

Elizabeth Heafey



Elizabeth Heafey as a nurse during the 1940's PD 09.200

Upon her death, Elizabeth Heafey bequeathed a large proportion of her estate to Central Stories and in recognition of her extraordinary generosity she is remembered in the Heafey Lounge.

Elizabeth Stewart was born in 1913 and lived with her parents and sister in Dunedin. She spent her holidays with other local families', camping by the lakes and enjoying the Central Sunshine.

She trained as a nurse initially and went on to drive ambulances, a job she was both dedicated to and passionate about. During her seven year career she drove the 1924 Austin Ambulance with its gate gearing and steering so stiff "you had to almost stand up to pull around corners" (*Heafey in ODT, Interest in cars over many Years, Dianne King, 06.08.92*).

As a war time driver she helped numerous people and was notably one of the first responders to the Hyde disaster in 1943.

Several years later she married Norrie Smith and moved with her husband to Roxburgh so that he could take up a job at the power station. Betty, as she was affectionately known, was a well liked and bright character of the Roxburgh community for a number of years.

She worked tirelessly for the museum in Alexandra assisting with the cataloguing of the collection. She was generous in her gifts, often giving her own personal items where she saw a need.

Upon the death of Norrie in the early 90's, Elizabeth became reacquainted with an old friend, a fellow ambulance driver from Dunedin. After many letters and few meetings, Elizabeth and Tom Heafey married in 1998.

Elizabeth lived her last years in Oamaru with Tom. She passed away in 2001.

Contributions

“Elizabeth Heafey was very interested in history and the importance of keeping it for future generations to enjoy” – *Daphne Kok (nee Ironside)*

Elizabeth was a generous woman giving of her time and possessions, very much an unsung local hero. She helped to catalogue parts of Central Stories' permanent collection; Elizabeth was a dedicated volunteer and meticulous in her detail. During her time working at Central Stories, Elizabeth donated a large number of objects to the museum; The Heafey Collection is so vast we could never hope to have it all on display.

A selection of those objects which have been tucked away for many years are below, giving you an insight into the variety and extent of the Heafey Collection.



Spectacles (AX 1995.109) – These Spectacles belonged to William Trimble, Elizabeth's Grandfather. He was an exceptionally academic man who, in 1910, became the first librarian of the Hocken Library in Dunedin. He prepared the first catalogue of the Hocken collections, donated a number of valuable documents (now referred to as the Trimble Collection) and is responsible for the comprehensive Whitman collection held by the Dunedin Public Library.



Figurine (AX 1999.137) – This figurine is from Easter Island and was carved by hand to resemble the Easter Island Statues. In 1933, the sailing ship, the 'Jacob Rupert' called at the Easter Islands on its way to the Bay of Whales in Antarctica as part of the second Byrd Expedition. Dr. Paul Siple, a crew member and friend of Elizabeth's, reportedly exchanged an old shirt for the figurine.



Tea Cosy (AX 2000.181) – This tea cosy belonged to Elizabeth's Great, Great Aunt, Jessie Heywood. She worked this tea cosy on board the ship the 'Dunedin' during her trip from England with the rest of her family in 1875. She was making the voyage as the governess to her sister's children – she eventually taught all three girls, including Elizabeth's grandmother, French, German and the piano, which was the only schooling they received.



Paper Kite (AX 1995.130) – This Chinese kite was given to Elizabeth, mid 1920's, by her teacher Miss Kelsey, for whom the Kelsey Yarella Kindergarten in Dunedin is named in recognition of all she did for her students.

Doll - (AX 2000.189) – This doll is called 'Margaret' and was bought for Elizabeth in 1924, when she would have been 11. She is wearing Elizabeth's own baby clothes, except for the singlet which was her mother's. The doll has a twin sister called 'Hope' which was bought for Elizabeth's sister, Dorothy, in the same year. Both dolls came from Germany and would have been some of the first of their kind in New Zealand.



A majority of the bequest Central Stories received as part of Elizabeth's Estate is reserved for collections acquisitions and care; we aim to use her generous gift to carry on the work that Elizabeth was dedicated to during her life.

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Memories and Stories

“Betty, although coming from a wealthy family led a very simple life, enjoying nature, birds, flowers etc”

Daphne Kok (nee Ironside)

“Next morning was a roaster so we wandered around the lovely hotel gardens... The mulberry tree is still there and I could have kicked myself for not trying some...we spent the rest of the morning watching the ducks from the end of the jetty and of course Joan and I had beautiful red faces by the time we went to lunch, much to Joan’s horror no amount of powder would tone it down”

*Elizabeth Heafey, Letter to her Mother, At the White Star Hotel, Wanaka,
Summer 1938*

“Parts of the lakes were warm and other parts cold. We lay about in scanties and singlets for a time (in the shade of course) and Joan and Phillis were getting dressed when all of a sudden an aeroplane swooped over the bay very low and what a skedaddle. I think that I got my dress on back to front. We were not in least expecting spying from the air!”

*Elizabeth Heafey, Letter to her Mother, Swimming at Dampier Bay,
late 1930’s*



“...she was an ambulance driver in Dunedin in the early 1940’s when my Dad was also there. She got in contact again with Dad in late 1996 when my mother passed away” June Rice, Step-Daughter to Elizabeth Elizabeth had sent a condolence note to Tom, afterwards they began talking and love blossomed. They married amongst a small media frenzy in 1998. In the photo Elizabeth, 84, is wearing her Great Grandmothers wedding dress that had not been worn since 1856. Tom, 86, is wearing Elizabeth’s Great Grandfathers’ Bell Top Hat.

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