



Nelly Crocker 1872-1962 – second from left

Photo from museum of London

Suffragette

Nelly was born in Stogumber, Somerset; her father was a Doctor and she was a cousin of Emmeline and Dorothy Pethick. In 1906, Crocker was a strong Liberal Party supporter, honorary secretary to the Wellington's Women's Liberal Association but became disillusioned in 1907 and left the party of 'a Government which persecutes women' to join the WSPU and spoke at the founding meeting of the Bath WSPU branch of the WSPU and spoke at the Hyde Park rally in 1908.

She was appointed as WSPU organiser for Yorkshire, based in Sheffield and then in 1909 became WSPU organiser in Nottingham until 1912. She was first arrested in 1909, taking up her post in Nottingham directly from a hunger strike. She was next arrested again in London on Black Friday in November 1910. Nelly was an early visitor to Eagle House where hunger striking suffragettes went to recover and on 7th February 1911 she planted a tree, an *Abies Magnifica* in the Suffragette Orchard. She is known to have been an evader at the 1911 Census and cannot be found anywhere on that night. There is an advert in 'Votes for Women' Oct 27 1911 which has Miss Nelly Crocker of 6 Carlton Street also an address given by Fanny Gladys Roberts (aka Clinton Chambers where various businesses and offices rented space) selling underclothes at the WSPU Christmas Fair.

Nelly was involved in the first wave of largescale window smashing in London which led to her being imprisoned in Holloway for 3 months from March 1st – June 4th 1912. Her address in 1912 was 8 East Circus Street which we know from trade directories was where John Wykes, was a cab proprietor and his wife took in boarders. On 4

March 1912, Nelly Crocker attacked a post office in Sloane Square, London, smashing its windows. A policeman had followed her and her two conspirators from the Gardenia restaurant in Covent Garden. It was her eighth arrest. Nelly recalled the hustling and jostling of the Westminster protests and how Mary Leigh was so skilled in ju-jitsu it took six policemen to arrest her. She was involved in seven by-elections, organising WSPU interventions. She recalled a by election in Nottinghamshire where "our good driver armed himself with a large iron rod which he placed under his seat to protect himself."

Nelly left Nottingham and the WSPU in 1912, probably after her Pethick relatives resigned over the increasing use of violence. Later in life Nelly wrote an account of her suffragette activities which she presented to Girton College, Cambridge. She was a member of Suffragette Fellowship and left them the residue of her estate. She lived in Maida Vale, London and died in 1962.

"Modern Young Women seem unaware of the price paid for their political and social emancipation and modern historians have greatly ignored the struggle".

Nelly Crocker in her memoirs, 1949.