

# Australiana

May 2020 vol 42 no 2

RESEARCHING, PRESERVING AND COLLECTING AUSTRALIA'S HERITAGE





# SIMPSON'S ANTIQUES

FINE AUSTRALIAN ANTIQUES



A very rare Australian Colonial cedar **Revolving Dumb Waiter** with two shelves rotating around a vase-and-ring-turned column, supported on three scroll-carved legs with brass castors. Attributed to William Hamilton of Hobart; compare the sofa illustrated on his trade label in *Nineteenth Century Australian Furniture* fig.140. Original 19th century patina, c 1850  
H 94 D 68 cm.  
Price \$8,500

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# Australiana

RESEARCHING, PRESERVING AND COLLECTING  
AUSTRALIA'S HERITAGE

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### COVER

Thomas Griffiths Wainewright (1794–1847), *George Gordon Byron, 6th Baron Byron (1788–1824)* September 1813, oil on canvas, 89 x 69 cm. Collection: Newstead Abbey NA 496, gift from Baroness D'Erlanger, 1936. Wainewright was trained by Thomas Phillips (1770–1845), who painted a similar portrait of Byron in the same month (later making several copies of it) and another of him wearing a flamboyant Albanian costume that Byron had acquired in Albania in 1809, now in the British Embassy in Athens. Wainewright shows a hint of embroidered Albanian tunic beneath Byron's black cloak. Wainewright, suspected of murdering three relatives, was convicted of forgery and transported to Van Diemen's Land in 1837.

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# Colonial Rarities



RARE COLONIAL CEDAR FOLIO CABINET / BOOKCASE C 1840–50 BY ANDREW LENEHAN

Impressed mark A. Lenehan. H 76.5 D 68 W 93 cm closed 169 open.

See website for more photos and full description.

By appointment Philip Wheatley, Newcastle NSW

02 4957 0165 | 0417 205 298 | bpw@colonialrarities.com | [www.colonialrarities.com](http://www.colonialrarities.com)

## Positives from the pandemic 'stay at home' restrictions

### DAVID BEDFORD

Communicating with members is a vital activity of any society. We also aim to share knowledge, mainly through our scholarly magazine *Australiana*.

Another channel of communication is through the internet, which has been used for the last few years by the South Australian Study Group, with its monthly "Show and Tell" bulletins.

One of the positive outcomes from the stay at home restrictions has been the publication of a national Virtual Show and Tell report, compiled by David Bedford, Peter Lane and Richard Phillips, inviting contributions from around the nation. Over 50% of our members have opened the first report

within a few days of sending and many have responded that they really appreciated the initiative.

Other members have provided a great deal of feedback and extra information on published items. These include some historical clarifications and some good connections made with institutions.

One item has prompted an article in this issue of *Australiana* and the owners of others have been able to have professional curators and experts provide advice to them about the items or their creators.

Responses so far are more than expected, though not more than hoped for. It shows that putting collectors, researchers and information together can have a synergistic effect. Cupboard finds, large items and hidden labels can now

be shared with a wider audience. Who knows what truths will emerge?

The editors are busy working on more virtual show and tell reports and look forward to more items and more positive connections. We expect to receive enough contributions to produce one of these reports every month.

Any members who do not have an email address or have not given their email address to the *Australiana* Society are encouraged to obtain or provide one to allow them to join in these virtual meetings, which can only be distributed by email.

**Send items to the Virtual Show & Tell team via [australiana.queensland@gmail.com](mailto:australiana.queensland@gmail.com)**

# Hunting for Mr Beauchamp

Among many contributions to the first "Virtual Show and Tell" was a portrait of a young boy. The owner asked who the artist might be, so the compilers flicked it to me to ask whom we should consult. It turned out to be a fascinating research project, and I want to share the process with readers.

## JOHN WADE

The subject is an oil portrait with a handwritten ink inscription on the back identifying the subject as William Penn Beauchamp, "born Febry 5<sup>th</sup> 1856" (**plate 1**). The unsigned oval portrait measures 44.5 cm x 34 cm and was incorrectly catalogued as being oil painted on tin; it is clearly on board and labelled: "ACADEMY BOARDS,/ PREPARED/ FOR OIL PAINTING,/ BY GEO. ROWNEY & CO.,/ [??] RATHBONE PLACE, LONDON." (**plate 2**). The current owner bought it at a suburban house auction.

Let's work from what we know to what we don't know, starting with the George Rowney & Co. label. London's National Portrait Gallery has an online directory of suppliers (maintained by volunteers) which lists this company as operating under this name from 1848–1923. That means that the portrait was painted after 1848.<sup>1</sup> Rowney changed labels frequently and was one of a handful of British makers with a large export trade.

This label is very similar in design to one of Rowney's for "Mill'd Boards", with the address "51, Rathbone Place" applied to a painting dated 1860, which narrows the date even further.<sup>2</sup> Rowney's boards were sold in Australia at that time – for

instance, in 1860 Stephen Spurling was advertising that his Stationery, Berlin, & Fancy Repository in Liverpool Street, Hobart sold<sup>3</sup>

**ARTIST'S MATERIALS.** Oil and Water Colors. &c, from Winsor & Newton, Newman, Rowney, Reeves and others; and a most complete stock of every requisite.

## William Penn Beauchamp

What can we find out about "William Penn Beauchamp"? The owner googled him, which produced a few scattered references, most of doubtful authenticity or half-truths. One family history site, Geni, says he was born in Zeehan, Tasmania in 1857, the son of Robert Proctor-Beauchamp – which will prove to be partly right but garbled. Another



### 1.

Attributed to Robert Beauchamp (England 1819– Australia 1889), *William Penn Beauchamp*, c 1860–62. Oil on board, 44.5 x 34 cm. Private collection



## 2.

Maker's Label on the back of the painting for Geo. Rowney & Co., London c 1860

says his father was an artist. Among this mix of information and misinformation, Google throws up the Tasmanian Names Index, a reliable database maintained by Libraries Tasmania, which not only gives the information we want but also displays the digitised original document. A marriage record shows that Rev. E. Prince Shelley officiated in a Church of England ceremony on 12 April 1895 at Derby when he married William Penn Beauchamp (butcher), aged 38, to Margaret Ann McLeod Cunningham, (living with brother at Derby), aged 31, in the house of Joseph Henry Bryant (**plate 3**). So we download the marriage record, make a note of the information *and* the exact webpage that gave us the information in case we need to check it.<sup>4</sup>

The note on the back of the painting said William Penn Beauchamp was born 5 February 1856. Thepeerage.com website gives 5 February 1857,<sup>5</sup> and his surname is not just Beauchamp, but the hyphenated Beauchamp-Proctor. It lists his father as Robert Beauchamp-Proctor (1819–1889) and his grandfather as Admiral Sir William Beauchamp-Proctor, Bart (1781–1861).

Good old Trove, the National Library's site that digitises old Australian

newspapers, might come to the rescue. Let's trove "William Penn Beauchamp" in Tasmania from say 1850 to 1930. That produces two references, one a court case in 1907 (full names are used in court) and an obituary (ditto) in 1926:

### Death of Mr. W. Beauchamp:

The death took place at Wynyard on Friday night [19 November] of Mr. William Penn Beauchamp, who was widely known in Tasmania and loved by all who knew him for his bright and cheerful disposition and gentlemanly character. Deceased was born in New Zealand in 1859. He was the eldest son of the late Mr. Robert Proctor Beauchamp, of Langley Park, Norfolk, England, and late of Langley, West Tamar, Launceston; and grandson of the late Sir Reginald Proctor Beauchamp (fifth baronet of Langley Park, Norfolk, England). The late Mr. Beauchamp visited England twice with his parents, but spent the greater part of his life in Tasmania, being for a considerable time at Derby, and later at Zeehan, whence he came to Wynyard about 12 years ago. He was married in 1895 to Margaret A. McLeod Cunningham, youngest daughter of the late Alexander Cunningham, of Cromarty, Scotland, and leaves to mourn their loss a grown up family of two sons, ...<sup>6</sup>

More a eulogy than an obituary – “loved by all who knew him” – but not that he's a butcher. Advertisements and puff pieces promote his butcher shops and some refer jocularly to Beecham's pills, a well-known laxative – so we also know how to pronounce his surname. His baronet grandfather is mentioned, but Reginald was not his first name, and the full surname was Proctor-Beauchamp. It tells us he was born in New Zealand, but in the wrong year.

Searching Papers Past, the internet source for old New Zealand newspapers, shows us that in 1854, “Robert Beauchamp” persistently advertises that he has imported some Saxon merino rams and ewes, and intends to set up a sheep-breeding farm near Wellington.<sup>7</sup> From July that year, “Mr Beauchamp” was offering to give lessons in drawing.<sup>8</sup> He has a cottage for let in November 1854, and by June 1855, he has instructed James Smith to auction his stock as he is leaving the colony.<sup>9</sup>

Later Australian reports claim that he introduced merinos to New Zealand – actually he introduced the Saxon line of merinos, not merinos in general – and that he struck problems with this sheep-breeding operation – possibly due to inexperience and the new environment, hence the need to supplement his income by offering drawing lessons.

New Zealand Births, Deaths and Marriages (BDM) should record William's birth. If we search between 1850 and 1860, up pop six Beauchamps, all fathered by John not Robert, so that's out. We know the family sometimes used a hyphenated name, so next we'll try Proctor as the surname – jackpot!<sup>10</sup>

Now we have established that William Penn Beauchamp

- was born in New Zealand in 1857 (not 1856 or 1859)
- his parents were Robert Beauchamp-Proctor (not Robert Proctor Beauchamp) and his wife Elizabeth
- he was a butcher in Derby, Tasmania in 1895
- he married Margaret Cunningham in 1895, they had three surviving sons and two daughters
- he died at Wynyard, Tasmania on 19 November 1926.

### 3.

Marriage record for William Penn Beauchamp and Margaret Cunningham 1895, from Tasmanian Names Index

18 95 MARRIAGES in the District of *Tasmania*. M.—1.

No.	When married, and where.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Rank.	Signature and Description of Parties.	Name of Clergyman, Officiating Minister, or Deputy Registrar.	When registered.	Signature of Deputy Registrar or Officiating Minister.
66	April 12 <sup>th</sup> at <i>Derby</i>	<i>William Penn Beauchamp</i> <i>Margaret Ann McLeod Cunningham</i>	<i>38</i> <i>31</i>	<i>Bachelors</i> <i>Spinster</i>	<i>William Penn Beauchamp (Bachelor)</i> <i>Margaret Ann McLeod Cunningham (single with brother at Derby)</i>	<i>E. Pinnie Pelley</i>	<i>April 17<sup>th</sup> 95</i>	<i>E. Pinnie Pelley</i>

*Married in the Home of Joseph Henry Bryant according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of England by License*  
*This Marriage was solemnized between us } William Penn Beauchamp { In the presence of } Thomas War*  
*Margaret Ann McLeod Cunningham } { Clare Emma Graham, Joseph Henry Bryant. } E. Pinnie Pelley Minister.*

### The family

I had never searched for a hyphenated name, so this was a lesson. The Beauchamp-Proctors made it worse; they could use Beauchamp-Proctor, or Proctor-Beauchamp, or just Beauchamp.

The family came from Langley Hall in Norfolk, now Langley School, originally constructed about 1730. George Proctor bought the Hall and bequeathed it to his nephew Sir William Beauchamp in 1744, on condition he change his name to Beauchamp-Proctor. Later, the family reversed the names to Proctor-Beauchamp.

### His father, Robert Beauchamp

His father Robert Beauchamp-Proctor was an artist. Trowing him brings up this death notice in a Launceston newspaper:<sup>11</sup>

Beauchamp-Proctor, — On the 12<sup>th</sup> August, at Langley. West Tamar, Robert Beauchamp-Proctor, third son of the late Sir William Beauchamp-Proctor, Bart., of Langley Park, Norfolk, England, in his 71st year.

More internet searching reveals that he was generally known as Robert Beauchamp, but also used the names Robert Proctor Beauchamp or Robert Proctor-Beauchamp, particularly in legal documents; that he died at Cormiston near Launceston, Tasmania; and that he was an artist.

The Launceston *Examiner* has a revealing obituary<sup>12</sup>

Our obituary notices record the death, at his residence, West Tamar, of Mr. Robert Beauchamp-Proctor, well known in this and other colonies as an artist in both oils and water-colours. Mr. Beauchamp Proctor, who was in his 71st year, was the third son of the

late Sir William Beauchamp-Proctor, Bart., of Langley Park, Norfolk, but during his residence in this colony the last portion of his name, though never omitted by him in any official document, was dropped to the general public, by whom he was simply known as Mr. Beauchamp. For many years he was resident in Launceston, following the profession of an artist, in which he was a great enthusiast. His efforts were at first confined to water-colours, but subsequently he devoted his attention to oil paintings with considerable success. He possessed a distinctive style, the merits of which naturally formed a subject of criticism, but as a landscape painter his work possessed marked ability, and some of his efforts have received warm commendation in New South Wales and Victoria, as well as in Tasmania. For many years past he has resided on his own property, fronting on the West Tamar road, some four miles from Launceston, which he called Langley, after the family seat, and where he planted out some 16 acres as an orchard, which has been growing in value every year, Mr. Beauchamp having been a frequent prize-taker at our local horticultural shows with magnificent and varied samples of apples raised by him...

Hang on — we've checked the *internet*, so now that we know he's an artist, let's check that old-fashioned tool, *reference books*.

First choice will be Joan Kerr's *Dictionary of Australian Artists*. George Deas Brown, a former lawyer, Tasmanian MP and author wrote an excellent essay on Robert Beauchamp and his life in England, New Zealand, Victoria and Tasmania.<sup>13</sup> His works are found in the Queen Victoria

Museum and Art Gallery and other public collections. We could do more Trove searches, but now we have enough.

What of the original question, who painted it? We'll never know for sure, but I'd put my money on Robert Beauchamp. It's not an entirely confident effort. He was predominantly a landscape artist, but may have tried portraiture to record an image of his eldest son as a youngster, still wearing a child's dress before he was "breeched", or wearing trousers.

That's not quite the end of this story. One of our Australiana Society members responded to the Virtual Show and Tell that she knew a member of the Beauchamp family. We got in touch, and she assured me that the inscription on the back was written by Robert Beauchamp. Of course, we encouraged her to write an artist biography.

**John Wade** is Editor of *Australiana*.

### NOTES

1. [www.npg.org.uk/research/programmes/directory-of-suppliers/r.php](http://www.npg.org.uk/research/programmes/directory-of-suppliers/r.php), accessed 18 Apr 2020.
2. [https://www.npg.org.uk/assets/files/pdf/research/artists\\_materials\\_9\\_Rowney.pdf](https://www.npg.org.uk/assets/files/pdf/research/artists_materials_9_Rowney.pdf), accessed 18 Apr 2020.
3. *Mercury* 21 Aug 1860 p 4.
4. [https://libriestas.ent.sirsidynix.net.au/client/en\\_AU/names/search/results?qu=NI\\_NAME%3D%22Cunningham,%20Margaret%20Ann%20McLeod%22](https://libriestas.ent.sirsidynix.net.au/client/en_AU/names/search/results?qu=NI_NAME%3D%22Cunningham,%20Margaret%20Ann%20McLeod%22), accessed 3 Apr 2020. RGD 37/1/54 no 761, accessed 18 Apr 2020.
5. [www.thepeerage.com/p63220.htm#i632194](http://www.thepeerage.com/p63220.htm#i632194), accessed 18 Apr 2020.
6. *Advocate* (Burnie) 22 Nov 1926 p 4.
7. *NZ Spectator* from 1 Mar 1854 p 2.
8. *Nelson Examiner* 16 Aug 1854 p 1.
9. *Lyttelton Times* 2 June 1855 p 2.
10. NZ BDM 1857/4382.
11. *Colonist* (Launceston) 17 Aug 1889 p 28, also *Advocate* (Burnie) 20 Nov 1926 p 2, 22 Nov 1926 p 4.
12. *Examiner* (Launceston) 13 Aug 1889 p 2.
13. Joan Kerr (ed.) *Dictionary of Australian Artists*, Melbourne, OUP, 1992 p 57f.

## The Convict Artists

Victorian collector and president of the Victorian branch Robert Stevens distills his passion for the works of convict artists in Australia, many of whom were transported for adapting their skills to forgery. A wide variety of works from public and private collections illustrate the range of their interests.

### ROBERT STEVENS

Between 1788 and 1868, British authorities shipped about 162,000 convicts to penal colonies in Australia. Some were artists who provided a visual record of this new land and the early stages of colonisation. They

were bound together more by their social experience than their art. All had been arrested, charged, convicted and sentenced to transportation to the other side of the world, often for what today would be regarded as trivial crimes, leaving behind their friends and loved ones. Then, on arrival, most had to survive in horrendous conditions.

However they were artists and there was so much to record. They painted and sketched the landscape, natural history, people and buildings, recording the progress of the colony, and bringing a tinge of culture to a wild and uncivilised frontier.

### Art, Incarceration and Transportation

Thomas Griffiths Wainewright studied under two of the best-known artists of the day, Thomas Phillips and John Linnell, and was taught by the great classical scholar Charles Burney. He was convicted of forging documents to avail himself of £5,000 left to him in trust by his grandfather, and was suspected of murdering three relatives for financial gain but never charged. He was a talented artist and writer. In 1813, when just 18, he painted a portrait of Lord Byron, which is said to capture the sitter's sensuality better than any other (**plate 1**). Wainewright was sentenced to transportation for life, and, on arriving in Van Diemen's Land, was immediately put to work on the Chain Gang. His delicate pencil and watercolour portraits of the first colonial citizens are his legacy. They are effortless informal studies which combine a striking likeness with a sensitive evocation of character.



#### 1.

Thomas Griffiths Wainewright (1794–1847), *Lord Byron*, 1813, oil on canvas, 89 x 69 cm. Byron Museum, Newstead Abbey, Nottinghamshire, United Kingdom, accession no NA 496, gift of Baroness D'Erlanger 1936

Francis Greenway was working as an architect in his family's business when arrested for forging a document. He was found guilty and sentenced to death, commuted to transportation for 14 years. He landed in Sydney in 1814 and became Australia's first Colonial Architect. His many notable works include Hyde Park Barracks, St Matthew's Church Windsor, St James' Church Sydney and the Courthouse at Windsor. In 1812 he recorded his time in Newgate Prison awaiting sentence (plate 2).

Knud Geelmuyden Bull was born into a respectable Norwegian family, his brother was Ole Bull, the famous violinist and composer. He trained in art in Copenhagen, and under the famous Norwegian artist, Johan Christian Claussen Dahl (known as J C Dahl) in Dresden, Germany. Convicted of forgery in London in 1845, he was transported for 14 years, arriving in Norfolk Island and being transferred to Van Diemen's Land.

## 2.

Francis Greenway (1777–1837), [*Scene inside Newgate Prison Bristol where Francis Greenway awaited Transportation*], 1812, oil on canvas, 42.2 x 68.2 cm. State Library of NSW, call no ML1003, a1970003u

## 3.

Knud Geelmuyden Bull (1811–1889), *Diomedea Exulans or Wandering Albatross*, 1846, pencil and watercolour, 17.6 x 26.8 cm. From the "John Calvin" sketchbook, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, AG5951.19

## 4.

Joseph Lycett (c 1775–1828), [*Sydney from the North Shore*] 1827, watercolour, gouache, pen and ink on paper, 32 x 48 cm. Dixon Galleries, State Library of NSW, DG SV1/13, a298340u presented by Sir William Dixon





5.

Knud Geelmuyden Bull (1811–1889), *Hobart Town*, 1855, oil on canvas, 55.5 x 88.5 cm. Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, AG288, purchased 1952

6.

Richard Browne (1776–1824), *White and Black Cockatoos*, 1813, watercolour, 16 x 23 cm, from *Select Specimens From Nature of the Birds and Animals of New South Wales - Collected and Arranged by Thomas Skottowe Esq.* Newcastle, New South Wales 1813, p 14. State Library of NSW



7.

Thomas Watling c 1762-after 1814), *Lace Monitor or Goanna*, c 1793, watercolour, 12.2 x 34.9 cm. Thomas Watling Collection, British Museum (Natural History), Watling 365



Bull kept a sketchbook which recorded his journey aboard the convict transport *John Calvin* and drew the bird life encountered. In 1846 he sketched the Wandering Albatross. With a wingspan of up to 12 feet, some have been known to circumnavigate the Southern Ocean three times in one year, covering 120,000 km (plate 3). He painted in Tasmania, Victoria, South Australia and NSW. His specialities: delightful landscapes of melodramatic, Nordic mood, vivid colour, and portraits. He is best remembered for his views of Hobart Town.

### Growth of the cities

In 1827 Joseph Lycett painted a panoramic view of Sydney (plate 4). A master forger, his skill is reflected in the detail of his painted landscapes. Transported for 14 years, he arrived in Sydney in 1814. He illustrated the important book, *Views in Australia* and the "Lycett Album", decorated the Dixon and Macquarie chests and the Riley cabinet, painted watercolour botanicals, and painted views of

Newcastle in oils – a major contribution. On returning to England, fearing that he was going to be arrested again, he cut his throat, and while recovering in hospital, tore open the wound and died.

In 1855, Bull produced a vigorous, light-filled, sweeping view of Hobart (plate 5), showing the busy harbour and thriving town dominated by Mount Wellington and the Turner-esque clouds above.

### Fauna and Flora

Richard Browne was convicted in Dublin for an unspecified crime, transported for seven years and arrived in Sydney. In 1812 he painted the White and Black Cockatoos (plate 6). This work captures the energy and character of the birds, and possibly carries the "Black versus White" message – two cultures pointing in opposite directions and so far apart. Nothing is known of Browne's background or training, however the painting skill shown suggests a sound understanding of natural history. He is best known for illustrating the Skottowe Manuscript.



### 8.

John Doody (active 1791–93), *Freycinetia baueriana*, c 1792, watercolour on paper. State Library of NSW, a1765065

### 9.

Andrew Doyle (c 1774–1841), *Woody Pear*, c 1820, watercolour on paper, 42.3 x 26.7 cm. State Library of NSW, a1528365

About 1793, Thomas Watling painted the sinuous goanna (plate 7). Watling was transported for 14 years for forging. On arrival in Sydney he was assigned to Chief Surgeon John White to produce natural history drawings, and later to Judge-Advocate David Collins, providing illustrations for Collins' *Account of the English Colony in NSW*.

John Doody was transported for seven years for theft. After arriving in Sydney,



**10.**

Thomas Bock (c 1790–1855), *Mithina (Mathinna)*, 1842, watercolour, 30.2 x 24.9 cm (irregular). Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, AG290, presented by Mrs J H Clarke, the artist's granddaughter, in 1951

**11.**

Charles Rodius (1802–1860) *King Jack Waterman*, 1834, crayon, charcoal and watercolour on brown paper further tinted by the artist, 18.5 x 12.5 cm. Private collection

**12.**

Richard Read Senior (c 1765–?), *Governor Lachlan Macquarie*, 1819, watercolour on ivory, 9.2 x 7 cm. Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, AG331, presented by Dr W Giblin 1898

**13.**

Thomas Griffiths Wainewright (1795–1847), *Edward Lord*, 1846, pencil and watercolour on Ruse and Turner paper, 47 x 36.5 cm. Allport Library and Museum of Fine Art, accession no HA403



he accompanied Captain William Paterson to Norfolk Island. Nothing is known of his art training. About 1792 he recorded the Norfolk Island Palm Lily, one of a large set of strong and bold watercolours of the flora of the island (**plate 8**). These are his only known works.

Andrew Doyle painted a woody pear c 1820 (**plate 9**). In Ireland he had studied art and served his apprenticeship as a calico printer. Found in possession of a watermark of the Bank of Ireland used for forging bank notes, he was transported for life, arriving in Sydney in 1803. He became a successful pastoralist.

### Indigenous Peoples, Settlers and International Figures

In 1842 Thomas Bock beautifully portrayed Mithina (Matthina) (**plate 10**). More tears have been shed in front of this painting than any other in the history of Australian art. It has become the symbol of the suffering of Tasmania's indigenous people. Governor Sir John and Lady Jane Franklin adopted Mithina in 1839 after her parents had died. She lived at Government House for five years as a companion for their daughter Eleanor. When Franklin was recalled to England in 1843, Mithina, aged 8, was returned to the Queen's Orphan School in Hobart. Aged 9, she was taken back to Flinders Island, her birthplace. Then, back to the Orphanage, and finally to the aboriginal settlement at Oyster Cove where she died in 1852, at age 17, by drowning while drunk. This beautiful little girl was caught between two cultures.

Bock had been transported for 14 years for administering a "decoction of certain herbs ... with the intent to cause a miscarriage". Prior to his conviction, he had an engraving business in Birmingham. A fine artist, he is best known for his portraits of Indigenous people and settlers.

Charles Rodius was transported to Sydney for seven years for theft. He was a talented painter, draughtsman, lithographer, architect and singer.



#### 14.

Joseph Backler (c 1813–1895), *Queen Victoria*, c 1850, oil on canvas, 91 x 71 cm, based on an engraving. State Library of NSW, Call No ML1144, IE Number IE9033794, presented by Mrs Bob Hall and Mr Reg Stokes June 1997

#### 15.

Thomas Browne (1821–1882), *The Convict Establishment Fremantle W.A.*, watercolour on paper. State Library of NSW, a358500u





## 16.

Charles Rodius (1802–1860),  
*Government House*, 1836, watercolour,  
19.3 x 38.4 cm. State Library of NSW,  
a918088

## 17.

George Edwards Peacock (1806–?)  
(artist), *NSW's First Rail Line from  
Sydney to Parramatta*, lithograph, J Allan  
Sydney (lithographer), 1850 32.7 x 47.5  
cm (sheet). National Library of Australia,  
Rex Nan Kivell Collection NK340

His accurate, sympathetic and beautiful sketched portraits of NSW indigenous leaders and their wives are his greatest legacy. The hopelessness, confusion, distress and anger of their expressions tells the story of the ruthless appropriation of lands and destruction of their culture by European settlers. In 1834 he sketched King Jack Waterman for Betsy Abell née Balcombe, the young woman who befriended Napoleon on St Helena (**plate 11**).

Richard Read Senior was transported for 14 years for possessing forged notes. He was Sydney's first professional portrait painter. In 1819 he produced a miniature portrait of Governor Macquarie (**plate 12**). Macquarie played a leading role in the social, economic, and architectural development of the colony.

In 1846 Wainwright painted Edward Lord, the prominent Van Diemen's Land settler, who took over as Governor when David Collins died (**plate 13**). Lord built the first private house in Hobart.

In c 1850 Joseph Backler portrayed the young Queen Victoria (**plate 14**). Backler was sentenced to death for forgery, commuted to transportation for life. Well educated, he was apprenticed to his father, a reputable painter on glass. In Sydney he continued to offend but eventually settled down and travelled around NSW and Queensland painting competent portraits and landscapes.

### Architecture

Thomas Browne painted the Fremantle Prison in 1866 (**plate 15**). An architect, surveyor and civil engineer, he was transported to Perth for 10 years for forgery. Later, found guilty of fraud, he committed suicide by taking strychnine. His dying words were said to be, "I wish



to lay against my child". His daughter had died aged six months.

Rodius recorded the first Government House in Sydney in 1836, considered the most accurate image of this building which was added to piecemeal over 50 years and no longer exists (**plate 16**).

These two works exhibit the artists' architectural drawing skills.

### Infrastructure

George Edwards Peacock, the second son of the respected Vicar of Sedbergh and a solicitor was sentenced to death for forgery, commuted to transportation for life. He had forged a Power of Attorney for transfer of stock which belonged to his brother. Peacock, who arrived in Sydney, is best known for his views of Sydney Harbour which depict the moods of the harbour. In 1850 he drew the celebrations marking the start of construction of NSW's first rail line from Sydney to Parramatta (**plate 17**).

### Industry

In 1857 Frederick Strange painted the Tyson & Grubb Sawmill on the Piper's River at Underwood in Tasmania, built to take advantage of the high timber prices, due to a timber shortage from the rapid growth of Melbourne (**plate 18**). Tyson harvested his heavily timbered property. He imported the latest plant, dammed upstream and moved the water via timber fluming for waterpower, built a 20 km wooden tramway to transport the timber to the coast, imported horses trained to work on rails, and provided housing for his workforce. The horses would haul the timber up the hills and along the flats, then be detached for the downhill, when the tram carts would freewheel with just a driver and a friction brake. Strange was transported for life for a series of burglaries. He arrived in Hobart and moved to Launceston.

Meshach Stevens was transported for life for stealing £5 from a dwelling place and arrived in Hobart. In the early 1800s it was said to be too dangerous to take a small boat across the Derwent because of the large number of whales. From the 1820s to the 1840s the sale of whale



#### 18.

Frederick Strange (c 1807–1873), *Tyson & Grubb Sawmill on Pipers River at Underwood in Tasmania*, 1857, watercolour on wove paper, 23.5 x 33.5 cm. Private collection

#### 19.

Meshach Stevens (1811-1885), *Northern Whale Fishery*, c 1830s -1840s, oil on canvas, 72 x 98 cm, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, QVM:1927:FP:0840. Purchased by Launceston City Council (Beattie Collection) 1927



oil, used for illumination and lubrication, was a major source of income for the colony. Painted c 1830, this is the only known painting by Stevens (**plate 19**). It is a competent copy of an aquatint after William John Huggins which depicted Northern Hemisphere whaling. The Van Diemen's Land whaling industry was at its height in the 1840s, and colonial vessels were venturing into polar waters.

### Politics

William Paul Dowling was transported for life for sedition. A multiple prize winner at the Art School of the Dublin Society, he travelled to England and became Secretary of the Davis Club, an Irish revolutionary society, and joined the radical Chartist movement. In 1853 he drew the Jubilee Festival Celebrations in Hobart to mark the Cessation of Transportation (**plate 20**). In Australia he worked as a portrait painter and later opened a photographic studio, his pastel portraiture showing an extraordinary skill in working over a photographic base.



### 20.

William Paul Dowling (c 1824–1877) (artist), *Jubilee Festival, Hobart Town, 10 August 1853, on the occasion of the Cessation of Transportation*, 1853, two-colour lithograph, R V Hood publisher, image 25 x 37.1 cm sheet 31 x 39 cm. Allport Library and Museum of Fine Art, accession no HA1150, record ID: SD\_ILS:101944

### 21.

Knud Geelmuyden Bull (1811–1889), *View of Ballarat, across Lake Wendouree*, 1879, oil on canvas, 66.5 x 113.5 cm. Art Gallery of Ballarat, purchased with funds from the Colin Hicks Caldwell Bequest and the Ferry Foundation, 1991

### 22.

George Edwards Peacock (1806–after 1855), *Port Jackson NSW – View up the harbour from Garden Island*, 1847, oil on academy board, 14.7 x 19.8 cm. Private collection





### Landscapes, Seascapes and Properties

Bull, painted a beautiful landscape of Lake Wendouree, Ballarat (**plate 21**), Peacock, a view of Sydney Harbour in 1847 towards where the Harbour Bridge stands today (**plate 22**), and Lycett, the residence of John Macarthur near Parramatta c 1823 (**plate 23**).

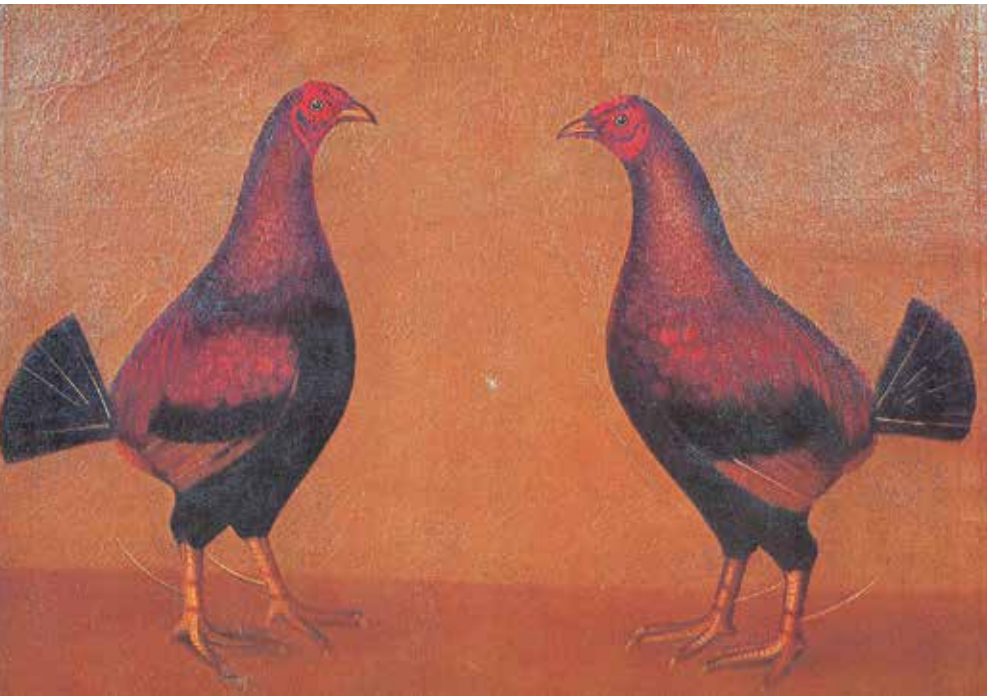
#### 23.

Joseph Lycett (c 1775–1828), *Residence of John MacArthur Esq near Parramatta*, c 1823, watercolour and gouache on paper, 17.7 x 27.8 cm. Art Gallery of South Australia, M J M Carter Collection 2004, HQ-20044P29

#### 24.

Edmund Edgar Bult (c 1804–after 1852), *Mary Ann Turner*, May 1835, watercolour on ivory, 5.75 x 4.75 cm. Caroline Simpson Collection, Sydney Living Museums





### Dress and Fashion

Edmund Edgar Bult was sentenced to death for robbery but saved from the gallows by a formal request for clemency from the Duke of York, next in line to the throne of England. He was subsequently transported for life, arriving in Sydney. His specialty was miniature portraiture and he was also a fine engraver, having trained under three of England's leading engravers. In 1835 he delightfully painted Mary Ann Turner, displaying the dress, coiffure and jewellery typical for the time (plate 24).

### Sport and Recreation

In 1840 William Buelow Gould recorded the start of a cockfight (plate 25). Cockfighting was the major sport and mode of gambling in the colony. Gould, a trained artist was transported for seven years for stealing clothing, arriving in Hobart, where he continued to offend, being before the magistrates on several occasions. He was assigned to Dr James Scott to record Tasmanian Flora, and then to Dr William de Little to produce studies of flora, fish and shellfish. Once free he earned his living painting mainly still life oils of flowers and fruit, game birds and rabbits.

### General Art

Charles Henry Theodore Costantini was sentenced to death for larceny in a dwelling place, commuted to transportation for life, and arrived in Sydney. He was pardoned by Governor Brisbane at the request of visiting French navigator Hyacinthe de Bougainville and eventually returned to England. He was later sentenced again to transportation for seven years for theft, this time sent to Van Diemen's Land. He is best known for his naïve portraits and landscapes, and finely painted *trompes l'oeil* (plate 26).

In 1851 William Gould painted a decorative still life of fruit and flowers (plate 27). Such paintings by Gould decorated many of the houses of Hobart.

Transportation to Western Australia lasted till 1868, longer than in the eastern colonies. James Walsh was transported



#### 25.

William Buelow Gould (1803–1853), *Fighting Cocks*, oil on canvas, 52 x 64 cm. Private collection

#### 26.

Charles Henry Theodore Costantini (1803–1860), *trompes l'oeil*, 1857, watercolour on paper laid on board, 46 x 58 cm. Allport Library and Museum of Fine Art (Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office), record ID: SD\_ILS:146271

for 15 years for forging an order for silver plate, arriving in Perth. After being released he offended again, in Perth, and was sentenced to a further eight years. He painted views of Perth, and images which depicted the way of life of the local indigenous people. He decorated his cell walls in Fremantle Gaol with frescoes derived from ancient, renaissance and biblical subjects (**plate 28**).

About the 1840s Bock painted a reclining nude, thought to be his wife Mary Ann (**plate 29**). Wainwright also painted what is said to depict “The Reunion of Eros and Psyche” from Apuleius’s *Golden Ass* (**plate 30**). As a follower of Romanticism, Wainwright is expressing classical literature in art, but in his own highly skilled style, portraying the eroticism rare in Australian colonial art. The “elongated mannerisms and neo-classical lines” confirm his links to Swiss painter Henry Fuseli (1741–1825) who spent much of his later life in England.



### 27.

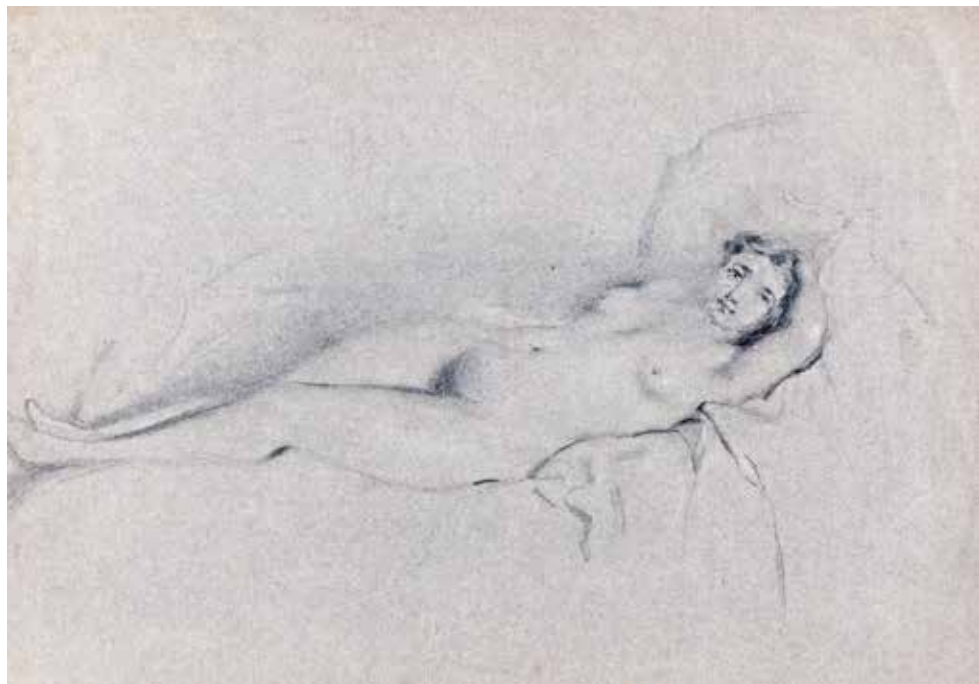
William Buelow Gould (1803–1853),  
*Still Life with Flowers and Fruit*,  
c 1851, oil on canvas, 61 x 75 cm.  
Private collection

### 28.

James Walsh (1833–1871),  
“*The folding of Athena’s peplos*”,  
after part of the sculptured frieze of  
the Parthenon in Athens, which shows  
the Panathenaic procession,  
c 1855. Fremantle Prison Collection,  
photograph Michael Lewi

### 29.

Thomas Bock (c 1790–1855),  
*Reclining Female Nude*, c 1840s,  
pencil heightened with white on paper.  
Queen Victoria Museum and Art  
Gallery, QVM.1968.FD.28





**30.**  
Thomas Griffiths Wainewright (1794–1847), “The Reunion of Eros and Psyche” from Apuleius’s *Golden Ass*, c 1840s, watercolour on paper. Private collection

**31.**  
William Buelow Gould (1803–1853), *Fox and a trapped Hare*, c 1830, pencil on wove paper, 9 x 16 cm. Private collection



## Humour

Gould demonstrated how to catch a fox in Van Diemen’s Land c 1830. A hare is tied to a fence, and as the hungry fox approaches, the hunter wielding a shillelagh hits it over the head (**plate 31**).

The Icelandic convict, sailor, revolutionary and author Jorgen Jorgenson was sentenced to transportation for life and arrived in Van Diemen’s Land in 1826. Prior to his conviction he portrayed “An Incident at the Icelandic Ball” c 1825, where a society lady has her wig swept off her head, caught on the chandelier, while dancing – revealing all (**plate 32**).

## Conclusion

Every convict painting is a small fragment of Australia’s colonial history and has a story to tell. The convict artists, in some cases convicted for a paltry crime, had to withstand the extreme deprivations of incarceration and transportation and then, on arrival, a primitive existence with incredible hardships. However they arrived in a burgeoning place of great beauty, with flora and fauna, countryside and coastline, and Indigenous peoples rarely seen before by Europeans. In recording their experiences, they made a huge contribution to Australian art history.



**Robert Stevens** studied metallurgy at RMIT and Melbourne University and has an MBA from Swinburne University. He was

later involved in management in West Footscray Engineering Works, making specialised forged steel components. He now enjoys writing about his passion, early Australian art.

**32.**  
Jorgen Jorgenson (1780–1841), *An Incident at the Icelandic Ball*, c 1825, from *The Adventures of Thomas Walter, as related to a friend: the autobiography of Jorgen Jorgenson*. British Library Egerton MS2066 p 262

# The 2019 Peter Walker Fine Art Writing Award: Judge's Report

## MEGAN MARTIN

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Peter Walker Fine Arts' innovative idea to fund the annual Peter Walker Fine Art Writing Award, to encourage authors to write for *Australiana*, has now operated for 20 years. We all benefit from his continuing interest and support.

As I faced the challenge of judging the award for the first time, I realised that it was no easy task. Some of the great values of *Australiana* magazine are the breadth of subjects covered, the diversity of contributors and the range of formats: both long and short research articles; reviews; news items; and a miscellany of small stories. How do you compare apples and oranges? What is good writing? As an historian I bring some baggage to this question. My criteria start with the quality of the research, the structure of the argument and the clarity of expression. The right words are important, but more words are not necessarily better.

Without diminishing the value of other contributions, I have selected these articles, which generally explore new areas of research, for particular commendation.

In February, two articles focused on little-known artists. Timothy Roberts followed the archival trail to rediscover Rose Blakemore, a Queensland-born artist and art teacher whose career spanned the late 19th and early 20th century. Robyn Lake revisited the Tasmanian convict artist Frederick Strange whom she first investigated for *Australiana* in 2002. Scott Carlin surveyed scrimshaw, well-illustrated from the Colin Thomas collection.

May was devoted to two very substantial contributions. "Kingston's vision" documents the quest to uncover the story of a large four-door colonial bookcase made of river red gum that

came up at an Adelaide auction in 2017. The trio of authors brought a broad skill-set to this task: Justin Gare, former carpenter and joiner and now Senior Objects Conservator at Artlab Australia; Peter Scammell, retired auctioneer; and Andrew Klenke, conservation architect. Starting from a detailed examination and description of the bookcase, the trio posed a series of research questions about date, style, materials, designer, cabinetmaker and commission. They surveyed colonial bookcases illustrated in the key references and identified another, similar bookcase; in 1985 this bookcase was considered to have been made c 1880 in NSW but Gare, Scammell and Klenke have re-dated the piece to 1848, identified the designer as Adelaide architect George Kingston and the cabinetmaker as Thomas Bell. The re-attribution was underpinned by the discovery of an 1848 description of this bookcase in the *South Australian Register*, made possible by Trove, the Australian newspapers digitisation program.

The second major article in May is Jillian Dwyer's meticulous reconstruction of the life of her ancestor "William Lamborn, gold rush jeweller in colonial Melbourne". Jill explores Lamborn's associations with other gold rush jewellers; reviews the challenges to precise dating of colonial jewellery and provides a stunning array of illustrations. Her article exemplifies the critical role played by *Australiana* and *Australiana* Society members over many years in publishing research on Australian material culture. These are the shoulders that we all stand on to take our research into new territory.

The August issue also contains two substantial contributions, on quite different subjects. Robert La Nauze ventures into the mid-20th century

Melbourne art scene to uncover the 'Paris Studio' of Hungarian émigré George de Nemes. This fascinating story breaks new ground and is richly illustrated with images of de Nemes' work in paint, ceramics and glass. Andrew Montana's investigation of Lyon, Cottier & Co's ecclesiastical stained-glass work from the 1870s looks at an aspect of the company's work which has hitherto received little scholarly attention. It too is richly illustrated.

November presents a number of shorter research articles: Dianne Byrne's survey of Queensland racing history as told through the gold and silver of Tattersall's Club cups; Gregory Hill's argument for recognising brothers Graham and William Ferry as Australia's first art potters; Gary Morgan's research into a miniature by Ludwig Becker; and Dorothy Erickson's tale of a Western Australian colonial table and desk. Four fine pieces on quite different subjects from Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia.

From this broad array of significant articles published in 2019 *Australiana*, I have chosen "Kingston's vision: South Australia's earliest and most enigmatic piece of colonial furniture" as the Peter Walker Fine Art Writing Award winner for 2019.



**Megan Martin**

is Head of Collections & Access at Sydney Living Museums, with a keen interest in exploring the meaning

of objects and crafting stories about them.



## Daniel Cooper's 1856 Foundation Stone Box

In 1856, Governor Denison laid the foundation stone for Daniel Cooper's Woollahra House at Point Piper. The stone was designed to hold an engraved copper box containing coins and a medal. This box was re-used for the foundation ceremony of a later Woollahra House in 1883, and unearthed when it was demolished in 1929, together with another box used at the 1816 foundation ceremony for Captain Piper's Henrietta Villa. Peter Lane unravels the history.

### 1.

Attributed to Augustus Earle (1793–1838), *Point Piper near Sydney, N.S. Wales*. c 1826, watercolour, 15.5 x 20.6 cm. The view shows Henrietta Villa, probably from Clark Island in Sydney Harbour. Rex Nan Kivell collection NK12/53, National Library of Australia

### PETER LANE

Foundation stones for church and charitable organisations are often laid to motivate people to raise funds to complete the building project. Those for public buildings can be used by a politician or civic leader to reflect their visions for the community. Rarely do private houses have foundation stones.

During the ceremony of laying a foundation stone, it is a common

practice to place coins and other contemporary objects under the stone. Modest abodes sometimes have a coin placed under the main entrance for good luck.<sup>1</sup>

The first house on Point Piper was Captain Piper's splendid Henrietta Villa (**plate 1**). Its foundation stone was laid on 2 November 1816 in a Masonic ceremony.<sup>2</sup>

Forty years later, the laying of the 1856 foundation stone for (Sir) Daniel Cooper's Woollahra House at Point Piper was a grand Vice-Regal occasion.

The house was never finished, causing confusion among later writers.<sup>3</sup>

Later still, Sir Daniel's nephew (Sir) William Charles Cooper built a grand Woollahra House on the same land, and in 1883 placed the 1816 and 1856 boxes and contents under his new house's foundation stone (plate 2).

### The 1816 ceremony

When Henrietta Villa's foundation stone was laid on 2 November 1816, John Piper had a metal box containing coins placed under the stone. The house was built on his Rose Bay Estate, comprising 190 acres at Point Piper and its hinterland, from Edgelyffe to Rose Bay. Piper owned more land at Vaucluse and elsewhere.

Nesta Griffiths records that when the 1883 Woollahra House was itself demolished in 1929, the "silver box" from Henrietta Villa was uncovered.<sup>4</sup> She quotes the text on Piper's box from Henrietta Villa, while Eric Russell's picture book on Woollahra<sup>5</sup> reproduces two photographs in the Mitchell Library of the inscriptions on the box, one in Latin and the other with an English translation. The present whereabouts of this box are unknown, but it is possible that both boxes were obtained by Sir William Cooper about 1930.

### The 1856 ceremony

Piper sold his Rose Bay Estate in 1826 to Daniel Cooper (1785–1853) and Solomon Levey (1794–1833) and by 1847 Cooper was sole owner.<sup>6</sup> Upon his death in 1853 the property was bequeathed to his nephew's young son Daniel Cooper (1848–1909) to be held in trust for him by his father, also named Daniel Cooper (1821–1902) who was knighted in 1857.

By 1856 Daniel Cooper (1821–1902) was a successful young merchant, politician, and the first Speaker of the NSW Legislative Assembly. Cooper planned to build a new mansion on Point Piper, and invited Sir William Thomas Denison, Governor-General of the Australian Colonies and Governor in Chief of New South Wales, to lay the foundation stone. The event seems to have been held for prestige purposes



and self-interest. Cooper did not own the land; he was only a trustee. The whole exercise implied that he was here to stay and was to show that he was an important person in the colony.

The foundation stone laying ceremony took place on Saturday 13 December 1856 with over 400 invited guests, consisting of the elite of Sydney society. The invitees included Charles Cowper a recent Premier; the Lord Bishop of Sydney; Justices Stephen, Therry, Dickinson and Milford; members of the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council; Colonel Bloomfield of the 11<sup>th</sup> Regiment; Professor John Woolley, Principal of the University of Sydney; and the French and Spanish Consuls.

The grand event started in the afternoon and finished late at night. Henry Parkes' newspaper *The Empire* reported the event in detail on 15 December:<sup>7</sup>

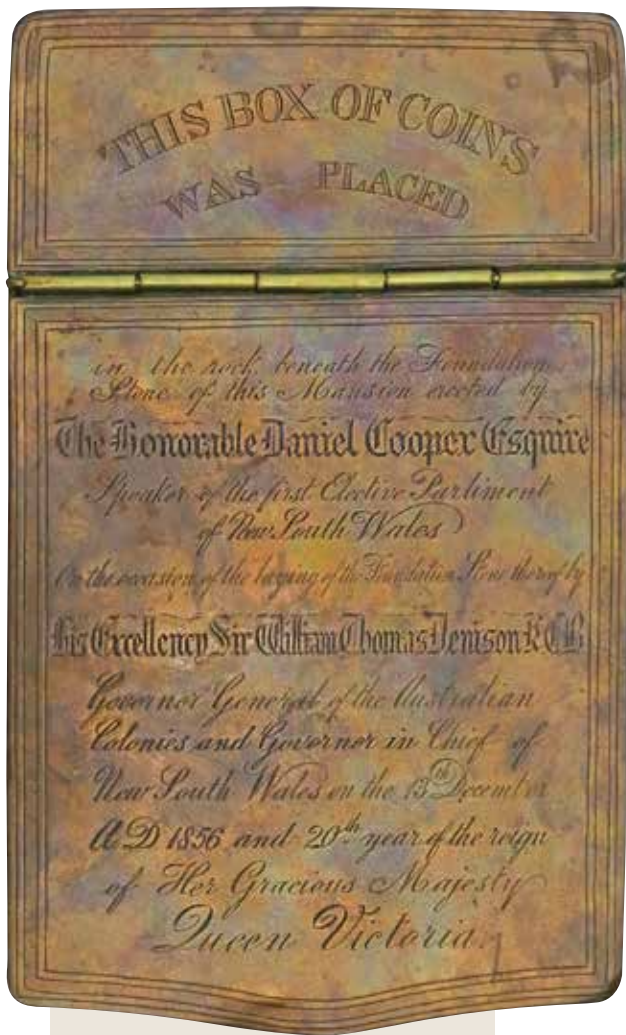
### 2.

Hall & Co, *Woollahra House*, photograph, 1929. The house was designed by John Kirkpatrick 1882 for William Charles Cooper. Collection Sydney Living Museums SLM 32413

### 3.

*Rose Bay Cottage*, designed by John Verge 1834, where Daniel Cooper lived in the 1850s, Later additions were removed and the cottage restored in the 1990s. Photograph John Wade

Shortly after two o'clock, his Excellency, the Governor-General, Lady Denison and the Misses Denison, accompanied by Captain Fremantle, Alfred Denison, Esq., and Captain Scott, arrived by water, in the gigs and pinnacle of *HMS Juno*, they were conveyed by two gunboats,



**4.**

*Copper foundation box for Woollahra House, 1856. Lid showing engraved inscription. Private collection*

**5.**

*Copper foundation box for Woollahra House, 1856. Lid open showing larger timber lined compartment. Private collection*

which upon landing of his Excellency, fired a salute of eighteen guns. Daniel Cooper and his brother Thomas Cooper received His Excellency and suite and escorted them to the future residence of the Cooper family, while the band played the National Anthem. When everyone was assembled around the foundation stone, the Lord Bishop commenced the proceedings

with prayers for the sanctification of the work.

After prayers, the Governor laid the foundation stone, and young Daniel Cooper placed the box containing the coins into a cavity within it:

Master Daniel Cooper (aged only eight years) then placed in the cavity in the stone a metal box containing all the coins of the realm from a two-sovereign piece down to a quarter-farthing, and an Australian sovereign and a half-sovereign, also a silver medal struck lately by Mr Hogarth, jeweller, and a variety of ancient coins down to the Roman period. Within this box also were the case and coins which were taken from the foundation of 'old Point Piper House.' Master Daniel presented a handsome silver trowel to His Excellency who,

after spreading the mortar in form, directed the stone be lowered into its place then applied the level, and finding it adjusted truly, he struck it thrice with his mallet, and said: "I lay this first stone of the house of 'Woollahra', the property of Mr Daniel Cooper, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of this colony; and I lay it with my best wishes that the house may prove as solid as the foundation upon it rests. And may it ever remain in the family."

The large gathering left the building site and rode in "a long train of carriages" or walked the short distance to Daniel Cooper's home, Rose Bay Cottage (or House or Lodge) (plate 3), to spend the rest of the day there. The garden had been prepared to welcome the guests in style. When all had arrived a series of toasts were made, first to the Queen, then to the Coopers. Between

## 6.

Copper foundation box for Woollahra House, 1856, showing timber compartments. Private collection



the toasts, speeches including details of the yet to be built mansion were given. When this formal session was completed, guests could dance or stroll around the magnificent perfumed garden.

The young midshipmen – described by *The People's Advocate* as “any quantity of white-trousered and blue-jacketed young middies, who enjoyed themselves vastly”, began a game of leapfrog, which “gave more amusement than anything else” with even the Parliamentarians – including Daniel Cooper himself – joining in.<sup>8</sup>

### The 1856 copper box

The lid is engraved as follows (plate 4):

THIS BOX OF COINS was placed in the rock beneath the Foundation Stone of this Mansion erected by The Honourable Daniel Cooper Esquire, Speaker of the first elective Parliament [sic] of New South Wales, on the occasion of laying of the Foundation Stone thereof by His Excellency Sir William Thomas Denison KCB, Governor General of the Australian Colonies and Governor in Chief of New South Wales on the 13<sup>th</sup> December AD 1856 and 20<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Her Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria.

The box's total weight is 770 g (copper and wood), it has a brass hinge some 45 mm from one end, gilt interior and cedar wood lining with two compartments both without a base lining and plain sides (plates 5-6). The external dimensions of the copper box are 185 mm long, 115 mm

wide, 60 mm deep (7½ x 4½ x 2¾ in), and the internal measurements of the wooden box 130 mm long, 110 mm wide and 60 mm deep (4¾ x 4¼ x 2½ in).

The box is in good condition with no signs of being exposed for long or to damp. Most likely it was removed to safe storage immediately after the ceremony, to avoid the risk of the coins being stolen, with the intention of putting it back later when the house was being built.

Depositing coins when laying a foundation stone was always a risk. In 1817, Governor Macquarie placed a silver holey dollar and dump under the stone of St Matthew's Church at Windsor. That night the stone was dislodged and the coins were stolen, so he had to re-lay the stone and replace the stolen coins the following day. A few nights later those coins were stolen too.<sup>9</sup>

### Who made the copper box?

Several engravers and jewellers working in Sydney in 1856 had the skills to make and engrave the copper box. As Julius Hogarth (1820–79) cut the dies for a silver medal that was in the box, his firm Hogarth & Erichsen is considered to be the most likely to have engraved the box.

Hogarth was born in Copenhagen and in 1852 he arrived in Sydney with fellow passenger Conrad Erichsen, a Norwegian engraver. After a stint on the goldfields, within a short time they became partners in a jewellery business in George Street.<sup>10</sup> Hogarth very likely made the silver trowel too. Other possibilities include the engraver John Black Carmichael.<sup>11</sup>

### Daniel Cooper's 1856 Woollahra House

Like Captain John Piper, Sir Daniel Cooper did not own the land when the foundation stone was laid. Sir Daniel was from 1853 to 1869 simply a trustee of the property on behalf of his eldest son Daniel (1848–1909, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Baronet), the boy who placed the box in the foundation stone cavity, until he reached his majority. This did not stop him planning in 1856 to build Woollahra House at a cost of over £50,000.

Sir Daniel's name for the house refers to the Eora name for Point Piper, signifying “camp” or “meeting ground”. This place was the famous “sit down” for the Aborigines “in the days of yore”.<sup>12</sup> The well-known Eora man Warrah Warrah, William Worrall or Ricketty Dick (c 1795–1863), camped on part of Daniel Cooper's Point Piper Estate, perhaps from as early as 1827. W. C. Wentworth paid George Rawlingson to look after the Indigenous man, and Rawlingson built him a gunyah at Rose Bay. He was the subject of several gold and silver sculptures, an inkstand, medals and tokens made by Julius Hogarth (plate 7).

The plans for the house, designed by leading architects John Fredrick Hilly (c 1810–1883) and George Allen Mansfield (1834–1908), were displayed at the foundation ceremony and described in the newspapers.<sup>13</sup> The mansion in the Italian style would have a *porte cochère* to shelter guests arriving or departing by carriage as at Government House, a great hall 67 by 30 ft (about 20 x 9 m), several drawing rooms, a library, a strong room,



## 7.

Hogarth & Erichsen, *inkstand* presented to Samuel Cook of the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 21 May 1857, silver. The central figure on the lid is probably Ricketty Dick in his gnyah at Rose Bay. Collection: Sydney Living Museums, gift of Caroline Simpson

business rooms, a great staircase, a family breakfast room, a great dining room, a hat and cloak room, numerous bedrooms (15 for guests), servants' quarters, kitchen and a large basement. The stable block and coach house was to be built near the main house but out of sight.

In 1856 Daniel Cooper represented Sydney Hamlets in the first NSW Legislative Assembly and was elected Speaker. When the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported the laying of the foundation stone it saw the proposed building of Woollahra House as “a pledge of his abiding attachment to his adopted country”.<sup>14</sup>

Cooper left Sydney apparently for health reasons in 1861 to live permanently in England. Rosemary Broomham observes that:<sup>15</sup>

However, even as the first steps were taken towards this ambitious construction, Daniel Cooper II decided to return to the home country like other colonial aristocrats such as Sir Charles Nicholson, William Charles Wentworth and Stuart Donaldson. With the rapid growth of democracy in New South Wales, upper class status and titles could only fully be enjoyed in England.

While some authorities maintain that the 1856 Woollahra House was never built, evidence proves that it was at least partly constructed, as this 1858 tender advertisement suggests:<sup>16</sup>

TO MASONS—Parties desirous of tendering for the erection of certain Offices, forming the south wing, at the proposed Mansion of Sir D. Cooper, at Woollahra, may see the plans and specifications at the offices of Messrs. HILLY and MANSFIELD architects, 138, Pitt-street.

English novelist Anthony Trollope, who visited Sydney in 1871, to write a travel book and to visit his son Frederick who lived on a farm between Grenfell and Forbes, gushed effusively of his visit to the house on Point Piper and of the other villas which by then surrounded it:<sup>17</sup>

There is a rock outside — or probably inside the grounds of Woollahra, belonging to Mr. Cooper, on which the blacks in the old days, when they were happy and undisturbed, used to collect themselves for festive, political, and warlike purposes. I wonder whether they enjoyed it as I did! How they must have hated the original Cooper when he came and took it,— bought it for 20s. an acre, out of which they got no dividend, or had a grant of it from the English Crown!

Woollahra is a magnificent property, covered with villas and gardens, all looking down upon the glorious sea. In England it would be worth half a million of money, and as things go on, it will soon be worth as much in New South Wales; and perhaps some

future Cooper will be Duke Cooper or Marquis Cooper, and Woollahra will be as famous as Lowther or Chatsworth. It is infinitely more lovely than either. I envied the young man, and almost hated him for having it—although he had just given me an excellent dinner.

In 1880, several notices report the death on 17 March “at Woollahra House” of Edward Smith Hill.<sup>18</sup> (Sir) Daniel Cooper had married Hill’s sister Elizabeth at St James’ on 3 September 1846.<sup>19</sup>

An obituary records that Hill:<sup>20</sup>

for the last eighteen years lived very privately at his residence on the Point Piper Estates — now better known as Woollahra ...

What was this Woollahra House? Nesta Griffiths writes that “After the Daniel Coopers left for England, Mr Edward Hill, Curator [Trustee] of the Sydney [Australian] Museum, went to live at the Woollahra House stables: ‘These having been previously erected were made habitable for a dwelling’.” She goes on to confuse matters further by referring to a later (1853?) print of Henrietta Villa as the ‘temporary’ house where Hill lived, and where “Anthony Trollope dined with young Mr. Daniel Cooper”.<sup>21</sup>

While the popular belief is that Henrietta Villa was demolished in the 1850s, Rosemary Broomham’s research shows that surveyors Reuss & Halloran

## 8.

Gate Lodge of Woollahra House c 1871, now Rose Bay Police Station.

The police car is not standard issue but is provided by BMW Sydney.

Photo John Wade



on 8 September 1882 drew up a plan entitled “Point Piper Cooper’s Appn” [Application] showing his 69 acres, still with Henrietta Villa in situ and with a square extension at the rear, possibly the 1858 ‘offices’. This plan also shows the Henrietta Villa stables, which were referred to in 1884 as “the old stables of Woollahra House”.<sup>22</sup> Both structures must have been still standing in 1882, but demolished soon after.

Some of this confusion was caused by the fact that Daniel Cooper had already removed the foundation stone from Henrietta Villa in 1856, as its “case and coins” were already in the copper box that his son young Daniel had inserted at the foundation laying ceremony.

The elaborate gatehouse, now the Rose Bay Police Station (**plate 8**), was apparently constructed during Edward Hill’s residence in 1871.

### W C Cooper’s Woollahra House 1883

Sir Daniel’s younger son William Charles Cooper (1851–1925, later the 3<sup>rd</sup> Baronet) decided to build “a large Family Residence on the Point Piper Estate” in 1882, designed by architect John Kirkpatrick, who advertised for tenders in October 1882.<sup>23</sup>

Mrs William Cooper laid the foundation stone for their new Woollahra House on 10 January 1883, with a silver trowel presented to her by the successful contractors, Phippard Brothers.<sup>24</sup> A large box and two smaller boxes – those from 1816 and 1856

with the coins and the medal<sup>25</sup>– were placed in the foundation stone.

The new Woollahra House was nearing completion in October 1883, when building contractors Phippard Brothers were seeking men to French polish the joinery,<sup>26</sup> and completed by early 1884, when Mrs W. Cooper of Woollahra House, Rose Bay, was advertising for Jane Elliott, Laundress, to get in touch with her.<sup>27</sup> Mrs Cooper was frequently advertising for servants;<sup>28</sup> their Fox Terrier puppy strayed on 3 August,<sup>29</sup> and they hosted a dance on 11 June 1885.<sup>30</sup>

Just a few years later, in 1888 William Charles Cooper and his family relocated to England and the property was leased to Lady Martin, widow of premier Sir James Martin. Then the house on five acres was sold in 1899 to Thomas Longworth. Longworth lived there until his death in 1927; two years later Woollahra House was demolished and the boxes were found during demolition.

Architect John Kirkpatrick had advertised to builders to tender for “the Erection of large Stone Stables to Woollahra House, Point Piper” in March 1883.<sup>31</sup> The stables were housed in a two-storey stone building with a tower over the central coach entry.<sup>32</sup> The tower was demolished and a third storey added when the stables were converted c 1930 into an apartment block with central courtyard, Wyuna Court; Nesta Griffiths notes Sydney Gilchrist was responsible for this, presumably as the developer (**plate 9**).

### Recovery of the boxes

When Woollahra House was demolished in 1929, the boxes were recovered. Melbourne’s *Age* reported the find and briefly described the coins that were found in “metal boxes” as “gold, silver and copper coins dating back to 1706”.<sup>33</sup> There was no mention of the Hogarth medal and ancient coins. The following day Brisbane’s *Sunday Mail* reported the find and added that the coins were in two small boxes encased in a larger box. Sundry provincial papers picked up the story from their news services.

Some weeks later, *The Picton Post*, a NSW country paper, reported the find and revealed the additional information; “... encased in a larger box, which let into a stone supporting the verandah post...”<sup>34</sup> All articles state that the coins and boxes were to be taken to the Mitchell Library for valuation, and recorded the inscription on the 1856 box. Surprisingly no Sydney newspaper appears to have reported the find.

In 1930 Mr John Garrison, one of the syndicate members who had purchased Woollahra House, was the custodian of all the boxes and remaining contents. This information was revealed in a letter John Taylor of Vacluse House wrote on 3 October 1930 to the President & Gentlemen Trustees of Vacluse Park, advising that Mr Garrison had left the “copper container that was used to hold the coins ... found by the demolishers in the N.E. corner of the building”. Garrison “offered to



## 9.

*Wyuna Court* at Point Piper, the former stone stables for Woollahra House designed by John Kirkpatrick in 1883, converted to apartments about 1930, with an extra floor added.  
Photo John Wade

lend it to the Trust, and he has also promised to give us one of the gold coins, i.e. a spade Guinea of George III to place on view. The box I have placed in the Trustees' Room."<sup>35</sup>

### Recent history of the 1856 box

The 1856 copper box reappeared on 11 December 2003, when the numismatic firm Morton & Eden Ltd auctioned it in London. The box was lot 525, and was illustrated, described, and given a brief history; the contents were missing. Included in the lot was a typescript copy of *The Story of Point Piper* by Woollahra Municipal Council, 1970, and a magazine article "Pioneer Families of Australia – The Coopers", taken from *The Home*, October 1932.

In October 2007, Downies Coin Auctions auctioned the box in Melbourne. The catalogue depicted the box, lot 769, on the back cover. It was illustrated and recorded similarly to the Morton & Eden description.

Where was the box between 1930 and 2003? Nesta Griffiths recalled that when the 4th Baronet, Sir William George Cooper, visited Sydney in 1936, he told her that his uncle Sir Daniel, the 2nd Baronet, had presented him with the 1856 "case of coins ... somewhat depleted of its original contents of coins by the workmen who dug it up during the demolition of the house in July, 1929"; and that this had been discovered with a "silver box" from Henrietta Villa.<sup>36</sup> The 1883 silver trowel was then owned by Captain Arthur Cooper (2<sup>nd</sup> son of Sir William) of London.

### The contents of the boxes

The 1856 *Empire* article records that the contents included all the coins of the realm from a two-sovereign piece down to a quarter-farthing, an Australian gold sovereign and a half-sovereign, up to eight gold, nine silver and six copper British and Australian coins, a silver medal struck lately by Mr Hogarth, jeweller, and a variety of ancient coins down to the Roman period, plus coins from the 1816 foundation of "old Point Piper House"; most likely one was an 1813 NSW holey dollar. From the 1929 newspaper article we learn that the British coins date back to 1706 and in 1930, a spade guinea of George III is mentioned. The most historically

significant of all the coins and medal, although it may have not then have been the most valuable, was the holey dollar.

### The holey dollar

In 1929 John Garrison intended to value the coins and boxes at the Mitchell Library. A search at that Library failed to reveal any correspondence from 1929 to 1931 involving the coins and boxes that were to be taken to the Library. There may have been some unrecorded contact or he may never have approached the Library after all.

It is likely that Garrison approached a dealer, or the newspaper articles caught the attention of a coin dealer who then approached Garrison and purchased some of the coins. Angus & Robertson were prominent dealers in coins, books and all kinds of Australiana.<sup>37</sup> They may have bought some, then sold them to Sydney collector Sir John Ferguson (1881–1969), the Australian bibliographer. He had a coin collection and in 1907 had married Bessie, daughter of George Robertson, partner in that firm. Ferguson left a number of papers to the National Library of Australia and a search through those files proved unsuccessful regarding most of his numismatic collection.

In March 1981 Spinks Australia, (now trading as Noble Numismatics) of



Sydney, sold Ferguson's holey dollar (lot 365), although at the time its provenance was not recorded. It was in superb condition (featuring on the catalogue front and back covers) and the host coin dated 1778, struck at Mexico Mint, is a unique surviving holey dollar of a host coin with that date and mint (**plates 10–11**). The provenance was revealed in *The Holey Dollars of New South Wales* by W.J.D. Mira and W.J. Noble, published in 1988. That book also recorded that it was acquired in the 1920s through Angus & Robertson.

Remarkably the Morton & Eden auction where the 1856 box was sold included the unique holey dollar that had belonged to Sir John Ferguson. Had someone attempted to reunite the box and holey dollar, or was it just a coincidence? Regrettably Morton & Eden and Noble Numismatics records no longer exist for those instances or were simply inaccessible during this research.

### The ancient coins

How Daniel Cooper originally acquired the ancient coins is not known but he may have acquired them from England or possibly in Sydney. Before 1856, Sydney had at least one book dealer offering numismatic publications; in 1837 Tegg's Repository in George Street was offering catalogues on Greek and

Roman coins<sup>38</sup> which indicates there was a market for this kind of publication among the collecting fraternity in NSW at the time. Julius Hogarth possibly supplied the ancient coins, as he may then have been courting James Tegg's daughter Charlotte, whom he married in 1858, and been familiar with Tegg's stock.<sup>39</sup>

Ancient coins were known to exist in Sydney. In 1840 Samuel Lyons had held an auction of coins and medals including "ancients".<sup>40</sup> The following month, "I F" offered coins for sale by private treaty, and as the timing was so soon after the auction it is likely that all or some of these were the same coins.<sup>41</sup> Another possible source was Sir Charles Nicholson, Sydney University Provost (Chancellor), a very prominent citizen and Member of Parliament who had an extensive collection of antiquities.<sup>42</sup>

### The Hogarth medal

Julius Hogarth's medal was almost certainly one of the medals struck in silver and bronze to honour Major-General Sir Edward Macarthur. Hogarth cut the two dies for the medal which were struck at the Sydney Mint – the first medal struck there. Thus technically the 1856 newspaper got it wrong about who struck the medal, but to the layman it was Hogarth.

### 10–11.

*New South Wales holey dollar*, struck in 1813 from a 1778 Mexico Mint silver eight reales, 39mm, ex Sir John Ferguson collection. Courtesy Noble Numismatics

### Later coins

If William Cooper added coins to the 1883 box, they were most likely to have been a recently struck collection of Queen Victoria "coins of the realm" including the crown, half-crown, florin, shilling, sixpence, groat, threepence, penny, half-penny and farthing and an Australian sovereign and half-sovereign.

### Summary

Early Australian foundation boxes are normally humble sealed containers and were frequently discarded when discovered years later. The objects in time capsules are the focus of attention, yet in this case it could be strongly argued that the reverse is true.

Daniel Cooper, who commissioned the copper box, like many Englishmen who lived in Australia always considered England as home although he had strong emotional ties with Australia – a legacy that lasted well into the 20th century. So it is rather fitting that some of its life may have been spent in England.



### 12-13.

*Macarthur medal* (bronze example), diam 33 mm. Designed by Ludwig Becker, dies cut by Julius Hogarth, struck at the Royal Mint, Sydney. This medal was ordered by Acting Governor of Victoria, General Edward Macarthur the son of Captain John Macarthur. Courtesy Noble Numismatics

This 1856 copper foundation box is of major historical significance in the colony of NSW and identifies with the social fabric of a long-gone era as it records the day it was laid down, the dignitaries involved in the ceremony, and the perceived future of a house that was only partly completed.

### Epilogue

When John Wade was president of the Australiana Society one of his last activities

was to give a presentation to the Adelaide Society of Collectors. I showed him the box and he said he was aware of the box which he had discussed with his long-time friend the late Kevin Fahy. They had puzzled over where it could be or whether it had been lost forever; they never thought to ask a coin collector about a metal box that had coins in it! I was amazed he knew about it and he was equally stunned when he saw it in Adelaide. John insisted that I record it

### Sir Daniel Cooper (1821–1902)

Daniel Cooper was the nephew of the first Daniel Cooper (1795–1853) and the second son of Thomas Cooper and Jane (née Ramsden) and was born at Bolton, Lancaster, England. His family moved to Sydney when he was a child. In 1835 he returned to England to be educated, spending four years at Junior School of University College, London. He later trained in law but dropped out to pursue a commercial career. He initially had a business in France but due to ill health returned to Sydney. He soon amassed property in and around Sydney, and stations in the Western districts by purchase and through inheritance, making him wealthy.

Shortly after Cooper married

Elizabeth, daughter of William Hill, in 1846 he rose rapidly in the commercial and political world in Sydney. He became a director of the Bank of NSW and to commemorate the bank's success in 1852, due to the extraordinary profit owed largely to the discovery of gold in NSW the previous year, he was presented with *The Cooper Vase*, which the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences acquired in 1973, accession number A6297. He was appointed to the Legislative Council, became a director of the Sydney Railway Co., appointed a Commissioner of the Peace, became a magistrate, elected to the Legislative Assembly in the first responsible government (1856) and elected its first Speaker. The following year he was elected to the Senate of

the University of Sydney, became a generous benefactor and was knighted. In early 1860 he resigned and the following year sailed to England, never returning to Australia.

Daniel was an avid collector of postage stamps and in 1869 founded the Philatelic Society of London, the predecessor of today's Royal Philatelic Society. He was created Baronet of Woollahra in 1863, KCMG in 1880 and GCMG in 1888. From time to time he acted as NSW Agent-General and was heavily involved in the Sydney International Exhibition of 1879–80, and in 1886 was a member of the Royal Commission for the Indian Exhibition at London. In 1902 he died in London leaving an estate valued at more than £440,000. Elizabeth survived him.

in *Australiana*. Over a decade later, in between many articles and writing a book, I eventually got around to research it and wrote it up as promised!

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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#### Time line

- **1816:** Foundation stone laid for Captain John Piper's *Henrietta Villa* on 2 November 1816,<sup>43</sup> on a promise given by Governor Macquarie to grant the land to him.
- **1820:** John Piper (1773–1851) granted land by Macquarie and the promontory becomes known as Point Piper.
- **1822:** Captain Piper takes up residence at *Henrietta Villa*.<sup>44</sup>
- **1826:** Captain Piper sells his Sydney properties and auctions the contents of *Henrietta Villa*, moving to Bathurst where he builds a new house on his 2000-acre property Alloway Bank, completed in 1829.
- **1826:** land acquired by (granted 1830) Daniel Cooper (1785–1853) and Solomon Levey (1794–1833), both emancipists, as part of a parcel of land purchased in the area. Levey wills his estate to his young son John.
- **1847:** After complicated attempts to sell and raise loans relating to the whole Estate, the Woollahra property and other lands are transferred to Solomon Levey's partner Daniel Cooper.
- **1853:** Daniel Cooper dies in England and wills the property to his nephew's eldest son, also named Daniel Cooper (1821–1902). Daniel Cooper was knighted by patent on 18 July 1857 and created Baronet of Woollahra in 1863.
- **1853–1869:** Sir Daniel was trustee of the property on behalf of his son Daniel Cooper Junior (1848–1909) until he reached his majority.
- **1856:** Foundation stone laid for Woollahra House.
- **1881:** Daniel Jr was about to sail for England in March and transferred the property to his father, Sir Daniel, to protect family interests should there be a misadventure.
- **1882:** In August it was transferred back to young Daniel. In October, ownership passed to Daniel's younger brother William Charles (1852–1925), later third Baronet (from 1909).
- **1883:** Foundation stone laid for William Charles Cooper's Woollahra House.
- **1899:** William offered the property to the NSW Government to use as Government House but the offer was declined. He sold Woollahra House to the British Australian Assets Company. Subsequently Thomas Longworth purchased the house and its five acres of surrounding garden.
- **1927:** Longworth died in March and the property was purchased for £57,200 by a development syndicate.
- **1929:** Woollahra House was demolished and the land subdivided.<sup>45</sup> During the demolition the 1856 and 1816 boxes were found.
- **2003:** The 1856 box is auctioned in London.
- **2007:** The 1856 box comes back to Australia and is auctioned in Melbourne.

#### NOTES

1. For an example see *Charleville Times* 4 Mar 1938 p 4.
2. SG 9 Nov 1816 p 2. Two photographs of the engraving on this box are said to be in the Mitchell Library, and illustrated in Eric Russell, *Woollahra A history in pictures*, John Ferguson, Sydney 1980 p 66.
3. For example, Russell *op cit* p 73.
4. G. Nesta Griffiths, *Point Piper Past and Present*, Ure Smith, Sydney 1947, reprinted 1970 p 29.
5. Russell, *op cit*, p 66.
6. Rosemary Broomham, *The Coopers of Woollahra: Land Dealings on the Point Piper Estate 1820–1920*. Woollahra Municipal Council, Woollahra NSW 2001.
7. *Empire* 15 Dec 1856 p 4f.

8. *People's Advocate* 20 Dec 1856 p 2f.
9. *Sydney Mail* 26 Feb 1881 p 328.
10. John Wade, "Hogarth, Julius (1829–1879)", *ADB Supplement* 2005, p 183f.
11. Karen Eaton, "John Black Carmichael (1803–1857), artist and engraver" *Australiana* Nov 2015, vol 37, no 4, pp 6–20.
12. *Empire* 15 Dec 1856 p 4.
13. *Empire* 15 Dec 1856 p 5; *SMH* 15 Dec 1856 p 5; *People's Advocate* 20 Dec 1856 p 2f.
14. *SMH* 15 Dec 1856 p 5.
15. Broomham *op cit*. p 12.
16. *SMH* 26 Aug 1858 p 1; 28 Aug 1858 p 2.
17. *SMH* 31 Mar 1873 p 2.
18. *Daily Telegraph* 24 Mar 1880 p 7.
19. *SMH* 4 Sep 1846 p 4.
20. *SMH* 25 Mar 1880 p 7f
21. Griffiths *op cit* p 27.
22. In 1884, the NSW Government proposed to resume and open to the public some adjoining land "commencing at the rocks near the old stables of Woollahra House on the western side of Rose Bay"; *SMH* 25 Oct 1884 p 4, *Sydney Mail* 1 Nov 1884 p 882.
23. *SMH* 4 Oct 1882 p 2.
24. Woollahra Library holds a photograph of the trowel.
25. *The Age* 20 Jul 1929 p 23.
26. TO FRENCH-POLISHERS.- Wanted, 2 or 3 good HANDS, at Mr. Cooper's new buildings, Point Piper, near Rose Bay. Phippard Brothers, builders. *SMH* 24 Oct 1883 p 3.
27. *SMH* 21 Jan 1884 p 12.
28. *SMH* 15 Mar 1884 p 20; 26 March 1884 p 16; 3 Jul 1884 p 14.
29. *SMH* 6 Aug 1884 p 16.
30. *Sydney Mail* 13 Jun 1885 p 1250.
31. *SMH* 6 Mar 1883 p 2; 7 Mar 1883 p 3; 10 Mar 1883 p 3.
32. Russell *op cit* pp 84f.
33. *Age* 20 Jul 1929 p 23.
34. *Picton Post* 14 Aug 1929 p 3.
35. The letter is held in the Woollahra Archives.
39. Griffiths *op cit* p 29.
37. Peter Lane *The Coin Cabinet: A Cultural History of the Numismatic Collection in the Art Gallery of South Australia*, AGSA, Adelaide, 2017, p 79.
38. *Sydney Monitor* 21 Jul 1837 p 3.
39. John Wade *op cit*.
40. *Australian* 2 May 1840 p 3.
41. *Sydney Monitor* 17 Jun 1840 p 2.
42. David S Macmillan, "Nicholson, Sir Charles (1808–1903)", *ADB*, vol 2 1967.
43. SG 9 Nov 1816 p 2.
44. SG 3 May 1822 p 2.
45. *SMH* 18 Mar 1929 p 10, with a history of the land and house.



## 'At Home' at Clairville: a Tasmanian Branch event

**SCOTT CARLIN**

On a beautiful summer's afternoon, 85 members from Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney, Hobart and northern Tasmania attended the Tasmanian Branch's 2020 opening event, an 'At Home' at Clairville (**plate 1**) near Evandale, courtesy of the owners, Michael McWilliams and Robert Henley (**plates 2-3**). The event on 22 February 2020 marked a new beginning for Clairville, a treasure of Australia's architectural and design heritage whose future has been secured.

### 1.

Clairville, built by John Sinclair on his 1826 grant, owned by the Cameron family c 1860–2019. All photographs were taken by Scott Carlin

John Sinclair built Clairville on a 700-acre grant he had received in 1826 for his role in the capture of a member of Matthew Brady's bushranging gang. About 1860 Sinclair sold the property to Dr Donald Cameron of Fordon, Evandale; Cameron's elder son Donald inherited Fordon and his younger son Robert was given Clairville.

The property remained in the Cameron family until last year when Michael McWilliams and Robert Henley were fortunate enough to purchase the house and outbuildings on its remaining 13 acres. Rejecting a climate of nationwide indifference to heritage, the last Cameron sisters, Airdrie and Denise, were keen to ensure that Clairville passed to owners who would ensure its preservation amid the continued expansion of the nearby Launceston Airport industrial park.

Clairville is one of four late 1820s houses whose colonial bungalow form and layout, with the principal rooms overlooking the garden, point to the authorship of Van Diemen's Land Colonial Architect, John Lee Archer (in office 1827–1836, with these houses designed for private clients). The others are Heathfield, Hobart (1828), Quamby, Hagley (1828+) and Highfield, Stanley (1832–35). These houses have their front doors in one of the "end" walls with a transverse hall running behind the principal rooms. Clairville and Highfield both have a two-storey bedroom wing to one side of the entry hall, seemingly an architectural exercise in "do my hips look big in this?" hiding the bulk of the house behind the bungalow.

Clairville's rare 1820s scenic wallpaper is unique in the Southern Hemisphere as surviving *in situ* (**plate 3**). The National Gallery of Australia has wallpaper and

## 2.

Some Australiana Society leaders gather at Clairville: L-R: David Bedford (Queensland co-chair), Robert Stevens (Victorian chair), Annabel Tyson (Tasmanian committee member and coordinator of this event), Jennifer Stuerzl (Queensland co-chair), Michael McWilliams (co-host), Colin Thomas (Tasmanian chair), Robert Henley (co-host)



fabric manufacturers Dufour et Cie's scenic wallpaper, *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique*, c 1805, as mounted panels. Roger Butler has identified the subject of the Clairville wall hanging as *Passage des Détroits* or *Cérémonie Turque*. It depicts an architectural fantasia, with Otto, the Bavarian prince who became first King of the modern Greek state (reigned 1832–62) reputedly sailing through the Bosphorus. A fragment of newspaper dated 1 August 1834 beneath the wallpaper gives a *terminus ante quem* for its hanging. Perhaps John Sinclair (with Lord Byron) was a supporter of Greek independence from the Ottoman Empire? How wonderful it would be if Society members were able to identify a grant program that will enable this design treasure in private ownership to be conserved.

Australiana Society members naturally appreciated Clairville's cedar joinery. The cedar chimneypieces (plates 4–5) follow a uniform pattern throughout the house but their level of detail reflects a Georgian hierarchy of rooms. The 'scenic wallpaper' room chimneypiece has the famed mirror-image 'quilled on the cann' carving to the



## 3.

French scenic wallpaper *Passage des Détroits* or *Cérémonie Turque*, c 1830, depicting an allegorical scene of Otto, the Bavarian prince who became first King of the modern Greek state (reigned 1832–62) sailing through the Bosphorus straits



central mouldings. The dining room has added Huon pine inlays. Members had the opportunity to inspect the interior of Clairville's gate lodge whose design is taken from J. C. Loudon's *Encyclopaedia of Cottage Farm and Villa Architecture* (London, 1833).

Throughout the house *Australiana* abounded and included the chaste Grecian bookcases surviving from the Cameron ownership and Tasmanian vernacular chairs, the subject of Michael McWilliams' ground-breaking 1978 monograph. Michael McWilliams has established a temporary studio in the former principal bedroom and his latest work *Changing of the guard* (plate 7) was found sitting on an easel ahead of its exhibition at the Philip



#### 4.

Dining room with a Michael McWilliams family portrait *Ikey and the girls* over the mantelpiece. Ikey is the Airdale Terrier, with the pugs, Winnie and Elizabeth

#### 5.

Australian red cedar (*Toona ciliata*) dining room chimneypiece c 1830. Corner boss with turned patera bordered by Huon Pine (*Lagarostrobos franklinii*) stringing

#### 6.

String trio – Claire Corban Banks, viola, Alexandra Harris, violin, and Robert Henley, cello

7.

Michael McWilliams, *Changing of the guard*, oil on canvas, Philip Bacon Galleries, Brisbane. The painting refers to the way the introduced cats are ready to become prime carnivores as the thylacine is considered extinct and the devils struggle to survive, just as the giant forest trees struggle to survive as their habitat is destroyed

8.

A first for an Australiana Society event – a buck’s party, L-R: Cam Jones, Scott Jones, David Menzie, Brad Menzie (groom), Cameron Parsons, Liam Peters of Liam Peters Fine Silver

9.

Tasmanian blue gum (*Eucalyptus globulus*) on an axis with Clairville



Bacon Galleries, Brisbane in November.

In the warm afternoon people gathered on the veranda and carriage drive enjoying the vista of a magnificent Tasmanian blue gum (*Eucalyptus globulus*) which is believed to be contemporary with the house (plate 8). The relationship between Clairville and this sentinel tree challenges the view that early settlers were so Eurocentric as to be blind, indifferent or hostile to the indigenous terrain. May it live another 200 years.



**Scott Carlin**

is the Manager of House Museums with the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, and a member of the Tasmanian

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# History is not wasted on the young

ELIZABETH STEVENS

A few years ago, I read an article in *The Australian* newspaper saying that future generations are at risk for being the generation that forgot history. As a mother who is an antique dealer with a passion for history, I found this a very upsetting concept. In the new world of social media – Instagram, selfies, Facebook, video, online gaming, YouTube and Snap Chat – I recognised that the article might have a point.

In such a techno-savvy society we are faced with bringing up the next generation with different hobbies and interests from what held importance in the past. Many of these activities focus on the present, the here and now, putting undue pressure on children to act in a certain way to conform. The past and its valuable lessons can be forgotten. This causes me great concern as I'm currently raising two children, so I had long think about how I could change my elder child's path.

As an antique dealer, I have noticed that the younger generations are happy to spend \$1,200 on the latest model of

iPhone or tablet which will be obsolete in 18 months, but do not see any value in investing in history.

I came up with two courses of action: talk about history to the kids, try and inspire them and give them as many experiences of history as possible. I figured the best way was to start young (he was four when I started) and hopefully thereby instil some sense of what history is all about.

So, bags packed, I took him on a convict tour of Tasmania. He is a boy who is very active and loves adventure. He has an active imagination so I knew abandoned buildings would appeal to him. We flew into Launceston and drove to Evandale, on to Clarendon House, then to Woolmer's Estate. He especially loved the cellars, the old equipment and the houses with their outbuildings. The fact that convicts had been there gave us plenty of opportunity for stories.

We drove down south though all the old towns and made our way to Hobart. From there we drove up to Richmond, out to my ultimate destination of Maria Island – an isolated place full of historic buildings that are untouched and falling down (plate 1). We

spent the day exploring those, telling stories and finished by fossil hunting below the cliffs. More chances to talk history with him.

It was an amazing trip. When I came home, I bought him an early convict love token at auction which he will grow to value and cherish even more as time goes by. Francis Collis, who was born in 1792, was convicted of stealing and sentenced to transportation, and gave the love token to his sister soon after he learned his fate. (plate 2).<sup>1</sup>

When my son is old enough, we are going on the journey of the medal to retrace Francis Collis' life. I will explain the reasons he made decisions he did to survive and the social inequities that led to his imprisonment. We will start in England where he was convicted and sentenced in 1818 then we will look at the place where the hulk was anchored on the Thames before the arduous journey to Sydney on the ship *Lord Sidmouth*.

I know what I'm doing is working. Why? The other day when another mum picked him up from school for me, he was very confidently sitting in the back seat of her car telling her and her two sons all about convicts and who they were. Her kids had never heard of convicts so they thought it was pretty amazing

So my advice is, be creative, engage the next generation in conversations about history as soon as possible. Choose topics and subjects they might find interesting. They are never too young to start to learn. Don't leave it too late.

Make it interesting, be insightful, tell them stories, and buy them some small treasure from the past, something that has a story line to it to get them thinking and talking about more history. Let's change the forecast of the generations to come to help preserve what we have.

## 1.

Exploring convict ruins of the penitentiary on Maria Island, Tasmania

The National Museum of Australia in Canberra now holds the largest collection of love tokens, having purchased 307 from British dealer Timothy Millet in 2008.



## 2.

Love token, engraved A: "Francis Collis / Born 26 Dec 1792 / Banished 17<sup>th</sup> June 1818"

B. "Dear Sister/When this you see/Rembr me when I am / In some foreign Country". Copper, diam. 35 mm, most likely made by a prisoner-craftsman in a prison or hulk workshop from a smoothed down 1797 cartwheel penny struck at Matthew Boulton's Soho Mint in Birmingham. Over 95% were made from these coins, and some are stipple-engraved. Francis Collis may have had more made for other family members or loved ones. Private collection Sydney

### Francis Collis (1792–1869)

Thanks to the internet, today you can look at the transcript of the trial of Francis Collis for grand larceny on 17 June 1818.<sup>2</sup>

958. FRANCIS COLLIS was indicted for stealing, on the 14th of May, one 20l., one 10l., and two 2l. bank notes, the property of William Scott.

WILLIAM SCOTT. I am a tailor, the prisoner was my porter. On the 14th of May, while I was out, a bill for 34l. was presented for payment. I gave my wife 34l. to give the prisoner to take it up at Sir Richard Carr Glynn's. He had lived ten weeks with me.

JUDITH SCOTT. I gave the prisoner one 20l., one 10l., and two 2l. bank notes, about four o'clock, to take up the bill.

ELIZABETH BILLING. My husband is a baker, and lives in Bury-street. I gave the prisoner change for a 20l. note about four o'clock on the 14th of May.

WILLIAM HEALE. I am a clerk in the Bank. I produce the note.

ELIZABETH BILLING. It is the note I received from the prisoner. I wrote his name on it. Prisoner. I beg for mercy.

GUILTY. Aged 25.

Transported for Seven Years.  
Second Middlesex Jury, before  
Mr. Recorder.

Collis was transferred to the hulk *Retribution* on the Thames at Woolwich,<sup>3</sup> before sailing from Portsmouth on 17 October 1818 on the ship *Lord Sidmouth*, Captain Gunner, 194 tons. He arrived at Sydney on 11 March 1819 with 159 other male convicts, on the first of this ship's three convict transport voyages to NSW.

The Sidmouth, whose arrival we last week reported, left Portsmouth the 17th of October. Her Surgeon

Dr. Lang of the Navy; and we are happy in stating that her prisoners. 158 in number, were all landed in good health, and in such spirits and grateful feeling of their treatment during a passage that had been for years considered doubtful from its climaterial changes, which proves kind treatment one of the best preservatives of human life. His EXCELLENCY the GOVERNOR inspected the men upon their landing last Thursday, and was pleased to appropriate them for their most suitable conditions. This is not now a place of punishment, but of reformation, the most charmingly identified in the humane wishes of the British Government,—Vivat Rex et Regina!<sup>4</sup>

Seven years after being sentenced, Collis received his certificate of freedom, in 1825.<sup>5</sup> Two years later, he was accused of assault:

Francis Collis, against whom a warrant had been prayed for by another named Byrne, and granted by the Bench, on a charge of cutting and maiming him, underwent a hearing on Saturday. A huge carving knife, which seemed better calculated for capering over a round of beef, than for cupping folks in the forehead, was produced, and sworn to by the complaining one to be the same instrument of destruction which the man Collis had opposed to him. Collis termed his accuser a perjured man; but notwithstanding this opinion, the bench committed the accused party at the Sessions for an assault simply.<sup>6</sup>

As there was no follow-up report, the charge may have been dismissed. No other information about him has been located.<sup>7</sup> Francis Collis died in 1869 at the age of 76 at Liverpool NSW.<sup>8</sup> NSW Births, Deaths and Marriages does not record any marriage or children.



### NOTES

1. See *South West District Coin Club Newsletter* (Bunbury WA) vol 4 2018 p 2; [https://www.southwestdistrictcoinclub.com/uploads/1/3/5/0/13507001/swdcc\\_newsletter\\_-\\_vol.\\_4.pdf](https://www.southwestdistrictcoinclub.com/uploads/1/3/5/0/13507001/swdcc_newsletter_-_vol._4.pdf)
2. <https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?name=18180617>.
3. See n 1.
4. SG 20 Mar 1819 p 3.
5. SG 30 June 1825 p 1.
6. *Australian* 7 Nov 1827 p 3.
7. A claim that he was in the Liverpool Benevolent Society Asylum in 1860 may be an error for Thomas Collis, aged 22, briefly held there from 9–24 August: <http://www.sydneybenevolentasylum.com/index.php>
8. BDM NSW 4123/1869.



**Liz Stevens** (pictured with her son Billy Barkell) took over Chiltons Antiques in Miranda when the original owner Margurite Chilton retired. She specialises in antique jewellery and hopes to inspire a love of history in others. Contact Liz at [chiltonsmiranda@bigppond.com](mailto:chiltonsmiranda@bigppond.com)

# Richard Dowling, the elusive cabinetmaker of O'Brien's Bridge, Van Diemen's Land

David Bedford has researched the life and work of Tasmanian cabinetmaker Richard Dowling (c 1820/1822–1867), little documented till now. He presents new discoveries about Dowling's life and suggests why Dowling's story has been so elusive. Evidence has emerged, and examples of his work found, which show that Dowling, previously known only for parquetry writing slopes bearing his label, also made furniture. Dr Bedford provides technical descriptions of Dowling's workmanship and identifies most of the timbers that Dowling used. By examining labelled examples, he identifies the characteristics of Dowling's style, showing how these stylistic characteristics can be used to assess if unlabelled pieces can be credibly attributed to Dowling or not.

## DAVID BEDFORD

Richard Dowling (c 1820/1822–1867<sup>1</sup>) is well known as a maker of exquisite parquetry work. Numerous "boxes", which can be described as writing boxes, writing desks or writing slopes, are known. In this article I use the term writing slope, because its use open as a sloped surface for writing

is arguably the defining characteristic of this type of box. After all, who calls a tea caddy a box, although it is undoubtedly a box for holding tea?

Some writing slopes bear a paper label with his name and the address, "O'Brien's Bridge, V.D.L." (Van Diemen's Land) (**plate 1**).<sup>2</sup> Other writing slopes and boxes are often attributed to his hand. To date, little has been recorded about Dowling,

This article adds more information about Richard Dowling, extends our understanding of his life, and defines his distinctive style of workmanship and range of production.

I became interested in Richard Dowling around 1999. We were living in Hobart, and had gone to Launceston to a Tulloch's auction. One of the lots was a very ornately inlaid and veneered pole firescreen in Tasmanian timbers (**plate 2**). We decided to bid and eagerly awaited the lot. Two men next to us were discussing the firescreen and saying how keen they were on it, which made us concerned that we would have stiff competition. Then, to our surprise, they walked out not long before the lot came up. The result was that we purchased the firescreen; they returned soon afterwards and realised that they had missed it!



### 1.

*Paper label* R. DOWLING/ MAKER./ O'BRIENS BRIDGE,/V.D.L. 5 x 7 cm, affixed to underside of the upper section of the writing surface of the writing slope shown as plates 3-5 & 7-10

That purchase began a long, slow process of research. Fahy and Simpson include a photograph of one writing slope with a Dowling label.<sup>3</sup> I had seen writing slopes either labelled or attributed to Richard Dowling in catalogues but had not had the opportunity to handle one. Photographs showed workmanship similar to that on the firescreen so I hypothesised that Dowling may have been the maker, although I knew only of writing slopes bearing his label.

Caressa Crouch and her husband Carl Gonsalves had a writing slope with a Richard Dowling label. When I mentioned my hypothesis to Caressa we began discussing putting the two items together to compare the workmanship. However, that did not happen, and the research went onto the backburner.

Carl and Caressa's labelled Dowling writing slope (plates 3–5) was auctioned in 2015<sup>4</sup> after their untimely deaths. Physically handling the writing slope allowed me to compare the items in detail. That provided impetus to find out as much as I could about Richard Dowling and his work.

### Richard Dowling's work

The terms marquetry and parquetry are often confused, and with good reason as they overlap. Different sources give different definitions. The usage adopted here distinguishes parquetry as the art of using pieces of timber in geometric patterns.

The American Marquetry Society describes marquetry as:

the art of creating decorative designs and pictures by skilfully utilizing the grain, figure and colors of thin veneers and sometimes other materials such as shell or ivory ... Geometric patterns (often referred to as "parquetry") were also quite popular.<sup>5</sup>

In this classification, Dowling's work is parquetry. From my reading, Dowling followed a long English tradition called Tunbridge Ware. Originating around 1650, tourist items had been made for visitors to the health springs of Tunbridge Wells in

Kent. In the early 19th century, this ware began to use a distinctive form of parquetry:

... the main veneer patterns available were cubes and the triangular 'Vandyke' pattern. Borders would be plain stringing and banding of contrasting timbers. Expensive and time-consuming production methods encouraged change and in a fairly short time (around 1830) the sophisticated tessellated mosaics, which we all know so well, became known as Tunbridge Ware.<sup>6</sup>

### Online resources

The historical research reported here relies primarily on online sources.<sup>7</sup> I have used the Tasmanian Government website index to named records held in the Tasmanian State Archives, variously known as the Tasmanian Names Index, Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office, or Libraries Tasmania (Names Index).<sup>8</sup> The Tasmanian Names Index is a searchable online database about people in Van Diemen's Land in the 19th century. The database contains information from records of arrivals, both free and convict, convict records, records of departures from VDL and other information. The Names Index is expanding as paper records are digitised and as volunteers transcribe records. Other sources include the wonderful online resource, Trove ([trove.nla.gov.au](http://trove.nla.gov.au)), provided by the National Library of Australia, as well as state births, deaths and marriages (BDM) records and other databases as detailed in the notes.

### Where is O'Brien's Bridge?

While O'Brien's Bridge does not appear on a map today, the area known as O'Brien's Bridge was part of greater Hobart, now known as the City of Glenorchy. Dr Alison Alexander's history of that area records that Governor Collins began granting land in the area in 1804.<sup>9</sup> Many of the early grants were not successful as farms, and many of the original grantees sold their properties.

Thomas O'Brien, on the other hand, was a successful farmer who had been in the first penal settlement on Norfolk Island and was relocated to Tasmania when that



### 2.

Attributed to Richard James Dowling (1820/22–1867), *pole firescreen*, a very detailed micro-mosaic parquetry inlaid veneered frame to a contemporary 19th-century wool and beadwork portrait of a young woman, mounted with a brass collar on an *Acacia melanoxylon* (Blackwood) pole above a cross-pattern string-inlaid ornately veneered octagonal column with Blackwood mouldings and ornately inlaid and veneered octagonal base on *Toona ciliata* (cedar) bun feet. Veneers are Tasmanian woods: *Nothofagus cunninghamii* (Myrtle) burl, *Lagarostrobos franklinii* (Huon Pine), and Blackwood (on a cedar carcass). Yellow silk to rear. The fine mosaic inlays and timbers are identical to those seen in boxes and writing slopes bearing Dowling paper labels. 150 x 60 x 43 cm. Private collection, Queensland



### 3.

Richard James Dowling (1820/22–1867), *writing slope* with Richard Dowling label (plate 1), smaller size known 16.5 x 43.5 x 25 cm. Tasmanian woods: Blackwood, *Banksia marginata* (Silver Banksia), Huon Pine, *Nematolepis squamea* (Satinwood), Myrtle, *Olearia argophylla* (Musk), carcass: Huon Pine; metal fittings, dark purple velvet. Dowling's distinctive design features of string inlay bordered feather pattern micro-mosaic banding, aris edge micro-mosaic rope banding, 12-pointed centre star, corners to all faces with contrasting coloured/*chatoyance* inlay veneer squares and shield-shaped escutcheon are evident. Private collection, Queensland

settlement was closed in 1808. O'Brien was given a land grant bounded by what became known as Main Road and by Humphrey's Rivulet. Alexander notes "The next group of farms was at Humphrey's Rivulet, and was most commonly known as O'Brien's Bridge, after Thomas O'Brien; the bridge was at the corner of his property."<sup>10</sup>

Visiting in 1811, Governor Macquarie "named Glenorchy after his wife's home in Scotland: the name means 'glen of tumbling waters', ... Glenorchy, Humphrey's Rivulet, O'Brien's Bridge and Kensington (after a local farm) were all common names for the area."<sup>11</sup>

By the mid-19th century, two place names, O'Brien's Bridge and Glenorchy, were used interchangeably, as well as, less commonly, the District of Kensington. Today, only Glenorchy is used; the name O'Brien's Bridge has disappeared and all that remains of the last name is a Kensington Street.

In Alexander's book Molly Tomlinson's map titled *Glenorchy in 1820* shows the exact location of Thomas O'Brien's farm on Humphrey's Rivulet,<sup>12</sup> the largest of the three creeks in the area and the only watercourse to require significant bridgeworks today. O'Brien's Bridge was a very small settlement and I presume that Dowling's workshop was on, close to, or visible from Main Road and Humphrey's Rivulet since he did not see the necessity to give a street address.

### Richard's birth, marriage and death

Some aspects of Richard Dowling's life can be filled in. Records of Richard's marriage in VDL and his death in Victoria tell us where and when he was born.

The record of Richard's death in Queenscliff, Victoria in 1867<sup>13</sup> says he was born in "Castle Connell, Limerick" (now called Castleconnell). It gives his age at his death as 45, which would equate to being born in 1822, and his full name as Richard James Dowling. That age does not agree with Richard's stated age of 29 when he married in 1849, which would equate to a birth in 1820. Although people's ages in the early 1800s were sometimes recorded inaccurately, it seems most likely to me that the correct date is 1820 as he was in the prime of life when he provided his age at his marriage. In contrast, his age at his death would most likely have been provided by his oldest surviving child, who was only 16 at the time she became an orphan with the responsibility for younger children, so some inaccuracy could be understood. The record gives cause of death as Phthisis, which is an old term for pulmonary tuberculosis, a very common disease at that time.

The earliest VDL record that I can find is his marriage in 1849. The register shows that a Richard Dowling "Free," "Carpenter," aged 29, married Jane Ayres, "Servant" and "spinster," aged 28,

on 20 February 1849 in the District of Kensington.<sup>14</sup> O'Brien's Bridge Church of England minister the Reverend W. R. Bennett officiated.<sup>15</sup>

### His wife Jane and children

I can find no records for the arrival or existence in VDL of a "Jane Ayres". However, the marriage application record,<sup>16</sup> which was approved,<sup>17</sup> spelled Jane's surname as Eyres. Convict conduct records<sup>18</sup> show that on 30 November 1846 at Manchester Quarter Sessions, Jane Eyres was convicted and sentenced to transportation for seven years. Jane arrived in Hobart on 2 January 1848.<sup>19</sup> The marriage application record gave Jane the "Ship/Free" description "Cadet" and Jane's conduct record includes an annotation about her as Jane Dowling. This convict record is definitely for the woman who married Richard Dowling in 1849.

Richard and Jane had four children recorded in VDL. For three, no given names were listed in the birth records but are on their parents' death certificates.<sup>20</sup> The first child, born nine months after their marriage, on 24 November 1849<sup>21</sup> was a girl, Catherine Elizabeth. The second was a son, born 28 September 1851,<sup>22</sup> named on the birth record Richard David Dowling, though the record of Jane's death gives his names as Richard James Dowling; he died in Hobart at age 24 hours.<sup>23</sup> A third child, Henry, was born in 1853<sup>24</sup>

#### 4.

Richard James Dowling (1820/22–1867), *writing slope*, smaller size, open, 11.5 x 43.5 x 49 cm. The dark purple velvet fabric on the writing surface appears to be original and is also found on the underside of the writing slope (not shown). Private collection, Queensland



and died before 1867 and the fourth, Sarah Jane was born 30 November 1857.<sup>25</sup> Richard is described as “cabinetmaker” in all four birth records. Jane’s death record shows that, in Victoria, a fifth child, Richard Thomas, was born in 1863.

#### When he worked in O’Brien’s Bridge

Fahy & Simpson record that Dowling was in O’Brien’s Bridge from 1852 and show one of his labels with some handwritten annotations “Since October 1853”.<sup>26</sup> Now his known dates at that location can be extended from 1849 to 1857/58.

His marriage record and convict employment records show Richard was at O’Brien’s Bridge from 1849 to 1854.<sup>27</sup> During that time Richard employed nine convicts, eight of whom were women and presumably house servants. In 1849–50 he had five employees, each for 3 months, four women and one man. The last, Thomas Peat, had been sentenced for forgery and was paid a rate of £10 compared to the £7 Richard paid the female convicts.

Then there was a gap in employed convict servants until 29 October 1852 when Dowling employed two convict women servants (the second on 1 November) for 12 months each at an increased rate of £9. In 1853 Dowling employed three convict women each for 12 months at the same rate of £9. If the last woman employed, Julia Murphy, worked her 12 months from a starting date of 8 September 1853, the Dowling family would have had convict servants until September 1854. The lack of any convict employees beyond that date is because transportation to Van Diemen’s Land ceased on 10 August 1853.

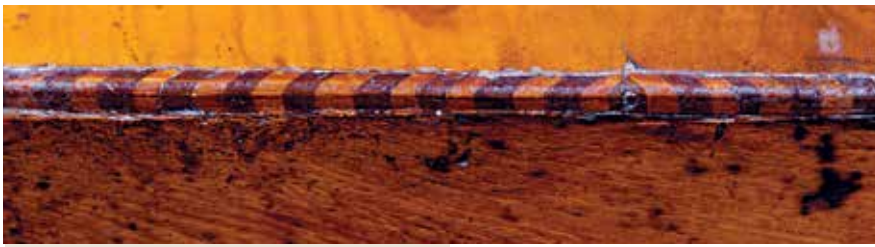
Another record from 1852<sup>28</sup> is difficult to understand without corroborating evidence. Richard Dowling, of Glenorchy, placed a public notice stating that he would not be responsible for any debts contracted in his name without proof he had provided a written order for same. We can speculate that someone had been running up debts in his name without his authority, but have no further evidence to support that at this time.

The records of the births of their children allow us to extend the date that Richard continuing working as a cabinetmaker in VDL until at least 30 November 1857.

#### 5.

Richard James Dowling (1820/22–1867), *writing slope*, smaller size, right hand side. The timber panels are Silver Banksia at the top, Bird’s-eye Huon Pine in the centre and Musk at the base. The panels to the sides appear to be Myrtle burl. Private collection, Queensland





## 6.

Richard James Dowling (1820/22–1867), *writing slope*, larger size known, 18.5 x 51 x 25 cm, labelled by Richard Dowling, c 1849–57. Tasmanian woods: *Acacia melanoxylon* (Blackwood), *Banksia marginata* (Silver Banksia), *Lagarostrobos franklinii* (Huon Pine), *Nematolepis squamea* (Satinwood), *Nothofagus cunninghamii* (Myrtle), *Olearia argophylla* (Musk), an unknown very dark-coloured timber (most likely a darker shade of Blackwood), cedar; metal fittings, baize. This is the best-known size and design of writing slope made by Richard Dowling. Collection: National Gallery of Australia, accession no. 2012.1334.A-G, purchased 2012

## 7.

Richard James Dowling (1820/22–1867), *writing slope*, detail of micro-mosaic rope pattern inlaid arris edge of smaller sized writing slope (plate 3). Private collection, Queensland

## What happened after 1857/58?

After 1857/58 there are no Tasmanian records that definitely relate to Richard Dowling the cabinetmaker or his wife Jane. However, Richard reappears in Victoria four years later when the *Argus* newspaper reported on the 1861 Victorian Exhibition held in Melbourne,<sup>29</sup> which was organised to gather worthy items to be selected for display at the London International Exhibition of 1862. The Melbourne exhibition opened on 1 October 1861 and closed on 29 November 1861.

Several inlaid writing-desks and dressing-cases of colonial wood, shown by Richard Dowling, Mount Shadwell [near Mortlake, Victoria], are of admirable workmanship, and are much admired.<sup>30</sup>

The next reports concern legal disputes that may indicate things were not going well for the couple. On 28 March 1866, Richard (as R.J. Dowling) and Jane appeared separately in the Queenscliff

Police Court, Jane accusing Mary White of abusive language and Richard in two disputes over debt.<sup>31</sup>

The final appearances in the records for Richard and Jane are their deaths in 1867 in Queenscliff, Victoria. Jane died on 31 January and Richard, described as ‘Cabinet Maker’, died on 18 May 1867. Both are buried in the same unmarked grave in Queenscliff Cemetery.<sup>32</sup>

## Richard Dowling’s likely insolvency

The very high quality of his work should have guaranteed Dowling a decent income. However, in May 1858, a Richard Dowling was before the insolvent court in Hobart.<sup>33</sup> His solicitor, Mr Lees, applied to adjourn the proceedings and the Commissioner accepted the application. By September the same year, he had absconded.<sup>34</sup>

INSOLVENT COURT.  
WEDNESDAY. (Before Mr. Commissioner Browne.) *In re* Richard Dowling. This was an adjourned first meeting. It appearing that insolvent had absconded the Commissioner stated that he had suggested to Mr. Lees to take some remedial measures, and the meeting was then further adjourned for six months.



The Richard Dowling referred to in the insolvency court had left the colony without satisfying his creditors. While it is likely that this was Richard Dowling, cabinetmaker of O'Brien's Bridge, the records found do not provide enough detail to be certain; it does seem too much of a coincidence, given that Richard and Jane disappeared from Tasmanian records at this time, and later appear in Victoria.

### **Possible reasons for insolvency** **Lack of promotion/advertising**

If this was the cabinetmaker's insolvency, I speculate that it may have occurred because he was not a good self-promoter nor self-publicist. There is little contemporary record of his work in VDL, and in the existing records, his creations appear to have been mis-attributed.

Geoffrey Stilwell's notes record a "writing desk" supposedly made by a Francis Dowling from Glenorchy in 1850.<sup>35</sup> The description is not clear whether the 'desk' was a substantial item or a writing slope 'portable desk.'

However, Trove has revealed a more complete 1850 record in the *Launceston Examiner*,<sup>36</sup> which regurgitated an article from the *Hobart Town Advertiser*. It is more detailed and informative and almost certainly the same record that Geoffrey Stillwell noted. The report attributes items to a Francis Dowling, as discussed below. The first name 'Francis' is almost certainly an error since there

are no other records for a Francis Dowling, cabinetmaker of Glenorchy.

Another indication that Richard and his work may not have had a high profile in Tasmania are two later misattributions in the catalogue of the Intercolonial Exhibition in Melbourne in 1866-67. Item 595 was a 'Writing Desk, 22 sorts of Wood, 1470 pieces.' Exhibited by John Wood of Launceston. Fahy and Simpson<sup>37</sup> illustrate the item, which shows many of Dowling's distinctive design elements with inlaid bandings and shield-shaped escutcheon as well as Tunbridge Ware Van Dyke triangles, albeit more highly decorated than labelled examples of his work.

The catalogue does not claim that Wood was the maker, only the exhibitor of the item. Fahy & Simpson note that it is signed in ink "J Wood, Upholsterer" and dated 1866. I believe that this inscription is simply to declare the ownership of the item at the time that it was exhibited.<sup>38</sup> Item 607 in the exhibition was also almost certainly a writing slope made by Richard that was exhibited by T. Watt of Hobart but with the maker misnamed 'T. Dowling'. It was exhibited with an annotation that it was 'made upwards of 12 years' [earlier]. The catalogue of that exhibition has been digitised by the State Library of Victoria.<sup>39</sup>

Other references give more detail and commentary to flesh out the catalogue entry. Newspapers of the day<sup>40,41,42</sup>

### **8.**

Richard James Dowling (1820/22-1867), *writing slope*, detail of centre of micro-mosaic feather inlay reversing direction of angles in the centre of the run (plate 3). This image shows the position at the centre of the feather banding where it reverses direction, adjacent to a point of the central star. Private collection, Queensland

### **9.**

Richard James Dowling (1820/22-1867), *writing slope* (plate 3). End of micro-mosaic feather inlay showing terminal square block. The original finish and patination are evident. The image shows that the work was definitely handmade. Private collection, Queensland

comment that T. T. Watt (the Collector of Customs at Hobart), sent a "Workbox and Rock crystal" to the Intercolonial exhibition in Melbourne in 1866. The *Tasmanian Morning Herald*<sup>43</sup> goes on to say:

While examining these woods and allowing the eyes to wander you become insensibly attracted by some magnificent work tables and desks of Tasmanian woods exhibited by Miss Collins and T.T. Watt, Esq, which are the admiration of the visitors.



The cover springs open when pressed here

**10.**

Richard James Dowling (1820/22–1867), writing slope, detail of escutcheon (plate 3). Shield-shaped escutcheons occur on all labelled writing slopes seen. Private collection, Queensland

**11.**

Richard James Dowling (1820/22–1867), writing slope, detail of concealed drawers. The ‘secret’ mechanism and concealed drawers in Dowling’s labelled writing slopes may not have been features unique to his manufacture. However, when used in combination with other features they do add strength to an attribution. Private collection, Queensland

**12.**

Attributed to Richard James Dowling (1820/22–1867), writing slope, unlabelled but bearing the unique combination of features seen in Richard Dowling’s work. 17.5 x 51 x 25.1 cm. Private collection, Tasmania

Unless the maker’s name is clearly stated, 19th-century exhibition catalogue entries cannot be relied upon to denote a maker. Many items made by others were exhibited by the proud owners of the items and gave no reference to the actual maker’s name.

**Competition**

Tasmania had many fine quality cabinetmakers in the early 19th century as testified by the wealth of top-quality furniture, boxes etc. that still exist. Anne Watson also explores how the exhibitor of an object is not necessarily the maker<sup>44</sup> and notes that in 1847 “Hobart had approximately 20 directory-listed cabinetmaking firms ... of these only Hamilton’s furniture is documented in any quantity from surviving labelled pieces.”

It is possible (though not necessarily supported by the records) that since Richard Dowling and William Hamilton

both produced quality veneered parquetry work, and both labelled at least some of their work, they were competitors in that “fine veneered furniture” market.

Dowling appears to have worked alone, as there are no records of his employing any free workforce, nor of advertising for workers. Dowling’s household did employ a number of convicts, the majority of whom were female and employed for too short a time to have contributed to such fine workmanship. As such, it must be presumed that all of Dowling’s products were handmade by him. The numerous items Dowling is known or believed to have produced indicate that he was prolific between 1849 and 1858 which would have involved a prodigious amount of fine work for one person.

William Hamilton ran a much larger business<sup>45</sup> and therefore, in my interpretation, was a significant competitor, as he always worked with others and had employees. William Hamilton had his address in O’Brien’s Bridge in 1852<sup>46</sup> where he had a 150-acre freehold farm Ravensdale. Dowling may have once worked for Hamilton but I have found no evidence for that theory.

I have searched in vain for evidence of a link between their businesses. Fahy, Simpson and Simpson<sup>47</sup> note that after 1852, Hamilton retired from his sole-owner business and went into partnership with James Whitesides in 1853. Then, in 1857 he travelled to



### 13.

Attributed to Richard James Dowling (1820/22–1867), *work box*, Tasmanian, very finely made. It shows string-inlay bordered micro-mosaic rope pattern inlays, very similar to Dowling's work. It also shows similar layout, with veneer squares to the corners, a central motif and fan decorations internal to the mosaic borders. 12.3 x 31 x 23 cm. Private collection, Queensland



the UK, returned in 1858 and opened an expanded business with his sons. The same year, Richard Dowling disappears from the Tasmanian records.

The population of Tasmania in 1850 was about 70,000 across the whole island, not all of whom were in Hobart or nearby.<sup>48</sup> That is a small population to sustain even two businesses producing similar, top quality work, let alone the total of at least 20 cabinetmakers. After 1858, William Hamilton went into business with his sons and the large number of extant items labelled or attributed to that business indicate that it was a much larger business, which would have been difficult to compete with.

My speculation is that, with such a small population, there was not a large enough market for all the cabinetmakers, especially two producing such similar high-quality veneered work at the same time. Hamilton appears to have been the more prolific labeller and self-promoter of the two. That would be a possible explanation for the failure of Dowling's business, likely insolvency and sudden disappearance from Tasmania.

#### **Economic circumstances**

The same ABS website provides an interesting summary of the population history in Tasmania:

Until the mid-19th century, Tasmania experienced a fairly rapid build-up of population, then in the early 1850s this growth rate slumped. This decline

was due to two major factors: the discovery of gold in Victoria in 1851, which led to a large-scale emigration of Tasmanians, and the ending of convict transportation in 1853.

Large-scale emigration *from* Tasmania, coupled with the reduction in the workforce from the cessation of transportation and the demise of the whaling industry,<sup>49</sup> led to a significant economic slump in the colony. The slump, which was not reversed until the 1870s<sup>50</sup> would have increased the financial stress on businesses, especially those making goods for discretionary purchases, such as fine quality writing slopes and drawing room furniture.

#### **Richard Dowling's work Historical records**

During this research, previously unreported 19th-century historical information about the range of Richard's work has been found. The most informative of these is this report in the 1850 *Launceston Examiner*:<sup>51</sup>

COLONIAL MANUFACTURES.—A very handsome writing-desk was shewn on Saturday last, made from the woods of the colony. It is made of Huon pine, and the top and sides are veneered with a wood commonly called musk wood, from the odour which is given by its leaves when rubbed in the hand. The ends are veneered with a very beautifully grained piece of Huon pine; in the

centre of the top is a star, formed of lightwood and myrtle, and a similar ornament in each corner. The edges of the desk are inlaid with minute pieces of lightwood and myrtle alternately. It is French polished, and is one of the best pieces of colonial workmanship we have seen in the colony. The maker, whose name is Francis Dowling, and who lives at O'Brien's Bridge, exhibited it at government house, and it was at once purchased by Mr. Denison, his excellency's brother. The same man, a short time ago, made two very beautiful chess tables, also from the woods of the colony, which were purchased by his excellency, and one of them sent to England, to shew the excellent wood we have in this colony for all the purposes of cabinet-making.

Further evidence of the range of Richard's work comes in an 1855 newspaper report of a dispute between Jane Dowling and her neighbour Agnes Bailey.<sup>52</sup> Evidence was given in the magistrates court that Jane had promised a table made by Richard to a witness as a bribe to give evidence against Mrs Bailey. The magistrate did not accept the evidence, but it is clear that it was well-known that Richard made tables.

#### **Richard Dowling's extant labelled work**

To my knowledge, the only known items with Richard Dowling labels and his distinctive 'work signature,' of complex,



## 14.

Attributed to Richard James Dowling (1820/22–1867), tea caddy, Tasmanian, extremely finely made. It shows an abundance of Dowling's distinctive complex, multi-part, Tunbridge Ware-like mosaic banding inlays, characteristic design features and use of timbers. 28 x 41 x 21 x cm. Collection: Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston Tasmania, QVM:1999:H:1482

fine, multi-part/mosaic parquetry pattern detailing are writing slopes. I will discuss the characteristics and timbers of these labelled items in detail before looking at items that may be attributed to Richard.

### Timbers used in labelled items

The *Launceston Examiner* in 1850 mentions four timber species: Huon Pine, Musk Wood, lightwood and myrtle.

In examples I have handled, the timber species Dowling has used are all Australian. He used Huon Pine and Australian cedar as carcass timbers, which can usually be examined by a wood technologist without destroying the appearance of an item and such identifications can be confirmed. For veneers, destructive testing is usually necessary, and even then, the section sizes can be so small that identification may not be certain.

I am reasonably expert at what I call 'recognition identification' from the old, finished surfaces of furniture timbers which I always compare with examples of identified wood blocks. However, I know that I am not always correct. It is impossible to be so, given the variability of timbers and finishes. If I were being truly scientific, I would not state that veneer timbers are a particular species; I would state only that they *appear* to be. However, descriptions can become wordy so I have opted for brevity, but ask the reader to bear this qualification in mind.

The timber veneers described below, all Tasmanian, are my recognition identifications. They include *Lagarostrobos franklinii* (Huon Pine) both plain and birds-eye figure; *Acacia melanoxylon* (Blackwood) burl and plain; *Banksia marginata* (Silver Banksia), sometimes, strangely and antiquatedly called honeysuckle; *Nematolepis squamea* (Australian Satinwood) – for simplicity I use the name Satinwood; *Nothofagus cunninghamii* (Myrtle); and a highly figured golden timber that could be either *Olearia argophylla* (Musk) burl or Myrtle burl.

I do not list "lightwood" among these timbers; such common names are variable and cannot be tied to a single species. In colloquial usage, in 19th and in early 20th century textbooks<sup>53</sup> Blackwood was sometimes known as Lightwood, but the term could equally have been applied to other timbers.

Distinguishing between Musk and Myrtle burl in Tasmanian furniture is difficult. Along with the easily distinguishable Huon Pine, these were both frequently used ornately burlled/bird's-eye figured timbers. Any knowledgeable woodworker today would scoff at the thought of confusing Musk and Myrtle. Freshly-milled Myrtle burl is strongly reddish pink and freshly-milled Musk burl is yellowish-brown, sometimes with a green tinge. But time and finishes change colours in strange ways, especially since some colours are more fugitive than others. The red-pink of Myrtle fades almost completely

with time and becomes golden. Musk mellows and also becomes golden. Burlled timbers have very similar and ornate figure, albeit with different botanical origins. In short, the two can come to resemble each other, especially under an old finish. There is usually a remaining colour difference between the two, even faded and under an old finish, but unless side-by-side it is often not very clear. I could not agree with any 'recognition identification' that claims to discriminate definitively between the two timbers in all situations.

What certainty does that give us whether the difficult-to-identify burlled timber is Myrtle or Musk in Dowling's work? Very little without destructive wood technology analysis or a contemporary record when it was made, e.g. a contemporary timber plan (**plate 16**). The 19th-century timber descriptions in the press mention both timbers but imply that the ornate timber was Musk. Common names have always been flexible and often wrongly attributed. I can go so far as to say that the ornate golden timber in Richard Dowling's labelled writing slopes *appears to be either Musk or Myrtle*. Dowling likely used both timbers at different times, so some items will contain one, and some the other – or a combination of the two.

### Labelled writing slopes

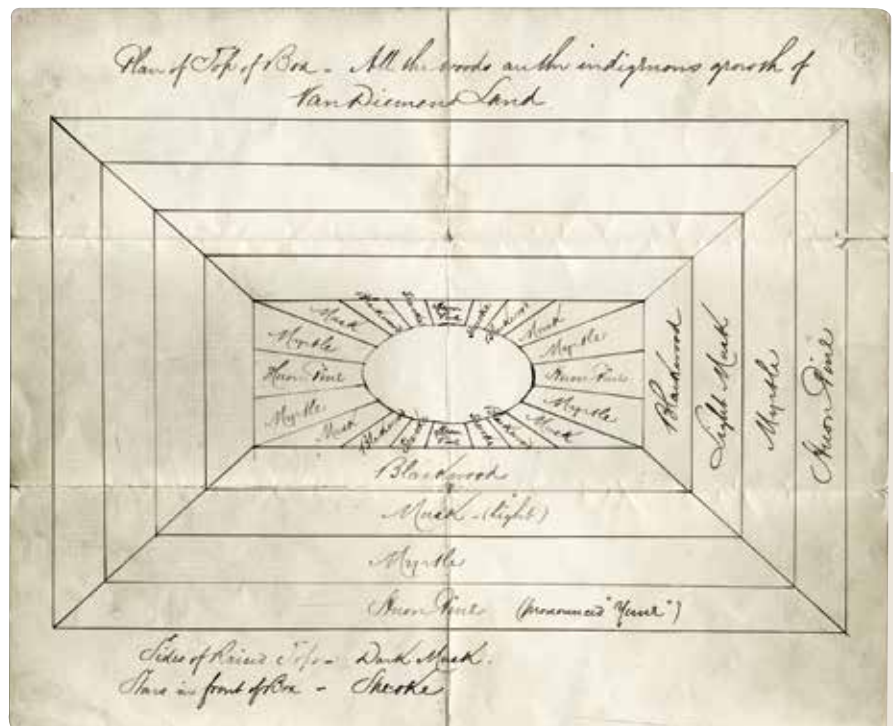
Different sizes of labelled writing slopes are known, although at this time we know of many larger examples and only one smaller example.

The National Gallery of Australia (NGA) holds a fine example of one of Dowling's larger writing slopes (**plate 6**), with numerous photographs on their website.<sup>54</sup> Timbers described in the NGA captions include "Huon Pine, Musk, casuarina, honeysuckle and cedar". What I can observe from photographs are border panels of Musk or Myrtle burl, with Blackwood corner squares around a central panel of Bird's-eye Huon Pine.

The central star appears to be made from Satinwood (not Myrtle) and Blackwood. The 1850 *Examiner* article referred to the fan decoration in the corners as Lightwood and Myrtle. In the NGA writing slope, these appear to be alternately Blackwood and Satinwood, but the darker segments may be another timber (but from the photograph it does *not* appear to be the *Casuarina* mentioned in the NGA caption). The outer arris edges of the box have Dowling's characteristic rope-pattern banding. The 1850 *Examiner* article referred to this as the edges being inlaid with minute pieces of "lightwood and myrtle alternately". Between the panels is Dowling's characteristic string inlay-bordered mosaic feather banding. The "honeysuckle" mentioned is Silver Banksia and occurs only on the ends of the box.

Numerous writing slopes of similar dimensions are in private collections. Many do not have labels but are virtually identical, so there is no doubt in my mind that Dowling made them (see below).

Another labelled version of one of Dowling's writing slopes is slightly smaller (**plates 3-5**). This model lacks the fan decorations to the corners but otherwise has detailing and workmanship very similar to the NGA example. The front and rear border panels are Blackwood as are the corner squares, but the border panels to the right and left sides are Musk or Myrtle burl. Similar to the NGA writing slope, the central star appears to have been made from Satinwood and Blackwood. The outer arris edges of the writing slope have Dowling's characteristic rope banding and his characteristic string inlay bordered mosaic feather banding between panels.



### Characteristics of Richard Dowling's labelled work 1. Exceptional quality of workmanship

Dowling's work was of the highest quality seen in the colonies in the 1850s and equal in quality to that other fine-quality maker, William Hamilton. Dowling's work is distinguished by his distinctive inlay banding, which is especially detailed, intricate and precise. When there is a question about whether an item can be attributed to Dowling this very high-quality factor needs to be paramount.

#### 15.

Attributed to Richard James Dowling (1820/22–1867), *tea caddy*, Tasmanian, top view. Collection: Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston Tasmania, QVM:1999:H:1482

#### 16.

Timber plan for the top of the *tea caddy*, handwriting attributed to Charles Henry Smith, the first owner of the caddy. Collection: Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston Tasmania, QVM:1999:H:1482. See text for full list of timbers.



## 17.

Attributed to Richard James Dowling (1820/22–1867), *pole firescreen*, detail of centre of frame with Dowling's distinctive design features and rope inlay arris edging reversing at the mid-point.

Note also the Van Dyke triangles of alternating coloured timber, typical of Tunbridge Ware. 148 x 59.5 x 43.5 cm. Private collection, Queensland

## 2. Unique mosaic parquetry banding

The distinctive 'work signatures' of Richard Dowling's manufacturing were his use of particular, complex, multi-part, Tunbridge Ware-like mosaic banding inlays. In writing slopes the combination of two of these bandings seems to be unique to Richard Dowling's work. Certainly, when found in combination with the other significant features, these bandings critically identify an item as being made by Dowling. It is important to describe them in detail.

One of these banding designs was a 'rope' inlay pattern of very small pieces of alternating different coloured timbers in a single-angle striped array as described in the 1850 *Launceston Examiner*. Possibly unique to Dowling's work in Australia, the angle of the stripe reverses at the midpoint of the run. This 'rope pattern mosaic inlay' is seen on the outer arris edges of every one

of Dowling's labelled writing slopes that I have seen (**plate 7**).

The second distinctive mosaic banding is a feather or herringbone pattern inlay (sometimes called chevron pattern) like two rope bandings side by side but at opposite angles to each other – looking like the barbs in a feather or a herring's ribs, referred to here as *feather inlay banding*. Dowling's own design of this is always bordered on both sides by a line of either dark or light timber string inlay. The longer runs of Dowling's string-inlay bordered feather banding always reverse in direction/angle at the mid-point (short, vertical runs of the banding on the ends of writing slopes often did not reverse direction). In rectangular items the run is terminated at the ends by a small square block of contrasting coloured timber that is the same width as the combined feather and string inlay band. These feather inlays feature on every labelled writing slope that I am aware of (**plates 8–9**).

As will be seen below under attributed items, Dowling sometimes seems to have used a version of his rope banding with similarly bordered string inlay.

## 3. Other significant characteristics of his writing slopes

Definitive characteristics of Dowling's writing slopes include: the 12-pointed star inlay to the centre of the top, with

each point comprised of two different-coloured timbers (the stars are presented as six points superimposed on another six, offset points); the inclusion of contrasting coloured (or with the colour change sometimes due to *chatoyance*) square sections of veneer to the outer corners of every visible face of the writing slopes, (**plate 3**); shield-shaped inlaid timber escutcheons (**plate 10**), and the small concealed drawers with ribbon pulls. Every Dowling labelled writing slope that I have seen, and some unlabelled very similar writing slopes, contain a set of hidden small drawers underneath the section for inkwells and pen storage. The drawers are hidden by a removable piece of timber/flap with a spring-loaded catch (**plate 11**). Pressing on a part of the side of the box releases the catch; the flap springs out, exposing the drawers.

His detailing and use of timbers show that Richard Dowling was a timber expert: he knew his timbers very well so he could select for contrast and figure. Dowling also demonstrated a good understanding of *chatoyance*, the way a timber's appearance and colour can change depending on the direction of the grain and the angle at which it is observed.

These latter design features are not necessarily unique to Dowling's work, but when seen in combination with the distinctive bandings do show a unique combination of characteristics.

### Attribution – extrapolating from the labelled to the unlabelled

Writing slopes, boxes and items of furniture that do not bear a label but have similar design features and workmanship to Dowling's work are sometimes attributed to him.

Leaving aside the situation where an attribution is completely unsupported because the item has *none* of Dowling's distinctive features, we need to consider why many items may not have been labelled. Conceivably, one of his paper labels may have peeled off and been lost. Sometimes, items are incomplete or have had significant restorations.

Another possibility is that Dowling held only a small stock of labelled items as samples, primarily to show the quality of his work. He could then have produced similar writing slopes, other kinds of boxes and furniture on commission or for exhibition, which may explain the lack of labels. After all, commissioned items were not, by definition, offered for general sale, and the person who commissioned the item knew who the maker was, so no label was required.

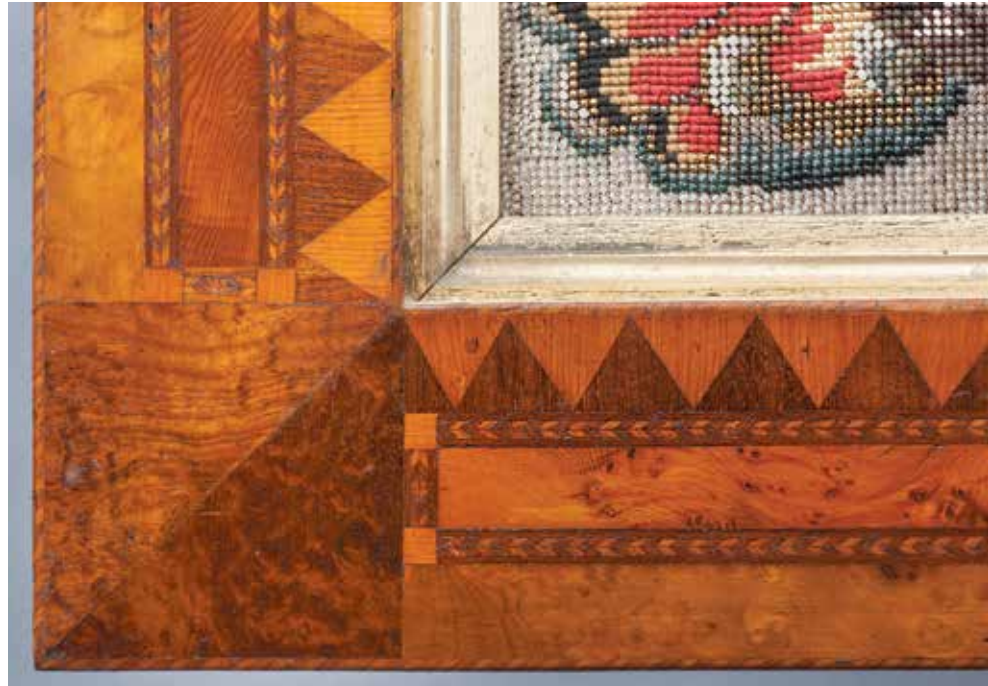
Similarly, Dowling would most likely have perceived that an item that he was going to exhibit personally (such as to Governor Denison at Government House) would not have needed a label. Unfortunately, that means that some items were misattributed in the press of the day and that the name of the maker of such items has not been passed down.

#### 18.

Attributed to Richard James Dowling (1820/22–1867), *pole firescreen*, detail of corner of frame with Dowling's distinctive design features such as the feather banding with terminal square blocks. Private collection, Queensland

#### 19.

Attributed to Richard James Dowling (1820/22–1867), *pole firescreen*, detail of column with Dowling's distinctive design features, cross-design string inlay and string inlay bordered feather banding. Private collection, Queensland





## 20.

Attributed to Richard James Dowling (1820/22–1867), *occasional table*. The circular top veneered and inlaid with a central dark timber star design set into Huon Pine, surrounded by four concentric circles of veneers, each delineated by rope pattern inlay (angled alternating stripes of different coloured timbers) edged with a string inlay of Huon Pine on both sides. Four circles are: a radial design in Satinwood; three outer circles of different cuts of Huon Pine segments. The two-height, tapered, octagonal cross-section tapered Huon Pine veneered column is subtended by an *Allocasuarina verticillata* (Drooping Sheoak) moulding. Triform, birds-eye Huon Pine veneered base and shaped bun feet. Carcass timbers are cedar and Huon Pine. The workmanship of fine inlays and timbers are identical to those seen in boxes and writing slopes bearing Dowling paper labels. 73 x 77 diam. cm. Private collection, Queensland

Not applying a label would have saved Richard the minor cost of one, but has had a much larger cost to how he has been remembered until now.

Many Australian colonial cabinetmakers never labelled their work and others did so intermittently. Dowling appears to have been an intermittent labeller.

I used to find such intermittent labelling difficult to understand and was highly suspicious of attributions. However, I have developed more of an understanding of a lack of labels since I began to design and make (contemporary) furniture myself. When I first began some years ago, I had not developed a label or mark so many pieces were unintentionally unmarked (though I sometimes used a pencil inscription on a hidden surface for larger pieces). Even since I developed labels, occasional pieces do not receive one, such as when a commissioned item was made to a tight deadline and the client was in a rush to take the item.

## Attributed writing slopes

In recent years, collectors and dealers have attributed many unlabelled writing slopes to Richard Dowling. Where do these attributions stand given the evidence that we now have? The current evidence supports the attribution to Richard Dowling of those writing slopes that are virtually identical to the labelled examples described above. The example shown (**plate 12**) can definitely be attributed to Richard Dowling, as the whole set of his characteristic workmanship and inlaid bandings are present. The height and pattern of timbers used vary slightly from that seen in the similarly sized NGA writing slope (**plate 6**), but that is to be expected as items were handmade not machine made, and available timber supplies would have varied with time.

I strongly suspect that Dowling may have made writing slopes in other designs. I have seen high-quality slopes in other designs that I suspect could be his, but with no labelled examples of these different designs, we can't be sure. Therefore, I urge caution about attributions to Richard Dowling unless they show clear evidence of his distinctive work features as identified and described in this article.

There were many fine cabinetmakers in VDL/Tasmania and they may well have tried to cash-in on the prestige of owning high-quality work. That purchasers were more concerned with ownership than the maker was demonstrated by owners entering items into national and international exhibitions under their own names, without mentioning the maker.

Until we discover further examples that have a Dowling label but not the above-listed set of characteristics, we cannot attribute writing slopes with other designs to Richard Dowling. Because the style of work, Tunbridge Ware, was widely made in the UK and possibly elsewhere, many writing slopes with difficult to identify timbers but superb workmanship are likely to be found; most will have no connection with Richard Dowling, maker, Van Diemen's Land.

## Boxes

Many 'boxes' have been attributed to Richard Dowling in recent years. What of them? Some of these have rope pattern inlay arris edges and string inlay bordered banding similar to those seen in his labelled writing slopes. Unfortunately, to my knowledge, none are known bearing a label and with their original tray or other internal fittings, where such a label may have been. However, 19<sup>th</sup>-century accounts record that Richard Dowling made boxes.

Some degree of confidence can be found when an item demonstrates a set of characteristics and similar high-standard workmanship to that seen in Dowling's labelled works. The work box (**plate 13**) shows string-inlay bordered rope pattern inlays, very similar to Dowling's work (see below for an attributed example with both the bordered rope banding and the bordered feather banding). This box exhibits similar layout, with a central motif and fan decorations internal to the mosaic borders. Because the remainder of the work is of similar quality and style, I would be confident that this can be attributed to Dowling. I do wish I had a signed example to be absolutely sure, so hope that this article prompts the discovery of such an item.

## A tea caddy

While flicking through the pages of Fahy and Simpson (an enjoyable pastime), I noted a tea caddy with some of Dowling's distinctive inlay bandings in the collection of the Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery (QVMAG), Launceston.<sup>55</sup> The QVMAG tea caddy is described by Fahy and Simpson as 'Of classical sarcophagus shape, this tea caddy is a testament to the high level of workmanship achieved by its unknown maker'. So I made a visit to Launceston to see it.

The tea caddy (**plates 14–16**) is the most superb inlaid Australian tea caddy that I have seen. In my opinion, the maker is far from unknown. This shows an abundance of Dowling's distinctive complex, multi-part, Tunbridge Ware-like mosaic banding inlays. Richard Dowling has to have made it, and he has excelled himself.

The raised top of the lid is a flat rectangular area, within which are inset

a range of different timber veneers in a complex design. In the very centre is a small circle of what appears to be Huon Pine, surrounded by a 16-point star of Satinwood set into an oval cartouche of Musk, bordered by Dowling's string-inlay rope banding. Outside the oval is a fan of radiating segments of different timbers (named in the included timber map, attributed to the first owner of the tea caddy). The arris edge of the raised section on the lid has Dowling's fine rope edge arris banding. The lid cascades down in layers, each layer delineated by Dowling's string-inlay bordered rope banding, which, as usual for Dowling, reverses direction in the middle of the run. The arris edges where the four faces of the lid meet are also adorned with Dowling's fine rope edge banding.

The front face of the tea caddy displays a number of Dowling's design characteristics: the outer band is Blackwood and the four corners are decorated with modified squares of different coloured/*chatoyance* timber; there is an inlaid shield-shaped timber escutcheon, and the central veneered panel of Huon Pine is delineated with Dowling's string-inlay bordered feather banding.

This is where the design varies considerably from Dowling's signed writing slopes. The front displays two of Dowling's 12-pointed star inlays described as being made of 'Sheoke'. In Tasmania this would have to be one of the species of *Allocasuarina* as there are no members of the genus *Casuarina* (She Oak) on the island.

The introduction of a dual-feature design element on the front of an item that is otherwise so distinctive of Dowling's workmanship provides a possible link to connect Dowling to a number of boxes attributed to him. However, unless those items also display some of Dowling's characteristics we should be cautious about attribution.

The 19<sup>th</sup>-century timber map with the tea caddy (**plate 16**) gives further support to the idea that Dowling used only Australian timbers. Above the plan reads: "Plan of Top of Box. All the woods are the indigenous growth of Van Diemen's Land."

Most of the timber veneers to the top are identified on the plan and include, for the



## 21.

Attributed to Richard James Dowling (1820/22–1867), *occasional table*, edge detail. Segments of differently figured Huon Pine that radiate out from the centre. The segmented circles are delineated by string inlay bordered rope pattern banding. Similar detailed banding inlays were characteristic of Richard Dowling's work. Private collection, Queensland

width of the box, from the outer bands inwards "Huon Pine (Pronounced Youn), Myrtle, Musk (light) and Blackwood." The shorter panels on the side of the lid are the same timbers although labelled slightly differently: "Huon Pine, Myrtle, Light Musk and Blackwood."

The 20 segments radiating out from the oval cartouche on the top of the caddy are labelled (from the 12 o'clock position, clockwise to the 5.30 position) "Huon Pine, Sheoke [*Allocasuarina*], Blackwood, Musk, Myrtle, Huon Pine, Myrtle, Musk, Blackwood, Sheoke." The other half of the oval repeats this sequence.

At the base of the timber plan it reads "Sides of Raised Top - Dark Musk" and "Stars in front of box - Sheoke."



## 22.

Attributed to Richard James Dowling (1820/22–1867), *occasional table* column detail. The octagonally shaped, veneered column is in two sections. The lower section is slightly tapered and is subtended by a rounded moulding of Drooping Sheoak timber. The higher, taller and more tapered section of the column is subtended by a more strongly convex moulding of Blackwood. Private collection, Queensland

## Furniture items

Historical descriptions of furniture made by Dowling make it likely that examples of his furniture may still exist but no labelled examples are known. Two extant items of furniture can be attributed to Richard Dowling. The first is the pole firescreen found in 1999 in northern Tasmania (plates 2, 17, 18, 19). It lacks a maker's label but is, in my opinion, definitely by Dowling's hand, as will be clear from the comparison photographs.

The screen consists of a picture frame holding a very fine wool, silk and beadwork image of a classically beautiful young woman with ringlets of blond hair surrounded by curlicues and other flourishes. The frame is mounted on a pole, which is supported by a two-height octagonal column on an octagonal base sitting on four, flat, turned bun feet.

The outward-sloping frame shows many of the same details seen in Dowling's labelled writing slopes. It is made principally of Myrtle burl, Huon Pine and burl Blackwood veneered on a cedar carcass. Around the outside arris edge of the entire frame, including the corner blocks, is a band of very fine parquetry mosaic rope inlay in a pattern exactly as seen on Dowling's labelled writing slopes. As with the writing slopes, the direction of the parquetry rope inlay edge banding reverses direction in the mid-centre of the run (plate 17).

The corners of the frame are blocks of burl Blackwood, visually square in outline. They are, of course, two-faceted to fit the shape of the outward-sloping frame. Between the corner blocks the frame is veneered in three bands. The outer band is Myrtle burl, the middle band is Huon Pine and an inner band is made of Vandyke triangles of contrasting coloured timbers: Blackwood and Huon Pine (plate 18). The interstitial joints between the bands are made of the same very fine string-inlay-edged feather pattern parquetry design as seen in Dowling's labelled writing slopes.

The octagonal column is in two sections. Each section is capped and subtended by a solid timber moulding. Both column sections are veneered: the upper section is burl Tasmanian Myrtle strung with fine lines of Blackwood; the lower section is burl Blackwood string-inlaid with fine lines of Huon Pine or Satinwood; both sections are inlaid in a cross pattern (plate 19).

The column sits on an octagonal base, veneered in three concentric bands. The inner band is birds'-eye Huon Pine, the central band is burl Blackwood and the outer band is Myrtle burl. The three bands are separated by lines of Dowling's distinctive string-inlay bordered feather banding. The inlay reverses in direction in the centre of each segment but is not

terminated by a square as the joints are not at 90 degrees.

## Occasional table

Nineteenth-century documents mention tables made by Richard Dowling. To the best of my knowledge, only one table bearing some of Richard Dowling's distinctive parquetry pattern detailing and other signature features is extant.

In 2018 Andrew Simpson advertised an "Exhibition Table" describing it as "An Important Exhibition quality Huon Pine, Casuarina and Satin Box veneered Occasional Table attributed to Richard Dowling, O'Brien's Bridge, Tasmania, 19th century patina with restorations" (plate 20).

This table with star-pattern top shows many of the distinctive characteristics of Richard Dowling's work, including high quality workmanship. The table-top differs from signed Dowling pieces by being in the round, which necessitates design changes. However, some of Dowling's distinctive 'signature' is present in the use of parquetry mosaic, string inlay bordered banding, contrasting coloured or *chatoyance* timbers and delineation of areas with detailed-design inlays (plate 21).

The top of the table is parquetry inlaid in five concentric circles, each delineated by a band of rope pattern inlay with a plain string inlay band to both sides. The centre is a 32-pointed star of a dark-coloured *Allocasuarina*, set into Huon Pine. Outside that is the first delineation line of string-bordered rope inlay, followed by a ring of 32 more star points of what appears to be light-coloured Blackwood (sapwood), set into an unusually lace-like, figured timber identified by a wood technologist as Satinwood (which my wood samples usually show as very plain satin-like figure possibly indicating that the example in the table is what is called spalted). Outer concentric rings are segments of contrasting, differently figured and *chatoyance* Huon Pine.

The column has some common features with the firescreen. It is in two height sections, both octagonal, of different widths and both expertly veneered (plate 22). At the base and between the two sections are mouldings similar to the mouldings seen

in similar positions on the firescreen. The lowest collar solid timber moulding appears to be *Allocasuarina verticillata* (Drooping Sheoak). The table sits on a Huon Pine veneered tri-form base.

The table column is veneered in a very similar manner to the column of the firescreen. It is less highly decorated than the firescreen as it lacks the diamond pattern string inlay seen on that piece. Unlike the firescreen, the column tapers towards the top.

These differences are easy to understand when we remember that the firescreen is designed to be seen from the front, with the column a significant feature, whereas the table is designed to be seen from the top, with the column a secondary visual feature.

### Summary of attribution evidence

Solid stylistic evidence exists for attributing these two items of furniture to Richard Dowling. The outside edges of the firescreen show Dowling's characteristic micro-mosaic aris-edge rope inlay. The base of the firescreen shows Dowling's characteristic micro-mosaic feather banding inlays with adjacent string inlay. In my view, that makes it virtually certain that the firescreen was made by Richard Dowling.

The high quality of the workmanship seen in the circular top of the occasional table, combined with the style of the star design, the string inlay bordered detailed banding between circumferential rings of timber segments and the common design features of the columns support the attribution of the table to Dowling.

### Timbers in unlabelled items

Some unlabelled items possess the same timbers, inlay bandings and workmanship as Dowling's labelled writing slopes, which justifies their attribution to him. However, others have attributed to Dowling some items that include imported timber species. I have not been able to examine those examples to form a view as to their maker.

Dowling might have made commission pieces in timbers selected by the buyer, but all Dowling's labelled pieces use only Australian, especially Tasmanian, timbers,

which indicate that he was part of the colonial movement keen to promote the colony's unique timbers. This is corroborated by Governor Denison choosing to send one of Dowling's tables back to England as an advertisement for the superb Tasmanian timbers.<sup>56</sup> Further, the items that we know Dowling himself exhibited publicly during his lifetime, the "inlaid writing-desks and dressing-cases" at the 1861 Victorian exhibition, made much of the fact that they were made "of colonial wood".<sup>57</sup> Unless labelled examples exhibiting exotic timbers come to light, I regard it as unlikely Dowling made them.

### Conclusions

We now know more about Richard Dowling as a person – where he came from, who he married, how many children he and his wife Jane had, the areas where he lived and worked and his relocation to Victoria. Because of the location of the marriage and his description in the records of the births (and one death) of his children it is certain that the Richard Dowling "Carpenter," who married in 1849 was the cabinetmaker who made the writing slopes and labelled some of them "R Dowling, O'Brien's Bridge VDL".

There is no doubt that he was a highly expert designer and master craftsman who made writing slopes between 1849 and 1861. Existing labelled pieces show that he used only Australian timbers in his work, which stand proudly among the best Australian craftsmanship. The evidence presented here from 19th-century records and extant examples of furniture with Dowling's distinctive work and design motifs show that he also made larger, parquetry veneered tables and other fine furniture items. We know that Dowling exhibited some of his furniture at Government House, Hobart (although newspapers misattributed them), which may explain the lack of a label on them. I speculate that items made as commissions rather than stock items were also not labelled.

We still lack definitive information about Richard's arrival in VDL and where he was trained to such a high level of skill. Wherever he was trained, Richard Dowling was very expert in the manufacture and

use of Tunbridge Ware-like mosaic inlays in rope, feather and string inlay designs. Cutting, assembling and gluing the very small components of those inlays, then fixing them into position requires very great accuracy and a high level of skill by the cabinetmaker. The known centre of such workmanship was near Tunbridge Wells in the UK, but no evidence has yet been found to show that Richard trained there or in any other of the number of manufactories producing that ware in the UK or Ireland.

There are confusing records of a number of men named Richard Dowling being in Hobart in the period 1846 to 1858. One came as a convict and there is a record that he became a free man, but the evidence suggests that he was not the cabinetmaker.

Disconcertingly, I can find no records of the arrival in Hobart of any men (other than the convict) by the name of Richard Dowling between 1846 and 1852 although there are departure records for a number of men with that name leaving Van Diemen's Land during that period.

Richard disappeared from the Tasmanian records after either 1857 or 1858 (the latter if it was his insolvency that was reported). We now know that Richard and Jane went to Victoria, where they lived for eight or nine years, and that both of them died in 1867, a couple of months apart, and are buried in Queenscliff cemetery in an unmarked grave.

Labelled examples of Dowling's work have been used as a basis for the attribution of very similarly made writing slopes as well as unsigned items including a box, a tea caddy and two items of furniture. Newly rediscovered 19th-century records of the fact that Dowling made furniture provide further support for the furniture attributions.

### NOTES

1. BDM Victoria, death reg. no. 6537/1867, <https://my.rio.bdm.vic.gov.au/efamily-history/5d438fec4b3c532324f56c59/record/5c65379c4aba80ac31084ae7?q=efamily&givenName=Richard%20James&familyName=DOWLING> accessed 2 Aug 2019.
2. Van Diemen's Land was formally re-named Tasmania on 1 January 1856.
3. K Fahy & A Simpson, *Australian Furniture, Pictorial History and Dictionary 1788 – 1938*. Casuarina Press, Sydney 1998, p 46 & pl 85.
4. Mossgreen Auction, Melbourne 22 Feb 2015

- lot 139.
5. <http://americanmarquetrysociety.com/Marquetry.html> accessed 29 May 2018.
  6. <http://www.antiquecollector.uk.com/articles/tunbridgeware.htm> accessed 14 Jul 2018.
  7. Y. Barber, "Digitisation for Researchers", *Australiana* 41.2, 2019 p 44.
  8. <https://www.linc.tas.gov.au/how-to/Pages/Names-Index-content.aspx> accessed 29 May 2018.
  9. A. Alexander, *Glenorchy 1804-1964*, sketches and maps by Mollie Tomlin, Glenorchy City Council 1986 p 5.
  10. *Ibid* p 7.
  11. *Ibid* p 5.
  12. *Ibid* p 12.
  13. See n 1.
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  15. J. H. Allan *An history of the Church of England Parish of Glenorchy and associated districts*. Church of England Parish of Glenorchy, 1969 p 30.
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  28. *Hobart Guardian* 19 May 1852 p 1.
  29. <https://guides.slv.vic.gov.au/interexhib/1861to62> accessed 7 Aug 2019.
  30. *Argus* 14 Nov 1861 p 4.
  31. *Geelong Advertiser* 29 Mar 1866 p 3.
  32. Email from Geelong Cemeteries trust, 13 Aug. 2019, location of grave QCF-SECT-1A-807-279.
  33. *Tasmanian Daily News* 12 May 1858 p 2; *Courier* 7 Jul 1858 p 3.
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  35. A partial record in the Stilwell Index (Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts) of an item from the *Hobart Town Advertiser* 30 Apr 1850 p 3, column 2, reads "Francis Dowling of Glenorchy maker of a Huon pine writing desk with mesh wood sides ... It is French polished, and is one of [the best pieces of] colonial workmanship we have seen in the colony. Exhibited at Government House." The index notes that "Francis Dowling could not be located in the usual reference sources but may be related to Richard D. Dowling of O'Brien's Bridge, Glenorchy." [https://linc.tas.ent.sirsidynix.net.au/client/en\\_AU/all/search/detailnonmodal/ent:\\$002f\\$002fTAS\\_INDEX\\_MARC\\$002f0\\$002fTAS\\_INDEX\\_MARC:57865/one?qu=SUBJECT%3D%2D2Dowling%2C+Francis%22](https://linc.tas.ent.sirsidynix.net.au/client/en_AU/all/search/detailnonmodal/ent:$002f$002fTAS_INDEX_MARC$002f0$002fTAS_INDEX_MARC:57865/one?qu=SUBJECT%3D%2D2Dowling%2C+Francis%22) accessed 12 Apr 2018.
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  38. A Watson, A 'Champion' Table, *Australiana* 15: 4, p 100.
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  57. See n 30.

## What's in a name?

Well, not as much as one might hope. We know from his death record that Richard James Dowling, cabinetmaker, of O'Brien's Bridge, came from Castleconnell, Ireland. Discovering his birth and early life is difficult, because many Irish records have been lost. Irish botanist and historian E. Charles Nelson writes:<sup>1</sup>

Irish records were largely burnt in 1922<sup>2</sup> during the civil war, when the Four Courts in Dublin was destroyed by fire. This means that most civil records and many church records (especially of Anglican (Church of Ireland)) parishes no longer exist. Roman Catholic records often do not exist simply because they were never kept. So, finding anything about him is going to be pot luck. Finding anything pre-1841 when the first census was taken is almost a lost cause.

Four men named Richard Dowling are recorded arriving in Australia. None of their details fit our cabinetmaker.

### An assisted immigrant

*A Return of the Disposal of Immigrants by the Ship Charles Kerr from Limerick arrived at Sydney on the 8<sup>th</sup> January 1839*<sup>3</sup> (Return) lists Richard Dowling, 26, from Castleconnell, Ireland, who travelled with his wife, 19. The Irish government had chartered the *Charles Kerr* to transport assisted migrants.<sup>4,5</sup> He was described as a 'Carpenter' on the ship's register when it arrived in Sydney. The Return shows that Richard was initially employed in Sydney by the Government.

This cannot be our cabinetmaker. He was already married and 26 in 1839, so would have been 36 in 1849, when our cabinetmaker married Jane Eyres with a stated age of 29 years (although his death certificate suggests he may have been 27).<sup>6</sup>

I have found no other assisted immigrants of the same name.

## Was he a convict?

Three convicts named Richard Dowling were transported to Australia in the early 1800s. Their details do not match our cabinetmaker. One was English, another came from Castleconnell in Ireland, while he and the third were both tried in nearby Limerick City.

The first convict Richard Dowling arrived in Sydney in 1800.<sup>7</sup> He was tried in Somerset in 1798 and sentenced to 14 years.<sup>8</sup> Sent to Sydney on the *Royal Admiral*, he was most probably the convict who was hanged in 1814 for stealing cattle.<sup>9</sup>

Another Richard Dowling, from near Castleconnell, born in 1812 or 1815, was a house servant who was tried in Limerick City in 1838 for receiving stolen goods and sentenced to seven years transportation. He was married with one child, and transported to Sydney.<sup>10</sup> What happened to him is unknown. However, a house servant seven to 10 years older than our Richard is an unlikely candidate for the expert cabinetmaker in VDL.

A third convict Richard Dowling<sup>11</sup> was sentenced for receiving stolen goods (linen) at “Limerick City, 14 May 1839: 7 Yrs” and arrived in Hobart on 3 March 1844. On arrival he was documented as “Roman Catholic Can Read and Write” and trade as a “Coachman” aged 33 (so born in 1811). This Richard Dowling was first sent to Norfolk Island in 1840. He was transferred to Hobart on 14 February 1844 via the *Maitland* and gained his “Free Certificate 461” on 14 May 1846. The same conduct record records that he was extensively tattooed with Catholic religious symbolism including a crucifixion scene.

Other sources suggest that his conduct record may contain some inaccuracies. The *Limerick Chronicle* records on 18 May 1839 p 4<sup>12</sup> that Richard Dowling was convicted on 10 May and sentenced to seven years transportation for “stealing a number of brass plates and knockers off the doors of several inhabitants.”

Other discrepancies rule out this

Irish convict as our cabinetmaker. It is unlikely that a coachman would have the training to be a cabinetmaker. His conduct record gives no indication that he was a skilled tradesman as he was put to field labour. The record also states he was “Married”. On Norfolk Island he was punished on 24 June 1840 for “Careless field labor”. On 31 December 1841 he was punished for “Refusing to Bathe”. In 1845 he was given four days solitary confinement for “Misconduct talking to a prisoner charged with Larceny” and later that year he was again admonished. All that indicates a pretty rough and disreputable character without trade skills useful in the colony.

Educated or skilled convicts were usually recognised by the Colonial Government and put to work at their trade. A cabinetmaker would have been tasked with making furniture and useful items for the government. Lawrence Butler is a well-known example of that approach.<sup>13</sup>

The convict’s age argues against his being our cabinetmaker: he would have been 38 by 1849, while Richard Dowling the cabinetmaker was 29 when he married Jane Eyres. Nine years is a big discrepancy and he was already married by the time the record was closed in 1846. As well as being illegal, bigamy was a mortal sin, so no devout Catholic would risk going to hell.

## Was he a free settler into Hobart?

No Richard Dowling appears in the lists of free settlers arriving in Hobart; One explanation for a lack of detailed immigration records is that “until 1854, many unassisted passengers (particularly steerage passengers) were not listed individually on a passenger list.”<sup>14</sup> Unless those passengers were listed in a newspaper or other list of the day, there may be no record of their arrival.

## Summary

A possible family relationship of the men (at least three) by the name of Richard Dowling from Castleconnell and nearby who came to Australia is

intriguing but may never be known. However, the name Richard was commonly used for males in the various Dowling lineages, which, coupled with the loss of Irish records, makes it hard to trace the VDL cabinetmaker’s origins.

We have no definite records for the arrival of Richard Dowling, cabinetmaker of O’Brien’s Bridge. We can speculate about a possible family connection with other Castleconnell woodworkers, but there is no proof.

Richard probably came as a free settler and travelled steerage, so there is no record of his arrival.

## NOTES

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2. E. C. Nelson “It’s a long way to Tipperary” – finding natural history archives in Ireland, with an appendix listing archives”, *Archives of Natural History* 1990 17 (3) pp 325–347.
3. [http://indexes.records.nsw.gov.au/ebook/list.aspx?series=NRS5313&item=4\\_4780&ship=Charles%20Kerr](http://indexes.records.nsw.gov.au/ebook/list.aspx?series=NRS5313&item=4_4780&ship=Charles%20Kerr) accessed 19 Aug 2019.
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5. *Clare Journal and Ennis Advertiser* 6 Aug 1838 p 2.
6. See main article n 1.
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8. [https://www.records.nsw.gov.au/index\\_image/12188\\_4\\_4003\\_0133-134#](https://www.records.nsw.gov.au/index_image/12188_4_4003_0133-134#) accessed 13 Aug 2019.
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# Design elements in Richard Dowling's work

## Labelled examples

Several clearly discernible design elements appear in labelled Dowling pieces and can be used to identify his work. Dowling's distinctive, complex, multi-part, Tunbridge Ware-like mosaic banding inlays are the most critical and are essential elements in attributing an item to Dowling. The labelled writing slopes have all the design elements listed below:

- Extensive use of Tasmanian decorative timbers in parquetry patterns.
- Radial star inlay centres and sometimes radial quarter star/fan corner decoration.
- An aris edge 'rope' inlay pattern of very small pieces of alternating different coloured timbers in a single-angle striped array. Possibly unique to Dowling's work in Australia, the angle of the stripe reverses at the midpoint of the run. This 'rope pattern mosaic inlay' is seen on the outer aris edges of every one of Dowling's labelled writing slopes that I have seen.
- Distinctive mosaic feather banding (sometimes called herringbone or chevron pattern) like two rope bandings side by side but at opposite angles to each other – looking like the barbs in a feather or a herring's ribs, referred to here as feather inlay banding. Dowling's own version of this is always bordered on both sides by a line of either dark or light timber string inlay. The longer runs of Dowling's string-inlay bordered feather banding inlays always reverse in direction/angle at the mid-point (short, vertical runs of the banding on the ends of writing slopes often did not reverse direction). In rectangular items the run is terminated by a small square block of contrasting coloured timber that is the same width as the combined feather and string inlay band.

- Sections of different timber veneer inlays are always separated by a line of one of Dowling's distinctive bandings.
- Rectangular faces of writing slopes have squares of differently coloured or different *chatoyance* timber at each corner.
- Writing slopes have a twelve-pointed star inlay to the centre of the top, with each point comprised of two different-coloured timbers.
- Escutcheons are inlaid timber in a shield-shape.
- A set of small drawers hidden under the pen and ink compartment, concealed with a spring-loaded catch built into the side of the writing slope. The drawers have ribbon pulls, not knobs.

## Attributed examples

Items that I attribute to Dowling may not have all of the above elements but all have some of the essential inlay and banding characteristics. They also combine some other distinctive design features. These attributed pieces could provide a link to some of the general-purpose boxes that may be attributed to Dowling. In items that I attribute to Dowling, the most significant departure from the set of characters seen in writing slopes is the substitution of string-inlay bordered rope banding for his feather banding. The best example of a 'missing link' between signed items and attributed items is the tea caddy in the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston (**plates 14–15**). It has many of the characteristics of labelled items and some of the characteristics seen in attributed boxes. Interestingly, it shows Dowling's design flexibility. Because the lower faces of the sarcophagus shape are tapered, they are not rectangular as in the boxes and writing slopes, but rhomboidal. Dowling followed the same design principles in the tea caddy as the rectangular faces but instead of squares of differently coloured or different *chatoyance* timber in each corner, he has used rhombus-shaped blocks. Similarly, the terminal block at the end of his feather inlay is a rhombus instead of a square block.

# Jane Dowling

Richard's wife Jane Dowling née Eyres (1819/21–1867) seems to have been a volatile character who was often involved in conflicts with other women in a similar social position to herself. Researching her story revealed some useful information about her husband and his work.

Jane's convict conduct record reveals that she had been convicted four times before being transported.<sup>1</sup> Jane was convicted on 30 November 1846 for stealing cotton cloth and money, with her trade given as "Laundry Maid". Her conduct record states that she was a Protestant, that her "Native Place" [birthplace] was Bolton and that Jane could both read and write.

Both her origin and literacy level may be errors. Being able to read and write does not accord with Jane's occupation of laundry maid, nor with how she 'signed by her mark' with a cross on her marriage certificate. Jane's death certificate states that she was born in Manchester<sup>2</sup> but Bolton and Manchester are close, about 18 km by foot today, so the apparent conflict may not be significant.

I cannot find a record for the birth of a Jane Eyres in Bolton or Manchester around 1819–1821. Before 1837 birth and baptism records in the UK were kept regionally and depended upon the local clergy for accuracy, reliability and the survival of records. However, Ancestry.co.uk includes census, baptism and birth records that list four females named Jane Eyres born around that time:<sup>3</sup>

1. a baptism in Lineham [Lyneham], Wiltshire, on 26 September 1819.<sup>4</sup> Lyneham is 245 km from Manchester, so an unlikely match;
2. a baptism on 21 May 1820 at Deverill Hill, Wiltshire<sup>5</sup> about 290 km from Manchester and an unlikely match;
3. a baptism on 16 Nov 1821 in Louth, Lincolnshire,<sup>6</sup> about 160 km;
4. a baptism on 6 March 1822 in

Leek, Staffordshire (father John, mother Ann).<sup>7</sup> Leek is within 50 km of Manchester, though in the opposite direction and further from Bolton.

Any or none of these may be the woman who married Richard Dowling.

Jane was a convict in 1849. She served her full seven years, obtained her ticket of leave on 27 April 1852 and her conduct record notes “Free Cert 13 December 1853. Herself”.

The UK National Archive, Kew<sup>8,9</sup> contains information about Jane while on board the *Cadet* on her voyage to Australia. C. R. Kinnear MD, Surgeon Superintendent on the *Cadet*, reports that Jane was put on the ‘sick list’ on 11 September 1847 for sores that Kinnear attributed to syphilis. He observed

she was of a cachectic habit and had evidently led a very profligate life.

Kinnear appears to have had a judgemental attitude and little sympathy for his patient, applying a disinfectant solution of chloride of lime to the sores. “Cachectic” refers to a pathological condition of general ill health with emaciation, today usually associated with cancer or a chronic infectious disease.<sup>10</sup> However, malnutrition can produce the same condition.

While it is impossible to diagnose definitively after such a long time and without seeing the patient, medical practitioners I have consulted suggest that Kinnear’s diagnosis was probably incorrect. Both these professionals and online information about syphilis<sup>11,12</sup> say that obvious sores (mucous membrane lesions) occur about four to 10 weeks after infection, and are signs of the secondary stage of the disease. Those sores heal by themselves, so, if it had been syphilis, Kinnear’s treatment would not have had any real effect.

Convict transports took about four months to sail from England to Australia.<sup>13</sup> The *Cadet* departed England on 9 August 1847,<sup>14</sup> and Jane’s sores appeared about a month after departure and nine months after her conviction. For the sores to have been second stage

syphilis, it would have meant that Jane was infected with the disease *after* her conviction and maybe after embarkation. More likely causes for the sores were an infection of Phthisis (tuberculosis) or chronic malnutrition. Multiple sores could also have been what were known as school sores, a bacterial skin infection common in children and the undernourished.

Once she arrived in VDL, Jane seems to have kept on the straight and narrow until 2 May 1850. Then Jane Dowling, was fined five shillings for “using indecent language”.

Trouble erupted on 19 April 1855. Jane fought with her neighbour, Mrs Agnes Bailey,<sup>15</sup> about a dress Jane had sold to Agnes but for which Jane claimed she had not been paid. The *Colonial Times* reported the hearing in the Kangaroo Point Police Office:<sup>16</sup>

Female Quarrels – Mrs Jane Dowling, of O’Brien’s Bridge, yesterday charged Mrs Agnes Bailey, her neighbour, with assaulting her with a stick, on the 2nd April ... The charge was that Mrs Bailey had bought a dress of complainant which she had not paid for, and that Mrs Dowling tried to tear it off her back, by which the squabble was caused, Mrs Dowling being further an aggressor by throwing water over her debtor. The evidence was contradictory, and ... [the record is incomplete].

The same month, Jane had a dispute with Agnes Daley; a misprint for the same Agnes Bailey, formerly Agnes Currans, who had married Joseph Bailey. Agnes was a ticket-of-leave convict, sentenced to seven years’ transportation on 24 April 1851 for stealing a watch, with two previous convictions for stealing shawls and money. Agnes had arrived on 26 January 1852<sup>17</sup> and had been in trouble since her arrival, having absconded twice. Her conduct record noted that she had “hard” eyes. Agnes was convicted on Jane’s charge as described below:<sup>18</sup>

Mrs Jane Dowling, of O’Brien’s Bridge, yesterday, at the police court, preferred a charge of misconduct against Agnes Daley, a passholder [convict with a ticket of leave], residing in the same place, for grossly abusing her on the 16th inst.

Mr Fenwick, the presiding magistrate, found the defendant Agnes Daley/Bailey guilty and sentenced her to one month’s imprisonment.<sup>19</sup> The court record is significant for Richard’s story because it mentions that he made tables.

Jane next appears in the records in Queenscliff, Victoria. On 31 December 1860 the *Geelong Advertiser*<sup>20</sup> notes that Mrs Henry Reed, wife of a pilot for vessels entering Port Phillip Bay, engaged Jane Dowling to assist her with the birth of her child. Mrs Reed also engaged a chemist, Edward Lane, for medical assistance. Mrs Reed died giving birth and Lane was committed for manslaughter.

In March 1866, Jane brought a charge against Mary White for abusive language.<sup>21</sup>

Jane Dowling v Mary A. White – For abusive language... The evidence went to show that very improper language was used on both sides. The plaintiff just as bad as defendant. The Bench dismissed the case.

In April 1866, Jane accused Esther Podger of abusive language in the Queenscliff police court.<sup>22</sup> That case was postponed and the outcome is unknown.

There are no more references to Jane until her death in Queenscliff in 1867. Births, Deaths and Marriages, Victoria<sup>23</sup> records that Jane was a “Lodging House keeper” and died aged 48 years on 31 January 1867 from “First, inflammation of stomach, Second, ulceration and perforation. Duration 4 weeks”. In modern terminology, Jane’s cause of death was a “ruptured peptic ulcer” – a gastric ulcer which has eaten through the stomach lining. This could have been dealt with only by urgent surgery. Neither Jane’s nor Richard’s deaths were related to what would be expected from tertiary syphilis.

Jane's stated age at death would make her year of birth 1819. That age agrees with Jane's convict conduct record but not with the marriage record, which gave her age as 28 in 1849, equating to being born in 1821. Jane may have deliberately understated her age at the wedding to pretend that she was younger than Richard.

The Queenscliff Historical Museum suggests that the lodging house that Jane kept was in a house called Sefton<sup>24</sup> in King Street, Queenscliff. Three houses in a row had been built by or for the pilots who guided ships into and out of Port Phillip Bay. The house next door to Sefton, Alikum, was the home of pilot Henry Reed and his wife Martha, who had called upon Jane to attend her at the birth of her child.

Jane left behind her husband, Richard (who reported her death) and three living children, Catherine Elizabeth, 16, Sarah Jane, 9, and Richard Thomas, 4.

Nine months after Jane's death<sup>25</sup> "Kate Dowling, a respectable looking young girl" was before the police court in Geelong charged with thefts in Queenscliff. She was sentenced to one month's imprisonment. There is no proof that this was Catherine Elizabeth.<sup>26</sup>

## Summary

Jane Dowling was obviously a strong-minded woman who stood her ground and fought to defend what she believed were her rights. Having come from an impoverished background, then being convicted and transported for theft, she found a new life in Australia. However, the difficult economic conditions during the 1850s and 1860s meant that she and Richard had to work hard to keep themselves and their family fed. Jane's bad language and disputes with other women could be seen in 21<sup>st</sup>-century terms as a borderline personality disorder. However, if we consider her background and the conditions in our fledgling colonies, such behaviour may have been much more common. When people are struggling to survive they do not always have the fortitude to be 'genteel'. Jane and Richard stuck

together through the good times (servants for a convict woman!) and the bad times and then died fairly young after a hard life, but, as I see it, she stood her ground along the way.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## NOTES

1. [https://stors.tas.gov.au/CON41-1-15\\$init=CON41-1-15p55](https://stors.tas.gov.au/CON41-1-15$init=CON41-1-15p55) accessed 21 Mar 2018.
2. BDM Victoria, death reg. 3260/1867, <https://my.rio.bdm.vic.gov.au/efamily-history/5d438e6a4b3c532324f56c39/record/5c65379c4aba80ac31084296?q=efamily&givenName=Jane&familyName=DOWLING> accessed 2 Aug 2019.
3. Ancestry includes other people named Jane Eyres who either gained the name Eyres by marriage, or who appear in death or census records as living in the UK after Jane Eyres/Dowling left on the Cadet. These can be excluded.
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8. <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/record?catid=-5876408&catln=7>.
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11. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/syphilis/symptoms-causes/syc-20351756>.
12. <https://www.cdc.gov/std/syphilis/stdfact-syphilis.htm>.
13. [https://jenwilletts.com/convict\\_ship\\_edden\\_1840.htm](https://jenwilletts.com/convict_ship_edden_1840.htm).
14. See n 3.
15. Agnes Currans, 20, servant, was married to Joseph Bailey, 26, labourer, on 14 September 1852 by the Reverend W R Bennet (who had officiated at Richard and Jane's wedding) at Kensington Chapel. [https://stors.tas.gov.au/RGD37-1-11\\$init=RGD37-1-11p235](https://stors.tas.gov.au/RGD37-1-11$init=RGD37-1-11p235).
16. *Colonial Times* 19 Apr 1855 p 2.
17. [https://stors.tas.gov.au/CON41-1-32\\$init=CON41-1-32p47](https://stors.tas.gov.au/CON41-1-32$init=CON41-1-32p47).
18. *Colonial Times* 28 Apr 1855 p 2.
19. Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office: Convict Employment Records p 212 (1849-1853) CON30-1-2: <https://stors.tas.gov.au/CON30-1-2p152.jpg> accessed 14 Apr 2018.
20. *Geelong Advertiser* 31 Dec 1860 p 2.
21. *Geelong Advertiser* 29 Mar 1866 p 3.
22. *Geelong Advertiser* 13 Apr 1866 p 2.
23. BDM Victoria, death reg. 3260/1867, <https://my.rio.bdm.vic.gov.au/efamily-history/5d438e6a4b3c532324f56c39/record/5c65379c4aba80ac31084296?q=efamily&givenName=Jane&familyName=DOWLING> accessed 2 Aug 2019.
24. <https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/120617> accessed 2 Oct 2019.
25. *Geelong Advertiser* 29 Oct 1867 p 3.
26. BDM Victoria records a Catherine Dowling married Edward Maher in 1875, while Sarah Jane Dowling married Chas Rosenthal in 1889.



### Dr David Bedford

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Circa 1870-80



## AUSTRALIAN TROWEL

A fine, rare Australian silver presentation trowel for laying the Walkerville Hall, South Australia, foundation stone. Presented to the prominent pioneer and politician George Charles Hawker in 1893. The reverse has the hallmarks of the silversmith John W. Bond of Pirie Street, Adelaide, who was a very accomplished craftsman but there are few identified works by him. Research is continuing into this historically important trowel and its maker.

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## THE MACQUARIE COFFEE BIGGIN

Maker William Elliott, London 1822 8" high and weight 28oz.



The Macquarie arms on the surviving coffee biggin as designed by Major-General Lachlan Macquarie created in part from his mother's arms as the daughter of Murdoch Maclaine of Lochbuie. Quarterly: in the 1st quarter gules three crosses crosslet fitchée ; in the 2nd quarter sable three towers embattled ; in middle base per fess azure and verte in chief a lymphad proper without sails and a single pennant and in base a salmon naiant, all ppr. (proper)



The lymphad is correctly depicted as originally drawn by Macquarie without sails or oars and with a single flag or pennant.  
Collection J. B. Hawkins Antiques