

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: IMP0042

McEwen, Annie Mills

(1900 - 1967)

Nationality Australian

Born 2 January, 1900, Tongala Victoria Australia

Died 10 February, 1967

Occupation Community worker, Political activist

Summary

Annie McEwen, a country woman and wife of the deputy prime minister, John McEwen, was active in the Country Party and devoted her life to working for the public good. She was appointed as a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire on 1 January 1966 for public services.

Details

Annie McEwen grew up in country Victoria, the daughter of John McLeod, a farmer in Tongala, Victoria. She was educated at Girton Church of England Girls' Grammar School in Bendigo, Victoria. She married John McEwen on 21 September 1921 at Ballavoca, Tongala. They had no children. McEwen was an experienced farmer and with her husband, developed the soldier settler property. They sold it and bought others to eventually hold 3000 acres (1200 ha), in the Stanhope region. They succeeded in circumstances where others had walked off their blocks.

Annie McEwen was active in her local community and particularly in women's organisations such as the Country Women's Association and in the Country Party. She spoke at women's meetings and was a key organiser in the Country Party during the early stages of her husband's political career. She drove thousands of miles through Victoria to political meetings while her husband worked on his speeches in the back seat of his car. He was elected to the Federal Parliament in 1934 as member for Echuca. He later held the seats of Indi from 1937-1949 and Murray from 1949-1971, when he retired from politics. He became leader of the Country Party in 1958.

When her husband, as Minister for Air from 1940, established the Women's Auxiliary Australian Airforce, Annie McEwen was one of the women who gained the use of a large Toorak home and named it WAAAF House. She was appointed as a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire on 1 January 1966, 'in recognition of many years of distinguished devotion to the public interest especially in country areas'.

She died on 10 February 1967, so was not alive to see her husband assume the prime ministership of Australia for three weeks after the disappearance of Harold Holt in December 1967.

Published resources

Newspaper Article

Wife of Deputy PM dies: life of service, 1967

Resource Section

McEwen, Sir John (1900-1980), Lloyd, C. J., 2006,
<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A150245b.htm>

John McEwen/Anne McEwen, National Archives of Australia, 2002,
<http://primeministers.naa.gov.au/meetpm.asp?pmId=18&pageName=wife>

Book

McEwen's way, Mc Ewen, John, Veitch, Don and Seale, John, 1996

Site Exhibition

Faith, Hope and Charity Australian Women and Imperial Honours: 1901-1989, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2003,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/honours/honours.html>

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Archival resources

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection

[Papers of Sir John McEwen, 1943-1980 \[manuscript\]](#)

Author Details

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