



## **Violet Rosa Markham 1872-1959**

### **Social activist/reformer**

Violet was the **first** woman to stand for election to Parliament in Nottinghamshire. She stood in 1918 as an Independent Liberal in Mansfield but was not elected. She was as an independently wealthy social reformer who, in the years before the First World War, was a leader of the anti-women's suffrage campaign. However, her views modified during the War and in 1918 she stood as a Liberal in Mansfield, where her brother, Sir Arthur Markham, had before his death in 1916, been the MP. It was ironic that Mansfield, which had had an active suffrage society since the 1890s, should have been contested by a woman candidate who, until very recently, had been so vehemently anti-suffrage. In her election manifesto Violet Markham declared:

Violet came third in the election contest, polling 4000 votes. The Labour candidate took the seat with 8957 votes. The Coalition 'coupon' went to a National Democratic candidate who came second. An Independent trailed in fourth place with 878 votes. She never again stood as a parliamentary candidate.

She was passionate about education and served on the Chesterfield School Board and Education Authority from 1899-1934. During WW1 she was an Executive member of the National Relief Fund and in 1917 she was made a Companion of Honour. She was one of the first women to be appointed a JP, and in 1924 was elected a town councillor in Chesterfield, her hometown, becoming Mayor in 1927. By 1937 she was deputy chairman of the Unemployment Assistance Board and in 1945 was the co-author of a report on the *Post-war Organisation of Private Domestic Employment*. She was the granddaughter of Sir Joseph Paxton who designed the Crystal Palace. She married in 1915 but continued to use Markham for her public work – married name Mrs Carruthers.