Entry type: Person
Entry ID: IMP0056

Walker, Eadith Campbell

(1861 - 1937)

Born	18610918, The Rocks, Sydney New South Wales Australia
Died	19371008, Concord Sydney New South Wales Australia
Occupation	Philanthropist

Summary

Dame Eadith Walker was the sole heir of merchant and pastoralist Thomas Walker. Over the course of her life she gave very generously of her time and money to a wide range of charitable causes, including substantial sums to the women's college at the University of Sydney, and to the Thomas Walker Convalescent Hospital.

Details

Born in Sydney in 1861, Eadith was the only child of merchant Thomas Walker. Her mother died when Eadith was not yet ten years old, and she was raised by her aunt Joanna at the Walker property, *Yaralla* at Concord. Eadith was taught to take her wealth seriously from an early age, and this lesson came to the fore when she inherited her father's fortune of just under £1 million in 1886 at the age of 25, though her cousin, James Thomas Walker, was appointed executor of the will. Thomas Walker's wealth had come from his interests as a merchant, pastoralist and shipowner. He was born at Leith, Scotland, in 1804 and emigrated to Australia in 1822 to work with his uncle, later taking charge of the business.

Eadith Walker had a wide range of interests and a sincere love of sport and animals. She was an executive member of what is now the RSPCA, vice-president of the Sydney Rowing Club and patron of the Yaralla cricket club. She was involved with the Queen's Jubilee Fund, the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children and the Royal Hospital for Women, where she served as vice-president of the auxiliary in 1922. Dame Eadith was a member of the council of the new Women's College at the University of Sydney for two years from 1893. Between 1895 and 1930, she offered an annual scholarship of £50 – known as the Yaralla Scholarship – to go to a high achieving student wishing to reside at the College, but requiring financial assistance to do so. To the original building fund she subscribed £1,000, to be paid over only when the fund had reached £4,000 by public subscription. During wartime, through to 1920, Eadith set up a camp at Yaralla where she accommodated and cared for soldiers suffering from tuberculosis, 32 at a time. She donated a second home, 'Leura', for use by consumptive soldiers, and established a library at the Prince of Wales Hospital. Eadith was heavily involved with the Australian Red Cross Society, as a member of its executive committee, and the Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' Imperial League of Australia. She continued to support the Thomas Walker Convalescent Hospital, founded with a £100,000 gift from her father, as well as various religious and educational institutions including her local church.

Eadith Walker was awarded the C.B.E. in 1918 and the D.B.E. in 1928. She died at Yaralla in 1937, leaving her £265,345 estate to the Walker Trusts.

Published resources

Resource

Yaralla and the Thomas Walker and Concord General Hospitals, Olympic Co-ordination Authority, 2000, http://www.oca.nsw.gov.au/ecology/ferry-concord-yaralla.cfm

Concord Heritage Society, Concord Heritage Society, 2000-2002, http://www.concordheritage.asn.au/index.htm

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Book

The Walkers of Yaralla: The History of Thomas Walker and Dame Eadith Walker, Skehan, Patricia, 2000

Yaralla and the Walker Family: a brief history of Thomas and Eadith Walker and the Yaralla Estate, Concord Heritage Society

Some Houses and People of New South Wales, Griffiths, Glynde Nesta, 1949

Letters from Louisa: A Woman's View of the 1890s, Based on the Letters of Louisa Macdonald, First Principal of the Women's College, University of Sydney, Beaumont, Jeanette and W. Vere Hole, 1996

My Grandfather's House, Rutledge, Helen, 1986

Resource Section

Eadith Walker, Lobb, Robyn, 2002, http://www.users.bigpond.com/roblobb/html/rivendell_page_3.html

Walker, Dame Eadith Campbell (1861 - 1937), MacCulloch, J., 2006, http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A120398b.htm

Thesis

In Her Gift: Activism and Altruism in Australian Women's Philanthropy, 1880-2005, Lemon, Barbara, 2008

Site Exhibition

Faith, Hope and Charity Australian Women and Imperial Honours: 1901-1989, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2003, http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/honours/honours.html

In Her Gift: Women Philanthropists in Australian History, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2009, http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/wiph/home.html

The Encyclopedia of Women and Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia, Smart, Judith and Swain, Shurlee (eds.), 2014, http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders

Archival resources

National Library of Australia

Order of service for the dedication of the Dame Eadith Walker, D.B.E., memorial fence, gates and flood lights by the Most Reverend Howard West Kilvinton Mowll, D.D., Archbishop of Sydney on Saturday, 20th September, 1941

Author Details

Clare Land and Barbara Lemon

Created 24 April 2002
Last modified 17 March 2019