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COVER

Embroidery on WW II army rug made by Corporal Clifford Alexander Gatenby from Coffs
Harbour, c 1942–1945 in POW camp Stalag 383, Germany, with needles fashioned from
spectacle frames, ground-down old toothbrushes, wood and broken odds and sods,
fabrics, threads from old pullovers, socks, balaclavas, scarves, towelling. 177 x 173 cm

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Letters to the Editor

From David Kelly: News from Ireland

The first update to my book *Convict and Free: the Master Furniture-makers of NSW 1788–1851* will be available on CD in December, with at least two new chapters, on Thomas Mercer Booth and John McMahon.

However, *Australiana* members may be interested to learn now that a reader from Ireland has provided me with details of the businesses run in Ireland by two of the cabinet-makers covered in the book.

The first is James Templeton, to whom Andrew Lenehan was apprenticed both in Ireland and in Sydney. It was already known that he ran a business in Dublin, but the details were uncertain. Kevin Fahy, Christina Simpson and Andrew Simpson suggested in *Nineteenth Century Australian Furniture* that he might be the man by that name who was in business at 6 Henry-street, Dublin, in 1835. That suggestion is now confirmed. He was in business as a cabinet-maker at 5 Henry-street, Dublin, 1829–1834; and at 6 Henry-street, Dublin, 1834–1835. He was married at St Mary's Church of Ireland in Dublin on 12 April 1829.

The second is William Sloan, of Maitland fame. I had assumed that he was a journeyman when he left Ireland for NSW in 1837. That turns out not to be the case, as the following advertisement on 3 October 1834 demonstrates:

New Cabinet Making, Upholstery and Undertaking Establishment, Ballyshannon. Mr William Sloan, late of Belfast, begs leave to inform the gentlemen, and respectable inhabitants of Ballyshannon and its vicinity, that he has commenced the Cabinet Making, Upholstery, and Undertaking Business, in that concern in Park-lane (lately occupied by Mrs Widow Johnson).

Ballyshannon is in County Donegal, while Sloan was originally from County Down. He is only the fourth maker covered by *Convict and Free* who is known to have run his own business before emigrating to NSW.

I thank John Rogers, furniture historian of Dalkey, County Dublin, for this information. John is writing a trade directory of furniture makers and allied trades who worked in Ireland from 1650 to 1900.

You can email me with any other suggestions or information at colonial@colonialhill.com.

From Ben McHenry: Opals wanted in Adelaide

2015 marks the centenary of the discovery of opal at what is now Coober Pedy in South Australia, and the South Australian Museum is mounting an exhibition later this year to celebrate the discovery.

Our Treasure Room will contain lovely pieces of opal jewellery or spectacular cut stones, such as the mounted opal pendant made by John Rowland in Melbourne c 1900.

If any of our readers has something with that wow factor – including historical pieces, especially pieces by J M Wendt and those with early Coober Pedy opal – and felt they'd like to lend them for our display – I'm more than happy to accept!

You can contact me at the South Australian Museum, North Terrace, Adelaide SA 5000 or by email ben.mchenry@samuseum.sa.gov.au

John Rowland, *opal pendant brooch*, Melbourne, c 1900.
Courtesy Trinity Antiques, Perth



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Lady Bowen's Irish Harp Brooch – a missing piece of Queensland colonial jewellery

The practice of presenting diplomatic gifts to dignitaries goes back to antiquity. As the much-admired wife of the governor of the colonies of Queensland, New Zealand and Victoria, Diamantina, Lady Bowen received some significant pieces of jewellery and metalwork. These gifts were frequently, and often fulsomely, described in contemporary newspapers. Dianne Byrne investigates some of her presentation pieces, through newspaper accounts and images.



DIANNE BYRNE

In the 1960s, when I was a pupil at All Hallows' School in Brisbane, I became closely acquainted with a work of art which was displayed for generations in the school concert hall, depicting Diamantina, Lady Bowen (1833–1893), the wife of Sir George Bowen, Queensland's first Governor (**plate 1**).

The presence of Lady Bowen's portrait in that place was particularly appropriate. In the nine years which she spent in the colony of Queensland following her arrival in December 1859, she became the school's first patron, regularly attending school fetes and presiding at musical soirees and concerts.¹

This special connection meant that when the Bowens were preparing to leave Brisbane for Sydney and then New Zealand in December 1867, the Sisters of Mercy, the Irish Catholic order which in 1861 had founded All Hallows', took great trouble to acquire an impressive gift to be presented to Lady Bowen on behalf of the pupils.

1.

Unknown artist, *Diamantina, Lady Bowen* (1833–1893), the former Contessa Diamantina Roma. Pastel portrait, oval image 43.5 x 33.5 cm, undated. Courtesy The Sisters of Mercy, Brisbane, gift of Lady Bowen

Their present took the form of a brooch in the shape of an Irish harp, made of Queensland gold and set with Queensland pearls and emeralds. In choosing the design, it was reported that the pupils:

were mindful that it was intended for one who numbers among her many endowments that of being a gifted musician, and whose approval was, more than once, the cherished reward of our poor musical efforts.²

Lady Bowen's letter in reply reflected her affection for the students and her belief in the importance of moral improvement through education.

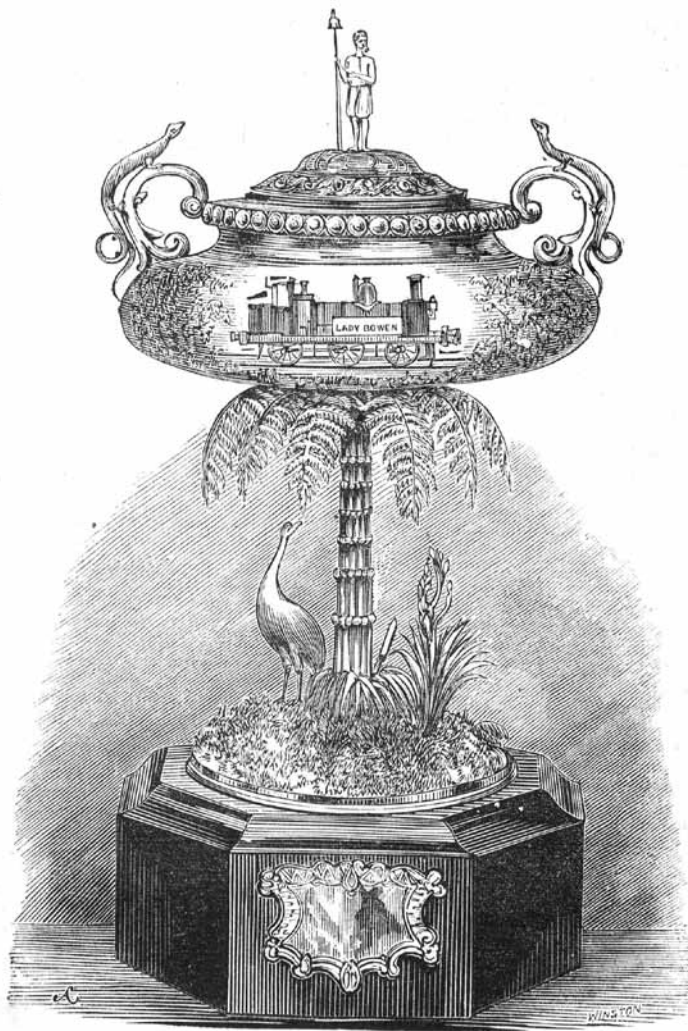
My Dear Young Friends, —I thank you very much for your kind address, and for the beautiful brooch which you have given me. You could not have thought of a souvenir more calculated to recall to my memory this land of promise than an ornament made in the colony, and composed of its most valuable productions—gold and precious stones; nor could you have paid me a more acceptable compliment than by choosing for its design the harp, the emblem of music; for, of all arts that make life dear, music has ever been the dearest friend to me. What greater expression of your feelings could have been found than

2.

"Memorial Cup Presented to Sir George Bowen", *Illustrated Sydney News*, 28 Sep 1872 p 16

3.

George Young (designer and silversmith, d 1909), *The Lady Bowen Railway Cup*, Dunedin 1872, presented to Sir George Bowen while Governor of New Zealand at the turning of the first sod of the Wellington–Hutt Railway in August 1872. The side of the cup is engraved with an image of the locomotive named in honour of his wife. The cup was acquired incomplete at a London auction in 1981, and G. & T. Young, the successor of the original firm, made replacements of the missing lid, base and inscription plaque in 1982. Collection: Toitū Otago Settlers Museum, Dunedin NZ, 1981/11/1



MEMORIAL CUP PRESENTED TO SIR GEORGE BOWEN.





4.

Lady Bowen's great-granddaughter, Mrs Merida Drysdale, photographed in 1961 wearing the diamond tiara presented by the Ladies of Victoria. The tiara, credited to Walsh Bros of Melbourne, was presented to Lady Bowen in 1879

Flavelles closely supported the Sisters of Mercy and provided items of jewellery as prizes in Art Unions which benefited All Hallows' School in 1867 and in 1869.⁷

Moreover, one of the prizes listed in the 1869 Art Union was

A HARP BROOCH (on the Model of Brian Boru's, preserved at Trinity College, Dublin); of Queensland Gold, encased and engraved; set with Shamrocks of Moreton Bay Pearls, and Peak Downs Malachite.⁸

The Trinity College harp (also known as *Brian Boru's Harp*) was a medieval musical instrument displayed in the long room at Trinity College, Dublin. It was, and is, one of the earliest surviving Gaelic harps.

The "Queensland Gold" for Lady Bowen's brooch may have come from the Cape River diggings in North Queensland, or from the riotous discoveries being made in south-east Queensland on the Mary River. Flavelle Brothers had many irons in the fire where gold sources were concerned. For example, a large parcel of ore from the Mary River diggings was sold to the firm in Brisbane, while a big nugget from the same source weighing over 10 ounces and valued at £35 was exhibited in the front window of their Brisbane store in late October 1867.⁹

After accepting her present, Lady Bowen went on to a new life in New Zealand where her husband took up an

the gift of a harp, which, as the Poet of Ireland says, "has long been known to mingle love's language with sorrow's sad tone." But I must not speak on this subject alone; indeed, no one accomplishment, however perfect you may be in it, will prove so valuable to you as the general cultivation of the mind. It is that which you will find your most useful friend through life—alone or in society, in health or on the bed of sickness.³

Apart from her appreciation for Irish culture and romance, Diamantina Bowen had another close connection with the country. While she had been

born to an aristocratic family in the Ionian Islands (her father was President of the Ionian Senate), her husband was the son of a rector from County Donegal.⁴ Lady Bowen was proud of her Ionian Islands heritage too, and wore a "national costume of a Greek lady" to a fancy dress ball in Brisbane in 1864—four months after Britain had transferred the islands to an independent Greece.⁵

Frustratingly, there is no mention in the newspapers of the maker of Lady Bowen's brooch. However, it almost certainly was created by the Sydney-based firm of Flavelle Brothers, which opened a branch in Queen Street, Brisbane in 1861.⁶

appointment as Governor. She returned to Australia in 1873, when Bowen was installed as Governor of Victoria. During these years, the couple received a host of glamorous gifts, such as the “Lady Bowen Railway Cup” presented to mark the inauguration of the railway system in New Zealand in 1872 (**plates 2 & 3**),¹⁰ and the gold trowel decorated with emblems representing Victoria and diamonds depicting the Southern Cross, presented to Sir George for laying the foundation stone of the Melbourne Exhibition Building in 1879.¹¹

Lady Bowen also received several important additions to her jewel box, including a tiara mounted *en tremblant* with diamond daisies, and a locket in the form of a “pendant of pearls” hanging from a diamond-set stalk, both presented by the ladies of Victoria (**plate 4**).¹²

Several of these pieces have survived and are now in public and private collections. However, the location of the All Hallows’ Harp Brooch remains a mystery. It may no longer exist. Or, if it has escaped the melting pot, its present owner may be unaware of its provenance.

It would be a sad end to the story if nothing more could be said about the gift given so long ago by Queenslanders to their First Lady, but in the course of preparation of this article, I discovered an image of Lady Bowen wearing her brooch (**plates 5 & 6**).



5.

Johnstone, O’Shannessy & Company, (photographers of Bourke Street, Melbourne), *Lady Bowen*, 1873–79, photograph, 13.9 x 9.3 cm. Collection: National Library of Australia, nla.pic-vn3356220

6.

Detail showing the Irish Harp brooch presented to Lady Bowen by the pupils of All Hallows’ School, Brisbane in December 1867. Collection: National Library of Australia, nla.pic-vn3356220





7.

Evan Jones (1846–1917), *diadem engraved with a head of Athena*, Sydney c 1880, silver-gilt. Collection: Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney 94/136/1, originally from the estate of Charles Badham, Professor of Classics at the University of Sydney 1867–84

A *carte-de-visite* photograph made during Sir George Bowen's term as Governor of Victoria (1873–1879), now in the collection of the National Library of Australia, shows the brooch pinned to Lady Bowen's bodice. The harp shape, the "shamrocks" – six trefoils of Moreton Bay pearls – are clearly visible, and the four dark spots on the body of the harp must be the emeralds.

The size and scale and lavish use of local materials attest to the fact that the pupils of All Hallows' clearly intended their patron to have a "statement" piece.

Interestingly, in the same photograph, Lady Bowen wears a metal diadem in the Greek style which closely resembles a silver-gilt diadem made by Sydney silversmith Evan Jones, formerly owned by Charles Badham,

second Professor Classics at the University of Sydney 1867–84 (plate 7).

The Bowen brooch is just one of many presentation pieces given to prominent personalities in 19th-century Queensland. The range of works made by local craftsmen for this purpose is surprising, exciting and diverse, and they deserve to be better-known and considered for their contribution to Australia's decorative arts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks go to Eva Czernis-Ryl and Kathy Hackett of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney; Margy Burn and Damian Cole of the National Library of Australia, Canberra; Claire Orbell, Registrar at the Toitū Otago Settlers Museum, Dunedin; and Peter Connell, Director of the Mercy Heritage Centre, Brisbane for assistance in obtaining photographs.

Dianne Byrne is Curator of Original Materials at the John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland. She currently is researching 19th-century Queensland presentation gold and silver for her M. Phil. thesis. She can be contacted at dianne.byrne@slq.qld.gov.au.

NOTES

- 1 *Brisbane Courier*, 20 Sep 1867 p 6; *Brisbane Courier*, 5 Oct 1867 p 5.
- 2 *Brisbane Courier*, 4 Jan 1868 p 4.
- 3 *Ibid*; *Queenslander*, 11 Jan 1868 p 6.
- 4 *ADB* vol 3 pp 203–7.
- 5 *Brisbane Courier*, 9 Sep 1864 p 2.
- 6 Flavelle Brothers of Sydney advertised their optical products in the *Moreton Bay Courier* and the *North Australian, Ipswich and General Advertiser* as early as February 1860, then opened their own Brisbane retail premises in Queen Street on 29 Apr 1861 *Moreton Bay Courier*, 27 Apr 1861 p 4.
- 7 Flavelle Brothers provided an engraved cross and a gold watch as prizes in the 1867 Art Union, *Brisbane Courier*, 14 Sep 1867 p 1.
- 8 *Brisbane Courier*, 28 Jan 1869 p 1.
- 9 *Brisbane Courier*, 26 Oct 1867 p 4.
- 10 *Illustrated New Zealand Herald*, 27 Sep 1872; *Illustrated Sydney News*, 28 Sep 1872 p 16; *Illustrated Australian News for Home Readers*, 31 Dec 1872 p 257; Winsome Shepherd, *Gold and Silversmithing in 19th and 20th century New Zealand*, Wellington, Museum of New Zealand, 1995 pp 65–7.
- 11 *Argus*, 20 Feb 1879 p 6.
- 12 The tiara was a farewell gift, paid for by subscription and presented at Government House, Melbourne on 20 February 1879. It was described at the time as "a really superb tiara of brilliants ... consisting of a wreath of five daisies, interspersed with trefoils", manufacture was ascribed to Walsh Bros. *Argus*, 19 Feb 1879 p 5; 21 Feb 1879 p 6; Another report described it as "in the form of a tiara of diamonds, the jewels being neatly set upon springs, which give them a constant tremulous motion" and valued at about £400. See *Geelong Advertiser*, 18 Feb 1879 p 3; also *Telegraph, St Kilda, Prahran and South Yarra Guardian*, 22 Feb 1879 p 3.



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From the Editor

Help us improve Australiana magazine

Our *Australiana* magazine is the main periodical that communicates knowledge about Australian decorative arts.

We aim to keep improving its quality and range by seeking new authors, new research topics and good quality illustrations from both private and public sources.

We aim to keep it accurate by referring material to experts and by asking members to proof read the articles before they are published.

We aim to keep you informed about new exhibitions and books across the nation.

We need your help in all of these. Miraculously, we come across people who can provide further information or illustrations from their collection to enhance an article, but obviously there must be many occasions when we miss out on vital information or images – or even make mistakes (which we loathe)!

Every issue you read has been enhanced by generous contributions from other members, dealers, auctioneers and some sympathetic institutions. Your editor can ask his personal contacts, and their personal contacts, for help. But we are not covering all the bases, so we are

looking for ways to improve. We might, for instance, announce on the website what articles are in the pipeline so that you can get in touch if you can help.

If you have any suggestions on how we can achieve this better, please email me.

Of course, keep sending in those valuable articles which enhance our knowledge of Australian creativity and culture.

John Wade
 Editor
editor@australiana.org

Adrian Feint's flowers and fishermen: the Lesley Godden collection



A collection of flower paintings by Adrian Feint, belonging to his friend and fishing companion Les Godden, came to light last year when they were sold at auction. Catriona Quinn researches the background of this collection, the work of Adrian Feint and his artistic friendships.

CATRIONA QUINN

A large group of paintings by Adrian Feint, with a significant provenance and depicting motifs and themes definitive to Feint's work has come to light for the first time in almost seventy years. Ten of the paintings were sold at Shapiro Auctioneer's Australian and International Art sale in Sydney on 25 August 2014;¹ two of the most important remain in private ownership and have never before been published.

The paintings were variously painted for, gifted to and purchased by Lesley Godden (**plate 1**), a close friend of the artist from the 1940s until Feint's death in 1971. Previously unseen theatrically set flower pieces, with Pittwater and Sydney harbour backdrops, as well as meticulously detailed landscape and architectural scenes of Palm Beach, were shown in public for the first time since

they were painted in the late 1940s.

Research undertaken since the sale has identified, for the first time, the names, dates and provenance of many of the pictures, many of which were sketches or studies for larger works. The paintings captured the Pittwater summers shared by Feint and Godden and were hung undisturbed in Godden's home until 2012.

Adrian Feint (1896–1971) was a design polymath, primarily known in the inter-war period for illustration and bookplates and, post-war, for his flower and landscape paintings. Feint was born in Narrandera, NSW, where his maternal grandfather,² the Irish convict turned politician and mayor of Sydney, Edward Flood, had started his pastoral empire with the 1841 purchase of Narrandera Station.³

Feint told Hazel de Berg in 1963 that his interest in drawing dated from his “smallest childhood” and that even while at school he decorated his exercise books every night.⁴ His early teachers included



MR. ADRIAN FEINT

Mr. Adrian Feint is an interesting painter of flowers, all his and landscapes. His sense of design, including tone and colour were never given first class a high approach in Australia art. A book reproducing his flower paintings, published in June, 1948, has brought him further fame. Mr. Gordon Dalzell in *Surrealism's* famous subject matter. He is photographed beside an example of his work, which reflects the strength and vigor of his approach. Mr. George Bell, of Melbourne, is a distinguished painter and a capable teacher of painting. Amongst his students have been Ronald Brindley, Peter Percy Smith, David Brindley, and Wolfgang Carlsson. Mrs. Joan Bell, Tasmanian, has painted working at Sydney, in a dramatic and powerful area. Her work has a spirit from classical subjects to landscapes.

1.

Lesley Godden, 1940s, photographer unknown. Courtesy of David Harris

2.

Mr Adrian Feint, from *Alec Murray's Album*, 1948. Like a gentleman from an 18th-century silhouette, Murray's portrait presents Feint as a man of “unerring taste and colour sense”, though perhaps his costume is more adventurous than his usual compositions



Elioth Gruner, Julian Ashton and Thea Proctor. After service as an ambulance driver in World War I and a stint managing the Grosvenor Galleries, Feint joined *Art in Australia*, a career move that drew him into the heart of Sydney's art, design and publishing circles, with Sydney Ure Smith at its epicentre (**plate 2**).

Popularity followed with the exposure of covers of *The Home* magazine and consequent involvement with interior decoration, including a room, with Leon Gellert, at the landmark Burdekin House exhibition of 1929.⁵ By the 1920s Feint had a clientele that extended to the United States and included influential Sydney patrons such as solicitor John Lane Mullins, whose collection of bookplates is in the State Library of NSW, and author Frank Clune and his art gallery proprietor wife Thelma. So prolific was this part of Feint's career, it is likely that more was published on Feint's bookplates before the 1940s than has been published on his paintings since.

Feint kept meticulous records in the form of handwritten catalogues, now held in the Mitchell Library.⁶ Beginning in 1928, the two chronological logbooks and several additional loose pages list every picture, whether sketch, study, large or small, including columns describing measurements, materials and title. Details of provenance are recorded,

including exhibition history, purchaser's name and price, commission percentage and later updates as paintings were published, exhibited or sold.

Feint labelled the books with his progressive addresses and dates: 10 Darnley Hall, Elizabeth Bay, 1932; 'Highclere', 25 Challis Avenue, Potts Point, 29 January 1953, 'Ashdown', 96 Elizabeth Bay Road, Elizabeth Bay, April 1960 and later, with C J Smith, 34 Wentworth Street, Glebe, April 1969. The logbooks are an exceptional record of patronage and productivity and are revealing in terms of the number of paintings presented as gifts to friends including John Winter, the Lane Mullins family, Lesley Godden and Christopher Smith.

Sydney Ure Smith (1887–1949), with whom Feint enjoyed a beneficial association as contributor and employee from 1920 to 1938 at both *Art in Australia* and *The Home* magazine, is chiefly remembered as a publisher of those influential journals as a means of advancement of art and taste in Australia. Nancy Underhill rightly draws attention to Ure Smith's influence beyond publishing, as President of the Society of Artists, a Trustee of the National Gallery of Art in Sydney and chair of numerous related committees.⁷ No co-incidence, then, that the examples of Feint's work in the Lesley Godden collection were not

3.

Adrian Feint (1896–1971), *Study for Susan in the Moonlight*, 1944. Courtesy of Shapiro Auctioneers, Sydney. Feint inscribed the back of the painting, "Property of Les Godden," and dated the gift "Adrian Feint, 12/3/1951," a month after Godden's birthday. Like many of the sketches and studies in the collection, the full-size version was published in *Adrian Feint Flower Painting*, 1948. The combination of Staffordshire figure, cornucopia and slightly unsettling angle and lighting made Susan the choice for the cover of the book

4.

Another whose larger version was featured, as plate 2, in *Adrian Feint Flower Painting* was this *Sketch, Flowers with yacht*, 1946. Courtesy of Shapiro Auctioneers, Sydney. Though a note on the reverse states "Property of Adrian Feint, 12/3/1951," Feint's catalogue records that he presented the sketch to Les Godden in 1950

5.

Adrian Feint (1896–1971), Most of Feint's gifts seem to have been presented years, sometimes even decades, after the painting was made. *Native Flowers Pittwater*, 1949, is an exception, with its inscription on the canvas, "For Les Godden, Adrian Feint, 1949." Courtesy of Shapiro Auctioneers, Sydney



6.

Adrian Feint (1896–1971), *Study, Flowers with Harbour*, 1949. Courtesy of Shapiro Auctioneers, Sydney. Hibiscus and other individual blooms were gathered from the garden of his friend Ray Gale, nearby in Onslow Avenue, Elizabeth Bay. Like Helen Blaxland, Feint felt the placement of individual flowers beside the main arrangement fulfilled his desire for a balanced composition

7.

Adrian Feint (1896–1971), *Study, Flowers with Apples*, 1949. Courtesy of Shapiro Auctioneers, Sydney. The larger painting, for which this was the study, was published as Plate 5 in *Adrian Feint Flower Paintings*

8.

Adrian Feint (1896–1971), *Study of Roses, Hibiscus and Pinks*, 1950. Courtesy of Shapiro Auctioneers, Sydney. It was Feint's Christmas present to Godden in 1951. The family collection also includes two signed and dated colour lithographs similar to this, *Camellias* and *Azaleas*, both 1954, made for an edition for the Legend Press

only precisely contemporaneous but also deeply connected with four of Ure Smith's most popular and ambitious publications of the late 1940s: *Flower Pieces* by Helen Blaxland (1946),⁸ *Camellia Quest* by E G Waterhouse (1947),⁹ *Adrian Feint Flower Paintings* (1948)¹⁰ and *Alec Murray's Album* (1948).¹¹

Lesley Godden (1912–2004),¹² originally from Sydney's Dulwich Hill, worked at the Bank of NSW for over 40 years, retiring in 1971. He lived with his sister and her husband from 1967 in French's Forest. Though not religious himself, Godden's family were strict Jehovah's Witnesses and his background was conservative; fishing and golfing at Long Reef on Sydney's northern beaches became a retreat from work and home.

Godden probably met Feint, 17 years his senior, in the mid-1940s through a group of mutual friends. All the paintings in the collection date from this period of the late 1940s to early 1950s and locate the friendship in a pre-suburban Pittwater, where the pair fished and enjoyed holidays together. The two were certainly close for many years and Godden kept a framed photo of Feint in his room until he died.

Godden decorated his home with more than a dozen of Feint's paintings, which were never moved from the wall

– the wallpaper fading around them – neither exhibited nor moved outside the home in almost 70 years. Since Godden and Feint spent much of their time fishing at Pittwater, the family has always recognised the figure of the lean, muscular young fisherman, which recurs in many of Feint's paintings, as modelled on Les Godden. Two fisherman paintings are held by the family and have not previously been published or exhibited in the more than 60 years since they were painted. These and recent research into another fisherman painting have cast new light on this iconic figure in Feint's work.

The Lesley Godden collection included six small flower paintings, the titles and provenance for which are all confirmed in Feint's own hand in the Mitchell Library manuscript: *Study for Susan in the Moonlight* (1944) (**plate 3**), *Sketch, Flowers with Yacht* (1946) (**plate 4**), *Native Flowers Pittwater* (1949) (**plate 5**), *Flowers with Harbour* (1949) (**plate 6**), *Flowers with Apples* (1949) (**plate 7**) and *Study of Roses, Hibiscus and Pinks* (1950) (**plate 8**). They were typically sketches for the larger works that established Feint's reputation beyond the sphere of design. Craig Judd describes Feint's flower and landscape paintings of the 1940s as

probably his best work ... Carefully composed, perfectly balanced... (there is) an unnerving sculptural quality...and innate theatricality in Feint's work, often strange and intense, there is something mysterious and melancholic in the flat empty stillness he creates.¹³

A fine primary source on the flower pieces survives in *Adrian Feint Flower Paintings*. It was, at the time, Ure Smith's most ambitious art book, published in 1948 in a limited edition of 1,500, each copy signed by the artist. Thanks to the comprehensive list of works at the end of the book, *Flower Paintings* provides a valuable record of taste and patronage in Sydney over two decades. All Feint's works and their buyers from 1920 to 1947 are listed: Sydney society, squattocracy, fellow artists and public institutions make appearances, all mutually influential in the Sydney art and design world between the wars.

Less than ten years after Feint's first exhibition in 1939 at the Grosvenor Galleries, Sydney, editor Ure Smith hailed Feint in his preface as "the most distinguished painter of flowers in Australia,"¹⁴ which he attributed to his "colour sense, composition and technical skill." These paintings, contemporary with the Lesley Godden collection, were seen by Ure Smith as a progression from earlier, flatter, decorator paintings, having become "less formalised" and showing a "greater appreciation of the individual treatment of flowers, the texture of petals and shadows on delicate masses of blooms, the subtleties of colour and the treatment of backgrounds."¹⁵

The influence of Dutch flower painters is clear and in his introduction to *Adrian Feint Flower Paintings*, Harry Tatlock Miller places Feint in a direct lineage with the Dutch tradition of meticulous and expressive precision.¹⁶ Feint himself, reflecting in 1963 on the impetus to work full-time on oil painting and virtually leave design, attributes this switch to "seeing a book on Dutch flower painting which influenced me more than anything I'd seen before."¹⁷

From early in his painting career, Feint's method of constructing his flower paintings attracted curiosity. Tatlock Miller wrote:

Lacking his own garden he must beg, borrow or steal. He must work fast before his models wither and die, so procures and works from a single blooms, each flower painted single and separately. Arrangement and background are usually purely imagined.¹⁸

Feint wrote he was "at the mercy of the florist or the generosity of friends who have a garden."¹⁹ Many such blooms came from Ray Gale, a friend who lived nearby in Onslow Avenue, Elizabeth Bay,

9.

Mrs Gregory Blaxland, from *Alec Murray's Album*, 1948, a year after the huge success of *Flower Pieces* and twelve years before the founding of the Women's Committee of the National Trust (NSW)



10.

Theatrical settings such as this, where William Dobell's *Portrait of a Boy* commands an alabaster urn of hydrangeas and water lilies, a shell of lilies of the valley and a single rose blossom, proved immensely popular, sending *Flower Pieces* of 1946 into a second edition. Blaxland successfully fused her home and art collection with flower arrangements, stating "the distinguished manner of this painting calls for formality in any accompanying decoration." Photograph by Olive Cotton

11.

The same alabaster urn, isolated from Blaxland's setting, has much in common, in scale, content and proportion, with Feint's large set piece flower paintings. Photograph by Olive Cotton

12.

Blaxland's "three very small pieces of nonsense." *Flower Pieces* showed readers how to employ smaller arrangements, such as these, as a foil to balance larger ones. Photograph by Olive Cotton



a few doors down from Darnley Hall, where Feint lived from 1932 to 1953. Feint used to visit Ray Gale's garden to pick flowers, in particular the hibiscus that feature in many of his flower paintings.²⁰

By the late 1940s, commentators such as Kenneth Wilkinson were noting a compelling complexity in Feint's work:

[Feint] declares that almost all his paintings begin with a mood – an emotional atmosphere. That is why straightforward landscape painting no longer interests him. He finds that he cannot create by that means the elusive, intangible 'something' that he senses rather than sees. For the purpose, he has developed his own particular form of flower painting – the group of flowers surrounded by symbols and suggestions of landscape ... It is the contrast of realism in the flowers and fantasy in the background that gives Feint's work its haunting and individual quality.²¹

Wilkinson alludes to a method of making art which Feint explained in detail in his 1963 interview with Hazel de Berg and which has particular significance to the flower paintings and landscapes in the Lesley Godden collection.

When I do a flower painting, I always work from small sketches which are mostly imaginary. I then put in the flowers I think I want, and when I come to make the sketch I get the real flowers and paint from them directly. I very seldom paint flower paintings from flowers just put in a jug ... I prefer to make landscape, seascape or some imaginative background, preferably with some fantasy in it or something slightly unreal perhaps. I'm not very interested in painting straight flower pieces as they are. Most of the things I do are imaginative and, as I say, have a touch of fantasy in them which I prefer.²²

13.

David Jones' window display to promote the books of Ure Smith Pty Ltd, 1948. Photograph by Max Dupain. Portraits of Helen Blaxland and Adrian Feint featured in Ure Smith's galaxy of publishing stars. From print made in 1997 from original photonegative at State Library of NSW



Feint is elusive about the origins of his fantasy landscape and seascape ideas, though he admits these ideas could come from anywhere and that “I am more interested in design and colour than anything.”²³ So despite broadening his work from bookplate, magazine artwork and interior decoration, colour and design remained at the heart of his work.

The implication is that the studies and sketches in the collection are not precursors of larger, later, more perfect paintings; rather, according to Feint in 1963, it was the small sketches to which he devoted the most time. Attributing his skill to his youthful training and work on bookplates, Feint developed an expertise in painting and drawing on a small scale. By the 1960s he even felt the smaller works were more sought after. Feint seemed happier at times with the original sketch; his satisfaction from working on the smaller paintings came from exercising his technical skill and “because I find you can never get the same thing twice.”²⁴

The Lesley Godden collection features several recurring motifs, common to Feint’s still life pictures; in such meticulously constructed paintings, no element was there by chance. Cornucopia-shaped vases, classical urns, fruit, hibiscus, fallen blossoms, jugs and shells indicate characteristic references meaningful to Feint’s clientele.

It is impossible to view the more decorative of the flower paintings without thinking immediately of the premier flower arranger of the era, Helen Blaxland (**plate 9**). Best remembered today as the backbone of the 1960s National Trust (founder of the Women’s Committee in NSW and energetic conservationist), Dame Helen Blaxland (1907–89) was known in the 1940s as a supportive patron of Australian artists and tastemaker of considerable influence.²⁵ Blaxland and Feint’s friendship very likely dated back to art classes with Thea Proctor, who taught art and design at the Grosvenor Galleries in the 1920s.²⁶ Blaxland was also an early patron; it is unsurprising to see the name of Mrs Gregory Blaxland listed in *Adrian Feint Flower Paintings* (1948) as the



purchaser of a *Study of Hibiscus Flowers* in 1941. Feint’s handwritten catalogue records that the picture was one of four *Flower Studies* sold that year at David Jones’ bargain sale for £6 each to Mrs Blaxland, among others.²⁷

Blaxland’s popular and influential book, *Flower Pieces*, was published by Ure Smith in 1946, two years before Feint’s *Flower Paintings*. It sold out quickly in the Christmas release, a second edition was printed and a sequel, *Collected Flower Pieces*,²⁸ came out in 1949. The names of those involved in its production reads like a roll call of the art and design world in Sydney that had helped popularise modernism in the inter-war period.

14.

Inspiration or homage? Thea Proctor’s contribution to Helen Blaxland’s *Collected Flower Pieces*, 1949 illustrates just how much her two Grosvenor Galleries pupils learned from the pervasive tastemaker of the inter-war years



15.

It should come as no surprise that Feint's arrangements for *Collected Flower Pieces* deviate so sharply from the look of his flower paintings, given the painstaking methods he used to arrive at his sketches and studies. Despite the difference in appearance, Feint's belief in the importance of the choice of vase and the achievement of a "graceful rhythm" of design remained paramount, whether in real or fantasy flower arrangements. Photographs by Max Dupain

Published by Sydney Ure Smith and decorated by Elaine Haxton, *Flower Pieces* was photographed in a moody half-lit style by Max Dupain, and in clearer, brighter pictures by Olive Cotton (**plates 10-12**), with Russell Roberts (David Moore had started working for him the same year). Thea Proctor acknowledged in its introduction "no one here has had a wider influence on our flower arranging".²⁹ Inspiration for one arrangement came from a strategically placed Loudon Sainthill *Vivandiere*. Paintings by Francis Lymburner, Loudon Sainthill, Sali Herman, Jocelyn Rickards, Elaine Haxton and William Dobell are placed to harmonise with the flowers, as integral to Blaxland's arrangements as Empire mirrors, Georgian tray tables and Louis Philippe wine coolers.

They are all names of practitioners whose craft could be characterised as having crossover elements between the fine and applied arts.

It is not only the cast of characters in Blaxland's *Flower Pieces* that begs comparison with Feint's *Flower Paintings*. Blaxland's deliberate use of a variety of vessels has a Feintian familiarity. The two clearly shared a common belief in the importance of collecting as well as a similar taste in *objets* – both *trouv * and *d'art*. Blaxland devotes an instructional page on the importance of accumulating

a broad collection of vases and the versatility of odd pieces. Belleek vases, alabaster urns, Rockingham sugar bowls, tureens and goblets were all used: "A really good collection of vases – and in this case the term 'vase' embraces everything."³⁰ Blaxland singles out "a delicious Victorian cornucopia ... admittedly, vases like these are hard to find these days – but they are worth hunting for, and worth pouncing upon for your collection."³¹

Blaxland's firm belief in the value of the occasional additions of other elements is startlingly similar to Feint's theatrical arrangements – *Capo di Monte* figures, mirrors, single blooms and shells, "even such a (large and lovely) arrangement can sometimes take on an added value if the setting is enlarged by a further small decoration."³² Recalling Feint's Staffordshire hound Susan,³³ in one illustration, Blaxland produces a dog in the form of a white Nymphenburg dachshund puppy, anxious beside a Rockingham bowl of daisies.

Another such setting employs a copper vase, a glass urn and a porcelain cornucopia, "Three very small pieces of nonsense which can be used either singly or with larger arrangements" (**plate 12**).³⁴ Blaxland had a preference for the sentimental vase and figurine and the two shared a taste for Feint's favourite props, cornucopia, classical urns and shells.

Craig Judd puts forward the theory that these theatrical props, such as the recurring vases and Staffordshire dogs "suggest a personal but ultimately hidden narrative."³⁵ Like Blaxland's, they were part of a collection assembled with care over decades, acquisitions in tune with,



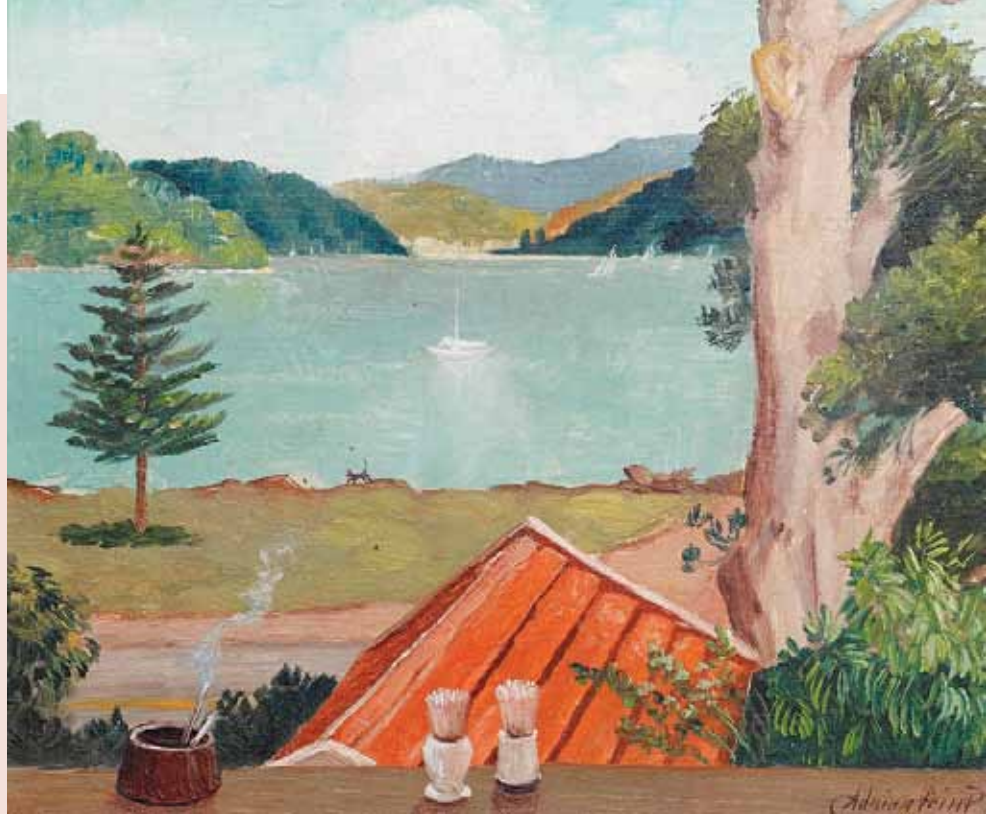
16.

Loudon Sainthill's crowded yet orderly studio appealed to Blaxland. The reader must look hard among the "nature mort of inanimate objects" on the artist's desk, to find an "urn of fresh yellow and white roses housed in a bird cage." Gourds, seashells and cast iron hands abounded and a Mexican *vanitas* of "two human skulls, one head brimmed full of roses" might have tested even Blaxland's belief that "the term 'vase' embraces everything."

Photograph by Max Dupain

17.

Adrian Feint (1896–1971), *Study, From the Terrace, Palm Beach*, 1951. Courtesy of Shapiro Auctioneers, Sydney. Feint's catalogue records the study, presented to Les Godden in March of that year (another likely birthday present), above the full sized *From the Terrace Palm Beach*, sold by Macquarie Galleries in Brisbane. Palm Beach was important to Feint's painting, the Pittwater landscape often providing his preferred high vantage point, in this case the viewer is also pulled back to the intimacy of the cigarette burning in the foreground ashtray. Palm Beach lent his pictures a holiday mood, was where he fished with Les Godden and where he mingled with the artistic branch of the Pill Hill establishment



according to David Dundas, “his manner of life (which) was austere but civilised since early economies had enabled him to acquire beautiful examples of furniture, paintings and other objects.”³⁶ The collected artefacts were sometimes players in a stage set style, which nodded to Surrealism, a movement Feint had been exposed to through Ure Smith publications of the 1930s (plate 13), adding to Judd’s “ambivalent atmosphere” which “could also derive from the kinds of closures and encoding of the homosexual milieu he inhabited.”³⁷

Perhaps the most powerful prop in Dupain’s shadowy back-lit angles was Blaxland’s house itself, the 1863 villa with alterations by Professor Leslie Wilkinson at 71 Wallaroy Road, Woollahra, where the family had lived since 1940. The house as a stage set and Blaxland’s own collection of furniture, paintings and decorative arts are essential to the flavour and success of the book (plate 10).

If *Flower Pieces* hints at the stylistic closeness of Blaxland and Feint, their personal links are patent in the popular sequel *Collected Flower Pieces* (1949).³⁸ Billed as a “collection of photos and advice from Mrs Blaxland’s friends and circle of people whose flowers she has admired in their houses,” *Collected Flower Pieces* was

in fact a telling mix of social and artistic figures in Sydney and Melbourne. There was Mrs Frank Packer, Mrs Dundas Allen (of the law firm Allen, Allen and Hemsley),³⁹ Mrs J V Hall Best (her old friend from Thea Proctor’s art classes, Marion Hall Best)⁴⁰ and one Mrs Gregory Blaxland – in the language of the time, when married women were called by their husband’s names, this was of course Helen Blaxland herself. Some of the Sydney women were related by marriage, including the Allens and Rutledges.

At least three of the women featured were from country medical families with holiday houses in the area known as Pill Hill at Palm Beach,⁴¹ north of Sydney – the Bullmores (Mrs Frank Packer), the Craigs, and the Burkitts (Mrs J V Hall Best). Athol Shmith took the photos of various Melbourne hostesses including Mrs John Grimwade, Mrs Jean Little (though her flowers were arranged by a florist), Miss Patricia Lyon and Lady Murdoch.

The most significant of the subjects in *Collected Flower Pieces* were those whose friendship overlapped with Blaxland’s artistic interests: the ikebana expert Mrs E G (Janet) Waterhouse, Thea Proctor (plate 14), Loudon Sainthill (plate 16) and Adrian Feint. In a prescient

selection, Marion Hall Best, Loudon Sainthill and Adrian Feint, though already started on their careers, went on to achieve enormous fame in their fields in the 1950s and 60s. In general, this group distinguished themselves from the rest of the contributors by virtue of the sparse restraint of their arrangements. In fact in Sainthill’s pages, Dupain’s images take in the entirety of the artists’ studio rooms and the reader has to search for the flowers. Ironically, many of the other contributors’ arrangements bear a closer resemblance to Feint’s flower paintings than do his own contributions,⁴² which are minimal arrangements of leaves and grasses. Ferns, canna leaves, Virginia creeper are arranged in vases instantly recognisable from his paintings.

And now we are back to where Blaxland and Feint’s interests intersect; a fluted glass cornucopia holds the native grasses collected from the roadside and a blue and white china vase holds canna and nandina (plate 15). Feint’s third arrangement, water lilies from the florist, is in an old fish vase, “the addition of shells, coral and a piece of ribbon to bind and complete the design.”⁴³ Feint’s words hold the key to the significance of his contribution to *Collected Flower Pieces*: his text is revealing as to the purpose of



18.

Adrian Feint (1896–1971), *The blue Dinghy*, 1949. Private collection. The full sized work of *The Blue Dingy*, (sic) Pittwater, 1949, was exhibited by the Society of Artists and later sold at a Macquarie Galleries show in Brisbane

19.

Adrian Feint (1896–1971), *The Fisherman*, 1949 (Les Fishing Winter Sunlight Pittwater). Private collection

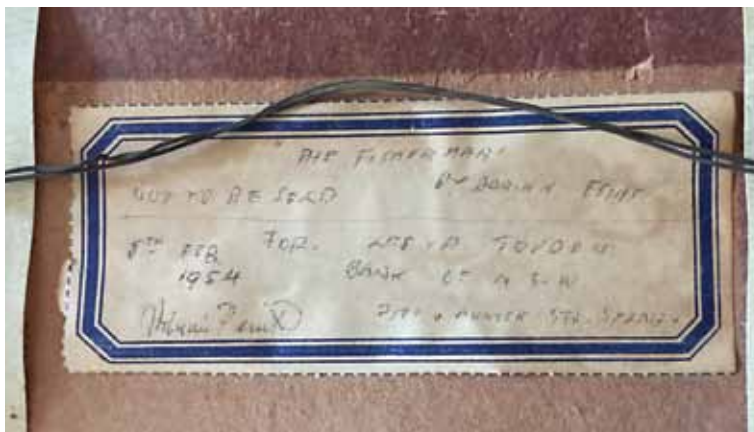
Blaxland’s “small pieces of nonsense.” It was not always about metaphor and significance but balance and design:

To me the most important thing in the arrangement of flowers or foliage is the vase. According to its shape, size, colour, one can then determine what flowers to use and the type of design that will look best.⁴⁴

The Palm Beach connections illustrated in *Collected Flower Pieces* place Adrian Feint at the centre of a vital socially and artistically interconnected set on the peninsula in the 1940s and 50s.⁴⁵ The backgrounds to

the flower paintings may have been imaginary and executed to various levels of fantasy, but they are, without doubt, views of Sydney Harbour, Pittwater and Palm Beach, which Feint inhabited and enjoyed, city life by the harbour and beachside fishing on the peninsula (**plate 17**).

Feint painted some of his finest views of Pittwater at this time, but the theme of greatest significance to the Lesley Godden collection is the fisherman figure. Two paintings owned by Godden which remain in family ownership are the small oils, *The blue Dingy* [sic]⁴⁶ (**plate 18**) and *The Fisherman*, both painted in 1949



20.

Feint’s hand-written label on the reverse of *The Fisherman*, 1949. (Les Fishing Winter Sunlight Pittwater) indicates the painting may have been his birthday present to Les in 1954. The reason for the change in title is unclear; this is probably the same painting Feint recorded in his catalogue as given to Les on 8.2.51 (his birthday). Since most of the paintings were gifted years after they were completed and the catalogue was annotated afterwards, it is likely Feint made a simple error in writing the date of the gift. Private collection

and gifts to Les in later years. Since *The Fisherman* does not appear as such in Feint's Mitchell Library catalogue, it is likely that this is the painting of the same size and year, listed as *Les Fishing Winter Sunlight Pittwater*⁴⁷ (plates 19–20). This is one of two paintings from this era bearing Les's name in the title. Les Godden's family understanding, long held, is that the fisherman figure in Feint's Palm Beach paintings of the 1940s and 50s was based on Les himself. The two spent their leisure time at the beach, fishing, and Les fit the physical type depicted, tall and lean.

Feint's own catalogue lists a second fisherman painting, naming the model *Les with Oars* (1949), which Feint kept for his own collection until 1967, when he gave it to his partner, Chris Smith, who sold it at auction the following year.⁴⁸ *Les with Oars* reappeared at auction at Shapiro in 2013, as *Boat man at Lion Island, 1939*.⁴⁹ The date on the canvas is scratched through the third digit and is closer to 1949 than 1939. The measurements of the two works are identical and both the figure, which strongly resembles Les, with his pencil moustache and the pose holding the oars, suggests this is, in fact, *Les with Oars* (plate 21).

Belonging to the same genre is *Summer Night* (1950), sold at the Shapiro sale, from a different vendor (plate 22). Here the fisherman is loading a boat with fish and shells with another youth for company, though this figure is dark, shadowy and obscured. Still within the years of his closest friendship with Les Godden is *Sketch for 'Sea Harvest'*, 1952,⁵⁰ where the same hatted nude gathers his fishing nets in a fantasy beach backdrop to a bountiful shell and flower theatrical set. In *Floral Cornucopia*, 1957,⁵¹ the solitary figure, this time in shorts and hat, trudges towards the beach to fish, rod over his shoulder.

If Les Godden was the model, he was providing a physical expression of a theme that had occupied Feint since the 1920s. The solitary youth is, whether bather or fisherman, a motif that recurs in his work over decades. In Feint's paintings the solitary figure assumes the same role as the youth in Thomas Mann's *Death*



in Venice (1912) and there is a common understanding for the viewer of what that represents – beautiful, golden, distant, glowing youth – impossible to reach.

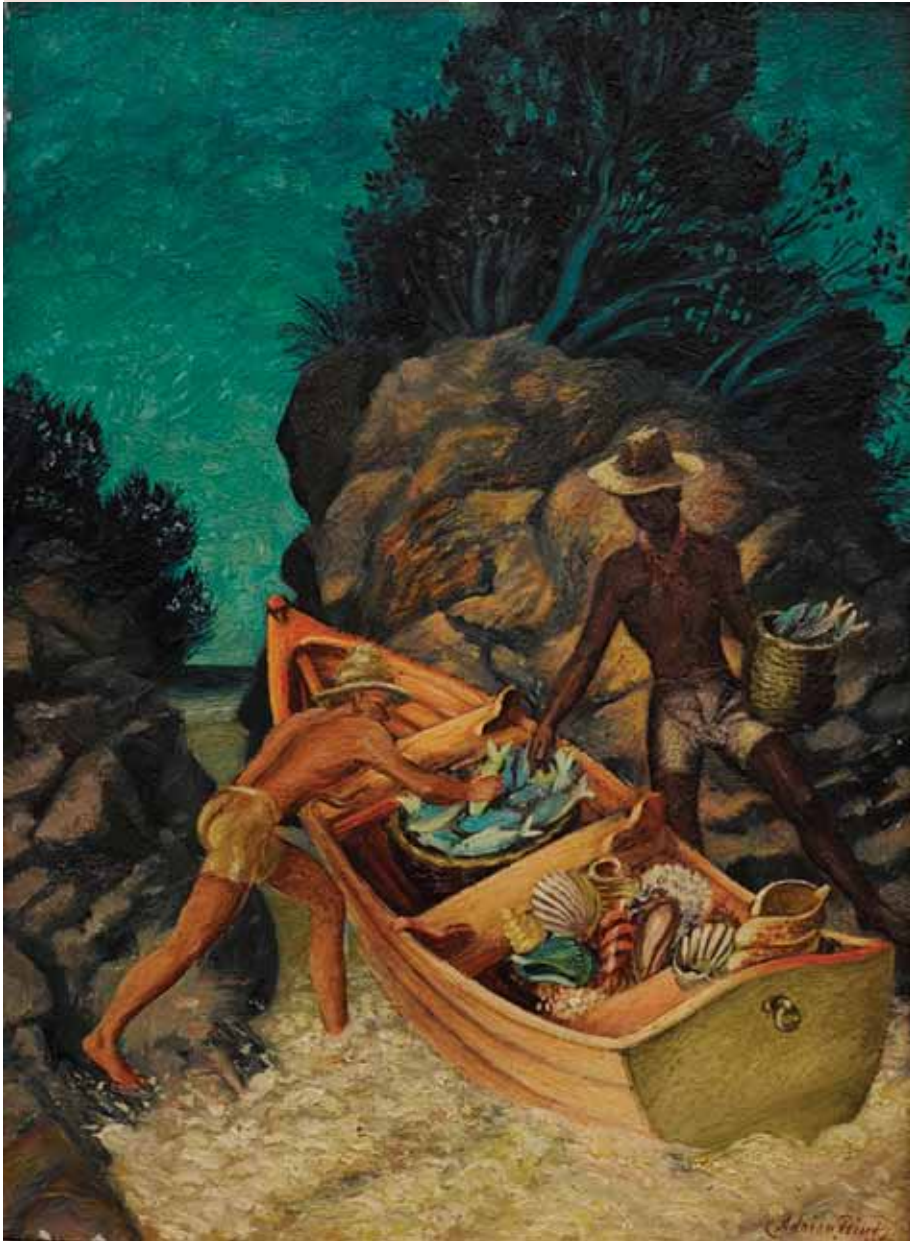
This type of youthful male figure appears as early as 1922 in *The Bathers*, 1922, an etching in the collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide. Like *The Bathers*, *Fisherman's Shrine*,⁵² an illustration drawn for the text of *Adrian Feint Flower Paintings*, 1948, the youth is naked, sensual, an athletic, muscular fisherman hauling his net at the beach, providing the background for a monumental urn and flower arrangement under a billowing canopy, with customary shell and fallen blossoms at its base. Despite the scale of the main theme of flowers, the eye is drawn to the naked fisherman and then out to sea to the men in a sailing boat.

Common to all the fisherman depictions is the idealising and sexualising of physical labour, in contrast to the model's prosaic

21.

Adrian Feint (1896–1971), *Les with Oars*. 1949. Courtesy of Shapiro Auctioneers, Sydney. Although figures of idealised youth undertaking physical labour had interested Feint for decades, only two paintings name the figure, taking them from the symbolic to the personal

daytime job. Yet clearly Les Godden was more than a symbolic figure in a landscape: the titles and records of gifts show a strong personal link to the fisherman paintings and Feint himself. While the fisherman/solitary youth figure is often alone and in the background, those paintings with a direct link to Les Godden as the model place him in the main narrative of the painting. Feint's depictions of the fisherman were not generic or solely symbolic, but personally meaningful and based on his



22.

Adrian Feint (1896–1971), *Summer Night*, 1950. Courtesy of Shapiro Auctioneers, Sydney. Although not from the Les Godden collection, this painting belongs to the Les/Fisherman genre. *Summer Night* was first sold in 1950 to Harold McGregor, of Adelaide, brother of Feint's great patron, Sir James McGregor, at the gallery in John Martin's department store

friend, Les Godden, the Bank of NSW manager, who escaped with Feint for weekends and holidays and whose day to day life could not have been further from that of the Pittwater fisherman.

This small collection, with its remarkable provenance, is representative of the range of styles that made Adrian Feint so successful from the 1930s to the 1960s. Robert Hughes was partly responsible for Feint's swing out of fashion, being among those painters he dismissively dubbed the "Charm School" in 1970. Hughes preferred a grittier social realism; ironically the so-called Charm School painters included some of the artists most closely associated with masculine experiences

of war. Feint had served as a stretcher-bearer in the First World War; Loudon Sainthill and Justin O'Brien had both been prisoners of war. The label trivialises their work and overlooks the more meaningful and unsettling aspects to be found in the paintings of Feint.⁵³

Although, with Thea Proctor and Hera Roberts, Feint contributed to the acceptance of modernism in Australia in the 1920s, his work has long been neglected and it was not until 2009 that the first and only retrospective was held, *Adrian Feint Cornucopia* at Carrick Hill in Adelaide. Many similar paintings are represented in national, state and regional collections.⁵⁴ Collectors recognised this and the Shapiro sale attracted great interest.

Fashions come and go, as Douglas Dundas well understood when he wrote

The enjoyment his paintings continue to give is commensurate with the imaginative thought and craftsmanship which went into their making ... his works will endure when many of the more facile productions of later times are forgotten.⁵⁵

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOTES

- 1 Shapiro Auctioneers Australian and International Art Sales 25 August 2014. Sold prices and estimates can be viewed under Auctions/Catalogues and Results at Shapiro.com.au. These paintings were catalogued under other names; the titles and dates I have used in this article are correct based on the Adrian Feint catalogue at the Mitchell Library.
- 2 Roger Butler, "Feint, Adrian George (1894–1971)", *ADB*, 1996, accessed online 10 March 2015.
- 3 R W Rathbone, "Flood, Edward (1805–1888)", *ADB*, 1972, accessed online 10 March 2015.
- 4 Adrian Feint and Hazel De Berg, Adrian Feint interviewed by Hazel de Berg for the Hazel de Berg collection [sound recording], 1963, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.oh-vn204327> transcript accessed 20 August 2014.
- 5 The significance of the Burdekin House exhibition is discussed in several essays, especially those by Martin Terry, Gitte Weise and Peter McNeil, in *Sydney Moderns: Art for a New World*, Deborah Edwards, Denise Mimmocchi (eds), catalogue for the exhibition of the same name, Art Gallery of NSW, 6 July–7 October, 2013. The most detailed analysis of Feint's room with Gellert, "A Man's Study," is by Megan Martin, "A man of unerring taste and colour sense": Adrian Feint and interior decoration," *Adrian Feint Cornucopia*, Carrick Hill 2009, pp 25–28.
- 6 Adrian Feint catalogue of paintings, 1928–1971, State Library of NSW ML MSS2407.
- 7 Nancy D H Underhill, "Smith, Sydney George Ure (1887–1949)", *ADB*, 1988, accessed online 10 March 2015.
- 8 Helen Blaxland, *Flower Pieces*, decorated by Elaine Haxton, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1946.
- 9 EG Waterhouse, *Camellia Quest*, illustrations by Adrian Feint and Paul Jones, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1947
- 10 Sydney Ure Smith (ed), *Adrian Feint Flower Paintings*, introduction by H Tatlock Miller, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1948.
- 11 Alec Murray's *Album: Personalities of Australia*, photographs by Alec Murray, introduction by H Tatlock Miller, "Playground for Sophisticates" by David McNicoll, commentary by Gwen Morton Spencer, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1949
- 12 Information on Lesley Godden from interview with David Harris, July 2014
- 13 Craig Judd, "The Art of Adrian Feint," *Art and Australia*, Spring 1994, vol 32, no 1, p 81.
- 14 *Adrian Feint Flower Paintings*, Sydney Ure Smith (ed), Ure Smith Pty Ltd Sydney, 1948, p 7.
- 15 *Ibid.* p 7.
- 16 *Ibid.* p 10.
- 17 Adrian Feint & Hazel De Berg, Adrian Feint interviewed by Hazel de Berg for the Hazel de Berg collection [sound recording], 1963, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.oh-vn204327> transcript accessed 20 August 2014
- 18 Sydney Ure Smith (ed), *Adrian Feint Flower Paintings*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1948, p 30.
- 19 Helen Blaxland, *Collected Flower Pieces*, Ure Smith, 1949 p 22.
- 20 Information from Christopher Snelling and John Gale, March 2015. Ray Gale's niece married architect Douglas Snelling in the 1960s. A flower painting of hibiscus from Ray Gale's garden arranged in an urn remains in the family.
- 21 Kenneth Wilkinson, "Feint: his flower pieces are unique" *Art Monthly* March, 1949, p 32.
- 22 Adrian Feint & Hazel De Berg, *op. cit.*
- 23 *Ibid.*
- 24 *Ibid.*
- 25 Caroline Simpson, "Blaxland, Dame Helen Frances (1907–1989)", *ADB*, 2007, accessed online 10 March 2015.
- 26 Marion Best's unpublished autobiography details meeting Helen Blaxland while studying with Proctor, Sydney Living Museums Caroline Simpson Library, Marion Hall Best Collection MHB/A/2 and MHB/B/3 though they had both also attended Frensham School at Mittagong.
- 27 Adrian Feint catalogue of paintings, 1928–1971, State Library of NSW MLMSS2407
- 28 Helen Blaxland, *Collected Flower Pieces*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1949
- 29 Helen Blaxland, *Flower Pieces*, Ure Smith, 1946 p 8
- 30 *Ibid.* p 23
- 31 *Ibid.* p 59
- 32 *Ibid.* p 17
- 33 The Staffordshire whippet appears as *Susan by Moonlight* (1944), for which Les Godden's *Study for Susan in Moonlight* (1944) is the sketch, in *Adrian Feint Flower Paintings*, 1948, plate 2 and again in *Still life Staffordshire* (1938/39), collection of the National Gallery of Australia. The whippet is mischievously reincarnated in a pencil sketch, *Untitled (Tasmanian tiger)* 1971, Collection of the New England Regional Art Museum, Armidale.
- 34 Helen Blaxland, *Flower Pieces*, Ure Smith, 1946 p 21.
- 35 Craig Judd, "The Paintings of Adrian Feint", *Adrian Feint Cornucopia*, Carrick Hill 2009, p 23.
- 36 Douglas Dundas, "Adrian Feint by Douglas Dundas," editorial obituary, *Art and Australia*, September 1971 p 114.
- 37 Craig Judd, "The Art of Adrian Feint", *Art and Australia*, Spring 1994, vol 32, no 1, p 83.
- 38 Helen Blaxland, *Collected Flower Pieces*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1949.
- 39 Christine France, *Merioola and After*, exhibition catalogue, S H Ervin Gallery, Sydney, 12 July–17 August 1986. Mrs Allen's husband's uncle lived at *Merioola* until 1941 when the family leased it to Chica Lowe, and the supporting cast from the Ure Smith books moved in – Jocelyn Rickards, Mitty Lee Brown, Loudon Sainthill, Harry Tatlock Miller and Alec Murray.
- 40 Catriona Quinn, *Sydney Style: Marion Hall Best*, exhibition catalogue, Historic Houses Trust of NSW, 1993. Best's Queen Street interior design business, established in 1939 was just restocking after the war and her place as the most influential and adventurous interior designer of the 20th century was yet to be achieved. Best was, nevertheless a recognisable figure in Sydney society and the arts and was a stalwart supporter of the Red Cross, where Blaxland worked from 1939 to 1951.
- 41 "Pill Hill – Palm Beach", Pittwater Online News, www.pittwateronlinenews.com/pillhill accessed 4 March 2015. The relationships between the artistically inclined country doctors' families on Pill Hill are also described in Marion Best's unpublished autobiography, Sydney Living Museums Caroline Simpson Library, Marion Hall Best Collection MHB/A/2 and MHB/B/3.
- 42 Helen Blaxland, *Collected Flower Pieces*, Ure Smith, Sydney 1949 p 23.
- 43 *Ibid.* p 22.
- 44 *Ibid.* p 22.
- 45 A survey of the buyers listed in the logbooks show that Palm Beach Surf Club was probably the single most consistent purchaser over many decades. Adrian Feint catalogue of paintings, 1928–1971, State Library of NSW ML MSS2407.
- 46 Adrian Feint catalogue of paintings, 1928–1971, State Library of NSW ML MSS2407. The entry for 1949 states "6 x 6/ oil on Swedish board/ The blue Dingy (sic)/ presented to Les Godden 1950".
- 47 Adrian Feint catalogue of paintings, 1928–1971, State Library of NSW ML MSS2407. The entry for 1949 states "8x6/ oil on Masonite/ Les Fishing Winter Sunlight Pittwater/presented to Les Godden 8.11.51" while the reverse of *The Fisherman* has a later label indicating it was given to Les in February 1954. Les's birthday was 8 February.
- 48 Adrian Feint catalogue of paintings, 1928–1971, State Library of NSW ML MSS2407. The list for 1949 details the provenance. Feint presented it to his partner C (Chris) J Smith 1967, who sold it in 1968 at a Bell's auction.
- 49 SH094 Modern and Contemporary Art, 24 November 2013. *Boatman at Lion Island* is not listed in the State Library catalogue.
- 50 Private collection, illustrated *Adrian Feint Cornucopia*, 2009, p 89.
- 51 Private collection, illustrated *Adrian Feint Cornucopia*, 2009, p 63.
- 52 Sydney Ure Smith (ed), *Adrian Feint Flower Paintings*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1948, p 25. The State Library catalogue also records the gift of a small oil, *The Shrine of the Fisherman* (1948), which was the sketch for the illustration in *Flower Paintings*. For reasons unknown, the line is then struck out and it seems the sketch may not have been part of the Les Godden collection.
- 53 Shapiro Auctioneers Australian and International Art Sales 25 August 2014. Sold prices and estimates can be viewed under Auctions/Catalogues and Results at Shapiro.com.au.
- 54 *Adrian Feint Cornucopia* exhibition held at Carrick Hill 1 Aug to 1 Nov 2009 and at Geelong Art Gallery from 5 Dec 2009 to 14 Feb 2010.
- 55 Douglas Dundas, "Adrian Feint by Douglas Dundas", *Art and Australia*, September, 1971, p 114.

A rare Feint format: 'Shells'

designed & painted by Adrian Feint 1947 for 'Jo' Fakhry

MEGAN MARTIN

This soft-paste porcelain mug, 8.7 cm high and 9 cm diameter, is painted in overglaze enamels on a Wedgwood "Barlaston" blank dated 1947. Feint's choice of this Wedgwood form, together with the incorporation of the date 1947 and the letters J F as key elements in the design, suggests an awareness of the notable commemorative and other mugs that English artist Eric Ravillious (1903–42) designed for Wedgwood in the late 1930s.¹

The elements of the design, on the other hand, are pure Adrian Feint. Sea shells figure in many of Feint's paintings from the 1940s and 1950s. The figure of a crab painted inside the mug fits the seaside theme but may also be an allusion to the Cancer star sign of "J F", Josephine Mary Fakhry (c 1917–1985), to whom the mug was presented in 1947.

Jo Fakhry was born on the Monaro where her father John, of Syrian background, was a prominent merchant

with stores at Nimmitabel, Delegate, Cooma and Bombala. She trained at Sydney's RNSH School of Nursing and was a member of the graduating class of 1940; in 1947 she was a nurse at Royal North Shore Hospital.

Jo seems to have been a long-term friend of the artist and her name appears more than once in the catalogue Feint kept of his paintings and their purchasers. She bought pictures in 1958, 1966 and 1967 and she and her sister Maureen received a small painting titled *Pale roses in a pottery jug* as a Christmas gift in 1968.

Megan Martin is Head, Collections & Access, at Sydney Living Museums and a former president of the Australiana Society.

NOTES

- ¹ Richard Dennis, *Ravillious and Wedgwood: the complete designs of Eric Ravillious*. Richard Dennis, Shepton Beauchamp, Somerset, 1995; Alan Powers, *Eric Ravillious artist and designer*, Lund Humphries, London 2014.



1-4.

Wedgwood (maker), Adrian Feint (decorator), mug, inscribed on base "Shells' Designed & Painted By Adrian Feint 1947 For 'Jo' Fakhry", printed backstamp "GvR / WEDGWOOD / BARLASTON / 1947 / Made in England". Private collection, photographs by Jamie North, 2015



Finding Firnhaber treasures

Colonial Australian jewellery is rarely marked with the name of its maker or retailer. Perth jewellery dealer Trevor Hancock sticks his neck out and attributes several pieces to the German-born Adelaide jeweller C. E. Firnhaber, based on stylistic similarities of the works. All of them are illustrated here.

TREVOR HANCOCK

This article tells a story which many Australiana Society members can relate to. It is a story of luck, good timing and the great satisfaction of discovering, identifying and saving our national treasures.

Some months ago I acquired an impressive gold memorial brooch with a daguerreotype on one side and an etched glass panel on the reverse (**plates 1–2**). I was unfamiliar with its massive, ‘massed vine’ decoration but bowled over by its weight and proportions. It definitely had the ‘feel’ of Australian colonial jewellery. I searched everywhere on the brooch for a mark, then also searched all the publications and my photographic records for a hint of its origin.

When I opened Robert Reason’s sumptuous 2012 publication *Bounty, Nineteenth-century South Australian Gold and Silver*,¹ I found the very same riotous ‘massed vine’ decoration on the title page. It was on the 1867 silver-gilt monstrance owned by St Augustine’s Catholic Parish, Salisbury, South Australia. Also shown in the publication is the 1865 “Lodge of Truth Masonic Cup” owned by Freemasons South Australia & Northern Territory. Both of these majestic silver masterpieces were created by Charles Edward Firnhaber (1805–1880), a German-trained silversmith who had arrived in South Australia in 1847, and



1-2.

Attributed to Charles Edward Firnhaber (1805–1880), *locket brooch* with daguerreotype, Adelaide, c 1870. Gold, glass, hand coloured daguerreotype, h 7.0, w 6.5 cm, wt 58.3 g. Collection: Trinity Antiques, Perth



3.

Attributed to Charles Edward Firnhaber (1805–1880), *brooch locket, with border of roses, shamrocks and thistles*, Adelaide 1859. Gold, malachite, glass, h 7.9 w 7.0 cm. Collection: Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, gift of Mrs Krogman 1944

4.

Attributed to Charles Edward Firnhaber (1805–1880), *locket with lyrebird*, Adelaide c 1872. Gold, diamonds, h 6.0 w 3.3 cm. Collection: Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, gift of Tom Pearce with the assistance of the Pauline Colley Bequest through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2014

Eureka! This was an exciting discovery, as now I knew of three pieces of jewellery attributed to Firnhaber. The first was the malachite gold brooch locket dated c 1859 in the Art Gallery of South Australia, illustrated in *Bounty*² (plate 3). This had formerly been attributed to Schomburgk, but while researching his exhibition and book, Robert Reason attributed it to Firnhaber after he located this reference, which clearly describes this brooch or another identical to it:

COLONIAL ART. – Mr. Firnhaber has shewn us a massive and beautiful brooch just manufactured by him, in South Australian gold and malachite. The setting of the malachite consists of a wreath of elaborately chased roses, shamrocks, and thistles. An ounce and a half of gold has been worked up in this elegant ornament, which is worth about £13.³

The second was the gold locket brooch which I acquired last year, and the third a locket with a lyrebird, inlaid with diamonds, within a “floating” oval of ivy leaves, dated c 1872 and given to the Art Gallery of South Australia in 2014 (plate 4).⁴ The lyrebird locket came in an original Henry Steiner box so he must have retailed it, but its lack of a maker’s mark led Robert Reason to conclude that it was an outworker piece, which he attributes to Firnhaber on stylistic grounds, although the leaves are less carefully modelled than in the earlier example.

Out of the blue, in February I received an email from Ben McHenry, Senior Collections Manager, Earth Sciences, at the South Australian Museum. He is mounting an important exhibition “Opal” to celebrate “The Centenary of the Discovery of our National Gemstone” in South Australia later this year and is



seeking the loan of jewellery incorporating South Australian opal.

Per chance, I was going to Adelaide the following week, so arranged to meet Ben. After some very enjoyable time looking at breathtaking but underestimated South Australian opal specimens, Ben remembered he had a piece of jewellery locked away securely in the safe. After much dial-turning, keys turning and the clunk of bars retreating, he handed me a box. As I was opening the box, he said “It’s by Firnhaber.”

Sure enough, there before my eyes was a sister brooch to mine, only this one held an impressive piece of malachite, rather than a daguerreotype (plates 5–6). All four items are truly outstanding. This was remarkable, to go from one jewellery masterpiece attributed to Firnhaber to four in a space of six months.

Malachite, a banded green stone made up of copper carbonate, is especially associated with South Australia through the copper mines at Kapunda, where mining began in 1844, and Burra, where copper ore was discovered in 1845. As Ben will attest, I was quite emotional with this discovery. This significant piece of South Australian colonial jewellery had been gifted to the museum, prized because of the piece of malachite and kept under lock and

key with other valuable “rock specimens”.

Ben McHenry and Robert Reason have since been talking and we now may have a chance to enjoy the Firnhaber brooch, which has been guarded by dinosaurs, elephant-eating sharks, blue-bottle jelly fish and prehistoric mammoths in the South Australian Museum.

Looking closely at and handling jewellery by Steiner, Wendt, Schomburgk, Hogarth & Erichsen, Charles Jones and Firnhaber, one is hugely impressed by their breathtaking work, made all the more impressive by the use of high carat gold. Their crafting of uniquely Australian pieces from local gold seemed uninhibited by cost, the only restraint being the ability of ladies (and the fabrics they wore) to bear the weight of these statement pieces.

Hopefully, one day, one of the major public galleries will exhibit a wide collection of Australian colonial silversmiths’ works together with their rarer gold jewellery masterpieces. They could even organise a seminar on the subject, where curators, dealers and collectors could meet, examine pieces and share their knowledge.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks to Robert Reason and Laura

5–6.

Attributed to Charles Edward Firnhaber (1805–1880), *brooch*, Adelaide, c 1870. Malachite, gold, h 5.9 cm, w 5.0 cm wt 39.0 g. Collection: South Australian Museum, Adelaide

Masters of the Art Gallery of South Australia, and Ben McHenry of the South Australian Museum, for kindly providing photographs of their pieces, so I could illustrate the whole set.

Trevor Hancock operates Trinity Antiques in Perth, Western Australia and has a particular interest in Australian jewellery. He can be contacted at tcfhancock@hotmail.com.

NOTES

- 1 Robert Reason, *Bounty, Nineteenth-century South Australian Gold and Silver*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide 2012.
- 2 *Ibid.* pp 17-18, 116.
- 3 *South Australian Advertiser* 28 Feb 1859 p 2.
- 4 Robert Reason, “C.E. Firnhaber”, *Articulate* no 18, Autumn 2015, p 32f.

Wartime quilts

World War I began 101 years ago. Galleries all around the world, including many in Australia, are having exhibitions with memories of this war. The Gallipoli campaign is particularly significant to Australians and New Zealanders this year, with the centenary on the first landing on 25 April 1915, and the withdrawal of the last Allied troops in January 1916. Dr Annette Gero is curating an exhibition of war quilts, and here she reveals some of the quilts that will be displayed at Manly Art Gallery and Museum from July.

1-3 .

Quilt with soldiers, Prussia, c 1760–1780. Initials JSJ, maker unknown. Wool, all hand sewn. The row of soldiers in the red, blue and white uniforms are musketeers of a Prussian regiment of infantry. Uniforms of this kind were worn in the late 1780s

ANNETTE GERO

Most of the Australian men recruited into the Australian Imperial Force soon after the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914 were shipped to Egypt to meet the threat that the Ottoman Empire posed to British interests in the Middle East and to the Suez Canal. After four and a half months of training near Cairo, the Australians

were diverted to the Mediterranean campaign and departed by ship for the Gallipoli (Gelibolu) peninsula on the Dardanelles Strait, together with troops from New Zealand, Britain, and France. The aim of this deployment was to assist a British naval operation which aimed to force the Dardanelles Strait and capture the Turkish capital, Istanbul.

The unsuccessful Gallipoli campaign, however, cost 28,150 Australian casualties, including 8,709 deaths. Back in Australia it became a situation where, after the war, there were fewer men than women.

The anniversary of World War I seemed an opportune occasion to show quilts from all wars. Waves of immigration of peoples from all over the world have settled in Australia and often they brought quilts from their own society. So we aim to show these war quilts as well as quilts made by Australians, which even include some made by mums from blackout fabric during the Japanese submarine attack on Sydney in 1942.

Ordinary soldiers on active duty endured long stretches of boredom coupled with intense moments of terror, overlaid with extremes of cold and heat, seemingly endless toil and long separation from family and loved ones. As a form of 'Trench Art', these rare and surprisingly beautiful artefacts were made by soldiers during protracted lulls in the fighting, while recuperating from war wounds or when interned in prisoner-of-war camps. They allowed men enduring unspeakable circumstances some respite from the tedium and hardship of war and to introduce some semblance of beauty and humanity to the blighted world of the combat zone.





Many quilts related to war exist in Australia, the earliest from the Napoleonic wars of the 1790s to 1815, or even before. These quilts came with those Prussian settlers who came here from Germany in the 1850–60s. These people mostly settled in and around Adelaide and started the South Australian wine industry, while some settled in southern Queensland, and a few in southern NSW around Holbrook. Many of their ancestors had fought in the Napoleonic Wars and their grandparents had made quilts from their colourful military uniforms after they were captured by the French and imprisoned. These quilts came with their family belongings when they came here 160 years ago.

Although Dr Noris Ioannou found no military woollen quilts belonging to the German immigrants who went to South Australia,¹ the story of German immigrants going to Queensland is slightly different. When Queensland became a separate colony from New South Wales in 1859, further Germans migrated to Australia, particularly those who had mechanical skills.

By 1861 there were about 2,000 Germans in Queensland, mainly in the cities, working as labourers and tradesmen. The gold rushes of the early 1850s had made Australia a popular destination for many Europeans, and in 1852 regular migrant shipping



4.
Lord de Saumarez' quilt,
early 19th century



5-8.

A soldier's patchwork quilt from the Crimean war, c 1855, made in England from the regimental colours of the 37th Regiment of Foot, containing fabric in a mosaic of red, yellow, black, green and blue felted wools taken from the uniforms

services began from the port city of Hamburg. However, until the early 1860s few German immigrants went to Queensland; Germans knew little about Australia's north.

The first Queensland Government set up a committee to encourage immigration, under the Rev Dr John Dunmore Lang, head of the Presbyterian Church in Australia. This committee appointed Johann Christian Heussler,

a successful German merchant and commission agent in Brisbane, to recruit immigrants from Germany to Queensland; Heussler had offered his firm's services as an immigration agent as early as 1854.² As Queensland Government German Immigration Agent, he was able to offer immigrants attractive deals, including free ship's passage, good wages, and the right to select land to the value of £12 once their compulsory period of service (usually two years) to a local employer was over. The employer paid for their passage.

Heussler did a good job and Germans arrived in Queensland in large numbers over the next decade and more, mainly in family groups.³ The German settlers in Queensland differed from those in South Australia because they were more scattered geographically, and consequently integrated more freely into the general community.

Heussler's advertisement is translated as:

Europeans will find in this colony a fine salubrious climate suited to their constitution; a strong orderly government on the British model and good laws which guarantee the safety of property; regular communal institutions and civil order; full political and civil rights immediately upon naturalisation; good schools for the education of their children; complete religious freedom for their families to worship in accordance with the dictates of conscience.⁴



These family groups brought most of their belongings to Queensland and among them were some of the oldest war quilts known, those made during the minor German wars between provinces like Saxony and Hesse and those made during the Napoleonic wars.

The earliest quilt in the exhibition was made in Prussia c 1760–1780 (**plates 1-3**). The top of the quilt has rows of appliquéd soldiers with a military band at the bottom. The row of soldiers in the red, blue and white uniforms are musketeers of a Prussian infantry regiment, and the soldiers in the row below, in white, are Prussian cuirassiers. Uniforms of this kind were worn in the late 1760–80s. This quilt comes from the period of Frederick II (1712–86), known as Frederick the Great, who reigned over the Kingdom of Prussia from 1740 until 1786. Frederick's achievements during his reign included his final success against great odds in the Seven Years' War.

Another army uniform quilt (**plate 4**) made in the Napoleonic era in the very early 19th century, was the property of Lord de Saumarez (7th Baron Saumarez). His great-great-great-grandfather, James Saumarez, 1st Baron de Saumarez (1757–1836) was an officer in the Royal Navy during the Napoleonic wars, notable for being Horatio Nelson's second in command in defeating the French at the Battle of the Nile in 1798.

Saumarez defeated a superior enemy force at Algeciras in 1801. Importantly,

from 1808 to 1812 Admiral Saumarez was commander of the British fleet in the Baltic, playing a key role in protecting Sweden from the demands of Prussia and Russia. The quilt probably dates from this period. The double-headed eagle in the centre of the quilt was a common emblem of these Baltic areas.

Many soldier's pieced quilts survive from the Crimean war (**plates 5–8**). Crimean war quilts, which were mainly made by English soldiers and later were brought here by English families, were made from the tiniest pieces of wool from their uniforms, with a skill of hand-sewing which would be hard to match today. The patterns, colours and designs are just remarkable and visually spectacular, anticipating the colourful 20th-century designs of Victor Vasarely's artworks.

The colour palette is huge, as uniform fabrics include not only those used in battle but also those of dress uniforms



9.

Uniform of the 37th Regiment of Foot

10.

Indian Army quilt, 19th century



British military personnel in India made similar military quilts between 1850 and 1900. These are quilts made of many thousands of pieces of one-inch squares or diamonds sewn over papers and usually made from uniform material. The 19th-century patchwork quilt in the exhibition was made from a colourful pot-pourri of service uniform materials and is known as the “Indian Army Quilt” because some of its colours are said to be the regimental colours of the Indian Army (plate 10).

The Anglo-Zulu war in Zululand, South Africa in 1879 was over in seven months but not before the Zulus defeated the British at the battle at Isandlwana and in other skirmishes. It was unthinkable that a “native” army armed substantially with stabbing weapons could defeat the troops of a western power armed with modern rifles and artillery, let alone wipe it out.

This extraordinary woollen military quilt, with thousands of tiny patches, was made in the late 19th century from military uniforms and is all hand sewn (plates 11–12). The inner squares of tiny diamonds have embroideries of British crowns and flags and show native huts, spears and shields, a drum and anchors.

As the embroidery all refers to the Zulu war, one can assume it was made on site or later when the soldiers reached home. The Zulu warrior’s equipment was the oval wooden shield and the metal-tipped thrusting spear (*assegai* or *ikiwa*) which appear on the quilt.

During the two World Wars, army blankets played an important part in Australian war quilt history. During and after both World Wars, army blankets were used with the designs appliquéd onto the blanket itself, or used as the insides of waggas (utility quilts), or as their backs. Many utility quilts were made from army blankets.

Because men who served in WW II are now passing away, many war artefacts are coming to light. Many men came home and such was their pain that they hid their memories and war artefacts and these are only now being discovered.

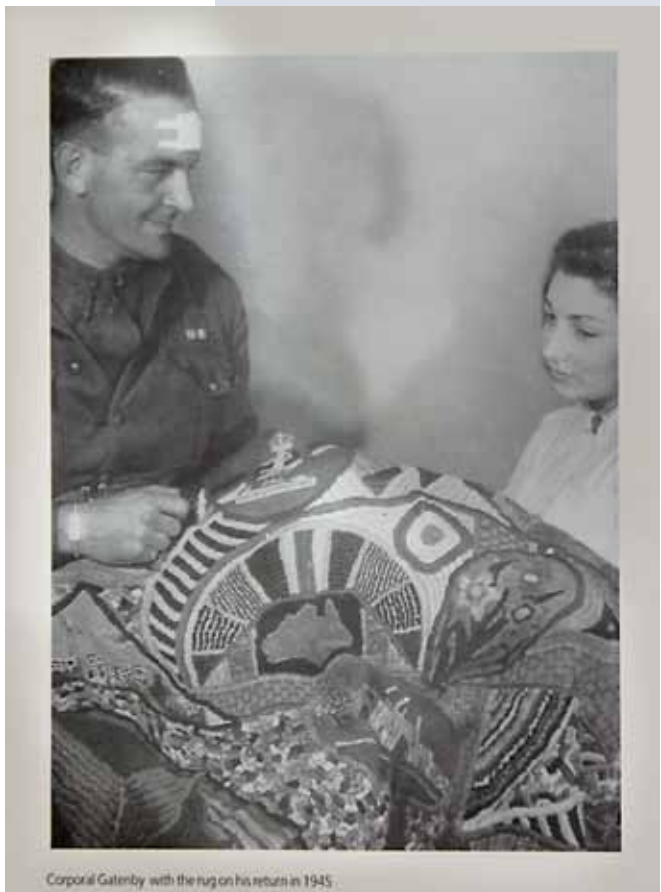


11–12.

Zulu war army quilt, British, late 19th century. Woollen uniform fabric, all hand sewn, pinked cut-out fringed edge, embroidery and motifs, 223 x 88 cm

used for formal occasions and pageantry (plate 9). The cloth, woollen serge or worsted twill, was heavy and difficult work with. Hence it is surprising when one sees the number of intricate borders of appliqué leaves and cut-out hearts made from uniform fabric. As well as the geometric squares, some quilts are highly decorated with motifs such as crowns and crests made from beadwork.

Men made the majority of these quilts, but it is not known just how extensive this tradition was. What kind of quilts did they make and what were they used for? A close examination of Roger Fenton’s Crimean war photos shows no quilts being used as palls for military coffins. One suggestion is that they may have been travelling military game boards (as table covers) or maybe simply something one made during convalescence or to alleviate the boredom of war.



Corporal Gatenby with the rug on his return in 1945.

13–16.

Embroidery on WW II army rug made by Corporal Clifford Alexander Gatenby from Coffs Harbour, c 1942-1945 in POW camp Stalag 383, Germany, with needles fashioned from spectacle frames, ground-down old toothbrushes, wood and broken odds and sods. fabrics, threads from old pullovers, socks, balaclavas, scarves, towelling. 177 x 173 cm

17.

Craft exhibition at a prisoner of war camp in Poland, c 1942–45. Gatenby was in this camp before he was sent to Germany



Some years ago, I found a quilt made during WW II by an Australian soldier while he was a prisoner of war in Germany.⁵ The quilt was made by Corporal Clifford Alexander Gatenby from Coffs Harbour in POW camp Stalag 383 from 1942–45. Sewn and appliquéd into a grey army blanket are numerous patterns, Australian motifs and animals and scenes of where he fought (**plates 13–16**). Gatenby collected pieces of wool and cotton taken from discarded garments and sewed them onto the blanket in the prison camp, using needles fashioned from spectacle frames, ground-down old toothbrushes, wood and broken odds and sods. In the centre he worked the Cross of St John superimposed on the Red Cross and, on various other parts, floral designs and colour patches of numerous Australian regiments. Gatenby escaped from the camp in 1945 and took the army blanket quilt with him. He said it represented too much hard work to leave it behind.

Before he was in Stalag 383, Gatenby was in Stalag XX-A, a German World War II prisoner of war camp located in Thorn/Toru, Poland. It was not a single camp and contained as many as 20,000 men at its peak. The main camp was

located in a complex of 15 forts that surrounded the city. Many Australian POWs were held here including Justin O'Brien, whose paintings, which he did in camp, are now in the Australian War Memorial and the Art Gallery of NSW. O'Brien initiated or was part of "craft classes" in this camp (which apparently was quite common) where they held their craft exhibitions (**plate 17**). Perhaps this inspired Gatenby to make his masterpiece later in Stalag 383.

Australian soldiers recuperating in hospitals often made waggas-like patchwork quilts. The Australian painter Sidney Nolan incorporated one such quilt in a painting in his Ned Kelly series, *The Defence of Aaron Sherritt* painted in 1946, which depicts a patchwork waggas on the bed. Soldiers recuperating at the Heidelberg Hospital in Melbourne made the patchwork waggas and gave it to Nolan.

A WW II army epaulette quilt found in Queensland was made by the regimental tailor of the 2nd/5th Australian Armoured Regiment based in Queensland during WW II (**plates 18–19**). This colour-patch quilt was made in 1945 using an old army blanket onto which was sewn many identical colour patches

of the 2nd/5th Australian Armoured Regiment. These are red, blue and grey. The colour patches were machined onto the army blanket in rows and have a wonderfully dramatic overall effect. The rug was given to A.W. Roberson when he was discharged from the Army in 1945.

And then there are the WW II make-do quilts and waggas made by women for the war effort or just to keep their children warm due to the shortage of wool and blankets. Even the Australian domestic blanket during WW II was 8 inches (20 cm) shorter than normal to save wool which went to the war effort as uniforms and army blankets.

One quilt made in the 1940s in rural Australia is not quilted, as was the tradition here at the time. The fabrics are crepe de chine dress fabrics as Suffolk puffs on the front, but the backing is the black-out fabric that was put over the windows at night during war time. By 1941 in Australia the likelihood that Japan would enter the war had increased. State governments ordered black-out drills during which whole suburbs or even a whole city would be blacked-out. People were required to prevent light from being seen outside houses. Several quilts backed with this fabric will be on display.



Dr Annette Gero, one of Australia's leading quilt historians, has been documenting and collecting quilts since 1982. She has travelled all over Australia giving lectures, curating exhibitions of Australian quilts and documenting quilts in private homes and public collections. In 1986 she was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society for Arts (London) in recognition of her work on Australian quilt history. She is a member of the Advisory Board of the International Quilt Study Center, Nebraska, USA and an Associate Fellow; Founder and Patron of the Sydney Quilt Study Group; Past President of the Quilt Study Group of Australia; lecturer for ADFAS; and her contribution to the history of Australian quilting has been documented in the Archives of the National Library of Australia, Canberra. She has lectured on quilt history in the USA, Canada, New Zealand, France and England, and exhibited quilts throughout Australia and at the Musée de l'Impression sur Étoffes, Mulhouse, France; the Musée des Traditions et Arts, Normandy, France; the International Quilt Show in Houston, USA and the European Quilt Symposium, Alsace, France.

She has written three books, *Historic Australian Quilts*, *The Fabric of Society*, and *Wartime Quilts*, all published by The Beagle Press.

NOTES

- 1 Noris Ioannou, *The Barossa Folk. Germanic Furniture and Craft Traditions in Australia*, Craftsman House, Sydney, 1995, pp 12–23.
- 2 *Moreton Bay Courier* 9 Dec 1854 p 2.
- 3 E.g. *Courier* 17 Oct 1861 p 5; 30 Jun 1863 p 2.
- 4 Jurgen Tampke, *The Germans in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- 5 Annette Gero, *The Fabric of Society. Australia's Quilt Heritage from Convict Times to 1960*, The Beagle Press, Roseville NSW, 2008.

18–19.

WW II rug with colour patches, made by a regimental tailor of the 2nd/5th Australian Armoured Regiment, Queensland, c 1945. Colour patches sewn onto a woollen single bed army blanket by machine, unfinished, 122 cm x 92 cm

***Wartime Quilts* will be exhibited at Manly Art Gallery and Museum, West Esplanade, Manly NSW from 3 July – 22 November 2015. Open 10–5 Tuesday to Sunday, free entry T 02 9976 1418.**

Annette Gero's book *Wartime Quilts* will be published by Lou Klepac of The Beagle Press in a hard cover edition of 240 pages, for sale only at the gallery or through the author. Email annettegero@bigpond.com to reserve your copy and 30% discount if you mention this magazine.

A Chance Beginning: the Lyons collection of Decorative Art

The Art Gallery of South Australia is showcasing for the first time over 50 examples of Australian decorative arts given to the Gallery by Adelaide psychiatrist Dr Robert Lyons, who had assembled one of the finest private collections of South Australian decorative arts.

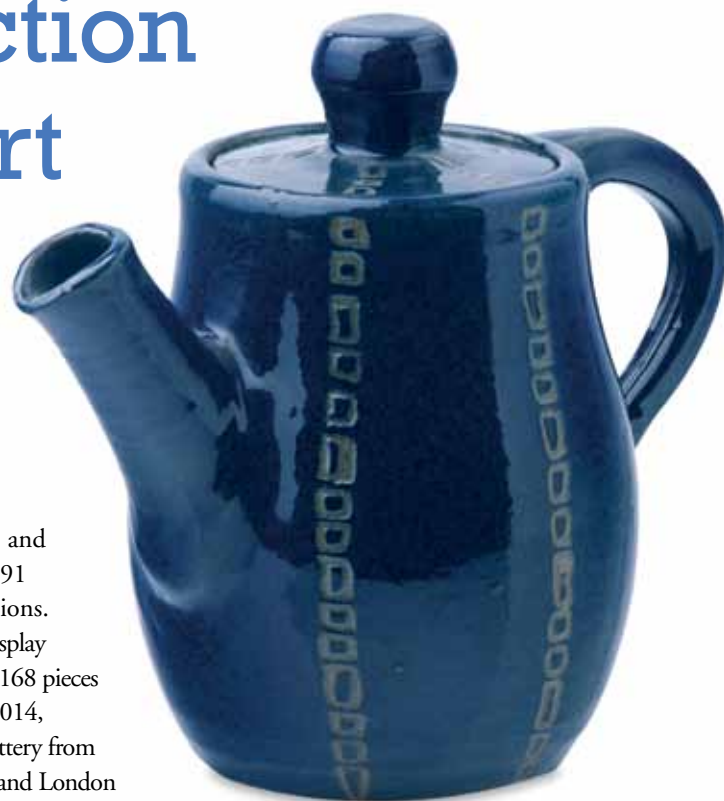
JOHN WADE

Between 1982 and 1984, more than 300 pieces from Dr Lyons' collection of European and Australian decorative arts were selected for the Art Gallery of South Australia. He also made substantial gifts of ceramics to the

Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences in Sydney in 1991 and to two other institutions.

The artworks now on display are highlights of his gift of 168 pieces to the Adelaide gallery in 2014, with major examples of pottery from Bosley, Trewenack Pottery and London Pottery. Studio pottery from Gladys Reynell's Reynella Pottery (**plate 1**) is complemented by the works of women china painters of the early 20th century, such as Maida Wright (**plate 2**).

The exhibition title derives from how chance figured in firing Robert Lyons' interest in art. In 1975 he had just moved to Adelaide and he recalls "the house I rented was filled with European and Australian art". Since then the psychiatrist's collecting has been a self-acknowledged obsession.



He concentrates on Australian and South Australian decorative arts and, with his South Australian Germanic family heritage, Barossa Valley furniture, folk art and pottery became a natural extension to his collecting.

A 19th-century tea caddy of Baltic pine (**plate 3**) is an example from the Barossa German settlements.



1.

Gladys Reynell (Australia, born Reynella SA 1881, died Melbourne Vic 1956), Reynella Pottery, Reynella SA, 1919–1922, *Teapot* 1921, Reynella, South Australia. Earthenware, glazed, 15.0 x 17.0 x 10.0 cm. Collection: Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, gift of Dr Robert Lyons through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2014. Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program

2.

Maida Wright (Australia, active 1910–30), *Vase* 1928, Adelaide. Hand painted on porcelain blank, h 36.8 diam 23.0 cm. Collection: Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, gift of Dr Robert Lyons, donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program

3.

Barossa Valley, South Australia,
Tea caddy c.1860, Barossa Valley,
South Australia. Baltic pine,
iron key, h 24.0 cm w 19.0 cm.
Collection: Art Gallery of
South Australia, Adelaide,
gift of Dr Robert Lyons,
donated through the Australian
Government's Cultural
Gifts Program



Garden gnomes

Among the items Dr Lyons collected and donated to the Art Gallery of South Australia is an impressive 67 cm high garden gnome made by the Bosley Pottery at Mitcham, South Australia c 1938 (plate 4). Dr Lyons donated two smaller gnomes to the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney in 1991.¹

Gnomes are small chthonic, humanoid male creatures, dwarf-sized, bearded, with a pointed hat which is usually painted red, colourful work clothes, and often a smoking pipe. They are more than ornaments, with a hint of being secret night-time workers in the garden.

Garden gnomes may have originated from the ancient fertility god Priapus. In 17th-century Italy, gardens might display small dwarfs known as *gobbi*. By 1841, ceramic gnomes were being manufactured in Dresden; in Germany they are known as *Gartenzwerge*.

The first gnomes crossed to Britain in 1847, when Sir Charles Isham imported a family of 21 German ceramic gnomes for his garden at Lamport Hall (only one survives). Soon derided by serious gardeners who preferred statuary, gnomes took up residence in the gardens of the working class, who adopted them in increasing numbers, and in a variety of humorous poses.²

Gnomes popped up in Australian gardens in the 1930s, and were popular among Adelaide gardeners. Their popularity was possibly fanned by the Disney film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, which was released in 1937.

Gnomes were joined by a range of various other moulded creatures – birds, frogs and lizards in particular – which are given some kind of companionship or guardian role, although usually

4.

T G & A G Bosley, Mitcham, South Australia, manufacturer, 1932–1945,
Gnome c.1938, Mitcham, Adelaide.
Earthenware, h 67.0 cm. Collection:
Art Gallery of South Australia,
Adelaide, gift of Dr Robert Lyons
through the Art Gallery of South
Australia Foundation 2014.
Donated through the Australian
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tongue-in-cheek. Australian gnomes came in many sizes and poses, and were usually glazed and painted in garish colours. As well as ceramics, they were also cast in concrete and painted.³

Thomas Bosley and his son Alfred, out of work due to the depression, starting making pottery in 1932. Thomas set up a pottery in the garden of his house at Mitcham in 1933.⁴ The business succeeded, and by 1937, Noris Ioannou writes⁵

The pottery at Mitcham was now a popular place to visit, particularly by families on weekends, even if it was simply to view the 'Mitcham Band'. This was a group of modelled gnomes which ranged from small (30 cm) to large (100 cm) sizes and were arranged as a musical group playing instruments. This colourful and amusing ensemble was arranged behind the front fence of Bosley's home, alongside the pottery where it attracted attention and often customers. Some of the gnomes had been freely modelled, then glazed and fired, while others had been produced from his originals using moulds. They were usually made to order and had been made in the first three or four years of the pottery's existence.

A report in the Adelaide press in 1941 noted

The vogue for garden ornaments, a comparatively recent innovation, is one which has made remarkable progress, and its popularity is indicated by the extent to which city shops cater for this branch of garden decoration. Whether you require a tiny green frog or a pair of yellow ducklings to perch in your window box, a sturdy gnome with a cactus plant in the basket on his back, or a shiny brown lizard to keep guard by your fishpond, you will find them all ready for the choosing. And an interesting point is that many of them are made in South Australia. There are squirrels for 6/9, owls for 2/6, magpies for 4/9, frogs from 4½d to giant bullfrogs and jumping frogs for 7/6 and 10/6, lizards for 2/9, and

gnomes which for color and variety must be seen to be appreciated.⁶

However, gnomes were rarely taken too seriously. Canberra, a bastion of eccentricity, has seen gatherings of hundreds of gnomes during the city's floral festival Floriade. In 1980, a photo in the *Canberra Times* showed an English travelling gnome, beloved of newspaper sub-editors because of the opportunity for puns:

Arthur, believed to be the world's most travelled gnome, back in the garden of Mrs Bridgette Friel, right, and her daughter Jackie, in Coventry, England. Arthur was gone for a year and he sent postcards from Singapore, Bahrain, Paris, Moscow, Australia and the US.⁷

An Australian travelling gnome was reported in 1986⁸

An Eastern suburbs gnome-owner was distressed when she discovered her gnome had been stolen at the weekend. A note was found in its place: "Dear mum, couldn't stand the solitude any longer. Gone off to see the world. Don't be worried, I'll be back soon. Love Bilbo xxx."⁹

Bilbo was probably photographed, like many other gnomes, in exotic locations around the world.

Gnome pranks, known as "gnoming", can involve activists returning domesticated gnomes to the wild. In France, these activities are supported by the *Front pour la Libération des Nains de Jardins* and in Italy by the *Movimento Autonomo per la Liberazione delle Anime da Giardino*. The French organisation is believed to have been responsible for the shocking mass hanging of 11 garden gnomes in 1998 at Briey. And after an influx of gnomes escaping their garden prisons to seek refuge at Barga near Lucca, the Italian MALAG established the European Gnome Sanctuary there, so gnomes can pursue their way of life in peace.

As recently as April 2015, retired window cleaner Ron Broomfield, who died aged 80 in his Lincolnshire home *Gnome Cottage* after collecting gnomes for 50 years, was cremated in his gnome outfit. Part of his collection of 1,800 gnomes will be auctioned for charity.⁹

But gnomes were not always harmless. In 1993, a Wollongong man was bashed to death with a concrete garden gnome.¹⁰ In Swansea, Wales, police were called a dozen times to quell disputes over garden gnomes in a communal garden, resulting in the council banning garden gnomes in 2014.¹¹ And American writer Chuck Sambuchino was so concerned about possible terrorist activities in the USA that in 2010 he wrote a practical manual, *How to Survive a Garden Gnome Attack: Defend Yourself When the Lawn Warriors Strike (And They Will)*.

NOTES

- 1 Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences nos 91/684 and 91/685.
- 2 Twigs Way, *Garden Gnomes: A History*, Shire publications, Botley 2009.
- 3 The Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences has a concrete garden gnome made by Concraft Pty Ltd of Wingfield, South Australia in 1991, reg no 91/2059.
- 4 Noris Ioannou, *Ceramics in South Australia 1836–1986*, Wakefield Press, Adelaide 1896, pp 257–271
- 5 *Ibid*, p 267.
- 6 *Advertiser* 14 Mar 1941 p 22 with pic.
- 7 *Canberra Times* 31 May 1980 p 5.
- 8 SMH 24 Sep 1986
- 9 *Daily Telegraph* (London) <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/howaboutthat/11535227/>
- 10 *Canberra Times* 2 July 1993 p 5.
- 11 *Daily Telegraph* (London) <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/11194414>

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