

LADY PIRRIE

The Times

Thursday 20 June 1935

WIDOW OF THE GREAT SHIPBUILDER

Viscountess Pirrie, widow of the famous Belfast shipbuilder and shipowner, died yesterday at her home in Carlos Place, W., at the age of 78.

She was Margaret Montgomery, daughter of Mr. John Carlisle, headmaster of the Royal Academical Institution, Belfast, and she was married to Mr. Pirrie in 1879. He was already a partner and practically master of the firm of Harland and Wolff, which he had entered as an apprentice, and he found in his wife's brother and his own cousin, afterwards the Right Hon. A. M. Carlisle, who had succeeded him as head draughtsman, just the helper he needed. Lord Pirrie always maintained that without his wife and his brother-in-law he could never have become the great shipbuilder and shipowner of his generation. His wife was his constant companion, travelling round the world with him, and taking a keen interest both in the business and in the welfare of his numerous employees. She was with him when he died at sea in June, 1924, off Havana, while on his way to New York.

It was at his request that she was then appointed president of Harland and Wolff, a position specially created for her. Her husband had been the first honorary freeman of Belfast, and she was the first woman to receive the same honour and was also the first woman magistrate for Belfast. She was associated with many public bodies, being a Senator of Queen's University, and president of the Royal Victoria Hospital which Lord Pirrie helped to establish. She was a governor of the Royal Academical Institution, and was elected in 1927 an honorary life member of the Belfast Chamber of Commerce; she was also a member of the Shipwrights' Company of London. In the War she formed and carried on her private household work guild, and distributed thousands of articles for hospitals, the Navy, and the Queen Mary Guild. After the War the work was continued for the benefit of various hospitals. After Lord Pirrie's death, his executors sold Witley Park, Surrey, which he had bought in 1911 and which formerly belonged to Mr. Whitaker Wright, who spent large sums on its development. Lady Pirrie leaves no children.

Courtesy of Mark Baber

© Encyclopedia Titanica (www.encyclopedia-titanica.org) 1996-2009 and third parties (ref: #10916)

URL : <http://www.encyclopedia-titanica.org/lady-pirrie.html>