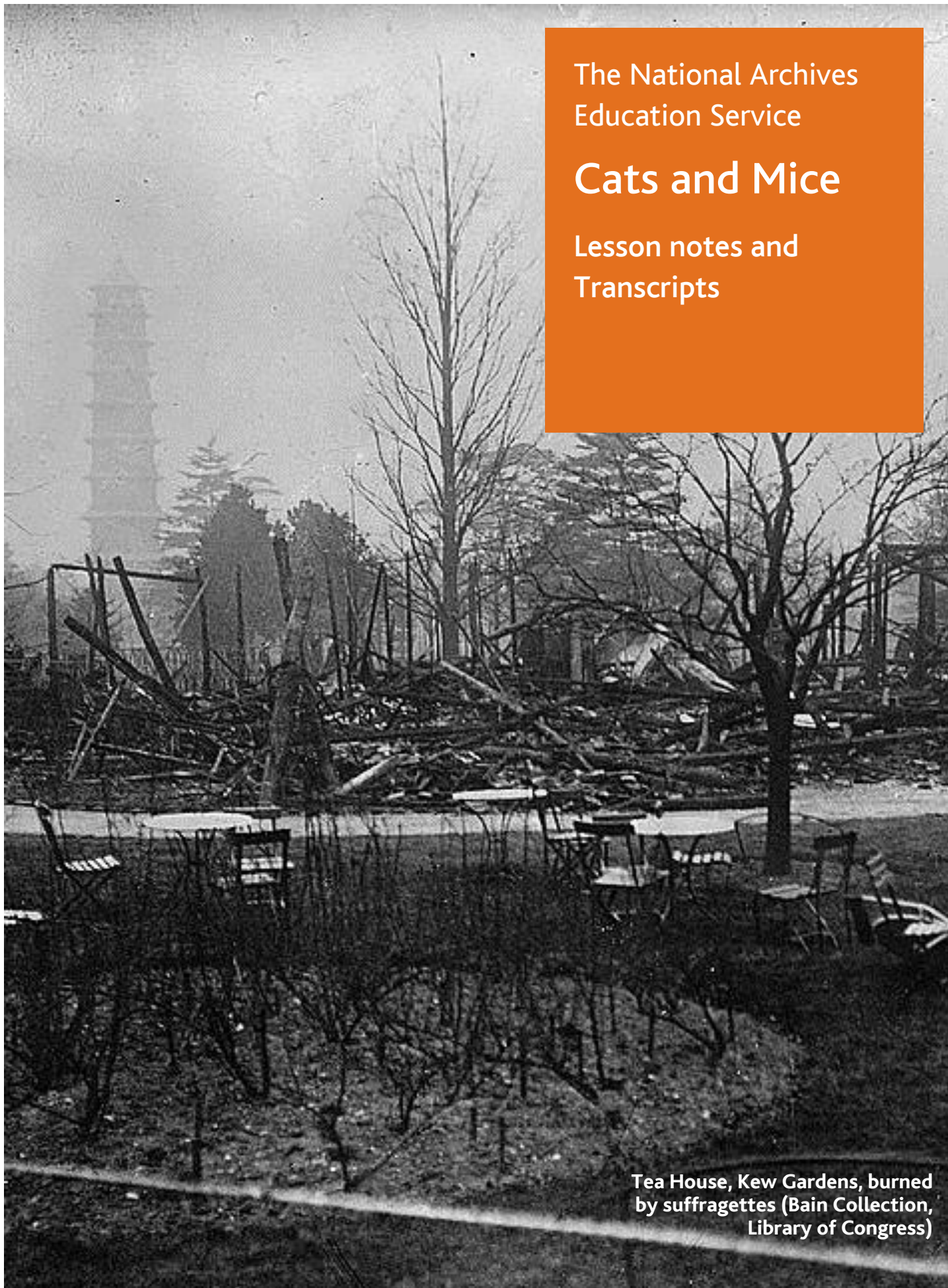


The National Archives  
Education Service

## Cats and Mice

Lesson notes and  
Transcripts



Tea House, Kew Gardens, burned  
by suffragettes (Bain Collection,  
Library of Congress)

# Contents

Teacher's notes.....	3
Introduction:.....	4
Connections to the Curriculum:.....	5
Tasks:.....	6
Transcripts:.....	7
1. Treatment in Prison	
2. Lilian Lenton's Release	
3. Meeting at Steinway Hall	
4. Hunger Strike Statement	
5. Protest against arrest	
6. Windowbreaking in Wales	
7. Tactics for polling day	
8. Police deny violence	
9. Dramatic arrest of a 'mouse'	
10. Motorcycles and motorcars	
11. Instructions for police	
12. Police seek Lilian Lenton	
13. Olive Wharry medical report	

# Teacher's notes

The purpose of this task is for students to explore a collection of documents relating to the suffragettes covering three themes:

police methods

suffragette tactics

the government's response to the movement

To make this more manageable, the documents are grouped into sets of three or four per theme. Prompt questions are provided to help students address each theme. The documents are arranged on the webpage so that the first row of documents relate to police methods, then suffragette tactics, followed by sources relating to the government's response.

It is crucial that students appreciate that the same document can reflect more than one of these themes, so the final prompt question for each is included to encourage them to do this. Again, this should not become an exercise in just finding 'examples' of the themes. Students should be encouraged to go on to interpret this evidence, pick up any inferences or see if they can detect any unwitting testimony.

Some general guidance questions on how to evaluate and understand documents are included here, to help students to draw their own conclusions and inferences from the documents. (Teachers may wish to print these out, and discuss them with the students before they look at the sources). All documents are provided with transcripts.

Find the date on each document

Who wrote it?

Do you know anything about the author?

What type of document is it? (e.g. letter, report or newspaper).

What is the document saying?

Check the meaning of any words you are unsure about.

What names appear in the document?

Does the document show the writer's opinions/values?

Are there any clues about the intended audience for the document?

Why was the document written?

Does it have any limitations?

Does it link to other documents in the group?

Does it share the same ideas, attitudes and arguments?

How would you explain any differences between these documents?

Teachers may want to break their class up into groups and get students to feed back on the different sets documents and/or annotate them at the white board. They may wish to hold a class debate on the case for/against the different tactics used by suffragettes or debate police/authorities responses' to the campaign.

Finally, teachers may wish to extend their student focus on the suffragettes by using the second resource on the movement, a collection of themed documents on a particular suffragette protest at Kew Gardens in 1913. Again teachers may wish to introduce pupils to these documents to create a wider enquiry question of their own.

# Introduction

Today, every British citizen from the age of 18 has the right to vote and so have a say in their government. This right was not easily achieved.

In the 19th century, campaigners fought to extend the vote to working class men in 1867 and 1884. However, there was still much opposition to women getting the vote at the time.

Without the vote it meant that Victorian women had very few rights and it represented their inequality with men in the law. For example, until 1882 a woman's property often went to her husband on their marriage.

Various organisations joined to form the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies led by Millicent Fawcett in 1897 to campaign for the vote for women. Their methods included petitions, demonstrations and public meetings.

The Women's Social and Political Union, founded by Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughter Christabel in 1903, used more militant tactics. Many suffragettes went to prison as a result of their actions and, while in prison, they often went on hunger strike to gain publicity for the cause and as a result were forcibly fed. In 1913 the Prisoners Temporary Discharge for Ill-Health Act was passed in Parliament, often referred to as the Cat and Mouse Act. According to this, any hunger-striking woman prisoner was released when they became seriously ill, and re-arrested when recovered.

It is important to remember that other groups supported votes for women too. For instance, the Women's Freedom League was formed in 1907 and later set up the Women's Tax Resistance League in 1910. Their supporters argued that there should be no taxation without representation. They also encouraged women to refuse to register for the 1911 census. Men's suffrage societies were also part of the general campaign, for example the Men's League for Women's Suffrage founded in 1907 and the Men's Political Union for Women's Enfranchisement.

With the coming of the First World War the NUWSS and WSPU called off the women's suffrage campaign. Afterwards, in 1918, women were given limited voting rights with the Representation of the People Act. Universal suffrage, that is, the vote for men and women on equal terms, was finally achieved with the Equal Franchise Act in 1928 when all men and women were given the vote at 21 years. In 1969 the voting age for men and women was lowered to 18.

# Connections to the Curriculum

## Key stage 3 (British History Unit)

The development of political power from the Middle Ages to the 20th century, including changes in the relationship between rulers and ruled over time, the changing relationship between the crown and parliament, and the development of democracy.

## Key stage 4

AQA History B Historical Enquiry: Changing role of women in Britain since 1900

Edexcel History B: Protest, law and order in the 20th century

OCR History B Unit A972: British Depth Study: How was British society changed, 1890-1918?

# External Links

[Suffragettes in the BBC Archive](#)

Lillian Lenton, Sylvia Pankhurst and other suffragettes recall the 1910s

# Tasks

Study the documents covering each theme: police methods; suffragette tactics; government response to the movement and answer the questions for each group of documents.

## 1. Police methods

What evidence can the top row of documents provide about the police methods used to deal with the Suffragettes?

How did the police gather information about suffragette activities?

What does it suggest about police organisation?

What does it suggest about attitudes to suffragette activities?

Can we learn anything from this set of documents about methods used by the suffragettes to further their cause?

## 2. Suffragette tactics

What evidence do the second row of documents provide about suffragette tactics used in the fight for the vote?

What different types of protest did suffragettes carry out?

Do they reflect a particular type of approach?

What does it suggest about suffragette organisation?

Can we learn anything from this set of documents about methods used by the Police?

## 3. Government response

What evidence do these final three documents provide about the government response to the Suffragettes?

What was the point of the Prisoner Temporary Discharge for Ill-Health Act?

What do the documents suggest about the attitude of the authorities towards the suffragettes?

Can we learn anything from this set of documents about methods used by the police?

Can we learn anything from this set of documents about methods used by the suffragettes?



# Treatment in Prison

Olive Wharry's petition from prison, 30 March 1912 (HO 144/1205/221873)

[stamp]  
PRISON COMMISSION  
30 March 1912

PETITION.

Register Number. 1485  
Name in full. Olive Wharry  
Age on Conviction. 26  
Conduct in Prison. Indifferent  
Conviction. London Co. Session 19.3.12  
Offence. Damage  
Sentence. 6 Mon Imp.

...

To the Right Honourable His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Home Department.

THE PETITION OF THE ABOVE-NAMED PRISONER HUMBLY SHEWETH:-

Dear Sir

30.3.12

I understand that all suffrage prisoners are entitled to certain privileges under Mr. Churchill's regulations, viz, to write & receive letters & see visitors once a fortnight, to have our own foods & needlework, to exercise twice daily & talk freely together during exercise time & to have our own food & books sent to us from outside.

This treatment has been refused us. We are sentenced to 6 months without hard labour. I point out to you that the treatment we are getting is that of ordinary criminals, & that even our books of study suitable to educated women have been taken from us, & that those provided for us by the prison authorities are only fit for children. The food supplied so far has been bad & insufficient, & we do not get enough exercise to help us in health through a long sentence. We shall be obliged if you will see that the privileges, to which we have every right as Suffrage prisoners, are accorded to us without delay. Meanwhile I am making my protest against the disgraceful treatment we are receiving.

Yours truly

Olive Wharry

# Lilian Lenton's Release

Letter to the Director of Public Prosecutions from the Home Office, 15 October 1913 (HO 144/1255/234788)

15th October, 1913

Sir,

With reference to the case of Lilian Lenton who was brought up at the Richmond (Surrey) Police Court on the 9th instant [dated this month] on a charge of arson and committed for trial, I am directed by the Secretary of State to inform you that he has today issued an Order under the Prisoners (Temporary Discharge for Ill-health) Act, for this prisoners temporary discharge until 20th instant.

I am to add that the Police have been instructed to make every effort to keep her under their supervision, but that, judging from past experience their task will be a difficult one.

I am Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

The Director of Public Prosecutions\*

[\*The officer who brings the case against a person who has been charged with committing a very serious crime, on behalf of the government]



# Meeting at Steinway Hall

Extract from report from a police observer at a suffragette meeting held on 23 February 1911 (MEPO 3/203)

Metropolitan Police  
Marylebone Lane Station  
"D" Division

February 23rd 1911.

Notes taken from a suffragette meeting held at the Steinway Hall on the 23rd. inst. at 8.pm under the auspices of the Womens Social and Political Union.

Mrs. Tuke, in the chair opened the meeting by welcoming new comers and explaining the meaning and the urgency of the Vote. Mrs Pertwee then addressed the meeting.

The other day a very determined anti-suffragette said to me, what do you think you can do with the vote when you get it, and I said when we do get it we shall concentrate our energies on the home. This brought a very sarcastic rejoinder, "the Cause first and the home anywhere". It seems to me the two things are synonymous as the Cause is the home and the home is the Cause. A Member of Parliament told me that until women get the vote we shall get no good social legislation whatever. One begins to wonder what gagging Mr. Asquith will have in his mind on the 5th. of May, but one thing is certain and that is that we shall not be gagged. Women are ready to march in battalions on this crusade for liberty and justice. Now is the time to work, we have a majority of 264 in the House in our favour, and every hand should be at the wheel and there should be no slackness. The Actresses' Franchise League are going to have a lorry in Hyde Park next to the anti-suffragettes, and they are going to have also Concerts and meetings in the East end.

....

# Hunger Strike Statement

Article from 'The Suffragette', April 11 1913 (HO 144/1205/221873)

## STATEMENT BY RELEASED PRISONERS

News has reached the offices of the W.S.P.U. that Mrs Pankhurst, who has been hunger-striking ever since she entered Holloway on Thursday, April 3 is in a state of collapse. There has been no attempt to feed her by force.

During the week four Suffragettes have been released from Holloway- Miss Olive Wharry, Miss Gibb, Mrs. Branson, and Miss Zelig Emerson- all on account of serious ill-health. Miss Wharry has been secretly hunger striking for 31 days, and is in a state of terrible emaciation [very underweight] and Miss Emerson, after five weeks' forcible feeding, was so dangerously ill that she was taken away from the prison in an ambulance.

Rumours of a hunger-strike that seems as if it were more or less general have leaked out from Holloway. Indignation and passionate protest are the order of the day inside prison as well as out.

# Windowbreaking in Wales

Extracts from a police report on Olive Wharry, 3 July 1914 (HO 144/1205/221873)

METROPOLITAN POLICE

CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION DEPARTMENT,  
NEW SCOTLAND YARD

3rd day of July 1914

CENTRAL OFFICER'S SPECIAL REPORT

SUBJECT: Olive Wharry, in custody

I beg to report that on the 1st instant [dated this month], as directed in telegram of 30th ult. [of last month] from Supt. [Superintendent] Quinn, I proceeded to Carnarvon, where on the 2nd inst. [dated this month], at Carnarvon Quarter Sessions, Phyllis North, whom I identified as Joyce Lock, otherwise Olive Wharry, was arraigned [called to state whether she was guilty or not] before John Ernest Greaves, Chairman, on indictment [charge] for that she, on the 2nd. Day June, 1914, at Criccieth, unlawfully and maliciously did commit damage upon the West End Stores, the property of Sir Hugh J. Ellis-Nanney, to the extent of £17-12-0, (breaking windows of stores) – further on the 2nd June, 1914, unlawfully and maliciously did commit damages upon the windows of the Criccieth Post office, the property of H.M. The King, doing damage to the amount of £11-8-0.

Miss Wharry declined to plead to the indictments [charges], but was tried, found guilty [sentenced to three months hard labour]

...

At the same Sessions, Georgina Lloyd, age about 28, a militant Suffragette, was arraigned [called to state whether she was guilty or not] on three indictments [charges] for malicious damage, at Criccieth, on the 2nd day of June, 1914, the amounts being £16,- £20,- and £8-16-0. Lloyd also refused to plead to the indictment [charge], but was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to three months imprisonment nothing being known regarding the antecedents [family background] of Miss Lloyd.

The offences in question took place on the visit of the Right Honourable Lloyd George, M.P. to Criccieth.

Submitted.

/sgd/. Christopher Negus P.C.

/sgd/. F. Pike, D.D. Inspector

/sgd/. Wm. C. Robinson.

Superintendent

# Protest against arrest

Protest letter to the Home Office from the Men's Political Union for Women's Enfranchisement, 1 October 1911 (HO 144/1169/214572)

Votes for Women

Men's Political Union for Women's Enfranchisement.

13 Buckingham Street, Strand, W.C

...

## R E S O L U T I O N

Passed in Hyde Park Sunday October 1st. with one dissentient [vote against].

THAT THIS MEETING strongly protests against the arrest and imprisonment of Miss CLEMENCE HOUSMAN for refusal to pay King's Taxes as long as women are unrepresented, and calls upon the Government to order her IMMEDIATE RELEASE.

Hugh. A. Franklin

Chairman of meeting

# Tactics for polling day

A police memorandum on the forthcoming 1910 General Election, 31 December 1909 (HO 45/10597/187632)

Executive Branch,  
31st December, 1909

## MEMORANDUM

### PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS – SUFFRAGETTES

In connection with the forthcoming Parliamentary Election the Women's Freedom League are issuing leaflets containing the following "instructions" to their supporters:-

Arrange for attendance at every polling booth.

Hold meetings outside the polling booth protesting against the exclusion of women.

Point out that an election is invalid when qualified people are restrained from voting.

Get women tax-payers to bring their tax-papers with them and demand the right to enter the booth and vote.

If a well known Anti is a candidate ask the electors to keep him out.

Make clear to the electors that we are a non-party organisation, opposing the Government when one is in power but not opposing or supporting any party.

If there are danger duty volunteers in the district communicate at once with Mrs Billington-Greig, Suffrage Centre, 302, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow.

This information is forwarded in order that Police may be prepared to deal with any obstruction and disorder which will probably arise in and near Polling Stations on the days of election, and Superintendents will take this into consideration when recommending Police arrangements for the occasion.

F.W.

To Supts. A to Y  
(J.V.)

# Police Deny Violence

Police statement reporting on a complaint from a suffragette after a demonstration in November 1910 (MEPO 3/203)

Metropolitan Police  
Cannon Road Station  
'A' Division  
7th March 1911

Statement of George Bingham P.C.336A,

Who saith:

On 22nd November last, the occasion of the Suffragette raid on Downing Street. I was on duty in plain clothes acting as cyclist messenger and when not so engaged I was assisting the Inspectors in the Parade Room, and occasionally I was employed to show Police with prisoners up the staircase. In all cases the women went voluntarily & quietly, and I did not see one case of any PC having to handle his prisoner. They were all treated kindly & courteously.

I saw no case of a woman being urged forward and thumped as alleged in attached.

George Bingham, P.C. 336A

Submitted D. Rolfe, Chief Inspector  
G Wells, Superintendant

9.3.11

# Motorcycles and Motocars

Extract from a letter to the Under Secretary of State from the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, 20 October 1913 (MEPO 2/1566)

New Scotland Yard, S.W.

20th October, 1913

Sir,

I have to acquaint you, for the information of the Secretary of State, that the members of the Women's Social and Political Union have at their disposal two Motor Cars which they are known to employ in connection with their numerous acts or attempted acts of incendiarism [acts planned to cause fires], also for the purpose of escaping arrest; and the duty of keeping Police observation on these Motor Cars is frequently impossible to perform owing to the fact that when outside the town they travel too fast for any conveyance [means of transport] at the disposal of the police to keep up with them.

It is thought that this difficulty might be met by the employment of a Police Officer on a Motor Bicycle and that the cost of a machine suitable for the purpose would be £55 to £70.

Before recommending that a purchase be made I have thought it advisable that some temporary arrangement should be attempted, with a view to test the efficacy [value] of the means suggested.

I propose therefore that Police Sergeant 14.C.O Smith of the Public Carriage Office, who has been a motor cyclist for upwards of three years, and thoroughly understands the mechanism of his machine, shall be attached temporarily to the Special Branch for this particular duty, as well as for any other similar purposes for which he would be available.



# Dramatic arrest of a 'mouse'

Article from The Evening News, 5 May 1914 (HO 144/1255/234788)

## DRAMATIC ARREST OF A "MOUSE"

"Good Afternoon, Miss Lenton!"

### WOMAN'S DISGUISES.

Lilian Lenton, authoress of the best-laid plans of the Suffragette "mice" for baffling the police, has been caught once more.

She was spending this afternoon speeding towards London from Liverpool, in a fast train in the company of two detective officers. This will enable her to renew her acquaintance with the Richmond magistrates tomorrow.

It will be necessary to go into the charge against her of setting fire to the tea pavilion in Kew gardens again owing to circumstances over which the Bench [the judge or magistrate] has had no control.

Miss Lenton was released in March last year while on remand [the period of time that someone accused of a crime waits for their trial] on the order of the Home Secretary, without any reference to the Bench.

She soon afterwards decided to leave, and rode away one Sunday evening in a motor-car.

### LILIAN RECOVERS

Sometime later her mother received at Bristol gratifying tidings that she had improved in health.

In June Miss Lenton (as described by the police in spite of denials by the accused) was committed to the Leeds Assizes (law court sessions) for arson (starting fires) at Doncaster, but while in Armley Gaol hunger-struck and was released. Once again the house to which she was removed was watched, but again the elusive [crafty] Miss Lenton did the vanishing trick with complete success-dressed as a young man.

She went on another motor tour and led the police a merry dance up and down the country for several weeks while she changed her disguises. Harrogate, Scarborough, and Dundee were a few of the towns she visited.

She also stayed at Cardiff. There she was nearly caught, but by disguising herself as an infirm old lady, with a black shawl over her head, she hobbled into the station and travelled to London.

Only yesterday was her freedom cut short. She was out for a walk in Birkenhead- when she was recognised by a detective named Gordon Hughes, who went up to her said "Good afternoon, Miss Lenton".

"I am not Miss Lenton." was the reply. "Oh yes you are." the officer rejoined. Miss Lenton then confessed to her identity.

She was dressed in a yellow jersey, a blue dress, and brown stockings, and had a large broad-brimmed hat and a veil.

# Instructions for Police

Police memorandum on Suffragettes, 11 July 1910 (MEPO 2/1308)

Executive Branch,

11th July, 1910

M E M O R A N D U M

SUFFRAGETTES

In view of the probability of further "Militant" action on the part of members of the various Suffrage Societies in connection with the Bill now before Parliament, the following instructions are circulated.

Any of these persons standing outside the residence of a Minister or taking up a fixed position in close proximity thereto on the footway so as to cause annoyance to such Minister, irrespective of obstruction being caused or placards exhibited, are to be cautioned that their presence is calculated to cause annoyance or obstruction, and they are to be requested to depart.

If they do not leave, they are to be further informed that Police in the exercise of their duties cannot allow them to remain, and that if they continue to remain, it will be necessary to take them into custody and charge them with wilfully obstructing or resisting Police in the execution of their duty.

If they then remain, a reasonable interval from the time of cautioning being allowed, they may be arrested, this being effected, if possible, by an Inspector or Sergeant, and so that they may be readily available for the purpose, the Inspectors and Sergeants patrolling should very frequently visit the Constables employed in this duty. The Constable after giving a caution is to at once obtain the assistance of an Inspector or Sergeant, but if before such assistance is forthcoming, the necessity for immediate action arises, he should himself effect the arrest.

As a general rule, it is more desirable to prefer this charge under 34 & 35 Vic.C112. Sec.12 as amended by 48 & 49 Vic. C75, Sec. 2 than under Sec. 72 of the Highway Act 1835, for wilfully obstructing the free passage of the footway or under Sec 54 (13) of the Police Act 1839 for using threatening or insulting behaviour whereby a breach of peace may be occasioned, but Station Officers must necessarily be guided by the circumstances. Experienced Officers who may be relied upon to exercise discretion and forbearance are to be employed, and their duties are to be carefully and fully explained to them.

It is not desirable that arrests should be made if that course can be obviated [avoided], but Police are, nevertheless, to be instructed to act with firmness as well as with tact.

E.R.H

To Supts. A to Y

(T.M.)

## Police seek Lilian Lenton

Letter from the Chief Constable of Leeds to the Home Office, 4 July 1913 (HO 144/1255/234788)

4th July 1913.

Dear Sir,

Lilian Lenton or May Denis.

I shall be glad to know whether you have been able to trace the whereabouts of this prisoner. It is, of course, very desirable that her re-arrest should be effected before the opening of the Leeds Assizes on the 12th instant [of this month]. In your letter of the 12th ultimo [dated last month] you mention that she is said to have gone to Scotland. It is not unlikely that she has taken part in the burning of Ballikinrain Castle or Leuchars Junction Station or at least is associating with the persons concerned in one or other of those outrages. Have you considered the advisability of circulating her description and Photograph to the Scottish Police? I have asked the Metropolitan Police to supply you with the photographs they have of her and I have instructed the Governor of Leeds Prison to give you copies of any photographs that were taken in the Prison upon your asking for them,

Yours truly,

The Chief Constable,  
City Police,  
Leeds.

# Olive Wharry Medical report

Letter from the Deputy Medical Officer at Holloway Prison to the Home Office, July 8 1914 (HO 144/1205/221873).

Holloway

July 8th, 1914

18732 Phyllis North @ Olive Wharry  
(Suffragette)

I think it expedient to draw the Commissioners attention particularly to the above-named prisoner transferred from Carnarvon Prison on Monday last July 6, so I am sending this report supplementing my daily report on her case.

To those who have had an opportunity of observing her and comparing her mental and physical condition to what it was two years ago, it is apparent she has altered considerably and deteriorated both in mind and body. She is well known to Dr. Sass, Dr. Higson and myself, and we are all agreed there is a marked change for the worse.

At the present time she is very thin, one may almost say emaciated, and I think it important to register this fact at an early date after her arrival in case it might be attributed later to malnutrition due to artificial feeding. Whether this wasting is due to actual disease, or whether it is due to the proper assimilation [digestion] of food not taking place as a result of previous hunger-striking, or whether previous to her incarceration [imprisonment] she had purposely reduced her weight with a view to embarrassing the Prison authorities, it is difficult to say. She can only be examined with difficulty, resisting all the time, so an examination conducted under these circumstances is of little value.

But in addition to physical deterioration [decline], I consider also her mental state has become more unsatisfactory. It was always realised from the first time she came to Prison, that she was mentally unstable and shewed evidence of mental disability partaking more of the moral than the intellectual type of disorder. Her irrational views on social things in general- her lack of moral fibre, diminished will power combined with obstinacy and her habits of cunning and deceit, all point to the fact that she cannot be credited with a full measure of responsibility for her actions. Imbibing [accepting] as she has done to the full, the doctrines of the Women's Social and Political Union and possibly conceiving the idea of becoming a martyr, her judgement has become warped and her mental view distorted, until at last she is fast approaching the border line of insanity. On account of the limited chances we have of getting her to converse with us, it is impossible to form an estimate as to what stage she has reached, and although it might not be possible or desirable to certify her now, I think it is a case in which every endeavour should be made to remove her from any influences of a

character likely to excite the imagination, and pressure should be brought to prevent if possible her participating in any militancy in the future. Otherwise I am afraid in the not too distant future, the excitement and mental strain entailed by association with a Political movement of this kind, will inevitably lead to a permanent breakdown in one whose mental equilibrium is so markedly unstable.

(Signed) Francis E. Forward

Deputy Medical Officer.