

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: PR00853

Carmichael, Grace Elizabeth Jennings

(1867 - 1904)

Born 24 February, 1867, Ballarat Victoria Australia

Died 9 February, 1904, Leyton England

Occupation Nurse, Poet

Summary

Grace Carmichael worked as a nurse and poet, and during her lifetime contributed many poems to newspapers and published her own book of verse in 1895. Grace is best known by her pen name Jennings Carmichael. The Australian poets Henry Lawson and Henry Tate have both written poems about her.

Details

Grace Elizabeth Jennings Carmichael was born in Ballarat to parents Margaret Jennings (née Clark) and Archibald Carmichael, a pioneer miner. Margaret and Archibald were originally from England and Scotland, respectively. In the 1860s two of Grace Carmichael's siblings died in infancy, and in 1870, Archibald Carmichael died aged 51. His widow remarried in 1875 to Charles Naylor Henderson. The family moved from Ballarat to Gippsland, where Charles Henderson worked near Orbost. It was here that Grace Carmichael most likely began writing her poetry, inspired by the surrounding Gippsland bush. Her early works were published by the *Bairnsdale Advertiser* and the *Weekly Times*, and it was in *Australasian* that she first used her penname Jennings Carmichael. In 1888, at the age of 21, she began training as a nurse at the Melbourne Hospital for Sick Children. Her experiences at this hospital would be told in her 1891 novel, *Hospital Children*. She became a qualified nurse in 1890 and worked in Geelong. A book of verse entitled *Poems* was published in Australia and England in 1895. That same year, she married Francis Mullis, an English architect. They lived in South Australia for some time before moving to England. In England, the couple and their six children lived in poverty. Three of these children predeceased Jennings Carmichael, and she herself died in 1904 of pneumonia. Her three remaining children were left impoverished in a workhouse. In 1910, a group of Carmichael's admirers brought these children to Victoria, whereupon they took their mother's maiden name. In the late 1930s, plaques were unveiled in Orbost and Ballarat in honour of Jennings Carmichael.

Published resources

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Photograph

Australian poetess Grace Jennings Carmichael,
<http://enc.slq.qld.gov.au/slq/neg/research/193000/193264r.jpg>

Jennings Carmichael - 'Poetess' [picture] / Mendelssohn, Mendelssohn and Co., photographers, 1890,
<http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/ncentury/gid/slv-pic-aaa07737>

Book

Grace Jennings Carmichael, from Croajingolong to London: with an annotated bibliography, McLaren, Ian F, 1986

Resource Section

Carmichael, Grace Elizabeth Jennings (1867-1914), Gardiner, Lyndsay, 2006,
<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A070571b.htm>

Author Details

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Created 10 June 2010

Last modified 21 November 2018