



**Des Sands**

(c.1940s <http://thetartanterror15.blogspot.com.au>; c.1980s RAIA)

**Desmond Ossiter Sands** (1911-1999) was born 16 December 1911 at Albany to Edwin Ossiter and Grace (nee Leishman) Sands, who had married at St John's Church in Albany during September 1910. At the time of the marriage and at Des's birth, Edwin Sands was manager at the National Bank in Broomehill. Des's father became manager of the National Bank at Leonora (1913), Kalgoorlie (1914-18), then from 1919 at Subiaco and other suburban branches, initially living at 60 Rokeby Road Subiaco, and eventually in residence at 28 Archdeacon Street, Nedlands.

From 1918 to 1925 Des received his primary education at the Subiaco State School, from which he obtained a scholarship to Perth Modern School. After five years at Modern School he received a Hackett Bursary to the University of Western Australia. Sands chose not to take the bursary, instead becoming articled to F.G.B. Hawkins (1885-1956) in 1930, and achieving success as the 1933 winner of the prestigious E.G. Cohen medal. In 1936 Sands travelled to London to further his studies and obtain wider experience. Accompanying him was his sister, Felicity, an accomplished dancer who also moved in a quest to achieve greater skills. In England, Sands travelled and worked with another young architect of future prominence in WA, Gordon Finn (1908-1998).

Initially working with Welch & Lander and then Joseph Emberton (1889-1956) whilst also studying at the Regent Street Polytechnic in London, Sands passed the final examination of the Royal British Institute of Architects in 1940. But with the pressures of the Second World War, in July 1940 Des enlisted with the

Royal Air Force volunteer reserve in England. In 1941 he received his commission as a pilot, and for two months was involved in ferrying planes from factories in England. After a few months at a navigating school he was participating in raids over Germany and enemy-occupied territory. After one particularly dangerous sortie in 1942, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Shot down and made a prisoner of war for three months in early 1945, Sands achieved further recognition of his duties with the receipt of a Distinguished Service Order.

Des arrived back in Perth in September 1945, on leave to visit his parents, and met Dorothea Verna Annear of Kalgoorlie shortly after his arrival. Squadron Leader Sands married Verna in December 1945, and she accompanied him on return to England, where he resumed practice as a junior partner with Emberton. Dissatisfied with his English arrangements, Sands returned to Perth and registered with the Architects Board of WA in September 1951 (no.228). Entering into partnership with his former mentor F.G.B. Hawkins, then approaching retirement, Sands' energy and creativity assisted in forming one of the most important and innovative architectural offices in post-war Perth.

Hawkins died in January 1956 aged 71 years, with the business continuing under the name F.G.B. Hawkins & Desmond Sands. Under Sands' leadership the practice produced a number of fine projects including the Red Cross Blood Bank (1953) in Wellington Street, Perth; the MLC Building (1956 with Bates Smart & McCutcheon) in St George's Terrace, Perth; the Subiaco City Hall and Theatre (1957) Hamersley Road, Subiaco; and a collection of experimental steel framed houses (1954-1958), mostly in Cottesloe.

St Lawrence's Church (1957) in Viking Road, Dalkeith has been attributed to Antoni Solarski (1920-1975) as Hawkins & Sands' project architect. Solarski had worked with Sands in London c.1950, and when Sands returned to Perth he asked Solarski to join the new firm. Eminent architectural historian Duncan Richards worked at the office of Hawkins & Sands from the mid-1950s to early 1960s, and later wrote of Des Sands' enthusiasm in an essay with respect to one particular project: "Desmond Sands was a busy and optimistic promoter of his firm and took on risky, or economically doubtful projects in the hope they would turn out well, or if not that any publicity was good publicity."

Des was an energetic president of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects (WA) in 1959-1960, a National Councillor and probable future National President until suffering an unfortunate accident. Richards provides further insight to the history, and design strength of Sands" office: "With the serious car accident to Desmond Sands in 1963 and the turmoil in the office that followed this unfortunate event, energy, enthusiasm and direction was lost and ... the office gradually slipped from public and professional esteem. ... Any study of the firm would need to discriminate between the work of key designers, John Bish, Peter Parkinson, Toni Solarski, and to a lesser extent Bob Stafford (not to mention the minor players, now significant figures such as Ron Bodycoat, Barry Cameron, Gus Ferguson, Walter Hunter, Jim Watson, and others who were on the staff for various periods of time)."

Planned in 1963, the white off-form concrete Classroom Block (1964, 1971) at the WA School for Deaf Children (WA Institute for Deaf Education) Curtin Avenue Cottesloe was another notable Hawkins & Sands" project. By the mid 1960s the practice was renamed Hawkins Sands & Aris, and by the early 1970s it had ceased to function. Des Sands had been a member of the Architects Board of WA since 1958 as one of the government nominees, and was reappointed until 1983, long after his debilitating accident, in recognition of his earlier prestige within the profession and in the general community. Des Sands died at Cottesloe on 16 November 1999, aged 87 years. Verna survived him, passing away in 2007, aged 86 years.

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- „D.S.O. Award“, *The West Australian*, 2 July 1945, p.4 (DSO & Sands" background).
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- „Special Advertisements“, *The West Australian*, 29 August 1951, p.2 (Hawkins joined by Sands).
- „Homes on Mass Scale Urged“, *The West Australian*, 19 January 1952, p.4 (Sands talk UWA).
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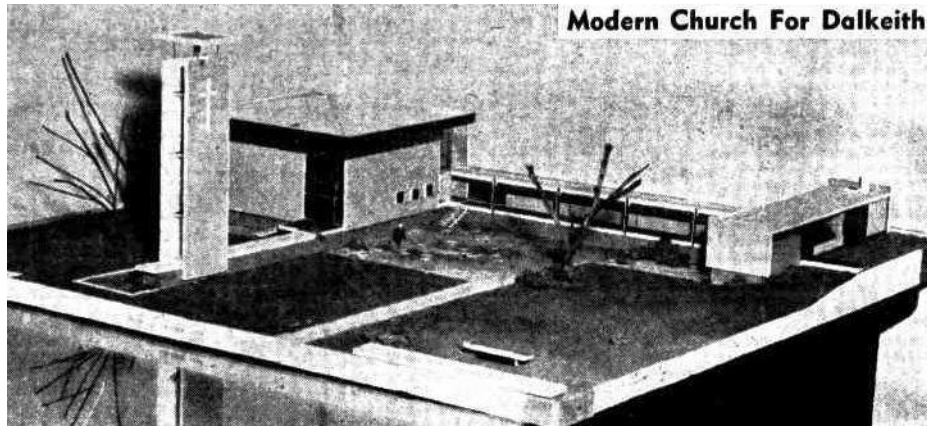
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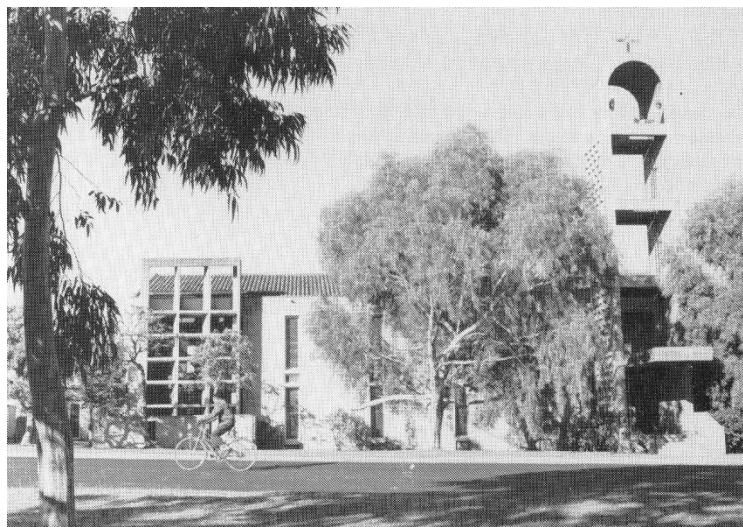
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MLC Building of 1956 in St George's Terrace, Perth (Molyneux, p.71).



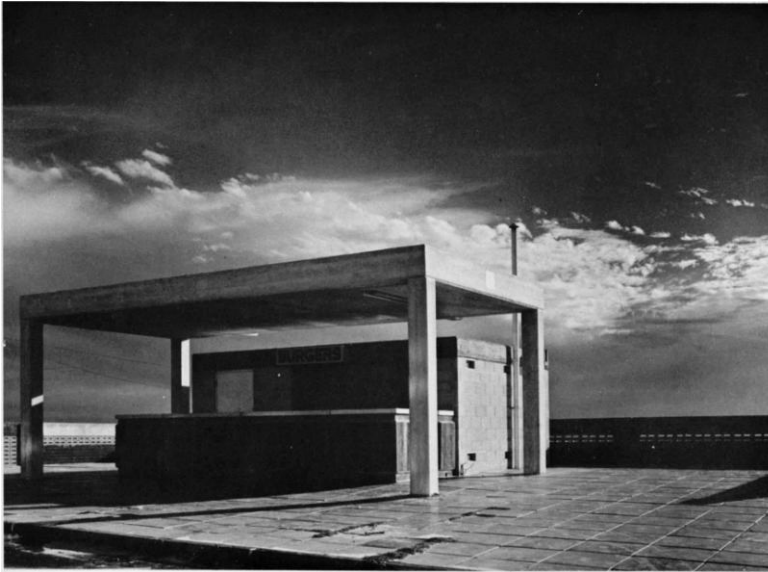
Model of earlier design for St Lawrence's Church, Viking Road, Dalkeith with detached bell tower, and rectory at right hand side of photo (*The West Australian*, 13 April 1954, p.4).



St Lawrence's Church of 1957 in Viking Road, Dalkeith (Molyneux, p.71).



Classroom Block (1964) at the WA School for Deaf Children, South Cottesloe (*Towards an Australian Architecture*, p.144)



Beach Kiosk  
Cottesloe, WA

This small building provides facilities for patrons of the Eric Street beach, one of the most popular in the Perth metropolitan area. The kiosk stocks picnic foodstuffs and has easy access at road level, with a large paved area surrounded by seats. Changing rooms with normal toilet and washing facilities are underneath, at beach level. A large flight of concrete steps provides the main access to the beach.

Kiosk at North Cottesloe Beach (*Towards an Australian Architecture*, p.134)



Changing rooms at North Cottesloe Beach (*Towards an Australian Architecture*, p.135)