Suffragette Talk and Fair Trade Coffee Morning

4th December at Barnham Village Hall

Alice Hawkins – 1863 – 1946

Quote from Alice “You must use your vote, we suffered for it”

Both the speaker Peter Barratt and the ladies of Barnham WI helped to make the morning an extremely interesting and enjoyable event. The Barnham ladies excelled in their array of cakes to welcome us and in their hospitality and help. Thank you to all of them, to the people who supplied the array of Fair Trade goodies and above all to Peter Barratt who stepped in and gave us a truly inspiring insight to those magnificent ladies of the Suffragette Movement.

Our original speaker became ill the day before so unfortunately we never got to hear about Princess Sophia Duleep Singh. Annie and Julie worked behind the scenes to provide a new speaker, which interestingly focused on another equally strong lady but one who came from the other end of the social spectrum.

Alice Hawkins came from a very working class background. She left school in Stafford at the age of 13 to become a shoe machinist. At the age of 20 she married and moved to Leicester where again she worked in a shoe factory and also managed to care for her six children. She and her husband worked in Equity Shoes, which was a workers' cooperative and as such did encourage political participation. Both Alice and her husband were very active in the trade union movement in the town.

Alice attended the fateful march in London in 1907 when Suffragettes started in high spirits expecting some forward movement by the Government toward votes for women which did not happen. Disappointed they marched to Westminster only to be met by charging mounted police. Alice was one of the 28 who were arrested and went to prison and emerged from Holloway a

totally committed member of the Suffragette Movement. She went to jail five times, some to Holloway and some to Leicester. Alfred was ejected from two public events whose speaker was a young Home Secretary. Winston Churchill. Alice and her fellow Suffragettes were not allowed to enter because access was for men only. Alfred went on their behalf. In Leicester he was forcefully ejected for heckling and later in Bradford he was thrown down from the upper floor with such force his leg was broken. He was later awarded £100 for illegal ejection. Such support from her husband was unusual at a time when many men disagreed with the protesters and agreed with the Government.

Six years ago her Great Grandson Peter Barratt, together with a Leicester Councillor, decided to raise funds for a statue of Alice when they recognised that there were statues in Leicester but these were all male. The final money for this project was given by the current owner of the building which used to be the Equity Shoe factory. The seven foot bronze statue, created by Sean Hedges Quinn, was unveiled in Leicester Market Square on 4th February 2018 coinciding with the Westminster Hall 'Voice and Vote – Women's Place in Parliament' exhibition for the centenary of the Representation of the People Act 1918, where many items on display came from Peter and his family.

Jan McLardy

PA Committee & Hundon W.I.