

3 SUFFRAGETTES Part 3 of 3

July 2021

Thirdly **Aileen Preston (1889-1974) #2094**. Lady chauffeuse to Emmeline Pankhurst.

Aileen Chevallier Preston was born on 7th March 1889 in County Armagh, Ireland, the daughter of **Captain John Preston (1851-1907) #2088** and **Edith Isabella Maria Chevallier (1858-1940) #2085**. (In passing it is recorded that Chevalliers married Cobbolds at least 3 times all in different generations). Aileen opened a driving school in London and later drove ambulances at the front in WWI.

Her brother **Wing Cdr. Raphael (Raph) Chevallier Preston (1892-1972) #2095** joined the Royal Engineers in 1914 and served with the cable section of the Signals in France and at Gallipoli. He transferred to RFC and learned to fly in Heliopolis, Egypt making his first solo flight on 28th April 1917. Subsequently he joined National Flying Services and in 1934 became personal pilot firstly to **Mary, Duchess of Bedford** until her death in 1937 and then to the **Marquis of Londonderry**. By 1940 he had joined the Accident Investigation Branch and in 1960 was appointed Chairman of the Northern Ireland Advisory Committee for Civil Aviation.

In 1911 Aileen became the lady chauffeuse to Emmeline Pankhurst, chosen because she was the first woman to secure a necessary certificate. Opinions vary as to who issued the certificate, the RAC or the AA, but in those days the driver needed to be a qualified mechanic who could deal with the frequent mid-journey breakdowns. In 1962 Aileen spoke on Woman's Hour about her struggles getting in and out of the car in a long skirt and veil let alone actually driving the car once she was at the controls.



Aileen driving Emily Pankhurst in 1911.

The Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) was formed in Manchester in October 1903. In November 1919 Nancy Astor took her seat in the House of Commons as the first female MP in Britain and in July 1928, The Representation of the People Act entitles everyone over the age of 21 to vote which women over 21 did for the first time in May the following year.