

Peaceful Protest: Suffrage and the Great Pilgrimage in Yorkshire, 1913

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A dissertation submitted to The Open University
for the degree of MA in History

January 2021

WORD COUNT: 15,550

Abstract

This study investigates the non-militant Great Pilgrimage of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) as it moved through four localities in Yorkshire during the summer of 1913. With much of the historiography of the suffrage movement focusing on the militant movements of the Women's Social and Political Union, the significant contribution of the National Union's campaign efforts have been largely overlooked, particularly on a local and regional level. This research examines the development, intention, strategy, reception and objectives of the Pilgrimage and assesses the success of this constitutional form of campaign. By exploring the existing militant, non-militant and anti-suffrage networks in the region, the origins of a march as a form of suffrage campaign and the way in which the Great Pilgrimage was received throughout the county allows for a greater understanding of the complex nature of suffragism in Yorkshire. By 1913, the campaign for women's enfranchisement was at a critical juncture, with the NUWSS seeking a new and striking way to end the deadlock with a disinterested Liberal government. Their solution was the largest march of the entire British suffrage movement, which moved through almost every corner of England in order to demonstrate the popularity and growth of suffrage throughout the country, whilst gaining further support and cementing their right for enfranchisement. This ambitious advertisement of non-militant suffrage transected the unique formations of suffrage networks throughout Yorkshire and exposed the anti-suffrage campaign which co-existed in parts of the county. The pilgrims experienced divergent responses to their march throughout their journey through Ripon, Harrogate, Leeds and Wakefield, and this study investigates the local components which shaped their experience.

Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my unerring gratitude to Dr Rachel Duffett for her invaluable expertise, guidance and encouragement during the writing of this dissertation. I

would also like to thank the unfailing support of my husband, Paul, for his boundless belief in me.

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Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work and that I have not submitted it, or any part of it, for a degree at The Open University or at any other university or institution. Parts of this dissertation are built on work I submitted for assessment as part of A825.

List of Abbreviations

EFF	Election Fighting Fund
ILP	Independent Labour Party
NLOWS	National League for Opposing Woman Suffrage
NUWSS	National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies
WSPU	Women's Social and Political Union

Chapter 1: Introduction

When Ida Beaver, the dedicated suffragist from Tyneside, was described as 'Amazonian' by the *Yorkshire Post*, we are compelled to consider 'en amazone', the women of revolutionary France who incited insurrection on the avenues of Paris, dismantling the demarcation between public and private space and operating in streets to allow their message to be heard.¹ Over a century later, countless men and women took to the streets throughout England to continue the peaceable fight of their own revolution; one of female enfranchisement.

The largest march in the entirety of the British suffrage campaign, the Great Pilgrimage took place in 1913 in the last summer before the onset of the First World War. Organised by the biggest suffrage organisation in the country, the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), the march has been a largely forgotten but deeply significant action of the suffrage movement which engaged thousands of people from across the country to make the 'pilgrimage' throughout England, culminating in a mass demonstration in Hyde Park, London. This often difficult, dangerous and arduous act was a symbolic gesture of co-operation, unity and a demonstration of the far-reaching support of women's enfranchisement across the country. Going further than any other march, demonstration or procession that had come before, the Pilgrimage was the embodiment of large networks of suffrage societies publicising their cause by non-militant means. Ensuring a distinction was made between militant suffragettes and constitutional suffragists, the National Union intended to eclipse the rhetoric of suffragist militancy, arson attacks and window

¹ Dominique Godineau, *The Women of Paris and Their French Revolution*, trans. by Katherine Streip (1988; London: University of California Press, 1998), p. 7.

smashing by 'appeals to reason, not to force' and as an 'act of devotion' to the cause.² By the peaceful demonstration of ordinary women, it denounced acts of militancy and appealed to the general public with the 'living voice', with suffragists making themselves seen and heard by those who have never looked or listened before.³

Focusing on four locations throughout the North Riding and West Riding of Yorkshire of Ripon, Harrogate, Leeds and Wakefield, this study is a localised examination of the journey of the Pilgrimage throughout Yorkshire. By investigating the extent of existing suffrage networks in the region, this research contributes to the understanding of the distinct regional and local characteristics which shaped the way in which the Pilgrimage was received and understood throughout the county. By interrogating valuable primary source materials such as contemporary journals, periodicals, pamphlets, leaflets, photographs, correspondence, minutes and newspapers, this study examines the formulation, intentions and tactics of the Pilgrimage, the reception of the pilgrims in each locality, the way in which the Pilgrimage was reported and the nature of suffrage campaign, suffrage networks, militant societies and anti-suffrage campaigners throughout Yorkshire. By assessing this national campaign on a local scale, this study contextualises the action of the Nation Union's campaign strategy and evaluates its effectiveness on a regional level. I will argue that the Pilgrimage was overall a deeply important and significant event in suffrage campaigning, and that its presence in Yorkshire was predominantly undermined by circumstantial events and well-timed anti-suffrage components. This

² *The Pilgrimage. What Does it Mean?*, July 1913, p. 57, digital resource, LSE Women's Rights Collection, 'Pamphlets and Leaflets: National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies Leaflets to 1914' <https://digital.library.lse.ac.uk/browse#suffragecollection> and accessed on 11 November 2020

³ "On Pilgrimage", *The Common Cause*, 13 June 1913, p. 3.

study demonstrates the symbiotic relationships of both militant and non-militant suffrage societies and organisations and presents a localised picture of the co-operation between suffrage networks on a local level, culminating in the identification of the complex and integrated nature of suffragism in the county. This study argues that women's bodies as peaceful political figures were still subject to violence as they made their claim to polity in the public sphere and examines the reasons for this spatialised culture in some destinations in Yorkshire. Little research has been conducted in the area of violence towards non-violent suffrage campaigners, and this study contributes to the understanding of that violence on a local level. This study argues that outside of that violence, the Pilgrimage contributed to the awareness of non-militantism in Yorkshire and the Pilgrimage's ability to join ordinary people from across the county in a collective political act.

The historiography for the Pilgrimage in Yorkshire has for the most part only been examined tangentially, with Harry Fairburn's examination of the Pilgrimage in Harrogate and Deborah Scriven's account of the Pilgrimage in Wakefield the only exception to this.⁴ Jane Robinson, Lisa Tickner and Elizabeth Crawford's work provide invaluable material relating to the national picture of the National Union and the Pilgrimage as a whole.⁵ Jill Liddington's examination of the Yorkshire suffrage movement provides a thorough investigation of the individual contributions of prominent local suffrage campaigners, whilst June Hannam's contribution to the study of working-class women in Leeds provides key local components to the lives of

⁴ Harry Fairburn, 'The Women's Suffrage Movement in Ripon, Northallerton and Harrogate: 1870-1913', *The Local Historian*, 49 (2019), 148-154; Deborah Scriven, 'The Pilgrim's Progress: Wakefield welcomes the Suffragette Pilgrimage of 1913', *Wakefield Historical Society Journal*, 16 (2012), 1-6.

⁵ Jane Robinson, *Hearts and Minds: The Untold Story of the Great Pilgrimage and How Women Won the Vote* (London: Doubleday, 2018); Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign 1907-14* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1989); Elizabeth Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement: A Reference Guide 1866-1928* (London: Routledge, 1999).

women during this period.⁶ As Sandra Stanley Holton reflected upon emerging masculine identities during the beginning of the twentieth century, this dissertation examines how peaceful physical activism like the Pilgrimage played a role in female identities, women's emergence as political public bodies and the way in which the public responded to peaceful activism.⁷ Julie Shultz examines the physical activism of women, arguing that the strenuous physical activity associated with marches like the Pilgrimage discredits the myth of women's frailty as an argument against enfranchisement, assessed in this dissertation through four Yorkshire towns and cities.⁸ This study will also reflect upon ideas of femininity, womanliness and the concept of physical forms of suffrage activism impacting the Pilgrimage and its reception. By constructing an identity and a visual culture which was visibly non-militant, I will assess the ways the Pilgrimage, as it journeyed through villages, towns and cities, collectively shared their cause for female enfranchisement, and consequently made its impact on Yorkshire.

⁶ Jill Liddington, *Rebel Girls: Their Fight for the Vote* (London: Virago Press, 2006); June Hannam, 'The Employment of Working-Class Women in Leeds, 1880-1914' (PhD thesis, University of Sheffield, 1984)

⁷ Sandra Stanley Holton, *Suffrage Days: Stories from the Women's Suffrage Movement* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 222-223.

⁸ Julie Schultz, 'The Physical is Political: Women's Suffrage, Pilgrim Hikes and the Public Sphere', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 27 (2010), 1133-1153 (p. 3).

Chapter 2: The Making of the Pilgrimage: 'Our great spiritual battle'¹

'We claim the right to serve our land,
And who should say us nay?'²

On the 17 April 1913, in an Executive Committee meeting for the National Union of Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), a march was proposed by chairman of the West Midland Federation and president of the Shropshire Women's Suffrage Society, Katherine Harley.³ Taken up by the Organisational Committee the following day, the march was to become the largest and most ambitious campaign of the National Union that was to ever take place.

The Pilgrimage had been suggested at a critical moment in the history of the suffrage campaign. By the summer of 1913, Tickner argues the outlook for women's suffrage was looking bleak.⁴ The movement needed to re-establish tactics and regain focus after the withdrawal of the Franchise and Registration Bill of 1913 which was intended to be an open to a women's suffrage as well as the defeat of Representation of the People (Women) Bill, known as the Dickenson Bill.⁵ The Dickenson Bill proposed to give the vote to women householders and wives of householders aged over twenty-five. The defeat of the Bill was seen as a betrayal to many, particularly key Liberals such as Millicent Fawcett, leader of the National Union. Blaming Anti-Suffragists and 'pledge breakers' in the Liberal government and

¹ "On Pilgrimage", *The Common Cause*, 13 June 1913, p. 3.

² "Song of the Suffrage Pilgrims", *The Common Cause*, 20 June 1913, p. 12.

³ Elizabeth Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement: A Reference Guide 1866-1928* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 275.

⁴ Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign 1907-14* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1989), p. 140.

⁵ Tickner, p. 140.

Irish Parliamentary Party, the NUWSS believed the government were prepared to sacrifice anything, including women's suffrage, to remain in power.⁶

The Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) increased their militancy in response to the political setbacks. The WSPU newspaper, *The Suffragette* in April 1913 carried the headline 'The Women's Revolution – Reign of Terror – Fire and Bombs', referencing 'militancy on an unprecedented scale' which was followed by multiple reports of arson and bomb attacks including setting fire to churches, houses and golf-courses.⁷ The introduction of the Prisoners (Temporary Discharge for Ill Health) Act, known as the Cat and Mouse Act in April 1913 was demonstrative of the short-sightedness and exasperation of the Liberal government in response to heightened militancy.⁸ The Cat and Mouse Act allowed female prisoners who had been on hunger strike and force fed to be released for a specified number of days in which to recuperate and regain their health. Once their licence expired, the released women were sought for re-arrest, some of whom went willingly, whilst others resisted arrest, finding refuge in safe houses across the country. Refuge houses and released suffragettes, including Edith Key's house in Huddersfield and Leonora Cohen's house in Harrogate, were covertly monitored by the state, with the chase between evading suffragettes and the police, concludes Liddington, a 'combination of comic melodrama and something more sinister'.⁹ By May, WSPU offices were raided, many active members such as Lilian Lenton and Kitty Marion adopted guerrilla tactics to continue their militant activities, whilst the loss of Emily Wilding Davison in June momentarily brought the entirety of the suffrage movement to a

⁶ "The New Development in the Policy of the N.U.W.S.S.", *The Common Cause*, 23 May 1912, p. 3.

⁷ "The Women's Revolution – Reign of Terror – Fire and Bombs", *The Suffragette*, 11 April 1913, pp. 7-8.

⁸ UK Parliament <<http://www.parliament.uk>> [accessed 10 June 2020]

⁹ Jill Liddington, *Rebel Girls: Their Fight for the Vote* (London: Virago Press, 2006), pp. 274-275.

standstill.¹⁰ Robinson states that many people in Britain considered the acts of Davison as extravagant and hysterical, illustrating the necessity for the NUWSS to differentiate themselves from the militant approach.¹¹ Regardless of difference, however, Davison's death was a tragedy for the cause and a dark day for all campaigners, described in a stirring statement by the National Union as a 'piteous waste of courage and devotion'.¹²

As 1912 and 1913 saw the height of suffrage militancy, the NUWSS was placed in a difficult position. Criticised by members of the WSPU as being 'staid' and 'incorrigibly leisurely' in their approach, the National Union needed to counter this perception with affirmative action, especially in light of a limited political prospects.¹³ Reflecting on the political landscape preceding the march, Hon. Treasurer of the National Union Helena Auerbach wrote for the *Common Cause*, the weekly journal of the NUWSS, that the Pilgrimage came at a time where there easily could have been a set-back in enthusiasm for the suffrage cause. With no bill to work towards, no breakthrough or immediate incentive it was the responsibility of the National Union to engage with a wider reach and rejuvenated focus.¹⁴ Holton states that without the preparedness of constitutional suffragists to reassess their strategy at this time, embarking on a broader movement and a more democratic society, the NUWSS wouldn't have been able to prevent a complete collapse of the suffrage movement as a whole.¹⁵

Although the NUWSS had continually advertised its 'non-party' status, the National

¹⁰ Crawford, pp. 749-752.

¹¹ Jane Robinson, *Hearts and Minds: The Untold Story of the Great Pilgrimage and How Women Won the Vote* (London: Doubleday, 2018), p. 137.

¹² "Responsibility", *The Common Cause*, 13 June 1913, p. 4.

¹³ Pankhurst, E. Sylvia, *The Suffrage Movement: An Intimate Account of the Persons and Ideals* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1931), p. 643.

¹⁴ "After the Pilgrimage", *The Common Cause*, 8 August 1913, p. 9.

¹⁵ Sandra Stanley Holton, *Feminism and Democracy: Women's Suffrage and Reform Politics in Britain, 1900-1918* (Cambridge: CUP, 1986), p. 95.

Union consistently held a close alignment through its membership to the Liberal Party. However in 1912, after the failure of the Conciliation Bill, the NUWSS established the Election Fighting Fund (EFF) in order to relax their non-party strategy and to support Labour candidates in by-elections.¹⁶ The *Common Cause* outlined their new strategy as a development of their present policy, not an abandonment of it, stating the importance of supporting 'Labour candidates in constituencies represented by Liberals whose Women's Suffrage record is unsatisfactory', simply, supporting candidates who have supported the movement and by opposing those who have 'caused it harm'.¹⁷ Suffragists, as concluded by Kent, realised the power of political constructions, and were determined to use them.¹⁸ Whilst this new strategy for the National Union sought to strengthen the pro-suffrage position in parliament, in Yorkshire, the ties to the Liberal middle classes, chiefly in the North and East Ridings, made the new policy more difficult to accept.¹⁹ Liddington argues that, unlike in Manchester and Lancashire, the Liberal stronghold in Yorkshire meant there were few active trade unionist women who, if involved in suffrage campaigning at all, were less likely to join the National Union due to their closeness with their Liberal employers.²⁰ The strategy therefore for the National Union was to fight on two fronts: by forging an electoral alliance with the Labour Party through the foundation of the EFF and reviewing their unofficial ties with the Liberal Party whilst using the Pilgrimage to differentiate themselves from militant suffragettes, garner a wider level of support and rejuvenate the cause in the hearts and minds of the wider public, particularly the working classes in local communities. The NUWSS would be able to

¹⁶ Liddington, p.261.

¹⁷ *The Common Cause*, 23 May 1912, p. 3.

¹⁸ Susan Kingsley Kent, *Sex and Suffrage in Britain, 1860-1914* (Princeton: PUP, 1987), pp. 207.

¹⁹ Liddington, p.263.

²⁰ *ibid*

demonstrate, throughout every corner of England, that the campaigners were ordinary women fighting for a cause which was relevant to all, free from elitism, militancy or autocracy.²¹

Once this strategy had been decided, the organisation for the Pilgrimage had to be done as quickly and efficiently as possible, as there were only two months from its conception to the first marchers setting foot on the open road. The first tentative mention of the march was made in the *Common Cause* just a few weeks after the proposal was first made. Filed under 'Notes from Headquarters' on page seven, the introduction to a 'Monster March for Suffragists' was presented as a great demonstration which was to be held in July, with simultaneous marches using four routes through England and Wales, all converging in London.²² Members of the National Union were asked, even in this preliminary stage, to start preparations in the form of financial contributions, to offer hospitality and to lend horses and conveyances to the marchers.²³ The skeleton of the march had already started to take shape, and as the weeks continued, a plan for the march began to be refined and redefined. The following issue of the *Common Cause* on the 9 May took a new dedicated, enthusiastic and evangelical tone. Promoted to the third page, news of the march held a bold new sentiment, referring to the march for the first time as a 'pilgrimage of grace' and speaking in the interests of a spiritual cause.²⁴ Members were encouraged, whether Christian or not, to feel the 'moving, living sense, of the deep spiritual meaning' of the suffragist movement.²⁵ Comparable politically focused pilgrimages such as the Pilgrimage of Grace in 1536-7, the Great Pilgrimage, as

²¹ Robinson, pp. 151-152.

²² "Monster March for Suffragists", Notes from Headquarters, *The Common Cause*, 2 May 1913, p.7

²³ *The Common Cause*, p.7.

²⁴ "The Pilgrimage of Grace", *The Common Cause*, 9 May 1913, p. 3.

²⁵ *The Common Cause*, p. 3.

described by Robinson, allowed a sense of self-sacrifice with a 'gloss of cheerfulness' in the form of hope, love and faith.²⁶ The newly titled 'Pilgrimage' was promoted with uncompromised positivity, reverence to the cause and a somewhat naïve determination that the march would be nothing but joyous, with an implicit ascetic tone. Vicinus concludes that Victorian women had long been considered the moral and spiritual leaders of the era who had been trained for a life of self-sacrifice, therefore this form of physical campaign drawing comparisons of religion and discipline made the Pilgrimage the ideal next step of women's place in the public sphere.²⁷

With the co-operation and support of over four hundred societies and seventeen federations which made up the union the foundations of the Pilgrimage were being set, the date for the completion of the march was arranged and the main routes were identified.²⁸ The deadline for the mass meeting in Hyde Park was finalised for the 26 July 1913, with the committee calculating their routes backwards from the final date. The main corridors across England were covered, consisting of the Great North Road, the Watling Street route, the Bath and West Country route, the Portsmouth road and the Kentish way. Initial intentions were to incorporate a route which would converge in the Scottish capital, Edinburgh, and then to London, however the logistics became too complex, resulting in the NUWSS's Scottish Federation participants joining from Carlisle and Newcastle instead.²⁹ The large and robust network of societies and regional federations allowed for direct communication

²⁶ Robinson, p. 143.

²⁷ Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* (Chicago: CUP, 1985), pp. 249-250.

²⁸ *The Common Cause*, p. 3.

²⁹ Fletcher, Ian Christopher, Philippa Levine and Laura E. Nym Mayhall, eds, *Women's Suffrage in the British Empire: Citizenship, Nation and Race* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 113.

between the head office and executive committee alongside the weekly updates published in the *Common Cause*. Such societies included some long-standing and active branches across Great Britain, including societies in Ripon, Harrogate, Leeds and Wakefield, with Leeds being the largest and most active of the four, boasting a shop and an office which was able to hold up to eighty people for meetings.³⁰ This network allowed for the requests made for accommodation and hospitality, donations and general assistance to be transmitted quickly and easily.

The Pilgrimage was being organised by the newly formed Pilgrimage Committee who were tasked with arranging every detail possible under a strict deadline and with minimal spending. The Committee was run primarily by Katherine Harley who with militaristic expertise and religious fervour, spearheaded the organisation between federations and societies with proficiency.³¹ The Committee worked to a tight budget, as the Pilgrimage, Robinson observes, was a way to raise money as well as public awareness, and therefore no centralised provision was made to subsidise participants; instead it was the responsibility of the local societies to fundraise and provide food and accommodation for the pilgrims so that no-one should be prohibited from joining the Pilgrimage due to lack of money.³² However, although the intention was that the Pilgrimage providing an opportunity for all to unite, no matter their financial position, the largest concern for potential pilgrims was one of economics, with clothing being the primary concern for NUWSS members.³³ As away from the tangible practicalities of the march, one of the key strategical components in the organisation of the Pilgrimage was the visual representation of the suffragists, which

³⁰ Elizabeth Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in Britain and Ireland: A Regional Survey*, (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 44-45.

³¹ Robinson, pp. 151-158.

³² Robinson, p. 153.

³³ "On Pilgrimage", *The Common Cause*, 13 June 1913, p. 3.

included society colours, dress and accessories which intended to differentiate marchers from their militant counterparts. It was imperative that the imagery of the NUWSS as non-militant, law-abiding and constitutional suffrage campaigners was clear, and that amongst the general public, the identity of the suffragists as peaceful campaigners and not suffragettes was paramount. The Pilgrimage was publicised through statements to newspapers, society meetings, canvassing, posters and smaller walks and demonstrations, however, distinctions between suffragettes and suffragists were still unclear amongst many.³⁴ The visual representation of the second wave of the suffrage movement, as Rolley identifies, was complex and inextricably connected to the Edwardian 'fashionable' and 'feminine' physical and psychological ideals of women, including the identification and differentiation between different factions.³⁵ Tickner describes the contemporary anxieties associated with motherhood, social Darwinism, social decline and the Empire, dropping birth rates and high infant mortality alongside perceived biological characteristics of femininity as described in *The Descent of Man* allowed for an ideology against women's involvement in public activities.³⁶ The 'virtues and vices of femininity', Tickner states, was written upon the female body in the form of a recognisably 'womanly' woman, a representation of femininity which held a complex relationship to the appropriate political social and moral function of women, especially amongst suffrage campaigners.³⁷ As Lindsay states, women's increased activity in public affairs tested and contested the ideals of feminine behaviour, definitions of womanhood and the image of femininity.³⁸ Suffrage campaigners knew

³⁴ Robinson, p. 158-159.

³⁵ Katrina Rolley, 'Fashion, Femininity and the Fight for the Vote', *Art History*, 13 (1990), 47-71 (p. 1).

³⁶ Tickner, p. 186-189.

³⁷ Tickner, p. 151-152.

³⁸ Shelley Lindsay, 'Eighty million women want -?: Women's Suffrage, Female Viewers and the Body Politic', *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 16 (1997), 1-22 (p. 1)

this, as the necessity of being not only identifiably peaceful and but ‘feminine’ was focused upon the use of dress, sashes, badges and banners which was used to form an important part of its visual presentation. The pilgrims, collectively, at least in intention, needed to differentiate themselves as law-abiding constitutionalists, after all, they were a walking advertisement for the cause.

Political ideologies in combination with practicalities, uniformity and affordability became key factors in the debate over clothing, with the eventual decision made that all pilgrims will be welcome, whatever they wear, however a preference for grey, navy, white or black coats, skirts and dresses with a blouse in white or to match was preferred.³⁹ Pilgrims were instructed, if possible, to adorn the National Union colours of white, green and scarlet upon sashes, hats, caravans, carts, bicycles, haversacks and motors as well as wearing the specially made Pilgrimage badge, available for the cost of 3d, whilst Swan & Edgar, the department store on Regent Street and Piccadilly in London were chosen providers for hats, coats, blouses and skirts as well as ribbon available in two sizes in National Union colours.⁴⁰ Suffrage colours created an important sense of identity, as displaying the colours of the NUWSS orchestrated a form of co-ordination from which different societies could be recognised nationwide whilst providing the pilgrims with a feeling of belonging and unity.⁴¹ Whilst the debate over suitable choices of clothing may seem trivial, dress was significant. Not only did it provide an outward presentation of the campaign and fulfilment of a practical purpose, it challenged the metaphor of ‘petticoats’ or ‘skirts’ used to perpetuate women as inferior physical and political bodies, intended to

³⁹ “Points About the Women’s Suffrage Pilgrimage”, *The Common Cause*, 13 June 1913, p. 5.

⁴⁰ *The Common Cause*, p. 5.

⁴¹ Thomas, Zoe, and Miranda Garrett, eds, *Suffrage and the Arts: Visual Culture, Politics and Enterprise* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), p. 13.

trivialise and diminish physical activism.⁴² Through physical toil, spiritual strength and a 'symbolic claim on the polity', the National Union intended to challenge Edwardian society's limited definition of femininity and place themselves firmly, and positively, in the collective consciousness of the country, commanding far reaching support, all the while proving there was an alternative amongst suffrage campaigners to militancy.⁴³

The Pilgrimage was not the first-time the National Union had campaigned in public spaces in order to spread their message of female enfranchisement. Although the Pilgrimage was very different to all the forms of public procession, marches, pageantry and tours which had come before, previous demonstrations had undoubtedly influenced the conception, organisation and intention of the Pilgrimage and what it hoped to achieve. The formation of the WSPU in 1903 spurred a second wave of activism in the campaign for enfranchisement, creating new energy in the suffrage movement. As Tickner describes, the tactics of the WSPU to increase visibility in the press created an urgency and encouraged older societies like the National Union to adopt similar strategies engaging wider public awareness.⁴⁴ After the development of a new constitution and strengthened organisational structure of the National Union in January 1907, the NUWSS devised their first mass demonstration, establishing a precedent in the fight for enfranchisement.⁴⁵ In what was to become known as the 'Mud March', a march from Hyde Park corner to the Exeter Hall was held on a rainy February afternoon in London which included three thousand people from more than forty organisations who collectively marched in the

⁴² Rolley, p. 2.

⁴³ Schultz, Jaime, 'The Physical is Political: Women's Suffrage, Pilgrim Hikes and the Public Sphere', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 27 (2010), 1133-1153 (p.1).

⁴⁴ Tickner, p. 74.

⁴⁵ Crawford, p. 438.

first open-air demonstration of non-militants ever held.⁴⁶ One of the many to travel from Yorkshire to take part in the march was the NUWSS executive from Huddersfield, Dr Edith Pechey-Phipson, who described walking ‘four abreast’, as banners of red, white and society colours (with help from the newly formed Artists’ Suffrage League) were held up against the wind and rain.⁴⁷ This pageantry and spectacle from all classes, backgrounds and places marching together, tramping through the mud in solidarity, required courage from all involved, and did not go unnoticed by the press. *The Tribune*, the *Manchester Guardian*, the *Daily Mirror*, the *Morning Post* and *The Graphic* printed articles, photographs and illustrations of the marchers and commented on the diverse nature of the participants, the dedication of those involved and the ‘striking’ nature of the procession.⁴⁸ The Mud March became the foundation for a new form of campaigning, stimulating a trend for further demonstrations and processions which each aimed to be bigger and more impressive than the last. The next large-scale NUWSS Demonstration was held on 13 June 1908 in London and took the spectacle of suffrage to the next level, with an estimated ten to fifteen thousand marchers from across the country including Leeds and Hull, as well as the inclusion of international participants from Europe, America and India.⁴⁹ The National Union, alongside the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, then organised The Pageant of Women’s Trades and Professions on 27 April 1909, which aimed to promote women workers, demonstrating the importance, value and legitimacy of the female workforce and their entitlement to

⁴⁶ Tickner, pp. 74-75.

⁴⁷ Liddington, p. 137.

⁴⁸ *The Tribune*, 11 February 1907; *Manchester Guardian*, 11 February 1907, “Snapshots of Incidents of Suffragettes’ March from Hyde Park to the Strand”, *Daily Mirror*, 13 February 1907; the *Morning Post*, 13 February 1907, “The Suffragists’ Progress: Incidents of the Latest London Demonstration”, *The Graphic*, 16 February 1907, p. 3, cited in Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign 1907-14* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1989), pp. 74-78.

⁴⁹ Tickner, pp. 80-87.

enfranchisement.⁵⁰ It was in on 17 June 1911, however, that suffrage procession reached its pinnacle. If MacKaye was correct in describing such pageantry as ‘poetry for the masses’, then the Women’s Coronation Procession provided a triumphant display of civic education and significant public appeal.⁵¹ Organised by the WSPU, the Women’s Coronation Procession was boldly performed just five days before the coronation of George V in order to take advantage of the enlivened holiday spirit and capitalise on the increased numbers of international visitors to London.⁵² A staggering estimated forty to sixty thousand women from at least twenty-eight suffrage organisations marched through a five mile stretch of central London.⁵³ The procession was a symbolic claim of citizenship, invoking historic precedents and demonstrating, in the fullest form, a contextualisation of sovereignty and patriotism. From the Pageant of Empire, The Historical Pageant, The March of the Women and the representations of national identity, the procession evidenced the ‘enormous value of women’s influence in public life’.⁵⁴

Suffrage campaigning that proceeded the Pilgrimage was not one solely focused on the capital or in the form of mass demonstrations, reliant on the appeal of spectacle, however. In what Liddington describes as ‘a symbol of liberty’, caravan tours were just as significant in the act of political persuasion, accessing rural communities around the country and inspiring future endeavours in local communities.⁵⁵ Inspired by the recent popularity in ‘vanning’ and the Women’s Freedom League members,

⁵⁰ Tickner, pp. 100-104.

⁵¹ Percy MacKaye, *The Civic Theatre in Relation to the Redemption of Leisure; a Book of Suggestions* (London: Mitchell Kennerley, 1912), pp.176-177.

⁵² Tickner, pp. 122-124.

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ Henry Holiday, “Pageants and National Life”, *London Daily News*, 28 June 1911, cited in Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign 1907-14* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1989), p. 299.

⁵⁵ Jill Liddington, *Vanishing for the Vote: Suffrage, Citizenship and the Battle for the Census* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), p. 27.

including Katherine Harley's sister Charlotte Despard and Australian actress Muriel Matters' tour of the South East of England in 1908, Nation Union members held their own caravan tours throughout the country.⁵⁶ One ambitious tour, led by Cambridge graduates Emilie Gardner and Margaret Robertson, toured the North Yorkshire Moors and the Yorkshire Wolds from August to September 1908.⁵⁷ Starting in the fishing town of Whitby, they travelled through remote rural locations throughout the North Riding, down to Beverley in the East Riding and then again moving north, stopping to address crowds of people in each locality.⁵⁸ In less than a month, Emilie Gardner and Margaret Robertson extended their message into communities untouched by the suffrage cause, penetrating a wider consciousness of the movement and setting the groundwork for the Pilgrimage five years later as it moved through Yorkshire. As Charlotte Despard stated, 'I am more and more convinced that this is one of the best and least expensive methods of propagandum', illustrating the success of the tours and cementing the ideas of physical campaigning which allowed access to women in rural communities and engaged them in political activity and debate beyond newspaper headlines and hearsay.⁵⁹

The final precursor which inevitably influenced the form and tactical approach of the Great Pilgrimage were the 'Women's March' and the 'Pilgrim Hikes' that came just a few months before Katherine Harley's suggestion in April. Originator of the suffrage 'pilgrim' march, Florence De Fonblanque, member of the Women's Freedom League, New Constitutional Society for Women's Suffrage and the Conservative Unionist Women's Franchise Association amongst others, conducted the Women's

⁵⁶ Liddington, pp. 27-29.

⁵⁷ Liddington, *Rebel Girls*, p. 205.

⁵⁸ Liddington, *Rebel Girls*, pp. 205-211.

⁵⁹ "Women's Freedom League Caravan", *Women's Franchise*, 27 August 1908, p. 5.

March from 12 October to 16 November from Edinburgh to London.⁶⁰ The march numbers were small, but the ambition, spiritual and characterful nature of the Women's March clearly made an impact with the National Union, as despite their lack of participation, the NUWSS saw the value of this form of peaceful physical activism. Also inspired by Mrs De Fonblanque's march was Rosalie Gardiner Jones, who led a march in December 1912 of hundreds of women and men from The Bronx, one hundred and seventy miles to Albany, New York in just thirteen days, followed by a larger march to Washington in February 1913.⁶¹

The Pilgrimage denied the pomp and spectacle of the mass processions and pageantry that had come before, whilst providing a larger impact and greater levels of participation than the caravan tours or Women's marches that preceded it. It intended to strike a balance between self-sacrifice and political statement, law-abiding and peaceful, yet assertive and resolute. The Pilgrimage was an advertisement, as by using the modality of a 'pilgrimage' with all the credence of religious devotion incited into the framework of political propaganda, the National Union aimed to present all, from the Liberal government to the Yorkshire mill worker, that enfranchisement was rightfully theirs. When Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence declared 'the greatest demonstration ever held upon British soil fails also to bring a satisfactory answer to our demand ... nothing but militant action is left to us now' after the WSPU 'Women's Sunday' march on 21 June 1908, the National Union's Great Pilgrimage was ready to challenge that claim by peaceful means on their impassioned crusade throughout every corner of England.⁶²

⁶⁰ Crawford, p. 164.

⁶¹ Zachary Michael Jack, *March of the Suffragettes: Rosalie Gardiner Jones and the March for Voting Rights* (Minneapolis: Zest Books, 2016), pp. 14-17.

⁶² "Go Forward!", *Votes for Women*, 25 June 1908, p. 7.

Chapter 3: The Pilgrimage in Yorkshire: An ‘invitation to the open road’¹

‘And we will show our country now,
What women folk can do’²

On the 18 June 1913, a group of men and women set off from the Haymarket in Newcastle to begin their march for women’s enfranchisement.³ As one of six major routes organised by the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), the collective ‘Great Pilgrimage’ was a non-violent demonstration which would culminate in a mass meeting in Hyde Park on the 26 July 1913. The six-week march would see people from all corners of England endure the hardships and dangers of the road to further their cause. For the Great North Road contingent setting off from Newcastle, their route along the east of England would take them through tiny hamlets to large cities, from large processions to violent attacks; with the reception of the pilgrims as varied as the destinations they travelled to. The Pilgrimage was reported by local and national press, the NUWSS newspaper, the *Common Cause*, as well as in other suffrage and anti-suffrage literature. In this chapter, I will assess the ways in which the Pilgrimage was reported, how the march was understood as well as the attitudes towards the Pilgrimage through press responses. As a collective of non-party and non-militant suffragists, the march was distinctive from militant activity, yet this was not always widely understood. By assessing the ways in which the Pilgrimage was reported in Yorkshire, through Ripon, Harrogate, Leeds and Wakefield, greater understanding can be developed in how regionality contributes to

¹ “The Invitation to the Open Road”, *The Common Cause*, 20 June 1913, p. 1.

² “Song of the Suffrage Pilgrims”, *The Common Cause*, 20 June 1913, p. 12.

³ “En Route”, The Great North Road, *The Common Cause*, 27 June 1913, p. 4.

the ways in which this form of suffrage activism was understood on a local level, and how women were received as political bodies in public spaces.

With suffragette militancy dominating the historiography of the suffrage movement, it can be easy to overlook the important role of non-militant action on the road to enfranchisement. The idea of self-promotion through spectacle as a suffrage tactic was nothing new. Major processions such as the 'Mud March' in 1907, a London based demonstration in 1908, several caravan tours as well as Mrs de Fonblanque's 'Women's March' from Edinburgh to London in 1912, which was credited as the invention of 'the march for propaganda' for women's suffrage, all set a precedent for the Pilgrimage.⁴ However, the 1913 Pilgrimage was an undertaking of unprecedented scale for the NUWSS, described in the *Common Cause* as 'the biggest piece of organisation the National Union had ever undertaken.'⁵ The *Todmorden Advertiser and Hebden Bridge Newsletter* recognised the scale of the Pilgrimage just as it was beginning, stating 'no demonstration so widespread as this pilgrimage has ever been carried out before by any political movement' whilst placing strong emphasis on the non-militancy and law-abiding nature of the march.⁶ Schulz, in her work on American suffrage marches, describes the hikes as a form of 'physical activism', a demonstration of symbolic politics, reaching a collective consciousness in an 'unprecedented act of publicity', contextualising major processions by women as an effective method of widening the reach of the suffrage movement.⁷

⁴ Tickner, p. 301.

⁵ Wilma Meikle, "An Old Stager", *The Common Cause*, 1 August 1913, p. 4.

⁶ "Non-Militant Suffragists' Pilgrimage", *Todmorden Advertiser and Hebden Bridge Newsletter*, 20 June 1913, p. 4.

⁷ Jaime Schultz, 'The Physical is Political: Women's Suffrage, Pilgrim Hikes and the Public Sphere', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 27 (2010), 1133-1153, pp. 1134-1141.

The NUWSS was perceived as a middle-class society, failing to garner wider support in working class communities as the WSPU had successfully done, particularly in Manchester. The Pilgrimage was an opportunity to reach those communities ‘in their own homes and villages’ to articulate the real meaning of their movement, not just to appeal to members of parliament, but to ‘the people of Great Britain’.⁸ As the Pilgrimage began, the *Common Cause* printed one last ‘invitation to the open road’ on its front page.⁹ The impassioned piece states the purpose of the Pilgrimage as a personal dedication to the suffrage cause through lawful means as well as the ‘outward symbol of the spirit of self-sacrifice’ and ‘unfaltering devotion’ to the pioneers of the movement.¹⁰ Contributing to the Pilgrimage would be to appeal to the ‘hearts and minds’ of those not yet convinced of the political freedoms of women.¹¹

When travelling through Yorkshire, the pilgrims required the resolution of their predecessors, as they had received a mixed response along their route so far. The Pilgrimage began on Wednesday 18 June with the Great North Road pilgrims setting off simultaneously with the Watling Street pilgrims from Carlisle. The one-hundred north-eastern pilgrims left Haymarket in Newcastle to the music of the Wellesley Training Ship Band, accompanied by a baggage cart marked as ‘law-abiding’ and two bicycles.¹² The Pilgrimage continued through the North East where Emily Wilding Davison’s funeral had taken place just days before. Although the Pilgrimage did not pass by Morpeth where Davison was buried, the atmosphere surrounding the

⁸ Meikle, *Common Cause*, pp. 4-5.

⁹ “The Invitation to the Open Road”, *The Common Cause*, 20 June 1913, p. 1.

¹⁰ *The Common Cause*, 20 June 1913, p. 1.

¹¹ *The Common Cause*, 20 June 1913, p. 1.

¹² Harry Fairburn, ‘The Women’s Suffrage Movement in Ripon, Northallerton and Harrogate: 1870-1913’, *The Local Historian*, 49 (2019), 148-154 (p. 152).

suffrage cause, as described by Robinson, was deeply emotive in the area.¹³ A mixed reception of disruptive students in Durham was followed by a receptive crowd of local minors the next day. The pilgrims first real encounter with violence was in Spennymoor where the pilgrims had stones thrown at them, although it was reported in a light-hearted way in the *Common Cause* stating that ‘neither men nor boys can throw straight’, as only one person was unintendedly injured.¹⁴ This encounter was followed by the first appearance of anti-suffrage campaigners from the National League for Opposing Woman Suffrage (NLOWS) in Northallerton, despite a positive reception overall from the crowd.¹⁵ It was in Ripon however that the pilgrims encountered their most challenging confrontation of their journey so far, arriving in the city on the day of the twenty-fifth annual show of the Ripon and District Agricultural Society, one of the largest local events of the year.¹⁶ The *Common Cause* reported that the market cross in the market place in the centre of Ripon was used as a platform, surrounded by a crowd including ‘a small gang of youths’, ‘intoxicated men bearing sandwich boards’ with anti-suffrage messages as well as two ‘exceedingly drunken men brandishing whiskey bottles’.¹⁷ The speaker, Miss Ida Beaver from the North-Eastern Federation, according to the *Common Cause*, attempted to gain the attention of the crowd for over an hour before ending the meeting.¹⁸ The NUWSS newspaper reported that the audience had closed round the pilgrims, and it was ‘with difficulty’ they found their way away from the crowd.¹⁹ The *Yorkshire Evening Post* reported the event with relish, particularly focusing in Miss

¹³ Jane Robinson, *Hearts and Minds: The Untold Story of the Great Pilgrimage and How Women Won the Vote* (London: Doubleday, 2018), p. 173.

¹⁴ *The Common Cause*, 27 June 1913, p. 5.

¹⁵ Robinson, pp. 173-174.

¹⁶ “Family in a Pig-Stye”, *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 27 June 1913, p. 7.

¹⁷ C.M.G., “Pilgrims from the North-East”, *The Common Cause*, 4 July 1913, p. 5.

¹⁸ *The Common Cause*, 4 July 1913, p. 5.

¹⁹ *The Common Cause*, 4 July 1913, p. 5.

Beaver who defended herself with a 'left straight from the shoulder' on a 'rough and boorish fellow'.²⁰ Describing Beaver as someone who 'knows how to take care of herself in the rough and tumble of the world', it is clear that the *Yorkshire Evening Post* was happy to make Miss Beaver the centre of their narrative, implying she, and perhaps the Pilgrimage, was less law-abiding and more militant than the NUWSS were advertising. Robinson states that another local newspaper reported that the pilgrims were catcalled, spat at, hustled and kicked with 'coarse brutality and rough treatment', with the newspaper condemning the action of the crowd against the 'refined and educated ladies'.²¹ The suffragists were reportedly hammering on doors appealing for sanctuary for fears for their safety, however very little detail of this was reported in the *Common Cause*, possibly because if the true nature of the event had been disclosed, it could inspire future incidences from anti-suffrage protestors or deter potential pilgrims from participating in the Pilgrimage. Instead, the *Common Cause* chose to place its focus on the kindness of those who helped the pilgrims and the spectators who were showing interest and 'listened attentively'.²² No physical injury was caused to the pilgrims, however, the corresponding agricultural show alongside some anti-suffragists denied the pilgrims the ability to speak freely whilst putting them in danger, with this 'thoroughly unpleasant' encounter serious enough to form part of the inquiry into the behaviour of the police after the Pilgrimage had finished, which summarised an insufficient and ineffective police presence in Ripon.²³

²⁰ *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 1 July 1913, p. 6.

²¹ Robinson, p. 175.

²² *The Common Cause*, 4 July 1913, p. 5.

²³ The National Archives, Kew, HO 45/10701/236973, Disturbances: Suffragettes' meetings, outrages, etc., 1913-1914.

After a much-needed break at Fountains Abbey, which was reported by the *Yorkshire Evening Post*, the pilgrims continued their march towards Harrogate the next day. The *Common Cause* reported that the pilgrims were strengthened by members from Hull, Filey and Bradford who met at Ripley, north of Harrogate.²⁴ The pilgrims arrived in Harrogate at 5.30pm, where they received a warm reception, stopping for tea at the Café Imperial before holding an evening meeting on the stray. Despite their distance from the route, updates of the Pilgrimage in Harrogate and the activities of local members were published by several newspapers including the *Hull Daily Mail* and *Whitby Gazette*, containing details about the ‘costumes’ of the pilgrims and a mention of the pilgrims’ song.²⁵ *The Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer* provided detailed accounts of the progress of the pilgrims, describing the group of thirty-five as looking ‘remarkably fit and well’, with further comment that whatever the result of the march, the suffragists’ would ‘lose nothing from a health point of view’.²⁶ The newspaper reported a comprehensive list of pilgrims, including their names and hometowns, listing pilgrims from Edinburgh, Sleights, Newcastle and Fife amongst the marchers.²⁷ The article goes on to detail the meeting which was held on the stray and was attended by around three hundred people, with a ‘cordial reception’ by the audience with no interruption, detailing the suffragists’ plea for votes for women by ‘peaceful and constitutional methods’.²⁸ This positive report is juxtaposed to the *Yorkshire Evening Post* article describing the turnout of pilgrims in Harrogate as a disappointment, with an emphasis placed on a lack of support and

²⁴ *The Common Cause*, 4 July 1913, p. 5.

²⁵ “N.U. of Women’s Suffrage Societies Pilgrimage Through Yorkshire Towns”, *Hull Daily Mail*, 26 June 1913, p. 2.

²⁶ “The Marching Non-Militant Suffragists at Harrogate - A Meeting on the Stray”, *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 30 June 1913, p. 10.

²⁷ *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 30 June 1913, p. 10.

²⁸ *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 30 June 1913, p. 10.

hospitality to the visiting pilgrims, with reports of the pilgrims 'unable to pay hotel bills' and having to 'return reluctant footsteps homewards', possibly because the Harrogate meeting lacked the newsworthiness of the previous stop in Ripon.²⁹ The article continues with a description of Miss Beaver as the 'leader of the pilgrims' and 'a vivacious Tyneside girl of ideas' followed by a lengthy quote regarding their progress along their route thus far, including an entertaining story about their experience in Durham earlier in the Pilgrimage.³⁰ *The Common Cause*, by contrast, focused on the experience of the pilgrims, details of the hospitality received, the keenness of the audience and the capabilities of the speakers, noting it was a 'most friendly meeting' with little other detail.³¹ The hospitality continued as the pilgrims attended a church service at Christ Church, High Harrogate alongside the Harrogate branch of the NUWSS the following day, before continuing their journey south.³²

The Pilgrimage continued to Leeds, with increased press coverage as it headed into the city. Details of the Leeds Women's Suffrage Society meeting and forthcoming plans for the Pilgrimage had already been reported a week before the Pilgrimage was due to arrive in Leeds, where it was made clear of the constitutional and law-abiding nature of the suffragists by the *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*.³³ The *Intelligencer* continued to report in detail the progress of the pilgrims as they made their way through the city. Details about a select group of pilgrims, where they took tea, the numbers of attendees to the meetings as well as local members who joined

²⁹ "The Pilgrim Sisters – Northern Suffragists' Tramp to London – Story of the Journey", *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 30 June 1913, p. 3.

³⁰ *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 30 June 1913, p. 3.

³¹ *The Common Cause*, 4 July 1913, p. 5.

³² Fairburn, 'The Women's Suffrage Movement in Ripon, Northallerton and Harrogate: 1870-1913', (pp. 153-154).

³³ "The Women's Suffrage Pilgrimage", *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 25 June 1913, p. 12.

the march were all included.³⁴ Although the paper mistakenly refers to the pilgrims as suffragettes, the paper reports with a respectful and knowledgeable tone, describing the non-militant band, including now Miss Meikle, the West Riding Organiser for the National Union, holding a short meeting in Collingham before lunching in Bardsey during their ‘arduous’ journey conducting ‘propaganda work’.³⁵ The *Intelligencer* describes the twelve original marchers alongside new additions to the group of pilgrims including non-militants from Leeds, Huddersfield and Halifax addressing a crowd of five-hundred at Roundhay Park before making their way into the centre of the city.³⁶ Most detail was given to the largest meeting on Woodhouse Moor, where it was reported that a crowd of eight thousand assembled to hear the pilgrims speak.³⁷ The newspaper reported large crowds lining the streets as the pilgrims marched to their demonstration point, with some reports of ‘booing’ and ‘rough chaff’ until the realisation was made that the pilgrims belonged to the ‘peaceable’ party.³⁸ *The Yorkshire Evening Post* printed a typically voluble article, declaring the Pilgrimage through Leeds as a ‘huge success’, stressing the pilgrims ‘deep regret’ having to leave the city after a ‘grand triumphal march’.³⁹ Miss Beaver was described as an ‘Amazonian young leader’, and was quoted as saying there were as many as fifteen thousand at the demonstration, with the crowd being “tremendously enthusiastic”.⁴⁰ The article documented the exuberant crowd who showered the pilgrims in nosegays and flowers, reiterated by the *Shipley Times and Express* who reported the pilgrims as ‘particularly enthusiastic’ about the

³⁴ “The Pilgrim Suffragettes – Non-Militant Marchers Arrive in Leeds”, *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 2 July 1913, p. 6.

³⁵ *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 2 July 1913, p. 6.

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ “Pilgrim Sisters Depart – Leeds Meeting Regarded as Huge Success”, *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 2 July 1913, p. 3.

⁴⁰ *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 2 July 1913, p. 3.

procession.⁴¹ The *Leeds Mercury* commented that the pilgrims were in ‘high spirits’ after their successful visit to Leeds, with the leaders of the march unable to ‘conceal their gratification’, and with the Pilgrimage leaving the city with around fifty pilgrims.⁴²

After the ‘gigantic crowds’ and ‘remarkable meeting’ at Leeds, the *Common Cause* reported the ‘hot and dusty tramp’ to Wakefield.⁴³ The tone from the triumphant reception in Leeds to the slightly sombre review of the meeting at Wakefield is marked. The *Common Cause* reported that after tea with the Wakefield Society, the pilgrims marched into town where they were received by an ‘immense’ crowd.⁴⁴ Little detail is provided for the meeting except for some information about the speakers before the report describes the ‘unpleasant experiences’ at the end of the meeting.⁴⁵ The NUWSS newspaper reported that despite warnings from the Wakefield Society, there was inadequate police presence for the size of the crowd, leaving the pilgrims unprotected from ‘hooligan elements’ amongst the spectators.⁴⁶ It was reported one pilgrim was stoned, resulting in a black eye, another was hustled and injured her spine while another pilgrim badly hurt her foot.⁴⁷ The *Wakefield Express* commented that flags and banners were torn down, and confirmed reports of the violence towards the speakers, noting it was ‘well that the results were no worse’.⁴⁸ The *Common Cause* reported it was their belief that the crowd had been incited by anti-suffragists who had proceeded the Pilgrimage with a meeting on the Tuesday night before their arrival.⁴⁹ With the *Anti-Suffrage Review* from the National League of

⁴¹ “Suffragette Pilgrims on the March”, *Shipley Times and Express*, 4 July 1913, p. 9.

⁴² “Suffragettes Success”, *Leeds Mercury*, 3 July 1913, p. 3.

⁴³ Wilma Meikle, “Great North Road Pilgrims”, *The Common Cause*, 11 July 1913, p. 6.

⁴⁴ *The Common Cause*, 11 July 1913, p. 6.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*

⁴⁶ *Ibid*

⁴⁷ *Ibid*

⁴⁸ *Wakefield Express*, 5 July 1913, cited in Deborah Scriven, ‘The Pilgrims’ Progress: Wakefield Welcomes the 1913 Suffragette Pilgrimage’, *Wakefield Historical Society Journal*, 16 (2012), 1-6 (pp. 3-4).

⁴⁹ *The Common Cause*, 11 July 1913, p. 6.

Opposing Woman Suffrage, claiming the Pilgrimage was little more than a 'perambulating circus' of 'a few leisured women', convinced that militants and non-militants were one of the same, it is easy to see how this misdirection played a role in the Wakefield demonstration.⁵⁰

The sentiment of the Pilgrimage, through its preparation, organisation and beginnings in Newcastle had an overwhelmingly optimistic tone, reiterated by Millicent Fawcett and the *Common Cause* as a joyous, reverent and happy. However, it is difficult to imagine that the National Union did not expect any challenging or dangerous behaviour from the public or anti-suffragists protesters. The Pilgrimage, however peaceful, was an act contesting political power which tested the relationship between local people and women as political bodies with parrhesia. In all the discussion proceeding the Pilgrimage, no mention is dedicated to the safety of the pilgrims or any potential danger of the Pilgrimage, and therefore no preparations are made to equip the marchers with a means of protection. Lacking the large numbers of participants found at processions, and without the protection and stability of a caravan, the pilgrims relied predominantly on the good nature of local people and the support of police forces when necessary. As Schultz outlines, the early twentieth-century had seen an evolution in the ideologies concerning women's physical culture, with concepts of frailty and weakness challenged by an increase in physical leisure and sporting opportunities for women.⁵¹ However, Schultz argues that despite the increased popularity of activities like cycling and walking, the general consensus was that such activities would have a masculinising effect of women's physical, psychological and emotional well-being.⁵² To choose a

⁵⁰ "The 'Great Trek'", *The Anti-Suffrage Review*, 1 June 1913, p. 4.

⁵¹ Schultz, p. 1138.

⁵² Schultz, p. 1138.

march across the country was therefore an act which was deliberately contentious and unfamiliar to a large portion of local populations. Although the NUWSS made distinct and concerted efforts to publicise their non-militancy, it would have been naïve to presume that the Pilgrimage would be completely positively received, when militancy was at its height and violence towards suffrage campaigners was well documented.⁵³ One of the responses to increased violence towards suffrage campaigners, implemented by the WSPU, was the introduction of self-defence practice including Jiu-jitsu, with the Women's Social and Political Union recommending that all members be trained in self-defence by 1913.⁵⁴ There is little evidence that the National Union was engaged with or interested in any form of martial arts of self-defence for its members, with the concept of self-defence potentially misaligning with their non-militant strategy, or simply that the Pilgrimage was organised in such haste that there was little time for much physical preparation. Overall, the reception of the pilgrims through Ripon, Harrogate, Leeds and Wakefield was reported with interest, with the presence of the Pilgrimage felt in every community. The local press reported the movements of the pilgrims at almost every juncture. Whilst the tone, length of articles and the publisher's sympathies differ, the press coverage of the Pilgrimage was thorough, with many newspapers concerning themselves with detailed accounts of the pilgrims' progress. For the most part, the differentiation between the suffragettes and the suffragists was reported correctly, with particular attention drawn to the constitutional and non-militant nature of the campaign in many reports. The press was critical in the engagement of the

⁵³ June Purvis, 'Did militancy help or hinder the granting of women's suffrage in Britain?', *Women's History Review*, 28 (2019), 1200-1234 (pp. 1202-1212).

⁵⁴ Wendy Rouse and Beth Slutsky, 'Empowering the Physical and Political Self: Women and the Practice of Self-Defence, 1890-1920', *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, 13 (2014), 470-499 (pp. 482-486).

Pilgrimage within wider communities, advertising and re-telling the events which shaped the women's march, helping the NUWSS to fulfil their objectives of reaching the people of Britain with their message of suffragism on a greater scale than ever before.

Chapter 4: Yorkshire Suffragism: Drawing rooms and effigies

‘Oh! Ye who need the women’s vote,
We’ll be victorious yet.’¹

As the Pilgrimage Committee decided upon their final locations for the Pilgrimage, it would have been almost impossible to predict the unique regional variations that would come to shape the pilgrims’ journey. For the North Road pilgrims, their journey through the ridings of Yorkshire started in the village of Croft-on-Tees, moving through the North Riding before reaching Ripon on Wednesday 25 June 1913. The North Riding locations of Ripon and Harrogate sat just over ten miles apart, however the historic yet small city of Ripon with its market square and cathedral sits in contrast to the spa town of Harrogate with its stray and avenues. Similarly, in the West Riding, Leeds was a large industrial city with two primary industries in wool and ready-made tailoring, with women making up at least one third of the labour force.² Wakefield, in comparison, described by Bartholomew in 1887, boasted a diverse collection of industries, including breweries, roperies, hosieries and collieries.³ The divergent nature of the destinations over this section of the Great North Road route of the Pilgrimage reflected the varying nature of suffrage support, indifference and opposition experienced by the constitutionalist campaigners.

¹ “Song of the Suffrage Pilgrims”, *The Common Cause*, 20 June 1913, p. 12.

² June Hannam, ‘The Employment of Working Class Women in Leeds, 1880-1914’ (PhD thesis, University of Sheffield, 1984), p. 1.

³ John Bartholomew, *Gazetteer of the British Isles: statistical and topographical* (Edinburgh: A. and C. Black, 1887) on A Vision of Britain Through Time <<https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk>> [accessed 10 August 2020]

The existing suffrage networks in the area were diverse in nature; with combinations of small fledgling groups, to large, interconnective societies that spanned across both geographical and ideological terrain. The combined counties of the North, East and West ridings of Yorkshire, collectively made up the largest county in England, with a combination of constitutional, militant and anti-suffrage organisations active in almost every area. The National Union's tactics to increase visibility and membership on a regional level resulted in the NUWSS containing nearly 500 societies with over 50,000 members in sixteen regional federations by 1913.⁴ Yorkshire's three ridings were covered by two federations: the North and East Riding Federation, including Ripon and Harrogate and the West Riding Federation which included Leeds and Wakefield. Ripon was home to a branch of the NUWSS only, with Miss Tyler of the Training College named as secretary in 1913, although little evidence remains to assess the size or activity of the branch.⁵ Close by towns like Thirsk and Northallerton presented a similar picture, with branches associated with the National Union forming in 1912 in Northallerton and a NUWSS branch, Friends' League for Women's Suffrage branch and the Thirsk British Women's Temperance Association formed in Thirsk.⁶ In comparison, Harrogate had a long history with suffragism as it held a unique position in the area as a place where middle-class people holidayed, and was therefore an ideal location to hold assemblies and speaking tours during the summer months.⁷ Lydia Becker, early suffrage campaigner and founder of the *Women's Suffrage Journal*, held a meeting at the Spa Concert room in August 1875, and again in 1876, addressing the audience about the female suffrage cause, the

⁴ Hume, pp. 229-230.

⁵ Elizabeth Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement: A Reference Guide 1866-1928* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 599.

⁶ Elizabeth Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in Britain and Ireland: A Regional Survey* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 53-54.

⁷ Crawford, *Regional Survey*, p.47.

wages of Dewsbury weavers and legislative restrictions on women's labour.⁸ Accompanied by Alice Scatcherd, an extremely active campaigner for women's suffrage, particularly in Leeds, Manchester and Sheffield, and co-founder of Women's Franchise League, Becker returned to Harrogate every other summer until 1882.⁹ Her visits were well attended, particularly by women, and reported upon favourably by the local paper, the *Harrogate Advertiser*.¹⁰ In 1909, both Ripon and Harrogate received a visit from the Yorkshire caravan tour. Evelina Haverfield reported in the *Common Cause* that the caravanners canvassed six villages around Ripon and held a 'capital' meeting in the market place the next day, in the same location the pilgrims were to speak with a turbulent reception just four years later.¹¹ In Harrogate, the caravanners were warmly received, holding two meetings in which the crowd were 'sympathetic and interested' and asked 'intelligent questions', alongside good collections and revealingly 'many enquiries about Mary Gawthorpe' who had spoken in Harrogate the previous July for the WSPU and had made 'a lasting impression'.¹² As Holton reflects, evidence such as this is demonstrative that the support, organisation and differences in tactics were less divisive on a regional level than on a national level.¹³ It may not be surprising then, that Harrogate contained both an active NUWSS branch, founded in 1904, as well as a WSPU branch founded in 1909.¹⁴ The WSPU branch had been organised by the Yorkshire organiser, Mary Phillips, a Scottish suffragette who predominantly worked in the

⁸ "Public Meetings: Harrogate", *Women's Suffrage Journal*, 1 September 1875, p. 7; "Lectures: Harrogate", *Women's Suffrage Journal*, 1 September 1876, p. 7.

⁹ Crawford, *Reference*, pp. 618-620.

¹⁰ Harry Fairburn, 'The Women's Suffrage Movement in Ripon, Northallerton and Harrogate: 1870-1913', *The Local Historian*, 49 (2019), 148-154 (pp. 148-149).

¹¹ Evelina Haverfield, "The Yorkshire Caravan", *The Common Cause*, 24 June 1909, p. 6.

¹² *Common Cause*, p. 6.

¹³ Sandra Stanley Holton, *Suffrage Days: Stories from the Women's Suffrage Movement* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 135.

¹⁴ Crawford, *Regional Survey*, p. 47.

Leeds-Bradford area from 1909 for three years, after working across the country as a paid organiser for the Pankhurst's.¹⁵ By 1913 the branch secretary was Morrie Hughes with Agnes Wilson as literature secretary, both active militants.¹⁶ Wilson had left the Redhill branch of the NUWSS and had taken part and was sentenced for a window smashing campaign in London, March 1912, whilst Hughes promoted militancy in the press such as her letter published by the *Harrogate and Claro Times* in May 1913 in which she states 'militancy need never surrender – obedience to unjust authority - is in itself a surrender'.¹⁷ By the summer of 1913 when the Pilgrimage arrived in Ripon and Harrogate each destination had already experienced a form of peaceful suffrage activism on their doorstep. As the pilgrims arrived in Ripon, it would have been reasonable for the NUWSS to suspect the pilgrims would receive a similar reception to the caravanners who had come through the city four years earlier was it not for the large agricultural show falling on the same day and the 'antis' joining the pilgrims' route in Northallerton, displaying their sandwich boards and spurring anti-suffragist sentiment amongst the crowds.¹⁸ Whilst the anti-suffragist involvement was somewhat unpredictable and consequently difficult to prepare for, the National Union was wholly unprepared for the more predictable potential hostility of local people along their route throughout the country.

A destination along the Great North Road which the NUWSS may have been prepared for animosity was Harrogate's large, industrial neighbour, Leeds. Whilst Manchester had become the industrial north's epicentre for suffrage, borne by pioneers suffragists like Lydia Becker and the Pankhurst's, the Leeds suffrage

¹⁵ Crawford, *Reference*, pp. 544-545.

¹⁶ Crawford, *Regional Survey*, p. 47.

¹⁷ Fairburn, p. 151.

¹⁸ "Pilgrims from the North-East", *The Common Cause*, 4 July 1913, p. 8.

movement had its own significant place in Yorkshire and the surrounding areas.¹⁹ Both Leeds and Wakefield formed important parts of the textile communities spread across the West Riding and the Pennines, employing forty-nine percent of all working women in clothing and textile production.²⁰ The West Riding was by far the most populated area in Yorkshire. With approximately three quarters of the four million residents in the whole of Yorkshire living in the West Riding by 1901, the energy of both suffrage and anti-suffrage movements were felt more distinctly here than in Yorkshire's more scarcely populated and rural counterparts.²¹ But although the origins of suffrage had been similar in both Leeds and Manchester, the movement in Leeds developed predominantly amongst the city's professional elite, including the influential and internationally connected Isabella and Emily Ford who re-founded the Leeds Suffrage Society in 1889.²² The society aligned itself the National Union, officially joining in 1899.²³ Continuing the work of Scatcherd, the Leeds Society led by Isabella Ford, continued its work by canvassing local working women, speaking outside textile mills and holding petitions regarding labour laws and suffrage, as well as directing the formation of close affiliations with The Women's Labour League assisted by the NUWSS Yorkshire organiser, Mary Fielden.²⁴ The branch was active in all National Union campaigns, and even some WSPU, to ensure that Leeds's magnificent blue and gold 'Leeds for Liberty' banner would be represented as frequently as possible.²⁵ This regular and consistent exposure allowed the branch to open a shop in the city centre for the 1910 general

¹⁹ Jill Liddington, *Rebel Girls: Their Fight for the Vote* (London: Virago Press, 2006), pp. 6-11.

²⁰ Census, 1901, Occupations of Males and Females, County of York.

²¹ David Hey, *How Our Ancestors Lived: A History of Life a Hundred Years Ago* (London: Pro Publications, 2003), pp.14-15.

²² Crawford, *Reference*, p. 226.

²³ Crawford, *Regional*, p. 44.

²⁴ *Ibid*

²⁵ Liddington, *Rebel Girls*, pp. 200-201.

election, and by 1912 open an office in which to hold public meetings of up to eighty people.²⁶

During this time too, Leeds was developing into a place where there was a fostering of new ideas, discussions and exchanges, where metaphysical conversations and controversial topics began to fuel an environment in which the question of suffrage was just the beginning, at least amongst an intellectual elite.²⁷ The founding of the Leeds Art Club in 1903, created by the charismatic Alfred Orage, produced an environment in which contemporary socialist and philosophical ideas could be disseminated, and the local elite could be introduced to Nietzsche, Shaw and Ibsen.²⁸ Amongst its membership was Isabella, Bessie and Emily Ford as well as Mary Gawthorpe, with Isabella providing a talk in 1905 on 'Woman and the State'.²⁹ The connections between Isabella Ford, the ILP, Mary Gawthorpe and the newly formed WSPU branch in Leeds demonstrated a solidarity between the local suffrage organisations at this time. After the formation of the WSPU branch in 1906, signified by the questioning of the cabinet minister for Leeds West, and critically the Home Secretary, Herbert Gladstone on the issues of female enfranchisement, suffrage activity in and from the city increased dramatically.³⁰ By 1908, the South Leeds by-election had become a focal point for WSPU energy, as the city was represented by five MPs, of which four were Liberal and one was Labour, suffragette focus became concentrated on disrupting the activities of local Liberals.³¹ Leeds participated in a

²⁶ Crawford, *Regional*, pp. 44-45.

²⁷ Carole Barash, 'Dora Marsden's Feminism, the "Freewoman", and the Gender Politics of Early Modernism', *The Princeton University Library Chronicle*, 49 (1987), 31-56 (pp. 32-34).

²⁸ Liddington, *Rebel Girls*, pp. 42-44.

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Crawford, *Regional*, p. 45.

³¹ Sandra Stanley Holton, *Suffrage Days: Stories from the Women's Suffrage Movement* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 120-121.

unique fundraising campaign, where the 15-22 of February was designated as 'Self Denial Week', where Mary Gawthorpe and Jennie Baines campaigned around areas of South Leeds in order to win local support and collect donations for their abstinence of luxuries such as coffee and tea.³² Between late January and early February the WSPU organised an astonishing twenty-two out-door speaking events outside mills and factories, including a torch-lit rally on Hunslet Moor, in which Emmeline and Adela Pankhurst addressed local crowds alongside speakers from nearby Huddersfield.³³ Mrs Pankhurst described the rally as 'throng of mill women kept up the chorus in broad Yorkshire', which was later followed by a demonstration in July on Woodhouse Moor, where the Pilgrimage would visit five years later, headed by Christabel Pankhurst, Annie Kenney, Flora Drummond and Jennie Baines.³⁴ Baines had become a full-time paid organiser by this time for the WSPU in the Midlands and the North of England, and continued her dynamic year in Leeds on the 10 October 1908 by harassing both Asquith and Gladstone after the Prime Minister barred the presence of suffragettes from his meeting in the city.³⁵ Reported by *Votes for Women* as 'Riot in Leeds' and by the *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail* as 'Wild Street Scenes in Leeds', Baines, alongside local women including Bertha Quinn, Leonora Cohen and Theresa Garnett, were almost successful in gaining entrance to the meeting, and were later sentenced for their participation.³⁶

But the surge of activity of the Women's Social and Political Union in Leeds did not last. The South Leeds by-election was won by a Liberal despite the efforts of

³² Liddington, *Rebel Girls*, pp. 195-197.

³³ "The By-Elections-South Leeds", *Votes for Women*, February 1908, p. 7.

³⁴ Emmeline Pankhurst, *My Own Story* (London: Evelyn Nash, 1914), p. 85; Crawford, *Regional*, p. 45.

³⁵ Crawford, *Regional*, p. 45.

³⁶ "Riot in Leeds", *Votes for Women*, 15 October 1908, p. 1; "Wild Street Scenes in Leeds", *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, 12 October 1908, p. 3.

regional and national influences, the new Prime Minister Herbert Asquith was wholly unconvinced by the appeal of female enfranchisement, the resources of the WSPU suffrage campaign was spread to other regions, and, as Liddington identifies, there was no key figure to provide leadership and financial stability on a local level.³⁷ Mary Gawthorpe had become the organiser for the Manchester branch of the WSPU, so Adela Pankhurst was sent to Yorkshire, with her attention focused on larger branches such as Sheffield, as smaller Yorkshire branches began to disappear.³⁸ Aided by the energising forces of organiser Mary Phillips and campaigner Leonora Cohen, by 1911, Leeds was rejuvenated by the promise of a new Consolidation Bill and the Women's Coronation Procession in June.³⁹ Leeds' position in the suffrage movement was further cemented by the new director of Leeds City Art Gallery and critically founder of the Men's Political Union for Women's Enfranchisement, Frank Rutter, who moved to Leeds and opened a branch of the MPU, alongside branches in nearby Bradford and Hull.⁴⁰ Rutter's position and support of the suffrage cause, as secretary of the Leeds branch of the MPU and member of Leeds Arts Club, allowed him to provide a safe house for fugitive suffragettes released under the Cat and Mouse Act, including, famously, the fugitive Lillian Lenton.⁴¹

The landscape in Leeds and the West Riding did, however, also form opposition groups to the suffrage campaign which would later influence the Pilgrims on their journey through the county. With the intense and sudden flurry of suffragette activity in Leeds in 1908, anti-suffrage activity began to increase in Leeds in the same year.

³⁷ Liddington, *Rebel Girls*, pp. 198-200.

³⁸ "Programme of Events", *Votes for Women*, January 1908, p. 8; "The Campaign in the Country", *Votes for Women*, 18 February 1910, p. 10.

³⁹ *Ibid*

⁴⁰ Crawford, *Reference*, p. 612.

⁴¹ Crawford, *Regional*, p. 45.

In October of 1908, the first local anti-suffrage action was reported at the annual Holbeck Feast, where an effigy of Emmeline Pankhurst was featured with a noose around her neck and a trapdoor beneath her, which was burnt as part of the celebrations.⁴² Anti-suffrage sentiment had existed as long as the suffrage movement, with the first collective protest against suffragism dating back to 1889.⁴³ However, the formation of the Women's National Anti-Suffrage League in July 1908 alongside the Men's League for Opposing Woman Suffrage in the same year followed by the formation of the collective National League for Opposing Woman Suffrage in 1910, was demonstrative of a growing network of anti-suffrage forming across the country, not just in Yorkshire.⁴⁴ With increased suffrage activity, alongside the onset of divisive militant tactics by the WSPU, the Anti-Suffrage League capitalised on growing concerns about militancy and the escalating forms of suffrage campaign. In December 1908, the first issue of the *Anti-Suffrage Review* was published, listing twenty-six branches including York, Middlesbrough and Bridlington in Yorkshire, which by August 1909 had grown to one hundred and three branches including Leeds alongside Hull and Sheffield.⁴⁵ By the time the Pilgrimage came through Leeds four years later, the *Anti-Suffrage Review*, now published by the National League of Opposing Woman Suffrage, continued to report a growing membership including branches in Yorkshire: mainly focused around the West Riding, with branches listed in Bradford, Ilkley, Leeds, Methley and Sheffield.⁴⁶ The anti-suffragists, however failed to make an impact in the large crowds who attended

⁴² Tina Jackson, *Struggle and Suffrage in Leeds: Women's Lives and the Fight for Equality* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword History, 2019), p. 60.

⁴³ Julia Bush, 'National League for Opposing Woman Suffrage', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, [accessed 12 October 2020], (p. 1).

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ "Formation of Branches", *The Anti-Suffrage Review*, December 1908, p. 2; "Branches", *The Anti-Suffrage Review*, August 1909, pp. 6-7.

⁴⁶ "Branches", *The Anti-Suffrage Review*, August 1913, pp. 16-21.

the pilgrims' visit to Leeds, where their sandwich boards and slogans were outnumbered by larger numbers of locals more interested in the march of suffragists. It was in smaller towns, like Wakefield, where the anti-suffrage campaigners made their most significant impact, despite the lack of anti-suffrage groups being based in the area. Instead, Wakefield had a long history of suffrage support and interconnective relationships with surrounding suffrage societies. Wakefield's experience with suffrage started early, with six local people signing John Stuart Mill's 1866 national petition for women's suffrage, facilitated by local vicar Reverend Goodwyn Barmby of Wakefield Unitarian Chapel.⁴⁷ Six years later, in 1872, a branch of the National Society for Women's Suffrage was operational in the town, inviting the lecturer and active suffragist for the National Society, Madame Ronniger, to speak on the Parliamentary enfranchisement of women to a 'small but very attentive audience'.⁴⁸ A decade later in April 1882, Wakefield received a visit by Alice Scatterd, alongside a group of speakers including Laura Whittle from Liverpool and the Reverend John Wolstenholme.⁴⁹ The diligent efforts of the Barmby family to introduce the suffrage cause to Wakefield lapsed when the family moved to Suffolk, however, the branch was re-founded in 1904, and again in 1910 by Florence Beaumont, who used her home at Hatfield Hall as the ideal location to host discussions on suffrage, reigniting the work of Barmby family in the area.⁵⁰ The branch grew quickly, with a reported fifty members by April 1910 and the confirmation of affiliation with the National Union reported by May 1910.⁵¹ In October

⁴⁷ Gaynor Haliday, *Struggle and Suffrage in Wakefield: Women's Lives and the Fight for Equality Regional*, (Barnsley: Pen and Sword History, 2019), p. 116.

⁴⁸ Crawford, *Regional*, p. 52.

⁴⁹ Haliday, *Struggle and Suffrage*, p. 116

⁵⁰ Crawford, *Regional*, p. 52.

⁵¹ "Reports of Societies within the National Union", *The Common Cause*, 5 May 1910, p. 13.

of the same year the Wakefield branch was joined by Millicent Garrett Fawcett, who reportedly 'spoke splendidly' to an 'interested audience', filling the group with 'fresh courage and enthusiasm'.⁵² This invigorating visit, alongside the influence of prominent local figures such as Isabella Ford and Mary Fielden, a collaboration with the Castleford branch of the Women's Freedom League, and the innovative local advertising scheme set up by Beaumont, the Wakefield society grew to one hundred and fifty-six members by October 1911.⁵³ Suffrage support was cemented in the area by a resolution passed by the Wakefield Trades and Labour Council in support of women's suffrage, followed by an outpouring of assistance in the form of open air meetings, distribution of literature and copies of resolutions to parliamentary parties by the trade unions.⁵⁴ Scriven reflects that Wakefield not only received support from local trade unions, but continuous support from the *Wakefield Express*, reporting on the 'non-militant, non-party' meetings, but also from the local Members of Parliament who had both voted in favour of the Representation of the People (Women) Bill in May 1913.⁵⁵ It is difficult to imagine that in Wakefield then, is where the pilgrims in summer 1913 would experience violence and anti-suffrage protest. However, the nature of the anti-suffrage behaviour against the Great North Road pilgrims was unpredictable and incalculable. It was only for a well-timed meeting held in Wakefield the night before the pilgrims arrival by Anti-suffragists who incited the break-up of the meeting of the pilgrims the following night, and according to the *Common Cause*, a

⁵² "Reports of Societies within the National Union", *The Common Cause*, 3 November 1910, p. 16.

⁵³ Haliday, *Struggle and Suffrage*, pp. 132-133.

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ Deborah Scriven, 'The Pilgrim's Progress: Wakefield welcomes the Suffragette Pilgrimage of 1913', *Wakefield Historical Society Journal*, 16 (2012), 1-6 (p. 2).

lack of police presence, which allowed for the violent disruption of a well-attended event.⁵⁶

The events in Wakefield reflected the way in which peaceful demonstrations were easily disrupted, and the ability of the anti-suffragists to incite violence irrespective of the non-militant form of protest adopted by the pilgrims. With National League of Opposing Woman Suffrage membership in Yorkshire concentrated in West Yorkshire, it is perhaps least surprising that their presence was most disruptive in Wakefield. What was surprising was that the anti-suffrage pursuit of the Pilgrimage began in North Yorkshire, far from any branches and seemingly at random, but placing the pilgrims in a dangerous position by the time they reached Ripon. However, despite the unfortunate disruption and violent behaviour, the collective identity of the National Union members appeared resolute, resilient and connected in light of any opposition. The Pilgrimage was able to combine separate branches from across the ridings to act in solidarity and togetherness, regardless of the size of the branch or the amount of time it had been active. Suffragism in Yorkshire ranged significantly from extreme militancy to placid drawing room meetings. It spanned outside of large cities to reach small market towns, trade unions and the corridors of ladies' colleges. It had existed in Yorkshire for decades, but the Pilgrimage was significant in pulling together factions of people, groups and resources to allow ordinary women to march together to use their bodies and their voice collectively, marching and speaking for everyone to see.

⁵⁶ "Great North Road Pilgrims", *The Common Cause*, 11 July 1913. p. 10.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

At the beginning of August 1913, Millicent Fawcett reflected upon the Pilgrimage by writing in the *Common Cause* that it had been an 'enormous success already', declaring that the law-abiding pilgrims carried their message to 'innumerable towns and villages', having 'calm courage and devotion' even when 'hooliganism was let loose upon them'.¹ For the Great North Road pilgrims who travelled through Yorkshire, speaking on podiums and on market square crosses throughout the ridings, they had experienced the full spectrum of joyous parades to drunken brutality.

The Pilgrimage had been organised at a point where militancy had reached unsustainable levels and political prospects had stalled. The creative solution of a mass demonstration, with its sententious undercurrent and its uncharacteristically bold ambition had been inspired by the Edinburgh to London march as well as the American Pilgrim Hikes a few months before. The National Union listed multiple and evolving reasons for the Pilgrimage and why it was important, not least to raise money for the NUWSS, but most importantly to raise awareness of non-militant suffragists who wanted to use their voices and their bodies to demonstrate the capabilities of women and their right to the vote. The Pilgrimage provided a balance of procession, self-sacrifice and peaceful campaign which was able to simultaneously involve and connect with multiple branches, federations and local people to demonstrate that suffragists were sensible women seeking reasonable and just solutions. With all the piety of a religious pilgrimage but with the grit and physical

¹ "After the Pilgrimage", *Common Cause*, 1 August 1913, p. 10.

determination of capable women, the Pilgrimage challenged perceptions of femininity and womanliness to make themselves objects of intrigue and spectacle, which in some places proved too challenging for local audiences. With all the experience garnered from caravan tours, processions and parades that had come before, the National Union was visible in a brand-new way, attaining the desired effect of being in and amongst local communities. The presence of the Pilgrimage in Yorkshire was particularly significant, as Yorkshire's liberal elite was closely aligned with the National Union, making the NUWSS an unlikely society for working people to support. The National Union's participation in local, working communities, backed by their new party policies and EFF, made them a far more viable option for support than their militant counterparts. Their presence across the county, whether addressing thousands of people or small groups of listeners, demonstrated they were accessible on a regional level. Without the Pilgrimage, the National Union may have struggled to reassert its position on not only a regional stage, but a national stage too.

This study set out to contextualise the campaign strategy of a nationwide Pilgrimage on a regional level, to understand its effectiveness, significance, reception and unique regional characteristics which shaped the pilgrims' journey through Yorkshire. By assessing suffrage on a local scale through the framework of four towns and cities, this study has revealed the scale, networks and interconnectivity of both militant and non-militant suffrage in Yorkshire. This study has examined the nature of anti-suffragism in Yorkshire, drawing conclusions about their effectiveness during the Pilgrimage and contributing to the understanding of the complex nature of suffrage and anti-suffrage support throughout the county. By examining the Pilgrimage on a local level, this study examines primary source material against current

understanding around violence towards women, women's polity in the public sphere and the experience of women as political and physical bodies in a regional context.

With few examinations of violence towards non-militant suffragists and non-militant campaigning, and fewer studies on violence towards constitutionalists and campaigning on a local level, this research offers important insights into the way that suffragism was experienced on a regional scale, providing opportunities for further development and additional research. With the examination of suffragism in Yorkshire still being developed, further research examining anti-suffragism, local networks and the impact on local communities in smaller places such as Wakefield could further understanding around these localities and their relationship with suffrage. The burgeoning collection of study dedicated to physicality, suffrage and protest, with particular gaps in non-militant physicality and local studies of physical protest, allow for further understanding in this area. Further research is also available assessing contribution of national periodicals and their readership on a regional level, to access a greater understanding of the ways in which suffrage information was accumulated and distributed throughout the country, and on a regional and local level. Whilst this study has made a contribution to the understanding of non-militancy, regionality and marches as a form of campaign on a local level, there are many more opportunities to build upon this research and ascertain greater understanding of suffrage and discover more about the ordinary women who made extraordinary progress.

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