

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE6568

Turtle, Alison Margaret

(1939 - 2006)

Born 1 January, 1939, Neutral Bay New South Wales Australia

Died 26 April, 2006, Sydney New South Wales Australia

Occupation Historian, Lecturer

Summary

Alison Turtle was the first person to write detailed historiographies of Australian psychology.

Details

Alison Turtle was the daughter of Charles Turtle and his wife Margery. She went to school at the Methodist Ladies College where she was Dux in 1955. Continuing to the University of Sydney she was awarded a Double first class honours in Psychology and History in 1961 and an MA in 1963 with a thesis on evolution and psychology. She then went to London to study but returned in 1968 to a lectureship, which she held until she retired in 1999. Amongst other things she studied and published on the first women psychologists in Australia – Lorna Hodgkinson in New South Wales, Constance Davey in South Australia and Ethel Stoneman in Western Australia. Her research on the historiography of psychology in Australia for the first time put the studies in a cultural context. She was interested in the teaching of psychology in the UK as well as Australia.

Alison bought a house in Arundel Street next to the university main campus that was a focus for her many friends. Often described as 'forthright and fearless' Alison from the start spoke her mind writing to the University News in 1971 about a proposed new Arts Building: 'Does the University want to increase its facilities and population indefinitely, at the expense of the quality of the environment it is providing for its members?'

She was focussed on teaching and always very concerned about the needs of students, both day and evening at the university. At different times she worked on specific issues such as their problems with AIDS and the pressures of part-time study.

For several years she was active in the Sydney Association of University Teachers and was particularly involved with the struggle over superannuation and the position of women. In 1980 she started the Association of Women Employees of the University of Sydney for women inside the university.

She was very attached to her dogs and concerned about the ways in which canines were treated. After many years of retreating to Mount Wilson when the pressure became too great, she bought a home there in Farrer Road called Boikunumba, which she laboured to turn into a small native paradise. From this time on, she was active in Mount Wilson affairs. In 1985 she developed cancer, but through chemotherapy and care survived. The cancer returned twenty years later in an aggressive form and she died in April 2006 and was buried in Mount Wilson. A collection of psychology material was assembled at the university in her memory and was named for her.

Archival resources

The University of Melbourne Archives
[Research of Alison M. Turtle](#)

Author Details

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