

MARY LOUISE ULYAT (1855 - 1946)

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Mary Louise Ulyatt was a suffragist who lived most of her adult life in Totnes. She was born in 1855 in Hanover Square in London and was the daughter of Admiral Robert Fanshaw Stopford. In 1882 she married the Anglican Minister William Ulyat, who converted to Catholicism.

They moved to Totnes in the early 1900s. In 1911 she became treasurer of the Totnes Branch of the National Union of Women's Suffrage (NUWSS).

The Totnes Branch started at a meeting about women's rights at the house of the writer Florence Elizabeth Young. At the meeting it was proposed that a Totnes Branch of the NUWSS be set up, which was received with such enthusiasm that they formed the following month.

In 1912 Mary collected a petition with 180 names in support of Women's Enfranchisement in Totnes. She sent this to her local MP Francis Mildmay, who she often publicly corresponded with and also lobbied. In response to this he acknowledged to her that the petition was influential and thanked her for her time.

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In 1913 Mary was also the secretary of the Totnes NUWSS Branch. At their second public meeting a fellow suffragist, Dr. Mable Ramsay, used Mary's actions as an example that she thought other women should follow. At this same meeting Mary seconded a motion that Mable proposed for demanding the government enfranchise women. In the month after the meeting Mary publicly disagreed in a letter to the press with Francis Mildmay's accusations that the suffragists used militant methods. He had also claimed that the WSPU had tampered with railway signals, which she denied.

Along with her work as a suffragist, in the First World War she was a committee member of the Totnes Dressings Depot. She helped in this by producing moss dressings for soldiers' wounds. In 1924 as a supporter of the Liberal party she proposed the former MP for Birkenhead Henry Harvey Vivian as their candidate for the general election. He had taken the Totnes seat in the previous election with a small majority, but lost it in the 1924 election to the Tory candidate.

In 1929 her husband died and she lived in Totnes until her death in 1946.

Researched and written by Elizabeth Strange, Curatorial Research
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Bibliography

(1) Prout Ken, The Totnes Suffragists, The Totnes Review, June 2018.

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