

FIVE FEMALE FIRSTS IN THE UK LEGAL PROFESSION



Elizabeth ("Eliza") Orme (1848 – 1937)

First woman to earn a law degree in England in 1888



Carol ("Carrie") Morrison (1888 – 1950)

First woman to be admitted as a solicitor in the United Kingdom in 1922



Ivy Williams (1877 – 1966)

First woman called to the the Bar of England and Wales in 1922



Helena Normanton (1882 – 1957)

First female barrister in the United Kingdom in 1949



Rose Heilbron (1914 – 2005)

First woman appointed judge in 1956
(First to take silk with Helena Normanton in 1949)

To celebrate International Women's Day and Women's History Month, we spoke to **Professor Mary Jane Mossman**, the author of "The First Women Lawyers".

Here she tells us why the stories of the women who first started the **#pressforchange** are still relevant today.

“*In 2018, women have succeeded in becoming barristers and solicitors, as well as judges, and many women law graduates engage in legal work in government, universities, and private corporations. In the context of International Women's Day, their successes should be celebrated.*

More widely, we should remember and celebrate the women who challenged their exclusion from the legal professions and began to press for change in many countries in the 19th and early-20th centuries; they became the 'first women' to succeed in many different legal contexts. Equally important are the many stories of women who failed to break through the often formidable opposition within the legal professions.

The patterns in the stories of these earlier generations of women in law remain significant in 2018. As several legal scholars have suggested, the challenges faced by women lawyers today sometimes continue to reflect exclusionary patterns in the legal professions, and not only in relation to gender. In 2018 we are faced with a wider question about what impact increasing diversity will have on the practice of law, on legal rules and concepts, and on the roles of lawyers in our society. ”



Mary Jane Mossman is Professor Emerita at Osgoode Hall Law School, York University, Toronto Canada.

Her most recent book is: "The First Women Lawyers: A Comparative Study of Gender, Law and the Legal Professions" (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2006).