

The Broken Hill - Collins House Connection: Mining Personalities

By GILBERT M. RALPH, MBE
Consultant Group Historian, WMC Resources Ltd

Built in 1910-11 to the design of Walter Butler for the Baillieu family to house the loosely formed alliance of companies that became known as the ‘Collins House Group’, the edifice located at 360 Collins Street, known as ‘Collins House’, became the home for dozens of business enterprises that had a major impact upon Australian mining and related industries. The undisputed leader of the family was William Lawrence Baillieu, ‘Big Bill’ to his close friends and ‘WL’ to the business world. To the 1960s, his family together with several of his associates was to have a significant impact on Australia’s industrial development with much of that development being attributed to the wealth generated at Broken Hill.

Demolished and replaced in 1974 by a modern office tower known as Collins-Wales House, there is nothing to remind passers-by today that 360 Collins Street was once one of Australia’s most important centres of industrial growth and prosperity and housed a host of individuals who have left an indelible mark on Australia’s economic development.

The tenants

Early tenants included North Broken Hill, New Broken Hill Consolidated, Broken Hill South and Zinc Corporation and some important associated companies such as Broken Hill Associated Smelters, Minerals Separation & De Bavay’s Processes (Australia), Australian Ore & Metal Co., and Edward H. Shackell & Co. It was also home to the property agents, Baillieu Allard Real Estate and prominent stockbrokers, E.L & C. Baillieu. The only major Broken Hill company not to have been domiciled in Collins House was Broken Hill Proprietary Ltd.

In 1916, other important tenants were; Queensland National Bank, P & O Steam Navigation, Ingersoll Rand, Outtrim Coal Co., Mt Lyell Mining & Railway, Bewick,

Moreing & Co., Reinforced Concrete & Monier Pipe Construction Co., Fyvie & Stewart Engineers, Eggleston & Oakley, Merz & McLellan Engineers, Eastern Extension Australasia & China Telegraph, and the Federal Building Society. In addition there were a host of stockbrokers, accountants, insurance companies and lawyers. Amongst the latter were two firms that acted for most of the resident mining companies - Arthur Robinson & Co. and Pavey, Wilson & Cohen.

Company acronyms used in the text

ALCOA: Alcoa of Australia Ltd	CZ: Consolidated Zinc Ltd
AM&S: Australian Mining & Smelting Co. Ltd	ER&S: Electrolytic Refining & Smelting Co. of Australia Ltd
APPM: Associated Pulp and Paper Mills Ltd	EZ: Electrolytic Zinc Co. of Australia Ltd
BALM: British Australian Lead Manufactures Ltd	GEFCA: Gold Exploration and Finance Co. of Australia Ltd
BARE: Baillieu Allard Real Estate Pty. Ltd	GMA: Gold Mines of Australia Ltd
BHAS: Broken Hill Associated Smelters Pty Ltd	GMK: Gold Mines of Kalgoorlie (Aust.) Ltd
BHP: Broken Hill Proprietary Ltd	ICI: Imperial Chemical Industries of Australia Ltd
BHS: Broken Hill South Ltd	KSGM: Kalgoorlie Southern Gold Mines NL
CAC: Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation Pty Ltd	MM: Metal Manufactures Ltd
CHG: Collins House Group	NBH: North Broken Hill Ltd
CIC: Commonwealth Industrial Gases Pty Ltd	NBHC: New Broken Hill Consolidated Ltd
CML: Colonial Mutual Life Insurance Co. Ltd	RCMPC: Reinforced Concrete & Monier Pipe Construction Co. Ltd
CNGC: Central Norseman Gold Corporation NL	RT: Rio Tinto Ltd
CRA: Conzinc Riotinto Australia Ltd	VGDC: Victoria Gold Dredging Co. NL
CUB: Carlton and United Breweries Ltd	WMC: Western Mining Corporation Ltd
CVDC: Central Victoria Dredging Co. NL	ZC: Zinc Corporation Ltd

By the early 1930s Collins House was home to 53 mining companies, ranging from Adelong Gold Estates NL to Zinc Corporation Ltd. Many of them were inter-related and had common directors. The most notable registered entities domiciled in Collins House were the very successful Broken Hill companies - Broken Hill South, New Broken Hill Consolidated, North Broken Hill and the Zinc Corporation - and some of their associated companies including Broken Hill Associated Smelters, Electrolytic Smelting and Refining, Electrolytic Zinc, and Metal Manufactures. The strong association that existed between these companies, their directors and the numerous Australian business enterprises led to them collectively being described as ‘Collins House’ companies. In addition there were dozens of other tenants, among them accountants, lawyers, stockbrokers, agents and engineers, many of who provided services to the Collins House Group.

The Broken Hill companies were instrumental in the formation of several new Australian enterprises, including Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation and Associated Pulp and Paper Mills. The Group had representation in London and a seemingly direct line to the seat of political power in Canberra. The occupants of Collins House were often regarded as the most powerful individuals in the country and among these were, Baillieu, Robinson, Shackell, Cohen, Knox, Massy-Greene, Fraser, Brookes, Stewart and Clark. As Geoffrey Blainey remarked, 'Collins House was the home of the most influential group of financiers in Australia between the wars, and that period was its hey-day'.¹

Of the hundreds of entities domiciled in Collins House, there were a number of major inter-related companies, which collectively became known as the Collins House Group. The relationship between these companies varied - sometimes it was through directorships, sometimes through shareholdings and very often both. Initially the common interest was mining, though strangely the three major Broken Hill companies concerned, Broken Hill South, North Broken Hill and Zinc Corporation never held shares in each other. Melbourne University's Peter Richardson, in a well-researched 1986 paper,² may have misinterpreted some of the marketing strategies and relationships of the Broken Hill companies in early years, when unjustly regarding them as 'cartels', particularly in respect to lead and zinc marketing prior to World War I. They did, however, frequently hold substantial interests in companies they spawned. There were two reasons for this. Firstly the Broken Hill mines were very profitable and the boards of the major companies were able to pay reasonable dividends yet retain sufficient cash reserves for future development. Secondly, the directors were perceptive men - they knew that the Broken Hill mines would not last forever and were keen to diversify into new areas.

Diversification of activities was a feature of the 1930s, though the extent and direction was sometimes perplexing. The smelting and refining activities were a logical extension of their mining operations and it is easy to accept metal and cable manufacturing in the case of ER&S, but the ventures into forestry, paper, paint, and aircraft in the mid 1930s must have been somewhat of a surprise to many. Clive

Baillieu, W.S. Robinson and Essington Lewis had a keen interest in air travel and later combined to form Silver City Airways. Geoffrey Blainey had another explanation:

One reason, I suspect, for the rapid diversification of many of the Broken Hill companies into secondary industry rather than into new mining ventures was their disillusionment with the labour trouble in their mines. The smokestacks which they planted on the coast were therefore the landmarks of both an invasion and a retreat.³

By 1935 there were some notable new names on the directory of tenants including, Gold Mines of Australia Ltd, Western Mining Corporation Ltd, Gold Exploration & Finance Company of Australia Ltd, Electrolytic Zinc Company of Australia Ltd, Australian Machinery & Investment Co., Australian Gold Industry Council, Amalgamated Wireless Australasia Ltd, National Insurance Co. of New Zealand Ltd, and dozens of smaller businesses and offices for individuals, many of whom had a close association with the mining and service companies in the building. But there is no doubt that the three most dominant individuals in the Collins House story were William L. Baillieu, Sir Colin Fraser and William S. Robinson, although Robinson spent much of his time in London and travelling the world.

When describing the demise of the Collins House Group Peter Richardson commented:

Equally serious for the maintenance of that community of personal as well as material interests was the death of Sir Colin Fraser in 1944. With the retirement of WS Robinson from active management of ZC (Zinc Corporation) in 1946, the demise of the original triumvirate which had ensured CHG cohesion, even in times of potential discord and in the absence of legally binding relationships between the mining companies themselves, was complete. Furthermore, with Robinson's retirement, the potential for discord in the Group was exacerbated by the removal of an important link between London and Australian interests.⁴

Following a number of mergers and acquisitions from the late 1940s, Zinc Corp. sold its interest in Electrolytic Zinc in 1949 and merged with Imperial Smelting Corporation in London to become Consolidated Zinc, which in 1962, merged with Rio Tinto to become Conzinc Riotinto in UK, with its Australian arm, Conzinc Riotinto Australia (CRA). With it went BHAS and New Broken Hill Consolidated. EZ moved to a new building in Lonsdale Street in the 1950s. GMA and GEFCA were absorbed into

WMC in 1950 when it became 'Australianised'. North Broken Hill absorbed APPM and soon after moved to a new building in St Kilda Road, South Melbourne. BH South was the subject of a takeover battle between CRA, WMC and National Mutual Life in 1979, which became even more complicated when Bond Corporation made an offer for the National Mutual's 34.4 per cent holding in BHS in November of that year. WMC won the battle in January 1980 in what was at the time Australia's biggest takeover. Under a prior arrangement between WMC and CRA, WMC sold most of BH South's subsidiaries and major investments (other than its Alcoa shareholdings) to CRA.

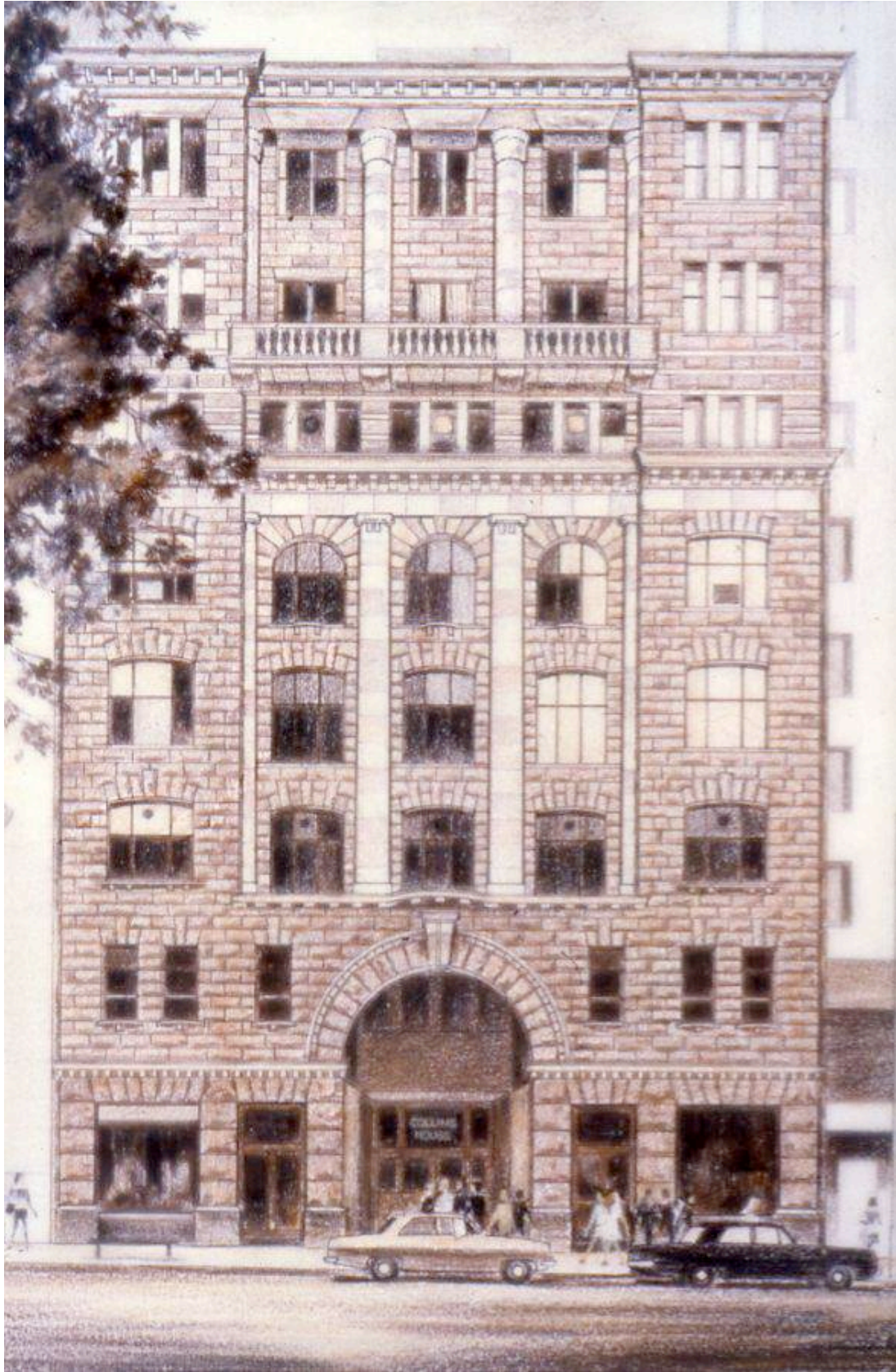
By 1985, apart from the E.L & C. Baillieu and Baillieu Allard Real Estate, the only significant link of the CHG left in the Collins House was WMC which occupied four floors. WMC finally moved to the IBM Building in Southbank in 1994. Remnants with the Baillieu name linger on at 360: E.L & C. Baillieu Ltd, now owned by Deutsche Bank, still operate as a private client sharebroker, and Ian Baillieu & Co., solicitors, have an office in Collins-Wales House. Baillieu Allard Real Estate merged with the UK firm Knight Frank to become Knight Frank (Vic) Pty Ltd.

The Collins-House image

In 1961, a three-part feature in the *Australian Financial Review* gave a good account of the significance of the building and its inhabitants under such stirring headings as, 'Birthplace of Industry - Vast influence in a Modest Domicile', 'New Worlds to Conquer - Creative Genius Seeks Fresh Ventures', and 'Power and the Glory - Older, More Mellow Behind that Solid Facade'. The writer said Collins House, 'Historically, ... is the birthplace of more Australian industries than any other domicile can claim',⁵ a statement supported by another writer in 1968, who described it as the 'Citadel of Adventure ... the home of daring thinking ... [it] came to be regarded as the financial citadel of Australia - although one giant company, BHP, never had an office there'.⁶ The correspondent also stated that:

WL Baillieu had three tests to determine the worth of an industrial venture: its products should be equally important in peace and war; its raw material should be available locally; and as far as possible, the product should not be subject to replacement by some other product.⁷

Drawing 1: *Collins House, Melbourne, early 1970s. Drawing by Max Forbes.*



Courtesy of WMC Resources Ltd, Group Historical Information Collection

The importance of Collins House to the nation and influence of its members is illustrated by a press report that appeared in 1974:

Collins House was, of course, heartily hated by the mining community at Broken Hill and by other sections of the business community which it had variously steamrolled and outsmarted.

It was a tipoff from just such an opponent with access to the rather large ear of the wartime Prime Minister Billy Hughes that led to a military raid on the offices of one of its leaders in November of 1914.

The raid on the office of W. S. Robinson was to investigate allegations that Collins House had retained links with German heavy industry and was clandestinely selling them strategic materials.

The raid yielded nothing, but the slanging match that followed resulted in W. S. Robinson publicly declaring the Prime Minister was a liar. Prime Minister Hughes subsequently met his accuser in his Parliament house office and the meeting led to an informal request to the Collins House group to expand its zinc, lead and copper manufacturing capacities.

The zinc works and the group's expansion into copper wire manufacture thus gained Government backing as the first steps in establishing minerals self-sufficiency for a nation hysterically aware of its dependence on beleaguered Britain.⁸

From time to time other authors, journalists, politicians, academics, commentators, trade union officials, historians and others wrote and spoke about the influence of the Collins-House fraternity on various aspects of life in Australia. Some marvelled at its achievements, others envied its power and influence, many workers applauded it for the livelihood it created, others hated it for the jobs it took away, some shareholders grew in wealth while others lost heavily on speculative enterprises. For example, Professor John R. Poynton noted that:

Collins House became for sixty years, the Symbol of Australian capitalism to its Socialist critics, while its rivals called it 'Glenrowan House' and alleged that its inhabitants were bushrangers, and (mixing metaphors) that its motto was 'when on thin ice skate fast'.⁹

Max Griffiths who began working in Collins House in 1943 as a sixteen-year-old boy fresh out of Melbourne Boys High School wrote a brief article in 1992 about his recollections:

What made Collins House unique, however, was not simply the presence of so many mining companies within its walls, but the way they related to each other. People who work in the head offices of mining companies today, would be astonished at the diminutive size of the offices in which their forebears worked. EZ and APPM, for example worked closely together in a small suite of offices on the sixth floor and Western Mining Corporation was tucked into the corner of a passage, halfway between the Collins Street and the Little Collins Street ends of the building.

But the most exciting part of my job (with Secretariat Pty Ltd) was to visit the seventh floor. Here perched on top of the building, with window views overlooking Collins Street, were the office suites of the great and mighty. Men such as Sir Colin Fraser, Sir Walter Massy-Greene, W S Robinson and A J Keast, all had their offices on the seventh floor. G Lindesay Clark, if I remember rightly, being the good company man he was, preferred to locate himself in Western Mining's own offices [on the sixth floor].

The family connections

Considering the close association of the directors, and their common socio-economic standing in the Melbourne community, it is not surprising that there was some intermarriage. The personalities associated with Collins House attracted national attention. E.W. Campbell, for example, while perhaps giving exaggerated assessments of their wealth, highlighted how fortunes were preserved by intermarriages between families of common socio-economic standing.¹⁰ This is illustrated when he described how one of the daughters:

of WL Baillieu married Sidney Myer, founder of Myer Emporium. June, daughter of Clive, married Samuel Horden, whose father sold the family business of Anthony Hordens to a public company in 1926 for £2,900,000.¹¹

Perhaps described as among the giants in Australian 20th century mining, some of these individuals and their family connections indicate just how close the world of mining and related industries were for a large part of that period. The object of this paper will thus be to identify these connections that tied together the world of mining in the 20th century with the following brief biographical information of some of the major characters.

Baillieu - The most prominent family associated with Collins House was the Baillieu's. As previously noted, it was William Lawrence (WL) Baillieu who conceived the idea of

a prestigious building in fashionable Collins Street in which to house the many businesses with which he was associated. He involved five of his ten brothers in this new venture. At the time they were associated with real estate and stockbroking and Collins House was close to the Melbourne Stock Exchange.

The enterprising Baillieu family came from Queenscliff where James George Baillieu (1832-1897) settled after having arrived on the *Priscilla* in 1853. On the 3rd November in the same year he married recently arrived Emma Lawrence Pow, who later bore him ten sons and four daughters. Initially a lighthouse keeper, James built *Baillieu House* (later called *Ozone Hotel*) and at one time was Mayor of Queenscliff. The entire family, except George (who remained to manage the Baillieu House), moved to Melbourne in the 1880s.

According to John Poynton, in an unpublished history of the Baillieu's, they 'were an extraordinarily close-knit family. Indeed it became a tradition among them to regard loyalty to the family as the highest duty of all'.¹² The eldest son, James Lambert (1855-1890) worked for importers Paterson, Laing and Bruce. The second son, William Lawrence (1859-1936), became the dominant member of the family, progressing from bank clerk, auctioneer, stockbroker, company promoter, and investor to a State Minister. George Francis (1860-1906) was a financial journalist. Robert Frederick (1862-1900?) was a salesman before going to the Boer War and disappearing while serving as a stretcher-bearer. Charles Formby Pieltain (1864-1903) became a doctor, went to the UK and established a practice in Kent. The remaining five sons became involved with W.L. Edward Lloyd (1867-1939), nicknamed 'Prince', who was a stockbroker with a keen interest in horse racing; Arthur Sydney (1872-1943) was the principal partner in Baillieu Allard Real Estate and Richard Percy Clive (1874-1941), Norman Horace (1878-1955) and Maurice Howard Lawrence (1883-1961) were partners with their older brother (EL) in the Collins House stock-broking firm of EL & C. Baillieu (when E.L. Baillieu died he bequeathed a significant part of his estate to the University of Melbourne Library 'in memory of William Lawrence Baillieu' and this generous bequest was ultimately to provide the foundation of what is now called the Baillieu Library).

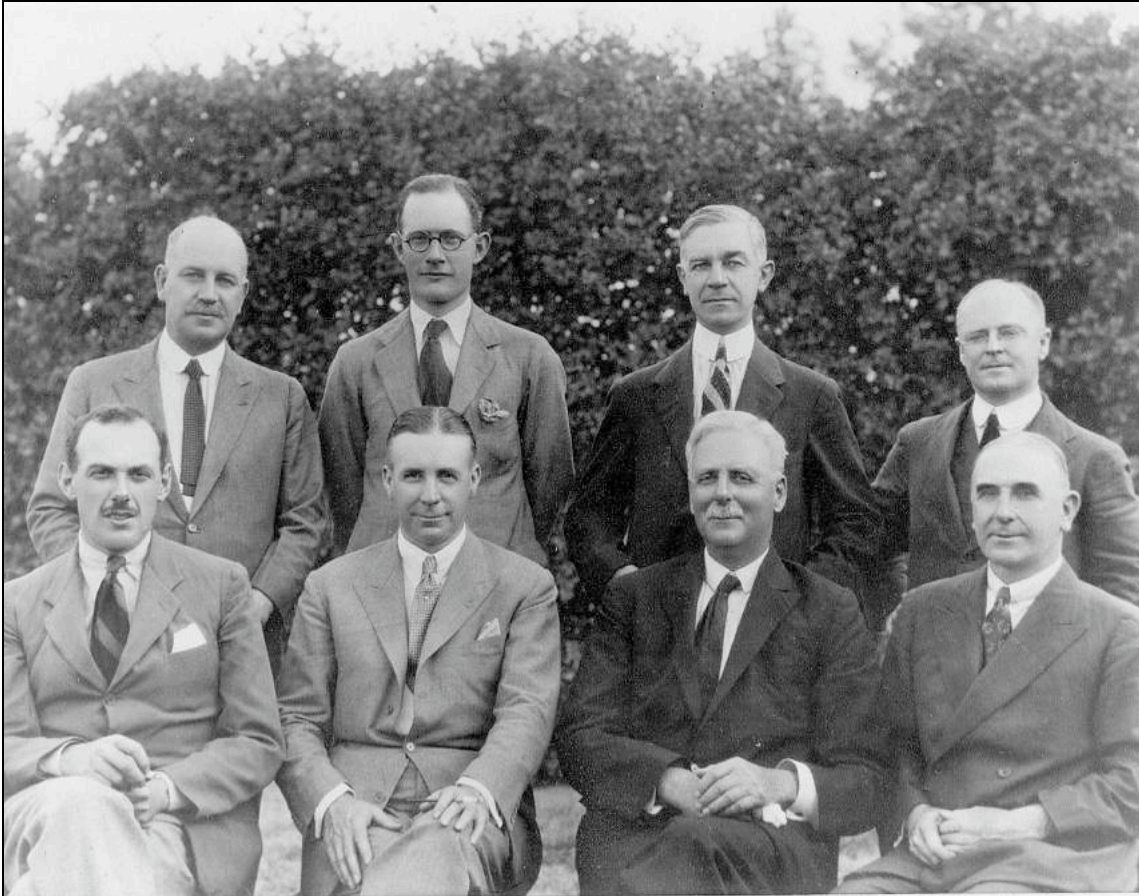
Of the daughters, Emma Elizabeth (1856-1910) married Edward Latham; Florence Frances (1876-?) married John Francis Teulon, an engineer with an office in Collins House; and Amy Adelaide (1872-1966) married Edward Herbert Shackell, proprietor of E.H. Shackell & Co., a Collins House firm of Accountants and Managers. Edward Latham, founder of the Carlton Brewery, had a marked influence on the career of W.L. Baillieu. WL married Latham's daughter, Bertha Martha, in 1887 and for seven years they lived with the Lathams at 'Knowsley', Kew. Soon after his wife died in 1894, Edward remarried WL's younger sister Emma, who thus became her brother's mother-in-law.

In about 1885, WL formed an estate agency and auctioneering business with Donald Munro, son of James Munro, one time Premier of Victoria. The tall and dashing WL was immensely successful and prospered during the Melbourne land boom only to lose a fortune in the 1890-91 crash along with most other land speculators who had borrowed heavily to finance land developments that never took place. Undaunted, WL set about re-establishing himself by setting-up W.L. Baillieu & Co. The firm prospered and his brother Arthur joined him. Arthur later managed the firm while WL involved himself in other activities such as politics and financing mining ventures.

WL built a grand mansion called *Heathfield* on five acres [2 hectares] in the heart of Toorak. Years later it was owned by Sir Keith Murdoch who made it available to the Australian Government during WWII as a residence for General Douglas MacArthur when he was Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in the Pacific. The land was later subdivided to form Kenley Court and the house demolished.

In 1897 WL went to London to promote several gold mining ventures in Victoria. Remarkably, he was successful not only making money from the declining Victorian goldfields, but in establishing himself as a reliable advisor on mining in Australia. The contacts he made at the time were to be of great value in some of his later ventures. In August 1901, he was elected to the Victorian Legislative Council as an Independent Member for the Northern Province. He worked diligently in this area and for the most part seems to have supported the Liberals. When the Murray Government was formed in 1909, Baillieu became Minister for Health and Public Works, and Government Leader in the Council. He served as Victoria's Agent General in London while on a visit with his family in 1911.

Photo 1: *Directors of Broken Hill South Ltd, at Broken Hill Associated Smelter's, Port Pirie, 10 February 1928.*



Back Row: A. Stewart; R. Govett; C. Fraser; H.St. J. Somerset.

Front Row: Capt. O. Lyttelton; W.S. Robinson; Hon. W.L. Baillieu; Sir R. Horne.

Photograph by courtesy of The University of Melbourne Archives from the Broken Hill South Collection.

WL also took up a number of important board appointments about the turn of the century (such a practice would not be acceptable in today's political regime). He was a director of Frome River Tin Mining Co., Mt Lyell Mining and Railway Co., Mt Tyndall and Dundas Mining Pty Co., Dunlop Pneumatic Tyre Co., Carlton & United Breweries (his Father-in-law was Chairman), Mount Morgan Gold Mining Co., Hampden-Cloncurry Copper Mine and the Victoria Cross Mine at the northern end of the Broken Hill lode. It was this latter mine, and his brewery association, which was to

become the linchpin in a great new adventure for the Baillieu family. WL became much more interested in Broken Hill and was fascinated by the experiments being undertaken to separate the lead and zinc from the ores at Broken Hill. He and Montague Cohen, a fellow director of CUB, financed the work of A.F.J. de Bavay, the experimental chemist at Fosters Brewery, who devised a workable mineral flotation process. In anticipation of a successful application of this, WL bought up vast heaps of tailings at Broken Hill, which others considered of little value. In 1905, in association with W.S. Robinson, Herbert Hoover, William Clark and Francis Govett, he set up the Zinc Corporation to acquire the tailings dumps and mining leases at Broken Hill.

After several years the Zinc Corporation prospered and along with it WL Baillieu, his close associates and other shareholders. WL was the driving force behind the ZC - he was imaginative and determined. As Chairman he sought out the best people to manage the enterprise and encourage them to succeed. The family shared in his prosperity.

W.L. Baillieu and Emma had four sons and four daughters between 1889 and 1904. Apart from *Heathfield*, WL built a retreat at Mt Macedon, called *Sefton*, which included a nine-hole golf course (*Sefton* was later owned by CRA).

WL's eldest son, Clive, had an outstanding academic record at Melbourne and Oxford before being admitted to the Bar in the Inner Temple in London. In 1915 he married Ruby Clark, daughter of William Clark, partner in the London broking firm of Lionel B. Robinson & Clark. Clive became prominent internationally, but always regarded himself as Australian. He succeeded his father on numerous boards, was a close associate of W.S. Robinson, supporting him in the formation of New Broken Hill Consolidated in 1936, and other ventures. He was Chairman of Central Mining and Investment Corp., which held substantial interests in South Africa. He was on the boards of ES&A Bank, Midland Bank and was one time Chairman of Dunlop Rubber Co. During the Second World War he held senior advisory posts in Great Britain and spent time in USA. He was involved in Post-War reconstruction of industry in the UK. He was created a Baron in 1953 choosing his title as Lord Baillieu of Parkwood in Surrey and Sefton in Australia. His is the only hereditary Baronetcy ever awarded to an

Australian. When Lord Baillieu died in London in 1967, his voluminous collection of records was bequeathed to the Melbourne University Archives, but sadly they suffer from an embargo. Lord Baillieu's eldest son, William Lawrence, inherited the title in 1967. He was accidentally killed in 1972 and the title passed to his son, James William.

WL's second son Harry was a pastoralist who married W.S. Robinson's daughter Margaret in 1922. Another son, Tom, served in WWI and the Citizen Air Force in WWII. He was also a pastoralist and held several directorships in the wool and carpet industries.

George F. Baillieu's daughter, Margery, married Sidney Myer, founder of Myer Emporium. She was perhaps better known as Dame Merlyn for the many charitable works with which she was associated. There was also some intermarriage between the Baillieus and the Hordens, the well-known department store family from Sydney.

Arthur S. Baillieu's son, Darren, was a Barrister and a Director of Baillieu Allard Real Estate (BARE) and CUB. His brother Everard served in WWII and spent his career with BARE becoming Chairman and Governing Director. Darren's son, Ian AK, graduated in Law in Melbourne and Oxford, became a Partner in Arthur Robinson & Co. and a Director of many related companies.

Richard P.C. Baillieu's son (and nephew of WL), Marshal L. Baillieu, was groomed by his uncle to succeed him. He was one-time Chairman of NBH, BHAS, MM, and a Director of ER&S, APPM, EZ and others companies. Marshall's son, Richard Lawrence became one of the prominent Baillieu's of the next generation. He sat on the boards of NBH, ER&S, BHAS, Alcoa of Australia, Kembla Coal & Coke and Beach Petroleum, chairing several of them.

Maurice H. Baillieu's son, John Maddern, was also a Barrister and serviceman before following a career in EL & C Baillieu. He was director of CUB, Dalgetys, CML and Massey-Ferguson. There were of course many other Baillieu family members who held positions of significance in a diverse range of business enterprises, organisations and community interest groups, which are not relevant to this study.

Brookes - Sir Wilfred Brookes had a long and notable career centered around Collins House. He had joined Australian Paper Mills in 1924 and later spent some time overseas

learning about the manufacture of paper. In 1936 he joined the newly-formed Associated Pulp and Paper Mills Ltd and was instrumental in establishing a successful process to produce paper pulp from eucalypts. After distinguishing himself in the Royal Australian Air Force during World War II, where he achieved the rank of Group Captain, he returned to APPM and was appointed a director in 1945. Thereafter he joined the boards of many other Collins House companies including, NBH, BHS, BHAS, WMC, CNGC, GMK, KSGM, ER&S, CAC, Cobar and Apsonor. Outside of the Collins House Group he was Chairman of CML and a director of Alcoa of Australia and H. C. Sleigh.

Sir Wilfred was interested in politics and for many years was Chairman of the Institute of Public Affairs. He was proud of having been a grandson of three times Australian Prime Minister, Alfred Deakin. For a time he was Chancellor of Deakin University. Martin Holme, a former Equerry to the Governor of Tasmania and later Secretary of Apsonor, was Sir Wilfred's nephew by marriage.

Clark - William Clark was the 'Clark' in Lionel Robinson, Clark & Co., the London broking house handling much of the Australian mining company business. William had been a stockbroker in Adelaide prior to moving to London. He was sometimes called 'The Viking' on account of his beard. His daughter, Ruby married Clive Latham Baillieu, first Lord Baillieu of Parkwood and Sefton. The firm continued to operate on the Adelaide Exchange, which in the early part of the 20th Century tended to specialise in mining stocks.

The second, but unrelated Clark was (Sir) Lindesay Clark, founding Managing Director and long-time Chairman of WMC. He was the son of mining engineer Lindesay Clark who had a notable career in the tin fields in Tasmania and later as a consultant to W.S. Robinson and Sir John Monash. Young Lindesay Clark's association with Collins House began in 1930 when he was appointed General Manager of the newly formed Gold Mines of Australia. He was Technical Managing Director of Western Mining Corporation on its formation in 1933 and it was with this company that he rose to prominence in Collins House. On the death of Sir Colin Fraser in 1944, Lindesay Clark was appointed to the boards of BHS, NBH and BHAS.

Sir Lindesay had a great passion for exploration and when he became Chairman of WMC in 1952 he initiated its diversification from gold into base metals. This led to a series of significant discoveries and new developments. Among these were the assessment and proving of the Darling Range bauxite deposits and, in 1961, the formation of Alcoa of Australia Ltd, of which he was founding Chairman. This subsequently led to the establishment of an integrated aluminium industry. He was also instrumental in exploiting the Koolanooka Hills iron ore deposit and initiating the first long term contract for the export of iron ore from Australia to Japan in 1966. The discovery of nickel deposits at Kambalda in 1966 and the development of an integrated nickel industry in Australia, as well as the discovery of uranium at Yeelirrie in 1972, and the discovery of the extensive copper-uranium-gold mineralisation at Roxby Downs in 1975, can also be attributed to his efforts.

Sir Lindesay Clark also held a number of important positions within industry organisations and professional associations such as Councillor and President (1959) of the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy, President (1956-1958) of Australian Mines and Metals Association, Councillor of the Chambers of Mines of Western Australia and Victoria, Councillor of the Australian Mineral Industries Research Association and a member of the Executive of the Australian Mining Industry Council (1967-1973).

In 1974 at the age of 78 years, Sir Lindesay stepped down from a number of Directorships and from the Chairmanship of BH South and WMC. He remained on the Board of the latter company for a further four years during which period he devoted some time to the writing of his recollections of Western Mining Corporation that was released in 1983 on the occasion of the company's fiftieth anniversary.¹³

Sir Lindesay Clark's attainments are to be found not only in the many mining and metallurgical ventures he promoted, developed and persevered with but also in the lives and attitudes of the many people who were fortunate enough to work closely with him and over whom he had influence. He was generous with his advice and liberal with his praise. He was always optimistic, as the last paragraph of his book *Built on Gold* reveals:

There have been many changes in the industry during the life of the Company but I have observed that one characteristic persists - every miner is a prospector at heart, and every prospector is perforce an optimist.¹⁴

Photo 2: Board members at Western Mining Corporation Ltd, Perth c. 1933.



Left to Right: WS Robinson (WMC Director), (Sir) Colin Fraser (WMC Chairman), CP Smith (MD West Australian Newspapers), HB Jackson (WMC Solicitor), Richard Hamilton (WMC Perth Advisory Committee), HE Vail (Chairman WMC Perth Advisory Committee) and (Sir) Lindesay Clark (WMC Technical Managing Director).

Photograph by courtesy of [Gil Ralph] WMC Resources Ltd, Group Historical Information Collection.

Cohen - Montague Cohen was a solicitor and director of Fosters Brewery whose wise counsel and enthusiasm for progress contributed to the advance of some CHG enterprises. He keenly supported the work of Auguste de Bavay, the Belgian brewer who had some creative ideas on the flotation process. He sat on the de Bavay company board and was associated with other ventures proposed by the imaginative W.L. Baillieu.

Brig. Hon. Sir Harold Edward Cohen, son of Montague, was a partner in the firm of Pavey, Wilson & Cohen of Collins House, and represented a number of nearby firms. He had had a distinguished career with the 6th Brigade during WW1. He was a director of several Collins House companies including EZ and was Chairman of APPM.

Sir Harold's son, Sir Edward Cohen, became even more prominent in the Melbourne business world. He too was a lawyer and a partner in the family firm in Collins House. He had a distinguished military career in WWII and on his return succeeded his father in many of his directorships. He was Chairman of EZ, ER&S, EZ, CUB, APPM and several other unrelated companies.

Fraser - (Sir) Colin Fraser, a New Zealander by birth, began his association with Collins House in 1915 when he moved from London to become Joint Managing Director of BHAS with W.S. Robinson. Whereas Fraser remained in Melbourne, WS continued his roving role working mainly from London. Fraser was a well-experienced geologist, competent project manager and a forward-looking individual. He was highly regarded and quickly rose in stature to become Chairman of BHS, EZ, MM, AB, GMA, WMC, CNGC and several other outside companies, and a director of NBH, ZC, NBHC, BALM, CAC, APPM, and Dunlop.

Sir Colin was a highly regarded businessman and held numerous chairmanships and advisory positions on Government bodies during the Second World War. He was also prominent in professional organisations and well-known spectator at race meetings. He once compared mining and horse racing and concluded that there was only one difference - 'in racing, one horse wins.' Fraser lived in a large house in Albany Rd, Toorak, until his death in 1944. I am unaware if any of his children followed in his footsteps, but his close associate and protégé was Lindesay Clark.

Gepp - For Herbert Gepp, who had been born in Adelaide, 1905 was to be an eventful year - he married Jessie Hilliard, joined the Zinc Corporation and moved to Broken Hill to work with Potter and others on the development of the flotation process. He set up the first pilot plant and after proving the process went on to become manager of de Bavay's flotation plant - the world's largest at the time. This made substantial profits for the Collins House group and it was Gepp who was able to convince them to direct more funds to the improvement of the working, and living, conditions in Broken Hill. He initiated the Broken Hill Progress Association and, despite some opposition from unions and apathy from some company boards, he was able to promote local enthusiasm and

inspire a degree of self-help at a very modest cost to the companies concerned.

At the outbreak of World War I, Gepp enlisted in the AIF, but before he had completed training he was released and sent to the USA by the Australian Government to study materials supply and munitions manufacture. When he returned he brought with him not only valuable know-how but also several experts who helped with the expansion of the lead smelters at Port Pirie to enable it to replace imports from overseas that had been disrupted by the outbreak of war.

After the war, Gepp championed the proposal that the Broken Hill companies establish an electrolytic refining plant for zinc production in Tasmania, based on its low-cost hydroelectric power. He moved to Hobart where he designed and built the pilot plant, proved the process and, as General Manager, established the full-scale plant for the Electrolytic Zinc Co. of Australia (EZ) at Risdon.

Following a disagreement with the board, the impatient Gepp left EZ in 1924 and subsequently initiated the Northern Australian Aerial Geological and Geophysical Survey. In 1931 he joined Australian Paper Manufacturers and in 1936 was appointed its General Manager. He championed the use of eucalypts for paper pulp and as he once remarked that the technical processes involved in paper manufacture were little different from mineral processes; they involved harvesting (mining), transport, crushing, pulping and refining. C.D. Kemp stated that,

Gepp himself probably gave birth to more ideas than the rest of his staff put together. One of his associates once said that he had three unique ideas every day of which one was a winner and the other two would have wrecked the company.¹⁵

Greene - Molesworth R. Greene was a pre-gold rush pastoralist in Victoria who was elected to the board of Broken Hill South in 1889 when it moved from Sydney to Melbourne. He later became Chairman and remained in that role until 1916 when he died at the age of 90. According to Blainey, on one occasion when responding to a suggestion by Andrew Fairweather that the company should introduce a Welfare Scheme for miners, Greene and fellow director, W.M. Hyndman opined that 'Their ideal working man was thrifty and obedient and self reliant, and a welfare scheme would only erode these admirable qualities and the Company's profits too'.¹⁶

Govett - Francis A Govett, was a London-based businessman who made numerous trips to Australia after he became involved with mining ventures in Kalgoorlie and Broken Hill. He was chairman of National Smelting Co. in UK, Burma Corporation copper mine in Burma, Lake View Consols gold mine in Kalgoorlie and was founding Chairman of Zinc Corporation. It was his connection with the cash rich Lake View company that helped save the Zinc Corporation from early bankruptcy. His son John succeeded him as Chairman. John was an enthusiast for technical innovation and modern thinking and was a close friend of W.S. Robinson.

Massy-Greene - C.D. Kemp in his biographical sketches wrote that Sir Walter Massy-Greene 'achieved distinction in two widely separate fields of life - politics, and, then business'.¹⁷ He was in Federal Parliament from 1913 to 1933, held a number of Ministerial portfolios, became Deputy Prime Minister but lost his seat in 1922 and was chosen to fill a vacant seat in the Senate in 1923. When nearly 50 years of age, he embarked on a career in business and sat on the boards of over 40 companies, many of them based in Collins House. He was Chairman of WMC, GMA, CNGC, VGDC, APPM, EZ, NBH, BHS, NBHC, MM, Dunlop, Yarra Falls, Bradford Cotton Mills, Felt and Textile, and many others.

Massy-Greene had an obsession with punctuality and it is said that at board meetings he would have the directors fees, in sovereigns, placed on the table at each directors place and at the appointed time of the meeting he would instruct the Secretary to reclaim those of any tardy directors. He lived at 3 Heyington Place, which was later bought by Sir Archibald Glenn a Director of Alcoa of Australia. Sir Wilfred Brookes lived nearby.

Monash - As a young engineer John Monash worked on the Melbourne Outer Circle Railway and for the Melbourne Harbour Trust. By the turn of the century he had set up a consulting practice and was responsible for introducing the Monier system of reinforcement of concrete into Victoria. He was an associate in the firm, Reinforced Concrete & Monier Pipe Construction Co. Pty Ltd which was based at Oakleigh.

RCMPC constructed many of the earliest reinforced concrete structures in Victoria, including buildings, bridges, dams, drains etc. One of the earliest examples of his work, which is still standing, is Morrell Bridge over the Yarra River near the Botanic Gardens. Monash was Superintending Engineer during the construction of Collins House. When the building was completed his firm took a suite of nine rooms. He rose to fame as a General during WWI when, because of his outstanding leadership, he was knighted in the field by King George V. On return to civilian life he became the founding father of the State Electricity Commission of Victoria.¹⁸

Robinson - Anthony B. Robinson was for many years Financial Editor of *The Age*. Three of his sons had important connections with Collins House.

Lionel B. Robinson, the eldest, was a notable stockbroker who, after some years experience on the Melbourne and Adelaide Stock Exchanges, went to London before the turn of the 20th Century and set up Lionel Robinson, Clark & Co., a broking house specialising in Australian mining shares. He was a brilliant operator and with his Adelaide friend William Clark maintained a very substantial business during the Broken Hill and Kalgoorlie booms at offices in London and Adelaide - the latter being a major centre for mining trading at the time.

William S. Robinson, the second son, describes in his memoirs, *If I Remember Rightly*,¹⁹ how after doing Agricultural Science he drifted into journalism and mining. He quickly learned about mining, visited many mines and built up a good reputation as a financial journalist with *The Age*. He gained the confidence of the industry leaders and investors, including W.L. Baillieu, and helped in the development of the flotation process at Broken Hill. By the time he arrived in London he was well on his way to success as a mining promoter. He became associated with Herbert Hoover, Colin Fraser and others and in 1915 became joint managing director of BHAS, and later, Zinc Corporation. His extraordinary skill and foresight resulted in the reorganisation of the Zinc Corporation, ER&S, BHAS, EZ, BALM and the promotion of new enterprises such as GMA, GEFCA, WMC, CAC and APPM. He mixed with world leaders and

became a minerals adviser to many of them particularly following his success in ensuring a supply of lead to the Allied Nations during World War 11.

WS married Charlotte Christie in Melbourne in 1900. She was the daughter of Lyell S. Christie a successful Melbourne industrialist and manufacturer, who in association with Alexander Stewart formed Yarra Falls Ltd, a leading woollen and worsted manufacturer. The Robinson's had two children, Lyell Bryant and Margaret Christie. Lyell became a broker and for most of his life lived and worked in London with his uncle, Lionel B. Robinson, and William Clark. He succeeded WS as Managing Director of ZC in 1947. W.S. Robinson and his wife, Charlotte, retired to Australia in 1951 and settled at *Arundel Farm*, near Keilor, just north of Melbourne, and at *Kilmarie*, on the Bay at Portsea. They usually spent the winters near the coast in Queensland, travelling between these residences with a cook, a nurse and a chauffeur.

The third Robinson son, (Sir) Arthur, established a legal practice at 360 Collins Street, which provided a service to many of the mining companies in Collins House - companies with which he, and some of his relatives, were associated. At the turn of the 20th Century he entered Parliament and was MLA for Dundas for a couple of years, then MHR for Wannon for three years, followed by 13 years as a MLC with numerous ministerial portfolios including Solicitor General. That was in the days when it was not unusual, nor unacceptable to be active in business while a Member of Parliament. Sir Arthur Robinson was highly respected in his business and was a director of WMC and Austral Development.

Shackell - Edward H. Shackell married W.L. Baillieu's sister Amy. He had been an Essendon footballer and an Assignee in Bankruptcy prior to forming his own company E.H. Shackell & Co., the company that acted as local administrative managers for a great number of the overseas-based mining companies in the Collins House Group. Later it became known as Secretariat Pty Ltd. Shackell lived in Albany Road, Toorak, in a mansion designed in 1919 by Walter R. Butler, the architect of Collins House. Edward's brother Harold was a manager in the firm. His son James Baillieu, graduated in law, went to Oxford and after serving in the RAAF followed a career in BHAS, was

appointed a Director in 1952 and went on to become Managing Director and Chairman. He was also a Director of MM and AM&S.

Somerset - As a metallurgist, Henry St John Somerset had a long career with CHG companies and his son (Sir) Henry Somerset followed in his path. H St J was Chief Metallurgist at Mt Morgan, Cobar and BHAS and finally General Manager of Electrolytic Zinc Co. in Tasmania. He was also a director of BHAS and ICI Australia.

(Sir) Henry joined APPM in 1937 as Technical Assistant to the General Superintendent and was one of the company's first employees. He progressed rapidly through skill and enterprise, becoming Managing Director in 1948, remaining in that role until his retirement in 1969. He was a director of some other Collins House companies, including EZ and CNGC, and served on several technical and scientific organisations. For a time he was Chancellor of the University of Tasmania.

Stewart - Sir Alexander Stewart was principal of a consulting engineering firm based in Collins House that specialised in work for mining companies. Initially it operated as Fyvie and Stewart but sometime in the early 1930s it became Alex Stewart & Co. Stewart was a Scot who had worked at the Abernathy Shipyard to gain a Chief Engineer's Certificate. He also worked at the Tharsis Mine in Spain. On a voyage to Melbourne in 1904 he decided to settle there and soon after met and married Grace M. Cuming, daughter of James Cuming of fertilizer fame. He formed an association with fellow Scot Fyvie that lasted for 28 years. While in Britain in 1907 he bought the Australian rights to the Linde process for liquefaction of air and with the Grimwade family set up Commonwealth Industrial Gases and became its first Chairman. Sir Alex had a long involvement with Dunlop Australia and was its Chairman for a number of years. He was on the board of ICI Australia, Triton Gold Mines, BHAS, Burma Corporation and Metal Manufactures. He was also Chairman of Broken Hill South during its most profitable period.

Sir Alexander's son William Alexander (Bill) followed in his father's footsteps and was appointed to several CHG boards including BHS, ER&S, MM, CAC, APPM, CIG and Austral Bronze. Bill Stewart married Beatrice Sandra Baillieu, daughter of

M.H. Baillieu. Many years later he married Margaret Morgan, widow of one time WMC Managing Director, William M. Morgan, and they lived in Kenley Court, Toorak, within a stone's throw of W.L. Baillieu's former mansion 'Heathfield'.

Wharton - John Wharton was a close colleague of W.L. Baillieu. Wharton became Chairman of Metal Manufactures Ltd when it was formed in March 1916. He had an office in Collins House.

Comment

The strong impact of Collins House personnel upon the development of Australian economic development in the 20th century, especially in the sphere of mining and metallurgy will be evident from the above bibliographic information. It was a close-knit world where inter-marriage and life-long friendship played no little part in shaping the direction, and often, the success of industrial ventures and development. The story of the companies where the Collins House members were intimately involved and their activities within these companies is again a tangled skein of interconnections but that is a story that will have to be left to another time.

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Endnotes

¹ Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended*, Melbourne UP, 1963, p. 281.

² Peter Richardson, 'The Origins and Development of the Collins House Group, 1915-1951', *Australian Economic History Review*, vol. 27, no. 1, 1987, pp. 3-29.

³ Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rise of Broken Hill*, Macmillan Company of Australia, Melbourne, 1968, p. 85.

⁴ Peter Richardson, 'Origins and Development', p. 28.

⁵ Special Correspondent, 'Collins House Today', *Australian Financial Review*, November-December 1961.

⁶ Alfred Phillips, *Herald Weekend Magazine*, April 1968.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Roger Aldridge, 'The rise and rise of Collins House', *The Age*, 9 April 1974.

⁹ John R. Poynton, *Biography of the Baillieu family*, Unpublished MS, Melbourne, 1977.

¹⁰ E.W. Campbell, *The 60 Families Who Own Australia*, Current Book Distributors, Sydney, 1963.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 34. Campbell was wrong in this statement – it was not W.L. Baillieu's daughter who married Sidney Myer but his niece, Merlyn (Margery), daughter of George Francis Baillieu.

¹² John R. Poynton, *Biography of the Baillieu family*, Unpublished MS, Melbourne, 1977. p. 3.

¹³ G. Lindesay Clark, *Built on Gold: Recollections of Western Mining*, Hill of Content Publishing, Melbourne, 1983.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

¹⁵ C.D. Kemp, *Big Businessmen*, Institute of Public Affairs, Melbourne, 1964. p. 62.

¹⁶ Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rise of Broken Hill*, Macmillan Australia, Melbourne, 1968, p. 140.

¹⁷ Kemp, *Big Businessmen*, p. 85.

¹⁸ Geoffrey Searle, *John Monash - A Biography*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1982.

¹⁹ W.S. Robinson, *If I Remember Rightly*, F.W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1967, *passim*.