

## A WALK WITH THE CLIFTON SUFFRAGISTS BY LUCIENNE BOYCE

This short walk focusses on some of the Clifton friends and neighbours who were involved in the non-militant suffrage campaign. Allow about an hour.

**[The walk starts at 3 West Mall, where the first meeting of the non-militant Bristol & West of England Society for Women's Suffrage was held in 1868.]**

### 3 West Mall (Formerly 3 The Mall)



From the 1830s, 3 West Mall was known as 3 The Mall, but by the 1890s this section of The Mall had been renamed West Mall.

**Florence Davenport Hill** (1829/9-1919) lived here with her widower father Matthew Davenport Hill (Commissioner of the Bristol and District Court of Bankruptcy) and her two sisters. The family moved to Bristol from London in 1851.

The Manchester National Society for Women's Suffrage was established in January 1867, and it was at 3 West Mall that the Bristol branch of the Society was founded at a meeting on 24th January 1868. It was apparently at Mr Davenport Hill's suggestion that a society was formed; he was active in a number of reform movements, in particular penal reform, and had been a supporter of women's suffrage since the 1830s.

Florence Davenport Hill was on the original executive committee of the Bristol suffrage society with a number of other famous Bristol reformers, including Agnes Beddoe, Mrs Alfred Brittain, Rev J Estlin Carpenter, Mary Estlin, Mrs Mill Colman (sister of J S Mill) and Liliash Ashworth (from 1869).

In 1869 the Society was renamed the Bristol and West of England Society for Women's Suffrage. By 1872 the Society had opened an office in Park Street. In October 1898 the society affiliated to the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies.

The Bristol and West of England Society for Women's Suffrage campaigned vigorously in favour of suffrage bills, holding meetings throughout the South West, sending deputations to Bristol MPs, and collecting signatures on petitions. Florence Davenport Hill herself signed the 1866 petition which was presented to Parliament by John Stuart Mill (1806-1873).



The Blue Plaque was installed at 3 West Mall on 15 December 2018 with Thangam Debbonaire MP as guest of honour.

With Thangam Debbonaire (left) and Lori Streich (right) of the Blue Plaque Committee at the installation ceremony.

Pic: Gordon Young

**[Walk along West Mall (away from The Mall).]**

### **16 West Mall: The Misses Duncan**

The home of sisters Maud (1866–?) and Mabel Harriet Duncan (1872–?) who hosted suffrage meetings here. Attendees included Geraldine Hodgson and Mrs F W Rogers, who we will hear more about later. In 1908 Mabel married a local solicitor and as Mrs W H Cross was honorary secretary of the local NUWSS. Maud lived with her sister after her marriage and both continued their suffrage work.

Mrs Cross was the organiser of the Bristol contingent of the Women's Suffrage Pilgrimage which was organised by the NUWSS in 1913. The Pilgrims walked from around the country to converge on London for a major suffrage demonstration. The south west route started at Lands End. Both militant and non-militant campaigners faced violence from opponents, and many Pilgrims were attacked along the way. In Twerton Mrs Cross disguised herself in men's clothes to escape a violent mob.

**[Walk to the end of West Mall, turn left at the bottom of the garden and then right onto Caledonia Place, then left onto Sion Hill; cross the top of Princess Victoria Street; go up three sets of steps to Royal York Crescent, or cross the road and walk along the opposite pavement.]**

### **45 Royal York Crescent: Clifton, Bristol and Counties' Ladies Club**

The Clifton, Bristol and Counties' Ladies Club opened with 260 members on 18 October 1903 as a place where women could gather to share social, intellectual and philanthropic interests. It was just the sort of place likely to appeal to Brighton-born, Cambridge-educated Miss Geraldine Hodgson, BA (1865–1937), a lecturer in education at Bristol University College (later the University of Bristol) and a member of the Bristol and West of England Suffrage Society committee. In February 1908, she chaired a meeting of the Society here which passed a resolution deploring the treatment of militant suffragettes in prison. However, after two suffragettes assaulted Prime Minister Asquith in Kent, Geraldine Hodgson lost sympathy with the WSPU. In 1909 she withdrew from a suffrage meeting in the Victoria

Rooms because the speaker, the actor Forbes Robertson, had spoken in favour of the militants.

#### **49 Royal York Crescent: the Baretto Sisters**

The home of the Baretto sisters. Their father, Thomas (1834–1916), was a doctor. Samuella was the eldest daughter (1872–?) and was secretary of the West of England Federation of the NUWSS. She spoke at both indoor and outdoor suffrage meetings on the Downs and the Horsefair. In 1912 she engaged in a public debate in Clifton with the anti-suffragist Mrs Solomon. She was later active in the Labour party.

Samuella's sister Josephine (1873–?) was also a member of the NUWSS. She wrote drama and poetry, and in 1916 dedicated a book of poems to fellow-suffrage campaigner Sarah Jane Tanner. After the First World War she was Honorary Secretary of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

**Continue to the end of Royal York Crescent, turn right onto Regent Street, cross over at the zebra crossing and turn left, then turn right onto Merchants Road. Walk past Victoria Square and cross at the zebra crossing into Lansdown Place. Turn right into Kensington Place, walk to the end.**

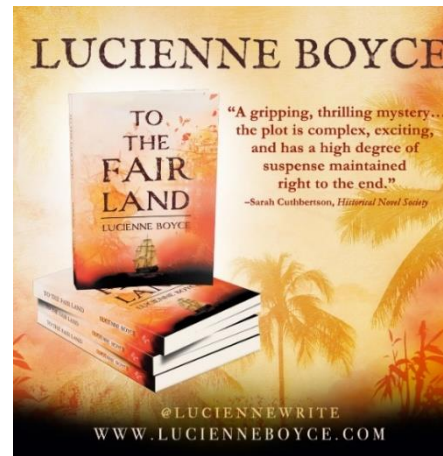
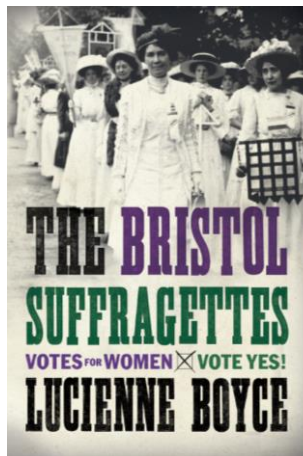
#### **2 Kensington Villas: No Vote, No Census**

The home of Mr and Mrs Frederick William Rogers and their two daughters. They were involved in the non-militant campaign, and later supported the WSPU. Mr Rogers was honorary secretary of the non-militant Bristol Men's League for Women's Suffrage, which supported both militant and non-militant campaigners.

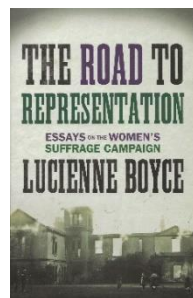
During the 1911 Census many suffrage supporters refused to fill in their census forms in protest at women's voteless condition. Mrs Rogers spent census night in Bath with other resisters. Mr Rogers also seems to have evaded the census as the house was empty when the enumerators called.

After the First World War, Mrs Rogers was active in the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

**[Walk back along Kensington Place. Cross over and walk through the opposite side of Victoria Square to come out on Boyce's Avenue and back into Clifton village.]**



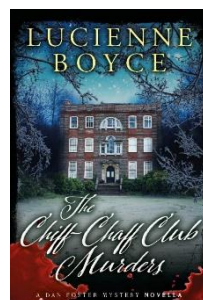
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