Guide to the Papers of May Gibbs

Mitchell Library,
State Library of New South Wales

Sydney
2000

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**Summary**

**Creator:** Gibbs, May, 1877-1969

**Title:** Papers of May Gibbs, 1867-1969

**Date range:** 1867-1969

**Reference number:** MLMSS 2048 & PIC.ACC. 2055

**Extent:** 4m (27 vols., 1 folder, 26 boxes & 35 portfolios) of ms., typescript, carbon typescript, duplicated typescript, proofs, newscuttings, printed, illustrations. Pictorial material.

**Repository:** Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales


**Biographical Note**

May Gibbs, author, children's book illustrator and cartoonist, was born in Sydenham, Kent, England on 17 January, 1877. She was the only daughter of Herbert William Gibbs (1852-1940), public servant and artist, and his wife Cecilia Rogers. Preceded by her father, May Gibbs migrated with her mother and brother to South Australia in 1881. In 1885 the family moved to Harvey River homestead, Western Australia, where she spent two impressionable years in the Australian bush, and finally settled at 'The Dune', Perth.

Demonstrating artistic ability at an early age with a penchant for fantasy and satire, Gibbs was encouraged to study art in England. Between 1900 and 1913 she thrice travelled abroad, became proficient in various styles of artwork and executed fanciful depictions of Australian animals. She received assignments to illustrate from *Western Mail* and the publishers George Harrap & Company, London, amongst others.
In 1913 she moved to Neutral Bay, Sydney, NSW, and maintained a steady livelihood with commissions from publishers, especially for the works she both wrote and illustrated. In 1916 *Gum-nut babies*, the first in a series of five 'Gum-nut' booklets, was published by Angus & Robertson with whom she worked for over fifty years. The successful *Tales of Snugglepot and Cuddlepie. Their adventures wonderful* was published shortly afterwards in 1918. In 1923-1924, *The story of Nuttybub and Nittersing* and *Two little gumnuts - Chucklebub and Wunkydoo*, were published by Osboldstone & Co, Melbourne.

In 1919 she was appointed a life member of the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

On 17 April, 1919, Gibbs married Bertram James Ossoli Kelly, a mining agent, who became her manager.

The 1920s was a prolific and prosperous period for Gibbs as a syndicated cartoonist and columnist. In 1924 the first “Bib and Bub” comic strip appeared in the *Sunday News* and other newspapers and continued until 1967. In 1925-1931, the *Sunday Sun* published “Tiggy Touchwood” under the pseudonym Stan Cottman, and from 1925 to 1935 her weekly column, “Gumnut gossip - extracts from the Daily Bark”, ran in the *Sunday News* and *Woman’s Budget*. Unfortunately her agent Special Press and friends Colonel Percy Kikelley and Norman Warren Waterhouse, acting on her behalf, were unsuccessful in placing her work with overseas publishers. The Depression and the local nature of her work confined her popularity to Australasia.

In 1925 Gibbs and her husband moved into ‘Nutcote’, the house they had built in Neutral Bay, Sydney, set among eucalypts and banksias, from which she drew inspiration for the enduring “Bib and Bub” comic strip.

In 1953 Gibbs' last book, *Prince Dande Lion*, was published.

Gibbs' contribution to children's literature was acknowledged in 1955 when she was appointed a Member of the British Empire, and in 1969 when she was granted a literary pension by the Commonwealth Literary Fund.

Administrative Information

Access
Collection is open to research.

Restrictions on Use
Copyright of materials described in this guide is governed by copyright law in Australia.

Preferred Citation

Provenance
The papers were deposited in the Mitchell Library by the copyright holders in 1970.

Additional Information

Related Material
MLMSS 2048/1A


This is a hard copy of the Guide, located at the beginning of the collection for the benefit of users.

Access Terms

Corporate Names
- Angus & Robertson
- Brooks, McGlashan & McHarg
- Osboldstone & Co
Geographical Names

• Neutral Bay (N.S.W.)
• Nutcote (Neutral Bay, N.S.W.)

Subjects

• Cartoonists, Australian -- 20th century
• Illustrated books, Children's -- Australia
• Women authors, Australian -- 20th century

Series List and Descriptions

Part 1: Manuscripts, 1900-1969
MLMSS 2048

The manuscripts component of the collection is described in 6 series.

I. Literary manuscripts, 1901-1967

A. Published works, 1916-1953

Mss., typescripts, galley and page proofs, illustrations.

i. *Gum-nut babies*, 1916
Ms. (Box MLMSS 2048/1B)

ii. *Gum-blossom babies*, 1916
Ms. (Box MLMSS 2048/1B)

iii. *Boronia babies*, 1917
Galley proofs. (Box MLMSS 2048/1B)

iv. *Tales of Snugglepot and Cuddlepie*, 1918
Page proofs. (Box MLMSS 2048/1B)

v. *Little Ragged Blossom and more about Snugglepot and Cuddlepie*, 1920
Page proofs. (Box MLMSS 2048/1B)

vi. *Two little gumnuts: Chucklebud and Wunkydoo*, 1924
Ms. (Box MLMSS 2048/1B)
Includes notes for another story.

vii.(a) “Bib and Bub”, 1924-1925
Page proofs. (Box MLMSS 2048/1B)

Part 1 of a series of booklets published by Cornstalk Publishers

vii.(b) “Bib and Bub” continued, ca.1925
Cuttings, pulls. (Oversize MLMSS 2048/2X)

viii. Scotty in Gumnut Land, 1941
Ms., typescript with ms. annotations by May Gibbs and others. (Volume MLMSS 2048/3)

Note reads 'Scotty in Gumnut Land first draft - handwritten & edited typescript'.

ix. Mr and Mrs Bear and friends, 1943
Typescript with ms. annotations, carbon typescript copy. (Volume MLMSS 2048/4)

x.(a) Prince Dande Lion, 1953
Ms., typescript, with illustrations. (Box MLMSS 2048/5)

Includes other notes.

x.(b) Prince Dande Lion, 1953
Ms. (Volume MLMSS 2048/6)

x.(c) Prince Dande Lion, 1953
Typescript, carbon typescript copies, with ms. annotations. (Volume MLMSS 2048/7)

B. Unpublished works, 1901-1941

Mss., typescripts, illustrations.

i. “Little Bin's adventure or John Dory - his story”, 190-
Ms. (Box MLMSS 2048/8)

ii. “Mamie and Wog in Fish Land”, 190-
Ms. (Box MLMSS 2048/8)

iii. “Nursery rhymes from the bush”, 1909
Ms., illustrations. (Box MLMSS 2048/8)
iv. “Babie days”, ca.1934
   Ms., illustrations. (Box MLMSS 2048/8)

v. “Garden days”, ca.1934
   Ms., illustrations. (Box MLMSS 2048/8)

vi. “Fishing days”, ca.1934
   Ms., illustrations. (Box MLMSS 2048/8)

vii. Four short stories, 1941
    Typescript. (Box MLMSS 2048/8)

viii. “Mimie and Wog”, 1910
     Ms., typescript, illustrations. (Box MLMSS 2048/8)

    Typescript, illustrations. (Box MLMSS 2048/8)

    Ms. (Box MLMSS 2048/8)

    Ms. (Box MLMSS 2048/8)

xii.(a) “Cupid”, 1901-1910
      Ms., typescript, illustrations. (Box MLMSS 2048/8)

xii.(b) Continuation of “Cupid”, (Oversize MLMSS 2048/9X)

      Ms., illustrations. (Oversize MLMSS 2048/9X)

C. Notebooks, and miscellaneous notes and verses, 1906-1966

i. Notebooks, 1906-ca.1946, n.d. (Box MLMSS 2048/10)

a. 'May Gibbs. 06', 1906
   Ms.

b. 'May Gibbs March 1911', 1911
   Ms.

c. Notebook, n.d.
Ms.

Includes ideas for “Bib and Bub”; “Tiggy Touchwood”; “Nuttybub and Nittersing”; and an alphabet book.

d. Notebook, n.d.

Ms.

Includes ideas for “Bib and Bub”; “Tiggy Touchwood”; and “Gumnut gossip”.

e. 'Daybook, Mrs C M O. Kelly. (May Gibbs) 5 Wallaringa Ave - Neutral Bay - phone XA1960’, n.d.

Ms.

f. Notebook, ca.1934

Ms.

Includes ideas for “Bib and Bub”.

g. Notebook, n.d.

Ms.

Includes notes for “Jacky”.

h. 'Ideas May Gibbs', n.d.

Ms.

Includes ideas for “Bib and Bub”.

i. Notebook, n.d.

Ms.


Ms.

Includes ideas for “Bib and Bub”.

k. Notebook, n.d.
Ms.

I. Notebook, n.d.

Ms.

Includes ideas for “Mamie and Wog”.

m. Notebooks, n.d.

Ms.

n. Notebook, n.d.

Ms.

Includes ideas for “Bib and Bub”.

o. Notebook, n.d.

Ms.

Includes ideas for “Mr and Mrs Bear”.

ii. Miscellaneous notes and verses, 1915-1966

Ms. (Volume MLMSS 2048/11)

Includes ‘Outline of Baby Book "Baby's Life" Jan 28th 1915'; with ideas for “Mr Bear's birthday”; “Tiggy Touchwood”; “Mr Lizard's boots”.

D. Newspaper column, n.d.

Ms., typescript, carbon typescript with ms. annotations.

i. “Gumnut gossip” (Volume MLMSS 2048/12)

Includes ideas for “Bib and Bub”.

E. Cartoons, 1924-1967

Includes ms., illustrations, bromides, pulls, proofs, cuttings.

i. “Bib and Bub”; “Tiggy Touchwood”, 19--

Ms., illustrations. (Oversize MLMSS 2048/13X)

ii. “Bib and Bub”, 1924-1967
Ms., illustrations.

Original pen and ink versions, with printed captions.

a. 1924-1925 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/14X)
b. 1926 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/15X)
c. 1927 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/16X)
d. 1928 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/17X)
e. 1929 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/18X)
f. 1930 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/19X)
g. 1931-1939 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/20X)
h. 1940-1941 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/21X)
i. 1942-1943 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/22X)
j. 1944 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/23X)
k. 1945 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/24X)
l. 1946 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/25X)
m. 1948 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/26X)
n. 1948 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/27X)
o. 1949 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/28X)
p. 1950 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/29X)
q. 1951 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/30X)
r. 1952-1953 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/31X)
s. 1954-1956 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/32X)
t. 1957-1958 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/33X)
u. 1959-1960 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/34X)
v. 1961-1962 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/35X)
w. 1963-1964 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/36X)
x. 1965-1967 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/37X)
y. n.d. (Oversize MLMSS 2048/38X-42X; )
   (Box MLMSS 2048/43-44)

iii. “Bib and Bub”, 1927-1953
    Bromides. (Oversize MLMSS 2048/45X)

iv. “Bib and Bub”, 1931-1953
    Pulls.

a. 1931-1953 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/46X)
b. n.d. (Box MLMSS 2048/47; )
   (Oversize MLMSS 2048/48X)

v. “Bib and Bub”, 1927, 1944-1945
    Proofs.

a. 1927 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/49X)
b. 1941-1945, n.d. (Oversize MLMSS 2048/50X)
c. n.d. (Oversize MLMSS 2048/51X)

II. Professional papers, 1912-1967

A. Correspondence, 1918-1967
   Ms., typescript, carbon typescript.

i. Correspondence with publishers and booksellers, including Angus & Robertson
   Arranged chronologically.

a. 1918-1931 (Volume MLMSS 2048/52)
b. 1932-1967 (Volume MLMSS 2048/53)

ii. Correspondence re. comics
   Arranged chronologically within newspaper or journal.
a. 1924-1954 (Volume MLMSS 2048/54)


b. 1930-1953 (Volume MLMSS 2048/55)


iii. Correspondence with Osboldstone & Co., Pty Ltd

   Arranged chronologically.

a. 1921-1922 (Volume MLMSS 2048/56)

b. 1923-1933 (Volume MLMSS 2048/57)

iv. Correspondence with Brooks, McGlashan & McHargre. children's handkerchief designs

   Arranged chronologically.

a. 1920-1952 (Volume MLMSS 2048/58)

B. General papers, 1912-1961 (Box MLMSS 2048/59)

i. Papers re. copyright, 1912-1923

a. Certificates of Registration of Copyright; Registration of Design, 1912-1923

   Ms., typescript, printed.

   Includes related correspondence.

b. 'The Commonwealth of Australia. Copyright. No.20 of 1912. An Act relating to Copyright.', 1912

   Printed.

ii. Agreements; Licences; Opinion, 1916-1953

   Typescript, carbon typescript.
Being contracts made between May Gibbs and Angus & Robertson, 1916-1921, 1925-1928, 1942; Osboldstone & Co. Pty Ltd, 1923-1924; Weston Company Ltd, 1923; Norman Warren Waterhouse, 1931; Seftons Ltd (North Ireland), 1950; Darbyshire Ware Pottery Pty Ltd, 1951; Laurie Winifred Hill Lerew, 1953; Robert Ellicott, 1953.

iii. Records re. cartoons, 1924-1958

Ms.

iv. Papers re. blocks and calendars, ca.1922

Ms., printed.

v. *Snugglepot and Cuddlepie*, with illustrations marked up for the printer, 1918

Printed.

vi. Miscellaneous, 1917-1961

Ms., typescript, carbon typescript, printed.

Includes prospectus and order form for Angus & Robertson's publications; notes from interview with Andrew McHarg re. handkerchief designs, 1920; "May Gibbs" Syndicating and Publishing of Cartoons etc.; Reader's Report on "Prince Dande Lion"; notes re. copyright.

C. Financial papers, 1918-1966

i. Royalty statements from Angus & Robertson, 1918-1965 (Volume MLMSS 2048/60)

ii. Cartoon payments and related papers, 1924-1966 (Volume MLMSS 2048/61)

iii. Accounts and orders relating to calendars, 1930-1934 (Folder MLMSS 2048/62)

iv. Miscellaneous, 1918-1964 (Volume MLMSS 2048/63)

Mainly accounts and notes re. income from cartoons.

III. Personal papers, 1900-1969

A. Correspondence, 1918-1969

Ms., typescript, carbon typescript.
Arranged chronologically.

i. 1918-1955 (Volume MLMSS 2048/64)

ii. 1956-1969 (Volume MLMSS 2048/65)

B. Journals; Notebooks, etc., 1900-1969

i. Scrapbook, 1914-1939
   Ms. (Volume MLMSS 2048/66)

ii. Notebooks, 1900-1961 (Box MLMSS 2048/67)
   a. Notebook begun by May Gibbs on her first voyage to England aboard the Konigin Luise, 1900-1901
      Ms., illustrations.
   b. Notebook kept by May Gibbs during her third voyage to England aboard the Persic, 1909
      Ms., illustrations.
      Ms., illustrations.
   d. 'Where is it? Look inside this Book', 1953-1961
      Ms.
      Being notebook containing lists of books lent; letters written, etc.
   e. Notebooks, 1955-1956
      Ms.
      Includes biographical notes; literary ideas; verses; illustrations.
   f. Address books, 1946-1967
      Ms.

iii. Pedigrees and registrations for Scotty dogs owned by May Gibbs, 1921-1947
    Ms. (Box MLMSS 2048/67)
Includes illustrations; notes; prize ribbons.

iv. Miscellaneous, 1901-1969

Ms., typescript, printed.

a. Includes literary and biographical notes; illustrations; calendars, etc. (Box MLMSS 2048/67)

b. Portrait study of unidentified woman, 1901 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/68X)

In pencil, drawn by May Gibbs at Chelsea Polytechnic; includes note to her father, H.W. Gibbs.

c. Certificate presented to May Gibbs on becoming a Member of the British Empire, 1955 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/68X)

C. Financial papers, 1921-1968

i. Mainly household bills and receipts, 1921-1968 (Volume MLMSS 2048/69-71)

ii. Income tax returns, 1940-1960 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/72X)

iii. Notebooks, 1924-1961 (Volume MLMSS 2048/73)

iv. Legal documents, mainly car insurance policies, 1926-1953 (Volume MLMSS 2048/73)

v. Bank statements, 1935-1965 (Volume MLMSS 2048/73)

vi. Account and receipt books, 1927-1951 (Volume MLMSS 2048/73)

vii. Wages stamp books, 1930-1937 (Volume MLMSS 2048/73)

viii. Savings bank books, 1923-1964 (Volume MLMSS 2048/73)

ix. Cheque butts, 1941-1959 (Volume MLMSS 2048/73)

IV. Newscuttings, 1905-1967

A. Cartoons, 1925-1967

i. “Bib and Bub”, 1925-1967

a. 1925-1930 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/74X)

b. 1931-1936 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/75X)
c. 1937-1940 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/76X)
d. 1941-ca.1947 (Box MLMSS 2048/77)
e. 1948-ca.1951 (Box MLMSS 2048/78)
f. 1955-1967 (Box MLMSS 2048/79)
g. n.d. (Oversize MLMSS 2048/80X)

ii. “Tiggy Touchwood”, 1925-1932 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/81X)

B. “Gumnut gossip”, 1926-1935

  Cuttings with ms. annotations.
i. 1926-1930 (Volume MLMSS 2048/82)

    Cuttings from The Sunday News.

ii. 1930-1932 (Volume MLMSS 2048/83)

    Cuttings from Woman’s Budget.

iii. 1933-1935 (Volume MLMSS 2048/84)

    Cuttings from Woman’s Budget.

C. Miscellaneous cuttings, 1905-1964

i. 1905-1964 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/85X)

    Includes cover of The Western Mail, Christmas Number, 1905; covers
    of Sydney Mail, 12 November 1913, 11 & 18 March, 29 April, 20 May, 3 &
    17 June, 1914; The lone hand, January & September 1914, Christmas
    number 1916; illustrated by May Gibbs.

ii. 1913-1941 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/86X)

iii. 1914-1939 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/87X)

V. Printed and miscellaneous material, 1906-1967

i. Boronia babies, Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1917(Box MLMSS 2048/88)

ii. Flannel flowers and other bush babies, Sydney: Angus &
    Robertson, 1917 (Box MLMSS 2048/88)
iii. *Wattle babies*, Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1918 (Box MLMSS 2048/88)

With original envelope.

iv. *Wattle babies*, 1918

Printed. (Box MLMSS 2048/88)

Being 'First sample'.


Inscribed and signed by May Gibbs.


Printed. (Box MLMSS 2048/88)


Printed. (Box MLMSS 2048/88)

Being sheet music with 'Words and Music by Bruce Railton Special cover design by May Gibbs'.

viii. 'Please leave gate OPEN Scotty is out 10/- reward', n.d.

Ms. (Box MLMSS 2048/88)

ix. Folders; envelopes; colour paper swatches, n.d.

Some with ms. inscriptions. (Box MLMSS 2048/88)

x. *The Western Mail*, Christmas Numbers, 1906-1907 (Oversize MLMSS 2048/89X)

VI. Microfilm material, n.d.

“Bib and Bub”, series 4, n.d. (Reel FM3 899)

Being five short stories selected by F. Treuthardt: “The three Scottie pups”; “Funny Mrs Lizard”; “The missing tadpoles”; “The lost food basket”; “Bib and Bub's shoe shop”.

**Part 2: Pictorial Material, 1867-1955, n.d.**

PIC.ACC. 2055

The pictorial component of the collection is described in 7 series.
A. Published works, 1916-1953 (Oversize PX D304/1-8)
B. Unpublished works, 1910, n.d. (Oversize PX D304/8)
C. Newspaper column, 1925-1935 (Oversize PX D304/9)
D. Miscellaneous, 1867-1916, n.d. (Oversize PX D304/10-18)
E. Relics, 1955, n.d. (Othertype R 656(u & v), R 680-683)
F. Framed pictures, 1910, ca.1923, n.d. (Othertype ML 764-767)
G. Watercolour by H.W. Gibbs, 1923(Othertype SSV5A/SWAN R./1)