

MEDIA KIT



(Duration 27 mins)



Muriel Matters, (left) 'Votes for Women' caravan tour of southeast England, 1908

Rivet Pictures P/L
Claire Harris M 0402 280 506
Julia de Roeper M 0418 842 961
Adelaide Studios
226 Fullarton Road
Glenside SA 5065

ONE LINE SYNOPSIS

Adelaide-born actress Muriel Matters made international headlines in 1909 as 'that daring Australian girl' for her bold escapades in the struggle for women's rights in Britain.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

London 1909, an actress from Adelaide makes worldwide headlines after taking to the skies under a 25-metre balloon emblazoned with 'Votes For Women'. Known as 'that daring Australian girl', Muriel Matters is inspired by playwrights, anarchists and revolutionaries to use her performance skills and bravery in the fight for women's rights.

LONG SYNOPSIS

When Australian actress Muriel Matters arrived in London in 1905 to seek her fortune on the stage, she was astonished to discover that English women didn't yet have the vote. She joined the Suffragette movement and soon became known as 'that daring Australian girl' for her wild exploits: distributing leaflets from a dirigible balloon, touring England to make impassioned speeches from a horse-drawn caravan, and chaining herself to a grille and becoming the first woman to speak in the House of Commons in 1909. Together with other Australian women artists living in London, Muriel made a remarkable contribution to the fight for women's suffrage, but has mysteriously been ignored in the historical record. This film shares Muriel's love of art and performance and tells the story of Muriel and her artistic friends with verve and gusto.

Born in 1877, Muriel was one of ten children in a Methodist family in the 'convict-free' settlement of South Australia. She was 17 years old when South Australia became the first place in the world to simultaneously grant women the right to vote and stand for parliament. She trained as an actor and became a gifted orator, performing in theatres in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide. Seeking fame and fortune she travelled to England in 1905, to try her luck on the big stage but as an empowered and passionate young woman she was astonished to discover that English women didn't yet have the vote. In London Muriel met the powerful 'anarchist prince' Peter Kropotkin, who rekindled her egalitarian principles when he told her "Art is not an end of life, but a means." This meeting was pivotal for Muriel, and she joined the Suffragette movement.

In true colonial style Muriel devised brave and creative escapades to get the message across. In 1908 she chained herself to a grille in the House of Commons's Women's Gallery demanding votes for women to vote. Her speech was hailed as the first delivered by a woman in the House of Commons. She was sent to Holloway Prison and on release added prison reform to her list of campaigns.

In 1909 she made headlines when she took to the skies in a basket under an 80-foot balloon emblazoned with 'Votes for Women' and equipped with megaphone, flags and 56 lbs. of leaflets. Muriel scattered leaflets over London and made headline news around the world.

While Muriel used her theatrical skills to fight for women's suffrage, a larger contingent of London-based Australian painters, cartoonists, composers and banner makers used their creative talents to push for social and political change. In the first political use of street art, slogans and information were chalked on pavements and buildings to spread the word about political demonstrations.

Through archive, interviews, dramatic reconstruction and some animated sequences we explore how this extraordinary woman got lost from history, and reveal what her story tells us about the links between art, politics and women's rights in England and Australia.



Brooke Satchwell plays Muriel Matters with Cameron Goodall as Captain Spencer

KEY CREW

SONIA BIBLE – WRITER DIRECTOR

Sonia Bible is an internationally award-winning writer/director. Her debut film 'Recipe For Murder', a 52-minute docu-drama won a Silver Hugo at the prestigious Chicago International Film Festival in 2011. When broadcast, Recipe For Murder received rave reviews and was the 2nd highest rating Australian documentary on the ABC in 2011. Sonia was awarded the NSW Premier's History Award, 2011 and was a finalist in the F4 Film Festival for Outstanding Emerging Documentary Talent at Adelaide Festival, 2012.

Sonia Bible has post-graduate qualifications in Screenwriting from the University of Technology Sydney. She has an extensive background in post-production and has won multiple local and international awards for her work as creative director and editor of film trailers and promos.

Sonia is the co-owner and director of Sydney based video production company Black Jelly Films, where she directs, edits and produces promotional campaigns while continuing to develop her own documentary films.

CLAIRE HARRIS - PRODUCER

Claire Harris producer credits include *Risking it All* 4 X 26 minute cross-platform documentary series (2008 SBSTV), *What the Future Sounded Like* (2007 dir Matt Bate ABCTV), *Hearing James* (2005 dir. Cath Moore SBSTV), *Lure* (2009 dir. Sean Riley). Claire was associate producer on *Love Lust and Lies* (2010 dir. Gillian Armstrong 1 X 87 minutes ABCTV) and production manager on *Race to London* (2012 6 X 26mins documentary series ABCTV). Claire's background is in visual arts, social anthropology and film publicity; she worked in the UK and Australia in cinema exhibition and marketing. Claire established Porthmeor Productions in 2005 to develop documentaries and formed Rivet Pictures in 2012 to co-produce projects with Julia de Roeper.

JULIA DE ROEPER PRODUCER

Julia de Roeper's producer credits include *A Taste of Africa* (6x27mins, ABC, SBS and Ch.4, 1994), *Magic Harvest* (30min doco for AFF, 2010) and *Ringbalin - River Stories* (multiplatform inc. 27min film, website, iPhone and iPad apps, currently in production). Julia line produced *Bad Language* (award winning short, dir. Viron Papadopoulos, 2008). and with Claire Harris is co-producer of *Muriel Matters!* (27min doco for ABC and AFF). With writer Mark Thomson she is currently developing *The Lost Tools of Henry Hoke*, a series of interstitials for the ABC.

JDR Screen (www.jdrscreen.com <<http://www.jdrscreen.com/>>) is a small, collaborative production company established by Julia on her return to the film industry in 2008, after

five years as Director of Industry Development at the South Australian Film Corporation and a PhD on the role of story in Australia.

ROGER DOWLING CINEMATOGRAPHER

In a career devoted to cinematography, Roger has to date filmed 244 television episodes including 130 for the Logie award winning “McLeod’s Daughters”, five television mini-series including “The Last Bullet” which won a Golden Rembrandt for Best Production and was the first HD Tele-movie shot in Australia. (NHK Television/Channel 9)

Roger has shot three tele features including “Captain Johnno.” which won an Emmy Award - Best Children’s Tele-movie. He also shot the highly successful “Napoleon”. Most recently he worked on ‘Race to London’ (6 X 26 min doc series ABCTV) and Meatworks (ABC2)

KEY CAST

BROOKE SATCHWELL

Brooke has been working as an actress since 1994 and in that time has had a successful and creative career in film, television and theatre. She started on Neighbours, and was quickly embraced by the viewing public as a favourite. She won a Logie Award for Most Popular New Talent and a People’s Choice Award for Most Popular Teen Idol. She turned her hand to theatre and starred in a production of The Caribbean Tempest with Bill Hunter and later The Graduate with Wendy Hughes. TV beckoned again and she played Steve Bisley’s daughter in Water Rats for an extended stint, and then a 2 year run on White Collar Blue. All this before she was 21 years old.

Brooke was cast in the acclaimed miniseries Tripping Over, which shot in the UK and then the telemovie Small Claims with Rebecca Gibney and Claudia Karvan. Away from drama Brooke appeared on Play School to the delight of children and parents alike. Brooke has also starred in Fox8’s Dangerous and later worked on Movie Networks comedy series The Jesters. Disney cast her for the female lead in Sue Brooks’ Australian comedy Subdivision. Audiences also enjoyed seeing her back on stage in The Clean House for Black Swan (WA) and QTC (Qld). Most recently Brooke has been a regular on Seven’s Packed to the Rafters.

INTERVIEWEES

FRANCES BEDFORD MP, JP

As founding secretary of The Muriel Matters Society in 2009, Frances made the acquaintance of present-day members of the Australia wide family of Muriel Matters. Frances has become a regular visitor to the UK, working to re-introduce Muriel in Hastings (the place of her home until her death in 1969), meeting people who can help shed light on Muriel’s activities and tracing documents and artefacts appertaining to ‘that daring Australian girl’. The Muriel Matters Society was formed to research, re-establish and perpetuate Muriel’s place in history, promote her ideals and vision around equity and access and champion her social justice causes – equality in participation and equal pay for women, eradication of domestic violence, industrial fairness and abolition

of sweating, education for all, prison reform and world peace (all these among other things - and in no special order!).

A community activist before winning the seat of Florey in the South Australian Parliament for the Australia Labor Party in 1997, Frances claims to be Adelaide's most left wing MP.

With 2 adult children and 2 granddaughters, Frances' interests include social justice issues -particularly access to health and education, women's sport and youth participation in performing arts.

ANN NEWMARCH

As one of Australia's foremost artists, Ann Newmarch's prints, paintings, murals, and mixed media works have addressed political, social, and feminist issues since the 1960s. Ann was born in 1945 in Adelaide, Australia. In 1969, a few years after graduating from South Australian School of Art, she became one of the few women at the time to be appointed as a lecturer at the school. Ann's political and social interests have played a significant role in her career. As a reaction to increased dissention over political issues in Australia, such as the Vietnam War and labor, Ann co-founded the Progressive Art Movement in 1974, an organization dedicated to creating artwork that addressed social and political concerns and educated the public. Likewise, her interest in feminist issues led her to become a founding member of the artists collective Women's Art Movement in Adelaide, a group active from 1976 to 1986. In 1974, Ann stopped exhibiting her work in solo shows at commercial galleries and focused on participating in group and theme shows to further demonstrate her commitment to utilizing art for social activism. Around the same time, she directed her artistic attention to screen printing as an ideal medium for communicating her messages to a wider audience. Ann Newmarch's artistic achievements and commitment to educating the community through her work earned her a Medal of the Order of Australia from the Australian government in 1989

ROBYN ARCHER

Robyn Archer AO is a singer, writer, artistic director and public advocate of the arts. She is currently Creative Director of the *Centenary of Canberra (2013)*, Artistic Director of *The Light in Winter*, (which she created for Federation Square, Melbourne) and Deputy Chair of The Australia Council. Her selected speeches are published under the title *Detritus* (UWA Press). She is patron of numerous arts organisations and has received many prestigious arts awards. She is an Officer of the Order of Australia, Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (France), Officer of the Crown (Belgium) and holds honorary doctorates from Flinders University (SA), and the Universities of Sydney and Canberra. See more at the depArcher lounge www.robynarcher.com.au

STEVEN ANDERSON

Steven Anderson was awarded the 2013 National Library of Australia's Norman McCann scholarship. He is currently at the University of Adelaide writing a PhD thesis focusing on capital punishment in colonial Australia. His co-authored paper on this subject, written

with Associate Professor Paul Sendziuk is published in the forthcoming issue of the Journal of Australian Colonial History. His enduring research interest outside the history of punishment in Australia is the women's suffrage movement in Australia and the United Kingdom. In June of 2013, Steven published a peer-reviewed, academic paper on the topic of Muriel Matters in the Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society.

WHO WAS MURIEL?

Muriel Lilah Matters (November 12, 1877 - November 17, 1969) was an Australian born suffragist, lecturer, journalist, educator, actress and elocutionist. Based in Britain from 1905 till her death, Matters is best known for her work on behalf of the Women's Freedom League (WFL) during the height of the militant struggle to enfranchise women in the United Kingdom.

Muriel Matters was a prominent member of a critical mass of people agitating for women's suffrage. Largely active between 1905-1924, she began her life of activism aboard the Women's Freedom League caravan, which toured England's southeast and Wales. Although tirelessly campaigning for women's voting rights in the English Counties for many years, Muriel is most recognised for chaining herself to the grille of the Ladies' Gallery in the British House of Commons on 28 October 1908. The 'grille' was a piece of ironwork placed in the Ladies' Gallery that obscured the women's view of parliamentary debates. A symbol of the oppression of women in a male-dominated society, it was her firm conviction the grille should be removed. Her non-violent solution to chain herself to the grille was the centre-piece of a larger protest conducted by the Women's Freedom League. While attached to the grille Matters, by a legal technicality, was judged to be on the floor of Parliament and thus, the words spoken by her that day are still considered to be the first delivered by a woman in the House of Commons.

Muriel is also identified with attempting to shower King Edward VII and the British Houses of Parliament with handbills dropped from an airship on 16 February 1909. With the overriding aim to garner attention to the cause of women, she took to the skies armed with 56 lb. of Women's Freedom League pamphlets and in an airship emblazoned with the words 'Votes for Women'. However, due to adverse wind conditions and the rudimentary motor powering the balloon she never made it to the Palace of Westminster but instead hugged the outskirts of London. Nevertheless, her exploit was a success as it created publicity for the suffrage movement generating headlines in newspapers around the world.

Although these two deeds punctuate Muriel Matters' life, they mask a hard working and strong willed activist who spent entire life acting upon deeply held principles. These convictions orbiting around thoughts of gender equality, universal access to education and a career open to talent may seem commonplace in contemporary society but at the beginning of the twentieth century they were ideals, which had to be won. All the different elements contained within her life of activism culminated in 1924 when she ran as the Labour Candidate for the seat of Hastings in the General Election. Although she did not gain enough votes to unseat the incumbent (Lord Eustace Percy), this actualization of her belief that women had a natural right to

participate in parliamentary decision making bodies was a victory in itself and provided an example which others soon followed.

© The Muriel Matters Society website

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- ◆ Theatre in Australia was in its infancy in the 1890's and the options for actors were limited.
- ◆ Muriel Matters trained as an actor and elocutionist in Adelaide. She studied with Lionel Logue. She was introduced to 19th century literary figures including Walt Whitman and Henrik Ibsen.
- ◆ London in 1905 was the 'metropolis of the world', but Muriel was shocked by the division between the rich and the poor.
- ◆ Theatre in London was marked by a new style with new playwrights. Inspirational plays include 'A Doll's House' by Henrik Ibsen, 'Arms and the Man' and 'The Doctor's Dilemma' by George Bernard Shaw, and the poetry 'Leaves of Grass' by Walt Whitman.
- ◆ Muriel was profoundly influenced by 'anarchist prince' and prolific writer, Peter Kropotkin. He befriended many prominent English socialists.
- ◆ The suffrage groups had become highly organized, although split between the moderate National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) and the more radical Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). Muriel joined neither. She joined the Women's Freedom League (WFL), formed in reaction to the dictatorial role of the Pankhurst's in the WSPU. Muriel becomes good friends with Sylvia Pankhurst.
- ◆ Muriel distanced herself from some members of the WSPU after their window smashing campaigns. In 1913 several members were jailed for setting fire to the Tea pavilion at Kew Gardens.
- ◆ Will Dyson, George Coates and Dora Meeson were among Australian artists living in London at the time. Dora Meeson was a founding member of the Artist's Suffrage League, which produced banners, posters and cartoons to further the cause. Much of this propaganda material was produced in Art Nouveau style. This 'new art' is recognised as a key transition to modern art.
- ◆ Inez Bensusan was another Australian actress in London. Like Muriel, she was a member of the Actresses Franchise League and wrote and performed many suffrage plays. They were produced on a low budget with minimal props.
- ◆ Lithography was the technique used in the 'Victoriana' and 'Vaudeville' poster

art. Printing using etched wax or oils applied to a stone or metal plate. This resulted in the characteristic poster designs from 1837 onwards.

CREDITS

Produced in South Australia

Writer - Director SONIA BIBLE

Editor
CEINWEN BERRY

Director of Photography
ROGER DOWLING ACS

Production Designer
BEVERLEY FREEMAN

Composer
GERI GREEN

Animator ANNA TOW
Illustrator LOUIE JOYCE

Narrator
TRACY MANN

Cast
Muriel Matters BROOKE SATCHWELL
Violet Tillard TIFFANY LYNDALL-KNIGHT
Mother KERRY REID
Prison Wardress EILEEN DARLEY
Helen Fox ELLONYE KENIRY
Prince Kropotkin STEVEN SHEEHAN
Captain Spencer CAMERON GOODALL

First Assistant Director DAVID WOLFE-BARRY
Sound Recordist WILL SHERIDAN
Gaffer ROBERTO KARAS
Grip HUGH FREYTAG
Camera Assistant/Data Wrangler ANDREW HORTON
Additional Camera EDDY GILL
BEN PEDERICK

Scenic Painter NEIL MALLARD
Set Construction CHRIS BLOCK
Standby Props JAMES PARKER
Assistant Standby Props CHRIS CANNON
Costume, Hair & Makeup Designer BEVERLEY FREEMAN
Wardrobe Assistant/Standby Wardrobe SAMANTHA VAN GYEN
Make up Assistant BRITTNEY READ

Production management CLAIRE HARRIS JULIA DE ROEPER
Production Coordinator CHRISSY KAVANAGH
Archive Research CLAIRE HARRIS
Transcription MEREDITH HOSKINGS
Script Consultant BILLY MARSHALL STONEKING

Post Production Facility DEFINITION FILMS
Online Editor BEN BLICK-HODGE
Colourist TRISH CAHILL

Mixed in Boom Sound @ Best FX
Dialogue & Re-recording mixer PETE BEST
Effects editor - Assistant mixer SCOTT ILLINGWORTH
Narration recording HUZZAH SOUND

Music recording STUDIO RIPPLE
Recording & mix CHRIS ROLLANS
Piano GERI GREEN
Violin AILSA FULCHER
Percussion & guitars CHRIS ROLLANS

Stills Photography ANDREW HORTON
MARK THOMSON
Legals JENNY LALOR
Accountant MARK KRAUS
Insurances WEBSTER HYDE AND HEATH

ABC Crew and Resources
CHRIS MOON GREG ASHMAN

Archive footage courtesy of

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eFootage.com
T3 Media
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Robana/Mirropix

Bridgeman Art Library
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Falling in Love Again at The Pram Factory: photograph by Ruth Maddison
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Camilla Wolfe-Barry Angelica Harris-Faull Jan Cornall

For the Adelaide Film Festival Amanda Duthie
For the South Australian Film Corporation
Viron Papadopoulos Melissa Juhanson

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ABC Development Executive Producer Sally Chesher
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ABC Head of Arts Katrina Sedgwick

Produced by
JULIA DE ROEPER CLAIRE HARRIS

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Ann Newmarch 1978