

A SUFFRAGE WALK AROUND WHITELADIES ROAD BY LUCIENNE BOYCE

This circular walk is a companion to the Bristol Suffragette Walk in *The Bristol Suffragettes* by Lucienne Boyce (ISBN 978-1-78132-106-5). It includes some new information about Annie Kenney and Census Night. You can do it as a detour from the main walk, but it is quite long and some of it is uphill, so you may wish to do it as a separate walk. However you choose to do the walk, there are plenty of cafes and shops on the way. Allow at least 40 minutes – more for browsing and breaks!

Start

The start of the Whiteladies Road Suffrage Walk is at 16 Arlington Villas which is No 3 in ‘A Walk with the Bristol Suffragettes’ pp 81 to 90 *The Bristol Suffragettes*.

16 Arlington Villas

As mentioned in the Bristol Suffragette Walk, 16 Arlington Villas is one of a number of places where Annie Kenney lived during her time as Bristol Women’s and Social Political Union organiser. However, information gleaned from the 1911 Census Records shows that by Census Night (2 April 1911) she was at 9 Whatley Road. You can find out more about what she got up to on Census Night later in the walk.

[You are standing at the side of St Paul’s Church, Clifton. To get a clearer view of the church, walk to the end of Arlington Villas and turn left.]

St Paul’s Church, Clifton

In 1914, suffragettes interrupted a church service with prayers for imprisoned comrades.

At the end of 1913 the WSPU began putting pressure on the Church of England to speak out against forcible feeding. In 1914, WSPU deputations were sent to a number of Bishops, including to the Bishop of Bristol on 9 March 1914. When the Church remained unsympathetic more drastic action was taken. This included the interruption of services, as well as arson and other attacks on church property.

One of these protests was carried out in St Paul’s Church during an evening service in February 1914. Suffragettes chanted a prayer for their imprisoned comrades and for all who were persecuted for the sake of freedom. The churchwarden tried to stop the women, but they got to the end of their prayer.

The original church was opened in 1853, and rebuilt after a fire in 1867 which only the tower and clock survived.

[From St Paul's Church, walk back into Arlington Villas and retrace your steps to Pembroke Road. Turn right onto Pembroke Road and then right onto Oakfield Road.]

9 Oakfield Road - Eliza Walker Dunbar (1845 – 1925)

A medical pioneer and suffrage campaigner.



A plaque placed by Clifton and Hotwells Improvement Society marks the home of Eliza Walker Dunbar. She was born in India, the daughter of a surgeon, and educated at Cheltenham Ladies' College. As women were not allowed to study medicine in England, she went to Zurich University where she qualified as a doctor in 1872. In 1873 she became Bristol's first female resident house surgeon when she was offered a position at the Bristol Royal Hospital for Sick Children. She was forced out of this post when all the male doctors carried out their threat to resign if she was appointed. She set up a private practice in Clifton, the Read Dispensary for Women and Children in Hotwells in 1876, and went on to found a private women's hospital at 34 Berkeley Square.

She was a member of the committee of the non-militant Bristol and West of England Suffrage Society and a frequent speaker for the cause. She was present at what the local press dubbed a "monster" suffrage meeting of over three thousand women at Colston Hall on 3 November 1880, one of the earliest meetings at which all the speakers were women.

Eliza Walker Dunbar died at 9 Oakfield Road on 25 August 1925.

[Continue along to the end of Oakfield Road until you come to Whiteladies Road. Turn left onto Whiteladies Road and continue up towards Clifton Down Shopping Centre.]

111a Whiteladies Road – the NUWSS

The shop and office of the law-abiding suffragists.

Pause outside Clifton Down Shopping Centre and look across to the Sue Ryder Charity Shop on the opposite side of Whiteladies Road. This is number 111/111a, where the non-militant National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, previously based in Park Street, opened a shop and office in 1910. The NUWSS moved back to Park Street in 1913.

[Continue on past Clifton Down Railway Station and turn left into Whatley Road, passing the University of Bristol's Canynge Hall and the Whiteladies Health Centre.]

9 Whatley Road – Census Night, 2 April 1911

“No Vote, No Census”: On 2 April, Annie Kenney’s home was filled with census resisters – women who refused to co-operate with the national census.

1911 was census year and women used the occasion to protest against the government’s continued failure to give women the vote. Both militants and non-militants joined a census boycott on Census Night, Sunday 2 April. Some spoiled their form; others spent the night away from home so that they would not be counted when the enumerators called. In Bath, the WSPU organiser took an empty house in Lansdowne Crescent and boycotters spent the night there. In Bristol too women arranged to spend the night away from home; groups of women gathered in several houses across the city. A few of the most daring crossed the Suspension Bridge in a caravan, intending to camp out at Failand, but abandoned the idea because of the bad weather.

Before the census, a rumour spread about the city that the protesters intended to gather in the Victoria Rooms after midnight. The police and the press duly flocked to Queen’s Road, only to discover the building in darkness. A journalist for the *Western Daily Press* had the bright idea of taking a taxi to a house in Clifton. In his report of his visit in Monday’s *WDP* (3 April 1911) he withheld the address and the name of the occupier. The house was not easy to find, and he and the taxi driver “searched the house doors” until they located it. However, all seemed quiet and it was not until the reporter listened at the front door that he heard people inside. Two women answered his knock and when he asked if “so and so” was at home they told him that “so and so” was away.

The obvious conclusion is that he called at 9 Whatley Road, but the evidence is confusing. For one thing, when the reporter eventually managed to track down Annie on Monday morning she told him that she had stuck a notice on her door which read: “House full. No vote, no census!” (*WDP*, Tuesday 4 April 1911). If this was so, why did the reporter find the house so hard to find? If he managed to find a house number in the dark, how did he miss a notice? So it is possible that he visited another house full of Bristol resisters.¹

In any event, the journalist eventually caught up with Annie and she told him that her “house full” of resisters had passed the night playing whist and bridge, while others slept. She added that she had written a lengthy statement on her census form: “Collect your information as best you can, but expect no help from those who do not count in the world of politics...” This statement is apparently missing from the Census records, but the first page of Annie’s form can still be seen with the word “suffragette” written under “occupation”.²

Annie was sure that the census boycott had been effective and that the government would never have accurate figures. The official version, however, told a different story: the officials

¹ It’s also puzzling that there do not seem to have been any police officers outside 9 Whatley Road. They must have known Annie’s residential address, yet their presence at the Victoria Rooms suggests that they did not know where she was that night. Had she only rented 9 Whatley Road for the purpose of evading the Census?

² For more information about the Census, see Jill Liddington, *Vanishing for the Vote: Suffrage, Citizenship and the Battle for the Census* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), p 166, note 29. Jill Liddington, with Elizabeth Crawford, has carried out extensive research about census evaders in the 1911 Census Records following the release of the census data (three years early) in 2009. Events in Bristol and Bath are described particularly in pp 154-164, but see various other references to Annie Kenney and Bristol.

had been prepared for the suffragette protests and very few people in Bristol (or nationally) had been missed off.

[Retrace your steps to Whiteladies Road. Turn right and cross over at the pedestrian lights outside Clifton Down Shopping Centre.]

Black Boy Hill: If you were to turn left and continue up Whiteladies Road you would come to Black Boy Hill. This is one of the many sites around the city where suffragettes held outdoor meetings. In 1908 regular meetings were held there on Wednesday afternoons. Many other meetings and major rallies were held on the Downs. However, our walk is taking us up Cotham Hill so...

[After you have crossed at the pedestrian lights outside Clifton Down Shopping Centre, turn right and walk up Cotham Hill. At the top of Cotham Hill you will see Western College, now the home of the Family Practice.]

Western College

One of many venues where Annie Kenney spoke about women's suffrage.

November 1908 was a busy month for Annie Kenney. At the start of the month she spoke in Avonmouth, and then back in Bristol for a debate with the Bristol Law Students' Society – her motion that women should be granted the vote on the same terms as men was defeated. She then organised and took part in major demonstrations at the Colston Hall on 13 November when Bristol North MP Augustine Birrell visited the city. Later that month she was involved in celebrations in Bath and Bristol to welcome back Clara Codd on her release after a month in prison. On top of all that, Annie managed to fit in a talk to students of the Western Theological College.

Western College was designed by Bristol architect Henry Dare Bryan (1868–1909) and opened on 27 September 1906 (there is a memorial tablet in the College vestibule, above the doors into what is now the reception area for the medical practice). The institution, which prepared men for ministry in the Congregational Church, was founded in Ottery St Mary in 1752. It had various homes until in 1901 it moved to Bristol to be near to Bristol's University College.³ The College was housed at 2 Hillside until the completion of the new buildings. There were around 25 students who studied at University College for degrees from the University of London; the full arts and theology curriculum took six years to complete.

The College suffered bomb damage during the Second World War, and was used by Bristol Grammar School when the school's premises were destroyed. One morning during BGS's occupation an unexploded bomb was discovered and two hundred boys had to be evacuated.

Incidentally, Mr Dove Willcox is listed amongst Western College's benefactors; presumably this is the same Mr Dove Willcox whose daughter-in-law was Bristol suffragette Lilian Dove Willcox.

³ The Academy moved to Bridport in 1765, from there to Exeter in 1829, and to Plymouth in 1845. In 1891 the Bristol Congregational Institute amalgamated with the Western Academy and in 1901 the College settled in Bristol.

[Retrace your steps back down Cotham Hill for a short way, and turn left onto Woodland Road, passing the church, and turning right onto Tyndalls Park Road. Cross over Tyndalls Park Road to the large detached house on the corner with Woodland Road, now number 36 Tyndalls Park Road.]

Chilliswood House: The Sturge Sisters

The home of an extraordinary group of sisters who were pioneers in many areas of women's emancipation.

This large house is Chilliswood (the name can still be seen carved into the wall next to the stone pier on the right as you face the property, which now houses the University of Bristol's Department of Theology). It was the home of the Sturges, a Quaker family, between 1864 and 1905. Charlotte and William Sturge, a land surveyor, had eleven children, of whom three sons and six daughters lived to adulthood. Three of the girls, Elizabeth (1849–1944), Emily (1847–1892) and Helen Maria (1858–1945), attended classes at Bristol University College.

Elizabeth and Emily were supporters of the non-militant suffrage movement. Both took part in meetings and peaceful demonstrations in London. Elizabeth was also involved, with Dr Eliza Walker Dunbar (see 9 Oakfield Road above), in plans for the Shirehampton garden suburb.

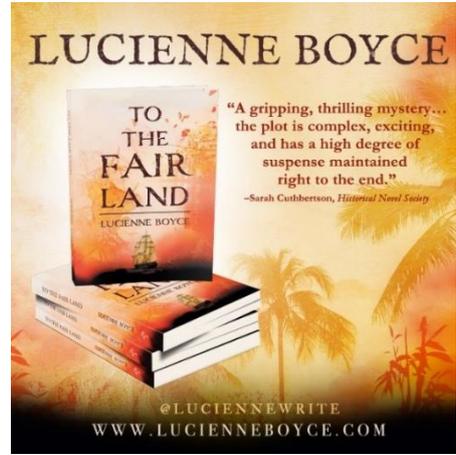
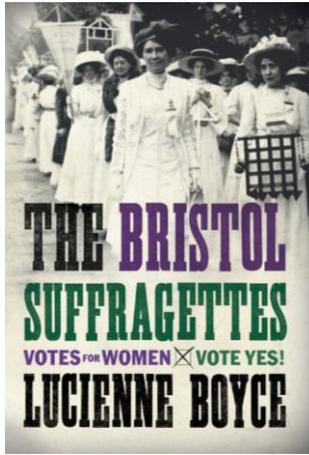
Emily was honorary secretary of the Bristol and West of England Society for Women's Suffrage and spoke frequently in the west country and beyond. She was one of the founders of the Bristol Women's Liberal Association in 1881. She also established a day college for trainee women teachers at 21 Berkeley Square, which opened shortly after she died. She was the first woman to sit on the council of Redland High School for Girls (Elizabeth joined the council four years after her sister's death).

Helen Maria Sturge was an assistant honorary secretary of the Bristol Women's Liberal Association, and in 1908 stood unsuccessfully in the first city council elections in which women were eligible for election.

The other sisters were also pioneers in their way. Caroline (1861–1921) studied medicine in London. After qualifying she specialised in midwifery and worked at the New Hospital for Women founded by Elizabeth Garrett Anderson. Mary Charlotte (1852–1929) studied at Newnham College, Cambridge at a time when, after a long struggle, women were allowed to study, but not to hold degrees.

[Continue along Tyndalls Park Road until you reach Whiteladies Road. Turn left and walk down to rejoin the main walk at the Victoria Rooms. Or, if you want to return to the start of this walk, cross Whiteladies Road at the pedestrian lights on the crossroads and continue straight on along St Paul's Road and back to St Paul's Church and Arlington Villas.]

I hope you have enjoyed the Whiteladies Road Suffrage Walk. Directions and street numbering have been checked as far as possible, but if you do want to suggest corrections you can email me at lucienne@lucienneboyce.com



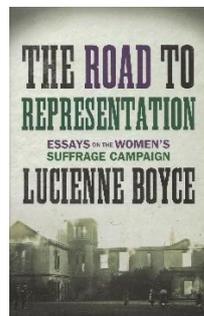
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