

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE1180

O'Keefe, Cherry (Tjapun)

(1895 - 1977)

Born 1 January, 1895, Cambridge Downs Station, near Richmond? Queensland Australia

Died 31 December, 1977, Hughenden Queensland Australia

Occupation Linguist

Summary

Cherry O'Keefe was an excellent horsewoman with a leading knowledge of the Ngawun language.

Details

Cherry O'Keefe (Tjapun) was a Ngawun woman probably born on Cambridge Downs station, near Richmond in north Queensland. In her early days she was well known as a fine horsewoman, and, at one time, as 'the Queen of the Forest'. Later she became an expert in saddlery and leatherwork. She never married. She lived a secluded and busy life on Poseidon Downs station, west of Hughenden, where she worked hard around the homestead for the privilege of living there in a galvanised iron humpy. After surviving flood, snakebite and burns (when her humpy was burnt down after a domestic accident), she died of pneumonia in Hughenden in 1977.

Cherry O'Keefe's knowledge of the Ngawun language, though limited, was much better than anyone else's. It was owing to her that a partial grammar and vocabulary of the language was eventually produced.

Published resources

Edited Book

The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia : Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, society and culture, Horton, David, 1994

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Author Details

Leonarda Kovacic and Barbara Lemon

Created 20 May 2005

Last modified 12 February 2019