

The Honorary Graduand: Jackie Longworth

The Orator: Dr Sue Durbin

Jackie Longworth is to be awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Business Administration.

Jackie chairs the regional women's equality network, Fair Play South West, which identifies the issues, policies and practices needed to improve women's equality and campaigns for their adoption. She is also a member of the SWTUC Women's Committee, which she has chaired in the past, and is currently a Vice-President of the Women's Engineering Society, having served as President in the past. These voluntary activities largely fill her time since she retired from the electricity industry in 2001.

Jackie graduated from the University of Bristol with a BSc (Hons) degree in physics and joined what was then the Central Electricity Generating Board in 1967. She worked for 34 years in nuclear plant safety: as a Research Officer at the Berkeley Nuclear Laboratories; as a nuclear safety engineer Group Leader; as a Manager of the Health, Safety and Environment Branch; and as Manager of an organisational change project to ensure that nuclear safety was fully considered in staff reductions. She worked continuously for one company as it changed its name and structure through Nuclear Electric to British Energy; it is now EDF!

Throughout this period, Jackie was an active member and representative of her Trade Union, then the Engineers' and Managers' Association, becoming its President in 1994. She was the first women delegate to the Union's annual conference, the first woman on its national executive and its first woman president. She was active in negotiations as the industry was split up and privatised and went through massive redundancy programmes. She was awarded an MBE for services to engineering management in 1996.

When she became a manager she represented her Union (now merged to become Prospect) at the SWTUC, serving on the Regional Executive, a role which she continued after her retirement. She represented the TUC as a social partner at the SW Regional Assembly, becoming the first woman chair of any regional assembly.

Jackie witnessed culture changes towards women engineers both within the Union and at work, but was disappointed that after 34 years women were still not equal in numbers, nor were they fully accepted as equally competent by male colleagues. In each new job and promotion she felt she was having to prove herself over again. Her experiences, and those of her fellows in the Women's Engineering Society, developed her passion for women's equality and made her a feminist.

The Honorary Degree is awarded in recognition of Jackie Longworth's contribution to gender equality, both locally and nationally.