

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE3726

Maxwell, May (Maisie)

(1876 - 1977)

Born 8 October, 1876, Sandhurst Victoria Australia

Died 24 July, 1977, Jolimont Victoria Australia

Occupation Actor, Journalist, Print journalist, Radio Journalist, Trade unionist, Women's rights activist

Summary

May Maxwell began her professional life as an actor but switched to journalism in 1907 when she discovered that it was a more stable career option than the theatre.

Details

Starting her career at *Table Talk* where she earned ten shillings a week, in 1910 Maxwell moved to edit the Melbourne *Herald's* weekly page for women. At the end of 1921 (Sir) Keith Murdoch asked her to make the page a daily feature.

Maxwell was an advocate for women's issues and her journalism was characterized by initiative, plain talking and impatience with silly social niceties. Although she covered the high-society round of balls, parties and royal tours, she insisted on writing her notes openly, and on being allowed to wear evening dress and to mingle with guests at Government House. She interviewed female prisoners, campaigned to have nurses' training cut by one year, and championed those women in public life who did more than go to parties. Throughout her twenty-four years with the *Herald*, she was closely associated with the National Council of Women.

In 1911, within four months of its foundation, Maxwell joined the Australian Journalists' Association as its second female member. She served (1925-27) on the A.J.A.'s Victorian committee and became an honorary life member (1960). In 1969 she was awarded the British Empire medal for her services to journalism. She retired from the *Herald* in May 1934, but continued to freelance for print and radio outlets until the day before she died in 1977.

Events

1907 - 1934

1969 - 1969

1911 - 1911

1960 - 1960

1925 - 1927

Published resources

Resource Section

Maxwell, May (Maisie) (1876-1977), White, Sally A., 2006,
<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A150397b.htm>

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>

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>

Author Details

Nikki Henningham

Created 6 October 2008

Last modified 1 March 2019