

MAGNIFICENT WOMEN:

Dorothee Pullinger



13 January 1892 - 11 January 1986

Dorothee Pullinger was a trailblazing Anglo-French automotive engineer and business woman. Awarded an MBE aged just 26 for her work during the First World War. A founder member of the Women's Engineering Society, Pullinger's legacy continues today.

Automotive Career

French-born Pullinger moved to England aged 8, and was educated at Loughborough Grammar School for Girls. After a reluctant year at secretarial college Pullinger's persistence paid off, and she secured a role in the drawing office of car manufacturer Arrol-Johnston, Scotland; where her father worked as the Managing Director.

Pullinger's expertise also contributed to the design of aerospace engineering at the business. The resulting engines were used in notable First World War aircraft and as a foundation for future designs.

Four years later saw the outbreak of the First World War and Pullinger was head-hunted by Vickers for their munitions factory at Barrow-in-Furness. During her time at Vickers Pullinger:

- Served as the Lady Superintendent in charge of 7,000 female war workers
- Set up their apprenticeship scheme for female engineers

An Entrepreneurial Leader

In spite of her achievements Pullinger was refused membership of the Institution of Automobile Engineers in 1914, as the organisation was not open to women. After the war, her outstanding engineering accomplishments continued, as Pullinger identified the need, engineered and commercialised the production of a car designed for women and built by a female workforce - the Galloway, for Arrol-Johnstons. She was the only automotive engineer ever to do so and it led to her acceptance as the first female member of the Institution of Automobile Engineers (forerunner of IMechE) in 1923 aged 29. When the company failed during the depression, she moved to London and set up the biggest and most innovative commercial laundry

of its period, using imported steam-laundry equipment never previously seen in the UK, and continuing up to the 1960s. It was on standby to be a decontamination station in case of gas attack in WW2.

Pullinger's leadership, engineering and business skills were also sought during the Second World War when she was employed to organise female recruits for the munitions factories. Pullinger oversaw the operations of 13 factories. She was also the only female member of the Ministry of Productions Industrial Panel.

Although French born, Pullinger's ground breaking engineering took place in Scotland, where she developed and honed her expertise. Pullinger was inducted into the Scottish Engineering Hall of Fame in 2012.

Pullinger's skill, persistence and passion for engineering flourished during the opportunities created by the World Wars. In establishing WES, Pullinger created a platform for future generations of female engineers.

Further information

Useful resources:

- www.engineeringhalloffame.org/profile-pullinger.html
- www.bbc.co.uk/southscotland/
- www.gracesguide.co.uk/Dorothee_Pullinger

Tennis, Hockey and Engineering Excellence

Pullinger was the manager of a pioneering engineering college for women. There was a roof-top tennis court, a hockey team, swimming pool and even a piano room. The technical aptitude of the females was clear with a typical 5 year male apprenticeship condensed to 3 years!