

Chapter 9

# Creative Paddington

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Peter McNeil





Margaret Olley, one of Australia's favourite artists, died in July 2011. She had become synonymous with the suburb of Paddington. As if to celebrate her art and personal energy, her estate left the downstairs lights of her home blazing, revealing the bright walls as well as her own artworks, including rooms she made famous by including them as subjects. Olley loved the suburb of Paddington. She could paint, garden and, entertain there from her large corner terrace in Duxford Street. She liked the art crowd as well as the young people working in shops and the working-class people who still lived there. She recalled that, as art students at the old Darlinghurst Gaol in the early 1940s, 'Paddington beckoned ... we knew there was something across beyond the Cutler Footway, but initially we dared not go there'.<sup>1</sup> Within a generation Paddington was teeming with artists and galleries. But the suburb had changed by the time of her death. With Olley's passing, had Paddington's place as the arts hub also passed away?

Creativity embraces literature, art, music, design and many aspects of business, and it also encompasses the everyday and the domestic, the ephemeral acts of cooking, gardening and decorating, as well as the actions of workers employed by others.<sup>2</sup> Creative artists have often been associated with bohemianism, which has shifted meaning and emphasis over time. In the 1890s it might have been bohemian just to be a writer or painter; in the 1920s to attend an 'Arts Ball' semi-clad or dressed in masquerade; by the 1970s much of Paddington debated feminism and the Vietnam War and identified with the counter culture. They lived in share houses or bought a small terrace if they could find the money. The 'musos', actors and DJs of the 1980s and '90s nearly always have a Paddington party story.

The creatives of Paddington today are more likely to run an art space, architecture or design firm, engage in public relations and media, trade commodities, or be retired doctors or lawyers. In the Paddington–Moore Park area today, nearly 20 per cent of employees work in legal and financial services.<sup>3</sup>

But why have so many culturally influential people lived in Paddington? Located conveniently close to the central business district which could be reached by bus, tram and later the train link at Edgecliff station, its mixture of terraced houses, small factories, workshops and warehouses, provided cultural producers – whether they be artists or advertising executives – a range of multi-functional spaces and interpersonal networks.

The Paddington we view today: well-kept, expensive, well-heeled and with many trees, bears little resemblance to the Paddington of just 50 years ago. Paddington was once poor and shabby. Yet it was precisely the flexibility and charm – as well as the affordability – of this almost intact late Victorian streetscape that appealed to musicians, poets, artists, journalists, anarchists and 'free thinkers'. Much of the accommodation was transient and therefore flexible, which was not typical outside the inner city. Paddington's views towards Sydney Harbour or Botany Bay and its partly hilly environment also cannot be overlooked as a factor in its appeal. Anyone with an eye for beauty liked the vernacular architecture of mixed shops and terraced dwellings, and the sense of a slightly seedy Mediterranean hill town. The terrace house roofs run like the lines of a seashell up and down the Paddington hills and ridges, perfectly captured in a late work by Donald Friend. In an ABC documentary for *Four Corners* in 1962 the





**Figure 9.1:** Margaret Olley painting in the rear 'salon' of her Duxford Street terrace, 1987. *Michael Amendolia.*







**Figure 9.2:** Donald Friend, *Still Life with Paddington Landscape*, no date. Watercolour, ink and gouache on paper, 70 x 104 cm. Image courtesy of Sotheby's Australia. © Donald Friend/ Licensed by Viscopy, 2018.



artist Clifton Pugh noted the visual excitement of Paddo with its cast iron and steep roads. It was full of life with the doors open and people chatting in the street. He said that Paddington had become so much fun it was hard to get much work done anymore. Other districts in Sydney such as Surry Hills have a mix of terraced housing and former spaces of artisanal work (albeit with a much higher proportion of light factories, which remained in use well into the 1980s). Glebe and Balmain were closer to the University of Sydney, and as they gentrified had large number of academics, writers and other cultural workers, but no other place in Sydney with the exception of Elizabeth Bay–Kings Cross in the inter-war years has such strong artistic associations as the suburb of Paddington.

The compact nature of the suburb – it can be crossed by foot in about 30 minutes – the density

of the Paddington ‘footprint’, the regular foot traffic through a maze of streets and ‘dunny lanes’, and the concentration of pubs, bars, restaurants, bookstores and galleries created a vital mix of people and ideas. From the late 1960s–1970s the artists, poets and writers were joined by architects, planners, journalists and publicists, from the 1980s by antique dealers and celebrity chefs, and in the 1990s by designers and ‘start-ups’.

### Early creatives

Innovation in 19th century Paddington ranged across a wide variety of artisanal and technological feats which often involved the ‘do-it-yourself’ culture of semi and skilled workers as a result of necessity and at other times the high technical achievements of engineers and builders.

Busby’s Bore, named for its engineer John Busby, for example, was an underground tunnel lined in sandstone that carried water from the Lachlan Swamps, now in Centennial Park, to a reservoir in Hyde Park. It was a major piece of colonial engineering some 3.6 kilometres long and 3 metres high in parts. The simply grooved basalt millstones from Barcom Glen watermill, the first such facility in colonial Sydney, developed by transported convict Thomas West between 1810–1812, near present-day St Vincent’s Hospital, survive in the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences.<sup>4</sup>

TS Mort attempted, but failed, to make an ice factory for the meat export industry in present-day Ice Street. The tracts of sandstone worker-housing (‘Paddington village’) developed to assist in the building of the Victoria Barracks from 1838, included myriad acts of quarry-work, stone-masonry, carpentry and glazing, conducted on a challenging site, mainly by French-Canadian convicts. Many of the famous vernacular men’s



**Figure 9.3:** Millstone, one of two surviving, made of vesicular basalt with dressed face, from a water-powered flour mill, used at Barcom Glen watermill, erected by Thomas West, Paddington, 1810–1812. *Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences. Presented by Mr Edward T West, Mrs EM Loder and Mrs AB Ellis, 1906. Photo: Ryan Hernandez.*

Sydney cabbage-tree hats and public wastepaper baskets were designed and woven in Paddington by the soldiers' wives posted there.<sup>5</sup>

The wealth of the owners of the group of grand Paddington houses such as Juniper Hall, Engehurst, and Sea View Villa was generated by entrepreneurs working in the brewing, newspaper and other industries in the 1830s and '40s. Glenmore Distillery was the first Australian legal distiller (producing gin, rum, port and liqueurs) from 1823 (the site later became Servis Industries and the Hardie Rubber Factory). Paddington later held a Fosters Cycles factory, a coach works (Gordon Street), Marshall's Brewery and Glenmore Tannery and Soap Works.<sup>6</sup> As a contrast, Asian market gardeners laboured in the 'Chinese Gardens', marshy and increasingly polluted

grounds at the bottom of Cascade Street. The land was resumed after 1891, reputedly 'in the interest of public health'.<sup>7</sup>

In the last third of the 19th century, Paddington housed a great many artisanal workshops. A number of professional photographers had their studios in Paddington. The photographer Alexander Brodie (b 1818) was a successful creator of stereoscopic views of Sydney with his studio in Sutherland Street from 1882 to 1891.<sup>8</sup> Well-known professional photographer Francis Whitfield Robinson, who photographed landscapes for the Duke of Edinburgh on his Australian tour in 1867, conducted a studio in Sarah Street in 1883–84.<sup>9</sup> William Francis Roberts ran a photographic studio in Paddington 1884–85 and artist Dorothy Hill, an illustrator, lived in Underwood Street in the 1890s.



**Figure 9.4:** Violin, wood, detail, made by Alfred Walter Heaps at his 46 Oxford Street Paddington workshop, 1905, printed label inside; 'Alfred Walter Heaps, maker Sydney NSW Date 1905 No.54'. *Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences Collection. H8580.*





Dressmakers ran small businesses from their front rooms;<sup>10</sup> and drapers, hosiers, gloves, hatters, mercers, shoemakers and hairdressers engaged in their trades. A musical instrument maker, Alfred Walter Heaps (1854–1906), arriving in Sydney from Leeds in 1876, made some of the finest Australian violin family instruments at his 46 Oxford Street workshop.

In the inter-war years of the 20th century Paddington contained 'a lot of small manufacturing businesses employing people doing repetitive work in presses, lathes and assembly work'.<sup>11</sup> Such skills came in useful in creating billy carts for the annual Centennial Park race, in which the 'Pride of Paddo' c 1940 was many times the winner. Home-made of water pipe and a bicycle handle with a silver-painted tin body, it frequently beat the professional vehicles that also competed; a symbol of working-class ingenuity over the shop-bought toys belonging to the 'toffs' of Centennial Park and the City.<sup>12</sup>

#### SCIENCE AND LITERATURE

A wide spectrum of creative thinkers and writers were brought up in or lived in Paddington over the years: after all, Paddington was presented by its 19th-century advocates as one of the best laid-out and connected suburbs in Sydney and it had a largely middle-class and comfortable population until the Great Depression.<sup>13</sup> Literacy was supported from an early date. The Australian Subscription Library received a Land Grant from Governor Darling opposite the barracks. Literary events such as readings of William Shakespeare and Edgar Allan Poe were hosted by the Woollahra and Paddington Literary Society in the 1860s.<sup>14</sup> The feminist, social reformer and writer Rose Scott lived at the now demolished Lynton, 294 Jersey Road,

between 1880 and 1925, where her Friday night salon included the author Miles Franklin. Emeline Carter, a soprano, lived in Cambridge Street.<sup>15</sup>

Scientists, doctors and psychologists also lived in the area, many with extraordinary lives. Walter Frederick Gale of Paddington discovered seven new comets and promoted the science of astronomy. Norman Haire (1892–1952) an Australian-Jewish doctor and sexologist (who departed Australia 1919–40) grew up opposite Paddington Town Hall at Morepo, 255 Oxford Street. Inspired by the writings of sexologist Havelock Ellis, between the wars he was considered one of Britain's foremost commentators on sex and birth control.<sup>16</sup>

Writers have been very prominent in Paddington. Ethel Turner lived in Erang at 465 Oxford Street, Paddington, where she had moved in 1881 as a child; she and her sister Lilian started the literary magazine *Parthenon* there and she famously published *Seven Little Australians* in 1894.

Literary figure Bertram Stevens, co-founder of the major periodicals *Art in Australia* and *The Home*, lived at 65 Glenmore Road in the late 1890s.<sup>17</sup> Kylie Tennant, famous for her word pictures of Depression life and the contrasts of rich and poor lived at 178 Windsor Street.<sup>18</sup> Novelist Dorothy Hewett lived in a room at 25 Moncur Street Woollahra in 1949 (later described in the poem *In Moncur Street*). Her 1959 novel *Bobbin Up* includes the subject of sisters living in an attic on Oxford Street, surrounded by the allure of nearby modernity but the trappings of a down-at-heel Victorian setting:

Oxford St lapped them round with promises, lured them with impossible dreams ... the whirl of lights, the purr of cars, the distant, velvety roar of the city, haloed with gold ... old, two-storey semis, scabrous



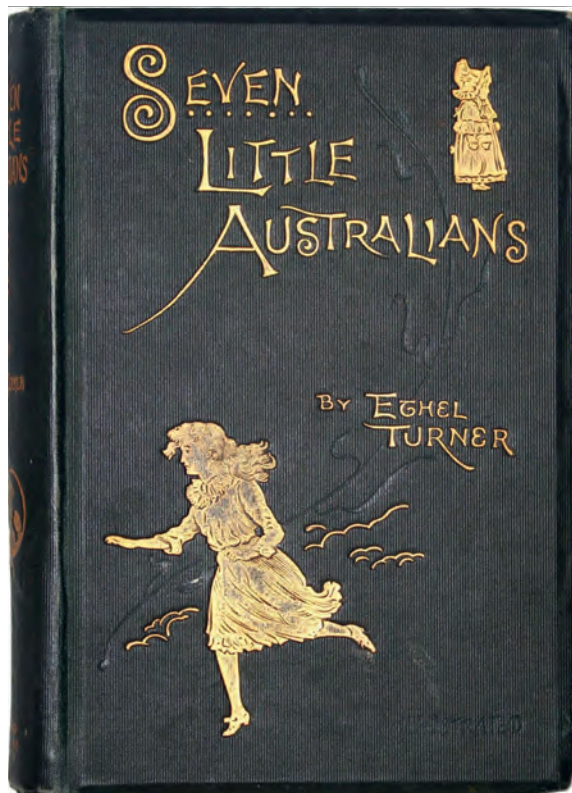
with flaky plaster, dim with paperwork baskets of asparagus fern & baked geraniums. The tattered, rusty lace of an iron balcony curved over the street ...

Other famous writers including AB Paterson, Dorothea Mackellar and Kenneth Slessor lived in adjacent Woollahra. The poet Mary Gilmore lived at 96 Glenmore Road around 1916.<sup>19</sup> Cyril Pearl (1904–87), who was an editor of the *Daily Telegraph* and then the *Sunday Telegraph* from 1936 to 1941, lived part of his life in Paddington. Well before artists arrived in the area from the mid-1950s, a significant ‘back story’ of creatives existed in Paddington – people working across visual, literary, journalistic, craft, science and musical industries.

### Bohemian culture

Most of the Bohemians of 1920s and 1930s Sydney lived and socialised in lodgings near Central Station, in the flats of Kings Cross or boarding houses of Woolloomooloo. The terrace house was described by many of them in negative terms, as repetitious and ominous.<sup>20</sup> The ‘Alps of Darlinghurst’, as poet Kenneth Slessor dubbed the area, is visible from parts of Paddington, a reminder of how the quarters of a city are linked to others in both everyday life and also the imagination.

Famous eccentrics grew up in and frequented Paddington. Les Robinson (1886–1968), writer, was born there, later becoming infamous for inhabiting harbour-side caves. The major Australian Symbolist poet Christopher Brennan (1870–1932) lived at several addresses in Paddington.<sup>21</sup> He was also a University of Sydney lecturer, orator and one of the ‘wonders of Sydney’, with a strong interest in psychology and sexuality; an alcoholic and complex personality, he died in poverty. One of his



**Figure 9.5:** Ethel Turner, *Seven Little Australians*, 1903 edition, cover design. Turner lived in Oxford Street before she published *Seven Little Australians* in 1894.



poems refers to the contrast between his life and the view down towards the modest Chinese gardens adjacent to Rushcutters Bay, making use of the racist language of the day:

This house of ours is pitch'd upon  
the utmost spur of Paddington  
poking its nose among the Chows  
that till their cabbages in rows  
where rushes erst were cut and reeds.

### Lure of the inner city

Paddington residents always had a strong sense of place, whether they were artists, writers or everyday people. A resident from the 1930s recounted the feel of Paddington thus:

With gentle slopes leading down to the Harbour foreshores, Paddington was ideally provided with a dress circle setting to view the construction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. She was fairly nonchalant about it – after all – she had Centennial park for her front garden and Victoria Barracks to defend her against the ‘Razor Gang Push’ who were making their nasty presence felt in adjoining suburbs – too close for comfort.<sup>22</sup>

Oral histories of Paddington describe a suburb that was once very rough but also enterprising. It included a network of sly grog shops and premises for illegal betting and prostitution including notorious razor gang leader Tilly Devine who ran various brothels in Paddington as well as Surry Hills. Following the Depression, men hawked chokos in billy carts and sold rabbits and self-caught sea-fish door to door.<sup>23</sup> Men and women ran illegal ‘SP’ booking shops from terrace houses and two-up games were conducted near the rubbish

pits of Trumper Park. Many locals walked to work. The low-lying parts of the Paddington basin near Boundary Street held numerous light industries: ‘Lustre Hosiery’ manufacturing silk stockings, ‘Zyp’ soft drinks in Roylston Street, the Yellow Cab Company garage and workshop and Advanx Tyres in Neild Avenue (the latter now upmarket apartments). There were many tensions in the Paddington of the day: when in the 1930s a Russian national opened a hairdressing shop in Oxford Street that undercut other traders’ prices, a brick was thrown through the window every night until the discounting stopped.<sup>24</sup>



**Figure 9.6:** Dulcie Deamer, Paddington resident, novelist and bohemian, in her attire for the Artists’ Ball, 1923. Photo: Swiss Studios. State Library of New South Wales.

**Figure 9.7:** Portrait of Christopher Brennan smoking a pipe. Black and white photograph, no date. National Library of Australia. Trove <[trove.nla.gov.au/work/20287356](http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/20287356)>.



Since at least the time of Henry Lawson the Australian inner city had been presented as a melancholy space, with reference to the poverty, repetition and dehumanisation of industrial society. Christopher Brennan wrote of inner city Sydney thus:

The yellow gas is fired from street to street  
past rows of heartless homes and hearths unlit,  
dead churches, and the unending pavement beat  
by crowds – say rather haggard shades that flit ...<sup>25</sup>

The inner city looked a bit of a mess. In the 1950s–1960s Paddington had few trees, many buildings were poorly maintained, with peeling paint, dilapidated plaster ornaments and enclosed balconies. Patrick White's *The Vivesector* (1970), although not set specifically in Paddington, painted a word picture of the urban condition in his typically acerbic fashion:

Here the clothes-lines and corrugated iron took over; ladies called to one another over collapsing paling fences. There was a mingled smell of poor washing, sump oil, rotting vegetables, goatish male bodies, soggy female armpits.

Clive James, who went to the Paddington campus of Sydney Technical High School in Albion Street in the 1950s described it in similar terms: 'The only paint (on terrace houses) on show was kack brown and the cast iron balconies looked like scrap metal waiting to be taken away.'<sup>26</sup> Paddington resident, activist and writer Patricia Thompson described the new pastel colours introduced by post-war migrants in the following way:

I well remember the Lebanese passion for mauve.  
Other new owners ripped off the ironwork from the

balcony and replaced it with asbestos sheeting or plywood ... Such houses looked like respectable old ladies done up as tarts, though the kaleidoscope effect was considerably more cheerful than the previous monotonous brown with black trim.<sup>27</sup>

In photographs of the 1960s and 1970s the area looks stark and quiet, with light or infrequent vehicular traffic. Artists capitalised on these streetscapes with their 'ready-made surrealism', as some of them had done previously in the neglected gold rush towns of the Central Tablelands, often depicting the suburb as unpeopled or populated by shadows. Sali Herman's street scenes of Paddington in the 1940s suggested the quiet solidarity of working-class neighbours.

Paddington was often depicted as fairly empty of people, a complete contrast to today's bustling cafes and shops. The black and white photographs of David Moore from the 1940s focus on the scenographic Paddington streetscape with its abstract contrasts of light and shade. Douglas Dundas, head teacher of painting at nearby East Sydney Technical College from 1938–60 painted a surreal dream-like streetscape around 1960 with a woman walking in her nightgown through empty streets.<sup>28</sup> He may well have been recalling the many local characters, including an old lady in Underwood Street who had not left her home in years and was visited regularly by her son bringing food, and a disabled boy wheeled around the area by his mother in a home-made contraption.<sup>29</sup> This atmosphere with connotations of Jungian psychology (emphasising the unconscious mind) pervaded much of the art of the so-called 'Charm School'. David Strachan, a painter of surreal and melancholy landscapes and still-lives had returned from many years of studying Carl Jung in London





**Figure 9.8:** Sali Herman, Saturday Morning 1948. Oil on plywood. 38.8 x 51.4 cm. National Gallery of Australia. NGA 72.472. © Sali Herman/ Licensed by Viscopy, 2018.





and Zurich in 1960, and lived at addresses in Paddington Street from 1963 until his untimely death in a car accident in 1970.<sup>30</sup> Photographs of Strachan's terrace depict his collection of art and antiques in the gently restored front rooms and kitchen. Margaret Olley, who greatly mourned his death, was permitted to continue using his terrace as her painting studio and she painted some beautiful still-lives there. Strachan's residence remains in the family and is relatively intact.

Residents of historic Juniper Hall on Oxford Street (then cut up into 14 flats) included members of the art world including art historian Daniel Thomas, gallerist Kerry Crowley, curator Nicholas Draffin, Asian art specialist Jackie Menzies, environmentalist David Mussared, cartoonist Bruce Petty, architect Francesca Morrison and journalist Julie Rigg. Guy Morrison, journalist, lived nearby.<sup>31</sup> Interviewees recollect the older set of artists, even if they did not know them personally. This sense of the generations interacting is important in Paddington, which is often recollecting as a series of layers or palimpsests.

Jackie Menzies, former curator of Asian art at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, notes that the 'artistic' nature of Paddington as well as its flexible and transient housing attracted young people there in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>32</sup> In many cases artists, writers, activists and journalists moved into the area through their contacts and friendship networks. Paddington provided modest but flexible accommodation with good northern light favoured by artists, cool afternoon breezes in a period before air-conditioning, easy access to inexpensive corner shops, pubs and bars, a short ride to the city, as well as a European sense of foot traffic. TV celebrity Jeannie Little commented that Paddington was surprisingly safe by the 1970s. The trendy inhabitants were mixed up with everyone else

including bikers and 'little old ladies'; the suburb 'brings people down to earth', she noted.<sup>33</sup> The flexibility of the shop-front terraces (many owners lived behind or above their shops) saw some artists exhibit their work in their own premises: the Patricia Englund Gallery at 2 Cascade Street in the 1960s showed Patricia and Ivan Englund's important stoneware pottery, bowls, wine jars and blossom jars with their Japanese tenor.<sup>34</sup>

During the first few decades of the 20th century, many creative individuals found the stringent censorship and the minimal arts infrastructure in Australia too challenging. Others such as artist and curator Bill Wright later found Australia 'narrow-minded, passively racist and in compound historic denial' (concerning the plight of Indigenous Australians).<sup>35</sup> Many felt they had to leave the country and become expatriate. They included the writer Patrick White and the artist Roy de Maistre. However, around 1965 many creative practitioners began to return home from centres including London, Paris and New York. A great many artists chose to live in Paddington from the 1950s, and many fortunate enough to have purchased a terrace before the 1990s still do so. Susan Baird, a Hill End artist, resides in George Street. Ceramicist Roswitha Wulff has lived in her Prospect Street terrace for 45 years. She built a gas-fired kiln in the back yard and the noise of her preparing clay prompted her neighbours to enquire if she were a 'female butcher'.<sup>36</sup>

Returning expatriate Australians often chose to live in Paddington. The glamorous Alleyne Clarice Zander (1893–1958), painter and gallerist, had been on painting trips in Europe with Olley and Strachan and lived in Paddington from 1956 after returning from London. Peggy Glanville-Hicks (1912–90) was a leading cosmopolitan notable in world music,

artistic collaboration and criticism and one of the first women to compose opera (*Sappho*). She studied folk, Greek and Hindu music among others and returned to Australia in 1975 after living mainly in Greece and the USA. Her Paddington residence at 45 Ormond Street was bequeathed 'as a haven for composers'<sup>37</sup> within the Peggy Glanville-Hicks Composers' Trust.<sup>38</sup>

National Art School students lived nearby in the impressive but dilapidated three part terrace Sobraon (17–21 Ormond Street). The area was vital and not as predictable as other parts of Sydney; energised by the dynamism of the young and the eccentric. The Claremont Theatre Group of Melbourne performed in old churches in Paddington circa 1973<sup>39</sup> and Carnaby Street and 'mod' fashions were de rigueur for many.

Many Paddington artists trained or worked at East Sydney Technical College, later to become the National Art School, behind the old Court House at Taylor Square. Godfrey Miller, who taught life drawing at 'Tech', had a private income and lived as a near recluse in Paddington. Others worked at nearby Alexander Mackie, later College of Fine Arts and now UNSW Art and Design. Paddington as an inner city area with like-minded people created a comfortable zone in which to live and thrive. They generally rebelled against what Kirkpatrick has called the 'Anglophilic suburbanism' that was seen to characterise Australian cities.<sup>40</sup> Instead they liked the historic architecture, proximity to the city and the visible lives taking place through open doors and windows.

### Mid-century art

Between 1959 and 1966 nearly half of Paddington terraces changed hands.<sup>41</sup> Corner shops and stone-built terraces in the area around Gipps



**Figure 9.9:** Peggy Glanville-Hicks at her Ormond Street home in 1982. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 December 2011.



Street (some quite large) began to be renovated as a new building type: the art gallery. The 1960s Sydney art scene saw a massive expansion of commercial art dealing following a period in which a few large galleries such as Macquarie and David Jones Gallery dominated the trade. The rise of art dealing, the concept of art as investment, and a shift of private galleries from the city to Paddington created a wholly new atmosphere in the area as an 'arts hub'. By the 1980s 40 private galleries had been established, although some were very small. At the time of writing there are about 20 commercial art galleries in Paddington.

Viennese-born Rudy Komon, knowing his buyers were in the Eastern Suburbs, opened his famous eponymous gallery on the site of a former wine shop (appropriate as he was also a great wine expert) at the corner of Paddington Street and Jersey Road in 1959. He pioneered in Australia the concept of retainers to keep artists bonded or loyal to one dealer. Founder of the Wine & Food Society of NSW, he provided much of the continental bon vivant image of Paddington and its art scene, which continues to this day in the ambience and art collection of Lucio's restaurant.

Another prominent Paddington gallery was established by Barry Stern in 1961 at 28 Glenmore Road (close to the Oxford Street intersection). Geoffrey Legge of the Watters gallery (run with Frank Watters) was an accountant inspired to enter the profession after living next door to Barry Stern. Nearby at 21 Gipps Street the highly influential Gallery A was established in 1964 by Max Hutchinson, Rua Osborne and Ann Lewis. The gallery specialised in hard-edge, abstract expressionism and related forms and represented emerging forces such as Rosalie Gascoigne, Janet Dawson, John Firth-Smith, Richard Dunn, Robert

Klippel, Frank Hinder, Ralph Balson and Peter Powditch. Hutchinson would later act as an agent for the sale of Jackson Pollock's *Blue Poles* to the National Gallery of Australia.

Arts patron Chandler Coventry opened his avant-garde Coventry Gallery at 38 Hargrave Street in 1970 and moved to purpose-built premises designed by Rollin Schlicht of Allen Jack+Cottier at 56 Sutherland Street in 1974. Described by James Mollison, the inaugural director of the National Gallery of Australia, as one of the most important collectors of contemporary Australian Art, Coventry represented the formative periods of artists such as Gunter Christmann, Michael Taylor and Dick Watkins.

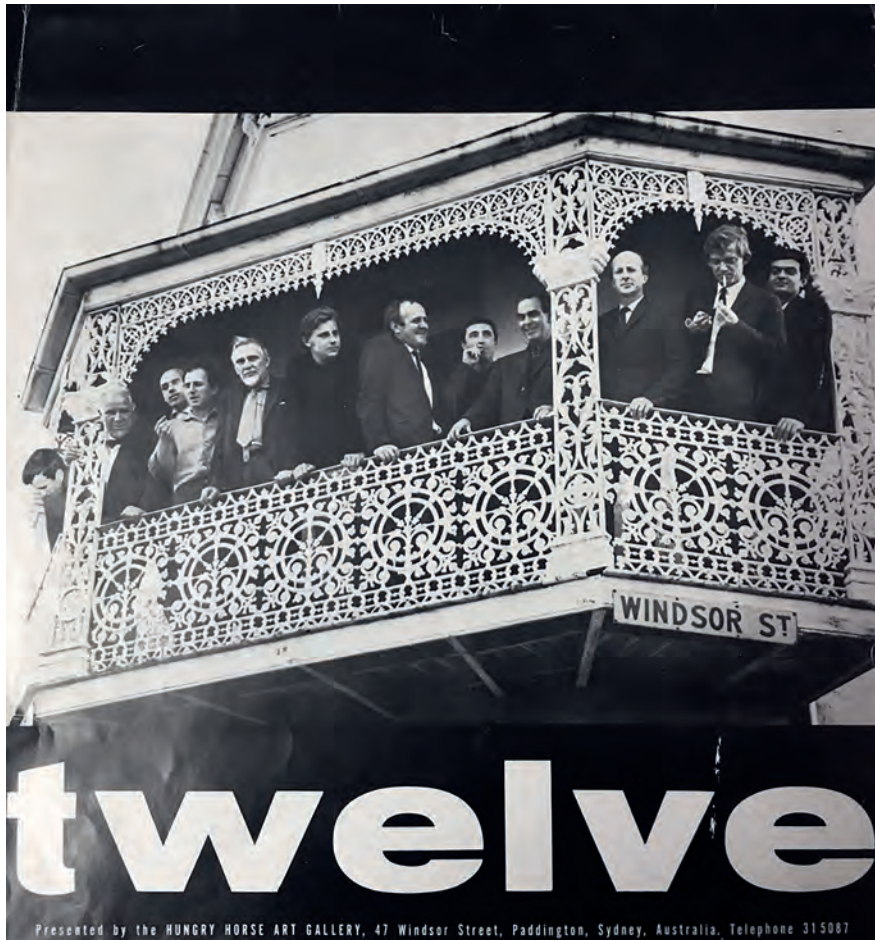
Art was also freely taught in Paddington. The Bakery Art School was managed by Bill (William) Rose, Janet Dawson and John Olsen from 1968–1970 as an alternative to 'tech school', the East Sydney Technical College, now the National Art School. It welcomed young students whose studies were subsidised by the fees paid by wealthier women known as the 'Bay Ladies' (referring to Double Bay, Rose Bay etc). Olsen introduced the students to European artists unfamiliar in Sydney such as Egon Schiele, and cooked European dishes for them once a week. The focus was on disciplined abstraction, with artists such as David Aspden and Peter Upward coming in to teach.<sup>42</sup>

Another Austrian émigré was Gisella Scheinberg, who ran the Holdsworth Galleries (1969–96) in a former factory in nearby Woollahra. In the 1970s she exhibited artists associated with the Sydney 'Charm School'<sup>43</sup> and Hill End, including Donald Friend, Margaret Olley and Jean Bellette. Bonython Galleries, which showed the work of Brett Whiteley, opened first upstairs on the site of the Hungry Horse and later in a larger space in Victoria Street, Paddington from 1967–76. The space was then

**Figure 9.10:** Opening of Colin Lanceley exhibition, Gallery A, Paddington, 1965. *Robert Walker Archive, Art Gallery of New South Wales Archive. AGNSW Gift of the Robert Walker family, 2008. © Robert Walker/Licensed by Viscopy, 2018.*

**Figure 9.11:** William Rose painting at the Bakery life drawing class, Paddington, c 1968–69. *Robert Walker Archive, Art Gallery of New South Wales Archive. © Estate of the Robert Walker family, image courtesy of Thames and Hudson. © Robert Walker/Licensed by Viscopy, 2018.*





adapted as an advertising agency by John Singleton. As Humphrey McQueen notes, many artists also worked for advertising agencies.<sup>44</sup> Clive Evatt opened Hogarth Galleries in Walker Lane in 1972. Originally showing contemporary international art, it later focused on Aboriginal bark paintings as art, not ethnography, and in the 1990s, significant Indigenous contemporary artists including Destiny Deacon.

The Hungry Horse Gallery and Restaurant was iconic in the 1960s as one of the first French restaurants in Sydney, with an avant-garde gallery upstairs, exhibiting the assemblage work of Colin Lanceley as well as the paintings of John Olsen. A photograph of its young artists standing on the gallery's first-floor lace-work balcony sums up the bohemianism of the time. This was also the ethos at Rudy Komon's gallery – although women were not included (Watters Gallery in East Sydney, showed the new feminist artists such as Vivienne Binns).

At gallery openings, artists mingled with new cultural workers and businessmen such as Harry M Miller, who worked in the rapidly expanding public relations (PR) and promotion industry.<sup>45</sup> Public relations, and its self-promotion, continues to maintain a strong presence in contemporary Paddington.

An amusing but telling article of 1974, describing how to spend a theoretical \$10,000 inheritance on art, mentioned the old guard of David Jones and Macquarie Galleries but focused mainly on Paddington. Barry Stern, once a decorator, had made his gallery cosy with 'small tables, exotic chairs, Persian carpets and ...objet's d'art'. At Rudi [sic] Komon's the journalist was served a bottle of good white wine. Stories such as this underscored Paddington's new-found status as chic and smart rather than poor and seedy.

**Figure 9.12:** From left to right: Painters Frank Hodgkinson, Stanislaus Rapotec, Charles Reddington, William Rose, Karl Plate, Colin Lanceley, John Olsen, Leonard Hessing, sculptor Robert Klippel, John Coburn, artist and author Robert Hughes and Emanuel Raft stand on the upper floor

balcony of the Hungry Horse Restaurant and Gallery, 47 Windsor Street at corner of Elizabeth Street (now Lucio's restaurant), Paddington. *Hungry Horse Calendar, 1964, The Australian Galleries.* Image courtesy of Lucio's Restaurant. © Robert Walker/Licensed by Viscopy, 2018.



Shirley Wagner's Wagner Gallery traded at 39 Gurner Street from 1978 until the building was sold in 2015; it is now in Hampden Street.<sup>46</sup> It showed the work of an eclectic group of well-known Australian artists such as Arthur Boyd, Charles Blackman and Pro Hart, as well as modern American art such as Andy Warhol. The mix suggests the way in which Paddington business people have responded to very different tastes and market flows.

Galleries Primitif, on the Paddington side of Jersey Road at number 174 was run from 1966 until 2015 by one of Australia's early professional women pilots, Senta Taft-Hendry, who traded in New Guinean and other tribal arts, some of which she acquired on her flights there.<sup>47</sup> John Olsen traced a mind map of the topography of the area in his watercolour 'Walking Down Victoria Street, Paddington, 1963'.

Many prominent architects lived in Paddington attracted by its built environment and arts culture and aspects of their work including innovative infill architecture are covered elsewhere in this volume. They include Don Gazzard, who built a prize-winning modern home with his wife ceramicist Marea Gazzard at 88 Hargrave Street in 1975, Terry Dorrrough (architect of Guriganya, a pavilion style house from the late 1970s built on one of the sites of the Progressive School of the same name), Ken Woolley (Woolley House, Cooper Street, 1980 and Stewart Street, 1995), Bill Lucas with Michael Coote (Orange Tree Grove, 8 Bennetts Grove Avenue, an innovative stepped terrace form, 1968) and Andrew Andersons (his own home in Alexander Street, and updates for the Sherman family).

By the 1990s, design firms and start-ups also operated in Paddington. OVO Design (Ruth

McDermott and Rina Bernabei), well known for their innovative electric light fittings, was run from the 52 Regent Street front room of McDermott in 1996.<sup>48</sup> The extremely successful Dinosaur Designs (resin jewellery and ornaments designed and sold at first by art school students Louise Olsen, Stephen Ormandy and Liane Rossler at the Paddington Markets from 1982) has been at the same spot in Oxford Street for many years.<sup>49</sup> The 2000 Sydney Olympics torch and the 'Mount Franklin' water bottle (2003) were designed by D3 design from their Paddington office in William Street.

The Paddington restaurant scene has a long tradition of innovative cooking and smart interior decoration; fine examples have included Claude's restaurant on Oxford Street, established in 1976



**Figure 9.13:** John Olsen, Sydney Art Opening, no date. Image courtesy of Thames & Hudson. © John Olsen/ Licensed by Viscopy, 2018.

and famous for modern French cooking;<sup>50</sup> Lucio's, established in 1983 and notable for fine Italian food and wine (still trading), Oasis Seros (now closed), a 'modern Australian' or French-Asian fusion restaurant opened in 1987 that trained Christine Manfield; Buon Ricordo, modern Italian from 1987 (still trading); and Bistro Lulu, famous for simple French cookery (now closed). Many of the restaurants had their heyday before 1986, when Paul Keating's Labor government introduced a

Fringe Benefits Tax covering business dining expenses and the state government imposed Random Breath Testing. These measures brought the long 'boozy' businessman's lunch to something like a conclusion.<sup>51</sup>

### Artists in residence

Margaret Olley lived in several properties in Paddington including Gurner Street and her well-known Duxford Street residence which



**Figure 9.14:** John Olsen, *Walking Down Victoria Street, Paddington*, 1963, watercolour and gouache on paper. *Image courtesy of Thames and Hudson.* © John Olsen/ Licensed by Viscopy, 2018.

**Figure 9.15:** Sculptor Marea Gazzard at the rear of her residence designed by Don Gazzard, corner Hargrave and Elizabeth streets, 1975. *Photo by Bruce Howard, National Library of Australia.*



she renovated mainly between 1965–68. Olley had bought her terraced property with its small hat factory in the garden for £4000. She could walk up or down the hill to see her many friends and ask the ‘nice boys’ (old-fashioned code for gay men) at the Oxford Street supermarket to save flowers for her to paint.<sup>52</sup> ‘I’m always going up to St Vincent de Paul to find if there’s an odd ginger jar’ she remarked.<sup>53</sup> In some ways this gentle pattern of life still exists for Paddington locals who support their local shops. ‘Mixed business’ corner shops still operate in the area, although they no longer sell stale cakes half-price to school children or single cigarettes (one penny each) as they did during the Great Depression.<sup>54</sup>

Olley bought Duxford Street as an investment to let as flats in order to finance her travels and painting career; a good example of the fact that living in Paddington did not suggest a sedentary lifestyle. Most creative people in the arts move around, to access friendship networks, to gain new insights and inspiration. Olley moved back into the hat factory in the back garden in 1988 but continued to have lettings.

It was Olley who suggested that romantic modernist painter Donald Friend move to Paddington on his return to Sydney from Bali. Friend lived on three occasions in Paddington. From 1962–66 he resided at 1 Hampden Street, drinking and listening to jazz with the artists, filmmakers and journalists of the ‘Paddington Push’ at the Windsor Hotel. At the pub he observed marijuana-smoking youth as well as ‘the jolly fat beer-sodden Paddington ladies’.<sup>55</sup>

Olley’s estate agent later helped Friend find a narrow, detached two-storey house in 1 Belmore Place where he lived from 1984–87. It was selected expressly because it resembled the marooned

19th century townscape of Hill End, the outback artists’ colony near Bathurst, where Friend once owned a miner’s cottage. Cold and drafty, but surrounded by a patch of vacant land where Friend grew flowers and vegetables, the modest Paddington house projected a surreal profile that resembled the paintings of Giorgio de Chirico, the Italian artist who painted marooned buildings in dream-like landscapes.

Like Olley, Friend found beauty in the everyday, buying cheap objects in the local shops to decorate his house and in turn incorporating representations of them into his art.<sup>56</sup> When he had the money, Friend dressed his houses with kelim-rugs, ceramics and tribal art from ‘the antique shops, galleries and junkeries of Paddington’. Friend captured in his watercolours of this period the effect of looking out of the classic first-floor projecting balcony into a canopy of vegetation that became characteristic of Paddington. These balconies with their mandatory wall blocking to the neighbours provide the ‘semi-secluded’ private space that makes the ‘permeable public/private interface’ and spatial divisions of Paddington so interesting.<sup>57</sup>

As with Herman and Strachan before them, Olley and Friend shared an ability to see hidden beauty in the shabby or discarded past. Victorian taste was generally out of favour with the architectural establishment and other tastemakers from the 1910s to the 1950s who preferred early Georgian, Arts and Crafts or Modern architecture. Moreover, most middle-class Australians could not wait to flee the inner city Victorian ‘slums’. However, the interest in mid-to-late Victorian Australia mirrors that of aesthetes abroad, who favoured various revivals of the Baroque and the Rococo. Cecil Beaton had found old Sydney architecture a bit

**Figure 9.16:** Donald Friend, Pears, Avocado and Balcony View, 1984, pen and ink and watercolour, 73.5 x 54 cm. Painted at 1 Belmore Place, Paddington, where Friend resided from 1984–87. *Private collection. © Donald Friend/ Licensed by Viscopy, 2018.*





puzzling and reminiscent of New Orleans when he visited in 1968. 'Rococo' was the very term used by Australian poet, broadcaster and heritage activist John Thompson to describe Paddington in the 1960s.<sup>58</sup>

### Counterculture revival: 1960s and 1970s

Paddington held a fair share of hippies and counter-cultural types. Michael Dransfield, who lived in a loft behind 55A Brown St, composed *Drug Poems* (1970–72) and the narrow footway between 194 and 196 Glenmore Road to Cooper Street was known as 'Marijuana Alley'.<sup>59</sup> Seventy-nine Windsor Street was the setting for Michael Wilding's comic novel *Living Together* (1974), which commented on communal living. As the impetus to publish Australian voices grew, Currency Press was established at 87 Jersey Road in the home of Katharine Brisbane and Philip Parsons in 1971, later operating from 330 Oxford Street.

Other artists congregated closer to the north-east borders of Paddington, much of which was demolished by the commissioner of railways in 1971 to make way for the new Eastern Suburbs Railway, a bus interchange and the Edgecliff Centre. This area was known as 'City Fringe' and was home to artists connected in part with the Yellow House in Kings Cross and Gallery A in Gipps Street. They included Vernon Treweeke (1939–2015), an 'abstract eroticist' or psychedelic painter influenced by his time in swinging London of the 1960s, who returned to Sydney from London in 1966 and lived there around 1968.<sup>60</sup> Treweeke made installation and sound art that resembled 'kaleidoscopic mandalas'; he was later founder of the Nimbin Aquarius Festival in 1973. These were the counter-cultural Paddington residents. Friend's diaries record inter-generational tensions about them.

The poet John Tranter lived at 112 Lawson Street in the late 1960s from where he published the poetry magazine *Transit* (1968–69), which included the work of Bob Ellis and Les Murray. Music singer-songwriter Keith Glass (born 1946), who appeared in the 1969 performances of *Hair* as Berger, describes 'tripping' with a friend and wearing make-up at his Gipps Street parties in the 1960s.<sup>61</sup> Radical journalists such as the political activist and anti-Vietnam war campaigner Wendy Bacon also lived in 'Paddo' in Olive Street, where Germaine Greer and members of the 'Sydney Push' were regular visitors. The anarchist Nestor Grivas ran a type of club in his dug-out cellar in Oxford Street opposite the Rose, Shamrock and Thistle Pub (near present-day UNSW Art + Design). Here Germaine Greer presented an early paper on the clitoral orgasm, communists and social democrats played cards and drank and filmmaker Margaret Fink talked ideas. Frank Moorhouse established the 'Left Club' with strong links to the Builders' Labourers Federation (the BLF) and the Victoria Street protests against the demolition of much of Potts Point. Drugs including marijuana and LSD were sold from the cellar until a police 'bust' ended that period of bohemianism.<sup>62</sup> Paddington therefore was far from being bourgeois or respectable in the 1970s, and encompassed a wide range of bars, clubs and lifestyles.

### Charm school

The image of Paddington that we recognise from real estate advertisements and lifestyle blogs today was very much created by artists who were 'mid-career' in the 1950s and 1960s. There was no common aesthetic among their works; however the art of Sali Herman from the 1930s–50s, that of Margaret Olley and Donald Friend and a number of



illustrators such as Cedric Flower, Cedric Emanuel, and Unk White was frequently reproduced in the popular media. This did much to promote a certain ideal of the Paddington terrace life involving a gentle renovation with minimal interior rearrangement; in contrast to the large-scale rebuilding and interventions that marked the Sydney property market from the 1990s.

Paddington appealed to its residents and many never moved from their homes. The complete list of artists and writers who lived and socialised in Paddington is remarkable. Robert Walker's photographic archive of residents, social events and street theatre in the suburb includes famous artists such as Keith Looby, Janet Dawson and John Olsen and the poets Oodgeroo Noonuccal and Judith Wright.<sup>63</sup> Polish-born Yoram Jerzy Gross (1926–2015), filmmaker and animator of the Australian classics *Dot and the Kangaroo* (feature film 1977) and *Blinky Bill* (1992) lived much of his adult life in Caledonia Street where he ran his studio. Elwyn Lynn, freethinker and artist, lived nearby in Moncur Street Woollahra from 1964–97, very near the building whose facade was taken to represent the flat building in the famous Australian TV drama *Number 96* (Channel 10, 1972–78). Artist Ruark Lewis who works across Indigenous text, performance and installation lives in Bennetts Grove Avenue.

### Post-1980s

By the mid-1980s, two generations of artists were present, although many had left the area as their needs had changed.<sup>64</sup> The older generation of artists living in Paddington included David and Hermia Boyd, Bill Rose, Margaret Olley, Cedric Flower, Robert Dickerson, Louis James and Donald Friend. Former inhabitants included John Olsen,

Charles and Barbara Blackman and Janet Dawson: 'New artists are moving to Paddington, but they often stay only a few years. For most, the area is too expensive.' 'Paddington is still charming', commented Boyd, 'but the old village atmosphere is fading ... Business and University people have supplanted the wharfie and carpenter.'<sup>65</sup> But Boyd did not resent the newcomers, noting that it was 'these newcomers who have preserved much of the village character, saved the terrace houses and prevented the building of units'.<sup>66</sup> 'Art has also become respectable in that time and money has made it so', he concluded. The new buyers who were investors as well as collectors shifted gallery practices. Galleries began to develop 'stables' as well as developing the careers of new artists and sustaining them over time. This created new markets and also the nature of art making, which became professionalised.

Two outstanding gallerists dominated the Sydney art scene in the 1980s and '90s, both in Paddington. They were Roslyn Oxley and Gene Sherman, and Oxley continues to represent artists today. Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery was first established in a light industrial building in MacDonald Street near the Cutler Footway, and later in the lower part of Paddington at Soudan Lane. Oxley has shown some of Australia's most significant contemporary artists, including assemblage artist Rosalie Gascoigne, photographers Bill Henson and Tracey Moffatt, painter Imants Tillers and sculptor Patricia Piccinini. Oxley also has exhibited important international sculpture, installation and mixed media art including the well-known work of queer photographers Robert Mapplethorpe and Pierre et Giles at Mardi Gras time. Her openings were art events in and of themselves, often with live performers (a podium male go-go dancer at Pierre

et Giles), music and people spilling on to the streets, reminiscent of the 'old days' of Paddington when Rudy Komon's events flowed over into the streets and on into the wine bars.

Dr Gene Sherman with curatorial director William (Bill) Wright introduced new standards of research and presentation for contemporary art in a

commercial setting when she directed the purpose-built Irving (later Sherman) Galleries at 1 Hargrave Street from 1989 until 2007. Wright noted that the area between the city and Double Bay (with Paddington as its centre) was known in the art trade as the 'Silk Road', meaning the cradle of commerce, and that it was challenging to run a



**Figure 9.17:** Two women outside shop, Paddington, 1968. Robert Walker Archive, Art Gallery of New South Wales Archive. AGNSW Gift of the Robert Walker family, 2008. © Robert Walker/Licensed by Viscopy, 2018.



gallery elsewhere in Sydney.<sup>67</sup> Sherman Galleries was conducted in a striking new building incorporating a sculpture roof garden (on the site of a former corner shop) designed by architect Victor Berk. Sherman faced challenges in having the contemporary design approved but she was adamant that she 'couldn't use a gallery that used a 19th century model', that is, small rooms and inadequate lighting, nor would she agree to erect a 'mock heritage building' on the site. Although she faced stiff opposition from her neighbour, Mr Xanatides, he quickly became interested in the gallery visitors and proudly welcomed guests to opening night receptions. This is a fine example of the interaction of people from different backgrounds, social classes, places and outlooks that recurs in recollections of 'old' Paddington. In 1992 Sherman opened a second art gallery (Sherman Galleries) in a converted car smash-repair shop in Goodhope Street near the Fiveways, now the location of the Sherman Centre for Culture and Ideas (SCCI), established in 2017.

The Sherman Family Group is housed in the old bakery and its extension on the corner of William and Paddington streets. That this building was previously the headquarters of Deeta Colvin Public Relations, and before that the Bakery Art School, is a fine example of the successful 'barnacle' effect of the re-use of old dwellings and structures in Paddington. It is also an excellent example of the pattern of transformation of many buildings in Paddington from light industry to atelier/gallery to PR/media and in this case, a return to an artistic and social-justice creative use.<sup>68</sup>

Other prominent contemporary galleries in Paddington of the 1990s–2000s included Australian Galleries, Savill Gallery, Gary Anderson, Kaliman Gallery and the Gitte Weise Gallery.<sup>69</sup>

The Australian Centre for Photography, founded in 1974, exhibited and taught photomedia for many years at 72 Oxford Street.

Just because a group of artists moves into an area, it does not mean that they are gentrifiers. Many artists disliked cookie-cutter post-war suburbia. Instead they appreciated patina, or even decay. They enjoyed the contrasts of older white Australians interacting with immigrant communities, their shops and pastimes.

They liked the everyday activities of the housewives, gardeners and handymen of the area. The artists did not necessarily want to see Paddington change. Olley made her views clear in 2001:

For me it's perfect. It's really a workers' area and close to the city and to transport ... Also it's peaceful and quiet. And there are all these little art galleries around the place ... [it's] central to everything I want to do. Other people want to be central to sports activities: my central is the arts.<sup>70</sup>

Flexible, quirky, inventive, once boisterous, somewhat crude but often open-minded, Paddington has flourished from the 19th century to our own times as a creative haven of arts and skills. Paddington retains its allure as a space of inspiration. As we walk its streets and laneways we sense echoes, scents, smells and shadows of the past, the hidden beauty that many generations of poets, writers and artists have passed down to us today.<sup>71</sup>



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- 14 Unk White and Patricia Thompson, *Paddington Sketch Book*, Rigby Ltd, Sydney, 1971, p 50.
- 15 Woollahra Street Tree Masterplan, Woollahra Municipal Council, 2014.
- 16 Woollahra Municipal Council, Register of Significant Trees, <[www.trove.nla.gov.au/version/29506106](http://www.trove.nla.gov.au/version/29506106)> (accessed 17/5/18).

## Chapter 11 Survival

- 1 Entry on Paddington in *The Australian Handbook*, Gordon and Gotch, Sydney, 1903.
- 2 See discussion of Sydney University's expansion plans and purchasing of terrace houses in PN Troy (ed), *Urban Redevelopment in Australia*, Urban Research Unit, ANU, Canberra, 1968.
- 3 This chapter draws on all previous chapters in the book. Readers wanting the general Sydney context for the 20th century are directed to Peter Spearritt, *Sydney's Century: A history*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2000. A bevy of social/urban histories were published in the 1990s on Sydney's inner suburbs, including Surry Hills (Christopher Keating, *Surry Hills: The city's backyard*, Hale & Iremonger,

