

Miss Elizabeth Ralph (1911-2000)

Elizabeth was the Bristol City Council Archivist from 1939 to 1971. As such she was in an ideal position to organise and maintain SI Bristol records, for which the Club is indebted. She held several public offices, including being the first female chairman of the Council of the Society of Archivists (now the Archives and Records Association) from 1957 to 1960. In 1953, she was awarded an Honorary Degree of Master of Arts and in 1993 an Honorary Doctor of Letters, both by the University of Bristol. She wrote many articles and books.

Elizabeth Ralph was invaluable to SI Bristol for more than six decades. She joined the Club in 1937 and within three years was elected its Honorary Secretary, a position she held until 1961. This 21-year stint made her by far the Club's longest serving Secretary. She was President of SI Bristol for two terms (1943-1944 and 1965-1966) and President of the South West Divisional Union (SWDU) for two consecutive terms (1946-1947 and 1947-1948).



Throughout the Second World War, Elizabeth is acknowledged for not only holding the Club together, but also for helping to run a Residential Club for service women. Impressively, in May 1943, when Elizabeth was President and under her leadership, the Club convened the first nationwide conference at which there were representatives from 30 Women's Organisations. The Club co-ordinated a Standing Conference of Women's Organisations (SCWO) whose purpose was to support women in the challenging times of war. The Club also supported the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs of Great Britain and Ireland, whose aim was to give business and professional women an opportunity to meet. In May 1943, the SWDU Conference was held in Bristol.

In 1956, Elizabeth travelled by boat to attend the International Convention in New York. She took the opportunity to visit the Main Line Club and thanked them for their support during the war years.

She wrote a brief history of the Club for its Golden Jubilee celebrations in 1970, and updated it for the 75th anniversary in 1995.

In December 1972, Elizabeth Ralph was awarded Honorary Membership of SI Bristol, a title she held until 1998. To honour and mark her 80th birthday in December 1991, SI Bristol donated and planted a plane tree in the precincts of the Bristol Records Office. In response to a competition to identify 50 'Great Westerners', SI Bristol and Bristol Archives nominated Elizabeth posthumously. As a result the Great Western Railway (GWR) named the first of its 50 new express train engines in her honour. GWR also produced a commemorative coin, and Miss Ralph's coin pays homage to Bristol's City Hall.

When Miss Ralph died in January 2000, a cheque was sent in her memory to All Saints Church Clifton, where she had been an active member of the Parochial Church Council for a number of years. A booklet was written about her by Brian Smith, entitled '**Elizabeth Ralph 1911-2000**'.