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

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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

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Sites of Feminist Memory: A Map of Memorials to the Women's Suffrage Movement

This map seeks to geolocate the memorials to the Women's Suffrage Movement all over the world.

It is a small contribution to the decades-long effort by activists and scholars to raise public understanding and awareness of the significance of our shared feminist past.

We hope it will provide an invaluable resource for citizens, teachers, researchers and students.

To suggest a site for inclusion, please EITHER email us the suggestion at feministmemory@gmail.com OR take the time to fill in the form here: [Sites of Feminist Memory Form](#)

To provide us with additional information about a site of memory which already appears on the map or if you have questions about the project, please write to feministmemory@gmail.com

You can also follow our progress on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#)

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- Benches
- Busts
- Buildings
- Exhibitions
- Fountains
- Commemorative Plaques
- Memorials
- Parks
- Sculptures
- Murals
- Street & Square Names
- Statuses
- Tombs

Crédits



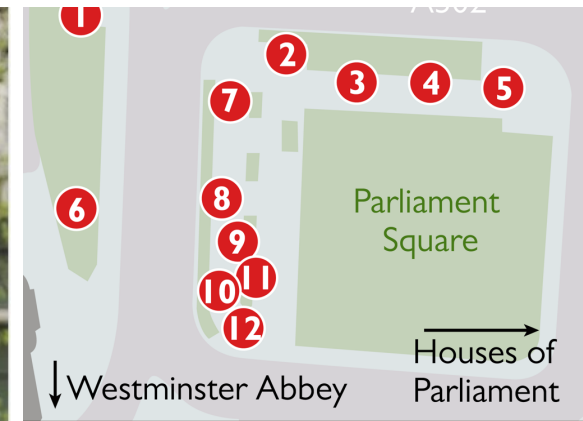
THIS IS SO EXCITING!!





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
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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:

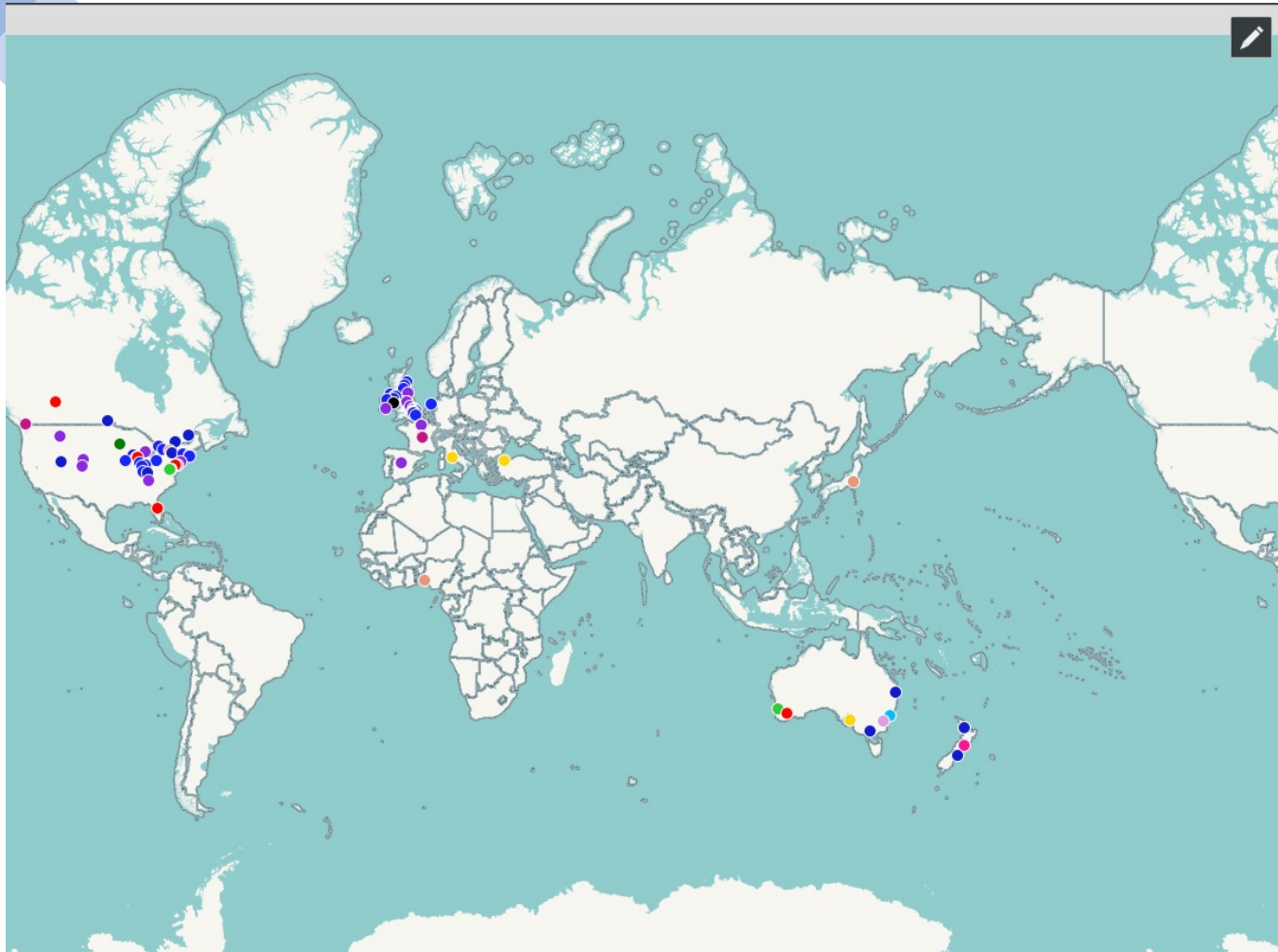
- Create an open database of memorials all around the world to facilitate comparative analyses
- Identify contemporary agents of memory so as to conduct interviews with them about the drivers of the *désir de mémoire*

Educational goal:

Create an accessible and engaging gateway into suffrage history

Civic goal:

Contribute to spreading and strengthening a “feminist civic culture”



X Fermer Visualiser les données

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- Benches
- Busts
- Buildings
- Exhibitions
- Fountains



The UK
“matrimoine”: what
is being transmitted?

CAREY MULLIGAN HELENA BONHAM CARTER
BRENDAN GLEESON ANNE-MARIE DUFF AND MERYL STREEP

VOTES FOR WOMEN
MOTHERS.
DAUGHTERS.
REBELS.

SUFFRAGETTE

FOCUS FEATURES, PATHE, FILM4 and BFI present in association with INGENUOUS MEDIA with the participation of CANAL+ and CINE+ a RUBY FILMS production CAREY MULLIGAN HELENA BONHAM CARTER BRENDAN GLEESON ANNE-MARIE DUFF BEN WHISHAW and MERYL STREEP "SUFFRAGETTE" CASTING BY FIONA VEIR HAIR AND MAKEUP BY SHAN GRIGG COSTUME DESIGNER JANE PETRIE PRODUCTION DESIGNER ALICE NORRINGTON EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ALEXANDRE DESPLAT AND BARNEY PILLING DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY EDU GRAU EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ANDY STEBBING HANNAH FARRELL PRODUCED BY CAMERON MCCrackEN TESSA ROSS ROSE GARNETT NIK BOYER JAMES SCHAMUS TERESA MONEO PRODUCED BY ALISON OWEN AND FAYE WARD

PG-13

FILM4

OCTOBER 23

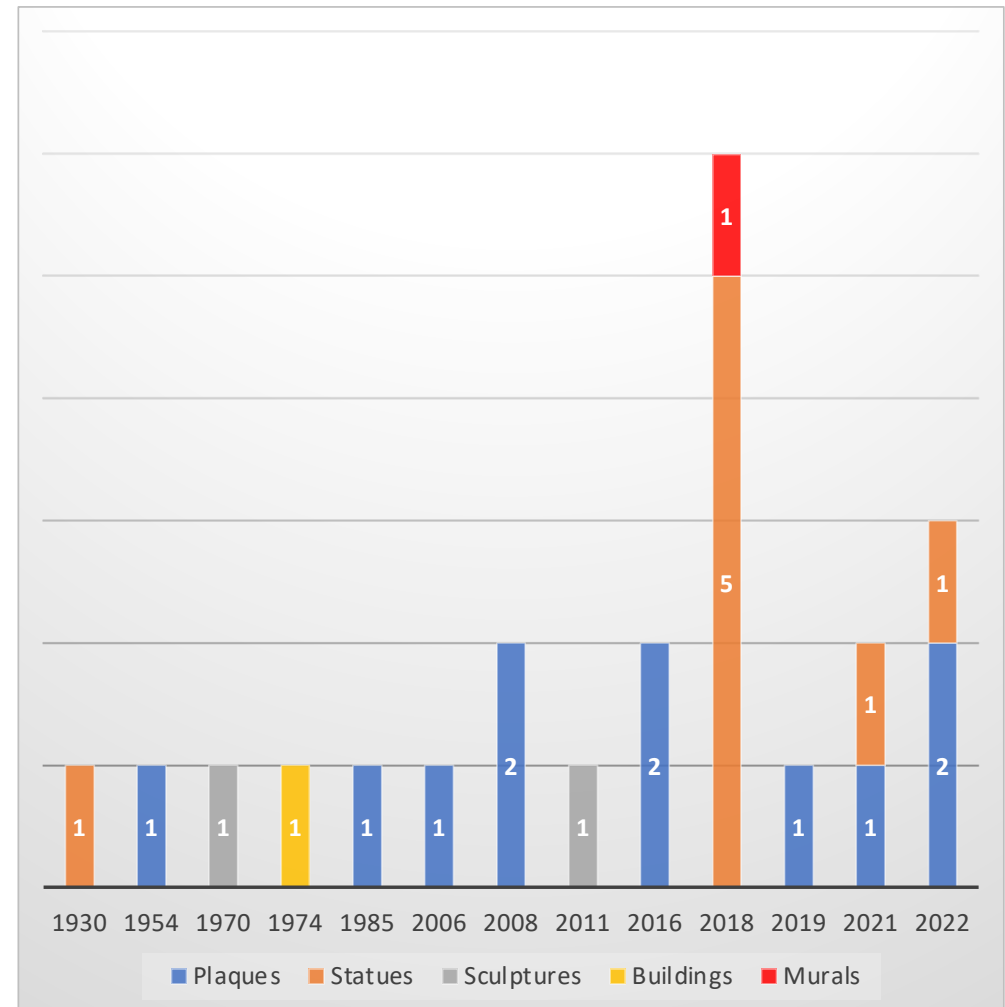
SUFFRAGETTE

Suffrage history & memory in the UK

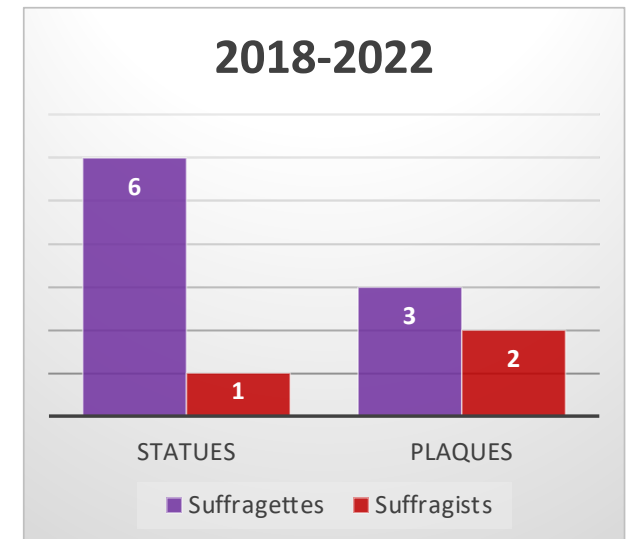
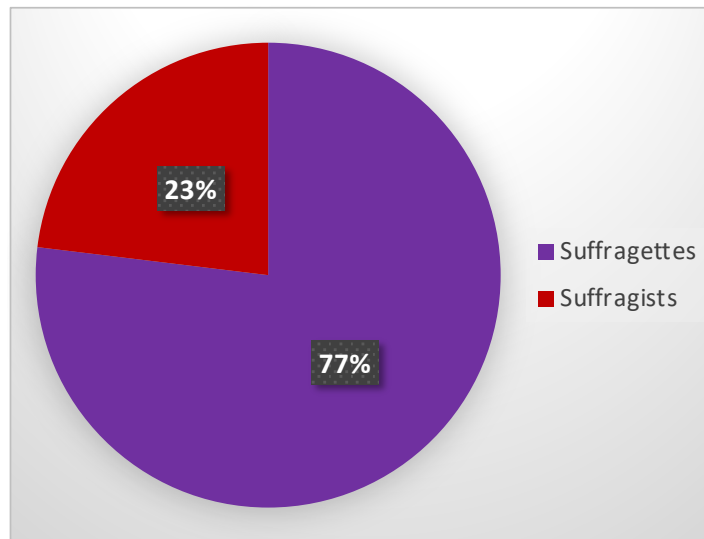
- Narrative tensions between:
 - Master (popular culture) narrative: “those plucky suffragettes”
 - Narrative trends in the historiography since 1970s:
 - Insistence on distinguishing between suffragists and suffragettes
 - emphasis on working-class involvement & geographical diversity
 - Move away from 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 memoire* 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

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

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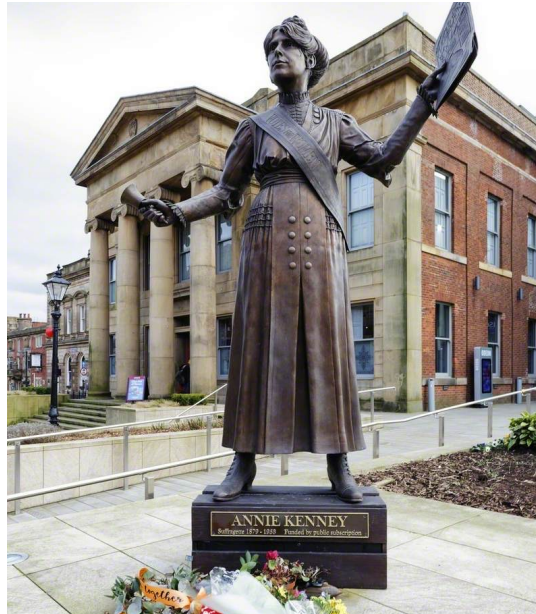
ical community 7 days to go

[Set up a remind](#)

Don't have time to do
now?



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

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



Thank you!

