



ENGLISH HERITAGE

NEWS RELEASE

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“DEEDS NOT WORDS!” – THE SUFFRAGETTE STORY COMES TO WITLEY COURT

Saturday 18 and Sunday 19 July 2009

The plight of women who were fighting for their voices to be heard in the early 20th century will be on the agenda at Witley Court, near Worcester, on Saturday 18 and Sunday 19 July, when a trio of actors stage performances of a play commissioned by English Heritage, “Deeds not Words”.

The play, written and performed by Simon Kirk, looks at the actions of militant suffragettes in 1908, around the time of the huge rally in Hyde Park, which saw an estimated half a million women from all walks of life and every corner of the country, gather in London to demand the vote. Regarded by historians as the start of the militant suffragette movement, the gathering culminated at 5.00pm with the great shout of “Votes for Women!”

Two actresses play Millicent Willoughby, a fictional character who brings together many of the voices of the suffragette movement in 1908, and Kitty, a lady’s maid who illustrates that calling for the vote and supporting the movement was not merely the preserve of the white middle classes. Kirk plays a variety of male characters, from MPs to newspaper editors, determined to ignore the calls of the women.

“This is a great play exploring a crucial time in British political history in a very accessible format,” says English Heritage’s Regional Events Manager, Karen Pike. “The story is punctuated with poems and songs that the women used to advance their cause, with the activists often taking popular melodies – like Auld Lang Syne or Glory, Glory Alleluia! – but changing the words to suit their cause.”

The play was premiered at English Heritage’s Festival of History in 2008, and following an excellent audience reception, the actors were invited to stage the play in the Houses of Parliament to an audience of MPs as part of an exhibition on the suffragette movement.

There are four performances each day, taking place at 11.30am, 1.00pm, 2.30pm and 4.00pm. Each performance lasts around 25-30 minutes.

Admission is £5.80 for adults, £4.90 for concessions, £2.90 for children and £14.50 for a family ticket (two adults and up to three children). English Heritage members get in free. Witley Court is open daily throughout the summer months from 10.00am to 6.00pm. For more information, please contact Witley Court on 01299 896636 or visit www.english-heritage.org.uk/witleycourt

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