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COVER: Richard Browne, *Burgun*, c. 1819. Watercolour and gouache on paper,
28.3 x 22.0 cm. Petherick collection, National Library of Australia, P92

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Plate 1. Sofa, cedar and eucalypt, 2nd quarter 19th century, Tasmania. Original chintz covering to back, temporary calico covering to squab and ends

Tasmanian magnificence

R.A. Fredman

Early Tasmanian furniture has character; Grecian sofas have style, and guild-trained craftsmen made furniture that has quality. When the best of each of these occurs in one genuine piece it is likely to represent the apogee of Australian chair making. This paper describes a sofa that potentially fits this description.

HISTORY OF THE SOFA

Sofas (or couches, ottomans, etc) were used in ancient times. The Greeks reclined on the sofa (*kline*) at least as far back as the sixth century BC, and historians believe that their design was based on an earlier Egyptian model. The Romans certainly enjoyed the comfort of reclining on a sofa (*lectus*) and it has probably been a feature of societies with leisure time ever since.¹

The word 'sofa' is of Arabic origin. Bailey's *Dictionarium Britannicum* (second edition, 1736) defined it as a 'sort of alcove much used in Asia; it is an apartment of state, raised from about

half a foot, to two feet higher than the floor, and furnished with rich carpets and cushions, where honourable personages are entertained'. Thomas Chippendale included designs for sofas in his *Director* (1762), and from the start of the 19th century, designers such as Thomas Sheraton were publishing drawings for 'modern' Grecian style sofas.

One of the high points of sofa history came in France in the year 1800 when French painter Jacques-Louis David painted a portrait of Paris socialite Madame Récamier reclining on a double-ended sofa. This painting is now in the Louvre in Paris. It was apparently widely viewed and very quickly it became fashionable for the liberated women of the Empire period (the French equivalent of Regency) to have one in their home for ladies' use. It was already established practice to have one for gentlemen's use in the library.

Commencing in 1809 and continuing through to 1828, Rudolf Ackermann of London published a series of interior furnishing designs in his periodical *Repository of the Arts*. The commentaries provide an excellent insight into attitudes

of the day. In 1811 he published a design for a library couch, which he described as 'a very elegant Grecian sofa, adapted for the library, boudoir, or any fashionable apartment.'

After a span of seventeen years and various sofa designs later, Ackermann wrote of sofas:

In every clime riches and luxury produce habits of indolence and indulgence; and these, being fostered by the excessive heat of Eastern climate, have obtained for us that elegant and luxurious piece of furniture called a sofa, which was doubtless invented by the natives of the East, on account of its allowing a reclined position, which of all others affords the most relief to the body, when overcome by lassitude or fatigue. For this reason, as well as for its elegant form, the sofa has been adopted amongst all civilised nations; so that from the palace to the cottage ornée, it is now required in every room, and may therefore rank among the leading articles of our modern furniture.



Plate 2. RH end of sofa



Plate 3. RH front paw foot, 'wing', and foot block



Plate 4. RH arm showing reed decoration and eleven point spiral boss

In other words, every home should have one!

The *Repository* advised on the matter of feet and furniture decoration that 'It is only in nature that we must seek materials in designing; we must therefore refer to the animal or vegetable kingdom for subjects of embellishment.' The full Grecian style embodies this concept. It incorporated features that were characteristic of classical Greek architecture such as scrollwork, decorative carving on exposed surfaces of classical vegetal forms such as palms, lotus and acanthus, and in the best examples lion's paw feet. The number of examples that have survived is testament to the popularity of this style in Australia in the 19th century.

DESCRIPTION

The subject sofa is a nominal seven-foot long double-ended Grecian style made from red cedar (*Toona ciliata*, formerly *T. australis*) with a eucalypt frame. The original upholstery survives on the back; it is roller-printed glazed chintz with a thin cream edge braid. The front legs are outswept three-inch paw feet and the rear legs plain sabre profile, outswept with castor marks under. They are double-tenoned into the frame at the front and single-tenoned at the rear.

The arms are S-profile and follow a continuous line from the front rail. Two framed panels in the front rail feature a piece of unidentified fiddleback-grain hardwood. This could be a special cut of the local blackwood, but could also be a sample from a stock of imported veneers. Several cabinet-makers in Hobart Town were known to have such stocks in the 19th century.

The back features a long swag curve, terminated with a spiral boss at each end carved into the timber and with honeysuckle infill carving. The reed pattern arms are surmounted with matching but smaller bosses again carved in to the timber. A rearwards cant has been incorporated into the rear arms to give the back a noticeable rake.

Old hinge marks on the back hardwood rail and a full-length rebate cut into the back of the front rail indicate that originally the squab cushion was supported by a timber squab frame. At some later stage this had been removed and a system of webbing installed to support the cushion. Four replacement coverings were found on the back over the original chintz. The second covering in the sofa's life was black horsehair. Subsequent to this a woven fabric, then leatherette, then another woven fabric

were applied, each over the preceding layer on the back.

The cabinet-making and carving are of the highest professional standard, equal to or exceeding that on any pre-1850 seat furniture previously seen in Australia. Such evidence indicates a chair maker and woodcarver who were guild trained and very experienced. The design is complex but harmonious and attractive, indicating again a professional chair maker. In correspondence to the current owners, the Victoria and Albert (V&A) Museum in London (one of the world's great furniture museums) has described this sofa as 'a very splendid example'.²

INTEGRITY AND REPAIRS

Establishing the originality of all of the component parts is an essential part of the process of establishing the integrity of a piece. Obviously missing on this sofa are the castors, squab frame, squab cushion and arm upholstery. Added have been the four new layers of upholstery (now removed), and hardwood reinforcing corner brackets in the frame. No other additions or deletions have occurred, with the exception of structural repairs that will be discussed later. All exposed (exterior) woodwork is definitely original to the time of manufacture, which is uncommon.

Five successive jobs by upholsterers had left the arms so ridden with tack holes that the top rail under the upholstery on each arm was no longer effectively attached. This has necessitated structural repair. Fortunately none of the exposed timber in the arms had to be touched.

As would have been expected with sabre legs made of cedar, both rear legs have split at some time. They have been repaired by pinning and gluing, fortunately using only the original pieces in the repairs.

Castor holes and marks indicate that three different types of castor have been fitted throughout its life. However it is doubtful that the sofa originally had castors, even though it was standard practice at the time. Without castors, the height to the top of the frame rail is 15 inches (38 cm), a recommended and normal finished height. Further, the rebate for the bearing plate of the oldest castor comes to the edge of the rear feet and this would not be the practice of an expert chair maker.

The hinged squab frame concept is original and is a relatively rare old British practice. It is documented in, for example, the *Edinburgh Chair Makers' Book of Prices for Workmanship* (1825). In Edinburgh, the recommended price to cut the hinges into the frame was 2d, and the price for the frame would have been 1s 11p. A similar specification and price is found in the *Belfast Cabinet Makers' Book of Prices* (1822).

The unusual raked back is also original. The practice again is little known, but appears on higher quality British furniture. A Grecian sofa made by Edinburgh cabinet-maker William Trotter for *Paxton*, Berwickshire in 1814 featured a raked back. A British researcher who has examined this sofa concluded that its purpose was 'to allow viewing of paintings hung high on the walls of the new "picture drawing room" of the house.'

Finally, to discuss integrity one has to consider the finish. The finish on this sofa is old and beautifully mellow. The original finish would have been an oil polish with wax, the method practised at the time for good furniture, and the only



method listed in the *Edinburgh Chair Makers' Book*. There is no evidence of any previous surfaces having been removed mechanically, nor is there any sign of solvent runs caused by chemical removal. It has obviously been waxed for a long time, giving us now a highly desirable patinated finish.

In summary, for its age this sofa has remarkable integrity. It is fortunate that the owners halted the recovering process ten years ago when they the original covering. It has enabled a thorough and rewarding examination of all of the components, including those that are normally not visible.

ORIGIN

An essential element of any dissertation on a piece of Australian furniture is a discussion on the evidence that it is indeed Australian. Furniture was made in

Top: Plate 5. Detail of back, showing late Regency glazed chintz covering and original edge braid (gimp)

Above: Plate 6. Sofa, rear view, featuring standard sabre back legs. Note Regency silhouette

England and America using some of the newly discovered Australian timbers, and some furniture was made from native cedar in Asia and India. Three factors show that this sofa is definitely Australian.

Firstly, the current owners acquired the sofa indirectly many years ago from a lady in Launceston, Tasmania. She recollected that her late husband had purchased it at an auction in Launceston in the 1940s, and that the underbidder had been 'a Doctor Craig'. Dr Clifford Craig (1896-1986) is regarded as one of the fathers of Australian furniture appreciation.



Top: Plate 7. Side profile with raked back

Above: Plate 8. Inside view of front rail showing chiselled rebate for squab frame to sit

Secondly, the frame timber has been scientifically identified and certified as *Eucalyptus* sp., 'probably *E. obliqua*.'²⁴ This tree is unique to Australia, and was not exported as far as is known. Growing primarily in Tasmania and Victoria, it

was the first eucalypt known to science and the genus *Eucalyptus* was founded on this species. The original Hobart Town palings exported from Tasmania were split from this timber. It is one of the three closely related species now known as Tasmanian Oak.

Thirdly, some other pieces of furniture extant, found in Tasmania, share some unique cabinet-making characteristics with this sofa. This establishes that the sofa is most unlikely to have been made

elsewhere from similar timbers. Some of these characteristics are:

A sofa from the Neale collection (illustrated Sotheby's catalogue 27/8/2002 p.14) has a back that is very similar and definitely by the same hand. The carver has left the same minor error in both pieces: carving the husks in the honeysuckle differently left to right. It appears however that the Neale sofa does not have the original frame.

Several Australian pieces have been noted with the same elongated toes in the feet as the sofa. These are in contrast to the normal practice of stubbier toes in the style seen on Lenehan furniture, for example. A survey of the paw feet on pieces of furniture in the book *Australian Furniture* shows three other examples of this practice:⁵

- Cedar centre table at Government

House, Hobart. These feet also have a similar stylised trailing wing, pl. 435.

- Cedar library table stamped Kings Yard (the Government manufactory in Hobart), pl. 541.

- Blackwood serving table, likely to be Tasmanian because of the use of blackwood, pl. 516.

Note they are all from Tasmania. The feet on these pieces may not necessarily be by the same carver as the sofa, but they are certainly of the same school.

Several other Tasmanian-sourced pieces carry the same carved spiral bosses as the sofa. The serving table, pl. 518 in *Australian Furniture* is an example.

Another is an armchair in the collection at *Entally House* in northern Tasmania.

The use of framed feature timber panels set into the front rails is common to Tasmanian sofas. There are several examples in *Australian Furniture*.

All of these examples point to the sofa having some of the design characteristics endemic to Tasmania. Hence the three factors of design, source and timber, from unrelated perspectives, point to the same conclusion: there is a strong body of evidence that indicates that it is an Australian piece of furniture, and of Tasmanian origin.



Plate 9. Angle view from front. Compare with pl. 10

STYLE

The style elements in this sofa have an excellent pedigree. That is, the style of the sofa echoes detail from the work of several famous British designers such as Thomas Hope and others. As a whole however, it does not reflect any one published design and this aspect is worthy of note when considering how it may have been commissioned.

One of the first published designs for Grecian sofas is found in Sheraton's *Cabinet Dictionary* published in 1802. The design quickly developed during the first quarter of the century with contributions from designers John Taylor, George Smith, Thomas King, the Nicholsons and others. All applied different archaeologically sourced Grecian features on the same basic platform in either single- or double-ended form. An account of the development of these designs can be found in Frances Collard's comprehensive text *Regency Furniture*.⁶

The sofa design contains some specific British stylistic elements. The swag back profile and the lion's paw feet were a Sheraton design from 1804. A winged paw foot under S-shaped arms appeared in the 1808 George Smith publication *A Collection of Designs*. His 1826 *Guide* showed the reed treatment on the arms of a sofa. The back feet are the standard sabre shape as found in price books of the 1820s, where they are known as 'Grecian claw legs'.

Spiral bosses on the tops of the arms were a feature of an Ackermann design of 1811. They were a carryover from cathedral design, where they were used as a feature at the junction of ceiling arches. Interestingly, the woodcarver was very experienced, as he set them out freehand. Had he needed to use his guild training in basic geometry he would have ended up with eight or twelve points. All four spirals on this sofa have eleven points.

The design of the front leg is rather wide compared with the standard work by British tradesmen and the carving is a little out of the ordinary compared with British Regency and William IV paw-footed examples. North American Empire-style designs show a closer correlation. However it is unlikely to be the work of an American or Canadian cabinet-maker because the legs on the North American versions are normally wider again, and the carving on the leg would have been a bird wing or a cornucopia carved in some detail.

Another reason might explain the width, if not the carving. British furniture designs were based largely on the assumption that they would be executed in mahogany. When comparing cedar furniture with British furniture, one must consider that red cedar has relatively low structural strength compared with mahogany. A good chair maker should have been aware of the risk

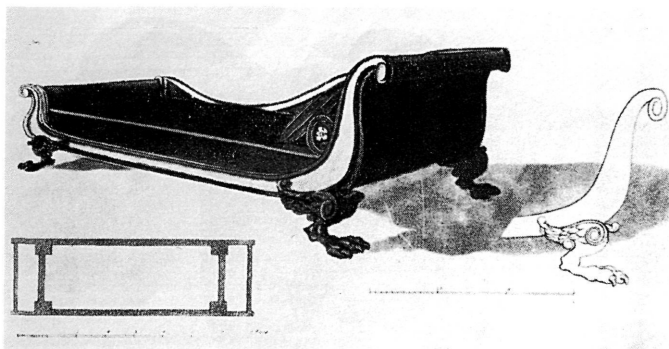


Plate 10. Smith, *A Collection of Designs*, 1808, pl. 65

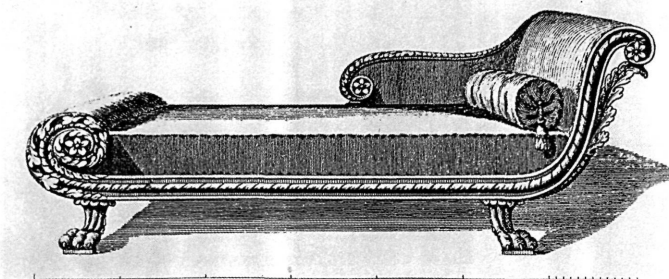


Plate 11. Sheraton, *The Cabinet Dictionary*, 1802, pl. 50

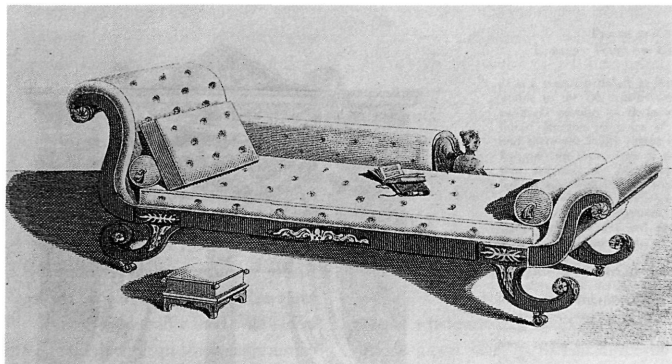


Plate 12. Ackermann, *Repository of the Arts*, 1811. Note spiral bosses on the tops of the arms

of fracturing when utilising a standard sabre leg design for cedar. He would have known that the legs would snap eventually unless he employed an alternative, sturdier design.

The front legs on this sofa are made from cedar. The chair maker has cut the blank with the grain at 30 degrees to the vertical, which corresponds with the inner angle of the leg. He has then constructed a roughly triangular leg of sufficient size to reduce the length of the thin cross section (the 'ankle') to three inches. The triangular shape also avoids the plane of weakness along the grain of the leg immediately above the ankle. Consequently, the front legs have stood the test of time with no fractures.

If the design of the front legs was chosen for robustness, then the choice of standard sabre legs at the back is enigmatic. More likely, fashion dictated the front leg design.

To carve decoratively the wide triangular face of the leg, the woodcarver has filled the space with a stylised wing accompanied by a combination of scrolls and vegetal designs. This concept of a combination of scrolls and vegetation can be seen on the arms of another piece of Tasmanian seat furniture, the original sofa (now one of a pair) at *Runnymede* in Hobart and shown in *Nineteenth Century Australian Furniture*.⁷

If it were not for the shape of the front legs, the style is arguably British. However, wide carved front legs on sofas coupled with a mix of design elements from a variety of design sources are certainly a trait of the North American Empire style. An American influence is understandable for any Tasmanian furniture from the first half of the 19th century because of the strong presence of American nationals with whaling and sealing interests. There was sufficient presence at the time to justify the stationing of an American consul in Hobart Town. In summary I suggest that the sofa style is British, but it shows a North American influence.

AGE

The next essential discussion point is the date of manufacture. A researcher should not rely solely on style indicators, although this is common practice today. Styles lasted a long time in Australia after they were first introduced, possibly more than thirty years. In this case, we are fortunate to have four other sets of evidence that, combined with style indicators, will enable the window of possible manufacturing dates to be narrowed considerably.

Style. The adoption of paw feet and sabre feet suggest an early 19th century date. The subject of the carving, i.e. reeds, honeysuckle, spiral bosses, and their refined execution, suggest similarly.

Cabinet-making. There are many indicators of early 19th century craftsmanship on the sofa. For example, as well as the hinged squab frame and raked back, the top rail in the arms has been shaped with an elliptical curve from three pieces of timber rather than the method introduced mid-century of a single lathe-turned rail. The hardwood frame faced up with a select timber is an 18th and early 19th century practice not often encountered in Australian furniture.

Capability. There was ample capability in Tasmania quite early to make a sofa such as this. As an indication, in 1831 J. Stoneham advertised in the *Hobart Town Courier* 'a splendid and superbly carved cedar sofa covered with rich scarlet moreen...'

Webbing. We are fortunate to have the original upholstery available to examine closely, and the covering and the webbing can give an indication of age. The webbing is a single chevron twill weave made from a coarse and irregular flax. The selvages (outer edge weave) are the same dull brown as the warps. Using information researched by Eric Miles, it is possible to date this webbing confidently as first half of the 19th century, probably early in the century.⁸

Covering material. A sample of the chintz was sent to the Dept of Textiles at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London for analysis. They assessed it based on the manufacturing technique

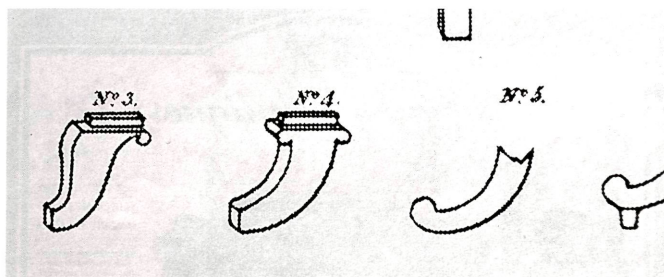


Plate 13. *The London Chairmaker's Book of Prices*, 1823, showing in figs. 4 & 5 the standard industry sabre leg

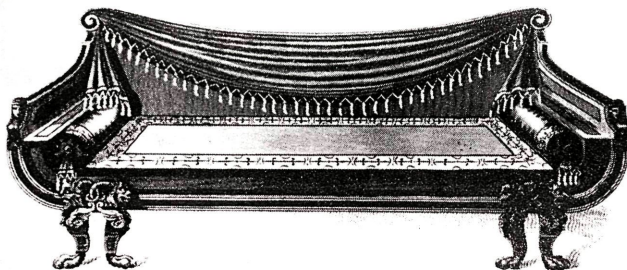


Plate 14. *Sheraton's Encyclopaedia*, 1804. Of interest is swag back, paw feet and front rail profile

(roller printed), the colour (originally a solid green which was first available in 1823, from which the yellow has flown) and the design (early Victorian). The curator noted that the Museum did not have a similar pattern to compare, but concluded that this cloth is likely to date 'from the very late 1830s to the early 1840s.' This date was slightly later than expected, and Mrs Collard of the Dept of Furniture and Woodwork did question whether there could have been an earlier fabric.

In summary, if the V&A Museum is correct with the fabric date, and indeed it was the first fabric (which it appears to be), then the date of manufacture of the sofa in Tasmania is likely to be c. 1840. It could easily have been identified as c. 1830 based on the other evidence alone. Suffice to say, this piece of furniture is from the second quarter of the 19th century.

PROVENANCE

Having established the authenticity, origin and age of the sofa, there is an opportunity to deliberate on its provenance. The exceptional quality and sophistication of this sofa would lead a furniture historian in the direction of an original owner who was a prominent government identity, perhaps a vice-regal commission.

One obvious candidate, who was in Tasmania from 1836 to 1843, is the Lieutenant Governor and renowned Canadian explorer Sir John Franklin. His wife Jane, Lady Franklin was an avid Graecophile who was not hesitant in finding the funds necessary to pursue her own interests (which were both material and philanthropic). She had at least two furniture pattern books in her library in Hobart. Government House had sofas as part of its furnishings, and Lady Franklin herself wrote in 1841 of a sofa in her bedroom.¹⁰



Plate 15. Typical American Empire-style sofa courtesy Gwynby Antiques, Ohio, USA

If one takes into account a potential American influence in the design of the sofa, then it could have been commissioned from a local manufactory by the American Consul in Hobart Town at the time, for example Jesse Morrell (during the time of Sir George Arthur) or Elisha Hathaway Jnr, who arrived in 1843. He could have given the commission with a description of an 'American' sofa he wanted. There is a record of a 'hair-covered sofa' in the sale of Hathaway's belongings after he returned to America in 1854.¹¹ The second covering of this sofa was horsehair fabric, and the delicate original chintz may well have been replaced by then.

Consideration of a potential chair maker can be a little more yielding thanks to the extensive research done by Kevin Fahy and others. The previously mentioned J. Stoneham would be a candidate. Another would be chair maker Thomas Johnson who arrived as an assisted immigrant in 1833. James Whitesides and William Hamilton both arrived in 1832 and commenced cabinet-making businesses that may have employed a skilled chair maker and a woodcarver. In 1856 James Whitesides' establishment provided the President's chair in the Legislative Council Chamber for the Parliament of Tasmania. This chair has exceptional workmanship.

One American cabinet-maker working in this period in Tasmania has been identified to date. Edward Augustus Wilson was one of the American patriots captured and transported to Van Diemen's Land from the British colony of Upper Canada in 1840. If he did make, as suggested, the Boston secretary featured in the February 2005 edition of *Australiana*,¹² then he certainly did not make the sofa. The sofa features a distinctly higher standard of workmanship.

There may have been other cabinet-makers with some American training or knowledge working in Tasmania at the time, who have not yet been identified. This is evidenced by the existence of a well-made American-style cedar chest of drawers of the period, in the collection of the National Gallery of Australia and shown as Plate 1 in *Nineteenth Century Australian Furniture*.

CONCLUSION

This sofa has the rare attributes of the most superb style, craftsmanship, integrity and condition. As a result of a documented process of analysis, my conclusion is that it was made in the second quarter 19th century in Tasmania and was likely to have been an important commission. It has no peer in Australia and hence is a very, very important piece of early furniture.

THE FUTURE

The owners have recently advised that now that the original upholstery has been documented, they will have the sofa recovered. The original upholstery will have to be removed, but will be preserved for further study.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My thanks go to the current owners for their cooperation, to Craig Warhurst for photography, to Mrs Frances Collard and Mrs Linda Parry of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London for their assistance, to Mr Colin Campbell of Sydney for his research and advice, and to Ms Anne Watson of the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney.

Bob Fredman is a Queensland-based writer whose particular interest lies in researching exceptional pieces of early furniture. He is keen for more subjects and can be contacted through the editors.

NOTES

- 1 G.M.A. Richter, *The Furniture of the Greeks and Romans*, Phaidon Press, London 1966, 522ff and 105ff.
- 2 Correspondence 17/5/2001
- 3 David Jones, *The Edinburgh Cabinet and Chair Makers Books of Prices*, Kirk Wynd Press, Cupar 2000
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- 7 K. Fahy, A. Simpson & C. Simpson, *Nineteenth Century Australian Furniture*, David Ell Press, Sydney 1985, fig. 262
- 8 Eric C. Miles, 'The development of English furniture webbing', *Antique Collecting*, May 1984
- 9 Correspondence 17/5/2001
- 10 Lady Franklin's diary entry, Friday 17th September 1841. National Library of Australia, Canberra
- 11 *Tasmanian Trade Circular*, 3 Jan 1854
- 12 John Hawkins, 'Edward Augustus Wilson, American-born patriot, cabinet-maker, political convict and 'British slave' *Australiana*, 27.1, Feb 2005, 16-21



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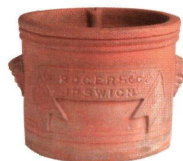


Rare 19th century Australian cedar three-tier dumbwaiter with carved and turned supports, by Andrew Lenehan of Sydney, bearing his paper label (143 Pitt St) for 1869-71, very good original finish, good patina

Ipswich ART Gallery

The Ipswich Art Gallery seeks to locate items of colonial furniture by:

George Dowden, cabinetmaker, upholsterer and undertaker
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Rogers & Co. (1887-98)
Water filter (top section) c.1890
City of Ipswich Collection

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All advice gratefully received.

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Burigon

CHIEF OF THE NEWCASTLE TRIBE

Shane Frost

Shane Frost's essay, *Burigon: Chief of the Newcastle tribe*, is from *Joseph Lycett: convict artist*, the book accompanying the exhibition of the same name. It came about from the desire of the Historic Houses Trust of NSW to include an Awabakal perspective from someone whose ancestors and traditional land in the Newcastle area are the subjects of many of Joseph Lycett's paintings. The curatorial partnership involved Aboriginal linguist and historian Jakelin Troy and Shane Frost, an Awabakal descendant.

The moment Shane Frost pointed out the clan's body paint and shield markings depicted in one of Lycett's paintings was especially moving. His comments during our discussions and his contribution to the book were invaluable and offer fresh insight into how Aboriginal people today might look at colonial works of art.

The exhibition was initiated by the Historic Houses Trust of NSW and developed in partnership with the National Library of Australia and the State Library of NSW.

John McPhee



Plate 1. Richard Browne, *Burigon*, c. 1819, detail. Watercolour and gouache on paper, 28.3 x 22.0 cm. Petherick collection, National Library of Australia, P92



Corroboree
or Dance of the NATIVES of New South Wales,
New Holland.

At night Jack, [alias] Burigon King of the Newcastle Native Tribe, with about 40 men women and children of his Tribe came by Capt. Wallis's desire to the Govt. House between 7 and 8 o'clock at night, and entertained with a carrauberie in high stile for Half an Hour in the grounds in the rear of Govt. House. I ordered them to be Treated with some Grog and an allowance of Maize.
Lachlan Macquarie, 6 August 1818

This excerpt from Governor Macquarie's journal records a corroboree staged for Captain James Wallis and Macquarie at Government House, Newcastle, during the governor's visit to the Newcastle settlement in 1818. Burigon, 'King' of the Newcastle tribe, is named by several other well-known people of the day. He is immortalised in paintings by the convict artist Richard Browne

as 'Burgun' the fearsome warrior (Plate 1), and as a fisherman. He is featured, painted up and laughing, in the left foreground of the engraving by Walter Preston called *Corroboree or Dance of the Natives of New South Wales, New Holland* (Plate 2).¹

The purpose of this essay is to find out a little more about this Awabakal man and his place in the early settlement of Newcastle, especially his possible role in the story of Joseph Lycett. Burigon is also extremely interesting to our family because we are related to him through our great-great-grandmother, Mahrahkah (Molly).

The historical records contain many references to Burigon as the elder and chieftain or headman of the Newcastle tribe of the Awabakal people. Although his Aboriginal name is spelt in a number of ways – Burigon,² Burgon,³ Burrigan,⁴ Burgun⁵ and

Plate 2. Walter Preston, engraver, *Corroboree or Dance of the Natives of New South Wales, New Holland*, c. 1818, from James Wallis, *Views in New South Wales*. Etching, 37.6 x 56.7 cm image. Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, V/98

Buriejou⁶ – and he was also called 'Jack' or 'Long Jack', there is no question that these are all one and the same person. The most detailed information about him comes from Major Wallis, in compelling extracts from his diaries and recollections that have recently come to light in private ownership in Canada.⁷

Wallis writes candidly about his fondness for Burigon, and remembers him in a sentimental and caring way.



Plate 3. Joseph Lycett, [*Corroboree at Newcastle*], c. 1818. Oil on wooden board, 70.5 x 112.4 cm. Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, DG 228

Wallis's account of a hunting expedition is an example:

I can now tho so many years have passed over me, call the scene to memory, an esteemed brother officer and a countryman, an honest and brave Scotch Sergeant and the King of Newcastle were the principal characters ... the scenery around was beautiful, twas near the close of one of those delightful days almost peculiar to New South Wales, I can call to mind Jack's broad grin and the pride ... There are scenes in all our lives to which we turn back to with pleasurable tho perhaps with a tinge of melancholy feelings and I now remember poor Jack ... with more kindly feelings than I do many of my own colour, kindred and nation.

Burigon had a brother called 'Dick' who Wallis described as 'a shrewd active fellow but wilder and more untamed than Burigon'. Wallis tells quite a story about how Dick takes Jack's second wife and a fight ensues over her. Burigon knocked Dick senseless and he later dies. The lore of the tribe meted out punishment on Burigon for the death of his brother. After a short time in the safety of Wallis's quarters, Burigon leaves to stand his punishment and returns a few days later, badly injured to the head. The surgeon tends to his wounds, and after he recovers he leaves once again to stand secondary punishment from neighbouring tribes. Wallis reports that Burigon 'did not appear to dread their vengeance so much' and arming himself with a large wooden shield 'sallied forth'. He soon returned without a mark and, having satisfied tribal lore, resumed his position of power as chief.

Burigon was murdered in about 1821 by a convict who was subsequently executed for the crime. Wallis records:

Jack's career has been I understand since terminated by a treacherous state from a convict who by his execution soon after paid in the world the forfeit of his crime, and was the first European that suffered for an Aboriginal native of New Holland.

Other historical evidence backs this up. For example, a letter by Reverend Samuel Leigh, dated 10 November 1821 and sent to the Wesleyan Missionary Society along with six watercolours by Richard Browne, after describing 'Burigon' or 'Long Jack' as 'a sensible and intelligent man', goes on to say that 'a few months back whilst on an excursion [to apprehend runaway convicts]', he 'was cruelly stabbed to the heart by a Bush Ranger who has since been apprehended, tried and convicted of the murder and executed for the same'.⁸ Another record of this event is found in letters to the Colonial Secretary stating that 'Burriگان, commonly called Jack, Chief of the Newcastle Tribe, stabbed by John



Plate 4. Joseph Lycett, *Aborigines using fire to hunt kangaroos*, c. 1820. Watercolour and gouache on paper, 17.7 x 27.8 cm. National Library of Australia, 2962715-s20

The stunted trees suggest that this is a coastal gully. Hunting for kangaroos in enclosed places like this involved the whole tribe spreading out and surrounding a gully, leaving the entrance guarded by several good marksmen armed with spears and boomerangs. In this representation, hunters are waiting on both sides of the gully, which has been set alight to flush out the kangaroos. On each side pairs of men, one with boomerang, the other with a spear, pursue or wait for the kangaroos.

Kirby⁹ and again 'John Kirby convicted by Court of Criminal Jurisdiction of murder of Burrigan, Chief of tribe at Newcastle'.¹⁰

All these references show that Burrigan was widely known as the 'chief of the Newcastle tribe'. This helps to establish the area covered by this particular clan or family group of the Awabakal people, as do the later detailed records by the missionary L.E. Threlkeld.¹¹

Threlkeld did not come to Newcastle until 1824, after both Wallis and Lycett had left, but it is reasonable to assume that conditions had not changed very much in that time. Following Burrigan's death, another member of the Newcastle tribe, Old Jackey, had become headman.

In May 1828 Threlkeld responds to a request from the Colonial Secretary for details on the local 'natives'. He lists:

1. Old Jackey's Tribe

There is no proper name for a tribe[,] all the persons returned are related to him by birth or marriage and therefore congregate together as one family for defence, assistance &c.

2. Usual Place of Resort

Newcastle and the Lake Macquarie. The [land] bounded by S. Reid's Mistake the entrance to Lake Macquarie. N. by Newcastle & Hunters River, W by the Five Islands on the head of Lake Macquarie 10 miles W of our Station. This boundary, about 14 miles N and S. by 13 E. and W, is considered as their own land.

3. Numbers of Men 24. Women 26. Boys 10. Girls 4...¹²

Threlkeld's list of the English and native names of 'the Black Natives belonging to Lake Macquarie and Newcastle' follows.¹³ My great-great-grandmother is named as Molly

or Mahrahkah. As a member of the Lake Macquarie and Newcastle clan of the Awabakal people, Mahrahkah would have been related by birth or marriage to Old Jackey and his predecessor Burigon, and so our direct descent from her connects us to Burigon. Another name on Threlkeld's list is M'Gill or We-pong [Birabahn] 'who will later become the new Chief of this tribe'.

The area described by Threlkeld in 1828 as belonging to Old Jackey's tribe is confirmed in 1846 by the Reverend C.P.N. Wilton of Christ Church at Newcastle, the 'Protector of the Aborigines' in Newcastle, in a reply to a circular from the Select Committee Inquiry into the Conditions of the Aborigines.¹⁴ Wilton advised that the number of Aborigines in the district had diminished by half in the previous ten years. He names M'Gill as the chief of this tribe, and notes that his assistance enabled Reverend Threlkeld to compile a grammar of this tribe's dialect.

We can assume that these later accounts of the Awabakal people and their particular clan area under the chiefs Old Jackey and Birabahn cover the same area and people that are spoken of by Wallis, Macquarie, Leigh and in the Colonial Secretary's letters between 1816 and 1820 when Burigon was chief.

Joseph Lycett was in Newcastle from 1815 to 1818 but it was not until Wallis took up the role of commandant in 1816 that he seems to have been encouraged to paint, in particular to paint the Awabakal people in their own country.

So we reach the crucial question: how did Lycett have the freedom to wander about in Awabakal country to record the many splendid scenes that depict the day-to-day life of our people in such a vivid and candid way?

The settlement at Newcastle certainly would not have been able to supply too many soldiers to escort him and they would more than likely have been killed by our people if they were by themselves. I believe Wallis resolved to

make a record of the Awabakal people and their activities, and I cannot see him jeopardising this project by losing a valuable asset in the person of Lycett. It stands to reason that Lycett must have had an Awabakal escort, not only for safety but to advise him on the cultural and ceremonial aspects of the scenes he was viewing.

Lycett's paintings bring the written documentation of later observers like Threlkeld to life. As well as having a degree of respect for them, Lycett must have been well guided by the Awabakal in his representations. Many of the images are of times when several clans gathered together, and Wallis may have been particularly keen to have these events recorded.

That Lycett must have been guided by the Awabakal can be stated with more confidence because of the new evidence about Wallis's good relationship with Burigon and his brother Dick. Wallis himself had Burigon accompany him on fishing and kangaroo hunting excursions, 'guiding me thro trackless forests'.¹⁵ It makes sense that he would have asked Burigon and maybe his brother to accompany Lycett on his travels through the Awabakal country so he could have safe passage and thus complete the assignment given by his commandant.

It is up to you, the reader, to judge these facts for yourself. As Awabakal people, we look into every one of Lycett's paintings and see not just people and landscapes, but our family, living and going about their lives in our country, just as our ancestors have done for thousands of years. We have such a feeling of pride knowing we have survived and are just as much part of our country today as they were then. No matter what happens we can never be separated from what makes us who we are. We have a snapshot of Awabakal life through the eyes of Lycett, but these snapshots continue today reflected through the lives of the people who carry on the name of Awabakal.

Shane Frost is chairman of the Awabakal Descendants Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation of Lake Macquarie and Newcastle. The corporation's main focus is to educate the community on all aspects of Awabakal culture. Shane conducts Awabakal education programs and research for government departments and educational facilities, and is involved with NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services Aboriginal discovery program. He is a descendant of the Awabakal people painted by Joseph Lycett.

Exhibition tour schedule

Joseph Lycett: convict artist

Museum of Sydney, Sydney

1 April - 18 June 2006

Newcastle Region Art Gallery, Newcastle

8 July - 27 August 2006

National Library of Australia, Canberra

1 March - 11 June 2007

NOTES

- 1 In the text which accompanies the London issue of these plates, Wallis says of this image 'All the principal figures in the fore-ground are from original portraits: the tall figure, laughing, on the left, is the chieftain or King of the Newcastle tribe, called Buriejou', State Library of NSW catalogue notes.
- 2 James Wallis, *An album of sketches dedicated to the memory of brother officers, 1807-1835, Transcription relating his tale of the Australian Aborigine, Burigon Jack and his brother Dick*, private collection, Canada.
- 3 Reverend Samuel Leigh to the Wesleyan Missionary Society, 10 November 1821, private collection.

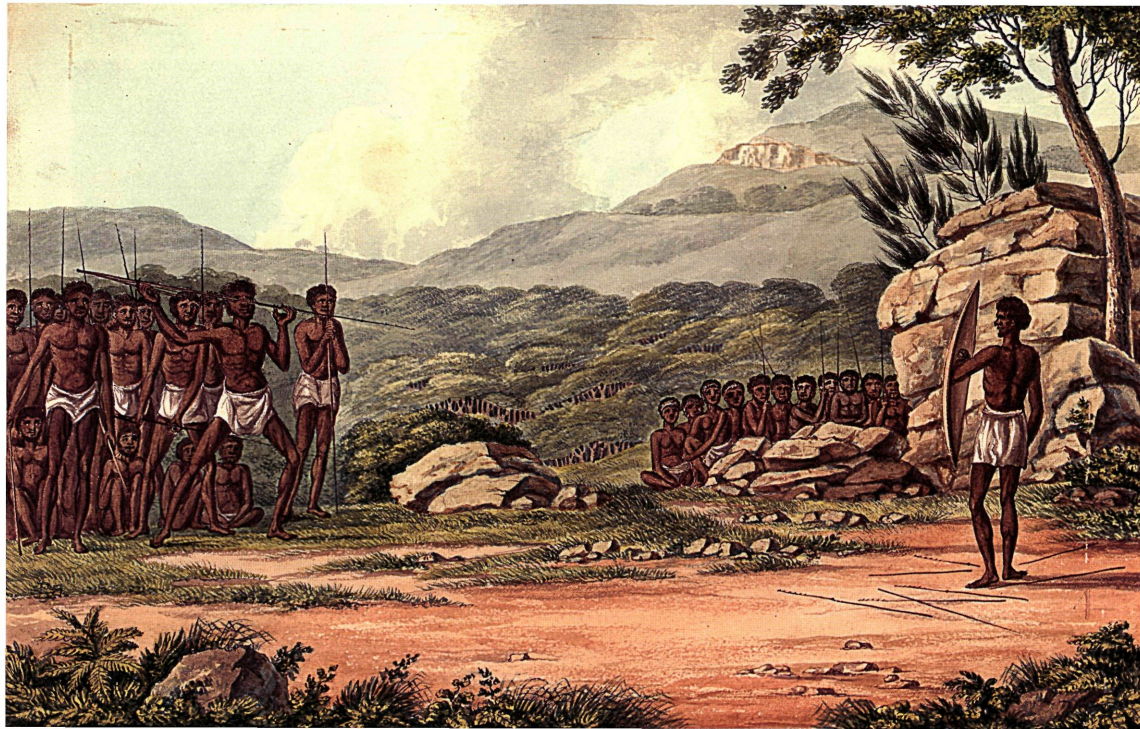


Plate 5. Joseph Lycett, *An Aborigine warding off spears with a shield*, c. 1820. Watercolour and gouache on paper, 17.6 x 27.7 cm. National Library of Australia. This image shows a man receiving punishment for an unknown transgression. He has faced four spears; the broken remains are scattered at his feet after successfully deflecting them with his shield. Burigon faced similar punishment from his own and a neighbouring clan for the death of his brother. There are no body markings on the two groups of people, although three men in the group watching behind the rocks look to have some white paint on their faces and possibly on their bodies, as their skin is shown as a more grey colour. This group includes women wearing distinctive headbands, but no children. The location is unknown although the coastal gully landscape and escarpments look similar to the setting of Aborigines using fire to hunt kangaroos.

- 4 J Morisset to J.T Campbell, 31 October, 16 November, 4 December 1820, Colonial Secretary, Letters sent, State Records NSW 4/1807 pp. 135-7, 143, 150.
- 5 Richard Browne's painting: Browne had been assigned by Lieutenant Thomas Skottowe, Newcastle commandant 1811-1814, to record some of the native arms, and flora and fauna of the area along with their native names. He had a lot to do with the Awabakal people and later painted several of the characters of his acquaintance, including 'Burgun' and 'Magill' (Birabahn), the much-loved helper of Reverend L.E. Threlkeld.
- 6 James Wallis in his notation to the London issue of *Corroboree or Dance of the Natives of New South Wales, New Holland*, State Library of NSW catalogue notes.
- 7 James Wallis, *An album of sketches*, private collection, Canada.
- 8 Reverend Samuel Leigh to the Wesleyan

- Missionary Society, 10 November 1821, private collection.
- 9 J Morisset to J.T. Campbell, 31 October, 16 November 1820, Colonial Secretary, Letters sent, State Records NSW 4/1807 pp. 135-7, 143.
- 10 Colonial Secretary, Report of Prisoners Tried at Court of Criminal Jurisdiction, 22 November-14 December 1820, State Records NSW X820, p. 31.
- 11 Niel Gunson, ed., *Australian Reminiscences and Papers of L E Threlkeld, Missionary to the Aborigines 1824-1859*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra, 1974.
- 12 Threlkeld to Alexander McLeay, 21 May 1828, in *ibid*, vol 2, p. 241.
- 13 *ibid*, p. 360.
- 14 C.P.N. Wilton to the Select Committee Inquiry into the Conditions of the Aborigines, Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council of NSW, 1846.
- 15 James Wallis, *An album of sketches*.



John Skinner Prout (1805-1876), *The City of Sydney N.S.W. From the Government Paddock, Paramatta Street* [sic]. T. Bluett, printer, Hobart, Town V.D.L. Tinted lithograph, 23.5 x 44.2cm. Published in J.S. Prout and John Rae, *Sydney Illustrated*, Part IV, Hobart. 1844. Courtesy Dixson Library, State Library of NSW, DL F84/7 pl 58

Thomas Bluett, lithographer

Paul Barton

A couple of years ago I got a home computer and decided to use the Internet to research my family history. Within a few days I made contact with a distant relative, Caroline Gurney, who had been researching her line of the family for years. She told me of my great, great, great grandfather Thomas Bluett (c. 1819-1846). Working together via e-mail we began to build up a picture of him, and a trip to the National Newspaper Archive in Colindale, North London, revealed some astonishing clues. Over the next few months, a picture emerged of a lithographic printer who produced some of Australasia's most important early works before

the gold rush era. While Bluett's work in Wellington, Hobart and Sydney has been published, we were able to expand the picture considerably. With Caroline's expertise in genealogy and my dogged persistence, we revealed a story that we are delighted to share.

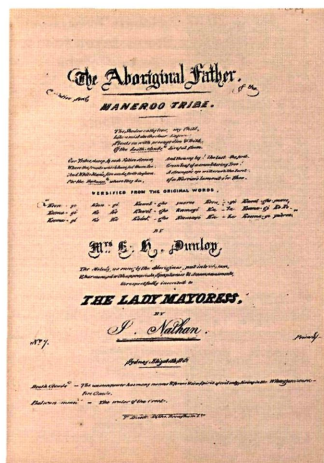
TO NEW ZEALAND: THE OLYMPUS VOYAGE 1840-1841

A fortnight late, on 9 December 1840 the barque *Olympus* set sail from Gravesend for Hobart via Wellington, carrying among its 159 passengers 21-year old Irishman Thomas Bluett, his wife 25-year old Mary, 3-year old Thomas and 2-year old Mary Ann. His father Adam Bluett, listed as a 40-year old locksmith, accompanied his 38-year old second wife Catherine on the ship. Thomas was listed as

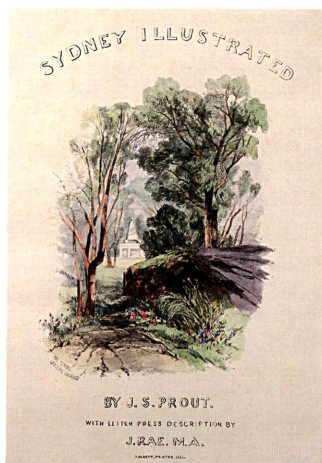
cook for the voyage and, strangely, as a smith and bell-hanger. In fact, Thomas had been working for Day & Haghe of London, regarded as Britain's leading lithographic printer. It must be assumed that he had at least one lithographic printing press in the hold plus all the related paraphernalia - paper, inks, chemicals, plates etc.

The cook's assistant was 23-year old Peter Langley, Mary's brother. The whole family had lived at 50 St Clements Lane, off the Strand. Another, younger Adam Bluett, his wife and two children had failed to catch the ship; this was probably Thomas's older brother and family.

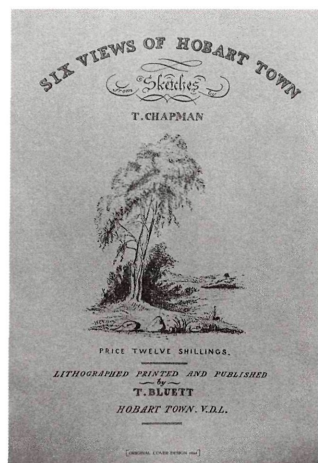
The passenger list shows a lot of crossings-out in three drafts and much confusion before the final draft. Some of these discrepancies can simply be put down to administrative error, but



Isaac Nathan (1792-1869), *The Aboriginal Father*, a native song of the Maneroo tribe, printed by T. Bluett, Sydney, 1843.
National Library of Australia



J S Prout, *Sydney Illustrated* with letterpress descriptions by John Rae. Printed by Thomas Bluett in Hobart, 1844.
Courtesy Hordern House Rare Books



Cover, *Six views of Hobart Town* / from sketches by T. Chapman, printed by T. Bluett, 1844

more than likely the family was deceiving the New Zealand Company in order to be granted assisted passage.

The new colony's development and prosperity was hindered by the easy acquisition of free or very cheap grants of land. The resulting scarcity of labour drove away capital, since the man-of-means disliked being his own labourer. The ready availability of land led to a dispersed population living at subsistence level. The solution was to offer the incentive of free passage to people with particular manual skills.

Wellington was at risk of becoming a town of middle-class investors with no lower classes to do the dirty work. A lithographer would have to pay his own way; a smith could apply for free passage. Married men under 40 could also apply for free passage, though Adam was probably over 40 in reality. Peter Langley qualified for free passage

because he was a single man travelling with his sister (odd, but that was the rule). Mary Ann was posed as less than one year to qualify for an infant's free passage. Proof of age or occupation was never demanded.

Another passenger, Mrs Douglas Mary Dunsmore McKain, a widow, described the *Olympus* voyage in letters to her children. The ship reached Port Nicholson, Wellington on 20 April, but a gale blew the next day so the

passengers did not disembark until 23 April 1841, 'as fine a day as any I ever knew in England in summer'.

Thomas Bluett was about to make his mark in the Southern Hemisphere. He can be traced in newspapers of the time, and in his surviving work, some of it in museums and archives. Within a month of arrival he would produce a historically important chart and go on to deal with some of the most respected and influential artists in Australasia.



St. Joseph's Church, Macquarie Street, Hobart Town, printed by T. Bluett, 1844.
Lithograph, 18.4 x 28 cm. Plate 1 from
Six views of Hobart Town / from sketches by T. Chapman, drawn on stone by Henry Green Eaton (1818-1887)



The new wharf, Hobart Town, from the Ordinance Stores, taken from a sketch made at the time of the Regatta H.G.E. printed by T. Bluett, 1844.
Lithograph, 20.6 x 27.9 cm.
Plate 2 from *Six views of Hobart Town* / from sketches by T. Chapman.

WELLINGTON 1841

The New Zealand Gazette of 1 May 1841 reported:

We are happy to find that a lithographer has arrived here in the *Olympus*, and that we shall now be able to publish charts of the harbour, of Cooks Straits, and plans of the town at a very moderate charge. A chart of the harbour has long been wanted for general distribution; and some means should be taken to get them put on board of the numerous whalers on the coast. We hear that the Captain of the American whaler states that many of his countrymen would resort to this port if acquainted with it, which they will not be, until steps have been taken to circulate the necessary information.

Thomas Bluett was now operating the first lithographic press in Wellington. An advertisement soon appeared in several issues of the *New Zealand Gazette*:

CHART OF PORT NICHOLSON – Just published, and on sale at the office of this paper, a lithographic chart of Port Nicholson from the survey of E.M.Chaffers Esq. RN, commander of the New Zealand

Company's Ship *Tory*, price 2s 6d. *Gazette* office May 27 1841.

Copied from a chart by James Wyld of 1 June 1840, this was historically important as the first map of Wellington. The example in the Hocken Library in the University of Otago, Dunedin, measures 13 x 10 inches (33 x 25 cm), and is inscribed 'T. Bluett, printer' and 'J.W. Jones delt.' Other examples are held throughout the world, including the British Library. Bluett was working with a partner who prepared the plates, Jacob W. Jones; a 'W. Jones' was listed among the *Olympus* passengers. It's possible that the two met on board ship and decided to go into business.

Then in the *New Zealand Gazette* 12 June 1841:

A plan of the harbour is now on sale at our Office, price two shillings and sixpence. It is very neatly lithographed, and does its authors, Messrs, Jones and Bluett, great credit. A considerable number were purchased by a subscription, with a view to circulating them gratis. Already a large number has been forwarded, to Akaroa and other places, with instructions to put them on board of whaling and other vessels not acquainted with our port. We anticipate a satisfactory

issue from the adoption of so prudent a course. Though, by this subscription, a certain amount was secured to the artists, still it is not sufficiently large to remunerate them properly; we hope, therefore, both, as a means of augmenting that sum, and of further making the port known, those who have not contributed to the original subscription, will each purchase a few copies, and circulate them among their friends out of the Colony. Mr. Jones and Mr. Bluett have since lithographed a plan of Wade's town, and a view of the harbour from the Tinakori hill. The latter is a mere sketch, but it would be interesting to our friends at home; we hope, therefore, we shall be allowed to have it on sale at a small price. We esteem it, because it is in every respect faithful, and must tend to give the absent a right conception of the harbour and its scenery. We believe, in a few days, we may expect to have a plan of the town, also by Messrs. Jones and Bluett.

Another advertisement appeared regularly in the *New Zealand Gazette*:

PLANS OF WELLINGTON On sale at this office, plans of Wellington, lithographed by Messrs Jones &

St. David's Cathedral,
Macquarie Street,
Hobart, Printed by
T. Bluett, 1844.
Lithograph,
18.4 x 28 cm.
Plate 3 from *Six
views of Hobart Town*
from sketches by
T. Chapman.



Bluett. Large size, colored: 10s 6d each. Ditto, plain: 5s 0d. Small sized, plain: 2s 6d. Gazette Office July 16 1841.

However, this ominous statement appeared in the *New Zealand Gazette* 24 July 1841:

The plans of the town which were advertised last week as on sale at this office will not be published for fourteen days owing to arrangements it has been found absolutely necessary to make for the construction of a new press with which to print them, the press with which they were commenced proving inadequate to the work.

The new press was apparently completed soon after, as on 21 August 1841 the plans of Wellington were advertised as being available.

Jones and Bluett also attempted to produce a lithographed newspaper, but the *Victoria Times* appeared only once, on 15 September 1841. A *Plan of the*

City of Wellington Port Nicholson New Zealand, which appeared as part of this publication, is possibly a further printing of the small plan referred to above.

Relations deteriorated between Bluett and Jones. In an advertisement in the *NZ Gazette & Wellington Spectator* on 13 November 1841, Jones 'cautioned the public against giving credit to T. Bluett, Lithographer Printer, on account of an alleged partnership which he represents has existed or does exist between him and myself, such partnership never having had any existence.'

We have already seen that Bluett was a bit dodgy, so Jones's effort to distance himself was probably a sensible move, but claiming that there was never a partnership is a bit rich considering his name appears on the *Chart of Port Nicholson*.

Whatever the truth of the matter, after less than eight months in New Zealand, Thomas Bluett sailed to Sydney in late 1841, so that was the end of the relationship.

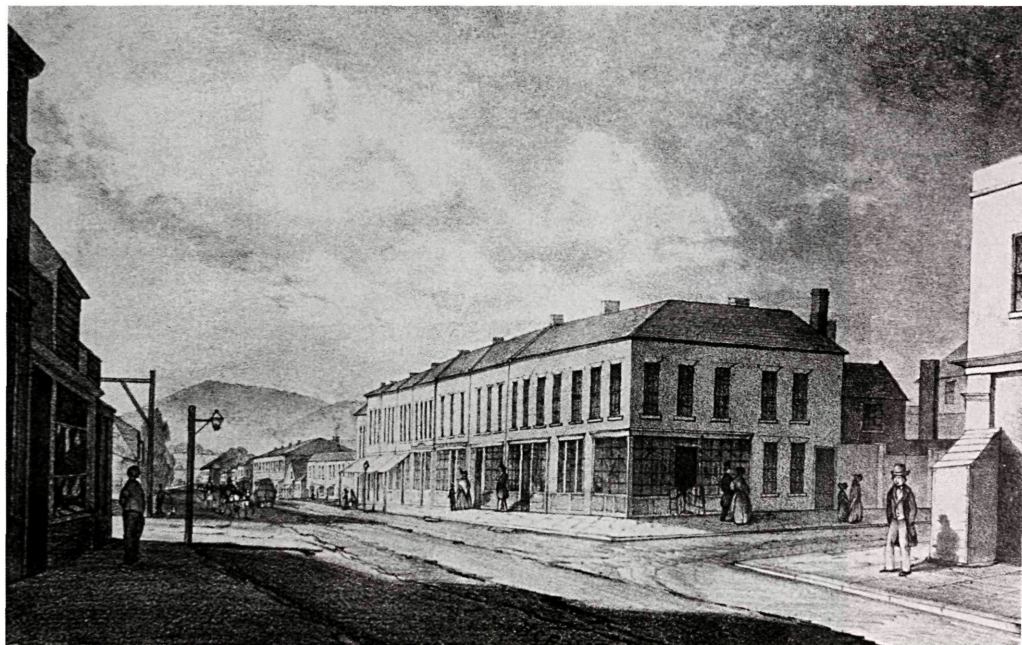
SYDNEY 1841-1843

Raphael Clint (1797-1849), who had established a printing and engraving business in Sydney in 1835, advertised in the *Sydney Herald* 28 December 1841:

The undersigned begs to inform landed proprietors, surveyors, auctioneers and draftsmen that per 'Lalla Rook' [a ship that docked the week previously] he has received his expected supply of materials for printing impressions in lithograph, as large as the *Herald* newspaper, with every other requisite; as also an artist from Day and Hague's Establishment, under which facilities, will be afforded for the economical conduct of his business, of which no house out of London but this can offer.

R. Clint. George-Street, opposite the Bank of Australia.

This was very likely Thomas Bluett, but their working together must have been brief, as by March 1842, he was working with Thomas Liley, another



Liverpool Street, Hobart Town, from Wellington House / H.G.E.
Printed by T. Bluett, 1844. Lithograph;
20.6 x 28.1 cm. Plate 4 of *Six views of Hobart Town* / from sketches by T. Chapman.

lithographic printer in Sydney operating from premises in Brougham Place (now Rowe Street), off Pitt Street.

A subdivision map of Annandale produced for an auction by George Stubbs on 14 March 1842 bears the imprint 'Liley and Bluet [sic] Lithographers'. Thomas Bluett and Thomas Liley had some sort of business arrangement; both produced subdivision plans for the same auctioneer and musical scores for Isaac Nathan, while Liley began producing a series of warrior chiefs of New Zealand.

Isaac Nathan (1792-1864) was the first notable musician to settle in Australia, wrote the first Australian opera (*Don John of Austria*) and produced the first Mozart operas in the Southern Hemisphere. *Australia the Wide and the Free*, an anthem with words written by William Augustine Duncan and billed on the music score as

a national song, was sung at a 'great Civic Dinner' held on 21 December 1842. It was composed for voice and piano, and inscribed to John Hosking, the first elected Mayor of Sydney, by Isaac Nathan. The music was published soon after, with T. Bluett of Brougham Place as lithographer; it announces that *The Aboriginal Father* is in the press.

Nathan was the first to take an interest in Aboriginal music, and made attempts to transcribe it, though it is said that it came out strangely like Victorian drawing-room products. An existing score bears Bluett's imprint: *The Aboriginal Father, a native song of the Maneroo Tribe* was versified from the original words by Mrs Eliza Hamilton Dunlop, and must have been published in early 1843. The imprint on Isaac Nathan's *Aboriginal Father* reads 'T Bluett Litho. Brougham'.

The artist John Skinner Prout (1805-1876) was the leading light of a group of artists who began a strong watercolour tradition in Australia and Tasmania in the 1840s. Born at Plymouth, Devon, he arrived in New South Wales in 1840, bringing from England a set of

lithographic equipment. His *Sydney Illustrated* was published in parts in 1842-44. Part I has a printed inscription at the end which reads, 'J.S. Prout and Co. Australian Lithographic Establishment, O'Connell Street'. In spite of being so well equipped, Prout apparently had to call on Bluett for help. The title page to *Sydney Illustrated* has on it 'T. Bluett, Printer, Lith.'

The ever-restless Bluett sailed from Sydney for Hobart in mid-1843.

HOBART 1843-1844/5

Scottish born ex-convict, architect, builder and entrepreneur James Alexander Thomson (1805-1860) was also a schoolteacher and short-lived publisher based at 26-28 Liverpool Street, Hobart Town. On 21 July 1843, Thomson announced in the *Hobart Town Courier* that he had just engaged an experienced litho printer from the house of Day & Haghe of London who could execute any type of printing; 'Artists or amateurs may be supplied (on moderate terms) with stones, chalks, &c, and their drawings will be printed with the utmost care and attention'.

Thomas Bluett's known work of that time includes the sheet music for *Tasmanian Waltzes* by John Howson, printed for the author by J.A. Thomson. After Thomson abandoned the business in October 1843, Thomas Bluett set up on his own at the Liverpool Street shop, producing among other things a further series of *Tasmanian Waltzes*.

Bluett announces in the *Hobart Town Courier*, 6 October 1843:

LITHOGRAPHY. THOMAS BLUETT, LITHOGRAPHIC PRINTER, from Day & Haghe, London, begs to inform the inhabitants of Hobart Town and its vicinity, that he has commenced business in the above line, at No. 28, Liverpool-street, next door to Mr. Robin Hood. Lithographic Drawings, Maps, Plans, Music, Circulars, Cards, Billheads, &c., executed in the neatest manner, and on reasonable terms. N.B. Artists supplied with Prepared Stones, Chalks, Ink, and every article required in the trade.

Soon after he offers lithographic portraits of Maori chiefs, in the *Hobart Town Courier*, 27 October 1843:

NEW ZEALAND PORTRAITS. This day is published, by Mr. Bluett, at his Lithographic Establishment, Liverpool-street, PORTRAITS of Raupa-rahah, Kafia Chief, and Rangihacata, his Fighting General, the principals in the late massacre at New Zealand, taken from life by Mr. Cootes, Artist. To be had at Mr. Bluett's, and at Mr. Tegg's, Bookseller, Elizabeth-street. Price, per pair, 3s. plain; 4s. coloured.

Mary Morton Allport (1806–1895) was a skilled artist and lithographer. Thomas Bluett assisted her in preparing a print of an opossum mouse, printed in 1843. He may have assisted Mary with her earliest lithographs and he obviously improved the sketches which less talented local residents put on stone. Mary enjoyed a regular income from producing portrait miniatures. It is tantalising that a family member possessed a portrait miniature of



Thomas in the earlier 20th century. Described as a good-looking man with dark wavy hair and side-whiskers, it has long since been lost.

The first three parts of John Skinner Prout's book *Sydney Illustrated* were printed in Sydney and attracted scathing press comments. In January 1844, Prout and his family relocated from Sydney to Hobart, where Bluett printed the two plates in part 4 of Prout's *Sydney Illustrated* (1842-44). These were twice the size of the others in the series. Prout began working on a series of lithographic views, *Tasmania Illustrated*, which Thomas Bluett printed in Hobart.

Roger Butler suggests that the mention of a 'Mr Bluett' sailing from Hobart to Sydney in February 1844 may have been a visit to Sydney to pick up the lithographic stones for Prout. The *Sydney Morning Herald* 12 February 1844, p.2, col.1, reports under Shipping Intelligence – Arrivals 'From Hobart Town last night, having left the 4th instant, the brig *Louisa* ... [included passengers] Mr and Mrs Bluett.'

Apart from what was done in association with Prout, Bluett's most important work was the production of *Six Views of Hobart Town* from sketches by Thomas Evans Chapman (1788-1864), price twelve shillings. The signature or initials of Henry Green Eaton (1818-1887) appear on every print; he probably copied

Hobart Town from the rocks below Kangaroo Bay, H.G. Eaton. Printed by T. Bluett, Hobart 1844. Lithograph, 22.1 x 29.7 cm. Plate 5 from *Six views of Hobart Town* / from sketches by T. Chapman.

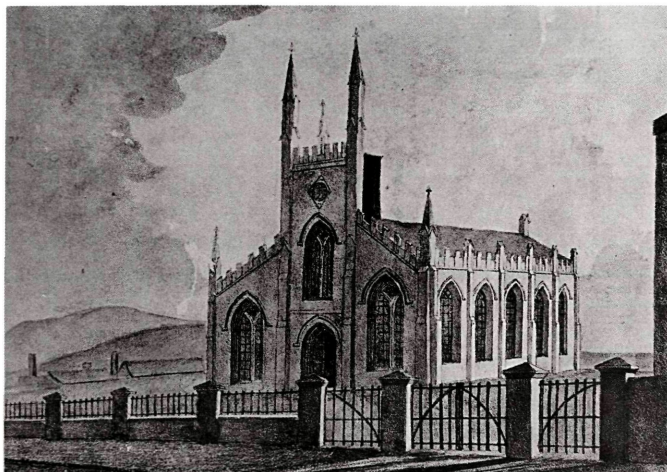
Chapman's sketches onto stone. H.A. Evans & Son, Melbourne, reprinted these Hobart views in 1967.

Thomas also lithographed six illustrations for a religious book *True Piety* printed by William Pratt and published in Hobart Town in 1844. Their original artist is unknown. One of his last Hobart jobs was a letterhead printed for the watchmaker and jeweller William Cole, showing a vignette of his shop, and inscribed 9 October 1844. Soon after, Bluett left the colony.

HONG KONG 1845

The Bluett's next show up in Hong Kong. This notice appeared on the front page of the *China Mail*, published in Hong Kong, issues 27 March, 3 April, 10 April 17 and April 1845:

MRS BLUETT, wife of THOMAS BLUETT, has been left by him with her two children in this island entirely destitute of support. Several influential persons have benevolently subscribed towards a



St. Andrew's Church, Bathurst Street, / H.G.E. Printed by T. Bluett, Hobart, 1844. Lithograph, 18.4 x 27.7 cm. Plate 6 from *Six views of Hobart Town* / from sketches by T. Chapman

fund in her aid, to enable her to proceed to England. Any further subscriptions for her will be received by the Hon Frederick W Bruce the Colonial Secretary. Victoria 19th March 1845.

Mary would later claim that Thomas had absconded from the family after getting into debt.

MUTINY AND MURDER ON THE HIGH SEAS 1845

In contrast to the outgoing trip on the *Olympus* five years earlier, Mary's return to England was a horror story to say the least. She and another woman and her son joined the 608-ton free trader *Tory* at Hong Kong on 14 May 1845. News reached England on 10 November of a tale of mutiny and murder which in modern parlance was a headline-grabber. Captain Johnstone, a 35-year-old Scot, had gone berserk and hacked at his crew with a cutlass and bayonet causing multiple deaths. He ordered men to be tortured in various inventive ways

over several days. On arrival in the Channel he claimed that the dead crewmen had been killed in the putting down of a mutiny. Mary, then living at 13 Albany Street, ended up as a key witness when he went to trial, covered widely in the press; Captain Johnstone ended up in Bedlam asylum.

LONDON 1846

A few months later, Thomas Bluett was working for Charles Graf, a prominent lithographer of Castle Street near Oxford Circus. The Bluetts were back in the headlines when Thomas, 'a native of Ireland', was shot in Drury Lane as he was returning to his new home at 7 White Horse Yard, off Drury Lane from work on Saturday evening, 25 April 1846. The culprit turned out to be John Graham, a teenage boy playing with a loaded gun on his way to a shooting gallery.

Thomas at first seemed on the road to recovery, but his condition gradually deteriorated. His case was given considerable coverage in the press over the following weeks and the boy's father was heavily criticised for allowing a 15-year-old to have a collection of weapons. In the early hours of 11 May 1846, his lungs full of fluid, Thomas lost his struggle

for life. He was no more than 27 years old.

Shortly before John Graham's trial, Mary applied for assistance, claiming hardship as she had lost her means of support. She wished to set herself up in business, but her application was hampered by the intervention of the court Usher and a police inspector who questioned her character. A fine four months previously for 'misconduct' seemed to be related to drink. In the hearing on 10 June 1846 she revealed that for a considerable period she did not live with her husband, which she attributed to his misconduct. At the time of Captain Johnstone's trial 'she again became acquainted with her husband, who called upon her at her lodgings, but it did not appear upon what terms they lived together, if at all, up to the shocking occurrence in Drury Lane.'

John Graham's trial was a brief one. The coroner's jury found the boy guilty of manslaughter; his father voluntarily paid all Mary's expenses, including the funeral.

Paul Barton is the great, great, great grandson of Thomas Bluett.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Thanks to Roger Butler, Senior Curator of Australian Prints at the National Gallery of Australia, for providing additional information.

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The Society of Arts and Crafts of New South Wales:

A CENTURY OF CONSTANCY AND CHANGE

Ruth Kerrison

This year the Society of Arts and Crafts of NSW celebrates a centenary of promoting the work of Australian craftsmen and women. Many of the pioneer members pursued the use of Australian motifs, are represented in the National Gallery of Australia, the Art Gallery of NSW and the Powerhouse Museum, and are now well known to collectors as a result of a revival of interest through exhibitions from the late 1970s on.

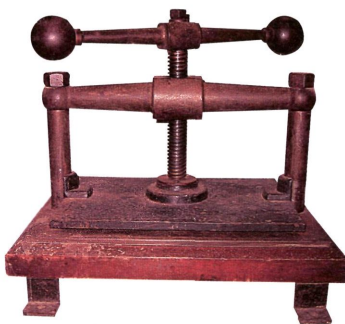
Below: *Duncraggan*, the Raglan Street, Mosman home of bookbinder Dorothy Wilson where the first meeting of the Society of Arts and Crafts of NSW in 1906

Below right: Dorothy Wilson, one of the original members who remained an active member until 1932

A group of women who met to discuss and exchange ideas about handcrafts founded the Society of Arts and Crafts of New South Wales in August 1906. They were strongly influenced by the changing attitude towards craft in Britain at the end of the 19th century. There was a reaction against machine-made objects, and a move towards well designed decorative handcrafts. The

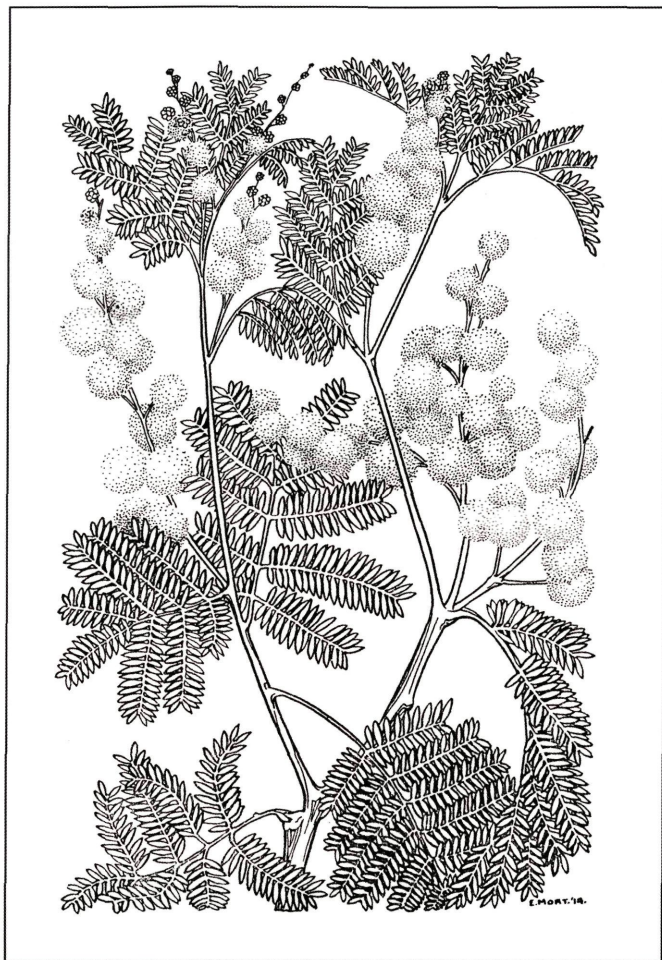
fluid lines of Art Nouveau and the flat, flowing natural lines suggested by William Morris became an ideal.

This group first met at *Duncraggan*, the Mosman home of bookbinder Dorothy Wilson, and included both men and women who established the Society. They initially met monthly in members' homes and studios, showing their work to each other, and holding their first exhibition in 1907. By 1908, they had rented rooms in Sydney's CBD, and later a depot in Rowe Street and a gallery with a workshop in Harrington Street, The Rocks. Today



Left: Foundation member Dorothy Wilson's bookbinding press





Acacia dealbata

Artist: Eirene Mort

Eirene Mort, *Acacia dealbata*. Eirene Mort's illustrations from Florence Sulman's book *A Popular Guide to the Wild Flowers of New South Wales Vol. 2*. Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1914, are displayed on the Australian National Botanic Gardens website, www.anbg.gov.au/images/illustrations/mort/acacia.html

the Society has two well established galleries in the Metcalfe Bond Stores in The Rocks, appropriately named Telopea Gallery - Craft at The Rocks and Australian Image - Craft at The Rocks.

The regulations of the Society were quite stringent and its aims well defined. These were formalised in a constitution when the Society was incorporated in 1929. The Society has remained faithful to its original objectives.

PROMOTING THE USE OF AUSTRALIAN MATERIALS AND DESIGN

Aiming to encourage the pursuit of arts and crafts in NSW generally, the Society specifically promoted the use of Australian materials and designs. This reflected the nationalist feeling evident at the time of Federation. A foundation member, Eirene Mort, opened an Australian Design and Art Centre. In 1913, with Dorothy Watkins she illustrated a book written by Florence Sulman (President 1928-36) on *Wildflowers of New South Wales*. Many of Eirene Mort's designs in pottery, leather, linocuts and bookplates depicted Australian flora and fauna. In 1915 she designed the waratah emblem for the Society.

Potter Grace Seccombe (member 1930-55) favoured Australian fauna in her small sculptures and vases. Ada Newman's china painting and pottery (member 1906-49) became renowned in Australia and overseas for originality and a distinctly Australian flavour. Ada Newman taught china painting from her studio in Hunter St, Sydney from 1914, and taught pottery students from 1931, when her studio became The Ceramic Art Studio. Although most of Nell Holden's (member 1928-80) pottery was wheel-thrown, her line of slip-cast earthenware jugs with a *Banksia Men* design, inspired by her cousin May Gibbs and based on a pre-war mould, was very popular after World War II.

In 1941, as part of an exhibition of Australian Aboriginal Art and its Application held at David Jones' auditorium, Grace Seccombe presented pots that were inspired by Aboriginal artifacts in the Australian Museum. At this exhibition, potter Nell Holden based the design for her plates and vases on the North Queensland Aboriginal shield and leaf design. The boldly Australian fabric designs of Nan Mackenzie (member 1940s) captured attention.

Margaret Preston (member from 1929, Vice-President 1953-56) adapted

Aboriginal motifs in her paintings as well as depicting the beauty of Australian wildflowers. The selection of work sent by the Society to the 50th Anniversary Exhibition of the English Society of Arts and Crafts was deliberately chosen for its definite Australian flavour. This unique Australian character is still evident in the Society's craft today, although its application is more modern and subtle.

EXHIBITIONS

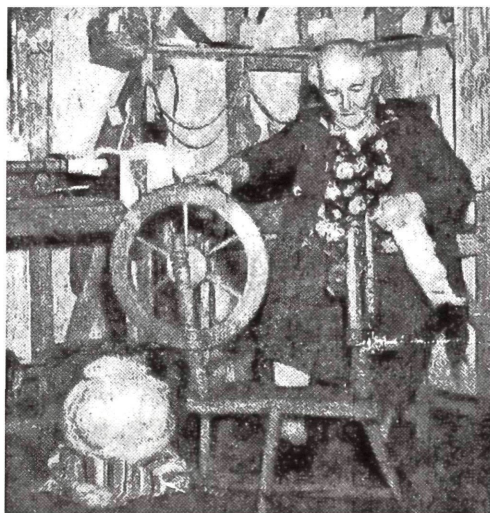
From its earliest days, the Society aimed to maintain exhibitions of members' work to introduce the community to quality handcraft. Society members had prepared work for the 1907 Australian Exhibition of Women's Work in Melbourne, which attracted 15,000 visitors. Women realised then that they could become self-supporting through their handcraft.

The Society continued to use exhibitions to promote the sale of craft. Lady Northcote, wife of the Governor-General and patron of the arts, opened its 1908 exhibition, and the Society has continued to benefit over the years with vice-regal patronage. At this exhibition, craft demonstrations were introduced to create interest and to bring the public in touch with the designer. Exhibitions in these times were prestigious social events. The Society flourished under the patronage of Sir John Sulman (associate member) who was partly responsible for the purchase of the Society's handcrafted objects by the Art Gallery of NSW until 1934.

Many members of the Society are represented in the National Gallery of Australia, the Art Gallery of NSW and the Powerhouse Museum. Mildred Creed's (member 1907-23) fine silver jewellery is in the AGNSW collection. In 1923, using the repoussé technique, she created the cover for a World War I Honour Roll Book. It was commissioned by the Bishop of St Peter's Cathedral in Armidale, made in solid silver and set with black opals.

Right: Muriel Danvers Power at her spinning wheel. She was the first president of the Society (1906-08) and remained an active member until 1927

Below: Eirene Mort (member 1907-31), pottery plate with kangaroos. She was a truly multi-skilled designer who practised printmaking, etching, woodcarving, pottery and graphic design. SA&CNSW collection



Myra Mullins tooled a leather Anzac Book cover in 1916 and Elisabeth Söderberg hammered her copper bowl with the flying fox design.

From 1916-1932, exhibitions were held in the Department of Education Gallery. Exhibition venues varied over the years until the 1990s when permanent exhibition space was established in the Society's galleries at the Rocks.

EDUCATION

The 1929 Constitution clearly stated the Society's aim of ensuring that craft education was available to its members and the wider community. Individual craftworkers established studios where they taught classes in china painting, wood carving, embroidery and bookbinding. Wood-carver and weaver Suzanne Gether established her teaching



studio in 1907. Interest in craftwork extended to rural areas due not only to the Country Women's Association in later years, but to enterprising women such as Muriel Danvers Power, the first President. After moving her studio from Burwood to Richmond, Mrs Danvers Power established a craft library and held exhibitions in the Hawkesbury region. Winifred West (member 1945, vice-president 1945-52) established the Sturt Craft workshop in Mittagong, where the craft school and gallery continue to operate at the highest level of excellence.

The Society conducted regular lectures as a part of its activities. Sir John Sulman spoke on 'Arts and Crafts applied to the Decoration of the Home' and Eirene Mort on 'Le Japon Artistique', reflecting her extensive travels. In the period immediately after each of the world wars, education had a different emphasis, with volunteers from the Society teaching remedial craft in military hospitals under the auspices of the Red Cross.

In 1945, the Society established a Craft Training College with the objective of developing a diploma course to raise the standard of craft through advanced education. These classes, encompassing colour, textile printing, sewing and weaving, continued until 1957. A correspondence course on colour and fabric printing was circulated as far as New Guinea and Singapore. College courses were extended to include interior design, costume and stage design, and pottery as well as basketry and leatherwork. Interest in traditional crafts declined in the late 1950s, and financial difficulties finally caused the College to close.

Craft tuition did not resume until 1975, after the Society had rented new,

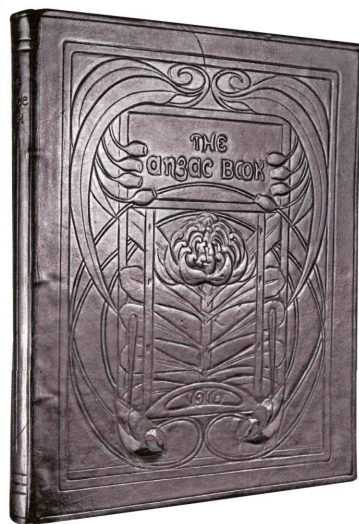


Top left: Grace Seccombe (member 1930-55), slip-cast earthenware vase with modelled koala figure and multi-coloured glazes. SA&CNSW collection

Left: Nell Holden (member 1928-80, president 1966-68), slip-cast earthenware Banksia Men jug. SA&CNSW collection



Far left: Ada Newman (member 1906-49), hand-painted porcelain jug with geebung motif typical of early endeavours to introduce Australian flora into craft designs. The geebung (*Persoonia pinifolia*) was a native fruit eaten by Aborigines. SA&CNSW collection



Left: Myra Mullins (member 1912-15), tooled leather Anzac book cover, 1916. Art Gallery of NSW collection



Below left: Elisabeth Söderberg, repoussé copper bowl with flying fox design. Art Gallery of NSW collection

larger premises in Harrington Street, The Rocks the previous year. Classes were offered in silver jewellery, leatherwork, enamelling, lace making and china painting. By this time, the interest in and demand for the Society's hand crafted items had been revitalised, largely due to the creative energy and talent of such members as potter, sculptor and kite maker Peter Travis. The Society had survived the post-war demand for cheaper machine-made articles and the government policy of encouraging only the production of utilitarian wares.

Classes continued until 1985 when we lost our Harrington Street space to the property development boom. Gallery space was acquired in the Metcalfe Stores in George Street, The Rocks but with insufficient space for classes. Teaching silver and leather craft continued under the Society's auspices for some years at other locations.

A new generation of craft practitioners was emerging, who benefited from the craft courses offered by tertiary colleges and local government funded evening colleges. Some Society members taught at these venues while others continued the tradition of private studio tuition and workshops. Valerie Aked (member 1981-

present) taught precious metalwork at Enmore TAFE (1995-2000) and enamelling at Randwick TAFE (1994). She tutored for the Society until 1995 and many of our current silversmith members are her former students. Elizabeth Calnan (member 1989-present) taught weaving at the Strathfield School of Textiles and later lectured at the ANU. Workshops have become an important teaching vehicle for members, especially in the crafts of enamelling, nuno felting and creative knitting.

The international reputation of some members brought invitations to teach in other countries. Carolyn Delzoppo has won awards for enamelling in Japan and has conducted workshops in Germany and the USA. Trudy

Billingsley (member 1997-present) held workshops in Japan, Germany and New Zealand on surface embellishment and manipulation of fabric. Nonie McFarlane (president 1989-91) wrote a definitive book on her strawcraft and won many national competitions in England, where the ancient rural craft of making 'corn dollies' was well established. She also taught in the USA and Russia. The wheat farmers of West Australia commissioned a spectacular corn dolly tableau to be presented to the Governor-General. Nonie was responsible for the Society's participation in the Australian Decorative Arts exhibition at the Art Gallery of NSW in 1991 and before her untimely death initiated the planning for our centenary celebrations.



Above: Nonie McFarlane (member 1980-2002, president 1989-91), straw neckpiece typical of the detailed precision with which Nonie plaited and wove her intricate designs using wheat as her basic fibre. SA&CNSW collection



Left: Valerie Aked, sterling silver and fine silver neckpiece with 24K gold kumboo and jasper picture stone set in 18K gold

A COMMUNITY OF CRAFT WORKERS

The value of promoting social interaction and good fellowship among people who shared an interest in arts and crafts was important to the early members. This objective was enshrined in the constitution and became a lasting tradition. With around 100 members practising a diversity of crafts today, there is social interaction every day as various members meet to staff the galleries.

In the first half of the 20th century, exhibitions were black-tie social events. Today, the openings of our special

exhibitions are less formal, but the discussions on craft that ensue are just as animated. Further discourse and exchange of ideas flows from our website, which illustrates and links all the Society's handcrafts.

MOVING WITH THE TIMES

In the 21st century, the aims and objectives of the Society have not changed. We still encourage decorative handcrafts and promote original Australian designs. Craft workers teach from their studios and exhibit under the Society's banner. Evolution within the Society is more a reflection of the social, economic and technological changes of the 20th century.

In the early 1900s, many craftspeople were multi-skilled and practised a variety of crafts. One of our first weavers, Suzanne Gether, who trained in this craft in Denmark, also taught woodcarving, pyrography and leatherwork. Gether wrote that 'weaving must have a future in Australia if for no other reason than the fact that the use of Australian wool should appeal to the squatter's family when decorating their homesteads with unique designs and patterns for their cushions, carpets and curtains.' In more recent times, spinning and weaving has become a more specialised craft.

Weavers today may still use hand looms, but they now incorporate finer wools and designer yarns such as silk, alpaca and camel. New yarn dyeing techniques have helped facilitate their craft. More affordable technology and computer assisted design software allow the craftspeople to weave unique and complex designs with greater ease. With the social change of more women in the workforce, there has been greater emphasis on fashion in clothing. Formerly, decorating the home appeared to be a major incentive. Individually designed handcrafted knits and woven garments have a more prominent display space in our galleries today.

The proliferation of courses offered by government educational institutions in the 1970s and 80s changed the face of craft. In the 1920s,

Nell Holden had difficulty finding a class that taught throwing. Eventually, a thrower at Fowler's commercial pottery taught her to use the wheel. In the early years, hand-painting of ceramic blanks, rather than throwing, was a more popular craft because tuition in those days centred on drawing and painting.

Most of the current potters in the Society studied at Brookvale TAFE where teacher Dianne McLean encouraged both skill and creativity. Pottery underwent a fundamental change with space-age technology. The availability of fibre kilns, paper clays and brighter underglaze colours now allow the potter to be more adventurous. In keeping with today's trends, some potters are more conscious of the environment and are experimenting with lower firing temperatures in their kilns and the use of non-toxic glazes.

Woodcraft in the early 20th century related to carving and pyrography and was practised by women. For the Society's 1910 exhibition, Gertrude King carved an oak chair with a waratah design, which was subsequently acquired by the Powerhouse Museum. Constance Evans (member c. 1909) carved the side altar in Newcastle Cathedral and an altar in the Bulahdelah church. Our woodworkers today are all men who turn sculptured vessels on the lathe. Woodturning did not gain prominence until after World War II, when more affordable machinery was produced that enabled woodworkers to practise turning in their own studio or workshop. Woodwork in the Society's galleries is crafted from Australian timbers with their distinctive patterns and patinas - red gum burls, coolabah, grasstree, Huon pine and the purple-black Acacia carnei.

Leatherwork, once the domain of women, is now crafted by men. The tooled Moroccan leather of the 1920s has been superseded by finely braided Australian hides.

Printmaking has played an active role throughout the life of the Society. Roy Davis (c. 1926), made early woodcuts and

etchings, Eirene Mort's paper cuts are held in the National Gallery of Australia, and Margaret Preston's lino prints and woodcuts are renowned. Today, the gallery displays the fine prints of wood engraver Yngvar Stroem-Hansen and the hand-pulled limited prints of Minky Grant, who practises various techniques of printmaking including etching, dry point engraving, lino cut and collograph processes.

Right: Liz Calnan, 24-shaft original pattern, hand-dyed woven silk scarf, 2006

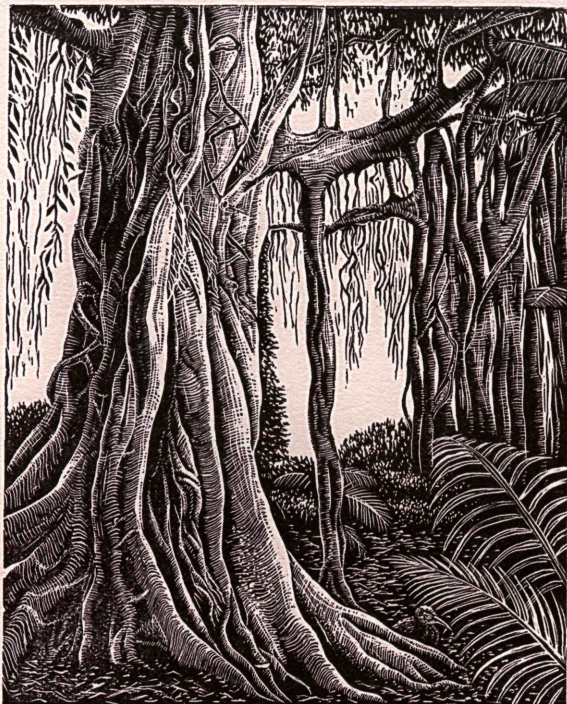
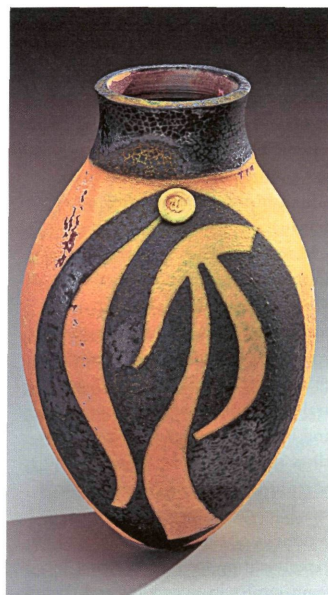
Below: Wendy Cartwright, 8-shaft original pattern, double-weave reversible wrap in merino wool, 2006



Right: Krysia St Clair, low-fired ceramic vessel with lithium glaze

Below: Mike St Clair, ebonised three-footed bowl of river red gum with a natural edge inside, 1992

Bottom: Yngvar Stroem-Hansen, 'Banyan Tree'. He was a wood engraver and limited edition printmaker who specialised in engraved prints of Australian birds, animals, wildflowers and landscapes



64/
90

"Banyan Forest"

Y. Stroem-Hansen

The multicultural nature of the Australian population since World War II is reflected in our Society. The craft of embroidery is just one example. At the beginning of the 20th century, many Australian women practised the art of fine needlework in the manner of their British forebears, e.g. Olive Nock's embroidered box. Through diligence and constant experiment, Australian flora and fauna became part of the early designs. Current member Marta Catano, of Columbian cultural background, uses the old technology of the treadle sewing machine to create sewn pictures incorporating iconic Australian motifs. Other craftswomen create amazing fabric collages using the modern sewing machine with its digital technology.

In the fabric screening process of the 1940s and 50s, Anne Outlaw and Nan Mackenzie, who established their own business called Annan Fabrics, chose bold designs and vibrant colours. Australian motifs were still prominent in their designs. In the 1990s, Dorothy Hood (member 1992-97), an art teacher, spinner and weaver, became interested in silk painting after a tour of kimono

exhibitions in Japan. Drawing upon nature for inspiration, she created extraordinary wall hangings and scarves painted on silk.

Japanese influence is also evident in the unique textiles of Carolyn Cabena, the current President. Australian flora and fauna still dominate her designs but the techniques used are shibori and devore. Shibori is a Japanese technique used in designing kimono fabrics. One process involves tying small areas of fabric with fine threads which, when removed after the dyeing process, reveal a myriad of patterns. Devore has evolved from an ancient decorative printing process, removing the pile from silk velvet to reveal transparent designs on the silk backing.

The basic techniques of metalwork have changed little over the century. Multi-patterned semi-precious stones retain their importance. Although silversmiths Mildred Creed (member 1907) and Rhoda Wager (member 1913) crafted beautiful jewellery, early exhibitions were dominated by hollow ware and flatware such as Elisabeth Söderberg's trays and bowls or Mildred Creed's spoons. With the more recent emphasis on decorating the body rather than the home, handcrafted gold and silver jewellery has become more prominent. Metalwork now reflects an Asian influence with Japanese mokume - the layering of different metals - or Korean kumboo, a gold leaf decorating technique. Jewellery is no longer limited to precious metals. Craftspeople have experimented with enamels, glass, ceramics, plastics and painting on wood to create adornments.

The opportunity to attend specialised craft classes in the 1970s and 80s influenced the range of craft produced. At this time, studio glass gained prominence. On returning from studying studio glass in England, Maureen Cahill taught at the Sydney College of the Arts where full-time degree courses were offered. All our glass workers were her students and they initially experimented with glass-forming techniques in ceramic kilns while incorporating the ideas of the visual arts. The range of glass fusion

Below: Olive Nock (member 1929-77),
hand-embroidered box
Bottom: Marta Catano, treadle machine
embroidered textile collage





Far left: Dorothy Hood (member 1992-97), hand-painted flannel flower silk scarf using gutta resist to separate the colour segments of her design

Left: Carolyn Cabena (president 2005-06), tailored jacket in silk rayon, surface textured by the devore process

Below: Jenny Hopper, nuno felting wrap, with merino wool and hand-dyed silk fibre felted onto silk georgette backing, 2006



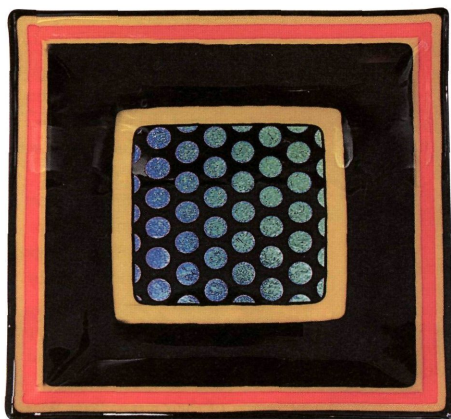
has been extended with the availability of compatible glasses and space age, multi-layered dichroic glass.

Enamel craft underwent a resurgence in the 1960s and 70s as classes were offered in colleges and materials became more available. Large enamel bowls reflecting the colours and textures of the Australian landscape brighten our galleries, while enamelled wall panels decorate the walls.

One craft of particular interest to overseas visitors is nuno felting. Following discussion at a National Symposium of Australian Felters in the 1990s, a move to experiment with felting onto a fabric backing opened the way to exciting new design opportunities in this craft.

These are just a few recordings of the Society's art and craft activities. By sharing their experience, expertise and ideas, generations of dedicated men and women of the Society have ensured the continuing vitality and viability of decorative handicrafts in our community for one hundred years.

Margot Alexander, kiln-fired glass bowl, with layers of glass cast in a fibreboard template and re-fired in the kiln to shape the bowl



Margaret Ramsey, kiln-fired glass platter with dichroic glass inlay

The Society will celebrate its centenary with exhibitions at the Manly Art Gallery and Museum (28 July - 3 September) and in the Society's galleries, Telopea Gallery - Craft at The Rocks and Australian Image - Craft at The Rocks (1 August - 3 September). For more information, go to www.artsandcraftsnsw.com.au

Ruth Kerrison is a silversmith, a member of the Society of Arts and Crafts of NSW since 1988, and serves as the curator of the Society's historical collection. She has a BA (History Honours) from the University of Queensland.

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NEWS and EXHIBITIONS



CENTENARY OF THE EXHIBITION OF WOMEN'S WORK 1907

The 1907 exhibition of Women's Work opened on 23 October at the Exhibition Buildings, Melbourne, running for six weeks. Over 16,000 exhibits covered a wide range of interests from oil painting and woodcarving, music and sports to needlework and laundry.

For the centenary next year, Castlemaine Art Gallery is mounting an exhibition from 21 October – 2 December 2007, bringing together items from the original exhibition.

If you know of any items from the 1907 exhibition, contact the exhibition curator Kirsten McKay at Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historical Museum, PO Box 248, Castlemaine Vic 3450, telephone 03 5472 2292 or fax 03 5470 6184.

GLADYS REYNELL EXHIBITION IN ADELAIDE

From 30 June – 24 September 2006, a retrospective exhibition and accompanying book, *The Most Delightful Thing on Earth: The Art of Gladys Reynell*, will be part of the 125th anniversary celebrations at the Art Gallery of South Australia. The timing also coincides with the 50th anniversary of her death in 1956.

Gladys Reynell is South Australia's first studio potter. She trained in art in Adelaide, but an extended stay in Britain from 1912 to 1919 with fellow artist Margaret Preston exposed her to the British *avant-garde*.

Back in South Australia, she established the Reynella Pottery south of Adelaide at Reynella in 1919. Later, after marrying, she

moved to Victoria where she continued her career as an artist. Her legacy of domestic and artistic ceramics is matched by many of her designs, paintings, drawings and prints.

This book by Robert Reason, the Gallery's Curator of Decorative Arts, is the first monograph devoted to Reynell and presents new research and insights into the work of this reticent artist.

The Gallery acquired its first Reynell-related work as early as 1908, a portrait of the artist by Bessie Davidson. The exhibition draws upon the Gallery's own holding of 107 Reynell's works, including a large number of ceramics, several paintings and prints, and a remarkable folio of drawings by the artist.



Gladys Reynell (Australia 1881-1956), *Emu beaker*; 1917, London, earthenware, h 10.0 diam 8.7 cm. South Australian Government Grant assisted by the Crafts Board of the Australia Council 1980, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

REMUED POTTERY WEBSITE

Remued pottery has become a favourite among Australian collectors. Made by Premier Pottery in the Melbourne suburb of Preston from the early 1930s to the mid 1950s, their wares ranged from small, simple pots that are inexpensive, to rare decorated pieces that sell for thousands.

Premier Pottery Preston produced other lines in their earlier years, branded 'PPP' and 'Pamela'. Characteristic features are their luscious glaze colours, usually drip-glazed, and often applied, modelled gumleaves and gumnuts. Most pieces were



Remued pottery in the National Gallery of Victoria, from the touring exhibition *Gumnuts and Glazes*

produced in a series of standard shapes and had a number denoting the shape incised underneath.

Collectors face a confusing picture. Not only were there hundreds of Remued shapes but, as output and styles changed over time, numbering systems changed.

Premier Pottery Preston's most productive years saw two main numbering series, 'Early' and 'Later', plus other minor series. When a complete new numbering system was adopted, the most popular shapes continued in production, but with new numbers. As a result, the same number may be found on two or more different shapes, and a particular shape may have two or more different numbers. The situation is further complicated by the practice in the early years of re-assigning disused numbers to new shapes.

Premier was just a small firm and never produced comprehensive catalogues of their wares. Peter Watson has set up a new website, www.remued.com, in an attempt to compile the first such catalogue. Hundreds of shape numbers have been identified but many gaps remain, and users of the catalogue are invited to contribute information.

CORRECTION & APOLOGY TO ANDREW MOORE

Last issue, we incorrectly cited the name of Andrew Moore, author of the excellent book *Francis de Groot: Irish Fascist Australian legend* published by The Federation Press. Our apologies to Professor Moore.

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Peter Purves-Smith
(1912 - 1949)



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AUSTRALIAN FURNITURE AND DECORATIVE ARTS

SATURDAY 1ST JULY 2006
AT OUR LAUNCESTON AUCTION ROOMS

When artist Henry Mundy arrived in Van Diemen's Land in 1831, he was immediately appointed Drawing and Music Master at the noted ladies seminary, Ellinthorpe Hall [sic].

The school near Ross, VDL, and run by Mrs George Carr Clarke, was acknowledged as the leading institution of its type in the colony.

The Mundy portrait, miniatures, daguerreotypes, colonial cedar, marine oil paintings and decorative arts represented in this auction are contemporary with this period. They represent a wonderful social history of Tasmania during the 1830s-1840s.



Right: A leather and woolwork polescreen on a huon pine base in as found condition



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An extremely fine black silk embroidered needlework panel. Circa 1900.

I am particularly interested in 19th century Tasmanian needlework and wish to acquire samples of a similar quality. Size 26" x 21"

Provenance: from the collection of Miss Foster, *Mertonvale*, Campbell Town, Tasmania.

