

Lucy Kerley, 1908-1996



Lucy Kerley was born and spent most of her life living in the family home in Swanston Street, Geelong. Her parents were Jack and Jean Kerley (nee Gambetta) and she had one brother, Jim.

Lucy was educated at St. Agnes School, then at Madame Clancy's Central College before becoming a boarder at Mary's Mount where she completed her schooling. She wrote her memoirs of her school days at Mary's Mount in the 1920s.

After school Lucy spent a period as a Junior Teacher at the Swanston Street State School. She then studied for her Bachelor of Science degree at Melbourne University during which time she was resident at St. Mary's Hall. She commenced post-graduate studies in Analytical Chemistry. During this time she taught part-time at the Gordon Institute as well as tutoring at Melbourne University.

Lucy started work as an industrial chemist for a tobacco company but during the war was transferred to a job at a steel foundry. After the war she taught chemistry at the Emily McPherson College. In the early 1950s she returned to work at Melbourne University in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology. Later she transferred to the Bio-Chemistry Department where she remained until she retired.

During the war Lucy was a part-time student at the National Gallery Art School. She made her own charcoal when drawing materials were in short supply. Using her scientific skills she experimented with different types of wood and various methods of charcoal burning using the family fireplace.

Lucy established a lending library of Art books for the Gallery students financed by charcoal sales. She continued as an honorary librarian until 1973. She was awarded the MBE for her services in starting and maintaining the library for such a long period. Her father was a railway-man for most of his life, retiring as the Commissioner's Representative on the Railway Board of Discipline. Lucy was a supporter of many railway groups such as Puffing Billy and the Bellarine Peninsular Railway. She campaigned to have a 9.30 train to Geelong to fill the gap between the 6.05 and 11.25 and succeeded.

Lucy had a lifelong devotion to cats which she drew in humorous aspects. Her final months of life were spent in Grace McKellar House. Determined to continue her lifestyle she was provided with a study area.

Lucy Kerley's generous bequest allowed the restoration of the Chapel in 1999.

