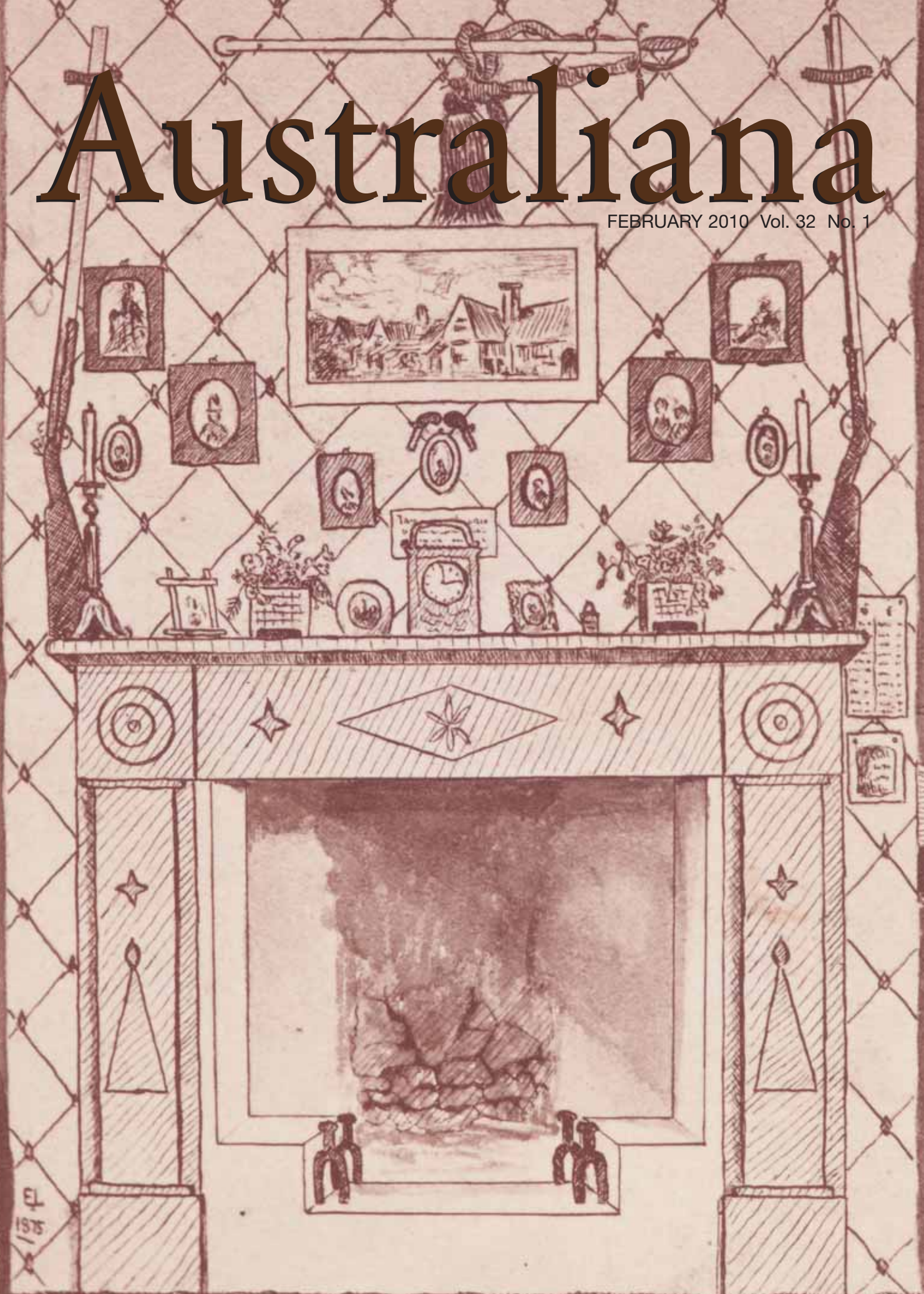


Australiana

FEBRUARY 2010 Vol. 32 No. 1





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www.australiana.org.au
info@australiana.org.au
ABN 13 402 033 474

AUSTRALIANA

PO Box 2335
BONDI JUNCTION NSW 1355
Tel 02 8239 2225 or 0404 051 999
info@australiana.org.au

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All articles appearing in *Australiana* in 2010
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DESIGN

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COVER

Adelaide Photographic Company, Adelaide, *Study mantel-piece Coralbignie Gawler Ranges SA*, carte-de-visite photograph of a drawing by 'EL' [probably Ernest Leycester], dated 1875. Collection: Caroline Simpson Library & Research Collection, Historic Houses Trust of NSW, Sydney.

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GORDON HOLDSWORTH: *rural retreat* FOR A CRAFT REVIVALIST

For almost 60 years, Gordon Holdsworth created paintings, etchings, sculptures, jewellery and metalwork in the crafts revival style from his rural retreat in southwest Western Australia. Today he is best known from the war memorials and church commissions that are preserved in situ, but many of Holdsworth's portable artworks must remain in private hands, probably unrecognised.



DOROTHY ERICKSON

Of Gordon Holdsworth it may well be said, as of Sir Christopher Wren, 'If you would see his monument look around you.' It is impossible to travel far among the churches of Western Australia without coming across numerous works of his art.

The subject of this obituary was Hubert Augustus Gordon Holdsworth, who lived from 1901 until 1965 at *Caplow* homestead in rural Hester Siding near Bridgetown, 270 km south of Perth, in Western Australia. From here he orchestrated a successful 60-year career as a painter, etcher and metalsmith.

Holdsworth, like his friends the Lintons, painted in oils and watercolour, drew in pastels and sculpted in metal, wood and stone. To these skills he added wrought iron, etching and design of war memorials. He exhibited in Perth, London and the eastern states and made commissions for places as far apart as Darwin and Albany. His metalwork passed national selection, making him the only Australian craftsman represented in the Fine Arts Hall of the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley,

1
Gordon Holdsworth,
self portrait

London in 1924¹ His metalwork graces many Anglican churches, chapels and cathedrals in Western Australia and constitutes a remarkable body of work in the Craft Revivalist tradition.

Judith O'Callaghan in *Treasures from Australian Churches* described his work as exhibiting:

... a highly individual approach. ... The hand beaten surfaces, predominant use of a non-precious metal, cabouchon stones and enamel work are all basic Arts and Crafts elements yet their combination, particularly that of the repoussé silver panels over copper, defies categorization.²

Gordon Holdsworth (c 1886-1965) was born in Middlesex, England; to Charles Edward Hall Holdsworth and Ellen Louise, née Bostock. Both were from old Yorkshire families connected for generations with the Anglican church. This heritage had considerable bearing on Holdsworth's occupation as a metalsmith who made objects in silver, brass and iron for an array of Anglican churches and chapels in Western Australia.

Details of Gordon's education are sketchy but included music and art in England and Australia. The family arrived in Western Australia in 1900 and settled at Hester Siding near Bridgetown where they became timber millers. The family was unusual and particularly formal. Gordon, although a dashing young bachelor, never married. Artist John Feeney who met him in 1961 wrote 'He was then an old man but quite extraordinary, ... He was relatively well known as a painter and was a complete artistic personality of a vanishing era. ... his work whilst not being particularly modern was of a rare excellence'³

Holdsworth joined the Western Australian Society of Arts in 1904 and began a career as painter, etcher, sculptor and metalsmith. Tradition has it that he had tuition in metalsmithing from James W. R. Linton before he opened an art school in Bridgetown in 1911. The families were certainly friends but Holdsworth soon made larger works than Linton. Much of his technique can be sourced to treasured books such as Henry Wilson's seminal work and magazines that he eagerly devoured in his rural retreat or to the metalworkers in the Perth factories who also



2
Photograph of
Gordon Holdsworth
c 1916



3
Gordon Holdsworth,
The Old Studio W.A.,
an etching of his
studio set amongst
the trees

taught Linton. His earliest known commission was from parliamentarian Sir James Lee Steere - a metre-high brass lectern for St Paul's, Bridgetown in 1910-11.

In 1913 he made an intricate and unusual Metropolitan Processional Cross for Bishop C.O.L. Riley, first Anglican Archbishop of Western Australia. This cross is carried by the Archbishop's chaplain and used at all diocesan functions when he appears as archbishop. The cross, made in 1913-4, was one of the most remarkable made in Australia, possibly anywhere, at this time.

Holdsworth, perhaps in consultation with the donors, gave considerable thought to the symbolism of the piece. The four arms of the cross are applied with silver panels intricately embossed with entwined fruiting vines. The vine was, and is, one of the most vivid symbols used to express the relationship of God to his people. For Holdsworth and his commissioners, the 'protected vineyard' symbolised by the use of vine leaves was the Anglican Church in Western Australia in which God's children could flourish, tended by the Archbishop as the Vicar of God.

The splayed shape of the copper cross gives the impression of a cross within a circle. The circle, as the monogram of God and symbol of eternity, is thus cleverly incorporated into the design. In contrast, the square is the emblem of the earth and earthly existence. This has also been subtly incorporated into the outline of the four stylised fruiting-vines placed at the intersection of the cross. At the intersection of the arms, an encrusted enamel of St George is set in a circular boss within a

crown of thorns. The encrusted enamel technique gives a particular luminosity to the image in blue, yellow, mauve and green. The fruiting vine appears again in an openwork band of repoussé silver set at the widest portion of the copper knop. Four cabochon stones of deep-blue lapis lazuli are set in this band. Silver fleur-de-lys have been applied to the copper stem and reverse of the cross.

How to make the fleur-de-lys and openwork bands were helpfully described in Henry Wilson's text. As this technically difficult piece was made early in Holdsworth's career he may have needed all the help he could get. That it did succeed in part explains why Linton, an Anglican of higher public profile, did not receive as many commissions from the Anglican church. In succeeding years Holdsworth made 'furniture' for very many churches. The most notable, usually in brass, silver and copper, are in St Paul's, Bridgetown; St George's Cathedral, Perth; St George's College, Crawley; Perth College, Mt Lawley; St Boniface Cathedral, Bunbury; and St Mary's, Busselton.⁴



4

5



4
Gordon Holdsworth, *Metropolitan processional cross* made for the Archbishop of Perth, silver, copper, email-en-ronde-bosse, lapis lazuli, 1913–14, 1905 mm high. Photograph courtesy Rev Brett Guthrie

5
Archbishop C. O. L. Riley preceded by the Metropolitan cross, in a procession to dedicate All Saints' Church, Collie



6 Holdsworth exhibited paintings in the Royal Albert Hall, London in 1912 and silver and copper artifacts in WA and NSW. From 1919 Holdsworth exhibited regularly with the WA and SA Societies of Arts and the NSW Society of Arts and Crafts. A hexagonal copper box with enamel-fruited quandong trees was purchased for the Art Gallery of NSW in 1920 having been mentioned in *The Bulletin* as 'a casket that might have been Pandora's'.⁵ The Gallery has declined to return it to its original shining state, insisting that the patination it has acquired over time may have been intended. No oxidized patination on copper has been seen in any of his other work.

When war broke out in 1914, Holdsworth closed the school and returned to his 'Studio of Arts and Artistic Crafts' and started to work for his first solo exhibition. This was held in 1916, in conjunction with a watercolour painter Miss Alice E. Adair, at Mrs Zarbel's Booklovers' Library in Hay Street, Perth.⁶ It met with considerable success. At midnight after the opening he could contain himself no longer and wrote proudly to his mother:

Hanged if I did not get most of the prais [sic] and got commissions and sold to the tune of £10 - and may still do something more as Mrs Z has asked me to continue showing until Saturday instead of one day as I find she intended...

People swarmed round all afternoon until I was nearly smothered, Mrs Lain [sic] Poole, Ladies Stone, & James, Mrs Trethowan, Hamersley, Learmonth, etcetera etcetera about 200 in all. Mrs Z provided lots of cakes, ices, etcetera of the best. I was sorry to see the old casket set with jasper go but still £5/5/- was not a bad price, Mrs Learmonth took it. A Miss Tobias was not satisfied with a set of 6 teaspoons but asked for a set of a dozen to be maid [sic] at my earliest convenience.⁷

7



8



9 Gordon Holdsworth, *tobacco jar or cigarette box*, beaten copper, repoussé and set with agate, 80 x 90 mm. This is similar to the work supplied to the Society of Arts and Crafts of NSW in Sydney. Private collection, photograph D. Erickson

6 Gordon Holdsworth, *photograph*, the altar in St Paul's Pro-Cathedral, Bunbury, 1928. The altar, presented in memory of Mrs Anne Wright Adams, wife of the incumbent archdeacon, features large repoussé bas-reliefs panels of beaten copper. In the left panel Christ is flanked by St Paul resting with his sword and in the right by St Boniface, the patron saint of the diocese, in bishop's cope and mitre, carrying his pastoral staff. The altar has since been removed to a side chapel at St Boniface Cathedral and altered to accommodate new church practices. Courtesy Bridgetown Tourist Bureau

7 Gordon Holdsworth, *photograph*, central panel of the Bunbury altar before installation, c 1928. Christ, as high priest in Eucharistic vestments, holds the host in his right hand and the communion cup in his left. Courtesy Bridgetown Tourist Bureau

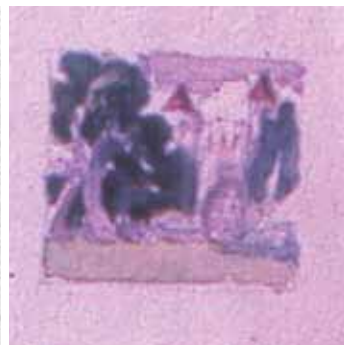
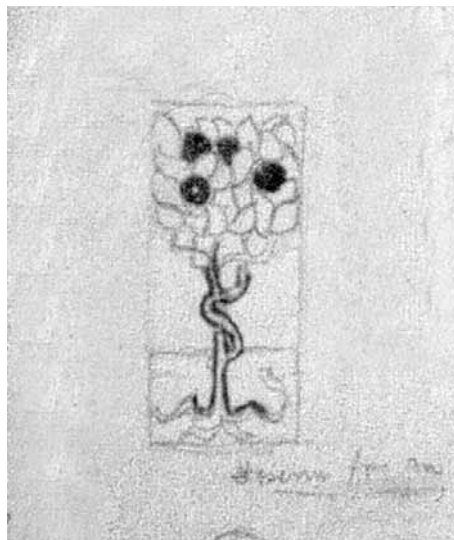
8 Gordon Holdsworth, *lectern* for St Michael and All Saints, Perth College, brass and enamel, 1929, ht 1270 mm. The lectern was donated in memory of Sister Vera, the first principal. The knob is set with blue-dyed quartz encircled by twisted wire and groups of circular bosses. These button-like bosses are deployed again at the junction of the arms of the book-rest with the stem. Arches are used, this time to strengthen and conceal the junction. The roses are symbolic of the order of Anglican nuns. Photographs D. Elford, courtesy WA Museum



The 'old casket' exhibited may be the 1909 one based on a study of a red gum. It demonstrates his absorption of Wilson's admonition:

In your studies be as minute as you please, you cannot be too painstaking; put in everything you see. But when you translate these studies into work, learn to leave out. The artist is known as much by what he omits as by what he puts in his work.⁸

This design illustrates the subtlety of the English influence on his early work. This box, with its organic design drawn from native flora, is very much in the 'romantic' Alexander Fisher spirit yet it is no pale imitation. Fisher's articles and books were available in Western Australia and several of his pieces were in the Art Gallery of Western Australia. The casket could hold its own with many Fisher caskets. The legs of Holdsworth's box, transformed into tree trunks firmly planted on the ground, branch and spread to gently embrace the circular form of the casket. Oval cabochons - presumably of the red jasper he used, reminiscent of the vivid colour of the flower - are placed centrally within the canopies of leaves. The most obvious difference, when compared to Fisher or much contemporary English metalwork, is the less crowded design.



10

Gordon Holdsworth, *bracelet*, silver and enamel, c 1916, originally purchased from Mrs Zarbel at the Book Lover's Library by WA's Engineer-in-Chief, Mr Rolland, for his wife and passed to his daughter, Norma, who gave it to the Western Australian Museum. Holdsworth adopted and adapted English teacher Henry Wilson's instructions for making flexible bracelets to create this piece. Photograph Douglas Elford, courtesy WA Museum

11

Gordon Holdsworth, *Red gum*, 1909, sketch for a jewel casket based on a redgum tree. This may be the 'old casket' purchased by Mrs Learmonth at his first exhibition in 1916. Family collection

12

Gordon Holdsworth, watercolour sketches for enamel plaques from his sketchbooks. Photo D. Erickson



In 1922-3 in Perth he exhibited 40 pieces of metalwork with his paintings. This included a trophy cup in silver and enamel and his mermaid pendant intricately worked in gold, enamel and oxidised silver with bezel-set carnelian. In this delicate but retardé piece, an enamelled medallion of a girl's face framed in clouds of red-gold hair was worked in the difficult technique of email-en-ronde-bosse. The stylised floral frame to the medallion was further developed as a series of motifs, repeated to form a necklet from which the larger medallion is suspended. Lovely as the piece is, it reflects the time warp of Holdsworth's family surroundings and possibly of those who purchased his work. His courtly 19th-century behaviour was at variance with his love of speed and fast cars and the dashing image he liked to convey.

Holdsworth was at the height of his career when he exhibited at the 1924 British Empire Exhibition in London. He was one of two

16

Gordon Holdsworth, *Trophy Cup*, silver-plated brass, 1920. A fairly traditional chalice-shaped cup was used for the basic form, and embellished with discreet ornamentation: two bands of twisted wire, one on the largest circumference of the swelling knop, the other at the junction of the stem and domed foot. The rimmed, domed base rests on four circular cushion-feet that often feature in his work. Photograph by Gordon Holdsworth, collection Bridgetown Tennis Club



13

Gordon Holdsworth, *Limoges plaques* for use in boxes and jewellery. Another item of Wilson advice — this time on pictorial enamels: 'the whole picture should be small enough to set as a jewel' was observed in these pieces. Gordon Holdsworth photograph courtesy Bridgetown Tourist Bureau

14

Gordon Holdsworth, *brooch*, Limoges enamel, c 1950. The enamel scene of gum trees is set in a repoussé silver frame. Private collection, photograph D. Erickson

15

Gordon Holdsworth, *Mermaid necklace and pendant*, 1922, silver, gold and enamel; pendant ht 75 mm. This appears to be catalogue number 128 in the Society of Arts annual exhibition of 1922-3, priced at ten guineas and described as 'Pendant, Mermaid Enamel, Gold and silver'. A variation on a Wilson exercise, the necklace was well received at the time but apparently did not sell for it was acquired from Holdsworth much later. It was stolen from a private collection in 2002. Photograph D. Erickson

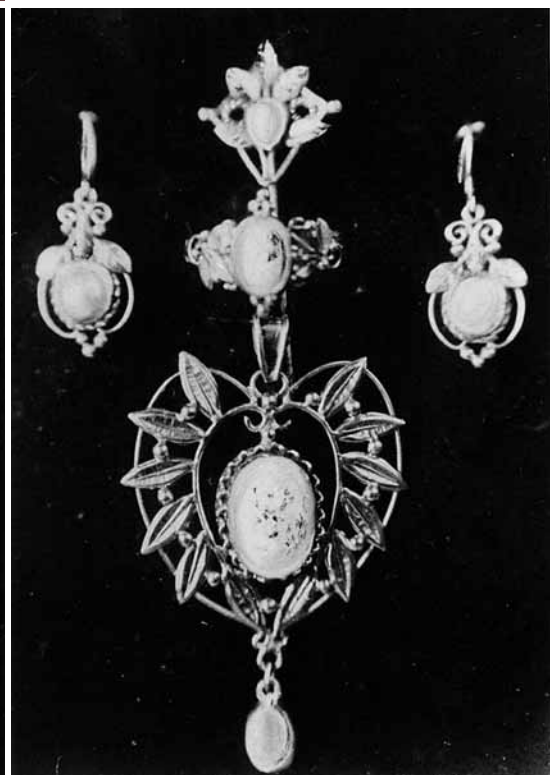
17
Gordon Holdsworth,
lectern, brass and
enamel, exhibited at the
British Empire
Exhibition, Wembley,
1924, now in St Paul's
Anglican Church,
Bridgetown. The
repoussé brass figures
are skilfully handled. A
rondel to the right of
each saint's head
contains his insignia in
a blue and white
enamelled boss. The
niches terminate in a
rim evoking the delicate
gothic-crown of Queen
Marguerite. H 1400 mm,
photo courtesy
Bridgetown
Tourist Bureau



18
Gordon Holdsworth's
photograph of a jewel,
c 1924, made of silver
with Limoges enamel.
The slightly domed
shield-shaped brooch has
been embellished with a
repoussé cluster of fruit
and leaves set below a
delicate pictorial enamel
of the head and
shoulders of a young
girl. The shield-shape
was finished with
twisted-wire edges
giving the appearance of
a thick braid from which
hung four 'bells'



19
Gordon Holdsworth's
photographs of finished
work show an earring and
pendant set
featuring cabouchon
stones set in silver.
Photos by Gordon
Holdsworth, courtesy
Bridgetown Tourist
Bureau. Location of
jewellery unknown



Australians selected to show craft work in the Fine Arts Palace and the only metalsmith. The exhibited lectern is one of his finest works. Like a number of his pieces it incorporates a domed base. It is a crisply executed technical tour-de-force, fabricated from brass using the techniques of repoussé and enamelling.

The brass book-rest is supported by four arms, three of which are in the form of a fruiting vine enamelled with bunches of purple grapes, rising from a cylindrical stem mounted on the domed, castellated base supported by four cylindrical, tower feet. Around the stem is a drum-shaped knob supporting four gothic niches each containing skilfully handled figures of a male saint, two of whom are the apostles Peter and Paul. These are embossed in the same sure manner of the panels he applied to the altar of Bunbury Pro-cathedral in 1928.

Despite suffering severe burns in a fire which destroyed his home in 1953, he continued working until shortly before his death in his 80th year in Bridgetown on 3 August 1965. He remained very much a man of the late 19th-

century, touched with a dash of 1920s hedonism. In mid-life, the dashing bachelor drove around the country creating quite a romantic picture, silk scarf flying, a lady by his side, off for a 'painting' excursion. Although some of his considerable output was pedestrian, most was excellent. Before World War I, James Walter Robert Linton overshadowed him but in the inter-war period he was very much to the fore nationally. By the time the mineral boom of the 1960s was in place, he was too old to take advantage of it, remaining a shadowy figure in Bridgetown. A new craft revival gathered momentum, little aware of his existence and his fund of knowledge - from which it could have profited. Even at the end, his works compared favourably with anything being made in art circles in the State. He had worked for almost 60 years as a Craft Revival artist par-excellence.

His work attests to the fact that it is not necessary to be in a large metropolitan centre to achieve proficiency. More than that, in his rural retreat he made work of 'rare excellence', which was exhibited nationally and internationally to considerable acclaim. He is an example of the individuality that can be achieved separated from too close a contact with the dominant forces of the major centres. His work however also shows the interaction that can occur from stimulation by one's peers and that a school, albeit small, of Western Australia was probably in force. His very considerable work for the church remains his memorial. Like Linton, he had cultivated the image of 'the artist' and is remembered with esteem.

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- D. Erickson, *Aspects of Stylistic and Social Influence on the Practice of Gold and Silversmithing in Western Australia 1829-1965*, PhD Thesis, University of WA, Perth 1992
 W. Moore, *The Story of Australian Art*, Sydney 1934
 J. O'Callaghan, *Treasures from Australian Churches*, Melbourne 1985
 A. Schofield & K. Fahy, *Australian Jewellery: Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century*, Sydney 1990

Collections represented

Art Gallery of NSW; WA Museum; Hall Collection, Perth; Royal Perth Hospital; Parliament of Western Australia; Town of Bridgetown, WWI War Memorial; Town of Greenbushes, WWI War Memorial; Town of Balingup, WWI and WWII War Memorial; Royal Perth Yacht Club; Royal Perth Golf Club; Bridgetown Tennis Club; Bridgetown Golf Club; Victoria Park Bowling Club; Hollywood Bowling Club.



20

Gordon Holdsworth, *Greenbushes War Memorial* designed and executed in 1920 with beaten bronze panels set into white marble. Photo D. Erickson

21

Gordon Holdsworth, *brooch*, 1964, silver and turquoise enamel, 5.0 x 5.0 x 0.7 cm. The swirling movement created by the repetition of the fern leaves gives the piece the unexpected energy of perpetual motion, something he no doubt learnt from pictorial composition. Private collection, Perth

Ecclesiastical commissions

St Paul's Anglican Church, Bridgetown

- brass lectern, 'The Turtle', in memory of Sir James Lee Steere made c 1911
- jarrah pulpit designed by Holdsworth commissioned by the Allnutt Family (used to have brass railings) - carving assisted by Clair Layman, a student of his
- brass sanctuary lamp (c 1911).
- altar cross and pair of candlesticks (1912) given by C.M. Laurie in memory of Reverend Purnell
- font top, copper, baptismal ewer, brass (Lance Hester 1916)
- lectern (1922) exhibited British Empire Exhibition, 1924
- memorial tablet (Scott 1941)
- brass collection plate (Lewis Edward Walker 1945)
- wrought-iron gates to churchyard (Aland) glass and silver cruets (Ernest Abbotts 1947) paschal candle stand (Bentley, died 1948)
- Honour-board insignia in brass and copper c 1919

St Boniface Cathedral, Bunbury (previously St Paul's)

- crozier (pastoral staff) in memory of Bishop Goldsmith (1918)
- WWI memorial processional cross (c 1919)
- altar cross in chapel of St David and St Paul (Mitchell c 1928)
- altar in chapel of St David and St Paul (Mrs Adams c 1926-1928), re-table and tabernacle (1928)
- ciborium (Mary Ann Spencer "NAN" 1846-1943)
- aumbrey (Clarice Gwendolyn Gibson 1964)
- font ewer (1955)

The Little Church of Saint Patrick, Rathmines

- lectern once in St Paul's

St George's Cathedral, Perth

- Metropolitan Cross for Archbishop Riley (1913-4)
- memorial processional cross in memory of Sir James and Lady Lee Steere (1923, 1930 or 1956, conflicting dates have been given by officials)

St George's College Chapel, Crawley

- altar cross, brass, silver and enamel (c 1935)
- altar candles, brass, silver, enamel
- chalice and paten, silver Georgian style (c 1933)
- paten on foot, silver (c 1933)

Perth College, Chapel of St Michael and All the Angels, Mt Lawley

- brass lectern (in memory of Sister Vera 1927)
- chalice and paten, silver (from the clergy 1927)
- altar, re-table and tabernacle (1927)
- font (from the old girls 1928)
- baptismal spoon of pearl-shell and silver

St Mary's, Busselton

- lectern brass (c 1913-1920)

St Saviour's, Boyup Brook

- silver cruet set, chalice, paten

Christ Church Anglican Church, Mandurah

- silver ciborium (to the memory of Charles Gillman, 1963)

St John's Anglican Church, Fremantle

- chancel screen, 1928 in honour of Annie and Zoe Gemperle Moore

St John's Anglican Church, Albany

- Chancel screen in wrought-iron, embossed brass plaque dedicated to WWI veterans

St John's Anglican Church, Pinjarra

- silver chalice and paten (Greatorex 1918, son of Rector, killed Villiers Bretonneux, France)

St Andrew's Anglican Church, Katanning

- lectern brass (7 Jan. 1920, Egerton-Warburton), table lectern

St David's Anglican Church, Brunswick Junction

- jarrah table desk

All Saints Anglican Church, Collie

- pulpit design, electric chandeliers

St George's Anglican Church, Wagin

- silver ciborium Norah Abbott (1965 last thing he made)

St Matthew's Anglican Church, Guilford

- war memorial (1920) and door hinges

Anglican Church of the

Annunciation, Broome

- copper chalice and collection plate, war memorial tablet (1919)

St Barnabas, Greenbushes

- font

St Alban's, North Perth

- font bowl 1930s (replaced), altar cross and candlesticks, missing

St Mary's Anglican Church, South Perth

- Chalice

This is a shortened excerpt from Dorothy Erickson's latest book *Gold and Silversmithing in Western Australia: A History* to be published by UWA Press in April 2010.

..... Dr Dorothy Erickson is well-known for her historical research into the pioneering craftspeople of her home state of Western Australia, as well as an internationally renowned contemporary jeweller.

NOTES

- 1 William Moore, *The Story of Australian Art*. vol 2, pp. 102-3
- 2 Judith O'Callaghan, *Treasures from Australian Churches*, NGV, Melbourne, 1985, p. 15
- 3 Letter to Robed *Social Influence on the Practice of Gold and Silversmithing in Western Australia 1829-1965*, PhD Thesis, University of WA, 1992
- 5 20 Oct 1920 p 28
- 6 Frances Zarbel was a prominent woman journalist who wrote under the names of Franciska and Mirabel. She had her own newspaper *F. Z. Review* early in the century. The Booklovers Library that exhibited prints, paintings and metalwork became Franciska Bookshop later owned by Phyllis Devoretsky, sister-in-law of Rose Skinner
- 7 16 Nov. 1916 Holdsworth family papers
- 8 Wilson, *Jewellery and Silverwork*,



DENHAM COURT

238 Campbelltown Road Denham Court

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THE MYSTERY OF THE

mantelpiece

The drawing of a mantelpiece in a remote South Australian sheep station homestead tells a story of a young Englishman's efforts to establish a comfortable life in the colonies.

MEGAN MARTIN

In June 2009 the Caroline Simpson Library & Research Collection at the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales acquired an unusual carte-de-visite photograph from Sydney dealer Josef Lebovic. The photograph was a 'portrait' of a mantelpiece.

The Library's prime focus is the history of house and garden design and domestic interiors and we are always on the lookout for documentary evidence relating to this history in Australia. We were intrigued by the photograph - actually a photograph of a drawing - although there was no mystery about the location of the mantelpiece. The drawing is titled 'Study mantelpiece Coralbignie Gawler Ranges SA' and is signed and dated 'EL 1875'. The photographer's details are on the verso: 'Adelaide Photographic Company, King William Street, Adelaide, H. Davis manager'.

In 1875 Coralbignie was a remote sheep station, 100 miles (160 km) west of Port Augusta, in pastoral country where, at that time, most of the runs were used only for winter pasture for stock from stations on the west coast of South Australia, and most homesteads were built only for seasonal habitation. The portrait of the Coralbignie mantelpiece conveys no sense of provisional occupation, no sense of the rawness of the frontier, except perhaps for the pair of rifles.

Instead we have a depiction of a carefully arranged and furnished space. The elegant, carved, fireplace surround is suitably equipped with a set of andirons. The chimney breast is papered and hung with a collection of small family pictures, including some miniatures, arrayed neatly around

a larger picture of a sprawling house. A dress sword is mounted above this larger picture. The arrangement is strongly symmetrical with a gun on either side of the chimney breast, a pair of candlesticks deployed likewise around a pair of small jardinières on the mantelpiece shelf. The symmetry is reinforced by the geometry of the diaper-patterning of the wallpaper.

With a little bit of research we have established that when this drawing was made in 1875 the property was held under pastoral lease by Charles Hugh Leycester (1847-1883), a former sub-lieutenant in the Royal Navy, born at Toft Hall near Knutsford in Cheshire.¹ The Leycester family was an old county family, settled at Toft Hall for more than 500 years, but Charles Leycester was a younger son, only a residuary heir to the family estate. He joined the Navy in 1860 at the age of 13 and spent the next seven years aboard various ships attached to the North America and West Indies Station of the Royal Navy. In 1868 he joined HMS *Challenger*, a ship attached to the Australia Station, but resigned the service in January 1869. In that year he bought Coralbignie and an adjoining run named Nonning.

Some elements of the picture begin to make sense: the sword must be a souvenir of Leycester's navy days and perhaps the concern for ship-shape symmetry is also a naval legacy. The larger picture in the centre of the chimney breast is of Toft Hall, the Leycester family home.

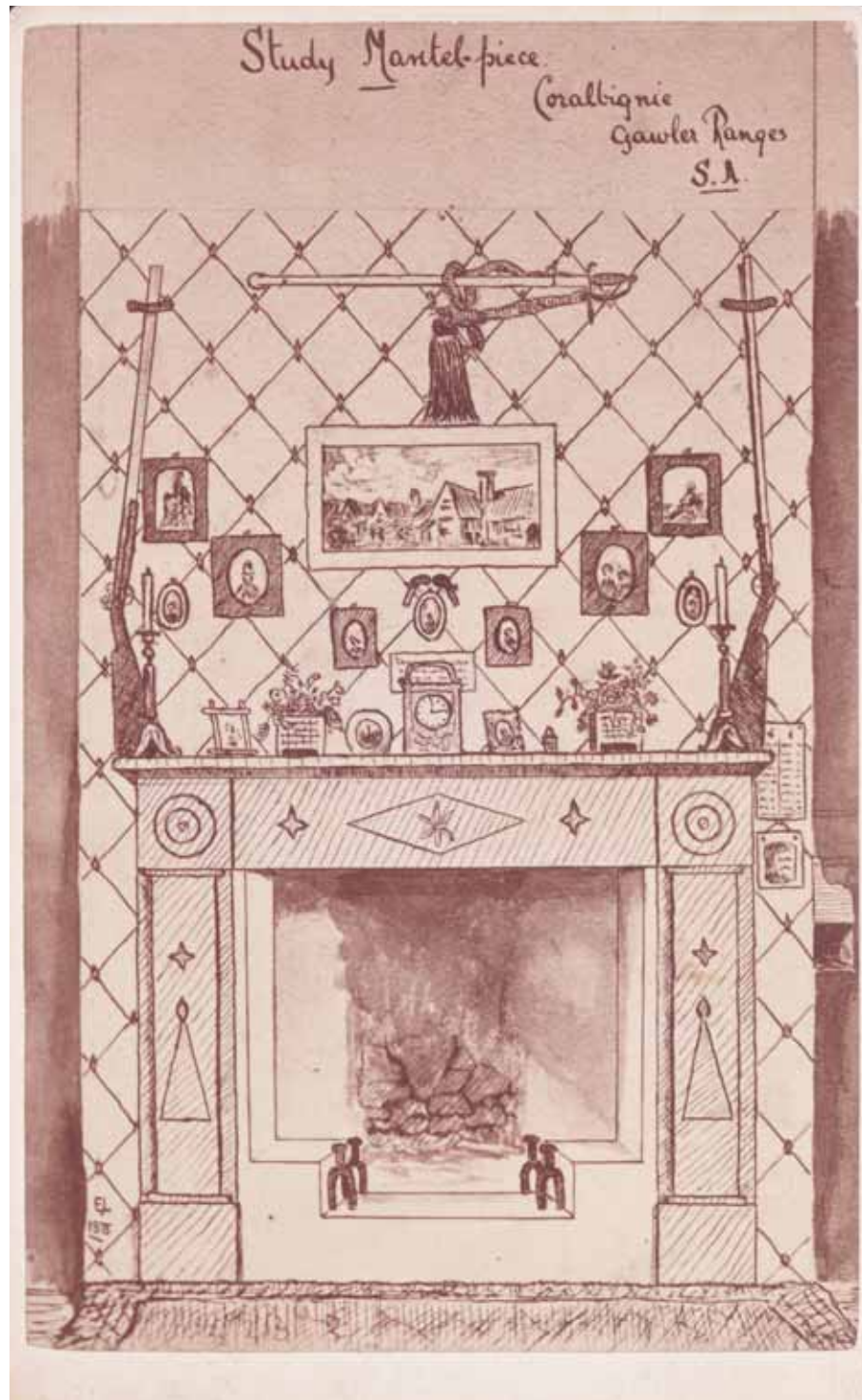
Leycester bought Coralbignie with some 'improvements' already carried out, including the erection of a homestead. He greatly extended these improvements and was remembered in later years for spending money 'not wisely, but too well'.² When he put the run up for auction on 17 June 1875, it was described as a property comprising

1,021 square miles of grazing country, carrying 18,000 sheep. The improvements included wells, dams, tanks, a large stone store, stone smithy, stone meathouse, a carpenter's shop, harness room, men's hut, married couple's hut, a woolshed for 14 shearers, a shearers' hut and drafting yards. The homestead itself was 'comfortable' with eight rooms plus a kitchen, washhouse and dairy.³

The sale date of Coralbignie corresponds with the date of the drawing. The artist 'EL' may have been Charles Leycester's younger brother Ernest who visited Australia in 1874-1875 with his bride Julia. The carte-de-visite is thus a souvenir, presumably for family distribution.

Charles Leycester returned to England. In the 1881 census he described himself as a 'retired sheep farmer' although he was only 33 years old. He had been busy with some inventions, taking a patent in 1878 on a new design for a hammock and tent and in 1880 patenting an illuminated clock. Two years later, with his wife Mary and a young niece, he retired from society to St George's Island, near Polperro on the coast of Cornwall, living in strict seclusion and finding amusement in fishing and shooting. One evening in May 1883, while fishing, their boat capsized and all were drowned⁴ - a world away from the dry inland of South Australia where, by 1890, Coralbignie and many other runs in the Gawler Ranges had been abandoned, the pastoralists defeated by dingoes, rabbits and drought.

Megan Martin is the President of the Australiana Society and Head of the Caroline Simpson Library & Research Collection, Historic Houses Trust of NSW. The Library, housed in The Mint in Macquarie Street, Sydney, has a valuable collection of resource material in both print and object formats, and is open to visitors Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.



Notes

- 1 Knutsford was the model for Elizabeth Gaskell's Cranford in her novel (1851-1853) of the same name.
- 2 Norman A. Richardson *The pioneers of the north-west of South Australia: 1856 to 1914* Adelaide, W.K. Thomas & Co., 1925, p.20
- 3 *The Argus* (Melbourne) 5 June 1875 p.3
- 4 *The Bristol Mercury and Daily Post* 11 June 1883 p.3

Adelaide Photographic Company, Adelaide, carte-de-visite photograph of a drawing by 'EL' [probably Ernest Leycester], *Study mantel-piece Coralbignie Gawler Ranges SA*

The editor

Please find attached my reply to Bob Fredman's comment on my work: 'I have always taken his conclusions with a grain of salt' (*Australiana*, November 2009 p 36). I suggest that my research, when considered within the hour glass of time, will be encapsulated by those moving grains of sand whose passage through the glass appears as yet unchecked. All this despite the efforts of those who have taken to them with the proverbial pinch of salt!

JOHN HAWKINS

PS. Bob, See my plate 9 (A-F) Part II *Australiana* May 2009, p 21). A grain of sand is now on the move. I suggested that a fourth chair was made to complete the set for the Executive Council Room. A fourth chair has now turned up, still within the Tasmanian Public Service. I have yet to inspect the chair and I stand by my attribution of Woolley maker, 1827/28, John Lee Archer designer. I can now confirm therefore that, as I suggested four were indeed made. I will keep you up to date, Bob, on any further developments.

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Samuel Thomas Gill, *Waiting for the Ferry*, c. 1860s watercolour, 27.5 x 35.5 cm, signed lower left and titled lower right.

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An exhibition curated by Dr Annette Gero



Roebuck chintz quilt (detail) c. 1860 | Henrietta Maria, Margaret & Lizzie Roebuck (attr.)
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**BOUND FOR VAN DIEMEN'S LAND:
Scottish cabinetmaker**

Alexander Watson

AND THE TOOLS OF HIS TRADE

ROBYN LAKE

The sale of what auctioneer John Stracey described as 'A Very extensive and valuable collection of tools' took place in Hobart on 22 October 1832 (plate 1). A 29-year-old Scottish cabinetmaker named Alexander Watson had brought the tools to Van Diemen's Land only a few months earlier.

In a small village churchyard in Scotland, a monumental inscription includes the words, Alexander Watson cabinetmaker, died Hobart Town Van Diemen's Land 6 August 1832. The well-known Hobart cabinetmaker Joseph Woolley administered his estate.

Alexander Watson's probate documents include the copy of the 'Account of Sales' from the 22 October 1832 auction, documenting his effects in detail.¹

This article expands and corrects an earlier one on the subject,² and puts the types of trade related items he brought to Van Diemen's Land into the context of the colony's furniture trade in the 1830s.

ALEXANDER WATSON

C 1802-1832

Alexander Watson was the son of James Watson, a tenant farmer near the village of Fern in the Angus highlands. In 1837 Alexander's brother John Watson commissioned a monument in memory of his parents James Watson and Jean Webster and his siblings, to be erected on the site of the two lairs (graves) where members of the family are buried in the St Aidan's church burial ground, Fern³, Angus - formerly Fearn, Forfarshire (plates 2 & 3). The inscription on one side of the monument begins with text from John 5:24 and John 5:25.

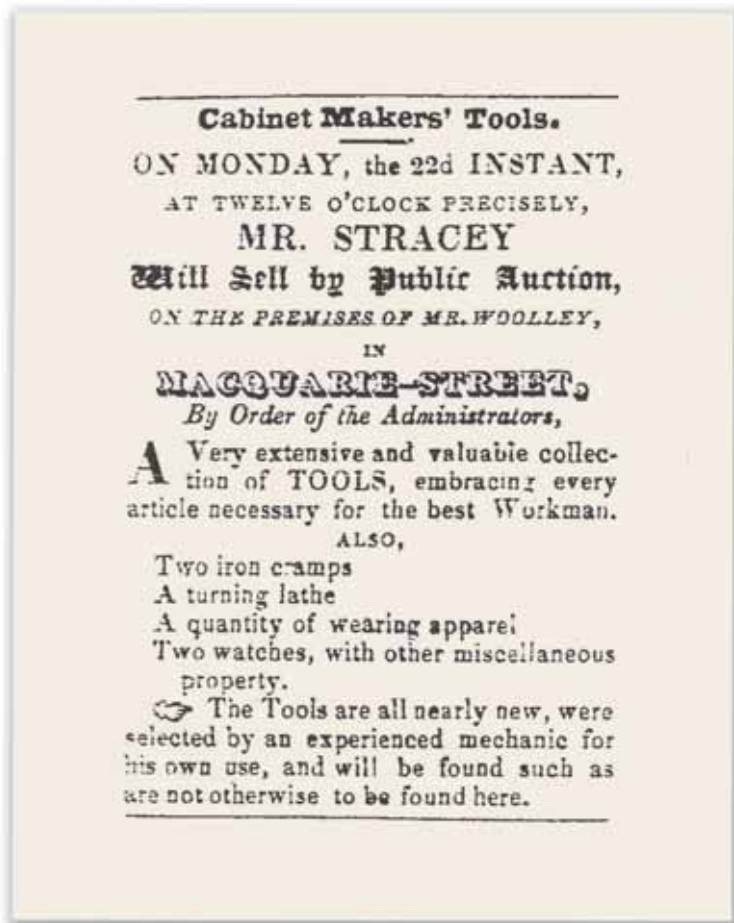
He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation but is passed from death unto life.
The hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live.

Inscribed below these two biblical texts is a moving poem. This was written by John Watson, who is described in Andrew Jervise's *Epitaphs and Inscriptions* as 'the only survivor of a family of twelve, six of whom died in the flower of their days'.⁴ The poem reads:

When mortals to the eve of life draw near,
And death's dark shades upon
their eyelids close
The wise through faith in Christ
are void of fear
How calmly sink the righteous to repose.
While here envelop'd in the grave's dark night
The body mixes with its kindred clay,
The soul unfetter'd soars to realms of light
To live in sunshine of eternal day.

The inscription on the other side of the monument chronicling the Watson family deaths (plate 4) reads like the entries found in a family bible.

1837
To the memory of JAMES WATSON
and MARY WEBSTER his spouse
and their family.
JAMES WATSON was 40 years tenant of
Balquhadlie and
he and his lineal ancestors occupied



that farm upwards
of a century previous to 1824.

He died at Ledmore
parish of Menmuir April 29th 1835
in his 81st year.

MARY WEBSTER
died June 14th 1818 aged 49 years.

JAMES their son tenant in Balrownie
died Nov 24th 1836 in his 45th year.

DAVID Schoolmaster at Cortachy
died March 31st 1834 aged 37 years.

WILLIAM Brewer in Arbroath
died August 24th 1832 in his 33rd year.

ROBERT Brewer in Montrose
died Feb 14th 1836 in his 35th year.

ALEXANDER Cabinetmaker died at
Hobartown VanDiemans land [sic]

August 6th 1832 in his 30th year.

JEAN wife of Robert Scott East Pittendrich
died October 9th 1834 in her
twenty seventh year.

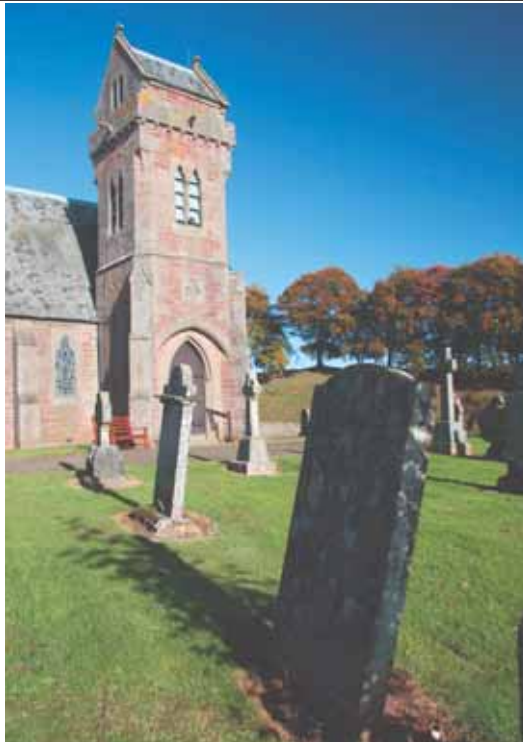
Those of the family who died in infancy
and juvenile years before 1809 were May,

1.
Just over two
months after his
death, Scottish
cabinetmaker
Alexander Watson's
effects were sold by
public auction on
the premises of
cabinetmaker
Joseph Woolley, the
Court appointed
administrator.
Colonial Times,
16 October 1832



2.
St Aidan's Church,
Fern, Angus County,
Scotland. Situated in a
wooded den, the church,
rebuilt in 1806, is said
to have been founded in
the 7th century by
Bishop Colman and
dedicated to St Aidan.
Photograph
Daan Kiezebrink

3.
St Aidan's Church,
Fern. Alexander
Watson's brother John
commissioned the
monument in the
foreground in memory
of his parents James
Watson and Mary
Webster and their
family in 1837.
Photograph
Daan Kiezebrink



Alexander,
Thomas, Agnes and Mary.
This stone is erected by the only survivor
of the family
JOHN WATSON

As this inscription indicates, Alexander
Watson's father, James Watson, was until 1824
tenant of the farm of Balquhadlie (now spelt
Balquhadly). The farm is situated close to the
village of Fern, 16 km from the town of Forfar in

the county of Angus. In 1801, two years before
Alexander's birth, the population of the parish of
Fern was 448. This extract from the entry relating
to the 'Parish of Fern' written in the 1830s,
conveys the isolated nature of the area:⁵

The parish, lying chiefly on the verge of the
inland country, at a great distance from any
great market-town, and without an
intermediate village, the habits of the
population may be regarded as completely
rural. The only places of common resort are
the parish church and school. We have no
tavern, no news-room, no lodge, no clubs and
no special association, civil, social, or religious,
which we can call our own.

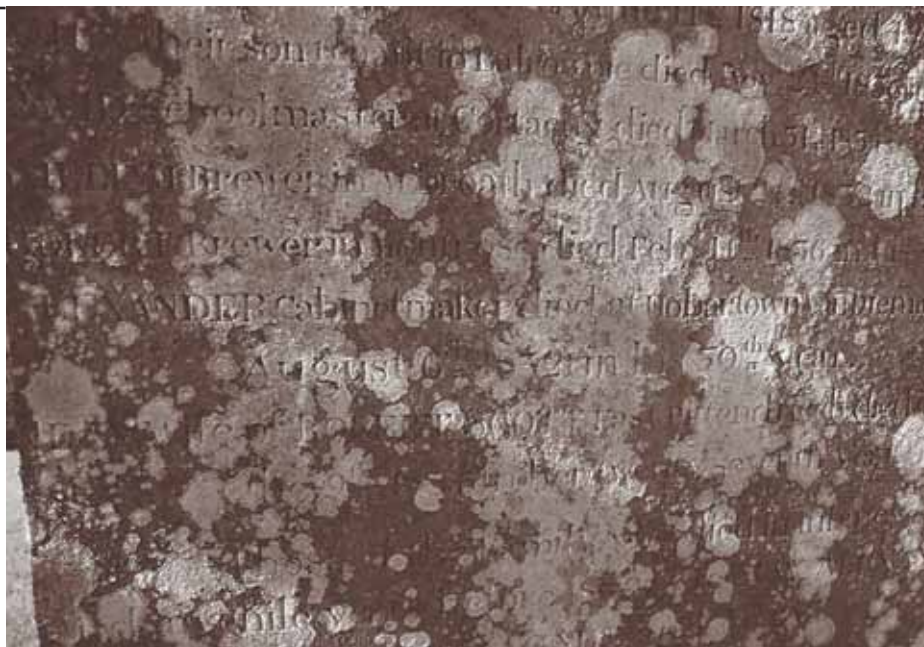
Alexander Watson's father died in 1835 at
Ledmore, the farm in the neighbouring parish of
Menmuir where his son John was for a period a
tenant farmer. Alexander's five other siblings who
died between 1832 and 1836 were also residents of
Forfarshire when they died. His brother James Jnr
was a tenant farmer, David was a schoolmaster
and the other two brothers were brewers in the
coastal towns of Arbroath and Montrose.
Whether Alexander Watson served his cabinet-
making apprenticeship in one of the larger towns
in Forfarshire or a neighbouring county, or his
father had been able to secure a place for him in
Edinburgh is not yet known.

Alexander Watson departed when the British
Government was actively encouraging emigration,
particularly to NSW and Van Diemen's Land. The
introduction to *'The Emigrant's Guide to New South
Wales, Van Diemen's Land, Lower Canada, Upper
Canada, and New Brunswick'*, claims that 'The
great want of England, is EMPLOYMENT; the
great want of New South Wales, is LABOUR'.
Published in 1832, this particular Emigrant's
Guide promoted NSW and Van Diemen's Land as
places where tradesmen and skilled mechanics
could expect high wages and 'certainty of
employment'.⁶ On the other side of the world,
Hobart's *Colonial Times*, reproduced in full one of
the Liverpool shipping agent's placards, which
refers to 'instant employment' and 'LARGE
WAGES' in Van Diemen's Land and NSW. The
newspaper regrets 'That there should be persons
who would knowingly so grossly deceive the poor
and industrious classes'.⁷

Alexander Watson wasn't the only Scottish
cabinetmaker lured to Van Diemen's Land in the

4. Detail of the Watson family monumental inscription. Between August 1832 and November 1836, Alexander Watson and five of his six adult siblings died. Photograph Daan Kiezebrink

5. Evidence suggests that the 'complete set of good Tools' offered for auction the next day were the property of Alexander Watson, and that the 1 September auction (arranged by Joseph Woolley as a creditor of Alexander Watson) did not take place. *Hobart Town Courier*, 31 August 1832



early 1830s. Other cabinetmakers, or cabinetmakers & joiners who arrived either as assisted or unassisted emigrants in the early 1830s include Alexander Barrie (Barry), Alexander Brunton, James Burns, William Dods, William Fairburn, George Hutton, Alexander Kidd, James Lumsden, Leonard Pearson, and the chairmaker James Fayll.⁸

In 1831, Van Diemen's Land was still very much a penal colony. Of a population of just under 27,000, slightly over 40% were convicts. The male population was almost 50% convict. Two statistics provided by James Ross in his *Hobart Town Almanack for the year 1831* bring into sharp focus the town in which emigrant cabinetmakers such as Alexander Watson hoped either to establish a business on their own account, or to find employment as a journeyman. According to James Ross:

The total number of inhabitants of Hobart town at the present time, is about 6000, they consist of the following proportions, viz:?

MALES

Free male adults	1400
Male prisoners	1900
Free males under age	600

FEMALES

Free female adult	1100
Female prisoners	600
Free females under age	400

From a street by street 'survey or walk through the town' of the just over 20 streets which made up Hobart, James Ross calculated the total number of 'houses' at that time at 785.⁹ The figure included private houses, those used both as a dwelling and place of business, and about 50 licensed public houses.



CHRONOLOGY FROM ALEXANDER WATSON'S EMBARKATION TO HIS DEATH

8 February 1832

Alexander Watson was one of 51 passengers aboard the 450 ton ship *Medway* when it left London for Van Diemen's Land and Sydney. The cargo for Hobart consisted of 'porter, rum, port, Madeira, Teneriffe, sherry and French wine, brandy, beer, tar, pitch, 1 phaeton, 1 gig, and 1 jaunting car &c'.¹⁰ Borthwick Wight, the *Medway's* captain, was very well placed to answer in detail his passengers' questions about Van Diemen's Land. As captain of the *Medway* he had spent time in Hobart on a number of occasions



CABINET MAKERS' TOOLS.

On Monday the 22nd inst. at 12 o'clock precisely,
MR. STRACEY,
WILL SELL BY PUBLIC AUCTION,
 On the premises of Mr. Wooley, in Macquarie st.
 By order of the Administrators.

A very extensive and valuable collection of Tools, embracing every article necessary for the best workmen.—Also, 2 iron cramp, a turning lathe, a quantity of wearing apparel, two watches, with other miscellaneous property. The tools are all nearly new, were selected by an experienced mechanic for his own use, and will be found such as are not otherwise to be obtained here.

6. Joseph William Woolley (1797–1880), photograph by his son the professional photographer and sketcher Charles Woolley (1834–1922). Charles has captured the entrepreneurial flair which made his father Joseph such a successful businessman. Joseph Woolley's final words from his *Colonial Times* 11 February 1840 page 3 advertisement are a fitting caption. After informing 'his best friends and patrons the public' of his removal to new premises, Joseph Woolley 'solicited them to inspect his new and large stock of Looking Glasses, Carpets, Floor Cloth, Cabinet and Chair Work, Upholstery, &c, and fearlessly challenges competition in the united qualities of fashion, material, manufacture, and cost.' Photograph courtesy Lewis Woolley

7. As with the 31 August auction notice, auctioneer John Stracey emphasised the quality of the cabinetmakers' tools to be auctioned, and that they were all nearly new. *Hobart Town Courier* 19 October 1832

between 1821 and 1830, his 'cargo' on two of these occasions being male convicts transported to the colony from England.

31 May 1832

After a voyage lasting 113 days the *Medway* arrived in Hobart 'direct from London'.¹¹ Alexander Watson was among the 35 passengers disembarking in Van Diemen's Land, the remaining 16 going on to Sydney. (Alexander had been the only passenger with the surname Watson.) The difference a direct voyage from a British port could make in terms of time could be considerable. Scottish cabinetmaker Alexander Kidd had left Leith aboard the *Ann Jamieson* on 10 December 1831, almost two months prior to Alexander Watson's leaving London. He arrived in Hobart (via the Cape of Good Hope) just one day before Alexander Watson. The journey had lasted 170 days.

8 August 1832

Alexander Watson was buried in St Andrews Church Burial Ground, Hobart Town. The church register records Alexander Watson's age at the time of his death as 36, not 29.¹²

Name	Alexander Watson
Abode	Liverpool street
Age	36
Ship's Name	Free [per] <i>Medway</i>
Quality or Profession	None recorded [the space is left blank]

Because Alexander Watson's death occurred prior to the introduction of official registration of births, deaths and marriages in Van Diemen's Land, there is no extant record of the cause of death. No inquest was held, which indicates that his death was considered to be from natural causes.¹³

Evidence of the date of his death (and the fact that he was 29, not 36 when he died) comes from the St Aidan's Church, Fern, Scotland monumental inscription (plate 4), which reads

Alexander Watson 'died at Hobartown
 VanDieman's land [sic]
 August 6th 1832 in his 30th year.

When the news of Alexander Watson's death in Hobart Town reached his family in Scotland they



8. Alexander Watson probate documents. As the court appointed administrator, Joseph Woolley had sworn to 'make and exhibit ... a full true and perfect inventory of all the said goods chattels rights credits and effects' of Alexander Watson by 20 October 1833. This first page is Woolley's statement showing the net value of the Alexander Watson's estate. Archives Office of Tasmania, AE242/1/1 no. 44

9. Alexander Watson probate documents. While this account most likely refers to a writing desk Alexander Watson made in Van Diemen's Land, it is possible that the young cabinetmaker had brought it with him to the colony. Archives Office of Tasmania, AE242/1/1 no. 44

were already in mourning – his brother William, aged 32, had died on 21 August 1832.

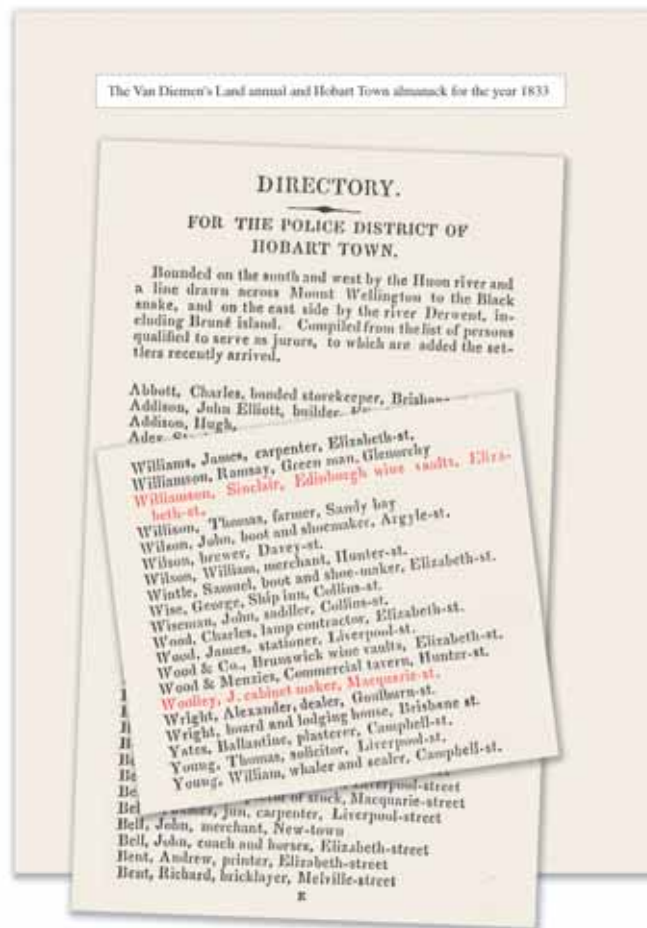
A CHRONOLOGY OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF ALEXANDER WATSON'S ESTATE

31 August 1832

Hobart auctioneer John Stracey advertised the sale by auction on 1 September 1832 of 'A valuable collection of Cabinet-makers', Carpenters' Joiner's & Upholsterers' Tools, with a very excellent Tool Chest'.

This advertisement, three weeks after Alexander Watson's death, contains no reference to the tools and tool chest being part of a deceased person's effects (plate 7). However there is little doubt that they were Alexander Watson's, and that the person behind the proposed 1 September auction

10. Both Alexander Watson's patron Sinclair Williamson and Joseph Woolley met the qualifications for inclusion in James Ross's 1833 *Almanack*. Divided into the colony's police districts, the entries were from 'the list of persons qualified to serve as jurors, to which are added the settlers recently arrived in the colony'. James Ross, *The Van Diemen's Land Annual and Hobart Town Almanack for the year 1833*



blank] at Hobart Town the aforesaid without a Will or Testament being possessed at the time his death of some personal and other property in Van Diemen's Land.

That the said Alexander Watson at the time of his decease was indebted to your petitioner in the sum of Ten Pounds. That your petitioner has been informed by Registrar of this honorable court that no caveat has been entered against the said Letters of Administration being granted to your Petitioner. Your petitioner therefore humbly prays your Honor to grant unto him Letter of Administration of all and singular the goods chattels right credit and effects which were of the said Alexander Watson deceased ... giving the usual security faithfully to administer the same.

20 October 1832

The Supreme Court formally granted letters of administration to Joseph Woolley:

Supreme Court of Van Diemen's Land: Letters of Administration granted to Joseph William Woolley 'In the administration of Alexander Watson deceased...'

A copy of the 'usual Bond' names 'Joseph William Woolley of Hobart Town Cabinetmaker, John Dean of the same place Baker, and George Stokell also of the same place, Dealer', as being 'jointly and severally held and firmly bound to our Sovereign Lord the King ... in the sum of two hundred pounds of lawful money of Great Britain ...'

The court accepted the three men's sureties as being 'good and sufficient'. Like Joseph Woolley, John Dean and George Stokell (the latter a fellow passenger of Joseph Woolley's on the voyage from England to Van Diemen's Land in 1822) were colonists with entrepreneurial abilities. Their entries in the 1832 *Van Diemen's Land Almanack* read

Dean, John, General Dealer, Baker and Miller, Elizabeth street
Stokell, George, General Dealer and Merchant, Macquarie street

Joseph Woolley appeared personally before the Supreme Court of Van Diemen's Land on 20 October 1832, promising under oath that, having been granted the Letters of Administration, he would fulfil two duties. They were:

Jack & Tryng Plane	9 ⁰
Jack & Round plane	6 ³
Jointer plane	5 ⁰
Tooth & smoothing plane	4 ⁰
8 Hollows & rounds	1 0 ⁰
7 Hollows & rounds	12 ⁰
1 P ^o of Quarter ploughs	6 ⁶
1 Slicator	7 ⁰
1 P ^o Table plane & gag	4 ⁰
1 P ^o Saw rounds	5 ⁰
1 P ^o Impre bills	7 ⁶
1 P 3/8 Ploughs	4 ⁰
1 P ^o Saw rabbits	5 ⁰
1 back & 11 Inch dead	3 ⁰
3 Gouging planes	14 ⁰
1 Moulding plane	5 ⁶
1 Gou plane	3 ⁰
1 Gou plane	4 ⁰
1 P ^o Gouging plane	2 ⁰
1 Plough 110 Irons	10 ⁶
1 Oval & 1 Plough	3 ⁰
1 Rabbit & 1 Gou Gouging	9 ⁰
1 Mortis Gage	7 ⁶
1 Hand saw	7 ⁰
1 Tunnel saw	5 ⁰
1 Tunnel saw	5 ⁶
2 Gou tail saws	7 ⁰
Braze & Bits	15 ⁰
4 Squares	5 ⁶
8 Mortis Chisels	6 ⁰
5 Gouges	6 ⁶
5 Chisels & -	5 ⁶
Summes	5 ⁶
Carried up	114/3

13. Alexander Watson probate documents, 'Account of Sales of Goods' (detail, column 1). The auction began with the sale of Alexander Watson's bench and moulding planes, saws and chisels. Archives Office of Tasmania, AE242/1/1 no. 44

To well and truly administer all and every the goods chattels rights credits and effects of the said deceased in Van Diemen's Land and pay his lawful debts so far as his said goods and chattels, rights credits and effects will extend.

And that he will make and exhibit unto this Honorable Court a full true and perfect inventory of all the said goods chattels rights credits and effects of the said deceased' on - or before - the twentieth day of April next and [to] render a true account of his administration on - or before - the twentieth day of October 1833.



14.
Part of a cabinetmaker's key 'tools of trade', these items reflecting decades of use. Photograph, John Leeming.

22 October 1832

An advertisement headed 'Cabinet Makers' Tools' in the *Hobart Town Courier* of 19 October 1832 had given notice that on 'Monday 22d instant at twelve o'clock precisely' Mr Stracey would sell by public auction on the premises of Mr Woolley in Macquarie street by order of the administrator (plate 7):

A very extensive and valuable collections of TOOLS, embracing every article necessary for the best Workman.

ALSO

Two iron cramps

A turning lathe

A quantity of wearing apparel

Two watches,
with other miscellaneous property

The advertisement ends:

The Tools are all nearly new, were selected by an experienced mechanic for his own use, and will be found such as are not otherwise to be found here.

A possible explanation why the auction of Alexander Watson's effects was held at Joseph Woolley's premises rather than the auctioneer's Mart was John Stracey's busy calendar of upcoming auctions. On the same page of the *Colonial Times*, John Stracey had five other auction advertisements. His 'usual Saturday sale' on 20 October included 'A variety of useful FURNITURE, Books, Crockery, a One Horse Dray &c. &c. &c.'. In addition to upcoming sales of several building allotments and a cottage villa, he had another at his Mart of 'Spirits, Wines, Ale, and Porter' and on 8, 9, and 10 November 'A very extensive assortment OF MERCHANDISE' ... including 'Ironmongery, from the best manufactories'.

15 January 1833

In a Public Notice dated 8 January 1833, His Honour the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Van Diemen's Land authorised the publication of 'A statement of the names and place of above of Persons who have died intestate in Van Diemen's Land and its Dependencies, and to whose Estates Letters of Administration had been granted by the late and present Supreme Court of Van Diemens' Land ...'. Alexander Watson was the 44th of the only 45 Van Diemen's Land residents whose estates had been dealt with in this way between 1825 and 1832.

44, Watson, Alexander, of Hobart Town, cabinet-maker; admr, Woolley, Joseph William, of Hobart Town, cabinet maker, &c, October 28, 1832.¹⁶

17 October 1833

In October 1833, in accordance with his obligation to 'render a true account of his Administration' of Alexander Watson's estate, Joseph Woolley duly lodged with the Registrar of the Supreme Court of Van Diemen's Land three documents. The first, dated 17 October 1833, is headed 'In the Administration of Alex Watson deceased' (plate 8) and contains the following information:

A true and correct Inventory of the effects of the late Alexander Watson late of Hobart Town Cabinet Maker deceased [space] taken by me J. W. Woolley Administrator.

	£	s	d
1832			
November 28			
Goods sold by auction as per account annexed	82	8	7
December 14			
Cash received as per account annexed	1	0	0
Total	£83	8	7

October 17, 1833. J.W. Woolley

The second document is an undated copy of the 28 November 1832 'Account of Sale' sent by auctioneer John Stracey to Joseph Woolley as administrator of Alexander Watson's effects. The gross proceeds from the auction amounted to £90 3s 7d, from which had been deducted the auctioneer's commission of £5 17s 6d, and £1 17s 6d for 'Advertisements & Bellman'.

The third document records that, on 14 December 1832, Joseph Woolley as administrator had received a balance of £1 from 'Mr S. Williamson' for a writing desk (plate 9). It is not clear whether Alexander Watson had brought the writing desk with him or made it in the colony during the ten weeks between his arrival and burial.

'S. Williamson' was probably Sinclair Williamson, a fellow Scot who had arrived in Van Diemen's Land in 1823 from Scotland aboard the Australian Company ship *Greenock*. At the time Alexander Watson arrived in Hobart, Sinclair Williamson was the publican of the Edinburgh Wine Vaults in Elizabeth Street (plate 10). When seeking a tenant for the Edinburgh Wine Vaults in July 1833 (in preparation for a proposed visit to Great Britain), Sinclair Williamson described the premises as standing 'in point of situation, interior, comfort and convenience, as well as neatness and respectability, pre-eminent.'¹⁷

Joseph Woolley's final obligation under the Letters of Administration was to pay Alexander Watson's 'lawful debts so far as his said goods and chattels, rights credits and effects will extend.' The probate papers record only one creditor, Joseph Woolley for £10.



The papers do not explain how the net proceeds of £83 8s 7d from the auction and the balance for the writing desk were disbursed, nor is there any reference to what (if any) cash or other financial instruments Alexander Watson had at the time of his death. In addition to the legal expenses involved in the process of obtaining the letters of administration of his effects, other probable expenses are lodging, medical and burial costs.

THE CONTENTS OF THE 'ACCOUNT OF SALES' OF ALEXANDER WATSON'S EFFECTS

There is a sense of poignancy about the contents of the copy of auctioneer John Stracey's 'Account of Sales' provided to the Supreme Court by Joseph Woolley in October 1833. It reveals the choices Alexander Watson made as to not only the work-related, but also the personal items the 29-year-old cabinetmaker believed would best fit him out for his new life in Van Diemen's Land.

15. Hobart coopering firm J. & W. Clark refers specifically to Arthur & Sons, the manufacturer of the 'limited quantity' of carpenter's and cabinetmaker's tools recently received from Scotland. *Colonial Times*, 8 October 1833

In all there are 121 separate entries in the account (when organised for auction, the original number of lots was higher, with some 'Sundries' lots having been grouped together at the time of sale) (plates 11 and 12). Of the 121 lots, approximately two-thirds were the tools of trade, furniture hardware etc. that Alexander Watson had brought to Van Diemen's Land, while the remainder were personal items. Similarly, of the gross proceeds of just over £90, approximately two-thirds could be considered work related.

In assessing the prices paid for the various items, it is worth recording the wage levels at the time. Perhaps the most appropriate source is

Government statistics giving the yearly 'Rates of wages per day in Van Diemen's Land for bricklayers, carpenters, masons and plumbers'. In 1832, the rate for carpenters was 8s per day; by 1833 it had fallen to 7s 6d. Emigrant and emancipist cabinetmaker's wages were similar, but might be up to several shillings higher, depending on the level of skill. Thus, if one of Hobart's free cabinetmakers was the successful bidder for Alexander Watson's copper glue pot, the 9s 6d he paid amounted to more than a day's wages.

CABINETMAKERS, JOINERS AND CARPENTERS TOOLS

(Account of Sales' page 1, columns 1 and 2)

The first of Alexander Watson's effects to be put up for auction were jack, smoothing, and try planes (known as 'bench planes' as they are continuously used on the joiner's bench). These were followed by a variety of moulding planes including hollows, rounds, fillister, snipe's bill, rabbit (or rebate) and ogee, together with several types of plough (adjustable planes, with usually eight different sizes of bits, for forming grooves). Next to be auctioned were his saws, his brace and roll of bits (sold for 15s) and then his chisels and gouges (curved chisels) (plate 13).¹⁸

The sale of Watson's tools of trade continues in column two with more chisels, saws and measuring and marking equipment. It's probable that the 'Sundries' lots included items such as files, rasps, scrapers, screwdrivers, pliers. Though usually considered as a part of an experienced cabinetmaker's tool chest, none of these items is listed separately in the 'Account of Sales'. In his chapter on Tools and Machinery, *Furniture of the New Zealand Colonial Era*, William Cottrell writes that 'an experienced cabinetmaker would have had between 100 and 300 tools at his disposal' adding ...

Tool chests were usually made by the apprenticed cabinetmaker, often using offcuts of exotic and valuable woods with veneers gleaned from workshop commissions. Their pine exteriors, generally painted green or black, do not betray the beauty and fine detailing inside. These chests had to be durable and sturdy enough to withstand being carted to workplaces and to secure the contents from theft, but when opened they afforded much pleasure, and the beautiful layouts were a showpiece of the craftsman's

16. Alexander Watson probate documents, 'Account of Sales of Goods' (detail, column 2). In his advertisement, auctioneer John Stracey highlighted 'Two Iron Cramps', a turning lathe and tools. The '4ft 6in Cramp' sold for £2 6s, the 'Cramp & Tail' for £2 10s and the turning lathe and tools for £7 12s 6d. Archives Office of Tasmania, AE242/1/1 no. 44

13 not up	11-4-3
11 Chissels	6 0
10 Iron axes 2	8-6
10 Bob saw & frame	7-6
10 Sundries	4-6
10 Measuring tape	5-0
10 Square & Gauges	4-0
10 1/2 Hand screws	5-0
10 Tapping screw	6-0
10 Drummel	7-0
10 Tapping screw	5-0
10 Beating Saw & frame	7-6
10 1/2 Adze	5-0
10 1 Hammer	8-0
10 Copper Glue Pot	9-6
10 Tapping screw	4-6
10 4ft 6 Cramp	2-6-0
10 Cramp & Tail	2-10-0
10 Bell wire & pipe	4-0
10 Sundries	5-0
10 2 Iron Bolts	5-6
10 Turning lathe & tools	7-12-6
10 9 lb of Glue	6-9
10 18 lb horse hair damaged	19-6
10 Turpentine Varnish & pot	15-6
10 15 lb of Paper damaged	16-0
10 Cake of Bees Wax	12-6
10 30 Brass rings	10-0
10 2 doz Drummel tools	15-0
10 12 drawer Knobs	12-0
10 Sett of Castors	8-0
10 Ring & rath pullies	4-6
10 4 Caps & Bases	14-0
10 3 can-d over	35-17-0

skills. The apprentice would gradually fill them with his tools as he could afford.¹⁹

Thus cabinetmaking tools gradually acquire marks reflecting their constant use (plate 14).

An interesting aspect of Alexander Watson's story is that, in the two advertisements relating to the sale of his effects, the 29-year-old cabinetmaker's tools are described as 'being in good order, and the sets have hardly been used - were manufactured by the best makers ...' and as 'A very extensive and valuable collection of TOOLS ... being all nearly new, and will be found such as are not otherwise to be found here' (plates 5 & 7).

In keeping with the usual practice when carpenters' and cabinetmakers' tools were advertised for sale in Van Diemen's Land, the auction advertisements relating to the sale of Alexander Watson's effects provide no clue to the manufacturer of any of his tools. The tool manufacturer who is identified by name in Hobart advertisements is Arthur & Son/s, the Edinburgh tool making company founded by David Arthur, who, in the 1820s described himself as both a plane maker and turning lathe manufacturer.²⁰ In March 1829, George Stokell (the merchant and timber dealer who, together with Joseph Woolley and John Dean, had provided the £200 sureties in relation to the administration of Alexander Watson's effects) announced that he had just received 'an extensive assortment of American AUGERS... manufactured by Arthur and Son, Edinburgh'.²¹

In October 1833, the Arthur company name appeared again in a Hobart newspaper advertisement when the Hobart cooperage firm of J. & W. Clark announced that they had received 'an excellent collection, and limited quantity of Carpenter's and Cabinet-makers' Tools ... made by that well-known, best edge tool makers' Arthur and Sons.' In the advertisement, the tools are listed in much the same order as in the 'Account of Sale' of Alexander Watson's effects, that is, it begins with trying and jack planes, followed by moving ploughs ... fillisters ... ogees ... snip [sic] bills and rabbets' etc., then 'Cabinetmakers' braces 36 bits' (plate 15).

While brothers John and William Clark had previously offered for sale items related to their core coopering business such as 'an assortment of hoop iron, etc.',²² the consignment of Arthur & Sons carpenters' and cabinetmakers' tools appears

LOTTERY.
TO MECHANICS,
THIS IS WORTHY OF ATTENTION.
TWO SUPERIOR
TURNING LATHES,
Being the Prizes.

THE First Prize :- A very powerful **TURNING LATHE**, got-up by a first-rate mechanic, designed entirely for his own use. The puppets are of cast iron, eight inches high from the puppet bed, the mandre remaining in two collars with double brasses, the puppet bed of Norway deal, the foot wheel of cast iron, with double crank, connecting rods and treadle. The tools consist of 8 gouges, 5 chisels, 4 parting tools, 7 iron tools, all with handles, 1 pair cullipers, 4 screw keys, 3 chucks, 2 rests for wood, 2 ditto ~~for iron~~ 8 carriers, 7 centres - capable of turning a body of $\frac{1}{2}$ ton in weight.

The second Prize :- A superior London-made **TURNING LATHE**, never used, but complete except as to tools.

To take place at the *Tamar Auction and Commission Sale Rooms*, when the List of **Forty-five Members at One Guinea each** is completed.
Charles street, Launceston,
sept. 18, 1835.

to have been a one off event. In Hobart, competition to meet the demands for such items was a fact of life - in September 1833 the 'choice and extensive assortment of Goods' just imported by George Stokell included 'A very superior assortment of large fancy moulding planes, new patterns'.²³

TWO IRON CRAMPS AND A TURNING LATHE

('Account of Sales' page 1 column 2)

Auctioneer John Stracey made particular mention in his advertisements of what he described as 'Two iron cramps' and a 'turning lathe'. Listed midway down the second column of the 'Account of Sales', the '4ft 6 Cramp' brought £2 6s and the 'Cramp & Tail' £2 10s. The 'Turning lathe & tools' sold for £7 12s 6d (plate 16). Whether in paying this sum for Alexander Watson's lathe and tools the buyer felt they had got a bargain is not known.

On 10 August 1832, just over two months prior to the auction of Alexander Watson's effects, auctioneer John Stracey had advertised the auction of Hobart cabinetmaker Robert Household's 'Extensive and valuable stock' and other furniture trade related items, including 'An

17. This advertisement seeks 'Forty-five Members at One Guinea each' to subscribe to a lottery, the prizes being two turning lathes. In terms of the number of potential participants, the lottery seems ambitious, but the detailed description of both the lathe and turning tools is a valuable furniture history resource. *Cornwall Chronicle* 19 September 1835

excellent turning lathe, with fly wheel, and tools complete'.²⁴ In the same edition of the *Hobart Town Courier*, an extensive range of machinery etc. 'Just imported from London, per *Norval*' and on sale at the Hobart firm of Hewitt, Gore, & Co., included 'Iron bodied turning lathes, with tools complete'.²⁵ In addition to the owners of Hobart's cabinet-making establishments, the potential buyers of turning lathes included the larger landholders in the interior. Turning lathes were considered acceptable as a 'gentlemen's amusement'.²⁶

An excellent description of 'a turning lathe and tools' appeared in the *Launceston Cornwall Chronicle* in September 1835. Directed 'TO MECHANICS' the advertisement sort to attract 'Forty-five Members at One Guinea each' for a lottery, the first prize being 'A very powerful TURNING LATHE', with tools, the second

prize 'A superior London made TURNING LATHE, never used, but complete except as to tools' (plate 17).

HARDWARE AND UPHOLSTERY ITEMS

(page 1, column 2, page 2 column 1)

The 'Account of Sales' lists about 20 lots of hardware and upholstery items. The first item below the 'Turning lathe & tools' in column two is '9 lb of glue', the next '18 lb horsehair damaged', which sold for 19s 6d, followed by 'Turpentine Varnish & polish and a cake of bees wax'. Next came other hardware lots including 30 brass rings, 2 dozen drawer locks, 12 drawer knobs, a set of castors, ring and rack pullies, 4 caps & bases.

Column three (from the second page of the 'Account of Sales') begins with 6 locks, followed by 16 gross of screws, 3½ dozen bed screws, tacks & brads, 2 sets of castors, 3½ yards of [hair cloth] seating, (several lots of 'Sundries' being interspersed between the last few items), then bed and carpet binding, which sold for £2 18s, fringe, and finally 'Yallow Ochre & Brown' [sic] which are earth pigments for colouring polish and for making pigmented glue size to colour out the cheaper timbers (plate 18).

Joseph Woolley could have closely estimated the prices achieved at auction for these items. In addition to his business as an upholsterer, cabinetmaker and undertaker, Joseph Woolley supplied both the public and the trade with many similar items (plate 19). For astute businessmen such as Joseph Woolley, there was one customer whose needs dwarfed all others – the Government. A tender to supply a diverse range of goods to the Convict Department and colonial government departments, with over 40% of the colony's population 'on their books', was a potentially lucrative business opportunity for those with the capital to take advantage of it.

For the most part, the quantities of hardware and upholstery items in the 'Account of Sales' suggests that these items were intended primarily for Alexander Watson's own use. In the few months between his arrival and death, he would have had the opportunity to judge whether the items he had brought were appropriate to the situation in his new home.

Emigrant cabinetmaker George Best's letters to his mother and other family members convey his frustration with the hardware and upholstery

18.

Alexander Watson probate documents, 'Account of Sales of Goods' (detail, column 3). Locks, screws, bed screws, tacks & brads and castors head lots in column 3, followed by upholstery items, then Alexander's personal and household effects. Archives Office of Tasmania, AE242/1/1 no. 44

Item	Price	Quantity
6 locks	9 0	3
16 Gross of screws	1 13 6	2
3½ Doz Bed screws	10 6	2
Tacks & Brads	15 6	2
2 sets of castors	1 6	1
3½ Yards of seating	11 0	1
2 sets of bastons	12 0	2
2 lots of sundries	4 6	2
3½ Yards of seating	8 9	1
2 lots of Bed & carpet	2 18 0	6
Fringe	1 0 0	2
Yallow Ochre & Brown	7 0	2
Set of fine Irons	1 7 6	1
1 Doz Knives & Forks	13 6	1
Plates & dishes	6 3	1
Tawdry Piece	1 14 6	1
Shirts	7 6	1
2 sets of drawers	9 0	1
Castor & Mould	8 0	2
Threads & Cotton	4 0	1
Witch	7 0 0	1
Coffee Pot	11 0	2
Chintze & Mosaic	2 11 0	2
2 Pair of sheets	1 13 0	2
12 Shirts	2 3 0	2
6 Shirts	17 0	1
4 Shirts	15 6	1
14 Handkerchiefs	7 6	1
Carried up	46 18 6	

items he had chosen to bring with him. George Best was about 37 years old when he arrived in Hobart in October 1833 aboard the *Vibilia*, together with his brother David, their families and their sister Mary. In early January 1834 they left Hobart aboard the *Vibilia* for their final destination, the town of Launceston in the north of the colony. In the intervening period George Best had walked to Launceston (a distance of about 200 km), arranged the rental of suitable premises, and returned to Hobart. For about ten years prior to his leaving England, George Best had been in business in Richmond, Surrey as a carpenter, cabinetmaker, upholsterer, paperhanger and undertaker.²⁷ In a letter to his mother telling of the Best families' arrival in Launceston George Best wrote

13 Jan[uar]y we have this day landed the remainder of our goods they have come very safe but we bro[ught]t out many things which are almost useless which if I had left and bro[ught]t looking glass, bed screws or brass chair nails, hair cloth for chairs 21 to 24 in wide and rosewood and mahogany veneers I should have gained almost double there are no mahogany or rosewood veneers to be bought at all only cedar is used,
May the Lord bless & keep you all.²⁸

George Best's reference to 'should have gained almost double' seems to indicate that, as well as the furniture hardware, etc. he had brought for his own use, he had additional quantities to sell or barter to others in the furniture trade. His annoyance stemmed at least in part from the prospect of missing the opportunity to capitalise on the price paid for such items in the colony - the weeks spent in Hobart had given him ample opportunity to visit Joseph Woolley's Cabinet and Upholstery Warehouse in Macquarie street, and to inspect the wide range of furniture hardware and tools recently imported and on sale at the premises of George Stokell in the New Market.²⁹

In Launceston a wide range of cabinetmakers' hardware such as castors, locks etc. were also available through ironmongers. On the same page of the *Launceston Advertiser* of 9 January 1834, which contains the 'Shipping Report' announcing the arrival of the *Vibilia* from Hobart with the Best families on board,³⁰ there is a full column advertisement for John Uther's 'New Ironmongery Warehouse', whose stock included

WOOLLEY'S CABINET AND UPHOLSTERY WAREHOUSE.
THE Public are respectfully informed they can be furnished with Goods of all descriptions in the above line, and Undertaking punctually executed on reasonable terms.
Goods for Sale, —
 Brussels, Grecian, Kidderminster, and Venetian carpets
 Hearth rugs and druggets
 Moreens, bindings and fringes.
 Painted baize and painted twill of the latest patterns for table covers
 White cotton and coloured worsted blind lines
 Worsted and silk gimps
 Black cotton velvet
 Paper Hangings
 Hearth brushes
 Brass and green fenders and fire Irons,
 Stained, rosewood, cane and rush bottom chairs
 Green Venetian blinds
 16, 18, 20, 22, 24 and 27 inch hair seating
 Chair Webbing and Flemish tacks
 Brass beading and chair nails
 Brass astragals for doors
 Cornice ends, rings, and brackets
 Curtain bands and pins
 Mortice, chest, cupboard and till locks
 Drawer knobs and handles
 Card and Pembroke table Hinges
 Fork table fasteners
 Rack -Pullics
 Flush and spring bolts
 Pully ends for French rods
 Coffin furniture
 Cane well adapted for making baskets
 Chimney glasses
 Bees wax, &c. &c. &c.
 N. B. The trade can be supplied at the lowest prices.
 Macquarie street, Nov. G.

CABINET MAKERS' FURNITURE, AND ARTICLES OR BUILDINGS &c.

BRASS FOUNDRY, including in the stamped, bedcaps and ferrils, draw and table knobs, and in the cast, castors, cupboard turns, curtain and picture rings, hinges of every description, hooks and eyes, rack pullies, sash screws, Bedscrews of [all] sizes, Bed castors, wood and iron ...

Certainly it is the question of veneers that particularly vexed George Best. Ten days after his arrival in Hobart he wrote to family at home

I regret very much I did not bring a box of veneers with me as there are none to be got nor is mahogany or rosewood used but what comes [made] up in furniture from England all is made from the cedar which we used for the inside of drawers

George Best's observations about the use and availability of other than Australian timber and veneers are not entirely correct. In June 1832 Hobart merchant John Kerr advertised that he

19. As this advertisement reveals, the prices achieved at auction for Alexander Watson's furniture hardware, upholstery and other furniture trade related items would have been anticipated by Joseph Woolley. In the 1830s, his Cabinet & Upholstery Warehouse offered the most comprehensive range of such imported goods in the colony. *Hobart Town Courier* 14 November 1834

had just received 'a case of Spanish Veneers, cut expressly for the front of sideboards, wardrobes, panels, &c. of different sizes',³¹ and in August 1832, when announcing that he had gone into business on his own account,³² young Scottish cabinetmaker Alexander Brunton made particular reference to veneers:

CABINET AND CHAIR MAKING.

A. Brunton, having commenced in the above branches hopes by strict attention to merit a share of public favour A.B. has on hand a quantity of horse hair for stuffing, hair cloth, Spanish and Honduras mahogany, rose wood veneers, &c.

Macquarie st. Aug. 9 1832

Veneers are a trade related item that is missing from the auctioneer's 'Account of the Sales' of

20. Alexander Watson probate documents, 'Account of Sales of Goods' (detail, column 4). Midway down the final column among Alexander Watson's clothing and household effects is a lot simply shown as 'Cabinet Guide'. Its desirability is reflected in its price of £2 6s, a week's wages for a cabinetmaker. Archives Office of Tasmania, AE242/1/1 no. 44

	£	s	d
Prot up	66	18	6
8 Pair of Stockings		11	0
Blanket Shirts & Drawers		6	0
Table cloths & Towels		10	6
2 Corsets		13	6
Coat & Belt		13	0
Blue Coat		1	0
4 lots of Sundries		17	6
2 Blankets		12	0
4 lots of sundries		1	3
Cabinet Guide	2	6	0
Stale & Paper		6	6
Sundries		15	0
Price Book	2	5	0
100 Quils		14	4
Hat Box		2	6
White Hat		15	0
Mattress		1	2
Beans & Midgets		1	2
Lam & Wine		4	0
Diamond &		15	0
Tool Chest	2	5	0
2 Cloths Boxes		1	1
2 Trunks		1	8
Sundries		13	3
Decanter Glass &		4	6
100 Quils		2	6
Sundries		8	6
Great Coat		9	6
	90	3	7

Alexander Watson's effects. One possibility is that he had brought veneers with him, but had sold them (and perhaps other items he had brought with him) to alleviate financial difficulties resulting from ill health. As the probate documents show, at the time of his death Alexander Watson owed Joseph Woolley the sum of £10.

'CABINET GUIDE' AND 'PRICE BOOK'

(Account of Sales' page 2 column 2)

The sale of Alexander Watson's clothing and other personal effects begins half way down column three with a 'Set of Fire Irons', and continues with the first few lots in column four. For Tasmania's furniture history, one of the two furniture books listed midway down column four has created the most interest since the existence of the 'Account of Sales' was brought to notice through the publication of the article on Alexander Watson in *Australiana* in August 1996.³³

Listed in the 'Account of Sale' simply as 'Cabinet Guide', the book sold for £2 6s (plate 20). To the frustration of furniture historians, auctioneer John Stracey left us with no clue which cabinetmakers' guide Alexander Watson had brought to Van Diemen's Land. There was no reason for him to be more precise; the information in the 'Account of Sales of Goods' is simply a reflection of how the lots were itemised in preparation for the auction.

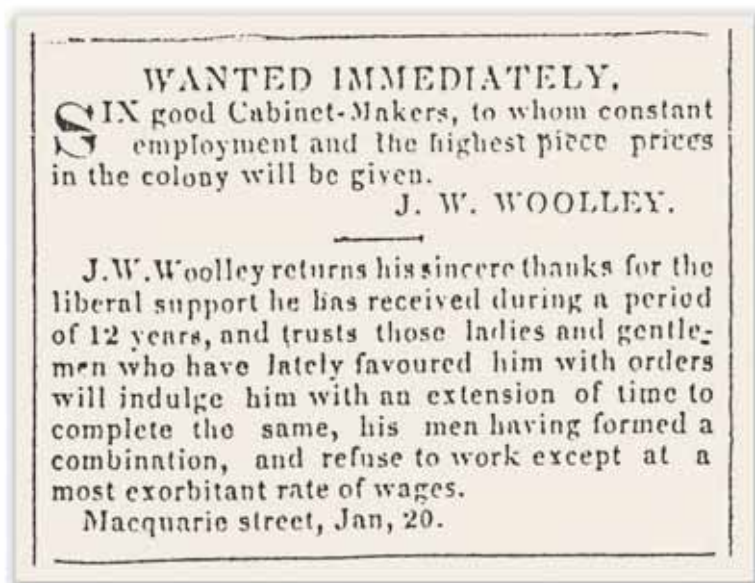
A generic description of a cabinetmakers' guide in Hobart in the early 1830s was not unusual. Among the books Mrs Deane of the Hobart Circulating Library offered for sale in March 1830 were the 'Vicar of Wakefield, Gulliver's travels, Peregrine Pickle, Tom Jones, Peter Wilkins, Brook's Gazetteer, Cabinet makers Guide, Smith's Interest table, Ready Reckoner, and a great variety of other Books.'³⁴ In March 1833 Hobart stationer and bookbinder James Wood announced that he had 'just received by late arrivals ... upwards of ONE THOUSAND VOLUMES OF NEW AND USEFUL Books all of the very latest editions, among which are the following excellent standard works ... Watt's psalms and hymns, An assortment of bibles and prayer books in elegant bindings, McCulloch's commercial dictionary, Nicholson's operative mechanic, Cabinet makers' and upholsterers' guide, Art of painting by Campan, Morrison's landscape gardening, Hudson's land valuer's assistant ...'³⁵

The other furniture book Alexander Watson brought to Van Diemen's Land was a 'Price Guide'. An indication that it was a sought after item is the fact that it sold for £2 5s, a similar amount paid a few lots later for Alexander Watson's Tool Chest which, in the 31 August auction advertisement, is described as being 'fitted up in the most useful manner' (plate 5). The first sentence in the introduction to the 1811 edition of *The Edinburgh Book of Prices for Manufacturing Cabinet Work* conveys the crucial part price books played within the furniture trade ...

The utility and necessity of a regular and well-digested Book of Prices, for ascertaining the value of Cabinet-work done by the piece, and for preventing many disagreeable disputes between the Masters and Journeymen, which would otherwise unavoidably occur, will, it is presumed, be obvious to both the employer and the employed.

Alexander Watson's Scottish origin raises the possibility that the price book he brought to Van Diemen's Land in 1832 was one of the three editions of *The Edinburgh Book of Prices for Manufacturing Cabinet Work*. First published in 1805, the book was reprinted in 1811 and 1821, with a supplement being published in 1825.³⁶

The potential for conflict between master and journeyman to arise, (and the decision-making that comes into play in creating a single piece of furniture) can be seen in the entry in the 1811 *Edinburgh Book of Prices* for 'A STRAIGHT-FRONT CHEST OF DRAWERS' (plate 22). Coincidentally, it was Joseph Woolley, the administrator of Alexander Watson's effects, who was in most need of a price guide. He was one of the few cabinetmaking masters in Hobart in the early 1830s whose business warranted the employment of more than one or two journeymen cabinetmakers. Indeed Joseph Woolley's advertisement of 6 August 1833 headed 'Cabinet Makers Wanted', and offering 'constant employment' to 'Four or Five Cabinet Makers', may well have been intended as a warning to his current workforce (the advertisement ran only once).³⁷ In January 1835, 'his men having formed a combination' and refused to work 'except at a most exorbitant rate of wages', Joseph Woolley sought 'Six good Cabinet Makers' (plate 21). The largest 'employer' of cabinetmakers in Hobart in the 1830s was the government. However for the convict



cabinetmakers assigned to government service working in the Lumber Yard and on Public Works, it was Convict Department Regulations, not a Price Book, which determined their conditions.

ALEXANDER WATSON'S PERSONAL EFFECTS

('Account of Sales' page 2 columns 1 and 2)

While there is a temptation to view the 'Account of Sales' of Alexander Watson's effects only from a furniture history perspective, it is also a valuable resource in the wider context of documenting emigrant's lives. Reading the personal items listed in the last two columns of the 'Account of Sales' is like looking over Andrew Watson's shoulder as he gathers together his fowling piece, sword, dirk and arrows, pistol and mould, packs his 'Coattee & kilt' and decides what other clothing, linen, cutlery, crockery, etc. to take with him.

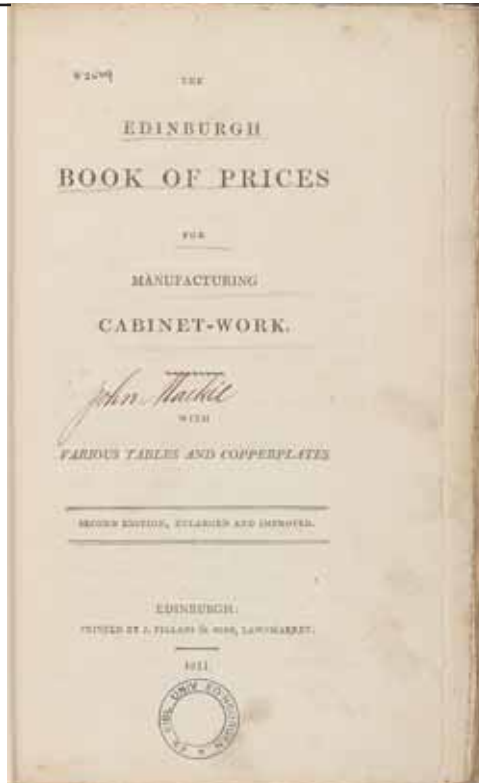
Knowing that he died within ten weeks of his arrival in Hobart, and that as part of the administration of his 'goods, rights, chattels and effects', everything Alexander Watson owned at the time of his death had to be sold, brings an added poignancy to his story.

His watch sold for £7, his white [beaver] hat for 18s, two cravats for 13s 6d, and among his other effects were 21 shirts and 14 handkerchiefs. The 'Sundries' lots may have included items such as personal books or mementoes, items of sentimental value within his family at home in Scotland.

If he had intended to go into business in Hobart on his own account, Alexander Watson did not live long enough to be tested. But even in

21. The government's annual statistics for the wages for carpenters put the dispute between Joseph Woolley and his cabinetmakers concerning the question of 'piece prices' into context. The daily rate for carpenters in 1830 was 10s, but by 1834 this had 'fallen to 7s 6d. *Hobart Town Courier* 23 January 1835

22. Cabinetmaker Alexander Watson's Scottish origins raise the possibility that the 'Price Guide' he brought to Van Diemen's Land in 1832 was an edition of the *Edinburgh Book of Prices for manufacturing cabinet-work: with various tables and copperplates*. Reproduced courtesy Edinburgh University Library



his short time he must have become aware that the limited potential customer base in the penal colony of Van Diemen's Land in the 1830s meant that success depended much more on being an entrepreneurial trader and retailer of imported goods, than on cabinet making skills. Conveying the situation most succinctly is James Ross's 1833 *Van Diemen's Land Annual and Hobart Town Almanack*. It contains an alphabetical listing of the colony's inhabitants who had met the age and financial requirements for jury duty.³⁸ In the Almanack, the only two residents of the Police District of Hobart Town with the calling 'cabinetmaker' beside their names are Joseph Woolley and Thomas Hellyer.³⁹ Also included in the Hobart section are James Jeffrey and Samuel Whitaker, two experienced cabinetmakers. James Jeffrey was licensee of the *Cabinetmakers' Arms* and Samuel Whitaker the *Freemason's Tavern*. Like Joseph Woolley, both had been in the colony since the early 1820s. A statement carried unanimously at Mechanics Meeting held in the *Cabinet-makers Arms* in January 1835 noted ... 'Need we remark here, that one half of the mechanical work of this Colony is done by the [convict] loan gang, which leaves many of the free men to want.'⁴⁰

Acknowledgments

Thanks to Hobart researcher Thelma McKay for drawing my attention to the reference to Alexander Watson in David Dobson's *The Scots in Australasia 1788 - 1900*,⁴¹ and to Fiona Dakers, librarian, Forfar Library. To Daan Kiezebrink, who voluntarily made the 20-mile journey from his home in Douglstown on 'a cold wintry day' in October 2009, to take the images of St Aidan's Church Fern and the Watson monumental inscription. To Lewis Woolley for permission to publish the photograph (taken by his great grandfather Charles Woolley) of his great great grandfather Joseph Woolley. To David Kelly and Denis Lake for editing assistance, and to Simon Barnard for artwork.

Robyn and her husband Denis Lake's extensive research into Tasmania's furniture history covers the manufacture, importation, sale and use of furniture up until 1930. Robyn's current research is centred on documenting the contribution of the more than 500 convicts with furniture trade skills who arrived in Van Diemen's Land during the first 50 years of European settlement.

The credit for discovering cabinetmaker Alexander Watson's probate documents goes to the late Caressa Crouch, collector and researcher, and former Treasurer of the Australiana Society. Having come across the probate documents by chance during a visit to the Archives Office of Tasmania in Hobart (Alexander Watson probate documents, AE242/1/1 no. 44), she subsequently wrote about Alexander Watson in *Australiana* in August 1996.

Rather than listing Alexander Watson's effects as they appear in what she referred to as 'The inventory of the effects', Ms Crouch re-arranged them under the most relevant headings such as planes, saws, measuring & marking tools, finishing & hardware, etc. The addition of descriptions relating to each item's use with the furniture trade enhances the value of the article as a furniture history source.

The Crouch article is based on two assumptions, which now appear to be incorrect. The first assumption is that Alexander Watson lived and worked in Van Diemen's Land for four years prior to his death 'on the 8th August 1836'. In truth, Alexander Watson was buried in Hobart on 8 August 1832; his death had occurred less than ten weeks after his arrival in the colony.

Her second assumption is that the auction of Alexander Watson's effects was conducted by Joseph Woolley in his role as the Court appointed administrator ... 'J.W. Woolley charged a Commission of £5 17s 6d with advertising and bed [bell] man £1 17s 6d. ... the inventory of the effects were itemised by the administrator, cabinetmaker J.W. Woolley ... whose familiarity with the names of the different types of tools presumably allows for a more correct or commonly used description compared with that given by a person unfamiliar with the use of such tools'. In fact, Hobart auctioneer John Stracey conducted the auction, in 1832. The document she calls the 'inventory of his effects', is an *undated* copy of the original 'Account of the Sales of Goods' that John Stracey sent to Joseph Woolley in his role as the Supreme Court appointed administrator of Alexander Watson's effects in November 1832.

Notes

- 1 Caressa Crouch, 'Master cabinetmaker Alexander Watson of Van Diemen's Land and his tools. A detailed description' *Australiana*, vol 8, no 3 August 1996, 68-75
- 2 Alexander Watson probate documents, Archives Office of Tasmania, AE242/1/1 no 44. In preparing transcripts of the probate documents for this article some capital letters have been changed to lower case in conformity with modern practice, and shortened words shown in full
- 3 Alison Mitchell (ed), *Pre -1855 gravestone inscriptions in Angus*, Scottish Genealogy Society, 1979, vol 1, Strathmore, 111
- 4 Andrew Jervise, *Epitaphs & Inscriptions from Burial Grounds & Old Buildings in the North-East of Scotland, with Historical, Biographical, Genealogical, and Antiquarian Notes*. Edmonston & Douglas, Edinburgh 1875, 269. Mr W[atson] is author of several pieces of poetry: among these is Whistlin' Tam, published in the 5th series of "Whistle Binkie".
- 5 *The Statistical Accounts of Scotland*. Account of 183445 vol.11, 311: Fearn, County of Forfarshire 31, -316. <http://stat-acc-scot.edina.ac.uk/sas/sas.asp/?action=public&>
- 6 *The Emigrant's Guide to New South Wales, Van Diemen's Land, Lower Canada, Upper Canada, and New Brunswick*, W. Pearson, London, 1832. The Guide states that, under the government scheme in place at the time, 'Pecuniary assistance' towards defraying the expenses of their passage to either NSW or Van Diemen's Land was available only to 'married men with families and single females.' (p 16)
- 7 *Colonial Times*, 27 August 1833, 4. A few weeks earlier in the *Colonial Times* 6 August 1833, 4, Joseph Woolley had advertised that 'Four or Five Cabinet Makers will find constant employment by applying to J.W. Woolley's Macquarie-street.' Joseph Woolley's advertisement, which ran only once, may have been intended as a warning to his current journeymen cabinetmakers. Among the assisted emigrants who had arrived in Hobart from Dublin aboard the ship *Strathfieldsay* on 28 June 1833 were two 24-year-old cabinetmakers, Thomas Booth, Richard Kearney and 33 year old cabinetmaker John Mara.
- 8 The evidence supporting the belief that these men are of Scottish origin includes: personal communication with descendants, death registrations, christening of children in the Presbyterian Church, and census records in which they give their religion as Church of Scotland. William Anderson and James Reid are two other Scots who arrived in Hobart during the early 1830s whose trade is shown as either joiner, cabinetmaker or carpenter
- 9 James Ross, *The Hobart Town Almanack for the year 1831*, James Ross, Hobart Town 1831, 80, 81
- 10 *Hobart Town Courier* 1 Jun 1832, 2
- 11 Archives Office of Tasmania, CUS30/1/1, 102, *Hobart Town Courier* 1 Jun 1832, 2
- 12 Archives Office of Tasmania, NS229/64, RGD34/1832/2901
- 13 Alexander Watson's choice of Van Diemen's Land, rather than one of the North American colonies, which were the preferred destination for Scots emigrants in the early 1830s, may have been influenced by the hope that the colony's climate would be beneficial to his health
- 14 According to the probate documents the Citation was published in the *Hobart Town Gazette* of 14, 21 and 28 September 1832. In fact, though it was published in the 'demi official' *Hobart Town Courier* on those dates, it appeared in the *HTG* on 28 September only
- 15 *Hobart Town Gazette*, 28 Sep 1832, p 4: *Colonial Times*

- 5 June 1832, 2
- 16 *Colonial Times* 15 January 1833, 4. The date 28 October 1832 for the granting of the Letters of Administration is a typographical error. The correct date, which appears in the *Hobart Town Gazette* of 11 January 1833 notice, is 20 October 1832.
- 17 *Colonial Times* 30 Jul 1833, 1
- 18 In some cases the spelling of a tool has been changed from the way in which it appears in the 'Account of Sales of Goods'. The spelling used in this article is as shown in the revised edition of R.A. Salaman's *Dictionary of Woodworking Tools*
- 19 William Cottrell, *Furniture of the New Zealand Colonial Era*, Reed Publishing, Auckland, New Zealand. 2006, 402, 403.
- 20 John MacDonald, Development of Record Tools Ltd. Companies incorporated into [Alexander] Mathieson's organisation. www.wkfinetools.com/hUK/RecordT/his/mathieRelated.asp
- 21 *Hobart Town Courier*, 21 Mar 1829, 4
- 22 *Hobart Town Courier*, 3 Aug 1832, 1
- 23 *Hobart Town Courier*, 20 September 1833, 1
- 24 *Hobart Town Courier* 10 August 1832, 3
- 25 *Hobart Town Courier*, 10 August 1832, 3
- 26 *Colonial Times*, 8 September 1840, 1
- 27 Geoffrey Beard, Christopher Gilbert (eds), *Dictionary of English Furniture Makers 1660-1840*, Furniture History Society, W.S.Maney and Son Ltd, Leeds, UK, 1986, 68
- 28 Best Papers, State Library of Victoria, La Trobe Library, MS 8848
- 29 *Hobart Town Courier* 20 September 1833, 1
- 30 *Launceston Advertiser*, 9 Jan 1834, 2
- 31 *Hobart Town Courier*, 29 June 1832, p3
- 32 *Hobart Town Courier*, 10 August 1832, p3
- 33 Caressa Crouch, 'Master cabinetmaker Alexander Watson of Van Diemen's Land and his tools. A detailed description' *Australiana*, vol 8, no 3 Aug 1996, pp 68-75. The statement in the article that the Cabinet Guide Alexander Watson brought to Van Diemen's Land 'is George Smith's 'Cabinet-maker and Upholsterer's Guide of 1826' is Ms Crouch's assumption; in the copy of the auctioneers 'Account of Sale' it is simply shown as 'Cabinet Guide'.
- 34 *Hobart Town Courier*, 6 Mar 1830, p3
- 35 *Hobart Town Courier*, 1 Mar 1833, p3
- 36 David Jones, *The Edinburgh Cabinet & Chair Makers' Book of Prices 1805-1825*, Kirk Wynd Press Cupar UK 2000
- 37 *Colonial Times* 6 August 1833, 4.
- 38 According to the 1833 *Van Diemen's Land Annual and Hobart Town Almanack*, qualifications of a juror were 'Age, not under 21 nor above 60; real estate £40 per annum, real and personal £60 per do. personal alone £60, rental £50.
- 39 Thomas Hellyer owned a number of properties in New Town Road. In Thomas's September 1832 Citation seeking to become administrator of his brother's estate (Van Diemen's Land Company surveyor Henry Hellyer), he gave his occupation as carpenter.

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Leslie J. Carlisle

OAM

Well known Australiana Society member Les Carlisle was honoured with the Order of Australia Medal on Australia Day 2010, in recognition of his study and documentation in the field of Australian numismatics – coins, medals, tokens and memorabilia – over many years.

Les produced the first edition of his essential numismatic reference book *Australian Commemorative Medals and Medalets from 1788* in 1983 and then published an expanded, 700-page second edition, *Australian Historical Medals 1788-1988*, listing 3,200 medals, in 2008. In the same year he printed a booklet, *Apprehension of Bushrangers Medals and Rewards*.

A long time member of the Australiana Society and several numismatic groups throughout Australia, he has assisted Sydney's Royal Agricultural Society Heritage Centre in collecting and cataloguing their extensive medal archive, for which he received a Long Service Award in 2009.



The Powerhouse Museum gave him a Distinguished Service Award in 2007 and in 2009 he joined the late Kevin Fahy as a Fellow of the Australian Institute of History and Arts.

Les keeps himself fit by gardening on a steep block at Clareville on Sydney's northern peninsula. You can send your own message of congratulations and order his publications by emailing malecarl@bigpond.net.au. JW

Les Carlisle OAM (right) in earnest discussion with the late Kevin Fahy AM at the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW's new display at Homebush NSW in 2006

25 years ago – Australiana in the saleroom

In 1986, just one year before the sharemarket crash and two years before the Bicentennial, Australiana was enjoying mixed, but mostly better, fortunes in the saleroom. The Australian economy was being de-regulated – not without some pain – but interest rates had a long way to peak. The big Perth entrepreneurs, the Australiana Fund and the fledgling National Museum of Australia contributed to a fresh excitement in the auction room all too elusive nowadays. In this occasional series, this is how Terry Ingram's Saleroom column in the *Australian Financial Review* reported it.

BAD BLOW FOR THE AUSTRALIANA MARKET **25 March 1986**

The Australiana market, which had been coasting along famously ahead of the

Bicentenary, was struck a crushing blow yesterday when a long-case clock by the early colonial maker, James Oatley, failed to attract any serious interest at an auction in Sydney. Offered by Geoff K Gray Pty Ltd in its room in Rosebery, the clock was passed in after the auctioneer, Hugo Eisdale, had taken a top bid, one of only two, at \$40,000. The clock had been expected to make more than the \$64,000 paid for a comparable clock by the same maker at Lawson's in December 1984. Putting it down as a harbinger of harder times to come, one collector pointed out that it was ironic, as the Federal Treasurer Mr Keating is a keen clock collector, albeit not of Australian clocks. The market regained some of its confidence later in the auction, with a maple and cedar swivel chair by the colonial maker Andrew Lenehan selling for \$1800 to the House of Cedar.

A fine proposal

TIMOTHY ROBERTS

David Kelly's 'Suggestion for an electronic "Dictionary" of Australian colonial furniture-makers 1788-1901' (*Australiana* vol 31 no 4 p 11) raises valid concerns to many scholars, researchers and lovers of Australian colonial heritage. The available material on decorative developments in Australia provides valuable but incomplete information on the individuals who created our artistic history. This information is scattered, and the progressive digitisation of historic documents on the internet enables the rediscovery of many details pertaining to Australian aesthetic heritage.

An online database of the decorative artists, craftspeople and designers of Australia would be an appropriate way to consolidate the current available information. David proposes a comprehensive resource on Australian furniture makers; however, given the rich heritage of Australian decorative production, scholars and art lovers alike would benefit from an expansion of this idea to all producers of decorative work in Australia. Whether such a database would be limited to historic figures or opened to include contemporary makers would be at the discretion of the instigators of the project.

The establishment of this project on the internet is crucial to its success. A web interface allows the project to evolve easily and swiftly as scholarship in the field expands and new facts about Australian decorative heritage come to light. It can create links to partner sites and other references for further study, and search utilities can maximise research potential. An internet-based database would be accessible by a broad spectrum of people, both locally and internationally.

One way to develop this database would be in the form of a biographical register. This would be congruous with other valuable resources available on-line, including the *Dictionary of Australian Artists Online (DAAO)*

and the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Limiting content to biographical material encourages the publication of factual information, and preserves the role of journals as media for scholarly debate on issues requiring qualitative judgment. Given the scholarly nature of the resource, authors should be identified. Of course it is possible that any collation of material could be absorbed into an existing resource such as the *DAAO*, however the breadth of Australia's decorative heritage could support foundation of a dedicated stand-alone resource.

Quality and accuracy of information can be controlled by peer-reviewing submissions. This is popular among numerous online journals and databases. An appropriate style and content guide would need to be developed for prospective contributors. One feature that could distinguish this project would be to include images of artworks by known makers. Given that many important examples of decorative arts in Australia lie outside public collections, a gallery of an artist's production, though expensive to establish and manage, would be a unique and valuable reference.

Developing a comprehensive database detailing the decorative artists, craftspeople and designers of Australia will be a challenging project, however the assistance of individual contributors, public and private sector sponsors, could make this a reality. The support of copyright holders from current publications on decorative history in Australia would be a wonderful boost to the initial setup and development of this task. With appropriate support, a scholarly biographical database could suitably augment the material currently available on Australian decorative history.

Timothy Roberts is a researcher in Australian colonial heritage and decorative arts. He is a contributor to the *Dictionary of Australian Artists Online*.



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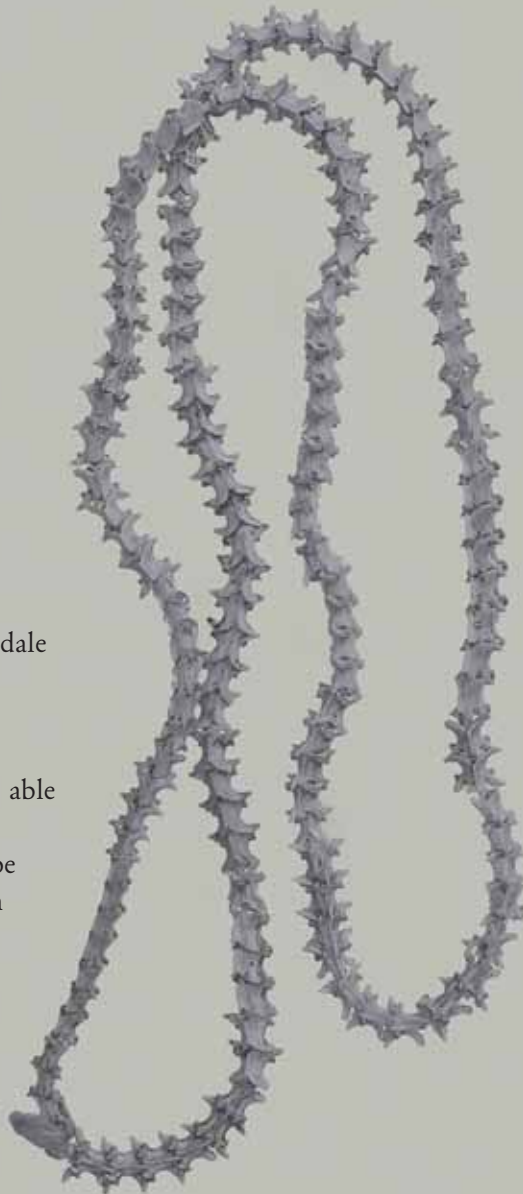
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At the Tasmanian Exhibition held between 1891 & 1892 in the magnificent Albert Hall building, Launceston, Mrs Amy Percy of Scottsdale exhibited a 'necklace made of vertebrae of a Tasmanian black snake - highly commended.' This is the only evidence I have been able to gather to date on snake vertebrae and their use in necklaces. It might be possible to suggest a prior Tasmanian Aboriginal source as the inspiration.

In June 2010 I will be holding an exhibition in London in conjunction with my daughter Emma Hawkins, of nearly 200 items of 'Zoomorphic Decoration' to include jewellery, clothing, furniture and extraordinary objects accumulated by J B Hawkins Antiques over the last forty years.

This seemingly unique example of a Tasmanian snake vertebrae necklace will be exhibited in London.

Launceston Exhibition Building with extensions into City Park and a copy of the rare original handbook with a list of exhibitors and exhibits. The Exhibition Building is still standing and is one of the finest of its type in Australia.

