

Councillor Mrs. Wallis Power

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During a performance of "Dick Whittington" at the Drury Lane Theatre some when in the 1890s a child's cries of anguish suddenly disturbed the scene.

The child was little Eileen White, now Coun. Mrs. Wallis Power, of "Culmore," Highcliffe, and she was protesting bitterly about the treatment being meted out to poor Dick Whittington's cat.

She was severely admonished by her parents for creating such a scene, but little Eileen was not to know that the cat was "neither animal nor vegetable," but human. However, it indicated one thing — a deep love of animals, and explains why Mrs. Power has been so closely connected with the work of the R.S.P.C.A. all her life and is now the Society's deputy chairman.

The caring for animals, although an important function in the eyes of Mrs. Power, has by no means been her only thought, and her life has been full of varied, exciting, and even dangerous incidents.

IRISH EXTRACTION

Daughter of John Berry White, a staff officer of the Indian Army, Mrs. Power is of true Irish extraction and it was during the early part of her life on the borders of Tipperary and Waterford that she learned so much about the hardships of the poorer classes. She was not content just to look on, but developed a burning desire to engage in public work.

Her people had a house in London and this accounts for her being educated just outside at Heathfield and Westheath. Even at the age of 16 she engaged in political and mission work in the East End.

There were frequent visits to Ireland, but the decision to leave the Emerald Isle for good came during the great rebellion of 1916. For Mrs. Power and other loyalists, the rebellion was a time of terrifying experiences. "I sometimes wonder however we came out of it alive, particularly after we were surrounded in a Dublin hotel and machine-gunners were everywhere," she says.

HORRORS AND HUMOUR

The rebellion had its horrors and its humour. There's the incident which Mrs. Power recalls of the old woman who looted two shoes and on finding they were both for the same foot, set out to "find" a pair. When she returned the original two were gone and she was heard to mutter: "Indeed you can't leave a thing about in this place for the robbers there are around!"

Nursing has been one of Mrs. Power's life-long interests, and this accounted for her taking on the secretaryship of the Highcliffe Nursing Association as soon as she came to the district in 1927. In the years between leaving Ireland and coming to "Culmore" she had lived for a considerable time in Merioneth

Undoubtedly one of the highlights of her social activities was her presentation in 1908 at the last Court of King Edward VII. "That was a most awe-inspiring occasion," she says.

GUEST OF ROYALTY

As one who was a guest at last year's royal garden party and who is going to this year's event, Mrs. Power says there is a much more democratic atmosphere about these present-day functions than there was in the old days.

In Highcliffe Mrs. Power has never ceased to take an interest in the people around her, and that was one of the reasons she accepted office on the Council in 1946.

"Everyone knows I have been a supporter of the Conservative cause, but I hate politics in local government and that was why I stood as an independent," she remarked, adding: "And if I stand again my views will be just the same."

Old people's welfare (she is on the local committee), the Women's Institute, and many other organisations for welfare of the people have always found in Mrs. Power a staunch supporter, and the beautiful grounds of "Culmore" have invariably been put at their disposal for social gatherings.