

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person

Entry ID: IMP0142

Rischbieth, Bessie Mabel

(1874 - 1967)

Born 16 October, 1874, Adelaide South Australia Australia

Died 16 March, 1967, Bethesda Hospital Claremont Western Australia Australia

Occupation Feminist, Women's rights activist

Summary

Bessie Rischbieth's interest in woman's suffrage was aroused when she attended a suffrage meeting in London in 1908. A co-founder of the Women's Service Guild of Western Australia in 1909, she was also co-founder and President of the Australian Federation of Women Voters (1921-1942). Rischbieth edited *The Dawn*, a women's paper issued in Perth from 1914 to 1939. A talented craftswoman her art embroidery, beaten copperwork and word carvings were exhibited with the West Australian Society of Arts. In the later years of her life Rischbieth clashed with Jessie Street, whom she labelled a communist. Bessie Rischbieth was appointed as an Officer of the Order of the British Empire for her work with women's movements.

Events

1915 - 1915

Appointed, in an honorary capacity, to the Children's Court

1920 - 1920

Appointed as a justice of the peace to the Perth Court

1925 - 1925

Inaugural secretary of the Western Australian Women Justices' Association

1921 - 1942

Foundation president of the Australian Federation of Women's Societies (later Voters)

1925 - 1925

Co-founder of the British Commonwealth League of Women, becoming foundation vice-president

1928 - 1928

Leader of the Australian delegation to the Pan-Pacific Women's Conference in Honolulu

1935 - 1935

Appointed Officer to the Order of the British Empire for her service with the women's movements

1926 - 1926

Joined the board of the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship

1955 - 1955

Life member of the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship

2001 - 2001

Inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women

1939 - 1945

World for Australian servicemen at the Boomerang Club, Australia House, England

1964 - 1964

Published *March of Australian women*

1898 - 1898

Married wool merchant, Henry Wills Rischbieth (deceased 1925)

1906 - 1906

Founding member of the Children's Protection Society

1909 - 1909

Foundation member of the Women's Service Guilds of Western Australia

1911 - 1922

President of the Women's Service Guilds of Western Australia

1946 - 1950

President of the Women's Service Guilds of Western Australia

Published resources

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Book

Reflections : profiles of 150 women who helped make Western Australia's history; Project of the Womens Committee for the 150th Anniversary Celebrations of Western Australia, Popham, Daphne; Stokes, K.A.; Lewis, Julie, 1979

Uphill all the way: a documentary history of women in Australia, Daniels, Kay and Murnane, Mary, 1980

Women on the warpath : feminist of the first wave, Davidson, Dianne, 1997

March of Australian women : a record of fifty years' struggle for equal citizenship., Rischbieth, Bessie Mabel, 1875-1967., 1964

Women's sphere : a summary of the movement for women's electoral reform and representation in Victoria, Mackay, Louise, 1904- [prepared by], 1989

Edited Book

Who's Who in Australia 1962, Alexander, Joseph A, 1962

200 Australian Women: A Redress Anthology, Radi, Heather, 1988

Photograph

Women's Service Guilds members at unveiling of plaque on board the M V Kabbarli, West Australian Newspapers, 1954

Resource Section

Guide to the Papers of Ruby Rich, National Library of Australia, 1999,
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-296328435/findingaid>

[Collar with inscription: Votes for women], c. 1913,
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.pic-an7853009>

[Portrait of Bessie Rischbieth] [picture]., National Library of Australia,
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.pic-an8328137>

[Saucer and plate belonging to Mrs. Pankhurst, presented to Bessie Rischbieth by the Suffragette Fellowship London], National Library of Australia,
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.pic-an7853019>

Rischbieth, Bessie Mabel (1874-1967), Lutton, Nancy, 2006,
<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A110404b.htm>

Conference Proceedings

Australian Federation of Women Voters (non-party) silver jubilee 1921-1948 : Eighth Triennial Australian Conference, Melbourne, October 25-30, 1948, Rischbieth, Bessie Mabel, 1874-1967, 1948

Finding Aid

Guide to the Papers of Bessie Rischbieth, National Library of Australia,
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-250831564/findingaid>

Book Section

Bessie Rischbieth, Jessie Street and the End of First-Wave Feminism in Australia, White, Kate, 1982

Bessie Rischbieth, Ogilvie, June, 1988

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>

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, Manuscript Collection

[Papers of Ruby Rich, 1906-1984 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Papers on various Australian women \[19--\] \[manuscript\]](#)

[Papers of Irene Greenwood, 1912-1981 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Papers and objects of Bessie Rischbieth, 1900-1967 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Papers of Ruby Rich, 1943-1948 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Papers of Jessie Street, circa 1914-1968 \[manuscript\]](#)

State Library of Western Australia

[Bessie Mabel Rischbieth papers](#)

[Women's Service Guilds of Western Australia records](#)

National Library of Australia

[Badges of women's suffrage groups worn by Bessie Rischbieth, circa 1913 \[realia\]](#)

[\[Biographical cuttings on Bessie Mabel Rischbieth, benefactor, containing one or more cuttings from newspapers or journals\]](#)

[\[Sash with inscription: Votes for women\] \[realia\]](#)

[\[Order of the British Empire medal awarded to Bessie Rischbieth\] \[realia\]](#)

[\[Saucer and plate belonging to Mrs. Pankhurst, presented to Bessie Rischbieth by the Suffragette Fellowship London\] \[realia\] / \[manufactured by\] Williamsons, Longton, Eng](#)

National Library of Australia, Pictures Collection

[\[Portrait of Bessie Rischbieth\] \[picture\]](#)

The University of Melbourne Archives

[Pethybridge, Eva](#)

Author Details

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