



Jack Ballenger sketching (courtesy Sue Callum).

**Jack Terry Ballenger** (1913-2005) was born 29 April 1913 at 'Kounetta' North Adelaide, the son of brewer Alfred John and Nora Cecily (nee McGuigan) Ballenger, who had married at South Yarra, Victoria in 1912. The couple had two further children, Virginia Isabel (later Safe) born at 'Quarnbi' North Adelaide in 1916, and Vincent Richard born at 'Konetta' North Adelaide in December 1918. In 1923 Jack was studying at Christian Brothers' College Wakefield Street, where he was 'Prince of Football' in 1926.



The Ballenger family home from 1928, at 76 Bay View Terrace Claremont (Google 2024).

In January 1928 the Swan Brewery took control of the Emu Brewery in WA, and 'Fred' Ballenger was appointed as Emu's head brewer, bringing his wife and three children from South Australia to their new home at Bay View Terrace in Claremont. In his work, Fred is credited with creating his own version of Emu Bitter Ale, which was popular for the life of the brewery. By 1929 Jack was enrolled to complete his schooling at the Christian Brothers' College in St George's Terrace at Perth.

In 1933 Jack was working as a brewery hand, and initially it was expected that he would follow his father and grandfather in that line of work. Jack became an articulated architectural student in the later 1930s, and joined the largely student body, the Architectural Association of WA. At that time the only other option to become an architect in Western Australia was by obtaining a cadet-ship with the Public Works Department.



Architectural Association WA Executive and Members 1937-38 (*Tee Square Journal*, 1937, p.5); Jack Ballenger's design for the cover of the RIAWA's 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Architectural Exhibition held at Perth in 1938 (RAIA WA).

The School of Architectural Design was commenced at the University of Western Australia (UWA) in 1936, initially under William Leighton (1905-1990), and Jack would almost certainly have become a member of the class, also attending evening lectures for students at UWA, some given by the elderly Alfred Wright (1861-1939). By 1940 two ex-members of the Architectural Association, Jack Ballenger and John McIlroy (1915-1987), were conducting architectural drawing classes at Perth Technical College (PTC). With the onset of the war, and many architects away, the studio class experienced difficulties with support and was discontinued, with a formal architectural course not finally established at PTC until 1946.



Four architects: Jack Ballenger at right, school-friend Mark Greene at left (courtesy Sue Callum)

Following the outbreak of the war, in 1940 Jack's brother Vincent went into service with the merchant navy. Jack was 'man-powered' by 1940, and from this time worked for the Commonwealth Department of Works, soon completing various military projects. Family recall that he was involved with designing Rottneest Island gun emplacements, and the Military Hospital (110 AGH) at Hollywood in 1940-1941, probably working in concert with his cousin Frank Glennon (c.1899-1964) and Ronald Ledger (1904-1998) on that project.



Aerial photo, layout diagram, and photo of Hollywood Hospital from Monash Avenue. (photos Chris Ledger; diagram in 'Hollywood Hospital', *The West Australian*, 11 November 1941, p.4).

Engaged in late 1940, Jack married divorcee Ray Agnes Hugo at Perth in 1942. Ray had previously married in 1933, and had a daughter Robin Ann in 1934. Robin took on the name Ballenger, and she gained a sister when Jack and Ray had a daughter Susan born in March 1947. Sue Callum notes that “Dad was an eccentric and creative man about whom most folk had a funny story!”



*Celebrating their Antelass together at a party at Nedlands Ice Skating by Miss Sydney Morrow (left) and Miss Robin Ballenger.*

Jack Ballenger's step-daughter Robin with fellow PLC student Sydney Morrow at the Nedlands Tennis Club (*Western Mail*, 27 July 1950, p.32).

In 1951 the Architectural Students' Association publication *Phi* mentions under 'Ex-Students Notes' that: *'Very little is seen of Jack Ballenger these days, because even when driving the jet propelled "black bertha" he spends most of his time with his head under the bonnet. However, he invariably keeps to a straight course by maintaining Radar contact with his passenger. Jack's 99<sup>th</sup> plan for his model home has materialized, and the structure now takes shape about 1.5 miles due south of Raffles. George Thompson keeps as watchful eye on progress from the lounge of his new home on the other side of the river.'*



Ballenger residence The Esplanade, Mount Pleasant; view to the Canning River (Sue Callum).

Jack was building a residence at 191 The Esplanade, Mount Pleasant of his own design. Family also recall that he was involved with design work for the ABC

Studios in Adelaide Terrace, most likely with John Hallam (1927-2016) in the later 1950s, the Carnarvon Tracking Station in the early 1960s, and mid-1960s works at the Leeuwin Naval Base (possibly the Academic Block).



ABC Studios built in the later 1950s at Adelaide Terrace, Perth (Jane Ajduk).

The architectural design of the late 1950s Talgarno facility south of Broome in the north-west of WA, with an expected cost of works around £4 million, was carried out “by Mr Jack Ballenger at his ebullient and irascible best under the direction of Principal Architect S.H. Bedford”. Talgarno was part of the British ‘Blue Streak’ intercontinental ballistic missiles program, with the major concentration of effort at Woomera and Salisbury in South Australia. Talgarno was to provide pleasant living and working conditions for visiting scientists for extended periods, workshops and stores for special equipment, radio communications, range observation posts and also the necessary infrastructure to enable the facility to be maintained at peak efficiency between firings. Jack’s efforts may have caused him some consternation, as the project was abruptly shut down by the United Kingdom in May 1960. Its buildings were dismantled and re-erected at other locations ranging from Exmouth to Derby, with the airfield left to be used by Anna Plains Station.



Disused buildings at Talgarno c.1960s (SLWA BA3437 10).

Sue Callum recalls that “Dad was an accomplished watercolour artist. He was ambidextrous, and as a child, I loved to watch him paint, swapping hands and working with equal skill. He also drew cartoons - many when staff were leaving, or when there was an amusing or significant occasion at the office!!”



Jack and Ray Ballenger with daughter Sue on her wedding day, March 1967 (Sue Callum).

As with many architectural students of the 1930s, Jack Ballenger’s professional development was interrupted by the Second World War, in his case however leading to a long and productive career working for the Commonwealth Government. Eventually Jack had cataracts removed and his eyesight was substantially diminished, this may have led to retirement in the 1970s. He was a President and Life Member of the Swan Bowling Club.



Close up of Jack at work in the 1970s; one of his watercolour paintings (Sue Callum).

Jack’s parents had passed away in the early 1960s, Norrie Ballenger in September 1963 at Claremont aged 80 years, and Fred Ballenger in December 1965 at Claremont aged 83 years. His wife Ray died 30 April 1999 at Nedlands aged 87 years, and Jack died 8 June 2005 at Hilton aged 92 years.

References:

- 'Births', *The Express and Telegraph*, 13 May 1913, p.1 (Jack at North Adelaide).
- 'Births', *Chronicle*, 12 August 1916, p.31 (Virginia at North Adelaide).
- 'Births', *The Journal*, 4 January 1919, p.12 (Vincent at Mile-End).
- 'Dance at CBC', *Southern Cross*, 30 July 1926, p.14 (Prince of Football).
- 'To Brew Beer - Mr Ballenger Comes West', *Daily News*, 20 August 1928, p.1.
- 'Second Fours', *The West Australian*, 5 May 1930, p.16 (rowing for CBC).
- 'Unlawfully Used Car', *Western Argus*, 14 March 1933, p.10 (Jack brewery hand).
- 'Coming of Age Dance', *The West Australian*, 2 May 1936, p.14 (Bay View Tce, Lido Cottesloe).
- 'Dissolution of Marriage', *Daily News*, 26 February 1938, p.13 (Ray and Lenard Hugo).
- 'Show Week Weddings', *Daily News*, 4 October 1939, p.15 (Virginia to John Safe).
- 'Students' Notes', *The Architect*, March 1940, p.36 (Jack working for Commonwealth).
- 'Chit Chat', *Western Mail*, 12 December 1940, p.18 (Jack and Ray Hugo engaged).
- 'Births', *The West Australian*, 14 March 1947, p.1 (at Kensington Hospital, daughter Susan).
- 'Double Celebration', *Western Mail*, 27 July 1950, p.32 (party at NTC for Robin).
- 'How Must Our Natives Feel', *Daily News*, 1 November 1955, p.4 (letter from Ray Ballenger).
- 'Fifty Years of Construction', Commonwealth of Australia Department of Housing and Construction, West Australian Region, June 1981, p.38, pp.133-37, accessed online 26 April 2023  
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