

National Trust co-founder honoured at Westminster Abbey

Submitted by: pr-sending-enterprises

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Octavia Hill, leading social reformer and co-founder of the National Trust, has been honoured at a service to dedicate a memorial to her at Westminster Abbey in London.

One hundred years after Octavia Hill's death, a memorial stone, commissioned by the National Trust (<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/>) and designed and crafted by Rory Young, has been dedicated at the service that celebrates her remarkable life.

Thousands of flowers, foliage and fruit from National Trust gardens across the South West were incorporated in eight spectacular displays for the service. Conceived by Mike Calnan, head of gardens at the Trust, the dramatic arrangements were made and assembled by London based floral artist Rebecca Louise Law, daughter of one of the Trust's head gardeners, together with Abbey florist, Jane Rowton-Lee.

National Trust Chairman, Simon Jenkins, and Director-General, Dame Fiona Reynolds, broadcaster Julia Bradbury and writer Robert Macfarlane were among the members, supporters, staff and volunteers from the National Trust and other organisations who paid tribute to Octavia Hill with readings and prayers at the service conducted by The Very Reverend Dr John Hall, Dean of Westminster.

The memorial stone, measuring 600mm x 600mm, is made of Purbeck marble, and has been laid in the nave of Westminster Abbey.

Octavia Hill (<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/what-we-do/who-we-are/our-history/view-page/item758281/>) founded the National Trust in 1895 with Sir Robert Hunter and Canon Hardwicke Rawnsley.

They were concerned about the impact of uncontrolled development and industrialisation and set up the Trust 'for the protection of the public interests in the open spaces of the country.'

Octavia Hill also played a pivotal role in the housing reform movement and had a lifelong passion for learning and welfare.

Dame Fiona Reynolds said: "Octavia Hill had a profound impact on this country both as a social reformer and as a co-founder of the National Trust. She and her fellow reformers believed passionately that access to beauty, heritage and nature was a basic human need. Her biggest legacy has perhaps been the National Trust, which last year reached 4 million members - surely exceeding even her ambitions. All year we have been commemorating the work of this remarkable woman, and I am delighted by the opportunity to honour her legacy in this way."

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About Octavia Hill:

Octavia Hill was a woman ahead of her time. A social reformer and green campaigner, she was a pioneer of affordable housing and founder of modern social work.

Her formidable achievements as an environmental and open space campaigner led to her co-founding the National Trust in 1895 with Sir Robert Hunter and Canon Hardwicke Rawnsley.

Concerned about the impact of uncontrolled development and industrialisation, they set up the Trust "for the protection of the public interests in the open spaces of the country".

Her vision extended to an early dream of a 'Green Belt' to protect and separate countryside (<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/what-we-do/what-we-protect/coast-and-countryside/>) from urban sprawl. As well as the National Trust, organisations as diverse as Octavia Housing, Open Spaces Society, Family Welfare Association and Army Cadets can all trace their roots back to Octavia Hill.

The first 40 years of the National Trust was as a small voluntary organization, focused on saving and acquiring places of natural beauty and historic interest.

This vision remains a fundamental part of the DNA of the National Trust and is now reflected ever more strongly in its ambition to encourage more people to get outdoors and closer to nature.

About The National Trust:

The National Trust looks after more than 250,000 hectares of countryside, 710 miles of coastline and hundreds of historic places across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. For more information and ideas for great days out, go to: www.nationaltrust.org.uk.

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