

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person

Entry ID: IMP0186

de la Hunty, Shirley Barbara

(1925 - 2004)

Born 18 July, 1925, Guildford Western Australia Australia

Died 17 February, 2004, Western Australia Australia

Occupation Athletics coach, Commonwealth or Empire Games Gold Medalist, Lecturer, Olympian, Teacher, Track and Field A

Summary

Champion sprinter and hurdler, Shirley Strickland (as she was then known), became the first Australian female to win an Olympic medal in a track and field event at the London Olympic Games in 1948.

Shirley de la Hunty was appointed Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) on 26 January 2001 for service to the community, particularly in the areas of conservation, the environment and local government, and to athletics as an athlete, coach and administrator. She had been appointed a member of the Order of the British Empire (Civil) (MBE) for services to athletics on 1 January 1957.

Details

Shirley Strickland studied nuclear physics, completed an honours degree and became a science teacher. In 1948 she won the Australian sprint and hurdles titles. Later that year she represented Australia at the London Olympic Games and became the first Australian female athlete to win a track and field medal. The champion sprinter and hurdler took part in three Olympic Games (1948, 1952 and 1956) and was the winner of three gold, one silver and three bronze medals. She also set world records and won three gold medals and two silver medals at Empire (later Commonwealth) Games.

In 1950 Shirley Strickland married Lawrence Edmund de la Hunty and they had four children. In 1960 she was selected for the Rome Olympics but did not compete due to her third pregnancy.

After retiring as a competitor Shirley de la Hunty continued teaching at various Perth high schools and later became a university lecturer. She maintained her interest in sport by coaching athletes including Raelene Boyle, and was involved in athletics administration as manageress of the Australian women's team at the Mexico (1968) and Montreal (1976) Olympics.

Besides sport Shirley de la Hunty is interested in nature and conservation issues. She has featured on 'This is Your Life' and 'Australian Story'. A recipient of the Helm award (now World Trophy) and the Queen's medal, in 1995 she was elected to the Australian Sports Hall of Fame.

A Fellow of Edith Cowan University, Shirley de la Hunty won the Advance Australia Award in 1987. At the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games Opening Ceremony Shirley de la Hunty was an Olympic Torchbearer along with Raelene Boyle, Betty Cuthbert, Dawn Fraser and Cathy Freeman.

1948 National Championships

80 metre hurdles

1948 London Olympic Games

4 x 100 metre relay – silver medal

100 metre sprint – bronze medal

80 metre hurdles – bronze medal

1950 National Championships

80 metre hurdles

440 yards sprint

1950 Auckland Empire Games

80 metre hurdles – gold medal

4 x 440 yards relay – gold medal

4 x 660 yards relay – gold medal

100 yards sprint – silver medal

1952 National Championships

80 metre hurdles

440 yards sprint

1952 Helsinki Olympic Games

80 metre hurdles – gold medal

100 metre sprint – bronze medal

1955 World University Games

100 metre sprint – gold medal

80 metres hurdles – gold medal

200 metre sprint – bronze medal

1956 National Championships

440 yards sprint

1956 Melbourne Olympic Games

80 metre hurdles – gold medal

4 x 100 metre relay – gold medal

1960 National Championships

4 x 110 yards relay

1962 National Championships

4 x 110 yards relay

Events

2001 - 2001

Inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women

1948 - 1948

Athletics – 80m Hurdles and 100m sprint

1948 - 1948

Athletics – 4 x 100m relay

1952 - 1952

Athletics – 80m Hurdles

1950 - 1950

Athletics – 80m Hurdles; 440y Medley Relay; 660y Medley Relay

1952 - 1952

Athletics – 100m sprint

1956 - 1956

Athletics – 80m Hurdles and 4 x 100m Relay

Published resources

Book

Reflections : profiles of 150 women who helped make Western Australia's history; Project of the Womens Committee for the 150th Anniversary Celebrations of Western Australia, Popham, Daphne; Stokes, K.A.; Lewis, Julie, 1979

Outstanding Women in Australia: Women in Sport, Rolton, Gloria, 1997

Edited Book

Who's Who in Australia 2002, Herd, Margaret, 2002

Monash Biographical Dictionary of 20th Century Australia, Arnold, John and Morris, Deirdre, 1994

Resource

Where are the Women in Australian science?, Australian Science and Technology Heritage Centre, 2003,
<http://www.austehc.unimelb.edu.au/wisa/wisa.html>

Australia at the Games, Australian Olympic Committee, 2006,
<http://corporate.olympics.com.au/index.cfm?p=25>

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Newspaper Article

Shirley Strickland, legend of the track, dies, Dowling, Jason and Evans, Chris, 2004

Strickland the first lady of Australian aths, Johnson, Len, 2004

Champion runs her race, Oakley, Vivienne and Collier, Karen, 2004

Enigma who lit the way for others, Reed, Ron, 2004

Resource Section

Interview with Shirley Strickland de la Hunty, Hughes, Robin, 2006,
<http://www.australianbiography.gov.au/strickland/index.html>

Site Exhibition

She's Game: Women Making Australian Sporting History, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2007,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/sg/sport-home.html>

Faith, Hope and Charity Australian Women and Imperial Honours: 1901-1989, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2003,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/honours/honours.html>

The Encyclopedia of Women and Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia, Smart, Judith and Swain, Shurlee (eds.), 2014,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders>

Author Details

Anne Heywood

Created 18 October 2002

Last modified 12 September 2017