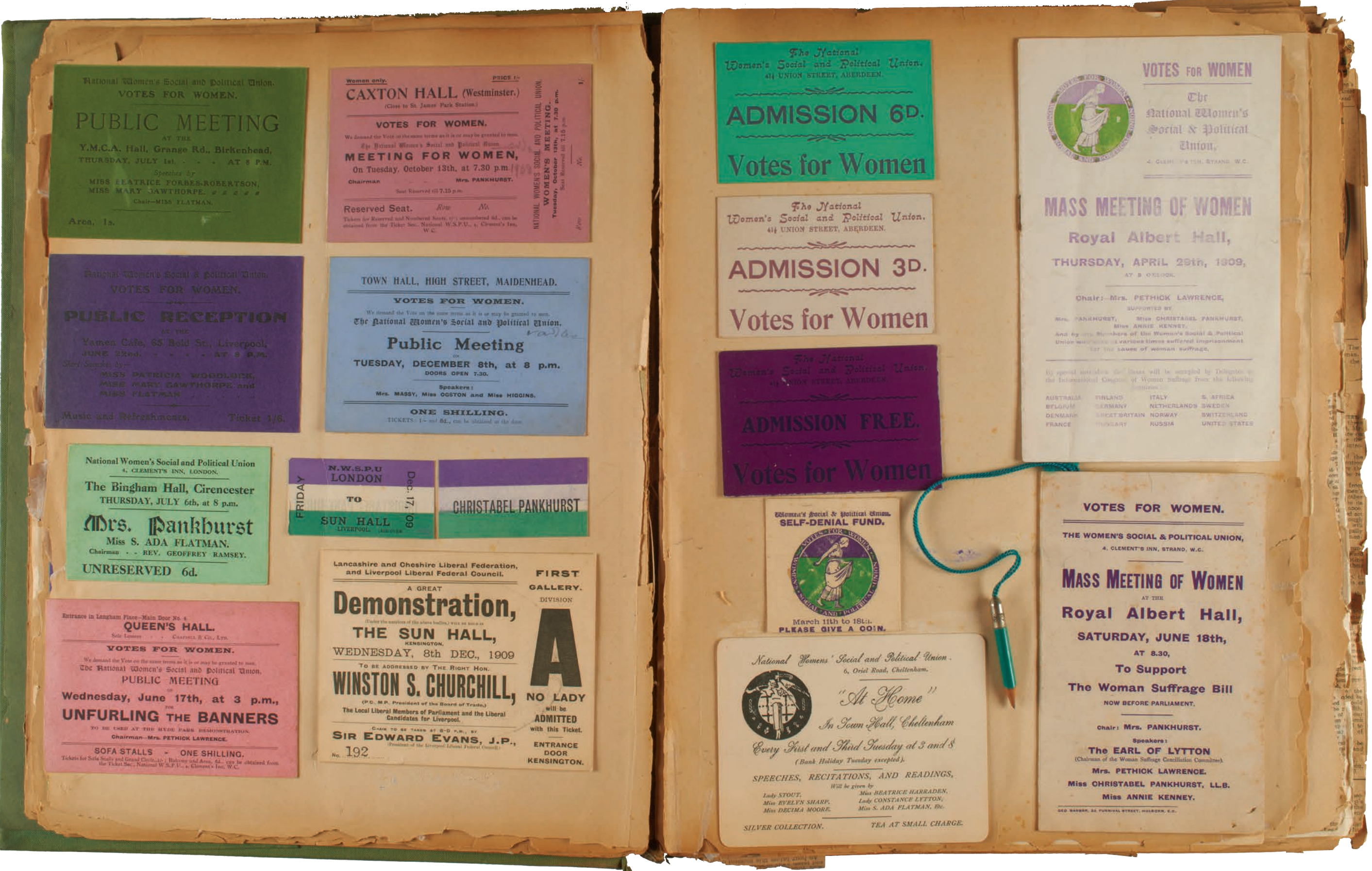




Access for the many, not the few – Suffragette scrapbooks at the Museum of London

Clare Reynolds & Rose Briskman, paper conservators
Museum of London, 150 London Wall, EC2Y 5HN
creynolds@museumoflondon.org.uk and rbriskman@museumoflondon.org.uk

Angeliki Kostaki, freelance paper conservator, agelikiko@yahoo.co.uk



The Museum of London holds a large collection relating to the Suffragettes, which is in high demand for access by researchers, especially in this centenary year of women's suffrage. The very poor condition of many items, particularly several scrapbooks, makes providing this direct access a risk to the collection. The curator and conservators at the museum have long been concerned with how to protect the scrapbooks from further damage. Removal of the individual items from the pages was not an option, as the scrapbooks needed to be preserved as complete objects.

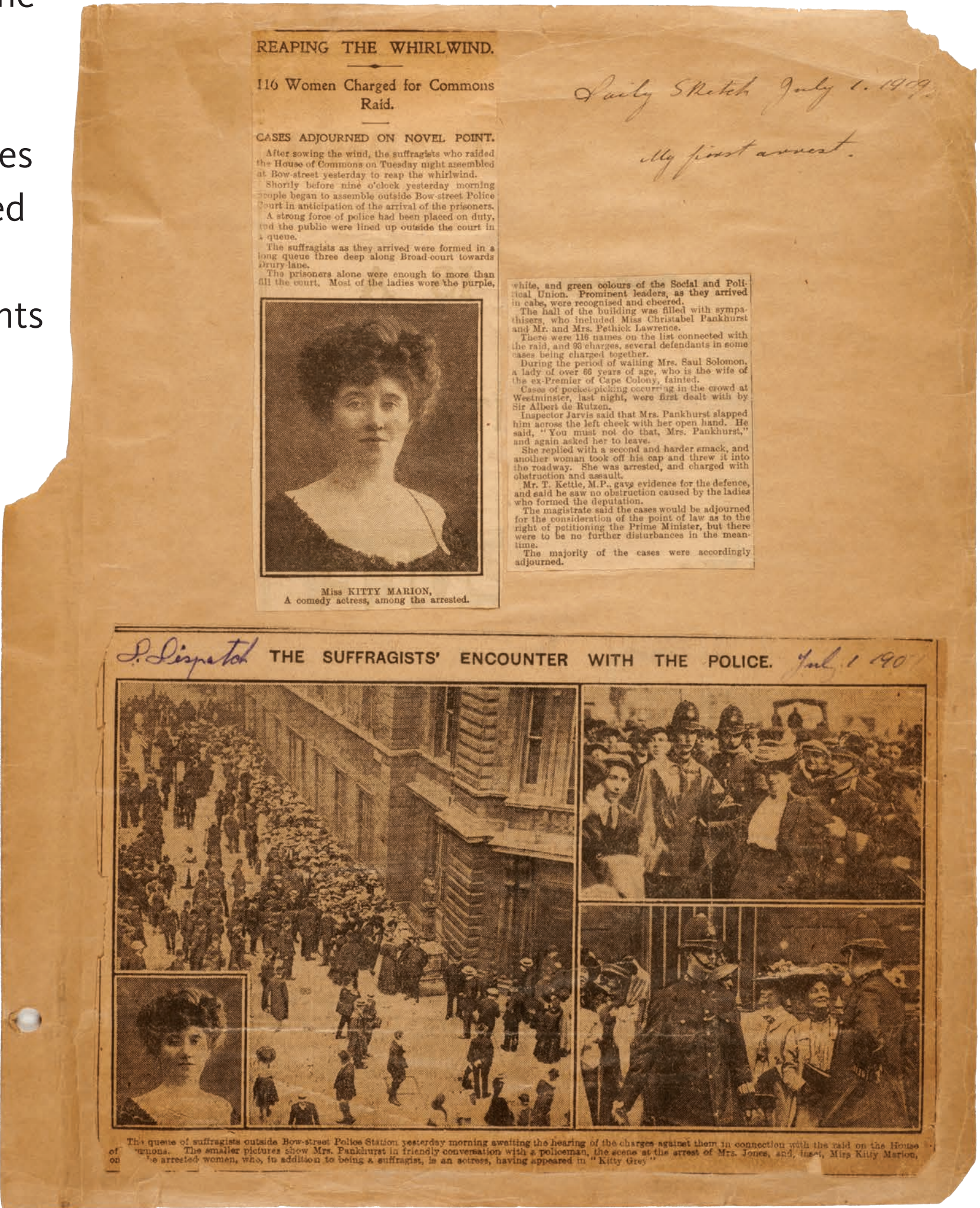
A partnership with Google Arts and Culture enabled us to stabilise, digitise, and make available online, both on the Google Arts and Culture platform and the Museum of London's website.



www.artsandculture.google.com/partner/museum-of-london

The scrapbooks were put together by Ada Flatman, Kitty Marion, Minnie Baldock and Marion Holmes, all suffragettes, to chronicle the activities and news stories relating to the struggle to gain the vote. They used commercially available scrapbooks, often with very poor quality wood pulp paper, which has fragmented wherever it has been under stress. However, they had used a good quality adhesive and a good technique to apply all the different tickets, flyers, letters, photographs, designs, cuttings, and even a promotional pencil.

The partnership with Google Arts & Culture enabled us to engage a freelance conservator, Angeliki Kostaki, to stabilise the scrapbooks in preparation for photography. The pages were surface cleaned; remoistenable tengujo tissue, toned with watercolour, was adhered to vulnerable edges and tears; creases were flattened and locally sized with methyl cellulose; damaged news cuttings were repaired. Loose elements were replaced if their correct positions were known; numerous smaller fragments had to remain unplaced. The scrapbooks are now stored in individual wrappers and archival boxes.



The photography was carried out by the Museum of London's in house photographers with Angeliki assisting to ensure the safe handling of the scrapbooks. The high resolution images are now available online and it is intended that researchers use this resource rather than physically accessing the works, although it is often the case that online exposure of an object increases the interest of people to see it in the flesh.



The conservation element of this project is the digitization: the scrapbooks remain in a vulnerable condition, and they are likely to lose more fragments when accessed in the future. The photographs provide a permanent record of how the scrapbooks are now.