Guide to the Papers of Eleanor Dark

Mitchell Library,
State Library of New South Wales

Sydney
2000-2004

Contact information:
The Curator of Manuscripts,
State Library of New South Wales,
Macquarie Street, Sydney
New South Wales, Australia.
Phone: +61 2 9273 1506
Fax: +61 2 9273 1248
Email: manuscripts@sl.nsw.gov.au
URL: http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au

Original finding-aid prepared by:
Manuscripts Section

Encoded by:
Meredith Lawn

This finding-aid is published as part of the Australian Literary Manuscript Collections Project, which has received funding from the Australian Research Council's Research Infrastructure Equipment and Facilities (RIEF) Scheme.

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Summary

Creator: Dark, Eleanor, 1901-1985

Title: Papers of Eleanor Dark, 1849-1980

Date range: 1849-1980

Reference number: MLMSS 4545 & Pic.Acc.6073

Extent: 4.37m (23 boxes, 1 drawer, 1 'X' item & 2 volumes) of ms., typescript, carbon typescript, photocopies, newscuttings, printed, drawings, photographs, realia.

Repository: Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales


Administrative Information

Access

An access restriction applies to MLMSS 4545. For information, contact the Curator of Manuscripts, Mitchell Library.

Access to realia in Pic.Acc.6073/2 is only by appointment with Pictures Section staff.

Restrictions on Use

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Preferred Citation
[Name of item], Papers of Eleanor Dark, 1849-1980, MLMSS 4545, Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.

Provenance
The papers were presented by Dr E.P. Dark, husband of Eleanor Dark, in 1985.

Biographical Note
Eleanor Dark (1901-1985) was born in Burwood, N.S.W. in 1901. Her father was Labor politician and writer, Dowell Philip O'Reilly (1865-1923). She was commonly known by her nickname, Pixie, among family and friends. Educated in Sydney, she attended the boarding school Redlands, Neutral Bay, 1915-1919, where she excelled in English and French.

Eleanor Dark married medical practitioner and writer, Dr Eric Payten Dark (1889-1987) in 1922, and the couple settled in 'Varuna', Katoomba in 1923. An only child, Brian Michael Dark was born in 1929. John Oliver Dark, the son from a previous marriage of Dr Dark, was born in 1920.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Eleanor Dark wrote short stories and verse, under the pseudonym Patricia O'Rane or P.O.'R., which were published mainly in Sydney literary magazines. Her attempt at the novel form came to fruition after ten years. "Pilgrimage" (ca.1923-ca.1924) was never published, but in quick succession came Prelude to Christopher (1934) and Return to Coolami (1936), both awarded the Australian Literature Society's Gold Medal, Sun across the sky (1937) and Waterway (1938).

In 1941, the first of Eleanor Dark's historical trilogy based on the early years of the colony in N.S.W. The timeless land (1941) was published and accorded the distinction of being the first Collins book set, printed (by Halstead Press) and published in Australia. This novel contributed to her reputation overseas and the translation of her work into foreign languages. The trilogy was completed with Storm of time (1948) and No barrier (1953).

In 1945, her novel The little company was published and her final work Lantana Lane, a collection of short stories based on experiences at the Dark's macadamia nut farm at Montfort, Queensland, was published in 1959.
Eleanor Dark was conferred with the honour, Order of Australia, in 1977 for her services to literature, and in 1978 received the Australian Society of Women Writers' Alice Award.

Eleanor Dark died on 11 September 1985, and her husband Eric Dark died on 28 July 1987.

Access Terms

Names
- Calder family
- Dark, E. P. (Eric Payten), 1889-1987
- Dark family
- Modjeska, Drusilla
- O'Reilly family

Subjects
- Women authors, Australian -- 20th century

Geographical Names
- Varuna (Cascade Street, Katoomba, N.S.W.)

Series List and Descriptions

A. Literary manuscripts, 1923-ca.1959

The descriptions of the literary manuscripts in boxes 1-9 are taken from Eleanor Dark's inscriptions on the manuscripts' original wrappings. These wrappings have been discarded.

i. “Pilgrimage”, ca.1923-ca.1924 (Box MLMSS 4545/1)
   'Rough copy'.

ii. “Pilgrimage”, 1923-1924 (Box MLMSS 4545/1)
'Typed copy 1923-24'.

iii. *Prelude to Christopher*, ca.1934 (Box MLMSS 4545/2)

'Original pencil copy'.

iv. *Return to Coolami*, ca.1936 (Box MLMSS 4545/2)

'Original pencil copy'.

v. *Return to Coolami*, ca.1936 (Box MLMSS 4545/2)

'Typed copy'.

vi. *Sun across the sky*, ca.1937 (Box MLMSS 4545/3)

'Rough copy'.

vii. *Waterway*, ca.1938 (Box MLMSS 4545/3)

'Original pencil copy'.

viii. *Waterway*, ca.1938 (Box MLMSS 4545/3)

'Rough typed copy'.

ix. *Timeless land*, ca.1937-ca.1940 (Box MLMSS 4545/4)

'Original pencil copy'.

x. *The timeless land*, ca.1937-1940 (Box MLMSS 4545/5)

'Rough typed copy'.

xi. *Little company*, ca.1945 (Box MLMSS 4545/5)

'Original rough copy'.

xii. *The little company*, ca.1945 (Box MLMSS 4545/6)

'Rough typed copy'.

xiii. *Storm of time*, ca.1944-ca.1947 (Box MLMSS 4545/6)

'Rough typed copy'.

xiv. *Storm of time*, ca.1944-ca.1947 (Box MLMSS 4545/7)
'Rough ms. copy'.

xv. *Storm of time*, ca.1944-ca.1947 (Box MLMSS 4545/8)

'Typed copy no.4 with some notes and references'.

xvi. *No barrier*, ca.1953 (Box MLMSS 4545/8)

'No.1'.

xvii. *No barrier*, ca.1953 (Box MLMSS 4545/9)

'Rough typed copy (unrevised)'.

xviii. *No barrier*, ca.1953 (Box MLMSS 4545/9)

'No.2'.

xix. *Lantana Lane*, ca.1959 (Box MLMSS 4545/9)

'Typed copy'.

xx. Mss. of articles, lectures, plays and poems, n.d.(Box MLMSS 4545/10-11)

Includes “Caroline Chisholm and her times”, “Books and their critics”, “The last appointment” and “The summit”.

xxi. Untitled ms. re. the Calder family, n.d. (Box MLMSS 4545/12-14)

xxii. Fragmentary literary mss., n.d. (Box MLMSS 4545/15-16)

**B. Personal papers, 1849-1980**

i. Miscellaneous family papers, 1915-1943 (Box MLMSS 4545/17)


ii. Family history of the O'Reilly family and Dark family, 1849-1934 (Box MLMSS 4545/18) (Reel CY 1051)

Includes letters, sketches and photographs.
iii. Family history of the Dark family, 1936-1978 (Box MLMSS 4545/19) (Reel CY 1052)

Includes letters, sketches and photographs.

iv. Certificates awarded to Eric Payten Dark by Sydney University, 1909, 1915 (Box MLMSS 4545/20X)

For Senior Public Exam, 1909, and by New South Wales Medical Board, 1915.

v. Diaries, 1936-1960 (Box MLMSS 4545/21)

vi. Research notes and references, 1936-1960 (Box MLMSS 4545/22-23)

Mainly for the historical trilogy begun by *The timeless land*.

vii. Bookjackets and newscuttings, 1923-1978 (Box MLMSS 4545/24)

Newscuttings include reviews of the novels in American and Australian newspapers, and printed short stories and poems, many published under the pseudonym Patricia O’Rane.

viii. Correspondence with publishers, 1935-1976 (Box MLMSS 4545/25)


ix. Legal agreements and correspondence with publishers re. royalty statements, 1936-1980 (Box MLMSS 4545/26-27)

x. General correspondence, 1924-1980 (Box MLMSS 4545/28-30)

Includes letters from the Australian Broadcasting Commission, the *Bulletin* and the Fellowship of Australian Writers.


xi. Filing drawer containing research notes and newscuttings, n.d. (Box MLMSS 4545/31)
C. Pictorial material, 1908-1967
Pic.Acc.6073

Pencil drawings of Eleanor Dark by her brother Brien ('Bim') O'Reilly, 1924-25 (Volume Pic.Acc.6073/1)

Sketch presented to Eleanor Dark by Pixie O'Harris, 1945 (Volume Pic.Acc.6073/1)

Drawing of 'Varuna' (Volume Pic.Acc.6073/1)

Watercolours of Redlands School, Wentworth Falls in 1919, and John Oliver Dark (Volume Pic.Acc.6073/1)

Album “Physiology. Leaving Certificate. 1919” (Volume Pic.Acc.6073/1)

   Contains study notes on the skeleton with sketches and portrait studies stuck onto pages. Includes loose sketches probably of family members Mabel, Bim, Nora, Lena.

Envelope of animal silhouettes (Volume Pic.Acc.6073/1)

Graphbook containing plans (very faded) of 'Varuna', which Eleanor Dark designed (Volume Pic.Acc.6073/1)

Photographic portraits of Eleanor Dark by Olive Cotton, Max Dupain, May Moore and Alan Row (Volume Pic.Acc.6073/1)

Scenes of Eleanor Dark at home at 'Varuna', and her studio (Volume Pic.Acc.6073/1)

Locks of hair (6) belonging to Dowell O'Reilly, Eleanor 'Pixie' Dark, Michael Dark and Jann Dark (Volume Pic.Acc.6073/2)

   Accompanying envelope labelled 'Four generations of curls'.