

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE6088

Traill, Elsie Margaret

(1876 - 1946)

Born 1 January, 1876

Died 31 December, 1946

Occupation Philanthropist

Details

Elsie Margaret Traill has been somewhat overshadowed in the historical record by her youngest sister, the artist Jessie Constance Traill, but she was a highly significant figure in the history of the University of Melbourne. Her £5000 donation to Janet Clarke Hall led to the naming of the Traill Wing in her honour and she herself carved both the entrance plaque to the new wing and the wall plaque that hangs which hangs in the Janet Clarke Hall Verdon Library.^[1]

Elsie Traill was the second daughter of George Hamilton Traill. Two others, Kathleen and Mina, joined the Anglican Community of the Holy Name and Jessie, as well as serving as a VAD in France during the First World War, made a considerable name as a painter and etcher.^[2] Their father had been manager of the Oriental Bank situated on the corner of Queen Street and Flinders Lane and demolished after the bank went out of business in 1884. Their mother was an Army Captain's daughter.^[3]

Elsie Traill's career was distinguished by her philanthropy and by the time she gave to serving the organisations she supported. These included the Lyceum Club, as one of the founders and acting honorary secretary of its planning group and a member of its first committee, the Victoria League, Diocesan Mission to the Streets and Lanes of Melbourne, Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind and most especially the Australian Red Cross. The Australian Branch of the Red Cross was set up only nine days after the declaration of war, and Elsie Traill, following her sister's enlistment in the Voluntary Aid Detachment, established the first Red Cross Shop, in suburban Sandringham. Edwards notes that the shop, which later moved to Regent Place in the City, not only assisted servicemen by providing an outlet for their handcrafts, but also provided one for women to sell theirs.^[4]

Elsie Traill was assiduous in her services both to Janet Clarke Hall, where she lived from 1895 until she took her BA in 1898, and to Trinity College, from which the women's college had sprung. She played an active part in establishing the Janet Clarke Hall Committee, which she chaired for some years, and served on the Trinity College Council. She was also the first woman appointed as Honorary Secretary of the Associates of the Royal Melbourne Golf Club.

^[1] Sarah Edwards and Lisa Sullivan. *The Art Collection of Janet Clarke Hall University Gallery, University Museum of Art August 7 to September 26 1997*. Melbourne: Janet Clarke Hall, University of Melbourne, 1997. p. 15-18.

^[2] Mary Alice Lee. 'Traill, Jessie Constance Alicia (1881-1967)'. *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1990.

^[3] 'Mr Traill's Death'. *Australian Town and Country Journal*. 17 April 1907: 43.

^[4] Edwards and Sullivan *op. cit.*

Published resources

Book
40 Years 40 Women: Biographies of University of Melbourne Women, Published to Commemorate the 40th Anniversary of the International Year of Women, Fleisch, Juliet, 2015,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/4040/>

Author Details

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