
AUSTRALIANA

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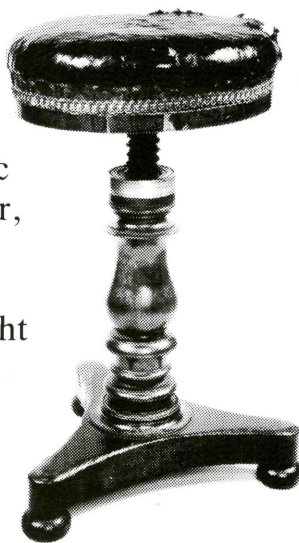
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A Message From The President

The Australiana Society was established in 1978. In anticipation of Australia's Bicentennial Celebrations in 1988 which will mark our first decade the Society is launching *Australiana* (formerly the Australiana Society Newsletter) in a new enlarged and more attractive format.

I hope that members throughout Australia will react favorably to the change and realize the increased scope it will give us all as a quarterly forum for *Australiana*. It is your society and we need your articles, information and comments to enable us to continue to publish significant and worthwhile material. Interstate, country and overseas members may feel a loss at their inability to regularly participate in a number of the Society's activities but the true lifeline of the Society is *Australiana*. Whether you can prepare an article or wish to agree or disagree with one already published put pen to paper and forward your contribution to the Editor. Do not feel intimidated. An article can be several pages, a few paragraphs or even a few lines of news about what you consider relevant and of interest to fellow members. Hopefully you might find it will become a regular habit. Not only will you make your Editor extremely happy but also acquaint other members of your particular interests. It is this exchange of ideas and comment that will give us all the enjoyment of a fuller and deeper knowledge of *Australiana*.

Kevin Fahy
President

CONTRIBUTIONS

Contributions to *Australiana* are welcomed and should preferably be typed, double spaced, on one side of A4 paper only. Photographs should preferably be good quality black-and-white prints on glossy paper. Photograph captions should include necessary identification and the name of the photographer. Copyright clearance, where applicable, is the responsibility of the author. Contributors requiring return of material should include a stamped, addressed envelope.

Manuscripts, press releases, book notices and books for review should be sent to the Editor, *Australiana*, 10 Porter Street, Bondi Junction NSW 2022.

The Editor reserves the right to make any changes necessary to contributions at his absolute discretion, or to reject items considered unsuitable. No major changes will be made without consultation with the author.

SOCIETY NEWS

We must be doing something right if most of the members of the Society rejoice every year. We hope you like the new format and quality of *Australiana* — not only the way it looks, but the content too. And there will be more good articles coming up in the May issue.

If this is your first issue, welcome to the Australiana Society. We are pleased that you have joined, and hope that you will spread the word. The more members we have, the better we can make the journal, and the better we can make the journal, and the better we can satisfy our objectives.

With this in mind, the Committee has been encouraging the development of the Society outside its home state of New South Wales, where it was founded in 1978. In November 1985, a meeting of members in Adelaide agreed to call a public meeting early in 1986 to strengthen South Australian membership, and Mr Peter Roberts of Moghul Antiques (66 Wyatt St, Adelaide, telephone (08) 223-5097) agreed to organise the first meeting. This year, Victorian members will similarly get together at a meeting to be coordinated by Juliana Hooper (telephone (03) 51-3260). Tasmanian members will soon be notified of a function where they can get together.

In Sydney, we have bi-monthly meetings usually with guest speakers, an annual Australia Day dinner, and excursions. Soon we should have a program in other states, and all programs will be published in the journal. Speakers will be encouraged to provide texts or summaries of their talks for *Australiana*; we will also be looking for interstate correspondents.

The advertisers in this issue have shown their faith in the Society's progress, and make a substantial contribution to funding the journal. We depend on their support — they depend on yours.

New Members

NSW

Graham Berryman
Nellie Bligh
Sandra Davidson
Michael Driffield
Dr Peter Emmett
Michael Greene
Dr Kevin Hanel
Mr & Mrs D. Hughes
Gwenda Mirabello
Peter Mitchell
Mrs M. Mullins
W. J. Noble
Mrs J. Pink
Robyn Skjoedt
Jim Zemancheff

ACT

Carolyn Forster

QLD

George Dean
Mrs M. Maynard

SA

Peter Jenkinson
Mr & Mrs H. Ryan

TAS

Mr & Mrs Rick Reynolds

VIC

Mr A. Collins
Peter Walker

Society Program 1986

NEW SOUTH WALES

All meetings are held at 7.30 p.m. at the rooms of James R. Lawson Pty Ltd, 212 Cumberland St, The Rocks, unless otherwise indicated.

January 26

Australia Day Dinner

Guest speaker: Peter Timms
"Australian Studio Ceramics"

Venue: James Cook Room, Wentworth Hotel

Peter Timms is Director of the Manly Museum and Art Gallery, and author of book on Australian Studio Pottery to be published by Oxford in October 1986. He was awarded a Churchill Fellowship in 1982 to study Arts and Crafts Pottery in Britain in connection with the development of the movement in Australia, and was formerly at the Shepparton Art Gallery and Mint Museum.

February 6

Guest speaker: Ken Cavill
"Electroplate in Australia"

Ken Cavill recently retired as Associate Professor in the School of Chemistry at the University of NSW, and has since accelerated his study of 20th century Australian silver. Aspects of his research appear in *Australiana* from time to time.

April 3

Guest speaker: Mike Darlow
"Contemporary Australian Woodwork"

Mike Darlow trained as a civil engineer before becoming a full-time wood turner in 1978. From his Sydney Woodworking Centre in Chippendale, he produces exhibition pieces, giftware, architectural and presentation items — many reflecting his idiosyncratic sense of humour and often based on bizarre puns. His recent book, *The Practice of Woodturning*, demonstrates his knowledge and dedication.

April 6

Excursion: Sydney Harbour and Rodd Island.

Relax from comet watching this weekend and take the family on all-weather ferry tour of Sydney Harbour with a picnic (no fires) at Rodd Island — site of a late 19th century laboratory experimenting on rabbit extermination and anthrax vaccine. It lies in Iron Cove and is now part of Sydney Harbour National Park. We will take a ferry around other historic parts of Sydney Harbour, and be given a commentary by the erudite and entertaining Vaughan Evans. He is a recognized expert on maritime matters, and an honorary consultant to the National Maritime Museum.

June 5

Guest speaker: Dr Joan Kerr
"An aspect of Colonial Art"

August 7

Annual General Meeting and Auction.

Recycle some of your second-hand Australiana, exchange it for some more, and have some fun fueled by light refreshments.

September

Excursion: TBA

October 2

Guest speaker: Julian Bickersteth
"Conservation and Restoration"

The field of conservation has grown enormously in Australia over the last decade in particular, spurred on by museums' recognition of the importance of looking after the national heritage for future generations to appreciate and enjoy. Come and hear about what to do, and what not to do with the things that you are the temporary custodian of.

December 4

Trash or Treasure Night and Christmas Party.

Bring along something you want to show, or something you want to know about. Hear the experts tell you what it is or make up a plausible story anyway.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

February

Inaugural public meeting of the Society in South Australia, at Moghul Antiques, 66 Wyatt St, Adelaide, telephone 08 223 5097.

VICTORIA

February 20

Inaugural meeting of Society members in Victoria, convened by Juliana Hooper, telephone 03 51 3260.

TASMANIA

Inaugural meeting of Society members in Tasmania, convened by Rick Reynolds

NEWS

NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM

The Commonwealth Government has established the National Maritime Museum in Sydney on the western side of the Darling Harbour redevelopment. Construction work will begin in early 1986.

Legislation is to be introduced to establish the Museum as a Commonwealth statutory authority with staff employed under the Australian Public Service Act.

The European settlement of our island continent was a result of the courage, determination and superb skill of mariners who sailed in flimsy vessels to discover and chart her unknown shores.

Maritime activity has been vital to all aspects of Australia's national development since 1788. The exploits of Bass and Flinders, the dependence of the early settlers upon the stores ships from England for their survival, the influence of sealers and whalers, the growth of the wool and wheat trade and its links to the famous clipper ships, the Government's role in owning and operating ships, the development of port and river transport, shipbuilding and immigration are all significant aspects of our maritime heritage.

The significance of the role of ships in the discovery, exploration, settlement, communications and sustaining of this country has largely been ignored. Until the early 1960s the principal means of immigration was still by ship.

The historian Russel Ward has pointed out that the Australian legend is the myth of the bush frontier. But the majority of Australians do not live in the bush. They live in coastal cities: some, such as Newcastle, Launceston, Geelong or the State capitals remind their inhabitants constantly of their connection with the sea and its ships. Most Australians probably have seen more of port life than they have of life on the bush frontier.

Set in the heart of Australia's oldest and busiest sea port the Museum will encourage its visitors to experience and become part of the life of a major sea port. Perhaps the main attraction of the Museum will be the wharves and ships. Visitors will be able to see how these vessels were built, rigged, crewed and sailed; to experience the life of sailors, of passengers and migrants and to understand how reliant Australia has always been on the sea.

The Museum will collect ships and small boats of many types and their fittings, maps and charts, paintings, diaries, ship models, uniforms and other memorabilia from all types of marine craft. The collections will embrace all aspects of the mercantile and naval maritime history of Australia including the development and use of Australia's coast, its ports and waterways. It will record the lives and culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and illustrate the significant role played by Australians in a whole range of maritime activities.

The development of Australia's naval history will be documented from the earliest voyages by European ships through the establishment of the Royal Australian Navy in 1911 to the present day.

In announcing the establishment of the National Maritime Museum the Federal Minister of Arts, Heritage and Environment, the Hon. Barry Cohen said "The National Maritime Museum will not be a dry repository of relics, but a living institution of interest both to Australians and overseas visitors, which will provide a major educational and research facility".

Set to be opened to the public in early 1988, the National Maritime Museum will be a most fitting bicentennial project and will join with the other national collecting institutions as a true showcase of Australia's heritage and a source of pride for every Australian.

CONFERENCES IN MELBOURNE

"Classicism and Romanticism" will be the theme of the 1986 conference of the Society of Architectural Historians. It will be held at the Department of Architecture and Building at the University of Melbourne on 16 and 17 May. Site visits before or after are being organised by the convenor, Dr Miles Lewis — and his site visits are memorable.

The Art Association of Australia will be holding its conference immediately following on 17 to 19 May, at the Department of Fine Arts. For more details, write to the convenors at the respective departments, University of Melbourne, Parkville 3052.

BICENTENNIAL NEWS

With sponsorship from BHP, it looks like the touring Bicentennial Exhibition might start moving. It is an updated version of the circus, with pantech-nicons, containerised display modules in an exhibition arcade, a circus tent for performances and live events, and a Bicentennial theatre with audio-visual spectacular. The itinerary, yet to be finalised, includes major population centres as well as capital cities. Exhibition Director Desmond Kennard and Curator Dr Peter Emmett will keep us informed.

SOCIETY OFFERS B & D

Society member and frequent contributor Ian Rumsey is offering a binding service to members who want to get their issues of the journal bound. Work we have seen is done beautifully in maroon quarter leather and buckram with gold tooling, and costs \$25 per volume. Ian is organising this himself so contact him at (02) 888-3618. Be warned that trimming can crop off a little text.

HERITAGE WEEK

All States will now be observing Heritage Week, which has now been scheduled for the next three years. Dates are: Sunday 13 to Sunday 20 April 1986; Sunday 5 to Sunday 12 April 1987; Sunday 17 to Sunday 24 April 1988.

MARY REIBEY LETTER PURCHASED

The State Library of NSW has bought a rare Mary Reibey letter at auction in London.

Mary Reibey, nee Haydock, was born in 1777 and transported for seven years in 1790 after stealing a horse. She was only 13 years old and was dressed as a boy when arrested under the name of James Burrow.

After arriving in Sydney in 1792 Mary worked as a nursemaid until 1794 when she married Thomas Reibey. Soon active in the family business Mary took control after Thomas' death in 1811 and proved to be an astute businesswoman.

Mary's letter, written in 1818, has many interesting comments on life in the colony. She has kind words for 'Governor Laclan Macquarie'. Her convict origins may have prompted the following comments "... this place is not like England You are under the Eye of every one and your Character scrutinized by both Rich and poor..."

Letters by Mary Reibey are extremely rare. The State Library of NSW has examples of documents signed by her and also holds the diary of her trip to England, 1820-21. Only one other letter of Mary Reibey's is held by the Library.

GREEKS IN AUSTRALIA

Hugh Gilchrist, former Ambassador to Athens, has made a study of Greek Australian relations for many years. On 27 February, he will be lecturing about this relationship over 200 years — from 1700 to 1900! The lecture is free at Sydney University's Stephen Roberts Theatre, 8.30 p.m.

FOR SALE

The Society has available for sale 2 tabletop showcases suitable for the display of jewellery or small items.

One has a glass top, 210 mm high with three hinged doors at the back, on two cedar supports with iron fretwork brackets. The cedar supports and frames are painted black. Overall dimensions are about 2440 mm long by 1010 high by 610 deep. It was made about 1890.

The other is similar but smaller (990 x 1010 x 590), and the glass top was replaced c. 1950 with a strong chromium plated steel frame and armourplate glass, ideal for valuable items such as coins or metalwork.

Each is priced at \$300, and they may be inspected by contacting the Editor on (02) 389 4404 (after hours).

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Letters

These letters are in response to an article in the October 1984 issue, entitled "The Reynolds Sale — Hobart", written by "our correspondent on the spot". Some of the opinions expressed by "our correspondent" are disputed. Members are always free to differ from the opinions expressed by our authors, who must, in future, sign their contributions. The journal will remain a forum for discussion and debate, within the bounds of reasonable comment. — Editor

14 January 1986

Mr John Wade, Editor
Australiana

SIR,

THE PREVIOUS issue of *Australiana* included a detailed account of the Reynolds sale in Hobart (28 Sept. 1985), contributed by 'a correspondent on the spot'. As the name of the correspondent is nowhere given, readers have been left with the question as to the 'background and interests of the author. This report strongly conveys personal views about a subject of great interest to members — colonial furniture — and as your informative journal has a reputation for excellence in information, it seems to us to be a matter of considerable importance that this account should have carried the name of the writer.

The contributor chose to remain anonymous. Considering the way in which others were named, this is not surprising.

We found the Reynolds' sale, contrary to the impression conveyed in the report, an important event, which also provided an excellent opportunity to highlight a primary objective of the Society, "to develop, promote and foster an interest in all items of *Australiana*, and in particular to make and conduct research and promote a general awareness and interest in this field". The contribution in question was patently at odds with this objective. Many pieces were described in a negative and often, a deprecatory fashion. We believe readers were misinformed, such as in the following examples:-

In the appraisal of the 'Mona Vale Gentleman's Press' (Lot 31), the following factors were given to suggest that 'it might well have been married from different pieces some time in the past'.

Correspondent: Inside the top right hand door ... a drawing of the press showed no dividing line to indicate that the press comprised two separate pieces.

Our comment: It is most unlikely that the draftsman was concerned about correct representation of the design, the sketch was for an inventory guide of the contents!

Correspondent: There was evidence of divisions and railings (inside the top) suggesting the present four drawers which covered the whole width were not original.

Our comment: Perhaps it was hanging space one side and drawers the other originally, but this does not indicate that the top and bottom are a marriage.

Correspondent: The base of the upper section was a fitted slab of Huon pine while the sides, back and top were cedar.

Our comment: To anyone who has studied Tasmanian furniture at all it is one of the most common features of it. (In fact, Tasmanian collectors enjoy finding their pieces lined in Huon just as much as collectors of NSW furniture enjoy finding their pieces lined in solid cedar).

Correspondent: The top had a four panelled cedar back ... the bottom had vertical planks of Huon pine at the back.

Our comment: This was one of the most acceptable and fashionable construction methods used in this type of 19th century furniture — a panelled back to the top, which was visible through the open doors, and a slat back to the base, not visible. Andrew Lenehan employed this method extensively.

The comments offered about the early colonial press (lot 130), chosen to illustrate the full-colour cover of the sale catalogue were also misleading, and again centred on whether the top belonged to the bottom "because certain stylistic features were not repeated throughout the piece so as to make a harmonious design". We wonder if the writer is familiar with the work of Thomas Sheraton, George



Regency Press — Lot 130

Hepplewhite and Thomas Chippendale, revered 18th century geniuses of design harmony and perspective.

In many of their designs for presses, bookcases, secretaires and wardrobes, the base was left undecorated, whilst the top was embellished. See for example plate 8, plate 39 and plate 52 of Thomas Sheraton's *The Cabinetmaker and Upholsterer's Drawing-Book*, plates 40, 44, 45, and 46 of George Hepplewhite's *The Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Guide* and numerous plates in Chippendale's *The Gentleman and Cabinet-Makers DIRECTOR*. If this press has design inconsistencies, then so have a great number of other Chippendale, Hepplewhite and Sheraton design influenced pieces exhibited in major museums the world over. At very remote intervals now, a remarkable regency Australian piece becomes available for purchase. This was such an item. We felt very fortunate to acquire it — a rare Australian full cedar piece of the 1820s (perhaps earlier), of striking design and beauty, of significant interest for a style not previously recorded in colonial furniture, showing definite design touches from the late 18th century in the cabinetwork and in the decoration (e.g. the drape motif on the cornice — Sheraton 1804). The doors are panelled in spectacular burr cedar (not veneered), bordered with fine nulling, flanked by spiral twisted half columns, and encompassed above by quarter round beading. The Sheraton style of pediment construction, with raised scrolls on the top edge, rosettes and the drape motif is a most unusual and elegant feature to be found on an Australian piece. The doors have a Georgian brass astragal. The timber quality throughout the whole press is uniform and the planing marks in the top and bottom sections are identical, as indeed are the original nails. It will be quite obvious to anyone that this piece, which can be viewed in our shop, has been designed and constructed by the same master craftsman throughout.

On to the drum table:

The correspondent: The financial highlight of the sale was a colonial cedar, library or drum table (lot 68) which excited a lot of interest, particularly with the auctioneers.



Drum Table — Lot 68

Our comment: The facts are that there were at least three other parties not only "excited" by this piece, but bidding strongly: Simpsons Antiques (clearly discernable up to \$19,000), Don Cornes the eventual buyer and the underbidder Dr Carl Bryant. The writer could only post defect notices about this table.

Correspondent: It was somewhat clumsy, difficult to sit at, the top of the column was not cedar, some of the handmade nulling was missing off several drawers, all the drawer knobs were missing, it had weak double reeding to the legs and the general condition could be described as distressed ... a number more of these drum tables has already been discovered.

Our comment: This was a most unkind view — if a piece has survived for 150 years, as this one has, in a country that went through an extended period of despising 'old stuff', some wear, and signs of neglect are very reasonable to encounter. One can count the number the drum tables found in Australia on one hand; that made the discovery of this one significant.



Chiffonier — Lot 120

Loose comments, such as when the chiffonier (lot 120) was described do not sit easily in a journal aimed at fostering knowledge.

Correspondent: This piece seemed to belong more to the 1850s or early 1860s and was of weak Thomas Hope design.

Our comment: Thomas Hope did not design anything remotely resembling this piece of furniture. However, it was the scroll back that was being referred to, a decoration which Thomas Hope utilised in his often complex designs. Scroll decoration is considered a pleasing and desirable feature in Australian colonial furniture.

On Lot 112, a worktable:

Correspondent: Sold to a Sydney collector for \$6,500 who was understood to have been the underbidder for the 'distressed' string inlaid chest of drawers sold at Christies, Sydney, on 23 September 1985 for \$4,500.

Our comment: This aside related to a piece acquired by The Rustic Charm at a competely different sale! For the record: Sue Hewitt, the auctioneer at the Christies sale in Sydney, lightheartedly used the word 'distressed' after selling two late 19th century 'squeaky clean' and over-restored colonial chests, confident in the knowledge that this early, cockbeaded and Greek-key strung chest would bring over four times the price of the others. It is illustrated on page 91, Jan. 1986 *Australian Antique Collector*.

On Lot 126, a three tier dumb waiter:

Correspondent: It may have been reconstructed or repaired and there was some controversy as to what wood it was made of, none being stated in the catalogue ... and dated to the third quarter of the nineteenth century.

Our comment: It was in fact made of cedar, and the style a representation of a Loudon design (1833). If you are not sure that an item has been altered, why make an issue out of it. Either it has or it hasn't.

On a chest described in the catalogue as William IV:

Correspondent: This chest was "in the late 1840s or early 1850s".

Our comment: This chest was simply described as William IV (not dated). The vast majority of Australian furniture has a stylistic resemblance to a particular period, but this does not necessarily mean it definitely falls into that period in date of manufacture! A point which strangely enough, and in complete turnaround fashion, is acknowledged at the end of the report!

Lot 60, Corner cupboard:

Correspondent: "This piece appeared to sell to a Sydney collector for \$11,000 despite the fact that it lacked its base. The back which was Huon pine, was constructed in a manner not typical of corner cupboards of the period."

Our comment: This piece did not in fact lack its base and the Huon lining was consistent with Tasmanian furniture, as previously stated. Australian cabinetmakers were from many diverse backgrounds and schools, and an a typical construction should not necessarily be construed as a point for suspicion.

We were pleased to have the opportunity to examine and to purchase colonial furniture at this sale, as were many other dealers and collectors. We take exception to the unbalanced way this event was portrayed to those who did not attend, and the derisive undertones often used in the report.

We believe it should be mandatory that future contributors be prepared to accept the responsibility for their opinions.

Graeme Dodd & Kornelia Vidler
The Rustic Charm
Sydney

12 December, 1985

John Wade, Editor,
Australiana,
Dear Sir,

I am responding to the article "The Reynolds Sale Hobart" which appeared in the October 1985 edition of *Australiana*. Over the years I have read the journal regularly and have enjoyed many of the excellent articles. Recently I enjoyed a long visit from Robert Hutchinson, one of your foundation members, and I have been acquainted with, and enjoyed talking to Kevin Fahy on occasion.

We have opened our doors on many occasions to others interested in the early furniture and our collection has been accessible to those who shared our interest.

I admire the efforts of the Society to promote the interest in our Australian heritage and identify very strongly with the ideals and principles it holds.

I would probably have no need to tell you that, as a group, Tasmanians generally have a very high awareness, and (per head of population) probably the highest in the country in appreciating the architecture, furniture and art with which Tasmania is so richly endowed.

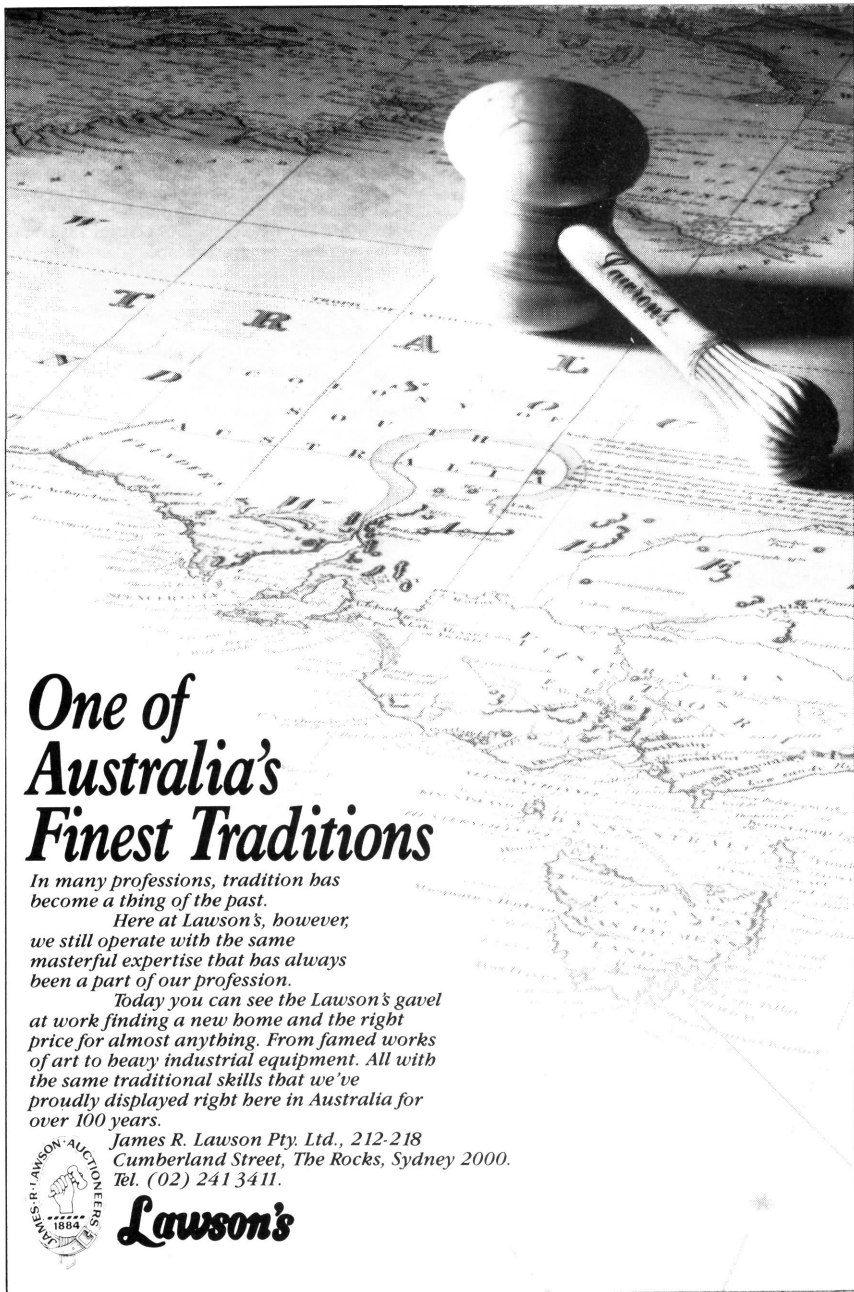
I'm therefore sorry that I have to express my disappointment in the above-mentioned article. I appreciate that the article expressed a personal opinion by your 'correspondent on the spot'.

There are many views expressed that make the most negative and jaundiced portrayal of the various items that were offered. My wife and I have a genuine love of all things associated with the early history of Australia, our love of the early furniture being only one of our interests. We sacrificed our collection for the purpose of buying and restoring a rather neglected 1840 Georgian building, an old pub on the Hobart waterfront in fact, but in no way have we abandoned our interest in early furniture.

The article I'm afraid left a very bad taste in our mouths as it contained many petty and inaccurate remarks.

I would like to make the following comments: In regard to Lot (11) I would challenge the opinion expressed; the chair depicted detail that is consistent with late Georgian to early Victorian and I think the estimate of its age was a fair one. By 1870, as the article attributes the more likely date of its manufacture, we were entering the end of the mid-Victorian era and many so-called Edwardian and late Victorian styles were emerging. The chair showed no hint of any such stylistic changes. A difference of opinion I suppose you could say!

(Continued page 10)



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Lot (29). Again a correction of the estimated age, again to the 1840s. Is it really fair comment to be so certain in this statement? It is generally accepted that give or take ten years, unless evidence is positive, no closer estimate is really possible. The tapered full columns in this chest were a feature in furniture from the Regency period through to William IV, 1830 — 1837. The writer is really splitting hairs. It is fairly well established that although the political regency lasted from 1811 to 1820, the term Regency in describing the style carries over to William IV and early Victorian. Many observers have commented on the vast divergence of competing styles that occurred during this time. Again I challenge the writer how he or she can accept the description 1840 for the chest illustrated in *First Fleet to Federation* but attribute the chest sold to Graeme Dodd to a much later period. I personally think that the William IV description is a fair one.

The comments about Lot (31) again would leave the reader convinced that this piece was highly suspect! Firstly the comment that Mona Vale was built in 1868 and that the press was sold as the contents of the house. I would have to advise that the Italianate dwelling referred to was preceded many years before by an earlier structure well established and also called Mona Vale. Page 91 of Craig's *Early Engravers of Van Diemen's Land* depicts a lithograph by N.I. Kempe, circa 1838, of a Georgian style building. Gentlemen's presses were quite often altered in the upper sections, but the consistency of construction between the upper and lower sections leaves no doubt in my mind that the gentleman's press is certainly not a married piece. It is not unusual for the upper sections and lower sections to have different construction methods in the back. The locating pins which this piece has also indicated they were certainly made together.

The use of cedar and Huon pine in the manner described in the article was quite commonly employed by Whitesides of Hobart Town, who was known to be favoured by the Kermodé family who occupied Mona Vale from the original land grant until the present building was sold in 1895 and the press purchased by the Nairn family of Hobart at that time. There exists far more evidence to support the opinion that the piece is **right** than otherwise indicated by the article.

The off-hand comment on Lot (51) I again take exception to. This piece was of exceptional quality, and contrary to the writer's remarkable lack of interest, I have found that pieces of drawing room furniture in cedar and Huon pine construction to be extremely rare, at least in Tasmania. Also, the fact that it can be attributed to a local cabinet maker, and its unusual carving, show the **influence** of a much earlier period. The writer places the date of manufacture to 1860-1870. The catalogue made no estimate of the date of its manufacture, but since Millington arrived in Hobart in 1859, 1860-70 would hardly be an earth shattering revelation! There is an insinuation by 'the correspondent' that the catalogue description was trying to suggest it was

MADE in or near the Regency Period.

I have found that the fashion to buy English manufactured furniture was particularly adhered to in the selecting of drawing room furniture and in my experience cedar examples, at least in Tasmania, are extremely uncommon. Some later examples did occur in blackwood, but cedar very rarely.

Lot (68) the Drum Table: the description and estimate of its date in the catalogue again is a fair one. The writer of the article even concedes it could have been made any time between 1825 and 1840, and comments that it 'seems' to be the earliest of its type so far illustrated. The comments about its base seem to originate from the breakfast table illustrated in *First Fleet to Federation* page 32, this table incidentally of estimated manufacture 1815. I don't think the description "in a distressed condition" is accurate. The table, as many who examined it would attest, was in a condition that was no more than one would expect of fair wear and tear considering its age.

I have had the benefit of handling another piece of furniture which shows many of the features of Regency influence with this item, and the piece I refer to is now on display in the Art Gallery of South Australia. This piece could be more closely dated because its history is known and circa 1825 is again an estimate of its age based on all available evidence. I refer to the console table in the Gallery's Tasmanian section.

Lot (145), "the ordinary chairs" so described apparently impressed the curators of the South Australian Art Gallery who acquired the matching carver from the same estate — Fitzpatrick, Deloraine, in 1983, and on display in the Tasmanian section.

The comments made about the cedar clothes press (Lot 130) as to whether the top belonged to the bottom really discloses the lack of familiarity that the writer and perhaps others have in early pieces of this quality and 18th Century character. Its pedigree locally here in Tasmania is impeccable, and its history extends through two families over a number of years and is as right as a piece could be.

I could continue in this vein, piece by piece, and correct the stream of inaccuracies and innuendo. In my opinion it was a good offering that had taken a lot of time and effort to collect, and was described with integrity and honesty.

The significance of the writer's final comments escapes me entirely, unless he or she feels that the continuing fashionability of the earlier styles depreciates the value of the pieces. I personally see it as a victory for continuing good taste, and a bonus for collectors and dealers alike.

In the interests of maintaining a balanced view and fairness to all concerned, I trust my sentiments are given some consideration.

Yours faithfully,
Rick Reynolds,
Hobart



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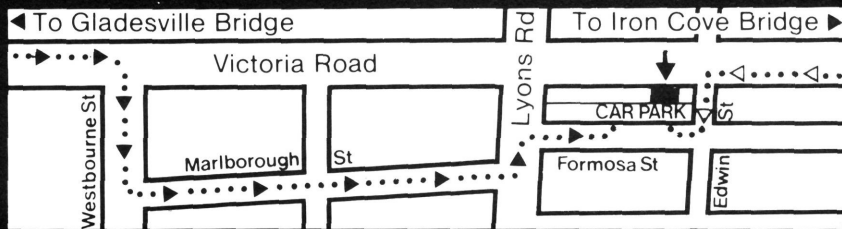
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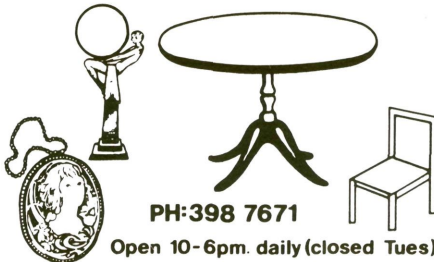


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Exhibitions

COLONIAL FOOD AND DRINK Elizabeth Bay House

It must be summer, because the need for ice in drinks propelled many guests at the opening of this exhibition to the display panel which reported that the first ice — from the U.S. — reached Sydney in the 1850s. The Geelong inventor James Harrison was producing ice locally from the machinery he invented in 1854, and by the late 1870s frozen meat was being shipped to England. Which all goes to show what a healthy thing it is to have a thirst.



This exhibition is a preview too of some of the "domestic history" artefacts which Sydney's Power House Museum has been collecting and will display in volume in 1988. There are some unusual pieces here, expertly conserved.

Curator Shar Jones has compiled a brief illustrated booklet (not a catalogue but an essay) which is not cheap at \$7 a copy.

PAINTED PANORAMA Grace Bros Market Street

As part of their centenary celebrations, Grace Bros made their Blaxland Gallery available to show 78 paintings from the Mitchell and Dixon collections of the State Library of NSW. Australian dealers Graeme Dodd and Kornelia Vidler were there too, discreetly selling furniture. The catalogue prepared by Patricia McDonald is superbly illustrated in colour, with 144 pages for \$20. There were lots of drooling private collectors at the opening, revelling in the opportunity of seeing all these works together for the first time.

NECKS TO NOTHING Manly Art Gallery

Fashions in beach wear reflect ideological battles as well as designers' whims. It was at Manly that

W.H. Gocher defied the restrictions on open bathing in daylight hours — first on 2 October 1902, and then several times again when no-one arrested him. In this exhibition, the changes in styles are related as much to local government regulations as to contemporary movements in the fashion industry. An essay by Robert Barton is available.

A HISTORY OF AUSTRALIAN PRINTMAKING AT THE ANG

The Australian National Gallery will present a major exhibition of Australian printmaking from pre-European settlement to the present day.

Australian Printmaking 1773–1985 opens on February 15 and closes on May 11, 1986.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a low-priced souvenir book *Australian Prints in the Australian National Gallery*. About 100 works will be reproduced in colour providing a much-needed short history of this country's printmaking.

Among the early works in the exhibition is a caricature of Sir Joseph Banks by James Gillray. Sir Joseph is portrayed as a great South Seas caterpillar climbing out of the slime into the splendour of royal favouritism.

Charles Rodius, a lithographer working in Sydney in the 1830s, produced some of the most beautiful portraits of the local Aborigines. His noble portrait of Tooban combines her carefully observed facial features with what appears to be a Roman toga draped over her shoulders.

The flourishing of wood-engraved illustrations for periodicals and books is seen in works such as the *Picturesque Atlas of Australasia* which was produced for the centenary of white settlement.

Syd Long in his fantasy of nymphs and fauns in the Australian bush and Ruby Lind in her poster produced for the Society of Artists exhibited at the Paris Salon and the Royal Academy in London and their influence can be seen in his "The Hesperides" c1905, with its soft Mediterranean colours.

The 'modern' look of the 1930s, so evident in Sydney in the works of Vera Blackburn and Margaret Preston and in Melbourne with Ethel Spowers, is unashamedly decorative, while Will Dyson, who worked for some time in New York, saw all of this 'modern art' as undesirable. He turned away from the decorative pleasantness to sarcastic caricatures of modern life.

The 1950s and 60s seem fraught with tension and the political posters that were produced across Australia in the 1970s showed artists becoming increasingly aware of their role in society. "Daddy what did you do in the nuclear war?" produced by the Earthworks Poster Collective gives a World War II recruiting poster an ironic twist.

The 1980s hums with activity — etching, wood and linocuts, lithographs and screenprints being produced by a diverse group of artists. Prints produced by artists of ethnic minority groups are injecting great vitality into contemporary printmaking and works of a political nature are still prominent.

It is a long overdue reassessment of Australian printmaking.

PATCHWORK QUILTING

The Embroiderer's Guild of Victoria is holding an exhibition of patchwork and quilting at their gallery, 170 Wattletree Road, Malvern, Victoria, from 15 to 31 March. Hours are 10 to 4 (9 pm on Thursday, 20 March), closed Good Friday. Admission is \$2.00.

SETTLERS AND SYDNEYSIDERS Hyde Park Barracks

Charles Kerry's studio was responsible for thousands of glass plate images from about 1880 to 1913, when Kerry left the business, and after. Now some of these have been printed and put on display at the Hyde Park Barracks. Lots more exist, forming a wonderful archive recording the activity of Sydney and the bush nearly 100 years ago, but also showing some of the conventions of the time, particularly of composition. The minimal captions draw attention to details such as the wristwatch worn by the Aboriginal posing with a boomerang.

Charles Kerry's "A Pioneer Settler", a sample of what's on display at Hyde Park Barracks.



GOLDEN SUMMERS

Art Gallery of NSW, 21 February to 20 April.

Art Gallery of S.A. 9 May to 29 June.

Art Gallery of W.A. 30 July to 14 September.

The works of the Heidelberg School painters — Tom Roberts, Arthur Streeton, Charles Conder and Frederick McCubbin — gathered together in a magnificent display of Australia's Impressionist masters. The exhibition is sponsored by the International Cultural Corporation of Australia and has already been seen in Melbourne. You saw the TV program last year.

MARGARET PRESTON

Art Gallery of NSW

AGNSW has combined with Penguin Books to produce an excellent book about this exhibition, which is just as well as it will not be seen outside Sydney. The large bibliography testifies to the popularity of this artist's works. In the exhibition they go from 1915 to 1959, and include a few of the ceramics from her early period as well as oils, woodcuts, stencils, screenprints, etchings, masonite cuts and monotypes. If you can't get to the show, buy the book *Margaret Preston. The Art of Constant Rearrangement* by Elizabeth Butel (\$14).

We welcome news of forthcoming and current exhibitions on Australiana themes. Please send press releases, etc to the Editor.

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Australian Medals

by Leslie J. Carlisle

“The medal... The mirror of History”

The birth of a purely Australian medal did not occur until the 1850s, that is a medal struck from a die. We do have many hand engraved medals, including one for the year 1788, but without positive proof of its actual execution at this date.

Before we discuss these more fully I feel sure many would ask the question, what is a medal or medallion? — and to further confuse, I add the word medalet. If we take the Oxford Dictionary the actual medal interpretation is “a piece of metal in the form of a coin, struck or cast with inscription and device to commemorate an event etc., or awarded as a distinction to a soldier, scholar, athlete etc., for services rendered, proficiency etc”. And the medallion is a “large medal or thing so shaped e.g., a decorative panel or tablet, portrait eted”.

Now the medalet does not appear in the Oxford, but does in Chambers as a “small medal”, and my own interpretation is that which is 32mm or less, and is a of a commemorative nature. We still have award medals of less than 32mm. The medalet is basically a numismatic term.

The medal has been used as an art form, a commemorative medium, a propaganda tool, a prize or a reward. Some of these historic mementos are a prized medium of record today.

The commemorative medal has a traceable record back to about 400 B.C., when the winners in the Syracusan Games received medals, in this case decadrachms, for their efforts. The Roman Emperors in the second century A.D. also produced medals for distinguished persons. Before the medallic art reached England from Italy, it had passed stages via France, Germany and the Netherlands.

The Tudor Period, mid 1500s to 1600, saw the beginning of the medallic era in England. The Elizabethan Period produced a small number of medals, one of the most noteworthy is for Sir Francis Drake's voyage around the world (1577–1580). The medal is engraved with a map of the world by Mercator, 69mm in diameter and struck in silver, of which there are only about nine specimens known. One such medal is housed in our Mitchell Collection here in Sydney. The medal was produced in 1589 by Michael Mercator, the grandson of the great cartographer, Gerard. The significance of this piece, as far as Australia is concerned, is the fact that this medal shows and identifies “Terra Australis” in some defined outline.

Through the reigns of Charles I, William and Mary, from Anne to George III, medals became more important. They were used to promote royalty, war victories, exploration and propaganda. Many great medallic artists were known throughout these eras — Briot, Rottier, Croker, Dassier, Pingo, Pistrucci and the family of Wyons. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Wyon family began an influence on English medallic art that was to last a century.

It is at this point that we now start to look at our Australian medallic influence, for it was from the Wyon schools that the first Australian medalists gained their training.

The Wyon family came from Cologne, where George senior was born. He came to England as George I's chief goldsmith, while his son George junior, served his apprenticeship under George II's goldsmith, Hemmings, before becoming a medalist at the Soho Mint in Birmingham in 1775. George junior's sons, Thomas and Peter, worked together as die engravers in Birmingham until 1800, when Thomas went to London to work as engraver of His Majesty's seal, of which he became Head in 1816. His son became chief engraver at the Royal Mint in 1815, and then in procession his brother Benjamin in 1831, and Benjamin's son Joseph in 1858 with his younger brother in 1873.

Peter Wyon, Thomas' brother, stayed on at Birmingham, and in due course handed over to his son William, who also went to the Royal Mint to become the chief engraver in 1828. On his death in 1851, he was succeeded by his son Leonard.

It was to these last two mentioned Wyons that the founder of the present day Amor-Sanders, medalists in Sydney from 1888, was apprenticed up to 1881, and if I may quote in his own words, a letter written by W.J. Amor on the 16 August 1947 at the age of 88 years:

“I was apprenticed to Messrs J.S. & A.B. Wyon in 1874, for seven years. I was their only apprentice and was instructed and looked after by Mr Alfred Benjamin Wyon, personally himself. I duly served my time up to 1881, stayed on for a couple of years and then went to Paris. I remained on the Continent till 1887, when I came to Sydney on a trip round the world, intending to go to America and work home again. I liked Australia, and Mr Robert Hunt, Deputy Master of The Sydney Mint, he persuaded me to stay and start business on my own account which I did in 1888, and have never caught

my work up to this day. I married the daughter of the Chief Engraver of the Sydney Mint, Mr Joseph Newton, who came out with the machinery and presses in I think 1856..."

The firm that W.J. Amor founded is now known as Amor, Sanders, Denham Neal and Trelour, trading at Surry Hills, Sydney, in medals, badges, enamelling, and even making some of our Order of Australia.



Obverse: ACCLIMATIZATION SOCIETY/VICTORIA
Reverse: 1868/F. LANDSEER. ARA.ADJ/J.S.&A.B. WYON
Size: 57mm
Metals: Bronze & Silver
The Victorian Acclimatization Society was founded in 1857. It was concerned with experimentation to determine the suitability of different overseas flora and fauna to the Australian environment.

The first known "struck" medal in Australia was executed by Alfred Ronalds, Lithographic and Copper Plate Printer, Malop Street, Geelong in 1850. This was produced in white metal with a mintage of only one hundred. The occasion was to commemorate the separation of Victoria from New South Wales. Heneker Heaton in *Australian Dictionary of Dates* records "great rejoicing, with Melbourne suspending business for four days, with church services, fireworks, illuminations, royal salutes, processions and general rejoicing".



Obverse: HOW SWEET IS LIBERTY MATERNAL AFFECTION SEPARATE BUT STILL UNITED. ADIEU
Reverse: COMMEMORATIVE OF THE GREAT CHARTER OF SELF GOVERNMENT GRANTED TO THE COLONY OF VICTORIA AUGUST 5TH 1850
Size: 51mm **Metal:** White Metal

The oldest medallist firm still producing medals, that is, struck medals from a die, is the Melbourne firm of Stokes, which began in 1856.

It was the beginning of the gold era in Australia when the English firm of W.J. Taylor sent to the colony a coining press to produce gold coin — the "Kangaroo Office" gold pieces of 1852. The shortage of coinage in the colony at this time saw the introduction of the token coinage in 1849.

Taylor's venture into the gold coinage market failed because of the arrival of a quantity of English Sovereigns, the setting up of a Branch Mint in Sydney in 1855, and the increase in the price of gold. To help his financial future, Taylor, or should I say Mr Scaife, his manager, took his machinery along to the 1854 Melbourne Exhibition and set it up to strike a medal. It is a medal struck in White Metal with the obverse showing a view of the Exhibition building with the legend MELBOURNE EXHIBITION/1854/STRUCK IN THE BUILDING. The reverse shows a wreath of wild flowers around the words THE HARVEST OF/THY YESTERDAY/THE SEED CORN OF/THY MORROW/W.B. Size: 38mm.

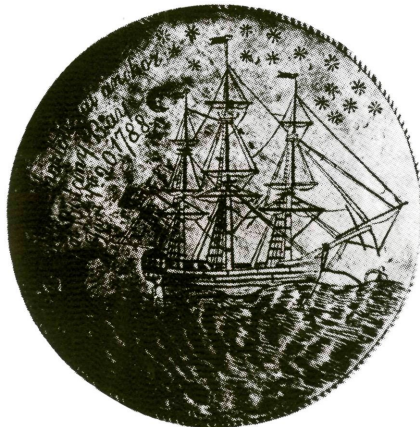
The machinery that produced this medal was purchased by Thomas Stokes in 1857. This timing gave Stokes the opportunity of striking the many tokens that were to be issued from 1857 to about 1877, when tokens were recalled.

Thomas Stokes had come to Australia from Birmingham, where he had learnt his trade in the 1850s. He came in search of gold which seemed to have eluded him, and in order to make a living he returned to his trade as a die-sinker and button maker. In 1856 he set up a factory business at 15 Mincing Lane, Melbourne, with success. He later moved to 115 Flinders Lane. For the period about 1873 to 1893, Stokes took a partner, a Mr Martin, and they conducted business at 20 Little Collins Street. Many medalets produced in this partnership show this address around the rim. In latter years the firm has had many name changes and now conducts business at Ringwood, an outer suburb of Melbourne.

The other medallists of note in this early period of struck medals are worth nothing. Evan Jones worked as a jeweller and medallist at 15 and 11 Hunter Street, Sydney. He too, took his machinery around the Exhibitions of this period, producing and selling many of the small medalets as souvenirs.

E.A. Altmann was another jeweller, watchmaker and engraver at Swan Street, Richmond, Victoria and later at 80 Elizabeth Street. He later moved to 108 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne. These premises were later purchased and run by A.H. Wittenbach and Co.

Altmann produced dies for many of the agricultural societies and exhibitions throughout Australia. They were in turn struck at Stokes or the Royal Mint, Melbourne.



Obverse: THE CHARLOTTE AT ANCHOR IN BOTANY BAY / JANU TH20, 1788

Reverse: SAILED / THE CHARLOTTE OF / LONDON FROM SPIT HEAD THE 13 MAY 1787. BOUND FOR BOTANY / BAY IN THE ISLAND OF NEW HOLLAND / ARRIV'D AT TENERIFF TH 4 OF JUNE IN / LAT 28.13 N LONG 16.23 W DEPART'D IT / 10 OF SEPT ARRIV'D AT RIO JANEIRO 6 OF AUG IN / LAT 22.54 S LONG 42.38 W DEPARTED IT THE 5 OF SEPT ARRIV'D AT THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE THE 14 OCTR IN LAT 34.29 S LONG 18.29 E DEPART'D IT TH 13 OF NOV AND MADE THE SOUTH CAPE OF NEW HOLLAND THE 8 OF JANU 1788 IN LAT 43.32 S / LONG 146.56 E ARRIV'D AT BOTANY BAY / THE 20 OF JANU THE CHARLOTTE IN CO IN / LAT 34.00 SOUTH LONG 151.00 EAST DISTANCE / FROM GREAT BRITAIN / MILES / 13106

Medallists of to-day (apart from Amor-Sanders) are A. J. Parkes of Brisbane, Millers Bades in Sydney, Brim, previously known as K. G. Luke in Melbourne and Bertram Bages also in Melbourne.

Getting back to the hand crafted medals of Australia, the famous "Charlotte" medal in silver and 74mm diameter is possibly the earliest known. It came back to Australia through two very famous collections, firstly the Milford Haven and then the Fred Baldwin and now resides in Melbourne. Milford Haven had put together the greatest collection of naval or nautical medals of all time. This collection forms the greater part of the famous collection of medals held at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich England. The "Charlotte" medal is listed in his also famous three volumes of books on the above subject, printed in the 1920s.

After the sale of this medal in Sydney in November 1981, another turned up. This was in copper but smaller, only 47mm. It had been found during renovations of an old house at Camden, New South Wales, in the early 1940s. It was without the ship engraving on the obverse. The reverse and the obverse of the medal had been used to engrave the long text, with also the initials of "W.B.", which has been thought to be the engravers' initials. No one has proved who "W.B." was as yet.

There are many other hand crafted medals from this period up till the 1850s, when struck medals started to be made. English or Spanish coin were used to craft these tokens of reward. They simply erased the legends and portraits and engraved on

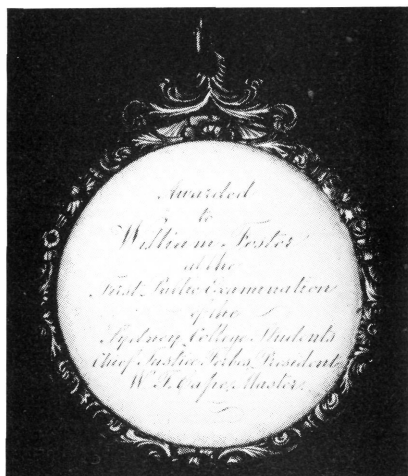
the then flat surfaces. In some cases they only erased one side. One such case is the use of an English three shilling token, where the head of George III remains and the reverse central wording only was removed, leaving the decorative wreath surround. The words WESLEYAN/SUNDAY SCHOOL/PARRAMATTA/1825 were then engraved in the central field.

At this early time the shortage of silver for use as medallic pieces, or even for flat silverware was overcome by the purchase of silver coin by the engravers and silversmiths. This is evidenced by advertisements in the *Sydney Gazette* of the time.

One very interesting facet of this is the shortfall in the known fate of the Holy Dollars. It is my belief that many of these missing dollars ended up in your very collectable Australian silver flat ware, or even in hand made medals.

A number of early school prize medals have survived today, and their progressive history is very rewarding when fully researched. The Sydney Grammar School medal by Samuel Clayton is one of these. It has been established that there were about twelve of these given to students for the period 1819 to 1824 by the then Headmaster Laurence Halloran. The names of ten of the student recipients are known. Four medals are known to exist, one to Robert Campbell (Tertius) 1819, Francis Lord 1822, Carlo (Charles) Driver 1823, and one to Henry Halloran 1824, the headmaster's son.

The following are some of the medals that form a medallic history of Australia and are described with photographs.



SYDNEY COLLEGE 1835

53mm

This medal was "Awarded to William Foster at the first Public Examination of the Sydney College Students. Chief Justice Forbes, President. W.T. Cape, Master." and was for "The medal for Improvement in English Composition. A.D. 1835. No. 3" (see cover).

The present Sydney Grammar School still uses the building facing College Street and designed by Edward Hallen, that was built for the start of The Sydney College in 1835.



RESOLUTION and ADVENTURE

44 mm

The current publication by L. Richard Smith gives a very detailed account of this medal and its distribution by James Cook on his second and third voyages. It was ordered and paid for by Joseph Banks, and was to be given to natives in return for fresh supplies. It was struck by Mathew Boulton at Birmingham in 1772, and was produced in brass, bronze, silver and gold. They were distributed in Tasmania, New Zealand, Tahiti, Tonga, Fiji, New Hebrides and other Pacific Islands that Cook visited. The recovery rate has been low, but one of the earliest to arrive here in Sydney is recorded in the *Sydney Gazette* of 17 July 1808:

"arrival of the *Mercury*, colonial schooner, Thomas Reiby, master from Otaheiti, which sailed from hence, on the 10 December last. The *Mercury* had called at the Bay of Islands, New Zealand, for water and wood before pushing on to Matavai Bay, Otaheiti. The *Mercury* was hove down at Ulitea, and was moored as the chief affirmed, at the very tree to which Captain Cook had made fast the *Resolution* on his last voyage. A chief named Mahee produced a medallion of His Majesty, which was presented to his father by Captain Cook.

Captain Reiby eventually secured the medallion from Chief Mahee. On the reverse side two ships were engraved encircled by the words "Resolution and Adventure, MDCCCLXXII (1772). This medal is larger than a crown piece and was originally gilt, but now, after 36 years, is nearly worn off."



CESSATION OF TRANSPORTATION 1853

Obverse: VICTORIA QUEEN/MDCCCLIII

Reverse: CESSATION OF TRANSPORTATION
1853/TASMANIA FOUNDED/1803

Size: 58mm *Metals:* White metal - Bronze *Mintage:* 9000-100
Mint: Royal Mint, London

Copy of a letter to a Recipient of a Bronze Medal:-
Launceston, Van Diemen's Land, July 1855
Sir,

I have the honour to forward herewith, for your acceptance, a Bronze Medal, 100 of which have been struck in commemoration of the Cessation of Transportation to this Colony — the Jubilee Year of its Foundation.

This Medal has been awarded by the Tasmanian Committees in consideration in your capacity as Alderman of Launceston in 1853.

I have the honour to be,

Sir

Your faithful Servant,
Henry Dowling J.P.

Transportation of convicts had become a political football and massive petitions were taken up for its abolition, with this medal being produced to commemorate the abolition and also to celebrate Tasmania's 50th anniversary. There were 9000 produced in white metal and the majority presented to school children, with another 100 in bronze for dignitaries.



RICKETTY DICK

Obverse: THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S AND THE FULLNESS THEREOF/NEW SOUTH WALES. INTERCOLONIAL EXHIBITION.

Reverse: STOKES & MARTIN/MELBOURNE.

Size: 47mm *Metal:* White metal *Mintage:* n/k *Mint:* Stokes & Martin c.1870s

This medal was struck at the Intercolonial Exhibition in Sydney and portrays an Aboriginal, Ricketty Dick, who resided in the Rose Bay district of Sydney. He was born about 1798 and died in June 1863. In his later life he was cared for by W.C. Wentworth of Vaucluse.



EMDEN MEDAL 1914

Obverse: NOV 9 1914/HMAS. SYDNEY. SMS. EMDEN

Reverse: W. KERR/SYDNEY

Size: 39mm *Metal:* Silver *Mintage:* 1000 *Mint:* Mounted by W. Kerr a Sydney Jeweller.

The *Emden* cruiser, pride of the Germany Navy, was sunk by the *Sydney* off Cocos Island on 9 November 1914. The Navy decided in 1918 that a portion of the silver Mexican dollars recovered from the *Emden* would be made into Commemorative Medallions and presented to the officers and men of H.M.A.S. Sydney who were on board at the time of the engagement (or their next of kin). The distribution would be made by Captain C.T. Glossop, C.B., Captain of the *Sydney* at the time. Presentations were also to be made to staff at Cocos Island, to the Australian War Museum, the Admiralty, and to approved Australian museums. The balance were to be sold to the public as souvenirs and the

money accruing was to be used to defray the cost of the medallions. Any remaining money was to go to the R.A.N. Relief Fund.

Two \$20 (American) gold coins, were recovered and presented to Captain John C.T. Glossop C.B., Royal Navy, who was in command of the *Sydney* at the time, and the other sent to the Navy Office, Melbourne, for disposal "as may be directed".

Number of silver Mexican dollars salvaged from the *Emden* = 6429. Of these, 1000 issued as Medallions; 653 unmounted, distributed by the Department of Navy; 343 unmounted, sold to the public; 4433 unmounted, melted down at Sydney Mint — funds to R.A.N. Relief Fund.



BARTOLOMEO COLLEONI 1940

Obverse: PRESENTED BY/THE CITIZENS OF SYDNEY/TO CAPTAIN J. A. COLLINS C.B., R.A.N./THE OFFICERS AND SHIP'S COMPANY/H.M.A.S. SYDNEY/IN COMMEMORATION OF THEIR GALLANT FIGHT/AGAINST SUPERIOR SPEED AND WEIGHT OF/ARMAMENT, WHICH RESULTED IN THE SINKING/OF THE ITALIAN CRUISER/BARTOLOMEO COLLEONI/IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA/JULY NINETEEN/1940

Reverse: —

Size: 58mm *Metal:* Oxidised silver *Mintage:* 600 + (crew 645) *Mint:* Amor *Edge:* Plain (engraved: The Captain each Officer and each member of the crew received this medal, 11.2.1941.)

Returning home in January 1941, after extensive service in the Mediterranean, the ship received a royal welcome. The Lord Mayor of Sydney and the city Aldermen presented a plaque, acknowledging the sinking of the Bartolomeo Colleoni, to H.M.A.S. Sydney. Medals, similar to the plaque, were presented to the Captain and crew. Sailing from Fremantle on 11 November 1941, H.M.A.S. Sydney was sunk by a German raider, with the loss of all the crew (645 men).

AUSTRALIAN COMMEMORATIVE MEDALS AND MEDALETTS FROM 1788

By *Leslie Carlisle A.F.A.N.S.*

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Inlaid Furniture in Queensland Exhibitions

by Glenn R. Cooke

The last few years have demonstrated a growing awareness of inlaid furniture, as one aspect of the range of cabinetwork produced in colonial Australia. Anne Watson's investigations into the work of the maker of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences' elaborately inlaid sofa crafted by John Mason resulted in the publication of an article in the July-December 1983 issue of *The Australian Antique Collector* "John Mason — a remarkable Queensland cabinet maker". After the Queensland Art Gallery acquired the dressing chest illustrated in her article I investigated the tradition of Australian inlaid furniture and discovered this style of decoration evolved as early as the late 1860s and was widely exhibited throughout Australia in inter-colonial and international exhibitions in the remaining portion of the century. This was documented in an article "A masterpiece of marquetry" published in *Arts National*, Vol. 2 No. 1. The technique of inlaying was probably even more widely spread than this article would indicate as continuing research into the annual exhibitions in the twenty five years 1876 to 1901 revealed other significant practitioners.

A complete series of the exhibition catalogues, unfortunately, does not survive. Occasionally the exhibitors of inlaid furniture are described in contemporary newspaper reports but, like most such reports, they are usually described in the vaguest terms. Even more occasionally mention is made of non-competitive entries which do not appear in the catalogue.

I would assume that investigations into the annual exhibitions in the various states would reveal a similar incidence of exhibiting inlaid furniture.

The Queensland National Agricultural and Industrial Association was founded to promote the agricultural progress of the State and secondly to encourage industrial development — in this case cabinetmaking. Inlaid furniture demonstrated the colouristic array of Queensland's timbers and the *Brisbane Courier* of 20/8/1887 enthused over an inlaid table by Peter Thomle under the heading "Excellence of Workmanship" — "...attention is first rivetted by a handsome writing table made of Queensland woods. Artistic in design, the table shows with what effect the light and dark native timbers can be employed in cabinetmaking". This was one aspect of the development of Queensland's nascent timber industry and has been briefly described in "A masterpiece of marquetry".

In order to foster the development of Queensland trade skills the Queensland National Agricultural and Industrial Association, from its first exhibition, offered prizes for superior workmanship for artisans involved in various trades "...to encourage excellence of workmanship, bronze medals will be awarded to colonial workmen for work executed during the last twelve months, in wood, textiles, fibre, leather, or other materials". Although the meticulous technique of inlaying tested the cabinetmaking skills of the exhibitors to the fullest, it is clear inlaying did not admit of industrial applications because of the sheer length of time the technique required. The *Brisbane Courier* of 20 August 1887 rightly regarded these items "...as more the work of leisure moments than as specimens of handicraft by which the exhibitors earn their living".

The first exhibition in 1876 included a workbox by Mr S. Olson of St Helena Island, best known for its penal settlement, in Moreton Bay which was inlaid with about 2,000 pieces of wood. The *Brisbane Courier* three days later provided the following description "(The workbox) is really an artistic piece of workmanship. The wood principally used is a kind of tulip-wood, believed to be peculiar to St Helena, but of which none now remains on the Island. The work-box deservedly received a first prize". A lady's work box made by Mr P. Brown of Ipswich was not included in the catalogue but it was mentioned in the *Telegraph* of 23/8/1876. Work boxes were suitable small scale pieces which could be conveniently completed in one's free time and were exhibited consistently. Such items were shown by David McPherson (St Helena Island) in 1877, by E. Speering (an apprentice of the cabinet-maker T. P. Hardy of Fortitude Valley) in 1880; by Peter Stevenson (Petrie Terrace) in 1884; and in 1885 and 1886 by Andrew Buchanan. The last examples it has proved possible to trace were exhibited by Thomas Kay of Gympie and an apprentice of W.D. Sterling in 1891.

The flat surfaces of small scale tables which could be readily inlaid with variegated timber sections were also popular exhibits. In 1878 the luo table displayed by Henry Wolf of Brisbane was a less complicated piece as it contained only 215 pieces of wood inlay, albeit representing sixty two different varieties of timber. Another resident of St. Helena, W. Bowden, in the following year exhibited two items inlaid with wood grown on the island — a round table and a writing desk and received highly commended awards for his efforts. Both were exhibited in the Sydney International Exhibition later in the year and at Melbourne the year following. An inlaid table was exhibited by A. Craigie of Brisbane in 1880 and "a fine collection of tables" were exhibited by Mr William Goeldner in 1882. The *Brisbane Courier*, 31 August 1882 mentioned these works were not entered in the catalogue as they were non-competitive.

An apprentice of the well-known Brisbane firm

John Hicks, Thomas Rhoades, exhibited an inlaid table in 1883 and Andrew Buchanan exhibited another in 1885.

A description of the district exhibit from the Eastern Downs in 1891 indicates that a Mr F. Reimer exhibited an inlaid table using no fewer than eleven different varieties of wood in a small table (*Telegraph*, 19 August 1891).

The report in the *Telegraph* previously cited also described "...some pretty inlaid work in the shape of writing desks was shown by Mr G. York, of Downfall Creek" which was not included in the catalogue. In 1877 C. Christ of Fortitude Valley gained a first prize when he exhibited a "fancy chest of drawers, inlaid" and J. Downie (St Helena) a writing desk. Later John Dahl at the Queensland International Exhibition of 1897 exhibited a "looking glass frame, cut with a penknife and consisting of no less than 661 pieces, as a testimony of his industry" (*Telegraph*, 5 May 1897).

The most significant exhibitor of inlaid furniture in these years was Peter Thomle, a Danish immigrant who arrived in Brisbane in 1875. The following year he demonstrated his skills with inlaid furniture in the first year of the exhibition with a model for the inlaid cabinet which he exhibited next year for which he received a first order of merit and a chessboard which gained him a highly commended. Inlaid furniture formed a significant section of his displays over the next few years. In 1877 he exhibited an inlaid jewellery cabinet and such was the quality of the piece that he was recommended for a special prize. *The Queenslander*, 25 August 1877, speaks approvingly of this display but does not provide us with any adequate description. "There is very creditable show of inlaid wood work in this class; perhaps the most handsome and finished piece of workmanship in this line being a jewellery cabinet exhibited by Mr P. Thomle of Petrie Terrace. This is really a model of ingenuity, and says much for the skill and patience of the maker". The following year he exhibited an inlaid work box (valued at £8/10/-) and a jewel cabinet inlaid with thirty four varieties of timber which was valued at the considerable sum of £80/- (which may possibly be the same piece exhibited the year previously) and was recommended for another special prize.

In 1879 his table, inlaid with sixty varieties of wood was also recommended for a first class certificate. *The Queenslander*, 2 August 1879 remarked "It is hardly necessary to say the workmanship is perfect, and the way in which the different pieces are placed so as to make their colours harmonise shows great judgement and taste". *The Brisbane Courier*, 4 August 1879, provides a more comprehensive description: "(Peter Thomle's) little cabinet has been in previous exhibitions and its exquisite workmanship has received fitting recognition; but the table of inlaid woods by the same cunning hand is a work specially constructed for this and the Sydney exhibitions, and a more tasteful example of ornamental cabinetwork it would be impossible to find. There are over fifty woods which go to the

composition of a very graceful design, and the pedestal is a most tasteful pattern perfectly executed. We believe our native woods, of which such a goodly show has been made in the late exhibition, are likely to attract very special attention for ornamental work from European cabinetmakers, but it is very gratifying to see such excellent local examples of their effectiveness for this purpose in the very handsome furniture exhibited, of which the articles just mentioned... are such beautiful specimens". Both items were exhibited at the Sydney and Melbourne International Exhibitions and the jewel box received a first award on both occasions.

The following year Thomle had no work completed but he displayed a design for a writing table and cabinet and a part of same which he was preparing for the Melbourne International Exhibition later the same year. He did not exhibit inlaid furniture again until 1887 when his lady's inlaid writing table gained a first class certificate. It is not positively identified as inlaid work but the high price of £80/- would indicate it was. His last items in this technique were a pair of picture frames inlaid with sixty varieties of wood which he exhibited in 1893.

With the normal experience of scanty descriptions for these pieces in the pre-photography era it is a delight to come across the following. *The Brisbane Courier* (11 August 1892), in describing the 1892 exhibition regarded the inlaid table made by J.M. Soblusky of Bundaberg, which took him six months to complete, as "perhaps the finest item in the whole show". It was fully described in the *Telegraph* of the same date—

"In the centre of the top are three circles so arranged that if the table is revolved an optical illusion will result. There are over 280 pieces in each of these circles. Another circle surrounds the three containing the 32 convex points of the compass. Surrounding this circle is another in which the 64 full and half points of the compass are shown. On the outside of this are 32 fans superbly inlaid, the outer rim showing the 360 degrees of the globe. Under the edge of the table is a rim composed of an endless chain of diamonds overlapping in such a way that not one diamond is complete without the other. The table is supported on five pillars fixed into a stand of carved and inlaid claws".

8,200 separate pieces of timber representing seventy five different types of timber were used in the execution of this table. It was regarded so highly as an example of Queensland craftsmanship that it was awarded a special medal and commendation. Thus encouraged Soblusky redoubled his efforts and the next year's exhibition saw an even more elaborate table.

His example in 1893 was a table of 3 feet six inches diameter inlaid with 10,500 pieces of wood. The *Telegraph* of 10 August 1893 gives an excellent description of the design of the piece but the report in the *Brisbane Courier* identifies the respective timbers and gives an indication of the colouristic effect of "nearly every known timber in Queensland". The description commences—

"The centre of the table is a rosette in the centre of a star, set in leaves and surrounded in banners, the whole of this portion of the design forming an octagon. Between the mace like circles and the flags are light spear heads, while muskwood fills up the spaces between. Outside the inner circle which is 14½ inches in diameter, is a series of leaves each so arranged as to be partially hidden. Beyond the tracing of leaves and nearer the circumference is a series of inlays of Gothic arches, composed of iron wood, the beautiful graining of which produces the effect of fleecy clouds, and it may be noted that in every instance this graining is beautifully matched. Round the latter design is traced a thin band or circle of silky oak, while beyond that are sixty four diamonds inlaid crosswise with other diamonds, the whole forming a circle running across a circle. Nearer the edge of the top is a band formed of three separate pieces of timber, two varieties of oak and one of musk being used, and making a golden edge to the diamonds. Beyond the last design the tracery changes into thirty-two fans, outspread, the form and shading being perfect. Joining each fan and filling the spaces between are diamond shapes of a dark brown and blood red hue respectively, while nearer the circumference of the tabletop is another inlay of black, yellow and red woods, which blend admirably with the whole. Under the outer edge of the top is a band composed of 2172 separate pieces of wood and forming a herringbone pattern, the tints of the wood producing a beautiful effect. The table is supported on four carved cedar claws, and on each claw there is a beautiful piece of carving representing fruit, roses and leaves, which seem as though resting on the wood on which they are carved".

The description in the *Telegraph* provides the additional information that—

"The central pillar is a magnificent bit of ring tulip wood highly polished. There are also four other pillars of tulipwood. Between the carved claws, there is an inlaid diamond design forming a cross and a square."

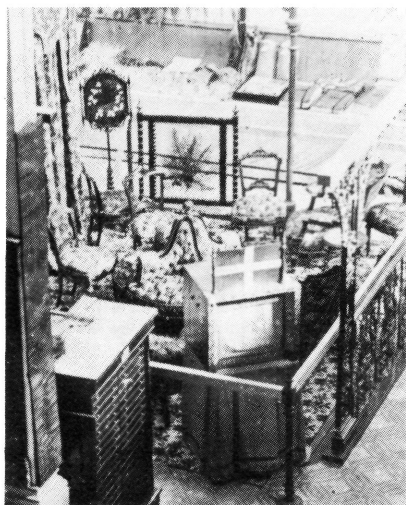
There was thus an extensive tradition of inlaid furniture being produced in Queensland before John Mason exhibited in the capital in 1894. This inlaid table was described in *The Queenslander* of 18 August 1894 as "work of art" and the richness of effect of The "properly worked" Queensland timbers commended. It was recommended for a silver medal.

The *Telegraph* of 18 August 1895 reports he displayed "...a dressing table with oval centre mirror (which) is inlaid with great taste and skill in different woods, a sofa of similar class being equally well executed". Two days later the same newspaper mentions that Mason's dressing table contains 12,850 pieces and briefly describes the couch now in the collection of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences and adds "All the woods used in these two articles were obtained within half a

dozen miles of Maryborough. Prizes have already been received by the dressing table at Maryborough, Bundaberg, and Gympie". He was awarded a first order of merit for these works and at the same time another resident of Maryborough, Thomas Mayfield, exhibited an inlaid dressing table with duchess mirror "wrought into elaborate designs" and received a second order of merit.

Clearly the fashion for this complex and elaborately wrought furniture had passed before the regional cabinetmakers Soblusky and Mason began to exhibit in Brisbane. Apart from the Mason pieces no other items have been identified for the period under discussion but it is known that less complicated small pieces have been produced in Brisbane until recent years. It should also be noted that the scale of the Mason pieces is really quite exceptional.

Mason, the last of the major exhibitors of this technique at the Queensland National Agricultural and Industrial Association exhibitions is an accomplished cabinetmaker in any context. More importantly, the fact that major pieces can be securely attributed to his hand, provides a basis for further research and a benchmark for assessment. Yet where are the pieces by Bowden, Soblusky, and last, but not least, Peter Thomle? With the average person's appreciation for meticulous craftsmanship these pieces have an increased chance of survival and it is hoped that these pieces may yet be identified. Despite these problems it is extremely fortunate that the series of annual exhibitions at the Queensland National Agricultural and Industrial Association can provide a key into research of Queensland's later colonial furniture.



Queensland Court at the Sydney International Exhibition of 1879-1880. The jewel case by Peter Thomle is at the corner of the stand. Photograph courtesy of The John Oxley Library, Brisbane.

Books

Book notices and books for review should be sent to The Editor, *Australiana*, 10 Porter St, Bondi Junction NSW 2022.

THE PRACTICE OF WOODTURNING, by Mike Darlow. Sydney, Melaleuca Press, 1985. Hard cover, \$29.50.

Society member Mike Darlow will need no introduction to Sydney members, to whom he spoke a couple of years back on Australian timbers. Here he shows the complex tasks of turning various sorts of wood, for the craftsperson and restorer in particular.

A SHORT HISTORY OF TASMANIA, by Lloyd Robson. Melbourne, Oxford. 1985 Soft cover, 190 pp, illustrated, \$12.50.

Dr Robson has followed up his authoritative study on Tasmanian history with this work aimed at the general reader.

IMAGES IN OPPOSITION: AUSTRALIAN LANDSCAPE PAINTING 1801-1890, by Tim Bonyhady, Melbourne, Oxford, 1985. Hard cover, 192 pp, 29 colour & 67 b&w ill., \$45.00.

CITY BUSHMEN. THE HEIDELBERG SCHOOL AND THE RURAL MYTHOLOGY, by Leigh Astbury. Melbourne, Oxford, 1985. Hard cover, 216 pp., 29 colour & 239 b&w ill., \$45.00.

Taking up where Bonyhady leaves off, Astbury argues that the painters of the Heidelberg School were above all influenced not by radicals but by conservative opinions and traditions.

SYDNEY FERRY FLEETS, by A.M. Prescott with illustrations by W.P.S. Nicolson. Magill, Ronald Parsons, 1984. Soft cover, 102 pages, \$9.50.

Not a glamorous picture book, but a solid little volume full of facts about the 73 operators who worked on Sydney Harbour and the 282 ferries they used, from 1831 to 1983. Tony Prescott's text is enhanced with line drawings by Peter Nicolson, very valuable for identifying the vessels in your paintings of Sydney Harbour. Obtainable from the publisher Box 33, Magill 5072.

MR JAMES OATLEY, THE CELEBRATED WATCHMAKER, by Dr D.J. Hatton. Sydney, the author, 15 Annette Ave Kogarah 2217, 1983. Soft cover, \$5 including postage.

An historical study of one of Sydney's first clockmakers, by a prominent member of the Hurstville Historical Society; the nearby suburb of Oatley was named after James, who owned land there.

SPANNING TWO CENTURIES. HISTORIC BRIDGES OF AUSTRALIA, by Colin O'Connor. St Lucia, University of Queensland Press, 1985. Hard cover, 168 pp, 125 b&w pl., \$40.00.

Professor O'Connor provides a comprehensive history of bridges from a civil engineer's viewpoint and documents over 500 of them, illustrating a third with photographs or drawings.

THE LEBANESE IN AUSTRALIA, by Andrew & Trevor Batrouney, 1985, \$11.95.

THE CZECHS IN AUSTRALIA, by Michael Cigler, 1983, \$11.95.

THE CORNISH IN AUSTRALIA, by Jim Faull, 1983, \$11.95.

THE SPANISH IN AUSTRALIA, by Al Grassby, 1983, \$11.95.

THE POLES IN AUSTRALIA, by Marian Kaluski, 1985, \$11.95.

THE GERMANS IN AUSTRALIA, by Ian Harmstorf & Michael Cigler, 1985, \$13.95.

THE HUNGARIANS IN AUSTRALIA, by Egon F. Kunz, 1985, \$11.95.

Titles in the Australian Ethnic Heritage Series, all in hard cover and over 100 pages each, with more volumes to follow. Available from the Library of Australian History, 17 Mitchell St, North Sydney 2060.

A PLACE OF EXILE. THE EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT OF NSW, by David Mackay. Melbourne, Oxford U.P., 1985. Hard cover. \$25.00.

History is not dead. Here is a work which fuels the current debate about why Botany Bay was chosen for a settlement by the British government.

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