



TOWSEY TALES

NAME: Arthur Charles Towsey
aka Arthur Van Towsey (from 1945)

BIRTH DETAILS: 13 January 1913 Hamilton NZ

DEATH DETAILS: 12 February 1985 Auckland NZ

CHART REF: Towsey Chart A1

MARRIAGE DETAILS: 1st M: mid 1935 Auckland
SPOUSE: Marie Aline Pageau (divorced 1946)

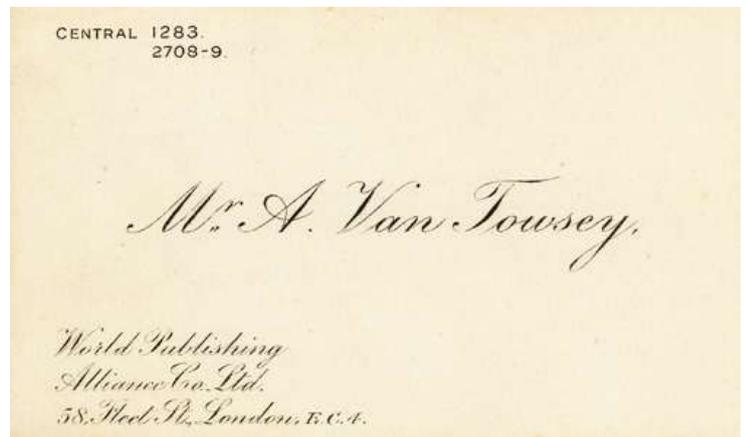
MARRIAGE DETAILS: 2nd M: 17 October 1947 Melbourne
SPOUSE: Peggy Evelyn Knibb

MARRIAGE DETAILS: 3rd M: 19 October 1979 Sydney
SPOUSE: Sylvia Dorothy Smith

PART 4 OF 5

It would seem that Arthur stopped working for the British Council some time during the latter half of 1945. It was at that time that Arthur changed his name.

During the war, Arthur's friends had started calling him "Van", because of a similarity in appearance to the American film star, Van Heflin.



I do not know exactly why he changed his name, but considering everything that had happened in recent years, the most likely explanation is that he wanted a new start; a clean break from the past, with its war-time suffering and the disaster of his now lost family.

There is a membership card for the White House Club, from 1945, showing his new name and an undated business card, showing him working for World Publishing Alliance Co. Ltd. at 58 Fleet Street, also with the name "Van Towsey." We also have a letter from Aline to Arthur, at that address, dated May 1946.

This all means that Arthur changed his name in the second half of 1945 and had almost certainly done so as he changed jobs.

Number 58, Fleet Street, is a very small building and no records of World Publishing Alliance Co. Ltd. are readily jumping out of the search engine. Putting these details together with the fact that any company with such a pseudo-grand, but meaningless name, is bound to be trying very hard to impress, and we come to the conclusion that Arthur's change of jobs was by no means a big step up.

Granby
24th May, 1946

Mr. A. C. Towsey
58 Fleet St.
London England.

Dear Arthur,

It was rather a surprise to hear from you, more so to learn your intentions of coming to Canada. It will be nice to see you after so many years.

As far as I can foresee at the present time my address is likely to be the same.

May I ask you to be kind and considerate and respect my request? – Please dear I beg of you to arrange our meeting outside of Granby; Montreal would really be the best place, if you can; you must understand that I do not wish our life to be upset once more.

I am very well known in this small town, and on account of the boys, I gave you as missing from the war. So they must not know anything; be careful that no communication comes to my house bearing your name.

Kindly promise and be faithful to it, you must not come to Granby for our sake, please dear.

Keep me informed, if you can, of the approximate date you expect being here. At the present time I am making plans for our summer vacation.

Sincerely,

Aline

Granby
June 13th 1946

Mr. A. C. Towsey
58 Fleet St.
London England.

Dear Arthur,

Attached is a letter (copy) sent to you in reply to yours of May the 13th. I am not certain if my first letter will reach you, this is the reason I am sending the enclosed one.

Hoping you will respect my will as requested.

Sincerely,

Aline

I have also found no record of the equally grand sounding White House Club. This will be because rather than being the sort of establishment that we might regard as a club, it would in fact have been no more than a bar.

Licensing laws in Britain at that time, required that all public houses had to close by some hour that was far too early for anyone wishing to have any sort of social life. The loophole in this law, allowed for private clubs to stay open until all hours. This will also account for the cheap quality of the membership card.

It is worth noting that the White House Club, being in the Regent's Park area, was quite close to where Arthur was living at the time.

The letter from Aline to Arthur, in May 1946, is a little confusing, as it makes no reference to his earlier attempt to visit Canada, in 1944.

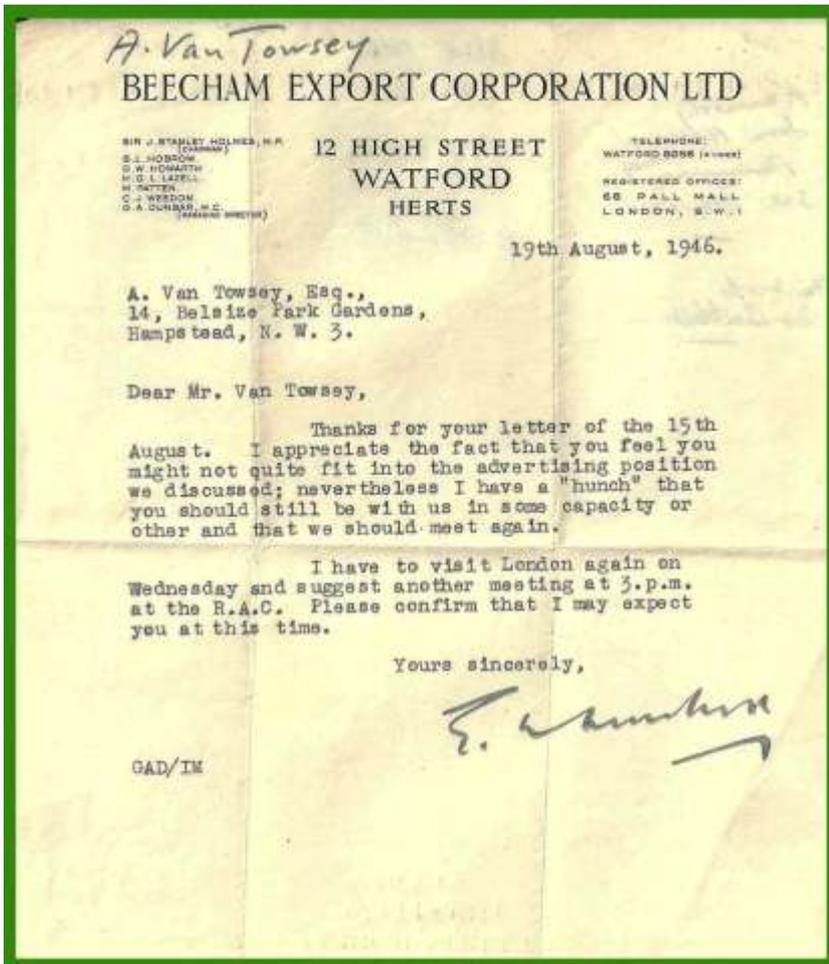
We know that Arthur wanted to visit Canada in 1944, because of his visa allowing such. Perhaps at that time though, with shipping connections and the necessity of reaching Australia by a certain date, and perhaps with Aline's efforts to prevent his entry into Canada, he had to abandon this plan upon reaching New York.

Perhaps also, it was not until the time of his planned visit in 1946, that Aline arranged for Arthur to be stopped at the Canadian border.

We do know though, that after receiving Aline's letter, Arthur made no attempt to visit Canada.

It is perhaps, a testament to Arthur's abilities as a salesman, that the Managing Director of Beecham should be trying to sell the idea of a job to Arthur, rather than the other way around.





Beecham's pills and powders had been the most popular cure for headaches, constipation and a range of other ailments, in the UK, since the middle of the 19th Century.

In 1946, apart from doing a lot of pharmaceutical research, they were also producing consumer products, such as Brylcreem, the most popular hair gunk at the time and Macleans Toothpaste. Most of the expansion of their product range over the years, was through acquisitions rather than developing new consumer products themselves, preferring to concentrate their research and development on pharmaceuticals. They were also instrumental in the development of synthetic forms of penicillin.

They also bought up Horlicks, Aquafresh, Eno, Lucozade, Ribena and several soft drinks, over the coming years.

As is the way in industry, Beecham merged with Smith Kline Beckman in 1989, becoming Smith Kline Beecham, which in 2000, merged with Glaxo Wellcome, to become Glaxo Smith Kline; the world's third largest pharmaceutical company.

Maybe all just boring details, but it does show that company names with which

we may be unfamiliar, are often enormous multi-nationals behind the most popular consumer brands.

Arthur took a job with Beecham, the title of which I do not know. He was in fact working as the personal representative of Mr. G. A. Dunbar, the Managing Director, who sent him to Australia to, as far as I can tell, run the company there as General Manager.

I know that one thing that Arthur tried to do in that capacity, was to buy the franchise for making Mars Bars in Australia. This was because he had developed a liking for them whilst in Britain and saw great market potential. In the end, it would not have been practical, because of the high price of cocoa beans at the time. Beecham would not have been buying large enough volumes to have been able to get a reasonable price.

With the end of the war, the large Sunderland flying boats that had been maintaining air links with the empire, were put into commercial service.

The new British international airline was B.O.A.C., (British Overseas Airways Corporation). Australia's international carrier grew out of a small regional flyer called Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services (Qantas), whilst New Zealand had TEAL (Tasman Empire Airways Limited).

Of course BOAC became British Airways and TEAL became Air New Zealand, leaving the Australian



national flag-carrier as the only one with a grandiose but obscure acronym painted on the side of its aircraft.

In 1946 it took over five days to fly from Britain to Australia, but it was so expensive, that most travellers were still going by ship well into the 1960s.

We see from Arthur's passport entries, for his next journey to Australia, in October 1946, just what a complicated process it was to fly.

The first step was to get an exit visa, meaning that Britain would allow him to leave. This procedure, in bankrupt Britain, was more about taxation and very tight foreign exchange restrictions, than about Mother England wanting to keep all her children close to her breast.

On 8th October the exit visa thus obtained stated; *Valid for all countries in Europe, including USSR, Turkey, Egypt, Iraq, Netherlands, Palestine, Possessions. Not valid for countries where a Military or Control Commission or other special permit is required unless such permit has first been obtained.*

On 23rd October, Arthur got a transit visa for Iraq, issued by *La Legation Royale de l'Irak Londres*.

On November 1st, he boarded a Sunderland Flying Boat, which took off from Poole Harbour, in Dorset, which was at that time the BOAC flying boat port. It later moved up to Southampton, where they built a more substantial terminal.



Sunderland Flying Boat coming in to land on The Nile at Cairo

That same day, they landed to refuel at Biscarrosse, which is a town on a small lake, just in from the southern French coast.

The following day they landed on the Nile, at Cairo, where they spent the night.

On the 3rd, they took off from Cairo. They might have stopped to refuel at the city of Basra, in southern Iraq, landing on the Shatt al-Arab, which is where the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers have joined together before emptying into the Persian Gulf. Although Arthur had obtained a visa for the Kingdom of Iraq, they might have bypassed Basra, going straight to Karachi instead, where they landed on 4th November.

They then flew straight across India, landing at Calcutta, from where they departed on 5th November, flying down to Singapore, where Arthur is shown as being in transit on 7th November.

The next stamp is upon arrival in Sydney, on 10th November, where they landed in Sydney Harbour, at the flying boat terminal in Rose Bay. These flights would probably also have refuelled in Jakarta or Darwin.

Ten days later, Arthur was given a very long registration number by the *Directorate of Rationing for Victoria*.

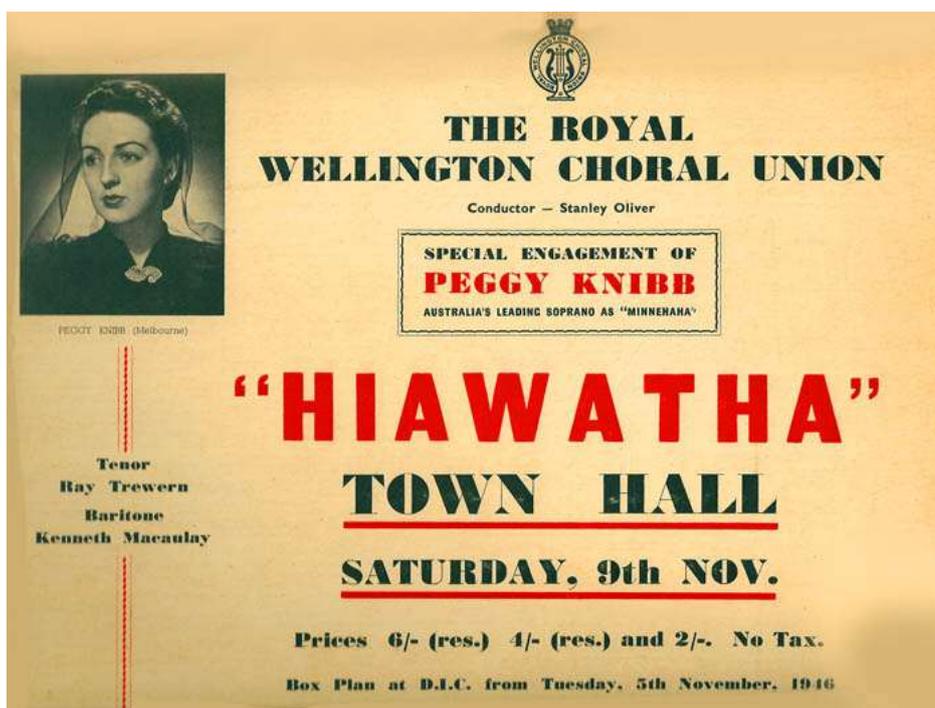
From November, 1946, Arthur was based in Melbourne, for his work with Beecham.

Arthur's work for Beecham Export Limited, probably did not also cover New Zealand, so his trip to Auckland for Christmas 1946 and New Year, was probably just to see the family.

It was during this trip that he officially changed his name, in his passport, on 24th December 1946, to Arthur Van Towsey: New name and, he hoped, new life. And so it came to pass.

For some weeks before Arthur's arrival, an Australian singer, Miss Peggy Knibb, had been touring New Zealand in a series of performances organized by Arthur's cousin, Dan O'Connor.

She sang the cantata "Hiawatha", in Wellington, then travelled to Christchurch, Dunedin, Invercargill and back to Auckland, performing in Handel's "Messiah" as well as a couple of radio broadcasts in each city.



The advertising posters on the sides of trams billed her as “Australia’s leading soprano.”

Whilst in Auckland, Peggy’s performances on the radio had been accompanied by Pat Towsey, who now had her photograph sitting on his piano.

When Arthur saw the picture, he was quite taken by the “personality” shown therein and made a point of having Pat introduce him when Peggy returned from her tour.

So, they met on New Year’s Eve.

Then, purely by chance, after a series of off-loadings and delays, they just happened to end up on the same Sunderland Flying Boat back to Sydney on 3rd January. This was the sort of coincidence that only ever

happens in a Hollywood romantic comedies, or when someone like Arthur goes out of his way to arrange it.

Although Arthur was based in Melbourne, he always landed from abroad in Sydney, because there were no international flights directly to Melbourne at that time.

There is a small notice in a society column, stating that on 22nd March 1947, Mr. A Van Towsey, of Beecham Export Co., accompanied by Mrs. Van Towsey, had arrived back in Melbourne by ANA (Australian National Airways), after touring Australia and New Zealand.

It is most likely, that Arthur spent some weeks in Melbourne after returning from New Zealand, then either took Peggy with him when flying about Australia on business, or they may have met up and spent some time together after an interstate singing engagement.

Whether they told the reporter that they were married, or he just presumed as much, I do not know, but there was no mention that she was Peggy Knibb.

You can read about Peggy Van Towsey (née Knibb) in her own Towsey Tale.

Arthur had spent at least some of the time when Peggy was subsequently touring Australia, back in Auckland, where his passport was renewed on 23rd June. He then flew back to Sydney on the following day, where he would have met up with Peggy, who had just come up from Melbourne.

They probably spent the following week together in Sydney, before Arthur returned to Melbourne on 1st July.

The Boyd Neel Orchestra, with whom Peggy was touring, then spent July touring New Zealand, with a final concert in Auckland on 29th July.

The day after his return to Melbourne, Arthur got a stamp from the Australian Immigration and Passport Office, in Melbourne, authorising his travel to Iraq, en-route to the United Kingdom, as well as a stamp also validating his passport for travel to Iran. The next day he got a visa for France and a transit visa from the Dutch Consulate, for the Nederlandsch Indie (Indonesia).

Despite all of this rigmarole, at least these people seem to have been issuing visas on the spot.

Arthur left Melbourne for Sydney on 10th July.

In Sydney, Arthur boarded another Sunderland Flying Boat, arriving in Singapore on the 12th, the Marine Air Base, Calcutta on the 14th, Karachi on the 15th, Basra on the 16th and Cairo on the 17th.

After some time back in London, Arthur registered in Westminster on August 7th, for rationing for four weeks.



He had been in London for a month when he paid another fee on his previous visa, authorising travel, then on August 27th, he was allowed to exchange seventy pound for French Francs at the Midland Bank, whose entry in his passport mentions that this is a "Special Allotment".

As I mentioned earlier, there were strict limits on foreign exchange, and the amount that Arthur was changing was, I believe, probably more than an ordinary tourist would be allowed. This indicates that Arthur's trip to France must have been on business for Beecham.

He went to France on August 30th, returning on September 5th. I do not know where he went, other than that he exchanged a bit more money at Toulouse on September 2nd.

It could be that Mr. Dunbar had initially wanted Arthur to work for him wherever Beecham was established in the world, but had agreed to Arthur settling in Australia and just running the company there.

After once more obtaining the usual visas, Arthur this time departed from the RAF base at Lyneham on 11th September.

It might be that he was actually going by a military flight, but more likely that he was aboard a BOAC Lancastrian, which was a civil conversion of the famous Avro Lancaster bomber, that Pat Towsey had flown during the war.



Some of these aircraft were actually converted at the end of the war, by removing the gun turrets, replacing the nose and putting a few windows along each side, but BOAC also commissioned some new aircraft in 1946, in the civil configuration. It could be that BOAC was running these flights from RAF bases, because they already had the servicing facilities for the Lancasters.

Although these aircraft had good range and could cover the distance to Australia in a shorter time than the Sunderland, it was nowhere near as spacious as the comparatively luxurious flying boats.

One thing that all of these aircraft with four propellers had in common, was the incredibly loud noise, hour after hour, day after day. Another common factor was that they all flew at a lower altitude, where they would be subject to constant buffeting by the weather that jet aircraft now fly above.

From RAF Lyneham, Arthur flew to an RAF base called Habbaniya, in Iraq, where his passport was stamped by Provost Security Control on September 12th. On the 13th, he landed at Karachi, then somehow took three days to reach Singapore, before entering Australia, probably at Darwin, on the 17th. He then reaching Sydney on 19th September.

If a Lancastrian had been flying directly, it could have reached Australia in about three days, so I assume that Arthur was either resting along the way, or awaiting connecting flights.

From his first voyage to England, by military convoy, in 1940, to his flight from London to Sydney, in September 1947, Arthur had travelled between Australia or New Zealand and Britain, ten times.

Although Arthur would travel to Europe on business in the future, he never again visited Britain.

Four weeks after his return to Australia from Britain, Arthur Van Towsey married Peggy Knibb at the local Presbyterian church in Melbourne.



It might seem strange that Arthur, who had been brought up Catholic, should be married in a Protestant church, but then, although his divorce from Aline had just been completed, it would not have been recognized by the Catholic Church. Besides, the failure of his first marriage, for which Arthur held the priest partly responsible, together with such dramatic experiences of the past decade, had turned Arthur away from any interest in the rituals of any sort of religion.

It has been said that Arthur and Peggy rushed into marriage, but although they had been kept apart for lengthy periods by different work commitments, they had known each other for ten months. On the other hand, it would still be true to say that they were both rushing to the altar with some degree of urgency.



Arthur & Peggy Van Towsey
Martin Place, Sydney November 1947

might indicate that although Arthur would undoubtedly have used the opportunity for a bit of business, Peggy seems also to be engaged in some sort of singing arrangements.

The other interesting aspect of this photograph, is that it is a rare occasion on which Arthur is wearing a hat.

Although hats were *de rigueur* for any man in a suit in those days, Arthur rarely wore one.

This was just one of many small instances of Arthur being defiantly, sometimes provocatively, occasionally perversely, out of step with what he might regard as illogical social norms.



Arthur Van Towsey driving Melbourne to Sydney on honeymoon in borrowed 1947 Austin 8 Convertible

In Arthur's case, this was the way in which he approached all aspects of his life. In fact, looking back over the numerous changes in direction over the preceding eighteen years, we could conclude that a wait of ten months was proof of a more measured, mature approach to life.

After the wedding, Arthur borrowed a small Austin convertible in which he and Peggy took a leisurely drive up to Sydney. Considering that Australia's wartime petrol rationing was still in force, this indicates that Arthur must have somehow managed to wangle extra coupons.

We see in the not very good street photograph of Peggy and Arthur walking up Martin Place, in Sydney, that Arthur has a leather folder in his hand, whilst Peggy is carrying a music satchel. This

NEW ZEALAND OBSERVER

Wednesday, December 17, 1947

SINGER'S VISIT TO N.Z. EXTENSION OF HONEYMOON TRIP

Now in Wellington to sing in Handel's "Messiah" at the Town Hall tonight, Miss Peggy Knibb, Melbourne, is making this visit to New Zealand an extension of her honeymoon trip. At the Presbyterian Church, Camberwell, Melbourne, on October 25, Miss Knibb was married to a New Zealander, Mr. Arthur ("Van") Towsey, son of Mr. Cyril Towsey, bril-

liant pianist, and grandson of Mr. Arthur Towsey, who some 50 years ago was a leading figure in the musical world of Dunedin.

Miss Knibb is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Knibb, Camberwell, Melbourne, and is known throughout Australia and New Zealand for her vocal accomplishments.

Mr. Towsey was last in New Zealand as aide to Sir Angus Gillon, representing the British Arts Council, and, before that, was connected with the picture industry in this country. He now represents the Beecham group (pharmacists, London) in Australia.

Early next week Mr. and Mrs. Towsey will leave for Auckland to board a plane for Sydney.



"I'D RATHER BE A SUCCESSFUL WIFE THAN A SUCCESSFUL SINGER" says attractive Peggy Knibb with smiling emphasis—a "strain" which quite evidently is melody to husband Arthur Van Towsey.

HER PHOTOGRAPH WAS FIRST "DART," AND PROPINQUITY DID THE REST

FEW New Zealanders who heard Peggy Knibb's very beautiful soprano voice in recent Auckland and Wellington performances of "Messiah," had any idea that, since her last visit here with the Boyd-Neel Orchestra, this handsome song-bird has changed her status and become the wife of a New Zealander. The lucky man is Arthur Van Towsey, member of an Auckland family well known in musical circles in New Zealand, and the two were married nearly three months ago in Peggy's home suburb of Camberwell, Melbourne, in the Presbyterian Church where she went to Sunday-school and which has been her family's church for many years. New Zealander among the guests was "Dan" O'Connor of Auckland.

"Introduce Me, Please"

It is now just a year—New Year's Eve, 1947—since the young pair first met in Auckland. Before this Van Towsey, on a five-day visit here from Australia (where, following war-service with the 2nd N.Z.E.F. in Greece, Crete, etc., he now holds a business post), had noted Peggy's photograph on his brother's piano. Pat Towsey is accompanist at IYA and had played for her when she

Choral Societies—last year. Always interested in faces, "Van" was attracted by the personality shown by the photograph and, when Peggy arrived in Auckland, made a point of having his brother introduce him. Next thing was that, through a series of purely chance off-loadings and delays, the two found themselves on the same plane when returning to Australia, and "things just went on from there," with the present happy result.

Career-Singing Abandoned

And now Peggy intends to continue her singing only as a hobby as she believes a woman cannot satisfactorily combine two jobs, and she would "rather be a successful wife than a successful singer." She is a most competent housewife, makes lots of her own clothes and is also a good typist and shorthand-writer, so that she is able to "help her husband a lot" in that way, too.

Says Peggy . . .

Crystal-clear enunciation, as audiences are well aware, is one of the most striking features of Peggy Knibb's delightful singing. She does not think this difficult to come by. "Singing is one of the most natural

message. It is their job to get the message across. Perhaps there is rather too much fuss made about the mechanics of production, tone and so on," she added. "Young singers are so busy trying to remember all they are supposed to be doing about those that they tend to forget that, to an audience, a great part of the charm and value of a song is lost if the words cannot be heard."

"Hide-and-Seek" Frock

Incidentally, the very lovely black gown which Peggy wore for "Messiah" was the one which, it will be remembered, played hide-and-seek with her during her visit here with the Boyd-Neel Orchestra, causing her to appear in Wellington in "borrowed plumes." Left on the plane, the dress went on to Auckland and, by the time its bereft owner got there, had been sent off again to Wellington.

13 Dec 1947 Wellington

PARTY FOR SINGER

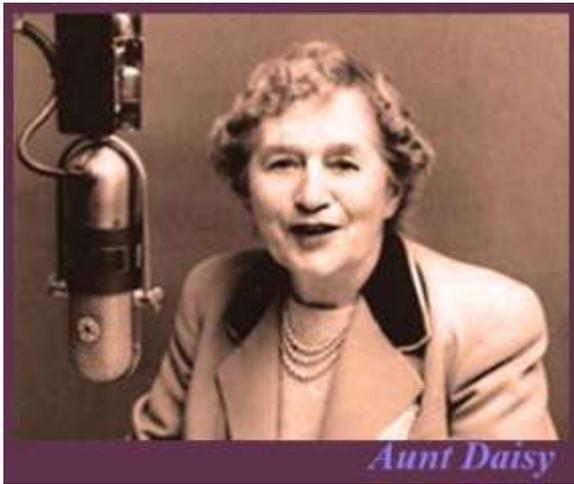
PEGGY KNIBB MARRIED

On October 25, at the Presbyterian Church, Camberwell, Melbourne, Miss Peggy Knibb, the gifted soprano who is to sing in Handel's "Messiah" at the Town Hall tonight, was married to Mr. Arthur Van Towsey, formerly of Auckland, and son of, that brilliant pianist, Mr. Cyril Towsey, for many years a resident of Wellington and Auckland. Miss Knibb is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Knibb, of Camberwell, Melbourne, and is known throughout Australia and New Zealand for her vocal accomplishments. She sang in Wellington in the last performance of the Handelian oratorio, and was here again in August last with the Boyd Neel string ensemble. Mr. Towsey, formerly well known in moving picture circles in New Zealand, was last in New Zealand with Sir Angus Gillon, representing the British Council, and at present is the Australian representative of the Bcecham Group, Ltd., of London. Mr. and Mrs. Towsey, who are spending part of their honeymoon in Wellington, were the guests at a morning tea party given by Mrs. D. Basham at the Pioneer Club yesterday when they were introduced to a number of representatives of the radio and musical world in Wellington. Guests included Mr. R. N. Hancock, assistant secretary, Australian High Commissioner's Office, and Mrs. Hancock. Mr. and Mrs. Towsey met during the latter's visit to New Zealand last year. They will return to Melbourne next week, visiting the Waitomo Caves on their way north.

After the Sydney trip, the honeymooners flew to New Zealand in December, where Peggy was booked to sing *The Messiah* before Christmas, in Auckland and Wellington.

Whilst in Wellington, a morning tea party was arranged in honour of Peggy and Arthur, by Mrs. D. Basham, who was an old friend of the Towsey family and a well known radio personality, who

The party guests were, apart from the Prime Minister and High Commission officials, mainly media personalities.

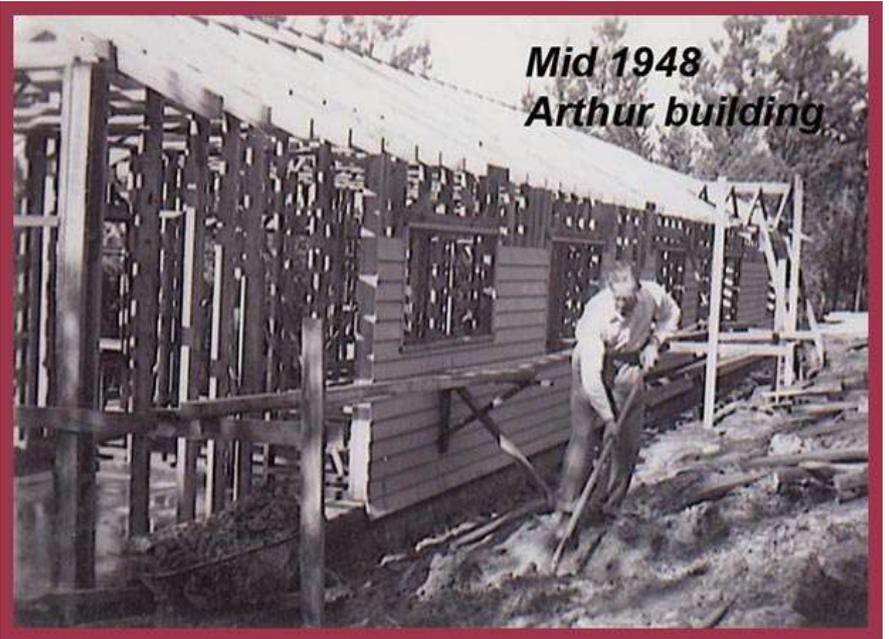


It is unlikely that Peggy actually said all the guff in the above article, about a woman not being able to combine two jobs. It is more likely that the reporter led her into such admissions through a series of loaded questions, which she answered in a flippant manner.

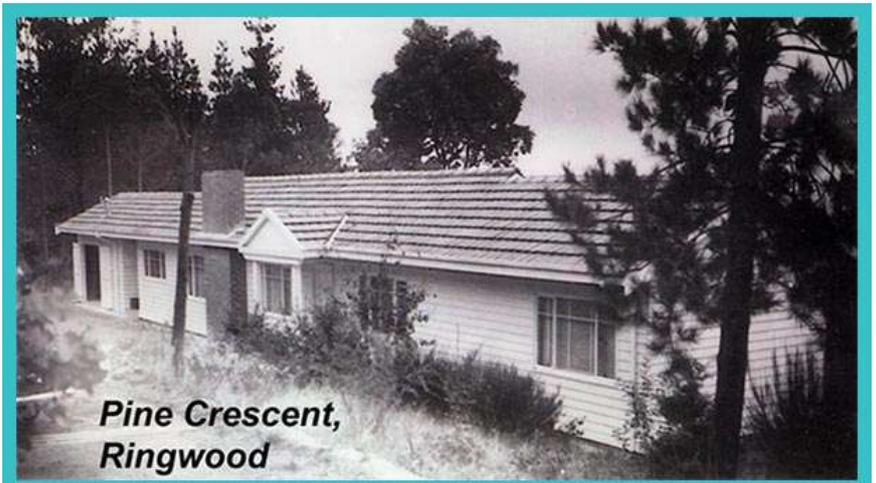
The sentiment though, is pretty close to how she was thinking. She indeed wanted a family and was thinking that it would be nice to no longer have to go through all the hard training, but had probably not really considered just how final would be her abandonment of fame, glamour, applause and freedom.

On 5th January, 1948, Arthur had Peggy's name and photograph entered into his passport. As strange as it might seem now, a wife did not necessarily have her own passport, if she was likely to be travelling only with her husband. Although the stamp says that this entry was done in Auckland, it might well have been done elsewhere or on an earlier date than the stamp, because we know

from the newspaper report of Arthur and Peggy's presence at the ballet in Melbourne, that they must have been back by 2nd January.



They should not though, have bothered entering Peggy into the passport. She did not leave Australia's shores again, for nearly thirty years.



It was eighteen years since Arthur had started travelling all over New Zealand and then around the world and, from 1948, it would be another eighteen years before he again travelled to anywhere outside Australia.

It seemed that he had finally satisfied that wanderlust.

After their marriage, Arthur moved in with Peggy at her parent's house, in Camberwell, whilst they built a place of their own on a new subdivision of land in the outer suburb of Ringwood.

The site was an old pine plantation atop a hill and Arthur bought four blocks of land which would have been one acre altogether.

Although Arthur and his new father-in-law tried to get along, there was always some tension between them, which may well have acted as a useful stimulus to get the new house built as quickly as possible.

The photos of Van working diligently on the building site, with no other builders present, seem to indicate that he built it with his own bare hands,

The Life of Melbourne

TWO people who cleverly managed to keep the actual date of their wedding secret are Shirley Grant and theatrical entrepreneur Dan O'Connor — the "D.D." of D. D. O'Connor Pty Ltd — who were married by Chaplain-General A. H. Stewart yesterday afternoon.

Shirley is the elder daughter of Mr and Mrs McIntosh Grant, of Auckland, New Zealand. Dan, who was associated with the British Council in bringing the Old Vic company to Australia, is the son of Mrs T. B. O'Connor, also of Auckland.

Black faille collar and pocket lapels set off the bride's beige lightweight woolen frock, which was worn with mushroom-shaped black felt hat, and fox furs in which she pinned a green orchid.

AFTER the ceremony best wishes to the newly married were offered by friends at cocktail party given at the Hotel Windsor by Shirley's mother, who came from New Zealand for the wedding. With her were her sons, John, who flew from Sydney, and Robert, who came up from Geelong.

Sir Laurence Olivier was one who toasted the bride and bridegroom, but unfortunately Lady Olivier was not well enough to be present. Those there included Mr and Mrs Garnet Carroll and their son, John; Mr Bryan Jones, of the British Council; and the bridegroom's cousin, Mr Arthur van Towsey, and his wife — she is well known to Melbourne audiences as singer Peggy Knibb.

12th June 1948

but as he was still with Beecham, these pictures were no doubt taken at the weekend, when the builders were off.

It does seem though, that the house was built relatively quickly.

We see that in 1948, Arthur (or "Van", as everybody was calling him by then) and Peggy had not disappeared from the Melbourne social scene, despite their new domestic idyll.

When Dan O'Connor married Shirley Grant, in June

Stratford Players' visit unlikely

MELBOURNE, Thursday.—Brisbane probably will not be visited by the Stratford-on-Avon theatrical company.

The Australian representative of the financier of the tour (Mr. A. Van Towsey) said to-night the company was likely to play a four-week season in Melbourne and Sydney, but it was doubtful if time would allow visits to other capitals.

"We shall make a good deal of effort to get to Brisbane, but the company has only four months for the whole tour, and this must include travelling time and rehearsals," he said.

"There is a general feeling, also, that while they are in this part of the world New Zealand should not miss out."

Final details of the itinerary will not be known until the financier and organiser of the tour (Mr. D. D. O'Connor) arrives in Melbourne on September 15.

Actors by plane

A specially chartered Qantas plane will fly the 33 players, including the stars, Diana Wynyard and Anthony Quayle, to Melbourne about October 10. The Melbourne season will start on October 17.

The plays Australians can expect to see are "Macbeth," "Much Ado About Nothing," and "Henry VIII."

There is still some doubt whether the scenery for "Henry VIII" can be transported here, as it is on a particularly grand scale, heavy, and bulky to move. Lavish costumes and "props" for this play alone are worth thousands of pounds.

1948, Dan was already 54 years old, but was still possessed of a youthful urbanity. He and Shirley always made a very elegant couple.

You will see that amongst the guests at the reception at Melbourne's prestigious Windsor Hotel, was Sir Laurence Olivier. "Larry" (as he was known to his friends), and his wife Vivien Leigh (star of Gone With The Wind), were at that time, by far the most famous celebrity couple in the world.

Also amongst the guests, was Garnett Carroll, who at that time was in partnership with Sir Ben Fuller, in the ownership of theatres, including the Princess Theatre in Melbourne, and the production of plays and musicals, in competition with the other

Shakespeare tour caused by Olivier

PRAISE of Australia by actor-manager Sir Laurence Olivier, was a factor in the decision of the Shakespeare Memorial Company, Stratford-on-Avon, to play a season here

Mr. A. Van Towsey, advance manager for Mr. D. B. O'Connor, who will direct the tour, said this in Brisbane yesterday.

"Larry" was so enthusiastic about Australia as "show territory" on his return to London that he influenced the British directors of the company. They accordingly abandoned American and New Zealand visits to give us preference," said Mr. Van Towsey.

In two groups, the 29 members of the company will arrive in Sydney from London



Mr. Quayle

by air to-morrow, and on Monday, to begin a season in Melbourne on October 19. The company will open at His Majesty's Theatre, Brisbane, on December 27, in John Gielgud's production of "Much Ado About Nothing" to be followed by Anthony Quayle's presentation of "Macbeth."

At the head of the cast is Anthony Quayle, noted exponent of Shakespearean roles. His leading woman is Diana Wynyard, whom filmgoers will remember for her delicacy, and found acting in Noel Coward's film "Cavalcade." Miss Wynyard is one of the leading personalities of the British stage.

FOOTNOTE. — The last Shakespearean company to appear in Brisbane was Alan Wilkie's Players. They had a highly successful season in the Theatre Royal in 1926.

Brisbane Courier Mail 8th October 1949

great Australian entrepreneur, J C Williamson. After Ben Fuller died in 1952, Carroll took complete control of the business, producing many of the popular musicals that came to Australia in the 1950s and 60s.

Although Arthur was still working for Beecham, we see that in 1949 he was also helping Dan O'Connor with the arrangements for a tour by the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre Company from Stratford-upon-Avon.

The first newspaper article from the Brisbane Courier Mail, doubts that they will be able to visit Brisbane. This might have indeed been the case, but it is just as likely that this was one of Arthur's publicity stunts, to generate more interest in the tour. In the event, they did actually play in Brisbane. The article also states that the tour was being arranged and financed by Dan O'Connor. Whilst it is true that Dan was organizing the whole thing, I believe that the money was actually put up by either Sir Ben Fuller or J C Williamson, depending upon which theatre they were playing.

The leading actors all came to Arthur and Peggy's new home for a party during their stay in Melbourne.

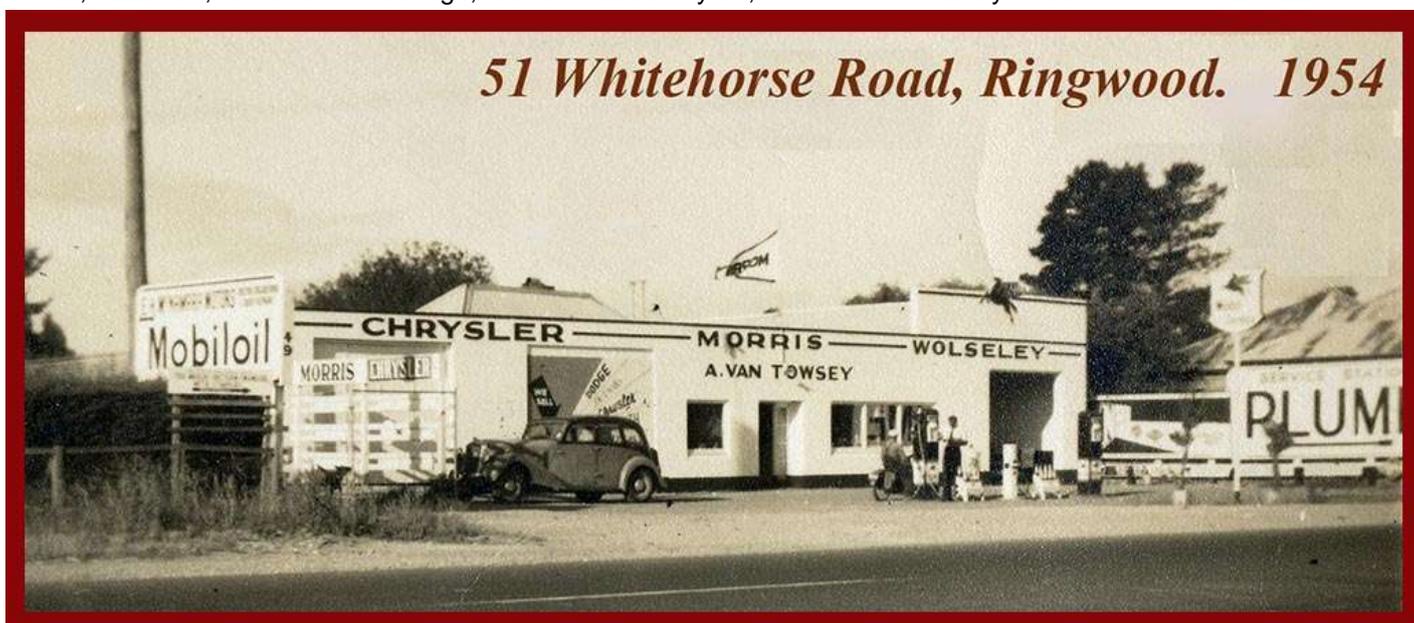
Van's position at Beecham Export, was linked to that of G.A. Dunbar, the Managing Director. When he left Beecham, Van's job also came to an end.

At this point, in 1953, Arthur had the idea of starting a garage on the main road coming into Ringwood.

As well as being a petrol filling station, Arthur would also employ an A Grade mechanic and have a small dealership for Chrysler and Nuffield cars (Morris, Wolseley and MG).

The basic idea for this business was quite good, but there were a few drawbacks, the first being that they would have to sell the lovely new house on the hill to pay for the new venture.

Fortunately, or in Peggy's opinion, unfortunately, the land on which Van intended to build the garage, already had a small, run down, two bedroom cottage, with a small back yard, into which the family could move.



The other problem was that Van did not really have enough money to support the overheads of the venture, during the time that it would take to grow and become profitable.

This enterprise showed up a problem that would arise again in the future, in that although he was a great salesman, Van had neither the patience nor the accounting skills to properly plan and grow a business. He always did better within a company where someone else handled the administration and Van went out and conquered the market.

It is unlikely that the decision to sell the garage was purely based on financial considerations. Little more than one year of operation should not have been enough to determine that the venture was not going to succeed.

More likely is a combination of unpromising financial forecasts and pressure from Peggy to get out of that slum and back to proper civilization.

The growing family would also have been a bit of an accommodation time-bomb. With one child at school, another about to start and the third reaching an age where she would have to be moved out of the main bedroom, the family had simply outgrown the two bedroom shack.