The Australian
Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE4870

Poole, Ruth Lane

(1885 - 1974)

Born	18850101, Limerick Ireland
Died	19741231, Sydney New South Wales Australia
Occupation	Interior designer

Summary

Ruth Lane Poole was an interior designer whose most notable commission was to design and furnish the interiors of the Prime Minister’s Lodge and the Governor-General’s residence in Canberra in time for the opening of Parliament House in May 1927. She also designed the interiors for Westridge House in Yarralumla, which was the residence for the Principal of the Australian Forestry School, a position held by her husband Charles Lane Poole from 1927 to 1944.

Details

Ruth Johnstone Pollexfen was born in Limerick, Ireland, one of eleven children of Henrietta and Frederick Pollexfen. When her parents separated in 1900, she became a ward of her cousin Susan Mary (Lily) Yeats, sister of the poet and playwright William Butler Yeats, and moved to London. In 1902, Ruth returned to Dublin with her cousins Lily and Elizabeth (Lollie) who founded the Dun Emer Press workshop where Lily ran the embroidery section, with Ruth as her apprentice, and Lollie who had trained in printing at William Morris's Kelmscott Press managed the Press. In 1908, the sisters founded Cuala Industries at nearby Churchtown, which ran the Cuala Press and a workshop where Ruth taught young women various crafts so that they could earn a living. Samples of Ruth's embroidery, and publications produced by the two presses, are held by the National Gallery of Ireland.

Ruth met Charles Lane Poole in Dublin and he proposed to her by letter from the Transvaal in southern Africa. When they married in Dublin in July 1911, she was given away by her cousin, WB Yeats. Ruth remained in Ireland while Charles worked in Sierra Leone for five years, then they both moved to Perth in 1916 where Charles took up the position of Conservator of Forests. When they left Western Australia in 1922, they had two daughters Charlotte (born 1913 in London) and Mary (born 1918 in Perth). A third daughter Phyllis was born back in Ireland in 1922. Ruth and her daughters remained in Ireland while Charles worked in Papua and then in New Guinea. When Charles was appointed the Commonwealth's Forestry Adviser in 1925, charged with setting up the Australian Forestry School (among other things), the family returned to Australia and lived in South Yarra in Melbourne.

In September 1925 Ruth Lane Poole designed a room featuring craftwork in Australian timber and wool in the Melbourne Town Hall for the Victorian Arts and Crafts Society, and began contributing articles to the *Australian Home Builder* (later renamed *Australian Home Beautiful*). In the following years she wrote regularly on interior design for magazines and newspapers, and advised clients of Melbourne's Myer Emporium on interior decoration.

In March 1926 she was commissioned by the Federal Capital Commission to design and furnish the interiors of the Prime Minister's Lodge and the Governor-General's residence in Canberra. This involved designing the interior colour schemes, selecting and ordering all the furnishings (including glassware, tableware and household linen) and designing furniture and supervising its construction. Both residences needed to be ready for the opening of Parliament House on 9 May 1927 for their occupants: Prime Minister Stanley Melbourne Bruce and his wife Ethel in the Lodge, and Lord and Lady Stonehaven, with their guests the Duke and Duchess of York, in the Governor-General's residence, Yarralumla.

The Lane Pooles moved to Canberra at the end of 1927 and moved into Westridge House in Banks Street, Yarralumla in early 1928. Ruth also designed the interiors for this building as it was the new residence for the Principal of the Australian Forestry School. Her husband Charles was the Acting Principal of the School and Inspector-General of Forests for the Commonwealth Forestry Bureau, positions he held from 1927 to 1944.

While living in Canberra, Ruth Lane Poole was prominent in developing the social and cultural life of the national capital. Ruth organised tennis parties and balls for students at the Australian Forestry School, creating decorative schemes for the annual balls. She designed and created the flag for the Australian Forestry School, featuring a large tree and the motto 'Mihi cura futuri' (I have a care for the future). The design also features above the entrance of the Australian Forestry School Building, opened in November 1927, in the Canberra suburb, Yarralumla.

The Lane Pooles moved to Manly in Sydney in 1945. Charles died in 1970, and Ruth four years later, aged 89.

Published resources

Book
A brief history of the Australian Forestry School, Carron, L.T., 2000

Resource
Charles and Ruth Lane Poole, Dargavel, John, 2006,
http://uncommonlives.naa.gov.au/lane-poole

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Resource Section
Living with Ruth Lane Poole: An Interior Legacy, 2010,
http://www.craftact.org.au/projects/dccc/2009/ruthLanePoole.php

Key items on the Lane Pooles,
http://uncommonlives.naa.gov.au/lane-poole/key-items-on-lane-poole.aspx

Site Exhibition
From Lady Denman to Katy Gallagher: A Century of Women's Contributions to Canberra, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2013,
http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/ldkg

Archival resources

Australian National University Archives
Australian Forestry School correspondence files

Australian Forestry School flag

National Gallery of Ireland, Yeats Archive
Ruth Lane Poole collection

National Library of Australia, Pictures Collection
Furniture designs for Prime Minister's Lodge and Government House, Canberra [picture] / Ruth Lane Poole

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection
Papers of Charles Edward Lane Poole, 1905-1970 [manuscript]

National Archives of Australia, National Office, Canberra
Pencil drawings

Author Details
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