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COVER

Joseph Backler (1813?–1895), *Alice Pollock*, 1870. Oil on canvas, 71.1 x 91.4 cm.
Collection: Royal Historical Society of Queensland, Brisbane

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John D Moore

Near Frankston, 1953

Oil on wood panel, 30 x 65.5 cm

Signed and dated lr

"John D Moore '53"

Incised into wood, verso

"5 Near Frankston / John D Moore"

The scene shows the bathing boxes along the north shore of Davey's Bay at Frankston on Port Phillip. Moore was an architect as well as a painter. In 1952, the Modernist architect Roy Grounds finished his iconic Round House at Olivers Hill in Frankston and Moore is likely to have visited Grounds soon after the house was finished. Neville Shute lived close by and his novel *On the Beach* is set at Davey's Bay. Part of the cliff face along Davey's Bay collapsed later in the 1950s. John D Moore exhibited in group shows at the Macquarie Galleries in 1953 and Roy Grounds held an exhibition there in 1954.

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Henry BURN

(c. 1807 – 1884)

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The *Saleroom* 150 years ago *A tale of two Monas*

TERRY INGRAM

The opening of the Museum of Old and New Art in Hobart in January this year marked an extraordinary coincidence. MONA, as it has been named for short, opened 150 years after the first serious private but open-to-the-public art museums were established in Australia.

One of these first art museums was also called Mona. Or at least it was referred to in the press as 'the gallery at Mona', a Celtic name meaning noble also given to the sitter for the world's most famous portrait.

Both Monas, 'Mona I' in Sydney's Darling Point and 'Mona II' in Hobart, were ground-breaking on both the national and international levels. Tasmania's MONA also broke new ground by going underground two storeys to create a cathedral-like setting.

The contents of the first *Mona* (plate 1), the home of merchant Thomas Ware Smart (1810–1881), represented provincial British taste, so delightfully identified, along with that of

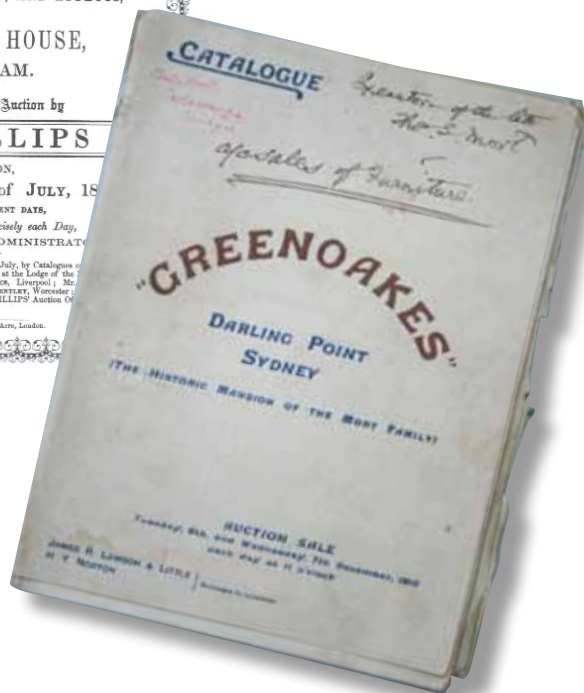
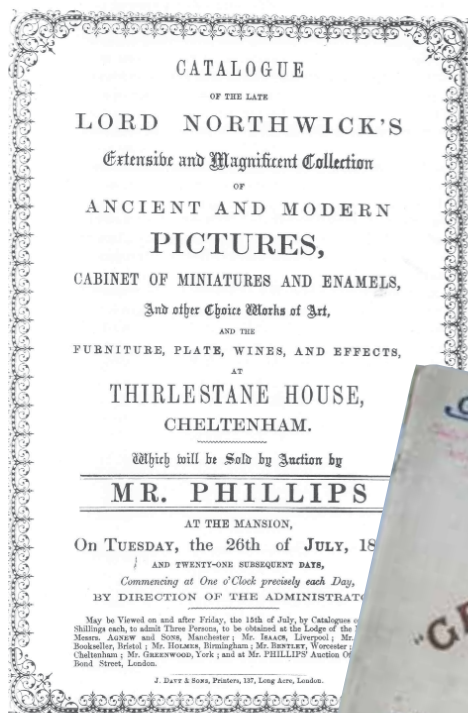
1

The north porch of T W Smart's *Mona* at Darling Point NSW. The house, begun in 1841, still stands although shorn of its 15 acres of gardens and of its Gallery, sited to the east and demolished to make way for the present Mona Road

2

T S Mort had *Greenoaks* extended by Edmund Blacket in the Gothic style. The hall displayed some of the weapons and armour Mort bought in England. Private collection





a flood of 'Old Masters' in the local auction rooms. Perhaps editors already suspected that they were the copies, or rip-offs of the works of major artists, that they are now considered to be, but had neither the inclination nor information to challenge the attributions.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* classified repeatedly carried advertisements for works by the world's greatest artists over several centuries. Time has not proved these attributions to be correct. There was, for instance, a Francesco Guardi in the Smart collection which it would be fascinating to compare with James Fairfax's Guardi, *View at the Villa Loredan*, which made \$8 million when sold at Christie's in 2007.

The *Mona* and *Greenoaks* galleries were nonetheless covered in the editorial pages. Their contents were listed and described extensively, with potted biographies of the artists to whom they were attributed.² Unlike Hobart's MONA, they did not, of course, make the front pages, except as auction notices. Then, the newspapers' front pages were devoted to classified advertising. There were no photographs or engravings, as that printing technology had yet to evolve and become economical.

None of the works can, as far as we can establish, be considered masterpieces although it would be delicious to imagine that Smart's Gainsborough was correct alongside a Francesco Guardi. Despite this, the delightful expression *'chefs d'oeuvres'* was used a couple of times contemporaneously.

Both Smart (*Mona*) and Mort (*Greenoaks*) acquired works from overseas sales. Smart was a cheapskate, buying mainly at the bottom end of the market at the famous sale in Cheltenham of Lord Northwick's collection in 1859 (plate 3).

Local art received little attention, although the 1910 auction catalogue by Lawson & Little of the *Greenoaks* [sic] collection³ (another auctioneer typo?) included three Conrad Martens watercolours (plate 4).

The art and the way the collections were disposed of may have been professional for its day but are light years away from anything to be seen at MONA. The owners, Thomas Ware Smart of *Mona* and Thomas Sutcliffe Mort of *Greenoaks*, were both auctioneers by profession but they did not, need it be said, yet have the internet and jpeg technology.

However when, following T W Smart's death and according to the instructions in his will, the 'very grand and important sale by

3
T W Smart, the son of a convict bootmaker, used his *nouveaux riches* to become a big buyer at the sale of Lord Northwick's collection in 1859

4
T S Mort's collection was dispersed at auction in 1910. Private collection

the contents of the neighbouring gallery at *Greenoaks* (plate 2), the home of Thomas Sutcliffe Mort (1816–1878), as '*retarditaire*' by Robert Holden in his 1981 thesis on colonial taste in NSW.¹

But Australia had never seen the likes of this before, especially with most of the works purchased in overseas salerooms. These two galleries represented the first serious entry by Australians into the international salerooms.

The sesquicentenary of the National Gallery of Victoria on 24 May 2011 is to be greeted with enormous fanfare. But the Melbourne opening was only a few weeks ahead of the two private enterprises in Sydney, no longer around to celebrate their contribution to the national heritage.

There appears to have been no regular investigative saleroom reporter around in Australia in 1861 when the *Mona* and *Greenoaks* galleries were opened to the public, despite



auction without reserve of the Mona Gallery of Magnificent and Priceless Oil paintings' was advertised for sale by Bradley, Newton & Lamb in 1884,⁴ telegrams were 'attended to'. An unillustrated but 'large and well-printed catalogue, with every picture named and criticised more or less fully by Mr Edward Reeve, the well-known journalist and art critic, who was for many years a prominent member of the *Sydney Morning Herald* staff'⁵ was available for sixpence. The gallery was thrown open for three whole weeks (except Sundays) for previewing the works in the auction, which was held on 26 June 1884.

Mona, then surrounded by six hectares at Darling Point on Sydney Harbour, enjoyed an aspect as scenic as MONA does today (plate 5), although the approach over the Derwent to MONA by the ferry provided by its millionaire proprietor David Walsh inevitably confronts passengers with the decayed industrial landscape, including a zinc factory on its banks.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* writer floriated that the *Mona* gallery stood on the southern side of Smart's residence

'on a spot not less adorned by nature than by art. The views from this charming

locality embrace such a combination of rocks, woods, houses and waveless bays as could be happily transferred to canvas by many of those great artists whose works now adorn the walls of the gallery.⁶

He went on to describe the gallery building, torn down later to make way for the roadway outside, as

a handsome piece of masonry sixty-five feet long by twenty-five feet wide, lighted in the proper manner, by clerestory windows in the roof. On entering from the corridor the "old world" visitor is forcibly struck with the majestic aspect of the paintings, the statuary, and the many other attractive objects which there await his inspection.

This is followed by a list of the contents, continued and repeated in parts of later editions of the *Sydney Morning Herald* and syndicated to regional newspapers in NSW.

Mort's *Greenoaks* collection, largely British watercolours, could be viewed on the last Saturday of the month and the following Monday, with entry by ticket. It was described as being housed in a gallery

5

MONA, Hobart.
Photography by
Leigh Carmichael
and Sean Fennessy



6

Wim Delvoye (b. 1965),
Cloaca. Collection
MONA, Hobart,
photography by
Leigh Carmichael and
Sean Fennessy

7

The grey granite tomb
of Thomas Ware Smart
at St Jude's cemetery,
Randwick NSW

built expressly for their reception, being thirty-five feet long by fourteen feet wide, a subdued light being admitted along a circular roof. The pictures number about a hundred and twenty, and are all neatly framed and glazed and hung so as to be seen to best advantage.⁷

Foreshadowing the long lines which grew outside woolsheds and other odd venues when Holman Hunt's *The Light of the World* toured Australia in 1906⁸ and for entombed Chinese warriors or pharaohs whenever shown in Australia, at *Greenoaks* 'the attendance has frequently been numerous.'⁹ *Greenoaks* still stands, renamed *Bishop's Court* as the residence of the Anglican Archbishop of Sydney.

Visitors to MONA in 2011 have not been confronted by any of the brown paintings of what are now considered second-rate mid-

19th century British artists of *Greenoaks* nor the Old Master pictures at *Mona*. Brown matter, perhaps, as the shocker of the MONA collection is Belgian artist Wim Delvoye's *Cloaca*, an excrement maker commissioned by David Walsh, which the press has nicknamed 'the poo machine' (plate 6).

As a patron, Walsh would probably identify more with Mort than the man at *Mona*, as Mort took an active interest and direction in the works he bought. Walsh, however, did not go so far as to tell artists what to paint. A working class boy who has favoured an industrial suburb, Glenorchy, with his \$75 million gallery and his \$100 million art collection, he might also empathise with Smart, the son of a convict bootmaker who made good.

But then Smart's collection included a lot of religious pictures of virgins, a rather contrary theme to Walsh's sex and death. Walsh's *Virgin* is by Chris Ofili; painted with elephant dung, the inclusion of this painting in the *Sensations* exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1999 was itself a sensation.

Walsh, however, began his collection with a traditional endeavour by buying antiquities, now placed among the contemporary art and identifiable, piece by piece, by the magic of a hand-held electronic guide similar to an iPod. Had Mort and Smart gone underground, they might have had to take candles or oil lamps.

Mona is the source of another coincidence. Antique dealers and Australiana enthusiasts John Williams and Bill Blinco have both at separate times made their homes there.

Notes

- 1 Robert Holden, *Aspects of Art Patronage and Collecting in Colonial NSW*, copy in Mitchell Library. Holden identified many of the purchases made at the Northwick sale in 1859.
- 2 *Sydney Morning Herald* 13 July 1861 and 20 July 1861.
- 3 *Greenoakes (sic) Darling Point, Sydney (the Historic Mansion of the Mort Family)* says the furniture and objets d'art were principally purchased at the sale of the late Earl of Shrewsbury's effects at *Alton Towers* in Staffordshire, now the most visited theme park in the UK.
- 4 *SMH* 19 April 1884 until 26 June 1884.
- 5 *SMH* 21 June 1884 p 11.
- 6 *SMH* 13 July 1861.
- 7 *SMH* 5 August 1861.
- 8 Jeremy Maas, *Holman Hunt and the Light of the World*, London & Berkeley 1984.
- 9 *SMH* 5 August 1861

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Ellis Rowan (Australian, 1848-1922). *Australian Birds*, c1890.
Colour lithograph, signed in image lower right, 57.8 x 39.6cm.
Laid down on acid-free paper.

Rediscovering *Jonathan Leak*

A new exhibition, based on recent archaeological excavations, will show the convict potter Jonathan Leak in a whole new light

GEOFF FORD

In 2007, a team of archaeologists had a rare opportunity to excavate a rubbish pit on the original pottery site of the convict potter Jonathan Leak (1777–1838). Leak began establishing his pottery in 1821, off Elizabeth Street, Sydney, near the Brickfields.

Leak had dug clay for making pottery from the pit in 1824, and then used it as a rubbish tip for broken pottery. Over 250,000 sherds were found covering a wide variety of articles previously unknown to have been made by Leak.

This 22.5cm high by 14.5cm diameter wheel-thrown salt glazed stoneware bung jar from Jonathan Leak's pottery in Sydney is just one of the items that will be on display



The National Museum of Australian Pottery at Holbrook NSW is hosting a short term exhibition, the greater part of which is made up of pieces found in the clay pit and reconstructed. A small amount of reconstituted clay used by Leak, potter's tools, a variety of clay smoking pipes, baking dishes, storage and bung jars, mixing bowls, breakfast bowls, jugs, cups, colanders, water monkeys, bottles and demi-johns in stoneware, earthenware and terracotta will be on display. Many of them are marked with Leak's pottery stamps. The exhibition will also show complete pieces from private collections.

Among the sherds was a salt-glazed stoneware wine bottle impressed with a merchant's name. Using the researched information on this merchant, we know that this bottle was made in December 1824 or January/February 1825, enabling us to date the fill in the clay pit so precisely.

The Leak pottery exhibition at the Museum will be officially opened on 19 June 2011 by Dr Mathew Trinca, Assistant Director, Collections, Content and Exhibitions at the National Museum of Australia, Canberra, and it will continue until 24 February 2012.

The National Museum of Australian Pottery at 76 Albury Street Holbrook NSW, has extensive displays of Australian Pottery and is open Thursday to Tuesday 9.30am to 4.30pm (closed Wednesday and the whole of August). Holbrook is on the Hume Highway, about 70 km north of Albury.

Geoff and Kerrie Ford can be contacted at the Museum on 02 6036 3464 or on their web page www.australianpottery.net.au

Henry Passmore

a man with a passion:
public servant, woodcarver and embroiderer

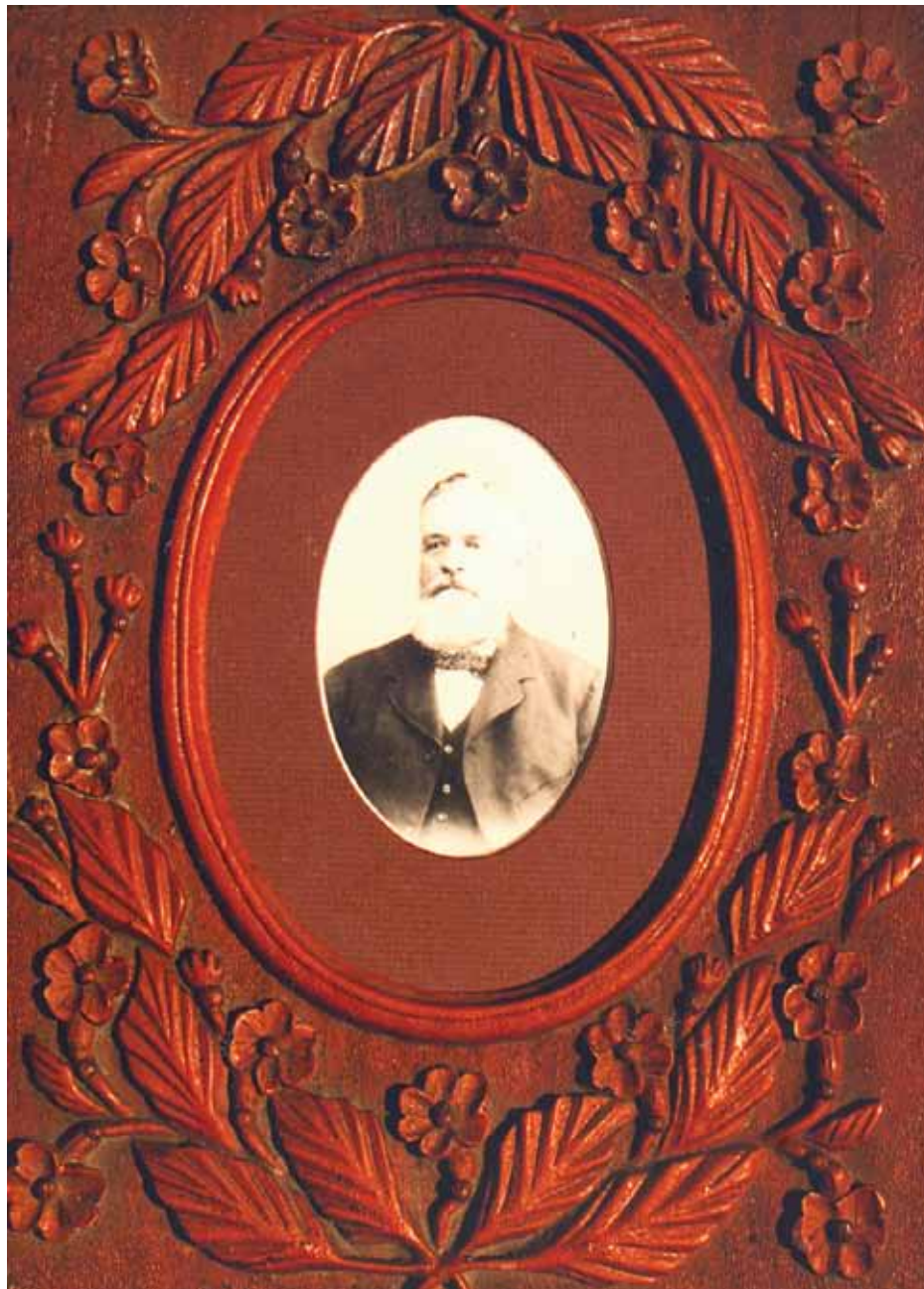
Dorothy Erickson continues her illuminating series on Western Australian craftsmen and women, this time looking at the works of amateur timber worker and embroiderer Henry Passmore.

DOROTHY ERICKSON

Henry Passmore (**plate 1**), embroiderer and woodcarver was born at Raleigh, Barnstaple, England on 22 February 1840¹ and died 6 March 1920 in North Fremantle, Western Australia. He was Anglican, the literate son of a lacemaker, himself the son of a woolmaker. Henry however became a midshipman in the Royal Navy, serving on HMS *Caesar* in the Baltic and Crimea from 1854–1862. He then joined the Convict Service at Dartmoor Prison in 1863, arriving in Western Australia in the *Racehorse* on 15 August 1865 as warden in charge of convicts, at a salary of £59 per annum.

1

Henry Passmore (1840–1920), shown in a photo frame he made in the 1880s





2
Henry Passmore (1840–1920), Fremantle from the northern shore of the Swan River, woolwork. Photograph Douglas Elford.

Collection: WA Museum

3
Passmore exhibited at the 1881 International Exhibition on the Perth Esplanade. The dome was frescoed inside by Henry Prinsep, while potted palms and a Viennese orchestra provided the ambience of an Austrian kursaal. Collection Battye Library, BL3076B/11

Passmore joined the Public Works Department in Western Australia in 1872 when there were only five officers, and was in charge of convicts involved in public works, roads, bridges, river dredging etc. He also took up land on the Upper Swan Valley, working it 1866–8 while supervising the building of roads etc in the area. In the 1870s he lived in Perth where the Supreme Court Gardens are now.

In 1872 he was in charge of dredging of the Swan River. One of his embroideries shows the dredge *Black Swan* working opposite where he later had his house in North Fremantle (**plate 2**). Embroidery, like painting, was one of the pastimes that seamen and naval officers used to fill relaxation time on their long voyages and it is probable that he took it up when at sea. He also

opened the Greenmount quarries about 1878. In the same year, while in charge of the dredge, he caught a strange, large flying fish which caused much interest among naturalists.² He retired from the civil service in 1898, after 26 years working for the West Australian colonial government, and 44 since he joined the Royal Navy.³

Outside his public works jobs, Passmore was active as a woolworker and woodcarver. In 1881 he was an exhibitor in the Perth International Exhibition staged by Joubert and Twopeny on the Esplanade (**plate 3**). The critics were generous in their praise of Fred Mason's jewellery and of the sculptor D. A. Gray but considered that some of the woolwork exhibited was an example of misapplied industry. This was the work of Henry Passmore.



We can judge for ourselves as a number of woolwork pictures and woodcarvings made by Passmore are still in existence. He used stitchery in wool to realise the panorama from where he built his John Street, North Fremantle home across the river to the Fremantle township and Arthur's Head (**plate 2**). There is a certain naiveté in the use of high perspective. The bar across the Swan River is obviously still in place; it was removed by Passmore's successor, the engineer C. Y. O'Connor (1843–1902), to create Fremantle Harbour.

Passmore also embroidered the representation of a cricket match on the Perth Foreshore (**plate 5**). This he reputedly embroidered while working on the Black Swan dredging Perth Water. As this took place in the 1870s, it is possible that he exhibited both pictures in the 1881 exhibition.

He had married Mary Sarah Ellis (1838–1877), purportedly in 1858. When his wife died in 1877 leaving him with seven young children, Passmore 'married' his housekeeper. It is probable that it was about this time he commenced his furniture making and woodcarving. He spent five



4

Henry Passmore (1840–1920), woolwork embroidery picture. Private collection

5

Henry Passmore (1840–1920), Cricket match on Perth Esplanade from the dredging barge *Black Swan*. Photograph Dorothy Erickson.

Collection: Royal Western Australian Historical Society



6

Photograph of carved photo stand on side table c. 1885, both by Henry Passmore (1840–1920). This photograph stand may have been exhibited in 1886. The frame was reputedly donated to the WA Museum by descendant Mrs Jones of Ethel St, Guildford. Photograph from family archives

7

Henry Passmore (1840–1920), 'The Passmore Suite' on display in Sandovers' window. Photograph from family archives

years in Albany (the five years included 1886) reclaiming the sand drift beside the road to the south coast. He surveyed the first telephone line from Wannerup Inlet to the Pilot Station at Albany. Later, he married Mary Ann (Marion) Dibb (c. 1848–1925) – who according to the family was very extravagant and gave away furniture and silver.

In 1891 Henry Passmore bought lots 36, 47, 48 and in 1895 lot 35, of Fremantle suburban lot 25, in North Fremantle between Harvest Road and John Street and developed a small village there. Between 1892 and 1910, he built a home for each of his children, although not all took up residence. Raleigh Avenue, named after his birthplace, had arches across it. The seven



houses – six wooden cottages and a limestone random rubble cottage – fronted this narrow street and on the rear of the blocks were stables, orchards, a windmill, vines, and a fowl yard. A 1900 description of his private street described the scene:

The versatility and energy of purpose possessed by Mr Passmore is further shown in his surroundings in Raleigh Avenue, North Fremantle. He has built several houses on a large block of land acquired several years ago, and the approach is up an avenue from John Street under a succession of creeper-covered arches. Pink and white idollychus have been trained over these arches, and when in full bloom a delightful picture is presented. He loves gardening as well as wood-carving, and his knowledge of botany and plant-life generally is very extensive.⁴

Henry Passmore was an accomplished amateur furniture-maker and woodcarver who exhibited at international exhibitions such as the Indian and Colonial Exhibition of 1886 in London, where he exhibited three carved photograph stands. One is probably the stand illustrated in **plate 1** and another that in **plate 6**. He was awarded a medal for woodcarving at this exhibition.

Passmore's furniture was on show in Sandover's shop window in Perth once a year (**plate 7**). It was displayed with the sign 'Henry Passmore's Suite' and even the Governor (who presided over the Crimean War and Indian Mutiny veterans' dinners at the Esplanade Hotel that Passmore regularly attended) came to inspect it.

In 1905, he exhibited his work in a fund-raising bazaar held at the North Fremantle Congregational Church:

One of the greatest attractions is a valuable collection of carvings and other curios lent for the occasion by Mr. Henry Passmore. It includes a drawing-room suite constructed of kauri pine, jarrah, and Queensland cedar, which represents the work of Mr. Passmore in his spare time for a period of ten years.⁵

After his retirement, Passmore remained active in public life. He was elected to North Fremantle Council in December 1898. He stood unsuccessfully for the state seat of North Fremantle in 1901,⁶ and during the campaign



took out public notices that he intended to 'take legal proceedings' against those making 'slandrous and malicious statements in public'.⁷ He became a Justice of the Peace.⁸ Holding his Council position for 14 years, he resigned in the aftermath of a messy municipal controversy into paying rates by instalments in October 1912, where the Town Clerk was dismissed for failing to issue proper receipts and account for the money.⁹

Passmore was a writer of letters to the editor, particular on matters relating to ports. Between August and December 1892, Fremantle optometrist Mr C. Wolfson ran over 50 regular advertisements carrying Passmore's testimonial for his spectacles; he claimed that one of his eyes was near-sighted and the other far-sighted, but 'I am now able to do any amount of reading or writing free from the continued ache that I use [sic] to suffer from before using your glasses.'¹⁰

Passmore took more than a passing interest in cures for rheumatism. In 1906, he recommended 'Dr McLaughlin's electric belt' as a cure,¹¹ and the following year he installed the first electric motor in North Fremantle, to drive an invention he patented for rheumatism.¹² By 1910, he was advertising his 'Anti-Rheumatic Galvanic Plate – An absolute cure for Rheumatism, Gout, Sciatica and all Kinds of Nervous Troubles', available from Henry Passmore at North Fremantle 'At the Low Cost of 10s. 6d.' with a testimonial from a miner who swore by one he had borrowed from a friend.¹³ His business expanded and from 1913, he was advertising 'Passmore's Patent Plates for rheumatism, lumbago and sciatica', marketed widely from an office in Melbourne (plate 8).¹⁴

He died aged 80 in 1920 at his residence in Raleigh Avenue (now Passmore Avenue), North Fremantle. As a Royal Navy veteran, his coffin was draped with a Union Jack and carried on a gun carriage to the Karrakatta Cemetery on 8 March 1920.¹⁵ The family continued to own the street until 1938 when it was sold.

A newspaper tribute to him, written in 1900 following his retirement, stated that:

In his comfortable residence at Raleigh Avenue is to be found a perfect museum of highly artistic carvings and other articles for beautifying the home all showing wonderful skill and possession of extraordinary patience. Bookcases, sideboards, chairs and occasional tables have all been made during spare hours and then decorated with carvings



8
Henry Passmore advertised 'Passmore patent plates' as a cure for rheumatism. *Western Mail*, 13 June 1913, p. 40

9
Photograph of a corner cabinet by Henry Passmore (1840–1920), one of those displayed in Sandovers' window, given to Charles Passmore. Photograph from family archives

executed in a style worthy of any art school. Mr Passmore is entirely self taught, but some of his carvings in high relief, as well as others on the flat, are really works of art and clearly show that if he had devoted the whole of his time to this particular branch of industry he would have had a distinguished career.¹⁶



Almost a year after Henry died, Perth auctioneers Ashenden & Co offered 'the Passmore collection of carvings' on 25 January 1921:¹⁷

HANDSOME CARVED ARTISTIC FURNITURE. HAND-CARVED WORK of the late Mr. HENRY PASSMORE, of FREMANTLE. Magnificent CARVED OVERMANTLE, carved water lilies and base relief HANDSOME CARVED SIDEBOARD 2 very unique CARVED CHINA CABINETS Handsome CARVED COUCH 2 Queen Anne design CARVED CHAIRS BOOKCASE beautifully carved OCC. TABLE, rectangular carved and punchwork top.

After listing other household lots which may have belonged to Passmore, they continued:

We call special attention to the fine collection of Unique Carvings specified above which were the life work of the late Mr. HENRY PASSMORE, who recently died at Fremantle, being a very old colonist, and held many public positions under the West Australian Government. He also held positions in the Navy and served in the Battle of the Baltic. The CARVED FURNITURE shows a unique taste and an amount of artistic merit.

When the last Mrs Passmore died on 7 July 1925 aged 77,¹⁸ the family says her stepson Harry collected the furniture that remained and parcelled it out among the family. Each of his children received a piece of intricately carved furniture. Annie Kennedy had a carved armchair upholstered in velvet, which was donated to the Royal Western Australian Historical Society by her daughter Eva Isles (**plate 10**). Detailed carving on the chair has motifs that had significance for him, e.g. pig sticking, which referred to army tactics and exercises. The seat front had a version of an Australian coat of arms incorporating the Scottish thistle and an English rose.

Minnie Howson had the large carved cedar sideboard (**plate 11**) which is now part of the collection of the National Trust (WA). Other pieces are known from photographs (**plates 9, 12, 13**), while those dispersed at auction in 1921 went into private hands.

10
Photograph of a chair, 1897, by Henry Passmore (1840–1920), now in the collection of the Royal WA Historical Society. Photograph from family archives

11
Henry Passmore (1840–1920), cedar sideboard, the first piece of furniture he made. Photograph Dorothy Erickson. Collection: National Trust (WA)



Collections represented:

Royal Western Australian Historical Society
Western Australian Museum
National Trust (WA)
Family collections

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Acknowledgments

Information and photographs from Robert Pow and Kate McGurk, descendants.

Dr Dorothy Erickson is a Perth-based historian and author as well as an internationally renowned jeweller. Her latest book is *Gold and silversmithing in Western Australia: a history* UWA Publishing, 2010.

Notes

- 1 *Sunday Times* 5 July 1914 p 6 notes his birth as 29 Feb 1840.
- 2 *WA Times* 7 May 1878 p 2.
- 3 *Sunday Times* 5 July 1914, p 6.
- 4 Anon, 1900.
- 5 *West Australian* 5 Oct 1905 p 6.
- 6 *West Australian* 24 Apr 1901 p 5.
- 7 *West Australian* 9 Apr 1901 p 8 and 10 Apr 1901 p 6.
- 8 *Western Mail* 15 Jun 1907 p 31.
- 9 *Sunday Times* 6 Oct 1912 p 15; *West Australian* 3 Nov 1912 p 9 & 15 Aug 1913 p 7.
- 10 E.g. *West Australian* 1 Aug 1892 p 2



12

Photograph of a couch, 1880s, by Henry Passmore (1840-1920).
Photograph from family archives



13

Henry Passmore (1840-1920), overmantel carved with lilies. On display in the National Trust property Woodbridge in the late 1970s, it was reputedly donated to the WA Museum by descendant Mrs Jones, of Ethel Street, Guildford

- 11 *West Australian* 14 July 1906 p 3
- 12 *West Australian* 23 Dec 1907 p 7.
- 13 *Sunday Times* 30 Oct 1910 p 22.
- 14 *Western Mail* 13 June 1913 p 40.
- 15 *Sunday Times* 7 Mar 1920 p 20; *West Australian* 11 Mar 1920 pp 4 & 42.
- 16 Anon 'Councillor H. Passmore Visits Mother Country', *The Umpire* 24 March 1900. I am indebted to descendant Kate McGurk for most of the photographs and much of the information on Passmore.
- 17 *West Australian* 25 Jan 1921 p 3.
- 18 *West Australian* 8 July 1925 p 1.



People and places:

Joseph Backler in Queensland

Joseph Backler's prolific career as convict turned itinerant artist has recently been the subject of considerable research.¹ However, Backler's life and career in Queensland is still relatively unknown. During his residencies in Queensland, Backler produced a number of works, many of special significance to the artist's career and to the places he painted. Backler's Queensland works not only provide further insight into the artist's life and work, but also provide a glimpse of life in Queensland in the mid-nineteenth century.

TIMOTHY ROBERTS

After two decades of travelling and working throughout communities across New South Wales, Joseph Backler (1813?–1895) had arrived in Brisbane by April 1865. Brisbane was a city of swift change and robust development, enjoying considerable prosperity as a leading port following Queensland's separation from New South Wales in 1859. The city's rapid expansion attracted skilled workers and entrepreneurs, and facilitated a number of new public works, including a new Governor's residence, completed in 1862, a new Parliament building, commenced in 1865, and the first bridge to connect the north and south shores of the Brisbane River, which commenced the same year. A dynamic young city no doubt offered endless promise to an artist, which may explain Backler's move.

Backler was not the only artist to travel to Queensland during the confident early days of the colony's independence. The aspiring character and promising expansion that Queensland enjoyed attracted several portraitists seeking both fame and good fortune. Prior to Backler's arrival, William Francis Emery painted in Ipswich during the early 1860s. William Ewart arrived in Brisbane around 1866; Auschar Chauncy came two years later, and would later travel to Rockhampton and Gympie in the 1870s. Though little evidence remains of the careers of these early artists, the Queensland Art Gallery holds an 1874 Chauncy portrait of Richard Edwards, and the Ipswich Art Gallery holds Emery's grand *View of Ipswich from Limestone Hill* c.1862.

Upon his arrival in Brisbane, Backler established his studio upstairs in Costin's buildings, a trio of two-storey brick and timber residences on Queen Street, in the city's premier business precinct. His fellow tenants included a butcher, a paper hanger and a solicitor. His first advertisement proudly advertised:

he is prepared to paint life-like portraits in Oils, and guarantees correct and satisfactory Likenesses to all parties who may favor him with sittings.²

Shortly after his first advertisement, Backler acquainted himself with the local authorities. He was charged with the misdemeanour of public

drunkenness, and fined five shillings.³ He also managed to introduce himself to several Brisbane residents, and soon established his reputation as a portraitist in the city. The *Brisbane Courier* reported that Backler had produced 'several very correct likenesses of some of our local celebrities' including a portrait of a Municipal Councillor, and praised the public for continuing to patronise painting, despite the increasing popularity of the affordable, accessible and portable photographic *carte-de-visite*.⁴

In 1866, Backler exhibited a panorama of Brisbane at his studio, and later at the boutique of prominent jeweller Augustus Kosvitz. The view, which Backler advertised as 4x3 feet in size, depicted the city from the unusual vantage point of Blakeney's Hill at South Brisbane.⁵ The panorama he displayed at the 1866 Brisbane

1

Joseph Backler (1813?-1895), *View of Brisbane* 1866. Oil on canvas; 38.3 x 58.7 cm. Pictures collection, National Library of Australia. Nla.pic-an2256914

2

Joseph Backler (1813?-1895), *The Hon. Gilbert Elliott MLA*, 1866. Oil on canvas, 90 x 74 cm. Collection: Parliament House, Queensland





3
 Photograph by
 Agrippa Bevan of
 painting of Gympie
 January 1870 by
 Joseph Backler. The
 original photograph is
 in the Ailsa Dawson
 collection, Gympie
 Regional Libraries

Exhibition⁶ was probably the same painting, as the *Brisbane Courier* detailed an identical description.

A smaller, unsigned panorama of Brisbane in the National Library of Australia (**plate 1**) is highly likely to be from Backler's hand.⁷ This panorama depicts the city in the midst of dynamic development. Many of Brisbane's prominent buildings can be observed, including the first Bellevue Hotel, the Commissariat Stores and Immigration Depot, and the wharves of Messrs. Harris & Co. The artist depicted the Queensland Parliament building, lacking its distinctive zinc roof, and the temporary wooden bridge that spanned the Brisbane River while the first permanent bridge was under construction. These features accurately date the work to the early part of 1866, and several newspaper entries report identical features in Backler's painting, providing strong foundations for the attribution.

Later in 1866, members of the Queensland Parliament approached Backler about commissioning a portrait of the first Speaker of the House, the Hon. Gilbert Elliott MLA. Previously discussed in the November 2010 edition of *Australiana*, this portrait (**plate 2**) is perhaps Backler's most significant commission during his residencies in Queensland. Though initially conceived as a personal gesture of appreciation for the Speaker's long and distinguished service to establishing responsible government in Queensland, Backler ultimately composed the work in the manner of grand 18th-century portraiture, no doubt seeing an opportunity to establish himself as a leading portrait painter in the city. Elliott's likeness measured over 2.5 metres in height and depicted the Speaker in the archaic robes of his office.⁸

The portrait generated considerable interest after Elliott's death in 1871. After lengthy

discussions in Parliament, the work was expensively reframed and absorbed into the small collection of art in the Queensland Parliament's custody.⁹ Parliamentary debates about the portrait afford a rare opportunity to understand contemporary opinions of the painting.¹⁰ Later, the work was cropped to a modest half-length portrait measuring 90 x 74 cm. Today the portrait remains an integral part of the Queensland Parliament art collection, and evidences the youthful zeal and dynamism that was prevalent among Queensland's colonists.

On 8 October 1866, a fire swept through Queen Street destroying twelve buildings. Costin's buildings were claimed when the buildings' wooden eaves were lit, and suffered significant water damage from earlier attempts to curb the progress of the fire. Though tenants were able to save their stock, some incurred water damage.¹¹

Later that year auctioneer Gordon Lynch brought Backler before the court for dishonouring a promissory note.¹² At this time, Backler may have experienced some financial distress after the fire, causing the promissory note to be dishonoured. Though no reports of Backler's painting have been identified in Brisbane media after December 1866, Backler's name appears in the 1868 *Queensland Post Office Directory*, listed as an artist.¹³

In 1869 Backler established himself as an artist in Gympie, advertising in the *Gympie Times* that he

Guarantees life-like portraits and satisfactory likenesses of all persons who may favour him with sittings, combined with first style of Painting.¹⁴



4

Joseph Backler (1813?-1895), *Robert Arthur Pollock*, 1870. Oil on canvas, 91.4 x 71.1 cm. Collection: Royal Historical Society of Queensland

5

Joseph Backler (1813?-1895), *Alice Pollock*, 1870. Oil on canvas, 91.4 x 71.1 cm. Collection: Royal Historical Society of Queensland



6

Joseph Backler
(1813?-1895), *His
Excellency Colonel
Samuel Wensley
Blackall*, 1871.
Oil on canvas.
Collection: Museum
of Brisbane

His studio, which was located opposite the *Gympie Times* office on Mary Street, was furnished with examples of his portraiture. Backler advertised that he would be in Gympie for only a short time, and that 'an early visit is requested'.¹⁵

At the time of his first advertisement, Gympie was rapidly expanding in the fervour of the gold rush. In late 1867 James Nash, an experienced prospector, discovered gold while travelling and prospecting towards Maryborough. A thriving community was established, with talented professionals moving into the region to support the growing population of miners. By 1869 when Backler reached Gympie, the community boasted all the luxuries of any township – banks and hotels, a printing office, a post office and several churches.¹⁶ Surely, given the wealth that the prosperous community possessed, there would be room for a portraitist.

Backler again contributed to the landscape genre while in Gympie, producing a highly detailed panorama of the rapidly growing community. The grand picture measured 45 x 30 inches, and depicted the growing city from Calton Hill. Completed in January 1870, Backler initially displayed the work in his studio, and later raffled the painting at Cowell's Mining Exchange Hotel in Mary Street.¹⁷ The painting was well received by the local media, with one commentator writing:

The various buildings in Mary Street are minutely represented and are easily recognisable. But we must admire the faithfulness to nature in regard to the general aspect of the town and surrounding bush... No doubt many of our rich reefers, who owe so much to the discovery of Gympie, will desire to possess a memento so appropriate and valuable as this painting of the event which bettered their fortunes.¹⁸

Around the time of the painting's completion, photographer Thomas Mathewson advertised his intention to produce a portfolio of views around the Gympie region. Mathewson photographed Backler's landscape of the young community, and subsequently sold prints together with *A Historical Account of the Rise and Progress of Gympie* for 2s. 6d. Advertisements for Mathewson's photographic copies valued Backler's landscape at sixty guineas.¹⁹ Though the original painting has not been located, photographic copies made by Mathewson and Agrippa Bevan allow the work to 'survive' (plate 3).

It is likely that late in 1870, Backler completed two elegant portraits of prominent Gympie residents Robert Arthur Pollock and his wife Alice (plates 4 & 5). The unsigned portraits measure 36 x 28 inches (91 x 71 cm) each, and were donated to the Royal Historical Society of Queensland in 1969 by a descendant of the sitters. The local media substantiates the attribution to Backler's hand, with the *Gympie Times* reporting:

We had the pleasure lately of inspecting the studio of Mr. Backler, the artist, who has been engaged upon portraits of several well-known residents of Gympie. There

is a great deal that is commendable in all these paintings, but the most admired was a likeness of Mr. R.A. Pollock, which is very truthful in feature and expression.²⁰

Robert Pollock and his brother Alexander had come to the Gympie goldfields shortly after James Nash discovered gold in the region in 1867. The Pollock brothers and their associate Franklin Lawrence discovered one of the first reefs of gold on the Gympie goldfields, which they named the *Lady Mary*. The rich reef yielded thousands of ounces of gold over the years. In 1869 Robert married Alice Harte; their relationship produced eight children. Robert and Alice Pollock remained in Gympie together for their lifetime, and contributed to their community by lending their support to various agencies and charities in the region.

The portraits of Robert and Alice Pollock are fine examples of Backler's painting style. Both subjects are depicted in a standard pose that Backler frequently used, seated in front of an austere background highlighted with red drapery. The sitters are depicted honestly, bearing the harder expressions that signal the toil they undertook to achieve the success they then enjoyed. Though both of the Pollocks are smartly dressed, Alice Pollock looks particularly resplendent, adorned with lacework and gold jewellery, most notably an earring, brooch and locket, tenderly serving as a reminder of a loved one.

The Pollock portraits provide further evidence about Backler's clientele in Queensland, as these are the only portraits known at present and executed by Backler in Queensland that are not of senior municipal or colonial government figures. Like many of Backler's clients in NSW, the Pollocks were respectable members of the community whose continued labour and hard work secured their success. Commissioning the painted portraits gave the Pollocks tangible evidence of the success of their family. Other successful colonists in both Brisbane and Gympie would have utilised Backler's services during his residence in these communities, though so far no other private portraits have been identified.

1871 saw Backler complete his most ambitious work in Gympie, a posthumous portrait of former Governor of Queensland, Sir Samuel Wensley Blackall (**plate 6**). Blackall was

a popular subject for portraitists, with likenesses executed by painters Myra Felton and Auschar Chauncy, as well as several photographers.²¹ After Blackall's death in January 1871, a vigorous debate erupted in the *Brisbane Courier* concerning an appropriate memorial to the late Governor. The proposals included a portrait, and William Ewart and Auschar Chauncy were both identified as potential candidates.²² Though Backler received no mention, he may have composed the posthumous likeness in response to these public calls for a portrait memorial to the late Governor, though this is speculation.

Backler's portrait of Blackall was based on photographs which were held by the Gympie Dramatic Club, one which Blackall had himself presented to the club during a visit to Gympie in 1869. The *Gympie Times* glowingly critiqued Backler's work, praising his treatment of both the subject's likeness and his attire. The paper proposed the community of Gympie purchase the work for posterity, writing 'By all means, we say, let this fine portrait be secured for Gympie'.²³

Evidently the portrait failed to sell. Backler returned to Brisbane in October 1871 with the painting, hoping to find a buyer. He displayed the portrait in Brisbane's Town Hall on Queen Street, and the *Brisbane Courier* wrote reviews as encouraging as those written months earlier in the *Gympie Times*. Backler advertised that he would raffle the work for one guinea per ticket, should he not find a buyer.²⁴

At the same time Backler composed a letter addressing the municipal council in Brisbane, proposing that Council purchase the portrait.²⁵ The Council held a special meeting on Friday 13 October 1871 regarding the acquisition, and unanimously agreed that purchasing Backler's portrait would be a fine memorial to the late Governor. An excerpt from their discussion eloquently describes the opinion of the council:

... it is only the duty of the Council to procure some memorial of that gentleman to mark their esteem for him personally, and to show their appreciation of the courteous manner in which he invariably treated the Council and the citizens of Brisbane during his Governorship.²⁶

To this day, the portrait of Governor Blackall remains in the art collection of the City of Brisbane.

After selling his painting to the Brisbane Municipal Council, Backler once again retreated from Queensland's public eye. No later works from Queensland have been discovered at this time, and Backler's name is absent from the 1874 *Post Office Directory*, the Queensland electoral rolls, and the almanacs of the period. After leaving Queensland, Backler continued to travel as an artist through NSW, before establishing himself again in Sydney, where he remained until his death in 1895.²⁷

Understanding Backler's career in Queensland adds a significant dimension to the artist's business and painterly sensibility, as well as adding depth to the social fabric in Queensland at the time. Though this article has introduced Backler's career in the young Queensland, much more information about the artist's life and work awaits rediscovery. Further research will enrich the understanding of Backler's practice, and allow a more complete appreciation of this fascinating artist's contribution to art in colonial Queensland.

Acknowledgement

The author would like to thank the Royal Historical Society of Queensland for introducing the portraits of Robert and Alice Pollock to the Queensland community. Despite suffering some damage to their exhibition space at the Commissariat Store in the 2011 Brisbane floods, the society will exhibit the paintings as a part of an exhibition on Gympie Gold when the Commissariat Store reopens later in 2011. www.queenslandhistory.org

Timothy Roberts is a writer and researcher on Australian colonial heritage and decorative arts. He is currently interested in researching subjects with specific relevance to Queensland. He can be contacted at timothyjroberts@hotmail.com.

Notes

- 1 Richard Neville, *Backler and Friends in The Picture Gallery: guide*, State Library of NSW, Sydney, 1999, 3-6; Timothy Roberts, 'Picturing Progress: Rediscovering Joseph Backler's View of Brisbane', *National Library Magazine*, vol 2 no 2, June 2010, 8-11; Timothy Roberts, 'A "national portrait" for Queensland', *Australiana*, vol 32 no 4, Nov 2010, 5-8.
- 2 *Brisbane Courier*, Mon 3 April 1865, 1.
- 3 *Brisbane Courier*, Wed 10 May 1865, 2.
- 4 *Brisbane Courier*, Fri 10 Oct 1865, 2. None of these early Brisbane works has yet been located.
- 5 *Brisbane Courier*, Mon 12 March 1866, 1; *Brisbane Courier*, Thurs 29 March 1866, 2.
- 6 *Brisbane Courier*, Wed 20 June 1866, 2.
- 7 Timothy Roberts, 'Picturing Progress: Rediscovering Joseph Backler's View of Brisbane', *National Library Magazine*, vol 2 no 2, June 2010, 8-11.
- 8 *Brisbane Courier*, Thurs 20 Sep 1866, 5; Timothy Roberts, 'A "national portrait" for Queensland', *Australiana*, vol 32 no 4, Nov 2010, 5-8.
- 9 Roberts, *op cit*; *Queensland Parliamentary Debates: Fifth Series. Session of 1872*, Government Printer, Brisbane, 1872, 592; *Brisbane Courier*, Fri 12 July 1872, 3.
- 10 *Queensland Parliamentary Debates: Fifth Series. Session of 1872*, Government Printer, Brisbane, 1872, 592.
- 11 *Brisbane Courier*, Tues 9 Oct 1866, 2.
- 12 *Brisbane Courier*, Tue 4 Dec 1866, 2; Queensland State Archives Series ID 6224, Minute Books – Item 949838. Backler was ordered to pay Lynch £9 plus costs.
- 13 *The Official Post Office Directory of Queensland*, W.J. Meyer, Brisbane, 1868, 108.
- 14 *Gympie Times*, Wed 10 Nov 1869, 2.
- 15 *Ibid*.
- 16 For further information about the early days on the Gympie goldfields, see John Ferguson & Elaine Brown, *The Gympie goldfield 1867-2008*, Gympie Regional Council, Gympie, 2009.
- 17 *Gympie Times*, Sat 29 Jan 1870, 4.
- 18 *Gympie Times*, Wed 12 Jan 1870, 2.
- 19 *Gympie Times*, Wed 16 Feb 1870, 2.
- 20 *Gympie Times*, Wed 21 Dec 1870, 3.
- 21 *Brisbane Courier*, Mon 4 Jan 1869, 2; *Brisbane Courier*, Thurs 9 Mar 1871, 2. Felton's posthumous portrait of Blackall is now in the art collection of the Parliament of Queensland. Chauncy's portrait has not been located. The John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland holds a number of photographs of Governor Blackall by various photographers.
- 22 The discussions that raged in the correspondence columns of the *Brisbane Courier* include those published on Fri 13 Jan 1871, 3; Mon 16 Jan 1871, 2; Tues 17 Jan 1871, 3; Wed 25 Jan 1871, 3. Other public meetings were held by the municipal council. *Brisbane Courier*, Wed 1 Feb 1871, 2.
- 23 *Gympie Times*, Sat 8 Apr 1871, 2.
- 24 *Brisbane Courier*, Tues 3 Oct 1871, 1.
- 25 *Brisbane Courier*, Tues 10 Oct 1871, 3.
- 26 *Brisbane Courier*, Sat 14 Oct 1871, 4.
- 27 Joseph Backler, NSW Death Certificate, 10953/1895.

Who is this man?

It is almost impossible to identify an unnamed rose and equally difficult to name an unknown sitter in a picture. Even multiple portraits of a known sitter when grouped together can look like a collection of unrelated strangers. Conclusions reached will often be labelled hypothetical and the identity challenged, but this does not mean that it should not be attempted, as research can add to the pool of knowledge and provoke discussion. Identity is an intriguing riddle to solve, and as we will, at one time or another, come across a portrait of an unknown sitter, it is useful to have some lines of enquiry to follow. Such a search is often triggered when the gaze of a viewer and an unknown sitter meet, as successfully trapping the viewer's curiosity as a Venus Fly Trap catches its fly.

LESLEY GARRETT

This article is the result of finding just such an anonymous *'Man with Crav at'* hanging in the upstairs bedroom of one of Sydney's historic houses. Placed there with another *Unknown*, he definitely struck a chord in my memory. Even now I do not know which part of that face snagged my attention, as it was some days later that a name came to mind and became the starting point for subsequent enquiry. Be warned though: it is easier to disprove an identity than prove one, as there is unlikely to be a 100% match between a known and supposed identity and many attempts are destined to fall by the wayside.

As it is not yet possible to extract an artist's or sitter's DNA from a picture, the only options to fall back on while time-honoured are also time-consuming. Some of them are listed here and can be followed once an identity has come to mind.

- First establish a working date for the picture by examining the sitter's clothing and hairstyle and then search out the surrounding props in the painting such as furniture and room decoration. Even the view through an open window can reveal a known street, building or landscape.
- Examine the painting carefully with a magnifying glass, or once a photograph has been taken in daylight and without a flash, by downloading the image to a computer. Then

use the computer's zoom function to look at finer details.

- Try and fix the sitter's likely age by examining the face, hands, body and clothing and then correlate that age with the known or provisional date the painting could have been carried out and see if they tally.
- Scrutinise body shape, hair, eyes and skin colour and check them against any known family members. Note whether the hair is full or not and on which side it is parted. Check the hairline: is it consistent with other known portraits?
- Imagine how ageing could change appearance.
- The sitter might be linked to a particular era by any jewellery worn. Similarly, connection to a particular family could be established when the same jewel is found in other family pictures. Jewellery included in a work can herald the sitters' cultural background, wealth or standing in society. Its exclusion can rule out an interest in worldly matters or suggest modest means. Definitive pieces of jewellery such as a crucifix or nun's plain wedding band could signal a religious calling. Mourning jewellery is helpful as it indicates a past death which may connect the sitter to a known event.
- Symbolism, emblems and allegory are often embedded in a painting with the intention of giving clues to the sitter's moral, professional, or even marital status, e.g. ripe fruit (fertility); compass and dividers (Masonic

connections), *memento mori* (mortality).

- Floral emblems, whether painted or represented in jewellery may suggest an origin, e.g. flannel flowers could only hail from Australia. The language of flowers has been expressed in artworks and jewellery as a coded message for centuries.
- Examination of the frame can determine whether it is original or has been acquired at a later date. Removing it from its frame to examine the reverse side (a bold step not to be taken lightly or without the permission of the owner) can with luck identify not only the sitter and the artist, but its date and the location where the painting was completed.
- Where a picture has been signed by the artist and the signature verified, a search through the artist's known work, order books and movements can sometimes pin down a likely sitter. Specialist books in research libraries which document artists' signatures are available. Without an artist's signature, chances of identifying the sitter are greatly reduced.
- Imaging and paint analysis can reveal an earlier work beneath the surface with the year the painting was completed, possibly a sitter's age, the artist, and even a location for the studio.
- Where other paintings of a known sitter exhibit a strong similarity in appearance or a written description of the subject exists, comparison of the two could lead to identification.
- Forensic applications such as biometrics, so beloved by the creators of crime fiction, can provide accurate measurements of facial features such as eyebrow ridges or the presence of a chin cleft which can then be superimposed over a sitter's face. This technique is not generally available to the man in the street.
- A painting is not a photograph and artists will always take the liberty of depicting a face in their own individual way, even under duress bending the truth where requested.
- By tracking a work's provenance backwards from the present day to its creation, an identity may be found which will hopefully meet with any living descendants' approval.
- Where the work is signed by the artist, it may be possible to place the sitter and the artist at the same location at the same time.

Very occasionally there will be an obvious physical marker which stands out like a pikestaff and dramatically narrows the search

Just such a struck a chord in my memory a few days after seeing the portrait cited. In trying to identify the unknown sitter, some of the above methods were employed by placing a photograph of that portrait side by side with one of the person whose name had come to mind and seeing if there was a match between the two.

Here is the portrait of the unknown sitter (**plate 1**). And here is the marker, medically known as a *strabismus*, or more exactly in this case, a *right exotropia*, commonly known as an outward-looking cast or squint of the right eye (**plate 2**). A secondary marker may present in the left hand, which seems to show some inflammatory changes in the small joints of the fingers.

The added lines are the sight lines of left and right eyes. In the case of a *strabismus*, one eye will dominate in the act of focusing. In this painting, the sitter's left eye is the dominant focusing eye as the right eye has the *strabismus* and deviates outwards. The eye lines marked by Sydney optometrist Valerie Norman clearly demonstrate the habitual working of this pair of eyes. Ms Norman had no hesitation in saying that they were the same in the above image (**plates 1–2**) as well as that below (**plates 5–6**).

On looking into the face of a person with a cast in one or both eyes it can be confusing deciding which eye is actually looking at you. Doubtless an artist also finds it difficult. It is therefore helpful if the sitter is caught in the act of performing a task, as the eyes are then seen working rather than resting. This is well demonstrated in the comparison portrait below, where the sitter's identity is known.

Looking at the first picture, it can be seen that it is well painted, in oils, and certainly not the work of an amateur. It shows a dignified gentleman in middle age of wealth and confidence with an expression which seems to say 'Don't mess with me' and bears the artist's signature A. Cornet.

The sitter has auburn hair which shows no sign of thinning and is parted on the left side of his head. Given the age of the face and that his eyebrows already show signs of greying, his hair could be hennaed. Prior to having his portrait painted his eyebrows may have been trimmed so that he would appear at his best. Apart from being auburn in tint, the hair is also wavy. The eyes are grey/blue and show signs of bagging

below the bottom eyelid. The eyebrow ridges are horizontal and then angle downwards at the outer third of their length. An obvious strabismus affects his right eye (see above). The complexion is fair, with ruddiness in the cheeks which could suggest that the sitter enjoyed his wine. The visible ear is small with a neat earlobe. His mouth has a full lower lip and the nose is beginning to lengthen with age and overhangs the upper lip.

While the shoulders are broad and sloping, stature is difficult to gauge as the subject is seated, leaning on the arm of a chair with his lower body out of view. His clothing is sombre: a black coat worn over a buttoned waistcoat and long-sleeved white shirt, secured at the front with a crescent pin, the collar turned up to allow the cravat to be knotted beneath. Interestingly, the cravat while simply knotted is askew and turned to the left. At the start of the 19th century cravats were white, giving way to colour as the century progressed while points of the collar were high on the cheeks, beginning to descend as the century wore on.

Gold jewellery worn by the sitter is modest, comprising a crescent-shaped diamond or pearl shirt pin; a long gold rope watch chain, and two rings on the ring finger of the left hand – one with pearls and the other almost certainly a wedding ring of plain gold (**plates 3 & 4**). Closer examination reveals that one stone or pearl is missing from the shirt pin. Such crescent-shaped jewellery was fashionable towards the end of the 18th century, then fell from favour and did not reappear till the end of the 19th/early 20th centuries, so it can be assumed that it originates from the generation before the sitter's. The watch chain is fitted with a slider which allows it to be shortened or lengthened; the terminals of the chain are out of sight. Such chains were common through the whole of the 19th century and well into the 20th.

The subject is seated indoors on a chair which allows the viewer to just glimpse a fragment of the back and armrest. They suggest an English Regency/French Empire/Continental Biedermeier era.

A possible date for the painting therefore ranges from 1830 to 1860 and the age of the sitter between 40 and 60 years. Three people looking at the portrait guessed his age as 45, 50 and 55.

The frame is not contemporary with the painting. An expert frame maker's studio in Sydney suggested that it was of the style of the 1950s.



The artist's signature A. Cornet most likely refers to Alphonse Cornet (1814–74), who was born and died in Antwerp and was active in Brussels as well as Paris. He was known both as a genre and portrait artist, his portraits showing a fine degree of expertise. As some of his works

1
A. Cornet, *Portrait of an unidentified man*, c. 1840, oil on canvas on board.
Collection National Trust of Australia (NSW), purchased from G.D. Doling Antiques, 1966

2
A. Cornet, *Portrait of an unidentified man*, c. 1840, oil on canvas on board, with sight lines marked.
Collection National Trust of Australia (NSW), purchased from G.D. Doling Antiques, 1966



3

A. Cornet, *Portrait of an unidentified man*, c. 1840, oil on canvas on board, detail. Collection National Trust of Australia (NSW), purchased from G.D. Doling Antiques, 1966

4

A. Cornet, *Portrait of an unidentified man*, c. 1840, oil on canvas on board, detail. Collection National Trust of Australia (NSW), purchased from G.D. Doling Antiques, 1966

have a given date of 1874–85, it is likely that there were at least two A. Cornets whose dates overlap. The Musée d'Orsay in Paris lists works by not only Alphonse Cornet but also Charles, Emile, Emile-Léopold, Joseph, Jacobus Ludovicus and Paul Cornet.

The signature on the painting is similar to the most likely Cornet signature in an encyclopaedia of artists' signatures. While there is a similarity between the two, there are also discrepancies: the 'C' is different and the 'Alphonse' not abbreviated. A search of newspaper archives failed to establish that *any* Cornet ever visited Australia.

The National Trust (NSW) bought the painting in 1966 from Sydney antique dealer George Doling. He and his brother Harry worked together at a time when only a handful of dealers operated in the city. The colourful Doling brothers stocked good material and had a special interest in ceramics. In 1966, George had yet to travel overseas, so it was probably bought locally. I have not been able to find any sources which document his purchases and sales during this period and he died a bachelor about 1980.

A search of the 1966 auction catalogues held by the Research Library of the Art Gallery of New South Wales has so far failed to unearth any mention of an A. Cornet painting passing through the sale rooms.

From the day a painting loses the name of its sitter, it embarks on a career as a 'sleeper', progressively becoming shrouded in mystery as time passes.

It is quite possible that working drawings of a subject done by another hand could have been sent to Cornet to be worked up into an oil portrait overseas. This method was practised by miniaturists, and I have one such miniature dating from the same period which on its reverse side shows a different view of the subject's nose. This practice provided a choice in the positioning of the subject's head in the event that the sitter could not be present in the studio when the final painting was completed.

Following the advent of photography in 1850, some artists made a living preparing portraits in oil, working from a photograph of the subject. This method was certainly practised in Australia, but too late to be relevant here.

As a last point, it is also possible that the finished 'Man with Cravat', once delivered never found lasting favour with the sitter and as a consequence was abandoned.

There the provenance trail goes cold, as no one knows whether Mr Doling acquired it from

a job lot of antiques – at a time when antiques by the container load were being imported into this country – or whether it was sourced from within Australia.

I am unable to explain how two paintings, one by a Belgian/French/Dutch artist of an unknown sitter and the other of a known sitter by an unknown artist, depicting two gentlemen with the same eye anomaly *both* came to be domiciled in Sydney 160 years after their creation.

What can be certain though, is that shortly after its acquisition the painting of the 'Man with Cravat' came to be hung at *Experiment Farm*, and later at *Old Government House* Parramatta (it is currently in storage due to building works). And that the gaze in that sitter's eyes had caught George Doling's attention just as surely as it had mine.

The Cornet portrait can be compared with an image of a younger man whose identity is known. William Charles Wentworth (1790–1872) is seen in the act of reading a letter addressed to him in Sydney (plate 5).

And here is the same image with the sightlines of both eyes marked in as his eyes focus in the act of reading. The strabismus in his right eye is clearly demonstrated (plate 6).

In the sketch, Wentworth is posed leaning on his right arm on a Regency sofa, most likely in the drawing room of *Vaucluse House*. As the date of the sketch is unknown, there is no way of knowing his age at the time. Opinions vary: Andrew Tink in his 2009 biography of Wentworth cites him as being 'young' at the time, while K.R. Cramp referring to the same work in his 1923 treatise describes him as being 50 years of age.

The sketch is in fact a lithograph. Lithographs eventually evolved in such a way as to allow the original work to be drawn the right way round, becoming reversed when transferred from the original and then reversed back on printing. Otherwise, printed words – and no doubt a left-side as opposed to a right-side strabismus – would have ended up being seen with left and right reversed. The printer 'J. Allen' whose name appears in tiny lettering under the sofa arm would have been conversant with these methods and is unlikely to have gone to print with the image reversed.

Wentworth has a tall, somewhat burly stature in all his portraits – he was known to top out at 5' 8" (173 cm) even in his early teens – and kept a full head of hair until his death. Here, his hair shows no sign of thinning. It was known to be auburn and wavy, full and parted on the left side. The eyebrow ridges here follow a similar line to those

in the Cornet portrait, as do the mouth, nose, eye pouches, forehead, hairline and shoulders. The eyebrows are certainly bushy, not flat.

I cannot tell you that the crescent-shaped shirt pin in the Cornet portrait miraculously appears in a later Wentworth painting or that it previously belonged to his father D'Arcy, but there is a small watercolour of his daughter Thomasine (Timmie) painted in about 1852 and attributed to William Nicholas in which the outline of a very similar long gold chain, opened out around her neck and hanging low to her waist can be seen. It is possible that the sketch shown above was done as early as William and Sarah's marriage in 1827 or around the time of their purchase of *Vaughan House*. Married or not, he is not shown wearing a wedding ring, nor indeed any jewellery at all, though in later portraits, both painted and photographic, he is wearing a linked watch chain over a waistcoat.

Written accounts do not refer to his eye colour. His full-length portrait hanging in the NSW Parliament painted by Richard Buckner in 1855 is hung high up on the wall, making it impossible to verify his eye colour. In addition, Buckner shows the strabismus reversed and I can only wonder why it differs here from the lithograph. If the two images compared above are of the same person, it naturally follows that the cast needs to be on the same side as well.

The Anderson portrait of Wentworth hanging in the dining room of *Vaughan House* is much yellowed, leaving him with eyes of an indeterminate colour. I was able however to hold a torch up to the face and could see that they were a palish grey/blue under the superficial browning of the whole portrait. Later, I experimented with watercolours by applying a thin yellow/ brown wash over blue/grey and arrived at the same swampy colour.

His father Dr D'Arcy Wentworth (1762–1827) is known to have had intense blue eyes and those of his mother Catherine Crowley go unrecorded in the description of convicts transported to Australia in the Second Fleet of which she was a part. Catherine died in 1800.

Wentworth was known to be careless of his appearance, a prolific drinker and unafraid of public opinion. The possessor of a formidable intelligence, he was destined to play a large role in Australia's formative years and leave a lasting impression. At the age of 59, the *People's Advocate* of 28 August 1849 describes him thus: 'a heavy, loose drabcoat and a mass of grizzled hair'. His strength of character was legendary and is caught well by all the

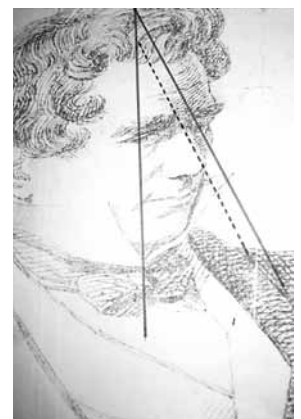


artists who painted him. Even though he is usually seen posed in three-quarter face – probably to minimise the cast in his eye – the unknown artist who sketched him at an unspecified age quietly reading a letter clearly depicts the confidence and wealth which were to become his hallmark and accompany him for life. Just as clearly, the artist depicts him with a right-sided strabismus.

In a letter to his father Dr D'Arcy Wentworth in 1805, when William was 15 years old, Mrs Charles Cookney, the wife of Dr Wentworth's agent in London, wrote that

William would be unsuited to follow his father's calling as a Surgeon is a very improper profession for Him as from the Cast in the Eye it leads Him differently to the object he intends.

Strabismus at birth occurs in modern times across all births at a rate of 1 in 36, twice as common in boys as girls and among the types of strabismus there are upward, downward, outward and inward deviations included in this statistic. It is not necessarily static as sometimes the sufferer will favour one eye for focusing and



5

William Charles Wentworth, lithograph by J. Allen. Collection Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW

6

William Charles Wentworth, lithograph by J. Allen, with sight lines marked. Collection Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW

the other for long distance. This could explain why Wentworth in subsequent portraits is seen with the strabismus differently displayed.

If the above ratio is re-calculated to include only (i) wealthy (ii) males with (iii) blue eyes which show a (iv) right-sided (v) exotropia, the number of possible candidates falls markedly. Sometimes the cast spontaneously resolves as the child matures. Treatment in the form of exercises and reading glasses was known to exist in the early 19th century and doubtless Dr D'Arcy would have attempted to improve his son's eyesight, but any efforts he may have made did not result in a cure as the condition persisted throughout his life, and he needed glasses.

In Paris at the age of 28, he suffered badly enough from rheumatic gout during the European winter 1817–18 to require staying indoors. This painful inflammatory condition tends to involve the small joints of the hands.

If there is no evidence of Alphonse Cornet ever being in Australia, is there any evidence to show that his and Wentworth's paths may have crossed in Europe when a portrait done from life could have been completed? Or that Cornet visited England or Ireland?

The Wentworth family travelled extensively on the Continent, including Brussels, Rome and Paris. Cornet's movements are not well documented. The *Australian Dictionary of Biography* places Wentworth as an adult in England in 1816, followed by Paris in 1818, and after being called to the Bar in 1822 in Cambridge, before returning to Sydney in 1824. All of these dates are too early for a middle-aged Wentworth to cross paths with a Brussels- or Paris-bound Cornet. In 1854 aged 64, he left Australia once more, bound for Europe where he remained, barring a brief return to Sydney in 1861–62, until his death in 1872.

This period followed on the heels of the Great Exhibition of Art and Industry of 1851 in London, which was to usher in a new age of conspicuous consumption, as luxury goods from around the world were showcased to an awe-struck public. The Wentworths, doubtless weary after their arduous life in Australia where they had achieved so much, travelled extensively, visiting spas and capital cities across the Continent, spending copiously on art and fine arts and living luxuriously.

Andrew Tink in his excellent biography mentions that the Wentworths were fond of having their likenesses taken. As well as portraits, many photographs of Wentworth exist and a marble sculpture of him made in Rome by Pietro Tenerani can be seen in the Great Hall of Sydney University.

His portrait likewise could have been painted overseas then brought to Australia at a later date, or he

and his family could have chanced upon the Alphonse Cornet portrait whose subject looked so much like Wentworth that they, on a whim, bought it.

It would be interesting to calculate the chances of finding two portraits depicting *different* people both showing identical signs of sex, age, wealth, body type, face shape, eye and hair colour of similar appearance. Then stipulate that they must both be located in the same city in the same country at the same time even after the passage of 150 years, in addition demanding that they both have an exotropia of 20 degrees deviation. Oh, and last but not least, in the right eye!

The above, while not conclusive, is worth further consideration as there are arguments for and against a match. It does not necessarily have an unknown man leaping off the wall into the limelight as a reanimated Wentworth, and yet ...

As for me, (and possibly a heavenly Mr Doling), I remain snared in the fly trap.

If any reader would like to add to this discussion, please contact the Editor.

Notes

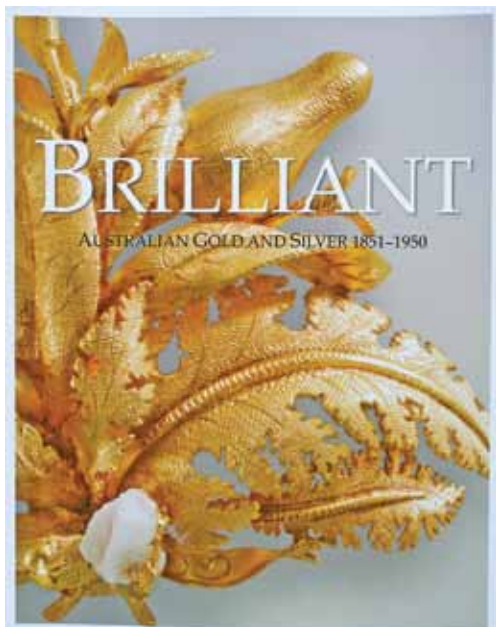
- 1 John Ritchie, *The Wentworths, Father and Son*, 1997.
- 2 K.R. Cramp, *William Charles Wentworth of Vacluse House*, 1923
- 3 Andrew Tink, *William Charles Wentworth Australia's greatest native son*, 2009
- 4 *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol 2, 582-9
- 5 H.H. Caplan, *Encyclopedia of Artists' Signatures, Symbols and Monograms*.
- 6 K.G. Saur, *The Artists of the World A-Z*
- 7 *Allgemeines Kuenstlerlexicon*, Muenchen Leipzig 2007
- 8 Bamber Gascoigne, *How to Identify Prints*, Thames and Hudson, 1986.

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank the following people who have helped my research: Dr James Bertouch, rheumatologist, President of The Australiana Society; Bill Blinco, antiques dealer, for notes on George Doling; Scott Carlin, Curator, *Vacluse House*, Historic Houses Trust of NSW; David Cloonan, antiques dealer, for notes on George Doling; Charles Hewitt, framemaker; David Hoffman, Old Government House, Parramatta, National Trust (NSW); Vivian Huang, Librarian, AGNSW Reference Library; Robyn Louey, Librarian, AGNSW Reference Library; Richard Neville, Mitchell Librarian, Mitchell Library; Valerie Norman, optometrist; Jennifer Palmer, Collections Manager, National Trust (NSW); John Wade, Editor, *Australiana*.

... **Lesley Garrett** is a committee member of the
... Australiana Society.

Book reviews



Eva Czernis-Ryl (ed.)

Brilliant. Australian Gold and Silver 1851-1950

Powerhouse Publishing, Sydney 2011
Soft cover, 280 x 220 mm, 136 pp, 222 plates
ISBN 978 1 86317 133 5, \$65.95

REVIEWED BY JOHN WADE

Recent price hikes have made gold and silver more valuable and topical. Both metals certainly were important in the 19th century, when coins really were made of silver or gold, instead of just being coloured to resemble those treasured metals. This book is timely, as it may help counter the ignorant, greedy people who melt down precious metals because the metal has risen in value, unaware that the intact artefact is almost certainly worth far more as a work of art.

Brilliant joins the list of seminal publications on historic Australian silver and gold, headed by John Hawkins' *Nineteenth-century Australian Silver* (1990), Kevin Fahy and Anne Schofield's *Australian Jewellery 19th and early 20th century* (1990), Ken Cavill, Graham Cocks and Jack Grace's *Australian Jewellers, Gold and silver*

smiths, makers and marks (1992), the Powerhouse's *Australian Gold & Silver 1851-1900* (1995) and Dorothy Erickson's *Gold and Silversmithing in Western Australia: a history* (2010).

Eva Czernis-Ryl, an experienced curator at the Powerhouse and a major force in building up its Australian silver and gold collection, provides the first essay, expanding on what she offered in the 1995 publication. She begins with a few early 19th-century pieces in the Powerhouse collection, moving rapidly to the transforming impact of the first gold rush in 1851. When the world looked seriously at Australia for the first time, and simultaneously fell passionately in love with international exhibitions, innovative local craftworkers in metal began to exploit Australian gold, and to explore the use of Australian motifs in jewellery and metalwork. Depictions of native flora, native animals, Aborigines and mounted emu eggs persist for the rest of the century. You won't find a better summary of this outpouring of Australian creativity.

Czernis-Ryl and Ken Cavill, an emeritus professor of chemistry who spent 30 years, much of it in his retirement, diligently researching Australian silver and gold, combine to write of the period from Federation – with its renewed interest in Australian motifs – to the mid last century. This is a wholly new contribution. While major works for sport and religion were still being created, small-scale workers in precious metals influenced by the Arts & Crafts Movement were joined by large and well-staffed workshops, mass-producing electroplated silver for general consumption, before the fashion for stainless steel overtook it.

The concise text is packed with facts, presents much new research and new insights, and races along as if vying to win one of the many sporting trophies illustrated. The 343 footnotes mostly refer to original sources, but among them are a number of articles which demonstrate how *Australiana* magazine (and Australiana Society members) have made major contributions to research into Australian decorative arts.

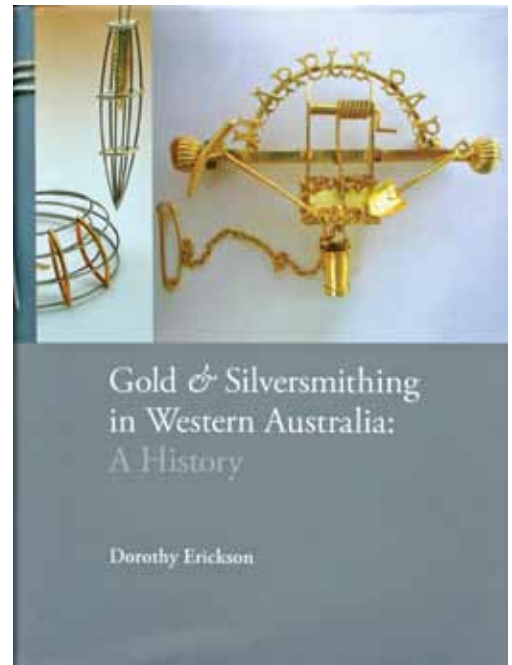
The 222 illustrations balance objects from the Powerhouse collection with those from other institutional and private owners to present an amazingly comprehensive view of Australian silver and gold, through jewellery and sporting trophies, agricultural prizes, formal presentation pieces, practical wares, cutlery, religious artefacts, design drawings, advertisements and workshop photographs. An index lists over 200 makers, while the absence of illustrations of marks (available elsewhere) and an up-to-date bibliography are casualties of space constraints.

If you compare the striking cover photograph of the gold specimen brooch with its exuberant spray of native flora with the actual size illustration (p 15), you will see how much remains to be explored by further study; such intricate works will repay careful examination, analysis and reflection. The difficulty for museums is how to display such tiny treasures to maximum effect. The Powerhouse has temporarily sidestepped the problem by once again ripping out its decorative arts displays for relocation and refurbishment.

While the decorative arts collection is in storage for a year or two, fortunately we have this excellent book to console those who are not interested in an endless succession of exhibitions about ageing pop groups. Does it mean the Powerhouse is returning to less ephemeral subjects, and expanding access to its expertise through publications like this? Let's hope so.

Brilliant is an excellent overview that brings together a wonderful array of photographs that demonstrate the brilliance of works in metal and the artistic flowering of gold and silver in Australia from the mid-19th century. This book is not, and was not intended to be, the final word on the subject, but it certainly brings us up to date. The authors leave the rest of the story, pre-1850 and post-1950, open for others to update. I cannot recommend it highly enough, and if you want a copy, you will have to move fast, as the print run was only 200.

John Wade is editor of *Australiana* magazine and is a former curator at what is now the Powerhouse Museum. In 1976, he acquired the documented Hogarth & Erichsen brooch illustrated on the cover of the book.



Dorothy Erickson,

Gold & Silversmithing in Western Australia: A History,

UWA Publishing, 2010. Hardcover, 479 pages, 550 colour and b/w illustrations, includes tables of makers and maker's marks, 290 x 215 mm ISBN: 978 1 921401 43 5 \$89.95

**REVIEWED BY
EVA CZERNIS-RYL**

This ambitious volume is essentially a restructured distillation of Erickson's doctoral thesis *Aspects of stylistic and social influence on the practice of gold and silversmithing in Western Australia 1829–1965* (University of Western Australia, 1991). It is enriched however with two new sections discussing developments of the second half of the 20th century predominantly in studio gold and silversmithing (1950s–70s) and jewellery (1960s–2000).

The book consists of 12 chapters preceded by an introduction and a prologue entitled 'The romantic dream' which delves into the nature of the Swan River settlement between the 1820s and 1840s. The first five chapters cover the entire colonial period and the early 1900s and comprise essays and shorter texts discussing the lives and work of immigrant jewellers and silversmiths – from the first arrivals from Britain who were more interested in settling

on the land than practising their trades, to the working silversmiths of the convict period (1850–68) and later retailers and their suppliers, to the makers of goldfields jewellery during the gold rushes of the 1890–1910. These discussions are interspersed with short summaries on topics such as presentation pieces, currents fashions or just hallmarking.

By focusing exclusively on Western Australia, Dr Erickson provides not only extensive new material but also new perspectives on the colony's distinctive developments. We learn for example of the importance of pearls and the pearling industry for jewellers, 'a chief enterprise of the colony' that commenced in the late 1860s, and of the negative impact on the state's first creative industries of the phasing out of colonial import duties in 1906.

Australiana readers may recall Erickson's series of articles beginning in 1989 which gave tantalising glimpses into the content of this book. This part of the book is a significant addition to the existing literature on the subject of 19th century Australian jewellery and gold and silversmithing, and complements the other key publications in this area.

There are numerous fascinating accounts about Western Australian artists, makers and entrepreneurs. Among the most exquisite are the three chapters looking at the life and work of Western Australia's legendary 20th century artist-silversmiths and jewellers James Walter Robert Linton, his son Jamie and their friend Gordon Holdsworth. These excellent studies are preceded by two substantial chapters, one examining what Erickson calls the Domestic Art Movement of the first Federation decade and another introducing the teachers, students and the artistic milieu of the Perth Technical Art School (1900–31). In the doctoral thesis, these two chapters appeared under the umbrella title of 'Aestheticism and Art Nouveau in Western Australia'.

The last two chapters are 'Postwar Craft Revival' covering the 1950s–1970s, and 'Graduates: 1970s–2000'. The former explores the Jamie Linton circle – his talented assistants and apprentices who established their own practices, then she looks at the postwar crafts movement supported by the Crafts Council of Australia and the Crafts Board of the Australia Council from the early 1970s. Particular attention is given to the marvellous sculptural work of Eric Car.

The book concludes with a focus on graduates of tertiary jewellery courses offered at

the Western Australian Institute of Technology from the early 1970s. Erickson herself was a graduate of, and lecturer at, WAIT (now Curtin University) later becoming a successful jewellery artist. As a result, her account of her own as well as her peers' career trajectories offers personal insights, critique and perspectives. Here we are presented with a rich tapestry of the lives and art of such noted jewellers as Katherine Kalaf, David Walker, Gillian Rainer, Carlier Makigawa, Bronwyn Goss and Felicity Peters among others.

The book is illustrated with an exciting range of images – from contemporary portraits and views to Erickson's own photographs of objects, to studio photographs, design sketches, press advertisements and even cartoons. While not integrated into the text through numeration, these are mostly well aligned with it – a comforting feature in view of the considerable size of the publication.

As an historical account, this book is somewhat unusual in that it is written from the dual perspective of a social and art historian and a contemporary jeweller. The book benefits from this and its multiple angles underscore its great value for a serious student. Erickson is an excellent and determined researcher as well as a natural storyteller and offers many rewards for those who share her passions. Some readers however may find the narrative at times slow-paced or too conversational and the richness of detail and argument – both in the main text and in picture captions – a little excessive. Fascinating as this topic is, an editorial decision to exclude the 30-page 'contextual' Domestic Art chapter from the book, which is concerned mostly with woodwork and works in brass and copper, may have strengthened its focus.

But these reservations, alongside a few dating errors, are minor and detract little from Dr Erickson's outstanding achievement. This impressive work offers a wealth of information while charting developments in gold and silversmithing in Western Australia over the course of two remarkable centuries. It is an invaluable new resource and a must-have book for historians, researchers, collectors and anyone with an interest in Australia's cultural heritage.

... **Eva Czernis-Ryl MA** is Curator of Decorative
... Arts and Design at the Powerhouse Museum,
... Sydney. Her most recent book is *Brilliant.*
... *Australian Gold and Silver 1851-1950*,
... Powerhouse Publishing, Sydney 2011.

Annual General Meeting,

13 April 2011

President's Report

JIM BERTOUC

Thank you for the opportunity to present the President's report for the last 12 months. I must admit to feeling a little bit underdone in presenting this report as I chaired my first meeting only in December. So I am really only about one-third of a president!

Having said that, I would like to start by thanking Megan Martin, my predecessor. She sent her apologies for tonight as she has another meeting to attend, and because of her many other commitments she was happy to hand over the presidency. There was no palace revolution. Megan has described herself as a 'caretaker' President, but the minutes of last year's meetings would suggest otherwise, as under her leadership a number of initiatives were commenced.

Firstly, with the help of Dave Barsby and Andy Simpson, the initiative to change from snailmail to email for communication with members was started. This is slowly proceeding but it is our intention to eventually have all members' details stored electronically on a database so that we can communicate information about meetings and events as quickly as possible.

An extension of this process is the introduction of payment online using a credit card because it is clear that banks are gradually phasing out cheques, and electronic funds transfer will be much more efficient and less time consuming.

The second initiative started under Megan's watch was the upgrading of our website to make it more attractive and interactive. Tim Cha is looking after this and is intending to introduce several new headings/topics so that we can incorporate the latest news about Australiana.

So thanks are due to Megan and her committee for getting these initiatives underway.

The Society always starts the year with a celebration of Australia Day but in 2011 the committee decided to change to another night so that people might enjoy the various public events staged on that day. At Paul Donnelly's suggestion we invited Dr Robert Bell, Senior Curator, Decorative Arts & Design at the National Gallery of Australia to give the presentation. He provided a fascinating insight into the collecting policy of the National Gallery. Almost all of the recently acquired objects shown by Robert were made in the last decade, helping to remind us that term Australiana is timeless.

Traditionally this Society has held several major events each year but unfortunately only one was held in 2010. All of that is going to change this year! The event I am referring to was the very successful visit to *Denham Court* at Ingleburn in May, where 50 members of our society joined members of the Furniture History Society. Dr Keith Okey conducted a guided tour of the house and contents prior to the auction of his collection of Australiana and furniture. Perhaps the most significant item was a casuarina and cedar six-legged sideboard which was attributed to the convict craftsman Laurence Butler, but Keith had many wonderful pieces and it was a treat to see such a collection.

This visit started me pondering on the current status of Australian decorative arts generally.

In recent times there have been several highlights. We have seen huge interest and a record price paid at auction for the Junius silver cup by Alexander Dick, which now resides in the National Museum in Canberra. This is one of the earliest known Australian-made racing trophies, being made in 1827 and, incidentally, the winner of the race was a horse called *Creeper*, something of a misnomer!

The exhibition at the State Library put together to celebrate the bicentenary of Governor Lachlan Macquarie was extremely well attended and there was particular interest in the Macquarie chest, culminating in the now-sold-out book by Elizabeth Ellis.

In February 2011 the first Australian exhibition of scrimshaw was held in Hobart, as part of the Australian Wooden Boat Festival. This extraordinary collection of almost 300 bone objects, most with Australian connections, ranged from a full-sized whalebone chair to opium pipes disguised as walking sticks. In the foreword to the catalogue the principal convenor, Colin Thomas, dedicated the exhibition to the late Carl Gonsalves and Caressa Crouch, two very dear members of this Society, with Caressa having been committee member and Treasurer for many years.

Just two weeks ago, the Powerhouse Museum launched a new book called *Brilliant*, which is about Australian gold and silver from 1851 to 1950. This has been written by Eva Czernis-Ryl and Ken Cavill, a long time member and previous president of this society.

Even with these few examples, I conclude that *Australiana* is indeed alive and well in 2011!

So where is the *Australiana* Society headed in the future? What are the challenges that we face? How do we remain relevant?

To start with, we are planning a return to our traditional program of regular lectures, here in the Annie Wyatt room on Observatory Hill, previously described by me as our spiritual home. We are also planning a series of regular house and collection inspections, and I am pleased to announce that we will start on Tuesday 17 May, with a long awaited visit to the legendary *Australiana* collection belonging to Trevor Kennedy. This has been arranged by Lesley Garrett and will be a fund-raising event for the Society, with strictly limited numbers, and only for current members.

We have a number of other ideas which will be revealed as the year goes on, with our major challenge being, as always, to attract more members and younger members. Following Robert Bell's presentation we want to pick up on more contemporary and younger Australian designers, including those producing art, pottery and glassware as well as furniture.

We want to promote closer ties with like-minded groups such as the Furniture History Society, the *Australiana* Fund, and other

historical societies by having combined visits and lectures of more general interest.

You should have already noticed that the journal *Australiana* has grown to 48 full colour pages with the latest issue, which is very impressive when you consider that we could afford only eight colour pages when we began the colour issues in November 1999. In those days the total number of pages was 32.

In the future it is also our intention that, in addition to hardcopy, our journal will be made available in an electronic format for members to download if they wish. This is very important advance as the cost of printing and mailing *Australiana* is our biggest expense. We also want to scan all the old copies to make them much more accessible for research purposes.

So we have a number of exciting initiatives planned and to keep pace you will need to keep watching our website and your email for news and notices. If you don't yet have an email address, then you need to get one!

As all of you know this society would cease to function without the committee and, in particular, without a secretary. Michael Lech has been doing an outstanding job for more than 10 years and John Wade has been editing the journal for even longer. I would particularly like to thank both of them as well as all the members of the committee who have contributed so much in the last 12 months.

I am looking forward to the challenge of being the President of this Society, if I get re-elected that is! I regard it as a great honour, and somewhat daunting, to follow in the footsteps of people like Kevin Fahy, Ken Cavill, John Morris and the like. My only qualification for the job is that I, together with my wife, have been an enthusiastic collector of *Australiana* for many years. So if I look like losing my enthusiasm could someone please tap me on the shoulder?

Could I close by observing that all of you belong to this Society because you have a passion about one or more aspects of *Australiana*. Don't keep us all guessing. Write the article and send it to the editor.

Here's to a very bright future for the *Australiana* Society!

Treasurer's Report

Year ended 31 December 2010

ANDREW MORRIS

Your Society incurred a cash deficit of \$1,530 during the 2010 calendar year, a result which, while disappointing, was expected. The 2009 surplus of \$6,286 did include the Tasmanian Tour which generated \$5,277.

At 31 December 2010, the Society had invested a healthy \$68,150 in cash and investment reserves (the prior year: \$69,680).

Your Committee would prefer that our membership base continues to grow, however an almost break-even result where the Society's incomes match our outlays is welcome.

Personally I would like to thank Michael Lech our Secretary, and all Committee members for their assistance in my role as honorary Treasurer.

I look forward to continued support from renewing subscribers, donors and advertisers. I'm sure you would all agree, *Australiana* continues to be a wonderful scholarly publication.

Australiana Society Incorporated

Profit & Loss Statement

Income

	12 Months to 31/12/2010	12 Months to 31/12/2009
Subscriptions from Members	14,995.35	13,027.33
Subscriptions from Members (Life)	3,000.00	5,000.00
Subscriptions written off	0.00	0.00
Advertising in Australiana	10,709.09	3,854.55
Australia Day & Other Events	2,240.00	1,760.00
Interest Received	2,754.49	3,173.98
Donations Received	700.00	1,790.00
Sponsorship - Peter Walker Fine Art	0.00	0.00
Sales of Australiana (back copies)	775.45	170.91
Sundry Income (Meetings, Events)	0.00	0.00
Tasmania Tour Income	0.00	21,897.82
Tasmania Tour Costs	0.00	-16,620.67
Tasmania Tour - Net Profit	0.00	5,277.15
Total Income	<u>35,174.38</u>	<u>34,053.92</u>

Expenditure - Australiana

Production	24,102.73	16,698.18
Editorial Fees	4,200.55	3,774.27
Postage	2,618.38	3,030.96
Stationery	1,081.57	306.55
Writing Awards	0.00	0.00
	<u>32,003.23</u>	<u>23,809.96</u>

Expenditure - General

Australia Day	2,645.45	2,356.55
Website & Internet	723.50	0.00
Membership Brochure Publication	0.00	0.00
Insurance	440.00	440.00
Merchant & Bank Fees	577.65	520.77
General Meeting & Event Expenses	192.73	697.78
Subscriptions to RAHS	0.00	209.09
Travel - Interstate Meetings (SA & Qld)	0.00	0.00
Corporate Affairs Filing Fees (2 years)	122.00	0.00
Adjustments to Prior Year amounts	0.00	-266.20
	<u>4,701.33</u>	<u>3,957.99</u>
Total Expenditure	<u>36,704.56</u>	<u>27,767.95</u>

SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR PERIOD (12 Months)

<u>- \$1,530.18</u>	<u>\$6,285.97</u>
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Balance Sheet

Assets

	31/12/2010	31/12/2009
Cash at Westpac Bank	4,002.53	13,399.69
Donations Account (Westpac)	359.69	358.77
Interest Bearing Term Deposit (Westpac)	64,208.39	56,496.16
Subscribers & Other Debtors (Adverts ex-GST)	0.00	0.00
GST Refundable	740.13	298.63

Total Assets	<u>69,310.74</u>	<u>70,553.25</u>
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Less Liabilities

Creditors & Suppliers Owed	0.00	0.00
Subs Raised/Collected in Advance (for 2011)	786.47	804.65
GST Payable	368.65	62.80

NET ASSETS	<u>\$68,155.62</u>	<u>\$69,685.80</u>
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Members' Accumulated Funds

Balance Brought Forward	69,685.80	63,399.83
Surplus for Year (2010)	-1,530.18	6,285.97

MEMBERS' FUNDS	<u>\$68,155.62</u>	<u>\$69,685.80</u>
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THE PETER WALKER FINE ART WRITING AWARD 2010 Judge's report

ELIZABETH ELLIS

It was an honour and a pleasure to judge the Peter Walker Fine Art Writing Award for articles published in *Australiana* in 2010, generously sponsored by Peter Walker Fine Art of Adelaide.

Selecting the winning article was a challenge and I congratulate all contributors for continuing the high standard of *Australiana* and in providing excellent, varied and interesting material.

As a journal, *Australiana* is unique in providing an enduring and useful resource for publishing original research on Australian fine and decorative arts. There is no other equivalent and I am sure you, like me, often find yourselves delving into issues to check some esoteric detail or information to be found nowhere else, now aided by the invaluable online index.

While I may be accused of parochialism in favouring my native homeland, I have selected Robyn Lake's article, 'Bound for Van Diemen's Land: Scottish cabinetmaker Alexander Watson and the tools of his trade' from February 2010.

The reasons this article won the award are:

1. It is a thorough and well illustrated piece of research which weaves earlier investigations together with new primary source material from a range of different resources.
2. It demonstrates how with a some initial leads and patient archival detective work, the story of an apparently insignificant person's life can reconstituted and given relevance within a broader historical context. Even though Watson was resident in Hobart for only 10 weeks before he died, the author creates a quite detailed picture of the cabinet-making trade in the town at the time.
3. The article shows how critical it is to go back to original documents and to interpret these with care, even where necessary correcting earlier research assumptions. The detailed endnotes provide useful additional information and clear trails for scholars and researchers – always welcome.

Elizabeth Ellis OAM is Emeritus Curator, Mitchell Library, Sydney and an Honorary Associate in the Dept of History, University of Sydney

Australiana Society

annual dinner and lecture, 4 February 2011

Stephen Bowers,
*The links of
Charmshire (an
Antipodean homage to
Grayson Perry), 2007.*
Earthenware with
underglaze painting,
7.0 x 65.0 cm diameter.
National Gallery of
Australia, purchased
with funds from the
Meredith Hinchliffe
Fund 2009



JIM BERTOUCHE

This year Dr Robert Bell, Senior Curator of Decorative Arts and Design at the National Gallery of Australia, gave the lecture. In a departure from previous years the Annual Dinner was not held on Australia Day, but was arranged for a weekend evening close to 26 January so that the various public holiday celebrations could be enjoyed.

The venue was the dining room in The Women's College at the University of Sydney. It happened to be the hottest weather ever recorded overnight for the month of February in Sydney, but this didn't deter the audience who enjoyed pre-dinner drinks followed by an excellent meal, and wine that had been specially bottled for the College.

Following the main course, Dr Paul Donnelly introduced Dr Bell who spoke on the topic *Australiana now: a decade of collecting 21st century Australian craft and design at the National Gallery of Australia.*

The presentation was illustrated with photos of many beautiful objects crafted by a wide variety of contemporary Australian designers. One of the themes of the talk was the influence of environmental, social and political issues

on the style, texture and presentation of craft, whether made from glass, timber, pottery or other media.

Some of the highlights included the exceptional large glass *Sea Urchin* by Kevin Goodman, an earthenware plate with underglaze painting by Stephen Bowers (pictured) illustrating icons like the Harbour Bridge intertwined with banksias and cockatoos, and contemporary furniture incorporating cabinetmaking techniques derived from ancient China and Barossa Valley Germanic pieces by Khai Liew.

The harsh nature of the Australian landscape was reflected in the pierced, bleached and skeletal-like ceramics of Bruce Nuske, the earthy colours of pots by Pippin Drysdale and Toni Warburton's textured earthenware landform with references to the Jenolan Caves. There was whimsical painting on glass of horses, humans and toadstools by Deb Cocks and social commentary by Tom Moore in his glassware sportscar titled *These young hooligans.*

There was even a political ceramic piece with underglaze painting by Patsy Hely from 2009, showing the then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd presenting a medal to Tony Negus, somewhat inadvertently illustrating the ephemeral nature of politics.

A ceramic work by Lynda Draper utilised an illuminated religious statue of Mary which had been covered in white moths. John Goulder's *Glissando credenza*, constructed from walnut, with sinuous, wavy door fronts, is designed to mimic the 'glide' from one musical pitch to the next.

Bell emphasised that all of these objects were made in the last ten years, reminding us that the term 'Australiana' is timeless.

Dr Bell's presentation provided a fascinating insight into the acquisitions philosophy of the National Gallery, and illustrated the wide range of contemporary decorative arts made in Australia. It was a very interesting presentation and, together with the dinner, rounded out a very enjoyable evening.



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The Scottish craft of hairwork and in particular hairwork pictures is a skill developed by the Scots on the Island of Orkney. With the settlement of Dunedin, the Gaelic name for Edinburgh, by the Lay Association of the Free Church of Scotland on the South Island of New Zealand in 1848 we see this art form spanning the world.

The vase of flowers illustrated above, described on the Exhibition Certificate as "Awarded to Mrs G. J. Meredith, Dunedin for artificial flowers (Human Hair) Third Order of Merit". The Hawkins Collection also contains a bouquet of flowers in its original frame, made from human hair, with the picture framers label for Aldenhoven's Art Gallery, 74 Hunter Street, Sydney.

The graduations of colour brought about by use of hair from different members of the family, the elderly with white hair, the various colours from younger generations all help to make this type of work extremely desirable.

This award winning vase of flowers is probably the finest and rarest example of this peculiar Scottish art form which will be the subject of a forthcoming article in *Australiana*.



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