

The Lady Barbara Grimwade Collection



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‘Lady Barbara Grimwade led a remarkable life, which combined her rural interests in livestock with her active involvement in the arts. She had a judge’s eye for cattle, matched by her ability in the fashion world to discern and precisely recall colours, in the way some musicians have perfect pitch’ - Sir Andrew Grimwade.

Lady Barbara Grimwade (born Barbara Gaerloch Kater) was born on August 27, 1935 in Woolloomooloo, New South Wales, Australia. Barbara’s early years were spent in Trangie, outback NSW.

Barbara's Scottish forebears, the Gaerloch Campbells, first settled in Australia in 1861 in the Ararat-Beaufort district. Her great-great grandfather, Henry Campbell, died on the voyage to Australia. His widow, Jane, with 10 of her 13 children, farmed and grazed land, firstly at Stockyard Hill and then at Fiery Creek, near Buangor, before leaving the region in 1873.



Left: Star of Siam,
Evening gown
© Ararat Gallery TAMA,
Ararat Rural City Council and
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Middle: Designer Unknown,
Dress with belt c. 1975
© Ararat Gallery TAMA,
Ararat Rural City Council and
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Right: Designer Unknown,
Caftan style evening gown c.
1978
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Cover image: Clifton Pugh, A Portrait Lady Barbara Grimwade (detail) 1981, oil on canvas

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Barbara's interest and appreciation for well-tailored clothing and fashion began during her school days and her early adulthood. As a young woman Barbara favoured Marlowe of Sydney, a designer who had studied in France and was highly proficient in haute couture. It was during this time that Barbara wore the sage ballgown featured in this exhibition – a Dior-inspired dress which reflects her early interest in international design.

An avid sportswoman, Barbara embraced many athletic pursuits throughout her schooling and young adult life. Barbara took part in swimming, skiing, and was a champion equestrian and an active participant in shows and carnivals at the local polocrosse club and district polo club meets. The logistics of attending and transporting horses to these events meant that she became the youngest woman and possibly the first, to hold a Class 5 truck licence.



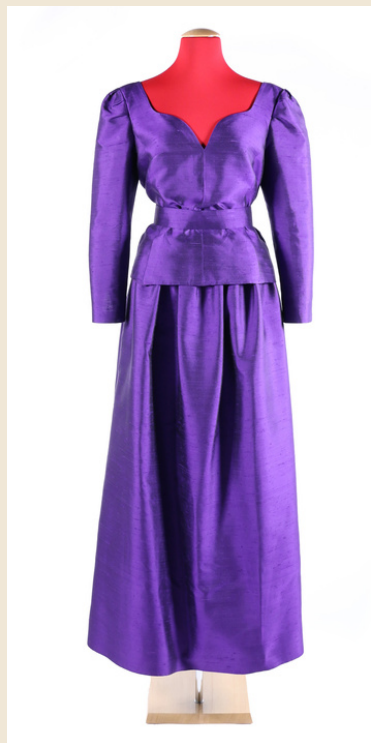
Barbara Kater on her 21st birthday. 1956.
Image courtesy of the Grimwade Family

After graduating in physiotherapy from Sydney University, in 1959 she married Andrew Grimwade, a chemical engineer and scientist recently returned from Oxford. The Grimwade family were pioneers of the pharmaceutical and chemical industries in Victoria. Barbara and Andrew shared a joint love of skiing, historical travel, and the arts.

Andrew Grimwade was a long-serving President of the National Gallery of Victoria, knighted in 1980 for services to the Arts and the Community. Barbara attended numerous official functions with Andrew, where she became renowned for her meticulous and stimulating dress sense, her flair for design and brilliant colours.



TU, Melbourne, Evening ensemble
© Ararat Gallery TAMA, Ararat Rural City
Council and Garde Robe



TU, Melbourne, Evening ensemble
© Ararat Gallery TAMA, Ararat Rural City
Council and Garde Robe

Having moved from Sydney to Melbourne, Barbara favoured the designs of Arija Austin, the owner and designer of Tu in South Yarra. Austin's designs were classically simple, austere, yet dramatic in colour and impact. Barbara continued her interest in working closely alongside designers and faithfully patronised Austin from the inception of the brand in 1965 until the boutique closed in 1989. Barbara and Arija Austin's collaborative design process created a stylistic signature that followed Barbara throughout her life. Her personal pursuits and interests are reflected in the sporty, functional nature of her clothes. Despite this, she also favoured vibrant colour and exaggerated detail. Arija Austin created outfits that were specific to the event they would be worn to, each detail down to the jewellery and accessories, worked together with their environment to create completely unified expression of couture.

While developing Santa Gertrudis cattle and sheep properties near Mansfield, Victoria, and a large area adjacent to The Coorong in South Australia, the couple made their home in Melbourne. Barbara was appointed a board member of the newly formed Victorian Tapestry Workshop (now the Australian Tapestry Workshop). She built up a collection of Australian art and had her portrait painted by three-time Archibald prize winner Clifton Pugh (1924-1990). This portrait was donated by the Grimwade family to provide further context for the fashion collection. The sleeveless pink linen dress Barbara is wearing in her portrait is featured within the collection and accompanies the portrait in this exhibition.

After a holiday with her husband in northern Queensland, Barbara's health was destroyed by an incurable Ross River virus. Following her death in March 1990, Barbara's son Mr Angus K Grimwade generously donated over 400 items from her wardrobe to Ararat Gallery, including clothing, hats, handbags, shoes and assorted accessories of gloves, belts and scarves. This exhibition showcases 25 outfits as well as accessories from the collection. Additional pieces of Lady Barbara Grimwade's vast costume collection are held in the National Gallery of Victoria; Barbara donated her wedding dress (co-designed with Marlowe in 1959) to the NGV during her lifetime.



Designer Unknown, Dress

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Sir Andrew and Lady Barbara Grimwade at the Coorong, SA, c. 1970.

Image courtesy of the Grimwade Family

In the words of art historian and educator Helen Jackson, 'Lady Grimwade presented a striking figure, impeccably groomed, her dark tailored hair accentuated the vibrant colours chosen by this independent woman. Colour was a crucial element, synonymous with her style'.



Image courtesy of the Grimwade Family

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A. 82 Vincent St, Ararat, VIC 3377
T. +61 3 5355 0220
E. gallery@ararat.vic.gov.au
W. araratgallerytama.com.au

ararat gallery tama