Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE2166

Raine, Mary Bertha

(1877 - 1960)

Born	18770217, London Middlesex England
Died	19600203, Perth Western Australia Australia
Occupation	Businesswoman, Philanthropist, Publican

Summary

In September 1960, seven months after the death of Mary Bertha Raine, the *Sunday Mirror* was reporting with incredulity that ‘The singing barmaid of a dilapidated outback New South Wales pub became the woman who left most of her £439,626 estate to the University of Western Australia Medical School. The bequest will bring her total gifts to the University to nearly £750,000’.

Details

Mary Bertha Carter, eldest of thirteen children of Putney storekeeper Charles Carter and his wife Mary Bertha (née Appleyard), began her working life at the age of fourteen earning 2/6 per week. According to the *Mirror* she saved for singing lessons as a teen and won a contract at Drury Lane, but lost her voice after an attack of typhoid fever. Mary and her sister Daisy sailed for Queensland in 1900 with £100 between them and worked as barmaids in Brisbane and Sydney. After a successful stint managing the ‘tumble-down Nyngan Hotel’, Mary was asked to take over a brewery that was in financial trouble, but licensing laws barred single women as licensees and she returned to Sydney. In 1904 the sisters’ return trip to London was curtailed by Daisy’s seasickness, forcing them to disembark at Fremantle. Working once more as a barmaid on £1/10/- and keep, Mary saved £100 and bought a property in Subiaco.

In 1905 Mary Carter married William Morris Thomas, seventeen years her senior, in Perth’s Wesley Church. The couple farmed south of Perth but kangaroos ruined their crops and the marriage was a failure. Mary returned to Perth. William Thomas was killed when he fell from a horse in 1918.

In Perth Mary took advantage of the 1920s property boom. She bought Gordon’s Café and Hotel on William Street, renaming it Hotel Wentworth, and by the beginning of WWII was owner or part-owner of five hotels alongside other properties. During the war the Hotel Wentworth provided accommodation for American submarine crews and was a site of tension between Australian and American servicemen.

In 1943, aged in her mid-sixties, Mary married Arnold ‘Joe’ Yeldham Raine and made him her business partner. Joe was ten years younger than Mary and absolutely devoted to her. According to John McIlwraith, Mary’s philanthropy was ‘inspired by her husband’. [1] In the mid-1950s the Raines contributed to an appeal for the launch of a medical school at the University of Western Australia. Plans for further contributions were cut short by Joe’s death, from arteriosclerosis, in 1957. Mary was his sole beneficiary. In mourning, she decided to preserve his memory and help find a cure for the illness which had killed him by founding the Arnold Yeldham & Mary Raine Medical Research Foundation in August 1957 with a £500,000 lump sum. A history of the Foundation writes:

It is an indication of the simpler and more innocent times in which this was achieved that a personal approach to the then State Premier, Bert Hawke… and another to the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies, released the estate from death duties and probate, providing significantly more money for research.[2]

On her death, Mary bequeathed the bulk of her estate to the Foundation, bringing her legacy to nearly £1 million. She directed that income ‘be applied towards seeking, diagnosing and investigating the nature, origin and causes of diseases in human beings, with the initial emphasis on arteriosclerosis and allied diseases, and the prevention, care, alleviation and combating of such diseases’.[3] In 1991 the Foundation had distributed grants totalling over $7 million.

Published resources

Report
Three decades of service: the Arnold Yeldham andamp; Mary Raine Medical Research Foundation, Arnold Yeldham and Mary Raine Medical Research Foundation, 1991

Resource Section
Raine, Mary Bertha (1877-1960), McIlwraith, John, 2006,
http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A160057b.htm

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

Newspaper Article
Ma Gave Away £750,000: From Bush Pub to W.A. Fortune, 1960

Book
The Mary Raine Story: From Putney to Perth, Sangster, Meg, 2001

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

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