

Margaret Bondfield (1873-1953)

Prominent trade unionist, women's rights activist, and politician who achieved several historical firsts.

By Sue Miller



During the 1922 campaign both Bondfield and Shaw were hosted at 78 Derrgate by fellow Fabian and Labour supporter W.J. Bassett-Lowke.



Early Political Career

Margaret was a key figure in the labour movement, becoming the first woman to chair the General Council of the Trades Union Congress.

Parliamentary Career

After two unsuccessful attempts in Northampton (1920 and 1922), she was elected as a Labour MP for Northampton in 1923. She was one of the first three women elected as Labour MPs, alongside Susan Lawrence and Dorothy Jewson. She served as Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Labour during the first minority Labour government in 1924.

First Female Cabinet Minister

In the Labour government of 1929–31, she was appointed Minister of Labour, making her the first woman to hold a Cabinet post and the first woman to be a Privy Counsellor. Her time as Minister of Labour (1929–31) was marked by economic crises and controversy over her consideration of cuts to unemployment benefits, which alienated some in the Labour movement. Bondfield did not join Ramsay MacDonald's National Government when the Labour government collapsed in 1931.