

Sheila Leather (1898 – 1983)

Sheila Leather was born in Cheshire. Her father was an analytical chemist. She was educated at Liverpool High School for Girls and then trained at Bergman Österberg Physical Training College between 1918 and 1920. She taught physical education in Barry, Glamorgan, Higher Tranmere High School, in Birkenhead; she lectured at St Mary's College, Cheltenham and then at Hockerill Training College, Hertfordshire. She is recorded as saying: "one can *grow out of* PE and that is what happened to me".

In 1940 she was one of the first women trainees on the courses run by the Women's Engineering Society at the Beaufoy Institute in Lambeth to prepare women for engineering war work. She joined Hawker Aircraft Ltd as a machine shop operator and was then rapidly promoted to the Staff Planning Department. In 1943 she was recruited by the Ministry of Labour to be one of its Women Technical Officers (Northern Region and National Service). She advised on the employment of women in heavy industry. In 1946 Sheila and Verena Holmes set up a small engineering company (Holmes & Leather Ltd, in Gillingham). When the company closed in 1959, Sheila returned to teaching, and became a peripatetic Head Teacher.

In 1950-51 Sheila became president of Women's Engineering Society and undertook some broadcasting, as well as visiting schools to encourage girls to do engineering, and working with other women's organisations to campaign for equal pay. In retirement she enjoyed acting as a volunteer guide in Lincoln Cathedral.

See *Obituary BÖU Magazine 1983* and:

<https://www.magnificentwomen.co.uk/engineer-of-the-week/8-sheila-leather>