

Bellaghy recalls women suffragettes

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BELLAGHY will be the venue for a talk to mark the centenary of the Suffragettes movement in Ulster next week.

The event will be held in the Old School Centre on Wednesday, November 21st at 7:30pm.

The guest speaker will be Dr Margaret Ward, Director of the Women's Resource and Development Agency and a well known author of Irish women's history.

The talk has been organised by the recently formed County Derry Centenaries Group, who have set out to mark the major events from the 'Decade of Centenaries' by remembering key moments while providing a platform for inter-community discussion and better understanding of alternate viewpoints.

Announcing details of the Bellaghy talk, [Maureen](#) Hughes, Chairperson of CDCG said the event focusing on the suffragettes follows on from their inaugural event in September, which marked the centenary of the signing of the Ulster Covenant.

"The historical talk and panel discussion was very well attended and warmly received," she said.

"At our Bellaghy event, Dr Margaret Ward will talk about the campaign for women's right to vote, which took place at the same time as Ireland was on the brink of civil war over the Home Rule crisis.

"Sir Edward Carson was a major target for the anger of the suffragettes as he fervently opposed the rights of women to vote, while openly advocating rebellion," she explained.

Ms Hughes said at this time women were becoming increasingly militant and were furious that they were being imprisoned while the UVF led by Carson were gun running and preparing for civil war, but went unpunished.

"The revolutionary period saw the suffragettes in response burn down Abbeylands House in Whiteabbey, where the UVF were drilling their troops.

"In the province of Ulster there were around 1,000 members in 20 different suffrage organisations," she said.

She explained that they held open air meetings in Belfast in places like Carlisle Circus, Ormeau Park and outside Methodist College.

"They filled the Grand Opera House and the Ulster Hall and despite the Home Rule issue, these crowds were made up of unionist and nationalist women united in a common cause," she said.

She added that Dr Ward in her talk will bring to life the headline grabbing activities of the suffragettes and point to their part in an international movement that spanned the US, Australia and Europe.

"Proportionally the suffrage movement had as many members in Ireland as they had in [England](#). They were divided on whether or not to be militant. Some of the groups supported direct action, while others were opposed to attacks on property. It was mainly a middle class movement but they tried to encourage working class women to get involved," she added.

A very warm welcome is extended to everyone in the community, male and female. Organisers especially want to invite local historical and women's groups to attend.

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