

Annie's story - a beautiful and unique collaboration.

March, 2017

When Annie Georgeson met architect and designer Ian Bailey in 1977, little did she know they would go on to develop a magnificent 37-year partnership.

The pair shared so many similar views, talents, hopes and desires.

Theirs was indeed a unique collaboration – a beautiful meeting of minds, and a partnership of life and work.

Speaking with Annie Georgeson, it's hard not to be drawn in by her warmth and her presence.

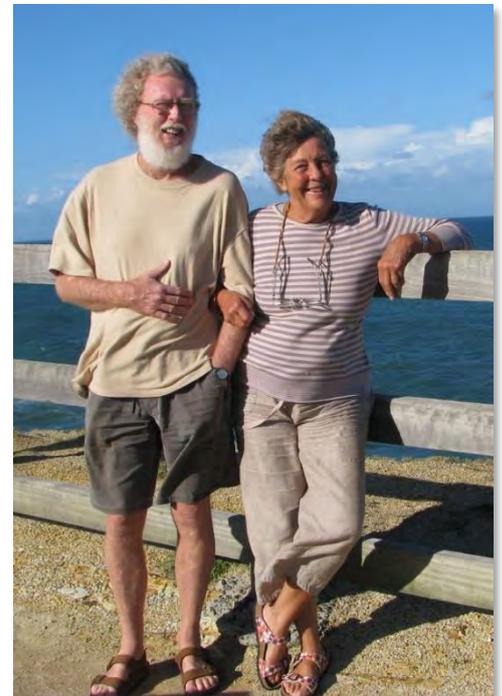
Aged in her 80s, Annie is bright and bursting with creativity; her gentle, humble exterior belies her sharp mind and long list of achievements.

A talented textile designer and artist, Annie had always been interested in architecture, and so enrolled in an architectural drafting course.

"I first met Ian at the Christmas party held at a Palm beach boatshed which was the office for well-known Australian architect John Andrews International," Annie said.

Their paths crossed again soon after at a follow up party for the office and friends.

"I remember going out onto the deck with Ian that night, and talking for hours and hours."



Ian Bailey and Annie Georgeson at Brooms Head, NSW.

"I remember going out onto the deck with Ian that night, and talking for hours and hours."

They were soon inseparable.

Annie and Ian went on to establish the textile design and manufacturing company, Serica Fabrics.

Together and independently, they earned the respect of their peers, and continued to grow, to learn and to push design boundaries.

A few years later, during a medical check-up for insurance purposes, a lump was found in Ian's groin, plus a mole on his knee.

From this time forward, the word "melanoma" became a constant in Ian and Annie's lives, although they went about living with the disease in their own inimitable fashion.

Ian's fair skin had seen plenty of sun over the years, both during his time on his parent's farm "Homedale" at Kew, and as a resident of Sydney's Northern Beaches.

"He was always drawn to the beach and walked on the beach and swam nearly every day," Annie said.

"I have to say though, that I believe it was a period of particular stress that was the trigger for Ian's illness."

After surgery to remove the melanoma and some lymph glands [by the late, great Dr Chris O'Brien], Ian accepted an invitation to take part in a new research project.

"... I believe it was a period of particular stress that was the trigger for Ian's illness."

"It was an immunotherapy trial, which involved a series of regular vaccines."

"We had recently relocated to Homedale and didn't yet have a fridge, so we arranged to store the vaccines at Kew Corner Store."



Ian and Annie at the Glasshouse Gallery in Dec 2011.

Annie and Ian threw themselves wholeheartedly into researching what could be done to improve Ian's wellness through diet and lifestyle change.

Time spent at the Gawler Foundation in Victoria set them on the path to establishing their own tailor-made treatment strategies.

"It was there that we first came to understand how well conventional and complementary medicines can work together, hand-in-hand," Annie said.

"Integrative medicine is the term for it."

The couple also made two key changes to their diet – the only meat was fish, and they embarked on an alkaline diet.

"We had fresh vegetable juice every day; we routinely avoided acidic foods, many fruits, but only tomatoes in vegetables. It was not a problem and increased our use of herbs and spices."

Decades later Annie still follows much the same guidelines, apart from the occasional treat.

The pair also undertook further courses and ongoing research. Annie kept detailed records of Ian's diet, medicines and treatments, so they could be shared with health professionals, and help guide their forward progress.

At the all-important seven-year milestone, Ian's checkups were clear and he seemed remarkably well.

"Although the results were encouraging, we didn't completely relax."

“We felt sure we were heading in the right direction, and that the diet, the regular meditation and the walks on Diamond Head beach were having the desired effect.”

Research further afield led them to a specialist in the UK, who recommended a form of integrative medicine and treatment designed to boost the immune system and detoxify the body.

For several years, there were no new melanomas. During this time, Ian continued his architectural practice and supported a number of local community projects.

He also began committing to paper his vision for the long-term future for Homedale, producing meticulously detailed drawings for The Chimneys, a concept for an ecologically sustainable village.

The project takes its name from the two heritage-listed chimneys on the former farm site.



Annie and Ian on the deck of their home and studio.

“Ian’s work on the village was very important to him; he wanted it to be a model for others, particularly in terms of how we manage water, waste, energy, food and transport.”

Eventually Ian’s cancers returned, targeting his lungs and finally his brain.

“We didn’t think about dying – right up until the end; he always looked so well.”

After battling melanoma for twenty-four long years, Ian Bailey died on February 22nd, 2013, at the age of 68.

“He virtually never had any pain, except immediately after surgery.”

“He was so dignified – always, and at the end; he had a twinkle in his eye.”

The loss of Ian left Annie feeling overwhelmed.

“We had a genuine love affair for thirty-seven years.”

“When he died, it was as though a part of me had been severed.”

“We didn’t think about dying – right up until the end; he always looked so well.”

Strangers often commented to the two of them “you look so happy together”, so the intimacy of their relationship and the closeness of their bond must have been obvious to others.

As Annie’s son once said to her, “you two could have worn the same shoes”.

Annie chose to share her story via the “Our Stories” Project to encourage others battling melanoma and other forms of cancer.

“Our story is unique – to live with stage 4 metastases for so long is pretty unusual.”

“Ian and I always had a synergy; we’d collaborated at work, so naturally we wanted to work on this [Ian’s treatment] together too.”

Annie's key message for others fighting melanoma is to do your homework thoroughly, and to always maintain a positive attitude.

"We made the most of every day, and didn't waste time on panic."

"It's imperative to get to the point where you're very comfortable with the path you're taking. You also need to satisfy yourself that you've investigated enough, both here and overseas, and that your decisions are evidence-based."

"Once you've done your homework, shake it all out, then chose a path and stick with it, while always listening to new information and assessing if it's appropriate for you."

"It's imperative to get to the point where you're very comfortable with the path you're taking."

Annie readily admits the journey she and Ian took was often a lonely one.

"Some people, including doctors, didn't see the benefits of complementary medicine, and were not supportive. Some even labelled what we were doing 'a fad'."

Annie says she and Ian were blessed to have marvelous support from family and friends, throughout his illness.

"It was wonderful to feel someone respected the path we'd chosen."

Today [March 2017] Annie occasionally feels a little shaky, as she continues her "post-Ian" life.



Annie and Ian's synergy was always clearly apparent.

"I've lost my confidence in a few different areas in the four years since Ian died, but I'm lucky to be surrounded by wonderful friends and family."

"I often feel a profound sense of loneliness, which can also lead to anxiety."

"I like to keep busy; I'm not sitting round feeling sorry for myself, in fact every morning I wake up and say thank you for another day."

"I do realise I am blessed to have experienced such a special relationship."

Looking forward, there are still things Annie wants to do and to achieve.

She is mindful about setting a positive course for her life and the need to take small steps. She also enjoys and is happy to share the knowledge she's gained with other cancer sufferers.

Annie goes to the beach for a walk every day, is planning an exhibition of her art and has started taking Pilates classes again.

"I like to stay positive – I know it's what Ian would have wanted."

Thank you for sharing Annie.

More about Annie

Annie Georgeson is an accomplished textile designer and artist, who studied architectural drafting at Sydney Technical College and worked at the Florence Broadhurst Studio before establishing a design studio specialising in textile design.

According to Dr Jean Battersby, founding executive officer of the Australian Council for the Arts, Annie is "one of the most original and creative designers working in the textile field. Her use of distinctively Australian imagery and colours in her work, in addition to her design talent, gives her work a particular character which is widely and rightly admired."

Annie's recent relocation from the home she shared with life-partner Ian Bailey for over 26 years has been an emotional wrench. Leaving the beautiful house, designed by Ian of course, has been particularly difficult. "It had such a welcoming spirit and casual ambience, reminiscent of an Australian farm shed in many ways," Annie said fondly.

The house is part of a 30-acre property on the banks of the Camden Haven River on the edge of the NSW township of Kew. Originally the site of Ian's parents' farm, it is hoped the site will become a ground-breaking ecologically sustainable village called "The Chimneys".

Annie has two sons, Richard and Tim and a daughter Vanessa, and four grandchildren.

She is currently enjoying her new coastal surroundings at Camden Head with a swim and walk on the beach every day, and plans to spend more time painting and creating.

Details of Annie's design career and professional achievements, are available on her AG Design website - www.agdesign.com.au.



"LOVING HER WAS EASIER
(THAN ANYTHING I'LL EVER
DO AGAIN)"

These words (by Kris Kristofferson)
were among Ian Bailey's favourites
to describe the love of his life, Annie.



One of Annie's acclaimed rug designs 'Metamorphosis' (designerrugs.com.au).



Annie speaks at a launch function at Designer Rugs in Sydney, where her designs are still available for purchase.

Career Highlights

Guest Artist at Watermark Literary Muster, Camden Haven
Textile Collection for Woven Image P/L
Rug Collection for Designer Rugs P/L
Textile Artwork selection for Confluence Exhibition at Pt Macquarie-Hastings Regional Gallery
Australian DesignMark Awards
SRS Wool Throws, Throwquilts, Scarves and Mini quilts
Named AWI Australia's Ambassador for Wool
Finalist Australian Micro Business Awards
Study tours Denmark, UK, Belgium, Holland
Fellow of the RSA London
Judge for Hastings Heritage and Design Awards
Study tours Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Scotland and Japan; also USA, North America, Europe under Churchill Fellowship
Aust Council Emeritus Award nomination
Design Consultant ANA Harbour Grand Hotel
Victorian Crafts Council Craftsperson of the Year nomination
1981 Australian Design Award - the first in textiles



Annie and Ian's former home, the award-winning 'Homedale'.

"Our Stories" Project – empowering people to share their stories.

To see read more stories, go to www.hastingscancertrust.org.au/our-stories

Contact: OurStoriesProject1@gmail.com



This story was written by Jan Dennis, from interviews and time spent with Annie Georgeson in early 2017. It forms part of the "Our Stories" Project, which is funded by a 2016 grant from The Hastings Cancer Trust.

The Hastings Cancer Trust is a local not-for-profit organisation that supports local cancer services via their annual grants program.

For more information go to www.hastingscancertrust.org.au.