Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE6105

Baillie, Helen

(- 1970)

Died	19701231
Occupation	Aboriginal rights activist, Nurse

Summary

Helen Baillie was an Aboriginal rights activist and a nurse. She was passionate about Aboriginal issues and was involved in various Aboriginals rights organisations. In addition, Baillie opened her house on Punt Road as a hostel to Aboriginal people from the 1930s to the 1950s.

Details

Baillie attended the Aldworth Girls' Grammar School in East Malvern and on completion of her study she travelled to England to undertake midwifery training at the London Maternity Hospital. In her late thirties, Baillie returned to Australia and it was during her sea journey that she became enthralled by the work of Mary Bennett, an internationally renowned activist on behalf of Australian Aboriginal people.

In 1932, Baillie formed the Victorian Aboriginal Fellowship Group and became their Honorary Secretary. In 1933 she also became involved with the Victorian Aboriginal Group; a group with similar objectives to the Fellowship. The Victorian Aboriginal Group co-ordinated a meeting to launch their campaign in September 1933, which brought together a considerable number of groups, including the Aboriginal Fellowship Group, The Women's Citizen's Movement, the Young Women's Christian Association, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Also involved were the Student Christian Movement, the United Aboriginal Mission, the Society of Friends and the Victorian League. Helen Baillie spoke at the meeting, alongside many others. Whenever an opportunity arose to present Aboriginal issues before a public audience, Helen Baillie took it. This was the case when she was made a delegate for Australia at the convention of the British Commonwealth League in 1935.

Bailie was a life member of the Australian Aborigines league and she also liaised with the Association for the Protection of Native Races in Sydney and the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society in London. After 1951, Baillie became a member of additional activist groups, including the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the Council for Aboriginal Rights.

In addition, Baillie volunteered as a nurse for the Republican forces during the Spanish Civil War and also worked for the Spanish Relief Committee in Melbourne.

Events

1935 - 1935
For Australia at the convention of the British Commonwealth League

1931 - 1932
Formed the Victorian Aboriginal Fellowship Group

Archival resources

National Archives of Australia, National Office, Canberra
BAILLIE, Helen

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection
Papers of Joan Kingsley-Strack, 1908-1978 [manuscript]

Author Details
Alannah Croom

Created 31 October 2017
Last modified 7 October 2020