What effects did the war have on the role of women?

The roles of men and women in British society
- 1910 women and men not equal
- In 1910 6 out of 10 men could vote in general elections, women could not

Why could women not vote in national elections?
- Male dominated society did not think women were equal
- Common belief that place of women was at home
- Women too emotional to vote/husbands could easily influence them

Period up to 1910 saw improvements in women’s legal rights:
- By 1900 women could vote in elections to school boards. First women to be elected in Scotland was Miss Jane Arthur to Paisley School Board in 1873
- Women could vote in local elections if they paid rates – a sort of local tax
- Women could now divorce their husbands and keep access to their children
- When women married they could now keep own money and property (previously had to give all away before 1882 if they were married)

Inequality at work
- Women not paid same as men for doing same job; estimated women paid 40% less
- In many careers, like teaching, women had to give up job when they married

Inequality in education
- Girls treated differently: had to study needlework, cookery and laundry
- In 1910 care of infants was added to the curriculum to prepare girls for role as homemakers
- Women could only attend university after 1889 when the Universities (Scotland) Act gave them access on same basis as men. This allowed some women to become doctors, teachers and lawyers

Why did women want the vote?
- Many women believed they could end unfairness of society if they had right to vote

How did women campaign for the right to vote?
- During mid-nineteenth century local organisations set up to fight for right of women to vote = suffrage societies
- 1897 – National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) brought all local organisations together into national organisation. Members were known suffragists
- Leader of suffragist = Mrs Millicent Fawcett. Felt it was unfair that women paid taxes, obeyed the law and could vote in local and school board elections yet were not trusted to vote in national elections.
- 1902: Glasgow & West of Scotland Association for Women’s Suffrage formed. It joined NUWSS in October 1903. Similar organisations appeared in Dundee and Aberdeen. 1909 all these suffrage societies came together under Scottish Federation of Women’s Suffrage Societies, which was part of NUWSS itself
How successful were the suffragists?

- Believed women should have vote and this should be achieved through peaceful, lawful methods
- Methods inc. leaflets, posters, presenting signed petitions to Parliament.
- Between 1867 and 1876, 2 million signatures obtained in Scotland for petitions in favour of granting women the vote
- To spread ideas even further NUWSS set up own newspaper *The Common Cause*
- Support given can be seen by fact that by 1914 NUWSS had over 500 branches & 100,000 members
- NUWSS supported Labour Party as it wanted vote for all men and women
- Peaceful methods helped convince Liberal and Conservative Party members that women deserved vote

Who were suffragettes?

- More radical organisation who were frustrated by lack of progress
- Manchester 1903 Emmeline Pankhurst and daughters Christabel & Sylvia set up Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU)
- Supporters were called suffragettes by *Daily Mail* newspaper
- Motto = ‘Deeds not words’. Showed that members were unhappy with methods of suffragists
- Sylvia said NUWSS were “so willing to wait, so leisurely” = too polite, too slow and seemed to be getting nowhere

Aims of suffragettes?

- To obtain the vote in national elections for women
- Prepared to break law to achieve aim
- Christabel Pankhurst believed WSPU was fighting a war - to win required total loyalty and obedience

Methods?

- Not willing to wait, suffragettes demanded it.
- Policy = militancy
- Created a lot of publicity
- Produced posters, pamphlets, demonstrations – some outside the Houses of Parliament, heckle speakers at political meetings, arrested for breach of peace, spitting at policemen, chaining themselves to railings outside Parliament
- Extreme tactics inc. buildings set on fire, bomb attacks on property, famous paintings in art galleries slashed

Suffragettes in Scotland?

- Leader = Flora Drummond, known as ‘The General’ because of her organisational abilities and because she always wore military-style uniforms. She organised all of great suffragette demonstrations e.g. one in Princes Street, Edinburgh, 1909.
- 1906: 1st branch of WSPU opened in Glasgow. HQ in Bath St. opened two years later
- Held public meetings, raised funds through book sales and opened more branches across Scotland
1909: 1st military demonstrations held in Glasgow and Dundee
By 1913 campaign more violent e.g. acid poured into pillar boxes to destroy letters, attacks on property, telegraph and telephone lines were cut, attempt to blow up cottage in Alloway where Robert Burns had been born. Also an attempt to burn down grandstand at Kelso racecourse

**Notoriety**
- Most famous suffragette protest was during 1913 at famous horse race called the Derby in which a horse owned by King George V was running. Suffragette Emily Wilding Davison tried to stop king’s horse to draw attention to cause of votes for women. She was knocked over and died of her injuries a few days later.
- Funeral was turned into huge publicity event by fellow suffragettes who claimed she was a martyr for the cause of women’s suffrage
- Not all women or suffragettes supported violent campaign. Led to split in 1907. Women’s Freedom League set up which had many Scottish supporters. Didn’t believe in violence but still prepared to break law inc. refusing to pay tax to government

**General reactions to suffragette tactics?**
- Reported in most newspapers are irresponsible law-breakers who didn’t deserve right to vote
- Described as women who neglected their families
- Male supporters were portrayed as hen-picked husbands (husbands who were controlled by their wives)
- Nonetheless, male supporters did eventually set up Men’s League for Women’s Suffrage
- Thousands of women left suffragettes and joined suffragists
- Local town councils and Scottish churches also supported. 1912: Scottish Churches League for Women’s Suffrage also set up

**Government reaction to suffragette actions?**
- Suffragette Marion Wallace Dunlop created sensation when she went on hunger strike in protest at her imprisonment. After 91 hours without food she was released
- Other suffragettes followed her example
- Government couldn’t allow people to break law and get away with it so in September 1909 Home Secretary decided that prisoners on hunger strike should be force fed
- Many horrified by treatment. Most shocking was in Perth prison where experiments were carried out to see if rectal feeding was possible in attempt to get liquid into the woman’s body. Suffragettes claimed women were being tortured
- Force feeding made government very unpopular. Politicians worried that someone on hunger strike would die in prison. As a result law called Prisoner’s Temporary Discharge (for ill health) Act was passed in 1913
- Under act, those on hunger strike released from prison when weak and once home and healthy again they would be re-arrested
- Suffragettes called this the Cat and Mouse Act as felt government playing with prisoners in way that a cat plays with a mouse

**Changing attitudes to women and vote during Great War?**
- Many campaigns ended with outbreak of war. In Aug 1914, writing in The Common Cause, Mrs Fawcett declared:
  
  Women, your country needs you. We have another duty now. Let us show ourselves worthy of citizenship, whether our claim to it be recognised or not.

- Attitudes changed partly because of women’s war work. Results of this work highlighted by Prime Minister Asquith who said:
  
  How could we have carried on the war without them? I find it impossible to withhold
from women the power and the right of making their voices directly heard

- 1918 Representation of the People Act passed:
  - All men over 21 given vote
  - Women over age of 30 who owned own homes or were married to householders given vote. Women who were university graduates could vote in their university city
- Despite adding 6 million men and 2 million women to the electorate, this act still discriminated against women. Almost all working-class women still could not vote
- First female MP to take seat in Parliament = Nancy Astor, elected Dec 1919. By 1931, there were 15 female MPs
- Finally in 1928 right to vote given to all men and women over age 21 through another Representation of the People Act

Other action Scottish women took during war?
- War had dramatic impact on Scotland’s economy. Thousands of workers flocked to west of Scotland for work in war industries. Led to shortage in housing which landlords tried to exploit by increasing rents. People were not happy and some felt direct action was needed

What were the rent strikes?
- Protests about high cost of housing in Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen.
- Mainly happened during 1915
- As many tenants couldn’t afford new higher rent costs, landlords tried to evict them (food and fuel was also rising in cost at this time)
- Mostly women who had to cope with these price increases. They resented landlords trying to exploit war for their own profit thus resentment to evictions grew
- 16 Feb 1915 Glasgow Women's Housing Association set up led by Helen Crawfurd, Mary Barbour, Agnes Dollan and Jessie Stephens. Aim was to protect tenants against rent increases. Did this by encouraging tenants to join together and resist rent rises

What happened during the strikes?
- May 1915 in South Govan, Glasgow was first real test
- Protests organised efficiently. Women accused landlords of being unpatriotic
- Supported by employers who did not want industrial production affected
- When law officers sent to evict tenants for not paying, supporters of rent strikes made it impossible for officers to carry out evictions
- By end of 1915, 25,000 tenants had joined movement
- 17 Nov 1915 trial due to take place of 18 tenants who refused to pay increased rents. Huge meeting George Sq., Glasgow to show opposition. Factory owners were worried when men went on unofficial strike to show their support.

What did government do?
- Rent Restriction Act rushed through Parliament which froze rents at their pre-war levels
- Increases only allowed if improvements had been made to property
- In short-term people’s action had won, for long-term more people came to take an interest in politics

Which other political areas did women become involved in?
- Some radical females e.g. Helen Crawfurd launched Women’s Peace Crusade on 10 Jun 1916. First attempt to organise people in all social classes to oppose war.
- Branches across Scotland and on 8 Jul 1917 over 14,000 protesters gathered on Glasgow Green
• Other organisations included Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom set up by Chrystal Macmillan, a graduate of Edinburgh University

‘Home fit for heroes’
• As war was near end, government promised people life would be better after war
• One promise made was ‘homes fit for heroes’
• Slums considered not good enough for men or their children who have won the war. Housing would become a nation concern
• In 1917 Royal Commission investigated state of housing in Scotland and found that
  o huge overcrowding
  o lack of basic sanitary services such as toilets in many villages and towns
  o unacceptable number of one-roomed houses occupied by large families
  o lack of proper light and ventilation in homes
• Improvement by government after Great War included
  o 1919 Addison’s Act: to make promise official but money ran out in 1921
  o 1924 Wheatley Housing Act: houses were built with electricity, gardens and indoor toilets
• Despite improvements Scottish housing remained poor