

Bill Bennett c.1924 and c.1936

(*Sunday Times*, 10 August 1924, p.3; *The West Australian Craftsman*, 8 Mar 1936, p.33)

William Garnsworthy Bennett (1896-1977) was born at Linton, near Ballarat, Victoria on 22 May 1896, son of Thomas John and Mary (nee Honan). In 1910 Bennett came to Western Australia with his mother, brother Tom and sister, Doris. He was apprenticed to James Street, Perth coach builders Wright & Fendick in 1911, but was involved in a dispute with employer John Henry Wright when desirous of travelling with the Young Australia League (YAL) in 1914. A settlement was eventually reached, and, spared the horrors of fighting in the First World War, Bennett soon attended the Perth Technical School, studying architectural drafting and allied subjects.

In April 1919 the local secretary of the Adelaide School of Arts Examinations Board reported results of drawing exams conducted in WA. Obviously talented, Bennett achieved honours in freehand, measured freehand, model drawing, plane geometry, solid geometry, and freehand perspective. With both practical and academic experience behind him, Bennett was first articled to Francis James Coote in connection with de Garis' Kendenup scheme, and later to Eales & Cohen. In July 1924, he became the first locally trained architect to pass the examination of the Architects Board of Western Australia. Gaining the first Bronze (later E.G. Cohen) Medal of the Royal Institute of Architects of Western Australia in 1925, Bennett was to have a substantial presence on the local and regional domestic, commercial, and civic building scene from the 1930s through to the 1960s.

By 1930 he was a partner in the firm Eales, Cohen & Bennett (ECB). Bill Bennett was in charge of the drawing office at Eales and Cohen, where he worked with another talented 1930s art deco designer, William Thomas Leighton. Bennett designed the Masonic Hall in Broadway, Nedlands in 1935 while with ECB. He left

the partnership and formed his own firm at the end of June 1935. Commercially successful, Bennett was a gregarious and popular man. It has been noted that he was variously described as 'dynamic, assertive, and downright aggressive'; and that some of his friends referred to him as "Bull Bennett".

During the mid to late 1930s William Bennett was responsible for the renovation of a number of existing hotels and the building of new hotels in the modern styles fashionable at the time. In Perth, these included the remodelling of the interior of the Savoy Hotel, the Esplanade Hotel (demolished), and the Bohemia Hotel (demolished) in Murray Street which was given a restrained Art Deco facade. Other hotel works include (the remodelling of) the Ocean Beach Hotel, the Majestic and Raffles hotels in Applecross, Checkers Hotel Bullsbrook, and hotels in Beverley and Sawyers Valley. One of his more prominent metropolitan hotels was the Scarborough (demolished) designed in 1938. Some other of his notable buildings include the Applecross District Hall; Regal Theatre, Subiaco; and the Plaza Theatre and Arcade, Perth (1936-37).

Another building which demonstrates Bennett's stylistic work of the 1930s is Motor House (1936-37) which still stands on an 'island' in Milligan Street, Perth. Bennett worked on this building in association with Powell, Cameron and Chisholm. Other significant works by Bennett include the Chalet at Araluen and other structures (1937), the remodelled Beaucott Buildings (1937) in Beaufort Street, and the Kalgoorlie Olympic Pool (1938). The C.S. Dyer house (1938) on the Esplanade, South Perth, was one of Bennett's more notable domestic buildings. The two-storey house was a fine example of Inter-War Functional style, designed to take advantage of views over the Swan River, but has been demolished.

Bennett designed the Dalkeith Tennis Club in 1938, and after a prolonged break with service in the Second World War, the Dalkeith Men's and Ladies' Bowling Clubs on the same reserve in the 1950s. The Leckie Pavilion at College Park and the Croquet Club in Bruce Street are other 1950s Nedlands buildings by Bennett. Within the City of Nedlands, Bennett is also associated with the design of Dalkeith Hall in Waratah Avenue; Nedlands Golf Club; the Child Health Clinic in Melvista Avenue; the Nedlands Roads Board Office (fmr) on Stirling Highway; St Margaret's Anglican Church and Parish Hall in Tyrell Street; and over a long period of time, the Peace Memorial Rose Garden on Stirling Highway.

Nancy Lorne Allen worked for Bennett from 1935, becoming a partner along with her brother Douglas in 1949 when Bennett formed a short lived alliance with Robert Blatchford and James W. Johnson as Bennett, Blatchford, Allen & Johnson. The firm was designated W.G. Bennett, Allen & Allen by 1962. At this time the practice undertook domestic and commercial commissions as well as projects for local councils such as infant health clinics.

William Bennett married Doris Ivy Franklin on 20 April 1921 at St George's Cathedral, Perth. He lived at Chamberlain Street in Gosnells in later years, and died at 81 years of age on 25 July 1977.

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- 'Drawing Examinations', *The West Australian*, 3 April 1919, p.4.
- 'Social Notes', *The West Australian*, 7 May 1921, p.12 (marriage).
- 'Mr W.G. Bennett's Success', *The West Australian*, 5 February 1930, p.13.
- 'Nedlands Masonic Lodge', *The West Australian*, 20 April 1935, p.12 & 28 December 1935, p.6.
- 'Public Notices', *The West Australian*, 6 July 1935, p.23 (forming his own firm).
- 'New Temple at Nedlands', *The West Australian Craftsman*, 8 September 1935, p.35.
- 'Nedlands Park Masonic Hall', *The West Australian Craftsman*, 8 March 1936, pp.29-33.
- Anne Higham's Biographies Index, citing *Decoration & Glass*, September 1936 (articles Coote).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 4 August 1937, p.1 (demolish Coliseum on Regal Theatre site).
- 'Building Enterprise', *The West Australian*, 30 October 1937, p.8 (Regal Theatre, Subiaco).
- Colless, V.H., 'Bennett, William Garnsworthy', *Men of Western Australia*; private edition, Perth, 1937, plate 80 (articles Coote, Eales & Cohen).
- 'Finchley', *Turners* (Perth), August 1938, pp.12-13 (58A Leake Street, Peppermint Grove).
- 'Scarborough Hotel', *The West Australian*, 25 March 1939, p.4.
- 'Tenders for Geraldton Flats', *The West Australian*, 20 September 1941, p.7 (Fitzgerald Flats).
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- Geneve, Vyonne, 'Artist of the Month: William G. Bennett', *Art Deco Society of WA Newsletter*, Vol.5, No.4, July/Aug 1992, pp. 10-11.
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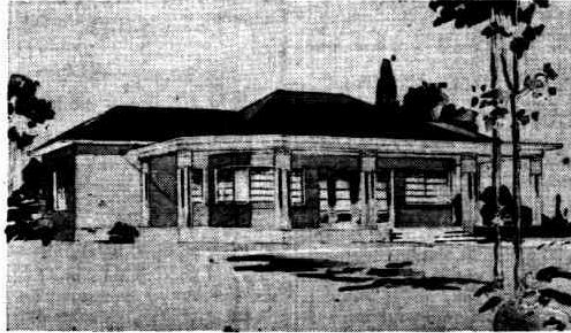
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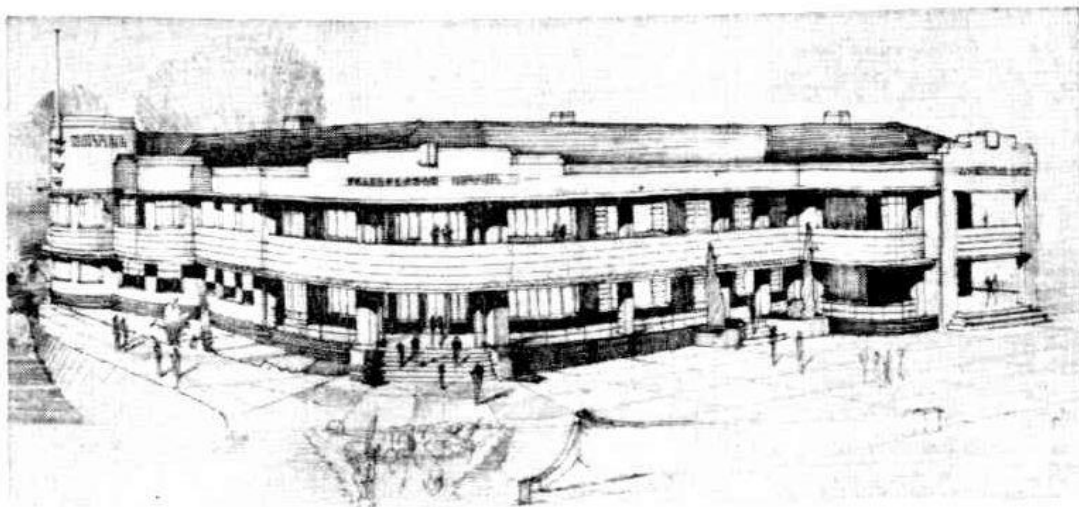
Perspective drawing of the Masonic Hall to be erected in Broadway, near Stirling-highway, Nedlands. It is expected that the work will be completed next October. The architects are Messrs. Eales, Cohen and Bennett.



Perspective drawing of proposed pavilion to be erected in Jutland-parade for the Dalkeith Tennis Club. The architect is Mr. W. G. Bennett.

Masonic Hall, Nedlands
(*The West Australian*, 20 April 1935, p.12)

Dalkeith Tennis Club
(*The West Australian*, 27 August 1938, p9)

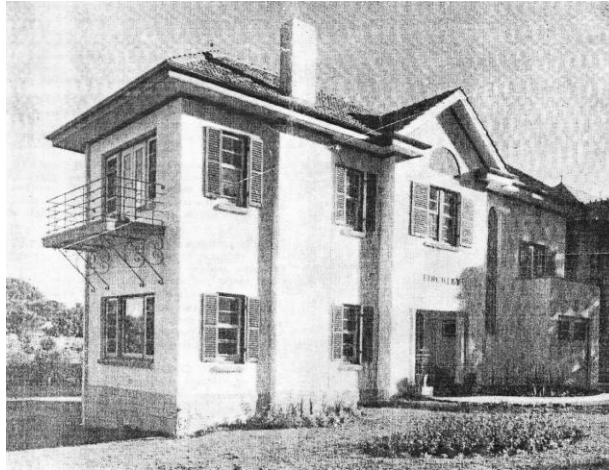


Perspective drawing of hotel to be erected at the corner of Lillian and Manning streets, Scarborough, for Scarborough Hotel, Ltd. The builders are Messrs. Finlay and Stoneman. The architect is Mr. W. G. Bennett.

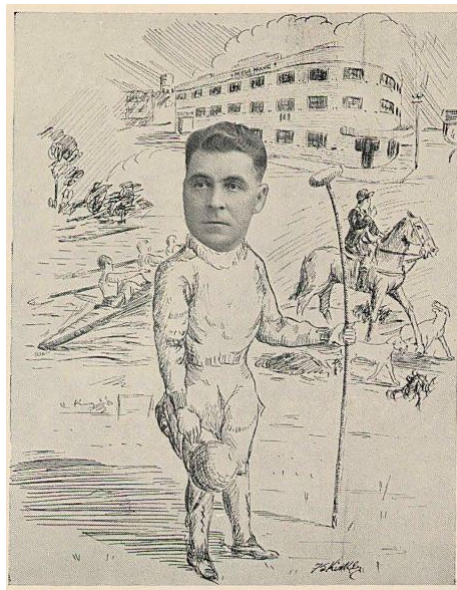
Scarborough Hotel (*The West Australian*, 25 March 1939 p.4)



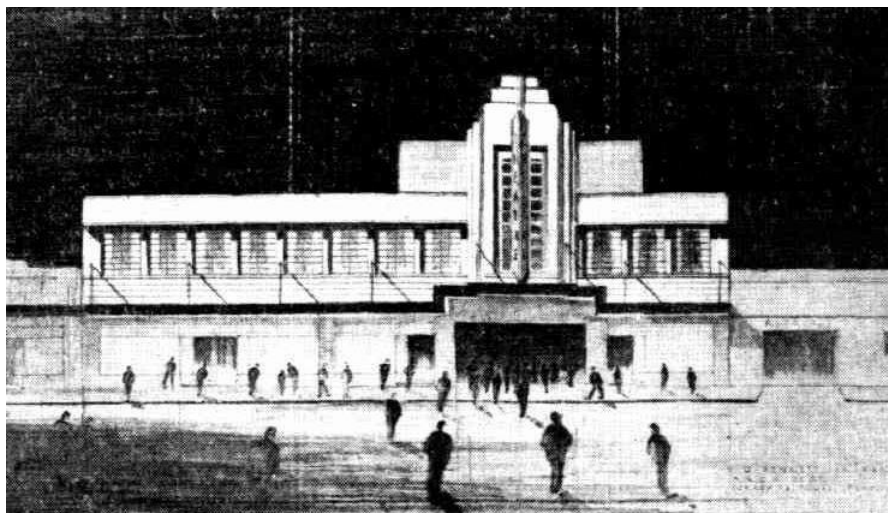
Fitzgerald Flats, 19-21 Fitzgerald Street, Geraldton (Google 2012)



'Finchley', 58a Leake Street, Peppermint Grove (*Turners*, August 1938, p.12)



Caricature of W.G. Bennett (*Men of Western Australia ...*, 1937, plate 80)



Front elevation of theatre and shops to be erected in Canning-road, Bicton, for Mr. H. J. Locke. The architect is Mr. W. G. Bennett.

Theatre at Canning Highway Bicton (*The West Australian*, 24 October 1936, p.8).