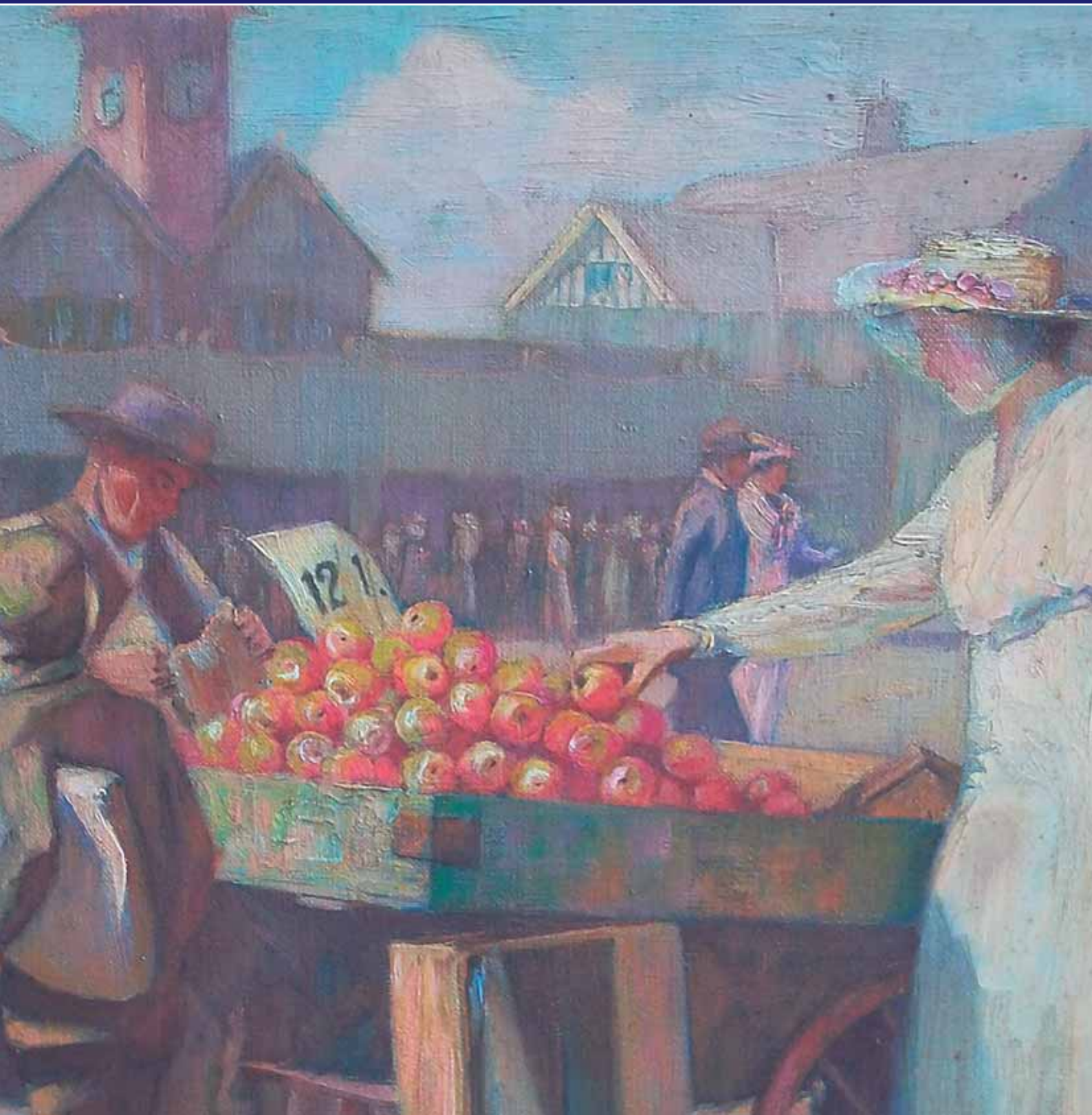


Australiana

MAY 2010 Vol. 32 No. 2





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Australiana

May 2010 Vol. 32 No. 2
ISSN 0814-107X

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

EDITOR

John Wade

SUBSCRIPTIONS 2010

Household.....\$55
Institutions.....\$60
Life.....\$550

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INDEX

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4

Thomas Dean: the sentimental fettler
Silas Clifford-Smith

10

Australia's quilt heritage gathered for
Ipswich exclusive
Ipswich Art Gallery

14

Reflections on Glass part 3: collectable
Australian glass and glassware
Mal Harrop & Andrew Mitchell

20

Kevin Fahy: An interview by Jim Bertouch
Part 1
Jim Bertouch

30

Pigeon shooting
John Wade

37

Design and art of Australia online
Olivia Bolton

ADVERTISERS

- 2 Simpson's. Antiques
- 9 Sotheby's Australia
- 13 Perth Mint & Wedgwood
- 19 W J Sanders & Co
- 19 Scheduling Berry Fine Art
- 39 Peter Walker Fine Art
- 39 The Merchant of Welby Antiques
- 40 J B Hawkins Antiques

DESIGN

Kylie Kennedy, JQ Pty Ltd

PRINTERS

Peninsula Colour, Brisbane

COVER

[Detail] Thomas Dean (1857-1947), *Fruit stall at Circular Quay, Sydney*,
oil painting based on his Circular Quay photograph, undated.
Family collection

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Contents

Thomas Dean:

THE SENTIMENTAL FETTLER

Researcher Silas Clifford-Smith reveals the life and work of railwayman and amateur painter Thomas Dean (1857-1947).

SILAS CLIFFORD-SMITH

Despite the growing interest in depicting the modern world during the late 19th and early 20th century, images of steam locomotives and railway infrastructure such as stations, viaducts, and tunnels have rarely been painted by local artists. Notable exceptions can be found in the work of Conrad Martens, Arthur Streeton, and Herbert E. Badham. The absence of railways as a subject in Australian art is intriguing, especially when we see how

important the rail network was to opening up the continent to trade and settlement.

With most professional artists choosing to avoid painting railway subjects, it comes as no surprise that amateur artists, the majority group that dominated many of the art schools and art societies, also overlooked the theme. One artist who regrettably followed the trend was the New South Wales railway employee Thomas Dean. Despite never painting trains in his own work, this working class railway worker was a prolific painter of landscape and portraits, and his long career deserves to be better known.

The son of William Dean and his illiterate wife Harriet née Harrison, Thomas Dean was born in the English Midlands county of Staffordshire on 28 July 1857. After leaving school he worked as a coal miner, as had his father before him. Thomas married Jane Smith in 1877. The couple soon left England for Australia on the *Commonwealth*, arriving in Sydney in 1877. Then they travelled to Greta, near Maitland in the Hunter Valley, where he joined the New South Wales Government Railways (NSWGR) as a fletcher, or railway labourer. After a year based in Muswellbrook, Dean and his wife lived for eight years at Breeza, a remote settlement in northern NSW.

During his early years in Australia, Dean took up photography and developed his own images. While working for the railway at Breeza, he became friendly with an itinerant painter and, according to family sources, the two shared their skills in painting and photography.

By the early 1880s Dean was painting in oils, such as his 1881 *Portrait in White Hat*. By the late 1880s the couple were living in the

1
Thomas Dean
posing with one
of his Archibald
Prize entries,
photograph,
c 1925-30.
Family collection



southern Sydney suburb of Kogarah. Jane sometimes modelled for him, but after she had an alleged extramarital affair the relationship was abruptly ended in the early 1890s; the childless couple later divorced.

While his railway work commitments would have taken up much of his time, Dean persevered with his painting and by the 1890s he began exhibiting his oils with the Art Society of NSW. Although based in Kogarah, Dean often travelled around New South Wales working on railway line extensions during the major expansion of the railway network. While on these working trips, he painted in his spare time.

Dean's exhibiting debut was at the annual spring exhibition of the Art Society of NSW in 1893 where he showed two works, *Tempe*, and *A Study*. The former image was an evening street scene clearly influenced by the work of Charles Conder, who was then exhibiting with the Art Society. Over the next thirty years Dean became a regular exhibitor at most of the Society's annual exhibitions. Much of his art reflected the low-key sentimental taste of the late 19th century, and his landscapes show the clear influence of the Art Society of NSW president, William Lister Lister, and the Art Society's art instructor Frank P. Mahony.

During the early years of the 20th century, Dean painted several large panoramic landscapes of northern New South Wales. One of these works was exhibited at the 1903 (now Royal) Art Society of NSW (RAS) annual exhibition. This oil was favourably mentioned in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (12 September 1903) review of the exhibition:

'Mr. T. Dean is to be congratulated upon his large oil painting, *On the Cattle Camp, Liverpool Plains*, (No. 124), spacious and spirited, though stockmen are not generally so well mounted, nor their horns so well groomed.'

The 1906 RAS annual exhibition accepted three of Dean's works for hanging. The *Sydney Morning Herald* critic commented on one of his northern NSW oils in their review:

'Mr. T. Dean contributes a large and important work in *The Valley of the Tweed* (No. 39), the pale, rather weak, tone throughout which is no doubt employed to achieve the effect of dreamy solitude in the immeasurable vastness of the pastoral scene. The foreground



is occupied by an almost circular sweep of the placid stream, and mountains rear their heads in the pale distance. This artist, who is an artist of talent, employed on the railway, is also responsible for *The Rose* (No. 88), a charming portrait of a girl smelling that fragrant flower.' (25 August 1906).

2

Kogarah Railway Station, photograph c.1910. Collection: Kogarah Council Library

Nancy Bishop, the artist's great-grand-niece, described Dean as a well-built man with few vices, who loved music and enjoyed reading and writing poetry. The 1858 Longfellow poem, *The Courtship of Miles Standish*, inspired the artist to paint *The Wedding Day - John Alden & Priscilla* (1907). This large gallery-sized work is Dean's only known pastel, but the quality of the image suggests that Dean must have produced other works in this medium.

Women were the principal subject in most of Dean's portraits. While his wife Jane was used as an early model, later he painted other women. The Traves sisters, who lived in Kogarah, were popular models for Dean during the later years of his career. One of the four sisters posed for his large religious work, *The Light Beyond* (1910). Dean felt drawn to write on this work's frame about the meaning of the image:

"THE LIGHT BEYOND" typifies the power of Faith to glorify and make beautiful an Old man's end, in contra-distinction to the creed of the materialist which is very bitter at such a time. The time of day represented is sunset. A girl sits at the Old man's feet and reads the Bible to him. in [sic] front of him is the dark river which typifies the grave. Beyond the river, his eyes are fixed on a bright glow in the sky, and as the promises of the future life are read to him, he seems to see in that far



3
Thomas Dean
(1857-1947), *The
Light Beyond*, 1910.
Family collection

4
Thomas Dean
(1857-1947), *Fruit
stall at Circular
Quay, Sydney*,
photograph,
undated. Family
collection

radiance their realisation. The presentment of the old man is an actual portrait of an aged Clergyman. (94).

Like many artists, Dean used a combination of sketches and photographs as aids in planning his oil images. A fine example of his use of a photograph as a reference can be seen in an image he took of his female model standing next to a fruit stall at Circular Quay. With one or two slight changes, the finished oil is similar to the original photograph.

Another work from 1910 is Dean's pastoral *Morning Mists on Cambezerra Mountains and Kangaroo Valley*. Here Dean bravely experiments with painting picturesque scenery in a style very much his own. While competent, the finished landscape seems more like the upland scenery of his native homeland than the hillsides of coastal NSW. This work was later exhibited in the RAS annual show in 1910.

After his retirement from the NSWGR in the early 1920s, Dean moved to a house at 63 Ocean Street, Kogarah, where he lived with relatives and had his own studio. From that time onward he devoted most of his time to his painting. In retirement he rarely exhibited with the RAS and seems to have concentrated mainly on private portrait commissions, as well as submitting work to the competitions organised by the (then National) Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW).

Dean's first Archibald Prize entry was a portrait of his niece, Emily Lowbridge, which he exhibited in early 1925. In 1930 he exhibited a portrait of Miss Haidee Saunders, who was described by Dean on his statutory declaration to the AGNSW as a 'ladies beauty artist of Kogarah'. For the 1931 exhibition he submitted





another portrait of Emily Lowbridge.

Dean's final Archibald Prize exhibit in 1939 was a self portrait.

During the 1920s, Dean visited his relatives overseas. In 1925 he travelled to his homeland of England, and while there he sketched and painted. Two years after his return he sailed to North America where he painted several works including a view of the Grand Canyon and a picture of a sailing boat. This latter work was presented to the Scouts movement in Pasadena, California. The generous gift warranted a front page illustrated article about Dean in the *Pasadena Star-News* of 2 June 1927.

As well as his overseas travels, Dean visited other parts of Australia including Adelaide and Melbourne. During these tours he visited the principal state galleries and took detailed technical notes on works that appealed to him. Dean seems to have been a self-taught artist who relied on sketches and photographs to complete his studio works. Many of his surviving drawings show that despite his lack of formal training, he was a competent draftsman.

As well as portraits and landscapes, Dean enjoyed painting flowers, such as roses, dahlias,

5

Thomas Dean (1857-1947), *Fruit stall at Circular Quay, Sydney*, oil painting based on his Circular Quay photograph, undated. Family collection

6

Thomas Dean (1857-1947), *Morning Mists on Cambewarra Mountains and Kangaroo Valley*, watercolour, 1910. Author's collection





7
Thomas Dean
(1857-1947),
*On a hot day in
the Elders
Gardens*
Adelaide, pencil
sketch, undated.
Family collection

8
Thomas Dean
(1857-1947),
drying fishing
nets, ink wash
and pencil
sketch, undated.
Family collection

frangipanis and rhododendrons. He painted native plants with nationalistic associations such as wattle, waratah and flannel flowers. Parks and gardens feature in some of his works, as in his 1920 view of the wisteria cascades at Vacluse House, Sydney.

Although his Archibald Prize days were over, Dean was a regular exhibitor in the Wynne and Sulman competitions during World War II. His last exhibited work was his 1945 *View from Art Gallery*, which was exhibited at the Wynne Prize exhibition in early 1946.

After an art career lasting sixty years, the 88-year-old artist held his first one-man show at Anthony Hordern's Fine Art Gallery, Sydney, from 11 to 27 April 1946. The Easter exhibition received little attention in the press apart from two brief reviews. The *Sydney Morning Herald's* defiantly pro-modernist art critic, Paul Haeffliger, was dismissive of Dean's old-fashioned display in his review published on 10 April 1946:

These works belong entirely to the Victorian era, and like their spiritual progenitors, their

idea of beauty lies mainly in the "beautiful subject" of characteristic pattern – ladies recumbent, ladies tender, and ladies with garlands. There are also many landscapes exuding a similar aroma.

A more sympathetic assessment came from 'WEP' (William Edwin Pidgeon) writing in the *Daily Telegraph* of 10 April 1946. WEP was most likely aware of the presence of Paul Haeffliger at the exhibition opening, as his attendance is alluded to in his more balanced review:

This is real old-time drawing-room art. Dean has been painting for more than 50 years, and has never lost the characteristic touch. These pictures will not excite the doter on the modern medium but will be apple-pie for the lover of the sentimental. Some early landscapes will surprise, particularly *Coromandel Valley*.

Ninety-year-old Thomas Dean died of pneumonia at his Kogarah home on Sunday 23 November 1947. He was buried in Woronora General Cemetery in Sutherland two days later. Despite his humble origins, Dean had invested the proceeds of his painting and other assets wisely and when he died he owned several properties in the Kogarah area. Following his death, his remaining art work was divided among his relatives. In 1998 forty of his paintings, owned by brothers Geoffrey and Alan Hercules, were put up for sale at James R. Lawson in Sydney.

Dean was an amateur artist who in many ways exemplified the growing popularity of painting in Australia during the late 19th century. Despite his unassuming origins, and his laborious work duties, he managed to produce many capable and occasionally fine works during his long life. Although little known as an artist, the question should be asked that, if he had painted railway subjects, would his art be far better known today?

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to thank Nancy and Colin Bishop, Andrew Watters, Eric and Meg Thompson, Art Gallery of NSW, and the Dictionary of Australian Artists Online.

Silas Clifford-Smith has an interest in art and garden history. He is a regular contributor to the *Dictionary of Australian Artists Online* and many other publications.



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1

Mary Ann Wellen (Auntie Green),
Auntie Green's floral appliqué, c.1860.
 Printed cotton and early chintz,
 appliqué very finely
 hand-sewn, not backed, 245 x 227 cm.
 Private collection

Australia's quilt heritage

GATHERED FOR IPSWICH EXCLUSIVE

Some of Australia's most treasured quilts will be on display at the Ipswich Art Gallery in the exhibition *The Fabric of Society: Australia's Quilt Heritage from Colonial Times to 1960*. The exhibition will feature over 30 exquisite historical quilts, early Australian furniture associated with quilts and quilt-making plus many family stories and local history behind the quilts.

Dr Annette Gero, Australia's foremost quilt historian, developed the exhibition for exclusive showing at the Ipswich Art Gallery until 25 July 2010. Dr Gero is perhaps most highly recognised for her own quilt collection, which is regarded as a national treasure. Numerous quilts from Dr Gero's collection are featured in this exhibition as well as quilts from private and public collections across Australia.

Quilting and needlework have been present in Australian culture since early colonial settlement. Immigration heavily influenced the development of Australia's quilt heritage – introducing styles and techniques from abroad as well as influencing new styles that remain uniquely Australian.

These styles and techniques include medallion, log cabin, pierced over paper, waggas, Suffolk puffs, tumbling block, crazy and embroidered quilts. The skill and workmanship combined with the stories of the women (and men) who lovingly stitched these beautiful and intricate quilts provide a fascinating look at our quilting traditions.

Some quilts were made on ships on their way to Australia by convict women during their transportation to the colony, or by wealthy women who were the wives of government officials, emancipists or immigrant free settlers. Wealthy ladies brought many household goods required for settling in Australia, including their bedding and patchwork quilts.



2

(Above)

Gertrude Mary Day, *Silk hexagons with stars and tumbling blocks*, early 20th century. Silks, pieced-over papers, all hand-sewn, hand-made lace borders, 217 x 200 cm. Private collection

Auntie Green's floral appliqué is a magnificent example of an early quilt made in London and later brought to Australia. The appliqué is very finely sewn with tiny hand stitches and the fabric edges have been whipped under to make a small hem before being finely stitched. As this quilt was probably made with almost no lighting except candles or rush lights, it is a marvellous tribute to the sewing skills of the women of that era.

Prior to 1851, Australia was a country associated with convicts and a penal colony. After the discovery of gold, Australia was seen as a place to seek one's fortune and to better one's way of life. Even after the hysteria of the gold rush died down many people remained in the goldfields towns. Many of these towns became prosperous as businesses developed and quite a few of Australia's historical quilts were made during this period.

The *Silk hexagons with stars and tumbling blocks* was made by Gertrude Mary Day. This exceptional quilt shows the diversity of designs and extravagant quilts being created during this era. Gertrude's father immigrated to Australia, settling in Melbourne. Her father ran a popular business in Little Bourke Street called William Day & Sons, which sold saddle goods and ironmongery.

The 20th century offered a mixture of economic climates. The prosperity at the end of the 19th century and the early 20th century turned to hardship during WW I and the Great

Depression. Luxury items were hard to find and quilts were created using recycled material. An intriguing style of quilt made during this period was the *wagga*.

Waggas were utilitarian quilts, constructed because of necessity, often extremely crude. They were used mainly in the country by drovers on sulkies, by farmers and miners and swagmen. Waggas were often made out of whatever material was available at the time.

The depression-era *Log cabin wagga* was made in Mayfield, Newcastle, last century. This area was inhabited mostly by workers employed at the nearby BHP steelworks. The suburb consisted typically of workers' cottages. Workers would have lived very modest lives and this wagga was made from recycled fabrics such as used dress fabric and petticoat fabric.

The breadth and diversity of Australian quilts reveal the influences from overseas as well as the social and economic circumstances of the time. Australia's variety of rare and exceptional quilts reflects the life of Australian's for over a century.

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3

Maker unknown,
Log cabin wagga
detail, c.1930-40s. Old
silk petticoats and
knickers, used dress
fabrics, grosgrain
ribbon, backed with a
blanket, no padding,
170 x 170 cm.
Private collection



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Reflections on Glass

PART 3

COLLECTABLE AUSTRALIAN GLASS AND GLASSWARE

INTRODUCED BY MAL HARROP

My decision to go back to full time study at La Trobe University at the age of 68 and to devote four years to the completion of a doctoral thesis is something I will never regret. Under the wise guidance of one of Australia's finest social historians, Dr John Hirst, I was able to complete a history of a great Australian industry, glass making. Having spent most of my life writing about locally made glass products, the opportunity to record under strict academic supervision what I had

learned either at first hand or through research was an opportunity to be grasped.

The publication of a book *Good Things came from Glass* based on my thesis might seem the logical conclusion to an adventure.

Unfortunately my research raised questions which refused to go away. Why was there so little publicly available information about Australian glass makers and the products of their furnaces? It seemed sad that Victoria's museums for example knew more about Murano than Waterloo or Spotswood.

Of course much Australian-made glass was hardly collectable, while its uses were often so mundane as to be looked through and ignored. Window glass, safety glass, fibreglass and optical glass are largely functional products. Yet there are excellent examples of Australian glass which seem highly collectable. The pipes and walking sticks made by apprentices as part of their final exam or made and sold for sixpence each at events like the 1911 Melbourne Exhibition are now prized. I well remember finding two glass walking sticks in a South Australian antique shop priced at \$60 each. While I considered a tentative offer for one, a Canadian tourist bought the pair and walked away with a piece of our glass history.

My continuing research and interest highlighted two areas in which there were active collectors. The first of these quite properly is antique bottles – properly, because

1
A selection of
Australian-made
carnival glass

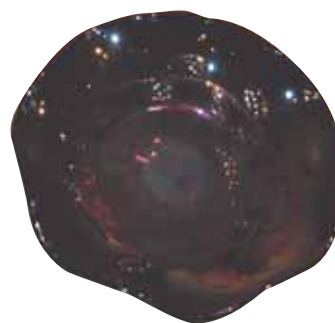
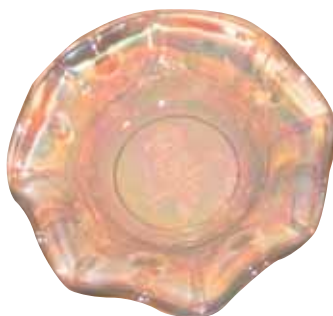


the Australian glass industry was built on bottle making with wholesale pharmacists in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney almost simultaneously setting up bottle works to supply colonial needs for patent medicines, mineral waters and cordials. In keeping with the national glass container industry which followed, there are well organised and well informed antique bottle collector groups in most parts of Australia.

The second area in which collectable Australian glass has developed a considerable following is glass ware both decorative and functional. While my history records that primarily due to market size local manufacture of drinking glasses, jugs, vases, bowls, and the like was rarely if ever profitable, operations such as Crown Crystal, Dott Brothers and Leonora Glass produced many thousand quality pieces of pressed or cut crystal glass.

An interesting example of Crown Crystal ware, which I believe has value as a collectable, is the Regis range of glasses. Designed by Edwin Kayser, these unique Australian drinking glasses with the distinctive short stubby stems found their way into most homes. Indeed, Crown sold more than four million of these glasses in Australia in the two-year period between 1969 and 1971. Few households, businesses and institutions did not own some Regis ware and many bits of sets are probably still in use. Sadly the size of the Australian market and the quality and durability of the product meant that manufacture could not be sustained. While odd Regis glasses may only have nostalgic value, there were many commemorative sets produced such as for the World Expo at Osaka in 1970 and the 50th anniversary of the RAAF. I suspect that such sets particularly in their original boxes may have value as collectables; I can only suspect for I am an interested historian rather than an experienced collector.

However, I have found a number of dedicated collectors for earlier Crown and other locally made glass and I am delighted to confirm that two of these have agreed to contribute to this *Australiana* series with both information and illustrations prepared specially for this publication, Andrew Mitchell is the President of the Carnival Glass Collectors Association of Australia and he has provided two significant articles one on Carnival Glass and the other about one of the less well known Australian glass works at Leonora, Newcastle, NSW, for a

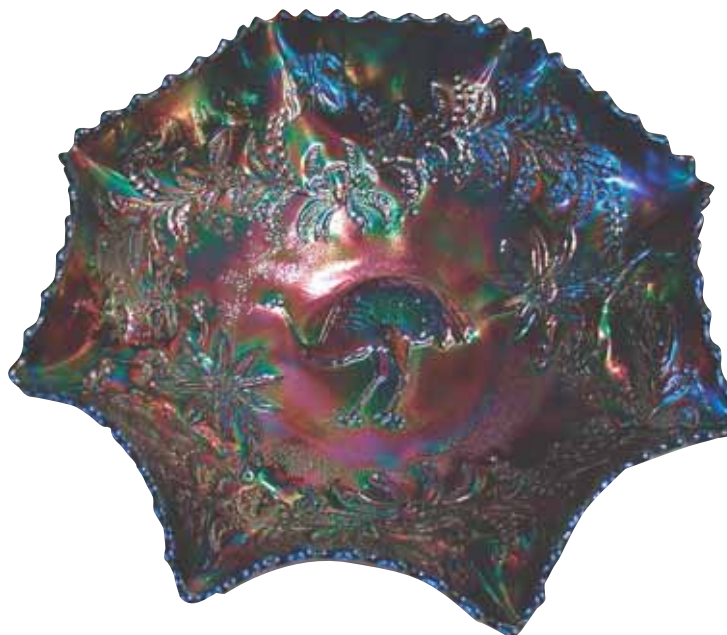


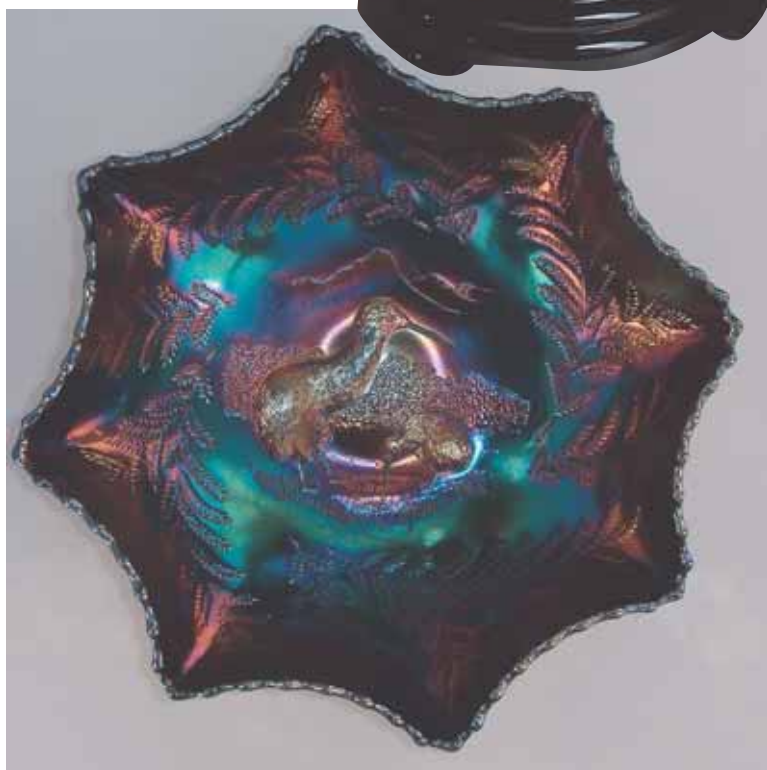
number of years the national centre for light bulb production.

Gary Workman has provided a superbly illustrated article on Crown Crystal Glassware drawing on almost 30 years' enthusiasm as a researcher and collector. The President of the Glass Collectors Society based in Adelaide, he summarises his interest in a few well chosen words. 'Crown Crystal glassware is such an important part of Australia's social history and

2
Beware! Fake imported Marigold Kangaroo Master Bowl (comes in a variety of colours) and fake Kingfisher nappy bowls

3
Amethyst Emu Master Bowl, diam. 24 cm





would enhance any collection. Keep our history alive and collect Australian made glassware'. This seems an admirable sentiment for all Australiana collectors.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to share some of Gary and Andrew's experience and enthusiasm with you. Let's start with Andrew's informative piece on Carnival Glass.

CARNIVAL – THE GLASS THAT GLISTENS

ANDREW MITCHELL

Carnival glass is avidly collected throughout the world today. Collectors are drawn to the intrinsic beauty of the design, colour and iridescence, the thrill of the hunt in tracking down an elusive or unusual piece, and solving mysteries and puzzles about production as many records were destroyed in WW II.

You can find pieces for literally only a few dollars, though rare or unusual pieces can be much more expensive.

The top price ever achieved for a piece of carnival glass was over \$100,000 in the US for a very rare Millersburg People's Vase.

Carnival glass is essentially pressed glass that has been sprayed with a liquid metallic salt after it has been taken from the mould, to produce the classic iridescent lustre. It provided much the same effect as the more expensive hand-crafted glass produced by companies such as Tiffany in the late 1800s.

Carnival glass was first produced by US companies in the early 1900s, so some examples are now more than 100 years old and true antiques. The prime or classic period for carnival glass production was from 1907 to 1929. The period from 1930 to 1939 is usually called depression era, while the period 1940 to 1959 is often considered to be the late carnival

4
Marigold Kookaburra Master Bowl

5
Amethyst Heavy Banded Diamonds
Float Bowl with Matching Flower
Frog and Base, diam. 25 cm

6
Scarce Amethyst Kiwi Master
Bowl. 22 cm diameter

glass era. Carnival glass made from 1960 to the present is mostly referred to as contemporary. Many forms of iridised glass are still produced today in many parts of the world.

Carnival glass was made in virtually every shape you can imagine in household items, including plates, bowls, jugs, tumblers and vases. It was produced in many different colours, both in the base glass and the colour of the iridescence.

Carnival glass was produced later in many other countries including England, France, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Mexico, Argentina, India, China and Australia.

Carnival glass supposedly got its name from excess glass being given away at carnivals, fairs and sideshows in the US. Certainly some was given away in Australia as bonus presents with Bushells tea labels. But I've also heard it called Festive Glass.

In Australia, carnival glass was produced by the Crown Crystal Company of Sydney (later part of the mammoth Australian Consolidated Industries) in the 1920s and early 1930s. The colours were mostly marigold (bright orange like the flower) and amethyst (a deep purple also called de lustre).

The items produced included large and small bowls, comports, vases, water sets and sugar bowls. Crown Crystal produced a line of Australian fauna bowls and comports that are highly collectable today. Many have attractive backgrounds of native flora. Patterns included Emu, Kangaroo, Kingfisher, Kookaburra (which is a member of the kingfisher family), Magpie, Shrike (Thunderbird), Swan and the elusive Kiwi (actually a New Zealand bird). There are also many attractive native flora patterns (often with butterflies or dragonflies) in bowls, and particularly comports, as well as several pleasing geometric patterns.

Occasionally you can find clear examples of the fauna bowls which must have slipped through the production process without being iridised. Some of the geometric patterns were also produced in clear glass and in non-iridised colours such as green, rosalin (pink), blue and citron (yellow-green).

Prices start from less than \$50 to many thousands for Kiwi bowls. Prices vary depending on the quality of the piece, the pattern, colour, and where you buy it. Generally, small (nappy) bowls range in the low hundreds, large (master) bowls from low through mid to high

hundreds, with some comports and float bowls being keenly sought after.

Later on, a different range of iridised plain bowls, decanters and plates was produced under the Gem Lustre brand in colours such as marigold, green, blue and rosalin.

In the last few years, fakes of both small Kingfisher bowls and large Kangaroo bowls have been discovered. See the Thistlewoods website for more information and how to identify them: <http://www.thistlewoods.net/Australia.html>.



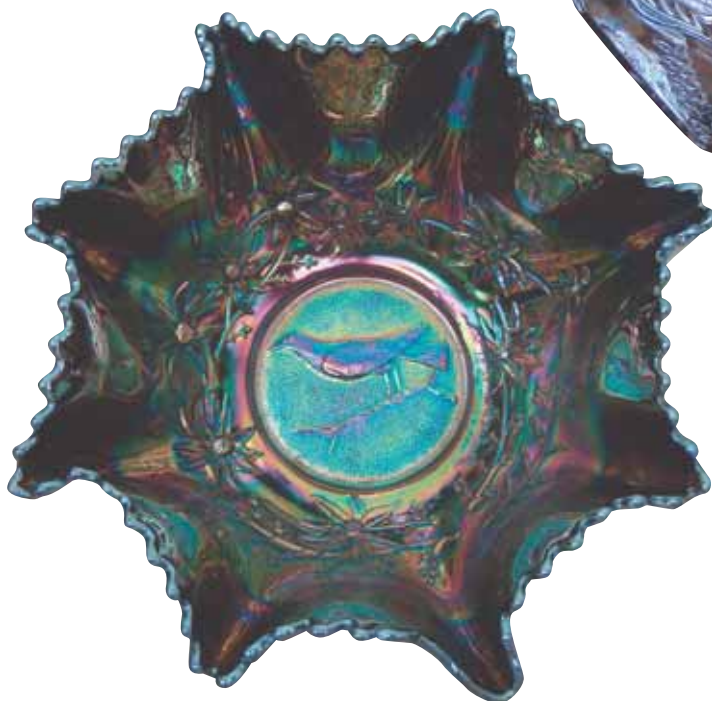
7
Amethyst Koala
Master Bowl,
contemporary

8
Blue Koala Master
Bowl, contemporary

9
Amethyst Platypus
Master Bowl,
contemporary

10
Amethyst Magpie
Master Bowl

11
Amethyst Shrike
Master Bowl



Two new designs have also been produced with images of either a platypus or a koala, with the word Summerland in the base. Crown Crystal never produced any items with these images, so you can't get them confused.

To get the most value and enjoyment out of collecting carnival glass you should consider joining a group of fellow collectors who are able to provide help, advice and support. These groups include:

- NSW: Carnival Glass Collectors Association of Australia, www.carnivalglass.org.au.
- Victoria: Australian Carnival Enthusiasts Association, www.acecarnivalglass.org.au.
- South Australia: Carnival Glass Society of Australia, PO Box 1028, North Haven, South Australia 5018.
- Western Australia: Western Australia Carnival Glass Enthusiasts Group, PO Box 688, Rockingham, Western Australia 6968.

REFERENCES

Ken Arnold *Australian Carnival Glass*, Crown Castleton Publishers, Bendigo 1984 (out of print)
Ken Arnold, *Australian Carnival Glass Valuation Guide*, Crown Castleton Publishers, Bendigo 1994
Australian Carnival Enthusiasts Association Inc, *Carnival Glass of Australia*, 1988

Many other books and websites help identify and value carnival glass from around the world.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The photographs for this article are by Andrew Mitchell and Ray Rogers of the Carnival Glass Collectors Association of Australia.

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Phyllis Shillito (1895 - 1980)
Rushcutters Bay, Sydney Harbour, 1932
oil on canvas, 26 x 32 cm
signed and dated lower right

A rare, early (1932) Modernist painting by Phyllis Shillito, a key figure in art and design education in Sydney. Information on the artist is available on our website.

Stephen Scheding and Jim Berry have been buying, researching and selling Australian art for over thirty years. To join our subscription list please email berry@schedingberry.com

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A silver cricket trophy circa 1875 crafted by Adelaide silversmith J M Wendt, one of many beautiful pieces of Australiana recently restored by W J Sanders. The original emu egg was broken and replaced by a plastic NSW rugby league money box in the 1980s. The silver ornamentation and plinth were restored and a new egg fitted.

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www.wjsanders.com.au



Kevin Fahy

AN INTERVIEW BY JIM BERTOUCHE PART 1



Kevin Francis Fahy AM, BA (Sydney University) (1932-2007) was a major figure in the revival of interest in Australian historical decorative arts for nearly 50 years. He was widely respected in collecting circles, a wonderful source of information, a spellbinding raconteur, paterfamilias and a good friend to many. Kevin was a Life Fellow and Honorary Associate of the Powerhouse Museum, a Fellow of the Australian Institute of History and Arts, an Honorary Life Member of the National Trust of Australia (NSW), and an Honorary Life Member of the Australiana Society. Fellow collector Dr Jim Bertouch interviewed Kevin in 2004, documenting the development of interest in Australiana, changes in collecting habits, and changing attitudes in institutions. This edited transcript retains the flavour of Kevin's knowledge, honesty, humour, his enduring love of Australia's craftspeople and their works, and his curiosity that always looked for the interesting stories that lie behind an artifact, building or place.

Q Kevin, how old were you when you first started to collect?

KEVIN Oh, I suppose like most kids I started collecting stamps when I was a schoolboy but I never really took a great interest in it. It seemed a bit pedestrian sticking bits of paper in albums. When I left school I joined the Ceramics Society, which was basically interested in 18th-century English porcelain, but it was only when I got interested in things Australian that everything really clicked.

Q And the Ceramics Society, why did you join that? What stimulated you?

KEVIN Well, it was involved with antiques and at the time one of its leaders was the antique dealer Stanley Lipscombe.

Q A legendary character.

KEVIN Indeed, in his own lifetime.

Q So from there you developed an interest in Australiana?

Yes. At school, there was no teaching of Australian history, it was just non-existent. It was nothing more than Blaxland, Wentworth and Lawson crossing the Blue Mountains and then endless stories of explorers expiring in the middle of Australia: Burke & Wills, Leichhardt, Sturt... what have you. So it was only at university that I began to study Australian history and that, coupled with a general interest in antiques made me suddenly think, well, surely there must be such a thing as an Australian antique.

What particularly interested me was the fact that you could actually research the makers here, whereas to try and research the standard English names – in the case of furniture, Chippendale or Sheraton – was far too remote and almost impossible to do in any serious way here. So that's why I began to be interested in things Australian, particularly the furniture makers, the

pottery makers, the silversmiths. Around this time – it would have been the late 60s – there were a number of publications starting like the *Australian Antique Collector*. I don't think I was a contributor to number one but I probably scored number two [1967] with an article on Australian silversmiths.

SILVER

Q What stimulated your interest in silver?

KEVIN I'd come across a piece of silver by Alexander Dick and I wanted to find out more about him. By perusing the newspapers of the period, the *Sydney Gazette* and the like, I found quite a bit of information about his trials and tribulations and how, while he had come here as a free settler, it wasn't long before he was receiving plate stolen from the colonial secretary Alexander Macleay and over-striking the mark with his own punch. This cost him a term at Norfolk Island, which was a pretty nasty place to go and was really for second offenders, but because he offended in the colony, that's where he went. But he was given a remission of his sentence at the instigation of some prominent settlers here like members of the Allen family. Even Macleay signed some document urging he be given a reprieve.

Q Was there much researched information available about Dick?

KEVIN Absolutely nothing. At the time there was a man [Fred Hodge] in Melbourne doing research and all his papers I think are now in the State Library of Victoria. He certainly had done a lot of research on Melbourne's silversmiths but that was largely of the period from the 1850s on. There had been a book published by Kurt Albrecht [1969] and that was the first which published lists of silversmiths in the various states; it provided the ground work for much more detailed studies. John Hawkins [1990] produced two volumes which are the standard text now on early Australian silver.

There was also an exhibition mounted by the Women's Committee [National Trust of Australia NSW 1973] which was organised by John Hawkins, and myself and Marjorie Graham contributed biographical essays on the various makers. A book quickly followed and that was the first book after Kurt Albrecht's book on Australian silver. Since then a number of articles on Australian silver have appeared in things like



the *Australian Antique Collector*. I did an article on Alexander Dick for a magazine called *Descent* which is the journal of the Society of Australian Genealogists [1973], and a small article in the *Royal Australian Historical Society Newsletter* on Alexander Dick.

ARCHAEOLOGY

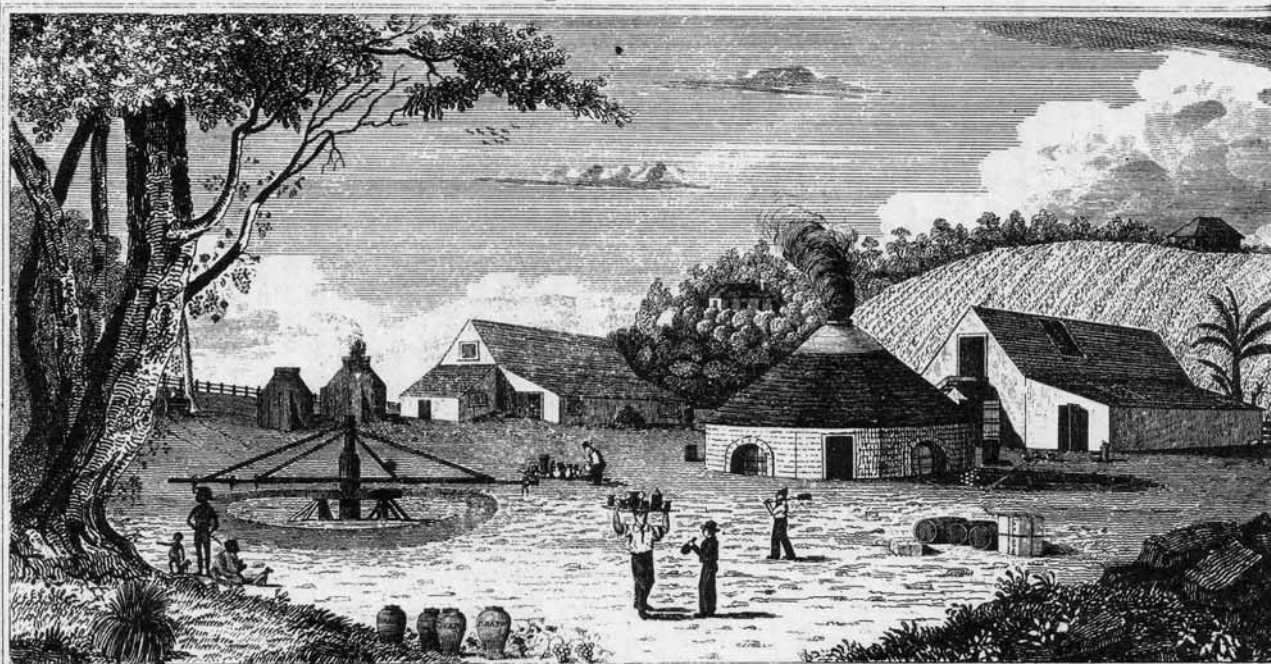
Q When you were at Sydney University you studied archaeology, and I wondered why?

KEVIN Well, everyone wants to go and dig up a pyramid I suppose. We had a lecturer called Professor [J R B] Stewart [1913-1962] whose great area of expertise was Cyprus and the Middle East, so that was where I got my grounding in archaeology and majored in it for my arts degree. The class when I did it consisted of about four students which sounds nothing, but it meant you really had to do your homework. You knew you would always get a question.

Stewart was a descendant of General William Stewart, and he lived up at *Mt Pleasant*, a huge

1
Colonial silver
spoons stamped by
Alexander Dick,
Sydney c 1830

Irrawang Vineyard & Pottery.



East Australia

2
J Carmichael,
'Irrawang
Vineyard &
Pottery',
engraving, from
J Macle hose,
*Picture of Sydney
and Stranger's
Guide in NSW for
1839*, Sydney
c 1839

property just outside Bathurst. It was a Scottish baronial pile built in the 1880s on a property granted to General Stewart. On the property was a much older house, built probably in the 1820s, called Strath, right on the Macquarie River. But the family built this huge baronial edifice further up the hill. That was taken over by the army during the war and the house fell into disrepair. After the war the University did it up as the Department of Archaeology so we used to spend our vacations there, rounding up turkeys which was Professor Stewart's sideline, and it was a great life.

IRRAWANG POTTERY

Q Did archaeology lead to your interest in the Irrawang Pottery?

KEVIN Yes, by accident. A few years after I finished archaeology I met Judy Birmingham, an archaeologist at Sydney University, and I asked her why didn't they excavate an Australian pottery site. The rules would still be the same as those applied to a Middle East excavation. Oh, she said, they're all in the city and they've all been over built and it would be impossible to sort anything out. And I said, well, what about Irrawang and she said 'what's that?'

Years ago I'd heard Stan Lipscombe talk about Irrawang pottery and he would discuss it fairly briefly, but he would say it was 100 miles *north* of Newcastle ... and for that you would almost read that means 100 miles *south* of Newcastle. By interpreting these strange misdirections I worked

out it must have been near Raymond Terrace.

I took myself up there one day and found where I thought it might have been and not a sign of anything. There was an old cottage on the site and a woman there and I asked her did she know anything about a pottery and she said 'Oh no, never heard of it'. So I asked did she mind if I just had a look around the property and she said 'No, go ahead'.

It had been raining heavily a few days previously, and I walked over a hill and all of a sudden the ground was just covered with thousands of sherds all exposed by the rain. I picked some up and sure enough impressed on the back was 'Irrawang Australia'. So I retreated back to the house and said to her 'I think I've found it' and she then said 'Oh that must have been the little figures the kids were playing with'. I said what happened to those? 'Oh' she said 'they threw them in the old pit', which was actually a collapsed cellar filled with gorse and blackberry bush. After a few scratches I gave it away and I never did find the pottery figures. Admittedly I then thought, surely there must be pottery around the local cemeteries, you know, vases. So I tried that but that was a dead loss, or somebody else had beaten me to it. A few pieces have turned up.

Judy Birmingham got interested in it and archaeology students at Sydney University did some extensive digs up there [1967-] and they collected bags and bags of sherds. Lots and lots

of documentation was done, but I don't think the results were ever published. It was an interesting pottery because it extended from about 1835 to about the gold rushes.

Now unfortunately the site's been flooded, so that's put the kibosh on any further information we will get from the site, but actually even when I did see the site I remember it was a kind of day where the sun was just falling at the right angle and you could actually make out the outlines of two circular buildings that must have been kilns. There's quite a well-known engraving of Irrawang in an early Australian book published by Macle hose [1839], and that showed images of kilns and warehouses. So it was obviously quite a large-scale enterprise. King had sent samples of sand back to England where it was made into glass and sent back here. There are supposedly some pieces at Vaucluse House, or were many years ago. I don't know whether they're still there.

Q Were you actually involved in the digs there?

KEVIN I went up once [1967] out of curiosity to see what was going on and thinking it would be just like the imagined digs in the Middle East where you sat on the side drinking gin and tonic urging the locals to dig deeper and faster. At Irrawang the students were more or less treated like slave labour so I was able to sit on the side and just watch what went on. But it was pretty painstaking to see them doing it, almost with little paint brushes and scraping here and scraping there. It's a wonder they were able to dig a hole one-foot deep ... that would probably take a month.

Q And did anything come out that was a complete piece or was everything broken?

KEVIN It was basically all broken but from it you were able to establish what the forms were like and apart from the basic, commercial stoneware, there were some quite elaborate pieces with moulded decoration on them that were reminiscent of Wedgwood but usually in terracotta. A lot of the moulds must have been bought in England and were probably bought second hand, because I remember seeing one showing the American insignia with a number of stars which indicated the number of states that were then in the United States. The number would suggest that the date was about 1810, but subsequently of course the number of states had risen, so the mould was useless for any commercial enterprise between England and America. So they dumped it on Mr King who



3

Judy Birmingham and Kevin Fahy examine sherds from the site of the Irrawang Pottery in the Hunter Valley

brought them out to Australia and they were used here as a decorative emblem. In a book on pottery by Marjorie Graham there is a jug of this raised, decorated terracotta ware and that is probably one of the few complete pieces. At some auction sales some of the wine jars or bung jars have turned up but they're of a curiosity value rather than of any great aesthetic interest, which the fine wares do possess.

NATIONAL TRUST

Q And your involvement with the National Trust?

KEVIN The first time would have been at a viewing just prior to the demolition [1961] of *Subiaco*, the old Macarthur residence at Rydalmere. It had gone through several hands. It had originally been the home of Hannibal Macarthur and on his bankruptcy in the depression of the 1840s, the property was sold and passed to the Benedictine nuns. They were an enclosed order, there for well over a century and conducted a school there for a number of years.

After the school closed down no one, and certainly no man, was allowed anywhere near the place. I remember trying to get in there and I got as far as a little room where you spoke through a curtain to the nuns on the other side but that was as close as you could get. After they disposed of the property it passed to a firm called Rheem and they proceeded to demolish what was really one of the greatest colonial

Experiment Farm at Parramatta, bought, restored and furnished by the National Trust. Kevin was an adviser to the Trust for furnishing this and other properties



mansions ever built. It had been designed by John Verge, the architect of *Camden Park* and other major residences built in the 1830s and 1840s.

Q So that sparked your interest in the Trust?

KEVIN I was vaguely interested in a group called Tinker Tailor Pty Ltd who, with a woman called Del Agnew, were almost the Trust rivals of the time. They had several houses here in Hunters Hill. They leased *St Malo* and that was demolished to make way for the freeway and the new bridge. *Passy* was one they owned and still stands in Passy Avenue. It has gone through several hands, and has been altered by one of the previous owners, Norman Wheeler, who changed the street façade, but the garden is still as it was, and it is still one of the great houses of Hunters Hill. They also had a number of other little stone cottages in Hunters Hill. They removed the weatherboard gatehouse of *Passy* to a property at Burwood called *Wellings*, where it still stands and that was where Del Agnew lived after they lost *Passy*, I think through financial misadventure.

Del Agnew was a decorator of some note and the museum up at Port Macquarie has room interiors prepared by her. Tinker Tailor Pty Ltd were an interesting group who also ran the Commonwealth Club in the city, which at first was in the St James building and later opposite David Jones. There one could get lunch for an extremely modest price and it was like every men's club, a very interesting place. They also were responsible for one of the first exhibitions

of Australian antiques which was held in the Hunters Hill Town Hall [1962].

Q What do you think of the philosophy behind the National Trust and what they do with their properties?

KEVIN Well, I have come around to the way of thinking that this idea of just collecting properties willy-nilly and opening them all as museums is not viable today. The Trust has found that while *Old Government House* Parramatta and *Experiment Farm* are goers, others have not been so successful – for example places like *Riversdale* [at Goulburn], which they've now leased. What is needed is an approach more along the lines of the Historic Houses Trust of NSW who do make an effort with their various properties, but it hasn't been plain sailing for them all along. *Elizabeth Bay House* was a great success but it's difficult to access and now the bus touring around Sydney has stopped, the numbers have dropped dramatically. So the idea of opening little historic houses here, there and everywhere is not the most viable way to get people interested in our architectural heritage.

But the National Trust certainly has done wonders since it was established, despite a major setback which was literally a fist fight among members with the proposal to lease *Lindesay* which caused an uproar, and of course some financial problems that resulted in the Trust being taken over by an administrator for a while. But things are at least back on track fairly well now.

Q So the future for the Trust is not to have as many properties or not to have them open as often?



5

Dining room at Government House, Parramatta, furnished as it might have been in Macquarie's period. Over time, as ideas changed and more research was carried out, the appearance of the house and its rooms has changed

KEVIN The problem is the prohibitive cost of opening a property every day. Whereas if you open a house like *Camden Park*, which is privately owned, say once a year, you might get two or three thousand people through. So that is probably the way to go, and it means the house is kept as it was as a living unit.

Once you get the cold hand of a museum falling over a house it becomes quite impractical and often impossible to understand the history of it. How do you explain the juxtaposition of trying to get a house back to what you *imagine* it might have been? For *Government House* Parramatta about four or five inventories have been found, which were extremely valuable and useful. Probably no house has been as well documented. But when you look at an inventory it might just say *one* table; it doesn't say whether it's round or square, whether it's cedar or mahogany, what date the table was. You can assume it was probably around the time of the inventory but that can be fallacious when you read other descriptive pieces that might say *old* chair or *old* table. So how do you actually work on the inventories, valuable as they are?

It's also very difficult to understand the room placement of these pieces of furniture, because often the furniture was merely gathered into rooms. So you will find a bedroom with no bed but 35 chairs. How you interpret this is extremely difficult. *Government House*, Parramatta

is well on the way now with the ground floor taken back to the period of Governor Macquarie, which I know caused considerable upheaval in Trust circles when they destroyed the wonderful arrangement of what, in point of fact, was one of the truest layouts.

Room usage may change as well and in a period of 50 years you've got virtually a dozen families, all of different interests, changing this, that and the other. Often a lot of the furniture these governors had was their own while most of the inventories, particularly at Parramatta, referred to government-owned furniture. In fact at the end of nearly every governor's term of office, you find an auction sale being held and the furniture they bought out from England with them was sold rather than carted back to England, and no doubt at a comfortable profit.

Australian furniture is interesting but a lot of English furniture can be Australiana in the sense it can have historical associations with various early personalities of the colony. Then again, this tends to get out of hand to a degree when you've got descendants of various governors, the King family in particular, who would have, I would say, four warehouses of furniture said to belong to Governor King.

Now, there is Governor Philip Gidley King, there is Admiral Phillip Parker King, there are various members of the King family all of who seemed to be, well, hardly collectors – one would

almost say dealers in furniture, from the extent of what the family now possesses. But amongst it all there are some wonderful, wonderful pieces; there are some others that don't quite come up to scratch.

CLOCKS

Q Going back to how you started out writing these various articles, you also wrote, pretty early on, an article about Sydney clock makers?

KEVIN Oh yes indeed. I was always interested in the work of one, James Oatley. In 1957, Bill Bradshaw sold an Oatley clock to the Powerhouse Museum, I think for \$300. The last one sold for \$310,000 so if you've got an Oatley clock you're sitting on a very nice asset.

There was an Oatley clock at *Throsby Park* that had belonged to the Throsby family and when *Throsby Park* was acquired by the government for National Parks & Wildlife [1972], the whole property and its contents were valued at approximately \$100,000. Well the Oatley clock alone would be worth several times the value of the other contents.

Bill Bradshaw has had at least two Oatley clocks. Tracking them down, I've come across about 24, and I would certainly not be averse to acquiring one. Many of them are numbered and dated, and you can actually build up a sequence. The earliest is about number 7 or 8 and they go

up to number 54, so that would suggest he must have made at least 54. Others have his name on them but have no number or even a date.

Bill Bradshaw said one was made for an early Sydney family of saddlers called Brush. I thought well, there can't be too many Brushes around, so straight to the phone book, and on about the second call, 'Excuse me madam, do you know, or do you have an old clock with the name Oatley on it?' And she said 'Yes.' It was in an old house over in Neutral Bay and I said 'Is it possible to see it?' 'Oh' she said 'no it's tenanted, the house, so when the tenant leaves I'll get back in touch with you and you can come over and have a look'. Eventually I did, and there was an Oatley clock with the works all in a hessian bag beside it.

And speaking of Oatley clocks, another anecdote. I was driving along Parramatta Road around Concord and I took a short cut on a road parallel to Parramatta Road. I noticed this house that had a Victorian cast iron verandah around it and thought, well the house looks Georgian, and it was obviously once on the original Parramatta Road where now Parramatta Road might have straightened itself out, and this became virtually a side lane. Anyhow, I thought I'd knock on the door and just ask, can they tell me anything about the history of the house.

Somebody came out and was very vague and it turns out it was a boarding house but behind her, in the hall I could see the side of a clock, and I thought 'Oh, I've got to see what's on the front.' So I said 'oh what are the mantelpieces in the main room like? Do they have Ionic column supports or Doric column supports?' She didn't know what I was talking about and she said 'you can have a look.' I wasn't interested in the fireplaces but when I turned and looked at the clock: Oatley. So there was an Oatley clock.

I think it was Les Buckland who was the architect of the restoration of *Old Government House* in the initial stages. He was appalled when I told him that I had rung the local council and said I lived next door to this place and the back fence had fallen down, wasn't the neighbour liable for half? And the council said certainly, but I said you know it's tenanted, and I don't know the name or the address of the owner. 'Oh, we can soon tell you that', which is something they normally wouldn't tell you. Anyhow I found out that the owner lived down at Dee Why so down I went to see her, to find to my horror, that she

6

Longcase clock
by James Oatley



owned the house, sure ... but none of the furniture. It was all owned by the boarders or the tenants.

So back I had to go to the house and I found the owner of the clock. Now after long discussions with him trying to get around to the subject he kept beating around the bush and eventually he said 'Are you interested in art?' I thought I would give it another go before I threw in the towel and said yes, and he said 'I paint'.

Out came the Sunday paintings. They were dreadful. Anyhow I oohed and ahed and said how interesting they were. It was getting me nowhere, so this time I was going to throw the towel in, give it away, and he said 'What about music? Are you interested in music?' I said, 'Next to art, music's my favourite thing.' 'Oh, he said, 'I sing'. I said 'You what?'... and he had all these tapes of Bach and he would sing along to them. Well you can imagine what an ordeal that was, and anyhow I said look if you ever decide to do anything about the clock, give me a ring. And he would ring every now and again and say 'look, come on over I think you'll be interested'. If it wasn't a new painting, it was a new song. So I never got any closer to that clock and I think it was the only thing he really had left. I knew he had recently been divorced, and this was the only family relic he had. Eventually I noticed it did turn up at Lawson's and was sold.

In an article I have written on these clocks, I have tried to indicate where they're illustrated, and who originally owned them – not so much who owns them now, that's probably giving too much away to the riff raff.

FURNITURE

Q You have also written a number of articles about various Sydney cabinet makers and I guess they go back quite a long way. I think Edward Hunt was one of them.

KEVIN I did an article on him for the *Leichhardt Historical Society Journal* [1972], but the one I was most interested in was ... well there were actually two. One was Lawrence Butler who was an Irish convict who came here in 1802 and he was our first cabinet maker of any real repute and I've amassed quite a bit of documentation about him and his family. In fact no piece of his furniture actually exists or can be proven to be his. A number of pieces have been ascribed to him but that's not the same thing.

The only thing we know is at *Old Government House* at Parramatta, there's a cabinet by James Packer, an apprentice, Sydney, dated 1815. Now we know Packer was apprenticed to Butler and this was probably his apprentice piece and it obviously would be to Butler's standards. It's in casuarina, its legs have been replaced, but it turned up at a fair at Olympia [London] some years ago. The National Trust was fortunate enough to get hold of it, so that's the only piece that really one can tie definitely to Butler.

Plenty of people leap on the fact that if it's got casuarina, it must be Butler. Actually, not one of his advertisements mentions casuarina, they relate only to cedar furniture. When he died his wife continued the business for a short time, until she sought a man to manage the business and then sought marriage from this gentleman. I think the Catholic clergy and the Anglican clergy refused to marry her, or remarry her, so she took the case to the governor but not with any effect because within a few weeks there were ads in the paper saying she was no longer responsible for any debts incurred by this gentleman. And so there's a good story around it.

ANDREW LENEHAN

But the one I was more interested in was Andrew Lenehan, who was at one stage a resident here at Hunters Hill – only a few doors away down on the waterfront, at a place called *Windermere*, which was known as *Potsdam* at the time he acquired it. It had been at one stage the German consulate in Sydney. Now Lenehan was quite a prolific cabinet maker and from his trade labels and bill heads we know he was also a furniture

7

Andrew Lenehan, side table, provided for Government House, Sydney c 1860





8
The furnishing of historic houses relies partly on photographs such as this one of the drawing room at Government House, Sydney, taken c. 1870 by the Government Printer.

designer. He came to Sydney in the early 1830s and was in the employ of a man called Templeton, but by about 1839 he'd established his own business and certainly became one of Sydney's most successful furniture dealers. Many of these furniture dealers were not necessarily cabinet makers, they were just businessmen who took on the business of dealing in furniture and probably employed cabinet makers.

Many years ago there was a notice from some book dealer that he had a Lenehan bill for furniture for *Government House* Sydney to the extent of about £1,300 and I thought that would be interesting. I think the price was \$5 or \$6 but when I got onto them, of course it had been sold. So I was beside myself with rage at not getting in early and I said 'Well, what date was on it?' Anyhow they gave me a date, and I thought well if it was a government contract it must be in the parliamentary papers, so I'd be able to find some record there.

In I went to the Mitchell [Library] and tracked down the parliamentary papers, volume after volume after volume, shelf after shelf after shelf, but at least I had a date to work on. I found a copy of this actual bill, and thought 'Oh, it's only one line, wasn't I lucky, I'd saved \$5!' Then I turned over the page and there was a 30 page discussion on a petition brought by Andrew Lenehan for the furniture of *Government House*, Sydney [1862].

The governor had called in Lenehan to give an estimate. Lenehan gave an estimate and produced the furniture requirements for the new *Government House* in Sydney, and the governor's wife wanted a few changes, this that and the other. Anyhow, when the bill came in the governor refused to pay it and the government refused to pay it and, of course it virtually meant Lenehan could have been bankrupted. In it, there is every major cabinet maker in Sydney dragged in to give evidence. They discussed the gimp and how many yards of it and what pattern it was. It's the most extraordinary document and it was only a fluke I came across it like that and of course it was very useful.

At the time I had been asked to go down to *Government House*, Sydney to try and identify some of the furniture together with an architect [Don Ellsmore], who was representing the government there. I showed him this document. In those days you could go and xerox almost any document you liked at the Mitchell Library. Now if its pre 1900 it's a no-no, you have to go and get it photographed page by page which would probably bankrupt you, but in those days, it was like 10 cents a page... a wonderful way of doing it. So that document is really one of the most important aide-memoires to anyone interested in colonial interiors.

Some years ago there was an incredible book written by Terry Lane and Jessie Searle in Melbourne on Australian interiors. It's quite interesting that in the early period how little is really known of what a colonial interior actually looked like, but particularly since the advent of photography, it's amazing. *Government House*, Sydney, was photographed from the 1850s through to 1900, and that's of course the new *Government House*.

Actually, while I was certainly horrified when the Governor was kicked out by the Premier, I have to confess that the house has never looked better than it does today. It's well taken care of, it gets gubernatorial use, and I just read in the paper it's the cheapest *Government House* to run in Australia. It costs, I think, half that of Melbourne and about a quarter of Yarralumla. It still possesses an amazing amount of furniture. The work of about 14 or 15 Sydney furniture dealers and cabinet makers is scattered throughout the house. Now admittedly some furniture is tucked away in bedrooms which are certainly not open to the public but anyone who



9

Government House,
Sydney, now open for
the public to enjoy

hasn't been should make a beeline down there. It's free admission and they'll get a good tour and, as I said, it's never looked better.

COLLABORATION WITH CLIFF CRAIG AND GRAEME ROBERTSON

Q One of your early books, I think perhaps your first book, was written with Clifford Craig and Graeme Robertson. It was first published back in 1972 with the title *Early Colonial Furniture in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land*. How did you meet them and how did you come to write that book?

KEVIN Well, I was in Tasmania – it would be in the late 60s on a tour organised by the National Trust of old houses in Tasmania. In the north I was looking around the houses for colonial furniture and I really couldn't see too much and I complained quite loudly, but where's the colonial furniture? And somebody tapped me on the shoulder and asked are you interested in colonial furniture? I said yes indeed and who should it be but Dr Craig. He said oh well perhaps you should come to visit me this evening and I'll show you some pieces.

I dutifully arrived at his residence in High Street, Launceston and I quickly realised why I hadn't seen any. He had it all and he really had made a study of it. And so we used to correspond. Cliff had been researching Tasmanian furniture and I had been researching Sydney furniture, so he said how about we get together and combine and do a book? But he said the photography would be terribly expensive.

A great friend of his was Graeme Robertson, who with Cliff's wife Edith had produced a

book on homes in northern Tasmania. Graeme was an avid photographer and had done another book in his own right on homes of southern Tasmania. Of course, he was a mad cast iron aficionado and had written books on the cast iron of Sydney, the cast iron of Melbourne; he even got it down to the cast iron of Carlton, into the suburban level.

So Cliff said if we could get Graeme interested we'd be set. Now Graeme was a neurologist, and occasionally he would come up to Sydney. I'd collect him after he had done his deeds on the operating table and take him around and photograph some furniture. But after a while he used to get a bit bored with the furniture so I always had to go and find some cast iron for him to photograph. Anyhow, he was a great photographer and a gentle, nice man but once he got behind that camera lens, with the black quilt thrown over his head, he was a total autocrat. Do this, do that, lift that. I was just out of hospital with a broken back, and can you move that table, lift that chair?

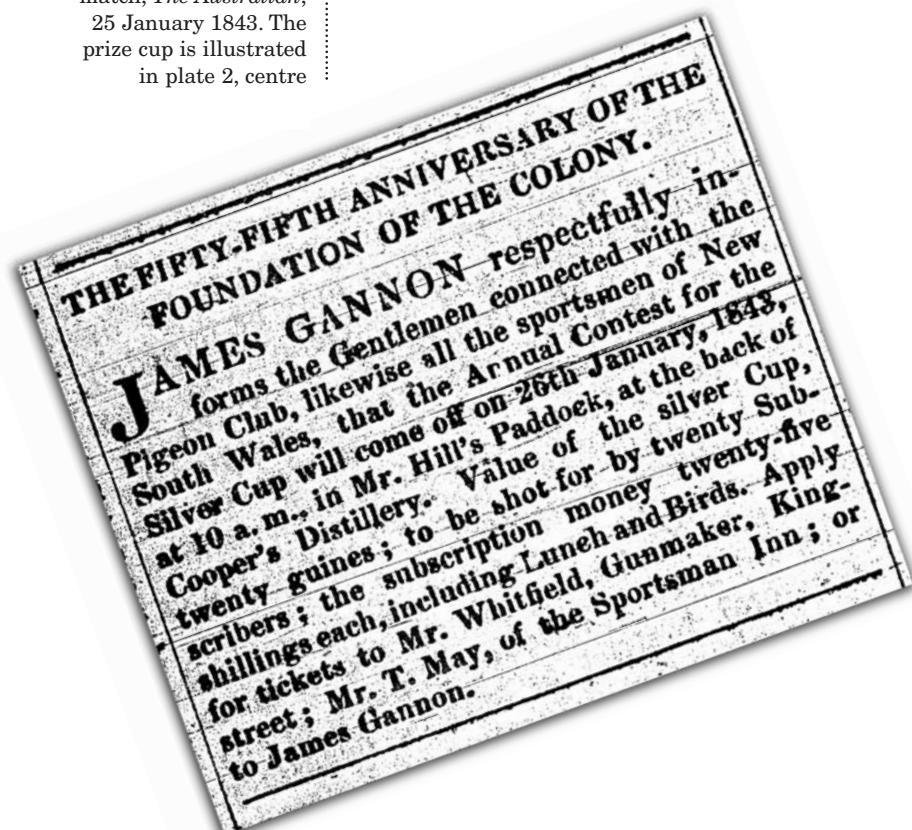
Anyway, that was the first major book. There'd been one published maybe a few months earlier by John Earnshaw called *Early Sydney Cabinetmakers* but it had only 15 illustrations and it wasn't at the level of the book Cliff and I did. Later there was the *Nineteenth Century Australian Furniture* with Andrew and Christina Simpson [1985] and then the more recent one that I did with Andrew Simpson [1998]. The last one I think you know, photographically it's superb.

To be continued.

Pigeon shooting

Pigeon shooting was a popular sport for gentlemen in Australia, starting as early as 1828. Winners of these regular competitions often took home a silver trophy. The few surviving trophies provide rare images of these events.

¹
Advertisement for the Anniversary Day pigeon match, *The Australian*, 25 January 1843. The prize cup is illustrated in plate 2, centre



JOHN WADE

The bookseller Jim Tyrrell, in his affectionate reminiscences called *Old Books, Old Friends, Old Sydney*, illustrates his old school at Balmain. An 1884 photograph shows the Pigeon Ground School, Gladstone Park: 'Its site was that of the pigeon shoots, dating back to the earliest days'.¹ Now it's part of the prosaically renamed Balmain Public School in Darvall Street.

Sport has always been strong in Australia. Governor Macquarie set aside part of Hyde Park for horse racing and cricket. Sports trophies were important, and one on the earliest preserved is a silver cup awarded in 1822 for a horse race.

Pigeon shooting is mentioned as a sport, although not for competition, as early as 1826, on Norfolk Island.² In Hobart, a commentator reported that wild pigeons 'afford good sport to those who are fond of shooting' and were being sold in town at a steep price of 15 shillings a pair.³ I have been unable to ascertain whether native pigeons were used in the sport, or if the foreign rock pigeon species, common in eastern Australian towns today, was introduced to supply the demand for targets.

The earliest reference I have located to a pigeon shooting competition is when a group of gentlemen held a shoot at Parramatta Racecourse on 13 June 1828.⁴ Within two years, the *Sydney Gazette* announced that a club had been formed in Sydney for promoting the sport of pigeon shooting, and a match would be held in a few days.⁵ This was possibly the first pigeon shooting match to be held on the anniversary of the founding of the colony,



26 January 1830, which became a regular annual event. Another competition match, between two shooters, was listed for 19 February.⁶

By 1833, pigeon shoots were held quarterly; on 16 September, the 'Quarterly Shooting Match will come off near the 'Sportsman' [Hotel], on the Parramatta-road; the prize on this occasion will be a double barrelled percussion gun.'⁷

The burgeoning competitive sport needed professional organisers, who tended to be gunsmiths, publicans or both. Gunsmiths could profit from their involvement by selling guns and ammunition, and demonstrating their own skills and equipment. Publicans could supply a gathering of competitors, mostly if not entirely composed of men, with food and drink during the day, and in the evening organise a celebratory dinner for the award presentations. Publicans could get a competitive edge by promoting a successful sporting event. It's no surprise today to find that breweries 'sponsor' the football and cricket, for the same reasons.

The organisers arranged the ground (often a racecourse), the advertising, the entry fees, the food and drink and the prizes, paid boys and

men to trap the birds (at around two shillings a pair), and to man the spring traps that released them for the shooters.⁸ In 1844, Sydney gunsmith and pigeon-shoot organiser George Whitfield advertised for 100 to 500 pairs of pigeons for a match where the prize was 50 guineas.⁹

This was a sport for gentlemen, who not only needed an expensive shotgun and used expensive ammunition, but also had to stump up £1, a guinea or 25 shillings for the right to shoot. It was no coincidence that gunsmiths like George Whitfield and William Pattison,¹⁰ and publicans like Thomas May of the Sportsman Inn also happened to be good shots, and carried off many of the prizes.

Few pigeon shooting trophies survive, but George Whitfield's trade label, 'Gunmaker of 83 King St Sydney', engraved by W. [William?] Harris c. 1845 shows three prize silver cups he had won, two with a kangaroo finial. His cups date from competitions on he won on 26 January 1843, 5 July 1845 and 12 July 1845 (plate 2).

The 20-guinea silver cup Whitfield won at the Anniversary Day Pigeon Shoot on 26 January 1843 was decided at Hill's paddock, behind [Sir Daniel] Cooper's gin distillery in

2
W. [William?] Harris (engraver), trade label pasted inside the lid of gun cases sold by George Whitfield, Gunmaker of 83 King St Sydney, c. 1845. It shows three silver prize cups he had won, two with a kangaroo finial. They are dated 5 July 1845, 26 January 1843 and 12 July 1845. Reproduced from R.C. Solomon, *The Convicted Gunsmiths of New South Wales*, privately published, Rockdale NSW 1990, p 2.96. No collection is quoted for the image



3-5
Silver trophy cup, the interior silver gilt, embossed with a scene of a pigeon shooting match. Inscribed under the base Cohen & Son/ Makers/ Sydney NSW, c. 1840-1850. H 17.2 cm. Private collection

Paddington. Limited to 20 competitors—‘Gentleman connected with the Pigeon Club’—it was organised by Whitfield, Thomas May of the Sportsman Inn, and another publican, James Gannon of another Sportsman, at Phillip and Hunter Streets, each of whom offered tickets.¹¹

Another competition, styled the ‘Great Pigeon Match’ was held on 12 July 1845. On the Wednesday before, five of the organisers advertised for pigeons:¹² Thomas Shaw of the Woolpack Inn, opposite the Petersham Race Course; Thomas May, of The Sportsman Inn, Parramatta street, Black Wattle Swamp (Ultimo), publican; George Whitfield of King

Street, gunmaker and crack shot; James Oatley of Pitt Street, the second son of clockmaker James Oatley, a keen shot (as was his younger brother Frederick) the publican of the Sportsman’s Arms Hotel on the corner of Pitt and Goulburn Streets;¹³ and Joseph Wilson of George Street.¹⁴ George Whitfield came away with the prize cup.

Several of these men were also involved in organising the horse races at Petersham Race Course. The planning of the first Petersham race meeting, with a four-race program to be held on Boxing Day, 26 December 1844, was organised at James Oatley’s hotel. Thomas Shaw of the Woolpack Inn opposite the Race Course gates sponsored a race, and Thomas May was the judge.¹⁵ Race-goers must have been amused when Sergeant Hudson and police runner Burrows apprehended a suspected thief, William Roberts, driving about ostentatiously in a hired carriage and pair, accompanied by ‘four dissolute females, all gaily dressed’.¹⁶

On 12 July 1845, twenty gentleman shot for a ‘A SPLENDID SILVER CUP, Value 25 guineas’ at Shaw’s Petersham Race Course. ‘Monsieur Delasante’ [Eugene Delessert] would present the winning trophy ‘on the ground, as a token of respect for the very liberal support he has afforded to the sporting circles, and his gentlemanly and sportsman-like behaviour during his residence in Sydney.’¹⁷ An extensive, full column report of ‘The Grand Pigeon Match’ appeared a few days afterwards, with George Whitfield once more the victor.¹⁸

The trophy Whitfield won is the two-handled, covered cup with kangaroo finial shown on the right of his trade card (**plate 2**). A week earlier, he had won the covered cup shown on the left, decorated with repoussé figures of a pigeon shoot. Both of these cups have at least some Australian manufacturing input. The third cup, from the Anniversary Day shoot of 26 January 1843, is a smaller, generic prize cup embossed with roses, and probably of English manufacture.

Eugene Delessert departed the colony on board the *Minerva* on 31 July.¹⁹ Another gunmaker, Isaac Elley, suitably humble ‘as a Tradesperson to the Members of the Australian Pigeon Club’, took out an advertisement to thank Eugene Delessert.²⁰

A Sydney pigeon shooting match is depicted on a surviving silver cup inscribed under the



base 'Cohen & Son, Maker, Sydney NSW' (plates 3-5). Joel John Cohen had arrived in Sydney in 1839, was active in the 1840s when his son Francis joined the business, and died in 1853. This cup dates from the 1840s; the repoussé decoration shows a pigeon match in progress, cartoon-like, so clearly the cup was made specially as a prize trophy for such an event. Unfortunately it has been inscribed with neither the winner's name nor date.

Victorians were keen shooters too. In 1853, Thomas Barker and George Swannell challenged any two gentlemen to shoot against them, 'at any flying mark', for up to £1,000.²¹ Frequent advertisements in *The Argus* promote coming pigeon shooting matches; as in Sydney, they took place at race courses, and offered prizes valued around £20.

Another surviving silver cup, with the marks of the Melbourne firm of William Edwards, may have been made for a Victorian pigeon shoot, and dates from the 1860s (plates 6-9). The workmanship is more skilful, and around the body we can see the pigeon shoot unfold in a continuous scene.

Three gentlemen wearing broad-brimmed hats and frock-coats relax in the shade of a

tree, watching the proceedings from a safe spot. In the distance, two men greet each other amiably at a bar housed in a shed, the Union Jack flying from a mast above it; in the foreground, four guns rest in a rack, also flying a flag. A man with two dogs kneels and pulls the string to let the pigeons fly from the trap. The gentleman competitor stands in front of him, his shotgun aimed and ready to shoot.

Depictions of pigeon shooting in art are rare. An 1828 aquatint by Henry Alken, 1828 and published by Reeves shows 'The Red House Club, Battersea, The members pigeon shooting for the gold cup'. Captain Ross carried the day, and the Red House Club flourished for a many years.²²

A Staffordshire pottery figure named 'Sir R Tichborne', depicting the Australian claimant to the Tichborne fortune, Arthur Orton, shows him as a rotund gentleman holding a gun and a pigeon (plate 10). This is presumably meant ironically to suggest the Wagga Wagga butcher's unlikely claim to be a gentleman of high birth.

In Tasmania, Harris & Just printed a large black and white poster, 92 by 59 cm, in 1870 advertising 'Grand pigeon shooting matches!:

6-9

Silver trophy cup, embossed with a scene of a pigeon shooting match. Stamped Kangaroo WE Emu and STERLING SILVER for William Edwards, Melbourne, c 1860-70. H 32.3 cm.

Private collection

Three gentlemen watch the proceedings from a safe distance. Two gentlemen chat at the well-stocked bar, with two hounds and a brace of shotguns on the rack. A gentleman releases the birds from the trap while another aims ready to shoot. The base is decorated with two kangaroos, two emus and a koala amid trees



to take place at Perth on Thursday, 27th instant, shooting to commence at 11 o'clock'. This was set down for 27 October 1870 in Launceston, with divisions for amateurs, those who haven't won a prize, a private match and a grand championship handicap.²³

Pigeon shooting continued to be popular in the colonies. Gradually, live pigeons were replaced with inanimate ceramic discs or 'clay pigeons'. NSW had abolished live pigeon shooting by 1950, but it still continued in Victoria, the ACT and South Australia. The SA Minister for Education, Baden Pattison, announced his intention to abolish live pigeon shooting in 1952.²⁴

It is likely that British rock pigeons were imported specially for this sport. Alongside foxes and rabbits, they would be another example of animals introduced for sport which are now vermin.

John Wade is a former museum curator who now runs a country hotel in Murrumburrah, in the South West Slopes region of NSW, with his partner Jenny Underwood. He was a foundation member of the Australiana Society in 1978 and has been the editor of *Australiana* magazine off and on ever since.



MOUNTED EMU EGGS

A by-product of this research was the discovery that mounted emu eggs go back earlier than we had previously thought. The earliest extant mounted emu eggs are of the late 1850s, and they are referred to in newspapers of 1857.

Hogarth and Company are reported in a puff piece as making and exhibiting in their shop an emu-egg vase mounted in colonial gold on a colonial marble base supporting figures of an emu, kangaroo and Aboriginal, intended for Moses Melchior in Copenhagen, a silver emu-egg vase, and an emu-egg jug.²⁵ These are richly embellished with Australian flora and fauna, displaying Julius Hogarth's capacity as a sculptor and his exploration of local imagery.

The concept was popular for some time and quickly adopted by other manufacturers. The workshop of Mr T. E. Rudd, jeweller, of 199 George Street, Sydney, created 'from an emu's egg an ornamental cup or vase, valuable as a gift or presentation ... The egg is supported on a silver-frosted eucalyptus stem, surrounded with wild ivy rising from amid the foliage, flowers, and shrubs that are worked in frosted-silver on a plate which rests on a rosewood plinth. Upon this plate the indigenous flowering plants and animals of the colony are represented in a very artistic manner. Amongst the former are the banana tree, the grass tree, and the waratah, and among the latter, two emus and two kangaroos in different postures. The upper portion of the egg serves as a cover to the cup; this is surmounted by an emu of frosted-silver, very naturally formed; where it joins with the other portion of the cup it is encircled with a silver-wreathed band very prettily wrought. On one side there is a highly polished silver shield, intended for an inscription...The whole is most creditable to the designer, Mr Rudd, and to his workman, Mr. L. Harvey.'²⁶

We know that native animals were used as ornaments for silver cups in the 1840s, but emu eggs also appeared then. On 28 August 1843, 'The first pigeon match for the season comes off today, at Gannon's old shooting ground, South Head Road, for a pair of cups, formed of silver-mounted emu eggs, with the colonial arms embossed on them (plate 11).'²⁷ The idea however does not seem to have taken off until after the gold rushes, when European-trained silversmiths such as Julius Hogarth, a Dane, took up the cause enthusiastically.

NOTES

- 1 James R. Tyrrell, *Old Books, Old Friends, Old Sydney*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney 1952, 8-9. An advertisement in the *Sydney Morning Herald* 4 February 1843, 1 claims the first pigeon shooting match in Balmain was scheduled for 6 February 1843.
- 2 *Colonial Times & Tasmanian Advertiser* 3 Feb 1826
- 3 *Hobart Town Courier* 28 Feb 1829, 2
- 4 *Sydney Gazette* 16 June 1828
- 5 *Sydney Gazette* 21 Jan 1830, 3
- 6 *Sydney Gazette* 18 Feb 1830, 2
- 7 *SMH* 5 Sept 1833, 3b
- 8 *Australian* 14 May 1842
- 9 *SMH* 16 September 1844, 3
- 10 William Pattison arrived in NSW as a sergeant in the 39th Regiment in 1827. He resigned when his regiment was transferred overseas, going into business in Sydney as a gunsmith in 1833.
- 11 *Australian* 25 Jan 1843, 3b. In 1845, James Gannon was licensee of the Sportsman, George Street: *SMH* 7 April 1845, 4
- 12 *SMH* 9 July 1845, 3
- 13 *ABD* 2, p 292. Oatley was already the licensee in 1844: *SMH* 14 Dec 1844, 1

- 14 For a list of those applying for the annual publican's licences, see *SMH* 4 April 1844, 4 & 7 April 1845, 4. To clear up confusion, in 1845 James Gannon was licensee of the Sportsman, George Street (but formerly Phillip & Hunter Streets); James Oatley was licensee of the Sportsman, Pitt & Goulburn Streets; and Thomas May was licensee of the Sportsman, George Street (or Parramatta Street)!
- 15 *SMH* 29 Nov 1844, 3; *SMH* 7 Dec 1844, 5. Eight years earlier, a one-year lease of the 'extensive and thickly wooded' Petersham Estate was being offered to sawyers, firewood cutters and market gardeners. *SMH* 21 Jan 1837, 1
- 16 *SMH* 4 Jan 1845, 2
- 17 *Australian*, 12 July 1845, 1
- 18 *Australian*, 15 July, 3c. George Whitfield unfortunately was murdered in the doorway of his shop in King Street on 4 November 1864; *SMH* 5 Nov 1864, 4
- 19 *SMH* 1 August 1845, 2
- 20 *SMH* 29 July 1845, 1b
- 21 *Argus* 5 April 1853, 12
- 22 Siltzer, *The Story of British Sporting Prints*
- 23 State Library of Tasmania AUTAS001126075142
- 24 *Sun-Herald* 4 July 1952
- 25 *SMH* 1 April 1857 p 5
- 26 *SMH* 8 Oct 1857 p 5. The story is repeated in *SMH* 10 Oct 1857 p 9
- 27 *SMH* 28 Aug 1843 p 2



10

Staffordshire glazed earthenware figure c. 1870-75 of 'Sir R. Tichborne', showing the Australian claimant to the Tichborne fortune, Arthur Orton, as a gentleman, holding a pigeon and shotgun. Private collection

11

Is this the earliest evidence of mounted emu eggs? *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 August 1843

PIGEON SHOOTING.—The first pigeon match for the season comes off to-day, at Gannon's old shooting ground, South Head Road, for a pair of cups, formed of silver-mounted emu eggs, with the colonial arms embossed on them. Several private matches are to come off at the same time.

Design and Art OF AUSTRALIA ONLINE

Australiana magazine has long been publishing biographical data on Australian craftsmen and women. In our recent issues, David Kelly and Timothy Roberts suggested a biographical database of Australian craftsmen available on the internet. As Olivia Bolton explains, *The Dictionary of Australian Artists Online* provides just that, and with expansions scheduled for 2010 it is calling for submissions.

OLIVIA BOLTON

The Dictionary of Australian Artists Online (DAAO) is an e-Research tool dedicated to the promotion of scholarship on Australian artists and designers. Developed with the collaboration of major Australian cultural and tertiary institutions, DAAO now holds around 7,894 indexed biographies of artists, designers and craftspeople.

DAAO's aim to collect, contextualise and share research on all Australian art and design practitioners is gathering pace. During 2010, DAAO will undergo a significant expansion thanks to an Australian Research Council (ARC) infrastructure grant of \$400,000, DAAO's third grant of this kind. Planned developments include a rebranding – Design and Art of Australia Online and still DAAO – to better reflect DAAO's representation of design; a broadened data structure to give full historical and interdisciplinary context to the current biographical schema; and enhanced search capability to support new cultural scholarship.

You can imagine our delight when we saw David Kelly's recent article and Timothy Roberts' follow-up¹ suggesting the creation of

an electronic dictionary of Australian colonial furniture-makers, and inviting *Australiana* readers to consider the DAAO for such a purpose.

Kelly raises a number of key points for consideration in setting up an online dictionary, including determining content structure and establishing quality guidelines. These and many other concerns have already been addressed by DAAO's governing bodies. The DAAO was built with funding from two major ARC LIEF grants (2005 & 2007); the system's development was guided by an advisory committee and informed by various working groups made up of art and design history and data specialists. An editorial board now oversees DAAO's content growth while peer reviewers aid quality control. This broad pool of experts has supported the growth of a tool that is relevant to researchers across a range of disciplines.

The DAAO inherited from its foundation texts² a spirit of inclusion. Thanks to the late Professor Joan Kerr and the hundreds of art historians who contributed to *The Dictionary of Australian Artists: painters, sketchers, photographers and engravers to 1870* and *Heritage: the national women's art book* (a number of who contribute

to *Australiana* Magazine), the DAAO now holds records of artists from hair and wax modellers to war painters. Professor Vivien Johnson offered over 500 Western Desert artist biographies. New entries coming from individual historians and organized research projects cover everything from installation artists to Indigenous basket weavers: the Storylines Project (2007-2009) contributed over 600 biographies under an ARC funded survey of 'non-remote' Indigenous artists; in 2009 a researcher-in-residence, supported by the Power Institute Foundation for Art & Visual Culture, University of Sydney, contributed important inter-war artist biographies; cultural institutions are submitting their data; and research, primarily on living artists, is being incorporated in to coursework at partner universities.

What DAAO offers that the print publication cannot is its searchability and the capacity to grow as new information comes to light. Updating an existing entry is as easy as submitting supplementary data, while authoring an entirely new variant biography is also possible.

DAAO holds a relatively small but growing sample of furniture-maker and silversmith biographies. Since launching the site in 2007 we have received entries on designers and craftspeople such as Geoffrey Hannah, Julius Hogarth, Elizabeth Jane Kingsbury, Augustus John Kosvitz and Paula Rosenstengel to name just a handful.

A skim of *Australiana*'s index to volumes 11 to 29 reveals a good many artists, designers and craftspeople yet to be represented on the system. We invite *Australiana* contributors to join DAAO's member base of over 700 authors to help build this content.

Of course this call for submissions is not limited to entries on furniture-makers. The DAAO publishes biographical research on jewellers, commercial designers, textile artists, ceramicists, theatre designers, glass and metal workers and carvers as well as painters, photographers, sculptors and the like. In all, DAAO divides media into twenty-one categories and allows for variants.

DAAO offers a permanent home for data in which entries on colonial artists and craftsmen and women can sit alongside those of contemporary practitioners. With the click of

a button researchers using the DAAO can refine their focus to a discrete sample, such as furniture-makers who were active between 1788 and 1901.

Bookmark the Dictionary of Australia Artists Online at www.daa0.org.au

Olivia Bolton is Managing Editor of the DAAO and can be contacted at the College of Fine Arts, University of NSW, Box 259, Paddington NSW, 2021

NOTES

1. David Kelly 2009, 'Suggestion for an electronic 'Dictionary' of Australian colonial furniture-makers 1788-1901', *Australiana*, vol 31 no 4, p.11; Timothy Roberts 2009, 'A fine proposal', *Australiana* vol 32 no 1, p 38.
- 2 Vivien Johnson, 1994, *Aboriginal artists of the Western Desert: a biographical dictionary*, Craftsman House, Roseville East, NSW. Joan Kerr (ed.) 1992, *The Dictionary of Australian Artists: painters, sketchers, photographers and engravers to 1870*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, Vic. Joan Kerr, (ed.) 1995, *Heritage: the national women's art book*, Craftsman House, Roseville East, NSW.





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