

Australiana

NOVEMBER 2010 Vol. 32 No. 4





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*An early colonial Australian cedar Work Table with a lift lid revealing lidded compartments veneered with Tasmanian Myrtle, with a lyre-shaped central support containing a silk covered work bag. NSW origin, revived 19th century patina, c.1835.
(for similar see Australian Furniture Pl. 558) (69.5 x 61 x 43)*

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Australiana

November 2010 Vol. 32 No. 4
ISSN 0814-107X

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Australiana, the magazine of The Australiana Society Inc.,
is published in February, May, August and November
and is available only by subscription.

EDITOR
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SUBSCRIPTIONS 2011
Household.....\$55
Institutions.....\$60
Life.....\$1100

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INDEX

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5

A 'national portrait' for Queensland
Timothy Roberts

10

An Anglo-Indian sideboard
Michel Reymond

14

Enterprising women studio artists:
the Misses Creeth
Dorothy Erickson

22

Morris Castle Sydney cabinet maker:
his addresses and neighbours
Michel Reymond

32

Kevin Fahy, an interview by
Jim Bertouch, part 2
James Bertouch

ADVERTISERS

Simpson's Antiques	2
Scheding Berry	4
W J Sanders	4
The Merchant of Welby	9
Anthony Buckley	9
ANZAAAB Australian Antiquarian Book Fair	13
Douglas Stewart Fine Books	13
China Rose Antiques	39
Tulloch's Auctions	39
Peter Walker Fine Art	39
J B Hawkins Antiques	40

DESIGN

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PRINTERS

Peninsula Colour, Brisbane

COVER

Joseph Backler (1813?–1897), *The Hon. Gilbert Elliott MLA*, 1866. Oil on canvas,
74 x 90 cm. Collection: Parliament House, Queensland Copyright 2010

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Contents

Scheding Berry Fine Art

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Emily Page

(Portrait of a girl, Hobart, Tasmania,
1844 - possibly a self-portrait)

tapestry on stretched linen backing
55 x 43 cm

in bird's-eye maple frame with original glass
bears typewritten inscription verso (probably typed
mid-twentieth century): 'This tapestry was worked by
Emily Page 2nd daughter of James Page of 11 Arthur Street,
North Hobart in 1844, she was then twelve years of age
and attended a school conducted by Mrs. Miller wife of the
Reverend Miller. This school, called Prospect House was
situated in Elizabeth Street next door to Melbourne Lodge.'

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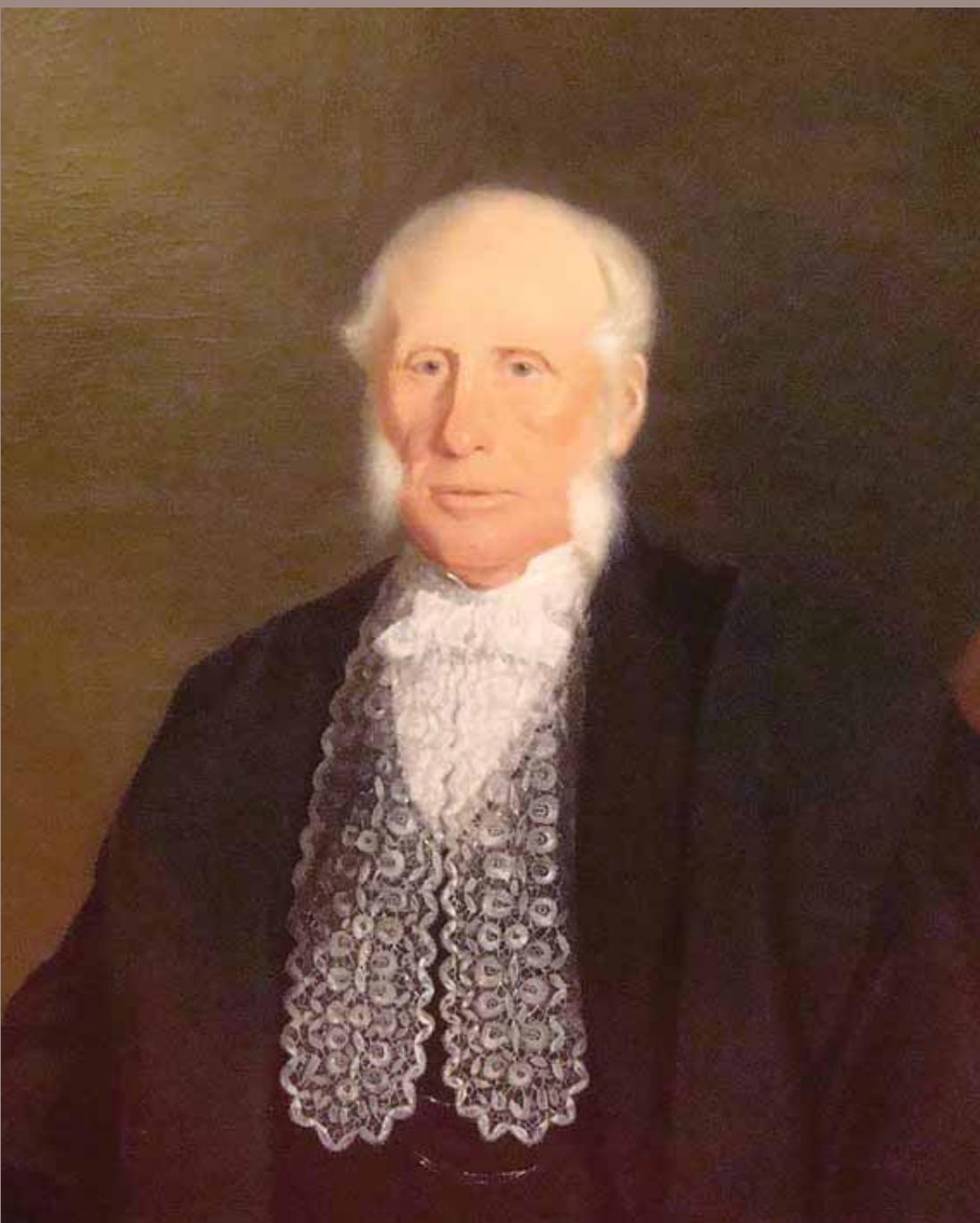


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A 'National Portrait' for Queensland



Joseph Backler's portrait of the Hon. Gilbert Elliott CMG is one of the first representations of a politician painted in Queensland. Recent research exposes an interesting story in early political life in Queensland, and reveals new information about the life and career of the artist.

1

(Previous page)
Joseph Backler
(1813?–1897), *The
Hon. Gilbert Elliott
MLA*, 1866.

Oil on canvas,
74 x 90 cm.

Collection:
Parliament House,
Queensland

2

John Watson,
Gilbert Elliott,
1870. Photograph.
Collection:
State Library of
Queensland, image
no. 109223



TIMOTHY ROBERTS

Joseph Backler (1813?–1897) was a travelling artist who portrayed local notables from the communities he visited across regional New South Wales and Queensland. Born in London, Backler was found guilty of passing forged orders and sentenced to transportation.¹ He arrived in Sydney from Portsmouth on 26 March 1832 aboard the *Portland*.²

Upon his arrival, the Surveyor General's department made quick use of Backler as a draughtsman, but the artist made headlines as early as 1833, having absconded from his duties.³ For this misdemeanour Backler was transported by the *Isabella* to Port Macquarie for further punishment, but remained unrepentant and committed several more misdemeanours there.⁴ He was eventually granted a ticket-of-leave in 1842, and was conditionally pardoned in 1847.⁵

Backler's career as a travelling portrait artist began around 1843 when he was employed by Messrs Cetta & Hughes, the framers, carvers and gilders of George Street, Sydney. By January 1844 he was involved in insolvency proceedings, and was declared insolvent again in 1849.⁶ Backler's work afforded him limited success in portraying notable colonial figures, and gave him the opportunity to observe and depict the Australian landscape.⁷ Backler worked across a number of communities in NSW, including Bathurst, Kelso, Tenterfield and Goulburn.⁸

When Backler first arrived in Brisbane around 1865, he established a studio in Costin's Buildings on Queen Street. He advertised that he painted sitters and reproductions of photographs in oils. The Brisbane public indulged Backler with their patronage; the local media reported that he successfully secured portrait commissions, including one of a local councillor.⁹ He also painted views of Brisbane, one of which is held today in the National Library of Australia's extensive collection of pictures.¹⁰ Backler's studio was open to the public, and he exhibited panoramas of Brisbane at jeweller Augustus Kosvitz's Queen Street boutique and at the 1866 Brisbane Exhibition.¹¹

In 1866, Backler was privately commissioned to portray the Hon. Gilbert Elliott MLA, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland. Though painted portraiture was becoming a less popular medium to the photographic *carte-de-visite*, it remained the preferred method for portraying eminent figures in society. It is tempting to believe that George Edmondstone, Member for the electorate of East Moreton proposed the commission; *The Brisbane Courier* praised him for organising the order, though no evidence has been found to confirm this.¹² The commission was a personal gesture from a group of Members of the Legislative Assembly to Elliott, celebrating his fine character and his continued service to the establishment and maintenance of responsible government in the young colony.¹³ Backler executed the work for £60.¹⁴

Upon its completion, the portrait was installed in the library of the Parliament building on Queen Street for inspection by members of the Legislature. The austere image depicted the Speaker full-length and life-size, dressed in the archaic robes of his office. The media complimented the accuracy of Elliott's likeness, and proudly proclaimed



...that this, the first “national portrait” of the most eminent and revered of our legislators has been secured to perfect the “history of our own times” that will be written in the future.¹⁵

It is no surprise that the subscribers to the portrait wished to immortalise Elliott in oils. Gilbert Elliott was a distinguished colonist in Queensland, and had spent much of his life in service of the community. Born into the Elliott baronetage at Stobs, Roxburghshire in 1796, Elliott served in the Royal Artillery as a young man. In 1839 he arrived in Sydney with his wife Isabella Lucy and children, and occupied a variety of posts including Police Magistrate at Parramatta and Commissioner of the City of Sydney. In 1858 Elliott acquired *Yenda* station at Wide Bay, and the following year he represented the Burnett district in the NSW Legislative Assembly.¹⁶

After Queensland’s separation from NSW in 1859, Elliott was elected member for Wide Bay in the Queensland Legislative Assembly, and was unanimously appointed Speaker. He served in this position until his retirement in 1870 without missing a sitting. Upon his retirement, Elliott was allocated an annual pension of £400 for life, and was appointed to Queensland’s Legislative Council.¹⁷ He continued to maintain an office in Parliament House after his retirement, and was appointed a Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George (CMG) in 1871.¹⁸

On 30 June 1871, Elliott died suddenly from *angina pectoris* at his son’s residence in Toowoomba.¹⁹ Just days after Elliott’s death, *The Brisbane Courier* called for the portrait, which remained in the late Speaker’s office in Queensland’s new Parliament House on George Street, Brisbane, to be reframed at public expense.²⁰ It appears that this suggestion was noted; in 1872 William Henry Groom

3
Unknown
photographer,
*Queensland
Parliamentary
Library* c. 1910.
Elliott’s portrait
hangs above the
fireplace, in its
original state.
Image provided by
the Queensland
Parliamentary
Library

proposed a motion to the Parliament for the allocation of £200 to erect a monument and a further £25 to reframe and hang the portrait in commemoration of Elliott's dedicated service to the Parliament.²¹

The Parliamentary debate reveals contemporary opinions on the work. Colonial Secretary Arthur Hunter Palmer described the work as a 'daub'; Opposition Leader Charles Lilley agreed. George Edmondstone noted a letter from former Premier Sir Robert Mackenzie that described the work as a 'most carefully painted picture and correct likeness'.²² A number of members protested the motion on the basis that the work was legally the possession of the Elliott family, though the family held no claim to the work. After deliberation, the motion was carried, the Parliament divided 13 ayes and 10 noes.²³

Elliott's portrait was mounted in a large gilt frame, the size of the work originally being close to 275 x 215 cm. Later, the work was subject to significant cropping, which reduced the image to its present size of approximately 90 x 74 cm. Today the work is mounted in a gilt wood and gesso frame, and forms a part of the Queensland Parliament's art collection.

Joseph Backler's portrait of the Hon. Gilbert Elliott, CMG holds special significance to Queensland heritage. The work is one of the earliest representations of a political figure in Queensland, and is one of only a few identified examples of Backler's work from his residencies throughout Queensland. The work is a fine 'national portrait' in the Queensland Parliament's art collection, and suitably remembers the distinguished service that Elliott gave to the young Queensland and its Parliament.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to the staff at Parliament House, Queensland, particularly the efforts of Joe Begley, Office of the Speaker, for assistance with access to the portrait and its photography, and the provision of historic material pertaining to the work. Special thanks to Dr Brian Hirschfeld, who generously shared information about his ancestor, the Hon. Gilbert Elliott CMG.

... **Timothy Roberts** is a researcher of Australian colonial heritage and decorative arts. He lives in Brisbane. He can be contacted at timothyroberts@hotmail.com

Notes

- 1 Eve Buscombe, *Artists in early Australia and their portraits: a guide to the portrait painters of early Australia with special reference to colonial New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land to 1850 with detailed biographies, catalogues of works and sources of Australian portraiture*, Eureka Press, Sydney, 1979, 89.
- 2 *Sydney Gazette*, Tue 27 Mar 1832, 5.
- 3 *Sydney Gazette*, Thurs 6 June 1833, 1.
- 4 Eve Buscombe, *op cit*, 90.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 91. Backler's ticket-of-leave was initially for the Port Macquarie area, and extended to Sydney in 1843.
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*Robert Prenzel (1866-1941), pair of finely
detailed carved plaques of an Aboriginal man
& woman, circa 1936-37.
Size including frame 60 x 50 cm*



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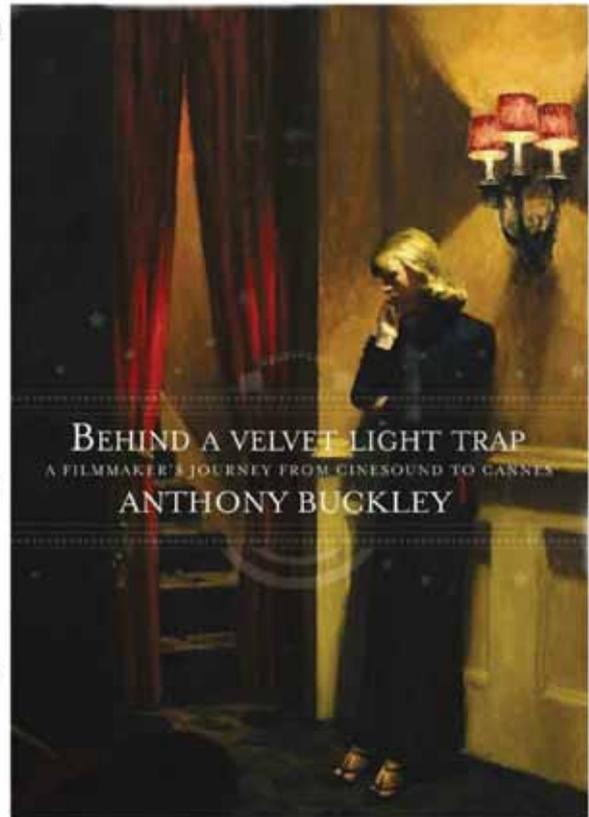
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1

Anglo-Indian
campaign
sideboard, cedar
and brass,
104 x 189 x
53.5 cm, c. 1840.
The Australiana
Fund, purchased
1979 (1979.14)

An *Anglo-Indian* sideboard

Michel Reymond traces the history of a sideboard found in Tasmania, once thought to be Australian colonial, but recently re-assessed as an Anglo-Indian import.

MICHEL REYMOND

Between May and August 2003, a sideboard owned by The Australiana Fund was exhibited in the *India, China, Australia Trade and Society 1788-1850* exhibition held at the Museum of Sydney (plate 1).

Description

The sideboard is made of cedar and consists of two cellarettes, with opening tops, each standing on four tapering reeded legs having brass ferrules or collars to their tops (which unscrew), with block feet fitted with brass castors. The two cellarettes, each of which has ebony inlaid escutcheons shaped like fish with

strange antennae similar to Chinese mother-of-pearl gaming counters, are joined with a simple shaped backboard and centre top beneath which is a frieze drawer.

Alterations

The sideboard appears to have been altered in the following ways:

- the whole of the frieze drawer, including the top, is a later addition (probably first half of 20th century) entirely made up of different pieces of cedar, replacing a simple removable shelf;
- the shaped backboard is now fixed in place with a piece of cedar located behind it. Originally it would have been a single, shaped backboard. It is probably the original but has been shortened, probably by between 7 to 15 cm at both ends;
- originally the centre section between the two cellarettes would have been wider by between about 15 to 30 cm.

Provenance

The Australiana Fund purchased this sideboard from Sydney dealer Frank McDonald in June 1979. At the time it was sold as an Australian colonial cedar sideboard c 1820-25. However in the course of research for the 2003 exhibition, the Fund's sideboard was identified as of Anglo-Indian origin, made in the campaign style: ie portable and readily demountable for travel or for fitting up of a ship's cabin, dating to the first half of the 19th century.

The sideboard exhibits Anglo-Indian characteristics in its use of brass, the whimsical ebony fish-shaped escutcheons, and the more bulbous reeded legs not carefully matched nor as uniform in detail as those found on similar Australian colonial-made pieces. A detailed consideration of this sideboard and another almost identical example appears in *India, China, Australia Trade and Society 1788-1850*, pages 101-104.

In 1972, the Fund's sideboard was part of a collection of colonial furniture at *Woodstock*, Longford, Tasmania, the property of Mr and Mrs T H Headlam. When Kevin Fahy was writing his first book (*Early Colonial Furniture in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land*), he visited Woodstock in about 1970. He remembered seeing the Oatley dwarf long case clock illustrated in plate 69 of this book, and a number of books bearing the signature of

Governor Macquarie. He did not remember seeing this sideboard nor seeing any significant colonial furniture there, and thought he and his co-authors called merely to see and photograph the clock. Kevin had no memory of going through the house itself.

Mrs Headlam was originally Miss Marjorie Alice Hulme, who married a Charles F Ludowici in 1928. After his death, in 1948 she married John Macquarie Christian Antill (1903-1954), a great-grandson of Major Antill, New York born, who served in India with the British Army between 1796 and 1807, when he became associated with Captain (later Governor) Macquarie. Together they sailed to Sydney in December 1809 where Antill served as Macquarie's aide-de-camp. After Macquarie returned to Britain in 1822 and Antill retired from the army, he settled in 1825 on his estate near Picton which he named *Jarvisfield*, where he died in 1852.

After the death in 1954 of John Macquarie Christian Antill, his widow married Tasman Hugh Headlam of *Woodstock*, Longford, Tasmania. In 1972, Mr and Mrs Headlam sold the sideboard to Frank McDonald of 30 Victoria Street, Potts Point NSW. McDonald later consigned the sideboard to auction at Christie's in Sydney on 4 October 1974, where it was illustrated in a full page photograph and described as follows:

335 A rare Australian cedar sideboard of rectangular outline fitted with a central long drawer flanked by deep panelled cupboards of square section opening upwards and united by a shaped gallery with carved scroll cresting, standing on slender tapering fluted legs with brass collars, the block feet with brass castors
73½in. (186.5cm) wide, circa 1840
See plate 17

It was apparently passed in at this auction, after bidding reached \$2,400.

In 1979, McDonald offered the sideboard to the Australiana Fund, which bought it in June 1979. Subsequently, Leslie Walford featured and illustrated the sideboard in an article appearing in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 30 November 1979.

Previously, it was thought the sideboard may have come through the Antill family because of Mrs Headlam's earlier marriage to J M C Antill.



2

Anglo-Indian campaign sideboard, India, early 19th century. Teak, 995 x 2212 x 503 mm, private collection, Adelaide. From *India, China, Australia Trade and Society 1788-1850*, pl. 47

However, it seems this was not the case.

When J M C Antill died in 1954, the inventory in his estate did not mention the sideboard. While this is not necessarily conclusive, I subsequently spoke with J M C Antill's son, Michael John Macquarie Antill of Bellevue Hill on 14 August 2003 and met him at a function at the Museum of Sydney on 15 August 2003. He told me he was reasonably certain the sideboard was never in his father's possession nor at *Jarvisfield* which he said had little cedar furniture in it when he knew it.

Under his father's will, his stepmother inherited everything except for a piece of furniture specifically left to him. He remembered the dwarf case Oatley clock in his father's home and said he believed that it came from *Jarvisfield*.

Neither the Oatley clock nor the books seen by Kevin Fahy were listed in the inventory of J M C Antill's estate, suggesting his stepmother already 'owned' them. Michael Antill thought the sideboard probably belonged to the Headlam family and came through that connection. All of this suggests that the sideboard probably was in the Headlam family when Mrs Antill married Mr Headlam, or they acquired it in Tasmania after they married.

Significantly, when the Fund purchased the sideboard in 1979, the provenance for the sideboard was referred to as the property of Mr and Mrs Headlam, while the provenance of the Oatley dwarf case clock in Kevin Fahy's first book is given as the property of *Mrs* HT Headlam (emphasis added). In addition, the similar Anglo Indian sideboard illustrated in

India, China, Australia Trade and Society 1788-1850 plate 43 at page 104, lent from a private Adelaide collection (**plate 2**), is believed to have come originally from Tasmania. That sideboard was exhibited at The National Trust of South Australia Antique Exhibition held at the Adelaide Town Hall between 10 and 13 May 1960. It was described in that exhibition catalogue (page 11) as 'Sideboard. Designed for easy removal, the shelf detaches from the boxes and the legs unscrew. Indian, Teak. c 1840 [lent by] Mr Peter Morgan.'

... **Michel Reymond** is a Sydney solicitor and former President of the Australiana Society who enjoys researching Australiana

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- Interviews with Michael John Macquarie Antill and the late Kevin Fahy AM August 2003

Acknowledgment

I am indebted to Dr James Broadbent, the late Kevin Fahy AM and Sonya Abbey for their kind assistance in the preparation of this article, which was originally compiled in October 2004.

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1



2



3



Enterprising women studio artists:

The Misses Creeth

Eastern states collectors need to be reminded that Western Australia has an impressive artistic legacy and a vibrant present and future that is intimately linked to the rest of Australia. Historian and internationally renowned jeweller Dr Dorothy Erickson charts the careers of two sisters who made a living by producing works of art in Western Australia a century ago.

DOROTHY ERICKSON

The Cinderella colony of Western Australia was a vibrant place in the first decade of the 20th century. The citizens commenced the new century confident of future achievement. The economy was booming. International communication was open. A constant movement of people between countries occasioned by the gold rushes promised artistic growth. Progress in art education was capped by international awards when J. W. R. Linton's students at Perth Technical School received a Diploma of Honour and the Grand Prix in the Franco-British Exhibition of 1908. Perth was on its way to becoming, as William Moore described it later, the third art centre in Australia.

Western Australia was remote enough, and to a certain extent exclusive enough, to develop along the lines that suited it. The west coast continued its traditional orientation as an outpost of Europe rather than a satellite of eastern Australia. The citizens concerned themselves with local issues and looked toward the international arena. Many of these people were newcomers to the colony who, in the normal course of events, would not have considered migrating to such an isolated outpost.

Some came for health reasons — attracted by a climate beneficial to tuberculosis sufferers. Others came for business opportunities, drawn to a colony that had escaped the depression of the 1890s. They found a capital city that had begun to bloom with new buildings and even amenities in advance of older centres.

Artistic activity was dominated by immigrants who had trained in Europe and retained strong ties via art magazines, which proliferated from the 1890s. British magazines: *The Studio*, *The Art Journal*, *The Connoisseur*,¹ *The Magazine of Art* and *The Artist*, were advertised in the Society of Arts' catalogues and available at E.S. Wigg and Son, in Perth.² These magazines supplied the needs of the diverse participants in the contemporary art movements, the collector, the professional artist, the semi-professional and the amateur.



Younger artists were particularly attracted to the Domestic Art Movement — a term which conveniently covered the modern Art Nouveau as well as the older Aesthetic cult of Japan and Queen Anne, by then inextricably confused with the historicism of William Morris's 'Arts and Crafts'. The young were building their homes. Before 1914, members of the West Australian Society of Arts consisted mainly of the upper echelons of society: the Government House circle, establishment families, English and Europeans with art and architectural training, professional people and some wealthy merchants.

Artwork had become a fashionable occupation for unmarried gentlewomen in the late 19th century and a number of Western Australian residents set up as artists with their own studios and art schools. The women's movement had encouraged women to expand beyond their traditional art forms of embroidery and painting and so the products of the studios were diverse, encompassing china painting, leatherwork, pottery, woodcarving, photography and pyrography.

If there was protest it was covert rather than overt — the women expressing feminist sentiments by being modern and artistic. May Gibbs poked fun at the conventional stereotypes in her cartoons. Others, such as Bessie Rischbieth and Mattie Furphy, beat metal. These feminists were gentlewomen but strong in their own way and in the vanguard of women's affairs from an early date. The

1-3

May Creeth (1854–1947), Three paintings of Western Australian wildflowers, *Hovea*, *Verticordia* and *Hibbertia*. Panel size 28 x 11 cm. George collection, Perth

4

Glasgow International Exhibition 1902. May Creeth's paintings are the panels at the top. The inscription is in French as they had previously been shown at the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1900

5a-b

May Creeth (1854–1947),
porcelain pin box c.1902-
1910 painted with
Anigozanthus manglesii
(kangaroo paw).
Thomson collection



6

May Creeth (1854–1947),
Tête-a-tête set painted
with *Leschenaultia biloba*
on German china blanks.
Significantly the 'Made
in Germany' has been
painted over on all but
the tray, placing the work
during WWI.
Rogers Collection, Perth



first professional women's club in Australia, the Karrakatta Club, formed in Perth in 1894 for 'mutual improvement and social intercourse', had the arts as one of its four major streams of endeavour.³ Margaret Forrest, one of the prime movers in the Society of Arts was also a foundation member of the Karrakatta Club.

Kate O'Connor, May Gibbs, Marie Tuck and Florence Fuller are well known outside Western Australia but there were others too. Miniaturist Annie Andrews, art-teacher Miss M. A. Bailey and painter and interior designer Daisy Rossi had studios in St George's Terrace with craft-worker Kitty Armstrong nearby in Malcolm Street and Annie Dorrington, a designer of the Australian flag, in Bazaar Terrace. Marie Tuck was in Wellington Street. Flora Le Cornu was in Midland Junction and later (as Flora Landells) in Maylands. Cecil Ross, painter and teacher (later Mrs Egleton), was in Claremont. Painter and embroiderer Loui Benham, wildflower painter Janie Craig and teacher and sketcher Henrietta Finnerty set up in Fremantle, though Benham later moved her studio to Perth. Augusta (Gussie) McKail had her school in Albany.

These were independent women who made a career of their art with many also teaching. As social pressure in Perth was still against married women having careers, only the really strong willed such as Gussie McKail, Janie Craig (Mrs Webster), Flora Landells and Daisy Rossi (Mrs Temple Poole) prevailed. By 1911, Western Australia had more professional women

and more servants per head of population than elsewhere in Australia. The availability of servants allowed a greater proportion of local women the time to pursue careers or engage in artistic activities.

Two career artists who deserve to be better known were May Creeth (Mary Elizabeth 1854–1947) and her sister Helen (Margaret Helena 1859–1941). They were the daughters of a Quaker, Margaret Grubb Beale from Mountmellick in County Laois, Ireland and her husband William James Creeth. Margaret was apparently skilled in china painting. William and Margaret emigrated to Victoria in 1853 where her parents were by this time established. May, Helen and their brother Richard were born in Victoria where the family became successful merchants and mining entrepreneurs. The women had Beale relations in Ireland, NSW, New Zealand, South Australia and Tasmania, places May was to depict in her paintings, as well as a Creeth cousin in Perth.

Both women trained in art at the South Kensington Schools (now Royal College of Art) in London. Many of the graduates of South Kensington became teachers of art, setting up in opposition to their former lecturers. May apparently won medals at the Art School as she advertised in the West Australian Society of Arts Catalogue of 1898, 'Miss Creeth Prize medalist and student of South Kensington – classes for drawing and painting St George's Studio, West Australian Chambers, St George's Terrace Perth,



7

7a

The front of a postcard showing the display in May Creeth's new studio in Colonial Mutual Chambers, St Georges Terrace, Perth 1906.

7b

The back of May Creeth's postcard to her student May Walker in Bunbury

8

May Creeth (1854–1947), Spider Orchid, Swan River Daisy, Geraldton Wax, Cowslip Orchid, Kangaroo Paw and *Hibbertia*, 1914, There is no brand on the porcelain but the Latin and common names are both written on the verso. Thomson collection, Perth

commissions for paintings executed.' She arrived in Western Australia mid-1898 or earlier, to join her brother who had arrived at the height of the gold rushes in 1896. May and Helen were apparently of independent means and resided in fashionable West Perth.

May opened a studio in St George's Chambers in 1898 but confusingly a month later advertised 'Hillcrest Ladies College, Emerald Hill Terrace. Classes will reassemble as usual Monday September 12. M. E. Creeth.' So perhaps she had arrived earlier and had taught there before.

May was soon exhibiting her work. She had a display at the WA Wildflowers Seventh Annual Exhibition held in the Perth Town Hall in August. An article in the *West Australian* August 24 1898, stated

Miss Creeth must indeed have been industrious as well as much travelled to produce so much and so varied work. ... There are scenes from Victoria, New South Wales, Tasmania, New Zealand, Great Britain, France and Italy. Miss Creeth mentioned that she hoped soon to have



8

9
Helen Creeth (1859–1941),
Moonlight on Lake Monger, oil on
canvas. Rogers collection, Perth

10
Helen Creeth (1859–1941),
European hard-paste porcelain
vase painted overglaze with
Hardenbergia comptonia and
gilding, c. 1910, h 18 cm The
delicate purple Native Wisteria
trails over a creamy bulbous base,
in striking contrast to the gold and
black-rimmed neck. Collection:
State Art Collection Art Gallery
of Western Australia, Perth,
purchased 1985

11
Helen Creeth (1859–1941), plate
painted with the striking *Grevillea
wilsonii*. Thomson collection

some local views of the Swan, Guildford and other surrounding beauty spots which she much admires ... "

The article goes on to discuss 'A new branch of art is the modelling and painting which must be seen to be admired. ... there are also figurines and animals which demand attention', suggesting that perhaps she had some painted 'slip-cast wares' completed elsewhere on display.

A reviewer of the 1898 exhibition held by the WA Society of Arts remarked that

'Violets' by Miss M. E. Creeth was a most natural looking group of violets, just plucked, seemingly, and thrown carelessly on to the panel they adorned. 'Wildflowers' by the same author, was also very beautiful.

May was one of a number of award winners at the Coolgardie Industrial Exhibition of 1899. She exhibited with other artists such as Valentine Delawarr, in an exhibition at Bickfords Furniture Warehouse where the upper floors were set out as rooms and the pictures were hung on the walls. The following year she held an Art Union at Bickfords. By February 1899, advertisements in *The West Australian* read 'Drawing and Painting. Miss Creeth's classes meet daily at the studio. WA Chambers, St George's Terrace. Outdoor classes for Sketching. Terms at Wigg & Sons. Commissions for Painting executed.'

A member of the local press visited her studio and recorded

I was ... very much struck with the beautifully painted panels of the wild flowers of the colony. Each flower is painted on a separate panel, and thus its beauties of flower and foliage are seen to a much better advantage than if a number of different sorts are grouped together. ... over a hundred different specimens which Miss Creeth has collected, and of which she has made paintings so true to nature that it is very easy to imagine that the flower itself is flung carelessly on the canvas. Miss Creeth gives lessons in painting, not only of flowers but of landscapes, of which she has several cleverly executed ones in her studio ... She is in her studio every day and all day, except Monday mornings and Saturday afternoons.





12a



12b

Author Peter Cowan tells us she

Painted a collection said to number some six hundred varieties of native flowers. She was assisted in naming them by the Government botanist Dr Morrison. ... the native flowers even got onto ceramics, when Miss Creeth imported what was said to be the first studio kiln. The china was popular and distributed widely. Perth did have considerable activity and enthusiasm in the arts in those years, perhaps more widespread than could be found later.

Miss Creeth had met Dr Morrison at the Royal Society, where she was later a councillor.

In 1900 fourteen of May's wildflower paintings (plates 1 – 3), together with thirty from Lady Forrest and seventy from Dircksey Cowan, Annie Dorrington, May Gibbs, Etta Finnerty, Gertrude Ford, Mrs E. Hardy, Mrs W. C. Thomas and Mr J. S. Anderson, were shown in the Western Australian pavilion at the Paris Exposition Universelle, and later sent to the Glasgow International Exhibition of 1902 (plate 4). Wildflowers, of which there are over 14,000 endemic to Western Australia, have always been identified as a particularly Western Australian subject. A long tradition of painting them has endured. This is not merely a legacy of the 19th century interest in botany but an assertion of local identity.

May visited Helen in Sydney in 1900 and apparently imported a kiln for firing painting on china, which arrived about 1902. She commenced decorating china with images of the native flowers that fascinated her. One of the earliest pieces known is a lovely little pin box decorated with Western Australia's state emblem the kangaroo paw *Anigozanthos manglesii* (plate 5). She was also



13

12 a-b

Two kangaroo paw brooches. That on the left in the silver surround is by Helen. The one on the right in the gold bezel is by May. George and Rogers collections

13

May Creeth (1854–1947), brooches featuring spider orchids, boronia, Leschenaultia biloba and a kookaburra – an introduced species – and a novelty in WA. Rogers and George collections



14



15



16



17

14
May Creeth (1854–1947), teapot, jug, sugar bowl and creamer c 1910. Recently acquired by the National Gallery of Australia together with a set of six cups, plates and saucers painted by Helen to match

15
Helen Creeth (1859–1941), sweetmeat dish. Thomson collection

16-17
Vases by Helen and May Creeth c.1910. Thomson collection

attracted to the bright blue *Leschenaultia biloba* and painted it often (**plate 6**).

May exhibited in the Adelaide Chamber of Manufactures Exhibition in 1905. The *Adelaide Advertiser* reported that 'Miss Mary E. Creeth shows some instructive studies in wild flowers, mostly Western Australian, which are executed with considerable skill.'⁴ By 1906 May had moved her studio down St George's Terrace to the Colonial Mutual Chambers, advertising that she taught oils, watercolours, china painting, pyrography and photography (**plate 7**). May apparently ran a china painting supplies outlet here as well. She sent out postcards to her friends and students to alert them to the change of address. She also fired the work of the students and others to at least 1930.

Helen is recorded as teaching in Sydney in 1893, which she continued to do until about 1910 when she joined her sister in Perth and in 1914 had a studio at 104 St George's Terrace. Her real name was Margaret Helena but she was known as Helen. Helen was a painter, china painter, teacher and photographer. They lived in various places near the city, Bagot Road, Subiaco and in West Perth in what is now Parliament Place. Both sisters were accomplished china painters. A beautiful vase by Helen Creeth is in the collection of the Art Gallery of Western Australia (**plate 10**). This has delicate purple Native Wisteria – *Hardenbergia comptonia* trailing over a creamy bulbous base in striking contrast to the gold and black-rimmed neck.

The Misses Creeth also painted wildflowers on porcelain plaques that were then set in gold to be worn as brooches. The metal surrounds were usually made by the commercial firms of Levinson & Sons, J C Taylor or Caris Bros.

May was a councillor of the Royal Society of W.A. in 1920-22 and gave one of the speeches at the tribute to the first woman in parliament in Australia, Edith Cowan, when she lost her seat in 1924. Which arena of Cowan's endeavour intersected with hers is not known. They may have both been involved in saving part of Kings Park from the proposal to build a hospital as a memorial for war veterans, however as they lived near the park a few hundred metres from each other there could have been a social interaction. May rarely exhibited with the West Australian Society of Arts however she exhibited china painting as well as oil paintings of wildflowers in 1926.

Her students included Debra Brockman (later Lady Hackett), Dr Buller Murphy, a young lady

married to a much older influential citizen who was the owner of the *West Australian* newspaper etc and patron of the WA Society of Arts, Marion Holmes wife of the Manager of the Western Australian Bank, Flora Le Cornu (Mrs Landells), Eugene M. Menz who came to Western Australia after her marriage and Rose Carey (Mrs Walker) a prominent solicitor's wife of Bunbury. Marion Holmes may have learnt her pyrography skills here too. Of these only Flora was a professional artist.

By 1935, the Misses Creeth were semi-retired in Outram Street, West Perth and the studio and artists' supply shop was taken over by china painter Helen Walker from Sydney to become the Haidi Studio. Helen and May moved to Churchill Avenue, Subiaco where they owned other property. Helen died on 8 April 1941, while May died in Subiaco on 22 September 1947.

They have been virtually forgotten as neither of the sisters nor their brother married, so there has been no one to promote their legacy. The beautiful vase in the Art Gallery of Western Australia collection inspired me to find what little I could of their story. There is much more to tell which will no doubt be uncovered when 20th century copies of the *West Australian* are available to search on line.

∴ **Dr Dorothy Erickson** is an historical researcher and world-renowned contemporary jeweller based in Perth WA. Her latest book is ∴ *Gold and Silversmithing in Western Australia: a History*, published by UWA Press.

Collections

Helen is represented in AGWA, WA Museum, NGA; May in the Holmes à Court Collection, NGA, WA Museum, reputedly Battye Library.

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- Peter Cowan, *A Unique Position*. Perth, UWA Press 1978, pp. 98-9.
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- *West Australian* 23 & 24 August, 6 Oct, 6, 7 & 24 Dec 1898; 14 Jan, 8 Feb, 22 April, 14, 15, 16, 18 Dec 1899.
- *Western Mail* Christmas Number 1899, p. 87-88, article by E. J. Bickford illustrated by Miss Creeth et al.
- RWAHS Photographic Collection L6 7185.

Notes

- 1 J. W. R. Linton's brother-in-law, Granville Fell, was the editor.
- 2 Advertisements in the West Australian Society of Arts' catalogues.
- 3 Margaret Forrest was in charge of arts, Lady Gwenyfred James of health. *Karrakatta Club Incorporated: History 1894-1954*, Imperial Printing Co., Perth, 1955, pp. 6, 10.
- 4 *Adelaide Advertiser* 22 March 1905, p. 5.



18



19



20

18 19

May Walker, jug featuring *stylidium*s (trigger plants), and caladenia purple enamel orchids on English Tuscan china c.1912. Rogers collection

20

Flora Landells (1888-1981), bowl painted with Glasgow roses c.1913. Family collection

21

Eugene Menz, blue wren brooch. Private collection



21

Morris Castle,

Sydney cabinet maker: his addresses and neighbours

Morris Castle the cabinet maker was the subject of an interesting pioneer article by David Kelly in the November 2009 issue of *Australiana*. Now Michel Reymond provides further information on Castle and his furniture billhead, as well as his neighbours and the buildings he and his neighbours may have occupied.

MICHEL REYMOND

Just 16 days after arriving in Sydney on 9 February 1830, Morris Castle (c 1809–1863) advertised in the *Sydney Gazette* that he had ‘... opened a Manufactory ... at 118 Pitt-Street, next door to Mr DAWES’ store’.¹ William Dawes was a Sydney merchant who owned a property (lot 2) on the eastern side of Pitt Street next to a property (lot 1) on the corner of Pitt and Hunter Streets, upon which the Union Bank of Australia would be built in 1839–40 (plate 1). Castle’s first ‘Manufactory’ would, I suggest, have been located either to the immediate north or south of Dawes’ property.

Street numbers

No study has yet been made and no history written on how and when street numbering came about in the City of Sydney, nor when and why the numbering changed at various times during the 19th century.

When Governor King arrived in 1800, he found Sydney’s buildings were erratically numbered so he ordered that they all be renumbered. But

1

Union Bank of Australia, Cnr Hunter & Pitt Streets, Sydney; next door in Pitt Street William Dawes’ property, beyond Vickerys Chambers.
Holtermann photo c1873-74, National Library of Australia, NL10353



street numbering was probably more regularised after Sydney's first postmaster, Isaac Nichols, was appointed in 1809. From the late 1820s to at least 1840, the western side of Castlereagh Street between King and Market Streets had both odd and even numbers on the same side of the street.² How this worked on the other side within the same block is unknown.

Given the existence of this system here, it probably also existed in Pitt Street between King and Hunter Streets, where Castle's building has been identified (**plate 3**). As has been seen elsewhere, changes in street numbers did not necessarily mean a person had moved.³ We need to reconsider what information the directories and other sources reveal about Castle, his locations and neighbours.

Directories

Directories with alphabetical lists of persons in Sydney were first published in 1832 and then for the years 1833 to 1837 and 1839. Thereafter, they were published in 1843, for 1844–45, 1847 and 1851. The next directories appeared in 1855, 1857, and with the *Sands' Directory* of 1858–9, were published almost every year thereafter until 1932.

Castle is not listed in the 1832 *Directory*.⁴ His omission may have been accidental, for he is listed (as 'Castles') in the 1833 *Directory* at 85 Pitt Street.⁵ This would indicate that he was at this address some time during the course of 1832, as directories were normally published around January of the year they covered (or the preceding December). He is again recorded at 85 Pitt Street for the year 1834.⁶

On 10 October 1834, *The Australian* noted that among the list of 'public house licences' transferred 'at the Police Office on Tuesday last' were 'the Three Horse-Shoes in Pitt-Street from Mrs Williams to Morris Castle'.⁷ On 27 October 1834, a £2 licence 'to Retail Wines and Malt and Spirituous Liquors' was issued in favour of 'Maurice Castles for the House known by the Sign of the Three Horse Shoes, Parramatta Road', it being noted at the time that 'Maurice Castles' had delivered up the licence for 'the House' with the same name in Pitt Street.⁸ I suggest this was a transfer of the licence from Pitt Street to Parramatta Road; and that the latter was a reference to Parramatta Street, which at this time was a continuation of George Street from present day Harris Street to City Road, an area now known as Broadway.⁹

Exactly where this hotel was located has not been identified, but we do know from the directories for 1835 to 1837 that Castle, while listed in 'Parramatta Road', continued to be described as a 'cabinetmaker'.¹⁰ Castle is not listed at any other address during this period.¹¹

The name 'Maurice Castles' is a mis-spelling for Morris Castle. No 'Maurice Castles' is recorded in the 1830s or 1840s directories, and his name was mis-spelt on many occasions during his lifetime, including in his legally made will.¹² It was common in the 19th century and earlier, when literacy levels were not high, for a person's name to be spelt in different ways.

The location of 85 Pitt Street has not been identified, but it is possible it was somewhere between King and Hunter Streets, and could well have been 'next door to Mr DAWES'.

2 Fowles, *Sydney in 1848*, opposite page 40

3 Fowles, *Sydney in 1848*, opposite page 41





4

'Metropolitan Hotel / J Hampton / Pitt Street / Sydney', engraving in James Dowling, *Billheads and Curiosities*, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW, CY1795

No directory was published for 1838. A 'James Castles' cabinet maker of Pitt Street North appears in the 1839 directory.¹³ No person of this name is recorded in the previous directories or afterwards during the 1840s; the reference to James Castles is most likely a mistake and is in fact a reference to Morris Castle, who is recorded in the next directory in 1843, again in 1844–45 and in 1847, on each occasion being described as a 'cabinetmaker' in Pitt Street.¹⁴ While Castle continued to be listed as a cabinet maker in 'Parramatta Road' though presumably still operating a hotel, he ceased operating his hotel and returned to his Pitt Street cabinet making business, most likely to the building illustrated in Joseph Fowles'

Sydney in 1848, sometime during 1838.¹⁵

All of these directory entries suggest Castle continued his cabinet making business during the 1840s, after which as we shall see his occupation changes. However, the City of Sydney rate assessment books reveal a different picture about his premises during the 1840s.

City of Sydney Rate Books

At this time, council rates were levied on the person in occupation, not the property owner. The rate assessment books for the relevant ward for this section of Pitt Street were written up for the years 1844, 1845, 1848 and 1851. They reveal the following:

Year	Street number	Person rated	Description
1844	None shown	Castle & Wade	Dwelling, Store and Shop
1845	None shown	H Castles	House, wood, shingled, workshop in rear in perfect ruins
1848	736	Morris Castle	House, wood, shingled - untenantable
1851	None shown	Maurice Castle	House, brick, shingled ¹⁶

All of these entries refer to Morris Castle. In the next directory, 1851, Castle is described as 'agent' at 349 Pitt Street, while John Hosking is at 351 Pitt Street (to the north), and according to the rate books, William Bland, surgeon, is next door (to the south) in a house also illustrated in Fowles (**plate 3**).¹⁷

From 1851 until his death on 15 November 1863, Castle appears in the directories as agent, commission agent and builder.¹⁸ During this time, he occupies various buildings on Hosking's Pitt Street property including the one with his name on it (**plate 3**).

Further references to Castle appear in newspapers during 1842-45; he is listed as having a house and shop in Pitt Street in September 1842; as being 'next door to Dr Bland' in August 1844; and as agent for George Fitchett in October 1844.¹⁹

Fowles' *Sydney in 1848*

Joseph Fowles' publication describes the buildings on the eastern side of Pitt Street between Hunter and King Streets in 1848 as follows:

Adjoining Mr Alexander's Coach Establishment and Livery Stables ... is the Office of the 'Australian Sportsman', ... The next house is the residence of Dr Bland, ... [**plate 3**]. A few yards further is the residence of John Hosking, Esq, (first Mayor of Sydney) [**plate 3**] ... A fine row of brick houses ... known as Terrys Buildings, ...' (**plate 3**),

then

We arrive at the Union Bank of Australia (**plate 2**).²⁰

From Fowles' description, we learn that the building inscribed 'M Castle' is located between the houses of Hosking and Bland; all were located on the eastern side of Pitt Street between Hunter and King Streets. Both Bland and Hosking are referred to in the directories which, together with information gleaned from survey plans, rate assessment books and other sources, enable identification of the building which Castle occupied.

John Hosking

John Hosking Junior (1806—1882), arrived in Sydney in December 1825, having received a

land grant in the previous June, no doubt due to his father's influence and prior residence in the Colony with his entire family. A person with 'capital', Hosking quickly established himself as a successful merchant and on 16 June 1829 he married Martha Foxlow Terry, daughter of Samuel Terry, later described as the 'Botany Bay Rothschild'. Hosking went into partnership with John Terry Hughes and the firm became known as Hughes & Hosking, a Sydney mercantile house, which rose rapidly in prosperity during the 1830s economic boom.²¹

Upon her father's death in 1838, Martha inherited significant real estate holdings including two properties in Pitt Street (lots 7 and 8) upon which the two houses identified by Fowles were built, together with the building with Morris Castle's name on it (**plate 3**).²² These properties originally belonged to George Crossley (1749–1823) who, as a previously practising English attorney, was transported to Sydney in 1799, where he became a successful farmer, trader, money lender and lawyer.²³ Crossley built the Hosking house in about 1815 and the Bland one in about 1820²⁴ He lost both properties in 1821 to Samuel Terry, having defaulted on Terry's loan.²⁵

After their marriage, John and Martha Hosking lived in the Hosking house which Martha subsequently inherited, along with the property on which Bland's house was built.²⁶ Rosetta Terry, Samuel's widow, refers to both in a letter written in September 1839 where she stated her husband had said 'give Mrs Hosking her house[,] Blands House & the middle place' [Castle's building].²⁷

In 1842 Hosking was elected as a councillor for Bourke Ward in Sydney's first municipal elections and, at the council's first meeting, he was elected its first mayor, being described as 'plain, sound [with] practical good sense ... general popularity, amenity of manners and extensive private benevolence'.²⁸ In the same year, perhaps anticipating her husband's financial troubles, Martha transferred all her properties to trustees upon certain trusts.²⁹ In the following year when the firm of Hughes & Hosking went spectacularly insolvent, his political career came to an end; he became bankrupt, leading him to resign as mayor.³⁰

John and Martha Hosking both continued to live in the Hosking house until the end of 1852, later renting *Vauchuse House* in 1854, while the Wentworth family were overseas, then moving to *Carrara* at Rose Bay, which Martha purchased.³¹ In March 1853, the Hosking house was leased



5

FC Terry,
Dr Bland's House
in Pitt Street,
watercolour.
Dixson Collection,
State Library of
NSW, ZPe 205

and became Russell's Hotel, named after its first licensee, George Russell.³² From about 1857 it became the Metropolitan Hotel under the licensee John Hampton, until Stephen Butts took over as licensee, probably about March 1863.³³ It continued as a hotel under Butts, until the property was sold, subdivided into three lots, with all buildings including the Hosking house being demolished about 1869.³⁴ During Butts' time there was 'a spacious garden with tropical trees, arbour and seats a delightful cool retreat on the hottest day in summer' at the rear of the property.³⁵ Today the area where Hosking's and Castle's buildings once stood is occupied by the eastern side of the Pitt Street frontage of Martin Place.

Castle's building

From about 1838 until about 1849, Morris Castle occupied the building depicted in Fowles (**plate 3**), which was of weatherboard construction with a shingle roof. During this period, a prolonged economic depression began in 1841. Next year, Castle was advertising that he was acting as an

agent and I suggest his cabinet making business went into decline, as evidenced by the condition of this building as described in the council rate assessment books. During this decline he began a transition to other business activities. By 1851, he was described as 'commission agent', by 1854 'builder', and these occupations continued until his death in 1863.³⁶

By 1851, Castle had moved to a 'brickhouse' on Hosking's property (lot 7).³⁷ A subsequent engraving of Hosking's house (**plate 4**), drawn when it was a hotel, and dating to around 1855–60, shows a new separate building adjoining Hosking's house, which replaced the Castle building.³⁸ This new L-shaped building is depicted on subsequent plans as divided into multiple occupancies; it is likely the 'brickhouse' Castle was occupying was one of these.³⁹ The L-shaped building was probably built in stages from around 1850. When Hosking's house became a hotel in 1853, improvements were carried out later including a 'Tap, Billiard Room' in 1854–55 and these may be as shown in the front elevation of the engraving.⁴⁰

William Bland

William Bland (1789–1868) lived in the house to the south of Castle's building (plate 3). A doctor, he was also one of the colony's most respected emancipists, having been transported in 1814 for killing a man in a duel. Pardoned in 1815, Bland practised in Sydney and became a friend of, and cared for, the Terrys especially during the last four years of Samuel Terry's life.

Bland worked in the Dispensary located in Terry's Buildings (plate 3), in charitable and educational organisations that Samuel Terry was involved in, and was prominent with him in establishing emancipists' civil rights and trial by jury. Along with William Charles Wentworth and others, Bland was instrumental in bringing about constitutional government in New South Wales in 1856, and in that year presided over a celebratory dinner to mark the occasion, at which he received an ovation.⁴¹

Probably Bland's friendship with Terry, more than anything else, allowed him to continue to reside in the 'Bland' house from at least 1832 until the whole property (lot 8) was subdivided and sold off by Martha's trustees in February 1866, after which he lived elsewhere until his death on 21 July 1868.⁴²

A signed watercolour by F C Terry (1827–1869), which is neither dated or titled, contains an inscription in Sir William Dixon's writing, which reads 'Dr Bland's house in Pitt St / now site of Richardson & Wrench's Auction Rooms / Mr Butts (on horse back) afterwards had house as a hotel ...' (plate 5).⁴³ Unfortunately this is incorrect. The auction rooms referred to were located to the north, adjacent to Hosking's house, and Bland's house was never used as a hotel.

Had the inscription read 'Hosking's house in Pitt St', it might generally be correct and could date to 1866–68. Bland's house was demolished in 1866–67, thus the vacant land to the south would correspond to where his house had stood; the houses facing south shown in the painting's background correspond with those shown on the 1865 trigonometrical survey plan; Richardson & Wrench's two-storey auction rooms with gateway were to the north next door to Hosking's house; Butts was the licensee and the whole scene could easily have been painted from what at the time was vacant land opposite.⁴⁴

However the street elevation depicted in the watercolour of the building adjoining Hosking's house to the south does not correspond with that shown in the earlier engraving, nor does it



correspond with the street alignment or show the gateway to the hotels rear (both of which are shown on plans and in the engraving). Unless this engraving depicted something never built, or if built by this time, it had been demolished or altered to what is shown in this watercolour.

During the 1860s, Foxlow Place (later Street) was created between Castle's building and Bland's house, eventually linking Pitt with Castlereagh Street. This link later became St Martins Lane and then Moore Street, when it was re-named after a City Alderman who gave his name to Moore's Chambers, which was built on the site of Bland's house, in turn pulled down in 1913 to become part of the site of the Commonwealth Bank, which today fronts Martin Place and Pitt Street.

John Price, copperplate engraver

On Castle's furniture billhead (plate 6), 'Price Sc' appears, and this is likely to refer to John Price, an engraver, who arrived with his wife Mary Ann at Sydney from London via Hobart Town on board the *Ferguson* on 24 April 1838.⁴⁵ Price is subsequently recorded as an 'engraver' at several Sydney addresses between 1839 and 1844⁴⁶ and, with Castle's change of occupation during the 1840s, this billhead probably dates to 1838–1842.

Price worked for Raphael (Ralph) Clint (1797–1849), a Sydney lithographer, engraver, printer and surveyor, who set up shop in Sydney in 1835 following his arrival from Tasmania.⁴⁷ According to Kerr, Price publicly accused Clint of being unqualified as an engraver and printer in 1840, of not paying Price anything for three months when he was ill, of assaulting another of his printers, and driving him 'almost to madness' when he refused to reveal trade secrets.

In newspaper notices, Price claimed he did 'Engraving ... in a style of superiority quite unknown to Clint.' He also claimed that he had

6
William Moffitt,
*Specimens of
Engraved Business
and Visiting Cards,
Bank Notes, Cheque
Forms, Billheads, etc
c 1836-1880*, Mitchell
Library, State Library
of NSW, PXA 368.
Also in Fahy p 50

engraved the map in Major Mitchell's work which had Clint's name on it. Price's other claim, that he had a 'Ruling Machine' enabling him 'to execute designs that will prevent forgery and thereby give the necessary security to promissory notes, Bills of Exchange, etc' appears to have impressed the editor of *The Australian*. This gentleman further reported having seen a specimen of Price's engraving of an imitation bank note 'the execution of which is equal to anything of the kind from Europe' and which was 'superior to anything produced' in the colony.⁴⁸ All this was in the context at the time of widespread forgery of bank notes, promissory notes and other commercial paper.

Price's time with Clint seems to have had tragic consequences. Shortly afterwards, in October 1840, his wife Mary Ann died (aged 50) 'after a lengthened and painful illness'.⁴⁹ This was followed by Price's own death (aged 40) in July 1844 at 'his residence' in Pitt Street, 'sincerely regretted by all who knew him'.⁵⁰

Castle and his family

As we have seen, Castle's cabinet making business went into decline after the 1841 recession, and he then became an agent and builder. In contrast to his cabinet making venture, he seems to have prospered in these occupations, acquiring significant Sydney real estate holdings after 1853, unlike the decades before.⁵¹ He began his purchases in Woolloomooloo acquiring his own family terrace home (he did not own his home before) and a separate adjoining terrace in Bourke Street, as well as three terrace houses in Cathedral Street, four terraces in Oxford Street, Paddington together with a large rear land area, a hotel in Pyrmont and two

land parcels on the waterfront at Watson's Bay with elevated views to the city, on one of which he built a two-storey 12-room stone house with a stone coach house.⁵² He owned all of this real estate at his death aged 54 in November 1863.⁵³

He was survived by his widow Elizabeth, and their four children, Henry Edward (born 1834), Alfred William (born 1838), William Dudley (born 1841) and Albert Morris (born 1843).⁵⁴ Under his will, Castle created two trusts: one in favour of his wife for life and, after her death, a second in favour of his four named sons. This trust provided that, should any son die unmarried or marry but die leaving no children, then the deceased son's share was to be divided equally among the surviving sons.⁵⁵ This part of Castle's will could be interpreted in at least two ways.

The first interpretation was to consider the situation at the date of death of his widow, and see which sons survived her, and then divide the estate in accordance with Castle's will. The second interpretation was to ignore that date and wait until the last son died to see who had married and, if they did, if there were any children. In other words, until the sons married and had children and died, or died unmarried, the class of beneficiaries to benefit within the second trust, could not be determined under Castle's will, and it was this interpretation that was followed.⁵⁶

As only one son married but had no children, the consequence was that the last son alive inherited the entire estate. Whether Castle understood this possibility, let alone intended it, the result was his estate would continue for more than 70 years until the death of his last son in 1916, who, to complicate matters even further, died without a will having never married.⁵⁷ This resulted in a complete intestacy of not only his own estate but the estate he had inherited under his father's will.

Perhaps the complications which arose with Castle's will reflected his family's history after his death. Of Castle's four sons, two died bachelors, one married but had no children, while the third born went to America where he is assumed to have died unmarried.⁵⁸ Castle's wife survived him by nearly 36 years, leaving everything she owned to her two eldest sons and nothing to her two youngest, while Henry became embroiled in litigation with Alfred and Albert (both solicitors) concerning their father's will.⁵⁹ There may also have been brothers and sisters of Morris Castle in England and relatives on his wife's side.⁶⁰

7

Looking south-east towards Castle's house Sefton, next door to the south, Mandalay, Watson's Bay. Photograph : Holtermann photo c1874-75, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW, PXA 4998 / Box 57 No 271



Castle owned a significant amount of real estate at his death which then had an apparent insurance value of £4,000.⁶¹ At his last son's death in 1916, this was valued at just over £11,200 which, together with this son's real estate, gave a combined value of just over £20,600.⁶² Some idea of the purchasing power of £20,600 at the time can be seen from the sale of one half of the present Strand Arcade building (built 1892, which runs between George and Pitt Streets, Sydney), which was sold for £24,000 in 1922.⁶³

Over the last 30 years we have seen Sydney's residential real estate prices often increase by a factor of 10, in the last 10 years by a factor of 2 or 3. It is sobering then to consider how the prices of some of Castle's real estate fared. He paid £500 in 1854 for his two separate terraces in Bourke Street, Woolloomooloo.⁶⁴ They were resold 70 years later in 1924 for £1,000.⁶⁵ In 1860 he paid £82 10s each for two vacant waterfront blocks at Watson's Bay, Sydney, with elevated views to the city, on which he built a two-storey stone house containing 12 rooms with a stone coach house.⁶⁶ Both properties were resumed in 1921 for a Sydney Water pumping station for just under £1,200.⁶⁷ After building the station, Sydney Water demolished Castle's stone house and sold off half the total area in 1928 for £300, which was immediately resold for £425; this in turn was next resold with a new house on it in 1982 for \$255,000 (£127,500).⁶⁸

Of Castle's real estate, the only photograph so far discovered of a house he is most likely to have designed and built is his two-storey 12-room stone house at Watson's Bay (**plate 7**).⁶⁹ Built on land the purchase of which was completed on 1 September 1860, it is likely to have been constructed that year and certainly by the next.⁷⁰ Designed in the Italianate style, it has two fronts – an entrance front and an arcaded garden front with a decided colonial revival air, facing Sydney Harbour. The flanking matching two-storey corner-stone pavilions with pitched roof hats give it a unique feature, unknown in any other colonial house of the period (**plates 8 & 9**). This feature may give some credence to the suggestion about the unique furniture designs seen on Castle's billhead.

Conclusion

If Castle had not purchased real estate, died owning it, and had not made his complicated will, our knowledge of him and his family might never have been known.



As to whether some of Castle's work may have survived, it is possible Castle's neighbours, Hosking and Bland, may have purchased furniture from him and, if so, some of Castle's work may have survived in their families.⁷¹ As no known marked examples of Castle's furniture exist, any identification of his work might best be made on the basis of the designs appearing on his only known furniture billhead.

This research reveals that Castle's cabinet making activities were carried out over limited periods suggesting they were not financially successful, unlike others of the period such as Lenehan, Sly and Templeton. Within four years of arriving in Sydney, Castle found it necessary for whatever reason to venture into running a hotel (while still being listed as a cabinet maker). When he returned to Pitt Street, he subsequently found his cabinet making business severely affected by the prolonged 1841 depression, such that he went into agency and then building work, the latter activity perhaps reflecting his carpentry skills referred to on his billhead. In these latter activities he prospered financially.

For furniture historians, Castle is interesting for the statement in his advertisement that he worked at Gillows,⁷² the English furniture maker, and for the unusual furniture designs (assuming these are his own) that appear on his only known billhead. In the absence of any verification of these matters, Castle will remain of academic interest.

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8

Castle's house, Watson's Bay, c1869–71. Part of collection of Captain John Jenkins and his wife Joan, one of seven photos, National Library of Australia, AN 65753-4

Postscript: Probates and inventories in NSW

Before 1890 a deceased person's estate (for which probate or administration was applied for) did not include real estate. Instead, upon the death of a person before 1890, their real estate passed directly to the beneficiaries named in their will, or, if they died without a will, to the persons entitled under the laws of intestacy.⁷³ Derived from medieval ecclesiastical law, this position applied in the colony of New South Wales from its foundation in 1788 until 1890 when the law was changed.⁷⁴

When Morris Castle died in 1863 his estate was sworn for probate purposes as 'goods under the value of £1,000', yet his will also mentioned 'my Freehold Lands' without detailing them.⁷⁵ No inventory was found in his probate papers listing either his 'goods' or his 'Freehold Lands'.⁷⁶

Before about 1880, inventories detailing a deceased person's assets are rarely found in NSW probate papers. After the introduction of 'death duties', inventories were required to be separately prepared for the purposes of assessing the duty to be paid. Such inventories generally survive separately from about 1880 onwards.⁷⁷

Thus the value of a person's estate before 1890 may, in the absence of any inventory, not necessarily reflect that person's true worth at their death, and this is sometimes not appreciated by historians and other researchers.

For example, when Samuel Terry died in 1838, it is said he left an estate estimated at £200,000 (mostly in cash or cash related), but this did not include his real estate which was separately estimated at £450,000.⁷⁸

Acknowledgments

In the preparation of this article I gratefully acknowledge assistance received from Judy Butlin, Clive Lucas, Margot Riley, David Sheedy, the Archives staff of Sydney City Council and Jane Britten and Libby Watters in the Woollahra Local History, Woollahra Library, Woollahra Council.

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Notes

1. *SG* 25-3-1830 p 3; Kelly; Reference to Dawes in Newman p 181
2. Reymond p 29, King quoted in Karskens p184
3. *Ibid* 2
4. *Dir* 1832
5. *Dir* 1833
6. *Dir* 1834
7. *TA* 10-11-1834 p 2 col 4
8. Certificate of Publicans Licence dated 29-11-1834 in index to Butt's certificates of Publicans Licences, 1830-60, reel 5052, State Records, and under hotel name, reel 1355
9. Descriptions of Sydney streets in *Dir* 1832-1835; see also 'Parramatta Road' on 1843 Map & 'Parramatta Street' on 1854 map in Ashton
10. *Dir* 1835-37
11. He is not listed in 'Cambridge Street' in 1835 nor during 1832-37; see *Dirs* for these dates
12. 'Maurice Castles' is how he is written in his will which he signs 'Morris Castle'; will of Morris Castle, series 1 no 5908, SC
13. *Dir* 1839
14. *Dir* 1843, 1844/45 & 1847
15. No records survive to show if this hotel licence was transferred after 1834. For a description of Sydney hotels at this time, see Freeland, chapter 3. For list of convict artisans he employed, see Crosbie
16. *CRS* for years quoted
17. *Dir* 1851 and *CRS* for 1851
18. *SMH* 16 Nov 1863 front page under deaths
19. *SMH* 13 Sep 1842 p 4, 2 Aug 1844 p 33 col 5, 11 Oct 1844 p 4 col 5, and generally under Castle digital search <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper>
20. Fowles opposite p 40 & 41
21. *ADB* vol 1 p 554/5, Dow p 236
22. Dow p121, 236. For lot 7 & 8 see City section plan DP 939702, *LPI*
23. *ADB* vol 1 p 262-3
24. Deeds 21 Apr 1815, 1 Nov 1816 & 20 Mar 1820 in Dow note 79; *SG* 24 Feb 1816 in *JRAHS* vol 6, 1920, p 78
25. *Ibid* 24, Dow p 91
26. Dow, p239-6, *Dir* 1833-37, 1839, 1843 and *CRS* 1845-51
27. Letter in case no. 399, Court of Claims re land, State Records, 2/2372; Dow p 236 note 45
28. Quoted in Dow p 239
29. Referred to in Deed Book 99 no 290, *LPI*
30. Dow p 225, *ADB* vol 1 p 554-5
31. House leased from March 1853 *ibid* 32, Dow p 240, *Cochrane* p 344, 394, 491
32. Deed Book 62 no 933 and Book 81 no 720, *LPI*
33. *Dir* 8, *JRAHS* vol 6, 1920, p 78-9 and *ibid* 31
34. Notes on plan 'City Property, T H Reuss' n.d. relating to subdivision of Bland's

- house, M2 811.1724 State Library; this plan corresponds with sale advertisement in *SMH* 22 Feb 1866 and Deed Book 99 no 290, *LPI*. See also *SMH* 20 Jun 1868 p 3 re sale of hotel to City Bank.
35. Quoted in *JRAHS* vol 6, 1920 p 79
36. *Dir* 1851-63 under Castle
37. *CRS* for 1851
38. In Dowling
39. For plan *ibid* 34, also DP52088 n.d. c1868 which shows garden layout and paths rear of hotel; *ibid* 35
40. *Ibid* 32
41. *ADB* Vol 1 p 112-15, dinner in Cochrane
42. *Dir* 1832-68 and *CRS* 1844-51, *ibid* 34
43. Dixson Library, State Library of NSW, ZPe 205
44. *Dir* 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10. Trig. map sec 65, 1865. Richardson & Wrench (R&W) first listed 1863, Butts 1864, Bland last in Pitt Street 1866. See *SMH* 21-7-1860 p 8 for description of R&W's new rooms adjacent to hotel; plans, Trig. Map, *ibid* 34 & 39
45. Unassisted passenger lists, State Records NSW
46. *Dir* 1839, 1843; indexes to *TA* 1824-42, *SMH* 1842-45 qv Price
47. Kerr p 767-8
48. *TA* 11-1-1840 p 3 col 4, 24-4-1841 p 2 col 6
49. *TA* 31-10-1840 p 3 col 3
50. *SMH* 30-7-1844 p 3 col 3. Burials in Parish of St James, Sydney p 10, State Library of NSW
51. Vendors Index, old system 1825-63 qv Castle, *LPI*
52. Real estate inventory in affidavit TW Garrett of 8-5-1916, estate H E Castle, series 4, no 73114, SC
53. *SMH* 16 Nov 1863 under deaths
54. Names appear in will *ibid* 12. Albert Morris baptised Maurice Albert, V1843 2502 25A, family history section State Library of NSW
55. *Ibid* 12; Decree 4085/1911 and advice Castle v Castle dated 4 Mar 1914 in *ibid* 52
56. *Ibid* 55
57. *Ibid* 52 and 55
58. Henry died in 1916, Alfred in 1913, Albert in 1902 and William's death date is unknown
59. Estate Elizabeth Castle, series 3 no 18632, SC; Camperdown Cemetery 0706 Family History, State Library of NSW; *ibid* 55 re Henry & Alfred; Vendors Index under Castle old system 1863-1900, re Henry & Albert, *LPI*
60. Castle's relatives in affidavit *ibid* 52, wife's relatives unknown except she had a brother John Henry Humphreys see Book 89 no 404 and *SMH* 6-5-1852 p 2 licensing application. For solicitors see Bennett & Law Almanacs
61. *Ibid* 12



9
Castle's house harbour front elevation, Watson's Bay c 1869-71. Part of collection of Captain John Jenkins and his wife Joan, one of seven photos, National Library of Australia, AN 65753-5

62. *Ibid* 52
63. Information in writer's possession
64. Deed Book 30 no 972, *LPI*. For location plan see sheet 8, Rygate & West map, Sydney City Council archives
65. Deed Book 1346 no 850, *LPI*
66. Deed Book 69 no 731 and Book 91 no 746, *LPI*
67. Deed Book 1290 no 453, *LPI*
68. Deed Book 1811 no 796 and Book 3535 no 184, *LPI*
69. See also FC Terry watercolour, *Watson's Bay*, n.d., c 1860-63 in *Painted Panorama 1800-1870*, Blaxland Gallery, 1985, p 96-7, which shows Castle's house and also see plan of Watson's Bay, n.d. c1860-63, *WC*
70. *Ibid* 67
71. Hosking employed Castle in 1859 to collect rents etc, Castle v Hosking, *SMH* 23-11-1865 p 3. Also Henry became a real estate agent and acted for Hosking's estate, Ford, Old Sydney, A1, 240 State Library of NSW
72. I suggest 'Gillers' is a mis-spelling for 'Gillows'
73. *McDermott* p 73-4,
74. *Hastings & Weir* p 3-25
75. *Ibid* 12
76. *Ibid* 12
77. State Records Information Sheet 29, Deceased Estates
78. Dow p 224



Kevin Fahy

An interview by Jim Bertouch part 2

Collecting for the National Trust

Q So the friendship with Clifford Craig and Graeme Robertson... that continued?

Kevin Oh until both their deaths. Cliff's collection was sold down in Tasmania [1994]. Graeme didn't collect Australian furniture but he did collect English furniture and had some wonderful eighteenth-century pieces.

But it was interesting too in those days meeting some of the collectors. There were people like Ken Bernard-Smith, who while predominantly interested in English furniture, also found it in his heart to buy the occasional piece of Australian furniture, particularly for his brother Norman Smith who lived up at Scone. Ken's sister Lady McMullin also lived there; she lived at *St Aubin's Within* and his brother Norman lived at *St Aubin's Without*, a modern building filled with colonial furniture that Ken probably acquired for Norman.

Ken was involved with the National Trust right from its inception and was a major figure in the furnishing of *Experiment Farm Cottage*. He not only purchased pieces for the Trust but he lent pieces and eventually gave some pieces to *Experiment Farm*. Later, of course, he was also involved with Old Government House, Parramatta.

My involvement with the National Trust probably began around 1962. *Old Government House* was opened in 1970 and we were out collecting furniture for it four or five years earlier and that was the time that Rachel Roxburgh and Ken Bernard-Smith got me on side. I think Ken's philosophy was 'look he's only competing with us out there. If we get him on our side, we'd kill the opposition.' And it was pretty good. They'd raised some thousands of dollars or something to furnish what? – 25 rooms? How we furnished it all I can't imagine.

I could wander around and spend up to £25 ... not sure when dollars came in and pounds went out [1966] but it was a fairly limited budget. More than that and it was a committee matter. Well anything you referred to a committee, you'd wait a year and you wouldn't even get an answer. So I used to go around and tell anybody 'Look, I can only go as far as this, but I think it's wonderful and therefore I can give you ... I'd spend my full allocation on your piece.' I don't think I got a knockback. And there were wonderful things they presented or gave me for Old Government House.

I remember going to a little old lady at Strathfield. She was involved with Meals on Wheels, and she was like my spy who would go around the area. She told me there was a wonderful lady who's got this bust of Windeyer. So she took me to see it and there on the top the wardrobe was this life-size bust of [Charles] Windeyer who was the first appointed mayor of Sydney. It was by Charles Abraham who was Australia's... well probably first sculptor of note. And there it was stuck on top of a wardrobe.

Well, oh she said yes take it. She said I'm glad you've come because last week I nearly was going to dig a hole in the backyard and bury it. And of course plaster wouldn't have lasted a week after a decent downpour of rain.

1
Kevin Fahy

2
Old Government House, Parramatta NSW is now on the World Heritage Register, and contains the largest public collection of Australian colonial cedar furniture



So I was up like a flash and even with a crook back it doesn't seem to matter, and down I came with the bust. It was at *Old Government House* for a while, then I think it went up to *Tomago* near Newcastle and as far as I know it's still there or maybe it has been returned to *Government House* where it wasn't appropriate. But the upper floors of *Old Government House* are going to end probably more a furniture museum with a changing display, hopefully to bring people back there, because once you go there and – been there, seen that – to get them on a return visit that's the only way to do these things.

Another thing was of interest for *Old Government House*. I was reading some letters written by Whalan who was Macquarie's orderly sergeant, and there was some reference to a bed and a desk – a bed that had belonged to Governor Macquarie and was presented to Sergeant Whalan and also a travelling desk that had been sent out from England after Macquarie returned. The desk had actually belonged to Macquarie's son and it was a gift to Sergeant Whalan who was evidently very fond of Lachlan Macquarie junior. So here was reference to a bed of Macquarie's, so after a bit of sleuthing around I found out that it was probably at a family property near Oberon. So up there I go and sure the family had it, it was somewhere up in an attic.

Now to get into the attic you had to climb onto the roof and get in through one gable where there was an opening. That was all right, I managed to get up the ladder and found these posts but of course, when it came to get down I got vertigo and I thought, 'Oh my God I'm going to be stuck up here on a roof like St Simon Stylites.' And in the freezing cold, because Oberon is the coldest place in NSW.

Anyhow eventually I managed to get down and the bed, of course, is now at *Old Government House*, Parramatta. It's going through a bit of fixing up. They have another bed very similar in style to it that came from an old property that belonged to the Lowe family. So really, *Old Government House* has a major collection of early colonial furniture that was put together for literally peanuts, when you consider some of the prices that are paid for colonial furniture today, even though I think with the bicentennial in 1988 the prices really soared. While they've come back a bit, every now and again there's always a shock and a fright when some of these pieces turn up.



3 One of the early military beds at *Old Government House*, Parramatta, recently furnished in the early 19th century manner

4 Bill Bradshaw, who died in 2009

Dealers and collectors

A lot of the old collectors seem to have gone and certainly a lot of the dealers that I was acquainted with such as Stanley Lipscombe, Len and Alma Barton, George Auchinachie, George Doling... a couple that lived here in Hunters Hill at one stage ah... I'm trying to think of their name now... it's amazing I can remember what happened a hundred years ago and not what happened last year. It was Phyllis and Stewart Binns. They had an antique shop out at Rouse Hill at one stage though I didn't quite know them then, but once they moved here I got to know them. They were regular visitors to Tasmania and would always come back with either dross or treasure trove – more treasure trove than dross probably. They were great characters and also had a keen interest. Of course, one of the keenest... and he's still around... is Bill Bradshaw who I thought would have been... we would have buried him long ago but I think he'll survive to bury us all.

Q I was going to ask you about Bill Bradshaw because you have mentioned him a number of times. He was obviously a friend from a long time ago.

Kevin I can't remember when I first met him. I think he started in business in 1941 so he's been in business a long, long time but I used to see him around the auctions behaving somewhat outrageously. I was always a bit frightened of him. He had a shop at that stage in Market Street, and I can remember in the shop window there was this dreadful... well it turned out it was a Meissen figure of some courtier [court jester Baron Schmiedel] with a rat hanging out of his mouth. Anyhow Bill picked it up at some sale or other and I think it was sitting in the window a long, long time. Eventually the Powerhouse bought it [1950] and it's today regarded as probably one of the greatest treasures they've got... it's by Kändler and Schmiedel was a favourite I think, of the King of Saxony. Schmiedel either had an aversion to rats or perhaps a perversion for rats... I'm not sure but anyway it's probably one of the most valuable ceramic items in the Powerhouse Museum today.

The skiing accident

Q You have mentioned your bad back a couple of times. How old you were when that happened and how has it affected you? What did it do to you in terms of your outlook on life?

Kevin Well I'd been rather reckless. I think I was about 30, I went skiing one weekend – the only weekend I never had insurance, so I was quietly minding my own business at a place called Dead Horse Gap and that's all I remember. I woke up in the creek below Dead Horse Gap and I think in the fall I must have hit my back. The cold water brought me to. I remember skis were sticking up out of the creek and I grabbed one leg and it just went like jelly and I thought, oh God I've broken a leg.

I thought, oh, you know, I'll get it plastered and get it autographed, you know... being smart. Then I tried the other leg – two broken legs, that didn't sound so smart. Anyhow they managed to get me out of the creek. I was with a group of people, and somehow or other they managed to get me some morphia, thank God, because otherwise I would never have got down the hill. And so I was floating on cloud seven down the hill, I definitely advocate the use of morphia on occasions like that.

I was hospitalised for about nine months and the diagnosis was, no you'll never walk. It was Dr Kevin

Bleasel who operated and he got me up and around

It's been an effort, but at least I was able to devote some time and no one really queried it, because, you know, poor thing... let him do what he likes. Actually of course it worked wonders. The Women's Committee... they were all pretty tough ladies but... oh the poor thing... you know. So, it had its advantages, often has some disadvantages. I'd like to be more active but it gets harder and harder. To get into the library to do any research is almost a no-no now but luckily I've got enough things around me to keep me going for a little while anyhow.

Q I think you actually have a collection of early walking sticks and canes. Was that related to that accident?

Kevin Yes, actually. Well I had some scrimshaw walking sticks, which is whalebone and I always wanted at least one of those. I remember I bought one down in Hobart and this is even before the accident. Coming back from Tasmania I thought, what can I do with the damn walking stick? Can't go in the suitcase, I'll just have to use it. While I'm in Melbourne I'll go to the art gallery. And so I was wandering around the gallery with the walking stick and people were staring and I thought, Oh, what could be wrong? Is there a hole in my trousers, my fly undone? Until it twigged, a white walking stick in an art gallery. I think they were waiting for me to start feeling the paintings.

Anyhow we had a burglary and that got knocked off. I don't quite understand why they bothered to take it, I somehow think they took it but they've probably thrown it over a fence nearby and some dogs probably got hold of it and found it.

No meat on this and so buried somewhere in one of the gardens nearby could be my scrimshaw walking stick.

At the time of my accident one of my sisters remembered Max Lawson the auctioneer. He used to collect walking sticks and he had an enormous collection of them, so if a walking stick came up he would just buy it in for himself. In his office, he had dozens of them. Anyhow my sister decided she'd go and see Mr Lawson and get hold of a few. Well she came home with about six and she said 'Oh six times around the desk. You know I couldn't stay any longer, he was catching up.' Some of those I've still got, from an Irish thorn stick to a carved bamboo walking stick and there were silver top canes and all sorts of things. I find them extremely useful.

Collaboration with Andrew Simpson

Q You have already mentioned Andrew Simpson, the co-author of at least two of the books that you have written. Where did you meet him?

Kevin Andrew was just starting dealing and... Oh, what was I doing at the time? I think I was doing an introduction to a book on Lithgow pottery for Ian Evans and I think Ian was going to do something on furniture. Andy got to me first and said how about doing it with me? I thought all right and so that was when we did *Nineteenth Century Australian Furniture*, published in 1985. That involved travelling all around Australia so it was quite a marathon job. Andy and I went to Perth. I don't think Christina went to Perth but I think we were all in the various other places.

There was a house down in Tasmania called *Pleasant Banks*, a lovely house just near the airport outside Launceston, occupied by a very strange mother and daughter. I'd heard they had a wardrobe with a very early label in it by a man called Brunton, who is one of Tasmania's earliest cabinet makers. Anyhow... the long and short of it was they wouldn't let us photograph the wardrobe, but they'd let us photograph the label and the label was so placed that there were screw marks in it. I noticed it in this sale coming up at Goodman's and you can identify the label quite clearly from the screw marks, they sort of deface the label. So it's interesting how these pieces turn up.

Tasmania is still a treasure trove of furniture. I suspect the dealers in Tasmania regularly go over to Melbourne to the sales and buy cedar there and ship it back across the strait and then it has a Tasmanian provenance. And then comes back to the mainland. Of course when anything really good turns up... Oh in any big sale down there of course the Tasmanians are terrified of letting mainlanders strip any of their assets, so really some of the best prices you can get for furniture are down in Tasmania.

Q So you and Andrew put in a tremendous amount of time to produce that first book and obviously the second one as well. Where did that take you apart from Western Australia and Tasmania?

Kevin Oh, Queensland, South Australia. We had an interesting contact in South Australia, Dick Richards, who was with the Art Gallery of South Australia. While his interest was really in South East Asian ceramics he provided us with... well in those

days, we were able to actually go and photograph in the museum where now most museums want their own photographs used.

He was able to organise access to Births Deaths & Marriages – nowhere have I been able to get that before and so when you were trying to search names out you could actually do it. In South Australia you also had the problem with a lot of German cabinet makers. With the outbreak of World War I, many of the families anglicised their names or changed their names so Mr Hamburg might have ended up dying Mr Brown. It was a nightmare to try and sort that out, so it was amazing we were able to get done what we did get done with the details on the early cabinetmakers of South Australia.

The Northern Territory ... well it's hardly a state to worry about furniture. I don't think we went near there.

I had been to Norfolk Island where there was, funnily enough, quite a good collection of Australian furniture in the Administrator's residence. It had been put together some years ago at a time when Australian furniture was regarded as nothing more than club-footed copies of English furniture.

The interesting thing over the period has been the increasing awareness of Australian furniture; where once dealers would scrape off a label that indicated it was Australian made, and try and pass it off as English. So many of those dealers would be sighing with horror at the damage they've done because the piece now, with an Australian provenance, is probably worth seven or eight times or several times anyhow, the value of the equivalent English piece. While the Australian piece doesn't always come up to the aesthetic value of English furniture, its historical value to us certainly is far more than a lot of imported English furniture.

The journalist Terry Ingram

One person who had quite an influence on the furniture market here is Terry Ingram the journalist who writes for the *Financial Review*, usually of a Thursday but every now and again he seems to vary it. He is a thorn in the side of a number of dealers and generally, to me, just fairly unassuming and quiet but, my God, once he gets behind a typewriter... you know, you want to be careful.

Q Any particular examples that you can think of?

Kevin The classic was a review he did of the book I did with Cliff Craig many, many years ago and it



5
Andy Simpson and Kevin collaborated on several Australian reference books

was pretty patronising. Anyhow I wasn't particularly concerned about it and years later the Trust rang me and asked would I review a book and I said, Oh look, I haven't got time to... who's it by? And they said it's by Terry Ingram. I said, send it over. So I found the review he did of mine, changed the name of the author and the title and copied it out virtually word for word and sent it in. Well, I'm still waiting for lightning to strike. But the only one who probably realised what it was about would have been Terry Ingram.

Regional differences

Q You mentioned the regional differences, Tasmanian furniture and South Australian with the Germanic influence and so on. Why are there such regional differences?

Kevin Well funnily enough, Queensland had a far larger number of German settlers than South Australia, but in Queensland they integrated very quickly with the general community. In South Australia they lived almost in ghettos, in these little towns throughout the Barossa. When I first went to South Australia many years ago, in the little churches in the Barossa the sermon was still being spoken in German, but it was old German. I think a current German would have had trouble even understanding.

There's been some regional German furniture found in Queensland but nowhere near the extent of what is found in South Australia. In Western Australia, jarrah, which is a very heavy timber and very hard to work almost creates its own forms, and while it looks like country furniture, it's quite distinctive.

South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania all featured Huon pine which is endemic to Tasmania and yet it was extremely popular for bedroom furniture in the late 19th century. It's amazing how widespread it was, and yet of the very early period, there's very little Huon pine pre 1850 even though it was discovered by about 1810. In fact Lieutenant Governor Collins's coffin in Hobart was Huon pine, evidently for its worm repellent qualities and keeping dry.

Francis de Groot

While I'm obviously emphasising 19th-century furniture, there's quite an amount of 20th century furniture that is really interesting; for example, Frank de Groot, an antique dealer from Ireland whose great claim to fame was cutting the ribbon at the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. He

dealt in bringing out English furniture particularly from Ireland, and also making furniture here. Quite an amount of his furniture is around, some of it is signed, but his reproduction of English antiques can be somewhat over the top. But he did do several pieces of Australian furniture, some of which is in the collection of the National Trust at Observatory Hill, and, while his work hasn't been documented to any great extent, he certainly provided an interesting feature using Australian timbers.

Oh, he would also bring furniture out from England and copy it but he'd often bring out copies of English furniture from England and copy those. Then he would offer you ... did you want a copy or the copy or did you want the original? What you were getting when you got 'the original' was an English copy, so I don't quite know how ethical he was in business. He went back to Ireland after the last war and I think was an agent for some American antique dealers and that's where he died.

The National Museum of Australia in Canberra was recently after his sword but they made such a song and dance of it that they gave the game away and somebody gazumped them and so they lost that. The man who runs the walks across the Harbour Bridge [Paul Cave] ended up with it ... a masterpiece. So it shows you've got to be pretty tight lipped about what you find out, like Marjorie Graham, who would never give a reference in her books because it took so long to find them: let them look.

What is Australiana?

Q How would you define the term Australiana?
Kevin Well, I think it's anything that was produced in Australia or has something to do with Australia. Anything that belonged to a colonial personality, even via an overseas association brings it into Australiana.

In fact the interesting thing with the Australiana Fund ... the fuss and furore over the Thai teak table at the Lodge which almost caused a civil war. If they turned around and said look, we're copying one of the tables that was made in the English style for Yarralumla. When Yarralumla was actually opened there was a lady decorator in Melbourne who designed a lot of the furniture, so if they'd copied that, even in Thailand, and said it was a copy of one of her tables that label of 'Australiana' could be applied to it. I did raise this matter with Tamie Fraser recently and I think she was horrified at the thought that I could be so devious. But the thing was... since the table on which the

American Declaration of Independence was signed has received not a fraction of the publicity that this table has, by now it's well and truly an item of Australiana due to its associational history. And whoever's acquired it – it's now, I think, the board table down in some company at Circular Quay – they've got an interesting piece of Australiana. Perhaps one of these days the Australiana Fund might buy it.

The Australiana Fund

Q You mentioned the Australiana Fund. I think you were one of the foundation members.

Kevin Yes one of the advisers, [Dame] Helen Blaxland I think, got Tamie Fraser involved in it. It was modelled on the Americana collection at the White House and in the State Department; Clement Conger was involved in both. In the State Department you've got these huge Diplomatic Reception Rooms set aside, furnished with the most magnificent pieces of Americana, but that could include French furniture that belonged to early presidents and what have you. Often for functions at the White House there's simply not enough room, so here they've got enormous spaces enclosed in a modern building, on the top floor. You've got colonial windows that you see from the inside and from the outside you've got plate glass windows, it's one of those sort of setups. It's an interesting collection to go to, that very few people know about and usually anyone can go there.

Anyhow it is a wonderful collection and Conger was the true expert. He'd find out that somebody had a portrait of George Washington and he'd go up to them and say 'look, would you mind if we copied it?' and the person would say all right and the next thing they'd know 'Would they like to attend the presentation when it's being received by the President?' etc. etc. and 'how about you take the copy and we'll present the real thing?' Worked every time. Worked every time.

Americana collectors, it's absolutely amazing. There's Winterthur, which was the Henry Dupont collection, which is vast, and Henry Ford at Dearborn and in Texas there's a wonderful collection of Americana owned by a lady with the euphonious name of Ima Hogg.

In Canada there's quite a following for collecting Canadian furniture. Australian furniture bears more resemblance to the Canadian types than it does to the American, mainly because the American types have a tradition much older and the quality is much higher, where Canada, of course, probably parallels

us in development. After the War of Independence, it was only then that the loyalists moved up into Canada, into Ontario for example, and this is about the same time as the settlement at Sydney Cove in 1788. Both were frontier towns or frontier colonies for some time. It's amazing that you'll find similar pieces of furniture: cedar might be the timber here, maple is the timber there.

In other branches of the empire... in South Africa you'll get a tradition of colonial furniture but it's predominantly Dutch, but then later after the British moved in you'll get, particularly in Natal, quite a tradition of English furniture influences, as opposed to the Dutch colonial influences.

The classic example is India, where Anglo-Indian furniture, of which there's recently been an exhibition, shows an amazing similarity with Australian furniture, particularly with the timber. Our cedar, which was once called *Toona australis*, now *Toona ciliata* – the emphasis being Toona, which is an Indian word – in Australia, only grew in the east coast rainforests. The same timber, botanically identical, is found in India and through the Malay peninsula. So in many cases, where once timber would almost dictate the origin, 'Oh, this is Australian not English' now you've got the possibility that it might be Indian not Australian and that opens a total can of worms. It's a never ending challenge.

Q So what is the philosophy behind the Australiana Fund?

Kevin The Fund is to furnish the four Official Establishments – *Yarralumla* and *The Lodge* in Canberra and *Kirribilli House* and *Admiralty House* in Sydney. They've never extended beyond that, and while this has caused somewhat of an upset with other States who think of us stripping the country of its heritage to go to Sydney or Canberra... well of course, neither the Prime Minister nor the Governor General have residences in any of the other State capitals, though there was talk at one stage of acquiring a property in Melbourne for the Governor General, but that has never eventuated. Getting people on the Committee has been difficult in the past for the Acquisitions Committee to get somebody from interstate who is able to come up to meetings, and that's why the emphasis has probably fallen on Sydney members. But now they've got people from Canberra and Melbourne which is great, so it's going well. In fact there was a function in Melbourne recently, organised around the launch of the pottery book that I was one of the

Cedar sofa, New South Wales, circa 1840, covered in black horse hair fabric, central carved scroll to back, new castors added June 2008. Donated by Sir Alan & Lady McNicoll, Yarralumla, ACT, 1978. Collection: The Australiana Fund



editors of, and it raised some \$10,000 for the Fund. It is amazing the interest that can be engendered if you've got a good organiser – and Melbourne's got some very good organisers.

Q So with the collection the Australiana Fund owns... it's a large collection now?

Kevin Yes it's growing all the time. The last addition to it was a piece by the Melbourne wood carver Robert Prenzel. It's a fire screen, probably intended for *The Lodge*. But the problem is of course *The Lodge* is a fairly small house, and you're still at the dictates of the incumbents. Both *Admiralty House* and *Yarralumla* are big enough to almost separate the official rooms from the private apartments, and what they do in the private apartments is purely their affair.

One of the problems has always been they try to get the incumbent to agree with the choice. Well some are interested, some are not, and when you have people with fairly forceful ideas like Mr Keating, it wasn't the easiest role in the world to be the consultant or the curator of the fund, though it's had a number of prominent people. John McPhee was the first curator, then David Dolan, then Margaret Betteridge and then Johanna Cole, and they produced quite a good book on the collection [1990]. But that's now 10 or 15 years out of date, so it's probably time for another volume. Then again, book publishing in this day and age is not for the fainthearted. You really need a heavily subsidised cheque book to even think about it.

Q What's the future of the Australiana Fund's collection? Will it stay in those four houses or do you think something like the American style in

Washington, the rooms you mentioned before, might be a solution?

Kevin Well it all depends. They are able to lend items out, and so several items might be on loan to various institutions or galleries, country galleries. There was a piece of furniture I've always been saying they should lend to the National Trust seeing it's no longer in use, sitting in store somewhere, probably costing an arm and a leg in storage fees. They could put it in another, a related situation, and it serves as an advertisement.

The only time it raises funds is when they have an open day at one of the houses, once a year. Well, try as you might you're not going to make a fortune on one day's opening. It has had in the past a considerable number of very generous donations from individuals and businesses, but by and large it is not the government's property, it's the fund's property and so maybe if an incumbent got too difficult we'd send in the pantechinons and empty the houses!

The Australiana Society

Q There often seems to be confusion between the Australiana Fund and the Australiana Society. Would you like to give some of the background to the Society?

Kevin Funnily enough it started in the same year as the Australiana Fund [1978] and of course it causes endless confusion still. People think they're one and the same, which of course they're not. The Australiana Society is directed to anyone interested in the subject of Australiana and while it organises outings, lectures and functions, its main activity is the production of a journal called *Australiana*, which over the years has improved out of sight and is almost entirely in colour. John Wade and myself are editors of it. I must confess John works much harder at it than I, but after 25 years of it one gets a bit tired, though John was the first editor, then took some years off but is now back in the saddle.

Organising lectures is the difficult thing, there are so many organisations now, the Ceramics Society, Wedgwood Society, the Furniture History Society, the National Trust, the Historic Houses Trust, all scrambling for much of the same sort of market.

To be continued.

... **Dr James Bertouch** is a Sydney rheumatologist with a long-standing interest in collecting Australiana. He has just been appointed President of the Australiana Society.

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A fine watercolour view of Singapore, signed 'Jacob Janssen' and dated 1837

An early view of Singapore from Government Hill, only recently discovered and correctly identified, it is quite possibly one of three watercolours commissioned by the Singapore merchant and close friend of Raffles, Alexander Laurie Johnston.

Jacob Janssen (1779 – 1856) a landscape, still life and portrait painter, was born in Einlage, Prussia.

In 1837 Janssen sailed to Singapore arriving November and leaving in July 1838. There, as he records in his diary he was commissioned by Alexander Laurie Johnston to paint three watercolours – this may well have been one of them. Janssen next went to Manila which he left in 1840 for Sydney, he lived and worked in Australia for the remainder of his life. Janssen's manuscript diary survives in the Mitchell Library, Sydney as does his watercolour, 'Singapore from on board the sunken ship Pasco' December 1837, the reverse view and a possible companion to the above.



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