



*Scenes in the Record Demonstration of Suffragettes* (1910), Emily Wilding Davison 2<sup>nd</sup> from right. Source: BFI National Archive

## Identity of Suffragette Emily Wilding Davison revealed in BFI film footage for the first time

For Immediate release: 6 June 2018, London

The BFI is thrilled to announce the discovery of previously unidentified moving image footage of iconic Suffragette **Emily Wilding Davison** revealed within a film of a Suffragettes procession in 1910, *Scenes in the Record Demonstration of Suffragettes* (1910) held by the BFI National Archive and available to view for free on BFI Player as part of the BFI's Suffragettes on Film collection. This is a significant find as the only previously known footage featuring Emily Davison came from the 1913 Epsom Derby Day, in which she lost her life, and from her funeral procession.

The discovery was made by writer and performer **Deborah Clair** who was watching the BFI's Suffragettes on Film collection as research for her new play about Davison, *A Necessary Woman*. Whilst studying *Scenes in the Record Demonstration of Suffragettes* (1910) Deborah Clair thought she saw Emily Davison in the Suffragette procession, in her graduate gown and mortarboard, "A familiar figure emerged. I instantly knew it was her right away and I even cried out, 'Emily' almost to get her attention! Then, even more strangely, the figure stops as the line temporarily halts and she looks directly at the camera. I could see her up close, in motion, for the first time. She was alive and she looked – defiant!"

Clair compared the moving image to a photo she knew of Davison held by the National Portrait Gallery. Stood next to Christabel Pankhurst and taken on the same day at a **march in Hyde Park on 18 June 1910**, the photograph was identical to the Emily on film: same clothes, same hair, there was no doubt as to her identity. Elizabeth Crawford, a suffrage historian agreed with the positive identification, which was corroborated by biographers and those with family connections. Having checked existing records for the film, the BFI are thrilled to confirm that this moving image identification of Emily Davison is a new discovery.

**BFI silent film curator Bryony Dixon** who curated the *Make More Noise!* Suffragette collection said, "Congratulations to Deborah for spotting Emily Davison in the crowd. It's so exciting that we can now share our film heritage online so that viewers can help us make these type of discoveries. Every contribution, large or small, to our knowledge of these films is great, but this is a really significant case. As an icon of the Suffrage movement Emily Davison is a hugely important national figure, her positive identification in this film is especially poignant given this centenary year".

The news of this discovery is incredibly timely one hundred years after the Representation of the People Act gave the first British women the right to vote. **Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> June** will see 1000s of women and girls in Belfast, Cardiff, Edinburgh and London come together to take part in a celebratory mass participation artwork, **PROCESSIONS**, commissioned by **14-18 NOW**, the UK's arts programme for the First World War centenary and produced by **Artichoke**. Whilst we know Emily Davison's story the best, what this footage demonstrates and this discovery reinforces, especially in the light of the centenary celebrations, is the importance of every woman's story in that demonstration, and being able to make a direct link between the past and the present.

Deborah Clair is currently on a UK tour with *A Necessary Woman*. Based on a true event, the play focuses on Census Night, 2nd April, 1911, when Suffragette Emily Davison hid in a cleaning cupboard, in the crypt beneath the Palace of Westminster, planning a daring act in Parliament. Further details of the production available [www.clairobcur.co.uk](http://www.clairobcur.co.uk)

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**ABOUT THE BFI**

The BFI is the lead body for film in the UK with the ambition to create a flourishing film environment in which innovation, opportunity and creativity can thrive by:

- Connecting audiences to the widest choice of British and World cinema
- Preserving and restoring the most significant film collection in the world for today and future generations
- Championing emerging and world class film makers in the UK - investing in creative, distinctive and entertaining work
- Promoting British film and talent to the world
- Growing the next generation of film makers and audiences

The BFI is a Government arm's-length body and distributor of Lottery funds for film. The BFI serves a public role which covers the cultural, creative and economic aspects of film in the UK. It delivers this role:

- As the UK-wide organisation for film, a charity core funded by Government
- By providing Lottery and Government funds for film across the UK
- By working with partners to advance the position of film in the UK.

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter.

The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Josh Berger CBE.

**ABOUT THE BFI NATIONAL ARCHIVE**

The BFI National Archive was founded in 1935 and has grown to become the one of the largest and most important collections of film and television in the world with over 180,000 films and 750,000 television programmes. For over 80 years the BFI has been an international leader in film preservation and guardian of Britain's unparalleled film and TV heritage. The BFI is an innovator in presenting films to audiences in new and dynamic ways, from cinemas to film festivals, outdoor events to online video-on-demand. At the heart of all its activities is the BFI's central aim to ensure that everyone in the UK has access to the widest possible range of film and their own film heritage.

That heritage includes all time great British directors Alfred Hitchcock, David Lean and Powell and Pressburger; and the rich vein of documentary filmmaking, in which Britain led the world, including the lyrical work of Humphrey Jennings. The archive also boasts a significant collection of filmmakers' papers as well as extensive stills, posters and production and costume designs along with original scripts, press books and related ephemera.

Expert teams undertake the time-consuming and complex task of restoring films at the BFI John Paul Getty Jr Conservation Centre in Hertfordshire. The BFI's most precious film materials are kept in optimum conditions in the world-leading Master Film Store in Warwickshire.