

OLIVE WHARRY (1886 - 1947)

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Olive Wharry. Image from Wikipedia (Public Domain).

Olive Wharry was born in 1886 in London, but moved to Devon when her father retired from medicine. After she left school she went to study art at the School of Art in Exeter. She became a suffragette and later returned to Torquay until her death in 1947.

In 1910 she became an active member of the Women's Social and Political Union. She also became a member of the Church League for Women's Suffrage.

In 1911 she was arrested for taking part in the suffragette window smashing campaign. She was imprisoned for 2 months. During this prison sentence and in subsequent ones, she kept a scrapbook which is now held by the British Library.

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She was arrested again in 1912 for window smashing and sentenced to six months imprisonment in Winson Green Prison, Birmingham. While in prison she went on hunger strike but was released in 1912 before completion of her sentence. She was arrested again in 1912 under the assumed name of Joyce Locke, for being involved in a scuffle at a meeting where Lloyd George was speaking. For this she was sentenced to five days imprisonment, during which time she managed to smash her cell windows.

She and another suffragette, Lilah Lenton, were arrested later that same year for setting fire to a tea pavilion in Kew Gardens. The fire caused £900 worth of damage. Olive was charged again under her assumed name Joyce Locke. She was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment with costs but she refused to pay them. She was sent to Holloway Prison. While in prison she went again on hunger strike and went from weighing 50 kg to 36 kg. She was also kept in solitary confinement and some of the prison doctors saw her as 'insane'. She was later released into the care of Dr. Flora Murray in 1914 under the Government's amnesty for suffrage prisoners.

Later in life she went to live Torquay where she remained until her death at the age of 61 in Heath Court Nursing Home. Along with her scrapbook there are records of her weight loss and newspaper cuttings of the police carrying her bags after her release in 1914 held in the British Library.

Researched and written by Elizabeth Strange, Curatorial Research Volunteer.

Bibliography

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