

# QUEEN VICTORIA MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

CHS 76

## THE NELL FRANKCOMBE COLLECTION

Artists, Tasmania  
Teachers, Tasmania

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## INTRODUCTION

Nellie (known as Nell) Willis Mary Frankcombe was born at Dunorlan, Tasmania, on 16 May 1906, the youngest of seven children born to William and Mary Frankcombe. She was educated at Red Hills Primary School and Devonport High School. In the 1920s she studied at the Philip Smith Teachers College in Hobart, then taught with the Tasmanian Education Department, including time as an infant teacher at the Campbell Street Practising School c1933. She studied watercolour painting with Hobart artist Isobel Oldham in the 1930s and from 1940 to 1948 she studied with Max Meldrum in Melbourne and also studied design at the Melbourne Technical College. As a trained art teacher, she set up the art department at the Devonport High School in 1937 and it was during school holidays that she travelled to Melbourne to have lessons with Max Meldrum. In 1948 she took a year's leave to study full time with Meldrum, returning to the High School in 1949. One of her pupils in the early 1950s was David Hopkins, who went on to become a successful commercial artist. She travelled extensively, including undertaking study tours of Europe in the 1960s. Later she worked as a teacher librarian at Hobart High School until she retired.

Miss Frankcombe exhibited with the Art Society of Tasmania in 1935, the first of her many group and solo exhibitions at various galleries and venues in Hobart. Her last solo exhibition was at the Masterpiece Fine Art Gallery in November 2000.

Later in life she concentrated on native and exotic flower paintings and because of a tremor painted only in watercolours. She was one of several artists who illustrated the Society for Growing Australian Plants Tasmanian Region's plant identification series booklets, *Wildflowers of Mt Wellington* (c1988), *Alpine Wildflowers of Tasmania* (1989), *Woodland Wildflowers of Tasmania* (1990), *Rainforest Plants of Tasmania* (1992), *Orchids of Tasmania* (c1993) and *Coastal Plants of Tasmania* (2003). She also assisted in the collection of plant specimens for botanical artist Margaret Stones for *The Endemic Flora of Tasmania*.

In 1989 she won the Wildlife Art Society of Australasia's award for the best botanical work. Her paintings were used by Paytel Australia Pty Ltd in 1995 for their \$5, \$10 and \$20 Tasmanian Wildflowers phone cards which were also issued in a limited edition collector pack of 2,500.

A life member of the Art Society of Tasmania and a member of the Tasmanian Art Group, Nell Frankcombe continued painting until the time of her death. Her other activities included cooking, tending her large garden and renovating her Bellerive home. She died on 12 June 2001 in Hobart.

The collection was donated to the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in June 2001.

## ***1. Correspondence***

- 1/1 Correspondence to Nell Frankcombe (Miss N Frankcombe, Practising School, Campbell Street, from Director of Education, 21/8/1933; Miss Frankcombe, 71 Best Street Devonport, from Isobel Oldham, c4/5/1937, c8/8/1938, c7/5/1943; Miss N Frankcombe, Oldaker Street, Devonport, from Miss Mabel Mallion, 20/10/1946; Miss N Frankcombe, Surrey Street, Devonport, circular re Children's Libraries Section, Library Association of Australia, 30/10/1963; Miss Frankcomb (sic), 50 South Street, Bellerive, from Charles Davis Group, 21/11/1978; from Governor's Official Secretary, 5/11/1985; from Wildlife Art Society of Australasia, 12/11/1987; from Art Society of Tasmania, 20/4/1989; from Wildlife Art Society of Australasia, with award certificate for best botanical work, 18/10/1989; from Don Martin, 2/11/1989; from Art Society of Tasmania, 8/11/1989; from Lord Mayor, 8/5/1991; from Vivienne ?, 21/7/1992; from Wildlife Art Society of Australasia, 11/1/1993; from Art Society of Tasmania, 9/6/1999; from Committee of Taxation Incentives for the Arts, 3/11/1999; from Kevin Bartlett, former pupil, 14/11/2000; from Masterpiece Fine Art Gallery, 20/11/2000, 5/12/2000, 20/3/2001; email re Sophie Haythornthwaite, 23/11/2000) 1933-2001

## ***2. Diaries***

- 2/1 Diaries (two) of Nell Frankcombe's overseas trip 1962
- 2/2 Diary of Nell Frankcombe's overseas trip, also her notebook 1969

## ***3. Exhibition Catalogues***

- 3/1 Catalogues and some invitations to Nell Frankcombe's solo exhibitions (1996 Hibiscus Gallery exhibition includes photocopy of visitors' book) 1971-1999
- 3/2 Group exhibition catalogues which include Nell Frankcombe's works 1967-1997

## ***4. Artwork***

- 4/1 Small sketch book of Hobart scenes by Nell Frankcombe c1936
- 4/2 Small sketch book of Tasmanian places by Nell Frankcombe c1937
- 4/3 Small sketch book of pencil drawings with notes re colours by Nell Frankcombe nd

4/4	Notes made in sketch book by Nell Frankcombe whilst studying with Max Meldrum in Melbourne	1948
4/5	Large watercolour of alpine scene by Nell Frankcombe, a version of her cover painting for <i>Alpine Wildflowers of Tasmania</i> <i>Oversize item</i>	c1988
4/6	Seventy-four watercolours of identified wildflowers by Nell Frankcombe	1988-1994
4/7	Seven watercolours of orchids by Nell Frankcombe	1990
4/8	Large sketch book of watercolours and drawings by Nell Frankcombe	nd

### **5. Photographs**

5/1	Folder of photographs of paintings by Nell Frankcombe exhibited at the Freeman Gallery, Hobart (includes 2 photographs of Miss Frankcombe with Lord Mayor Doone Kennedy, exhibition catalogue)	1991
5/2	Twenty-eight photographs of flower paintings and two landscapes by Nell Frankcombe	1996, 1999
5/3	Small box with 3 drawers, each drawer containing a folder of photographs of paintings by Nell Frankcombe (one folder contains photographs of paintings exhibited at the Hibiscus Gallery, Sandy Bay, in 1996)	1991, 1996, 1999, 2000
5/4	Colour photograph of Nell Francombe, includes two of her paintings (photograph appeared in <i>Mercury</i> 17/5/1999)	1999
5/5	Folder of photographs of Nell Frankcombe with friends, scenery and a number of her flower paintings	nd
5/6	Nine photographs of paintings by Nell Frankcombe; negatives of various paintings	1999, 2000, nd
5/7	Nell Frankcombe and Isobel Oldham photographed in a Hobart street	nd

### **6. Miscellaneous Records**

6/1	Newspaper cuttings re Nell Frankcombe's exhibitions	1946-1999
6/2	Invitation to Nell Frankcombe to attend Legislative Council for 150 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of constitution	1975

6/3	Exercise book with record of expenses, invitation lists to Nell Frankcombe's exhibitions	1984-1986
6/4	City of Clarence Australia Day Committee (citizen award certificate to Miss Nell Frankcombe and program of award ceremony)	1992
6/5	Pay Tel Tasmanian Wildflowers limited edition collector pack no.507 of 2,500 (\$5, \$10 and \$20 phonecards with illustrations from original paintings by Nell Frankcombe)	1995
6/6	Publicity sheet listing Nell Frankcombe's achievements, includes colour illustrations of six of her flower paintings	c1995
6/7	'Ode to Aunt Nell', poem written on the occasion of her ninetieth birthday	1996
6/8	Invitation to opening of Gallery at Campbell Street School (Nell Frankcombe performed the opening)	1996
6/9	Three exercise books with transcriptions from Van Diemen's Land Company records, one also includes manuscript radio? script in Miss Frankcombe's hand writing headed 'North West Settlement'	nd
6/10	Nell Frankcombe's address book, used whilst she was living at Devonport, photograph of Sylvia Pedder loose inside, notes re painting at end of book	c1940
6/11	Nell Frankcombe's address book, used whilst she was living at Bellerive	nd
6/12	'Feature artist exhibition by Nell Frankcombe, flowers, berries, landscapes. Gallery open..., April 4-5, 11-12, 18-19, 25-26' (large handmade poster) <i>Oversize item</i>	nd

### ***7.Miscellaneous Items***

7/1	Exhibition of paintings by Isobel Oldham and Mabel Hookey at Masonic Hall (catalogue)	1937
7/2	<i>Souvenir Lady Franklin Museum Hobart</i> , Hobart, 1949 (with photocopies from various publications concerning Lady Franklin)	1949
7/3	K B Fenton, 'A physicist looks at man and the environment', University of Tasmania Winter Series of Lectures (typescript)	1972
7/4	James McAuley, 'Sex and love in literature', University of	1972

- Tasmania Winter Series Lecture (typescript)
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| 7/5 | Society for Growing Australian Plants, Tasmanian Region, <i>Seminar Papers</i>   | 1975 |
| 7/6 | Society for Growing Australian Plants, Tasmanian Region, <i>The beginner's guide to native Australian plants for Tasmanian gardens</i>               | nd   |
| 7/7 | Phil Collier, 'Mt Field Wildflowers: advice to artists' (typed notes with illustrations)   | 1988 |
| 7/8 | John Mystery's singing cards (miniature plastic record in Christmas greeting card)   | nd   |
| 7/9 | Findlay's, distributors of all makes gramophones, records, accessories, Launceston (record cover with handwritten notes) <b><i>Oversize item</i></b> | nd   |

#### **OTHER SOURCES**

QVMAG, Community History, 1995.P.0899

Sue Backhouse, *Tasmanian artists of the twentieth century*, Hobart, 1988

Max Germaine, *Artists and galleries of Australia*, vol. 1, Roseville, NSW, 1990