



Stuart Bedford (courtesy Robert & Berris Groom)

Stuart Harold Bedford (1904-1998) was born 9 July 1904 in London to parents Stewart Henry and Ellen Agnes Bedford. Along with Stuart's older brother Arthur (b.1900), the family lived at 20 Berwick Street in Pimlico. They emigrated to Australia on the Australind Steam Shipping Company's newly-built *SS Ajana*, departing from Tilbury Docks on 24 December 1912, a few hours before the P&O line's *SS Narrung*, and soon after celebrating Christmas, both vessels experienced violent weather. Huge seas swept over the ships, and for three days the passengers had a trying time. Eventually gaining way as the storm abated, it took five weeks to make the voyage around the Cape of Good Hope and into the Indian Ocean, arriving 1 February 1913 at Fremantle in Western Australia. The ship had 452 nominated and 61 assisted immigrants aboard. Unfortunately 63 of the passengers were reported to be suffering from measles on arrival, and were subsequently conveyed to the Woodman's Point Quarantine Station.

The Bedford family settled at a relative's farm near Kellerberrin for a brief period, and then moved to suburban Perth, soon living in a cottage at 84 Tenth Avenue Maylands. Stuart attended Highgate Primary School, and in 1917 continued his education at the Perth Junior and then Senior Technical Schools.

Stuart's original occupations aged 17-21 included work as a French Polisher; with his parents' paying a fee from 1925-1928 he studied to become an architect while articulated to Percy W. Harrison (1864-1951). Gaining a position in the drawing office at Wunderlichs detailing architectural metal work under Len J. Walters (1903-1989), Stuart was finally gaining an income, however the Great Depression intervened and he found himself out of work for twelve months. Stuart later considered this event a blessing, as he was able to methodically study for the Architects Board of Western Australia (ABWA) examinations. Stuart was then offered a post in the Commonwealth Department of Works as assistant to Robert

Michael Baxter (1898-1969), architect in charge of the Commonwealth Bank building being erected in Forrest Place, and Baxter was to figure in Bedford's future career. Stuart passed the University Art Certificate in 1931, topping a group that included John Oldham, Zoie Bennett, Leo Clarke, and Ken Cameron. He is listed as a student at Maylands in 1932, living with his brother and parents. In December 1932 he passed the ABWA exams and was registered (no 137).

On 23 January 1934 Stuart, of Tenth Avenue Inglewood, was married at Christ Church Claremont to Edith Mary Bownass of Kingston Street Hollywood. The couple were soon living in a house Stuart had designed for a block they had previously purchased at 18 Leon Road in Dalkeith.



Stuart Bedford and Edith Bownass were married at Christ Church Claremont in January 1934, and moved into 18 Leon Road at Dalkeith (b&w photos Robert & Berris Groom; Google 2024).

Recognizing his talents, Stuart was elected President of the largely student body, the Architectural Association of WA for 1934, and with his committee organized the highly popular T-Square Ball held in June 1934 at the Embassy Ballroom in Perth.

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Stuart Bedford was President of the Architectural Association of WA in 1934, leading a group of highly talented designers emerging from the Great Depression (RIAWA Kalendar 1934-1935).

By 1934 Stuart had decided to practice from an office in the Royal Insurance Building at Perth on his own behalf, initially undertaking small domestic and commercial works. He supplemented his work with hourly-basis designing and drafting for architects Reg Summerhayes, Howard Bonner, E. LeB. Henderson

and W.G. Bennett. In mid-1934, Bedford designed a modest cement block residence on Caves Road at Busselton for Mrs P. McMurchy, and a cottage at Scarborough for F. Symes. Recognizing his emergence as an architect, in May of 1935 Bedford was elected as an Associate of the Royal Institute of Architects of Western Australia (RIAWA), and he soon took on James Traquair Hatton (1914-2002) as an articulated student for a period of three years. The Hattons were fellow members of the Nedlands Tennis Club, and wished for their son Jim to be trained in architecture.

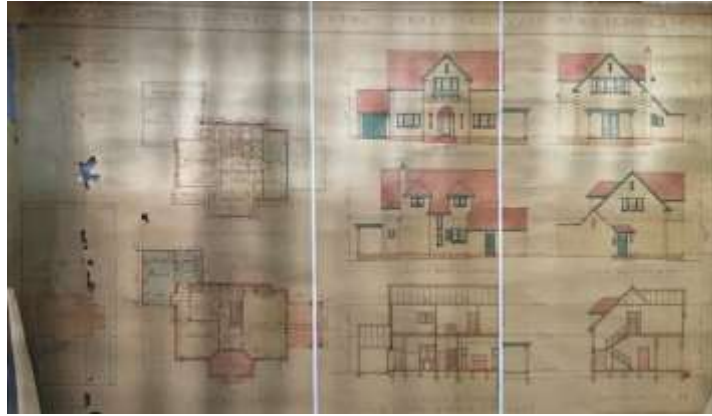


Shop of 1935 for R. McCleery at 201 Railway Road in Daglish (Google 2024).



Aerial photography suggests that Bedford's 1935-designed service station on Railway Street Claremont (alongside Swanbourne Railway Station), was demolished between 1965 and 1970 (*Daily News*, 16 February 1939, p.11). The site is now occupied by Dawsons Garden Centre.

Building enterprises under his direction in 1935 included a shop on Railway Road in Daglish for R. McCleery, and a garage and service station on Railway Street Claremont opposite Swanbourne Railway Station for J.J. Copley. In late 1935 Stuart designed an 'attic residence' for his brother Arthur and family at 86 Dundas Street, Inglewood, with a tender for its construction accepted in December 1935.



Stuart Bedford's 1935 design of a residence at 86 Dundas Road Inglewood for his brother Arthur and family appears to be relatively intact, the front façade having lost a flower-pot shelf at the upper level (plans and b/w photo courtesy Sybe and Dawn Jongeling; Google 2024).

Other works by Bedford around this time included a large house for James W. Vivian (managing director of Boans) at 37 Inverness Crescent Mount Lawley, a two-storey residence at 6 Neville Road Dalkeith for brother-in-law Doug Kent, another attic residence at Brockman Avenue Dalkeith, a brick residence in DalGLISH, and the addition of six bedrooms with balconies to Sussex House, a now heritage-listed building at 89 Queen Street in central Busselton.



Stuart Bedford's 1936 design of a residence for the James Vivian family at 37 Inverness Crescent Mount Lawley (Google 2024).

In December 1935 a tender was accepted for Bedford-designed alterations and additions to three houses at Forrest Street in Cottesloe. This work may have contributed to the commission for the design of four flats nearby in Broome Street. In November 1936 a tender was accepted for the construction of the flats named 'Pine Court', completed in 1937 and now listed on the State Register of Heritage Places. Pine Court showcases Bedford's architectural style, which blends practicality with elegance, ensuring the building is both functional and visually appealing. During 1935-1937, at the time Pine Court was constructed, Bedford practiced from an office in the Perpetual Trustees Building at 89 St George's Terrace, Perth.



'Pine Court' flats at 96 Broome Street Cottesloe of 1937 (Google 2024).

Bedford received tenders in February 1937 for a shop and store to be built at 116 Hensman Road Subiaco for Mrs G. Liddicoat (appears to have been demolished), and in August 1937 for a residence at Beaufort Street in Bayswater.

Stuart's mother Ellen died at Maylands in December 1938 aged 62 years, and around this time Stuart and Edith moved to the east coast, the young architect finding work at the Commonwealth Department of Works in Canberra, where R.M. Baxter was then based. In 1939 Stuart tendered his resignation to the RIAWA, and the council minutes of the time note that it was 'accepted with regret'. Bedford was soon busy with national building activities responsive to the dire times of the Second World War (1939-1945). By August 1942 he had returned to WA, enlisting with the Volunteer Defense Corp (VDC), at this time he was living at Hillesden Road Darlington, and was an architect with the Commonwealth Department of the Interior.

The war marked a turning point in the lives and careers of many architects; in Stuart's case it was reflected in his private design work changing to activity for government agencies. By 1944 Stuart was the lead architect for the design of new Repatriation and Customs Offices to be built at the foot of William Street in Perth. Along with his junior colleague Leonard F.H. Parry (1911-1989), he would battle government funding issues and indecision for nearly fifteen years before the completion of the project. In 1946 Bedford became an Associate of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA), which had incorporated the RIAWA in the austere times of 1943. At this time he was listed with the Department of Works and Housing, operating from the 6th floor of the GPO at Perth.



Mount Hawthorn Post Office, 180 Scarborough Beach Road, Mount Hawthorn (Building Licence drawing 1953, City of Vincent) – demolished c.2012.

Bedford's design work with the various Commonwealth departments in the 1940s and 1950s is difficult to isolate without an in-depth study of archival drawings and records, but one project known to bear his signature was the Mount Hawthorn Post Office on Scarborough Beach Road, completed circa 1955.

Plans for the Repatriation and Customs Offices at 11 William Street in Perth had first been prepared by W.H. Robertson (1905-1953) in 1940. Robertson was to lead the first architectural design course in WA at Perth Technical College, commenced in 1946. From 1944, if things had proceeded according to plan, the whole Repatriation and Customs building would have been faced with Donnybrook stone. It was only when deposits of the local stone cut out in the 1950s, and time was running short, that a decision was made to import additional greyish-white Bondi stone, which arrived with significant defects. The Commonwealth Building in William Street was officially opened in April 1959. It was demolished around 1990 for the current building on the site, the Quadrant.



Repatriation Department (large part of building at left) and Customs Building (at right), 11 William Street Perth, photographed in 1965 (SLWA 115211PD).

Whilst living at Darlington in 1958, Stuart succeeded Ronald Ledger (also 1904-1998) as Principal Architect at the Commonwealth Department of Works (WA), and continued in that important position for seven years. His father Stewart died in June 1961 at Inglewood aged 88 years; Stuart & Edith retired in 1965 to 152 Hare Street in Albany, and finally to Manjimup with their daughter Berris' family.

Berris June Bedford was born at Canberra in June 1939, and her brother Graham Roland Bedford was born at Perth in November 1946. Graham also became an architect (ABWA reg no 738) and worked with Hassell in Perth. Berris' son Paul Roland Groom (ABWA reg no 1927), continues another generation of the family's service to the profession in the State.

Stuart Bedford achieved great success in his adopted country, modifying his personal goals as the difficult Depression years eased, war difficulties intervened, and then the profession battled post-war finance, labour and material shortages. Stuart is somewhat unusual in that the majority of Inter-War trained architects in WA were locally born, and his youthful entry as an emigrant to the State perhaps provided much greater opportunity than may have been found had he remained in England. Edith Bedford passed away at Manjimup in 1991, and Stuart Bedford died at Manjimup on 17 August 1998, aged 94 years.

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