

Australiana

November 2013 vol 35 no 4





SIMPSON'S ANTIQUES

FINE AUSTRALIAN ANTIQUES



An impressive 18" English mahogany Wall Clock with a fusee movement having a painted dial retailed by Brush & McDonnell, Sydney (act. 1850-67)

www.australianantiques.com.au

AA&ADA
AUSTRALIAN
ANTIQUARIAN AND
ART DEALERS
ASSOCIATION

By appointment
Mobile: 0404 051 999
Email: simpson@casuarinapress.com.au



Australiana

November 2013 vol. 35 no. 4
ISSN 0814-107X

THE AUSTRALIANA SOCIETY

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

Australiana, the magazine of The Australiana Society Inc.,
is published in February, May, August and November
and is available only by subscription.

EDITOR

John Wade

SUBSCRIPTIONS 2013

Household.....\$60
Institutions.....\$65
Life.....\$1100

To subscribe, call us for a brochure or download a membership
form from the web site and mail with your payment, or call or
email with your credit card details

ADVERTISING AND EDITORIAL

Send editorial contributions and advertising for
Australiana by email to johnwade@optusnet.com.au or
on disc to PO Box 2335, Bondi Junction NSW 1355.
You can download a Style Guide from the website

INDEX

An index to *Australiana* is available on the web site

GIFTS

The Australiana Society is listed on the Australian
Government's Register of Cultural Organisations and
recognised as a Deductible Gift Recipient.
Gifts to the Society are tax deductible.

COMMITTEE 2013-14

President

Dr Jim Bertouch

Vice-President

Annette Blinco

Secretary

Michael Lech

Treasurer

Andrew Morris

Committee

Timothy Cha

Dr Paul Donnelly

Lesley Garrett

Judy Higson

Michel Reymond

Andrew Simpson

All articles appearing in *Australiana* in 2013 are eligible
for the Peter Walker Fine Art writing award sponsored
by Peter Walker Fine Art, Adelaide.

contents

4

David G Reid – printmaker, painter and plumber
Silas Clifford-Smith

11

Fit for a Queen: two Royal jubilee testimonials from colonial Queensland
Timothy Roberts

16

The Macquarie Event
Tim Cha

20

Joseph Bridekirk, Cabinetmaker: Hobart, Sydney and Maitland
David Kelly

25

Grant of \$5,000
Dr Jim Bertouch

26

London calling
Bill Blinco

28

John Wood, gentleman turner
John Hawkins

31

Jewellery is for giving
John Wade

34

Book reviews
Penny Olsen, *Cayley & Son*, review by *Richard Neville*
Penny Olsen, *Collecting Ladies*, review by *Dr Dorothy Erickson*

ADVERTISERS

Simpson's Antiques	2
Hordern House	10
Colonial Rarities	18
Australian Scholarly Publishing	19
The Merchant of Welby	39
Peter Walker Fine Art	39
J B Hawkins Antiques	40

DESIGN

Kylie Kennedy, Reconstruct Design 0402 417 871

PRINTERS

Point Graphics 0419 248 068

COVER

Rhoda Wager (1875–1953), *brooches*, 1917–1939. Collection: Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, Gift of Deborah Cocks and Jennifer Genion from the Estate of Elizabeth and Graham Cocks through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, 2013. Photographs by Marincio Kojdanovski. See story pages 31-33.

© Copyright 2013 The Australiana Society and/or individual authors and photographers.
Opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Society.

David G Reid – printmaker, painter and plumber

1

Daily Telegraph Pictorial,
Friday 7 December 1928.
Collection: Mitchell Library

Scottish immigrant David Reid was a plumber and gasfitter who worked in Sydney's inner western suburb of Newtown. He enriched his life by taking up painting and etching, mostly of pastoral scenes, and by participating in the life of the artistic community.



SILAS CLIFFORD-SMITH

A deafening bang rocked Newtown in Sydney's inner western suburbs in the late afternoon on Thursday 6 December 1928.¹ The cause was the rupture of an acetylene cylinder in a plumber's workshop, and the resulting explosion not only gutted the two-storey rear building at 439 King Street, Newtown, but also damaged several nearby houses.

Despite no casualties, the blast was a major news story around Sydney. According to the *Sydney Morning Herald*: 'windows of adjacent houses were shattered: sheets of tin, billets of timber, twisted fragments of iron, and a litter of debris were flung hundreds of feet into the air and deposited over a wide area'.¹ Photographs of the event were splashed over the front page of the *Daily Telegraph* the next day (plate 1).²

The workshop was owned by plumber and gasfitter David G Reid, a Scottish migrant who had run his sanitation business from King Street since 1916. Despite the extensive damage

to the building, his business occupied the site for many years after the incident. While Reid's contribution to sanitation may have been locally significant, his lasting legacy lies not with this dramatic explosion but with his activities within Sydney's emergent art community.

The son of Thomas and Amelia Reid, David Graeme Reid (**plate 2**) was born in Scotland between 1860 and 1862. Little is known of his upbringing; he was educated at the Lancastrian School in Edinburgh, an institution that followed the monitorial system of teaching where more advanced students taught less advanced ones. The motto of this kind of schooling was 'he who teaches, learns', but by the time Reid was being educated, this form of instruction was increasingly seen as old-fashioned. Despite this, Reid seems to have been proud of his old school as it is mentioned in most artist-sanctioned profiles of him during his lifetime.

Reid arrived in Sydney in November 1883 and quickly established himself as a plumber and gas fitter in the Newtown district. The following year he married Sarah Ann Bignell (1865–1954) and the couple had six children between 1885 and 1903.³ Reid later established his successful plumbing and gas fitting business at 439 King Street, and some of his sons later became involved in the concern.

Reid lived at several addresses in the area, including a house named Fulham in Simmons Street, Enmore during the 1890s, but in 1898 he moved to 29 Black Street, Marrickville. There is now no sign of his former residence opposite Enmore Park, as it was demolished to make way for a block of flats.

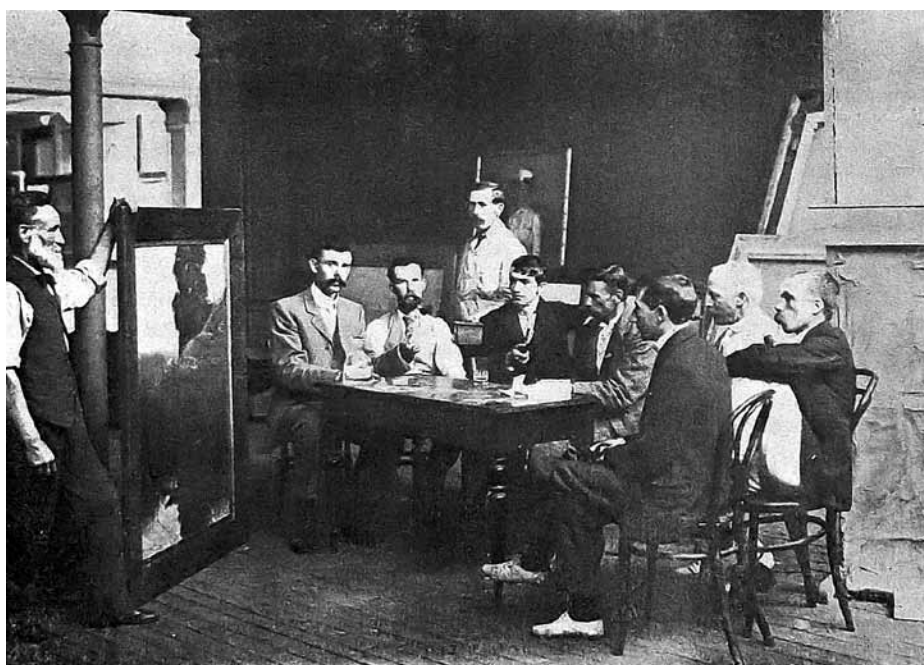
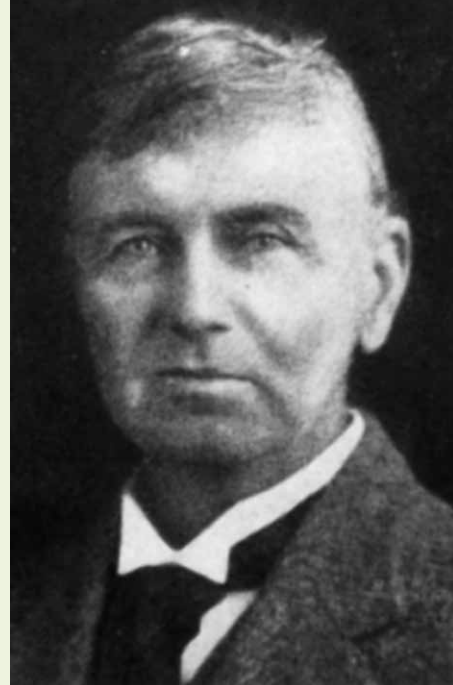
Despite his business commitments, Reid clearly had an interest in art and he took lessons at the Art Society School in Sydney under notable instructors A J Daplyn and Julian Ashton, two teachers who advocated the plein air method of landscape painting. These English immigrant artists were followers of Barbizon, a pre-Impressionist French school of art that promoted the outdoor painting of everyday landscapes rather than rendering images of dramatic scenery or golden sunsets in their studios,

2

David Reid c 1912, photograph from Royal Art Society of NSW catalogue for 1913

3

Society of Artists exhibition selection committee 1901, photograph. Seated figures from left: F J Martyn Roberts, H E Powell, Harry Garlick, David G Reid, Sydney Long, Julian R Ashton and D H Souter



which had been the preferred method earlier in the century.

While in France in the mid 1870s, Daplyn had painted at Barbizon, a rural district near Paris made famous by the mid-century realist landscape painters Corot, Millet, Rousseau, Diaz and Daubigny. While Ashton never painted there, he certainly promoted the style during his early years in Australia. It's no wonder that Reid, under Daplyn and Ashton's instruction, also adopted the Barbizon approach to landscape painting.

Reid's interest in art was clearly evident by the mid-1880s, as he had named his eldest son (b.1885) after the

French landscape artist Claude Lorraine, while his second son Les (b.1887) was given the middle name Rembrandt. Reid first came to public notice when he exhibited a sketch at the Art Society of New South Wales' annual spring exhibition in 1890. The following year he exhibited a watercolour view of the Cook's River, a picturesque waterway near his home which was then popular with Sydney artists. Over the next decade Reid produced several works with titles inspired by the Marrickville district.

Reid continued his involvement with the Art Society up to 1894, but in 1895 he switched allegiance to the newly established



4

David Graeme Reid (c 1861–1933), [*Farm landscape with horses*], watercolour. Private collection

Society of Artists (SOA), and he exhibited with that group until their (first) disbandment in 1902. One of the main reasons for the establishment of the SOA was the desire to have an art society which was controlled by professional artists rather than a mix of amateurs and professionals as was the case with the Art Society.

Despite Reid's artistic status as a non-professional he was elected to the committee of the SOA in 1897. His involvement with this embryonic group saw him associate with many of Sydney's leading artists. Fellow members of the SOA committee during this time included prestigious artists Julian Ashton, Sydney Long, D H Souter, and George W Lambert among others (**plate 3**).

Reid exhibited at nearly all the SOA annual shows between 1895 and 1901. His exhibits were evenly split between oil and watercolour subjects. A highlight from this period was when three of his watercolours – *At the Slip-Rail*, *A Wayside Post Office* and *Field by the Sea* – were included in the 1898 "Exhibition

of Australian Art" at the prestigious Grafton Gallery in London. Being seen in the motherland certainly gave prestige to any colonial artist at that time, but especially an amateur such as Reid. In 1901 one of his works, titled *Evensong*, was purchased by the Art Gallery of NSW trustees for the State collection.⁴

Due to the NSW Government's displeasure in funding two similar art organisations in Sydney, the SOA and the Art Society were persuaded to reunite as the Royal Art Society of NSW (RAS) under the leadership of William Lister Lister. Reid joined the amalgamated group in 1902 and maintained membership of the RAS for the rest of his life, despite the re-formation of the SOA in 1907.

Reid was an active member of the RAS and served on its executive council for 12 years from 1908 to 1922. In 1929 Reid was formally recognised as an Associate Member of the Royal Art Society (ARAS), and between 1931 and the time of his death he was their honorary treasurer.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* photographed Reid in this prestigious role with the RAS patron, NSW Governor Sir Philip Game, at the opening of the 1931 RAS spring annual exhibition.⁵

While Reid painted most of his images in the Sydney region, he also painted briefly in Queensland. He worked in oils and other media, but is best known as a watercolourist specialising in tranquil views of riverbanks and farmland close to gently flowing rivers (very Barbizon), most notably the Hawkesbury-Nepean river system, the Illawarra and Shoalhaven areas (**plates 4 – 6**). Though his work was hardly earth-shattering, he received many positive passing comments in press reviews of Art Society exhibitions.

After the death of pioneer watercolourist J J Hilder in 1916, there was an increasing male interest in watercolour painting, which subsequently led to the formation of the Australian Watercolour Institute (AWI) in 1923. Although never a member, Reid exhibited at their first show in 1924 and occasionally at other AWI shows. In a review of the 1930 AWI exhibition his exhibits were described thus:⁶

Mr. D. G. Reid has a number of rural landscapes, painted in his conscientious style. "In the Rabbit Country" may be instanced as typical of his appreciation of colour and effective composition.

As well as demonstrating an aptitude for watercolour and oils, Reid responded to the increasing popularity of printmaking in the early 20th century when he experimented with etching. He produced over 35 prints, mainly of pastoral landscapes and Sydney architectural subjects. His first known works were *The Brewery* and *St Stephen's, Newtown* (**plate 8**), images that were reproduced in the September-October 1912 issue of the Australian architectural journal, *Salon*. Other local subjects include a view of the Dunbar Tomb in St Stephen's cemetery and an image of a fruit stall in Newtown (**plate 9**). Several other



images depict farm buildings (**plate 10**). Reid's experimentation with etching saw him become a regular exhibitor with the Australian Painter-Etchers' Society (APES) from 1925, and in 1927 he was elected to the committee.

While we know little of Reid's personality, we do have some evidence of his views on art. Over several decades he was an occasional contributor to the letters page of *The Sydney Morning Herald* on art related themes. In August 1930, he appealed for a restructure of how the Wynne Prize for landscape art and sculpture was organised and selected.

5

David Graeme Reid (c 1861–1933),
A Cross Country Track on the Shoalhaven,
1909, oil, 116.1 x 84.6 cm, slr "David G Reid
1909" Collection: Mitchell Library ML821,
gift of Mrs M Canty 1979



6

David Graeme Reid (c 1861–1933),
Kiama Farm 1912, watercolour,
slr “David G Reid 1912”. Private collection

7

David Graeme Reid (c 1861–1933),
[*Rural scene*] oil, 19.5 x 24 cm.
Collection: Mitchell Library PXE 1211,
gift of Mrs M Canty 1979

Before raising his central point he opened his long letter with his general reasons for the popularity of landscape art at the time:

The vogue of landscape in Australia is all pervading; whether one realises it or not our hearts are in the country. We travel thither by car or railway on week-ends and

holidays, we look to the country for health and quiet breathing, and when we dream of retirement when the strenuous part of life is over, it is not of trees and flowers and green lawns and blue distances. Art reflects the dominant aspiration of its time, and so we find landscape subjects greatly predominating in the pictures composing our art exhibitions ...⁷

Late in life Reid challenged the suggestion to form a NSW Ministry of the Fine Arts which he described as a ‘Bolshevik looking idea’. In this 1933 letter Reid suggests the ideal form of art education and, perhaps, alludes to his own youthful apprenticeship:

Like life, Art is in a constant state of flux, and refuses to be bound into a Government department with red tape. The ideal of Art education is the old form of apprenticeship or pupilage, which existed in the palmy days of the art of Italy and the Netherlands. The next best thing is to allow the student to enter the class of the artist he most admires; who can arouse that enthusiasm which is vital to every worker of art ...⁸

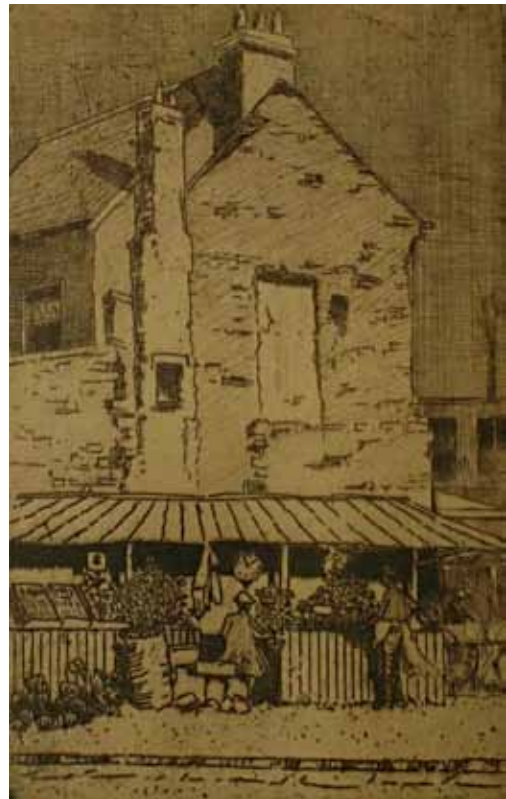
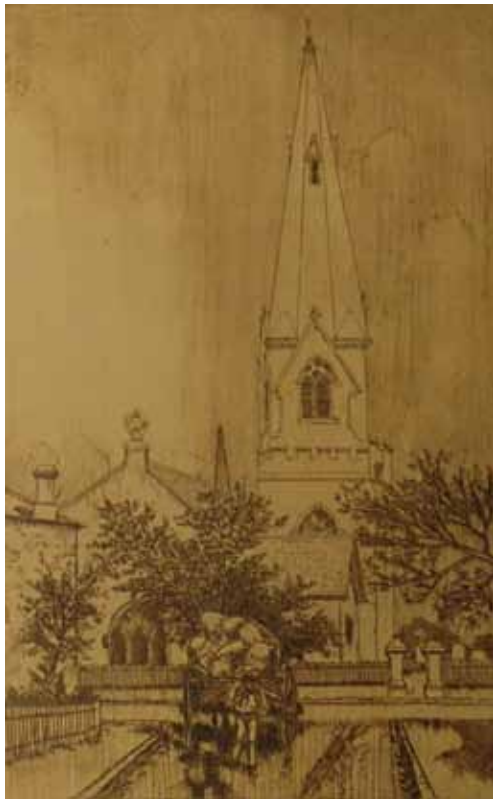
The artist concluded his art career when he exhibited three watercolours at the Sydney AWI exhibition in April 1933. Not long after, on the afternoon of Wednesday 20 April, Reid visited the British Contemporary Art exhibition at the Blaxland Galleries in Farmer’s department store in Sydney. While appearing to be in good health that day, Reid died suddenly at his Marrickville home that evening.

He was buried in the Church of England section of Woronora cemetery, Sutherland, Sydney on Saturday 22 April 1933. Reid was survived by his wife and five sons, his only daughter, Nellie, having predeceased him in 1926. He is represented today by the 1916 watercolour *An unfrequented by-way* in the collection of the Art Gallery of NSW and several oils, watercolours and etchings in the Mitchell Library.

While the inner western Sydney suburbs are now populated by a large and diverse art community this was certainly not the case during the first half of the last century. What makes Reid interesting is that while closely associated with an unglamorous trade he managed to become a reputable artist and a leading member of Sydney's fledgling art community. Apart from an exhibition of his watercolours in a commercial Sydney gallery in 1986, Reid's four decade career as an artist has been largely forgotten.⁹ It has now been many years since his art was last seen on a gallery wall. Hopefully this article will encourage someone to make him the focus of a future exhibition.

NOTES

- 1 *SMH* 7 Dec 1928, p 13.
- 2 *Daily Telegraph Pictorial* 7 Dec 1928, p 1.
- 3 Reid's children were Claude Lorraine Reid (1885–1956), Leslie (Les) Rembrandt Reid (1887–1954), Nellie B Lindsay, née Reid (1889–1926), Thomas Francis (Frank) Reid (1892–1974), Charles Graeme Reid (1900–65), Eric Milton Reid (1903–57).
- 4 The Art Gallery of NSW later de-accessioned *Evensong*.
- 5 *SMH* 21 Aug 1931, p 12.
- 6 *SMH* 17 Apr 1930, p 20.
- 7 *SMH* 22 Aug 1930, p 15.
- 8 *SMH* 21 Mar 1933, p 6.
- 9 Christopher Day Gallery, Paddington NSW, held an exhibition of 38 of his watercolours in December 1986.



8
David Graeme Reid (c 1861–1933),
St Stephen's Church (Old Camperdown Cemetery), etching. Private collection

9
David Graeme Reid (c 1861–1933),
Newtown Fruit Stall, etching.
Private collection

10
David Graeme Reid (c 1861–1933),
Grandfather's barn, etching.
Private collection



Sydney the Punchbowl

A magnificent replica of a Sydney treasure from the Macquarie period, available in a strictly limited edition of 25 copies for sale.

One of the most fascinating of all the great rarities and unique treasures held in the State Library of New South Wales, the Sydney Punchbowl is a fine large porcelain bowl manufactured in China around 1820, decorated with a panoramic scene of Sydney Cove around the outside and a group of Aboriginal figures on the inside, and finished with exquisite floral and gilded banding.

This project is in collaboration with the State Library of New South Wales, using as a prototype their unique bowl. Each one of the replicas is an individual work of art, hand-made and painted by craftsmen in the 'porcelain city' of Jingdezhen, using traditional methods. Each bowl stands 17 cm. tall with a diameter of 45 cm. Elizabeth Ellis OAM, Emeritus Curator of the State Library of New South Wales, has written a fascinating book to accompany each bowl.

Only 25 will ever be available for purchase, each priced at \$16,500.

Contact: rare@hordern.com or (02) 9356 4411.

HORDERN HOUSE

RARE BOOKS • MANUSCRIPTS • PAINTINGS • PRINTS

77 VICTORIA STREET • POTTS POINT NSW 2011 • www.hordern.com

Fit for a Queen:

two Royal jubilee testimonials from colonial Queensland

On 6 February 2012, Queen Elizabeth II celebrated her Diamond Jubilee, the 60th anniversary of her accession. This milestone has afforded an examination of her life and reign, and has revived interest in the Royal Family at large, including Britain's longest reigning monarch, Queen Victoria. Queensland – one of the two Australian colonies named after her – presented gifts to the Queen for her Golden Jubilee in 1887 and Diamond Jubilee in 1897.¹

TIMOTHY ROBERTS

Golden Jubilee 1887

The production of commemorative testimonials was commonplace for landmark events during the 19th century, and Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887 was no exception. On that occasion, many fine Australian products were offered to the monarch, including a striking album holding black and white drawings of New South Wales views produced by John Sands with the assistance of the Royal Mint. The testimonial, which was commissioned by an anonymous donor on behalf of New South Wales, featured a number of works by British artist Louis Bilton, who had visited Australia to complete a series of drawings and vignettes for the *Picturesque Atlas of Australasia*.²

The colony of Queensland enjoyed a respectable connection with the British monarchy, to the extent that the Queensland Acclimatisation Society received a gift of six Red Deer from Windsor Park in 1873.³ To celebrate Her Majesty's Golden Jubilee in 1887, the

1

Bertram Mackennal, *Queen Victoria at her Coronation* (detail) 1897. Bronze, Queensland Art Gallery, gift of Barry Batson 1986. Photograph Natasha Harth





Queensland Government commissioned a splendid album of photographs, housed in a rich presentation casket. Recognising the importance of promoting local industry on the international stage, the trophy combined the finest locally sourced materials with the skill of some of the colony's best photographers and craftsmen.

The album's 50 photographic views of Queensland landmarks included scenes of the Southern and Western Railways and major public buildings in Brisbane. Twelve views evidenced Brisbane's modernity, through a comparison of the modern city to the city 20 years earlier. The photographs were bound between flyleaves of moire-antique silk, and the album's binding was finished in crimson plush with silver mounts produced by Brisbane-based silversmith Charles Allen Brown from locally sourced silver.⁴

Brown's reputation as a silversmith was well known in Brisbane, where he managed his own business as a manufacturing jeweller since 1870.⁵ He was an enthusiastic participant in the Queensland Exhibitions after 1875, and furnished a range of remarkable commissions to Queensland's discerning public, including a 30-ounce model wheelbarrow in silver and a 9-inch high silver and vermeil model of a pile driver.⁶ Brown's silver mounts and clasps for Her Majesty's Jubilee album were extensively decorated with filigree work, while the Government engraver, William Knight, engraved the Royal coat-of-arms on the silver shield on the centre of the album cover.

The album was laid inside a glass casket that was designed and fitted by Queensland Government stereotyper (and keen cricketer) Henry Strickland.⁷ The casket's frame was constructed from indigenous and imported timbers, including figured pine, yellow-wood, forest oak, black palm and cypress pine, and rested on feet that were carved from the roots of cypress pines that grew on St Helena Island, to represent lion paws. The interior of the casket was no less impressive than its exterior, being fitted with tooled and gilt dark red morocco



2

John Hicks, *The Local Authorities' Association Address Casket for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee 1897*, Queensland Black Bean (*Castanospermum australe*) and other timbers. Royal Collection RCIN 69424. © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

3

John Hicks, *The Local Authorities' Association Address casket*, detail of the locking mechanism. The central section of the mechanism pulls down by a spring action to secure the casket

and surrounded by bands of timber specimens. Local reports valued the album and casket at 150 guineas.⁸

Queensland Governor Sir Anthony Musgrave and his wife Jeanie Lucinda inspected the album before the Hon. Frederick Thomas Brentnall MLC transported it to London.⁹ There, Brentnall gave the album and casket to Queensland Premier Sir Samuel Griffith, who was representing Queensland at the first Colonial Conference. Griffith sought advice from the Royal household to determine if Her Majesty would accept the tribute from the Queensland Government, and upon receipt of her pleasure to accept the gift, presented the album and casket. A letter of appreciation from Buckingham Palace dated 24 May 1887 – the Queen's 68th birthday – officially recognised Queensland's gift.¹⁰

Queensland's splendid Golden Jubilee album and casket have not yet been located. However, the Royal Library has an album of photographs presented to Queen Victoria in 1887 from author and later Mayor of Ballarat William Little.¹¹ Bound in an elegantly tooled and gilt brown morocco cover, the album features 22 photographs, including several views of Ballarat and a rare photographic portrait of Aboriginal leader Kaawirn Kuunawarn.

Diamond Jubilee 1897

Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897 garnered as much interest around Australia as her Golden Jubilee ten years before. Despite the increasing nationalistic sentiment emerging due to growing support for Australia's Federation movement, support for the monarchy and Queen Victoria was evidenced in the quality and variety of gifts that were produced for the Diamond Jubilee. Artistic tributes to Her Majesty included Bertram Mackennal's modest bronze of Queen Victoria at her coronation in 1837 (**plate 1**), and his monumental Carrara marble statue of the monarch in robes decorated with wattle blossoms, which was unveiled in Ballarat in 1900.¹²

The Local Authorities' Association of Queensland presented Her Majesty with a luxuriously illuminated address and



casket. Unlike Western Australia's offering (see box), this gift did not proclaim the tremendous mineral wealth of Queensland – these exploits were celebrated with large testimonials at the Queensland International Exhibition of 1897, hosted in Brisbane.¹³

A committee comprising Alderman Wilson Weaver Littler, Mayor of Rockhampton; Alderman William Thomas Deacon, Mayor of Ipswich; Alderman John McMaster MLA, Mayor of Brisbane; and W Henry G Marshall, Town Clerk of Brisbane, oversaw the production of the gift, which was fashioned by printers Sapsford & Co in collaboration with prominent Brisbane cabinetmaker John Hicks (**plates 2-3**).

Sapsford's address was an artistically formidable offering. Bound in rich blue morocco, the cover glittered with a gold VR monogram surmounted by a crown jewelled with four diamonds and three rubies. Inside the binding, three white, watered satin-backed leaves presented the address, which was richly coloured by artist Francis Cottrell. Indigenous subjects featured prominently among the imagery, including flowers of the yellow wattle and a lyrebird, as well as a depiction of the Houses of Parliament in Brisbane.¹⁴

4

John Merten (cabinetmaker), LJ Harvey (woodcarver), Messrs Ferguson and McLaren (illuminator and painter), Thomas McColl (leatherworker), Gordon & Gotch (commissioner), *The Local Authorities' Association Address to the Duke of Cornwall and York* 1901, Queensland Black Bean (*Castanospermum australe*) and other timbers, leather, vellum. Royal Collection RCIN 64121. © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

The casket was a chaste but impressive work, crafted from native timbers including locally sourced Moreton Bay black bean. A confidently carved laurel wreath encircling a dexterously fashioned crown and star adorned the cover of the casket, which was tastefully framed in the Renaissance style by floreate bas-reliefs under a shell terminal. Described as a “splendid piece of the woodworker’s art” by the *Brisbane Courier*, the casket’s technical features included a double-hinged spine to enable the lid to open fully, and a spring-loaded barrel clasp that secured the front and back covers together.¹⁵

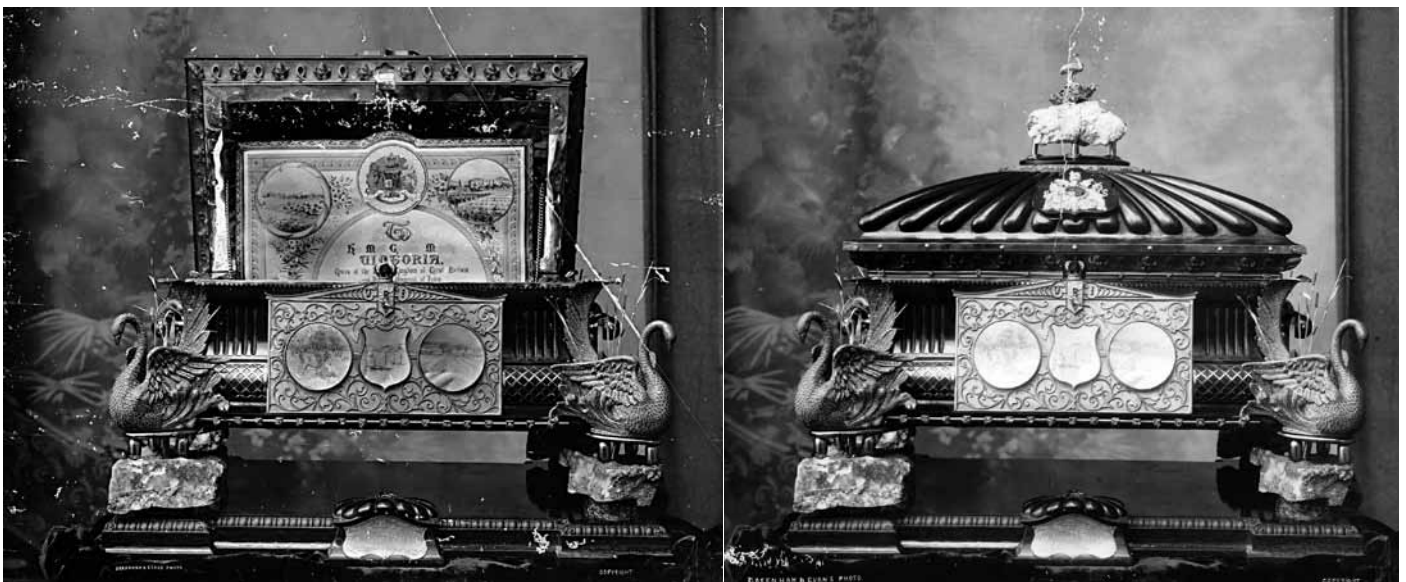
Hicks’s timber casket is preserved in the Royal Collection,¹⁶ though the accompanying address has become separated from the casket and has not been located.

Sapsford & Co. collaborated several times with Hicks to create striking presentation articles, including a noteworthy commission from the Victoria Bridge Board, which welcomed the Duke and Duchess of York to Brisbane in 1901 with a presentation casket containing an illuminated address. Like the 1897 Jubilee testimonial, the gift incorporated locally sourced materials and design motifs, and was made entirely in Queensland.¹⁷

The Local Authorities’ Association’s address and casket is one of six testimonials presented by Queensland organisations to Queen Victoria on her Diamond Jubilee. Another noteworthy address was presented by the Brisbane City Council.¹⁸ Artist George Simpson illuminated the address, which was bound in tooled “scarlet turkey [Turkish]

5
Greenham & Evans, *The Western Australian Parliament’s casket to the Queen* (open) 1897, photograph. National Archives of Australia, Series A1721/2 Barcode 8852044

6
Greenham & Evans, *The Western Australian Parliament’s casket to the Queen* (closed) 1897, photograph. National Archives of Australia, Series A1721/2 Barcode 8852042



Western Australia’s Diamond Jubilee Gift

Though many elaborate testimonials were prepared around Australia for Queen Victoria’s 1897 Diamond Jubilee, perhaps the superior Australian Diamond Jubilee testimonial was commissioned by the Parliament of Western Australia (plates 5-6). The gift took the form of an address illuminated with depictions of native wildflowers by A G Stach. It was presented in a monumental casket designed by Ernest Hugh Hamilton and constructed by Messrs Cohen & Madeley from native timbers including karri, pear wood, jarrah, jam wood and figured banksia.²² Local jewellers Herman Jerger and Donovan & Overland fashioned inlays, figural mounts, plaques, and a lock plate for the casket from locally sourced gold, silver, copper and pearls.

The casket was further highlighted by specimens of quartz from local mines which were incorporated into the supports and lid of the piece. Six pearl shell cartouches, artistically carved with scenes of Western Australia’s mining, pearling, forestry, viticulture, agricultural and pastoral industries were mounted on the casket’s front and back faces.²³ This tribute, though not yet found, is undeniably one of the major artistic works undertaken in colonial Western Australia.

Morocco” by Watson, Ferguson & Co., with gold-plated silver mountings from Hardy Brothers. Builder John Moody fashioned a silver-mounted casket from indigenous timbers to house the address.¹⁹ The location of this work is currently unknown.

Queensland organisations continued to produce significant presentation articles for Royalty into the 20th century. Testimonials that survive in the Royal Collection to this day include John Merten and L J Harvey’s vibrantly illuminated address casket, presented from the Local Authorities’ Association to the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall during their visit to Queensland in 1901 (**plate 4**), and an elegant Black Bean casket presented to the Duke and Duchess of York from the Brisbane City Council during their visit to the city in 1927.²⁰ Other works, such as the impressive potpourri decorated with images of kookaburras and a kangaroo made by Charles Astley for presentation to the Duchess of York in 1927 from the children of Queensland, remain undiscovered.²¹

The presentation pieces in the Royal Collection represent only a fraction of the gifts that have been offered to royalty from Queensland since its inauguration in 1859. These works are valuable relics that display the unique characteristics of colonial Australian style, products and workmanship on the international stage. The rediscovery of other significant Royal presentation pieces would undoubtedly enrich the story of Australia’s cultural and social links to Britain and the British monarchy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to thank the staff at the Royal Collection, particularly Curator of Decorative Arts Kathryn Jones and Picture Library Assistant Agata Rutkowska, for their assistance, and to Dr Dorothy Erickson for generously sharing her knowledge about the artists who contributed to the Western Australian Jubilee casket.

Timothy Roberts is a researcher and writer on Australian art heritage and decorative art before 1945, and a member of the Professional Historians Association of Queensland. He currently investigates subjects which enrich the understanding of Queensland’s art and history.

NOTES

- 1 For Australian gifts to Queen Victoria’s son Prince Alfred on his visits to Australia, see J B Hawkins. ‘A Royal visitor: the Duke of Edinburgh’, *Australiana* vol 21 nos 2, 3 & 4, May, Aug & Nov 1999 and J B Hawkins, ‘Illuminated addresses presented to Prince Alfred’, *Australiana* vol 21 no 4 Nov 1999.
- 2 On Louis Bilton’s life and career in Australia, see Glenn R Cooke, ‘Louis Bilton and Australian flora’, *Australiana* vol 26 no 3, Aug 2004 pp 6-8. The album is described extensively in “A jubilee gift from New South Wales”, *The Kiama Independent and Shoalhaven Advertiser*, 22 April 1887 p 4. The album has not yet been located.
- 3 “His Lordship (The Marquis of Normanby) had now committed to him the pleasing duty of informing the Council that Her Majesty the Queen, having heard of the wishes of the society, had been graciously pleased to cause instructions to be given for the preparation of six fawns of the red deer from the Windsor herds, for shipment to the colony”. *Brisbane Courier*, 1 Jan 1873 p 3. “The deer which Her Majesty was graciously pleased to present to Queensland arrived safely at Cressbrook station on September 21”. *Brisbane Courier*, 3 Oct 1873 p 2.
- 4 *Brisbane Courier*, 16 Mar 1887 p 5.
- 5 For Brown’s life and work, see Sue Air, ‘Charles Allen Brown (1850-1908): Australian Silversmith’, *Australiana*, vol 23 no 3, August 2001 pp 72-79 and Dianne Byrne, ‘Silversmith Brown’, *Australian Business Collectors Annual*, 1985 pp 85-87.
- 6 In 1884 contractor John Watson commissioned Brown to make a scale model of a pile driver for presentation to Lady Musgrave on the occasion of driving the first pile of the South Brisbane Wharves, *Brisbane Courier*, 4 Nov 1884 p 5. In 1886, the contractors of the Fassifern Railway extension commissioned a wheelbarrow and shovel from Brown for presentation to the Hon. William Miles, Minister of Public Works. *Brisbane Courier*, 8 Jan 1886 p 6.
- 7 *Brisbane Courier*, 16 Mar 1887 p 5. Curiously, the article mentioned Strickland’s abilities as a cricketer before his professional role as stereotyper. Strickland

played for Queensland in several matches between 1877 and 1885.

- 8 *Brisbane Courier*, 16 Mar 1887 p 5.
- 9 *Ibid*.
- 10 *Brisbane Courier*, 11 July 1887 p 5.
- 11 Royal Library, reference no. RCIN 1026296.
- 12 Mackennal’s marble likeness of Queen Victoria was unveiled in Ballarat on the Queen’s birthday, 24 May 1900; *Argus*, 25 May 1900 p 5.
- 13 On Queensland’s 1897 International Exhibition, see Judith McKay, *Showing Off: Queensland at the World Expositions 1862 to 1988*, Rockhampton, CQU Press 2009 pp 47-52.
- 14 *Brisbane Courier*, 5 May 1897 p 6; *The Capricornian*, 15 May 1897 p 40.
- 15 *Brisbane Courier*, 5 May 1897 p 6.
- 16 Royal Collection reference no. RCIN 69424. A contemporary captioned photograph held in the John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland (negative 62488 record 113004) confirms that this casket held the Local Authorities Association of Queensland’s address.
- 17 *Brisbane Courier*, 17 May 1901 p 5.
- 18 *Adelaide Advertiser*, 23 Nov 1897 p 5.
- 19 *Brisbane Courier*, 12 May 1897 p 4.
- 20 The highly original 1901 casket features original artworks on vellum by Messrs Ferguson & McLaren, and leatherwork by Thomas McColl, *Brisbane Courier*, 21 May 1901 p 18. Royal Collection reference no. RCIN 64121. The 1927 casket housed a lavishly illuminated address produced by Messrs Watson, Ferguson & Co, bound in blue morocco. The location of this address is unknown. The casket features restrained decoration in gold and enamel, *Brisbane Courier*, 6 April 1927 p 25. Royal Collection reference no. RCIN 79931.
- 21 *The Queenslander*, 21 April 1927 p 33; *The Condaminian*, Warwick, vol 8 no 1 July 1927 p 10. On the life and work of Charles Astley, see Glenn R Cooke, ‘Charles Astley: the career of an artist and art teacher on the Darling Downs’, *Australiana* vol 26 no 1, Feb 2004 pp 5-13.
- 22 Prior to moving to Western Australia, E G Madeley worked in Brisbane. It is likely that he taught L J Harvey, and he submitted specimens of wood carving and pencil drawings to the 1884 Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition. Bettina MacAulay, ‘Harvey, Lewis Jarvis (1871–1949)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University; ‘Artisans’ Prizes’, *The Queenslander*, 30 Aug 1884, 28.
- 23 *West Australian*, 15 May 1897, 6; Dorothy Erickson, *Gold & Silversmithing in Western Australia: a history*, Perth, UWA Publishing 2010, 79, 81.

The Macquarie Event:

Viewing of the Macquarie collector's chest, Dixson collector's chest and the Wallis album



On a Thursday evening in August, Australiana Society members had the privilege of a private viewing of the Macquarie collector's chest, the Dixson collector's chest and the Wallis album at the State Library of NSW. As well as being able to view the entire Wallis album, this was a rare opportunity to examine and compare the two chests side by side.



TIM CHA

The Wallis album is closely linked to the two chests through Captain James Wallis (1785?–1858). Wallis, appointed commandant of the Newcastle penal settlement by Macquarie in 1816, had the Macquarie chest made as a parting gift for Governor Macquarie around 1818. It is possible that Wallis, who retired from the army in 1826 as a Major, put together the album in the 1840s, when he retired to the Isle of Man. Many of the drawings and paintings in the album were the basis for decorating the panels on the two chests. The Library bought the album in October 2011, after it was discovered in the miscellaneous possessions of a deceased estate consigned to auction in Canada.¹

The evening was divided into two sessions with the viewing of the chests hosted by Elizabeth Ellis OAM, Emeritus Curator, Mitchell Library while the current Mitchell Librarian, Richard Neville, conducted the Wallis album session.

The large audience, which included members from interstate, was divided into two groups to provide optimal viewing of the chests and album, one group starting in one room with Elizabeth Ellis and the chests while the other group started with Richard and the Wallis album in a second room. Halfway through the evening, the two groups swapped over.

1
Richard Neville (second from right) showing the Wallis album to members

2
The Wallis album. On the lower painting, the Aboriginal figures were cut-outs, presumably posed and arranged by Wallis, then pasted on to the background watercolour scene



Richard Neville provided an introduction and background on the rediscovery of the Wallis album (**plate 1**). Prior to its rediscovery in Canada, its existence had not been known. There is speculation that Wallis may have sold or gifted the album while on a visit to Canada, as the family of the vendor has no known direct family connection to Wallis. The album is a large format book, about 8 to 9 cm thick and pages of roughly A3 size. The contents of the album is Wallis' personalised copy of his 1821 publication *An Historical Account of the Colony of New South Wales* bound with end pages pasted with original drawings and watercolours.

Richard opened the album and discussed each of the end pages while we gathered round and were able to have a very close view of each page. A number of the watercolours of scenes of indigenous Australians were composed, presumably by Wallis, by pasting cut-outs of each person onto a painted background (**plate 2**). The colours of the watercolours were well preserved and vibrant, probably as a result of the album spending most of its life in the back of a wardrobe in Canada.

Elizabeth Ellis had two Library staff on hand to assist with the opening of the chests and removal of the trays (**plates 3–7**). Elizabeth is the author of *Rare and Curious: The Secret History of Governor Macquarie's Collector's Chest*, a highly detailed study of the two collector's chests, a book well worth purchasing

should copies ever come up for sale, as the entire 2010 edition sold out. Elizabeth provided expert commentary as the two chests were opened progressively and shown.

The Macquarie chest has retained most of its contents and has remained largely unmolested since its manufacture in the second decade of the 19th century, while the Dixon chest has unfortunately suffered from a number of restorations and is missing most of its original contents. The origin of the Dixon chest remains unknown but it appears that it is a slightly later version of the Macquarie chest, as a number of design improvements appear in the Dixon chest.

3

Members gather round the two chests

4

A chance to take a closer look at the tray of early 19th-century bird specimens of the Macquarie chest during the talk by Elizabeth Ellis (right). The Dixon chest is at rear

5

The Macquarie chest resting on a foam block on a platform trolley. The front panel of rose mahogany has ebonised stringing and edging, as well as fine composite stringing of ebony flanked either side by stringing in a light-coloured wood such as pine or satinwood





Having the two chests side by side, the differences in size, construction and design were easily discerned. We started with the paintings on the panels. The Macquarie chest panels show an obvious vibrancy that is lacking on the restored panels of the Dixon chest, which are quite dull and flat in comparison. Each of the trays and drawers of both chests was removed or opened to reveal amazing contents of early Australian fauna and flora. The contents of the Macquarie chest are well preserved, considering its history and unappreciated past ownership, while only a few drawers in the Dixon chest have any contents.

An interesting highlight of the evening was the comments contributed by members, who are specialists in their respective fields as a dealer, collector or researcher. This generated interesting discussions with our hosts and provided insights, based on expert opinions, into the historical context and background of the objects.

The Australiana Society is extremely grateful to Richard Neville and the Mitchell Library for so generously providing the Society with an opportunity to view these highly significant historical objects. We would like to thank Elizabeth Ellis for hosting and speaking at the collector's chest sessions. The Macquarie Event had been an amazing evening for the Society.

Tim Cha is a committee member of the Australiana Society.

NOTES

1 See John Wade, "Captain Wallis' album", *Australiana* vol 33 no 4 November 2011, cover and pp 20-21.

6

Mitchell Library staff open the Macquarie chest

7

Macquarie chest opened to reveal trays of insects and early scenes of the Newcastle region

Colonial Rarities and other Curiosities

www.colonialrarities.com | 02 4957 0165 | 0417 205 298 | bpw@colonialrarities.com



Colonial cedar console table c 1850 features impressive crossbanding, classically shaped and carved front legs with lion's paw feet.

Refinished

H 1.00m L 1.53m x D 0.82m

By appointment
Philip Wheatley, Newcastle NSW

CONVICT AND FREE

THE MASTER FURNITURE-MAKERS OF NEW SOUTH WALES 1788-1851

David St L Kelly • ISBN 978-1-925003-16-1 • \$110.00
270/210 mm • HARD BACK • 700 pp • AVAILABLE FEBRUARY



This remarkable book provides a comprehensive account of the life and work of more than 80 leading furniture-makers in mainland New South Wales until the separation of Victoria in 1851. It deals with their political, commercial, religious, social, sporting and cultural interests. It identifies their actual and possible clients and their employees. It reveals their known associations with one another, and the conflicts and scandals in which some of them became embroiled.

The book is the culmination of extensive original research carried out over a number of years. It expands greatly the known information about the relevant furniture-makers, and creates a data base necessary for the development of a detailed profile of the colonial furniture-making industry in the 19th century.

The author, David St L Kelly, is a regular contributor to *Australiana*. He is also known for major articles in *Furniture History*, the leading journal in London. He formerly had a distinguished career as a government and academic lawyer. He has written a number of books on a variety of legal topics.

RECORD YOUR ORDER NOW – PUBLICATION FEBRUARY

Convict and Free David St L Kelly • ISBN 978-1-925003-16-1 • HB • \$110.00 (post free, payment processed on order supply)

Name _____ Copies

Address _____

Email _____ Phone number _____

Please charge my Mastercard Visa Cheque attached
(Please make out to Australian Scholarly Publishing)

Card name _____

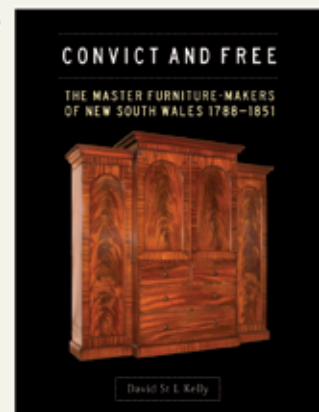
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Expiry date



AUSTRALIAN SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING

7 LT LOTHIAN ST NORTH, NORTH MELBOURNE 3051 • WWW.SCHOLARLY.INFO • P 03 93296963



Joseph Bridekirk, Cabinetmaker

Hobart, Sydney and Maitland

In his new book *Convict and Free: The Master Furniture-makers of Early New South Wales*,

David Kelly presents well-researched biographies of dozens of previously little-known cabinetmakers.

Tasmanian and NSW cabinet-maker, undertaker and upholsterer Joseph Baronet Bridekirk is just one of them. His story is documented in the book, and abridged here for reasons of space

DAVID ST L. KELLY

Personal Life

Joseph Baronet/Bernard Bridekirk (1800–1885), cabinet-maker, upholsterer and undertaker, appears to have been born in South Shields, Durham, on 28 May 1800.¹ He was the son of Joseph Bridekirk and Sarah Bridekirk (née Storey). He was baptised at St Hilda's Church, South Shields on 9 August 1801.² According to family tradition, he left England with his brother, William Storey Bridekirk, from Liverpool on 13 January 1820 on the *Stentor*, bound for the Cape of Good Hope. However, *The Dictionary of South African Biography* states that William (?) Joseph Bridekirk arrived at the Cape in 1817,³ apparently based on an entry in an earlier set of records, which states that William Storey Bridekirk arrived at the Cape on the *Gertrude* from Gravesend on 30 July 1817.⁴ William Storey Bridekirk (c 1796–1843) stayed at the Cape, where he died in 1843.

Joseph was a cabinet-maker at the Cape for a time in the early 1820s⁵ before sailing for Hobart in 1823,⁶ arriving in Hobart on the *Thalia* on 4 May.⁷ Three years later he sailed for Sydney, arriving on the *Adrian* in October 1826.⁸ He was recorded in the 1828 Census as a carpenter, aged 27, in Park Street, Sydney. William Bridekirk, aged 1; Jane Spencer, housekeeper; and John Palmer, lodger,

who had arrived on the *Neptune* in 1790, were living with him.

There is no record of a marriage of Joseph Bridekirk in BDMNSW. However, four children are recorded as fathered by Joseph Bridekirk: William, 1827; Joseph, 1830; Valentine, 1833; and Sarah J, 1836. Their mother was Jane Spencer, née Smith, born in the colony, a daughter of Thomas Smith and the famous First Fleeter, Ann Colpitts. Jane had married Francis Spencer⁹ in 1810. She had a number of children by him, the last in 1825.¹⁰

According to Francis Spencer, he and his wife separated by “mutual consent” in December 1824.¹¹

CAUTION—Whereas I, the undersigned, and my Wife, Jane Spencer, late of the Black Horse, Clarence-street, Sydney, did, in the Month of December last, separate by mutual Consent, and shortly afterwards my said Wife departed for Van Diemen's Land, from which Place she has lately returned; I now deem it necessary to caution the Public, so she may be advised by some Person or Persons to contract Debts, not to credit her on my Account, having a Family of Children to provide for.
FRANCIS SPENCER.

According to Jane Spencer, the facts were rather more complicated:¹²

JANE SPENCER, Wife of FRANCIS SPENCER, late of the Black Horse, Clarence-street, Sydney, consider it a duty incumbent on me to answer an Advertisement published against me, in last Week's Gazette; I acknowledge that we parted by consent, but with my husband's desire, that I should leave this Colony for Van Diemen's Land; I left the house he was then in possession of; the same morning I went on board the vessel; when I arrived at the ... I obtained a place of service, and should have remained there with credit, but my said husband, Francis Spencer, followed me, and enticed me from my service, under pretence that he intended to settle at Port Dalrymple, he then persuaded me to return to my service, during the time that he came to this Colony to bring the children with him; but finding myself disappointed, through his long delay, and likewise being left in a situation which is so disagreeable to a married woman, I was advised by my mistress, Mrs. Hanson, to return to this Colony, hoping that I might find a home, instead of which I found that my former servant, Mary Howell, is now in keeping by my husband, and has got the charge of three of my children; I beg leave to ask the Public at large, whether I have been guilty of faults which I am charged with; if any one can come forward and testify against me, let me die the death of Jane Shore, otherwise let me have the justice due to
JANE SPENCER

It seems likely that Jane Spencer became acquainted with Bridekirk in Hobart before he left for Sydney in 1826. Certainly, she was living with him at the time of the Census of 1828, along with their first child, William, then one year old.

Francis Spencer appears to have directed his malice towards Bridekirk at about the same time. Bridekirk issued a public warning to Spencer in 1828, demanding an apology for libellous statements Spencer had made about him:¹³

NOTICE.
WHEREAS, FRANCIS SPENCER, of Sydney, has inserted in memorials, one to the Right Hon. A. M'Leay, and in another to the Rev. R. Hill, unfounded, base, false, scandalous, and libellous assertions against me. This is to give Notice, that if the said Francis Spencer, does not retract and apologise for inserting such base, false, scandalous, and libellous assertions, that he shall be dealt with according to law; and whereas the said Francis Spencer has been going about Sydney, from individual to individual, offering sums of money to false swear against me.
JOSEPH BARONET BRIDEKIRK.
Pitt Street, Feb. 12, 1828.

In an unrelated case of fraud later in 1828, Spencer under cross-examination stated that he had made a complaint some time earlier against Bridekirk for a violent assault¹⁴ that is believed to have taken place at Spencer's inn, the Black Horse. The case had been decided in Spencer's favour, but the damages awarded were only £5. In the 1828 case, Spencer denied that he had paid a third party to swear that he had witnessed that assault.

Joseph Bridekirk and Jane remained unmarried and separated around 1835.¹⁵ In 1837, Joseph wrote to the Colonial Secretary, seeking a response to his

earlier Memorial (not found), in which he had sought Government approval for two of his children to be placed in the Orphan School, as he could not afford to maintain them.¹⁶ He said that he had been living, unmarried, with a woman who now “had gone to another, leaving your petitioner with four young children to support, the youngest only 13 months”. To care for them all would have prevented him from working to support them. He was able to maintain his two boys, aged seven and five.¹⁷ Joseph Sly his employer, John Jones, and Thomas Griffin (presumably, the cabinet-maker of that name) supported his petition. Whether his petition was successful is not known. The youngest, Sarah, appears to have died, an infant, in 1837.¹⁸ The petition suggests that Bridekirk and Jane Spencer had had a fifth child a few years before.

Although BDMNSW records no marriage of Joseph Bridekirk after the departure of Jane Spencer in 1837, Mrs Mary Bridekirk appeared in the *Maitland Mercury* in 1845 living in West Maitland.¹⁹ Joseph Bridekirk and Mary Comber had married on 28 October 1839.²⁰ Mary Comber had arrived on the *Whitby* on 23 June 1839, described as a laundress, aged 35. At Galway Town in January 1839, she had been convicted of shoplifting, and sentenced to transportation for seven years.

Joseph and Mary were obviously deeply unhappy. Joseph Bridekirk was charged in Maitland with a knife assault on his wife in 1847,²¹ but she claimed he had injured her accidentally when throwing the knife from one table to another.²² In 1855, she was bound over to keep the peace towards her husband.²³ In 1857, after threatening her husband’s life, Mary Bridekirk was again bound over.²⁴ Two months later, a Joseph Bridekirk cautioned anyone against granting credit in his name.²⁵ Mrs Bridekirk was again bound over later in the year.²⁶

A Joseph Bridekirk, carpenter, died at his residence in Booth Street, Balmain, on 12 September 1885, aged 85.²⁷ On the basis of name and age alone, he must surely have been the cabinet-maker. He was

recorded as born in England, and having spent 61 years in NSW. Particulars of his marriage and children were ‘not known’. The informant was Isabella Cummins(?), a friend from Port Macquarie.

Furniture business²⁸

Bridekirk had practised as a master furniture-maker in England,²⁹ and carried on that business at the Cape of Good Hope.³⁰

1 The years in Hobart

Two weeks after arriving in Hobart in May 1823, Bridekirk advertised that he was about to leave Van Diemen’s Land for Sydney on the *Urania*.³¹ That plan was quickly put aside. In June 1823, he entered into a partnership with the Hobart cabinet-maker, Robert Houshold:³²

NOTICE is hereby given, that Mr. Robert Houshold & Mr. Joseph Baronet Bridekirk have entered into Partnership; & that from the date hereof the Business of Bedstead, Cabinet, and Chair Manufacturers, Upholsterers & Undertakers, will be carried on in the joint Names of Houshold & Bridekirk, where they hope to merit the favours of their Friends & the Inhabitants of the Colony.—June 19, 1823.

The partnership was not restricted to furniture. In January 1824, an auction at the premises of Houshold & Bridekirk on their retiring from the retail business advertised haberdashery, hosiery, linen drapery and stationery.³³ Only drapery could possibly be regarded as part of the business of an upholsterer.

Their partnership had lasted only eight months.³⁴

In May 1824, Bridekirk advertised his own cabinet-making business.³⁵ He sought a continuance at his new premises in Murray Street of the patronage he had enjoyed since arriving in the colony; and referred to his knowledge of upholstery and cabinet-making in the most positive terms. He would soon have new designs, as he had received ‘from the first houses in London, drawings of drapery window hangings, fire screens, footstools, sofas’.

The following month, Bridekirk offered a remarkable European cabinet to impress the gentry of Hobart:³⁶

MR. BRIDEKIRK begs to inform the Gentry of Van Diemen’s Land, that he has received by the *Geildford*, a large quantity of superior CEDAR, and with the assistance of some excellent workmen whom he has lately engaged, he flatters himself to be able to give general satisfaction to those Ladies and Gentlemen who may be pleased to favour him with their commands; he has also on SALE, at his Residence in Murray-street, Bedsteads, chairs, and tables; English made sofas, swing dressing glasses, cord for drapery, hardware; a Ladies’ cabinet, beautifully finished, with agate pillars, formerly the property of a German King; and purchased at the sale of the French Field Marshal Davoust, at Hamburgh. Upholsterer, Cabinet-maker, and Undertaker.—Mattresses made to order, and funerals furnished.

179 • Furniture sold on Commission.

In May 1825, along with many others, he petitioned the Governor against differences in the tariffs between NSW and VDL.³⁷ The following year, he left Hobart on the *Adrian* and arrived in Sydney on 14 October 1826.³⁸

2 The Years in Sydney

Nothing appeared in the Sydney newspapers about Bridekirk’s furniture business until 1829:³⁹

Mr. Bridekirk, of the Race Course, has just finished off a splendid four post rose wood bedstead, for which he is to receive £40. This article is unique of its kind, and will be found to reward the trouble of inspection we understand.

In 1830, Bridekirk opened a furniture showroom in Pitt Street. The *Sydney Monitor* noted:⁴⁰

Mr. Bridekirk, the cabinet-maker, has opened a repository for furniture in Upper Pitt-street. Some of the furniture would not reflect discredit on a London manufacturer.

The *Sydney Gazette* was equally complimentary:⁴¹

It is worth any one’s while to take a look in at Mr. Bridekirk’s Cabinet Repository in Pitt-street. For a show of furniture, there is unquestionably none better at any house in the trade in Sydney. We might almost call the new contractor’s attention to the admirable style in which Mr. Bridekirk’s sale-room is lighted up on evenings; it is so much after the English fashion.

Bridekirk quickly defended his reputation when the *Sydney Gazette* reported a case of ill-treatment of an apprentice by an unnamed cabinet-maker in Pitt Street. The case was serious enough to alarm the parents of apprentices:⁴²

An indented apprentice to a master cabinet-maker, living in Pitt-street, was brought before the Bench, on Saturday at the instance of his master, for deserting his service. The case being entered into, it appeared that the lad was more “sinned against than sinning.” The boy went home to his friends, to whom he complained of insufficiency of food. As might naturally be suspected, the boy’s friends made some enquiry into the matter and those enquiries ultimately proved the complaints not to be altogether without foundation. When the case came on for hearing before the Bench, it was admitted by the master, that not happening to have any tea or sugar in the house, he had supplied the apprentice with drink made from burnt bread and water. The Bench held, that as the boy (complainant) had failed in his proof to establish a charge of starvation, they could not interfere, but told the master that he did not supply his apprentice with that wholesome nourishment which was expected of him. The Bench added, that if the boy had again occasion to complain, they would see whether they had not power to interfere in the way of releasing the boy from the articles of his apprenticeship.

To the Editor of the Sydney Gazette.

Feed them well, and work them well.
 Sir,
 Having observed a paragraph in your *Gazette* of Tuesday last, of an indented apprentice to a master cabinet-maker in Pitt-street having been brought before the Police, where, it was shown, that his master had fed him on burnt bread and water, I beg to inform the public, through your widely circulated paper, that it was not any of my apprentices. Your giving insertion to the above, will much oblige
 Your obedient servant.

Bridekirk’s disclaimer was convincing:⁴³ The publicity did him no lasting good; he became insolvent late in the same year.⁴⁴ No details were provided in the brief newspaper account. By 1837, he

was Joseph Sly’s foreman;⁴⁵ Joseph Sly charged Thomas Griffiths, a cabinet-maker with premises opposite Sly in Pitt Street, with receiving goods allegedly taken from Sly by his foreman, Joseph Bridekirk, who had earlier been in business in his own right, first in Hobart, then in Sydney. Sly alleged that Bridekirk had taken locks and brassware from Sly’s premises and sold them to Griffiths. The hearing was reported in the *Sydney Gazette*.⁴⁶

Mr. Sly deposed that, in consequence of a man named John Grimstone, who had been living with Griffiths for six weeks, informing him that his (Sly’s) overseer had offered for sale to Griffiths a number of locks and other brassware, stating at the same time that they were the property of Sly, and that Griffiths with that knowledge had purchased them; he obtained the warrant in question.⁴⁶

At the hearing, Sly nonetheless gave evidence which, while critical of Griffiths, practically absolved him from the charge:

Joseph Sly – Had looked at the property in question; could not speak as to the locks as they were so much alike; he knew the castor produced, he could swear to it; it had been upon a table and taken off, the holes to admit the screws had been rimerd; he had the fellow caster at home; had no good feelings towards Griffiths in consequence of his conduct towards him; had had Griffiths bound to the peace towards him a month or two ago; when Grimstone gave him the information, he (Grimstone) was intoxicated. Grimstone had made a charge of robbery against a party some time ago, he therefore placed no reliance on Grimstone’s statement.

Grimstone then gave evidence that Bridekirk had offered to sell a number of locks to him, but that he had replied that he had no money to buy them. He denied knowing anything about the castor; and stated that he had no knowledge of Griffiths in connection with the locks.

Bridekirk was then called. He denied the allegation concerning the offer to sell the items to Grimstone; and could not identify the castor. He did know that Grimstone had consumed five glasses of grog before breakfast on the relevant morning; and he had prosecuted him twice for improper conduct in hired service. Just how he knew of Grimstone’s consumption of grog before breakfast did not appear.

The defence contended that the case was based on malice on the part of Sly, Griffiths being one of his rivals in the trade. Aware of the weakness of the prosecution case, the defence called only Thomas Metcalf, a cabinet-maker in George Street, as a character witness. Metcalf swore that Griffiths ‘always bore the character of an honest man’. He stated that he would be unable to identify a single castor, there being probably 50 dozen of the same kind in Sydney.

The magistrates dismissed the charge. They observed that there was not ‘the slightest impeachment whatever’ of Griffiths’s character. Indeed, Grimstone was taken into custody to answer a charge of perjury. Nothing was said concerning Sly’s conduct in bringing and pursuing the prosecution.

3 The years in Maitland

Whether Bridekirk remained with Sly after the case is not known. However, by January 1843, he had moved to Maitland.⁴⁷ The *Maitland Mercury* noted that his brother, William Storey Bridekirk, had died at the Cape of Good Hope. In November 1844, an auction of his stock was to be held at his premises in High-street, West Maitland.⁴⁸ In 1846, Bridekirk celebrated his 30 years in the trade.⁴⁹

30 Years! 30 Years! 30 Years!
JOSEPH BRIDEKIRK, CABINET MAKER
 and UNDERTAKER, having had 30 years’ practical experience in the different branches of his trade, and also having had first-rate workmen, in England, Cape of Good Hope, and in the city of Sydney, under his superintendance, hopes will secure for him a liberal patronage, and which he will exert every endeavour to merit a continuance of.
 J. B., in conveying his thanks to those ladies and gentlemen who have patronised him, trusts that his endeavours for the future may be crowned with the like success which it has been his good fortune to meet up to the present time.
 Furniture of every description always on hand.
 Funerals conducted by persons of practical experience.
 High-street, West Maitland, }
 January 20th, 1846. } 80

In May 1847, his contributions to a bazaar for the hospital – a cot and a bedstead – were noted with strong approval.⁵⁰

In December 1848, an auctioneer advertised the sale of Bridekirk's stock and tools, indicating that he intended to return to the Cape:⁵¹

Preparatory to the Departure of the Proprietor for the Cape of Good Hope.
MR. JEREMIAH LEDSAM has been honoured with instructions from Mr. Joseph Bridekirk, to sell by public auction, at his Cabinet-ware Rooms, High-street, West Maitland, on **MONDAY**, the 8th of January, 1849, at Twelve o'clock, Noon.
 A large and **SPLENDID STOCK** of **FURNITURE**, consisting of—
 Can-seated and other Chairs, Chaise Lounges, Scroll-end Sofas, Round Table, Wash-hand Stands, common Sofas, Pictures, framed and glazed, Book Shelves, high Chair, Music Stool, Bedsteads; two large and beautifully executed Book Cases, 4 feet 6 inches by 6 feet 6 inches each.
ALSO.
 The **HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE**, comprising every article necessary for domestic comfort.
TOGETHER WITH,
 The **CULINARY or KITCHEN UTENSILS**, Cabinetmakers' Benches, Sign Board, &c., &c.
 Mr. Ledsam respectfully invites the attention of the resident gentry and the public to the sale now advertised. The furniture to be offered is of the best material, and has been executed by a master hand. The whole of the property will be sold without reserve, it being the intention of the proprietor to proceed immediately to the Cape of Good Hope; intending purchasers may therefore reckon (with tolerable certainty) upon acquiring the property on safe and moderate terms.
Terms cash. 1849

I have found no evidence that Bridekirk went to the Cape. He was certainly a cabinet-maker in Maitland in July 1851.⁵² Both Joseph Bridekirk and Henry Ikin were witnesses in a prosecution for the theft of chairs in 1851.⁵³

STEALING CHAIRS.

William Tosney ... was indicted for stealing two chairs, the property of James Richard Muir, at Maitland, on the 10th March, 1850.

The witnesses called were George Hunter, James Richard Muir, Joseph Bridekirk, Jeremiah Ledsam, Henry Ikin, Thomas Clifton, and George Wood. Mr. Muir had lost two chairs from his verandah one evening in March, 1850; in April last constable Hunter went to prisoner's place to

bargain about a saddle, and saw two chairs, which he asked the price of, and prisoner offered to sell to him; prisoner said he got the chairs from Mr. Ikin, and that they were all that were left of six; subsequently, after seeing Mr. Muir, Hunter took away the chairs, with prisoner's consent, on his saying he suspected them to be stolen, prisoner accompanying Hunter to the police office. Mr. Muir believed the chairs produced to be his; they were of a peculiar pattern, and were made for him by Mr. Bridekirk, who sold him six, and Mr. Muir now produced another of the six. Mr. Bridekirk pointed out how he identified the three chairs produced to be of his make, and to be three of the six he sold to Mr. Muir. Mr. Ledsam held a sale at Captain Horsley's in February, 1850, and at prisoner's request he subsequently referred to his sale book, but found no chairs entered as bought by prisoner, although prisoner did buy some other things. Mr. Ikin never sold the chairs produced to prisoner or any other person; they were not made in or sold from his establishment. Mr. Wood was at prisoner's place about a fortnight before he was apprehended, with a search warrant, and questioned him about many things, and amongst others about the two chairs then in the hut, and now produced; prisoner said he bought them at Captain Horsley's sale, and Mr. Ledsam could prove it.

In defence, prisoner addressed the jury, denying the charge, and commenting on the evidence that had been adduced, stating that he had bought the chairs at Captain Horsley's sale, although Mr. Ledsam had not made an entry of it. He called three witnesses, but none of them was in attendance.

The jury returned a verdict of guilty. The prisoner was sentenced to four years on the roads.

4 Back in Sydney

By January 1852, he appears to have relocated to Sydney, and to have again become an employee of Joseph Sly.⁵⁴

FUNERAL. — The friends of Mr. Joseph Sly are respectfully requested to attend the funeral of his late departed wife Jane, which will take place this morning, at nine o'clock, 30th January. Her remains will be removed from her late residence, Pitt-street, at the above hour precisely.
 1852 **JOSEPH BRIDEKIRK.**

Bridekirk was in Sydney in the period 1855–1857;⁵⁵ and mentioned in this death notice in 1860.⁵⁶

LUDWIG— At Prospect House, Cape Town, Cape of Good Hope, Baroness E. Von Ludwig, sister of Mr. Joseph Bridekirk.

In fact, she appears to have been his sister-in-law. She was the widow of William Storey Bridekirk.⁵⁷

Nothing further appeared in the newspapers about Joseph Bridekirk, the cabinet-maker.

Other interests

A sheep station near Port Curtis in the late 1850s was known as 'Bridekirk Station'. Whether it was connected with Joseph Bridekirk is not known.

In 1823, Bridekirk contributed 10 bushels of wheat to the fund to buy an organ for St David's Church, Hobart.⁵⁸ He was a member of the committee of the Wesleyan Missionary Society in Hobart in 1823.⁵⁹ He was also a strong supporter of the Maitland Total Abstinence Society and its charitable work.⁶⁰

Clients

- Van Diemen's Land Government. A payment of £2.10.0 for stationery was made to a Bridekirk by the VDL Government in 1825.⁶¹
- Liverpool Hospital.⁶²
- Maitland Total Abstinence Society. In June 1844, Bridekirk was noted as the maker of a handsome cedar president's chair for the Society.⁶³
- A Mrs Mein. In July 1844, evidence was given that Bridekirk had bought a sofa from Mrs Mein for £4, some time before her husband became insolvent.⁶⁴
- James Richard Muir.

Employees

Charles Marshall, alias Anderson, a baker, was an employee. He absconded in 1825.⁶⁵

In the Census of 1828, two apprentices were recorded:

- John Aitchison, 14, who came free on the *Prince of Orange* in 1823.⁶⁶ In July

1830, Bridekirk took out a summons against him for absconding.⁶⁷

- James Anderson, aged 16, born in the colony.⁶⁸

John Grimstone was also an employee of Bridekirk. In the prosecution brought by Joseph Sly against Thomas Griffiths in 1837, Bridekirk stated that he had prosecuted Grimstone twice for 'improper conduct in hired service'.

Conclusion

Joseph Baronet Bridekirk was a significant figure in early 19th century cabinet-making in VDL and NSW. Unlike most of the cabinet-makers of the period who came to the colonies, he had been a master furniture-maker (that is, he had run his own business) before he left England. He is the only colonial cabinet-maker of the period who is known to have set up business at the Cape of Good Hope before coming to the colonies.

Once in Sydney, he again ran his own business at least until, in 1830, he became insolvent (an all too familiar fate for colonial cabinet-makers). By 1837, he was Joseph Sly's overseer. Some years later, he was in business in Maitland, where he remained until 1851. He appears to have moved back to Sydney by 1852, and to have become associated again with Joseph Sly, though in what capacity is not known. He was recorded in Sydney as a cabinet-maker in 1855–1857. He disappeared from view a few years later.

Bridekirk's known association with other cabinet-makers of the period is not limited to his partnership with Robert Household in VDL, and his employment as overseer by Joseph Sly. Shortly after he left Maitland and returned to Sydney, his son, Valentine, married Ann Ikin at the Presbyterian Church for Clarence Town, Dungog and Stroud.⁶⁹ She was the daughter of William and Mary Ikin. William was the son of Obadiah Ikin, a corporal in the NSW Corps, who arrived in Sydney on the *Surprise* on 26 June 1790. Obadiah was also the grandfather of Henry Ikin, cabinet-maker in Maitland and VDL.

Perhaps of more interest is the contrasting association Bridekirk had with James Rooke, another VDL and NSW cabinet-maker. Rooke was a co-passenger of Bridekirk's on the voyage from Hobart to Sydney on the *Adrian* in 1826.⁷⁰ They did not become friends. In the prosecution of an Edward Butler for theft of a watch in 1830, Rooke gave evidence that he had bought the watch from the accused in somewhat unusual circumstances. He had then left it at James Oatley's to be repaired. Oatley had recognised it as stolen, and had raised the alarm.

Joseph Bridekirk was called to give evidence for the defence. It bore not directly on the facts of the case, but on Rooke's credibility as a witness. Bridekirk's evidence could hardly have been more damaging:⁷¹

Joseph Bridekirk—I am a cabinetmaker, and live in Pitt-street; I know Rooke; I have the means of knowing his general character for the last five years; I would not believe him on his oath.

Bridekirk's evidence was followed by that of yet another fellow-passenger on the *Adrian*:

William James Hambleton said, I was formerly a publican at Hobart Town; but I am now a trader and I have been robbed of my stock in trade, consisting of apples, in this colony; I know Rooke; he came a passenger with me when I first came to this colony, about four years ago; I remember Rooke being sued on a note at Sydney, which I witnessed; he wanted me to come forward and swear I did not. He said it would only cost a shilling, and he would pay it; Bridekirk was present. By the Court – Did you not knock him down? Witness – That's rather dangerous, my lord, in this colony. I asked him if ever he asked me to witness the note? He said that was nothing, and sent for half a pint of brandy. I left the house, and, to the best of my knowledge, did not taste his brandy.

Bridekirk then confirmed Hambleton's evidence of Rooke's alleged duplicity.

Despite these devastating attacks on Rooke's credibility, the accused was found guilty. So much for the requirement of proof beyond reasonable doubt!

David Kelly has contributed a number of articles on colonial furniture to *Australiana*. The leading English journal *Furniture History* has published two of his articles, one of them dealing with the alleged influence of Baron Dominique Vivant Denon on Thomas Hope's furniture designs.

A former academic and government lawyer, he has written a number of books on a variety of legal subjects. He was recently appointed a Conjoint Professor in the Law School of the University of Newcastle, where he is assisting in the development of a draft Code of Contract.

NOTES

- 1 Helen Woodward, a direct descendant of Joseph Bridekirk, has generously provided information on the Bridekirk family.
- 2 <http://www.ancestry.com>; Joseph Bridekirk; family tree.
- 3 *Dictionary of South African Biography*, 1995, vol 2, p 88.
- 4 P Phillip, *British Residents at the Cape 1795-181; biographical records of 4800 pioneers*, D Phillip, Cape Town, 1981, p 38.
- 5 *Maitland Mercury* 21 Jan 1846 p 3.
- 6 *Hobart Town Gazette* 10 May 1823, p 2.
- 7 *HTC* 10 May 1823, p 2.
- 8 *SG* 18 October 1826 p 2.
- 9 Colonial Secretary Papers 1788–1825; Spencer, Francis. Born in the Colony; publican. His father was James Squire, a First Fleeter. See SRNSW: Colonial Secretary Papers 1788–1825; Per 'Friendship', 1788; brewer and farmer; of Kissing Point; died 16 May 1822
- 10 Recorded in BDMNSW as: James, Ann, Mary J, Martha (1818), Francis, Martha (1822), and Jane.
- 11 *SG* 18 Aug 1825 p 1.
- 12 *SG* 25 Aug 1825 p 3.
- 13 *Monitor*, 18 February 1828 p 1.
- 14 *SG* 24 September 1828 p 3.
- 15 Information supplied by Helen Woodward. It may have been a little later. Sarah J was baptised in 1836.
- 16 SRNSW: Colonial Secretary; Main Series of Letters Received 1826–1982; [4/2361.2]; 37/4272.
- 17 The seven year old was presumably Joseph,

- b 1830, the five year old Valentine, b 1833 and the 13 month old child probably Sarah, b 1836. William, b 1827, was not mentioned.
- 18 BDMNSW: V18372123; 21/1837.
- 19 *MM* 29 March 1845 p 3
- 20 <http://www.ancestry.com>; Register of Convict Applications to Marry 1836–1851.
- 21 *MM* 23 Oct 1847 p 2.
- 22 *MM* 3 Nov 1847 p 2.
- 23 *SMH* 17 Jan 1855 p 5.
- 24 *SMH* 26 Feb 1857 p 3.
- 25 *SMH* 2 Apr 1857 p 8.
- 26 *SMH* 22 July 1857 p 3. Things only got worse for the poor woman. She was later imprisoned as an idle and disorderly person: *SMH* 29 Jan 1858 p 4.
- 27 BDMNSW: 2903/1885; *SMH* 14 September 1885 p 1.
- 28 Earnshaw recorded him as 'Bridkirk' at 22 Edward St, 1855: p 37. FS&S recorded him as 'Bridkirk' in Clarence St, 1834; and at 22 Edward St, 1855–1857: p 533.
- 29 See Bridekirk's own statement: *MM* 21 January 1846 p 3.
- 30 *Ibid.*
- 31 *HTG* 17 May 1823 p 2.
- 32 *HTG* 21 June 1823 p 2.
- 33 *HTG* 9 Jan 1824 p 1. In 1825, after the partnership had been terminated, a payment of £2.10.0 for stationery was made to a Bridekirk by the VDL Government.
- 34 *HTG* 19 Mar 1824 p 3.
- 35 *HTG* 21 May 1824 p 3.
- 36 *HTG* 4 Jun 1824 p 1.
- 37 *HTG* 13 May 1825 p 2.
- 38 *SG* 18 Oct 1826 p 2.
- 39 *Australian* 5 Dec 1829 p 4.
- 40 *SM* 24 Feb 1830 p 2S.
- 41 *SG* 6 Mar 1830 p 2; *Australian* 24 Feb 1830 p 2. *The Launceston Advertiser* 29 Mar 1830 p 2 noted the Sydney publicity, and suggested that Bridekirk had moved his furniture much more quickly in Hobart!
- 42 *SG* 20 Apr 1830 p 3.
- 43 *SG* 24 Apr 1830 p 3.
- 44 *SG* 9 Oct 1830 p 1.
- 45 *SG* 24 Jun 1837 p 3.
- 46 *SG* 24 Jun 1837 p 3.
- 47 See, eg, *MM* 25 Feb 1843 p 2.
- 48 *MM* 23 Nov 1844 p 3.
- 49 *MM* 21 Jan 1846 p 3.
- 50 *MM* 12 May 1847 p 2.
- 51 *MM* 30 Dec 1848 p 3.
- 52 *MM* 9 Jul 1851 p 2.
- 53 *MM* 9 Jul 1851 p 2.
- 54 *SMH* 20 Jan 1852 p 3.
- 55 Earnshaw, p 37; *Empire* 29 Apr 1857 p 6.
- 56 *SMH* 21 Apr 1860 p 4.
- 57 *DSAB*, vol 2, p 89.
- 58 *HTG* 21 Jun 1823 p 2.
- 59 *HTG* 22 Nov 1823 p 2.
- 60 *Eg*, *MM* 14 Jul 1847 p 3.
- 61 *HTG* 19 Apr 1825 p 2S.
- 62 *SG* 20 May 1830 p 3.
- 63 *MM* 15 Jun 1844 p 2.
- 64 *MM* 27 Jul 1844 p 2.
- 65 *HTG* 25 Feb 1825 p 1S. He was still at large in 1830: *HTC* 13 November 1830 p 4.
- 66 *Census of 1828*, A158, as 'Aitchisen'.
- 67 *SG* 8 Jul 1830 p 2.
- 68 M Sainty & K Johnson, *Census of New South Wales, November 1828*, Library of Australian History, Sydney, 1980, A396.
- 69 BDMNSW: V1854931 81/1854.
- 70 *SG* 18 Oct 1826; *Colonist (Sydney)* 20 Oct 1826 p 8.
- 71 *SG* 11 Sep 1830 p 3.

Grant of \$5000 towards acquisition of an item of Australiana

I am very pleased to announce that the Australiana Society would like to invite submissions from institutions to assist in the acquisition of an object or objects of Australiana.

'Australiana' includes items of decorative arts of historic or contemporary interest, originating in or relating to Australia – for example, books, paintings, prints, photographs, furniture, ephemera, ceramics, silver, jewellery, glass and other artefacts.

The committee of the Society has resolved that up to \$5,000 will be made available per annum, at the discretion of the committee, to assist an institution in the purchase/acquisition of an item or items of Australiana. The grant may be used to

fully or partly fund the acquisition.

It is a condition of the grant that the item(s) would be placed on public display, and that the Australiana Society would be acknowledged as having provided assistance in the acquisition. Acknowledgement would be included with the object and also in the annual report and financial records of the institution.

An institution means a museum, gallery, library, or similar building or historical precinct where objects of Australian historical significance are on regular public display.

If more than one application is received the committee of the Society will make the final decision. Committee members working for, or representing, an institution from

which an application has been received, will abstain from discussion and voting.

The Society was formed in 1978 to encourage interest, collection, preservation and research of Australiana, and the Committee and members are excited that we are now providing funding towards the preservation of Australiana for future generations. More information about the Society can be found on our website www.australiana.org.au

Submissions should be made by email to the President of the Australiana Society at president@australiana.org.au

Jim Bertouch
President



1
The Royal Academy with Nolan's *Ned Kelly* on the banner

2
A remarkable one of a kind watch set in a single large bright green Colombian emerald crystal, c. 1600, the size of a small egg. The Cheapside Hoard, Museum of London



London calling

Bill Blinco reports from London on some of the current art exhibitions in the British capital

London being London, many wonderful and stimulating exhibitions were on when we visited in September – October 2013. They are worth recording here to remind us of the importance of mounting exhibitions aimed at stimulating the audience rather than pandering to a market.

Australia. 200 years of Australian Landscapes

The Royal Academy's advertising for *Australia*, featuring Sidney Nolan's 1946 *Ned Kelly* was posterised all over town and intrigued Londoners, but few got the message that this was an exhibition of Australian landscape art (plate 1). The 205 exhibits ranged from Indigenous paintings through colonial works to cutting-edge contemporary Australian art, and included the usual suspects (some featured in Edmund Capon's TV series on Australian art, and all illustrated in the catalogue) and even some South Australian silver by Steiner and Schomburgk.

Australians will enjoy seeing so many familiar works displayed here, as well as noting many that were not. But critical media response was lukewarm; four weeks after reluctantly castigating the hanging of the exhibition in his regular column of 28 September, the *Sydney Morning Herald's* art reviewer John McDonald complained that "I'm still trying to exorcise memories of the chaotic, amateurish hang of Australian art at the Royal Academy, London" (*SMH* 26 Oct 2013 Spectrum p 13).

However, reports indicate that the Royal Academy is happy with the good crowds attending the exhibition each day and at specific event functions.

Pearls

The Victoria and Albert Museum's blockbuster *Pearls*, staged in conjunction with the Qatar Museums Authority, features more than 200 jewels and works of art. The history of pearls from antiquity to the present day is covered

and a fascinating insight is gained into the pearl fishing industry from the South Seas to Arabian waters and Europe. It captures the romance, glamour and eternal attraction of pearls for women of all ages and social classes – an item never out of fashion.

A large and intriguing section is devoted to Mikimoto Kokichi, who pioneered cultured pearls in Japan. This exhibition displays jewels from royal tiaras to necklaces of cultured pearls and includes the necklace given to Marilyn Monroe by Yankees star Joe DiMaggio as a wedding present. A most impressive, profusely illustrated volume on pearls has been produced to accompany the exhibition. The introduction begins "Pearls are a global phenomenon. Pearls symbolise wisdom, tears, innocence, power."

3

Roman cameo, probably depicting Cleopatra. The Cheapside Hoard, Museum of London

4

An agate cameo profile portrait of Queen Elizabeth I, one of about only 50 hardstone portraits of the Queen, 16th century. It was probably a gift from the Queen, late in her reign, to one of her favourites. The Cheapside Hoard, Museum of London

Also on view at the V&A is *Club to Catwalk: London Fashion in the 1980s*, till 16 February.

London's Lost Jewels – The Cheapside Hoard

Out of sight since the mid-1600s, and buried five metres below a cellar on Cheapside (London's then fashionable jewellery and manufacturing street), the Cheapside Hoard – the fabulous 500 piece treasure trove of late 16th- to early 17th-century jewels was unearthed by chance by navvies demolishing 17th-century tenements in 1912. The shocked workmen fortuitously took their finds to George “Stony Jack” Lawrence, a well-known antiques and antiquities dealer, who recognised the importance of the find and secured the hoard for the Museum of London.

When first shown in 1914 in the gold and silver room of the London Museum, it was widely acknowledged that this was the most important and amazing find of Elizabethan and Jacobean jewellery ever unearthed. Now that the entire collection (some pieces were lent by the British Museum) can be seen together again 100 years later at a new exhibition at the Museum of London (the permanent home of nearly all the treasure trove), it is clear that the time span covered by the hoard is much earlier. Pieces in the hoard date from early Roman (a cameo probably of Cleopatra, **plate 3**) and Byzantine times – rings and extraordinary chains and amazing seals and pendants. The museum has re-created a 16th-century jeweller's workshop/retail outlet from illustrations surviving from the time, as well as displaying contemporary portraits showing jewellery being worn.



How did the jewels get to Cheapside? Many mysteries surround the collection including ownership – was it hastily buried pirate or burglar's booty? Did the owner go off to fight in the Civil War and never return? Did the plague claim the goldsmith-jeweller who may have stashed his work and retail stock before taking his secrets to the grave? Or perhaps the Great Fire of London which razed most of Cheapside spared the hoard because it was covered by soil deep below the many workshops, subdivided rooms and shops which burned to the ground. Whatever the answer, new buildings were erected over the site around 1666 and the treasure lay buried for another 250 years.

Our knowledge of the jewellery made and worn by the fashionable rich and upwardly mobile merchant classes is based on these rich and detailed pieces, which show just how important London was at the crossroads of the old and new worlds.

Many stunning jewels – and surprisingly some balas ruby (spinel) counterfeits – in this magnificent Museum of London exhibition gradually draw the viewer into a lost and absorbing world. The show is more than the sum total of these priceless relics; it is a time capsule of life, politics, social history, art and intrigue. To quote curator Hazel Forsyth in the accompanying incredibly well researched and illustrated book:

I look forward to more people becoming acquainted with all this wonderful and unrivalled collection – the greatest hoard of its type and kind – and hope that the exhibition will become a catalyst for further research. I truly believe there are so many more secrets still waiting to be unlocked and thrilling discoveries to be made.

The Cheapside Hoard is on display at the Museum of London till 27 April 2014. A range of faithful replicas of some of the jewels are for sale. Ms Forsyth's book should be in every historian and jeweller's reference library; it's the Bible and is for sale in the museum shop.

Visit these exhibitions if you are in London. The British Museum's follow-up show to *Pompeii, Life and Death* which closed in September and was a sold-out success, is *Shunga – Japanese Artworks of the art of love*. We didn't view this one but were assured by the curators that it would be sold out too. Perhaps online might be the way to secure tickets.

Bill Blinco collected postcards as a child. He was originally a cadet reporter at the *West Australian*, then became an advertising copywriter in Sydney and London, and finally an antique dealer specialising in jewellery.

John Wood, a gentleman turner

JOHN HAWKINS



The construction of the complex and difficult-to-make oval cedar case for the Woodstock Challenge Cup (**plate 1**) illustrated in my article “Essie Jenyns and her Australian Terriers” has prompted me to wonder how and why it came into being.¹ Recently I purchased for my reference library a complete set of the *Bulletin of the Society of Ornamental Turners* (SOT).² In *Bulletin* vol 25, no 125, September 2011, there is an article on surviving Birch twin-mandrel lathes, giving as an example the Wood family and its Birch lathe.

Ornamental turning lathes used by amateur gentleman turners were supplied by two specialist British firms, Holtzapffel in London and G. Birch & Co of Manchester.³ Between them they seemed to have had almost a duopoly in the manufacture of these immensely complex and expensive machines. The firm of George Birch & Co operated from the Islington Tool Works, Salford, Manchester, and supplied a series of expensive and complex ornamental turning lathes to the super rich with a mechanical bent.

Shortly after his marriage on 5 December 1888 at St Andrew’s Cathedral, Sydney to the actress Essie Jenyns (Elizabeth Esther Helen Jennings, 1864–1920)⁴, John Robert Wood, the son of a wealthy Newcastle brewer, ordered a lathe from G. Birch & Co.

Documentation still with this machine, Birch’s lathe no. 5504, is the invoice dated 2 March 1899 for

1
Woodstock Challenge Cup in oval turned Australian cedar case, 1906

£112/18/6 (plate 2). The invoice suggests that the lathe was purchased in 1898, however detailed examination suggests that the basic lathe was purchased earlier and that the invoice refers to an expensive group of additional new turning accessories to convert the Birch lathe to full ornamental turning (plate 3). This implies that Wood bought the lathe second-hand, had it completely refurbished, and then fitted with the additional equipment, as illustrated in *The English Mechanic* of 17 March 1899. The lathe was shipped to Australia in 1899.

Later, the lathe returned with Wood and his wife to London in 1907. By 1923, the lathe was installed in John Wood's house "Holmwood", Putney Hill, Wandsworth (plate 4). On his death on 14 February 1928, the machine passed to his son Brigadier John Morton Devereux Wood (b. 1898), who lost a leg during the Second World War. The lathe then passed to his son Brigadier Christopher Wood of 'Meadowfold', Peaslake near Guildford, who died in 2006.

The machine and its equipment and tooling for milling and metalwork are extensive, being stored in two matching cabinets illustrated in the SOT article. It has spherical slide rests, a medallion device possibly a Birch original and unique, as well as a group of very substantial ornamental turning chucks (plate 5).

Through this purchase, Wood becomes a figure of considerable interest as an ornamental turner, probably using Australian timbers. The oval turned case for the 1906 Woodstock Cup is an exceptional example of turning for to turn an oval, the turner needs to own an expensive and difficult-to-master oval chuck. In my collection of over 500 items of ornamental turning in ebony and ivory, only some 1 per cent of the items were oval in form, due to the expensive equipment required.

This poses the question: was the box containing the cup turned on the Birch ornamental turning lathe no. 5504 before the couple departed with their 'Seven Little Australians' for England in 1907?

ISLINGTON TOOL WORKS.
SALFORD, Manchester, March 2nd 1899

M. John R. Wood Esq

Bought of G. BIRCH & Co.,
ENGINEERS AND TOOL MAKERS.

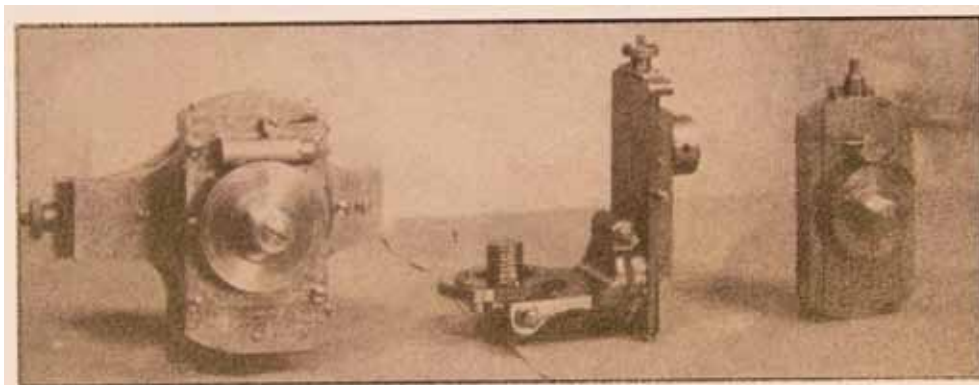
To One Oval Chuck complete	£ 16 10 0
One Eccentric Chuck	13 10 0
Patent Spherical Chuck	16 10 0
16 Additional Index plates interchangeable with Spherical & Eccentric chucks 1 each 72, 84, 96, 100, 108, & 112 teeth	at each 12/6 3 15 0
Ornamental Turners 3 jaw Ornamental chuck, gunmetal body & hardened steel jaws 4 1/2" size.	5 10 0
Fitting to lathe by back plate.	8 6
One Spiral chuck fitted to mandrel with new swinging frame, 8 gunmetal change wheels & 1 Steel ditto of 20, 25, 35, 45, 55, 60, 70, 90, 100, & 120 teeth extra wheel studs & one stud fitted with 30 wheel for reversing the spiral connecting rods, hook joints etc-	25 0 0
Intermediate arm for long spirals.	2 10 0
Set of 6 gunmetal male & female Screw chucks as follows:- 1 1/2", 2", 2 1/2", 3", 3 1/2", & 4" dia fitted to lathe.	12 0 0
Set of 8 gunmetal Cup chucks as follows:- 1 1/2", 2", 2 1/2", 3", 3 1/2", 4", 4 1/2", 5", & 6" dia	7 5 0
Compensating Index pointer for Equally dividing the Ellipse in oval turning fitted to lathe headstock.	10 0 0
	£ 112 18 6

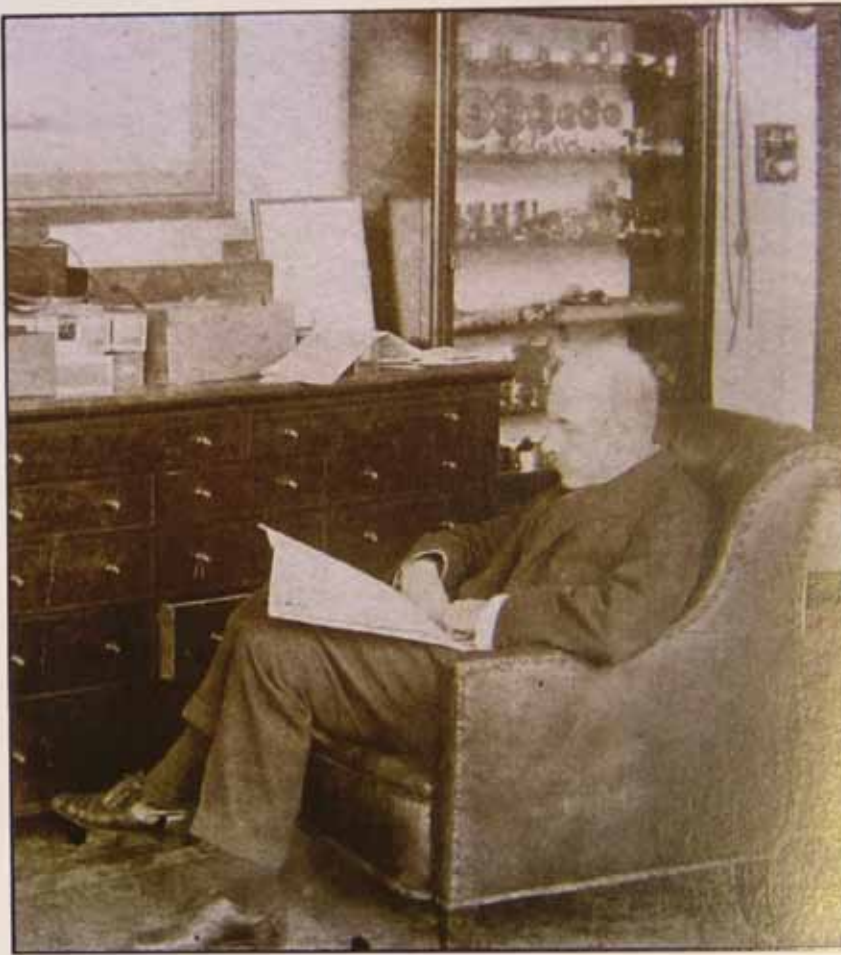
2

G. Birch & Co, Manchester, invoice for lathe equipment and accessories purchased by J R Wood, 1899

3

Lathe equipment photographs from *The English Mechanic* of 17 March 1899

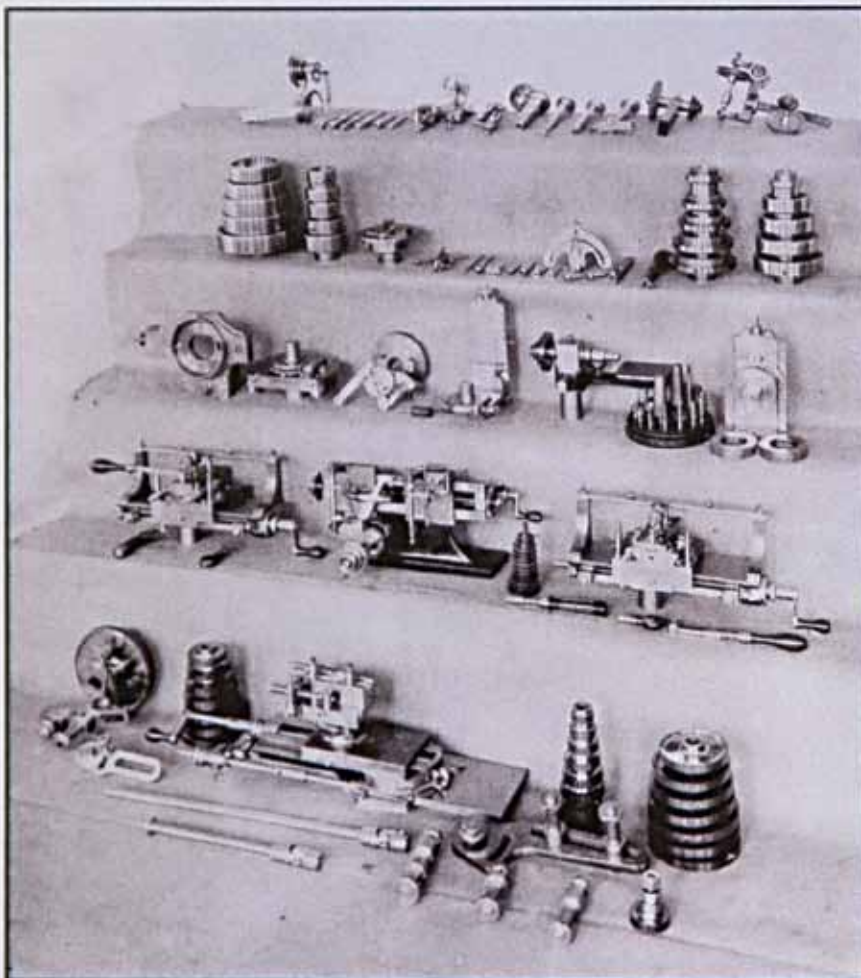




In the Powerhouse Museum collection is Holtzapffel lathe number 754, a 5-inch Screw Mandrel lathe originally sold in 1811 and updated in 1888 at a cost of £210 for a Mr I.M. Purves. The museum records show that this lathe was once owned by Charles Francis Smith, a Newcastle carpenter and cabinetmaker. Is this lathe the connection between Wood, Smith and/or Purves and did either Smith or Purves induct Wood at Newcastle into the art and mystery of engine turning?

NOTES

- 1 J B Hawkins, 'Essie Jenyns and her Australian Terriers', *Australiana* November 2011, pp 16-19.
- 2 www.the-sot.com
- 3 In 1981, Douglas M. Smith gave Sydney's Powerhouse Museum an 1811 Holtzapffel & Deyerlein, London, ornamental lathe (registration no. B2413), which had belonged to his ancestor, Charles Francis Smith (1857-?1946), a carpenter and cabinetmaker, who had also lived and worked in Newcastle NSW. I am indebted to Des Barrett, Curator of Technology at the Powerhouse Museum, for providing this information.
- 4 Helen M. Van Der Poorten, 'Jennings, Elizabeth Esther Helen (1864-1920)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/jennings-elizabeth-esther-helen-3855/text6129>, accessed 1 October 2013.



4
John R Wood with his Birch lathe equipment cabinet in his UK study

5
Ornamental turning chucks and change wheels from the Birch lathe No 5504

Jewellery is for giving

Collectors and Australiana Society members Graham and Elizabeth Cocks will be remembered by a collection of Arts and Crafts jewellery, generously given by their daughters to the Art Gallery of South Australia and the Powerhouse Museum.

JOHN WADE

Their many friends in the Australiana Society will recall Graham and Elizabeth Cocks fondly as long-standing, knowledgeable members with a focused ability for collecting interesting pieces. Graham was active on the committee, while Elizabeth (Ann) will be well-known to many from visiting her Chatswood, NSW antique shop, Elizabeth Antiques. They died just on two years ago, three months apart. Bonhams sold much of their private collection, including a James Oatley long-case clock, in November 2012.

Now their daughters Deborah Cocks and Jennifer Genion have donated a substantial collection of 35 pieces of Australian jewellery by Rhoda Wager and her niece Dorothy Wager to enrich the collections of the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney, which already had many Wager pieces, and the Art Gallery of South Australia in Adelaide, which did not.¹

1
Rhoda Wager (1875–1953), *Brooch*, silver, gold and black opal, exhibited at the 50th anniversary exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, London, 1938. Powerhouse Museum 2013/113/3

2
Rhoda Wager (1875–1953), *Brooch*, silver, cryptocrystalline sardonyx, paste, cornelian, 1939. Powerhouse Museum 2013/113/2

3
Rhoda Wager (1875–1953), *Ring*, citrine-colour pastes, gold, 1920–46, length 3.5 cm. Art Gallery of South Australia 20132A48A

4
Dorothy Wager (1912–2001), *Brooch*, cornelian, gold, silver, 1981, 1.9 x 1.2 cm. Art Gallery of South Australia 20132A35A



1



2



3



4



5



6



7

5

Rhoda Wager (1875–1953), *Spoon*, silver, gold, amethyst, c. 1938. Powerhouse Museum 2013/113/1

6

Rhoda Wager (1875–1953), *Brooch*, lapis lazuli, silver, 1920–46, 4.9 x 3.3 cm. Art Gallery of South Australia 20132A51A

7

Rhoda Wager (1875–1953), *Brooch*, with silver-mounted porcelain disc painted by Amy Vale, c. 1919. Powerhouse Museum 2013/113/8

Both Wagers worked in the Arts and Crafts style, the aunt teaching her niece. Rhoda had been trained in Scotland at the Glasgow School of Arts 1897 – 1903 and then set up a jewellery workshop there, but in 1913 decided to join her brother in Fiji. Passing through Sydney, she joined the Society of Arts and Crafts of NSW, and sent jewellery from Fiji to their 1914 exhibition. She relocated to Sydney in 1916, established a studio in Rowe Street in the city, married Percy Ashton in 1920, and worked at various buildings in Sydney CBD until she retired in 1946.

Her work was mostly small, bright and colourful brooches, earrings, rings, pendants, necklaces, chains and belt buckles. Usually a single stone would be mounted in a silver or sometimes gold or white gold frame, with naturalistic ornaments such as tiny leaves, vine leaves, tendrils, nuts and berries soldered on. Dorothy told Powerhouse staff that they never used gum leaves, which are totally absent from design drawings in the archive and objects in the Powerhouse collection, although Deborah Cocks reported that, although Rhoda detested gum leaves, they might have used them if a customer made a specific request.³

Rhoda's working sketchbooks contain over 12,000 designs, and to help her make them she employed several staff. She advertised her work in magazines such as *The Home*, and also sold through outlets in Brisbane and Melbourne. Advertisements emphasise the “hand-wrought” craftsmanship.

Deb Cocks, a renowned contemporary glass artist who is represented in the National Gallery of Australia and the Powerhouse Museum, researched and wrote two substantial articles on Rhoda Wager (1875-1953) and Dorothy Wager, later Mrs R W Judge (1912-2001), in *Australiana*, with the assistance of Dorothy Wager.² Even though she was then 80, Dorothy had a clear recollection of many of the pieces she had made. Both women kept sketchbooks of their jewellery designs, which were then made up by hand, usually based on mounting colourful, semi-precious stones, amber or pearls in silver. These are now part of the Dorothy Wager Archive donated by Dorothy Judge to the Powerhouse Museum in 1997.

8

Rhoda Wager (1875–1953), *Brooch*, silver, onyx, 1917. Powerhouse Museum 2013/113/6

9

Rhoda Wager (1875–1953), *Pendant*, agate and silver on later chain, 1920–46, length 7 cm. Art Gallery of South Australia

10

Rhoda Wager (1875–1953), *Ring*, silver, gold, black opal, exhibited at the 50th anniversary exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, London, 1938. Powerhouse Museum 2013/113/4



8

9

10

Rhoda often attached to her pieces a plate stamped with a punch bearing the word “WAGER”. Her niece Dorothy made some of these pieces from Rhoda’s studio entirely by herself, while others were partly constructed by other staff and finished by Rhoda.

Dorothy was born in Fiji and moved to Sydney in 1922. She left school in 1928, joining her aunt’s jewellery business until they had a falling out and opened her own studio from 1939–41. Then she went to the country, before joining the Army. At war’s end she set up a home studio at Mosman, in 1947 marrying Robert Judge and holding her first solo exhibition of jewellery. Dorothy’s output was less prodigious – some 1,700 pieces – and followed the style of her aunt’s work. She kept working into the 1990s; none of her work bore a punch mark after she left her aunt’s studio.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Robert Reason and Tracey Dall of the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Eva Czernis-Ryl and Rebecca Evans of the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney and Alan Landis provided information and photographs for this report.

NOTES

- 1 Robert Reason, *Articulate*, Art Gallery of South Australia, no 12, Spring 2013, p 36f
- 2 Deborah Cocks, “Rhoda Wager”, *Australiana* vol 13 no 1, Feb 1991 pp 5-12 & “Dorothy M. Wager” vol 15 no 1 Feb 1993 pp 5-10.
- 3 *Ibid*, Feb 1991 p 10

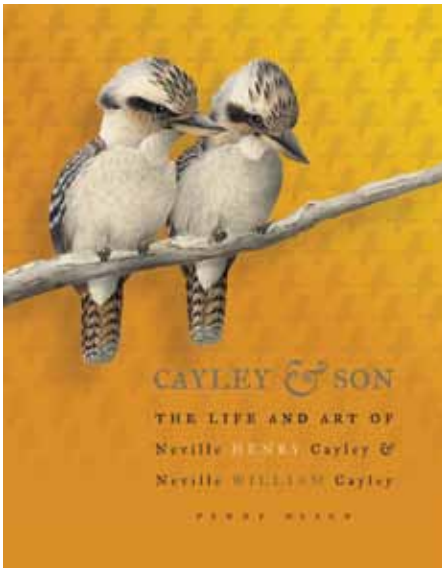
CREDITS

Plates 1, 2, 5, 7, 8 & 10: Powerhouse Museum, Gift of Deborah Cocks and Jennifer Genion from the Estate of Elizabeth and Graham Cocks through the Australian Government’s Cultural Gifts Program, 2013. Photographs by Marinco Kojdanovski

Plates 3, 4, 6 & 9: Art Gallery of South Australia, Gift of Deborah Cocks and Jennifer Genion from the Graham & Elizabeth Cocks collection through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2013. Donated through the Australian Government’s Cultural Gifts Program. Photographs by Saul Steed



Book reviews



1

Neville Senior – Neville Henry – is often dismissed for the sentimentality of his work, its sometimes crude finish and its repetition, perhaps a symptom of his ill-health and reputed heavy drinking (evidence Olsen cites is indirect, e.g. in 1880 he was found liable for unpaid goods he obtained from a storekeeper and spirit merchant – see p. 7). Indeed Olsen suggests that he may have painted some 1,500 kookaburras. Neville Junior – Neville William – is better known as the illustrator of *What Bird is that*, a classic first published in 1931. Influenced by his father in the earlier years of his career, sometimes the work of the two is confused.

Penny Olsen's *Cayley & Son* is a splendid introduction to their work, and the first monograph to attempt to untangle some of the complications around their respective lives. NLA Publishing has produced a handsome book, surely one of the most pleasing and satisfying yet issued by that press.

The book is drawn largely from the holdings of the National Library of Australia, and is divided into two sections. The first section provides a biography of Neville Henry, and is followed by a portfolio of his work. The second section, unsurprisingly, concentrates on Neville William, and follows the same formula. It works well as a structure, and the good colour reproductions are big and bold, and therefore useful.

There is no evidence, it seems, which indicates why Cayley Senior became an artist, or whether it was a talent he acquired in the colony – he emigrated to Australia as a 21 year old in 1877. This is a pity because it is clear that he had talent and a facility for ornithological illustration. Indeed not long after his arrival he was describing himself as an

Penny Olsen,
Cayley & Son. The life and art of Neville Henry Cayley & Neville William Cayley.
NLA Publishing, Canberra 2013,
hard cover, 290 x 240 mm,
227 pages, many colour illustrations,
bibliography, index,
ISBN 9780642277893, \$49.99

REVIEW BY RICHARD NEVILLE

The Neville Cayleys – father and son – are a curious case. Both were prolific, and are well represented in the market. The most recent iteration of the *Australian Art Sales Digest* (www.aasd.com.au) lists 605 works by Neville Henry Cayley and 572 works by Neville William Cayley sold at auction since the 1970s. This is more than artists like Conrad Martens or Tom Roberts. Market backing for the Cayleys is consistent, but not spirited. The highest price for Neville Henry, realised at auction in August 2013, is \$23,600, while Neville William has reached \$15,000.

Yet while the two artists are undoubtedly well known, attitudes to them are not always complimentary.

2



1
Neville Henry Cayley (1854-1903),
Kookaburras on branch 1888, watercolour,
62.5 x 49 cm. National Library of Australia nla.
pic-an6928695

2
Neville William Cayley (1886-1950), *Superb parakeet (Polytelis swainsonii)* 1930s,
watercolour, 55 x 37.7 cm. National Library of
Australia nla.pic-an6940251

artist, and newspaper accounts of his work suggest that this was how he was seen by his contemporaries too. His compositions drew on a long tradition of animal illustration, but Cayley's twist – in part Victorian sentimentality – was often to imbue his subjects with a kind of knowing twinkle in their eyes which sometimes verged on anthropomorphism.

Cayley Senior was a more than competent animal artist. He observed carefully and composed effectively. He was blessed with considerable technical skill. It would be interesting to understand more of his motivations and influences. One suspects that little has survived. As it is, it seems that miracle of modern research – Trove's digitised newspapers – provided Olsen with most of the clues to his peripatetic life.

The story of Cayley's life is much the richer for it as it throws up not only a chronology and narrative, but fascinating insights as well. One cheers for Cayley as he writes to a Grafton newspaper in February 1890 to defend an Aboriginal man, because he wants to show "that there are some people who respect color" (page 29). But intriguing observations like this also leave us wanting to know more about him, and there is certainly room – which was never the intention of Olsen's book – for a much more detailed analysis of the life of an essentially popular, commercial artist in regional Australia.

Significantly more records have survived about Neville William Cayley (1886–1950), largely because of his active engagement both with publishers Angus & Robertson, and with the Royal Australian Ornithologists Union (RAOU). The importance and influence of this community of largely amateur or semi-professional naturalists cannot be overstated, and Olsen's telling of this part of the tale is fascinating. Cayley himself seems to have been a fairly obstinate and self-opinionated chap, who managed to drive George Robertson, the publisher and his most important patron, to the point of severing, temporarily at least, their relationship.

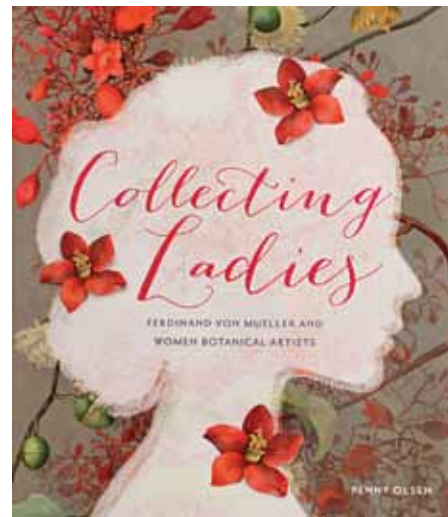
Neville William, unlike his father, did not have ambitions of being a fine artist. Rather he was more comfortable working as a professional illustrator, and much of Olsen's text describes how he worked across illustration, prolific publishing and journalism to support his family. His famous *What bird is that?* was supported by the Gould League of Bird Lovers. There is much more of the documentary record for Olsen to mine here, and it tells the story of an emerging environmental consciousness (as we would perhaps now describe it) in Australia in the 1920s and 30s, underpinned by a committed amateur cohort of naturalists like Alec Chisholm, Keith Hindwood and Cayley himself. All belonged to multiple societies which supported their causes and interests.

Olsen provides fascinating snippets of details about the various galleries and exhibitions through which both men sold their works. The mechanics of being a popular artist in Australia, the making of a living, is often invisible or poorly documented. Many incidental comments throughout the book, and the frequent reference to the important dealer William Aldenhoven, suggest the diversity of venues and businesses that artists had to use to promote their wares. Rarely was an art gallery enough to support artists like the Cayleys.

There are some annoyances. There are no endnotes, for example, so the reader is forced to consult a chronological bibliography to locate references, which is a slow and tricky procedure. The bibliography, too, seems to be devoid of unpublished collections.

Cayley & Son is a beautiful book, lavishly illustrated. If its limitations are accepted – that it is a generalist text which focuses on the National Library of Australia's collections – then it achieves its goals admirably. It is too easy to dismiss the Cayleys as overly-prolific populists, but as Olsen demonstrates there was a lot more to these men than simply prolific illustrators of sentimental kookaburras.

Richard Neville is the Mitchell Librarian at the State Library of NSW.



Penny Olsen,
Collecting Ladies: Ferdinand von Mueller and Women Botanical Artists.
NLA Publishing, Canberra 2013.
Soft cover, 248 pages,
many colour illustrations,
ISBN 9780642277534, \$39.99

REVIEW BY DOROTHY ERICKSON

As the daughter of a botanist, botanical artist and writer for whom species and genera have been named, and currently researching the women artists of Western Australia, I was really interested to review what looked to be a lovely book. The attractive layout designed by Kathryn Wright has numerous illustrations interspersed with a selection of photographs of von Mueller and the women.

A typeface where every so often the dot of an 'I' would have a tail, or a curlcue would be attached to odd letters, was a small irritation. I found myself constantly trying either to brush away what I thought was a bit of soot or having to do a double-take to re-read a word. The embellishment was not consistent and was most disconcerting.

The first chapter sets the scene and describes the milieu in which the "collecting ladies" worked, while the remaining chapters cover the life of either one woman, a pair of sisters or a related group, in all profiling fourteen women closely or loosely associated with



1
Henry C. Gritten, *Melbourne from the Botanic Gardens*, c 1866. National Gallery of Victoria

2
Louisa Anne Twamley, *The Romance of Nature*, 1836

3
Louisa Anne Meredith née Twamley, *Sassafras or Tortoiseshell Butterfly and Brown or Cinnamon Moth; Blueberry (*Dryophila cyanocarpa*); Red White & Black (*Aristolelia peduncularis* var.)*, 1880



Ferdinand Jacob Heinrich Müller (who became Baron Sir Ferdinand von Mueller). The author, Dr Penny Olsen, tells us that von Mueller, the son of the commissioner for customs, had been born in Schleswig-Holstein, trained as a chemist and received his PhD for a botanical thesis in 1846 before sailing to Adelaide with his two sisters. When he was naturalised in 1849, he anglicised the spelling of his name from Müller to Mueller.

When gold was discovered in Victoria, the siblings moved there and in 1853 he became the first Government Botanist and later Director of the Botanic Gardens (**plate 1**). He apparently built up a staggering number of contacts who collected specimens for him. Some 3,000 collectors and correspondents are noted. These included his two sisters, who married and returned to South Australia, and their daughters. King Karl of Württemberg made him an hereditary baron and granted the use of “von” in his name. Various other honours were bestowed upon him and some are mentioned in the text, but perhaps a complete list could have been included in the biographical details. The author tells us that when he died thousands turned out for his funeral.

Fascinating details culled from contemporary sources, combined with words from the artists or from von Mueller himself, build into a relatively

comprehensive picture of the women the author has chosen to profile. The title however is a little misleading as only a small selection of them have been explored, while a number are well known and already well documented. These included the adventurous explorer Ellis Rowan née Ryan, a wealthy pastoralist’s daughter from Victoria; Louisa Anne Meredith née Twamley (**plate 2-3**) the ‘bluestocking’ author, artist and wife of a prominent pastoralist in NSW and Tasmania; the Scott sisters (**plate 4**), Helena and Harriet (Mrs Forde and Mrs Morgan), natural daughters of a Cambridge graduate, illustrators from the Hunter River area in NSW; and Caroline Louisa Atkinson (Mrs Calvert) well-known journalist, naturalist and novelist who lived first on the family property Oldbury in Sutton Forest, NSW and then at Kurrajong Heights in the Blue Mountains where she collected specimens, 120 of which were mentioned in George Bentham’s six volume *Flora Australiensis*. Another profiled was Margaret Elvire Hamersley (Lady Forrest), who had been born in France while her wealthy well-connected family who had estates in Western Australia were on holiday. Only Meredith had been born in England.

The other ‘collecting ladies’ mentioned above were all Australian-born of families that had been able to make their mark in the new land. The author tells us von Mueller identified plants painted by Fanny Anne Charsely (**plate 5-6**), Anne Frances Walker (**plate 7-8**), Ellis Rowan and Louisa Atkinson and provided letters of introduction to publishers and scientists to assist them. He liked their



4

Helena Scott,
Rhizopsyche swainsoni



5

Fanny Anne
Charsley, *The
Wildflowers around
Melbourne*, 1867,
title page



6

Fanny Anne
Charsley,
{*Wildflowers*}, 1867



help but, as Professor Olsen tells us, he employed only men to illustrate his own works, even though by the 1880s it was becoming acceptable for women of good families to take up a career in art – albeit they were mostly unmarried daughters or widows of professional men such as doctors and lawyers.

Other women profiled such as Euphemia Henderson, his 'beloved bride' (**plate 9**), Fanny de Mole and Gertrude Lovegrove apparently had only a fleeting interest in botany. Euphemia could have been forgiven for stopping painting when he jilted her but she did continue to collect seaweeds for him.

Olsen does introduce us to some women hardly known to the public, including von Mueller's niece Marie Wehl who exhibited in the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London, as did another South Australian resident Rosa Catherine Fiveash who illustrated many books for botanists. An interesting tidbit is that Marie Wehl and Flora Martin were also painters and collectors of fungi (**plate 8**), which Mueller preferred to call 'fungi' but could not get anyone else to adopt the term.

Mueller comes across as a bit of a self-centred bounder, proposing and then renegeing on his promise to marry Euphemia as she was too old to bear him children to go with his hoped-for hereditary barony. Soon after, he had his eye on a 16-year-old singer and pianist Rebecca Nordt. Various other proposals came to nought yet he had scores of

women collecting for him; some "twenty correspondents" in Western Australia are mentioned but only three named.

Sarah "Louise" Brooks of Israelite Bay was one for whom Mueller named *Scaevola brooksiana* and *Hakea brooksiana* in the 1880s. Olsen could have told us she was actually Sarah Theresa Brooks (1850–1928), daughter of Irish parents, born aboard a sailing ship in Plymouth harbour bound for Australia. When her father died soon after arrival in Victoria, her mother ran a school. The highly talented and well-educated Sarah became an intrepid pioneer pastoralist near Israelite Bay and Eucla on the western edge of the Great Australian Bight from about 1874. The family had been lured to the isolated outposts by offers of free leasehold. She was apparently a strong-minded unmarried woman who held several leases of up to 100,000 acres in her own name. She painted, wrote for the newspapers, was musical and spoke three languages. Another mentioned, Annie Mary Adams, readers might be interested to know was one of the nine children of well-known pioneer Jane Adams, of Mangowine in the Nungarin district, about whom stories and plays have been written.

Mention could have been made of some of the better-known Western Australians who collected for von Mueller from 1867 onwards. These were Lady Richardson-Bunbury, her daughter Diana and daughter-in-law Amelia née Molloy who also collected seaweeds for Professor Harvey in Dublin. They collected in the

south-west near Bunbury and Busselton. Western Australians of this class were accustomed to botanising; Amelia's mother, well known botanical collector Georgiana Molloy, had made up parcels for William Hooker at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and for Captain James Mangles to pass on to the Duke of Devonshire at Chatsworth. Lady Richardson-Bunbury's grand daughter-in-law Amelia née Pries also collected around Busselton.

Other Western Australian collectors who could have been mentioned were Charlotte Taylor née Gresham formerly of Melbourne, a teacher before her marriage, who also collected for von Mueller at Israelite Bay near Esperance. She was a painter who exhibited her paintings with the Wilgie Sketch Club in 1890. Then there is the wealthy Ann Augusta Knight née McKail of the Albany area who collected for him from October 1867 when he came to Western Australia and purchased property in the area. Her father was the Western Australian consul for Hamburg at the time. Gussie Knight was a painter who later won a Bronze Medal in London at the 1886 Indian and Colonial Exhibition.

Because he had all these areas covered by willing collectors, von Mueller needed to advertise for collectors only in the north and east of Western Australia. He was obviously well regarded in the west as the Mueller Botanical Society of Western Australia was formed and held an Art Exhibition in the Agricultural Bureau Museum in his honour in 1900.



7
Portrait of Anna
Frances Walker,
1860s

8
Anna Frances
Walker, *fungi*

9
Euphemia
Henderson,
*Rhinocarpus
pinnifolius and
others*

Apart from these gaps and an authorial ‘voice’ which at times appears to ‘put down’ women, there are occasional errors of fact. Margaret Forrest for instance did not just decorate the walls of her home as the publicity blurb said or even “rarely showed her paintings in public” as stated on page 136. She had sketched from childhood and exhibited in the Joubert & Twopeny International Exhibition in Perth in 1881, winning a first class award, and another special first class award for “WA Wildflowers in watercolour” at the 1899 Coolgardie International Mining and Industrial Exhibition. She exhibited in the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London, the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1900 and Edinburgh International Exhibition in 1902 as well as with the Wilgie Sketch Club and the West Australian Society of Arts. In the Western Australian Pavilion in Paris in 1900 an extensive display of her wildflower paintings lined one whole room.

Margaret Forrest also exhibited in the Mueller Society exhibition and the 1907 Exhibition of Women’s Work in Perth then Melbourne. She was closely involved in the development of Perth Park, now Kings Park in Perth, which was a few hundred metres from her door in Hay Street, where she lived in a house left to her by her father Edward Hamersley. She returned to painting after her husband’s death in 1918, having a seaside studio in Cottesloe as well as one at home in Perth.

The wording of some other sentences in this chapter could have been expressed to state more clearly what the author wished to convey or perhaps more diligent

research was needed. The 1940s renaming of John Forrest National Park was not “Western Australia’s first reserve” as stated on page 136. The original orders when founding Western Australia as a free colony for gentlemen were to reserve lands for public recreation – to avoid the problems that occurred in Sydney. The land which is now called Kings Park on Mount Eliza overlooking the city, which was set aside in the 1830s as a reserve for public purposes such as recreation, was gazetted an A class reserve in 1870. In 1890 John Forrest made it a crusade to develop it as a park. Originally called Perth Park, it was opened officially in 1895.¹

The John Forrest National Park mentioned in the text is a different place altogether. It is in the Darling Ranges and came into being earlier than stated under a different name. The Karrakatta Club too is misrepresented. It was not just to introduce women “to the fine arts”. It was established “for mutual improvement and social intercourse” and had four departments; Hygiene was chaired by (Lady) Gwennyfred James, Artistic by Lady Forrest, Literary by Miss J. A. Nisbet and Legal and Educational by Miss Best. The President was Lady (Madeline) Onslow and (Dame) Edith Cowan was the Records Secretary.²

While the biographical details listed at the back are only sparse, being basically dates and the locations of births and deaths which could easily have been included in the text, the bibliography is comprehensively detailed but not exhaustive. The time taken to trawl through Trove has obviously proved informative as has other printed information such as the books of Susannah de Vries

and Clarke’s brochure on Lovegrove of Shoalhaven, but to do a complete search of all the women was probably more time than the author could spare.

Dr Olsen, an Associate Professor at ANU, already has some 20 books to her credit and has made reasonable use of the very useful tool of Trove, which now sees the majority of Australian newspapers to about 1950 accessible online with a search facility that makes research so much easier. Personally I would have liked the first chapter – on von Mueller’s life – to have been filled out a little more with details such as his deciding to sail to Australia on the advice of the botanist Preiss who had just returned, or the details of the various trips or excursions he undertook, and more on some of the other collecting women about whom not enough is known to fill a chapter but who did collect for him.

These points notwithstanding, this is a book many will enjoy. It is a readable text for those just dipping their toes into Australia’s artistic botanical heritage.

Dr Dorothy Erickson is a researcher and practising jeweller based in Perth WA, and the author of many books and many articles in *Australiana*.

NOTES

1 See Dorothy Erickson, *A Joy Forever: The Story of Kings Park*, Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, Perth 2008.

2 Also on p. 36. The two maiden ladies were the heads of respected private schools. See *Karrakatta Club Incorporated: History 1894-1954*, Imperial Printing Co, Perth, 1955, p. 5-6, 10.



THE MERCHANT OF WELBY ANTIQUES

Noel Ferguson
The Merchant of Welby
72 Old Hume Hwy Welby NSW 2575
3km west of Mittagong
T 02 4871 2158
M 0408 480 111
F 02 4872 2551

www.merchantofwelby.com.au
noel@merchantofwelby.com.au

Open Thursday to Monday 10am – 5pm
and by appointment



Colonial Australian Cedar Occasional Table,
on a turned tapering centre column with tri-form base
and bearing the stamp of Joseph Sly of Sydney. Circa 1840s

PETER
WALKER
FINE
ART

JAMES WARDELL POWER (AUST 1881 - 1943)



James Wardell Power
L'homme Calculateur, 1939
Linocut
31 x 24.5 cm

Peter Walker Fine Art
101 Walkerville Terrace
Walkerville, SA 5081

p 08 8344 4607
info@peterwalker.com.au
www.peterwalker.com.au

Specialising in rare Australian art



J.B. HAWKINS ANTIQUES

44 INVERLEITH PLACE
EDINBURGH EH3 5Q13
SCOTLAND UK
Mobile: 07 831 0931 98
Fax: 44 (0) 131 558 1727
Email: emma@emmahawkins.co.uk
www.emmahawkins.demon.co.uk

'BENTLEY'
MOLE CREEK ROAD
CHUDLEIGH 7304
TASMANIA
Telephone: 61 (0) 3 6363 6131
Mobile: 0419 985 965
Fax: 61 (0) 3 6367 6262
Email: jhawkins@acenet.com.au
www.jbhawkinsantiques.com



An extremely rare, fine and important documented example of Australian jewellery, combining the skills of Ada Newman, an Australian-born founder of The Society of Arts and Crafts of NSW and a trained porcelain painter, and the London-born, Glasgow-trained former resident of Fiji, the Sydney silversmith Rhoda Wager.

This brooch may be identified from a newspaper entry in the *Evening News* of 24 November 1922, "Presentation to Artist ... gift to Miss Joan Drummond ... a dainty hand painted blue porcelain brooch, the work of Miss Ada Newman and Miss Rhoda Wager."

At this time Ada Newman was noted for her porcelain brooches in addition to her tea ware. At The Society of Arts and Crafts of NSW annual exhibition in addition to her tea ware she exhibited, 'a case of hand painted brooches' (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 October 1921).

A good biography of Newman is in *The Globe and Sunday Times War Pictorial* issue 9 January 1915, which also illustrates her work.

This mounting in silver by Rhoda Wager using gum leaves and nuts is of the finest quality and an early example of her silversmithing skills which enhances the gum leaves and blossoms of the porcelain plaque. Wager sent some of her work from Fiji to The Society of Arts and Crafts of NSW in 1914 before coming to Sydney, perhaps resulting in her initial contact with Newman.

