

Slide Show Notes

Slide 1: Political Reform (19th to early 20th century)

Slide 2: Introduction

- Today in the UK all men and women over the age of 18 have the right to vote in local and national elections.
- Many people in the UK take their right to vote for granted. Many do not even bother.
- People have chosen representatives to send to Parliament since the 13th century.

But . . .

- At the start of the 19th century it was still only 2% of the population that had the right to vote.
- By 1928 all men and women over the age of 21 had the right to vote.

Slide 3: Politics at the start of the 19th century

The Voters

- Less than 2% of the population had the vote.

Ask your class:

- **How many in your class would have the vote?**
- **How many in your school?**

Who were they?

- These voters were rich.
- They had to own a burgage – a piece of land with a property on it.
- In Horsham there were officially 52 burgages so 52 voters. But at the start of the 19th century this number rose to around 80 because of corrupt practices.

How they voted

- Voters did not go to a polling station or send in a postal vote.
- They made their vote in public. In Horsham they would do it outside the Town Hall for everyone to see.
- This meant voters could be bought or threatened.

Image: Map of Horsham 1792 showing and naming all the burgages in Horsham. © Horsham District Council's Horsham Museum and Art Gallery

Slide 4: Politics at the start of the 19th century

Who did they vote for?

- In Horsham voters voted for **two** Members of Parliament (MPs) to represent Horsham. They also voted for **two** MPs to represent Sussex.
- This gave a small number of people a huge say in parliamentary decisions.
- The candidates for MP were rarely 'representative'.
- They were usually rich.
- They were also not really chosen by the vote but by the biggest land owners in the area.



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- Because the biggest landowner could buy or influence the voters the most they could effectively choose their own MPs.
- In the early 19th century Horsham's biggest land owner was the Duke of Norfolk. So Horsham's MPs were the Duke's candidates.

*Images: the Duke of Norfolk, Timothy Shelly and Wilson Badyll (the Duke's candidates 1792 election.)
© Horsham District Council's Horsham Museum and Art Gallery*

Slide 5: Politics at the start of the 19th century

- **Discontent begins . . .**
- The rich and powerful in Britain began to worry about the power of the public. They worried because of what was happening in other countries e.g. the French and American Revolutions.
- It was clear that people want a say in what happens
- Another factor was the Industrial revolution. This was a time when industry became very different. New machines meant that goods could be made faster, cheaper and easier than before. Huge factories were built and people had to move to cities and towns to work in them.
- The population in cities grew particularly in the North of England.
- **But . . .** They had no say in government. For example Horsham had two MP's but Manchester and Birmingham had **no** MP's. The movement for change begins. . .

Slide 6: Peterloo

- Throughout 1815-1819 there were disturbances all around Britain protesting for political reform.
- In 1819 60,000 people gathered for a demonstration in St. Peter's Field Manchester. Leading political reformer Henry Hunt gave a speech.
- In an attempt to arrest Mr Hunt cavalry charged the crowd killing 11 people and injuring many more. This became known as the Peterloo massacre.
- There was a public outcry and even some MP's were upset.
- But government was afraid and introduced the Six Acts. These restricted people's right. For example gathering in public without permission was banned.
- The acts were only active for a few years.
- In Horsham Peterloo inspires our poet Percy Shelley to write many political poems.

Image: 19th century print of Percy Shelley by Arthur Greenhow in Horsham, © Horsham District Council's Horsham Museum and Art Gallery

Slide 7: Swing Riots come to Horsham

- By 1830 political control was still in the hands of the Duke of Norfolk. The candidates nominated to be MP were his friends or family
- But not everyone in Horsham was happy.
- They sent petitions to the government on many different issues. It was clear that they were unhappy with the Duke's control.
- Then the Swing Riots came to Horsham. The Swing Riots were part of an *agricultural* uprising. The protest was about tithes (taxes), wages and new machines replacing workers.



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- In Horsham and the surrounding villages hand bills were printed, threatening letters sent, and even fires lit.
- When the land owners held a meeting in St Mary's church in Horsham a large group of protesters got together and marched down the Causeway to the Church.
- Local John Brown reported 1000 people gathered. The result was that tithes were lowered and wages rose.
- Many in power believed this kind of disruption would be avoided if political reform extended the vote. Then these people would be represented in parliament and wouldn't need to cause disruption.
- One such believer was Lord Grey who in November 1830 became Prime Minister.

Images: Poster from 1832 election. People wanted to be free from Ducal influence. Poster: 1999.154 @ Horsham District Council's Horsham Museum and Art Gallery

Slide 8: 1832 Reform Act

- Lord Grey led the political party the Whigs who wanted political reform. In 1832 they managed to get the first Representation of the People Act passed after a few tries.
- This was the first major change to the political system in around 600 years!
- It brought changes. Places like Manchester now got to vote for an MP and places like Horsham now only voted for **one** MP.
- The number of people who could vote got bigger.
- In counties small landowners, tenant farmers and shopkeepers could now vote.
- In the boroughs like Horsham, all householders who paid yearly rental of £10 or more, paid the poor rate and hadn't received parish relief got to vote.
- Horsham residents celebrated the passing of the Act with a slap up dinner and marching bands.
- **In the election in 1832 Horsham's new voters chose Robert Henry Hurst.** Robert.H. Hurst was son of Robert Hurst. Robert Hurst had been an MP for the Duke of Norfolk. However Robert H. Hurst was not a candidate for the Duke. He was an Independent candidate and a 'radical' supporter of reform.

Images: Campaign poster for Robert Hurst 1832, addressing the new voters. Poster: 1998.1396 @ Horsham District Council's Horsham Museum and Art Gallery

Slide 9: Chartists

- **But the 1832 Act was not as revolutionary as it at first seemed**
- **For example:**
- In Horsham the number of voters had only increased from around 80 to 247. 247 was still only a small proportion of the several thousand inhabitants of the Borough.
- There was a clear exclusion of women in the Act. Only 'male persons' were included although the suggestion of women voters had been raised in parliament.
- The Act inspired the rise of the Chartist movement in following the years (1838 on)
- The Chartists campaigned for;
 - universal male suffrage (all men should get the vote),



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- secret ballot (voting should be private not public)
- elections be held every year
- constituencies (the area represented by an MP) should be of equal size
- MPs should be paid
- property qualification for MP's abolished (MPs should no longer have to be rich landowners)

Slide 10: 'One of the most drunken and corrupt elections in the entire UK'

Corrupt tactics were still widespread

- 1847 Horsham Election is a good example of this.
- The candidates were John Jervis (a Liberal, blue) and Seymour Vesey Fitzgerald (a Conservative, pink)
- They were both rich and powerful. Fitzgerald was the son of an Irish Statesman and Jervis was the son of the Attorney General. They did everything they could to persuade, buy and even threaten voters into supporting them.

For example:

- Free beer was given out in pubs for six weeks leading up to election
- Voters were bribed with gold and positions of power
- As both candidates owned a lot of land in the area they threatened to take the homes or jobs of voters unless they gave them their vote.
- There were even cases of kidnapping!
- In the end it didn't do them any good because the government declared the election too corrupt and ordered a new election the following year.

Images: Political squibs for the 1847 election. Poster: 1998.1401.2 and 1998.1425 © Horsham District Council's Horsham Museum and Art Gallery

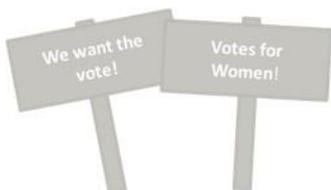
Slide 11: 1867 Reform Act

- The Chartists faded out by 1852 but there was a general acceptance that more reform was needed. The problem was no one could agree on how it should happen.
- There was still resistance to universal male suffrage and a definite lack of interest in women as voters.
- **Eventually a second Reform Act was passed in 1867**
- There were no big changes in rural areas but now working men in urban areas who met the property qualifications also got a vote.
- This made a huge difference. It roughly doubled the number of voters in England and Wales
- Overall 1/3 of all men now had a vote.

Ask your class:

- **How many people in your class can vote now?**

Image: 1867 election poster addressing the new voters. Poster: 1998.1406 © Horsham District Council's Horsham Museum and Art Gallery



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Slide 12: Tackling Corruption

- Although there were now more voters they were still voting in the same way – in public.
- It was common for candidates to use bribes or threats to get votes.
- So in 1872 the Secret Ballot Act finally made your vote private.
- However we still have an example of corruption in Horsham following this Act.
- In 1875 the candidate elected (another Mr Hurst) was shown to have used corrupt tactics. He was thrown off his seat. But his opponent didn't take his place because he had been corrupt too! Another election had to be held the next year.
- In 1883 the Anti-Corruption Act was passed and finally rid the UK of the worst of the corruption. One of its key rules was making candidates reveal what they spent their campaign money on.

Image: political cartoon showing the unseating of Mr Hurst for corruption. © Horsham District Council's Horsham Museum and Art Gallery

Slide 13: 1884 Reform Act

- **In 1884 a Third Reform Act was passed**
- This extended the vote to include agricultural workers like it had urban workers in 1867.
- It still did not include women.
- Around 2/3 of men now have the vote
- However there were still only two key political parties - the Liberals and the Conservatives.
- All these new working class male voters felt they had no one really representing them in party politics. A new party was needed.
- So in 1900 the first official Labour Party formed with the support of the Trade Unions after many years of campaigning.
- The Labour party supported universal male suffrage but also supported women getting the vote.

Image: 1893 election poster addressing the new rural voters. Poster: 1998.1353 © Horsham District Council's Horsham Museum and Art Gallery

Slide 14: Women's Suffrage

- In 1832, 1867 and 1884 women had been passed over. But support for women in positions of influence was starting.
- For example in 1872 the Education Act allowed women on to school boards and 1894 Local Government Act let women vote in local elections.
- In 1889 the Women's Franchise League formed. This was the first large organisation that campaigned for women's suffrage.
- In the following years of campaigning there were two key types of groups.
- **Suffragists**
- They followed groups like the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) formed in 1897
- Their campaign focused on petitions, peaceful marches and gaining government support. Their leaders included Millicent Fawcett.



- **Suffragettes**
- They followed groups like the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) formed in 1903
- Their leaders were the Pankhursts. Emmeline Pankhurst and her 3 daughters were all involved in campaigning for women's suffrage.
- Their campaign focussed on militant actions; chaining themselves to railings outside parliament, using toffee hammers to smash windows and other acts of vandalism
- Many were arrested and put in prison. The prisoners continued their protest by taking part in hunger strikes. The prison officers force fed them an unpleasant and dangerous practice.
- In 1913 the Cat and Mouse Act was introduced. This would allow prisoners who went on hunger strike to be released on health grounds but be returned to prison once they were well.

Image: Mrs Millicent Fawcett. © Bain News Service in 1913 [Image from Library of Congress](#)

Slide 15: Women in Horsham

- Women in the Sussex area were quite well involved in the campaign of women's suffrage.
- In Horsham we have an example.
- **In 1912 Mrs de Fonblanque organised a march for women's suffrage**
- The main route was from Edinburgh to London. The goal of the march was to raise awareness of women's suffrage and to protest white slavery. It was a very small group that actually took part.
- But they inspired the NUWSS who in 1913 held the Women's Pilgrimage.
- Women from the Sussex and Surrey marched north to join 50,000 women in London's Hyde Park for a peaceful demonstration. This apparently got special notice from Prime Minister Asquith.
- **Mrs de Fonblanque also formed the suffragist group the Marchers Qui Vive Corps in the spirit of her march.**
- She set up one of the only permanent headquarters for the group at 60 West Street in Horsham.

Image: 1913 poster advertising Mrs de Fonblanque visiting Horsham to talk about her march. Poster: 1999.27.1 © Horsham District Council's Horsham Museum and Art Gallery

Slide 16: World War One

- Despite all these improvements at the Outbreak of World War One all women and 1/3 of men did not have a vote.
- Suffragettes and Suffragists put their campaigns on hold to support the war effort.
- Women become an important force on the Home Front for example:
 - They took on men's jobs making weapons, farming and more.
 - They organised charity events to support injured soldiers and their families
 - They made clothes, blankets, bandages and more to send to hospitals and soldiers on the Front Line
 - They volunteered as nurses many even going out to the battlefields in France to help

Images: Posters encouraging women to help the war effort. Posters: 1998.1502.1 and 1998.1510 © Horsham District Council's Horsham Museum and Art Gallery



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Slide 17: A Pankhurst comes to Horsham

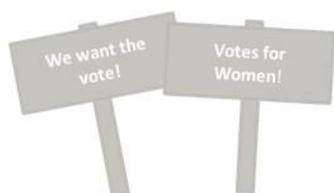
- **In 1916 Sylvia Pankhurst visited Horsham**
 - Her mother and sister led the Suffragettes
 - But Sylvia believed in a different way of campaigning. She joined up with the Labour party to support women's suffrage.
 - She also formed her own group: The **East London Federation of Suffragettes in 1914**. They were working-class women that focussed on social reform, and rejected the violence of the WSPU.
 - In the War she continued her quest for non-violent solutions by siding with the section of the Labour Party that wanted peace
 - And in 1916 she came to Horsham to speak about peace and against conscription which forced men to become soldiers.
 - She and the other speakers were not appreciated. They were jeered, rotten fruit and cabbages were thrown - her speech ended when one of these projectiles whacked her on the forehead! The people of Horsham then sang Rule Britannia as they chased them out of town.

Image: Sylvia Pankhurst. Image source Museum of London in public domain, access via [Wikimedia](#).

Slide 18: 1918 Representation of the People Act

- When the war ended the 1918 Representation of the People Act was passed.
- This act gave universal suffrage to men over the age of 21.
- It also gave some women the vote for the first time - Women over 30.
- What influenced the 1918 act?
 - **For men**
 - The way the rules were currently men returning home after serving their country would not have a vote. This was seen as very unfair. Also Russia had had a revolution in 1917 where a similar issue had been a factor
 - **Women**
 - There is a debate over what was the most influential.
 - The campaigns of the Suffragists
 - The fear that there would be a return to the militancy of the Suffragettes
 - The Labour movement who were committed to reform and were gaining power in government.
 - The women's work during the war effort that showed their abilities, skills and commitment to their country.

Images: 1918 election poster, 'All men and women electors are invited to attend'. Poster: 1999.50 © Horsham District Council's Horsham Museum and Art Gallery

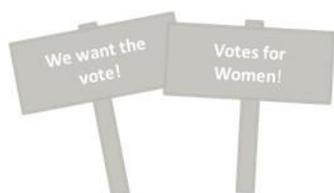


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Slide 19: Equal Franchise

- It was another ten years before there was universal franchise – the 1928 Representation of the People Act.
- This gave all men and women over the age of 21 the right to vote. Britain was finally a true democracy.
- In 1969 the voting age was lowered to 18 for men and women.
- But changes are still being made in the UK today with 16 year olds getting to vote in the Scottish Independence Referendum and the debate in Europe over the rights of prisoners to get the vote.
- And the quest for democracy is still being fought in countries all over the world.



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