

LOCAL HEROES

BLACK HISTORY MONTH



Iris De Freitas

Submitted by: Fair and Fabulous

Location: Newcastle Emlyn, Wales

It was the chance discovery of a postcard that uncovered the incredible story of a Welsh university's alumni. Iris de Freitas was born in 1896, the daughter of a merchant in British Guiana.

She registered as a student at Aberystwyth University in 1919 after a short period studying in Toronto. At Aberystwyth she studied botany, Latin and modern languages, law and jurisprudence, and lived in Alexandra Hall, the first purpose-built university hall of residence for female students in the UK.

She went on to become the first female lawyer in the Caribbean and was the first female prosecutor of a murder trial there.

Tributes published in the Guyana Chronicle after her death in May 1989 described her as "a pioneer and frontrunner of women who dared enter the exclusively male legal profession", and someone who "blazed the trail for women lawyers".

Once her former university became aware of her place in history, they renamed a study room after her. The Iris de Freitas Room was opened on March 8, 2016.