

QUEEN VICTORIA MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

CHS 121

GEOFFREY TYSON COLLECTION

Commercial artist and watercolour artist, Launceston

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INTRODUCTION

Geoffrey Gordon Tyson was born in Launceston, Tasmania on 3 April 1911 to Frank and Anne Henrietta Tyson and was the youngest in a family of six children. He went on to become one of the best known watercolour landscape painters in Tasmania.

Tyson attended Launceston Church Grammar School and art classes at the Launceston Technical College. He later undertook private art classes with Edgar A Holloway and Mrs Mary Greig from 1922 to 1926. During his childhood, Tyson spent his holidays at Lagoon Bay, Low Head near George Town, where he went on sketching excursions with his uncle John Crust, a keen watercolourist and an architect who worked with Walter Burley-Griffin in designing the Australian War Memorial. Low Head became a favourite painting location of Tyson's and he continuously painted landscapes of the area throughout his career. In addition to his love of drawing and painting, Tyson was also a talented schoolboy athlete, footballer, cricketer and swimmer.¹

In 1927, at the age of 16, Tyson commenced a commercial art correspondence course with the Leyshon White School in Melbourne and in 1928 moved to Melbourne to attend classes at the same school. Tyson also enrolled in drawing classes at the National Gallery School in Melbourne, under the tutelage of William McInnes. While living in Melbourne, Tyson worked as a commercial artist at Ramsay Publishing Company from 1930 to 1931, before being employed by Apex Engraving for a year in 1933 and Peacock Printers in 1934. During his time in Melbourne, Tyson also furthered his studies between 1932 and 1934 at the newly-established Bell-Shore School. In 1933 Tyson was commended by artist and art critic Arthur Streeton, after he participated in an exhibition at the Athenaeum Gallery.

Tyson returned home to Launceston in 1935 and was appointed head artist at *The Examiner*, a role which he held from 1935 to 1940. During this period he continued his artistic studies, attending classes with Miss Hope Evershed and also studying with Dorothy Stoner and Jack Carington Smith. In the late 1930s Tyson also formed a close association with fellow artists Stanley Fuller and Alan McIntyre which continued throughout his life, with the artists later staging joint exhibitions during the 1970s.²

In 1940 Tyson enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), 2/40 Infantry Battalion and used his artistic skills to draw plans of the area around Brighton for platoon and company manoeuvres of his Battalion.³ The 2/40 Infantry Battalion left Darwin for Timor in 1941 and a short time after, in February 1942, troops in Timor surrendered to the Japanese at Airkom

¹ Peter Henning, 'A lifetime's obsession', in *Leatherwood*, vol. 45, no. 15.

² Henning, 'A lifetime's obsession'.

³ Henning, 'A lifetime's obsession'.

and were transferred to Tandjong Priok camp in Batavia (Jakarta). During his time as a prisoner of war (POW) in Batavia Tyson was moved to a number of camps, including Makasura, Cycle camp, Glodok and Adek. While in these camps Tyson made backdrops for camp concerts and was involved in designing covers for camp newspapers.

In May 1944 Tyson and other POWs embarked for Shonan, Japan, travelling via Singapore, Manila and Formosa aboard the *Tamahoko Maru*. However, after leaving Formosa, the ship Tyson was on was torpedoed sixty miles from Nagasaki by the American submarine *Tang*. Only 212 of the 770 men on board survived and over 80 Tasmanians died in the attack.⁴ Tyson eventually arrived at Fukuoka No. 14 camp in Nagasaki, Japan in June 1944 and in August 1944 he started work at the Mitsubishi Iron Foundry. In 30 June 1945, six weeks before the atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, Tyson was moved from Nagasaki to Omine, a coal mining camp in Kyushu. On 22 August 1945 Tyson left Omine to be repatriated to Australia.

While the Second World War changed Tyson's artistic direction for a period of time, it did not shift his interest away from watercolour landscapes permanently. Following his return to Australia, Tyson resumed watercolour painting in 1946 and worked briefly again for *The Examiner* before taking a job as an art instructor at the Launceston Technical College from 1947 to 1949.

In 1947, Tyson married fellow art teacher and artist, Hilma Wright, who he had met while working at *The Examiner*.⁵

In 1946 to 1947 Tyson published two books of his drawings from his time as a POW. Many of the drawings produced by Tyson in Batavia had been hidden in Glodok camp and were never seen again. However, drawings made for fellow POWs, which were successfully brought back to Australia, were used to illustrate *Oesapa-besar and other Remnants* and drawings made in Omine camp in the months after the war ended were used to illustrate *The Last Phase at Omine*. Both of these books were published by *The Examiner* and copies of these books are now held by the Imperial War Museum, London and the Australian War Memorial (which also holds a number of the original drawings in its collection).

Tyson left his job at the Launceston Technical College in 1949 to work as the advertising manager of McKinlays Pty Ltd (Launceston department store) from 1949 to 1960. After a decade at McKinlays, Tyson re-joined the Launceston Technical College in 1960 as the Head

⁴ Henning, 'A lifetime's obsession'.

⁵ Henning, 'A lifetime's obsession'.

of the Art Department and also served as President of the Launceston Art Society from 1959 to 1962.

In 1975 Tyson retired from teaching and in 1977 he was made a life member of the Launceston Art Society. In 1982 the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery held a comprehensive exhibition of Tyson's work, including 70 of his paintings from 1936 to 1980, which were borrowed from a diverse range of owners. A number of artworks by Geoffrey Tyson are held in the collection of the Queen Victoria Art Gallery.

In 1983 Tyson retired to Low Head, the place that inspired many of his watercolour landscapes, where he resided until his death on 24 April 1986.

The collection was donated to the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in 2008.

List of Geoffrey Tyson Exhibitions

Individual and Joint Exhibitions

- 1953 QVMAG
1968 The Gallery, Carrick
1968 Telfer Dennis, Alan McIntyre and Geoff Tyson, Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureau, Melbourne
1970 Salamanca Place Gallery, Hobart
1972 Alan McIntyre and Geoff Tyson, Entally House, Hadspen
1973 Alan McIntyre and Geoff Tyson, The Charles Wesley Gallery, Launceston
1982 'Geoff Tyson Watercolours 1936-1980', QVMAG

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 1928-1930, 1934-1939, 1946-1984 Launceston Art Society
1947-1960, 1962-1965, 1967 Tasmanian Group of Painters, TMAG 'Tasmanian Art Exhibition', Canberra University College
1953-1956 Victorian Artists Society Exhibitions, Melbourne
1957-1961, 1968, 1974 Tasmanian Art Gallery Exhibitions, TMAG
1961 'Group Ten', QVMAG
1964 'Tasmanian Painters', Bible House, Canberra
1965-1968 Tasmanian Art Prize
1966, 1967 ESU Prize, Tasmania
1967-1968 Max Fry Hall Art Exhibitions, Launceston
1969, 1970, 1972 Salamanca Place Gallery, Hobart
1969, 1971-1974, 1977, 1980 Oakburn College Art Exhibitions, Launceston
1976-1981 Tasmanian Independent Artists
1972 'The Tasmanian Drawing Exhibition', Festival of Tasmania, QVMAG
1972 'Ingoldby-Ryecroft Purchase Exhibition', Adelaide
1977 Alan and Jo McIntyre, Hilma, Lyn and Geoff Tyson, Bowerbank Mill Gallery, Deloraine
1978 '50 Years of Watercolour Painting in Tasmania 1928-1978', Fine Arts Gallery, University of Tasmania

THE RECORDS

1. *Works by Geoffrey Tyson*

1/1 Miscellaneous sketches nd, 1940
1947

2. *Military Records*

2/1 Menus, pay books, 1 rehabilitation advice book and 1 demobilization procedure book 1940-1946

3. *Correspondence*

3/1 Miscellaneous correspondence 1940-2002

4. *Maps*

4/1 Map of Indonesia - Timor, Flores and Soemba nd

4/2 Outline of Koepang Bay and Oesapa-Besar on tracing paper (map used in 'Oesapa-besar and other remnants' book) nd

4/3 Line work for combination line & half tone, place names and rivers surrounding Koepang Bay, on tracing paper (map used in 'Oesapa-besar and other remnants' book) nd

4/4 Hand-drawn map of Koepang Bay, ink on card nd

4/5 Hand-drawn map of Kyushu, Japan nd

4/6 General map of Dutch Timor, reprinted May 1942 from a Dutch reprint of 1941 1942

5. *Photographs and Glass Plates*

5/1 Various British subjects including King's Jubilee, royal yacht, ships, British navy, sailing and farming 1934-1936, nd

5/2 Various photographs relating to film, dance, music and theatre 1935-1937, nd

5/3 Various Australian subjects including Tasmanian social and sporting events, landscapes, farming, steam boats, ships 1916, 1954, nd

5/4 Various glass plate negatives of people, dogs, landscapes flora and animals, (3.25 x 4.25 inch (80 x 110mm)), (6.5 x 4.75 inch (165 x 121mm)) nd

6. *Publications*

6/1 Various authors, *Lettering of Today*, London: The Studio Limited nd

6/2	William S. Furneaux, <i>Philips' Anatomical Model: A Pictorial Representation of the Human Frame and its Organs</i> , London: George Philip & Son	nd
6/3	<i>Royal Academy Pictures</i> , Cassell & Company, 1904	1904
6/4	<i>The Artist</i> , vol. XII, no. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 (September 1936 - February 1937)	1936-1937
6/5	Herbert Newell, <i>The Key Lettering Book</i> , Sydney: Angus & Robertson Ltd, 1937	1937
6/6	A. Cecil Wade, <i>Modern Lettering from A to Z</i> , London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons Ltd, 1937	1937
6/7	Tommy Thompson, <i>The Script Letter: Its Form, Construction and Application</i> , London: The Studio Ltd, 1939	1939
6/8	Charles X Carlson, <i>The Essentials of Pastel Painting</i> , New York: Melior Books, 1945	1945
6/9	H. Davis Richter, 'The Pastel Society', <i>The Studio</i> , vol. CXXXIII, no. 650 (May 1947), pp. 129-138 (extract)	1947
6/10	<i>Barbed Wire and Bamboo</i> , Ex-prisoners of War Association of Australia, vol. 26, no. 1 (February 1976)	1976
7.	<i>Newspaper and Other Cuttings</i>	
7/1	Various articles and photographs relating to the Second World War and the Korean War	1945, 1953, nd
7/2	Various clippings relating to film, theatre, dance & music	1931, 1953, nd
7/3	Various illustration and lettering style references	1928-1953, nd
7/4	Articles relating to Tyson's artwork, 1982 watercolour exhibition, war sketches, POW history, Various reproductions of Tyson's sketches	1934-1995
8.	<i>Ephemera</i>	
8/1	Miscellaneous ephemera, including magazine extracts, cartoons and booklets	nd
9.	<i>Miscellaneous Items</i>	
9/1	Other miscellaneous items, including notebooks, lists of names and addresses, and POW-related material	nd

OTHER SOURCES

- QVMAG, Library *The British Workman*, yearly part, no. 14, London: British Workman Office, 1868
- QVMAG, Library *Design in Everyday Things*, Australian Broadcasting Commission, 1941
- QVMAG, Library *The Netherlands Indies Current Affairs Bulletin*, vol. 6, no. 8 (December 18, 1944)
- QVMAG, Library C. P. Mountford, *The Art of Albert Namatjira*, Bread and Cheese Club Melbourne, 1944
- QVMAG, Library Toc H with the Forces in the East, 1946, printed by The Ganges Printing Co (Sibhur, Howrah)
- QVMAG, Library Dick Wordley, *Tasmanian Adventure*, Hobart: Adventure Productions, ?1953
- QVMAG, History Ceramic teapot with black glaze
- QVMAG, History Pantograph in box, Reeves & Sons Ltd., London
- QVMAG, History The Examiner' Proportion Indicator
- QVMAG, History 'The Tasmanian Lace' orange cardboard packaging box
- QVMAG, History Small timber box with red seals, text on lid 'Miss Doris Hurley, (?) Theatre, Leicester Square, London England'; contains vial of phosferine, Ticka Finder Model A, metal studs?
- QVMAG, Art gallery Holds various artworks by Geoffrey Tyson