

Her blunt Aussie manner is a winner in London

Friend to the rich & famous

Rebecca Hossack, a Melbourne doctor's daughter, serves tea with honey to British aristocrats and local bohemians on the pavement in front of her shop.

The shop is an art gallery in the romantic part of London called Fitzrovia, and Rebecca, 34, is as famous for her doorstep hospitality as for her paintings.

In September, she opens a second gallery, in Piccadilly, across from the Royal Academy,

and it, too, will be distinguished by the mugs of tea and the two bulldogs Moon and Stella who lounge around Rebecca's heels.

Rebecca (left) went to London in 1980 to study law. However, she drifted into an art course at Christie's before going on to Peggy Guggenheim's museum in Venice and a series of odd jobs.

Early in 1988 she saw a shop in London with a lease for sale and opened a gallery — it was that spontaneous. It was a stroke of luck which has kept striking, repeatedly, for 3½ years.

Aboriginal artist Clifford Possum, for instance, made his first trip to London for the Possum exhibition mounted by Rebecca. Clifford lived in Rebecca's flat above the gallery.

They went to a Buckingham Palace garden party together and met the Queen, and they went to the televised Tina Turner concert at Woburn Abbey.

"Clifford was cool as a cucumber meeting the Queen, but when he met Tina he was so shy," Rebecca laughs. Tina, however, was charmed

and acquired a Possum painting.

Rebecca's gallery has concrete floors and unscuffed white walls which are regularly repainted. Her flat above is the opposite: a riotous mix of velvet drapes, clouds painted on the ceilings, vases of blossoms and, of course, paintings everywhere.

She rides on the back of a motorcycle driven by Lady Rose Cecil, the only daughter of the Marquess of Salisbury and a photographer whose work Rebecca is going to exhibit. Her clients include many titled people because her basic, blunt Aussie manner eases them off their pedestals.

Among all the flamboyance, Rebecca says what she misses most is Australia — and of all things Australian, she most longs for the insects!

Rebecca enjoys being considered eccentric. "I think I could be eccentric in Australia, too, but whether there are people there to be eccentric with..."



MAX WALKER: in for a duck

As one of the front-line bowlers for the Australian cricket team, Max Walker (above) became rather familiar with ducks.

"Yes, I scored a few ducks," Max says, "but not as many as some of the other tail-enders. Look at Bruce Reid: he's only been in the game a minute and already he's a legend with the bat."

Now Max is becoming more familiar with ducks — the cute little yellow plastic variety.

He has put his name to a fundraising venture for The Sunnyfield Association in Sydney which cares for intellectually disabled people.

The idea is to find sponsorship for 100,000 of these ducks, which will be set loose in October in the Great Duck Race.

Sponsorship costs \$5 and the first duck over the line will win a car for its sponsor.

Says Max: "We're trying to get enough ducks in the pond so that we can make an impact and help people with a disability."

Max, whose wife Kerry is expecting a baby next month, says he and his family have always enjoyed good health and he is aware many people are less fortunate.

"I've been very lucky with my life. I've played football and cricket, architecture has been good to me and now television is great. If I can help, I will."

The Great Duck Race will be held at Davidson Park, Roseville Bridge, Sydney on October 6. Ring (02) 451 6999 for more details.