



Bill Tracey
(Courtesy John Tracey)

William Harold Arthur Tracey (1903-1986) was born 4 September 1903 in Adelaide, South Australia. He was the second of three children to telegraphist William Charles James Tracey and Clara Annie Caddy, school teacher. 'Bill' Tracey's father had been working on the Overland Telegraph Line in the Northern Territory prior to moving to Adelaide. Bill's older sister became an accountant, and his younger sister an artist. The family moved to Western Australia in 1914, where young Tracey recorded passes in the University of Western Australia (UWA) Junior Certificate examinations – in 1921 for English & Geography at the Midland Junction examination centre; and in 1922 also in Mathematics and Drawing as a private student.

Tracey served his articles with architects Eales & Cohen, and in August 1924 it was noted that he and Margaret Pitt Morison had passed an examination at the University of Western Australia following a course of lectures given by A.R.L. Wright, the patriarch of architectural education in WA. Bill passed an Art Certificate exam conducted by UWA in 1926, and having passed the exams set by the Architects Board of WA, registered as an architect in June 1928 (no.120), by which time he had joined Hobbs, Smith & Forbes.

Bill Tracey designed Arundale Hall for the Perth Lodge of the Theosophical Society in 1928 on a *pro bono* basis, largely on the instigation of his sister Clare, a prominent member of the Society. Built at the corner of James and Museum Streets in Perth, the premises have been demolished. From 1929-1934 Tracey is listed as an architect in *Wises Directory* at Perth – whilst working at Hobbs, Smith & Forbes, re-titled Hobbs Forbes & Partners in 1932. Bill was an active member of, and competed in competitions for, the Swan River Rowing Club, part-founded by his employer Sir J.J. Talbot Hobbs.

In April 2006, ninety-three year old Norman McGow was able to recall the partners, architects, draftsmen and typists of Hobbs Forbes & Partners during the 1930s. Born in 1913, McGow had worked for the Perth practice as a draftsman from November 1928 through to February 1936, with a break during the depression. McGow noted that in the early 1930s an emerging band of very talented young architects at Hobbs Forbes & Partners shared the large drawing office, including Athol Hobbs, Alex Winning, Bill Tracey, and Leslie Walker.

In 1933 Tracey was Secretary of the Town Planning Institute of WA, and with the Depression reducing all business opportunities at this time, he may have moved from Hobbs Forbes & Partners to enjoy the permanence of government employment at the Public Works Department (PWD). Eventually economic circumstances improved, and in May 1935 *The West Australian* newspaper reported that Tracey had resigned from the PWD to join with prominent architect Michael Cavanagh (1860-1941) and form the practice Cavanagh, Cavanagh & Tracey at 42 St George's Terrace, Perth.

Cavanagh, Cavanagh & Tracey undertook a significant amount of Catholic work with churches and schools etc within the State, and within the stability of this employment Bill Tracey married Annie Veronica Yuille in November 1935 at St Mary's Cathedral, Perth. There were two children from this union, Anne, born in 1942 and John, born in 1944. Tracey then joined with Howard Bonner (1904-1975) during early 1937, bringing a number of church and school projects into the partnership, including Immaculate Conception Church on the corner of Preston Point Road and Canning Highway, East Fremantle. Achieving a deal of professional prominence, Tracey was elected an Associate of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects on 28 November 1938.

Both Tracey and Howard Bonner enlisted in the Royal Australian Engineers during the Second World War and served 1942-1945. Other WA architects whose army engineering appointments were announced at the same time in 1941 included Ken Duncan and Marshall Clifton. After being discharged from the Australian Army, Tracey rejoined the PWD, before moving to the State Housing Commission (SHC) in 1952. Bill was appointed architect in charge of the architectural division from September 1953 – February 1966. During that period the SHC erected over 22,000 houses and flats throughout the State. As

Chief Architect, Tracey was the guiding force behind introducing many new plan types to give better aesthetics to low-cost housing, over a State-wide range of geographical and climatic conditions.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Perth had experienced a severe housing shortage as Western Australia experienced high birth rates and attracted many migrants. In this climate the SHC turned to constructing multi storey flats, a decision that was not always popular with the public. In 1956 significant public debate occurred over the construction of Wandana Flats in Subiaco - this complex had at its centre a ten-storey building. Opened at nearby West Perth in December 1958, the now State Heritage listed *Graham Flats* comprises two three-storey brick buildings. Subject to some earlier schemes, the final design for *Graham Flats* was completed 'in house' by the SHC, with Tracey chief architect and the design architect Neville Coulter.

Tracey became ill with heart trouble in 1965, took leave and eventually resigned as Chief Architect due to his health in early 1966. The General Manager of the SHC soon wrote to the Institute of Architects in Perth suggesting that Tracey might be elevated in professional status, noting Tracey had guided the SHC's architects in the design of notable social service flat projects such as *Graham Flats* in West Perth for elderly pensioner couples; South Perth, Swanbourne & Carlisle Flats for elderly women; also flats for Navy personnel and workman's flats at Fremantle. Besides undertaking the responsibility for low-cost operations, Tracey was the main architectural adviser to government departments requiring housing in the north and in country centres.

In 1966 Tracey was resident at 61 Lockhart Street, Como and a letter to Bill from the SHC confirming his resignation stated that "All of us, too, are hoping that through laying down the cares of responsibility of office, your health will very considerably improve and that you will have a long and happy retirement." Bill had designed the first family home at 5 Webb Street, Cottesloe. The family had relocated to Darlington in 1948, and to Como in 1957. After retiring, Bill and Annie (known as 'Vern') Tracey moved to Busselton, where he assisted with extensions to St Joseph's Convent and renovations to St Joseph's Church. Vern Tracey died in 1980, and Bill died on 30 September 1986 at age 83. They are buried in Busselton Cemetery.

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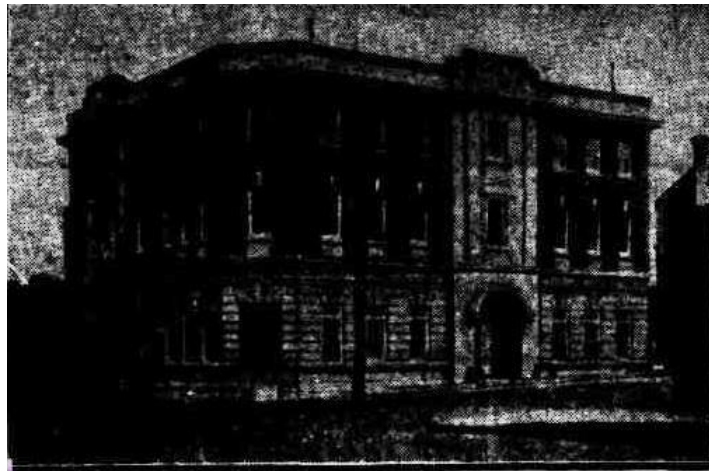
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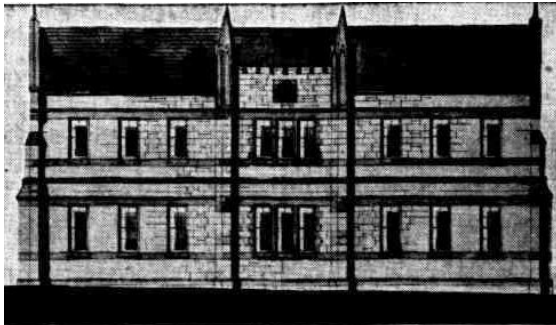
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Arundale Hall, the new premises of the Perth Lodge of the Theosophical Society, at the corner of James-street and Museum-street. The building was declared open last week.

Now demolished, Arundale Hall was the home of the Perth Lodge of the Theosophical Society, and opened in early 1929 (*The West Australian*, 16 February 1929, p.8).



Christian Brothers' High School, Ellen-street, Fremantle, as it will appear when two-storey extensions have been completed at a cost of £3,123. The architects are Messrs. Howard Bonner and Tracey.



Two-storey extensions at CBC Fremantle completed in 1939 (*The West Australian*, 12 November 1938, p.8; Google 2013).



Immaculate Conception Church of 1940, corner of Preston Point Road and Canning Highway, East Fremantle (Google 2013).