



CREWE
TOWN COUNCIL

CREWE



Ada Nield

1894

About me

Hi, my name is Ada and I am 24 years old.

How old are you?

I live in the year 1894.

I stopped going to school when I was 11 years old. That's because in 1894, children only have to go to school until they are 11 years old.

My family have had to move around a lot to get more money.

My dad had to sell our farm in Staffordshire and we moved to Worcestershire. In 1887, we moved to somewhere called Crewe for him to find work.

I wasn't too sure about moving at first but now I quite like it and I've made friends here.

Although, there is one thing I really don't like.



- **How do you think Ada felt moving away from her home to a new place?**



Credit: Crewe Heritage Centre

My job

I work as a tailor for Compton's Clothing Factory in Bridle Road, Crewe.

A tailor makes clothing for people. I make special uniforms for the train drivers at Crewe Railway Station.

I have to sew the buttons onto the jackets and make sure the sleeves are long enough.

I really don't like how me and the other women at my job are treated.

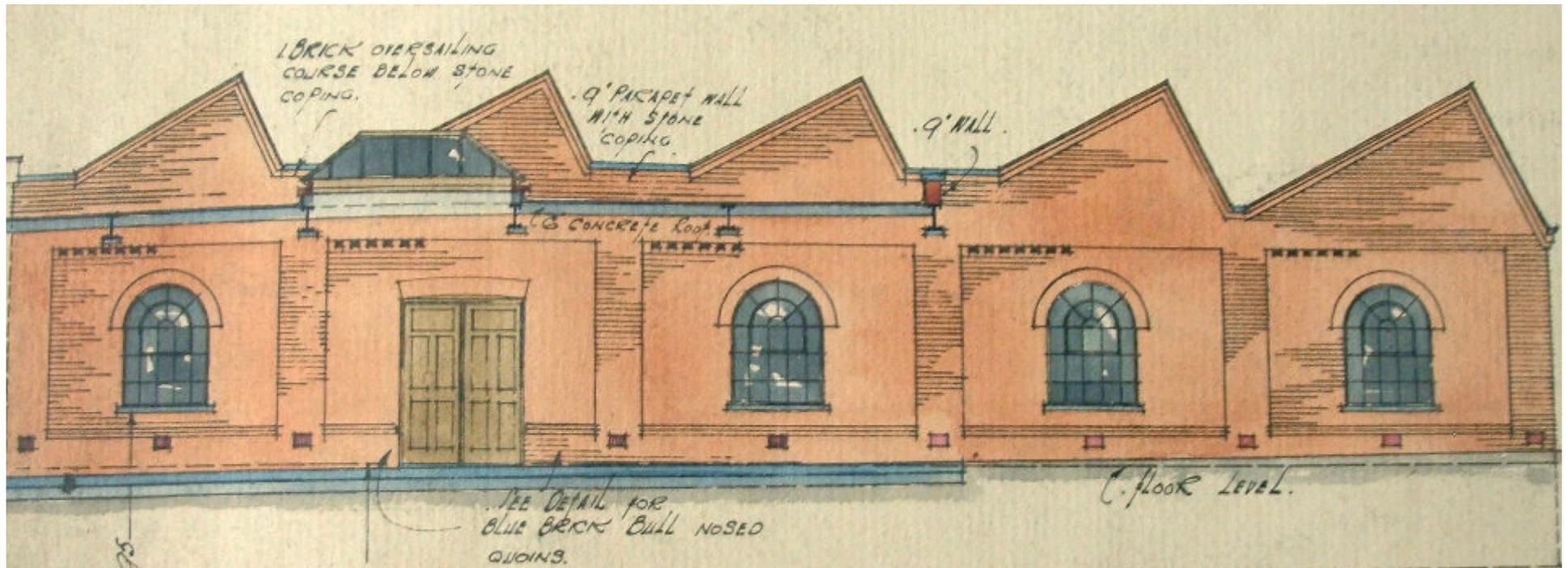
I get paid less money than men just because I am a woman!

I think this is wrong so I wrote 12 letters to my local newspaper, the Crewe Chronicle.

My job can't find out it is me though so I write the letters secretly and call myself the 'Crewe Factory Girl'.



- **Take a look at the drawing of Compton's Clothing Factory in 1894 and what the factory looks like now.**
- **Can you spot any differences?**



Credit: Cheshire Archives and Local Studies



A Crewe Factory Girl

I write letters about the factory that we work in where it is really dirty. We are also charged money to take tea and biscuit breaks!

We are also expected to work 10 hours a day to earn just 8 shillings a week. That's about £33 in money in your time.

It isn't fair that we aren't paid much money, especially when the men are paid a lot more.

I don't want to get in trouble, but I also don't want to let this carry on!

I wrote secret letters to the newspaper for 5 months but one day, they found out who I was and they stopped me from going back to work.

That is ok though because I have a new job.

In my new job, I'm going to be travelling all around the country making sure women are paid the same as men!



- **Do you think the factory were fair to Ada?**
- **Why do you think women and girls were paid differently than men?**
- **How would you feel after working 10 hours a day?**



- **Read these quotes from Ada's letters below.**

Every Monday morning a boy comes round with a bag and a tray of numbered checks. We each are compelled to buy one of these checks the one on which our number is inscribed. Some cost two pence, some three-pence. If we pay two-pence, we have the inestimable privilege of a seat in the tea-room and a mug of tea every afternoon. If we pay three-pence, we have, in addition, the privilege of some hot water at lunch- or dinnertime. Now, there are a number of us who never take this tea. I am one of them. We thus pay two-pence for simply nothing at all. Personally I have two reasons for not drinking the tea. First because I do not like it, secondly because I do not consider that I need it, and I object either to drink tea which I do not like, or to drink tea which I do not consider that I need, and I object also to pay for what I never get.

The rates paid for the work done by us are so fearfully low

As for recreation and enjoying the beauties of nature, the seasons come and go, and we have barely time to notice whether it is spring or summer.

To take what may be considered a good week's wage the work has to be so close and unremitting that we cannot be said to 'live' — we merely exist. We eat, we sleep, we work, endlessly, ceaselessly work, from Monday morning till Saturday night

Now, sir, our working day — that is, in the factory — consists of from 9 to 10 hours.

Now we factory girls are aware of the public opinion of us. That we are regarded as quite the lowest class of female workers. As a noisy, cheeky, idle, ignorant, shallow class of girls.

The fact that we are suffering from a great evil which stands in urgent need of redressing

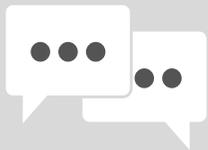
I told you last week that the favourites are of various kinds. Amongst them are widows who have children to maintain, and women who have sick husbands, and other pitiable cases which I could mention.

Those of us who for any reason, laziness or otherwise, do not manage to arrive before the doors are locked, are allowed to come in at half-past-eight or nine o'clock on payment of a penny.

The employer proceeded to interrogate me in the most merciless manner.

8 shillings a week...I wish some of those, whoever they may be who mete it out to us, would try to 'live' on it for a few weeks, as the factory girl has to do 52 weeks in a year. To pay board and lodging, to provide herself decent boots and clothes to stand all weathers, to pay an occasional doctor's bill, literature, and a holiday away from the scope of her daily drudging, for which even the factory girl has the audacity to long sometimes

Are you prepared, my reader, to come and work hard with us 9 hours in the factory, and then to come home with us and begin again, and sew till you can sew no longer, from sheer fatigue — such fatigue as some of you, I hope have not felt — and then to rise early again with some of us and do a little more before it is time to wend our way back for another day of it.



- **What did you think about the quotes?**
- **What do you think she is trying to say?**
- **Do you agree with Ada?**
- **How would you feel if you were treated like that?**

LIFE IN A CREWE FACTORY.

[BY A FACTORY GIRL.]

**for space, I remain, sir, yours sincerely,
A CREWE FACTORY GIRL.
Crewe, June 26th, 1894.**

An (ex) Crewe Factory Girl

My new job involves trying to make factories better for the women working in them, just like I used to.

One of these rules was that people couldn't talk to each other during lunchtime at work. Now they are allowed to!

I am still trying to get 4 new rules approved but it's taking me a bit of time.

I am also about to become a suffragette. A suffragette is someone who tries to get women to be allowed to vote for the Government.

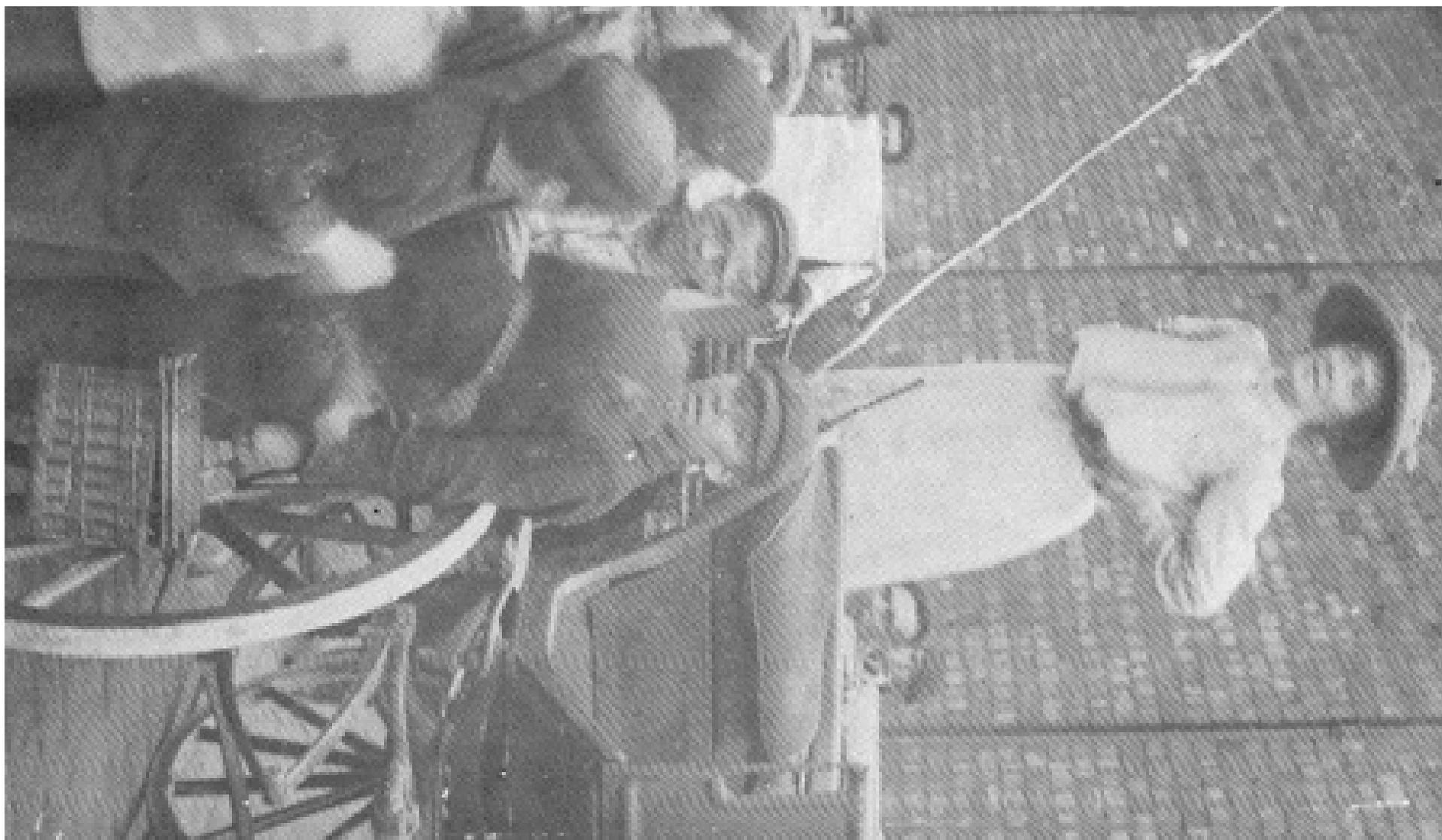
It isn't fair that women can't vote but men can.

Sometimes, I don't agree with everything the suffragettes do though. They do a lot of things like chain themselves to fences and run in front of horses!

The images below show me as a suffragette.



- **Do you think it was fair that women weren't allowed to vote for the Government?**
- **Is there anything that you don't like at the moment?**
- **What would you want to say to your local newspaper?**
- **Write your letter to the newspaper.**



Credit: Cheshire Archives and Local Studies



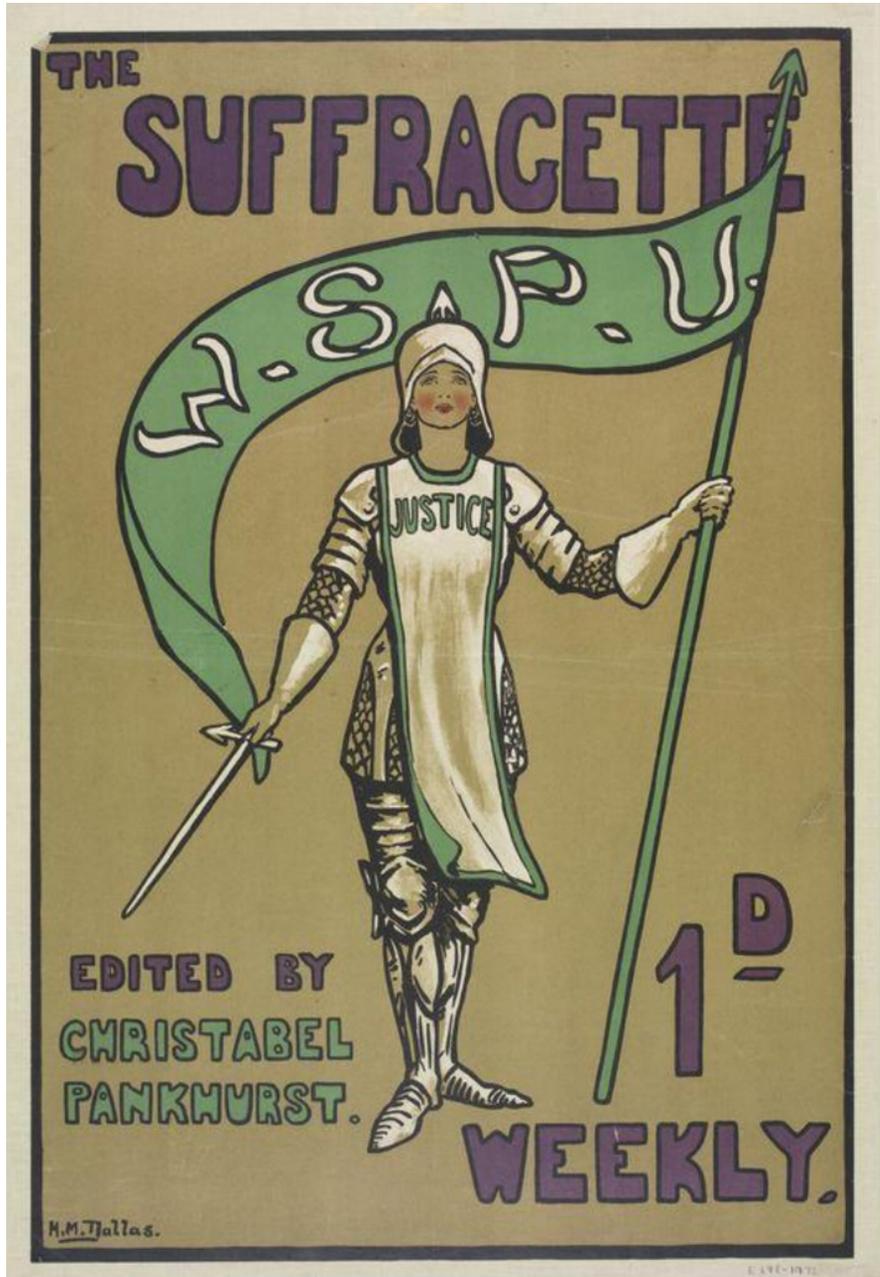
Credit: BFI National Archive



- **Take a look at these suffragette banners and posters.**
- **Think about the topic you felt strongly about earlier.**
- **Can you create a poster to show your message?**
- **What will you say?**
- **What pictures will you draw?**
- **What colours will you use?**



- **Watch the short video on Ada's life.**



Credit: Harvard University



SUFFRAGETTE PROCESSION JUNE 17, 1911.



Credit: Bain News Service