



Administrative/Biographical History

The Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) was founded in Manchester in 1903 in the home of the Pankhurst family. The WSPU was to be more radical and militant than the previous law-abiding organisations. Tactics of members included disrupting political meetings, smashing windows, chaining themselves to railings and hunger strikes. They held conferences and produced their own newspaper *Votes for Women* and in 1908 *The Women's Press*.

There were a series of splits and schisms over some of the tactics used from time to time, however one of the side effects of this was that there is a legacy of different suffrage newspapers. Perhaps the most tragic episode of the whole suffrage campaign was the death of Emily Davison, who threw herself under, or was hit by (nobody knows for sure), the King's horse that was running in The Derby at Epsom in June 1913. She died in hospital four days later. When war broke out in 1914 the vast majority of those involved in the WSPU threw themselves into supporting the war.

Sources

- **Newspapers** – we hold a number of suffrage-related newspapers on microfilm:
 - Egoist (New Free Women)***: Nov 1911 to 1919 (incomplete)
 - Suffragette (Britannia)***: January 1914 to December 1918
 - Women Worker*** (later ***Women Folk***): June 1908 to February 1911
 - Women's Dreadnought***: March 1914 to June 1924 (incomplete)
- ***The Writing's of Sylvia Pankhurst. WSPU***: 1915-1919 (microfilm)
- **Pamphlets** - ref 331.4, these contain a number of WSPU conference reports.

- **Labour Representation Committee (LRC) papers** – these begin in 1900 and are the foundation documents of the Labour Party. They contain correspondence from a number of affiliated women’s suffrage groups.
- **Women’s Labour League (WLL)** - these papers cover the period 1906 to 1918. They contain minutes, correspondence, conference reports, and ephemera. Although the WLL was part of the Labour Party, the issue of women’s suffrage was of crucial importance to its formation and daily activity. There are also bound volumes of WLL conference reports.
- **Labour Woman 1918-1971** – the magazine of the Women’s Labour League.
- **War Emergency: Workers’ National Committee (WNC)** - a number of leading Suffragettes were active in this Committee during the First World War; there are several useful files on the role of women in the War and the suffrage issue.

Related material

There are a number of books in our reference library relating to women’s suffrage – ref 331.42

