

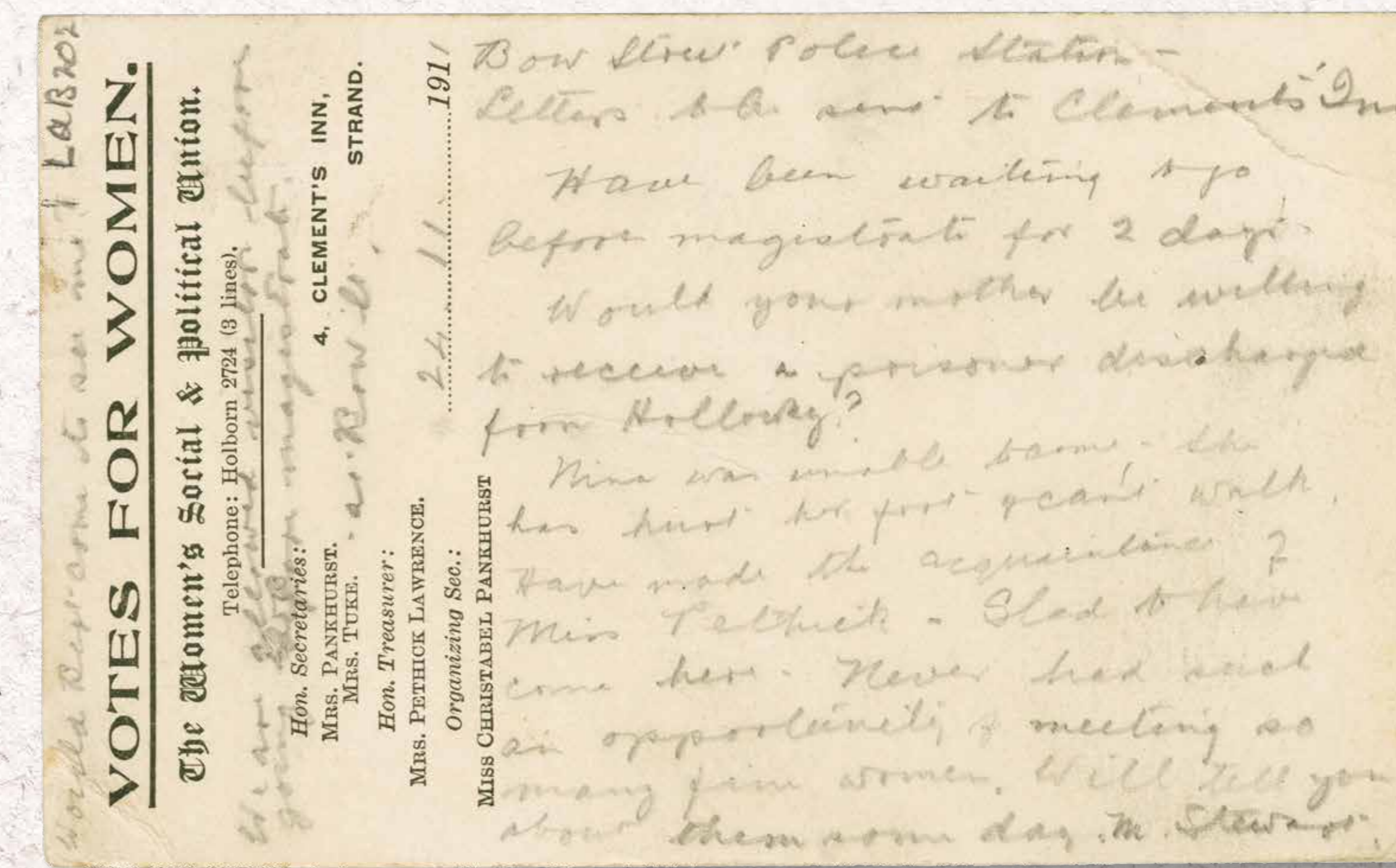
DH Lawrence and Women's Suffrage

Author DH Lawrence had friends who campaigned for the female vote. However, while he supported the cause of female emancipation, he was deeply ambivalent about women's enfranchisement within a political system he despised.



Left: Photograph of Louie Burrows, 1910
DH Lawrence Collection, La Phot 1/38

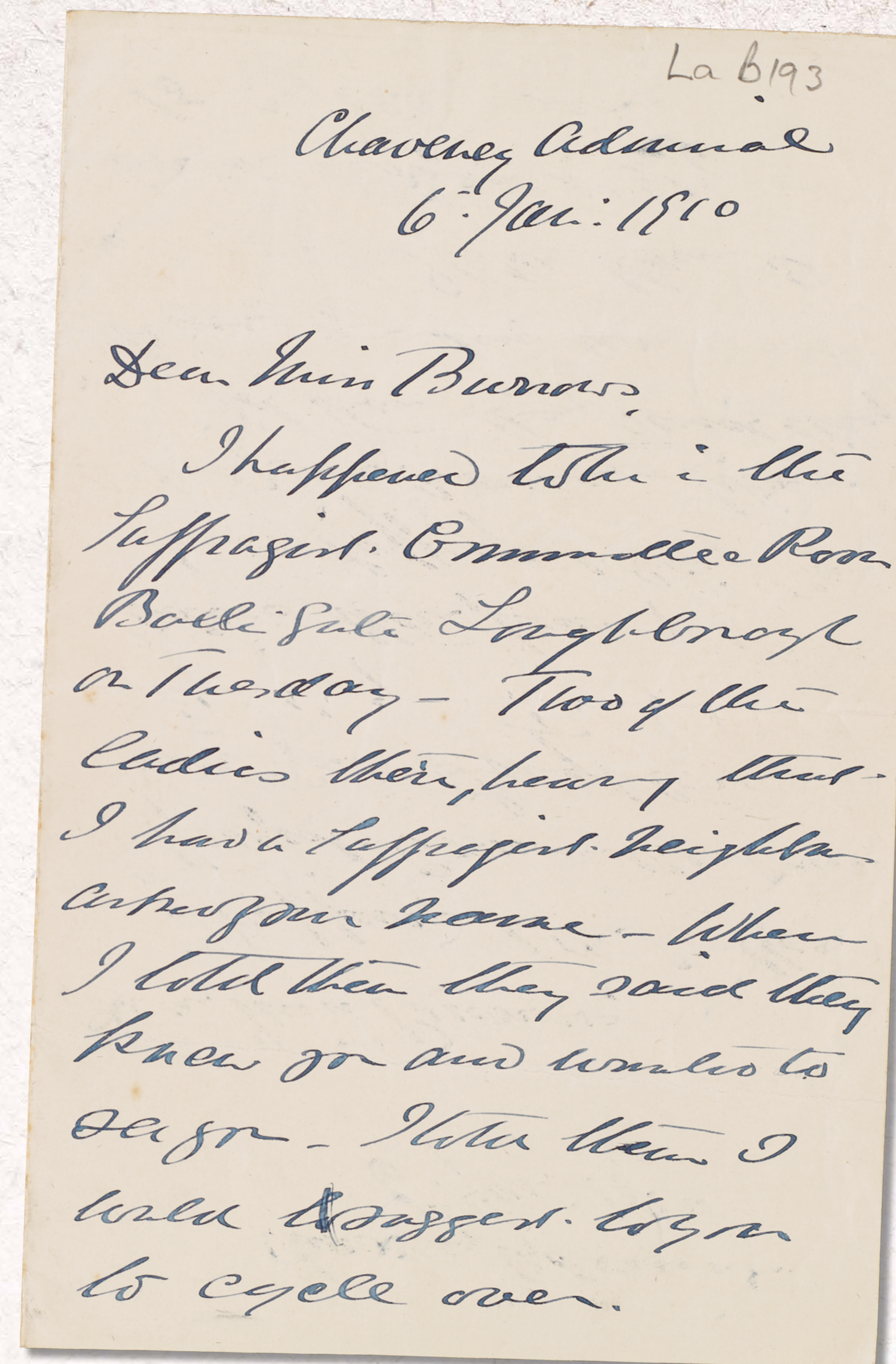
Below: Suffragette postcard from M Stewart to Louie Burrows, 1911
DH Lawrence Collection, La B 202



Between December 1910 and February 1912 Lawrence was engaged to be married to his college friend Louisa (Louie) Burrows (1888-1962).

Louie was a headmistress of a primary school in Leicestershire. In a letter dated January 1910, W Wastenays refers to her as his “suffragist neighbour” and passes on a request for her to visit the activists at the Suffragist Committee Room in Loughborough.

In November 1911, Louie received a postcard from a friend who had been arrested in London. She had probably taken part in the first of two window-smashing campaigns organised by the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). These campaigns aimed to highlight the WSPU belief that the government was more concerned for property than women's lives. The friend enquires, “Would your mother be willing to receive a prisoner discharged from Holloway?”, and asks if Bert [DH Lawrence] could visit her.



Letter from W Wastenays to Louie Burrows, 1910
DH Lawrence Collection, La B 193

Some of Lawrence's friends in Eastwood were great supporters of votes for women. Lawrence often attended gatherings led by William (Willie) Hopkin (1862-1951) and his wife Sallie in which the affairs of the day were discussed. It was here that he met Alice Dax, an older, married woman interested in the campaign for women's suffrage, who later became a model for Clara Dawes in *Sons and Lovers*.

According to Dr Andrew Harrison, Director of the DH Lawrence Research Centre, Lawrence “can be described as in some senses an anti-suffragist feminist. He saw his fiction as exploring the limitations placed on women and their restless desire for a better, freer life”.

“The women suffragists ... are certainly the bravest, and, in the old sense, most heroic party amongst us, even they are content to fight the old battles on the old ground, to fight an old system of self-preservation to obtain a more advanced system of preservation.”

DH Lawrence, *Study of Thomas Hardy* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), 14



Photograph of DH Lawrence, Arabella Yorke, Kitty Allcock and WE Hopkin, probably taken by Enid Hopkin, 1918
DH Lawrence Collection, La Phot 1/9