

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE2281

Gatehouse, Eleanor Wright

(1886 - 1973)

Born 12 May, 1886, Near Geelong Victoria Australia

Died 31 December, 1973, Victoria Australia

Occupation Golfer, Sports administrator

Summary

Eleanor Wright Gatehouse was born in 1886, the eldest daughter in an eminent Victorian family; granddaughter of one of the earliest white settlers in the Geelong region, Thomas Austin. Described as 'a born ringleader' she was a forthright and formidable figure in women's golf in Victoria. Her refusal to take nonsense from people is well exemplified by a story that tells of the time she responded to a group of men who hit up on her party by hitting a ball right back at them!

It is said that Nellie's maternal grandmother nearly ended her golfing career before it began. Apparently Nellie arrived home from a mixed foursomes event one Sunday soaking wet and smelling of spirits. Nellie's grandmother was convinced by her doubtful excuse, that her partner had filled her button-up golf boots with whiskey to ward of the cold, and permitted her to continue playing. After this controversial start, she went on to enjoy a very successful playing career. She won the first of three Australian Championships in 1909 and won five Victorian Championships over the thirty years she was active in the game. In keeping with her personality, she retired a champion, hanging up her golf shoes after winning a veterans championship.

Nellie firmly believed that playing golf had taught her life lessons. 'After the game is over, forget all about it – especially if you had a rotten time. Live for the next day,' she advised. 'In my opinion a sound beating at golf is one of the best medicines you can have.' It was much more than a game for her, a round of golf was a spiritual experience. 'Golf is such a wonderful game that the more we can do for her the better is for the whole community,' she observed. 'For worshipping at the shrine of this goddess Golf gives us health, happiness and contentment.'

Nellie Gatehouse is best known as a golfer and golf administrator but she was also heavily involved in other activities. She was a Justice of the Peace, and served a term as President of the Australian Women's National League. She was keenly interested in the rights of children and served seven terms as President of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

Events

1942 - 1946

President of the Victorian Ladies' Golf Union

1909 - 1909

Gatehouse wins the first of three Australian Championships

1928 - 1936

President of the Victorian Ladies' Golf Union

Published resources

Book

From Green to Gold: The First Fifty Years of the Australian Ladies' Golf Union, Perry, Phyllis, 1976

Site Exhibition

She's Game: Women Making Australian Sporting History, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2007,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/sg/sport-home.html>

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

Private Hands (These regards may not be readily available)

[Papers of the Victorian Ladies Golf Union](#)

Author Details

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