

# The Australian Women's Register

---

**Entry type:** Person

**Entry ID:** AWE6066

## Grimwade, Mabel Louise

(1887 - 1973)

---

<b>Born</b>	18870104, St Kilda Victoria Australia
<b>Died</b>	19730906, Melbourne Victoria Australia
<b>Occupation</b>	Philanthropist

---

### Details

Mabel Louise, Lady Grimwade, nee Kelly was the daughter of George Colman Kelly, a pastoralist, councillor and one of the original shareholders of Broken Hill Proprietary Limited. He left his two sons and daughter in comfortable circumstances and 'Miss Mabel Kelly' figures frequently in the social pages of newspapers of the early 1900s.

In 1909, just two months before her father's death, she married Wilfred Russell Grimwade (1879-1955). They were to have an enduring impact on the University which from which Russell Grimwade had taken his BSc in 1901.

Mab Grimwade's enormous support of the Russell Grimwade School of Biochemistry lasted well beyond her husband's lifetime, but it was by no means her only interest. Her presence is noted in the newspapers at theatre performances, notably one of *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* on 5 October 1956 to which overseas athletes were specially invited.<sup>[1]</sup> She inspired the 'Hats through the Ages' pageant in Melba Hall compered by Myra Roper and Joseph Burke (the first Professor of Art History in Australia) to raise money for the University's Centenary Appeal.<sup>[2]</sup>

Mab Grimwade's interests and patronage extended well beyond the University of Melbourne. The inventory of her papers in the University Archives lists correspondence with the National Gallery Society of Victoria, the Alexandra Club, the Royal Horticultural Society, London, the National Trust of Australia (Victoria), the Society for Growing Australian Plants, the Arts and Crafts Society of Victoria, the Australian-American Society, the Australian Ballet, the Australian Elizabethan Trust, University House, the Native Plants Preservation Society of Victoria and the Free Kindergarten Union of Victoria.

The Mab Grimwade rose, bred in 1937 by Alister Clark, is a yellow hybrid tea rose, with rich orange, coppery buds and large double blooms of salmon pink flushed with orange.<sup>[3]</sup> Proceeds from its sale were donated to the National Rose Society of Victoria.

On her death, the University received the bequest now known as the Russell and Mab Grimwade Miegunyah Fund, which included 'Miegunyah', the house in which the Grimwades lived and all its furnishings, an extraordinary collection of books and paintings and funds for publications of the Miegunyah Press.

[1] 'A Dream Night for Playwright'. *Argus*. 6 December 1956: 8.

[2] Freda Irving. 'Brains in Her Hats'. *Argus*. 2 July 1955: 41.

[3] There appears to be some doubt about this date, which is given in various sources as 1927, 1937 and 1947.

### 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/>

## Archival resources

### **National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection**

[Papers of Alexander Gore Gowrie, 1835-1987 \[manuscript\]](#)

#### **Author Details**

Juliet Flesch

**Created** 31 July 2017

**Last modified** 3 June 2026