



Early WILPF Women

Name: Rosa Mary Barrett
Dates: 1855 - 28 August 1936
Born: Jamaica (father was a Congregational minister and sometime missionary)
Education: not known
Profession: Reformer and feminist

In her childhood Rosa used her pocket money to help pay for a nurse to mind the children of charwomen who had to go out to work. Later, in her early twenties, she founded the first crèche in Kingstown, Dublin that became the 'Cottage Home for Little Children'. Rosa was honorary secretary for fifty years. The home enabled poor mothers, often widows or deserted women, or those suffering from domestic abuses, to go out to work. The children gained from good food and proper care. Rosa publicised* the work of crèches and the social need they helped meet.

Rosa founded the Irish section of the NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children) in 1889 after discovering ill-treatment of children in a badly run 'home'. She published papers and pamphlets on different aspects of child neglect and destitution and was awarded the medal of the Howard Penal Reform League for *The Treatment of Juvenile Offenders* (1900). She advocated separate juvenile courts, trades schools and the rehabilitation of young offenders - her paper, *Foreign Legislation on Behalf of Destitute and Neglected Children*, was read before the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland.

Rosa supported the temperance movement through the Irish Women's Temperance Association and helped co-found the National Women's Health Association for Ireland (1907) where she campaigned to combat tuberculosis. She represented the Irish Women's Suffrage Federation in London in 1912 and lobbied Irish MPs. Rosa admired the work of Ellice Hopkins who rescued child prostitutes and campaigned to raise the age of consent to sixteen years. Rosa later wrote her biography.

Rosa is listed on the British Committee of the Women's International Congress (General Committee) to The Hague but was not one of the twenty four women permitted a passport to travel by Home Secretary, Mr McKenna.

During her lifetime, Rosa was widely travelled: Canada, South Africa, Norway and Sweden; and compiled Ward Lock's Irish Guides for a number of years.

Published:

**Our Kingstown Nursery* (1880)

**Guide to Dublin Charities* (1884)

Foreign Legislation on Behalf of Destitute and Neglected Children (1896)

The Rescue of the Young (1899)

The Treatment of Juvenile Offenders (1900, The Journal of the Royal Statistical Society)

**The Cottage Home for Little Children: a retrospect* (1905)

Sources and further reading:

Oldfield, Sybil (2001). *Women Humanitarians" A Biographical Dictionary of British Women Active Between 1900 and 1950*. London, New York, Continuum

Oldfield, Sybil. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford University Press, 2004-2014; online edition

Towards Permanent Peace: A Record of the women's International Congress (1915)