Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE4251

O’Brien, Catherine Cecily

(1893 - 1945)

Born	18931025, Merriwa New South Wales Australia
Died	19450514, Moss Vale New South Wales Australia
Occupation	Educator, Religious Sister

Summary

Born to Australian-born parents of Irish descent, Catherine O’Brien received her senior education at the Dominican Convent, Maitland, where she won a teacher-training scholarship. In July 1914she entered the same convent, and received the habit in April 1915, taking the religious name of Mary Anselm. She made perpetual vows in April 1917 and remained at Maitland, teaching in the secondary school, until 1920.

She left Maitland In 1921, and moved to Santa Sabina Dominican Convent School, Strathfield, so that she could attend the University of Sydney. She graduated B.A. in 1924 with first-class honours in English and Latin and the University medal for English. She gained her diploma in education in 1925, and in 1928 took a first-class honours M.A. in English literature, with a thesis on tragedy.

She taught at Santa Sabina for twenty years, between 1925-45, and became well known and respected for her innovative methods and range of publications. She was an enthusiastic educator who aimed to provide a high quality education for girls. She was particularly interested in ensuring that girls received opportunities to participate in sport and other forms of physical education. In 1922 she convened the first meeting of principals of Catholic girls secondary schools to facilitate co-operation in sporting competitions, which became a feature of Catholic schools in the 1930s.

Published resources

Resource Section
O'Brien, Catherine Cecily (1893-1945), Leavey, Margaret Carmel, 2006,
http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A110054b.htm

Book
Dominican pioneers in New South Wales, O'Hanlon, Mary Assumpta, 1949

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

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

Archival resources

Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia and the Solomon Islands Archives
Archives of the Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia and the Solomon Islands

Author Details
Nikki Henningham

Created 12 August 2009
Last modified 20 November 2018