

Unsung Women 1897

Although you will see many women celebrating their graduations alongside their male classmates nowadays, this wasn't always the case. Women's colleges were founded in the mid-1800s, but despite doing all of the hard work and exams, women weren't full members of the University and so were not awarded any degrees in Cambridge until after World War Two, in 1948!

Unsurprisingly, the women of the University became rather fed up with this lack of equality. They rallied together to bring about an official vote on the matter on the 21st of May, 1897. The day of the vote brought lots of protestors to Cambridge, men who had degrees from the University and were outraged about the campaign for women to be awarded degrees were given voting rights, even if they had graduated years before!

Unfortunately for women almost three times as many men voted against them as for them. Thrilled, some male students made fun of female students and even made effigies of a woman on a bike representing emancipated women and also the head female campaigners. They hung these figures up along wires above the queue of voters going into the Senate, and afterwards burnt the effigies in the Market Square.

