The Foundation’s trust deed, signed in 1986, states that “the Settlor desires to perpetuate the memory of her late husband, Edward Roland Garnett Passe, who was born in Johannesburg and died in England on the 1st day of August 1952 … and her (second) late husband Rodney Wellington Williams, who died in the United States of America on the 19th day of February 1984”.

That all sounds rather legalistic and perhaps somewhat impersonal. But it should be clearly recognised that it is to this extraordinary woman, Barbara Hope Williams, with her love, vision, concern and generosity, that the Foundation and all those who have benefited from its activities owe the most enormous debt of gratitude. Her selfless bequest, dedicated in perpetuity to the advancement of the Specialty of Otorhinolaryngology and the related medical, surgical and paramedical fields (and planned during her life to become active upon her death), has already facilitated changes and advances that could otherwise never have been possible in Australia.

Thus far, $42 million has been provided, purely from the income of the bequest, to further advances in all aspects of the Specialty, both from the scientific and clinical points of view. Many recipients of awards have built upon the funding provided by the Foundation and gone on to attain higher academic degrees, have been granted higher academic status, have been able to avail themselves of international experience, and develop new and exciting technologies and therapies.

This was Barbara Williams’ dream and the responsibility she invited us to accept. Much of her dream has been realised already. And in what is really quite a short time! But much more is now being planned in the areas of clinical and translational research and higher level surgical skills training to balance the enormous advances made by those scientists dedicated to the basic science of the Specialty, all in the pursuit of excellence, the demand that Barbara insisted upon.

It is for all these reasons, and with a deep sense of gratitude, that the Foundation has desired, to honour and more formally recognise the incredible contribution of Barbara Williams through the commissioning of a portrait of her by Dr Gillian Dunlop - an esteemed colleague in Otorhinolaryngology, a past awardee of the Foundation, and a renowned, highly skilled portrait artist of national and international reputation.

Gillian’s portrait truly reflects the character of a remarkable woman.

Dr Dean Beaumont
Chairman of the Foundation
Biographical Details

The Garnett Passe and Rodney Williams Memorial Foundation was established on 26 February 1986 by the late Mrs Barbara Williams to honour the memory of her two husbands, Garnett Passe and Rodney Williams.

The trust became operative upon her death on 16 September 1991, with one of the largest bequests ever made to Australian medicine. It is one of the largest to Otorhinolaryngology in the world.

Barbara Slatter was born in Kenya on 16 August 1909. Her parents came from Rhodesia and were travelling when Barbara was born somewhat unexpectedly. She was christened by a passing clergyman but no one recorded his denomination so that Barbara remained in doubt as to the branch of the Christian Church to which she belonged. She had been told that she could be christened only once but eventually, in 1988, she decided to be christened as an Episcopalian in Charleston, South Carolina.

She told a story of her father who, while out on safari, suffered an injury to his right hand that later became gangrenous. He drank a bottle of whisky and then excised the gangrenous area, amputating his own right hand in the region of the wrist joint. This saved his life and he was able to return to civilisation where his surgical handiwork was tidied up. Subsequently, he continued to shoot, using his gun from his left shoulder, having changed from the right, and taught Barbara to ride and shoot. Apart from this, not a great deal is known of the early period of Barbara's life other than that her childhood was spent mostly in Kenya and Rhodesia, and much of her schooling was in England. Some of her childhood was spent at Bledington in Gloucestershire.

As an adult, she trained as an artist at the Edinburgh College of Arts. In early 1938, she was sent out to India by The Illustrated London News, being commissioned to prepare paintings of the people living in a number of areas. Most of her work was line drawing and watercolour. She wrote, “I went to [India] to paint and I loved it … some so very handsome … with aristocratic features … and blue eyes. I went up the Khyber Pass - quite a feat in those days … pre-war”. She lived in and around Kashmir, usually in a harem, but was able to venture out and go riding from time to time. She had a brother serving in the Indian Army and, presumably, this was one reason that attracted her to this region. He was subsequently killed in Burma during the war. It was at about this time she was being courted by Garnett Passe.

How and when she and Garnett met is not known but a little book that Garnett published in 1933, entitled “The Singing Voice”, contains some sketches labelled “B. Slatter”, Barbara's maiden name. They must have known each other for many years.

In the latter part of 1939, while she was visiting India, she received a telephone call from Garnett, who was in London at the time, urging her to return home as war was expected. The call was to ask her to marry him. She used to recount how the manual telephone exchanges of the day led to this proposal of marriage being relayed over half the world by many people in Europe and in India. In September 1939, she returned to England in the first convoy to leave Port Said for passage through the Mediterranean after the outbreak of the war.

Barbara and Garnett were married in December 1939 and lived at 36 Weymouth Street, London, which he had purchased just before the war.

Garnett was a Royal Naval Reserve Medical Officer. He was called up and initially served at the Naval Hospital at Plymouth, being there during the blast of that city whilst Barbara served as an Air Raid Warden.

Barbara wrote, “As soon as the war was over, we came back to Weymouth Street to patch up the war wounds … among other things, a small fire bomb went right through the consulting room … and he started his practice again”.

In subsequent years, the ground floor level of 36 Weymouth Street was let out to an Ophthalmologist and it is probable that Garnett used this same area of the house for his own professional rooms. Barbara retained this house and spent some time each year in it, right up until her death in 1991.

In July 1952, Garnett received a letter from Dr Leighton Johnson, President of the New England Otolaryngological Society, inviting him to be the principal speaker at the next meeting of the Society on “Surgery of the Sympathetic in Relation to Neurovascular Lesions of the Internal Ear (including Menière’s Disease)”. However, Garnett died suddenly the following month from a massive haemoptysis. He had been suffering from essential hypertension and, in those days, there was no medication to control his condition. Barbara was subsequently invited to present his paper at the meeting of the New England Otolaryngological Society in November 1952. She flew across the Atlantic and gave a remarkably successful presentation with inimitable charm.

Barbara and Garnett were married for a little over twelve and a half years. There were no children from the marriage.

In the early 1960s, Barbara decided that she wanted to leave the major part of her estate to perpetuate the memory of Garnett. She was well aware of the financial hardships that he faced while working for his senior qualification in London and wished to do something to help promising young people, particularly their families. Eventually, she came up with the idea that she would offer a bequest to Australians wishing to study to become Otolaryngologists, one of her motivations being that Garnett had been born the son of an Australian and had been educated in Melbourne.

Two Australians were instrumental in encouraging Barbara to set up such a bequest. The first was the eminent South Australian Otolaryngologist, Alfred Sydney (“Syd”) De Bohun Cocks, who first met Garnett when he went to the Central London Hospital,
Gray's Inn Road, to study for the DLO, which he obtained in 1937. Garnett coached him for this examination when he was Norman Patterson’s registrar at the London Hospital. Patterson was “no mean painter” himself and had exhibited on several occasions at the Medical Art Society.

Following his preliminary discussions with Barbara, Syd Cocks enlisted the aid of an old South Australian school friend and Rhodes Scholar, Myles Formby, who went on to become Head of the Department of Otolaryngology at University College Hospital, London.

There followed a series of negotiations between Syd Cocks, Myles Formby and Barbara, culminating with Syd Cocks, in conjunction with a solicitor in Adelaide, drafting what he considered would be a satisfactory clause to be included in her will. Difficulties had been encountered in the negotiations with solicitors and the drafting of appropriate clauses, and the matter appeared to lapse, with Syd Cocks almost giving up all hope that the bequest would ever materialise.

However, when Barbara was visiting Syd Cocks in Adelaide several years later, she mentioned to him that she hoped that she would be able to leave the major part of her estate to perpetuate the memory of Garnett for the benefit of Otolaryngology in Australia. After seeking her permission, Syd Cocks reported at the annual meeting of the Otolaryngological Society of Australia in Hobart in 1964 that there was a possibility of a substantial bequest to Otolaryngology sometime in the future.

Matters then became far more complicated for several reasons. Firstly, Barbara married Rodney Williams, a retired stockbroker from New York in February 1968, and went to live in the United States, whilst retaining her London home. Secondly, Syd Cocks died in May 1968.

Rodney was, however, a very considerate and understanding person. He did not interfere with any of Barbara’s activities in relation to the establishment of her trust but quietly assessed the situation, and eventually provided her with the opportunity to make it a much larger and more effective entity.

Barbara had no idea how wealthy her husband was and, in fact, on her marriage to Rodney, she had signed a document foregoing any claim on him or his estate. For this reason, she felt she needed to retain her own assets as a ‘nest egg’ in case he died and did not sufficiently provide for her after his death.

Colin Richards, who had succeeded Syd Cocks as President of the Otolaryngological Society of Australia, took over the role of negotiating with Barbara (now Williams) in relation to the establishment of her trust. Colin had never met her and, in fact, did not know where she was at that time. Eventually, he was able to make contact and was much relieved to find that in spite of her remarriage, she still intended to make a substantial bequest to Otolaryngology in Australia.

Eventually, a trust deed to establish The Garnett Passe Memorial Trust was signed in March 1976. From then until 1983, there were various discussions in which Barbara made it clear how she expected the funds in the trust to be used and that she wished that the trust be administered entirely in Australia.

However, during 1983, Rodney had several heart attacks and in November that year, he returned to his home in Charleston to be nursed. Nothing more could be done for him. In February 1984, Rodney died and the situation changed dramatically. His will left a substantial bequest to his widow with instructions that the funds were to return to his estate upon her death, unless she determined otherwise.

There followed a period of great stress and confusion for Barbara, due mostly to the increased responsibility of a much larger estate. She received advice from various quarters as to what she should do with her assets and her London accountant, her husband’s investment adviser and her attorney in New York, all advised her that it was unwise to leave so much money to Otolaryngology in Australia! She was encouraged to sign several wills successively to protect her assets but was not happy with them. Eventually, she decided to start again and, after making certain personal bequests, indicated that she wanted to establish a single trust with the bulk of her assets to be dedicated to perpetuate the memory of her two husbands.

She made it clear that if this very large sum of money was to come to Australia, the trust deed would have to be rewritten, had to be entirely independent of any other body or organisation, and much wider in concept to include the whole field of Otorhinolaryngology and the related surgical, medical and paramedical disciplines, and that a function of the trust would be to promote the highest possible standards of excellence. Her letters indicate that she was very insistent upon this.

All legal requirements having been fulfilled, a totally new trust deed to establish The Garnett Passe and Rodney Williams Memorial Foundation was signed in February 1986. The trustees appointed under this deed were The Union Fidelity Trustee Company of Australia Ltd, Colin Richards and Peter Freeman.

Finally, her wishes had been put into effect, after which she stated that a great burden had been lifted from around her neck and had now been conferred upon her trustees. A heavy burden indeed!

Ongoing discussions concerning the eventual activities of the trust continued to take place during which Barbara made it clear, on many occasions, that the thrust of her wishes was towards the pursuit of excellence, particularly on the part of selected individuals. Her wishes in this regard were subsequently incorporated within the motto that forms part of the crest of the Foundation, namely Semper ad Excellentiam Persequendam (“always in the pursuit of excellence”).

Barbara’s last few years were marred by increasing blindness and deteriorating general health with her increasing age. Mercifully, her mind remained clear and alert until the end, and she remained steadfast in her intention that the utmost must be done to financially secure the trust that she set up to honour the memory of her two husbands. In spite of her varying problems, including fractures from various falls, she adhered to her normal lifestyle for as long as she was able.

She was always reticent about her personal affairs and her bequest. Even in the early days of The Garnett Passe Memorial Trust, she was reluctant to say much about it. She resisted repeated attempts to be persuaded to come to Australia or be honoured by the Society that would ultimately benefit from the trust, perhaps because it would not become operative until her death and because she had no idea of what her financial situation might ultimately become.

Barbara died of a heart attack in London on 16 September 1991.
Training in surgery, as in classical art, employs the age-old system of master and apprentice. I had wonderful surgeon mentors and ready access to training videos and conferences. Not so for training to be a portrait painter.

Classical art training has long been “watered down”. Gone are the days of copying antique casts and anatomical dissection for artists. Very few schools teach rigorous levels of realism in life drawing or even correct canvas preparation for portraiture.

I stand in awe of the Great Masters. Their works, held in art museums, are now my primary information source, as I live in an era two generations after the collapse of formal art training.

Yet not all Great Masters took on apprentices. Michelangelo was so notoriously secretive that Raphael had to trick his way into the then unfinished and locked Sistine Chapel, desperate to learn from the Great Master. Raphael also copied the exact pose of another contemporaneous master (Figures 1 and 2). This was Leonardo’s ‘Mona Lisa’. It was brilliantly constructed, so why should he reinvent the wheel? The hard work of a pleasing composition had been done. In fact, the pose created for the ‘Mona Lisa’ (seated, three quarter view with right hand over left wrist and head turned almost to face the viewer) has now been copied countless times, even by me (Figure 3).

To create a colour portrait of Barbara Williams, I was given a 1950’s studio photograph. But, it was only in black and white. So, where did I turn? To a Great Master - Agnolo Bronzino, a sixteenth century Florentine, known for his remarkable portraits and superb colouring. Colouring, of course, was my missing ingredient.

Initially, I wanted to refuse this commission, as I had never met Barbara Williams. I prefer to develop a relationship with the sitter, as this allows me to express my perception of their persona in paint. Here there was no opportunity, so I am very grateful to Peter Freeman for imparting his memories of her to me. I soon realised what a valuable opportunity I would lose by refusing the commission. Indeed, many masterpieces have been posthumous.

The death of the subject was the very reason for a commemorative portrait, particularly in the Renaissance period.

So, I agreed. Fortunately, the studio black and white photograph had been taken with excellent lighting, which is an integral part of creating a successful portrait image. The composition, arms crossed, was very becoming as it drew the hands up towards the face. Hands, like faces often reflect the person within. Here they emphasised her refinement.

Colouring was my greatest challenge. I chose the colouring depicted in ‘Eleanor of Toledo’ by Bronzino (Figure 4). Eleanor married into a well-known banking family, the Medici. This was not entirely inappropriate for a painting of Barbara Williams, as her second husband, Rodney Williams, was an American stockbroker. Yet, it was the striking clarity, nobility and grace conveyed by Bronzino’s portrait that I wished to emulate.

The painting began by gridding the photograph and the canvas, and creating a charcoal sketch (Figures 5 and 6). A sepia image (Figure 7) was made, building up the tonal values as an under painting of accurate measure. Once this was dry, I layered on colour (think of cellophane) to create the glow. Each layer takes a week to dry. Some areas have up to seven layers (Figures 8 to 12).

Colour is added with trepidation, as the image is frequently lost and found again. Anyone seeking to be a portrait painter has experienced the need for persistence. It is not an easy task. The elusive moment when you capture the soul of the sitter must not be over painted.

Barbara Williams died just over 20 years ago but her generous legacy lives on as The Garnett Passe and Rodney Williams Memorial Foundation. She was a remarkable woman and I have sought to reflect this in her portrait.
Gillian Dunlop

After coming dux of her school, Gillian Dunlop announced her plans to go to Art School. "Not so", said her father, who suggested that she get a job like her five brothers and sisters, all of whom were studying Medicine.

Sixteen years later, she emerged with honours at graduation in 1987, FRACS in 1996 and then a rare position as a female ENT Surgeon. A career in rhinoplasty, which was to her a form of living sculpture, began.

When she was finally mistress of her own time, she began to enter art competitions, becoming a finalist in the Archibald Prize in 2004 and winning the People’s Choice Award for the Salon des Refuses in 2006.

Her main focus is portraiture with commissions including the Governor General, Her Excellency, Ms Quentin Bryce, as well as the Governors of New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania.

Her work is held both nationally and overseas.

PORTAIT COMMISSIONS

Governor General, Her Excellency, Ms Quentin Bryce
Governor of New South Wales, Professor Marie Bashir
Former Governor of Victoria, Professor David de Kretser
Former Governor of Tasmania and Head of the Army, Navy and Air Force, Sir Phillip Bennett
Mrs Hazel Hawke, wife of former Prime Minister Bob Hawke

AWARDS AND MAJOR EXHIBITIONS

People’s Choice Award, Salon des Refuses 2006
Portia Geach finalist 2006
Archibald finalist 2004
Blake Prize finalist 2003

ARTWORK HELD IN COLLECTIONS

Australia
United States
United Kingdom
Canada
New Zealand

PUBLICATIONS

agedcareguide.com.au, 8 March 2012, Hazel Hawke
thepunch.com.au, 7 March 2012, Hazel Hawke
Sydney Morning Herald, 6 March 2012, page 6, Hazel Hawke
The Telegraph, 6 March 2012, page 11, Hazel Hawke
bigpondnews.com, 5 March 2012, Hazel Hawke
Radius, Sydney Medical School Magazine, March 2010, page 38
Surgical News, September 2007, page 18-19

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

James Harvey Gallery 2003
James Harvey Gallery 2002
The Foundation wishes to thank Dr Peter Freeman, with the assistance of Dr Dean Beaumont and Mr Wayne Daniels, for the work in preparing the account of Mrs Barbara Williams, and acknowledges source letters provided by the families of the late Syd Cocks and Colin Richards.

The Foundation also wishes to thank Dr Gillian Dunlop for her willingness to accept the commission.

2012 marks the 21st anniversary of the death of Mrs Barbara Williams and the trustees have commissioned Dr Gillian Dunlop, a highly regarded Otorhinolaryngologist and portrait painter, to paint the commemorative portrait of a remarkable woman.
THE GARNETT PASSE AND RODNEY WILLIAMS MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

Suite 8.03, 372-376 Albert Street
East Melbourne VIC 3002 Australia

P (+61 3) 9419 0280
F (+61 3) 9419 0282
E gprwmf@bigpond.net.au

All correspondence:-
PO Box 577
East Melbourne VIC 8002 Australia