

EGLANTYNE JEBB

I chose her to be on my banknote because she was a woman and less well known than many

Eglantyne an unusual Christian name originally meant a sweet briar now also a shrub pale pink shrub rose

Eglantyne Jebb was a British [social reformer](#) who founded the [Save the Children](#) organisation at the end of [World War I](#) to relieve the effects of famine in [Austria-Hungary](#) and Germany. She drafted the document that became the [Declaration of the Rights of the Child](#).^[1]

She was born on August 25, 1876 in [Ellesmere, Shropshire](#) She grew up at "The Lyth", her family estate.[[]

She was born into a world where children were forced to work from the age of nine, in terrible conditions in cotton factories or down mines and she had the courage to change it?

After studying history at Lady Margaret Hall, University of Oxford (one of the first colleges open to women), Eglantyne trained to become a school teacher, but after a year's experience she realised this wasn't the role for her.

Between 1894-1910 she lived with her sick mother in Cambridge trying to nurse her back to health. While there she became actively involved in charitable activities, joining the Charity Organisation Society which

attempted to reform the approach to tackling poverty by the application of scientific methods.

Her most important accomplishment at this time was an extensive and pioneering survey of poverty in the city of Cambridge (including child poverty) which revealed the misery and squalor of working class conditions in the area; it would be an experience that would haunt her for the rest of her life and she even published a book in 1906, *Cambridge, a Study in Social Questions* based on her findings.

During this time, Eglantyne met and fell in love with another woman, Margaret Keynes; they had a very intense and caring relationship, but at the time **homosexual relationships** between women were frowned upon by society (however, it wasn't technically illegal unlike same-sex relationships between men)

Despite their dreams of getting married to each other, Margaret would eventually leave and marry a man in 1913 due to pressure from her parents. Eglantyne, heartbroken, would never enter another serious relationship for the rest of her life.

In 1913, Eglantyne travelled to Macedonia as part of the Macedonian Relief Fund to help starving peasants impacted by the **Second Balkan War** and when the First World War ended in 1918, she campaigned alongside her sister Dorothy to end the **Allied Naval Blockade** on Germany and Austria-Hungary which had continued despite their being an armistice in place and was causing famine and the deaths of thousands of children as well as unimaginable suffering.

Eglantyne and her sister set up a fund to raise money for German and Austrian children called '**The Save The Children Fund**' in 1919 (the basis of the modern charity) and the success of this led to the pair setting up the 'International Save the Children Union' in Geneva, Switzerland, in 1920, which turned the organisation into a worldwide movement.

Save the Children responded to various crises during her lifetime, including a refugee crisis in Greece due to the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922) and a famine in Russia caused by the Russian Civil War (1917-1922) and thanks to her careful planning and research-based approach—which she had refined in Cambridge—these relief efforts were largely successful.

Her greatest achievement was '[The Declaration of the Rights of the Child](#)' which she drafted in 1923 and was endorsed by the League of Nations a year later and would form the basis of the current United Nations convention on children's rights today.

This was the first time that the basic rights of children to be fed, protected from exploitation and provided with sufficient education had been enshrined in international law.

Aged only fifty-two, Eglantyne died due to thyroid problems in a nursing home in Geneva in 1928. Until her last breath, this extraordinary and unconventional woman fought for the basic right of children everywhere to be valued and cared for by their society, something we now take for granted in modern Britain.

Eglantyne Jebb's Legacy Today

Save the Children remains a global leader in child welfare, delivering education, health care, and protection in emergencies. Some key impacts include:

- It leads the world in protecting children in [conflict and war zones](#) – identifying their needs, advocating for their safety and delivering support
- Since 1990, we've cut the number of children dying before age 5 by over half.
- Since 2000, it's helped reduce the number of children out of school by over a third.
- Since 1990, we've helped reduce [child marriage](#) worldwide by nearly a third

Eglantyne Jebb: one of the most influential women you've never heard of.



THE LYTH ELLESMERE

EGLANTYNE JEBB

