KINGSLEY HENDERSON: ARCHITECT OF CIVIC VIRTUE IN INTERWAR MELBOURNE

by

Helena Morris
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I am the author of the thesis entitled

Kingsley Henderson: architect of civic virtue in interwar Melbourne

submitted for the degree of Master of Arts

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Abstract

This thesis is a biographical study of Kingsley Anketell Henderson, an influential architect and community leader in interwar Melbourne who made important contributions to architecture and the architectural professional in Australia and elsewhere, and also to other areas of his interest.

To understand the nature and significance of Henderson’s contributions to architecture, the thesis follows the rise of his firm, A&K Henderson, throughout the 1920s and into the ‘30s to a position of pre-eminence in Melbourne. The context of the interwar period and Henderson’s background of respectability and civic virtue contributed significantly to the skills he developed as an architect, to his ideas about and approach to architectural practice, and to the way in which he conducted himself and his firm. This context also informed his attitudes to architectural education and to the building of Australia’s Federal Capital.

Henderson’s standing as an architect has been obscured by time and by the position architectural historians have taken with regard to the period, particularly to the types of architectural design that characterised the period. The thesis examines the extent to which these factors have contributed to the virtual absence of Henderson from architectural histories. It also proffers other possible reasons which could have contributed to such lack of recognition.

The thesis considers the small but important role Henderson played in political events during the early years of the Depression, a role that has not been forgotten by political historians. The thesis contends that while these actions contributed to Henderson’s prominence in the period, at same time his political position as an ultra-right wing conservative, might have contributed to the lack of appreciation of him and his architecture in later years.

To restore Henderson to his place in history as a memorable identity of interwar Melbourne, this study brings to light the extent of his contribution to architecture and in the public arena, drawing together his strengths and weaknesses as an architect as well as his diverse interests and pursuits to establish his significance as a leader in his time.
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# Abbreviations

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<tr>
<td>A &amp; K Henderson</td>
<td>Anketell &amp; K Henderson; A &amp; K Henderson &amp; Partners</td>
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<tr>
<td>FCC</td>
<td>Federal Capital Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>Federal Council</td>
<td>Federal Council of the Australian Institutes of Architects</td>
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<td>National Bank</td>
<td>National Bank of Australasia</td>
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<tr>
<td>RAIA Victorian Chapter</td>
<td>Royal Australian Institute of Architects, Victorian Chapter</td>
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<tr>
<td>RVIA or Institute</td>
<td>Royal Victorian Institute of Architects</td>
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<td>RVIAJ or Journal</td>
<td><em>Journal of Proceedings of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects</em></td>
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<td>SLV</td>
<td>State Library of Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>T &amp; G</td>
<td>Australasian Temperance and General Mutual Life Association Society Ltd</td>
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<td>UAP</td>
<td>United Australia Party</td>
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Kingsley Henderson: Architect of Civic Virtue in interwar Melbourne

1. Kingsley Anketell Henderson (1883-1942)
President, Savage Club Melbourne, 1933-39
From a portrait by Charles Wheeler, with permission - The Savage Club

Introduction

This thesis examines the life and work of Kingsley Henderson, Melbourne architect, political activist and businessman. In the years between 1920 and 1942 - the period which extends from the end of World War I to his death - Henderson was a foremost figure in architectural circles. In Melbourne, his firm, A & K Henderson, was responsible for so many buildings as to make it almost a household name. For example by the end of the 1930s A & K Henderson had constructed eight buildings in Collins Street - predominantly banks and insurance offices - causing one correspondent to suggest to Henderson that before long Collins Street would be renamed.¹ Buildings of note, just outside the city, were the Alfred Hospital, St Andrews Hospital and the Fairfield Hospital, and further afield the firm was responsible for every T & G Building in Australia and New Zealand. Not only did Henderson gain prominence from his firm’s high standing, but also from his work for the architectural profession, both State and Federal. In addition, his political and business activities earned him further distinction.

¹A Bell to Kingsley Henderson, 18 December 1930, A & K Henderson Records, Box 8 Folder 169, (henceforth Box/Folder). The firm was also responsible for two major rebuilding projects for the Bank of Australasia and the Commercial Bank of Australia, both in Collins Street, plus eight more significant building in other parts of the city, and many factories and warehouses in Melbourne and elsewhere.
Despite the prominence he achieved, Henderson's life and work has been neglected by historians. The aim of this thesis is to account for this neglect and to demonstrate that his contribution was of such importance to establish him as a man who should be remembered. The central research questions are:

- What was the nature and significance of Henderson's contributions to architecture and the other areas in which he was involved?
- Why has he been overlooked by historians?
- What were his major contributions that warrant explanation, in the context of Australian politics and business in a time of change?

Kingsley Henderson was born in Melbourne in 1883, the son of Anketell Henderson, a relatively successful architect, and Mary Louisa Andrew, a teacher. Kingsley was a first-generation Australian, the Henderson family having migrated from Northern Ireland in the 1860s and the Andrew family from England in the 1850s. As both paternal grandfathers had been ministers of Protestant churches, a Christian ethic characterised Henderson family life. Private schools provided Kingsley and his siblings with the education and attributes necessary for life in middle-class Melbourne.

McCalman describes the middle class as comprising those individuals who climbed their way out of the Depression of the 1890s to the comfort and security of their previous lives. She writes: 'In the 1890s was born the careful and moral Melbourne middle class'.

The mindset of middle-class people was of superiority to the working class and of responsibility for the well-being of society. 'Hard work and good character' were the attributes for success, and they were, as Robert Menzies said, 'the backbone' of the nation. Brett takes a similar approach when she describes the middle class as a class defined by its members' moral qualities rather than by their social and economic role [which] is open to anyone who tries hard enough to walk the narrow and respectable path of virtue.

Henderson's background was characterised by his family's respectability and work ethic and his outlook on life reflects these ideals. In an address to the Melbourne Technical College in 1938, he twice asked the question: 'How well can I do my life's work

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3 Ibid., p.136
irrespective of reward?\textsuperscript{5} This, he claimed, should be the fundamental outlook of the professional man and, irrespective of the success or otherwise of his endeavours, it was Henderson’s \textit{modus operandi} throughout his life. In 1930 he wrote about relationships between architect and clients and all involved in the contract on hand. Extending this to all endeavours, in and out of the firm, he strictly abided by the principles he laid down, relating not only to meticulous supervision but also to the absolute necessity for honesty and frankness, moral courage, and accountability.\textsuperscript{6} These principles characterise the man and his approach to his role in the firm.

To illustrate the nature of Henderson’s role in his firm’s work as well as his approach to architecture, this thesis draws on specific ideas that can be gleaned from his various communications with his staff as well as addresses and papers he gave to his colleagues at Royal Victorian Institute of Architects (RVIA) Council meetings. In a summation made towards the end of his career he nominated five fields of competence:

\begin{quote}
\ldots (1) the talented seer, with the gift of being able to transfer his visions to paper by means of colour or pencil or chalk, (2) the excellent draughtsman, (3) the skilful planner, (4) the skilful, meticulous scientist whose life’s work is in steel and concrete and pipes, tubes, ducts, wires and equipment of all sorts, and (5) the occasional captain of them all, the great practitioner who knows instinctively all of the secrets of the planner, of the designer, of the constructor, of the equipper and of the economist in cost and return – the man who combines all their secrets and blends and moulds them and produces the extraordinarily intriguing, beautiful, and economically sound modern building.\textsuperscript{7}
\end{quote}

This analysis is contained in a speech he made upon the conferring of the First Diploma in Architecture at the Melbourne Technical College in 1938. It was an honour for Henderson to be invited to speak at this important event at which representatives from the University of Melbourne and the architectural profession were also in attendance. Henderson had attended the College, then known as the Working Man’s College, from 1901 to 1904, and the fact that he was chosen to give the address on this ceremonial occasion many years later is evidence of the prominence he had achieved in the architectural profession over the intervening years.\textsuperscript{8}

Henderson’s idea of a ‘captain’ was one who could take his firm to great heights. While it is unlikely that he aspired to such a goal, or claimed such a description for himself, in

\textsuperscript{5} Kingsley Henderson, 10 October 1938, ‘The Profession of the Architect’, \textit{RVIAJ}, xxxvi/4 (1938), 116-19, p.116. On the second occasion the wording was slightly different, p.119
\textsuperscript{6} K Henderson, ‘Supervision and the Relationships of Contracting Parties’, \textit{RVIAJ}, xxviii/4 (1930), 91-100, pp.94-97
\textsuperscript{7} Henderson, ‘The Profession of the Architect’, p.117
\textsuperscript{8} The Working Man’s College became the Melbourne Technical College in 1934.
terms of Australian architectural practice, the significance of his role in his firm was worthy of the description of ‘captain’. The architects he nominated as representative of the title were responsible for enormous architectural enterprises and clearly, for him, there was no comparable architectural achievement in Australia. In fact, when contemplating the future for architects working in an expanding Australian society, he posed the question:

Can we possibly train enough competent architects to do the work which will be demanded of the profession? Will the great captains emerge from the ranks as they have done in other countries?

Notwithstanding the fact that the achievements of his ‘captains’ were so huge that they made anything he had done look minor by comparison, this thesis will demonstrate that he possessed all the prerequisites for and instinctively performed the role of ‘captain’.

In his formative years in architectural practice the firm comprised only Kingsley and his father Anketell. As the sphere of his responsibility was very general, the early years provided him with good grounding in all aspects of architectural practice. He designed, drafted and planned, and understood the scientific aspects through training in his engineering course. As the firm grew others were employed in these roles, but he maintained involvement in the entirety of the firm’s work and at the same time developed his knowledge in the operation and management of business. The scope of his expertise became evident when, in the course of negotiating an early partnership agreement, he referred to the range of responsibilities he seemed expected to undertake as: ‘the wielding of influence’, getting the work, doing the field work, adjustments, specifications, supervising contract drawing and management. As the firm expanded and others were entrusted with much of the responsibility, Henderson maintained his involvement by adopting an overseeing role. By remaining intimately conversant with all aspects of the firm’s work, his knowledge and skills were always up to date.

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9 As architects possessed of such attributes, he nominated HW Corbett, an American architect who had charge of the Chicago World Fair in 1933 and who headed the architectural panel for the Rockefeller Centre in New York, and T.L. Lodge, whose firm, Lancaster and Lodge, ‘controlled vast works in England, India and South Africa’. Henderson had met these architects during a recent tour of England and America, and was clearly inspired by their practices and the buildings they had designed.


11 Until 1927 architecture was part of an engineering degree. See Miles B Lewis, ‘The development of architectural teaching in the University of Melbourne: a report prepared for the Committee’, University of Melbourne, 1970

12 Henderson to Alsop, 16 December 1920, hereafter cited as ‘Letter to Alsop 16 December 1920’, A & K Henderson Records, Box 132, unnumbered partnership file
Henderson, however, was aware of his limitations. For instance, he was always ready to acknowledge that he personally did not possess the skills of the ‘talented seer’ or designer, his strengths being in the practical side of architecture. As early as 1921, when he first was elected president of the RVIA, he declared almost apologetically that ‘any small prominence I may have gained in our Profession has been rather on the executive and structural side of the work and not on the aesthetic side’.\textsuperscript{13}

As his career progressed so too did his expertise in the practical aspects of architectural work, and he refined his skills in the economic planning of buildings to the extent that he gained a reputation as an expert in this aspect of practice. In other words he understood ‘instinctively the secrets of … the economist in cost and return’. Interestingly, the great skills he developed, such as in maximising commercial potential, client development, and business strategies, were those that could not really be taught in architectural schools; rather they were gained through years of experience in practice.

Henderson’s particular expertise in economic planning was a skill highly regarded by his banking and insurance clients who needed to obtain the best possible commercial return from their investment in their new buildings.\textsuperscript{14} The ‘wielding of influence’ and getting the work remained in his province, and one of his greatest skills was his ability to attract clients, building up an impressive network through which he entrenched his reputation and created a source of new clients.

As it is the nature of any building enterprise to be beset by delays and other frustrations, the soothing of clients’ frayed tempers was something Henderson took seriously as he abided by the principle that clients were entitled to the best service they could possibly get.\textsuperscript{15} He traded on the premise: ‘I always try and work [up] new clients through satisfied clients’.\textsuperscript{16} He understood ‘satisfaction’ to result from expert service, diligence and personal attention. Consequently, his clients were assured of his personal involvement in their work and of his complete faith in his staff to do likewise. His ability to form close relationships with his clients enhanced their feelings of satisfaction.

\textsuperscript{13} Kingsley A. Henderson, ‘Presidential Address’, RVIAJ, xix/1 (1921), 33-37, p.33
\textsuperscript{14} As recognised by Susan M. Balderstone, ‘Henderson, Kingsley Anketell (1883–1942)’, Australian Dictionary of Biography (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1983), 9, pp.257-258
\textsuperscript{15} Kingsley A. Henderson, ‘Architectural engineering services in relation to building construction’, RVIAJ, xxii/3 (1924), p.74
\textsuperscript{16} K Henderson, Letter to Alsop 16 December 1920, Melbourne
and inspired loyalty. It will be established that as a result of the role he played in the firm he almost single-handedly ‘captained’ it to its position of eminence.

2.
Kingsley Anketell Henderson
RVIA president, 1921-23
RAIA Victorian Chapter, Records, Box 56A

This thesis will demonstrate the extent of Henderson’s contribution to the architectural profession. From 1919 when he was elected to a number of committees he was increasingly active in the RVIA. In March 1920 he was elected second vice-president of the Institute, and then president from March 1921 to March 1923. He became acting president of the Federal Council of Australian Institutes of Architects (the Federal Council) from October 1923 for the remainder of that term and then president for the subsequent term: March 1924 to March 1925. Prior to that appointment, for the two terms of his presidency of the RVIA he was also the senior Victorian member of the Federal Council. Each year he was typically on a number of RVIA committees until, in 1927, he resigned from the Council and all other positions save for the Architects’ Registration Board, citing pressure of business as his reason. In 1928 he was elected to the Royal Institute of British Architects, and in 1934 served a second term as vice-president of the RVIA. In 1937 he was awarded a CMG for services to the architectural profession.

In his presidential address of 1921 he nominated registration of architects and architectural education as important goals for the Institute. He never relinquished these goals. He remained on the Architects’ Registration Board until 1939 when pressure of business, namely his chairmanship of the Argus & Australasian, necessitated his retirement. His address to the Melbourne Technical College is evidence of his

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17 Henderson was also involved in the creation of a National War Memorial having been appointed an assessor, together with George Godsell, of a competition for the design.
18 Henderson, 'Presidential Address', p.35
continuing interest in education, when the main thrust of his speech was training for the architectural profession. In addition, over the years he donated money to student travelling scholarships and finally bequeathed funds for a scholarship in his will. The Henderson scholarship was last awarded in 1988. He contributed papers, addresses and participated enthusiastically in a high proportion of meetings he attended at the Institute, demonstrating his willingness to share knowledge and experience within the profession.

In Chapter Two it will be contended that Henderson’s most significant contribution to his profession relates to the establishment of the Federal Capital in Canberra. The early stages of the planning and development of the capital city coincided with his presidency of the RVIA and the Federal Council, the latter position coming about largely because of his involvement in events concerning the new Parliament House. In 1926 he became closely involved in building the city as a member of the Public Taste Committee. This position led to membership, in 1938, of the National Capital Planning and Development Committee, appointed by John McEwen, Minister for the Interior, the purpose of which was to ensure no deviation from the ‘official plan based on the Griffin layout.’ Events in Canberra are discussed to establish their significance, including one episode that also highlights the connection between Henderson’s architectural and political interests.

In the early thirties Henderson turned his mind and energy to the economic and political turmoil facing the country. The thesis will show that, although at times behind the scenes and somewhat anonymous, his part in political events was important and helped change the course of our political history. This episode also demonstrates the strength of Henderson’s friendships, his network of influential contacts and the nexus between his political and business interests.

In the interwar period A & K Henderson designed and constructed a large number of significant buildings in Melbourne and elsewhere in Australia and New Zealand, including bank and insurance buildings, hospitals and industrial buildings, bringing it success and the reputation as one of the leading firms in Melbourne. In particular, by the end of the 1930s, to the firm’s credit, eight new buildings plus two others with important additions, stood in Collins Street, Melbourne’s premier street. Nevertheless,

19 The latest mention of this scholarship was the confirmation of 31 March 1988 that the combined Kingsley A Henderson and War Memorial Scholarship had been created. RAIA, Records, Victorian Chapter, Melbourne, Box 166, File 2 (henceforward Box number/file/envelope number).
20 The Mercury, Hobart, 27 January 1939.
Henderson and his firm are overlooked by historians. This thesis argues that this is largely due to the peculiar nature of the firm’s clients and the type of buildings needed by those clients. They were principally banks and insurance companies who required designs that expressed the sense of trustworthiness, permanence and security traditionally associated with classical architecture derived from ancient precedents. Moreover, in some cases the principal client was an English company with a long tradition of building in classically-derived styles. As famously pointed out by Robin Boyd, A & K Henderson designs habitually drew on Georgian, Gothic and Renaissance ideas. Indeed, traditionalism was characteristic not only of A & K Henderson’s work, but also of most commercial buildings constructed in Melbourne in the period. Ideas about good manners in architecture and planning translated into the desirability for order and control amongst architects and city officials. Traditional architecture where rationality expressed the classical ideals of beauty, truth and utility was particularly appropriate and desirable. Nevertheless, despite being held in high regard by clients and the general public at the time, traditional styles quickly lost favour.

This thesis argues that as a direct consequence of this attitude to the type of work of which A & K Henderson was such a notable exponent, the firm’s contribution to the creation of the city has been discounted. Studies of early twentieth-century Melbourne architecture are not typically concerned with the work of specific firms, instead they tend to concentrate on innovation in style, for example Federation or Arts and Crafts, or the search for an Australian style; or building types: residential in particular rather than commercial types. Studies of architects active in the early period are generally limited to those perceived as exponents of stylistic innovation, for example Robert Haddon, Harold Desbrowe-Annear or Walter Burley Griffin. Thus it is an architect’s creative ability that is of most interest. Architects skilled in the practical and business side of the work are more likely to be overlooked. For example, in Bryce Raworth’s article,

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22 This attitude persisted internationally as well; an extreme example being WR Mead of McKim Mead & White, the American firm very prominent in the late nineteenth century. Alongside that of his creative partners, the contribution of Mead to the practical side of the business was dismissed and he was sometimes described as a ‘glorified office manager’. Martin Filler, ‘Our Grand & Randy Great Architects’, *The New York Review of Books*, Ivin9 (2011), 20-22, p.20.
‘Between the Wars’ in Goad’s *Melbourne Architecture*, some A & K Henderson buildings are mentioned but the firm does not rate an entry in the Biographies section.\(^{23}\)

The dearth of Australian architectural histories of a general nature compounds the disregard of commercial architecture in Melbourne in the interwar period. In fact, the only general history of Australian architecture is Freeland’s *Architecture in Australia* (1968).\(^{24}\) Even the relatively short life of Australian architecture is too big a subject to be covered comprehensively in one fairly short volume, so Freeland’s history is necessarily limited. However, it reveals a disregard of interwar commercial architecture. In his chapter covering the period 1917–29 he concentrates on residential architecture: styles, materials and technical developments and identifies four ‘thinking-architects’ as responsible for ‘ushering in the twentieth century’, including Annear and Griffin in Melbourne. The effect of this group’s ideas, he notes

> was strongest on domestic work. The same depth of thought and changes which they brought to homes did not begin to percolate into other types of building … for another forty years.\(^{25}\)

The inference here is that ‘other types of building’ were not of the twentieth century, or in other words were old-fashioned, an idea first propounded by Robin Boyd in 1967.\(^{26}\)

The impact of Boyd’s views on future architectural historians was crucial. Tibbits points out that as Boyd’s observations of the history of Australian architecture were published ‘before any of the now familiar books on Australian architecture had appeared,’ he was effectively Australia’s first architectural historian.\(^{27}\) In a review of Boyd’s writings Tibbits claims that Boyd had great influence on ‘our outlook towards past Australian architecture’ and that: ‘His categories of styles and periods have created


\(^{25}\) Freeland, *Architecture in Australia*, p.236

\(^{26}\) Robin Boyd, ‘The state of Australian architecture’, *Architecture in Australia: June* (1967), pp.457,459. Boyd alluded to this idea in his earlier writings as well, for example *Victorian Modern*, p.17, when he proclaimed 1934 as the year of the arrival of the modern movement.

\(^{27}\) George Tibbits, ‘Robin Boyd and the interpretation of Australian architecture’, *Transition*, 38 (1992), 45-55 p.45. This article was first presented as a memorial address for Boyd in 1972 but not published until 1992. The books by Boyd named by Tibbits are *Victorian Modern* (1947) and *Australia’s Home* (1952).
the framework by which we recognise our past. Tibbits describes Boyd’s interpretation as a decline and fall – a decline during the nineteenth century from the purity of Colonial Georgian through the revivals to the end of the century and into the twentieth century, then subsequently a revival of architecture by modern architects. Eclecticism represented the abyss of architecture while a unity of purpose and expression was its acme. This was an interpretation which focussed on heroes and bravery in the face of easy options.

In this interpretation Australian architecture declined from the mid-nineteenth century to the late 1930s when ‘some brave architects’ such as Roy Grounds, a modernist, ‘rescued it from [an] abysmal decline’. Tibbits argues that ‘Boyd interprets past Australian architecture from the point of view of modern architecture’, the supremacy of modern architecture over past styles being his underlying assumption.

Willis and Goad point out that as well as Boyd, other early writers of Australian architectural history, such as Morton Herman and Walter Bunning, took a modernist approach. Their efforts were as a precursor to their espousal of the modernist credo, as adapted for the Australian climate, as though they were outlining a pedigree for Australian architecture from which proper modern architecture would spring.

In his chapter covering 1930-44, Freeland too concentrates on the modernist elements creeping into design, again at the hands of the ‘thinking-architects’. Echoing Boyd’s ideas he writes that: ‘To the few who really understood, it was a transcendental way of life that offered hope for all the ills which had racked architecture for nigh on a hundred years.’

Concentration on modernism was widespread. For example Hitchcock observes that in American writing in the 1920s and ‘30s traditional forms were neglected because ‘traditional’ architecture was not of interest to contemporary historians as it seemed ‘to belong to a past age’ and did not rate against a new movement or ‘rising force’.

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28 Ibid., p.45
29 Ibid., p.46
30 Ibid., pp.46-47
31 Ibid., pp.48-49
32 Willis and Goad, 'A Bigger Picture: Reframing Australian Architectural History' p.16, referring to The early Australian architects and their work (1954) by Morton Herman (1907-83); Walter Bunning (1912-77) wrote about domestic architecture principally in Sydney, eg Homes in the Sun (1945).
33 Ibid., p.16
34 Freeland, Architecture in Australia, p.252
Nevertheless, as in Melbourne in the same period, ‘traditional’ designs characterised most American buildings designed before 1930. Hitchcock writes

   However much the youthful vitality of the newer architecture attracted sympathy and attention, as late as 1930 its impact on building production was in most countries a very limited one. It is fortunate, therefore, that not all the traditional architecture of the years 1900-30 need be dismissed with scorn, even if the standards by which it must be judged remain those of the nineteenth rather than of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{36}

Gelernter adds that, despite a modernist bias in American architectural histories, until the 1940s almost all European and American buildings were designed in traditional styles as clients ‘preferred and even insisted upon’ them.\textsuperscript{37} He compares attitudes to American architectural history before and after 1945 as a conflict between Modernists and Traditionalists:

   The former were usually represented as clear-thinking visionaries in tune with a new century, while the latter were dismissed as reactionaries who stood in the way of progress. Most histories written after 1945 hardly discuss a traditional building after 1910, when the first Modernist essays by Gropius and Le Corbusier appeared on the scene. … A very different story emerges [from] contemporary books and magazines written between 1885 and 1945. … the few Modernist buildings were hardly discussed even by the professional architectural magazines.\textsuperscript{38}

He observes that a common view was that modernism symbolised the ‘true spirit of the twentieth century’ but that this was not recognised by the majority who still thought in terms of traditional styles.\textsuperscript{39} A similar situation existed in Australia, with Boyd claiming for himself and his small band of like-minded practitioners, sole rights to twentieth-century status, thus relegating the traditionalist majority to the past.

Ironically, Robin Boyd developed his ideas about architecture while working with A & K Henderson. In 1935 he entered the firm as Henderson’s articled pupil and became his most famous employee and his most famous critic. Referring to accounts of Boyd’s life and ideas by Hetherington and Serle, this thesis argues that Boyd’s views, not only of Henderson’s architecture but also of the man himself, have affected the way he is remembered, and have contributed to his neglect.

A second significant reason for the disregard of Henderson is his failure to form a partnership that would ensure the life of the firm beyond World War II. The thesis will

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p. 533
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
argue that a partnership that did not rely on one person alone could have had the strength to survive the interruption of war and Henderson’s death. Here comparison is made with Stevenson & Turner, a firm that did survive much longer and was in many ways similar to A & K Henderson.\footnote{Stevenson & Turner was a Melbourne architectural firm active between 1920 and 2009. See Chapter Four.}

Henderson had no logical successor to follow him into the firm and ensure its longevity; and he also had no children and therefore no one to ensure his contribution was recorded. An analogous example is the childlessness of WR Mead of the American firm of McKim Mead & White, prominent at the turn of the twentieth century. Biographies of both McKim and White were published by or at the behest of their families. Not so the childless Mead. In her account of the firm, Broderick notes: ‘Poor Mead, alas, had no heirs to commission a book about him.’\footnote{Mosette Broderick, \textit{Triumvirate: McKim, Mead & White: Art, Architecture, Scandal, and Class in America’s Gilded Age}, Alfred A Knopf, New York, 2010, p.xix.}

Although there is a very large archive of A & K Henderson records, none of Henderson’s personal files were found. Enquiries of Henderson’s extended family revealed little more than some old family photographs. Nothing was known of Henderson’s widow’s life in later years, and his secretaries who had looked after his personal files had passed on. Broderick laments a similar difficulty in the case of Mead, about whom she writes ‘we know so very little’.\footnote{Ibid., p.214} In Broderick’s case the lack of information about Mead results in a book heavily weighted towards the lives and work of his partners.

A third reason cited for Henderson’s absence from the histories is the fact that he was a practical architect and not a designer. Here again he compares with Mead. The thesis will argue that creative architects are more likely to be associated with buildings and therefore remembered, and that the practical aspects of the profession are downplayed. It will demonstrate that in fact it was Henderson’s skill in economic planning and his sense of commercial potential of buildings that led to the firm’s success.

This thesis brings to light the work of an architectural firm that in its day put its stamp on the city of Melbourne. Moreover, it demonstrates that Kingsley Henderson, a man of importance at the time, is worth remembering now, and that his career can be seen as a
prism through which Melbourne as an interwar city can be understood. The study has provided leads to events that characterise the interwar period: the creation of Canberra, the political machinations of the early 1930s and the building of the city of Melbourne as Australia’s leading commercial centre. If one were to compile a history of Henderson’s network of family, friends and political and business acquaintances, it would very likely cover the whole of the Melbourne establishment. Furthermore, as an example of his class, a picture of the Melbourne establishment is presented. This in itself is unusual as it is more often the working classes around which studies are made.43

As a study of Henderson’s contribution to architecture, politics and the community, this thesis is primarily concerned with Henderson himself. As well as presenting details of his diverse activities, it draws on all available sources to determine the kind of man he was, his ideas, motives and aspirations. In the absence of diaries or any personal material, a picture of his life is constructed mainly from contemporary sources such as the daily press, the records of the RVIA and Federal Institute, and importantly his office records. To create a context in which to view Henderson and his work, this thesis also draws on architectural and social histories, and political histories and biographies. The thesis is not a study of the work of the firm, in fact only a few examples of its work are discussed. Details of the extensive range of the firm’s work can be found in the archive held by the State Library of Victoria, and especially in the complete collection of plans and drawings.

Sources
The choice of Kingsley Henderson as the focus of this study began with an interest in the extent to which Melbourne’s architecture derives from classical styles and a search for an architectural firm whose work might provide a source for relevant research. My first choice was Yuncken Freeman (1933-93) an architectural firm with which I have a family connection. The domestic work of John and Tom Freeman in particular, from about 1933 to 1960, was largely inspired by English and American Georgian styles, but unfortunately little remained in the archive relating to their ideas and designs. Moreover, domestic architecture of the period had already been the subject of fairly

43 Brett, *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class*, p.7. Brett states McCalman’s *Journeyings*, referred to above, is ‘the only full-scale study of the Australian middle class in its own terms’. 
extensive research. In the meantime the fact that the founding partners of Yuncken Freeman - Otto (Rob) Yuncken, John Freeman, Tom Freeman and Balcombe Griffiths - were all former employees of A & K Henderson, led me to examine the A & K Henderson archive in the State Library of Victoria. An initial search of the records for clues to design choices in A & K Henderson buildings led to careful examination of the contract and correspondence files. As a picture of Kingsley Henderson emerged from the old records I became increasingly intrigued by his personality and his achievements, which led to my wish to bring something of his life and work to light.45

The A & K Henderson archive is the principal source of research for this thesis. As well as plans and drawings and contract files, the archive contains a very large collection of office records including partnership documents, financial records, job files, correspondence files and files relating to staff and the running of the office. The bulk of the records contained in the archive relates to the period of time that is the subject of this thesis. However, despite this wealth of information there are also frustrating omissions. In the 1920s and 1930s communications were limited to letters, some telephone communications and telegrams. Letters could be sent and replies received on the same day as there were two postal deliveries daily as well as on Saturday mornings. Also, it is clear from file notes and letters that often face-to-face discussion took place as the architect and banker or colleague met in the street, or he walked through the city with his client to meetings and site inspections.

Henderson was a prolific letter writer. He would often dash off a letter of complaint or criticism, particularly to builders who had displeased him. More often than not an angry letter would be followed by one of apology, and it is from this type of spontaneous correspondence that we can glean an insight into his personality. Many letters were written at home in the evenings, and then typed in the office the next day. References to subsequent conversations indicate that, regrettably, many of his correspondents were not so committed to putting pen to paper and preferred to reply in person.

44 For example, Bryce Raworth, A Question of Style: inter-war domestic architecture in Melbourne, MArch thesis, University of Melbourne, 1993; Peter Cuffley, Australian houses of the Twenties and Thirties, 1989; George Beiers, Houses of Australia: a survey of domestic architecture, 1948.
45 There was already a connection between Henderson and my family, and as my research progressed I discovered that as Henderson and I had a connection, by marriage to Marcus Barlow, we were in a way related.
A personal folder is listed in the A & K Henderson Index as ‘Kingsley Henderson Private: not found’. Nevertheless, some personal correspondence has been filed in the general office files, for example, regarding his political affiliations and activities. From these files we also discover information about his extensive charitable works, his travel experiences and something of his personal relationships. Random office memoranda give us a picture of the way in which the office was run; he was clearly a hard taskmaster, demanding and particular, and in fact he admits this, for instance, in some of the memoranda alluding to his obsession with tidiness. Importantly, Constance Hart, a former employee, was able to give a first-hand account of Henderson and the firm in the last months of the period.

The archive of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (RAIA, Victorian Chapter), also held by the State Library of Victoria, is another source of information for this thesis, principally in relation to the activities of the RVIA and the Federal Council. In particular, documents relating to the building of Parliament House in Canberra, and the competitions and commissions for building the city are contained in this collection.

As an active member of the RVIA there are numerous references in the Journals to Henderson and his activities. Like many members of the Institute he was a keen contributor at meetings and in most cases transcripts of addresses given by him are published in the Journals. Contemporary newspapers and industry journals are another source of information, in particular the Argus, available via the National Library of Australia digitised newspaper collection.

Structure

The interwar years saw A & K Henderson develop and entrench its reputation as one of Melbourne’s leading architectural firms. Simultaneously, Henderson, through his various interests and activities, established his standing as one of the city’s leading identities. His activities in his firm, the architectural profession and political and business circles had a consequential effect, with one sphere of influence leading to another. Thus, the early chapters are arranged chronologically so that, as Henderson developed his skills and reputation, the contributions he was able to make to architecture and to the community increased in significance.

46 A & K Henderson Index, Box 55/96b
47 Interview with Constance Hart, 29 March 2011.
To establish the keys to Henderson’s outlook on life and architecture, Chapter One first considers his family background. Beginning with his grandfather’s career as a Congregationalist minister and then his father’s early career in architecture, the chapter traces the Henderson family to the end of World War I. The first indicators of Henderson’s interests in the areas to which he would later make significant contribution are found in this period. His formative years at the beginning of the century in the practice begun by his father created a sound basis for his architectural career and also there is early evidence of the ambition which was to bring him status and success in later years. Membership of the RVIA in 1913 set him on the path of active involvement in his profession, and evidence of early political activity prefaced his later involvement in the political arena.

Chapters Two and Three demonstrate the contributions Henderson made in the various areas of his interest and involvement. The 1920s is the setting for Chapter Two. By this time Anketell was taking little part in the firm and Kingsley was in charge. As he made his mark in Melbourne as an entrepreneur of architecture and business, important new clients were attracted and significant commissions acquired. Discussion of some of these commissions demonstrates the nature of these clients and the type of buildings they required, and also illustrates the role Henderson played in the firm. The chapter reveals how Henderson’s participation in the affairs of the RVIA led to a prominent role in the Federal Council and in the establishment of Canberra, and by the end of the decade he had reached a position of prominence and influence in the community.

Chapter Three begins with the Depression and follows the fortunes of Henderson and his firm through to 1942. The firm’s relative success during the Depression years indicates Henderson’s solid business acumen, and examples of dealings with clients later in the period illustrate the increasing distinction he gained as an architect. The presence of Robin Boyd in the firm from 1935 sets the scene for a disparaging view of Henderson and his work, which the thesis argues became a principal reason for the view subsequently ascribed to him in architectural histories. By 1939 increasing involvement in the business sphere of his interests, namely his chairmanship of ‘the Argus and Australasian’, brought him further prominence. Then, as the dangers of war loomed closer, his combined community and architectural interests led to the war work he undertook in the months before his death. His political activity resulted from a similar
combination of interests and experience, and an account of this short episode also reveals something of the personality which lay beneath his success.

The importance of Henderson’s various contributions to architecture and in other areas having been established, Chapter Four sets out to do justice to his achievements. Reasons why his efforts are generally disregarded are outlined: the nature of his architectural practice, the absence of a successor, the failure to establish a strong partnership and the effect of Robin Boyd’s views are ideas to be pursued. The chapter concludes with rationale as to why Henderson should be remembered, including the notion that traditional interwar architecture can and should be viewed in a different light from that expressed by Boyd as well as for the value of the buildings to the heritage of the city. Similarly, it is asserted that architects working on the practical and business side of their profession can make a contribution equally worthy to that of designers. Following this line it is contended that in his consulting roles with the Federal Council and the Public Taste Committee, Henderson made a significant contribution to the establishment of our nation’s capital, Canberra. Equally important were his various activities in the political arena and business interests. It is argued that in the sum of his parts Kingsley Henderson was a man worthy of a greater place in Melbourne’s history than he is presently afforded.

Finally, I contend that this study of Kingsley Henderson’s life and work will retrieve a Melbourne identity who has hitherto been wrongly cast aside.
Chapter One:

1880-1920: Henderson's world

In order to appreciate the substantial legacy made by Kingsley Henderson not only to architecture but also to other areas of his interest, an understanding is essential of his family, his education and the environment in which his character and values were formed. To this end this chapter has two parts: Part I explores the history of his immediate and extended family set within the context of Melbourne, the city of his birth, and in which he spent almost all his life. Beginning with a short account of his father’s early career, Part II examines the background to Kingsley’s development as an architect as well as events in the early years of the Henderson partnership that indicate the path in architecture that Kingsley was to follow. Also relevant to his future career were his associated and wider interests, such as the beginning of his involvement in RVIA activities and early evidence of his interest in politics.

Part I: Family background

The Hendersons’ life in Melbourne dates back to the mid-1860s when the family arrived from London. In Architecture in Australia, JM Freeland writes that in contrast to the ‘rag-tag lot of illiterate and unskilled opportunists’ who arrived in Melbourne in the early 1850s, later in that decade new arrivals comprised a higher proportion from the middle classes - many from professional groups as well as trades, all of whom contributed to a background of ‘culture, education and skill’. Still very much tied to Britain, the ideals of Australian society in the 1860s were set by Queen Victoria, ‘to whom respectability and formality were the very corner-stones of civilization and order’. Among traditions symbolic of prevailing attitudes was weekly attendance at church, which was, for Melbourne families, a demonstration of respectability and moral upright. Freeland adds that the tradition of church-going was enhanced by the ‘energetic activities of numbers of evangelical non-conformist preachers’.48

Reverend Anketell Henderson

One well-known preacher of the time was Kingsley Henderson’s grandfather, the Reverend Anketell Matthew Henderson. Born in 1820 in Northern Ireland, Henderson’s reputation as an inspiring Congregationalist preacher in Ireland and then London had

come to the notice of the Australian Fellowship. Consequently, he was recruited by the Melbourne Fellowship to help reverse the then dwindling fortunes of that denomination so, in 1865, he and his family set off for Australia. His initial destination was the parish in suburban Richmond; however, it was only a short time before he was persuaded to transfer to the central church in Collins Street. At the time, the eloquence of a good preacher was more likely to draw a congregation than loyalty to a particular faith and Henderson was reportedly able to draw good crowds from all faiths to his sermons. By the time of his death in 1876, his preaching skills were legend and attendances at Congregational services had shown a healthy improvement.  

3.
Reverend Anketell Matthew Henderson (1820-68)
With permission - Alison Voss (Henderson family)

Between 1866 and 1867, while awaiting the construction of a new church in which he was to be incumbent, he preached at the Theatre Royal in Bourke Street. Here he continued the tradition of theatre-preaching he had pursued in Ireland, and then in London. Such was his success that the Illustrated Australian News reported:

Let anyone go to the Theatre Royal where Mr Henderson preaches on Sundays while the new church is being built: let him mark the peculiarly simple, and unaffected, but manly style of speech, the lucid exposition of the text, the thorough mastery of the various phases of doctrine, the sympathy with all that is right and true in the movements and

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49 Christopher Wood and Marc Askew, St Michael's Church: Formerly the Collins Street Independent Church, Melbourne. Hyland House, South Yarra, Vic., 1992, pp.36-7. Wood and Askew write that although his intention was to enter the Church of England ministry, Henderson in fact joined a Wesleyan society and was ordained as a Wesleyan minister in 1845. Following a dispute on matters of principle within the Wesleyan ministry Henderson resigned and joined the Congregational fellowship, a body he found more democratic and all-encompassing.

50 Ibid., p.41

51 In Ireland and London he preached in theatres and open spaces, his mission being to reach those who did not attend Church. In Victoria his task was to swell Congregational numbers. Ibid.
tendencies of the time; and he will come away with the reflection that it is no wonder that crowds should flock to hear the man, and that were more preachers more like him there would be less complaint of empty churches.  

Construction of Henderson’s new church, the Collins Street Independent Church (now St Michael’s), was begun in 1866. Henderson took a keen interest in the architecture of the Collins Street church and dictated that it should be built to address the need for the congregation to both see and hear the preacher. This meant the creation of a horseshoe shaped gallery with the pulpit placed at the rear.

Designed by architect Joseph Reed of Reed & Barnes, the building was completed in 1867 and the foundation stone laid in October of that year. Henderson preached in the church for the next nine years during which time the Collins Street congregation in particular, and the Congregationalist denomination in general, continued to grow and prosper. Writing in 1888, Alexander Sutherland remarked that Henderson was one of the most popular and capable preachers the colony has ever possessed. ... [and that] ... week after week for years, the largest congregations that met in the colony listened with rapt attention to [his] utterances.

The Reverend Anketell Henderson died in 1876 at the age of fifty-six. His eloquence proved a significant legacy for his son and his grandson, as both descendants demonstrated a talent for persuasive rhetoric. For Kingsley in particular this powerful gift of communication was instrumental in the influence and success that he was to attain. Furthermore, Henderson’s interest in architecture, in particular the building of the Independent Church, became the catalyst for his son’s and grandson’s future careers. Wood and Askew conclude that the Independent Church is an example of ‘the interplay of the inspiration and experience of a fine architect and his clever patron’. Instances of similar relationships between architect and client would subsequently become a feature in Kingsley Henderson’s success as an architect.

Anketell Henderson, architect

Kingsley’s father, also named Anketell Matthew Henderson, was born in 1853 in County Monaghan in Northern Ireland. When the family arrived and settled in

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52 Quoted in ibid., p.42
53 Ibid., p.57
54 Ibid., p.46
55 Alexander Sutherland and George Sutherland, The History of Australia and New Zealand from 1606 to 1890, v.1, George Robertson, Melbourne, 1911, p.585
56 The name Anketell comes from the area in which the family lived and its use was perpetuated throughout the family until at least the 1940s.
Melbourne the young Anketell was enrolled at Scotch College, then in East Melbourne. This was an interesting choice of school. McCalman observes that attendance at a private school meant automatic membership of the middle class; she also notes that the fathers of Scotch students were likely to be 'engineers and small businessmen, sales representatives and accountants'. This was the new middle class; and contrasts with the landed gentry who were more likely to send their boys to Melbourne Grammar School. One of Melbourne’s six Greater Public Schools, Scotch is described by McCalman as more democratic than, for example, the elitist Melbourne Grammar.\(^{57}\) Years earlier Henderson senior had abandoned the established church for a more free-thinking order and he now looked for a democratic educational institution for his son. Anketell was the third of five children all born before the family migrated to Australia. No records have been located to show anything about the other children of the family, but their parents’ strong belief in education probably provided a start for all of them. During his school years the young Anketell often accompanied his father to inspect progress at the new church in Collins Street. The demolition of the old church and the construction of the new gave Anketell junior first-hand experience of architecture. W Lucas, in an eulogy for Anketell following his death in 1922, delivered at a meeting of RVIA members, observed that the process ‘aroused his instinctive interest in structural problems, and as the building grew it fired his imagination Architecturally, so that much leisure was spent upon the works.’\(^{58}\)

His time spent at the building site also brought Anketell into contact with the architects, Reed & Barnes, and immediately following his matriculation in 1869, he took articles with that firm, while at the same time completing a certificate of engineering at

\(^{57}\) McCalman, *Journeyings*, pp.4-6,136

\(^{58}\) W Lucas, 'The late Anketell M Henderson', *RVLAJ*, xx/6 (1923), p.143
Melbourne University.\textsuperscript{59} He remained with Reed & Barnes until 1878 when he left to set up on his own account. The following year he entered partnership with Francis Smart before joining again with Joseph Reed in 1883 to form the partnership of Reed, Henderson & Smart.\textsuperscript{60} In 1890 he left this partnership and established the practice his son Kingsley would join ten years later.

At the beginning of 1880 he married Mary Louisa Andrew, and by the end of 1887 they had five children, of whom Kingsley Anketell, born in 1883, was the third. At first, the family changed address quite frequently; moving from South Yarra to Brighton and back again. By 1887 they were living in Avoca Street, South Yarra, and would remain at this address for the next twenty years. As no business address is listed, it appears that, in 1890, once on his own again, Anketell practised from home. In any event, as he embarked on his new enterprise he had a family of seven to support, and he may not have been able to afford to rent office premises. Furthermore, he also had to contend with the economic downturn which was about to bring much of Melbourne to a halt. While there is no evidence that Henderson, unlike his erstwhile partners, had been caught up in any speculative activities during the years of the land boom, the times could well have been difficult for the family.

\textbf{Mary Louisa Henderson (1852-1934)}

\textit{With permission - Alison Voss (Henderson family)}

\textsuperscript{59} Anketell Henderson was aged sixteen in 1869. He graduated from Melbourne University in 1872, and was one of only two graduates to pursue a career in architecture rather than engineering. Lewis, ‘The development of architectural teaching in the University of Melbourne’, p.28

\textsuperscript{60} Anketell Henderson’s early career is outlined briefly at pp.34-35 of this Chapter.
The Henderson family, (c.1895)

Kingsley is standing second from right

With permission - Alison Voss (Henderson family)

The Henderson boys attended Cumloden School in East St Kilda. Established in 1890, Cumloden was one of a number of smaller private schools, or associated Grammar schools, at which the fees were lower than those of the Greater Public Schools; perhaps a reason why Kingsley and his brothers did not follow their father to Scotch College. All then studied Engineering at Melbourne University and all graduated with Masters Degrees. Little else is known of Kingsley’s elder brother, Anketell Matthew, other than that he became a mining engineer, married and had four children. He lived in New South Wales for a time as there is a reference to Kingsley visiting him there, but he and his family had returned to Melbourne when he died in 1941. Andrew Anketell, Kingsley’s younger brother, was a brilliant student and won an Exhibition in Natural Philosophy in his first year at Melbourne University. He followed his mother into a teaching career. However, in 1910, while working as a science teacher at the Wangaratta Agricultural High School, he contracted typhoid fever and died soon after. He was only twenty-four years old, and his death was a great blow to the family, especially to his father Anketell.
Wedding group, (c.1913)

Kingsley is standing fourth from right, next to his father, with his mother sitting immediately below, next to Mary on the right. Kingsley’s wife, Ruve, is standing first on left.

With permission - Alison Vass (Henderson family)

Like his brothers Kingsley was a good student and was a consistent prize-winner at Cumloeden in subjects ranging from English and French to Mathematics. He won his form prize in his final year. At university his subjects were Chemistry I and Natural Philosophy I in which he obtained passes and Architecture I and II in which he obtained Second and First Class honours respectively. While architecture was part of the Engineering course it was common for architecture students to supplement their studies with practical subjects at the Working Man’s College. Kingsley studied Applied Mechanics at this institution, obtained honours and was prize taker in Part II of the course.61

Commitment to the value of education created a strong link between the Andrew and Henderson families. There was probably a philosophical link as well, as Mary Louisa’s father, like the Reverend Anketell Henderson, had been a Wesleyan minister, although he resigned when he came to Australia in preference for a commercial career. The family arrived in Melbourne in 1857. Where Mary Louisa was educated is unknown, however her mother ran a boarding school for girls in South Yarra, in which she was assisted by her daughter until her marriage to Anketell Henderson in 1880.62 Mrs Andrew’s involvement in education continued at least until 1885 but whether she was

61 RAIA, Records, membership documents, Box 87/14
62 See for example, Obituary for Mrs Henderson in The Argus, 31 October 1934
still involved when Kingsley’s sisters, Mary and Louise, began their education is unknown. There is no record of Mary’s secondary education, but Louise spent her final year, 1904, at Melbourne Girls’ Grammar. It could be that the motivation for moving Louise to this elite school was to enhance her opportunities to meet the ‘right’ people and thence a suitable husband. While such reasoning does not fit with the family’s general attitude to education, if Louise was not inclined to a career the family may have reverted to the middle-class precept that the best private schooling and a suitable husband went together. How she spent the five years between leaving school and marrying in 1911 is not known, but she may have stayed home as a companion to her mother.

In contrast to Louise, Mary was clearly set upon a career and she joined the small group of young women studying medicine at Melbourne University. In the early twentieth century, it was still unusual for women to enter the medical profession, or in fact any profession. Although Mary might have been a rebel in her family it is more likely that her tertiary education and career in medicine is evidence of an enlightened view in the Henderson family of the role of women in society. Presuming she had graduated by 1906, she was one of the first forty female medical graduates from Melbourne University.  

8.
Mary (Henderson) Bell
With permission - Alison Voss
(Henderson family)

After working at the Eye and Ear Hospital and then the Women’s Hospital, Mary opened her own practice in Collins Street in 1910. Prior to this date her professional address was that of the family home in Malvern Road, Toorak. Women’s and children’s health

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63 McCalman, Journeyings, p.vii
64 Farley Kelly, Degrees of Liberation: A Short History of Women in the University of Melbourne, The Women Graduates Centenary Committee of the University of Melbourne, Parkville, Vic., 1985, p.44.
65 The family moved to this address in 1907.
is the likely focus of her practice as references to conference papers given by her in contemporary newspapers show her to be active in these areas. In 1915 she married Arthur Bell, also a doctor with a special interest in vaccine treatment. It would seem that the date of the marriage was determined by Arthur’s decision to enlist in the Royal Australian Medical Corps, as within weeks of the wedding he left Melbourne to take up a post as director of bacteriology in a military hospital in Egypt. Mary, meanwhile, also travelled overseas as the Argus of August 1915 reported a letter from London in which she describes a ‘military hospital ... staffed by women doctors, who hold rank and pay exactly similar to their male colleagues’.66 This comment no doubt refers to the disparity existing elsewhere between the status of men and women in the medical profession at the time. Arthur Bell died in 1924 from a disease contracted in Egypt from which he never recovered, leaving Mary to raise their four children, the youngest of whom was less than one year old. However, at least from the late 1930s, she continued to practise and to support women’s causes. For instance, she was an active member of the Women Graduates Association, the National Council of Women and a founding member of Melbourne’s Lyceum Club: established in 1911 by ‘a group of distinguished women, many of whom [were later] leaders in different spheres of life in Melbourne’. The mission of the Lyceum Club was to promote increased ‘recognition of the importance of women’s share in the public, intellectual and artistic life of the community, and the opening of greater avenues of opportunity for university graduates’.67

Thus, as well as in her medical field, Mary took a prominent role in the advancement of women in the community. Although directed differently, her drive and determination matched those of her brother Kingsley, whose ambitions and expertise took him into the commercial and political environments of Melbourne. Nevertheless, both worked for the betterment of society as they saw it, gave of their time and won esteem in the Melbourne community.

When Kingsley married Ruve Cutts Poolman in 1909, he was the first of his siblings to marry. Ruve was born in 1888, the same year as Louise Henderson and, together with her four sisters, spent some of her school years at Melbourne Girls’ Grammar. Here she

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66 Excerpt from ‘a letter received by a Melbourne colleague from Dr Mary Bell’ in The Argus, 25 August 1915
67 The Argus, 1 November 1934.
undoubtedly met Louise and a friendship between the two girls may have led to a meeting with Kingsley. Little has been discovered about Ruve and indeed about Kingsley’s life with her. However, it was probably a good match, as the pair came from similar middle-class backgrounds, were well-educated and, as they lived in the same area, probably moved in the same circles. Ruve’s father, FW Poolman, was a well-known Melbourne businessman; a member of a sugar refining family, one time Mayor of Port Melbourne and President of the Chamber of Manufactures. Anketell was possibly acquainted with Poolman as his name appears in the A & K Henderson Drawings Index. Following Poolman’s death in 1905, both Ruve and her mother were active in the community, politically and socially, in their own right. Like Mary (Henderson) Bell both were involved in National Women’s Council activities, with Ruve elected to the position of vice-president in the mid-1930s. Upon Mrs Poolman’s death, the Argus reported that many church and philanthropic bodies had lost a devoted worker, Mrs Poolman having been particularly involved in activities in aid of mothers and women.\textsuperscript{68} In addition Ruve was active on the council of her old school, as well as the Malvern branch of the Australian Women’s National League, a body affiliated with the Nationalist Party.

As was common practice, Kingsley lived with his parents in the family home until his marriage, after which he moved with his wife to Horsburgh Grove, Malvern, the first of only two addresses he would have during his married life. In 1920 the couple moved to

\textsuperscript{68} The Argus, 17 July 1937.
Adelaide Street, Armadale where they lived together until Kingsley’s death.\textsuperscript{69} They had no children, and again there is no explanation.

\textbf{10.}
\textit{A & K Henderson Records, Boxes 237/28; Helena Morris}

The Hendersons’ address from 1920. The house was renovated in the 1930s, and it is likely John Freeman designed the façade. A big house for two people and their staff, but it seems other family members lived there, too, at times.

\textbf{Part II: Kingsley Henderson, Architect}

In his years with Joseph Reed, Kingsley’s father, Anketell, received such wide training and experience that he was well placed to establish his own practice. More than the large public and commercial buildings for which Reed is so well-known, the firm carried out ‘a continuous substratum of other works, mostly in suburban Melbourne and country towns, which included banks, churches, warehouses residences and other buildings.’\textsuperscript{70}

This ‘substratum’ of work was likely to have been the source of Henderson’s grounding, in particular suburban and rural banks, an area in which he was to become expert in his own practice. A significant city building in which Anketell was involved, and one of particular interest to this study, is the head office of the Bank of Australasia (1876) at the corner of Queen and Collins streets, for which he ‘prepared all the drawings and designs’.\textsuperscript{71} Many years later when A & K Henderson was commissioned to add new floors to the building, Kingsley Henderson referred to his late father’s involvement in the original building and stated that as a consequence he had ‘a keen personal interest in preserving the character of the building, and the whole study of the external appearance

\textsuperscript{69} Both the Adelaide Street house and the Hendersons’ holiday house at Portsea were sold three months after Kingsley’s death. \textit{The Argus}, 17 July 1942.

\textsuperscript{70} George Tibbits, ‘Joseph Reed and foundation 1853-90’, in Philip Goad (ed.), \textit{Bates Smart: 150 Years of Australian Architecture}, Thames and Hudson, Fishermans Bend, Vic., 2004, p.57

\textsuperscript{71} Henderson to Bank of Australasia, 10 June 1929, A & K Henderson Records, Box 242 Folder 365A
of same has had my closest consideration’. In relation to smaller banks Anketell became an exponent of a style of design described as ‘Austere Classicism’, a style characterised by its simplicity and the prominence given to the ‘wall at the basis of architectural expression’.

The timelessness of Henderson’s restrained bank designs of the 1890s laid the foundation for the styles for numerous banks the firm constructed for the Bank of Australasia up to World War II. Writing to the Bank superintendent in 1937, Kingsley Henderson said

we have been endeavouring in recent years, to give the banks’ buildings something of a character of that period of architecture which developed as a classic revival in the time of the Georges because these buildings, of all, in our opinion, never look ‘dated’.

11.

Country banks

Left - Bank of Australasia, (c.1936), Toogoolwah, Queensland; Right - Bank of Australasia (c.1936), Deniliquin, New South Wales.

A & K Henderson Records, Box 226

Once in his own practice, Anketell became actively involved in the RVIA (then the Victorian Institute of Architects), and during the Depression, saved the ‘faltering organization’ by his ‘dedicated efforts’. In his years as a member of the Institute he served a term as vice-president and three terms as president. He was always an active and vocal member of the Institute - traits which he passed on to his son. He was the first lecturer in architecture at Melbourne University, a position he held until his retirement in 1917. He was to remain a vocal advocate for the advancement of architectural education, another path Kingsley would also follow.

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72 Ibid.
74 Henderson to Bank, 15 October 1937, A & K Henderson Records, Box 285/43
75 JM Freeland, The making of a profession; a history of the growth and work of the architectural institutes in Australia, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1971, pp.38,43
Kingsley Henderson entered his father’s office in 1901 as an articled pupil. This was an auspicious year in which to start his career for, not only did the city’s economy begin to recover, it was also the year of Federation when Melbourne became the home of Australia’s first Federal Capital, and the scene for the opening of the first Federal Parliament. In line with the city’s enhanced status, consideration of planning and presentation in the city were paramount, and gave rise to ideas associated with the ‘City Beautiful Movement’ that originated in America at the turn of the century. As preparations got underway in anticipation of the visit by the Duke of York, the city was animated by civic decoration. St Kilda Road, the main thoroughfare along which the royal procession would travel, ‘was transformed literally and figuratively into a grand “boulevard” of international pretension’ and once the procession entered the heart of the city it would proceed through eight triumphal arches on its way to Parliament House.

Some years later height restrictions were implemented limiting buildings to a maximum of 132 feet (40.23 metres) to achieve some uniformity in the streetscapes. Edquist writes that by controlling the environment in this way ‘Melburnians were encouraged to conceive of their city in City Beautiful terms. Freestone adds that City Beautiful ideas were ‘promoted primarily by architects and local government reformers’ and that the ‘bigger objective was reordering the urban environment for moral and economic betterment. These aims also reflect conservative middle-class attitudes so that while the Hendersons’ particular responses are not articulated, it is very likely that they thought in these terms. For example, Anketell’s predilection for classical restraint in his designs, accords with City Beautiful ideas. Also, while still a student Kingsley set out his ideas about the importance of ‘Truth’ in architecture as in life, referring to ‘refinement and grace or noble effect by the proper disposition of masses.’

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79 Lewis, *Melbourne: the city's history and development*, p.95. Lewis points out that the length of fire brigade ladders also contributed to this imposition.
80 Edquist, 'Harold Desbrowe-Annear & the City Beautiful: Melbourne 1901-1927', p.47
81 Freestone, 'Melbourne and the City Beautiful Movement 1900-50', p.223
reflection of City Beautiful thinking he connected ideals in architecture with polite behaviour. Throughout his career Kingsley was a vocal proponent of decorum and control in architecture, a stance which is in line with the prevailing City Beautiful thinking of the first thirty years of the century.\textsuperscript{83}

The interests of the RVIA reflect City Beautiful principles of order and control. At Institute meetings, town planning in particular was a regular item on the agenda from 1910 and once preparations began for planning the new Capital in Canberra, it was a priority at every meeting. The implementation of a Street Architecture Medal in the late twenties is a clear example of the Institute’s fundamental belief in polite architecture.\textsuperscript{84}

In the early years of the century the economy was boosted by a resumption of building activity. Technical innovation and the use of reinforced concrete characterised developing building practices in Melbourne, and department stores, both city and suburban, rose up, often in the American Romanesque style, which became the dominant commercial style.\textsuperscript{85} To an extent the Hendersons benefited from this trend as commissions were received for shops, stores and warehouses for new clients.\textsuperscript{86}

In 1905 Kingsley became a partner in the firm, which then became known as Anketell & K Henderson. In the meantime he had joined the T Square Club, an association of artists, architects and students formed to advance study of architecture and allied arts.\textsuperscript{87} By 1903 he was secretary of the Club: the first intimation of his energetic interests in the activities of the profession.\textsuperscript{88} He presented a paper to the Club entitled ‘Truth Beauty and Utility’ which, as the Club’s motto, reflected his view of its philosophy. In this paper he stated that in Australia

\begin{quote}
We seem to be distinguished by such propensities, as reckless borrowing, and too great a desire to make a show. … Adornment of any kind must be the acknowledgment and decoration of construction.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{83} See Lewis, \textit{Melbourne: the city's history and development}, Chapter 5, ‘The City Beautiful’. See later chapters for Kingsley’s enduring concern for good taste in architecture.

\textsuperscript{84} See Chapter Two below.

\textsuperscript{85} Lewis, \textit{Melbourne: the city's history and development}, pp.92,98,102

\textsuperscript{86} There were no large department stores among these commissions.


\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., p.53
He also referred to the period from the Renaissance and beyond as ‘several centuries of chaos’, characterised by ‘revivals galore’. These are interesting comments from the nineteen-year-old who in later years would be criticised for his eclecticism.

Together the Hendersons built up the practice attracting clients and commissions. Kingsley worked hard to improve his architectural expertise, management as well as design. He later commented that he entered seventeen design competitions before achieving success. In 1913 the older Henderson proposed his son for associate membership of the RVIA, and in support of the application, praised his skills. He wrote that he had used Kingsley’s student notes as the basis for his lectures. He added:

During my absences travelling he has been left in charge of works of responsibility for the Bank of Australasia and others and has shown his ability therein. In modern construction he has shown originality and resource and in planning and design he is far beyond his years, also in business ability and tact.

Kingsley had been well-trained by his father.

Later that year Kingsley Henderson set off on an overseas excursion to the United States and Canada. Tours of this kind were becoming common. Lewis writes that Frank Tompkins who, with his brother Harry, had ‘more or less introduced’ American Romanesque to Melbourne, made a ‘well-publicised trip to Europe and the US… returning … full of enthusiasm for things American, but critical of the: “slavish worship of old forms and the dilettantisms of many of the English architects.”’ There is mention in most issues of the RVIAJ of some member’s departure or return from such a trip.

Upon his return in early 1914, Henderson addressed the members of the Institute in what was to be the first of many lectures and talks he would give throughout his lifetime. He expressed vital interest in everything he saw, and his account of his travels suggests someone who is highly observant and blessed with unlimited energy; an energy that was to characterise his working life. It seems he had an informative guide and was able to retain a vast amount of information, not only about architecture and building in isolation, but also in the context of the development of each city. He did not discuss specific buildings or styles, rather the rapidity of his trip allowed for a general impression only of

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90 See Chapter Four
91 RAIA, Records, Box 87/14. Despite his father’s praise of his designing ability, Kingsley did not consider design to be one of his strengths.
92 Lewis, Melbourne: the city’s history and development, p.102
the cities, and the various types of buildings he inspected. His descriptions reflect his interest in technical development and planning. An early indication of his interest in lighting is evident in a comment on New York skyscrapers: ‘The day-lighting of skyscrapers with the possibility of the light-well being built in, has brought about the arrangement of light-wells on the street frontages, where the sites permit.’

He concluded his talk by saying: ‘I spent the two most interesting months of my life in a hurried run through the United States of America. Architecturally I became gorged.’ His paper was warmly received with one Fellow stating that he hoped ‘the good use [Henderson] had made of his time would encourage other of the younger men to take the trip.’

War broke out in Europe in July 1914. For unknown reasons neither Kingsley nor his brother Anketell volunteered for military service. In terms of age both were eligible and given the patriotic fervour that gripped Australia and the standpoint of civic virtue they could have been expected to take, it seems strange that they apparently failed to take part in any way. It is interesting to note that Kingsley supported conscription - presumed at least from his support of the Nationalist Party in the Federal election in 1917. A report of his campaigning on behalf of Win-the-War candidates for the Malvern Branch of his party is the first evidence of an interest in politics that was to endure throughout his life.

Lucas writes that following the death of his son Andrew in 1910, Anketell’s health was never good. It may have been decided that Kingsley was needed at home by his father, both in the business and to support him emotionally. In any event, the general tenor of RVIAJ articles is such to suggest that in no way did Kingsley neglect his duty to King and Country by not enlisting.

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93 K Henderson, 'A trip through the United States & Western Canada', RVIAJ, xii/2 (1914), 60-68, p.60
94 Ibid., p.62
95 Ibid., p.68
96 Ibid., p.73
97 The Argus, 2 May 1917. At about the same time he became involved in local politics as The Argus reported his election to the Malvern City Council in 1917, a position he held until, due to the pressure of work in his rapidly expanding firm, he resigned in 1922.
98 Lucas, 'The late Anketell M Henderson', p.146
99 For example, Kingsley was elected president of the Institute in 1921, an unlikely event had he been regarded in a negative light. Moreover, there is no sense of guilt or regret at his non-participation in the welcome he expressed to returned servicemen in his presidential address. Kingsley A. Henderson, 'Presidential Address', ibid., xix/1 (1921), 33-37; ibid., p.33
In 1919 Kingsley applied to the Institute to be admitted as a Fellow. In his statement he listed the principal works in which he was involved. These included a number of private residences, factories, stores, retail shops, banks and hospitals. He mentions competition results: first prize for the Eye and Ear Hospital, second prize for the Women’s Hospital, and in the final six for Geelong College. He stated: I have designed, supervised and controlled probably £200,000 worth of work in the last five years or so. Anketell Henderson was again his son’s proposer. He confirmed Kingsley’s statement as to his work, adding that in particular the Fairfield Infectious Diseases Hospital was ‘specially under his control’. In his statement Kingsley declared the value of this job as £70,000; a large job indeed and one that kept the firm busy for nine years (1916-1925). By this time Anketell was reducing his participation in the firm and Kingsley was effectively running the business.

12.

Fairfield Infectious Diseases Hospital (c.1914)
A & K Henderson Records, Boxes 237/38
Henderson’s first competition win was for a design for this hospital. A & K Henderson worked on the hospital for twenty years.

By 1918 Kingsley had become officially involved in RVIA activities when he was elected to the RVIA Council as well as the Board of Examiners and the Social Committee. At this stage at least he would have begun making the important business and political contacts that would become important allies in later years when he became

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100 RAIA, Records, 87/14. The competition results were not referred to in Kingsley Henderson’s statement to the RVIA of 1913, when seeking membership as an associate; therefore the successes listed were most probably achieved between 1913 and 1919.
101 Ibid., 87/14. Proposer’s statement.
102 Ibid., 87/14. See also A & K Henderson Records, Boxes 124,195,196,197,289. Henderson is referring to the construction of the new hospital itself, that is from 1916-18. More hospital buildings were commissioned over the next seven years. Moreover other commissions were received from the Fairfield Hospital in 1932-35 and then on occasions until the end of the firm’s existence.
involved in the building of Canberra and also in the founding of the United Australia Party.

Thus, by the end of the decade, Kingsley was firmly established as a force in conservative Melbourne. His upbringing had instilled solid values and his education had provided him with the skills to build and manage a successful business. His years at school and university, his family, and professional and political associations provided the basis for his extensive network of contacts. Before long he gained membership on boards of several leading companies and was seeking assistance from his political contacts on behalf of the architectural fraternity. In pursuit of his firm’s interests he was building his client base and by the end of 1920 was to win one of the great architectural appointments in Australia: architect to the Australasian Temperance and General Mutual Life Association Society Ltd (the T & G).103 As well he had cemented his place on the committee of the RVIA and was rising quickly to higher office.

As Melbourne’s spirits were revived following the War and business and industry resumed, Kingsley Henderson was ready and able to take advantage of the good times that beckoned.

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103 See Chapter Two.
Chapter Two:

1921-29: Building a reputation

After the War, Melbourne’s architectural profession looked ahead with confidence to a period of freedom and affluence, and resumption of activity in favourable conditions. The mood of optimism that prevailed was to be echoed in a future description of the period from 1923 to 1927 as the ‘golden years’; memories of war had faded and economic pressures were not yet on the horizon. Frank Stapley, president of the RVIA in 1919, told his fellow members that while some members of the community faced difficulties in the War’s aftermath – financial strain and uncertainty, discontent that threatened prosperity – architecture was a ‘peaceful profession’ that could avoid such travails and, with tact and consideration, ensure continuing development in Australia. He encouraged members to participate in the period of prosperity the nation was entering. Indeed, for much of the decade, the city enjoyed a boom in building from which Melbourne architects, including A & K Henderson, were to benefit appreciably.

By 1920, Anketell and Kingsley Henderson had built the firm up to the extent that it was now established as one of the biggest architectural practices in Melbourne. With business calculated at £60,000 per year; there had been more than enough to occupy the two Hendersons as well as one other senior architect, four student draftsmen, an office boy and two secretaries. By this time Anketell had reduced active participation in the business. Evidence of his diminished role appears in the profit split. It was equal up to 1918 but by 1919 was one third to two thirds in favour of Kingsley. In 1921 Rodney Alsop and Marcus Martin entered the Henderson partnership and the firm became known as A & K Henderson, Alsop & Martin. The reasons for the proposed expansion are not known but, given the value of work on hand as well as anticipated new work, Kingsley clearly could not have managed on his own. Alsop was well known to the Hendersons having been associated with Anketell in architectural teaching at the

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105 Ibid., p.141
106 Frank Stapley, ‘Presidential Address’, *RVIAJ*, xvii/1 (1919), 3-8, pp.3-4
107 Henderson, Letter to Alsop 16 December 1920. This amount was estimated from figures for the past five years, calculated at the time the Hendersons were contemplating partnership with Alsop and Martin.
108 Ibid.
109 A & K Henderson Records, Box 132 Partnership Agreement, 17 January 1921
university, and having attended Cumnoden at the same time as Kingsley. Martin, who was ten years younger, was to become a junior partner. His inclusion was possibly due to a previous agreement he had reached with Alsop, but in any event he was also well known to the Hendersons as he had commenced articles in their office before enlisting in the AIF in 1915.

Documents relating to the partnership do not indicate who initiated discussions leading to the affiliation, but show that negotiations began in early October 1920. A likely explanation for the decision relates to the prospect of a new and extremely valuable client, the T & G Society to which Kingsley had just been appointed architect. The T & G was a well-established insurance company and it is likely that this appointment came to Henderson through the growing reputation of his firm and his network of business contacts. He must have been in negotiation with the Society for some months before his appointment, confirmed by letter dated 18 October 1920, as from that date he was to be responsible for all the Society’s future building. As the Society intended to open branches throughout Australia and New Zealand, a huge building program was planned, so Kingsley’s appointment must have been the envy of his fellow architects.

Presumably Kingsley was concerned that the firm lacked the strong design element necessary for its work with the new client. Although he had a list of buildings designed by him and competition wins to his name, he never claimed a particular skill in architectural design. In fact he stated openly that his interest lay in the practical and business side of architecture, and it was these areas that were to prove his forte in later years. By contrast, Alsop was well known for his artistic talents, and Martin, although not yet qualified, must have already showed signs of the creative ability that was to bring him prominence as a residential designer in later years. A letter from Kingsley to Alsop, dated 16 December 1920, confirmed the discussions that had taken place regarding the arrangement. This letter is important as it provides the only insight into events leading to the partnership. While the letter does not mention specific clients or commissions it does show that Henderson was keen to strengthen the design side of the

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110 Ibid., Box 132, partnership file.
111 J Thompson, general manager T & G, to Henderson, 18 October 1920. The A & K Henderson index lists a job relating to the Auckland T & G in 1909. Examination of this file indicates that this job is completely unrelated to the T & G. See Box 236/592, (specifications for warehouse for A Clark & Sons.)
practice. In theory the combination of skills in the new partnership was ideal, as it would deliver: ‘a strong design element, and a strong structural and business element, with a strong junior understudying both sides of the work. I think the idea an excellent one’ \[113\]

Unfortunately, the alliance did not live up to its promise, and the partnership was dissolved in October 1924. Although seemingly ideal in its combination of practical and creative skills, in reality this partnership was doomed from the start and it is strange that Henderson ever contemplated it, given his misgivings arising from partnership discussions. In particular, as he wrote in his letter to Alsop of 16 December 1920, he was concerned that Alsop had overestimated the amount of business he could bring from his old practice to the new and that he intended to take little part in the business side of the practice, instead concentrating on design and drawing only, which in Henderson’s opinion amounted to an unequal contribution to the work of the practice and therefore a disproportionate financial interest.\[114\] Nevertheless a partnership agreement was struck for an initial term of four years: January 1921 to January 1925.

While Alsop and Martín concentrated on design, Henderson took care of all other aspects of the practice, in particular, management of the business and client liaison. While he assumed total control, he was sometimes oblivious of what else was happening in the office, leading to a perceived lack of consideration for his partners. By the middle of 1923 Henderson believed the concerns he had expressed in his letter to Alsop had proved correct. Now the great satisfaction he must have felt in seeing his firm flourish was tempered by his dissatisfaction with his partners’ performance. Nevertheless, he wanted the partnership to continue and attempted to persuade his partners to his view of the current operation of the practice and how it should best proceed.

The crux of the matter was the relative importance of the contribution of each partner to the success of the business. In Henderson’s assessment the income Alsop and Martin received pursuant to the Agreement was more than what was warranted by their respective efforts; they naturally disagreed, and indeed contended that any deficiency in their work

\[113\] Henderson, Letter to Alsop 16 December 1920
\[114\] Henderson, Letter to Alsop 16 December 1920
resulted from the inefficient and unhealthy conditions in the office. Thus an impasse was created that highlighted fundamental flaws in the relationship.\textsuperscript{115}

The bitter experience of this short-lived partnership is discussed more fully in Chapter Four as it exemplifies Kingsley’s view of the relative importance of the two sides of architectural practice as well as his attitude to his co-workers and his belief that full control should always be in his hands.

The departure of Alsop and Martin did not seem to make any marked difference to the running of the firm as it continued to attract increasing numbers of commissions throughout the decade. The majority of the work came from banks, in particular the Bank of Australasia; specifically commissions involving fifty-four branches for the 1920-29 period, seven of which were for new buildings.\textsuperscript{116} As it expanded its business the Commercial Bank of Australia was also among existing clients that continued to support the firm with new projects, in particular substantial alterations and additions to its head office in Collins Street. In addition, commissions continued to come in from the Alfred Hospital and the Fairfield Hospital.\textsuperscript{117} New hospital clients provided valuable work, including the Geelong Hospital and St Andrews Hospital in East Melbourne. The firm began the T & G’s new building program in 1921 with its Brisbane branch office,\textsuperscript{118} and in the period from 1921 to 1942 T & G commissions involved thirty-four buildings.\textsuperscript{119} The head office building in Collins Street was particularly noteworthy as, by the addition of a tower, it was the first building to extend above the regulation 132

\textsuperscript{115} Percentages pursuant to the Agreement were Kingsley 36.8%, Anketell 26.9%, Alsop 24.8% and Martin 11.8%. They relate to profits up to £4,000. Above this figure percentages were increased, the variation arising from Anketell’s inactive role in the partnership. It was agreed that Kingsley should take Anketell’s share following his death in November 1922. It is clear from Henderson’s memo of about August 1923 he was keen to negotiate a fresh partnership agreement to January 1927.

\textsuperscript{116} A & K Henderson Index

\textsuperscript{117} From 1927 plans were prepared for a large extension to the Alfred Hospital Nurses’ Home (90 bedrooms), as well as the Outpatients’, Casualty and Theatre Blocks. Wrangling over funds between the Hospital and State Government delayed any new work. Ann M Mitchell, The hospital south of the Yarra: a history of Alfred Hospital Melbourne from foundation to the nineteen-forties, Alfred Hospital, Melbourne, 1977, p.192

\textsuperscript{118} Immediately following his appointment as T & G architect Henderson was consulted regarding buildings underway in Hobart and Sydney. See A & K Henderson Records, Box 132, correspondence with the T & G of 3 November 1920 which shows that Henderson got straight into work, immediately travelling to Sydney and Hobart; 11 January 1921 first sketch plans submitted for the Brisbane T & G. Box 268/ 243. In 1922 new offices were planned for Perth and Launceston, as well as Christchurch and Wellington in New Zealand. Work began on a large office building in Adelaide in 1923 and another in Bendigo in 1924. At the same time alterations proceeded in relation to a number of existing buildings.

\textsuperscript{119} The list of works is ascertained from the A & K Henderson Index. In addition, Kingsley Henderson attended monthly meetings with the Society and the firm constructed or renovated residences for T & G managers. See ibid., Box 68/56
feet (40.23 metres). The Society’s work, together with that of the Bank of Australasia and the Alfred Hospital, created the mainstay of work on which the firm could rely throughout the period 1920-42.

In an address to Institute members in 1930, Henderson\textsuperscript{120} stressed the importance of delegation to appropriate staff, be it of routine office matters or management of large projects. In the latter case he said the assistant should be one who has worked on the drawings and specifications or ‘at least studied the project sufficiently to be familiar with every detail of it’. He stressed the importance of clear and definite drawings and specifications; while on the question of supervision, he recommended overseeing even the smallest and most indirect aspect, and emphasised the need to keep a ‘tight rein’.\textsuperscript{121} This advice reflected precisely the fastidious nature of his approach to the work of his firm, so that in this period, while he did not involve himself in the practical tasks, he oversaw everything. He spoke of the relationship between architect, builder and client as ideally a combination of good faith, good humour, pleasantness and optimism, and, importantly, achievement.\textsuperscript{122} It is clear that dealing with his clients was his special domain and in every case he set out to maintain a good relationship.

The firm reached unprecedented heights in the Melbourne central business district in this period. While it had constructed or worked on a number of city buildings such as shops and stores in the preceding two decades, none matched the prestige of those with the Henderson name on them in the 1920s. Constance Hart remembers that when she was with A & K Henderson in the early 1940s it was still a point of conversation that, during the twenties, the firm had worked simultaneously on five Collins Street buildings.\textsuperscript{123}

The first of these buildings was the head office for the National Bank of Australasia, a commission won in competition in early 1925.\textsuperscript{124} With preliminary work already underway for the T & G head office at the corner of Collins and Russell Streets, Henderson’s rise to prominence was gaining momentum.\textsuperscript{125}

\textsuperscript{120} As Anketell had been inactive from 1921, henceforth ‘Henderson’ refers to Kingsley only
\textsuperscript{121} Henderson, ‘Supervision and the Relationships of Contracting Parties’, p.91-94
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., p.94
\textsuperscript{123} Interview with Constance Hart, 29 March 2011
\textsuperscript{124} In 1928 the firm won the commission for this bank’s Brisbane office and in 1938 the Hobart office.
\textsuperscript{125} The T & G Building (1926-28). Additional work was carried out at the T & G continuously throughout the period. In particular a large new section in Russell Street was added during the years 1933 to 1938
Building

National Bank of Australasia - limited competition 1924

The competition for the National Bank head office was launched in November 1924 with Henderson and five other architects invited to compete. At this time Henderson had just been awarded second place in a competition for the administration building in Canberra – a prestigious competition he had been extremely keen to win. The Bank competition now gave him a second chance to secure a valuable commission and enhance his name in Melbourne at least. As Alsop and Martin had left the firm a few weeks earlier he was without a specialist designer, so he enlisted the help of P Scott-Williams, the architect with whom he had collaborated on the Canberra proposal, to assist with the competition drawings.126

This time fortune favoured Henderson and, following the announcement of his win, he received many congratulations from his friends and colleagues, and news of the proposed bank building was announced in the press.

National Bank of Australasia (1925-28) - building

Work on the new building commenced in October 1925. Instructions from the client were to preserve as far as possible the character of the old bank which had been designed by Melbourne architect Lloyd Tayler (1830-1900) and constructed in 1869-70. At that time, the directors, ‘believing an imposing and spacious building would attract new deposits … begrudged no expense’ and commissioned a building that would impress with its grandeur as well as express solemnity and security appropriate to the business of banking.127 The resultant two-storey Renaissance revival building, which Tayler described as ‘Palladian’, was as tall as the five-storey buildings that arose beside it and, at the time, was the tallest building on its Collins Street block between Elizabeth and Swanston Streets. The Bank opened its doors in September 1870.128

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126 The Canberra Administrative Building competition was won by George Sydney Jones, architect of Sydney. This and the National Bank competition, together with Henderson’s dealings with Scott-Williams, Department of Public Works architect, in relation to them, are discussed in Chapter Four.
128 Ibid.
Details of the brief for the 1925 building are not on the file; instead the competition reports which accompanied each of the five entries give an idea of what was required. Each report stresses the preservation of the character of the old bank, and the concept of dignity suitable to such an important building as the head office of ‘your bank’. A press report describing the eventual design reads:

Though the present [Tayler] building has a sense of dignity and elegance about it, ... the directors of the bank have determined to spend over £200,000 to bring their building in line with present day conditions of structural beauty and commercial convenience.\textsuperscript{129}

In preserving the character of the former bank Henderson was mindful of the affection held by the people of Melbourne for the old building. Moreover, he was mindful of the need to satisfy the English parent company by adhering essentially to the formula for English bank building. Thus, despite the changes, the relationship to the old building and the relationship to classically-styled banks in England were preserved.

In the competition report Henderson also included the maxim he relied on in all his proposals: ‘The fundamental [principle] of Architecture throughout the ages has been the expression of the purpose for which a building is used, both in its external appearance and in its plan’. He added: ‘The new elevation must express itself primarily as a Bank, although there are five floors in it for letting off to the public’.\textsuperscript{130}

 Provision of letting space in new buildings was an American practice and an innovation for Melbourne banks. However, planning, particularly that emanating from American ideas, was an area of Henderson’s special interest and expertise, and one for which he would become highly regarded. Following his competition win, he

\textsuperscript{129} \textit{Sunday Times}, Sydney, 8 February 1925,

\textsuperscript{130} A \& K Henderson Records, Box 238. Following his win in the competition Henderson asked to see the other entries, ‘to pick the best out of them’, Henderson to Wilson, 3 February 1925.
had written to the Bank elaborating on what spaces should be let on which floors. He explained that ‘The Banks generally in Melbourne have yet to build on a large scale’. He described the developing practice of building larger bank buildings with space excess to the bank’s requirements for letting, as had occurred in bank building in Sydney at that time, for example the Bank of Australasia, the London Bank and the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney, with the Bank of New South Wales contemplating a similar scheme. He continued

In England, it is not usual to see many tenants in Bank Buildings, as, generally speaking, the sites are small, and the limitation of height is very severe, which means that the banking institution generally requires to occupy the whole of its site on all floors. In America it is the opposite.\(^{131}\)

The job was complicated by the requirement for the Bank to continue its business uninterrupted, a requirement often incorporated in bank building as well as in building retail premises. In a report Henderson wrote for the bank, he explained:

A major problem in the construction of the new premises was the question of maintaining and keeping ‘alive’ and comfortable, the business of the Bank. The acquisition of temporary premises was impossible anywhere in the neighbourhood of the old head office building. For two years, the public … watched – first the demolition of Allen’s Chambers and the erection of one-third of the area of the new building as a skeleton, to a height of five stories. This skeleton was roughly finished off on the Basement, Ground and First Floors, and the Bank’s business moved into it. Then the public watched the demolition of the old head office building and the raising of that to a height of five floors, and the ultimate raising of the whole area of the building to its full height. Then after twenty-one months, the Bank was transferred back to the site of the old head office building, and the portion previously occupied by Allen’s chambers was finished off.\(^{132}\)

Two years had passed by the time the Bank was officially opened in 1927, but the building was still unfinished. This must have been a serious irritation for Henderson, who had stated in his letter of thanks to the Bank Board that ‘I want the contract to be the smoothest running building contract that can possibly be achieved and all my foresight and effort will be directed to this end.’\(^{133}\)

Nevertheless, in a manner typical when faced with difficult situations, he made the best of it. Those present at the Bank’s opening included all Board members, among them the president, Sir John Grice, who travelled from England for the occasion. Others in attendance included the Lord Mayor of Melbourne, indicating the importance of the

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\(^{131}\) Henderson to Wreford, 3 April 1925, ibid., Box 262/5451

\(^{132}\) Ibid., Box 206. The undated report was written for Bank promotional material. The author was probably John Freeman

\(^{133}\) Henderson to Wilson, 13 October 1925, ibid., Box 262/5451
building to the city. Henderson’s speech of thanks to the Bank for their trust and patience included a heartfelt apology and explanation of all that was involved in such a building, and he expressed gratitude to his staff and builders for their loyalty and hard work.134

The finished building retained the ‘sense of dignity and elegance’ of its predecessor. In addition, in its restrained classical style, it reflected City Beautiful ideals.

14.
National Bank of Australasia, head office, Melbourne (1925-27)
Contemporary and 2011 views.
*A & K Henderson Records, Boxes 237/38; Helena Morris

134 ‘Notes of Speech’, undated, ibid.
A designated ‘Ladies Bank’ was an innovation in Melbourne, as was the idea of creating letting space, in bank buildings, to enhance a building’s economic potential. The Quamby Club was a ladies club - especially for women visiting the city from the country. It later merged with the Alexandra Club.

The T & G Building was completed at about the same time; in addition, commencing in 1926, A & K Henderson constructed a seven-storey warehouse for Debenhams (Australia) on the corner of Russell Street and Flinders Lane. The building was named ‘Cavendish House’. Novel features in this building were its brick (rather than concrete) construction and floors made of hollow blocks.\(^{135}\) Supply of hot and cold water for the whole building was also a modern feature. The *Argus* reported in March 1927 that together the Debenhams and T & G buildings ‘will occupy space equal to one complete block of a city Street. They will also have the effect of making a large increase in the business population of the district.’\(^{136}\) Thus, the impact of A & K Henderson’s presence in Melbourne was increasing. In 1930 the *Herald* held a public competition in which the

\[^{135}\] The records construction methods are not clear but hollow blocks ‘set in concrete floors’ are listed in the Estimate and Specifications. See Estimate and Specifications, A & K Henderson Records, Box 5

\[^{136}\] The *Argus*, 22 April 1927
public voted for Melbourne’s most beautiful building. With the T & G Building in Collins Street and the National Bank head office, also in Collins Street, the firm won first and second place.\textsuperscript{137}

15.
T & G Building, Melbourne (1925-28, 1939-41)
Contemporary and 2011 views. The second picture shows the substantial alterations the building underwent in the late ‘30s.
\textit{A & K Henderson Records, Boxes 237/8; Helena Morris}

16.
Cavendish House, Melbourne (1926-28)
\textit{Helena Morris 2011}

\textit{Bank of Australasia, head office, additional floors (1927-30)}
In 1927 A & K Henderson was commissioned to add additional storeys to the Collins Street head office of the Bank of Australasia. The fact that A & K Henderson had been architects for the Bank since 1890 did not guarantee the job for the firm, as head-office contracts were usually independent of the tradition of exclusivity.\textsuperscript{138} Nevertheless, Anketell Henderson’s involvement in the design of the original building may have ensured the commission for the firm.\textsuperscript{139}

\textsuperscript{137} A & K Henderson Records, Box 112/29A. Public buildings were disallowed in the competition.
\textsuperscript{138} Trethowan, 'A Study of Banks of Victoria 1851-1939', p.7
\textsuperscript{139} See p.34 above
The original head office at the corner of Collins and Queen Streets, was completed in 1876. To maximise the corner site the directors had commissioned an appropriately imposing building that would impress customers with its sense of grandeur, solidity and security. The result was a two-storey classically-styled building.

In September 1927 Henderson received instructions to prepare sketch elevations for two or three new storeys, including a Mansard storey, plus floor plans. The following November he reported to the Bank:

> We have given close thought to the design of the proposed additions. The street corner is one of the most prominent in Melbourne, and the building has extraordinary dignity of its own, and we have studied the problem for a considerable time with the greatest care, in an endeavour to make the building when added to, a complete building, and not a building in which there has been an obvious change of style and feeling, and we trust that our efforts will meet with your approval.

To ensure the Bank’s operations were modern and up to date, the architects were also commissioned to remodel the Bank’s interior. An additional requirement of the new building was its attraction to prospective tenants for the new letting spaces. Henderson informed the Bank:

> In this city, the modern, well lighted, well-kept fire-proof buildings are being filled [with tenants] at the expense of the old-fashioned un-fireproof buildings.\(^{140}\)

To maximise the economic potential of the building, the new work was designed to incorporate a possible future extension to the north up Queen Street.

Contracts were signed at the end of 1928.

As architect of a number of buildings replacing those housing existing Bank operations, the problem of building in stages around the daily business of banking was a constant nightmare for Henderson, and one which had to be handled with the utmost diplomacy. He informed his client:

> There is no more difficult type of work to estimate the cost of on preliminary sketches than the remodelling of old buildings while the owners are in occupation.\(^{141}\)

With headquarters in London the new work was funded with British capital, meaning that, as with the National Bank, Henderson had to deal effectively with two clients. Such an arrangement always delayed the initial design process and many months passed before the designs were met with approval by directors in both Melbourne and London.

\(^{140}\) Henderson to Bank, 8 November 1927, A & K Henderson Records, Box 242/365A

\(^{141}\) Henderson to Bank, 2 February 1928, ibid.
Eventually, in June 1929, he was able to inform the bank that a final perspective drawing was ready.\textsuperscript{142}

To ensure the character of the old building was preserved and that the additional floors were in perfect harmony with the original design, the classical style and proportions were continued throughout. Triangular pediments on the third-storey windows create a classical contrast with those of the second storey, while the prominent cornice is in perfect balance. The fourth is an attic storey, and the fifth a set-back storey that replaces the proposed Mansard storey. Again to ensure a seamless addition, the walls of the new storeys were faced with the same material as the original building: Oamaru limestone, imported from New Zealand. The identity of the architect responsible for designing the additions is not noted on the files. However, Constance Hart believes it was John Freeman, the firm’s principal designer from July 1925.\textsuperscript{143} To achieve a perfect finish, the blackened walls of the lower levels were stripped of more than fifty years of dirt and grime so that the completed building was of ‘creamy stone from base to parapet.’\textsuperscript{144} The whole of the stonework then was treated with a protective coating.

As well as adding new floors the architects completely reconstructed the bank’s interior. To bring natural light into the building, a light well pierced its centre. The new enlarged banking chamber was lit ‘from large windows on all four walls and through a saucer dome in the ceiling’; a ‘Mezzanine Gallery’ was added, ‘bounded by a wrought iron balustrade.’\textsuperscript{145}

\textsuperscript{142} Henderson to Bank, 10 June 1929, ibid.
\textsuperscript{143} Interview with Constance Hart, 29 March 2011. See also Chapter Four.
\textsuperscript{144} Description of the building by John Freeman, 26 June 1930, probably for press release.
\textsuperscript{145} John Freeman description, 26 June 1930, ibid.
To explain the provision for a ‘Ladies Bank’, which was included in the architects’ initial drawings, Henderson advised the Bank that

A similar Ladies Bank has been established in the last eighteen months by one of the other Banks in Melbourne and I understand has been a somewhat conspicuous success, and I would strongly urge that consideration be given to a similar establishment in your Melbourne office. The accommodation provided is in excess of that provided at the other Bank.¹⁴⁶

Here, Henderson is referring to the recently completed National Bank head office in Collins Street. Competition between banks was fierce with each bank striving to outdo its fellows in operation and premises. Thus Henderson’s recommendation was approved.

The pains taken with the façade of the building were matched by the attention to detail in the interior. A description prepared by John Freeman for publication in the Herald paints a picture of tasteful selection of the finest materials. He wrote:

The columns, walls and rich ceiling will be decorated in varying shades of warm ivory. ... The fittings will be of bronze and Queensland maple and below the counter line of beautiful travertine stone from Europe, which also forms a margin round the floor. The walls are of travertine in both the Queen Street Entrance the Collins Street Entrance Vestibule from which branch stairs of the same material with wrought iron balustrades. The bronze grilled lift doors open to lift cars of beautifully veneered and inlaid Australian timbers.

The First Floor devoted to the Bank’s offices includes a handsome Board Room, from the moulded ceiling of which will descend an elegant Georgian crystal chandelier of particularly choice lustre. The Second, Third and Fourth Floors are to be available for private tenancies. The Fourth Floor is set back and its windows give upon a terrace with excellent views, making the rooms most attractive. The tenants of these upper floors are served by special lifts from the main vestibule.¹⁴⁷

Later in the year Freeman suggested to the Bank that the old furniture be utilised. He described the old table as ‘splendid’ and suggested that it be renovated together with the

¹⁴⁶ Henderson to Bank, 10 June1929, ibid.
¹⁴⁷ Freeman, description, 26 June1930, ibid.
chairs and covered with dark blue leather. The result would be more 'handsome' and economical than the purchase of new furniture. Again, in the meticulous attention to all the detail, this building accorded with City Beautiful principles, and stood as a model of decorum to the city.

17.b Boardroom.
A & K Henderson Records,
Box 226

At the end of 1929 A & K Henderson had four important buildings underway in Collins Street and so much other work as to cause a later report to state that 'at one stage [just before the Depression Henderson's] firm had more than £2,000,000 of contracts on its hands'. More jobs were planned for Collins Street as well as in other parts of the city, at the University of Melbourne and elsewhere. While many jobs were postponed and little new work was received, contracts on hand created a buffer for the firm as Australia entered the years of financial upheaval. Henderson's meteoric rise to prominence was stalled, temporarily, but certainly not diminished.

Guest Houses, Canberra (1926-27)

In addition to the big Melbourne contracts, the firm now had work in Canberra. Guest houses were on the Government list of required buildings in the new Capital to supplement accommodation provided by planned hostels. In a letter from the Federal Capital Commission (FCC) of February 1926, Chief Commissioner, Sir John Butters, advised that as the Commission's own architectural staff was too busy to attend to the guest houses, each of the four firms whose designs were awarded prizes in the competition for the permanent administration buildings was invited to submit a sketch plan and estimate for a guest house. Accommodation was to be for about forty people,

148 Freeman to Bank, 16 December 1930, ibid.
149 The Argus, 'Talk of the Town', 6 March 1936
predominantly public servants of moderate incomes who would probably live in similar quarters in Melbourne, as well as those Members of Parliament who might prefer a boarding house to more expensive hotels or private residences.\textsuperscript{150} A & K Henderson was one of the four firms of architects invited to take part.\textsuperscript{151} The guest house designed by A & K Henderson was Beau champ House, at Telopea Park, and its Georgian Revival style was probably to the design of John Freeman.\textsuperscript{152} Work commenced on the building in May 1926 and was finished approximately one year later.\textsuperscript{153}

In the meantime A & K Henderson was also commissioned to supervise construction of another building in Canberra: the Hotel Acton.\textsuperscript{154} Accommodation for expected guests for the imminent Royal Visit caused a flurry of building activity and the erection of the hotel was pressing. Designed by John Murdoch, it was intended that the Commission’s architectural staff supervise construction but with so many buildings underway it was too busy to carry out the work. Thus, it was a practical decision for the Commission to employ private architects already on site, but it also indicates the good opinion Commissioner Butters held of Henderson. Monthly reports of the FCC, published in the \textit{Canberra Times}, describe the progress of the enormous task of building the new Capital and included public and private buildings, as well as roads, services and amenities.

Work on the Hotel Acton, as reported month by month, seemed painfully slow. Each month it was reported as almost finished. It was described as ‘unique’ because of its reinforced concrete composition, which the \textit{Canberra Times} described as important for future building in the city area. The paper reported: ‘Hitherto concrete structure has not been utilised to any marked extent in the city, although very fine raw materials in the shape of river shingles lends itself admirably to this purpose’.\textsuperscript{155} Ultimately it was finished in April 1927 and opened the day before the opening of Parliament House. In

\textsuperscript{150} FCC to A & K Henderson, 3 February 1926, A & K Henderson Records, Box 53/116
\textsuperscript{151} The other firms were Stephenson & Meldrum of Melbourne and Budden & Hood and Burcham, Clamp & Finch both of Sydney.
\textsuperscript{152} The building is now named ‘Ian Potter House’ and belongs to the Academy of Science. See Ken Charlton, \textit{Federal Capital Architecture: Canberra 1911-1939}, 2nd edn., National Trust of Australia, Canberra, 2001, p.45
\textsuperscript{153} G Hogan, Parliament House Canberra, 1927: records relating to the design, construction and opening of the provisional Parliament House, Canberra, 2003, p.16. Hogan writes that accommodation at the time was ‘one of Butters’ ‘biggest headaches’, and that some of the guest houses were only finished the day before the ceremony on 9 May 1927. Apparently Beau champ House was not finished in time to provide accommodation for visitors, but it seems this was not expected.
\textsuperscript{154} FCC to Henderson, 28 July 1926, A & K Henderson Records, Box 32
\textsuperscript{155} The \textit{Canberra Times}, 24 September 1926; Beau champ House and the Hotel Acton are illustrated in Charlton, \textit{Federal Capital Architecture}, pp.45-6
August it became the first home of some of the 200 public servants who arrived from Melbourne to begin their lives in the new Capital.\footnote{56}

During 1926 and 1928 the firm also constructed buildings in central Canberra for the Bank of Australasia and the Commercial Bank of Australia. Henderson endeavoured to persuade the T & G to build there as well, but without success.

The Profession

\textit{The Royal Victorian Institute of Architects (RVIA)}

Throughout the twenties Henderson was heavily involved in the activities of the architectural profession. Given the increasing amount of work his firm had on hand his pursuit of the profession's interests is remarkable, and is evidence of the boundless energy he inherited from his father. He was deeply concerned for the continuing advancement of his profession and, from 1917, gave freely of his time to the RVIA and Federal Council for the betterment of architecture. Again echoing Anketell's approach, he encouraged a similar commitment in other members and, in his presidential address of May 1921, urged attendance and participation at monthly meetings

\begin{quote}
not from a sense of duty, but to give and receive, benefit and knowledge and experience. Each one should regard himself as an ever-increasing store-house of experience (which is knowledge) the treasures of which it should be one's pleasure, to share with his fellow members.
\end{quote}

In the same address he expressed diffidence in accepting the role

\begin{quote}
primarily on account of my age, [38 years] and consequent lack of mature judgment and experience; and secondly on account of the fact that any small prominence I may have gained in our profession has been on the executive and structural side of the work, and not on the aesthetic side.
\end{quote}

Henderson's comment regarding his architectural skills would seem to acknowledge the importance of design, and to be at odds with his attitude to Alsat and Martin that would prove the undoing of the partnership.\footnote{59} It could also mean that presidents were usually creative architects, or at least had more all-round experience.\footnote{60} Later he would state

\footnote{56} See for example the \textit{Mercury}, Hobart, 9 August 1927
\footnote{57} Henderson, 'Presidential Address', p.37
\footnote{58} Ibid., p.33
\footnote{59} See correspondence between Henderson, Alsat and Martin, A & K Henderson Records, Box 132
\footnote{60} It could also mean that the business-oriented architect was not so common at this time.
that he believed architectural training should be apportioned at ‘80% practical and 20% artistic’.\textsuperscript{161}

\textit{The Federal Council of the Australian Institutes of Architects (Federal Council)}

While each official role raised his profile in the profession, Henderson’s work with the Federal Council in relation to the building of Canberra brought him to the particular attention of his colleagues, and demonstrates his highly developed negotiation and diplomatic skills.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{federal_council.jpg}
\caption{The Federal Council (1922)
Henderson is standing second from right}
\end{figure}

\textit{Parliament House, Canberra}

During 1922 and 1923 the Federal Council was vitally interested in government plans to build a new parliament house in Canberra. Several issues concerned the Council, the first being the fate of the international competition for the design of the building which had been launched in July 1914. It had attracted entries from all over the world but was then suspended in September of that year due to the outbreak of war. Now the Government, newly formed by the National Party with Stanley Bruce as Prime Minister, argued that it was not responsible for a competition initiated by the previous government.\textsuperscript{162} The Council’s argument was that the competition should go ahead, but if not, then the entrants, of whom there were over 200, should be compensated for the not inconsiderable expenses incurred in preparing their entries.\textsuperscript{163}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{162} Following the election of late 1922 the National Party formed government with the support of the Country Party which agreed to the coalition on the condition that William Hughes relinquish leadership of the Nationals in favour of Stanley Bruce. For an account of events surrounding the competitions and the new building see Hogan, Parliament House Canberra, 1927: records relating to the design, construction and opening of the provisional Parliament House
\textsuperscript{163} See the \textit{Age}, 21 June 1922, ‘The Building of Canberra: Architects in Conflict with Canberra: more waste and muddling feared.’ See also the \textit{Age}, 23 June 1922, the \textit{Argus}, 23 June 1922 and 24 June 1922.
\end{flushright}
The second matter concerning the Council was the status of the new building. The Government proposed a provisional building, to be designed by the Commonwealth architect, which could be built quickly to enable the Parliament to be installed in its national home in Canberra within its first term. The Council argued for a permanent building the design for which should be resolved by open competition, as only in a permanent building could the best design be achieved for a building of the status of Australia’s parliament house.\(^{164}\)

The third matter of concern was a competition proposed by the Government for housing in Canberra, namely Canberra Homes.\(^{165}\) While the Government stated this proposal was quite separate from the Parliament House competition, the Council argued that the two competitions were linked and that the second competition should not proceed until the matter of the first competition had been resolved. The President of the Council, George Godsell of Sydney, was particularly adamant, stating the two competitions were ‘indissolubly associated’, and declaring that ‘no private practising architect would be allowed to enter the second competition until the Federal Government honoured its first contract’.\(^{166}\)

The Government’s proposal for the new Parliament House was investigated by a Parliamentary Committee on Public Works in 1923. Kingsley Henderson was among those giving evidence on behalf of the Council.\(^{167}\) He was also a member of a deputation from the Council to the Minister for Works and Railways, Percy Gerald Stewart, which sought to persuade the Minister to support the Council’s case, with the result that the Minister recommended to the Committee that the new building should be the nucleus of a permanent building.\(^{168}\)

In July 1923 the report from the Parliamentary Committee was handed down. It recommended the ‘erection of either the nucleus of a permanent building on Camp Hill or a provisional building on a site below Camp Hill’.\(^{169}\)

\(^{164}\) George Godsell to Henderson, 14 July 1923, RAIA, Records, Box 153/1b.
\(^{165}\) Conditions regulating the submission of designs had been received by the Council in March 1923. See letter 27 March 1923, Commonwealth of Australia Department of Works and Railways to Council, ibid. Box 153/1b
\(^{166}\) Stewart to Henderson, 13 July 1923; Godsell to Henderson, 16 June 1923, ibid.
\(^{167}\) Others were Godsell, Bertrand Waterhouse, Honorary Secretary and Leslie Wilkinson, New South Wales delegate.
\(^{168}\) Daily Telegraph, c.14-31 August 1923, in RAIA, Records, Box 153/1b
\(^{169}\) Articles in press, 12&13 July 23, in ibid.
It seems that Henderson presumed from press reports that the decision would be to build permanently and suggested to Godsell that it was now time for co-operation:

I think it would be a good move, as soon as Parliament has approved the report, for you to drop a note to the Minister saying the service of the whole Federal Council [is] at his disposal to assist him in framing conditions of competition for the parliament buildings and the cottages.\(^{170}\)

In contrast to Henderson’s diplomatic approach, Godsell was intractable and determined on a competition to establish ‘the nucleus of a capital architecturally worthy of Australia’.\(^{171}\) Simultaneously, discussions took place regarding the Canberra Homes competition. Godsell was adamant in his view that the two competitions were linked, and insisted that an embargo be placed on the second competition pending resolution of the first.\(^{172}\)

In late July 1923 the Government decided the new Parliament House should be a provisional building, with plans to be prepared by the Commonwealth architect. As a result Godsell became even more insistent on the embargo. Together with his colleagues on the Council Henderson took the view that an embargo could jeopardise the profession’s position and recommended negotiation to ‘avoid a deadlock and then be cut completely out of Canberra work’.\(^{173}\) Next he engineered a secret meeting with, among others, Prime Minster Stanley Bruce.\(^{174}\) Whether or not he knew Bruce at this stage, his political activity and contacts were likely to have been instrumental in making the meeting possible. Perhaps no other person had the contacts, the confidence or the diplomatic skills to consider such a step. Although he was unable to elicit a definite response from Bruce or Stewart, he was able to report to Godsell that he had received a good hearing and had put the Council’s case. Ultimately, Stewart pointed out that if

\(^{170}\) Henderson to Godsell, 13 July 1923, ibid.

\(^{171}\) Godsell to Henderson, 14 July 1923, ibid.

\(^{172}\) In fact this course was not favoured by all members, for instance Henderson and his fellow Victorian representative Philip Hudson were inclined to be more conciliatory, and felt more could be achieved by compromise. Hudson wrote to Henderson:

> Personally I feel very sorry that Godsell has taken up the attitude he has regarding the Clerks’ home competition. This competition is not going to affect the designs of the more monumental buildings and of course we are dealing with a new government. I should judge that the Federal President’s attitude in this matter has already made the minister antagonistic. Hudson to Henderson, 23 May 1923, ibid.

\(^{173}\) Godsell to Henderson, 14 July 1923, ibid.

\(^{174}\) This meeting took place on 16 August 1923.
they lifted the embargo and were then not pleased with Cabinet’s decision, there was nothing to stop them reviving the embargo. 175

However, Godsell would not resile from his stance and promptly resigned his position as President of the Federal Council. 176 Once Henderson had agreed, albeit reluctantly, to become acting president, an appointment unanimously endorsed by all State Presidents, he immediately wrote to Stewart confirming the withdrawal of the embargo, stating he had conferred with John Murdoch, the Commonwealth architect, on the conditions of the competition for the Canberra Homes, and expressing his belief that the competition would be ‘an unqualified success’. 177 Two weeks later he nominated himself as ‘Adjudicator in the proposed competition’, which nomination was accepted by Stewart. Thus the competition was launched and Henderson wrote to all the delegates and State Presidents informing them of the competition and promising full communication and consultation. He informed them of his opinions, his actions, his dealings with Government, adding that future competitions would include: ‘artisans’ homes and layout, administrative buildings, the Federal Government House, National War Museum (War Memorial) and a National Library. He wrote:

My policy in regard to these matters will be to obtain, in consultation with you, the best possible conditions of competition, the best possible juries of assessors and the best possible conditions of employment for the successful competitors. 178

In the meantime Henderson proposed a solution to the Parliament House competition.

He wrote to Stewart that he was preparing

a definite suggestion [for] a satisfactory solution of the question of the compensation … I assume, from the cordial conversation we have had in the matter, that this subject will be treated by you with sympathy and consideration. 179

This outcome was reported in a Melbourne newspaper as follows:

Succeeding governments have made a sorry farce of the world competition opened in 1914 for plans for Parliament House and public buildings at Canberra. The present administration contributed to the muddle by adopting departmental plans for what is termed a ‘provisional’ building and is now sorely puzzled as to how best to extricate itself.

A board of architects, consisting of Messrs Henderson (V), Poole (WA) and Murdoch (representing the government) is now making a belated adjudication on the plans

175 Henderson to Godsell, 17 August 1923. The reason for the secrecy of this meeting was possibly that it was unofficial politically and also was not at the request of the Council. RAIA, Records, ibid.

176 Godsell to Henderson, 3&9 October 1923; Godsell to State Presidents, 13 October 1923; telegrams from State Presidents endorsing Henderson’s appointment as acting President, 16 October 1923. Ibid.

177 Henderson to Stewart, 1 November 1923, ibid.

178 Godsell to State Presidents and delegates, 19 November 1923, ibid.

179 Henderson to Stewart, 1 November 1923, ibid.
submitted by architects from various parts of the world. The intention is to award prizes for what are adjudged the three or four best designs. There is a hope that by this means a long standing trouble will be adjusted, but there is also a danger that the government will get itself deeper in to the wood. ... 180

The circumstances surrounding the abandonment of the competition and compensation for the competitors is confirmed by Hogan. She writes: 'After some deliberation the Government decided that although there was no legal obligation to pay compensation, Australia's standing would be enhanced by an act of grace payment to deserving architects'. 181

International architects, who had previously expressed disappointment at the way they had been treated, now applauded the outcome 182. Hogan's only reference to the Federal Council is in connection with the competition proposed for the Canberra Homes. Here she acknowledges the Council's stand on the matter which resulted in the payment of compensation in relation to the first competition. 183 Henderson's efforts, which resulted in open competitions for new buildings in Canberra and opportunities for all Australian architects, were recognised by the RVIA and a vote of thanks recorded in the Journal, with particular mention of 'his tact in so placing the case before the Commonwealth Minister of Works, as to achieve the ... result'. 184

In August 1926, the Annual Meeting of the Federal Council was, for the first time, held in Canberra. By now Henderson was no longer involved in Council affairs, save for his role as an adjudicator in the competition for the National War Memorial. Victorian delegate to the meeting, Percy Oakley, informed his colleagues that

Mr Henderson found it impossible to accept appointment this year as a delegate. The council expressed their regret at his absence, and decided to send a letter to Mr Henderson expressing appreciation of his services to the Federal council as member and last president. 185

Henderson's decision was no doubt due to the need for him to concentrate on his firm's increasing workload. However, the prominence he had achieved from his efforts in Canberra, including his role as adjudicator in the Canberra Homes competition of early

180 Press clipping. Ibid., Box 153/16. A small excerpt from a long article, the date of which and the identity of the Newspaper where it appeared have been removed from this press clipping.
181 Hogan, Parliament House Canberra, 1927: records relating to the design, construction and opening of the provisional Parliament House, p.11
182 See for example letters from AC Clark of Washington and FW Fitzpatrick of Chicago, quoted in ibid, pp.11,26
183 Ibid., p.11
184 RVIAJ, 'Canberra Competitions', RVIAJ, xxii/1 (1924), p.21
185 Report of Annual meeting published in the Mercury, Hobart, 6 August 1926
1924, and by his entry in the Administration Offices competition, led to a new role in the planning of the Capital.

Committee of Public Taste
In 1926 a ‘Committee of Public Taste’, comprising ‘eminent architects’, was appointed to advise the FCC on the building of Canberra ‘in the matter of aesthetics and design’. The composition of the original Committee, included Commonwealth architect John Murdoch and Professor Leslie Wilkinson of Sydney University. In 1928 WAM Blackett (then President of the RVIA) and Kingsley Henderson were invited to join.\(^{186}\)

The purpose of the Committee was to advise and consult on the appropriateness of designs for particular building types, appropriate and harmonious siting, and to ensure that land use and building groups accorded with the Griffin plan, all the time taking into consideration the layout of future buildings. The aims of the Committee reflected City Beautiful ideas and indicate the persistent relevance of the movement to contemporary architectural thinking. For example Wilkinson had for some years pressed for control of design. He said, in 1929: ‘A fine street cannot be created without control, voluntary or enforced, and if created it cannot be preserved without some means of control’.\(^{187}\) Some years earlier he had called for a ‘well-ordered scheme of town-planning’ in Sydney, with ‘uniformly good buildings and a general recognition of the laws of beauty’.\(^{188}\)

The extent of public building in Canberra was more than Government architects could handle and it therefore contracted private architects from Sydney and Melbourne to assist. In many cases it then fell to the committee members to persuade their colleagues to accept modification of their plans to reduce expenditure. With reference to this particular aspect of the role of the Committee, the Commissioner Butters, wrote of the difficulty the Commission experienced in the very sensitive issue of scrutiny of buildings being erected by private architects, which amounted to ‘cramping the style of private architects of standing. … We could not get away with that except with the assistance of your Committee’.\(^{189}\) The work of the Committee was made even more

\(^{186}\) The Canberra Times, 12 September 1928; also letters Henderson to Sir John Butters, 28 May 1928 and Butters to Henderson, 1 June 1928. A & K Henderson Records, Box 49/265. Variousy referred to by this name, the ‘Committee of Design’, the ‘Advisory Committee on Architectural Design’ and the ‘Civic Design Committee’. See correspondence and minutes.

\(^{187}\) The Sydney Morning Herald, 8 May 1929

\(^{188}\) The Sydney Morning Herald, 15 October 1920

\(^{189}\) Butters to Waterhouse, 24 October 1928, A & K Henderson Records, Box 49/265
difficult by a continual battle with government architects who often failed to communicate decisions which affected the Committee’s activities. It was also difficult to arrange meetings suitable to Committee members from different States and all busy in their own practices.

More problems arose surrounding the construction of the Administrative Building, the subject of the 1924 competition won by George Sydney Jones. In December 1928 the Committee reported on the best way to proceed with the building for which the foundations had been laid but the remainder of which had been assessed by the Government as too costly. The minutes of a meeting in January 1929 reflect the difficulty arising from any modification to an original scheme for which Government had a ‘moral obligation’. A suggestion was made that, at least in the interim, a very simple building be constructed in a very similar form on an adjoining site, but again a dilemma arose in that to place the Administrative Building on an alternate site would not be in conformity with that for which Jones had designed his scheme. The difficulty surrounding the Administrative Building prompted the Committee to report that no other site should be selected for a permanent building in the Government area until the whole lay-out of future buildings had been reconsidered, particularly in relation to the road scheme already laid down. The Committee resolved to treat the new Parliament House as permanent and to group additional government buildings accordingly, with building designs to be based on Jones’s plan.

Such were some of the difficulties in planning and building the government area of the city. Later minutes indicate the Committee moved on to laboratory buildings for the CSIRO Council and then a ‘Botanical Block’ and School of Anatomy. Next were site inspections for religious institutions, namely the Roman Catholic cathedral, churches for Presbyterians and Church of Christ groups, and buildings for a Methodist Sunday school and kindergarten, followed by negotiations with respective private architects.

By mid-1930 the Committee had a very large number of buildings on its list, however with the Depression now biting, it had been granted no further funds and thus its work

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190 See Chapter Four. Jones died in 1927, adding to the Committee’s difficulties.
192 Minutes, 17 January 1929, ibid.
193 Minutes, 14 March 1929, 10 June 1929; letter FCC to Bates Smart, 11 June 1929, ibid.
ceased. Nevertheless, the planning and design of the city in its early stages owed much to the hard work and foresight of the members of the Committee of Public Taste.\textsuperscript{194}

In Melbourne in 1927 the RVIA had called for a body such as a Committee of Public Taste in an endeavour to preserve good taste in the city’s building. Already members had been vocal regarding the appearance of Collins Street and decried the City Council’s decision to allow street verandas. The Institute considered the building line should be uninterrupted so as to preserve the ‘architectural beauty’ of the buildings. Trams were also considered to detract from the beauty of the street while the ‘Street Telephone Cabinets’ were ‘most unsightly’ and an insult to Melbourne’s ‘aesthetic senses’.\textsuperscript{195} At an Institute meeting in October 1927 a lengthy discussion took place on the control of architectural design in Melbourne. Already the Melbourne City Council and all metropolitan councils had been encouraged to take advantage of an ‘Advisory Board of Architectural Design’ that had been established to assist in matters of design.\textsuperscript{196} Now it was pointed out by member Alec Eggleston that the principle of control had been adopted in cities in England and America, and that

\begin{quote}
It was a question of the rights of the community as against the rights of the individual, for the community had certain ownership in its buildings and it had a right to have some voice in the design of them. …. A man might say, ‘this is my building’ but the community says ‘this is my street.’
\end{quote}

Eggleston explained that in Washington an architectural advice committee existed to assist those who were not so strong in the art of design. In his view a similar body could be set up in Melbourne. Alternatively a ‘committee of taste’ could be established ‘which would have the power to veto any Architectural design which might offend the artistic eye or which might violate the recognised canons of good taste’.\textsuperscript{197}

In December an article appeared in the ‘Real Estate and Building’ section of The Argus, which reported that the RVIA planned to implement a ‘Public Taste Committee’ to control building design in Collins Street, and that the committee would be based on that operating in Paris where ‘invaluable work’ was being done. The article stated that the Paris committee ‘exercises jealous supervision of street designs, so that none may clash,

\textsuperscript{194} FCC to Henderson, October 1930, ibid. The Committee’s work apparently ceased with the onset of the Depression. This last piece of correspondence on Henderson’s file states no funds had been granted for the Committee for 1930.
\textsuperscript{195} RVIAJ, ‘Report of the Council for the Year 1927-8’, RVIAJ, xxvi/1 (1928), 17-24, pp.19,22
\textsuperscript{197} RVIAJ, ‘Discussion on the control of architectural design’, RVIAJ, xxvi/5 (1928), pp.219-220
although ample allowance is made for each architect’s originality’. The article also
touched on the Committee of Public Taste in Canberra which was founded on the same
principles as the Paris example, which was ‘formed to promote harmony in street
architecture in the Federal Capital from the beginning of building’. 198

Control of design was the subject of much discussion at Institute meetings, with the
minority who were against control, expressing concern for an architect’s individuality.
Henderson spoke in favour of control: ‘I am entirely in favour of a control of
Architectural Design or a Censorship of bad design, provided [it is] exercised by an
exceedingly gifted and tolerant committee’. 199

Uniform building height, a tenet of City Beautiful principles, had been regulated in 1914
and to the frustration of most Institute members, still imposed unwelcome control of
design. In a discussion on the subject it was put that ‘a little irregularity is always
desirable’ and that ‘we should follow nature’. Imagine a mountain range with all the
peaks of similar height’. Moreover it was pointed out that as sky-scrapers began to
dominate, as in New York, ‘uniformity of sky-line would be impossible. Regent Street
was beautifully proportioned but terribly monotonous’. 200 Until height restrictions were
eventually lifted in the 1950s, architects and builders had to be satisfied with decorative
towers - such as those on A & K Henderson’s T & G buildings.

In Melbourne, in pursuit of control of good taste in design, the RVIA implemented a
‘Street Architecture Medal’ to be awarded annually to buildings which ‘notably
contribute to the civic beauty and architecture’ of the city, thus encouraging ‘civic
responsibility’ among architects and citizens. 201 As well as recognition of ‘excellence in
design’, an objective of the award was to ‘educate the public in developing a sense of
good architecture’. 202 Education of the public taste in line with City Beautiful principles
is further exemplified by the public vote in the Beautiful Building competition set up by
the Herald. The first RVIA Street Architecture Medal was awarded in 1929 for Francis
House (1928) at 107 Collins Street, a small stripped classical building designed by
Blackett. When reporting on the chosen building the RVIA journal reported that it was

198 The Argus, 6 December 1927
199 RVIAJ, ‘Discussion on the control of architectural design’, ibid., p.222
201 RVIAJ, ‘RVIA Victorian Street Architecture Medal’, RVIAJ, xxvii/3 (1929), p.60
'based on the best principles of tradition in Architecture'. Blackett would no doubt take these ideals to the Committee in Canberra.

19.
Francis House, Melbourne, 1927-28
Blackett & Forster
<R VIAJ
Winner of the first RVIA Street Architecture Medal

Adherence to control and principles of correct taste in architecture continued to be prominent in RVIA discussions throughout the next decade and also in Henderson’s attitudes to the work of his firm.

203 Ibid.
Chapter Three:

1929–1942: Consolidation: prominence and influence

During the Depression years A & K Henderson suffered fluctuating fortunes. Evidence found in the files and in the press give conflicting pictures: on the one hand evidence of a drop in the value of work and reduction of staff numbers suggests the firm was affected by the straightened economic times; while on the other, reports of its activities create a picture of a firm that was riding out the Depression well. One year before the onset of the Depression, in October 1928, Henderson had stated that ‘better work could be obtained in … times of business depression’, adding that he found himself busy in dull times because his clients realised that these were the best times to build’. It seems some clients heeded his advice and took advantage of the downturn in the economy when costs were low, labour cheap and materials plentiful. These clients gave the firm important work to keep its key staff busy; in particular the Bank of Australasia, head office (1929–30), Lyric House (1929–1930), Alcaston House (1930–31) and an extension to Trinity College at the University of Melbourne. In addition, existing T & G contracts proceeded as did work for various hospitals, including a new block for the Alfred Hospital. In 1928 contracts had been let for work on the Commercial Bank of Australia head office in Collins Street, a fourteen-storey building for the Bank’s Sydney office and another in Brisbane, and work proceeded on these jobs. While no new commissions were received from the Bank of Australasia, the firm continued with work on eighteen branch buildings.

The early months of 1931 appear to have been productive, at least at times. In February senior architect, Rob Yuncken wrote to Henderson, at that time absent in Sydney and New Zealand, that the office had been busy

> Things have been rather like old times in the last fortnight and for once we have had more work than draftsmen. I have not recalled anyone but have been doing a bit of slave driving instead.

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201 The Argus, 11 September 1928. Henderson’s speech, made at an RVIA dinner, is also referred to in the RVIAJ of November 1928, but no transcript is included.

205 Staff numbers had reached a maximum of about thirty during the 1920s, although some people were possibly employed for specific contracts only and were not permanent members of the firm; a common practice for architectural firms. See previous chapter for an account of The Bank of Australasia head office.

In September the *Brisbane Courier* reported on the firm’s activities. The paper enthused:

> It is encouraging to come into contact with a firm of architects which is busily engaged on big contracts either in operation or contemplated. This is the position of [A & K] Henderson, of Melbourne and Sydney.

The article continued, listing the projects described above, and stating:

> Work was also in hand for three big contracts, for which tenders would be called shortly, the aggregate of which, on current quotations, would probably be about £750,000. These were industrial concerns, so that in addition to the work for the building and allied industries during constructions there would be continuous employment for large staffs when the buildings were completed.

This article also described a new factory for Bristol Myers, manufacturing chemists, recently commenced in North Sydney, explaining that the architects, taking into account the business and residential nature of the district, had ‘endeavoured to make it artistic and away from the ordinary factory lines’.

Other records show that the value of the firm’s building work from 1929 to 1931 dropped more than 80 per cent, that new work was scarce, staff and profits suffered, and commissions guaranteed by competition wins were postponed as were other anticipated jobs. As work dwindled Henderson delivered a memorandum to the sixteen members of the drawing office which stated that owing to the lack of work coming in, drawing work had to be spread around. Three staff members were given notice in January 1930, another in March and in May a system of rotating stand-downs was implemented. In the meantime Henderson received numerous requests from people seeking employment and in fact employed Tom Freeman in May 1930. However, in October 1931 Henderson was obliged to stand Freeman down ‘due to the volume of work shrinking and shrinking’ together with long-standing senior men, Aisbett and

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207 The *Brisbane Courier*, 25 September 1931
208 See graph, A & K Henderson Records, Box 98. The graph shows values of buildings erected in the metropolitan area, taking 1929 as the highpoint or 100%. Values fell to 72.79% in 1930 and to 18.72% by 1931. The *Argus*, 6 March 1936, states that just prior to the Depression Henderson ‘had more than £2,000,000 worth of contracts on his hands’, which, therefore, by 1931 had dropped significantly. From mid-1932 recovery was, on the whole, steady; reached parity with 1929 by the end of 1936 and was more than 10% above 1929 figures at the beginning of 1938. These figures relate to ‘all buildings’ and include ‘commercial buildings’, ‘dwellings’ and ‘additions and alterations’. Residential building suffered the most, dropping to 11.32% of 1929 values, while commercial building dropped to 26.15%. However, recovery in residential building was steady while commercial building recovered to 43.04% by 1932, only to drop again to 25.6% in 1933. Thereafter recovery was rapid and by the end of 1937 the value of commercial buildings was at 91.24% of 1929 values.
209 Henderson to staff, January-May 1931, ibid., Box 110/67a
Opie.\textsuperscript{210} By November 1931 complete lack of new work resulted in some staff members being stood down indefinitely on 15/- per week compensation.\textsuperscript{211} It was not until 1934 that he began to advertise for new draftsmen and office staff.

Some years later the author of ‘Talk of the Town’, the social jottings column of The Argus, wrote

Mr Henderson is one of those cheery fellows who keep smiling in sunshine and shadow. He smiled before the Depression when at one stage his firm had more than £2,000,000 of contracts on his hands in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane; he smiled all through it when every architectural firm in Melbourne was more or less badly hit by the slump; and he came out on the other side of it still happy.\textsuperscript{212}

This article suggests Henderson survived the Depression well; perhaps he did through careful handling of business, because the figures calculated by the valuer to the Federal Taxation Commission indicate that values, from their lowest point in 1931, had risen approximately 5.5 per cent by mid-1932, and a further 9.5 per cent in 1933.\textsuperscript{213}

1929–32: Building in the Depression

\textit{Hugo Wertheim building: ‘Lyric House’ (1929–30)}

The commission for this building was for a private client, and as such an unusual one for A & K Henderson, more accustomed to building for banks and insurance companies.\textsuperscript{214} Henderson took little part in the conduct of the job, and limited his role to soothing his difficult client. It seems he did not keep his usual ‘tight rein’ on supervision as responsibility was in the hands of Yuncken and John Freeman. Although total delegation of responsibility was unusual, in matters of design, detail and finishing Henderson invariably deferred to Freeman. In this instance Henderson followed his own advice to employ appropriate experts when called for.\textsuperscript{215}

Wertheim’s Ltd was a music company and previously occupied premises in Bourke Street. The brief for the new building was for a design that reflected ‘the function of a music store, and the client suggested to the architects that the strings of a musical

\textsuperscript{210} Henderson to T Freeman, J Aisbett and W Opie, 2&7 October 1931, ibid., Box 216/76a
\textsuperscript{211} Henderson to staff, November 1931, ibid., Box 110/ 67a;
\textsuperscript{212} ‘Talk of the Town’ in the Argus, 6 March 1936. Using RBA inflation and pre-decimal inflation calculators, £2m in 1928 equates to approximately $130m in 2010.
\textsuperscript{213} See Graph, A & K Henderson Records, Box 98
\textsuperscript{214} Hugo Wertheim had been among the clients Rodney Alsop intended to bring to the 1920-24 partnership. This may have led to the commission, ibid., Box 132
\textsuperscript{215} Henderson, ‘Supervision and the Relationships of Contracting Parties’, p.92
instrument might be incorporated in some way or other [in the design]. The building still stands on a site, which at only 20.5 feet (6.25 metres), dictated a vertical treatment. Glass forms a high proportion of the triple-bay Collins Street façade and runs from floor to ceiling on each storey, with the fine vertical lines created by the mullions suggestive of stringed instruments, thus expressing a musical theme. Aiming at ‘individual character and a certain rhythm in its lines’, variety was introduced with colour and terracotta figures in high relief. The figures, human and animal, were life-size and drawn from classical mythology, while colour was introduced in marble, faience, paint and glass. Concluding a description Freeman composed for the Herald he wrote:

The building subtly conveys a suggestion of its purpose as a music warehouse in its taut aspiring lines, which, in the detail, it has been sought to capture and express something of the fanciful quality of music and a little of its variety and colour.

That the result was a triumph was confirmed by the reception the building was given by fellow architects, the press and, in particular, by the Institute, when it awarded Lyric House the Street Architecture medal for 1931. The examining Jury stated that Lyric House is a definite contribution to the Architecture of the State of Victoria. … Lyric House possesses a happy and refreshing personality and embodies skilful handling of material, colour and detail, and above all, exhibits that air of scholarship, thoughtfulness and completeness which is so desirable in good building.

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216 Australian Architects and Their Work III: Anketell & K Henderson, Melbourne', 12 January 1932, Building, 1932, 44-49, p.48. The article on A & K Henderson’s Melbourne buildings in which this passage appears was written by Rob Yuncken at the request of the publisher.
217 Freeman for the Herald, December 1931, A & K Henderson Records, Box 254/36a
219 Alcaston House was also on the short list of four for the 1931 Medal.
220 Islip (Secretary RVIA) to A & K Henderson, 13 August 1931, A & K Henderson Records, Box 254/36a
The award to Lyric House received a good deal of press. Six articles are on file, all in praise of the building. Confirming Freeman’s role in the design, one article states

Mr Kingsley Henderson stated today that he wished the fact to be made clear that his associate in his practice, Mr John Russell Freeman, was the author of the design for which the medal was awarded to Messrs A & K Henderson.\textsuperscript{221}

Henderson’s statement was of course true, and at the same time magnanimous. His public recognition of Freeman’s role did not go unnoticed as the\textit{Herald} correspondent observed:

With a characteristic grace when I congratulated him yesterday, Kingsley Henderson passed on to his associate, John Russell Freeman, all the glory of having designed Lyric House, which has just been awarded the Victorian Street Architecture Medal as the best building of the year.\textsuperscript{222}

In a later article about Lyric House, Ray Tonkin notes the status of A & K Henderson at the time, and also points out the significance of the appearance of Freeman’s name at this time, a prelude to the many awards his own firm would receive in later years.\textsuperscript{223}

\textit{Alcaston House (1930-31)}

The new Alcaston House at the corner of Collins and Spring streets exemplifies Henderson’s interest in innovations and developments in American architecture, in this instance drawing on American examples to create a modern city apartment building. As

\textsuperscript{221} The name of the publication is not included
\textsuperscript{222} The \textit{Herald}, 18 August 1931
well it demonstrates the value of his influence as an architect, his network of important contacts and his determination to contribute modern and prestigious buildings to the city. The commission to rebuild came from the Trustees of the Estate of Dr EM James, owners of the existing building designed by Reed & Barnes, and described as ‘a pair of houses, Alcaston House (1868–69) for Garrard and James’.

Sometime between 1869 and 1920 the whole building passed into Dr James’s hands, as an article in the RVIAJ states that the building is ‘on the site of the old home of the James family’. Possibly, the source of the commission was a connection between Anketell Henderson and Dr James formed when Henderson was in partnership with Reed but, in any event, Dr James’s daughters, Roma Bayles and Frances Molesworth, the Trustees of the Estate were known to Henderson. First instructions were received in November 1922, and rough sketches were prepared and plans submitted to a building surveyor in March 1923. However, a clause in Dr James’s will created difficulties in financing the project, causing it to be postponed. In 1923 Alsop and Martin were in charge of design work so one of them may have been responsible for the unsigned water-colour elevations on file. The design was based on recent American high-rise hotel and apartment buildings, as there are three examples illustrating similar designs on file. In particular, the Hotel Cleveland, Cleveland, Ohio, (1918) designed by Graham Anderson Probst & White, is comparable in plan and proportion to Alcaston House. Both buildings have a solid base with three blocks and two recessed bays or external light courts above. The purpose of such light courts, first observed by Henderson when in New York in 1913, was to maximise natural light in the building; an innovation in Melbourne building at that time.

224 Tibbits, 'Joseph Reed and foundation 1853-90', p.39
225 RVIAJ, 'Alcaston House', RVIAJ, xxix/6 (1932), pp.149-63. The author of the article is not given in the Journal, but there is a draft of this article on the file which was prepared by John Freeman. Freeman was responsible for all detailing in the building.
226 Henderson to Building Surveyor referring to this difficulty, 24 January 1929, A & K Henderson Records, Box 207/66a
227 A & K Henderson Plans and Drawings, Box 611/1, Design drawing set (7 sheets) ND, but sheet One is stamped 'Building Surveyor's Office Application No. 4922, Received 3/3/1923 Anketell & K. Henderson, Alsop & Martin Architects'
228 See SA Chappell, Architecture and Planning of Graham Anderson Probst & White. A second example by these architects, the Equitable Building, New York, (1912-15), shows two blocks with one recessed bay. The illustrations on file were taken from 1922 issues of Architectural Forum. The Ambassador Apartments, Portland, Oregon (1922-23) by Carl Lind, shows two blocks and one recess which also takes in the base. This building is far more ornate than either of the other examples or of Alcaston House. This illustration was taken from The Valve World, November 1922, p.383
After the project was revived in late 1928, the final 1929 drawings signed by R Jack Wilson were similar to the designs approved in 1923. Upon completion a RVIAJ article stated the building fulfilled the growing demand for medical suites in Collins Street, and also a need which had ‘grown among people who required a pied-à-terre in town’. Fully equipped with every modern convenience, decorated with the highest quality fittings and beautifully appointed, the flats represented the height of 1930s luxury. In *Melbourne Architecture* Philip Goad writes that the freely interpreted modern Renaissance design of Alcaston House ‘respected the Italianate sense of propriety in Collins Street’ and its neighbouring buildings. Henderson would have appreciated this comment.

The clients had strong views on the appearance of the building and were keen to follow American examples. Mrs Bayles wrote in May 1929:

> I have looked at the plans carefully and do not think the small railings outside all the windows are necessary or useful and should like [them] and the rails on top done away with if possible. Mr Henderson will know that in America all useless things like these are not put and the windows are not French. ..."  

Certainly, the floors between base and attic storey of the Hotel Cleveland are completely devoid of decoration.

The RVIAJ article also referred to American influence when it pointed out that while there ‘appears to be mild local prejudice against apartment houses’ the tradition was popular in America and on the continent where ‘thoroughly efficient apartment houses sheltering many families may yet possess considerable character and charm, particularly when situated adjacent to public gardens or possessing gardens of their own’.

Much was made of the siting of Alcaston at the ‘Eastern gateway’ to the city, overlooking ‘the beautiful Treasury and Fitzroy Gardens’ and surrounded by such gracious buildings as Parliament House, the Hotel Windsor and the Treasury Building. Situated at almost the highest point of the city, the building boasted views ‘to the hills, across the bay and the city itself’. These delights the residents could take in as they relaxed in the peaceful roof garden:

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229 A & K Henderson Plans and Drawings, Box 611/1
230 Goad, *Melbourne Architecture*, p.128
231 R Bayles to Strachan-Smith, 1 May 1929, A & K Henderson Records, Box 207/66A
232 The central section of the façade of the Equitable Building in New York is similarly plain.
233 RVIAJ, ‘Alcaston House’, p.150
234 Ibid. See also advertising brochure produced by letting agents.
Although but a few minutes from the [city centre], the situation of Alcauston House is slightly withdrawn and at night, when the traffic has dwindled, the quarter is so still and quiet that there falls on the car only the gentle splashing of the delightful little convict-made fountain in the garden behind the bronze statue of General Gordon.\textsuperscript{235}

A progress report of 13 December 1930 describes the building as ‘virtually complete’ and by January the following year it was certainly sufficiently complete for photographs to be taken for the RVIAJ.

\textbf{21.}

\textbf{Alcauston House, Melbourne (930-31).} Contemporary and 2011 views

\textit{RVIAJ, SLV: Helena Morris}

\textbf{Shell Company Building (1932–34)}

As with Lyric House, the Shell Building is an example of Henderson’s delegation of responsibility to Freeman and Yuncken. As well, the commission exemplifies the difficulties architects encountered when dealing with a powerful English parent company and its London architects. In this instance both client and architect showed a lack of appreciation of Australian conditions such as climate and local building regulations, which led to misunderstandings over the design and planning of the building.

In October 1929, a few weeks following submission of preliminary sketches for a proposed new office building for the Shell Company (British Imperial Oil), A & K Henderson were appointed architects for the project.\textsuperscript{236} The new building was to be constructed next to the existing Shell Building on the corner of Bourke and William

\textsuperscript{235} Ibid., p.152. The statue of General Gordon stands on the other side of Spring Street outside the Treasury Building.

\textsuperscript{236} Shell to Henderson, September 1929, 16 October 1929, A & K Henderson Records, Box 271/5
Streets in Melbourne’s central business district. A sketch plan, prepared by the Shell Company’s London architects, Josephs, was supplied to A & K Henderson as the basis on which their scheme should be devised.

Of the sixteen different schemes prepared by A & K Henderson, two were submitted to the client. The architects stated that in Scheme ‘A’ ‘light’ regulations were a governing factor in determining the ‘most economical plan scheme’. Floor space and its use were also important. Ever cognisant of a building’s future capacity, the letter also stated that they had

studied the problem as a complete building occupying the whole area, [a] portion of which is to be built soon, rather than as a building on a portion of the site, which may be added to later.237

Scheme ‘B’ was based on the plan proposed by Josephs, but developed into a ‘whole building’. The shortcomings of this were explained and the scheme rejected. Scheme ‘A’ was recommended.238

In June a reply was received from the client’s Melbourne representative, AJ Dean of Shell’s Engineering Department, informing A & K Henderson that Josephs agreed their sketch plans needed alteration because they ‘were made without knowledge of the By-laws’ regulating lighting. However, Josephs rejected the Melbourne architects’ plan and submitted a Scheme ‘C’. Then followed a series of discussions and letters, over many months, with each firm rejecting the other’s ideas. The London architects had little knowledge of local conditions, such as street width or the impact and extent of hot weather; moreover they were keen to keep to English traditions. In response to their insistence on internal light courts, Henderson explained that external courts239 were preferable, one reason being

for climatic reasons. Our summer months are extremely hot and we have heat waves with maximum temperatures of from 108° to 110° in the shade. Our buildings get hot, and after these heat waves cool south-westerly changes arrive, and the building has an infinitely better chance of being perflated [sic] with cool air and being cooled down rapidly after such changes.240

However, the London architect rejected the scheme. A & K Henderson then produced the final elevation and description:

\[237\] Shell to Henderson, 7 January 1930, ibid.
\[238\] Ibid.
\[239\] As seen at Aleaston House
\[240\] Henderson to Shell, 15 August 1930, A & K Henderson Records, Box 271/5
The façade to William Street, in accordance with the express wish of the company and after studying the London buildings indicated, has been designed with a vertical emphasis. …

In keeping with modern practice throughout the World it is a façade of many windows – there are eighteen in its width – not only admitting a maximum of light but giving great flexibility for internal subdivision. 241

At first this elevation was also rejected, and in fact ideas suggested by A & K Henderson which were ‘in keeping with modern practice throughout the world’ were constantly challenged by the client. Ultimately, Yuncken received verbal advice that while Josephs disagreed with the elevation both the General Manager and Dean liked it. Dean then requested some ‘confidential comments’ for him to put in his report for the London office. 242 The letter was duly prepared by Yuncken and finally agreement was reached between all parties. However, nearly two years had passed since first instructions were received and in November 1931, Henderson was advised by Dean that the job was to be postponed due to the difficult economic environment. 243

At the beginning of 1932 Henderson wrote to Dean advising of renewed interest in building, partly inspired by the recent change of Government. The letter also reflected a conversation Yuncken had with Marcus Barlow, architect of the Manchester Unity Building (1929-32) which was currently under construction, wherein Barlow expressed the opinion that building costs, which had dropped during the Depression, would not drop further. 244

Intention to commence building was announced in the local press in April 1932. The Age proclaimed it a ‘fine gesture of confidence’ while the Sun News Pictorial announced that ‘The ten-storey building to be begun at once … at an estimated expense of £128,000 will provide work for many Australians for thirteen months’. 245

A small piece of good news in an otherwise bleak landscape.

241 Yuncken to Shell, 6 May 1931, ibid.,
242 Notes of interview - Yuncken and Dean, 5 August 1931, ibid.
243 Shell to A & K Henderson, note of meeting Henderson with Dean, 10 November 1931, ibid. Interestingly, Henderson wrote to Dean on 24 November 1931, informing him that if work were to commence he would not want to be paid until July 1932 which suggests the firm was doing well financially.
244 Undated note of discussion between Yuncken and Marcus Barlow (Yuncken’s uncle), ibid. Barlow estimated building costs, based on Manchester Unity figures, had dropped a net 15% since 1929, with the result that the June 1931 figures for the Shell Building could be reduced by 5%.
245 The Age and Sun News Pictorial, 4 April 1932, ibid.
Charter House (1932-34)

Negotiations for the purchase of Charter House began in January 1932. Henderson had long cherished the idea of his own city building and, with prices falling, recognised that the time to realise his dream was right. Once he had decided on the building, then owned by printers Troedel & Cooper, he waited some months to secure the lowest price possible. This was not just a case of opportunism; as even the low price agreed was absolutely all he could raise. Eventually, in December 1932, contracts were signed and the building changed hands for £15,750. He borrowed £14,000 and covered the balance of £1,750 himself. After calculating the cost of alterations and refurbishment, he was obliged to borrow an additional £11,000 for the renovation, making a total outlay of £26,750. Repayment was to be made from earnings from the rental of six floors.\(^ {246}\)

The building was ready for occupation in mid-1934, although work continued throughout the decade, with Henderson always keeping a critical eye on the project which, he described to his mortgagee as ‘a personal adventure.’\(^ {247}\)

His pride in his building is clear from his invitation to friends and acquaintances to ‘come up and see my own little office building some day.’\(^ {248}\)

![Charter House, Melbourne (1933-34)](image)

22.

Charter House, Melbourne (1933-34)
A & K Henderson Records, Boxes 237/38

Henderson had no trouble finding tenants, with most space allocated prior to completion.\(^ {249}\) He took care of leasing arrangements personally until December 1934 when he employed letting agents who reported, following an inspection, that the building was in their opinion, ‘one of the most up-to-date office buildings in Melbourne’, and likely to remain fully tenanted. At that time the agents valued the

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\(^{246}\) Henderson, file note, 21 January 1932, ibid. £1,750 in 1933 equals approximately $148,000 in 2010.

\(^{247}\) Henderson to National Mutual Life Assurance Co., 23 February 1933, ibid.

\(^{248}\) Henderson, draft letter, ibid.

\(^{249}\) Certainly by March 1935 when Henderson wrote to prospective tenants informing them that the building was fully occupied. Tenants included Yuncken Freeman - discussed in Chapter Four.
property at £35,600, an excellent increase in capital value for Henderson. Over the next few years, keeping track of the tenancies and maintenance of the building occupied much of Henderson’s time. Always a perfectionist, he insisted, for example, on a uniform for the lift attendant and identical brass plates on the doors of the offices. This was probably not unusual for a building in the 1930s, particularly for owners as fastidious as Henderson. Constance Hart describes the offices as the best furnished in Melbourne, with dark-blue thick pile carpet and all the fittings of the highest quality.

Chamber of Manufactures, (competition 1930) (construction 1933-34)
During the Depression years entries in competitions created employment for staff, although they resulted in no profitable building work at the time.

A competition for the design of a building to replace the Chamber’s current building in Flinders Street was launched in July 1930. The winning design of A & K Henderson was illustrated in The Argus on 7 August 1930. The newspaper reported that ‘when completed [it] will be the largest of its kind in Melbourne, as the site has an area of 21,000 square feet.’ As well as providing more space for the Chamber the building was to include letting space and considering the economic environment at the time it ‘was considered unpropitious to place so much office floor space on the market, and rebuilding was deferred.’

By 1933 more accommodation for the Chamber was considered essential and A & K Henderson was briefed to carry out the renovations. This commenced in July 1933 and, as a sign of improving employment conditions, provided ‘regular employment for a number of men’. 

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250 Baillieu Allard to Henderson, 6 December 1934. A profit of about 25% on inflation figures alone, but these do not reflect movement in the property market. In 1946 the property was sold for ‘about £43,000’. The Argus, 26 July 1946. About $2.5m in 2010, but again inflation only.
251 Interview with Constance Hart, 29 March 2011
252 The Argus, 7 August 1930
253 The Argus, 29 June 1933
254 The Age, 21 August 1934
23.

Chamber of Manufactures Building, Melbourne, competition design, 1930.
A & K Henderson
The Argus 1930; the Age 1934

The plan to construct a new building was abandoned due to the economic downturn.
In 1933-34 A & K Henderson carried out extensive alterations to the existing warehouse building.

The Trustees Executors and Agency Limited, (competition 1930) (construction 1935)
The competition for the design of a new building at 401-403 Collins Street for the Trustees Executors and Agency Company was also launched in 1930 with A & K Henderson declared the winner in December of that year. Announcement of the winners in The Herald stated the design was jointly produced by Kingsley Henderson, John Freeman and Otto Yuncken. Evidence that City Beautiful ideas were still relevant lies in the objective of the architects who ‘sought to develop the design in Gothic feeling which will be in harmony with other buildings and, together with them, will form a pleasing group’. The company’s announcement of the winning entry reiterated the description and stated that it was intended to ‘present a Collins Street façade Gothic in spirit, deferring to the Gothic character of its neighbours’.

In answer to the many letters of congratulation, Henderson wrote that he was doubtful whether the project would progress in the near future. In fact it was postponed in May 1931 and it was not until May 1934 that Henderson was able to advise his staff that the client company desired to commence building ‘as soon as possible’.

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255 The Herald, 13 December 1930.
256 Company announcement, c. December 1930
257 A & K Henderson Records, 26 May 1934, Box 8/169
File documents of April 1936 reveal that the client was undecided whether to have the Gothic or the Classic building. I baulked hard for the Gothic building as the better piece of architecture, and also from the point of view that it had ten windows in the front whereas the Classic one only had seven. A determining factor may have been the need, expressed by the company, for the ‘elevation to be an architectural link with the Sydney building’. After a new sketch was prepared Henderson drew the company’s attention to the ‘fairly severe Corinthian order... with simple more modern treatment of the ground storey in polished granite and necessary consequential changes above’. Ultimately, the finished building displayed a solid base and vertical emphasis through nine storeys above.

24.

Trustees Executors & Agency, Melbourne (1937-38)
Contemporary and 2011 views
RVJD, Helena Morris

Reflecting the architects’ idea of modern design, the clean geometric lines of the granite base and pale sandstone upper storeys demonstrate the contrast the building created with its Victorian neighbour (on the left of the picture)

258 Henderson file note, 18 April 1936, ibid. Box 121/382B
259 Henderson file note, 9 July 1936; memorandum, 15 September 1936, ibid.
260 Henderson to Strachan-Smith, 19 August 1936, ibid.
261 Henderson to Trustees Executors, 3 August 1936, ibid.
The Herald 'Beautiful Building' competition (1930)

Although suffering a decline in work during the Depression, the year 1930 ended on a high note for A & K Henderson, at least in terms of kudos. Success in the design competitions described above was followed by success in the ‘Beautiful Building’ competition - a public competition launched by The Herald. In this instance it was the general community who voted for Melbourne’s most beautiful building, public buildings such as Parliament House or the Town Hall being disallowed. The firm won first and second prizes for the T & G Building in Collins Street and the National Bank head office, also in Collins Street.\(^{262}\) Although this competition was not judged by architects or architectural critics, and thus does not rate on the same level as the RVIA Street Architecture Medal, the status of A & K Henderson as a leading architectural firm was reinforced by public opinion.

1933–1939: Expanding horizons

In 1933 preparations for Melbourne’s centenary the following year got underway, giving rise to another opportunity to decorate the city. The mood of the city was heightened as ‘prosperity officially returned and celebrations proceeded merrily’.\(^{263}\) From September 1934 to June 1935 there were exhibitions, pageants, competitions and a wide range of other activities throughout central and suburban Melbourne. The city centre was festooned with decorations and city buildings were brilliantly lit at night. Photographs in A & K Henderson files show the National Bank in Collins Street with the façade illuminated against a dark sky.\(^{264}\)

The outlook improved for A & K Henderson; commissions were revived and new work received. As well as the new buildings already referred to, the firm constructed an eastern branch for the Bank of Australasia and buildings for the MLC and Capel Court for JB Were stockbrokers. Also in Collins Street, the firm continued rebuilding the head office of the Commercial Bank of Australia. In other parts of the city, as well as those buildings already discussed, the decade saw a new city branch for the Bank of Australasia in Swanston Street, one for the Union Bank in Little Collins Street and one for the National Trustees in Queen Street. In addition there were banks and insurance

\(^{262}\) Ibid., Box 112
\(^{264}\) A & K Henderson Records, Box 237
company buildings in other cities and States and in New Zealand, plus hospital and university buildings. Also from 1932, the Bank of Australasia resumed suburban, rural and interstate building; the files indicate 145 jobs for the years 1932 to 1935 and sixty-five for 1938 to 1939. There are no lists for 1936 and 1937, which could indicate another lull in building or, and most likely, lists were simply not made. Hospital contracts were also revived.

25. Commercial Bank of Australia
Melbourne (1928-37)
Façade demolished
*From photograph in 333 Collins Street*

26. MLC Building, Melbourne, 1937-38
Demolished
*A & K Henderson Records, Box 29*

27. National Trustees & Executors
Agency, Melbourne (1938-39)
*RVIAJ*

*The Shell Company Building (1932-34) (RVIA Street Architecture Medal 1935)*

By mid-1933 the Shell Building was near to completion. A & K Henderson conducted ‘a large and representative body of the members of the RVIA’ on a tour of inspection of the building, at which time all the details relating to structure were ‘lucidly explained’. The RVIAJ reported at length on the building, with details of innovations in office
buildings such as enhanced sound-proofing and a system of ‘alternating electric current’ to provide back-up in the event of failure in the main supply. The article also noted additional innovations in the use of electricity. As well as for lifts and lighting, electricity was being used to operate calculating machines, an internal telephone system, and a system of synchronised clocks which included time clocks for staff.265

28.

The Shell Company Building, Melbourne (1932-4)
Demolished
*A & K Henderson Records, Boxes 237/38*

The following year the Shell Building was awarded an Honourable Mention in the RVIA Street Architecture Medal Competition. The Medal was awarded to the Buckley & Nunn building, designed by Bates Smart & McCutcheon and, as well as praising the winner, the Institute journal reported:

In their report the Jury as recommended that special recognition be made of the many excellent qualities possessed by ... The Shell Building, William Street, Melbourne, Architects, A & K Henderson ... A certificate of Honourable Mention is to be presented to these Architects in recognition of this fine and worthy addition to the Melbourne Street architecture.266

This is the only instance, in the Street Architecture Medal’s fourteen-year history, that a second award was made.

Then, in 1935, the Shell Building won the award. The Institute Journal reported:

It is the opinion of the Jury that the façade of this building has considerable merit, and is entirely appropriate to its requirements.

As contemporary architecture, the façade is a complete and satisfactory solution of what an office building should be. Its proportions are entirely satisfactory, and express its construction in an honest and pleasing way, no forced treatment or superfluous decoration having being adopted....

265 RVIAJ, 'The Recent Additions to the Buildings of the Shell Company of Australia in Melbourne', *RVIAJ*, xxxi/3 (1933), pp.50-51; see also *The Age*, 22 June 1933. These articles were probably prepared by John Freeman.
Throughout the detail is both fresh and delightful, and shows careful thought and discretion in its application with the result that while the building may not excite at first impression, it is thoroughly pleasing and complete in its conception.\textsuperscript{267}

There is no note of how news of the Award was received in London.

\textit{Union Bank, Collins Street - proposal}

In 1937-38 A & K Henderson erected a ten-storey branch office for the Union Bank in Little Collins Street on the corner of The Causeway. At the same time the firm entered into negotiations to rebuild the Bank’s head office at 351 Collins Street. The proposal was for a nine-storey building, 132 feet (40.23 metres) high (still the prescribed height limit) and 66 feet (20.2 metres) wide, which extended 313 feet (95.4 metres) through to Flinders Lane, thus making it one of the largest buildings in the city. Discussions regarding the façade, which was to be ‘traditionally classic’ and ‘untouched by the “modern” architectural feeling’, continued for some time. Also the subject of prolonged discussion was the proposed letting space of 85,000 square feet (7896 square metres), as the Bank was nervous about becoming ‘such big landlords’. Once again proceedings were slowed down by the need to communicate with an English parent company, but by the middle of 1939 it seems all parties were in agreement. In particular, a letter from the Bank’s Chairman stated ‘Mr Henderson is particularly expert in the economic planning of a building with a view to rentals, which is a matter of great importance’. The letter continued with instructions that ‘it is unnecessary to call for competitive designs, that Mr Kingsley Henderson should be employed as architect, and that he should proceed forthwith ...’. Henderson had already agreed that, as with the National Bank head office, the character of the existing premises be preserved. The Chairman noted this and added ‘We do not think it is desirable to instruct him or bias him in relation to the artistic design’.\textsuperscript{268}

29.

\textit{Union Bank, Little Collins Street, Melbourne (1937-38)}

\textit{A & K Henderson Records, Box 226}

\textsuperscript{267} RVIAJ, ‘Street Architecture Medal’, \textit{RVIAJ}, xxxiii/5 (1935), 96, p.96

\textsuperscript{268} Extract of letter Chairman to Melbourne director, Union Bank, c. August 1939, A & K Henderson Records, Box 117/280g; also the \textit{Argus}, 6 August 1938
It was no doubt a bitter disappointment for Henderson when in 1940 this job, estimated to be worth ‘more than £300,000’, was postponed due to the war in Europe. Although the ultimate accolade he received in the Bank’s expression of confidence in his personal expertise now amounted to little, it confirmed his standing as a leading commercial architect and builder of banks.

_A & K Henderson & Partners - (Staughton and Strachan-Smith)_

In what must have been a blow to Henderson, John Freeman with his brother Tom, and Rob Yuncken, left the firm in June 1933 to set up their own practice: Yuncken Freeman & Freeman. Henderson was now without the two men he appeared to rely on most. Although he had previously declared his aversion to such affiliations, in July 1935 he entered into partnership with his two remaining senior architects: R Cedric Staughton and CH Strachan-Smith. This decision was possibly precipitated by the prospect of the rebuilding of the Alfred Hospital. At about the same time that partnership negotiations must have taken place, the Alfred Hospital board settled on a ‘Ten Year Plan’: ‘a long-sighted building plan to cover the future development of the hospital’ which included the gradual replacement of all old buildings …’

This was excellent news as it guaranteed at least ten years good work for the firm. In anticipation of the proposed plan Henderson then informed the board that he planned a

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269 The Argus, 6 July 1938,
270 Discussed in Chapter Four
271 Mitchell, _The hospital south of the Yarra_, p.204
'tour of inspection of the leading public hospitals' in England, Europe and America, the principal purpose of the trip being to study trends in hospital building.\textsuperscript{272}

Leaving the practice in his partners' hands, in September 1935 Henderson and his wife Ruve sailed for Europe. Their departure and itinerary were reported in the press - often the case when the city's leading citizens travelled. Henderson wrote to the firm frequently. His letters, addressed to his partners and his secretary, are in the most familiar and affectionate terms, and his casual language reveals the warmth of his personality. His first two letters report on the firm's work in Adelaide and Perth. The next, from on board the SS \textit{Orama} informs his partners that the voyage has been 'damot' and that all are fit and well, living an idle life reading, eating, playing quoits, swimming and 'yarning', but that he has done no writing and his brain is a 'dumpling'.\textsuperscript{273}

Two weeks later he wrote from Rome where he was having an 'exciting' time enjoying luxury hotels, local restaurants, and architectural tours of hospitals and of the city's monuments. He regretted he had not done it '30 years ago'. Of the churches he wrote 'Classic dignity and pure design and proportion means so much more when seen with thousands of examples'. He praised Mussolini for the cleanliness, order and discipline he observed in Rome. As he had twenty years before, he displayed an insatiable appetite for everything the city had to offer; noting in particular the preservation of the ruined remnants from the Roman Empire. He assured his partners that he had not 'gone fascist'.\textsuperscript{274}

He describes his eight days in Rome as 'wonderful', the hospitals he visited there were also 'wonderful' as they were in Paris where he also spent eight days. From France he travelled to London and made a rapid tour of England, visiting monuments: 'Winchester Cathedral the biggest lump in my throat so far. Lichfield is lovely too.' The Birmingham Hospital was the only one to draw praise: 'well balanced and they prepared, thought and sketched for 5 years',\textsuperscript{275} He must have impressed his English hosts with his ideas about hospital building as he remarks that he was invited to practice

\textsuperscript{272} Ibid., p.204
\textsuperscript{273} Henderson to Partners, 7 October 1935, A & K Henderson Records, Box 167/60
\textsuperscript{274} Henderson to Partners, 21 October 1935, ibid.
\textsuperscript{275} Letter, undated, ibid.
in London, an invitation if made officially, he would have considered as living in London appealed to him.276

There are no letters from the American stage of his trip, but on the eve of his departure from New York the AAP reported that he was particularly impressed by the practice of housing all hospital services ‘under one roof’, a practice not hitherto employed in Australia.277

His return was announced in the Melbourne press and he was immediately invited to speak on his overseas experiences to the RVIA members and to the Alfred Hospital board. His enthusiasm was infectious, and stimulated the hospital board to start work immediately on the ‘Ten Year Plan’: ‘Everyone shared the architect’s dream of a unified multi-storey building scheme which would incorporate the best features of modern hospitals abroad’.278 Excavations for the central block began in 1938 and were completed just before war broke out in September 1939, an event which effectively put a stop to the project. Thereafter, the only work which proceeded for the hospital was a maternity wing and boiler house, both started in 1941 and completed in 1944. After the war and Henderson’s death, the firm continued with works in progress but was commissioned for no new work. Arthur Stephenson became the next Alfred Hospital architect.

Robin Boyd

Robin Boyd was Henderson’s most famous employee and was destined to become one of Australia’s most influential architectural thinkers. In 1935, at the age of sixteen, he became Henderson’s article pupil. He was the son of one of Henderson’s close friends, the artist Penleigh Boyd, who died in November 1923. How they met is unknown but they were sure to have had friends and acquaintances in common, including in the T Square Club and, later, in the Savage Club. Also, Henderson was a collector of art and Penleigh’s style of painting, described by Serle as ‘Streetonesque’ may have appealed to Henderson’s taste, and he may have been a patron.279

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277 See for example, Sydney Morning Herald, 22 January 1936; the Mercury, 23 January 1936
278 Mitchell, The hospital south of the Yarra, p.204
279 Mitchell, The hospital south of the Yarra, p.204
279 David M Dow, Melbourne Savages: a history of the first 50 years of the Melbourne Savage Club, Melbourne Savage Club, Melbourne: 1947, p.65
In May 1935, perhaps through Henderson’s connection with Willy Weigall, a solicitor and a Boyd cousin, the Boyd family vicar enquired of Henderson regarding the possibility of the young Robin becoming his article pupil, explaining that Robin would be unable to pay university fees and would do the course at night. When interviewed, Robin impressed Henderson with his ambition and he and his partners concluded that he was ‘probably bright and talented’ and that, anyway, they should support students. Consequently, a letter was sent offering the position ‘without premium’. This was a considerable concession, as when Rob Yuncken was offered articles the fee was 200 guineas. If this was still the usual fee in 1935 it would have represented as much as a year’s income for Robin’s widowed mother. Boyd accepted the offer and articles were drawn up for approval by Weigall, to whom Henderson later wrote stating, ‘I have seen the lad’s work and I think he has gifts and I do not think he should be condemned to a commercial career.’ Did this comment refer to Boyd’s previous employment with an importing company, or did Henderson at this early stage recognise the path Boyd would eventually take in residential design?

Boyd settled into the firm and a few months later Henderson wrote to his mother telling her how pleased they were with Robin, who, because of his very fair hair, they had named ‘Snowball’, and that ‘as a student he is quite unique in his grasp of everything that has been put in front of him’. The fact that Boyd grew to dislike the sort of architecture his employer practised, and indeed everything Henderson stood for, must have put him in a difficult position. Not only was he bound to Henderson for the period of his articles but he was also in his debt, both as his father’s friend and the recipient of his generosity. Nevertheless it did not prevent his criticism of Henderson and his buildings.

Some years later when asked by John Hetherington about his time with Henderson, Boyd referred to the style of Capel Court. He complained that in 1936 Henderson was ‘still building Georgian skyscrapers’, and added

One of the places I worked on was Capel Court ... It was twelve stories, and I don’t suppose there would be a taller Georgian building anywhere in the world. Everything

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281 Henderson to Otto Yuncken (senior), 7 February 1922. Letter in the possession of John Yuncken.
282 Serle, Robin Boyd, p.39
283 Boyd file, A & K Henderson Records, Box 81/80a
had to be Georgian, Gothic, or so-called Renaissance. The one inadmissible thing was anything modern.\textsuperscript{284}

Moreover, when Henderson gave Boyd the task of designing an insurance office, rather than following his own modernist inclinations, he tried to please his employer. His attempt was inadequate and Henderson asked for another design - in 'any style he chose':

[This] ... Henderson looked at ... for a long time, then said in measured tones, 'This is the most profoundly vulgar thing I have ever seen.' Boyd recalls that he was both hurt and annoyed. 'I had ... done a clumsy version of the international style, but it was at least simple. These days you might call it boring, dull, anything else of that kind. But not vulgar.'\textsuperscript{285}

Accounts of Boyd's time with A & K Henderson, his opinion of the firm's buildings and his relationship with Kingsley Henderson, appear in two biographies of Boyd and his family.\textsuperscript{286} In each case the material is drawn from Hetherington's work.\textsuperscript{287}

Hetherington's essay on Boyd is clearly drawn from a conversation between Boyd and the author; in addition, it was published while Boyd was still living, while the later biographies were published after his death. Reference is made to Boyd's criticism of A & K Henderson buildings in \textit{Smudges}, a student newspaper co-edited by Boyd in the late 1930s in which he and his fellow commentators decried the stylistic standards of most Melbourne buildings, still reflecting a predilection for polite architecture, and the lack of genuine criticism. They complained that, in most cases, as reports on Melbourne buildings emanated from the architect's own office they could not be seriously critical.\textsuperscript{288} A & K Henderson files confirm the accuracy of this claim. Newspapers invariably asked the firm for descriptions of buildings which were then prepared in understandably glowing terms. Hetherington writes about an example of Boyd's criticism: 'in [the] pages [of \textit{Smudges}] he analysed and pilloried one after another of Kingsley Henderson's buildings'.\textsuperscript{289}

A search of all four years of issues of \textit{Smudges} shows this statement to be exaggerated; one A & K Henderson building, the MLC building in Collins Street, is mentioned once, and while it is criticised, it is not exactly pilloried. Nevertheless the claim is repeated,

\textsuperscript{284} Hetherington, 'Robin Boyd: Quiverful of Darts', p.38
\textsuperscript{285} Ibid. p.39
\textsuperscript{287} Hetherington, 'Robin Boyd: Quiverful of Darts'; ibid.
\textsuperscript{288} \textit{Smudges}, \textit{Smudges}, 1/May (1939)
\textsuperscript{289} Hetherington, 'Robin Boyd: Quiverful of Darts' p.39. Serle's account is more accurate.
thus perpetuating the exaggeration. In relation to Boyd’s criticism of the MLC building, Henderson apparently said:

‘What I can’t understand is that he sits there, writing in my time and criticising my buildings’ ... [but Henderson] ... never tried to bully his articled pupil into abandoning the campaign. ‘He couldn’t have taken it seriously’, Boyd says. ‘I suppose I was like a puppy yapping at his heels. He didn’t even know an architectural revolution was underway.’

Henderson probably gave very little credence to the blustering of twenty-year-olds, so Boyd’s analysis of Henderson’s dismissal of any criticism is very likely accurate.

Boyd’s period of articles expired at the end of April 1940 while he was training at an Army camp. Serle remarks that

Despite all legends [Henderson and Boyd] must have remained on some sort of terms; Henderson asked Boyd to be sure to send ‘lightning sketches and cartoons of your officers’ for *The Argus*. But Henderson did not offer to keep him on, virtually sacking him.

What Serle fails to observe is that by April 1940 work was declining rapidly, the firm’s profits had fallen to 35 per cent of their 1939 value, and staff numbers were being reduced accordingly.

Apart from brief acknowledgment of Kingsley Henderson and A & K Henderson as authors of buildings in the general architectural histories, Boyd’s description of Henderson and his work remains the only published contemporary account.

31.

*Capel Court, Melbourne (1935-39)*
Demolished
*A & K Henderson Records, Boxes 237/38*

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290 Ibid., p.39
291 Serle, *Robin Boyd*, p.62
Politics

A small but important part played by Henderson in federal politics occurred in 1931. He had long supported the conservative side of politics, as is illustrated by the first record of his involvement in 1917 when he campaigned on behalf of his local branch of the Nationalist Party for the forthcoming federal election. From its formation in 1917, the Nationalist Party dominated non-Labor politics. In 1931 it was incorporated into the newly formed United Australia Party (UAP) which remained the principal conservative body until 1943. After about two years of chaos within its ranks, non-Labor forces then reformed to become the Liberal Party of Australia.\(^{292}\)

Henderson’s interest in politics had begun at least as early as 1917.\(^{293}\) His subsequent political activity is unrecorded but the network of political contacts for whom he performed architectural work suggests that he maintained involvement throughout the twenties. Evidence also of increasing activity in business circles suggests he was building a valuable relationship between political and business interests. Clients with whom he had political and business connections included RJ Boyne, a city wool broker and a director of the Australian Mercantile Land and Finance Co. The firm’s index shows that, from 1923, it was commissioned to carry out work at this company’s premises in South Kensington, just north of the Melbourne central business district. From then the connection between the two companies continued until the war. In the early thirties Henderson became closely associated with Boyne in his political activities. Another political associate was Essington Lewis, managing director of BHP. Minor works were performed by the firm for BHP and Lewis became a private client, indicating the increasing strength of Henderson’s network of political and business contacts.\(^{294}\) Robert Menzies, future prime minister of Australia, was another political associate for whom Henderson carried out architectural work.\(^{295}\) The most important connection between politics and business lay in Henderson’s relationship with


\(^{293}\) See Chapter One, p.39 n.97

\(^{294}\) See A & K Henderson, Index

Stanisforth Ricketson of JB Were & Son. The relationship not only brought Henderson an important architectural commission but also prominence in business circles. His involvement in federal politics could have arisen from this relationship as well.

During the twenties Henderson’s political interests could have been confined to membership of one of the conservative groups active in Melbourne at the time, in particular the Constitutional Club, set up initially to support Bruce’s 1925 election campaign. Martin writes that it was also likely that Robert Menzies’ was associated with this club.

It is not clear whether Menzies was a member of the Constitutional Club though he must have been well informed about its work. Its rooms were near to the courts and to the Savage Club, and prominent among its officials were individuals who would soon be working with Menzies to establish a ginger group of younger men with the Nationalist party.

Henderson joined the Savage Club in 1924 and if he had not met Menzies before, would have undoubtedly come into contact with him at this stage. In any event, in 1928 he was campaigning for Menzies in his first attempt to enter State Parliament. Martin refers to a 'Central Committee’ backing the campaign, describing it as

decidedly formidable and [it] clearly indicated the type of backing [Menzies] could boast. [One of] three vice-chairmen ... [of the Committee was] ... Kingsley Henderson, head of a major Melbourne architectural firm and director of a number of companies, including the stockbroking firm of J.B. Were.

In 1929 the Government of Nationalist Prime Minister Stanley Bruce was brought down following the defeat of an industrial arbitration bill. Bruce lost his seat, signalling the demise of the Nationalist Party as a real force in Australian politics. In October of that year, Labor came to power with James Scullin as Prime Minister. The day after the first sitting of the new Parliament the New York Stock Exchange crashed, and the Australian financial system too was in crisis. Clem Lloyd writes:

Scullin’s ministers soon learned that they had taken office on the brink of an economic cataclysm. ... Before Scullin had been in office a month, canny Nationalist politicians were predicting a short life for his government.

297 AW Martin, Robert Menzies: A Life, 1, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Vic., 1993, pp.56-7
298 Ibid., p.58.
299 Henderson’s involvement with the Savage Club is discussed at pp.100-04.
300 Martin, Robert Menzies, p.63
301 Lloyd, 'The Rise and Fall of the United Australia Party', p.138
Indeed, by February 1930 the Government was in trouble. In particular ‘domestic loan conversion obligations’ were due for repayment at the end of the year, resulting in an investigation by the British Government as to the Australian Government’s financial policies and ability to repay international loans, and a consequent policy of strict financial measures forced upon state and federal governments.\(^{302}\)

By the end of 1930 such was the despair of the business community that a delegation of three, including Henderson, approached Sir John Monash, engineer and decorated soldier, with the request that he, together with Robert Gibson, Chairman of the Commonwealth Bank, move to take control of the Government, but Monash rejected the idea as unconstitutional and stated that the only way to bring change was at the polls.\(^{303}\) In fact, an election was not far away. Earlier in 1930, national problems such as rising unemployment and industrial strife, created dissension in Government ranks. Moreover, Edward Theodore, then Treasurer and Deputy Prime Minister, was forced to resign while an enquiry took place into a mining scandal in Queensland which occurred when he was Premier of that State. Joseph Lyons, former Premier of Tasmania and experienced in State politics and finance, was appointed to the position of acting Treasurer; he was known to be cautious and conservative.\(^{304}\) In November, with Scullin overseas, management of repayment of a domestic loan of £28 million fell upon Lyons. Lloyd explains: ‘The Government could either make repayments in full to the bondholders, or seek to convert the loan for a further period possibly at a re-negotiated rate of interest.’\(^{305}\) The Commonwealth Bank was requested by the Government to cover the maturing loan. As Chairman, Gibson was effectively in control of the federal purse and had consistently resisted Scullin’s endeavours to implement new financial and economic policies. The Bank now declined to cover the loan.\(^{306}\) Lyons and his supporters, contrary to caucus majority, moved for conversion of the loan.\(^{307}\) In support

\(^{302}\) Ibid., p.139
\(^{305}\) Lloyd, ‘The Rise and Fall of the United Australia Party’, p.139-41
\(^{306}\) A stance which could only assist the conservative objective to defeat Scullin.
\(^{307}\) Caucus moved that ‘the Commonwealth Bank meet the loan, failing which it should be renewed for twelve months by legislative action’. Philip R Hart, 'Lyons: Labor Minister: Leader of the U.A.P.', *Labour History*, 17/October (1969), 37-51, p.41
of conversion, the Melbourne business community organised a campaign committee which included Kingsley Henderson.

Lyons prevailed and, with Loan Council approval, the loan was converted and then fully subscribed:

Lyons was justly acclaimed as a popular hero. A surge of press exaltation and public adulation transformed him from a political backwoodsman into a national statesman imbued with hitherto unsuspected toughness and sagacity.

More subtly ... [his triumph] ... joined him with influential Melbourne business figures connected with the Nationalist political and fund-raising machines.\(^{308}\)

In January 1931 Scullin returned to Australia and resumed the prime-ministership. To Lyons’s dismay, he reinstated Theodore as Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer. Lyons promptly resigned from Cabinet and, with dissension rife once more, became increasingly disenchanted with his party.

In February 1931, at Gibson’s suggestion, a group of five Melbourne businessmen convened with the ultimate aim of persuading Lyons to leave the Labor Party and join the Opposition.\(^{309}\) The ‘Group’, as it was known, was led by Ricketson, a friend of Lyons. Lloyd states that Henderson joined as the sixth member sometime after the initial meeting, perhaps at the request of Lyons. Henderson and Menzies were the members with practical experience in politics and Menzies is described as the main negotiator in discussions with Lyons.\(^{310}\) Of advantage to the Group was Henderson’s close association with Gibson and, in addition, he arranged membership of the Savage Club for Lyons and thus enabled him to come in contact with leading members of the Melbourne business community. In terms of access to power and influence, the composition of the ‘Group’ could not have been surpassed.\(^{311}\) The Group’s principal agenda was the preservation of economic stability, and although in its ideals sympathetic to the Nationalists, it was not affiliated with them and political influence was not a factor in the discussions with Lyons. Recollections of Ricketson and Dame Enid Lyons, recorded by Philip Hart in his thesis on Lyons, confirm that it was the Group that

\(^{308}\) Lloyd, ‘The Rise and Fall of the United Australia Party’, p.140. For Lloyd’s sources see n.19, p.348

\(^{309}\) Lloyd, ‘The formation and development of the United Australia Party, 1929-37’, p.85

\(^{310}\) Hart, ‘Lyons: Labor Minister: Leader of the U.A.P.’, p.44

\(^{311}\) Lloyd, ‘The formation and development of the United Australia Party, 1929-37’, p.55
persuaded Lyons to leave the Labor Party. Following his defection in March 1931, Lyons became involved in the development of the UAP.\textsuperscript{312}

The origins of the UAP lay in ‘patriotic groups [which were] aimed at complementing or replacing political parties’.\textsuperscript{313} These were a rather loose amalgamation of different interest groups held together by their anti-Labor stance; Labor groups were seen as sympathetic to communism, socially disruptive and responsible for the economic mess into which the country had fallen under Scullin’s Government during the Depression.\textsuperscript{314}

One such group, the Victorian branch of the All For Australia League, grew out of the Melbourne organising committee for the conversion campaign; Kingsley Henderson was the honorary secretary of the League and Ricketson the honorary treasurer.\textsuperscript{315} When representatives of the various groups met in mid-April 1931 it was officially decided to amalgamate to form a new Federal organisation, the United Australia Movement.\textsuperscript{316}

At the end of April 1931 the decision to form a new parliamentary party was confirmed: and the UAP came into being. In November, following the defeat of an industrial relations bill in the House of Representatives, an early election was called for December; the UAP won in a massive landslide and Lyons became Prime Minister.\textsuperscript{317}

The source of the [UAP’s] success was the stunning conjunction of judgments, intuitions, rationalisations, events, machinations, coincidences and, perhaps, miracles, that brought the unlikely figure of Joe Lyons to the leadership of Australian Liberalism. ... How could a Labor minister disgraced within his own party become leader of resurgent national Liberalism and then Prime Minister of Australia in little more than six months? For the ALP, Lyons’s desertion was a comprehensive disaster. For Australian Liberalism, Lyons’s conversion was the greatest stroke of political good fortune in its history. It was a calculated gamble of inestimable risk, reliant on the accumulated wisdom and daring of a handful of players, [among whom were Bruce, Menzies, Ricketson, and Henderson] and, of course, Lyons himself and his politically astute wife, Enid.\textsuperscript{318}

Thus, Kingsley Henderson was among those who, in 1931, helped change the course of Australian political history. His participation in these events is evidence of his dedication to the cause of safeguarding the well-being of the Australian community as seen through his conservative lens.


\textsuperscript{313} Lloyd, 'The Rise and Fall of the United Australia Party', p.144

\textsuperscript{314} Lloyd, 'The formation and development of the United Australia Party, 1929-37', pp.32-44

\textsuperscript{315} Lloyd, 'The Rise and Fall of the United Australia Party', p.144

\textsuperscript{316} Hart, 'Lyons: Labor Minister: Leader of the U.A.P.', p.50

\textsuperscript{317} Lloyd, 'The Rise and Fall of the United Australia Party', p.148-53

\textsuperscript{318} Ibid., p.154
The extent of his subsequent influence on Lyons, or that of any group or individual outside his party, is uncertain. It had always been Lyons’s habit to consult with groups outside his government. For example, when premier of Tasmania he had consistently sought the advice of experts of all political persuasions in the financial interests of the State.\footnote{319}

Philip Hart has delved deeply into the relationships between Lyons and various individuals, business groups and party fund raising groups, both in Melbourne and Sydney, in an endeavour to ascertain the level of power they exerted on the Prime Minister. While unable to be altogether definite, Hart concludes that the Melbourne groups were more effective, but he is unable to establish precisely who in Melbourne wielded any and what real influence.\footnote{320} Various groups and individuals are proposed but, in the absence of detail or substantiation, Hart finds it likely that while Lyons listened, he was not consciously dominated by anyone.\footnote{321}

As far as the Group was concerned its work had finished when Lyons became Prime Minister and leader of the UAP. In her introduction to So We Take Comfort Dame Enid acknowledges the work of the Group:

\begin{quote}
... six names cannot, in gratitude, remain unmentioned. They are the names of a group of Melbourne friends unknown at the time to either of us, except for [Ricketson] who, as a young journalist, had been Joe’s friend in Devonport ... The others were [Norris, Higgins, Pratt, Menzies and Henderson]. It was these men primarily who convinced Joe that he had a role to play in the rehabilitation of Australia that he alone could fill, and through all the stress of that time they gave him their undivided loyalty and support.\footnote{322}
\end{quote}

Dame Enid also observed that although they ‘faded from the scene’ as a group, individually ‘they remained as links in a chain of friendship that was broken only by death’.\footnote{323}

Henderson’s participation in the Group constitutes an important contribution to Australasia’s political history. His ongoing friendship with Lyons seems to have been the strongest of the group members. The steadying hand of a close friend may have been a great help to Lyons as he grappled with the dilemmas of politics and conscience, and perhaps for Lyons, it was Henderson’s most important contribution. Their

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{319} Hart, ‘Lyons: Labor Minister: Leader of the U.A.P.’, p.38
\footnote{321} Ibid, pp.113-14
\footnote{322} Enid Lyons, So We Take Comfort, Heinemann, London, 1965, p.xi
\footnote{323} Enid Lyons, Among the Carrion Crows, Rigby, Adelaide, 1977, p.53-4
\end{footnotes}
friendship dated back to the time of the conversion campaign, as observed by Hart who also cites a description by Lyons’s private secretary in a letter of April 1931:

Mr Kingsley Henderson is a close personal friend of the Prime Minister’s, and indeed was his guide, philosopher and friend during the troublous [sic] period after his break with the ALP.324

Lyons himself described Henderson as ‘an entertaining comrade [and] a man of the most sterling character’.325 They met whenever their commitments allowed and when in Melbourne Lyons sometimes stayed with the Hendersons. The depth of the friendship is confirmed by Dame Enid when she refers to Henderson as one of Lyons’s ‘staunchest friends’, and that ‘Tom Murray in Sydney and Kingsley Henderson in Melbourne were the two he loved most’.326

Henderson continued to support the UAP during the 1930s although there is no record to indicate any official capacity. In response to a request from the National Union in 1935 to help fight the forthcoming State election ‘in the interests of all opposed to the disruptive forces of communism and official labour’,327 Henderson sent £30 on behalf of the firm, a large donation when most donations to the numerous charities and causes supported by the firm were in the order of £1 or £2. A further £5 was sent following a request from the UAP, also to support the campaign.

Henderson attended lunches and dinners organised by the Young Nationalists and the National Union and also received monthly bulletins from the UAP. Pages torn from one of the bulletins, on primary industries and slum clearance, relate to talks he gave to the Institute and other bodies, and indicate his continuing allegiance to Nationalist philosophy.328

By the end of the decade, Henderson’s relationship with Menzies had cooled. There is reference to Henderson assisting Menzies politically in 1933, as well as to minor work the firm carried out for him between 1933 and 1937. Later, events within Government circles could have caused Henderson’s disapproval of Menzies. For example, by 1938 Lyons was tired and unwell and wanted to resign.329 Most of his colleagues argued

325 Hart, ‘The Piper and the Tune’, p.121  
326 Lyons, So We Take Comfort, pp.xi,275  
328 See ibid., Box 178/79  
329 See for example, Kate White, Joseph Lyons, Black Inc., Melbourne, 1987, p.189
against his retiring, at least before the next election, as they knew from experience his popularity with voters, but Menzies, who was critical of Lyons’s leadership, also had ambitions for the top job. In October 1938 Menzies made a speech at the Constitutional Club in Sydney. While historians have differing views on the intent of the speech, at the time it was seen by some as an attack on Lyons.\textsuperscript{330} Henderson could have viewed it this way; moreover he could have been critical of Menzies’ resignation, in March 1939, as attorney-general and deputy leader of the party.\textsuperscript{331} Lyons died soon after. In April 1939 the contest for prime-ministership began in earnest between Menzies and former Prime Minister Bruce, with much bad blood being spilt. Menzies won. Martin cites a letter from journalist RL Curthoys to Sir James Darling which describes the bad opinion in which Menzies was now held by the National Union. Martin also reports information received by Darling from Henderson relating to these events, and writes that Henderson was ‘once a political associate of Menzies, although now partly estranged from him’.\textsuperscript{332} The precise cause of the estrangement is not explained but, apart from Menzies’ actions in pursuing the prime-ministership, it is likely that Henderson, ever a man of principle, would have found his treatment of Lyons totally unforgivable.

Henderson had remained close to Lyons until his death and, together with Tom Murray, was a pallbearer at his funeral. In 1940, Henderson was commissioned by Dame Enid to build a memorial to her late husband at the Devonport Cemetery.

\textit{The Savage Club and Newspaper Interests}

Kingsley Henderson joined the Savage Club in 1924. Club culture, based on that in England, had thrived in Melbourne since the establishment of the Melbourne Club and the Australian Club in 1838. The Savage Club was founded in 1894, and in line with the Melbourne and Australian clubs was conservative in nature, and had at first a membership of business and professional men. From the beginning of the twentieth century musicians, artists and journalists were added to the membership which, today, still represents a wide range of the professions, the arts and academia. Despite its

\textsuperscript{330} Ibid. White claims Menzies action was a ‘slug in the back’ for Lyons and as such an act of gross disloyalty. pp.178–79; also Frank C Green, \textit{Servant of the House}, Heinemann, Melbourne, 1969, p.111. Menzies claimed that the press had reported the speech inaccurately, an explanation which Lyons accepted. White also refers to comments made by Tom Murray who was present for the speech which suggest the press reports were correct. White, \textit{Joseph Lyons}, p.178.

\textsuperscript{331} Martin, \textit{Robert Menzies}, pp.256-62; White, \textit{Joseph Lyons}, pp.187-8

\textsuperscript{332} Martin, \textit{Robert Menzies}, p.269
‘Bohemian’ element the Savage Club was, until at least the 1970s, ‘quintessentially a British-style institution’. The conservative nature of the Club suited Henderson, moreover it was an ideal meeting place for him and his friends and acquaintances.

Henderson was president of the Club from 1933 to 1939 when he resigned to concentrate his energies outside architecture on the role as Chairman of Directors of *The Argus and Australasian*. Architects have always featured prominently in club membership: Kingsley Henderson is described as ‘the Savage Club’s best-known architect’. He is described by both Dow and Johnson as a popular president, known especially for his human appeal, humour and camaraderie. Dow adds:

> A quaint Puckishness seemed to colour the mind of this man of forceful character. It was a trait so elusive that it could not be clearly defined, and since no other word seemed adequate, his friends called it impishness.

Henderson served the Savage Club well. It had moved into premises at 12 Bank Place in 1923, and plans for renovations were prepared by Club members JJ Meagher and Percy Meldrum, both architects. Henderson too became involved in the renovations immediately upon joining the Club; in particular he was responsible for the plans and structural work for the Social Room, which he carried out without fee. In Johnson’s opinion the Social Room was ‘surely one of the finest rooms in Melbourne’. By 1933 Henderson had purchased Charter House and set about the reconstruction. Johnson recounts anecdotal evidence that, during the Charter House renovation, Henderson connected the Savage Club to that building’s heating system. Over the next forty or so years the Club had thereby received free heating, of which the later owners of [Charter House] were quite oblivious.

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334 Ibid., p.172
336 Dow, *Melbourne Savages*, pp.36-7
338 Ibid., p.206. This anecdote was related to Johnson by Club member John Chalajian. Johnson states incorrectly that the renovations were being carried out at ‘Bank Chambers’ which Kingsley Henderson owned. Henderson’s building was Charter House. n.11, p.238
Presumably, Henderson was content for the Savage Club committee to remain oblivious too, illustrating a generosity that needed no accolade.

The histories of the Savage Club reveal Henderson to be a man of loyalty, compassion, benevolence and generosity of spirit. His portrait, by Charles Wheeler, still hangs in the Savage Club today.  

Dow writes that Henderson resigned as president of the Savage Club in 1939 when elected Chairman of the Board of Directors of The Argus and The Australasian newspaper interests. Unfortunately for Savages, his determination to concentrate on newspaper administration resulted in his resignation as President of the Club, a position he would have held until his death had not initiative been taken from members’ control.

Henderson’s role at the Argus occupied considerable amounts of his time and energy. As well as resigning his presidency of the Savage Club he resigned directorship of all company Boards. He had been vice-chairman of the Board of The Argus and Australasian since 1934 when it succeeded the old Argus and its new and unsuccessful evening paper, The Star. The failure of The Star brought the old company close to financial ruin. It was then floated as a public company and underwritten by JB Were, thus increasing the stockbrokers’ influence in Melbourne. When Chairman Staniforth Ricketson retired from this position due to ‘pressure of business in other spheres’,

339 See Introduction, p.1
340 Dow, Melbourne Savages, p.37
341 The directorships referred to were investment trusts in the names of: JB Were, National Reliance, Capel Court and Jason also Chevron Ltd (the all under the JB Were umbrella), and also Eagle Star Insurance. Henderson was also on the board of the Capel Court Group and was to construct a building for them in 1936.
Henderson became his successor.\textsuperscript{343} It had taken five years for the new board to turn the company’s losses into a modest profit. With Henderson at the helm profits increased quickly so that by 1941 the paper was in good shape.\textsuperscript{344}

1940-42: Loss and War

Early in 1939 Henderson had become concerned about the immediate future of architecture and building and had delivered a memorandum to his partners stating that work was slowing up because of the ‘drought’, ‘general jitters about European position’, and the export price index. He also noted with concern a decline in building in Sydney, with little new work being anticipated.\textsuperscript{345} Before long A & K Henderson began to experience the effects of the downturn. In July 1940, at the end of the prescribed term the partnership between Henderson, Staughton and Strachan-Smith was extended by agreement to 31 October and then to 31 December 1940. On this last date it was dissolved formally by mutual agreement.

The dissolution followed a memorandum from Henderson to his partners of 2 December in which he stated:

\begin{quote}
If we were to go on as we are now (and I would describe our present condition as completely top heavy with too many seniors, [too] few juniors and not enough work), it is quite obvious that the value of your interests and my interest would disappear in working expenses, and after the 1st January I suggest that you take a salary commensurate with the work which you will inevitably have to do and that is a share of sketching and drafting and detailing and specifying and your position will be that you will draw a salary every fortnight and draw as and when you want to, from your ascertained pools...

The amount of new work offered is absurdly small and we will inevitably have to shorten staff fairly promptly.

All our major work is winding up and what is offering will not carry a senior Partner and two Juniors plus Engineer [Clutterbuck], plus Designer [Wilson], plus Specification writer plus three stenographers and Clerk, plus Draftsmen and tidy up officer.\textsuperscript{346}
\end{quote}

He concluded his letter with

\begin{quote}
I visualize the possibility in two years of my final and smallest set up which would be myself, Frank Bell and Miss Livingstone, the same as when I started with my Late
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{343} Staniforth Ricketson (1891-1967), journalist and stockbroker. A partner in JB Were & Son, a few years later he also became chairman of the Capel Court Investment Co., a JB Were investment company.

Kingsley Henderson was also on the board of the Capel Court Group and was to construct a building for them in 1936. Ricketson was first chairman of the Argus & Australasian Ltd from 1936 to 1939, when Henderson took over. JB Were, The House of Were 1839-1954, JB Were, Melbourne, 1954, pp.253,517

\textsuperscript{344} Muray, ‘All a matter of finance’, p.187

\textsuperscript{345} Henderson to partners, 3 February 1939, A & K Henderson Records, Box 117/280g; see also Sydney Morning Herald, 2 February 1939, for diminution of the building trade.

\textsuperscript{346} Ibid., Box 132. A total number of staff in excess of twelve.
Father and an office boy in January 1901, just 40 years ago. This may be pessimistic but would be the inevitable end of the total war effort. 347

Indeed, from 1939 to 1940, profits had dropped dramatically, as indicated by the balance sheets for the years 1937 to 1940:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Total Profits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 June</td>
<td>£9,953.17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>£9,501.3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>£9,490.18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>£3,326.19.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, Constance Hart’s account of the firm in 1941 suggests that Henderson was overly pessimistic in his assessment. When she joined the firm in about the middle of the year there was enough work for a staff of roughly ten. She says that although the firm had scaled down considerably it still had some significant contracts, in particular for the Alfred Hospital and Swallow & Ariel. One of her specific tasks was to make sketch plans for the Margaret Coles Maternity Wing at the Alfred Hospital. The firm was also constructing air-raid shelters which, she remembers, were being added to every building. 348

Following the dissolution of his partnership with Staughton and Strachan-Smith, Henderson delivered a letter to Wilson:

I have taken the liberty of pre-dating this letter.
In case anything unforeseen happened to me which meant my being transferred feet first to the St Kilda cemetery, it would be necessary for Staughton and Clutterbuck and yourself to carry on the practice in terms which, or course, would be arranged with Mr. Wilks, my Trustee.
I do not for a moment think that anything of the kind is imminent, but I think it would be well if, as from this date, you joined the elect or, in other words had your name up on the door and on the notepaper, etc., as an associate.
Bear in mind of course, that I would expect Staughton, Clutterbuck and you to contribute to the education of Frank Bell when he comes back and later invite him to be a member of the firm. I think my wishes in this regard are well understood by you. From the point of view of reputation and records we hold, I feel quite sure it is all worth carrying on and in the course of every discussion with you I will do my best to make your way a wee scrap less thorny. 349

It was no doubt simply an act of responsibility for Henderson to make plans for the future of the firm in the event of his death, and although he stated he did not foresee an imminent passing, it is interesting that he should in fact die suddenly only fifteen months

347 Henderson to partners, 13 December 1940, ibid.
348 Interview with Constance Hart, 29 March 2011
349 Typed copy letter, undated. Henderson to Wilson, A & K Henderson Records, Box 132
later, perhaps from a heart attack. One month earlier he had written that he had been ill with the flu and ‘complications’.\textsuperscript{350} On the other hand Constance Hart recollects that he was well and extremely busy in the week before the died, travelling to numerous parts of the State to talk to communities about the war effort and the need for air-raid shelters. His death was a total shock to all.

In the event, Stoughton and Wilson carried on the firm’s work for approximately two years when Stoughton bought the company from the Estate. Any invitation to Frank Bell to rejoin the firm which, as honourable men, they undoubtedly made, must have been declined when he returned from war. Instead, in various collaborative arrangements, he joined up with fellow students including Robin Boyd with whom he had served in the Army.\textsuperscript{351}

At the time of his death Henderson had cemented his place as a leader in architectural and business communities. The extent of his network is indicated by the tributes reported in the Melbourne press following his death in 1942. Attendees at his funeral included many members of the architectural and business communities, as well as politicians and representatives of other sections of the community.

\textsuperscript{350} Henderson to Best, 5 March 1942, ibid., Box 105/158c. Jack Best, for whom Henderson was writing a reference, was a steward at the Savage Club.

\textsuperscript{351} Serle, \textit{Robin Boyd}, p.79
Chapter Four:
Professional Relationships and the Forces of Obscurity
As outlined in Chapters Three and Four, Kingsley Henderson’s contribution to architecture, politics and the community in the interwar period was substantial. Yet his name is found rarely in architectural histories. The objective of this chapter is to recall Henderson to the history of interwar Melbourne. The way in which he has been generally overlooked by historians resides in three main areas: the influence of Robin Boyd, the early demise of his firm, and his political outlook. A summary of these factors is followed by an assessment that counters the negative light in which Henderson has been cast. Finally, the Conclusion looks at the man and his work as representative of his time and place.

The first reason proposed for the neglect of Henderson is the writing and opinion of Robin Boyd. Chapter One explains how architectural historians have chosen to reflect more on the emergence of modernism than the traditional conservative architecture that was prevalent in the interwar period, and also that the direction Australian architectural history has taken is largely due to the writing of Boyd and his modernist approach. Therefore, this study argues that Boyd’s modernist views are partly responsible for the neglect of Henderson. The second reason relates to the early demise of the firm and in particular Henderson’s failure to form professional partnerships that would have ensured its longevity. Instances of partnership experiences and opportunities are analysed to explain how this came about. Thirdly, just as the traditional architectural design of the period lost favour after the War, so did ultra-conservative political views become unfashionable, pushing Henderson and his ilk further into the background. In addition, although prominent at times, his political activity was at other times anonymous. Typically, in all his activities, Henderson did not seek fame; his aim in life seems always to have been to serve his profession and the community rather than seek personal glory or deliberately draw attention to himself.

The Introduction explains that Robin Boyd’s view of Australian architectural history before 1934 was, in its eclecticism, one of ‘decline and fall’, only to be rescued after the Depression by the bravery of some young modernists; and also that Boyd’s interpretation, as that of the first historian, has been the guiding influence in the way we view past Australian architecture. While Boyd allowed for some modernists in the early
part of the century, namely Harold Desbrowe Annear, Robert Haddon and Walter Burley Griffin, who gave Melbourne the distinction as the indisputable leader in architecture, he nevertheless categorised most Melbourne architecture, or that designed in traditional styles, as old fashioned. Then, after the Depression, with the advent of Roy Grounds and his ‘pioneering’ work that established the ‘movement towards reasonableness and direct simplicity’, as well as the work of a few radicals, architecture in Melbourne was new and exciting beyond compare in any other Australian city.  

Thus it is these ‘pioneers’ and ‘radicals’ on whom Boyd concentrated his writing at the expense of the conservative traditionalists, such as A & K Henderson and the vast majority of architects and firms operating in the period. When he did write about those firms, it was with an unkind pen. For example, in relation to the post-Depression period, he wrote that while modernist tendencies were emerging in Melbourne’s new, young architectural minds, the ‘old firms that had been hibernating through the depression were dusting out their folders of yellowing classic details and considering methods of adapting them to the changed public temper’.  

As well as promoting modernist ideas Boyd also expressed preference for the creative side of architecture. Writing about the 1960s he divided what he termed ‘serious’ architecture into two categories: ‘creative’ and ‘professional’. In relation to the latter category, into which A & K Henderson falls, and which he described as ‘rather unexciting’ and ‘literally square’, he acknowledged that it was not always the architect who made decisions about design. He wrote

although … historical forms of ornament have been banished, still a great proportion of our most careful and biggest commercial and governmental building remains essentially traditional, or conservative, in concept. This is the intention of the owners or promoters, who would be displeased if their architects presented them with anything else. The big architects usually correctly interpret their clients’ wishes in regard to appearance by injecting conservative forms with a judicious flavouring of new materials, and by designing the whole with considerable skill, and with a genuine desire to do the best, and with taste.

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354 Boyd, *The New Architecture*, pp.3-4. Here, Boyd grouped architecture into three categories. The first and largest group was vernacular, or those buildings that were not architect-designed; second was pop, or that based on ‘some routine pattern … or magazine illustration’ at the insistence of the client; and the third group was serious architecture.
By contrast, creative architecture was artistic by nature as well as professional, and was the work of 'creative designers who believe that every building should be a vital expression of life and society'.

To his descriptions of professional and creative, he added the terms 'practical' and 'visionary', and 'borrowed' and 'new', which he applied to the Australian people in an analysis of architectural thinking since first European settlement:

> Everyone is a mixture of doer and dreamer. The proportions vary greatly, however, so one person turns out to be a practical man of action and another a creative man of vision. Thus two kinds of people, respectively eclectic and creative by nature, have existed throughout our history, carrying down their two different views of what Australia should be: something borrowed, or something new.

Therefore, whereas Boyd acknowledged the constraints often put upon architects by clients, if the resulting architecture did not fit his interpretation of modern, creative, visionary or new, he dismissed it as unworthy, thus setting the paradigm for the next generations of historians.

As an entity almost entirely dependent on one individual it was always going to be difficult for the firm to carry on after Henderson's death. The dynamic personality which brought him rewards in the profession and in business also created complications for him. His career also demonstrates difficulty in forming effective associations, which arose in part from a sometimes obsessive pursuit of his goals. A significant example was the problematic partnership with Alsop and Martin. They complained that Henderson displayed a distinct lack of consideration for them in relation to the Canberra Homes competition. As shown in Chapter Three, for much of 1923 he was heavily involved in Federal Council matters in Canberra, including the competition for public service housing (Canberra Homes), this being the first general building project for Canberra. In November he was appointed an adjudicator in the competition, thus, to his partners' chagrin, denying them the opportunity to enter. He apologised for his thoughtlessness:

> I very much regret I put you both in the position of not being able to compete for Canberra Homes. I endeavoured to get Waterhouse or Jones to act, but failed, and, without thought, and in keenness to get the matter settled, I accepted [Minister] Stewart's invitation.

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355 Ibid., p. 5. These ideas were also applicable to the interwar period.
357 Henderson to Alsop and Martin, 5 February 1924, A & K Henderson Records, Box 132
In fact the documents indicate that Henderson nominated himself, although this could have been at the request of the Minister. He admitted that he did not give any thought to what could have been a good opportunity for his partners, an omission that contradicts a statement made in an earlier letter to the then Council president, George Godsell, which related to the building of Canberra generally:

So far as I am personally concerned, from the purely business point of view, I do not mind whether they have competitions or not, as I am too busy to compete, (and the “hotch potch” scheme of building does not appeal to me). I am thinking principally of the younger chaps in the Profession, particularly those who went to the War, and trained at home for a period afterwards, and every possible avenue for them to display their skill should be opened, and we members of the Federal Council are taking a grave responsibility in continuing to keep this avenue shut.\textsuperscript{558}

Marcus Martin fitted exactly the description of the ‘younger chaps in the profession’ who went to war and who should be given every opportunity.\textsuperscript{559} Perhaps however, Henderson considered that Martin had already been given opportunity enough. Otherwise, it seems extraordinary that Henderson did not consider him, and it is not surprising that Alsop and Martin were offended by such disloyalty.

\textit{Administrative Building, Canberra (1924–25)}

Despite Henderson’s protestation that he had no time for competitions, in 1924 he embarked on a secret entry into the Canberra Administrative Building competition. This of course was no ‘hotch potch scheme of building’. It was an extremely important building in the new capital and the honour of designing it would bring the winning firm enormous prestige.

The events leading up to the competition are strange. In March 1924 Henderson was approached by P Scott-Williams who enquired as to the possibility of joining A & K Henderson as a designer. He wrote:

\begin{quote}
It has come to my notice that you may be requiring the services of a Designer in the near future. If such is the case would you kindly consider an application from me; as I am desirous of improving my present position.\textsuperscript{560}
\end{quote}

It is not known how Scott-Williams came to be in possession of this information and it is odd that he should have it. The partnership with Alsop and Martin had not been dissolved and the difficulties it was experiencing were presumably not in the public

\textsuperscript{558} Henderson to Godsell, 17 August 1923, RAIA, Records, Box 153/1b

\textsuperscript{559} Martin’s term of articles at A & K Henderson was interrupted in 1915 when he enlisted in the AIF. He was discharged in April 1919. See for example, \textit{RVLJ}, xxv/1 (1927)

\textsuperscript{560} Scott-Williams to Henderson, 15 March 1924, A & K Henderson Records, Box 132
arena. However, with the competition looming, it is quite likely Henderson, going behind his partners’ backs, conducted a private search for a designer, making discreet enquiries amongst his colleagues, in particular John Smith Murdoch, Commonwealth Architect, with whom he was associated in Canberra. Murdoch, as head of the Department of Works, was Scott-Williams’ employer, and perhaps had passed the information on to the young designer.

In any event, discussions took place between Henderson and Scott-Williams over the next few months, but Scott-Williams, who was very keen to have his ‘name associated with [Henderson’s] … as a means of coming before the Public’, wanted the promise of a future partnership before leaving the ‘Permanent Government Service’.\textsuperscript{361} Henderson would make no such promise but would guarantee two years’ employment and a salary package based on the firm’s profits since January 1921. This would determine not only Scott-Williams’ ability but also see ‘how we pull together … and [for] you to know my bad points’.\textsuperscript{362} Here, Henderson perhaps acknowledged that there was some justification in Alsop’s and Martin’s complaints. The qualification demanded by Henderson suggests that he also had his doubts about Scott-Williams. While Scott-Williams did not join the firm he did form a liaison with Henderson for the forthcoming competition.

Immediately following the formal departure of Alsop and Martin, Henderson delivered a ‘confidential’ memorandum to his staff. The memorandum is undated but referred to a new work detail effective as of 16 September 1924, the day after the partnership ceased.

It stated:

\begin{quote}
For some time in a separate office, and with an associate, I have been working on the Canberra Administrative Buildings Competition. On Tuesday morning, this job will come into the office. It is my particular wish that the subject shall be mentioned to no one outside the office in any circumstances whatever, and no feature of the design or hint of any detail incorporated in it is to be discussed outside at any time before or after its completion.\textsuperscript{363}
\end{quote}

Clearly this work had been in progress during the partnership period. Does it mean that Henderson was so thoroughly disenchanted with his partners that he made sure they were precluded from this opportunity as well? Perhaps he felt that relations had deteriorated to the extent that there was little hope of resurrecting the partnership. There was certainly an opportunity to involve Martin at least in the competition as, from

\textsuperscript{361} Scott-Williams to Henderson, 14 April 1924, ibid.
\textsuperscript{362} Henderson to Scott-Williams, 16 April 1924, ibid.
\textsuperscript{363} Henderson to staff, c September 1924, ibid.
approximately March 1924, negotiations instigated by Martin ensued regarding an independent partnership with Henderson. Although it was not until July that he formally rejected the proposal, the attraction of a partnership must have faded for Henderson and he decided against the idea. Martin's departure left the firm without an expert designer, and requiring Henderson to look elsewhere for his next project.

An announcement made in The Argus of 17 December 1924 of the results of the Administration Building competition confirms the collaboration between Henderson and Scott-Williams. To Henderson's bitter disappointment, their entry was awarded second prize in the competition, which was won by George Sydney Jones, architect of Sydney.

33.
Administrative Building, Canberra, (competition drawings, 1924)
A & K Henderson Records, Boxes 237/38

National Bank of Australasia - limited competition 1924
The competition for the National Bank head office was launched in November 1924 with Henderson, and five other architects or firms invited to compete. Still without a
specialist designer, Alsop and Martin having left a few weeks before, Henderson again enlisted the help of Scott-Williams.

34.
National Bank competition (1924-25)
(sketches by Henderson)
A & K Henderson Records,
Box 120

To confirm discussions that had taken place regarding his offer Henderson wrote to Scott-Williams on 17 December 1924. He told Scott-Williams that he had been informed confidentially that if their competition entry was successful they would get the job. He also confirmed the terms of the offer, which were either for Scott-Williams to stay in his current employment with the Public Works Department and split the prize money, or enter into a contract with A & K Henderson as chief draftsman for the duration. Henderson wrote

Being a confidential, limited competition, I cannot send the design in our joint names. I think you know me well enough to know that, if we should be successful, in any public statement in regard to the matter, I would give you your fair meed of credit.  

Scott-Williams agreed to the proposal, opting to stay with the Public Works Department but to work full-time on the entry from 24 December 1924 to 15 January 1925.

Henderson also informed Scott-Williams that his office was ‘sketching hard on plans’, banking being a ‘special planning business’. He said: ‘We have settled our floor

361 Henderson to Scott-Williams, 17 December 1924, ibid., Box 262/5451
heights, and settled our front subdivision upstairs, and settled our ground floor entries, so that you could start the thinking straight away.\textsuperscript{365} From this it would appear that Scott-Williams' role was to design and draw the elevations and perspectives. Presumably, if he was to receive half the prize money, he was to be equally responsible for the entry but, by 8 January, he had stopped work on the project to go on holiday, apparently satisfied with the work he had done but also concerned about his health and thus the need for a break. This left Henderson to finalise the entry and submit it on 15 January. Henderson wrote to Scott-Williams:

You may have been somewhat surprised when you realised that I had re-drawn both the elevations myself. During the couple of days after you went away for your holiday, a couple of my closest professional friends went over the competition drawings with me, and they both, (when I asked them what they thought of the job,) told me frankly, that they liked the perspectives, but that they did not think the elevations were up to the standard of the rest of the job. They both dropped on to obvious discrepancies in the widths of the piers, and a lack of [centring] in the triglyphs, and the presence of Corinthian capitals where they should not exist, and their comments, and my own further study of the drawings, decided me to re-draw them.

Henderson went on to say that in the circumstances he considered Scott-Williams had not fulfilled his part of the agreement and accordingly was not entitled to half the prize money. He gave a full account of his reasons, adding that of course he wanted to have Scott-Williams' view and invited him to lunch.\textsuperscript{366} Henderson's behaviour here is evidence of the openness and truth he considered essential to working relationships.\textsuperscript{367} However, letters indicate that Henderson had taken over the entire project without consulting his colleague, who had an equal interest in the competition entry, and that he considered it was within his rights to do so. No doubt Rodney Alsop and Marcus Martin would not have been surprised to learn of this course of events, which might equate with their idea of being treated as subordinates.

This time fortune favoured Henderson and the firm won the competition. Despite there being no evidence that Henderson gave Scott-Williams any credit for his part in the winning design, a good relationship was maintained, and Scott-Williams continued to offer help and otherwise take an interest in the project.

\textsuperscript{365} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{366} Henderson to Scott-Williams, 28 January 1925, ibid. This is a long detailed letter of over 500 words. \textsuperscript{367} Henderson, 'Supervision and the Relationships of Contracting Parties', p.97. Henderson's letters and memoranda demonstrate this straightforward approach in all business matters.
A further indication of Henderson’s disenchantment with partnerships occurred the following year, when in response to an invitation to design a guest house in Canberra he replied accepting the invitation, but not in conjunction with Scott-Williams ‘not on account of any objection we have to him but on account of the fact that we have had several experiences of Joint Architechtship, and have decided to have no more’. What Scott-Williams thought of such peremptory dismissal is unrecorded. In the meantime John Freeman had joined the firm and for the time being at least the question of a key designer for A & K Henderson was resolved.

Henderson’s association with Rob Yuncken and John Freeman presented an outstanding opportunity for a partnership. Perhaps through a connection between his father, a master builder, and Kingsley Henderson, Rob Yuncken joined the firm as a student in 1921. John Freeman joined in 1925. He had trained at the Gordon Institute of Technology in Geelong under the direction of George R King, who probably arranged for Freeman’s employment with Henderson. King was reputedly one of the best architectural teachers. He was also a classicist and it is likely that Freeman received his classical training from King. From the late 1920s Freeman and Yuncken became increasingly important to Henderson, and at the end of 1930 their names were on the firm’s letterhead. However, in June 1933 they, together with Tom Freeman, left A & K Henderson to set up their own practice, Yuncken Freeman & Freeman. A fourth staff member, W Balcombe Griffiths, followed soon after and the firm became Yuncken, Freeman, Freeman & Griffiths. There is no documentation explaining the reasons for the departure of these men, and accounts from other sources are varied. Whatever the reason, it seems extraordinary that Henderson allowed it to happen. The various areas of expertise these young men had developed while with Henderson comprised the

368 FCC to A & K Henderson, 3 February 1926, A & K Henderson Records, Box 53/116; 8 February 1926 Henderson to FCC, ibid.
370 There are not many examples of letterhead on the files, the majority being copy correspondence. The earliest example of the letterhead referred to is 9 December 1930 on which Strachan-Smith and Staughton are also included. There is also an example of 11 January 1929 showing only Henderson’s name. In 1925, when dealing with the National Bank regarding its new head office, Kenyon Elliott’s name appears. As these architects had no partnership status it is likely the names were included on the letterhead for the sole purpose of assuring clients of Henderson’s faith in his senior men.
371 Yuncken Freeman existed from 1933 to 1993. This firm had a number of titles. In this study it is referred to as Yuncken Freeman.
ingredients of an excellent partnership. John Freeman, as expert in all aspects of design, took a crucial, if not leading, role in those of the firm’s buildings acknowledged at the time to be most significant; his brother Tom was also skilled and knowledgeable in classical design. In 1933 Henderson had no designers to fill their place.

Yuncken had become one of Henderson’s chief administrators; Henderson had treated him like a son, and seemed to be grooming him to be his successor. When Yuncken temporarily left the firm to travel, he took with him a testimonial from Henderson who described him as the most brilliant young architect the firm had ever had. He seemed to be the perfect protégé and, surely, Henderson felt his loss deeply.

While with A & K Henderson, Yuncken in particular received experience that was to stand him in good stead for the foundation of Yuncken Freeman. In his new firm he concentrated on the practical side of architecture, developing strengths in master planning and administration. He specialised in hospital construction, was president the RAIA (1939-40), and was keenly interested in architectural education. Charismatic like Henderson he could have been an ideal heir apparent for the firm.

Through the expertise of the Freemans, Yuncken Freeman became known for their Georgian Revival houses, built for well-to-do inhabitants of Melbourne’s eastern and south-eastern suburbs. Philip Goad writes that the elements of this style characterised ‘the soberly respectable architecture’ of Melbourne’s wealthy suburbs, and describes the Freeman brothers as ‘masters of this ever-so-polite idiom’. Their clients and their houses were well-publicised in Home Beautiful and in social columns in the daily press, generating good exposure for their firm, and one would think exposure that Henderson might have also been pleased to receive.

The reasons why no partnership eventuated are unclear. Henderson’s experience with Alsop and Martin is a likely factor, his subsequent dealings with Scott-Williams in 1924, as well as his remark to the FCC regarding working in conjunction, confirm his reluctance to risk another affiliation. However, Yuncken and John Freeman had been with him for a number of years, and he had confidence in them and was well acquainted with their characters and their skills. In Melbourne Architecture Philip Goad states that
Yuncken and the Freeman brothers refused an offer of partnership, a suggestion not supported by John Yuncken, who believes Henderson promised his father Rob a partnership some time earlier but as the years went by without the promise being fulfilled, he tired of waiting.\textsuperscript{375} It is also possible that Henderson, when learning about the breakaway plans, did eventually repeat his offer, but by then it was too late. Eventually, in 1935, Henderson formed a partnership with Staughton and Strachan-Smith. As with the Alsop and Martin partnership, the share split was unequal, with Henderson holding 61 per cent and his partners 39 per cent between them.\textsuperscript{376} The basis for the division is not explained; but reference to Henderson’s discussions with Alsop and Martin suggests it was based either on effort, the relative value of client connections, or the relative value of work in each partner’s charge.\textsuperscript{377} In any event, it is unlikely that Yuncken and Freeman would have agreed to such an unequal split, nor might they have agreed to the level of control Henderson would have undoubtedly wanted to wield. As a consequence, it seems their close relationship came to an end and in later years Rob Yuncken rarely mentioned Henderson’s name.\textsuperscript{378} On the other hand, the tone of John Freeman’s notes of thanks to Henderson, following competition successes, indicates the two remained on good terms.

In his biography of Robin Boyd, Geoffrey Serle writes that after leaving A & K Henderson in 1933, the new firm ‘cheekily [set] up their office in the same building’. Appealing as this anecdote may be, it does not truthfully portray the facts. John Yuncken understands that ‘it was an amicable arrangement’.\textsuperscript{379} In 1934 both firms moved into Charter House. Henderson owned the building and the decision as to its occupants was entirely his; at the same time he needed to tenant it and, ever a pragmatist, would have had no difficulty in accepting an application from Yuncken Freeman. The tenancy file in the firm’s records shows agreement on the arrangement early in 1933, a few months before the group departed and well before the building was ready for occupation. Moreover, it is unlikely that Henderson was at all concerned about the presence of the new firm, and given his supreme confidence, even less likely that he felt threatened. Similarly, it is reported elsewhere that staff members of Yuncken

\textsuperscript{375} Interview with John Yuncken, 12 March 2009
\textsuperscript{376} A & K Henderson Records, Box 132
\textsuperscript{377} Henderson to partners, 29 August 1923, ibid.
\textsuperscript{378} Interview with John Yuncken, 12 March 2009
\textsuperscript{379} Ibid.
Freeman felt embarrassed when they encountered Henderson in the building, especially in the lift; no such emotion would have moved Henderson. The account of Yuncken Freeman's audacious tenancy in the building presumably comes from Boyd who, despite being in Henderson's employ, said he was 'tongue-tied with embarrassment' whenever he encountered him in the lift.  

In retrospect, a formal association between Henderson, Yuncken and John Freeman had the potential to ensure the longevity of the firm and its status as a leader in the profession. Instead the firm continued in practice after the war, successful still but without many of the clients Henderson had worked so hard to acquire and hold. In particular, the Alfred Hospital, although it still retained A & K Henderson for some work, began to use other firms as well. Without Henderson's entrepreneurship and dynamic networking, the firm's celebrity status was lost. Ironically, it was Yuncken Freeman that went on to be a leader in the profession until it too closed its doors in 1993.

The fact that Henderson had no logical successor made the formation of a partnership all the more necessary to ensure his place in architectural history. He may have presumed that Francis Bell would stay with the firm and eventually become his partner, reminiscent of his partnership with his father. However, the direction taken by Bell after the War indicates that it would have been unlikely for him to follow a traditional path, as he instead followed Boyd's modernist inclinations. Therefore, like WR Mead, Henderson had no one to protect his memory. In conversation with members of his extended family, his fame is overshadowed by the more ordinary lives of their more direct ancestors.

In addition, a number of other factors contributed to the diminution of the firm following Henderson's death in 1942, the foremost being that for the firm's prestige to be maintained it relied on his entrepreneurship. Secondly, he died at the comparably young age of fifty-nine years, probably unexpectedly but at the same time he had been unwell in the preceding months and it's possible he had been warned or was aware in some way that his health was fragile. Certainly, in the memorandum to his partners of December 1940, and that addressed to Wilson of about the same date, there is evidence that he had begun to make plans, and he instructed Staughton and Wilson as to the future operation

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380 Serle, Robin Boyd, p.41
of the firm in the event of his death. In his will he decreed his Trustee carry on the practice in like terms.

The War itself was another factor in Henderson’s neglect by architectural historians. Not only had business slowed but also the community was preoccupied with more important issues than architecture and building. When Henderson died in 1942 the RVIA had temporarily ceased publication of its journal, thereby depriving Henderson of the accolades he could normally have expected to receive from within the profession. His death and funeral were well reported in the Melbourne (and Canberra) press, but probably soon put aside by the larger community whose thoughts were on events in Europe and the developing war in the Pacific, which had begun just a few months earlier.

The heyday of large-scale city building had ended in the late 1930s, and after the war, when building resumed in Melbourne, the focus was on the need for new housing. Some years earlier Henderson had decided to place more emphasis on residential architecture; he informed the staff that as he and his partners considered the practice too highly specialised in office, industrial and hospital work, they felt ‘the field should be broader and should include residential and apartment house work’. It was for this reason that Wilson joined the firm. 381 Had he lived longer, Henderson would probably have embraced residential architecture with the gusto he displayed for all his activities. In the event the firm was carried on by Staughton and Wilson, and by all accounts with some success. Nevertheless, without Henderson’s forceful personality, it lost much of its standing.

To illustrate how the lack of a strong partnership or successor contributed to the demise of the firm, comparison is made with Stephenson & Turner, a partnership similar to A & K Henderson in many ways. Formed in 1921, it grew to become a leading firm of the twentieth century. Only in 2009 did it close its doors. Moreover, this firm has been accorded two written histories plus a pictorial record published by the firm in 1970.

In the combination of its partners’ skills, the original firm of Stephenson & Meldrum bore a resemblance to A & K Henderson in the early 1920s when Alsop and Martin were in partnership with Henderson. Like Henderson, Arthur Stephenson was ‘not known as

381 Henderson to drawing office, 1 October 1938, A & K Henderson Records, Box 132
a designer as much as a businessman and gifted negotiator’, while Percy Meldrum, like both Alsop and Martin, was ‘a talented designer and watercolourist’.\textsuperscript{382} Rowan Wilken writes that

\begin{quote}
What held the initial partnership together for so long [1921-1937] had been a balance of creative design and business acumen, with the individual strengths and preferences of Stephenson acting as a foil for those of Meldrum, and vice versa.\textsuperscript{383}
\end{quote}

Where the combination of skills led to a harmonious and enduring relationship in this instance, the same did not apply to Henderson and Alsop and Martin, and in a much shorter time that partnership ended. Another similarity between the two firms was the nature of their work; in particular hospitals, banks and other commercial buildings. However, Stephenson & Turner grew and expanded and in later years opened offices throughout Australia and in New Zealand, while A & K Henderson remained centred in Melbourne with the occasional temporary office elsewhere for the management of a particular project.\textsuperscript{384} Nevertheless, although the firm’s fortunes and staff numbers fluctuated, throughout Henderson’s lifetime it maintained its reputation as one of Melbourne’s leading firms.

In relation to Stephenson & Turner, Wilken writes that

\begin{quote}
it is clear from documentary material that the firm was successful as a complex team of designers, project managers and business people, far beyond the individual personality of Arthur Stephenson.\textsuperscript{385}
\end{quote}

Conversely, in the interwar period A & K Henderson was driven by Kingsley Henderson - his personality and his management. At the same time he clearly trusted his senior staff and gave some members a great deal of responsibility, in particular when on his many trips to oversee the firm’s interstate jobs, and those in New Zealand, when management of the office was necessarily left to others.

Shaw gives an interesting account of the way in which Stephenson was viewed in his firm, and of his personal power. He writes:

\begin{quote}
In his firm he shared financial equity but not authority; there were partners but not equals. To his associates and employees Stephenson projected the image of a father figure, sometimes stern, often affectionate. Even senior partners called him "The Boss"
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{382} Philip Goad, Rowan Wilken and Julie Willis, \textit{Australian modern : the architecture of Stephenson & Turner}, Miegunya Press, Melbourne University Publishing, Carlton, Vic., 2004, pp.4-5
\textsuperscript{383} Ibid., p.4
\textsuperscript{384} Wilken writes that: ‘Corporate expansion had already been set in train in 1934 with Donald Turner’s elevation to senior partner and his superintendence of the firm’s newly established Sydney office.’ p.4
\textsuperscript{385} Goad, Wilken and Willis, \textit{Australian modern}, p.6
and he signed the long open letters he often wrote to his staff, “Boss” – or, in later years, “Your Old Boss”. Stephenson’s willingness to share financial equity but not authority was possibly a brilliant strategy, because the psychological satisfaction inherent in the implied equality enabled the other partners to forgo authority as of their choice. Conversely, Henderson created partnerships but no equality in either equity or authority, thereby emphasising his partners’ inferiority, or perceived inferiority. These terms are not likely to have appealed to Yuncken and Freeman. The power Stephenson exerted was clearly extraordinary. It seems inconceivable for a firm of such size to be completely controlled by one man. The work practices he implemented were probably a contributing factor to the smooth operation of the firm. Shaw writes that Stephenson was determined on reforms. He modelled the organisation of his practice not on the cosy, cottage-industry approach then common, but on the systems of the American industrial architect Albert Kahn who, in the 1920s, was famous for the production-line efficiency and autonomy of his vast practice. Henderson also transformed the business of A & K Henderson from a ‘cottage-industry’ style (although probably never cosy), to an efficient machine. For some staff at least he certainly presented an image of an affectionate father figure who was often stern and, by his own admission, exacting. A smaller, more intimate practice probably suited his personality, particularly given his intent of overseeing everything.

A & K Henderson lost impetus following Henderson’s death. Stephenson & Turner also experienced a reversal with the death of Arthur Stephenson in 1967. Shaw concludes: ‘The distinctive shape his powerful personality had stamped on his empire for almost half a century did not survive without his reinforcing presence’. As a result, although it did not lose momentum, that firm changed direction.

At Bates Smart, Osborn McCutcheon became a partner in 1925, aged twenty-six and only three years from completing articles. He too became a powerful figure in his firm.

387 Ibid., p.25. Shaw does not make it clear when these innovations were implemented, but includes the statement in his account of the early years of the practice.
388 Ibid., p.65. The main source for *Australian Modern* is the Stephenson & Turner archive which, like that of A & K Henderson, is held by the State Library of Victoria. In addition, the bibliography lists a number of texts published by the owners of specific buildings - particularly hospitals. The authors also draw on Shaw’s biography. The author does not cite his sources in detail but amongst the acknowledgments is an undergraduate thesis from the University of New South Wales plus archives at the University of Melbourne, the State Library of Victoria and the Mitchell Library, Sydney.
and a great loss when he retired in 1977. However, Bates Smart & McCutcheon had a long tradition of sharing control and infusing the firm with new blood: that firm continues to this day.

Yuncken Freeman, too, was always a partnership of many, and never relied on one powerful figure. Instead a combination of designers and administrators ensured its reputation as a leader throughout its lifetime. Why Henderson let the Yuncken Freeman group depart the firm will always be a mystery, as despite A & K Henderson’s continued success until the outbreak of the Second World War, it surely would have been significantly more notable and prosperous had those architects remained. After the War A & K Henderson no longer held its position of pre-eminence as of earlier times; whereas Yuncken Freeman was by now well-established and successful in its own right - with hospital architecture a speciality. One can only speculate as to the standing of Henderson’s firm, and its place in history, had a new partnership eventuated.

Henderson’s entrenched ideas about how his architectural practice should operate may have led to its decline. His strong political convictions might have added to the way he has been overlooked by historians. During the twenties and thirties, the threat of communism was high in conservative middle-class circles. Cathcart writes of the uneasiness of the time: ‘Throughout the west, respectable folk had grown disillusioned with democracy and fearful that democratic socialist parties were the tools of the new Bolshevik Russia.’ Clearly Henderson was one of the ‘respectable folk’, but how extreme his views were is not clear. Certainly, his belief that Monash should take over running the country suggests he was not averse to a dictatorship. It is known that he admired some of Mussolini’s efforts in Rome but, once again, this was not unusual. Cathcart says an attraction for Mussolini and fascism in the period was respectable. Nonetheless, Serle claims Henderson’s politics were very extreme when he describes him as ‘a premature McCarthyist, who kept dossiers on communists and other subversives, accused the university of being “a hotbed of communism” and harassed its

389 Philip Goad (ed.), Bates Smart: 150 years of Australian architecture, Thames and Hudson, Fishermans Bend, Vic., 2004, p.298
390 Michael Cathcart, Defending the National Tuckshop: Australia’s secret army intrigue of 1931, McPhee Gribble, Fitzroy, Vic., 1988, p.31
391 Ibid., pp.32-34
vice-chancellors. However, he does not give a source for this claim, so while it fits with Henderson's general stance, its accuracy should be questioned. Nevertheless, such extreme views gradually became less popular, perhaps adding to Henderson's lack of credibility.

392 Serle, Robin Boyd, p. 39. Serle does not give his source for this comment, other than a general reference to the Boyd file in the Henderson records. This file relates only to Boyd's articles and early employment with the firm, and contains no information relating to Henderson's political activities or beliefs.
Conclusion

This study establishes the extensive contribution Kingsley Henderson made to architecture, throughout Australia and New Zealand, but in particular to the building of Melbourne and Canberra. In Melbourne the construction of eight buildings in Collins Street, plus noteworthy alterations to two others, was in itself impressive. The significance of various buildings discussed, or otherwise referred to, in this study, including head-office buildings for banks and insurance companies, demonstrates the position of importance and reputation for excellence A & K Henderson deservedly enjoyed.  

Henderson’s particular contribution to the firm’s buildings was economic planning, an aspect of the utmost importance to his clients who desired the best possible commercial return for their investment. His great skill in developing and maintaining an extensive network of influential client contacts contributed to the firm’s prestige, and his skill in business management ensured the firm’s continuous success throughout the periods of economic highs and lows that characterised the interwar years.

The fact that the firm followed the tradition of drawing on the styles of other countries, in particular America, should not preclude its architecture from consideration.

Architectural thinking in the period accorded with City Beautiful philosophy regarding good taste and manners in design that would contribute order and regularity to the cityscape. This sense of architectural conformity characterised Melbourne buildings until the 1960s when, as a result of large-scale demolition, the city’s identity began to change.

In the twenties and thirties most architects continued to draw on overseas ideas for their buildings, increasingly originating from America rather than England. For Henderson it was necessary to fulfil the expectations of his clients. It was not necessarily his particular preference that determined style in his firm’s work; rather his major bank and insurance clients with parent companies in England invariably dictated the style of their buildings. It was a long-standing tradition for bank buildings to express solidity and

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391 The works chosen for this study represent only a small portion of the firm’s total output. A complete list of the 800 plans and drawings and the contents of 310 boxes of documents relating to the hundreds of buildings created by A & K Henderson has been compiled by the State Library of Victoria and is available for research upon application.

392 Therefore, Boyd’s ‘professional’ approach, describes that taken by A & K Henderson in the 1920s and ‘30s.
security of purpose, and to hint at a past heritage of power and prestige.\footnote{For example, designs based on the Italian Renaissance palazzo were used in America whenever 'nineteenth-century capitalists needed impressive premises in which to conduct their business.' Richard Apperly, 'The Commercial Palazzo: its origins overseas and some examples in New South Wales in the early twentieth century', \textit{Fabrications}, 6 (1995), 57-81, p.62} This tradition also belonged to City Beautiful ideas as they were applied to Melbourne. At the beginning of the period JH Harvey wrote in \textit{Building} that a new bridge, designed by Desbrowe Annear, adhered to the ‘Roman type’, in detail as well as in general form, which resembled ‘the arched bridges of the great Roman engineers’. The design demonstrated

the propriety of combining architectural embellishment with engineering form and function for like the beautiful bridges of the Seine … [it was] an adornment to the city as well as a public utility.

Harvey also remarked that the bridge’s ‘richness and grandeur’ evoked Roman forms that were ‘particularly applicable to public structures in Melbourne, which is noted for its civic pride, and in this respect is analogous to the Rome of ancient days.’\footnote{JH Harvey, ‘The new Church Street Bridge, Melbourne’, \textit{Building}, November 11 (1922), 105-113, pp.105,107}

In respect of Henderson’s particular role in the firm, Boyd’s ‘practical man of action’ describes him well. By his own admission creativity was not one of his strengths and for much of the interwar period he contracted expert designers for the creative part of the work. Irrespective of Boyd’s views, it is usually the more creative architects who tend to be remembered. For example, Marcus Barlow is remembered for the Manchester Unity Building (1929-32).\footnote{In fact this building draws heavily on the Chicago Tribune Tower (1922, Raymond Hood).} At the same time there are often problems of attribution for office buildings because, particularly in large firms, many people make a contribution to the final project.\footnote{Martin Filler, \textit{Makers of modern architecture}, New York Review Books, New York, 2007, p.xvi} This is so with most of A & K Henderson work, where plans and drawings are mostly unsigned, and is the case for the firm’s iconic buildings such as the T & G. Although no longer the home of an insurance company, the T & G Building in Collins Street is readily identified by many people. However, very few of those people can name A & K Henderson as the architect.

Boyd’s description of the two kinds of architect - creative and practical - tallies with Henderson’s account of his experience expressed in 1921.\footnote{See Chapter Two} Boyd acknowledged that Henderson held ‘progressive views on technical aspects of architecture, such as air-
conditioning, electric eyes, and fast lifts'. He did not mention that Henderson was particularly skilled in planning and the economic potential of a building, aspects of paramount importance to clients. Neither did Boyd refer to the skill that was perhaps Henderson's greatest: attracting clients. Martin Filler stresses the importance of this aspect: 'Even now, an architect still needs a client before a project can proceed beyond the drawing board.' Henderson, too, put weight on this aspect of the business. He raised it with Alsop, stating 'to me it is the most important part of the work that every partner can share in'. He added that his favourite tactic was to attract new clients through 'satisfied' clients, thus emphasising the value of client networks. However, Alsop was reluctant to take an active role in attracting clients, stating he would prefer to leave it to Henderson, whom he described as 'a past master at it.'

Henderson's personality was certainly suited to the proactive side of business. Filler reflects on personality in his collection of studies of some of the world's leading modern architects, and observes that a 'recurrent theme' emerges:

> the decisive role that personality, character, and temperament play in shaping architectural careers ... [and] the ways in which an architect, even the most creatively endowed, is able to cope with external pressures can make all the difference.

The different personalities of Alsop and Henderson exemplify this statement. Alsop, described at one stage as 'a true Edwardian gentleman, a man of impeccable manners' was perhaps too gentlemanly for effective marketing, while Henderson, although undoubtedly a gentleman in every way, was extroverted and keen to meet any challenge head-on. It is possible to visualise him in a modified version of Filler's description of Stanford White who, he writes, led a frenetic social life ... which he rationalized as a means of getting jobs from the nabobs of finance and industry. Never has there been a more adept architectural networker ... [He] moved with intuitive ease among the various subsets of New York's economic and social elite as he made friends and garnered commissions everywhere he went.

Instances of some of Henderson's relationships with colleagues and clients suggest his personality was quite magnetic, so that business associations quickly turned into personal friendships. The most obvious example is the friendship between Henderson

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400 Hetherington, 'Robin Boyd: Quiverful of Darts', p.38
401 Filler, Makers of modern architecture, p.xvi
402 Henderson, Letter to Alsop, 16 December 1920
403 Ibid. Here Henderson is quoting Alsop's comment to him.
404 Filler, Makers of modern architecture, p.xvi
and Joseph Lyons, but correspondence on a number of files also shows increasing intimacy between client (or colleague) and architect. Letters from Godsell during the Canberra campaign indicate an increasing fondness for Henderson, and correspondence with Dr Behan, Warden at Trinity College, during the firm’s involvement at the College, shows a burgeoning friendship with Behan being anxious to assist Henderson in every way.⁴⁰⁶ This bizarre episode, wherein the College had suddenly refused to continue with its current architects, Blackett & Forster, and requested Henderson to take over, took all his negotiating skills to produce a result that was both ethical and practical and which brought him Blackett’s abiding gratitude. Amongst his friends he was also popular as histories of the Savage Club attest, where he was noted for his ‘human appeal’, ‘humour’ and ‘camaraderie’ and, singularly, ‘impishness’.⁴⁰⁷

While Henderson’s dynamic personality made him popular with his friends and a powerful influence in the profession, for Robin Boyd, he was an ogre.⁴⁰⁸ Such a forceful personality could have been intimidating for a shy teenager as Boyd was when he joined A & K Henderson. Not much older than Boyd when she joined the firm, Constance Hart describes her first encounter with Henderson. In the course of her interview, which was conducted by Wilson, they were interrupted by the appearance at the door of Henderson. Without any introduction Henderson said: ‘...in the multitude of counsellors there is ...’? Finish it!’ Miss Hart was very taken aback; she was not yet twenty and already nervous in her interview. Unable to finish the quotation, she said ‘I can’t.’ With that Henderson merely nodded and walked out.⁴⁰⁹ Although rattled by this experience, she accepted an offer of employment and started work the following week. Despite further abrupt demands she grew to like and respect Henderson and to be grateful for his encouragement.

The determination and hard work of Australian architects as a group to achieve a fair outcome of the 1914 competition for the new Parliament House in Canberra rescued the reputation of the Australian architectural profession and the Federal Government. An illustration of Henderson’s unique role in these early events was his meeting with Prime Minister Bruce. Here he played a crucial role. It is likely that his political activity had

⁴⁰⁶ Correspondence between Henderson and Behan, 1930-34, A & K Henderson Records, Box 232/96;
⁴⁰⁷ Dow, Melbourne Savages, pp.36-37
⁴⁰⁸ Serle, Robin Boyd, p.41
⁴⁰⁹ Interview with Constance Hart, 29 March 2011. The quotation is from Proverbs: "Where no counsel is the people fail, but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety".
brought him in touch with Bruce and, as none of his professional colleagues were involved in federal politics, his dual role put him in the best position to speak confidentially with the prime minister and, if it was to be possible with his known diplomacy and tact, wield some influence. The secrecy of this meeting is an example of Henderson’s private manoeuvring, which was also evident in his later political involvement.

Henderson’s public contribution to Canberra involved the scrutiny of designs for a large number of the first government and public buildings, including taking care that their placement conformed to Griffin’s plan. His involvement in this respect continued until 1939 when he resigned membership of all boards and committees to concentrate on his chairmanship of The Argus. The architectural profession’s resolve for Canberra to become a city worthy of its status as Australia’s capital called for a great deal of time and energy on the part of many architects and by necessity involved frequent travelling. In Henderson’s case it took him away from his own firm on many occasions during a period that was crucial to its establishment.

Although A & K Henderson had existed for thirty years, it was not until the early 1920s that the firm changed from a large but conservative practice into a dynamic business with high-profile clients and prestigious, even glamorous, contracts. Clearly in those early years Henderson needed partners to assist in the new work then coming into the firm. The new partnership with Alsop and Martin survived its rocky start but in order for it to settle down it needed Henderson’s full attention - to adequately consult with his partners and to efficiently manage the practice. Instead he threw himself into the affairs of the profession and of the establishment of the Capital. It was not surprising therefore that his partners became irrevocably aggrieved. The failure of this partnership signalled trouble for the firm’s future.

It is not unusual for architectural firms to enjoy relatively short life spans, in fact those that survive for long periods are more the exceptions than the rule. However, the identity of interwar Melbourne was formed by men such as Kingsley Henderson. The fabric of the city was created by buildings such as those A & K Henderson contributed. Therefore Henderson and his work have an important place in our history.
Mention is made of Henderson’s political activity in relation to the Conversion Committee, the All For Australia League, ‘the Group’ and the formation of the UAP in the numerous political histories of the period. The extent of Henderson’s activity and, more importantly, his influence, is unknown as probably intended. The Group worked behind the scenes and did not broadcast its aim to change the course of political history. It had a single objective and once this was achieved, did nothing more. It did not trumpet its success. Journalist George Baker stated that ‘After years of snuffling round it all’ he still found ‘the translation of Joseph Lyons from the Cross Benches ... to the leadership of ... the UAP ... shrouded in mystery.’

Henderson quickly became good friends with Lyons and the influence of friendship is probably all that can be claimed for Henderson. He had many friends and acquaintances amongst Melbourne’s leading business figures, many of whom were members of the Savage Club and, as he allegedly arranged for Lyons’s membership at the Club, he thus put him in an advantageous position to make powerful connections.

Henderson’s contribution to the community included support of numerous charities. In 1928 he was included in a group of ‘influential citizens’ invited by the Governor of Victoria to support the Toc H Movement. Typical of the movement’s activities was raising money to buy food to distribute amongst poor families. Those who had no money were encouraged to give their time and effort to endeavours such as the building of facilities, including meeting places.

From that time until his death in 1942, Henderson was involved in the Toc H movement as a member of the advisory committee, particularly in relation to the Boys’ Club Movement established to assist disadvantaged boys by implementing communal activities such as camping programs. As well, Henderson advised in relation to the conversion of buildings for club premises, and may well have donated the services of his firm to the actual renovation or construction work.

411 White, Joseph Lyons, p.146
412 A & K Henderson Records, Boxes 4 and 94 contain minutes of Toc H meetings 1929 to 1942 and other material, including brochures detailing the ideals and work of the movement, as well as records of Henderson’s and his firms monetary donations.
The Argus obituary for Kingsley Henderson described him as ‘a force in Australian politics’ although ‘not a member of Parliament’. A similar suggestion appeared in an earlier report in The Argus which claimed:

There was a time when he bid fair to add MHR and MLA to the degrees after his name … [and] … Busy as he is these days, his friends would not be surprised if [he] yet entered Parliament in Canberra as a member …

Neither Henderson’s real political intentions nor the likelihood of this prediction can ever be known. However, there is no concrete indication that he had any political ambition beyond the role he played in the early thirties, although in 1935 ‘he was urged to offer himself for election [in a by-election for the Federal seat of Fawkner] by a large number of representative electors’. He resisted these overtures, stating ‘it would be impossible for me at such short notice to alter professional engagements [which] would prevent me [taking my seat in Canberra this year] were I elected’.

His vigorous campaigning on behalf of the All For Australia League back in 1931, or subsequent activity in the UAP, perhaps kept Henderson prominent in the mind of the conservative electorate, but there is no evidence of this in the contemporary press or in the office files. Maybe a repeat of the political turmoil of the early thirties would have spurred him to action, but in the meantime he was probably content that while Lyons’s conservative government was in power, the future of the country was assured. At the election following Lyons’s death the conservatives were returned, albeit with a shaky majority. However, Henderson was so disgusted with the events leading up to the election and its aftermath, that it is possible he washed his hands of his party. By the time Labor came to power in October 1941, the country was in the grip of war, and Henderson was heavily involved in the war effort and in his role as Chairman of The Argus, and so left the conservative fight to others.

In an analysis of the origins of Liberal politics, Judith Brett highlights the ‘moral qualities’ of the middle class. This detailed study of Henderson finds him to epitomise this understanding of an individual whose purpose in life was to serve the community; a responsible and virtuous member of society, who was ‘able to put aside the interests of self for the greater good’. Finally, it may be Henderson’s class, his conservative

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413 The Argus ‘Talk of the Town’, 6 March 1936
414 The Argus, 27 June 1935, 4 July 1935
415 Brett, Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class, p.9
416 Ibid., p.10
nature, his establishment background and his ultra-right-wing ideology - that is, his very membership of the ‘moral middle class’ - that has caused him to be cast him aside. Such attitudes towards people like Henderson were not uncommon, particularly in later years when more expansive views were held, not only by Robin Boyd, but also by other modernists in the profession and the general community came into vogue.
Reflections post-Boyd

Tibbits wrote that, because Boyd’s interpretation of Australian architectural history was so widely accepted it came ‘to present the reality of the past’ rather than one individual view.\(^{417}\) Boyd’s extraordinary influence over our historians’ thinking has extended to opinions of Henderson. Thus, Boyd’s negative account of his time with A & K Henderson and his memory of Kingsley Henderson personally are to date the only published first-hand views of what the firm and its master were like. A corollary then, is the unfavourable light in which Henderson is cast by Boyd’s biographers – Hetherington and Serle – and their selective and negative approach to Henderson’s personality and work.

In his writing Boyd concentrates on the emergence of modernism in the interwar period and the creative architects who produced it. The place of the ‘practical men of action’ and their contribution to architecture is overlooked, and buildings in traditional styles disdained, despite their contribution to the fabric and identity of the city. For Boyd, the tradition of good manners in architecture had ended. Thus, Henderson and the work of his firm, and that of others like it, are not afforded the place in history they deserve.

To conclude his criticism of the MLC Building in Smudges, Robin Boyd wrote, sarcastically, ‘But what the hell! It’s a “Modern Building” and the public love it.’\(^{418}\) This is a telling remark and, ironically, one that Henderson probably agreed with as for him the MLC Building was modern. As he stated on several occasions throughout his career, Australian technical and structural practices were at world standard. Educating the public in architectural taste was an important aim of the Institute and one that Henderson pursued tirelessly. It was not so much a question of urging his own claims for good taste but of pressing for advisory groups comprising artists as well as architects. Henderson was a member of a number of such groups: from a Melbourne planning committee proposed in the early twenties to the Canberra planning committee in 1939. Throughout the period he continued to voice opinions at the Institute and in the press on the subject of control in building. Prevailing ideals of politeness and good taste were exemplified in A & K Henderson buildings, significantly the Bank of Australasia at 81

\(^{417}\) Tibbits, 'Robin Boyd and the interpretation of Australian architecture', p.46
\(^{418}\) Smudges, 1/May (1939)
Collins Street - the eastern or fashionable end of the street - which was almost certainly designed by Henderson himself.\textsuperscript{419}

\textbf{35.}

\textbf{Bank of Australasia, eastern branch, Melbourne (1935-36)}

Contemporary and 2011 views
\textit{A & K Henderson Records, Box 226; Helena Morris}

When designing this building Henderson stressed its complementary position between its neighbours. The three buildings stand as they did in 1936.

In his early thinking and writing Boyd bemoaned the current state of architecture and, looking to the future, expressed ideas about the course design should take. In his buildings, Henderson looked to the needs of his clients in the circumstances of the present: up-to-date technology and facilities, expression of purpose, and the best commercial return. In his mind he held a position of responsibility, not only to his clients but also to the city and the community. For public appreciation of concepts of good taste, people needed a sense of familiarity and confidence in the city’s buildings - hence the popularity of the T & G Building and the National Bank head office in Melbourne.

Almost anyone with even a vague interest in architecture knows the name Robin Boyd. His writings are still relevant today. Hamann points out that anyone who has written about the history of Australian architecture ‘invariably ran up against Robin Boyd’ and this will probably remain the case into the future.\textsuperscript{420} Some of his books are still in print, with the fifty-year anniversaries and concurrent reprints of \textit{Australia’s Home and The Australian Ugliness} being loudly proclaimed. Moreover, the ‘Robin Boyd Foundation’

\textsuperscript{419} \textit{Table Talk}, 12 January 1936

organises regular ‘open-day’ opportunities for the interested public to view his houses. Thus Boyd is remembered and his modernist ideas are still seen as relevant in 2011. On the other hand Henderson, of whose buildings eleven are still standing in a concentrated area of the Melbourne central business district, is barely remembered. Although he may be absent from Australian architectural histories, a walk around the streets of Melbourne, finds that Henderson’s presence, by the grace of some of our most distinguished buildings, still endures.

Boyd ‘provided an unwavering vision’ in his attitude to both architectural style and thinking. Henderson actively pursued advancement in building technology and economics. In relation to design he thought more in terms of gradual transitions in style than in any abrupt departures from the traditional and familiar. Anything sudden and revolutionary would have conflicted with his inherent view of good manners in architecture and his moral duty to the community.

Henderson had strong ideas about architectural practice and teaching but his writing did not extend beyond lectures and addresses to the Institute. Had he lived longer he might have contributed more to the body of architectural criticism and history. In some ways Henderson and Boyd were not so very different. As Humphrey McQueen points out in relation to Boyd: ‘Good manners and personal charm spread to his views about design.’

The same could be said for Kingsley Henderson.

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421 An area of less than one square kilometre. Many other buildings are extant elsewhere, thanks largely to the efforts of Heritage Victoria.
422 Hamann, ‘Against the Dying of the Light: Robin Boyd and Australian Architecture’, p.10
423 Humphrey McQueen, ‘Home truths’, the Age Extra (Melbourne), 2002, p.6
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