**HULL AMNESTY GROUP**



***Mary Murdoch (1864-1916)***

In June 2014, Hull Amnesty Group published a volume of eight essays *Not Just Wilberforce,* which celebrates human rights champions from this city and region. One of these was Dr Mary Murdoch, Hull's first female GP, active in the city from 1893 until her death, aged 51, in 1916, exactly hundred years ago, when thousands of Hull citizens gathered for the funeral of this much-loved figure. As well as her contributions to public health especially for Hull's children, she was revered for her unstinting work with the poor, taking Hull Corporation to task for insanitary housing conditions, and she was a prominent campaigner for women's rights, and especially for votes for women. She became nationally known as a prominent suffragette.

With her colleague and close friend Dr Louisa Martindale, she founded the Hull branch of the suffragist movement in 1904, and became its first President. The branch became known nationally during the Hull West by-election in 1907; packing public meetings and pressing speakers to commit themselves to votes for women, with only limited success. The campaigns were highly visual, using card games and suffrage puppets, as well as choirs, to drive home their message. A recent history of the movement notes that '*Hull West took suffrage by-election choreography to new heights'.*  A plaque at Grosvenor House, Beverley Road, which was their home and surgery, was unveiled last year to commemorate these two pioneers for women's rights.

Many of the rights Mary fought for all her life are today taken for granted. Women have won the vote, child poverty and slum housing has been much reduced, children's health is much improved, and fathers in Hull participate in childcare. Her life's work is testimony that this was not always so. The rights she fought for were hard-won, and deserve to be respected and protected for future generations.

With our 'gigant' of Mary we hope to interest the young of the city in this remarkable woman, whose life and work deserves to be better known and remembered in the city where she spent her working life.

*'Not Just Wilberforce: Champions of Human Rights in Hull and East Yorkshire' is available from Hull Amnesty Group (hullamnestygroup@gmail.com) and local bookshops.*