

# Hornsby Uniting Church

*Our Vision: To grow in Christ and share His love.*

## History of the Memorial Window

The wonderful stained glass window in our Heritage Chapel, highlighting praises to God, is the work of master artist, **Philip Handel**. Headed "Glory to God in the Highest", it is dedicated "In loving memory of **Marion Ethel Winter** - erected July 1955." From Hornsby and St. Ives, Marion Winter, nee Boyd, born 1884, had died in 1952. The window features musical elements in tribute to her position as the organist at Hornsby Methodist church. The window was originally in the entry porch of the old Hornsby church, facing out to Frederick Street.

In 2012, Mrs. Elizabeth Handel, wife of Philip, visited the new church with Rev. Ann Hogan and was pleased to see this window in its new position. She also located the receipt for the creation of the window, which was paid for by Mrs. J.M.Symington (Marion Winter's daughter) in March 1953, £150-0-0

Philip Handel, amongst many other works, created windows at St. Peter's Anglican, Cremorne, St. Paul's Anglican at Sale VIC, and St. John's Dee Why. You can find a longer story at:

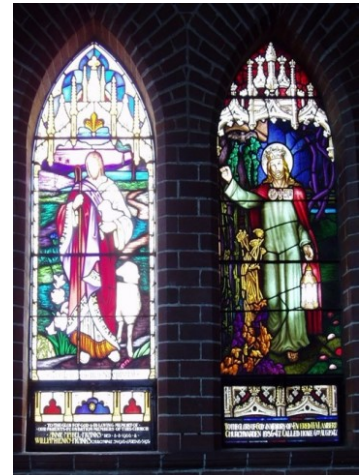
<https://www.stpaulssale.org.au/sgwinfo/86-philip-handel-stained-glass-artist-info.html>

but this is a short history by his wife - "Philip Handel's father, Alfred Handel was born in 1881, and in 1901 went to work as an apprentice in the firm of Lyon Cottier & Co. who came out from England and set up a studio in Sydney in 1873. Alfred became the principal painter, and when the last of the family died and the sons did not want to continue Alfred was able to buy the business & equipment. Philip was born in Croydon in 1931, left school at 16 to learn the trade in his father's business in Elizabeth St. Surry Hills. Unfortunately 18 months later his father died, late 1948. This was a great shock to the family and Philip. But with support from his father's helpers and members of the clergy who gave him small windows to start with, and using his father's designs, he continued and was able to survive. His windows became similar to his father's but later he developed his own style. Both were committed Christians and wanted to interpret the Scriptures as a visual aid to worship. He had a satisfying career of over 65 years, the last 35 in his own studio at our home in Beacon Hill, where he died in July 2009.

He made over 900 windows in most states of Australia. The last big job was at Sandakan, North Borneo, where he made several windows mainly in memory of the 2500 Australian and British soldiers held in camp there. Only 6 survived this ordeal. This was accomplished in his last 5 years when he struggled with illness, but the Lord gave him the strength to finish the great work." (From Elizabeth Handel, Feb. 2012)







The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW: 1842 - 1954) / Wed 17 Sep 1873 / Page 4 / Advertising

**FINE FIRST CROP TEAS** are for private sale by the undersigned.  
**LOBIMER, MARWOOD, and ROME.**

**STAINED GLASS and ARTISTIC WALL PAINTING.** **LYON, COTTIER, and CO.,** 333, Pitt-street; and at 2, Langham-place, Regent-street, London.

**158 GEORGE-STREET.—WHITLEY and CO.,**

### Marion Ethel Winter

**Marion Ethel Winter** was a daughter of the parsonage. Her father, the late Rev. J. J. Boyd, in the excellent service that he gave was ably supported by his daughter. Her Church was always a real responsibility to her. Her husband, the late Mr. H. A. **Winter**, was an able local preacher and a devoted servant of the Church. His work, and that of his wife, in the Churches at Blayney and Glenorie, is recalled with deep satisfaction even today. He died 13 years ago at Hornsby, where Mrs. **Winter** continued to live and serve, and two years ago she moved with her daughter, Joan (Mrs. Alan Symington) to St. Ives. At both these Churches she showed her greatest interest in the music of the sanctuary. She was an excellent vocalist and a capable organist. At Hornsby she was leader of the choir, and for a time was church organist. On arrival at St. Ives she immediately gave herself to the musical side of the Church work, thus considerably enhancing the work of the choir and the congregational singing there. This was due to her appreciation of music and her sense of its high worship value. She was a dependable worker in connection with the Ladies' Church Aid, and most regular in her attendance at the services. But permeating her life and guiding her

service was her rich spiritual experience. She loved her Lord and knew Him as Saviour.

Prayer was a vital factor in her life, and a pastoral visit by her minister was welcomed because of the opportunity it gave her of spiritual fellowship and a season of prayer. It was a rare experience for those who were with her at those times. She was a gifted woman, but in the use of her gifts and in her common life, she carried an engaging personality, accounted for by her quality of simple goodness, which quality was also the secret of her successful impact on all who knew her. Many mourn her passing. She had been ailing for some weeks, and then seemed to move towards recovery when she unexpectedly received the call on June 20th last, and triumphantly moved forward to meet her Lord.  
 —W.T.D.

From "The Methodist", July 19, 1952.

These notes compiled by Kent Blackmore,  
 2024

## Philip Handel obituary, Sydney Morning Herald, August 8, 2009

PHILIP HANDEL was one of Australia's few remaining traditional stained-glass artists. His greatest commission was the Windows of Remembrance in the historic stone Church of St Michael and All Angels in Sandakan, Sabah (formerly British North Borneo). In 2003, on learning that the windows were to honour the almost 2500 Australian and British POWs who died at the infamous Sandakan Camp or on the death marches to Ranau, and to thank the local people who risked and gave their lives to help them, Handel offered to come out of retirement to undertake the work. It was only after he had done so that he learnt the soldier engaged to his much older sister had died at Sandakan.



So began his greatest and most rewarding project, which encompassed the Memorial Windows and two large "Friendship Windows", celebrating the bonds forged between Australia and the people of Sabah. Made from many thousands of pieces of antique hand-blown glass, the windows are testimony to courage and endurance, demonstrated not only by the prisoners of war but by Handel himself who, although suffering from terminal cancer, completed stage two of the project in time for the unveiling on Anzac Eve last year. Philip Handel, who has died aged 78, was the youngest of five children, born in Croydon, Sydney to Alfred Handel, a well-established stained-glass artist, and his wife, Mary.

Best described as "a master artist who worked in the medium of stained glass", to distinguish him from those simply skilled in leadlighting, from the time he could pick up a pencil Handel was drawing and, after completing his intermediate certificate at Homebush Boys High School, joined his father in the family business in Elizabeth Street. When Handel was 17 his father died and, as he had yet to complete a window by himself, many commissions had to be passed to other firms. However, clergy who had been associated with his father gave him some small commissions, which gave him the confidence to continue. Despite this, the pickings were lean and in 1954 Handel was on the point of giving up when the minister of the Gunnedah Presbyterian church arrived on the doorstep.

Outraged by the rudeness he had experienced at a rival studio, he gave Handel his first large commission: five two-light (panel) windows. Work proceeded at a frantic pace, from 4am until midnight, to meet the deadline for the unveiling. In the meantime, his financial position now secure and with 13 more windows to be completed over the next few years, Handel became engaged to Elizabeth Jeffrey, a kindergarten teacher. They married in 1956. During the next 50 years of his working life, he undertook about 1000 commissions around Australia. His first under his own name was in 1957 when, at 26, he designed and made the great west window in Sale Cathedral in East Gippsland, eventually completing 15 "lights" there. Churches with his work are in Dee Why, Hornsby and Seaforth in Sydney, Ainslie in Canberra, Bairnsdale in Victoria and Henley Beach in Adelaide. As well, there are the chapels at Garden Island Naval Base and North Shore Hospital in Sydney and faculty windows at Newcastle University. Handel was a committed Christian and an active member of the Anglican Church, and, blessed with a rich voice, sang with the Holy Trinity Singers for 35 years. He loved classical music, particularly Beethoven and Handel (a distant ancestor), which he played while working in his studio - which he transferred to his home at Beacon Hill in 1972. As his was a solitary occupation, once his children were grown he started a car club for fellow Ford Prefect devotees, which gave him a good social network and weekends away in his succession of Prefects.

Although Handel was described as a "living treasure" in Sabah, recognition came late in Australia, with a documentary on the Sandakan windows filmed in 2008 and the announcement, in June, that he was to be awarded a medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for his services to the arts. However, the announcement coincided with a rapid decline in his health. The Governor, Marie Bashir, presented his medal to him at a bedside ceremony at his home a week before he died. Handel was a humble man who never sought recognition for himself. Only in more recent years was he persuaded to sign his work. His legacy, however, will live on, not only in Sandakan, but in the beautiful stained glass windows enhancing so many churches and institutions around Australia. Philip Handel is survived by Elizabeth, their four children and seven grandchildren.