

MARY BLATHWAYT (1879 - 1961)

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Mary was born in 1879 in Worthing in Sussex to Colonel Linley and Emily Blathwayt. She spent the first few years of her life in India and after her father retired from the army in 1882 they moved to Batheston, where he brought Eagle House. Mary lived at home while growing up and was educated at Bath High School.

She first became involved with the suffragettes in 1906 when she sent a donation of 3 shillings to the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). She later went to WSPU meetings where she met Annie Kenney, a prominent suffragette who she became close friends with. In 1908 she helped organise the campaign for women's suffrage in her local area; her work involved distributing leaflets around Bath and speaking at open air meetings.



Image from Wikipedia

In December of 1908 she was elected onto the executive committee for the local branch of the WSPU. Mary was prepared to do peaceful methods of protest but refused to be involved in any activities that could get her arrested as she thought her father would disapprove.

Her home became known as the 'Suffragettes Rest' as suffragettes came to stay in order to recover from their prison sentences.

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In 1909 a suffragette arboretum was created in a field near her house. Suffragettes such as Annie Kenney and Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence planted trees to remember their hunger strikes and prison sentences.

In 1911 Mary took part in the campaign to undermine the National Census. This involved evading it by not being home or by spoiling census forms. Women took part in this as they thought it was wrong that they were asked questions about themselves such as their marital status without being able to vote. Mary evaded it by staying overnight in an empty house in Bath with 29 other women.

In 1913 there was an escalation in the violence of the WSPU as they began to use methods such as arson. This angered her parents who pressured her into resigning from the WSPU. Her parent's opposition increased even more when Elsie Howey and Vera Wentworth assaulted the Prime Minister.

After this, her father never allowed them to visit Eagle House again. She and her mother continued to be members of the NUWSS but apart from this her life was quiet. She remained at her home until her death in 1961.

Researched by Curatorial Research Volunteer Elizabeth Strange.

References

- (1) Simkin John, Mary Blathwayt, January 2015, Spartacus Educational, Spartacus Education Publishers Ltd, <https://spartacus-educational.com/Wblathwayt.htm>
- (2) Mary Blathwayt, Wikipedia, 21 July 2018, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Blathwayt

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