

FELD, VALERIE ANNE (1947-2001), politician

Name: Valerie Anne Feld
Date of birth: 1947
Date of death: 2001
Spouse: John Feld
Partner: Mike Read
Parent: Evelyn Breen-Taylor
Parent: James Breen-Taylor
Gender: Female
Occupation: politician
Area of activity: Politics, Government and Political Movements
Author: John Graham Jones

Val Feld was born at Bangor on 24 October 1947, the daughter of James Breen-Turner, a dentist, and his wife Evelyn. She was brought up as part of the small monoglot English population of Caernarfon, very conscious that, as a result, she was unable to play a full part in the life of the local community. She received her education at Hillgrove School, Bangor, The Abbey, Malvern Wells, and the University of Wales, Cardiff, where she later gained an MA in Women's Studies. She married John Feld in 1969, with whom she had two daughters. They divorced in 1979. Her later partner was Mike Read.

She worked as a researcher and secretary for BBC, ITN, Tellex Monitors, 1969-72, and became involved in various voluntary and community activities between 1972 and 1977. She was a housing and welfare rights worker at Chorley, 1977-79, and was the founder and then Director of Shelter Cymru from 1981 until 1989. She then served as Director of the Equal Opportunities Commission Wales for ten years, working to promote the rights of women and minority groups.

Val Feld served as the treasurer of the 'Yes for Wales' campaign in the 1997 Referendum, and campaigned tirelessly throughout the country. She was the Labour AM for the Swansea East constituency from 1999 until her death in 2001. Her particular interests lay in economic development, housing and education issues, and she always maintained a close relationship with her constituents. She was passionately committed to equality and social justice, and saw a devolved government as an opportunity to deliver a fairer society in Wales. She did much to encourage women's participation in Welsh politics, and the fact that 25 of the 60 original National Assembly members were women is due in large part to her influence.

She took over the chair of the Economic Development Committee of the Assembly when Ron Davies stood down, but was forced to resign because of increasing ill-health in May 2001. She was also on the European Affairs and the Standards of Conduct committees. Before the election she was tipped by some for a Cabinet post, being a highly regarded politician with a history of social activism. She was a member of Amnesty International, Greenpeace and Cyrenians Cymru. She also learned the Welsh language, feeling very conscious of the need to bring together the two linguistic communities of Wales.

Val Feld died of cancer on 17 July 2001. She was the first ever member of the National Assembly for Wales to die in office. In the by-election held on 27 September 2001 the Swansea East seat was held by Val Lloyd for the Labour Party. Feld's extensive papers are held at the West Glamorgan Archive Service in the Civic Centre, Swansea. After her death a Memorial Fund was set up by the Women's Archive of Wales to provide educational support for women who are single parents.

Author

Dr John Graham Jones

Sources

Welsh Hustings - 1885-2004 (Ammanford 2005)

Western Mail, 20 July 2001

The Independent, 20 July 2001

The Guardian, 10 August 2001

Val Feld election leaflet, 1999

Assembly Member Val Feld dies, BBC News website, 18 July 2001

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Val Feld](#)

BBC: [First purple plaque to honour late AM Val Feld](#) 6 March 2018

Additional Links

Wikidata: [Q7909090](#)

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