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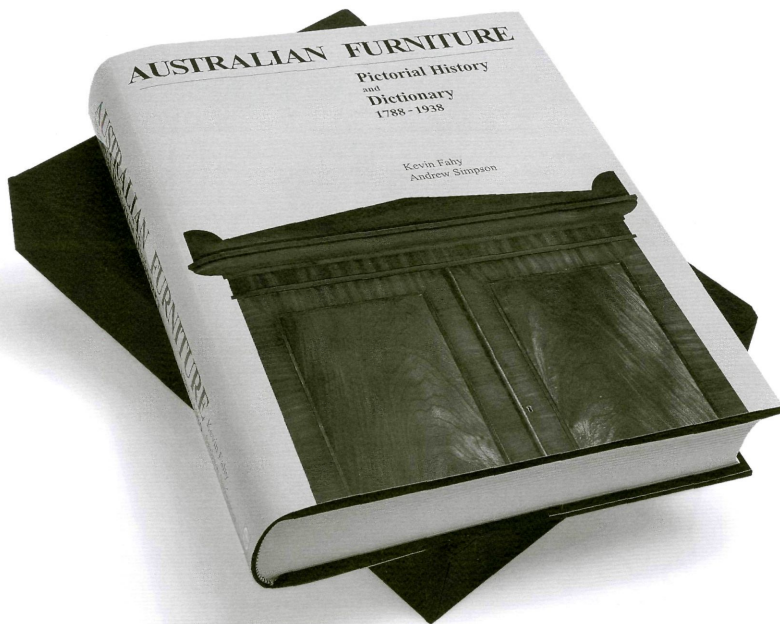


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Cover: Framed illuminated address presented to Captain Hugh Craig of the SS Menmuir in 1896, attributed to Stuart Bowyerie.

THE AUSTRALIANA SOCIETY

PO BOX 1782, STRAWBERRY HILLS NSW 2012



— SOCIETY PROGRAM —

MEETINGS — 1999

Tuesday
26 January 1999

The Society's 1999 Australia Day Lunch will be held at the former Female Orphan School, Rydalmere, on Tuesday, 26 January.

Next Australia Day 1999, members and their guests will have a rare opportunity to inspect this important historic building. After drinks on the carriage loop at 12.15, members will adjourn to the Walter Liberty Vernon designed Recreation Hall at 1 pm for a sit down lunch followed by the annual Australia Day Address, given by Professor Carol Liston, on the history of the Female Orphan School (see page 105).

Mark this day in your diary and invite your friends to join you. A booking form accompanies this issue of *Australiana*.

Thursday
4 March 1999

The next general meeting of the Society will be at Government House, Sydney at 7.30pm on Thursday, 4 March when the curators, Ms Ann Toy and Mr Robert Griffin, will lead guided tours of the collections at Government House. For this special event, there will be no showcase and no drinks.

SOCIETY MEETINGS

Society meetings will be on the first Thursday of every alternate month:
March, May, July, September (A.G.M.), November.

They are held in the meeting room of the National Trust Centre, Observatory Hill, Sydney.
Ample parking available.

Drinks served 7.30-8.00pm, followed by *Australiana* showcase
(bring your *Australiana* treasures along for general discussion).
The lecture will commence at 8.00pm.

Linking Some Sydney History with Old Patchwork Quilts

Annette Gero

During a recent exhibition at Elizabeth Bay House called "Sydney Quilt Stories 1811-1970" jointly put on by the Historic Houses Trust of NSW and the Sydney Branch of the Quilt Study Group of Australia, many quilts were documented which had histories which specifically related to Colonial Sydney.

In preparing a talk as part of this exhibition, I realised that many of the quilts were providing additional interesting history relating to the life of the Colony, in linking the quilts to other well known Sydney craftsmen and International or Colonial exhibitions, as well as adding to the history of the Colony and visits of Royalty. Some of these stories were included in the exhibition, and some are stories of quilts that I have documented over years of research or are part of my collection of Australian quilts.

Early NSW Quilts, Settlement to 1850

It has always been assumed that the history of patchwork in Australia dated from 1817 when the Quaker prison reformer Elizabeth Fry supplied women from Newgate Prison, London, who were to make the appallingly crowded and long voyage to Port Jackson, with an occupation for the voyage - patchwork - with fabric donated by the British Society of Ladies and wealthy Quaker merchants.

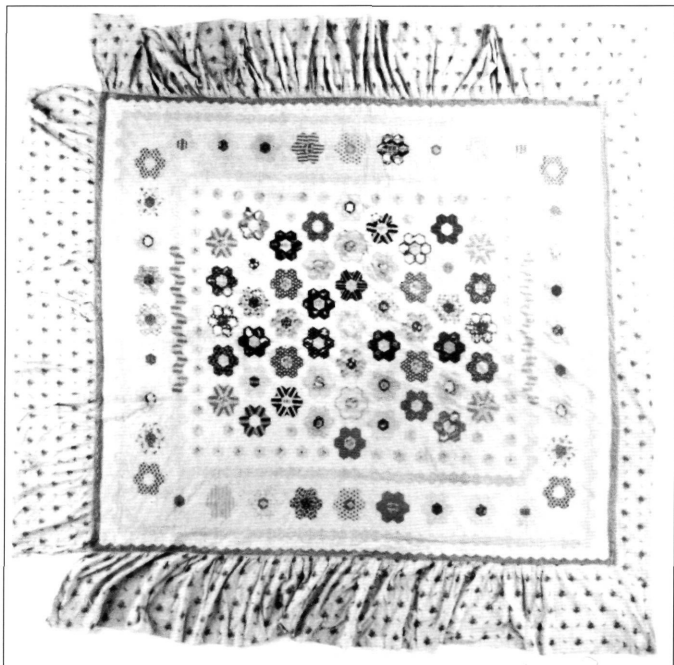
In a letter written on her behalf on 20 April 1818 to the chaplain of the colony, Reverend Samuel Marsden, Elizabeth Fry enquired whether the occupation of patchwork had produced beneficial results:

[Mrs Fry] has been taking great pains with the females of this ship ... given them work to perform [patchwork] ... and has laid out the little money belonging to each in those things that are likely to sell at Port Jackson. I much fear however that all these useful [occupations] will be laid aside as soon as the ship proceeds to sea and I should feel much obliged if you would give me an account of the effect they produce, for if good results from it, some important changes may take place in regard to future ships sent out.

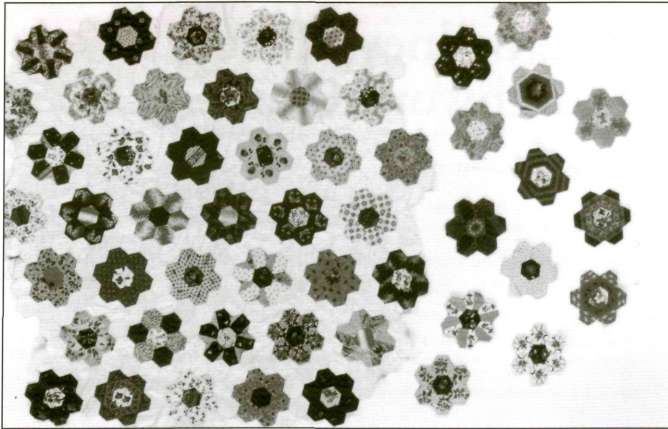
Although over 12,000 convict

women came under this scheme of "patchwork as occupational therapy on the voyage", only three patchwork quilts which were associated with these voyages have been discovered. Two are housed in museums in England and one, the *Rajah* quilt of 1841, which has been recently purchased by the National Gallery of Australia, is currently travelling around Australia as part of the exhibition "Everyday Art, Australian Folk Art."

One quilt which I found recently may be another convict-made quilt, possibly made in Sydney in 1811 and attributed to a Sarah Wall. The quilt is a hexagon quilt containing fabrics from the early 1800s and is signed "Sarah Wall, Allestry, 1811".



Hexagon quilt signed Sarah Wall 1811.



Lady Mary FitzRoy's unfinished hexagon quilt, c. 1847.

As a convict, Sarah Litherland was sentenced to seven years transportation beyond the seas at Chester on 25 April 1797 and arrived in NSW in 1801 aboard the *Earl Cornwallis*. She married James Wall at St John's Church of England, Parramatta on 9 February 1807.

A James Wall per the *Marquis Cornwallis* is listed as a resident of the Hawkesbury and holding ticket no. 225, allowed to be off the shores by Governor's Leave. However, Sarah eloped from him in 1809. As reported in the *Sydney Gazette*, 4 June 1809, James Wall of Richmond Hill placed a notice cautioning the public against giving credit on his account to his wife Sarah Wall (formerly Litherland), as she had eloped from him and he would not be responsible for any debt she may contract.

Her quilt is dated 1811. There is always the question of how she could afford the fabrics of chintzes and dimities in her quilt although they were readily obtainable. The Index of References to Furnishings from Advertisements in the *Sydney Gazette* from 1803-1814 mentions many sales and auctions of fabrics in Sydney such as "English cottons and dimity, palampores, colour cambric and English chintz", the kind of fabrics used

in Sarah's quilt. However we do not know is whether this is the correct "Sarah Wall". Unless there are some descendants of the Richmond Hill Sarah Wall who have evidence that it was she who made the quilt we shall, unfortunately, never be able to definitely attribute this social history to the quilt.

Besides quilts that may have been made in Sydney in the early 19th century, many quilts in Sydney families are those brought to the Colony by their ancestors. Another quilt found in Sydney reflects very early



Photo of Jane Thomas (née Cavanough).

19th century fabrics. This is a chintz quilt made by a Miss Jane Temperley Hope in England and brought to Sydney early this century. The story of the quilt was featured with a photograph in *The Sun* newspaper, 6 March, 1932 with the following description:

"A Century Old Patchwork Quilt is [a] mass of fine hand quilting and old fashioned chintzes. Very proud of this marvellous patchwork quilt is Mrs A E Talbot, wife of Dean Talbot. The quilt which is made of pieces of the loveliest of patterned and gaily coloured chintzes, has a plain white lining, showing an intricate and beautiful pattern worked in quilting. It was the work of one, Miss Jane Temperley Hope, in 1798-1800, who lived at Hexham, Northumberland, England, an ancestress of Mrs Talbot's on her mother's side, and has been in the family ever since. It was recently sent to Sydney to her mother, Mrs A Vert, who has passed it on."

Although reported to be made around 1798-1800, the fabrics suggest it was made in the first part of the 19th century. The quilt contains a virtual museum of fabrics which were typical of those furnishing fabrics printed in England in 1800-1840. It is likely that many of these fabrics were also available in Sydney in the early 19th century as we know that John Macarthur imported similar fabrics to sell and possibly use at Elizabeth Farm, Parramatta. A hexagon quilt attributed to Elizabeth Macarthur in the collection of the National Trust of Australia (NSW) contains similar fabrics. Hence there is interesting evidence that women were producing similar quilts with similar fabrics in both England and Australia during this period in history.

Besides Elizabeth Macarthur's quilt, we know from diaries of early

Sydney “Ladies” that patchwork was regarded as a highly desirable pastime. The most popular quilt patterns in the late 18th century and the early 19th century were the medallion quilts, followed by hexagons and tumbling blocks. Many examples of spectacular silk tumbling block quilts have been recorded in Australia.

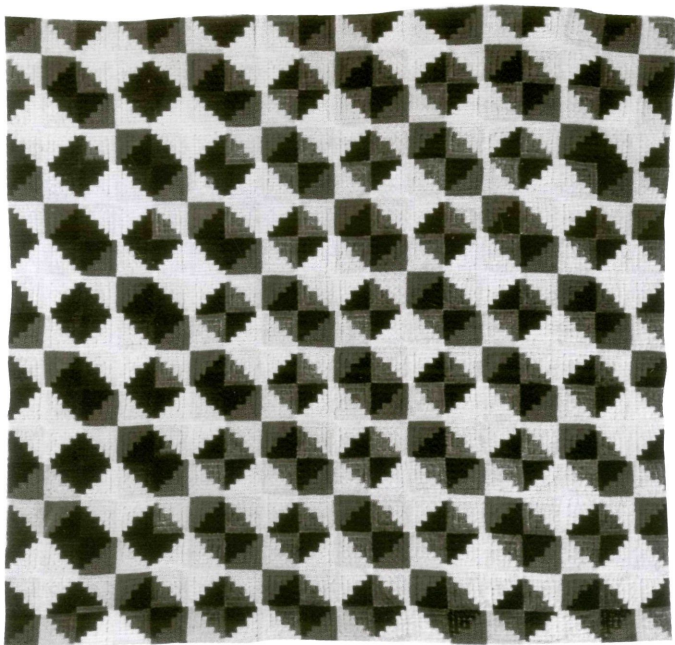
Annabella Boswell, who lived with her uncle Major Archibald Clunes Innes, owner of many sheep and cattle stations in the northern district of NSW, describes a tumbling block patchwork in her diary of 1844.

“Marion was busy finishing a patchwork table cover of silk, the pieces cut in diamond shape of three different shades. These, when sewn together, form rows like boxes. The effect is very good. She kindly gave me the patterns and we at once looked out all our pieces of silk and began to make one for our aunt”.

In January 1848 she reports they were still sewing patchwork:

“My uncle, aunt and cousins took their departure ... we sat down to work at the patchwork tablecover, which, though it is not unpicked every night like Penelope’s web, seems likely to be as long in hand.”

It is recorded that Annabella Boswell was often visited by Lady Mary, the wife of Sir Charles FitzRoy, the Governor appointed to the Colony in 1846. Lady Mary also made a hexagon quilt from fabrics of printed cottons and silks, but it was not completed before her tragic death in a carriage accident in the grounds of Government House, Parramatta in December 1847. This quilt and Lady Mary’s work bag have recently been acquired by the National Trust of Australia (NSW).



Log Cabin quilt (late 19th century) made by Jane Thomas (née Cavanaugh).

It is obvious that the fashion in British and European needlework of the early 19th century was quick to find its way here and many Australian quilts reflect these trends. Australian “Ladies” in the 1830s-1840s were quick to copy these early designs, while quilting and patchwork was regarded as a highly desirable pastime using fabrics, threads and needlework tools also imported from Britain.

1850 to late 19th century

Many Australian quilts originated from the Australian Gold Rush. Although conditions were harsh to begin with, by 1855 balls and theatre were advertised, and tailors and women’s outfitters established themselves to cater to the women of rich husbands who had appetites for silk and satins in the fanciest of gear.

According to a goldfields newspaper of the time, “Young misses began to appear in brand new bonnets,

carrying a parasol of the finest quality silk and sedate matrons came out on the streets in gaudy silk dresses”. Those men who had struck it rich appeared in “swooping tailcoats of silks and brocades.”

During the latter part of the nineteenth century a different style of patchwork developed including many log cabin quilts and an abundance of crazy patchwork incorporating extravagant velvets and silks in all sizes and shapes.

One such velvet log cabin quilt of the late 19th century was made by Jane Thomas (née Cavanaugh) and was probably made as a table cover. Originally the piece was fringed, but the fringing has since been removed. Jane Thomas (1837-1924) was the great granddaughter of Owen Cavanaugh, an Able Seaman on HMS *Sirius*, the flagship of the First Fleet which arrived in Sydney Cove with Captain Arthur Phillip in Janu-

ary, 1788. Owen Cavanough was born in Gosport near Plymouth, Hampshire in 1762 and remained in Australia as a Hawkesbury settler.

It was obviously fashionable for women to produce quilts and it was highly desirable that ladies' work should be encouraged by regular exhibition, such as at agricultural fairs and international exhibitions, paralleling what was happening in England and America in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The International Exhibition held in Sydney in 1879-80 included a separate Ladies' Court which, among other fancywork, included needlework. Fancywork sections were included in other colonial international exhibitions, as well as at the Women's Industry Exhibition and Centenary Fair of 1888.

A bronze medal awarded to the maker of a quilt exhibited in the In-

ternational Exhibition in Sydney in 1879 was also exhibited in "Sydney Quilt Stories". The quilt, which is missing as it was sold in Sydney during the Maritime Strike of the 1890s to provide food for the family, was made by Charlotte Elizabeth Sells (née Booker). Before she came to Australia Charlotte was forewoman in a children's clothing factory in London. In 1875 an order was placed for hundreds of tiny red/blue shot silk slippers for an Indian Maharajah and she saved the offcuts in a calico bag. Charlotte emigrated to Australia as an assisted tradesperson, arriving on the *Nineveh* on 4 August 1876. She created the quilt top from 7,360 tiny pieces on the voyage and also met her future husband, William James Sells. The quilt was exhibited in 1879 at the International Exhibition in the Garden Palace, Botanic Gardens, Sydney under "Ladies Court, NSW" and the catalogue states

"Mrs Sells (Woolloomooloo), Quilted silk counterpain containing 7,360 pieces. Commended. Report: this is a well made counterpain, stitched by machine, the design is regular."

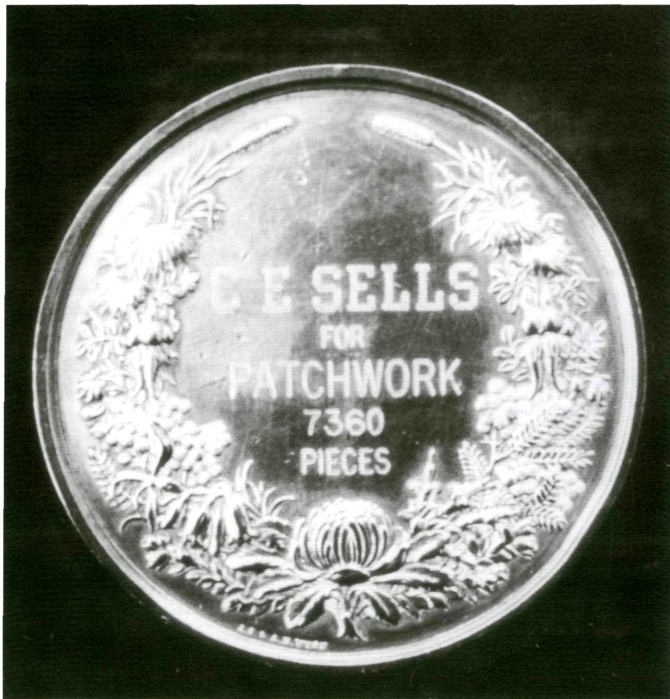
Charlotte was awarded a bronze medal. Among the entries are five other quilts made by Sydney women. These quilts are also still missing. Is there a chance that these quilts will turn up and allow us to put history back together with the items?

Another Sydney quilt maker was associated with the Centennial International Exhibition in Melbourne in 1888. Nina Alice Read at the age of 21 immigrated to Australia from London on the *Arizaba* in 1887. Too late to book a stand at the local Centennial exhibition of 1888, she talked her way into sharing part of Webb & Co's, where she exhibited a Connelly sewing machine (Wilcox and Gibb, London). In her diary she says:

"In the first week I cleared nearly £80. [The money was made by embroidering names on silk handkerchiefs at the exhibition.] Singers, Beales and reporters were all very interested. They had never seen this work done before nor seen a sewing machine like it."

During the exhibition she met Frank Piggott Webb, a maker of finely engraved glassware. Frank Webb is recorded as one of Sydney's colonial craftsmen, despatched from England by the family firm of Thomas Webb and Sons to demonstrate glass engraving during the 1879-80 Sydney International Exhibition.

Webb exhibited and won many first class awards for his work, which covered a variety of Australian themes: foliage, native flora and fauna, and which included vases engraved with a kookaburra holding a snake in its beak. Both the Power-



The Bronze Medal from the 1879 Sydney International Exhibition awarded to Charlotte Elizabeth Sells for her quilt.



Kookaburra quilt made by Nina Alice Webb (née Read).

house Museum and the Nambucca District Historical Society Museum in NSW have examples of his glassware engraved with kookaburras.

Nina Alice Read married Frank Piggott Webb on 19 July 1888 at St Peter's Church, Woolloomooloo, so that they would be respectable when they attended the Centennial International Exhibition in Melbourne together. They went back to England in 1889 but returned to Australia. From 1894 to 1923 the couple occupied various premises in the city of Sydney, including a shop in the Queen Victoria Building and here Nina supplemented their earnings

with fancy work done both by hand and on the Connelly sewing machine. This included the production of patchwork quilts which were highly embroidered on the front. We have evidence that Nina Alice Read made seven quilts, and one of the quilts which survives contains a grey and blue embroidered kookaburra in the centre with a snake in its mouth, sitting on a branch with native flora surrounded by pink fabric and pink and green embroidery.

It is interesting that the design of the kookaburra and its surroundings exactly mirrors the patterns on Webb's etched glassware. I have in my

possession two pieces of Webb's engravings and one could actually point to the design of the kookaburras, which were shared by both the quilt maker wife and the engraver husband. One can only assume that Nina copied the quilt patterns from her husband's highly successful work.

It is also known that possum and platypus skin patchwork rugs made by the women of New South Wales were displayed in the Australian Courts of the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876 and the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition. This kind of skin rug was first made by the Aborigines. Early explorers found parties of Aborigines in possession of small rugs made of possum skins sewed together with sinews, and the rugs became trade items between the natives and the white settlers.

In the late nineteenth century it became fashionable for Sydney women to make these skin patchworks, and they continued to be made up until the 1940s. Hence two Sydney pieced skin rugs of Tasmanian Wallaby fur lined with blue felt were included in the Sydney Quilt Stories exhibition. Several other skin rugs



Etched glass with Kookaburra by Frank Piggott Webb.



Clara Bate's quilt which was displayed at Jenolan Caves House in 1927.

were brought to the lectures at Elizabeth Bay House, some outstanding examples owned by members of the Australian Society!

One of the most remarkable coincidences in collecting the histories of these Sydney quilts is the historical interlinkages between of some of the quilts and some of the makers. A wonderful "crazy" quilt made by Clara Bate (1859-1914) described below was seen and admired at Jenolan

Caves House in 1927 by the Duke and Duchess of York when they visited the Caves, while some waggas were pieced by Sydney women waiting to see the Duke and Duchess's carriage pass on their way to open the Royal Agricultural Society Show in Sydney in the same year!

Clara Bate made a wonderful late 19th century velvet and silk "crazy" quilt. Clara was born to John Wesley and Mary Hughes, growing up in the

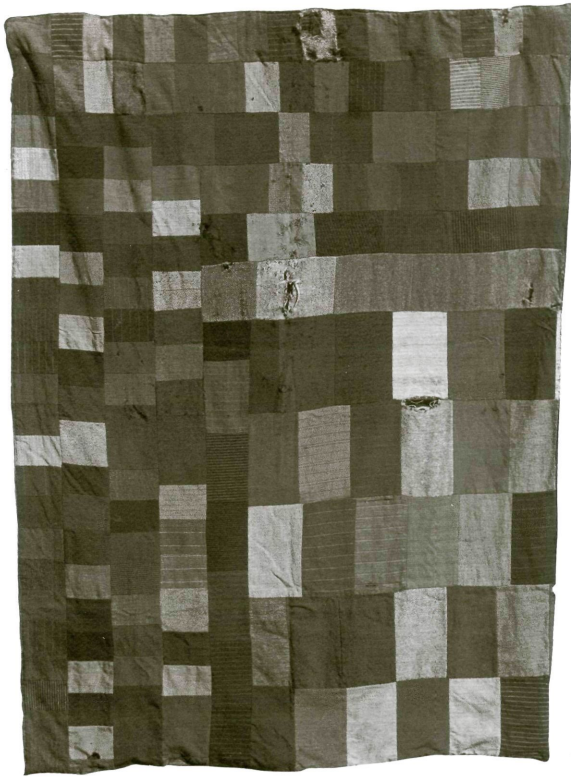
Bathurst region where her father was a farmer who took a keen interest in public life and the local Methodist church. She married Frank Picton Bate in 1884 and later moved into 'Frankfurt' in Gingkin where she ran a guest house while Frank ran a farm.

The Bates were great friends with the Whalan family who discovered Jenolan Caves and often supplied produce for meals at the Caves. The embroideries on the quilt reflect everyday life in Gingkin, containing mining tools, lumps of gold, geckos, Victorian paraphernalia, cricket bats, flags, horses and saddles and a plethora of day to day items of a Victorian home. There are several dates between 1898 and 1915. It is indeed a masterpiece. Clara's quilt was often on display at Caves House and it was there in 1927 that the Duke and Duchess of York stopped to admire it when they visited the Caves during their trip to Australia to open Parliament House in Canberra.

The Wagga from suiting samples which connects to the above story due to the Duke and Duchess' visit was made in Sydney, as many others were during the 1920s.

The original owner of this particular quilt still had a cupboard full of waggas made from tailors' samples and offcuts, which she made together with her mother, grandmother and her aunts. In a letter to me she stated:

"The back room of our house was turned into a sewing room with two sewing machines. We used to go to Blackmore's Tailors near St Peters [Sydney] and pick up pre-cut men's vests, which we took home to sew. The tailor often gave us swatches and offcuts from which we produced waggas - we gave many away. They were often lined with sugar bags which we got from the grocers. We were making them in 1927 when the Duke and Duchess of York [later King George VI and the present Queen Mother], came to Australia to open



Wagga of
suiting
fabrics.

Parliament House and I remember taking along a box of swatches to sew whilst waiting to see their carriage pass when they opened the Royal Agricultural Show that year.”

Quilts with provenance such as these provide us with some valuable information, not only about the lives of 19th century Australian women, but also about the fabrics available and the motivations for domestic decorative work. These quilts highlight a different perspective of the lives of women in Sydney in their participation in, or relationship to, Sydney history already documented. It is important that we continue to recognise our own history which is revealed through such women's work.

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Notes

1. A few copies of the illustrated catalogue for the exhibition *Sydney Quilt Stories 1811-1970* may still be available from the Quilt Study Group, PO Box 389, Neutral Bay 2089 price \$5 plus \$2 postage.
2. Marsden Files, State Library of New South Wales, manuscript A1992 pp 224-226.
3. Research kindly supplied by the Historic Houses Trust of NSW.
4. N. Walsh, Index of References to Furniture and Furnishing in Advertisements in the *Sydney Gazette* 1803-1824, Historic Houses Trust of NSW 1997.
5. Susan Hunt, “Restoring Elizabeth Farm, Colonial textiles”, *Craft Australia* No. 2 1985 pp 81-88. Many ledger entries by John Macarthur record the purchase of fabrics and soft furnishings. In one purchase he spent £92 on material alone. He also

imported fabric for resale.

6. Morton Herman, *Annabella Boswell's Journal*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1981 pp 89-90 and pp 155.
7. *Ibid* p 125.
8. Annette Gero, “Australian quilt makers from our past”, *Australiana* Vol 8 No. 2 1986 pp 46-51, and “The History of Patchwork Quilts in Australia”. *Australian Collectors Quarterly*, November-January 1989, pp 18-26.
9. *Ballarat Times*, 2 September 1854; *Ballarat Times*, 28 October 1854.
10. Herbert J Rumsey in “Pioneers of Sydney Cove”.
11. Information from the National Quilt Register, kindly supplied by Wendy Hucker, Pioneer Women's Hut, Tumbarumba.



Makers of the Wagga of suiting fabrics, Lillian Head and her aunt.

12. *Official Record of the Sydney International Exhibition*, Government Printer, Sydney, 1881 p 517.
13. Diary of Nina Alice Webb, private collection.
14. Marjorie Graham, *Australian Glass of the 19th & Early 20th Century*, David Ell Press, Sydney 1981, pp 42-46.
15. Karen Fail, “Discovering Aunt Clara's Quilt” *Craft and Home* Vol. 7 No. 1 1995.
16. Annette Gero, “The Folklore of the Australian Wagga”, *Australiana* Vol 10 No. 2 1988, pp 37-46.

Vagabond Sports

Fiona Starr

In 1844, a Select Committee Inquiry into convict discipline at Hyde Park Barracks in Sydney found that the convicts “were at gambling and all sorts of vagabond sports.” Indeed, Captain Browne of the Committee reported seeing convicts playing “chuckpenny” on the steps of the Court House, for stakes of £25.¹

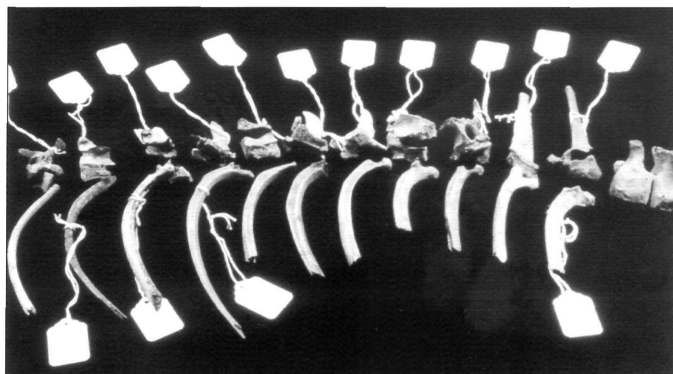
The Captain’s concerns are mod-

estly validated by archaeological evidence, as hand-carved bone gaming pieces or tokens, dice and a domino have been recovered from beneath the floorboards and the courtyard of the Hyde Park Barracks in Macquarie Street.

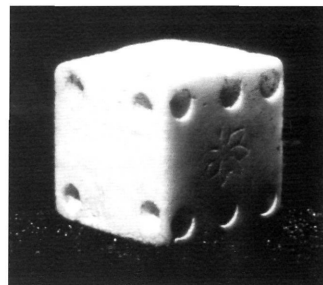
Charles Cozens, a convict resident at Hyde Park Barracks about 1840, reported that the food rations

supplied to the convicts consisted of “... hominy for breakfast...one pound of brown bread, and half a pound of animal food: this formed the daily allowance to each person, if I might except the liquor termed soup, in which the fresh meat is boiled, with a slight sprinkling of cabbage leaf.”

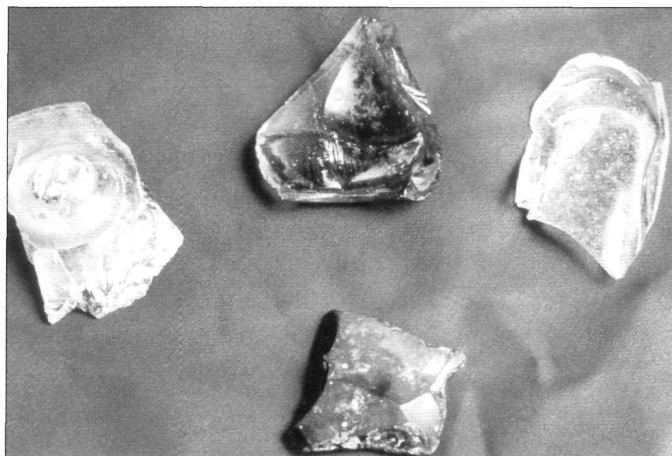
The boiling of meat for nutrients and flavour for broth was a common practice in the nineteenth century kitchen. Many thousands of broken sheep, pig and cattle bones have been recovered from beneath the floorboards of the dormitory rooms of the Hyde Park Barracks.



Partially reconstituted pig skeleton from the Hyde Park Barracks Collection. Photo Christopher Shain.



A die recovered from the Hyde Park Barracks. Photo Christopher Shain.



Sherds of glass and flint that may have been used for cutting and carving of the Barracks bone material. Photo Christopher Shain.

Some of these bones display the identifying marks of butcher’s saws and knives, demonstrating that they have been divided into portions by the cooks. This strongly suggests that these archaeological finds are the refuse of convict meals. While the bones might have been broken up for soup preparation, they may also have been crushed by the Hyde Park Barracks convicts so they could suck out extra sustenance from the marrow.

A Van Diemen’s Land convict, J. F. Mortlock, recorded in his memoir of 1840s servitude that the prisoners’

extraction of marrow was not uncommon:

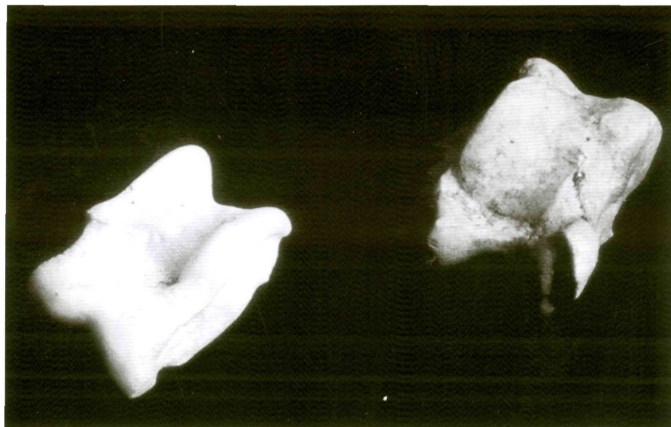
“By secretly crushing fresh beef bones ... we collected a relish more wholesome than [the] bad butter [issued by the government].”³

The presence of bone refuse along with a scattering of convict crafts such as hand-fashioned draughts, knucklebones and dice in the convict dormitory areas however, is an intriguing factor. Early plans of the Convict Barracks show that the mess rooms were in the long range of buildings that once formed the southern wall of the Barracks enclosure. How then did these thousands of bones find their way into the dormitory building and under the floors?

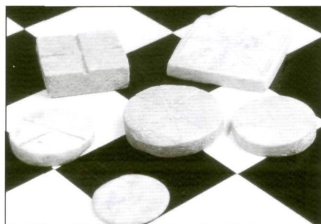
The distribution of food at the Hyde Park Barracks was an important part of the social control the Government exerted over the convicts. At 8.00 am and 1.00 pm each day, convicts were summoned to their meals by the Barracks bell. Under the watchful eyes of their overseers, the men assembled in groups to be served their rations in the mess rooms.

Great care was to be taken by the Superintendent and his staff to ensure that the rations were “properly cooked ... clean, wholesome”, that the regulated allowances were distributed and that the cooks were not appropriating too great a share for their own meals⁴.

Among the concerns with the accurate measure of rations, there was official anxiety that portions of the prisoners' food were being used for gambling. While it is impossible to determine the extent that food served as currency for gambling, some convicts must have concealed meat and bones in their clothing to eat, barter or to recycle into useful objects. It must have been an achievement for the prisoners to smuggle bones and other food into the Barracks as the



The Vagabond Sport of Knucklebones. Photo Christopher Shain.



Draughts and game pieces from the collections. Photo Christopher Shain.

convicts were searched for illegal property.

Some of the bones taken into the dormitory were probably destined for nocturnal convict handiwork to produce gaming pieces. So while the Superintendent and his overseers wielded their authority through the rationing of food, the convicts subversively resisted by gambling with the very food that they were issued.

The memoirs of convict life do not elaborate on illicit craft activities such as bone carving, but some of the archaeological finds suggest that illegally obtained sherds of glass and stone, nails and knives might have been used to carve the bone. Many of these items have also been retrieved from beneath the Barracks floor. A selection of recovered British flints and sherds of glass show macroscopic chipping on the edges,

evidence of their repeated use in cutting, scraping and carving.

The bone remains of convict meals, bone gaming pieces and some likely carving tools are currently on display in a “Focus” display in the archaeology room of Hyde Park Barracks Museum. The theme chosen for the exhibition highlights two aspects of convict life at the Barracks and reveals convict resistance to the ponderous authority imposed upon their lives. This research will supplement the research into convict life for an extensive convict exhibition planned for the Hyde Park Barracks Museum in 1999.

Notes

1. *Select Committee on Life and Property*, NSW Government Printer, Sydney 1844 p 53.
2. Charles Cozens, *Adventures of a Guardsman*, Richard Bentley, London 1848. p 117f.
3. J. F. Mortlock, *Experiences of a Convict*, Sydney University Press, Sydney 1965, p 82.
4. Governor Sir Thomas Brisbane, *Instructions for the Guidance of the Superintendent ...of the Establishment of Convicts in the Hyde Park Barracks*. NSW Government Printer, Sydney 1825, p 9.

Stirring the Colonial Possum

Leo Schofield

On page one hundred and sixty seven of Kevin Fahy and Andrew Simpson's splendid new volume *Australian Furniture: Pictorial History and Dictionary 1788-1938* is a photograph of a very fruity cedar bookcase in the Gothick – that's Gothick with a k – taste.

It is one of a pair that used to belong to me. I acquired them in the late nineteen sixties at a Lawson's auction in a house in Neutral Bay with the improbable name of "Once Upon a Time".

They belonged to a lady called Lorna Crowle. She had been the mistress of a Sydney businessman called William Alfred Leopold Crowle whose wife had refused to divorce him, thus forcing Lorna, who desperately craved respectability in addition to the considerable wealth she had gained by the liaison, to change her surname by deed poll.

Lorna Crowle was dancing dressed as a fairy in a pantomime in Launceston when she caught Crowle's eye, and he whisked her up to Sydney when she was barely twenty and installed her in a flat at the Cross, not far from his Italianate mansion "Wyldefel", where the bookcases stood in his library.

An entrepreneur with an uncanny knack for making a quid, Crowle demolished "Wyldefel" in the early nineteen thirties to build terraced apartments, "Wyldefel Gardens", which still stand today. As the Harbour Bridge had not been constructed, Crowle had most of the contents, including the Gothick bookcases, floated over the water on barges to his new house on Kurraba Point. They looked pretty odd there as "Once Upon a Time" was con-

structed in the "P&O style".

After buying these two extraordinary pieces of furniture, for four hundred dollars as I remember, I found they were too large to fit into my house so I offered them on more or less permanent loan to "Lindesay" at Darling Point.

My offer was declined. Apparently a member of one of the innumerable committees there declared the bookcases to be fake. This was a bit rich as installed over the mantelpiece in the room adjacent to the one where they might have been placed, stood what was known in the Queen Street antique trade as a Gro-Plus mirror. This had started out its life as standard Regency overmantel mirror of the type to be seen in plate 273, page 307 of Kevin and Andy's book.

But as the shallow rectangular form was unfashionable in the early seventies, a certain dealer used to convert them into a more fashionable tall pier glass shape by removing the

stumpy side bits, extending them usually with lengths of broom handle later gilded, and fitting modern plate mirror. Hence the name Gro-Plus suggesting miraculous growth after a little judicious fertilising.

Anyhow, my 'fake' Gothick bookcases, banished from "Lindesay" by the taste police of the Women's Committee, were lent instead to a friend in Elizabeth Bay whose ceilings were of a sufficient height to accommodate them.

Later, when I acquired Benjamin Backhouse's St Matthias's Rectory in Paddington, they were retrieved and flanked the fireplace there. In fact, the colour photograph in Kevin and Andy's *Dictionary* shows them still stacked with my books. When my business partners and I sold that building, we sold the contents as well, and the bookcases went to David Ell for eight thousand dollars. David knew they were Australian as I did, but it wasn't until they were disman-



Kevin Fahy, Andrew Simpson and Leo Schofield at the book launch in the Ball Room of Government House, Sydney, 6 October 1998.



Simon Quass, Andrew Simpson, Margot Riley, Kevin Fahy and David Sampietro.

tled and loaded onto the removal van that he noticed they were plastered with impressed marks indicating that they had come from the workshop of the Sydney cabinetmaker Joseph Sly.

At the time we knew relatively little about Australian cabinetmakers and associated craftsmen, but the names of Lenehan and Sly had begun to crop up in articles and in conversation.

David lost no time in selling on his purchases to the Australiana Fund and they now stand on either side of the hall at Kirribilli House, filled with mounted emu eggs.

I relate this somewhat complicated tale as it is indicative of a number of things - the growth in awareness and appreciation of the work of Australian decorative arts, burgeoning scholarship and of course values, but most of all, changing tastes. There is something to be said for William Alfred Leopold Crowle who, although he was prepared to knock down a Potts Point mansion, was smart enough to keep items of singular quality in his collection no matter how odd they looked in his new triple-decker land-locked liner of an Art Déco home.

But even more admirable than collectors are people like Kevin and

Andy, who, in these culturally dark times are prepared to spend years on compilation and preparation of a publication such as the one we are celebrating tonight, which will be of inestimable value to collectors and connoisseurs - they are not necessarily the same thing - and curators.

Kevin Fahy and I go back longer than either of us probably cares to remember - forty something years. We met, I think, when we were both at Sydney University where, instead of more conventional student pursuits, we busied ourselves learning about and visiting old houses.

An early memory is of stomping over "Macquarie Fields House" before David Jamieson did such a marvelous job of restoring it. We had organised a picnic cum working bee at the house, an unsolicited amateur attempt to tidy it up a bit. Our first task was to get a cow out of the drawing room where it had wandered and fallen through the floor.

On another excursion, we visited "Bungarribee" at Eastern Creek, a house that should never have been demolished as it stood in a vast tract of Government-owned land.

Yet another trip was to "Fernhill" at Mulgoa on a stifling day. As we were admiring some details of the

carpentry on the internal shutters in the dining room, a fire broke out in a paddock below the house and together with the owner, we rushed out to help extinguish it, beating it out with wet wheat sacks. Then we resumed our tour. The admission was ten shillings but our money was returned on this occasion.

Egged on by the formidable Rachel Roxburgh, we visited doomed houses, wrote letters to newspapers and generally stirred the possum in matters pertaining to what is now known as heritage.

Information of our built past was slender back in the fifties and we relied for much information on the writings of G. Nesta Griffiths, valuable in that they were pioneering works but wildly romantic and overly concerned with life above stairs.

Our paths diverged in the sixties but came together again when we were lobbying the Wran Government to establish a museum of decorative arts. We got one in the form of the Powerhouse and it now has a pretty good collection of Australiana, as have most of the state galleries and the National Gallery in Canberra.

Gingering of another kind was also Andy Simpson's forte and his founding of the Australiana Society was a major milestone along the path to appreciation of our rich and quirky legacy of decorative arts. That appreciation, fostered enthusiastically by Kevin, Andy and others, is now widespread and, as in America, home grown art, despite its occasional gaucheries, is understood, admired and collected.

This passion for the past is something of a recent phenomenon and it may not be long-lived. I fear for the future of scholarship such as this book exemplifies. Having just begun to appreciate our history we are now, it seems, re-writing it as the twin forces of multiculturalism and political correctness come into play.



Clare May and Margot Riley.

Celebrants of the new culturally diverse Australia would have us believe that this country was a wasteland, a drab Anglo outpost, uncultivated and ignorant, before the wave of post-World War II migration reshaped it. To some, the furniture illustrated in this marvellous volume may symbolise cringe, a dependence on Britain, on imported ideas and mores. Cultural subservience. It is, of course, no such thing. It is emblematic of ambition, aspiration and is also a celebration, sometimes a naive one, of the makers' and designers' new home and of native materials.

Of even more concern than the rejection of the past is what the Americans have dubbed with an unlovely phrase for which there is no acceptable alternative at the moment, the dumping down of this country. When a political party tells us that the arts are elite, that cultural pursuits are to be despised even though sport is lavishly funded and celebrated universally and uncritically, that the muscle between our ears is of lesser importance than the one in someone's thigh or upper arm, then we know that the black forces of philistinism are at work.

I wonder what the future might be for dedicated souls like Messrs Fahy and Simpson in a country that is currently in denial of its past.

Ironically, awareness of heritage



The Hon. Barry O'Keefe AM QC, Judy Moran and Morgan Jones.



Joanne Moran, Caroline Jones and Rosilea Gabriel

has never been higher. But at the same time official indifference to it has never been more pronounced. Just outside the gates of this building a monstrous act of vandalism is under way as hobbit holes are constructed in which students are to learn music as trains on the City Circle line pass between classrooms. And a few blocks away more parkland is being pilfered for a mayoral wading pool and the opportunity to create the great civic space imagined by James Barnet has been lost, probably for all time.

Most of us are suffering battle fatigue. Whole suburbs like Rockdale and Roseville are being ineradicably altered, rarely for the better, and we are powerless to do anything about it. At a level where a difference might be made, in the schools and universities, funds are drying up and education is becoming devalued. Of primary concern is not excellence - that is an elite, anti-egalitarian concept - but success, usually in business and in sport, neither of which is about a cel-



Peter Simon AM, Julieane Watson and John Watson.

ebration of community but rather about screwing one's opponents.

It is in this curious and, one trusts, temporary social context that this book emerges, and we must be grateful for passionate enthusiasts willing to record our past while we still have one that some of us think worth recording.

On behalf of you all here this evening, may I congratulate the authors and thank them for asking me to launch their "alte werk" this evening. I do so with great pleasure.

This article is the text of a Speech at the launch of Kevin Fahy and Andy Simpson's book, *Australian Furniture: Pictorial History and Dictionary 1788-1938*, at Government House, Sydney, 6 October 1998.

The book is available at \$485 plus \$15 handling and insurance from Casuarina Press, PO Box 643 Woollahra NSW 2025 Tel (02) 9363 3424, fax (02) 9362 8035.

Exhibitions

One of our greatest Australiana collections

Paradise Possessed: The Rex Nan Kivell Collection

National Library of Australia, Canberra, till 7 February 1999. Curator: Michelle Hetherington.

Sir Rex de Charambac Nan Kivell was one of the greatest collectors of items relating to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific. Born plain Reginald Nankivell in Christchurch, New Zealand, recent research shows his background was not that of "a man of gentle and patrician origins" which he feigned.

When Nan Kivell found himself in London at the end of the First World War, John Thompson describes him as "the achetypal outsider - illegitimate, homosexual, self-educated, an Antipodean colonial - who, pressing his nose to the window, eventually gained access to the larger, more marvellous world from which he must have felt ... excluded".

While dealing in contemporary art from the Redfern Gallery in London, Nan Kivell amassed an extraordinary personal collection of 15,000 items relating to Pacific history. His collection was first lent, then sold or given to the National Library of Australia - a country he never visited. Importantly, it led to the NLA expanding its collecting to include historical material as well as books and manuscripts.

Starting with the early maps showing how Europeans' first ideas about the South Pacific were expressed, the exhibition moves on to the explorers, the settlers and the missionaries.

This show of treasures from the Nan Kivell collection marks the centenary of his birth on 8 April 1898,

and shows the amazing drive that saw him ferret out vast quantities of material to put Australian exploration and early settlement into its broader geographic, political and historical context.

Publication: *Paradise Possessed: The Rex Nan Kivell Collection*, 78pp.

French explorers return to Sydney

Terre Napoléon: Australia through French eyes - the explorations of Captain Baudin 1800-1804

Museum of Sydney, 26 February to 30 May 1999. Curator: Sue Hunt.

Terre Napoléon: Australia through French eyes - the explorations of Captain Baudin 1800-1804 will present beautiful images by Charles-Alexandre Lesueur and Nicolas-Martin Petit from the Natural History Museum at Le Havre.

Baudin's 238 men spent three and a half years sailing half way around the world on a scientific expedition in two ships, *Le Géographe* and *Le Naturaliste*, to survey the Australian coast. Giving the topography French names, the western part of the continent was named Terre Napoléon in honour of France's First Consul. Most French names didn't last, being superseded by Admiralty charts prepared by Matthew Flinders. Baudin and Flinders crossed paths at Encounter Bay in South Australia in April 1802.

Baudin's ships brought back more natural history specimens than any other expedition. Lesueur's delicate watercolours and drawings of zoological specimens were no doubt shown by this gunner's-mate-turned-draughtsman to the distinguished Austrian artist Ferdinand Bauer when they met in Sydney. Nicolas-Martin

Petit's portraits of Tasmanian and mainland Aborigines illustrate their physiognomy, their clothing and their activities, as well as infusing the subjects with dignity and personality.

Both French ships called at Port Jackson. Here, where Baudin stayed five months, they were entertained by Governor King at Government House, where 46 of the watercolours and drawings will be seen in an exhibition scheduled for the Museum of Sydney from 26 February till 30 May 1999.

Running before the Wind

The Last Windjammers - Grain Races round Cape Horn

National Maritime Museum, Sydney, till 14 March, then Adelaide, South Australian Maritime Museum, 21 April till June. Curators: Henrik Karlsson & Daina Fletcher.

This is the story of the last great sailing ships, the world's most majestic anachronisms, awe-inspiring canvas and hemp dinosaurs moving majestically towards their doom in the middle of this century.

These big steel ships, carrying up to 4,500 tons, were operated by Gustaf Erikson, an enterprising Finnish ship owner from the Åland Islands, serving the grain trade between South Australia and Europe till 1949.

Ships such as the *Herzogin Cecilie*, *Hougomont*, *Viking*, *Lawhill*, *Moshulu*, *Pommern*, *Pamir* and *Passat* left Europe every September on the 'great circle route' via the Cape of Good Hope and across the Indian Ocean, more often than not in ballast if no outward bound cargo was available. They sailed back around Cape Horn, fully laden with grain plus a few Australian adventurers.

Primitive loading facilities, low overheads, uninsured vessels and low wages kept the sailing ships viable. Erikson's grain ships created tremendous interest wherever they sailed. They were the last big ships of commercial sail and everyone knew it. The press championed the idea of races between them - recalling the great tea clippers of the 19th century.

Eager young adventurers clamoured to get on board, to sail under clouds of canvas while they could. The artist Dennis Adams sailed as an "able-bodied passenger" on the *Herzogin Cecilie* to attend art school in London in 1935, returning in 1938 on the *Lawhill*. On both voyages he scampered up the rigging, paintbox in hand, to sketch and paint.

Composer Percy Grainger, inspired by the sounds of the wind in the sheets and sails, with a lifelong interest in folk music and sea shanties, climbed the rigging and worked with the crew as a passenger from Copenhagen to South Australia on *L'Avenir* in 1933/34. Playing the piano to his wife and shipmates at night, writing parts of his autobiography on board, he painted other Erikson ships at anchor and even commissioned a model of the ship.

The Last Windjammers - Grain Races around Cape Horn was mounted by the Åland Maritime Museum in association with the Australian National Maritime Museum, and supported by the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finnish Ministry of Education, Wilhelmsen Lines, Nokia,

Finnair, Polarcup, UPM Kymmene, Metsä Serla, Viking Line and the Gustaf Erikson Foundation.

Publication: *The Last Windjammers. Grain races round Cape Horn*, Åland Maritime Museum 48 pp.

Talented surgeon

Lamalera - Whale Hunters of Indonesia

National Maritime Museum, Sydney, until 8 March. Curator: Patricia Miles.

While this exhibition is about subsistence whale hunters from the village of Lamalera on Lembata in eastern Indonesia, it contains one of the finest pieces of scrimshaw, from the National Library's Rex Nan Kivell collection.

Dr William Roderick sailed as a surgeon on several voyages to the whaling grounds in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans between 1847 and 1856. He retrieved a large piece of a sperm whale's lower jawbone, 30 by 66 cm, to engrave a panorama of the whaler *Adventure* off the island of Flores. The superb engraving is testimony to his dexterity, while the composition with islands, ships, whales and whaleboats, probably telescopes his experiences on several voyages.

Family Album

Flesh & Blood. A Sydney Story 1788-1998

Museum of Sydney, until 14 February. Curator: Ace Bourke.

The Museum of Sydney continues a tradition of challenging exhibitions with this show which reveals a number of the prominent Sydney families from whom the curator, commercial gallery director Ace Bourke, is descended.

Two Governors, Sir Richard Bourke and Philip Gidley King, and their wives are there as well as Macarthur, Merewethers, Dockings, Hicksons and Mitchells. We see their portraits, their houses, family photographs and their personal effects, as well as the 1856 funeral of Rear Admiral Philip Parker King by Conrad Martens. Some of these artefacts and artworks are from public collections, many from private collections or family so most of us will see them for the first time.

The grand families and grand houses contrast with a parallel theme about Aboriginal perspectives on European settlement. This includes Augustus Earle's portrait of Bungaree, and a documented wooden club owned by Bungaree, given to the Pitt-Rivers Museum in Oxford in 1900. A third strand shows the work of contemporary artists William Yang, the late Peter Tully and Brett Whiteley, and others.

A fourth strand might have included people in another group - the servants and workers. It's amazing how everyone in the 19th century was influential, powerful, rich and respected, and had such good taste.

Contributions Please ...

The Editors welcome contributions to the magazine *Australiana* at any time. Contributions should preferably be submitted both in typed hard copy and in Microsoft Word on floppy disc or by email to johnwade@anmm.gov.au. Use the current issue as a style guide for presentation of text and notes.

Photographs will reproduce best from black and white prints.

The Editors will wherever possible send you the edited text of your article for checking prior to publication. Be sure to include your address and telephone number.



The Australiana Society

Annual General Meeting 3 September 1998

President's Annual Report

The Society has completed another successful year with an interesting group of speakers and a very popular and erudite journal. Most general and committee meetings have been held at the National Trust Centre and I wish to record our thanks to the Trust and to committee member Ian Stephenson for their hospitality. It has proved to be a popular location.

We also record warm thanks to the Historic Houses Trust and to the Powerhouse Museum for providing venues for our activities and committee members and speakers from among their ranks. It would not be possible for the Society to function so well if it was not for the cooperation of all these bodies, personal and institutional!

Michael Bogle, committeeman and Historic Houses Trust curator spoke to our July meeting on "Design in Australia" and subsequently we saw the publication of his splendid book with the same title.

In November we heard a fascinating talk by John McPhee, former Deputy Director of the National Gallery of Victoria and Senior Curator of Australian Art at the National Gallery of Australia. Titled "Collecting the Uncollectable" John spoke of folk art, lost things, and items too large to "collect".

Our Australia Day function this year was a lunch at Vacluse House, put together with a great deal of organising by committee members and staff at the site. Dr James Broadbent, Senior Curator with the Historic Houses Trust, gave an erudite and amusing address to our members and friends.

Dr Charles Pickett spoke on "Fibro" at our March meeting this year. Charles, Curator of Social History at the Powerhouse Museum, gave an illustrated talk on the history of this versatile material which did much to provide inexpensive housing for Australians for many years. He is also author of *The Fibro Frontier*, published to coincide with the exhibition of that name.

In May we had an address on "Convict Love Tokens" by another Powerhouse Museum curator, Paul Donnelly, Curator of Decorative Arts. The talk coincided with a guided tour of an exhibition of these touching objects at Hyde Park Barracks. Many of our members were surprised at the great number of such items gathered together for this display.

Michael Bogle stood down as Secretary towards the end of the financial year to travel overseas but until then did a very capable job. Roslyn Maguire has carried out those duties since and has also seen to the despatch of our journals.

Caressa Crouch has been a very effective Hon. Treasurer for the year, as you will see from the annual accounts appearing in this issue.

Johanna Cole has edited our journal during the year and has had some assistance from Kevin Fahy from time to time. *Australiana* has continued its high standard of content and production over the year but I would be happier to be spared the anxiety of uncertain delivery dates where it also serves as a reminder of meetings.

John Morris
President

Australiana Writing Awards

Sponsored by
Peter R Walker Pty Ltd
Dealers in Fine Art

Peter R Walker Pty Ltd, Dealers in Fine Art, are sponsoring a cash award of \$250 for the best article submitted to *Australiana* for each of the next two years.

Articles appearing in *Australiana* Volume 21, 1999 are eligible to receive the first award, to be presented at the Australia Day Dinner in 2000. Members and non-members, including students, are encouraged to submit entries. The Society Committee is considering the best method of selecting the winner.

In coming issues ...

Paul Hundley
A Pair of Chinese Punch Bowls

Patricia Miles
The Steamship Owners Cricket Trophy

Kevin Fahy
Australia's first cabinetmaker of note, Laurence Butler

Caressa Crouch
Australia's first known furniture pattern book c. 1874

John Wade
A database for your collection

The Australiana Society Inc.

Income & Expenditure Statement for the year ended 30 June 1998

	1998	1997
Journal Income		
Sales to members		
1998 187@ \$40, 1997 201@ \$40	7,480.00	8,040.00
Other sales, back copies	516.00	492.50
Advertising	3,103.00	2,450.00
Total	11,099.00	10,982.50
Journal Expenditure		
Production	9,748.00	11,210.30
Postage	923.74	632.70
Stationery	139.98	202.30
Total	10,811.72	12,044.67
Nett Surplus/(Deficit)	287.28	(1,062.17)
General Income		
Subscriptions less proportion applied to journal (80%)	1,920.00	929.00
Annual dinner including raffle	1,615.00	6,025.00
Interest Received	42.69	81.58
Donations	120.00	0
Total	3,697.69	7,035.58
General Expenditure		
Corporate Affairs Fee	50.00	30.00
Subscriptions to R.A.H.S.	80.00	80.00
Stationery & Postage	169.30	79.20
Insurance	365.00	330.00
Annual Dinner expenses	889.25	3,204.69
Government taxes & bank charges	14.90	26.62
General Meeting Expenses	118.02	0
Total	1,686.47	3,750.51
Nett Surplus/(Deficit)	2,011.22	3,285.51
Total Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	2,298.50	2,222.90
Balance Sheet as at 30 June		
Accumulated Funds		
Balance brought forward 1 July 1997	9,365.84	7,142.94
Plus Surplus	2,298.50	2,222.90
Peter Walker Writers Award	500.00	0
Total	12,164.34	9,365.84
These funds are represented by –		
Current Assets		
General Account	10,052.03	7,300.31
Investment Account	2,012.31	1,965.53
Deposit Glover Cottage (bond)	100.00	100.00
Total	12,164.34	9,365.84

Treasurer's Report

The format for the Income and Expenditure Statement and Balance Sheet for the year ended 1998, has been improved to show both this year and the previous year to allow for easy comparisons.

My greatest concern in my new role as Treasurer, is to see the continual drop in membership numbers, which we do need to address this financial year, and any suggestions or help towards this would be welcome. If you know of anyone who would like to receive an application form please let me know.

The continued financial support by our sponsors and advertisers is greatly appreciated, towards the cost of production of the journal, which has been steady for the year.

Caressa Crouch
Hon. Treasurer

Australia Day Lunch 1999

The Society's 1999 Australia Day Lunch will be held at the former Female Orphan School, Rydalmere, on Tuesday, 26 January.

Founded by Governor King in 1800, the Female Orphan School's first home was Captain Kent's former residence on the corner of Bridge and George Streets, Sydney, built in 1797. The orphan institution quickly fell into disrepute and was later described by missionary the Rev Pascoe Crook as being nothing better than a school for prostitutes run by a notorious strum-

pet. Its bad reputation, cramped accommodation and urban location led to the decision by the management committee to transfer it to a more wholesome rural setting. Accordingly in August 1813 Governor Lachlan Macquarie laid the foundation stone of a new building on the north bank of the Parramatta River near the town of the same name.

In his evidence to the Bigge enquiry the Rev. Samuel Marsden attributed the design of the building to Mrs Macquarie. It is believed that

the plan was loosely based on her childhood home, Airds House near Appin in Scotland. Marsden clearly thought the building too good for its occupants when he wrote 'the Female Orphan Institution should not be like a Boarding School for Young Ladies who have Some Prospects in Life, but like a House of Industry'.

The new school was completed in 1818. During its long history it has been an orphanage, a mental hospital and is now the Parramatta Campus of the University of Western Sydney.

Our Authors

Dr Annette Gero

Dr Annette Gero has been documenting and collecting quilts since 1982. She is perhaps most highly recognised for her own quilt collection which has been regarded as a "national treasure" by the Manly Art Gallery and Museum. Her collection contains early Australian, English and American quilts. She has had over 30 exhibitions of her quilts around Australia including Regional Galleries and the National Trust through galleries in NSW, Western Australia, Queensland and Victoria. She is currently the Convenor of the Sydney Branch of the Quilt Study Group of Australia, which jointly presented "Sydney Quilt Stories" together with the His-

toric Houses Trust of NSW at Elizabeth Bay House in 1998.

Leo Schofield

Leo Schofield is the Artistic Director of the Olympic Arts Festival Sydney 2000, Director of the Sydney Festival, Chairman of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, *Sydney Morning Herald* columnist, and former Artistic Director of the Melbourne International Festival of the Arts. Leo now lives in a picturesque Gothick house, surrounded by a glorious garden overlooking Nelson Bay, which he regularly opens to the public.

Fiona Starr

Fiona Starr is an Honours graduate in historical archaeology from the University of Sydney. She has recently completed a thesis on convict artefacts from Norfolk Island and is currently serving an

internship at the Hyde Park Barracks Museum while studying for an M.A. in Museum Studies.

John Wade

John Wade is an archaeologist turned curator turned sponsorship manager, with a Master of Arts with First Class Honours in Archaeology and an MBA, both from The University of Sydney. He pesters people to support the Australian National Maritime Museum, where he has worked for the last 12 years. Twenty years ago he was the original editor of *Australiana*, and has recently returned to haunt the place. He lives in a Federation house which last year celebrated its centenary, surrounded by objects whose significance he can no longer recollect.

“A Small Token of our Appreciation”

An illuminated address presented to Captain Hugh Craig, 1896

John Wade

An oil portrait of a sea captain, painted by a Chinese artist in 1894, was offered at the Christie’s paintings auction in Melbourne on 23-24 November 1998.¹

In a red lacquered Chinese frame which has more recently been gilded, the diminutive Captain is shown in uniform, dignified yet relaxed, leaning on the red-upholstered back of a curved captain’s chair. With a glowing cigar stub between the fingers of his left hand, he gazes out of the frame at the viewer. His thin, doleful face, framed by neatly combed dark brown hair and trimmed full beard above a white starched collar, exudes the confidence that comes from years of command. The deep set blue eyes, long nose and large ears are typical of a Chinese painter’s rendition of a Westerner.

Below the chair rail, the painting is inscribed in a cartouche:

“Presented to Captain H. Craig
by

Quong Tart on Behalf of The
Chinese Passengers Per
S.S. Menmuir 14/5/94
Sydney to Hong Kong”

flanked by the names of the passengers in Chinese characters.

Western visitors² to Chinese entrepôts often brought back souvenirs of their visits, such as paintings of the hongs (foreign factories) of Canton, portraits of their ships, portraits of themselves, diligent copies of artworks and armorial porcelain. This tradition went back to the 17th Century; John Green, captain of the first American trading ship into Canton after the War of Independence in

1784, came home with a porcelain punch bowl³ painted in enamels with a generic view of a sailing ship and inscribed “John Green – Empress of China – Commander”. Captain

Green brought back other bowls, for he had an invoice⁴ for “4 Factory Painted Bowles @ 5 1/2 [\$] each”.

By the second half of the 19th century, Chinese painters could turn



Framed illuminated address presented to Captain Hugh Craig of the SS Menmuir in 1896, attributed to Stuart Bowerie.

out an accurate oil portrait, often based on a photograph, during the much shorter port visits of the steamers. John McPhee,⁵ writing the Christie's catalogue entry, points out that the National Gallery of Australia has a Chinese "trade" portrait of "Thomas Dewhurst Jennings, a famously fat Hobart publican sitting on a pair of chairs" and carrying the stamp of Sue Hing Long and Co, possibly the studio where the portrait may have been painted.

Craig was commander of the steamship *SS Menmuir* when she sailed from Miller's Point, Sydney on Sunday 22 April 1894, carrying the well-known and well-respected Sydney merchant [Mei] Quong Tart and his family to Hong Kong⁶ for a three month absence. On the Saturday, the decks were thronged as they were farewelled by the Premier Sir George Dibbs, Manager of the Australian Joint Stock Bank Francis Adams, and the Mayor of Parramatta accompanied by brass music from the City Band, which Tart sponsored. Another crowd of well-wishers turned out on the Sunday morning, some going as far as the Heads on a chartered steamer to wave goodbye.

It was his third trip to China, the first with his wife Margaret and family who would meet Quong's elderly mother for the first time. The Emperor would also bestow on him a higher order – Mandarin of the Fourth Degree. Quong Tart, already importing tea, silk and other Chinese goods, hoped to establish a new trade in wool between Australia and China.

On arrival in Hong Kong, Quong Tart, fluent in Cantonese, commissioned from a local studio this portrait of Captain Craig, and presented it on behalf of the Chinese passengers in steerage. Though he mixed with the first class passengers and visited various dignitaries at ports of call en route, Quong Tart must have

known the steerage passengers well enough to write down their names for the artist to copy.

The charismatic Quong Tart had arrived in Australia from Quangdong province as a nine year old boy in 1859, taken by his uncle to the gold fields around Araluen and Braidwood in southern New South Wales. Learning English from Scots immigrants, he developed a Scottish burr and a love of all things Scottish, including haggis and wearing kilts, as well as cricket and race horses. In 1871, he swore allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Victoria and became a British subject.

Most Chinese miners returned to China when the gold ran out. Some, of course, set up furniture factories, causing distress to the British furniture makers who complained about their exploitation of cheap labour, and the cheap prices of the goods made by Chinese makers. Some resorted to stickers "white labour only" on their products. Quong Tart, however, had made enough money to set up in business in Sydney, using his Chinese connections, as a tea merchant.

When he left Braidwood, Tart was presented with an illuminated address by the prominent citizens – quite an achievement at a time when "Celestials" were reviled. It had been only 1861 when a mob of white miners attacked and looted the camp of "a swarm of Mongolian locusts" at Lambing Flat, and then, as now, ranting demagogues like publisher John Norton or cabinetmaker turned politician Ninian Melville attracted support by spouting the principles of protectionism and "White Australia".

Chinese miners would have sailed on the cheaper sailing ships or in steerage, but Quong Tart made his first trip back to China in April 1881⁷ in first class, to Hong Kong on the regular Eastern and Australian Steam Ship Company steamer *SS Menmuir*, commanded by Captain Winthrop

Ellis, to see his family.

The Eastern and Australian Mail Steam Company (founded by James Guthrie of Singapore, James Henderson of Sydney, William McTaggart of London and Paul Tidman of Batavia) was formed in 1873, originally to carry mail under a subsidised contract with the Queensland Government from Queensland ports to Singapore, where it connected with P&O steamers bound for Britain. E&A ships were manned with British officers and crews of Malays, Chinese, Lascars and other native peoples.

The Company lost its new ship *SS Queensland* in August 1876, fortunately with no loss of life, when she collided with the Howard Smith ship *Barrabool* and sank near Wilson's Promontory, Victoria. A second new steamer, *SS Singapore*, sank in February 1877 when she was stranded on an uncharted reef near Mackay, again with no loss of life. *SS Brisbane* was wrecked near Darwin in October 1881.

After declining to agree to new conditions imposed by the Queensland Government, the company lost the mail contract and went into voluntary liquidation in 1880. The Eastern and Australian Steam Ship Company Limited was formed to take over the mail company's assets, and four new, bigger ships were acquired in the next few years – *Catterthun*, *Tannadice*, *Guthrie* and *Airlie* – to carry passengers and cargo on new Asian routes from Japan, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Manila, Singapore, Java, and Timor to Port Darwin, Thursday Island, Cooktown, Cairns, Townsville, Bowen, Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne. Depending on the ports of call, the voyage from Brisbane to Singapore took 19 days, to Hong Kong an extra six.

Competition began on the route from John Swire's China Navigation

Company⁸ in 1882, followed by regular services the following year with three ships, including SS *Chingtu* and SS *Tsinan*.

Quong Tart's second trip⁹ to China was aboard the E&A Company's SS *Guthrie*, to be invested by the Chinese Emperor as a Mandarin of the fifth degree. She sailed on 5 November 1889 under the command of Captain Hugh Craig. In August, Tart had received another illuminated address signed by, among others, Lieutenant Governor and Chief Justice Sir Alfred Stephen, hoping that his forthcoming visit as an unofficial ambassador would ease international tensions caused by anti-Chinese rioting and racist politicians in New South Wales.

Travel always held dangers. In the Australian-Asian trade, the two main dangers were piracy and the reefs off Queensland. SS *Bowen* narrowly escaped a pirate attack in 1880, when infiltrators among the crew were recognised and disarmed, and she steamed through the lurking pirate junks at full speed of 15 knots, brushing them well and truly aside.¹⁰

The British India Line's *Quetta* hit an uncharted pinnacle of rock in the Adolphus Channel, Torres Strait and went down with the loss of 133 lives in 1890.¹¹ SS *Catterthun* was lost on 8 August 1895 when she hit Seal Rocks on the NSW North Coast, with the loss of 77 lives. Quong Tart lost a chest of sovereigns in that wreck, but still raised money to buy clothing for the destitute Chinese crewmen who survived, after first helping passengers to safety.

In 1878, SS *Menmuir* was added to an E&A fleet reduced by the loss of the *Singapore* and *Queensland* to just four other ships – *Somerset*, *Normanby*, *Bowen* and *Brisbane*. SS *Menmuir* sailed on her first voyage with the mails from Singapore on 16 September 1878, arriving at Sydney on 10 October via Brisbane.

SS *Menmuir* was an iron-hulled screw steamship, 285 feet long, 2,500 ton burthen, 1,940 gross tonnage, 1,287 net tons, 240 nominal horsepower, built by William Doxford & Sons at Sunderland, England in 1878 for J. Guthrie and W. McTaggart of 34 Leadenhall Street, London. She was commanded by Captains Winthrop Ellis, Peter Helms, George, and Hugh Craig. The E&A Line sold *Menmuir* in 1901, when she was renamed *Perla* by the new owners, the China and Manila Steamship Company.¹²

Captain Hugh Craig was born in Teignmouth, Devon in 1834, received Master's Certificate no 93119 in Glasgow in 1875 or 1876 according to *Lloyd's Captains Register*¹³. His first command with the E&A company seems to have been the *Normanby* in 1880, while at other times he captained the *Guthrie* (1889), *Tannadice*, *Menmuir* (1890, 1894, 1896), and then the *Guthrie* again in 1897-8. Hugh Craig was the commander on two of Quong Tart's voyages to China, in 1889 and 1894.

Well experienced in sailing along the North Queensland coast, on 10 January 1899 Captain Hugh Craig of the E&A Line became the 31st Torres Strait Pilot licensed by the Marine Board of Queensland. When he died, he was buried on Thursday Island¹⁴.

As well as the portrait of Captain Craig consigned to Christies, an illuminated address presented to him in 1896 was offered by Sydney print dealer Josef Lebovic in a December 1997-January 1998 exhibition¹⁵.

An elaborate Oriental black lacquer frame, painted with gilt chrysanthemum or pomegranate (?) flowers and swirling streams, containing a gilt card mask surrounds an illuminated address in watercolour and ink on paper presented by the passengers to Captain Hugh Craig of the SS *Menmuir* in 1896, and signed with initials S.B.¹⁶.

It is inscribed
March 1896
To
Captain Hugh Craig

We the undersigned Passengers request you kindly to accept this small Token of our appreciation of your skill as a navigator, your capacity as a commander, your courtesy as a host, and your Kindness as a friend

Signed –

J Rodbard	Sydney
[?] Rosenfeld	Sydney
Bertrand P Bouverie	Pewsey Wilts England
S H Edwards	Port Elizabeth South Africa
G Barnsley	Birkenhead
M Rosenfeld	Sydney
D R Young	England
Stuart Bouverie	Salisbury England
W Archer	Gracemere Queensld
Will Sowden	Adelaide

The inscription is enlivened with named watercolour views of Noble Rock, shells and coral, Restoration Rock, Orchid Rock, the wreck of the *Volga*, and the SS *Menmuir*, with the artist's initials "S.B." in a rope border.

Noble Rock, Restoration Rock and Orchid Rock are all small islands off the eastern coast of Cape York Peninsula in Far North Queensland, while *Volga* was a well-known 1890 wreck near Double Island in Torres Strait which "remained for many years a mute reproach for the inadequacy of marine surveys in those reef studded waters" (Rhodes).

The fresh way these places are represented suggests that they were sketched by an artist on the voyage as the ship glided past them on the Inner Route, between the Great Barrier Reef and the Queensland Coast,

and as the initials "S.B" match those of one of the passengers, this work is presumably by the Englishman Stuart Bouverie.

The Sydney Morning Herald's Shipping Report shows that the SS *Menmuir* under Captain Craig arrived in Sydney on 26 February 1896 from Hong Kong via Port Darwin and Queensland ports carrying Mrs Craig and their child, other passengers, and cargo consisting of tea, fish oil, flour, hides, cigars, gold, sugar and rice. Two days later she sailed for Melbourne, returning to Sydney on 6 March.¹⁷

An advertisement on the front page of the *Sydney Morning Herald* for 11 March announced her sailing next day:

"CHINA AND JAPAN
Via QUEENSLAND PORTS,
PORT DARWIN
and DILLY (Timor)
the EASTERN and AUSTRALIAN
SS Co Ltd
the Popular Steamship
MENMUIR
2000 tons, HUGH CRAIG, Com-
mander
will be despatched from the Com-
pany's Wharf, Millers Point
Thursday 12th March at 4 p.m.
NO CARGO RECEIVED AFTER
5 PM. TODAY
Full particulars upon application to
GIBBS, BRIGHT & CO
Managing Agents
37 Pitt-street, Sydney

The Sydney Morning Herald of 13 March 1896 reports on the ship, her passengers and cargo cleared for sailing the previous day:

CLEARANCES – March 12

Menmuir (s) 1899 tons, Captain Hugh Craig, for Hong-kong and Japan, via Port Darwin, Thursday Island, Cooktown and Townsville. Passengers – for Hong-Kong: Mrs Rodbard, Mr G Barnsley, Mr M (sic) Archer, Mr

W Nicholls, Mr and Mrs Wheen and 3 children, Rev Hon Canon Bouverie, Hon Stuart Bouverie, Mr E Buckhold. For Japan: Mr W J Sowden, Mr Edwards, Mr Young, Mr & Mrs Rosenfeld. For Thursday Island: Mr P Fitzwilliams. For Port Darwin: Mr W Griffiths, Mr E M'Keddie, Mr E O Robinson, Mr and Mrs Morris, Mr Liddle, Mr T Sayle. For Shanghai: Mrs Lamputt and 2 children, and 29 Chinese and 3 Coreans in the steerage.

EXPORTS – March 12

Menmuir (s) for Hongkong and Japan: 400 tons coal, 9 boxes gold (£4,690); 849 quarter-bags flour; 120 boxes 2350 half-boxes soap, 10 cases brandy, 25 cases milk, 15 cases salmon, 30 bales 6 rolls leather, 10,350 bars lead, 1?? packages fungus, 327 packages metal, 64 bags sugar, 50 cases kerosene, 12 casks cement, 6 packages shovels, 5 drums oil, 11 bundles gluepieces, 24 bags shanks, 62 cases glass, 6 pieces oregon, 18 oregon spars, 308 pieces kauri, 76 bags hoofs, 20 bags sinews, 10 bales basils, 18 bales wool, 77 packages horse-shoes, 12 bags 8 cases onions, 89 cases 20 bags potatoes, 21 bags maize, 10 bags oats, 70 bales hay, 12 cows, quantity wire riggings, 1598 packages merchandise and sundries.

Illuminated addresses were often given out to people leaving the district, retiring or travelling, as we have already seen. It was not unusual for passengers to make a presentation to the ship's captain after a successful voyage, especially if he had extricated them from danger. On this occasion, there is no mention of any problems and it may simply have been in thanks for a very pleasant voyage.

However, *Lloyd's Captains Register* records some casualties on *Menmuir* in 1896 – in the traditional

blue ink – but we cannot decipher them from a microfilm, while a trawl through the *Sydney Morning Herald* has not yet revealed a report.

Passengers who signed their names on the address are the first class passengers, and it is hardly surprising that it reads like the social pages. More is known about at least two of the passengers.

Will Archer was a member of the Norwegian Archer pastoralist family which settled at Gracemere, Rockhampton. He is probably the nephew of Colin Archer, famous designer of vessels such as *Fram*, Amundsen's Arctic exploring vessel, and *Kathleen Gillett*, a double-ended yacht in the collection of the Australian National Maritime Museum. A passenger for Hong Kong, later that year he was visiting his family in Norway.¹⁸

Will Sowden (1858-1943) was a wispy-bearded journalist and newspaper editor who reported on a previous trip to Port Darwin on the SS *Menmuir* under Captain Ellis in the columns of the *South Australian Register*, syndicated to other newspapers, and published as *The Northern Territory as it is: Narrative of the SA Parliamentary Party's Trip* in 1882. A prominent South Australian conservative, he was knighted in 1918.¹⁹

The watercolour illuminated address, documenting the regular steamship service carrying passengers and cargo between Australia and Asia in the 19th century, its record of topographical features on the Queensland coast, and a portrait of the ship is an attractive object. Its appearance is well and truly enhanced by its contemporary Oriental frame, and when it was acquired by the National Maritime Museum, it cost a great deal less than the fanciful estimates on the painting of Captain Craig at Christie's.

Over the course of its history, the E&A company ships continued to trade with Java, Singapore, the Phillipines, China and Japan. E&A became a subsidiary of AUSN (Australasian United Steam Navigation Co) in 1919, and incorporated into the P&O group in 1946. Though affiliated with P&O, E&A retained its separate identity and reached its centenary in 1973.

Notes

1. Christie's Paintings Sale, Melbourne 23-24 November 1998. lot 118.
2. Many examples of these, from the Hong Kong Museum of Art and the Peabody Museum of Salem, were exhibited in 1998 at the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney in the exhibition *Views of the Pearl River Delta*.
3. D S Howard, *New York and the China Trade*, New York 1984, pp 73.

4. *ibid*, p 77.
5. See note 1.
6. Travers, Robert, *Australian Mandarin, the Life and Times of Quong Tart*, Sydney 1981 p 143; *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol 5, p 234f q.v. Mei Quong Tart. *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 April 1894, p 4, lists Mr & Mrs Quong Tart first then 11 other passengers by name (the single men last, as was the custom), plus 30 Chinese.
7. In the shipping advertisements, the Eastern & Australian Company offered sailings to Hong Kong "at regular intervals of three weeks" *SMH* 29 March 1881 p. 1, advising on 8 March that the *Menmuir* would sail on the 23rd. In shipping clearances in *SMH* 25 April 1881 p. 4, on 23 April "Menmuir (s) 1247 tons, Captain W. Ellis for Hong Kong, via Queensland ports.

Passengers – Mr & Mrs D. Lindsay, Messrs C.H. Fleming, Quong Tart, and 12 Chinese in the steerage."

8. Hyde, Francis E., *Far Eastern Trade 1860-1914*, London 1973, pp 171-5.
9. Travers, *op cit*, p. 94. *SMH*, 6 November 1889 p. 6, lists only "passengers Mr J. Anderson and 2 in the steerage and a number of Chinese".
10. Olson, William, *Lion of the China Sea. A history of the Eastern and Australian Steamship Company Limited*, Sydney 1976, *passim*.
11. Loney, Jack, *Australian Shipwrecks Volume 3 1871 to 1900*. Geelong, 1982, *passim*.
12. Maber, John M., *North Star to Southern Cross*, Prescot (UK), 1967, pp 86-88.
13. *Lloyd's Captains Register*. Unfortunately the microfilm in the Australian National Maritime Museum is very difficult to read so the information cannot be guaranteed accurate.
14. Foley, John C. H., *Reef Pilots The History of the Queensland Coast and Torres Strait Pilot Service* Sydney 1982 pp 47, 52, 74.
15. Josef Lebovic Gallery, *Collectors' List No. 69* December 1997, item 35.
16. The frame measures 606 by 485 mm and the image size is 345 by 244 mm.
17. *SMH*, 27 February 1896, p 4; 13 March 1896, p 4.
18. McDonald, Lorna, *Magic Ships. The Life of Colin Archer*, Rockhampton 1997.
19. *Australian Dictionary of Biography* Vol 12, p 24f q.v. Sowden.

Book News

George Hamilton, *A Voyage Round the World in His Majesty's Frigate Pandora*. Sydney, Hordern House in conjunction with the Australian National Maritime Museum, The Australian Maritime Series no. 4, 1998. Facsimile of the 1793 edition including an essay by Peter Gesner, hand-bound Scottish calf, \$145.

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Geoff Ford, *Encyclopaedia of Australian Potters' Marks*, Wodonga, Salt Glaze Press 1998, softcover \$35 (plus \$5 postage from PO Box 928 Wodonga Vic 3689).

•••

Elisabeth Findlay, *Arcadian Quest: William Westall's Australian*

Sketches. Canberra, National Library of Australia 1998, hardcover \$34.95

•••

Susan Shortridge (ed.), *Paradise Possessed: The Rex Nan Kivell Collection*, Canberra, National Library of Australia 1998, softcover \$19.95.

•••

Kevin Fahy and Andrew Simpson, *Australian Furniture: Pictorial History and Dictionary 1788-1938*, Sydney, Casuarina Press 1988. hardcover, \$485 plus \$15 postage.

•••

Martin Terry, *Maritime Paintings of Early Australia*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press 1998, hardcover, \$59.95.



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