



Media Release

Australia's most famous babies turn 100

05/12/2016

It's 100 years since the adorable Gumnut Babies found their way into the homes and hearts of Australians, and the State Library of NSW is celebrating with a free display featuring May Gibbs' iconic artwork.

The Gumnut Babies became an instant hit when they first appeared on 5 December 1916 in a booklet published by Angus & Robertson, and the Gum-Blossom Babies soon followed.

"The arrival of the Gumnut Babies in December was no coincidence," says State Library Senior Curator Alison Wishart. "It was brilliant marketing designed to take advantage of the Christmas season - both publications became 'must-have' Christmas gifts that year, selling out quickly."

Original illustrations and beautiful reproductions from May Gibbs' much-loved children's books, including early drafts and unpublished drawings, as well as examples of her specially commissioned work, will be on show at the State Library until 27 February 2017.

According to acting NSW State Librarian and Chief Executive, Lucy Milne: "The State Library holds a remarkable collection of May Gibbs' original illustrations, cartoons and literary papers, most of which was deposited at the library in 1970 by the copyright holders, the Northcott Society and the Cerebral Palsy Alliance."

"This anniversary offers a wonderful opportunity for audiences to see highlights from this rare and beautiful collection, and to introduce May Gibbs and her lovable bush characters and fairytale landscapes to a whole new audience," Ms Milne said.

Visitors to the State Library both big and small are encouraged to look up high and search down low to find bush babies hidden around the building.

As Australia's first full-time, professionally trained children's book author and illustrator, May Gibbs created the Gumnut Babies, Gum-Blossom Babies, Snugglepot and Cuddlepie and the Wattle Babies at the very start of her career, and is what she is remembered most for.

She supported herself to live in Sydney through various commissions from publishers, designing covers for magazines such as the *Sydney Mail* and commercial work. During the First World War, she designed a series of popular postcards and bookmarks for soldiers overseas. *About Us*, May Gibbs' first published book (London, 1912) remains largely unknown to Australian audiences.

May Gibbs: Celebrating 100 Years is on display at the State Library of NSW until 26 February 2017.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Golda Mitchell, Media & Communications, State Library of NSW
(02) 9273 1691, 0434 683 435, golda.mitchell@sl.nsw.gov.au