

## Obituary

### **Ann Veronica Helen Moyal** **AM, FRSN, FAAH**

23 February 1926–21 July 2019

Ann's mother named her after the heroine of H.G. Wells' scandalous novel of a rebellious New Woman — and, though both mother and father raised her in the comfortable respectability of Sydney's North Shore, Ann broke many barriers.<sup>1</sup>

Upon graduating in 1946 with first-class honours in history from the University of Sydney, Ann Hurley worked as a research assistant for W. C. Wentworth (then gathering information on communists) and John Carrick (research officer for the New South Wales branch of the Liberal Party). A scholarship took her to the University of London in 1949, but she soon abandoned postgraduate research to work for Nicholas Mansergh at the Royal Institute of International Affairs and then Max Aitken, Lord Beaverbrook, whom she helped write his recollections of *Men and Power, 1917–1918* (1956) in the British government during the Great War.

Ann would return to academic employment, but never for long. At the ANU from 1959 to 1962 she laid the foundations of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, while the two titular editors, Manning Clark and Malcolm Ellis, did combat, and then worked with Earle Page on his memoirs, *Truant Surgeon* (1963). As a joint research associate of the Research School of Social Sciences and the Academy of Science, she produced a

*Guide to the Manuscript Records of Australian Science* (1966) and embarked on a biography of the colonial geologist (and founder of the Royal Society), W. B. Clarke. A book of documents on *Scientists in Nineteenth-Century Australia* (1975) appeared subsequently. By this time she had accompanied her third husband, the mathematician José Enrique Moyal, to the Atomic Energy Laboratory in Illinois and, while working as science editor for the University of Chicago Press, she published an arresting article on the problems of the Argonne laboratory.

In 1971 Ann took up a lectureship at the NSW Institute of Technology (now UTS), from where she produced an equally stringent account of the mismanagement of the Australian Atomic Energy Commission. By this time her interest in the history of science extended to science policy and she had a spell at the celebrated Science Policy Research Unit at Sussex University. Her appointment to Griffith University in 1976 was to direct the Social Policy Research Centre at Griffith, an arrangement that broke down during 1979 in an acrimonious dispute over her impossible teaching burden. Never cowed by authority, Ann was disconcerted by the way her academic colleagues bowed to its misuse. For the rest of career she would work as an independent scholar.

She did so at first as an associate of Henry Mayer's department of politics at the University of Sydney. Mayer, a restless and irreverent polymath, encouraged her

---

<sup>1</sup> Ann Moyal was the inaugural winner of the RSNSW History and Philosophy of Science Medal in 2014. The late poet, Les. A. Murray, dedicated his 1993 poem, "The Tube", to her. [Ed.]

to accept a commission to write a history of telecommunications in Australia. *Clear Across Australia* (1984) met with acclaim, and deservedly so for it integrated the technological dimensions with the role of government, the men and women who staffed the Postmaster-General's Department and the profound effects of telecommunications on Australian life.

In the course of this project Ann moved with her husband to Canberra, where she became editor of the ANZAAS bimonthly journal, *Search*. It was here also that she produced *A Bright & Savage Land: Scientists in Colonial Australia* (1987), two striking works of natural history, *Platypus* (2001) and *Koala* (2006), and an edited edition of W. B. Clarke's correspondence, *The Web of Science* (2001). A visiting scholar in several university departments, she was profoundly out of sympathy with the changes made to universities in the 1990s, from which a number of her friends resigned, and with the assistance of Warren Horton, then Director-General of the National Library, she established the Independent Scholars Association. Ann made the Petherick Room of the National Library her base of operations and used its manuscript collections to write a brief and compelling life of *Alan Moorehead* (2005), the journalist, biographer and historian whose life as a writer reaching a popular audience exemplified her ideal of the independent scholar.

There were other works that appeared in this final phase of Ann's life, including a biography of her third husband, *Maverick Mathematician* (2006). Her own volume of memoirs, *Breakfast with Beaverbrook* (1995) carried the subtitle "Memoirs of an Independent Woman," and ranged memorably across her adventures. A later volume, *A*

*Woman of Influence: Science, Men and History* (2014), took up particular aspects of her dealings with all three. Her range of friendships was large, and to the end she kept them up, curious, encouraging and supportive.

Ann Moyal was a Fellow of the Royal Society of New South Wales (and contributed articles to its *Journal & Proceedings* right up to 2019) and the Australian Academy of the Humanities, and was awarded honorary doctorates by the ANU and the University of Sydney. She was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in 1993 for her "contribution to the history of Australian science and technology, especially the writing of its history." That citation understates her achievement, as does the level of her honour. She was a path-breaker who worked across domains of knowledge, an exceptionally intelligent woman with unshakeable principles.

—Professor Emeritus Stuart Macintyre, AO,  
FAHA, FASSA

### Select Bibliography

- Aitken, Max (Lord Beaverbrook) (1956) *Men and Power, 1917–1918*, Hutchinson, London.
- Moyal, Ann (1971) "Change in Argonne National Laboratory: a case study," *Science* 174 Issue 4004: 30–38.
- Moyal, Ann M. (1975) "The Australian Atomic Energy Commission: a case study in Australian science and government," *Search*, Vol 6(9): 365–384.
- Moyal, Ann (1976) *Scientists in Nineteenth Century Australia: A Documentary History*, Cassell Australia.
- Moyal, Ann (1984), *Clear Across Australia: A History of Telecommunications*, Nelson, Melbourne.
- Moyal, Ann (1986). *A Bright & Savage Land: Scientists in Colonial Australia*, Collins, Sydney.

- Moyal, Ann (1989). *Women and the Telephone in Australia: A Study prepared for Telecom Australia*, Melbourne, Telecom.
- Moyal, Ann (1995) *Breakfast with Beaverbrook: Memoirs of an Independent Woman*, Hale & Iremonger, Melbourne.
- Moyal, Ann (2001) *Platypus: The Extraordinary Story of How a Curious Creature Baffled the World*, Smithsonian Press, Washington DC.
- Moyal, Ann (2003) *The Web of Science: The Scientific Correspondence of the Rev W. B. Clarke, Australia's Pioneer Geologist*, Australian Scholarly Publishing.
- Moyal, Ann (2005). *Alan Moorehead: A Rediscovery*, National Library of Australia, Canberra.
- Moyal, Ann (2005) "The Rev. W. B. Clarke and his scientific correspondents." *Journal & Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales* 138: 31–38.
- Moyal, Ann (2006) *Maverick Mathematician: The Life and Science of J. E. Moyal*, A.N.U. Press., Canberra
- Moyal, Ann (2008) *Koala: A Historical Biography*, Melbourne, CSIRO Publishing.
- Moyal, Ann (2012) "Friends, savants and founders: W. B. Clarke and J. D. Dana." *Journal & Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales* 145: 54–58.
- Moyal, Ann (2014) *A Woman of Influence: Science, Men and History*, U.W.A. Publishing, Perth.
- Moyal, Ann (2017) "P. A. M. Dirac and the maverick mathematician." *Journal & Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales* 150: 188–194.
- Moyal, Ann (2017) "Creative foundations. The Royal Society of N.S.W.: 1867 and 2017." *Journal & Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales* 150: 232–245.
- Moyal, Ann, with Robert Marks. (2019) "The scientists and Darwin's *The Origin of Species* in nineteenth century Australia. A re-evaluation." *Journal & Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales* 152: 5–26.
- Mozley Moyal, Ann (1966) *Guide to the Manuscript Records of Australian Science*, Australian Academy of Science in association with Australian National University Press, Canberra.
- Murray, Les. A. (1993), *Dog Fox Field: Poems*, Farrar Straus & Giroux, New York.
- Page, Earl (1963) *Truant Surgeon: The Inside Story of Forty Years of Australian Political Life*, edited by Ann Mozley,<sup>2</sup> Angus and Robertson, Sydney.
- Wells, H. G. (1909) *Ann Veronica, A Modern Love Story*, T. Fisher Unwin, London.

---

<sup>2</sup> E. Mozley was her second husband.

