

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE4418

Macquarie, Elizabeth Henrietta

(1778 - 1835)

Born 1 January, 1778, Scotland

Died 11 March, 1835, Argyll Scotland

Occupation Diarist, Governor's spouse, Traveller, Writer

Summary

Elizabeth Macquarie, the wife of New South Wales Governor, Lachlan Macquarie, was an active supporter of her husband's plan to transform the penal settlement at Sydney into a thriving settler colony. She is said to have taken an interest in the welfare of women convicts and the local Aboriginal people. Her significant role in the establishment of the colony is memorialised in many landmarks in and around Sydney, New South Wales, including Mrs Macquarie's Chair, Campbelltown and the various Elizabeth Streets that pepper the map of Sydney.

She and another prominent Elizabeth (Macarthur) the wife of prominent colonial pastoralist John Macarthur, helped to introduce haymaking to New South Wales.

Details

Elizabeth Macquarie was a 'gently born' Scots woman, without fortune, who grew up on her brother's estate at Appin, Scotland. She met Colonel Lachlan Macquarie, a widower and a distant cousin, in 1804 at the age of 26. They became engaged in 1805.

They married in Devon on 3 November 1807. The bride was 29, the groom 46. In September 1808 their first child, a daughter named Jane Jarvis after the first Mrs Macquarie, was born, but she died in December. In 1809 Macquarie was appointed governor of New South Wales. His wife accompanied him to the colony, where they landed, in Sydney, on December 31, 1809. Their second child, a boy named Lachlan, was born on 28 March 1814.

Elizabeth was a strong willed and determined woman and a devoted wife. She was an intrepid traveller, and her surviving 1809 journal of the voyage to Australia reveals a lively and inquisitive mind. Though dogged by ill health for much of her later life, she accompanied Lachlan on all of his major journeys throughout New South Wales and Tasmania. Recent histories have also indicated that she took an active role in instigating, designing and supervising many of the public works programs that her husband implemented during his time as Governor. She fully supported his efforts to transform a penal settlement into a thriving settler colony.

After her husband resigned as Governor, amidst criticism and controversy over the administration of the colony under his leadership, the couple returned to Britain, to live at Macquarie's estate, Jarvisfield on Mull, Scotland. Lachlan died in 1824.

After his death, she continued to work tirelessly to promote the memory of his achievement, most graphically by making the claim on Macquarie's tombstone inscription that his character and services to society 'rendered him truly deserving the appellation by which he has been distinguished: THE FATHER OF AUSTRALIA.'

Published resources

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Lachlan & Elizabeth Macquarie Archive, Macquarie University, State Library of New South Wales, National Library of Scotland, Historic Houses Trust, National Library of Australia, National Museum of Australia, New South Wales State Records, 2009,

<http://www.library.mq.edu.au/digital/lema>

Governor Macquarie: 1810-2010, New South Wales Government, 2010,

<http://www.macquarie2010.nsw.gov.au/>

Journeys in time: the journals of Lachlan and Elizabeth Macquarie, Macquarie University and State Library of New South Wales, 2010,

<http://www.lib.mq.edu.au/all/journeys/menu.html>

Resource Section

Macquarie, Elizabeth Henrietta (1778-1835), Barnard, Marjorie, 2006,

<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A020161b.htm>

Elizabeth Henrietta Macquarie of Airds (1778-1835), 2010,

<http://www.lib.mq.edu.au/digital/lema/biographies/embilog.html>

Lachlan and Elizabeth Macquarie: Journals and Memoranda, 2010,

<http://www.lib.mq.edu.au/digital/lema/1809/>

Book

Elizabeth Macquarie: Her Life and Times, Cohen, Lysbeth, 1979

Archival resources

Mitchell and Dixson Libraries Manuscripts Collection

[Elizabeth Macquarie journal of a voyage from England to Sydney in the ship 'Dromedary', 15 May 1809 - 25 December 1809](#)

National Library of Australia

[\[Biographical cuttings on Elizabeth Macquarie, wife of the late Governor Macquarie, containing one or more cuttings from newspapers or journals\]](#)

Author Details

Nikki Henningham

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