

Public History and Popular Memory: issues in the commemoration of the British militant suffrage campaign

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ABSTRACT Drawing on Raphael Samuel's work on the construction of historical knowledge, this article argues that British militant suffrage feminists had a strong sense of their role in history. Once the vote was won, militants became the first public historians of their own suffrage history by collecting 'relics' of the campaign and commemorating suffrage events. The work of curators, especially at the Museum of London and National Library of Australia, Canberra, also enabled wider access to the movement's ephemera. Subsequent generations have 'remembered' suffrage in different ways, including depiction in fiction, film, local histories and the physical landscape. An exploration of such depictions might help us start to understand the continuing fascination with this aspect of women's history.

Introduction

In the recent past many historians have explored the way in which the past is brought into the present both through various forms of popular memory and heritage.[1] Academic history aside, the exploits of British suffrage feminists are kept alive in film and fiction, and commemorated within the physical landscape, museums and galleries. Through unofficial forms of knowledge, including local histories, family stories, and tourist trails,[2], suffrage history has been created and 'remembered' for different generations. In his *Theatres of Memory*, Raphael Samuel argued that history has 'always been a hybrid form of knowledge, syncretizing past and present, memory and myth, the written record and the spoken word'.[3] His argument can be usefully applied to knowledge of the suffrage movement. Suffrage feminists can be 'remembered' both because of the nature of their campaigns but also through the histories they helped to construct themselves. Materials of the campaigns, including artefacts - banners, photographs, even bread saved from hunger strike in Holloway - and

women's own writings, particularly autobiographies, have survived, enabling new histories to be written. The public history and popular memory of suffrage has been reinvented through local and family historians, archivists, curators and so-called amateur historians keen to ensure widespread knowledge of the movement. As Paul Ashton & Paula Hamilton have observed in their Australian study of how people know about the past, museums and heritage sites are highly valued since 'great authority was ascribed to material culture as a "real" testimony from the past'.^[4] In the suffrage context the role of the militant suffrage feminists themselves, as public historians, collecting, preserving - and displaying - the material culture of the movement, needs to be recognised. The suffragettes contributed to their own historical survival.^[5]

The Historical Consciousness of a Political Movement

In her influential book, *The Spectacle of Women*, Lisa Tickner drew our attention to the way in which 'suffragists developed a new kind of political spectacle in which they dramatised the cause by means of costume, narrative, embroidery, performance, and all the developing skills of public entertainment at their disposal'. The particular gender identity that feminists constructed may have been new. However, they built on, and adapted, many past traditions of progressive movements.^[6] The 'new' idea of what it meant to be a woman in Edwardian England drew on 'old' features of the labour movement, situating the movement in a continuum of oppositional politics. Certainly British suffrage feminists 'knew' that banners worked.^[7] Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy, former secretary of the mid-nineteenth-century Manchester Society for women's suffrage, for example, recalled a childhood memory, 'watching with deep emotion the great Manchester procession in celebration of the repeal of the Corn Laws'.^[8] The historical iconography of suffrage specifically included past heroines, such as Grace Darling, Florence Nightingale, Harriet Martineau and Mary Wollstonecraft as well as the military figures of Boudicca and Joan of Arc, examples of both militant women and those who died for their cause. The purple, white and green colours adopted by the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) were distinctive; however, the concept of political colours had historical antecedents, most obviously in the Radicals' green and, in the case of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies' (NUWSS) adoption of red, white and green, in the specific colours of Garibaldi and Italian nationalism, a cause supported by many nineteenth-century feminists - and radicals. Such visual devices helped establish suffrage feminism as a movement taking its place in history: the present was built on a particular past.

Perhaps the most famous epithet of the WSPU was 'Deeds not Words'. When 'Deeds not Words' appeared on WSPU mastheads, banners and paper-

wrapped stones, or at Caxton Hall in 1908 when the feminists ‘rushed’ the House of Commons, it was not a statement of direct ‘people’ action ignoring ‘words’ as mere rhetoric. The very inclusion of words ensured another layer of meaning; the words became an integral part of the action. The theatrical nature of words, as Barbara Green has argued, was used to create a performative discourse – and a feminist identity.[9] Slogans helped create a particular idea of a literate movement and a sharp way of identifying the movement’s antecedents – in socialist and progressive organisations.

‘Deeds not Words’ was taken from Shelley’s ‘Mask of Anarchy’ written in September 1819 after the massacre at Peterloo. It celebrated the power of controlled, organised resistance, most famously in the last verse:

Rise like Lions after slumber
 In unvanquishable number
 Shake your chains to earth like dew
 Which in sleep had fallen on you –
 Ye are many – they are few

Shelley’s work was known in different ways. By the late nineteenth century his poetry had undergone a *direct* revival. Even University College, Oxford, which had expelled Shelley in 1811, erected a statue in his honour in June 1893.[10] The Shelley Society, established in 1885, had numbered amongst its early members Eleanor Marx and Edward Aveling, who both presented lectures to the society on Shelley and socialism; and Eleanor Marx quoted from the ‘Mask of Anarchy’ at the first May Day demonstration held in Britain in 1890.[11]

The Pankhurst children were brought up in a consciously literary milieu: Christabel being named after the eponymous heroine in Coleridge’s poem and Sylvia after the character in Shakespeare’s *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. [12] The reading of poetry also formed a part of contemporary family life for radicals like Emmeline and Richard Pankhurst [13]: a knowledge of Shelley was not just a public political legacy but one that they reconfigured personally. Sylvia Pankhurst recalled that she ‘listened to [her father] spell bound, with tear-filled eyes, when he talked of Shelley, his idealism, and search after the perfection of human life ... I was elated when he read to us from Whitman: ‘Pioneers! O Pioneers!’ When Annie Kenney literally sat at Sylvia’s feet to be read to, she was encouraged to learn snatches of verse from Tennyson, Keats – and Shelley.[14] When Sylvia or indeed Annie Kenney were listening to Shelley they were also entering into a radical tradition that had acknowledged Shelley as an integral part of a vibrant – and present – movement. Suffrage feminists were not simply using a poetic quotation but one that had previously been used for political purposes by the Chartists.

Nineteenth-century Chartism – like twentieth-century women’s suffrage – had been both a cultural and political movement.[15] Different currents within Chartism were accustomed to pepper their works with quotations from Shakespeare, the Bible, Robert Burns, Byron and Shelley.[16] The work of the previous generation of Romantic poets was both republished in Chartist papers and imitated by Chartist contemporaries.[17] Moreover, Shelley was seen as a martyr, both of the Chartists’ own cause, and of free thought.[18] As Martha Vicinus has suggested, ‘The exposure of hypocrisy and folly, a central theme in Byron, was transmuted by Chartists into descriptions of avarice and misused power ... Shelley’s idealism and faith in human potential were fundamental tenets among all Chartists’.[19] Slogans on banners carried on Chartist demonstrations [20] also had a later reincarnation in suffrage. These included references to the Old Testament, Burns and Byron, as noted by Flora Tristan, the French socialist feminist, in her account of a London Chartist demonstration:

Better to die by the Sword than Perish with Hunger (Lamentations Ch 4v 9)
One day of Freedom is worth an eternity of Servitude
A man’s a man for a’ that! (Burns)
Beat your ploughs into swords and your billhooks into pikes! (Joel Ch 3 v10)
He who would be free, himself must strike the blow! (Childe Harold)[21]

Chartism, including its practices of reading and autodidacticism, had been celebrated in the last decades of the 1800s as ‘a movement of radical, social, and political emancipation; and its survivors were looked on with awe as living links with a heroic past’.[22] Thus Shelley did not only have a ‘direct’ influence in the socialist organisations of the late nineteenth century, including the Independent Labour Party, the organisation supported by Emmeline Pankhurst and her husband Richard, but helped signify a link with the aspirations of the earlier campaigners for the vote.

Byron, ‘a champion of liberty at all costs’, was ‘one of the few authors read by all ranks of society’, including working-class men and middle-class women.[23] *Childe Harold*, in particular, was popular.[24] The particular lines ‘Who would be free himself must strike the blow’ (canto ii, stanza 76) had been employed by Chartists and Radical Liberals alike before re-emerging as ‘Who would be free herself (or themselves) must strike the blow’. Such was the extent of the absorption of the phrase within the discourse of the Pankhurst family that Christabel Pankhurst could write as follows about a discussion with Emmeline:

Mother and I arrived at the conclusion that who would be politically free herself must strike the blow, and that women could not do better

than pay the Independent Labour movement the compliment of imitation, by starting an independent women's movement.[25]

The context of the Byronic – and Shelleyian – appropriation is important for it indicates the implicit decision of the Pankhursts to align themselves in the first years of suffrage militancy with the popular memory of socialism.[26] While creating a forward-looking movement, the Pankhursts also drew on the inspiration of a past mass movement.

In speeches suffrage feminists also consciously referred to political slogans of much earlier times, reappropriating them for the new movement. A striking example is the use of the epithet 'Revolt against Bad Laws is a Christian Virtue and a National Duty'. This was the alleged epitaph of John Bradshaw, president of the parliamentary commission that condemned Charles I to death in 1649.[27] It was used, for example by Lady Constance Lytton on the label surrounding a stone with which she hit the radiator of Lloyd George's car: 'To Lloyd George: Rebellion against tyrants is obedience to God'.[28] In similar vein John Hampden's civil war epithet 'Taxation without representation is tyranny' was displayed at the June 1910 WSPU demonstration on the banner of the Women's Tax Resistance League.[29]

Epithets used by the suffrage movement were a coexistence, of socialist, radical, liberal, dissenting and contemporary feminist words.[30] When Emily Wilding Davison, the WSPU activist who died under the hooves of the King's horse at the Derby in 1913, was buried in her native Morpeth, in Northumberland, her tombstone contained several quotations that created in various ways the idea of a martyr. The sources of biblical quotations were given underneath the words (St John XV CHP X111 and Joshua 1 CHP 9 V). As indicated in Figure 1, no such reference was needed for 'Deeds not Words'. What had previously been seen as a quotation from a Shelley poem, or a Chartist sentiment was now viewed as a fitting epitaph for a suffrage martyr.

The Use of Material Culture

Radical political antecedents were also reflected in the material culture of the movement: the crockery recalling anti-slavery campaigns, buttons recalling trade union badges, hunger-striking and imprisonment medals evoking military comparisons.[31] The material culture of the movement was consciously developed and given an importance not usually applied to the ephemeral, or everyday. Banners were not discarded, badges were not thrown away but kept by activists, often for many years, handed down within the family or given to the museum of the Suffragette Fellowship. In addition, activists visually recorded the everyday activity of the movement. Speaking, advertising meetings, selling newspapers, organising a fund-raising bazaars were seen as activities worthy of photographic record.[32] In addition to the

set images of speakers at demonstrations, in the pre-war 'golden age' of the picture postcard we might also find rather more unusual frozen images in archives collected and donated to public institutions by suffrage feminists. The ephemeral – chalking slogans on walls, riding off on a votes for women caravan publicity event – or drawing elaborate fund-raising pavement pictures for a self denial week (as Figure 2 indicates) became different, permanent, records of the movement through their inclusion in archives and later reproduction on postcards.[33] The visual image served to create another layer of meaning: here was a political movement but also one that intended its present activities to be remembered in the future as an important historic phenomenon.



Figure 1. Tombstone of Emily Wilding Davison, Morpeth, Northumberland (Jack Halliday).

Suffrage Autobiography as History

As I have discussed elsewhere, a collective political identity was constructed in print through the proliferation of autobiographies, the genre typifying ideas of self and change.[34] 'If history is an arena for the projection of ideal selves', Raphael Samuel suggested, 'it can also be a means of undoing and questioning them, offering more disturbing accounts of who we are and

where we come from than simple identification would suggest'.[35] Suffrage autobiography – rather than history as such – became established as a genre for writing about suffrage, eliding ideas of a public past with those of the self.



Figure 2. Pavement drawings and paintings for a self denial week, London 1910. Note the message 'We have asked for the vote since 1832'. (National Library of Australia, PIC/9089)

Other initiatives were taken to disseminate a public history of the movement. The Women's Freedom League (WFL) campaigned, albeit unsuccessfully, for portraits of Charlotte Despard and Emmeline Pethick Lawrence to be hung alongside Georgina Brackenbury's portrait of Emmeline Pankhurst in the National Portrait Gallery.[36] While Brackenbury's portrait is regularly displayed, other acquisitions, such as they are, are less often on view and, according to the gallery's catalogues, only a handful of photographs and paintings of suffrage activists exists. Although the suffrage movement has been acknowledged by the gallery in recent years, for example, in a temporary 2003-04 exhibition, 'Circling the Square: photography, history and a London landmark' on Trafalgar Square, the *former* collecting practices of the institution ensured that in the most important gallery of its type in England, few images of suffrage activists remain for future

generations. John Mack has recently argued that memory can be fostered in 'specially constructed spaces in which the aim is often explicitly that of the encouragement and incubation of memory'. The nature of that memory rests at least in part upon the substance of the museum or archive as a source of memory. Joanna Sassoon too has suggested, 'The archive is the memory from which the material can be woven into the garment of history'; conversely, if little remains in public spaces, the opportunities for constructing particular memories and histories of suffrage remain limited.[37] It was due both to the initiatives of former suffrage activists themselves and the recognition of the importance of the collections by particular curators and archivists that the fine collections of British militant suffrage exist particularly in the Museum of London and the National Library in Canberra, Australia.[38]

The Suffragette Fellowship as Public Historians

The Suffragette Fellowship had been established by former members of the WSPU and current members of the WFL to 'perpetuate the memory of the pioneers ... connected with women's emancipation and especially with the militant suffrage campaign'.[39] Annual suffrage lectures were established to celebrate past campaigns and current concerns, with an emphasis given to the achievements of individual women, seen as pioneers and martyrs to the cause.[40] Regular commemorations were held on the birthdays of Charlotte Despard and Emmeline Pankhurst and pilgrimages were organised to the grave of Emily Wilding Davison.[41] Former militants, including Viscountess Rhonnda, had been responsible for raising funds for the erection of a statue to Emmeline Pankhurst in Tower Gardens, near the Houses of Parliament in London.[42] This emphasis on the importance of public commemoration was recognised by the memorial fund committee in a fund-raising leaflet:

A Statue is the recognised form of tribute paid to historic personalities, the highest and most lasting honour that humanity has ever been able to pay to those who have rendered great services to civilisation. As in ancient days, so now, men commemorate their heroes and liberators by erecting statues. Shall not women claim equal honour for her who led them to victory?[43]

The Suffragette Fellowship established its own museum at 41 Cromwell Road, South Kensington. Here were collected what the organisers called, 'the only authentic and unique collection of records and relics of the women's militant suffrage movement'.[44] The language of religious iconography employed to define women such as Emily Wilding Davison as martyrs was also used to describe the material culture of the movement, as if they were saint's relics. Certainly, some items might be said to resemble

relics, for example, ‘the breakfast loaf’ brought from Holloway prison by Ada Flatman in November 1908, that had been preserved by her together with two suffragette badges under a small glass dome.[45] The trustees explained their sense of almost religious duty when offering their collection to the Museum of London: ‘[Y]ou realise our great feeling of responsibility for the sacred trust and respect due to the magnificent women of our country’.[46]

The decision to offer the collection to the Museum of London was ostensibly derived from the need to ensure that it would ‘appeal to a wider public than which it now obtains in its present home’.[47] The Suffragette Fellowship was particularly keen to ensure that the exhibition would be permanent and that it should take up a whole room of the museum, conditions that the Museum was unable to accept.[48] As the feminists explained, their main object was to ensure that the collection ‘shall not be scattered’ [49] so that the history of the movement, as a movement, could be maintained. Encouraged by the museum curators, the Suffragette Fellowship members themselves carried out the initial cataloguing of the exhibits to ensure accuracy.[50] Although the curator responsible for the collection in the early 1950s did not have specific expertise in this field (being a medievalist by background), he was nevertheless enthusiastic about the collection, defining it as a:

collection of literature, propagandist material and relics of militancy and prison-life, diligently collected and cherished by these ladies, [which] represents in a very complete fashion, every aspect, period and personality of the movement. ... From a ‘business’ point of view, the material has that sort of date and slightly sensational character that together provoke a lively interest amongst visitors.[51]

The museum could not offer the space the Suffragette Fellowship desired, but the feminist historians (and the press) were positive about the initial displays when the museum reopened in London’s Kensington Palace in 1951 after a closure of some ten years.[52] Una Duval, vice chair of the Suffragette Fellowship, declared, ‘how thrilled I was and so were all of us, at the display of our precious relics ... The special alcove to take the grill which of course is the symbol of our former “apartheid” is I think admirable’.[53] Stella Newsome, the honorary secretary, went so far as to declare that the relics had been ‘admirably displayed’ and shown to better advantage than had been the case when the Fellowship had shown them.[54]

The collection of - British - suffrage memorabilia that exists in the National Library in Canberra, Australia was also due to the initiative of feminist activist and collector Mrs Bessie Rischbieth, ‘probably the most important feminist in Australia during [the mid-war period]’.[55] Like other Australian feminist activists, including Jessie Street, Nellie Martel, Vida Goldstein, and Muriel Matters, Mrs Rischbieth had formed close links with

the British movement.[56] In London in 1913 she had attended WSPU meetings and described her impression of Emmeline Pankhurst thus: 'Really as I listened I felt my backbone growing longer, as though you gained courage and freedom from her'.[57] Mrs Rischbieth had established a small museum in Perth, to which the Suffragette Fellowship added some depositions, before it was bequeathed to the National Library on her death in 1967.[58] As Mrs Rischbieth declared, her collection was of the 'epic struggle' of British women that she wished to form the nucleus of a permanent collection of British women's struggle for enfranchisement. She hoped it might become 'the property of the Australian nation as national history'.[59] Together with Sydney-based Ruby Rich-Schalit [60] Bessie Rischbieth had campaigned for the establishment of a memorial to Vida Goldstein and a permanent, separate, collection devoted to women within the National Library.[61] She also encouraged former suffrage activists to contact the librarian, Harold White, who was very keen to receive such material - though not to create a separate women's archive.[62] As a result the collection today includes memorabilia from former WSPU activist Louise Cullen:

I've had word from Mrs Rischbeith ... that you are interested in anything dealing with the fight in England for the vote ... I was a 'militant' and I have sent my books and various photos to Mrs Rischbieth ... I never thought anything of mine would be so respected when I left England in 1912 to come here for two years and I've never wished to go back.[63]

The public availability of such collected material in the Canberra and Museum of London collections has enabled researchers to access a wealth of material, not through happenstance but through the specific initiative of women seeing themselves as historical actors - and from particular curators acknowledging the value of such material.[64]

Other forms of commemoration first initiated by these collectors and 'unofficial' historians have also ensured knowledge of suffrage in different forms. In particular, the feminists sought to commemorate suffrage within the physical landscape through various initiatives: 'landscape is called upon to do the memory work which in earlier times might have been performed by territorial belonging'.[65] They realised that social space is not an empty arena within which we conduct our lives; rather it is something we construct and which others construct about us.[66] Such changes in the landscape included planting trees at the Blathwayt estate near Bath [67] and erecting a memorial to Christabel Pankhurst near her mother's statue.[68] Church pews were carved with Mrs Pankhurst's initials in Chipping Ongar church in Essex.[69] A plaque celebrated the site both of the WSPU offices at 4 Clements Inn and the day in 1905 in the Free Trade Hall in Manchester when Annie Kenney and Christabel Pankhurst were ejected from the

hall.[70] Plaques and monuments in the landscape substituted for an actually existing and thriving political feminist movement; but such examples of 'street art' have nevertheless enabled the suffrage campaign to be seen as a permanent feature of the modern environment. Suffrage has made its mark on the physical landscape, rather than just in the more slippery and transitory memory. As public historian Graeme Davison has suggested, 'while a statue may seem mute compared with a movie or a website it is also more fixed and durable. By its very solidity and permanence it is a quiet protest against all those other powerful, omnipresent but ephemeral forms of remembering.'^[71]

Commemoration after the Suffragette Fellowship

The Fellowship's pioneering work established a tradition on which others have built. Physical reminders in recent years include a plaque in Gordon Road, Clifton, Bristol to celebrate Annie Kenney's sojourn.^[72] In Manchester an early Pankhurst home has been recognised by a plaque and women's centre complete with faux WSPU iconography. And there continues to be an ongoing campaign to erect a statue to Sylvia Pankhurst near Parliament.^[73] Streets have been named after suffragettes. On the Litherland estate in the north end of Liverpool, for example, there is a Pankhurst Road running into Octavia Hill Road, apparently built in the post-Second World War period.^[74] Even in Epsom, Surrey, near the racecourse, a street has been recently dedicated to the memory of Emily Wilding Davison.^[75]

Although the form of such commemorations may have similarities with the efforts of the Suffragette Fellowship, the political and social context is different. Suffrage has been revisited and reinvented for different generations creating their own ways of remembering. An example of this is the 'value' attached to suffrage ephemera, particularly medals. In a dispute with the Suffragette Fellowship over the contested ownership of a bronze medal, bearing Mrs Pankhurst's portrait, Mary Richardson suggested the medal was of 'small historic interest', although of 'great personal value'.^[76] As the 1958 photograph in Figure 3 suggests, Louise Cullen, like other former prisoners, certainly valued her badge sufficiently to have ensured that it survived over the years (including her emigration to Australia). The value attached to such items now is certainly considerably more, at least in monetary terms, than ever before.^[77] The scarcity of suffrage ephemera in private hands now helps create greater 'worth'.^[78] In December 2003 in a three-way telephone bidding war for a 'Hunger Strike' medal belonging to Mary Richardson, the record price was achieved of £19,000 from an individual (no other suffragette medal had sold for more than £10,000). The auctioneers argued that this figure was achieved principally because the

medal has eight award bars, including 'fed by force'.[79] What was once a symbol of political allegiance has become an expensive item for collectors precisely because such items were not valued continuously in the past.[80] Scarcity - and a willingness to buy - has increased the monetary value.

Suffrage has been reinvented for different, new, audiences. A not altogether serious Googlism search will reveal pages of material on Emmeline, Christabel and Sylvia Pankhurst.[81] There is the 'raw and unapologetic neo-rock' from New York Band 'suffrajett' - who adopted the name as it was a 'cool word'.[82] In the poll of Top 100 Britons, run by the BBC in the winter of 2002-03, Emmeline Pankhurst reached number 27 - being marginally less popular than the current queen at 24 but beating William Wilberforce at 28 and David Bowie at 29.[83]



Figure 3. Mrs Louise C. Cullen, 1958 (National Library of Australia).

Fictionalising Suffrage

Fictional depictions – in songs, film and fiction – have also had an important role in popularising awareness of suffrage. Music hall satires included Jen Latona's 1913 song 'You Can't Blame the Suffragettes for That' in which she chastised a drunken husband seeking to blame the suffragettes for his bad behaviour. Jock Mills's 1908 song 'The Suffragee' laments his poor life 'suffering under a suffragette' since his wife joined the 'down with men movement'. He has become a 'sufferagee'.^[84] Cinematic examples emphasise spectacular – and often eccentric – behaviour. The short 1913 cinema film *Milling the Militants* depicted a neglected husband's fantasy that suffragettes should be punished by being set to dig roads – while smoking clay pipes. The popular Ealing comedy of 1949, *Kind Hearts and Coronets*, in which successive members of a wealthy family – all played by Alec Guinness – were murdered by Dennis Price included, as befitted Edwardiana, a suffragette victim. Lady Agatha was portrayed (by Alec Guinness) smashing windows, being arrested, taken to Holloway and on her release dramatically dropping leaflets over Whitehall while drifting in the sky in a balloon. Shot by Dennis Price – in a dramatically aimed arrow – she fell to earth (and her death) over Berkeley Square. The early 1960s too reinvented suffrage with *Mary Poppins* in which Mrs Banks deserted domesticity for the cause, returning to her home with a song, 'Our daughter's daughters will adore us and sing in grateful chorus, well done, well done', as she distributed WSPU sashes to the servants.^[85] More recently the National Theatre of Brent – Desmond Dingle and his one member 'company' Raymond – has displayed the transformative power of women's suffrage in *Massive Landmarks of the 20th Century*.^[86] We first see Mrs Gilbert O'Sullivan in 'the nineteenth century' collecting Victoriana and cooking her husband's meals but by 1910, the suffragettes have made an impact. Mrs Gilbert O Sullivan declares to her shocked husband that she will no longer be cooking meals but is off to join Mrs Hanky Panky and her Majorettes as she wishes to get emaciated (*sic*). Written fiction too continues to include suffrage narratives, including the recent *Falling Angels* of Tracey Chevalier complete with suffrage martyr and the suffragette detective series of Gillian Linscott.^[87] Such cinematic and written examples span a period of some ninety years and different generations, yet nevertheless there are some common features in the depictions. Apart from the theme of votes there is a common depiction of transgressive women. Whether for humorous or dramatic effect suffragettes are seen as women who stand up for themselves (and other women), forcefully exhibiting high principles albeit in often rather bizarre ways. However, Australian Muriel Matters did indeed fly over the Thames in a balloon as a publicity stunt ^[88], women did reject their families for 'the cause', women were brutally punished for their transgressive behaviour and women did die because of their political

campaigns. Fictional representations have drawn on a reality of the movement.

The public 'memory' of suffrage can exist because of the deeds of the suffrage feminists themselves, their *publicity* for their actions and the extant material that can be appropriated by different generations. Because of their emphasis on the creation of a particular political and cultural identity assisted by the material culture of distinctive badges, postcards, soap, china, clothes and banners, suffrage feminists *were* 'known about' at the time – and not necessarily sympathetically if one considers the plethora of anti-suffrage material.[89] The sheer quantity of such extant material has enabled the publication of a number of local histories, written in accessible formats, and printed by local presses or museums, often well illustrated and at a reasonable cost, covering, for example, Merseyside, Cornwall, the North East, and East London.[90] A typical example is the booklet issued as part of the WSPU centenary commemoration by the Beckenham Suffragette Centenary Group highlighting achievements of local activists for a mere £2.95.[91] Similar histories are increasingly seen on the Internet, with localities including Hastings featuring as sites of suffrage activity.[92] Such work has flourished outside academic presses, enabling a locality to be written into a framework of national political history. Recent research on the lives of NUWSS local organiser Alice Abadam and Lancashire WSPU organiser Jessie Stephenson based on *family* papers also suggests a new and potentially different reading of political activists within a familial setting.[93]

Fiction, local histories and commemorative plaques and statues in the physical landscape may well offer representations that a traditional historian might shun. For those, however, interested in starting to understand the contemporary and past fascination with militant suffrage an acknowledgement of the different ways knowledge of the past is obtained and reworked might prove a useful starting point. We no longer have the Suffragette Fellowship to initiate commemoration of suffrage; nor a thriving feminist movement keen to celebrate its past. But a knowledge of suffrage has not disappeared. Despite the times in which we live the struggle of women to win the vote *has* been recognised by the present as one of its own concerns.

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Notes

- [1] See, for example, Ludmilla Jordanova (2000) *History in Practice* (London: Arnold); David Lowenthal (1996) *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Susannah Radstone (Ed.) (2000) *Memory and Methodology* (Oxford: Berg); Susannah Radstone & Katherine Hodgkin (Eds) (2003) *Regimes of Memory* (London: Routledge).
- [2] See, for example, Katherine Sturtevant (1991) *Our Sisters' London, Nineteen Feminist Walks* (London: The Women's Press); Jennifer Clarke (1984) *In Our Grandmothers' Footsteps* (London: Virago Press); and Katherine Bradley (n.d.) *Women on the March* (Oxford: privately published); (n.d) Crouch End Women's History Walk (London: North London Group of Fawcett Society); Lesley Hall Women's History Walk, Lesley Hall's webpage: homepages.primex.co.uk/~lesleyah/lwhnwalk.htm site (accessed 4 August 2005).
- [3] Raphael Samuel (1994) *Theatres of Memory* (London: Verso), p. 443.
- [4] Paul Ashton & Paula Hamilton (2003) At Home with the Past: background and initial findings from the National Survey, *Australian Cultural History*, 22, p. 27.
- [5] Katherine Bradley (2000) Women's Suffrage Souvenirs, in Michael Hitchcock & Ken Teague (Eds) *Souvenirs: the material culture of tourism* (Aldershot: Ashgate), p. 87.
- [6] Lisa Tickner (1987) *The Spectacle of Women: imagery of the suffrage campaign 1907-14* (London: Chatto & Windus), pp. 56-57. (For an account of the iconography of banners of the American suffrage movement, see Margaret Finnegan [1999] *Selling Suffrage: consumer culture and votes for women* (New York: Columbia University Press). pp. 71ff., 93 ff.)
- [7] Sandra Stanley Holton (1996) *Suffrage Days: stories from the women's suffrage movement* (London: Routledge), pp. 11, 23, 32. A good example of the way in which words were used for anti-vaccination the cause can be found in an unusually detailed account of the demonstration held in Leicester in March 1885 of c.5000 marchers. (*Vaccination Inquirer*, 7(73), April 1885, pp. 4-5).
- [8] Mrs Wolstenholme Elmy, 'A Woman's Plea to Women', *Macclesfield Courier*, 8 November 1886, as quoted in Holton, *Suffrage Stories*, p. 11.
- [9] Barbara Green (1997) *Spectacular Confessions: autobiography, performative activism and the sites of suffrage, 1905-38* (London: Macmillan), p. 15.
- [10] Shelley was expelled for writing and circulating a pamphlet entitled 'The Necessity of Atheism'. Henry Salt (1896) *Shelley Poet and Pioneer: a*

- biographical study* (London: W. Reeves), p. 18; Henry Salt (1892) *Percy Bysshe Shelley. A Monograph* (London: Swan Sonnenschein), pp. 45-47.
- [11] Paul Foot (1984) *Red Shelley* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson), pp. 244-246; Yvonne Kapp (1976) *Eleanor Marx* (London: Lawrence and Wishart), vol. 2, p. 250. Appendix 2 in Kapp, *Eleanor Marx*, vol. 2, pp. 735-736.
- [12] E. Sylvia Pankhurst (1977 reprint edition) *The Suffragette Movement, an intimate account of persons and ideals* (London: Virago, first published 1931), p. 58.
- [13] Shelley was also defined as influential reading undertaken by suffrage feminists such as Helena Swanwick and Charlotte Despard. Kate Flint (1993) *The Woman Reader 1837-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), pp. 236-249.
- [14] Pankhurst, *Suffragette Movement*, pp. 67,197.
- [15] Ian Haywood (1995) *The Literature of Struggle: an anthology of Chartist fiction* (Aldershot: Scolar Press); Timothy Randall (1999) Chartist Poetry and Song, in Owen Ashton, Robert Fyson & Stephen Roberts (Eds) *The Chartist Legacy* (Woodbridge: Merlin Press), pp. 171-195.
- [16] Gregory Claeys (Ed.) (2001) *The Chartist Movement in Britain 1838-50*, 6 volumes (London: Pickering & Chatto).
- [17] Peter Scheckner (Ed.) (1989) *An Anthology of Chartist Poetry* (London: Associated University Presses), pp. 28-30; Steve Devereaux (1996) Chartism and Popular Fiction, in John Lucas (Ed.) *Writing and Radicalism* (London: Longman), p. 129.
- [18] Bouthaina Shaaban (1996) Shelley and the Chartists, in Betty T. Bennett & Stuart Curran (Eds) *Shelley: poet and legislator of the world* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press), p. 113; Richard Holmes (1974) *Shelley: the pursuit*, p. 209 (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson).
- [19] Martha Vicinus (1974) *The Industrial Muse: a study of nineteenth British working-class literature* (London: Croom Helm), p. 96.
- [20] Unfortunately, as Nick Mansfield has noted, few Chartist banners are extant mainly because of the circumstances of the defeat of Chartism. Nick Mansfield, 'Why Are There No Chartist Banners?' unpublished paper, Banners Unfurled Conference organised by National Museum of Labour History, Pump House Museum, Manchester, 3 April 2000.
- [21] Jean Hawkes (Ed.) (1982 reprint edition) *The London Journal of Flora Tristan* (London: Virago, 1982; originally published 1842), p. 36.
- [22] Antony Taylor, 'Commemoration, Memorialisation and Political Memory in Post-Chartism Radicalism: the 1885 Halifax Chartist reunion in Context', in Ashton et al, *The Chartist Legacy*, p. 273.
- [23] Andrew Elfenbein (1995) *Byron and the Victorians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 85-87; Collins, *Thomas Cooper*, p. 19, as quoted in Elfenbein, *Byron and the Victorians*, pp. 85-86.

- [24] *Childe Harold* was written at the time Byron was criticising the latest legislation to criminalise Luddites breaking machinery. Phyllis Grosskurth (1997) *Byron: the flawed angel* (London: Hodder & Stoughton), p. 145.
- [25] Christabel Pankhurst (1987, reprinted) *Unshackled: the story of how we won the vote* (London: Cresset Women's Voices, first published 1959), p. 3.
- [26] For analysis of 'The Woman's Cause is Man's: they rise or sink together', from Tennyson's 'The Princess', see Hilda Kean 'Deeds not Words: the use of poetry in the creation of suffrage cultural politics', unpublished paper presented at Suffrage City! Women's Suffrage and Cultural Representation Conference, University of Wolverhampton, 11 November 2000.
- [27] *Vaccination Inquirer*, 7(73), April 1885, pp. 4-5.
- [28] Pankhurst, *Unshackled*, p. 141. The slogan was also employed on a banner designed by Sylvia Pankhurst for the WSPU demonstration of 17 June 1908. Tickner, *Suffrage Spectacle*, p. 261.
- [29] Tickner, *Suffrage Spectacle*, p. 256.
- [30] Atkinson, *Suffragettes in Pictures*, pp. 104-106; Tickner, *Suffrage Spectacle*, pp. 91-98.
- [31] Clare Midgley (1996) Slave Sugar Boycotts, Female Activism and the Domestic Base of British Anti-slavery Culture, *Slavery and Abolition*, 17(3), pp. 137-162. Madge Dresser & Sue Giles (Eds) (2000) *Bristol and Transatlantic Slavery: catalogue of the exhibition A Respectable Trade? Bristol and Transatlantic Slavery at the City Museum and Art Gallery, Bristol, 6 March-2 September 1999* (Bristol: Bristol Museums and Art Gallery); Paul Martin (2002) *The Trade Union Badge. Material Culture in Action* (Aldershot: Ashgate Press).
- [32] See, for example, Diane Atkinson (n.d.) *Mrs Broom's Suffragette Photographs. Photographs by Christina Broom 1908-1913* (London: Nishen Photography). These examples of professional images form part of the collection donated by the Suffragette Fellowship to the Museum of London.
- [33] Pavement photograph from suffragettes picture file, donated by Mrs Ruby Rich Schalit, 1978, in National Library of Australia, Canberra; photograph of Muriel Matters on *Votes for Women* Caravan from suffragettes picture files MS 2004/3/, National Library of Australia, Canberra.
- [34] Hilda Kean (1994) Searching for the Past in Present Defeat: the construction of historical and political identity in mid-war British feminism, *Women's History Review*, 3(1), pp. 57-80; (1998) Some Problems of Constructing and Reconstructing a Suffragette's Life: Mary Richardson. Suffragette, socialist and fascist, *Women's History Review*, 7(4), pp. 475-494; (1996) Continuity and Change: the identity of the political reader, *Changing English*, 3(2), pp. 209-218; (1990) *Deeds not Words: the lives of suffragette teachers* (London: Pluto Press).
- [35] Paul Martin (1999) Look, See, Hear: a remembrance with approaches to contemporary public history at Ruskin, in Geoff Andrews, Hilda Kean &

- Jane Thompson (Eds) *Ruskin College: contesting knowledge, dissenting politics* (London: Lawrence & Wishart), pp. 148-149.
- [36] Minutes of Women's Freedom League National Executive Committee, 13 July 1935, Box 55, WFL collection, Women's Library. Another version of the Brackenbury portrait is held by the Museum of London as part of the Suffragette Fellowship donation. Mireille Galinou & John Hayes (1996) *London in Print. Oil Paintings in the Collection at the Museum of London* (London: Museum of London) p. 408.
- [37] John Mack (2003) *The Museum of the Mind: art and memory in world culture* (London: British Museum Press), p. 15; Joanna Sassoon (2003) 'Phantoms of Remembrance: libraries and archives as 'the collective memory'', *Public History Review*, 10, p. 55. See also Carolyn Steedman (2001) *Dust* (Manchester: Manchester University Press).
- [38] Materials from the NUWSS and the subsequent London National Society for Women's Service were deposited in the former Fawcett library, now the Women's Library. See also David Doughan (1998) Celebrating 50 years of Equal Franchise in the United Kingdom, *Women's History Review*, 7(3), pp. 419-424.
- [39] Objects of the Suffragette Fellowship as printed in Thelma Cazalet Keir MP (n.d.) *I Knew Mrs Pankhurst* (London: Suffragette Fellowship).
- [40] Lectures and subsequent pamphlets included lectures on the work of Mary Wollstonecraft and Lady Constance Lytton. Geraldine Lennox (1932) *The Suffragette Spirit* (London: Suffragette Fellowship), p 1.
- [41] *Calling All Women*, July 1960, pp. 3, 4, 11.
- [42] For analysis of the erection of public monuments, see Serguisz Michalski (1998) *Public Monuments: art in political bondage 1870-1997* (London: Reaktion Books), pp. 7-8.
- [43] The Mrs Pankhurst Memorial. Fund raising leaflet. Women's Suffrage Collection. Memorial Material SC 35, Museum of London Archive.
- [44] As included on suggested label to accompany the exhibition when transferred to the Museum of London in the early 1950s. Undated letter (November 1950?) from Una Duval, vice chairman of Suffragette Fellowship to Mr Grimes, Museum of London, in Objects relating to suffragette movement, Acc 50.82/1-154, Museum of London.
- [45] Letter from Stella Newsome, Suffragette Fellowship, to Mr Spencer, curator, Museum of London, 18 February 1954, Collection of Suffragette relics file 54.26, Museum of London.
- [46] Undated letter (November 1950?) from Una Duval to Mr Grimes, Objects relating to suffragette movement, Acc 50.82/1-154.
- [47] Letter from Winifred Mayo, acting chairman of Suffragette Fellowship to Director of the London Museum, 22 November 1947, Objects relating to suffragette movement, Acc 50.82/1-154. There were also issues over the renewal of the lease and the ill health of some of the trustees.

- [48] Correspondence in Objects relating to suffragette movement file, Acc 50.82/1-154, including draft minutes of the Board of Trustees, 26 November 1947.
- [49] Winifred Mayo to Mr Grimes, 3 May 1948, Correspondence in Objects relating to suffragette movement file, Acc 50.82/1-154.
- [50] Correspondence between Stella Newsome and Mr Grimes, 10 August 1948, 2 September 1948, 21 January 1950, and Una Duval to Mr Grimes, 11 March 1951. Correspondence in Objects relating to suffragette movement file, Acc 50.82/1-154.
- [51] Letter from Mr Spencer to Mr Jogden, Corporation museum, Keighley, offering, with the agreement of the Suffragette Fellowship, duplicates from the collection, which related to the movement in Yorkshire, 11 February 1954. Correspondence in Objects relating to suffragette movement file, Acc 50.82/1-154.
- [52] News Cuttings file, DC11/9 1951, Museum of London.
- [53] Letter of Una Duval to Mr Sheppard, 12 July 1951. Correspondence in Objects relating to suffragette movement file, Acc 50.82/1-154.
- [54] Stella Newsome to Mr Sheppard, 19 July 1951. Correspondence in Objects relating to suffragette movement file, Acc 50.82/1-154.
- [55] Dianne Davidson (1999) A Citizen of Australia and of the World. A Reappraisal of Bessie Mabel Rischbieth, *Studies in Western Australian History*, 19, p. 99. See also Nancy Lutton (1983) Bessie M Rischbieth OBE: an oral history study, *Journal of the Royal Western Australia Historical Society*, 9(1), pp. 23-36; Tammie Reid, Suzanne Curry & Mandy Clews (1999) Doing What Comes Naturally: celebrating women in conservation in Western Australia, *Landscape (sic)*, Winter, pp. 43-44.
- [56] Ann Nugent (2003) Sister Suffragettes: Australian women activists in England, *National Library of Australia News*, February, XIII(5); Marilyn Lake (1999) *Getting Equal: the history of Australian feminism* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin), pp. 19, 24, 44; Audrey Oldfield (1992) *Woman Suffrage in Australia: a gift or a struggle?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Judith Smart (2000) Jessie Baines, Suffrage and an Australian connection, in June Purvis & Sandra Stanley Holton (Eds) *Votes for Women* (London: Routledge), pp. 246-266.
- [57] Bessie Rischbieth to Olive Evans, 18 July 1913, Rischbieth Papers, MS 2004/1/12, National Library of Australia, as quoted in Davidson, 'A Citizen', p. 103.
- [58] *Calling All Women*, July 1960, p. 5; (National Library of Australia) Presents to Mrs B.M. Rischbieth file 206/19/00022 no. 94, 17 March 1967.
- [59] National Library of Australia presents to Mrs B.M. Rischbieth file 206/19/00022 no. 94, 17 March 1967.
- [60] Ruby Rich, 1888-1988, joined the Feminist Club in Sydney in 1923 and during the next fifty years was a member and office-holder in numerous feminist, family planning, peace, internationalist and Zionist organisations.

- National Library of Australia online catalogue. Available at:
<http://catalogues.nla.gov.au/cgi-bin> - bin (accessed 15 July 2004).
- [61] Memo, 3 August 1983, Ruby Rich latest proposal, Vida Goldstein acquisition of materials memorial, 203/07/00070, National Library of Australia; Conversation between author and Graeme Powell, current manuscript curator, National Library of Australia, 15 July 2004.
- [62] File note by Harold White, 24 January 1955, on meeting with Mrs Rischbieth, in NLA Presents to Mrs Rischbieth, 206/19/00022.
- [63] Letters from Louise Cullen to Harold White, 5 January 1960, 17 January 1960 nos 44 and 54 in file 206/19/00022, National Library of Australia.
- [64] Steedman, *Dust*, pp. 66-83.
- [65] Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, p. 39.
- [66] Doreen Massey (1995) Space-Time and the Politics of Location, in James Lingwood (Ed.) *Rachel Whiteread. House* (London: Phaidon Press), p. 36. See also Simon Schama (1995) *Landscape and Memory* (London: Harper Collins) and Dolores Hayden (1995) *The Power of Place: urban landscapes as public history* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press).
- [67] The arboretum was destroyed in the 1960s to make way for a housing estate. B.M. Wilmot Dobbie (1979) *A Nest of Suffragettes in Somerset* (Bath: Batheaston Society); June Hannam Suffragette photographs. Available at: <http://humanities.uwe.ac.uk/Regionhistory/suffrage.htm> (accessed 2 October 2003).
- [68] Unveiled July 1959, *Calling All Women*, July 1960, p. 9.
- [69] These were purchased by Kitty Marshall for the parish church in Chipping Ongar, Essex and engraved with Emmeline Pankhurst's initials. Paula Bartley (2002) *Emmeline Pankhurst* (London: Routledge), p. 230; see also Mary Hayter, *The Cry of the Strenuous: Jessie Stephenson*, Unpublished MA Public History dissertation, Ruskin College, Oxford, 2004.
- [70] *Calling All Women*, July 1960, p. 3.
- [71] Graeme Davison (2000) *The Use and Abuse of Australian history* (St Leonards: Allen & Unwin), p. 55.
- [72] 23 Gordon Road. Available at: www.bristol-city.gov.uk/aboutbris/blueplaque.html (accessed 21 September 2003).
- [73] See the website of the Sylvia Pankhurst memorial committee at: www.gn.apc.org/sylvia pankhurst
- [74] Thanks to both Ron Noon and June Hannam for directing me to this and to Margaret Parry, Liverpool Record Office, for this observation drawn from ordnance survey maps sheet 33/39 (Scale 1:25,000) published 1946 and sheet SJ3498SW, surveyed 1958 (Scale 1:1,250).
- [75] Thanks to Sue Bruley for advising me of this. See: <http://www.multimap.com/map/browse.cgi?pc=kt185qb&GridE=&scale=10000&title=&cat=h> (accessed 21 November 2003).

- [76] Letter from Mary Richardson to custodian of the Museum of London, 2 December 1955, Objects relating to the suffragette collection, 50.82/1154.
- [77] Lending various badges and medals for a provincial exhibition in May 1968, the curators of the Museum of London indicated an insurance value of some £2 each. Suffragette material file, 50.82.
- [78] For example, on 20 August 2004 a 'celluloid' badge of the Actresses Franchise League was sold for the sum of £818 on eBay: www.ebay.co.uk (accessed 20 August 2004).
- [79] See <http://www.dnw.co.uk/dnw/medals>. Site of Dix Noonan auctioneers, accessed 16 December 2003; Maeve Kennedy (2003) Medal of Valour, *Guardian*, 27 November, p. 6.
- [80] Susan Pearce (1995) *On Collecting* (London: Routledge); Paul Martin (1999) *Popular Collecting and the Everyday Self: the reinvention of museums?* (London: Cassell).
- [81] www.googlism.com/index.htm? (accessed 15 September 2003).
- [82] <http://www.celebritymate.co.uk/suffr/Suffrajett.htm> (accessed 14 October 2003).
- [83] www.links4kids.co.uk/top100britons.htm sited (accessed 22 September 2003).
- [84] Both songs to be found on the CD *Blazes of the Day*. For American songs on women's suffrage see Danny O. Crew (2002) *Suffragist Sheet Music* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co.)
- [85] Maggie Morgan (1997) Why I'd Be Rather Watching Mary Poppins than Reading Postmodernism, *Women's History Notebooks*, 4(1), pp. 14-20.
- [86] *Massive Landmarks of the 20th Century*, 21-26 December 1999, Channel 4, Tuesday-Sunday, 7.30 p.m.
- [87] Tracy Chevalier (2002) *Falling Angels* (London: Harper Collins); Gillian Linscott (2003) *Blood on the Wood* (London: Virago).
- [88] Hilary Frances (2000) 'Dare to be Free': the Women's Freedom League and its legacy, in Purvis & Holton, *Votes for Women*, p. 189; Pankhurst, *The Suffragette Movement*, p. 301.
- [89] Brian Harrison (1978) *Separate Spheres: the opposition to women's suffrage in Britain* (London: Croom Helm); Julia Bush (2002) British Women's Anti-Suffragism and the Forward Policy, 1908-14, *Women's History Review*, 11, pp. 431-454.
- [90] Katherine Bradley (2000) *Friends and Visitors: a first history of the women's suffrage movement in Cornwall 1870-1914* (Penzance: Patten for the Hypatia Trust); Iris Dove (1988) *Yours in the Cause: suffragettes in Lewisham, Greenwich and Woolwich* (Lewisham: Lewisham Library Service and Greenwich Libraries); David Neville (1997) *To Make their Mark: the women's suffrage movement in the North East of England 1900-1914* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Centre for Northern Studies, University of Northumbria); Rosemary Taylor (1993) *In Letters of Gold: the story of*

Sylvia Pankhurst and the East London Federation of the Suffragettes in Bow (London: Stepney); and Marij van Helmond (1992) *Votes for Women: the events on Merseyside 1870-1928* (Liverpool: National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside).

- [91] Beckenham Suffragette Centenary Group (2003) *Votes for Women: the struggle for women's suffrage nationally and in and around Beckenham 1867-1929* (Beckenham: Beckenham Suffragette Centenary Group).
- [92] <http://www.hastingspress.co.uk/history/hassuf.htm> site (accessed 14 October 2003).
- [93] Marilyn Timms (2003) Alice Abadam, Unpublished MA Women's Studies dissertation, Ruskin College, Oxford 2003; Hayter, 'The Cry of the Strenuous'.

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