Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE0327

Forrest, Margaret Elvire

(1844 - 1929)

Born	18441022, Le Havre Normandy France
Died	19290613, Georgina Western Australia Australia
Occupation	Botanical artist, Botanical collector, Political activist

Summary

Margaret Forrest was one of Australia's early botanical artists, and the wife of Western Australia's first Premier. She was born Margaret Elvire Hamersley in 1844, to Edward Hamersley and his French wife Anne Louise (Cornelis). They left London with their two young sons aboard the Shepherd, and arrived at Fremantle in 1837. Edward quickly acquired land around Perth and Fremantle, and became involved in viticulture and horse breeding. In 1843 the family made the first of two voyages back to Europe, and on this first extended sojourn, Margaret was born at La Havre, France, in October 1844. The Hamersley's returned to the Swan River colony in 1850.

From an early age, Margaret Hamersley showed enthusiasm for watercolour painting, spending much time studying and sketching wildflowers. She later travelled on sketching trips with other noted botanical artists Marianne North and Rowan Ellis. She married John Forrest on 29 February, 1876 at St. George's Cathedral, Perth, and became heavily involved in political life, accompanying her husband on overseas and interstate trips. Lady Forrest was an active member of Western Australia's first society for artists and exhibited six wildflower watercolours in the Wilgie First Annual Exhibition of Paintings in 1890. She was a founding member of the Western Australia Society of Arts and the Karrakatta Club which was organised to broaden women's outlook by bringing them in contact with the fine arts. After her death in 1929, her collection was bequeathed to the Art Gallery of Western Australia in 1933.

Source: http://www.anbg.gov.au/biography/forrest-margaret.html [accessed 15/03/2002] and *Australian Garden History*, vol. 7, no. 6, May/June 1996, p.12.

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