

IRENE (RENE) JEFFREYS OBE



Accountant, Anglican Lay Leader, Advocate for the Status of Women

Born: London UK, 26 June 1913

Died: Adelaide 8 June 2004

Attended AHS: 1926-28

Career

Irene Jeffreys came to Australia with her parents in 1922. On that voyage as a 9 year old she already showed signs of a precocious accounting talent as she roamed the ship checking and recording the number of lifeboats and belts, portholes and companion ways. She was determined from the age of 12 to be an accountant.

After night class studies at the School of Mines Irene, in 1942 was the first South Australian woman to become a Chartered Accountant [by examination] and the fourth woman member of the Institute. Later she became a member, by examination, of the Institute of Chartered Secretaries. From 1946 to 1984 she ran a small accounting practice and found it difficult as a woman in what was normally a man's business.

In 1962 Irene became the first woman to become a member of the General Synod of the Church of England in Australia and was the only woman among 192 men. Irene was the first Australian woman to be appointed to the world-wide Anglican Consultative Council in 1971, attending meetings in Kenya, 1971; Dublin, 1973 and Trinidad in 1976. From 1946 to 1984 she was also Honorary Treasurer of the Church Missionary Society S.A. Branch and in that time she visited Missionaries in India, Pakistan, Cairo, Iran, Nepal, Singapore, both East and West Malaysia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Peru, Indonesia and Arnhem Land..

In 1977, she became the first woman licensed as a Lay Preacher in the Anglican Diocese of Adelaide and in 1984 became a committee member of the Movement for the Ordination of Women. During this time Irene became a foundation charter member of the Adelaide Zonta Club, with particular interest in status of women, but then resigned to become more involved with the National Council of Women of S.A. And was the Honorary Treasurer of its National Board, 1976 to 1979. Irene was still active in her local Church, the Probus Club and the Over Sixties Educational Association up until the late 1990's.

Awards:

In 1978, she was honoured by the award of the insignia of Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, presented by Her Majesty the Queen, at Buckingham Palace, for Services to Women, the Church of England, Children and the Aged.