

## Restoration of Emily Wilding Davison Grave (2007)



The Heritage Lottery Fund awarded a grant of £49,900 to restore the gravestone of Emily Wilding Davison, the suffragette who is one of the most famous of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century Suffragettes. It was Emily Wilding Davison who threw herself under the king's horse at the 1913 Derby thus making her mark in history. Her death and the fervour of the crowds who poured out to witness her funeral and burial can truly be said to have changed the course of history.

Greater Morpeth Development Trust (GMDT) in partnership with Morpeth Town Council (MTC) and the Emily Wilding Davison Working Group, has restored her gravestone in St Mary's Churchyard, Morpeth, Northumberland. Thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund there is signage and interpretation in and around the graveyard; an education package for schools and local youth groups; "Morpeth Town Trail" signs directing tourists to the graveside, and a number of adjacent gravestones have also been restored.

As a young lady Emily defied the odds of a male-dominated society imposed on women, by graduating with a BA at London University and after this she gained a first class honours degree at Oxford University.

She was appalled at the lack of real opportunities women had in late Victorian society but she was especially angered by the stigma attached to all women by being denied the right to vote. A very wealthy female landowner could not vote at the end of the nineteenth century but many of her male staff could. This particular aspect of discrimination greatly angered Emily Wilding Davison.

Emily became a natural follower of the Suffragettes. She took part in attacks on property. She became a leading member of the Suffragettes and was imprisoned and force-fed. On one occasion she barricaded herself in a prison cell to escape force-feeding. Her cell was flooded with ice-cold water, which drenched her while workmen broke down the cell door. Such treatment only made her even more determined.

Emily died from the injuries she sustained at the 1913 Derby where in an attempt to draw attention to the movement towards women's suffrage, she stepped out in front of the King's horse in an apparent attempt to pin the suffragette colours onto the horse's bridle, but was knocked to the ground and died four days later. Emily was buried in St Mary's Churchyard Morpeth, Northumberland. Her headstone has inscribed on it "Deeds not Words".

Thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund this project enabled the restoration of the monument that marks Emily's grave in the churchyard. It has made the site accessible and improve the quality of the visitor experience. The grant enabled the restoration of the iron railings, which were removed during the 2nd world war, reconstruction of the plinth, improving site accessibility, restoration of the headstone and the introduction of essential signage and interpretation boards.

A most exciting part of the project has been working in partnership with Beamish museum to incorporate an educational package where schools and youth groups can learn about the suffragette movement and women in politics.