



### **Lady Laura Riding 1849-1939 nee Palmer**

#### **Women's suffrage supporter and activist**

Laura was born in London the eldest daughter of Roundell Palmer, 1st Earl of Selborne, and Lady Laura, Waldegrave. In 1876 she married George Ridding, who in 1884 became Bishop of Southwell and they moved there.

Laura was a keen suffragist though this was something she had to downplay because of her husband's role. Nonetheless she was active in social projects for women and girls eg founding a rescue home for girls in prostitution Southwell House in Broad Marsh and Hope Lodge. She was also involved in campaigning for better factory conditions and reduced hours.

In 1895 she organised a meeting in Nottingham and founded the **National Union of Women's Workers** together with the writer Louise Creighton and the administrator Emily Janes. Although it was called a union its purpose was to co-ordinate the voluntary efforts of women across Great Britain. It said that it would "promote sympathy of thought and purpose among the women of Great Britain and Ireland" Creighton became the first President and in time Laura would also serve.

She was involved in the Girls' Evening Home Movement – clubs to keep young working women off the streets and out of pubs. She was responsible for founding Family Care, an organisation still helping families today. She was also a Poor Law Guardian and rural district Councillor for Southwell Union from 1895 – 1904.

During WWI she was active in the Soldiers and Sailors Family Association, the Women's War Agricultural Committee and the YWCA. After her husband's death in

1904 she moved to live at the rectory at Winton in Hampshire. Nonetheless she appears as one of the patrons of the East Midlands Federation of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies in 1912. The 1911 census has her with her sister and brother in law Earl Waldegrave at 20 Bryanston Square, Marylebone, London.

She also wrote for various periodicals, and the Times on subjects such as women's education. She wrote 3 biographies of her husband, sister and nephew. She also wrote a historical novel 'By Weeping Cross' 1899. She died in 1939 in Hampshire and is buried in Southwell alongside her husband.