

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE4797

Cooke, Frederica

(1897 - 1955)

Born 29 January, 1897, Sandhurst Victoria

Died 31 December, 1955

Occupation Midwife

Details

Frederica Georgina Wheeler was born on 29th January 1897 to Phoebe Clarke (nee Morgan) a boarding house keeper and Frederick George Wheeler, a commercial traveller, storekeeper and miner. She attended school in Echuca in Victoria and at the age of 18, on 12 October 1888, she married widower Robert Cooke aged 40 in Melbourne. She had two stepdaughters, Jean and Bella and three children of her own, Clive, Phoebe (Tottie) and Frances (Fanny).

Robert died of bronchitis and pneumonia in 1904 leaving her a young widow with no particular skills to support herself. She trained as a midwife, because as her granddaughter wrote, 'Faced with the need to support her family she decided against shopkeeping. Domestic service was beneath her dignity.'

In 1904, leaving her youngest daughter Frances in Victoria, she moved to Boulder in Western Australia to take up her profession. One of her first patients was her daughter Tottie. 'Nurse Cooke attended the birth of over a thousand babies and never lost a mother or a full term child'. She briefly conducted a small private hospital, but most patients preferred to be delivered at home, so she continued to give women that service.

In March 1917 she married again to a farmer James Glasson but found life on the farm too primitive, so returned to practise midwifery in Boulder and to care for her grandchildren.

She died in 1955.

Published resources

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Book

The Misfortunes of Phoebe, Erickson, Rica, 1997

Site Exhibition

Karlkurla Gold: A History of the Women of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, Criena Fitzgerald and National Foundation for Australian Women, 2012,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/wikb/wikb-home.html>

Author Details

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