Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE0514

Brookes, Ivy

(1883 - 1970)

Born	18830714, South Yarra Victoria Australia
Died	19701227, Melbourne Victoria Australia
Occupation	Advocate, Community worker, Musician, Philanthropist, Women's rights activist, Women's rights organiser

Summary

The daughter of former Prime Minister Alfred Deakin, and wife of public official Herbert Brookes, Ivy Brookes played an active part in Australian political life. She occupied a central role in the National Council of Women; the Housewives' Association; the International Club of Victoria; the Women's Hospital; and in various boards and committees at the University of Melbourne. A talented musician, she won the Ormond Scholarship for singing in 1904, and played first violin for Professor Marshall Hall's Orchestra at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music.

Details

Back home from the United States in 1931, the ‘clever, attractive, Titian-headed’ Mrs Brookes, auburn hair swept across her forehead and a posy pinned to her lapel, was profiled by the *Dominion*. The strong features and somewhat sombre expression belied a ‘fluent speaker’ who was ‘brimming with a keen sense of fun’, and the author couldn’t help but note ‘what a great help she must be to her clever husband, a woman with brains, charm, and filled with the desire to help everything in need – nothing could be more suited for the wife of a trade diplomat’.

Ivy Brookes was the eldest daughter of Alfred and Pattie Deakin. Her husband, Herbert, was secretary of Austral Otis, later Chairman of the Chamber of Manufactures, and served on the Commonwealth Board of Trade. He was appointed Commissioner-General for Australia in the United States from 1923 to 1930, and was Chairman of the Australian Broadcasting Commission. Ivy was involved in charitable work from an early age. Her mother, Pattie, gave much of her own time and energy to child welfare services and to charities for Australian servicemen and, like Ivy, took part in the kindergarten and playgrounds movements. When Ivy returned in January 1931 from that fifteen-month stay in the United States, she reported to the National Council of Women and the Children’s Welfare Association on her extensive investigation of child welfare services there.

Ivy’s particular passion, though, was for music. She relinquished the Ormond Scholarship at the University’s Faculty of Music upon her marriage to Herbert in 1905, but continued to support the Faculty, serving as a council member from 1926 to 1969. Described by Professor Bernard Heinze as the ‘fairy godmother’ of the Conservatorium of Music, Ivy was responsible, with Herbert, for financing a new wing there in memory of Marshall Hall in 1935. Alongside Sidney Myer, Keith Murdoch and Norman Brookes, both Ivy and Herbert were members of the Orchestra Advisory Committee which was convened in 1933 in order to oversee the amalgamation of the Marshall Hall Orchestra and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. Ivy was also a member of the Lady Northcote Permanent Orchestra Trust Fund, and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra ladies’ committee. In 1924 she was credited by Sir James Barrett, Chancellor of the University of Melbourne, with having increased the funds of the Lady Northcote orchestra from £4,000 to £10,000. An article in the *Australian* in 1928 claimed that ‘Mr and Mrs Brookes have shown their practical sympathy with musicians who are finding it not an easy matter to get their feet on the ladder of fame, just as their collection of the works of Australian artists is testimony to their practical patronage of another field of art’.

In addition to supporting music and the arts, Ivy and Herbert Brookes were strong supporters of the University of Melbourne, and of intellectual life in general. Ivy was a member of the Board of Studies in Physical Education at the university for thirty years, and a member of the Board of Social Studies for over twenty-five years. She was involved with the women’s auxiliary for International House, a residential college. Herbert was a representative of donors to Trinity College. Indeed, the Brookes home in South Yarra, *Winwick*, was described by Trinity’s warden, Alexander Leeper, as ‘the chief intellectual power house in Melbourne’. There Ivy and Herbert held the musical and literary activities of their T.E. Brown Society. In 1928, Ivy hosted a visit from Miss Royden of England, the ‘world-famous woman preacher’ who edited *The Common Cause*, the official organ of British women suffragists.

Ivy took an active part in social and political life. She joined the League of Nations Union and the National and International Councils of Women. She was founder of the International Club of Victoria in 1933, serving as president until 1958. She was a member of the Women Justices’ Association, and of the Playgrounds’ and Housewives’ Associations of Victoria. She served on the board of the Women’s Hospital for a monumental fifty years. Between 1931 and 1961, Ivy served as Director of the Bureau of Social and International Affairs. She was honorary secretary of the women’s section of the Commonwealth Liberal Party until the National Federation formed to incorporate all sections, at which point she concluded that the new organisation did not give fair representation to women.

Ivy Brookes was involved with just about every voluntary organisation open to her. An overview of her activities paints a valuable portrait of the times. It is illustrative, in particular, of a leaning toward American influences, a shift in philanthropic priorities, and a strengthening independence in women’s philanthropy.

Events

1952 - 1960
Commonwealth member of the Import Licensing Committee

1931 - 1961
Director of the Bureau of Social and International Affairs

1908 - 1960
Executive member of the Lady Northcote Permanent Orchestra Trust Fund

1903 - 1915
First violin with Professor Marshall Hall’s Orchestra

1938 - 1970
Foundation member of the Board of Studies in Physical Education at the University of Melbourne

1941 - 1967
Foundation member of the Board of Studies in Social Studies at the University of Melbourne

1915 - 1915
Founded the Housewives’ Co-operative Association of Victoria

1933 - 1958
Founder and president of the International Club of Victoria

2001 - 2001
Inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women

1948 - 1952
President of the National Council of Women of Australia

1939 - 1945
President of the National Council of Women of Victoria

1944 - 1970
President of the Playgrounds & Recreation Association of Victoria

1927 - 1929
President of the Royal Women’s Hospital Board

1934 - 1938
President of the Royal Women’s Hospital Board

1945 - 1963
Vice-president of the United Nations Association of Victoria

1904 - 1904
Winner of the Ormond Scholarship for Singing

Published resources

Resource Section
Brookes, Ivy (1883-1971), Patrick, Alison, 2006,
http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A070709b.htm

Newspaper Article
Ivy Brookes, Flesch, Juliet and McPhee, Peter, 2003

Portraits in Cameo: Mrs. Herbert Brookes, 1936

Edited Book
Who's Who in Australia 1968, Legge, J S, 1968

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

Report
Resume of the second conference, Women's Division, Brookes, Herbert (Mrs) and Goodisson, L E (Mrs), 1915

Annual report, National Council of Women of Victoria

Book
Nation builders : great lives and stories from St Kilda General Cemetery, Eidelson, Meyer, 2001

Liberal women : Federation to 1949, Fitzherbert, Margaret, 2004

150 years, 150 stories: brief biographies of one hundred and fifty remarkable people associated with the University of Melbourne, Flesch, Juliet and McPhee, Peter, 2003

Jessie Webb, a memoir, Ridley, Ronald T, 1994

The Early years of the Housewives Association of Victoria, 1915-1930, Oldfield, Robert, 1989

So Many Firsts: Liberal Women from Enid Lyons to the Turnbull Era, Fitzherbert, Margaret, 2009

Champions of the impossible: a history of the National Council of Women of Victoria, 1902-1977, Norris, Ada, 1978

Journal Article
A Mission to the Home: The Housewives Association, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and Protestant Christianity, 1920-1940, Smart, Judith, 1998

The Politics of Consumption: The Housewives' Associations in Southeastern Australia before 1950, Smart, Judith, 2006

Thesis
In Her Gift: Activism and Altruism in Australian Women's Philanthropy, 1880-2005, Lemon, Barbara, 2008

Site Exhibition
In Her Gift: Women Philanthropists in Australian History, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2009,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/wiph/home.html

Stirrers with Style! Presidents of the National Council of Women of Australia and its predecessors, National Council of Women of Australia, 2013,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/ncwa

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

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Victorian Honour Roll of Women List of Inductees 2001 to 2011, Department of Human Services, Victoria,
http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-business-and-community/community-involvement/women-in-the-community/women-as-leaders/vict

Archival resources

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection
Papers of Alexander Gore Gowrie, 1835-1987 [manuscript]

Letter, 1967 Oct. 26 [manuscript]

Papers of Alfred Deakin, 1804-1973 (bulk 1880-1919) [manuscript]

Papers of Herbert and Ivy Brookes, 1869-1970 [manuscript

Papers on various Australian women [19--] [manuscript]

Records of the National Council of Women of Australia, 1924-1990 [manuscript]

Records of the National Council of Women of Australia, 1936-1972 [manuscript]

Author Details
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Digital resources



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