

Peter Arney (*Phi*, 1951, p.27)

Peter Arthur Brent Arney (1927-1996) was born 28 October 1927, the only child of lawyer Earle Brent Arney, and Edna Arlington (nee Jacob) Arney of York Street, South Perth. The couple had married at St Mary's Church, Colin Street West Perth in 1926. Peter attended Wesley College in South Perth 1941-1945, and in January 1946 entered into articles for a term of three years with Colin Ednie-Brown (1894-1960) of architects Oldham, Boas & Ednie-Brown.

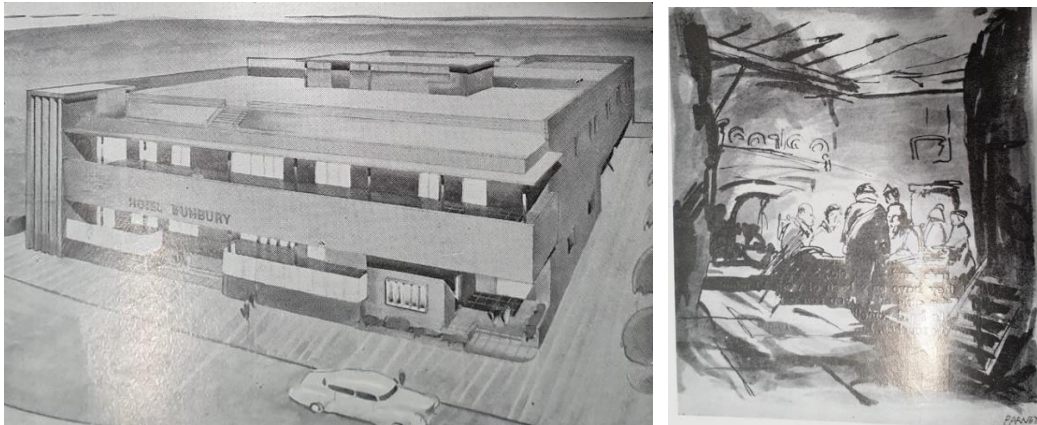
In 1948 Peter shared equal first prize in the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA, WA) Architectural Exhibition Competition, and won first prize in the same competition in 1949. Peter also won the Institute's E.G. Cohen Medal in 1949. He was the librarian of the Architectural Students' Association in 1948, secretary in 1949, and president in 1950. At this time his fellow officers in the ASA were vice-president Gil Nicol, secretary Alan Shepherd, treasurer Ean McDonald, librarian John White, auditors Lex Hill and Ed Whitaker, with a committee including Peter Grigg, Wendy Mickle, Arthur Smith and John Lidbury.



Don Collins at left, Ken Rosenthal in centre, and Peter Arney at right (*Phi*, 1950, p.8)

Passing the Architects Board of Western Australia examinations, Peter Arney was registered (no 210) as an architect in February 1950. He also became an

Associate of Oldham, Boas & Ednie-Brown in 1950, the same year in which he was treasurer of the WA branch of the Planning Institute.



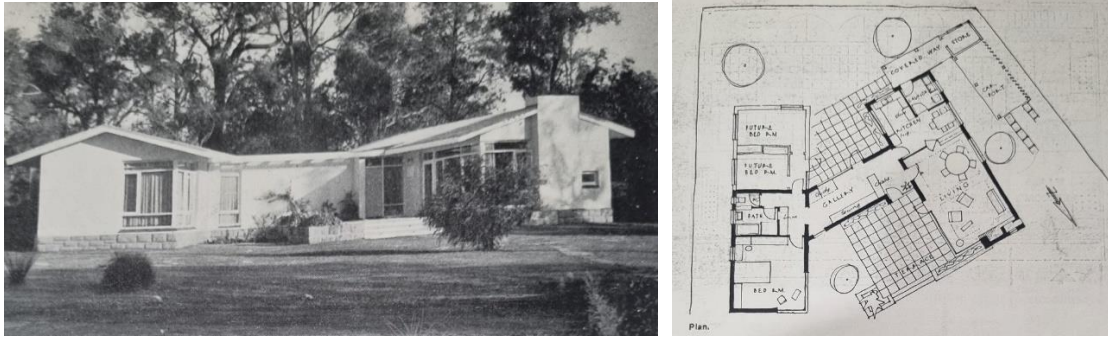
Bunbury Hotel by Oldham, Boas & Ednie-Brown; sketch by Peter Arney (*Phi*, 1950, pp.27, 38)

Peter's first major project came in the early 1950s when Oldham Boas & Ednie-Brown won the commission to design the Prudential Building, the first office tower to be built in Perth in the post-war years, and it was opened in 1954.



Prudential Building design of 1952 for 187 St George's Terrace in Perth; as built in 1954; and in 1969 with the Parmelia Hotel at right rear behind a crane on the Hamersley House building site. (*The West Australian*, 21 June 1952, p.5; SLWA 237759PD; SLWA 342801PD)

Peter was busy with planning matters, and also undertook residential design work with Oldham Boas & Ednie-Brown. His own house was featured in *The Architect* magazine during 1956 – it was located on a site facing 'north-east on a river road and has views up river to the City and down river to Freshwater Bay. The dining and sleeping activities were accommodated in two separate wings located parallel to the angled site boundaries, thus repeating the fan shape of the site. A gallery 26ft long and 10ft wide connects the two wings. The living room has been orientated to catch the City view and has a 20ft long by 8ft high main window ...'



Swan River elevation and plan of Peter Arney's residence at 88 Burke Drive in Attadale – now demolished (*The Architect*, June 1956, pp.24-25).

In the late 1960s, Peter met British peer Lord Alistair McAlpine, the client for whom he was to design some of his best work. The relationship began with the design of the Parmelia Hotel, opened in 1968 and the first truly international establishment of its kind to be built in Perth.



Two views of Hamersley House, constructed from 1969 on the south-east corner of St George's Terrace and Mill Street in Perth, with the Prudential Building at left and the Parmelia Hotel behind - on the south side of Hamersley House (Google 2022).

Tony Ednie-Brown, partner with Oldham Boas & Ednie-Brown and later managing director the Buchan Group (formerly Oldham Boas & Ednie-Brown) wrote in 1997 of his admiration for Peter's work with McAlpine:

A special synergy developed between client and architect and reached its pinnacle with the design for the redevelopment of the Bishop's See site. St George's Square, the major component of the development, is one of the most articulate buildings of that genre in terms of its streetscape and arcades, its urbane glass profile and its formal garden.



London House at 216 St George's Terrace and St George's Square at 225 St George's Terrace in Perth (Google 2022)

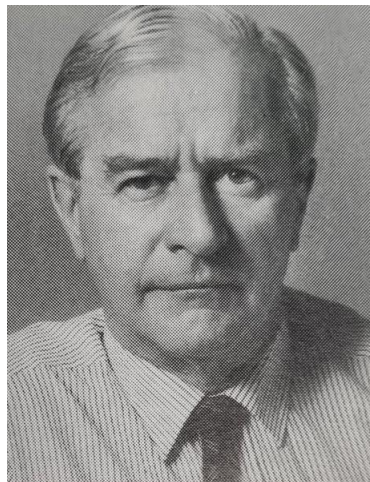
One of Lord McAlpine's most ambitious schemes was the creation of the Cable Beach Club at Broome in the Kimberley, and it was on this project that Peter's truly original approach was most apparent. Fascinated by the simple, frugal architectural forms of Broome, he took the same limited palette of materials and designed a five-star resort of corrugated Iron and timber. It was the first Australian resort to demonstrate a local rather than an international architectural style, and it put Broome on the tourism map worldwide.



The Cable Beach Club at Broome opened in May 1988 (c.1992, SLWA 216364PD)

Peter was also prominent in the planning and design of hospitals and educational facilities. He acted for a number of Catholic orders – including the Little Sisters of the Poor - on both education and health-care projects throughout Australasia. He also designed many facilities for private health-care institutions, where his work - always at the leading edge - won recognition for its innovation and functionality.

Tony Ednie-Brown noted that *Peter showed great generosity towards his fellow architects, never criticising another professional and always encouraging younger members of Oldham Boas Ednie-Brown. He remained a 'hands-on' architect and planner, and derived great satisfaction from getting the aims of a project right and making a building work. Possessed of considerable artistic flair, Peter nevertheless insisted that the function of a building should drive its design. He was known to his fellow directors and staff as a man of quick wit and outgoing personality; he was also modest and avoided publicity. In his long career he received many awards for his and his fellow architects chose to acknowledge his work by awarding him life membership of the RAI.*



Peter Arney in later years (*BOMA news*, Sept.1990, p.6)

In addition to his architectural commitments, Peter played an important role in many civic bodies. His urban design and town-planning skills, plus his membership of the RAI, contributed greatly to Perth City Council's Bonus Plot Ratio Advisory Committee, of which he was a member for 27 years, and the Town Planning Appeal Tribunal, on which he was also a long-serving member. Peter was appointed to the council of the Royal Automobile Club of WA in 1981, and became president in 1991.

Peter died 17 August 1996 at Attadale, aged 68 years, and was buried at Karrakatta Cemetery. The marriage in 1955 of Peter Arney and Elizabeth (Betty) Emmaline Dougall was blessed with four sons. He was survived by Betty and his sons, and was particularly proud that his youngest child, Earle, chose to follow him into the profession. Named in his honour by Anglican Homes, the 60 bed Peter Arney nursing home at Salter Point was officially opened on 1 September 1998.



Terry Hogan, Chair of Anglican Homes and Revd Betty Arney with a framed photograph and calligraphy noting some of the Peter Arney story at the home named in his honour (*On line*, Dec. 2000, p.8).

References:

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 'Births', *The West Australian*, 29 October 1927, p.1 (to Mr and Mrs Earle Arney).
 P. Arney, 'Phi and Why', *The Architect*, December 1949, p.23 (preview of ASA magazine).
 'The Students Approach or "As we see it"', *Phi*, 1950, pp.32-4 (signed 'P.A.').
 'Fairies in Architecture', *Phi*, 1950, pp.37-8 (signed 'PETE').
 Pitt Morison, M; White, J.G.; *Western Towns and Buildings*, UWA Press, Crawley, 1979, p.148.
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 'New President', *The Road Patrol*, Dec. 1991-Jan.1992, p.8; SLWA 620 ROA, .b11434715.
 'Honour to Architect', *BOMA news*, Sept.1990, p.6, SLWA 333.338 BOM, .b13638713.
 'Vale: Peter Brent Arney (41-45)', *OWCA*, Sept. 1996, p.10, F373.9411, .b11432160.
 'Death of Prominent Architect', *Western planner*, 1996, Vol.13, no.4, p.3, SLWA 307.12 WES, .b11442360.
 'Peter Arney', *The Architect*, Autumn 1997, p.6 (obituary by Tony Ednie-Brown).
 'Peter Arney the man', *On line*, Anglican Homes Inc, Dec. 2000, p.8, SLWA 363.59 ONL, .b11433231.

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