

= Helen Mayo =

Helen Mary Mayo , OBE ( 1 October 1878 ? 13 November 1967 ) was an Australian medical doctor and medical educator , born and raised in Adelaide . In 1896 , she enrolled at the University of Adelaide , where she studied medicine . After graduating , Mayo spent two years working in infant health in England , Ireland and India . She returned to Adelaide in 1906 , starting a private practice and taking up positions at the Adelaide Children 's Hospital and Adelaide Hospital . In 1909 , she co @-@ founded the School for Mothers , where mothers could receive advice on infant health . This organisation , which became the Mothers ' and Babies ' Health Association in 1927 , eventually established branches across South Australia and incorporated a training school for maternal nurses . In 1914 , after unsuccessfully campaigning for the Children 's Hospital to treat infants , Mayo co @-@ founded the Mareeba Hospital for infants .

In addition to her medical achievements , Mayo participated in a number of other organisations . She was heavily involved in the University of Adelaide , serving on the university council from 1914 to 1960 ( the first woman in Australia to be elected to such a position ) and establishing a women 's club and boarding college there . She was also the founder of the Adelaide Lyceum Club , an organisation for professional women . Mayo died on 13 November 1967 , with the Medical Journal of Australia attributing the success of South Australia 's infant welfare system to her efforts .

= = Early life and education = =

Helen Mary Mayo was born in Adelaide , Australia on 1 October 1878 . She was the eldest of the seven children of George Gibbes Mayo , a civil engineer , and Henrietta Mary Mayo , née Donaldson , and granddaughter of George Mayo , a prominent Adelaide doctor . Her formal education commenced at the age of 10 , when she began receiving regular lessons with a tutor . At the age of 16 , she was enrolled in the Advanced School for Girls on Grote Street ( the forerunner of the Adelaide High School ) , from which she matriculated after one year , at the end of 1895 .

Despite never having heard of female doctors , from an early age Mayo had been set on pursuing a career in medicine . However , Edward Rennie , then a professor at the University of Adelaide advised Helen 's father that she was too young to commence study in Medicine , so in 1896 , Mayo enrolled in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Adelaide . The death of her younger sister Olive at the end of her first year of study meant that Mayo was unable to sit her final exams for that year , and when she repeated her first year in 1897 , she failed two of her five subjects ( Latin and Greek ) . Having gained her father 's permission , Mayo enrolled in medicine in 1898 . She was a distinguished medicine student , coming top of her class and winning the Davis Thomas scholarship and the Everard Scholarship in her fourth and fifth years of study , respectively .

= = Medical career = =

Upon her graduation in at the end of 1902 , Mayo took up a position as a resident medical officer at the Adelaide Hospital . In February 1904 , she left for England to gain practical experience . There she worked as a clinical clerk at Hospital for Sick Children in Great Ormond Street , London . To gain experience in midwifery , she went to Coombe Women 's Hospital in Dublin , and after returning to London to complete a course in tropical medicine , she travelled to India where she worked for a year as a midwife in a Cambridge Mission hospital for women and children . In 1906 , Mayo returned to Adelaide and started a private practice in premises owned by her father on Morphett Street , next to the family home . With spare time on her hands , she began laboratory work at the Adelaide Hospital and took up an appointment as honorary anaesthetist at the Adelaide Children 's Hospital .

= = = The Mothers and Babies ' Health Association = = =

In May 1909 , Mayo presented a paper to an interstate conference on the subject of infant mortality . In it , she addressed the high infant mortality rate in South Australia , and claimed that more

needed to be done to educate women for motherhood . Later that year , after hearing a talk about the success of a school for mothers in London , she and Harriet Stirling ( the daughter of Edward Stirling ) founded the School for Mothers in Adelaide . The Kindergarten Union made a room in its offices available for one afternoon a week , where a nurse would weigh babies and Mayo and Stirling would give advice . At the first annual meeting of the School a prominent medical doctor criticised the organisation for thinking that spinsters could teach mothers , who were guided by the " mother instinct " ( both Mayo and Stirling were childless ) . In spite of this , the organisation flourished , and in 1911 a cottage in Wright Street was purchased and became the headquarters of the School . In 1927 , the organisation became the Mothers ' and Babies ' Health Association , and by 1932 , it had branches throughout South Australia . Mayo served as the honorary medical officer of the association until her death in 1967 , by which time the organisation gained a training school for maternal nurses and a hospital . In her honour , the Association inaugurated the annual Helen Mayo lecture . Eventually , in 1981 , the Mothers and Babies ' Association was incorporated into the Department of Health of the South Australian Government .

After visiting Melbourne to learn how to make vaccines , in 1911 Mayo was appointed clinical bacteriologist at the Adelaide hospital , a position she would hold for 22 years .

= = = The Mareeba Hospital = = =

In the early part of the 1910s , there was an urgent need for medical facilities to treat infants in South Australia since , due to the risks of cross @-@ infection , the Adelaide Children 's Hospital would not treat those under the age of two . In 1913 , Mayo and Stirling called a meeting of medical practitioners to discuss the prospect of a hospital for these children . After doubts about the practicality of such a plan were expressed , the group raised some funds and presented to the board of the Adelaide Children 's Hospital a plan to use the funds to build a separate ward on the grounds of the hospital . The board rejected the proposal , so Mayo and her group rented a two @-@ story house in St. Peter 's and opened a hospital for infants in 1914 . Financial difficulties for the hospital eventually became overwhelming and the state government took over the hospital , moving it to Woodville and renaming it the Mareeba Hospital .

Mayo played a central role in establishing Mareeba Hospital and forming its policy , serving as honourable physician at Mareeba , and as honorary responsible officer from 1921 to 1946 . To combat the risks of cross @-@ infection , she instituted a policy of strict isolation of babies from other patients . Each child had their own locker , where their own equipment would be kept , gowns used by nurses to tend to one child would only be used for that child , and blankets , bottles and floors were all sterilised . Mareeba eventually became a 70 @-@ bed hospital , complete with a surgical unit and a ward for premature babies .

= = = Later medical career = = =

In 1919 , The Adelaide Children 's Hospital advertised for honorary physicians . Believing that her gender would prevent her being given the position , Mayo initially declined to apply . However , following a recommendation by Adelaide surgeon Henry Simpson Newland , Mayo applied for the post , and that year was appointed honorary Assistant Physician in charge of outpatients . With positions at the Royal Adelaide Hospital , the Children 's Hospital and the Mareeba Hospital , as well as commitments at her private practice , Mayo commenced her Doctor of Medicine degree in 1925 . She used her experiences as a clinical bacteriologist at the Adelaide Hospital as the basis for her thesis , which she was forced to write on the weekends , such was the volume of her workload . The following year , she became the first woman to receive an MD from the University of Adelaide . She was subsequently appointed honorary physician to inpatients at the Children 's Hospital , and a clinical lecturer at the University of Adelaide . In May 1935 Mayo was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire ( OBE ) " for services in connection with maternal and child welfare in the state of South Australia . "

She retired in 1938 and became an honorary consulting physician at the Children 's Hospital , but

when the Second World War broke out , she returned to the hospital as senior paediatric adviser , at the same time organising the Red Cross donor transfusion service . Dr. Elma Linton Sandford @-@ Morgan ( 22 February 1890 ? ) , author of ABC of Mothercraft , was appointed medical officer for M.B.H.A. in 1937 . She was a daughter of industrialist and politician A. Wallace Sandford .

= = Other activities = =

Mayo became the first woman in Australia to be elected to a university council when , in 1914 , she was elected to the Council of the University of Adelaide , a position she held for 46 years . She founded , in 1922 , the Adelaide Lyceum Club , and was its inaugural president . The club provided a place for women who were leaders in their respective fields to meet , and aimed to " advance the status of women in the world of arts and letters " .

Mayo was also heavily involved in the life of female students and graduates of the University of Adelaide . She spearheaded the foundation of the Women Student 's Club ( eventually the Women 's Union ) in 1909 , and in 1921 initiated efforts to unify the various student bodies at that University into what would eventually become the Adelaide University Union . The construction of the Lady Simon Building for the Women 's Union was due in large part to her efforts , as was the founding of St. Ann 's College , where she served as chairperson from 1939 to 1959 .

Mayo died 13 November 1967 , aged 89 . In its obituary , the Medical Journal of Australia described her as " the doyen of medical women in South Australia ( and most probably Australia ) " , and credited her with the efficiency of South Australia 's infant health welfare system . The Federal Division of Mayo is named for her .