

Frances (Fanny) Mary PARKER (1876-1924)

Frances Mary Parker, known as Fanny, was the elder daughter of Harry Rainy and Frances Emily Jane (née Kitchener) Parker, and a niece of Lord Kitchener. She was born on Christmas Eve, 24 December 1875, at Waihao Downs, Waimate. Her father was a farmer in the district. Harry and Frances had married at Weybridge, Surrey, England, in 1869. By 1871 they were in Dunedin, New Zealand, where their first son, Richard Harry Parker, was born. James Herbert followed in 1872 in Dunedin, and Alfred Chevallier in 1874 at Waihao, Waimate. In 1881 Harry and Frances, with their children - scholars James, Alfred and Frances, and seven-month old Ellen Annie Beatrice - were living at Temple Rothley, Leicestershire, England. Harry gave his occupation as Magistrate and Farming 263 acres. The family returned to Waihao Downs and in the 1890s moved to Little Roderick (on the north side of the Waitaki River, between Ikawai and Hakataramea). Mrs Parker was a runholder at Hakataramea in her own right. Harry and Frances later retired to Oamaru. Their family, apart from James and Ellen, seemed to have gone abroad.

Fanny's brother James Herbert Parker served in the South African War with the Second New Zealand Contingent, and there he was killed in action on 1 May 1900 at the age of 27. James, who was a sheep farmer at Little Roderick then Hillgrove in North Otago, was a lieutenant in the Hampden Rifles and served as a corporal with the contingent. Just before his death he had been transferred to Kitchener's Light Horse and gained the rank of lieutenant. A memorial was placed in St Stephen's Church, Hampden, and he is remembered on the Palmerston (South) memorial.

Her uncle, Field Marshal Lord Kitchener, paid for her education at Newnham College, Cambridge, England. She left New Zealand in 1896 to study at Newnham. After gaining her degree in 1899 she spent several years teaching in France and New Zealand. Frances Mary Parker was back home with her parents at Little Roderick in 1905. A few years later it was this same uncle who was to state that he was "disgusted" by her involvement in the women's suffrage movement.

Fanny had returned to Britain before 1908. There she began campaigning for women's suffrage, initially with the Scottish Universities Women's Suffrage Union, and later with Emmeline Pankhurst's Women's Social and Political Union, for which she became the representative in the West of Scotland in 1912. From February 1908 she engaged in increasingly militant actions, and was consequently imprisoned several times. Following a demonstration in 1908 she served six weeks for obstruction.

Fanny was there at the disturbances outside the House of Commons on 13 February 1908, when the women attempted to enter The House and present their petition to the Prime Minister. Large numbers of police were on duty. In the scuffles which ensued some of the women were handled roughly, although the police at times were acting in self-defence. Among the names of those imprisoned was that of Fanny Parker. They were charged with obstructing the police in the execution of their duty. All were bailed out, until their appearance in court the next day. Among the defendants was Fanny Parker, 22, of Clement's-inn. All were charged with wilfully

obstructing the police within the prescribed area of the Houses of Parliament. Later in the day, sureties were entered into to bail Miss Parker.

In March 1912 Fanny Parker was sentenced to four months in Holloway Prison after taking part in a window-smashing raid. Like many of the suffragettes she went on a hunger strike and was force-fed. Later in 1912 she was again imprisoned, twice - for breaking windows and for breaking into The Music Hall in Aberdeen to disrupt an appearance by David Lloyd George. On both occasions she was released after hunger-strikes of several days. During her trial she stated "You Scotsmen used to be proud of Bruce, now you are torturing women." By 1914 the suffrage movement was becoming more violent, with many buildings in Britain being bombed and burned. Fanny was involved. On 8 July 1914, using the pseudonym of Janet Arthur, she and Ethel Moorhead tried to set fire to Burns Cottage at Alloway, Ayrshire, Scotland. The night watchman came across the two women, with their biscuit tins full of explosives, cans of oil and masses of waste saturated with oil, and about to light a fuse. They had stockings pulled over their boots to deaden the sound of their footsteps, and were wearing men's cloth caps. He seized Arthur and struggled with her. Her loud shrieks and a barking dog brought the village men to his aid. She was overpowered, while her associate made a get-away in a waiting car. When Janet appeared before the Sheriff of Ayr later in the day, she was very violent, both in the cell and in the court, and was committed to prison for further inquiry. She was thought to be a Scotswoman, and had a considerable amount of money on her. While on remand, she went on a hunger and thirst strike, resulting in a transfer to Perth Prison, where the prison authorities subjected her to brutal force-feeding and inflicted severe bruising. She became seriously ill and was released to a nursing home. During her trial, Parker exclaimed "Liberty's in every blow, let us do or die" – a quotation from Burns, which action suggests that the attempted burning was not out of hatred for Burns or Scotland, but rather, strangely, out of appreciation for Burns' sentiments. It was after her release from Perth Prison that her true identity became known to police.

But still Fanny managed to escape. Before she could be recaptured war broke out, leading to an end to militant campaigning and an amnesty for suffragettes. This was when her uncle, Lord Kitchener, is said to have been disgraced by her actions. He wrote to her mother – "Whatever her feelings may be, I cannot help thinking she might have some consideration for her family." Nonetheless, Frances Mary Parker was awarded the suffragette medal – the women's Social and Political Union Medal for Valour. At her death Frances left the medal to her friend and fellow suffragette, Ethel Moorhead, with whose family it remained until February 2016 when it came on the market. It was still in its original case bearing the inscription – "Presented to Frances Parker by the Women's Social and Political Union in Recognition of a Gallant Action, whereby through Endurance to the last Extremity of Hunger and Hardship, a Great Principle of Political Justice was Vindicated." Te Papa purchased the medal for about \$40,000. A newspaper columnist described it as an emblem of incredible suffering and courage and valour.

Frances Parker was an attendant at the wedding of her brother Alfred to their cousin, Winifred Margaret Parker, in August 1909 in the parish church of Fairlie, Ayrshire, Scotland. Her father died on 12 December 1912 at Cairo, while staying with her brother Captain Alfred Parker who was with the Egyptian service.

During the war, Frances Parker served in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, which was renamed Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps in 1918. She joined on 29 March 1917, two months before Messines. She became Deputy Controller of the organisation in which 57,000 women served both at home and in France and Belgium. She was discharged on 15 January 1920, just before the QMAAC was disbanded. F. M. Parker received the British War Medal and the Victory Medal. She was also awarded the OBE for her service during the war.

Mrs Frances Emily Jane Parker (Fanny's mother) died on 10 February 1925 in London, predeceased by her eldest son Richard Harry Parker, a captain in the Royal Navy, in 1917, her second son, James Herbert Parker, who was killed in action in the South African War in 1900, and by her activist daughter, Frances Mary (Fanny) Parker. Mrs Parker was a strong advocate for the interests of soldiers' wives and she addressed open-air meetings and demonstrations on war related issues. She tried to get every public-house in the country closed at 8 o'clock to reduce the temptations to recruits to drink. She was also Commander-in-Chief of the Women's Signaller Territorial Corps, formed to release telegraphists and other men signallers for the front.

Fanny's eldest brother Captain Richard Harry Parker died on 20 June 1917 at the Royal Naval Hospital, Yarmouth, and was buried at Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, England. Richard had enrolled in the Royal Navy at the age of just 13. Her second brother, James Herbert Parker, was a victim of the South African War, killed in action on 1 May 1900. Her third brother, Alfred Chevallier Parker, outlived her, dying on 27 December 1935 in England, having been decorated for his distinguished military and civilian services in Egypt. The youngest of the family, Ellen Annie Beatrix Parker, was the only member to be born in England and the only one to die and be buried in New Zealand. She married Adam Cairns in 1909 in New Zealand and lived thereafter in Kurow, Otago.

Frances Mary Parker (Fanny) died on 19 January 1924 Arcachon, Bordeaux, France. She had last been in Edinburgh, and previously at Durham, Liverpool and London. The executrix of her will was Janie Allen, spinster, of Invergloy House, Invergloy, Invernessshire, Scotland. Her estate was valued at £3177.15s.3d.



The Suffragette medal was awarded to Frances Parker, a New Zealander who fought for women's suffrage in Britain. TE PAPA



Frances Parker (Wikipedia)