

# My Grandma was a suffragette.

*Josephine Foote Hitch was born in 1872 in Rotherham but spent most of her young life in Sheffield.*



Fortunate to have been an only child of an ambitious father, she moved from her board school to benefit from the best education on offer for girls in Sheffield at that time, the Girls' High School.

From there she spent a year in France at a 'finishing' school and then left Paris to tour Italy.

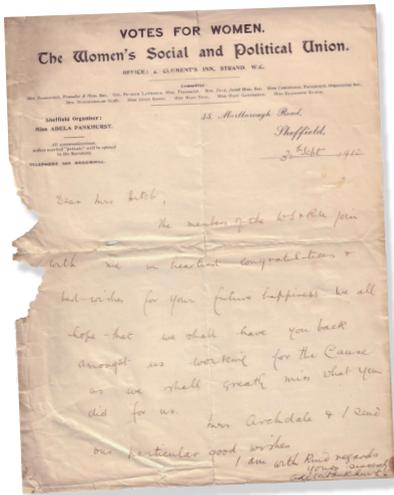
Born when her mother was 39, there was less chance of a son and heir for her father to cherish.

My great grandfather, born at Norton Disney into a tenant farming family, had moved away and made money as a cutlery manufacturer in Sheffield.

Grandma was mixing with the middle class young women, who would turn their energy and free time to the Suffragette movement. Her great granddaughter has become custodian of Grandma's suffragette sash and the 1910 letter from Adela Pankhurst (*see overleaf*) thanking Grandma for her efforts.

Grandma retired from the movement in 1910 when she married and came to live at Mill Farm, Stainsby.

For those of you who are familiar with the National Trust mill at Stainsby, you may know that her husband, John Edwin Hitch, was the tenant farmer and miller at that time.



It is known that, during her time in the Suffragette movement, Grandma hid under the platforms to heckle renowned speakers. Grandma got arrested. It is believed she was imprisoned but I have yet to find the evidence.

At this time a lot of men believed women did not have the intellectual capacity to vote nor did they wish to give up control of their wives' money, a right they acquired on marriage. Grandma, an only child, did not relish giving up her inheritance to a man.

Her strident manner was not popular with her elder son, my father, who nicknamed her the 'old shrew.' Her energy was never turned to farm work but she played a key role in Heath and Holmewood WI and Glapwell Townswomen Guild.

She died in 1965 aged 93 and is buried with her husband in Ault Hucknall churchyard.

Nevertheless, I reckon she earned her vote and a place in history with the thousands of women who fought their corner and were finally franchised in 1928. It had taken WW1 when women undertook the roles of men in conflict, for the true value of women in society to be recognised.

*Ann Newth Wood*

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