

# Elizabeth Frisby (1872-1946)



Elizabeth was educated at Wyggeston's Girls' School and then worked for eight years as a district visitor in the poorest districts of Leicester under a scheme set up by the National Union of Women. She used her own money to fund meetings of the Women's Social and Political Union [WSPU] in Leicester and regularly attended suffrage processions and protests in London. In November 1910, she was one of 119 women arrested in Westminster when protestors clashed with police outside Parliament. The violence and brutality of the police led to the day becoming known as 'Black Friday'. Elizabeth turned up at court the next day, ready to go to prison but found that all charges had been dropped by the Police. It was deemed too embarrassing for the government to be imprisoning large numbers of women on the eve of an election.

Elizabeth was less fortunate in November 1911 when she was arrested at a suffragette protest outside Parliament. She was sentenced to five days imprisonment in Holloway for 'obstructing the police'. In her subsequent political career, she made no mention of her prison record...



A J.P. FOR THE CITY OF LEICESTER: MISS COUNCILLOR ELIZABETH R. FRISBY, M.B.E. Miss Councillor Elizabeth R. Frisby, M.B.E., J.P., has the distinction of being the only Conservative to retain a seat at the County Council Elections in Leicester. She is a recently appointed Justice of the Peace for the city. Miss Frisby worked hard during the war, was one of the first members of the Women Patrols, organised and partly financed a clothing depot in Leicester, and, in 1915, with the members of her family, gave and equipped a Y.M.C.A. hut in one of the largest training camps in England, where she worked untiringly. She was decorated with the M.B.E. for her war work.

Photograph by Frank Brown.

## Justice of the Peace, 1927

In 1918, Elizabeth received an MBE for her work during the First World War, funding and staffing a YMCA refreshment hut at an army camp at Seaford in Sussex. This was no doubt a great asset when she decided to embark upon a career in local politics and was elected as a Conservative City Councillor.

## Evacuees at Stackley House, Leicester Mercury, 2nd October 1939

In later years, Elizabeth and her sisters lived at Stackley House in Great Glen. At the outbreak of the Second World War, she threw herself once more into providing refreshments - this time for evacuees.

### A Woman's Diary By Rita Wakefield WAR WORKERS MEET AGAIN

I WAS interested to discover that Dr. Edith Fowell, who spoke at a luncheon meeting of the Leicester branch of the National Council of Women, and Councillor Miss Elizabeth Frisby, who sat next to her on that occasion, were fellow-workers during the last war.

In fact, as members of the Women's Social and Political Union and workers for women's suffrage, they were colleagues even before then.

I believe they met at the N.C.W. luncheon, however, for the first time for many years.

At the outbreak of the last war Miss Councillor Frisby, with the help of some of the members of the W.S.P.U., and inspired by her family, organised a clothing depot.

This was for the benefit of reservists' families, many of whom found themselves in straitened circumstances and did owing to the sudden calling up of their menfolk.

Miss Frisby took a shop in the Silver Arcade, collected garments and materials, and got working parties together. These turned old garments into new ones.

They were distributed with the co-operation of the Charity Organisation Society, who made the necessary enquiries, the recipients being fitted out at the shop.

Many thousands of garments were distributed in this way and when Miss Councillor Frisby later went to London, Mrs. Fowell took over the depot for her, and carried on the work for several months, sending her weekly reports.

At that time Councillor Miss Frisby's war work became wider in its scope. She and her family gave a Y.M.C.A. hut to serve a large military camp.

Councillor Miss Frisby and her sister, Miss Jessie Frisby, started it and were the first women to do this type of camp work. It was in the early days of the war before the formation of the W.A.A.C.C. Later they worked in various other places, including London. It was in connection with her war work that Miss Frisby received the M.B.E.

Today Miss Councillor Frisby and her two sisters find themselves very much occupied on the "home front," for so far they have been mainly concerned with evacuees.

**SEWED SAUSAGE AND MASH**

Instead of serving the troops in a Y.M.C.A. hut, they are caring for an "occupant" of their own at Stackley House.

Here they dispense delicacies like sausage and mash or jam tart to a bunch of London schoolboys, whose appetites are sharpened by country air and daily walks to school at Great Glen.

On Sundays, I understand, this "family" of eleven grows considerably, for relatives arrive to find out how their young hopefuls are getting on. (I think they must sometimes feel a little jealous as they return home.)

By the way, I hear from Miss Councillor Frisby that the political pro-

gramme originally arranged for the Knighton Ward Women's Conservative Association has been cancelled, though other meetings will be held at intervals.

Starting this Tuesday, also, knitting parties will be held at the South Leicester Conservative Association offices. Here garments will be knitted for the troops according to the proper pattern supplied for the purpose.

These garments may possibly be given as part of Knuthorn's contribution to the Lady Mayoress Mrs. T. J. Gooding for distribution through her organisation. Miss Frisby told me her plan was the members were to make this small beginning.

**CLOTHING FOR EVACUEES**

THE Personal Service League, which for a some years now has been active in the distribution of clothing to the unemployed, especially in the depressed areas, I hear, been simply inundated with requests for clothing for child evacuees.

The sensible attitude of the League in this matter has been very well summed up by the Hon. Mrs. Sydney Mansham, who is one of the joint chairmen. "The average housewife of Knuthorn is the able."

In discussing this problem Mrs. Mansham points out that people should understand that the war-torn children are, in nearly every case, the children of employed people.

"At the moment," she adds, "the State is entirely providing for them and it is thus relieving the fathers and mothers of all anxiety if responsibility. In these circumstances it is essential that the League should be asked to provide the necessary clothing for these boys, while the country is as it is possible for them to do so."

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## First Female Mayor of Leicester, 1941

Elizabeth served as Mayor of Leicester in 1941, with her sister Jessie acting as Lady Mayoress. In notes about her life, she herself recorded that she left Leicester in 1913 to study at the London School of Economics. Whilst in London, she worked at WSPU Headquarters. However, rumours still abound about her involvement in local suffragette outrages such as the defacing of the greens at Leicester Golf Course with the words 'No votes. No Golf' in February 1913 and the burning of Blaby Station in July 1914.

### Elizabeth Frisby

Elizabeth Rowley Frisby was born on the 9th March, 1878 and sadly died in February 1946. She lived with her parents Joseph (who was a boot and shoe agent and the founder of Joseph Frisby, Ltd. Multiple Footwear Stores which she later became a director of) and Harriet who also conceived four others: Joseph, Edward, Edith and Jessie.

In 1910, She joined into the WSPU (Women's Social and Political Union) and volunteered for 'danger duty' which meant they were essentially the people who went out, smashed windows, caused other public disturbances and organized all the demonstrations. During the year of 1914, she, along with two accomplices, Kitty Mason and Ellen Sheriff, burned down Blaby Railway Station (which she never admitted to) causing £500 worth of damage. This really set the suffragettes campaign alight. In early 1916 her and her family donated a YMCA hut to the army training camp in Sussex and, along with her sister, continued to run it until the end of the war in 1918. She also organised a clothing depot for families of reservists during the war and was awarded an M.B.E. for her services. And eventually, in 1921 she joined the knighton women's conservative club and was elected the first Woman Lord Mayor in 1941.

By Cam Marlow and Alex Liptrot



### Cam Marlow on Elizabeth Frisby

"Elizabeth Frisby was inspiring because she never seemed to give up and carried on through everything."



### Alex Liptrot on Elisabeth Frisby

"I found working on this project and writing about Elisabeth Frisby inspiring because she was very involved in supporting the suffragette movement in Leicester, helped families during the war by running a YMCA hut and then went on to be elected the first woman Lord Mayor."

