

Dame Maria Ogilvie Gordon

The degree of Doctor of Laws* was conferred ad eundem gradum upon Dame Maria Ogilvie Gordon by the Chancellor Mr Justice Halse Rogers at the ceremony held in the Great Hall on 2 February 1938 in recognition of her scientific work.

It was the first time an honorary degree had been conferred on a woman by the University.

Dame Maria was a British geologist and senior vice-president of the International Council of Women. One of the special guests of the NSW Government for the 150th anniversary celebrations in Sydney of the Foundation of Australia, she was visiting Sydney to deliver an address, "International Aspects of Women's Work," at the Women's Conference arranged in connection with the celebrations.

The Earl de la Warr, Dr Hugh Dalton and Sir Josiah Stamp were also awarded honorary degrees at this ceremony.

** As there was no provision in the University Act until 1952 for conferring of honorary degrees by the University of Sydney, the University awarded a number of degrees 'ad eundem gradum' - mostly Doctor of Laws - as a mark of special honour. Those who received this award included members of the Royal Family, Governors-General, distinguished soldiers and leaders of industry.*



From left: Dr Hugh Dalton, Dame Maria Ogilvie Gordon, the Chancellor Mr Justice Halse Rogers, the Earl de la Warr and Sir Josiah Stamp, *photo, Queensland Times, 11 February 1938, National Library of Australia.*

Report

The Vice-Chancellor Dr R S Wallace said: "In Australia we have a great appreciation of those who break records. Dame Maria established a record when she became a Doctor of Philosophy at Munich, and she has established another record in Sydney today".

In her reply, Dame Maria said that the honour conferred upon her had been conferred upon all women. She recollected that when she first studied for entrance to a University, the only University which would enter her for her degree was the London University; her own University in Scotland would not hear of women students, and although in Germany she earned her degree, it was not conferred till 13 years later.

She referred to Dr Wallace (whose schoolmaster in Aberdeen had been Dr Alexander Ogilvie, Dame Maria's father) as one of her father's "most promising boys".

From the 'Sydney Morning Herald', 3 February 1938