

Hidden gems and Forgotten People

COUNTY ROSCOMMON ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Lily Cadiz



Rosie Cadiz

Lily and Rosie Garcias de Cadiz, also known as “Maggie and Jane Murphy” were prominent suffragettes in the early part of the Twentieth Century and for part of their early years were brought up in St John’s House, Lecarrow, Co Roscommon.

They suffered jail more than once, went on hunger strikes and were force-fed. They were also expelled from the Irish Suffragette movement, ultimately, for being too militant.

Militancy, if not Irishness, was in their genes. A male ancestor was a duke who earned the Isles of Cadiz for his military service, but later defied the Spanish Inquisition, which ordered him burned. Thanks to a sympathetic guard, he escaped with his life, if not his title and lands, and so was left only a surname to pass on to his descendants.

Lily and Rosie were born in India where their mother died and later their father. The orphans had to be raised by their relations, the Gunning family at Hodson’s Bay. When their new father, William Hodson Gunning died in 1895, they were left to be brought up by another Gunning aunt, Lydia, at St John’s House. By her early 30s, Lily was deeply involved in politics. In 1910, she and Rosie joined the Irish Women’s Franchise League, founded by Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington, and also signed up with Emmeline Pankhurst’s British equivalent, the Women’s Socialist and Political Union. In 1912, they smashed the windows of the GPO, the Custom House, and Dublin Castle. A few months earlier, jailed in Holloway Prison for similar offences in London, the sisters had undergone their first hunger strike. They were force fed. The Dublin window breaking landed the sisters in jail again, this time Mountjoy, and they again refused food. The Suffragettes’ guerrilla war raged in the years after 1910, with militants burning houses and post-boxes, scorching golf courses, breaking street lamps, plugging keyholes in Government buildings, and cutting phone lines. They attacked paintings in galleries too.

On August 22nd, 1914, the sisters wrote to *The Irish Times* in response to an appeal for women to volunteer as military nurses. A prerequisite for such service, they argued, should be the franchise. In the event, they did spend the war years as nurses, tending the wounded from both the Easter Rising and in France. Rosie suffered a severe spine injury in the process and had restricted mobility for the rest of her life. Like many of their generation, they both had fiancés who were killed in the war and never married. They spent their later years living together in South Dublin, in poor circumstances.

Rosie died in 1964. Lily survived her by a few years ending her days in a nursing home in Donnybrook.

By: *Richard Collins, St John’s House. A cousin of the Cadiz sisters.*