



President: Felicity Farrelly
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Dear Members of Graduate Women WA

We hope you all had an enjoyable few days over the Easter Break. What wonderful weather we enjoyed!

Your new Committee has been quite active on the part of GWWA.

Two of our new committee members showed their talents on Convocation Day at the lecture theatre in the old Zoology building.

Julia Jarel has written a play about women in the wheat belt based on the writings of Barbara York Main's *Marginal Country*.

Helen Munt showed her talents as one of the actors. It was a very moving and emotional play and all the audience were very impressed and could relate to the issues portrayed.

Congratulations to Julia and Helen.

(A review of the play *'Wilton'* accompanies this newsletter)

Alison Hayden and Wendy McCallum attended a View Club lunch for International Women's Day where a cheque was given for two scholarships for young girl students being supported by the Smith Family. Their names are Evangelina (10) and Dakota (7). Alison gave a short talk about Graduate Women to the ninety women and one man present.

Jane Scott has been organising for this year's GWWA scholarships and is appointing an assessment panel and ensuring advertisements have the correct criteria. Applications have just been released on the web site and all universities have been made aware of the scholarships. Our thanks go to Jane for all her hard work. Scholarships link:

<https://graduatewomen.org.au/scholarhips>

**The 2024 round of Graduate Women
WA Scholarships and Bursaries**

OPEN

CLOSING DATE

Friday 28th June 2024,

12am (midnight) WST

For our 101st birthday on Saturday the 22 June 2024, we have booked St Catherine's College at 6.30 pm. Details of this evening and the program will be given in later news.

Please save the date!

We are negotiating to have our web-page revamped and be brought up to date. We are well aware that this is the way information is disseminated and our web page needs a lot of updating!



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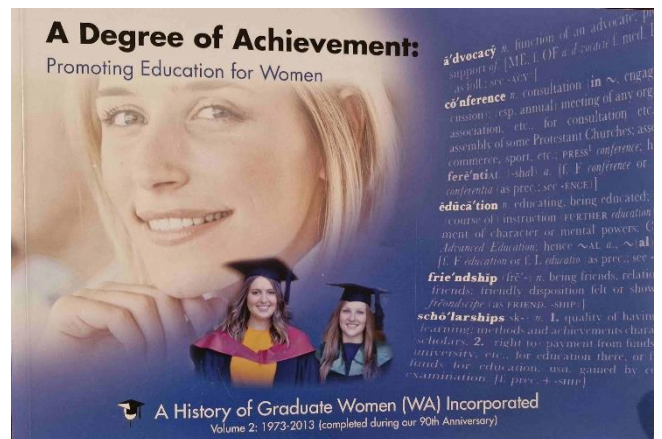
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Helen and Hira joined Wendy in an inspection of our property at 4 Park Road. They were very fortunate in that the tenant in the lower flat invited them in, so they were able to see the alterations that had been made and how generally the place looked. They were very grateful to the tenant as this inspection had not been arranged. A real bonus for the three of them. The place looked well kept and the tenant was very happy living there. They also spoke to one of the girls upstairs and she also assured them of how happy she is. Notwithstanding the happiness of the tenants, it is obvious that some areas are in urgent need of upgrading. The Committee is researching the alternatives of what is the best to do for the house.

Hilary Silbert has been busy with the honour boards displaying life members and past presidents. She has organised for new lettering and has updated both lists, so that the names are up to date,

Hilary has also ensured copies of the GWWA history 'A Degree of Achievement' are now in the libraries of all five universities. UWA also has a copy in its archives. The book is also held by the State Library.

Thanks to Hilary for all her efforts.



Our President Felicity Farrelly was recently given an award for her work for local councils. Congratulations Felicity.



(Pictured: Hannah Beazley (left), Minister for Local Government and Felicity Farrelly)



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Graduate Women (WA) Inc.

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The Committee is keen to have a social event in the near future. We are planning a cocktail afternoon at The University of WA Club with a speaker on current women's issues. As soon as the plans are finalised we will send details and invitations.

The Committee encourages any member to contact us via email with any suggestions and ideas they have for Graduate Women WA.

The Committee is meeting on the first Wednesday of each month.

'Wilton' Review for GWWA

This year, the UWA Convocation of Graduates celebrated by gathering at UWA's heritage listed Park Avenue Building, UWA's first permanent building at Crawley, to mark its 100th anniversary. After the annual tree planting, the attendees entered the G20 Lecture Theatre, a beautiful building which still boasts the original pulley-operated boards, shutters which open onto the sky above Kings Park and inbuilt wooden benches and desks. Once seated, they were treated to a short play, entitled *Wilton*.



The play was an adaptation of *Marginal Country*, a short story by Barbara York Main. The playwright, Julia Jarel, first came across Barbara's evocative and lyrical writing a few years ago as she read Tony Hughes D'Aeth's seminal work *Like Nothing on this Earth: A Literary History of the Wheatbelt* as part of her PhD research on contemporary women of the wheatbelt. Julia had lived in Wagin, Narrogin and Mount Walker as a young teacher and, as she read Barbara's words, was astonished by the way the author had viscerally captured the spirit, landscape and life of the wheatbelt.

Julia then discovered that, in addition to being an exceptional writer, Barbara York Main OAM (1929-2019) was also an eminent arachnologist who was popularly known as the 'Lady of the Spiders', after a David Attenborough documentary about her. Barbara had grown up on a farm in Tammin, the only daughter in a family with three older brothers. While her brothers played sport and helped on the farm, Barbara read the books especially sent to her by her correspondence teacher and wandered the farm carefully studying the small creatures and plant life she loved so much. Eventually, she managed to convince her father,

who was resistant to the idea, to let her attend Northam District High School and finally the University of Western Australia, where she enrolled in Zoology.



Barbara on the east steps of the Park Avenue Zoology building in the 1940s.

At UWA, Barbara lived at St Catherine's College where it was suggested that perhaps she kept spiders in her room to ward off potential suitors! If this were true, it proved an ineffective strategy and Barbara married Albert Russell Main, an equally gifted zoologist, who supported her career as fervidly as she supported his and together, they raised three children. Despite Bert's support, however, Barbara faced many obstacles. Barbara was the first woman to be awarded a PhD from UWA yet she was not allowed to be formally employed at the University, particularly when her husband was there. She had to borrow Bert's library card to check out material and submit grants in Bert's name. Barbara also had to use a tiny corner of Bert's office to voluntarily conduct her experiments, usually on Saturday mornings while Bert watched the children at home. Remarkably, this little office had unexpected, current day connections.



Barbara York Main with her husband, Albert, in 1956.
West Australian Newspapers Limited

After writing *Wilton*, Julia asked her long-time friend and theatrical collaborator, Helen Munt, to read the play with a view to possibly staging the work. Helen, who is a heritage consultant and the UWA Music Archivist, conducted her own research and was astonished to discover

that the Park Avenue building where she currently works, is the exact building where Barbara spent most of her academic life! In a further instance of serendipity, Julia and Helen also discovered, after speaking with Barbara's daughter, Monica, that the G20 Lecture Theatre at Park Avenue had been Barbara's favourite building at UWA and one where she had attended and given lectures. It seemed only fitting, therefore, that *Wilton* be performed for Convocation 2024 at the G20! The eight generous performers, including Monica Main and Helen Munt, both professional actors, then took to the stage and spoke Barbara's magical words, underscored by interludes of her favourite music.

In 2011, Barbara York Main was given the Medal of the Order of Australia, for her service to the nation. In 2018, at 89, she was awarded the Medal of the Royal Society of Western Australia — the first woman to win it since its inception in 1924. Main described more than 70 new spider species, including a blind trapdoor variety from the caves of Nullarbor; two dozen more new species have been named for her. She preserved 10,000 specimens in ethanol to guide future research. Barbara's tenacity and dedication in pursuing her dream to be a scientist and writer reminds us all at GWWA of the past and current challenges faced by women in education. Her story exemplifies the importance of support and mentoring women as they achieve extraordinary feats of research which benefit the whole community.



Barbara and Bert Main out collecting. 'This photo, taken by Mum's younger brother, Ron, in 1955, perfectly captures their collaborative joy.' *Monica Main*