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The time suffragette Theresa Garnett horsewhipped Winston Churchill



A short account of suffragette Theresa Garnett attacking then-Home Secretary Winston Churchill with a horsewhip in 1909, written by Anny Cullum.

The campaign for female suffrage began in 1865 with the introduction of the first private members bill for an amendment for female enfranchisement. Suffrage groups first campaigned democratically and using constitutional means, lobbying, petitioning etc and won some small victories in terms of women becoming more involved in public life; sitting on school boards and becoming poor law guardians.

However, nearly 40 years later women were still disenfranchised and in 1903 a group called the Women’s Social and Political Union was set up in Manchester. Its policy of “deeds not words” led to increasing militant methods of campaigning by women who felt fed up with the continuing failure of traditional methods. One of the groups icons, Emmeline Pankhurst, described this use of militancy as “moral violence” and the group condoned and organised hundreds of illegal activities ranging from slapping policemen to widespread arson attacks.

The “suffragettes” as they were named by the Daily Mail also organised and took part in harrassing and attacking Members of Parliament. 100 years ago, on 13 November, Winston Churchill came to Bristol to address the Anchor society at the Colston Hall. Theresa Garnett, a suffragette who had previously chained herself to a statue in the central lobby of the houses of parliament to protest against the ‘brawling bill’ and who had been accused of biting a prison warden during a previous stay in Horfield jail was also at Temple meads that day. Churchill was walking down this platform with his wife when he was accosted by Theresa who was brandishing a whip. Theresa repeatedly struck Churchill screaming “Take that in the name of the insulted women of England!”

Theresa was first arrested for assaulting Churchill but because he did not want to appear in court he did not press charges. Instead she was charged with disturbing the peace and sentenced to 1 month in Horfield Prison. At this time prison officers would force feed suffragettes who went on hunger strike as the government did not want any suffragette martyrs. The decision to use forced feeding was taken by the Home Secretary at the time who was Winston Churchill. Theresa was force fed during her stay in Horfield prison and set fire to her prison cell in protest. She was made to spend the rest of her sentence in solitary confinement in what was known as a punishment cell, but after she was found unconscious she spent the rest of her sentence in hospital.

Taken from <http://www.brh.org.uk/site/articles/theresa-garnette-vrs-winston-churchi...>
libcom has edited the date this event took place from the original version with information from the following source via Colin of the Bristol Radical History Group: Times of November 15th 1909, cited in "The Bristol Suffragettes" by Lucienne Boyce p35, it was published by Silver Wood in 2013.

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Steven.
Feb 21 2017 11:42

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“Take that in the
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Theresa Garnett

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