

# Women's Suffrage in Dover

## Part II

Lorraine Sencicle

1909 saw an increase in militancy by the WSPU with more of their members arrested and imprisoned. Following her imprisonment, on 5 July that year, Marion Wallace Dunlop went on hunger strike. She was released after 91 hours of fasting. On 9 July a deposition was made to King Edward VII for female suffrage, but was blocked by protocol. In retaliation, hunger strikes following imprisonment became the next stage in the WSPU campaign. By September, force-feeding was introduced - this was not only by mouth.

At the end of December 1909, the Dover Express published a long letter from Alice Barlow, Lorna Bomford and Annie Brunyate - saying, in essence, that woman should not be disqualified from voting simply on the grounds of their sex. Making the same points as before, they added that at the General Election, to be held in January 1910, they would wait with their petitions outside the polling stations.

1910 was unusual in that for the first time in over 200 years, there were two Parliamentary elections, but only one contest took place in Dover. The first Parliamentary Election was on 15 January and in the run up deputations from the DWS were received by both local candidates, Conservative, George Wyndham and Liberal, Montague Bradley. George Wyndham reiterated his



*Alice Barlow junior  
Vice President of Dover  
Women's Suffrage Society*



*Lorna Bomford  
Dover Women's Suffragist  
activist*

commitment to women being enfranchised on the same grounds men but added that his Party was divided. Montague Bradley did not pledge himself. George Wyndham won although the Liberals were returned to power at Westminster.

In the second contest, which took place in December, Mr Wyndham was returned unopposed and again the Liberals won nationally.

During 1910, the WSPU increased their campaigning and on Saturday 28 May organised a march along the Westminster Embankment to the Royal Albert Hall, where the meeting was chaired by Emily Pankhurst. A delegation from Dover attended.

On 4 June Dr Annie Brunyate called for local Suffrage supporters to attend another demonstration organised by the

WSPU but this was openly frowned upon by the Executive Committee of the NUWSS. This annoyed the Dover ladies, and thus together with a change in the election policy within the NUWSS, they voted to affiliate themselves with the New Constitutional Society.

Their policy was to "unite all suffragists who believe in the anti-Government election policy, who desire to work by constitutional means and to abstain from public criticism of other suffragists whose conscience leads them to adopt different methods".

Thus, distancing themselves from the NUWSS, the Dover ladies joined the WSPU London march on Saturday 18 June along with over 10,000 women. These included factory workers, teachers, university students, office workers and nurses - who carried banners, bearing a flaming red cross. The leaders wore outfits representing famous women of the past but most ladies wore white dresses adorned with purple green and gold ribbons - the 'uniform of the Suffragists' - many carried bunches of flowers. Those who had been incarcerated in prison carried small banners with their names inscribed. A thousand police officers were deployed keeping back tens of thousands of spectators, most of whom were cheering. The establishment press barely mentioned the march.

In the meantime, on 10 June, William Crundall, Mayor of Dover, wrote to Annie Brunyate saying that Dover's MP, George Wyndham would be voting for the Bill supporting Women's suffrage. This was the Parliamentary Franchise (Women) Bill better known as the first Conciliation Bill. If enacted it would enfranchise women on the same terms

as men. The Bill was given a Second Reading on 12 July and by the large majority of 299 to 190 was sent for consideration to Committee. To keep up the momentum the next major demonstration was scheduled for 23 July.

However, two days before, a letter, signed by the Anti-Suffrage League, was published in the Times. The League was founded on 12 July 1908 by Lord Curzon of Kedleston, the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports in 1904-5. It was also actively supported by public prominent women and their argument was that:

- Women were predominantly confined to the domestic sphere and therefore their husbands' vote was effectively their vote.

- Female suffrage would 'raise unduly the standard of women's pay. Men work to provide the home, women's place is in home.'

The views expressed by the League was supported by the Socialists and Trade Unionists and given positive coverage in the establishment press. Added to this were the populist views of Harley Street specialist, Leonard Williams. He argued that women were breeding machines. "That the operation of that machinery, whether actually productive or potentially, unfits her for any other use or activity whatsoever between the ages of 17 and 50. Therefore, if women were given suffrage on the same grounds as men it would affect the future of the British race."

The WSPU demonstration of 23 July 1910 took place and the ladies of Dover were at the forefront, receiving a special mention. In Dover on 9 September the largest demonstration ever to take place in Market Square was held - it was the

At the same time, the Anti-Suffrage league collected well over 250,000 signatures and Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith refused to give the Co Bill more Parliamentary time the wording was changed to ensure more men thus keeping both Suffragists and the Unions happy.

The response by the WSPU took place on Friday 18 November when a delegation of about 300 women demonstrated outside Parliament. The Home Secretary, Winston Churchill, called out the police and many of the women were beaten. Over 100 were arrested. The day was named Black Friday.

This changed the WSPU who began to wage guerrilla warfare, alienating many Suffragists. Their aim was getting themselves arrested. They arrived at court carrying their bags and smiling. On being given prison sentences of 3 days to several months - usually in Holloway, they went on hunger strike and suffered force-feeding.

## A Second Conciliation Bill - Women's

[illegible]

Anti-Women Suffrage  
leaders 21.07.1920

Enfranchisement Bill - was introduced into the new Parliament on 9 February 1911. The Second Reading debate was scheduled for 5 May.

However, although the Bill secured a Second Reading by 255 to 88, it made no further progress. The WSPU organised a mass rally for 17 June, prior to the Coronation of George V on 22 June.

On that day, the Suffragists wore historic costumes and some Dover ladies watched while others, led by Lorna Bomford, took part. The Third Conciliation Bill was introduced on 19 February 1912 and set down for Second

Reading on 22 March but delayed until 28th. It was then defeated by 222 to 208 votes. This was due to:

- The Anti-Women Suffrage league launching an active campaign
- The Irish Parliamentary Party who did not want to waste Parliamentary time, which could be used for discussing Home Rule, on women.

On 23 June 1912, Edward Barlow, the husband of Mrs Alice Barlow, the President of the Dover Women's Suffrage died at the early age of 57. Although Alice remained President, it appears that she ceased to take an active part in Dover's suffrage campaign. By that time, Annie Brunyate had moved away. However, the Vice President of the DWS was Countess Brassey, the wife of the then Lord Warden! Lorna Bomford was by this time, the chief and most active protagonist representing Dover. The centre of activity was her home, 14 Godwyne Road.