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

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Miguel McKinlay (c 1894–1959), *Summer 1933* (detail), oil on canvas, 166 x 200 cm, hung at the Royal Academy in 1933. Family collection on loan to Bushey Museum and Art Gallery, Bushey, England

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*Australian Furniture: Pictorial History and
Dictionary 1788–1938*, p185 and Robert La Nauze,
*Made to Order: George Thwaites and Son,
colonial cabinetmakers*, p 222

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Miguel Mackinlay: artistic success in London

Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959) arrived in Western Australia as a child in 1906 and trained as an artist. He sailed for London in 1914 and was caught up fighting and sketching in the Great War. Dorothy Erickson concludes her three-part series on the painter who settled in England after the war and never returned to Australia.

DOROTHY ERICKSON

Miguel Mackinlay's career got off to a good start in England once he had recovered his health following the horrors of WWI. In 1921 he began exhibiting with the New English Art Club, seen as a stepping-stone to the Royal Academy, and with The London Group, a progressive co-operative dominated in the 1920s by Roger Fry, and the Bloomsbury Set who exhibited in Heal's new 'Mansard Gallery'. This was a space on the fourth floor of the department store in Tottenham Court Road opened as a venue for young artists.¹

Miguel (**plate 1**) was never formally a member of either of these groups but managed to mix with men such as the senior and very bohemian figure in the

New English Art Club, the Welsh portrait painter Augustus John (1878–1961). They both exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1930 when John showed a painting of Tallulah Bankhead, which was criticised while Miguel's *Tête-a-tête* (**plate 16**) was hung "on the line", the most prestigious position and was the sensation of the year.

Miguel exhibited *Laurie* and *Michael* (**plate 2**) in the 1921 Summer Exhibition of the New English Art Club. In the Winter Exhibition 1922 he showed *The Blue Overall* (**plate 3**); in Summer 1922, *Charlotte*; in Winter 1923 *The Convalescent* (**plate 4**) and in the Summer in 1923 *Dorothy*.² To his great satisfaction, *La Siesta* (**plate 6**) was hung in the Summer Exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1922, when Max Martin made his stunning impression.³ *La Siesta* was also known as *Mother and Child*



1.
Miguel Mackinlay, photograph 1914.
Courtesy of his family in Western Australia

2.
Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959),
Michael [Michael John Mackinlay] c 1921,
oil on canvas, 94 x 74 cm.
Collection: M J McKinlay Trust, UK

3.
Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959),
The Blue Overall c 1921,
oil on board, 36 x 31 cm.
Family collection UK

4.
Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959),
Convalescent [Michael John Mackinlay]
1922, oil on canvas, 58 x 40.5 cm.
Family collection UK





when published in *The West Australian* in 1930. By now he was trading on his exotic Spanish connection and signing his paintings *Miguel Mackinlay*.

Miguel, as one of the up and coming Australians, was selected to exhibit in *Australian Artists* at the Faculty of Art Gallery, University of London⁴ in 1924 and *Australian Artists in Europe* at the Spring's Garden Gallery in 1925. Princess Marie Louise, Queen Victoria's sculptor daughter, opened the 1924 exhibition, comprising 150 works. The critic for the Sydney *Sunday Times* wrote:

The chief interest of the exhibition ... was to disclose the Dominion origin or connections of several artists well known in London. Of

these the most noteworthy was Mr Max Martin, the young painter whose hard-bitten "Portrait group" made something of a sensation in the Academy two years ago ... Mr Miguel McKinley, [sic] with a painting of Still Life (plate 7), and Mr Horace Brodzky, with some racy paintings of street life and drypoints of the nude, are other additions to the list ...

A critic for the *Australasian* discussing the exhibition wrote:

Technically, the level of the exhibition was very high – in the opinion of several competent judges, as high as that of an average academy exhibition. It further resembled

recent academy exhibitions in the variety of schools it represented. As distinguished from other London shows in which the artists are all tarred more or less with the same brush, it was remarkable for the high standard of technical skill maintained in a great diversity of styles. Australian artists stood revealed among the leading exponents of the artistic cults of the day. ...

The other exhibitors included Sydney Long, Penleigh Boyd, Septimus Power, Arthur Streeton, George Lambert, Dora Meeson, John Longstaff, Elioth Gruner, Hans Heysen, Charles Conder and Edith Fry. All except the last were or became big names in the Australian art world.

5.

Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959), *Drowsy Child* [Laurie Marion Mackinlay] c 1922, oil on board, 39 x 60 cm. Collection: M J McKinlay Trust, UK

6.

Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959), *La Siesta* c 1922, oil on board, 48.5 x 38 cm. Hung in the Summer Exhibition at the Royal Academy 1922, also known as *Mother and Child* [The two Lauries]. Family collection UK

7.

Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959), *Still Life* 1924, oil on canvas, 45 x 50 cm. Collection: M J McKinlay Trust, UK

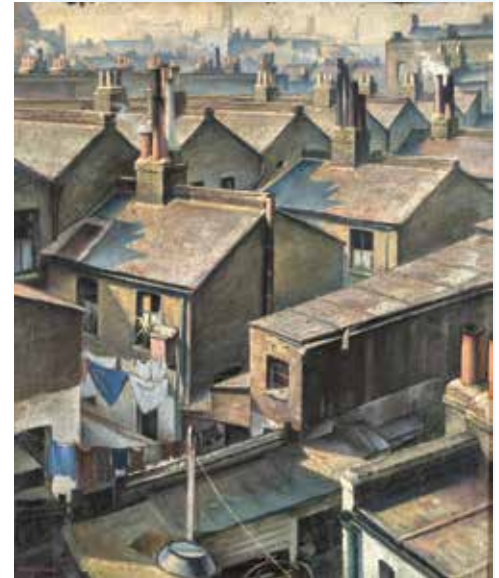




"EL ANDALUZ" OIL PAINTING BY MIGUEL MACKINLAY



"THE MOTHER," PEN DRAWING BY MIGUEL MACKINLAY



The critic for the *Colour Magazine* wrote that the paintings "should find a home in some Australian art gallery." He was referring to works by Max Martin, Miguel Mackinlay, Rupert Bunny, Emanuel Phillips Fox, Edith Fry, Jessie Gibson and Horace Brodzky.⁵

Martin and others were virtual exiles because of Australian import duties. Martin declared that

when the unjust tax on imported works of art by Australian artists in Europe is lifted, I shall bring over an exhibition to the cities of Australia.⁶

Import duties would have deterred artists such as Miguel and his friend Brodzky returning to Australia; as Leslie Rees observed in *Art in Australia* in 1931:

I fancy that both these accomplished artists would like to return to Australia, even if only for a short time. They will not do so without encouragement from the Australian public. It remains for the public to show them practical sympathy.⁷

Miguel's involvement in these and other exhibitions engendered interest and he was feted with an article in *The Studio* in December 1926. The premier art magazine illustrated *El Andaluz* (plate 8) along with *Drowsy Child* (plate 5) and a pen and ink sketch *The Mother*

(plate 9). *The Studio* writer "W. G." remarked of Miguel:

His technique follows the broad lines laid down by Cézanne, which the modern may honestly follow without losing his own personality and with the possibility of unlimited development. ... A strong sense of individual character MacKinlay undoubtedly has; and this, we may note, is one of the features of the Spanish genius. The Andalusian (plate 9) with his coarse strength of countenance is extremely well realized, and MacKinlay has done other portraits in which the same striking quality of personality appears, notably in a picture of a thin young girl, who holds an orange in her hand (plate 11). He is excellent at seizing a likeness; but one does not feel constrained to rest all one's appreciation of his work upon this talent. It is accompanied by real merits in pure painting. MacKinlay draws also with a great sense of style, and the pen drawing of mother and child we reproduce is beautifully sensitive. Some of his other drawings have an almost pre-Raphaelite care and tenderness of line. All his work shows a reverence for nature – a carefully thought out design and the capacity for taking pains which a true artist must possess. It is to be hoped Mr MacKinlay will occupy himself less, as time goes on, with

8.

Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959), *El Andaluz* c1924/5, print reproduced in *The Studio* magazine in 1926

9.

Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959), *The Mother* [wife Laurie with their baby Laurie], as published in *The Studio* in 1926

10.

Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959), *Battersea Roofs* c 1920, oil on canvas, 60 x 50 cm. Collection: M J McKinlay Trust, UK

11.

Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959), *Girl with Orange* c 1925, oil on canvas, 77 x 61 cm, discussed in *The Studio* Dec. 1926. Family collection UK





picture, “The Bath” has an unusual combination of qualities – accomplished technique, artistic conception and psychological insight – conspicuously lacking in most exhibits which surround it.⁹

The Summer Exhibition at the Royal Academy had been a fixture on the English art calendar since 1769. Paintings by the most important artists as well as the largest were usually “hung on the line”, originally this was with the bottom edge of the painting 244 cm from the floor. This was the most prestigious position where large paintings and those by famous artists hung. Reviewing for the *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, Anthony Bertram thought *The Bath*

A well-built, well-kit picture, an interesting progression of greens on a background of drab pinks, neutral greys and browns, a sincere picture.¹⁰

About this time Miguel’s drawings were collected by Dan Fellows Platt (1873–1937), a wealthy American ‘Renaissance man’, trained in archaeology and law, who travelled the world, lectured on art and amassed a major collection of drawings which he left to his alma mater Princeton University. He purchased the 13 drawings now in the Princeton

12.

Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959), *The Bath* c 1927 oil on canvas, 126 x 187cm. Hung in the Summer Exhibition of the Royal Academy in 1927, the models are his wife Laurie, son Michael and daughter Laurie. Family collection on loan to Bushey Museum and Art Gallery

13.

Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959), *Children in a tub* c 1920s, 15.4 x 19.3 cm. Collection: Princeton University Art Museum

14.

Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959), *Head of a Child* 1920s, 27.4 x 22.7cm. Collection: Princeton University Art Museum

the illustrative work he has recently been doing and concentrate on pure painting – in which field he has great promise.⁸

Miguel continued with the illustrative work. It paid the bills. He was soon able to celebrate earning £1,000 in one year. Miguel did not cease exhibiting. In the summer exhibitions at the Royal Academy. *The Bath* (plate 12), *Interior* and *El Andaluz* (plate 8) were reviewed in 1927 by Edith Fry for the *Western Mail* in Perth and the *Sydney Morning Herald*. She wrote of:

... the gifted Western Australian, Miguel Mackinlay, whose large





University Art Museum from London dealer F. R. Meatyard between 1924 and 1928. Two of Miguel's works that Platt collected, *Japanese Dancer* and *A Bather*, were exhibited in the Art Institute of Chicago in 1932.¹¹ The others are in the university collection (plates 13–14).

In 1928 the family moved to 31 Bournehall Road in the artist colony area of Bushey in Hertfordshire. Mackinlay painted in the Bourne Hall Studio of Elizabeth Milner (1860–1953) at neighbouring Bourne Hall. The size of the major paintings he was producing demanded a large studio. Whether he still continued to paint there after about 1932, when the family moved to *The Hut* in Finch Lane with its own capacious studio, is not known. Later when he moved to *Ruilands* (plate 15) he also had a studio at the Bushey Meadow Studio complex.

In 1930, when he was again hung in The Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, Miguel's *Tête-à-tête* (plate 16) created quite a stir among the 1,669 exhibits. It was the first thing noticed when entering the Academy, being described by eminent art historian and critic William Moore in the *Brisbane Courier* as "...the success of the year".¹² Gui St Bernard noted that *Tête-à-tête*

was of 'decided merit;' ... The effective placing of component arts and soundness of figure construction are also characteristics¹³

This was his year to be the success of the season. *The Week-end Review* declared it

one of the best pictures in the show, with something of the suave openness of a Seurat but without the childish incapacity to maintain a background steadily ... and if he is a young man he should perhaps be warned against getting the Prix de Rome.¹⁴

An innovation that year was the presentation of five 'tableaux vivants' at the Coliseum featuring Academy paintings. Brightly lit living representations of the hung works of Miguel, Laura Knight, Russell Flint, Walter Webster and Campbell Taylor were posed on the stage surrounded by huge gold frames. Miguel's tableau was illustrated in the *Daily Sketch*. Knight and Flint were Royal Academicians. Australian critic Leslie Rees wrote:

Tête-à-tête was one of the most discussed and most outstanding pictures in the last Academy. Like Cezanne, whose method he follows, he is concerned with expression not surfaces, but of essential structures; that is to say he paints not what he sees, or not only what he sees but, what he knows to be there. He achieves par excellence the roundness of things that are round, adds emphatically the values of mass and weight.¹⁵

15.

Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959), *The Hut* 1932, oil on canvas, 49.5 x 60 cm. The garden at their new address Finch Lane, Bushey. Collection: M J McKinlay Trust, UK

16.

Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959), *Tête-à-tête* 1930, oil on canvas, 202 x 237 cm, hung "on the line" at the Royal Academy. Collection: M J McKinlay Trust, UK, on loan to Bushey Museum and Art Gallery

His *La Siesta* or *Mother and Child* (plate 6) was illustrated and written up in Perth, Western Australia where his career was being avidly followed. The critic for the *West Australian* wrote:¹⁶

Mackinlay has very definite theories about his art and is a direct descendant of Cezanne, in that he aims first at the realization on his canvas of solidarity and volume in his forms by use of massed planes of colour. In other words he is definitely a three-dimensional artist. His capacity for achieving the effect of roundness in an object that is round, of adding the values of weight and mass, is well seen in the picture called "Mother and Son". The child's head here is not lying merely on



17.

Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959),
Rutlands 1940, oil on canvas,
67 x 81 cm.
Collection: M J McKinlay Trust, UK

18.

Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959),
The Marrow Bed, oil on canvas
59 x 74 cm.
Collection: M J McKinlay Trust, UK

19.

Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959),
Gypsy Caravans 1930s, watercolour
and ink on paper, 27 x 37 cm.
Collection: M J McKinlay Trust, UK

20.

Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959),
Brixham Harbour, Devon 1930s,
watercolour on paper,
24.5 x 35 cm.
Collection: M J McKinlay Trust, UK

the pillow but is essentially pressing into it. Mackinlay's early training in modelling no doubt influenced him in this insistence on the third dimension. ... It is only necessary to examine the picture "Tête-a-Tête" to see that Mackinlay is a constructive designer of skill. He builds his pictures with a kind of solid deliberation and the movement in them is slow. The appearance of the figures in "Tête-a-Tête" combines in an individual way the static solidity of sculpture with a plastic rhythm of line possible only in painting. He favours figure compositions on an unusually large scale, but also paints landscape and still life.

The critic for the *Brisbane Telegraph* and *Boston Evening Transcript* had other ideas, describing *Tête-à-tête* as

very terrifying with its two heavy young women lying on a slope so steep that the tea-things just below are in danger every moment, but its' forms and lights and colour are interesting.¹⁷

Leslie Rees, discussing Mackinlay and Brodzky in *Art in Australia* in 1931, wrote that:

Among Australian painters who have left Australia to seek a larger fortune in London, only a few have adapted themselves to those principles, which have become known popularly as "Modern." Fred. Porter, Horace Brodzky, Max Martin and Miguel Mackinlay stand out. ... While both [Brodzky and Mackinlay] are essentially modern,





neither subscribes to theories so abstruse or abstract as to cause head scratching in front of their pictures. They are neither of them so keen on emotional self-expression that they throw technique to the winds and try to achieve art in a passing spasm of aesthetic agony.¹⁸

However, the critic for London's *Sunday Times*, discussing Miguel's entry in the Royal Academy *Summer Exhibition* of 1931, was unfamiliar with the artist and resorted to speculation:

From afar we can see Miguel Mackinlay's "The First Communion" (631) which occupies the centre of the centre wall of Gallery VIII. ... his picture – which suggests Besnard with a soupçon of Marchand – has a familiar look. It is very sunny, clear and dry in colour, the kind of thing we are more accustomed to see at the Tuileries than in Burlington House. I suspect the artist is Paris trained.¹⁹

That must have amused him. Life in a rambling house on Bushey Heath was pleasant (plates 17–18). The extensive gardens that he cultivated provided fruit, vegetables and flowers and room for elder daughter Laurie's little black dog that appeared in a number of paintings. Yet Miguel never lost his interest in the sea and boats. Holidays, especially in the 1930s were mostly taken in Cornwall and Devon where there were several artists' colonies and contacts could be made to plug into exhibition circuits. Numerous images of the sea and harbours remain in his portfolio (plate 20). He was also reputed to have kept a boat in France.²⁰ Trips to the countryside saw farmyard scenes painted and, in later years when his TB or war wound was troubling him, many vases of flowers (plate 23).



21.

Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959), *Self Portrait as artist* 1940s, oil on board, 59.5 x 49 cm. Collection: M J McKinlay Trust, UK

22.

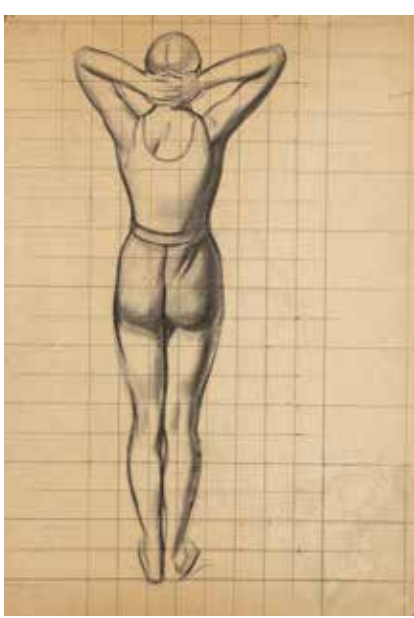
Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959), Probably *Cornish Village* 1936, oil on canvas 60 x 49.5 cm. Collection: M J McKinlay Trust, UK

23.

Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959), Possibly *Kitchen Bunch* 1945, oil on canvas 75 x 62 cm. Collection: M J McKinlay Trust, UK

24.

Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959), *Summer* 1933, oil on canvas, 166 x 200 cm, hung at the Royal Academy in 1933. Family collection on loan to Bushey Museum and Art Gallery



25.

Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959),
Study for *Summer*, charcoal on paper,
56 x 38 cm. Son Michael and his
friends Pat and Boy were models for
figures in the painting.
Collection: M J McKinlay Trust, UK.

26-27.

Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959),
Sketches for *Summer*, pencil on
paper, 38 x 31 cm.
Collection: M J McKinlay Trust, UK

28.

Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959),
The Poacher c 1936, oil on canvas,
214 x 150 cm. Hung 1936
Royal Academy Summer Exhibition.
Collection: M J McKinlay Trust, UK



Miguel's best-known image is that of *Summer* (**plate 24**) currently on loan to the Bushey Museum and Art Gallery. It had been exhibited at the 1933 Royal Academy Summer Exhibition. Swimming had been introduced as an Olympic sport for women in the 1920s and costumes became figure hugging rather than the preceding baggy Edwardian style. Miguel with his facility in figure drawing was in his element. After this we hear little of Miguel in the Australian papers and he faded from sight. However he did continue a lucrative career as a portrait painter and illustrator in England. In 1936 much was made of *The Poacher* hung at the Royal Academy and the next year in Bradford (**plates 28–29**).



Two other well-known images are that of *The Young Reader* hung in the 1945 Summer Exhibition at the Royal Academy and now in the collection of Leamington Spa Museum and Art Gallery (**plate 30**). The subject is his youngest daughter Theresa, then nine years old. Another is *Still Life with Dress Uniform* thought to be the enigmatically titled *Props* hung in the Royal Academy in 1942 now on loan to Bushey (**plate 31**). One of the loveliest and last paintings he undertook was of daughter Theresa's wedding bouquet in 1957 (**plate 32**). He died of TB in the UK in January 1959.

A recent sales pitch on the internet for a print of *Summer* claimed that Miguel was:

one of a small group of British figure painters whose crisp realist style enjoyed great notoriety across 1930s Europe. Positioned between the avant-garde abstractionists and Edwardian traditionalism, they fostered a mainstream popularity for this style of art. However it is only now that these painters are being fully recognised for the contribution they made to British art in the years between the two great wars.

It is time to recognise Miguel's part in this.

29.

The Poacher being hung in
Bradford in 1937. *Yorkshire
Observer* 19 March 1937



NOTES

- 1 Research notes provided by Claire Fitzgerald May 2016 citing Denys J. Wilcox, *The London Group 1913-1939: the Artists and their Works* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, c 1995), p 180 and *London Group 1914-64 Jubilee Exhibition. Fifty Years of British Art at the Tate Gallery (exhibition catalogue, 15 July – 16 August 1964)* (London: Tate Gallery, 1964), appendix 'Fifty years of London Group Exhibitions 1914-64', no pagination.
- 2 Research notes provided by Claire Fitzgerald May 2016 citing Charles Baile De Lapperriere (ed.), *The New English Art Club Exhibitors 1886-2001: a Dictionary of Artists and their Works in the Annual Exhibitions of The New English Art Club* (Calne: Hilmaron Manor press, 2002), volume III, p 93.
- 3 *Royal Academy Exhibitors 1905-1970: A dictionary of artists and their work in the Summer Exhibitions of the Royal Academy of Arts*, vol V Wakefield, EP Publishing Ltd 1981 p 91
- 4 If this was the Slade students' gallery it could account for the notion that he had trained at the Slade.
- 5 Quoted in the *Huon Times* (Tasmania) 24 Nov 1924 p 3.
- 6 *The Register* (Adelaide) 26 Dec 1927 p 13.
- 7 "Two Australians in London", *Art in Australia*, 15 Feb 1931 p 38.
- 8 *The Studio*, December 1926 pp 393f.
- 9 *Western Mail* (Perth), 18 August 1927 p 26 and Supplement p 2 and *Sydney Morning Herald* 23 July 1927 p 11.
- 10 Anthony Bertram, "Art: The Royal Academy", *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, (143: 3732) 7 May 1927 p 703.
- 11 Exhibition catalogue held by the family.
- 12 William Moore in "Art and Artists", *Brisbane Courier* 5 July 1930 p 23.
- 13 Gui St. Bernard, "The Royal Academy and the Public" *The Studio* 99 1930 pp 387-402.
- 14 *The Week-end Review* (London) 10 May 1930.
- 15 Leslie Rees, *West Australian* 31 May 1930 p 18; «Two Australians in London» *Art in Australia*, Feb 1931, pp 36-38.
- 16 *West Australian* 31 May 1930 p 18.
- 17 "A Bird's Eye View", *Telegraph* (Brisbane) 19 June 1930 p 4.
- 18 See n 15.
- 19 *Sunday Times* (London) 3 May 3 1931.
- 20 Information from daughter Theresa 2016.

30.

Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959), *The Young Reader* 1945, oil on canvas, 50 x 44 cm. Exhibited Royal Academy 1945. Collection: Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum.

31.

Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959), *Still Life with Dress Uniform*, 74 x 62 cm; possibly *Props*, exhibited RA 1942. Family collection, currently on loan to Bushey Museum and Art Gallery

32.

Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959), *[Head of a girl]* c 1957, pencil on paper, 33.5 x 23.5 cm. The subject is his granddaughter Gilly, daughter Laurie's youngest child. Family collection UK

33.

Miguel Mackinlay (1894–1959), *Wedding Bouquet* 1957, oil on board, 37.5 x 47.5 cm. Daughter Theresa's wedding bouquet. Family collection UK



Dr Dorothy Erickson is a distinguished historian, author, practising jeweller and frequent contributor to *Australiana* who lives in Perth WA. You can contact her at dorothyerickson@ozemail.com.au

Miguel McKinlay's birth date is usually given as 1895, taken from his army enrolment forms. Attempts to locate his birth record in Spain have not yet been successful. However, on 23 October 1918 he wrote to his sister Wiliamina discussing his time in the trenches and requesting a birth certificate as he believed he was older than he thought. As his younger brother was born in February 1895, Miguel was more likely born in 1894. The few drawings which I dated 1915 in my first article "Miguel Mackinlay in the Great War" in *Australiana* February 2017 are now known to have been drawn in 1918, as the upstroke on the 8 is missing.





Fire Insurance Companies' Fire Marks: the Art Gallery of South Australia collection

Few of us spend enough time cataloguing, photographing and managing our collections – subjects we will address in future issues. The Art Gallery of SA's collection of "fire marks" put out by insurance companies has been in storage for over 70 years, but now they have been photographed, and catalogued by the Gallery's indefatigable honorary numismatist, Peter Lane.

PETER LANE

Throughout Australia and many parts of the world in the mid-19th century, insurance offices' metal fire marks, depicting the firm's decorative coloured emblem, could be seen on buildings insured with them. Today fire marks rarely come on the market, nor are they displayed in public institutions. From 1915 to 1939, a collection of fire marks was displayed in the coin room in the South Australian

Museum building (an annexe of the Art Gallery) in Adelaide, placed in a prominent position around its walls.

Since then, public institutions have to a large extent kept them in storage. The Art Gallery of South Australia's (AGSA) collection has just been catalogued. The South Australian Australiana study group (which meets monthly in Adelaide) saw them at a private viewing at the Gallery.

Fire marks in Australia

From the 1830s British fire insurance companies set up agencies and branches in Australia and at the same time Australian fire insurance companies were established. They continued the custom of issuing fire marks that date from the aftermath of the Great Fire of London in 1666, when the first fire insurance companies were established. Insurance companies gave their policy holders a fire mark. These bore their

trademark on embossed sheet metal, brightly painted in various shapes; most are around 30 x 30 cm in size. House owners and business owners were encouraged to place them in a prominent position on their insured buildings (**plates 1–2**). In Britain in the 17th and 18th centuries road names were rather haphazard and street numbers were rarely recorded, a far cry from the formalisation we have today. Fire marks were intended to help firemen locate a property. The use of fire marks in Australia fell out of use shortly before federation. Who designed and manufactured the many fire marks used in Australia is not known and no maker's marks have been seen on any example. Some fire marks were exclusively used in Australia and would have most likely been made locally, but as yet no hard evidence supports this. Tinware manufactories in major cities are a possibility, as many would have

1-2.

Brunkhorst's jeweller's shop, 110 Rundle Street, Adelaide, at the corner of Charles Street, with an Equitable fire mark immediately below the Charles Street sign; the photo was taken on 16 July 1915 and within days the building was demolished. Collection: State Library of SA B83

had the necessary machinery, skills and manpower; one such was Alfred Simpson's workshop in Gawler Place, Adelaide.¹

An urban myth exposed

Initially fire brigades were funded by individual insurance companies, and some banded together to share overheads and reduce claims. Then they were taken over by municipalities, and more recently by state and territory governments.

Since the fire marks ceased to be used, newspaper articles on fire marks have told the story that when a fire broke out and an insurance company fire brigade arrived on the scene to find that the insurance sign was not theirs, they would not act.

No Australian newspaper articles have recorded actual events where firemen simply watched a building burn down. It was a great way to sell local and popular insurance company policies. Insurance companies handed out fire marks to policy holders and told them to put them on a wall in a prominent position so the firemen could see them. I can't help thinking that it was a cheap and effective way to advertise the insurance company! Fire marks used in Australia did not carry the policy's expiry dates and it appears no one went around and removed them if the policy lapsed; some buildings had a multitude of fire marks on their walls. Owners might take out multiple policies to spread the risk. For instance, when Hill's Australian Furniture Warehouse burned down on 21 December 1865 (plate 3), the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that²

The insurance on Messrs. Hill and Co.'s stock in the Sydney Insurance Company is £3000, and on the building £1000. The building is also insured for £2000 in the Northern, £2500 in the Liverpool and London, and £1000 in the Victoria. The stock is insured for £4000 in the United, £2500 in the Liverpool and London, £2000 in the Imperial, and £1000 in the Victoria. The amount of the insurances on the building is £6500, and on the stock £12,600.

Four fire engines attended the blaze, two from the Fire Insurance Company's Brigade and two from the Volunteer Company. The practice of having multiple fire marks was not uncommon. In 1917, Alfred Chitty was allowed to remove fire marks from wool brokers and skin merchants Synnot Bros' warehouse at 276 Spencer Street in Melbourne. Those in the Adelaide collection represent five different companies: Alliance, Australasian, Colonial, Liverpool London & Globe, Tasmanian and Victoria. In Sydney, Circular Quay Bond Store provided four from their building: Commercial Union, Imperial, National Mutual and Standard.

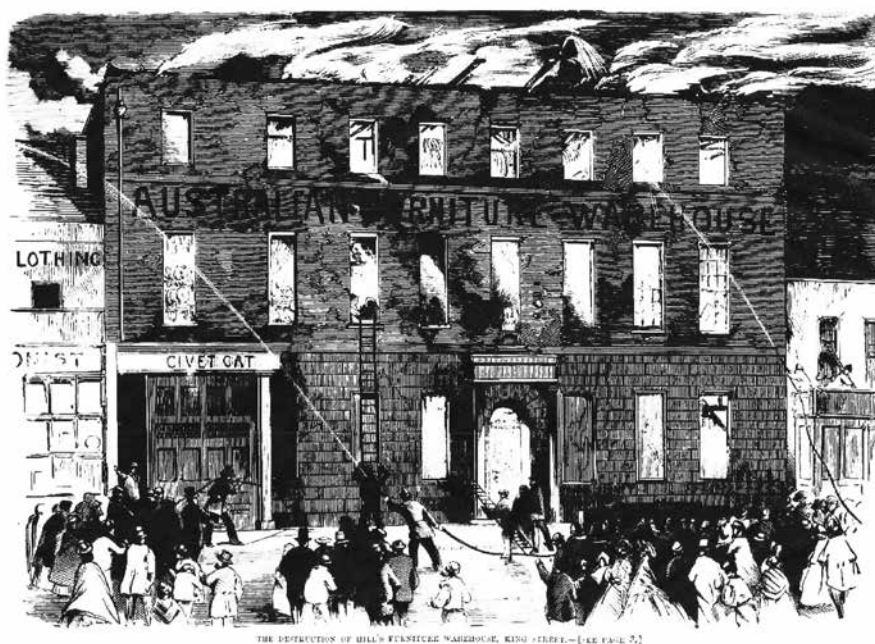
What happened to fire marks?

Fire marks are rarely seen on walls nowadays. It appears many were removed from walls during World War I scrap metal drives to support the war effort, if they had not already been souvenired by a small handful of collectors. Before and since, many have been lost due to building demolition. Fire mark clubs exist around the world, in particular in Great Britain and America, but none in Australia. A collection of Australian fire marks came on the market in February 2015,

put together by long-time Australiana collectors, the late Caressa Crouch and Carl Gonsalves of Sydney, auctioned through Mossgreen. The auction catalogue and website shows images of them.³ Lot 428, five pieces, sold for \$2,232; lot 429, six pieces (of which two are not fire marks but manufacturer's nameplates from safes, one made by John Tann of London and the other made by Thomas Wearne of Sydney), sold for \$1,364, while lot 430, a pressed metal mark for the Cornwall Fire & Insurance Company, together with a certificate for their insurance of the Assembly Rooms and Hotel at Campbell Town, Tasmania dated 1846, sold for \$1,240. Among these were plaques for insurance companies not represented in the current AGSA collection: Phoenix,⁴ London, National, Australian Mutual and Van Diemen's Land.

3.

"The Destruction of Hill's Furniture Warehouse, King Street", *Illustrated Sydney News* 16 January 1866 p 4.





4.

The Adelaide Coin Room with fire marks high on the wall. AGSA Reference Library

5.

Alfred Chitty, photograph c 1910. Collection: State Library of SA B93787/108

The Art Gallery of South Australia collection

The Art Gallery of South Australia's collection of 49 examples includes multiple copies, and all except one were either on Australian businesses or homes at one time or were in the possession of Australian insurance managers. The odd one was found on a ruined building on the Western Front during the Great War and brought back to Australia as a wartime souvenir. At one time the Gallery's collection had even more specimens in it.

Alfred Chitty, who was responsible for acquiring and displaying the fire marks, published an article on them in an Adelaide newspaper.⁵ He stated that they had recently acquired a Sun example made of lead [Alfred Chitty reference number AC1] that had been on a London wall for 113 years, and was donated by Mr Edward Malpas who acted as the attorney for the Sun Insurance Company in South Australia. Mr Coombs, from the Yorkshire Insurance Company's Grenfell Street, Adelaide Office, presented one from his company [AC96 tinplate] and another from State Insurance [AC89 tinplate].

Chitty wrote "some marks before me are:-" Colonial [AC14 iron], Melbourne Fire Company [AC7 copper], London Assurance Company [AC58 copper], Pacific [AC23 copper], Van Diemen's Land Insurance [AC5 copper], and Victoria

[AC10 copper], and described design details and recorded many other insurance company fire marks. None of these nine examples named can now be found. When Chitty wrote "some marks before me", did he mean they were in the collection or just lent from his private collection? He had an even larger collection than the Gallery.

The Gallery's fire marks were acquired between 1915 and 1922 and placed around the coin room walls (plate 4). At that time the coin room was in the East Wing of the South Australian Museum, an annex of the Gallery; the wing is on the western side of AGSA. The fire marks remained there until 1939 when the coin and fire mark collections were moved to the Art Gallery building. While the coin collection went on display in the Gallery, the fire marks went into storage and have remained there.

Having researched and written a manuscript on the Gallery's numismatic collection, I was aware of the marks but had no knowledge of their whereabouts, and was extremely delighted that they had been discovered after having been tucked away and forgotten for nearly 80 years. This was a great start for 2017 and this sighting kindled my enthusiasm for the fire marks and aim to get them the exposure they rightly deserve. They represent the largest public collection in Australia that I am aware of; the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences in Sydney has eleven.

Fortuitously, some of the fire marks stored in envelopes still had their caption cards with the insurance company's name, donor details, where it was originally attached and the date of acquisition; these were printed either during World War I or soon after. In all there are 28 captions, and this suggests that there were at least that many fire marks on display. Twenty can be linked to a particular fire mark while the other eight record the same information, but due to having multiple copies it is impossible to attribute them individually to a donor. Fortunately, the original correspondence between the institution and the donors has survived in the State Records office, and duplicate copies are held in the AGSA Research Library. These were examined and a few more snippets of information were gleaned from them.



The Gallery's fire mark enthusiast: Alfred Chitty

Alfred Chitty was retired, an enthusiastic and much respected coin collector of Melbourne when he was offered the position of numismatist in 1911, to sort out the Gallery's collection and build it up (plate 5). He was born in England, and arrived as a young adult in Melbourne in 1871. Chitty was a self-employed house builder until 1882 when he became insolvent, and later ran a newsagency. He was due to start in November 1911 but due to one of his daughters' ill health he started in January 1912, days after she died. Another daughter accompanied him to Adelaide.

He remained in the position till 1917 when his understudy of 12 months, Miss Sedley Towler, took over his position. The two had met through Chitty's daughter who worked at the same company as Towler. Chitty was a mentor and friend to her and she visited him regularly for a few years after he returned to Melbourne. The only year she missed seeing him was 1919, the year of the influenza epidemic.

In 1915 when the public coin room was opened in the new Eastern Wing, high up around its walls Chitty started to fill the space with fire marks; he seems to have filled every inch of space in the modest-sized room. Chitty contacted many insurance companies and wrote newspaper articles in the pursuit of fire marks as well as coins and medals for the collection. The following list gives individual details if known.

When Chitty left Adelaide there was a continuous flow of correspondence for some five years between him, the mentor, and his student. He offered many kinds of currency specimens and medals as well as fire marks; Towler readily accepted them all. In 1921 he gave a paper on fire marks to the [Royal] Victorian Historical Society and it was published in their journal;⁶ an offprint he gave to the Gallery illustrates 28 examples, mainly from his private collection. In 1922 he started to catalogue the National Gallery of Victoria's numismatic collection, now held by Museum Victoria.

In 1925 Chitty published a monograph *Fire Insurance offices and 'Fire-Marks' in Australasia* through Southland Press in Melbourne. He illustrates 134 examples and notes a few minor varieties. The book is 12 x 21 cm, has 12 pages of plates, 44 pages of text and sold for seven shillings and six pence, a hefty sum in those days. This is now a rare publication and is available online. Chitty died on 4 June 1929.⁷ A newspaper report shows that he offered his private collection to what is now the State Library:

Alfred Chitty, of Turner Street, South Camberwell, numismatist, who died on June 4, left real estate of £3320 and personal property of £966 to his children, subject to gifts to grandchildren. He bequeathed to the Adelaide Public Library his collection of church tea sets, fire marks, fire buckets, and directors.⁸

Chitty's bequest was conditional on his fire marks going on display, and if the collection already had an example they would not be given a duplicate.⁹ Towler was keen to acquire them and recalled that Chitty had about 150 fire marks, containing about 20 possible duplicates. She pointed out to the Board that they were relics of a bygone era and that 31 fire marks were already displayed in the Coin Room, with no space for more. However, Towler recommended they be accepted and suggested they be hung in the main hall of the administration department.¹⁰ Regrettably the Board declined the bequest on the grounds that they lacked sufficient space.¹¹

While Towler readily accepted fire marks through Chitty she did not chase them, and likewise her understudy, James Hunt Deacon, who worked in the coin room from 1917. He took over when she died in 1931 and remained in charge until his retirement in 1966. He was the last staff numismatist at the Gallery.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

AGSA registration officer Daniel Schutt brought the fire marks to my attention. Rebecca Evans, curator of European and Australian Decorative Arts, encouraged me to record and write about the collection. Saul Steed photographed the images. Australiana Society members Bernie Begley and Richard Phillips gave valuable comments and encouragement.

The Associated Fire Insurance Companies Adelaide Fire Brigade medal 1867

Insurance companies with offices in Adelaide banded together and established a fire brigade in 1860. Seven years later, they asked their firemen with seven years' service if they would prefer money or some other token of appreciation. The men chose a medal, so the companies organised for one to be struck in England.

Chairman of the Adelaide Insurance Companies, John Morphett, presented the silver medals to the men and a gold watch to the superintendent on 26 November 1867. At that time the brigade had three stations in Adelaide and one in North Adelaide. Around the rim are the names of all the insurance companies in the association.

Right: Fireman Richard Clark's 1867 Adelaide Fire Brigade Silver Medal, private collection



Reference numbers 'AC' refer to Alfred Chitty's numbers in his *Fire Insurance offices and 'Fire-Marks' in Australasia* published by Southland Press, Melbourne 1925.

THE WESTERN FRONT FIRE MARK



LA BELGIQUE

The Belgium Joint Stock Company was established in 1855.

Description: Centre a Belgian crown, below in a curve LA BELGIQUE in an oval within a rectangular frame. This example has blue/white paint fragments.

Metal: zinc

Size: h 22 w 28 cm

Weight: 141 g

Provenance: Donated by Mr H W Marshall 1918.

Reference: AC118

Accession no: NFM 001

The donor, Mr Hately Waddell Marshall in 1916 was the chief clerk at the Adelaide Public Library. He was a friend of Alfred Chitty and had seen fire marks high on the walls of the coin room. Marshall enlisted in the AIF and as a signaller served in Belgium. While marching at Ypres with his company he noticed the fire mark on the only remaining section of wall of a house, and remembered how enthusiastic Chitty was about these things. When his company camped nearby, Marshall and one of his mates returned to the wall and out of the ruins built a scaffold and removed the fire mark. Marshall was unsure how he could get it back to Adelaide. Somehow it arrived at the South Australian Agent-General's Office in London and was then shipped to Adelaide. When it reached the coin room it was put on display. Upon Marshall's return he went back to the library, and shortly afterwards was promoted to General Secretary of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery which position he held until 1939, when it became three separate entities with their own boards.

AUSTRALIAN FIRE MARKS



ALLIANCE

Description: A castle keep with four projecting corner towers each flying a flag, raised on a rocky base in an oval frame, above the word ALLIANCE, the castle and name gilded on a dark ground.

Metal: copper

Size: h 23 w 23 cm

Weight: 73 g

Provenance: Donated by Mr H Caire, 59 Hindley St Adelaide, 1915. It had been displayed on the front of his saddlery premises.

Reference: AC30

Accession no: NFM002

Alliance was created in 1824 in England and in 1833 appointed as its Sydney agent Montefiore & Co;¹² their insurance policy on the life of explorer J T Gellibrand, who died in 1837, was believed to be worth £10,000.¹³ Alliance established an agency in Adelaide in 1847 and Melbourne in 1848. Branches were established in Melbourne 1860, Sydney 1876, Adelaide 1882 and Brisbane 1886. In 1959 it amalgamated with Sun Insurance office and this entity became Sun Alliance Insurance Company, now Vero. In April 1917 Chitty interviewed an old staff member at Australian Alliance in Melbourne and learnt that this fire mark was similar to a British mark as it was copied from one and would have been issued on an old policy. The following mark (AC31-NFM003) was a later issue.



ALLIANCE

Description: Allegorical figure of Plenty in the form of a standing woman holding a cornucopia and comforting a kneeling woman and child, within a garter bearing the word ALLIANCE, unpainted.

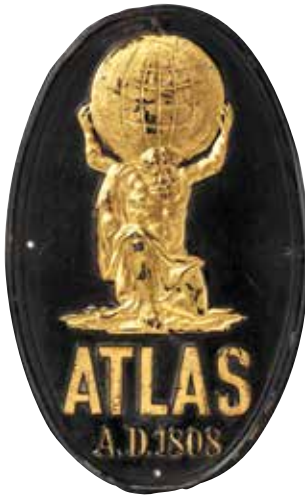
Metal: zinc
Size: diameter 20 cm

Weight: 95 g

Provenance: Donated 1917 by Synnot Bros, who permitted Chitty to remove the fire mark from their warehouse at 276 Spencer St, Melbourne.

Reference: AC31

Accession no: NFM003



ATLAS

The Atlas Assurance Company was established in 1808 in London, opening an Australian office in 1890. Atlas was taken over in 1959 by Royal Exchange Assurance.

Description: Atlas, the mythological Titan condemned by Zeus to hold up the sky, representing strength, supporting a globe, below in two lines ATLAS/A.D.1808. The figure, globe and lettering are gilt and a black background.

Metal: tinfoil
Size: h 25 w 15 cm

Weight: 63 g

Provenance: Donated 1917 by Alfred Chitty of Melbourne. This example used in Melbourne

Reference: AC33

Accession no: NFM004



ATLAS

Duplicate, Accession no: NFM005, weight 58 g. Otherwise identical, the globe is painted blue, the robe red, and ground yellow on a black ground; donor Atlas Assurance Co. Ltd 1917. This example was used in Adelaide.



AUSTRALASIAN INSURANCE

The Australasian Fire and Life Assurance Company was established in August 1857 in Melbourne with head office in Collins Street.

Description: Circular mark, five-pointed stars of the Southern Cross within a ring, around above AUSTRALASIAN, below INSURANCE. Traces of bright blue paint remain.

Metal: zinc

Size: diameter 24 cm

Weight: 140 g

Provenance: Donated in 1917 by Synnot Bros of Melbourne, who gave permission for Chitty to remove the fire mark from their warehouse at 276 Spencer St, Melbourne.

Reference: AC21

Accession no: NFM006



BRITANNIA

Description: Palmette-shaped mark with standing figure of Britannia holding trident and shield, and reclining British lion, below BRITANNIA. This example has traces of red paint.

Metal: copper

Size: h 31 w 26 cm

Weight: 111 g

Provenance: Donated in 1915 by the South Australian Company. The fire mark came from a house at 227 Pirie St, Adelaide.

Reference: AC39

Accession no: NFM007

In 1844, the Britannia Fire Association was founded in London and in 1873 Alfred Watts of 1 Register Chambers, Adelaide was appointed their first agent in South Australia.¹⁴ Chitty recorded that this specimen was from a house in Pirie Street. He noted that each of a terrace of six houses next to Chalmers Church, North Terrace, Adelaide bore this mark. He was unaware of any of their fire marks on Melbourne buildings despite an agency being set up in Melbourne in 1879. The office was renamed Britannia Home and Colonial Insurance Company in 1879, and that same year it was taken over by the Anglo-French Fire Insurance Company.



COLONIAL

Colonial Insurance Co was established in Victoria in 1855.

Description: A rococo shaped fire mark, centre, COLONIAL and above, a flame. Traces of red and black paint. Chitty believed the flame would have originally have been coloured gold.

Metal: tinplate

Size: h 25 w 23 cm

Weight: 85 g

Provenance: Donated in 1917 by Synnot Bros of Melbourne. They gave permission for Chitty to remove the fire mark from their warehouse at 276 Spencer St, Melbourne.

Reference: AC15

Accession no: NFM008



COMMERCIAL UNION

- Description:** Circular mark with British Ensign in the centre, above COMMERCIAL, below UNION.
- Metal:** tinplate
- Size:** diameter 18 cm
- Weight:** 66 g
- Provenance:** Donated in 1921 by Mr F.C. Jack, Circular Quay Bond, 5-7 Phillip St North, Sydney NSW.
- Reference:** AC42
- Accession no:** NFM009

Commercial Union (London) was established in 1861 and in 1881 it took over the Sydney Insurance Company (see AC 13) and in 1905 it absorbed Hand-in-Hand (established 1696). The Commercial Union's emblem was a salamander (an animal with a lizard-like form that has an affinity to fire) among flames. The ensign probably alludes to its overseas interests.



CORNWALL FIRE INSURANCE

- Description:** Centre standing kangaroo on grass, facing left, above FIRE INSURANCE, below CORNWALL. Kangaroo, lettering and borders of frame yellow, centre background and grass green, frame mainly red.
- Metal:** copper
- Size:** h 28 w 22 cm
- Weight:** 113 g
- Provenance:** The collection has two examples, one from a house in William St, Norwood SA in 1915 and the other in the same year as an anonymous donation, but it is not known which one was displayed with this caption.
- Reference:** AC6
- Accession No:** NFM010
- Duplicate:**
- Accession no:** NFM011, weight 109 g.

In 1842 Cornwall Fire Insurance Office was established in Tasmania and named after a county in that state. It ceased as an entity circa 1911.



DERWENT & TAMAR FIRE INSURANCE

- Description:** Centre, Phoenix rising from the flames, around DERWENT & TAMAR FIRE and on base INSURANCE. Phoenix and flames, and lettering and borders of frame in gold, background of centre red and dark blue in frame.
- Metal:** copper
- Size:** h 24 w 21 cm
- Weight:** 76 g
- Provenance:** Donated along with the duplicate (NFM13) in 1916 by the landlord of the Ross Hotel, Ross, Tasmania; it was attached to his hotel building.
- Reference:** AC4
- Accession no:** NFM012
- Duplicate:**
- Accession no:** NFM013, weight: 73 g.

The Derwent and Tamar Fire Insurance Company founded in Hobart in 1838 is regarded as the first Australian-originated insurance company. In 1854 it established agencies in Victoria and NSW and in 1858 South Australia. Royal Insurance acquired the company in 1961.



EQUITABLE

Equitable Insurance Company of London established a subsidiary company in 1857 titled Equitable Fire Assurance Company of Australia.

Description: Centre, a hand holding scales representing Justice, above INCORPORATED 1865, below on base EQUITABLE. traces of blue paint throughout.

Metal: tinplate

Size: h 21 w 27 cm

Weight: 166 g

Provenance: Six examples are in the collection but only one donor is known; Mr H Caire, of 59 Hindley St, Adelaide. He donated two Equitable fire marks in 1915, and they had been attached to the front of his saddlery premises. It is not known which two examples Caire donated. An article by Chitty appearing in the *SA Register* on 23 August 1915 on fire marks states that the last one in Rundle Street was removed a few days previously from Brunkhorst's jewellery shop (**plate 1**) and it was an Equitable Office mark. Chitty wrote 'There are a number of them about in Adelaide... I know of only one that is on a wall in Melbourne.'

Reference: AC17

Accession no: NFM014

Duplicates:

Accession no: NFM015, weight: 221 g, over-painted in brown paint.

Accession no: NFM016, weight: 214 g, over-painted in brown paint.

Accession no: NFM017, weight: 197 g, over-painted in brown paint.

Accession no: NFM018, weight: 159 g.

Accession no: NFM019, weight: 154 g.



IMPERIAL

Description: Crown, below IMPERIAL. Crown and frame around lettering in gold, and rest black. Back blackened.

Metal: copper

Size: h 21 w 21 cm

Weight: 87 g

Provenance: The collection has seven Imperial fire marks and one is a minor die variety; no relief line between crown and lettering, NFM026. Two fire marks have been recorded as being donated; in 1915 Mrs Holder of *Ellimatts*, Main St, Henley Beach donated one that was attached to a building at 283 Waymouth St, Adelaide. The other was received in 1921 from Mr F.C. Jack of Circular Quay Bond, 5 & 7 Phillip St North, Sydney.

Reference: AC52

Accession no: NFM020

Duplicates:

Accession no: NFM021, weight: 71 g, paint removed.

Accession no: NFM022, weight: 131 g, over-painted in brown paint.

Accession no: NFM023, weight: 93 g.

Accession no: NFM024, weight: 95 g.

Accession no: NFM025, weight: 88 g.

Imperial was established in England in 1803 and a Sydney agency was established in 1845 followed by Adelaide 1847 and Melbourne in 1848. Subsequently branches were established in Melbourne in 1860, Sydney 1876, Adelaide 1886 and Brisbane in 1886. In 1902 Imperial was taken over by Alliance.



IMPERIAL

- Description:** Crown, below IMPERIAL. Back blackened.
- Die variety:** There is no line between crown and lettering and made of tinfoil.
- Metal:** tinfoil
- Size:** h 21 w 21 cm
- Weight:** 82 g
- Provenance:** See comments NFM020
- Reference:** AC54 (die variety)
- Accession no:** NFM026



LIVERPOOL & LONDON & GLOBE

- Description:** Centre left, liver bird with a liver branch in its mouth facing left (from the coat of arms of the city of Liverpool), and right, a dragon (supporter on the coat of arms of the city of London). Above LIVERPOOL and below LONDON. In the attached ribbon, '& GLOBE' and it is attached to the original sign by a brass split pin. Back of main fire mark is blackened.
- Metal:** tinfoil and zinc (ribbon)
- Size:** Top h 25 w 21 cm, attachment h 10 w 25 cm
- Weight:** 106 g
- Reference:** AC56
- Provenance:** Donated in 1917 by Synnot Bros of Melbourne. They gave permission for Chitty to remove the fire mark from their warehouse at 276 Spencer St, Melbourne.
- Accession no:** NFM027

The Liverpool Fire and Life was established in 1836, and in 1847 it absorbed the London, Edinburgh and Dublin Assurance Company of London and was renamed Liverpool and London Fire and Life Insurance Company. In 1851 it took over the Australasian Company. In 1864 the Liverpool and London merged with the Globe (commenced 1803) and traded as Liverpool and London and Globe Insurance Company. In 1919 the company was acquired by Royal Insurance Company. This example appears to have been issued shortly after the merger with Globe and predates AC 55. Chitty believes this type was used only in Melbourne.



LIVERPOOL & LONDON & GLOBE

- Description:** Centre left, liver bird with a liver branch in its mouth facing left (from the coat of arms of the city of Liverpool), and right a dragon (supporter on the coat of arms of the city of London), above a globe, around LIVERPOOL & LONDON & GLOBE, below 1836. Symbols and lettering in gold, frame and scroll red, centre black ground.
- Metal:** Copper
- Size:** h 28 w 22 cm
- Weight:** 53 g
- Reference:** AC55
- Provenance:** Donated in 1915 by W Coombs, Yorkshire Insurance Company, Grenfell St, Adelaide. This example appears to have been unused and displays its original paintwork.
- Accession no:** NFM028



LONDON & LANCASHIRE

The company, involved in Australia since 1838, established an office in Melbourne 1862 and at the time also had offices in London and Liverpool.

Description: Centre in three lines LONDON/&/LANCASHIRE, gold lettering, on a black ground.

Metal: copper
Size: h 26 w 24 cm
Weight: 46 g
Reference: AC60
Provenance: Donated in 1916 by Goldsbrough Mort Co from their Melbourne warehouse.
Accession no: NFM029



LONDON & LANCASHIRE FIRE

Description: Centre coloured shields of London and Lancashire, above LONDON and below FIRE and LANCASHIRE, on an unpainted ground.

Metal: tinfoil
Size: h 23 w 27 cm
Weight: 112 g
Reference: AC61
Provenance: Donated in 1916 by Goldsbrough Mort Co from their Melbourne warehouse.
Accession no: NFM030



MERCANTILE MUTUAL

Mercantile Mutual was established in Sydney in 1877.

Description: Oval mark with MERCANTILE/FIRE/MUTUAL in gold lettering on a black background.

Metal: copper
Size: h 15 w 21 cm
Weight: 43 g
Reference: AC24
Provenance: Donated in 1921 by Mr F.C. Jack, Circular Quay Bond, 5-7 Phillip St North, Sydney NSW.
Accession no: NFM031



NATIONAL INSURANCE COMPANY OF NEW ZEALAND

National Insurance Company of New Zealand established a branch in Melbourne in 1874.

Description: Rectangular mark with NATIONAL/FIRE AND MARINE/INSURANCE COMPANY/NEW ZEALAND on four lines

Condition: badly pitted.
Metal: tinfoil
Size: h 13 w 23 cm
Weight: 106 g
Reference: Not listed in AC but Chitty mentions the company on page 28 and in the AGSA copy Chitty wrote in pencil that this variety exists.
Provenance: Donated in 1921 by Mrs F. Rutkin, from a building in Kiama NSW.
Accession no: NFM032



NORWICH UNION

Description: Centre, Justice blindfolded standing facing front, around a decorative scroll, at base in two lines NORWICH/UNION. The figure and lettering are gilded. This example has fragments of red and black paint. Back blackened.

Metal: copper

Size: h 37 w 26 cm

Weight: 94 g

Designer: Gandiano

Reference: AC72

Provenance: Donated in 1916 by Goldsbrough Mort Co from their Melbourne warehouse.

Accession no: NFM033

Norwich Union was founded in 1797 and an agency was established in Melbourne in 1870. Chitty states that the company used 16 or more fire mark varieties of which two were used in Australia. This example was issued about 1860 and was known as the Gandiano sign, named after the designer.



NORWICH UNION

Of the three of this type of Norwich Union fire mark two were donated in 1916 by Goldsbrough Mort Co from their Melbourne warehouse.

Design: Centre Justice seated facing right, shield with clasp hands (representing good faith), above NORWICH and below UNION. Gilded figure and lettering, on a black ground.

Metal: copper

Size: h 27 w 22 cm

Weight: 98 g

Reference: AC73

Provenance: See above

Accession no: NFM034

Duplicates:

Accession no: NFM035, weight: 93 g.

Accession no: NFM036, Weight: 95 g.



QUEEN INSURANCE

Description: Centre, young head of Queen Victoria facing left with traces of gold paint, above QUEEN, and below INSURANCE, on a black ground.

Metal: copper

Size: h 27 w 25 cm

Weight: 90 g

Reference: AC79

Provenance: See above

Accession no: NFM037

Duplicates:

Accession no: NFM038, weight 89 g.

Accession no: NFM039, weight 89 g.

Accession no: NFM040, weight 88 g.

Queen Insurance was founded in Liverpool in 1857 and a branch was established in Victoria in 1865; by 1891 the company was absorbed into the Royal Insurance Company. Chitty noted six fire marks varieties but he had seen only two in Melbourne. Three of the four of this design were donated in 1916 by Goldsbrough Mort Co from their Melbourne warehouse. The provenance of the other is unknown.



ROYAL

Description: Centre, ROYAL, above a crown and below a liver bird (a cormorant) with a laver branch (crest of Liverpool) facing left. Gold crown, lettering and bird, background on scroll black, all other parts green.

Metal: copper
Size: h 30 w 25 cm
Weight: 99 g
Reference: AC83
Provenance: See above
Accession no: NFM041

Royal Insurance Company was established in 1845 in Liverpool and established agencies in Adelaide in 1848, Melbourne 1849 and Sydney in 1850. There are two similar varieties, one 30 cm high and the other 38 cm; of the former, one example and of the latter two examples are held. The caption cards reveal that one came from Mr T. Truscott in 1915 and the other from Goldsbrough Mort Co from their Melbourne warehouse in 1916. Chitty's 1915 correspondence states the third example came from Don Taylor of Rundle St, Adelaide.



ROYAL

Description: Centre, ROYAL, above a crown and below a liver bird (a cormorant) with a laver branch (crest of Liverpool) facing left; overpainted brown.

Metal: tinplate
Size: h 38 w 31cm
Weight: 201 g
Reference: AC82
Provenance: See NFM041
Accession no: NFM042
Duplicate:
Accession no: NFM043, weight: 174 g.



STANDARD

Standard Fire and Marine Insurance Co. of New Zealand was established 1847.

Description: Centre Royal Scottish Standard, around above STANDARD and at bottom four stars each with five points. Hints of a faded blue in centre, on a black ground.

Metal: zinc
Size: h 25 w 20 cm
Weight: 85 g
Reference: AC18
Provenance: Donated in 1921 by Mr F.C. Jack from Circular Quay Bond, 5 & 7 Phillip St North, Sydney, NSW.
Accession no: NFM044



SYDNEY

Sydney Fire Insurance Company was established in 1844 at 468 George St, Sydney.

- Description:** Centre Golden Fleece facing right, above FIRE INSURANCE below SYDNEY
- Metal:** copper
- Size:** h 18 w 26cm
- Weight:** 47 g
- Reference:** AC13
- Provenance:** Donated in 1916 by Goldsbrough Mort & Co from their Melbourne warehouse.
- Accession no:** NFM045



TAMAR FIRE & MARINE INSURANCE

Tamar Fire & Marine Insurance established in Launceston c.1853.

- Description:** Centre a radiant sun with a human face, around TAMAR FIRE & MARINE and at bottom a star and on base INSURANCE. Sun, star, and lettering gold, centre background blue background of frame and base red.
- Metal:** copper
- Size:** h 23 w 20 cm
- Weight:** 83 g
- Reference:** AC3
- Provenance:** The quality of the painting and the lack of attachment holes show this example is unused. Chitty had purchased two in Launceston from the estate of its first insurance manager and sold his duplicate to the Board in 1916 at cost price of 7/6d.
- Accession no:** NFM046



TASMANIAN FIRE INSURANCE COMPANY

The Tasmanian Fire Insurance Company was established in 1835 in Hobart. The company was taken over by Alliance Insurance Company of London. Pre 1917

- Description:** Centre, emu facing right head turned left, around TASMANIAN FIRE INSURANCE, and on base in two lines A.D. 1835/COMPANY. Bird and lettering gold on a black ground. Back blackened.
- Metal:** copper
- Size:** h 23 w 17cm
- Weight:** 61 g
- Reference:** AC2
- Provenance:** Donated in 1917 by Synnot Bros of Melbourne. They gave permission for Chitty to remove the fire mark from their warehouse at 276 Spencer St, Melbourne.
- Accession no:** NFM047



VICTORIA

The Victoria Insurance Company was established in 1849 in Melbourne.

Description: VICTORIA on ribbon, above eagle in flight. Bird and lettering in gold, ribbon blue and background red.

Metal: copper

Size: h 21 w 23cm

Weight: 56 g

Reference: AC11

Provenance: Donated in 1918 by the manager, Victorian Insurance Company, 53 Market St, Melbourne. As it came from the insurance company and is in mint condition it would have never been placed on a wall.

Accession no: NFM048

Duplicate:

Accession no: NFM049, weight: 108 g, and provenance; donor Synnot Bros of Melbourne. They gave permission for Chitty to remove the fire mark from their warehouse at 276 Spencer St, Melbourne (1917).

Coloured postcard entitled "A fire alarm – Adelaide Brigade – racing to the scene" dated 1906. In the background is a sign for C. Ohlmeyer, Butcher, which was established in Wakefield Street in 1862. Collection: State Library of South Australia, B 39379



NOTES

- 1 Eg *South Australian Register* 24 Oct 1865 p 2.
- 2 *SMH* 22 Dec 1865 p 5.
- 3 Mossgreen, *The Collection of Caressa Crouch & Carl Gonsalves*, Melbourne 22 Feb 2015 (MG045); <http://www.mossgreen.com.au/m/view-auctions/catalog/id/137/>, accessed 2 Mar 2017.
- 4 Phoenix appointed H W Phillips as their SA agent in 1846; *SA Register* 25 Feb 1846 p 2.
- 5 *The Register* 23 Aug 1915 p 9.
- 6 *Journal of the Victorian Historical Society* vol viii nos 3, 4, October, December 1921.
- 7 His obituary is in *The Argus* 8 Jun 1929 p 9.
- 8 *Weekly Times* (Melbourne) 20 Jul 1929 p 11.
- 9 South Australian State Records, ref. GRG 19/7 (Chitty), 13 June 1929.
- 10 South Australian State Records, ref. GRG 19/7 (Chitty), 5 July 1929.
- 11 South Australian State Records, ref. GRG 19/7 (Chitty), 3 Aug 1929.
- 12 *SH* 1 July 1833 p 2.
- 13 *SG* 18 May 1837 p 2.
- 14 *SA Register* 2 Aug 1873 p 5.



Peter Lane is an Adelaide numismatist, collector and Honorary Numismatist at the Art Gallery of South Australia. Last year he and his wife Janis established an Australiana collectors' study group which meets in Adelaide the first Thursday of each month and welcomes guests. Contact him at pnj.lane@bigpond.com.

Considerations on the psychology of collectors and collecting

Melbournian medical practitioner, ornithological art historian and collector Dr Mark Cabouret is well placed to set out some thoughts about the psychological aspects of collecting and distinguishes between 'healthy' and 'unhealthy' collecting. We hope this will stimulate some more contributions on the subject from other readers who have reflected on their or others' collecting habits.

MARK R. CABOURET

No-one needs to collect, so why do we do it? Phylogenetically, there is no precedent for this behaviour. Man is the only animal that collects.

In the Northern Hemisphere, birds which include woodpeckers, flickers and jays collect acorns in autumn and store them but clearly do so with the intent of providing food during the harsh winter to follow. They collect in times of bounty in anticipation that seasonally this cannot last and instinctively prepare to offset against times of deprivation.

Among Northern Hemisphere mammals, the wolverine forms caches where food is stored out of the way of other predators as a similar safeguard. It is not so much for this habit as their voracious appetite that they were once known as gluttons. This word is a peculiarly human construction and evidences a quality seen in abnormal collecting: the accumulation or hoarding of objects in excess of requirements.

In the Southern Hemisphere, during Victorian times the intriguing bowerbirds belonging to the family Ptilonorhynchidae were attributed anthropomorphically with an attraction to brightly coloured, curious and novel objects with which to 'decorate' their bowers or courting arenas. Indeed the word *bowerbird* itself has come to represent an avian metaphor highlighting or at least inferring an 'unhealthy' attribute in conceit and self-interested ornamentation of one's life with novel objects.

A similar avian metaphor has been drawn historically through the European Magpie which embodies those attributes that find no place in the activities of the

'healthy' collector; the misappropriation or theft of other's valued possessions. While "collecting" such materials is evident to a minor and even extravagant and astonishing degree among various members of the family Ptilonorhynchidae, the behaviour is best understood as an extension of male display behaviour in which plumage and posturing are given a remarkable and seemingly contrived accessory.

While these animal behaviours are driven by instinct, they show some of the motives which socio-biologically have become translated into human behaviour and which can allay one's fears of being ill-prepared for times of hardship as well as increasing one's desirability or attractiveness as a reproductive partner. The ancient practice among New Guinea Highlanders of collecting the plumes of the Birds of Paradise, parrots and other exotic forms reveals in a very unsophisticated way, the importance of the collected object in becoming an article of commerce or currency in various transactions, a measure of one's status within the community and through the emergence of aestheticism, an article of adornment. These enhance one's attractiveness and according to the number, rarity and obvious difficulty in attainment, speak most eloquently of the owner's prowess as a hunter and by inference, suitability as a mate.

In sophisticated society, we tend not to collect what we need and when we do collect food or necessary articles of clothing and household goods in anticipation of unsettled times; the behaviour is seen at best as preparation and at worst as evidence of eccentricity but not as collecting. Our unique gift for abstract thought ensures that the underlying

biological needs and origins of the activity have become obscured and gratification takes place at a largely symbolic level. We cannot eat Fabergé eggs and yet the sale of one of these highly collectable trophies by the Russian goldsmith would pay for and satisfy the nutritional requirements of a lot of hungry people.

Objects, unlike life, have the potential to endure for an indefinite period of time and therefore our association with such things provides us with the means to enjoy a sense of continuity with the distant past through the present into the future. To that degree they provide comfort for those who value living and who are in no hurry to relinquish life and for those who live in fear of what, if anything, may follow.

The practice of collecting together objects for burial in tombs in pharaonic Egypt and much of the ancient world attests to this important aspect of our attachment to objects. It follows then that the more objects and the better quality, the better we are prepared for our journey through life and what may follow. Objects are therefore invested with a quality that helps us to transcend the mundane aspects of everyday life and sharing in that quality of permanence may allow us through self-deception to partake of some small share in immortality. Those individuals who are by good fortune in a position to be philanthropic are often remembered for their bequests of collections and their name at least remains on people's lips long after any knowledge of their character has vanished.

One of the cardinal features, while not pathognomonic, but forming an indispensable diagnostic criterion for the collector is that once the desideratum of the moment is acquired or 'captured',

attention quickly moves to the next object that bears an even more desirable characteristic, such as greater rarity, greater beauty or greater value. Many collectors agree that the thrill of collecting is in the pursuit or *hunting* the object rather than in *possessing* it. The parallel to hunter-gatherer behaviour is obvious.

These behaviours, once essential for survival, were first sublimated into field sports such as fox hunting, bear baiting, dog fighting and cock fighting. Who owned and/or could ride the fastest horse similarly formed the basis of competitive horse racing. The delineators of these activities capitalised on the aesthetic appeal of the finely bred horse and this animal, ahead of all others, entered into the realms of elegance; their breeding and racing became the absorbing interest of sophisticated society.

Apart from the occasional spills, the horse is a mute animal and unless approached injudiciously is unlikely to cause offence. The other field sports, however, involve in a more obvious way pain and suffering of animals and obvious risks to riders or handlers. As sublimated activities whereby the expression of basic instinctual drives became socially acceptable, their natural history was to enjoy a shorter reign.

During an age when fewer and fewer people could ride let alone were required to do so in pursuit of their livelihood and as the social acceptability of brutal sports has become exhausted, these activities have been immortalised through the work of artists such as Sir Edwin Landseer, Richard Ansdell, George Stubbs and many others whose works have become the desiderata of the hunter-collector whose field of endeavour embraces the auction room offering fine sporting pictures rather than the cockpit or the racetrack. The quarry has become the image of these activities which once were deemed an inviolate or sacred and integral aspect to the British character.

In the same way that the cave paintings or petroglyphs of ancient humans served as representations of a successful hunt in anticipation, the collecting of images and the trophies of the hunt, be it fox masks

or stirrup cups, speak convincingly, albeit to the extent of one's imagination, of a supposedly romantic time for which one may, disconsolate, pine nostalgically for the hunt which will never take place.

Another cardinal feature of the collector is the narrow focus of their endeavours, referred to as specialisation. The 'successful' collector is a person who is discriminating and who early on recognises the impossibility of collecting too broadly. The scope, however, obviously and often has run in parallel with the depth of one's purse and those with enormous resources have collected well across several areas yet still realising the impossibility of collecting in all.

This criterion draws into sharp focus a quality which helps to distinguish the 'healthy' from the 'unhealthy' collector. The 'unhealthy' or perhaps 'unsuccessful' collector in this respect is a person who focuses too narrowly and invests so much of their available resources as to compromise their ability to enjoy a broader experience of life and even to attend to the necessities of life, having already placed all and usually more of their finances in service of the exclusive development of their collection.

There are those for whom collecting has been a familial activity and therefore personally appears as a congenital characteristic. For others it has been acquired and for them, their interests often dictated by fashion, pursue an ephemeral course and their collections rarely serve a deeper purpose than their temporary amusement. It is a mere flirtation compared to the abiding love and dedication that the 'true' collectors feel for their collections. Some become obsessed, intensely interested and authoritative as if they have discovered their *raison d'être* only to awaken one morning to find unexpectedly that their interest has evaporated.

There are the 'amateur' and 'professional' collectors who in turn collect for themselves or actually or supposedly on behalf of another individual or institution. There are those who vicariously gratify the collecting need by assisting collectors in forming

their collections. These are the purveyors, retailers and brokers who arrange the marriages between the serious collector and the object of their desire and do so as a preferred livelihood but at the same time gratify their collecting wish without needing to experience the responsibility of owning anything. Whoever and by direct or indirect means are associated with collecting, are to that degree investing their own ego. 'Healthy' and 'unhealthy' or 'good' or 'bad' collectors cannot escape the attraction to and the effect of collecting on their ego or identity. Whether briefly held or lasting a lifetime, collecting addresses a need within the individual.

An example of 'healthy' collecting may evolve as follows. In support of the adage attributed usually to Rudyard Kipling, the Jesuits and many others and known experientially by most observant parents: 'give me a child's first six (or so) years and you can have the rest' we find here so often the nidus of the passion. Imagine that during these first and most formative years a child is exposed to an interest expressed by one or both loving parents. The child consciously or more probably unconsciously recognises that sharing this interest is a desired attribute and continuing to share this interest will ensure affection and security with the parent(s). The child finds that she or he becomes interested in the subject and over time, like the development of one's conscience, the interest becomes autonomous.

Through a child's imagination in which as much value can be ascribed to symbols and representations as to the real object; the gathering of representative objects becomes a means of strengthening the bond to the loving parent(s) and thereby enhancing a sense of their own worthiness to be loved or self worth. Furthermore the 'healthy' collector thereafter relates to the collected objects according to the principles of good parenting. The collector looks after the objects and protects them from destructive or noxious influences of any variety. Whether such threats come in the form of clothes moth or rising damp, fire protection or theft, there is a conviction in the collector that the objects like the collector are worthy of being cared for.

Furthermore, the relationship is an honest one in which the objects collected have only positive or appropriate connotations, excluding any that may, despite their level of desirability, be acquired by any dishonest means. This practice would include theft or purchase through gulling an unsuspecting vendor. A collection which has evolved since early childhood is strengthened by the passage of time and develops a sense of having its origins in the personal past and generically a reverence for any worthy human endeavour in the past. Personally this refers to having enjoyed good parenting but becomes symbolically extended to include an appreciation of similar good craftsmanship whether through the hands of a master wood carver like Grinling Gibbons, consummate furniture design by either Thomas Chippendale, a perspective drawing by Joseph Michael Gandy or the peculiar genius behind a Chelsea tureen.

In the same way that good parenting encourages confidence in a child and a healthy curiosity about the world, these values become incorporated in collecting whereby the collector exercises an intelligent, discerning and even shrewd approach to the hunting and gathering of objects. The sincere appreciation of the various merits possessed by the collected objects is understandable as is the comment, seemingly perverse to the non-collector, that the collector 'loves' the objects. What the collector loves is not the object for being an object but rather what it has come to represent in terms of that greatest desideratum, the state of being loved.

The 'healthy' collector has therefore developed a collection that possesses an essential characteristic: integrity. Acquisition of objects can therefore not be dismissed as amassing or hoarding which is comparable to creating a cache or gluttony. Collectors do not flatter themselves in the erroneous belief that they are better people for possessing such objects, but rather feel better simply by virtue of living in their presence and the contribution that an evolving or working collection makes to the collector's life. As in any loving relationship, parenting or otherwise, endurance, industry, fidelity, as

well as acceptance come to characterise the relationship between the mature collector and the collected objects.

These qualities reach their ultimate expression in the phenomenon of connoisseurship in which the object, found in its 'original' state regardless of condition is preferred and preserved. Such notions satisfy the aesthetic needs of the collector and to the degree that beauty lies in the eye of the beholder, also gratifies the libidinal need. The connoisseur will 'fall in love' with a solid teak and metamorphic cartographer's table, once a desirable piece of military equipage and of use in some Indian campaign while someone else, unmoved by such beauty, will relegate the same to the tip.

In the same way that our children do not belong to us, we do not own our possessions but rather enjoy a healthy parenting and curatorial role in their 'lives'. In providing security for these objects we are repaid by enjoying symbolic forms of security in return. While we may enjoy placing objects in some relevant order, completing series and gaining some new perspective on our collection by comparing it with those of others, the 'healthy' collector desires no more to be in 'control' over the collection than would have the collection control her or his life.

It is at this point that the inanimate objects, unable to speak on their own behalf, may fall into the hands of the 'unhealthy' collector who wishes no more than to impose their will on the objects. The emphasis then becomes one of control. 'Original condition' becomes a secondary consideration to appearing 'brand new' and sympathetic conservation gives way to zealous and destructive attempts at trying to reconstruct what the object may have resembled when newly manufactured or created.

Possessing objects becomes a means by which comparisons are drawn with other collectors and to those who possess none and perversely the 'unhealthy' collector feels a better person. This collector's ruling passion often declares itself because the objects collected are of little intrinsic merit and it is evident that the collector is possessed by the attributes

of or phenomena of collecting which become distorted as a projection of their own excessive or abnormal needs. The 'unhealthy' collector becomes consumed with such pointless notions as 'perfection' and the importance of 'acceptance' becomes lost if indeed it had ever been found.

Returning to our child-collector; enthralled in some ineffable way, curiosity and intelligent enquiry has led to a deepening understanding of the relevant subject matter and the drawing together of what may have appeared disparate objects, and the development of new lines of enquiry. This evolves into a capacity for research and the value to be placed on 'collecting' information and associations as much as the objects themselves.

Thus collecting books may evolve into the establishment of a working or reference library which attracts the curious mind to an appreciation of the history of and practices of book production such as the history of printing and lithography, exemplary literature as well as fine illustration and binding. The acquisition of such a reference collection enables the new researcher to identify neglected or promising areas of enquiry and the means by which to initiate pursuit. A process which when nascent involved the gathering of objects has evolved into a valuable working resource and a complementary personality in the collector which makes possible a future contribution of original work to the field by the 'collector'. Thus, what may have originated as a loving gift or an engaging anecdote by parent or guardian evolves into an absorbing and generative activity which lasts and gives fascination throughout the life of the collector.

Many people do not, of course, collect anything at all. For them the phenomena of collecting are entirely foreign. While their lives may have been enriched by the process of collecting, it cannot be fairly said that their lives are deficient for not pursuing such a course and may have found similar fulfilment through other activities.

Some people have the misfortune of developing within families where traditionally objects have been shunned as somehow possessing nefarious qualities. To this degree, their lives are indeed

impoverished as their relationship to objects is somewhat fear-based and even suggests a paranoid position.

Collectable objects are not fearful; it is only what we do with them which is capable of generating danger to ourselves. The phobia-like avoidance of objects and surrounding ourselves with the nothingness of a minimalist environment robs us of the enriching experience which objects as the work of nature or the highest endeavours of man must surely inspire.

Ultimately the distinction between the 'unhealthy' and 'healthy' collector is based on whether the activities of the collector are selfishly for themselves or altruistically for the benefit of all. It is the insecure ego

that needs to bolster itself up defensively through the amassing of 'security', thought to be afforded by a 'wealth' of objects.

The depressed, dependant and obsessional personality will find succour in the amassing, ordering and controlling of objects in the pursuit of an external expression of perfection, deficient, they feel, within their own lives. Such a regimented approach to collecting and perverse over-valuation of a collected object is so often inversely reflected in their impoverished relationships with other people. The same principles of over-valuation are advanced before any valuation of the 'human' aspect in relating and are to that degree understandably experienced as harmful by their neglected partners.

The 'healthy' collector on the other hand, celebrates the creative achievements of others and their selfless attachment to their collections takes the form of sharing and ultimately passing on their collection to others or a public institution for its safeguard into the future.

Historically, collectors have often been misunderstood. In the same way that the reputation of the fine artist may be compromised by the activities of unscrupulous plagiarists of indifferent ability; the activities of the 'healthy' collector have so often been misjudged through the conspicuous and not uncommonly ostentatious or attention-seeking activities of the 'unhealthy' collector.



Dr Mark R Cabouret is a dedicated collector of early books, photographs, art and any primary source material that helps to elucidate the history of Australian ornithology. He has published four articles in *Australiana* which have served to introduce some of the results of 34 years research into the Cayley family of artists. He has also written the Society's inaugural monograph, in press, which provides an unprecedented insight into the life and work of John Mitchell Cante.

TRIBUTE: G W K (Ken) Cavill, 1922–2017

The passing of Emeritus Professor Ken Cavill on 25 August 2017 at the age of 95 should not go unnoticed. Many newer members will not be familiar with Ken, who was the foremost researcher in the field of Australian silver and gold of the early 20th century, which he also collected. His articles appear in *Australiana* from 1984 to 2013, and in other publications. He served as Treasurer of the Australiana Society from 1987–91, then President 1991–94.

Nothing pleased him more than to share his knowledge when, in curator Eva Czernis-Ryl's words, his "almost boyish enthusiasm" shone through. His best known books are *Australian Jewellers, Gold and Silversmiths, Makers and Marks* and *Brilliant. Australian Gold and Silver 1851–1950*, which he co-authored. Ken's knowledge, record keeping and research skills were formidable, and his

approach that of a perfectionist. While many knew he trained as a chemist, few collectors are aware of his distinguished academic career before he turned his profound intellectual abilities to Australian silver.

Ken Cavill was born in Sydney in 1922, and educated at the Universities of Sydney (BSc, MSc) and Liverpool (PhD, DSc). From 1951 to 1959, he was a Senior Lecturer in Chemistry at the University of NSW, then Associate Professor. He was the first person at UNSW appointed to a Personal Chair (1964–80). In 1969, he was elected a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science.

Ken retired from the university in 1982, in his retirement concentrating on something that did not require a laboratory, grant funding or staff: he devoted himself to the study of early 20th century Australian silver and jewellery.



Ken Cavill, with his familiar smile, in his 90s attending an Australiana Society meeting

At his funeral service, four speakers covered the different aspects of his life, and agreed to share their reminiscences with us. David Black, Professor of Organic Chemistry at the University of NSW, commented on his chemical research:

Ken was distinguished for his research in the chemistry of natural products. His early work dealt with the relationship between chemical constitution and biological activity. His contributions in the heterocyclic field include structural and synthetic studies on mould metabolites. He also published valuable contributions on organic processes, particularly on the mechanism of lead tetra-acetate reactions.

His later and most important research centred on the chemistry of insect venoms, attractants, and repellents. In particular, he isolated a series of novel monoterpene from various species of ants and established their structural correlations by degradation and synthesis. He was a leading authority in the field of cyclopentanoid monoterpenes.

Ken's entire work was characterised by thoroughness, meticulous precision, and integrity. His chemical legacy is a superbly detailed body of work on insect chemistry that will be of great value to future scientists.

Doreen Clark rounded out his scientific life with a more personal view, based on their 57-year friendship which began in 1960, when she started work as one of his researchers. Field trips to the Royal National Park to catch bull ants (legally) for their research were often followed by afternoon tea at his Port Hacking house *Shiprock*; Ken had designed the house and garden himself. He was proud of, and amused by, a plaque awarded for his prize winning garden, though they recorded his name as "Dr G W Kenneth".

Later he moved to Cronulla, then Seaforth, where his house was filled with antiques. There he enjoyed Sunday games of tennis, followed by lunch at one of the players' houses. In 2008, he moved to a nearby apartment, after selling some of his collection the previous year.

By 2016, Ken was no longer in robust health and, after several years of campaigning, a group of his close friends eventually persuaded him to move to a retirement home at St Ives.

Jennifer Genion recounted Ken's long connection with her parents, the collectors

and dealers Graham and Elizabeth Cocks. Ken, Graham Cocks and Jack Grace were the trio who wrote *Australian Jewellers, Gold and Silversmiths Makers and Marks* published by CCG Gold in 1992, but Ken's friendship with Graham went way back to school days, about 1937, based around a tennis club and St John's Young Men's Club in Ashfield. The bonding activities of social events, sports, camping and car trips held the group together through annual reunions for more than 60 years. Ken was always fond of hiking, driving and convivial meals with his close friends, right up to the last.

After leaving the University, Ken planned to continue to use his academic skills and make a useful contribution by researching Australian goldsmiths, silversmiths and jewellers. In the event, his publications spanned more than three decades. He was one of the first to supply excellently researched articles to *Australiana* magazine, having faith that the fledgling newsletter would eventually develop into the pre-eminent publication of reliable articles on Australian decorative arts.

Ken's output on the history of the firms of manufacturing silversmiths and jewellers, many of whom employed hundreds of people in their heyday, came in a steady stream: WJ Sanders (1984), Magnus Goldring (1985), Stokes & Sons (1986), G & E Rodd (1986-7), Willis & Sons (1998) Angus & Coote (1988), Aronson & Co (1990), Tilbury & Lewis (1991), Phoenix (1993), Prouds (1996), W J Sanders (1998) and F J Mole (2006).

Ken's other subjects included souvenir spoons (1994), napkin rings (1996), fishing trophies (2000), the Riverview gold cup (2001), match boxes (2003) and a naval trophy (2004). Two important later articles examined the works produced by individual craftsmen, William Mark (2008) and Louis Somme (2013). All his articles are clearly and precisely written, and well illustrated.

Jack Grace met Ken in the 1980s, introduced by Graham Cocks. Jack like Ken was a chemist and graduate of Liverpool University. All three were collectors and members of the Australiana Society, and had written articles on Australian metalwork. Graham suggested they should pool their resources and publish a book. They all did further research, Ken wrote it up (long hand),

and Graham and Jack took the photographs.

It took two years, and *Australian Jewellers, Gold and Silversmiths, Makers and Marks*, the definitive work on early Australian jewellery, appeared. Terry Ingram, saleroom correspondent for the *Australian Financial Review*, wrote that "The book provides an idea of the immense depth of jewellery manufacture in Australia and the large variety of possibilities Australian jewellery presents to the collector. Richard Edgcumbe, jewellery curator at the Victoria and Albert Museum, praised the work:

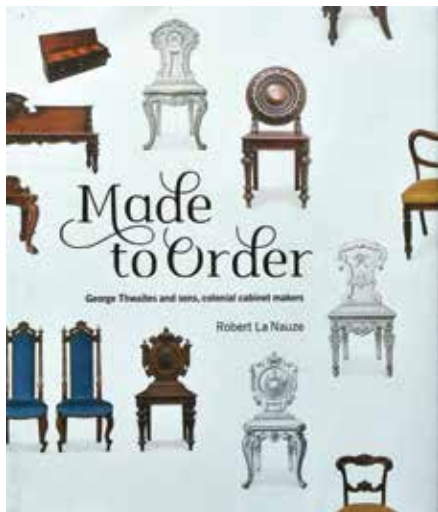
The biographies are fascinating, the illustrations give a wonderful idea of the range of work, and the reproductions of the marks will be invaluable. The accumulation of such a body of precise and well-ordered knowledge is a triumph, and I am sure that the book must already be established as the Bible on its subject. I hope it was enjoyable to write – it is certainly a delight to use and to read.

In 2011, in collaboration with Powerhouse Museum curator Eva Czernis-Ryl, Ken wrote on early 20th century gold and silver for the superbly illustrated book *Brilliant. Australian Gold and Silver 1851–1950*. He was then 89, yet he still produced another incisive article after that, on the French immigrant craftsman Louis Somme, in 2013.

Ken Cavill was a good friend to many and a major contributor to the aims of the Australiana Society, whether as member, committee member or author. He had a ready smile, a familiar chuckle, and was quite modest about his achievements. He was always a delightful author to work with, as his contributions were carefully thought out, comprehensive, interesting, balanced, concise and well illustrated. He has left us a solid legacy of publications in the field he chose to specialise in, early 20th century gold and silver. Ken was a wonderful example of how to enjoy a fulfilling life in retirement.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Professor David Black, Doreen Clark, Jennifer Gennion, Dr Jack Grace and Eva Czernis-Ryl generously made available their thoughts for this tribute which was compiled by John Wade.



REVIEW BY PAUL GREGSON

Robert La Nauze, *Made to Order. George Thwaites and sons, colonial cabinetmakers.* New South Publishing, Sydney & State Library Victoria, 2017. Hard cover, 247 x 208 mm 316 p. ISBN 9781742235516 \$59.99

Our furniture history for many years has been the subject of naivety, supposition, and guesswork. “Who made it?” – “it must have been a cabinetmaker because it has dovetails.” “What was it made from?” and “could they have had a pattern book?”

The first study into our furniture history appears to be by John Earnshaw, a retired engineer. The name ‘W. Beaton’ stamped on an old cedar chiffonier aroused his curiosity. Earnshaw investigated further and produced a slim book, *Early Sydney Cabinetmakers*, in 1971 which resulted in devotees, students, historians, dealers and makers striving for more information.

Over the years we have gone from newspaper reports, magazine articles, individual summaries and reference books

to what attracts me in recent times: books that draw the reader to the real social, educational, creative and hard life of the cabinet maker. Denis Lake’s *The Men who made the Celebrated Chairs* (2016) is one, now joined by Robert La Nauze’s *Made To Order* – a superb book guaranteed to satisfy everyone interested in all aspects in our colonial furniture making.

Both writers have gathered us into a social and professional circle, with a lively account where you can almost smell the lumber. None more so than Robert, whose challenge was real and approach genuine – he wanted to research the history and lives of his wife’s family, furniture makers in Melbourne. The volume of information he has amassed invites the reader to be totally absorbed so that they themselves feel involved – bystanders in the story not just of the cabinet makers but encompassing the social, economic, domestic and commercial development of Melbourne.

It amuses me to read that “they might (must) have had pattern books.” Every culture in architecture (the genesis of ideas for all our arts), decorative arts, furniture, etc has designs, because in the background there was a publisher ready to print for his living. If you made it attractive, the tradesmen would buy it and the makers and publisher earn a living – simple! The catalogue enabled the client to view a picture of a potential ‘must have’, even though most of us have the ability to design and draw to our client’s wishes. Thwaites brought pattern books with him from England.

I can imagine the Thwaites’ excitement at seeing for the first time the exposed timber of river red gum, with its density and vibrant colour. But it is so hard and thankless, in my opinion this timber must be worked with metalwork machinery. I have had the pleasure to test and reject it (I have a lot of respect for my hand tools) so I take my hat off to the Thwaites. Cost may have been the factor but the lists show they made many pieces. They would have

been well pleased when their chisels hit musk, Huon, cedar and blackwood or even mahogany; the world used it, it was here and so were veneers.

We can see the progression of design in their finished products, especially their chairs. In the 1860s, their design inspiration, heavily reliant on turning and carving, came from Blackie et al (1853). The medallion-back, all-wood chairs are very heavy but easily made. The bank chair on page 156 is heavy, commercial, and relies for its decoration on turned legs (not pretty) with the back medallion turned and carved. On page 160 a more elaborate chair is structurally the same, but now with a lozenge to the leg squares, carving to the large leg bead, fluting below and to the seat rails, carving to the back legs and medallion rim, and adorned with foliate carved brackets onto applied timbers. There is not a lot of evidence that Thwaites made sets of sprung, fully upholstered furniture.

I suggest that much of this work was probably out-sourced, although not acknowledged as such; these were specialised trades, separate disciplines, and with upholsterers expensive to employ apart from their necessary tools. Although most of these trades had their basic kits, “none of them were paid by piece”. All of these trades were in demand and they could enhance the heavier furniture being produced. Even Gillows was known to bring out earlier designs and bolster their construction to meet the demand for sturdier frames. This created more area of timber for incised or applied decoration.

Sydney Technical College has in recent years abolished the *only course in the world* teaching trade wood turning. It began very early last century and (we don’t know why) was known as the “Scottish” method. English and European methods involved more plunge cutting and scraping; the Scottish method required fewer tools as well. As a graduate of this course, I was sad to see its demise. The wood carving course also began in the early 1900s, survived

for a short period and was attended and patronised mostly by women, whose work can be identified on commercial and hobby work; a private publication exists on this history. War was probably the reason for its closure.

The book has so much information on the houses, vice regal residences, mansions, commercial buildings, ceremonial pieces, politicians – all with assigned or attributed commissions. The appendices give us the full history of the workshop addresses, land holdings, clients, biographies, briefs on some family members and employees. All in all, it is a comprehensive collection of information that might otherwise have been forgotten or unidentified.

It would be harsh to find any objection to this volume. I personally would have liked to see the hard cover laid with blue cloth with a gilt stamp of one of the line drawn chairs and to the spine “THWAITES”, but this is only my opinion (a bit like eulogising a perfect rose only to note the thorn on the stem). I would delete the word *master* referring to an experienced craftsman, as it relates to the European schooling method for a tradesman to achieve business skills.

What a beautifully written book. That so much material was available, unearthed, digested, untangled, related or assigned is not only a credit to the families’ input but also their associates. This family history book has to be put forward as remarkable, not only in literary terms but also in historical significance. What cannot be conveyed is the mood of a furniture workshop – the temperature, temperament, the idle hours, the unproductive hours, mistakes, arguments and the ‘not meeting expectation’ scenarios – life. As an experienced practitioner, I can relate to the book, having had two factories, now back to where I started.

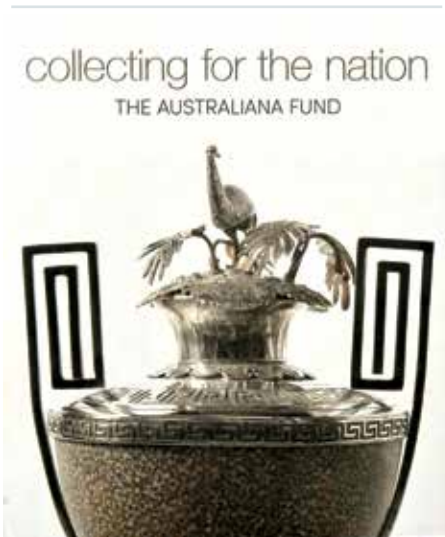
John Hawkins’ foreword echoes my sentiments. Whatever I have written may not be enough in praise of this book.

The words of one of the Thwaites (page 266) echo so much to those of us who are attached to our disciplines, provide enjoyment to our clients and build our character, and that I too have been able to pass to on my children:

“I have experience that very few men have had, and my father before me. We have experience in our family that very few people in the world have had.”

Thank you Robert La Nauze.

Paul Gregson is a practising conservator, restorer, furniture maker and upholsterer based in Camden NSW.



REVIEW BY JOHN WADE

Jennifer Sanders (ed.), *Collecting for the Nation, The Australiana Fund. The Australiana Fund and New South, Sydney, 2017. Hardback with slipcase, 314 pp, 276 x 240 mm, many illustrations, index, ISBN 9781 7422 35608, \$100.*

On a visit to Washington with her husband, Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, Tamie Fraser was inspired by Jackie Kennedy’s initiatives in setting up the organisations charged with

decorating the State Rooms of the White House and the State Department, where American art and antiques are arranged in period settings to impress visiting dignitaries. To avoid the inevitable philistine claims of government waste, these new bodies were privately funded,

Tamie Fraser was one of the first to realise the same could be done here to reflect our own culture and history. In 1978, she encouraged the establishment of The Australiana Fund (not to be confused with the Australiana Society, established in the same year), with the aim of lending appropriate examples of Australian historical and contemporary artworks to the four official residences – *Government House (Yarralumla)* and *The Lodge* in Canberra, *Kirribilli House* and *Admiralty House* in Sydney.

Mrs Fraser would also have been cognisant of the eye-catching changes that her 1960s predecessor Dame Zara Holt had made to *The Lodge*, as Margaret Betteridge points out in her chapter. So The Australiana Fund was set up as an independent body, which would fund, select, acquire and lend items to the houses, generally free of interference from their distinguished but nevertheless transient inhabitants.

The Australiana Fund lends the objects to decorate the houses’ public spaces. From this year on, an expert panel appointed by Prime Minister Turnbull, with the acquiescence of the Opposition Leader, will guide the Government on how to “conserve and improve” the two official residences of the Prime Minister (but not the Governor-General’s houses, which presumably come under a different government body!). I imagine the incumbents will still have more or less free rein in the private apartments.

The first half of the book is about the houses and their history. None of the four houses is particularly grand, as chairman Donald McDonald immediately points out; all the more

reason that they should be furnished wisely. Melbourne decorator Ruth Lane-Poole, hired to design the interiors of *The Lodge*, described it in 1926 as “manorial architecturally and suburban in size”. This creates its own problems in presenting valuable objects in cramped spaces.

Photographs show how some of the interiors, displaying the Australian Fund collection, look now, but it is far from a complete record of the houses today, and the impact of 40 years’ work, which must sometimes have been an uneven struggle.

The second half of the book is about the collection itself. Authors give an overview of major periods starting with the land and its exploration by Europeans, colonial (from 1788 to 1851), gold and prosperity, Federation and flora, and modern Australia, plus a chapter on cabinet timbers.

Honorary editor Jennifer Sanders has done a fine job of bringing it all together, with the help of expert contributors, so that each object in the collection tells many stories. Objects must encapsulate some or several recognised themes, such

as distinguished artists or makers, all states and territories, political figures, design movements, the nation’s history and its place in the world.

What appeals most to me are the essays on the individual objects, which are long enough to be interesting and short enough to be easily digested. As well as being illustrated and described, with a short history of the maker or subjects, each item is set into its historical context. A recurring theme is that many were made by immigrants, reflecting the fusion of their foreign training with the styles and motifs they adopted in their new home.

The Fund collection is clearly a work in progress and will develop over time to include, I expect, works that are more recent, more Indigenous artworks, and items which are not just artworks but items that reflect our sporting, industrial, mining, agricultural or innovative abilities, and those that reflect the contribution of immigrants of more recent times. While generally these must be suitable for a domestic interior (commemorative gifts such as the Broken

Hill mine model in silver come to mind), some of these things might, for instance, be incorporated into the gardens of the houses, as a few items of sculpture have been (and I’m not recommending a Hill’s Hoist).

The most remarkable thing about the collection is that it has been put together solely by the fundraising efforts of the members and generous donors. The Fund’s collection is made available to the community each year through open days, and now is even more accessible with this elegant publication.

It’s a long time since we had an impressive book that attempts to put Australian arts and decorative arts into context, which is what it does very successfully. This volume makes it all worthwhile, giving context to the objects and making them form a coherent picture, with many interwoven historical, social and cultural threads that help define our nation.

John Wade is the Editor of *Australiana* and, like many of the contributors to this book, a former curator.

Queensland members’ first event

Queensland members of the Australiana Society held their first event at the John Oxley Library Heritage Collections at the State Library of Queensland on 31 August 2017.

Dianne Byrne and other SLQ staff members hosted the meeting, attended by 12 members, including some who had re-joined the Society as a result of the formation of our local group. Dianne and the staff put on an exceptional mini-exhibition of some of the real treasures held in the collections, along with an illustrated talk about the items.

Highlights from the display were the Alexander Shaw Specimen Book, 1787, with items collected during the three voyages of James Cook; the Queensland Turf Club Corinthian Cup, a sterling silver cup presented to Robert Herbert,

first Premier of Queensland, whose grey gelding *Grasshopper* won the race in 1865; a silver tea set presented to James Challacombe (1829–69) by the employees of Jimbour station on the Darling Downs to mark his retirement as superintendent of the property in 1869; John Campbell’s 1890 watercolour “View of Merthyr from the Brisbane River”, the home of Sir Samuel Griffith (1845–1920), Premier of Queensland and Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia; an illuminated album presented to Johann Christian Heussler, Commissioner of the Queensland Government, by the German inhabitants of Queensland on the eve of his return voyage to Germany, August 1897; a stiff detachable shirt collar belonging to Henry Lawson, written on in pencil and signed; the 18 carat gold

swag-style necklace with five openwork carved gold hinged pendants, made by Christian Ludwig Qwist for Queensland squatter John Watts; and a collection of six black and white silver gelatin photographs taken in Queensland by Max Dupain c 1942–43.

Being able to see and handle these items in the “White Gloves Room” was a very special experience and members responded very enthusiastically. We thank Dianne for her thoughtful selection of items and imparting her knowledge. Dianne has a set a very high standard for us and it will be a challenge to match.

Contact details for Queensland convenors David Bedford and Jennifer Stuerzl are posted on the Society website, www.australiana.org.au/about.



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HAUGHTON FORREST (1826-1925)

Mt Wellington, Tasmania
Oil on board in original frame
Signed lower right
31 x 44 cm

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The death of the famous greyhound Rhodanthe is announced ... Rhodanthe was the most celebrated greyhound of either sex that Australia has produced. She was bred in 1880 by Mr W.B. Rounsevell, of Adelaide, and was by Rebellion – Westeria. She enjoyed the distinction of being the only greyhound that ever won the Victorian Waterloo Cup twice, her victories being accomplished in 1883 and 1885, and amongst other stakes won by her were the Waterloo Purse, Australian Cup, Moonee Valley Champion Stakes, and Ballarat Champion Stakes.



An obituary from *The Tasmanian*, 24 March 1894, p 43.