

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE5765

Backhouse, Harriet May

(1888 - 1951)

Born 18880311, Hawthorn Victoria Australia

Died 19510505, Melbourne Victoria Australia

Occupation Lawyer, Solicitor

Summary

From an early age Harriet May Hordern was encouraged to study law by her father a solicitor. It was unusual in those days, she being born in 1888, when women were still regarded as ornaments, where possible, but otherwise of little use except around the house.

Her achievements in Melbourne University were as follows:

Bachelor of Arts – 22 April 1910 (First in all subjects plus University Medal)

Bachelor of Laws – 6 April 1914

Master of Laws – 23 December 1915

Master of Arts – 10 April 1914

On 20th July 1914 she became an articled clerk with James Whiteside McCay, Barrister, practising at 360-366 Collins St. Melbourne. Harriet was admitted on 1st March 1916, to practise as a Barrister and Solicitor in the Supreme Court of Victoria.

As to whether she was involved in cases heard in the Supreme Court I can only assume that she was, considering that she did recount some of her experiences, and was most likely called to do so between 1916 and 1918, when so many men were away at the War. My father, Rev Canon Nigel a'Beckett Talworth Backhouse and Harriet May married in 1919, soon after Nigel returned from service in the 7th Australian Light Horse Regiment.

Published resources

Site Exhibition

Australian Women Lawyers as Active Citizens, Trailblazing Women Lawyers Project Team, 2016,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/lawyers>

Author Details

Robert Geoffrey Backhouse

Created 17 August 2016

Last modified 15 March 2026