

IWD Remarkable women

WALES



Sarah Jane Rees aka Cranogwen – Master mariner, teacher, poet

I think it's fair to say that there's little Sarah Jane Rees (1839-1916) couldn't do.

Her first claim to fame was as a master mariner. Born in Llangrannog, she accompanied her sea captain father on ship. She went on to gain her master mariner's certificate – a qualification that allowed her to command a ship in any part of the world. Back in West Wales she became a head-teacher at the tender age of 21, educating the children of the village, and also taught navigation to local men.

In 1865 her immense writing skills meant she became the first woman to win a major prize at the National Eisteddfod of Wales. Writing under the name of Cranogwen, her winning poem *Y Fodrwy Briodasal* (*The Wedding Ring*) was a satire on the married woman's destiny.

SCOTLAND



Katharine Marjory, first female Scottish MP

Known as 'the Red Duchess', in 1923 Katharine Marjory, the Duchess of Atholl, became the first ever female Scottish MP, when she was elected to the House of Commons.

As a Scottish Unionist Party politician, Katharine was a self-proclaimed crusader against international cruelty.

Her open criticism of the Conservative government's toleration of Spanish dictator Franco cost her position as party whip.

A principled politician, she resigned her parliamentary seat in 1938 in opposition to Neville Chamberlain's policy of appeasement of Adolf Hitler.

ENGLAND



Dame Laura Knight

Laura Knight (nee Johnson) one of the most famous and prolific female British artists started life in most impoverished circumstances, having to quickly learn how to fend for herself from an early age as together with her sister Eva (“Sis”) she became orphaned in her late teens. She led a full life: The only woman to be given War Commissions in the two World Wars. In 1946, at the age of 69! she was commissioned as the only British artist to cover the Nuremberg Trials. The first female artist to be made a Dame of the British Empire at a time when such awards were rarely given and not so prolifically as today. In the first half of the century, she was one of the most highly regarded British artists and in 1936 she became the first woman to be created a Royal Academician since the original women members Angelica Kauffmann and Mary Moser. At the height of her considerable fame (she was regarded as a ‘character’ —the nearest equivalent to a female Augustus John) she won great popularity for her colourful scenes of circus life and the ballet, but these now often seem rather corny. On the other hand, her early Newlyn School landscapes, which at their best have a sparkling sense of joie de vivre, have recently come back into favour. Some of the work she did as an Official War Artist during World War II is also now highly regarded. In 1946 she went to Nuremberg to make a pictorial record of the War Criminals' Trial; she made scores of sketches from which she produced a large painting (The Dock, Nuremberg, 1946). Her husband Harold Knight was also a painter, mainly of portraits.

IRELAND



Lady Mary Heath

The record-setting, daredevil aviator Lady Mary Heath. She was born Sophie Peirce-Evans from Knockaderry in Co Limerick, near Newcastle West, was one of the best-known women in the world in the 1920s. Getting over a troubled childhood (her father murdered her mother), Peirce-Evans took a top-class degree in science, was a dispatch rider during the first World War, a champion athlete and the first woman to hold a commercial flying licence. She was also the first recorded woman to do a parachute jump. Known as Lady Heath, following her second of three marriages, she flew an open-cockpit plane from Cape Town to London. It took three months. Making front-page news on both sides of the Atlantic, she was, for a while, one of the most famous women in the world. She later became the first female mechanic in the US.



Norah Geddes (1887–1967) was a Scottish landscape designer.



Geddes was born in 1887. She attended her father's (Patrick Geddes) botany course at the University of Dundee when she was just 14 before moving to the Edinburgh College of Art for drawing lessons.

Both her parents worked extensively to improve conditions for the poor, and so Norah's first endeavor was to provide window box planting. She took a leading role in her father's Open Spaces project, which aimed to revive derelict urban plots with gardens and play areas. In 1908, the group carried out a survey to locate sites within the city that could be used to provide outdoor recreation areas for the local residents and their children. In 1909, she opened White Hart Garden below Johnstone Gardens – the first in a series of spaces brought back to life by her designs.

Geddes joined her father's Open Spaces Committee at the Outlook Tower and Camera Obscure but was left frustrated with her scope of work in the role.

Initially she contributed significantly to the planning and layout of the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland Garden. It was inspired by zoos in Hamburg and New York, which moved away from the caged menageries of the Victorian era and instead promoted large open enclosures and naturalistic settings. It had pet corners and promoted opportunities for education.¹ Her part in this was overshadowed by those of her husband and her father.

Geddes has been described as "One of the early pioneers of creating green spaces in an urban environment for the benefit for the local community. Norah's work 110 years ago is still incredibly important today.



Juliana Morell (16 February 1594 – 26 June 1653) was a Catalan Dominican Nun and intellectual child prodigy. Some sources assert that she received a doctorate in canon law in Avignon in 1608. In 1941, Sylvanus Morley traced this to an 1859 misreading by Joaquin Roca y Cornet of 17th-century Latin documents. and cited others stating that, while her father wished for her to obtain a doctorate, she refused, regarding it as incompatible with her status as a nun. Juliana Morell, first woman to graduate from a doctoral program

Born in Barcelona in 1594, Juliana Morell was so brilliant that by the age of four, her teachers informed her father they had nothing left to teach her. Home-schooled after that, Juliana had written and defended theses on ethics and morality by the tender age of 12. In 1608, she became the first female ever to earn a university doctoral degree.



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This is woman she is remarkable, and this is you. All women are remarkable.

“But there’s wisdom in women, of more than they have known,
And thoughts go blowing through them, are wiser than their own.”

(Rupert Brooke)

townswomen's guilds