

Lucienne Boyce

Allen, Mary Sophia (1878-1964)

Mary Allen was born in Roath, Glamorgan and joined the WSPU in 1909 after hearing Annie Kenney speak. She was imprisoned and forcibly fed three times, the first after participating in a deputation to the House of Commons in February 1909. This experience convinced her of the need for a female police force. She was in Holloway for a month, where set to work mending men's shirts the suffragettes embroidered "Votes for Women" on the shirt tails.

On her release she worked as an unpaid West of England Branch organiser in Newport and Cardiff until on 29 June 1909 she was arrested for breaking a Home Office window. She returned to Bristol on 4 September when she and Mrs Dove Willcox were met at Temple Meads by a procession led by Annie Kenney. On 13 November 1909 she was sentenced to 14 days in Bristol for breaking windows during Winston Churchill's visit to the city. She was then pronounced unfit for further militant work. She became a WSPU organiser in Hastings in 1912 and Edinburgh in 1914, where she organised the delivery of pamphlets into King George's carriage during a Royal visit.

She was planning further militant attacks when the war broke out. She joined the Women Police Volunteers (WPV), but was disappointed when at the end of hostilities the WPV was dismissed. She spent the rest of her career campaigning for the foundation of a permanent female police force. This was not without controversy: she kept the WPV going on a voluntary basis and was tried for impersonating a police officer in 1920. Also controversial was her support for the Nazis. She visited Hitler in 1934 and urged him to create a force of Nazi policewomen. She became a member of the British Union of Fascists and her activities were curtailed during the Second World War, though she was not imprisoned. She died in a Croydon nursing home on 16 December 1964.

Bard, Wilkie (1874-1944)

Wilkie Bard was a music hall comedian whose real name was William August Smith. He was famous for his songs and character sketches such as *The Nightwatchman* and *The Charlady*, and for his pantomime dames. He appeared in Bristol many times, at the Hippodrome and also at Prince's Theatre. Prince's, which stood on Park Row, was renowned for its pantomimes, which were produced by theatre owner, Mr Macready Chute, himself, and won the praise of no less a critic than George Bernard Shaw.

One of Wilkie Bard's popular songs was *Put Me Upon An Island (Where the Girls are Few)*. It is one of many music hall songs written during the suffragette campaign. Some are downright unpleasant. "Feed 'em with a hosepipe" cries Mark Sheridan in *In the Days That Are Coming Bye and Bye*. Arthur Aiston's *The Suffragette* credits Mrs Pancake with the declaration "Man? I hate him. I hate him", and promises in a chorus that, "When once the vote we get/We'll make it hot for men you bet".

Many of the songs have catchy choruses, and were probably sung with gusto at suffrage meetings, reflecting as they did popular images of the suffragette as old maid, hammer-

swinging Amazon, or the woman who really wants not "votes for women" but "blokes for women" (Mark Sheridan again). In *That Ragtime Suffragette* sung by Warwick Green we are introduced to "That ragtime suffragette/Ragging with bombshells and ragging with bricks/Hagging and nagging in politics./That ragtime suffragette/She's no household pet". There are some songs that raise a laugh, anti though they are. In a rolling Scots accent Jock Mills wails "I'm suffering from a suffragette,/Suffering as you can see./Since my wife joined the suffragists/I've been a suffragee". Jen Latona gives a reminder that not every calamity can be laid at the feet of the suffragettes in *You Can't Blame the Suffragettes for That*.

And Wilkie Bard's contribution? "Put me upon an island where the girls are few,/Put me among the most ferocious lions in the zoo,/Put me upon a treadmill and I'll never fret,/But for pity's sake don't put me near a suffragette".

Beamish, Agnes Olive (1890-1978)

When Agnes Olive Beamish's family moved to Clifton from her birthplace Cork so that her four brothers could attend Clifton College, Agnes was sent first to a private school, then to Clifton High School. She joined the WSPU when she was 16 and wore her "Votes for Women" button at school. She later said she became a suffragist during the 1905 election when she realised she would never have political equality with her brothers.

After studying Mathematics and Economics at Girton College, Cambridge she moved to London in 1912. Her first militant act was to take part in the pillar box raids that autumn. She worked as a WSPU organiser in Battersea, and during the war joined Sylvia Pankhurst's Workers' Suffrage Federation in the East End. Agnes was arrested, with Elsie Duvall, in April 1913 when they were found in possession of incendiary material, and again with Elsie in January 1914 when she was charged with setting fire to a house in Egham in March 1913. She was convicted under the name Phyllis Brady and hunger struck and was forcibly fed on both occasions.

Agnes later served on the executive of the Association of Women Clerks and Secretaries, which in 1941 became part of the Clerical and Administrative Workers Union, changing its name to Apex in 1972. She was for a time a member of the Communist Party, but left to join the Labour Party. She died in Suffolk.

Begbrook House, Bristol

On 11 November 1913, the head gardener at Begbrook House in Frenchay near Bristol discovered that the building was on fire. The house stood in its own wooded grounds, and was said to have twenty rooms and a fine old staircase.

Within a few hours the house was gutted. The fire caused £3,000 worth of damage. A copy of the WSPU newspaper, *The Suffragette*, was left at the site with the message, "Birrell is coming. Rachel Pease is still being tortured".

Augustine Birrell was the Liberal MP for Bristol North, and a cabinet minister. He was frequently targetted by militants in Bristol. Suffragettes interrupted his meetings and two

women once accosted him at Temple Meads Railway Station with their demand for the vote.

Begbrook House belonged to Hugh Thomas Coles, a wealthy banker. Hugh Coles was the son of William Gale Cole of Clifton, who was also a banker, and was born in Clifton in 1856. Like his father before him, Hugh Coles was treasurer of Clifton College. He was also very active in church business, and was treasurer to the Diocesan Training College in Fishponds for fifty years, until he resigned in 1939 due to ill health (he died in 1940). This post too had been held by his father before him, and was inherited by his son, Denys. Hugh Coles lived in Begbrook House between 1906 and 1912 with his wife Wilhelmina, two sons, a daughter, and five servants. But when the fire broke out, he and his family had already moved away and were living at Elmcroft, Winterbourne Down. The house was still in his ownership, but it was untenanted.

It wasn't always possible to be certain that an arson attack had been carried out by suffragettes. On the night Begbrook burned, the cactus house at Alexandra Park in Manchester and a tennis pavilion in Catford were both damaged by fire. In these cases, nothing was found linking the fires to the suffragettes, but they were suspected, which is some indication of the impact that suffragette militancy had on the public consciousness. Whenever there was a fire, the suffragettes were blamed for it. It was very easy to frame the militants, and there were cases of arson attacks where suffragette literature was deliberately planted by the guilty parties, who were usually after the insurance money.

However, in the case of Begbrook I think we can be sure that the suffragettes were responsible, particularly given the connection to an earlier arson attack. Begbrook House burned a fortnight after the University of Bristol's Sports Pavilion. Here arsonists also left a demand for the release of Rachel Pease and Mary Richardson, who both lived in London but had been active in Bristol.

Could there have been any other reason for targeting Begbrook? Hugh Coles was a magistrate, and that could conceivably have made him a target. On the other hand, he was a conservative not a Liberal, and the suffragettes' fight was with the Liberal party. In fact, Bristol organiser Dorothy Evans once apologised for breaking the windows of a conservative club in error. So I don't think there was any reason for selecting Begbrook other than that it met the criteria of being empty and isolated. But of course many of the circumstances surrounding this and other militant attacks remain a mystery...

A care home now stands on the spot once occupied by Begbrook House.

Bland, Violet (1863-1940)

Violet Ann Bland was born in Bayston Hill, Shrewsbury in 1863. After working as a kitchen maid at Dudmaston Hall (now owned by the National Trust), she moved to Bristol. Here she ran a domestic science college for ladies before settling in London in 1910. In August 1909 she decorated the garden of her Bristol house for a reception for hunger-strikers Lillian Dove-Willcox and Mary Allen on their release from prison.

She was arrested on Black Friday, 10 November 1910, when women protesting about the failure of the Conciliation Bill they were treated with remarkable brutality by the police. One hundred and seventeen women and two men were arrested but the Home Secretary, Winston Churchill, secured their discharge on the grounds that no public advantage would be gained by prosecuting them. Churchill was no sympathiser to the suffragettes however. He argued against the Conciliation Bill, and he refused to institute an inquiry into the conduct of the police.

Violet Bland joined the March 1912 West End window-smashing campaign. This time she was prosecuted, with Violet Ethel Baldock, for breaking windows worth £10. She was imprisoned for four months and while in Aylesbury Prison went on hunger-strike and was forcibly fed.

Blathwayt, Mary (1879-1961)

Mary Blathwayt was the daughter of Colonel Linley Blathwayt, who retired to Eagle House, Batheaston in 1882 after serving in India, and his wife Emily. She was a member of the Bath Suffrage Society when in July 1906 she also joined the WSPU, and until 1908 she was an active member of both organisations.

Mary became treasurer of the Bath WSPU in 1908, and worked with Annie Kenney in Bristol. She chalked pavements and handed out leaflets, ran the Bristol WSPU shop, arranged meetings, went to some of the London demonstrations, and chaired outdoor meetings. She was also exposed to violence: at one meeting in Bath in November 1908 two hundred "hooligans" rushed the platform. For a time Mary lived with Annie Kenney in Bristol lodgings, and did her washing and mending for her.

The Blathwayts were amongst the WSPU's most ardent west country supporters. Eagle House became a place where suffragettes could rest and recuperate after speaking tours or prison sentences. Annie Kenney, Christabel and Mrs Pankhurst, Mrs Pethick Lawrence, Lady Constance Lytton and Theresa Garnett were frequent guests. Many others enjoyed the Blathwayts' hospitality. Colonel Blathwayt, whose interests included natural history, photography and gardening, conceived the idea of inviting his famous visitors to plant trees to commemorate their visits. An area known as Annie's Arboretum was soon filled, each planting ceremony recorded by the enthusiastic photographer.

Mary never took part in any militant activities, and it was to be the intensification of militancy that eventually led to the Blathwayts' withdrawal from the WSPU. Mrs Blathwayt resigned in 1908 and Mary in 1913. However, the Blathwayts remained interested in women's suffrage. When the war broke out they joined the Bath Red Cross Society. Mary died at Eagle House on 25 June 1961.

Codd, Clara (1876-1971)

Clara Codd was born in Bishops Taunton, Barnstaple, North Devon. When she was 23 her father died and the family moved to Geneva, where she became a theosophist. On their return to England they settled in Bath. Clara was a member of the Theosophical Society,

the Bath Suffrage Society (NUWSS), and the Social Democratic Federation when in 1907 a speech by Annie Kenney inspired her to join the WSPU.

She worked with Annie Kenney in Bristol and Bath, arranging and speaking at meetings and coming in for her share of rough treatment. In 1908 she became honorary secretary of the Bath branch of the WSPU, and on 13 October was a participant in the Rush the House of Commons demonstration. Her task was to enter the House of Commons: how she was to achieve this in the face of the 6,000 policemen in Parliament Square was left to her. She spent the day hiding in Westminster Underground Station and at 8 pm walked, apparently unnoticed, through the police cordons and into the building. She was soon arrested and served a month in Holloway. She later recalled that the prison clothes were all the same size, so tall women had skirts around their knees while shorter women had to hold up their skirts when they moved. On her release she returned to Bristol. Shortly after she was offered a post as a paid WSPU organiser but rejected it in favour of what was to become the remainder of her life's work: lecturing and writing for the Theosophical Society.

Cross, Mabel Harriete (1872-1940)

Usually referred to as Mrs W C H Cross, she was born Mabel Harriette Duncan in Bristol in 1872. Her mother was Adelaide, and her father, Edward Duncan, was a tea wholesaler. In the 1880s the family were living in Westbury-on-Trym near Bristol. By the time of the 1901 Census the family had moved to Clifton. Mabel does not appear with them on the Census however, and it is possible that at this time she was training or working as a nurse. A Mabel Duncan is recorded on the 1901 Census as a "sick nurse" in Weston-Super-Mare. At some point Mabel was a district nurse in London.

She was back in Bristol in the early 1900s when she was honorary secretary of the Women's Reform Union (WRU). The WRU had been formed by Quaker sisters and suffragists Anna Maria and Mary Priestman. In 1908 Mabel Duncan and Sarah Jane Tanner organised a Bristol WRU contingent to join the NUWSS procession on 13 June which culminated in a meeting in the Albert Hall in London.

In 1908 Mabel Duncan married William Charles Henry Cross (1855-1936). William was born in Merriott, Somerset (near Crewkerne). His father was rector of Merriott, but by 1881 his mother, Caroline Mary, was a widow. At this time the Cross family was living in Westbury-on-Trym, as were the Duncans. Both families were reasonably well off, each employing two servants. Ten years later, William had qualified as a solicitor and lived in Clifton, where he and Mabel settled after their marriage.

Mabel and William were active in the Liberal party, and prominent in the local women's suffrage campaign. The WRU and the Bristol branch of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) amalgamated in 1909. They had been working jointly for some time previously, holding outdoor meetings on the Downs and the Horsefair, as well as in the Victoria Rooms. Mabel Cross became joint honorary secretary of the Bristol suffrage society with Sarah Tanner until 1913, after which she held the post alone. Her sister, Maud, was also active in the NUWSS.

In 1909 Mabel was stage manager for the performance in Keynsham of a suffrage play called *Man and Woman* by suffragist Mary Jane Ward (1851-1933). She also continued to speak at meetings in and around Bristol, including at a large demonstration on Durdham Down in 1910.

In 1913 she was a member of the executive committee of the West of England Federation of Suffrage Societies, and organising secretary for the West of England section of the Women's Suffrage Pilgrimage. As pilgrims, she and Sarah Jane Tanner were attacked by an anti-suffrage mob in Twerton, Bath. Sarah Jane Tanner was knocked down and badly bruised. Mabel Cross hid in a nearby house and escaped from the back disguised as a man.

During the First World War she was superintendent of a maternity centre and mothers' school in Bedminster, Bristol. She gave talks at Co-operative meetings, Patriotic Societies and Bristol Women's Liberal Society meetings on health, infant welfare and the need for women police and magistrates. In 1915 she interviewed nurses from the west of England and Wales for the Scottish Women's Hospital Unit, and organised the seeing off of nurses, transports and supplies. She was also chair of a committee formed to set up a hostel in Bristol for women workers.

In 1918 the Bristol NUWSS recognised her contribution to women's suffrage by presenting her with an attaché case and an antique limerick lace scarf and collar. Perhaps this is the train of limerick lace she lent to her daughter, Mary, when she married Robert George Randall of Guernsey in 1929. When the NUWSS changed its name to the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship in 1919 Mabel Cross was appointed secretary of the Bristol branch. She was president of the Bristol Women's Liberal Association in 1921, and a founder member of the Bristol Venture Club: the Venture Club went on to become the Soroptimists.

William Cross died in 1936. After his death, Mabel went to live in Guernsey. She died there in 1940.

Dove Willcox, Lillian (1875-1963)

Lillian Dove Willcox (nee Dugdale, later Mrs Buckley) was born in Bristol. A widow, she joined the WSPU in 1908. On 29 July 1909 she was one of twelve women at a WSPU meeting in London to receive medals from Mrs Pankhurst. The honour had been earned after their imprisonment and hunger strike following a deputation to the House of Commons on 29 June 1909, when they had broken windows in Government offices. The award proceedings were interrupted when the police arrived to serve summonses on Lillian Dove Willcox and Theresa Garnett. Each faced two charges of assault on wardresses during their stay in Holloway. At their trial on 4 August, Theresa Garnett was sentenced to a further month in prison and Lillian Dove Willcox ten days. Back in prison they were put in punishment cells. They were released on 8 August after a hunger strike.

When Annie Kenney left Bristol in 1911, Lillian Dove Willcox took over as WSPU organiser. On 16 February 1912 she heckled Bristol MP Charles Hobhouse at an anti-suffrage meeting in Colston Hall. On 9 March 1913 she was at St Andrew's Hall in

Glasgow when Mrs Pankhurst was arrested. Lillian Dove Willcox was arrested again on 11 March 1913 while attempting to petition the King at the opening of Parliament.

When Bristol students wrecked the WSPU shop in Bristol in October 1913, Lillian Dove Willcox was in prison. She had been arrested on 8 October in Piccadilly trying to prevent the arrest of Annie Kenney. For attempting to puncture the tyres of the taxi carrying Annie to prison, she was sentenced to a £2 fine or twenty days.

After the WSPU ceased suffrage activities on the outbreak of the First World War, Lillian Dove Willcox joined Sylvia Pankhurst's East London Federation of Suffragettes. She became a member of the Suffragette Fellowship founded in 1926 to bring together militant women and commemorate the struggle of the suffragettes.

Evans, Dorothy (1888-1944)

The 29 August 1913 issue of *The Suffragette* announced a forthcoming welcome-meeting for a new organiser of the Bristol & West of England WSPU – Miss Dorothy Evans. London-born Dorothy Evans joined the WSPU in 1907. She left her PE teaching post at Batley Girls' Grammar School in 1909 after her arrest for breaking windows at the Batley Conservative Club. In court she apologised for this action, saying the women's quarrel was not with the Conservatives, but the Liberal Government. Her father paid her fine against her will and she was released.

Between 1910-12 she was the WSPU's organiser in Birmingham. She was arrested on 18 November 1910 during the "Black Friday" demonstration in London when women were treated with great brutality. She spent 7 days in prison in May 1911 for refusing to pay her dog tax licence as part of a "no taxation without representation" campaign. In 1912 she was arrested for her part in the window-smashing campaign in London; she was forcibly fed in prison, and released in July. She then worked for WSPU HQ, travelling about in disguise engaged in arson, before being sent to Bristol in 1913. Sylvia Pankhurst described her as sturdy and handsome, and praised her courage.

Dorothy Evans's stay in Bristol was a short one, for in September 1913 she was organiser at the newly-established WSPU office in Belfast. She was arrested in Belfast in April 1914 and charged with possession of explosives. Her protests during the court proceedings included failing to appear at court on 20 April 1914, instead driving several times past the Central Police Station in a gaily-decorated car. She became a pacifist during the First World War, and continued to work for feminist and socialist causes when the hostilities ended.

Feek, Florence, A Worcester Suffragette (1877-1940)

On 31 March 1909, thirty suffragettes attempted to get into the House of Commons to speak to Prime Minister Asquith. Nine of them were arrested after a struggle with the police. Amongst them was Florence Eliza Feek of Pershore. Florence was the daughter of

Julius Harnworth Feek, who was the minister of the Baptist church at 2 Broad Street for thirty one years until his retirement in 1903. He was also on the Board of Guardians, and a district and parish councillor. The family lived at Myrtle Cottage, Pershore.

Florence was a civil servant who worked in the General Post Office at St Martin Le Grand in London, and was also involved in social work with women and girls. It was that social work, she said, that made her a militant. She became a member of the Women's Social and Political Union after hearing Mrs Pankhurst and Mrs Emmeline Pethick Lawrence speak in Hampstead in 1907.

In Bow Street Magistrates' Court on 2 April 1909, the arrested women were charged with obstruction. They were all sentenced to a month in prison. In court, Florence refused to be bound over and protested that she was not a criminal, but a political prisoner.

When the nine were released on 30 April, the WSPU held a reception for them in London. The *From Prison to Citizenship* banner hung on the stage behind Christabel Pankhurst, and Florence and the others spoke about their prison experiences. She said that she had been haunted in prison by the song the '*Women's Marseillaise*'. She added that she felt her time in prison was rewarded when she heard that her two brothers and a man friend had changed their minds about militancy.

Florence was born on 26 December 1876 with a twin brother, Harry. A promising artist, Harry died around 1899. The brothers she converted to the cause were Arthur and Percy. Arthur Julius Feek was born in Redditch in 1869 four years before his father moved to Pershore. He was educated at Tettenhall College, Staffs, and later qualified as an accountant. He married Miss Annie E Milburn in 1920, and died in 1935. Florence attended his funeral.

The pastor's youngest son was Percy George Feek, who was also born in Redditch. He studied at Evesham Grammar School, and then the University Colleges of Bangor and Aberystwyth. He was the Director of Education for Derby until his retirement in 1933. At this time, their 86 year old mother, Mary Ann Feek, was still living in Myrtle Cottage in Pershore and Percy went to live with her. He never married, spent his leisure time boating, and in 1910 published *The Navigation of the Avon, with Notes on the Worcestershire Bridges and Mills*. Like his father, he undertook a number of civic roles including membership of the Board of Guardians.

Norfolk-born Mary Ann Feek died in 1939 aged 92, leaving Percy and her daughter. Florence was described by the *Worcester Journal* 16 December 1939 as "a retired civil servant in London, [and] an active advocate, with other very prominent members of the movement, of women's franchise".

However, Florence moved away from the WSPU as suffragette militancy escalated. She devoted her spare time to working in Canning Town Women's Settlement. With her friend Miss Laura Stead she founded the West Ham Home and Hostel for Girls.

Although her brothers remained Baptists (Percy was a deacon of Osmaston Road Baptist Church in Derby), Florence became a Quaker and was secretary of the Wanstead Friends

Meeting. She retired from the Post Office in 1936. She continued her social work and went to the County Hostel most weekends.

In September 1940 London endured a week of almost non-stop bombing, with nearly forty raids and 2,000 bombs dropped. Tragically, Florence was amongst the civilians killed during these air raids when the County Hostel at 35 High Street, Plaistow was almost destroyed by a bomb on 15 September 1940. She was taken to Whipps Cross Hospital and died later that day. Her funeral was held at Golders Green Crematorium on 28 September 1940.

In October 1941 Florence Feek was memorialised by the provision of two extra room for the County branch of the West Ham Home for Girls at Jordans Village, Buckinghamshire, a Quaker settlement founded in 1919. Over a hundred people attended, including Laura Stead who was Superintendent of the Home. Her brother Percy was in the chair. On the following Sunday during the service at Jordans Friends' Meeting house there were further tributes to Miss Feek.

Garnett, Theresa (1888-1966)

Leeds-born Theresa Garnett trained as a teacher and joined the WSPU in 1907. She was involved in a number of militant actions before her most famous escapade in Bristol, when she attacked Winston Churchill with a whip. These included chaining herself to a statue in the Central Lobby of the Houses of Parliament, gate-crashing a reception at the Foreign Office, and breaking Government office windows. She was imprisoned and went on hunger strike in Holloway and Walton gaol in Liverpool.

Her most notorious action took place in Bristol when on 13 November 1909 she assaulted Winston Churchill at Temple Meads railway station. Churchill had come to speak at a charity event in the city that evening. She broke through a cordon of detectives surrounding the politician and lunged at him with a whip crying (according to some accounts), "Take that you brute!" She was charged with disturbing the peace, though in court she protested that she should have been charged with assault. She was sentenced to a month in Horfield. Later, however, she denied that she had touched Churchill.

In Horfield she went on hunger strike and was forcibly fed. She protested by setting fire to her cell and was placed in solitary confinement. On the eleventh day she was found unconscious and moved to the prison hospital.

By 1910 she was WSPU organiser at Camberwell, but by now she had had enough of suffragette militancy and left the WSPU. During the First World War she served as a nurse at the front. After the war she joined the Suffragette Fellowship, founded in 1926 to bring former suffragettes together, and the Women's Freedom League. She was also a member of the Six Point Group, founded in 1921 by Margaret Haig to work for women's equality.

You can see a 2009 re-enactment of Theresa Garnett's attack on Winston Churchill by the Bristol Radical History Group on YouTube [here](#). For the Bristol Radical History Group see their [website](#).

Gibbs, George Abraham (1873–1931)

George Abraham Gibbs lived in Tyntesfield near Bristol, which is now a National Trust property. He was the Conservative MP for Bristol West between 1906 and 1928. That meant he was in Parliament during the women's suffrage campaign, and one of Bristol's MPs at the height of suffragette militancy in the city. Gibbs was opposed to women's suffrage, and in 1910 voted against the Conciliation Bill, which would have enfranchised some women.

However, unlike his more unfortunate Liberal counterparts, he did not have to endure heckling and interruptions at his meetings, arson attacks on his homes, or thrashings such as the one suffragette Theresa Garnett gave Liberal MP Winston Churchill in Bristol in 1909. This was because the target of WSPU militancy was the government and its ministers, and at this time the Liberals were in power.

Gibbs does not seem to have paid the women's franchise much attention. As far as I can see, he never spoke about suffrage in the House of Commons. He broke his silence in the House of Lords, where he sat from 1928–1931 as 1st Baron Wraxall. Here he promoted the 1928 Act which gave Parliamentary representation to Reading University. The University had only received its charter in 1926, and so had not been included with the older universities which had seats in Parliament under the recently-passed 1928 Representation of the People Act. The Representation of the People Act had included votes for university graduates in university constituencies. The university franchise was not removed until the 1948 Representation of the People Act.

The only other franchise debate in which Gibbs seems to have been involved was in 1931 when he opposed a motion to abolish the right of "men in business" to two votes based on both their home and business addresses, provided they were in different constituencies and the business premises were worth over £10 per annum. For businesswomen, the value was set at £5 per annum. This right had been granted by the 1918 Representation of the People Act.

Gibbs argued that just because businessmen "spend their days in the city and their nights in the country...that is no reason why they should be deprived of their votes, when they are carrying a great deal of the burden of the taxes and rates". During the debate he described Bristol as "one of the greatest cities in this country". Plural voting was finally abolished by the 1948 Representation of the People Act.

Gibbs was educated at Eton and Oxford. He served in the South African War, and was Conservative Whip between 1917–24 and 1924–28. His hobbies were hunting, travelling and shooting.

The Gibbs family wealth derived from importing 'guano' (bird droppings) from Peru for use as a fertiliser. It will come as no surprise to learn that much of the labour on which their fortune was built was carried out by slaves, convicts, and later by workers indentured under conditions that were little removed from slavery (as acknowledged by the National Trust on their website).

Hamilton, Cicely (1872–1952)

Cicely Hamilton was a suffrage campaigner who joined the militant Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), and wrote the words for the WSPU anthem, *The March of the Women*, music by Ethel Smythe. Later critical of the dictatorial style of the Pankhursts, Cicely left the WSPU to join the Women's Freedom League, and edited their paper *The Vote*. In 1908 she founded the Women Writers' Suffrage League and the Actresses' Franchise League.

She achieved success with her play *Diana of Dobson's* in 1908, and went on to write a number of suffrage plays with her friend Christopher St John (born Christabel Marshall, 1871–1960), including the comedies *How the Vote Was Won* and *The Pot and the Kettle*. In 1910 she wrote *A Pageant of Great Women*, which featured fifty two great women including Joan of Arc, Jane Austen, Angelica Kauffman, and Charlotte Corday. Cicely Hamilton herself played Christian Davies (1667–1739), who enlisted in the army as Christopher Welsh. Davies's disguise was discovered by surgeons after she was wounded at the Battle of Ramillies.

The *Pageant* was performed around the country, and at Bristol's Prince's Theatre in 1910 and the Albert Hall in Swansea. Cicely Hamilton also wrote the book *Marriage as a Trade* (1909) criticising women's limited economic choices which forced them into marriage for want of the skills or opportunity to do anything else.

During the First World War, she worked for the Scottish Women's Ambulance Unit, and then joined a touring theatrical company entertaining the troops. Many of her novels and plays deal with the issue of war and humanity's capacity for violence, which she attributed to what she called the herd instinct, the "crowd-life" which overcame people's "responsible individuality". These included the novels *William: an Englishman* (1919), which has been republished by Persephone Books, and *Theodore Savage* (1922). Her 1926 play *The Old Adam* (also known as *The Human Factor*) explores the response of two warring nations when they acquire the technology to disarm one another's weapons. You might expect this to be a cause for rejoicing, but Hamilton's disillusionment takes the play in another direction entirely. Unable to use machines, men arm themselves with knives and clubs...

In spite of her pessimism about the possibility of human progress, she continued to campaign for women's equality. She was an editor of *The Englishwoman*, and worked on the feminist journal *Time and Tide*. She was active in the Six Point group in the 1920s, campaigning for better child protection laws, legislation to protect widows and their children, rights for unmarried mothers, equal guardianship of children, equal pay for teachers, and equal opportunities and pay in the civil service.

One of the things Hamilton criticised the WSPU about was its obsession with dress and appearance, "its insistence on the feminine note". In a witty tangle of gender identities, she once attended a fancy dress party dressed as George Eliot (Marian Evans), with her friend Christopher St John dressed as George Sand (Amantine-Lucile-Aurore Dupin) in male costume.

After a long illness, Cicely Hamilton died in London in 1952.

Hazel, Gladys (1881- ?)

Gladys Mary Hazel was the organiser for Bristol in 1914, after working as an organiser in Birmingham and Leicester. She was arrested at a WSPU meeting in Birmingham on 24 November 1909 and charged with disorderly conduct and obstruction. Four other women and two men were also arrested.

She was later sentenced to four months' imprisonment for her part in the window-smashing raid in London's West End in March 1912. After her release she went to Dublin, where Manchester suffragette Mary Leigh was serving five years' penal servitude for arson at the Theatre Royal in July. On 28 September 1912 Gladys Hazel was arrested in Grafton Street for distributing suffrage handbills, but the case was dismissed.

On 4 May 1913 she was one of the speakers at a meeting in Manchester protesting against Government attacks on the right of free speech following raids and arrests at WSPU headquarters. On 5 December 1913 she joined the demonstration outside Exeter jail, where Mrs Pankhurst was on hunger strike. When the prison doctor left the prison, she jumped onto the running board of his car.

She looked after the restocking of the WSPU Bristol shop which had been wrecked by Bristol University students in October 1913, collecting donations of furniture and books to replace those that had been destroyed. She also led a deputation to the Bishop of Bristol, the Right Rev George Forrest Browne DD, on 9 March 1914, to protest against the church's failure to condemn forcible feeding.

Hobhouse, Sir Charles Edward Henry (1862-1941)

Charles E H Hobhouse was the Liberal MP for East Bristol from 1900-18, and a Cabinet Minister from 1911. He was a prominent member of the National League for Opposing Woman Suffrage, and voted against the Conciliation Bill, an all-party compromise measure which would have enfranchised one million propertied women. When the Bill failed in November 1911, the suffragettes protested by smashing windows in the west end of London. On 16 February 1912, in a meeting in London to welcome women released from Holloway after the demonstrations, Mrs Pankhurst announced that the WSPU would from now on rely on "the argument of the stone". The argument was used again during two days of window-smashing in London on 1 and 4 March.

On the same day that Mrs Pankhurst was speaking in London, 16 February, Hobhouse addressed an anti-suffrage meeting in Bristol's Colston Hall. During a speech punctuated by interruptions – a suffragette who had locked herself in the organ loft was ejected – Hobhouse argued that there was no popular demand for female suffrage, and claimed that there had been no popular uprising in favour of women's suffrage on the scale of that in support of an extension to the male franchise. He pointed out that male campaigners had burned down Nottingham Castle and torn down the railings at Hyde Park.

According to Sylvia Pankhurst, Hobhouse's words were like "a match to the fuse". Charged with conspiracy to commit malicious damage, Mrs Pankhurst quoted Hobhouse in her defence speech in court on 21 May 1912. She accused Hobhouse and other MPs of inciting the suffragettes to violence. She mentioned his words again in her ghost-written

autobiography when she observed that the violence in "the very city in which Mr Hobhouse made his speech" led directly to the passing of the 1832 Reform Act. It seemed that because women had not been as destructive as men, the Government did not take them seriously. No wonder, she argued, that women decided they had to do as much as the men. Short of taking human life, that was what they were doing with their attacks on property - and Government ministers like Hobhouse had to take at least some of the blame for it.

Hobhouse was frequently the target of suffragette militancy. He received envelopes laced with pepper or snuff, which caused him particular distress as a hay fever sufferer. Many of his meetings were interrupted, and in 1912 an arson attempt was made on his Corsham home.

Howey, Elsie (1844-1963)

Elsie Howey joined the WSPU in 1907 with her mother, Gertrude, and elder sister Marie. She was arrested on several occasions, notably in February 1908 when she was one of the women who hid inside a delivery van and attempted to enter the House of Commons, and later for breaking the windows of Liberty's in Regent Street during the March 1912 window-smashing campaign.

She was a well-known speaker for the WSPU. She also helped with by-election campaigns. She rode in demonstrations dressed as Joan of Arc a number of times, including at the funeral of Emily Wilding Davison in June 1913. She was awarded a WSPU medal in 1910 for enduring forcible feeding whilst in prison. In 1912 she was in Holloway after setting off a fire alarm in Kensington, when her throat was so badly injured by forcible feeding her voice was permanently damaged.

During 1909 she was organiser for Plymouth and Torquay and played an active part in west country militancy. She harangued Bristol Liberal MP Augustine Birrell in March 1909 at Bristol Temple Meads railway station. On the afternoon of 1 May 1909, with Vera Holme, she hid in the organ in the Colston Hall to interrupt Birrell's speech that evening. On 30 July 1909 she, Vera Wentworth and Mary Philips were arrested for demonstrating at Lord Carrington's meeting in Exeter and sentenced to a week in prison. On 5 September 1909 she, Vera Wentworth and Jessie Kenney (Annie Kenney's sister) assaulted Prime Minister Asquith in Kent, an event which led to the resignation from the WSPU of west country supporter Mrs Blathwayt of Batheaston. Mrs Blathwayt and her husband Colonel Blathwayt had been generous supporters of the movement, but could not condone physical violence.

In 1923 Elsie Howey became a theosophist. She died in Malvern in 1963.

Lamb, Aeta (1886-1928)

When Annie Kenney came to Bristol in 1907 to start the Bristol and West of England branch of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) she was not alone. Aeta Lamb,

who worked at WSPU headquarters in Clements Inn, came to help her. Lamb joined the WSPU in 1906 and had taken part in WSPU deputations to the House of Commons which resulted in two terms of imprisonment in Holloway. Part of her duties in Bristol included helping to organise meetings, including the first WSPU meeting in Bath on 1 April 1907. When Bristol medical students threatened to break up a meeting in the Victoria Rooms on 3 April 1908 she hired six professional boxers to protect the speakers.

She was the first suffragette to visit WSPU-sympathisers Colonel, Mrs and Miss Mary Blathwayt in Batheaston, and in 1912 one of the last to plant a tree in the arboretum they established to honour visiting suffragettes. Like the Blathwayts, she had misgivings about escalating WSPU militancy, but continued to support the Pankhursts and was working at WSPU headquarters when the war broke out.

Lenton, Lillian (1891-1972)

Lillian Lenton was born in Leicester and trained as a teacher. She first engaged in militancy at the age of 21, when she took part in the March 1912 West End window-smashing campaign, for which she was sentenced to two months in prison. She was living in Fishponds, Bristol when she carried out one of the most well-known of the suffragette arson attacks: burning the tea house in Kew Gardens.

On 23 February 1913 she was arrested, with Olive Wharry, outside Kew Gardens carrying incendiary material while the tea house burned. While on remand she went on hunger strike, and on 23 February was forcibly fed once. She was released a few hours later suffering from pleurisy caused, apparently, by food entering her lungs. She did not appear for her trial and Olive Wharry, who had also been forcibly fed, faced the charges alone.

Lillian Lenton was in and out of prison until the start of the First World War brought the suffragette campaign to an end. She evaded the police so often that she became famous as the "Pimpernel" suffragette who made many bold escapes. Once she left a house surrounded by detectives by disguising herself as a delivery boy. On another occasion she walked past a policeman into Scarborough railway station dressed as a nurse and carrying the child of another WSPU member. Another escape was managed when forty or fifty women rushed out of a house and scattered, giving her the opportunity to get away from the outnumbered detectives outside. By her own account, when she was free she committed arson at the rate of two fires a week.

During the First World War she served in Serbia with the Scottish Women's Hospital Unit, then worked for the British Embassy, the Save the Children Fund, the Women's Freedom League, and the National Union of Women Teachers. She was Honorary Secretary of the Suffragette Fellowship, and unveiled a Fellowship memorial to the suffragettes near Caxton Hall in 1970.

You can hear Lillian Lenton's own account of her escapes on the BBC website, and follow the link "Suffragettes Anniversary 1955: A Reunion with Medals and Memories" to hear

her talk about burning two houses a week!
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/people/64/05.shtml>

Lidiard, Victoria (1890-1992)

(This entry has been updated in the light of my further research.)

Victoria Lidiard was born Victoria Simmons in Windsor. By 1901 the family was living in Clifton, Bristol. She left school at the age of fourteen, learned shorthand at evening classes, and got a job in a photographic studio in Clifton. With her mother and sisters she joined the WSPU in 1910. She worked hard in Bristol, selling Votes for Women and chairing open-air meetings - often enduring insults from men in the audience. She also chalked pavements advertising suffragette meetings, for which she was arrested and cautioned.

She took part in the West End window-smashing campaign on 4 March 1912 when she broke a window at the War Office. She was sentenced to two months' hard labour, and served six weeks. At her mother's request, she did not go on hunger strike.

When militancy was suspended in 1914, Victoria Simmons moved to London where she ran a guest house and worked in a munitions factory in Battersea. In 1918 she married Alexander Lidiard MC, who had been a member of the Men's Political Union for Women's Enfranchisement. After the war the couple trained as opticians. They worked at the London Refraction Hospital (now the Institute of Optometry) and subsequently set up practices in Maidenhead and then High Wycombe.

Victoria Lidiard joined the campaign for the ordination of women priests, and also took an interest in animal rights – she had been a vegetarian since she was a girl. The last surviving suffragette, she died in Hove in 1992 at the age of 102.

You can listen to a BBC profile of Victoria Lidiard with contributions by Mrs Lidiard herself on the BBC website [here](#).

McKenna, Reginald (1863–1943)

Reginald McKenna, the man who introduced the infamous “Cat and Mouse Act”, was Home Secretary from 1911 to 1915. Born into a Catholic family in London, he later converted to Protestantism. He studied at Cambridge University, in 1887 became a barrister, and in 1895 he was elected Liberal MP for North Monmouthshire.

McKenna was appointed First Lord of the Admiralty in 1908, and from there moved to take up the post of Home Secretary. The appointment pitched him into the forefront of the Liberal government's battle with the militant suffragettes. Over the next few years he was engaged in a rancorous struggle with them for the moral high ground, a struggle which already seemed lost when he took up the post.

In 1909 imprisoned suffragettes had started using the hunger strike as a protest against the government's refusal to grant them political prisoner status. When their refusal to eat threatened to put their lives in danger, prison authorities had no choice but to release them

on medical grounds. This meant that the women were effectively evading their prison sentences. In an effort to put a stop to this, McKenna's predecessor, Herbert Gladstone, introduced forcible feeding. But the sheer brutality of the treatment meted out to women during what was disguised as a medical procedure only seemed to increase their defiance – and brought down a barrage of criticism on the government.

Worse still, forcible feeding didn't work. The women persisted in their hunger strike in spite of it and, as before, as their health failed they had to be released. Caught between the risk of creating martyrs and letting convicted criminals go free, McKenna sought an extension of his powers. Hitherto his only option had been to release the prisoners with a pardon. What he needed was a mechanism for releasing prisoners without pardoning them. He obtained that under the Prisoners (Temporary Discharge for Ill Health) Act 1913 (the Cat and Mouse Act). Under the Act, hunger striking women could be released on licence to recover from their ordeal, then readmitted to prison to continue serving their sentences.

It was a neat solution to the Home Secretary's dilemma, as he told the House of Commons in July 1913: "When we are confronted with the situation in which these women refuse to take their food, we have now power which we had not got before to liberate them in order to prevent them committing suicide, and yet, while we liberate them, we still retain power to enforce the law and to compel them to serve the sentence imposed upon them by the Courts." (*Hansard*: HC Deb 23 July 1913 vol 55 cc2171-6.)

But as far as his critics were concerned, the Cat and Mouse Act was a cruel refinement of the torture of forcible feeding – especially since McKenna had not relinquished the right to order forcible feeding on hunger striking prisoners. In vain he protested that all the women had to do was eat. The opposition countered: all the government had to do was grant the women what they asked for – political prisoner status.

A committee to campaign for the repeal of the Act was established. Their attempt to deliver a petition to the House of Commons ended in exactly the same way as previous attempts to deliver suffrage petitions, with arrests and imprisonments. Mrs Emmeline Pethick Lawrence, former treasurer of the WSPU, and the writer Evelyn Sharp were amongst the women who went to prison, where they went on hunger strike.

McKenna was vilified as a coward and a torturer of women. The militant Mary Richardson, speaking in court after her arrest for slashing *The Rokeby Venus*, a painting by Velasquez in the National Gallery, declared, "Mr McKenna has made the criminal code into a comic valentine...I have great contempt for any Administration which does not treat all persons equally. Mr McKenna has not rearrested me under the "Cat and Mouse" Act, as he has done other women, presumably because he is afraid of killing me in the forcible feeding torture. But I am not afraid of dying. Therefore he is the greater coward. He cannot coerce me, he can't make me serve my sentence, he can only again repeat the farce of releasing me or else kill me. Either way, mine is the victory." (*Glasgow Herald* 11 March 1914.)

Labour leader Keir Hardie and other MPs raised awkward questions in the House of Commons. They demanded to know by what right police entered private houses to arrest women subject to the Cat and Mouse Act. They also condemned the unnecessary violence with which the arrests were carried out. Others criticised the cost of policing the scheme.

And critics pointed out that the Cat and Mouse Act had failed: suffragettes were still not serving their prison sentences. Many of the women released on licence went on the run, and added insult to injury by continuing to carry out militant acts. Inevitably, McKenna himself was a target for militancy. He was accosted by suffragette Helen Cragg in Llandaff on 28 June 1912. In October 1913 his brother's house in Hampshire was targeted by arsonists.

McKenna lost his seat in the 1918 general election. He became chairman of Midland Bank, and an expert on financial matters who was consulted by Bonar Law's Conservative government in the 1920s. He took the lease of Mells Park, in Somerset, and commissioned Sir Edwin Lutyens, who had built a house for him in Smith Street, London, to rebuild the house, which had been damaged by fire in 1917. Lutyens and Gertrude Jekyll designed the gardens.

Lutyens's work is to be found all around the village of Mells: he designed the avenue of clipped yews at St Andrew's Church, as well as the war memorial and other structures. Reginald McKenna died in London on 6 September 1943, and was buried in St Andrews Church, which is also the resting place of the poet Siegfried Sassoon. McKenna's tomb was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens.

New, Edith Bessie (1877-1951)

Edith New was born in Swindon and trained as a teacher in Swindon and London. She then taught at poor schools in East Greenwich and Deptford. In January 1908 she gave up her teaching job to become a WSPU organiser, and worked in Newcastle and Leicester. On 21 March 1907, she was one of 76 women arrested during a deputation to the House of Commons. The trial of the women the following day lasted 6 hours, and the magistrate, noting that leniency had had no effect, handed out fines and custodial sentences. Edith was sentenced to a 20 shilling fine or 14 days' imprisonment, and opted for prison.

She was in court again in January 1908 when she was bound over to keep the peace, but was arrested only two days later during a demonstration outside 10 Downing Street. She and Nurse Smith fastened themselves to the railings using steel chains wound around their waists and padlocked to the railings. Nurse Smith and three other women were arrested. Edith New was sentenced to a £5 fine or three weeks in prison, but, with the others, she again chose prison.

Following her release, she worked in by election campaigns in Hastings, Peckham and North West Manchester. She was one of the speakers at a major suffragette demonstration in Hyde Park on 21 June 1908.

She is chiefly remembered now for being one of the first window breakers, with Mary Leigh, who was also a teacher. The pair were protesting about the brutal treatment of women by police and men in the crowd during a demonstration outside the House of Commons on 30 June 1908. They took a cab to 10 Downing Street and threw stones through the windows. It was the first act of damage committed by suffragettes, but since they had not acted on the instructions of the WSPU, they sent a message to Mrs Pankhurst

telling her she could repudiate their action if she wished. Mrs Pankhurst did not do so, and by the following year "the argument of the stone" had become an official WSPU tactic.

On her arrest, Mrs Leigh threatened that the suffragettes would use bombs in future, but in court Edith New refused to be drawn on the question of whether or not the women would use bombs. She said that would depend on the actions of the government. The magistrate sentenced both women to two months in prison.

In September 1908, Edith New was one of the speakers at a demonstration on Bristol's Durdham Down. In 1909 she was campaigning in Dundee where she was arrested and went on hunger strike. She was released without being forcibly fed. In 1911 she gave up her job as WSPU organiser and returned to teaching. She never married and died in Cornwall in 1951.

Find out more about Edith New at '[Edith New: Swindon Suffragette](#)', Frances Bevan, Swindon History Blog

['Suffragette jailed for votes battle'](#), Frances Bevan, Swindon Advertiser 7 October 1909

[An interview with Tamara Dugdale, Edith New's great niece](#), Swindon Heritage

Pankhurst, Adela (1885-1961)

Adela Pankhurst was the youngest of Mrs Pankhurst's daughters. Like many women involved in the suffrage campaign, Adela trained as a teacher through the pupil teacher system in Manchester, but left teaching to work for the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) alongside her sisters Christabel and Sylvia.

She soon faced her first imprisonment in Manchester when she was sentenced to a week in prison after a WSPU demonstration. She then worked as an organiser in Yorkshire, but was in London for the protest meeting led by her mother at the House of Commons in October 1906. She was arrested with Annie Kenney and several other women and served a month in Holloway. Following her release she went up to Aberdeen to campaign at a by election.

In 1907 Adela joined Annie Kenney in Bristol, where Annie was establishing the Bristol and West of England branch of the WSPU. She shared a house in Clifton with Annie and Mary Blathway of Batheaston near Bath, with Mary doing most of the housekeeping. That summer Adela travelled to Cardiff, where she was heckled and pelted with fruit during a speech and had to be escorted to safety by the police.

Adela went back to work as a WSPU organiser in Yorkshire, spending periods in Sheffield and Scarborough, and at by election campaigns in Scotland. She was arrested in Dundee and went on hunger strike. She was too frail to be forcibly fed and was released.

She was back in Bristol in July 1910, when she spoke at a demonstration on the Downs on 30 July. One of the reasons men were so afraid of women having the vote was that they outnumbered men. Adela remarked that "she did not think it would matter if there were more women voting than men...If women made the better teachers how was it they got so alarmed about their having the paltry vote?" She also dealt with the objection that women

were not educated enough to vote: “There were thousands of electors in this country who could neither read nor write, and had to be shown where to place their cross on the ballot paper. Even the stupidest woman they could find would be as smart as that”. (Reported in the *Western Daily Press*, 1 August 1910.)

Unfortunately, Adela, like her sister Sylvia, was to find that her socialism increasingly alienated her from her mother and Christabel, as did her growing unease with escalating militancy. After a bout of ill health, a period working as a gardener in Bath, and a stint as a governess, she was shipped off to Australia in 1914. Here her career traced a trajectory from socialist to conservative, with several imprisonments along the way. Initially she worked for feminist, pacifist and labour causes. In 1914 she married trade union leader Thomas Walsh.

In 1928 Walsh was expelled from his union, and Adela turned her back on socialism and the labour party. She set up a branch of the conservative Women’s Guild of Empire, although she retained her pacifism to oppose the Second World War. In 1942 she was interned because of her support for Japan. She later joined the anti-British Australia First movement, but after her husband’s death, and suffering from failing eyesight, she withdrew from public life.

She converted to Roman Catholicism and died in Sydney in 1961.

Pethick, Dorothy (1881-1970)

When Winston Churchill came to Bristol in 1909, a number of women came to the city to help Bristol organiser Annie Kenney organise protests during his visit. Actions included window breaking, heckling, and Leeds suffragette Theresa Garnett’s assault of Churchill at Temple Meads Railway station. Among the women who came to help was Dorothy Pethick, younger sister of Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence.

Dorothy Pethick was educated at Cheltenham Ladies’ College, and then worked in a Women’s University Settlement in Blackfriars Road in London. She had been working with Annie in Bristol and the west country since at least 1908. When Annie went to speak in Weston-super-Mare in August 1908, Dorothy went on ahead to make arrangements for the meeting and advertised it by chalking the pavements.

Dorothy was one of many suffragettes who sometimes stayed with the Blathwayt family in Batheaston. In 1911 Dorothy planted a fir tree in the Blathwayt’s Suffragette Arboretum. Colonel Blathwayt photographed most of the planting ceremonies but unfortunately no photograph of Dorothy survives, although you can see a copy of the commemorative plaque on the [Bath in Time website](#).

Dorothy was arrested during the WSPU deputation to the House of Commons on 29 June 1909. In October 1909 she and actress Kitty Marion were in Newcastle for the visit of David Lloyd George, and were arrested for breaking the windows of Newcastle General Post Office. Kitty, who succeeded in breaking glass after two attempts, was sentenced to one month in prison, while Dorothy, whose stone failed to do any damage, got fourteen

days. In all eight women were arrested in Newcastle, including Lady Constance Lytton, and they went on hunger strike.

From 1910 to 1912 Dorothy was WSPU organiser in Leicester, where she worked on the 1910 election campaign. In April 1911 she organised a local census protest: twenty census evaders spent the night at the WSPU shop and office at 14 Bowling Green Street, Leicester. (You can find out more about the Census Protest in Leicester on [Woman and Her Sphere](#).) She was sentenced to another fourteen days for taking part in the “Black Friday” demonstration in London on 18 November, but released when her fine was paid. She left the WSPU in 1912 when her sister Emmeline Pethick Lawrence was ejected from the organisation by Mrs Pankhurst and Christabel Pankhurst after a disagreement about intensifying militancy.

Early in 1914 Dorothy was in America giving talks about women’s suffrage. Speaking in New York, she declared that the suffragettes were prepared to die for their cause. She also said that she and her sister were still in sympathy with Mrs Pankhurst and their only disagreement was about methods. Mrs Pankhurst believed in arson, but Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence did not.

During the First World War Dorothy joined the Women’s Police Force. In 1916 she joined the United Suffragists, and was also treasurer of the British Dominions Woman Suffrage Union. She later worked at the Rudolf Steiner school in Hampstead. She died at an old people’s home in Markyate, Bedfordshire.

Pethick-Lawrence, Emmeline (1867-1954)

Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence was born at 20 Charlotte Street, Bristol and spent part of her childhood in Apsley Road, Clifton. When she was eight she attended Greystone House, a boarding school in Devizes, for two years. The family later moved to Weston-super-Mare. It was Labour leader Keir Hardie who, in 1906, suggested to Mrs Pankhurst that Mrs Pethick-Lawrence should be invited to join the WSPU, but Mrs Pethick-Lawrence refused Mrs Pankhurst's request because of other commitments. Keir Hardie then sent Annie Kenney to see Mrs Pethick-Lawrence, and it was Annie who persuaded her to take on the role of treasurer – at a time, Mrs Pethick-Lawrence later recalled in her autobiography, *My Part in a Changing World*, when the WSPU had "no office, no organization, no money - no postage stamps even". Under her guidance the WSPU grew to be a national organisation with an annual turnover of thousands of pounds.

With her husband Frederick (1871 - 1961), a wealthy newspaper owner, she established and edited the suffragette newspaper *Votes for Women*. She introduced the colours - purple, white and green - in 1908, and was an imaginative fund raiser with initiatives such as Self Denial Week, also introduced in 1908. She was a key figure in the WSPU leadership and worked closely with Mrs Pankhurst and Christabel Pankhurst. She endured six imprisonments, the first of which in October 1906 caused a nervous breakdown and forced her early release from prison. She was forcibly fed once, in 1912.

The Pethick-Lawrences parted company with Mrs Pankhurst and Christabel when they left the WSPU in 1912 after a disagreement over escalating militancy. Emmeline Pethick-

Lawrence remained devoted to women's suffrage. In July 1913 she was arrested during a deputation to the House of Commons protesting about the Cat and Mouse Act.

The Pethick-Lawrences were founder members of the United Suffragists in 1914, which attempted to unite militants and non-militants, and gave Votes for Women to the new organisation. Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence remained friendly with Sylvia Pankhurst (1882-1960), to whom she gave financial support. She was treasurer of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom from 1915 to 1922, stood as a Labour candidate in 1918, and was President of the Women's Freedom League from 1926 to 1935.

Pitman, Ellen W (c1857-1926)

(This entry has been updated in the light of my further research.)

At midnight on Friday 8 October 1909, Nurse Ellen Wines Pitman of Southleigh Road (also known as Leigh Road South), Clifton boarded the train from Bristol to Newcastle. She was on her way to take part in protests against the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lloyd George, who was due to speak in Newcastle the next day.

Nurse Pitman may have been sporting a bruise on her face. She had spent the evening protesting about Bristol North MP Augustine Birrell's visit to the city to speak in St James Parish Hall. Nurse Pitman and the other suffragettes had struggled unsuccessfully against the police barricade to get into the meeting, and as Birrell was leaving she ran towards his car to remind him of women's demand for the vote. Someone in the car opened the door, which struck her in the face (another version is that a police officer in the car behind the minister's put out his hand and struck her).

A rumour started that the intention had been to throw corrosives at Mr Birrell, and Lillian Dove-Willcox of the Bristol WSPU had to write a letter of denial to the Bristol press. But a few days later Sir Herbert Ashman, one of the occupants of the car, declared that the incident had never taken place: no woman had approached the car.

In Newcastle the next afternoon Nurse Pitman and other women once again faced barricaded streets and police cordons around the Palace Theatre. It was left to male supporters to interrupt Lloyd George's speech and to suffer violent ejection from the building. Later that day Nurse Pitman and seven other women were arrested for window-breaking. They wrote a letter to *The Times* from the Central Police Station announcing their intention to hunger strike, and sent a similar letter to WSPU headquarters. Nurse Pitman, who had broken a window at Barras Bridge Post Office, was sentenced to fourteen days in prison with hard labour.

Nurse Pitman was then aged 52 – although Lady Constance Lytton, who was in prison with her in Newcastle and who said she knew her well, put her age at close to sixty. She had been imprisoned previously, at a deputation to the House of Commons in 1909. She was one of the women whose treatment in Newcastle prison prompted Lady Constance to

disguise herself as a working woman to expose the class bias of the prison system. Nurse Pitman and Kathleen Brown were forcibly fed and kept in prison twenty four hours longer than Lady Constance and Jane Brailsford, the wife of the well-known journalist H N Brailsford. Lady Constance was not forcibly fed on this occasion. However, disguised as working class Jane Warton, she was arrested and forcibly fed in Walton Gaol, Liverpool.

When Nurse Pitman was released from Newcastle prison her official welcome back to Bristol was delayed while she was nursed back to health, and then she preferred not to celebrate her release. In October 1909 *Votes for Women* published a notice from Bristol organiser Annie Kenney stating that the report that Nurse Pitman had given up her job for paid work for the WSPU was not true, but it “had much damaged her professional career”. Annie added that in her devotion to the cause, Nurse Pitman had even gone without “the necessaries of life”. In early November 1909 Ellen Pitman volunteered to take part in another protest, but Bristol organiser Annie Kenney asked for other women to take her place as she “has already done more than her share”.

But Nurse Pitman was determined to do more and she was arrested on 12 November 1909 when she broke the windows at Small Street Post Office during protests against Winston Churchill’s visit to Bristol. It was said she was cheered by men in the street as she was arrested. She was imprisoned for two months with hard labour in Horfield Gaol and once again went on hunger strike. She was not forcibly fed and was released on 22 November 1909 because of poor health.

Nurse Pitman was still living in Southleigh Road in 1911 and working as a nurse, but I have not found any evidence of further suffrage activity. She died in Bristol in 1926.

Richardson, Mary (1882–1961)

Mary Richardson was born in Britain and brought up in Canada. She returned to Britain when she was sixteen. She was a freelance journalist when she joined the WSPU in 1909, and worked in Kilburn, then in the shop on Charing Cross Road. She knew Bristol organiser Lillian Dove Willcox, and stayed with her at her cottage near Tintern Abbey to recover from one of her hunger strikes. On 11 March 1913 she was arrested for breaking windows at the Home Office in protest at the arrest of Dove Willcox and others for attempting to present a petition to the King at the opening of Parliament. She was sentenced to one month in prison.

Mary Richardson was in Bristol on 4 July 1913 when she attempted to present a petition to the King during his visit to the city. One of the outriders struck her with the flat of his sword, and two women in the crowd slapped and hit her before police hustled her away from the hostile crowd. She was later released without charge at the King’s request. It was the arrest of Mary Richardson and Rachel Pease on 14 October 1913 for arson which prompted the destruction of the Bristol University Sports Pavilion on 23 October 1913: a card found near the scene demanded her release. Richardson had been forcibly fed, and while awaiting trial on the arson charge was on 21 October sentenced to 4 months’ imprisonment for breaking windows at the Colonial Office in August. She was released from Holloway on 25 October with suspected appendicitis.

She was arrested again on 10 March 1914 for damaging the *Rokeby Venus* (*The Toilet of Venus*), a painting by Velázquez in the National Gallery, in protest at the arrest of Mrs Pankhurst. For this she was sentenced to six months in prison. On 15 March 1914 a service at All Saints in Clifton was interrupted by prayers for her and Mrs Pankhurst. Mary Richardson's doctor suspected she had been given bromide while in prison, and the prison authorities retaliated by accusing her of smuggling in tablets which had induced vomiting. At the end of July she was operated on for appendicitis.

Her final arrest was on 27 August 1914 for taking part in a deputation to the Home Office to demand the release of all suffragette prisoners following the declaration of war on Germany on 4 August. The Government had already announced an amnesty and the women were released without charge.

With the militant campaign over, Mary Richardson resumed her writing, publishing a novel, poetry collections and an autobiography. Although the WSPU had folded, many former members formed other groups to continue the campaign for the vote, including the United Suffragists and the Suffragettes of the WSPU. Mary Richardson was a member of both organisations for a time. She later joined the Labour Party, and stood as a parliamentary candidate four times. However, between 1932 and 1935 she was a member of Oswald Mosley's New Party and then the British Union of Fascists.

Rogers, Frederick William and Blanche Mary

Frederick William Rogers (1859–1927), who ran a firm of Bristol stone masons, and Blanche Mary Rogers (1866–1951), were married at St Mary Redcliffe in Bristol in 1889. They were supporters of the non-militant Bristol and West of England Women's Suffrage Society. On one occasion, Mrs Rogers went to a meeting at the home of the Misses Duncan at 16 West Mall when she read a sketch by Miss M Duncan with the intriguing title "*Latest intelligence from the planet Venus*".

However, when Annie Kenney came to Bristol to set up the Bristol and West of England branch of the WSPU in 1907, Mrs Rogers was one of the many Bristol suffragists who offered practical and financial support to the WSPU. Annie Kenney held a meeting in Mrs Rogers' house in August 1908. When the Bristol WSPU put on two suffragette plays at Princes Theatre in 1910 – *How the Vote was Won* (by Cicely Hamilton and Christopher St John) and *A Pageant of Great Women* by Cicely Hamilton – Mrs Rogers played Madame Christine in *How the Vote was Won*, and Mr Rogers played an attendant to Catherine the Great in the *Pageant*.

The Rogers participated in the Census Protest in 1911, when Mrs Rogers joined census evaders in Bath. Mrs Mansel, the Bath WSPU organiser, had taken an empty house at 12 Lansdown Crescent for the occasion. Twenty nine women gathered, and entertained one another with music, recitations, and a lecture on clairvoyance. Mrs Rogers gave a recital but left at midnight. According to their census form, the Rogers' home in Clifton was unoccupied that night so it seems Mr Rogers also evaded. The census enumerator, who recorded that there were two daughters, obtained her information about the family from a neighbour.

Mrs Rogers gave recitals and violin performances for a number of other good causes, including the Workers' Education Association, the Women's Total Abstinence Union, and children's charities. She was involved with a group called the Folk House Players in the 1920s.

She was chair of the Bristol Women's Citizen Association, and a founder member of The Venture Club, a women's club formed by the Rotary Club in Bristol in 1920. The Bristol Club inspired the formation of other Venture Clubs around the country. It later amalgamated with the Soroptimists group, which was originally formed in California in 1921, to form the International Soroptimists. Membership of the Venture Club was open to women engaged in honorary social or philanthropic work. Mrs Rogers is listed in 1922–1923 as "Elocutionist: Kensington Villa, Royal Park". (The listing for Mrs Rogers was provided by Marion Reid, author of *100 Years of Sisterhood Bristol Fashion*, a history of the Bristol Soroptimist Club.)

In 1923 Mrs Rogers was a member of the Bristol branch of the Women's International League (WIL). She gave a recitation at a WIL garden party for foreign students in June 1923. In December 1923 she reported to a WIL meeting about a visit she had made to Czechoslovakia. She was still involved with WIL in 1932, when she chaired a meeting at Bristol Folk House.

Mr Rogers was the honorary secretary of the Bristol Men's League for Women's Suffrage. The branch was founded in 1908 and its address was the Rogers' home, 2 Kensington Villas in Clifton. In June 1909 Mr Rogers chaired a Men's League meeting on Durdham Down. In July 1910 he chaired a meeting of the Bristol Men's League for Women's Suffrage at one of the four platforms of a WSPU meeting on Durdham Down; the meeting was nosily heckled by a group of young men.

Frederick William Rogers died in Derby Royal Infirmary in February 1927. Mrs Rogers died in St Mary's Hospital, Clifton in January 1951, leaving two daughters.

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Tothill, Mabel (1869-1964)

Mabel Tothill was a Quaker, a tireless worker for social reform, and a non-militant suffragist. She was born in Liverpool and her family moved to Bristol when her father retired from business. Mabel went to Clifton High School and later lived in Clifton with her sister, but they moved back into the family home in Cambridge Park, close to the Downs, after her mother's death.

In the 1890s she was a member of the Bristol branch of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), as well as the Independent Labour Party. Her labour politics was to lead to a breakaway from the Bristol branch of the NUWSS when in 1912 the NUWSS formed an alliance with the Labour Party. The NUWSS had lost patience with the Liberal government which stubbornly refused to give women the vote, and had decided to work with the Labour Party which they thought was now the party most likely to help

women to the franchise. However, many of the NUWSS's members weren't happy about this and a large number resigned. The Bristol branch did not welcome the new pro-Labour policy and so Mabel Tothill, with NUWSS organiser Annie Townley, set up a new branch in East Bristol. Mabel Tothill was elected President of the East Bristol NUWSS.

In 1911 Mabel Tothill was one of the first women workers to move into the Bristol University settlement at Barton Hill (see Note). The Barton Hill Settlement provided meals, medical care and schooling for poor children on land which Mabel had purchased and given to the Settlement. When the Clifton High School Old Girls' Club, as charitably minded as Bristol university students, set up a club for working girls, Mabel Tothill purchased a house for them in Hebron Street.¹

When the First World War began,² women workers were badly hit by unemployment as people retrenched their expenses and sales of fashion and luxury goods dropped. Women in the textile industries were particularly affected. Mabel Tothill was involved in schemes to alleviate women's unemployment, such as offering training for unemployed seamstresses at Barton Hill. Women's war-time unemployment was, however, only a temporary issue. Before long women were much in demand to take over men's jobs as men joined or were conscripted into the armed forces and there was no longer a need for such schemes.

Mabel Tothill had other work to do. Acting on the Quaker peace testimony to oppose all war, she became secretary of the Bristol Joint Advisory Committee for Conscientious Objectors. This group looked out for the interests of imprisoned objectors, and campaigned against the war.

In 1915 Mabel Tothill was involved in controversy after she wrote a letter referring to the Fellowship of Reconciliation, a pacifist organisation,¹ on Barton Hill note paper. This, together with her well-known involvement in peace work, was one of the incidents that led to accusations against Bristol University that it was riddled with pro-German pacifists. However, a Lord Mayor's enquiry found no evidence of pro-German sentiment at the University, and in order to avoid further embarrassing the University Mabel Tothill left the Barton Hill Settlement.

Mabel Tothill continued to campaign for peace. She set up a Bristol branch of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. In 1923 she took part in a No More War Demonstration on the Downs.

After the war Mabel Tothill stood as a Labour candidate for St Paul's in the municipal elections of 1919. By this time she had left the house in Cambridge Park and was living in the much less salubrious Rosemary Street, which was bombed during the Blitz and has now disappeared under Broadmead. Here she helped found the Rosemary Lane Nursery School for poor children, which still exists today as Rosemary Nursery School.

Mabel Tothill argued that women were needed in local politics because they were concerned in issues such as nursery provision, improved education for poor children, and the need for new houses. Lloyd George had famously promised homes fit for heroes to the returning soldiers, but it was not a promise that was kept. As well as better housing, Mabel Tothill also campaigned for the provision of bath houses, and public toilets for women – not a very exciting issue perhaps but one that affected women's ability to move around in public spaces.

Mabel Tothill was not successful in the 1919 election, but in 1920 she was elected onto the city council for Easton Ward. She was Bristol's first woman councillor.¹

Unfortunately, she lost her seat a few months later. She was however co-opted onto the city council's education committee and continued to work for education provision, particularly for poor children.

In the mid 1920s Mabel Tothill moved back to Clifton. She lived in Berkeley Square, and then in Pembroke Road – where her home was burgled. She was a governor of Badminton Girls' School in the 1930s. By 1939 she was living in Sandford, a village in the parish of Winscombe, where she was active in the local Women's Institute, and a member of Winscombe Parish Council.

Mabel Tothill, Bristol's first woman councillor, died in 1964.¹

Note: Settlements originated in the Victorian era. They were often associated with universities, and were established in poor areas as places where young educated people could live while doing community work.

Walters, Alice Mary (c1859– ?)

On 27 June 1913 Alice Mary Walters, a teacher from Bristol, smashed a window in Regent Street Post Office with a hammer. The attack was one of a number of simultaneous raids made on Post Offices throughout the country. She was sentenced to four months' imprisonment at Bow Street Magistrates Court on 10 July 1913.

In Holloway, Alice Walters and others petitioned the Home Office for political prisoner status, and when this was refused they went on hunger strike. After two days she was forcibly fed. The procedure affected her so badly she feared that if a second attempt was made she would go mad. In fact, she was so distressed that she was released and taken back to Bristol by two wardresses.

In 1913 Alice Walters was Honorary Secretary of the Bristol branch of the WSPU. She had been imprisoned for a week in March 1913 for refusing to pay her dog tax as a protest against the Government. She was one of the two women who were in the WSPU shop on Queen's Road when it was wrecked by students from the University of Bristol on 24 October 1913. She also had an interest in the theatre. She took the part of Maudie Spark in the 1910 performance of Cicely Hamilton's *How the Vote Was Won* at Bristol's Prince's Theatre. On 15 March 1913 a "Miss Walters" performed in Evelyn Glover's suffrage play *A Chat With Mrs Chicky* at the Co-operative Hall in Fishponds.

Ward, Mrs Humphry (1851–1920)

In 1915 the best-selling novelist Mrs Mary Humphrey Ward published *Delia Blanchflower*. In many ways it's typical romantic fare: a stern guardian to a wilful young heiress must save her from bad influences before their love can blossom. Much of the plot revolves around a beautiful old mansion called Monk Lawrence. It belongs to an anti-suffrage Government minister. A militant suffragette called Gertrude Marvell has her eye on the old place. Gertrude is a harsh, ruthless woman who is unmoved by Delia's pleas to spare the "beautiful and historic" house. The inevitable happens: the house goes up in smoke and with it the "beauty of four centuries". A crippled child also dies in the fire, as does Gertrude herself.

Behind the melodrama is a very real sense of loss, and although Monk Lawrence is fictitious, *Delia Blanchflower* expresses something of people's actual experiences of suffragette militancy. Begbrook Mansion in Frenchay, near Bristol was a fine old house until it was destroyed by arson. The ancient church of Wargrave, Reading was wrecked by fire, to the profound grief of the parishioners. When Mary Richardson slashed a painting known as the Rokeby Venus, artist Laurence Housman, a long-time supporter of the suffrage campaign, said he felt it like "a stab in the back".

So there's nothing remarkable in Mrs Ward's opposition to suffragette militancy. Many people who supported the female franchise detested militant tactics. But Mrs Ward was not only opposed to militancy: she did not want women to have the vote. In 1908 she accepted an invitation from anti-suffrage leaders Lords Curzon and Cromer to join the National Women's Anti-Suffrage League. The Women's League later combined with the Men's League to form the National League for Opposing Women's Suffrage. Mrs Ward's opposition to votes for women has baffled many biographers, who describe her involvement with the anti-suffrage movement as a mistake, or account for it in psychological terms as a desire to please father figures – her own father having been a distant presence in her childhood.

That childhood was spent first in Tasmania. She was born in Hobart on 11 June 1851, the granddaughter of Dr Thomas Arnold of Rugby, and niece of Matthew Arnold. Her family returned to England in 1856, and Mary Arnold spent the next few years at a series of boarding schools offering the sketchy education considered suitable for girls. One of these was in Clifton, Bristol, between 1864 and 1867, when she returned to her family in Oxford. She married Thomas Humphry Ward, a newly elected fellow at Brasenose College, in 1871. Ward had to relinquish his fellowship on marriage. He later joined *The Times* as a leader writer and art critic, and the family moved to London in 1881. *The Times* was to be a useful outlet for Mrs Ward's anti-suffrage views, and published her articles and letters on the subject.

She campaigned energetically for the anti-suffrage movement, travelling up and down the country to make speeches. She spoke in Bristol's Victoria Rooms in 1909, and was one of the speakers at a major anti-suffrage meeting in the Colston Hall in Bristol in 1912. On that occasion, Bristol MP Charles Hobhouse, a fellow anti-suffrage campaigner, was heckled

by a suffragette who was found, after some confusion, hiding in the organ loft. After her ejection other women interrupted him with cries of “Rubbish!” and “Votes for Women!”

Mrs Ward was not heckled on that occasion, although many of her other speeches were not greeted with such forbearance. She was interrupted at a meeting in Queen’s Hall, London in 1909, during which she announced that the Anti Suffrage League had collected 250,000 petitions on an anti-suffrage petition. In 1910 in an article in *The Times* she said much of this support came from working-class women. She refused to speak at the Albert Hall in 1912 because of suffragette threats to interrupt the meeting with megaphones and stink bombs.

She led an anti-suffrage deputation to Prime Minister Henry Asquith in 1911 which had the satisfactory result of prompting the Prime Minister to voice his opinion that the inclusion of women’s suffrage in his forthcoming reform bill would be a disaster. She pushed her son Arnold into politics, and as a Member of Parliament he campaigned against the female franchise. In 1913 he introduced a resolution to reject a suffrage bill; the bill was rejected by forty seven votes.

Yet Mrs Ward had been an early campaigner for women’s right to education. She was involved in the Lectures for Women Committee in Oxford, which led to the establishment of Somerville College in 1879. She was secretary of the College between 1879 and 1881. She also carried out pioneering work for the education of disabled children, and founded a settlement in London devoted to offering education to working class children. She was a “self-made woman” who earned a fortune from her writing. Her work was highly valued by William Gladstone and Theodore Roosevelt, and she counted amongst her friends Henry James and Henry Asquith.

For a woman who achieved so much, Mrs Ward’s belief that the Parliamentary vote would be detrimental to women is at first sight perplexing. Yet it was a view she held consistently over many years. As early as 1889 she collected signatures for a petition against a suffrage bill, which declared that women had reached the limits of their emancipation. She argued that men and women moved in complementary spheres, and although she opposed women’s involvement in national politics she encouraged women to get involved in local government. But the crux of her argument was that the women’s franchise would put the country in danger. We live, she declared in *The Times* (4 June 1910), in “a complicated and dangerous world”. The nation could not afford to let women’s political inexperience interfere with the “executive power of men, and therefore the strength and safety of our country”.

Mrs Ward suffered for the stance she took. She was forced off the Board of the National Union of Women Workers when it took up a pro-suffrage stance, and her links with Somerville College became untenable. Perhaps there was an element of retaliation in her accusation that girls’ schools and colleges – Cheltenham Ladies’ College amongst them – were staffed by strident suffragists. But she did not waver from her opinions. When other anti-suffragists like Henry Asquith, politician Walter Long, who had been Conservative MP for South Bristol between 1900 and 1906, and Lord Curzon, then President of the National League for Opposing Women Suffrage, had abandoned their opposition, she continued to argue against votes for women.

Mrs Ward went on to offer the services of her pen to the war effort, in particular with her 1916 book *England's Effort: Six Letters to an American Friend*, written to encourage America to join the war. In the book Mrs Ward, who had described suffragette arsonists and bombers as rash and disgusting, eulogised the “young and comely” girls who were making fuses, detonators and cartridge cases, and packing bombs with “death-dealing” explosives. As “to the problem of what is to be done with the women after the war,” she said airily, “one may safely leave it to the future.”

Her son Arnold's gambling losses all but bankrupted her in 1919. Critics usually attribute a failure in her powers as a novelist to the fact that she was forced to churn out books in order to earn money to pay his debts. In 1919 she was awarded the CBE. She died in London on 24 March 1920 and was buried at the church of St John the Baptist, Aldbury, near the mansion she had bought years before with the proceeds of her novels.

Wentworth, Vera (1890-1957)

Vera Wentworth (born Jessie Spinks) was a London shop assistant and trade unionist. She often worked with Elsie Howey: the pair came to Bristol to assist Annie Kenney in 1909, and Vera Wentworth served as WSPU organiser in Plymouth.

Vera Wentworth and Elsie Howey (see "*Spotlight On*" Archive) were arrested after attempting to approach the House of Commons in a delivery van in 1908. Vera was kept in prison for an extra day for carving "Votes for Women" on her cell wall. She told the Governor of Holloway that one day the prison would fall into disuse and become a tourist attraction.

In March 1909, Vera and Elsie accosted Bristol Liberal MP Augustine Birrell at Temple Meads Railway Station to ask him when the Government would give women the vote. Vera, Elsie and Mary Phillips were arrested for demonstrating against Lord Carrington in Exeter in July 1909.

In 1909, Vera, Elsie and Jessie Kenney (Annie Kenney's sister) went to Clovelly in Devon where Prime Minister Asquith was spending the weekend, and followed him into church. Asquith fled from a side door. On 5 September 1909, the three caught up with the Prime Minister again in Lympne in Kent. This time he did not escape. They surrounded and struck him outside church, followed him to the local golf club, and that evening threw stones in at the window of Lympne Castle, where he was dining with his wife. Vera Wentworth wrote afterwards to WSPU supporter Mary Blathwayt of Batheaston that if Asquith continued to refuse to receive suffrage deputations they would strike him again. It was this attack on Asquith that led to Mrs Blathwayt's resignation from the WSPU.

Vera Wentworth was arrested in Bristol on 12 November 1909 during disturbances associated with the visit of Winston Churchill to the city, when she broke windows at the Liberal Club. She went on hunger strike in Horfield prison and was forcibly fed. She took part in further demonstrations in London, and was arrested on 18 November 1910, 21 November 1911 and March 1912 in the West End window-smashing campaign. While in Holloway, her one-act play, *An Allegory*, was performed by suffrage prisoners.

In 1912 she studied at St Andrew's University, and during the Second World War she worked in Air Raid Precautions.