Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE0743

Somers, Lady Finola

(1896 - 1981)

Born	18960909, Dublin Ireland
Died	19811006, Eastnor Ledbury Herefordshire England
Occupation	Governor's spouse

Summary

In 1926, Lord and Lady Somers sailed to Australia following Lord Somers' appointment as Governor of Victoria. The couple disembarked the *R.M.S. Cathay* at Port Melbourne, where they were escorted by launch to an official landing amid much celebration at St Kilda Pier. At "Stonnington", the Vice-Regal residence in Glenferrie Road, Malvern, 220 scouts formed a guard of honour lining the driveway and school children gathered to welcome the new Governor and his wife.

Details

Daughter of Captain Bertram Meeking of the 10th Hussars, Finola Meeking married Lord Arthur Somers in 1921. She was nine years his junior. Finola and her sister Viola had been frequent visitors to the Royal Family's Scottish residence at Balmoral. Viola went on to marry Lord Apsley, heir to the Earl of Bathurst.

In the short period she lived in Melbourne, between 1926 and 1931, Lady Finola Somers used her position to assist the development of women's organisations in Victoria. She made a significant contribution to the Australian Red Cross; was president of the Gilbert and Sullivan Society and of the Three Counties Agricultural Society; a member of the YWCA, the National Trust, the Conservative party, the Soldiers' Club and the Three Choirs Festival; a founding member of the Victorian Branch of the Country Women's Association; and a State Commissioner in the Victorian Girl Guides Organisation. In 1931, she was presented with the Silver Fish – the highest guiding award – by Lady Baden-Powell. Whilst in Australia, Lady Somers also assisted in the development of the Lord Somers Camp and Powell House. She was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (C.B.E.) for services to Girl Guides.

Lady Finola Somers was presented with her aviator's certificate by the Royal Aero Club on 17 July 1929, and on 12 December that year she made her first flight in her moth at Essendon. She has been described as "a great lover of the country and an accomplished horsewoman". The Lady Somers Camp for girls is held annually as a tribute to her memory.

Published resources

Site Exhibition
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

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection
Papers [microform] : [M2504-2511], 1886-1937

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