**Entry type:** Person
**Entry ID:** AWE4734

# Donaldson, Mona Emily Gertrude

(1900 - 1985)

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| **Born** | 19000102, New South Wales Australia |
| **Died** | 19851212, Kirribilli New South Wales Australia |
| **Occupation** | Film editor |

## Summary

Mona Donaldson is an important figure in early Australian film production and worked as film editor on numerous quintessentially Australian films.

In February 1915, at the age of 15, Mona Donaldson began work for Australasian Films in Sydney as a film examiner. In 1917, she moved to Paramount and worked first as a film examiner and then a booking clerk. In 1921, Donaldson left work to take care of her mother. Once she could return to work, her previous work experience again allowed her a job with Australasian Films.

Donaldson soon became known for her competence and perfectionism. This was said to have led to a reputation of being formal and distant.

Many of Donaldson's early editing is uncredited. In an interview with Andree Wright and Stuart Young in the 1980s, Donaldson described cutting for Whyte's *Painted Daughters* (1925), Webb's *Tall Timber* (1926) and *The Grey Glove* (1928) and Longford's *Hills of Hate* (1926) and *The Pioneers* (1926).

Donaldson's first clear onscreen recognition for editing was in *For the Term of His Natural Life* (Dawn, 1927). The silent film was based on a novel by Marcus Clarke of the same name and tells the story of an English aristocrat who is transported for life as a convict to Van Dieman's Land for a crime he did not commit.

Donaldson again worked with director Norman Dawn on his film *The Adorable Outcast* (1927). The film was based on the romantic adventure novel, *Conn of the Coral Seas* by Beatrice Grimshaw.

In 1928, Lacey Percival, a colleague from Australasian Films, left and started Automatic Films. He invited Donaldson to join him. Donaldson used this job offer to attempt to get a pay raise from Australasian Films, however they refused and she began work for Automatic Films.

While working at Automatic Films, Donaldson was 'loaned out' to work on other feature films. She re-edited Chauvel's *Heritage* (1935), which then won the Australian Film Award in 1935. She worked again with Chauvel on *Uncivilised* (1936). Donaldson also co-edited Badger's *Rangle River* (1936). In 1937, Donaldson edited Chauvel's documentary about how screen tests were conducted, *Screen Test.*

In 1946, after working for Automatic Films for eighteen years, Donaldson fell ill and was hospitalised for seven months. During this time, Donaldson was denied sick leave and she was fired. Both Cinesound and Commonwealth Film Laboratories offered her employment, however she decided to leave the film industry completely.

Upon retirement from the Australian film industry, Donaldson bought a shop in Chatswood and became a successful milliner.

## Published resources

**Resource**
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

**Book**
Australian Film 1900-1977: A Guide to Feature Film Production, Pike, Andrew and Cooper, Ross, 1980

## Archival resources

**National Film and Sound Archive**
[Donaldson, Mona : Interviewed By Andree Wright and Stuart Young : Oral History]

The Adorable Outcast : Original Release

For the Term of his Natural Life : Original Release

Screen Test

Black Cargo of the South Seas

The Grey Glove : [Stills]

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