



Dorothea Hancock at left, with her brother John, his wife Phyllis and children Jean and Bill during 1940 (courtesy Margaret Little); and at right with students at Wynstones School, Gloucester in 1961 (courtesy Gail Pinnington).

Mary Dorothea Hancock (1906-1992) was born on 5 June 1906 at *Rosevean*, 31 Richardson Street, West Perth to Dublin-born William Neilson Hancock (1873-1964) and Anna Dorothea (Tonkin) Hancock (c.1876-1929). Her parents had married in July 1901 at St John's Church, Perth. Preferring the name Dorothea (and known in family circles as 'Doff'), she attended the Alexandra High School, West Perth, which became part of St Mary's Girls' School in 1921.

Neilson Hancock, as he chose to be called, was an accountant. Neilson was secretary to the Perth Public Hospital from 1897 until 1913, when he was dismissed due to a dispute with the hospital board. He then became secretary to the Western Australian branch of the British Medical Association 1918-44, and registrar of the Medical Board 1927-49. Neilson's brother William John Hancock (1864-1931) achieved renown in Western Australia as an electrical engineer, telephone pioneer and pioneer in X-rays. In early 1934 a memorial window in his honour was placed within the foyer of Winthrop Hall at the University of Western Australia, and Hancock family descendants recall that Dorothea provided a highly-rated entry in the competition for its design.

Dorothea's elder brother Neilson John (known as John or Jack) Hancock was born in 1902. John travelled to England in 1922 to qualify as an aeronautical engineer, and worked with various companies including the Bristol Aeroplane Company, Hawker Siddeley, and Vickers. Dorothea's sister Lucy Hope Patricia (known as Pat) was born in 1908, and a younger brother Stephen Hugh (known as Hugh) was born at South Perth in May 1916.

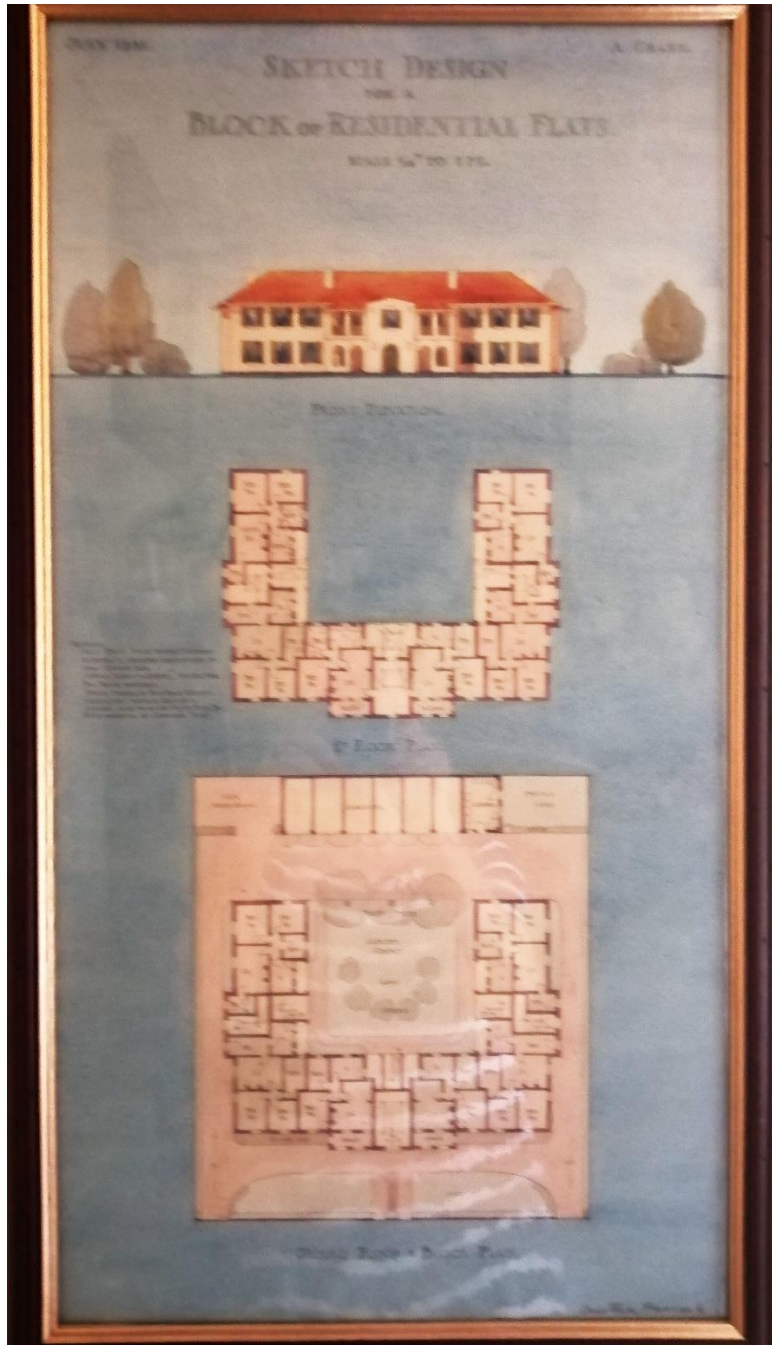
Dorothea showed early academic skills and promise for architecture, winning numerous prizes at the Alexandra High School in West Perth from 1918, and the Form VI drawing prize at St Mary's Girls' School Speech Day in December 1923. Obviously a gifted young woman, Dorothea left for Melbourne on the SS *Katoomba* in 1924 to study art, and remained in Victoria for some time, attending the National Gallery School of Art in Melbourne during 1925-26. Returning to Perth, she served articles with architects Oldham, Boas & Ednie-Brown during 1927-30, whilst also studying at the University of Western Australia and Perth Technical School.

In July 1930 Dorothea was part of a committee that organised the Architectural Students' Association ball held in the Young Australia League Hall. The committee included gifted individuals such as Walter L. Green, Ken Cameron, Ben Clifton, Gordon Finn and Gus Kreitmayer (later Creightmore) – prominent in future Western Australian architectural circles. Later that month newspapers carried mention of candidates who had passed the University of Western Australia's art certificate examination, in order of merit: John B. Fitzhardinge, Dorothea Hancock, George Rowe, Gus Kreitmayer, and Ernest John Quinn. In August 1931 it was reported that candidates who had passed the University of Western Australia's history of architecture examination were, in order of merit: Dorothea Hancock, George J.S. Nelson, Zoie T. Bennett, and Leo C. Clark.

Dorothea worked at Oldham, Boas & Ednie-Brown during 1931-32, and then with architect E. Le. B. Henderson in 1933. After registering as an architect (no. 139) in WA during December 1932, just the third female in the State to do so, Dorothea became a member of the Royal Institute of Architects of Western Australia (RIAWA). Hancock, with Nancy Allen and Zoie Bennett, were the first female members of the previously male-dominated professional body. Despite a promising increase in the number of women entering the profession in WA in the 1930s, with the disruption of the Second World War (1939-1945) hindering the potential studies of both men and women, just six females were registered as architects in Western Australia in the first half of the Twentieth Century.

Dorothea's mother Anna had died in March 1929, and her father, aged in his early sixties, remarried in early 1934 to the much younger Annie Clausen Smith (1898-1986). Social notes in the *Daily News* of March 1934 mention Dorothea

(around 28 years) and her step-mother (around 36 years) attending a cricket match at the WACA ground. Pat Hancock had left WA for England in the early 1930s. With the economic difficulties of the Great Depression in the 1930s, and perhaps missing the company of her closest siblings, Dorothea embarked on the *Orsova* for London in April 1934, undoubtedly also seeking greater work opportunity and experience. She would have been extremely gratified to hear of receiving the E.G. Cohen Medal for 1934, awarded by the RIAWA.



Dorothea Hancock's 'Sketch Design for a Block of Residential Flats' drawing of July 1931, probably produced for the Architects Board examination (courtesy John Raybould)

Arriving in the United Kingdom, Dorothea toured English cathedral cities, parts of Scotland, and also visited Italy during 1934. Securing work with S.H. White Consultant Engineers of Westminster during 1935, she was able to spend six weeks touring on the continent, visiting relatives in Austria, then joining Mewes & Davis Architects, based at 1 Old Burlington Street in Mayfair, from 1936. In these times, Dorothea studied design at the Bartlett School of Architecture during 1934-35, design and other subjects at the Northern Polytechnic 1935-38, and then Theory of Structures and Materials at the Regent Street Polytechnic during 1938. Achieving another significant milestone in her career, Hancock passed the Royal Institute of British Architects examination in December 1938.

Proposed by Charles Henry Gage FRIBA (d.1958), a partner at Mewes & Davis, Dorothea was admitted as an Associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects in early 1939. Her admission papers were recommended by Gage, Sir Albert Edward Richardson FRIBA (1880-1964), and Thomas E. Scott FRIBA. At that time 'Doff' was 'flating' at Streatham Hill with ex-Perth friend 'Nan' Ford, who accompanied her to the RIBA Meeting, there to be also congratulated by Gordon Finn, a fellow ex-Perth architect also gaining experience in the UK.

A Perth newspaper note of 1937 records Dorothea as bridesmaid at Pat's wedding, to be held at her brother John's residence in Somerset. No doubt 'Doff' maintained close contacts with her siblings in this time, and only the outbreak of the Second World War (1939-1945) could squash the looming prospect of a happy life in England and the continuation of a highly rewarding architectural career. During the war, older brother John continued his aeronautical work for the benefit of British air forces while based in Surrey, and younger brother Hugh served in the Royal Australian Navy reserve.

Dorothea's nieces recall that in 1938 "Doff was asked by a friend to go with her to a talk about the Rudolf Steiner education system", and that the presentation made a great impression upon her. At some stage in following years she went to be near a Steiner School at Minehead, one that had relocated from London following the outbreak of the War. In 1943 Dorothea was at the Bristol Academy of Art, and in 1945 she lived at 5b Clifton Park, Bristol. Her location in 1946, derived from RIBA membership records, is at 128a Hampton Road in

Bristol, and in 1946-1947 she was at the Forest Row School in Sussex. By 1947 Dorothea had become a teacher at Wynstones School, Whaddon, immediately north of Bristol and near Gloucester. Wynstones is a Steiner/Waldorf school, where a teacher takes a single class through from age 7 to 14. Electoral rolls for 1949-1952 note her residing at Whaddon Manor in Stroud Road, Gloucester. In the late 1950s Dorothea returned to see family in Western Australia for a short period of time, and she is listed as an architect in the 1958 Electoral Roll at 14 Walker Avenue, West Perth. Returning to Wynstones and resuming teaching, by 1967 she moved to live at Tuffley (on the southern outskirts of Gloucester) with fellow teacher Frances Woolls, before that having occupied the Gatehouse at Wynstones School.

One of Dorothea's students at Wynstones, Gail Pinnington, records that:

I have a plaque at home which came from the tree which was planted in her memory in the School grounds after her death which says she was a teacher at the School from 1947-1970. Besides being a Class Teacher she was also the Handwork Teacher and taught all children in Classes 4-8 - with cross stitch/embroidery to dress/shirt making with sewing machines.

Miss Hancock - she never married or had children - was a very dedicated, capable and respected teacher who had a profound effect on some of her pupils in particular and who still appreciate her influence today. Dorothea lived for many years (late 1950's and early 1960's) in the Lodge in the School grounds. She suffered with rheumatism and on a few occasions our small class went to the Lodge for our lessons.

Prior to my leaving School Miss Hancock had moved to a house that she shared with her very dear friend and colleague Miss Woolls which was a few doors down the road from my family home so I saw her on occasions when I returned home. She was always interested and still a teacher despite now being retired! During the late 1950's as my Class Teacher, I was aware she was an architect and she was designing the new building which was to be the Eurythmy Room with handwork and art classrooms above. With this project she incorporated what we referred to as Steiner building (corners cut off doors and windows!). The building is still in use today.

I last saw her not long before she died - I am not sure what was specifically wrong but she told me she did not want the proposed treatment and she would let things take their course - she had a quiet acceptance and her sentiments have stayed with me.



Photo of entry canopy to the Eurythmy Room, a building designed by Dorothea Hancock at Wynstones School, Gloucester (courtesy Graham Kennish, 2019)

Another former pupil, John Raybould, provides further glimpses of the character of the beloved teacher whom he stressed was always addressed by students as 'Miss Hancock':

Dorothea was in her late 50's when we met. As I developed from a child into a mature adult, I soon realised how committed she was to the school. Salaries at the school were very meagre, just enough for living expenses. She had no need for designer clothes, cars, jewellery or television. She only needed her radio and of course her books. Her living standard was very frugal and her time completely dedicated to the school and the children. I remember very well her typical winter dress. Dorothea was tall, I expect over 6ft. She wore in the winter a pencil skirt and matching jacket of a coarse weave which came out season after season accompanied by the same white blouse. The only

adornment would be a flower or a rose worn on her lapel, that had surrendered to the strong wind in the night. At the age of 24, I worked overseas in the middle east for 7 years. Dorothea would write an airmail letter 3 or 4 times a year with all the news, hers and fellow pupils. So enthusiastic, she would write in the margins using every scrap of space. I still to this day have her letters. ...

Dorothea died at Gloucester in England on 24 January 1992, aged 85 years. But for the intervention of the the Second World War, it is possible that she would have followed a career as an architect and partner in a prominent London-based firm. Her transition to a teacher, highly regarded and lovingly remembered by former students, is testimony both to her character and to the depth of her education.

Dorothea's brother Jack had remained in England, and died at Surrey in 1960, aged 58 years. His two children migrated to live in WA in the 1950s. Neilson Hancock died at West Perth in October 1964, aged 90. Dorothea's stepmother Annie Clausen Hancock died at Nedlands in May 1986 aged 88, and her brother Hugh died at Albany in December 1986 aged 70 years.

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NAA A6769 HANCOCK STEPHEN HUGH Service Number F3159 DOB 19 May 1916.

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