

Dorothy Helen Hatfield (McRither)

Dorothy McRither was brought up in Surrey. After attending the local primary school and a typical 1950s girls grammar school, she left at 16 to become an Engineer Apprentice at Vickers-Armstrongs (Aircraft) Ltd at Weybridge, home of the Viscount, Vanguard, and Valiant, was only a few miles away,

In 1956 Dorothy applied for an apprenticeship, passed the rigorous acceptance tests and broke new ground and the culture of the time by becoming the first female engineering apprentice ever with Vickers-Armstrongs (Aircraft) Ltd at Brooklands. Having spent a year in the Apprentice Training School, a total of three years working in various departments and four six-month sessions at Kingston College of Technology, she graduated with a 1st class Diploma in Technology in Aeronautical Engineering, later converted to an honours degree. She stayed for several years at Vickers in the Aircraft Air Conditioning Group until a career break to bring up three children intervened. Looking to return to work as the children grew, she managed to join the Tech Pubs department of Redifon Flight Simulation on pretty flexible terms, moving on to Sales Engineering and, after a few years in the Science and Engineering division of a software house she became Pricing Manager at the now Rediffusion. On parting company with Rediffusion she did various things for a while including a spell as Trust Executive to the Daphne Jackson Trust. She then joined the Quadrant Group as Contracts Manager at an Essex manufacturer of aircraft parts. When that company was sold she returned to a sister flight simulation company in Sussex.

Dorothy achieved recognition with the award of an OBE in 2014 for services to engineering. She is also a Fellow of The Royal Aeronautical Society. She joined the Women's Engineering Society in 1962 and has held most of the key roles having been President in 1990 when the international ICWES conference was held at Warwick University. Her aim has always been to raise the participation of girls and women in engineering.

Much of Dorothy's voluntary work has been associated with WES and its objectives, including that as a trustee of the Daphne Jackson Trust, as instigator with Sir Monty Finniston of the Lady Finniston Awards and as a Governor of Crawley College. Having retired from paid employment in 2001 she is still involved in the Local History Society and the local branch of Parkinson's UK and as a lay reviewer of applications for research grants from Parkinson's UK.

She was awarded the Women's Engineering Society Hardwich Medal in 2007 for Services & Dedication to the Society and Life Membership in 2010

Dorothy married a fellow apprentice and they have two sons and a daughter. She and her husband have lived in Sussex for over 50 years.

Dorothy Hatfield
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