



Wong Khong Tuck (at left), Michael Fitzhardinge (standing) and Choon Kok Heng (at right), architecture students at Perth Technical College in 1959 (NAA A1501, A1533-1).

Michael Berkeley Fitzhardinge (1939-1999) was born 13 February 1939 at Niola Hospital, Cambridge Street Leederville. His parents were bank officer Roger Francis Berkeley (1912-2007) and teacher Dorothy Shelagh (nee Brogan 1911-1980) Fitzhardinge, who had married at St Mary's Cathedral Perth in April 1938. With the outbreak of the Second World War (1939-1945), Roger enlisted in May 1940, and was fortunate to be able to return to Australia after taking part in the desert battle at El Alamein of 1942. 'Mike' had siblings Roger Anthony Moreton (b.1941), Phillip Maltraver (b.1944) and Digby Stratton (b.1953) Fitzhardinge. Digby died in 1971 after a rugby accident at UWA, aged just 18.

A keen sportsman, Mike went to Wembley Primary School and Christian Brothers College in Perth (now Trinity College) – he was 1956 Dux and School Captain. He completed an Associateship of Architecture at Perth Technical College in 1961, and was registered with the Architects Board of Western Australia (reg no.383) in 1962. Mike initially worked at the Public Works Department, but his career soon followed the influence of two architect uncles, John and Bill Fitzhardinge, when he joined the architectural practice Forbes & Fitzhardinge in 1966. Mike also achieved a Diploma of Town and Regional Planning in 1966.

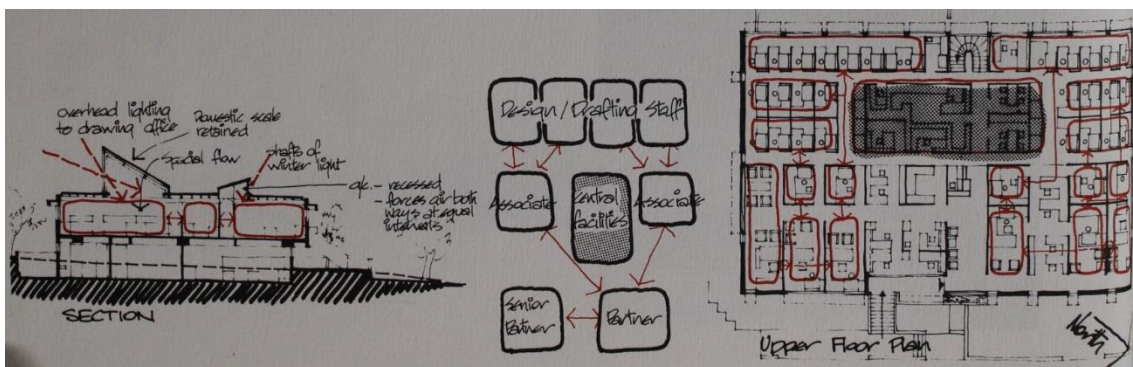
After the Second World War of 1939-1945, Forbes & Fitzhardinge (F&F) had developed from earlier prominent architectural firms, and was led by H.T. (Bill) Forbes (1904-1975) and John Berkeley Fitzhardinge (1911-2008). David Moreton Berkeley (Bill) Fitzhardinge (1920-1996) and William Milton Barton (1913-2006) were admitted to the partnership in 1954. E.G. (Gres) Cohen became a partner in 1959, and J.A.G. (Tony) Brand joined in 1964.



Three of the six Forbes & Fitzhardinge partners when Mike Fitzhardinge joined the firm in 1966 – from left Bill Forbes, John Fitzhardinge and Gres Cohen (*The Architect*, June 1966, p.30).

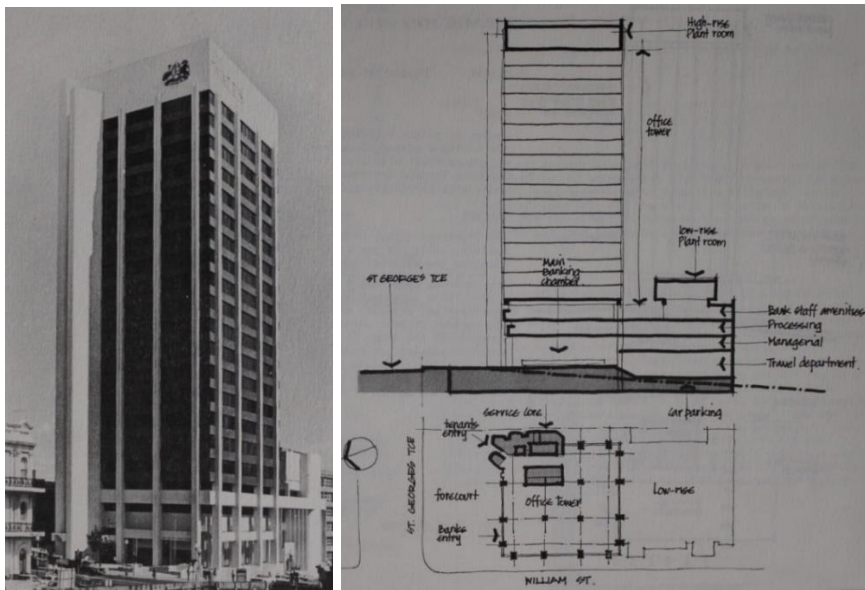
Mike Fitzhardinge married Leslie Irene May (Lisa) Ashton in December 1965. Mike and Lisa had four daughters: Mary-Jane Ashton b.1966, Anna Ashton b.1968, Sarah May Ashton b.1970 and Sophie Ashton b.1972.

Soon after Mike joined F&F, the firm designed their own office premises at 1 Ord Street West Perth, and moved there in 1967.



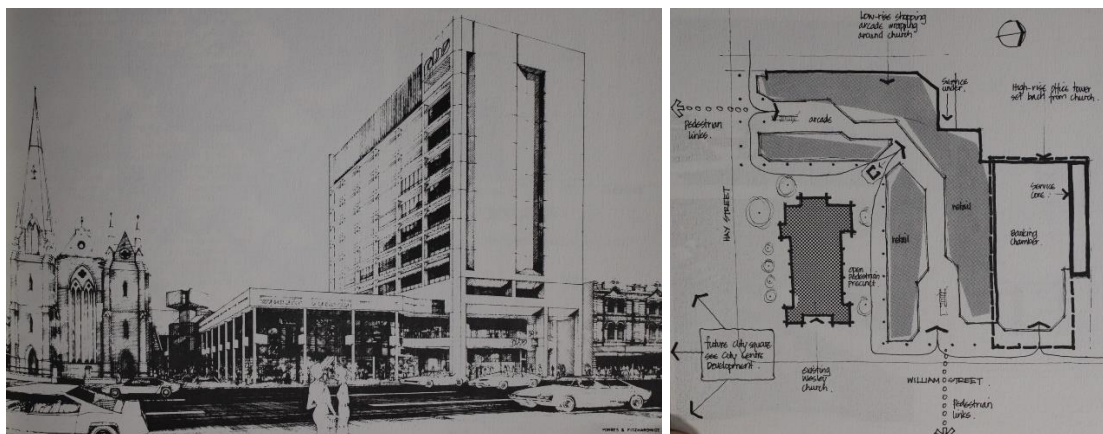
Forbes & Fitzhardinge Offices of 1967 at 1 Ord Street, West Perth (1971 photo Fritz Kos, SLWA160055PD; section and upper floor plan F&F Brochure 1975, p.2).

Mike enjoyed the design and development of high-rise office buildings in a booming economic cycle at Perth, and F&F were responsible for the Prudential Building constructed 1968-1970 on the south-west corner of Howard Street and St George's Terrace, replacing *Surrey Chambers* – E.H. Dean Smith's classic Federation-era design of 1903. Another large office project by the practice was the Wales Centre on the south-east corner of St George's Terrace and William Street in Perth, built 1968-70. By 1969 the partners remained as Bill Forbes, John Fitzhardinge, William Barton, Bill Fitzhardinge, Gres Cohen, and Tony Brand.



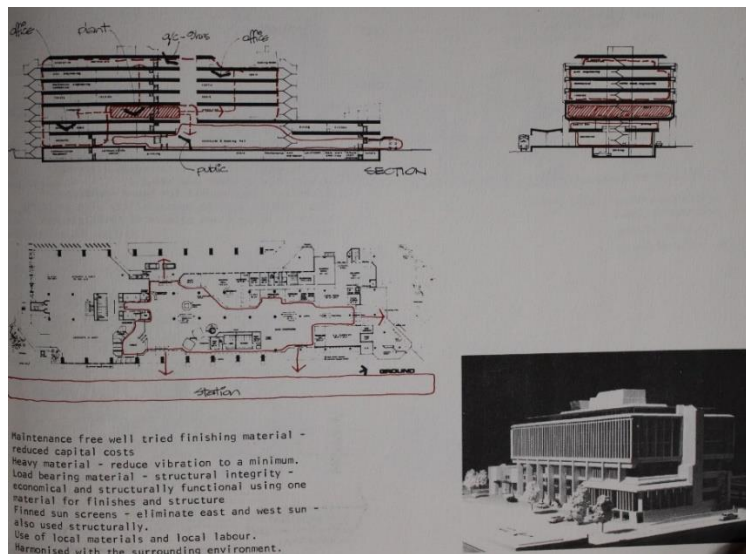
1968-70 Wales Centre St George's Terrace Perth (F&F brochure 1975, pp.8-9).

Mike was an associate at F&F in 1968, became a partner in 1971, and took the lead as director of the business in 1973. He was influential in the firm's Perth CBD design work, including the Wesley Centre at William Street of 1972-74.



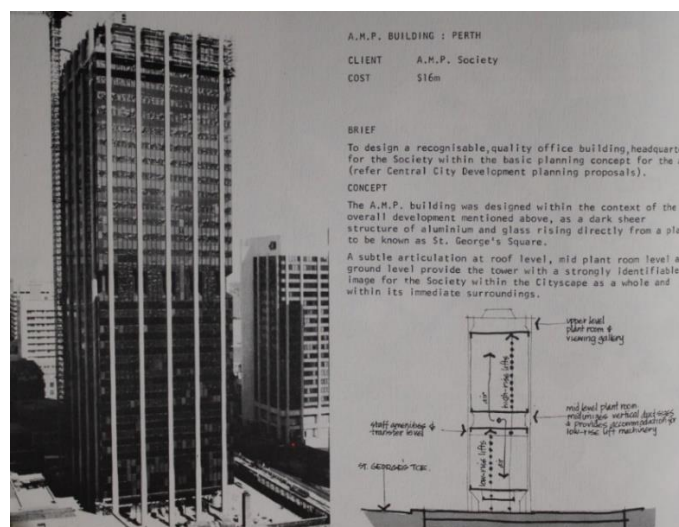
1972-74 Wesley Centre William Street Perth (F&F Brochure 1975, pp.14-15).

F&F announced a new partnership effective from 1 July 1974, with six partners John Fitzhardinge, William Barton, Gres Cohen, Tony Brand, Mike Fitzhardinge, Lindsay Waller; and five associates Peter Wilks, Graeme Paynter, Anthony Coble, Bruce Fell-Smith, and Graham Bedford. With a large staff working across many complex projects, attribution of F&F design work in the 1970s and 1980s to singular persons would be unrealistic, but other projects in this time when Mike was the leader of the practice included the Music Building of the UWA Crawley Campus and the West Australian Government Railways Perth Terminal in 1974.



1974 West Australian Government Railways Perth Terminal (F&F Brochure, 1975, p.33).

In 1975 John Fitzhardinge had retired to a consultant role, and Graeme Paynter had been elevated to a partner at the business. Graham Bedford, D. Haldon Hodge and John Wood were associates.



1975 AMP Centre St George's Terrace Perth (F&F Brochure, 1975, p.18).

Chris Fitzhardinge (son of Theo Fitzhardinge - who was a brother of Roger, Bill and John), notes of discussions with his cousin: *I had many conversations with Mike about his work. ... He was very enthusiastic about the precinct approach. My father Theo (AMP building company project manager), Roger (State Manager Commonwealth Bank), John (architect), Bill (architect), Michael (architect), were all involved in the planning of the AMP, Commonwealth Bank, Wesley Centre, Central Park precinct. Michael was the prime mover behind the undergrounding of the rail and the Subiaco redevelopment authority. He was also keen on landscaping vacant building sites and using them as temporary city parks.*



Holy Spirit Church, City Beach, 1974 Clay Brick Award winner (HCWA place 13020; Booklet for 21st Anniversary Clay Brick Awards, 1987, p.27).

Mike Fitzhardinge maintained a strong religious conviction throughout his life, and an example of his design work (with Graeme Paynter) for the Catholic Church is the Holy Spirit Church at City Beach. Heritage Council of WA place record notes that the church is: 'A striking landmark constructed to a unique sculptural design, with its dramatic external form, high quality interior spaces, and finely designed sanctuary fittings and furnishings; the place is a good example of a church

designed to facilitate liturgical and theological changes in the Catholic church following the Second Vatican Council, with its open interior layout, clear site lines, placement of altar and baptistery, and lack of barriers to the sanctuary area; the place is a very fine representative example of Late Twentieth Century Organic style architecture, featuring sweeping curved brick walls and an overall irregular curved floor plan.'



Mike Fitzhardinge is attributed as the designer of the 1983 Clay Brick Award winner, the SGIO Atrium on the corner of St George's Terrace and King Street in Perth (Google 2024; Booklet for 21st Anniversary Clay Brick Awards, 1987, p.44).

Forbes & Fitzhardinge produced a large share of Western Australia's finest buildings up until the 1990s, then evolving into Forbes & Fitzhardinge Woodland. The Fitzhardinge name finally disappeared in a merger as the company name changed to Cox Howlett & Bailey Woodland.



Mike Fitzhardinge in the 1980s (*21st Anniversary Clay Brick Awards, 1987, p.43*).

Outside of business, Mike was also a keen and successful sailor, especially with the brilliant tuition of other members within the wider Fitzhardinge family. Mike had a busy and happy family life, however Lisa Fitzhardinge passed away in September 1994, aged just 53. Mike was fortunate to marry a second time, to Patricia. He retired in 1995, and died 2 August 1999 in Perth aged 60 years, after a battle with leukemia. He was survived by Trish and his four daughters. Steve Woodland wrote of Mike's qualities: *A strong sense of teamwork was always present in the office and carefully fostered by Mike. His expectations were high and he was not tolerant of laziness or carelessness, but the sense of 'working family' was overriding. It was a unique balance of a strong work ethic and loyalty towards, and compassion for, the people working with him. The result was a tight-knit studio of openness and fairness.*

Mike Fitzhardinge's professional qualities were recognized over time by the conferring of honorific titles Associate of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) in 1964, and Fellow of RAIA in 1973.

References:

- 'Engagements', *The West Australian*, 18 February 1936, p.5 (Fitzhardinge-Brogan).
 'All-white wedding', *Daily News*, 30 April 1938, p.21 (at St Mary's Cathedral).
 'Births', *The West Australian*, 14 February 1939, p.1 (at Niola Hospital).
 NAA B883, WX1582 FITZHARDINGE ROGER FRANCIS BERKELEY Service Number - WX1582
 DOB 16 Jun 1912, POB MANLY NSW, POE PERTH WA, NOK FITZHARDINGE DOROTHY.
 'Births', *The West Australian*, 12 June 1944, p.1 (Phillip Maltraver at St Anne's Ellesmere Road).
 'Births', *The West Australian*, 25 February 1953, p.30 (Digby Stratton at St Anne's).
 'Professional Notices', RAIA Chapter News, July 1974, p.3 (F&F partnership announcement).
 'Forbes & Fitzhardinge, architects & planners', brochure, 1975, SLWA 720.9941 FOR.
 'Architect shaped city', *Sunday Times*, 22 August 1999, p.54 (obituary; designed Central Park).
 Roger Fitzhardinge, Eulogy for Michael Fitzhardinge, August 1999, courtesy Chris Fitzhardinge.
 David Gulland, Eulogy for Michael Fitzhardinge, August 1999, courtesy Chris Fitzhardinge.
 Steve Woodland, 'Obituary - Mike Fitzhardinge', *The Architect*, Spring 99, p.14.
 Len Findlay, 'El Alamein veteran a good sport to the last', *The West Australian*, 25 October 2007, p.61 (obituary for Roger Fitzhardinge - Mike's father).
 Pers comms. John Taylor with Chris, Mary-Jane, Anna, Sarah, & Sophie Fitzhardinge, Oct 2024.
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