

KS3 History and Activism Activity

Researching The Willesden branch of the London Society of Women's Suffrage

This activity is about Brent's history and how local people campaigned for women's right to vote. We hope you enjoy learning about Brent's past. You are taking on the role of researcher and using scans of real archive records to answer questions. The research questions in this activity are the sort of questions that we receive from members of the public contacting Brent Museum and Archives.

Brent Museum and Archives is based at The Library at Willesden Green, 95 High Rd, Willesden, London NW10 2SF. We look after thousands of artefacts and historical records for the Borough of Brent. They include maps, building plans, local newspapers, street directories, minutes of council meetings and photographs. We keep records not just for people to look at today but also for future generations, so we look after them very carefully. Visitors can make an appointment to see these documents in the Search Room.

Mary Blake

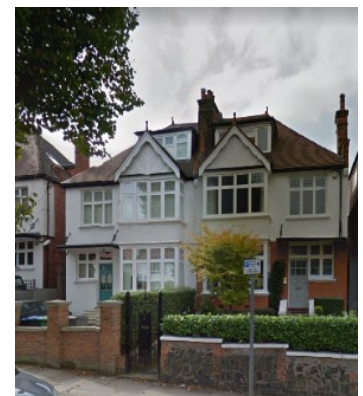
- Mary Blake was a local woman who was born in 1872.
- During the First World War (1914-1918), she supported the Suffragette movement and became Secretary of the Willesden branch of the London Society of Women's Suffrage.
- She lived at 37, Staverton Road in Willesden (on the right in the photo below, taken in 2015).
- Mary died in 1964.

1. Read the following text.
2. Write down all the new things you found out on the lines below in your own words.

For many years, if you owned property, you could vote at a local level.

Only women who owned property and who had never married or women whose husband had died could vote though. This was because if their husband was still alive then the man voted and their wife could not.

There was a new Act of Parliament in 1832 called the Great Reform Act. An Act of Parliament creates a new law or changes an existing law. The words that were written down in this new law included that all voters in parliamentary elections were 'male persons'. So, for the first time, it was clearly written down in law that no women could vote. The new Act did mean that more men could vote than before but most working class men still could not vote in parliamentary elections.



In 1835, another new Act was created, called the Municipal Corporations Act. This Act also said that women could not vote. This meant that women who had voted to elect town councillors before could not do this anymore.

Women did continue to vote to elect people to hold responsible positions for a range of local groups, such as ones looking after poor people, the roads or police and some positions in the church. They also held some of the positions themselves. However, they were not allowed to vote in parliamentary or town council elections.

There was a new act in 1869 called The Municipal Franchise Act. This Act meant that female property owners could vote for local municipal councils. In 1872, this was changed so that only unmarried or widowed women could vote.

In 1872 the fight for women's suffrage became a national movement with the formation of the National Society for Women's Suffrage and later the more influential National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies.

Another Act, called The Married Women's Property Act, 1882 meant that married women could now own and control property by themselves. Before this Act, any property that the wife held was given to her husband when she got married. If women did not marry or were widowed they kept control of their property and inheritance.

All male house owners in the cities received the parliamentary vote in 1867. Men living in the countryside did so in 1884. Male non-householders (for example, men living with their parents, or in the homes of their employers, such as servants, or in barracks, such as soldiers, or who were homeless) got the vote in 1918.

By 1908, women had already been campaigning to be able to vote for forty-two years. Campaign meetings started off in private homes and then started being held in public spaces. In 1908 Mrs Fawcett's 'constitutional' National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) and Mrs Pankhurst's 'militant' Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) staged spectacular processions promoting 'Votes for Women'.

The NUWSS was democratic and non-militant, aiming to achieve women's suffrage through peaceful and legal means, for example by getting persuading members of parliament to change the Acts of Parliament and by holding meetings to explain and promote their aims.

Members of the WSPU were known for civil disobedience, by breaking windows in prominent buildings, setting fire to post boxes, committing night-time arson of unoccupied houses and churches, and when imprisoned went on hunger strike and endured force-feeding.

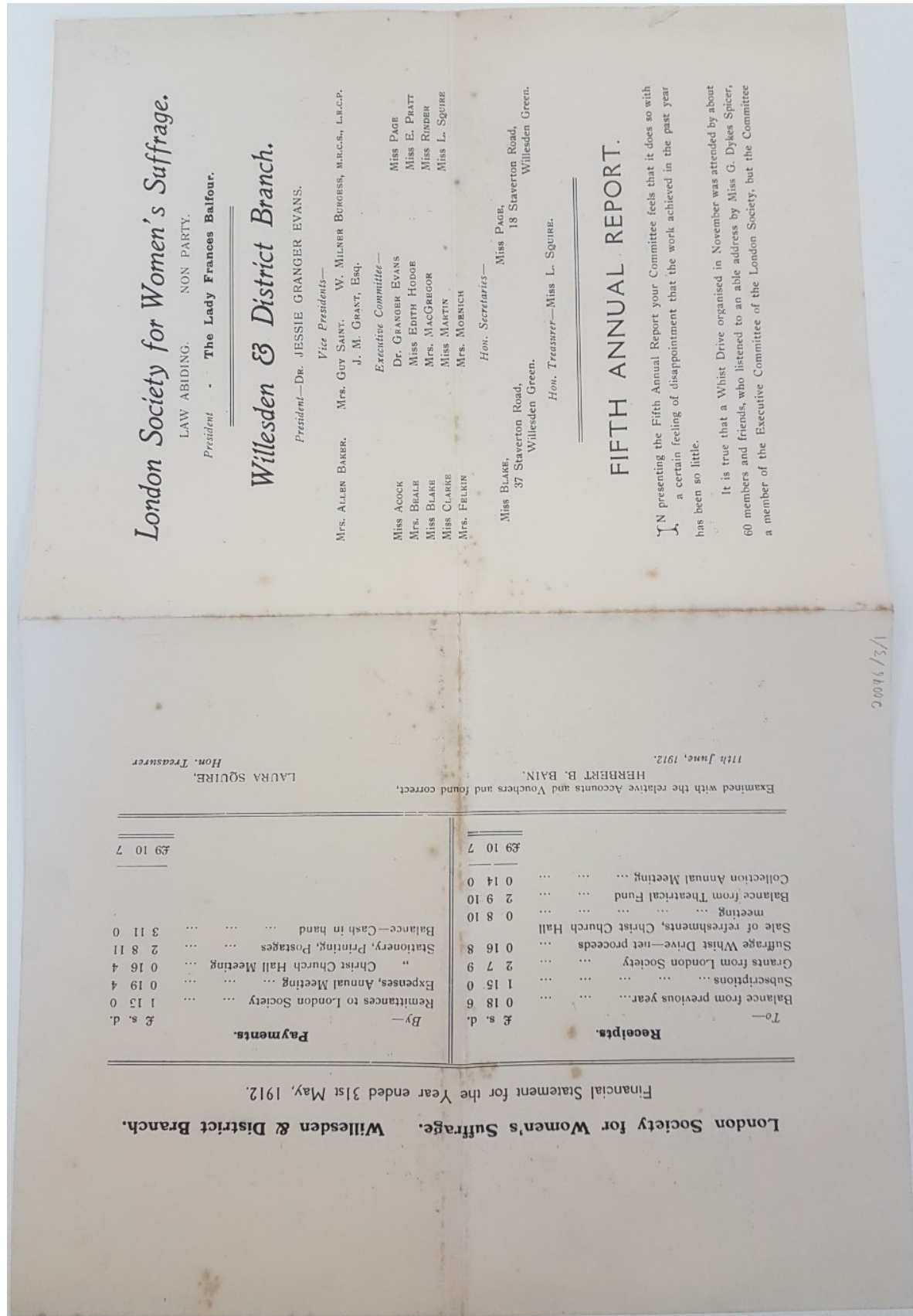
Between 1910 and 1912 there were some Members of Parliament (MPs) who had an idea that they thought could get agreement in the House of Commons. It was called the Conciliation Bill. If agreed, it would mean that some women got the vote (depending on how much property they owned and whether they were married or not). It would have been an increase on how many women could vote (from zero women to 1 million women). There were many discussions in parliament. In the end, there was a vote in parliament in March 1912. Sadly, the bill was defeated by 14 votes.

Unfortunately, only women over the age of 30 who owned property or who were married to a man who did, became able to vote in 1918 with the new Representation of the People Act. Although there were 8.5 million women in this group, it was still only about two-thirds of the total population of women in the UK at that time.

The 1918 Act stopped men having to own property in order to vote, meaning that nearly all men over the age of 21 were now able to vote. Before 1918 only 58% of men in Britain could vote. Also, men in the

Annual Reports of the London Society for Women's Suffrage (Willesden and District Branch) for 1912, 1913 and 1914. An annual report was printed each year and sent to every member of the Willesden and District Branch of the London Society for Women's Suffrage. It was a list of all the things that the people in the society branch had done and what happened. On the last page of the annual reports there is a financial statement. Look at the digital scans of the financial reports below then answer the questions.

Image 1. The Front and back pages of the 1912 Annual Report. The document is one sheet, about A4 size, folded in half.



London Society for Women's Suffrage.
LAW ABIDING. NON PARTY.
President - The Lady Frances Balfour.

Willesden & District Branch.
President—Dr. JESSIE GRANGER EVANS.

- Vice Presidents—*
Mrs. ALLEN BARBER. Mrs. GUY SAINT. W. MILNER BURGESS, M.B.E.S., L.R.C.P.
J. M. GRANT, Esq.
- Executive Committee—*
Miss ACOCK
Mrs. BEALE
Miss BLAIR
Miss CLARKE
Mrs. FELKIN
Dr. GRANGER EVANS
Miss EDITH HODGE
Mrs. MACGREGOR
Miss MARTIN
Mrs. MOENICH
Miss PAGE
Miss E. PRATT
Miss RINDER
Miss L. SQUIRE
- Hon. Secretaries—*
Miss BLAKE, 37 Staverton Road, Willesden Green.
Miss PAGE, 18 Staverton Road, Willesden Green.
- Hon. Treasurer—*Miss L. Squire.

FIFTH ANNUAL REPORT.

IN presenting the Fifth Annual Report your Committee feels that it does so with a certain feeling of disappointment that the work achieved in the past year has been so little.

It is true that a Whist Drive organised in November was attended by about 60 members and friends, who listened to an able address by Miss G. Dyles Spicer, a member of the Executive Committee of the London Society, but the Committee

LAVRA SQUIRE,
Hon. Treasurer

Examined with the relative Accounts and Vouchers and found correct,
HERBERT B. BAIN,
11th June, 1912.

Financial Statement for the Year ended 31st May, 1912.	
London Society for Women's Suffrage. Willesden & District Branch.	
Receipts.	Payments.
£ s. d.	£ s. d.
Balance from previous year	Remittances to London Society
Subscriptions	Expenses, Annual Meeting
Grants from London Society	Christ Church Hall Meeting
Suffrage Whist Drive—net proceeds	Stationery, Printing, Postages
Sale of refreshments, Christ Church Hall meeting	Balance—Cash in hand
Balance from Theatrical Fund	
Collection Annual Meeting	
£9 10 7	£9 10 7

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feels that members ought not to need the inducement of a whist drive to bring them to meetings, and it is to be deplored that an excellent lecture given by Miss Irene Cox, of the Industrial Law Committee, was attended by only 18 members. It is hoped that the new suggestion of Ward Secretaries may tend to keep members more in touch with one another and with the work of the Society, and to stimulate interest and enthusiasm in the district.

The great disappointment of the year, however, has been the rejection by the House of Commons of the Conciliation Bill on March 28th by a majority of 14. To this rejection we feel that we have contributed to a certain extent. Mr. Mallaby Deeley, M.P. for the Harrow Division of Middlesex, in spite of having stated in his election address that he was "in favour of extending the franchise to women ratepayers," and having promised a deputation of electors to vote for such a measure or even a wider one, has now publicly withdrawn his support from the Suffrage Cause, and abstained from voting for the Conciliation Bill on its second reading on March 28th. The correspondence which passed between the Committee of this Society and Mr. Mallaby Deeley on this subject, as also Mr. Mallaby Deeley's public utterances, have appeared in the local press and will, of course, be borne in mind when the next election takes place.

In spite of these disappointments however, and indeed because of them, we must go forward with renewed energy, greater enthusiasm, and stronger convictions, as

" one who

Never turned his back but marched breast forward,

Never doubted clouds would break,

Never dreamed tho' right were worsted wrong would triumph;

Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,

Sleep to wake."

Members are reminded that their subscriptions should be sent direct to the London Society, 58 Victoria Street, S.W., and that any change of address should be at once notified to the Hon. Secretary.

..... is Ward Secretary for
..... Ward
..... including

Image 3. The back page of the 1913 Annual Report.

London Society for Women's Suffrage.
(WILLESDEN AND DISTRICT BRANCH).

FINANCIAL STATEMENT for the YEAR ENDED 31st MAY, 1913.

<i>To—</i>	Receipts.	£ s. d.	<i>By—</i>	Payments	£ s. d.
Balance from previous year	...	3 11 0	Remittance to London Society (Subscription, per contra)	...	0 2 6
Subscription—Mrs. J. S. Baker (per contra)	...	0 2 6	Annual Meeting Expenses	...	0 4 0
Grants from London Society	...	2 3 11	Campaign Expenses	...	2 6 11
Profits from Suffrage Lending Library (per Mrs. McGregor)	...	0 10 0	Stationery, Postage, Printing and Miscellaneous small charges	...	2 14 0
Donation for Branch Work (Mrs. J. W. Carpenter)	...	0 6 6	Balance—Cash in hand	...	1 16 6
Collection—Annual Meeting	...	0 10 0			
		<u>£7 3 11</u>			<u>£7 3 11</u>

Examined with the relative Accounts and Vouchers and certified correct.

HERBERT B. BAIN. LAURA SQUIRE,
27th June, 1913. *Hon. Treasurer.*

PHILP & SONS, HARLESDEN.

20894/3/2

Image 4. The back page of the 1914 Annual Report.

London Society for Women's Suffrage
(WILLESDEN AND DISTRICT BRANCH).

Financial Statement for the Year ended 31st May, 1914.

<i>To—</i>	Receipts.	£ s. d.	<i>By—</i>	Payments.	£ s. d.
Balance from previous year...	...	1 16 6	Remittance to London Society (Subscriptions per contra)	...	0 6 0
Subscriptions	...	0 6 0	Remittance to London Society (special donation towards Pilgrimage Fund)	...	2 2 0
Grants from London Society	...	4 14 10	Expenses, Annual Meeting	...	0 15 9
Sale of tickets, donations, etc., for Social Evening	...	1 18 6	Expenses, Social Evening	...	2 0 6
Sale of tickets for Lantern Lecture	...	2 5 4	Expenses, Lantern Lecture	...	1 17 4
Donation for Branch work	...	0 3 0	Six months rent of Suffrage Reading-room	...	2 0 0
Donation towards rent of Suffrage Reading-room	...	0 6 8	Stationery, Postage, Printing, and miscellaneous small charges	...	3 8 0
Collection, Annual Meeting	...	2 2 0	Balance, cash in hand	...	1 3 3
		<u>£13 12 10</u>			<u>£13 12 10</u>

Certified correct after examination of the relative accounts and vouchers.

HERBERT B. BAIN. LAURA SQUIRE,
22nd June, 1914. *Hon. Treasurer.*

PHILP & SONS, HARLESDEN.

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1. List three different things that the London Society for Women's Suffrage, Willesden and District Branch did to raise money:

2. How much did they spend on stationery, printing and postage for the year ending 31st May 1912?

_____ They used stationery and postage to write and send letters. Who do you think they were writing letters to?

3. Who was Mr Mallaby Deeley? _____

4. Why were the Willesden and District Branch members disappointed by Mr Mallaby Deeley's behaviour in 1912?

5. Find page 2 of the 1912 Annual Report and you will see a quote from a poem called 'Epilogue', which was written by the poet, Robert Browning.

"In spite of these disappointments however, and indeed because of them, we must go forward with renewed energy, greater enthusiasm, and stronger convictions, as

"one who
Never turned his back but marched breast forward,
Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed tho' right were worsted wrong would triumph;
...""

Why do you think the words above were included in the Annual Report for 1912?

6. Write down a current issue that you are concerned about, that relates to Brent or the wider world, for example, climate change.

7. List three things that you could do to raise awareness of this issue at a local, national and international level.

Local: _____

National: _____

International: _____

8. What sort of things might make it hard for someone to vote in a parliamentary election nowadays?
