

Women's Suffragettes Community Project

Character study: **Emily Davison**

Davison was a militant suffragette who died after throwing herself in front of the king's horse at the Epsom Derby.



Emily Wilding Davison was born in Blackheath in southeast London on 11 October 1872. She studied at Royal Holloway College and at Oxford University, although women were not allowed to take degrees at that time.

In 1906, she joined the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), founded by Emmeline Pankhurst. Three years later she gave up her job as a teacher and went to work full-time for the suffragette movement. She was frequently arrested for acts ranging from causing a public disturbance to burning post boxes and spent a number of short periods in jail.

In 1909, she was sentenced to a month's hard labour in Strangeways Prison in Manchester after throwing rocks at the carriage of chancellor David Lloyd George. She attempted to starve herself, and resisted force-feeding. A prison guard, angered by Davison's blockading herself in her cell, forced a hose into the room and nearly filled it with water. Eventually, however, the door was broken down, and she was freed. She subsequently sued the wardens of Strangeways and was awarded 40 shillings.

By 1911, Davison was becoming increasingly militant. On 4 June 1913, she ran out in front of the king's horse as it was taking part in the Epsom Derby. Her purpose was unclear, but she was trampled on and died on 8 June from her injuries.

