

Mrs Violet Frisby b.1917 d.2011 *Untitled (self portrait with black bow)*
date unknown acrylic on board 61 x 41cm

Mrs Violet Isabel Frisby (nee Dorrington) b.1917 – d.2011
Biography

Violet was born on 9 January 1917 in Glen Innes, NSW and was one of 10 children to Jesse and Sarah Dorrington. When she was ten years old the family moved to a farm at Doubtful Creek, north west of Casino, near Kyogle NSW.

In 1938 Violet married Haydon John Frisby at St Marks Church, Casino NSW. They then moved to Cooranbong, near Lake Macquarie, NSW, where they ran a gravel yard and raised four children Beryl, Daphne, Pamela and Archie. As well as being a devoted mother to her children Violet worked as Psychiatric Nurse and ran her farm 'Glen Elgin' till c1981.

Violet was a Seventh Day Adventist and was described as a 'real game player', independent and yet a quietly private person. She made all her clothes (never wore pants, only dresses), loved dancing, riding horses, animals, crocheting and dolls of all descriptions (mostly sourced from opportunity shops). All her life she treasured a doll she was given as a young child, which no one was allowed to touch. She reclothed hundreds of 'found' dolls with satin slips and crocheted dresses, which she displayed in glass cabinets in her home.

Violet moved to the NSW north coast (c.1981-82) and built a house in Raja Rd Ocean Shores where she lived for 3-4 years. In c.1986-87 she bought a house in Stuart St Mullumbimby. It was only when she moved to Mullumbimby that she started painting. For about 15 years she painted hundreds of paintings until ill health stopped her in approx. 2004. (c.1987–2002/4)

Violet framed and signed all of her paintings but never exhibited them. They were displayed all over her house, her garage and her studio. Violet's images describe her life story, her experiences and memories; on the farm as a child, her farm in Cooranbong, her children and grandchildren and sometimes the worlds of her imagination. She knew she wasn't very good but she kept painting regardless and obsessively. They describe exuberantly, a full and colourful life.

In 2009 she moved to Caroona Nursing Home, Lismore where she died peacefully in 2011 at the age of 94.

In 2011 local Mullumbimby based artist Robyn Sweaney painted her portrait which was a finalist in the Doug Moran Portrait prize and again on display in the National Portrait Gallery (NPG) exhibition *The Popular Pet Show* in Canberra in 2016. Also, that year her story was published in the NPG magazine 'Portrait'. In 2013 her work was exhibited alongside Sweaney's work, in two exhibitions, *A quiet obsession* in Sydney at Sheffer Gallery and then *Finding Mrs Frisby* at the Art Piece Gallery in Mullumbimby.