

JAMES WATSON

(1799-1874)

'TO SEEK ... EQUAL POLITICAL AND SOCIAL RIGHTS'

James Watson had a long career as a publisher, activist and Chartist at a time when the freedom to express radical views was under constant attack by the Government.

In April 1834 a huge crowd gathered in Copenhagen Fields, now Caledonian Park in Islington on their way to a demonstration. Six farm labourers had been transported to Australia for forming a trade union. There were nationwide protests. Two years later the men were given pardons and returned to England. They were welcomed at Clerkenwell Green by the London Dorchester Committee, one of whom was James Watson.



Watson first came to London in the 1820s and set up a bookshop near Bunhill Fields, a nonconformist burial ground in Islington. Watson was imprisoned three times for selling periodicals such as the *Poor Man's Guardian*.

Watson lived at a time when ordinary working people were struggling to establish civil and political rights. Watson was also a founder in 1836 of the London Working Men's Association who wanted "to seek by every legal means to place all classes of society in possession of their equal, political and social rights". Through this he met others committed to the cause and their ideas would form The People's Charter.

- * ALL MEN SHOULD HAVE THE VOTE
- * VOTING SHOULD BE BY SECRET BALLOT
- * PARLIAMENT SHOULD BE ELECTED EVERY YEAR
- * CONSTITUENCIES SHOULD ALL BE THE SAME SIZE
- * AN MP SHOULD NOT HAVE TO OWN PROPERTY
- * MPS SHOULD BE PAID

Without being able to elect MPs the working class could not get the reforms that would improve their lives. The Government was against working people having the vote and there were huge demonstrations as a result. Clerkenwell Green had been a rallying point for radical protests since the 18th century. In 1848 it was one of the meeting points for the largest ever Chartist march which presented a petition to Parliament with a million signatures.



Chartist arguments had a big impact. Only 15% of men had the vote at the beginning of the movement, but with the reforms of 1867 and 1882 60% gained the vote. Women had to wait until 1918 (for some) and 1928 (for all).

EDITH GARRUD

(1872-1971)

SUFFRAGETTE DEFENDER

Edith Garrud was a suffragette and jiu-jitsu specialist who taught the suffragettes to defend themselves against police brutality as they fought for the right to vote.

Brought up in Islington she had a tough childhood and learned early how to defend herself. Garrud and her husband worked together as self defence instructors and began classes for suffragettes.

On campaign marches, many women complained of being manhandled, knocked to the ground and sexually assaulted by police and male bystanders. Sylvia Pankhurst said, "The police know jiu-jitsu. I advise you to learn jiu-jitsu. Women should practise it as well as men".



Many suffragettes were arrested and held in Holloway Prison. From 1909 they went on hunger strikes to protest against conditions and were force-fed. Their treatment led to a public outcry. The Government brought in the 1913 'Cat and Mouse' Act in response. Prisoners were released on licence when the hunger strike affected their health and then rearrested to serve the rest of their sentence. Garrud ran a 30 strong bodyguard to protect the Pankhursts from being arrested. Women hid rubber clubs under their skirts and made armour out of cardboard.

Garrud appeared in films and gave demonstrations of jiu-jitsu at suffragette meetings. Even though she was only four foot eleven tall, she could throw a grown man over her shoulder.

Garrud also taught suffragettes how to trick their opponents. In 1914, Emmeline Pankhurst gave a speech from a balcony in Camden Square. When she emerged from the house in a veil, escorted by the bodyguard, the police swooped in. Despite a fierce fight, she was knocked to the ground and dragged away unconscious. But when the police triumphantly unveiled her, they realised she was a decoy. The real Pankhurst had been smuggled out in the commotion.

The Garruds continued to teach martial arts until retiring in 1925. There is an Islington Peoples' Plaque to Edith Garrud at Thornhill Square. She died at the age of 99 in 1971. Her great-nephew Martin Williams helped found the ground-breaking Lesbian and Gay Switchboard on Caledonian Road in 1974. He said he was inspired by his great-aunt.



LEAH MANNING

(1886-1977)

AND THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

Leah Manning was an Islington MP who played a key role in delivering medical support and the evacuation of Basque children during the Spanish Civil War despite the British Government's commitment to 'non-intervention'.

In 1936 fascists, led by General Franco, attempted a military coup against the Republican Government of Spain. Civil War broke out and thousands of people from around the world joined the International Brigades (foreign volunteers who fought with the Republicans) as soldiers, nurses and doctors. More than 500 British and Irish volunteers were killed in the war, including 11 from Islington.



Manning was born in 1886 and became MP for Islington East in 1931. However, her anti-fascist views led her to disagree with the Labour Party line of non-intervention in Spain. She became secretary of the Spanish Medical Aid Committee which raised funds and sent doctors, nurses and ambulances to Spain.

Leah Manning travelled to Spain several times during the war delivering urgent medical supplies, visiting frontline hospitals and helping to nurse wounded combatants. She carried a weapon for self-protection. In 1938 she spoke at 'Spain Week' in Islington Central Library, an event organised by Islington Labour Party and Trades Council.

In the winter of 1936 to 1937 the Basque country came under heavy attack and the Republic appealed to countries across the world to take refugee children. The British Government refused to help but Leah Manning and Edith Pye went to Spain to evacuate the children.

They witnessed the bombing of Guernica where 1600 civilians were killed. In just three weeks Manning and Pye organised the evacuation of 3,826 children along with 95 teachers on the SS Habana. Basque children were settled around the UK entirely funded by public donations.

LEAH MANNING REMEMBERS THE CHILDREN CRAMMED ONTO THE SHIP 'ON THE BULKHEADS, IN THE SWIMMING POOL, IN THE STATE ROOMS AND ALONG THE ALLEYWAYS.'

