



# A sculptor's vision

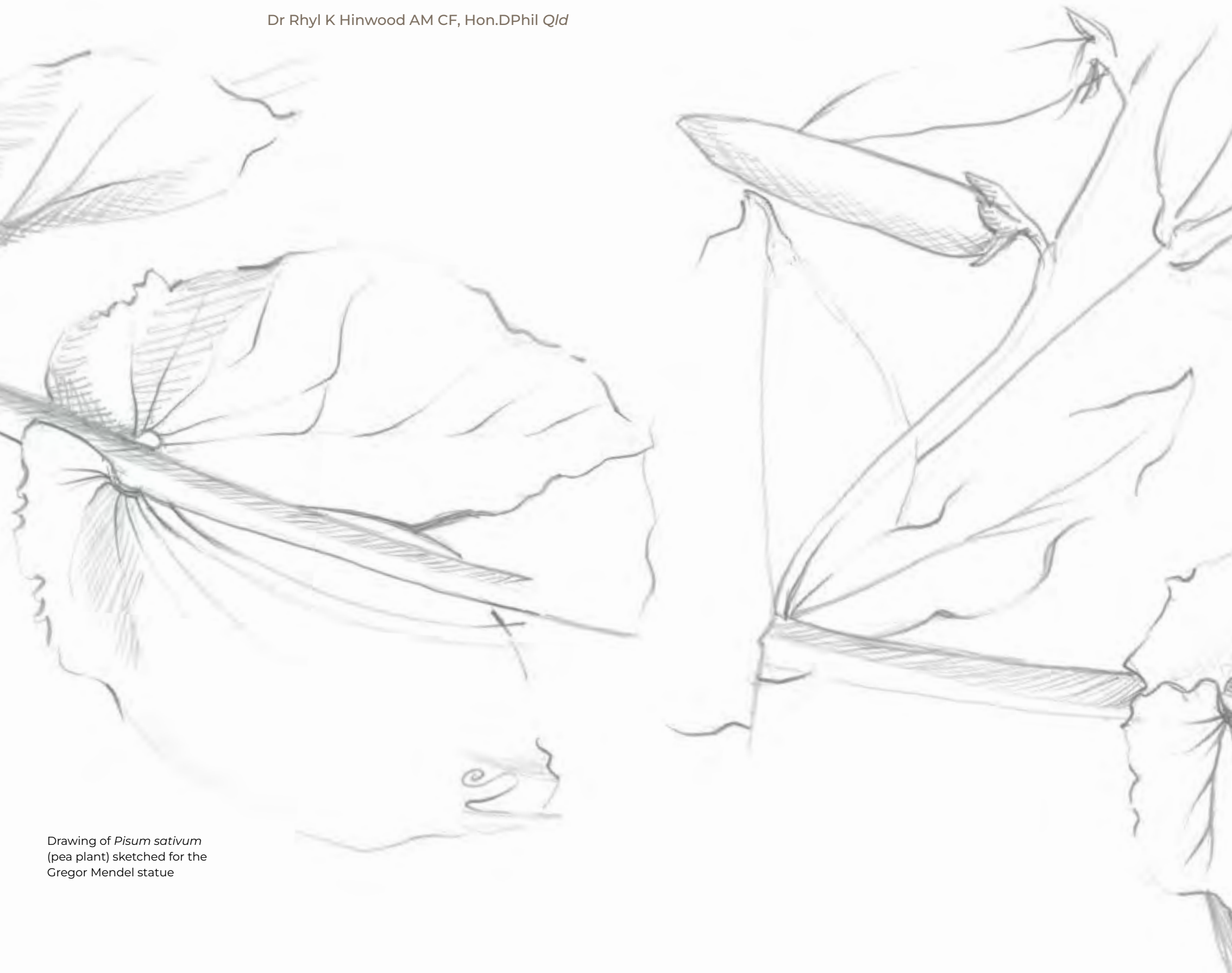
CREATING A LEGACY IN STONE

Dr Rhyl K Hinwood  
AM CF, Hon.DPhil *Qld*



These reminiscences of an artist's life  
are dedicated with love to my children,  
Matthew and Georgia, and my four  
grandchildren, Macushla, Hugo,  
Miranda and Declan.

Dr Rhyl K Hinwood AM CF, Hon.DPhil Q/d



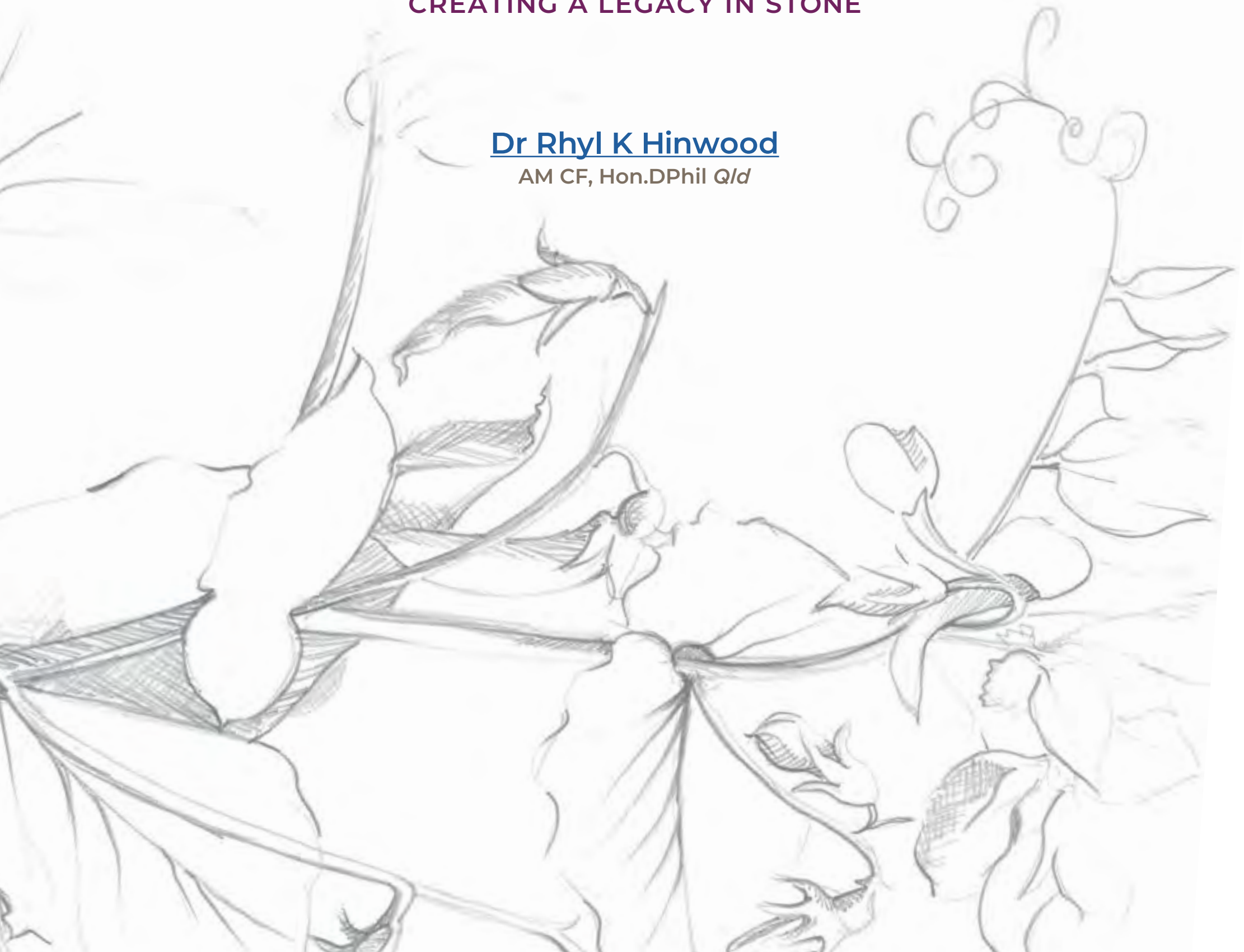
Drawing of *Pisum sativum*  
(pea plant) sketched for the  
Gregor Mendel statue

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Cover image: Grottesque of  
Dr Rhyl K Hinwood, carved in 1993

Right: Working on the portrait of  
author [Peter Carey](#), 1995

## Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and their custodianship of the lands on which our University stands. We pay our respects to their Ancestors and descendants, who continue cultural and spiritual connections to Country.

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CREATE CHANGE





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# A few words

According to my dear friends here, being a sculptor is a rare career choice for even the most creative of people. Quite apart from an artist's eye, there is a need for knowledge of the many traditional artistic forms of expression – from drawing to bronze casting – which are essential to translate concepts into solid objects. Physical strength and confidence are also required to work with a sympathetic but unforgiving material.



## A tribute to enormous creativity

Rhyl Hinwood is undoubtedly best known for her work at The University of Queensland. As University Sculptor since 1976, she has created a rich legacy of carvings for generations to discover and enjoy.

Rhyl might choose other words, but for me, as a long-time observer of her work and reviewing its impressive span through the images featured in this book, central to that vision is her commitment to authenticity, her strong sense of history and of the responsibility of artists to be recorders of history, and, above all, the idea of art as tribute.

Tribute to the medium in which she is working – whether sandstone, bronze, marble or clay. Although drawn to choose materials that, in her own words, “will stand the test of time”, with every piece she sculpts Rhyl calls attention to the material's beautiful qualities, as well as its strengths and possibilities.

Tribute to the subject and setting – ensuring that her designs incorporate elements that anchor the sculpture in its location and in its time and context. Rhyl takes meticulous care in researching her subjects to create works of integrity that will also stand the test of time, gifting to future generations information about our times.

Tribute to the natural world – its abundance and diversity. Rhyl's world teems with life: birds, flowers, foliage and animals are a constant focus of her creativity, with Queensland's distinctive flora and fauna especially featured. Here, too, while relishing and wanting to celebrate the beauty she sees around her, Rhyl feels a sense of responsibility to use her art for a larger purpose, saying that our rare and amazing creatures should not only be a source of pride, but should also acknowledge our responsibility for their care and protection.

It's an important message – not only about conservation but about the artist herself – offering insight into her feelings and her vision of what art can and should achieve, influencing people to appreciate the world in a different way.

I wish all readers enjoyment of this book, trusting that it will inspire you to look at Rhyl Hinwood's work with fresh eyes and a deepened understanding of her purpose and contribution.

### **[The Honourable Dr Penelope Wensley AC](#)**

[Governor of Queensland](#) 2008–2014

Fellow of [The Women's College](#) and [King's College](#), UQ

Patron, [Alumni Friends](#) of UQ 2008–2020



### Care and commitment

It is not often a sculptor has the opportunity to work on a canvas of the scale of The University of Queensland's Great Court. Equally, it is not often a sculptor of Rhyl Hinwood's calibre presents credentials to work on such a canvas. In Rhyl's case, she has also brought tenacious research accuracy to guide the storytelling in the stone – the richness of heraldry, the capturing of vivid expressions on the grotesques, and the storytelling in the symbolism.

The Great Court complex at UQ is bursting with embedded personality and has more than rewarded the inspiration behind its original genesis by delivering for multiple generations a sense of joy, wonder and delight. It has done this by being carefully tended and maintained from the deep shadows of the cloisters to the delights and journeys seamlessly integrated into its sandstone facades.

The University's sense of place and purpose has had the good fortune to be nurtured, provoked and expressed by Rhyl, its resident sculptor for more than 30 years. Rhyl commenced work on the grotesques, medallions, arch-voussoirs, monumental figures and heraldic decorations integrated into this splendid art deco building in 1976, and was awarded an honorary doctorate for her contribution to the University.

This partnership has been a two-way contract – one of opportunity and respect – and the legacy is now in place, literally carved in stone. Many people know of this contract and have been instrumental in its evolution. In the years to come, perhaps this familiarity will be less well known – but despite this, everyone who is fortunate enough to experience the place, whether briefly or fully immersed, and everyone who walks in and around the Great Court will feel the richness and discover their own way to have this monumental canvas interact with them.

This is because it has been nurtured with energy, care, love and commitment by Rhyl Hinwood, with the wonderful support of her husband, Rob.

**[Malcolm Middleton OAM, LFRAIA](#)**  
[Queensland Government Architect](#)



### Research rigour

In 1996, Rhyl Hinwood invited me (as a companion [Churchill Fellow](#)) to recommend subjects that she might consider completing for the range of sandstone carvings adorning the Biological Sciences (Goddard) building of The University of Queensland – as an integral part of this singular collection of historical sculptures of the natural resources and cultural heritage of the state of Queensland.

My knowledge of Rhyl's outstanding works of art has grown during 50 years of close association with her sensitive artistic treatment of the environment – from its origins in her handling of exhaustive fauna survey material we had collected throughout Queensland for depositing in the [Queensland Museum](#).

Clearly, it has long been my view that the role of the scientist must be complemented by the exquisite ability of the artist to translate and bring the obscure language of science into the community realm.

It is difficult enough even for those highly trained in the often-complex world of the environment to understand its processes. Such interpretation, it seems to me, fails without the discipline that is basic to both science and art. Unfortunately, few display this sense not only of place but also of purpose.

Dr Rhyl Hinwood AM CF is one of those who do, with still many more years to pursue her incisive views. Such is her research rigour that each expertly sculpted form embodies not only the essential art form but also records her interpretation of that subject so that we may gain further insight into her perspective. This is a truly communicative adjunct in her process, carrying her view way beyond the art world into the community-at-large.

This book is an extension of her written 'vignettes', and we all benefit from her clarifying overview. Oh! That there would be more of this...

**[Dr Hugh Lavery AM CF, MSc, PhD, MEc, FIBiol, FEIANZ](#)**

Inaugural [Environmental Practitioner of the Year](#),  
[Australia and New Zealand](#) (2007)



# A place in history

Universities worldwide have always sought to distinguish themselves in the field of history, both international and local. The University of Queensland has taken advantage of having founders of considerable imagination shaping the Great Court with a different kind of history: history in sandstone.



From the early days of the founding of the University in 1909, a combination of scholars, architects and administrators have discussed a variety of ways to record a different kind of history to that found in books, glorious though the work of historians may be.

The University of Queensland has continuously sought to record a history of immense achievement, particularly in the sandstone grotesques on the cloister walls of the Great Court. All those once empty spaces on the pillars in the splendid colonnades have now seen the skilled but patient work of two distinguished sculptors.

When I was a student just after World War II, I became aware of a sculptor who daily climbed his ladder to chip away at stone images of leading figures in the academic world in Queensland and worldwide. This was [John Theodore Muller](#), a German stonemason who worked from 1939 to 1953. I remember the excitement of a visit in that early library by the English Foreign Minister Anthony Eden and then

coming out into the bright sunlight where we all watched Muller at work.

In 1976, [Dr Rhyl Hinwood AM](#) was commissioned as the Great Court sculptor, and this time I had the privilege of being involved.

It became my mission to write to famous scholars, governments and other universities to seek pictures of people or images of coats of arms that we were considering as carvings in the Great Court. I suddenly found myself thinking in a new way so I could form an imaginative link with Rhyl. Success came quickly as so many of my letters bore fruit and so many outsiders reacted with alacrity to the prospect of appearing in stone in our Great Court.

Not always. Some smaller countries in the Caribbean region were slow to provide their coats of arms. There was a simple way around that problem. The University frequently sent scholars on research missions to those countries. It was easy to induce the researchers to purloin a local coat of arms as part of their mission. Only thus did the island of [St Lucia](#) come to be represented in the Great Court as it rightfully did.

It was with immense pleasure to me and to my fellow students that several of our most beloved teachers found their way to the cloister walls. To this day, I never fail to look up to see one of the University's most beloved figures, the French scholar [Kathleen Campbell-Brown](#), looking down on me. So well carved is her likeness that I almost wave back to her as I recall the wonderful days of her as one of the genuine characters of the University's early days.

Now the days of seeing Rhyl ascending her ladder to begin carving are gone. Most of the available spaces of the Great Court have been carved and only one grotesque remains undecided. Rhyl and her carvings are themselves now part of University history. I cannot think of a more memorable sight in the University than my having seen both Rhyl and John Muller at work.

## [Donald Munro AM](#)

Former Director, [Institute of Modern Languages](#); Director of Protocol; and University Deputy Registrar, [The University of Queensland](#)



# a gift

## 'CARVING A LIFE' IN PUBLIC ART

Capturing a likeness came naturally to me. It was a gift and, for as long as I can remember, I have always enjoyed drawing, painting and sculpting portraits of family, friends and other important people. I still recall being sent on a tour of [Camp Hill State School](#) to show everyone my portrait of a classmate when we were both about six years of age. This is my story.





Attending a field trip to Caloundra with friends from Somerville House, early 1958 (that's me far left)



## Looking back

My parents, Reuben and Maisie Jones, were full of encouragement for my art practice and always had a ready supply of art materials on hand, including large white cardboard squares that separated the dozens of eggs delivered to their mixed business at the [Camp Hill tram terminus](#).

We created everything out of virtually nothing, making do with flour-and-water glue, colour pages from [The Australian Women's Weekly](#), watercolours, and clay from the riverbank. Mother was a talented and imaginative dressmaker and artist, and Father often arranged competitions between us, with offers of a prize for the best drawing. Sometimes he couldn't possibly choose a winner, and so the small prize was put away safely until the competition the next week.

When the family business was sold, we moved back to Cook Street, Yeronga, with my grandparents, and the window box in my parents' bedroom became my favourite place to paint and draw. The seats were comfortably cushioned and the area was filled with light. It was there that I painted watercolours of every flowering plant in the garden and submitted entries for the annual [Courier-Mail](#) art competitions. It was always a thrill to see my work on show in their city foyer, and sometimes to win a prize.



## Beautiful Brisbane

Growing up in Brisbane had a lasting influence on me, especially when in 1954 we moved down to the end of Paragon Street at Yeerongpilly, to a wonderful, big, old Queenslander set on acreage on the bend of the river – high above flood level, thankfully. We enjoyed the lawn tennis court and organising fundraising barbecues with international students in aid of the construction of a proposed [International House](#) at UQ. Those friendships introduced me to the love of aromatic spices, intricately woven baskets, hand-woven cloth, batik, wood carving and the exotic music of the gamelan orchestra.

With long views of the river from [Indooroopilly bridge](#) to Long Pocket opposite, my parents always sat on the verandah in the early evening to enjoy the magnificent sunsets framed by the branches of aged poincianas, lilly pillly, huge historic Bunya pines, and jacarandas adorned with great staghorns, king orchids and midnight cactus. Probably because he was a chartered secretary, my father couldn't resist counting the number of blooms when the cactus flowered. He would bring some buds inside for us to witness them opening as darkness fell, and we enjoyed the delicate buds springing open, releasing their subtle perfume into the night air.

Father, ever the accountant, placed a lot of importance on accuracy and would survey my drawings, pointing out the smallest imbalance, perhaps an eighth of an inch higher on one side than on the other, offending his eagle eye. Mother, on the other hand, was the true artist. She had great imagination and a talent for making something out of nothing. Everything was done with flair and a flourish, and she would be happy as long as whatever she created was 'effective'. I think she would have been a great costume or set designer, creating wonderful costumes and scenery best seen at a distance. From both parents I inherited a combination of talents – imagination as well as an eye for detail.

Like many of my contemporaries – including my husband, Rob – as a child I attended [Vida Lahey](#)'s art classes in a well-lit studio on the first floor of a building in George Street – but I really can't recall Vida's presence there. I joined crowds of children all sitting on the polished timber floors drawing and painting, but I don't remember being given any instruction. It was an opportunity to enjoy splashing around as much colourful powdered tempera paints as we liked on large sheets of paper. Mother often took us to the [Queensland Museum](#) to prowl around the exhibits, and to the [Queensland Art Gallery](#), where I recall being fascinated by the [Dobell](#) portraits – *Margaret Olley* and *The Cypriot* being my favourites.

As a child, I do recall walking with my parents through The University of Queensland's [Great Court](#) when it was under construction and seeing large sandstone blocks, sections of columns and capitals, and an elderly gentleman carving a large stone set up on a plinth. Most probably it was [John Theodore Muller](#), the very accomplished University Sculptor.

Father haunted auctions in the city and bought copious books on art, literature and science until the bookcases were overflowing and volumes piled up behind his large armchair in the living room – much to my mother's disgust! Among these volumes were many beautifully illustrated art books, mostly about painting. I devoured them.

It was only when I was enrolled at [Somerville House](#) for my secondary schooling and thumbed through my first art textbook, [The outline of art](#), edited by Sir William Orpen, that I discovered sculpture. Although there were very few illustrations of sculpture, I remember going through and through looking for more, totally enthralled by my first glimpse of the *Head of Nefertiti*, the *Discus thrower*, *Venus de Milo*, the *Winged victory of Samothrace* and Michelangelo's *David*.

Learning about the art and architecture of the ancient world, especially the wonderful frieze on the Parthenon and the work of Michelangelo, is still among my fondest memories of those days. Sculpture was seldom discussed, possibly because our teachers were all painters.

Some afternoons after school, I would go into the city on the tram to visit exhibitions in the small Johnstone Gallery in the basement of the Brisbane Arcade, and I recall on one occasion wishing I could purchase a [Clifton Pugh](#) painting of black crows in a scorched landscape. I decided that some time in the future I was going to buy one of his artworks – a dream not yet realised!

## Marvellous Melbourne

Our family all went to the [Melbourne Olympic Games](#) in 1956. Father drove up and down the streets so that my sisters and I could stand up in the back seat to enjoy the city illuminations through the sunroof of our new car. We visited all the exhibitions in the city, and it was in a city bank foyer that I became entranced by [William Ricketts](#)'s terracotta figurative sculpture, which celebrated the culture of the Indigenous peoples of Victoria. Many beautiful over-life-size terracotta figures of aged elders, warriors, matriarchs and children had all emerged from the landscape of the [sanctuary](#) he created in the Dandenongs on the outskirts of Melbourne. I was inspired by his vision of that holy mountain.

Upon our return home, Father bought me some terracotta clay from [Stone's Bristol Pottery](#) in Coorparoo and I began to model my own small figurative groups. These were subsequently fired and given to my friends for birthday and Christmas presents. Years later, one friend proudly showed me her small terracotta ornament in her china cabinet and I jokingly said that it must be worth a fortune by now. She sadly replied, "No, you didn't sign it!" I still have a small terracotta head of an Indigenous man that I gave to Mother at that time, and it's a precious souvenir of my formative experiences.



## Quintessential Queensland

In 1958, I started my first job as an artist at the [Queensland Museum](#) in Bowen Bridge Road, Brisbane, where I learnt many new skills. I enjoyed making colour sketches and notes of live specimens, such as reptiles and fish, before the preparators made plaster of Paris moulds and latex rubber casts of them.

I had to ignore the formalin atmosphere that made my eyes water and sting, follow the nuances of colour selected from my notes and reproduce the pattern on the cast replica, carefully painting each scale with a sable brush. It was not a pleasant experience, especially when a python might be around four metres long. Keeping your place in the pattern as the coils of the snake wound around and around in the glass tank full of formalin was quite tricky. The days of the airbrush, fibreglass and various resins had not yet dawned, but more than 60 years later, some of my work is still on display in the [Queensland Museum](#) at South Brisbane. Today, the workshop behind the old museum where this all took place is home to [Sculptors Queensland](#).

It was about this time that I recall attending an evening function at the [Queensland Art Gallery](#), when it was housed in the old Exhibition building, and hearing the Australian sculptor, [Tom Bass](#), speak about his experience of designing and fabricating the huge copper frieze above the entrance to the [National Library](#) in Canberra. He said something that really struck me at the time, “When an artist looks at an object, it stays looked at.”

I have recalled that comment so often over the years, and have certainly found it to be true – as did the late Betty Churcher, another Somerville Old Girl, and art critic, author, TV presenter and academic, who for 30 years was at the centre of the Australian

art world. Betty regularly sketched aide-memoires during her seven-year role as the first female Director of the [National Gallery of Australia](#) in Canberra.

Four days a week after work, I walked down George Street to attend evening life classes at the Brisbane Central Technical College, and when sculpture was finally offered, for a year I learnt some basic moulding and casting techniques with the French sculptor, [George Virine](#). When I married, my public service job at the Museum was officially terminated and so I continued to work at home on clay portraits of friends and family.

George Virine awarded me first prize in a 1967 sculpture competition for my plaster of Paris portrait head of a girlfriend, and the \$50 prize money paid for my first Sculpture Summer School at UQ's [St John's College](#), tutored by prominent Queensland sculptors [Leonard and Kathleen Shillam](#). At the time, I was eight months pregnant with my second child. On the last day, Len taught a few keen students – including myself – the technique of carving stone and I was hooked, as they say. I bought my first two chisels from Len, and a brickie's mallet and a cold chisel with a replaceable scutch comb from the local hardware shop, and then proceeded to carve several very large sculptures from the sandstone blocks my father had purchased from the demolition of the old [Victoria Bridge](#). While my baby daughter slept, I taught myself to carve during long hours of practice, hitting my thumb so many times. I remember struggling on my own to move heavy blocks about, without the assistance of any proper equipment or a strong offsider.

Enthusiastically, I persevered and even carved one of those huge old Victoria Bridge blocks into a stylised figurative artwork, which was included in the first public sculpture exhibition of the newly formed Society of Sculptors (now Sculptors Queensland), held in King George Square in 1970.

With experience, my skills and confidence grew, and one of my first commissions was to produce a series of larger-than-life-size terracotta busts of Roman senators and a gladiator for the new Lennon's Plaza Hotel in Brisbane's Queen Street in 1974. Then followed religious ceramic friezes for several Roman Catholic churches, and a stone-carved life-size portrait bust of Alexander Pope.



Snake sketches made for the Queensland Museum, 1958

Left: Working at the Queensland Museum, 1958

1958

1974



## Sensational St Lucia

In 1975, [Leonard Shillam](#) wrote a reference for me:

*Mrs Shepherd (nee Jones) is a very accomplished sculptor, and also skilled in craftwork. She has acquired her skills by dint of devoted work under considerable difficulties, due to having no properly equipped place of work. Her family responsibilities have not deterred her from giving time to teaching art to children and advancing the cause of sculpture in Queensland in the demanding role of Honorary Secretary of the Society of Sculptors, Queensland.*

I believe Len may have put my name forward when The University of Queensland called for expressions of interest from sculptors to produce grotesque portraits for the [Great Court](#) at St Lucia. Of the five short-listed sculptors considered, I was the only female and was fortunate to win that first commission – and the rest is history.

It was soon after this that I remarried and my name changed from Shepherd to Hinwood. My new husband, Rob, suggested that I should make up my mind whether I wanted to be a dressmaker or a sculptor and, of course, I knew the answer to that. He encouraged me to pursue my dream.

Helidon freestone grotesque portraits would have to be the most popular sculptures in the University's Great Court, adding humour, delight and often controversy over their origins. The Academic Committee of the University is responsible for making each choice of appropriate subject. According to archival records:

*Subjects may include, for example, officers of the University, members of the academic or general staff of any rank, students, colourful campus personalities, or any noteworthy member of the University or individual who has made a major contribution to University life.*

The very talented Dresden-born sculptor, John Theodore Muller, spent 11 years of his life working on dozens of carvings, including 32 of those intriguing grotesques. Over a period of 17 years, from 1976 until 1993, I subsequently carved 17 grotesque portraits, including the first five female subjects. One subject remains to be chosen to complete the first 50 grotesques originally planned for the Great Court and a stone allocated for this work remains ready on the Parnell building. I am disappointed that I could not complete this series: with 44 male and only five female subjects completed so far, I think it's time to correct the gender imbalance. Of the 143 places available for carved grotesque heads, 94 remain unallocated.

My career was given a great boost when I received a Sir Winston [Churchill Memorial Fellowship](#) in 1986 to explore the relationship of sculpture to universities and cathedrals in Canada, the USA, Great Britain, France and Italy. This experience empowered me to become more proactive in the selection of appropriate subjects for representation in the Great Court, where I sometimes had the opportunity to propose new work.

Following an official invitation to "join my victims in the Great Court", my final grotesque was my own self-portrait. Seven people



Receiving my Doctor of Philosophy *honoris causa* from Chancellor [Sir Llew Edwards](#), 2001

have lived to see their grotesques installed in the Great Court: Emeritus Professor [Robert Cummings](#), [Kathleen Campbell-Brown](#), Don Russell, Emeritus Professor [James Mahoney](#), Bruce Green, Emeritus Professor [Dorothy Hill](#) and myself.

I went on to complete many coats of arms and, initially, I willingly accepted whatever subjects were provided for me to carve. However, as the years went by I noticed much repetition of subjects and began to question the waste of the limited space available for carvings. New universities were burgeoning in Australia and around the world, and our own university population had changed to include many more students and staff from Asia, the Middle-East and the Pacific. As a result, representation of each university was limited to only one column face from then on, and exotic flora and fauna were virtually eliminated from any future depiction – except when part of an existing heraldic design.

From 1980 onwards, whenever the opportunity arose, I proposed suites of subjects that celebrated the cultural and social life of the Indigenous peoples of South East Queensland, and then, with expert advice, proposed other suites of subjects celebrating the achievements of UQ staff and graduates, as well as Queensland's principal flora and fauna. This was the most satisfying phase of my work. Since 1990, the Great Court and its sculptures have been listed on the registers of [Queensland Heritage](#) and the National Estate, and it has certainly been a great honour to have my work included in this recognition.

In 2001, UQ awarded me an honorary doctorate in recognition of my outstanding contribution to the visual arts in Queensland. I recall that it seemed like the 'kiss of death' when, without warning, the allocation of funds provided for sculptural work in the Great Court ceased. At the time I was devastated. For me, it was the end of an era at UQ – although certainly not the end of my career as a sculptor.

1975

2001



# Beginning a new career

When planning the subjects for future carvings in the Great Court of The University of Queensland in the mid-1970s, UQ's Academic Committee considered a wide range of people deemed suitable for commemoration in the form of grotesque portraits – starting with the list of UQ staff members whose names had been under consideration for inclusion in the [Australian Dictionary of Biography](#) between 1890 and 1939.

1976

As the Great Court was about to be totally enclosed with the completion of the cloister linking the Goddard and Michie buildings, after a break of more than 23 years the University planned to commission a series of carvings. I believe that Leonard Shillam, a noted Queensland sculptor, may have proposed my name.

Along with four other Queensland sculptors, I received an official invitation from the University Architect, James Maccormick MBE AM, to enter into a limited competition to prepare a sculpture head of similar proportions (235 mm wide with 340 mm projection on a 45 degree downward incline) and character to those already executed and installed in the Great Court.

Also competing for the commission were two sculptors I knew well, Dixie Lambert and Ted Hall, as well as stonemasons Richard Mackie and Vic Sanderson. Each of us was given a Helidon freestone block cut to size, one month in which to complete our submission, and a payment of \$400 upon delivery. We were provided with two black-and-white photographs of our subject, [Professor Charles Schindler](#).

I familiarised myself with the style of the grotesques in the Great Court, and when the stone was delivered I set it up on a large stone banker under the wattle trees beside my house in Kenmore Hills. The acacias' feathery foliage provided some sparse shade from the hot summer sun and breezes carried away most of the dust.

I began work with my three-and-a-half pound brickie's mallet and my three hand chisels: one point, one scutch tool with replaceable claws, and one three-quarter inch flat. My chisels were soon rather blunt because I had no means of sharpening them properly, and



Sir Zelman Cowen and myself with the grotesque of Associate Professor Schindler, 1976

many times my left thumb bled when the rough top of the mallet-head chisels peeled over and bit into it. My ragged cotton gloves frayed into big holes, but I was so determined I just kept working until the job was done. I remember a friend coming over to take quite a lot of slide transparencies to record the work from every angle because I didn't own a camera. By 1 November 1976, my grotesque of Schindler was completed, collected and delivered to the University on time.

Soon after, on the afternoon of 10 November, I was very surprised and excited to receive a phone call informing me that I had won the competition. I was summoned to meet the Vice-Chancellor, [Sir Zelman Cowen](#), and the University Architect, James Maccormick, immediately. That day I had just finished making myself a smart yellow linen dress, so on it went and I arrived to meet everyone for the first time and to have photographs taken for *The Courier-Mail*. My prize was the commission to carve another seven grotesques of distinguished academics – Professors [Melbourne](#), [Robinson](#), [Michie](#), [Castlehow](#) and [Cummings](#) – and two non-specific subjects representing people of the South Pacific. Little did I realise that this was the beginning of my professional career as a sculptor.

Many years afterwards, Assistant Registrar Bruce Green told me that on the day of the selection he was the last person to view the entries. Arriving late, and with everyone already enjoying cups of tea, he swept around the room and quickly made up his mind which one he considered the best likeness. He then announced to the other judges gathered there, "This one looks like Schindler but who are all the rest?" He told me that the decision to choose my entry was unanimous.



# a commission

## CREATING THE FIRST EIGHT GROTESQUES

After being awarded the title of University Sculptor in November 1976 for my carving of Associate Professor Charles Schindler, I completed my commission to carve seven more grotesques in 1977 and 1978 – of Professors Melbourne, Robinson, Michie, Castlehow and Cummings; and of two non-specific grotesques originally representing people of the South Pacific – but at my suggestion, changed to representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.









# Associate Professor Charles Schindler

Mr [Don Munro AM](#), who for many years was the Deputy Registrar and Director of Protocol and Ceremonies at UQ, was always a great supporter of my work and later wrote his reminiscences about my first subject, fondly known to his students as [Charlie Schindler](#):

*I have heard that he was a Paris correspondent for the London Times somewhere earlier in his career and he was certainly always interested in politics. He was a small courtly figure, scrupulously kind to students and very good at lecturing us on the great figures of French literature and history. As his retirement neared, a small group decided to invite him to accompany us to the Brisbane Exhibition. This must have been in 1947. It was a hot day and Professor Schindler became increasingly thirsty and was desperate to find a glass of beer. As students, we were still under-age and unable to join him. We waited as he spied a queue for what he thought was a bar and joined it.*

*Moments later he rejoined us, a little confused. The queue was for the ladies' toilets and some kind woman had steered him away. But he did eventually get that beer!*

*When he retired, he went to live in New Guinea where his son, Aubrey, owned a plantation. When I last heard of Charles, he was happily teaching the rights of man to the locals who apparently found him a strange but lovable character.*

*Many years later, I joined [Kathleen Campbell-Brown](#) and Olive White to set up a fund in his memory. He was one of the genuine characters of the early days of The University of Queensland when it was in Old Government House at George Street.*

*Your grotesque is a fitting memorial to him and is so lifelike that I can almost hear his voice whenever I see it. That Kathleen's carving is also there in perpetuity (she adored him) is a tribute to a civilised university.*

*Of all the 17 grotesques I  
have now carved for the  
University, this would have to  
be one of my favourites.*

My grotesque portrait of Associate Professor Charles Schindler, wearing the [Palme Académiques](#) award on his lapel and happily holding that glass of beer, is now centrally situated on the exterior of the vehicular entry to the Great Court between the Michie and Goddard buildings. Of the 17 grotesques I have now carved for the University, this would have to be one of my favourites.

In a chance conversation with Schindler's granddaughter in 2016, she remarked that in the photo image I had been given for the competition he was most probably enjoying his favourite sauterne. She also mentioned that her grandfather was adamant that he was the model for the Crusader grotesque carved by Muller. That seems quite plausible considering his crusading drive to educate the people of remote New Guinea after his retirement.

Thinking back to when I carved this grotesque for the prize of University Sculptor commission, I remember my first foray into the use of power tools.

Traditionally, grotesque heads had been first modelled in clay and then submitted to the Professor of Architecture at UQ, [Robert Cummings](#), for his approval. Thinking procedures would be the same after I won the commission, a stone carver who had worked at the University offered his assistance to produce the actual stone carving derived from my clay model. I thanked him but told him that I didn't produce scale drawings or clay models and so, although I appreciated his offer, I wouldn't need his help. He then offered to make me a new mallet and, at his invitation, I went to his home to see his compressor and pneumatic tools.

I was alarmed at how difficult it was to control the violently vibrating tool he placed in my hands. I went on to carve the first eight grotesques with my few hand tools until I could finally afford to purchase my own compressor, which included a regulator on the air line – and that made all the difference to my command of the pneumatic tools.



## [Ordre des Palmes Académiques](#)

This honour is an order of knighthood from France for academics and cultural and educational figures.





# Associate Professor Alexander Melbourne

The grotesque portrait of [Associate Professor Alexander Clifford Vernon Melbourne](#) was the first one on the list of the remaining seven grotesques that I was commissioned to carve when I won the sculpture commission at the University in 1976.

In the beginning, [Professor James Mahoney](#) took me under his wing as, for many years, he had been the Professor of French and member of a subcommittee that dealt with matters relating to the Great Court grotesques for consideration by the Academic Committee. In a bold scrawl, he noted some suggestions for this particular subject, what he knew of his role at the University, and names of family and work colleagues I might contact for further background information. It was before the days of Google searches and I needed to find some good clear photographs of my subject, but we could find only one that was of any use.

On a large pale-blue file card Mahoney wrote:

*Chairman of Bldgs & Grds Com at time of planning for St Lucia  
Aust-Jap relations  
Landing at ANZAC  
Sagar-gardening and cigarette*

That was all I had to go on.

Professor Melbourne was an excellent subject for a grotesque because of his wide-ranging contribution to the University. As well as being appointed Associate Professor of History in 1934, he was also Chairman of the Building and Grounds Committee and an honorary librarian. He had a keen interest in Australian-Japanese relations, and also served in the ANZAC Corps.

*...I think [Melbourne] would  
have liked the idea...of  
watching the passing parade...  
enjoying the pungent aromas  
of freshly cut lawns, flowering  
plants, towering trees, and that  
cigarette.*

Abstract qualities are almost impossible to represent in any three-dimensional form. Professor Melbourne had been on the lecturing staff of the Department of History and Economics at the University in the early days at George Street and was an enthusiastic supporter of the move to the St Lucia site. So, it seemed fitting to portray him with arms full of gardening tools and native plants to symbolise his years of dedicated planning for construction of the site.

There was not a lot of useful information forthcoming when I asked people who knew him personally what they recalled; they remarked that he was a very handsome man, that he regularly

lectured with his feet up on the desk, and always had a cigarette in his hand. Including both feet in his grotesque portrait would have been quite a novelty but I rejected that idea. However, I did carve a cigarette in his left hand.

Melbourne died in 1943, so he wasn't around to see his contributions to the University honoured in this way – but I think he would have liked the idea that his grotesque was forever looking out from the main vehicular entrance to the Great Court towards Chancellor's Place, watching the passing parade of local and international staff and students who had inspired my narrative series of nomadic and migratory birds that I later carved on a nearby arch. He could be enjoying the pungent aromas of freshly cut lawns, flowering plants, towering trees, and that cigarette.

Just think, since UQ is now smoke-free, he's the only character on campus left holding one of those 'illegal objects'!









*'Doc Robbie' was described  
as a perfectionist and a man  
with a universal mind.*



# Associate Professor Frederick Robinson

Every spring when the blue flowers of the jacaranda mingle with the golden flowers of the silky oak trees on the St Lucia campus, they celebrate the official colours of UQ and remind us of the vision of [Associate Professor Frederick Walter Robinson](#), who chose to have these particular species planted together for that very reason.

Born in 1888 and still fondly referred to at UQ as ‘Doc Robbie’, he was described as a perfectionist and a man with a universal mind. He lectured in the Department of English and Modern Languages from 1923 to 1958, and died in 1971. He was among the first eight grotesque portrait subjects I’d been given to carve and certainly one of the most interesting, I believe.

In 1977, Professor James Mahoney’s notes in his big scrawling hand on his pale-blue file cards again suggested quite a few ideas I should pursue for depicting the subject of Doc Robbie:

*Aust lit*  
*Aboriginal art & sites*  
*Fryer memorial lib of Aust lit*  
*book of student benefactions*  
*heraldry (arms of univ in cloister)*

I had never met Professor Robinson, but from photographs, I thought he was an interesting subject with that full moustache, strong profile and quite long silver-grey hair. Others had recorded that his physiognomy was the delight of cartoonists. In a carving such as a grotesque, which will be installed high above the viewer, the sculptor has to consider a form that will be ‘readable from a distance’ and that will present the essence of the relevant history of the subject.

To represent his leadership of the Heraldic Committee in the consultancy on academic heraldry, I chose to carve him holding a heraldic shield emblazoned with a cross patee and an open book, the symbol of The University of Queensland.

Then there was the fact that he was instrumental in the identification and protection of Aboriginal sacred sites. So, in his left hand I chose to carve another shield, an Aboriginal shield, symbolic of his other great passion. The valuable aspects of different cultures such as Greek amphitheatres and Aboriginal Bora Rings were first recognised and associated by Robinson, and he proceeded to write articles and speak publicly about the preservation and restoration of [Bora Rings](#) in South East Queensland, particularly those at North Burleigh, Nudgee, Samford and Kippa-Ring.

Many decades later at [Fryer Library](#) functions, I met his grandson, Michael Robinson, who looked the image of his esteemed relative, with similarly fine features, that same nose, and long fair hair. Without the real model to sit for me, Michael would have been a good substitute if only I’d met him back in 1977 – but then he would have been just a boy, I realised!

One contemporary staff member recounted the way Professor Robinson would dash enthusiastically down the passageways with his long grey hair streaming behind him, just as I had carved it. My grotesque of Robinson does seem to fly from the wall with enthusiasm, but the form of his long hair really just developed during the carving process as I linked the head to the background.

Professor Robinson founded the Fryer Library of Australian Literature at UQ and, decades later, its value as a resource continues. Dr Fred Cahir, the 2014 recipient of the [Fryer Library Award](#), stated that his project would draw on a wide range of archival and secondary sources from the Fryer Library and aim to reconstruct the history of the Aboriginal people and gold mining in Queensland from pre-colonisation to the twentieth century.

Brisbane sculptor [Daphne Mayo](#) had known Doc Robbie in the 1930s and had modelled a clay portrait head of him. She later cut it in half through the profile to make a haut relief, which was then cast in fibreglass. She presented it to his family and they in turn eventually presented it to the Fryer Library. To mark the occasion of the University’s centenary in 2010, the fibreglass model was cast in bronze, mounted on a fine piece of polished silky oak, and placed on permanent display.

The nationally respected poet, journalist and inaugural arts editor for [The Courier-Mail](#), [David Rowbotham](#), also wrote a wonderful description of Doc Robbie in a poem:

*The Professor*  
*And, rising from the academic gloom,*  
*Prominently quaint, a Roman face,*  
*Like an elliptic moon reflecting light*  
*Of knowledge, wrinkled with a cultured grace.*

**David Rowbotham**

from *Ploughman and Poet* (Edwards and Shaw for the Lyre-Bird Writers and the Commonwealth Literary Fund, Sydney, 1954)



# Professor John Michie

According to an article in the *75th Anniversary Handbook*, produced by the Secretariat and Media and Information Services, University of Queensland in 1985:

*The Queensland State Government announced in 1974 that it would provide the funds for the Helidon sandstone cladding on the Western Arts building and this job was finished in 1977 at a cost of \$2.2 million, enabling the completion of the Great Court soon after and providing harmony and completeness to this historic and traditional area of the University.*

When a cloister was constructed to link the Goddard and Michie buildings and finally enclose the Great Court, the Academic Committee at the time was advised that a policy be established concerning the multiple commemorations of individuals, i.e.

Michie will be honoured by a building name and by a grotesque head. Thus, the Western Arts building became the Michie building, and the then Vice-Chancellor, Sir Zelman Cowen, commissioned me to carve [Professor John Lundie Michie](#)'s grotesque portrait for the Great Court.

The retired Professor of French, [James Mahoney](#), had known Michie personally, and from him I learnt of his prowess on the athletics fields of Cambridge and about his academic career as

*I thought that this noted athlete...could be shown using an incorrect technique for which he would be disqualified! I hoped that everyone who knew him would be amused...*

one of the four [Foundation Professors](#) and Dean of Arts at The University of Queensland. In contrast with the other portraits I'd already completed, I decided to accentuate his athleticism and so his grotesque portrait reveals a man with a strong physique, shot put at the ready, aiming at the Great Court.

At that time, one of my neighbours was a physical education teacher at the [Kelvin Grove Teachers' College](#) and he obliged me with a demonstration of the correct arm action and placement of the shot. Of course, it being a grotesque portrait, I thought that this noted athlete and retired President of the University of Queensland [Athletics Club](#) could

be shown using an incorrect technique for which he would have been disqualified! I hoped that everyone who knew him would be amused and I completed this grotesque by the end of 1977.

In July the same year, the University proudly announced that Vice-Chancellor [Sir Zelman Cowen](#) had been selected as Australia's 19th [Governor-General](#), leaving a cultural legacy for the University and the state when he departed at the end of the year.

1977









### Skyphos

A small deep wine cup [was] one of the acquisitions made possible by Associate Professor Castlehow's generosity.





# Associate Professor Stanley Castlehow

In 1976, my original list of eight grotesque portraits commissioned by the University included the 1908 Queensland Rhodes Scholar, [Associate Professor Stanley Castlehow](#).

By 1977, I had just carved the grotesque portrait of the Foundation Professor of Classics, [John Lundie Michie](#), and when I was ready to develop the design concept for the next subject for a grotesque, [Professor James Mahoney](#) arranged an introduction for me to meet Max Kanowski in the Classics and Ancient History Department in the Michie building.

Max was the curator of the [Antiquities Museum](#), and he showed me around while we talked about Associate Professor Stanley Castlehow and his long career as a lecturer in that Department from 1915 until his retirement in 1957.

Max told me about the significant bequest of £4,000, which the Professor had given the University to maintain the existing collection, as well as to acquire new objects of classical antiquity. Among the many fascinating items on display in the collection, of special interest to me was a *skyphos*, a small deep wine cup and one of the acquisitions made possible by his generosity. This ancient Greek ceramic was a *glaux skyphos*, or owl cup, with two handles and a design of olive sprigs and a plump little owl painted on one side. The owl was symbolic of Athena, the goddess of both warfare and wisdom, and the all-seeing and all-knowing patron goddess of Athens. The olive sprig symbolised the prosperity of Athens, due in large part to the export of olive oil, silver and ceramics.

I was looking for an appropriate object to place in the hands of the proposed grotesque to indicate Castlehow's connection with the University, and this small *skyphos* was just what I was looking for. I had my sketchbook ready, and then and there I made a drawing with sufficient detail for me to use for the carving.

I decided to depict Castlehow wearing academic robes and realised I had to take a closer look at the details of an academic gown and a mortarboard before I started the carving. So, off I went to the Alumni Academic Hire office to borrow one of the robes regularly hired out for student graduation ceremonies. When they heard the reason for my request they gave me an old well-worn outfit that wouldn't last another season of use. Long after my detailed sketch was made, that outfit ended up in my grandchildren's dress-up box and they had a wonderful time wearing it.

Just before the 50th anniversary of the newly named RD Milns Antiquities Museum was celebrated in 2013, I decided to make a miniature of my grotesque portrait of Stanley Castlehow as a gift to the Museum. I carved the original in plaster of Paris and had it cast in bronze. I was delighted to see it included in the special *Then and Now* exhibition planned for the occasion. I learnt later that it was particularly fitting that Castlehow was commemorated in this way, because his bequest had recently funded the restoration of a number of bronze artefacts in the Museum collection.

1977

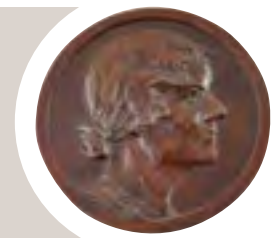
1992

## Betty and friends

As a result of this commission, my interest in antiquities was aroused and my husband, Rob, and I joined the [Friends of Antiquity](#), a special interest group of the Alumni Association established in 1988. During Rob's presidency we hosted a 'Homeric Feast' at our home to raise funds towards the establishment of a Travelling Scholarship set up in honour and in memory of its first patron, Betty Fletcher.

The [Betty Fletcher Memorial scholarship](#) is awarded annually to a meritorious student in Classics and Ancient History to enable travel for academic purposes in Greece, Italy, Asia Minor or any other place that was part of the civilisations of Rome or Ancient Greece, for a period of not less than four weeks. The first scholarship was awarded in 1992.

I subsequently created a relief bronze portrait of Betty Fletcher mounted on Helidon freestone for the Friends of Antiquity, and a second edition was gifted to [Somerville House](#), where Betty was a pupil from 1923 to 1927.





# Professor Robert Cummings

It was not until 1935, during the University's silver anniversary year, that an announcement was made about the Queensland state government's decision to build a new university on land at St Lucia. The Queensland Premier, the Honourable [William Forgan Smith](#), and the Chancellor, [Sir James Blair](#), laid the foundation stone for the new university at Old Government House in George Street in March 1937.

The same year, a Diploma of Architecture became available, and [Professor Robert Percy Cummings](#) joined The University of Queensland staff. He was elevated to Chair, and a Faculty of Architecture was established in 1949.

Included in my first commission of eight grotesque portrait subjects for the Great Court, Professor Cummings was the first person still alive to enjoy this great honour. I arranged a meeting with him and drove to his home high up on a hillside overlooking Currumbin Beach on the Gold Coast, where we enjoyed a wonderful view of the Pacific Ocean. It was a beautiful sunny day and we spent the afternoon discussing the concept of his portrayal as a grotesque. He was very excited at the prospect of having his portrait carved in stone and was keen to help me find some supporting elements that could illustrate his 29 years of professional service to the University. It was obvious that he had enjoyed the opportunity to plan and record the development of the St Lucia campus and especially the Great Court. He had kept a comprehensive photographic record of the construction, so perhaps looking back, I could have chosen to carve a camera in his hands!

He trotted out rolls of architectural drawings and drafting instruments, and after a very happy afternoon and lots of tea and cake prepared by his charming wife, Mavis, I left to ponder the appropriate elements to best represent his architectural career.

*.... his love of Roman architecture was the element that should be represented... the sunglasses added a touch of whimsy and reference to his retirement to the Gold Coast...*

Soon after our visit, I received a note from him with a number of new suggestions. He wrote:

*A short traditional definition for architecture is 'commodity, firmness and delight' but how these characteristics could be embodied in a grotesque, I do not know.*

I'd observed the Roman arches outlining the cloisters surrounding the Great Court and, when I learnt of his particular love of Roman architecture, I decided that this was the element that would be an important part of the design concept. By the end of 1978, I had carved a Roman triumphal arch in his hands and adorned his head with a laurel wreath.

The sunglasses added a touch of whimsy and reference to his retirement to the Gold Coast in sunny Queensland.

Looking back, I realise his suggestions penned to me after our visit to his home actually came to be incorporated in his grotesque.

'Commodity' is represented by the stone used in construction of the arch and his carved portrait.

'Firmness' is represented by the strength and stability of the Roman arch that is repeated throughout the Great Court cloisters.

'Delight' is represented by the subject's crowning with the laurel wreath because, not only was he the first person living to see himself honoured by a grotesque portrait in the Great Court, but he was also to be depicted holding his favourite architectural element.

1978











# Gaiarbau, also known as Willie Mackenzie

In 1978, I carved the grotesque representing Gaiarbau, a Dungidau man of the Jinibara 'people of the lawyer cane'. Known as [Willie Mackenzie](#) in UQ's Anthropology Department, he worked from 1950 until 1959 on research projects, recording matters of the kinship, beliefs, language and customs of his people.

In his grotesque portrait I depicted him beside an eastern water dragon and wearing a headband of human hair. In his hands, two boomerangs mark the rhythm of the music in a corroboree and refer to his assistance in the preservation of music and legends and the stories of many peoples of South East Queensland. The grotesque of the Indigenous woman I carved beside him complements its symbolism.

I later had the opportunity to include the native bee on the keystone of the arch below his portrait. The native bee cannot sting and makes a honeycomb quite different to that created by the European bee. The honey was a great delicacy for Gaiarbau's people, who would climb great heights to cut out the hive and throw it down to those waiting below. The voussoirs on either side of that arch are raised stones intended for carving, and so on this particular arch I chose to depict various fauna that were a rich food source for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of South East Queensland.

Indigenous poet [Oodgeroo Noonuccal](#), from Minjerribah, wrote a poem about Gaiarbau. I feel so sad every time I read it, written with such empathy for a very special leader. Gaiarbau died in 1968, age unknown.

Gaiarbau's work in recording the heritage of his people has had a long-lasting effect, with his accounts of the Jinibara people's cultural practices proving their connection to Country, enabling a successful [Native Title determination](#) in 2012.

*Willie Mackenzie worked on research projects recording matters of kinship, beliefs, languages and customs of his people, the Jinibara of the Blackall Ranges, Stanley River Valley, most of the Glasshouse Mountains and the D'Aguilar Ranges, South East Queensland.*

1978



# Indigenous woman and matriarch

Included in that first list of eight grotesques that I was commissioned to carve in the Great Court were two that were originally to represent people of the South Pacific.

In 1978, I proposed that they should instead represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and that one of them should be a woman. My proposal was readily accepted and it seemed appropriate that an Indigenous woman was the first female subject to be included as a grotesque in the Great Court.

The Senate Committee suggested no specific individual and, as far as I knew at that time, no Indigenous women had been connected with The University of Queensland (I have since discovered that this was incorrect). Google did not exist in those days so I chose to carve a young female, representative of all Indigenous women: a proud matriarch wearing only a seed necklace, her natural beauty perhaps representing the beauty of Mother Earth.

I spoke with the Head of Anthropology at UQ, Dr Peter Lauer, who showed me several publications that might be helpful in my search for ideas for this subject. These included one of particular interest, *Finguistics*, by anthropologist, ethnographer and linguist Walter E Roth, and published by the Government Printer in Brisbane in 1897. It was illustrated with 233 signs in Queensland used by Indigenous peoples for communicating about everyday activities. One illustration referred to the use of two boomerangs being tapped together to keep the time.

*I chose to carve a young female, representative of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, a proud matriarch wearing only a seed necklace, her natural beauty perhaps representing the beauty of Mother Earth.*

As it happened, I had just completed the grotesque of Gaiarbau doing just that, and so, speaking an elegant sign language with her fingers, this female grotesque describes the carved character beside her, recording the singing and dancing at the corroboree and marking the beat with his boomerangs. Since installation in 1979, the knotted bilum on her back has often carried the odd pair of student's runners.

In retrospect, I have often wished that I had been aware at the time of the poetry and Aboriginal activism of [Oodgeroo Noonuccal](#). With her long connection with the [University of Queensland Press](#), she would have been most worthy of recognition as a subject for a grotesque portrait in the Great Court.

However, at the time I was young and totally accepting of the directions the University gave me and so it was not until two decades later, when I experienced the freedom of the commission at [Wordsmiths the Writers Cafe](#), that I was finally able to include a tribute to Oodgeroo Noonuccal, including a passage from one of her wonderful poems on the generous sandstone seat under a paperbark tree at the entrance. Hopefully, her portrait might be included in some appropriate place on the campus one day.

1978









Carving the grotesque of  
Professor JC Mahoney,  
April 1983



# a challenge

## MOVING FROM STUDIO TO SITE

In 1980, Greg Berkman, the University Architect at the time, approached me to carve heraldic shields on the Michie building cloister, which was about to be completed. I had never carved on site and neither had I carved such intricate detail before. With only three rather blunt chisels, all hand tools, I was unsure whether I was capable of such a task.





# Heralding a new order

When asked to carve heraldic shields on-site, I didn't even own a grindstone to sharpen my chisels – I had always relied on other tradespeople to do this for me – and I couldn't afford to upgrade my very basic equipment.



It was going to be a challenge. To try my hand at the job, I was supplied with a sample block of Helidon freestone in the shape of a heraldic shield. The University Architect delivered it to me personally, along with a drawing of the armorial bearings of [La Trobe University](#) – not the easiest design to be translated into three dimensions!

The design incorporated an open book, three Coquille St Jacques (shells) and the floral emblem of the state of Victoria, the common heath (*Epacris impressa*, Labill.) – a flowering plant discovered in Tasmania by the French explorer [Labillardière](#) in 1793 and described by him in 1805, following his return to France.

My husband, Rob, who'd had a career in the building industry, suggested we hire an air compressor and pneumatic tools and try them out at home before making any decision about accepting work onsite at the University. Understanding the use of the regulator initially eluded me and I shed a few tears as the wild thing in my hands seemed out of my control. However, I persevered and, with his encouragement and patience, I did carve that shield, complete with sprigs of tiny flowers tied in a large elaborate bow with a ribbon.

Armed with that experience, I felt more confident and accepted the University's offer to carve heraldry onsite. That, however, necessitated learning to tow my new electric compressor, bolted onto a trailer, over to the University, then manoeuvring it carefully into place, backing up close enough to each column as I went. Fortunately, I live only about 20 minutes away from the St Lucia campus and could avoid peak-hour traffic to arrive around noon when the site was in shade.

This was the beginning of a new phase of my work at UQ's Great Court. I began with a commission to carve the heraldry of all of the University colleges. [St John's College](#) was my first, with rows of tiny lions and Christian crosses repeated on the four faces of the freestanding column.

Of course, I began by feeling that everyone in the Great Court was watching me, a novice, wrestle with backing up a trailer that seemed to have a mind of its own, but I finally mastered the manoeuvre. Then, I had to find an obliging professor nearby who would allow me to connect a power lead from my compressor to the electricity supply in their office.

Although climbing a scaffold was an uncomfortable experience for someone like myself who had never liked heights, I slowly became more confident working in such a public place. I would climb a ladder onto the top deck of the scaffold via a trapdoor in the floor, pull all my gear up with ropes, and lay out my tools on the narrow shelf set at knee height. There was no room for interpretation of the subjects. I was given a drawing of the heraldry, which I scaled up to size and then drew some guidelines on the allocated shield blank. One old stonemason told me that they used to rub the surface of the stone with weeds until it was all stained green and then scratch the guidelines for the design into that surface. I did try this, but found that the pencil mark on top just blew away. A coloured pencil was more waxy and stayed long enough to mark a guideline.

Afternoons were the best time to carve the coats of arms as the light was good. I could avoid the sun shining on my dusty visor, which would make work quite impossible because of the glare.

I would then go down again to start up the compressor and return to the deck; don my protective clothing of earplugs, dust mask, visor and gloves; before taking a deep breath, raising the pneumatic angle grinder, and first outlining the perimeter of the stone shield on all sides about 50 mm down. This defined the extremities of the design and maintained a sharp border edge that prevented the background from breaking away as I roughed out the planes for each level of the relief. Working over two separate days was also good, as I could see the piece with a fresh perspective on the second day.

I often thought about what a responsibility I had to be accurate with my work. There's a joke about the patron saint of sculptors being Araldite, but using an adhesive to repair a mistake is never an option! The important thing is to be careful and turn down the pressure of the pneumatic hammer as each edge is approached, and to direct the chisel towards the body of the work. If an accident does happen, then the only thing to do is carve the forms more deeply again. Some of the designs were very finely detailed and were never intended to be carved at such a small scale in Helidon freestone. However, I did my best with each one.

If it rained, the dust would stick to my visor and I'd have to retire to the cloister for shelter or go home early. I was mostly too dusty to take up the generous offers of tea or coffee in staff rooms nearby, although sometimes I ducked inside for a cold drink from the bubbler. Academics often paused to ask questions when I had removed my mask and, once, a student asked me if I was cleaning





Looking down the Law cloisters, featuring coats of arms for the [University of Natal](#), [University of Witwatersrand](#), [University of Malta](#), [University of Hong Kong](#), [Queen's University of Belfast](#), [University of Toronto](#), [Stellenbosch University](#) and the [University of Cape Town](#)



the carvings! I could hardly believe it. With such a pile of large chips on the paving below my scaffold, surely it was obvious that something much more invasive was happening to the stone column capital. “Open your eyes!” I thought.

That first year, I carved 29 heraldic shields, and over the ensuing years, completed several hundred more as each one was officially approved by the university in question. Finally, it was decided that with the foundation of dozens of new universities around the world, we were fast running out of space to represent them all, and a decision was made to cease the repetition that had previously occurred. Several Asian and Middle-Eastern universities have now been represented and there is still space for more. How delighted so many visitors have been to find their alma mater represented in such a beautiful and historic setting.

Years later, I was delighted to be ‘adopted’ by two of the colleges when they commissioned me to design and create artworks for their precincts and included me in their college functions.

The first such commission was for the foyer of the new Playhouse at [Women’s College](#) in 1997. After construction, a generous gift from a college alumnus allowed for a meaningful artwork to be commissioned. I gained an understanding of the proposed uses of this new facility, and created an artwork entitled *Response*. Within weeks my design concept was approved, the pattern was made and moulded, and then it was cast in bronze. The morning the patination was completed, my husband collected the artwork from the foundry. The bronze was still so hot that Rob had to wear leather gloves for the installation – just in time for the arrival minutes later of [Major General Peter Arnison AC CVO](#), Governor of Queensland, to officiate at the opening ceremony.

Subsequently, in 2007, a small group of College friends commissioned me to create a memorial that now graces the front entrance to the College. It features three carved Helidon freestone pedestals embellished with elements of the armorial bearings of the College: the Lamp, the Tudor rose and the Maltese cross. Then in 2013, the beautiful Maureen Aitken Garden was opened and it included several of my carved Helidon freestone

**bench seats**, again embellished with quotations, huge Tudor roses and several life-size bronze songbirds.

In 2007, Brother Vince Skelly, the Rector of [St Leo’s College](#), invited me to design an **entry marker**. I chose to use a natural boulder of Helidon freestone with its rugged crust split through the centre to reveal a precise symbol of St Leo’s College armorial bearings in its heart. I saw the artwork as symbolic of the young collegians whose ‘rough edges’ could be refined during their college experience. Set on a granite base, the entry marker is well lit at night to welcome its many visitors.

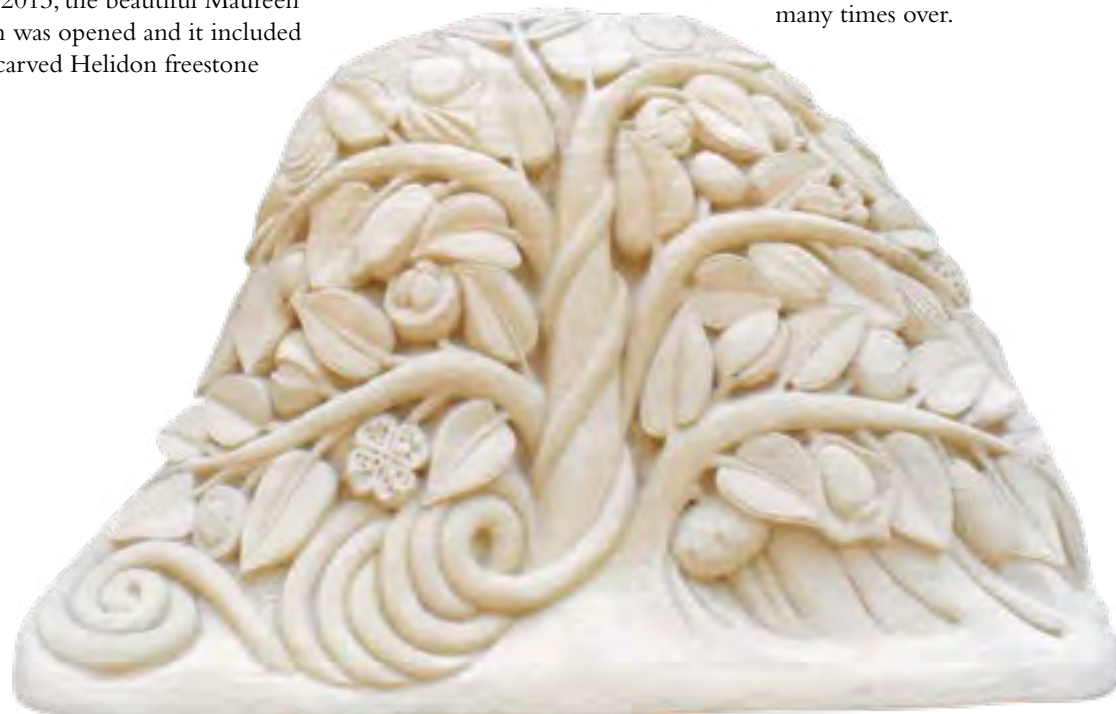
I designed and created another artwork for the courtyard at St Leo’s College in 2009, in the form of a carved Helidon freestone *Tree of Life*. Set on a granite base, the symbolic tree’s spreading branches are filled with abundant forms of Queensland native fruits representing the young men from throughout the state who come to live and study at the College. The tree reaches upwards towards the sun and the stars and its trunk is bound by a coiling vine, symbolic of striving for high achievement.

Because no heraldic design was available to represent [Union College](#) when all of the others were carved, it is the only UQ college not yet represented in the Great Court, although space does remain for it to be included with the group in the future.

I eventually carved the heraldry representing La Trobe University on the Michie building cloister during my first year onsite. My sample La Trobe shield remains hanging on a wall at home, a souvenir of my first brush with pneumatic tools.

Of all the carvings I produced at UQ, the coats of arms were less interesting for me because I had no design input. It was just a matter of translating an existing drawing into three dimensions – carefully.

I was fortunate in that I had no major mishaps with any of the blank shields, as it would have been quite difficult to repair the damage to a stone already fixed in place and, unlike in the early days of carving, I did not have to duplicate the same design many times over.



The *Tree of Life* sculpture at St Leo's College, 2009





Response sculpture at Women's College, 1997



Bench seat at Women's College, 2013



St Leo's College entry marker, 2007









The commemorative frieze at [UQ Gatton](#) depicting Queensland's agricultural industries of wool, beef, dairy, cotton, fruit, sugar cane and wheat, overlaid with representations of the weather extremes – cyclones, drought and seasonal changes – that impact all agriculture in Queensland



# Honouring the occasion

In 1987, I spent a day touring the [Queensland Agricultural College](#) (now UQ Gatton) as guest of the Director, who was keen to commission a sculptural artwork to mark the institution's 90th anniversary – whether interior or exterior, frieze or freestanding monument, he was undecided.

I gave him my best concept and designed a Helidon freestone frieze for the end wall of the Management Studies building, centrally located in the heart of the College precinct. Because my concept necessitated cladding the brick wall with Helidon freestone, the proposed budget was far exceeded. However, they loved the concept and decided to accept my proposal to carve a monumental 54-square-metre frieze celebrating the evolution of agriculture in the state of Queensland.

I had hoped to have the commission completed early so I didn't have to spend the cold winter months in Gatton. However, a cyclone had wiped out many tourist resorts in Queensland that summer, so the cladding of the brick wall was seriously delayed as tradespeople rushed north to rebuild the resorts. The monumental masons returned to our job many months later and finally, with no time to spare, I began work on site. I roamed the acres of fertile paddocks surrounding the College's historic buildings and began to sketch details of the stock and the produce being grown.

I laid out my design with a grid drawn on my cartoon to match each row of large stones cladding the wall. I worked from the top down, transferring the top layer of the design to the top of the six-metre high wall. After setting out this row I began to carve. As I completed each nine-metre wide panel, my husband Rob repaired

the grout and lowered the deck so I could progress along the next area below. I carved every day for six weeks to have the artwork ready by the promised completion date.

The scaffolding was removed the day before the official unveiling of the huge frieze, and the surrounding lawn that had been trampled on for months was sprayed a bright green and bordered by colourful potted plants. The Governor of Queensland, [Sir Walter Campbell AC](#), arrived on schedule to do the honours and I recall him smiling at me as he said, "We have to stop meeting like this!"

The Queensland Agricultural College is now known as The University of Queensland Gatton and became home to the School of Agriculture and Horticulture in 1990.

Because of its north-eastern orientation, the stone has remained clean and mould free, and I understand that standing in front of the frieze is a popular place for celebratory photographs to be taken.

Ten years later in 1997, I returned to the College to carve an **ANZAC memorial** (see page 93) from an existing Helidon freestone slab on site. Natural figuring of the stone suggested a rising sun, symbol of the Australian Army, so I enhanced that image with relief carving and gold leaf. I had little time to produce the work in time for ANZAC Day but managed to have it ready in time for a very cold dawn service.

While the carving of the frieze at Gatton had been underway, I was keen to enter a competition run by the [Brisbane City Council](#), to design a sculptural tableau for King George Square. This artwork was intended to be set up on a high plinth opposite the elegant equestrian figure of [King George V](#), and would recognise the significant contribution to the establishment of the city of Brisbane and South East Queensland by the Petrie family.

Although I was working long hours carving the frieze at Gatton, I made time to research the original [Andrew Petrie](#) family and prepared a maquette that included the parents along with their six children (a maquette is a scale model of a proposed three-dimensional concept). I included the young Tom, aged about 12, climbing over the edge of the plinth to offer bunya nuts to visitors below, just as he had enjoyed sharing that food with the local Indigenous people when he journeyed with them to the [Bunya Mountains](#). My entry was shortlisted but I was an unknown local artist, and the commission ultimately went to a Tasmanian sculptor.



Preliminary drawings

1997



# a narrative

## INFORMING A SELECTION OF QUEENSLAND'S PRINCIPAL FLORA

By the early 1990s, I was no longer enthusiastic about carving more heraldry in the Great Court because it gave me no artistic satisfaction, the designs having been created by others long ago. Having recently carved the federal, state and territory floral emblems, in 1992, as no new work had been approved for carving, I took the opportunity – in consultation with anthropologists at UQ – to propose a selection of native flora considered significant in the cultural life of Indigenous people.





# Dogrose to desert rose to database

During the 1990s, I had enjoyed carving European heraldry that included many Tudor roses and unidentified exotic trees and flowers. I was aware of numerous exotic flora subjects already depicted elsewhere on half-column capitals, like sugarcane, mango, poinsettia, passionfruit, grapes, and dozens of fanciful and unidentified subjects – and all those ‘dogroses’, with their four, five, six, seven, eight, nine or more petals! I rarely found Australian species represented.



Murdoch University shield

I always dutifully accepted the lists of subjects I was given for carving each year. So, along with the heraldic shields of Australian universities on the full-column capitals in the Great Court, the Commonwealth, state and territory [floral emblems](#) were to be represented on half-column capitals carved onsite during 1990–1991. They included Queensland’s [Cooktown orchid](#), the Western Australian [kangaroo paw](#), the Tasmanian [blue gum](#), the New South Wales [waratah](#), the Northern Territory [Sturt’s desert rose](#), the South Australian [Sturt’s desert pea](#), the [heath](#) representing the state of Victoria, and the Australian Capital Territory’s [royal bluebell](#).

The Commonwealth floral emblem, the [golden wattle](#), would have to be the most difficult flora subject I have ever had to carve. Making those small balls look soft and fluffy and not like a bunch of grapes was quite a task, but viewed from a distance I felt that all of my cutting and drilling was quite effective. I have often thought about how fortunate I am not to be in the shoes of some poor future sculptor who might have to carve a replica of my original.

When it came to carving monumental figures on either side of the main entrance to the Goddard building in 1989, I chose to include exotic flora species related to the research of the two celebrated naturalists, [Charles Darwin](#) and [Gregor Mendel](#). On the side of the Darwin figure is an insectivorous plant, a climbing plant, as well as a fossil conifer and two leaf fossils collected when he visited Australia as a young man in 1826. The design on Gregor Mendel’s embroidered mitre hat on the other side of the doorway is based on the fuchsia flowers he hybridised in his monastery garden, and four pea plants are depicted across the base.

It was great to carve native Australian flora on the armorial bearings of Australian universities, including a stylised form of banksia on the [Murdoch University](#) shield, five flowers of the Illawarra flame tree on the [Wollongong University](#) shield, a large Sturt’s desert rose on the [Charles Darwin University](#) shield, and heath included on the heraldic shield of [La Trobe University](#). Twice I repeated the Cooktown orchid on the Mansfield Place side of the vehicular entry and it was the only example of the state of Queensland’s principal flora included in this series. Quite by chance, I chose to carve both of these sprays of flowers on pink Helidon freestone that appears close to the actual colour of the real flower when the stone is clean.



## Australia's state, territory and national floral emblems



ACT: Royal bluebell



NSW: Waratah



NT: Sturt's desert rose



QLD: Cooktown orchid



SA: Sturt's desert pea



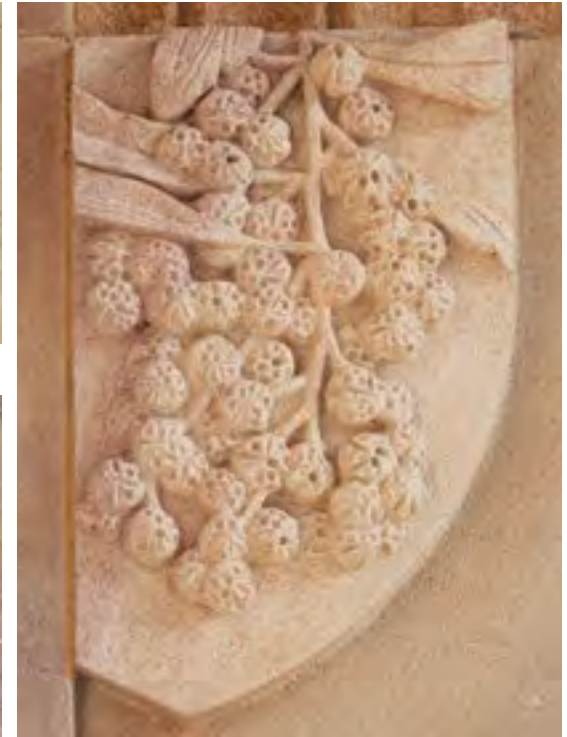
TAS: Blue gum



VIC: Heath



WA: Kangaroo paw



AUS: Golden wattle

I had enjoyed carving all of that flora as directed, but after delving into the UQ archives, I learnt that one of the objectives of the carvings in the Great Court was to depict the state of Queensland's principal flora. This fact emboldened me to propose new subjects that fulfilled that original objective. Attitudes towards the beauty and importance of our own native flora had certainly changed since decisions for the subjects of carvings were first made and, as the principal flora of Queensland had mostly been overlooked to date, I was keen to correct this. I consulted with botanists on staff before choosing an interesting selection of plants that would record the social life of Indigenous people, as well as celebrate the achievements of UQ staff and graduates.

As there was no existing record of the flora already depicted in the Great Court carvings, I realised that I needed to make that record myself before I could possibly prepare a new selection without repetition. Thus, one incredibly hot November afternoon during a Brisbane heatwave in the late 1990s, I began my walk around the cloisters, recording flora subjects in pencil on ruled-up foolscap pages and using the 1996 *Guide to the Great Court* numbering system for the columns. My initial documentation of the existing carved flora took many weeks and filled copious pages with information.

I began with the common names of flora and added the up-to-date scientific names, as well as the dates they were carved and, wherever possible, the sculptor's name. Unfortunately, because of the house fire that destroyed all of Muller's records, I had little information about flora carved before my time.

To complete the identification of much of the flora, I sought the assistance of retired UQ staff members, eminent Queensland botanists [Joan](#) and [Dr Alan Cribb](#). They quickly applied themselves to the task of walking around the cloisters and positively identifying any plant that was identifiable. Their detailed observations were added to my lists and became the basis of an exhaustive record of all of the carvings in the Great Court that then consumed me off and on for the next 14 years. All of these pages of handwritten information were delivered to the Property and Facilities office and typed up by the office staff. When the lists were returned to me, I realised that people without scientific training had become involved and that many scientific names were now incorrectly recorded – despite my carefully handwritten original guide. That typed document was useless.

My friend, [Dr Hugh Lavery AM](#), esteemed environmental scientist and UQ alumnus, offered to have his assistant compile the lists in a professional way, and thus our work together began on a database that finally recorded all of the carvings on all UQ campuses in Ipswich, Gatton and St Lucia. That database was finally completed, checked onsite and delivered to the [UQ Art Museum](#) in August 2012. It became the basis for a new guide to the Great Court entitled [Carving a history: a guide to the Great Court](#) published in 2016, along with an app providing access to the comprehensive database.

1990

2012



# From exotic to native

Rather than continuing the depiction of exotic flora species, I chose a list of native flora subjects for the half-column capitals in the Michie building cloister, where I had begun my first work on site in 1980 carving the armorial bearings of UQ's Colleges.

Because of the proximity of the Anthropology Museum to the Michie building cloisters, I proposed that the subjects reflect the usefulness of various flora species to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of South East Queensland – not only for the provision of food but also for medicinal purposes and for making implements. Many of these plants were represented in a garden on the north-western side of the Michie building. Dr Peter Lauer gave me pages from a booklet he had prepared for the Anthropology Museum in 1986, *Significant plants of the Butchulla people on Fraser Island and in Hervey Bay*, which provided me with descriptions of the uses Indigenous people had made of many native plants, and from these I chose 20 subjects.

I submitted my proposal to the Senate Art Committee for its consideration and, following its approval, I began work onsite in 1992 with renewed enthusiasm, completing the series two years later. Because I was able to obtain specimens of these plants, I used them as on-the-spot reference for the work and just carved intuitively, using only sparse construction lines to determine the thrust of the image.

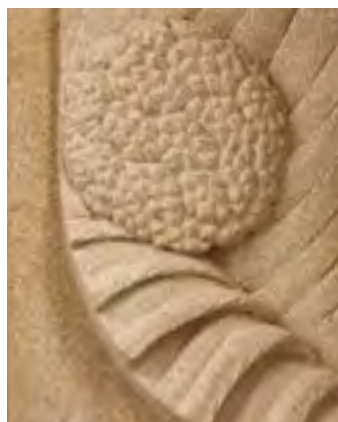
South East Queensland provided a rich and diverse menu for the local people, and edible species included the very important [Bunya pine](#), a species of particular interest to me. Several huge old specimens, perhaps up to 20 metres in height, had grown beside the lawn tennis court at my childhood home, an old Queenslander on the riverbank at Yeerongpilly in Brisbane, where renowned artist [Lloyd Rees](#) had also lived for a short time during his very early childhood. When preparing to write his book, *Peaks and Valleys*, in 1985, he returned to our home with his son to photograph some aspects of the property. It was always believed that a Bora Ring had once existed there, although no traces were evident when we moved to the property in 1954. These



Bunya pine



Cabbage tree palm



Pandanus

huge trees that had been recorded in [John Oxley's](#) field notebooks as he proceeded up the Brisbane River towards Oxley Creek in 1823 would certainly indicate the possibility of the existence of such a sacred site. When extensive outcrops of Bunya pines in the Blackall and Stanley Ranges were fruiting, they were a magnet for the huge ceremonial gatherings that were also used for trade purposes. From personal experience, I recall that those nuts were quite delicious when Mother either baked or boiled them for us to enjoy.

On the available half-column capital there was only room to carve one prickly frond and a nut shed from the fibrous husk that binds many together into a very large heavy cone about the size of a soccer ball. When ripe, a cone can fall from a great height without warning and smash open with deadly results for anyone below. There were many large dents in our lawn tennis court caused by such events! Because of my father's interest and knowledge of local history and fear of a proposed riverside road being constructed by [Brisbane City Council](#), I believe that he had proposed that those particular Bunya pines in Yeerongpilly should be heritage listed, but subsequent property developers felled them after my family left the district. These magnificent landmarks have gone, just like so many of the Bora Rings.

Along with the kernel of the Bunya nut, the whole root or rhizome of the gristle fern or [bungwall fern](#) was bruised and roasted and was a most important part of the diet of Indigenous people. It was a very attractive subject to carve near the armorial bearings of [St Leo's](#) and [Cromwell Colleges](#).

Palms had an important role in the dreaming stories of the coastal people, and the Livistona or [cabbage tree palm](#) is included in this series. Its fresh young leaves mixed with honey made a delicious fresh salad. It became the inspiration for

1992  
1993



another of my artworks, commissioned for the sculpture garden at [The Maroochy Regional Bushland Botanic Gardens](#) on the Sunshine Coast, where the species still flourishes bordering the Sculpture Garden. I had thought of the many uses to which every part of this plant had been put, and hence I entitled that artwork *The gift*.

Then, at the vehicular end of this series in the cloister, I carved the [pandanus](#), commonly known as bread fruit and found along the coastal fringe of the east coast of Australia. It is very important to the health, culture and economic life of the people of the Pacific region.

I found my sample of the so-called nut palm, or [cycad](#), in a neighbour's garden during my regular morning walk, and took a few photographs for reference when it bore fruit. Only after a prolonged process of repeated pounding, rinsing and baking was this plant rendered edible. Untreated, the fruit of this plant was as toxic as the next specimen I was about to carve, the [cunjevoi](#), a lily-like plant with very large leaves that I had often seen on visits to rainforests over the years. I could only fit a scaled-down version of its huge leaf on the half-column capital inside the cloister.

[Lilly pilly](#) trees were also once common in the rainforests bordering the lower reaches of the Brisbane River, and their plentiful pink and white fruit were gathered and eaten by locals throughout the region. Now, they are popular in Brisbane gardens and it was easy to obtain a sample before carving a sprig just inside the cloister beside the badge of [International House](#).

Nearby, I carved a native black [orchid](#) that grows in tree hollows, with fleshy drooping leaves and a handsome scarlet hanging flower with edible tubers.

Among the most useful of plants included in the series is the melaleuca, [tea tree](#) or paperbark. Dominant in coastal swamplands, the bark could become a ready blanket and its flowers drew the honey bees. It was easy for me to get a specimen as they are quite common street plants here in Brisbane. That same year at the entrance to [Wordsmiths the Writers Cafe](#) at UQ, I had carved a seat in memory of Aboriginal activist Kath Walker, or [Oodgeroo Noonuccal](#) as she came to be known (*see page 69*). Her name means paperbark and a large melaleuca tree planted beside that seat in her memory attracts swarms of native bees during its flowering season.



Bungwall fern



Another profusely flowering species carved nearby is the [honeysuckle oak](#). Its nectar was attractive to native bees and birds and thus popular for generations. Widely distributed along the east coast of Australia, it can grow quite high and I still remember spending one memorable family Christmas holiday under an outcrop growing just beyond the low sand dunes at a beach on the Sunshine Coast. The family gathered in the shade there daily, and over time we decorated the largest tree with ornaments fashioned on the spot from remnants of gift paper and ribbons.

Close to the armorial bearings of [Women's College](#), I chose to carve a native species of flora called [geebung](#), which has become the name of a north Brisbane suburb. Its fresh fruit was enjoyed by when ripe and sometimes preserved by burying it in the ground for retrieval at a later time.

Two native plants I included were used for medicinal purposes. The first is the [convolvulus](#), which is carved beside the shield of [La Trobe University](#). This plant is a trailing vine with large purple flowers and grows profusely on the sand dunes bordering many Queensland beaches. The rhizomes are edible and its crushed leaves were used to treat the painful sting of stingrays and stonefish.

The second species with a medicinal use is the [Moreton Bay ash](#), carved in 1993 on the external wall of the cloister. This is my husband's favourite eucalypt, which he came to admire in the days when he was a (very popular) scout leader, teaching generations of boys to appreciate the natural environment during bush camps organised in the Brisbane environs. These trees are easily recognised by the unusual tessellation of the lower bark that is included in the carving. This bark could be infused to prepare a tea for the treatment of dysentery.

Along the cloister is the magnificent [grass tree](#) that grows well on sheltered hillsides. Years ago, during a visit to Millmerran in western Queensland, I saw it thriving on a rocky hillside and recall that the nectar from its flowers had attracted swarms of bees and thus was a source of nourishing honey. Due to early morning exposure to the sun, these flowers bloom earlier on the eastern side of the spike and thus were observed as a compass. Because of its length, I was only able to show part of the flowering spike of the plant on a small half-shield surmounting a half-column capital next to the armorial bearings of [King's College](#).

Flowers of the [cotton tree](#), commonly called the beach hibiscus, were carved at the cloisters' vehicular entry. On many occasions in the early 1970s, I used to gather baskets full of these lovely pale-yellow flowers to decorate our beach camp at Moreton Island, where we could enjoy watching them fade to a rich rusty-red by evening. Far from the glare of the city lights, we waited and watched in the darkness for early sightings of satellites crossing the night sky, making our own middens of drift oyster shells. Fibre gathered from these trees could be made into strong fishing nets.

Along the wall inside is represented the small-leaved [Moreton Bay fig](#), which can grow up to six metres in height and is scattered throughout the Moreton Bay region, providing fruit for native animals and fibre for making dilly-bags.

Beside the fig are carved leaves of the [macaranga](#), which naturally grows behind frontal sand dunes and on mountain slopes and is now a popular plant in native gardens in Brisbane suburbia. Several have self-seeded in my own courtyard over the years and I gathered a good leaf specimen during my morning walk along the banks of McKay Brook, a tributary of Moggill Creek that runs along the edge of my garden in Brisbane's west. Its fibre was gathered for making twine and the timber was strong enough for making spears.

One of the most detailed flora subjects that I have had to carve in Helidon freestone is the [carrol](#). This plant favours open situations



Supplejack native vine



in light rainforests and grows profusely on the banks of creeks, and is an understory plant on my own hillside above the floodline of our creek. So, when it flowered profusely with clusters of tiny white blossoms, I collected a small flowering sprig and proceeded to spend a long time carving the detail. The [UQ Anthropology Museum](#) houses two boomerangs made from the timber cut from this plant.

Near the entrance to the Michie building is the flower and a fruiting stem of the [red mangrove](#), which is an important plant because it provides breeding places for prawns, crabs, fish and other species, and its bark was used for tanning fishing nets. I still have one of my childhood treasures – a shiny crimson-coloured mangrove seed that I found one camping holiday at the beach.

Early in 1994, I completed this series of flora with a climbing reed-cane, or [supplejack native vine](#), at the entrance to the Michie building. A rambling rainforest plant, it appears plentifully along riverbanks in many places where the soil is moist, and I was interested to find detailed descriptions of its use in my very old copy of *Tom Petrie's Reminiscences of Early Brisbane*, written by his daughter Constance. It's one of many old books that my father had collected and I have dipped into it on many occasions for inspiration. She recorded that after the bark was chewed off, great lengths of the inner cane were useful for scaling high trees and were preserved afterwards by soaking in water to keep them supple.

It was while working in this cloister that I was dismayed to be advised that the sound of my carving had upset someone working in a nearby room. I was directed in writing not to work between the hours of 9am and 5pm, or to work only on weekends! In contrast, I had also just received an encouraging letter from an enthusiastic academic who wrote to Buildings and Grounds to let them know what a privilege it was to be able to observe history being made as each carving was completed just outside his own window overlooking my scaffold. As it was close to semester break, I waited and then continued on warily, managing to complete the series without causing further inconvenience or nuisance.

It was also here that I had my first and only accident onsite. My scaffolding was erected in a tight corner with the ladder entering the deck through a trapdoor that ended up right where I needed to stand when working. There was a narrow space between this trapdoor and the railings and one day, as I concentrated on the carving in front of my eyes, I moved and stepped down the hole. I suffered a lot of grazed skin and bruising as a result and it made me very wary about where I was putting my feet from then on.

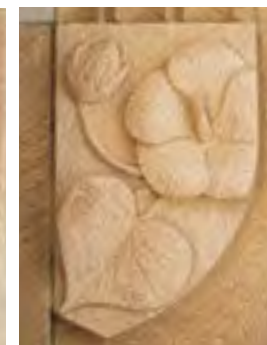
I believe that this suite of carvings tells a really interesting story about the cultural life of Indigenous people in South East Queensland. Having the chance to choose and carve my own subject matter was not only satisfying for me, but I hope that my selection meets with the approval of the Traditional Custodians of the land.



Carrol



Convolvulus



Cotton tree



Cunjevoi



Cycad



Geebung



Grass tree



Honeysuckle oak



Lilly pilly



Macaranga



Moreton Bay ash



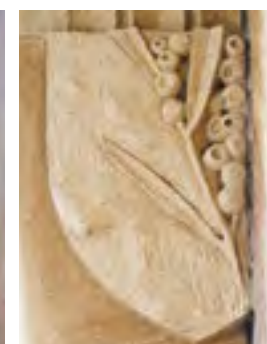
Moreton Bay fig



Orchid



Red mangrove



Tea tree





Carving the coat of arms for  
the University of Tennessee, 1985



# a tribute

## RECOGNISING MORE FEMALES

Having successfully completed my original commission for eight grotesques, I was keen to continue carving the remaining 10 originally envisaged for the Great Court. Between 1981 and 1994, I carved nine grotesques – until a decision by the Great Court Sculpture Committee decreed that the last one “be left unfilled, so as to signify the ongoing tradition and history of the University”. With only five women honoured to date, I had hoped to complete the original series of 50 with one more female subject.





# John Theodore Muller

My parents often attended lectures at The University of Queensland. Once when I was with them, we stopped to watch a sculptor carving a sandstone block set up on a large stone banker in the Great Court, where the sections of huge sandstone columns were awaiting installation. I was aged about 10 or 11 and was absolutely fascinated to watch for the first time in my life someone actually carving stone right there in front of me.

The man was probably [John Theodore Muller](#) and, of course, it didn't cross my mind that one day I too would become a sculptor and continue his work.

Muller was a gifted Dresden-born sculptor who began work under contract to sculpt the carvings at the new St Lucia site in 1939. Apart from a three-year break during WWII when the site was requisitioned for the military, he worked from then on, almost to the day of his death in March 1953, aged 80. Before he came to work full-time at The University of Queensland, Muller had worked as a sculptor on many significant public buildings including the Brisbane City Hall, where he assisted in the carving of the figurative [tympanum](#) designed by [Daphne Mayo](#).

Muller was described as a modest man who regarded himself as a stonemason, not a sculptor, and with his tall straight frame and straw hat he was a familiar figure on campus. Although the University did offer suggestions for grotesque subjects, Muller had complete freedom to choose his own models or work entirely from his often playful or sardonic imagination. In an article in the Brisbane [Courier-Mail](#) in November 1951, he is quoted as saying:

*If a professor says a certain gargoyle is like Mr Colin Clark, who am I to question his comparison? I merely carve them.*

Only recently have the probable models for three of his previously unidentified subjects been finally revealed. Most still remain an enigma.

At the University, Muller carved monumental busts of Shakespeare, Chaucer, Plato and Justinian. Assisted by stonemasons who roughed out the forms, he also carved huge friezes depicting Aboriginal culture; the state's early European settlement and industries; flora

and fauna; and the armorial bearings of universities of the British Commonwealth and other principal universities throughout the world. Nevertheless, he is most famous for his grotesques.

Once described as an expert in his field, it was recorded in the [Sunday Mail](#) in 1973 that "he used to shake like mad, but when he was carving, he was as steady as a rock. He worked fast and once he got going, he could finish a gargoyle in a couple of days." Many of his carvings have been incorrectly referred to as gargoyles, which are actually functional water spouts – named because of the gargling sound of water directed from a roof through a channel in the carving and away from the walls of a building. The carvings at UQ are actually grotesques, caricatures of humans and other fanciful creatures once created for grottoes, hence the name.

In 1980, after I had started to carve the heraldry onsite in the Great Court, I put away my old mallet and chisels and my husband, Rob, set up a new electric compressor on a trailer so I could use my new pneumatic tools at home as well as at the University.

Before tackling Muller's grotesque for the University that year, I went to talk to his daughter, Louise, at her home in Hamilton, Brisbane. I remember admiring a fine oval-framed life-size relief portrait that Muller had once modelled, hanging in the entrance hall. We shared a lovely afternoon tea and she gave me a folder full of images of European classical sculpture that he had once owned. I was looking for some of his original designs on paper that might be suitable to include in the design of his grotesque and an insight into his world but found nothing useful, probably because Muller's home in Queens Road, Hamilton, was destroyed in a fire in 1952 and all of his records were lost. Haunted by the prospect of a similar fate for all of my meticulously kept records, I have lodged them all to date with the Fryer Library.

Decades earlier, Muller had made a plaster of Paris maquette depicting himself as a grotesque and it was to this scale model hanging in the Building and Grounds workshop at the University that I was directed. By this time, I'd been carving in the Great Court for over five years and, even though I'd already completed many grotesques, this was going to be a very significant one and the only time I was asked to enlarge and copy another artist's work.



## Gargoyles or grotesques?

Many of his carvings have been incorrectly referred to as gargoyles, which are actually functional water spouts – named because of the gargling sound of water directed from a roof through a

channel in the carving and away from the walls of a building. The carvings at UQ are grotesques – caricatures of humans and other fanciful creatures once created for grottoes, hence the name.



## Keeping the home fires burning

Around this time, we had begun building our own studio on the hillside below the house on our large property in Kenmore Hills. We were in what we later called the 'romantic period', using old hardwood timber from the demolition of the [Dalgety Wool Stores](#) in Brisbane and old terracotta roof tiles from the demolition of Eventide Home at Brighton. We had all of the materials delivered to the footpath of the steep dirt road outside our home and, after pulling out thousands of rusty nails, we carried every stick of timber down to the building site where Rob capably undertook construction, with me as the labourer. We even planted ferns in hanging baskets under the tree that penetrated the roof, and installed a wood-burning potbelly stove to keep us warm in the winter months. That comfort lasted only until we inadvertently managed to cook a possum trapped in the chimney.

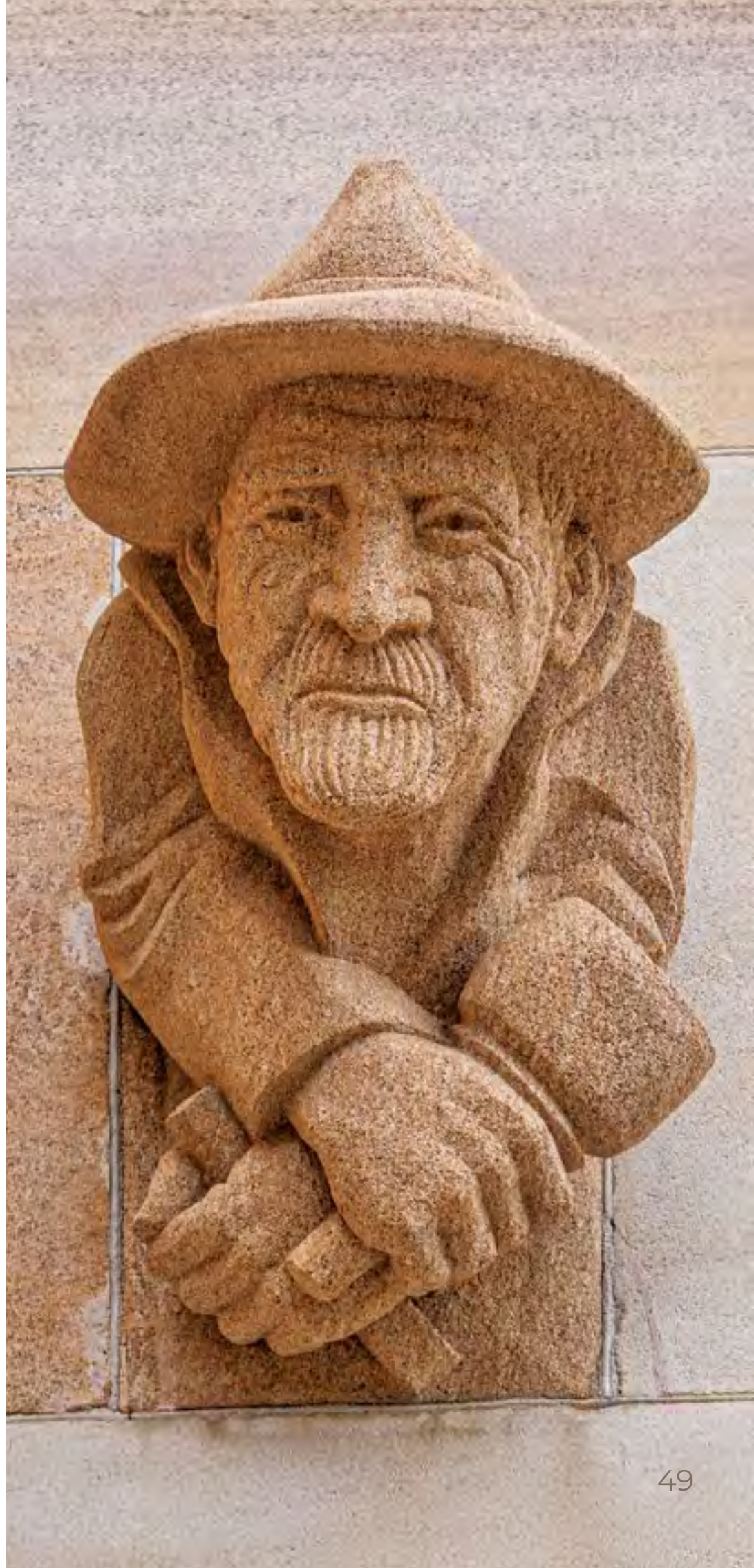
During the hot Christmas period before 1981 dawned, we commenced work building a large gas-fired kiln especially for the production of our first collaborative commissioned artwork, a very large ceramic Royal Coat of Arms for the Banco Room at the New Law Courts Stage 2 in George Street, Brisbane. One day, as I modelled up one of the supporters of the escutcheon, the unicorn that was as tall as me, Rob commented that he didn't think the shoulder anatomy was quite right. In defence, I remember answering, "When did you last see a unicorn?" My retort became quite a family joke.

Although Muller did use pneumatic carving tools, I found a wonderful picture of him at work with hand tools, and wearing a big white dustcoat and broad-brimmed straw hat shading the strong profile of his craggy face. I couldn't quite equate this image with the maquette he'd made, depicting himself in a business coat and tie and wearing a trilby hat, so I took artistic licence and followed my own instinct regarding his attire. However, years later I was advised that he would have chosen to depict himself in this way to identify as a German gentleman. I did follow his intent with the design, however, showing his arms crossed at the wrist and holding a large wooden mallet and a flat chisel.


I was delighted to carve this particular grotesque portrait of Muller, honouring the man who had contributed so much to the wonderful ambience of the Great Court.

Years later, I made a bronze miniature of Muller's grotesque and an edition of it was presented to [Emeritus Professor Dr Mary Mahoney AO](#) – then a long-serving Senate member and twice Deputy Chancellor of UQ – on the occasion of her retirement as Chair of the Buildings and Grounds Committee following 24 years of service.

Muller's original maquette for the grotesque still hangs on the wall in their offices and Mary has often told me how delighted she was with this gift. She was appointed Alumna of the Year in 2016 and received an edition of the bronze award that I also designed and made.







*I carved him, surrounded by eucalyptus leaves... with a specimen flask at the ready to capture the precious oil.*



# Professor TGH (Gilbert) Jones CBE

In 1981, after carving the heraldic shields representing [Griffith University](#) and [The University of Queensland](#) in the vehicular entry to the Great Court, as well as a memorial portrait in stone of [Lieutenant Colonel JA Robinson](#) for the Brisbane [College of Advanced Education](#) at Kelvin Grove, two grotesques were ready for me to design and carve. The first was to represent sculptor [John Theodore Muller](#) and, after that was completed in April, I began working on the second, representing [Professor Thomas Gilbert Henry \(TGH\) Jones](#), fondly known as Gilbert Jones.

Because my maiden name was Jones, I was particularly interested, so up in the usual place in the Arts Faculty, over a cup of tea and biscuits, Professor Mahoney filled me in about the professor's career. Professor Jones had joined the Department of Chemistry in 1915 and spent the last 25 years of his working life as Professor of Chemistry as well as Dean of the Faculty of Science. He had a distinguished career at The University of Queensland and was awarded a CBE for his outstanding contributions to education in Queensland.

As former Professor in Biochemistry and University Senator Dr Burt Zerner once described him, he was somewhat shy, but warm and generous, humble and honest. Of swarthy complexion, with a firm mouth and upright bearing, he best indicated his pleasure with a magnificent grin and a glint in his steely eyes.

I went off to the Chemistry Department and made pencil sketches of a mortar and pestle, petri dish, flasks and test tubes – all potential supporting elements for the grotesque I was about to carve. I was keen to include reference to his particular interest in eucalyptus oils and so the concept evolved in my mind's eye. I carved him, surrounded by eucalyptus leaves – of which there are hundreds of varieties in Australia – with a specimen flask at the ready to capture the precious oil.

I never made scale models and seldom made detailed sketches of any of the grotesques, but preferred to let the forms evolve during the carving process. When I'd completed this grotesque, including some rather tricky work getting his spectacles sitting on his nose correctly, I arranged for his son, David, and some of his colleagues from the Department of Biochemistry to come to my studio to see the work before its delivery and installation on the Law end of the Forgan Smith building. We enjoyed an afternoon tea together and it was especially pleasing to see David's reaction to the portrait of his father, long since deceased. David took many photographs and soon after, wrote to say that all of the family, including his sister in the UK, were impressed with the grotesque.

Saved in what I call my 'strawberry file' is Dr Burt Zerner's wonderful letter of appreciation of my work. He wrote:

*I think it is magnificent. It successfully captures the twinkle of his eye and strength of his face. From one who knew and loved him, thank you.*

1981

## Venturing further afield

Apart from my work at UQ, in 1981 Rob and I produced our first major commission together. It was the ceramic [Royal Coat of Arms](#) for the ceremonial Banco Room in the New Law Courts in Brisbane. Its significance in our career was realised

when, as a result of its successful completion, we subsequently won the commission to produce the ceramic [Australian Coat of Arms](#) for the House of Representatives in the New Parliament House in Canberra in 1987. Following the subsequent demolition

of those Law Courts in George Street, and construction of the new Queen Elizabeth II Courts of Law in 2012, our ceramic Royal Coat of Arms was rescued and placed permanently on display in the new complex. We were delighted that it was valued so much.



# Emeritus Professor Dorothy Hill AC CBE, FRS, FAA

I often heard the sound of [Dorothy Hill](#)'s laughter as I walked along the cloisters of the Richards building, where she'd forged an illustrious career and was a significant role model for women of her time. She was a leader in her field of mineralogy and geology, and a world authority on Palaeozoic corals. She was once reported to have said, "Given the opportunity, I would choose the same career again without hesitation."

Among the black-and-white photographs I was given prior to creating her grotesque portrait, there was one depicting her in a black-and-white spotted dress. The pattern suggested to me the form of brain coral, and so the idea evolved of depicting her almost becoming a fossil coral herself as she aged to a diminutive though happily animated figure of more than 80 years. I carved her holding a greatly enlarged Palaeozoic coral, and invited her and some of her staff to visit my sculpture studio to see the work at close quarters before its delivery and installation on the Geology building in the Great Court in November 1981.

It was marvellous to see her honoured by her university as a grotesque in her own lifetime, and she continued to frequent the Geology building until her death in 1997, aged 90. [Emeritus Professor Brian Wilson AO](#), Vice-Chancellor of The University of Queensland at that time wrote:

*In the centuries ahead, Dorothy Hill's name will be recalled when distinction is extolled. It will be recalled through the legacy of the library she developed in her department and even if the gates of the University are closed to students and staff, and the libraries and laboratories emptied, her grotesque will remain above the Great Court with that serenity of view which barely masks the bubbling exuberance and the impish wit of the person; that serenity of view characteristic of a discipline which counts time only in millennia.*

In 2001, because the principal of [Brisbane Girls Grammar School](#) was keen to celebrate the achievements of significant old girls and wanted to encourage current students to similarly aspire to great achievements, I was commissioned to create a bronze life-size portrait of Dorothy Hill as a young student.

Dorothy had attended the school from 1920 until 1924 and was inspired by the study of mathematics, chemistry, biology and the classics that later helped her in her research work. It was here that she won the school's most prestigious academic prize, the [Lady Lilley Gold Medal](#), as well as the Sports Brooch for her sporting achievements. As a teenager she was just like any other schoolgirl with potential.

In the school archives there are good images of her in a sports uniform wearing a bandanna hand-embroidered with the initials BGGs. When a really faded old bandanna was found, I was able to have it scanned so I could use all of that information to model the master for the life-size bronze portrait for display at the school.

It was the second such portrait bust in this series for the school, the first one being of [Kathleen Campbell-Brown](#), who was also the subject for one of my grotesques at UQ (see page [62](#)).

1993

(Photo courtesy Fryer Library, UQ: Hill, Dorothy, 1907-97 Dorothy Hill and field party, Dorothy Hill Collection, UQFL25, Box 63, Folder 2, item 35.)



## A woman ahead of her time

Dorothy Hill (1907–97) was a woman of fierce intelligence born at a time when women typically were not lauded for their intellectual prowess. After topping the state in the 1924 Senior examination, she won a scholarship to The University of Queensland to study chemistry. However, a chance enrolment in geology 'to broaden her education' completely changed her path – along with a holiday to Mundubbera in central Queensland, where she

discovered the ancient coral fossils that were to become her life-long research passion. She went on to become the first woman to win a University Gold Medal (1928), the youngest Fellow of [Newnham College](#) at Cambridge University (1932), Australia's first female professor (1959) and the first female president of the [Australian Academy of Science](#) (1970). She was also awarded several medals and fellowships – including the [Royal Society of London](#), a CBE, an AC and an honorary Doctor of Laws for her achievements. A [branch library](#) at UQ is named in her honour.






*“Given the opportunity,  
I would choose the same career  
again without hesitation.”*

Emeritus Professor  
Dorothy Hill AC CBE, FRS, FAA





*I put him back there on  
his bike, peering over the  
handlebars with his necktie  
flying back over his shoulder  
in the breeze.*



# Bruce Green

By the end of 1982, I was ready to work on two more grotesque carvings. However, now that it was time to commence work on [Bruce Green](#)'s portrait I learnt that he was away overseas and could not be contacted. As no-one even knew when he might return and I had a deadline to meet, I proceeded without ever actually meeting or speaking with the man himself. Following some research, I decided to depict him in the important role of Assistant Registrar, wearing his UQ necktie emblazoned with the cross patee from the University's [armorial bearings](#), and dreaming of those happy days as an office boy riding his bike at the George Street campus and beyond.

At that time, a television advertisement for a bank showed a man rolling up his sleeves, symbolic of getting the job done. I decided that this was how I could represent Bruce Green's application to the many roles he undertook during his long and successful career as an administrator – planning, directing, conducting, editing, organising and supervising important day-to-day events in the University calendar.

As a newly recruited 13-year-old messenger boy, for many years he rode his bicycle out to collect the weekly rent from the farms at St Lucia and Pinjarra Hills, which were part of the [Mayne family estate](#) gifted to The University of Queensland in 1930. So, in my carving I put him back there on that bike, peering over the handlebars with his necktie flying back over his shoulder in the breeze. For a change, I had some very good black-and-white

photographs of my subject and was pleased with the likeness I was able to achieve. I delivered the grotesque by the deadline in the following January, ready for installation before students were to return in early February 1983.

On his return from overseas, I received a telephone call from a rather alarmed and irate Mr Green, who demanded to know why I had carved his portrait without discussing it with him first. I told him I had a deadline to meet and it was too late. The job was done. I suggested that he should go see the artwork that was now stored on campus ready for installation on the Parnell building in the Great Court, and hoped for the best.

Shortly afterwards I did receive a very reassuring response from him. He just said, "I loved that bike!" That was enough for me and I breathed a sigh of relief. What a year!

1983

## On the side

During a tea break at a town-planning seminar in Brisbane in 1982, my husband, Rob, and I by chance met a Brisbane City Councillor. When he learnt we were sculptors he asked us on the spot if we were interested in designing and producing a fountain for the small triangular island at the intersection of George, Roma and Herschel Streets in the city, and what would it cost. He was in a hurry to get it made, as the Council needed the whole thing to be completed in six weeks, ready for the impending [Commonwealth Games](#) and a royal visit to our city. We worked out a concept and an estimated budget, signed the contract and, with no time to spare, I sailed into carving seven days a week to have the commission completed in time.

There were 10 big blocks of Helidon freestone weighing many tonnes in total and I had less than two weeks to carve each one in relief with designs of Queensland native flora typical of the precinct before white man's arrival. (In 2020, the carved stone components of the George Street fountain were relocated to the [Brisbane Botanical Gardens Mt Coot-tha](#) and renamed *Subtropical treasures*.)

After the installation was successfully completed by 8.30am, we literally ran down George Street to greet about 30 children

who had joined our Queensland Arts Council painting workshop in a big tent in the City Botanic Gardens.

The workshop was part of Festival '82, an arts festival that ran concurrently with the Games. After convincing the executive of the Arts Council that Queenslanders could create equally spectacular projects if given the same budget as the international artists already engaged, our budget was increased. As a result, we created a huge dragon rising from the lawn and supported by two tall palm trees. The children painted the body made from flexible aluminium air-conditioning ducting, and embellished the shade cloth wings with streamers of colourful felt offcuts embellished with shiny milk bottle tops. Rob organised flashing traffic-warning lights for the eyes and a special machine delivered an impressive cloud of smoke that issued from its nostrils. Little did we know that this was a volatile mix until a great explosion blew the back out of the dragon's head and real flames appeared. The children, of course, wanted more of this; however, the plug was quickly pulled for safety reasons. Notwithstanding all the excitement, it was a great success and as a result we were invited to participate in [Universiade '83](#), the cultural event coinciding with the World University Games in Edmonton, Canada, the following year.



# Dr Freda Bage

After carving the armorial bearings of all UQ Colleges on the Michie building cloister in 1981, including the one for [The Women's College](#), I became closely associated with that College.

The name of [Dr Freda Bage](#), who was the principal of The Women's College for 32 years following its establishment in 1914, was on my original commission list of eight grotesque subjects and she was the third female I was able to include. Unfortunately, she wasn't around when I came to carve her grotesque portrait in 1982, but a very formal portrait painting of her hung in the College dining room. Other photographic images taken at different times of her life were so varied as she aged that it was quite difficult to arrive at a suitable era to capture in stone.

Freda Bage was a woman of enormous energy, an enthusiastic biologist, sports administrator, women's activist and motoring adventurer – and, by all accounts, a woman to be reckoned with. The photograph that influenced my interpretation of the proposed grotesque was one printed in the newspaper, showing her as an intrepid motorist in her familiar grey driving coat with her large open-topped vehicle. Packed full of enthusiastic young female students, she conducted them across town from the original College site at Kangaroo Point to the University in George Street, and later to the St Lucia campus.

I decided to portray these happy memories by surrounding her portrait with a car body, complete with mudguards, folded soft hood and the big horn on the driver's side. Symbolic of the firm control she kept over the College during its formative years, she is depicted gripping the wheel with both hands, just as she so brilliantly steered the college community into the modern era, empowering young women with potential to shape society.

I carved an oil lamp on the front of the windscreen like a registration sticker, in reference to the lamp that is the universal symbol of scholarship and one of the elements depicted on the armorial bearings of The Women's College. Those armorial bearings also include the Tudor rose, which represents the mother of Henry VII of England, Lady Margaret, who generously endowed University of Cambridge Colleges in the early 16th century, and the cross patee, which appears on UQ's armorial bearings.

Since 1983, Dr Bage's grotesque portrait has smiled down on passers-by from the north-eastern end of the Goddard building.

*Freda Bage was a woman  
of enormous energy and by  
all accounts a woman to be  
reckoned with.*

That same year, I also carved *The Good Samaritan* for [Lourdes Hill Convent](#) in Brisbane, and represented Australia at the art festival of Universiade '83 as part of the 1983 World University Games in Edmonton, Canada. I also participated in Brisbane's Warana Festival '83, when Australians were all excited to see our team win the [America's Cup](#).

In 1997, the new Playhouse at The Women's College was to be opened by [Peter Arnison AC CVO](#), Governor of Queensland and, with very short notice,

I was commissioned to create a bronze artwork for the foyer. In only four weeks I designed and produced a cast bronze artwork entitled *Response* (see page [35](#)).

Then in 2007, College alumni commissioned me to create a special memorial to a colleague as a gift to the college. I made a group of small Helidon freestone pedestals for the front entrance of The Women's College entitled *Share and share alike*, inspired by the College motto, *Capimus ut dividamus* – We take that we may share.

The ambience of the College has been enhanced over the years and at the beginning of the College centenary celebrations, in recognition of the dedication of the recently retired Principal [Maureen Aitken](#), a very lovely new garden was created in her name. I contributed Helidon freestone carvings of huge Tudor roses on the bench seats, bronze birds and many inscriptions, including one quotation from Robert Frost:

*But I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep.*

To many alumni, the happiest time in their lives was spent at The Women's College and in the invitation to the official opening, the garden was described as "the beautiful space for beautiful minds of The Women's College residents of today and into the next century." The Governor, the [Honourable Dr Penelope Wensley AC](#), who along with her mother and daughter is an alumnus of The Women's College, officially opened the garden in March 2013.

I was very delighted and honoured to be invited to give the official address to the Standing Committee of Women's College Centenary Luncheon the following June. Over the years I've attended many memorable events at The Women's College, where I always feel welcomed as one of the College family.











# Emeritus Professor James C Mahoney

When preparing to complete any subject in grotesque form, my first task was to gather background information about the person, and so I began a long and happy association with [Emeritus Professor James Mahoney](#), Dean of Arts 1956–1959, President of the Professorial Board 1966–1968, and on the University Senate for five years until 1971.

From the beginning, Professor Mahoney took me under his wing and arranged to meet me in the staff room of the Department of French in the Arts Faculty on the first floor of the Forgan Smith building. We sat in comfortable armchairs and, over a cup of tea and a plate of Arnott's gingernut biscuits, we discussed each grotesque portrait subject before me.

He produced a handful of large, pale-blue file cards. In a bold scrawling hand he jotted down names of colleagues well known to him, and any information that might be useful to me – what he knew of their role at the University, and the names of family and work colleagues I might contact for further background information.

James became my mentor for many ensuing years and I was delighted to eventually commence work on a grotesque portrait of the man himself.

When the time came to consider his own portrait grotesque, James and his wife, Maureen, were very welcoming hosts and, over afternoon tea in their St Lucia home, we discussed his career and the possibilities of including references to his achievements. I admired his wonderful [Croix de chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur](#) in its velvet case, awarded to him by the French Government in 1978, and decided to include it in the carving, along with the white fur-edged hood of his pale-blue academic robe. To identify him as the 1929 Rhodes Scholar, I carved the heraldic shield of [Balliol College](#) at Oxford University and surrounded the whole design with a border of oak leaves and acorns bound with ribbon, symbolising wisdom, strength and stability.

I survived the Queensland summer heat and humidity carving two grotesques throughout the Christmas period to complete the work in time for installation before the year's influx of new students in February 1983.

*James became my mentor for many years and I was delighted to eventually commence work on a grotesque portrait of the man himself.*

Four years later, while travelling on my Churchill Fellowship, I was invited to stay at [Oriel College](#) in Oxford by [Sir Zelman Cowen](#). Sir Zelman, who had been UQ's Vice-Chancellor when I was first commissioned to undertake the role of University Sculptor, and later Governor-General of Australia, was now Provost of Oriel College.

When I arrived, he generously presented me with a giant plastic fried egg attached to a key to the grand wooden door of this historic building so that I could come and go as I

pleased, exploring the historic buildings of Oxford University, photographing and making sketches of the numerous grotesques and gargoyles, and gaining inspiration for my own work at UQ.

Before I left Australia, I recall puzzling over an appropriate thank-you gift for such an important person as a former Governor-General. Finally, I decided to take some Queensland delicacies: two very large cellophane packets of Buderim ginger and Queensland nuts.

Late one evening when I said my goodbyes, I presented Sir Zelman with my small gift. He wrestled to open the packet of ginger immediately and suddenly it tore apart and sugar crystals scattered right down the length of the beautifully polished antique dining table. He quickly demolished most of those delicious treats and I was delighted that they had obviously been a good choice for a sweet tooth!

James Mahoney's grotesque portrait is sited on the north western end of the Parnell building beside the grotesque portrait of his contemporary, Bruce Green.



# Donald Russell

I began the next grotesque awaiting my attention as the new year of 1983 dawned. When I went to meet Don Russell, he was in very poor health but his wife – fondly known as Ma Russell – made me most welcome, serving up a good hot cup of tea and lots of cake.

While Don's breathing was assisted with oxygen, he smiled approvingly as Ma answered my many questions. He told me how they'd originally lived in a house at St Lucia on the present site of the campus kindergarten and were responsible for maintaining the security of the site while the new University of Queensland buildings were under construction. Learning of the many duties undertaken throughout his long employment as head cleaner, resident caretaker of the new St Lucia campus, and caterer for University events, it occurred to me that Don Russell had to be some kind of juggler to perform so many different tasks each week. This was the design concept that then grew in my imagination.

I used my father's collection of rather large and interesting old keys as reference to the security of the new university buildings; and a big paintbrush, heavy gloves and a hammer suggested

*It occurred to me that Don Russell had to be some kind of juggler to perform so many different tasks each week.*

building maintenance. Then there were the stories about catering for hundreds of official functions throughout the years. A stack of teacups and saucers, steaming tea, and a cupcake were the elements I finally chose to include. I carved all these items swirling around a very surprised looking Mr Russell, startled by the constant stream of different jobs falling into his hands.

The carving was installed on a wall of the Goddard building in the Great Court in September 1983, but by then Don was seriously ill and unable to visit the campus to see the completed grotesque, and so the occasion was celebrated at a family gathering at [Mount Olivet Hospital](#), where the Vice-Chancellor presented him with a photograph of the sculpture.

Don Russell was one of only a very few people to have had the honour of having their own grotesque portrait carved and installed in the Great Court during their lifetime.

## Keeping the wolf from the door

Limited annual budgets for the Great Court carvings meant that I always needed to find other work to 'keep the wolf from the door', and thus I was often drawn into unusual projects that made life interesting.

Following the success of our contribution to Festival '82 in Brisbane, Rob and I were invited to contribute to a public art project for Universiade '83 in Canada.

Just before Easter that year, I had produced a life-size carved Helidon freestone crucifix on a ceramic cross, approximately four metres high, in the grounds of [Marist College](#) in Ashgrove, and a small relief Helidon freestone artwork for the Sisters of the Good Samaritan in Hawthorne.

Then we planned the project for Canada, which was to be held mid-year. On a visit to a marine aquarium on Magnetic Island, I was enthralled by the colourful and exotic creatures I saw there and so, rather than use the usual Australian subject matter for this international event in Canada, I thought of creating a huge sea anemone.

As the budget was limited, we mostly used recycled materials. We ordered lengths of quarter-inch steel rod, a bubble machine, and 6,000 white sausage balloons to be delivered to the site in Edmonton. We had the assistance of enthusiastic

university students, who filled the local empty swimming pool with helium-inflated balloons prior to tying them off on the domed framework we'd erected using the steel rod onsite in a suburban park. Each day, children came to paint marine creatures on the internal clear plastic curtain walls suspended within the dome that supported a large bubble machine in its central core. We all created huge bubbles with giant wands and the 'anemone' came alive when light breezes blowing over the surface caused the balloons to sway. As they burst we substituted new yellow ones. The effect was quite lovely until it all came to a sudden end one night when vandals stomped the whole thing to the ground.


We returned to work for the Queensland Arts Council's art program for children in the Brisbane City Botanic Gardens during the Warana Festival in September 1983, and even made our own America's Cup fleet cross the lawns with painted cardboard sails erected with masts made from meat skewers.

Then Rob began to design and produce 16 huge terracotta planter urns, each a metre in diameter, for the new Porte Cochere at Parliament House in George Street.







A detailed stone carving of a woman's face and hands. The woman has a gentle smile and her hands are clasped together, resting against her face. She is wearing a brooch with a central figure, possibly a lighthouse or tower, and a patterned design below it. The carving is set against a light-colored stone wall.

*When work on the carving progressed, I found that a change in the colour of the freestone was revealed and I was able to position the brooch to replicate that sunset effect.*



# Kathleen Campbell-Brown

Following her graduation from UQ in 1924 with Honours in Classics and Ancient History, [Kathleen Campbell-Brown](#) taught English in France and then returned to teach French at [St Margaret's](#) Anglican Girls School in Brisbane. In 1945, she joined The University of Queensland staff, holding various administrative and academic positions, and remained until 1973, when she retired as Senior Lecturer in the Department of French.

I had met Kathleen Campbell-Brown, fondly known as KCB, many times at University functions, and her name was on the original list of eight grotesque subjects I was commissioned to carve in 1976.

After carving numerous heraldic shields in the Great Court in 1986, I was ready to work on her grotesque portrait and made an appointment to visit her at her home in Spring Hill. Whenever it was appropriate, I often took my 81-year-old mother, Maisie, with me just for the outing. On this occasion, we were immediately welcomed with glasses of chilled French champagne and brought to her back door to admire the magnificent red-and-gold leafed creeper that cascaded from the treetops outside.

Soon we were led to Kathleen's bedroom to see the huge sepia drawing of old Paris covering the whole wall beside her bed like wallpaper, with spots worn through where loving fingers had rested many times on favourite landmarks.

She talked enthusiastically about her long career and her connection with The University of Queensland, and the French Department in particular. She loved her work and her students – whom I believe were either rather frightened of her or absolutely adored her, no doubt depending on their grasp of the French language. I had never been one of her students so this passionate Francophile didn't intimidate me at all!

Before I took any photographs for the record, Kathleen quickly donned her favourite Christian Dior silk scarf as well as her precious 'badge', which she always wore when lecturing at the University. It was a rather large cameo brooch set in silver.



She told us that when she first went abroad to study at the [Sorbonne](#) in Paris, she had taken some trochus shell from Queensland's Great Barrier Reef and asked a French jeweller to create a cameo brooch for her depicting the [Eiffel Tower](#). The naturally graduated colour of the shell suggested a sunset in the distance beyond the Tower. I decided that this brooch must be included as an important element in the artwork I was about to create, and so I made a small pencil sketch of it there and then. When work on the carving progressed, I found that a change in the colour of the freestone was revealed and I was able to position the brooch to replicate that sunset effect.

With clasped hands suggesting, 'I love Paris', the carving was completed some months later in February 1987, and I arranged a small private celebration at my home studio.

Her great admirer, Professor of French [James Mahoney](#), along with [Don Munro](#) who was the Director of Protocol and Ceremonies, their wives, and a couple of her closest friends all came to enjoy the occasion. Kathleen arrived with bottles of chilled French champagne, of course, and was absolutely delighted when I unveiled her smiling portrait. Her immediate response was, "I'm obviously pronouncing the French vowel 'i'!"

Everyone was delighted to see her honoured in this way.

I was very moved to receive a letter from Kathleen some time later when she wrote:

*My time with you was probably the loveliest chapter of a long life.*

In the year 2000, I revisited the subject of Kathleen Campbell-Brown. The [Brisbane Girls Grammar School](#) commissioned me to create a life-size cast bronze portrait bust of the young Kathleen, who had been a pupil and then teacher there. It was envisioned that students of today might find inspiration by identifying with old girls of the school, young women their own age, who had gone on to achieve greatness in their lifetime. I made a quite lovely bust of a young Kathleen in a lace bodice with a camellia at her throat, and again I included that beautiful Eiffel Tower cameo brooch.

Sitting with Kathleen Campbell-Brown and her grotesque before installation, 1987





# Dr Rhyl K Hinwood AM CF, Hon.DPhil Q/d

During my [Churchill Memorial Fellowship](#) study tour in 1986, I visited [Washington Cathedral](#) especially to see the work of the American sculptor, [Frederick Hart](#). He had designed the tympanum and the trumeau statue of Adam on the west entrance of the cathedral depicting 'Creation' and I had seen reproductions of his work in sculpture magazines. To see his work in stone was to be one of the highlights of my study tour, as the subject of my fellowship was the relationship of sculpture to universities and cathedrals throughout the world.

I was really excited as I arrived at the cathedral early one morning and headed towards the west end, but the closer I went the more disappointed I became. At first, I couldn't understand why. Initially, I thought perhaps it was the steely grey colour of the stone, so different to the beautiful warm tones of our Queensland Helidon freestone. As I came closer, I tried to work out just why I still felt such disappointment: the figurative carving seemed bland and lifeless.

When I met the Italian master carver on site, he showed me the small plaster of Paris scale-model that Frederick Hart had made for the stonemasons to copy. Under the artist's supervision, stone carvers using a pointing machine had enlarged the master and then reproduced it in the grey stone, and every mark of the chisels had been smoothed away. There was no texture left.

It appeared that the artist had not touched the carved surface at all and I left understanding the need to leave the marks of the tools that reinforce the contours of a form, like the lines in a drawing as they describe volume. I realised just why I'd spent so much time enjoying Michelangelo's carvings of the prisoners still emerging from those huge blocks of marble in the Accademia in Florence, and why I had not been in any hurry to go down the hall to gaze at the famous David more closely!

I took a guided tour through Washington Cathedral and in the stone carver's studio, I admired a newly completed and very detailed pinnacle for the south transept facade. I remarked that it seemed a pity for all of that amazing decoration to be going so high up and lost from sight. The guide gave me a withering look and commented, "God will see it." I felt suitably chided and a little embarrassed for being so thoughtless!

Because the Washington Cathedral was still under construction, the site was a hive of industry. In the previous year, [National Geographic World Magazine](#) had advertised a 'Draw a Grottesque' contest and some very imaginative drawings were received from young readers from 16 countries, including Australia.

*When I thought about it, I look my most grotesque when I'm wearing all my protective clothing...*

The winners had been announced in April 1985 and the design concepts included [Darth Vader](#), a girl with braces on her teeth entitled *Bertha's braces*, and a smiling man with huge snaggly teeth sheltering under an umbrella. From the many submissions chosen to be interpreted in three dimensions, clay models were made and then the master carver translated each one into stone. I loved this modern approach to the choice of subjects, although I never felt comfortable about the rather Walt Disney style of some of the characters chosen for the roof ridge capping.

Years later, as our own [St John's Anglican Cathedral](#) was completed, they ran a similar competition for Queensland children to propose subjects for the west end and some concepts were translated into carvings.

On 1 November 1990, I received a letter from the Vice-Chancellor of The University of Queensland, [Professor Brian Wilson](#), who wrote:

*There is a tradition at this University that the sculptors of grotesques for the Great Court should join their subject/victims. I should like to invite you, therefore, to be the subject of a grotesque.*

I was taken by surprise and quite overwhelmed to receive such a great honour during my lifetime. However, it took some time for me to arrive at the task of designing and carving this particular portrait grotesque. I was already committed to carving another 27 heraldic shields and 13 flora subjects at UQ and spent much time researching a design for a monumental frieze that I had proposed to carve on the facade of the Forgan Smith tower. There was also the commission to design and create the first **Alumnus of the Year Award** trophy (*pictured opposite on page 65*) which has since been awarded annually to exceptional UQ graduates such as Nobel Prize winner Professor [Peter Doherty](#) AC FRS FMedSci, [David Malouf](#) AO FAHA, the Honourable Dame [Quentin Bryce](#) AD CVO, Dr [Penelope Wensley](#) AC and Emeritus Professor Dr [Mary Mahoney](#) AO.



It had been some time since carving the last grotesque of [Kathleen Campbell-Brown](#) in 1987. The influence of my Churchill Fellowship studies from 1986 until 1988 gave me great insight into the choice and portrayal of unusual subjects for such a commission, but it was not until 1993 that I came to grips with actually carving my own portrait grotesque.

When I thought about it, I look my most grotesque when I'm wearing all my protective clothing, the scarf and visor, the filtered dust mask, and the thick leather gloves. On this occasion, I did make a few quick sketches as I tried to decide just how I'd fit all of these elements into one concept.

When the stone was delivered I sailed into the job and it all came together quite quickly.

I included the air line for my pneumatic tools wound around my arm, and gloved hands holding an angle grinder. I carved only half of the visor so as to show my left eye, the only part of my face revealed, and my finger in my ear because of the terrible screaming sound of the angle grinder.

As usual, when I had completed each grotesque, we arranged an unveiling in the sculpture courtyard at home, so we invited some friends to come and celebrate with us and on St Valentine's Day 1993, one of our guests, [Professor Trevor Clifford](#), wrote a congratulatory greeting:

*May today be a happy one for all makers of monsters,  
and goblins, gargoyles and grotesques.*

At that time, a documentary about my career was being filmed and two cameramen precariously recorded the afternoon's celebrations from the top of the narrow overhead gantry in our sculpture court. As the shroud was lifted and only part of my face was revealed, someone exclaimed, "What a cop-out!"

When my grotesque self-portrait was installed beside the smiling grotesque of Kathleen Campbell-Brown on the facade of the Goddard building, my one-eyed gaze was revealed. Since then, I've literally kept a watchful eye fixed on the Great Court.







Me, myself and I



# a story

## HONOURING UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND PRESS (UQP) AUTHORS

With the 1994 launch of Wordsmiths the Writers Cafe, I was asked to create portraits in stone of selected UQP authors that featured a brief quotation from each. I portrayed Hugh Lunn, David Malouf, Peter Carey, Thea Astley, Janette Turner Hospital and Judith Wright, as well as carving a seat honouring Oodgeroo Noonuccal.





# Not a Mount Rushmore

[Laurie Muller](#), Manager of the University of Queensland Press ([UQP](#)), was inspired to promote the idea of a writers' cafe within a Queensland garden, overhung with mature frangipani, poinciana and jacaranda trees, and surrounded by evocative quotations and carved stone portraits of authors who published with UQP. In 1994, [Wordsmiths the Writers Cafe](#) became a reality on a vacant site adjoining the University Book Shop. Laurie gave me a few cartons full of books, a list of names of authors who publish with UQP, and the brief was brief:

*I do not need any concept drawings, this is my budget, treat the place like the Great Court and come and go as you please. I would like portraits of the selected authors and a brief quotation from each but I do not want a Mount Rushmore.*

His original list of famous Australian authors included [Hugh Lunn](#), [David Malouf](#), [Peter Carey](#), [Thea Astley](#), [Janette Turner Hospital](#) and [Judith Wright](#).

With a limited budget, we used Brisbane tuff quarried onsite, purchased demolition Helidon freestone for the panels to be carved, and directed most of our finances to the job of researching and carving the subjects. The large Helidon freestone tablets I chose for the relief portraits were all rescued from the stonemasons' dump and delivered to site for the cost of transport only. However, the quality was good and, although each piece was only about 150 mm thick at the most, it was sufficient for relief carving.



David Malouf, Judith Wright and Peter Carey carvings





Wordsmiths entry marker, front and back views



Carving of Janette Turner Hospital

I did most of the work onsite, arriving at first light and making all of the biggest cuts before the newspapers, milk, bread rolls and cakes were delivered to the cafe each morning so that the worst of the dust would have blown away before the crowds of staff and students started to trickle in for an early coffee. The garden flourished, scrub turkeys and ibis moved in, and Wordsmiths became the most popular meeting place on campus for good coffee, light meals, book launches and musical performances.

Two **entry markers** in the form of huge bookcases with UQP authors' names on the spines of the books were constructed from some of the Brisbane tuff and sandstone offcuts. On one, I carved a left hand writing (mine, in fact), while on the other I suggested a more modern approach with the right hand reaching out to touch a QWERTY keyboard. As I worked on the carvings, my own hand was my model and I only had to remove my glove from time to time when I wanted to check the details. Beside one of the entry markers was a small pillar where I carved a stone 'cup of cappuccino' on top of a stack of books. That small item proved too tempting for some souvenir hunter and was finally broken off and removed. I often wonder where it went.

I also carved a large stone with all of the punctuation marks that may have been omitted from publications by UQP in the past. This idea arose because after the official opening of the cafe, a number of academics commented on the fact that an apostrophe had not been included in the name of the cafe. I thought I would just scatter around a few other punctuation marks that may have been missing in UQP publications over the years.

At home in my studio, I produced a carved Helidon freestone **memorial seat** – now installed at the Staff House Road entrance to Wordsmiths in honour of [Oodgeroo Noonuccal](#) (pictured at right). Although it was not a portrait grotesque, I did finally have the opportunity to represent this special woman, formerly known as Kath Walker, the poet and Aboriginal activist who reclaimed her family name of Noonuccal (those from Minjerribah, otherwise known as North Stradbroke Island) to acknowledge the injustices inflicted on her people. 'Oodgeroo' means paperbark and is the closest interpretation of the word 'writer' in the Aboriginal language.

Oodgeroo earned international renown and the respect of the Australian people for her activism that promoted peaceful change.

A large paperbark tree was planted beside the seat near the entrance to the cafe. And draped over the seat are a huge carpet snake and large dolphin – both very sacred animals – as well as pipis, mud whelks and words from one of her poems.

I discussed my concept for the seat with [Kathie Cochrane](#), a close friend of Oodgeroo, and learnt that together they were known as 'the two Kathies'.

She gave me an autographed copy of her biography of her friend when she launched it at Wordsmiths in 1995, and many Noonuccal people, including Oodgeroo's sister Lucy, came all the way from Minjerribah to attend that book launch. They took it in turns to have their photographs taken sitting on the seat beside me, and it was a really happy occasion. I felt quite sure they all approved of what I had done. Oodgeroo died in September 1993, so she never saw this special seat created in her memory.



1994  
1996





## The author portraits

For each portrait, I decided to find just three to six words that would evoke the writing style of the author and spent many days reading the books Laurie had given me, searching the pages and selecting meaningful passages. The cartons of books were finally accepted as spoils of war and I have enjoyed revisiting some of them from time to time.

I met [Janette Turner Hospital](#) when I was contemplating the details of her depiction in the row of large portrait tablets behind the stage area and asked her if she would like to nominate just a few words to be included in the design; something about the rainforest I suggested, just five or six words at most. She chose a whole paragraph that described the rainforest and when asked for a more succinct phrase that could be read from a distance,

she chose: *The rainforest...smells like Queensland.* However, upon rereading the chosen paragraph myself, I found the perfect phrase: *soft rot and manic growth.* I carved her profile surrounded by the buttress roots of a strangler fig.

[David Malouf](#)'s portrait took me some time to devise as I decided to show his face behind a Scrabble board on which relevant Brisbane place names and a book title were interwoven. The idea came from one of his poems, "This day under my hand", in which he conjured memories of his childhood holidays at Moreton Island where the sand crabs were cooked and:

*At nine the Scrabble board,  
small words interlocking  
down and across that fill  
an evening square by square.*



Hugh Lunn

I borrowed some professional photos of [Thea Astley](#) standing under a leafy arbour and found an appropriate description she had written about the Australian bush: *Sun. Leaf scribble.*

Then there was my favourite poet, [Judith Wright](#). I grew to love her work as I searched the pages of several anthologies for those few significant words and finally I found them: *language carving all silence into meaning.* They perfectly linked imagination, the sculptor and the poet.

Next is probably my best portrait in this series, the one of [Peter Carey](#). I had learnt that the author kept a photograph of a Queensland rainforest view in his studio in New York and I imagined that he must draw inspiration from it. So, I depicted him looking out of that window at the Prince Rupert's Drop looming large with its fragile tail framing the view. Three words describe the moment of its deliberate destruction by the heroine of his *Oscar and Lucinda* book: *Crescendo, Diminuendo, Silence.*

Before I tackled his portrait, [Hugh Lunn](#) and I discussed various characters that he had written about. I liked the story about his mother's habit of snatching flowers from neighbours' gardens and returning from her evening walk with her cheeky comment, "The Phantom strikes again!" as she thrust them into a vase. So, I carved Hugh having a nice chat with his mother's cartoon hero, the [Phantom](#). Years later, I learnt that St Leo's College lads regularly haunted Wordsmiths because that Phantom carving had some special significance to them at the time.

Hugh wrote in *Over the top with Jim* that as a child he could only write the figure two backwards. So he used to practise writing it with a stick in the dirt underneath the family cake shop in Annerley – until one day he finally got it right! I included the numbers one, (a backwards) two, and three along the side of the carving as a little glimpse of his childhood scribbling.

Wordsmiths has occasionally been invaded by ibis and scrub turkeys and supposedly 'upgraded' with stainless steel guardrails on the small stage. The venue is as popular as ever and the portraits remain a celebration of many great Australian authors.

The Wordsmiths Cafe sculpture commission is one of the most satisfying and successful commissions I have ever undertaken, probably due mostly to the imagination and generous spirit of the client and the freedom of expression I was granted.



Thea Astley



# a record

## CHRONICLING QUEENSLAND'S FAUNA AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS

I had a long association with The University of Queensland,  
dating back to zoology field trips in my high school years.  
This stood me in good stead when I became University Sculptor and  
was commissioned to record the state's principal fauna, as well as  
the achievements of UQ staff and graduates and other academics.







Charles Darwin and Gregor Mendel  
preside over the Great Court.



# From the lake to the Great Court

I don't recall who took the very tiny black-and-white photographs with frilled edges that still recall a happy day of discovery at Caloundra's rocky littoral zone on Queensland's Sunshine Coast in 1957.

We were teenagers on a [Somerville House](#) zoology excursion, wearing the latest colourful sunsuits with bloomers and our white sandshoes. Those were the days before sunscreen and only a few of us wore big hats. I wasn't among them as my mother hated hats! We filled our field notebooks with descriptions and drawings of the specimens we found in the rock pools at low tide and did get very sunburnt spending all day in such an exposed spot, but we were too excited to notice until it was too late. Later, at home, I couldn't resist adding some watercolour to the pages of my field notebook. I don't know where that notebook went to – I kept it for many years and always enjoyed dipping into it – but I do still have some of those tiny photographs not much bigger than postage stamps.

Later that year, we all went by bus to the UQ lake for the day and waded into the reeds to collect our freshwater specimens in glass peanut butter and vegemite jars, envelopes and matchboxes. Those memories of zoology field trips with our inspiring teacher, [Hazel Gray](#), are still fresh in my mind. She made our lives exciting and interesting, and those years of studying zoology alerted me to the importance of being observant and recording species with their correct Latin names – with capitals and lower case in the correct places. In my senior year, she even arranged for four of us to paint murals on a large pillar in the middle of the zoology lab. I chose to depict marine gastropods and bivalves, all rendered in black, white and terracotta. Sadly, generations later, those murals were painted over.

At the end of my sub-senior year (Year 11), I accompanied my mother to an interview with the Director of the Queensland Museum and showed him those field notebooks of mine. When he learnt that Hazel Gray was my teacher and saw the quality of my artwork, he offered me a job on the spot as an artist and said that he was prepared to keep the position open until I gained my matriculation the following year – if that's what I wanted to do!

With high marks for zoology in matriculation, I briefly considered the idea of studying biological science at university – but the lure of an art career was too strong. So, in 1958 I took up the full-time Public Service position that had already been offered to me at the Museum. The Scottish Director, [George Mack](#), designated the role of his two artists as museum assistants who were entitled to a much lower salary, but we did not find that out until many decades later when it was all too late. Early experiences at Somerville House and

then six years at the [Queensland Museum](#) in the 1950s and '60s, as well as life classes four nights a week at the [Central Technical College](#) at the end of George Street, helped prepare me for my future sculpting role at The University of Queensland.

When I started work onsite at UQ in 1980, some exotic and fanciful fauna subjects were included in heraldry to be carved on the column capitals lining the cloisters of the Biological Sciences building. As they mostly represented European universities, there were such animals as winged and rampant lions, a bear, bivalves, fish, eagles, swans and other exotic creatures. Even the heraldic shield representing [Newcastle University](#) in Australia included a very fanciful seahorse.

When discussion arose about the choice of subjects for the two monumental figures proposed to flank the main entrance of the Goddard building, I hoped that eminent Australian naturalists might be chosen. However, the world-famous naturalists [Charles Darwin](#) and [Gregor Mendel](#) were finally selected.

This UQ commission was added to quite a list my husband and I already had, so the following three-year period was a really busy time for us. First, there was the grotesque portrait of Kathleen Campbell-Brown for the Great Court at UQ; and then came the **Alumni Great Court Race perpetual trophy** for recording the winners of the UQ version of the race depicted in the [Chariots of Fire](#) movie, where runners in the Great Court of [Trinity College](#) in England's Cambridge University aim to cross the finishing line of their Great Court circuit before the last of the clock's 24 chimes.



The Great Court Race perpetual trophy being held by 2011 Great Court Race winners [Caitlin Sargent](#) and [Jordan Pearce](#)

1957

1989



# Leaving clues: Darwin and Mendel



Knowing that I was soon to carve the two monumental figures of [Charles Darwin](#) and Gregor Mendel for UQ, I decided that while I was in the British Isles attending an international sculpture conference in Ireland, it would be helpful to include a visit to the [Charles Darwin Museum](#) at Down House in Kent.

So, one sunny morning in September 1987, I took the train from London to Bromley South, a bus to Downe Village, and then walked a short distance along the narrow road to Down House, where, from September 1842, Charles Darwin had lived and worked for 40 years. When I arrived, the Custodian of the Museum welcomed me warmly and offered any assistance I might require.

As it was a weekday and not many tourists about, it was quiet in the house. Each room was filled with light from the open windows, taking advantage of the beautiful sunshine. The furnishings were modest, family portraits graced the walls, and fresh flowers from the garden gave the place a homely, lived-in feel. I found Darwin's study the most interesting room and spent quite a long time musing over the collection of paraphernalia. There was so much to see. The room was cosy, lined with bookshelves, and a big desk was cluttered with instruments,

books and specimens of every description, so that it appeared as if Darwin had just stepped out for a short break along the famous sand walk at the extremity of his property.

I had brought a small sketch pad and pencils with me, and had plenty of time to draw the specimens strewn on a small polished table: Darwin's compass, a microscope, his magnifying glass and geologist's hammer, a collecting bottle and box from the [Beagle](#) expedition, fossils, rock crystals, skulls, and even a portion of the skull of a giant sloth discovered at Punta Alta, Bahia Blanca in Patagonia.

On the mantelpiece of the large fireplace was a Panama hat that had once been worn by the man himself, and I also discovered his walking stick nearby, fashioned from entwined vines. The curator invited me to take both of these items out into the garden to sketch and they became important elements in my concept for the carving at UQ. Out in the garden quite near the house I found the famous 'worm stone', a small mechanical device that measures the movement of earth as earthworms carry soil to the surface of the lawn at night, so I made a sketch of this too.

Then, imagining meeting the ghost of the great man himself, I walked the length of the sand walk, making notes about the vegetation there: the holly, ivy, fungi, climbing roses, buttercups and huge old oak trees. I could see him on one of his regular walks along that sandy path, pondering on his theories and returning to his study to muse and finally write [The origin of species by means of natural selection](#). There were so many interesting objects and ideas, but my job was to find the essence of the subject and an appropriate design concept for a carving.

I returned home to Brisbane greatly inspired and decided that, rather than depicting an aged and bearded Darwin, I would show him as a young man aged almost 27 when he visited Australian shores on the HMS *Beagle* in January 1836.

Upon returning to the University, I was asked to present a concept drawing of the proposed artwork to the University Architect – something I had never before or have since had to do – and was then given freedom of expression in the final details that would unfold during the carving. I decided that the clue to the identity of the subject in the artwork I was about to create would be a large book inscribed with the famous title, *The origin of species*. Surely no visitor to the Great Court would miss such an obvious clue.



1987

1989





Charles Darwin



Gregor Mendel





Working on the carving of Charles Darwin, 1987

My husband, Rob, was a willing model for the Darwin figure, wearing his own Panama hat, holding the walking stick and resting casually on the large volume. I incorporated the walking stick as a device to separate fossil specimens, mostly collected in Australia, from live specimens such as the marine iguana, tortoise and finches he had observed on the Galapagos Islands; the earthworm and the platypus; as well as carnivorous plants, primulas, orchids and vines.

Although the carving is packed with interesting elements, at the eleventh hour several zoologists issued from the building to apprise me of the fact that I had not yet included the very important goose barnacle! Fortunately, just enough space could be found and everyone was happy – until *University News* reported on the completion of my monumental carving, and revealed that I had carved a great black bug of the Pampas on his shoulder. The revelation prompted one concerned UQ entomologist to write:

*Statues and orations honouring the famous are laudable,  
but they tend to be great perpetuators of myth.*

The bug has never been mentioned again.

I then began work on the monumental statue of a contemporary of Darwin, [Gregor Mendel](#). He was an abbot who lived from 1822 until 1884 and taught in a monastery in the city of Brno, now part of the Czech Republic. Throughout his life, he carried on a wide range of studies and experiments in natural history, physics and mathematics, but his most important discovery was the concept of unit inheritance.

Preparatory drawings  
for the Darwin statue



To denote his high office in the church, I depicted him wearing a large ring and an ornate cross on his breast, a crosier as symbol of his authority in the church, and holding a mitre adorned with embroidered fuchsia flowers like the ones he hybridised for the European market. Again, Rob modelled the ring and held the shaft of the elaborate crosier shaped like a shepherd's crook so that I could make some drawings prior to carving.

I depicted Mendel with his records of sunspots in relief above his head, and wearing a surplice edged with a lace border of honeycomb swarming with the bees that pollinated the plants in his experimental gardens. Among all of his other pursuits, he became an authority on bees.

Just to be sure that I depicted the correct species of pea plant in my artwork, [Trevor Clifford](#), the Professor of Botany, grew that particular species for me in the rooftop garden of the Goddard building, and one day he presented me with a wonderful trailing pea plant about a metre high – complete with roots, leaves, tendrils, pea pods and all. It was a wonderfully useful gift and I covered several pages of my sketchbook with drawings of all of the details I planned to use in the carving.

In my carving the pea plants are each labelled with his initials 'GM', as a hint of the identity of the subject, but which today some observers have incorrectly interpreted as suggesting genetically modified!

The carving of Mendel was completed onsite in 1989 and thus ended a very productive period in my life.





Preparatory drawings for the Mendel statue

## Hectic but productive

As well as completing the Darwin and Mendel statues, the late 1980s were very busy for me.

Rob and I worked on reception friezes and foyer artworks for the two new Sheraton Mirage resorts at [Port Douglas](#) and the [Gold Coast](#), as well as friezes for the [Pan Pacific](#) Hotel at Broadbeach.

We also had many commissions celebrating the 1988 Australian bicentenary. Most notable was the ceramic Australian Coat of Arms for the House of Representatives in [Parliament House](#) in Canberra. In early 1987, we drove down Northbourne Avenue into the national capital with the ceramic tiles safely packed into the tray of our own little truck, mindful of such a precious cargo being so quietly delivered. Working together on a 'cloud-prop', Rob and I installed the whole thing 18 metres off the floor immediately above the Speaker's chair. I was getting somewhat better at handling heights by then. This was the first artwork commissioned and installed in the magnificent new complex and on our return to the offices of architects [Mitchell Giurgola & Thorp](#), we celebrated with champagne. Unfortunately, I missed the official opening of Parliament House in 1988 and Rob had to tell me all about it upon my return from overseas.

Next was a memorial to the Dreaming of the Indigenous people of Fraser Island, two friezes for the foyer of the Queensland Primary Industries building, and two life-size bronze figures for the memorial to the Australian Forces in Korea and South-East Asia in [ANZAC Square](#), Brisbane.

Then there was a life-size bronze memorial to [Canon Morris](#), the founder of the Church of England Grammar School in Brisbane, and a small carved stone statue of Saint Magnus, the Patron Saint of 'Churchie', for a niche on the exterior of the school chapel. This had quite a backstory of its own.

After attending an international sculpture conference in Dublin, Ireland, in 1987, I took the opportunity to visit the spectacular Orkney Islands in the north of Scotland, where Saint Magnus had been murdered in 1118. A new lifeboat was launched the day I arrived, and I witnessed Norwegian lifeboats arrive for a spectacular ceremony in Kirkwall when the new lifeboat literally waltzed around the harbour with men ascending to and descending from hovering helicopters as the excited crowds were entertained by pipe bands and choirs.

I also visited the [Saint Magnus Cathedral](#) in Kirkwall, the main town of Orkney, where during renovations in 1919, excavations had exposed skeletal remains that were claimed to be those of Saint Magnus. The place was filled with ancient wooden


lifeboats and rusty anchors among huge floral tributes to generations of brave seamen. I met local stonemasons working at the cathedral and with their assistance visited the quarry, where the red sandstone was reputed to be stained with the blood of Magnus. I endeavoured to arrange purchase of some of that red stone for my carving of Saint Magnus in Brisbane, but local politics prevented this from happening and my only souvenir was a handful of small red pebbles.

I finally used Queensland Helidon freestone and carved the figure of Saint Magnus holding a Viking axe and wearing a helmet adorned with eagle's wings. He stands beneath the threatening tidal wave that enveloped him and his men before his betrayal and martyrdom on the Island of Egilsay.

In 1989, [Marist College Ashgrove](#) commissioned a life-size bronze statue of [Father Marcellin Champagnat](#), a French curate who founded the Society of Mary that was entrusted with the missions of Oceania and had sent the first missionary Marist Fathers to the islands of the Pacific. Symbolic of modesty, humility and simplicity, flowering violet plants surround the feet of my life-size bronze statue of Champagnat that now stands in their chapel.

1987  
1989





Grotesques of [Rhyl Hinwood](#) and [Kathleen Campbell-Brown](#) sit above the red-clawed crayfish, school of flathead mullet, blue swimmer crab, barramundi and greentail prawn

## A new focus

After working in the Great Court for some years and always accepting whatever subjects I was asked to carve, I was aware of a great deal of repetition as well as the fact that very few of the animals depicted were the state's principal fauna – as designated in the objectives for the carvings.





Reef heron

Just to fill the spaces allocated for carvings, it appears that whenever the full-time stonemasons ran out of new work they would reuse drawings supplied by Leo Drinan, who worked for architects [Hennessy, Hennessy & Co.](#) I was keen to correct a seeming lack of attention to the objectives and not waste valuable spaces with more repetition. In 1996, with expert advice from [Dr Hugh Lavery AM](#), I took the opportunity to propose suites of subjects that were suitable for carving and that would not only represent the diversity and uniqueness of our Queensland fauna, but would also celebrate the achievements of staff and graduates of the University.

Traditionally, fauna subjects were mainly depicted on arch voussoirs and I finally had the opportunity to choose some of Queensland's principal fauna for the arches at either end of the Goddard building, grouping reef species on one arch, and estuarine and freshwater species on the other.

The Biological Sciences building, which housed the Zoology and Botany Departments, was a good place to start. This building was earlier named after [Professor Ernest J Goddard](#), who had been Professor of Biology at UQ for 25 years, during which time he planned the establishment of the Heron Island Marine Research Station on the Great Barrier Reef, where he subsequently died in 1948. In celebration of this place, I chose to include the head

of a [reef heron](#) for the keystone of the arch on the north-eastern end of the Goddard building, and followed it up with the [eastern silvereve](#), in recognition of outstanding research on the behavioural ecology of these birds on islands off the Queensland coast by [Professor Jiro Kikkawa](#).



Professor Jiro Kikkawa next to the carving of the eastern silvereve, the subject of his research

1996  
1997





Soldier crab



Blue blubber jellyfish

Also included on this arch was the [geography cone snail](#), studied for its predatory and defensive venoms and the possibilities of those toxins for direct therapeutic treatments, and the [staghorn coral](#), first documented in deep waters of the Great Barrier Reef, and reputedly threatened by climate change, predators such as the crown of thorns starfish, and non-climate-related human activities. The fifth subject was [Stokes's seasnake](#), which has also been found to have bio-resources, potentially producing many life-saving medications.

High up and to the right and left of the main entrance are two carved roundels, depicting the [blue blubber jellyfish](#) and the [soldier crab](#), which are both found seasonally in vast numbers in Moreton Bay. When it was time for me to hunt for some live specimens to observe and sketch in preparation for my carving, I searched the bay and its mangrove shores to no avail. It was the wrong season, and I finally had to rely on specimens from the spirit collection in the [Zoology Department](#) at UQ.

For the group on the arch at the north-western end of the building, I chose species that were being researched at UQ for the development of their farming potential. They included the colourful [red-clawed crayfish](#) that Associate Professor Don Fielder introduced me to in a large glass aquarium in the basement of the Goddard building. After sketching a large specimen, I was able to carve one almost at life-size except for the long antennae that would have extended beyond the allocated voussoir. Then there was a school of [flathead mullet](#), the [blue swimmer crab](#) on the keystone, and below them the [barramundi](#) and the [greentail prawn](#), all found abundantly in Queensland.

Carving all of these species was satisfying, but my dream was always to have the opportunity to design and carve extensive friezes on the large stone panels atop several buildings surrounding the Great Court. A panel on the Goddard building would be the perfect place to depict one of the most significant fauna species in our state, the [Queensland lungfish](#), in its fossil and extant forms. That would have been really something! The bare stone panel remains, so it just might happen one day...



Geography cone



Staghorn coral



Stokes's seasnake



Heading off to work in the Great Court with equipment in tow, 1980s







Musky rat-kangaroo



Pterosaur



Saratoga



Boyd's rainforest dragon



Southern gastric brooding frog



Albert lyrebird





# From cockroach to caterpillar

Half-column capitals depicting the Cooktown orchid, the official [floral emblem](#) of the state of Queensland, flank the western side of the arches of the vehicular entry to the Great Court from Chancellor's Place. In 1997, my proposal to carve Queensland's principal fauna on these arches was accepted.

Again, with the expert knowledge and recommendations of [Dr Hugh Lavery AM](#), we chose rare and unique species of insect, fish, reptile, bird, amphibian, fossil vertebrate, marsupial and invertebrate, all classed as the principal fauna of Queensland and mostly found only in Queensland.

First was the [giant burrowing cockroach](#) to represent the insects, rather than the elegant stick insect at first considered, because over time its more bulky shape was less vulnerable to breakage. These large fat shiny creatures are found in the rich leaf litter of the rainforest habitat at the far north of the state, and many have been carefully placed into matchboxes and other suitable 'homes' as popular pets for children. A whole showcase full of live specimens was on display when I last visited the [Queensland Museum](#) during the school holidays, when the place was teeming with children of all ages.

Then there was a fossil vertebrate, the [pterosaur](#), a "demented creature with mail-order teeth", as the Professor of Palaeontology described it. At the time, a museum reconstruction of this creature swooped low over the staircase, so I could get a good view of it to take photographs and make useful preliminary sketches prior to carving.



Giant burrowing cockroach



Peripatus

Because of the uniqueness of [Neoceratodus forsteri](#), the Queensland lungfish, I had always hoped to carve a huge frieze incorporating this species on a large existing stone panel at the end of the Goddard building, but the opportunity never presented itself. Hopeful that this was a possibility in the future, to represent fish we chose the [saratoga](#), its relative, with similar large scales. Although reported to be a wonderful sporting catch, it has too many bones to be good eating. I found a specimen in the Zoology Department spirit collection so that I could make sketches before commencing the carving.

The Queen Victoria or Superb lyrebird was carved on the Steele building in the Great Court decades before my time, despite it not being one of our state's principal fauna species. The bird we chose in contrast was the [Albert lyrebird](#), because this very shy and well-camouflaged species lives in only a small area of subtropical rainforest along the state border between northern New South Wales and Queensland.

My favourite in this series is the reptile, [Boyd's rainforest dragon](#), which is also found only in Queensland. It is a really beautiful creature with its bright blue-green body and white spikes on its cheeks. I had actually seen them up close, lazily draped over branches in the Daintree rainforest wilderness.

The [Southern gastric brooding frog](#) is an extraordinary creature, capable of producing more than 20 live young at a time, but I could fit only one progeny on the keystone of the second arch to represent this endemic amphibian.

The [musky rat-kangaroo](#) was our choice for a marsupial that has sometimes been described as 'the most primitive living member of the family Macropodidae'. The species is endemic to northern Queensland, where its distribution is restricted to evergreen forests.

The endemic invertebrate represented is [peripatus](#), which is important in evolutionary biology due to its phylogenetic position, ancient history and Gondwanan distribution. A tiny nocturnal caterpillar-like creature found in rainforest understory vegetation, my reference specimen preserved in a test tube was borrowed from the Queensland Museum.

This collection of rare and amazing creatures should not only be the source of our pride, but also acknowledges our responsibility for their care and protection.



# Birds of a feather: nomads and migrants

For many decades, thousands of people have passed under the arches of the vehicular entry to and from the Great Court of the University and, like the birds, UQ staff, graduates and students are both nomadic and migratory. This observation by my ornithologist friend, [Dr Hugh Lavery AM](#), caught my imagination and influenced my decision to choose a collection of bird subjects together for inclusion on the eastern voussoirs of that entry. Voussoirs are the wedge-shaped stones that form an arch and these two particular arches had eight raised areas intended for relief-carved fauna embellishment.

The usual Australian fauna species like the grey kangaroo, the laughing kookaburra and the koala had already been carved in the Great Court by others some decades ago. We also noted that few of the fauna were uniquely Queensland species, some were not identifiable, and several were purely fanciful.

For the eight voussoirs available for the birds, I made my choice from Hugh's list of those most suitable to be carved in stone – those with some bulk and without fragile extensions that would not stand the test of time on the exposed external walls of the Great Court.

After the University approved my concept in 1998, I visited the [Queensland Museum](#) looking for actual specimens so that I could sketch details of the beaks, eyes, legs and feet, as well as the arrangement of feathers on the body. I found most of the birds I wanted either on display or in the cabinet collection.

The voussoirs were much higher up than any I had previously carved on site and getting all my equipment in place every day was quite an effort – even before any work could take place. I

dared not leave any tools up there overnight for fear they would 'disappear' in the darkness.

For the nomads, we chose the [mistletoebird](#), which is found throughout Australia except in Tasmania. I had recently visited friends outside Warwick, where the dirt road was overhung with gumtrees draped in flowering parasitic mistletoe. Large flocks of these noisy little birds were feasting, but they were so high up in the branches it was difficult to see the birds, let alone make out any detail. When I was awarded my honorary doctorate in 2001, I recall mentioning in my speech how unobservant some people were – actually thinking I was just cleaning the carvings, despite the piles of large chips of stones on the pavement below. And so, I wanted to draw attention to the carving of the mistletoebird, and encourage people to notice that the natural history of our state was being recorded in these carvings. Of course, the distinctive red under the throat and tail of the bird could not be indicated in a stone carving, and I wonder how many have taken the opportunity to steal a kiss 'under the mistletoe' below that arch.

1999



Magpie goose



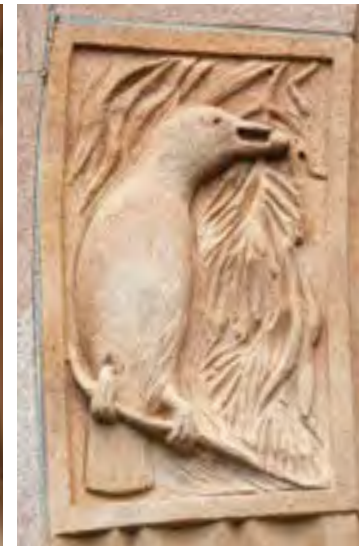
Pink-eared duck



Australian snipe



Channel-billed cuckoo



Mistletoebird



Fitting neatly into the small curved space available for the carving at the bottom of the right-hand arch is another nomad – my favourite in this series – the [zebra finch](#), with its distinctive zebra-striped plumage. In its grassy habitat, it is represented in the arid regions of Queensland and is the smallest and most widespread grass finch in Australia.

Above the mistletoebird, the [red-tailed tropic bird](#) was chosen to represent the dispersive oceanic species that nest on the coastal shores and islands of north-eastern Queensland. The red streamers that trail from the tails of these birds have been highly prized by generations of South Pacific Islanders to add colour to their traditional costumes.

Found across our continent is the [pink-eared duck](#), carved on one of the two keystones. Of course, the pink ears are impossible to suggest in stone but whenever we walk beneath this carving someone always warns, “Don’t forget to duck!”

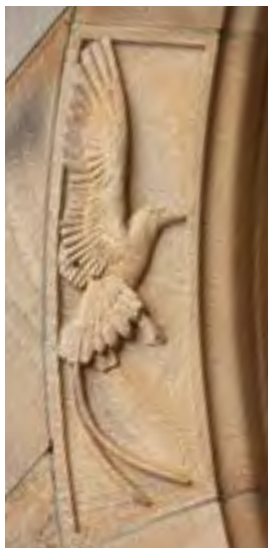
On the right-hand side of the arch, the large bird with a distinctive knob on top of its head is the [magpie goose](#), which breeds during the wet season in the north Australian wetlands.

Three migratory species are represented, including the [channel-billed cuckoo](#) with its short legs and large beak. I have often heard its blood-curdling call each year in my own property in suburban Brisbane, as well as in habitats as far south as the Blue Mountains when I have been visiting there.

On the other keystone, the second migrant is the [Australian snipe](#), which flies annually from Japan to our shores and finds a summer habitat here.

I’ve never seen the third migrant in the wild, the [white-tailed kingfisher](#). These beautiful birds arrive annually in the rainforests of North Queensland, where they mate and nest in burrows in small termite nests. With its royal blue head and two long white feathers trailing from its tail, it is a very special addition to this series.

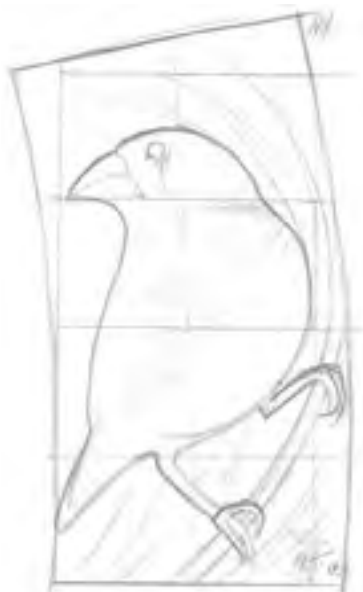
*Like the birds, UQ staff,  
graduates and students are  
both nomadic and migratory.*



White-tailed kingfisher



Red-tailed tropic bird



Zebra finch





# What's in a name?

When the architectural firm [Hennessy, Hennessy & Co.](#) designed The University of Queensland buildings at St Lucia, their draughtsman, [Leo Drinan](#), produced most of the designs for the historical friezes on the buildings surrounding the Great Court. Among several objectives for the choice of subjects to be carved in stone was the full representation of Aboriginal customs and social life in South East Queensland.

The leading sculptor was [John Theodore Muller](#), who would have made any necessary changes to Drinan's designs to carve his three-dimensional interpretations in the Helidon freestone.

Friezes on the Arts Entrance to the Forgan Smith building depict mainly men's activities, such as making and decorating shields, boomerangs, clubs and various weapons. The domestic life of women and children beside their bark shelter also depict them obtaining honeycomb and collecting firewood. The friezes on the Law Entrance of that same building show men involved in an initiation ceremony, paddling a bark canoe, resting, hunting and making fire with fire-sticks, while the women are shown making palm-frond baskets and caring for children.

On the adjacent wall of the Michie building are two grotesque portraits of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that I had carved in 1978, and below them is an arch where I continued the anthropology theme in 1998. A tribute to [Gaiarbau](#), who had a long association with the Anthropology Department and whose face smiles down from above, was the [native bee](#), now appropriately carved on the keystone of the arch. Assisted by the skilful use of vines looped around the trunk of the tree, Gaiarbau's people could reach high up to access a native beehive and its honeycomb. The hive could be cut out with an axe and thrown down to those waiting below. This native bee also represents the suburb named Mount Coot-tha, 'Kuta, place of dark native honey dreaming'.



*...witchetty grubs...  
were considered a great  
delicacy*

1998

2000

Cycad, Hercules club whelk, ship's worm, native bee, giant wood moth caterpillar, pipi and cabbage tree palm





Long-necked turtle

Included on this same arch is a bivalve known as [pipi](#) or ugarie. For generations, women foraging along Queensland's sandy surf beaches at low tide dug them up with their toes to share in communal feasts, and they are a major component of extensive middens throughout Moreton Bay. A large glass jar containing my own shell collection at home has quite a few of these violet-tinged shells among the more exotic specimens I've collected over the years, so I didn't need to look far to find a specimen to draw and then carve.

Above it and to the right of the keystone is depicted the larva of the [giant wood moth](#). Evidence of the existence of these larvae, known as witchetty grubs, can be detected by traces of sawdust on the bark or on the ground below the tree. They were harvested throughout Australia and extracted by the use of a barbed and pointed stick or laboriously chopped out, to be eaten either raw or roasted: these grubs were considered a great delicacy. I was able to borrow a very large specimen from the Queensland Museum so I could have a close look at it. About 125mm long and very fat, it filled a test tube that I was able to take up onto the scaffolding the day I actually carved the subject on the voussoir.

To the left of the keystone is the carving of a [ship's worm](#) known as 'cobra'. They are found in submerged swamp oak saplings and tree trunks along tidal creek banks, where they were judiciously arranged by those passing through to ensure there was a ready supply to consume on their return.

Below it is depicted a [Hercules club whelk](#), a gastropod regularly collected along the intertidal zone of beaches around Moreton Bay as a common source of food. When I went looking for a specimen to draw I had no trouble finding this otherwise unremarkable species, which is nevertheless of significant historical interest. It was collected by Captain James Cook when he first sailed up the east coast of Australia in 1770 and named the depression between Bribie Island and Point Lookout 'Morton Bay' after James Douglas, the 14th Earl of Morton. When Cook's journal was first edited, an 'e' was added to the name and that spelling has remained ever since.

In 1985, I had been directed to carve several heraldic shields representing the Commonwealth of Australia, the state of Queensland, and the city of Canberra on column capitals of the cloister at the Law end of the Forgan Smith building. Then in 1989, the heraldry of the **Island of St Lucia** in the Caribbean was added, including stalks of sugar cane dividing the shield into quadrants with a small Breton stool in the centre and alternate fleurs-de-lis and Tudor roses in recognition of alternate French and British rule. The Brisbane suburb of St Lucia was named after this island because sugar cane flourished here also.



Island of St Lucia heraldic shield

Adjacent to these particular heraldic shields, which were symbols of place, were three voussoirs remaining to be carved on the arch nearby. This arch was also adjacent to the Anthropology Department and the grotesques of two Indigenous people sited on the Michie building. Traditionally, carved arch-voussoirs depict fauna subjects, so in order to continue with the symbols of place and to continue the Indigenous theme, in 2000 I proposed subjects that would represent three Brisbane suburbs, Pinkenba, Mount Gravatt and Moggill.

I have my father's copy of *Tom Petrie's reminiscences of early Queensland* recorded by his daughter Constance and published in 1904, which observed that Indigenous people named the area we now call the Brisbane suburb of New Farm 'Binkin-ba', meaning 'place of the tortoise'. In a subsequent publication of *Vocabularies of four representative tribes of South Eastern Queensland* by FJ Watson, it was recorded that the name of the suburb, Pinkenba, was derived from the name for the barbell tortoise or **long-necked turtle** 'pinkin'.

No doubt there were many places where tortoises were prolific, and they were usually caught by hand in the swamps or sometimes with nets spread in the fresh waterholes. I subsequently incorporated a similar tortoise on the *Watercolour dream* artwork commissioned for the Spectacle Garden in Roma Street Parkland in 2001.





Short-beaked echidna

The suburb we now know as Moggill was first named 'Maggil', meaning 'large water lizard' by the local Indigenous people. Because of the suburb's proximity to the Brisbane River and its tributaries, these large lizards or [eastern water dragons](#) are quite prevalent and I regularly see them exploring my own garden. However, not being able to get close enough to them, I sketched details of specimens at the Museum. When the Mount Coot-tha [Children's Trail](#) was built years later, I also carved one of these dragons on the entry marker I was commissioned to create there.

Tom Petrie also recorded that the original name for the area now known as Mount Gravatt was 'Karrar-mabul', meaning 'place of porcupines' or 'porcupine resort'. However, the porcupine is a European species not found in Australia, and the native fauna species referred to would certainly have been a spiny anteater or echidna. They were mainly hunted at night when out feeding and I chose to carve the [short-beaked echidna](#) on the keystone of the arch.

I still recall that one of my first jobs at the [Queensland Museum](#) in 1959 was to replace the word 'porcupine' with the word 'echidna' in more than 1,000 booklets produced by UNESCO

for an exhibition on Aboriginal culture travelling throughout Queensland during the state's centenary. The Director of our Queensland Museum could not overlook this small but significant error and so in the art room we printed that short word 'echidna' hundreds of times in endless columns to be then cut to size by guillotine and glued into place in each booklet with the use of fine tweezers! I will never forget that mistake and the great importance placed on being scientifically correct.

I also fondly remember one very cold winter's day when Maurizio Bigazzi, the Italian taxidermist from the Zoology Department's museum (since closed), invited me to join other staff for their morning coffee break and to catch a few minutes of an exciting international soccer match. When I didn't arrive, he decided to deliver the coffee to me himself and give me the score! Coffee in hand, he climbed up the scaffold and admired my work on the echidna. I appreciated the coffee and his brief note that arrived soon after:

*Thank you for the precious learning of the real world that you give me in your art.*



Eastern (Moggill) water dragon

1998

2000



# Physics in focus

Over the years working in the Great Court, I had often met Physics [Professor John Mainstone OAM](#), who was the custodian of the [Pitch Drop experiment](#), which holds the [Guinness World Record](#) for the longest-running laboratory experiment in history.

The experiment was set up in the foyer of the Parnell building in 1927 by [Professor Thomas Parnell](#), and in 2005 together they won the Ig Nobel Prize for this unique scientific endeavour!

In the year 2000, I really enjoyed consulting with Professor Mainstone concerning appropriate subjects for friezes to be carved at the entrance to the Parnell building. We chose two of the classic physics experiments.

The first was a depiction of [Galileo's famous gravity experiment](#) with cannonballs and feathers dropping from the top of the Leaning Tower of Pisa. The second related to the branch of physics

concerned with quantum theory. I borrowed the skeleton of a cat in a glass-walled polished timber box from the Veterinary Science Department and made a few sketches before trying various ways of illustrating [Schrödinger's cat](#), the live and the dead animals together within a box and separated by the symbol for quantum physics.

\*\*\*

I hope that everyone who visits the Great Court will one day appreciate the story behind each carving as it illustrates and celebrates the culture of our Indigenous people, the achievements of our staff and graduates, and the history of Queensland.



Galileo's experiment



Schrödinger's cat



2000



# Portraying academics

The UQ Senate Room, located in the Chancellery at the St Lucia campus, is home to many works of art, mostly depictions of past university leaders. While Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors are chronicled via oil paintings, Presidents of the Professorial and [Academic Boards](#) are depicted in bronze bas-relief portrait medallions on the cornice above the back seats. Since 1988, I have created many of these.

A long tradition prevails for commemorating the services of Presidents of the Professorial Board, later known as the Academic Board. Well-known sculptors [Daphne Mayo](#), [Andor Meszaros](#) and [Kathleen Shillam](#) made the first medallions, which were displayed in neat rows across the bluestone wall of the original Senate Room in the JD Story Building. I began this work in 1988 with a portrait of [Emeritus Professor Roger D Scott](#) and continued every subsequent few years until 2017, with the most recent portrait being of [Emeritus Professor Fred D'Agostino](#).

First, I would prepare a full-size technical drawing describing the layout of the elements of a medallion measuring 144 mm wide and 6 mm thick, including the raised rim. Armed with this information, a clear acrylic disc would then be professionally cut to size with raised letters spelling out the name of the particular academic and dates of their Presidency of the Academic Board. The acrylic disc that made up the base of the pattern and all of the letters and numbers would have bevelled edges to facilitate moulding and casting.

I was supplied with professional black-and-white photographs of the subject, which I could then reduce to a size that would fit neatly into the space available on the back of the acrylic disc within clear view of the raised lettering on the surface above. The image below the surface reveals the exact profile of the subject.

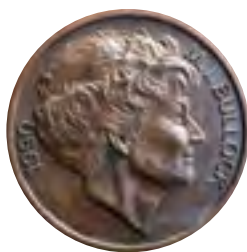
I used an air-drying modelling putty to model up the contours of the face, taking note of the details revealed in the photograph below. It was important to have an understanding of perspective. When the model was completed and the putty dry, I would then seal it with shellac and deliver it to the foundry, where two moulding and casting processes delivered a silicon-bronze cast that was then patinated, lacquered and waxed prior to being fixed to various types of fine-timber backing plates. Carefully made brass fixings were then prepared for the reverse of each one, ready for installation.

I believe that if these finely detailed medallion portraits were more brightly illuminated and fixed at eye level, they would be appreciated more.

1988



Emeritus Professor  
[Roger D Scott](#)  
(1986–1987)



Emeritus Professor  
[Margaret I Bullock](#)  
(1988–1990)



Professor  
Steven Schwartz  
(1991–1993)



Emeritus Professor  
[Linda S Rosenman](#)  
(1994–1996)



Emeritus Professor  
Andrew M Lister  
(1997)



Emeritus Professor  
[Cindy Gallois](#)  
(1998–2000)

2017



Professor  
[Ian O'Connor](#)  
(2001–2002)



Emeritus Professor  
[Jenny Strong](#)  
(2002–2005)



Emeritus Professor  
[Mark D Gould](#)  
(2006–2008)



Emeritus Professor  
[Susan E Hamilton](#)  
(2009–2011)



Emeritus Professor  
[Kaye E Basford](#)  
(2012–2014)



Emeritus Professor  
[Fred D'Agostino](#)  
(2015–2017)



# a life

## CHOOSING TO BE A SCULPTOR

It's had its challenges – but the rewards have more than made up for it. Mother had often suggested that I take up the more gentle art of watercolour painting, but from the first time I felt the slippery clay gleaned from the riverbank at Yeronga squeezing through my fingers, my imagination and enthusiasm for the creation of sculpture has remained.





# Four decades of sculpting



1976 — Completes grotesque of Associate Professor Charles Schindler (*pictured left*); wins commission for UQ grotesques carvings and is appointed University Sculptor

1977 — Completes grotesques of Associate Professor Stanley Castlehow, Professor ACV Melbourne, Professor JL Michie, Associate Professor FW Robinson

1978 — Completes grotesques of Gaiarbau, Indigenous woman, Professor RP Cummings

1980 — Completes UQ Colleges coats of arms suite: UQ Cromwell College, UQ Duchesne College, UQ Emmanuel College, UQ Grace College, UQ International House, UQ King's College, UQ St John's College, UQ St Leo's College, UQ Women's College; Australian universities coats of arms suite: Australian National University, Flinders University (*pictured left*), Griffith University, James Cook University, La Trobe University, Macquarie University, Monash University, University of New England, University of New South Wales, University of Newcastle

1981 — Completes University of Queensland coat of arms; grotesques of Professor Dorothy Hill AC CBE, Professor TGH Jones CBE, John Theodore Muller

1982 — Completes grotesque of Dr Freda Bage (*pictured left*)

1983 — Completes grotesques of Mr Bruce Green, Professor James C Mahoney, Mr Donald Russell

1984 — Completes coats of arms of Murdoch University, Wollongong University, Queen's University of Belfast, Rhodes University, University of Natal (*pictured left*), University of Papua New Guinea, University of the South Pacific, University of Witwatersrand, Cornell University, Simon Fraser University, University of Pennsylvania, University of Windsor

1985 — Completes coats of arms of City of Canberra, Commonwealth of Australia, Deakin University, State of Queensland, Guy's Hospital Medical School, Heriot-Watt University, London School of Economics and Political Science, St Bartholomew's Hospital Medical College, The Open University, University of Cambridge's Darwin/Newnham/Wolfson Colleges, University of Lancaster, University of Leicester, University of Manchester, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, University of Nottingham (*pictured left*), University of Oxford's Green/St Anthony's/St Catherine's/St Cross/St Hilda's/St Peter's Colleges, University of Stirling, University of South Africa, Boston College, Indiana University, New York University, University of Chicago, University of Montreal, University of Quebec, University of San Francisco, University of Tennessee; produces 75th Anniversary commemorative bookends and Yachting Trophy

1986 — Completes coats of arms of Imperial College of Science and Technology, Queen Mary College (*pictured right*), Royal Veterinary College, St Mary's Hospital Medical School, St Thomas's Hospital Medical School, University of Aston in Birmingham, University of Cambridge's Churchill/Gonville and Caius Colleges, University of Keele, University of London's Bedford/Birbeck Colleges, University of Oxford's Lady Margaret Hall/Nuffield/Somerville/St Anne's/St Hugh's Colleges, University of Southampton, University of Sussex, University of Warwick, Brown University, Bryn Mawr College, Dartmouth College, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Rutgers State University of New Jersey, University of Hawaii, University of Michigan, University of Minnesota, University of Missouri, University of Pittsburgh, University of South Carolina, University of Vermont; is awarded Churchill Fellowship to 'study the work of present and past great sculptors and to learn firsthand the skills of marble sculpture – Italy, France, UK, USA', and specifically to study the relationship of sculpture to the architecture of universities and cathedrals

1987 — Completes coats of arms of University of Cambridge's Girton College, University of Dundee, Georgetown University, University of California, University of Mississippi; completes grotesque of Miss Kathleen Campbell-Brown; visits UK to research Charles Darwin (*study drawing pictured above right*); completes the Evolution of Agriculture frieze at Gatton campus (*study drawing pictured above right*)

1988 — Completes bronze portrait medallion of Professor Roger D Scott (*pictured right*)

1989 — Completes coat of arms of Island of St Lucia; statues of Charles Darwin, Gregor Mendel

1990 — Completes coats of arms of Karlova University, University of Bordeaux, University of Copenhagen, University of Vienna, Keio University, Kyoto University, National University of Singapore, University of Malaya, Duke University, Notre Dame University, Stanford University

1991 — Completes Australian floral emblems half-shields suite in Goddard/Michie cloisters: Cooktown orchid (Qld), golden wattle (Australia), heath (Vic), kangaroo paw (WA), royal bluebell (ACT), Sturt's desert pea (SA), Sturt's desert rose (NT), Tasmanian blue gum (Tas), waratah (NSW) (*pictured right*); coats of arms of University of Kent in Canterbury, University of Barcelona, University of Bern, University of Bucharest, University of Geneva, University of Grenoble, University of Helsinki, University of Lausanne, University of Leipzig, University of Oslo, University of Stockholm, University of Uppsala, University of Zurich, Manila Central University, University of Mauritius; bronze portrait medallion of Professor Margaret I Bullock AM







1992 — Completes half-shields in Michie cloisters of convolvulus, cotton tree (*pictured left*), pandanus, tea tree; coats of arms of Amsterdam University, University de l'Etat a Liège, University Libre de Bruxelles, University of Bologna, University of Granada, University of Padova, University of Tübingin, University of Nigeria, University Federal de Rio de Janeiro



1993 — Completes half-shields in Michie cloisters of Moreton Bay fig, bungwall fern, Bunya pine, cabbage tree palm, carrol, cunjevoi, cycad, geebung, grass tree, honeysuckle oak, lilly pillly, macaranga, Moreton Bay ash, orchid, red mangrove; coats of arms of Charles Darwin University, Universidad de Zaragoza, University of Utrecht, University of Venezia; completes self-portrait grotesque (*pictured left*)



1994 — Completes half-shield in Michie cloisters of supplejack native vine; coats of arms of Bond University, Curtin University, Queensland University of Technology, Budapest University of Technology and Economics, Fribourg University, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Leiden University, Ljubljana University, Universidad de Alcalá (*pictured left*), Universidade Clássica de Lisboa, Universidade de Coimbra, University of Ankara, University of Siena, Warsaw University, University of Colombo, University of Djakarta, University of Columbia; sculpture of book, two entry markers and Oodgeroo seat for Wordsmiths the Writers Cafe; bronze portrait medallion of Professor Steven Schwartz



1995 — Completes coats of arms of University of York, Freie University, Friedrich-Schiller University, Rijks Universiteit, Ruprecht-Karl University, University of Athens, University of Tartu, University of Valladolid, Universidad Nacional de San Augustin de Arequipa, University de Guadalajara, University of Honduras; friezes of Peter Carey (*pictured left*), Janette Turner Hospital for Wordsmiths the Writers Cafe

1996 — Completes arch carvings on Goddard cloister of eastern silvereye, reef heron, geography cone, staghorn coral, Stokes's seasnake; roundels on Goddard building facade of blue blubber jellyfish, soldier crab; sculpture of open book and friezes of Thea Astley, Hugh Lunn, David Malouf, Judith Wright for Wordsmiths the Writers Cafe



1997 — Completes arch carvings on Goddard/Michie exterior cloisters of Albert's lyrebird, Boyd's forest dragon, giant burrowing cockroach, pterosaur, southern saratoga; carvings on Goddard cloister arch of barramundi, blue swimmer crab, mullet, greentail prawn, red-clawed crayfish; coat of arms of University of Southern Queensland; portrait medallion of Professor Linda M Rosenman; *Response* sculpture for Women's College Playhouse; ANZAC memorial at Gatton campus (*pictured left*)

1998 — Completes carvings on Michie cloister arch of giant wood moth larva, Hercules club whelk, native bee, pipi, ship's worm; musky rat-kangaroo (*pictured right*), southern gastric brooding frog; portrait medallion of Professor Andrew M Lister



1999 — Completes carvings on Goddard/Michie interior cloister arch of Australian snipe, channel-billed cuckoo, magpie goose, mistletoebird, pink-eared duck, red-tailed tropic bird, white-tailed kingfisher, zebra finch; arch carving on Goddard/Michie exterior cloister of peripatus (*pictured right*)



2000 — Completes carvings on Law cloister arch of eastern water dragon, long-necked turtle, short-beaked echidna; carving on Parnell building, friezes of Galileo's gravity experiment, Schrödinger's cat

2001 — Completes bronze portrait medallion of Professor Cindy Gallois

2003 — Completes bronze portrait medallion of Professor Ian O'Connor



2006 — Completes bronze portrait medallion of Professor Jenny Strong (*pictured right*)

2007 — Completes memorial entrance pedestals at Women's College; entry marker for St Leo's College



2009 — Completes bronze portrait medallion of Professor Mark D Gould; *Tree of Life* sculpture for St Leo's College (*pictured right*)

2010 — Completes portrait medallion of Dr James O'Neil Mayne for Forgan Smith tower entrance foyer; PVC (Advancement) Centenary Equity and Diversity Award



2011 — Completes coats of arms of Queensland University Regiment, Queensland University Squadron (*pictured right*)

2012 — Completes bronze portrait medallion of Professor Susan E Hamilton

2013 — Completes artworks for Maureen Aitken Garden (*pictured right*), Women's College; retirement gift for Adjunct Professor Mary Mahoney AO



2015 — Completes portrait medallion of Professor Kaye E Basford; retirement gift for Chancellor John Story

2017 — Completes bronze portrait medallion of Professor Fred D'Agostino (*pictured below right*)





# Defining a university

As early as 1986, and with the bicentenary approaching, I began seriously considering what kind of sculptural project could suitably mark the occasion at UQ. *Scientia ac labore* in three dimensions came to mind. However, it was not until the early 1990s that I was given the opportunity to present my design concept proposing what I believed to be the reasons for the existence of the University: knowledge in all its forms.

I knew that any suggestion made to the University Senate Art Committee would have to be both worthy and meaningful, having a timeless quality that might capture the imagination.

As I had always wanted to design and carve the large expanse of a Helidon freestone frieze, I began to consider the potential of the large raised stone panels planned for friezes on the Forgan Smith tower. For me, the most attractive site was the area high above the main entrance on the northern aspect and facade of the tower, an area of roughly 33 square metres, above what – apparently – used to be the formal entrance to the University.

Of course, I hadn't been asked to even consider such a major project but as nothing else was happening I was keen to use my time constructively.

I thought the concept for the frieze design should symbolise the reason for the existence of this significant tertiary institution, one of the great sandstone universities in Australia. The first decision to be resolved then was why did it exist? My search began with the inscription boldly carved above the main northern entrance to the Forgan Smith tower:

*Great is truth, and mighty above all things*

The word 'truth' was so prominently displayed at the University that I wondered whether truth was considered to be that essence, that meaningful abstract quality I was looking for – but how would I manage to depict it in three dimensions?

I made appointments with a number of interested academics in various UQ departments to discuss my search for a concept, that essence, the *raison d'être* for the place.

I was also mindful of the other carved inscription above the Great Court entrance to the tower:

*A place of light, of liberty and of learning*

Were any of those subjects suitable? My search went on, and many times I felt like giving up, but then the subject of knowledge arose and was met with acceptance. So I began to explore the depiction of yet another abstract quality.

In the introduction to my concept proposal, I wrote that although some of the history and tradition of higher learning is embodied in the Great Court, I sought a concept that would be a framing device for what I understood to be the essential reasons for the existence of a university:

*To preserve knowledge  
To disseminate knowledge  
To extend knowledge*

I believed I had resolved a concept that worked in harmony with these sentiments of scholarship and integrity, a concept universal in its symbolism and which also related to the UQ motto:

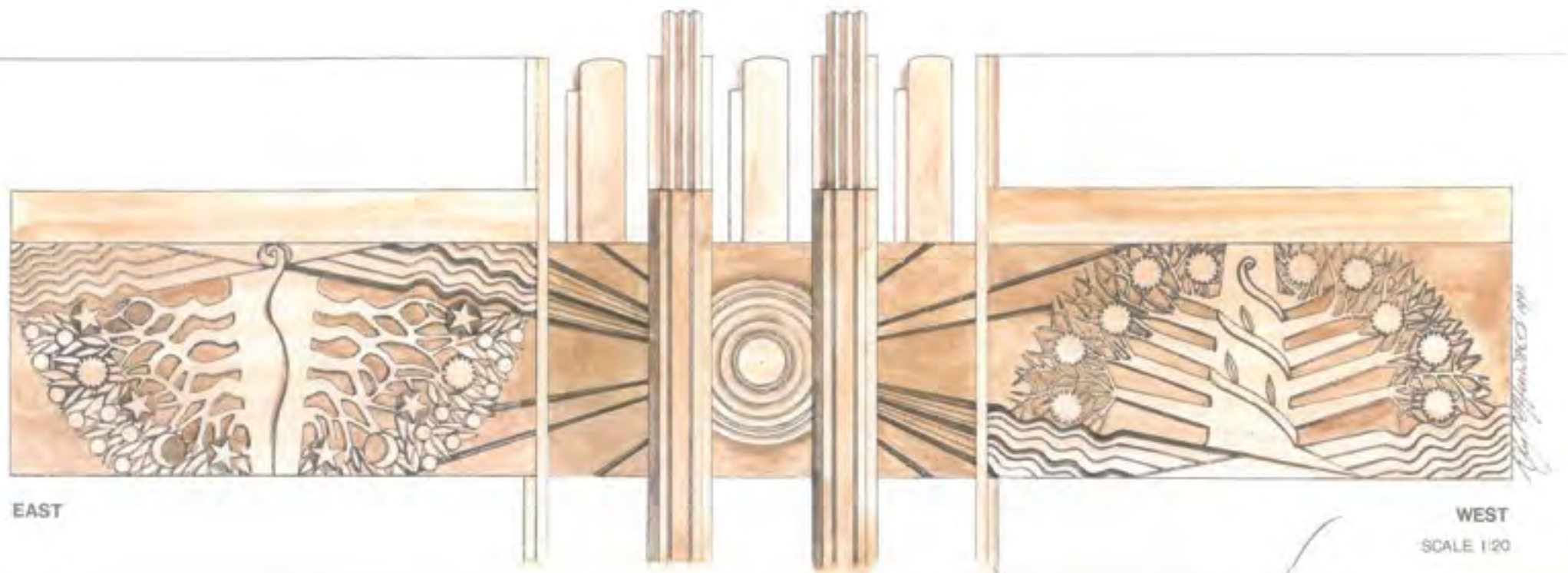
*Scientia ac labore (By means of knowledge and hard work)*

To match the style of the buildings designed by the government-appointed architects [Hennessy, Hennessy & Co](#), I proposed incorporating the three existing blank panels on the tower facade in a symmetrical art deco design concept relating to knowledge of the mysteries of the cosmos, and the five essential elements of the physical universe: aether, air, earth, fire and water.

To continue the classical references already incorporated in the architecture and other sculpture at the University, I chose the sun as a central feature of the design in reference to [Apollo](#), who is associated with the higher developments of civilisation, approving codes of law, inculcating high moral and religious principles, and favouring philosophy. Nine concentric circles traced on the surface of the sun represent the five Platonic solids: the tetrahedron, octahedron, cube, icosahedron and dodecahedron, all traditionally associated with instinctive knowledge, intuitive knowledge, innate knowledge and pure reason.

I used the tree, the most essential of traditional symbols, as the other significant element in my concept design and was inspired by the literature of noted Australian writers such as [Oodgeroo Noonuccal](#), [Judith Wright](#) and [Michael Dransfield](#).





On the western side of my design, the tree is depicted rooted atop a mountain, and on the eastern side inverted with its roots in the heavens. Details of the concept design portray in three dimensions many symbolic elements, including the vine that winds up the trunk of one tree, symbolising aspiration to greater reality and attainment of knowledge. The spiral is also a profound image of the movement of time, central to our vision of evolution.

I chose to link the two friezes either side of the central sun with elements symbolising flowing water, thus incorporating a reference to the classic muses – Apollo's companions, who presided over springs of water that had the power to impart inspiration and imagination to humanity.

Of course, for me, should my concept design have been embraced, the really hard work indicated in the University motto would have followed and I would have been committed to several months of onsite manual work laying out the concept and carving those many square metres of stone – quite a task, but one I felt very confident in doing since completing the 54-square-metre frieze at the Gatton Agricultural College in 1987.

However, my design was returned without comment. The whole process of resolving my original concept and putting it on paper was a very stimulating exercise, and I really enjoyed the experience – despite my imagination failing to enthuse others.

Those panels remain blank.







# Beyond the Great Court

Since the noted Queensland sculptor [Len Shillam](#) sold me my first two chisels and my father bought me huge pieces of Helidon freestone from the demolition of the Victoria Bridge, I've understood the words of [Emile Zola](#):

*Live for the effort of living, for the stone brought to the far and mysterious work,  
the only possible peace in this world being the joy of this accomplished effort.*

My UQ experience of designing grotesque portraits embellished with elements that identify each subject through gesture and content has informed my work ever since I commenced carving in the Great Court in 1976. I gained even more confidence after completing my [Churchill Fellowship](#) in 1986.

However, at the end of 2000, carving in the Great Court was discontinued and I was not able to complete the last of the original 50 grotesques planned for the site.

In 2006, I was admitted as a Member in the General Division of the [Order of Australia](#) for my service to the Visual Arts. In 2010, the University's centenary, I returned to the site to carve the armorial bearings of both the University Regiment and the University Squadron – later unveiled by the Honourable [Dame Quentin Bryce AD CVO](#), Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia. And then, in 2012, I collaborated with [Dr Hugh Lavery AM](#) to create a database recording all of the sculptures at UQ campuses. Our compilation of the database was seen as a critical step in the [UQ Art Museum](#) collection's conservation, valuable for both reference and for visitor guidance.

Since then, UQ has commissioned several retirement gifts and awards, as well as cast bronze medallion portraits of retired Presidents of the Academic Board.

[St Leo's](#) and [Women's](#) Colleges have commissioned several major artworks and, in 2010, I designed and produced a large bronze [medallion portrait](#) of Dr James O'Neil Mayne, whose generous philanthropic gifts to UQ have transformed higher education in Queensland and the lives of generations.

I hope that one day the University will find another dedicated sculptor to recommence the carving program in the Great Court and continue the unique visual narrative about our Indigenous culture, the history and the principal flora and fauna of our state of Queensland, and the achievements of the staff and graduates of the University.

Since the year 2000, I have designed and produced many major artworks such as the seven monumental stone sculptures for the Roma Street Parkland Spectacle Garden, an 11-metre long stone and bronze frieze for [Monte Sant'Angelo Mercy College](#) in North Sydney, and an impressive bronze 3,500 mm high statue of the *Spirit of St Magnus* for the [Anglican Church Grammar School](#) in Brisbane.

After carving four portraits of significant donors to the completion fund of [St John's Anglican Cathedral](#) in Brisbane in 2012, I was then commissioned to design and carve 13 monumental **Helidon freestone statues** for the west end. Following their completion and installation by 2019, a film documenting the project was aired on the ABC's [Compass](#) program in 2021, sparking a very enthusiastic public response.

Now the pattern for *Selene*, a life-size bronze of the Greek Goddess of the Moon, is completed in my studio and I am about to commence the creation of a 3,000 mm high bronze *Hand of Plato* balancing the five Platonic solids on its fingertips for a new mathematics museum in our region.

The imagination of an artist never rests and will always find an outlet somewhere. Who knows what's around the corner? Eventually perhaps those watercolours my mother once suggested?



Statues created for the west end of St John's Anglican Cathedral in Brisbane, 2019

1976

2021



# Acknowledgements

This project began years ago as I contemplated the boxes of records I had kept over the years and packed up ready for safekeeping in the Fryer Library at UQ. There was so much of the story about the carvings that would never be told without the inclusion of the many concept drawings and records that still remained deep in my large file-drawers at home. I was keeping them until I had the time to assemble a scrapbook of memories of my time in the Great Court. Many people had asked when I was going to put pen to paper but, apart from family commitments, fulfilling my sculpture commissions rather than writing was always my priority. At the end of each long day I had little energy left.

I had started to contribute brief articles to *Alumni News* and, following publication in 2016 of [Carving a history: a guide to the Great Court](#), I showed some of my drawings I had saved to **Camille Layt** and **Suzanne Parker** in UQ Marketing and Communication, and their interest was aroused. So, my sincere thanks must firstly go to them and other members of staff – particularly designer and photographer **Jennifer McLeod** – for their enthusiasm and interest in my work, and for 'getting this show on the road'.

I acknowledge the faith placed in me by [James Maccormick MBE OAM](#), University of Queensland Architect, who in 1976, recognised my natural talent for carving but also acknowledged the new era of gender equality, and approved my appointment as successor to John Theodore Muller, commissioning me to follow on in his role as University Sculptor.

I appreciate the encouragement of [Don Munro AM](#), the Deputy (and often Acting) Registrar and Director of Protocol at UQ. His knowledge of subjects for grotesques aided my understanding of their role in the foundation of the University and its move to the St Lucia campus. As founding Chairman of the [Queensland Performing Arts Trust](#) in 1978 and President of [Musica Viva](#), Don significantly influenced Queensland's cultural life.



Attending the 2010 launch in the Forgan Smith tower foyer of my cast bronze relief portrait medallion of Dr James O'Neil Mayne – who, along with his sister, Mary Emelia, gave the title to the St Lucia land to the Chancellor of the University in 1930 – are author Rosamund Siemon, myself, and my husband, Rob



The Churchill fellowship I received in 1986 was a turning point in my career. I gained great self confidence and an insight into the value of keeping history alive through the discipline of sculpture as it relates to the architecture of universities and cathedrals in particular. I am indebted to the [Churchill Trust](#) that recognised the opportunity I had in the role of UQ Sculptor to put new ideas I had gained into action for the benefit of Australia.

The [UQ Alumni Friends](#) have always been supportive of my role as University Sculptor and, as well as giving me the opportunity on many occasions to be their guest speaker and promote the work I have done onsite, they have commissioned me to produce a number of special awards such as the prestigious Alumnus of the Year Award, the Great Court Race Perpetual Trophy, and the [3MT](#) Award, always including the beautiful Helidon freestone and silky oak that identify connection with the University.

I have especially enjoyed my long association with the **Friends of Antiquity** and opportunities to support the Classics and the [RD Milns Antiquity Museum](#) wherever possible.

[The University](#) has also given me the opportunity to create some very special awards over the years, like the hundreds of 25-Year Service Awards (stone bookends actually made by my husband, Rob), the 75th Anniversary Secretariat Yachting Trophy and Commemorative Bookends, the PVC Centenary Equity and Diversity Award, and the PVC (Advancement) Awards. Inclusion as guest in many prestigious events over the years has been a delight and a privilege.

In the early 1990s, at my invitation, renowned botanists [Joan](#) and [Dr Alan Cribb](#) identified the existing flora carvings in the Great Court for me. Their application to that task was pivotal to my opportunity to apply a more disciplined approach to the subsequent selection of new suites of Australian native flora and fauna subjects.

Following the success of this fact-finding exercise, I sought the advice of my friend, [Dr Hugh Lavery AM CF](#), about the selection of suitable fauna subjects that would add interest and information to the heritage collection of relief carving that I was committed to creating. I am most grateful to Hugh for his years of friendship and expert advice, and for his professional commitment and collaboration that saw the completion of the comprehensive database that now records all of the carvings in the UQ campuses and provides the opportunity for future disciplined additions that will continue to celebrate Queensland history.

[Malcolm Middleton OAM](#) has brought an impressive academic and administrative flair to his role as Queensland Government Architect and over the years I have appreciated his enthusiastic response to my sculptural endeavours to contribute in a meaningful

way to the architectural landscape of our home state and especially to impart to the hallowed cloisters of the Great Court of The University of Queensland a meaningful narrative and an enduring celebration of its achievements. For this, I thank him.

I appreciate the recognition of the [Fryer Library](#) for seeing value in housing my papers collected since 1976 when I first set foot in the Great Court. I was relieved to know that they were now in safe hands and hopefully would never suffer the fate of Muller's records, which were all destroyed in a fire at his home. I hope they have enough space to house the relevant drawings and photographs remaining in my possession.

I acknowledge my **parents**, who made personal sacrifices to give their three daughters the very best education available in Queensland at the time, sending us all to [Somerville House](#) for our secondary education. I am certainly indebted to them for their lifelong encouragement and delight and pride in my success as a sculptor.

I acknowledge the influential role of **Somerville House**, where inspiring teachers, some of whom remained friends over the years, encouraged my particular interests in zoology, history and the arts. I still remember them with great fondness and acknowledge the Somerville Old Girls who commissioned me to create a number of very significant artworks for our school, and I remain indebted to my friend, **Marjorie Searle** (nee Shackleton), who so generously edited my original manuscript for this memoir.

I owe much to [Leonard and Kathleen Shillam](#), who awarded prizes for my early sculpture and whose vision saw the foundation of the Society of Sculptors in Queensland, affording learning and exhibition opportunities for budding sculptors such as myself. I am very proud to be Patron of Sculptors Queensland, which celebrated its golden jubilee in 2019.

A sincere thankyou goes to my children, **Matthew** and **Georgia**, both now successful in their own careers in aviation and the arts. They endured the dust and noise as they shared my life and the unusual career I chose. They have always been supportive, sharing their tech skills and muscle when heavy materials and models needed to be moved in the days before I had any equipment to deal with such problems a stone sculptor faces.

And finally, I pay tribute to my skilled artigiani, my dear husband **Rob**: technical adviser, skilful draftsman and builder who, without a doubt, is the most capable self-taught fine craftsman I know. For his enduring encouragement and practical support of my career as a sculptor throughout the 40 or so years we have enjoyed living and working together, I am certainly indebted.

**Dr Rhyl K Hinwood AM CF, Hon.DPhil Qld**



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\* A list of all works completed at UQ can be seen in chronological order on pages [92-93](#).



# Thanks

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