

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: IMP0249

Vasey, Jessie Mary

(1897 - 1966)

Born 19 October, 1897, Roma Queensland Australia

Died 22 September, 1966

Occupation Community worker

Summary

Jessie Vasey founded and became President of the War Widows' Guild of Australia. For her work in the field of social welfare she was the recipient of both the CBE (8 June 1963) and OBE (8 June 1950).

Details

Jessie Vasey, the eldest of three daughters of Joseph and Jessie Halbert, attended Moreton Bay Girls' High School as a boarder, before the family moved to Victoria in 1911. She then attended Lauriston Girls' School before moving to Methodist Ladies' College, Kew.

In May 1921 Jessie Halbert married George Alan Vasey. In the same year she graduated from the University of Melbourne with a Bachelor of Arts. In 1928-1930 and 1934-1936 Jessie Vasey and her two children accompanied George Vasey when he was posted to India. The family returned to Australia in 1937 and settled at Wantirna at the foot of the Dandenongs.

During World War II, while her husband was posted in Europe, Jessie Vasey worked with the Australian Comforts Funds. In 1940 Jessie Vasey was a foundation member and secretary of the Australian Imperial Forces Women's Association. George Vasey drew the attention of his wife to the plight of war widows after visiting the widow of one of his men and was appalled at her living conditions. It was Major-General Vasey's wish that after he returned from the battlefields he, with the help of his wife, would look after the families of the men who were killed while serving with him. On 5 March 1945, aged 49 years, Major-General Vasey was himself killed in an aircraft accident.

In 1945 Jessie Vasey established the War Widows' Guild in Victoria, the following year in New South Wales and thereafter in every Australian State and the Australian Capital Territory. By the time of her death in 1966 the Guild had grown into an influential national lobby group.

Events

2008 - 2008

Inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women

2001 - 2001

Inducted into the Victorian Honour Roll of Women

Published resources

Resource

A Tour of the Lilydale Cemetery 1861-1994, Lilydale and District Historical Society,
<http://www.art-technology.com.au/lilyhist/l4/cemtrya5.pdf>

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Edited Book

Who's Who in Australia 1962, Alexander, Joseph A, 1962

200 Australian Women: A Redress Anthology, Radi, Heather, 1988

Book

Australian women at war, Adam-Smith, Patsy, 1984

No mean destiny : the story of the War Widows' Guild of Australia 1945-85, Clark, Mavis Thorpe, 1986

150 years, 150 stories: brief biographies of one hundred and fifty remarkable people associated with the University of Melbourne, Fleisch, Juliet and McPhee, Peter, 2003

Book Section

Jessie Mary Vasey (1897-1966), Smith, Mary, 1989

Resource Section

Vasey, Jessie Mary (1897-1966), Damousi, Joy, 2006,
<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A160533b.htm>

Newspaper Article

Jessie Mary Vasey, Fleisch, Juliet and McPhee, Peter, 2003

Author Details

Anne Heywood

Created 8 November 2002

Last modified 21 November 2018

Digital resources



Title: Jessie Vasey headstone at Lilydale cemetery

Type: Image

Date: 3 May, 2023