

**PHOTO NEEDED**

Gordon Royle (courtesy x)

**Gordon Paul Royle** (1886-1970) was born 1 March 1886 to architect William Alfred (1840-1904) and Henrietta (nee Boardman) Royle at Heaton Chapel, an area in the northern part of Stockport, Greater Manchester, within the boundaries of the historic county of Lancashire, England. A prolific and successful practitioner, William Royle became a member of the Manchester Society of Architects in 1872 and was president of the Society in 1888-1889.

Gordon's siblings included William Alfred (b.1874), who briefly ran the practice after his father's passing in 1904, Walter Dudley (1879-1934) and Philip Nunn (1882-1950) Royle. Gordon noted four years training at Royle & Bennett on his army enlistment papers in 1915, suggesting work there from around 1902-1906.

It appears Gordon migrated to Australia with his brothers early in the Twentieth Century. They all attempted to enlist for Australian Imperial Forces (AIF) First World War (1914-1918) service - William at Melbourne in 1914; Walter at Fremantle in 1917; Philip at Perth in 1916, and Gordon at Perth in 1915. By June of 1911 Gordon was working as a draftsman for Perth-based architects Cavanagh and Cavanagh, when at licensing court hearings he noted a totally brick walled building was proposed for a wayside house (hotel) at Gnowangerup. Gordon married May Ruby Healey in 1913 at Perth, Western Australia. At Perth, Gordon and May were parents of Gordon 'Paul' Royle (b.1914), Michael 'Gordon' Royle (b.1918), and Elizabeth 'Shirley' Royle (b.1926).



Mrs May R. Royle nee Healey of South Perth in her wedding dress 1913 (SLWA004872D)

In October 1914 Gordon was elected an Associate of the West Australian Institute of Architects (WAIA) – it is likely that profession stalwart Michael Cavanagh (1860-1941) would have supported the 28 year old's nomination. Despite the recent birth of his first son, in July 1915 Gordon Royle enlisted in the AIF. At that time they were living at 'Oratava', River Front, Bennett Street, Perth.

Gordon was one of a fair number from the WA architectural profession who served including Talbot Hobbs, Ross Harwood, Edwin Summerhayes, Eustace Cohen, Gordon Clifton, Reg Summerhayes, Claude Harrison (son of prominent architect Percy), Ronald Hardwick (son of WA Government Architect), Oswald Spangenberg (later Spanney), William Nelson, Kenneth Duncan, and Albert (Paddy) Clare. Harold Boas also served overseas with the Australian YMCA, working with Jewish soldiers in Britain and France. Architect Robert Thompson McMaster and draftsman David Alexander Jackson were both killed at Gallipoli in 1915. Draftsman Rowland Wilson died at Rabaul, New Guinea in 1916, and Keith Stronach, a junior member of the architectural firm Summerhayes and Boas, died in a flying accident in England during 1918.

Serving with the AIF on the 'Western Front' in France during 1916, Gordon suffered gunshot wounds to his hand and leg. Fortunately he was able to return to Australia in March 1917, and was discharged from the army. During 1919, the very young Ron Ledger (1904-1998) commenced his architectural career in the St George's Terrace Perth offices of Hobbs Smith & Forbes as an unarticled junior draftsman and record clerk. Ledger noted that along with principals Talbot Hobbs (1864-1938) and Waldie Forbes (1869-1939), other staff in the early 1920s included architects Gordon Royle, Alex Winning (1892-1963) and building supervisor Tom Edwards. Ledger later wrote that "*Alex Winning and Gordon Royle did some great work in that office – wool stores, brewery and office buildings. After I left Hobbs' office I kept up my association and friendship for many years with these two professional gentlemen whom I regarded very highly.*"

The *Architects Act of Western Australia 1921* received formal assent in 1922, and Gordon duly registered (no.18) with the Architects Board of WA in May of that year. It is likely that Gordon worked with Hobbs Smith & Forbes through the 1920s, but may have found this employment ceased as the effects of the Great Depression struck, and many architects were forced into other occupations. By

the 1930s Royle had joined the Commonwealth Government Works and Services Branch of the Department of the Interior (later known as Department of Works) under Regional Director George Sydney Cook. Cook had required additional architectural staff in the early 1930s for documenting the new Commonwealth Bank building at Forrest Place in Perth. By 1933 Royle was loaned to the Department of Civil Aviation as an inspector of country aerodromes, conscripted to assist with public safety for the emerging West Australian aviation industry. Examples of Gordon's travels are found in 1930s newspaper articles – eg. in September 1933, inspector Royle left Roebourne by car for Onslow accompanied by his son Paul, and in June 1934 he arrived at Roebourne by plane from Wyndham. In 1939 Gordon visited Beverley as inspector of landing grounds.

The Second World War (1939-1945) had great effect on many Australians, and the fifty-six year old Gordon Royle, then living at 7 Melville Terrace South Perth, enlisted again during March 1942 for service as a member of the Volunteer Defence Corps (Home Guard, or 'Dads Army'). Gordon and May suffered the anxiety of potentially losing their sons in the war. Paul was flying for the Royal Air Force and was shot down over Europe in May 1940. Made a prisoner of war, it was not until May of 1945 that he was able to return to England, and eventually to WA. Second son Gordon junior served in the Middle-East and at the notorious El Alamein campaign in 1942, before returning safely to Australia in 1945.



R.A.F. prisoners of war taken at Stalagluft in Germany. The man standing second from the right in the back row is a West Australian, G. Royle.

Gordon 'Paul' Royle as a prisoner of war, second from right in the back row (*Western Mail*, 15 May 1941, p.19)



Paul Royle as a POW in the early 1940s; Gordon Royle junior at enlistment in 1940, and Shirley Royle at her marriage to George Rogers in 1952 (NAA A13950; NAA B883, WX3849; 'Married Recently', *Western Mail*, 25 September 1952, p.33).

To date relatively unknown in the history of the WA architectural profession, Gordon Royle's work is similar to that of many who were 'behind-the-scenes' designers in larger architectural practices. After arrival in WA, he was no doubt a great contributor to the success of the Cavanagh's architectural practice, to the ongoing growth of Hobbs Smith & Forbes in the 1920s, and finally to the quality of the activities of the Department of Works in the 1930s and 1940s. With his local architectural training supplemented by as-yet undocumented experience in England, Gordon's story is one of great interest to local history in WA.

It is likely that Gordon retired in the later 1940s. Gordon and May Royle were eventually able to celebrate the various activities of their three married children, and grandchildren. May Royle died at South Perth in 1958 aged 71 years, and Gordon senior passed away 26 August 1970, aged 84 years, also at South Perth.

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