
Surely there is no equivalent to the late Professor Leslie Wilkinson in any state of Australia, nor can there now ever be one.

He was the country's first professor of architecture, being appointed to the chair of Sydney University in 1918. He was then 36. He held the position until 1947 but lived on in retirement (and private practice) until 1973. He died, virtually on the job, at 91.

His appointment was dramatically different from that of Melbourne's Brian Lewis. Wilkinson arrived in the August after World War One. In September he was welcomed at the Institute of Architects (New South Wales) with the Premier, Lord Mayor and the Speaker present. He stayed at the Australian Club and had tea at Admiralty House.

In contrast Lewis arrived with five children in 1947 and was welcomed, much to the chagrin of the profession, by a cheeky Victorian Architectural Students Society who telegraphed him at the Queenscliff pilot stop.

Wilkinson came with impeccable references. Two of his referees, his biographer notes with wonder, were in fact on the final selection panel.

Looking back it was inevitable that a British architect became our first professor of architecture. In those days (and for many years on) most senior appointments, especially in academic fields, were from the United Kingdom. Perhaps when non-British talent got through by open competition, as say with the case of Griffin or Utzon, they were always seen as interlopers and made to suffer as such. On the other hand Wilkinson's architectural work at the university, as distinct from his teaching, ran into trouble with the university senate. Many of his bolder schemes were either knocked back or trivialised.
This makes one believe that a British passport did not necessarily mean acceptance but rather the grand scheme was (and is?) unacceptable to many Australian institutions. It was no less acceptable even coming from a graduate of St Edwards Oxford, the Royal Academy and an ARIBA to boot.

No architect from our past will ever have as complete a dossier as has been provided by this book. But the elegance of the publication is only equalled by its lack of critical insight.

Lloyd Rees wrote the foreword.

David Wilkinson, an architect now practicing in Melbourne wrote of his grandfather's pre-Australian life and contributes an affectionate epilogue.

Peter Johnson, the present professor in Sydney contributes a chapter on Wilkinson's work at the university but again the 'work' referred to is the various university architectural commissions. The Wilkinson teaching philosophy, its development and its success and that of the new school in general is not discussed. Nor is the attitude of the students to their professor over several decades. This latter 'work' could well have been considered as equally important to the community as the elegant additions and new buildings for the departments of botany, zoology et al.

George Molnar, the political cartoonist, architect and long-time lecturer contributes a heart-warming chapter, the tone of which could be pre-judged by the title: The Prof.

Despite the multiplicity of contributors and contrary to what one would have hoped, little emerges about the subject. Wilkinson's architectural philosophy as practised if not as taught, was popular in the eastern states in the inter-war decades. 'Mediterranean in feeling' said one critic. 'Let us say it is present day Australian architecture' said the designer himself.

Neither was correct.
The Wilkinson style was the scaled down, stripped down Georgian then being delivered up by a handful of fashionable architects for the rich of the eastern seaboard. In looking north and west towards Home, they were able to ignore the first 3000 km of the vista and see, not their own country but columns, hipped slate roofs, much symmetry, many shutters and twelve pane windows.

Wilkinson strode across five generations of his profession and his adopted land (originally he hadn't intended to stay). He deserves and will surely receive a definitive study.

The present work although lacking in depth and prespicuity at least includes an exhaustive job list complete with address, date, client's name, contract sum and builder's name. Also displayed on well-printed black and white and colour plates are examples of Wilkinson's sketches, renderings and working drawings. Like all architects of his era he was an accomplished painter and a compulsive sketcher.

Apart from his unique academic position he was the prototypical architect of his era, only more so. He completed his last commission in his sixty-ninth year. He towered, at almost two metres, above his contemporaries.

Reviewed by NEIL CLEREHAN
Entire publications have been devoted to subjects which Ian treats as mere chapters in *The Australian Home*. His latest book, therefore, with brevity and clarity provides a tantalizing and sometimes frustrating insight into the development of many aspects of the home in Australia.

In the main, this book condenses what has been written before in order to provide an overall scenario of life and the home in Australia from 1788 to 1938. As a result, the general reader is presented with a clear and logical introduction to the subject.

In his attempt to extract the overall essence of homes in Australia, Ian Evans divides his book into a logical sequence of chapters. An introduction to the architectural development of the house and its rooms is followed by its dissection into major components; walls, roof, floor and ceiling. These receive brief examinations before the development of associated details, such as hardware, furniture and decoration is considered. By finally providing a brief excursion outside the house itself and discussing the setting and ancillary buildings, Evans provides the reader with an overall appreciation of the home.

One of the most positive aspects of the book is the inclusion of many contemporary illustrations; those taken from early catalogues being of particular interest. Other modern photographs illustrate both the typical and atypical, although the emphasis on early photographs is refreshing.

Few errors have been detected in the book, but it is important to note that the caption to a photograph on page 57 has been incorrectly cited. The upstairs window is in fact not Robert Haddon's house 'Anselm', Glenferrie Street, but at 43 Alfred Crescent in North
Fitzroy; Haddon's book Australian Architecture is incidentally misdated by three years elsewhere in the text.

It would appear that Ian Evans set himself a frustrating task in achieving his aim to distil the essence of the Australian home. It is a far more difficult task to adequately examine a general subject than to present a clear understanding of a specialized topic. Evans succeeds however, in writing a clear account of the house, which should appeal to those with an interest in history rather than the seeker of information on particular restoration problems. The lay reader should emerge with a basic understanding of the subject, and the more informed reader will enjoy a text presented with clarity and an informative collection of illustrations.

As an interest in subsequent architectural periods continues to develop it would be of great interest to follow the Australian Home beyond the Second World War in order to provide a complete scenario of its development to the present day.

Reviewed by ROSLYN COLEMAN