

University Library, Special Collections & Archives
Highlight for May 2010

Eleanor Rathbone, Independent. Classmark: Rathbone Papers, RP XIV.

1909: Eleanor Rathbone the first woman elected to Liverpool City Council – Independent councillor for Granby 1909-1934



RP XIV.1.2: Letter from Eleanor Rathbone to her mother, Oct. 5, 1909.

“People seem to think that I ought to be safe to get in, but you never can tell: it is a queer sort of election.... The meeting last night was very successful, the room quite packed before it began, and hundreds turned away.... but of course that merely means curiosity at the novelty of a woman candidate.”

RP XIV.3.3(2): Election circular for municipal election, Granby ward, 1910 (left).

“Reasons for voting for Miss Eleanor Rathbone:...
BECAUSE ... the thousands of women electors in Liverpool have no representative of their own sex, except Miss Eleanor Rathbone...”

BECAUSE Miss Eleanor Rathbone does not forget that she represents the men of the Ward, as well as the women of the City.”

1910s-1920s: Campaigning for women’s suffrage in Liverpool and beyond

RP XIV.3.101: Postcard for the Kirkdale by-election campaign, 1910 (right)

Eleanor Rathbone (centre) and other Liverpool suffragists campaigning in support of the pro-women’s suffrage candidate in the Kirkdale by-election, 1910.

RP XIV.3.3: Election address to electors of East Toxteth, election campaign, 1922

“THE POSITION OF WOMEN. I stand for a real equality of liberties, status, and opportunities between men and women. The conditions of the franchise should be the same for both sexes.”

RP XIV.3.3: Election address to electors of combined English universities, 1929

“THE STATUS OF WOMEN. Perhaps the fact speaks for itself that for the past ten years I have been President, in succession to Dame Millicent Fawcett, of the oldest and probably the largest women’s non-party political organization”
[National Union for Equal Citizenship, formerly the National Union of Women Suffrage Societies.]





RP XIV.1.19: Postcard of women's suffrage caravan speaking tour, 1912

Sent to Eleanor Rathbone by Jane Colquitt, August 16, on a tour of the West Lancashire, West Cheshire and North Wales Federation (an expansion of the Liverpool Women's Suffrage Society) to canvass suffragist support in rural areas in the region.

RP XIV.1.3: Letter from Eleanor Rathbone to her mother, [1913?]

“No one seems to know what is going to happen about the Bill ... It is nearly 5 years (since May 1908) since Mr Asquith announced his intention with regard to a W[omen's] Suffrage Amendment to a Reform Bill...”

1929: Eleanor Rathbone elected as Independent MP for the Combined English Universities, until her death in 1946

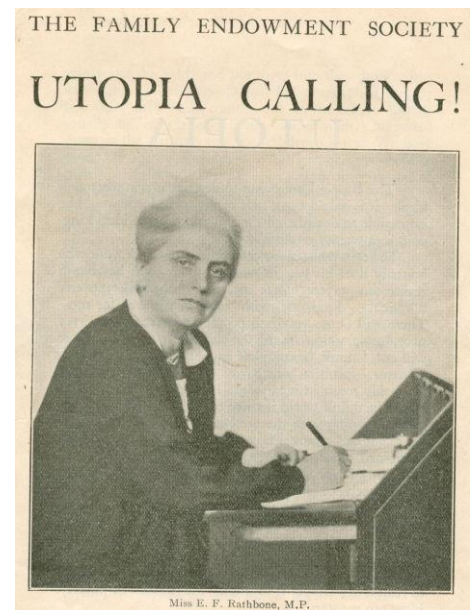
RP XIV.3.10: Address to Women Voters of the Combined English Universities

“During the most active years of the Suffrage movement, Eleanor Rathbone was one of the leading spirits of its non-militant side... The spate of complicated legislation affecting the status and economic freedom of women ... owes much ... to her bold initiative combined with her sense of political realities ... we cite only the Acts which gave mothers equal rights with fathers over their children, pensions for widows and orphans, and the completion of equal franchise to which so many women graduates - disenfranchised under the previous qualification -owe their voting rights.”

RP XIV.3.99: Printed leaflet of "A plea for family allowances" 1930 (right).

Address broadcast by Eleanor Rathbone from Northern Stations, February 11 1930, produced by the Family Endowment Society.

The Family Allowances Act 1945, for which Eleanor Rathbone is now mostly remembered, was the culmination of her efforts over nearly three decades to promote women's independence, and it was at her insistence that the family allowance payment has always been paid directly to the mother.



References:

Susan Pedersen, 'Rathbone, Eleanor Florence (1872–1946)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2009 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35678, accessed 29 April 2010]

Eleanor Florence Rathbone (1872–1946): doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/35678

Susan Pedersen, *Eleanor Rathbone and the Politics of Conscience* (Yale, 2004)

Website: <http://sca.lib.liv.ac.uk/collections/index.html>

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