

# footprints

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Mary Glowrey as a teenager

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of Victoria & Wagga Wagga.

## EDITORIAL

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Dear Subscribers,

It's good to be back in the chair after an absence of seven issues of *Footprints*. On behalf of all the subscribers and for my own part I should like to record my heartfelt thanks to Val Noone, David Schütz and David Moloney for their indefatigable work during the last three and one-half years. Their own articles and the research of other contributors have ensured that the demand for *Footprints* will continue to be met.

This edition, may I say, has the odour of sanctity about. There are two articles on the Servant of God, Mary Glowrey, whose life spans Melbourne and India. An account of a Melbourne Catholic Anzac, Richard Kiernan, who died from wounds sustained at Cape Hells on 25th April 1915, is a fitting way to record the centenary of the Gallipoli Landings.

Fr Gardiner's article on the link between holdings and the causes of saints is a call for the proper preservation of records written and oral in the understanding of the interaction of people, their actions, motives and innermost thoughts.

Kathleen McCarthy's work brings new evidence to our understanding of Bishop Goold as a significant collector of art and the importance of religious artworks in colonial society and the Catholic Church. With continued thanks for your support of *Footprints*.

(Rev.) **Brendan Hayes**  
Editor

## DR SR MARY GLOWREY JMJ SERVANT OF GOD: AUSTRALIAN PIONEER MISSIONARY IN INDIA

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### Introduction

The cause for sainthood of Dr Sr Mary Glowrey JMJ (1887–1957) advanced at Easter 2013 when she was declared Servant of God. It is being continued in the Diocese of Guntur, India where she worked as a medical missionary for many years. Strong support of her cause is also being provided by the Archdiocese of Melbourne and especially by the Catholic Women's League of Victoria and Wagga Wagga – in 1916 Mary was founding President of its predecessor, the Catholic Women's Social Guild. While she grew up in the Diocese of Ballarat, Mary spent the years of her secondary and university education in Melbourne and worked here as a gifted young doctor in private practice in Collins Street as well as in appointments at the Victorian Eye and Ear, St Vincent's and Queen Victoria Memorial Hospitals.

In the midst of her many and fruitful activities in Melbourne, in 1915 Dr Glowrey felt a call to serve the desperate health needs of Indian women and children. Following the chance reading of a related pamphlet, she realised that her vocation was medical missionary work in India. Due to World War I she had to delay her departure overseas until 1920. In the intervening years and in preparation for her Indian ministry, Mary added postgraduate studies in obstetrics, gynaecology and ophthalmology to her already demanding agenda and in 1919 became one of the first women in Victoria to achieve a doctorate in medicine.

Beside her medical practice, which increased due to the absence of male colleagues on military service, Mary and other like-minded young Catholic women were active during the war years in service of the poor, especially in the Fitzroy area, and in advocacy and action for improved social conditions. One outcome was the founding of the Catholic Women's Social Guild (as noted above, now the Catholic Women's League of Victoria and Wagga Wagga). Its headquarters in Nicholson Street, Fitzroy, Mary Glowrey House, recognise the significant role of its

founding President both in Victoria and later in India. Mary later wrote: 'It was during this busy period that God deigned to give me my religious vocation'.<sup>2</sup>

### Mary's Childhood and Education

Mary Glowrey's early years, with two exceptions, were typical of her contemporaries in Irish-Australian Catholic families. She was born in the small Western District town of Birregurra as the third of the nine children of Edward and Margaret née Danaher. Shortly afterwards the family moved to Garvoc, which is also in Victoria's Western District and later to Watchem in the Mallee. Mary and her family knew hardship when a bank manager's malfeasance led to sale of family property to pay debts. Mary also knew the joys and sanctuary of a loving and devout family, the tragedy of loss of siblings, and the vagaries of education in a small rural community – she and her sisters were initially home-schooled by a local Catholic laywoman and, when Mary was seven years old, then able to transfer to the one-teacher state school which opened in Watchem.

The exceptions to this otherwise typical childhood were Mary's piety from an early age and her exceptional academic ability. While Mary had her religious education formally from her mother, the devotional home and parish life of the Glowreys was also a fertile ground for her spiritual development. Already at the age of six years, she committed herself to doing the will of God and never wavered from this commitment:

If I could but succeed in doing God's Holy Will always, then not only would sin be impossible but I should always do that which was well pleasing in His sight. This petition became my constant prayer.<sup>3</sup>

Mary had a particular devotion to the Sacred Heart and to the Holy Spirit.

Fortunately, her teacher at the Watchem state school recognised and fostered Mary's giftedness. He assisted her to apply for a State secondary school scholarship, for which she ranked third amongst 800 applicants and the 60 Victorian awardees and which enabled her to complete her schooling at South Melbourne College while boarding at the nearby Good Shepherd Convent. She matriculated at 14 years and then again the following three years in a range of other subjects until she was old enough to go to university. Mary later acknowledged the mentorship of the school's principal, the popular Australian poet, John Bernard O'Hara.<sup>4</sup>



Dr Mary Glowrey with nurses at St Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne.  
Photo from Mary Glowrey papers, Catholic Women's League of Victoria  
and Wagga Wagga.

Her Exhibition scholarship enabled Mary to commence an Arts degree at the University of Melbourne. However, at her father's urging and following prayer, at the end of a successful first year she transferred to the Faculty of Medicine. She undertook her subsequent clinical studies at the Melbourne and then St Vincent's Hospitals, after the latter's clinical school opened in 1910, and was a prize-winning student, gaining first place in surgery upon graduation from the University in 1910. Dr (later Sir) Hugh Devine (1878–1959), eminent surgeon,<sup>5</sup> wrote in a 1911 testimonial:

Dr Glowrey as a student under me at St Vincent's Hospital was particularly capable and brilliant in her work. Her personality is above reproach and I know her to be a very fine woman. Her high honours in the recent final examinations testify to [her] capability as far as her surgical and medical work is concerned and I can say that the surgical work she has done under me was of very high order indeed. She would make a splendid medical officer of an institution.<sup>6</sup>

She later wrote, 'I can never sufficiently express the gratitude I owe to St Vincent's Hospital.'<sup>7</sup> Dr Glowrey completed her residency in New Zealand and then began the successful practice trajectory noted above.

## Medical Missionary

Having discerned her life's vocation, enhanced her medical skills, and continued to hone her faith commitment spiritually and practically during World War I, Dr Glowrey left Melbourne for India in January 1920 'as an educated mature woman'.<sup>8</sup> She did not want to be a missionary 'to work for wages' and took advice from her spiritual adviser about a request from Archbishop Aelen of Madras for 'medical women for the mission'.<sup>9</sup>

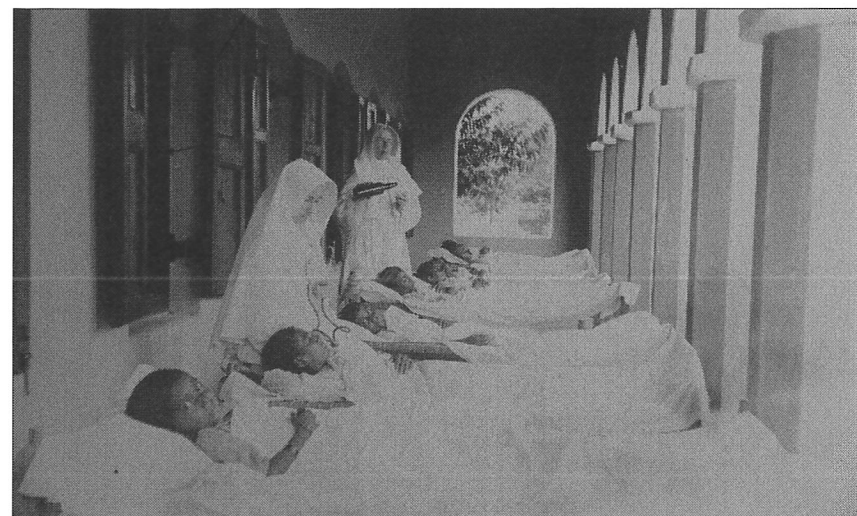
Archbishop Aelen invited her to come to India and told her 'of the Sisters of the Society of Jesus, Mary and Joseph whom he had brought to India from Holland precisely for the purpose of rendering medical help to Indian women' who could not seek the services of male practitioners. Although Dr Glowrey did not know this congregation from Australia, she took the decision to join them and permission was sought to open a novitiate in Guntur to enable her to enter the order there. The Vatican also gave a subsequent dispensation for her to practice as a missionary doctor 'for the good of souls'. The latter led to her unique vocation as the first medical missionary religious sister. Amongst the sisters in Guntur there was no medical practitioner and Dr Glowrey 'was received with much joy and affection'. She, in her turn, felt a particular welcome as she entered the Church in Guntur with its statue of the Sacred Heart above the altar, arms outstretched and bearing the message, 'The Lord is here and calleth for you'.<sup>10</sup> Dr Glowrey took the name in religion of Sr Mary of the Sacred Heart.

Following her religious profession Sr Mary began to practice in Guntur. As the sole practitioner for many years she saw up to 100,000 patients each year with very limited resources. While she received generous donations from Australia, including through her family and leading Catholic layman John Wren,<sup>11</sup> she also needed to improvise with respect to medical equipment and the dearth of medications. One outcome of the latter was Sr Mary's significant work on indigenous medicines and their application. At the same time, in adapting to her new situation, she became fluent in Dutch and Telugu. By 1925 St Joseph's Hospital had been founded in Guntur and over subsequent years training was introduced there in nursing, midwifery and compounding (pharmacy).

Despite her prodigious workload in the Guntur district, Sr Mary also sought to improve healthcare services, grounded in the absolute inviolability of human life and service of the poor, in the wider Indian context. These endeavours saw her influence extend well beyond St

Joseph's Hospital and Indian bishops and other religious congregations seeking her advice in relation to the Church's healthcare initiatives. Of particular importance was Sr Mary's role in the 1943 founding of the Catholic Hospital Association of India of which she was its first President until 1951. Significantly, the Catholic Hospital Association of India has become the world's largest non-government organisation in the health care sector.

In order to improve women's access to healthcare services, Sr Mary actively promoted medical education for Indian women – the years following her death saw the realisation of her vision for the establishment of Catholic medical and nursing colleges in India. She also sought to advance Christian medical practice and education through her writing – for example, a series of Sr Mary's articles was published in 1936 in the American *Medical Missionary*.<sup>12</sup> Already as a medical student at the University of Melbourne, Mary and fellow students had been concerned about some teaching and medical practices that were contrary to natural law. As a result of their interventions Archbishop Thomas Carr of Melbourne published a booklet titled *Infanticide* addressing one of their concerns – Mary Glowrey was the author.<sup>13</sup> Her active involvement in healthcare ethics continued in India – in 1936 a paper by Sr



Sr Mary Glowrey JMJ (front) with patients at St Joseph's Hospital, Guntur.  
Photo from Mary Glowrey papers, Catholic Women's League of Victoria  
and Wagga Wagga.

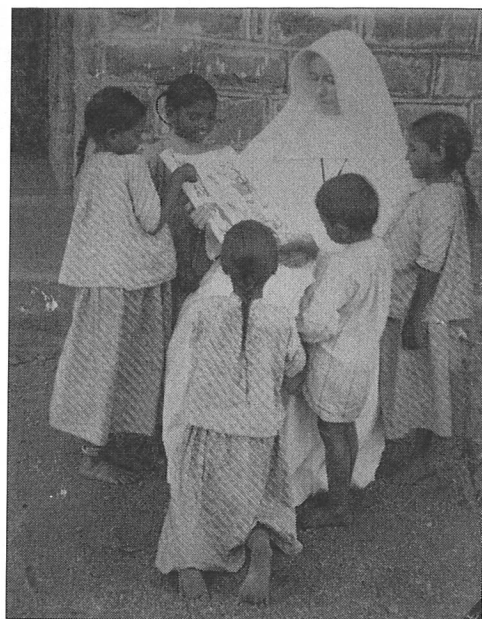
Mary was read at the Second International Congress of Catholic Doctors in Vienna and two years later her written report on St Joseph's Hospital in Guntur was presented to the International Congress for Obstetrics and Gynaecology in Amsterdam.

### Contribution to the Second International Congress of Catholic Doctors in Vienna<sup>14</sup>

In May 1936 the Second International Congress of Catholic Doctors held in pre-Anschluss Vienna addressed as its major theme 'Eugenics and Sterilisation' as well as the further themes of 'Missionary Medical Care' and 'International Cooperation'.

Congress delegates came from Belgium, England, France, Germany, Holland, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Spain and Switzerland.<sup>15</sup> Those present were conscious of colleagues from British India, China, Portugal and the United States who could not be there in person but who had sent valuable input. The correspondent from British India was Dr Sr Mary of the Sacred Heart JMJ (Glowrey). Sr Mary's paper is illustrative of her scholarly work – significantly, she is the only woman acknowledged as a contributor to the congress.<sup>16</sup>

While Sr Mary's paper addresses some contemporary ethical issues, her major focus is on the other two congress themes. The paper opens with an expression of joy on the part of the Society of Jesus, Mary and Joseph that Rome had lifted the ban on medical missionaries and 'given the seal of approval to a work which the Society has conducted, with the Church's approval, for more than 30 years'. As noted above, Sr Mary was the first missionary doctor to receive the Vatican's permission to practise



Sr Mary showing Indian children an Australian newspaper.

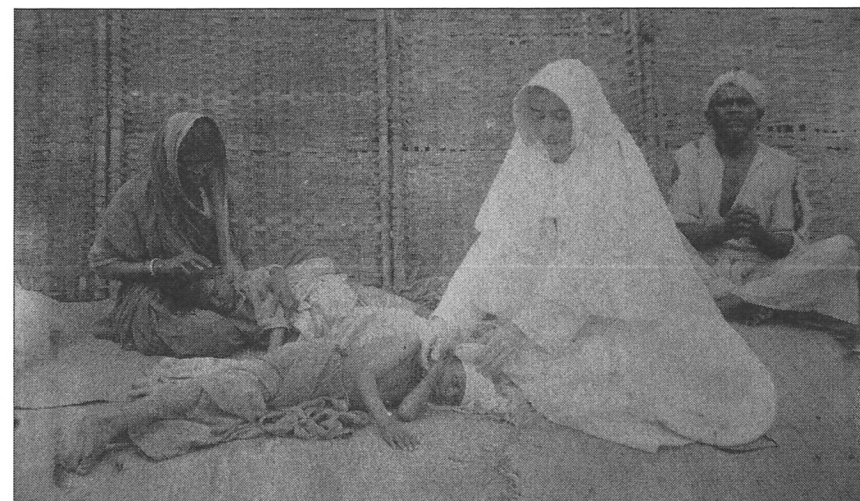
Photo from Mary Glowrey papers, Catholic Women's League of Victoria and Wagga Wagga.

medicine. In her paper, she highlighted the dedicated role that the nun-doctor vocation permits in the missionary context 'from the perspective of economy, diligence and regularity of service'.<sup>17</sup> The paper illustrates this role in the case of St Joseph's Hospital in Guntur and then addresses some of the issues for Catholic healthcare in India. In particular, Sr Mary appealed to the congress to promote the establishment of Catholic universities and medical colleges:

especially in missionary lands and for women. These lands ... are already plagued by neo-pagan currents; thus, medical missionary women, and especially Indian women, require thorough Catholic training. According to local custom, the latter cannot attend a faculty for men but are, like female European missionary doctors, of particular significance for the Christianisation of the country, since only female doctors, as women, can make headway with [Indian] women and, by way of medical assistance, Christianise them. At this time, however, they are already being taught contraceptive and eugenic practices.<sup>19</sup>

Sr Mary concluded her paper with a challenge to the congress. In noting that it undoubtedly intended to implement its recommendations, she asked:

'Why do most congresses end in talk?' ... Perhaps the answer lies in the following comment, which was made about another congress. 'The



Dr Sr Mary Glowrey JMJ treating a boy with leprosy.

Photo from Mary Glowrey papers, Catholic Women's League of Victoria and Wagga Wagga.

congress was a great success. Brilliant resolutions were passed, however they suffered the fate of most resolutions, with everyone expecting someone else to implement them.' The honoured medical members, who distinguish this congress by their presence, show thereby that they are full of the best of intentions to find effective means and to assist the medical mission. If they want to achieve something of lasting good, here is an excellent opportunity. Might this congress be distinguished by a pledge to establish a Catholic medical school for the women of India!<sup>19</sup>

The congress gave in principle support for such a resolution<sup>20</sup> but it was not until 1968, after Sr Mary's death and on 25th anniversary of the founding of the Catholic Hospital Association of India, that her vision was realised in St John's Medical College, Bangalore.

### Conclusion

Sr Mary died in 1957 in Bangalore following two years of immense suffering and disability from cancer. During her lifetime and upon her death Sr Mary was recognised not only as a woman of outstanding ability across all her ministries, but also as a woman of exceptional holiness. Her adopted homeland has entitled her both 'Australia's gift to India' and 'Apostle of the untouchables'.<sup>21</sup>

October 2015 marks 100 years since Dr Mary Glowrey recognised her calling to a missionary vocation to India. At a time when sanctity of life issues are challenging contemporary Australia, Dr Sr Mary Glowrey JMJ is a shining light to whom the Australian Church and, in particular, its health sector can turn for enlightenment and inspiration.<sup>22</sup>

### Bibliography

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<<http://www.cwlvicww.org/dr-sr-mary-glowrey-jmj/dr-sr-mary-glowrey-jmj.html>>.

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne, where Dr Mary Glowrey was both a student and a medical practitioner, is one of the health facilities of Mary Aikenhead Ministries.
- <sup>2</sup> Glowrey, M., *Autobiography of 'God's Good for Nothing' or Australia's Gift to India*, St Joseph's Convent: Guntur, 1963, 27.
- <sup>3</sup> Glowrey, 1963, 9.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid., 17; Pawsey, M.M., 'O'Hara, John Bernard (1862–1927)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*; [adb.anu.edu.au/biography/ohara-john-bernard-7893/text13725](http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/ohara-john-bernard-7893/text13725), published first in hardcopy 1988, accessed online 7 August 2015.
- <sup>5</sup> Horan, J., 'Devine, Sir Hugh Berchmans (1878–1959)', *ibid.*, [adb.anu.edu.au/biography/devine-sir-hugh-berchmans-5969/text10183](http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/devine-sir-hugh-berchmans-5969/text10183), published first in hardcopy 1981, accessed online 16 August 2015.
- <sup>6</sup> Professional reference for Dr Mary Glowrey from medical personnel, c. 1911, Mary Glowrey Papers, Catholic Women's League of Victoria and Wagga Wagga, Melbourne.
- <sup>7</sup> Glowrey, 1963, 26.
- <sup>8</sup> Orem, M.A., *Out of Nothing: The Genesis of a Great Initiative*, The Catholic Hospital Association of India: New Delhi, 1968, 15.
- <sup>9</sup> Glowrey, 1963, 30 and 28, respectively.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid., 31 and 30, respectively.
- <sup>11</sup> Griffin, J., 'Wren, John (1871–1953)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*; [adb.anu.edu.au/biography/wren-john-9198/text16247](http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/wren-john-9198/text16247), published first in hardcopy 1990, accessed online 6 August 2015.
- <sup>12</sup> Orem, 23.
- <sup>13</sup> Swamikannu, F.L., *A Nun Revolutionizes: Biographical Sketch of Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart Glowrey MD 1887–1957*, Society of Jesus, Mary and Joseph Provincialate: Somajiguda-Hyderabad, 1972, 35; Catholic Women's League of Victoria and Wagga Wagga, 'Dr Sr Mary Glowrey JMJ: University Years'; <[www.cwlvicww.org/dr-sr-mary-glowrey-jmj/university-years.html](http://www.cwlvicww.org/dr-sr-mary-glowrey-jmj/university-years.html)>.
- <sup>14</sup> This paper [Glowrey, M., 'Medical Help for the Missions: The Medical Mission of the Society of Jesus, Mary and Joseph', *Mitteilungen der Österreichischen St. Lukas-Gilde*, 1937, V (3/4), 33–39] was recently located in Vienna and copied with the assistance of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna and Australian Catholic University Library in

Melbourne. I have prepared an English translation as a contribution to the cause of Mary Glowrey, with copies now deposited in the archives of her Congregation in India and of the Catholic Women's League of Victoria and Wagga Wagga.

- 15 *Mitteilungen der Österreichischen St. Lukas-Gilde*, 1936, IV(3), 73–177. A fellow participant in the congress was Pedro Arrupe SJ (1907–1991) who was to become 28th Superior General of the Society of Jesus. After some years of medical training in Spain, he had entered the Jesuits in 1927. When the Jesuits were expelled from Spain by the Republican government in 1932, Arrupe continued his studies in Belgium and Holland from where he attended the congress.
- 16 Glowrey, 1937.
- 17 Ibid., 33 and 35, respectively.
- 18 *Mitteilungen*, 1936, 172.
- 19 Glowrey, 1937, 38.
- 20 *Mitteilungen*, 1936, 176.
- 21 Glowrey, 1963; Swamikannu, 78.
- 22 For further information on Dr Sr Mary Glowrey MJ, see: <<http://www.cwlvicww.org/dr-sr-mary-glowrey-jmj/dr-sr-mary-glowrey-jmj.html>>.

*Photographs used with the kind permission of the  
Catholic Women's League of Victoria and Wagga Wagga.*

Following her retirement as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) of Australian Catholic University in 2011, **Emeritus Professor Gabrielle McMullen** has been a Trustee of Mary Aikenhead Ministries, the new Church entity which has responsibility for education, health and social services founded by the Sisters of Charity. Her current community roles include membership of the Australian Catholic Council for Pastoral Research, Christian Brothers Oceania Professional Standards Consultative Committee, Xavier College Council, Marist Province Timor Leste Committee, Divine Word University Council in Madang and Caritas Institute of Higher Education Institute Development Steering Committee in Hong Kong.

## AN OUTSTANDING ALUMNA OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE: DR SR MARY GLOWREY MBBS 1910 MD 1919

*Dr Jacqueline Healy*

Dr Jacqueline Healy  
Senior Curator, Medical History Museum  
& Henry Forman Atkinson Dental Museum  
University of Melbourne

Over the next few years it is highly likely that Mary Glowrey will become Australia's second saint. Mary Glowrey studied at the University of Melbourne graduating in medicine in 1910.

Dr Sr Mary Glowrey's life contribution and link to the University of Melbourne was brought to the attention of the Medical History Museum by the Catholic Women's League of Victoria and Wagga Wagga (previously the Catholic Women's Social Guild) which, sifting through her prodigious correspondence, came to appreciate the strength of her connection with the University. Mary Glowrey's life was highlighted as an outstanding alumna of the University in the 2013 *Strength of Mind: 125 years women in medicine* publication. Items from her archive were displayed in the corresponding exhibition. It was the first time the Mary Glowrey papers were on public view.

Dr Sr Mary Glowrey is only the second Australian person on the official path to becoming a saint. The preliminary phase of her canonisation was announced in December 2010 and she was declared Servant of God in March 2013 by the Bishop of Guntur, the first of four official approvals necessary on the path to sainthood (a 'Cause'). As part of the Cause, a Postulator ('the one who promotes') is appointed and is responsible for conducting research into the life of the Servant of God in order to determine his/her reputation for holiness [*fama sanctitatis*] and the importance of the cause for the Church and to make a report on these matters.

In March 2015, the Catholic Women's League arranged for Sr Mary Karickakunnel (the Postulator) and Sr Innama Yeruva to visit the University. The Sisters visited Melbourne and Victoria, to examine

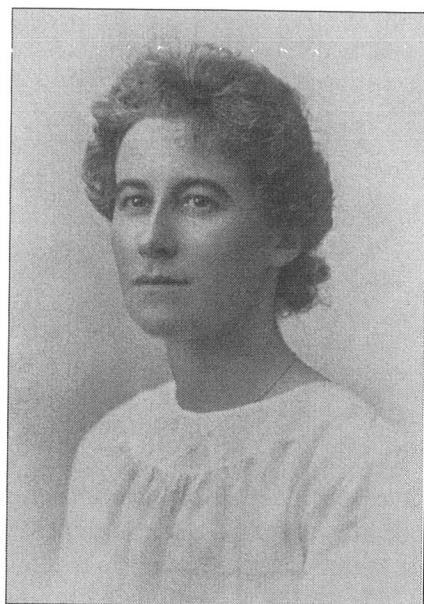
original documentary evidence about Mary's life, including in the Mary Glowrey Collection, and visit places associated with Mary's life, such as her birthplace, the Melbourne Medical School, St Vincent's Hospital and the Eye and Ear Hospital where she worked. During their visit to the University they were shown the Medical History Museum to view student photographs of Mary; the Old Medical School façade; the desk tops from the early lecture theatre where Mary would have sat and which are displayed in the Medical Building; Ormond College where she was a student and Newman College. The Master of Ormond encouraged Mary to pursue her studies in medicine.

Dr Sr Mary Glowrey entered the University of Melbourne, winning exhibitions in every subject, and a scholarship to Ormond College.

As a medical student, she lived in a convent in East Melbourne, was a founding member of the Newman Society for Catholic students at the University, and in 1906 commenced an apostolate. She was the first ever medical doctor to become a nun anywhere in the world, but always viewed herself as 'first a doctor'.

She undertook her early clinical training as a medical student at St Vincent's Hospital and in 1911, following graduation, became the first woman to be granted a medical residency in New Zealand where she moved because no such positions were available for female graduates in Victoria at the time.

Having returned to Melbourne, in 1912 she was appointed to a residency at the Eye and Ear Hospital, then later to the positions of refractionist and Clinical Assistant. She was also appointed as Honorary Physician to Outpatients at St Vincent's Hospital on the unanimous recommendation of a Committee for the University of Melbourne.



Mary Glowrey.  
Photo from Mary Glowrey papers,  
Catholic Women's League of Victoria  
and Wagga Wagga.

In 1916 she was elected as the first General President of the newly formed Catholic Women's Social Guild. In 1920, she left her family, her medical practice and Australia to become a medical missionary with the Congregation of the Society of Jesus, Mary and Joseph in Guntur, India. She spent the rest of her life in India working as a clinical doctor, medical educator and administrator, and was actively interested in clinical science and medical research all her life.

In 1943, she established the Catholic Health Association of India (CHAI), an organisation which now provides health care to 20 million people annually and is significantly involved in the teaching and training of health professionals through its medical and nursing colleges, such as St John's Bangalore, now one of India's leading medical colleges.

The relationship of the University of Melbourne with Mary Glowrey continues. The Catholic Hospital Association of India (CHAI) has a formal memorandum of understanding with the University of Melbourne to support education and research opportunities between the University and their health services. More than 70 years after she established CHAI the university that trained Mary Glowrey sends medical students to study there. Professor Susan Sawyer, who is intrinsically involved with this agreement commented:

... everyone, from the most junior of medical students, to the most senior of professors and deans is inspired by her commitment as a doctor, her faith as a nun, her achievements throughout her life, and her profound humility.

Dr Sr Mary Glowrey's vision for better health services and education of health professionals in India continues to set the standard. A remarkable ongoing legacy.

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**Dr Jacqueline Healy** is Senior Curator of the Medical History Museum and Henry Forman Dental Museum at the University of Melbourne. Mary Glowrey was featured in *Strength of Mind: 125 years of women in medicine* catalogue and exhibition held at the Medical History Museum in 2013.

Previously Dr Healy was Director of Bundoora Homestead Art Centre, the public art gallery of the City of Darebin, Melbourne from 2002 to 2011. Other positions include Director of the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin and Director, Public Programs, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.



Sr Mary in her final years  
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