Sylvia Fox-Strangways

First Head of Visual Arts at Dartington Hall, 1927–29

Frances and Malcolm Billinge

The Dartington Hall estate was purchased by Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst in 1925. They were social reformers who planned to develop the land and buildings in a new way, integrating art and the countryside, and promoting rural enterprise and spiritual well-being. Michael Young, in his study of the development of Dartington Hall, encapsulated this ethos in his book's subtitle, *The Creation of an Utopian Community*.[1] Sylvia Fox-Strangways made an important artistic contribution at the start of this major project.

Sylvia – known as Jane while she was at Dartington – was the first resident potter and head of visual arts on the estate. She was from a family with aristocratic links; her brother Walter was to become the 8th Earl of Ilchester. Devon was a county that Sylvia knew, as her grandmother had lived in Bovey Tracey and her parents lived in Lustleigh and then South Brent in the 1920s. She also had other relatives in South Devon.

Sylvia: The First Artist In Residence

Sylvia's background gave her unique advantages. She was born in India in 1890 and spent some time there as a child before her parents settled in England.[2] Her father was a district commissioner in the Indian Civil Service, her brother Walter Angelo was vice-consul at Mogador, Morocco, and her other brother Vivian was in the British Consular Service, which included being secretary for African Affairs in Nyasaland.[3]

Sylvia's mother Louisa was known for her work promoting the education and rights of women. While in India she was president of the Central Provinces Branch of The National Indian Association.[4] In 1913, when she was back in England, Louisa supported the National Indian Association in Aid of Social Progress and Education in India and at the Annual Meeting she supported a motion for the advancement of education among women and girls. She said, 'a nation which did not emancipate its women was only half educated'.[5]

Louisa was also a strong supporter of the women's suffrage movement. She attended several suffrage meetings and made financial contributions to the cause between 1914 and 1930.[6] Louisa's views on education and suffrage would have influenced how her own daughters

[1] Michael Young, *The Elmhirsts of Dartington* (Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1982), pp. 167, 168, 220.
[2] British India Office Ecclesiastical Returns – Births & Baptisms India.
[3] Supplement to the *London Gazette*, 1 January 1953.
[4] *Englishman's Overland Mail*, 17 March 1910, p. 13.
[5] *Homeward Mail from India China and The East*, 31 May 1913, p. 4.
[6] *Vote*, 12 September 1924, p. 7.

were reared, and would have given Sylvia a sense of freedom to study art and use it to help develop a new form of education. It also gave her other daughter Elinor the opportunity to study music and to gain her Royal Aero Club Aviator's certificate in 1934 at the age of 41, four years after Amy Johnson had become the first female pilot to fly single-handedly from Croydon to Australia.[7] Louisa, Sylvia and Elinor benefited from Representation of the People Act of 1918, followed by the Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act 1928.

Sylvia went to spend time in India in 1908 when she was 18 and returned to England a year later.[8] Her early experiences of Indian and other cultures would have contributed to Sylvia's artistic and spiritual creativity – traits that would have endeared her to Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst.

Sylvia's contacts were in both the aristocratic and art world. She was an artist and ceramicist who trained at the Central School of Arts and Crafts, Camberwell School of Arts & Crafts and the Royal College of Art in London, alongside Barbara Hepworth. Sylvia was also a protégée of Bernard Leach, the renowned St Ives potter.[9]

Sylvia's Devon links stemmed from her grandmother, Harriet Fox-Strangways née Buller (related to Redvers Buller of Downes in Crediton) who on her widowhood settled in Bovey Tracey. Although Harriet would be the mother of one earl and the grandmother of another, she lived in comparatively modest circumstances at Front House on East Street, Bovey Tracey (see Figures 1 and 2).

Figures 1 and 2: Front House, East Street, Bovey Tracey
(Front: David Lewis Collection, rear: current owner's archive)

[7] Pilot's Licence Great Britain Royal Aero Club Aviators' Certificate 1910–1950 <www.ancestry.co.uk> [accessed 31 December 2022].
[8] *Homeward Mail From India China and The East* (*HMICE*), 20 June 1908, p. 29; *HMICE*, 15 May 1909, p. 29; *HMICE*, 22 May 1909, p. 29.
[9] Cornwall Artists Index <www.cornwallartists.org> [accessed 1 January 2023]; Devon Heritage Centre, letters from Sylvia Fox-Strangways to Leonard Elmhirst (5, 9 and 11 November 1930); Rachel Esther Harrison, 2002. *Dorothy Elmhirst and the Visual Arts at Dartington Hall 1925–1945* (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Plymouth), p. 89, refers to November letter and Hepworth.

Sylvia, her parents and the children of the future 8th Earl of Ilchester – one being Maurice who would become the 9th Earl – were living at Alvington in Lustleigh by 1926 (see Figure 3). Her aunt, Mary née Fox-Strangways, was living at The Hut in Bovey Tracey in 1927 (see Figure 4).[10] Theirs was an example of a family with aristocratic links but without the resources to live an aristocratic lifestyle.

Figure 3: Alvington, Lustleigh (archive of current owner)

Figure 4: Sylvia's aunt Mary at The Hut, Bovey Tracey, 1920s (Gould family archive)

[10] Electoral roll, 1926, *Find my Past* <www.findmypast.co.uk> [accessed 24 April 2024].

Sylvia's Uncle Arthur Fox-Strangways and the Indian Artistic Connection

Sylvia's uncle Arthur Fox-Strangways was the music master at Wellington College.[11] He later became a renowned writer and music critic of *The Times* from 1911.[12] He had a particular interest in Indian music and culture. His brother Maurice, Sylvia's father, who he visited in India, was the commissioner of the Central Provinces.[13]

In 1910 Arthur became the secretary of the India Society, whose aim was to promote an interest in Indian Art.[14] In October of that year, Arthur travelled to Bombay, and during a long vacation studied and later wrote a book about the *Music of Hindustan*, which was published in 1914.[15] Arthur brought the polymath Rabindranath Tagore to the attention of the Indian Society, which published Tagore's *Gitanjali* [Song Offerings] in 1912.[16] Tagore received his Nobel Prize for literature in 1913. In 1920, Arthur was the founding editor of the *Music and Letters* publication, and between 1925 and 1939 he was music critic for *The Observer*.[17]

Arthur Fox-Strangways, Tagore and Leonard Elmhirst

Leonard Elmhirst was also interested in Indian culture and had met Tagore in India in 1918. In 1921, Leonard returned to India for two years to be Tagore's secretary, and he helped Tagore set up an Institute of Rural Reconstruction in the village of Surul in Bengal.[18] This was to be a precursor of Leonard and Dorothy's experiment in Dartington. The connection between Arthur, Tagore and Leonard would have played some part in the latter's decision to employ Arthur's niece Sylvia.[19] Arthur was also connected to Sylvia through living in Devon, as in in his later years he resided at The Hut in Bovey Tracey with his widowed sister Mary.[20]

Sylvia's Artistic Development and Introduction to the Elmhirsts

In 1926, Sylvia was at St Ives working as a ceramicist in the Pottery of Bernard Leach. In that year Sylvia exhibited her work at the prestigious Thirteenth Exhibition of the Arts & Crafts Society held at the Royal Academy in London. The Elmhirsts attended this exhibition (see Figure 5).[21]

---

[11] *Reading Mercury*, 23 December 1893, p. 5.
[12] Steuart Wilson, revised by John Warrack, 'Arthur Henry Fox Strangways', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004).
[13] *Homeward Mail from India China and The East*, 23 January 1905, p. 13.
[14] *Westminster Gazette*, 7 June 1910, p. 7 'Start of Society'; *Homeward Mail India China and The East*, 21 December 1912, p. 15 as secretary; Martin Clayton, 1999. 'A. H. Fox Strangways and 'The Music of Hindostan: Revisiting Historical Field Recordings' in *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* (Taylor and Francis Ltd), vol. 124, no. 1, pp. 86–118, 89.
[15] *Pall Mall Gazette*, 23 March 1912, p. 5.
[16] H.C. Colles and Frank Howes, *Fox Strangways A.H.* (Grove Music Online, Oxford University Press, 2001).
[17] *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, *op. cit.*; *The Times*, 4 May 1948, p. 6, obituary.
[18] Victor Bonham Carter, *Dartington Hall* (Phoenix House Ltd, 1958), p. 20.
[19] Leonard Knight Elmhirst, *The Straight and Its Origin* (Willard Strait Hall, 1975) originally serialized in *Cornell Alumni News* (1974–75); *Hendon & Finchley Times*, 31 July 1914, p. 3; *Clifton and Redland Free Press*, 21 August 1914; Arthur Fox-Strangways *The Music of Hindostan* (Oxford University Press, 1965).
[20] Electoral rolls.
[21] Harrison, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

Figure 5: Catalogue of the Thirteenth Exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Society, 1926 (www.archive.org)[22]

In 1926, Sylvia's work was praised in *Potters of Today*:

> Statuettes and groups of figures are not the only works produced by the artist potters; exquisite in colour and shape are many of the bowls and jars created by Mrs Charles Vyse, Miss Fox-Strangways, W.S. Murray, Charles Norton, and others.[23]

Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst invited Bernard Leach to visit Dartington in 1927 and asked him to establish a pottery there. Leach declined and instead recommended that they engage his assistant, Sylvia Fox-Strangways, whose work the Elmhirsts had already admired in London. Sylvia became the first artist in residence at the Elmhirst's new venture in 1927.[24]

---

[22] *Catalogue of the Thirteenth Exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Society 1926*, National Art Library Collection <https://archive.org/details/ACESExhib13AAD19801121>, accessed 2 January 2023.
[23] *Britannia and Eve*, 9 June 1926, p. 538.
[24] Harrison, *op. cit.*, p. 87; Charlotte Anna Niema, *Dartington Hall and Social Reform in Interwar Britain*, unpublished PhD thesis (University of Cambridge, 2018), p. 149; Jane Brown, *Angel Dorothy* (St Ives plc Cornwall, Clays Ltd, 2017), p. 117.

Sylvia at Dartington, 1927–29

Sylvia was the first organiser of the arts at Dartington, where she was the resident head of visual arts, ceramicist and art adviser from early 1927. Her contribution has been fully described by Niema, who reported that Sylvia was passionate about, 'trying to get people to realise the artistic side of whatever they were doing', and that Sylvia opened her studio to the whole estate and held regular 'Design and Workmanship' exhibitions. These were exhibitions of, 'any portable work done on the Estate by anyone of any age, which has been made with an eye to beauty of design'. Her ideological position was, 'tinged with Bauhausian ideas on the unity of the arts' – although it manifested more in practical work in the community than in high-level theorisation. Sylvia shared Dorothy's sense that creativity was a quasi-religious act, almost 'as necessary as breathing'. She also shared Leonard's belief that art could and should be socially and economically useful, and thought that art, 'would help reform civilisation in the wake of the Great War'.[25]

Sylvia felt it was her duty to bring art to all 300 members of the estate, 'from children to bricklayers' during the so-called 'Amateur Period' of Dartington's development'. As well as teaching pottery classes, Sylvia organised 'peoples' exhibitions of the work of many members of the estates. She expanded the definition of art to include everyday activities, including baking, shoe polishing and typescript layout for secretaries.[26]

Sylvia made a significant contribution to the development of visual art at Dartington. Her fireplace tiles are in Shumaker College and the Courtyard rooms at Dartington and are similar to those held at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (see Figure 6). Some of Sylvia's tiles and vessels are displayed at the Rufford Ceramics Galley, Nottinghamshire.

Figure 6: Tiles by Sylvia Fox-Strangways
(The Victoria and Albert Museum Collection, c.1418–1934)

[25] Charlotte Anna Niema, *op.cit.*, p. 149; Anna Niema, *The Utopians* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 153.
[26] 'History of the Studio Pottery Tradition at Dartington' <https://www.dartington.org/about/our-history/studio-pottery-tradition> [accessed 24 April 2024].

In 1929 there was a performance at Dartington Hall of *The Masque of Comus*, where 'the leading characters wore masks designed by [Sylvia] Jane Fox-Strangways.' [27]

Sylvia had a successful three years at Dartington Hall. She gave drawing and painting classes as well as teaching ceramics, and she had a kiln installed in a studio behind buildings which became the Barn Theatre (see Figure 7). According to Young, 'The demands of her kiln for electricity plunged the rest of the courtyard into darkness when it was being fired'.[28]

Figure 7: The Pottery, Dartington Hall, where Sylvia worked during the late 1920s (Frances Billinge 2018)

Sylvia continued to exhibit her work. The catalogue of the International Exhibition of Ceramic Art, which toured America in 1928/9, described the pieces presented.[29] This exhibition by the American Federation of Arts toured America and was supported by the Victoria and Albert Museum, as well as by many famous patrons. Sylvia's exhibits included bowls, pots and tiles that she had designed and made and which were lent by Dorothy Elmhirst. Sylvia was named by the press.[30] Her work is still considered to have been of international importance and has been reported on in recent historical reviews of ceramic art.[31]

---

[27] Young, *op. cit.*, p. 220.
[28] Ibid., p. 197.
[29] 'Catalogue of International Exhibition of Ceramic Art, The American Federation of Arts, 1928, 1929'. *The Met: Watson Library Digital Collections* <https://libmma.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16028coll4/id/45613> [accessed 24 April 2024].
[30] Niema, *op. cit.*, refers to 'News of the Day', 9 October 1928, T/PP/EST/1-8.
[31] Ibid., p.149; David Jeremiah, *Beautiful Things: Dartington and the Art of the Potter and Weaver*' in Tanya Harrod (ed.) *Obscure Objects of Desire: Reviewing the Crafts in the Twentieth Century* (Crafts Council, 1997), pp. 163–76.

Bonham-Carter described how Sylvia worked intensely to encourage the arts on the estate:

> The Sunday Evening Meetings, however, were only incidental to the regular artistic life of the Estate, which first found expression in activities led by resident or visiting teachers: in music with Nevison Robson, in drama with Erica Inman, in the fine and applied arts with Jane Fox-Strangways, and in dance movements with Leslie Burrowes.[32]

Both Bonham-Carter and Young made some references to Sylvia's work but recent studies have given more emphasis to the important contribution she made at the start of the project. Harrison in 2002 and Niema in 2018 described the intensity of Sylvia's commitment and her close links with Dorothy Elmhirst.[33] Dorothy shared her intense inner world with a small group of like-minded friends, which included Sylvia. Through meetings and correspondence, 'they drew art and religion together in an attempt to access the spiritual unities'; this was a method of self-analysis – looking at one's inner experience which was a vogue in the interwar years.[34] Sylvia championed Leonard's hope that art could strengthen community.

Sylvia's Friendship with Dorothy

Throughout 1928, Sylvia maintained an intense correspondence with Dorothy. In January, she wrote, 'My Lovely Dear… your letter which came most wonderfully just when I was in "doleful dumps"… enabled me to "fight upon my stumps"… I long to be with you'.

In May, Leonard wrote to Sylvia hoping that the treatment [psychotherapy] was working, but Sylvia replied from West Kensington saying she was 'in doleful dumps' and missing Dartington.[35]

In early 1929, Sylvia travelled to Egypt and the Holy Land, financed by the Elmhirsts. She did not like her fellow travellers and they did not accept her. 'Still, I hope the Consul will think me respectable – The "nice" English people evidently don't!' She complained of feeling tired and unwell and at times she sought refuge, once in a missionary's home of rest and later at the Edinburgh Medical Missionary Society Hospital in Nazareth. From Jerusalem she said that, 'It is very peaceful here, and the lady who keeps the hostel is a great friend of one of my aunts.'[36]

Sylvia was in Cairo in April 1929 and wrote to 'My Lovely Dear' saying 'I waited to see if Erica had let me know the date of the new term… I do hope the last Exhibition of Design and Workmanship was a success and that Beatrice and Michael are working happily at design and pottery'. Then from onboard the ship home she wrote to, 'My dearest Dorothy and Leonard', saying that she had heard that the new term would be starting on the 25th. Sylvia was due to recommence her teaching at Dartington that April.[37]

---

[32] Victor Bonham-Carter, *Dartington Hall: The History of an Experiment* (Phoenix House Ltd, 1958), p. 125.
[33] Harrison, *op. cit.*, pp. 87–90; Niema, *op. cit.*, pp. 155–68.
[34] Niema, *op. cit.*, 2018, p. 168.
[35] Devon Heritage Centre, Dartington Hall Trust Records General Correspondence, T/AAP/3/A1.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.

Sylvia was at her family's home in South Brent later in 1929. Her mother was also friendly with Leonard and she asked him to deliver lectures to the South Brent Branch of the WEA, later writing, 'Thank you, Thank you, good friend'[38].

After 1929, Sylvia suffered ill health which caused her to leave Dartington Hall. Dorothy continued to give her considerable financial help, paid for her poetry to be published, as well as paying for her years of analytical psychotherapy.[39]

Sylvia's Life After Dartington Hall

In 1930, Sylvia was back living with her parents at Belmont in South Brent. Tagore visited Dartington to see the Elmhirst's innovative educational practice, which was based upon his work in India. In April, Sylvia wrote, 'I am just off to join Dorothy and do some business with the poet Tagore.'[40] In November, Leonard asked Sylvia to view some Barbara Hepworth statuettes and Sylvia reported back to him that she was not altogether smitten by her work and referred to having trained at the Royal College with her.[41]

In 1931 and 1932, Sylvia's mental health continued to deteriorate. From 'Belmont', she wrote to Dorothy:

> I have been meaning to write to you for a long time, but my mind was so black and hopeless that I had a sort of mental cramp. Now that I begin to see myself from the outside it gives me an awful shock to find what a detestable person I am; and it seems almost hopeless to try and alter things now. The only respite is when I get right away from all other humans, which I did today, almost for the first time. I discovered a field not far away where there is a lovely tinkling stream that makes the most soothing and indescribably lovely music and I sat by it till I almost hoped I had forgotten how to frown![42]

Sylvia spent time at the Elmhirsts' cottage, The Chalet, in Cornwall in 1933 where she enjoyed the company of their two young children, Ruth and Bill. However, she continued to tell Dorothy that, 'I feel very near complete despair about myself. I am afraid this member of your flock of swans is turning out quite a large goose'.[43]

Her correspondence reveals that Sylvia had started to paint again by 1934. Thus pleased her therapist who cautioned, however, that:

> It is a problem to find any branch of art in which she could make a living. I think the chances of her taking up criticism has been marred by her uncle's [Arthur] attitude. She cannot contend with the type of opposition which he presents.[44]

Sylvia continued to correspond with both Leonard and Dorothy. She told Leonard of her visit to see Elizabeth Peacocke, who created the tapestries for the Great Hall at Dartington. To

[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.; Harrison, *op. cit.*, p. 88.
[40] Devon Heritage Centre, Dartington Hall Trust Records General Correspondence T/AAP/3/A1, 12 April 1930.
[41] Ibid., 5 and 11 November, 1930.
[42] Ibid.; Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 139.
[43] Devon Heritage Centre, Dartington Hall Trust Records General Correspondence T/AAP/3/A1, 1933.
[44] Ibid., 1934.

Dorothy she wrote about a forthcoming psychological-educational conference and urged her to send delegates from Dartington. This was the time of 'free schools' and Sylvia wrote that she had been reading Freud again and felt that he was 'the main hope of education and therefore of the human race'.[45]

Dorothy and Sylvia developed a lifelong friendship which is recorded in their correspondence.[46] Together with her practical work she also advised the Elmhirsts on which art shows to attend and on acquisitions for their collection.[47] It was the latter role that she continued from 1929.

At the end of the 1930s, Sylvia was with her mother and sister at South Brent and still writing to, 'My very Darling Dorothy'. On the 1939 register, Sylvia was described as an 'artist teacher temporarily incapacitated'. Sylvia's first cousin remembered the family, describing that she was then a nudist.[48] She retained her contact with Dartington Hall and she attended when Kurt Jooss' ballet troupe was there with thirty-six students.[49] Her Uncle Arthur and Aunt Mary were still at The Hut, Bovey Tracey and her Gould cousins in Lustleigh. A few years later, Arthur wrote to Dorothy, hoping to meet her and saying that, 'I hoped to see you and perhaps hear something about that wild niece of mine.'[50]

Thanks to financial support from Dorothy, Sylvia was able to published a book of her poems in 1950.[51] Dorothy paid for her cataract operation in 1957 and in 1961 Dorothy was trying to place her manuscript, *Meanderings of a Muddled Victim.*[52]

By the time Sylvia was sixty-six she was living with her younger sister Elinor near Dartington Hall at 2, Clay Lane, Puddavine, Totnes. [53] This was a modest bungalow (see Figure 8). The sisters were noted locally as eccentric.[54]

[45] Ibid., 1935.
[46] Ibid; Harrison, *op. cit.* p.87.
[47] Ibid., p. 88.
[48] Personal communication.
[49] Young, *op. cit.*, p. 227; Brown, *op. cit.,* describing Sylvia's continuing friendship with Dorothy Elmhirst, pp. 187–88.
[50] Devon Heritage Centre, Dartington Hall Trust Records General Correspondence T/AV/4/C, 1944.
[51] Sylvia Fox-Strangways, *Poems* (The Saint Catherine Press Ltd, 1950).
[52] Devon Heritage Centre, Dorothy Elmhirst General Correspondence DWE/G/4/E.
[53] Electoral roll.
[54] Information from current owners who purchased the house after the sisters died.

Figure 8: Clay Lane, Dartington, where Sylvia and Elinor lived from the 1950s (Malcolm Billinge, October 2018)

Sylvia had always had family living locally. As well as her parents and younger sister, she had several relatives living in South Devon during her later years. In 1943, her aunt Mary Gould née Fox-Strangways died in Lustleigh and Sylvia attended her funeral. Mary's sons Arthur and John, who had both worked in the teak forestry business in Siam before the Second World War, returned for a short while to Lustleigh and ran the Boveycombe fruit and flower farm.

Sylvia's brother, Walter Angelo Fox-Strangways, early in his Consular Service career married Laure Mazaraki, whose father was the treasurer of the Suez Canal Company. In 1964, Walter inherited the title 8th Lord Ilchester and Stavordale, Baron of Woodford Strangways of Dorset, Baron of Redlynch, Co. Somerset and Dorset. He and Laure lived in Torquay, but in somewhat humble circumstances. Walter explained that he was not at all wealthy, 'I think it is extremely unlikely I shall see any part of the wealth, which is considerable' – the family wealth passing through the female line.[55] In his retirement, Walter became a language teacher, speaking ten foreign languages. He and Laure both died in Torquay in 1970.

In 1970, Sylvia and Walter Angelo had a second-cousin, Pamela Fox-Strangways, living in Torquay. Pamela was a descendant of the Silverton branch of the Fox-Strangways family and she was born in Bloemfontein, South Africa, in 1907.

[55] *Birmingham Daily Post*, 24 August 1964, p. 16.

In 1974, when Sylvia was eighty-four, she was a resident at St Peter's Convent, Plympton, and in February was described as lingering and near death:

> Now her sister Elinor has collapsed and is in Totnes hospital, we can't quite get at the truth just what is wrong with Elinor, maybe she simply didn't look after herself properly… 'Jane' [Sylvia] is concerned about her and misses her a great deal … and not only for the goodies she used to bring, and tries her best to make up for her horrid behaviour in the past… Altogether Jane is quite a pitiful spectacle of senility and remorse, and looks to me to reassure her about God's good sense and merciful ways.[56]

Sylvia died there in 1975 and her estate was valued at £22,000 (which would be £168,000 today). At this time, her Gould cousins were in Lustleigh and her niece Lady Jeanne Doreen Fox-Strangways, daughter of the 8th Earl of Ilchester, had moved from Torquay to Bovey Tracey. Lady Jeanne lived in a flat in Fore Street. Like her aunt, Doreen was of an artistic nature and was an active member of the Bovey Players. Perhaps Lady Doreen's financial situation was not a surprise as her father Walter Angelo said when he inherited the earldom that he had no money to support it.

Conclusion

Sylvia was well-educated, well-connected and well-travelled free-thinking woman. She is remembered for her contribution to the visual arts at the start of the Dartington Hall project. Her family were from the aristocracy where the men furthered their careers across the British Empire, living, marrying and rearing children in India, Africa, the Middle East, Morocco and Siam. The women of the Fox-Strangways family in the first half of the twentieth century did not have the same career opportunities as their brothers but Sylvia's creativity benefited from her family's foreign links, particularly in India.

Sylvia's mother was a supporter of female emancipation and Sylvia was given the freedom to study and practice art in a setting that aimed to expand educational opportunities in a novel way. Despite her frailty, Sylvia clearly was an independent person whose contribution to art and the social innovation of the Dartington Hall project deserves to be acknowledged.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Sylvia's cousins for sharing their insights into her life. Also to the current residents of the houses where Sylvia lived for their photographs and insights.

[56] Devon Heritage Centre, Dorothy Elmhirst General Correspondence DWE/G/4/E, February 1974.