

Louisa Martindale

Frances Stenlake December 2020

Louisa Martindale 1839-1914

Louisa Martindale belonged to a prominent Congregationalist family: her brother Sir Albert Spicer, a Liberal politician, was a vice-President of the National Women's Suffrage Society; her brother Augustin Spicer and his wife held suffragist gatherings at their home, Franklyns, Wivelsfield, near Haywards Heath.

Louisa Martindale was well-known as a women's suffrage campaigner when she moved to Cheeleys, Horsted Keynes in 1903. During the 1890s, as President of the Brighton Women Liberals Association, and Vice-President of the Burgess Hill WLA, she called for equal voting rights with men and joined the executive committee of the newly-formed Practical Suffragists within the Women Liberals Federation.

In 1904, with Marie, Margery and Cicely Corbett, she attended the International Congress of Women in Berlin at which the International Women's Suffrage Alliance was founded. The portrait of Louisa by the German artist Clara Ewald shows her sitting behind a desk on which rests a volume inscribed 'International Frauen Congress 1904'. Meetings held by the Liberals in Horsted Keynes included a 'Call to Women' in 1906 at which Louisa and the Corbetts urged women to take part in local government.

In 1907 Louisa invited the Brighton and Hove branch of the **Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU)** and local WLA members to a garden party at Cheeleys at which the speakers were **Emmeline Pankhurst** and Pethick-Lawrence. In June 1910, referring to over 40 years' campaigning on her own part, she acknowledged that the WSPU's 'militant ways' had 'worked wonders and roused our sex as we could not'. Soon afterwards, however, she hosted the inaugural meeting of the Horsted Keynes branch of the constitutional Cuckfield and Central Sussex Women's Suffrage Society in the Congregational Hall. This had been built thanks to her efforts and she had appointed as its first pastor Hatty Baker, founder of the Free Church League for Women's Suffrage.

Subsequent suffragist meetings in the Congregational Hall included two talks in February 1911 by Lady Stout, whose husband had been Premier of New Zealand: on the advantages of women having the vote there, and on 'Temperance Reform and Social Progress', a subject of particular interest to Louisa. The following month Louisa was on the platform at a Cuckfield and Central Sussex Women's Suffrage Society meeting in the Congregational Hall to support 'distinguished non-militant suffragists,' Lady Sybil Brassey and Lady Betty Balfour.

In 1910 the Brighton and Hove Women's Franchise Society acted upon Louisa's proposal that a Women's Local Government Association be formed to encourage women to stand for election. Louisa's elder daughter, Dr Louisa Martindale, was a committee member of this branch of the NUWSS, and a pioneering specialist in women's health. Mother and daughter were centrally involved in the establishment of Brighton's Lady Chichester Hospital for Women and Girls, run entirely by women.

