

Ellen Malos: 1937 – 2023

An activist and academic, she was inspirational and innovative

Ellen Scarlett was born in Ballarat, Victoria, Australia on 21 November 1937, the oldest of 5 children. After attending Ballarat high school, she studied English and history at Melbourne University, producing a prize-winning dissertation on the Australian author Patrick White.

Through her activities in socialist student politics, she met Greek Australian John Malos, whom she married in 1958. In 1962 they came to the UK with two-year-old son Rob. With John lecturing in physics at the University of Bristol, Ellen started a doctorate on James Joyce. However, she abandoned it after the birth of their daughter Anna, as it was considered impossible for a woman to work on a Ph.D. and bring up children at the same time!

Both Ellen and John were active Labour Party members, and despite occasional fallings out with the party, Ellen was a member at her death. In the 1970s, she became involved in the Labour Party Women's Section and the newly formed Women's Liberation Movement. Putting her beliefs into practice, in 1973 the basement of their house in Bristol became the city's first women's centre.

Initially an office, it soon became a refuge too, offering a home to women fleeing domestic violence. Eventually the campaign led to the purchase of three safe houses, and Bristol Women's Aid was born. Some years later, in 2007, her contribution to supporting women across Bristol was recognised when a Next Link safe house was named after her.

Ellen's activism sat alongside an interest in the academic aspects of violence against women, which she began to research at the University of Bristol as a part-time lecturer. In 1990, she and her colleague Gill Hague established the Domestic Violence Research Group, now the Centre for Gender and Violence Research within the University's School for Policy Studies. In 2006 she was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the University.

As well as a number of collaborative publications, Ellen edited a collection of essays, *The Politics of Housework*, which was published in 1980. In 2013, with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, her archive was catalogued by the Feminist Archive South and is now part of the special collections at the University of Bristol.

Ellen loved history all her life and returned to it on retirement. Her interest was in telling the social history stories of women that might otherwise remain untold. It

is fitting that this walk is now available for all to enjoy on the West of England and South Wales Women's History Network site.

John died in 1995. Ellen Malos died at home in Bristol on 22 August 2023, at the age of 85.