



Suffrage stories

Mary Newton was a key suffragist in Christchurch who drew on her personal struggles to become a social reformer. Mary lived in Curragh House in St Albans with her parents until she married Arthur Newton in 1875. Although charming when sober, Arthur was an alcoholic. Mary often carried her drunken husband home from nearby Carlton Hotel. Arthur died, aged 35, in 1888 from alcohol abuse.

Mary had to take in boarders to make ends meet. One of these boarders was Ernest Rutherford, who later married her eldest daughter.

No wonder Mary became a staunch temperance fighter. She helped found the Christchurch branch of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), serving as branch secretary for nine years. Mary and her younger sister Emma distributed temperance literature on the trams and informed police of hotels illegally providing alcohol to minors or drunks.

In the early 1890s, Emma purchased a new safety bicycle. This gave her freedom of movement to campaign and gather signatures for the three women's suffrage petitions. Once the right to vote was won, she presided over the Christchurch Enrolment Convention. This meeting encouraged women to enrol immediately so they could vote in the next general election on 28 November 1893.

Mary Kate Newton

1851-1933

“WOMAN'S FRANCHISE WON.”

ENROL!! ENROL!! ENROL!!

UNLESS any unforeseen circumstances arise the women of New Zealand will be able to Vote at the approaching Parliamentary elections.

ONE DAY'S DELAY

May prevent women from exercising their right, and to meet the urgent necessity for immediate enrolment in the Christchurch Parliamentary Electorate, an

ENROLMENT CONVENTION for WOMEN

Will be held in the

ODDFELLOWS' HALL, LICHFIELD STREET,

ON

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13TH,

At 7.30 p.m.

A large staff of volunteer registration clerks is arranged for, and the enrolment will be speedily effected.

Mesdames Sheppard and Newton will preside over the proceedings.

Every woman, married and single, over twenty-one years of age, residing in Christchurch, Sydenham or St. Albans, is cordially invited to embrace this opportunity to register. 653

■ 'Woman's Franchise Won', Press, Vol L, Issue 8586, 13 Sept 1893. Credit: Papers Past.



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