

5400

103 Deodar Rd

SW15

15.11.70

Dear Miss Burton,

Miss Surry suggested that you might like to know something about Miss May Billington, from what I remember of her.

She & my mother were great friends for many years, the friendship dating from the period 1908-13 when they were both members of the Blackheath & Levenshewam Branch of the W.S.P.U.

~~As~~ As a child at that time I remember hearing startling stories of her running battles with the police.

Her crutches were lodged on each side of her self-propping wicker chair, & when a meeting was broken up or an arrest being made, she would charge the aggressors at a rate of knots that carried

all before <sup>her</sup> when the police retaliated  
& tried to control this embryo talk,  
she ran the risk of being ejected on  
to the ground, where she was quite  
helped <sup>left</sup>; of course she took this risk  
with her eyes open & when this  
happened <sup>as it did on occasion</sup>, made full & unscrupulous  
use of her infirmities so as to obtain  
the maximum publicity for The Cause.

I believe she was imprisoned & there  
were certainly photos of her in her  
chair in processions & so on.

We moved to Hampstead in 1913  
& Miss Billington some time after  
1914 went to live with her brother  
Henry Billington, age R. B. A.,  
a water colour artist of some distinction  
at 12 Park Village East, Regent's  
Park N. W. I think he served in  
the Artist Rifles, but anyway  
she leased the basement flat in  
this charming Regency Cottage,  
& his studio was above her.

She was devoted to children & used to give me & my brothers the run of flat & the garden, & lived on magnificent lawn even in wartime

She also had a passion for the Russian Ballet, & after 1918 when Diaghilev re-opened at the Alhambra she used to take me, as a school girl to the 'Pit' to see as many as she could get into. She was friends with ~~all~~ the Pit attendants at many London theatres & always got help over her chair & in getting to her seat. Her legs were always in brons & she was barely mobile even with her crutches, & yet she always kept up to date with all the best shows in town, & often took me with her.

She had a nephew & niece, Lewis & Mary Billingham's children of another brother. Lewis lived with

as for some time as a young man,  
just starting a job in London, about  
1930-32.  
many because a social worker  
with the hcc & I ran across her  
a few years ago, when she told  
me Aunt Mary had moved to  
Weybridge, & I think, died there.

I lost touch with her when  
my own family left Hampstead  
some time <sup>last</sup> before the war, & I rather think  
she evacuated herself to Weybridge  
in 1939.

I hope these few notes will be  
of interest to you.

Yours sincerely  
Norica Pittman