

Shoulder to Shoulder

Many of the songs of the women's suffrage movement were modern lyrics penned by women suffragists to be sung to traditional tunes, with the consequent advantage that the melodies would already be known and familiar both to the singers themselves and to those who would hear them. And since songs would characteristically be sung on marches and at rallies as the women's suffragist movement—and in particular the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) under Emmeline Pankhurst—became more militant, it was unsurprising that rousing marching tunes were preferred.

Thus Florence Macaulay's lyric, *The Women's Marseillaise* was predictably sung to the tune of *La Marseillaise*, while Theodora Mills' *Rise Up, Women!* was sung to the tune of *John Brown's Body*, *Forward Sister Women* (also known as *The Women's Battle Song*) to the tune of *Onward Christian Soldiers*, and, in the case of this present song, *Shoulder to Shoulder* to the tune of *Men of Harlech*.

The music of *Men of Harlech* was first published without words during 1794 as *Gorhoffedd Gwŷr Harlech* in the second edition of *The Musical and Poetical Relicks of the Welsh Bards* but it is said to be a much earlier folk song. The suffragist lyric was written by Mary Theodora Mills (1870-1958), president of the NUWSS in Cheltenham in 1902 and 1913, and author of a number of suffrage songs.

From the daughters of the nation
Bursts a cry of indignation
Breathes a sigh of consecration
In a sacred cause.

They who share their country's burden
Win no rights, receive no guerdon,
Only bear the heavy burden
Of unrighteous laws.

Women young and older
Shoulder put to shoulder
In the might of sacred right
Bolder still and bolder.

Let no ancient custom bind you
Let one bond of suffering bind you
Leave unrighteous laws behind you,
Soon you shall be free!