

COMING SOON: ‘Popular and Smart: Why Scholarship on the Women’s Suffrage Movement in Britain Still Matters’ by Prof. Jacqueline DeVries

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PROVISIONAL ABSTRACT: Popular and Smart: Why Scholarship on the Women’s Suffrage Movement in Britain Matters Abstract The history of the women’s suffrage movement in the British Isles suffers from the perception that little new is left to be said. However, more than a dozen new books demonstrate that the field is still vibrant. This new scholarship illuminates not only the historical contours of feminism, but also the complex, changing political cultures of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Historians have reworked the usual chronologies to reveal the long trajectory and shifting dynamics of women’s political participation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They remain sensitive to class dynamics, but also explore how region, ethnicity, religious affiliation and social networks made a difference to the way in which women conceptualized citizenship and exercised political agency. Increasingly, suffrage historians define the movement broadly and view feminism as a shifting discourse, so that even anti-suffragists are included among these categories. This new crop of books contributes to the field’s ever-expanding empirical sophistication, and the best make eminently clear why the study of women’s suffrage is still relevant and popular, among both scholars and the broader public.

My thanks to Erika Rappaport, Lucy DeLap, June Purvis, Sue Morgan,



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and Timothy S. Jones for their judicious comments on earlier drafts of this essay.

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