

I'm going to talk to you today about EMMELINE (pronounced 'Em - uh - leen') PANKHURST, who was born in 1858 and spent most of her life campaigning to ensure that women like your mummy were allowed to vote in elections. Nowadays, people would think it was crazy if women like your mummy couldn't vote in an election - but women were only allowed to vote in 1918, when Emmeline Pankhurst was 60 years old. She started campaigning to see that women could vote when she was 14 years old - which means she organised, went on marches, gave speeches, had meetings, and tried to raise money for 46 years before she finally achieved her goal. Imagine working for something for 46 years! It's a good thing she achieved her goal - working for something for 46 years, and not achieving it would be very sad.



Emmeline Pankhurst was born in Manchester - her birth name was Emmeline Goulden. The movement to allow women the right to vote in election was known as the SUFFRAGETTE (pronounced 'suff - rah - jet') movement, and Emmeline became a suffragette at the age of 14 when she heard a speech on the subject. Her work fighting for women's rights led her to meet Richard Pankhurst, a lawyer who also campaigned for women's rights. They got married in 1879, when Emmeline was 21, and as a result Emmeline's surname changed to 'Pankhurst'. She had five children with Richard, including three daughters who would grow up to fight for women's rights to vote alongside her mother - CHRISTABEL, SYLVIA, and ADELA. In 1889, Emmeline and Richard helped to create the 'Women's Franchise (pronounced 'Fran - chyze') League' ('franchise' is another word for 'right to vote') in the hope of persuading people to support the idea that women should be allowed to vote. But the League didn't get anywhere, and Emmeline became very frustrated. Her husband Richard died in 1898, and Emmeline was ready to make some big changes in her life.

In 1903 she created a new organisation called the WOMEN'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL UNION (WSPU), which would take direct non-violent action to force the government to give women the right to vote. Emmeline was arrested in 1908 and sent to prison for six weeks, simply for attempting to walk into Parliament to deliver a petition to the Prime Minister. She was disgusted by the way she was treated while she was in prison - she was given horrible food to eat - but that didn't put her off doing other things that would get her arrested and sent to prison. She thought if she was arrested enough, people would start to pay attention to her cause. When the government ignored her, the WSPU started breaking windows - in particular, hurling rocks at the Prime Minister's home at 10 Downing Street. That got a lot of women arrested, and when they went to jail,



they refused to eat, in order to protest at their imprisonment and the conditions under which they were being held. When you refuse to eat food for a long time, that's called going on a **HUNGER STRIKE**. That is a really dangerous thing to do - people need to eat to live. And the government was very scared of what would happen if one of the women they had locked up died in jail. So they forced the women to eat - something which was a very cruel thing to do. In 1912, Emmeline was arrested again, and joined her fellow women prisoners in refusing to eat - when the prison officers and doctors arrived at her cell to try to force her to eat, she threatened to hit them with a jug that was in her cell. Eventually, the government gave up trying to make the women prisoners eat food, and simply let them go when they started refusing to eat and it looked like they might harm their health.

The suffragettes continued campaigning for women to be allowed to vote. The most famous, and saddest, incident in the suffragettes' campaign happened at the **DERBY** (a big horse race) in 1913. One of the campaigners, **EMILY DAVISON**, ran out in front of the horses as they

came down the track and she was hit and killed by a horse that turned out to be owned by **KING GEORGE V**. It was not clear whether she meant to give up her life in the cause of getting the women the vote (she may have just intended to



disrupt the race) - but if she did, she cannot possibly have known that the horse that hit her was owned by the King (the horses were moving too fast for anyone to be able to identify them clearly). But the fact that the horse was owned by the King made Emily Davison's death a very powerful image of the suffragette cause - it seemed like the women campaigning to be allowed to vote were starting to be killed by the men who had the power to give them the ability to vote.

The start of **WORLD WAR I**, in 1914, caused Emmeline to suspend all campaigning for women to be allowed to vote. She took the view that it was far more important that Britain defeat Germany in the war. But the fact that so many men were sent to France to fight the Germans was ultimately the thing which led to women being allowed to vote in elections from 1918 onwards. They made such a huge contribution to the war effort, replacing the men who had gone to war, in factories and offices, that it became impossible not to recognise that women were the equal of men and deserved to vote in elections just as much as men did. But Emmeline had no idea that World War I would have that effect. Instead, she focused completely on winning the war, organising rallies and giving speeches in favour of the war against Germany. Emmeline's patriotism (which means 'devotion to your country') meant she became a big fan of the **BRITISH EMPIRE**, and she also rejected the **RUSSIAN REVOLUTION**, which happened in 1917. She was a fierce opponent of **COMMUNISM**, and warned about the dangers of communism spreading to Britain.

In 1918, women over 30 were not only granted the right to vote - they were also, for the very first time, given the right to stand for Parliament and become Members of Parliament if they won the election in the constituency (pronounced 'con - stih - chew - ensee') where they were

standing for Parliament. Everyone wanted Emmeline to run, but instead she pushed her daughter Christabel to stand for Parliament. Despite all their efforts, they came agonisingly short of her becoming one of the first female MPs - Christabel lost the election by only 775 votes. Emmeline would later make a run at becoming a Member of Parliament - she announced in 1928 that she would stand for election as a Conservative candidate. Everyone was surprised that she had become a member of the right-wing Conservative party, when she had been such a radical rebel when she was young - but her patriotic views and opposition to communism made her a natural conservative. Emmeline's attempt to run for Parliament soon got into trouble when there was a scandal involving her daughter Sylvia, and Emmeline felt forced to withdraw from the race. She then fell very ill and died on 14 June 1928.

It was a sad end for a woman who had done so much to fight for the rights of women to be treated equally to men when it came to voting in elections. But she is still remembered for what she did - and a statue of Emmeline Pankhurst was put up close to the Houses of Parliament in 1930, just two years after her death. And in 2018, another statue of Emmeline was put up in Manchester, her birthplace. Here is some video coverage of the unveiling of the statue, showing how relevant and remembered Emmeline remains even today: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLZ-bPe8efs>