



The Women's Suffragette Community Heritage Project

Introduction:

In 2022 we created a new community theatre and history project aimed at using performance techniques to bring to life the inspirational story of the Women's Suffragette Movement. The six-month project was supported by the **National Lottery Heritage Fund** and the **LSE Library**. Throughout our project we created a group of local people interested in developing their historical enquiry skills and learning about the past whilst using performance techniques to help explore the key themes and events which took place. We worked with the LSE staff using their resources to research about what life was like for those people who were part of the Women's Suffragette movement – the sacrifices made, how they were treated and the effects which it had upon their family life. We explored the strategies which they used including the direct action took, the protests held, the key figures, the treatment from the Government and Police, Prison life and the Hunger strikes. We used the National Archives to find diary entries, letters and newspaper reports and legal records to build an understanding of the story of the movement.

We then applied what we had learnt to devise a theatrical piece to share what we had learned with others in our local community. The performance brought to life the inspirational story of the strength which they showed and the impact which their battle has had upon our lives today. The performances were held in April 2023.

We hope that by putting this following free educational resource pack together it will help others to learn more about the Women's Suffragette Movement.

*All materials are also available to download for free from our website at:

www.alfiejamesproductions.com

The Women's Suffragettes

A Brief outline of the movement



What was the cause of the Women's Suffragette movement

Today, all British citizens over the age of 18 share a fundamental human right: the right to vote and to have a voice in the democratic process. But this right is only the result of a hard-fought out battle. The suffrage campaigners of the 19th and early 20th century, including the Chartists, suffragists, and suffragettes, struggled against opposition from both parliament and the general public to eventually gain the vote for the entire British population in 1928. They believed that all men and women should be equal and if women were expected to abide by the country's laws, then they should be allowed to have a say in what these laws were. They wanted to create a country where everyone was equal and valued and had an equal opportunity in life.

Before the first of a series of suffrage reforms in 1832, only 3% of the adult male population were qualified to vote. For the most part, the right to vote depended on how much you earned and the value of your property. For this reason, the majority of people who were able to vote were both wealthy and male. Throughout the 1800s, campaigners fought to extend the franchise and some concessions were made in 1867 and 1884. However, under these reforms women were still denied the vote and an increasing number of groups began campaigning for just that.

Campaigners for women's suffrage initially wanted the vote for women on the same terms as it was granted to men. This is because many of the original campaigners for women's suffrage were female middle-class homeowners. Their priority was that the franchise should be extended to women of their own status rather than to all women. This version of reform did not include either working-class men or women but, eventually, universal suffrage – votes for all – became the goal of the campaign.

Who took part in the campaign for women's suffrage?

Groups and societies dedicated to the cause of women's suffrage had formed in the late 1860s. The first women's suffrage bill, however, came before parliament in 1832. In 1867 John Stuart Mill led the first parliament debate on women's suffrage, arguing for an amendment to the Second Reform Bill, which would have extended the vote to women property holders. Mill's proposed amendment was

defeated – but acted as a catalyst for campaigners around Britain. In 1897, various local and national suffrage organisations came together under the banner of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) specifically to campaign for the vote for women on the same terms 'it is or may be granted to men'. The NUWSS was constitutional in its approach, preferring to hold public meetings and lobby parliament with petitions.

In contrast, the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), formed in 1903, took a more militant view. From the start it characterised its campaign with disruptive actions, known as 'direct action', and civil disobedience. Soon some suffragettes turned to violent direct action, such as attacks on property. They also used campaigning methods such as public meetings and marches.

Together, these two organisations dominated the campaign for women's suffrage and were run by key figures such as the Pankhurst's and Millicent Fawcett. However, there were other organisations prominent in the campaign, including the Women's Freedom League (WFL), who split from the WSPU in 1907. These groups were often splinter groups of the two main organisations.

Why were they campaigning?

The inability to vote meant that Victorian women had very few rights and their disenfranchised status became a symbol of civil inequality. The denial of equal voting rights for women was supported by Queen Victoria who, in 1870, wrote, 'Let women be what God intended, a helpmate for man, but with totally different duties and vocations'. Campaigners wanted the vote to be granted to women as they felt that too often the law was biased against women and reinforced the idea of women as subordinate to men. For example, until 1882, a woman's property often reverted to her husband on their marriage.

Steps towards equal rights came with the Married Woman's Property Acts of 1870, 1882 and 1884 (amended again in 1925). These enabled women to keep their property and money after marriage, where previously it was the automatic property of their husbands. Even after the Married Women's Property Act of 1882, however, the situation was not much improved – women now had to pay taxes on the businesses the new law permitted them to own but did not have any say in how those taxes were spent. Campaigners felt that the best way to achieve equal status with men, in society and in the home, would be to get the vote and participate in the parliamentary process.

How did they campaign?

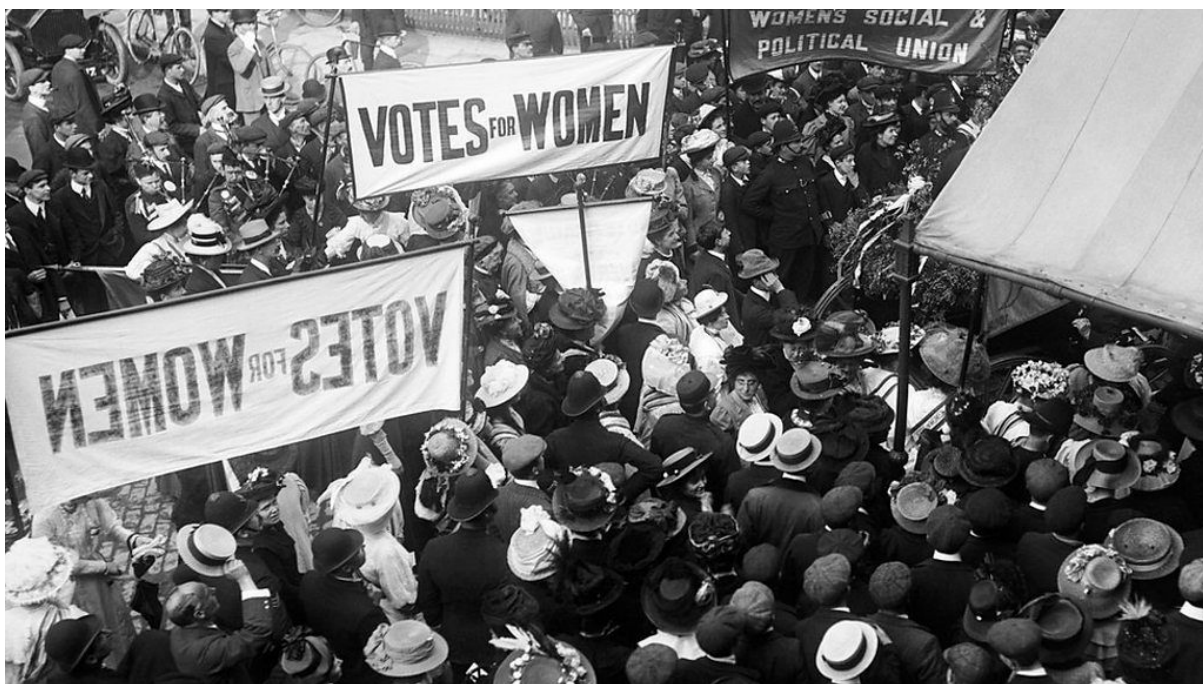
The campaign for women's suffrage took several forms and involved numerous groups and individuals. The constitutional National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) campaigned peacefully and used recognised 'political' methods such as lobbying parliament and collecting signatures for petitions. The group also held public meetings and published various pamphlets, leaflets, newspapers, and journals outlining the reasons and justifications for granting women the vote. Members of the NUWSS and other such organisations were known as 'suffragists'.

To gain publicity and raise awareness, the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) engaged in disruptive tactics as well as a series of more violent actions. They chained themselves to railings, set fire to public and private property and disrupted speeches both at public meetings and in the House of Commons. Alongside this, the WSPU also took part in demonstrations, held public meetings and published newspapers (such as Votes for Women) and other literature. Members of the WSPU and other militant groups such as the Women's Freedom League were known as 'suffragettes'.

A selection of images we have found in our research about the Women's Suffragettes Protest Marches







The March of the Women, song lyrics

Song: **The March of the Women**

Lyrics: Dame Ethel Smyth

Shout, shout, up with your song!
Cry with the wind for the dawn is breaking;
March, march, swing you along,
Wide blows our banner and hope is waking.
Song with its story, dreams with their glory,
Lo! they call, and glad is their word!
Loud and louder it swells,
Thunder of freedom, the voice of the Lord!

Long, long, we in the past,
Cowered in dread from the light of heaven.
Strong, strong, stand we at last,
Fearless in faith and with sight new-given.
Strength with its beauty, Life with its duty,
(Hear the voice, oh hear and obey!)
These, these, beckon us on,
open your eyes to the blaze of day.

Comrades, ye who have dared,
First in the battle to strive and sorrow,
Scorned, spurned, nought have ye cared.
Raising your eyes to a wider morrow.
Ways that are weary, days that are dreary,
Toil and pain by faith ye have borne;
Hail, hail, victors ye stand,
Wearing the wreath that the brave have worn!

Life, strife, these two are one,
Nought can ye win but by faith and daring:
On, on that ye have done,
But for the work of today preparing.
Firm in reliance, laugh a defiance,
(Laugh in hope, for sure is the end)
March, march, many as one.
Shoulder to Shoulder and friend to friend.

Peggy's Speech

Devised for The Women's Suffragette play

Since I was 7. Don't need much schooling to launder shirts. Me' mother - she got me the job. She worked there too. She used to strap me on her back whilst she worked. That or under the copper vats if I would sleep. All the mothers did it back then. The factory would have you back as soon as you could after dropping the babe. Sorry. She was a hard worker and a tough woman. Taught me everything, my mother did. She ain't no longer with us though God rest her soul. Vat tipped and scolded her, you see. She couldn't work no more, and she got sick. My father wasn't around. In fact, I never knew him. But me ma' well, she still wouldn't have no wrong word said about him. Love is love. They said that I was good at my job. Got the hands for it. I was made head washer at 17 and forewoman at 20. Been doing it since. Although, I don't know how much longer though. Laundry life is a short life for a woman, you see. You get you aches, chest cough, crushed fingers, leg ulcers, burns, headaches from the gas. We had one girl last year poisoned. Ruined her lungs all for 13 shillings a week. For the men, it's 19. But we work a third more hours than they do. They're outside most days on deliveries so at least they're outside in the fresh air. Hardly seems fair, does it? That's what I keep asking me'self. Over and over again. Why don't we get the same pay at least? But they just laugh at us when we ask. 'You're lucky to be at work.' And 'you should be at home.' That's what we get. But you see – that factory. It wouldn't work without us. Things wouldn't 'appen. We're not asking for much. We just want it to be fair. I don't want my children growing up in an unfair world. You see, that's my boy there. He loves books and reading, like. He dreams of going to school and being somebody. He's proper bright too. Gawd know's where he gets that from. And I've got a daughter. She's still a little babe, but I don't want her to have the same life as my mother or me. I want better for her. I know you think that might be daft. But this is Britain after all. I want everyone to have a say. That's why I want the vote. That's why it's important. Cos things ain't really working as they are. I believe there's a better way of living our lives. This vote might – just might be the start of making things better. It's about bringing people together as one. Singing the same tune and respecting each other, like. It's about making things better for everyone. Surely that would be a better life, wouldn't it?

(She looks around at the faces)

I'm sorry. I ain't very good my words.

Who were the Suffragette's?



By the start of the 20th century there were two main elements in the campaign for votes for women, the **suffragists** and the **suffragettes**. The dividing line between these two strands was about tactics.

On the one hand, the suffragists wanted to act within the law and follow the route of political persuasion to win support for their cause. It was felt that any actions that broke the law would allow their opponents to portray them as irresponsible and provide further excuses to deny women the vote.

On the other hand, there were those who were frustrated by the lack of progress and non-confrontational approach of the suffragists. Some felt that it was time to pursue a course of civil disobedience and **direct action**, even if that meant breaking the law. They felt that if they caused enough problems for the authorities, then the government would be forced to address the issue.



The Suffragists

The suffragists were led by **Millicent Fawcett**, head of the **National Union for Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS)**. It was founded in 1897 but merged with other organisations that dated back to the 1860s. Its aim was to win women's suffrage through considered debate and campaigning, such as petitions and non-violent marches.

The Suffragettes and the Pankhurst family

In 1903, the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) was formed when **Emmeline Pankhurst** and her daughters became disappointed with the lack of progress by the NUWSS. It decided upon an approach that was more direct and confrontational, which we refer to as militancy. These campaigners were labelled '**suffragettes**' by the press. It was meant as an insult, but the name stuck and was used by the members of the WSPU themselves.

The Pankhurst family, originally from Manchester, led this new struggle of militant suffragettes. Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughter **Christabel Pankhurst** were at the forefront of the WSPU'S campaigns and were arrested many times.

The militant tactics employed by the suffragettes shocked society. A large number of the suffragettes were middle-class women from respectable and well-connected families. In the very traditional atmosphere of the early twentieth century such behaviour was considered scandalous. However, there was also a lot of support, as seen by the 1908 demonstration in London that was attended by over 300,000 activists, the largest in British history.



Under the leadership of Emmeline Pankhurst, the WSPU decided to use direct action to force the government to award the vote to women.

Women's Suffragettes Community Project

Character study: **Annie Kenney**

"The changed life into which most of us entered was a revolution in itself. No home life, no one to say what we should do or what we should not do, no family ties, we were free and alone in a great brilliant city."



Annie Kenney helped run the East End London branch of the Women's Political and Social Union. This is the fourth and final blog post in the Remember the Suffragettes blog series, looking at the lives of four suffrage campaigners from our Women's Library.

Annie Kenney was born in Lancashire to parents who worked in the textile industry. Annie started work at a cotton mill at the age of 10, losing one of her fingers in an accident with machinery.

Annie became involved with the Suffragette movement after she heard Christabel Pankhurst speak at an Independent Labour Party meeting in 1905. As one of the few working-class members of the WSPU, Annie was asked to leave her mill work and help run the organisation's East End branch in London.

Her first militant action happened in 1905 when, on being expelled from a Liberal rally for constantly shouting "Will the Liberal Government give votes to women?", she and Christabel kicked and spat the police officers.

In 1912, she defended herself in court with the speech "The Right to Rebel" where she shone light on the injustice of the Suffragette sentences for property damage by pointing out the leniency of sentences levied against men guilty of sexual violence.

In total Annie Kenney was sent to prison 13 times for her Suffragette activism. She retired from politics after the vote was won in 1918 but recorded her experience in her autobiography *Memories of a Militant*.



Women's Suffragettes Community Project

Character study: **Sylvia Pankhurst**



Sylvia Pankhurst was the daughter of Suffragette co-founder Emmeline Pankhurst. Sylvia, alone with her sister, Christabel, became a driving member of the movement but left it to create a party that enveloped her own socialist views alongside her views on women's rights.

Sylvia was born in Manchester on May 5th, 1882. Her father was a radical socialist and his teachings stayed with Sylvia for life. She went to Manchester High School for Girls and in 1900 won a place at the Royal College of Art in South Kensington. She developed a friendship with Keir Hardie, the founder of the Independent Labour Party.

In 1906, Sylvia became a full-time worker for the WSPU – Women's Social and Political Union – that had been founded by her mother and sister in 1903. The WSPU had one simple goal – to have equal voting rights with men. However, during this time she maintained an interest with the Labour movement. In 1906, Sylvia went to prison for the first time.

She started to argue with her mother and Christabel over the direction the WSPU was taking pre-1914. She was very much against the WSPU touting itself towards the middle class at the expense of the working class.

In 1913, she left the WSPU and, helped by Keir Hardie, set up her own organisation. This was first called the East London Federation of Suffragettes but later changed to Women's Suffrage Federation and then to the Workers' Socialist Federation. The names alone gave a clear hint as to the political leanings of the organisation, whichever name it had at any given time.

During World War One, Emmeline Pankhurst urged her followers in the WSPU to do 'their bit' for the country in its time of need and to show their patriotism. Sylvia, on the other hand, urged her followers not to support the war effort. Some members of the WSF took to hiding conscientious objectors so that they escaped detection by the police.

The WSF continued towards the left and eventually adopted the title 'Communist Party (British Section of the Third International)'. This was not the official British Communist Party and eventually the 'Communist Party (British Section of the Third International)'

was absorbed into the official Communist Party of Great Britain. However, Sylvia's association with this party did not last long. When the Communist Party of Great Britain told Sylvia to hand over her newspaper ('Workers' Dreadnought') to them, she refused and was expelled from the party. She created the Communist Workers' Party as a rival to the Communist Party of Great Britain. This folded in 1924.

Sylvia toured Europe speaking at left wing meetings and even visited Lenin's Russia. Sylvia openly spoke out on why she disagreed with some of the policy statements Lenin had made – especially on censorship.

In 1927, Sylvia gave birth to a boy. She refused to marry the father and her mother, Emmeline, was so angered by this that she had no further contact with her daughter.

In the mid-1930's Sylvia took up the cause of Ethiopia. She became a fervent supporter of Haile Selassie and in 1936 set up the 'New Times and Ethiopian News' to keep the British public alert as to what was happening in Ethiopia after the invasion by Mussolini's Italy. Sylvia's work for Ethiopia attracted the attention of MI5 and they continued monitoring her work after World War Two when she pushed for a re-union between Italian Somaliland and Ethiopia. One MI5 brief referred to Sylvia as "tiresome" as they tried to find ways to quieten her down. She became an advisor to Haile Selassie and in 1956 moved to Addis Ababa. Here she founded the 'Ethiopian Journal' that reported on life in Ethiopia.

Sylvia died in Ethiopia on September 27th, 1960, and was given a state funeral and is buried in the Holy Trinity Cathedral. At her funeral Haile Selassie named her an 'honorary Ethiopian'.



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.



Women's Suffragettes Community Project

Character study: **Mary Pollock Grant**



May was the eldest daughter of the Rev Dr C M Grant, (who made his congregation 'a centre of religious and social influence') and was educated at Dundee High School. In 1905 she went to India for six years under the auspices of the Church of Scotland on educational work. Returning to Dundee, she was militant in the suffragette cause and was imprisoned in Perth in 1913. As a member of the Women's Social and Political Union she disrupted meetings and wrote to the press; she's quoted as having said she was 'proud to be a gaolbird' (a remarkable statement for a minister's daughter) in the cause of women's suffrage. Disguised in widow's weeds and glasses, she managed to get into a meeting held by Ramsay MacDonald in the Gilfillan Memorial Hall but was roughly dragged out by eight burly men – an onlooker describes this as "one of the strongest arguments for women's suffrage that I have ever seen."

From 1914 until 1916 when her father died, she worked as a VAD nurse in Caird Hospital, Dundee. After that she was involved in war work in Gretna, Waltham Abbey, and the Halifax area, then joined the women's police service. She was a loyal follower of Lloyd George and a frequent speaker at political meetings, twice chosen as a Liberal candidate though never elected. In the 1930s she took up Christian Science and worked as a practitioner and healer until four years before her death. In World War 2 she did Civil Defence work in London.

Women's Suffragettes Community Project

Character study: **Christabel Pankhurst**



Christabel Pankhurst, along with her mother Emmeline Pankhurst, was one of the driving forces of the Suffragette movement. Christabel had a sister, Sylvia. However, Sylvia left the movement when Emmeline expressed the view that a patriotic Suffragette should help the war effort. Sylvia was a committed pacifist and did not agree. Christabel, however, fully supported her mother's point of view and remained one of the most vociferous members of the Suffragette movement.

Christabel was born on September 22nd, 1880. Her father was a radical socialist and he was very influential in her upbringing and helped to shape her early views. Her mother also played a prominent role. Christabel attended Manchester High School for Girls.

In 1901 Christabel met Eva Gore-Booth who was a member of the NUWSS – National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies. Gore-Booth was in Manchester trying to persuade working class women there to join the NUWSS and Christabel was taken by her arguments. Sylvia and Emmeline Pankhurst were also taken in by the arguments for women's suffrage. However, the NUWSS did not believe in direct action as they placed their faith in the powers of verbal reasoning. All three Pankhurst's soon believed that the NUWSS was not going to achieve anything, as it was too passive.

In 1903 Christabel along with her mother co-founded the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), which became better known as the Suffragettes. In 1905 she was arrested for disrupting a meeting of the Liberal Party. Along with Annie Kenney, she shouted out 'Votes for Women' when speakers were on stage addressing the audience. Christabel was fined for disturbing the peace, but she refused to pay and was put in prison. The media paid a great deal of attention to this whole episode and served to highlight the Suffragette cause. As a result, many more women decided to join.

In 1906, Christabel was awarded a Law degree from Manchester University. After this she moved to London where she became the organising secretary of the WSPU. Despite support from the fledgling Independent Labour Party and some MP's, the real power base in Parliament refused to accept the notion of female suffrage. As a result, the Suffragettes became more extreme in their approach. They argued that they were pushed into becoming more militant as a result of Parliament's obstruction. Christabel was jailed in 1907 and 1909 and was dubbed the 'Queen of the Mob' by the media.

In 1910, the WSPU decided that the only way they were going to achieve their aims was to become more disruptive. Demonstrations with placards was replaced with stone throwing, breaking of shop windows, attacking politicians who were known to be against women's suffrage. The 'Queen of the Mob' became a target for the police and to an extent Christabel invited their attention.

From 1912 to 1913, Christabel lived in France to escape imprisonment. In 1913, as a result of the declining diplomatic position in Europe, Christabel returned to England. She was arrested on her return. She had been sentenced to three years in jail but only served 30 days. Unlike her sister Sylvia,

Christabel announced her support of the government in its declaration of war against Germany. On September 8th, 1914, she spoke at the London Opera House and gave a speech entitled 'The German Peril'. Christabel was a supporter of conscription and the 'industrial conscription' of women. She also believed that internment should have been used against those who were foreign nationals but who could not be trusted. The WSPU newspaper was renamed 'Britannia' in 1915. Its slogan was "For King, For Country, For Freedom". Christabel's followers gave out white feathers to any young man they saw in public who was in civilian dress. Christabel made frequent attacks in 'Britannia' against politicians she saw as being soft on war – Sir Edward Grey and Lord Robert Cecil being amongst them who were both openly referred to as "traitors". In fact, 'Britannia' became so vitriolic that it attracted the attention of the police who more than once raided its premises. By an ironic twist, Christabel gave her support to the one man who in earlier days she had blamed for the stalling on women's suffrage – David Lloyd George.

In 1917, Christabel went to Russia in an attempt to stop the country from withdrawing from World War One.

In 1918, the Representation of the People's Act introduced women's suffrage for those over 30 years of age. To an extent this satiated many in the WSPU. In the 1918 election Christabel stood as a Women's Party candidate in Smethwick. She narrowly lost to the Labour Party candidate.

In 1921, Christabel left the UK and moved to America. She became an evangelist and joined the Second Adventist movement. Christabel returned to England in the early 1930's and in 1936 she was appointed a Dame Commander of the British Empire. In 1939 she returned to America.

Christabel Pankhurst died on February 13th, 1958, in California aged 77.



Women's Suffragettes Community Project

Character study: Emmeline Pankhurst

Pankhurst was a leading British women's rights activist, who led the movement to win the right for women to vote.



Emmeline Goulden was born on 14 July 1858 in Manchester into a family with a tradition of radical politics. In 1879, she married Richard Pankhurst, a lawyer and supporter of the women's suffrage movement. He was the author of the Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882, which allowed women to keep earnings or property acquired before and after marriage. His death in 1898 was a great shock to Emmeline.

In 1889, Emmeline founded the Women's Franchise League, which fought to allow married women to vote in local elections. In October 1903, she helped found the more militant Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) - an organisation that gained much notoriety for its activities and whose members were the first to be christened 'suffragettes'. Emmeline's daughters Christabel and Sylvia were both active in the cause. British politicians, press and public were astonished by the demonstrations, window smashing, arson and hunger strikes of the suffragettes. In 1913, WSPU member Emily Davison was killed when she threw herself under the king's horse at the Derby as a protest at the government's continued failure to grant women the right to vote.

Like many suffragettes, Emmeline was arrested on numerous occasions over the next few years and went on hunger strike herself, resulting in violent force-feeding. In 1913, in response to the wave of hunger strikes, the government passed what became known as the 'Cat and Mouse' Act. Hunger striking prisoners were released until they grew strong again, and then re-arrested.

This period of militancy was ended abruptly on the outbreak of war in 1914, when Emmeline turned her energies to supporting the war effort. In 1918, the Representation of the People Act gave voting rights to women over 30. Emmeline died on 14 June 1928, shortly after women were granted equal voting rights with men (at 21).



Women's Suffragettes Community Project

Character study: **Millicent Fawcett**



Millicent Fawcett (née Garrett) was born in Aldeburgh, Suffolk in 1847. Unusually for the time, her father, a wealthy businessman, encouraged her to read widely and take an interest in politics—a sphere normally reserved for men. She wasn't the only pioneering woman in the family: she was the eighth out of her parent's ten children and her elder sister Elizabeth would later become Britain's first female doctor.

When she was a child, Millicent was introduced to the campaigner for women's suffrage (right to vote), Emily Davis, by her sister Elizabeth and after attending a lecture given by the philosopher and feminist John Stuart Mill, she met and fell in love with Henry Fawcett, a Member of Parliament and a prominent economist. Tragically, Henry had been blinded in a shooting accident at the age of twenty-five, but he didn't let this get in his way and he and Millicent married in 1867. Their marriage was a happy one

and as well as caring for her husband, Millicent pursued her own writing career, writing three books including *Political Economy for Beginners* which made her ideas and those of her husband accessible to the general public, especially women. She had only one child, Philippa, born in 1868, whose education she strongly supported, particularly in maths and Philippa would later benefit from this when she became the first woman to obtain the highest mark in the University of Cambridge's Mathematical Tripos exam and a successful mathematician in her own right. This belief in women's education would inspire Millicent to leave behind one of her most enduring legacies, Newnham Hall, Cambridge, a women's college which she co-founded in 1875.

Millicent began her political career at the age of twenty-two when she attended the first ever women's suffrage meeting. She quickly established herself as an influential member of the movement and in 1897, she became the leader of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), Britain's largest suffragist organisation. Millicent was bitterly opposed to their rival organisation, the Women's Social and Political Union (WPSU) also known as the suffragettes. The NUWSS' slogan 'Law-Abiding suffragists' summed up her moderate approach to obtaining the right to vote through peaceful and legal means in stark contrast to the militancy and direct action of the WPSU. Although Emmeline Pankhurst (the leader of the WPSU) and the suffragettes gained more publicity, it was the NUWSS that had more popular support; by 1905 it had fifty thousand members compared to only two thousand in the WPSU at its height in 1913.

As well as campaigning for women's right to vote, Millicent championed raising the age of consent, ending cruelty to children within the family and repealing the Contagious Diseases Acts which reflected the sexual double standards that governed attitudes towards prostitution at the time. Despite all of her tireless efforts, however, it was only after the First World War ended in 1918, that Women's Suffrage truly became a reality. During the war, the WPSU had ceased all activities to focus on the war effort as its leaders were vehemently in favour of the conflict, yet Millicent's NUWSS had continued to campaign

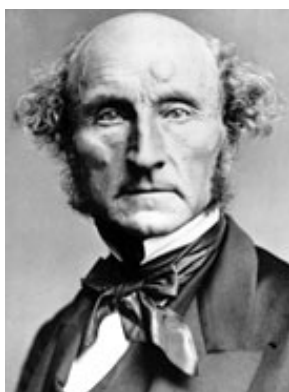
for votes for women as many of its members were pacifists and against the war. Through a combination of Millicent's refusal to bow down to government pressure and the massive contribution women made to final victory, the battle was finally won for women's right to vote.

Millicent remained leader of the NUWSS until 1919, after holding the position for an incredible twenty-two years. In her final years, she published many more books and essays including her history of the Suffrage movement, *What I Remember*; she died in 1929, only a year after the final parliamentary act that allowed all women over the age of twenty-one to vote, putting them on equal terms with men for the first time. She was a true heroine and a pioneer of the rights we take for granted today.

Women's Suffragettes Community Project

Character study: **John Stuart Mill**

Mill was a philosopher, political economist and social reformer who had a huge impact on 19th century thought.



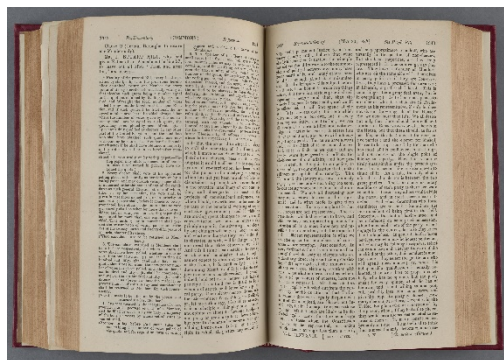
John Stuart Mill was born in London on 20 May 1806. His father was James Mill, a Scottish philosopher who gave his son an intensive education, beginning with the study of Greek at the age of three. His father was friendly with Jeremy Bentham, whose utilitarian philosophy was a huge influence on Mill.

In 1822, Mill was given a job in the examiner's office of the East India Company, where his father also worked. He was employed by the company for more than 30 years, eventually becoming head of his department, but his job allowed him plenty of time for writing.

At the age of 21, Mill suffered a nervous breakdown. He turned to poetry for consolation, particularly that of William Wordsworth. He also began to shape his own philosophical views. In his writing, Mill championed individual liberty against the authority of the state. He believed that an action was right provided it maximised the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people.

In 1851, Mill married Harriet Taylor. They had been close friends for 20 years but were only able to marry when her first husband died. She was a great influence on his work, particularly in the area of women's rights, of which she was an early advocate. She died in 1858 and the following year he published 'On Liberty', his most famous work, which they had written together and which he dedicated to her.

In 1866 John Stuart Mill presented a petition to the House of Commons of over 1500 signatures which had been collected by the Women's Suffrage Committee in favour for women's suffrage. Mill used the Second Reform Bill as an opportunity to introduce equal voting rights. He tabled an amendment asking for the enfranchisement of all households, regardless of sex. The Amendment was defeated by 194 votes to 73. Despite this initial defeat, John Stuart Mill's amendment sparked a continuous political campaign for female enfranchisement. Bills in favour of women and the vote were presented on an almost annual basis to Parliament from 1870 onwards and by 1928 all women were given the legal power to vote.



In 1865 when he was elected as member of parliament for Westminster. He was considered a radical in parliament because of his support for equality for women, compulsory education, birth control and land reform in Ireland. Mill was not re-elected in the general election of 1868, so he returned to France. He divided his time between Avignon and London, studying and writing. He died on 7 May 1873

Emmeline Pankhurst Window Speech

My friends. Despite Her Majesty's government, I am here tonight. I know the sacrifice you have made to be here. Many of you, I know are estranged from the lives you once had. Yet, I feel your spirit tonight. For fifty years we have laboured peacefully to secure the vote for women. We've been ridiculed, battered, and ignored. Now we have realised that deeds and sacrifice must be the order of the day.

We are fighting for a time in which every little girl born in the world will have an equal chance with her brothers.

Never underestimate the power we women have to define our own destinies. We do not want to be lawbreakers. We want to be lawmakers. Be militant, each of you in your own way. Those of you who can break windows, break them. Those of you who can further attack the sacred idol of property, do so!

We have been left with no alternative but to defy this government. If we must go to prison to obtain this vote, let it be the windows of government and not the bodies of women which are broken. I incite this meeting and all the women in Britain to rebellion. I would rather be a rebel than a slave. Never surrender.

Never give up the fight!

What happened on Black Friday?



In the 1908 election campaign, Herbert Henry Asquith of the Liberal Party promised to include women's rights in a new law he intended to pass if elected Prime Minister. The suffragettes supported his campaign as a result, and he won the election. However, during his time as Prime Minister from 1908 to 1916, he went back on his promise and refused to reform voting law.

The WSPU organised a march in response to Asquith's refusal to consider giving women the vote. Policemen and male bystanders met the women with violence. Hundreds were badly hurt, and the police violence resulted in some deaths. This day became later known as Black Friday.

Writing in a newspaper two years later, Emmeline Pankhurst reflected on the events of Black Friday and the impact it had on future campaigns - **'Public conscience must be aroused, and it can only be done by attacks on public property. When women's bodies were battered on Black Friday that was alright but when a few windowpanes are broken, that is all wrong.'**



The Daily Mirror

THE MORNING JOURNAL WITH THE SECOND LARGEST NET SALE

No. 2,205.

Registered at the G. P. O.
as a Newspaper.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1910

One Halfpenny.

VIOLENT SCENES AT WESTMINSTER, WHERE MANY SUFFRAGETTES WERE ARRESTED WHILE TRYING TO FORCE THEIR WAY INTO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.



While forcibly endeavouring yesterday to enter the Houses of Parliament, great numbers of suffragettes used more frantic methods than ever before. Above is illustrated

one of yesterday's incidents. A woman has fallen down while struggling, and she is in a fainting condition. The photograph shows how far women will go for the vote.

Turning to Direct Action & Militant Tactics

“We are not here to be lawbreakers. We are here to become lawmakers!”
(Emmeline Pankhurst)



The use of direct action to achieve progressive change has always been debated throughout history. Many argue against direct action because of the violence it creates and think that persuading others is a better means of achieving one's aims.

However, those who have adopted direct action tactics, such as the WSPU, did so because decades of petitions and appeals to authority had achieved very little progress. "Deeds not words" was the WSPU's slogan and the momentum of the movement made the participants feel that they were finally getting the government's attention, as they were now the focus of the political world. As Emmeline Pankhurst suggested at one of her trials, "We are here, not because we are lawbreakers; we are here in our efforts to become lawmakers." It also appealed to younger women as it seemed more dynamic than the steady approach of the suffragists.

The government may have listened and acknowledged the suffragists' petitions, but it had not made changes to their legal position in society. For some in the women's movement, direct action was seen as the only alternative to bring about change.

Militant tactics

Whether you agree with direct action or not, the suffragette's militant tactics had a great impact on the government and society. Some of the tactics used by the WSPU were:

- smashing windows on private property and governmental buildings
- disrupting the postal service
- burning public buildings
- attacking Church of England buildings
- holding illegal demonstrations
- burning politicians unoccupied homes
- disrupting the 1911 census
- ruining golf courses and male-only clubs
- chaining themselves to buildings
- disrupting political meetings
- planting bombs
- handcuffing themselves to railings
- going on hunger strikes

Many historians still argue whether or not the militant campaigns helped to further the women's suffrage movement or whether it harmed it.

As they disagreed with direct action, the suffragists would not cooperate with the WSPU. Instead, suffragists chose to distance themselves publicly from the strategy of the suffragettes. As one NUWSS pamphlet said, "some people think that women's suffrage means breaking windows and spoiling other people's property. This is a great mistake. Only a small number of women do these violent actions."



Direct Action

We are not here to be lawbreakers,
We are here to become lawmakers!

Direct action is what we did,
We took to the streets in a mighty bid,
To get our message heard loud and clear
"Votes for women" United, we cheer!

We are not here to be lawbreakers,
We are here to become lawmakers!

Smashing windows shattered and crash,
At illegal demos the police we did clash,
Handcuffed ourselves to railings with chains,
The publicity was high and the support we gained

We are not here to be lawbreakers,
We are here to become lawmakers!

Buildings were set alight in the night,
Disrupting postal services with all our might,
Attacking churches and small bombs were planted
"Deeds not words" is what we all chanted.

We are not here to be lawbreakers,
We are here to become lawmakers!

Hunger strikes, we painfully endured,
It tested our strength that is for sure,
Our message will be heard far and wide,
Until every Politician could no longer hide!

We are not here to be lawbreakers,
We are here to become lawmakers!

Direct action is what we did,
We took to the streets in a mighty bid,
To get our message heard loud and clear
"Votes for women" United, we cheer!

Miss May Billingham's recount

A woman called Miss May Billingham recounted her experiences at the hands of both the Police and angry mob that surrounded another protest. I am lame and cannot walk or get about at all without the aid of a hand tricycle, and therefore obliged to go to the deputation riding on the machine. At first, the police threw me out of the machine on to the ground in a brutal manner. Secondly, when on my machine again, they tried to push me along with my arms twisted behind me in a very painful position, with one of my fingers bent right back, which caused great agony. Thirdly, they took me down a side road and left me in the middle of a hooligan crowd, first taking all the valves out of the wheels and pocketing them, so that I could not move, and then left me to the crowd of roughs.

The Daily Mirror report

Chancellor's interrupters beaten, stunned, and kicked by mob! The Daily Mirror reported. Whether you agree or disagree with the militant methods of the suffragettes, it is impossible to justify the brutal attitude on the part of both Police and the crowd around them. One woman's hat was torn away and armed with sticks, she was battered to the head, in the face and other parts of her body. Others tried to protect the woman, but their efforts were useless. One man forced his way through the dense mass to where the woman's fainted body lay to try to help her up. But she was quickly picked up and carried to a Police carriage and taken away. The howling crowd continued to hold their position, but more punches and blows were seen. Several women fell to the floor injured and many arrests were made.

Prison life and Hungry Strikes for the Women's Suffragettes



As the campaign became increasingly militant, over a thousand Suffragettes, including Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters Christabel, Sylvia and Adela, received prison sentences for their actions. Many Suffragettes were sent to Holloway Prison in North London. Emmeline was imprisoned three times.

Prison life was very harsh for the women. They were treated very badly. Their belongings were all taken away from them and their cells were extremely basic. They didn't even have combs for their hair or soap to wash properly nor books to read like most of other political prisoners.

In fact, the imprisoned women were angry that they were being treated as criminals for demanding their rights. They wanted to be recognised as 'political prisoners', something which the authorities refused to consider. When the leading lights of the suffrage campaign arrived at Holloway Prison, they would be put in the prison hospital, to keep them away from the hundreds of other Suffragettes already imprisoned. Behaviour would spread between prisoners, so if one smashed a window to improve the ventilation, the others would as well.

In response, in 1909, imprisoned suffragettes began to refuse food, a strategy known as a 'hunger strike'. Marion Wallace Dunlop of the WSPU became the first imprisoned suffragette to go on hunger strike, refusing all food. Many others would follow.

Hunger Strikes

The government didn't want any imprisoned protestor to starve to death whilst in their prisons. Many of the prisoners were from upper class families and the government was keen to avoid bad publicity. Rather than considering the suffragette's demands and acting on them, the government instead, started to use force feeding methods on the hunger strikers.



Prison officers poured liquid food straight down their throat and into their stomach through a tube which they inserted either down the hunger strikers throat or nose. As you would expect, forced feeding caused many injuries and traumas to the struggling suffragettes - bleeding, broken teeth, vomiting, and choking as food was poured into the lungs. It was a tortuous process. One woman, Marion Roe was forced fed over 200 times.

Cat and Mouse Act 1913

Most of the public saw the forced feeding as an inhumane act and sympathy for the suffrage movement grew as a result. In response to this outcry of support for the strikers, the government released a new law called the Prisoners (Temporary Discharge for Ill-Health) Act to prevent hunger strikers dying whilst in prison. The act stated that strikers would be released until they regained their strength, after which they would be imprisoned again to carry out the rest of their prison sentence.

This created a traumatic cycle for striking suffragettes. They were released to recover from the illness caused by striking injuries, after which they were rearrested and taken back to prison where they restarted their hunger strikes again. As a result, the act soon became known as the Cat and Mouse Act. However, many released suffragettes hid from the police when recovering so that they could not be rearrested.

Did the Suffragettes seek to publicity from their imprisonment?

When the British public first learnt what was going on inside Holloway prison there was a lot of mixed feeling. You had up to 200 suffragettes being admitted on a single day. These were often educated women, some with influential friends. They were clearly documenting what was going on, they hoarded their arrest warrants, smuggled out letters, kept secret diaries. When they were released, they would be greeted with cheering crowds and given a medal, the Holloway brooch. Sometimes they would give interviews to journalists on the day of their release. They didn't just promote the cause of suffrage, but also wanted to make things better for the women imprisoned in Holloway.

Holloway was based on the separate and silent system: you were isolated in your cell, and no-one was supposed to talk to each other. The Suffragettes started defying prison

discipline and making constant complaints and demands. At first the suffragettes looked at penal reform as distracting from their core purpose of getting the vote. Then these campaigning women would go to the prison chapel and see 16-year-old girls and ask, why are they here?

A letter from Eloise Duval to her father

Dear Dad,

You may have heard about the Police court proceedings and that I am remanded until next Thursday. I had my basket taken away from me, and therefore have nothing with me, so will you send me, as soon as possible a hairbrush, comb, soap, toothbrush, and slippers. And I have no money with me, so please send me some money also. Soon after my arrival last night, I heard our band outside playing the marching song and it was most encouraging. I shall listen to it tonight. Could you make some arrangements with the dentist, you know I had to visit them on Monday, and I do not know how long the stopping he had put in can remain. I believe it was only a piece of cotton wool and therefore I should say it ought to be taken out and be replaced as soon as possible. Have you heard how mother is? I am feeling rather conscious of her. Do let me know as soon as possible. I was brought before a perfectly hateful magistrate; I believe his name was Francis and I was kept in a filthy cell until nearly 5 o'clock when I was brought to the prison. Men are kept on one side and women on the other. The language used is awful, and the smell of smoke and dirty clothes and it does not get any better.

Hunger strikes and forced feeding

Upon arrival, the women were stripped and forced to wear prison clothes. Some were given forced haircuts and their belongings were taken away from them. Their cells were very basic, and conditions were harsh. The government were embarrassed and unsure on how to deal with so many women being arrested. One thing which was allowed was women were able to write and receive letters. These letters still serve as a shocking memory of what life was like for the suffragettes.

Suffragette Mary Richardson's account of force feeding

Forcible feeding is to my mind one of the worst forms of torture imaginable. The attack is brutal the method primitive. When I was first forcibly fed, I offered only passive resistance but after a few days the process became so degrading so morally staining to me as well as increasingly painful that I was obliged to resist the struggle. With ten wardresses is severe and in it the arms and legs are twisted, and the hands badly cut by the wardresses' nails. After these ten wardresses had overcome me and thrown me

violently on the bed three of them lay full weight across my legs. My knees are still painful. I cannot go up or down stairs without difficulty. On several occasions wardresses fell on top of me on the floor. Once so severely injuring my ribs that I could not lie in bed on my left side for several days. Twice my head was thrown against the wall of the cell owing to my feet being taken from under me violently. My face was blackened and swollen from this.

The process of driving the tube through the nose is very terrible as the tube is usually too large for the nasal cavity and when there appears any obstruction more and more violent pushing is resorted to on one occasion Doctor Pearson almost tore my nose in his repeated efforts to force the tube through the opening. After 30 times of nasal feeding my face eyes and nose were so swollen and bruised that Dr Pearson brought in a home office specialist and after consultation, he announced that he would feed me by the throat tube. Thereafter I refused to be and set my teeth together whereupon he ran his second finger through my lips cutting them and then finding the extremity of my jaw he deliberately cut my cheek with his fingernail. I cried out at his cruelty, but he continued until in agony my teeth were parted, and a metal spring gag inserted followed by the feeding tube. By this time the blood from my cut cheek and gums were running from the corner of my mouth down the neck into my clothing and I began to choke violently. The pain of this operation was beyond my insurance. I was driven almost mad by it and springing off the bed when they had left off holding me, I ran out of my cell. Dr Pearson said I was in a dangerous state of mind and must be treated accordingly with the result that they refused to open my cell door when I needed anything and contented themselves with shouting at me as they went to a lunatic. The following day Dr Pearson told me he had decided to return to nasal feeding, and I was fed accordingly until I was discharged four days later owing to an attack of appendicitis. This was brought on by the hospital treatment I had been receiving.