

James Ramsay AO

1923 - 1996



James was born on 19 July 1923 in Launceston, a twin to brother William, who sadly only survived for 3 months. His father Sir John Ramsay CBE was a pioneering surgeon and one of the founders of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. His Mother, Lady Ramsay was a nurse and later became an important advocate for charities and regularly hosted functions at their Launceston family home for organisations such as the Red Cross. James witnessed this deep involvement in numerous charities and philanthropic causes which no doubt seeded his own spirit of generosity.

The Ramsay name is synonymous with the famous Kiwi boot polish company, which was founded by James' Uncle William Ramsay. James was also the nephew of celebrated Australian artist Hugh Ramsay.

James attended Scotch College in Launceston and Geelong College in Victoria. He was keen to serve his country, however whilst ill health prevented him from serving on the frontline, he became a well-respected finance officer in the military services. Unfortunately his failing eyesight regarded him as unfit and he was discharged in 1943, and he then worked as a credit manager and bookkeeper for various organisations.

In 1960, James married Diana Hamilton from the South Australian wine making family and they made the most of their happy 35 years together. Later in life, James was to inherit some wealth from the Kiwi family business as well as a collection of Hugh Ramsay paintings. James and Diana were fulfilled by their life of philanthropy and they were acknowledged for this by each being awarded as an Officer of the Order of Australia in 1992. James passed away from cancer in 1996 at the age of 73.

Meanwhile, James's investments continued to grow with Diana having life interest in his estate. Diana's passing in 2017 triggered his significant cultural bequest to the Art Gallery of South Australia. Diana carried on James' memory through the establishment of the James and Diana Ramsay Foundation in 2008 and a book on the history of their lives and their philanthropic journey together is expected to be launched in 2024.

Some of James's Memberships and Associations included:

Adelaide Botanic Gardens
Adelaide Festival of Arts
Art Gallery of SA Foundation
National Gallery of Australia
National Trust of South Australia
National Trust of Tasmania
Naval and Military Club
Royal Adelaide Golf Club

Royal Agricultural and Horticultural Society
Royal Sydney Golf Club
South Australia Cricket Association
State Library of South Australia
The Adelaide Club
The Australian Ballet
The State Opera of South Australia
Tasmanian Ex-Serviceman's Club