

THE SUFFRAGETTE MOVEMENT – SCRIPT

Picture 01 – Opening screen Emeline Pankhurst and Annie Kenney (left).



A suffragette was a member of an activist women's organisation in the early 20th century who, under the banner "Votes for Women", fought for the right to vote in public elections in the United Kingdom.

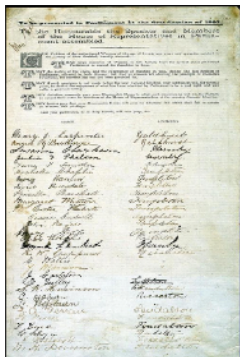
The term refers in particular to members of the British Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), a women-only movement founded in 1903 by Emmeline Pankhurst, which engaged in direct action and civil disobedience.

Picture 02 – The Tynwald (Isle of Man Parliament).



Although the Isle of Man (a British Crown dependency) had enfranchised women who owned property to vote in parliamentary (Tynwald) elections in 1881.

Picture 03 – New Zealand Petition.



New Zealand was the first self-governing country to grant all women the right to vote in 1893, when women over the age of 21 were permitted to vote in all parliamentary elections.

This is the first sheet of the giant suffrage petition signed by 'Mary J. Carpenter and 25,519 Others' that was submitted to Parliament on 28 July 1893. Suffrage leader Kate Sheppard's signature appears halfway down the left column.

Picture 04 – South Australia



Women in South Australia achieved the same right and became the first to obtain the right to vote and stand for parliament in 1895.

In the United States, women over the age of 21 were allowed to vote in the western territories of Wyoming from 1869 and Utah from 1870, as well as in the states of Colorado and Idaho from 1893 and 1896, respectively.

Picture 05 – Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU).



Formation of the WSPU - Emmeline Pankhurst founded the WSPU in 1903 and became the most prominent of Britain's suffragettes.

It was on October 10, 1903 that I invited a number of women to my

house in Nelson Street, Manchester, for purposes of organisation.

We voted to call our new society the Women's Social and Political Union, partly to emphasise its democracy, and partly to define its object as political rather than propagandist.

We resolved to limit our membership exclusively to women, to keep ourselves absolutely free from party affiliation, and to be satisfied with nothing but action on our question. 'Deeds, not words' was to be our permanent motto. — Emmeline Pankhurst.

Picture 06 – Lydia Ernestine Becker.



In October 1866, amateur scientist Lydia Becker attended a meeting of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science held in Manchester and heard one of the organisers of the petition, Barbara Bodichon, read a paper entitled Reasons for the Enfranchisement of Women.

Becker was inspired to help gather signatures around Manchester and to join the newly formed Manchester committee.

She established Manchester as a centre for the suffrage movement and with Richard Pankhurst she arranged for the first woman to vote in a British election

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A petition presented to Parliament in 1866, by which time the supporters had gathered 1499 signatures, including those of Florence Nightingale, Harriet Martineau, Josephine Butler and Mary Somerville.

Picture 07 – Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney in 1912.



The suffragettes heckled politicians, tried to storm parliament, were attacked and sexually assaulted during battles with the police, chained themselves to railings, smashed windows, carried out a nationwide bombing and arson campaign, and faced anger and ridicule in the media.

Picture 08 – Smashing windows campaign.



1912 was a turning point for the suffragettes, as they turned to using more militant tactics and began a window-smashing campaign. Some members of the WSPU, including Emmeline

Pethick-Lawrence and her husband Frederick, disagreed with this strategy but Christabel Pankhurst ignored their objections.

In response to this, the Government ordered the arrest of the WSPU leaders and, although Christabel Pankhurst escaped to France, the Pethick-Lawrences were arrested, tried and sentenced to nine months' imprisonment.

Picture 09 – Force feeding.



Suffragettes were not recognised as political prisoners, and many of them staged hunger strikes while they were imprisoned.

The first suffragette to be forcibly-fed was Evaline Hilda Burkitt, who, between 1909 and 1914 was force-fed 292 times. Mary Richardson was recognized as the second suffragette to be force fed while imprisoned, describing her experience as "torture" and an "immoral assault."

Without consulting suffragette leaders such as Pankhurst, they refused food in protest at being denied political prisoner status. After a 92-hour hunger strike, and for fear of her becoming a martyr, the Home Secretary Herbert Gladstone decided to release her early on medical grounds.

Picture 10 – Media cover.



A 1910 poster by Alfred Pearce for the WSPU showing a suffragette being force-fed.

The process of tube-feeding was strenuous without the consent of the hunger strikers, who were typically strapped down and force-fed via stomach or nostril tube, often with a considerable amount of force.

The process was painful, and after the practice was observed and studied by several physicians, it was deemed to cause both short-term damage to the circulatory system, digestive system and nervous system and long-term damage to the physical and mental health of the suffragettes.

Some suffragettes who were force-fed developed pleurisy or pneumonia as a result of a misplaced tube. Women who had gone on hunger strike in prison received a Hunger Strike Medal from the WSPU on their release.

In the early 20th century until the outbreak of World War I, approximately one thousand suffragettes were imprisoned in Britain. Most early incarcerations were for public order offences and failure to pay outstanding fines.

Picture 11 – The Suffragette Newspaper and media.



Stung by the stereotypical image of the strong minded woman in

masculine clothes created by newspaper cartoonists, the suffragettes resolved to present a fashionable, feminine image when in public.

In 1908, the co-editor of the WSPU's Votes for Women newspaper, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, designed the suffragettes' colour scheme of purple for loyalty and dignity, white for purity, and green for hope

Picture 12 – The Derby at Epsom in 1913



One suffragette, Emily Davison, died under the King's horse, Anmer, at The Derby on 4 June 1913.

It is debated whether she was trying to pull down the horse, attach a suffragette scarf or banner to it, or commit suicide to become a martyr to the cause.

However, recent analysis of the film of the event suggests that she was merely trying to attach a scarf to the horse, and the suicide theory seems unlikely as she was carrying a return train ticket from Epsom and had holiday plans with her sister.

Picture 13 – The Rosslyn Chapel



In 1914, at least seven churches were bombed or set on fire across the United Kingdom, including Westminster Abbey, where an explosion aimed at destroying the 700-year-old Coronation Chair, only caused minor damage.

Places that wealthy people, typically men, frequented were also burnt and destroyed whilst left unattended so that there was little risk to life, including cricket pavilions, horse-racing pavilions, churches, castles and the second homes of the wealthy.

The Rosslyn Chapel was one of the many churches and buildings attacked in the 'bombing' campaign.

Picture 14 – Great Yarmouth Pier.



Before and after it was bombed and burned down by suffragettes in 1914

Picture 15 – The First World War began.



After Britain joined the war, the WSPU took the decision to suspend their own campaigning. Leader Emmeline Pankhurst instructed

suffragettes to stop their violent actions and support the government in the conflict against Germany.

End.