



Dorothea Jewson was born on 17th August 1884, the fifth child of eight, three of whom died during childhood. Her father George Jewson made his fortune as head of the Jewson timber firm. He was a member of the National Liberal Club, a Norwich Alderman and a Trustee of the Great Hospital in Norwich. In 1874 he married Mary Jarrold of Norwich.

Dorothy was educated at Norwich High School for Girls, which was then housed in the Assembly House, where she studied from 1891 to 1903. Dorothy was one of two girls at the school to pass the entrance exam for Girton College in Cambridge, where she studied classics and gained a BA and discovered both socialism and feminism, becoming a member of the Cambridge University Woman's Suffrage Society. In 1908 Dorothy became a schoolteacher in Kingston in Surrey, before moving back to her house in Bracondale, Norwich in 1911. During this time Dorothy was working for women's suffrage rather than for socialism, 'believing the former to be an essential step to the latter'. She joined the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), which had been founded by Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters Christabel and Sylvia, who believed the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) was insufficiently dynamic and too middle class.

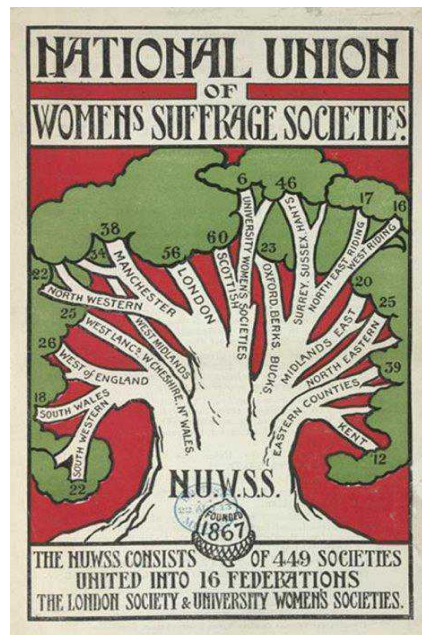




'Not a cat, dog or canary, would be harmed'. In response to government intransigence on votes for women, the WSPU had adopted tactics that included violence against property. The breaking of the windows of government buildings from 1908, and escalating to arson by 1913. The 'violence' was aimed at the properties of the politicians who stood in the way of political process, or who authorised violence against the women protesters.



The WSPU came to Norwich in 1911: previously the East Anglian campaign had been organised from an office in Ipswich. Dorothy was one the founding members and in April 1912 the Norwich office was opened at 52 London Street. Although her brother Harry and other members of the family help fund and organise the hire of venues for speeches during this time, it is Dorothy who has publicly entered the suffragette arena at this time.



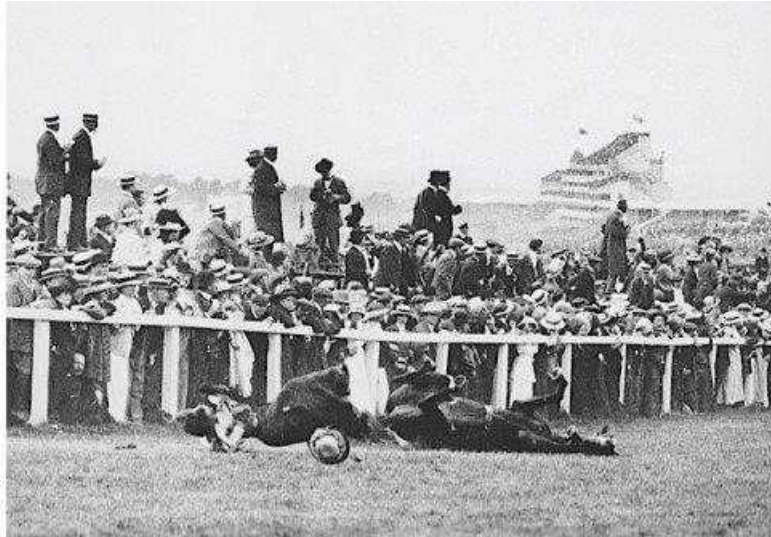
Emmeline Pankhurst spoke at St. Andrew's Hall on 11th December 1912. The front seats cost a shilling, the seats in the middle sixpence and those nearer the back two pence. During the day several post-boxes in Norwich had burning rags pushed into them. This was a common WSPU tactic. The area organiser Margaret West claimed that the letter box damage was part of a plot to incite the people of Norwich to create a disturbance at the meeting. Certainly by 7.30pm the Hall was packed out, mainly with young men with whistles, mouth organs and penny-shriekers seeking to prevent Mrs Pankhurst from speaking. Emmeline made her speech, turning her back and addressing the 300 working women who were sitting in the gallery behind the podium.

Shortly after this meeting the Speaker of the Houses of Parliament announced that it was not possible to add clauses to the Women's Franchise Bill and that a new bill would have to be drawn up, creating further delay. Mrs Pankhurst declared: 'we will fight for the vote as Garibaldi fought for Italian freedom'. ..'it is guerilla warfare that we declare this afternoon.'

In Norwich a property in Eaton Chase was destroyed by fire, and the opening of Buntings (currently the home of Marks and Spencer's cloths store), was delayed due to 'Votes For Women' having been cut into the glass window display.



On the 18th May 1912 a house and a new genetics laboratory in Cambridge were burnt down. Miriam Pratt was eventually sentenced on the 14th October to eighteen months for her actions. In fact the arson attack had been prepared by Olive Bartels, the Cambridge WSPE organiser, but there is little doubt that Miriam carried out the deed.



On the 4th June 1913, Emily Davison attempted to grab the bridle of the Kings horse at Epsom and was injured severely, she died on 8th June. Dorothy's contribution to the WSPU meeting in 1914 was a duologue with Nancy Lightman entitled 'No 10 Clowning Street'.



In April 1914 the pavilion on the Britannia Pier in Yarmouth was burnt down by suffragettes. However, the declaration of the First World War on 4th August changed everything. The WSPU suspend all political activity. A truce was declared: the prison sentences of women like Miriam Pratt were cancelled. Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst were strong supporters of the war and of the duty – and right – of women to participate in it fully. As a pacifist, Dorothy could not follow the Pankhurst's lead.

THE BOARD OF GUARDIANS

If you were unable to maintain yourself for whatever reason, be it old age, illness or you were unable to find work, and had no community support, your only form of possible support was to approach the Norwich Board of Guardians.

The Board of Guardians had 48 members, three from each district in the city, and the guardians were elected en bloc every three years. Emma Rump, Kate Mithcell and Alice Searle were the first women to be elected in 1894.

In 1913 a booklet entitled 'The Destitute of Norwich and How they Live. 59 investigators provided a factual document which exposed the terrible extent of poverty, illness, poor nutrition and bad housing in Norwich. Dorothy and Harry played a vital role in its publication and Dorothy was amongst 8 Investigators who stood as Independents in the April board elections of 1914. 2 Investigators and 3 Independent Labour Party candidates were elected, but Dorothy was narrowly defeated. In November 1913 Mabel Clarkson was the first woman to win a seat on the Council for Town Close ward.

1914 War

As a Quaker and a pacifist Dorothy was opposed to the war. As today, the support for war is upheld by the trade unionists, with Independent Labour Party members less attached to the arms industry and business of war. Pacifists are described as conscientious objectors by those accepting the moral case against the violence of war and cowards by those that support military conflict. Opposition to the war against Germany in 1914 was minimal, and many who voiced their opposition were branded as German sympathisers.



Dorothy began her war work in charge of a workshop for girls established by the Norwich Distress Committee to relieve unemployment. She volunteered to go to the women's Emergency Corps in London and obtain information on how to set up a local toy factory. There was a direct link to this work from women's suffrage.

The Women's Emergency Corps – in whose ranks were to be found most of the women who had lately been, making so brave a fight for Woman Suffrage – came to the conclusion that a field of industry lay open to the girls and women of our country in the making of wooden toys and stuffed dolls and animals, if the necessary instruction could be obtained; to this end, they established workrooms in which many women were trained as instructors in the art of 'toy-making.

Carrow Road Works Magazine.- January 1916.



However, by 1916 the wartime economy had reduced the number of women making toys to a small number and in 1916 Dorothy moved to London, as an organiser for the National Federation of Women Workers. This organisation had been founded a decade earlier by Mary Macarthy to encourage women to join the union movement: In contemporary language, Dorothy might be described as a 'Champagne Socialist', as she worked alongside a new generation of women involved in trade unionism.

Speaking fifty years later, Dorothy noted 'Women before had been scared of the sack. Now they gained the confidence and learned. We had to teach them to write and to educate them to play their part in trade unionism and Labour movement.

Keir Hardie and Ramsay MacDonald, spoke against the war in 1915 at what became Keir Hardie Hall, in St. Gregory's Alley. The Independent Labour Party was always ready to listen to its women members, no doubt part of its appeal to Dorothy. One speaker from the platform was Katherine Gasier who spoke movingly of what the war was doing to the young.

“Human solidarity is not a sloppy sentiment but a fact in nature... This is the darkest hour of the world's conscious life – the undoing of all the work of human parenting. We must dedicate ourselves to get children to become unselfish and to think of life as human service.”

Dorothy was one of the leaders of a Deputation to the Minister of Labour to demand that the munitions factories – and their workers – be used to build houses and housing accessories, but like today, nothing was done.

Dorothy organised a great meeting at the Royal Albert Hall on 15th February 1933 to proclaim a Women Workers Charter. The Red Flag was sung, and the meeting ended with 'God Save Our People', rather than 'God Save the King'.



The charter made demands still relevant today.

1. THE RIGHT TO WORK: the provision of suitable work of full maintenance for all workers, whether by hand or brain.
2. THE RIGHT TO LIFE: security against want: and a wage sufficient to maintain health and happiness.
3. THE RIGHT TO LEISURE: time to think, and play, and do things.

The charter pledged to work 'against any sex or class distinctions'. It demanded a:

- legal basic wage 'sufficient to provide all the requirements of a full development of body, mind and character.
- Maximum working day of eight hours and maximum working week of 40 hours 'so that full opportunity for recreation and physical and mental development may be available for all'.

By 1921 the Federation had grown to 146 branches, with 54,000 members, but during that year, it became part of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers. Dorothy became the organiser for the women's section of the union.

Throughout her career, Dorothy was a support of women-only groups. The Labour Party historian Martin Pugh describes her as one the 'middle-class labour feminists' who believed that women should retain independent organisations for fear of being absorbed and exploited by male-dominated parties.

The 1923 General Election in Norwich

Norwich was a double-member constituency: all electors had two votes the two names topping the poll were elected. Voters might vote for one candidate (plumping), or they might vote for one candidate from one party and a second from another (cross-voting): in a close election votes from these groups could mean the difference between winning and losing.

Labour turned to Walter Smith and Dorothy Jewson. Smith was a union man and President of the National Union of Agricultural Workers and an official of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Trade operatives. He had also been MP for Wellingborough from 1918-22.

Both candidates were announced at a mass meeting at St. Andrew's Hall on 20th November. Dorothy said:

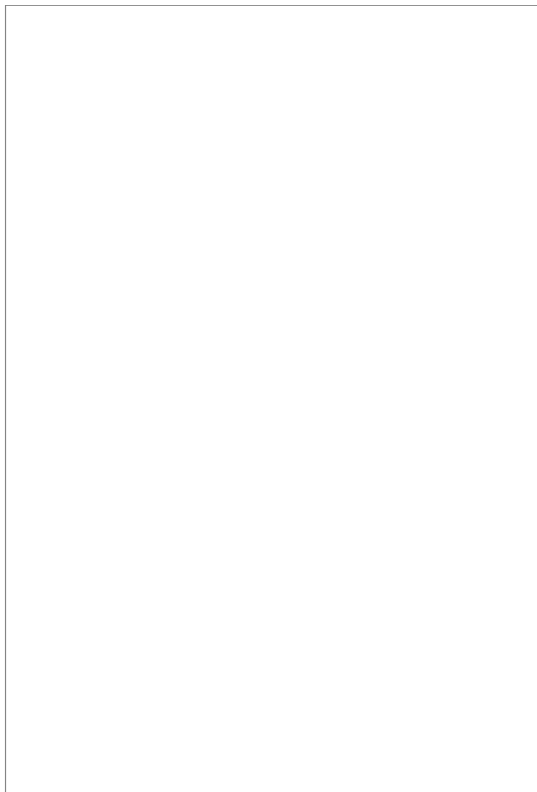


“ I was not many years ago when the sight of a woman on the public platform meant crises from all citizens 'Go home to your children' or 'Cook your husband's dinner', quite regardless of the fact that the woman might not have either husband or children. (Laughter). Perhaps as one who had worked for the empowerment of her sex she ought to congratulate her city on showering honours on some of her sex after a very long time. The had a woman Lord Mayor (Applause) (Miss Ethel Colman was appointed as the 1st lady Lord Mayor in 1923). Miss Colman had led the way, and it was to be hoped that the city might yet have a woman MP... A greater honour had been done her by asking her to stand, not as a woman, but as a representative of the organised workers of the city (Applause). It was of that she was most proud.

At a speech at the Avenue Road school where Dorothy spoke of her 'deep sense of shame – shame that there should be in such a wealthy country as England so great an injustice as this enormous army of men and women who had not the means of working.'

“There was no reason why I should not come home to Norwich and enjoy every comfort, because I belong to the employing class, because I was one of the privileged...I say that every man should have the same choice – every boy and girl should have the same chance that I had... I was quite an ordinary girl, but I was allowed to go on to the university. It was at the university that I joined a Socialist society. And ever since then I have tried to work to secure the removal of the inequalities that exist in our society – the removal of the terrible feeling of insecurity that threatens many of you if you are unemployed.

The result of the election was a triumph for the Labour party, but only 34 of the 1,380 candidates were women, 8 were elected. At 39 she was the youngest. In 1924 Dorothy and six of the other women met and decided against a formal agreement to act as a woman's party, but hoped they would be able to work together on women's issues and that there would be no need to divide the rooms in Westminster allocated to women into 'Government' and 'Opposition'.



Dorothy's maiden speech continued the campaign for women still excluded from the vote, She was one of five members of a Committee set up by the Home Secretary to look into the adoption of children. Dorothy was opposed to Capital Punishment and led a deputation to the Home Secretary. The campaign against capital punishment would take another 40 years, before being abolished in the 1960s.

The single issue with which Dorothy became most closely associated with during her time as MP – and later – was the dissemination of information about birth control to working class women. In 1922, maternity clinics had been banned from giving out such information. The 1923 Labour Women's Conference voted in favour of providing full birth control information to everyone. Dorothy was part of a delegation to John Wheatley, the Health Minister: other delegates included the

writer H.G. Wells and Dora Russell, but as a practising Roman Catholic the Minister avoided any actions that would deliver the necessary change, despite the evidence provided by Dora that four out of a thousand mothers died in childbirth in coal mining communities, compared to 1.1 miners killed in mining accidents. Many people felt the first Labour Government had been a disappointment.

In July, Dorothy spoke in a debate on setting up agricultural wages committees:

I think it is very important to realise in this Debate that this is not only a rural question affecting the agricultural workers, but is also a question which concerns those Hon. Members who represent urban constituencies. For my part, representing Norwich. I can say that the problem of the agricultural worker is constantly with us. During the last 50 or 60 years, thousands of workers have been driven from the land and have had to seek refuge in Norwich. Very badly paid and unskilled work has been found for them, and factories have been started which have absorbed this lowly-paid labour. The question of the position of the agricultural worker in Norfolk, is therefore, a vital one and I welcome any Measure, even this Bill as it stands after the committee stage, which will give those workers some sort of machinery to help them to improve the conditions under which they live. Everyone will agree that the present position is chaotic. The conciliation committees have been absolutely useless, and the wages of the workers are a disgrace to a civilised country.

The third general election in three years was called in October 1924. Dorothy Jewson and Walter Smith published a joint manifesto which included a radical statement on unemployment: it is well to emphasise once again that no final solution can be found within the existing order. "It is part of the Capitalist system of society; and will only be removed when that system can be replaced by one based upon co-operation and social service." A letter, allegedly by Zinoviev, President of the Communist International, was published during the election campaign. The 'Red Scare' as Bolshevik Communism was called, was used to discredit Dorothy, who had travelled to Russia, and whose father had imported timber from Russia.

In the country as a whole, the Labour vote rose by around one million, but the votes deserted the Liberal party, mainly in favour of the Conservatives. In Norwich, Dorothy was defeated by the ruthless campaigning of Norwich clergy who were determined to prevent her winning. Martin Pugh, the labour party history describes her as "the woman who took most risks". Dorothy did not return to Parliament but was now seen as an internationally-minded feminist and socialist. She continued campaigning on access to birth control information and public ownership. Out of Parliament, she became a member of the National Administrative Council of the Independent Labour Party.

Dorothy wrote a short leaflet published by the ILP in 1926 (the year of the General Strike), which she sold at meetings for one penny, entitled: Socialists and the Family: a plea for family endowment. She calculated that to pay five shillings a week for every child under fifteen would cost £158 million, commenting, that, "a Government that can spend 120 million on armaments and 300 million on War Debt can surely spend this on its children." Her campaign was blocked by the unions and was unsuccessful.

In November 1927: she was elected to Norwich City Council whilst continuing to a very active member of the Labour Parties Women's Group. Dorothy moved resolutions demanding the right of conference to put forward three resolutions at Labour Party Conference, but whilst these resolutions were debated by women, but the full Party could ignore the demands.

Dorothy was also a supporter of the No More War Committee, and as a pacifist had moved further away from the Labour Party. The next General Election was called in 1929. Again Dorothy and Walter Smith stood in Norwich but her support for left-wing policies including the abolition of the armed forces, and the police force, meant that she failed to be elected and despite her fearless honesty, she polled 2,500 fewer votes. At a national level, Labour doubled their representation and the 2nd Labour Government came to power with Ramsay MacDonald as leader, but as Dorothy continued for demand family allowances and increased taxes on the wealthy to fund social services, in particular an effective system of children's allowances. The Government was overwhelmed by the economic crises of the 'Great Depression'. MacDonald's party began to slide into turmoil and by the time of the next election in 1931 the party was split, with Walter Smith standing as a Labour Party candidate and Dorothy as an Independent Labour Party candidate.

As an Independent Dorothy was free to say what she wanted. She was scathing about the new government formed by MacDonald. "The Socialist movement has anticipated this crisis for a long time. Today we are facing not merely the break-up of the industrialised world, but the break-up of our financial system, which is after all the very essence of capitalism – a crisis as serious as ever faced the country. In the face of that crisis the National Government – what a mockery, because it was National in non sense of the word – was led by Mr Ramsay MacDonald, a deserter from our ranks and once the most hated man by the Tories, but who is now described as 'the most noble saviour the country has ever had'. And why? Because he had listened to the dictates of the city; because he had given way to the dictates of the money-lenders and money barons who controlled our finance, and whose advice Mr Lloyd George had said was generally wrong."

On the 20th October, speaking at the Avenue Road School, she called for a National Investment Board:

"If you are going to allow the bankers to be the masters of industry then this country can only go down the hill and we are going to see a national crises compared to which the present crises is a mere nothing. This country will go down in confusion and chaos, and bloodshed, and possibly war.

The National Government obtained the largest majority ever recorded in British politics, receiving 60% of the votes and won 521 seats. Dorothy lost the election and by the time of the spring Party Conference the Labour party had decided to disaffiliate the ILP. Membership of the ILP declined rapidly after the split from about 17,000 in 1931 to 4,000 in 1935. Dorothy remained an ILP member and Norwich remained one of the few strongholds, not least because they owned Keir Hardie Memorial Hall and membership held steady at around 500. Dorothy declined to stand at the 1935 General Election for the ILP, but with Labour Party candidates standing against the ILP, there was little hope of winning.

Dorothy's pacifism had come to the fore in 1931. A local Joint Disarmament Campaign Committee was formed in Norwich in June, to campaign in preparation for the World Disarmament Conference planned for Geneva in 1932. Adolf Hitler withdrew Germany from both the Conference and the League of nations in 1933.

Dorothy's name appears twice in The Times as signatory, to letters signed by prominent people. In February 1935, over 60 – mainly but not exclusively women – condemned the practice of giving unemployed women two shillings a week less than men, and 'female young persons' a shilling a week less than their male counterparts. In October 1936, Dorothy and 34 others, including Lawrence Houseman and Vera Brittain, wrote that the Factory Bill would lay down a maximum working week for adults, and would regulate hours and working practices for young people. These were to be her last interventions in national politics.



Her observations on Parliament was the terrible waste of time and the lack of any sense of the importance of a matter. Both Houses were overloaded with a tradition of heritage, habit and ancient customs. She also painted a dismal picture of social conditions in her home city, describing housing in Norwich as a disgrace to civilisation: when campaigning she had come across many houses that were completely unsuitable for human occupation. These two themes of internationalism and local social issues were to be Dorothy's main concerns for the rest of her career.

In 1928 the Government of Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin finally introduced legislation which allowed women to vote on equal terms with men.

In 1927 Dorothy was adopted as Labour candidate for Wensum ward. During her elections for Norwich City Council she declared:

“The Labour Party stood for the Socialisation of all essential services. These should be run primarily on the principle that the first consideration is the well-being of the citizens, Finally, they must remember that there is no real solution of all these problems within the confines of the Capitalist system. It is the failure of Capitalism to solve these problems which condemns it and makes the growth and ultimate triumph of Socialism inevitable.

She was elected unopposed, with her main practical concerns being unemployment and children's welfare. She was re-elected in 1930 with an even bigger majority. Her campaign work involved the creation of parks and playgrounds such including Eaton Park and Waterloo Park, Earlham Library, Riverside Walk and Mousehold Heath.

At the following election in 1933 she stood for the Independent Labour Party (ILP) against the official Labour Party candidate and won. During the next two years the three ILP-ers' created a unique place in the history of Socialism. Again, she stood unopposed in 1936, but the death of her close companion Maude Murray began her withdrawal from council meetings and campaigns, resigning in 1937. Her personal popularity was revealed, when the conservatives won the by-election in Westwick ward. The ILP vote fell by over half.

True to her pacifist principles, Dorothy opposed the war which broke out in September 1939. In 1945 she married Campbell Stephen, who was an ILP member of Parliament. He died two years later, Dorothy made several visits to Norwich in the spring of 1963, planning to move in with her brother Christopher. However, she died in the Plantation Nursing Home on Christchurch Road in February 1964, before the extension to Christopher's house was completed.

By the time she dies, Dorothy's achievements had largely been forgotten.



Extracts from Dorothy Jewson – Suffragette and Socialist by Frank Meers.