

WILLIAM EDWIN PIDGEON “WEP” (1909 – 1981)

William Pidgeon condensed so many careers into his lifespan of seventy two years. By 1965 he was fifty six years old when he became one of the founding members of the Lane Cove Art Society. However, he had already experienced many jobs including being a journalist, a cartoonist for the *Daily Telegraph*, an illustrator for the *Australian Women's Weekly* and a newspaper critic for the *Sunday Telegraph*. In these roles he was able to give insightful comments on the social, political and cultural issues of the times. In addition, Pidgeon was also a war correspondent and artist. The War Memorial has over 400 works depicting his World War 2 experiences in Darwin, New Guinea, Borneo and Morotai between 1943 to 1945.

By the 1960's Pidgeon had developed into a very successful portrait painter. He was awarded the Archibald prize three times. In 1958 he entered a portrait of *Ray Walker*, a newspaperman. In 1961 he won with a painting of *Rabbi Israel Porush* and in 1968 he painted the portrait of his neighbour *Lloyd Rees*. He was a finalist many times in both the Archibald and Wynne exhibitions.

Unfortunately Pidgeon suffered failing eyesight in his twilight years not unlike Lloyd Rees. His final portrait was done in 1972 and it was of the third wife of his friend Reinis Zusters. Her name was Venita Salnajs and she was an artist in her own right. However, these examples illustrate the close friendships that existed amongst the artists living in Lane Cove at the time. Their bonds were strengthened through regular drawing nights in the Santry household and sketching with the Northwood group of local artists.

Pidgeon's work is held in many public institutions and private collections. He sadly passed away in 1981 after being struck by a car some years earlier at Northwood.

By Margaret Vickers