

GREEN, BEATRICE (1894 - 1927), political activist

Name: Beatrice Green
Date of birth: 1894
Date of death: 1927
Spouse: Ronald Emlyn Green
Child: Kenneth Emlyn Green
Child: John Nicholas Green
Parent: William Dykes
Parent: Mary Ann Dykes
Gender: Female
Occupation: political activist
Area of activity: Politics, Government and Political Movements
Author: Bryan Boots

Beatrice Green was born on 1 October 1894 at Abertillery, Monmouthshire, the seventh of eight children of William and Mary Dykes. Her father was a tin worker who became a miner when she was 5 years old. One of her brothers, John Arthur Dykes, was killed in a roof fall in Rose Heyworth colliery, Abertillery in 1910, aged 19.

Beatrice's introduction to public life came through the Ebenezer Baptist Church, where she played a very active role in the Sunday school. She was educated at the Church School, Abertillery, and Abertillery Grammar School, and became a teacher. Although obviously talented in her profession, she was forced by the marriage bar then in operation to give up teaching on her marriage to Ronald Emlyn Green (1892-1967), a miner, on 22 April 1916. They had two sons, Kenneth Emlyn (1917-1980) and John Nicholas (1925-2001).

By the early 1920s Beatrice Green was deeply involved with supporting the local district hospital and the women's section of the Abertillery Labour Party. In common with other Labour women in South Wales at this time, she did not call for radical transformation of gender roles in society. She did, however, believe that women should gain control over those areas of life which most concerned them and that to this end they should engage in public work on the same terms as men.

Green worked tirelessly as the secretary of the hospital's Linen League from its inauguration in 1922. The group was made up of about 40 local women, including two of Beatrice's sisters and a number of Labour Party women, who worked to supply the hospital's linen and washing services. They organised fund-raising events in order to purchase materials and used their own sewing skills to make items such as sheets and pillowcases. Her fellow workers attributed much of the League's success to Beatrice Green personally. In 1923 it was decided that League membership should entail an annual subscription and extend its purpose, serving as a social club with regular events for its members. The League was also consulted on developments in the hospital such as David Daggar's proposal for a birth control clinic in 1925. As the League's representative on the board of management, Green was closely involved with much of the hospital's decision-making. During the twenties she became a close friend of Marie Stopes who was a fundamental figure in the clinic's formation. Green herself was a supporter of the clinic, although the League, like the local women's section, did not unanimously back its introduction to the hospital. The clinic lasted for 16 months before it was forced to close due to intense opposition led by the local clergy.

Green was actively engaged in support for the 1926 General Strike, as president of the Monmouthshire Labour Women's Advisory Council, and working for the Women's Committee for the Relief of Miners' Wives and Children (WCRMWC). She helped form a Maternity Relief Committee in Abertillery which focused specifically on women in confinement. She was also involved with the fostering scheme, which the WCRMWC organised to provide very needy children with temporary homes. In July of that year Beatrice Green and Elizabeth Andrews accompanied a group of 50 miners' children from Dowlais, Merthyr, Rhondda and Abertillery to London to be looked after by foster families for the duration of the Lockout.

Green was also a talented writer and speaker. The July 1926 edition of *Labour Woman* contained an interview with Green, in which she vividly describes life in Abertillery including details of the Poor Relief system and what it was like to be a mother of a large family without a waged income coming in. She was asked to speak at rallies in London and to participate in a Miners' Federation of Great Britain delegation to the Soviet Union. The nineteen strong delegation, which included six women representing miners' wives in different coalfields, was designed to cement the bond between British miners and Soviet workers following the donations sent by Russian trade unionists to miners for relief in the Lockout. It was a lengthy trip from 27 August to 16 October 1926 during which the British women visited workplaces, clubs, hospitals and schools and explored many aspects of Soviet life. According to Marion Phillips the trip was for Green 'a crowning happiness in her

life' during which she blossomed as a speaker, writer and activist. Green sent in two long articles to *Labour Woman* recounting her experiences. Although not declaring herself a Communist, she was clearly impressed with the Soviet system, and wrote that women had achieved equality.

Green continued to be a woman of action until her untimely death from ulcerative colitis at the Aberbeeg Hospital, Monmouthshire on 19 October 1927. She was buried at Blaenau Gwent Church, Abertillery. In an obituary in *Labour Woman* (November 1927), Phillips drew attention to the part played by the harshness and uncertainty of the times in reducing Green's life. Although her political career had spanned a relatively short period, by the time of her death she had established an impressive political track record and would have had a promising future ahead of her in the labour movement.

Author

Bryan Boots

Sources

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Sue Bruley, *The women and men of 1926: a gender and social history of the General Strike and Miners' Lockout in South Wales* (Cardiff 2010)

The South Wales gazette and Newport news, 3 September 1926, p. 9; 23 September 1927, p. 9; 30 September 1927, p. 13; 21 October 1927, p. 12; 28 October 1927, p. 6; 23 December 1927, p. 13

National School Admission Registers (1870-1914)

Further reading

Wales Online: [Beatrice Green and the unsung heroines behind 1926's Lockout](#)

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