



Brian Kloppe in the early 1980s (AIA-WA E-News 16 December 2020)

Brian Ross Kloppe (1937-2020) was born 10 July 1937 at Fermoy Hospital in Northam, to parents Harold Raymond and Ruth Laretta (nee Hill) Kloppe of *The Glynde* at Seabrook – east of Northam. Harold and Ruth had married at the Northam Church of Christ Chapel in December 1935. Brian recalled that he “*grew up in a little mud brick house on the banks of the Mortlock River, about 10km out of Northam on the York Road. ... I went to school with about 7 students for a few years and then for Year 2 the bus started up and we went to East Northam School and then we moved to Chidlow for my last year*”. He then attended Midland Junction High School and Perth Modern School, before commencing training to become an architect at Perth Technical College (PTC) in 1955.

At PTC, Brian served as a president of the Architectural Students Association, and was granted a cadetship with the Public Works Department (PWD) in 1959 under Principal Architect Albert Ernest (Paddy) Clare (1894-1975). Ken Adam, who commenced at PTC in 1960, later noted his very similar early training, and admiration for Brian - who became a lifelong friend and colleague: *After graduating I continued to work with the Public Works Department Architectural Division. My cadetship had delivered vacation employment and included a bond to work with the Department for four years after graduation. It was no hardship. The PWD was an excellent training ground, providing exceptionally varied work and, after graduation, unprecedented opportunities. In my generation notable graduates from the PWD included Brian Kloppe, Mike Fitzhardinge, Brian Kidd, Peter Hunt and Paul Odden.*

In February 1960 Brian Klopper was registered with the Architects Board of Western Australia (reg no 333). He took leave from the PWD in 1961 to work in Melbourne for architects Chancellor and Patrick, sharing a house with fellow young PTC graduates and Western Australian architects Peter Little (reg no 337), Barry Cameron (reg no 338), and Walter Hunter (reg no 342). Brian and Gillian Adrienne Boucaut were married at Perth in 1962.

In 1964 the Kloppers travelled to Japan, the USA and Canada, with Brian working in Vancouver and Montreal before arriving at London in 1967. In 1968, after travelling overland to India, they returned to Perth, where Brian was encouraged by his friend Bob Gare (reg no 357) to join him working with L.W. Buckeridge & Associates. The practice of Len Buckeridge (reg no 354) was renowned for commercially-driven design, and Brian soon learnt the tough principles of minimising cost and maximising value. Klopper commenced the next phase of his career when he joined in a partnership with Bob Gare from 1973 to 1979, after which time he practiced on his own. Marcus Collins reviewed a 2012 exhibition titled 'Brian Klopper Architectural Projects' that was held at the University of Western Australia, and provided his own view of Klopper's work up until that time:

Klopper, a third-generation Australian born in 1937 in Northam, an early farming area of Perth, is something of an anomaly. An architect/builder/developer, his work, firstly in Subiaco and later in Fremantle, is largely single- and multi-residential. ... His use of a rustic palette of exposed recycled brick walls, brick flooring on sand, sawn timber, galvanized iron roofing, and glass walls fabricated from small steel angles and flats, with triangular "gothic" mullions and coloured glass inserts, all with little or no secondary finishing and with open planning, has been consistent throughout his career. ...



1976 Raphael Street townhouses (*Architecture Australia*, September 2012).



1980 Bellevue Terrace House (*Architecture Australia*, September 2012).

In his domestic projects Klopper takes an adventurous and innovative approach to structure, particularly with regard to suspended floors and roof structures. His early houses used exposed timber columns, beams and flooring. These were followed by houses with suspended brick floors supported by upside-down salvaged railway line joists at three-hundred-millimetre centres. His recent vaulted brick floors and ceilings are gravity defying and the lateral thrust on the cavity masonry walls is controlled by steel rod ties or external engaged pier buttressing, or a combination of both. ...



1983 Hopetoun Terrace House (*Architecture Australia*, September 2012).

Klopper attained something approaching cult status in the 1980s, with real estate agents advertising certain properties as “Klopperesque.” His persona closely matches his work, and the words rugged, forthright, outspoken, bush philosopher, bush lawyer, bush businessman and imposing (six and a half feet) come to mind when thinking of him, as well as articulate, intelligent and well-read. ...



Chapel at St Hilda's Anglican School Mosman Park of 1993
 (<https://ohta.org.au/organs/organs/MosmanParkStHildas.html>)

Jennie Officer's essay *Brian Klopper: A Practicing Architect* was published in the 2012 exhibition booklet, and notes that: *Klopper has continued to build, and in doing so, developed and adapted building technologies necessitated by cost, availability and expertise. These have led to handcrafted, often audacious solutions. ... Brian Klopper is a pivotal figure in Western Australian residential architecture. He has made substantial and original contributions to design and building technology and has been responsible for what is widely regarded as a local architectural character.*

Officer's comprehensive writing is followed by an interview with Brian that obtains some of his characteristic direct responses. The oral history (also with Andrew Murray) was extended by another Klopper interview with Alexandra Mackenzie in 2019, where Mackenzie elicited further career details, Brian's reasons for moving to Northam around 2014, and his subsequent work at the locale.



Wine Bar at Northam (*The Architect*, Spring 2019, p.36).

University of Western Australia academic leader and architectural writer Simon Anderson's entry for Brian in the Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture concludes with a statement of Brian's national influence: *Klopper has been a regular and iconoclastic contributor to professional debate and is recognised for bringing to the attention of Glenn Murcutt [celebrated Australian architect b.1936] the WA indigenous expression 'to touch-this-earth-lightly'.*

Brian Klopper died 14 December 2020 at Northam, aged 83 years. Australian Institute of Architects WA Chapter President Peter Hobbs, a former employee of Brian's, noted at his mentor's passing: *Brian Klopper was one of WA's great architects of the latter 20th century. He pioneered the re-use of buildings, such as warehouses and factories, into inner city living apartments in Fremantle and Perth, all before the phrase "adaptive re-use" was coined.*

He invented two material standards: the now ubiquitous steel window, and cut limestone cavity blockwork, both of which are now industry standards. He led the way with re-cycled materials before sustainability and embodied energy were even thought about. He mentored a generation of architects with his generous spirit of sharing and teaching. Brian created an enviable body of work, underpinned with rigorous modernist planning clothed with an Arts and Crafts sensibility. ... He had a fierce intellect, always questioning and challenging, a love of ideas accompanied with an extraordinary appetite for life.

On behalf of the entire architecture community, we send our love to his architect sons Matt and Sam, and to the rest of his family.



Brian Klopper in 2012 (*Post Newspaper*, 26 Dec 2020, p.4; *Architecture Australia*, Sep 2012).

Brian Klopper is amongst the most notable of the more than 120 Western Australian architects who graduated from PTC between 1950 and 1967, when the course was transferred to the Western Australian Institute of Technology. Brian's robust design and building portfolio, with locally distinctive responses to many factors - including modernism, materials availability and creative engineering, forms a large portion of highly valued architecture in the State from the later Twentieth and early Twenty-First Centuries.

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