

# — EDITH — LADY LONDONDERRY



**Creative  
Centenaries**

The story of  
**Edith, Lady Londonderry**

**Key Stage 3** Learning Resource



# Creative Centenaries



The story of Lady Londonderry has been developed by the Nerve Centre's Creative Centenaries project which produces innovative resources around the Decade of Centenaries and important historical events and people from Ireland's history.

This is a Key Stage 3 curriculum linked resource that looks at the part played by influential women to gain parity with men. This story focuses on the actions of Edith, Lady Londonderry, socialite, suffragist and founder of the Women's Legion. It has been produced in 2018 to mark the centenary of the Representation of the People Act and women voting and standing for election for the first time.

Further graphic novels highlighting the role of other significant women, as well as a suite of animations and interactive resources are all available to access from [www.creativecentenaries.org/resources](http://www.creativecentenaries.org/resources)

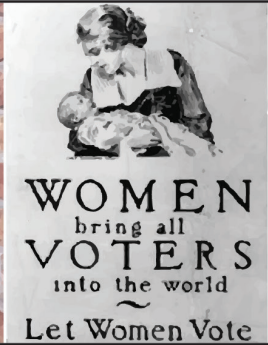
Artwork by Deirdre Gribbin and script by Seth Linder. With thanks to Neil Watt, Aileen McEwen and Jenny Ferguson at National Trust.

[www.creativecentenaries.org](http://www.creativecentenaries.org)



A project supported by the European Union's PEACE IV Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

THE 1918 REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE ACT GAVE WOMEN THE VOTE FOR THE FIRST TIME.



ONLY WOMEN OVER 30 WERE ALLOWED TO VOTE, IF THEY OR THEIR HUSBAND OWNED PROPERTY WORTH OVER £5, BUT IT WAS A HUGE STEP FORWARD.

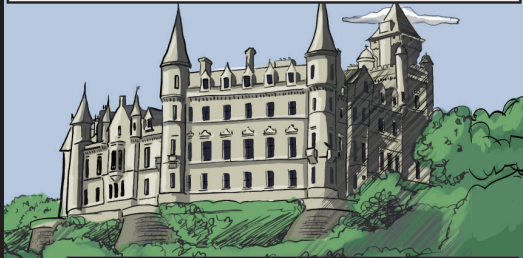
SOME WOMEN RISKED THEIR LIVES TO BRING ABOUT EQUALITY, OTHERS RISKED THEIR LIBERTY.

REMEMBER, THERE IS VIRTUALLY NO JOB A WOMAN CANNOT DO ...

AS WELL AS A MAN!

LADY EDITH LONDONDERRY CHOSE ANOTHER WAY TO ADVANCE THE CAUSE. THE WOMEN'S LEGION SHE FORMED DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR PROVED WOMEN COULD DO THE SAME WORK AS MEN — A REVOLUTIONARY IDEA AT THE TIME.

THOUGH SHE CAMPAIGNED FOR ALL WOMEN, EDITH'S OWN BACKGROUND COULD NOT HAVE BEEN MORE PRIVILEGED. HER FATHER WAS A TORY MP, HER MOTHER A DAUGHTER OF THE DUKE OF SUTHERLAND, THE LARGEST LANDOWNER IN BRITAIN.



AFTER HER MOTHER'S EARLY DEATH WHEN EDITH WAS THREE, SHE AND HER SIBLINGS WERE BROUGHT UP BY THEIR UNCLE AND AUNT AT ANCIENT DUNROBIN CASTLE IN THE SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS.



IN 1899, EDITH MARRIED CHARLES STEWART HENRY VANE-TEMPEST-STEWART (CHARLEY), THE SON OF THE 6TH MARQUESS OF LONDONDERRY. THE LONDONDERRY FAMILY WERE VERY WEALTHY WITH A VAST COAL MINING BUSINESS IN THE NORTH OF ENGLAND.

THEIR LONDON BASE WAS LONDONDERRY HOUSE BUT THEY SPENT HOLIDAYS AT THEIR IRISH HOME, THE BEAUTIFUL MOUNT STEWART, OVERLOOKING STRANGFORD LOUGH.



EDITH, WHO WOULD HAVE FIVE CHILDREN WITH CHARLEY, WAS SEEN AS A GREAT BEAUTY AND BECAME A FAMOUS POLITICAL HOSTESS. BUT, AS HER FAMOUS TATTOO SUGGESTS, SHE WAS NOT CONVENTIONAL AND HER SUPPORT FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS WAS UNUSUAL AMONGST HER CLASS.



IN SUPPORT OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS, EDITH SPOKE AT MEETINGS, WROTE PAMPHLETS AND TRIED TO CONVINCE PEOPLE, INCLUDING HER OWN FAMILY, OF THE NEED FOR WOMEN TO HAVE THE VOTE.



CAMPAIGNERS WERE DIVIDED INTO TWO GROUPS. EDITH WAS A SUFFRAGIST, A FOLLOWER OF MILLICENT FAWCETT WHO BELIEVED IN USING NON-VIOLENT AND LEGAL METHODS TO WIN THE VOTE.



EMMELINE PANKHURST LED THE SUFFRAGETTES, WHO BELIEVED IN DIRECT ACTION, SUCH AS TYING THEMSELVES TO THE RAILINGS OF DOWNING STREET.

EDITH SPOKE ELOQUENTLY ABOUT THE INJUSTICE WOMEN EXPERIENCED TO AUDIENCES SUCH AS THE CONSERVATIVE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS.

FIVE MILLION DAILY WORKERS ARE WOMEN YET THEY CANNOT VOTE FOR AN MP TO LOOK AFTER THEIR INTERESTS.

IF WOMEN WORK IT WILL BREAK UP THE FAMILY HOME.

HOW CAN WE BE FULL CITIZENS IF WE DO NOT HAVE THE VOTE?

WHO WILL COOK FOR THEIR CHILDREN AND THE MAN OF THE HOUSE WHEN HE RETURNS FROM WORK?

SHE WAS NOT ALWAYS WELCOMED.

ONE OF EDITH'S MOST OUTSPOKEN OPPONENTS WAS SIR ALMROTH WRIGHT, A HIGHLY RESPECTED SCIENTIST WHO WROTE A LETTER IN *THE TIMES* NEWSPAPER SAYING WOMEN WERE UNFIT TO VOTE.



**'WOMEN MUST NEVER HAVE THE VOTE. THEY CANNOT BE RELIED UPON TO USE REASON AT ALL TIMES AND DO NOT HAVE THE CALMNESS OF TEMPERAMENT TO MAKE DECISIONS OF THIS KIND. JUST THINK HOW MENTALLY DISORDERED THEY BECOME DURING CHILDBIRTH.'**

IT DID NOT TAKE EDITH LONG TO RESPOND.



ARE NOT THE VAST MAJORITY OF TERRIBLE CRIMES COMMITTED BY MEN? WHY DOES HE NOT QUESTION THEIR MENTAL STATE!

### LADY LONDONDERRY RESPONDS

Today Lady Londonderry gave her response to a comment made in *The Times* by the respected Scientist Sir Almroth Wright that women should not have the vote. They cannot be relied upon to use reason at all times and do not have the calmness of temperament to make decisions of this kind.



WITH THE OUTBREAK OF WAR IN 1914, SUFFRAGETTES AND SUFFRAGISTS DECLARED A TRUCE WITH AUTHORITIES. THEY SAW THE WAR AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO PROVE THEIR EQUALITY. AS A CHAMPION OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS, EDITH WAS REGULARLY CRITICISED BY MEN OF INFLUENCE, NOT LEAST THE EDITOR OF A FAMOUS NEWSPAPER.

I WILL BET YOU FIVE POUNDS AT THE END OF THE WAR THERE WILL BE NO SUFFRAGETTES.

YOU ARE RIGHT.

THERE WILL BE NO SUFFRAGETTES AFTER THE WAR BECAUSE WE WILL HAVE WON OUR CAUSE BY THEN.

WAR WILL TEACH WOMEN THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF THEIR DEMANDS AND THE ABSURDITY OF THEIR CLAIMS.

WE WERE ONLY WAITING FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO PROVE OURSELVES AND NOW OUR OPPORTUNITY HAS COME.

IN 1915, THE YEAR HER HUSBAND INHERITED THE TITLE OF MARQUESS OF LONDONDERRY, EDITH PERSUADED THE WAR OFFICE TO LET HER FORM THE WOMEN'S LEGION.

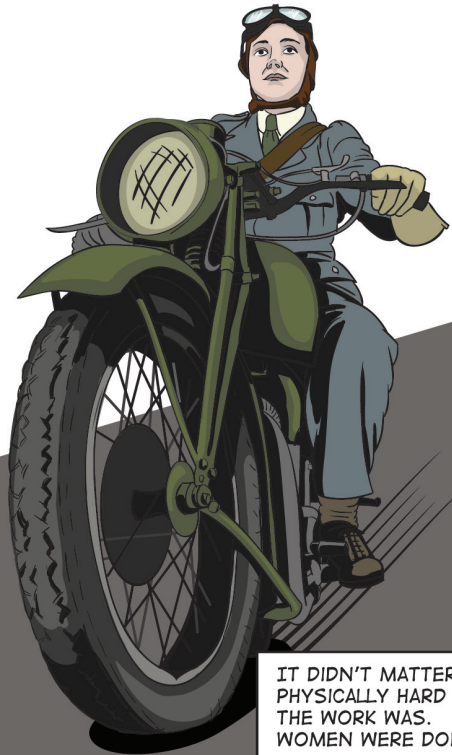
IF WE TRAIN WOMEN TO TAKE ON MEN'S JOBS HERE IT WILL RELEASE MEN TO JOIN THE WAR.

WE ARE NOT TRAINING AN ARMY OF AMAZONS TO FIGHT ALONGSIDE MEN, BUT ORGANISING WOMEN TO TAKE THEIR PLACE AT HOME.



THE FIRST GROUP OF FEMALE VOLUNTEERS WERE TRAINED TO COOK FOR THE CONVALESCENT CAMPS FOR WOUNDED SOLDIERS. OVER 40,000 FEMALE COOKS WERE TRAINED BY THE END OF THE WAR.

MEMBERS OF THE WOMEN'S LEGION WERE TRAINED AS ARMY SERVICE CORPS DRIVERS, DESPATCH RIDERS AND MECHANICS.

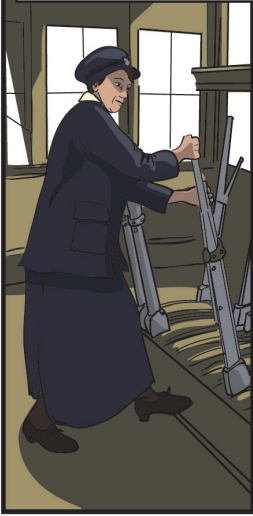


THEY DO THE SAME WORK AND THE SAME HOURS AS MEN AND ARE JUST AS GOOD!

OF COURSE THEY ARE PAID LESS, I CAN'T FIX THAT.

IT DIDN'T MATTER HOW PHYSICALLY HARD THE WORK WAS. WOMEN WERE DOING IT!

PRETTY SOON WOMEN WERE TAKING ON JOBS IN VIRTUALLY EVERY SECTOR.



IT WAS TOO MUCH OF A CHANGE FOR SOME.

WOMEN WEARING BREECHES INSTEAD OF SKIRTS, IT'S OBSCENE!

THEY HAVE NO PLACE ON OUR FARMS!



FOR THE FIRST TIME IN OUR HISTORY WE CAN SHOW MEN JUST WHAT WE ARE CAPABLE OF. EACH WEEK WE FIND ANOTHER ROLE WOMEN CAN TAKE ON.

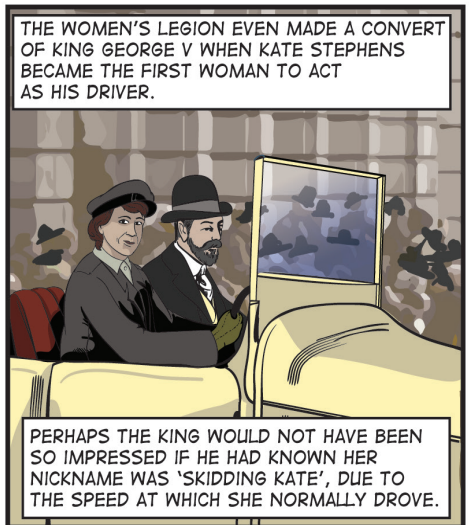
REMEMBER!

YOU ARE NOT JUST HELPING THE WAR EFFORT BUT CHANGING SOCIETY FOR THE BETTER!



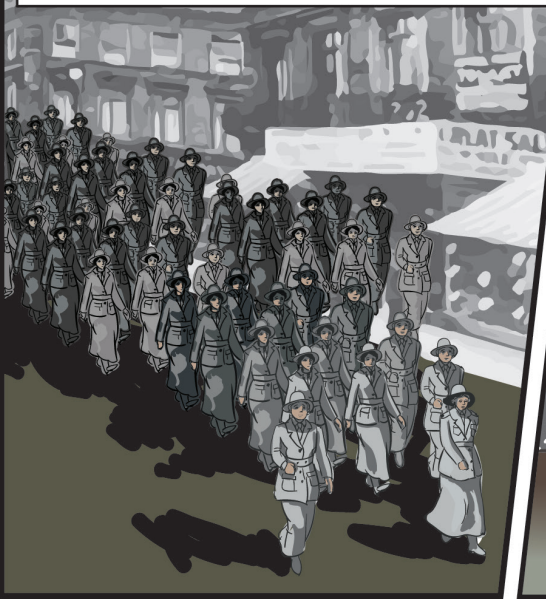
THE WOMEN'S LEGION EVEN MADE A CONVERT OF KING GEORGE V WHEN KATE STEPHENS BECAME THE FIRST WOMAN TO ACT AS HIS DRIVER.

PERHAPS THE KING WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN SO IMPRESSED IF HE HAD KNOWN HER NICKNAME WAS 'SKIDDING KATE', DUE TO THE SPEED AT WHICH SHE NORMALLY DROVE.



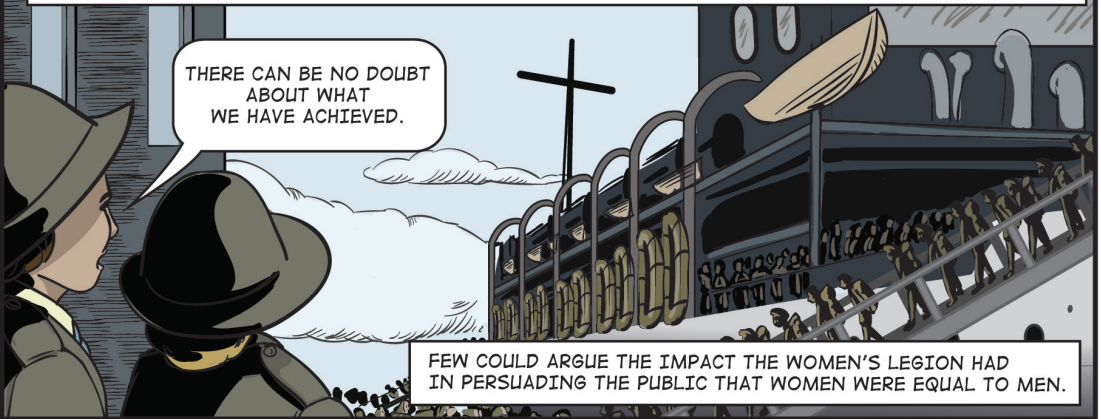


IN MARCH 1918, THE WOMEN'S LEGION WAS INSPECTED BY THE QUEEN. IT WAS AN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF HOW SUCCESSFUL THE WOMEN HAD BEEN. BY THE END OF THE WAR WOMEN WERE DOING 80 PER CENT OF THE WORK PREVIOUSLY DONE BY MEN.



LADY LONDONDERRY HAD BEEN MADE A DAME OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE FOR HER WORK.

A FEW WEEKS BEFORE THE DECEMBER 1918 GENERAL ELECTION, THE FIRST WORLD WAR CAME TO AN END.



THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT ABOUT WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED.

FEW COULD ARGUE THE IMPACT THE WOMEN'S LEGION HAD IN PERSUADING THE PUBLIC THAT WOMEN WERE EQUAL TO MEN.

EARLIER IN THE YEAR, THE REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE ACT HAD BEEN PASSED, ENABLING WOMEN OVER 30 TO VOTE. AT THE NEXT ELECTION, ON DECEMBER 4, ALMOST SIX MILLION WOMEN COULD VOTE FOR THE FIRST TIME.



WE PROVED YOU WRONG

...FOR A WHILE AT LEAST.

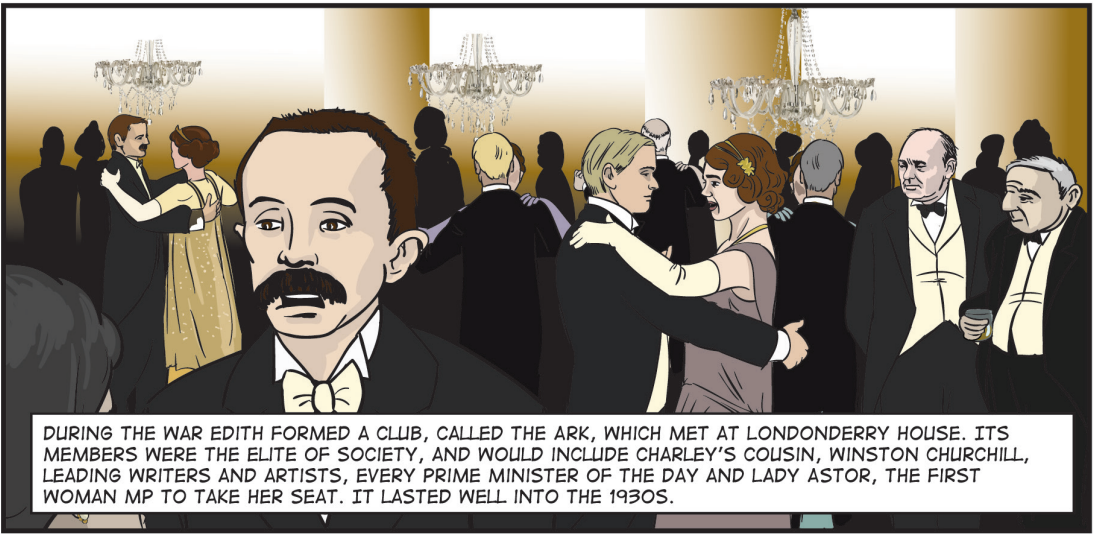
THAT YOU DID.

MANY OF THE MEN WHO RETURNED FROM WAR TOOK BACK THE POSITIONS HELD BY WOMEN, WHO WERE FORCED TO RETURN TO THEIR PRE-WAR LIVES. TRUE EQUALITY WAS STILL A LONG WAY OFF.

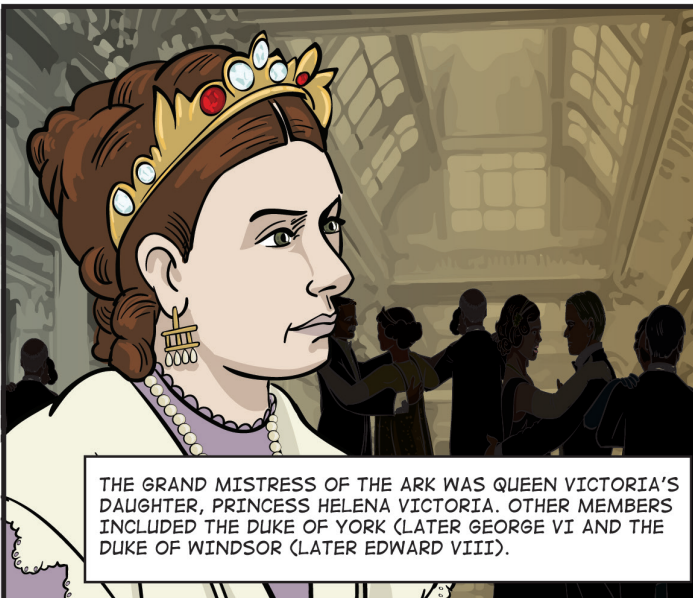
WITH THE WAR OVER, LADY EDITH TURNED HER ENERGIES TO BECOMING THE COUNTRY'S LEADING POLITICAL HOSTESS. FABULOUSLY RICH, THE LONDONDERRYS USED THEIR LONDON BASE, LONDONDERRY HOUSE, TO ENTERTAIN ROYALTY, PRIME MINISTERS AND ANYONE WHO WAS ANYONE IN SOCIETY.



DURING THE WAR EDITH FORMED A CLUB, CALLED THE ARK, WHICH MET AT LONDONDERRY HOUSE. ITS MEMBERS WERE THE ELITE OF SOCIETY, AND WOULD INCLUDE CHARLEY'S COUSIN, WINSTON CHURCHILL, LEADING WRITERS AND ARTISTS, EVERY PRIME MINISTER OF THE DAY AND LADY ASTOR, THE FIRST WOMAN MP TO TAKE HER SEAT. IT LASTED WELL INTO THE 1930S.



EACH MEMBER OF THE ARK HAD TO TAKE A NAME WHICH REFLECTED THEIR CHARACTER. EDITH WAS CIRCE, THE SORCERESS. HER HUSBAND WAS THE CHEETAH.



THE GRAND MISTRESS OF THE ARK WAS QUEEN VICTORIA'S DAUGHTER, PRINCESS HELENA VICTORIA. OTHER MEMBERS INCLUDED THE DUKE OF YORK (LATER GEORGE VI AND THE DUKE OF WINDSOR (LATER EDWARD VIII).







EDITH SHOCKED SOCIETY BY HER FRIENDSHIP WITH THE FIRST EVER LABOUR PRIME MINISTER, RAMSAY MACDONALD.



IT REMINDS ME OF MY BELOVED HIGHLANDS.

THAT'S WHY I FEEL SO AT HOME HERE, IT'S LIKE THE COUNTRY WHERE I GREW UP.

DESPITE DIFFERING IN CLASS AND POLITICAL ALLEGIANCE, THEY SHARED SCOTTISH HERITAGE AND A SIMILAR SENSE OF HUMOUR.

IN THE 1920S THE LONDONDERRYS SPENT MORE TIME AT THEIR MOUNT STEWART HOME. LORD LONDONDERRY WAS MINISTER FOR EDUCATION IN THE NEW PARLIAMENT OF NORTHERN IRELAND. GIVEN HIS HIGH PROFILE, THE FAMILY WERE PROTECTED BY THE RESERVE POLICE FORCE THE B-SPECIALS AS TENSIONS ROSE FOLLOWING THE IRISH WAR OF INDEPENDENCE.



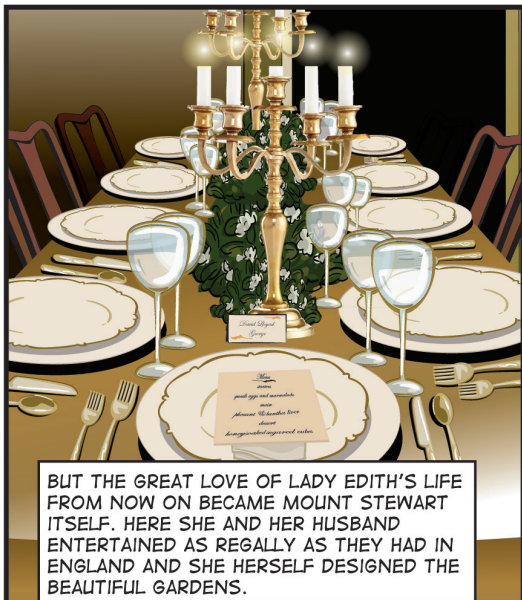
A SOCIALIST AND A LOVER OF RUSSIA...

AND YET I HAVE NO CLOSER FRIEND.

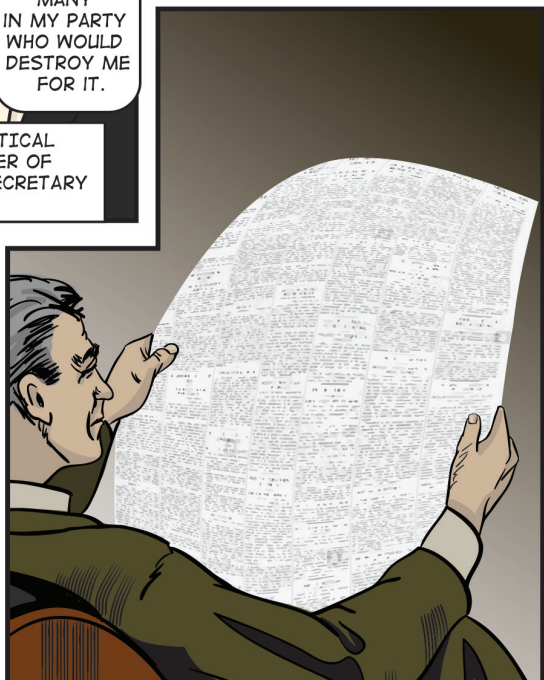
NOR I

...AND YET THERE ARE MANY IN MY PARTY WHO WOULD DESTROY ME FOR IT.

EDITH'S AIM WAS TO FURTHER HER HUSBAND'S POLITICAL CAREER. IN 1931, MACDONALD, THEN PRIME MINISTER OF THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT, MADE CHARLEY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR.



BUT THE GREAT LOVE OF LADY EDITH'S LIFE FROM NOW ON BECAME MOUNT STEWART ITSELF. HERE SHE AND HER HUSBAND ENTERTAINED AS REGALLY AS THEY HAD IN ENGLAND AND SHE HERSELF DESIGNED THE BEAUTIFUL GARDENS.



THE SECOND WORLD WAR YEARS WERE PAINFUL FOR LORD LONDONDERRY. HE TRIED TO USE HIS SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INFLUENCE IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT AND VISITED GERMANY IN AN ATTEMPT TO PREVENT WAR, KEEN TO ACT AS A DUTIFUL DIPLOMAT FOR THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT.



WITH ITS LOW RAINFALL AND MILD CLIMATE, THE GARDENS AT MOUNT STEWART ALLOWED ALL KINDS OF EXOTIC PLANTS TO BE GROWN. EDITH DESIGNED A SERIES OF BEAUTIFUL GARDENS, WHICH REMAIN TO THIS DAY. EACH ONE HAS REFERENCES TO HER LIFE. STATUES IN THE ITALIAN GARDENS HAVE SEVERAL CLUES TO HER NICKNAME, CIRCE, FROM GREEK MYTHOLOGY.

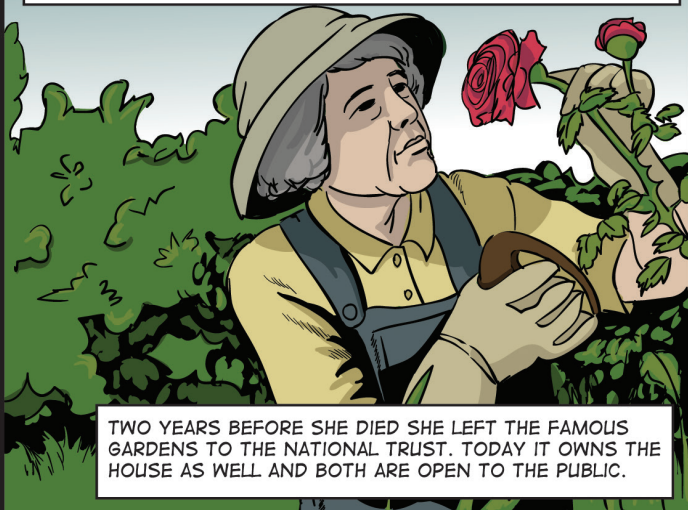


MAIRI GARDENS



EDITH'S FOUNDING OF THE WOMEN'S LEGION IS REFLECTED IN THE ROWS OF BLUE AND WHITE FLOWERS IN THE MAIRI GARDEN, NAMED FOR HER DAUGHTER, WHO HAD DRIVEN AN AMBULANCE FOR THE WOMEN'S LEGION DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR.

TO THE END OF HER DAYS, EDITH FOUND SOLACE IN THE BEAUTY OF MOUNT STEWART'S GARDENS. SHE DIED IN 1959, TEN YEARS AFTER HER HUSBAND.



TWO YEARS BEFORE SHE DIED SHE LEFT THE FAMOUS GARDENS TO THE NATIONAL TRUST. TODAY IT OWNS THE HOUSE AS WELL AND BOTH ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.



DESPITE HER WEALTH AND PRIVILEGE LADY LONDONDERRY WILL BE REMEMBERED FOR WHAT SHE ACHIEVED FOR ORDINARY WOMEN. THE WOMEN'S LEGION PROVED ONCE AND FOR ALL THAT WOMEN ARE AS EQUALLY CAPABLE AS MEN, A VITAL FACTOR IN THE DECISION TO GIVE WOMEN THE VOTE.



## EDITH, LADY LONDONDERRY

Edith Chaplin was born into a wealthy and influential family. Her father was Sir Henry Chaplin, a Conservative MP; her mother Florence was the daughter of Lord Sutherland, Britain's largest landowner.

Edith was just three when her mother died and most of her childhood was spent at Dunrobin, the Scottish castle where her uncle and aunt lived. The Sutherlands also had a magnificent London residence, Stafford House.

Presented as a society debutante to Queen Victoria in 1897, Edith was seen as a perfect choice of wife for Charles Vane-Tempest-Stewart, son of the 6th Marquess of Londonderry. They married in 1899 and the first of their five children was born in 1900.

In a sense Edith had been groomed for the life she would now lead, society hostess. The Londonderry dynasty had long been at the heart of UK politics, and their London home, Londonderry House, was a regular venue for the great and good in society. Vastly wealthy from their coal mining business in the north of England, the Londonderrys also had a beautiful residence in Northern Ireland, Mount Stewart.

Her husband became the 7th Marquess of Londonderry in 1915 on the death of his father. Now Lady Londonderry, Edith became the leading political hostess in Britain.

Unusually for her class, Edith was also a passionate feminist and campaigned ardently for women's right to vote. She saw the outbreak of the First World War as an opportunity to demonstrate women were equal to men. In July 1915 she formed the Women's Legion, whose purpose was to enable women to take on jobs that would normally be done by men, releasing them for military service.

Over 40,000 Women's Legion members became trained cooks, others worked as ambulance drivers, farmers, mechanics and many other roles previously thought unsuitable for women.

Created a Dame of the British Empire in 1917 for her war work, Edith always believed the work of the Women's Legion helped significantly in the campaign for women's suffrage.

Edith was also renowned for overseeing a social group known as the Ark, which met regularly at

Londonderry House. Lasting until the 1930s, its membership included royalty, Prime Ministers and the leading members of society. Her close friendship with Ramsay MacDonald, the first Labour Prime Minister, shocked her society friends.

In 1921, Lord Londonderry became Minister of Education in the new Northern Ireland Parliament, and the couple now made Mount Stewart their base. Here she embarked on what would become her most abiding love, designing its beautiful gardens. Now owned by the National Trust, the gardens and the adjoining house are one of Northern Ireland's most popular attractions. Edith died in 1959, ten years after her husband.

Image courtesy of National Trust

### Further Information

#### VISIT

Mount Stewart, owned and operated by National Trust, was Lady Londonderry's home. Visit the restored property and extensive gardens:

[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/mount-stewart](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/mount-stewart)

#### ONLINE

PRONI has digitised the Londonderry papers, available online at: [www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/introduction-theresa-lady-londonderry-papers](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/introduction-theresa-lady-londonderry-papers)



## Develop a comic about the role of the Women’s Legion

Lady Londonderry is remembered for her part in establishing the Women’s Legion during the First World War. Students will use publishing software to create their own comic about the movement and describe some of their main activities. Students should research and find copyright free and non-commercial imagery from the time (search Imperial War Museum’s online image archive) to use in their comic as well as some facts and figures.

### Key Stage 3 Curriculum Links

Key Elements	Cross Curricular Skills	Thinking Skills & Personal Capabilities	Areas of Learning
Personal Understanding; Mutual Understanding; Moral Character; Citizenship; Cultural understanding; Media Awareness; Ethical Awareness	Communication; Using ICT	Managing Information; Thinking, Problem Solving, Decision Making; Being Creative; Working with Others	The Arts; English (with Media Education); Environment & Society



## Create a film about Mount Stewart

Mount Stewart was Lady Londonderry’s home from 1920 and a place she absorbed herself in, once writing: “I do love this place so deeply”. Edith is particularly remembered for her work on the extensive gardens that surround the property. Visit Mount Stewart to get a feel for the home and gardens, taking imagery as you go. In the classroom, use film editing software to create a short film about the history and legacy of Mount Stewart and Lady Londonderry’s impact on it, also using text or voiceover to further describe the property.

### Key Stage 3 Curriculum Links

Key Elements	Cross Curricular Skills	Thinking Skills & Personal Capabilities	Areas of Learning
Personal Understanding; Mutual Understanding; Moral Character; Citizenship; Cultural understanding; Media Awareness; Ethical Awareness	Communication; Using ICT	Managing Information; Thinking, Problem Solving, Decision Making; Being Creative; Working with Others	The Arts; English (with Media Education); Environment & Society



## Class discussion

Do you think Edith, Lady Londonderry’s approach of encouraging women to support the war effort was a deciding factor in women gaining equal voting rights with men in 1918? Compare the actions of the Women’s Legion with suffrage and suffragist campaigns at the same time. Which do you feel had more of an impact?