

# Gude Cause: celebrating women's struggle

## A photo-essay

Gude Cause organising group  
<http://www.gudecause.org.uk/>



On October 10<sup>th</sup> 1909 a march for women's suffrage took place in central Edinburgh, a battle which was fully won when women had the right to vote on the same basis as men across the UK in 1928. One hundred years later, more than 4,000 women, men, children and young people took to the streets of Edinburgh again to celebrate the success of the struggle for votes for women, the achievements of the women's movement since, and the ongoing struggles for equality. The event also stimulated community activities throughout Scotland and beyond, focusing on women's rights and democracy. Some of the stories of 10<sup>th</sup> October 2009 and the activities leading up to it are told here through a photo-essay, with thanks to members of the Gude Cause organising group. More photographs and educational and community arts resources can be viewed on [www.gudecause.org.uk](http://www.gudecause.org.uk). Hard copies of some materials can be obtained from the Scottish Women's International League for Peace and Freedom on [scottishwilpf@peaceandjustice](mailto:scottishwilpf@peaceandjustice).

In 1909, nine year old piper Bessie Watson played from the back of a float. The 2009 march was led by piper Louise Marshall Millington. The leading banner carried by organiser Janet Fenton and cross party representation of elected women politicians, bore the Scots slogan "A gude cause maks a strong arm", from a banner on the 1909 march.



The 2009 march brought together the banners of a wide range of community, faith-based, educational, youth, activist, trades union and women's organisations. Many of the banners were purpose-made, in some cases copying or updating the banners from the 1909 march. Banner-making workshops took place in community centres and educational establishments across the country.



A feature from the Gude Cause quilt. Squares were produced by women's groups and individual supporters from across the world and sent to Edinburgh where the quilt was displayed at the Scottish Parliament.

Young people made a significant contribution to the activities both on the march and in schools and youth centres across Scotland. In preparation for the procession West Lothian Youth Participation Network worked with youth forums and other youth groups to raise awareness of the struggle for democracy and on the day of the march took approximately 70 young people and staff to Edinburgh to join the procession. As part of the ongoing struggle for democracy, the youth forums are supporting a campaign to reduce the voting age to 16.





Many participants dressed in the style of the women's suffrage campaigners of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century and wore the purple, green and white colours the Women's Social and Political Union, the organisation set up by Emmeline Pankhurst which used militant and violent tactics in support of votes for women. WSPU activist Marion Wallace-Dunlop, from Inverness, was the first suffragette to go on hunger strike in 1909 when she was imprisoned for graffiting the House of Commons.





Herstory lessons: A protestor remembers the women's industrial militancy in past generations, and David Hume dons a headscarf and sash and joins the procession.





Above, *SheBoom*, Glasgow's women drummers, and right, *Protest in Harmony*, Edinburgh based political choir.



Edinburgh's Adult Learning Project has been organising women's education for 30 years.