Notice from the Australian National Portrait Gallery...

Lady Florence Packer (b. 1915) was born in Paris to Edmond Porges, a major in the British Army, and his Russian wife Marie-Mathilde Brodsky. During the German occupation of Paris, all Porges's assets were seized and the family moved to London, where Florence worked for the Free French. There she met a Wing Commander at a party for Australian Air Force officers. They married in 1946 and she moved to Australia with him. In 1964, she married print magnate Sir Frank Packer and they lived in Australia until he died. She then returned to Monte Carlo to care for her mother. From 1978 and for many years, Lady Packer divided her time between Monaco and Australia.

Genteel society loses a Packer

LADY (FLORENCE) PACKER, one of the glittering fixtures of Sydney's society pages in a more genteel time, has died in her Monaco apartment, aged 97.

Lady Packer's local chaplain, Walter Raymond, confirmed the second wife of the press baron the late Sir Frank Packer, had died on December 22.

The funeral will take place late next week in Monte Carlo.

Having marked her 97th birthday in June, she had been confined to her bed for weeks due to declining health. But for six decades she split her time between Sydney's eastern suburbs and the glamorous French Riviera as part of the international jet set.

She was Sir Frank Packer's second wife while he was her third husband. Lady Packer first arrived in Sydney in grand style aboard a luxury ship soon after World War II, however post-war Sydney was a long way from the cocktail parties of Europe to which she had become accustomed.

Florence Packer was born in Paris in 1915, the daughter of Edmond Porges, a British banker whose family went on to establish the DeBeers diamond empire.

Her childhood years were spent with the likes of the wealthy de Rothschild clan while *British Vogue* covered her coming-out party in 1935 when 250 members of Parisienne high society were invited to the family's home, where the Ballet Russe performed in the garden, just a stone's throw from the Elysee Palace.

When the Nazis invaded Paris they seized the home and took the family's valuable art collection and possessions. Florence escaped with her mother by being smuggled aboard a

ship bound for England with the King of Albania. She came to Sydney in 1946 after marrying Wing Commander Noel Vincent, a friend of Frank Packer's, and she was quickly feted in the *Herald's* social pages.

Becoming firm friends with Frank's first wife Gretel, she quickly took up a position on the Sydney social scale until she returned to Paris in 1961 after her marriage to Vincent came to an end. In 1964, four years after Gretel Packer died, Frank Packer travelled to Paris before marrying Florence at a London registry, later announcing the news at a press conference at the Savoy.

As the new chatelaine of Cairnton, the Packer family estate in Bellevue Hill, her parties were the talk of the town with visiting dignitaries, including Cecil Beaton who described her as ''very French and cuddlesome''. She counted the late Princess Grace among her wide circle of friends.