

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: IMP0100

Booth, Mary

(1869 - 1956)

Nationality Australian

Born 9 July, 1869, Sydney New South Wales Australia

Died 28 November, 1956, Sydney New South Wales Australia

Occupation Physician, Public Health Worker

Summary

Mary Booth graduated in Arts from the University of Sydney before studying medicine at the University of Edinburgh (graduating in 1899). On her return to Australia she lectured in hygiene at girls secondary schools in Sydney, and for the Department of Public Instruction and the Sydney Teachers College 1904-1909. In 1910-1912 she helped establish the first school medical service in Victoria and was later involved in household health and welfare. She was the founder and office bearer of many patriotic associations, such as the Anzac Fellowship of Women (president 1921-1956). She was appointed OBE – Officer of The Order of the British Empire (Civil) – 4 October 1918, for her work with the Friendly Union of Soldier's Wives.

Booth also founded the Women's Club in Sydney in 1901, the Centre for Soldiers Wives and Mothers in 1915 and the Memorial College of Household Arts and Science in 1936, and was involved with the University of Sydney Society for Combating Venereal Disease, the League of Nations Union, the New Settlers' League and the Australian Institute of International Affairs. She had a keen interest in eugenics and was a member of the Anthropometric Committee of the Australian Association for the Advancement of Science from 1908.

Details

Independent candidate for North Shore in 1920.

Mary Booth was born in Sydney and educated privately, at Airlie School and then University of Sydney. From 1891-1893 she was governess to the children of the Earl of Jersey, then governor of NSW. In 1894 she began studying medicine at the University of Melbourne, but transferred to Edinburgh, from which she graduated in 1899. She returned to Sydney in 1900 but did not practise medicine for long. She taught hygiene at girls' secondary schools, and was lecturer in hygiene for the NSW Department of Public Instruction 1904-09. In 1910-12 she helped establish the Victorian school medical service. She was very active during World War I, founding the Babies' Kit Society and the Soldiers Club. She was on the executive committee of the Universal Service League and campaigned in favour of conscription.

Running as an independent feminist, she stood in the first election for which women were entitled to be candidates. Two years later, in 1922, she failed to gain nomination for the Senate election though she was supported by the Women's Reform League.

In 1921 she founded the Anzac Fellowship of Women, and remained its president until 1956. From 1921, she was involved in the Dreadnought Scheme which brought out boy immigrants, and from 1925 to 1944 published a monthly magazine, *Boy Settler*.

She was an inveterate joiner and activist and belonged to numerous organizations including the League of Nations Union, the Town Planning Association, and the English Speaking Union.

Her last major initiative was to found the Memorial College of Household Arts and Sciences in 1936, to which young women went to learn the domestic arts, as Dr Booth believed : "good wives made good husbands". After her death and the sale of the property, the funds were used to found the Dr Mary Booth scholarship for women economics students at the University of Sydney.

Published resources

Resource Section

Booth, Mary (1869-1956), Roe, J.I., 2006,
<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A070350b.htm>

Booth, Mary (1869 - 1956), Biographical Entry, 2002,
<http://www.asap.unimelb.edu.au/bsparcs/biogs/P000963b.htm>

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

Thesis

The 'Woman Question' in Melbourne, 1880-1914, Kelly, Farley, 1983

Edited Book

Who's Who in Australia, 1947, Chisholm, Alec H, 1947

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>

Journal Article

The soldiers' club, 1915-1923, Brooklyn, Bridget, 2000

Archival resources

Mitchell and Dixson Libraries Manuscripts Collection

[Mary Booth papers, 1899-1957](#)

[Mary Booth: a biography by Ruth Mackinnon, 1969](#)

[Rose family papers, 1749-1974 \[Henrietta Eliza Bertha Rose\]](#)

[Series 01: Mary Booth papers, 1905-1957](#)

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection

[Papers of Mary Booth, \[ca. 1918\]-1979 \[manuscript\]](#)

[Papers of H.P. Philpot and G.W. Philpot, 1912-1985 \[manuscript\]](#)

Author Details

Helen Morgan and Jane Carey

Created 20 October 1993

Last modified 21 November 2018