
AUSTRALIAN DICTIONARY OF BIOGRAPHY

VOLUME 15 1940–1980

Kem-Pie



GENERAL EDITOR
JOHN RITCHIE

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Deputy General Editor
DI LANGMORE



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PREFACE

In 1940 a nondescript, weatherbeaten factory in Melbourne, which had previously produced lipstick cases, was converted into a munitions-making plant for the duration of World War II. In 1980, after much toing and froing, members of the Australian Olympic Federation decided that Australian athletes should compete in the Olympic Games in Moscow. Many of the events that occurred and the people who rose to prominence in the intervening years provide the subject matter for Volume 15 of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. It contains 682 entries by 543 authors and is the third of four in the 1940-1980 section.

Incorporating the lives of some 2700 individuals, volumes 13 to 16 illustrate such topics as immigration, accelerating industrialism, urbanization and suburbanization, and war (World War II, Korea, Malaya and Vietnam). While other themes are also illuminated—material progress, increasing cultural maturity, conservative and radical politics, conflict and harmony, loss of isolation and innocence—the emphasis of the biographies is on the individuals. The entries throw light on the complexity of the human situation, and on the greatness and the littleness of moral response and actual behaviour which this can evoke. In Volume 15 the subjects range from Errol Noack, a national serviceman who died at the age of 21, to Grace Perrier, a librarian who lived until she was 103. Although the majority of the men and women included in this volume flourished in the 1940-1980 period, a minority of the lives, like that of the solicitor and patron of the arts, Alexander Melrose, who was born in 1865, reveal facets of Australian history long before 1940.

The two volumes of the 1788-1850 section, the four of the 1851-1890 section and the six of the 1891-1939 section were published between 1966 and 1990. Volumes 13 and 14, the first two of the 1940-1980 section, were published in 1993 and 1996 respectively. Douglas Pike was general editor for volumes 1 to 5, Bede Nairn for Volume 6, Nairn and Geoffrey Serle for volumes 7 to 10, Serle for Volume 11, and John Ritchie for volumes 12 to 15. An index to volumes 1-12 was published in 1991, and the *A.D.B.* was produced on CD-ROM in 1996. The chronological division was designed to simplify production, for 7211 entries have been included in volumes 1-12 (volumes 1-2, for 1788-1850, had 1116 entries; volumes 3-6, for 1851-1890, 2053; volumes 6-12, for 1891-1939, 4042). For the period from 1788 to 1939, the placing of each individual's name in the appropriate section was determined by when he/she did his/her most important work (*floruit*). In contrast, the 1940-1980 section only includes individuals who died in this period. Volume 13 thus marked a change from the *floruit* to the 'date of death' principle. When Volume 16 has been completed, the *A.D.B.* will begin work on the period 1981-1990.

The choice of subjects for inclusion required prolonged consultation. After quotas were estimated, working parties in each State, and the Armed Services and Commonwealth working parties, prepared provisional lists which were widely circulated and carefully amended. Many of the names were obviously significant and worthy of inclusion as leaders in politics, business, the armed services, the church, the professions, the arts and the labour movement. Some have been included as representatives of ethnic and social minorities, and of a wide range of occupations; others have found a place as innovators, notoriety or eccentrics. A number had to be omitted through pressure of space or lack of material, and thereby joined the great mass

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whose members richly deserve a more honoured place, but thousands of these names, and information about them, have been gathered in the biographical register at the A.D.B.'s headquarters at the Australian National University.

Most authors were nominated by working parties. The burden of writing has been shared almost equally by the staff of universities and by a variety of other specialists.

The *A.D.B.* is a project based on consultation and co-operation. The Research School of Social Sciences at the A.N.U. has borne the cost of the headquarters staff, of much research and of occasional special contingencies, while other Australian universities have supported the project in numerous ways. The A.D.B.'s policies were initially determined by a national committee composed mainly of representatives from the departments of history in each Australian university. That committee's successor, the editorial board, has kept in touch with historians at many universities, and with working parties, librarians, archivists and other local experts, as well as with research assistants in each Australian capital city and correspondents abroad. With such varied support, the *A.D.B.* is truly a national project.

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The Australian Dictionary of Biography is a programme supported by the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University. Special thanks are due to Professor Jill Roe for guidance as chair of the editorial board, and to Professors Geoffrey Brennan and Ian McAllister, successive directors of the R.S.S.S., and Mrs Pauline Hore, the school's business manager. Those who helped in planning the shape of the work have been mentioned in earlier volumes.

Within Australia, the A.D.B. is indebted to many librarians and archivists, schools, colleges, universities, institutes, historical and genealogical societies, and numerous other organizations; to the National Library of Australia, the Australian War Memorial, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, and the National Archives of Australia; to public libraries, archives and record offices in the various States and Territories, and to registrars of probates and of the Supreme and Family courts whose co-operation has solved many problems; to various town and shire clerks; to the Returned & Services League of Australia, the Australian Department of Defence, and State education departments; to the Royal Society of New South Wales, the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia, the Australian Orthopaedic Association, the *Medical Journal of Australia*, the Linnean Society of New South Wales, the Royal Art Society of New South Wales, the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance, the Australian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, the Australian Federation of University Women, the Sisters of Charity of Australia, the Big Brother Movement, the Union Club, the Aisling Society of Sydney, the Law Courts Library, the Whitlam Library, the Coalfields Heritage Group, the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales, the Professional Golfers' Association of Australia, the New South Wales Cricket Association, all in Sydney; and to the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Authority, Cooma, the Pioneer Women's Hut, Tumbarumba, and the Dubbo Rural Lands Protection Board, New South Wales; to the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, the Australian Society for Microbiology, the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research, the Baker Medical Research Institute, Commonwealth Serum Laboratories Ltd, the Australian Council for Educational Research, the Royal Australian Air Force Association (Victorian Division), the Royal Australian Institute of Architects, the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science and Technology, the Australian Institute of Management and Public Administration, the Royal Humane Society of Australasia, the Christian Brothers Provincial, the Society of Jesus, the Salvation Army, the Menzies Foundation, the Victorian Bar, the National Australia Bank, the Lyceum Club, the Melbourne Savage Club, the Municipal Association of Victoria, Preston and Northcote Community Hospital, and Kingston Heath Golf Club, all in Melbourne; to the Australian College of Education, the Australian Institute of International Affairs, the Law Council of Australia, the Institution of Engineers, Australia, the National Heart Foundation of Australia, the National Health and Medical Research Council, the Commonwealth Club, and the Air Power Studies Centre, all in Canberra; to the National Trust of Queensland, the Royal Society of Queensland, the Queensland Art Gallery Society, the Royal Australian Planning Institute (Queensland Division), the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, the Housing Industry Association, and the Brisbane Golf Club, all in Brisbane; and to the Queensland Master Builders' Association, Townsville,

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THE A.D.B.'S THIRD GENERAL EDITOR

As to time and place, Geoffrey Serle was born on 10 March 1922, almost within sight and sound of Glenferrie Oval, Hawthorn, son of Melbourne-born parents, Percival Serle (1871-1951), accountant and scholar, and his wife Dora Beatrice, née Hake (1875-1968), an artist. In the year of Serle's birth, Henry Lawson died and Melbourne University Press was founded. Schooled at Scotch College, Serle proceeded in 1941 to the University of Melbourne, where he read history. He suspended his studies and enlisted in the Melbourne University Regiment on 13 October 1941; he transferred to the Australian Imperial Force on 15 September 1942; during his thirty-two months service he was seriously wounded in action at Finschhafen, New Guinea. Discharged from the army on 7 June 1944, he resumed his undergraduate course, and numbered Max Crawford, Kathleen Fitzpatrick and Manning Clark among his mentors. Serle joined the Labour Club, helped to found the Victorian Fabian Society and co-edited (with Ken Gott) *Melbourne University Magazine*. After completing his B.A.(Hons) degree in 1946, he won a Rhodes Scholarship and entered University College, Oxford, where he graduated D.Phil. in 1950. He returned to the University of Melbourne, taught Australian history there and, from 1961, at Monash University, and edited (1955-63) *Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand*. On 12 January 1955 he married Jessie Macdonald, who became an art historian; they were to have a daughter, Oenone, and three sons, Donald, Jamie and Richard.

In a career that was as multifaceted as it was creative, Serle established his name as historian, biographer and editor. His first book of history, *The Melbourne Scene, 1803-1956*, co-edited with James Grant, was a collection of documents, published in 1957. It was followed by two general histories of the colony of Victoria, *The Golden Age* (1963) and *The Rush to be Rich* (1971). The former focused on the goldrushes of the 1850s, the latter on the boom of the 1880s. In 1973 he produced *From Deserts the Prophets Come*, a history of Australian literature, art, music, theatre, architecture and science. His biographies included *John Monash* (1982), which won four major awards, *Percival Serle* (1988), the most sensitive, self-revealing and elegant of all his works, *Sir John Medley* (1993) and *Robin Boyd* (1995). In addition to these full-scale studies, he also completed forty-nine entries for the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Most of them are jewels. Varying in length from 500 to 6000 words, these articles cover subjects ranging from John Curtin to the McInnes brothers, Graham and Colin. Serle's 'brief lives' reveal the span of his interests and expertise, the humanity of his judgement, and the precision of his prose. In 1975 he and Bede Nairn were appointed joint general editors of the *A.D.B.* One came from a middle-class, Protestant and Melburnian background; the other, by upbringing, was working-class, Catholic and a Sydneysider. They made a marvellous team. Together, they produced volumes 7 to 10; after Bede's retirement, Geoff edited Volume 11 alone.

Serle also contributed a great deal to libraries, magazines, the arts and sport. In 1966, with Professor A. G. L. Shaw, he founded the Friends of the La Trobe Library to promote development of the library's research collections; he was, in turn, secretary, president and vice-president of the Friends, foundation editor of the *La Trobe Library Journal*, and vice-president (1989-94) of the council of the State Library of Victoria. Conscious of the merits of other repositories, he supported the National Library of Australia, the Australian War Memorial and the National Gallery of Australia. Serle's

love of Australian literature, and his friendship with Clem Christesen and Stephen Murray-Smith, led him to be closely associated with *Meanjin* and *Overland*: he contributed to both magazines, edited *Meanjin* in 1957, and chaired its board and that of *Overland*. Absorbing 'high culture' all his life, he read prodigiously and developed a passion for the novel—in all its forms. He inherited an enduring love of painting, especially that of the Heidelberg School. For many years he belonged to the Buildings (Classification) Committee of the Victorian branch of the National Trust of Australia. In his youth Serle was an excellent hurdler and hockey-player, and a capable cricketer and Australian Rules footballer; in middle age he was an enthusiastic spectator at all these sports; even in his sixties he continued to play a wily game of tennis against members of the A.D.B. staff, a number of whom were nearly a generation younger. He eventually acknowledged the merits of Rugby Union football, yet showed next to no interest in horse-racing.

A fellow of the Australian academies of the Humanities and of the Social Sciences, and of the Royal Victorian and Royal Australian Historical societies, Serle was appointed AO in 1986. He had been promoted to a readership in 1963, but neither sought nor accepted a chair. Incisive and insightful, pragmatic and down-to-earth, left-leaning in his political sympathies without being dogmatic, he was gentle in nature, thoughtful in temperament, egalitarian in outlook, exceptionally hard-working, and a loyal friend. He enjoyed a can of beer, a glass of wine, a cigarette and his pipe. In private life, he succeeded in the three things that matter most, as a son, a husband and a father. Family tradition traced his ancestry to the Conquest, and Norman elements could be discerned in his features, but his laconic voice and distinctive drawl were outward signs that he was 'unapologetically Australian'. When I sent him a letter from London in 1972 extolling the virtues of England, he sent a postcard in reply: on one side it had a painting by Tom Roberts, on the other he wrote, 'aut Australia, aut nihil'. Serle died on 27 April 1998 at Epworth Hospital, Richmond. The nation that he loved has lost one of its finest sons, one who left to family, friends and colleagues an abundant legacy. As the Reverend Dr Davis McCaughey said in his eulogy, Geoff took the 'fragments of a useable past' and wove them into 'the stuff of consciousness and conscience'. Through his understanding of our past, he has helped us to understand ourselves.

J. R.