

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person

Entry ID: AWE0327

Forrest, Margaret Elvire

(1844 - 1929)

Born 22 October, 1844, Le Havre France

Died 13 June, 1929, Western Australia Australia

Occupation Botanical artist, Botanical collector, Political activist

Summary

Margaret Forrest was one of Australia's early botanical artists, and the wife of Western Australia's first Premier. She was born Margaret Elvire Hamersley in 1844, to Edward Hamersley and his French wife Anne Louise (Cornelis). They left London with their two young sons aboard the *Shepherd*, and arrived at Fremantle in 1837. Edward quickly acquired land around Perth and Fremantle, and became involved in viticulture and horse breeding. In 1843 the family made the first of two voyages back to Europe, and on this first extended sojourn, Margaret was born at La Havre, France, in October 1844. The Hamersley's returned to the Swan River colony in 1850.

From an early age, Margaret Hamersley showed enthusiasm for watercolour painting, spending much time studying and sketching wildflowers. She later travelled on sketching trips with other noted botanical artists Marianne North and Rowan Ellis. She married John Forrest on 29 February, 1876 at St. George's Cathedral, Perth, and became heavily involved in political life, accompanying her husband on overseas and interstate trips. Lady Forrest was an active member of Western Australia's first society for artists and exhibited six wildflower watercolours in the Wilgie First Annual Exhibition of Paintings in 1890. She was a founding member of the Western Australia Society of Arts and the Karrakatta Club which was organised to broaden women's outlook by bringing them in contact with the fine arts. After her death in 1929, her collection was bequeathed to the Art Gallery of Western Australia in 1933.

Source: <http://www.anbg.gov.au/biography/forrest-margaret.html> [accessed 15/03/2002] and *Australian Garden History*, vol. 7, no. 6, May/June 1996, p.12.

Published resources

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Forrest, Sir John [Baron Forrest] (1847 - 1918), Crowley, F. K.,
<http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A080565b.htm>

Journal Article

Lady Margaret Forrest (1844-1929), 1996

Resource Section

Lady Margaret Forrest (1844-1929),
<http://www.anbg.gov.au/biography/forrest-margaret.html>

Book Section

Forrest, Margaret Elvire (1844-1929), painter and botanical artist, Gooding, Janda, 1995

Margaret Forrest, Popham, Daphne [ed.], 1978

Thesis

A Biography of Lady Forrest, French, Jane, 1969

Book

Forrest Family: Pioneers of Western Australia 1842-1982, Muir, Alison and Dinee, 1982

Margaret Forrest: Wildflowers of Western Australia, Gooding, Janda, 1984

Booklet

Western Australia's Lady Forrest 1844-1929: A Memoir, Crowley, F.K., 1975

Archival resources

State Library of Western Australia

[Correspondence and diary, 1858-1913 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Letter, 1867 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Letter, 1922 June 14 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Letter, 1910 April 19 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Letters, 1918 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Papers, 1839-1922 \[manuscript\]](#)

Author Details

Anne Heywood and Lisa McKinney

Created 15 March 2002

Last modified 22 March 2019