

Institution: University of Lincoln		
Unit of Assessment: 28 – History		
Title of case study: Votes for Women! The Suffrage Centenary		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2006-18		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): COWMAN, Krista	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of History	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 6 Sep 2006 to date
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014-19		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>This case study presents the impact of Krista Cowman's research into the UK's militant suffrage movement prior to and during the 2018 centenary of votes for (some) British women. The impact described concerns:</p> <p>(a) Creativity, Culture and Society. Cowman's research informed the interpretation and presentation of the suffragette movement to a wider public in, <i>inter alia</i>, a major international feature film <i>Suffragette</i> (dir. Sarah Gavron, 2015); theatre productions in York (<i>Everything is Possible</i>, York Theatre Royal, 2016) and Manchester (<i>She Bangs the Drums</i>, Contact Young Theatre, Manchester, 2018) and the BAFTA-award winning television documentary-drama <i>Suffragettes with Lucy Worsley</i> (BBC1, 2018).</p> <p>(b) Contributing to the commemoration of the suffrage centenary through: blue plaques in York and Liverpool; the selection of regional activists included on the plinth of Millicent Garret Fawcett's statue unveiled in Parliament Square in 2018; exhibitions in Portcullis House and Westminster Hall; public lectures; talks at party conferences; media broadcasts and articles and the updating of 41 entries on Historic England's National Heritage List to spotlight the suffragette connections of significant buildings.</p> <p>(c) Widening public access through participation in the political process via a series of workshops for sixth form pupils with artists, politicians and political pressure groups.</p> <p>Collectively and individually these activities have promoted an increased understanding of gender roles in our political processes, drawing on the history of women's struggle to become equal political actors to inform our understanding of the gendering of contemporary politics.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The underpinning research is by Krista Cowman, Professor of History at Lincoln from September 2006. In 2007 she published <i>Women of the Right Spirit: Paid Organizers in the Women's Social and Political Union</i> (Manchester University Press, 2007). This book was the first study of how the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) the largest militant suffrage society in Britain, functioned as a national political organization. Whereas previous research had concentrated on the Union's militant tactics, the personalities of its best-known leaders and its activities in London, <i>Women of the Right Spirit</i> shifted readers' attention to its numerous branches to show how it operated across the regions and nations of the United Kingdom. In particular her identification of the 150+ women who received salaries from the WSPU in return for their work as full-time district, regional or itinerant organizers demonstrated the strength and spread of regional suffrage branches and reinterpreted militancy as a national rather than a metropolitan phenomenon. Through focusing on the Union's grass roots activities and the work of its local organizers (many of whom had never previously figured in suffrage histories) Cowman's research challenged perceptions of the class composition of the militant suffrage movement, revealing significant participation by working-class women throughout the UK. Her identification</p>		

of the complex, mixed-class composition of WSPU branches and the importance of the branch network in recruiting and retaining members and encouraging and supporting them in militant activism including imprisonment informed the presentation of the WSPU's grass roots in the 2015 film *Suffragette*.

Cowman explored further aspects of local suffrage in *The Militant Suffrage Movement in York* (Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, 2007). This first study of the WSPU in York, a city not previously known for suffragette activity, identified key local activists who participated in a range of militancy in York and Selby. It also revealed for the first time the existence of a complex map of 'safe houses' across Britain. Suffragettes on temporary release from prison under the terms of the controversial 'Cat and Mouse' (Temporary Discharge of Prisoners) Act of 1913 evaded re-arrest, secretly moving from house to house helped by local suffragette branches. Author Bridget Foreman used this research in devising the script for *Everything is Possible*, a play about the York suffrage campaign performed at York Theatre Royal in July 2017. An updated version of the Borthwick publication incorporating 1911 census data was issued alongside the production and sold out.

In 2017 Historic England awarded Cowman £15,444 for *Herstories: Sites of Suffragette Sabotage*. This project (winner of a British Library Digital Labs award) updated the text for 41 entries on The National Heritage List for England, the official register of listed buildings. Cowman was also part of a small group of experts who worked with the Office of the Mayor of London to select the 59 suffrage supporters whose names are included on the plinth of the statue of Millicent Garret Fawcett unveiled in Parliament Square in 2018.

The final chapter of *Women of the Right Spirit* followed the WSPU's organizers into the First World War. This uncovered the previously unknown extent of formal opposition to Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst's support for the war, showing how many key activists challenged the leadership's suspension of their campaign by continuing campaigning in dissident groups such as the Independent Suffragettes and the Suffragettes of the WSPU. In 2017 Cowman was awarded £74,922 by the AHRC for 'What Difference did the War Make' a project in conjunction with Vote 100 (the official UK Parliament body coordinating the centenary of the Representation of the People Act 1918) and Professor Angela Smith (Plymouth University) for a series of events and exhibitions exploring suffrage during the war.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- 3.1 Cowman, K. *Women of the Right Spirit! Paid Organizers of the Women's Social and Political Union, 1904 – 18* (Manchester University Press, 2007; paperback 2011). Available on request
- 3.2 Updated text for 41 buildings for The Heritage List owned/managed by Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>
- 3.3 Cowman, K. *The Militant Suffrage Movement in York* (Borthwick Institute, 2007, rep. 2018) <https://www.york.ac.uk/media/borthwick/documents/samplepages/8.BP110.pdf>
- 3.4 Contributor to the multi-authored volume M.Takanyagi, M. Unwin & P. Seaward, eds., *Voice and Vote* 136p catalogue for the eponymous exhibition in Westminster Hall, 2018. Available on request
- 3.5 Cowman, K. 'Working Class Suffragettes.' *New Statesman*, 6 February 2020. <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/feminism/2018/02/suffragettes-women-100-years-working-class>

4. Details of the impact

Krista Cowman's research into the UK's militant suffrage movement was foundational to a number of events prior to and during the 2018 centenary of the Representation of the People Act.

Creativity, culture and society: Co-Production of New Cultural Artefacts

Cowman's research has influenced and shaped various recent cultural presentations of the militant suffrage campaign. In 2009 she was approached by Sarah Gavron to discuss a potential film about the suffragette movement. Cowman was appointed as Historical Advisor to the project which became the award-winning international film *Suffragette*. She worked with Gavron and scriptwriter Abi Morgan from point of concept to develop a historically accurate representation of

a fictional suffrage branch providing research that enabled the creation of feasible composite characters. Cowman worked with the props and costume department advising on suffragette dress, medals and regalia, and provided information for the film's historically informative endcards praised as 'the most profound moment of the film' (E1Topshop Blog October 2015). She participated in workshops with actors which informed their performances as actor Ben Whishaw acknowledged: 'she...really illuminated a lot for me and helped me to understand the pressures on people like [my character]' (E2). Gavron and Morgan publicly acknowledged the importance of Cowman's research in the 'additional features' section of *Suffragette's* DVD release, which also features an interview with Cowman (E3). Reviews in national and international media connected *Suffragette's* 'immaculate historical accuracy' and its relevance to present-day movements such as #MeToo with comments such as: 'A fantastic resource about a period of history that remains largely unspoken about...About the present, not the past: Oppression is still happening' -*Film Inquiry*; 'The best kind of history lesson [with] a series of arguments about the workings of patriarchal power' – *New York Times*; 'Makes this feminist history relatable to this generation....a movie that matters' – *Rolling Stone*; 'captures and preserves the pulse and passion of a past era, yet strengthens the vibrant urgency of a cause that continues to inform the future' - *Observer* (all E4). Cowman's association with the film led to invitations to speak at several public screenings held as part of other local and national suffrage commemorations including the Women's Museum, Aarhus, Denmark (2015) and Stockholm, Sweden (2019).

When introducing a public screening of *Suffragette* in York in 2015, Cowman was approached by audience member and playwright Bridget Foreman about a possible collaboration with Pilot Theatre and York Theatre Royal. Foreman took *The Militant Suffrage Movement in York* as a basis for her play *Everything is Possible* citing Cowman as 'an immense and authoritative help' and acknowledging that 'her research filtered through into the dramatic narrative of the play as well as individual scenes and characters.' (E5 *Everything is Possible* Education Pack/Letter from Bridget Foreman). *Everything is Possible* was conceived as a large-scale co-production, and Cowman worked with the cast and backstage team to shape the final public performances. These began outside York Minster before moving to the Theatre Royal stage in 'an extraordinary community production' (*Observer* 25 June 2017). The *York Evening Press* noted that 'straighted times for funding for the arts' could be challenged 'when a community comes together and turns York into Suffragette City.' (*Evening Press* 23 June 2017) As well as the wider excitement of co-production, many volunteers enjoyed 'learning what it was like to be a suffragette' and 'bringing life to the city's history' by telling 'stories that are unknown.' (E5 Education Pack). Post-performance evaluations carried out by Pilot Theatre demonstrated the beneficial effects of participation. One cast member said 'I have always been a bit of a small world liberal but this show has radicalised me quite a lot!' Another that it had 'changed my life for the better.' (Evaluation summary Pilot Theatre E5).

In 2017 Cowman worked with Contact Young Theatre Company, Manchester as guest facilitator on *She Bangs the Drums*, an exploration of Manchester's suffrage legacy 'packed full of historical facts' (*Manchester Evening News* 13 March 2018). Here the production team was more interested in catching a mood than establishing a chronological narrative. Cowman advised the cast of young actors on the process of historical research, and the history of the suffrage movement which fed into the Education Pack (E5) and participated in a discussion panel on the final night. The production described by one reviewer as one which 'grabs hold of history and gives it a good shake' spoke particularly to younger audiences through its mixture of historic and modern examples of anti-woman behaviour. 'PHENOMENAL...I left in tears; I was shaking with emotion' was the response of one young audience member. (E5).

In October 2017 Cowman was approached by production company Brook Lapping to work as Historical Consultant on *Suffragettes with Lucy Worsley*, a 90-minute drama-documentary screened by BBC in June 2018. Scriptwriter Emma Frank worked closely with Cowman, using her extensive research on hitherto unrecognized suffragettes to provide background information on the historical characters who featured in the production as well as fact-checking the developing and final script. The production won a BAFTA for 'best specialist factual' broadcast

2018. Presenter Lucy Worsley confirmed that Cowman's close work with scriptwriter and producer 'assure[d] the programme's historical accuracy' as well as enabling it to 'introduce a broader, more socially diverse group of activists to a wide public audience.' (E6). Wide media reviews affirmed the broadcast's success in bringing 'the lesser known (yet equally as fascinating)' suffrage activists to the fore (*Daily Telegraph* 4 June 2018, E6).

Contributing to the commemoration of the 2018 centenary of parliamentary votes for (some) British women. This anniversary drew widespread public attention at local and national level, especially on 6 February (when the original Act was passed) and in June when the mass participation artwork *Processions* took place. As a leading suffrage expert Cowman was interviewed numerous times across the media on both days including BBC (*Today*; *The World Tonight*; *Woman's Hour*) Sky News and on international media. Soundbites from her Radio 5 Live interview with Emma Barnett (February 6 2018) where Cowman cautioned against calls to pardon suffragettes for their crimes fuelled a lively public debate which ran for some weeks. (E7). Days later when an audience member on BBC R4's *Any Questions* asked panellists to debate the possibility, programme chair David Dimbleby reminded them that 'a quite eminent professor of history said...it's a badge of honour that they became criminals.' (E7) Ella Whelan deputy editor of *Spiked*, cited Cowman's comments in her summary of the commemoration's meaning, noting that 'to pardon their daring would be bizarre.' (*Spiked*, 9 February 2018). Cowman was also invited speaker at a range of high-profile political events during the centenary year including the Conservative Women's Organisation Annual Conference and the Liberal Party History Group Fringe Meeting at the Liberal Party Conference, and a Government Equalities Unit day school.

Cowman's research on less familiar suffragettes was critical to extending the range of women commemorated through the centenary. Her *New Statesman* article 'let's not forget the working-class suffragettes' (*New Statesman* 6 February 2018 E7) moved the commemoration beyond familiar leaders and resonated with regional readers. Social Media responses to the piece reflected this; for example, in Leeds, one councillor promoted it on Twitter as 'a good read and includes Leeds' own Leonora Cohen and Mary Gawthorpe'. (E7). In April 2018 a statue of suffrage campaigner Millicent Garret Fawcett was unveiled in Parliament Square. Cowman was one of a group of historians who advised on the selection of 59 activists to be included on the statue's plinth to make it more representative of the broader campaign. London Mayor Sadiq Khan who led on the project was 'keen to make sure working-class women were involved in this statue...[they] were involved in the campaign as well.' (E7) Mary Gawthorpe and Annot Robinson, two working-class WSPU organisers featured in *Women of the Right Spirit* were added to the plinth on Cowman's advice along with Liverpool suffragist Nessie Stewart-Brown.

The non-metropolitan focus of much of Cowman's suffrage research made it central to a number of regional centenary events. After the production of *Everything is Possible*, York Theatre Royal and Pilot Theatre worked with York Civic Trust to put up a blue plaque marking the location of the WSPU's York offices on Coney Street. The Civic Trust relied on 'Cowman's research and expertise to inform where best to place the plaque.' (E7). At an event in Liverpool for North West Trades Council's celebrations for International Women's Day 2018, Liverpool campaigner Jeannie Mole was celebrated with a blue plaque near to her home in Bold Street, in a location researched by Cowman who also provided the biographical information for the supporting text ('Liverpool celebrates women trade unionists', CWU News March 2018, E7).

In 2018, Cowman collaborated with Historic England on *Herstories: Sites of Suffrage Protest and Sabotage*, a key part of HE's suffrage centenary work. Cowman's research identified listed buildings across England with connections to the militant suffrage movement. (*London Live* 6 June 2018 E8). She then produced additional narrative for 41 historic buildings on The Heritage List 'to enhance the list descriptions, adding further information about the role that these sites played in the struggle for women's suffrage' (Historic England *Research* Autumn 2018 p. 31) and upgraded Emmeline Pankhurst's grave in Brompton Cemetery to II* listed status. Heritage Minister Michael Ellis professed himself 'delighted' at these changes, telling *ITV News* that it was 'vital that we continue to remember all those who campaigned so hard for greater equality.' (E8).

HE's Cultural Programme Curator Tamsin Silvey acknowledged the wider importance and influence of *Sites of Suffrage Protest and Sabotage* on other key HE initiatives such as Processions, the nationwide mass-participatory art event across all four UK capitals in June 2018, and praised the project's 'excellent press pick up' with coverage across national and local media (E8). This gave the project significant regional resonance in local media as part of centenary events, making it central to several local commemorations with headlines including 'Suffrage Sites in North West to be Recognised' *ITV News* 8 June 2018; 'Manchester's Sites of Suffrage Protest among those Officially Recognised' *About Manchester*, 8 June 2018; 'Liverpool Sites of Suffragette Protest Recognised' *Your Magazine Liverpool*, 8 June 2018 (all E8). Residents alerted to their area's suffrage pasts reacted with surprise and pride to the relistings. The present incumbent of St Edmund's Hunstanton, where suffragettes had interrupted a service, commented that he had 'been [there] 20 years and...never had any inkling of anything like that' while Brighton Dome's official website announced that its 'suffragette history [was] officially recognised' via the updated list. (E8). The project received a British Library Digital Labs Research Award in 2018.

Widening public access through participation in the political process. Understanding learning and participation. Before and during the centenary year Cowman was PI on 'What Difference did the War Make', an AHRC-funded project that explored the continuity of suffrage activism during WW1 in partnership with Vote 100, UK Parliament's centenary co-ordination group and Professor Angela Smith of Plymouth University. The project added to public knowledge of the wartime suffrage campaign via a display on suffrage and WW1, shown in Portcullis House in 2017, then in Westminster Hall in 2018 and still available on UK Parliament's website (E9). A 38pp booklet produced by UK Parliament written by Cowman with the project team including text and images from the display and specially commissioned poetry and music was sent to every secondary school in Britain (E10). Messages of thanks described this as a useful addition to school libraries.

In tandem with an exhibition the project ran a series of workshops for secondary schools. These were designed to encourage pupils to use the example of the suffrage campaign to consider gender inequalities in present-day politics, and how they themselves might overcome these. Creative activities including poetry, drama and music were combined with educational talks. Participants included local and national politicians, groups such as 50:50 Parliament and Ask Her to Stand who both campaign for a more equal gender balance in UK politics, and creative practitioners. The majority of attendees claimed to have taken new knowledge away from the workshops; several used words such as 'engaging' and 'informative' in free text feedback. One student at the Lincoln event noted that he did 'not believe women in politics is a big issue today' before the event but had been 'really moved by Karen Lee's speech. It is something I need to and will look into further.' Another stated that she now felt 'more equipped as a woman to become involved in politics.' One sixth form tutor commented 'what a fantastic day...we all came away impressed by the breadth of ideas, experiences and perspectives...it was such a worthwhile day, linking well with the topic on democracy in the new AS Politics course and developing the political and gender awareness of all the students.' (All E10).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- 5.1 'Three reasons why you need to watch Suffragette' TopShop Blog 13 October 2015 (E1).
- 5.2 Ben Whishaw, Actor, interview at *Suffragette* London premier, 7 Oct 2015 (E2).
- 5.3 *Suffragette* DVD, Dir. Sarah Gavron, Pathé/20th Century Fox, London 2015 (E3).
- 5.4 A file of international press reviews for *Suffragette* (E4).
- 5.5 Theatre Productions: *Everything is Possible & She Bangs the Drums* Press Reviews, Education Packs & testimonial letters. (E5).
- 5.6 *Suffragettes with Lucy Worsley* reviews and testimonial letter (E6).
- 5.7 A file of media coverage of suffrage centenary events (E7).
- 5.8 A file of media coverage & testimonials relating to English Heritage's *Herstories: Sites of Suffragette Protest and Sabotage* (E8).
- 5.9 'What Difference did the War Make?' Online display (E9).
- 5.10 'What Difference did the War Make' School Booklet & feedback forms (E10).