

# The Australian Women's Register

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**Entry type:** Person  
**Entry ID:** AWE0050

## Bates, Daisy May

(1859 - 1951)

<b>Nationality</b>	Irish
<b>Born</b>	16 October, 1859, Tipperary Ireland
<b>Died</b>	18 April, 1951, Prospect South Australia Australia
<b>Occupation</b>	Anthropologist, Journalist

### Summary

A self-taught anthropologist, Daisy Bates conducted fieldwork amongst several Indigenous nations in western and southern Australia. She supported herself largely by writing articles for urban newspapers on such topics as 'native cannibalism' and the 'doomed' fate of Indigenous peoples. Bates also published her work on Indigenous kinship systems, marriage laws, language and religion in books and articles. She was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) for Aboriginal welfare work in 1934.

Bates' birth year was changed from 1863 to 1859 on 16 January 2018 after consulting the references in Bob Reece's work *Daisy Bates: Grand dame of the desert* and Susanna De Vries' book *Desert Queen: The many lives and loves of Daisy Bates*.

### Details

Daisy May Bates first arrived in Australia in 1884 and worked as a governess in Berry, New South Wales from 1884-1885. She worked on the *Review of Reviews* in London, 1894-1899, gaining expertise in journalism.

From 1899-1900 she was at the Trappist mission, Beagle Bay, north of Broome and in 1904 was appointed by the Western Australian government to research the tribes of the State. Bates was a member of an expedition led by A.R. Radcliffe-Brown to study the social anthropology of Aboriginal people of north-west Australia in 1910.

Over more than twenty years Bates camped at several locations in South Australia and Western Australia; Eucla, 1912-1914; near Yalata, 1915-1918; and near Ooldea, 1918-1934; She was appointed Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) for Aboriginal welfare work on January 1, 1934. She was a member of the British Royal Anthropological Institute and the Australasian Anthropological Institute.

Bates wrote her autobiography 'My natives and I' in a tent at Pyap, South Australia, 1935-1940. This was serialised in *The Adelaide Advertiser* and later edited and published as *The Passing of the Aborigines* in 1938. Her articles appeared in several newspapers, including *The Catholic Record*, *The Western Mail*, *The Adelaide Advertiser*, and *The Children's Newspaper*.

She lived in Wynbring, east of Ooldea, South Australia from 1941 until old age and failing health led her to return to Adelaide in 1945, where she remained until her death in 1951.

Bates is remembered in an ambivalent light by Indigenous and non-Indigenous folk-lore, and has been represented in children's literature, theatre, film and opera. According to the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Bates was given the affectionate name 'Kabbarli', meaning 'grandmotherly person'; the *Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia* records that Anangu people living at Yalata have referred to Bates as 'Daiji Bate mamu' ('mamu' meaning ghost or devil) and as 'that poor old lady at Ooldea.'

## Published resources

### Book

Daisy Bates, Elizabeth Salter, 1971

First in Their Field: Women and Australian Anthropology, Marcus, Julie; Lepervanche, Marie de; McBryde, Isabel; Prior, Mary Ellen Murray; White, Isobel; Morris, Miranda; O'Gorman, Anne; Marcus, Julie and Cheater, Christine, 1993

100 great Australians, Macklin, Robert, 1983

Kabbarli, Curtis, Allan, 1985

Down the hole, up the tree, across the sandhills : running from the State and Daisy Bates, Edna Tantjingu Williams and Eileen Wani Wingfield ; illustrated by Kunyi June-Anne McInerney, 2000

Daisy Bates: keeper of totems, Anne Bartlett, 1997

Daisy Bates in the desert, Julia Blackburn, 1994

Aboriginal Perth and Bibbulmun biographies and legends, Daisy Bates; edited by P.J. Bridge ; with an introduction by Peter Bindon, 1992

The native tribes of Western Australia, Daisy Bates; edited by Isobel White, 1985

Portraits of Australian women [sound recording], Cobbers, 1981

Kabbarli: a personal memoir of Daisy Bates, Hill, Ernestine, 1973

Tales told to Kabbarli: Aboriginal legends collected by Daisy Bates, Barbara Ker Wilson. Illustrated by Harold Thomas., 1972

Daisy Bates: "the great white queen of the never never", Elizabeth Salter, 1971

The passing of the Aborigines : a lifetime spent among the natives of Australia, Bates, Daisy, 1966

Imagined destinies : Aboriginal Australians and the doomed race theory, 1880-1939, Russell McGregor, 1997

Reflections : profiles of 150 women who helped make Western Australia's history; Project of the Womens Committee for the 150th Anniversary Celebrations of Western Australia, Popham, Daphne; Stokes, K.A.; Lewis, Julie, 1979

Australian women writers : a bibliographic guide, Adelaide, Debra, 1988

Uphill all the way: a documentary history of women in Australia, Daniels, Kay and Murnane, Mary, 1980

Efforts made by Western Australia towards the betterment of her Aborigines, Bates, Daisy, 1859-1951. (compiled from statistics, records, etc., under the direction of the Registrar General), 1907

### Resource Section

Bates, Daisy May (1863-1951), Wright, R. V. S., 2006,  
<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A070209b.htm>

Guide to the Papers of Daisy Bates, National Library of Australia, 2002,  
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-229618391/findingaid>

Daisy May Bates, Bois, Danuta, 1998,  
<http://www.DistinguishedWomen.com/biographies/bates-dm.html>

### Journal Article

Social organization of some Western Australian tribes, Daisy Bates, 1913

Aborigines of the west coast of South Australia: vocabularies and ethnographical notes, Daisy Bates, 1918

The marriage laws and some customs of the Western Australian Aborigines, Daisy Bates, 1905

An evaluation of Daisy Bate's Passing of the Aborigines, London, John Murray Ltd., 1972, Stewart, Michael, 1978

### Film

Kabbarli: a film about Daisy Bates, Andrew G. Taylor, 2002

### Journal

The Sphere: The Empire's Illustrated Weekly [London], 1934

**Edited Book**

The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia : Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history, society and culture, Horton, David, 1994

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

**Resource**

Where are the Women in Australian science?, Australian Science and Technology Heritage Centre, 2003,  
<http://www.austehc.unimelb.edu.au/wisa/wisa.html>

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

**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>

The Encyclopedia of Women and Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia, Smart, Judith and Swain, Shurlee (eds.), 2014,  
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/leaders>

## Archival resources

### **National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection**

[Papers of Alexander Gore Gowrie, 1835-1987 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Papers of Daisy Bates, 1833-1990 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Papers of Daisy Bates, 1905-1921 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Correspondence of Daisy Bates 1941, 1943 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Letters, 1901-1951 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Letters and diary, 1911-1931 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Papers of Daisy Bates, 1905-1913 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Papers of Eleanor Witcombe, 1941-1987 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Papers of Elizabeth Salter, 1922-1980 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Typescripts and photographs \[ca. 1947\] \[manuscript\]](#)

[Correspondence from Daisy Bates on the treatment of Aborigines](#)

[Letters from Daisy Bates, 1905-11](#)

[Correspondence with the National Library and photocopies of photographs relating to the funeral of Daisy Bates](#)

[Papers of Nancy Lutton, 1918-2007 \(bulk 1960-2007\) \[manuscript\]](#)

[Papers of Ernest William Pearson Chinnery, 1897-1971 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Darwin, NT; Adelaide, SA; Daisy Bates...](#)

[Papers of William Hurst, 1918-1956 \[manuscript\]](#)

### **State Library of Victoria**

[Letters, 1918-1946. \[manuscript\].](#)

[Letters to John Mathew, ca. 1905-1913. \[manuscript\].](#)

[Draft letter and 'queries and remarks' A. W. Hewitt to Daisy Bates 10 September 1905 and 6 November 1905](#)

### **The University of Adelaide, Barr Smith Library Rare Books & Special Collections**

[Sir John Burton Cleland \(1878-1971\) - Papers, principally relating to anthropology and medicine](#)

[Daisy May Bates - Records](#)

[Letter to Fitzherbert , 21/8/31 and vocabularies.](#)

[Letter to Fitzherbert, 12/8/31 \(incl. Ibari's information\)](#)

[Letter to Fitzherbert 5/4/32 and vocabularies](#)

[Letter to Fitzherbert 9/11/31 and vocabularies](#)

### **State Library of Western Australia**

[Papers, 1907-1940 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Papers, 1907 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Papers, 1907-1940 \[manuscript\].](#)

[Papers, 1920-1956 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Collection of papers on Western Australian history, 1829-1966 \[manuscript\]](#)

### **South Australian Museum Archives**

[Bates, Daisy May \(AA 23\)](#)

[Field diaries, notebooks and other data relating to fieldwork](#)

**Mitchell and Dixson Libraries Manuscripts Collection**

[Daisy Mary Bates correspondence, 1910-1942](#)

**State Library of South Australia**

[Daisy Bates : SUMMARY RECORD](#)

[Kathleen Hilfers : SUMMARY RECORD](#)

[Aborigines' Friends' Association : SUMMARY RECORD](#)

[Nancy Robinson : SUMMARY RECORD](#)

**Fryer Library, The University of Queensland**

[Letter to A.J. Vogan relating to Mrs. Bates](#)

[Letter, 1928 Nov. 10 Ooldea, to Phoebe Kirwan](#)

[Susanna De Vries Papers](#)

[Ernestine Hill Papers](#)

**National Library of Australia, Oral History and Folklore Collection**

[Alvis Brooks interviewed by Marian Hinchcliffe \[sound recording\]](#)

**National Library of Australia**

[\[Biographical cuttings on Daisy Bates, ethnologist, containing one or more cuttings from newspapers or journals\]](#)

**AIATSIS Manuscript and Rare Books Collection**

[Daisy Bates](#)

[\[Papers relating to Daisy Bates - comments on her manuscript of "The native tribes of Western Australia"\]](#)

[White mother to a black race by Mrs Daisy Bates](#)

['You would have loved her for her lore' : the letters of Daisy Bates](#)

[Series of ceremonies : Eucla district natives / \[Daisy Bates\]](#)

**Royal Historical Society of Victoria Inc**

[Correspondence](#)

[Letters, 1943-44](#)

**The National Archives of Ireland**

[Request that publicity in Ireland be given to work done by Mrs Daisy Bates in Australia](#)

**Royal Geographical Society of South Australia Inc.**

[BATES, Mrs Daisy May](#)

**State Library of New South Wales**

[Georgina King papers, 1889-1930](#)

[Georgina King Papers, 1888 - 1921](#)

**Academy Library, UNSW Canberra**

[Dorothy Green manuscript collection 1918-1990](#)

[Rory Barnes manuscript collection](#)

**Author Details**

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