

PHILPOT, Arthur COLLECTION
Architecture Museum, University of South Australia

PHILPOT, Arthur

SERIES 354

BIOGRAPHY

Arthur Philpot engaged passionately with many facets of life and described himself as a ‘Christian, humanitarian, architect, teacher and mentor in design, invention and presentation’, a view endorsed by his peers (Chappel, 1984:16).

Arthur Alfred Philpot was born 16 December 1915 at Toodyay, in the district of Northam, Western Australia, to newly arrived English emigrants, Ernest Sidney and Annie Eliza (née Hutchings) Philpot (Page: 204; One Great Family). In 1936, at the age of 21, Philpot was indentured to the Western Australian architectural firm of Eales, Cohan and Fitzhardinge for a period of four years. J. Herbert Eales was one of the founders of the Western Australian Institute of Architects and its Board of Education, and was, according to Philpot, ‘considered by many to be the doyen of architecture in that state’. Fitzhardinge, too, was well known throughout the profession. In 1940, Philpot sat for the Board examination for the ten prescribed subjects, gaining five passes and a credit in design. World War Two delayed the completion of his examinations. He moved to South Australia in 1941 and finally completed the remaining four subjects under the supervision of Louis Laybourne Smith in 1944 (Philpot Collection S354).

Philpot had come to South Australia in the reserved occupation of architect for the Commonwealth Department of Works. He was involved in munition factory design and supervision at the complex being built at Salisbury, remaining with the Department until 1947 (Page: 192, 204). On February 4, 1943, Philpot married Fanny Olive Thorpe, niece and adopted daughter of Mr and Mrs W. Trowse of Tasmore, at Scots Church, Adelaide (Advertiser 1943: 6). They had two children, Christopher (Ross) and Joy.

Philpot worked in the same office as Jack Cheesman for four years and became a partner with Evans, Bruer & Partners in 1947, the same year in which he became an Associate of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA). He later became an Associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1953, and a Fellow of the RAIA in 1970. In 1953, the practice, then known as Evans and Bruer, Philpot & Partners (although Evans had died in 1948), took on Eric von Schramek, Christopher Bruer and Robert Dawes (‘Public Notices’, 1953). It was during this time in the 1950s that Philpot undertook ecclesiastical commissions for which he is best remembered: Ernabella Presbyterian (1952), Clearview Presbyterian (1954), Tasmore Presbyterian (1956, later Tasmore Park Uniting) and most notably, The John Flynn Memorial Church in Alice Springs (1956).

Arthur Philpot was asked to design The John Flynn Memorial Church to specifically reflect the life and achievements of John Flynn, a Presbyterian minister and one of the founders of the Royal Flying Doctor Service. The foundation stone was laid by the Prime Minister, Mr. R.G. Menzies, on 26 June 1954 and was opened by the Governor-General and dedicated by the Moderator General of the Presbyterian Church in Australia on 5 May 1956. Constructed of pink and white marble and red sandstone sourced from Central Australia, it was ‘intended to interpret and express history, the history of Flynn and the Inland; to speak of Flynn, with a message not only for the worshipper, for every inlander, for tourist and townsman alike’

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(Philpot, 1956: 6). The wide ranging symbolism was embedded in a structure responsive to the climate and environment of Alice Springs. The church is listed on the Northern Territory Government's Heritage Register.

From 1957 to 1959, Philpot worked as a salaried architect with the London firm of Beard Bennett & Wilkins. Upon his return to Adelaide he became a lecturer in architecture within the School of Architecture and Building at the South Australian Institute of Technology (SAIT). He covered architectural design in all years including final theses, and lectured specifically in Fine Arts and Aesthetics, Landscape, Free Drawing and the History of Architecture and Construction. He also worked towards a new course in Design and Invention as a General Studies elective subject at SAIT (Cheesman Collection).

Philpot's interests and skills extended beyond architecture and artistic pursuits. After a varied career, Philpot died on 4 February 1984. A Memorial Window to Arthur Philpot installed in the Tusmore Park Uniting Church where he was a member, included these words: 'He always had a pencil in his hand' (Philpot Collection).

This is an abridged excerpt from: McDougall, Alison, 'Philpot, Arthur Alfred', Architecture Museum, University of South Australia, 2015, Architects of South Australia: [http://www.architectsdatabase.unisa.edu.au/arch_full.asp?Arch_ID=134]

SOURCES

Page, M. (1986) *Sculptors in Space: South Australian Architects 1836–1986*, RAI A (SA), Adelaide.

Chappel, J. 'Obituary: Arthur Philpot', *Building and Architecture*, Vol 11, No.3 1984: 16.

COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

The Philpot collection comprises clippings, copies of biographical material and colour photographs.

SERIES LIST

Series	Description
S354/1	Biographical material on Arthur Philpot, includes correspondence regarding job applications
S354/2	Photograph of Arthur and Olive Philpot at their home, 37 Northumberland Ave, Tusmore, SA
S354/3	Photocopy of 'Intention and Performance: Creativity – Design and Creation' by Arthur Philpot, typescript and handwritten
S354/4	Photocopies of items relating to John Flynn Memorial Church, including excerpt from book by Richard Woldendorp and Roger McDonald (1994) <i>Australia's Flying Doctors</i> ; and axonometric drawing of church exterior
S354/5	List of architectural works by Arthur Philpot
S354/6	Photographs of Tusmore Park Uniting Church
S354/7	Photographs of St Andrews, Naracoorte
S354/8	Photographs of Arthur Philpot and family members with musical instruments including the Pottophone