

ALAN GEOFFREY (GEOFF) SERLE (1922-1998)

Eminent Australian historian Geoff Serle was born to parents Percival Serle, scholar and bibliographer and Dora Serle, artist, on 10 March 1922 at Hawthorn. Brought up in a well-educated and well-read family interested in the arts and the literary world, he excelled during his school years at Scotch College and then studied history at the University of Melbourne. He left to join the A.I.F., serving in New Guinea where he was wounded at the battle of Finschhafen.

After the war, he resumed study at the University of Melbourne and when he won the Rhodes scholarship. He also studied at Oxford, only to return to teach back at Melbourne. When Monash University opened he moved to the history department there where he remained until retirement. He married Jessie Macdonald in 1955 and she shared his interests, becoming an art historian herself.

Serle was a prolific writer and produced seminal works such as *The Golden Age* and *The Rush to be Rich*; both works studied by generations of students of Australian History. He also wrote on art history, the history of literature, music, theatre and architecture. His wonderful biographies are well regarded and include the biographies of Robin Boyd, John Monash, Sir John Medley and an evocative memoir of his father, Percival Serle.

He was active in many groups and organisations including the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and the Royal Australian Historical Society as well as the Australian Academies of the Humanities and of the Social Sciences. A keen and active sportsman, he played tennis and in

later life followed many sports with interest. His passion for architecture led him to contribute to the National Trust of Australia, Victoria where he was a member of the Buildings Classification Committee for many years.

He died in Epworth Hospital on 27 April 1998. His eulogist, Dr Davis McCaughey, remarked that through his understanding of our past he helped us understand ourselves.



'An Australian Gold Diggings', oil on canvas, Edwin Stockqueler

Find out more

Serle, G. *the Golden Age*, (1963)

Serle, G. *the Rush to be Rich*, (1971)

Serle, G. *John Monash*, (1982)



DR JAN PENNEY BA, DIP ED, PHD

Jan is a professional historian who has worked across the fields of heritage, education and tourism. She has taught at several universities, including Monash University where she delivered the master of public history course. She is also a former Chair of the Heritage Council of Victoria. Jan was appointed to The Greater Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust in 2010.



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