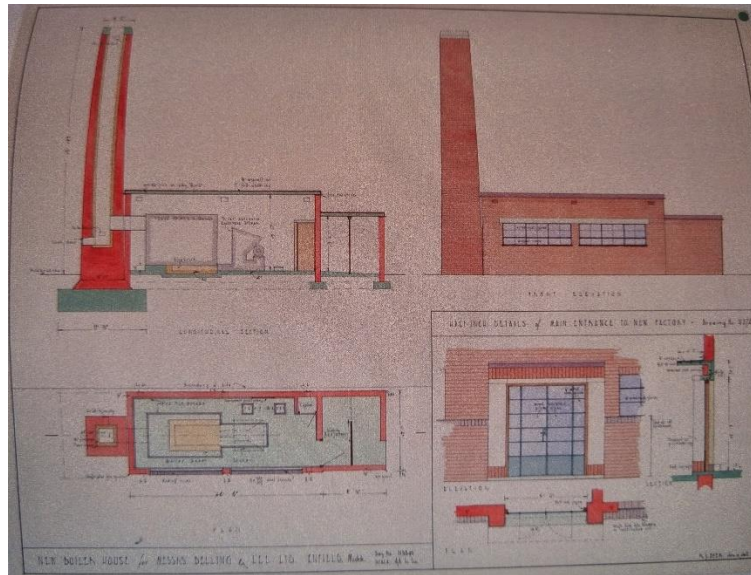


Ron Dyer (courtesy Susan Ledger)

Ronald James Dyer (1916-2012) was born 9 March 1916 in London, England. Ron's parents were of modest means - his father was an electrical engineer and his mother before marriage was a maid. Living with his family at Squires Lane in Finchley, Ron attended Finchley County School from 1927-1931, where he later described his academic performance as 'fair'. Due to the Great Depression of 1929 through to the mid-1930's, trying to get work in his chosen field of architecture was virtually impossible, so 'five long years' were spent in insurance offices - his parents called it a "safe line of work".

After what Ron described as 'the not entirely useless experience of general office procedures', an opportunity arose to join the International Correspondence School's London office, as a junior instructor in architecture and building courses. Ron's career, although not entirely to his liking, was stable and on 9/9/1939 he was married to Ivy Lilian Wagner. The outbreak of the Second World War (1939-1945) terminated the ICS employment, but provided opportunity in that the 23 year old was 'thrown in at the deep end to a Reserved Occupation', and he was called upon to design the first factory works canteen building followed by sundry factory buildings for Belling and Lee Ltd at Enfield, north of central London.

His war time work experience included managing to avoid the fatal effects of the German's bombs, rockets, and falling aircraft in and around London. Ron later wrote that ... *it is difficult to recall anything apart from a stoical disregard for the prospect of annihilation – there were of course many times of risk, but we felt realistic about it all, knowing full well that there were many, many people far worse off than ourselves. ...*



Boiler House, part of works for Belling and Lee Ltd at Enfield 1941-1945 (Susan Ledger)

With significant experience accumulated rapidly in the highly-accelerated war time building projects, then followed the post-war task of achieving formal qualification as an architect. Ron attended classes and completed a number of assignments at the Department of Architecture at Canterbury College of Art in Kent, and undertook the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Special Final Examination, initiated to cope with the large intake of ex-service personnel. Following post-war employment in various sundry offices including Jackson & Jackson Architects at Ashford, Kent, Ron worked for the Margate Corporation at Kent from 1948 to 1951, designing fifteen different house types of which around 600 were built under his direction. Work at Margate also included a garage-showroom at Cliftonville in 1948, school buildings for the Kent County Council 1948-49, an Information and Tourist Bureau in 1950, a Meteorological Station in 1950, and a block of twelve flats in 1951.



Dyer's modernist design of 1950 for Margate Information and Tourist Bureau (Susan Ledger)

In March 1951 Dyer applied to join the State Housing Commission (SHC) of Western Australia as an architect, and this appointment brought Ron, Ivy and daughters Susan (b.1943) and Corrina (b.1948) to WA. Then living at Bessel Avenue in South Perth, Ron registered with the Architects Board of Western Australia (reg no 229) in December 1951. His memoirs noted the twenty weeks with the SHC were 'an experience which is better left as a blur in the memory'. With Ron's discontent at the SHC, the Dyer family were soon invited to meet over tea with established Perth architect Reginald Summerhayes (1897-1965) and his wife Sheila 'for Mrs Summerhayes' inspection!'

Dyer's experience of British modernism was welcomed in WA, and he joined Summerhayes' firm as an Associate from 1952 to 1960. Reg's son Geoff Summerhayes (1928-2010) returned from studying in America, and entered into the business during 1953. With post-war recovery advancing, by this time the firm had increased to sixteen staff. Reg had employed other bright young architects - Ron Facius, 'Gus' Ferguson and Bill Weedon all showed great promise as young graduates of the early 1950s, along with enthusiastic students Norman Hunter and Bill Hartman. Others that Ron Dyer noted as being in the Summerhayes office in the 1950s were John Lidbury, David Kelsall, Fred Warren, Stan Carr, Jim Bremner, Alan Proctor, Gordon Harrison, and Nic de Wolf. Julius Elischer was employed for a period, but Ron found him to have a 'rather aloof' personality! Secretarial staff included Yvonne Foss ('formidable at times') and Ann Bailey-Drew. Colin Bourne was engaged as supervisor of works in progress, followed later by Bill Muir.



Ron Dyer's 1950s sketch of St Mary's Tardun for a greeting card; working on repair of the King Street facade of His Majesty's Theatre at Perth in 1957 (Susan Ledger)

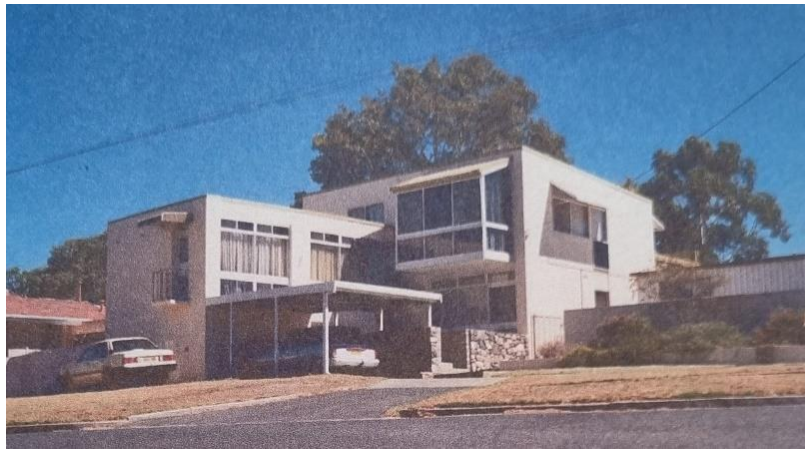
With his significant site experience, Ron was Summerhayes and Associates' project architect for many jobs around the State, travelling by train and plane to places as varied as Derby, Wyndham, Geraldton and Yalgoo. With Catholic Church projects, Dyer had a senior role in works at Tardun and at Our Lady of Victories Church at Wembley of 1954. Some of Ron's other projects at the firm included the re-planning and refurbishing of the interiors of four ANZ Bank branches - at Perth, Kalgoorlie, Fremantle, and Beverley; a showroom at Geraldton for Massey Ferguson; the remodelling and refurbishing of the Colliefields Hotel at Collie, Metropole Hotel at Perth, the Cannington Hotel and the Subiaco Hotel. The great breadth of his design skills were demonstrated by extensions to the St John of God Hospital at Rivervale with operating theatres and wards; the interior renovation of His Majesty's Theatre Perth for Eric Edgley; warehouses at Fremantle & Kalgoorlie for William Adams & Co, and at Welshpool for Eagle Globe Steel Co; the interior remodelling of the Faulding & Co premises at Perth; alterations for new plant installation at the Bryant & May - WA Match Co factory in Perth; a residence at Chapman Valley for R. Forrester; a Science Block at Wundowie School; and a new wing for a convent at Morawa.



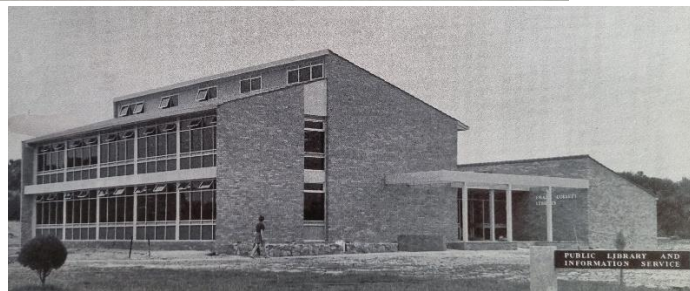
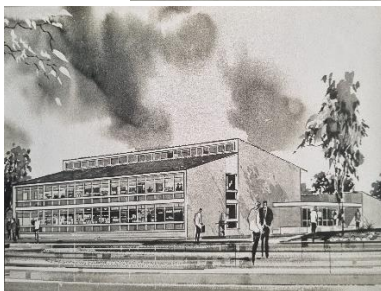
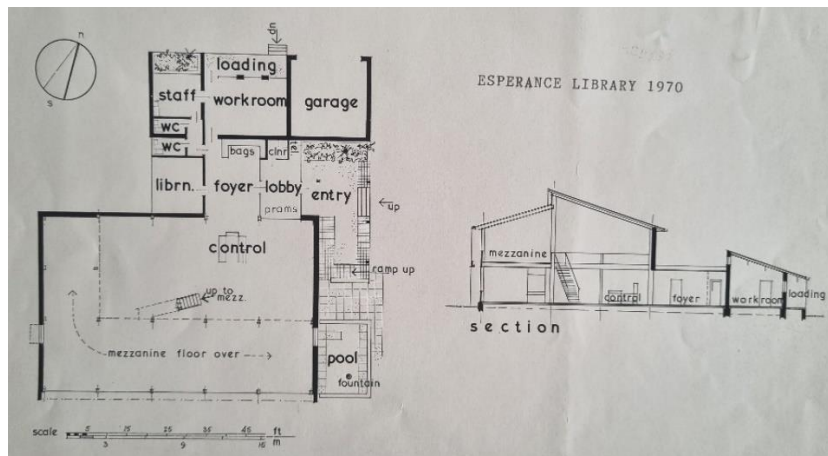
1954 Our Lady of Victories Church, Cambridge Street Wembley perspective and exterior photo (Susan Ledger)

Dyer undertook some private commissions in WA from the mid-1950s. These included houses at Dianella for Peter and Alma Freiberg in 1955, at City Beach for R. Sullivan in 1955, at South Perth for Tony Oram in 1957, and at City Beach for Fred Parker in 1958. Ron teamed up with friends John White and Allan Douglas for an Australia-wide competition to design the master-plan for five State Government office buildings on the Mount Eliza site at Perth, won by PWD architects Gordon Finn, Eduard Van Mens and Peter Maidment in 1960. With a desire to teach part-time, and having ten years of contacts made in WA, Dyer commenced his own practice in 1960.

Projects that Dyer undertook after 1960 on his own account again demonstrated his wide experience and his versatility. Further house designs, for J. Reid at Mount Pleasant in 1960, for Jack Ward at Safety Bay in 1960, for R. Teakle at Cunderdin in 1961, for Jack Lorimer at Mount Pleasant in 1962, for F. Clifton at Claremont in the early 1960s, for G. Mitsopolous at Victoria Park in 1964; and many domestic alterations & additions projects followed for years onward. He designed an open-air cinema at Willagee for A.D. Conole in 1960; flats at Perth, Cottesloe and Nedlands through to 1964; a factory at Bayswater for P.C. Freiberg from 1969 onward; and a library at Esperance in 1970.



1962 residence for J. Lorimer at Mt Pleasant, pictured in 1995 (Susan Ledger)

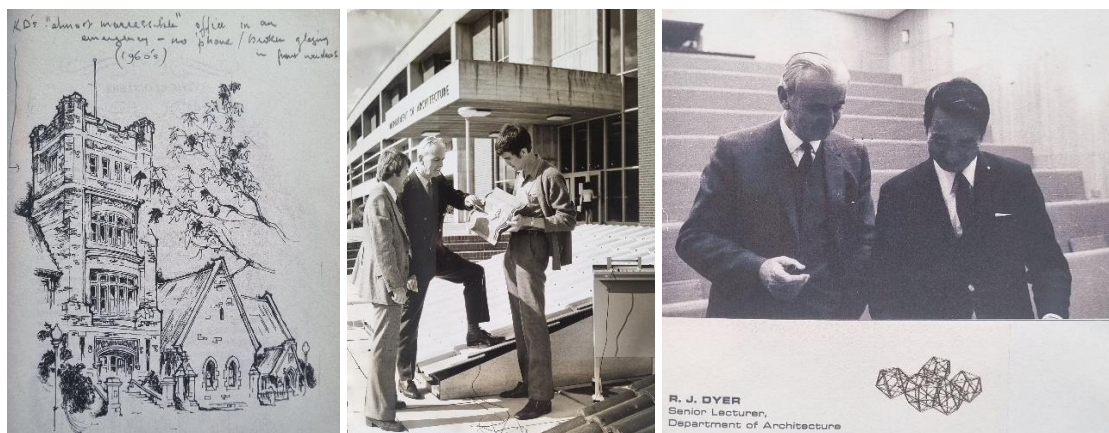


1970 Esperance Library – plan, section, perspective and exterior photo (Susan Ledger)



1990 House at Yankalilla South Australia for daughter Corrina and husband Neil (Susan Ledger)

Ron joined the staff of Perth Technical College (PTC) from 1960, and was an architectural lecturer through the evolution of the academic body into the West Australian Institute of Technology (WAIT) at Bentley. He recalled working with other architectural staff including Arnold Camerer, Francis Senior Bolland, Clarence Bunn ('not popular!'), Mike Beasley, John White, Allan Douglas, Peter Little, Duncan Richards, David Standen, Bill Jones, Reed Shaw, Russell Baxter, Tibor Vass, Bob Blatchford, Geoff Cooper and town planning expert Jack Grey. Ron noted that in his early days at PTC in Perth, he was located for a short while in a room at the top-most level of the St George's Terrace tower, reached across ceiling joists via a spiral stairway – 'with no phone and broken glass in the windows!' Dyer was at WAIT until 1976, when some health issues arose.



1960s Ron Dyer's office in PTC St George's Terrace tower; 1970 at WAIT with Monier WA's Larry Fitzgerald and technician John Roberts; 1971 at WAIT with Professor K. Seiki of Tokyo Institute of Technology (Susan Ledger)

Ron served as a Councillor of the WA chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) from 1962-1970, and was editor of the WA chapter periodical *The Architect* from January 1964 until mid-1973. He was also the WA correspondent and design critic for the Melbourne University publication *Cross Section* in the period 1963-1965.



Sketch of Ron Dyer from a series showing editorial staff of *The Architect*, by Vito Comar and Peter Garvey (*The Architect*, June 1970, p.20).

Ivy Dyer died at Karrinyup 18 December 2000 aged 84 years, and Ronald Dyer lived on until 17 May 2012, also passing away at Karrinyup, aged 96 years. Ron's memoirs contain many notes of his interactions within the architectural profession, including a performance with John White at the infamous 'Shiralee' in Howard Street Perth; and visit to Iwan Iwanoff's flat at Terrace Drive in Perth, with initiation into the hazards of drinking vodka - 'Haven't touched the stuff since then'! Ron was well-regarded by his students, evidenced in a death notice:

DYER (Ronald James): Our deepest sympathy to Sue and Corrina and their families at the passing of a greatly respected teacher and long-standing companion of our class of architectural students. A constant attendance at our class reunions for 30 years, he was the epitome of a gentle man who gained the respect and admiration of a quirky student group. We shall miss him dearly. Don Newman on behalf of the Perth Technical College architectural class of 1960.

A not-well-known practitioner, Ron Dyer's long-serving and significant contributions to architectural education in WA and as editor of the RAIA (WA) periodical *The Architect* deserve greater recognition. His professional qualities were acknowledged by the conferring of the honorific titles ARIBA 1950, FRIBA 1968, ARAIA 1954, FRAIA 1969, and as a privileged member of the RAIA 2001.

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