

Stan Cann (*Tee Square Journal*, 1937, p.5; *Le Page*, 1986, p.591)

Stanley Buckingham Cann (1915-1991) was born 22 August 1915 at *Devonia*, 37 Chatsworth Road Highgate to George Francis Wellington Cann and Bessie Louisa Buckingham (nee Booth) Cann. The couple had married in Victoria during 1909. Stan's siblings were Percy Wellington b.1912, Dorothy Rose b.1918, and Alan George b.1921.

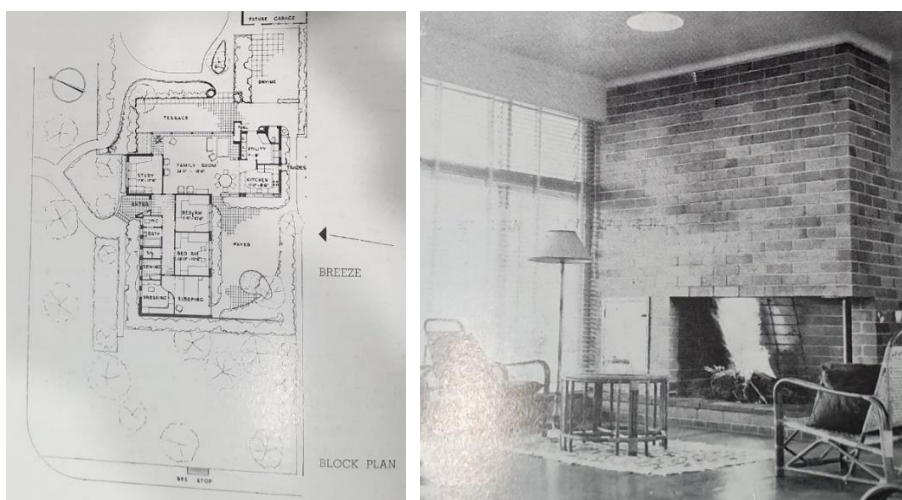
'Stan' Cann won a scholarship to Perth Modern School, from whence he became a cadet with the Public Works Department (PWD) in 1934. Learning 'on the job', Stan registered with the Architects Board of Western Australia (ABWA no. 161) in December 1937, after passing the ABWA exams in one sitting. It was noted in the press that 'only about one in eight accomplished this'. He was Honorary Librarian of the largely student body, the Architectural Association of WA in 1937-1938. Stan was the PWD's acting District Architect in Bunbury for six months in 1938, and promoted to Architect Class 5/6 in 1939. He worked on Caves House at Yallingup and the Blind School at Maylands. Following the commencement of the Second World War (1939-1945), Stan, Dorothy and Alan joined the services. Alan's service record notes that he was a cadet architectural draftsman at enlistment in 1942, and he achieved registration in 1950 (ABWA no. 208).

While stationed in Sydney with the Royal Australian Engineers in 1940, Stan met and married Queenslander Ruth Harriot Grenville Williams (b.1916). He saw service in the Middle East, Greece, Crete and New Guinea. Stan served in the 6th Division Engineers and was responsible for placing 'Bangalore Torpedoes' under the barbed wire during the 1st battle for Tobruk, and his distinguished war service was recognized with the award of Member of the British Empire (MBE).



North-west view of Cann family home at 161 Victoria Avenue, Dalkeith; and from Minora Road (*Phi*, 1950, p.22; Google 2022)

Returning to work at the PWD after the war, with a growing family Stan produced a progressive design for their home at 161 Victoria Avenue in Claremont (now Dalkeith), located with a nearby pathway down to White Beach. It was completed in 1948. In a 1950 article 'An architect designs his own home' for the Architectural Students Association journal *Phi*, Stan wrote: *Your invitation to me to write an article about my house is appreciated, and I do so fully aware of the fact that you are very critical individuals. ... After much discussion, bearing in mind the limitations imposed by one's own budget and the State Housing Commission as to cost and size, the following basic requirements were agreed to. ... There was to be a small study off the entrance hall to be used mainly in the winter and also as a "parents' retreat" from the children. All the remaining space was to be thrown into a large Family room, airy and well lit, centrally placed and with access to terraces and lawns. The focal point of the room was to be a big open fireplace. Further there was to be no door from this room into the kitchen, the idea being to bring the kitchen into the hub of family activity. No doubt some people with violently disagree with this. ...*



Site plan; interior view of family room of the Cann family home of 1948 (*Phi*, 1950, pp.22, 25)



North-east view of Cann family home at 161 Victoria Avenue, Dalkeith (*Phi*, 1950, p.24)

Post-war work at the PWD saw Stan elevated to a number of senior positions, and his projects included the Perth Chest Hospital (which became a portion of Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital), the new Government Printing Office at Subiaco, as well as the extensive remodelling of Government House, the old Arbitration Court Building, and the Treasury and Titles Office. His work on the accommodation and office buildings for the Ord River Scheme in Kununurra was highly regarded as being the first project of its kind to function effectively in a tropical area.



Perth Chest Hospital pictured in 1958 (SLWA 012238D)

Stan became the Principal Architect of the PWD in 1968, when rapid growth in the State's economy spurred by another mining boom had accelerated the demand for public buildings. A successful career architect and public servant, Cann took control of a public works program worth billions of dollars, including the construction of schools, hospitals, police stations, court houses and other government buildings throughout the State. He streamlined the Architectural Division by introducing improved management and record systems and, to keep track of the large number of projects underway at any given time, initiated a method of effectively monitoring the progress of every job within the offices.



Entrance to Government Printing Office (1952), Station St Subiaco in 1965 (SLWA 144739PD)

Undoubtedly the highlight of Cann's career was his dedication to the Perth Cultural Centre project, whereby his vision was responsible for changing much of the northern section of Perth city and giving impetus to the emergence of Northbridge as a focus for public activity. Other major projects completed during Stanley Cann's term as Principal Architect included Queen Elizabeth II Hospital, the District Courts Building and the Zoological Gardens redevelopment.

Cann was made a Fellow of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects in 1969, and a Life Fellow in 1978, recognizing his services to public sector architecture. He served on many important government committees, including the Murdoch University Planning Committee and the His Majesty's Theatre Refurbishment Steering Committee. Stan also contributed in many community service spheres: he was on the vestry of St Lawrence's Church in Dalkeith and for many years held places on the boards of Christ Church Grammar School and the Mount Hospital.

On 22 July 1980 Stan retired after a 49 year career in the Public Service and nearly twelve years as Principal Architect of the PWD. After some governmental consideration of reorganization of the PWD, in 1981 Jerry Bateman was made the final Principal Architect. In January 1985 a large staff contingent finished their employment with the Department, and the PWD that had its origins in 1829 came to the end of its official life on 30 June 1985. A new organization named the Building Management Authority began operating under a much reduced staff.

WA Government Principal Architects were:

1891 – 1897 George Temple-Poole

1897 – 1905 John Harry Grainger

1905 – 1917 Hillson Beasley

1917 – 1927 William Burden Hardwick

1927 – 1930 John Melvin Tait

1930 – 1960 Albert Ernest (Paddy) Clare

1960 – 1967 Walter Leonard Green

1967 – 1968 Leonard James Walters

1968 – 1980 Stanley Buckingham Cann

1981 – 1985 William Edward (Jerry) Bateman

After a five year battle with cancer, Stan Cann died 14 November 1991 at Dalkeith, aged 76 years. He was noted as the husband of Ruth, father of Murray, Robert and Gavin. Ruth passed away aged 92 years. In the 1970s there were two other Canns registered as architects in WA with Stan and Alan, as Stan and Ruth's eldest son Murray became an architect (ABWA no. 679), second son Robert was also an influential architect in Perth (ABWA no. 632, deceased 2010). Third son Gavin worked as an Agricultural Economist, Property Developer and Project Manager. Gavin provided additional personal information on his father:

- Stan was not allowed to play football so he concentrated on the Scouts Movement becoming a Queen Scout;
- Out of RFBYC he sailed on *Sandra*, one of 'the big three' on the river; he was also a member of RPYC, becoming a Flag Officer; and along with Hassey Grounds, they commissioned the design and construction of the first two Pelican class boats for sailing beginners. He was a keen golfer - it didn't take long before he was elected President of Chidley Golf Course; he was also a member of Claremont Football Club and an inaugural member of the West Coast Eagles;
- He was very business-like and highly regarded by those he worked with for; and an accomplished harmonica player which came out after he had a few!

References:

'Stanley Cann', *Daily News*, 24 November 1937, p.2 (passes ABWA exams).

NAA B544280, CANN, STANLEY BUCKINGHAM, Service Number - WX1533, DOB – 22 Aug 1915 : POB - PERTH WA : POE - PERTH WA : Next of Kin - CANN RUTH

NAA: B884, W45654, PRIOR DOROTHY ROSE : Service Number - W45654 : DOB - 02 Jun 1918 : POB - PERTH WA : POE - CLAREMONT WA : Next of Kin - CANN GEORGE

NAA: B883, WX29333, CANN ALAN GEORGE : Service Number - WX29333 : DOB 19 Sep 1921 : POB - PERTH WA : POE - PERTH WA : Next of Kin - CANN GEORGE

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'Obituary, Stanley Buckingham Cann MBE', *The Architect*, 91-4, pp.5-6.

Pers. comm. Jamie Cann, Gavin Cann October 2022.

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