

Curiosities No 21

Suffragism at Lincoln Christ's Hospital Girls' High School

From the Garton Archive

Compiled by Peter Harrod

from primary sources contributed by Elaine Johnson & other material

June 2022



The May 2015 article in the Picture of the Month series from the Garton Archive featured the photograph above which shows the long-serving Lincoln Christ's Hospital Girls' High School (LHS) teacher Miss Kathleen Clare Huddleston with her Form. The precise date is not known, but the evidence suggests that it was taken in about 1912 when the school would have celebrated its twentieth anniversary, shortly after the legendary headmistress, Miss Lucie Savill OBE MA, had taken over the reins.

Records in the archive at Bishop Grosseteste University, formerly Lincoln Diocesan Training College, revealed that Miss Huddleston was the daughter of Fred and Clare Huddleston of Chiswick and that she completed her course of teacher-training in 1892, aged 24. She was described as an assistant at the College's practising schools, and was described as an excellent student and teacher, being awarded

Head of First Division in the Teaching Certificate Examination. She taught at Ashbourne Girls' School for a short period before being appointed to LHS in 1897 to teach drawing, needlework, and elementary French. Jane Burgess has kindly found the reference below.

Church National (girls), Mayfield road, erected in 1876,
for 230, with an average attendance of about 127;
Miss Kathleen Huddleston, mistress

She resided at 185 Monks Road in Lincoln and, according to Miss Savill, 'ruled over the middle school' with a 'critical eye' during her long career at LHS. Her Form was Upper 3, and since this is a class-sized photograph, the probability is that she is with her own Form. Apparently, her favourite invective was, "You are an exceedingly naughty little girl," and her demeanour would seem to offer confirmation! Perhaps smiling for the camera was out of fashion at the time, but the girls certainly look smart in their gym slips! It is believed that the location of the photograph was outside the corridor leading to the gymnasium, newly added to the School in 1911.

However, this article focuses not on the professional life of Miss Huddleston, but on a significant and influential aspect of her private life. As such, I have decided that it is more appropriately placed in the *Curiosities* series from the Garton Archive and I am indebted to Elaine Johnson who, during her research for her MA in Social and Cultural History at Bishop Grosseteste University, discovered that Miss Huddleston was an active suffragist. Perhaps that is not surprising as Miss Savill had once described her as 'irrepressible', surely an essential trait for a member of such an admirably relentless and focused movement. Elaine discovered from historic articles in the *Lincolnshire Echo* and the *Lincolnshire Chronicle* that Miss Huddleston was an active and committed member of the non-militant Lincoln Suffrage Society and her colleagues, Deputy Head Miss Mason, and part-time teacher of typewriting Miss Harrison were also members.

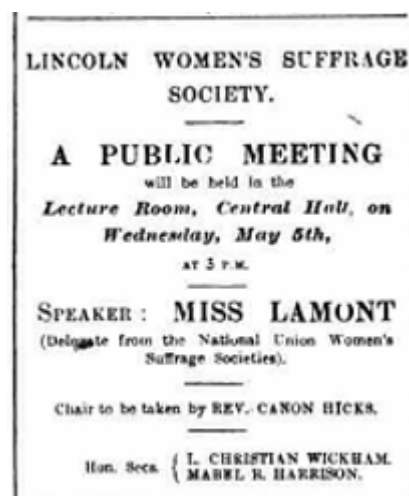
On 20 May 1909 the *Echo* reported that, some five years previously, an attempt had been made to form a suffrage society but owing to the difficulty of finding anyone to take on the role of secretary the attempt proved to be abortive. Local campaigner Miss L C Wickham had taken the initiative of applying to the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) for help and advice and their offer of a delegate and organiser was gladly accepted. A temporary committee was formed comprising women of all shades of politics, including Miss Huddleston. Preparations were made for the arrival of the NUWSS delegate, Miss Wilhelmina Lamond, who arrived in Lincoln on the 3 May 1909 'taking the place by storm'. Two 'Drawing Room' meetings were held and were well attended by representative women of all political parties.

It was proposed to extend the temporary committee's office during the summer and start a vigorous campaign in the early autumn culminating in a large and popular

meeting with a well-known speaker. The newly formed Society was to be affiliated to the NUWSS. and was to be non-partisan and strictly constitutional and educational in its methods.

Two days later on Wednesday May 5 1909 Miss Lamond was the main speaker at a large Public Meeting held in the Central Hall, St Swithin's Square (see Notes), and presided over by the Bishop of Lincoln, the Rev Canon Edward Hicks, joint president of the Men's League for Women's Suffrage. Miss Lamond was given an enthusiastic hearing and during the short time of her stay made several friends and converts, and the number of members of the new society already enrolled reached almost fifty, with many others in the pipeline.

That meeting, advertised as 'Women's Suffrage in Lincoln' (see poster below), was recorded in the 8 May edition of the *Lincolnshire Chronicle* and was to be a key moment in the history of suffragism in Lincoln. A large attendance listened to the guest speaker Miss Lamond who was a Scottish suffragist, editor and equalitarian feminist lecturer. She later married, changed her forename, and became Elizabeth Abbott, a member of the Executive Committee of the Scottish Federation of Women's Suffragist Societies and highly influential in the movement in Scotland. Both Miss Huddleston and Miss Mason attended the meeting and were clearly inspired by her speech which gave momentum to a vigorous campaign in Lincoln during the autumn.



(Note the misprint: the name of the speaker was Miss Lamond and not Lamont)

The meeting was chaired by the President of the Lincoln Suffrage Society, Canon Hicks, a staunch advocate of the movement, who described it as 'an act of justice and equality.' Another of its most enthusiastic male supporters, Arthur Crookes Newsum, was also present. He was Chairman of the Governors of both Lincoln Girls' High School and Lincoln Grammar School for thirty years until his death in 1934 (see References) and on Speech Day 1929 he paid a great tribute to Headmistress Savill, Miss Mason and Miss Huddleston whom he described as being mainly responsible for 'the type of girl turned out' and for the high place of the school in public esteem.

It was recorded in the *Chronicle* in 1909 that the Society had about 80 members including Miss Huddleston and Miss Mason. The 26 November 1909 edition contained a report on an 'At Home' meeting for members and friends held in the Co-operative Restaurant. There was a large attendance numbering 70-80 of both sexes. Mrs Hodgett, chairman of the branch, introduced the meeting informing the audience that the Lincoln members were not militant suffragettes but peaceful suffragists petitioning for women's suffrage (see Notes). Addresses were given by Miss Wallis and the Rev G Barrett. The main business of the meeting was to prepare a petition for the next election.

In 1910, a further meeting of the Society was held at the Old Palace, courtesy of Mrs Hicks, the Bishop's wife. Among those present at the meeting were Miss Huddleston and Miss Mason. Miss Corbett spoke lucidly about the *Conciliation Bill*, which proposed legislation that would extend the right of certain women to vote. Others were invited to speak in support of the movement to enfranchise women. Headmistress Lucie Savill also attended that meeting, so it is likely that she was supportive of the movement and indeed of her colleagues.

In a letter to the *Echo* on 15 February 1913, Ursula Roberts, Honorary Secretary of the East Midlands Federation of the NUWSS wrote in support of the local branch and publicised the election of Miss Huddleston as honorary secretary of the society. She informed readers that the Union was founded in 1867 and by 1913 consisted of some 400 affiliated societies with a total membership of about 35,000, including 'scores of men.' It worked on Constitutional and non-party lines and had for its sole object the enfranchisement of women on the same terms as men. During the previous year, between 150 and 200 meetings had been organised by the Union in support of its objective in the East Midlands alone. The movement was gathering momentum both locally and nationally.



Headmistress Savill flanked by Miss Mason (left) and the irrepressible Miss Huddleston (1913)

The suffrage movement was up against stiff opposition which included a well-supported women's Anti-women's Suffrage League. The main opposition, however, came from several heavyweights including Herbert Gladstone, son of William Ewart Gladstone, and Lloyd George (see 'In Our Time' reference). Gladstone, who was serving in the Liberal government as Home Secretary at the time, pointed to the fact that there seemed to be little public support, including from women, and that women were unsuited to parliamentary politics. He also had the reputation for putting women on a pedestal and believed that there was a differentiation of function between

women and men, and that there was a risk that the reservoir of moral power and influence would be reduced if women participated in the 'dirty work of politics', a view apparently shared by Queen Victoria. Gladstone was certainly no supporter of the militant suffragette movement and favoured the use of violence by the police against suffragettes, and in particular the force-feeding of women prisoners on hunger strike.

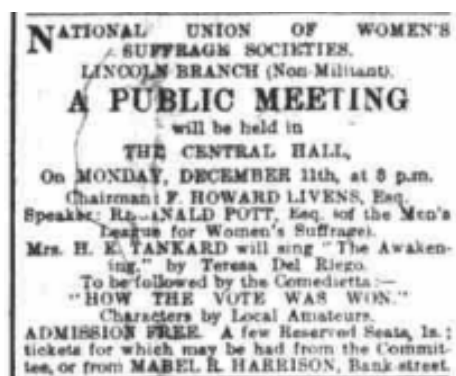
Moreover, there appeared to be broken promises. Ursula Roberts' letter, referred to above, drew attention to the manner in which the 'Radical Ministers', including the 'Premier', had rejected the 1912 *Franchise (Women) Bill*, offering the less favourable facilities of a Private Members' Bill, despite having pledged their previous support for the *Bill*. "We are not placated," she concluded.

Despite this opposition, women in England, Scotland and Wales over the age of 30 were given the vote in 1918 by the *Representation of the People Act* and all women over 21 in 1928 by the *Equal Franchise Act* as a result of the relentless and persuasive commitment to the cause by stalwarts including local representatives such as Miss Huddleston and Miss Mason. Both national and local celebrations followed, and the 15 December 1911 edition of the *Lincolnshire Chronicle* recorded that Miss Huddleston and Miss Harrison, the part-time teacher of typewriting at LHS, were members of the cast of *How the vote was won*, a 'comedietta' play celebrating the success of those formidable suffragists and suffragettes, acclaimed by Elaine Johnson (2019) as 'heroines'.

The play took place as part of a public meeting (see Poster below) in the Central Hall which was almost filled to capacity with men as well as women. The *Chronicle* described the plot as follows:

"The play is nicely worked out. It tells how Suffragists arrange an organised 'strike' and decide to foist themselves upon their nearest male relatives, for the latter to monetarily support them in the way of board and lodgings, until they (the suffragists) are admitted to the rights of citizenship. "Horace Cole" is, in this way, visited by all his relatives and his feelings are worked up to such a pitch that he finally falls in with the views of the Suffragists and becomes a pledged supporter of the cause."

The journey had been a long and hard-fought battle since the petition to parliament in 1866.



The suffrage movement should be seen against the backdrop of the ongoing struggle to achieve secondary education for girls and the role that teachers and especially head mistresses adopted in the process. Price and Glenday (1974) described the latter as 'reluctant revolutionaries' and Headmistress Lucie Savill wrote that they were 'by no means tame or tameable.' That mirrored the essential spirit of the suffrage movement. The Right Honorable Lord Butler, writing in the *Forward* to the book, named the chief protagonists of the fight to create girls' and women's education: Miss Beale, Miss Buss and Miss Porter. The leaders of the suffrage movement for women had a similar mission and ambition and it is no coincidence either that both progress in both endeavours were made during periods of war: notably the Boer War and the First World War.

Wider reforms for women's status and position were also passed at that time following new opportunities and roles available for women during the Great War. Measurable progress had been made since 1832 when the flamboyant MP Henry Hunt had been persuaded to present the first petition and was ridiculed as, 'the man who wants girls in parliament.' Despite the fact that his amendment to the *Great Reform Act* was rejected, it acted as a catalyst for the campaign for women's enfranchisement, which gathered momentum during the second half of the 19th century and led to almost annual *Bills* in favour of women's votes until the legal power to vote was granted to men and women over the age of 21 by the *Equal Franchise Act* of 1928.

I feel I must conclude, however, by pointing out that it was not until 1948 that Cambridge University agreed to award degrees to women on equal terms with men. The campaign for women's rights continued, and it still does almost seventy-five years later some one hundred years since the first female MP Nancy Astor claimed her seat in parliament alongside seven hundred and six men.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to local historian Elaine Johnson for kindly allowing me to use the primary sources on Miss Huddleston from her MA in Social and Cultural History at Bishop Grosseteste University. That material, which includes Miss Huddleston's Probate Record and the sources from the Lincolnshire Echo and the Lincolnshire Chronicle, forms the backbone of this article. I am also grateful to her for reading a draft of my article and for offering advice and suggestions on some of the historical detail.

My thanks are also due to the Christ's Hospital Lincolnians secretary Jane Burgess for supplying me with additional information, and to local historian Chris Page for researching into the origin and location of the Central Hall in Lincoln (see Notes).

Notes

A shorter version of this article was published in the May 2022 edition of the Lincoln Independent magazine.

A 'suffragette' is defined as a woman who campaigned militantly through direct violent and disruptive action for women to be given the right to vote in public elections, their mantra being, 'Deeds not Words'. They were members of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) and key figures included Emmeline Pankhurst, her daughter Christabel, and Emily Davison, who became a martyr to the cause by throwing herself in front of the King's horse in the Epsom Derby and later died from her injuries, although she was apparently not attempting suicide. It was reported in the *Lincolnshire Chronicle* (Johnson, 2019) that Mrs Pankhurst delivered an 'eloquent speech at the Corn Exchange in Lincoln in 1912, which was given 'a very warm reception.'

A 'suffragist' is defined as a non-militant campaigner for the same cause. Led by Millicent Fawcett, those women were members of the NUWSS, a much larger organization than the WSPU which relied on peaceful meetings and lobbying influential 'movers and shakers' such as MPs, clergy and civic leaders, to further their cause. As Ursula Roberts put it in the letter referred to above: "The National Union believes that such (militant) methods are futile and seeks to carry on its work by constitutional propaganda and political warfare only."

In its 'Looking Back' feature on the 12 May 1936 the Echo reported that the following ladies constituted the committee of the Lincoln Women's Suffrage Society: Mrs Caroline Monks (president), Mrs Bessie F. Barrett, Mrs A.M. Coomber, Miss Edith M Harrison, Miss Christina Hicks, Miss Kathleen C Huddleston, Miss Hilda S Livens, Miss Gladys M Newsum, Mrs Mary Ann Quarm, Mrs Margaret Wilkins, Miss Elizabeth Young and Miss Mabel H Harrison (Hon Secretary).

Local historian Chris Page has informed me that the Central Hall was located in St Swithin's Square in Lincoln and was designed by the local architect William Mortimer. The building, which accommodated one thousand people on two floors, was completed in 1902 and was originally known as the Temperance Hall. It was later renamed the Central Cinema which was the first in Lincoln to present a 'sound on disc' film, *The Donovan Affair*, in 1929. It was destroyed by fire in 1944. The ruins were eventually demolished in 1960. I have also found that the site may have been used for entertainment during the mid-nineteenth century. Thorngate House now stands on its site (see Alan Middleton reference). The photograph below, sent to me by Jane Burgess, shows the hall during its Central Cinema days.



Jane Burgess has delved into Miss Huddleston's early history and has offered me the following information from her research which includes her entry in the 1881 Census and details of her return to England following a visit to Canada on her retirement.

1881 England Census for Kathleen C. Huddleston										Save
100	100	Benjamin B. Noble	Head	21	Independent	Gloucestershire, Stroud				
1	1	Esther B. Noble	Wife	5	Scholar	Surrey, Wandsworth				
1	1	Madeline V. Huddleston	Head	36	Inspector of Railways	Lincolnshire, Lincoln				
		Clara	Wife	35		Yorkshire, Doncaster				
		Percy H.	Son	14	Boys	Lincolnshire, Lincoln				
		Kathleen C.	Daughter	12	Scholar	Do				
		William C.	Son	7	Do	Do				

The 'irrepressible' Miss Huddleston celebrated her retirement by embarking on a world tour and, in an 'enthraling' lecture to the School in 1933, she described her visits to Egypt, India, Singapore, Hong Kong, China, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand, where she stayed on a sheep farm (LHS magazine, 1933). On each stage of her journey, she met up with former LHS staff and alumnae. She told the Old Girls' Association in a letter that she had a 'tremendously gay time', which shows how the meaning of language evolves over time.

The itinerary below provides evidence that she then continued her tour to Canada, possibly to visit a relative. On a personal note, my father-in-law served as a wireless operator on the *Empress of Britain* and was certainly in service at that time

Name:	Kathleen C Huddleston
Arrival Age:	65
Birth Date:	abt 1869
Port of Departure:	Quebec, Canada
Arrival Date:	24 Aug 1934
Port of Arrival:	Southampton, England
Ports of Voyage:	Quebec and Cherbourg
Ship Name:	Empress of Britain
Shipping Line:	Canadian Pacific Line
Official Number:	162582

It is clear that Miss Huddlestone was not prepared to allow the small matter of retirement to interfere with her lifelong quest for adventures.

Probate Record (supplied by Elaine Johnson)

Huddleston, Kathleen Clare of 105 Lee Park, Blackheath, London.

Spinster: died 19 May 1959.

Probate 19 August to Bernard Waldby Duggleby and John Geoffrey Compton, retired bank officials.

Effects: £2,829 4s. 4d.

Jane also discovered that Miss Huddleston's nickname was 'Puddles' or 'Pud'.

References

Price, M & N Glenday (1974) Reluctant Revolutionaries: a Century of Headmistresses 1974-1974 Pitman, London

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Occasional Paper No 61: Two Distinguished Chairmen of Governors: Part One: Arthur Crookes Newsum (Garton Archive Publication)

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BBC Sounds, *In Our Time* Melvyn Bragg (released in April 2009)

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