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## Week 8 Reading

### APA referencing

Tognini, M. (2015) *Many hearts, one voice: The story of the War Widows' Guild in Western Australia* (pp. 56–65). Fremantle Press.

### Referencing for family history

Melinda Tognini, *Many hearts, one voice: The story of the War Widows' Guild in Western Australia*, Fremantle Press, Fremantle, 2015, pp. 56–65.

*entitlements, but in the future the politicians will know he or she will have to answer to a representative of thousands of women who are members of the War Widows' Craft Guild, if we are forgotten.<sup>82</sup>*

There was no question that there was a great deal more work and campaigning to do, but the war widows' persistence and political pressure was beginning to pay dividends.

### CHAPTER 3 A PLACE TO CALL HOME

The initial problems confronting the war widows in Western Australia included finding somewhere to meet and assessing the viability and practicalities of establishing a weaving course. For the first few months, members met in each other's homes, with committee meetings conducted at Anzac House.<sup>1</sup>

On 11 March 1947, Jean Ferguson, vice-president of the Guild and assistant matron at the Repatriation General Hospital, Hollywood, attended a Post-War Reconstruction meeting with representatives from other ex-service organisations, including the Totally and Permanently Disabled Soldiers Association and the Australian Legion of Ex-Servicemen and Women, seeking information regarding the training scheme available to war widows. Mr Wood, deputy director of the Ministry of Post-War Reconstruction, confirmed what Jessie Vasey had told Legacy about the training allowance. While undertaking training, a war widow received a living allowance of £3 5s, plus a further £1 for the care of her children. The catch was that her war widow's pension of £2 10s would be deducted from this amount. There was general agreement at the meeting that the allowance should be *in addition* to the pension, otherwise the benefit of participating in the training was substantially reduced.<sup>2</sup>

Mr Phillips, deputy director of industrial training, expressed concern that not many war widows had yet enrolled in training. Jean Ferguson explained that this was primarily due to the lack of suitable rooms in which to conduct classes. From Mr Phillips' perspective, however, the establishment of a weaving centre was being delayed because of insufficient enrolment numbers. 'All widows who intend to

train should immediately submit an application,' he said.<sup>3</sup> And if there were war widows unable to commence immediately, 'they should still apply and then defer,' added Mr Wood. 'As soon as there are enough applicants, I will assist in the search for accommodation,' Mr Phillips promised.<sup>4</sup>

Following the meeting, the Guild approached its members, and a number enrolled in training. That same month the Guild moved into rooms at Army Records, situated in the 28th Battalion Drill Hall in Lord Street, East Perth.<sup>5</sup> The Guild now started the process of setting up its own weaving school by submitting a formal application to the Ministry of Post-War Reconstruction.<sup>6</sup> The classes would operate under the auspices of the Perth Technical College, but it was the Guild's responsibility to find staff and equipment,<sup>7</sup> and materials such as linen and cotton threads.

Anticipating a positive response, the Guild ordered six large looms and approached Kitty Gahan to teach. Kitty had been among Rachel Grieve's first trainees in Melbourne, and had initially known little about weaving:

*Apart from liking all sorts of hand work, I hadn't done anything remotely connected with weaving, and I didn't imagine that I would be capable of doing such work. When I first visited our Guild in Victoria, and saw the work being done, I was fascinated but rather doubtful of my ability to follow suit. However, I decided to take the chance ...<sup>8</sup>*

Kitty had displayed flair for the craft, and just over a year later, had become an instructor. Weaving classes commenced unofficially at the Guild rooms in Lord Street, although applicants did not receive their training allowance until the school was formally approved and opened.<sup>9</sup> The Guild also employed one of its members, Mrs McEvoy, as a clerk to deal with administrative work.<sup>10</sup>

The women had the option of keeping finished articles for the cost of materials, or selling them through the Guild. While the war widows learned to make rugs on large looms, many of them produced fine linen, which was in high demand in the post-war period. Products included tablemats, tapestries, furnishings, travel rugs, and material

for winter skirts.<sup>11</sup> 'There is such a variety of both useful and beautiful things to be made, that one is spared the boredom of too much repetition of the same thing,' commented Kitty Gahan in a radio interview. 'In weaving, one's own creative ability has the opportunity for expression, and it is really quite a thrill to see the actual fabric growing under your own hands.'<sup>12</sup>

Some doubts over the viability and suitability of a weaving school in Perth were cast at a Post-War Reconstruction meeting on 29 July, even though the group had supported the venture in March, and the



Weaving School students. Back (L-R): Ruth Engwell, Beatrice (Trixiel) Davey, Gwen Forsyth, Edna Ramage, Mrs Hill, Ethel May Jones; Front (L-R): Mrs J Kelly, Eleanor Burnside, Wyn Spence. [Courtesy of Helen Treloar]



Weaving School students. Back (L-R): Ruth Engwell, Wyn Spence, Mrs Hill, Ethel May Jones, Gwen Forsyth, Edna Ramage, Fanny May Collins, Beatrice (Trixiel) Davey; Front (L-R): Kitty Gahan, Peggy Walker, Mrs Butler, Mrs Smith, Marjorie (Madgel) Davidson, Eleanor Burnside, Mrs J. Kelly. [Courtesy of Helen Treloar]

weaving school had now been officially approved. 'Is it wise to train for weaving in uncertain conditions?' a representative of one organisation asked, presumably in reference to the rations and shortages that were still occurring.<sup>13</sup>

Mr Growcott, the meeting chair, replied that 'the market would remain pretty buoyant for a considerable time,' while currently there was 'a fairly well defined demand for woven articles and on that basis training had been approved.' Mr Leslie, MLA, believed that 'there would always be a market for weaving' and Miss Pearce concluded the discussion by stating:

*in nearly every case a woman chooses to do weaving because it is something that she can do in her own home - she visualises learning this craft and doing it in her spare time. Therefore, there would not be the volume of work turned out which would flood the market.<sup>14</sup>*

By September, there were ten students enrolled in the six-month full-time weaving course and seventeen enrolled in its part-time equivalent. Edna Ramage was one of the full-time students. Many found that part-time studies were more compatible with their commitment to homes and children. Even so, over time, several pulled out of the course. Some realised that weaving was not for them, or left due to work commitments or remarriage. Others took to it naturally and thoroughly enjoyed it.

Some women discovered that although they did not want to weave, belonging to the Guild was still beneficial.<sup>15</sup> But not all war widows joined the organisation, imagining it to be a 'gloomy affair'. Kitty Gahan was quick to allay this perception:

*The interest the women have found in the work is apparent in their faces. A number of them were in a very nervous state when they started, having only heard definite news a few months previously after varying periods of uncertainty. The companionship of others who understand how they were feeling was of great value, and contrary to what one expected in such a gathering, there was no suggestion of any gloom.<sup>16</sup>*

Edna Ramage was one of those who found great comfort and companionship at the Guild. Full-time work eventually drew her away from Guild activities, but the friendships she formed helped her enormously in the early post-war years, and lasted many years. She was particularly friendly with Betty Thompson and Marjorie (Madge) Davidson, whose husbands had both served with the 2/4th Machine Gunners alongside Edna's.<sup>17</sup> Captain George Alan Jack Thompson had been executed by the Japanese shortly after the fall of Singapore, and Thomas Davidson died in September 1943 while a POW in Thailand.<sup>18</sup> Edna, Madge and Betty met socially outside of Guild activities, and attended dances together.<sup>19</sup>

Ethel May Jones enjoyed the weaving too. Originally from the goldfields, Ethel had worked in a Kalgoorlie munitions factory during the war. Her youngest child was just a baby when she received the news that her husband had been killed on 3 January 1944. After the war, she moved to Perth. She joined the Guild, but had little spare time after caring for five children and working at Boans, and she was unable to continue with the weaving. She was initially granted a six-month suspension from studies in a letter dated 20 July 1948, but a letter dated 5 July 1949 indicated that she had not returned.

Mindful of its aim to help widows, many of whom had young children, the Guild investigated the possibility of setting up a nursery or kindergarten in the city. The kindergarten was to be of service to the women who were working or training full time, and to those who wanted to leave their children for a short time while shopping.<sup>20</sup> The project never eventuated, and during school holidays, weavers were encouraged to bring their children to the Guild rooms, where Muriel Jones minded them during weaving classes.<sup>21</sup>

One of the women to undertake the course, Peggy Walker, showed a particular aptitude for weaving. Although she had no previous experience, she had always enjoyed using her hands. As a teenager in the Depression, Peggy taught herself to cut down clothing to create new items. At seventeen, she taught herself to knit and later she started doing needlework. During the war, Peggy had worked for the Red Cross at the Repatriation Hospital, teaching a variety of handicrafts to bed-ridden returned servicemen. These included using small looms to make scarves and ties, but that had been the extent of her weaving

skills until she joined the Guild, where she discovered she was in her element: 'I loved it. Absolutely enjoyed it.'<sup>22</sup>

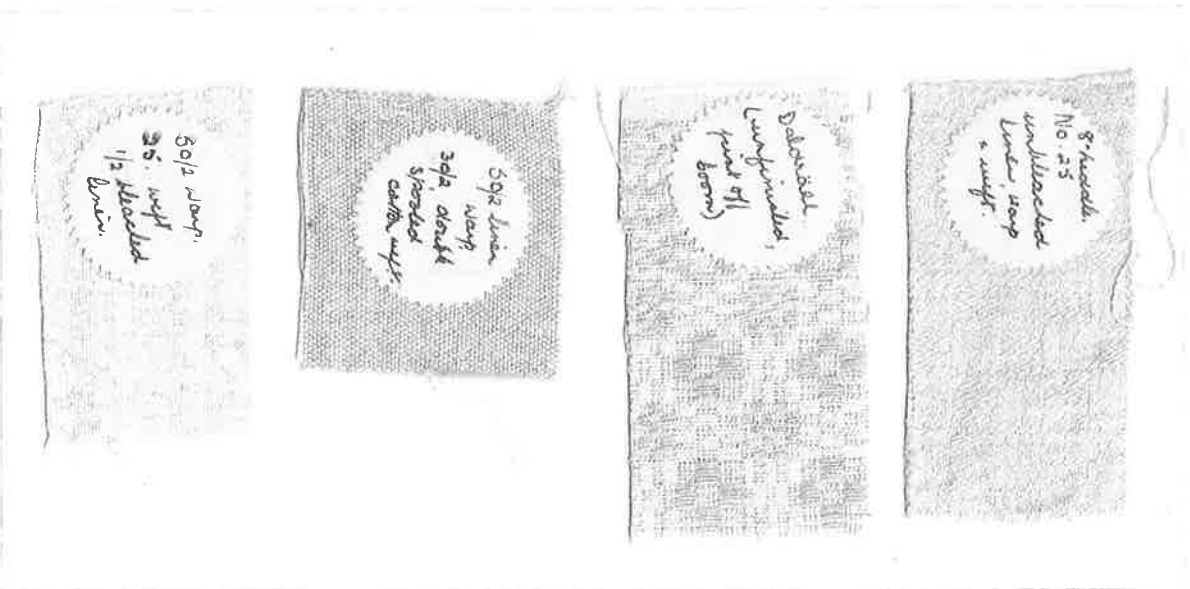
After Peggy completed the basic course, the Guild proposed sending her to Melbourne to attend an advanced weaving class.<sup>23</sup> The plan was that upon completion she would replace Kitty Gahan, who could then return to Victoria. Approval was not immediately forthcoming from the Department of Reconstruction, so the Guild invited Peggy to be a student teacher in the interim.<sup>24</sup> Authorisation for further training finally came through in September 1947, and Peggy immediately left for Melbourne, while the other women continued under Kitty's instruction.<sup>25</sup>



Community groups commonly invite a person of note to become their patron, as a way of raising the profile of their organisation within the wider community. In May 1947, Mrs Dyson had proposed, and vice-president Madge Anketell seconded, that the Guild invite Lady Clara Mitchell, wife of Lieutenant Governor Sir James Mitchell, to be the War Widows' Craft Guild patron in Western Australia. A woman with a long-term interest in community affairs, Lady Mitchell was already involved in a number of organisations, including the Red Cross, the Country Women's Association (CWA), the Girl Guides and Silver Chain. Moreover, she understood the pain of losing loved ones. Her son Gerald had been killed in the First World War, and her only daughter, Jean Anketell, who was also Madge Anketell's sister-in-law, had died in 1946.<sup>26</sup>

When Lady Mitchell replied to the invitation, she was convalescing following a heart attack. It is unknown whether her family connection to Madge Anketell influenced Lady Mitchell's response, but she agreed to take on the role in spite of her illness. She promised to visit as soon as her health improved. Guild members were delighted,<sup>27</sup> and her acceptance established a precedent of asking wives of successive state governors to be the Guild patron.

Just as Lady Mitchell's association with the Guild began, Marjorie Learmonth's ended, for she married Lieutenant Colonel Leslie Le Souef, with whom she had been friends since before the Second World War. During the war, Le Souef had trained and commanded the 2/7th



Weaving samples.  
(Courtesy of Peggy Litchfield)

Australian Field Ambulance. After the Australians were forced to surrender on Crete in May 1941, he survived four years in German prisoner-of-war camps where he used his knowledge of the Geneva Convention to challenge guards and save the lives of many. He finally returned to Australia in February 1946, renewed his friendship with Marjorie and began courting her.<sup>28</sup>

When Marjorie and Leslie married on Saturday 25 October 1947 at St Georges Chapel in Crawley, the Guild presented them with a gift of weaving that included a finely woven tablemat by Peggy Walker. Marjorie's remarriage meant that the Department of Repatriation no longer considered her to be a war widow.<sup>29</sup> As the War Widows' Guild constitution stated that only war widows could be members, she was required to resign from her role as state president and her membership of the organisation she had helped to establish. Nevertheless, Marjorie remained interested and concerned about the Guild and its members, as did her husband Leslie, now a surgeon at Royal Perth Hospital. On one occasion, he assisted a war widow whose child needed an operation she could not afford, by arranging a payment plan and conducting the surgery. The operation was a success, and the widow repaid the debt as agreed. Upon receiving the final payment, Leslie handed the woman an envelope. Inside was the amount she had repaid him, which he now returned to her in full.<sup>30</sup>

With Marjorie's departure from the Guild came the task of electing a new president. This fell to the Guild council, which met every three months and consisted of the executive committee plus additional members interested in the broader decision-making processes of the organisation. At the council meeting on Friday 7 November 1947, Mrs Rosenberg moved, and Gwen Forsyth seconded, that Winifred Fowler be elected state president.<sup>31</sup>

Winifred Fowler's husband had returned from two wars. Promoted to the position of Captain during the First World War, Hugh Lionel Fowler was wounded twice and eventually returned to Western Australia. While lecturing at Claremont Teachers College he met Winifred (née Finch), who was undertaking her teacher training, and they married in 1922. After studying in London for both a Diploma in Education and a PhD in Psychology, Fowler established the Psychology Department at the University of Western Australia

My dear Mrs Vasey,  
 I have only just  
 discovered that I should have had  
 you - but was well so very  
 pleased to read of your most  
 deserved recognition for all you  
 have done for so many women in  
 Australia. I'm proud so many  
 war widows have got so much out  
 of the Guild, you may see they could  
 ever give local. At last - even mothers  
 gain having an association with surge

Marjorie Le Souef (formerly Learmonth) maintained contact with the Guild after her marriage. Here she congratulates Jessie Vasey on her OBE in 1950. [VFP, MS3732, NLA]

(UWA).<sup>32</sup> He enlisted in the Second World War in 1941, but was soon discharged due to bronchitis and asthma attributed to his First World War service.<sup>33</sup> Undererred, he re-enlisted in May 1942 to start the Australian Army Psychology Service in Melbourne. He was promoted to the position of major, but in November he again retired due to ill health.<sup>34</sup> He returned to his wife and three children, and his academic work at UWA until his premature death on 27 May 1946.<sup>35</sup>

Not long after her husband's death, Winifred was forced to examine her own mortality when she was diagnosed with a possibly cancerous growth in her breast. She underwent a mastectomy, although the lump was subsequently discovered to be benign. During the operation a lymph node was cut, causing long-term swelling in her arm, and later she suffered further ill-health resulting in several hospital stays. Although not physically robust, Winifred Fowler was a gregarious



Winifred Fowler  
[Courtesy of Beryl Haneman]

person who enjoyed the company of others and welcomed many into her home. She took in boarders to supplement her pension, mostly university students or high school students from the country. Well educated and widely read, she was often called on to assist her friends' children with their homework. Evenings were often punctuated by the phone ringing and the caller asking, 'Winnie, can you help me with this?'<sup>36</sup>

In accepting the position of state president, Winifred now broadened her sphere of influence and assistance. One of her first tasks was to attend a national conference in Melbourne in November 1947 with representatives from other state guilds. Peggy Walker, still in Melbourne for her advanced weaving course, accompanied her.

At the conference, members shared a 'growing belief' that there was strength in unity and were hopeful that by 'combining the Guild and fighting as one body' they would 'eventually get somewhere in raising the low standard of living which the government offer[ed] as compensation' for their husbands' lives.<sup>37</sup> Delegates examined and made amendments to a draft national constitution, which stated in part that:



Winifred Fowler (right) with her daughters, Beryl and Margaret.  
[Courtesy of Beryl Haneman]

*The objects of this Federal body are to discuss and determine the general policy of the Guilds; to deal with such matters as may be referred to it by any State Guild or Guilds; and to control the activities listed hereunder, subject to the fact that the Federal Executive shall have power to delegate authority to each State Guild to deal with the appropriate Commonwealth authority on State matters. And to follow the original purpose: 'To watch over and protect the interests of war widows.'*<sup>38</sup>

Membership was discussed, in particular whether First World War widows should be accepted as members. One of the concerns was that financial assistance provided to the War Widows' Guild from the Department of Reconstruction was only available to Second World War widows. Yet any work undertaken by the Guild, such as opening a hospital, would mainly serve those from the First World War, many of whom were older and experiencing ill health. The widows from that earlier war had also suffered greatly, but were without such a leader as Jessie Vasey to fight for their interests. Furthermore, some state guilds already welcomed First World War widows; it would be difficult to

exclude them. Conference delegates eventually agreed to accept First World War widows as associate members, with all entitlements apart from the ability to hold office or vote, with an exception made for those who were already full members prior to the conference.<sup>39</sup>

When it came to governance, a national council would comprise a federal president, honorary treasurer, honorary secretary, state presidents, and one other representative from each state. In selecting a federal president, Jessie Vasey was the obvious candidate; it is difficult to imagine anyone standing against her. The possibility of a national patron was discussed, and it was agreed to write to Her Royal Highness Princess Marina, Duchess of Kent, after seeking permission from the federal government. She too was a war widow; her husband, the Duke of Kent, was killed in an air crash in 1942, while on active service. Princess Marina accepted the invitation to be patron, a special privilege as it was unusual for a member of the royal family to become patron of a new organisation.<sup>40</sup>

Other issues pertinent to forming a federal body and developing a national identity were raised. The word 'craft' was dropped from the name, and there was discussion as to whether 'association' should replace 'guild', but it was felt that the word 'guild' had greater meaning.<sup>41</sup>

Visiting the conference on the second day, Senator Dorothy Tangney participated in a discussion about medical benefits and the availability of facilities for war widows in repatriation hospitals, formerly only for returned soldiers. Dorothy Tangney said that she thought Minister Barnard and the repatriation authorities were willing for war widows to use repatriation hospitals provided they used existing medical staff; it would be seen as a slight on hospital staff if widows chose their own doctor. She agreed to discuss the issue of tuberculosis and other chronic cases with Minister Barnard, and, shortly after the conference, she wrote confirming that she was personally taking up the case with him.<sup>42</sup> In mid-February 1948, Senator Tangney fulfilled her promise,<sup>43</sup> and that same month, three war widows with tuberculosis were admitted to Hollywood Hospital.<sup>44</sup> Senator Tangney then visited the Guild on 27 February to address the weaving students and executive committee, who thanked her for her kindness in approaching the minister.<sup>45</sup>

Soon after that, Winifred Fowler took three months' leave due to her own hospital admission.<sup>46</sup> In her absence, Gwen Forsyth took on

the role of chairing meetings, and attended the federal conference in June, where issues affecting war widows nationally were discussed, including the Canteens Trust Fund and a proposed Widows and Orphans Panel.<sup>47</sup>

During the war, the army, navy and air force each ran service canteens which sold goods to members at just below retail value. Collectively, the canteens raised almost five million pounds by the end of hostilities. In 1947, the government passed legislation that required surplus patriotic and canteen funds to be given to the Repatriation Commission. Sixty thousand pounds was allocated to relief funds for each of the three services. The remainder was consolidated into a single fund, the Canteens Trust Fund, with the aim of providing relief and assistance to ex-servicemen and their children, including a provision for their education.<sup>48</sup> The Canteens Trust Fund began operating on 1 January 1948, with an education committee and a welfare committee formed in each state to oversee the distribution of funds. In Western Australia, Patricia Connor was selected to represent war widows on the education committee. Gwen Forsyth became the war widows' representative on the welfare committee and at the same time agreed to take on the role of welfare officer within the Guild.<sup>49</sup>

The Widows and Orphans Panel was formed to handle war widows' cases, previously dealt with by the Regional Welfare Committee.<sup>50</sup> The panel was made up of three representatives from Legacy and three from the Guild, giving war widows increased authority in decisions regarding their own members. Gwen Forsyth, Winifred Fowler and May Hiatt agreed to represent the Guild on the new panel, and Mollie Hayes took up Gwen's previous position on the welfare committee. Patricia Connor remained on the Canteens' educational committee until November, when Rita Kuring replaced her.<sup>51</sup>

Peggy Walker had returned from her advanced weaving course in time to spend Christmas 1947 with her children on her parents' farm in Serpentine<sup>52</sup> before starting as weaving instructor on Tuesday 3 February 1948. Classes started at approximately 9 am, with the women working through until 3 pm, finishing in time for their children's return from school. Peggy boarded in the city with Marjorie and Leslie Le Souef for several months, and then with another war widow for a year. But she always caught the train home for the weekends, where

her youngest son lived with her elderly parents. She would return to the city on the 6.30 am milk train on Monday morning, or on Sunday afternoon in the winter months. At that time, her older son Graham boarded at Christchurch Grammar School, an expense her job at the Guild made possible.

Beatrice Davey, Wyn Spence and Phyllis Thomas were among those who displayed a talent for the craft. Peggy reflects:

*Some of them took to it, absorbed it, and were really interested. Others thought, oh this is easy, like you might pick up a pair of knitting needles ... they suddenly found, no it isn't easy ... I got a reputation, I'm afraid. I don't tolerate mistakes.<sup>53</sup>*

Peggy believed it was important to set a high standard for the work, something that was crucial when it came to selling the goods. She remembers a conversation she had with one weaving student when she inspected the woman's work and pointed out a mistake.

'Oh, no one will see that,' the woman said.

'You must take it out and do it again,' Peggy told her. 'Then you'll be happy. It will be right.'

'I'm not taking it out.'

'But it's wrong. You can't leave something blatant like that.'

'But I only weave for my friends. They won't look at it.'

'Don't you worry because you've done the work?' Peggy asked.

'No, it's all right.'

Nothing Peggy said could persuade the woman to correct her work, and Peggy refused to help her again.<sup>54</sup>

While many of the weavers, including Peggy Walker, Gwen Forsyth, Beatrice Davey and Phyllis Thomas, learned to weave to supplement their pensions, not all war widows needed the extra income. Eleanor Burnside joined the Guild because of her interest in the weaving, but she was a woman of independent means, having helped run her family's private taxi service for many years. Her husband, Lance Corporal James Wallace, had been killed in the Middle East on 30 January 1941, without ever having the chance to meet his daughter. One of Eleanor's final pieces on the large loom was a rug for a double

bed, which she wove in two pieces in a pattern of navy, red, grey and white tartan. She enjoyed anticipating how long the rug was going to be and measuring out the wool accordingly. Eleanor found weaving to be a stimulating and creative task, with no two pieces the same. She did, however, wonder how it could ever truly be a livelihood, because although pleasurable, it was time consuming, and the materials were expensive.<sup>55</sup>

In an attempt to reduce costs, the Guild sought out materials at wholesale prices. Finished articles, including delicately designed fine linens, were displayed for sale in a small room off the main hall. Unfortunately, the Lord Street rooms were not centrally located and so failed to attract sufficient interest from the public. While Peggy Walker was in Melbourne, the Perth Guild had held a display in the window of Foy and Gibsons in St Georges Terrace, as part of the 1947 Show Week. Following the exhibition, the executive committee agreed that the Guild needed to 'secure a shop in a prominent position as soon as possible' to display goods and take orders.<sup>56</sup>

In May 1948, following an article in the *Western Mail*, the Department of Reconstruction and Training offered the Guild an army hut at their premises in Bazaar Terrace (later the Esplanade). No rent would be charged, but the Guild would be required to vacate the premises with a month's notice should the hut be needed for other Reconstruction Training purposes.<sup>57</sup> The Guild accepted the conditions and moved from their rooms in Lord Street to their new home on Monday 24 May 1948. But while the army huts in Bazaar Terrace were closer to the city centre than those in Lord Street, they were not particularly suitable as a shop where goods could be ordered, displayed and sold.

To promote their goods, the Guild held an exhibition at Newspaper House in early September 1948, resulting in a large number of orders being taken, especially for travelling rugs. Particularly popular were those made with school crests or initials in the design. These rugs could be made more efficiently on a large loom, so one was purchased, and in the months that followed it was in constant use.<sup>58</sup> Winifred Fowler ordered a rug in Perth College colours, as she had once taught there; it became a family heirloom, and now belongs to her great-granddaughter, who was a student at Perth College. During the final week of September, the Guild participated in the popular Country

Women's Exhibition, an initiative of the CWA. The Guild entered the weaving section with a scarf, an afternoon tea cloth, a set of cotton mats and a set of linen mats. Members also exhibited in the Reconstruction Training Section of the Royal Show.<sup>59</sup>

By October, all full-time weaving students had completed their course, and the school was now open only two days per week for the remaining twenty-two part-time students. Peggy Walker was allocated space in the Guild rooms to weave for herself on days she was not teaching; however, she found herself constantly attending to Guild business. Believing this to be an unfair arrangement, Winifred Fowler suggested that Peggy be paid as a full-time clerk, a proposal Peggy accepted.<sup>60</sup>

Still searching for a shop, Madge Anketell approached Eric Sandover, a member of the prominent Perth family that owned Harris, Scarfe and Sandovers. He invited the Guild to display its weaving in the Hay Street store's front window. Marjorie Davidson's mother, Mrs Rushforth, also offered them a window in her Barrack Street shop, along with a small counter inside for the sale of goods. Those who had displayed work at the Guild's exhibition at Newspaper House were asked to bring in items to be sold.<sup>61</sup> Then, in March 1949, the *Daily News* ran a story about the Guild, resulting in the use, rent free, of a room as a gift shop in Durham House, opposite His Majesty's Theatre in Hay Street. While the Guild was grateful for somewhere to sell their goods, the shop struggled to make a profit. Tucked away on the first floor, its position was still not prominent enough to attract shoppers.<sup>62</sup> In the meantime, weaving classes were due to finish in June, requiring the Guild to vacate the army huts in Bazaar Terrace, and leaving the war widows without a meeting room or space to socialise.<sup>63</sup> The RSL allowed the Guild to use the Supper Room at Anzac House to hold its AGM, but it was not the same as a space of its own.<sup>64</sup>

In an attempt to draw war widows together socially, Winifred Fowler invited the weavers, together with anyone who had ever served on council, to her home in Stanley Street, Nedlands on the evening of Wednesday 9 March 1949. She hoped that small social gatherings would rouse greater interest in the Guild, but there was also a need for a place to hold larger meetings. Winifred suggested the Guild take over the lease of the Esplanade Kiosk, situated on the Esplanade

Reserve and overlooking the Swan River.<sup>65</sup> Originally established in 1880, and known as the Esplanade Recreation Ground from 1885, the large grassy area between the Esplanade and the river was the site of many activities: religious meetings, concerts, and Sunday afternoon soapboxes, hecklers included. It was also a venue for football, rugby, soccer, lawn bowls, tennis and hockey. Significantly, it had been the location of Anzac Day services since 1916, and the VP Day Service in 1945.<sup>66</sup>

The Esplanade Kiosk had been built in 1928 to replace an old grandstand, and its initial purpose was as a tearoom.<sup>67</sup> Unfortunately it had been neglected during the Second World War and was rather rundown, but it was centrally located, with the potential to be a viable business, and would provide the war widows with a suitable meeting space. Winifred Fowler and the Guild's solicitor, Brian Simpson, had already been to see the lessee of the Esplanade Kiosk in August 1948, hopeful of taking over the lease. They returned to the Guild disappointed; there appeared to be no possibility of acquiring the premises, although the Guild minutes provide no reasons for this.<sup>68</sup>

But once Winifred made up her mind, there was no changing it,<sup>69</sup> and she and Madge Anketell continued to pursue the possibility of leasing the Esplanade Kiosk. Eventually, their perseverance paid off. In August 1949, a year after their initial inquiries, the Esplanade Kiosk became available for lease from the Perth City Council. There was a



The Esplanade Kiosk (foreground) and surrounding city buildings.  
[Courtesy of Florence Gordon]

catch: the Guild needed to pay a once-off fee, known as 'key money', of £1100, in addition to its weekly rent.

The Guild had already launched a state-wide appeal for monetary help in June but it was 'apathetically received and the results were very disappointing.' Instead of the £2000 they had hoped for, they collected only £335.<sup>70</sup> Not to be defeated, members gave interest-free loans of amounts from £1 to £50, with the understanding that the Guild would gradually repay the money. In this way, the Guild raised the £1100, and the Esplanade Kiosk lease was theirs.<sup>71</sup> Securing the lease was only the first step, however. There were still weeks of cleaning and renovating ahead of them. 'It was filthy, not just dirty,' Gwen Forsyth reminisced years later:

*Talk about 'Seven maids with seven mops' – we used more than mops. We scrubbed and scraped, we scoured, we cleaned, we oiled and polished, we washed windows and made curtains, we painted all the tea room tables and chairs, we cooked and sewed.<sup>72</sup>*

Gwen Forsyth's son Alan remembers those days well:

*If you can imagine Mrs Heath and my mother and Mrs Heath, who was very delicate and always looked as though if you sneezed shed blow away; there they were with shovels, scraping the floor. It was awful. The change rooms were worse still.<sup>73</sup>*

Although the women raised the 'key money', refurbishment required extra funds. Money from the Lotteries Commission enabled the Guild to furnish the clubroom. The Soldiers Dependants helped equip the kitchen and tearooms, and the Red Cross donated chairs, tables, cupboards and towels. Members of Legacy offered practical assistance, as did members of the 2/28th Battalion. The men, some of whom most likely fought alongside the husbands of Sheila Barron, Rose Heath and Gwen Forsyth, donated their Sunday mornings to do carpentry work.<sup>74</sup>

The Guild officially took over the Esplanade Kiosk as their headquarters on Monday 26 September 1949. They now had a place to store the rug loom, a handcraft shop, a meeting room upstairs,

and tearooms, which they hoped would generate an income. The kiosks first week of business took place in the midst of renovations. It generated £30 profit, while treasurer Rita Kuring requested that 'all expenses be kept as low as possible.'<sup>75</sup>

Everybody needed to pitch in if the business was to prosper. While the Guild was required to employ some paid staff, such as Rose Heath as manager, many more volunteered, especially on weekends and public holidays. Peggy Walker offered to work in the gift shop for half her salary for two weeks from 10 October, at which time she announced her engagement.<sup>76</sup> She continued on until her wedding in January 1950, when Mollie Hayes agreed to take on the role of saleswoman, and to organise what had become an annual exhibition.

Gwen Forsyth willingly scraped the floor with a shovel, and was even prepared to clean toilets, but she was reluctant to wait on tables. 'I will do anything except waiting,' she said.

'Come on,' another woman cajoled, 'we need everybody who is able to help.'

'I'll never make a good waitress,' Gwen insisted.

The other women prevailed upon her until she relented. Her first customer ordered a meat pie and sauce. Returning with her customer's meal, Gwen tripped and the pie flew into his lap.

'You will never do this again,' the other women informed her.<sup>77</sup>



Rose Heath (second from right) with her mother, Louisa May Pollard, son David and daughter Maureen outside the Post Office Building on the corner of Wellington Street and Forrest Place, circa 1947. (Courtesy of David Heath)

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