Women’s Honour Roll 2006

**Recipients:**

* Elizabeth Palmer Northcott
* Alice Robertson
* Pearl Millane (Posthumous)
* Grace Bremner (Posthumous)
* Sarah Whiteley (Posthumous)
* Margaret Cross (Posthumous)
* Thelma Annear (Posthumous)

**Elizabeth Palmer Northcott**

Not only is Elizabeth Northcott referred to affectionately as ‘The Grand Lady of Creswick’, this 94 year old unofficial historian of Creswick has been nominated as “Personality of the Month” in the District News.

Elizabeth Northcott is held in high esteem for the store of wisdom and knowledge of the town and its people and is living proof that age is no barrier to contributing to a town she loves.

Elizabeth was born in Creswick on 29th December 1911, the second daughter in a family of four.   She attended Creswick State School, No 122, and Ballarat High, completing her education in 1930 during the Depression years.  She went on to work in her father’s newsagency and in 1935, part of her role was to register births, deaths and marriages in the town. From this grew her consuming interest in historical research and genealogy, assisting people from all over Australia and internationally in tracing family data.

Elizabeth has had an ongoing commitment to many local organisations in Creswick over the past 35 years, which include:

* Ballarat Business & Professional Women’s’ Club— 27 years member, (10 years as Sec.)
* Girl Guides – 5 years
* Creswick Historical Museum – 35 years
* Victoria Street Sunday School – 3 years
* Active Blind Institute – local committee
* Meals On Wheels

Elizabeth recalls scrubbing the huge Victoria Street Sunday School floor on hands and knees twice a year and also started on the first day of service of Meals On Wheels in Creswick.

Elizabeth contributed enormously to the historical research of the Creswick Museum & Gold Battery, and wrote a total of 75, “100 years ago’ columns for the Creswick District News.

Elizabeth Northcott has been a business woman in Albert Street, Creswick all of her working life. She is thought of within her community as a quiet achiever with an astute intellect, keen sense of humour, unflagging enthusiasm and great energy given to the progress of the Creswick community, with no thought of recognition for herself. She is fiercely independent, enjoys good health and enjoys making friends and helping others wherever possible.

Commenting on the future of Creswick, Elizabeth is appalled when she reads of the huge amounts spent on consultants for various works …… she remembers the civic fathers and committed citizens of the past who made Creswick township great, even on its stringent budgets.

Elizabeth Palmer Northcott is recognised as a living treasure in Creswick.

**Alice Robertson**

Alice Robertson, known affectionately as Mrs Robbie in the Trentham and Lyonville communities, is honoured for 60 years of unfailing community service, and education & training.

A widely known and loved person, Alice gave a commitment to education at a time when married women weren’t allowed to teach. She progressed from Teachers College to Lyonville Primary School in 1945 where she taught students to honour fair play and taught them a sense of justice.

The Robertson family moved to Trentham in 1964 with their 3 daughters and Alice re-entered teaching as an emergency teacher at Trentham Primary School in 1965 as well as being involved in the Mothers’ Club, including a stint as Treasurer and fitting in a canteen roster at Daylesford for her older girls. Seven years of emergency teaching were followed by 8 years of full time teaching from 1971. Her high ideals became the norm and as the Trentham School librarian, is remembered by many students as an important influence in their lives.

Alice Robertson has always encouraged people to become community minded. She has been a quiet leader, others following her love of literature, education, the church and community.

Alice has been a member of the Uniting Care Church, as an elder in the Ladies Guild, a religious education instructor both within her church and at primary school. She has been involved in school care programs and one fellow church member describes Alice “as always early, always ready and willing and tremendously loyal”.

A member of the Country Women’s’ Association (CWA), Alice won awards as a knitter; renowned for her fruit cake, jam making and preparation of small cakes and delights. Many of the community fundraising events have done very well when raffling Mrs Robbie’s cakes. Alice has also taught handiwork on behalf of the CWA.

A host of organisations have seen Alice’s commitment and involvement. These include: Trentham Hospital, the Hospital Auxiliary, Meals On Wheels, Lions Club catering and fundraising, Bingo calling and visiting Day Care residents. At Easter time, Mrs Robbie and a grandchild dressed up in bunny ears would deliver chocolate eggs to each room in the hostel.

One event held every year on behalf of the Royal Victorian Institute for the Blind is the ‘Spud Lunch’ where everything on the menu is made from potato; even the chocolate cake! This gives Alice another chance to bake up a storm, and has been a great influence for everyone involved, spanning all generations.

Within her community, Alice is thought of as a caring and sharing person with a strong determination to succeed along with a quietness and humility which have led many of her community efforts. She has been sustained in a loving marriage and has reared three lovely daughters.

**Pearl Millane (posthumous)**

Born in Warrnambool in 1933, Pearl and her family arrived in Creswick in 1975. Many of Pearl’s activities were an inspiration to women but her election to Creswick Shire Council is particularly noteworthy.

Pearl Millane was only the third woman to be elected to a Victorian council in 1986. She was returned as a councillor in 1988 and continued to represent her electorate until 1990. In 1989/90 she became the Shire’s first woman President.

During her time as a Councillor, Pearl was given an award by the Shire of Creswick “for her outstanding services, commitment and betterment to the Shire of Creswick”.

Pearl was also committed to continuing education and its liberating role in women’s lives and in 1975 joined the Creswick Continuing Education Group, a forerunner of the Creswick Community Centre which Pearl was committed to throughout the whole of her life in Creswick.

The Centre hosted the nine day photographic exhibition on “Raw Earth Architecture”. There were a lot of mud brick buildings being erected within the Shire when an invitation to host this travelling exhibition was extended to Cr Millane.  Many organisations including the French Government, the Earth Building Forum of Sydney and the Victorian Ministry of Housing included tours of mud brick houses in the region as examples of this form of earth architecture.

After her retirement from local government in 1993 and Council life, Pearl continued to encourage women to stand for Council, to gain knowledge and experience in this important community role.

Pearl Millane was instrumental in commemorating the 1882 Centenary of the Australasia Mine Disaster. She was Secretary of the New Australasian Centenary Commemoration Committee. Sir John Holland from the History Advisory Council of Victoria wrote “A great deal of the success of the commemoration at Creswick was undoubtedly due to Pearl’s competence, persistence and cheerful leadership”.

Much of the conservation of many of the Creswick Museum & Gold Battery’s valuable paintings were administered by Pearl Millane where she was seen as an eminently practical person, rationalising storage and work areas, improving displays, cataloguing of museum items and initiating a weekly working bee which still runs today.

Fulfilling three terms as a Councillor in local government, serving the Shire of Creswick was all done while managing a bringing up a family.

Pearl Amelia Millane died in 1994.

**Grace Bremner (posthumous)**

Grace Eugene Muriel Bremner, born in 1919, was a woman who was thought of as a fine example of thinking globally but acting locally.  It is said about Grace that she was a warm, passionate person, a woman of substance and inspiration who hated injustice. She gave her love, compassion, trust and understanding to all who needed it.

One of Grace’s prime motivations was her support of family values and her door was always open, particularly to women in difficult family situations, taking on the role of a social worker in the community. She promoted independence for women and treated children with the same respect as adults.

Grace Bremner was ahead of her time in the organisations she supported, including sponsoring a child in India 35 years ago.

Grace was a self-educated woman, completing her matriculation in adulthood. She wrote, painted and was a knowledgeable gardener, completing a course in eucalyptus identification. She was also an independent thinker, accepting of others beliefs; she thought spiritual development was important and she embraced Buddhist meditation and thinking.

Grace befriended people who were marginalised, isolated and underprivileged. She was an animal rights activist and was known to confront people who were mistreating their animals. She raised awareness and others’ consciousness of animal welfare issues and became a vegetarian after witnessing animals treated poorly whilst in transport.

Always the matriarch of the family, Grace fostered strong family cohesion, which she encouraged all of her children to achieve. She was courageous and never afraid of making unpopular decisions or actions. In the outline of her contributions, one theme seems to run through – her tremendous encouragement of all around her to succeed and take charge of their lives. Grace’s life can be viewed as dropping a pebble in still water and the ripples created, moving outwards. There is an ever widening circle of effect and the outcome of the ripples is not always known. She sowed many seeds with individuals and indicated opportunities with kind words and actions and her experience of life. She had a great sense of humour and was a great yarn spinner. Her calmness and clarity guided people to work on building and maintaining relationships. She leaves a great legacy.

Grace Eugene Muriel Bremner died in 2005. During her life she was involved with many organisations, holding office in many of the below listed groups and giving of her time generously:

* Business and Professional Women’s Club
* Red Cross
* Greenpeace Creswick
* Field Naturalists
* Daylesford Drama Group
* RSPCA
* NIMALS Australia
* Christ Church Guild
* Daylesford Book Club
* Human Society
* Diggers Club
* Blind Christian Mission
* Neighbourhood Watch
* Meals On Wheels
* Beauty Without Cruelty
* Coalition Against Duck Shooting
* Lyonville Hall Committee
* Lepers Groups in India
* Local Heritage Groups CWA
* Victorian Women’s Trust Health Services Support Group

**Sarah Whiteley (posthumous)**

Born 1903 – Died 1988 Sarah Eulalie Whiteley was known as Lalie by those who knew her. Lalie Whiteley was born at a time when, as Renee Geyer sings, “it’s a man’s world” and politics was thought to be the domain of men. Lalie grew up in this era and would have been one of the first women to push the boundaries in a world dominated by men.

From the pages of Daylesford’s, The Advocate on Friday 2nd December 1960 – Another Page in Council History where it is quoted “*Woman’s Softening Influence Will Be There”. “After one hundred and one* *years of activity, the Borough Council has admitted one of the gentler sexes to its ranks”.*

The Advocate questioned: “*will a woman’s restraining influence lead the Council along a path of quiet activity, or will Councillors expect Cr Mrs Whitely to be “one of* *the boys” and join them in their (at times) acrimonious debates”.* Cr Whiteley was notable for “*her wide knowledge of local needs, gained through association with several* *organisations working for the betterment of the community. Mrs Whitely should be an acquisition to the Council and with her woman’s viewpoint, may give a lead in legislation of a useful nature”.*

Among many of Lalie’s achievements she was a Justice of the Peace and also acted as a magistrate. She was also on the Daylesford Hospital Board from 1956 and the President of the Board in 1971/72. In 1970 she was elected as a President of the Daylesford & District Trotting Association, the only trotting association in Australia with a female President, a position she held until 1978/79.

Lalie Whiteley contributed to Daylesford’s burgeoning tourism industry, working at Whiteley’s garage during 1938 where she also took telephone bookings for Daylesford Guest Houses, a precursor to the Daylesford region’s modern day accommodation booking services.

During the early 1940’s Lalie became the first aid lady for the town’s woollen mills and in 1952 worked at Albert Motors, her brother Harry Dwan’s business (now known as Savage Tyre Services).

In 1956 when the Australian Federation of Business and Professional Women opened a branch in Daylesford, Lalie became their first President.

Sarah Eulalie Whiteley died in 1988.

**Margaret Cross (posthumous)**

Margaret May Cross is honoured for her roles as journalist, writer, needlewoman and historian. Margaret (affectionately known as Maggie) was born in Geelong in 1857 and moved to Daylesford with her parents and baby brother when she was only two years of age.

In an age when it was considered that a ‘woman’s place was in the home’ Margaret Cross was surprisingly liberated. With her brother Andrew Cross, she was co-owner of the Daylesford Herald, until it combined with The Advocate.  It is said of Maggie that she possessed a ‘wonderful journalistic sense’ and was a prolific writer, having written a number of books.

A mark of her generosity of spirit was the fact that the proceeds from the sale of one of her books, written after WW1, was donated to assist returning soldiers. She also won many prizes in London for the various essays she had written.

With her death in 1948, Margaret May Cross’s obituary in Daylesford’s The Advocate records that ‘*another link* *with the early days of the Daylesford district has been severed’*.

Margaret was also a keen student of history and familiarised herself with a wealth of interesting facts concerning the early days of the district, *‘her knowledge of local events from late in the 19th century up to recent years was extensive’.*

The Advocate also reports that ‘tapestry’ was another art in which Miss Cross delighted. She took up needlework at the age of 12 and won many prizes in Melbourne and London with wonderful works produced from her nimble fingers. Apparently, Maggie worked her tapestries for up to half an hour before and after school every day. The result were tapestries of such excellent quality, many of which Maggie gave to family and friends. It is said that some of these tapestries had a biblical theme. In a quiet moment of rebellion however, she was heard to wish that “her fingers would drop off”.

The Daylesford Museum currently have more than one example of Margaret’s work, along with her typewriter which is also exhibited.

Margaret also taught music and shorthand and hundreds of Daylesford and district residents can testify to her efficient and skilful training in these disciplines.

Church and charitable works occupied much of Maggie’s time and in her quiet, retiring manner, as did a vast amount of good for organisations and individuals within the district.

Maggie must have been very bright because once again, quoting from her obituary, it is noted that “Her wealth of knowledge was always ready to be used for any cause she felt worthy and many articles and letters appeared in the pages of the paper under the signature of M.M. Cross. Her opinions were always given due consideration; a tribute to the height of regard in which she was held by all sections of the community”.

**Thelma Annear (posthumous)**

It would be easy to picture a mother lion fighting fiercely to defend one of her cubs when speaking about Thelma Joan Annear.

When Thelma’s son Ivan contracted meningitis at the age of two and was left profoundly deaf, she fought for his needs in an age when disability had a different meaning than it has today. She founded and was the first President of the Mothers’ Club at Ewing House School for the Deaf, which Ivan attended.

Thelma overcame the difficulties which came with the education of a profoundly deaf child, even standing up to bureaucrats who tried to stop him from travelling on the school bus from Clunes to Ballarat, a stance which paved the way for other children in the same circumstances.

A long-time resident of Clunes, Thelma contributed to her community in a number of other ways as well. She was an inaugural member of the Clunes Tourist and Development Association and was Treasurer until June 1996.

Thelma was a key player in the success of various projects undertaken by the Association, such as the establishment of the Clunes Caravan Park and Gold Festivals and was made Festival Monarch as a token of appreciation for her services to Clunes.

She was also President of the Clunes Country Women’s Association, the Clunes Ladies Bowling Club and Clunes Golf Club Ladies Committee.

Other organisations she gave tirelessly to were:

* Clunes Primary School Mother’s Club
* Clunes Fire Brigade Women’s Auxiliary
* RSL Women’s Auxiliary

Thelma was renowned as a superb cook and a regular competitor at the Clunes and District Agriculture Show, where she won many prizes. Her flare for cooking also saw her as a key player in catering for many fundraising functions for the organisations she was involved with.

Thelma Annear was also instrumental in establishing the first Meals On Wheels in the Central Highlands region. She also worked with the youth of Clunes as a leader in the Youth Group and in the Girl Guides and Brownies, also inspiring others to contribute their time and skills with the youth of Clunes.

She successfully ran her own business in the main street of Clunes at the same time she was involved in all her community endeavours.