

## Ms Kathleen Mollie Gillen

The degree of Doctor of Letters (*honoris causa*) was conferred upon Kathleen Mollie Gillen, biographer and journalist, at the Arts ceremony held in the Great Hall at 11.30am on 13 April 1995.



The Chancellor, Dame Leonie Kramer, with Kathleen Mollie Gillen, photo, *'The University of Sydney News'*, 5 July 1995.

### Citation

*Presented by the Acting Vice-Chancellor and Principal D J Anderson*

Chancellor

I have the honour to present Mrs Kathleen Mollie Gillen AM for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (*honoris causa*).

Mrs Gillen graduated in Arts from this University in 1930 and then worked in London for some years before going to Canada with her Canadian husband. She worked as a federal government information officer in Ottawa and was active in the University Women's Club. In 1961 she moved to Toronto and spent eleven years as associate editor and staff writer with the Canadian magazine, *Chatelaine*.

Earlier, she had developed an interest in writing and in 1960 published a thriller, *Star of Death* and the first of a series of short stories for the *Saturday Evening Post*. Then, in steady succession, came a biography of the Canadian Massey family, a book exploring the relationship between the Duke of Kent (Queen Victoria's father) and his French mistress, and an account of the assassination of Spencer Perceval, the only British Prime Minister to have met such a death. In 1975, she published a biography of L.M. Montgomery, Canada's best known writer of children's fiction and author of the celebrated *Ann of Green Gables* series. Mrs Gillen justifiably gained a high reputation for the quality of her writing, the range of her interests and the depth of her research. In 1965 she won the President's Medal of the University of Western Ontario for a three-part series of articles on the Massey family.

Her standing has been further enhanced by the important contributions she has made in more recent years to Australian history. She began in 1982 with an outstanding article on the reasons for the settlement of New South Wales. This appeared in the prestigious *English Historical Review* and stands out as a major contribution to a continuing controversy.

In 1985, she published *The Search for John Small*, which set new standards for the writing of family history. For the Australian bicentenary she wrote *The Founders of Australia*, a most impressive book, which analysed the background to the First Fleet and contained meticulously researched pen-pictures.

Mrs Gillen clearly is one of our more illustrious graduates and possesses in abundance those qualities of mind and character which are the hallmark of the dedicated scholar.

Chancellor, I have the honour to present Mrs Kathleen Mollie Gillen for admission to the degree of Doctor of Letters (*honoris causa*).