Reference number: MS 294

Guide to the Papers of John Forbes

Australian Defence Force Academy Library

Contact information:

Special Collections
Academy Library
UNSW@ADFA
CRICOS Provider Code: 00100G
Australian Defence Force Academy
Canberra ACT 2600
Phone: +61 2 6268 6270
Fax: +61 2 6247 2324
Email: specialcollections@adfa.edu.au

Prepared by:

K. Diehm

Date completed:

September 2000

Encoded by:

Special Collections

Last updated:

April 2003

This finding aid is published as part of the Australian Literary Manuscript Collections Project, which has received funding from the Australian Research Council's Research Infrastructure Equipment and Facilities (RIEF) Scheme.

©2000 Australian Defence Force Academy. All rights reserved.
Summary

Title: Papers of John Forbes
Date range: 1969-2002
Reference number: MS 294
Extent: 75 cm (6 boxes)
Repository: Australian Defence Force Academy Library
Abstract: This collection includes correspondence, manuscript and typescript drafts of poems, book reviews, reader’s reports and articles by Forbes. There are also interview transcripts and writings regarding Forbes, and drafts of poetry and prose sent to Forbes.

Scope and Content

The papers of John Forbes feature personal and professional correspondence between Forbes and writers such as Laurie Duggan, John Kinsella, Les Murray and John Tranter. There are also drafts and page proofs of Forbes’ book New and selected poems (1991). Other elements of the collection include drafts of poems and prose writings by Forbes, interview transcripts and book reviews, and manuscript and typescript drafts of poems sent to Forbes. Poems by other writers include poems sent to Forbes for the journal Surfers Paradise, No. 5. The collection covers a small but intense period of Forbes’ literary work.

Organization

This collection has been rearranged into eight artificial series to describe and preserve context and relationships.

Biographical Note

John Patrick Edward Forbes was born in Melbourne, on 1 September 1950, and lived most of his early life in New Guinea, Malaya and Sydney. He completed is Higher School Certificate at De La Salle College, Cronulla in 1968. He graduated from Sydney University with a Bachelor of Arts Honours in 1973. He was a poet, teacher, editor and reviewer and had been publishing his own poetry since 1969. From 1984, he taught creative
writing and was writer-in-residence at various secondary schools, colleges and universities in Australia and England. He was invited to read poetry at schools, colleges, universities, libraries and at festivals.

Forbes' poetry, reviews and articles were published in various Australian anthologies, journals and newspapers. His poetry was widely reviewed; he has been the subject of a variety of biographical works, and critical analyses have been written regarding his work and contribution to Australian literature. He edited and produced *Surfers Paradise* 1974-c. 1992; he reviewed poetry, prose, art and non-fiction for the *Age*, *Australian*, *Sunday herald*, Melbourne, 1990-1991 and the *Sydney morning herald*; he was poetry editor of *Scripsi* 1990-1993, poetry reader/editor for Freemantle Arts Centre Press 1990-1993, poetry editor and consultant Angus & Robertson(HarperCollins) 1994, and non-fiction consultant for *Meanjin* 1995-1997.

Forbes was awarded several scholarships, prizes and grants, including the Teachers and Commonwealth Scholarship 1968, Commonwealth Postgraduate Scholarship 1973 and the Arthur Macquarie Travelling Fellowship 1975; the Poetry Society of Australia Award 1972, New Poetry Award 1973, H.M. Butterley - F. Earle-Hooper Memorial Award 1976 (for best contribution to *Southerly*). His writing has been recognised with the award of numerous grants, from the Literature Board of the Australia Council in 1974, 1982, 1988 and 1990, the residency award at the Australia Council B.R. Whiting Library, Rome 1993, and a four-year Senior Writers Fellowship 1995. He also received an Australian Bicentennial Authority grant 1984, and an Arts Council of Victoria grant 1994.


Administrative Information

Access
This collection is available for research.

Restrictions on Use
No copying is permitted without the permission of the copyright owners.

Preferred Citation
[Manuscript Item], Papers of John Forbes, Australian Defence Force Academy Library, MS 294, Series [Number], Folder [Number].

Provenance
The collection was acquired from John Forbes in 1992 and 1993 and from his family in 2002.

Additional Information

Separated Material
This collection originally included a number of publications, listed below. These works have been separately catalogued.

Drawings, A. F. (Ken Bolton). “A small portfolio of drawings of covers”.

Nash, Ken (Mark O’Connor). Ode to Iggy Pop.


Slug, No. 2.

Surfers Paradise, Nos. 1-4.

Your friendly fascist. Nos. 17, 21, 22.


*Ear in the wheatfield*, Second series, no. 9, July 1974.

*Ear in the wheatfield*, Second series, no. 17, Autumn 1976.


Further papers relating to John Forbes are held by the Fryer Library, University of Queensland, at UQFL 148; University of Sydney Library, University of Sydney, at MS 0012 Guide to the Papers of Erica Bell; Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, (call number not provided) John Forbes literary papers, and the Oral History Section, National Library of Australia.

**Series List and Descriptions**

**Series 1 Correspondence, 1980-2000**

This series comprises correspondence between Forbes and numerous Australian literary associates, his friends, family, agents and publishers. Topics discussed include poetry criticism, literary works and publications, as well as personal matters. The series includes several postcards. There are also a small number of letters relating to the publication of *New and selected poems* (1991) in Series 3.
Folder 1
General correspondence and photocopies of poetry, 1983-1992

Correspondents include Don Anderson, Bruce [Beaver], Ken Bolton, Laurence Bourke, Peter Craven of *Scripsi*, Robert Crawford, Louise Crisp, Laurie Duggan, Carl Harrison-Ford, Yang Guobing, Kevin Hart (*re The trespass of the sign*), John Kinsella (with poem “The Dam Busters”), Anthony [Lawrence], Jennifer [Maiden], Les Murray, Gregory O’Brien, Peter [Porter], John Tranter (with poem “An absolutely extraordinary recital”), Alan Wearne and Michael [Wilding]

Folder 2
General undated correspondence and notes

Correspondents include Ken Bolton, Robert Crawford, Louise Crisp, Laurie [Duggan], Gisela Ervin-Ward, John Forbes (first page missing), Carl Harrison-Ford, Gwen Harwood, Meaghan Morris, Victoria Morrison (biographical notes for Lehmann-Grey anthology), Les Murray, Gregory O’Brien, John and Lyn Tranter, Alan Wearne, Andrew [?], Judith [?], Lawrence [?], Michael [?] and Ron [?]

Folder 3
Postcards sent to Forbes, 1980-1992

Folder 4

Correspondents include Chris [Wallace-Crabbe], Angie Angel, Angus & Robertson, Joy Hooton, Michael Denholm and Lynn Hard of University College, Australian Defence Force Academy, Australian Society of Authors, Irene Stevens of Australia Council for the Arts, K.E. Baumber of the University of Wollongong, Michele Beale, Ken Bolton, Tony Bond, Paul Brennan of Primavera Press, Chris Burns, John Cain, Heather Cam of Hale & Iremonger, Ed Campion, Kiernen Carroll, Gary Catalano, Sherryl Clark of Footscray Community Arts Centre, Robert Crawford of University of Saint Andrews, Laurie Duggan, Felicity Edge and David Hamilton of Oxford University Press, Michael Forshaw, Helen Garwood of Fremantle Arts Centre Press and John Frow

Folder 5

Correspondents include Carl Harrison-Ford, John Hawke, Robert Hefner, Margot Hilton, Moira Hyland, Ivor Indyk, Ingrid Squirrell of East Midlands Arts Board and Sandra Jasper Loughborough University,

Folder 6
Copies of general correspondence from Forbes, 1983-1997

Including to Judith of Angus & Robertson (with five poems) , Bruce Bennett and Susan Lever of University College, Australian Defence Force Academy, Sandra Jasper of East Midlands Arts Board, David Foster, Michael Hulse, Andrew Wilkins of Hyland House, Ivor Indyk, Literature Board of the Australia Council for the Arts, Angelo Loukakis, Les Murray, Peter Porter, Mandy Sayer, Marianne Shaw, Brian Stonier, University of Technology Sydney and University of Wollongong

Folder 7
General correspondence relating to issue no. 5 of Surfer's paradise, and to Sacrophogus & unnerved alms, prose writing, 1992-2000

Surfer's paradise: correspondents include Lynn Hard, Luke Davies, John Kinsella, Pam Brown, together with a copy of the cover and a photocopy of an article by Forbes on the magazine for Salt Volume 11, 1999
Sacrophogus & unnerved alms, prose writing (1980) by Kris Hemensley (variant title: “Rare birds with sticky wings”); the book contains a copy of Forbes' poem “Stalin's holiday”: correspondents include Pam Brown, Kris Hemensley, E.L. Forbes, Gillian Currie and Anne McDonald of the National Gallery of Australia and Michael Callaghan of Redback Graphix, together with a photocopy listing the contributor's and the title of their work, 2000

Series 2 Notebooks

This small series comprises seven notebooks kept by Forbes containing drafts of poems and articles; correspondence; research notes and ideas; contacts, and ink and pencil drawings. Only one notebook is dated.
Folder 1-2
Notebooks (7), one dated 1996

**Series 3 Poetry**

This series comprises manuscript, typescript and photocopy typescript drafts of published and unpublished poems, together with correspondence, notes and page proofs. The papers document the development and publication of Forbes' poetry collection *New and selected poems* (1991). There are also drafts of early and unpublished poems. In addition, the notebooks in Series 2 include often extensive notes, ideas and drafts for many of Forbes' poems. A computer disc containing published copies of poems is included in **Series 7**.

3.1 *New and selected poems* (1991)

Comprises typescripts, page proofs and correspondence with the publisher's relating to *New and selected poems*, which was published by Angus & Robertson, Pymble, NSW, 1991. Reviews of the book are included in **Series 6**.

Folder 1
Computer typescript draft, 113 p. and notes, 18/4/1990

Folder 2
1st annotated page proofs, 112 p., together with related correspondence, 15/10/1990

Folder 3
Annotated master of 1st page proofs, 121 p., 15/10/1990

Folder 4
Final 2 annotated page proofs, 121 p. 15/10/1990

Folder 5
Annotated page proofs photocopy, 98 p.; author's copy of page proofs (incomplete), 15 October-21 November 1990; signed Memorandum of Agreement, 1/8/1989


Comprises typescript drafts of “The banquet of Cleopatra & other poems”, prepared by Forbes before his death for his collection *Damaged glamour*,
which was published posthumously by Brandl & Schlesinger, Rose Bay, NSW, 1998. Also includes explanatory notes by his father E.L. Forbes.

Folder 1

Computer typescript drafts of “The banquet of Cleopatra & other poems”, 1995


3.3 Miscellaneous Poetry

Manuscript, typescript and photocopy typescript drafts of published and unpublished poems, together with notes from E.L. Forbes. Most poems are undated.

Folder 1

Manuscript, annotated typescript, and annotated photocopy typescript drafts of unpublished poems arranged alphabetically according to final title

Folder 2
Manuscript, annotated typescript, and annotated photocopy typescript drafts of poems arranged alphabetically according to title


Folder 3
Manuscript, annotated typescript, and annotated photocopy typescript drafts of incomplete, corrected and variant poems arranged alphabetically according to final title or first line


Folder 4
Manuscript, annotated typescript, and annotated photocopy typescript drafts of incomplete, corrected and variant poems arranged alphabetically according to final title


Folder 5

Photocopies of poems as they appeared in a variety of magazines, arranged alphabetically according to title, 1970-1997

Photocopies of sixty poems as they appeared in a variety of magazines, 1970-1997

, including:

Photocopies of pages from magazines containing copies of Forbes' poetry, 1973-1996

, including:
“On Tiepolo’s banquet of Cleopatra”, “Ode to tropical skiing”, “Ode (Goodbye memory...)”, “A Bad day”, together with notes on Forbes, “Drugs”, “The search for the golden boomerang”, “Ode: Inspired by The last outlaw a TV mini-series “Brought to you by the Australian Mining Industry””, “Up, up, home & away”, together with package/assembly
concept details and a note from Pam Brown, “Pacific”, “Baby”
Computer printout with details of some of the small press magazines in which Forbes' poems appeared

Folder 6
Photocopies from original sources of thirty previously uncollected poems in the order in which they appear in *Collected poems, 1970-1998*, which was published by Brandl & Schlesinger (2001), including:

Folder 7
Computer typescript photocopies of poems sent to the Academy Library by Forbes


Computer typescript photocopies of poems sent to Special Collections by Forbes, including: “Queer theory”, “Ode to cultural studies”, “autobiography”, “Muddy Waters relaxing between gigs”, “Mazda”, “post-colonial biscuit”, “Spleen”, “Satellite of love”, “fletcher jones”, “The Drowned ones”
**Series 4 Prose, c. 1977-1997**

This series includes a selection of Forbes' articles, reader's reports, book and art reviews and other unpublished prose writings and projects. Related correspondence is included in Series 1 and notes and drafts are included in the notebooks in Series 2.

4.1, Reviews, 1990-1996

Comprises manuscript and annotated typescripts and photocopies of book and art reviews for magazines, newspapers and radio, and unpublished reviews by Forbes.

Folder 1

Manuscript and annotated typescript and photocopy typescript drafts of titled reviews, 1990-1996


Folder 2

Manuscript and annotated typescript and photocopy typescript drafts of untitled reviews, 1990-1996


4.2, Reader's Reports, c. 1990s

Comprises manuscript and annotated typescripts and photocopies of reader's reports by Forbes.

Folder 1

Reports for Chris Kelen, Anthony Lawrence, Stephen Hall and Roland Leach, c. 1990s

Comprises manuscript, annotated typescript, and photocopy typescripts of published and unpublished criticisms, essays, addresses and biographical prose by Forbes. There are also transcripts of interviews by Forbes with Amanda Lohrey and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o.

Folder 1
Manuscript and typescript drafts, 1980-1997

Including “Go ask Alice” (incomplete), “Language at the edge”, “The Pill”, “Regional art & its enemies”, “Sydney a place for poetry?” “Sydney Push”, “The village explainer” and Wayne's world

Interviews: photocopy of a published interview with Amanda Lohrey entitled “Writer from the waterfront gives politics a berth” and a transcript of an interview with Ngugi Wa Thiong'o entitled “Profile of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o”

Manuscript draft of a speech by Forbes for his mother's 70th birthday, 3 p.

Typescript report on Arts Victoria grant

Computer typescript of a judge's report for Victorian Premier's Literary Awards - Poetry

Flyer by Forbes advertising a party

4.4, Material on Frank O'Hara

Comprises material relating to Forbes thesis and a published essay on the American writer and art critic Frank O'Hara.

Folder 1
Manuscript photocopy of Forbes' unfinished Master of Arts in English Literature, University of Sydney thesis on Frank O'Hara, 126 p., 1979; annotated typescript of a critical article entitled “In memory of my feelings” (incomplete), together with a photocopy of the published version entitled “Frank O'Hara's In memory of my feelings”, published in Scripsi, volume 2, numbers 2 & 3, Spring 1983, p. 199-219


Comprises manuscript, typescript and photocopies of biographical writings by Forbes.

Folder 1

Photocopy of published version of “Loughborough diary”, which was published in Meanjin, volume 56, no. 2, 1977; “Work”, typescript biographical note, manuscript, 14 p., annotated photocopy typescript, 11 p.,

Folder 2
Curriculum vitae's (7, some incomplete); manuscript and photocopy typescript autobiography by Forbes written in the third person

Series 5 Poetry and Prose sent to Forbes, 1988-1992

This series comprises manuscript and typescript drafts of poetry and prose sent to Forbes for criticism, advice or perusal. It includes drafts of poems by various writers for Surfers Paradise No. 5, together with a copy of the journal issue.

Folder 1
Manuscript and typescript drafts

“The shadow of doubt : and derivations in Australian poetry”, typescript photocopy essay by Robert Adamson, 10 July 1990

“The clean dark”, typescript photocopy poems by Robert Adamson, c. 1989
“Halothane”, typescript photocopy poem by John Tranter, c. 1988
“John Forbes : 'Topothesia’”, manuscript essay by Bridge Weller [nd]

Folder 2
'Blue notes' annotated computer typescript poems by Laurie Duggan, 80 p.

Folder 3
“Dazed”, annotated typescript photocopy poem by Ken Bolton, together with a note from Forbes
“Getting to know the general”, “Tabula Rasa” and “His wife is a well known criminologiste”, typescript photocopy poems by [Martin Johnston], 12 January 1988
“Greedy and dumb The true believers”, notes toward the construction of a context for reading by Meaghan Morris, computer transcript of a talk
delivered at the Claire Johnston Memorial Lecture, Edinburgh Film Festival, 19 August 1988, 22 p., together with an explanatory letter from Morris, 29 January 1989

Folder 4
Surfers Paradise, No. 5, this issue was produced in an edition of 150 copies, of which 26 were lettered and signed by Forbes - annotated manuscript, typescript and typescript photocopy drafts of poems by various writers, 19 p. c. 1992, together with a copy of the journal issue (undated)


Series 6 Works about Forbes, 1988-2002

This series comprises biographical and publicity material, including interview transcripts, published and unpublished criticisms of Forbes' work and various newspaper cuttings relating to his career; copies of drawings by Frank Littler; referees reports and two essays included in Homage to John Forbes (2002). There is an audio cassette copy of the Keneally radio interview in Series 7.

Folder 1
Interviews with Forbes

Including:
Transcript of a radio interview with Catherine Keneally on Radio 5UV, Adelaide, 20 September 1991

entitled “John Forbes - form, intuition and (a) song : interview”, also appeared in Otis rush : new writing, new art & reviews, no. 8 February 1993, p. 88-102

Folder 2
Critical analyses, biographical material, cuttings, referees reports and drawings
Including:
Photocopy typescript entitled “John Forbes : a ludic voice” by Jennifer Strauss
Typescript entitled “Red wheelbarrow poetry : John Forbes in Wollongong” by Joseph Davis, August 1990
Photocopies from various published sources containing biographical details of Forbes (8)
Copy of Humanities research, 2, 1998 containing the poem “Lassu in Cielo”, p. 62 and “In memoriam John Forbes” by Christopher Burns, p. 63
Newspaper cutting of “Behind the lines” by Don Anderson, Saturday, July 1, 1989, p. 78
Newspaper cuttings of reviews of The stunned mullet(1988) and New and selected poems (1991)
Photocopies of Frank Littler’s drawings, some of which appear in The stunned mullet
Typescript photocopies of referees reports supporting Forbes' applications for Australia Council grants, 1994-1995

Two typescripts of essays included in the publication Homage to John Forbes edited by Ken Bolton (2002)

**Series 7 Audio Cassettes and Computer Discs, 1991-1999**

This small series comprises one audio cassette tape and one computer disc.

Folder 1
Audio cassette of the Radio 5UV, Adelaide interview between Forbes and Catherine Keneally, 20/9/1991
Computer disc containing 157 poems by Forbes, 1999

**Series 8 Photographs**

Photograph of John Forbes and other writers at a book launch.

Folder 1
Black and white photograph of Rae Desmond Jones, John Forbes, John A. Scott, Laurie Duggan and three unidentified people at a book launch, Courthouse Hotel, Newtown, Sydney, nd
## Box List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series</th>
<th>Folder/Piece</th>
<th>Box</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1-6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Main</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Main</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Main</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Main</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Main</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Main</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>5-7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Main</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Main</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Main</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Main</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Main</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Main</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Main</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Main</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-8</td>
<td>1-3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>AV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>