

**Biographical Background:** Winifred Holtby was born on 23 June 1898 to a prosperous farming family in Rudston, East Yorkshire. Holtby was initially educated at home by a governess and later at Queen Margaret's School in Scarborough. She chose to postpone further studies until after the First World War, and instead joined the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps. In 1919 Holtby began studying at the University of Oxford, and this is where she met Vera Brittain and began their life-long friendship. After graduating Holtby and Brittain moved to London in the hope of establishing themselves as writers.

Holtby, like Brittain was an ardent feminist, socialist and pacifist and she initially gained fame through her journalism and later as an author. As well as her journalism, Holtby wrote 14 books, including six novels; two volumes of short stories; the first critical study of Virginia Woolf (1932); and a feminist survey called *Women and a Changing Civilization* (1934). Holtby is of course best remembered for her novel *South Riding*, which was edited by Vera Brittain and published posthumously in 1936.

In 1931 Holtby had been diagnosed as having Bright's disease, and she later died on 29 September 1935 and was buried at All Saints Church in Rudston. At her death her archive was left to the people of Hull. It was deposited with the Local Studies Library and is now housed at the Hull History Centre.

**Custodial history:** The collection was deposited by Shirley Williams M.P.

**Description:** In addition to her published works and biographies, Hull Local Studies Library houses a collection of thousands of items which form the largest collection of original material on Winifred Holtby in public ownership in the world. A substantial collection, reflecting her personal life and her involvement in politics, feminism and South African civil rights, as well as showing the path of her literary and journalistic career.

The papers are as varied as that which they illustrate, and include letters, manuscripts, newscuttings, video and audio recordings, photographs, advertising material, books, paintings and even a tablecloth.

**Arrangement:**

L WH/1	Manuscripts	1927-2002
L WH/2	Journals	1924-1972
L WH/3	Reviews	1922-1940
L WH/4	Race Politics and Feminism	1922-1944
L WH/5	Personal Correspondence and Early Work	1909-2000
L WH/6	Holtby/Brittain Correspondence	1920-1961
L WH/7	Ephemera	1909-2000
L WH/8	South Riding	1932-1999
L WH/9	Audio Visual Material	1875-2000
L WH/10	Printers Blocks	1911-1958
L WH/11	Books	1911-1999
L WH/12	Miscellaneous Items	1924-2000
L WH/13	Portrait	1914-2000

**Extent:** 10455 items

**Related material:** Bridlington Local Studies Library holds a collection of items relating to Winifred Holtby including books by and about Winifred Holtby; photographs; letters and a booklet regarding the unveiling of the Winifred Holtby Memorial in Rudston Church; a plan of the Rudston Memorial; a scrapbook about the history of the Winifred Holtby Memorial; a tape recording of the talk given by Geoffrey Handley-Taylor on 28 September 1960; a copy of the article 'Men, Women, Children Thirst for Knowledge' published in South Africa's National newspaper 'The Bantu World', dated 8 December 1945, the original is held at the Winifred Holtby Memorial Library in Johannesburg; postcards; illustrations; material dealing with the Winifred Holtby bibliography by Geoffrey Handley-Taylor; Winifred Holtby society book of minutes; as well as the Winifred Holtby society book of accounts.

The Winifred Holtby Collection (reference BRD) also includes unfinished fragments of manuscript works by Winifred Holtby; a series of 16 manuscripts notebooks, some of them diaries of Winifred Holtby's foreign travels; a typescript of an unpublished novel 'The Runners'; a typescript of a story called 'The Forest Unit'; typescripts of two plays, 'Efficiency First' and 'Hopes of Thousands'; an annotated typescript of Vera Brittain's 'Testament of Friendship'; as well as some of Vera Brittain's papers.

**Access conditions:** Access will be granted to any accredited reader. We are currently in the process of producing a new catalogue for this collection which, due to its complexity, may take some time. When this is complete it will be accessible from the L WH collection on our on-line catalogue. In the meantime the collection can be searched using the on-line catalogue at: [www.hullhistorycentre.org.uk](http://www.hullhistorycentre.org.uk).