

LAND GIRL SUFFRAGETTE

THE EXTRAORDINARY STORY OF OLIVE HOCKIN

Simon Butler

Olive Hockin (1881–1936) has never been accorded her rightful place among those brave and resourceful women who fought, and in some cases, risked life and limb, to champion the rights of women. While in many ways she epitomised those in the vanguard of the Suffrage movement through her class, liberal education and aesthetic principles, her story reveals a complex character – mixing within elite literary and artistic circles, while revealing a deep understanding and empathy for those whose lives were devoted to work on the land.

Trained at the Slade School of Art in the early 1900s, Olive embraced Theosophism, a belief that holds to the principle that deeper understanding comes through mystical insight – themes apparent in her paintings, many of which are only now coming to light. Free thought, devotion to her beliefs and freedom of sexual expression characterise her life at this time.

Implicated in a 1913 bomb plot against Lloyd George, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, Olive was later charged with an arson attack, convicted and sent to prison. On the outbreak of war in 1914, Olive, along with many of her compatriots suspended their militant actions and joined the war effort. How she then came to work as a labourer on a remote Dartmoor farm is a mystery but her fascinating account of that year is recorded in her book *Two Girls on the Land: Wartime on a Dartmoor Farm* which, along with the background to her life and times, is republished here in full, including notes and contemporary photographs.

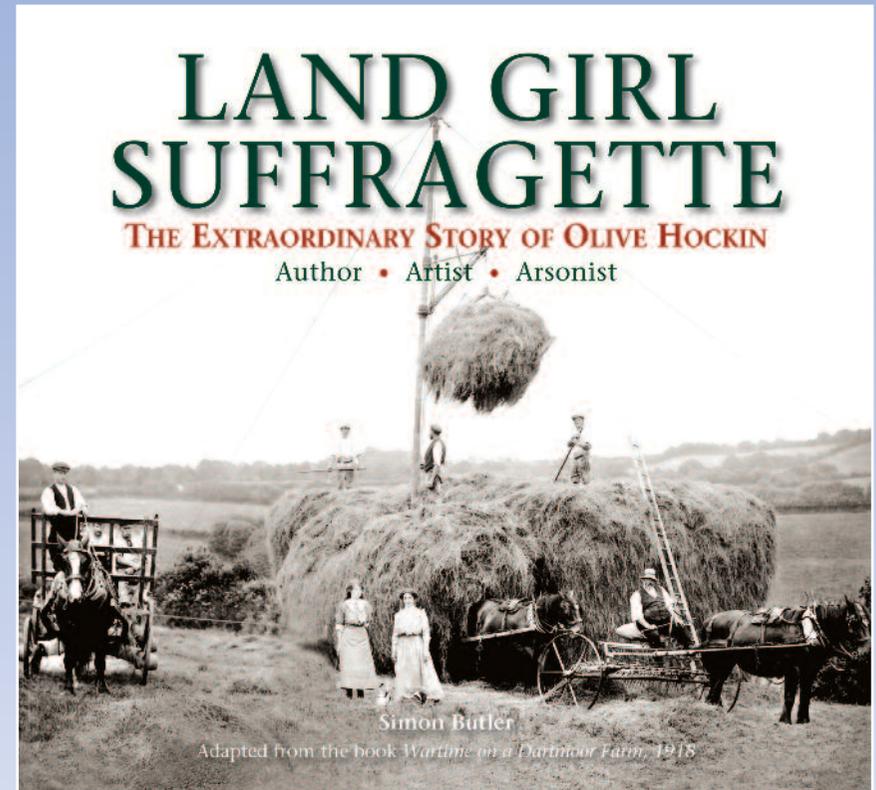
Simon Butler is a writer and consultant to the publishing industry, having directly published over a thousand books during a long career. He is also a Director of the Dartmoor Trust and of two major regional arts organisations.

His own writings include the bestselling *The War Horses* (covering the First World War), and a companion volume *Goodbye Old Friend*. It was during research on his book *The Farmer's Wife*, concerning the history of women workers on the land, that he discovered the writings of Olive Hockin and which led him to research and write *Land Girl Suffragette*. Having lived on Dartmoor for over forty years, the landscape background to Olive's story holds a particular resonance.

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A watercolour by Olive Hockin showing two men fishing beside a lake.



Above: WLA Timber Corps workers 1918.

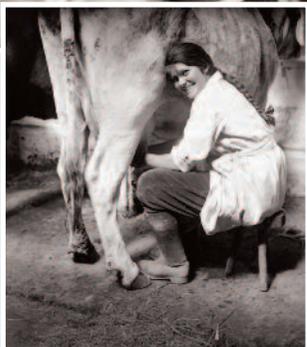


Left: Olive Hockin in her studio.

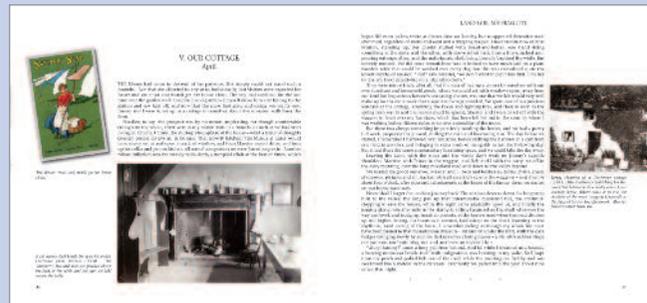


Below: Women proving themselves the equal of men. WLA members undertook training at Seale Hayne College in South Devon from March 1916 to be instructed in milking, calf and pig rearing and field work.

Left: A 'Law-Abiding Suffragists' rally in Hyde Park.



Land Girl milking.



Example of a double-page spread.

