

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: PR00425

Crist, Alice Guerin

(1876 - 1937)

Born	18760206, Clare Castle Ireland
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Died	19370613, Toowoomba Queensland Australia
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Occupation	Author, Journalist
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Summary

Alice Crist was a prolific writer of verse and short fiction, who published widely in the Australian secular and religious press including the *Bulletin* (Sydney) *Worker*, *Steele Rudd's Magazine*, *Home Budget*, *Toowoomba Chronicle*, *Catholic Advocate* and *Catholic Press*. Crist wrote about her rural and domestic experiences, frequently celebrating the beauty of the bush and the virtues and struggles of Irish Australian pioneers. Crist was also a long-term member and vice-president of the Toowoomba Ladies Literary Society. Her Irish heritage intermingled with a unique Australian flavour and this contributed to the uniqueness of her poetry.

Details

Alice migrated to Australia with her parents when she was just 2 years old. On 4 October 1902 at St Patrick's Catholic Church, Toowoomba, Alice married a German immigrant farmer, Joseph Christ, who later changed his name to Crist. The couple moved to an isolated property at Rosenberg near Bundaberg in 1910 but returned to Toowoomba in 1913 when Jo began a fuel supply business there.

Alice pursued an active literary life despite significant periods when she had to concentrate on farm work and the care of her five children. Her first book of poetry named *When Rody Came to Ironbark* was published in 1927 in Sydney Australia and the following year she published *Eucharist Lilies and Other Verses* in Sydney again. She became friendly with another poet and schoolteacher (Dame) Mary Gilmore, who published her work in the woman's page of the *Australian Worker*. A marked Celtic influence is discernible in her poems about the homesickness of immigrants and in the sprites and fairies of her nature verse and poems for children.

Her devout Irish Catholicism was at first associated with democratic politics and in 1902 she joined the Social Democratic Vanguard. In 1917 her youngest brother Felicin was killed at Passchendaele, Belgium; for many years she contributed Anzac Day poems to the *Toowoomba Chronicle*. From 1927 the Brisbane *Catholic Advocate* began to pay Crist for rural and religious poems, short stories and a serial celebrating the contribution of the Christian Brothers to Catholic education, which resulted in the novel: *'Go it! Brothers!!'* (1928). In 1930 she became 'Betty Bluegum', editor of the children's page, and used the versatility of this outlet to stimulate Queensland's Catholic children. Crist's page, like her verse, was an inventive mix of Catholic Irish-Australian nationalism, domestic virtue and appreciation of nature, and encouraged young correspondents.

In September 1953 (after her death), a wing of the Holy Spirit Hospital, Brisbane, was dedicated in her name.

Published resources

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Site Exhibition

The Women's Pages: Australian Women and Journalism since 1850, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2008,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/cal/cal-home.html>

Resource Section

Crist, Alice Guerin (1876-1941), Lee, Christopher, 2006,
<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/AS10109b.htm>

Archival resources

Private hands (These records may not be readily available)

Family papers, Dornan family, Brisbane

Author Details

Lee Butterworth

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