

# RECENT ACQUISITIONS

## The Papers of Russell and Maisie Drysdale

**M**aisie Newbold grew up in Melbourne and in 1937 studied art at the George Bell School where two of her fellow students were Peter Purves Smith and Russell Drysdale. She married Purves Smith in 1946, but he died after an operation in 1949. Maisie worked as a bookseller and librarian until 1964, when she married Drysdale. They built a house, Bouddi Farm, on the central coast of New South Wales, where they were generous hosts to many visitors. Russell Drysdale died in 1981 and Maisie continued to live at Bouddi until her own death in 2001.

In the last year the National Library has acquired three quite disparate collections of papers of Russell and Maisie Drysdale.

Lynne Clarke, the daughter of Russell Drysdale, has donated Maisie's papers to the Library. They are a splendid source on the lives of Maisie and both her husbands. There are, for instance, 146 letters from Purves Smith covering the years 1937 to 1946, as well as some of his sketchbooks, and 76 letters from Drysdale written during 1963 and 1964. Other material includes papers of Maisie's forebears, some of her early sketchbooks, letters that she wrote to her mother when she was overseas, cuttings, letters from friends, photographs of paintings and drawings by both Purves Smith and Drysdale, exhibition catalogues and memorabilia. There is an extensive correspondence with galleries, dealers and publishers in the years after Drysdale's death.

Among the artists and writers who figure in the collection are Donald

Friend, Peter Sculthorpe, Jock Marshall and the Canadian novelist Robertson Davies (Maisie's brother-in-law).

The eulogy at Russell Drysdale's funeral was delivered by John Nagle, a judge of the New South Wales Supreme Court. Mr Nagle has recently presented to the Library a collection of 75 letters written by Drysdale to Paul Haefliger between 1957 and 1980. Haefliger had been art critic for the *Sydney Morning Herald* for 16 years, but after 1957 lived mostly in Europe. The letters are often lengthy and Drysdale wrote openly and warmly about other artists, dealers and curators. He also wrote about his exhibitions, his travels overseas and in outback Australia, the books he was reading, the music he enjoyed, his various homes, and small details of his daily life. It is possibly the most important series of Drysdale's letters to be preserved in a library.

The third acquisition has little research value but is a delightful artifact. In 1978 Russell Drysdale gave Maisie a copy of Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy's book *The Public School Phenomenon, 597-1977* (London: Hodder and Staughton, 1977). He not only inscribed it, but adorned it with three sketches: the young knock-kneed Russell in school uniform, the young Maisie in school uniform with a hockey stick, and finally the two schoolchildren together, armed with a cricket bat and tennis racquet.

GRAEME POWELL  
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