



Tony O'Hara at around twenty-five years of age (NAA A9300)

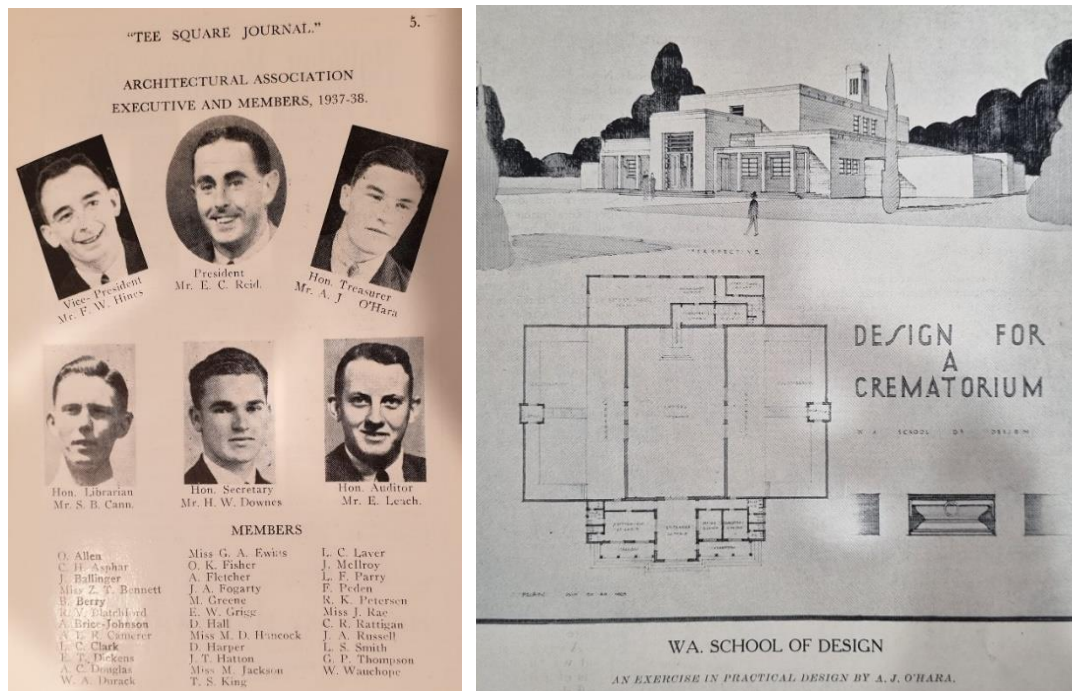
**Anthony John O'Hara** (1917-2013) was born 16 May 1917, a son of John Patrick and Alice Maud (nee Kennedy) O'Hara. 'Tony' was born at his aunt and uncle's (James Kennedy) house *Muro*, 21 St Leonard's Avenue West Leederville. The O'Hara family lived in a house 500 metres away at 85 Blencowe Street West Leederville. Tony had siblings Margaret Mary b.1918, Alice Patricia b.1919, Bernard Aloysius b.1921, and James Michael b.1923.

Tony attended St Joseph's Primary School on the corner of McCourt Street and Railway Parade at Subiaco, and then Christian Brothers College at Perth. He passed exams at the Leaving standard held in November 1933. After high school, he was unsure of a career path and began work as an office boy for the legal firm Dwyer, Durack and Dunphy. Tony soon realized that the law was not to be his chosen profession, and having decided on architecture he was articled to Harold Krantz (1906-1999) from around 1935. The O'Hara family moved from Leederville to Dalkeith from late 1935, when John O'Hara had Reg Summerhayes (1897-1965) design a £3 000 residence at Birdwood Parade.



The Design Class at UWA Crawley, with Bill Leighton standing front left, Tony O'Hara probably the second from the right at rear; and editorial staff for the Architectural Association's *Tee Square Journal* of 1937 (pp.22, 27). Of the four staff shown, only Arnold Camerer, unable to serve due to medical issues, survived the Second World War.

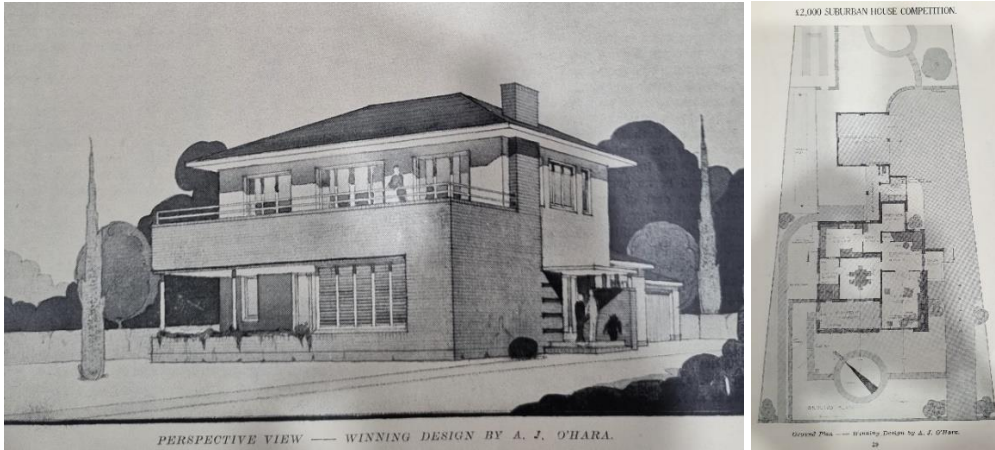
The School of Architectural Design was commenced at the University of Western Australia (UWA) in 1936, initially under William Leighton (1905-1990), and Tony was soon a member of the class. In 1937 Tony was the Honorary Treasurer of the Architectural Association of WA, a largely student group. In May 1938 he was part of the organizing committee of the annual T-Square Ball held at the Embassy Ballroom in Perth.



Architectural Association Executive and Members 1937-38 (*Tee Square Journal*, 1937, p.5); example of Tony O'Hara's work at the WA School of Design (*The Architect*, March 1940, p.41).

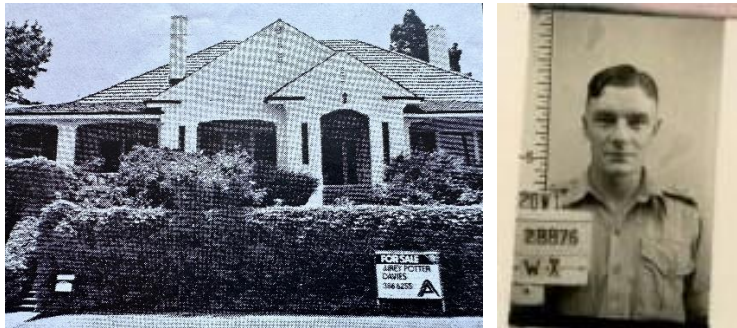
By mid-1940 Bill Leighton had signed up for Second World War (1939-1945) service, and the class was under the aegis of Marshall Clifton (1903–1975). With the onset of the war, and many architects away (Clifton joined the Army in 1941), the studio class experienced difficulties with support and was discontinued, with a formal architectural course not finally established at Perth Technical College until 1946.

In 1940 the Royal Institute of the Architects of Western Australia (RIAWA) held a competition for students to design of a house to cost no more than £2 000, and Tony's entry took first place, winning a prize of £5/5/-! But with the onset of the war and patriotic fervor, many students and architects of varying ages were drawn to serve in the Australian forces. The fact that almost all economic activity was directed toward the war, soon obliterated 'normal' building projects.



Tony O'Hara's first place house design in a student competition (RIAWA 10th Architectural Exhibition 1940 catalogue, pp.28-29; also featured in *The Architect*, June 1940, pp.24,26).

Tony was recorded as an architectural draftsman with six years' experience, living with his parents at 47 Birdwood Parade Dalkeith when he enlisted during August 1940 for Second World War service, initially in the Army. He noted that he had passed the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) exams in all subjects except building construction. Tony undertook various tasks in the army, being chief draftsman and quantity surveyor to his unit, and in 1942 completing a course at the School of Military Engineering in NSW.



O'Hara residence built in 1935 at 47 Birdwood Parade Dalkeith; Tony O'Hara pictured in 1942 (Michael O'Hara; NAA B883, WX28876).

Tony's brother Bernard was the pilot of an RAF Boston 111 undertaking an armed reconnaissance mission over Sicily and killed in action in July 1943. This tragedy led Tony to decide that he could do more for the war effort, and to transfer to the Air Force from September 1943. He then undertook extensive flying training in Australia, Canada, and Australia again, rising to the rank of Flying Officer by April 1945. 'Students' Notes' in *The Architect* in mid-1945 inform that Tony had been home on leave from Benalla in Victoria, which accords with his service records.

With the war coming to an end, and to the great relief of his family and friends, Tony was spared active service overseas. A number of his colleagues were not so fortunate. Harry Wraith Downes (1918-1943), Osborne Kirkton Fisher (1913-1941), Ernest William Grigg (1917-1942), Leonard Courtney Laver (1917-1943), John Henry Stubbs (1918-1942), and Michael Courthorpe Haynes (1920-1942) were all younger members of the WA architectural profession whose lives were cut short by the horrors of the Second World War. In 1943 Zoie Bennett (1911-1985) lost her husband John Fryer, and Vida Wright's (1915-2005) fiancé Bill Philippon was killed in New Guinea. Tony was demobilized in September 1945, and resumed his career in architecture, with the first task to finalize the examinations that had been curtailed by the war five years previous.

Following his war service Tony worked in a variety of jobs and locations, including in Tasmania with the Hydro Electric Commission. Having passed all the required subjects, Tony was registered with the Architects Board of Western Australia (no.181) in February 1947. He became an Associate member of the RAlA in 1949. In 1950 the WA Architectural Students Association periodical *Phi* stated in a section headed 'Ex-Student Notes' that '*Tony O'Hara and Bill Durack wander regularly from Sydney to New Guinea as representatives of Rudder Littlemore and Rudder (we hope our information is correct, as this sounds more like a sailing direction than a firm)*'. William Aiden Durack (1918-2010), born the year after Tony, also attended school at CBC Perth, and Tony's aunt Agnes O'Hara married Bill's great-uncle Jerry Brice Durack, so the young architects had a close association from even before their 1930s student days.

Bill Durack had worked for Rudder Littlemore and Rudder earlier during the war, before resuming with them in late 1945. It is likely that Bill's influence led to Tony working in Sydney. The firm had a very extensive and varied practice, and were then engaged as architects for Qantas Empire Airways, who were expanding after the war with flights to London. They were active in New Guinea, and it appears Bill and Tony made frequent visits there to supervise building works in remote locations. About the same time the multi-storey Qantas Head Office was built at 1 Chifley Square in the heart of Sydney, with Rudder Littlemore & Rudder the architects of the iconic building, one of the first buildings in Australia to utilise curtain walled technology.



Qantas House, designed by Rudder Littlemore & Rudder and built in 1950 at 1 Chifley Square Sydney (Darren Bradley photo, Docomomo Australia)

Tony returned to Perth and in May 1953 married Queenslander Ruth Jean Hughes at the Church of the Holy Rosary, Nedlands, with Tony's brother Jim acting as the best man. Tony had been introduced to Ruth at Rottnest Island by Mary Rodoreda, a friend from another Dalkeith family. Tony and Ruth lived in a number of rental homes in Mount Lawley, Cottesloe, Nedlands and Shenton Park before Tony designed and built a family home at 93 Thomas Street Nedlands, completed in 1959. The couple had children Michael b.1954, Bernie b.1955, Gerard b.1957, and Mary Anne later.



Tony and Ruth O'Hara were married at the Church of the Holy Rosary, Nedlands in May 1953 (O'Hara family).

Tony's father John O'Hara died in January 1954 at Dalkeith aged 77 years, his mother Alice lived on to April 1976, passing away at Belmont aged 91 years. The *Daily News* noted that John's remaining children inherited a fair amount at his death: *'Retired bloodstock salesman and racehorse owner John Patrick O'Hara, of Birdwood Parade, Dalkeith, left a £29,824 estate. ... He left the bulk of his estate to his children Anthony, James, Patricia and Margaret. Included in the estate were nine racehorses ...'*

RAIA records note that by 1957 Tony was located at the CBC Chambers, 42 St George's Terrace Perth – his father had also an office there previously. Tony ran a small but successful architectural practice, and the children were often asked to accompany their father to help survey a site. This would usually involve walking through dirt or bush to hold the survey staff, while Tony took the relative levels. As with many other WA architectural firms, by the 1970s Tony's sole practice (with one or two drafters) was located to the west of the City of Perth. RAIA year books confirm that in 1975 he was at 357 Rokeby Road Subiaco, in 1980 at 15 Cook Street West Perth, in 1986 at 9 Altona Street West Perth, and in 1988 at 33 Ventnor Street West Perth. Family records provide some of Tony's extensive portfolio of design works. Residences included his own family home at 93 Thomas Street Nedlands; the O'Leary residence at 14 Peebles Road Floreat; and Simper residence at 12 Bird Street in Mosman Park. Tony maintained a strong Catholic faith all his life and was a regular reader at the Holy Rosary Church in Nedlands for many years. He undertook a significant amount of work for the Church in WA, including the design of:

St Joachim's Church, 122 Shepperton Road Victoria Park of 1955



St Joachim's Church Victoria Park (<https://www.perthcatholic.org.au/Parish>)

St Columba's Church, 32 Roberts Street Bayswater of 1958

Holy Family Church, 27 Capel Street Kirup of 1959



Holy Family Church Kirup (SLWA BA2493 1899)

St Aloysius Church, 84 Keightley Road West, Shenton Park of 1962



St Aloysius Church Shenton Park (<https://www.perthcatholic.org.au/Parish>)

Sacred Heart Church, 20 Hoddy Street Goomalling of 1963

Our Lady of Lourdes Church 265 Flinders Street Nollamara of 1964

An altar redesign at the Holy Rosary Church, Nedlands, and the Holy Rosary Presbytery are likely to be 1960s-1970s works

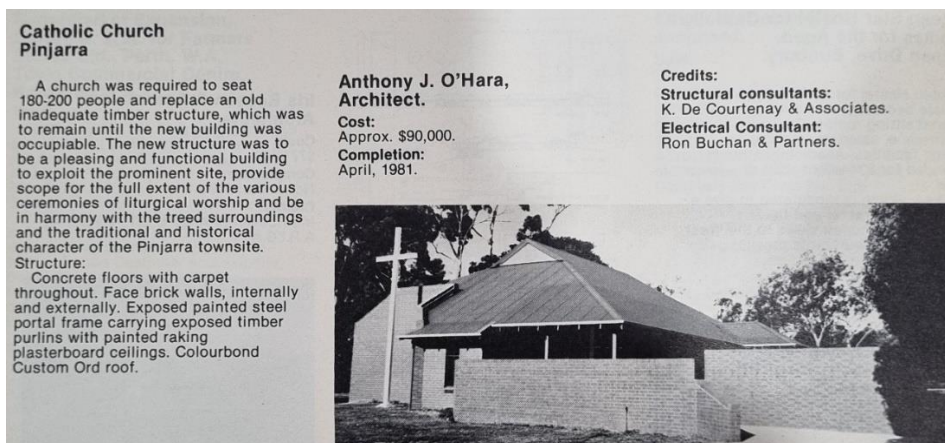
Our Lady's Assumption Church, cnr of Stevenson & Creery Streets Mandurah of 1969 (side aisles 1975), and the Presbytery

St Mary's Church, South Avenue Merredin of 1973, the Presbytery, and St Mary's School including administration area to front of school (c.1976)



St Mary's Church Merredin (<https://www.perthcatholic.org.au/Parish>)

### St Augustine's Church, 40 George Street Pinjarra of 1981



St Augustine's Church of 1981 at George Street Pinjarra (*The Architect*, 82.2, p.18).

### St Columba's Church Centre, Forrest Street South Perth of 1986

Tony's aged care works for Catholic institutions included St Vincents 'C' class hospital in the late 1960's at Bunbury; St Vincents at Guildford in the 1970's; and Nazareth House nursing home in the 1970s (now demolished). He also designed a number of schools for the WA Education Department, and only retired when he was seventy-one years old.

Tony O'Hara is an outstanding example of a young Australian who undertook initial architectural study and training in the 1930s, only for their life to be severely interrupted and career postponed by the Second World War. He was at least fortunate to survive the war, when one brother and many colleagues did not, and was eventually able to commence architectural practice with an even more extensive background training following his war experience.



Tony was able to enjoy the relaxed Western Australian lifestyle, and raising an extensive family. He died at Nedlands on 24 October 2013. A newspaper notice at his passing records: *O'Hara - Anthony John (Tony) of Nedlands, passed away on 24 October 2013 at Hollywood Private Hospital, aged 96 years. Loving husband of Ruth, father and father-in law of Michael and Laura, Bernie and Karen, Gerard and Kimberley, and Mary Anne, grandfather of James and Katherine, Nicola and Louise, Isabella and Rachel.* Ruth O'Hara passed away in 2018, aged 92 years, and was buried at Karrakatta alongside Tony.

References:

'Births', *The West Australian*, 25 May 1917, p.30 (at Muro, St Leonard's Ave West Leederville).

'University Examinations Leaving Certificate', *The West Australian*, 9 January 1934, p.8.

'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 23 March 1935, p.3 (large residence Birdwood Pde Dalkeith).

'Residences', *The West Australian*, 6 April 1935, p.4 (£2,994 design by R. Summerhayes).

'This Week's Permits', *The West Australian*, 13 April 1935, p.6 (Birdwood Parade for O'Hara).

'Varied Activities', *The West Australian*, 5 May 1938, p.6 (tenth annual T-Square Ball).

'Itching to be in it', *Daily News*, 21 July 1942, p.9 (Bernie O'Hara).

NAA: B883, WX28876, O'HARA ANTHONY JOHN : Service Number - WX28876 : DOB - 16 May 1917 : POB -PERTH WA : POE - GUILDFORD WA : NOK - O'HARA JOHN

NAA: A9300, O'HARA ANTHONY JOHN : Service Number - 441489 : DOB - 16 May 1917 : POB - PERTH WA : POE - PERTH : NOK - O'HARA JOHN

NAA: A9301, 415176 O'HARA BERNARD ALOYSIUS : Service Number - 415176 : DOB - 03 Jun 1921 : POB - PERTH WA : POE - PERTH WA : NOK - O'HARA JOHN

NAA: A705, 166/31/85 O'HARA, Bernard Aloysius - (Flight Sergeant); Service Number - 415176; File type - Casualty - Repatriation; Aircraft - Boston 3 AL 747; Place - Catania, Italy; Date - 18 July 1943

NAA: A9301, 436808 O'HARA JAMES MICHAEL : Service Number - 436808 : DOB - 17 Dec 1923 : POB WEST LEEDERVILLE WA : POE - PERTH WA : NOK O'HARA JOHN

'Mr and Mrs Anthony O'Hara', *The West Australian*, 11 May 1953, p.13 (picture, Adelphi Hotel).

'Racehorse Owner Leaves £29,824', *Daily News*, 12 March 1954, p.8.

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**Citation details:**

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