



Mapping the suffrage matrimoine as an exercise in national "transmission of positivity"

Marc Calvin-Lefebvre

► To cite this version:

Marc Calvin-Lefebvre. Mapping the suffrage matrimoine as an exercise in national "transmission of positivity". Congrès de la Société des Anglicistes de l'Enseignement Supérieur, Jun 2023, Rennes, France. hal-04430770

HAL Id: hal-04430770

<https://hal.science/hal-04430770>

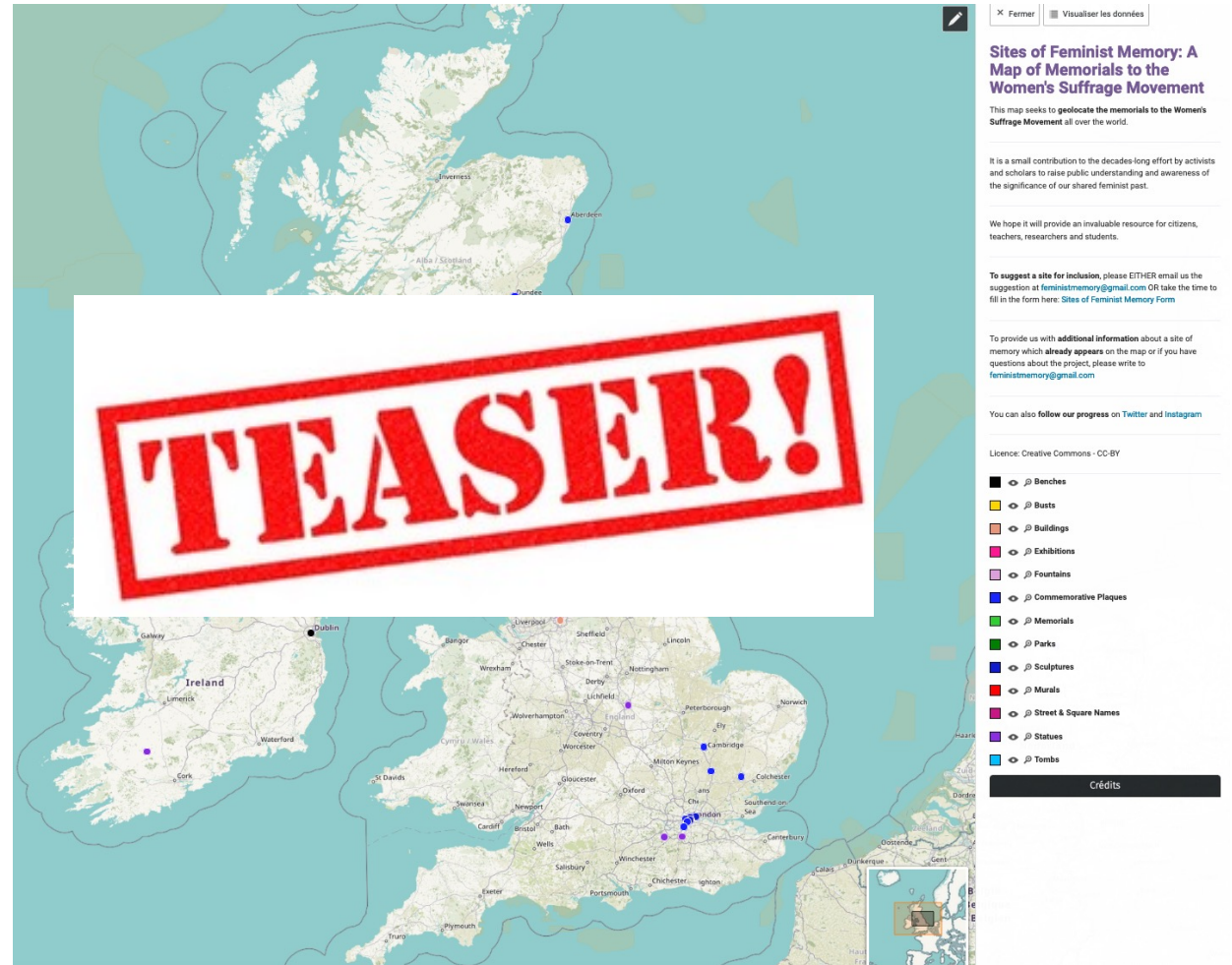
Submitted on 1 Feb 2024

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Mapping the suffrage *matrimoine* as an exercise in national “transmission of positivity”

Marc Calvini-Lefebvre, Atelier de la
SAGEF, Congrès de la SAES, Rennes
02/06/2023





THIS IS SO EXCITING!!

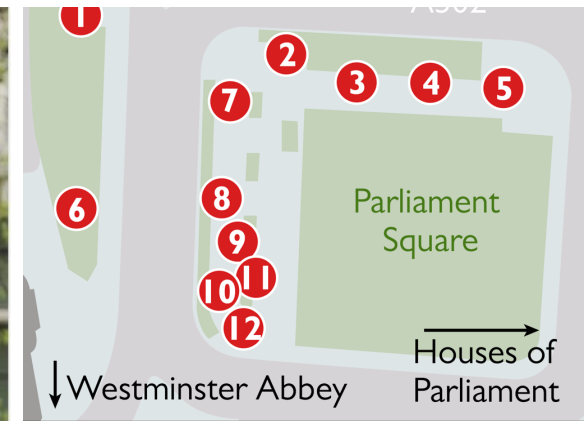




Feminists ❤️ statues



Breaking the “bronze ceiling”



Parliament Square statues

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| 1 George Canning | 7 Edward Smith-Stanley |
| 2 Palmerston | 8 Disraeli |
| 3 Jan Smuts | 9 Gandhi |
| 4 Lloyd George | 10 Robert Peel |
| 5 Churchill | 11 Fawcett |
| 6 Abraham Lincoln | 12 Mandela |

ERROR
404



Why remember *suffrage*?

Ann Rigney: “the cultural transmission of positivity and the commitment to particular values”

“Remembering hope: transnational activism beyond the traumatic”, *Memory Studies*, Issue 3, Volume 11, pp. 368-80, 2018

The Suffragette in my House

by Isabeau Kemp
MWS Youth Voice

Hi, my name is Isabeau and I'm 11 years old. I am going to tell you the story and my thoughts about a girl who grew up in my house over 100 years ago and became a suffragette. Her name was Ethel Baldock.

A couple of years ago my family was sent a picture of the Baldock family who used to live in my house in Orchard Place, Maidstone, by a lady writing a book about Suffragettes in Kent called Jennifer Godfrey. Can you imagine my surprise when we opened the letter and there was an old photo of a family sitting outside my house! SHOCKED!!! And that one of the girls was a suffragette. It was so cool! This is the photograph of the Baldock family outside my house in 1899. Ethel is on the left, holding a book. Underneath is a picture of my family outside the house. I'm the one in the middle!



Image of the Baldock Family 1899 (Ethel on left holding book). Courtesy: The Baldock family.



The Kemp family outside the house (I'm in the middle)

A “citizen science” project

Idea:

Make an online map of the sites of memory dedicated to women's suffrage with the help of “the general public”

Scientific goals:

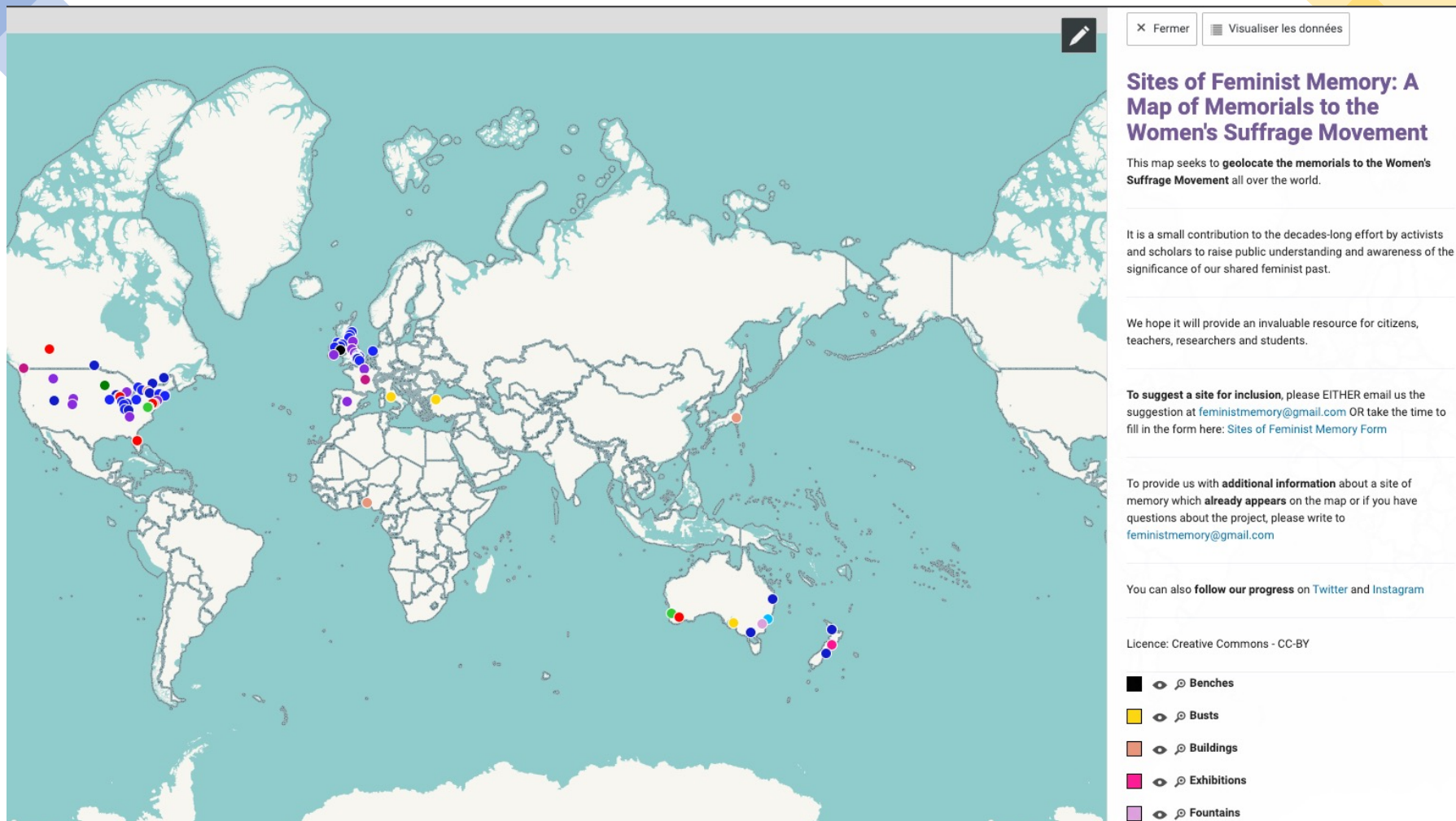
- Create an open database of memorials all around the world to facilitate comparative analyses
- Identify contemporary agents of memory so as to conduct interviews with them about the drivers of the *désir de mémoire*

Educational goal:

Create an accessible and engaging gateway into suffrage history

Civic goal:

Contribute to spreading and strengthening a “feminist civic culture”





The UK
“matrimoine”: what
is being transmitted?

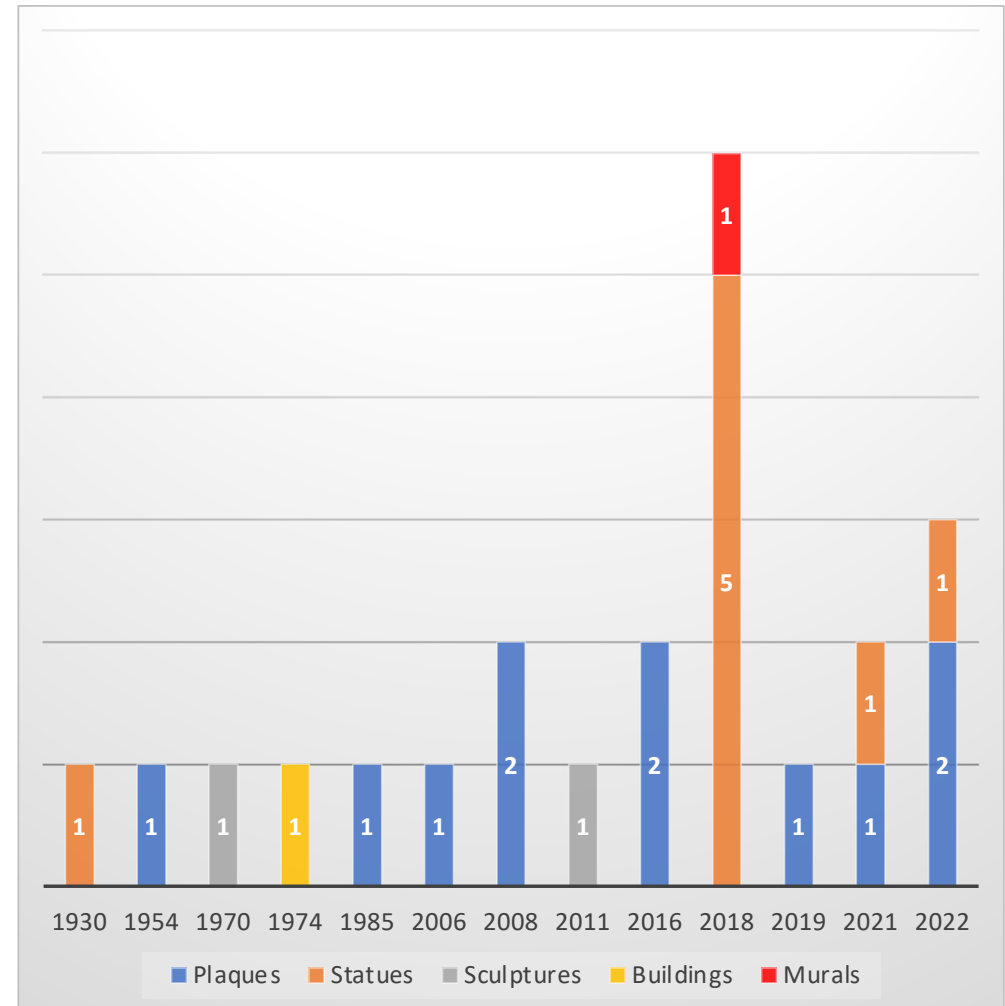


Suffrage history & memory in the UK

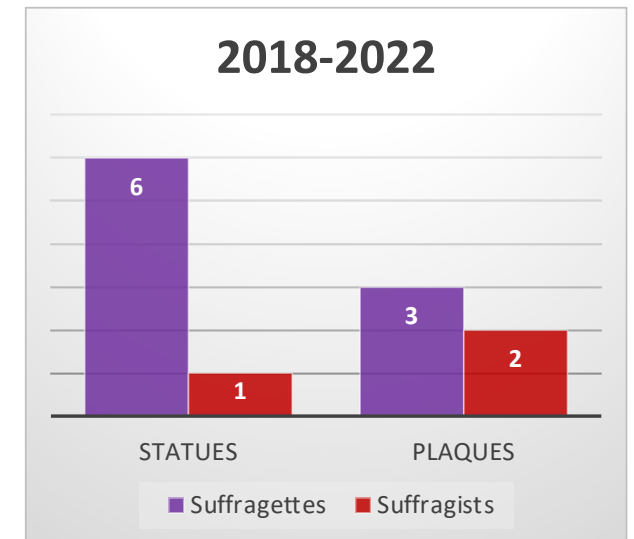
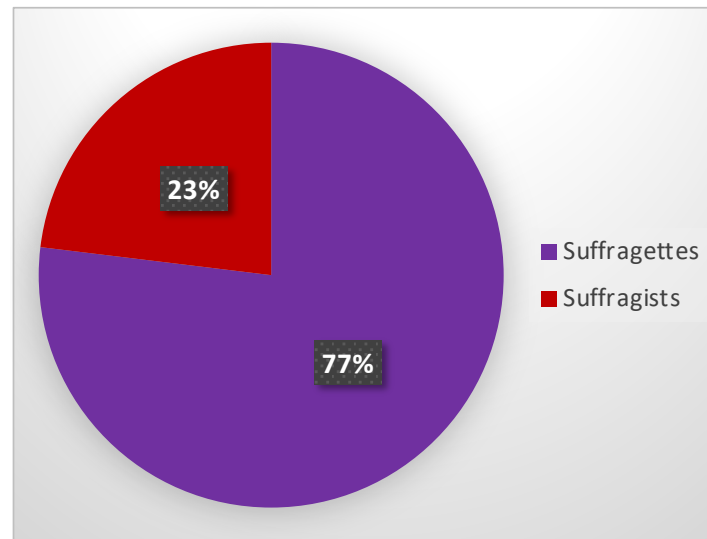
- Narrative tensions between:
 - Master (popular culture) narrative: “those plucky suffragettes”
 - Narrative trends in the historiography since 1970s:
 - Insistence on distinguishing between suffragists and suffragettes
 - emphasis on working-class involvement & geographical diversity
 - Move away from hagiography and towards “warts and all” assessments
- Questions: Which of these stories do the memorials tell/reinforce/undermine? With what consequences?

Suffrage memorialisation goes mainstream

- The *désir de mémoire* has been powerfully spurred on by the centenary
- It is striking that the principal memorial form since 2018 has been the statue
- Even my small sample almost covers the entire UK (see map) → further work must be done to explore differences in local memorial dynamics



Suffragettes
dominate
the
memorial
landscape



Who gets remembered?

4 "Great Women" = 10/23
memorials

- Emmeline Pankhurst: 3
- Millicent Fawcett: 2
- Emily Davison: 2
- Sylvia Pankhurst: 3




Memorial forms:
tentative
remarks on the
case of Sylvia
Pankhurst

TEASER!



Menu ▾ Start Fundraising Search 🔍



8%
£4,010
raised of £50,000 to
150 supporters

Give Now

Share

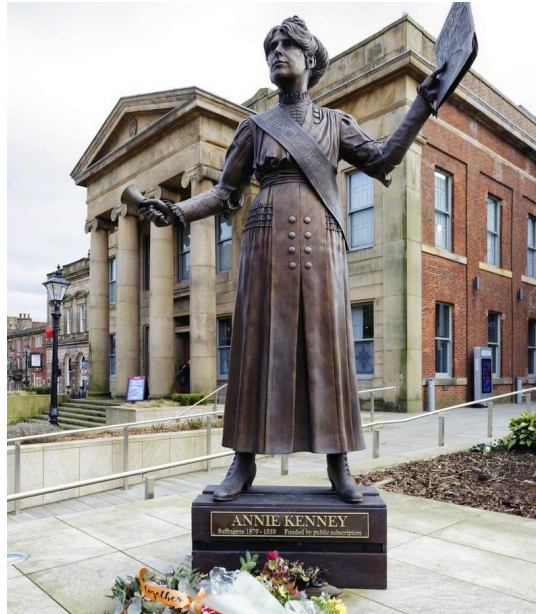
re raising £50,000 to raise a
ue for Sylvia for Sylvia
khurst

ical community 7 days to go

Don't have time to do
now?
Set up a remind



LOUISA
LUMSDEN DBE
1840-1935
PIONEER OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION
PRESIDENT
ABERDEEN ASSOCIATION FOR
WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE
WORKED HERE



AGNES
DAWSON
1873-1953
EDUCATOR, SUFFRAGIST, JP,
TRADE UNIONIST, POLITICIAN
IN LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL
SHE BROKE THE BAR ON
MARRIED WOMEN TEACHERS
LIVED HERE 1926-53
PLAQUE SPONSORED BY NEWPORT NEWS

ULSTER HISTORY CIRCLE
ELIZABETH G. BELL
1862-1934
Physician, Suffragist
One of the first women
medical graduates in Ireland
1893
born at Springhill House
near this site



Who gets remembered? The drive to diversify

13/23 memorials are to "less famous" women

- All unveiled since 2008
- 3 statues, 2 to working-class activists
- 11 plaques, either in places born or lived in

Scales of memory

- Local scale: statues erected to celebrate “our local heroine”
→ expressions of civic pride & identity
- National scale: powerful disagreements over how to represent a movement



Conclusions

- The suffrage past has become a *matrimoine* because it is a “safe” past through which to express a commitment to “mainstream” feminist ideas
- This matrimoinialisation has NOT predominantly pushed forward a “feminism is done with” narrative
- Neither has it dislodged the master narrative of “those plucky suffragettes”
- But it has seen a push to diversify the stories told
- And these sites of memory have become public flashpoints for the expression of a diversity of feminist ideas
- Outstanding question: does “transmitting positivity” mean “forgetting the warts”?



Watch this space ;)



TEASER!



PLATEFORME

INSTITUT //////////////
DES SCIENCES ETIENNE
DU MOUVEMENT JULES
//////////////////// MAREY



Thank you!

