



Percy Harrison (*The West Australian Craftsman*, November 1951, p.40)

**Percy William Harrison** (1864-1951) was born at London on 19 June 1864. Harrison served five years articles with Thomas Watts in Melbourne 1880-1885, and was chief draughtsman to Watts & Son from 1885 to 1892. He lived in Toorak when he was married during September 1887 at St Martins Church, Hawksburn (South Yarra) to Ruth Agenoria Henderson Dean, and became an associate of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects in 1891. Harrison may have been retrenched by Watts with the early 1890s crash in Victoria, as he was a surveyor for the Metropolitan Waterworks Board 1892-1893, and designed several private residences on his own account from 1893. Percy and Ruth had two sons, Sydney Percy Vernon born at Melbourne in 1892, and Claude Leslie Everard born at Perth in 1896.

As with many other Victorians, by 1895 Percy fled the depressed conditions of 1890s Melbourne for gold-boom Western Australia, and in 1896 was a foundation member of the West Australian Institute of Architects (WAIA). Harrison was in partnership with Percy D. Wyburn at the Bank of Australasia Chambers in William Street, Perth, until late 1896, from whence he continued as a sole practitioner once more.



St Andrew's Anglican Church, Katanning of 1898 (*Western Mail*, 8 October 1904, p.28).

Harrison's fellowship nomination papers to the RVIA of August 1900 reveal at that time his office was in the National Mutual Building in St George's Terrace, Perth, and that he had been nominated by three other Fellows of the RVIA in Talbot Hobbs, Henry Stirling Trigg, and Thomas Watts. Some of Harrison's work in Western Australia from 1895-1900 included Anglican churches at Katanning and Wagin; St John's Anglican Parish Hall at Perth; Bunbury Municipal Offices of 1897 (won in competition); Ministering Children's League Convalescent Home of 1896-97 (now Wearne Hostel), Marine Parade, Cottesloe; Presbyterian Manse West Perth (also won in competition); various shops and offices; and about £30,000 worth of private residences.



Ministering Children's League Convalescent Home of 1896-97 (Battye, J.S., *Cyclopedia of Western Australia*, Vol.2, p.115); Wearne Hostel from Marine Parade Cottesloe (John Taylor).



Residences at Illareen near Katanning for Ross Anderson of 1906, and at Condeena near Broomehill for Thomas Anderson of 1907 (SLWA 300834PD, SLWA 024238PD).



Laxey Glen cnr Broome and John Streets Cottesloe (Google 2023)

Percy Harrison was President of WAIA from 1907-1909, following George Temple Poole 1896-1903, Michael Cavanagh 1903-1905, and Poole again 1905-1907. Harrison handed over the presidency to Talbot Hobbs, who served 1909-1911, and then took the job back again in 1911. Harrison was prominent in the Freemasons, in 1912 holding high honours in the Masonic world as Senior Grand Warden, and Master of the Mundaring Lodge. In 1916 Percy was elected a Fellow of WAIA.

Percy's son Claude, also an architect, enlisted for service in the First World War (1914-1918) and travelled to Gallipoli in late 1915. To his family's great relief, Claude returned to WA in late 1918. Bank officer Syd Harrison enlisted in late 1917, travelled to England in mid-1918, and thus was fortunate to avoid the horrors of the Western Front before returning home in 1919. The *Architects Act of Western Australia 1921* received formal assent in 1922, Percy (no.21) and Claude (no.44) duly registered with the Architects Board of Western Australia in that year.



1914 Anglican Church of the Epiphany at Mann St Mundaring (28 Jun 1981, HCWA 020789)

Percy Harrison has been identified as the architect for the Anglican Church of the Epiphany, Mundaring; Corrigin Town Hall & Road Board Office (fmr); Dangin Masonic Lodge (fmr); Freemasons Hall (fmr), cnr Roberts & Coghlan Roads, Subiaco; a house at 4-18 Rheola Street, West Perth; 'Laxey Glen', 102 Broome St (cnr John St), Cottesloe; Morawa Shire Office & Town Hall; a portion of the Rokeby Road Precinct between Hay and Barker Streets, Subiaco; and St Mary's Church, Colin Street, West Perth.



House at 4 Rheola Street West Perth, part of a Department of Health facility (Google 2023)

Percy Harrison was also involved in designing flats, and a two storey brick factory in Brown Street, Perth for the Western Hat Manufacturers (1934-35). He had a long and successful professional career, and Percy and Claude Harrison were listed together under architects in the Wisers Directories of 1946-1949, at 85 St Georges Terrace in Perth. At this time Percy and Ruth were living at 40 Megalong Street in Nedlands.



Freemasons Hall (fmr), Subiaco of 1929 (HCWA 02444 16 Dec 2010)

Ruth Harrison died on 3 October 1949, aged 85 years; Percy died on 1 November 1951, aged 87 years, and both were cremated at Karrakatta. They were survived by Syd and Claude, although Claude, by then working at the Department of Works and Housing, died suddenly in May 1952 aged just 56 years. A few of Harrison's drawings are found within Battye Library records, it is likely others would be found in Anglican Church and other archival sources, and his body of work would form a fine topic for an undergraduate study.

References:

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- 'Public Notice', *The West Australian*, 18 November 1896, p.2 (dissolution of partnership).
- 'St John's Parish Hall', *The West Australian*, 13 March 1899, p.6 (at Melbourne Rd Perth).
- 'St John's Hall', *The West Australian*, 27 April 1899, p.5 [Melbourne Rd became Milligan St].
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 30 November 1901, p.3 (brick villa residence Colin St Perth).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 20 March 1903, p.3, (bulk store West Perth, Metters and Co).
- 'On The Terrace', *West Australian Mining, Building, and Engineering Journal*, 9 December 1905, p.19 (large residence at Goblup Station near Katanning for Ross Anderson - Illareen).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 5 December 1906, p.9 (large residence at Goblup Station Broomehill for Thomas Anderson - Condeena).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 5 December 1906, p.9 (residence at First Avenue Mount Lawley for C.A. Rippon).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 3 February 1908, p.3 (renovation of 'River View' Esplanade Peppermint Grove).
- 'Tenders', *The West Australian*, 19 September 1910, p.5 (alterations to Palace Hotel Perth).
- 'Percy William Harrison', Battye, J.S., *Cyclopedia of Western Australia*, Vol.1, 1912, pp.623-4.  
NAA B2455, HARRISON C L E – First World War service record for son Claude.
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- 'A Hardy Veteran', *The West Australian Craftsman*, April 1945, p.27.
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- Heritage Committee review: 8 October 2009 Last updated: 23 June 2023
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