

# The Australian Women's Register

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**Entry type:** Person

**Entry ID:** AWE6064

## Gardner, Joan Forrest

(1918 - 2013)

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**Born** 16 June, 1918, Melbourne Victoria Australia

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**Died** 19 November, 2013

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**Occupation** Researcher, Scientist, Teacher

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### Summary

Joan Forrest Gardner took up a position at the Department of Bacteriology (now known as the Department of Microbiology and Immunology) at the University of Melbourne in 1953. During her extensive career, she taught and researched in the areas of sterilisation, disinfection and infection control.

Joan established and lectured in advanced training courses for infection-control nurses and the staff of hospital sterilising departments. She also played an important role in the establishment of standards for sterilisers and other related hospital equipment.

She was an Honorary Life Member of what is now the Sterilising Research Advisory Council of Australia. In June 1992 Joan was declared an Officer of the Order of Australia.

## Details

Joan Forrest Gardner came from a distinguished scientific family. Her uncle was Howard Florey, who shared the 1945 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, her father served as a medical officer during the First World War and practised as a physician until his untimely death in 1928 and her mother, Hilda Josephine Gardner, a brilliant medical student, became one of Melbourne's foremost haematologists.[1]

Joan Gardner also had a brilliant undergraduate career, taking honours in most of her subjects. She took her BSc in 1940 and MSc in microbiology with a thesis on coenzymes the following year. On a part-time research scholarship from 1941 to 1946, she investigated enzymes in wheat flour in the Department of Biochemistry after which she left for the Dunn School of Pathology at Oxford University, from which she took her DPhil and published two papers in the *British Journal of Experimental Pathology*. [2]

Back in Melbourne in 1953, Joan Gardner took up an appointment in the then Department of Bacteriology, now the Department of Microbiology and Immunology and began a long period of teaching and research in sterilisation, disinfection and infection control. As well as writing two books on the subject with Sydney Rubbo and Margaret Peel, she established and lectured in advanced training courses for infection-control nurses and the staff of hospital sterilising departments.[3] She also played an important role in the establishment of standards for sterilisers and related hospital equipment. Her work was recognised by being declared, in June 1992, an Officer of the Order of Australia. She was also an Honorary Life Member of what is now the Sterilising Research Advisory Council of Australia.

Outside her professional life Joan Gardner had many interests. She was a member of the Handknitters' Guild and a longstanding supporter of the Lort Smith Animal Hospital. She was also especially interested in the riggings and sails of the different types of sailing ships. One of her obituaries mentions that as a child she liked to go to the docks and watch the movement of the ships in and out of the Port of Melbourne. [4]

[1] 'Hilda J. Gardner, MB BS'. *British Medical Journal*. 13 June 1953: 1336-1337.

[2] Joan F. Gardner. 'An Antibiotic Produced by *Staphylococcus aureus*'. *British Journal of Experimental Pathology*. v. 30 no. 2(Apr 1949): 130–138; Joan F. Gardner. 'Some Antibiotics Formed by *Bacterium coli*'. *British Journal of Experimental Pathology*. v. 31 no.1(Feb 1950): 102–111.

[3] Sydney D. Rubbo and Joan F. Gardner. *A Review of Sterilization and Disinfection as Applied to Medical, Industrial and Laboratory Practice*. London: Lloyd-Luke, 1965; Joan F. Gardner, Margaret M. Peel. *Introduction to Sterilization and Disinfection*. Melbourne: Churchill Livingstone, 1986 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1991; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 1997).

[4] 'Leader in the fight against infection'. Prepared by Dr Margaret Mary Peel with assistance from Joan's cousins, John (Jack) Sunter of Melbourne and Elizabeth Shephard of Adelaide. *Age*: January 17, 2014.  
<http://www.theage.com.au/comment/obituaries/leader-in-the-fight-against-infection-20140116-30xmf.html>

## Published resources

### Book

40 Years 40 Women: Biographies of University of Melbourne Women, Published to Commemorate the 40th Anniversary of the International Year of Women, Flesch, Juliet, 2015,  
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/4040/>

## Author Details

Juliet Flesch

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