

ANNIE LEIGH BROWNE (1851 - 1938)

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Annie Leigh Browne. Image from Wikipedia (Public Domain).

Annie Leigh Browne was a suffragist and women's rights activist who was born in Somerset but spent most of her adult life in London.

She was born in 1851 in Bridgwater and was the eldest daughter of Samuel Woolcott Browne, a merchant. Her family moved while she was a child to Clifton, a suburb of Bristol. While living there she was educated by tutors and governesses. In 1868 her family moved to London so that she and her sister could attend Queen's College in Harley Street. Annie attended full time for only a year as she was needed at home. That same year she became involved in the women's suffrage cause when she attended what was probably the first women's suffrage meeting at the house of the ethnologist John Beddoe.

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In the 1880s she became involved in the campaign for better education for women. She helped fund College Hall in in Byng Place, which was established to provide accommodation for the growing number of women students at the University of London.

In the late 1880s she provide funding for a group of women who became the Women's Local Government Society. Their aim was to get more women elected in local politics. Their work helped the election of Lady Margaret Sandhurst and Jane Cobden onto London County Council.

In the 1890s Annie was a member of the Union of Practical Suffragists executive committee and also a member of the Central Society for Women's Suffrage. In 1907 she took part in the Mud March organised by the National Union of Women's Suffrage (NUWSS). It was called the mud march because the day's awful weather left the protestors drenched in mud and dirt. It was the largest public demonstration for women's suffrage up to that date. Annie continued to campaign for women's suffrage until 1918, when women were granted partial enfranchisement.

She died in 1938 in London of bronchitis.

Researched and written by Elizabeth Strange, Curatorial Research Volunteer.

Bibliography

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