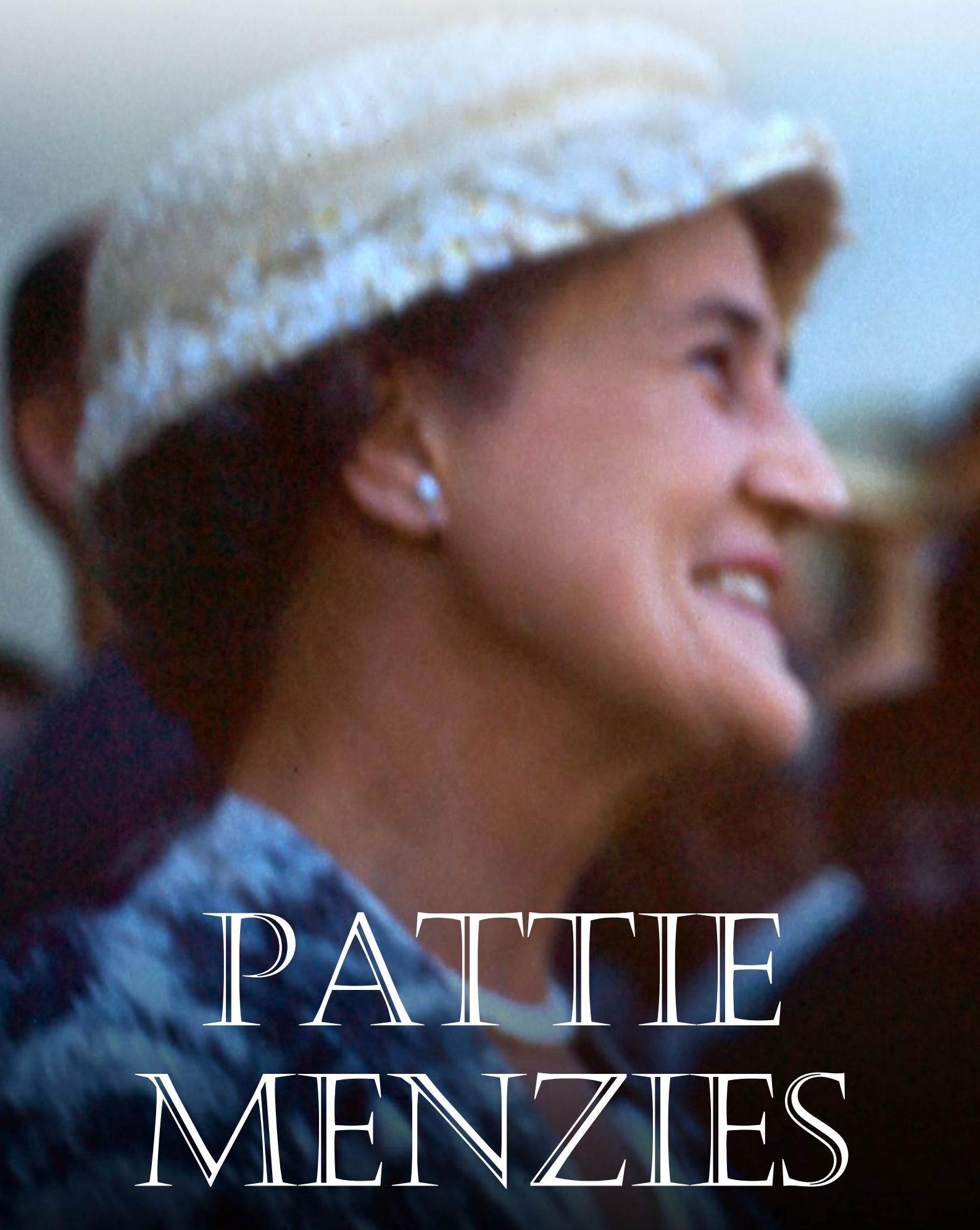


D A M I E



PATTIE
MENZIES



**HERITAGE
PEOPLE
SERIES**

DAME PATTIE MENZIES

CONTRIBUTORS

National Library Australia
State Library Queensland
State Library Victoria

Simone Adams
Michelle Bourke
Eileen Hall
Lawrence Hood
Leisa Lees
Kathie Maynes
Allan & Patricia Weeks
David & Debbie Hibbert

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INTRODUCTION

Name: Pattie Maie Menzies GBE
Born: 2 March 1899
Married: 27 September 1920
Dame: 1 January 1954
Died: 30 August 1995

Dame Pattie Menzies (née) Leckie was born in Alexandra, eldest daughter of politician John (Jack) Leckie. She married Robert Menzies, who later became Australia's longest serving Prime Minister.



Dame Pattie Maie Menzies (Lady Menzies) was born Pattie Maie Leckie on 2 March 1899 at the small rural township of Alexandra, in Central Victoria. She was the eldest daughter of parents John (Jack) William Leckie (1872-1947) and May Beatrice Leckie (nee Johnston).

Pattie grew up on the Leckie farm on the north side of Josephine Cutting at Alexandra, near the intersection of Goulburn Valley Highway and Swann Road. As a child she was a constant contributor at the Rural and Autumn shows at Alexandra and partook in community events such as the Children's Fancy Dress Ball in 1907 where she was recognised for her daffodil costume. She later attended Fintona Girls' School in Melbourne.

Her father John served as a Deakinite Liberal (member of the Commonwealth Liberal Party) and was elected to the Victorian Legislative Assembly in 1913. He held the Federal seat of Indi from 1917 until 1919. Pattie often joined her father during his campaigning.

In 1919, Pattie was introduced to her future husband Robert (Bob) Gordon Menzies (1894-1978) at a party. She had seen him previously at a Church Service while attending Fintona. They married on 27 September 1920 at the Presbyterian Church, Cotham Road,



HISTORIC FACTSHEET

INTRODUCTION

Kew, Victoria, with the service conducted by the Rev. J R Anderson. She was 21 years of age and Robert was 25. The service was held at night and the church was described as being 'prettily decorated'. The bride was given away by her father and wore ivory satin. The pannier draped skirt being caught with clusters of silver flowers. Pattie's sisters Conyn and Gwenyth joined with the bridegroom's cousin Ruth Gosman as bridesmaids. After the ceremony, a reception was held at the Grand Hotel, followed by a wedding supper. Pattie's going-away costume was a navy blue ratine worn with a cherry-silk hat.

Robert and Pattie had four children, one of whom died at birth. Pattie was a traditionalist, and loved her role of raising her three children: Kenneth Leckie (1922-1993), Robert Ian (1923-1974) and Margery Heather (1928-).

In 1934 her father John was elected to the Senate where he served until 1947. He rose to Minister in his son-in-law's ministry and was later appointed Minister for Aircraft Production.

Dame Pattie was a tireless Ambassador for Australia who spoke little about politics, but loved Australia and everything Australian. While raising her children, she still found time to participate in fund raising for kindergartens and was the founder and first President of the Canterbury Hospital Auxiliary. She was involved in many charities, for organisations such as the Women's Hospital where she served as Vice President for years, and as President of the auxiliaries. From December 1942 to 1945 she was Vice President of the combined auxiliaries and from 1945-50 was President. She had a special interest in the health and wellbeing of Australian women, including in remote areas of the country and often spoke on this when afforded the opportunity.

During the 1954 New Year's Honours, Pattie was awarded the 'Dame Grand Cross', an Order of the British Empire. Her award was:

'In recognition for her years of incessant and unselfish performance of public duty in hospital work, in visiting, addressing and encouraging many thousands of women in every State of Australia, including very remote areas, and in the distinguished representation of Australia on a number of occasions overseas'.

That year also saw the Queen create eight new Australian Knights, which included two

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

INTRODUCTION

former Prime Ministers. In all, the list included 108 names (54 military and 54 civil). Dame Pattie Menzies was the third wife of an Australian Prime Minister to be made a Dame, joining Dame Mary Hughes and Dame Enid Lyons. Dame Pattie was reported as resting quietly at her home in Canberra during the announcements, after having just returned from having a minor operation in Melbourne.

Portrait by
William Alexander Dargie



In 1955 Dame Pattie had her portrait painted by respected artist William Alexander Dargie (1912-2003). William holds the record for winning eight Archibald prizes. He was also an official war artist during WWII.

On 5 April 1958 Dame Pattie Menzies attended the Alexandra 'Back to Alexandra' event, staying the weekend with Cr. Briggs and his wife. The week long event ran from Monday 31 May to Sunday 6 April, with Dame Pattie attending on the Saturday and staying to Sunday. While here, she visited her former home, received a tour of the new Hospital and the new High School, as well as visiting old friends and family. She also noticed an old photograph in the window of Pollock's Chemist of small children in a jinker—one of which was her.

In October 1962 Dame Pattie had her tonsils removed at London's University College Hospital. She then returned to Australia.

In 1963 Robert her husband was knighted and this would normally have meant that Pattie would from that point be known as Lady Pattie Menzies. However she elected to keep her own title of Dame Pattie Menzies instead, as this was her own personal award.

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

INTRODUCTION

In her honour, during the 1967 America's Cup, Sir Frank Packer raced an international 12 metre class racing yacht named Dame Pattie. The boat was designed by Warwick Hood and built by W H Bennet in NSW. The challenge cost \$2 million and was Mr Packer's second challenge, after first challenging in 1962 with the yacht *Grettel*. *Dame Pattie* lost against the American yacht *Intrepid* which won the series 4-0. *Dame Pattie* was later refitted and used as a charter boat out of Vancouver Island before being purchased in 2008 by Danish architect Mads Buhl who took her to the French Riviera.

On 7 June 1976, her husband (Sir Robert Menzies KT AK CH QC) was appointed as a Knight of the Order of Australia. Sir Robert Menzies died two years later on 15 May 1978, fifty-eight years after he and Pattie had married.

In 1978, the year of her husband's death, she became the Patron of the Dame Pattie Menzies Centre at Alexandra, named in her honour. The following year, the Alexandra property *The Mount* was purchased with funds raised by the community, with all funds being matched by the Federal Government.

In 1981, the Alexandra Dame Pattie Menzies Centre was opened by Patron Dame Pattie Menzies. In November 1983, she attended the Annual Alexandra Rural Show Centenary and is pictured right (*courtesy Eileen Hall*) presenting a ribbon.

Dame Pattie died at Canberra on 30 August 1995 aged 96. Her passing was 17 years after her husband had died. In her final years she reportedly told a



Courtesy Eileen Hall 2013



HISTORIC FACTSHEET

INTRODUCTION

friend that she believed she had lived too long and that she no longer had any friends left, a reference to how most of her friends had pre-deceased her.

Former Federal President of the Liberal Party, Tony Staley once said of Pattie that she 'embodied the virtues and values of the best of the Australian way of life'.

In Alexandra, the large Leckie Park Reserve which surrounds much of the Ultima Thule Creek (UT Creek) as it weaves its way through the township, was named in honour of her father John Leckie.

In 2013 Heather Henderson, daughter of Sir Robert Menzies and Dame Pattie Menzies published her book *A Smile for My Parents*. She was encouraged to write the book by then Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott. The book pays homage to her parents.

In 2017 the ACT Government sold the multistorey commercial property *Dame Pattie Menzies House*, located at 16 Challis Street, Dickson. The property was bought by the private company Merrylin Lindland Pty Ltd for \$15 million. The ACT Government had an ongoing lease on the property at the time of the purchase and was using the office space for the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate.

Dame Pattie was often described as having a warm and charming character, a welcoming and loving personality and a graciousness. She was said to be polite, had an easy smile and a delightful presence. She was regarded as a fine speaker in her own right and had an assured manner. It was said that one of her prevailing qualities was that once she had been introduced to a person and saw their face, she never forgot them. At one time Dame Pattie (then Mrs Menzies) overheard a woman say 'She can't be Bob Menzies' missus – she's much too nice.' This story was often retold by her husband.

At 3 pm on 16 November 2017, an afternoon tea was held to officially unveil three new township signs: Dame Pattie Menzies, Raymond Weinberg and Bernhard Smith.

TIMELINE

BASIC TIMELINE OF EVENTS



HISTORIC FACTSHEET

TIMELINE

- Late 1800s** Alexandra building 'The Mount' was built.
- 2 March 1899** Pattie Maie Leckie was born in Alexandra Victoria, eldest daughter of politician John (Jack) William Leckie.
- 1900s** Attended school at Fintona Girls' School in Melbourne.
- 24 June 1904** Pattie and childhood friend Alison Fox sold flowers at the Presbyterian Church Bazaar. It was said that 'they approached people in such an innocent manner that none could refuse to purchase'. (*Alexandra & Yea Standard*, Friday 1 July 1904).
- 11 November 1905** At the Agricultural Show at Alexandra, Pattie was awarded second for Two Button-hole Bouquets and second for Nest Arranged Two Specimen Glasses. (*Alexandra & Yea Standard*, Friday 17 November 1905).
- 28 April 1907** Pattie won an award for a 'Pot Plant in Bloom' at the Alexandra Autumn Show (*Alexandra & Yea Standard*, Friday 3 May 1907).
- 17 October 1907** At the Children's Fancy Dress Ball held in the Shire Hall, Pattie was recognised for her daffodil costume. (*Alexandra & Yea Standard*, Friday 25 October 1907).
- 1913** Her father John was elected to the Victorian Legislative Assembly.
- 1917-1919** Her father John held the Federal seat of Indi 1917-1919.
- 1919** First saw her future husband — Robert Menzies.
- 1920** At age 21 she married Robert Menzies at Kew, Melbourne.
- 1942-45** Served as Vice President of the combined auxiliaries for the Women's Hospital.



HISTORIC FACTSHEET

TIMELINE

- 1945-50** Served as President of the combined auxiliaries for the Women's Hospital.
- 1954** Had an operation in Melbourne and was resting quietly at her home in Canberra during the announcement of the awards. (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, Friday 1 January 1954).
- 1954** Pattie received the 'Dame Grand Cross' Queen's Award from Queen Elizabeth.
- 4 December 1954** Dame Pattie opened the Alexandra District Hospital fete on Saturday 4 December. (*The Argus*, Wednesday 1 December 1954).
- 1955** Dame Pattie had her portrait painted by artist William Alexander Dargie (1912-2003).
- 5–6 Apr 1958** Dame Pattie Menzies attended the Alexandra 'Back to Alexandra' event, staying the weekend with Cr. Briggs and his wife. The week long event ran from Monday 31 May to Sunday 6 April, with Dame Pattie attending on the Saturday and staying to Sunday. While here, she visited her former home, received a tour of the new Hospital and the new High School, as well as visiting old friends and family. She also noticed an old photograph in the window of Pollock's Chemist of small children in a jinker—one of which was her.
- 3 November 1962** Dame Pattie returned to Australia after having her tonsils removed at London's University College Hospital. (*The Canberra Times*, Saturday 3 November 1962).
- 1967** In her honour, during the 1967 America's Cup, Sir Frank Packer raced an international 12 metre class racing yacht named 'Dame Pattie'. The boat was designed by Warwick Hood and built by W H Bennet in NSW.



HISTORIC FACTSHEET

TIMELINE

- 1970** The book *The Measure of the Years* is written by Sir Robert Menzies and published by Cassell Australia Limited and republished in 1972 by Coronet Books.
- 1976** Robert Menzies was awarded the 'Knight of the Order of Australia' Award.
- 1978** Sir Robert Menzies died 15 May 1978. At the time of his death he was recognised as Australia's longest serving Prime Minister and a matriarch of the Australian Liberal Party — the conservative party founded by her husband in 1944.
- 1978** Alexandra Lions Club held community meeting regarding the purchasing of the property known as 'The Mount'.
- 1980** The purchase of 'The Mount' was finalised.
- 1980** Dame Pattie was approached by Alexandra Shire President Cath Cooper who requested she be Patron. Dame Pattie agreed and the name 'Dame Pattie Menzies Centre' was established.
- 1981** The Dame Pattie Menzies Centre at Alexandra was officially opened.
- 1983** Dame Pattie opened the Alexandra Agricultural Show on its Centenary. She also awarded a number of awards.
- 30 August 1995** Dame Pattie died at Canberra, aged 96. Her ashes were interned alongside her husband within the Prime Ministers Garden at the Melbourne General Cemetery. She was survived by her daughter. An obituary was published by the *Independent* and can be read [here](#).
- 2013** Heather Henderson, daughter of Sir Robert Menzies and Dame Pattie Menzies published her book *A Smile for My Parents*. She was encouraged to write the book by then Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott. The book pays homage to her parents.



HISTORIC FACTSHEET

TIMELINE

2011

Dame Pattie Menzies Centre celebrated their 30th Anniversary.

16 November 2017

An afternoon tea was held at 3 pm by the Shire to officially unveil three new township signs: Dame Pattie Menzies, Raymond Weinberg and Bernhard Smith. Three new history posters and three factsheets produced by Artworkz were also published.

5 September 2019

A memorial plaque on a large rock was unveiled near the fenceline of the old family home (Rosemont) on the outskirts of Alexandra. The memorial was erected on the property of Joy Welsh, who purchased the property in 1985 from Cr. Kath Cooper.

GALLERY

RELATED IMAGERY

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

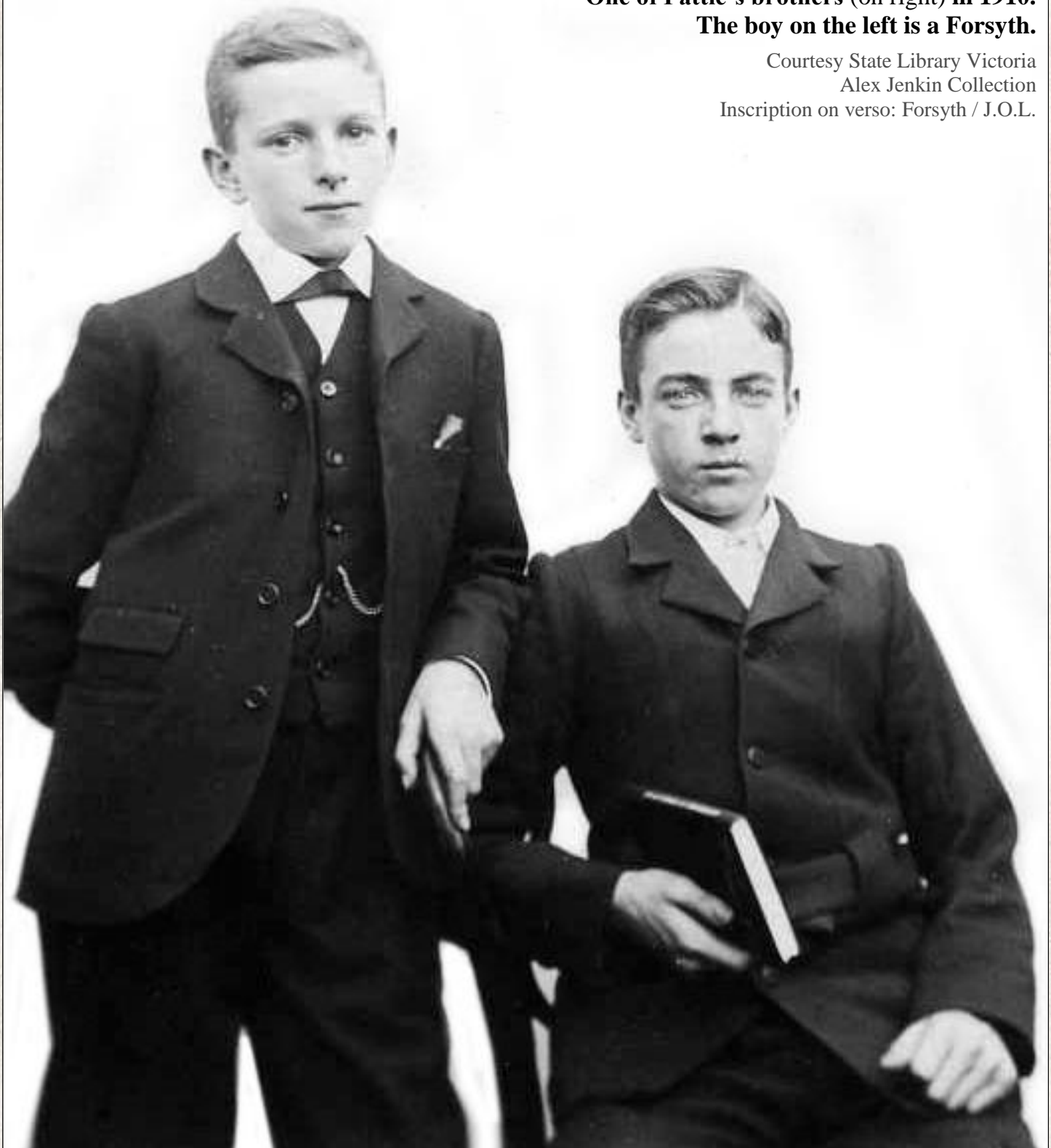
GALLERY

**One of Pattie's brothers (on right) in 1910.
The boy on the left is a Forsyth.**

Courtesy State Library Victoria

Alex Jenkin Collection

Inscription on verso: Forsyth / J.O.L.



HISTORIC FACTSHEET

GALLERY



Portrait painted by William Alexander Dargie (1912-2003)

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

GALLERY



Prime Minister Robert Menzies and his wife Pattie arrive at Bundaberg Airport in 1953

Courtesy State Library Queensland — Image out of Copyright

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HISTORIC FACTSHEET

GALLERY



Prime Minister Robert Menzies and his wife Pattie arrive at Bundaberg Airport in 1953

Courtesy State Library Queensland — Image out of Copyright

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HISTORIC FACTSHEET

GALLERY



Prime Minister Robert Menzies' wife Pattie and daughter Heather in Bundaberg in 1953

Courtesy State Library Queensland — Image out of Copyright

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HISTORIC FACTSHEET

GALLERY



Dame Pattie Menzies at the Back-to Alexandra celebrations in 1958

Photograph © Copyright Simone Adams 2013

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

GALLERY



Dame Pattie visiting Emma Grace Freeman at the new Alexandra District Hospital, during her 1958 Easter visit for the Back-to Alexandra celebrations.

Courtesy Mrs Freeman's great grand-daughter Michelle Bourke
Photographer © Allan Weeks

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

GALLERY



Dame Pattie Menzies presenting a ribbon at the 1983 Alexandra Rural Show Centenary

Courtesy Eileen Hall 2013
Photographer Allan Weeks

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

GALLERY



Birthplace of Dame Pattie Menzies (nee Leckie)

One of three signs erected in September 2017 at the three main entrances to Alexandra. Each sign highlights a person of note from Alexandra's past. This sign was erected on the Yea side of Alexandra on the Goulburn Valley Highway.

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

GALLERY



**Birthplace of Ray Weinberg
Olympic and Commonwealth Games Athlete**

One of three signs erected at the three main entrances to Alexandra. Unlike the other two, this one was erected in December 2016, while the other two were erected in September 2017. Each sign highlights a person of note from Alexandra's past. This sign was erected on the Melbourne side of Alexandra on the Maroondah Highway.

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

GALLERY



Home of Bernhard Smith
Sculptor and painter of the Pre-Raphaelite School
and police magistrate

One of three signs erected in September 2017 at the three main entrances to Alexandra. Each sign highlights a person of note from Alexandra's past. This sign was erected on the Eildon side of Alexandra on the Goulburn Valley Highway.

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

GALLERY



Memorial plaque unveiled on 5 September 2019 at *Rosemont*, the childhood home of Dame Pattie Menzies.

NEWSPAPERS

RELATED NEWSPAPER ARTICLES



HISTORIC FACTSHEET

NEWSPAPERS

GEOERGE D. LECKIE,
BARRISTER AND SOLICITOR,
HIGH STREET, MANSFIELD.

May be Consulted at the Corner Hotel
Alexandra, every Saturday, from 10 till 2.

Alexandra Standard
Friday 14 June 1901
Courtesy National Library Australia

Pattie's Brother George D Leckie at Mansfield and Alexandra

The Standard
Friday 14 June 1901
Courtesy National Library Australia



HISTORIC FACTSHEET

NEWSPAPERS

MENZIES—LECKIE.

The marriage of Robert Gordon, son of Mr. and Mrs. James Menzies, of Lowan, Kew, to Pattie Maie, eldest daughter of Mr. John W. Leckie, of Indi, Hawthorn, was celebrated in the Presbyterian Church, Kew, on September 27, by the Rev. J. R. Anderson. It was an evening wedding, and the church was prettily decorated. The bride, who was given away by her father, wore ivory satin, the pannier draped skirt being caught with clusters of silver flowers, whilst the bodice was softly folded and finished by georgette sleeves. A veil of old Honiton lace arranged with a wreath of silver leaves completed her attire. The bride's sisters (Conyn and Gwentyth) and the bridegroom's cousin (Miss Ruth Gosman), as bridesmaids, wore ivory lace frocks, trimmed with pearl embroidery and touches of pink. Their headbands were in pink and silver, and their bouquets were of pink roses. Mr. Frank Menzies (brother of the bridegroom) was best man, and the groomsmen were Messrs. P. Ettelson and S. Menzies. After the ceremony Mr. and Mrs. John Leckie held a reception in the Grand Hotel, followed by wedding supper, the floral decorations being in pink and white colourings. The going-away costume of navy blue ratine was worn with a cherry-silk hat.

The Australasian
Saturday 2 October 1920
Courtesy National Library Australia

MENZIES—LECKIE.—On the 27th September, at the Presbyterian Church, Cotham road, Kew, by the Rev. J. R. Anderson, Robert Gordon, third son of Mr. and Mrs. James Menzies, "Lowan," Wellington street, Kew, to Pattie Maie, eldest daughter of Mr. John Leckie, "Indi," Manning-tree road, Hawthorn. (Present address, 39 Gellibrand street, Kew.)

The Argus
Tuesday 26 October 1920
Courtesy National Library Australia

Marriage notice

The Argus
Tuesday 26 October 1920
Courtesy National Library Australia

Marriage notice

The Australasian
Saturday 2 October 1920
Courtesy National Library Australia

NEWSPAPERS

Honor

Canberra is delighted over the New Year honor received by the wife of the Prime Minister.

The award follows an Australian tradition.

Dame Pattie Menzies now becomes the third in an illustrious line of Australian Prime Ministers' wives who have so been honored.

Dame Mary Hughes and Dame Enid Lyons were before her.

Quiet, petite and silver-haired, Dame Pattie Menzies has not yet made the impact on the nation that Dame Enid Lyons has.

But in her own way, she is very much the woman behind the Prime Minister—much more so than most people realise.

She is well liked and respected by both sides of politics.

A story the Prime Minister likes to tell is of what happened at a hospital meeting attended by Dame Pattie Menzies in the Labor stronghold of Collingwood, in Melbourne.

One woman was heard to remark to another:—"She can't be Bob Menzies's wife—she's much too nice."

The Adelaide Advertiser
Saturday 2 January 1954

Courtesy National Library Australia

'She can't be Bob Menzies' wife — she's much too nice'

The Adelaide Advertiser
Saturday 2 January 1954
Courtesy National Library Australia

HISTORIC FACTSHEET

NEWSPAPERS

QUEEN HONOURS DAME PATTIE



At the Yarralumla investiture today, Her Majesty the Queen placed the scarlet ribbon of Dame Grand Cross of the British Empire on the shoulders of Dame Pattie Menzies, wife of the Prime Minister. (Picturegram.) Mr. Menzies was in the distinguished gathering which viewed the investiture. (See Page 3). "BRISBANE TELEGRAPH" DAILY RECORD OF ROYAL VISIT, Pages 13-16.

Brisbane Telegraph
Monday 15 February 1954
Courtesy National Library Australia

**Queen Honours Dame Pattie
with her *Dame Grand Cross***

Brisbane Telegraph
Monday 15 February 1954
Courtesy National Library Australia

NEWSPAPERS

DAME PATTIE MENZIES RETURNING

LONDON, Friday (A.A.P.).—Dame Pattie Menzies, wife of the Australian Prime Minister, left England for Australia on the *Arca-dia* yesterday.

Dame Pattie had her tonsils removed last month in London's University College Hospital.

She was discharged last Friday. An Australia House spokesman said to-day she had "completely recovered."

Conference

Dame Pattie accompanied Mr. Menzies to London early in September when he attended the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conference.

Before his departure after the conference, Mr. Menzies told a Press conference that his wife had not been well and was receiving medical attention.

**Return to Australia after having tonsils removed at
London's University College Hospital**

Canberra Times
Saturday 3 November 1962
Courtesy National Library Australia

The Canberra Times
Saturday 3 November 1962
Courtesy National Library Australia



Artworkz

Serving the Community