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Inscribed on the back, 'Painted by Ada Whiting,
230 Collins St Melbourne 1907', 12 x 8.5 cm

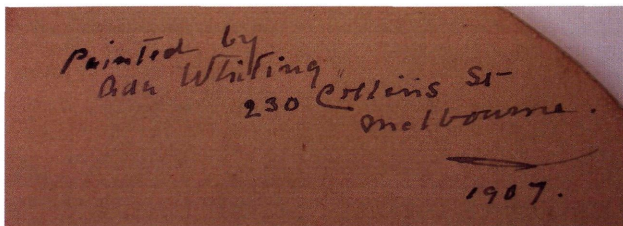
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Ada Whiting (née Cherry) (1859–1953)

Unsung heroine of Australian Art



The name Ada Whiting is probably unknown to most Australian art lovers today. In her lifetime, she was a 'big noise' as an artist, most famously for her miniature portraits (in watercolour on ivory) but also for her flower paintings in oils. Her work was widely exhibited, both in Australia and Europe, including works hung in the Royal Academy, London, the Royal Scottish Academy and the Paris Salon in a career that is known to have spanned at least 61 years (1877–1941).



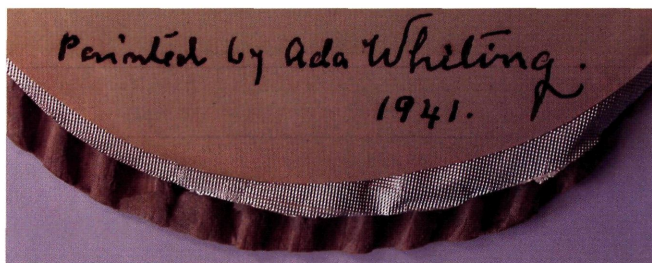
1 Ada Whiting (1859-1953), an unknown lady, 1907. Inscribed on the back, 'Painted by Ada Whiting, 230 Collins St Melbourne 1907', 12 x 8.5 cm

Carmela & Roger Arturi-Phillips

Ada was born in 1859 in Hobart, Tasmania, the eldest daughter of George Cherry, himself an artist, although he earned his living as a photographer, and his wife Matilda. Such was his reputation that he was one of six photographers commissioned by the Tasmanian Government to cover the Australasian tour by Prince Alfred, the Duke of Edinburgh in 1868.

By the time Ada was 18, both her parents had died and her life mimicked that of another very famous woman miniaturist of the 18th century, Anne Mee. In 1877, Ada and her four younger siblings moved initially to Geelong, where she supported them with her work colouring black and white photographs for Johnstone & O'Shannessy, and began painting miniatures in her own time. Soon they moved to Melbourne and Ada became a professional artist.

The art of painting miniature portraits dates back to the mid-15th century and was a progression from the illuminated manuscripts of medieval times. Miniatures are a very personal type of portrait and during the heyday of their popularity during the late Georgian/Regency period, every family, other than the poorest, owned some. They were the predecessors of the family photographs of today. In fact, when photography was introduced in the late 1830s, it soon brought about the end of most miniaturists' careers, with only a few elite artists being able to survive the competition from the almost instant new technology that guaranteed a likeness. By the late 1880s, photography was cheap and commonplace and very few miniaturists were practising. Interest in miniatures was having something of a revival at this time, although it



was difficult for artists to earn a living.

It is a testament to Ada's skills that she met with almost instant success with her work and maintained her professional practice over such a long period of time, even extending into the war years, as shown by the beautiful miniature of the unknown

2 Ada Whiting (1859-1953), an unknown lady, 1941 (when she was 82 years old). Inscribed on the back, 'Painted by Ada Whiting, 1941', 9 x 7 cm



3 Ada Whiting (1859-1953),
miniature of Alfred Felton.
National Gallery of Victoria

4 Alyn Williams, portrait of Violet
Hammersley, 1906 (detail) and his
signature, which was always
signed in full

5 Ada Whiting, unknown lady (detail),
1907 and her conjoined initial signature

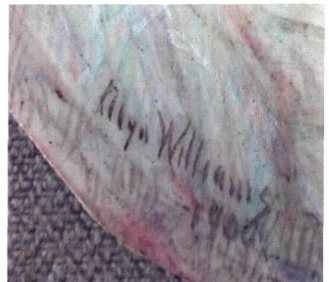
lady signed and dated 1941. By then she was 82 years old. She was known as a very fast worker, painting a miniature in a couple of days, whereas most miniaturists laboured for a week or so on each portrait.

Just as the 18th-century artist Anne Mee had done, Ada married but her husband Saville Whiting was a wastrel with a drink problem. Courageously, Ada divorced him, despite having herself and two children, Saville and Molly, to support. By now, she had a studio in Collins Street and was painting all the elite of Melbourne society, including Dame Nellie Melba, despite the snobbish Melburnians of her day referring to her as 'the convict artist', a nasty reference to her roots in Tasmania. At the height of her career, she spent summers in Melbourne and winters in Sydney.

Today there are four examples of her work in the Art Gallery of New South Wales, and eleven in the National Gallery of Victoria, including a very fine miniature of Alfred Felton, whose generous bequest resulted in many of the finest acquisitions by that Gallery.

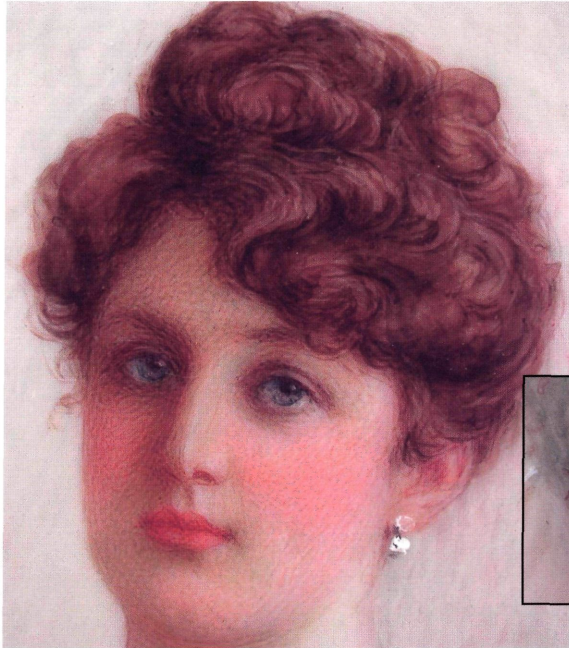


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The NGV miniatures were the gift of Ada's daughter in law, Violet Whiting, in 1989.

From time to time, Ada Whiting's work comes up for sale at auction and by art dealers, both in Australia and in Britain. Sadly her conjoined initials 'AW' are often mistaken for another, very different artist, Alyn Williams, who was a contemporary and also the first president of the Royal Miniature Society (RMS). The RMS is still going strong today, with HRH Prince Charles as its patron. The illustrations show both Ada's and Alyn Williams' work in close-up. She nearly always signed with her trademark 'AW' on the front and often her full signature on the back of each miniature, whereas Alyn Williams signed with his full name on the front. As you can see with closer inspection, their styles are very different and you must judge for yourself the quality of this remarkable Australian artist's talent.



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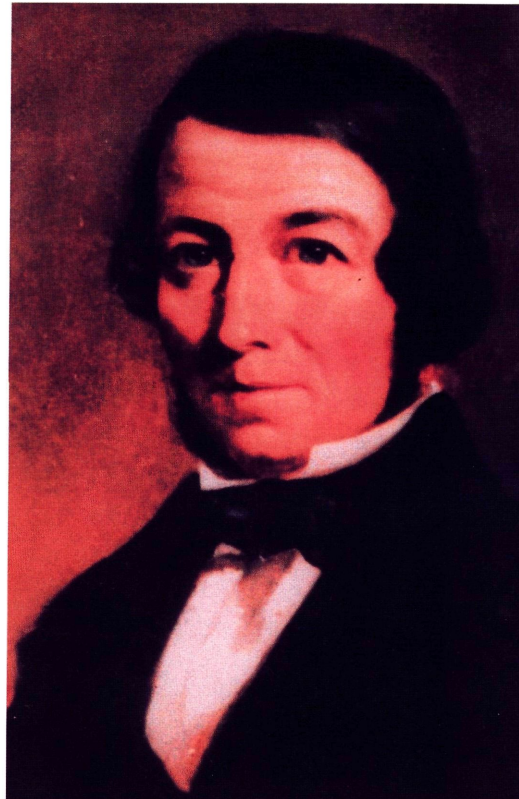
The Tolman Quilt

from New Town, Tasmania



Collecting often has the extraordinary sideline of your having to become a mini expert in yet another area in order to understand the former. This has been the case in Annette Gero's documentation and writing of the book *The Fabric of Society. Australia's Quilt Heritage from Convict Times to 1960*, where she not only documents the quilts found in this country but also the social history of countless ordinary and extraordinary people – histories which otherwise would never have been written – reflecting life over two centuries.

1 *The Tolman quilt*, c. 1856, 330 cm x 265 cm (131" x 105"). There are 120 stitches per hexagon, 63 hexagons per square foot, and 6063 hexagons. This gives a total of 727,560 stitches



Annette Gero

The thread that holds this patchwork of Australian history together is that each story involves the making of a quilt. It draws on women's and men's memories, diaries, their letters to relatives, official records, newspaper and magazine articles reflecting the current domestic influences and, of course, the old magazines which provided the quilt patterns.

The search and documentation of these quilts over the past 20 years includes all periods of Australian history. The history covers the convicts, early settlers,

Governors' wives, Gold Rush immigrants, wealthy shop owners, WWI diggers, people who were forced off the land during the Depression, WWII Australian prisoners of war, rabbit trappers, artist's wives and finally last, but not least, Mum, who made all her children's clothes and never threw anything away. We are indeed fortunate that in most cases the history of all these people is still available.

One such case is the story of James Chubb Tolman, born 24 October 1805, at Rotherhithe, London. On 5 July 1820, he was indentured to a London vintner by the name of Christopher Nockells. It would seem that he was treated harshly because

2 Mary Chubb Tolman (b. 1804) who made the quilt in the mid-19th century

3 Portrait of James Chubb Tolman, thought to have been painted while he was in London, 1853-4

James ran away after only 18 weeks and boarded the ship *Emerald* bound for Hobart Town, Van Diemen's Land.

The *Emerald* was the first privately chartered ship to sail directly from England to Hobart Town, departing from Gravesend on 20 November 1820. The charterers were two men who became notable names in the early history of Tasmania, George Meredith of 'Cambria', Swansea, and Joseph Archer of 'Panshanger',

By the by James you never said whether your Female Friends
 admired the Counterpane I made for you or not I have
 now begun another but I do not like it so well as
 I did that as yet



4 Portion of Mary Chubb Tolman's letter to James in Tasmania dated 10 April 1857, referring to the quilt.

5-7 Details of the fine fabrics in the quilt

Longford. Some names whose descendants are still numerous in Tasmania were passengers on the *Emerald*. James Chubb Tolman's name is not mentioned among the passengers on the *Emerald* for he was the cabin boy. He arrived in Hobart Town on 13 March 1821, and was put into the hospital suffering from scurvy, his age then being five months short of 16 years.

James was given employment by Mr T G Gregson on a farm at Risdon, the first settlement in Tasmania on the eastern shore of the Derwent, opposite Hobart. For ten years he was the overseer of Gregson's farm. He then engaged in farming on his own account in various parts of the Midlands of Tasmania, and in the south at 'Daisy Farm' in Richmond. While there he was appointed the third governor of Richmond Gaol early in 1833, a

position he held till he resigned on 27 April 1835. In 1847 he commenced a wood and coal business in Hobart.

In 1852 he went to the gold diggings in Victoria, and at the end of seven months returned with 25 pounds avoirdupois of gold, which he took to England and sold.

In 1854 he returned to Van Diemen's Land and engaged again in the wood and coal business at the Old Market, the site of the present Parliament House gardens. He combined the fuel trade with selling general merchandise, hay, corn, straw, china and a commission agency. His sons and grandsons continued the business until 1941, a period of 94 years. James died in 1883, aged 78.

The quilt in question here is one of the finest in our Australian quilt heritage. James' sister, Mary Chubb Tolman, born 11 September 1804, who lived at

Rotherhithe, London, made the quilt.

She wrote a letter dated 10 April 1857 to her brother in Tasmania. The three and a quarter pages deal mainly with their father's state of health, but she also refers to the quilt:

By the by James you never said whether your Female Friends admired the Counterpane I made for you or not. I have now begun another but do not like it so well as I did that as yet.

The letter indicates the quilt would have been completed not later than 1856. The former owner of this quilt (James's great grandson) writes:

How typical of some men, how dismaying it must have been to this dear genius of the needle, not even (it would seem) to receive a

word of thanks for a thing of surpassing beauty into which she had sewn many years of her life.

Mary probably sent the quilt to her brother on or after his return to Van Diemen's Land. Mary was 16 years of age and James 15 when, penniless, he left London for Australia, and when he returned to London 32 years later ('just as the family sat down to tea') with a bag containing 25 lb of gold, it would be somewhat of an incentive, under the somewhat fairy tale circumstances, for his sister, an unmarried woman of 48, to present her long absent brother with the best that was in her power to give. This was especially the case when, while in London, he bought property for his family. We don't know however for whom the quilt was intended, but maybe family letters one day may still disclose the full intention of Mary's kindness.

James was married to Mary Ann Watts on 30 April 1831. Four sons were born of the marriage: William Watts, 26 March 1832; James Chubb, 29 September, 1833; John Gibbs, 21 February, 1836 and Edward, 14 February, 1838. James Chubb was married a second time to Thirza Hurst, a widow, on 2 July, 1861. He was 55 and she was 53 at the time.

Mary's question concerning the quilt was dated 1857, four years before his second marriage, so that the inference of 'whether your Female Friends admired the Counterpane' may indicate that James was fancy free at the time.

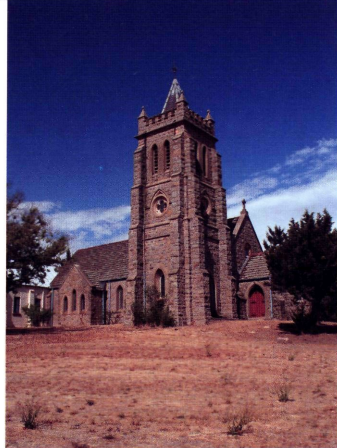
The quilt would have been an extremely significant gift. It would have taken at least 10 years to make, probably by lantern lighting and the extraordinary thing is the amount of work it would have taken to produce such an item. As well as the tiny pieces of fabrics, which were those fabrics highly fashionable at the time, there are three-quarter of a million stitches in the quilt. This quilt and over 130 other Australian heritage quilts and their stories are featured in the new book.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks the Tolman family for their generosity in allowing me to use their family history

Dr Annette Gero FRSA is patron and founder of the Sydney Quilt Study Group and Advisory Board Member of the International Quilt Study Centre, USA. Her work, as quilt historian, collector, author and curator is archived in the National Library of Australia. She is most highly recognised for her own Australian quilt collection which as been regarded as a 'National Treasure'. Her new book is *The Fabric of Society. Australia's Quilt Heritage from Convict Times to 1960*, The Beagle Press 2008, 240 pages, full colour. For enquiries contact Annette at a.gero@unsw.edu.au or www.annettegero.com



1 2

3

Midwinter weekend in Murrumburrah

Lesley Garrett

The village of Murrumburrah this year celebrates the 150th anniversary of its founding in 1858. Australiana Society members willing to brave the winter chill of the NSW south-west slopes in Murrumburrah during July were regaled over two nights by their hosts John Wade

and Jenny Underwood at their newly acquired Commercial Hotel.

With great interest, members have tracked John and Jenny's progress since they undertook the mammoth task of restoring the old pub. The bar with its thick stone walls was built in 1861, extended to include a dining room in 1868, and a second storey added to the central section in 1892. When the pub was threatened with de-licensing in the

1920s, it was expanded again, basically into its present two-storey, verandahed form in 1926. The ground floor eastern verandah was incorporated into the bar in 1968.

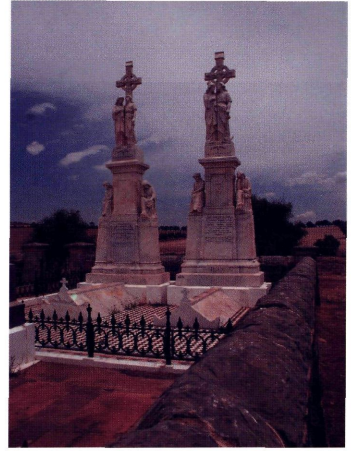
Under Jenny's direction, the Commercial's restaurant is once again re-instated, and guests now more than willingly seek out the hotel's dining room. As Australiana Society members, we were truly pampered, with open fires, cosy bedrooms and wonderful meals. The bedrooms have been furnished progressively with items John and Jenny pick up in local auctions and antique shops, and each has its own individual character.

John had prepared a challenging two days for us, which included many of the discoveries he has made in the neighbourhood since becoming a resident of the Harden-Murrumburrah



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- 1 T & G Barnes Store, originally dating from 1860
- 2 Brian and Judy Dunn's military museum
- 3 St Mary's Roman Catholic Church, begin in 1868
- 4 The Commercial Hotel with its new second storey in 1892



5 6

area, and made accessible by the friends he and Jenny have made there. We drove through the gently rolling countryside to visit the historical museum at Young with its wonderful material, especially the 'Roll Up' banner, relating to the historic 1861 conflict with Chinese miners, a unique collection of gold wire jewellery and among many other exhibits, gold-mining equipment dating back to the days when Young was called Lambing Flat.

We were all very moved by the private museum in Harden commemorating soldiers of the Boer War and First World War who were members of the famous Light Horse regiments, lovingly collected and curated by just one Harden resident in his own back garden.

Two very different gardens were on John's list. One was 100 years old and now being restored, with many of its original trees such as palms still alive and well, and where we were encouraged to collect stock seeds. The other garden, only recently created over the last few years by a very energetic teacher, already covers several acres and is still expanding. This plantswoman, Geraldine Dwyer, with great imagination, has included lines from Banjo Patterson's *Clancy of the Overflow* in her garden as a sculpture: 'And he saw the vision splendour of the sunlit plains extended / And at night the wondrous glory of the everlasting stars.'

With grey drizzle falling, we set off across country to Galong and there, in

the middle of nowhere, found and marvelled at the beautiful rural graveyard begun for the Ryan family and now attached to St Clement's Monastery, which is listed with National Heritage. St Clement's, built in 1918 around the original Ryan homestead of c. 1850, belongs to the Redemptorist Order and serves as a retreat. The delightful Sister Julian showed us over the buildings, the chapel, library, and museum devoted to the Ryan family and the later monastery.

We visited a vineyard, the old Anglican Rectory, a row of historic conjoined shops in Murrumburrah – the earliest dating from 1860 – and

currently being restored, and of course were plied along the way with lunches and coffee.

It was a most enjoyable and informative weekend. Thank you John and Jenny.

5 Former Anglican Rectory, Murrumburrah

6 The Ryan family monuments at Galong cemetery

7 Geraldine Dwyer's two-acre garden created from scratch



7

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A 'champ' of a library table by William Hamilton

Research into the history of a fine Tasmanian myrtle table shows that it was made for Colonel William Champ in the later 1830s. The design is adapted from that of a library table in George Smith's publication 1826 *The Cabinet-maker and Upholsterer's Guide*, and the table is attributed to Hobart cabinet maker William Hamilton.



Text - Ruth Dwyer,
Research - Ruth Dwyer
& Brett Manley

Haley's Auction House in Malvern, a suburb of Melbourne, on 12 April 2005, offered a library table for sale:

A fine Colonial table in Tasmanian myrtle with double moulded edge and proportionate skirt, on

inverted arches of frame configuration mounted on a pair of cedar encased plinth bases on bun feet, with turned stretcher between, with paterae to the plinths and inverted arches. Length 1090, depth 485, height 735.

It was purchased by the present owner, Brett Manley.

Ensis, an organisation formed by the CSIRO and Forest Research, confirmed that the table is indeed of myrtle beech,

1. Tasmanian myrtle library table made by William Hamilton, Hobart, Tasmania for Colonel William Thomas Napier Champ, c 1835-40, l 1090, d 485, h 735 mm. Collection Brett Manley, Melbourne

Nothofagus cunninghamii, a timber indigenous to Van Diemen's Land and Victoria.' Joseph Hooker of London's Kew Gardens had named the timber to honour the botanist Allan Cunningham,



2. Colonel William Thomas Napier Champ, 1808–1892, for whom the myrtle library table was made by William Hamilton, cabinetmaker of Hobart. Courtesy Mr Peter Alcock, Clerk of the House of Assembly, Parliament House, Tasmania

who first located it at Emu Bay and on the side of Mount Wellington near Hobart in 1819.²

Late in 1840, the surveyor, James Erskine Calder, travelling through the hinterland to Macquarie Harbour on the west coast, noted forests of myrtle at Wombat Glen near King's River (sic), and in the vicinity of the Loddon. Calder reported that the myrtle forests of the western half of Tasmania covered vast areas, not much less than two or three thousand square miles. He wrote

the highly ornamental wood of the red myrtle trees hardly can be surpassed in beauty either of color (sic) or grain³... These trees can attain a height of 30 to 40 metres with the trunks measuring 1.5 to 2.5 metres in diameter. On good sites, they are well-shaped trees with a long straight trunks. [The wood] seasons and reconditions with difficulty, but works well and has excellent bending qualities. A beautiful furniture and cabinet timber⁴ ...

The myrtle table was made for Colonel William Thomas Napier Champ (see above). The design was adapted from that of a library table in George Smith's publication of 1826, *The Cabinet-maker and Upholsterer's Guide*. A copy of Smith's guide was in Van Diemen's Land in 1836, as it was listed in the probate papers of

the deceased cabinet maker Alexander Watson. The valuation given was £2 6s.⁵ The auction of what may have been Watson's stock of furniture, 'A QUANTITY of very valuable Household Furniture, nearly all new ...' appeared in the *Hobart Mercury* on 23 September 1836, an appropriate interval having been allowed for the administration of the estate to be granted. Smith's reference book, considered then to be of minor importance, was not listed for sale in this brief advertisement. As will become more evident, Champ had reason to purchase this guide.

Colonel William Thomas Napier Champ, son of Captain Thomas Champ of the 43rd Regiment and Mary Ann, née Blackaller, was born at Maldon, Essex, England, on 15 April 1808. He was educated at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, and later joined the 63rd Regiment.⁶ Champ first arrived in Van Diemen's Land aboard the *Wave* on 11 January 1829 in command of a detachment of the 63rd Regiment.⁷

He was stationed at Macquarie Harbour and New Norfolk for 15 months in 1829 and 1830,⁸ acting as Assistant Engineer under his superior, John Lee Archer, Colonial Architect and Civil Engineer in Van Diemen's Land. In 1830–31, the Lock-up Houses, Court House and Police Offices at New Norfolk were being erected to Archer's designs.⁹ Archer's Norfolk Plains chapel, now demolished, was erected in 1829–1832.¹⁰ In 1829, Champ also participated in Governor Arthur's first sweep of the island's 'Friendly Mission' to the aboriginal population later led to conclusion by George Augustus Robinson.¹¹

Champ, wishing to settle in Van Diemen's Land, applied for his discharge from the army but had to sail with the regiment to India. After his discharge had been approved he arrived back in Hobart Town in 1834 and leased a small farm near New Norfolk.¹² In January 1836, he became a member of the public service, the Lieutenant Governor, Colonel George Arthur, appointing him a Justice of the Peace, Assistant Police Magistrate, and

Muster Master from January 1836.¹³

The duties of the Muster Master were chiefly to maintain the complicated system of convict records on which the efficiency of the penal system depended.¹⁴ 'There are about 30 000 convicts in the island; [I supervise] every removal from one station to another', he wrote.¹⁵ A number of these convicts were to be assigned to the workshops at King's Yard in Sullivan's Cove, manufacturing furniture for government purposes. Champ may have bought Smith's book to encourage good design for the convict made furniture manufactured at the Yard.

A cedar and blackwood library table with a braise-lined top manufactured to George Smith's design, now in the Chambers of the Supreme Court of Tasmania in Hobart, was manufactured at the Yard in the mid 1830s. It carries the mark K↑Y. This table can be attributed to George Wilkin, alias Williams, and Robert Gaham. It exhibits characteristics very similar to those of the cedar and native cherry desk made at the Yard by Wilkin and Gaham, ostensibly for Governor George Arthur, namely the turned stretcher with with faceted edges, the insets of timber to the frieze, corners, stretcher and ends, and the use of turned reeded paterae. Both pieces have green braise insets to the tops. This cedar and native cherry desk also bears the mark K↑Y and carries the signatures of Robert Gaham and George Wilkin. Robert Gaham, when tried for theft at the Perth Court of Judiciary in Scotland in 1834, was listed as a Cabinetmaker.¹⁶ Did Champ supply the appropriate page of Smith's book for the design of this cedar and blackwood library table now in the Chambers of the Supreme Court?

On 28 December 1838, Colonel Champ was appointed Chairman of the Caveat Board administering the granting of land.¹⁷ Later, in November 1840, Sir John Franklin appointed Champ Surveyor-General, recommending that the appointment be made permanent: Champ considered that Franklin 'was a great friend of mine.'¹⁸ The appointment was not confirmed by the Colonial Office. The surveyor, Calder, in late 1840,

in Champ's time, was in process of surveying an overland track to Macquarie Harbour in preparation for the inspection of the Penal Settlement by the Lieutenant Governor, Sir John Franklin, and Lady (Jane) Franklin in 1841-42. Champ was relieved of these duties in July 1841, reverting to the Caveat Board.¹⁹

In January 1844, Champ went to Port Arthur as Commandant, then temporarily held the position of Comptroller-General of Convicts, before returning to Port Arthur.²⁰ In 1852, the Governor, Sir William Denison, offered Champ the position of Colonial Secretary which was later confirmed. 'We get on exceedingly well [now].'²¹ After the island gained self government, he was briefly a Member of Parliament and became the first Premier of Tasmania on 1 November 1856.²² Champ later moved to Victoria.

Colonel Champ and his lady, Helen, the daughter of Major James Gibson, had moved among the upper echelons of Van Diemen's Land society, as would be expected of an ex-army officer and descendant of good family who had wed suitably. According to the custom of the time, formal calls were paid to Government House. In the time of Sir John and Lady Franklin, Mrs William Champ made one such call on 11 January 1842.²³ At the nuptials of Governor Denison's aide de camp in the following year, four of Champ's daughters were bridesmaids.²⁴ In 1855, in Governor Sir Henry Fox Young's time, Colonel Champ and his lady were again among guests invited to dinner at Government House.²⁵

In the wider community, one position Champ held was that of founding secretary of the Royal Society of Van Diemen's Land. Calder was also a member, as was Ronald Campbell Gunn, the noted botanist and plant collector.²⁶ Champ was able to further his knowledge of indigenous timber through contact with Gunn.

The table made for Colonel William Thomas Napier Champ in Van Diemen's Land carries an impeccable provenance, as set forth in a declaration by his great grandson, James H. Holdsworth.

I, James H. Holdsworth, am a direct descendant of William Thomas Napier Champ. ... In 2005, Mr B Manley of Brett Manley Antiques, obtained a myrtle table which has been in my family since being in Colonel Champ's possession.²⁷

Victorian records confirm that it remained in possession of direct descendants of William Thomas Napier Champ until the 2005 sale. On 3 June 1889, Colonel Champ wrote in his will 'I bequeath to my son, James Knox Champ, all the household goods and other property about the house at Darra.'²⁸ After Champ's death in 1892, James Wise valued the household furniture and effects at £54 14s. There was no separate listing for the table.²⁹

James Knox Champ was succeeded at Darra by his son Charles Alexander Champ, who after legacies to his three Holdsworth grandsons, willed his estate in equal shares to his son and daughter: 'I give, devise and bequeath the rest, residue, and remainder of my real and personal estate to the said Jack Wilton Knox Champ, and daughter, Lexie Margaret Holdsworth, [née Champ], in equal shares.'³⁰ The Holdsworth sons, James, Peter and John, remember this myrtle table being in the possession of their mother, Lexie Margaret Holdsworth. James Holdsworth put the table to auction in April, 2005, ending the ownership by the family of some 160 years since William Thomas Napier Champ commissioned it, probably in the late 1830s.

In early 1836, when Champ became a member of the public service, as Justice of the Peace, Assistant Police Magistrate, and Muster Master, he came to reside in Hobart Town. 'In January 1836 my personal property consisted of my bed and table, and two chairs.'³¹ In 1841, Champ went to considerable expense in the purchase of additional furniture.³² Therefore it is probable that his myrtle library table dates from this period, before 1836 to as late as 1841.



3. Huon pine pedestal table made by William Hamilton, Hobart, Tasmania, Australia, c.1850. Collection Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, photo Jane Townsend

Colonel Champ's myrtle table, c.1836, can be safely attributed to the cabinet maker William Hamilton of 8 Argyle Street, Hobart. The design, a little altered, is from Perspective XII of George Smith's *The Cabinet-maker and Upholsterer's Guide*, published in 1826. Smith's guide was possibly provided by Champ. The legs to the rear of the myrtle table are slightly deeper, rounder and flatter, giving a larger sweep. The turning to the legs is another adaptation.

Colonel Champ's table is of solid myrtle. Hamilton did not have a specialised tradesman capable of cutting large sheets of veneer until 1841. Hand-made screws have been used. Machine-made screws were first available in Australia in the early 1850s. The use of

paterae and similar techniques is typical of Hamilton's oeuvre and shows a Georgian, rather than Victorian influence, as is to be expected. Owing to the time taken in voyages between countries, cabinet makers in Australia were slow to emulate developments of style followed in the British Isles.

Two tables made by Hamilton, now in the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney, show similar techniques. The tilt-top, that of musk wood veneer on red cedar, c.1850, exhibited by William Champion in the Great Exhibition, London, 1851, has a petal-carved apron, with similar decoration to the triangular base of the pedestal. Hamilton's Huon pine pedestal table, also c.1850, has a similar apron with decoration likewise to the base and bears his trade label.³³

The alterations to George Smith's design of 1826 show an Irish influence. By whom? John Lee Archer, also Irish-born, was known to have designed furniture for the convict tradesmen to make at Macquarie Harbour.³⁴ He also

designed the timber portico for the barracks in Hobart: '... columns are also to be seen at the Barracks, cut from wood, tapering with a distinct entasis and simple caps and bases.'³⁵ None of his designs has survived. Was he responsible for the alterations to George Smith's 1826 design? He and Hamilton, known to each other, had on at least one occasion visited Government House to advise on the furnishings.³⁶

William Hamilton (c.1796 – 1885) was born in Sligo, Ireland, the son of an ancient Irish family, whose shibboleth was 'Honor and Honesty'. After marriage in 1831, he, his wife, Mary Anne, née Beaugarde, son, and daughter born at sea, sailed south aboard the *Lindsays* which berthed in Hobart Town on 23 June 1832. Aboard this vessel were fellow cabinet makers, James Whitesides and John McLoughlin, both of Irish birth.

In 1834, Hamilton opened what was to become a very successful business as a cabinet maker, upholsterer and furnishing undertaker, in early times in partnership with McLoughlin and then Whitesides. In 1852, Hamilton retired from business. In 1857 he visited his homeland. Upon his return Hamilton once again opened 'to establish his Sons in the business', the firm henceforth becoming known as Wm Hamilton and Sons situated at 6 Elizabeth Street. On board the vessel, Hamilton had brought with him from the old country an extensive stock of goods for sale to his clientèle in Tasmania. Two accomplished artisans from one of the most fashionable establishments in London who had joined the firm were also on board. Hamilton finally retired in 1878.

A list of part of his remaining stock appeared in the auction notice of 24 June 1878, for example, 'handsome drawing room suites; superior dining room table, patent screw, extra leaves, opens 14 feet; walnut oval table; mahogany loo table; chess table; large mahogany bookcase; cedar chiffonier...'³⁷

Although requested 'to submit himself as a candidate for public honours', Hamilton declined, but none the less involved himself in political matters,

identifying with those candidates who advocated morality, law and order, and supporting the churches St David's Cathedral and St. George's 'with which he has been usefully identified for more than half a century'. He had advised on the furnishing of Government House, and may even have made some of the original furniture. To the poor he was especially kind. A generous, progressive man, the bells of St. George's were tolled, and the flags of the vessels in the harbour lowered as Tasmania bid farewell to one of her earliest and most enterprising colonists in July 1885.³⁸

Champ would not have been present to attend this service. On 4 June 1857, he arrived in Victoria.³⁹ The myrtle table came too. Champ had been appointed to the position of Inspector-General of Penal Establishments in Victoria. He was based at Pentridge and instituted a number of improvements at the 'Palace'.⁴⁰ Henry Augustus White's comments in his book about the time at Pentridge are somewhat hagiographic concerning his superior, Champ:

[his] impartial administration of the Penal Department stands unrivalled ... the management of the department was never questioned ... no comment appeared in the press unless in praise of his public career ...⁴¹

Champ was probably deserving of these comments. Throughout his career the only 'sin' appears to have been smuggling tobacco to convicts at Macquarie Harbour in exchange for 'sticks'.⁴²

George Smith's work *The Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Guide* was possibly brought to Victoria by Champ. During his time at Pentridge, Champ instituted the teaching of various trades to the inmates; one was cabinet making. Smith's book would have been an excellent reference. Furniture of exhibition quality, made at Pentridge, was shown at the Victorian Exhibition in 1861,

a work table, of colonial woods, inlaid with marvellous skill, and highly polished ... showing ingenuity and elegance of the workmanship.⁴³

In 1866 - 67 at the Intercolonial Exhibition of Australasia in Melbourne exhibited was a

collection of articles manufactured at the Pentridge Penal Establishment. It is composed chiefly of pieces of furniture - tables ... of myrtle; of Tasmanian wattle, ebony, etc.; of New Zealand woods, and a round table of Australian woods ... very nicely inlaid ... which exhibit the excellence of the workmen under confinement.

A medal was awarded.⁴⁴ After a distinguished career, Champ ceased to be the Inspector-General of Penal Establishments on 31 December 1868.

Upon retirement, Champ moved to *Darna*, a substantial property in the Western District near Meredith a little north-west of Geelong.⁴⁵ The table remained here until bequeathed to Lexie Margaret Holdsworth née Champ.

During this time a copy of George Smith's book, *The Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Guide* was presented to the Gordon Technical College in Geelong.⁴⁶ One page of this book is missing, that of the design of the cedar and blackwood library table which was made in King's Yard in the mid 1830s by George Wilkin and Robert Gaham, and is now in the Supreme Court Chambers in Hobart. Had Champ passed this page to King's Yard for the order to be fulfilled? Did Lexie Champ, later Holdsworth, present this copy of *The Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Guide*, with one page missing, to the Gordon? Is it merely a coincidence that Lexie Champ, later Holdsworth, the grand-daughter, was enrolled at the Gordon Technical College studying architecture in 1927 -28?⁴⁷ There is no signature of a previous owner in this copy. Could it have been the one sold in Van Diemen's Land in 1836 by Alexander Watson's administrators, then purchased by Champ, and brought to Victoria to be

later donated to the Gordon Technical College by Lexie Champ? If so, both book and the myrtle table made for Champ are now in Victoria.

With this documentation of Colonel Champ's myrtle library table, demonstrating an impeccable provenance, another piece of fine colonial Australiana by the hand of William Hamilton of Hobart has come to light, adding to our knowledge of one of the most noted of cabinet makers in early Tasmania.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are especially grateful to the Champ and Holdsworth families, as well as researchers, Irene Schaffer and Thelma McKay, at the Archives Office of Tasmania who patiently dealt with many requests.

Ruth Dwyer is a freelance researcher based in the suburb of Hawthorn in Melbourne. Her main interests are the history of that inner suburb, that of the decorative arts, and the documentation of the non-British in nineteenth century Victoria.

NOTES

Abbreviations

ADB - Douglas Pike, (ed.), *Australian Dictionary of Biography*,

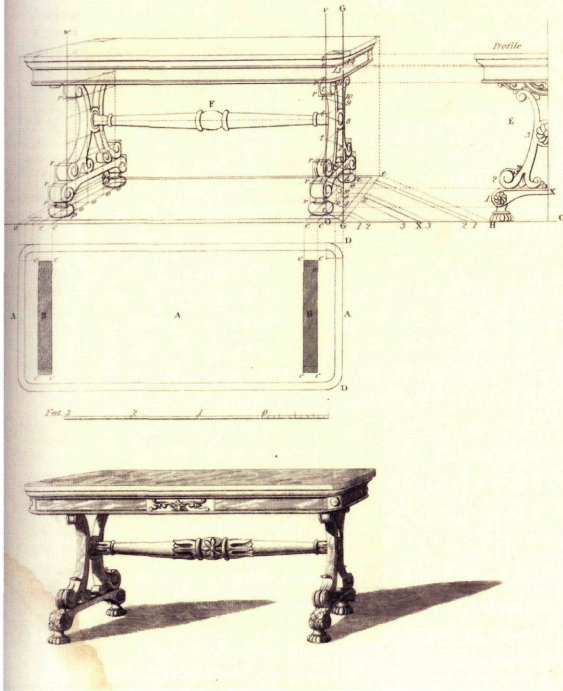
AOT - Archives Office of Tasmania.

Letters - From Colonel William Thomas Napier Champ to his family in England, transcribed by Peter R K Champ, December 1991.

1. Copy in possession of the author.
2. Sir W J Hooker, *The Journal of Botany*, London, Longman et al, 1840, vol. II, p 152. I am indebted to Helen Cohn, Librarian, Royal Botanic Gardens, Melbourne, for this reference.
3. *Hobart Mercury*, 6 March 1860, np.
4. D J Boland et al, *Forest Trees of Australia*, Fifth Edition, CSIRO Publishing, 2006, pp 110- 1.
5. Caressa Crouch, *Australiana*, August 1996, pp 68-75.
6. *ADB*, vol 3, p 379.
7. MS 10913F Box 89/1-4, James Erskine Calder, State Library of Victoria.

PERSPECTIVE XII.

Distance 11 Ft. 5 In. from Station S. by the S.C.A.L.E.



The drawing which was slightly adapted for the design and manufacture of WTN Champ's myrtle library table, c.1836. Image taken from Perspective XII, George Smith, *The Cabinet-maker and Upholsterer's Guide*, 1826, now in Deakin University Library having originally been presented by Lexie Champ to the Gordon Technical College in Geelong

- Invited or Eligible to be Invited to Government House, GO1/122/1.
26. *ADB*, vol 1, pp 492-3, Ronald Campbell Gunn.
27. Declaration dated December 2005, copy in possession of the author.
28. PROV VPRS 7591/P/2 Unit 202 50/460 Will of William Thomas Napier Champ.
29. PROV VPRS 28/P/2 Unit 349 50/460 Probate Papers William Thomas Napier Champ.
30. PROV VPRS 7591 Unit 477 595/866 Will of Charles Alexander Champ.
31. Letters p 20.
32. Letters p 21.
33. K. Fahy & A. Simpson, *Australian Furniture Pictorial History and Dictionary 1788-1938*, Casuarina Press, Sydney, 1998, pp 445, 446; www.powerhousemuseum.com We thank John Hawkins and Warwick Oakman for their assistance in this identification.
34. AOT: Chief Secretary's Office: Civil Engineer's Office, CSO1/406/9170, p. 48. (1829 John Lee Archer).
35. Roy Smith, *John Lee Archer, Tasmanian architect and engineer*, Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Tasmania, 1962, p 41.
36. Diary of John Lee Archer, n p.
37. *Hobart Mercury*, 29 July 1885, p 2; 24 June 1878, p 4; Fahy, Simpson & Simpson, *Nineteenth Century Australian Furniture*, David Ell Press, Sydney, 1985, pp 124-6.
38. *Hobart Mercury*, 29 July 1885, p 2.
39. Henry A White, *Tales of Crime and Criminals in Australia*, Ward & Downey, London, 1894, dedication, etc.
40. *ADB*, vol 3, p 379.
41. White, *op cit*.
42. N J B Plomley, (ed.), Friendly Mission, *The Tasmanian Journals and Papers of George Augustus Robinson 1829-1834*, Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 1966, p 797. This was a common practice among the military.
43. *Argus*, 25 October 1861, p 4.
44. Intercolonial Exhibition of Australasia, 1866-67: Official Catalogue, *Blundell & Ford, Melbourne*, ?1866, p 36; *Argus*, 25 October 1866, p 6; 13 November 1866, p 5; 14 February 1867, Supp, p 2. Charles Summers designed the medal.
45. *ADB* *op cit*.
46. It is now in Deakin University Library.
47. *Hobart Mercury*, 27 April 1988, p 4. Lexie Holdsworth had also presented objects relating to Champ to the Port Arthur Management Authority.

8. Edmund D H Flack, *The 63rd Regiment of Foot (West Suffolk) in Australia 1829-1833*, unpub. MS, 2003, p 37.
9. AOT: Governor's Office: Governor's Duplicate Despatches received by the Colonial Office, GO33/71 pp 213-28 (1848 Champ's letter).
10. Roy Smith, *John Lee Archer, Tasmanian architect and engineer*, Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Tasmania, 1962, pp 21, 69.
11. *ADB* *op cit*; Flack, *op cit*, p 21.
12. Letters, p 2.
13. *ADB*, *op cit*.
14. AOT: Colonial Secretary's Office: Letterbook of Correspondence addressed to the Muster Master, CSO1/42 p.1.
15. Letters, p 27.
16. We are both very grateful to Warwick Oakman for sharing the results of his in-

- depth research at the Archives Office of Tasmania and other archives.
17. AOT: Governor's Office: Letterbooks of Despatches sent to the Secretary of State, 25/165/3936.
 18. Letters, p 48.
 19. AOT: Governor's Office: Governor's Duplicate Despatches received by the Colonial Office, GO/33/36 pp. 335-45; AOT Governor's Office: Despatches received from the Secretary of State, GO/1/42 pp. 3-6.
 20. *ADB*, *op cit*.
 21. Letters, p 93.
 22. Letters, pp 128-9.
 23. MSM 72, vol. 9, p 16, Papers, Franklin, Lady Jane, State Library of Victoria.
 24. Letters, p 107.
 25. AOT: Governor's Office: Registers, Lists and Associated Papers Relating to Persons

David Collins' blackwood tea caddy: an open letter to the trade

Much has been written and said about the simple blackwood tea caddy believed to have been made in Port Phillip in 1803 as a gift for Governor David Collins, and reviewed by the late Caressa Crouch in *Australiana*. I believe Caressa's article warrants a response in defence of the Collins items and of my own research.

Antony Davies

Although Caressa's article in the August 2007 edition of *Australiana* purports to record the history of the Collins material and my own substantial involvement with it, a good deal of the published information criticising the objects is incorrect or unsubstantiated. I don't recall having met Caressa, and not once in ten years did she attempt to contact me to verify facts or ask for my version of events before writing.

Caressa's claimed quotes range from decade-old auction catalogues to articles I wrote as a columnist for *The Australian* as recently as last year, to oral quotes from charity appraisal days at a nursing home in suburban Sydney.¹ That she managed to quote me so freely without ever meeting or talking to me, and without verifying a single quote, is astonishing. I would have welcomed the opportunity of correcting her before the article was published.

I'm grateful to *Australiana* for allowing me space to reply. Caressa's article covered two items, the tea

caddy and a miniature identified as a portrait of David Collins. Both emerged at a clearing sale in Tasmania in 1998 and were consigned on to a specialist colonial auction at my Sydney auction house Wemyss later that year. The presence of the two items together at the Sydney auction was unfortunate, as in expressing doubt on the miniature commentators have tarred both items with the same brush.

I have persevered with research on these objects, and particularly the tea caddy, long beyond any paid arrangement or expectation of commission, and at my own expense, because, notwithstanding all the additional information that I have unearthed in ten years, I have yet to find anything that contradicts my original descriptions. Today I am sure more than ever that these fascinating discoveries are totally authentic and highly significant, and have suffered at the hands of some determined trade rivals with questionable motives, leaving them at risk of being passed over by the public museums who are perhaps the proper custodians.

THE PORTRAIT MINIATURE

This article will focus on the tea caddy, but for clarity I would first like to record some facts about the portrait miniature. The miniature sold on 12 September 1998 at Wemyss in Sydney for \$59,000 to a Sydney dealer that three days later reneged on the sale. The same dealer bid nearly \$40,000 for the tea caddy. The underbidder on both lots was the Tasmanian Museum in Hobart. As the defaulting bidder refused to pay for the lots, they were re-offered on 12 December 1998 where the miniature sold for \$56,250 to the late collector Caroline Simpson. The tea caddy was sold privately.

I delivered the miniature myself to Caroline at her Sydney home and still have the receipt she signed. Caroline sent it to London for further research and cleaning and some weeks before her death telephoned me to relay the exciting news that she had verified the sitter as David Collins through records found in London, and that the painting had been formally attributed to the popular 18th-century



1 Portrait miniature identified as David Collins, and monogram 'C' on the back. Private collection



miniaturist William Wood. Caroline was looking forward to showing me this documentation when it arrived, but sadly she passed away before this could happen.

Caressa Crouch claims that this miniature was instead one purchased at a Sotheby's decorative art auction in the 1980s, but ignores some critical facts. As senior decorative arts cataloguer at Sotheby's Australia at that time, I personally catalogued the Sotheby's auction in question, and described those particular portrait miniatures in comprehensive detail. The Collins miniature bears no relation in description or size to those in the Sotheby's catalogue aside from depicting a gentleman, and the Sotheby's miniatures had no seed pearl monograms, an important point of quality which would not have been left out of the catalogue. There was

another, more ordinary English miniature sold in the Launceston clearing sale that could possibly have fitted the Sotheby's catalogue description, but *not* this one.

COLLINS' ITEMS EMERGE IN TASMANIA

My involvement with the two items began on 7 August 1998 while conducting a sweep of Tasmania for Wemyss' upcoming colonial auction. I had founded the small auction house Wemyss following a long career with Sotheby's and focused on specialised sales including colonial furniture, and I am proud of the excellent results.

When sourcing items for our colonial sales from Tasmania, it was my habit to arrive in Hobart and drive northwards visiting clients and dealers in search of suitable items for sale. I would then arrange a carrier to collect all the finds and bring them to Sydney for auction. Calling at a friend's shop near Launceston, I was shown various colonial items as possibilities for inclusion in our sale. Among them were the tea caddy, then just described as a blackwood box, possibly for deeds, and the miniature, a very finely executed 18th-century portrait of a young man in a formal coat with high collar and jabot, with a beautiful monogram 'C' in graduated seed pearls on the reverse over a woven hair panel.

Nothing was known about either item except that both had been acquired at the same house-clearing sale in Launceston a few weeks earlier by other local dealers, who had traded them to our consignor for a few hundred dollars each. This information was given me by our consignor, a friend and trusted business associate with an excellent eye for early colonial material, and later confirmed in writing by the original purchaser, a respected collector and retired policeman. However the information was never a part of our provenance or catalogue entry for either item, being so unspecific as to seem of little value to future buyers.

2 David Collins' tea caddy. Image courtesy National Museum of Australia



The prices were very low, just a few hundred dollars each, and could not have warranted any pretence of importance or attempts at fakery.

Since 1998 many people have claimed that I used the fact that the two items arrived together as the basis of evidence of the items' authenticity. This is incorrect. I relayed this information orally only when asked, as it was all that I knew about their appearance in Tasmania.

COLLINS' ITEMS REACH \$100,000 AT SYDNEY AUCTION

The reserve prices at the first Wemyss auction on 12 September 1998 were modest, just \$1,000 for the miniature and \$4,000 for the tea caddy – what one might have expected to pay for attractive early objects with no history. In our early research, physical evidence of the objects (particularly the identification of the engraved crest on the tea caddy) suggested that they might be of greater than usual interest and I placed estimates of \$20,000 to \$30,000 for the tea caddy and \$8,000 to

\$12,000 for the miniature (based on the earlier Australian sale of another very fine English portrait miniature for about this amount). The original reserves, which were confidential, did not alter.

Little information regarding David Collins was at that time easily available. John Currey's excellent biography *David Collins, A Colonial Life* was not published for another two years (in mid 2000) nor had we any idea that it was in preparation. As a consequence it was fully two more years before much critical evidence regarding what the tea caddy was and where and when it might have been made became available.

Those who bid at the Wemyss auction should have made up their own minds prior to committing nearly \$100,000 at the sale for the two items which had carried estimates of a fraction of that amount. The rules of auction are clear and well known. The defaulting Wemyss buyer had pretended at the sale viewing to want the items for her personal collection and actually had me agree to three months payment terms to allow her to

bid. Expecting that both items might, given the low reserves and notwithstanding the higher estimates, together realise less than \$6,000, I agreed. Had I guessed that bidding could reach \$100,000 I certainly would not have agreed to stretch my company's finances that far.

None of those who have since seen fit to comment have studied (or in some cases even viewed) this object, nor have they read the considerable documentation which has been accumulated in the intervening decade. Despite my many offers, I have never had a single detractor ask to see the tea caddy or request information compiled regarding its history. I would have dearly liked to have bought it myself and given it to a museum but I had not the means to do so. However, a friend purchased it so that it was available for a museum to acquire and not lost into the open market, with no profit expected should a museum wish to proceed. Given into my care by its owner for further research some years ago, it is relegated to storage when it should



3 Detail of printing plate used to engrave David Collins' crest. Image courtesy National Museum of Australia

really be in a museum. My frustration at the slavish repetition of rumours purporting to show the tea caddy as a fake has been amplified by the reluctance of those responsible to put their names to their opinions. Nor, despite ample opportunity, has anyone ever produced any evidence demonstrating any reason to doubt the authenticity of the item.

MORE INFORMATION EMERGES

After the portrait miniature left my hands in 1998, I have focused on the tea caddy. Colonial specialists including expert conservators and curators from some of Australia's leading state and national museums have studied the tea caddy in forensic detail and have independently verified its age and originality. All agree that it is totally untouched and not interfered with in any way.

Several integral features strongly suggest that it could only have been made for David Collins, so its journey through a Tasmanian auction in the

1990s is of marginal significance. It was clearly made to look fashionable by someone with some basic knowledge but no great skill at carpentry, and with very basic tools and limited resources. As Collins died in 1810 it can only pre-date this.

The recently uncovered documentary evidence outlined below regarding the Port Phillip camp and the colonists' activities there strongly support the tea caddy having been made in that camp in 1803 by one of two or three possible people, most probably the convict forger James Grove, as a gift for David Collins. The circumstances of such a presentation between the Governor and a convict or a soldier are not likely to have been formally recorded, so a deduction and attribution is all that one can really make, just as in the case of almost any very early colonial antique.

DEALERS CAST DOUBT

As far as I am aware, the only fact still in dispute regarding the tea caddy is whether or not it appeared in Launceston in a 1997 house clearing

sale run by a local firm, an irrelevant point when the physical and documentary evidence is considered. I have nonetheless taken some trouble to investigate this and as I wasn't there myself, can only rely on evidence given me by others. This evidence demonstrates that it was in all probability at that auction and for several perfectly good reasons was not sighted by the auctioneer or by others viewing the sale.

The buyer of the tea caddy at that sale, Bill Lowe, was a policeman who had retired to concentrate on his interest in Chinese ceramics. I have met him and believe him to be an open and honest man. Bill has provided a signed statement setting out how he came to purchase the tea caddy at the Launceston house clearance auction, in which it is hard to see any motive for inventing the purchase. He had bid on some oriental plates for a few hundred dollars, and when he collected his purchases was handed them in a cardboard box full of kitchenalia

4 Detail of recycled 18th-century hardware and mahogany carcass. Image courtesy National Museum of Australia



which the clerk told him were all part of that lot. The box was in the garage below the house from where the accounts clerks were taking payments and delivering goods, and had evidently not been taken upstairs with most of the other items for the sale. Pleased with his bargain he did not dispute this and, unpacking it later, found the box contained some collectable rolling pins, various vintage kitchen items and at the bottom, open and full of small kitchen items, the tea caddy, which was in a dilapidated condition. Over the following days he resold the kitchenalia and the tea caddy for a few hundred dollars, thereby recouping the cost of the Chinese plates that were of more interest to him.

How the items came to be at this auction is another story, and one that apparently steps on the toes of several people, so I will omit it here. However the information, which was freely given to me, is available to anyone else who genuinely wants to know, for the asking. The short version is that the

items were thought to be of little consequence and they arrived mixed with other general household estate belongings and no more information than that. For those who won't contemplate this, we'll have to agree to disagree. Suffice to say that, despite all those prepared to swear that the caddy was not at the Launceston auction, in a decade of wide national publicity *not a single individual* has offered up any suggestion as to where else it might have appeared from.

PHYSICAL EVIDENCE SUPPORTS THE COLLINS ATTRIBUTION

The tea caddy itself is a fascinating object, and study of physical evidence drawn from it gives some remarkable facts. The caddy was first described as a colonial deed box and thought to be Tasmanian, a reasonable assumption given the veneer of finely figured blackwood decorating its panels and the fact it is missing its interior so was effectively an empty box. The simple construction did not make it

immediately obvious that it had been made as a tea caddy, however on closer study witness marks are visible inside the box which define two wooden divisions, long since removed. There are some unusual joints in the carcass timber, which is mahogany.

Reconstructing the recycled mahogany panels with which the box carcass was made shows that the timber was recycled from the canted writing slope of an English writing case. The thick blackwood veneer is hand cut, and has warped and buckled with age, although it is apparent that when originally fitted it was carefully chosen and neatly polished. Broken off in two stages on a corner, there is obvious aged discolouration of the exposed carcass wood.

While many people assume that all cabinet-quality blackwood comes from Tasmania, in fact *Acacia melanoxylon* (blackwood wattle) is a species which grows mainly in south-east Australia and was one of the most prolific trees in the Sorrento area at the point of first contact with colonial settlement

at Port Phillip. The hinges of the caddy are mercury-gilded and cut down from larger versions, and the handles are adopted from a piece of cabinet-furniture. The screws are all hand cut but of odd sizes, and have been shortened to fit. All these components are English and late 18th century. No lock is fitted although there is a scribed mark for an escutcheon.

The top of the lid is solid blackwood and rather heavy, so when the box is open it topples backwards. Presumably when made it contained a glass or metal container for tea, and the other wooden internal fittings, which would have made it stable in the open position. The lid is inset with a rectangular brass plate, bright cut engraved with the crest of Collins' family (a camel's head) and the Old English initials 'DC'. The engraving is remarkably similar to that on the crude silver pepperette or pounce pot which may have been made by the convict James Grove as a gift for the Governor to mark the King's birthday in 1805, illustrated in the August 2007 issue of *Australiana*. Also visible on the plate are several dot-punched letters in reverse, which have been almost obscured by wiping, a technique used by printers when reusing a printing plate.

GROVE THE MOST LIKELY MAKER

The convict James Grove, who became a close friend of David Collins during the voyage to Port Phillip on the ship *Calcutta*, had been transported for forging banknotes. On the voyage to Port Phillip, Collins allowed Grove to use the government printing press on board to make engraved calling cards which he sold to merchants in Rio and Tenerife en-route.²

The press, a second hand one in average condition, had been supplied by the London printer Thomas Bensley, also an emancipist who had petitioned for leniency on behalf of James Grove.³ The General Orders which Collins had printed on the government press in Port Phillip and

later in Hobart used moveable type,⁴ and no engraved plates were required. However Grove definitely used engraved plates for his calling cards on this press, so he had both the means and the opportunity to make, use, and re-use, engraved plates for this purpose. He must have also made his own simple tools for engraving his calling-card plates, as no engraving tools were required for the Government use. These improvised items would have been far from his ideal but probably adequate for the job in the hands of a skilled engraver.

Grove's access to the printing plate provides strong evidence that he was involved in making the tea caddy as a gift for Collins. While others on the ship may have had some engraving skill, it appears that among the convict passengers, Grove alone was granted access to the Government printing press.

DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE SUPPORTS PORT PHILLIP THEORY

The voyage between Tenerife and Port Phillip was extremely rough, and the fleet was separated for several days.⁵ Journals record that 'many items on board were damaged'.⁶ Several writing boxes would have been on board, a part of the standard travelling equipment of most officers. It is not difficult to imagine the destruction of a writing box in a sailing ship during a storm. Of items damaged, anything salvageable would have been kept as a matter of course for recycling, and timber items would certainly have been given to the ship's carpenter.

James Grove, with his wife and child, had paid for accommodation in the ship's carpenter's cabin⁷, an unusual luxury afforded some monied convicts travelling with their families. Grove had ample opportunity to access some small items of damaged wood, particularly if it were for construction of a gift for the Governor. This is not something which anyone there would have recorded formally.

The shipboard references to Grove

demonstrate that this particular individual had a variety of skills, among them the ability to make articles in wood, sufficient cultivation and social qualities to interest Collins, access to metal and tools to engrave calling cards, and a friendly association with the ship's carpenter Mr Dow.⁸

Residing in the carpenter's cabin, he would have been privy to information about the carpenter's work on board and would have had access to some of his tools and materials. As Collins allowed him to print calling cards, he certainly had access to the ship's printing press and the equipment used with it. He enjoyed extremely unusual privileges allowed by Collins, and went to great lengths to repay the Governor's favour with friendly interaction and by making gifts.⁹

Collins found Grove to be 'an intelligent and ingenious man',¹⁰ and often visited Grove in his cabin. Grove felt that his reputation on board would ensure his freedom, later quoting 'There seems but little doubt of my emancipation; my name and character have been blazed about at Sydney by the captain and officers of the *Calcutta*'.¹¹

At Port Phillip, there existed a clear affection between Grove and Collins demonstrated by their close concern for each other's welfare and comfort, and Grove was given an extraordinary open reign.¹² Collins agreed to let Grove undertake several private projects, saying 'Grove, do as you like, pursue the researches of your own mind, in any way you think best - if you want assistance, I will give it to you. I am perfectly satisfied of the consistency of your conduct, and whatever you ask you shall have'.¹³

Grove built a hut near the Governor's, but until then lived in another with three rooms, far better than the convict tents down on the flats. Grove made soap using tallow he had purchased at the Cape, mixing this with alkali from plants around the bay.¹⁴ He gathered leaves from the native tea tree and produced 'tea equal

to any of the common black teas sold in England'.¹⁵ Grove packed the tea into a chest which he fashioned from the local timber.¹⁶ Grove later remarked that at Port Phillip it was 'impossible to get a piece of straight timber there more than twelve feet long.'¹⁷ demonstrating that he had in fact tried to do so.¹⁸

Collins' diary mentions several times the collection of samples of timber from around Port Phillip Bay. Some of the 'stout' trees of many kinds found around the bay were felled and wood samples taken for the Royal Navy, and the *Calcutta's* carpenters were busy felling trees on the slopes of Arthur's Seat for huts and fencing.¹⁹

The *Calcutta's* carpenter, Mr Dow, is not listed in the victualling book kept from 17 October 1803 at Port Phillip²⁰ and evidently remained on board as a part of the *Calcutta's* crew when it left for Sydney on Sunday 18 December 1803. Dow might have been involved in making the tea caddy for Collins but from the victualling list it is clear he was not there to obtain the native wood used in its construction. He could easily, however, have provided James Grove with the damaged pieces of mahogany writing box salvaged during the voyage for later use in one of the many small objects Grove liked to make.

DOCUMENTED FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN GROVE AND COLLINS

The friendly relationship between Collins and Grove is clearly recorded by Collins, but stops short of detailing any gifts or personal exchanges. Whatever Collins' personal relationship with Grove was, his professional one would always have remained aloof and it would have been quite inappropriate for him to have recorded gifts from a convict in his formal diaries. The same applies to the silver pepperette (or pounce pot) he received in Hobart two years later. There are no records whatsoever prior to the 1850s of this object, and yet there is little doubt that Collins owned it and that it

5 The Collins caster in fitted box. Image courtesy Bonhams & Goodman



is quite authentically early colonial, whether one believes it was made in Hobart, or made in Sydney and engraved in Hobart by Grove.²¹

The pepperette sold at a 24 April 2007 auction in Melbourne for \$408,000,²² suggesting that several buyers agree on its legitimacy. David Collins made no mention in his journals of any of the presentations made by James Grove and few references exist mentioning him other than as a useful man. Some years earlier, in Sydney, despite making a diary entry for that day, Collins neglected to record Ann Yeats giving birth to his son George. Collins' writings were intended to record the official settlement, and discussions regarding his social interaction with convicts would have been kept private.

Grove himself did document the fact that he had made items for presentation to the Governor in the hope of eventually gaining his support for a pardon. From March 1802 Grove had written a detailed journal and letters which he had sent to friends in England, in particular to his patron Thomas Bensley.²³ Bensley had petitioned Collins on Grove's behalf and it is likely that this is how Grove

quickly came to Collins' attention on the Port Phillip expedition. In 1807 Bensley persuaded Grove to allow him to publish all his letters and notes and Bensley proceeded to arrange these at his London printing works with the intention of producing a book with them. However on 7 November 1807, a serious fire destroyed 'many more letters and particulars concerning the convict'. Grove himself died, shortly after Collins, in 1810.

GROVE'S EARLIEST JOURNALS PUBLISHED

For some years nothing further was done. Then in 1819 another fire totally destroyed the printing works of Thomas Bensley & Son. Despite this, some letters survived in a manuscript book later inherited by Bensley's son Benjamin. The Bensley business declined but in 1857, as a pensioner, Benjamin returned to Grove's letters and re-edited them to be published as *Lost and Found*.²⁴ Of the 43 letters which survived, *forty* covered March 1802 to April 1803, but *only four* survive from the period 1803 to 1810, the period in which the tea caddy and the pepperette would have been made.²⁵

Under these circumstances, it is clear that many omissions were made from Bensley's version of Grove's original journals. Bensley remarked 'not that the writer had failed in his communications to his numerous friends, but that many of the letters have been unfortunately and accidentally destroyed.'²⁶ The letters from the period during which the tea caddy and pepper pot were made and presented by Grove to Collins, and which would certainly have been mentioned given Grove's tendency to record minutiae, were obviously lost in the fires.

JAMES GROVE, THE ONLY INDIVIDUAL WITH THE SKILLS, OPPORTUNITY AND INCLINATION TO MAKE THE TEA CADDY

James Grove had access to all the recycled and the new materials required to make the tea caddy at Port Phillip through his use of the government printing press, his relationship with Mr Dow the ship's carpenter and his involvement with the collection of timber samples around the bay. He had the necessary skills in engraving and woodwork, personal experience of current fashions in London allowing him to make a reasonable version of a fashionable tea caddy from memory, free social interaction with David Collins both on board the *Calcutta* and at Port Phillip, and later in Hobart, and a known record of having made numerous gifts for Collins in the hope of emancipation. He is also recorded as having made tea in Port Phillip as a gift for the Governor, and of presenting this in a 'box made from the local wood'.²⁷

If the tea caddy had been presented by an officer or a soldier to the Governor, it seems far more likely that they, having the means to do so, and the opportunity in Rio and Tenerife, would have purchased a gift, rather than constructed it themselves. Grove, however, had no option but to

improvise with what he could find or construct himself, and according to all available surviving records, was the only individual with this unique combination of skills and opportunities necessary to create the tea caddy in this form.

What remains is for the trade rivalry to evaporate and for historians to step back from the controversy and take another look at this fascinating object. Whether this is the most stylish or finely made object of its period is irrelevant, given the circumstances of its manufacture. The fact that it was made at all is truly remarkable and gives a fascinating insight into the aspirations of the Port Phillip convicts and settlers and the unique relationship between one convict and the Governor. Whatever the recent circumstances of the rediscovery of this unique early colonial artefact, a considerable weight of physical and documentary evidence supports its authenticity, and none challenges this. It's time for it to be brought out of storage and into a museum where it belongs.

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- 13 *Ibid* p 33
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The creation and furnishing of Government House, Hobart

BY LIEUTENANT GOVERNORS SORELL, ARTHUR AND FRANKLIN BETWEEN 1817–1843
PART 1: SORELL (1817 – 1824)

In the first of a three part series, John Hawkins looks into how the early governors' residences in Hobart were furnished.

John Hawkins

Between first settlement in 1803 and 1817, Lieutenant-Governors David Collins and Thomas Davey had little or no input into the creation of the Government House. Their modest residence can be seen at the end of Elizabeth Street in the model of the complex made circa 1837 (plate 1). By the time Davey's

administration of the colony ceased in April 1817, the European population of the colony was 3,114, of whom 566 resided on the northern side of the island.¹

An indication of the state of the colony then is the hand-over document between Davey and William Sorell dated 8 April 1817.² Davey listed a small number of state documents, the Royal Church Plate in a box labelled 'Port Phillip',³ the

Royal Standard, 24 chairs, a stove, a set of fire irons, a pair of globes, a 20-volume encyclopaedia and the Colonial Seal, for which Sorell signed – with the exception of the Colonial Seal and the 24 chairs.

Davey remained for some time as a settler. Unsuccessful, he returned to England, where he died on 2 May 1823. His daughter married the Hobart surgeon James Scott who built 'Boa Vista', then Hobart's finest

1 The model of Government House, Macquarie Street, Hobart as it stood in 1837, constructed by Francis Low and commissioned by Jane, Lady Franklin. Collection Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery, Hobart.

This accurate scale model, exhibited in London in 1841, is the only record of the complex now known as Old Government House. The lower view from Macquarie Street shows the first Government House inhabited by Collins and Davey, the cottage facing Macquarie Street with two later bow windows. To the left is Sorell's second Government House, the two-storey, badly built 110 x 35 ft house with a veranda. The upper view is looking from Sullivan's Cove with Arthur's two storey, five-bay third addition supporting and attached to the back of Government House, with a summer house with its octagonal roof providing access to the veranda





2 One of a pair of sabre-legged armchairs in the collection of the Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery, Hobart, P.1978.283.1-2. Three of this set of chairs with a Tasmanian provenance are known to survive, and are part of set of at least 20 chairs, for one chisel-numbered in the 20's is now at Old Government House, Parramatta. Perhaps they went from the Sorell Government House to Boa Vista. Anglo Indian circa 1815. James Broadbent et al, *India China Australia Trade and Society 1788- 1850*, pl 47, p 107

house, and a likely resting place for the missing 24 chairs mentioned above. Furniture with a Tasmanian provenance which may be of this date are a pair of cane-bottomed, sabre-leg armchairs in the Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery, presumed by that Museum to have been in Government House, and probably of Indian origin (plate 2).⁴

Governor Macquarie first visited Hobart in 1811. As a result he issued a government and general order completely realigning the streets and prospects, confirmed by a plan drawn up by his surveyor, James Meehan (plate 3).⁵ On his return, writing from Sydney in February 1812 Macquarie decreed that⁶

The present Government House for the residence of the Lt. Governor of Hobart Town, being much too small and incommodious, and being also in a state of decay, it is absolutely necessary that a new one should be built as soon as the means of Government will admit thereof.

This first Government House (plate 8A) is, I suggest, the small cottage by then with two bow windows to be seen in plate 1, facing Macquarie Street.

At this time the creation and furnishing of a Government House was a direct consequence of the skill level of the convicts working in the Lumber Yards in Sydney or Hobart. One such skilled convict was Lawrence Butler (c 1750-1820) a cabinet-maker by trade and Australia's first furniture maker of note. Born in Ireland, he was transported for life for his participation in the Irish Rebellion of 1798. Arriving in Sydney in 1802, he was immediately employed in the Lumber Yard. Macquarie needed skilled men, so Butler remained in the Lumber Yard on a ticket of leave until granted a conditional pardon in 1813. I suggest that any furniture

supplied to Government House Hobart between 1803 and Sorell's departure in 1817 originated from Butler's workshops in the Sydney Lumber Yard.

On his release in 1815, Butler advertises that he has for sale⁷

chairs, tables, and sofas, drawers and clothes presses, patent dining tables on pillars, on the newest construction, dressing and shaving boxes with glasses, card tables, an elegant cabinet and escritoire, bedsteads and mattresses, &c. Made under his immediate inspection and warranted of the best materials.

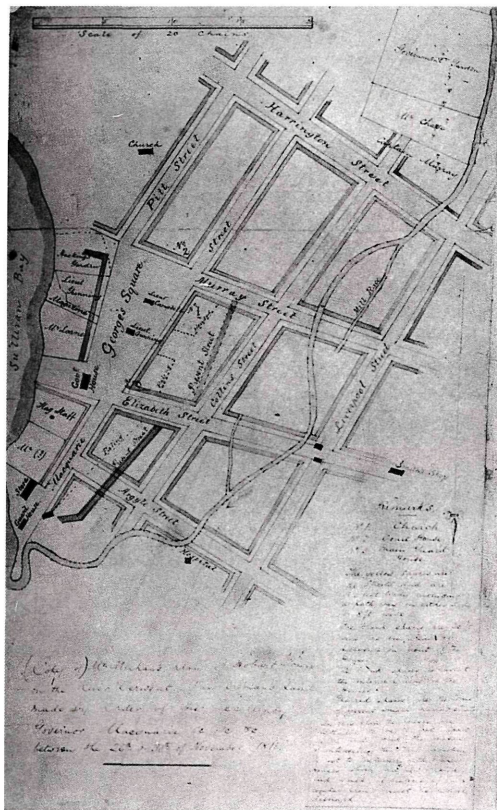
Butler's work was highly regarded, and of sufficient merit to warrant his providing the furniture for the new Courts of Justice and for the chambers of Judge Jeffrey Bent of the Supreme Court, Sydney; the £210.10.0 payment for this work was made from the Police Fund in March 1816. Government House was furnished from the Police Fund, which collected government monies for licences to import and sell alcohol. In the *Sydney Gazette*, 4 April 1816, Butler advertised for two journeymen and an apprentice.⁸ As this was in addition to the four apprentices already operating within his workshop, demand for his furniture must have been brisk.

In 1820 Commissioner J.T. Bigge visited both Tasmania and New South Wales to investigate Macquarie's government of the Colony. Tasmania's Lt Governor William Sorell (1775-1848) was to benefit from Bigge's reports, as Bigge appears to have disliked Macquarie and approved of Sorell. Bigge's reports to government on his return to Britain are vital for an understanding of how the various lumber yards worked.

The existing system enabled the governors to furnish their houses without being held to account on departure for their contents; Bigge had seen through this and I quote his solutions in full:⁹

I may here be permitted to observe to Your Lordship that the Salary and Allowances made to the Lieut. Governor of Van Diemen's Land do not appear to me to be adequate to the necessary importance of the situation. The salary of the Lieutenant Governor amounts to £800 Sterling. He draws 36 daily rations from the Store for his household Servants, most of whom are convicts. Some of them are virtualled as Constables, and draw the increased ration and a weekly quantity of spirits. The Lieut. Governor has also the advantage of obtaining the Services of Mechanics from amongst the Convicts, when required for repairs of the Government House and Garden, or the making of furniture, the materials of some part of which have been purchased and defrayed from the Police Fund.¹⁰ His Horses, Harness and Carriage have been purchased at the public expense, and, generally, by drafts of cattle from the Govt. Herds to Individuals, who received an Order for supplying them to the King's Store, and then received the usual price for the quantity of meat they produced. I suggested to Lieut. Governor Sorell, as well as to Governor Macquarie, the propriety of taking Inventories of all property that had been purchased for their use at the Public Expense and that remained or in future should be placed in any of the Government Houses. In this suggestion they concurred, and I received from Brigade Major Antill by Governor Macquarie's direction, a list of all the furniture that was then in the Government Houses in New South Wales, and that had been either purchased or made at the Public expense. This List I thought proper to suggest for Governor Macquarie's justification, as well as for the benefit of his Successor, and is to

3 Meehan's 1811 map showing Government House directly opposite the exit to Elizabeth Street with all the streets realigned and named. The small bow-windowed Collins/Davey Government House is positioned centrally as part of Macquarie's grand plan

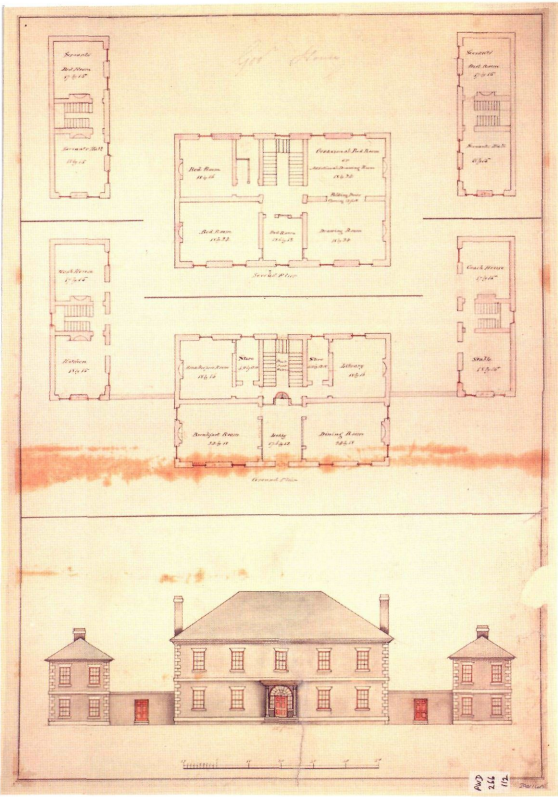


be found in the Appendix.¹¹ I think it is all right to state that all due attention had been paid to economy in the purchase of furniture or in the orders for it, when made by the convict workmen. I should therefore recommend that the salary of the Lieutenant Governor of Van Diemen's Land should be raised to the Sum of £2,000 per annum, and that he should be allowed a Ration for himself and four of the servants of his Household; but that, in future, as furniture can now be purchased both in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, that all allowances consisting of Articles of Furniture and Forage for Horses should be withdrawn and the expense of

purchasing them should be defrayed by the Governor and Lieut. Governor, except in cases where they should have previously received Your Lordship's express commands.

Captain Thomas Bell of the 48th Regiment, the Engineer and overseer of Convicts at the Hobart Lumber Yard, prepared this statement for Bigge regarding the public buildings built in Hobart during his time as Chief Engineer.¹²

... the public buildings erected and in progress since the arrival of the present inspector includes the whole of the inside work of government house completed and a kitchen, servants hall, coach house and stable with a veranda in front built, and the house stuccoed. At the lumber yard a



4 Plan for the Sorell Government House (1817). This bears many similarities with Government House, Parramatta designed by Lt John Watts of the 46th Regiment, who arrived in Sydney in 1814 and departed in 1819. The quoins to the sides of all the buildings depicted in the elevation are to be found on his Military Hospital Sydney (1814), the Surgeons Barracks, Sydney (1814) and the twin towers to St John's Church Parramatta (1819). This design feature is peculiar to his work and was not used by Greenway. Watts' complex was probably too expensive to construct in Hobart at this date, and as a result the simple straight-fronted, barrack-type building was completed by 1820, shown to the centre of the model, as seen in plates 6 & 7

life to New South Wales in 1813, he arrived in Sydney on the convict transport *General Hewitt* on 7 February 1814. On 7 May 1814, when he appeared before the Bench of Magistrates as a witness in the case between Captain Gill of the 46th Regiment and Lawrence Butler, Temple stated that

I am a prisoner and a cabinetmaker by trade. I have been in the employ of Laurence Butler ... I used to go to Butler, immediately after I had done my government work ... I have been in the habit of working for Butler during my after hours ever since my arrival.

When Temple applied for and was granted a conditional pardon by Governor Macquarie in November 1821, he was listed as a 'cabinet maker'. In his petition for a conditional pardon he stated that he had been 'exclusively employed under your Excellency's direction for the last 18 months at Government House' - a New South Wales precedent probably repeated in Hobart.

The two armchairs were constructed from Australian rose mahogany (*Dysoxylon fraserianum*) and are the earliest known examples of Colonial Gothic, derived in part from designs appearing in George Smith's *Collection of Designs for Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* published in London in 1808. They, like the Tasmanian sofa to be discussed later, are of a sophisticated design and I suggest bespoke, from a commissioned design, possibly suggested by Mrs Macquarie and drawn by the convict architect Francis Greenway who drew up the plans in 1820 for the still surviving Gothic stable block, now the Conservatorium of Music in Sydney.

When Governor Macquarie left New South Wales in February 1822, he took the two chairs back with him to Scotland. Is this an example of Macquarie commissioning furniture from convict mechanics through the

brick building erected for a blacksmith's shop and a stone building erected for government stores ...

This Government House is the long central section depicted in the model (plate 1), with eleven windows facing Macquarie Street. Bell continues:

Government House and offices were completed in 1819. Built and roofed in but very little inside work done. The outbuildings partly done ... Government House - Length 110 ft; Breadth, 35 ft¹³

A building (plate 6) of this breadth would be difficult to span using the skill base then available in the settlement. A shingled roof with a

central valley would be certain to leak.

At this time, and towards the end of his governorship, Lachlan Macquarie commissioned two convict artisans, William Temple and John Webster, to make him two large ornamental chairs (plate 5). These chairs appear to have been designed for purposes of state rather than personal comfort, and are likely to be the two large armchairs listed in the inventory of the contents requested by Bigge as being in the drawing room of Government House, Sydney, and drawn up by Macquarie's aide-de-camp, Henry Colden Antill, in March 1821.¹⁴ One of these chairs is now the property of Macquarie University, the other belongs to the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney.

William Temple was a native of Boston, Lincolnshire. Transported for

Sydney Lumber Yard and keeping it at the end of his tenure, or as noted in Bigge's assessment, personal furniture made in the Lumber Yard paid for by Macquarie and kept on his retirement? I suggest the latter.

On inspecting Government House Hobart in 1817, William Sorell decided that it was uninhabitable, uncomfortable and lacked proper security, so he ordered additions and alterations.¹⁵ In the meantime he and his family stayed at the home of the timber merchant Thomas Birch.¹⁶ In July a house and offices at New Town were purchased for Sorell's use from the former convict Andrew Whitehead, but soon after these burnt down. As there was no other residence within easy reach of the town that could accommodate Sorell and his family, they returned to Government House, with all its faults.

Bigge's investigation into the workings of the Hobart Lumber Yard are contained within the transcripts for his commission as detailed in *Historical Records of Australia (HRA)*. This important published record places the problems of running a colonial Lumber Yard 12,000 miles from Britain into a local context.

Examination of Captain T. Bell, 48th Regiment - Chief Engineer Hobart¹⁷

Q. Do you think you could not have obtained the same work from the Prisoners in Govt. employ without giving a promise of a ticket of leave?

A. I do not think I could have got the same quantity of work done in the same space of time; it also operated as a security for their good behaviour in places where superintendance could not be provided. the men, who obtained Tickets of leave, worked at various and some at considerable Distances from the Town, without any overseers, and only subject to casual Inspection of myself or my assistant.

Q. Do you keep any other list of Convicts who arrive here,

5 One of a pair of armchairs made for Macquarie by the firm of Temple & Webster, Sydney 1821 and possibly intended for his Executive Council Office. A third chair of related form made for Archdeacon Scott implies that Mrs Macquarie had very little or no input into designing these chairs, despite her known interest in matters Gothic. If architect designed, Greenway is the most likely design source. Hobart had neither the skills nor designers to produce furniture of this quality to furnish Government House at this date. I suggest that Sorell sourced the furnishings for Government House from Sydney and that they were either Anglo-Indian or from the workshops of Lawrence Butler, Alexander Hart or Temple & Webster. Webster may have had familial connections with Lancaster; this chair bears many stylistic correlations with Gillows' Porden-designed Gothic furniture supplied to Eaton Hall in 1817



distinguishing the ship they come by, the date of arrival, their assignment to settlers, or employment, and any memorandum of their future destination?

A. Yes, I do. I enter in a book the name of every convict on his landing and the date with the name of the Ship, by which he arrived, and also to whom they are assigned, both on or off the Store.

Examination of G. Read 1820 Superintendent of Carpenters in the Lumber Yard Hobart¹⁸

Q. How long have you held your situation of superintendent of carpenters at this station?

A. About 12 months.

Q. What is your pay and what other emoluments do you receive?

A. I receive £30 per annum from the Police Fund, and I have two

Government men.

Q. How many convict carpenters are there placed under your superintendance?

A. I believe there are about 30.

Q. Are they good workmen?

A. There are not above eight that can be called good workmen.

Q. Do you ever Task them to their work?

A. I do it where I can and put 2 or 3 to a job.

Q. How do you limit the task work?

A. By calculating as much as an ordinary carpenter can perform in the hours of Govt. work.

Q. Have you reason to be satisfied with the manner in which the carpenters perform their work?

A. I have.

Q. Do you think they work as well as free men?



6 Benjamin Duterreau, view down Elizabeth Street to the Derwent with Government House to the centre, the verandah fronting onto Macquarie Street, c 1836, watercolour. Collection Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery, Hobart

A. Some are good work men and take a Pride in doing their work well. There are others whom it is impossible to make work.

Q. It has been the practice here I believe to employ all the Govt. mechanics in their extra hours on Govt. labour?

A. The carpenters have not been so employed with the exception of Brown, who had the making of the Church windows; and he agreed to make them for £9 a window and allowed his Govt. time to be deducted out of that, rating it at 5 shgs. per day.

Q. Do not you observe that the carpenters as well as other mechanics and labourers in Govt. employ that are set to task work, can finish it before their Govt. hours are expired?

A. They certainly do, for they will work hard to finish their task work.

Q. Do you think they do their work as well altho' they do it quicker?

A. They do not do it well, unless they are well looked after.

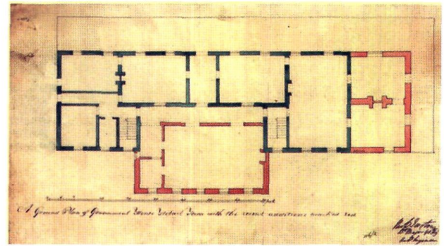
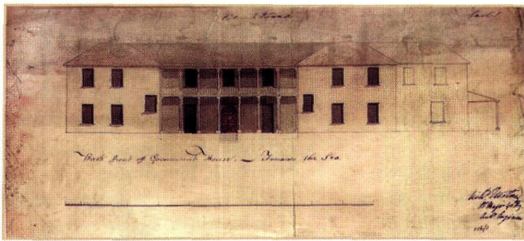
Q. Do you find that the wood of this country is well adapted to building purposes?

A. The Huon Pine is very good for fittings and inside work and the Stringy Bark is good for carpenter's work.¹⁹

Q. Do you not find that the latter shrinks very much?

A. It does, but it stands well if seasoned. The large logs or an old tree also stand well.

Q. Does the working of these woods destroy the tools?



A. It does.

Q. All the carpenters and mechanics are allowed to take their tools home with them and to use them in their own work?

A. They are.

Q. Are the workmen, when employed in their extra time by Government, paid according to their time or to the work they do?

A. They are paid according to their time, three shillings for extra time for a mechanic and two for a labourer.

In 1817 of the 544 convicts who all arrived from Sydney, three were carpenters. In 1818 of the 540 convicts who arrived (149 from England, 491 from Sydney) ten were carpenters, and in 1819 of the 588 convicts who arrived (162 from England and 426 from Sydney) 13 were carpenters, making a total of 26 over the three years.²⁰

In 1819 included among the 1,732 miscellaneous labourers was one chair caner.²¹ No convict was willing to call himself a 'cabinetmaker' or for that matter a 'joiner', but it was from this skill base that Sorell's Government House was built.

J Lakeland, Assistant Inspector of Public Works, Hobart²²

Q. Are the Mechanics and Tradesmen in Govt. employ at this settlement of a good or inferior description?

A. The generality of them are very inferior. We have only six good Carpenters and Two good Blacksmiths. The Demand for these last both in the country and

for Govt. is very great and has been always.

Q. Has Govt. made Purchases of Huon Pine?

A. To a considerable amount, as much as £400 in my time, and I know that a large quantity was Purchased before.

Q. Of whom was it Purchased?

A. Of Mr. Birch Principally.

Q. To what Purpose was it applied?

A. For linings and fittings of the Govt. House and for the Church.

Q. At what price was it Purchased?

A. On one occasion the sum of £200 was given for a whole cargo and I do not know what the Quantity in Feet was, tho' there were 63 Logs, but at other times we have purchased the Pine of Mr. Birch at 6d. per superficial Foot.

Captain Bell was questioned later about timber:²³

Q. From whence do you procure the wood from this Settlement?

A. On my arrival, the wood, used in common buildings called Stringy Bark, was procured from a place called Cascade about 3 miles from the Town. About a year after, that Supply failed and now it is brought by water from Northwest Bay in D'Entrecasteaux's Straights about 20 miles off.

Q. From Whence do you obtain the common cedar and the Huon Pine?

A. We have lately procured a Ship load of common cedar or what is

7A This previously unpublished watercolour is an elevation drawn up in 1826 by Major Turton, acting Engineer of the 40th Foot, then Garrison Regiment in Hobart. It portrays the harbour front of Sorell's Government House with its unusual verandah inset between the two bays, with the oddly placed staircase windows lighting the two internal staircases. The front overdoor and side windows survived the demolition of the building in 1858-9 and were sold to the Union Chapel at Woodbridge (then Peppermint Bay) for £6/10/-³⁰ It is dated as being received in London, 7 April 1828. National Archives, Kew, England

7B The footprint plan showing Major Turton's solution to the falling down 1820 Sorell building. The red infills are the proposed new building, designed to support the existing structure. The plan was completed before September 1827 when Arthur dispatched it from Hobart as his solution to providing a new Government House. This watercolour is in the National Archives, Kew

called pencil wood from the Huon River, and the Huon Pine is procured in any quantity from Macquarie Harbour on the West side of this island; but the Govt. Vessel now here draws too much water to enter that harbour...

Q. Have you ever required any supplies of wood from Sydney for the works here?

A. Yes, we have received some cedar for the finishing the Pews and Pulpit in the Church...

Captain Bell continued his evidence:²⁴

Q. From whence do you Procure

Tools and Utensils for the Public Works?

A. Utensils, such as Iron Pots and Frying Pans, have been always sent from Sydney. Tools formerly were, latterly they have been principally bought or made in the works.

Q. Do you keep an account of the receipts and Issues of these Tools and generally of the Stores in your charge and is that account ever inspected by the Lt. Govr?

A. I keep an account of all receipts and Issues. The Lt. Govr. receives a quarterly return of them, and they are transmitted to the Governor in Chief.

Q. Has the Government House at Hobart Town been finished during your period of service?

A. It has.

Q. Has it been finished, as far as was practicable by work done in the Government yard or at Govt. expense?

A. It has, and work is now going on the same account.

Q. Are Purchases of furniture ever made by you on that account?

A. A few trifling things but of absolute necessity for the accommodation of the Lt. Governor or his family have been Purchased by me on the verbal or written authority of the Lt. Govr., and they appear in the accounts.

Q. Do you know of any other Purchases of the same nature, not made by you, and defrayed out of the Police Fund?

A. As an auditor of the Police Fund, I have seen bills of that Description, which did not bear my signature. I was asked to sign them by the Treasurer of the Police Fund at the audit, but I declined to do so for reasons that I stated in writing to the Lt. Govr.

Bell's reference to Macquarie Harbour becomes important under the Governorship of Sir George Arthur (1754-1854) who moved part of the Lumber Yard workshop to

Macquarie Harbour, circa 1826. He skirted around the issue of purchases for the Lieutenant Governor and his family out of the Police Fund, placing the responsibility with the Lt Governor.

The problems of ordering chattels from the nearest major metropolis, in this case Sydney, are exemplified in a letter written by G T W B Boyes (1787-1853), Colonial Auditor, to his wife, in England on 24 September 1825, from Sydney.

I received a letter from him [Sorell's son who was to marry Elizabeth, daughter of Anthony Fenn Kemp] some time ago announcing the coming event and requesting me to purchase some plate for him at this place. You will hardly believe that I could not find a single piece of new English Silver in the Town and I am quite sure there is not one. I went to Robertson's, the greatest rogue in Sydney I believe/bye the bye he was an apprentice of Grimaldi & Johnson's/ and he made me pay for plate of Chinese manufacture/ horribly rough and mean looking/ upwards of eleven shillings an ounce. I never regretted laying out thirty pounds or upwards but I could not allow Sorell to be cheated to such an extent. I have been obliged to purchase 1/2 a dozen table spoons, as many tea spoons, the same number of forks - a Fish slice and a couple of sauce ladles but I got them at a reasonable price say eight shillings an ounce - but all second hand and somewhat worn - but they are English and that is something.²⁵

Maybe Arthur was aware of this problem, for with the imminent changeover from Sorell, from on board ship off the coast of England he writes a letter which begs the question of how he was able to assess the current state of furnishings within Government House Hobart from the

other side of the world. He was soon to receive a short sharp reply.²⁶

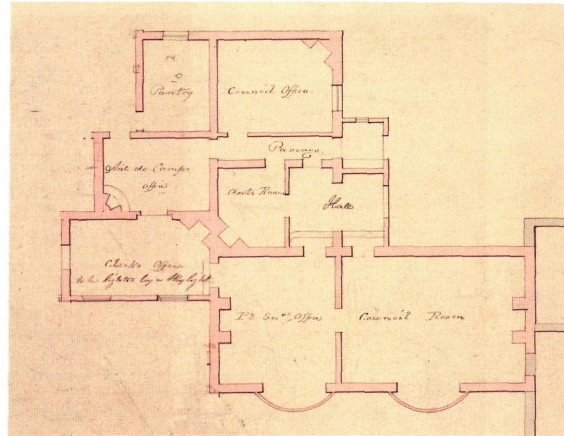
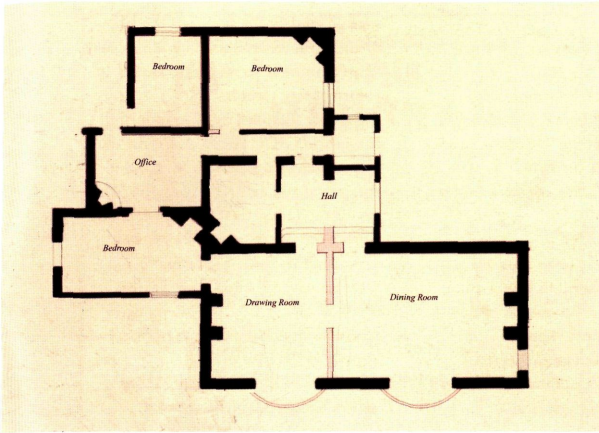
Furniture for Government House. Letter from Lieut.-Governor Arthur to Under Secretary Horton dated Plymouth, 18th August, 1823.Sir,

I do myself the honor to represent to you that I find the small quantity of furniture, which has hitherto been supplied for the Government House at Van Diemen's Land, consists chiefly of tables and chairs made in the Government Yard and that much is required both for the comfort and respectability of the dwelling. As a transport is taken up for the purpose of conveying stores to the colony, I beg through your kindness to request that the agent may be authorized to procure and ship those necessary articles of furniture, which are most required, and may be supplied from hence on much more advantageous terms than in the colony.

The charge, I should conceive, need not exceed £500, and may be defrayed out of the Police Fund. I have, &c., Geo. Arthur

He received the following reply.

Letter from Under Secretary Horton to Lieut.-Governor Arthur dated Downing Street, 4th September, 1823.²⁷
Sir,
Having received, and laid before Earl Bathurst your letter of the 18th ulto., I am directed by his Lordship to acquaint you that he is by no means prepared, without more explicit information upon the state of the Government House at Van Diemen's Land, to decide whether in principle that House should be furnished at the public Charge; but under any circumstances His Lordship thinks that it would be far more expedient to make arrangements



for manufacturing upon the Spot the additional Furniture, which may be considered necessary or desirable, and his Lordship is induced to suggest this arrangement not only in consideration of the heavy expense, which would attend the purchase of Furniture in this Country, and its conveyance to Van Diemen's Land, but because he considers it generally more expedient that wants of this nature should be supplied from the means which are at the disposal of the local Government.

I am, &c., R. Wilmot Horton²⁸

As a result, and prior to the arrival of John Lee Archer as Chief Engineer in August 1827, things had moved slowly with regard to both the improvements and furnishing of Government House as confirmed by this dispatch from Arthur over suggested acquisitions.

Sir,

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of 1st December last, transmitting by Lord Bathurst's directions Copy of a Treasury Minute of 9th November, 1826, on the Requisition for Stores to be supplied for the Public Service in

this Colony, and requesting an explanation of the grounds on which the articles, enumerated therein as objectionable, were applied for, viz., 12 Pieces of Green Baize 3 dozen Table Covers, 12 pieces Carpeting contained in Requisition No. 2 were applied for by Captain Cotton, the Acting Engineer, for the year 1825, in his Requisition dated June, 1824. Most of the articles applied for by this Requisition were sent by the *Catherine Stewart Forbes*; but such of them as were omitted were again applied for by a Requisition signed by Major Kirkwood, then Acting Engineer, and forwarded to England in my Dispatch No. 9, as articles required by the Engineer's Department and headed "Tools and Stores included in the Requisition for 1825, but not yet supplied." There is no note of Captain Cotton to show the purpose to which it was intended to apply them, but the Assistant Engineer is of opinion that the Green Baize and Table covers were required for the tables in the new Court House, and several Public Offices; the carpeting for the Government House, there not being a yard to be procured in the Colony. It was an Article of Furniture much required, and

8A 'Plan of Govt House, Hobart Town.

NB: The walls tinted red denote the present buildings, the walls tinted grey denote the new additions, estimated cost to the Govt. £350.'

This is a later footprint plan of c 1829 which I suggest includes the original Collins-Davey Government House as offices for the new Executive Council. Upon separation from NSW in 1826, Arthur required new offices for the Executive Council and the additions costing £350 were approved. It would be a nice thought on the part of Arthur to place the executive arm of Government in the recently restored Davey/Collins Government House, and I suggest it was he who added the bay windows. PND266/122

8B I suggest that the existing walls tinted red show the scale and footprint of the Collins-Davey, pre-1817 Government House, Hobart with its two bow windows (which appear to be later additions to encompass the original window openings) on the Francis Low model in plate 1. I have extracted a suggested first Government House from the footprint plan shown in plate 8A and given the rooms their possible original usage under Lt Governor Davey in 1817

which had hitherto been supplied at the Public expense.

6 Church-bells, 6 Church-clocks. Three of the Church-bells and Church Clocks were applied for on the representation of the Archdeacon for the churches already erected at Launceston, Pittwater, and New Norfolk; the other three for the small churches he recommended to be built. As nothing is more important in a convict colony than the regular muster of the prisoners, the church bell and clock are particularly useful, and could not be purchased but at a most extravagant price; they are absolutely desirable for the benefit of the public service...

The Government House in this Colony, as in all others, I believe, has hitherto been supplied with the ordinary articles of furniture, sofas, chairs, tables, and carpeting, partly made in the Lumber Yard and partly purchased at the Public charge. Those which have been made here are of a very inferior description, and now in a condition so unserviceable, that I have been under the necessity of directing such as cannot be repaired to be replaced.

Prior to leaving England on 16 July 1825, the new Governor of New South Wales General Ralph Darling had been given two separate but practically duplicate commissions. He was to call at Hobart on his way to Sydney to hand over one commission, namely the full powers of Governor to Arthur 'it being intended that the two colonies of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land should be henceforth distinct and separate Governments.'²⁹

With this commission, Arthur was no longer subservient to His Excellency in Sydney. Hence he was capable of using his decision-making powers to furnish and commission a new Government House appropriately, as will be shown in Part II of this series of articles.

NOTES

- 1 *The Jubilee History of Tasmania*, vol 1 p 19
- 2 *HRA Series III*, vol 3, p 650
- 3 JB Hawkins, 'Royal Presentation Silver with an Australian History', *Australian Antique Collector*, 1980 pp 78-81 for a similar Royal Service for NSW.
- 4 J Broadbent, *India, China, Australia Trade and Society, 1788-1850*, p 107, plate 47. Broadbent illustrates two of these chairs which are in the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, and believed to have a Treasury provenance. Another from this set at Old Government House Parramatta has a seat number stamped with a 1/2" chisel in Roman numerals in the 20s. They are of Anglo-Indian pegged construction.
- 5 *HRA Series III*, vol 1, p 512: 'His Excellency the Governor, having observed with much regret, since his arrival here, that the several Public and Private Buildings in Hobart Town have hitherto been erected in a very irregular manner and without any Plan whatever, has judged it expedient, and essentially necessary for the better appearance of the Town itself, and the accommodation of the Inhabitants, to frame and mark out a regular Plan of it for the future guidance and observance of all such Persons as may be permitted to reside and build in it. The Acting Surveyor has accordingly by His Excellency's direction, marked out with Stakes, in appropriate Places, the different divisions of the Town, which is for the present to consist of a large Square nearly in the centre of it, and Seven Streets, three of them running nearly Parallel, the whole length of the Town, and the remaining four Crossing the three long Streets at Right Angles. The Governor has named the Square George's Square, in honor of our most Gracious Sovereign, and has given the following names to the Seven Streets: Viz. Liverpool, Collins, and Macquarie are the names given to the three long Streets, Argyle, Elizabeth, Murray and Harrington being the names given to the four Cross Streets.'
- 6 *HRA Series III*, vol 1 pp 458-460 *Sydney Gazette*, 9 Dec 1815 www.lib.mq.edu.au/lmtr/temple.html
- 7 *HRA*, Series III, vol IV, p 686 Bigge to Bathurst
- 8 To confuse the auditors of the Police Fund, it would seem that only materials

were charged to the fund not the labour or the finished product. This is probably why furniture is so rarely mentioned in contemporary records.

- 9 These lists compiled by Governor Macquarie's ADC Henry Antill for the Government Houses in Sydney and Parramatta still exist. J B Hawkins. 'The Art of the Cabinetmaker 1788-1820. The Known Survivors', *Australian Antique Collector* 1984, pp 56-63 for my interpretation of Antill's inventories dated 21 March 1821. No surviving or recorded inventory prepared by Sorell appears to have survived.
- 10 *HRA*, Series III, vol III, pp 552-561
- 11 *HRA*, Series III, vol III, p 561
- 12 Hawkins, 'The Art of the Cabinetmaker', *op cit* p 62
- 13 *HRA Series III*, vol II, p 196
- 14 This building survives as Macquarie House in Davey Street, Hobart. Only one of the original 8-panel cedar doors is locatable in the interior and may qualify as the earliest surviving door in the Colony. Information supplied by Warwick Oakman.
- 15 *HRA Series III*, vol III, p 236, 26 Feb 1820
- 16 *HRA*, Series III, vol III pp 333-335 March 1820
- 17 The TMAG sofa has seat rails of mountain blue gum and stringing of pear wood. Information supplied by Warwick Oakman.
- 18 *HRA Series III*, vol III, p 552
- 19 *HRA Series III*, vol III p 556
- 20 *HRA Series III*, vol III, p 330 23 March 1820
- 21 *HRA Series III* vol III, pp 239, 240 29 Feb 1820
- 23 *HRA Series III*, vol III, p.241, 29 Feb 1820
- 24 *The Diaries and Letters of G.T.W.B. Boyes* p 239 Letter: Sydney, 25 September 1825
- 25 *HRA Series III*, vol IV p 82
- 26 *HRA Series III*, vol IV p 87
- 28 *HRA Series III*, vol VI, pp 54-55. Letter from Lieut.-Governor Arthur to Under Secretary Hay, dated Government House, Van Diemen's Land, 20 May 1827.
- 29 *HRA Series I*, vol XII, pp 40, Bathurst to Darling, 27 July 1825.
- 30 AOT/NS499/462 by Mr Goran. The building was destroyed by fire on 3 January 1898.



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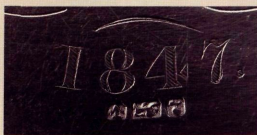
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Actual size



Mark of Richard Lamb

In July 1822 a group of gentlemen and land holders met at the silversmith James Robertson's shop to form an Agricultural Society. They elected Sir John Jamison as the first President and their first show was held at Parramatta in 1823. For a period in the 1820s and 1830s two shows were held per year but they ceased in 1836. In 1842 the Cumberland Agricultural Society was formed, later to become the West Cumberland Agricultural Society when it merged with the Penrith, Emu Plains and Nepean Agricultural Society in 1845, holding their first joint show at Regentville in 1846. The Society changed its name to the Agricultural Society of New South Wales in 1854 and is now known as the Royal Agricultural Society of New South Wales. This medal was won by Edward Cox, son of William Cox, for wines produced on

his property, Fernhill, competing against his brother and neighbour Henry at Glenmore also at Mulgoa and Sir John Jamison at Regentville. Competition in 1847 for the West Cumberland Agricultural Medal for the production of the best wine, was stiff. The magnificent 3 1/2" diameter, 5 1/2 oz medal by Richard Lamb is a reflection on the status of the prize, possibly engraved by the colony's leading exponent Samuel Clayton, then living close by at Windsor. A case could be made for this medal being amongst the earliest and possibly the grandest of all surviving New South Wales agricultural medals and one of the great objects of Australian silver. **SOLD**

