

## ELSIE WRIGHT

Elsie Wright was the daughter of a dairy farmer born in northern New South Wales in 1898. The family moved to a farm near Pomona in southern Queensland when Elsie was still a girl.

Elsie's mother and sister were accomplished needlewomen, Elsie had rudimentary instruction in sewing at primary school. She married a soldier during World War I. After the war, they settled on a small farm in a slab hut dwelling with neither electricity nor running water. Later, they moved to the town of Caboolture where Elsie ran a fruit stall at the railway station.

Elsie had exhibited her work at small country shows, but was launched on her serious show career in 1927, when Elsie and her family moved to a soldier settler farm near Mt Mellum, on the slopes of the Blackall Range, where they both laboured to grow bananas and small crops. At night, when she could escape from farm work, Elsie rubbed her work-roughened hands with a concoction of glycerine, lemon juice and methylated spirits and plied her needle by the light of a kerosene lamp.

Elsie won many prizes for her needlework. The prizes provided essential cash to boost the family income – no less than 500 pounds in one of the deepest Depression years. At the end of her career in the late 1960s, she had won some 10,363 prizes and awards.

Elsie died in 1986, aged eighty-eight<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> J McKay and K Kleinschmidt, *The embroiderers*, Brisbane, Queensland Museum, 1995.