

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE0898

Birks, Rosetta Jane (Rose)

(1856 - 1911)

Born	1 March, 1856, Adelaide South Australia Australia
Died	31 December, 1911, College Park South Australia Australia
Occupation	Social reformer, Suffragist

Summary

Rosetta Jane Birks (née Thomas) was born in March 1856. She joined the Ladies' Committee of the Social Purity Society which led to her interest in women's suffrage. She joined the South Australian Women's Suffrage League, becoming its treasurer. After suffrage was granted she joined the short-lived Woman's League, working with Catherine Helen Spence, Lucy Morice and others. She was appointed to the board of the Adelaide Hospital in 1896. In 1902 she helped form the National Council of Women as well as becoming president of the Young Women's Christian Association. She died in 1911.

Details

Rosetta Jane Birks (née Thomas) was born in March 1856, one of nine children to William Kyffin and Mary Thomas. When she was twenty three she married her sister's widower, Charles Birks, and became an affectionate step-mother to her six nieces and nephews. A devout Baptist, she was committed to social reform and joined the Ladies' Committee of the Social Purity Society. Through her work with the Society she became committed to women's suffrage and joined the South Australian Women's Suffrage League, becoming a councillor at her first meeting, and treasurer at her second. When suffrage had been attained she joined the short-lived Woman's League and worked on its committee with Catherine Helen Spence and Lucy Morice. On election day in April 1896 she woke early so that she could be the first woman in Glenelg (South Australia) to vote. She was appointed to the Board of the Adelaide Hospital in 1896 although soon resigned, along with most other members, over a matter of principle. In 1902 she helped organise the formation of the National Council of Women and became its vice-president. In the same year she became president of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and re-formed its Traveller's Aid Society in 1911. Rosetta Birks was president of the Flinders Street Baptist Mothers' Union. She died in 1911 while presiding over a women's missionary meeting at the College Park Congregational Church, Adelaide.

Published resources

Book

In her own name : women in South Australian history, Jones, Helen, 1926-, 1986

Journal Article

Rosetta Birks' Obituary

Archival resources

State Library of South Australia

[Young Women's Christian Association of Adelaide : SUMMARY RECORD](#)

Author Details

Robin Secomb

Created 19 April 2004

Last modified 30 April 2009