Entry type: Person
Entry ID: PR00446

Bryan, Edith

(1872 - 1963)

Born	18720629, Derby Derbyshire England
Died	19630329, Ascot Brisbane Queensland Australia
Occupation	Disability rights activist, Teacher

Summary

Edith Bryan was appointed head teacher of the school section of the Queensland Blind, Deaf and Dumb Institution in Brisbane, Australia, in 1901. In 1918 the Queensland government assumed responsibility for this charitable organisation and initially Edith retained her position with the institution.

Following an increase in class numbers as a direct result of introduction of the Blind, Deaf and Dumb Instruction Act of 1924, which made the education of deaf children compulsory, it was deemed appropriate in 1926 that a male should take control of the school. Edith retained charge of the deaf section of the school until she retired in 1937, after which she continued to work for the deaf community.

An active member of the Queensland Adult Deaf and Dumb Mission which she had helped to establish in 1902, Edith chaired a parent support-group which she had also promoted. The mission named Edith Bryan Hostel in her honour.

Details

Educated at the local council school, in 1887-91 Edith served as a pupil-teacher at the Royal Institute for the Deaf and Dumb, Derby. Having obtained a diploma (1892) from the College of Teachers of the Deaf, London, she taught in Ireland at the Dublin Institute for the Deaf, then at the Jews' School for the Deaf, London, before returning to Derby in 1893.

Edith arrived in South Australia in 1895 where, on 29 June at St James's Church, West Adelaide, she married Cecil Charles Bryan, another teacher from the Derby Institute, who was appointed senior teacher at the Blind, Deaf and Dumb institution, Brighton. Following her husband's death in January 1897, Edith took a private teaching post at Port Rush, Antrim, Ireland, and then returned to England in 1899 to teach at the Deaf school, Bristol. Edith arrived in Brisbane on 12 November 1901 to take up her position with the Queensland Blind, Deaf and Dumb Institution.

Upon determining the aptitude of a student, Bryan would then place each child in either an oral or sign-language group. She had been deeply influenced by the work of Thomas Arnold and used his textbooks in training pupil-teachers. Edith was an advocate for change in Queensland in accordance with the 1889 recommendations of the *Royal commission on the condition of the blind, the deaf and the dumb* in the United Kingdom. She supported early compulsory education for the blind and the deaf, and recommended appropriate teacher-training. The deaf community had great faith in her integrity and competence. Due to her proficiency in sign language Edith was frequently enlisted as an interpreter.

Published resources

Resource Section
Bryan, Edith (1872 - 1963), Swan, Geoffrey, 2006,
http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A130320b.htm

Book
The Edith Bryan Hostel : a commemorative history of the Queensland Deaf Society's residential services, Wilson, Susan G, 1999

Resource
Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

John Oxley Library, Manuscripts and Business Records Collection
Workshop of the Queensland School for the Deaf at Dutton Park, Brisbane, ca. 1935

Queensland State Archives
Registers of Letters Received

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