Women’s Honour Roll 2005

**Recipients:**

* Dr Gweneth Wisewould (Posthumous)
* Jean Elizabeth Peart M.B.E. (Posthumous)
* May Evelyn Lay B.E.M.
* Florence Montgomery Brooke

**Dr Gweneth Wisewould (posthumous)**

It was often said this remarkable woman was born well ahead of her time, studying to become a doctor when the professional world was dominated by men.

Known as an eccentric character, she wore trousers under an army greatcoat and drove to house calls through the remote bush in a battered ute. Her wit was well known and her annual Christmas poem was famous for featuring local identities and stories.

Born in Melbourne in 1884, adored daughter of prosperous parents, Gweneth graduated as a Doctor in 1915 and worked as a surgeon in several of Melbourne’s top hospitals.

She ’retired’ to Trentham in 1938 and was to become the town’s longest serving medical practitioner, both in general practice and at Trentham Bush Nursing Hospital 1939—1972 when she passed away.

Dr Wisewould’s legendary exploits include saving the life of Bill Stevens, injured while working at the Trewhalla Foundry when a metal bar pierced his chest. She was also known to apply medical skills to the occasional veterinary emergency.

Always involved in committees and organisations, she did much more: leaving patients to decide whether they could pay fees and setting up the Truganinni Foundation at Melbourne University in 1968 to provide scholarships for indigenous students.

**Jean Elizabeth Peart M.B.E.(Posthumous)**

Born in Natte Yallock in 1920, Jean Elizabeth (nee Andrew) and family moved to Clunes when she was five. After finishing elementary school, she attended a Melbourne business college for two years, returning to Clunes and a lifelong dedication to the community.

Jean Peart’s philosophy in life was to be charitable to all, saying “what I am and have is to share.”

Music was her great love. As an accomplished pianist she frequently played at local fundraising concerts and functions, forming a band with her sons.   She was known as the Methodist church organist for 22 years. Jean always had time for her family and others, particularly the aged and the young.  Often as office bearer, she was involved with over twenty community groups and committees.  She was founding member of the Clunes Elderly Citizens club and initiator of the 1st Clunes Girl Guide Company and enjoyed many bush walks with the young guides.

Awarded an MBE in 1973 for outstanding involvement and service to the community Jean was recognized as ‘The Clunes Ambassador’ and ‘Unofficial Mayoress of Clunes’, even so she stood in the background and did not look for honour or glory.

Jean said, “we should leave this world a little better than when we came.” That she did. Jean passed away in 1978.

**May Evelyn Lay B.E.M**

The British Empire Medal was awarded to May Evelyn Lay (nee White) in 1976 for over 60 years work with the RSL and Women’s Auxiliaries. This was just one award presented to a remarkable lady who graced this earth from 1895 to 1982.

Born in London she came to Australia as a war bride in 1919 and moved with her husband Ted and baby son to a soldier settlement block at Sutton Park, Newlyn.

Not only did she manage to raise seven children and establish a dairy farm while enduring the depression, she worked tirelessly for the community and was still a member of several committees at the time of her death. During hard times and with a clear sense of purpose and humour, May would attend to those in need, never sparing a thought for herself.

Among her various office bearing roles May Lay was President of: The Red Cross; Federation of State Schools Mother’s Clubs; Dean Branch of the CWA; Methodist Ladies Guild; and State President of the RSL War Service Fund at ANZAC House during World War Two. She was instrumental in bringing unity to the many RSL Women’s Auxiliaries in Victoria. In recognition of over a half century of dedication the RSL honoured her with its highest distinction – the Certificate of Merit with Gold Badge.

**Florence Montgomery Brooke**

Born in Daylesford in 1900 and daughter to a State Parliamentarian, Florence Brooke (nee Cox) was vocal on regional issues during her 92 years.

Florence was an active and successful political lobbyist and as a member of the Daylesford Liberal Party contributed to the abolition of probate duties and lobbied on many conservation and heritage issues.  She was among a group of women who put an end to logging in Wombat Hill Gardens and her intervention prevented demolition of the Wills Square Memorial Fountain in the 1950’s.

She was a successful farmer and breeder of Angus Cattle on her inherited farm “Wombat Park” and in 1970 established a wildlife sanctuary on part of the property. Florence was never shy to debate any issue that concerned her and was strongly supportive of many local groups. She was a founding member of several community organizations and committees including the Girl Guides and Red Cross and life supporter of the Daylesford Christ Church Guides Association, local Country Women’s Association, and Daylesford and District Historical Society (hosting many early meetings in her home). She was also an active member of the Daylesford Branches of the National Trust of England.