



Alex Winning
(RAIA c.1960)

Alexander Barr Winning (1892-1963) was born 29 September 1892 of Scottish parents at Kharkoff (Kharkiv) a major industrial centre of Ukraine. Alex was just three years old when his father, mining-engineer James died in 1895. Alex's mother Annie Drummond Barr Winning returned to Scotland with her three infant sons, and Alex was educated at Glasgow. In 1909 he began an articulated apprenticeship to James Austen Laird, studying building construction for a year each at Queens Park School, Shawlands Academy and the Royal Technical College and achieving first prize in all three classes.

Alex migrated to Western Australia in 1912 with his mother and older brother. He worked for four years as assistant in the firm of Hobbs, Smith & Forbes, established in Perth by J.J. Talbot Hobbs (1864-1938), E.H. Dean Smith (1860-1906), and W.J. Waldie Forbes (1869-1939) in 1904. Following patriotic duty, Alex enlisted with the Australian Imperial Forces in 1916, hence serving on the 'Western Front'. At the time of Alex's enlistment his mother Annie was at Kalgoorlie, where she lived with her brother. At the conclusion of the First World War, Winning received special permission from the army to remain in the UK, initially spending four months with architect William Holmes Howie in Glasgow and then again in Laird's office from July 1919 as chief assistant. Working in the daytime and studying at night, Winning undertook a further course of study at the Royal Technical College under Charles Gourlay before returning to Hobbs, Smith & Forbes as chief assistant in 1921.

With regard to his family, Alex's mother Annie, late of Kalgoorlie, died at a private hospital in Perth during September 1921. Alex married Dorothy Major at the goldfields in 1923, and they had three children - Olga Patricia (Patty) born 1924, Ian Stewart Barr born 1926, and George Alexander was born in 1934.

Although St George's College at Crawley (1930) has been attributed to Talbot Hobbs as the Hobbs, Smith & Forbes senior director of the project, Alex Winning did the major portion of the design and documentation work in the late 1920s. Alex visited England to research metal windows for the project, and produced detailed drawings for the splendid Donnybrook stonework utilised at the College, adjacent to the University of Western Australia. Alex also made a major contribution to another prominent and highly-regarded Hobbs, Smith & Forbes design, Newspaper House (1932) in St George's Terrace, Perth.

Alex was admitted as a Licentiate of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in late 1930, his proposers being Talbot Hobbs, E.Le.B. Henderson and W.G. Bennett. Dean Smith had died in 1906, and the practice was re-titled Hobbs Forbes & Partners in 1932 when Alex Winning, Athol Hobbs (1899-1979) and others were admitted as junior partners. By the end of 1934, the two senior partners Talbot Hobbs (seventy) and Waldie Forbes (sixty-five) were no longer creative directors. In the early 1930s Athol Hobbs, Alex Winning, Bill Tracey, and Leslie Walker had formed the core of the office; and Waldie's son Howard 'Bill' Forbes (1904 -1975) began to make his presence felt in the business in the mid-1930s. There may have been some frustration for the younger architects of the office, as Talbot Hobbs and Waldie Forbes did not seem to be moving on! Following Alex's later training in Scotland and with Athol Hobbs' background in 1920s London, the younger architects developed greater artistic expression in their work – following the emerging Modern and Art-Deco Movements.

Seeking greater independence, Athol Hobbs and Alex Winning founded the new firm of Hobbs & Winning in January 1938. Alex's involvement and respect in professional affairs was recognised when he was made a Fellow of the Royal Institute of Architects of Western Australia (RIAWA) in April 1939. A temporary hindrance to the partnership activities occurred when Athol served in the Second World War from September 1939 until June 1943, then returning to private practice. Meanwhile Alex, of Hobbs & Winning, had been successful

during March of 1940 with a winning entry in a competition for a Talbot Hobbs memorial to be built on the Perth foreshore. Alex's design, in association with sculptor Edward Kohler (1890-1964), had been chosen from ten entries submitted, and would take the form of a bust in military uniform surmounting a column, with a sword suspended at the side. Alex's son George believes that his father was working 'flat out' during the Second World War of 1939-1945, despite the scarcity of materials and labour, undertaking projects such as wool stores at Fremantle without assistance until Athol returned in 1943.

A senior member of the profession remaining in WA during war years, in October 1944, Alex was elected as President of the relatively newly-formed WA chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA) for 1945-1946. Winning was a Councillor of the RAIA from 1944 to 1949 having been a member of its Western Australia Chapter since 1940. With further acknowledgement of professional status, he was elected a Fellow of RIBA in December 1952, nominated by the Council of RIBA.

With post-war building activity starting to improve despite crippling material shortages, in late 1945 the highly-talented Western Australian-born architect, William Thomas Leighton (1905-1990) returned from service and joined with Alex and Athol Hobbs, initially in association, hence practicing from 1946 as a partner in a new firm titled Hobbs, Winning & Leighton.

Although it is impossible to attribute the practice's extensive works in the 1940s and 1950s to individuals, under Alex's and the other partners' guidance, Hobbs Winning & Leighton practiced prolifically and with distinction - eventually for over five decades. At the very end of the twentieth century, the business was absorbed by the Woods Bagot company.

Alex Winning was a long term resident (c.1926-1963) at 19 Melville Terrace (now Parade), South Perth. Alex died at South Perth on 20 March 1963, aged 70 years. Continuing family involvement in the profession, Alex's son George became an architect, registered with the ABWA in 1960 (reg no. 335), and worked with Hobbs, Winning & Leighton at various times. Bill Leighton's son Garry Howard Leighton had registered with the ABWA in 1956 (reg no. 300), and in his career also practiced with Hobbs Winning Leighton & Partners.

References:

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Hobbs Winning Leighton and Partners company prospectus, circa 1974.

Pers Comm John Taylor with George Winning 21 July 2003, 23 August 2013.

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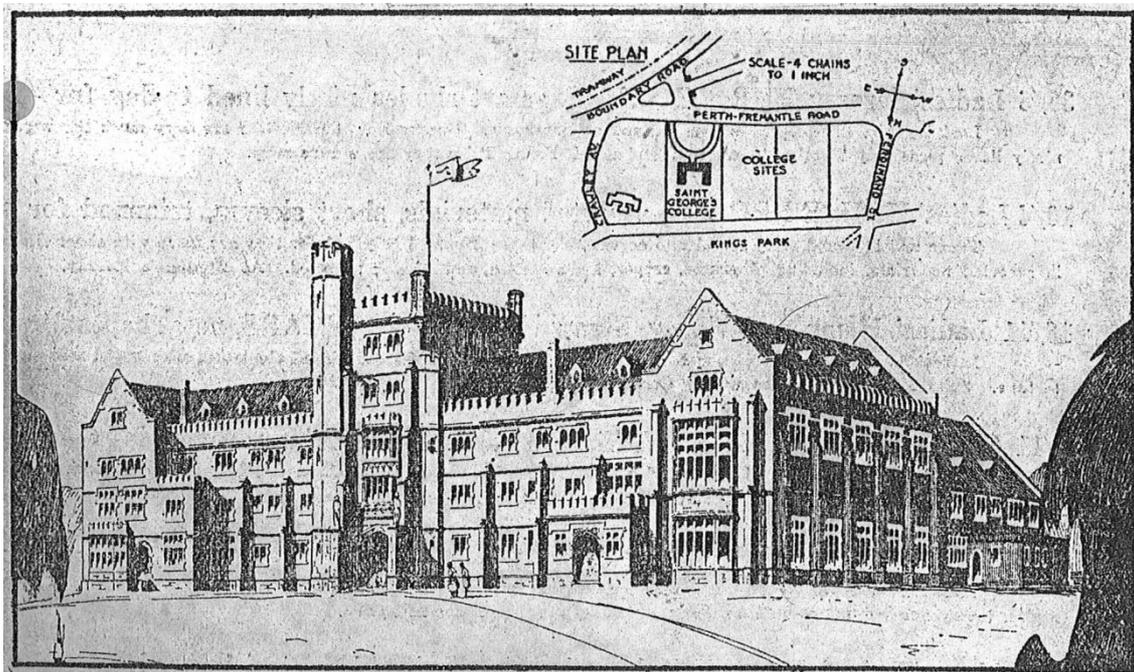
Hobbs Winning & Leighton photographs 1960s-1980s, 82 images by Fritz Kos, online at SLWA.

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Hobbs Smith & Forbes' perspective sketch of St George's College at UWA (*The West Australian*, 26 August 1927).



Newspaper House (1932) in St George's Terrace, Perth (SLWA 095206PD).



Portion of model for the Hobbs Memorial, Perth which was unveiled on Remembrance Day 1940 (*The Architect*, vol.1, no.4, March 1940, p.27; John Taylor 2008).