

*WILPF women working in partnership*

*100 years working to ensure women's  
voices are heard in peace building*



*These  
Dangerous  
Women*





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*L-R Ruth Miller, Nan Sheppard, Natasha Posner, Vicky Deary, Charlotte Bill, Sheila Triggs, Pat Pleasance, Abigail Shapiro, Rasa Goštautaitė. Photo by Anna Watson*



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## Introduction

These Dangerous Women is a community heritage project run by Clapham Film Unit and WILPF. The aim is to celebrate and commemorate the women who tried to stop World War 1 and founded the organisation, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).

The Heritage Lottery Fund awarded a grant to train members of WILPF and young volunteers in research and oral history skills enabling them to make an exhibition, documentary and this booklet to celebrate the centenary.

UK WILPF has been very pleased to work closely with the Clapham Film Unit to celebrate the centenary of our organisation. We have some important archives housed with the London School of Economics Library, and Anna Towlson, the Archivist, has generously helped to introduce our volunteers to these records. Our members, as well as women who knew nothing of our history until they started their research, have produced the short biographies published here.

We are very pleased to have uncovered the hidden histories of some astonishingly socially conscious and active women who, among their many concerns, were working for peace in the middle of the First World War, one hundred years ago.

As an international women's peace organisation active today in many countries and at international fora including the United Nations, we stand on the shoulders of these outstanding women who started our movement.

*Clapham Film Unit*

*Women's International League for Peace and Freedom*

## Acknowledgments

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The authors of the biographies are named in the booklet but there are others involved in the preparation of the booklet whose names do not appear in the text. Thanks are due to Jessica Halliwell for editing, Jean Kerrigan and Anna Watson for proof reading, and to Ian Lynch for the design of the booklet.

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The beautiful banner illustrated on the cover of this booklet was created for WILPF centenary by Thalia Campbell

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# The Women Who Tried to Stop World War I

By Helen Kay

At the end of April 1915, in the midst of the European carnage of World War I, 1,200 women from twelve countries met in The Hague, Holland to protest against the massive destruction caused by the war and to present an alternative analysis of the causes of war. They argued that the use of military force to resolve international disputes should be replaced by mediation and arbitration. But, what was it that led women of different nations, for the first time in history, to meet and express their opposition to war?

One month before war was declared in Europe, women of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) had delivered a Manifesto to all the embassies and the British Foreign Office in London, appealing to the leaders of each country “to leave untried no method of conciliation or arbitration for arranging international differences which may help to avert deluging half the civilized world in blood” (*Jus Suffragii* Vol. 8, No. 13, September 1914, p.1).

With the onset of war, the women of the German section of the IWSA felt that they had no alternative but to cancel the International Congress which had been due to meet in Berlin in June 1915. In response, Dr Aletta Jacobs of the Dutch National Committee wrote to other national suffrage organizations in November 1914, suggesting that the Congress could still be held, but in Holland which was a neutral country.

Several national suffrage leaders in Europe and North America expressed strong reservations about an international gathering, fearing that it might

bring a backlash on the suffrage movement. Chrystal Macmillan, the IWSA secretary offered an alternative arrangement whereby women might attend a Dutch meeting as individual women.

The women who signed up for the Congress had to agree to two principles: 1) that international disputes should be settled by peaceful means and 2) that the parliamentary franchise should be extended to women.

To reach the Congress, the women had to brave the threat of shelling or torpedo attacks, and had to cope with disrupted rail and ferry services. No French or Russian women were able to obtain permission to travel, and although twenty-five of the 180 British delegates were granted passports, in the end, only three British women reached the Congress because all merchant shipping in the North Sea and the Channel was suspended on 27th April 1915 by order of the British Government.

The popular press in Britain condemned the “blundering Englishwomen” (*Daily Graphic*) and “babblers” (*Evening Standard*) and called into question the loyalty of these “Pro-Hun Peacettes” (*Daily Express*). But as nearly every one of the women attending the Congress had relatives involved in military action, “it was a great test of courage for these women to risk the bitterness of their families, the ridicule of their friends and the censure of their governments” (*The Survey*, 5th June, 1915).

Some of the German and Austrian press were similarly critical. The Austrian *Ostdeutsche Rundschau*

was angered by “false sentimentality of bourgeois organisations” which did not grasp the “justified”, “holy” and “good hatred” against Austria’s enemies. The American delegation, led by Jane Addams was not subjected to such severe press criticism at this stage, and indeed the US newspaper cartoons and comments “expressed astonishment that such an archaic institution [war] should be revived in Modern Europe” (Addams, Jane, 1945, *Peace and Bread in Time of War*, p.1).

The women worked for three days with a programme of debates and discussions, some in public, some in committee. Speeches were short, delivered in English, French and German. Working in groups, with some women acting as translators and interpreters to overcome language barriers and divergent interpretations of correct committee procedure, the Congress reached agreement on twenty resolutions, which still resonate with women today.

The Congress then elected an international team of five envoys who travelled back and forward across war-torn Europe and to the USA during the summer months of 1915, visiting fourteen belligerent and neutral countries, and meeting with twenty-four influential leaders: Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers, Presidents, the King of Norway and the Pope.

The women urged the political leaders to set up Continuous Mediation by neutral countries to end the war. Each statesman declared himself sympathetic. “We heard much the same words spoken in Downing Street as those spoken in Wilhemstrasse, in Vienna as

in Petrograd, in Budapest as in Havre” (*ibid.* p.16).. But not one leader would take the first step and the war continued unabated.

The women met again in Zurich in 1919: their plans to meet in the same place as the Peace negotiators had to be abandoned as German women would not have been allowed to travel to a Congress in Paris. On the first day of the Congress, the Treaty of Versailles was published. The women sent five envoys to Paris to convey to the statesmen their dismay at the terms of the Treaty.

With the formalisation of a constitution at the Zurich Congress in 1919, the international women’s peace movement which grew out of the Congress at The Hague in 1915 was established; the international organisation and the national committees united under the name of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).

The legacy of these determined women continues to be acknowledged today. Current members of WILPF – the oldest women’s international peace organisation – are preparing to invite women to return to The Hague in April 2015 – to review their current work and to celebrate 100 years of women’s campaigning for peace.

## Margaret Ashton

1856–1937

By Alison Ronan

Born into a wealthy mill-owning family, Margaret Ashton was a Unitarian with a strong sense of duty, she described herself as having a “tiresome conscience” which led her to achieve a huge amount in the name of women’s rights and the votes for women campaign.

In 1908, Ashton was elected as the first woman councillor for Manchester where she stood as an independent candidate. She was also President of the local constitutional Suffrage Society North West Federation and part of the executive committee of the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies (NUWSS).

She worked tirelessly for the improvement of the lives and education of women and girls in Manchester, establishing Ashton House in 1910, a hostel for working women in Manchester. On top of this she was a governor of Manchester High School for Girls and was on the City Council’s Education Committee. In 1914, she founded the Manchester Babies’ Hospital and was a member of the Council’s Sanitation Committee.

In 1915, Ashton was one of the women who resigned from the NUWSS. She set up a peace education campaign and established the Manchester branch of the Women’s International League. She was a founder member of the Manchester Women’s War Interest Committee in 1915 and lobbied for trade union rights and pay for women in the munitions industries.

Towards the end of the war Ashton joined the Council for Adult Suffrage arguing for universal suffrage. At the same time, she was part of the radical, pacifist Women’s Peace Crusade.

*“worked tirelessly  
for the improvement  
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Manchester”*

Because her views on the war began to be seen as “unfit” for a person in authority, she was removed from the Education Committee in 1917. She resigned from the Council of her own accord in 1920.

Margaret Ashton worked tirelessly her whole adult life, and continued her work with the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom until her death.





# *“A worker for the workers”*

Eleanor Barton

1872–1960

*By Gillian Lawrence*

Born in Stockton in 1872, just after the first women's suffrage committee was formed, Eleanor Barton attended Socialist League meetings with her brother Herbert in her late teens. It was here that she fell in love with her husband Alfred with whom she would continue the fight for free speech that she so strongly believed in. Calling herself an Anarchist-Communist as her brother and husband liked to be known, Eleanor Barton became active in the political arenas of Sheffield, to where she and Alf moved when she was just 25.

On the 4th August 1914, Barton was at the second anti-war for peace rally in Kingsway Hall, London and as president of the Women's Cooperative Movement she addressed the audience. She stood for peace and for working women, co-operation and the Labour Movement. As a working woman herself she was billed as “A worker for the workers”.

Eleanor Barton was also secretary of the Brightside and Carbrook's Hillsborough branch of the Sheffield Cooperative Movement rising up to become a director of the Sheffield Co-op.

At the age of 48 Eleanor became the first woman to be elected to Sheffield Council. At the same time Nancy Astor was the first woman to get into Parliament. Eleanor Barton stood as Labour candidate for Attercliffe in the 1920 council elections in Sheffield, a seat where women's suffrage was a prominent topic.

When Alfred died in 1933 Eleanor Barton emigrated to New Zealand.



*“held a prominent position of leadership and authority in Ireland, and recognition internationally meant that her opinions were highly regarded”*

Louie Bennett was a dedicated campaigner for social reform throughout the first half of the twentieth century. In 1919 she joined the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). The historical landscape saw rapid and fundamental change between Louie's year of birth and that of the birth of WILPF, both in her native Ireland and across the world. Some pertinent aspects of this historical landscape include: the Irish campaign for women's suffrage as it unfolded in the early 1900s; global instability and changes wrought by World War I; and heightened conflict surrounding the movement to gain Irish legislative independence from British parliament ("Home Rule"). Born in Dublin, Louie's middle-class upbringing saw her educated in England, Ireland and Germany. Though scarce, evidence of her life before forty hints at a serious-minded, practical, and responsible

**Louie Bennett**

**1870–1956**

*By Zoë Perry*

personality with a stubborn streak and a strong sense of purpose.

Her authorship of two books in 1902 and 1908 show her active early attempts to develop a public voice.

During the same period, the movement for women's suffrage continued to gather momentum worldwide. In Ireland, legal rights had been won in the fields of education (Trinity College, Dublin, 1904) and property (Married Women's Property Act, 1882); and women could vote in local government elections (The 1898 Local Government Act). To begin with, Louie attended an established women's suffrage group but by 1911 she had developed her thoughts and branched out to head two new organisations: the Irish Women's Reform League, and the Irish Women's Suffrage Federation (IWSF).

Her lifelong friend Helen Chenevix, joint honorary secretary of the latter, offered vital support. She wrote often for *The Irish Citizen*, the official newspaper for the Irish Women's Suffrage Movement, then also for *Jus Suffragii*, the official journal of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance where she formed contacts with other prominent international suffragists.

In 1913, she attended a meeting in Budapest of the International Woman Suffrage Association (IWSA), an organisation that "voiced radical feminism on an international level, giving members a sense of belonging to a great and irresistible current of world opinion". (Richard Evans, 1977, *The Feminists: Women's Emancipation Movements in Europe, America, and Australasia, 1840–1920*, cited in Rosemary Cullen-Owens, 2001, Louie

Bennett). At this point she held a prominent position of leadership and authority in Ireland, and recognition internationally meant that her opinions were highly regarded.

When World War I broke out in 1914, two concerns came to the fore for Louie: approaches to militarism and national identity. Using her political experience and contacts at home and abroad, she began to find new ways of confronting these issues.

The growing militancy of women suffragettes in Britain in the early 1900s had raised the issue of the legitimacy of violent methods of activism. With many, at the outbreak of World War I, she demanded that the issue of “justified violence” be addressed. In February 1915, she clearly elaborated a commitment to both pacifism and internationalism through the pages of *The Irish Citizen*: “Suffragists of every country must face the fact that militarism is now the most dangerous foe of... all that women’s suffrage stands for.” (27 February 1915, cited in Cullen-Owens, 2001)

When the International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace (IWCPP) met at the politically neutral site of The Hague, Louie did not attend but demonstrated her support, as she was accustomed to doing, in writing. The IWCPP demonstrated a commitment to end violence forever through communication and co-operation between nations. This chimed with her pre-existing calls to women of “every country” to recognise “militarism” as their “greatest foe”. Her statement of support suggested her esteem for, and sympathy with, the organisers of the 1915

Congress, which she called a “brave plan” (ICW Report, 1915). Her comments highlighted the courage of women to think ahead and to organise, in spite of uncertain circumstances.

Between 1915 and 1919 Louie continued dialogue with the group, following their method: seizing opportunities to speak and act as part of a self-designated collective. At this point, the IWCPP had no formal structure. She took this chance to claim a form of autonomy for her native Ireland, whose struggle for freedom from England was intensifying. Initially given a formal role as a representative on the British committee, she campaigned from the outset for separate Irish representation. She wrote on several occasions to the Honorary Secretary of the IWCPP and submitted a formal resolution to the ICWPP in October 1915 requesting representation for any nation perceiving itself as a unique polity in pursuit of self-government. She joined a chorus of voices from the Netherlands, Poland, Germany and England who in 1915 called for: “autonomy and a democratic parliament for every people”. (ICW Report, 1915)

In January 1916 the Irish section took decisive action, renaming itself the Irishwomen’s International League (IIL). Whilst tensions in Ireland peaked with the Easter Rising in 1916, Louie wrote a campaign letter from IIL (and by extension from IWCPP) to heads of state on both sides of the conflict for “Home Rule”. Thus Louie Bennett’s writings were taking on unofficial political force, using assumed support from IWCPP. Eventually, in December 1916, the organisers of IWCPP formally



accepted IIL as an independent national organisation. By 1919, therefore, Louie Bennett and Ireland (in the form of the IIL) were represented in Zürich where the IWCPP was organisationally formalised into the WILPF.

The upheaval of wartime had offered many people a chance to think and act outside of the status quo. Both Louie Bennett and an international league of women took opportunities to act immediately in the interests of what they perceived would be beneficial, in the long-term, for humanity. In 1919 their cause was enshrined in the name of a new organisation, WILPF, which works for permanent peace and freedom.



# *“As a result of her dedication to work, Margaret became the first female cabinet minister”*

Margaret Bondfield, the daughter of William Bondfield and Anne Taylor, was born on 17th March 1873 in Chard, Somerset. She was the tenth child in the family of eleven children.

William Bondfield had worked in the textile industry since he was a young boy and was well known in the area for his radical political beliefs. As a young man he had been secretary of the Chard Political Union. He had also been active in the Anti-Corn Law League of the 1840s. Entirely self-educated, he was fascinated by science and engineering. Margaret's parents gave her a non-conformist faith and ethic and strong views on the active role of women in politics and the workplace, whilst she educated herself by reading widely on social, ethical and spiritual issues.

Margaret was an extraordinary woman and her unique character helped her to achieve great things and played a crucial role in her political career. She was keen to work and earn a living by herself. At the age of fourteen she left home to serve an apprenticeship in a large draper's shop in Hove.

She later recalled: “When I first went to Brighton for a holiday in 1887 I had the chance of a job as apprentice to

**Margaret Bondfield**

**1873–1953**

*By Rasa Goštautaitė*

Mrs. White of Church Road, Hove, a friend of my sister Annie. I eagerly grasped this opportunity of earning my living.” While working in Hove, Margaret became friendly with one of her customers, Louisa Martindale, a strong advocate of women's rights. Margaret was a regular visitor to the Martindale home where she met other radicals living in Brighton. Louisa Martindale lent Margaret books and was an important influence on her political development.

In 1894 Margaret moved to London to live with her brother Frank. Soon after getting a job in a draper's shop, she was elected to the Shop Assistants Union District Council, which led her to further career in Women's Industrial Council. Eventually, Bondfield became known as Britain's leading expert on shop workers. She was not only active in the fight for labourers' rights, but was also one of the key figures in women rights movements. In 1906 Margaret with her friend Mary Macarthur established the first women's general union, the National Federation of Women Workers (NFWW).

Margaret also became the chair of the Adult Suffrage Society. In 1906 she made a speech where she said: “I work for Adult Suffrage because I believe it is the quickest way to establish a real sex-equality...” Margaret fought for all women, no matter what their social class, to get the vote, which made her quite unpopular among the middle-class suffragettes. In 1910 the Liberal Government asked her to serve as a member of its Advisory Committee on the Health Insurance Bill. Her efforts were rewarded when she persuaded the government to include maternity benefits.

Margaret had an extraordinary and charming character.

Her close friend Mary Macarther recalls their first meeting: "I saw a thin white face and glowing eyes, and then I was enveloped by her ardent, young hero-worshipping personality. She was gloriously young and self-confident. It was a dazzling experience for a humdrum official to find herself treated with the reverence due to an oracle by one whose brilliant gifts and vital energy were even then manifest." Sylvia Pankhurst, another active suffragette, described Margaret as an especially charming character: "Miss Bondfield appeared in pink, dark and dark-eyed with a deep, throaty voice which many found beautiful. She was very charming and vivacious and eager to score all the points that her youth and prettiness would win for her against the plain middle-aged woman with red face and turban hat... Miss Bondfield deprecated votes for women as the hobby of disappointed old maids whom no-one had wanted to marry."

Margaret's charm, combined with her dedication and hard-working nature, paved her way to success in everything she did. She described her own attitude to work in her autobiography, *A Life's Work* (1948): "I concentrated on my job. This concentration was undisturbed by love affairs. I had seen too much – too early – to have the least desire to join in the pitiful scramble of my workmates. The very surroundings of shop life accentuated the desire of most shop girls to get married. Long hours of work and the living-in system deprived them of the normal companionship of men in their leisure hours, and the wonder is that so many of the women continued to be good and kind, and self-respecting, without the incentive

of a great cause, or of any interest outside their job... I had no vocation for wifehood or motherhood, but an urge to serve the Union." As a result of her dedication to work, Margaret became the first female cabinet minister in 1929.

Just two days after Britain declared war on Germany in 1914, the NUWSS announced that it was supporting the war effort and suspended all political activity until the conflict was over. Due to her pacifist beliefs, Margaret decided to take another path and joined the Women's Freedom League, establishing the Women's Peace Crusade, an organisation that called for a negotiated peace.

Margaret wrote: "I shared the views of those who blamed secret diplomacy, and in particular Sir Edward Grey, who had failed to make it clear which side Great Britain would take. The shots at Sarajevo did more than kill an Archduke and his Duchess. They gave the signal for a blood bath in Europe; and yet our Foreign Secretary dallied on the fence until the invasion of Belgium had actually begun." As a result of her views and beliefs, she was amongst the twenty-four British women including suffragettes who tried to go to the Peace Congress in The Hague. Margaret never reached The Hague, but the closure of Tilbury docks in April 1915 was only a small obstacle, which did not stop her passionate work in feminist movements and campaigns against war.



# *“I am a law breaker because I want to be a law maker”*

(Julia Sarah) Anne Cobden-Sanderson  
1853–1926

*By Clara Manasian Cook*

Anne (also known as Annie) Cobden was born in London in 1853, one of six children born to Catherine Anne and Richard Cobden. Richard Cobden was a radical politician and statesman and Catherine Anne was the daughter of a timber merchant. Anne's early years were spent at Dunford House in Midhurst, but when her father died in 1865, when Anne was just 12 years old, she was sent to Germany to continue her education. Despite her young age when she lost her father, his career as a statesman and radical politician affected Anne's beliefs and political consciousness.

After her mother moved to Wales in 1869, Anne spent long periods of time amongst family friends, including the poet and novelist, George MacDonald, and the well-known designer, printer and socialist activist, William Morris. She resided at “The Retreat” (later known as Kelmscott House), a Georgian brick mansion at 26 Upper Mall in Hammersmith, overlooking the River Thames, which later became the home of William Morris until his death. Within these social circles, subjects such as socialist politics, arts and literature were often discussed.

In 1881, Anne, her sister Jane and their friend Jane Morris, travelled to Siena, Italy, where Anne met the young lawyer Thomas James Sanderson. They quickly fell in love, were engaged in February and married on 5th August 1882. Both Thomas and Anne adopted the joint

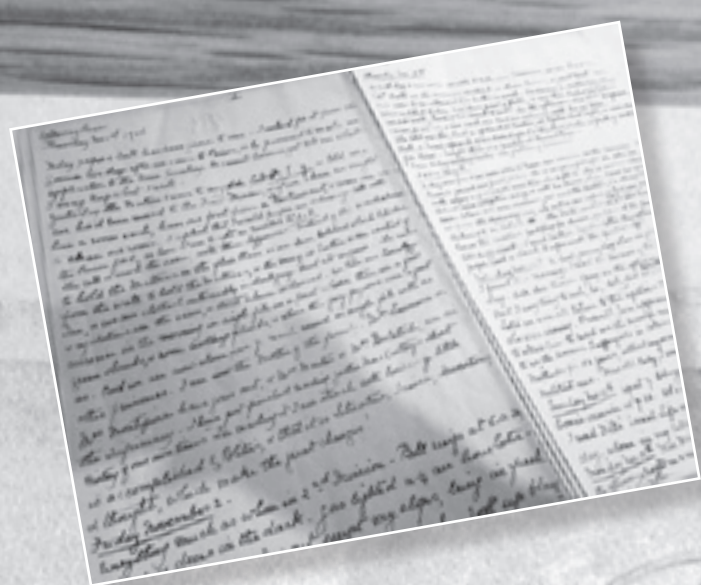
surname Cobden-Sanderson, an unusual act of equality for the time period, but as her husband poignantly wrote in his diary, it was done “in order that she might not lose her name”. The couple had two children, Richard (1884–1964) and Stella (1886–1979).

Both Thomas and Anne had progressive political opinions and the early years of their marriage were spent reading, travelling and engaging in philanthropic activities and studying theosophy and vegetarianism. The couple continued to be good friends with William Morris and were influenced by the economic ideas of the progressive American writer Henry George. Anne eventually went on to become a socialist and in 1890 joined William Morris' Hammersmith Socialist Society. Anne encouraged Thomas to take up the hobby of bookbinding and through manual work and with Anne's help, Thomas set up The Doves Bindery in 1893, which eventually became the Doves Press in 1899.

Anne Cobden-Sanderson became more involved in the socialist movement in Britain after 1900, and in 1902 she joined the Independent Labour Party organising a series of lectures for the party. She continued her social work in London and supported Margaret and Rachel MacMillan with their pioneering Bow Children's Clinic which provided dental help, surgical aid and lessons in breathing and healthy posture. Anne and the MacMillan sisters also campaigned for school meals and compulsory medical inspections. Anne was also focussed on the issue of women's rights and she was prominent in the campaign for the right to work.

Holloway Prison  
Thursday Nov 1<sup>st</sup> 1906.

Today paper & Lark has been given  
to me two days after we came to  
application to the Home Secretary. He  
may keep what I write.



For several years Anne had been a member of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), but she was frustrated with its lack of success and in 1905 she joined the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). She is recorded as having been the first prominent constitutional suffragist to have defected to the militants. In October 1906, Anne, along with members of the WSPU, Mary Gawthorpe, Charlotte Despard and Emmeline Pankhurst, was arrested at a large demonstration outside the House of Commons in Westminster. Anne was found guilty at her trial and was sentenced to two months in Holloway Women's Prison.

The arrest, trial and imprisonment caused quite a controversy at the time, with newspapers reporting that Anne supposedly said in court: "We have talked so much for the Cause, now let us suffer for it... I am a law breaker because I want to be a law maker." Anne's friend the playwright and co-founder of the London School of Economics, George Bernard Shaw, wrote in *The Times* in 1906, that "one of the nicest women in England is suffering from the coarsest indignity" of being imprisoned. Anne bore the imprisonment well. Her prison diaries, written on several sheets of rough blue paper given to her by the warden of Holloway, show a woman who was thoughtful and strong spirited and who continued to follow the cause of women's suffrage even from the confines of her twelve by six foot prison cell. She describes accurately in her diaries the routine of prison life, the food and her fluctuating health.

Despite some quiet questioning of herself and her

actions, she remained faithful to her ideals while confined in prison and on the final pages of her diary she states: "Why have I come to feel that the enfranchisement of women is at this moment of supreme importance to the progress of humanity? Because I do not believe that the present industrial system can continue, but will give place to one based on more moral and eternal principles and for the building of which it is necessary that women should take this part." Anne Cobden-Sanderson was released to great fanfare and the NUWSS organised a banquet at the Savoy Hotel in her honour on 11th December 1906.

The following year, Anne and other members of the WSPU began to question the leadership of Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst and their habit of making decisions without consulting members. Feeling that the organisation was becoming undemocratic, Anne Cobden-Sanderson and six other women left the WSPU and founded the Women's Freedom League (WFL). Anne was one of the WFL's most tireless campaigners speaking in outdoor meetings and taking part in militant protests. She was arrested again in August 1909 while picketing outside 10 Downing Street with a petition to Herbert Asquith. She was arrested a third time while leading a procession to Parliament in November 1910, but avoided imprisonment through the intervention of Winston Churchill, whose wedding she had attended in 1908 and who had previously been a dinner guest at her house.

After hard campaigning but continuing frustration,

Anne decided to turn her attention to the tactic of tax resistance to gain the Government's support for women's suffrage. In October 1909, Anne helped to establish the Tax Resistance League (TRL) with the motto of "No Vote No Tax". Around the same time as the formation of the TRL, Anne became interested in land reform and published a pamphlet highlighting her father's past involvement in progressive politics entitled: *Richard Cobden and the Land of the People* (ILP. 1909).

Anne was increasingly concerned with unemployment and publicly critical of the treatment of the poor in her local area of Hammersmith, so much so that she was elected on a reform platform to the Hammersmith board of guardians in March 1910, a position she retained until 1922. When the Labour Party announced its commitment to women's suffrage at their annual conference in January 1912, the NUWSS entered into negotiation with the Party. The NUWSS announced its intention in April 1912 to support Labour Party candidates in Parliamentary by-elections and established an Election Fighting Fund (EFF). Anne Cobden-Sanderson, who had been a long-time supporter of the Labour Party, donated generously to the EFF.

The outbreak of World War I in 1914 led to a split amongst women's suffrage campaigners. The NUWSS' official stance was that Asquith's government should do everything possible to avoid war, but two days after war was declared in August 1914, Millicent Fawcett declared that the NUWSS was suspending all political activity until the conflict was over. The NUWSS would support the

war effort but not become involved in persuading young men to join the fight. Not everyone within NUWSS agreed with this stance and Anne Cobden-Sanderson joined the ranks of female peace campaigners. In January 1915 Mary Sheepshanks published an open Christmas letter to the women of Germany and Austria from 100 British women pacifists. Anne was amongst some of the campaigners who signed the letter. Although she never made it to the First International Congress of Women held in The Hague in 1915, she continued to support the cause of peace and mixed largely in pacifist circles in London.

After the war Anne remained active in the Labour Party in Hammersmith and although she was not present at the formation of the Women's International League (WIL) in 1915 – later the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) – she continued to donate to the organisation up until her death. Anne Cobden-Sanderson died at 15 Upper Mall, Hammersmith on 2nd November 1926. In the week following her death, newspapers throughout England paid tribute to her in their obituary columns. The *Daily Telegraph* called her "a character of intellectual power" and the Manchester Guardian described her as a "singularly gentle lady who did rather startling things". The journalist for the *Manchester Guardian* finished his short obituary for Anne with the words: "She combined great charm of manner with real courage and unconventionality when the call [to protest] came."



# *“one of the three British women who reached The Hague”*

Kathleen Courtney was born on 11th March 1878 in Gillingham Kent, one of seven children. Her parents, Lieutenant (later Major) David Courtney, and Alice Mann were Anglo-Irish gentry, and both came from military backgrounds.

Kathleen was educated at the Anglo-French College in London, followed by a boarding school, and she then went to Dresden to study German. She read French and German at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford University, and whilst there established a friendship with Maude Royden, who was also to become involved in campaigning for women's suffrage.

After working for a while at the Lambeth Constitutional Girls' Club, Kathleen became involved with the women's suffrage movement, at first as Secretary of the North of England Society for Women's Suffrage in Manchester, and then as Honorary Secretary of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) in London.

At the beginning of the first world war there was a split in the NUWSS, and despite her friendship with Millicent Fawcett, Kathleen found that they were in disagreement over attitudes to the war. Millicent Fawcett ruled that NUWSS would not send delegates to the International Women's Congress at The Hague in April 1915, and Kathleen was one of the NUWSS executive committee who resigned.

She was one of the British women who met with

**Kathleen D'Olier Courtney**  
**1878–1974**

*By Helen Kay and Pat Pleasance*

the Dutch women in February 1915 to plan for the Congress and travelled to The Hague early in April to work with the Dutch committee on the organisation for the Congress.

Because she was there in advance, before the Channel and North Sea were closed to shipping, Kathleen was one of the three British women reached The Hague.

The new organisation formed at the Congress was the International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace; Kathleen Courtney was elected chair of the British section which was called the Women's International League.

In an article in *Towards Permanent Peace* (September 1915) reporting back on her time at The Hague she wrote “The Women's International Congress does not claim to have invented a new means for preventing war; it does not claim to have put forward any startling or original theory. It does claim to have been a gathering of women of many countries, which proved that, even in time of war, the solidarity of women will hold fast; it does claim to have shown that women of different countries can hold out the hand of friendship to each other in spite of the hatred and bloodshed under which most international ties seem submerged. It claims, too, to have shown that, while women have a special point of view on the subject of war, and while its wastefulness of human life must appeal to them with particular emphasis, they can, at the same time make their own contribution to the work and ideals of constructive peace.”



***British Delegates to the WIL 1919 held in Zurich May 12 - 17 1919***

*Left to right:- Top row Miss I.O Ford, Miss M. Sheepshanks, Mrs Salter, Miss Macnaghten, Mrs Annot Robinson, Miss Royde, Miss K.D Courtney, The Hon. Mrs Rollo Russell, Mrs Hy Lloyd Wilson, Miss Gertrude Eaton  
2nd Row Mrs Giles, Mrs Crawford, Mrs Despard, Miss Margaret Ashton, Miss Hardcastle, Dr Ethel Williams.  
Bottom Row Mrs Huth Jackson, Miss Wilkinson, Mrs Anderson Fenn, Mrs Briggs.*

In 1916 Kathleen Courtney went to Salonika and Baxtia to work with the Serbian Relief Fund. She was later decorated by the Serbian government. After the war, she helped her friend, Dr Hilda Clark, at the Friends' Relief Mission in Vienna, and also travelled to the Balkans and Poland.

Towards the end of the war the extension of the franchise was once more an active issue and in her capacity as an officer of the National Council for Adult Suffrage Kathleen was involved in lobbying until the Act giving some women the vote at last was passed in 1918.

In the 1920s Kathleen became the President of the British Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, a position which she held until 1933, when she resigned. At this time the organisation was strongly pacifist, and Kathleen came to believe that the call for complete disarmament was unrealistic.

In addition to her work for WILPF Kathleen was involved in many other campaigns relating to peace, arbitration issues and disarmament. She was an organiser of the Women's Pilgrimage for Peace in 1926, and also active in the international effort that culminated in the presentation of a petition signed by several millions to the Disarmament Conference of 1932.

In 1930 Kathleen took part with four other women from France, Germany, Japan and the US in the Women's Round Table at the Fifth National Conference on the Cause and Cure of War in Washington. A

newspaper report at the time comments "The subject of these promoters of peace are to discuss is: How far is the peace question woman's responsibility and how may women be an effective force in the general movement?" This is a question which may still exercise our minds to-day.

Kathleen was always a strong supporter of the League of Nations and its successor the United Nations, and her speeches in 1945 were influential in persuading Americans of the value of the United Nations. She also worked for those organisations which supported these international bodies, becoming Vice-Chair of the League of Nations Union in 1939, and in 1949 Chair and Joint President of the United Nations Association. Work in connection with these organisations involved her in extensive travelling abroad and many speaking engagements.

Although Kathleen Courtney decided to retire from her formal position in the United Nations Association in 1951, she continued to be active with the organisation, and to work for peace throughout her remaining years.

She was awarded a CBE in 1947, and created a Dame in 1952. In 1972 she was awarded the UN peace medal.

Kathleen Courtney died at the age of 96 in 1974.

## Gulielma Crosfield

1851–1945

By Roslyn Cook

Gulielma Crosfield (maiden name Wallis) was born in Brighton on 29th April 1851. Her family were Quakers, a religion famous for its pacifist views and strong stance on truth and justice. Gulielma was a leader among the young Quakers of Brighton in the 1870s before marrying into another Quaker family in 1880. She and her husband Albert J. Crosfield devoted their lives to the service of God through the Society of Friends for the next 51 years.

The Crosfields travelled extensively on religious visits to Norway, India and California amongst others places. They shared a missionary-like zeal to improve the lives of others and later in life Albert took on the challenge of such work in China, although Gulielma did not go with him.

In 1904, with her son as an undergraduate at Cambridge University and Albert away travelling, Gulielma moved from Reigate to Cambridge. Here, she and Albert, when he returned, became active members of the Cambridge Quakers. Gulielma was an excellent hostess and kept an open house for visiting Quaker Friends.

In 1914, Gulielma was on the committee for the relief of War Victims and in November of that year visited Holland with Albert. Here, they were involved with the work predominantly done by Quakers to relieve the suffering of the refugees from Belgium and France at the beginning of the war.

One of the first reports of the committee describes how badly affected people were, with no possessions,

*“relieve the  
suffering of the  
refugees from  
Belgium and  
France”*

homes or food. The Quakers built houses as well as providing food and clothing. It was noted that a maternity hospital was urgently needed and the committee had much to do with the building of one in Chalons sur Marne opened in November 1914.

Gulielma was also active with the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and the British Women's Temperance Society. As a Quaker, the relief of others' suffering and the need to work actively for peace meant that Gulielma would have made a huge effort to get to Holland for the International Women's Congress in April 1915.

She died on 7th March 1945, ten years after publishing a memoir of Albert, who had died in 1931.

*“women pit-brow  
workers, barmaids,  
women acrobats  
and gymnasts, and  
women florists were  
successfully organised”*

Sarah Dickenson was involved with the Trades Council which had been established at a meeting in the Lord Mayor's Parlour in Manchester Town Hall in February 1895. A group of men and women mainly connected with the Liberal party had the aim of assisting women workers to organise and lobby for the improvement of working conditions.

The most successful women's union established by Eva Gore Booth and Sarah was the Salford and District Association of Power Loom Weavers, set up in April 1902. As well as trade unionism the women workers were also interested in politics and the suffrage campaign, sending a resolution just weeks after their establishment to a meeting at the Free Trade Hall called to protest against the imposition of a corn tax.

Over the next few years Sarah worked very hard to encourage women to set up and join unions. It was rarely an easy task. One of the difficulties encountered was getting women to go to meetings which was solved by starting a Tea Fund in 1902 to buy tea, sugar, milk and cake: “It was found that the tea was a great convenience,



**Sarah Dickenson**

**1868–1954**

*By Alison Ronan*

as many of the women live in outlying districts, they are naturally anxious to hurry home to tea when their work is over and it is both inconvenient and expensive for them to come back to meetings in the evening. We are glad to say that the tea had good results in introducing a social element that promoted good fellowship and a friendly spirit among the members, and the attendance has largely increased.”

Sarah and Eva were firmly of the opinion that they should campaign for women's trade unionism and suffrage, and they resigned their posts in 1904 when a motion in favour of suffrage was rejected at a meeting of the Council's committee. (This tension between socialism and women's rights was a common aspect of the wider working-class movement at this time.) In September the women set up a new body, the Manchester and Salford Women's Trades and Labour Council.

According to Esther Roper the next ten years “were full to overflowing with organisation, writing, speaking at large gatherings in all parts of England, deputations to Cabinet Ministers and to Members of Parliament. To this was added a new activity, when well-meant and ill-meant efforts were made to restrict women's labour in various fields. On different occasions, women pit-brow workers, barmaids, women acrobats and gymnasts, and women florists were successfully organised.”

Sarah Dickenson and her colleagues Esther Roper and Eva Gore Booth were against the war and as a well-known political local woman she was a natural choice to be sent as a delegate to The Hague in 1915.





MRS. MINA B. HUBBARD ELLIS  
Hon. Treasurer of the British Committee  
of the Women's International Congress,  
Labrador Explorer and Lecturer, whose  
work has received the recognition of the  
geographers of the world. *W. H. Allen*

# *“took on the responsibility of Hon. Treasurer of the International Women’s Congress in the Hague”*

Mina Benson was born to a farming family near Bewdley on the Rice Lake Plains, in Ontario, Canada. She trained as a nurse in New York and met her husband Leonidas Hubbard (1872–1903) when she nursed him through typhoid. They married in 1901. They shared an interest in boating and hiking and outdoor adventures, and spent their honeymoon on a five months camping trip.

Two years later in October 1903 Leonidas Hubbard went on an expedition into the uncharted interior of Labrador with Dillon Wallace and George Elson (a Scots-Cree guide). Hubbard died of starvation while his companions were seeking help.

In 1905 Mina mounted an expedition to complete her husband’s work, and because she felt that her husband’s name had been blemished by Wallace’s account of the original expedition. She took George Elson and other Metis Cree experienced local guides for her companions, and in spite of getting very misogynistic press coverage the expedition was successful and was completed in record time.

**Mina Benson Hubbard Ellis**  
**1870 – 1956**

*By Sheila Triggs and Pat Pleasance*

Mina Benson Hubbard kept a diary as she was planning to write a book. She wrote two articles about her expedition, one for *Harper’s* magazine, in 1906, and started giving lantern slide lectures. In the spring of 1907 she travelled to England and continued to give lantern slide lectures. She met the publisher John Murray, who published the book that she had written about her expedition, both in Britain and in Canada: *A woman’s way through unknown Labrador; an account of the exploration of the Nescauppee and George Rivers*, by Mrs Leonidas Hubbard Junior.

Mina met Harold Thornton Ellis (1875–1935) in England and they went to Canada to be married on 14th September 1908. She returned to England with her husband and subsequently had three children: Mirval Jane 1909–2006, John Edward, 1911–1961, and Margaret Shipley 1913–1998.

Harold Ellis was a well-to-do Quaker from a Liberal family and as a non-combatant went to the Netherlands to work with refugees during the war. Meanwhile his twin sisters, Edith and Marian (later Lady Parmoor) were actively campaigning for peace. Edith actually had a spell in Holloway for refusing to pay a fine for not submitting a leaflet to the censors. Together the sisters financed the No-Conscription Fellowship and supported the families of Conscientious Objectors, establishing the “News Bureau” for pacifists.

Mina was not a Quaker but became a pacifist and an anti-imperialist. “Mrs Hubbard Ellis took on the responsibility of Hon. Treasurer of the International

Women's Congress in the Hague." She features in *Towards a Permanent Peace* published following the meeting at The Hague, in the summer of 1915. However by the time of the Women's International League (WIL) AGM in October 1915, Mrs Pethick Lawrence is the WIL Treasurer, and Miss Marian Ellis (Mina's sister-in-law) is on the WIL Committee. Mina, however remains a subscribing member to 1918, and was living in London according to the Electoral Register for that year.

Mina and Harold grew apart and the marriage was strained. They divorced in 1924 and Harold went to live abroad with a new wife.

As her children grew to adulthood Mina considered returning to Canada, but eventually decided to remain in London, although she made a number of visits to Canada and the United States, where she had many connections.

One such connection was the grave of Leonidas Hubbard in a New York cemetery. A letter to the *New York Times* in November 1935 by an admirer of Leonidas Hubbard complained that there was no memorial on the grave, and Mina was incensed. She organised not one plaque but three, recording the achievements of Leonidas, herself, and George Elson, their guide.

In 1936 Mina, aged 66, was honoured by an invitation to go to Canada to give a prestigious lecture about her expedition.

During 1936/37 she had an ambitious new project.

She wanted to provide a Canadian cultural centre in London, and decided to embark on a series of lectures about Labrador to raise funds. Unfortunately she was unable to gain sufficient support for her scheme in London, and in the end it had to be abandoned.

In her later years she enjoyed the companionship of her daughter in law, Betty Cawkill, who had been briefly married to her son, John. The child of that marriage was Judith, and it was to her grandchild that Mina left the majority of her estate in a trust.

Her death was the result of a tragic accident on a railway crossing in 1956, when she was run down by a train.

# *“Fight against every form of conventional thought”*

Isabella Ford

1855–1924

*By Sara Baradour and Gillian Lawrence*

Isabella Ford came from a privileged and extremely wealthy Quaker background. Her father was a landowner and a solicitor who ran a night school for girls who worked in the Leeds Mills. When she was sixteen, Isabella Ford began to teach classes at the school.

She began campaigning for better working conditions for tailoresses in 1889 and marched with the workers from the Manningham Mills in Bradford which were the greatest producer of silk in the United Kingdom. The strike, which lasted for nineteen weeks, came about when Lister, the owner, tried to implement a reduction in wages.

It would be interesting to know whether Isabella's socialist activities had an effect on her relationship with her father, the landowner. It is known however, that she and her sisters had strong views about the rights of the working classes and that they believed that the way to help their plight was through united forces.

According to the Leeds Socialist Party “the strike revealed that the wider working class needed greater strength and unity then, not only industrially, but politically as well. Within a month of the dispute, the Bradford Labour Union was formed, and eighteen months later, the Independent Labour Party was formed in Bradford in January 1893.”

Isabella Ford was elected a life member of the Leeds Trades and Labour Councils; was president of the Tailoresses Union; helped set up the Leeds Independent Labour Party (ILP); and was elected a parish councillor in Leeds.

She believed earnestly that change for women's working and life conditions could only come about through their own fight and that they should “fight against every form of conventional thought... particularly among the women themselves”. (*Women's Trade Union Review*, January 1900). She dismissed the do-gooding interference by philanthropists who had no vision of a different life for working women.

In 1903 Isabella Ford became the first woman to talk to what became the British Labour Party.

During World War I there was disagreement within the Women's movements about the use of force towards the enemy and she was one who proposed ceasefire.

John Simkin, writing in Spartacus-educational.com, concludes: “As the war went on Isabella found herself more and more isolated and in 1915 was forced to resign from the executive committee of the NUWSS. For the rest of her life, Ford concentrated her efforts helping the peace movement. In the years, 1919–1922 Ford was a delegate to the Women's International League Congress.”

## Mrs Harold W. Hills (born Margaret Robertson) 1882–1967

By Pat Pleasance

Mrs. Hills was Secretary to the original organising committee for the 1915 Congress at The Hague, and continued to work for the new Women's International League until 1916. As was the social custom, she is referred to in the WILPF records by her husband's name, but she was born Margaret Robertson. Her father, Henry Robert Robertson was an artist, working both as a painter and a sculptor. His paintings were in a traditional realistic style and are still selling well at auction to-day.

This was a very talented family. The eldest daughter, Agnes, who married Edward Arber in 1909, was the first woman botanist to be elected a Fellow of the Royal Society and the first woman to receive the gold medal of the Linnaean Society. Her father's art lessons enabled her to illustrate her scientific publications herself. Jannette (or Janet) followed in her father's footsteps and became an artist, designer and sculptor, specialising in portrait painting. Margaret's younger brother, Donald Struan Robertson, became Regius Professor of Greek at Cambridge University.

Margaret herself studied under Dr. de Selincourt, at that time University Lecturer in Modern English Literature at Oxford. 1909 saw the publication of *Keats Poems Published in 1820*, edited with introduction and notes by M. Robertson. The 1911 Census details show that she was Organising Secretary of the Manchester and District Federation of Women's Suffrage Societies.

At the outbreak of the war in 1914, Margaret married Harold William Hills. He and his brothers and sisters

## *“Secretary to the original organising committee for the 1915 Congress”*

were born in Samoa, and Harold had been sent back to England with his younger brother Frederick, for education as a boarder at a Mission School in London. Perhaps his religious upbringing made him wish to save life rather than kill, and during the war he served in a non-combatant unit, the Royal Army Medical Corps.

A leading group amongst the pacifists who refused to fight in the war was the “No-Conscription Fellowship”, and they objected to the Royal Army Medical Corps on the grounds that this was part of the war machine. However, others did see this as a way of serving but avoiding actual combat.

The contribution Mrs Hills made to the work of the Women's International League was clearly much appreciated, and the 1915-16 Annual Report refers to this: “Mrs. Harold Hills, who in the first months was particularly helpful in the Literature Department, has been obliged to give up public work temporarily, but we know that she will always be in the movement for liberty and peace...” She gave birth to her first baby in February 1917: a daughter, Margaret Clara.



# *“a member of the British Committee at the start of the arrangements to set up the Congress in The Hague”*

Olive Amy Jetley  
1882–1975  
*By Pat Pleasance*

Born in 1882 to Zillah and Lionel Jacobs, Olive Jetley was part of an internationally extensive Jewish family. Although it is not known for certain how Olive, her sister Eileen and brother Hugh came to have the surname Jetley, it is possible that their mother remarried abroad after their father's death in 1892.

Olive is recorded as a member of the British Committee at the start of the arrangements to set up the Congress in The Hague. Her function on that committee was a “reporter”, which may have included clerical duties. However, she was not listed amongst the Committee members in *Towards a Permanent Peace*, the final report of proceedings at The Hague.

In 1917, Olive Amy Jetley married Frederick James Errock. She died in 1975, aged 93, in Kingston upon Thames.

## Emily Maud Leaf 1870–1941

By Ruth Miller

Emily Maud Leaf, a spinster living on a private income, was descended from the large Leaf family who resided in Streatham and the Norwood Hills. Emily was born on 25th September 1870 in the fifty-six room Burlington House, Crown Lane, Norwood. This was near the home of her grandfather William Leaf who lived at Park Hill House, a large building set in expansive grounds, purchased with the fortune he had made by working as a silk merchant.

Growing up in Streatham, Emily was surrounded by her extended family; she had seven brothers and three sisters, not to mention numerous cousins residing in the south London area. She studied locally, attending Miss Mason's school in Streatham, although her brothers studied at Marlborough School and Harrow School. They went on to pursue their education at Cambridge and in 1894 she followed in their footsteps by becoming the only female family member to study there.

She spent two years at Newnham College, 1894 to 1896, but does not seem to have finished her studies. It is likely that her time spent there was when she came into contact with people involved in the fight for women's suffrage. Another possible exposure to the suffrage cause would have been when Millicent Garrett Fawcett, president of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), was invited to speak at Streatham Grove, home of the Nettlefords who were acquaintances and neighbours of the Leaf family.

It is unclear when Emily became a member of the NUWSS but she became their honorary press secretary from 1911. Aside from this interest in suffrage, she was

*“putting women in  
a better situation so  
the other issues that  
affected women, such  
as poverty, could be  
addressed by a female  
voice”*

involved in social and educational work in Bermondsey and was the secretary to the Women's Liberal Association in St George's Hanover Square.

The Leaf family had taken a great interest in philanthropic work. Emily's aunts, Julia and Jane, ran the Leaffield Temperance Association, partly funding a coffee house in Streatham. Her older sister Mary worked with factory girls, founded a home for “fallen girls” and was on the Lambeth Board of Guardians. It is possible that these relatives had an interest in suffrage although no evidence exists to confirm that.

It seemed to be common among the Leaf siblings to remain unmarried; many of them shared a home in Arlie Gardens, Kensington. Emily's first cousin once removed, Katherine West, wrote an account of her childhood *Inner and Outer Circles* and mentioned Emily's siblings describing the family's attitude to life as a wish to “pull their weight”. Emily lived with her brother Henry at 4 Barton Street, Victoria, from 1905 until 1915. He had

served in the Boer War and then in World War I, along with their brother Edward. After the war, Henry married and moved to Chelsea while Emily remained at the house in Victoria. As Emily seems to be the one sibling who did not end up living in the shared home in Kensington, one can draw the conclusion that her political views caused a rift between her and her family.

Emily was involved in many causes but upon taking up her work as honorary press secretary with the NUWSS, she had to step away from her other work. As there is little written of her personal life, it is difficult to know who Emily was close to within the suffrage movement. She was a neighbour of Mary Sheepshanks when she lived in Barton Street. According to *From Liberal to Labour with Women's Suffrage The story of Catherine Marshall* by Jo Vellacott, Emily had a friendship with Catherine Marshall. It was perhaps she who encouraged Emily to become involved with the International Women's Congress at The Hague in 1915.

At the preliminary meeting to organise the event, on 26th February 1915, Emily was appointed to the executive committee. As differences in the opinions of the NUWSS president Mrs Fawcett and those wanting to attend the conference became apparent, there were a number of resignations among senior members including Emily who resigned as press secretary on 15th April 1915, days before the Congress at The Hague. Although Emily was amongst those who had been given passports to travel to she was also amongst those who remained trapped in England.

Emily continued her involvement with the executive

committee but resigned in 1916 to focus on war work. She joined the British Committee of the French Red Cross as a *canteener d'éclopes* (canteen worker) and served from May 1916 to July 1916. She was awarded the Victory Medal and British War Medal for her work.

We catch a glimpse of Emily's life at the end of 1916 in an archived correspondence between her and Mrs Fawcett. In this letter we see Emily speaking on behalf of her friend Kathleen Courtney, one of the women who had resigned from the NUWSS to go to The Hague. Emily writes that Kathleen would like to see Mrs Fawcett as she misses her. The returned message is that Mrs Fawcett would rather things remained as they were. It seems that the resignations from the NUWSS had caused trouble between the women. It also shows Emily acting as a peacemaker between her friends and acquaintances and her continued support of women's suffrage.

Her ongoing involvement with what was to become the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is evident in a pamphlet on the Resolutions passed at the Third Congress of the WILPF in Vienna July 1921 when she represented the British section and was involved with the Fight the Famine Council.

Free of the constraints of married life and having a private income allowed Emily the choice to lead a life that she defined for herself. Her fight for the vote and voice for women's issues suggests her priorities were about putting women in a better situation so the other issues that affected women, such as poverty, could be addressed by a female voice. She passed away on 2nd March 1941.



*Chrystal Macmillan & Jane Addams*

# *“a leading figure in international women’s organisations”*

**Chrystal Macmillan**  
**1872–1937**

*by Katrina Gass and Helen Kay*

Chrystal Macmillan campaigned all her life for women to achieve full citizenship rights with men. She was a Scottish feminist and peace activist, the first female science graduate from the University of Edinburgh with a first class honours degree in Mathematics and an honours degree in Moral Philosophy.

She campaigned throughout Scotland for women’s right to vote. With four other women graduates she applied for the vote under the University Franchise. When the Universities refused their application, the women fought the case right up to House of Lords where, in 1908, Chrystal Macmillan addressed their Lordships, who decided to refuse the application on the grounds that “person” did not include “woman”. Her skill in arguing the legal case was recognised by Scottish Press who named her “the Scottish Portia”; and indeed she was one of the first group of women to become barristers in London in 1924.

When World War I began, Chrystal Macmillan looked for peace activism. As secretary of International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA), she helped organise the International Women’s Relief Committee soon after hostilities broke out in August 1914. Two months later, in response to a call from Dutch women who were experiencing a major humanitarian crisis as 80,000 Belgian refugees had fled into Holland, she travelled with Mary Sheepshanks to Flushing, Netherlands with a large consignment of food. By late October 1914 the International Women’s Relief Committee, in consultation with Dutch women were providing food and clothing for

refugees from the fall of Antwerp.

In late 1914 Chrystal Macmillan was one of one hundred British women who signed the “Open Christmas Letter” in *Jus Suffragii*, a peace-seeking exchange between women of warring nations. Then, in cooperation with Aletta Jacobs, she worked with Dutch women to organise a large International Congress of Women, where 1,136 women from Europe and North America gathered in April 1915 to discuss the causes of war and how women might influence political leaders to resolve international disputes through peaceful mediation.

The 180-strong contingent of British women was greatly reduced as the North Sea and English Channel was declared a war zone and closed to normal commercial shipping. Even the 24 “sensible” women provided with passports by British Government were stranded at Tilbury, unable to cross the North Sea. Chrystal Macmillan was one of only three British women at the Congress, the others being Kathleen Courtney and Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence.

The Congress elected an international team of five envoys, including Chrystal Macmillan, who travelled back and forward across war-torn Europe and to the USA during the summer months of 1915, visiting 14 belligerent and neutral countries, and meeting with 24 influential leaders: Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers, Presidents, the King of Norway and the Pope. The women urged the political leaders to set up Continuous Mediation by neutral countries to end the war. Each statesman declared himself sympathetic but not one leader would take the first step and the war continued unabated.

After the war, Chrystal Macmillan went to Zürich in May



1919 as a delegate to the Second International Congress of Women. The Congress strongly condemned “Peace Terms” that were being planned for Germany in the Treaty of Versailles, noting that these terms would create further animosity which would lead to future wars. Chrystal Macmillan carried the Congress’ condemnation to the ongoing Paris Peace Conference, but the men who were negotiating the settlement made no changes to the treaty.

The organisation established by the Congress was named the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom which, in 2015, is the oldest women’s peace organisation. In the run up to WWI, suffragists spoke out against the nationality laws. Following her experience of providing relief to women of many nationalities during the first few months of the war, Chrystal Macmillan gave voice to the protest against the legislation which deprived or imposed British nationality on women without their consent.

She continued to lead campaigns throughout the 1920s and 1930s in Britain and at The League of Nations on the Nationality of Married Women, in an effort to secure the right of women, whether married and unmarried, to have the same full nationality rights as men. By early 1918, most British women who had attained the age of 30 were given the right to vote and hold office. Following the passing of The Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919, which enabled women to become members of the legal profession, Chrystal Macmillan applied to Middle Temple as a pupil. She was called to the bar on 28 January 1924 and in 1926 joined the Western Circuit.

Chrystal Macmillan co-founded the Open Door Council for the repeal of legal restraints on women, especially in the professions. She worked to lift restrictions, and so give women of all classes an equal opportunity in the workplace. In 1929, she co-founded an international group, the Open Door International for the Economic Emancipation of the Woman Worker, and served as President of the organisation until her death in 1937.

Although she was a leading figure in international women’s organisations, Chrystal Macmillan’s pioneering work was not always visible. Despite her abilities as an able and humorous public speaker, her main work after 1920 was undertaken in committees and in the scrutiny of legislative reforms. Her colleagues found her a strong personality who could be tiresome in her attention to detail: they complained that conference times could be extended by her insistence on arguing the case around a small amendment but another acknowledged that she had an astonishing foresight in noticing legislative changes that would, in time, discriminate against women.

In obituaries, colleagues described her as a brave and gifted woman with a brilliant and enlightened mind, who showed leadership in every enterprise she became involved in, inspiring and encouraging all those with whom she worked, especially younger women such as Gertrud Baer who became President of Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom 1932-37. Throughout her life, Chrystal Macmillan’s integrity and commitment to equality and justice for women was never in question.

*“women... are more likely than men to find some other way of settling international disputes than by an appeal to force”*

Catherine Elizabeth Marshall was born in 1880 in Harrow on the Hill, Middlesex, and was educated privately before attending for three years at St. Leonard's School, St. Andrews.

The family moved to Keswick on her father's retirement and it was here that her involvement with the suffrage movement began. She was a co-founder of the Keswick Women's Suffrage Association, which was a branch of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS). She began to develop a flair for organization, and in 1906 became the Parliamentary Secretary of the NUWSS, where she worked alongside Kathleen Courtney, the Honorary Secretary, from 1911 to 1914. Through her involvement with the British and international suffrage

## Catherine E. Marshall 1880–1962

*By Katrina Gass and Pat Pleasance*

movements Catherine's political views changed and she became a socialist and a pacifist. She worked towards having women's suffrage adopted as party policy by the Labour Party.

In 1914, at the outbreak of World War I Catherine Marshall was amongst the group who resigned from the NUWSS, and worked with Dutch, German and Belgian women on the preparations for the 1915 Hague

Congress. It was her firm belief “that women... are more likely than men to find some other way

of settling international disputes than by an appeal to force”. She worked to secure passports for the 180 British women wishing to attend the Congress but with other delegates was stopped from sailing when all civilian shipping was banned. Following the Congress she was the British Committee Hon. Secretary until her work with the No-Conscription Fellowship became more demanding.

This organisation had been established in November 1914 to campaign against conscription. By 1916 conscription became law, and those men who had been working for the Fellowship were imprisoned. Catherine Marshall became Hon. Secretary, and took over



MISS CATHARINE E. MARSHALL  
Acting Hon. Secretary, British Committee  
of the Women's International Congress

the direction of the work. For the rest of the war she campaigned tirelessly for the humane treatment of those imprisoned for persisting in refusal. She faced regular police raids on the office, and risking arrest herself when she aided men to avoid being taken into custody.

After 1917 she suffered from periods of ill health but remained active in the Women's International League. At the 1919 Congress, she proposed that the organisation should adopt the name Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). She then worked from 1920-21 at the WILPF headquarters in Geneva, and in 1923-4 she was appointed a WILPF envoy, visiting the heads of state in France and Germany when the Ruhr was invaded, and also visiting workers there involved in non-violent resistance.

In the late 1930s she became involved in the support of Jewish refugees from Czechoslovakia, and gave some of them a home at a house in Derwentwater owned by herself and her brother.

Despite her continuing ill-health, for the rest of her life Catherine was active in the Labour Party, the Union of Democratic Control and in the United Nations Association, and maintained her interest in international affairs.

She died in 1961 following a fall at her home.

# *“arrested for attempting to make a speech in the lobby of the House of Commons”*

Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence

1867–1954

By Rasa Goštautaitė

Emmeline Pethick was born on 21st October, 1867 in the small town of Clifton, near Bristol. She was the second of thirteen children in a prosperous, middle class family. At the age of eight, Emmeline was sent to boarding school, where she was described by her teachers as a rebellious child. She was later moved to a Quaker school, where she was accused of corrupting the other children.

In the 1890s Emmeline became interested in socialist ideas, which went on to play a huge role in her life. At the same time she became a voluntary social worker at the West London Methodist Mission. She also helped to organise a club for young working-class girls, as Emmeline believed it was important that girls see an example of socialism in action. She became an active and fully committed participant in the suffragette movement.

In 1901, Emmeline married Frederick Lawrence, who was also involved in women's movements and the fight for equality. After the wedding, Emmeline spent her time helping the Independent Labour Party. Then, in 1907, Emmeline and Frederick began publishing the *Votes for Women* journal whilst their London home became a suffragettes' refuge. The husband and wife even went on a hunger strike together.

After reading of Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney's arrest in 1905, Emmeline became friends with the two women and joined the Women's Social and Political

Union (WSPU). A couple of months later, she was arrested for attempting to make a speech in the lobby of the House of Commons. Her arrest led to the first of six prison sentences that Emmeline ended up serving.

Eventually, Emmeline's and Christabel Pankhurst's friendship broke up over the arson campaign which Pankhurst encouraged, and with which Emmeline and Frederick strongly disagreed. As a result of their disagreement, Christabel Pankhurst expelled Emmeline and Frederick from the WSPU, an action that was to have a profound effect on Emmeline.

It did not deter her however, and she continued to work for the suffrage cause and spent a lot of time writing for her journal, *Votes for Women*. She joined the Women's Freedom League and was a prominent member of the Women's International League during World War I.

Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence was one of the three British women who succeeded in reaching The Hague in 1915. She travelled with the American delegation as she had been on a speaking tour in America. They were delayed on government orders in the English Channel and reached The Hague just as the Congress was due to open.

From 1926 to 1935 she was president of the Women's Freedom League.

Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence was a prominent suffragette, who did an immense amount of work and contributed a lot towards the fight for universal suffrage. She died of a heart attack on 11th March 1954 and her mourning husband wrote to his friend: "I feel a bit dazed. It is as though I was at a violin concerto with the violinist absent."

## Edith Picton-Turbervill 1872–1960

By Pat Pleasance

In her autobiography *Life is Good* (1939) Edith Picton-Turbervill refers to her attempt to travel to The Hague for the Peace Congress:

“I was always troubled over the official and general attitude towards peace, and had been one of the few women who in 1915 had tried to go to the Hague to discuss peace with women of other nations. Winston Churchill, who was then First Lord of the Admiralty, stopped that effort by not allowing our steamer to leave Tilbury Dock! I note in my diary ‘Intercessions in the churches for peace. I am in a fog. We pray for peace but everyone is very angry if we talk of peace.’”

By this time Edith was in her forties, and her life had already been eventful.

She was born Edith Picton-Warlow, the daughter of Indian army officer, Captain John Picton-Warlow. One of large family, including three sets of twins, she spent much of her childhood with an aunt in Brighton until her parents returned from India. In 1892 her father inherited the Ewenni Priory estate in Glamorgan and the family name was changed to Picton-Turbervill.

Edith was always deeply religious, and a conversion experience in 1895 made her determine that her future life should be dedicated to missionary work. After training, she spent some years in India, and during that time she worked with the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), lectured on English literature and opened the first holiday home in Simla for Indian girls.

Ill health forced a return to England, at first temporarily, but in 1908 permanently. Here her interests widened to

*“worked tirelessly for improvement in the position of women”*

include topical issues including the suffrage campaign. She records a discussion with Mrs. Pankhurst, trying to persuade the latter to pursue less militant tactics but Mrs. Pankhurst was quite unmoveable. Edith must have been impressive because Mrs. Pankhurst remembered the discussion years later when they met again.

Edith must also have made an impression with her work for the YWCA, because in 1909 she was asked to be head of the YWCA Foreign Department (later “Overseas Department”). Later she was national Vice-President from 1914-1920, and 1922-1928. Despite being involved in numerous other committees it was the YWCA to which she devoted the majority of her time in the war years. She was appalled at the conditions in which girls in the munition factories had to work, and within the YWCA took charge of a campaign to provide hostels, canteens and clubs for girls, both in this country and for those working in France in the Women's Royal Air Force. The campaign raised about £250,000, a huge sum in those days. As a result of her work she was awarded an OBE in 1917.

Religion was always a dominant factor in her life. She was a member of the Church of England, which at that time took a traditional attitude to the role of women. Convinced that women should be allowed to play a full part in Church life, she campaigned with Maude Royden for women to become priests in the Church of England,



and wrote a book with Canon Streeter *Woman and the Church*, published in 1917. She also engaged in a public debate on the issue in Church House. In this she was years ahead of her time as women were not allowed to be ordained priests until very recently. She also wrote a number of other books on religious issues.

In addition to trying to go to The Hague for the Women's Congress in 1915, Edith found time to continue her support for WILPF's work. This included opening a WILPF bazaar at Central Hall on 5th April 1919, when she spoke "of our aims and work during the war and the work that lay before us in the future". She is also listed in the 5th WILPF Annual Report as having been present at the Third International Congress in Vienna in 1921.

Politics beckoned, and in 1919 Edith became a member of the Labour Party. After two unsuccessful attempts, she became the Member of Parliament for The Wrekin in Shropshire in 1929, remaining an MP until 1931, when she was defeated by the Conservative candidate. During this time she successfully promoted a private member's Bill to prevent the death sentence being pronounced on pregnant women convicted of murder. Previously the death sentence was first passed in court and only subsequently could a woman reveal she was pregnant, when the sentence was delayed until after the birth of the child. In practice it was not then carried out and the sentence was often changed to penal servitude. In her speech to the House of Commons she referred to a case where a woman had murdered her child because she was destitute and could not provide for it. Even

Judges disliked the duty of having to pronounce a death sentence in such distressing cases.

Her time in parliament also included serving on the ecclesiastic committee of the Houses of Commons and Lords, and campaigning for facilities for women Members of Parliament.

Whilst she did not again return to the House of Commons, Edith remained active on political issues between the wars, and also attended a number of international meetings of women's organisations. One of these was the International Congress of Women Citizens held in Turkey in 1935, where she was head of the British delegation. In 1936 she was appointed to a three-member commission looking into established practices in Malaya and Hong Kong regarding indentured girl servants, called *mui tsai*. They were thought to be effectively slaves, and she wrote a minority report calling for registration and inspection. Eventually she won her point with the Colonial Office and child welfare was much improved.

In the second World War she worked for the Ministry of Information. Although by this time she was in her seventies, she became President of the National Council of Women Citizens in 1944, and continued to write, lecture and appear on radio and television.

Throughout her life Edith travelled extensively and had a wide circle of acquaintances, including left wing politicians and social reformers. A tall woman with abundant energy, she made her mark in the causes she supported, and in particular worked tirelessly for improvement in the position of women.

## Sarah Reddish

1850–1928

By Alison Ronan



Sarah Reddish was born in Bolton and left school at the age of eleven to work with her mother, a silk weaver. Her father was a librarian and secretary to the Bolton Co-op Education. Sarah became a forewoman in a hosiery mill and by the 1890s she was active in the Lancashire and Cheshire Women Textile and Other Workers' Representative Committee with other trade union activists like Eva Gore Booth (sister of Countess Markievicz) and her close friend Esther Roper, who were active in the suffrage movement in Manchester. By the 1890s she was elected to the School Board, as a Poor Law Guardian and active in the Women's Co-operative Guild.

Sarah was a radical suffragist, one of a group of working class suffragists whose aim was "womanhood suffrage" (voting rights for all women). They were prepared to support demands for limited women's suffrage; they saw this as a step towards full universal suffrage and not an end in itself.

The radical suffragists naturally took the question of women's suffrage into their own organisations – the cotton workers' and weavers' trade unions, the Women's Co-operative Guild, the Independent Labour Party (ILP, formed in 1893) and, later, the Labour Representation Committee (which preceded the Labour Party).

Sarah would have known Margaret Ashton through the suffrage campaigns and trade union activity throughout Lancashire and Cheshire in the years before the war. She was a political woman and her visibility in the region as a champion of women's rights made her a natural choice as a delegate for The Hague in 1915.

*“left school at the age of 11 to work with her mother, a silk weaver”*

*“encouraged her  
working-class sisters  
to become more  
actively involved  
in the fight for the  
women’s vote”*

Esther Roper

1868–1938

By Ann Kramer

Born in Lancashire, Esther’s parents were missionaries and she was largely brought up by her mother’s grandparents and educated by the Church Missionary Society. She went on to become one of the first women to attend Owen College, Manchester, where she studied English Literature, Political Economy and Latin.

Esther graduated in 1891 but continued an interest in education that demonstrated her already existing concern for social justice and the vulnerable. In 1895 she helped to found the Manchester University Settlement in Ancoats. Its aim was to bring learning and culture to impoverished people within the community while at the same time encouraging students and staff to make links with and understand the difficulties and social problems experienced by the working class. The Settlement continues charitable work to this day.

By the early 1890s the women’s suffrage movement began to enter a new and more active phase. A women’s suffrage bill had once again been rejected in

the House of Commons but only by twenty three votes so leading activists such as Mrs Fawcett and Isabella Ford decided to build on this promising result and planned a mass petition – the Special Appeal – which was launched in 1893 to be signed by “Women of All Parties and All Classes”.

Campaigning was particularly active in the north west of England, largely due to the efforts of Esther, who in 1893 became secretary of the Manchester Suffrage Society, a post she held until 1905. Throwing herself into the suffrage campaign, she re-energised the Society, organising meetings and promoting the Special Appeal among both Liberals and socialists. She encouraged her working-class sisters to become more actively involved in the fight for the women’s vote, not least to widen the campaign and move it out of its predominantly middle-class base. She appointed two working-class women to take and promote the Special Appeal in the cotton towns. In 1897 the Manchester Society changed its name to the North of England Society for Women’s Suffrage and soon became part of the umbrella organisation, Millicent Fawcett’s National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies (NUWSS).

In 1896, exhausted from her campaigning work, Esther took a holiday in Italy, where she met Irish poet and aristocrat Eva Gore-Booth. The two were immediately attracted to each other and on their return to Manchester decided to set up home together. From then on, and until Eva’s death in 1926, the two



women were almost inseparable and campaigned together for the suffrage.

Over the next few years, Esther and Eva, together with other activists such as Selina Cooper, worked with what became known as the radical suffragists of the north of England, the mill workers who campaigned strenuously for women's right to vote. In 1900, Esther and Eva launched the Women's Labour News and three years later helped to set up the Lancashire and Cheshire Women's Textile and Other Workers Representation Committee, which organised for the first women's suffrage candidate to stand in a general election.

Though radical, Esther and Eva were always suffragists; like others in the NUWSS they distanced themselves from the militancy of the Pankhursts' Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), which was formed in 1903 and which from 1906 adopted an increasingly confrontational programme of activism.

When the rifts began to appear in the women's suffrage campaign at the outbreak of World War I, Esther and Eva, describing themselves as "extreme pacifists" were among those who opposed the war, turning their considerable organising and campaigning skills towards working for peace. They immediately started relief work with German men, women and children living in England, who were being victimised. They also later worked with German prisoners of war.

The two women were also amongst at least 100

signatories to the historic "Open Christmas Letter", which was organised by the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA). Addressed "To the Women of Germany and Austria" it expressed solidarity with women across the warring lines and appealed to international womanhood.

When invitations flooded out to women's organisations across the world to attend the Women's Congress in The Hague in 1915, Esther and Eva were amongst those who resigned from the NUWSS and began work on helping to organise the Congress, forming the British Committee of the International Women's Congress.

She went on to become a founder member of the Women's International League, (later the Women's International League of Peace and Freedom, WILPF) that was born and launched at the Congress and worked with Catherine Marshall and other activists in the No-Conscription Fellowship to support conscientious objectors. She attended tribunals, recording the outcomes and it was largely thanks to women such as Esther that the No-Conscription Fellowship was able to continue its activities throughout the war years, despite its leadership and most of its members being imprisoned.

Esther Roper also became involved in the Women's Peace Crusade, an extraordinary and radical grass-roots initiative, which was launched in the summer of 1917 with Glasgow feminist Helen Crawford. It demanded "a people's peace" based on arms limitation



and international co-operation and repudiated the right of any nation to conquer or annex another. It aimed to take its anti-war message into working class communities. Esther and Eva travelled around Britain speaking to various groups that sprang up. In August 1917 they arrived in Nelson, Lancashire to join Selina Cooper and some 1,200 women of the Nelson Peace Crusade for a procession to the local recreation ground where they would speak to the crowd. Carrying banners, they arrived at the recreation ground to be met by an extremely hostile crowd who, according to local reports, howled them down. For those who attended the rally it was a frightening experience but typical of the public reaction to war resisters.

Following the end of the war, Esther continued working with WILPF and also became involved with the Committee for the Abolition of Capital Punishment and worked for prison reform.

Following Eva's death in 1926, Esther edited and wrote the introductions for *The Poems of Eva Gore-Booth* (1926) and *The Prison Letters of Countess Markievicz* (1934). Both Esther and Eva had been close friends of the Countess. Esther remained a member of WILPF and committed to social justice until her death. She died on 28 April 1938 and was buried next to Eva in St John's Churchyard, Hampstead.

# *“Everywhere there was pacifism the women’s movement advanced”*

(Agnes) Maude Royden

1876–1956

By Abigail Shapiro

Agnes Maude Royden (known as Maude) was a noted author, campaigner and preacher on women’s rights, pacifism and Christian values. Maude was born on 23rd November 1876 at Mossley Hill, near Liverpool, the youngest of eight children, to Sir Thomas Bland Royden, a ship owner and MP, and his wife Alice Elizabeth. She grew up at Frankby Hall in Cheshire, attended Cheltenham Ladies’ College and, later, Lady Margaret Hall at the University of Oxford.

After graduating with a degree in History, Maude worked in slum settlements in Liverpool improving living conditions for the poor. She became particularly interested in the rights of working women, taking an active role at the Victoria Women’s Settlement, a social work centre for women’s and children’s health and education. During this time, Maude became increasingly interested in Christianity. At the invitation of a friend, she attended several meetings in Oxford with The Reverend George William Hudson Shaw, a university lecturer and Anglican priest, with whom she developed a close friendship. In 1902, Maude went to live with Shaw and his wife Effie in Oxfordshire, where she spent several years enjoying the companionship of the couple and studying the teachings of the Church in conjunction with her views on gender parity.

Shaw helped Maude get work at the University of Oxford as a lecturer of English Literature. She greatly enjoyed teaching and began to deliver public lectures,

speaking of her faith and the rights of women. By 1905, Maude’s reputation had stretched across the country and she was invited to be a speaker for the non-militant suffragists under the leadership of Mrs Fawcett. Maude had now fully embraced the suffrage movement and in 1909 was elected to the executive committee of the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies, frequently speaking of its cause. From 1912 to 1914 she was the Editor of *The Common Cause*, the journal of the Union until she – and several other prominent executive members – resigned due to the approach the National Union was taking to the war which they publicly opposed. The disagreement began when the National Union refused to promote peace during the war, rejecting an invitation to send delegates to the International Women’s Congress for Peace in The Hague in 1915.

Maude, along with other women such as Margaret Ashton, Helena Swanwick and her old friend from University Kathleen Courtney, established a new group called the Women’s International League (WIL). The WIL’s first act was to organise delegates to attend the conference in The Hague. Interest was overwhelming with nearly 180 women expressing the desire to attend.

Speaking at a conference only a day before she was due to go to Holland, Maude said:

“War was the woman’s worst enemy, and it affected the whole position of women as a sex. The advance of civilisation depended on their realisation of the fact that men and women were not and could not



be governed by violence, but only by spiritual force. Everywhere there was pacifism the women's movement advanced; everywhere there was militarism it went back." (*Manchester Guardian*, 20th April 1915).

But speaking of peace during the war was controversial and any opposition to the war effort was condemned. As Millicent Fawcett, another suffrage campaigner, pointedly said "it is akin to treason to talk of peace". Although Maude's application for a passport was successful, she never made it to Holland.

Speculations have been made as to the delays and denial of permits. Sheila Fletcher's biography *Maude Royden: A Life* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), suggests that a well-connected public enemy of Maude's was directly involved. Fletcher's research uncovered a letter from Lady Margaret Elizabeth Child Villiers (1875–1959), Countess of Jersey and noted anti-suffrage campaigner, to Arthur Nicholson at the Home Office. She wrote of Maude on 7th April 1915, just two weeks before the WIL was due to go to The Hague, that she was:

"...a keen suffragist who misrepresents facts about the female labour market and successful in rousing male feelings... I think it is dangerous idea that 100 English women of the Suffrage – Peace – Ethical – Reconciliation class should, at this crisis, go and orate at the Hague in company with a considerable number of German women. The one way to stop it would be to absolutely refuse passports. I think... that whoever gives passports should find out quietly in advance

who the women are – but not refuse them absolutely till near enough to the time to prevent their making other arrangements! ... We are supposed to be under Martial Law [sic] but I suppose these women could not be stopped from talking indirect treason if they once got into Neutral ground."

The Peace Congress established the International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace, which concentrated its focus on peace during the war. Maude remained involved with the group for many years, although her interest shifted after the war to the role of women in the Church. In 1929 she began the official campaign for the ordination of women when she founded the Society for the Ministry of Women and she was the first woman to become a Doctor of Divinity in 1931. Maude went on to make several worldwide preaching tours from the 1920s to the 1940s, maintaining all the while her commitment to peace until in 1939, when she publicly renounced pacifism believing Nazism to be a greater evil than war. In 1944, she married the recently widowed Reverend Hudson Shaw whom she had loved for more than forty years but in a tragic twist, he died only two months after their marriage.

*“the first female  
Labour councillor in  
London before being  
elected as Mayor in  
1922”*

Born in Raunds in Northamptonshire to a Wesleyan Methodist family, Ada moved to London in 1896 and soon began work at a girls club at the Bermondsey Settlement. Here, she worked with factory girls, rag pickers, wood choppers and tin-smiths, trying to improve their home lives and working conditions.

In 1900, Ada married Alfred Salter, a socialist doctor with revolutionary ideas and they became members of the Religious Society of Friends. They loved nature and Ada dreamed of transforming Bermondsey. She established a ‘Beautification Committee’ and organised the planting of trees, shrubs and flower beds in the area. Ada and Alfred were fully committed to their community, sending their only child, Joyce to the local school on Keaton Road. Unfortunately, Joyce died at the age of eight, from scarlet fever, leaving her parents completely devastated.

Ada and Alfred were committed pacifists and World War I was a challenging and difficult time. Ada worked for the No-Conscription Fellowship and they allowed their new home at Fairby Grange in Kent to be used as a convalescent home for conscientious objectors who had been badly treated in prison.

In 1915, Ada was one of the founder members of the Women’s International League and had planned to go to The Hague for the Peace Congress, but was unable to take part. At the end of the war she represented the British Section of the WIL at conferences in Zurich and Vienna.

Ada was the first female Labour councillor in London

before being elected as Mayor in 1922. She declined to wear Mayoral robes and preferred to begin Council Meeting in the Quaker style without formal chaplain-led prayers. During local strikes and the general strike in 1926 she organised free meals for women and children.

Concerned with public health in the 1920s, she was elected to the London County Council in 1925 and became Chair of the Pasko Committee in 1934, working on the introduction of a Green Belt.

A statue in honour of Ada was unveiled in 2014 in Bermondsey. This was a very special occasion with civic and church dignitaries, local M.P. Simon Hughes, as well as many peace activists (including Bruce Kent and Valerie Flessati), local residents, and family members being present for the unveiling. The statue depicts her standing, holding a garden spade in her right hand and the sculptor – Diane Gorvin – has made her left hand curled to make space for her to hold a bunch of fresh flowers. This statue was unveiled by her grand-nephew and grand-niece Nick Hudson and Janet Kendall.



# *“called for a negotiated peace and an end to the arms race”*

Mary Sheepshanks was born on 25 October 1872, in Liverpool, the second of thirteen surviving children to John and Margaret Sheepshanks. Her father was a Church of England vicar in Bilton near Harrogate, who became Bishop of Norwich in 1890. She attended Liverpool High School until she was seventeen. In 1889 she was sent to Germany for a year to learn the language, living first in Kassel and then in Potsdam. At this time she enjoyed her first cultural events – concerts, plays and art. In 1892 she went to Newnham College in Cambridge, where she appreciated the freedom, independence and academic atmosphere of the university, and the collegiality of the college. She graduated in medieval and modern languages, before taking a 4th year course in Moral Science, Psychology, and the History of Philosophy and Economics.

In 1895 Mary started working with the Women's University Settlement in Southwark and then Stepney. Two years later she was appointed as vice-principal of Morley College for Working Men and Women. She encouraged under-privileged women to enrol at the college and invited well known people to lecture: Virginia Woolf taught history evening classes, Ernest Shepherd and Christabel and Emmeline Pankhurst lectured. She began the practice of holding women-



**Mary Sheepshanks**

**1872–1960**

*By Natasha Posner*

only meetings for female students. She recognised how much the College meant to people in the area who came straight from work to classes without having had a proper meal all day.

At this time she was friends with Flora Mayor until her marriage and move to India. Mary fell in love with Theodore Llewelyn Davies who wanted to marry Meg Booth, but Meg refused him and he committed suicide. Mary appears to have regretted the lack of a partner and there were times in her life when she was lonely. Sybil Oldfield describes Mary as “a tall upright woman with bespectacled brilliantly blue eyes and a brusque manner”, (Sybil Oldfield, 1984, *Spinsters of this Parish*.)

Mary was a member of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, believing that having the vote would benefit women and the state. Initially she also supported the Women's Social and Political Union in their militant campaign to obtain women's suffrage. However her attitude to suffragettes became ambivalent. She was averse to violence and disliked their methods, though admiring individual acts of bravery. In 1913 she was asked to undertake a suffrage lecture tour of western and central Europe for the International Women's Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) culminating in an IWSA meeting in Budapest. She spoke in French and German with women on local government, industry, temperance and education. Later that year Jane Addams persuaded her to become secretary to the IWSA in London, and the editor of its journal, *Jus Suffragii* (The Right of Suffrage).

At the outbreak of World War I, Mary was a strong opponent of Britain's involvement. She wrote that the war "brought her as near despair as I have ever been", (Mary Sheepshanks, 1955, Autobiography). She signed the manifesto of the Union of Democratic Control initiated by Charles Trevelyan and supported by a number of leading figures. Mary wrote in *Jus Suffragii* (14th October 1914) that: "Each nation is convinced that it is fighting in self-defence, and each in self-defence hastens to self-destruction... thousands of men are slaughtered or crippled... and what gain will anyone have in the end?" She called for a negotiated peace and an end to the arms race. The journal *Jus Suffragii* maintained a neutral position while attacking the war itself.

With Isabella Ford and Elsie Inglis, she campaigned to bring a vast number of Belgian refugees from the Western front. In January 1915, she published an open Christmas letter to the women of Germany and Austria signed by 100 British women pacifists. In February, all the officers in the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies and ten members of the National Executive resigned after Millicent Fawcett attacked these peace efforts. In April of that year, she hoped to be able to respond to Aletta Jacobs' invitation to suffrage members all over the world to attend an International Congress of Women in The Hague but, like other women in Britain, was unable to get there.

In 1918 Mary was appointed secretary of the Fight the Famine Council. In 1920 she lobbied the League of

Nations unsuccessfully for the immediate admission of Germany and for a revision of the reparation clauses of the Treaty of Versailles. After the end of the war, she resigned as the editor of *Jus Suffragii* and then became a member of the Executive Committee of the British Section of WILPF. In 1921, she went on a trip to South America studying the economic and social conditions, returning to Europe via the USA.

Mary became the International Secretary of WILPF in 1927, replacing Emily Balch. At the office in Geneva she monitored the cases of political prisoners. In September 1928 she headed a deputation to the League of Nations to present an urgent memorandum calling for world disarmament. The following year she organised the first scientific conference, in Frankfurt-am-Maine, on chemical weapons and their use against civilians. Also in 1930, she organised a conference on statelessness attended by the international Council of Women, the Society of Friends, the International Suffrage Alliance, the League of Rights for Man, and the League of Nations Union. Mary resigned as WILPF International Secretary in 1930 because of her disapproval of what she saw as the pro-communist policies of the French and German members of the Executive. She was commissioned to conduct a fact-finding mission with Helen Oppenheimer, to East Galicia and Poland, investigating atrocities carried out by the government. Her report back was publicised throughout Europe. In 1932, she moved back to London.

In 1936 she was involved in sending medical help to

republicans fighting in the Spanish Civil War. Also in 1936 she helped to find homes for Basque child refugees and her house in Highgate became a place of refuge for political dissidents from Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin. She was very concerned about the increasing power of Adolf Hitler in Nazi Germany, and on the outbreak of World War II, she renounced her pacifism. She was nevertheless opposed to blanket bombing, and to the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. At this time she was employed by the BBC as a German translator.

In her later years she suffered badly from arthritis and was generally in poor health, needing an operation for cancer when she was 79 years old. She still retained her many interests in music, art, books and politics. She was persuaded to begin work on her memoirs in 1955, but refused to add gossipy comments about the well-known people she had known in her life. After the resignation of her daily help because of a quarrel with a neighbour, she faced the prospect of being in a care home, as she was nearly blind and paralysed. She chose instead to commit suicide on 21 January 1960 at her home in Hampstead.



# *“A pioneer amongst women”*

Lucy Deane Streatfeild (nee Deane)

1865–1950

*By Pat Pleasance*

Lucy Anne Evelyn Deane was born in 1865 in India, and grew up as part of a British Army family, first in India, and then in South Africa. She was the eldest child of Bonar Millett Deane and his wife Lucy, sister to Viscount Falmouth. In the social context of the late nineteenth century this background would have opened doors and would enable her to exercise her gifts as an energetic confident woman devoted to the improvement of working conditions. Tragedy struck while Lucy was still in her teens. Her father, Colonel Deane, was killed in South Africa leading a charge at Laing's Nek in 1881. Five years later her mother also died, in London, and Lucy and her younger sister, Hyacinthe Mary, were alone. A quarterly allowance from wealthy relatives helped, and after staying for a while with an aunt, the sisters set up house together in Kensington.

In pursuance of her goals Lucy worked to improve her skills and knowledge. She obtained a nursing diploma from the National Health Society (not of course our modern NHS) and worked at the Chelsea Infirmary. Later she also passed an examination at the Parker Institute for a Sanitary Inspector's Certificate.

Her diary for 1893 shows that she was already making a name for herself. She was leading a busy life, including going round to inspect sewage works, apparently on her own initiative, and giving lectures on health issues, as well as attending lectures by others. She also represented the National Health Society at a Women's Conference in Leeds. In this same year, 1893, Kensington Vestry (an

administrative division of London before 1899) took a very bold decision. Although Inspectors of Workshops had always been men up to this time, they advertised to take on two women Inspectors, checking places where women were employed, to ensure compliance with the Factory Acts. This covered over-crowding, lighting, ventilation and sanitary conditions.

Lucy applied. She and Miss Rose Squire were appointed at a salary of £60 p.a., the first two women to hold such positions. Lucy was also earning money from her lectures.

Magazines pursued Lucy for interviews, and she relates in her diary that one printed a sham interview, putting words into her mouth which she had never said. This caused some upset.

Lucy was really getting noticed, and was also meeting many women who shared similar concerns. She had an invitation from Lady Dilke, who clearly wanted to assess her capabilities. Consideration was being given to the appointment of Women Factory Inspectors, which would be responsible positions at a much higher level than the position Lucy then held. It emerged that Mr. Asquith (then Home Secretary) was ready to nominate her if she could satisfy the Civil Service Commission as to her qualifications. She gained the appointment. Unsurprisingly there were adverse reactions from some men officials, but fortunately Mr. Sprague Oram, the Chief Inspector of Factories, was supportive.

Lucy's friend Violet Markham relates that Lucy and May Tennant (also appointed) included in their responsibilities the inspection of sweat shops in Soho, which involved



dealing with their hostile foreign owners. A friend gave Lucy some practical advice at this time. She should keep clear of public speaking, trade unions etc. because the government would not employ a “party” woman who was strongly connected with any cause. Lucy was grateful for this advice, which may have made her more cautious, but clearly could not persuade her to relinquish entirely her involvement with causes she believed in. Not long afterwards she was at a trade union meeting with Lady Dilke, and was relieved that she managed to avoid being called upon to speak.

In 1898, as a result of what she was seeing in the course of her work, Lucy became convinced that dust particles and particularly asbestos were causing lung disease. Looked at under a microscope the particles were very sharp. These warnings were included in the reports of the Chief Inspector of Factories, but it was not until 1911 that they were taken seriously.

In 1901 public opinion was becoming incensed at what was happening in South Africa during the second Boer War. Emily Hobhouse, who had been to South Africa on behalf of a charity, had seen some of the conditions in the Concentration Camps. On her return to England she publicised the burning of farms, deportations, and semi-starvation in the disease ridden camps. The government was eventually forced into action and unusually decided to send out a “Ladies Commission” to South Africa to investigate the camps, which were mainly occupied by women and children as the men had been transported elsewhere. The Commission was chaired by Dame

Millicent Fawcett, a Liberal supporter, and Lucy was appointed as Secretary.

They went to South Africa and spent over four months travelling by train, inspecting the camps. In one of the last of her regular letters to her sister from South Africa, Lucy writes of her frustration at trying to get her viewpoint included in the report of the Commission. “It seemed to me that it would be most mischievous if we split. It would be more ‘white-washy’ than ever. So I have struggled and fought and pleaded and argued for my main points and got nearly all of them. I couldn’t prevent all the jam and blarney at the beginning...”

The eventual report fully supported Emily Hobhouse, and it may be that Lucy’s pressure was crucial. Conditions in the camps were improved and the high death rate was much reduced. Lucy’s letters to her sister give a vivid description of their own daily lives during this visit to South Africa: the ankle deep dust, difficulty of getting water to wash in and extortionate prices for vegetables and eggs. Lucy’s maid, Alice, had to sweep their accommodation several times a day to try to keep the dust down.

It was not long after her return that tragedy struck yet again. In 1903 Lucy’s beloved sister Hyacinthe died in a railway accident on her way back from her duties in Ireland. She had also had a position in public life as an Inspectress of Domestic Science.

Leaving London behind, Lucy moved to Westerham in Kent in 1904, and lived there for the rest of her life. Ill health in 1906 caused her to resign her official duties, but when she recovered it was not long before she was again

in demand. Under the Trade Board Act of 1909 various boards were set up, and Lucy sat on those relating to shirts, tin boxes and paper. Following the establishment of National Health Insurance in 1911 she held a senior administrative position as Chief Woman Organiser. In 1912 Mr Asquith (now Prime Minister) appointed her as a member of the Royal Commission on the Civil Service.

In 1911 Lucy married an Architect, Granville Edward Stewart Streatfeild, and she became known as Mrs. Deane Streatfeild. Her husband was always very supportive of her work. Women were demanding the right to vote, and Lucy was active in the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies. In 1913 there were large marches and rallies in London, and Lucy helped to organise the women's contingent from Westerham.

The outbreak of war in 1914 meant more government work. She was the woman member of the War Office Appeals Committee, which dealt with disputes over pensions and allowances to soldiers' dependents. Still concerned for working conditions, she organised the setting up of canteens for night workers in munition factories. This did not mean neglecting other matters about which she cared.

She supported the idea of the Women's Conference in The Hague in 1915. She was one of those selected by Mr. McKenna, the Home Secretary, to receive a passport, and no doubt all the government work she was doing made her an acceptable choice.

During the war ugly rumours had been circulating about the behaviour of women in the Women's Army Auxiliary

Corps. Lucy chaired the Commission of Enquiry sent out to France to investigate, and to look into the conditions under which the women lived in 1917/18. She found the conditions were good, and unsurprisingly that the rumours were grossly exaggerated. She did however comment that some of the women did not understand that when they were in uniform different behaviour was required. She threw herself into committee work in her home area of Kent, and was involved in a number of County Committees, including the West Kent Women's Agricultural Committee. She also became a Justice of the Peace acting for the Sevenoaks Petty Sessional Division.

A strong supporter of the Women's Institute, she founded the branch in Westerham, and produced some Shakespeare plays in which she also acted. She was very keen that these should be projects involving the whole community in the village. Her London connections were not entirely forgotten, and she was instrumental in setting up a home in Chelsea for unmarried mothers and their babies.

In 1918 public recognition of all Lucy had achieved had come in the form of a CBE, which was presented to her by King George V. Lucy died in 1950 and many tributes were paid to "a pioneer amongst women". She was a public servant who used her official positions and the status these gave her to work tirelessly for the improvement of the lives of others, particularly women.

## Helena Swanwick

1864–1939

By Nan Sheppard

Helena Swanwick was a feminist, writer and public speaker who worked tirelessly to promote peace and equality.

Born in Munich in 1864, her family moved to England when she was four.

Influenced by reading *The Subjection of Women* by John Stuart Mill at school, Helena rebelled against her parents' views on the role of women. She complained that: "A boy might be a person but not a girl. This was the ineradicable root of our differences. All my brothers had rights as persons; not I." Despite her obvious intelligence, Helena's parents refused to contribute to her university education when she received a partial scholarship to Girton College, Cambridge. Her mother believed that marriage and dependence was the only acceptable life for a woman. Fortunately, a sympathetic godmother agreed to pay Helena's fees and her education could continue. Armed with her degree, Helena was appointed lecturer in Psychology at Westfield College in London. She also worked as a journalist, and contributed to her family's finances, but her mother never approved of her lifestyle until Helena finally married in 1888. Helena and her husband Frederick, a lecturer in mathematics, moved to Manchester where they met with the city's cultural elite.

In 1905, Helena joined the North of England Suffrage Society, and her work for the pacifist cause began in earnest. She believed strongly in non-violence and tolerance and spoke extensively throughout England

*"Most men have  
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how immensely  
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co-operation of  
women"*

and Scotland in approval of equality between the sexes, socialism and peace. She had a way of engaging with her audiences, showing an understanding of their working-class struggles and reaching thousands with her powerful addresses.

"The encouragement we got from the poor and the inarticulate was best of all. Said one, 'What you bin saying, Ah bin thinkin long enough, but Ah niver gotten t'words reet...'"

Helena became editor of *The Common Cause* in 1909, opposing the Women's Social and Political Union for what she saw as its unnecessarily anti-male stance. Her own book, *The Future of the Women's Movement*, was published in 1913.

Despite not being one of the women who attended the International Congress of Women in 1915, Helena

was one of the founding members of the Women's International League, serving as chairperson from 1915 to 1922, by which time it was the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). From the outbreak of World War I, she began campaigning for peace and the formation of an international peace-keeping organisation. When the League of Nations was set up in 1919, Helena was critical of the permissions granted to use force and economic sanction as paths to peace, and believed that the Versailles settlement was an unjust and unsustainable treaty that would lead to future conflict. She wrote in her pamphlet, *Live Dangerously* that "Those who 'make peace by preparing for war' are not pursuing the right way; those who 'plan war to end war' are not pursuing the right way; those who plan violence in the cause of peace are not pursuing the right way."

Helena continued to write and became editor of *Foreign Affairs*, the journal of the Union of Democratic Control. She also wrote for the feminist journal, *Time and Tide*. She published several short stories, and continued to campaign for gender equality and peace. In 1927 she wrote, "It is my conviction that most men have not a notion how immensely better the world could be made for them, by the full co-operation of



women." Helena's autobiography, *I Have Been Young*, was published in 1935.

In 1929, Helena served as the UK's substitute delegate to the League of Nations. But in the 1930s, she became disenchanted by the talk of war, growing fascism in Europe and international attitudes towards violence. Helena's husband suffered ill health and died in 1934. Finally, growing increasingly depressed and struggling with her own health issues, Helena committed suicide with an overdose of sedatives, just a few months after the start of World War II.

## Jane Whyte 1857–1944

By Vicky Deary

*“brought together  
many conflicting  
organisations and  
united them under a  
common goal”*

Miss Jane Elizabeth Barbour was born in Bonskeid, Scotland in 1857. In 1881 she married The Reverend Dr Alexander Whyte and after a few years living together in 52 Melville Street, Edinburgh, they moved into the house where they would together make history through their spiritual, social and political works, number 7 Charlotte Square. Today the family home that housed the Whytes and their eight children from 1889 until 1927 is a beautifully preserved National Trust property in the New Town in Edinburgh.

Jane Whyte and her home are perhaps best known for their association with Abdu'l-Bahá' whom she first met in a prison in Palestine in 1906 when she was travelling with a companion. He was a leading figure of the Bahá'í faith and so inspired Jane that she spent years after their initial meeting giving formal talks and writing articles about both him and his faith. Indeed, she was so moved by her encounter in Akka, and Abdu'l-Bahá's gift to her of the tablet of the “Seven Candles of Unity” that she is often credited with bringing the Bahá'í faith to Scotland and being one of the first Scottish Bahá'ís.

Religion was no stranger to the Whyte household; her husband, Alexander, was the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland. Described as “a celebrated clergyman and well known throughout this part of the world” (Ahmad Sohrab, *Abdu'l-Bahá in Edinburgh: The Diary of Ahmad Sohrab* p.5) he encouraged his wife's support and promotion of the Bahá'í faith.

As a strong feminist and devoted to promoting cross

religious and cultural understanding, Jane Whyte single-handedly brought together many conflicting organisations and united them under a common goal. It is no wonder then, when World War I began in 1914 that she felt the need to act to stop it. A promoter of unity, peace and understanding her entire life, she was a natural candidate to be chosen to travel to The Hague in 1915 to attend the International Women's Congress.

However, despite being in possession of a passport and a passion to share her message, Jane was not able to attend the conference. As far as records show, there is no evidence to suggest that she attended the later Congresses in 1919 or 1926. One can imagine that her inability to go and speak on behalf of not just the women of Britain, but all of those who felt the injustice and futility of war was especially poignant for her as she lost her son, Robert Barbour, a Second Lieutenant in Black Watch (Royal Highlanders) later that same year.

Jane Whyte's activism continued until her death in 1944. Her home during the early 1900s was the meeting place of many women's rights groups. She bravely brought together suffragists, suffragettes and



anti-suffragists to hear a talk from her esteemed friend Abdu'l-Bahá, who preached to them the importance of unity and spirituality. But he also addressed the role of women more specifically, forewarning in a speech in 1913 that women should endeavour to study and train in every kind of science and art and social service; “ ‘Fit yourselves for responsibility’, he said, adding with sad emphasis, ‘you will inevitably have it thrust upon you.’” (*Ibid.* p. 14)

Jane Whyte was a remarkable woman. Promoting unity and knowledge amongst the many groups she either headed, brought together or merely worked tirelessly for, she was truly a dangerous woman of her time. This was a legacy she would also pass on to her children; one of her daughters, Janet Chance, was a pioneer of women's rights and worked tirelessly to reform laws governing abortion rights and campaigned for sexual liberalisation. Jane herself went on to become an active member in the Peace Movement of the '20s and '30s, remaining an influential figure with friends and guests such as Gandhi, with whom she frequently corresponded.

Mrs Whyte was many things to many people; her obituary summarises her life as a series of remarkable achievements:

“Mrs Alexander Whyte, who died recently, for a full half century took an active part in many of the most forward looking movements of her day... They included the provision of nursing services in the Hebrides long before any official body had realised their need, the

interlinking of art and especially craftsmanship with the life of the church, the provision of coeducational residential schools, the carrying out of a survey in the depressed part of Edinburgh. Many plans destined to affect the life of the world were discussed round her table, where men of such varied personality and interests as General Booth,... Mr W. B. Yeats, Baron Friedrich Von Hugel could be met.” (*The Glasgow Herald*. 6th December 1944).

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WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR  
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