

NEWSLETTER 2 of 3

MARION'S SUFFRAGISTS

Welcome to the second of three newsletters about local Suffragists of Marion.

SUFFRAGIST / SUFFRAGETTE - WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

The term suffrage means the right to vote. 'Suffragette' is largely associated with the UK movement for women's suffrage in the early 20th century where women from the British Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), a women-only movement founded in 1903 by Emmeline Pankhurst, engaged in direct action and civil disobedience. This began after the vote was achieved for women in South Australia in 1894. The fact that the South Australian movement was peaceful and did not include acts of violence, demonstrates that the movement for women's suffrage in South Australia is better referred to as a suffragist movement, not suffragette.

LOCAL RESEARCH

Nine committed volunteers, in association with the Marion Heritage Research Centre, have been researching information to find Marion's suffragists. These are either actual suffragists or women with the 'suffragist spirit' of independence, leadership, innovation, courage and freedom, who contributed to women's empowerment and gender equality. This has proved to be both enriching and a challenge.

MARION AND WOMEN AT THE TIME OF THE SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT

During the time period we are examining (1880 to 1950) Marion was very much a rural community. Houses and villages were dotted sparsely amongst the acres of vineyards, orchards and paddocks, and the population was small. For most Marion families, women worked hard running the household, bringing up children and helping their husbands with the day-to-day running of their properties. Others ran the small businesses and shops which served the local villages. Widows shouldered an even bigger load having to run everything themselves, when illness or war took their husbands or sons. We consider these women some of Marion's true unsung heroes with the brave 'suffragist' spirit.

CHALLENGES FINDING MARION SUFFRAGISTS AND WHY

We are consulting our local history books, looking in our MHRC archives, reading the 1894 Suffrage Petition, scouring South Australian newspapers of the day, and googling extensively. So far we have found a small but significant selection of people from Marion who we are calling our 'suffragists'. In 1891, when the Suffrage Petition began to be circulated for signing, the Marion district had just 58 houses and a population of 223. So we have only been able to find a small handful of names on the petition. Fully occupied as they were with their labours, and somewhat isolated, Marion women possibly didn't have the opportunity to hear about or sign the petition. But they were the backbone of their families and community life, so more than qualified as suffragists by our definition - people of courage, leadership and confidence.

We are also looking at the women from the district who served during both world wars, four in WW1 and 106 in WW2. We think these women also reflected the brave and confident suffragist spirit by going ahead of most women of their era in doing this kind of work and service.



KATE COCKS

Fanny Kate Boadicea Cocks (1875-1954), policewoman and welfare worker, was born on 5 May 1875 at Moonta, South Australia, eldest child of Anthony Cocks, a Cornish miner, and his wife Elizabeth, née George, a schoolteacher. In 1885 the family moved to a farm near Quorn and Kate was educated at home; she taught for a year at Thomas Plains in 1900 and next year became schoolmistress and sub-matron at the Industrial School, Edwardstown.

In 1903 she entered the State Children's Council as a clerk where she was influenced by Catherine Helen Spence. In 1906, anxious to prove that women could deal with vagrant boys, Cocks was appointed as the State's first probation officer for juvenile first offenders. The job took her into the slums; she decided that prevention was better than prosecution and her work lessened the number of children on parole who were placed in institutions.

In December 1915 Cocks was appointed as the State's first woman police constable, concerned with female offences in the areas of adolescent sexuality and alcoholism, and the enticing for brothels of girls newly arrived from the country and overseas. She worked easily with male colleagues, and won respect and obedience from juniors in the women's branch which she headed. She combined stern efficiency with generous advice and help to needy women. Her originality, insight and kindness, especially in the Depression, led to a wealth of legends. Moral but not censorious, she never used a revolver or baton. She saw the equality of the sexes as 'a just conclusion', but believed in the sacredness of child-rearing. Her staff had to take a first-aid course which emphasized maternity care. Although slight and spare she was proficient in judo, and once helped a woman whose husband was beating her, by tutoring her in self-defence.

In 1935 Cocks retired to nurse her dying mother and, already a justice of the peace, was appointed M.B.E. Before resigning she had cared for homeless girls in her house. In April her speech on the problem persuaded the Methodist Women's Home Mission Association to rent a cottage behind her home. That year she became voluntary superintendent of the Methodist Women's Welfare Department and served till 1951. In 1936 a property at Brighton was bought as a refuge for unmarried girls and their newly born babies and other infants needing care. Cocks found fulfilment in this work, moving to Brighton in 1937 to superintend the home. She gave and demanded much and restored people's self-esteem, but her intellectual and organizational ability is often obscured by stories of her kindness and strong religious faith. She died on 20 August 1954 and was buried in Payneham cemetery. Her home and estate, which was valued for probate at £3344, were left to her Church and the Methodist Homes for Babies, renamed the Kate Cocks Babies' Home in 1954. It closed in 1976 and the children were moved into cottage or foster care.

Source <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cocks-fanny-kate-5705> State Library of South Australia, b20473941

Reference This article was published in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 8, (MUP), 1981

Image State Library of South Australia.

NORA HERRING

Source Nation Library of Australia
The History of Marion on the Sturt by
Alison Dolling, Published 1981. This
book is available at Marion libraries.

The article and image 'Representative
Women of Australia' is from a book
called *The Lone Hand*.

Nora Herring was the daughter of local land and vineyard owner Joseph Herring. She first managed her brother's vineyard in Sturt, and in 1901 purchased 20 acres of land and planted her own vineyard. She was later joined by Miss Henriette De Mole and by 1925 was operating a 65-acre property, which she continued to do until she retired in the 1940s. For a woman to operate a vineyard during the early decades of this century was not the accepted norm. Her success was proof and a reproof to the Council of Roseworthy Agricultural College who had debarred her from admittance to the Diploma Course in 1898.

It is not unreasonable to assume that Nora was in sympathy with the Women's Suffragette Movement, which started in England in 1906 by Emmeline Pankhurst. Nora's friends and acquaintances included other liberal-minded women such as Miss De Mole, Miss Nell Horn, and even welfare activist Miss Amy Tomkinson who came and stayed at Nora's home. Nora persisted in her determination to point the way to a new and lucrative employment for women, and to make herself an asset to her State. Nora's house, which was known as 'The Beehive', still stands off Seacombe Road to the west of Seacombe High School, which was built on the eastern portion of the property.

Miss Herring died in 1949 at Murrumbene, Victoria.

**PIONEERING
ABORIGINAL WOMAN
GLADYS ELPHICK
(1904 - 1988)**


A descendant of the Kaurna and Ngadjuri people, Gladys was known to the community simply as Auntie Gladys. She was a woman's rights advocate and Indigenous leader in South Australia. Born in Adelaide and raised on Point Pearce Reserve, she was the founding president (1964 – 1973) of the Council of Aboriginal Women of South Australia, which actively campaigned for the 1967 referendum.

Gladys began active committee work with the South Australian Aborigines Advancement League in the 1960s and was involved in setting up the Aboriginal Community Centre, the College of Aboriginal Education in Adelaide, and co-founded the South Australian Aboriginal Medical Service.

She was appointed Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire in 1971 for services to the Aboriginal people and named SA Aboriginal of the Year in 1984. She died in 1988 in Daw Park. The Gladys Elphick Park/ Narnungga located in the West Park Lands, Adelaide, honours this inspiring women. Narnungga – which means 'native pine place' in the Kaurna language, the traditional owners and custodians of the Adelaide Plains.

Source <https://www.amnesty.org.au/5-amazing-aboriginal-women-history/>

<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/elphick-gladys-12460>

<https://living.cityofadelaide.com.au/the-city-park-celebrating-culture-and-cricket/>

**MURIEL MATTERS
AND GUEST SPEAKER
FRANCES BEDFORD MP**

This short SA-produced documentary is about one of Adelaide's most fascinating historic women, Adelaide-born actress Muriel Matters. An Australian-born suffragist who campaigned in Britain after pulling off a series of brave and theatrical stunts in the early 1900s.

Frances Bedford MP founded the Muriel Matters Society in 2009. The Society was formed to research and promote Muriel's life and work, and the importance of the continuation of her philosophy of equality and access which remains current today.

Frances has been an Independent Member of Parliament for Florey since 2017, representing the constituency since 1997. She is the longest serving female Member of Parliament currently elected to the Lower House.

WHEN: Saturday 16 November, 2pm – 3.30pm

WHERE: Domain Theatre, Marion Cultural Centre

287 Diagonal Rd, Oaklands Park

COST : FREE!

BOOKINGS: Bookings essential.

<https://www.marion.sa.gov.au/things-to-do/events-calendar/murielmatters>

For more information Tel. 8375 6855



In partnership with the
Muriel Matters Society.

CONTACT DETAILS

Please pick up a copy of the Marion's Suffragists newsletters to keep informed about the project from

- › Glandore Community Centre, Cooina, Mitchell Park and Trott Park Neighbourhood Centres
- › Park Holme and Marion Libraries, Cove Civic Centre, Living Kaurna Cultural Centre, Marion Cultural Centre and Marion Heritage Research Centre.
- › CoM website: www.marion.sa.gov.au/womenssuffrage

**Contact Elizabeth Sykora, Cultural Development Officer T 7420 6514
or email elizabeth.sykora@marion.sa.gov.au**