

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person

Entry ID: AWE5974

McKellar, Doris Winifred

(1897 - 1984)

Born 1 January, 1897, Melbourne Victoria Australia

Died 31 December, 1984, Melbourne Victoria Australia

Occupation Photographer

Summary

Doris McKellar was an amateur photographer based in Melbourne, whose photographs documented university life and the social activities of a wealthy professional family in Melbourne in the first half of the twentieth century. Using a Kodak No.3A Folding Pocket camera, she captured many aspects of life at the University of Melbourne. The University of Melbourne holds McKellar's archive.

Details

Doris McKellar's photographs depict life during the early 1900s. Her photographs, taken whilst she was a student at the University of Melbourne, capture University life, while her family photographs document life within a wealthy professional family, their social activities, their family holidays at the beach, and their excursions into the countryside.

Doris McKellar (née Hall) was born into a wealthy professional family in Melbourne in 1897. She was the eldest child of Percival St John Hall, a solicitor, and Harriet 'Hattie' Louisa Hall (née Moore). They lived at 'Glenmoore' house, a two-storey villa in Elsternwick. Doris was educated at Cromarty School for Girls, in Elsternwick where she excelled academically, and in 1912 she was the dux of the school.

McKellar went on to enrol at the University of Melbourne, where she studied Arts and Law from 1915-1921, graduating in 1922 with a law degree. It was around this time in her life that she became involved in the Princess Ida Club which was aimed at 'promot[ing] the common interests of, and forming a bond of union between the present and past women students' of The University of Melbourne.' She continued her involvement with the University after graduating through her membership of the Victorian Women Graduates' Association, an organisation in which she was very active.

It was while she was at university that she became interested in photography, and using a Kodak No.3A Folding Pocket camera she began taking many photographs of the University grounds, the staff and students, and capturing various aspects of university life including social and sporting activities (tennis, cricket, and bowls).

Being a keen amateur photographer, she recorded not only family social functions and holidays, but also cityscapes, landscapes and seascapes; her resulting images depicted life just after the turn of the century. Some of these images, especially the landscapes, were in the Pictorialist in style.

As for her portraits, she was able to connect with the people she photographed to the extent that her portrait and group studies capture aspects of the sitters' personalities. One also glimpses their feelings of vulnerability, a feature that is particularly evident in her portraits of the young men dressed in military uniform who were heading off to fight in WW1. McKellar was one of the few women in Australia to graduate with a Law degree in the early 1920s and to gain employment as a barrister and solicitor.

In 1925 she married Rolfe Warren McKellar, a publisher with Stockland Press and soon after gave up her professional career but continued her involvement with the Victorian Women Graduates' Association and then the University Women's College (currently known as the University College). In 1932 her son, Ian Campbell McKellar was born.

Doris assisted with the family's publishing business during WW2 after her husband enlisted as an officer, however it is unclear if she continued in this capacity after the war or continued to pursue her interest in photography.

Doris McKellar died in 1984.

The University of Melbourne Archives hold a Collection of Doris McKellar's photographs and memorabilia covering the periods 1915-1919, and 1934-1954.

Technical

The Kodak No.3A Folding Pocket camera was marketed to 'glamorous young women' and was quite expensive for the times, costing around five pounds in 1914. It came with a leather pouch and 'used cellulose nitrate film instead of glass plates, making it more portable and easier to use' (Laurenson 29).

Collections

Doris McKellar Photographic Collection held by the Archives Collection at the University of Melbourne

Events

1915 - 1919

Worked as an amateur photographer

1934 - 1954

Worked as an amateur photographer

Archival resources

The University of Melbourne Archives

[McKellar, Doris](#)

Author Details

Anne Maxwell (with Morfia Grondas and Lucy Van)

Created 4 October 2016

Last modified 4 July 2017