

# Grace Emily (Gordon) Munro OBE

(1879 - 1964)



Grace was born on 25 March 1879 at Gragin, Warialda, a town in the Northwest States region of NSW. She attended Kambala before 1897 and many of her relatives also attended and currently attend Kambala. She was said to be a very skilled horsewoman and a strong shooter.

On 14 July 1898 she married Hugh Robert Munro and the couple had four children. The sad death of her youngest child encouraged Grace to work to improve the conditions of medical help for women and children in the country. She trained as a sister of St John of Jerusalem (St John Ambulance Association) and then ran first aid classes in the country. In addition, she travelled to Papua and the Trobriand Islands

with Sir Hubert Murray between 1911 and 1914. During the First World War, Grace was the honorary organising secretary of the Australian Army Medical Corps and worked for the Australian Red Cross Society. Grace was qualified in first aid, home nursing, and hygiene with the St John Ambulance Association and continued to give first aid classes after the war. Her success was so profound she became the first woman to serve on a hospital board in rural NSW.

Following the war Grace organised a three-day conference during the Sydney Royal Easter Show in 1922, in which the Country Women's Association of New South Wales was established and she was elected the president. The aims of the organisation were to improve the living conditions and health care facilities for women and children in rural areas. In one year she helped establish sixty-eight branches of the Association throughout NSW and Queensland. Additionally, she established the first Country Women's Association rest room in Bingara in 1924 and helped found the first country baby health centre in Moree. She continued to campaign actively for maternity wards and pushed for same gender equality in government. She stepped down from her role as president in 1926 leaving behind an Association with over four-thousand members in one-hundred branches across NSW and Queensland. She was awarded the Order of the British Empire in 1935 and died in Sydney on 23 July 1964.