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Centenary of suffragette Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington's gift marked

Pic for Lorna Siggins story (HMTEASET) Dr Micheline Sheehy Skeffington of NUI Galway and the silver tea service presented to her grandmother, suffragette and republican Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, in March 1913 after she was released from jail. The centenary of the presentation is being marked by the family in Galway tomorrow (tues mar 12)

Lorna Siggins

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LORNA SIGGINS

When Irish suffragette Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington lost her job for her direct-action activities, she refused offers of financial aid from friends.

However, some friends were so determined to help her that they gave her an unusual gift a century ago.

The suffragette received a silver tea service, engraved with her name and the date, March 12th, 1913. The centenary of the event is due to be remembered in Galway tomorrow by her granddaughter and current guardian of the service, Dr Micheline Sheehy-Skeffington.

“My grandmother left it to the family, and the irony is that she probably hardly used it as she wasn't that domesticated,” Dr Sheehy-Skeffington told *The Irish Times*. The set's teapot is inscribed: “Presented to Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, MA, by some friends, Wednesday March 12th, 1913.”

Hanna Sheehy (1877-1946) was one of the first female graduates of University College, Dublin, and was imprisoned twice in relation to suffrage and other causes. She lost her post as a lecturer at Rathmines College after her first prison sentence, for throwing a stone through a Dublin Castle window.

She co-founded the Irish Womens' Franchise League with her husband, Francis Skeffington, in 1908, and was active in the 1916 Rising. After her husband, a pacifist, was shot by the British, she secured an official inquiry into his death. She refused compensation of £10,000 offered by British prime minister HH Asquith, and toured the US on a false passport to highlight the republican cause.

She was a member of the Sinn Féin council, and was also briefly a member of Fianna Fáil, but objected to Eamon de Valera's paternalistic attitudes to women, according to her biographer Margaret Ward.

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