



# Memorial to Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst

## Overview

Heritage Category:

Listed Building

Grade:

II\*

List Entry Number:

1357336

Date first listed:

05-Feb-1970

Date of most recent amendment:

21-Dec-2018

Location Description:

Victoria Tower Gardens, by the north-west entrance from Abingdon Street.

[illegible]

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## Location

City of Westminster (London Borough)

**Parish:**

Non Civil Parish

**National Grid Reference:**

TQ3022479329

## Summary

Memorial to Emmeline Pankhurst, unveiled 1930, by A G Walker and Sir Herbert Baker with later additions of 1959 by Peter Hills commemorating Christabel Pankhurst and the Women's Social and Political Union.

## Reasons for Designation

The memorial to Emmeline Pankhurst of 1930, expanded to commemorate Christabel Pankhurst and members of the Women's Social and Political Union in 1959 is listed at Grade II\* for the following principal reasons:

**Architectural interest:**

\* as a finely crafted piece of commemorative sculpture which brings together the work of several noted artists and architects; \* in the full-body bronze by Arthur George Walker which captures well the likeness of Pankhurst in an expressive but naturalistic style, depicting her in characteristic dress and pose; \* in its depiction of Pankhurst, choice of inscription and location, the memorial bears witness to the struggle and success of the movement she led; \* in the quality of the later expansion which gives additional presence to an already strong work and echoes the original design for the base of the memorial which Walker had proposed.

**Historic interest:**

\* for its commemoration of a major figure of the C20 whose contribution to the fight for women's enfranchisement was recognised by the establishment she committed her life to challenging; \* for its rarity in commemorating a woman, for the exceptional nature of her achievements as the leader of the militant suffrage campaign, and the fact that it was commissioned by the women she led; \* in its later commemoration of Christabel Pankhurst and the women of the WSPU the memorial commemorates the militant suffrage campaign as well as the figures who led it; \* in marking the year of Pankhurst's death the monument also marks the point at which the campaign for women's suffrage achieved its ultimate objective: a seminal moment in British history and in the advancement of women's rights.

## History

"As in former times, so now men commemorate their heroes and liberators by erecting statues; shall not women claim equal honour for her who led them to victory?" (National Archives ref: WORK 20/188).

THE MEMORIAL Emmeline Pankhurst (1858-1928) was a British political activist who founded the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), the most iconic of Britain's suffrage organisations. Shortly after her death the Pankhurst Committee Memorial Fund was established; this was run by Katherine Willoughby Marshall, a former WSPU member and part of Pankhurst's 'bodyguard' team, with Lady Rhondda, Welsh peer, businesswoman and former WSPU organizer, as Treasurer. Funds of over £2000 were gathered from subscriptions from Pankhurst's friends and supporters to pay for the memorial statue, the purchase of Georgina Brackenbury's portrait of Pankhurst for the National Portrait Gallery and a headstone for her grave at Brompton Cemetery.

By January 1929 Marshall had engaged the support of the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, to unveil the memorial statue, but agreeing a suitable site for it with the Office of Works and Royal Fine Arts Commission took some negotiation; it was considered of paramount importance to the sponsors that it be located in the vicinity of Parliament as the primary focus for Pankhurst's political activism. It was eventually settled that the memorial would be erected in Victoria Tower Gardens, a small public park to

the immediate south of the Palace of Westminster and Victoria Tower. The statue of Pankhurst was the work of painter and sculptor A G Walker, but after the Royal Fine Arts Commission criticised his proposed plinth, this was redesigned by the eminent architect Sir Herbert Baker. Marshall requested that Baker make a small aperture in the plinth to fit a box containing medals awarded by Pankhurst to WSPU members. The box was laid in the plinth shortly before the memorial's unveiling but it is not known if the box or its contents survived the subsequent relocation in 1956.

The memorial was unveiled by the now former Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin on 30 March 1930; the ceremony included a programme of music played by the Metropolitan Police Band, prayers and the laying of wreaths. For some years after, annual memorial services were held at the site by the Suffragette Fellowship. In 1956 the memorial was moved to its present location during the re-landscaping of Victoria Tower Gardens. The new site was agreed upon after the Suffragette Fellowship strongly objected to the first proposal, which would have taken it slightly further away from the Houses of Parliament.

Following the death in 1958 of Christabel Pankhurst, Emmeline's eldest daughter and co-campaigner, a memorial committee was established and Peter Hills was commissioned to expand the existing memorial to Emmeline to commemorate Christabel and members of the WSPU more widely. Hills designed a low curved Portland stone wall to flank the statue of Emmeline; this was reflective of what had previously been proposed by Walker but not executed. The expanded memorial was unveiled on 13 July 1959 by the Lord Chancellor, Lord Kilmauir.

**EMMELINE AND CHRISTABEL PANKHURST** Emmeline Pankhurst (nee Goulden) was born on 14 July 1858 to a merchant family of Moss Side, Manchester. Raised in a political household, at the age of just 14 she heard Lydia Becker, founder and editor of the *Women's Suffrage Journal*, speak; she later wrote that she left the meeting a 'conscious and confirmed suffragist'.

In 1903 Pankhurst was a founding member of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), formed to campaign for votes for women. In its early years there was little to distinguish the WSPU from other pro-suffrage societies, many represented under the umbrella of Millicent Fawcett's National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies. This changed dramatically in October 1905 when Pankhurst's eldest daughter, Christabel, and another WSPU member, Annie Kenney, attended a Liberal Party election meeting at the Free Trade Hall, Manchester. After persistently asking whether a Liberal government would give women votes and unfurling a banner demanding 'Votes for Women', the women were ejected and subsequently arrested. Choosing prison over paying a fine, the action brought the desired media attention for the cause.

From this point the WSPU became a militant organisation, its members known as 'suffragettes'. It moved its Headquarters from Manchester to London, and developed a network of branches with offices throughout Britain. Over the next nine years more than 1000 women went to prison in pursuit of the vote, for a variety of offences ranging from civil (obstruction or unlicensed street selling) to criminal (damage to property and arson). Once in prison, suffragettes continued their protests through hunger striking. This led to the controversial policy of forcible feeding, and in turn to the so-called Cat and Mouse Act of 1913 which allowed hunger-strikers to be released on license until they were well enough to be re-arrested. Pankhurst was the Union's undisputed leader and frequently led from the front, with the first of many arrests and imprisonments coming in 1908. As a persistent hunger-striker, after being sentenced for conspiracy in 1912, Pankhurst spent much of the next 18 months in and out of prison.

The WSPU suspended its militant campaign at the outbreak of war in 1914, Pankhurst calling on suffragettes to support the war and campaigning for women's war work. As the end of the war approached it was clear that votes for women would soon become a reality and the WSPU was renamed the Women's Party, with Pankhurst as its treasurer. The Representation of the People Act 1918 introduced universal suffrage to men over the age of 21 and suffrage to some women, but the restrictions still excluded approximately a third of the female population. Nevertheless, the sex barrier had been broken and Pankhurst knew that equal voting rights could not be delayed indefinitely.

In need of a steady income, Pankhurst spent the next seven years lecturing on social hygiene for the Canadian Government, but her health was declining. In 1925 she accepted an invitation from the Conservative Party to stand as a candidate in Whitechapel in the 1929 election and moved to the constituency, but died on 14 June 1928 from septicaemia after developing influenza. Only a couple of months later the Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act 1928 received Royal Assent. This act gave all women over the age of 21 the right to vote on equal terms as men.

Pankhurst's funeral took place at St John's Church, Smith Square. Her coffin was accompanied by a WSPU flag, and over a thousand women accompanied it to Brompton Cemetery where it was laid in a grave lined with ivy, privet and laurel. Her headstone, by sculptor Julian Phelps Allan (born Eva Dorothy Allan) (1892-1996) is listed at Grade II\*

Christabel Pankhurst (1880 – 1958) was the eldest of Emmeline's five children. A passionate and uncompromising campaigner for women's suffrage, it was she and Annie Kenney, who triggered the organisation's transition to the militant tactics for which it became notorious. Christabel took a key role in devising the organisation's policy and tactics. Her services to the enfranchisement of women were recognised in 1936 when she received a damehood. Christabel died at her home in California in February 1958 and she is buried at Woodlawn Cemetery, Los Angeles.

A G WALKER Arthur George Walker (1861-1939) studied as a sculptor at the Royal Academy, but also practised as a painter, illustrator and mosaicist, becoming a full Royal Academician in 1936. He built a reputation as a memorial sculptor, responsible for memorials to the Boer War and the First World War as well as to individuals, including women such as Florence Nightingale (Waterloo Place, London, 1915, listed Grade II), Dame Louisa Aldrich Blake (Tavistock Gardens, London, 1926, listed Grade II) and humanitarian and animal welfare campaigner, Georgiana Baroness Mount-Temple.

## Details

Memorial to Emmeline Pankhurst, unveiled 1930, by A G Walker and Sir Herbert Baker with later additions of 1959 by Peter Hills commemorating Christabel Pankhurst and the Women's Social and Political Union.

MATERIALS: bronze sculpture and relief medallions with Portland stone plinth and side screens.

POSITION: the memorial is approximately 10 metres within the north-west entrance of Victoria Tower Gardens, facing Abingdon Street. The gardens are situated to the south of the Palace of Westminster.

DESCRIPTION: the memorial comprises a cast bronze statue of Emmeline Pankhurst, just over two metres high, on a stone plinth. To either side are low, curved, exedra-like screens terminating in square piers.

Pankhurst is depicted in a long dress and coat with fur collar. Her right arm and hand is held low but outstretched, a pose she often adopted during her speeches, and left arm is bent at right angles, held against her body and in her left hand she holds an eyeglass. Walker's signature is at the base of the sculpture and at the rear is the maker's mark: 'A. B. Burton/ Founder'. In the late C20 the sculpture was covered in a black coating in a bid to protect the bronze.

The square stone plinth has inset pilasters at the four corners and on the front face bears the inscription: EMMELINE PANKHURST: 1858-1928. Set into the paving at the base of the plinth is a tablet with the following inscription: THIS STATUE OF / EMMELINE PANKHURST / WAS ERECTED / AS A TRIBUTE TO / HER COURAGEOUS / LEADERSHIP OF THE / MOVEMENT FOR THE / ENFRANCHISEMENT / OF WOMEN

The right-hand pier bears a bronze roundel with a cast relief head portrait of Christabel Pankhurst, with the carved inscription below: DAME / CHRISTABEL / PANKHURST / [illegible, possibly post-nominal letters] / 1881-1958. On the outer face of the pier is the following inscription: THESE WALLS AND PIERS HAVE / BEEN ERECTED IN MEMORY / OF DAME CHRISTABEL PANKHURST / WHO JOINTLY WITH HER MOTHER / MRS EMMELINE PANKHURST / INSPIRED AND LED THE / MILITANT SUFFRAGE CAMPAIGN

On the left-hand pier is a second bronze roundel depicting a WSPU prisoners' badge with the following inscription below: W.S.P.U PRISONERS' BADGE 1905-1914. On the outer face of the pier is the following inscription: REPLICA OF BADGE, A BROAD / ARROW ON THE WESTMINSTER / ARMS, GIVEN BY THE WOMEN'S SOCIAL AND POLITICAL UNION / TO OVER 1000 WOMEN WHO / SUFFERED IMPRISONMENT FOR / WOMEN'S ENFRANCHISEMENT.

## Legacy

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System number:

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## Sources

### Websites

Film of the unveiling of the memorial to Emmeline Pankhurst in 1930, accessed 21 September 2018 from

<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/lifes-work-for-women-crowned>

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Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Christabel Pankhurst, accessed 21 September 2018 from

<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/35375> (<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/35375>)

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Emmeline Pankhurst, accessed 21 September 2018 from

<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/35376> (<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/35376>)

### Other

The National Archives, ref: WORK 20/188 – Miscellaneous, Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst, Victoria Tower Gardens, c.1928-30

## Legal

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

End of official listing

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