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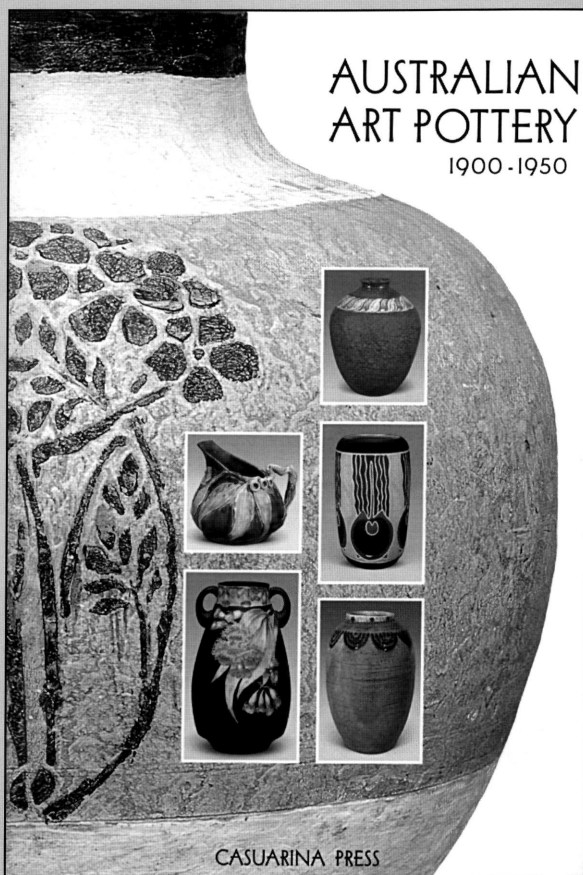
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# Australiana

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**COVER:** Grace Saccombe (1880-1956), *Budgerigars*, Sydney NSW, glazed earthenware, c. 1935, h 16.5 cm. Photo Andrew Simpson, from Australian Art Pottery 1900-1950, published by Casuarina Press.

# Editorial

Credibility is one of the most important attributes of any person or organisation. Businesses, governments and other organisations have to strive for it, and some do it better than others. We have to do it too.

Our magazine has glitches, but on the whole over our 26 years we've stood up well to scrutiny. And where we haven't, we have certainly allowed people to have their say in putting contrary points of view.

Having two editors is useful, as we complement each other in knowledge. To quote a telling example, Kevin and I were talking about James Broadbent's *India, China Australia* exhibition last year, and he mentioned that at the auction of Captain Piper's palatial *Henrietta Villa* on Sydney Harbour in 1827, there were in the drawing room a pair of figures of mandarines with nodding heads. His knowledge, as this demonstrates, is truly prodigious; but unknown to Kevin, I had been reading about it only a few days before in the contemporary newspapers. So I shot back, 'Yes, but one of them was damaged!' My knowledge of this esoteric subject was just a fluke. I hardly ever catch him out, but it did give me childish pleasure.

But we don't and can't know everything, so we would like to have a panel of experts in various areas that we can refer articles to for checking. It would increase our credibility and accuracy if we could have submitted articles refereed in this way, as is common for academic journals. That will not stop debate: we encourage people to present new ideas, about which there is certain to be disputation.

The Australiana Society has been a vehicle for publishing research for almost as long as it has been around. But we also want to harness others to help advance the research interests of members. For instance, I have a number of concurrent research projects, some of them stalled because I need further information before I can publish. In research, you often have to venture into other fields and like, everyone else, I for one

do not want to be humiliated for missing some point that's obvious to someone else. So it would be helpful to set up some cooperative scheme.

Both of these aims could be achieved if we can set up a register of expertise and current research interests, and post it on our website where members and others could peruse it. I'm happy to start it up, so let me know if you think it would be helpful. And yes there is a degree of self-interest here; it will hopefully remove some roadblocks to members contributing articles to our magazine.

Tasmanian members are to be congratulated in starting up a Society event program, with a meeting in Hobart addressed by Launceston researcher Robyn Lake in May. Twenty members showed up to the first event, and we hope this will be the first of many events, not only in Tasmania but in other states as well. It is no easy task to set up such a program, and we encourage others to get involved.

Most of our activities are confined to the Sydney Basin, where there are admittedly many interesting colonial properties to visit. Our first excursion to the Australian Capital Territory is planned for the weekend of 3-4 July, to expand our activities further outside Sydney when we will visit the institutions in the national capital. Details, as usual, can be found on our website.

We will be expanding the chronological range of interests in our visits and magazine. Colonial Australia is not the period favoured by collectors, who are taking more of an interest in 20th and 21st century art and artefacts, as the stunning new book on art pottery reviewed in this issue demonstrates. ■

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Brush scene, Brisbane Water, 1848 (detail) Conrad Martens, oil on canvas, Dixon Galleries, State Library of New South Wales

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# 'Colony New Australia' notes

ANDREW CRELLIN

*'We will write the history of humanity on the rocks of the Andes.'* William Lane, c. 1892

Several 'shinplasters' issued at the 'Colonia Nueva Australia' have recently become available, for the first time in a number of years. Just five notes relating to this fascinating experiment in social theory are known to remain in existence; two are in public collections, these are two of the three known in private hands.

Profoundly disheartened by the lot of the common man in Australia in the 1890s and inspired by the ideal of socialism, 220 colonists left Sydney on 16 July 1893 bound for a workingman's paradise in South America. The primary motivator behind the expedition was William Lane, one of Australia's foremost radical journalists, a man with passion for labour issues and the trade union movement.

Lane decided that the only way to bring about a radical change in government was not by violence or political unrest, but by 'starting again', specifically establishing a new colony in which the benefits of socialism would be shown to the world. Paraguay was selected as a suitable location – as isolated from capitalism as possible, and where the local government was amenable to foreign arrivals.

Once established, Colony New Australia was bound by temperance and racial exclusiveness, rules some settlers refused to comply with. Lane would not compromise however; his Puritanism is said to have contained no tact, and little human sympathy. He is described as autocratic, and under pressure his simplistic communism and mateship developed a non-

denominational, but distinctly religious tinge. The final result of Lane's abrasiveness, coming about after the arrival of a further contingent of colonists, was a rift between himself and the majority of his followers.

On 7 July 1894, 63 settlers loyal to Lane relocated to a new colony, named Cosme, 72 km south of New Australia. They were joined by other true believers from Australia, as well as by a few families recruited by Lane during an extended visit to England between 1896 and 1898.

As the colony never became more than barely self-sufficient, numerous settlers either sought a better standard of living elsewhere, or were expelled for breaches of communal practice. Weakened by illness and hardship, and disillusioned by human nature, Lane resigned as chairman of Cosme in June 1899. The colonies of New Australia and Cosme retained some of their original character following Lane's departure, however becoming capitalistic and Paraguayan with the passage of time.

'As an experiment in communism, New Australia was a great disillusionment. They searched for the equality of mankind, and could not find it. Still, Australia had given the world its first experiment in communism.' Jack Lang, *I Remember*, 1956

Although by going to Paraguay, William Lane in one sense opted out of Australian history, where his actions are seen as the reaction of a high-profile union activist to the Depression and strikes of the 1890s, he remains a significant figure in Australia's social history.

Similarly, although the notes issued at Colonia Nueva Australia are not recognised as being part of Australia's mainstream numismatic corpus, they are the medium of exchange conceived and accepted by a group of Australians reacting to one of the toughest periods in Australia's economic history.

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Two notes from 'Colonia Nueva Australia' the Australian colony founded in Paraguay in 1893

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## Colonia Nueva Australia 1 Peso Notes

Physically, the short-lived notes of *Colonia Nueva Australia* embody and depict many of the values Lane hoped would represent – discipline; temperance; simple living; democracy; mateship and harmony.

The paper is a reasonably hardy and practical example of paper stock during this period, the ink is a rich red, while the mixture of a sans serif & serif fonts in the typeface alludes to the earnest Australian colonists toiling in the exotic South American landscape.

The primary symbol on each of the note differs – the first (clasped hands) is clear testimony to William Lane's firm belief in the righteousness of the New Australian "who grips hand for the wellbeing of all". The other symbol, featuring a lion guarding a

Phrygian cap, alludes more to the strength with which the colonists at New Australia defended the principles of democracy and harmony against the taints of capitalism.



Notes pictured actual size



Just five notes from the Colony of New Australia are known to remain in existence – these are two of just three notes in private hands. As to other tangible relics of the Colony of New Australia, two philatelic collectibles have been sighted in recent years, one being a letter postmarked *Colonia Nueva Australia*, the second being a lot of 13 similarly linked. Little else relating to this fascinating experiment in social theory has been seen.

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# A scrimshaw box in the Clyde Bank Collection

## and its conjectural Australian significance

ROBERT M. WARNEKE

*Bob Warneke revisits John Hawkins' theory that the subject engraved on the elaborate scrimshaw box we featured last year was of Matthew Flinders careening his ship Investigator in Australian waters*



Plate 1. The sewing box at auction - with permission.

This sewing box, which is a remarkable example of the scrimshander's art, was featured in an article by J.B. Hawkins titled 'Australian decorative arts in the Clyde Bank collection', in the May 2003 issue of *Australiana* (vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 56-70) and by a photograph on the cover.

Hawkins invoked several historical sources to present a most beguiling argument that the box could be an Australian artefact of considerable historical importance, in regard to the significance of two scenes scrimshawed on the front panel and possible geographic sources of the whalebone, sperm whale teeth and tortoiseshell used in the box's construction and decoration.

Hawkins suggested that a three-masted vessel featured in both scenes are representations of HM *Investigator* sloop, commanded by Matthew Flinders, and that the raw materials could have been collected by someone on board during their outward passage from England to Australia in the latter part of 1801, arriving in Port Jackson on 9 May 1802. Hawkins interpreted one scene as the *Investigator* in King George Sound during December 1801.

If both his conjectures are correct, it would follow that the box was either crafted at sea or perhaps in Sydney by that member of the ship's company during her subsequent period of service under Flinders, between January 1802 and June 1803, or soon after while the materials were still to hand.

The box first came to public notice when it was offered for sale in Tasmania by Gowans Auctions at their sale of 11 May 2002.<sup>1</sup> Gowans featured the box on their website and in their catalogue, describing it as a 'colonial scrimshaw whalebone and tortoiseshell sewing box on legs in the shape of skeleton hands.'<sup>2</sup>

I closely examined the box on 5 March 2002 and again at the auction. At the time of consignment it was in a sorry state, lacking one of four drawers, the side panels of the carcass had warped causing parts of the vertical joints to separate, significant elements of the decorative tortoiseshell overlays on the carcass and lid had broken away and were missing (plate 1), and an internal floor above the drawers (presumably of whalebone) was also missing (plate 2). As can be seen in the recent photographs illustrating the Hawkins article, the box has been extensively restored and the missing drawer replaced by a faithful facsimile. It is quite small, measuring 24.8 x 16.0 cm (excluding the projecting feet) and stands 16.7 cm to 18.2 cm high, including the lid, which has a pronounced warp.<sup>3</sup>

### The organic materials and workmanship

The sides of the carcass, the lid, and the three original drawers are made of single rectangular pieces of whale 'pan' bone.<sup>4</sup> The base, which is the largest structural element, is comprised of eight interlocking pieces (plate 3) which are either attached to a rectangular inner floor piece (partly visible in plate 2) or the latter is contiguous with the central octagonal element visible in plate 3, i.e. it is a thicker slab that has been rebated to accommodate the peripheral pieces. A small block of whalebone of coarser texture has been shaped to infill a rebate at the rear of the left front 'foot', a feature that is lacking in the other three and may represent either an early repair or a change of mind by the maker in how to attach the feet to the base, i.e. having expended so much effort in carving that (first?) foot it was not to be discarded. Thin plaques of pan bone have been used in the decoration of the top of the lid. The feet (carved in the form of a singular thin-fingered hand clutching a slightly flattened ball), the cock beading of the drawers and the drawer knobs are of sperm whale tooth ivory (comprised of dentine, as is elephant ivory), and the whole is strikingly enhanced by the use of dark tortoiseshell as a central panel on each of the drawer-fronts, narrow reeded strips framing the group of drawers, wider plain or single reeded strips at the edges of the carcass and

lid (plate 4), and contrasting pieces alternating with those of pan bone to form a central panel of diamond chequerboard marquetry on the lid (plate 5). All the overlays are fixed in place with small silver (?) pins, but iron nails (now slightly rusted) have been used to attach the base to the frame of the carcase, the feet to the base and the lid to its shallow frame.

The quality of the dovetailing of the vertical joins of the carcase, lid and drawer fronts, the accomplished carving of the 'feet', the precision of the marquetry work and touches such as the cock beading, the reeding, and the quarter-round moulding of the edges of the base all attest to the skill and finesse of the maker and possibly to professional experience. On the evidence of the published photographs, the restoration of the piece is quite faithful and serves to emphasise the sophistication of the original concept.

### Sources of the organic materials

In support of the notion that the raw materials were collected by someone on HMS *Investigator*, Hawkins suggested that the tortoiseshell could have been obtained from marine turtles known to have been captured during the vessel's outward passage to Australia (when nearing Madeira in July 1801) and dissected on board, citing the diary kept by the ship's naturalist, Robert Brown.<sup>5</sup> However, neither Brown's nor Flinders<sup>6</sup> accounts of these events reveal anything further on that point, but Flinders does helpfully state that they were hawksbills (the source of the tortoiseshell of commerce) and that one weighed about 30 pounds (13.5 kg), which would have yielded good-sized pieces of shell.

Hawkins then suggested that the pan bone and sperm whale teeth could have been found in King George Sound during the *Investigator's* visit because even at that early date, according to him, it was an active bay-whaling location where 'whales...were so plentiful they could be hunted from the land.' Apparently to add weight to the notion that numerous sperm whalers had been frequenting the Sound he then quoted (see his note 31) part of an unsourced statement by Mercer<sup>7</sup> that 'in 1791 no fewer than 102 small whaleships were working in southern waters.' However, since Mercer's statement concludes '...often close to icebergs and far from help' he can only be referring to southern whaling in general because, at that time, virtually all southern whaling was focused in the South Atlantic where sperm whales were still plentiful. Although rapid expansion of sperm whaling into the Pacific Ocean was imminent, a long-standing obstacle for British owners of whaleships was the Honourable East India Company's trading monopoly, sanctioned by Parliament, which stringently restricted all commercial activity by British subjects eastward of the Cape of Good Hope or west of Cape Horn, except under licence.<sup>8</sup> American whalers were of course unaffected and in 1790 had only just penetrated the eastern Pacific by rounding the Horn, where at first they concentrated on the virgin sperm whaling grounds that lay off the west coast of South America.<sup>9</sup> In the western Pacific the prospects for whaling were first tested off the east coast of Australia in 1791 by British whaleships that had been contracted to transport convicts and stores to Sydney. The owners were prompted to undertake this venture by earlier reports of large schools of sperm whales in that region, but the ships (once free of their human cargo) sailed with indifferent success and it was not until the Honourable Company's restrictions were virtually removed in 1798<sup>10</sup> that owners began to send their ships to search for whales more widely in Australian waters.<sup>11</sup>

Very little is known about the first whalers to venture into Western Australian waters about the turn of the 18th century and records of early visits are few.<sup>12</sup> Hawkins noted one such visit to

King George Sound, commenting that 'Flinders found a whaler's grave marked by a brass plaque; the captain and crew died there, 27 August 1800.' What Flinders<sup>13</sup> actually wrote was 'Returning to the entrance [of Oyster Harbour], we landed on the east side, and found a spot of ground six or eight feet square, dug up and trimmed like a garden; and upon it was lying a piece of sheet copper, bearing this inscription: "August 27, 1800. Chr Dixon [sic] – ship Elligood;"...'.

The assumption that Captain Christopher Dixon and some of his crew were buried there is based on a terse report published at Cape Town (where the *Elligood* called on her way home to England) of his death and the deaths of nine crew-members from scurvy, but neither places nor dates were mentioned.<sup>14, 15</sup> While the precise circumstances of Dixon's and his men's demise are of no concern here, the reason for the *Elligood's* visit and the crew's activities in the Sound are directly relevant to the question of whether the remains of sperm whales would have been available to Flinders' crew when they arrived there 14 months later.

By great good fortune, there is a first-hand account which relates to the *Elligood's* voyage – a journal that was kept by Captain Thomas Dennis of the *Kingston*, a whaleship that belonged to the same owners and sailed in company with her.<sup>16</sup> Dennis reveals that the captains were instructed to explore untried waters off north-west Australia if the usual whaling grounds off Natal were judged too dangerous because of the activities of French privateers. In that eventuality they planned to visit King George the Third's Sound (so named and known from George Vancouver's discovery in 1791) first, for wood and water. As it happened, the *Kingston* and the *Elligood* did not encounter sperm whales between leaving Natal and making their landfall 'near the SW Cape of New Holland' on 9 August 1800, nor while they lay at anchor in the Sound, but the *Kingston's* boats did capture three right whales there. Dennis recorded sighting their first sperm whale in Australian waters eight days after their departure on 5 September 1800, when they were well offshore and far to the west.

Be all that as it may, two crucial aspects of Hawkins' argument are that sperm whales were readily available within rowing distance of the Sound, and that they were processed there. In reality, sperm whales do not habitually range inshore of the edge of the continental shelf, which in that vicinity lies about 20 nautical miles (37 km) to the south, well beyond the reach of boats operating from a whaleship anchored in the Sound. Right whales (which do not provide pan bone and have baleen instead of teeth) frequented those inshore waters during the winter months and became the *later* primary object of bay and shore whaling in Australia.<sup>17, 18</sup>

A further technical point – if, by chance, a sperm whale carcase had conveniently drifted into the Sound and decomposed there (the vast majority of known strandings of this species in Australia have involved single animals), only the massive skull and bulky vertebrae would tend to remain in view, while the ribs, smaller bones, lower jaw and teeth (which eventually fall from the sockets) would lodge in sediments in the shallows or, if cast ashore, would rapidly disappear into the sand.

Finally, since pan bone and teeth were abundant non-commercial by-products of sperm whaling, it is hardly surprising that they were used extensively by whalers as a surface (once suitably prepared) on which to incise or scribe scenes, portraits and imaginative designs, and were also used in making and decorating an extraordinary range of constructed scrimshaw articles, including ditty boxes, sewing baskets and boxes, swiffs, pastry crimpers, walking sticks and trinkets. Thus, on the matter of

its components, no particular feature of the box identifies it as Australian in origin.

The ill-fated Dixon may have been a bit-player in this story, but I think he and that forlorn plot at the entrance to Oyster Harbour deserve a footnote. Dixon's remains do not lie there. Scurvy claimed him some four months later, on 4 January 1801 somewhere between the north-west coast of Australia and Madagascar, and he was promptly buried at sea.<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately the purpose of the plot remains a mystery because Captain Dennis's journal record of their visit to the Sound deals only with ship matters and his hunts for whales; the *Ellitgood's* activities received scant mention.

### Evidence of the scrimshaw scenes

Of the two scenes, the detail of the one on the right (**plate 6**) is the nub of any claim to an Australian origin. I agree with Hawkins that the vessel depicted is not a whaler, primarily because none of the boats illustrated with the careened ship are whaleboats. The absence of davits from which whaleboats were lowered (**plate 8**) is not necessarily significant because scrimshaw depictions of whaleships often lack that detail and this is especially the case in scenes in which the whaleboats are on the water pursuing whales.<sup>19</sup> The failure to include davits is partly due to the small scale of many images, and partly because the majority are relatively crudely done or are stylised representations rather than detailed ship portraits.

In this case the left-hand scene of the ship under sail (**plate 7**) – which also lacks davits and may or may not be the same vessel in the right hand scene – clearly shows it to have three masts carrying square sails on the fore and main, and with square sails above a fore-and-aft sail on the mizzen, i.e. she is ship-rigged and so is the careened vessel. The *Investigator*, although rated by the Royal Navy as a sloop, was also three-masted and ship-rigged. The detail of the larger r/h scene is much more revealing, depicting a vessel with three masts lying on her starboard side in the shallows of a small inlet, with open water beyond (in **plate 6** a tiny boat with a single mast and sail can just be seen to the right of the foremast and below the yard) and on the opposite side is a rocky bluff fronted by low vegetation and large boulders at the water's edge. Intriguing additional details include a boat's crew beside the ship's exposed hull, either engaged in caulking (as Hawkins suggests) or repairing what appears to be a hole in her planking, which is drawn with fine parallel lines, revealing that the hull is not coppered. In the foreground is a low shore littered with a jumble of items of gear including a pair of large anchors (rendered with a single shank and stock but with two arms in the same plane), a third stockless anchor lying flat, a coil of rope, a large barrel, buoys and a grapnel. Nearby is a crudely drawn figure of a man wearing a brimmed hat and tending a small iron pot over a fire; as Hawkins suggests he is probably boiling pitch to be used in the repairs. In the background to the right is a substantial barn-like building with a pitched roof, windows and doorway, and further back is an open shed with post supports. What appears to be a minimally sketched tree of indeterminate species (it is not a palm) stands to the right of the building.

The features by which Hawkins identifies the place as Princess Royal Harbour in King George Sound are necessarily topographical. He equates the high rugged mass at the left-hand margin of the scene with Mt Melville and a more distant conical hill, on the right behind the building, with Mt Clarence. Several points do not tally however – there is a second and more distant conical hill to the right and crucially, as reference to Flinders' chart

of the Sound<sup>20</sup> and the campsite shows, there cannot be open water between Hawkins' Mts Melville and Clarence. Furthermore, in the context of the expedition's temporary encampment, requiring only a few tents on shore, the presence of the buildings and the absence of tents in the scrimshaw scene cannot be explained.

Hawkins offers two points to support his contention that the scrimshawed vessels could be the *Investigator*. First, he perceived similarities between them and contemporary drawings of her (not referenced) and second, because the ship in the r/h scene is careened for repairs; as he pointed out the *Investigator* lay in the harbour while repairs were done.<sup>21</sup> Hawkins makes secondary points to show that the scene had nothing to do with shore whaling (see my note 17), i.e. all the small boats – one at work beside the hull, two beached – have square sterns whereas whaleboats are double-ended, and there are no sheerlegs, try works or a depot of oil casks on shore.

In regard to similarities between the scrimshaw images of the vessels and a contemporary drawing of the *Investigator*, Hawkins noted one in relation to the prow, a feature that can only be seen in the image in the l/h scene. Unfortunately, in all three *original* contemporary illustrations of the *Investigator* known to me,<sup>22, 23</sup> she is portrayed more or less stern-on by the respective artists; therefore Hawkins must be either referring to a fourth contemporary drawing which presumably shows her in lateral profile or more or less bow-on, or he used the term prow in error. While it can be said that the stern of the ship in the r/h scene is not dissimilar to the stern shown in each of the known images of the *Investigator* identified here, there is not one specific feature of any of the latter that categorically identifies them all as the same vessel! On the other hand, while it is obvious that the number of gunports in the scrimshaw images (six) does not compare with the known complement on the *Investigator* (ten),<sup>24</sup> given the intrinsic unreliability of the scrimshaw representations that difference is not particularly relevant.

What must be emphasised at this point is that no detailed plans of the *Investigator* survive, and none of the contemporary images of her<sup>22</sup> were drawn with any need or purpose to render identifying detail; in each case she was a relatively small object in a much larger scene. But within those limits and with additional technical data assembled by Geoffrey Ingleton (biographer of Flinders' naval career) and his painstaking reconstruction, we do have a reasonable idea of what she looked like.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, it is obvious that the scrimshander was no draughtsman – his rendering of detail is rather sketchy and amateurish – and it is possible that the r/h scene was done from memory, long after the event it may represent. Other possibilities are that it is a composite of temporally unrelated elements and details or it may even have been imaginatively conceived. Consequently historical detail concerning the management of the *Investigator* and relevant events are crucial to any evaluation of the 'evidence' of the ship(s) in the scrimshaw scenes.

Hawkins' conjectures ultimately stand or fall on the nature of the repairs done to the *Investigator* while in Princess Royal Harbour, i.e., is there any proof that she was careened? As Hawkins cogently explained in his note 29, this process was a major undertaking even for a small ship of the *Investigator's* size (333 tons),<sup>25</sup> and was not usually done outside of a dock if that could be avoided. To elaborate: careening required striking the upper masts, clearing the holds and removing any heavy guns so that the ship, now riding as high as possible, could be heeled over using heavy block and tackle to expose one side of her hull, from waterline to keel.



Plate 2. Interior structure with three original drawers - with permission.



Plate 3. Underside of sewing box - with permission.



Plate 4. Detail of drawer fronts and tortoiseshell framing - with permission.

This procedure could only be carried out in a protected place where the ship's contents could be unloaded and safely stored on shore and the lightened vessel then floated into the shallows at high tide and hove down. If it was necessary to continue work on the other side she had to be refloated, warped around and the process repeated. Hawkins' note 29 further explains that this laborious and time-consuming operation was virtually superseded by sheathing ship's bottoms with copper (except in the case of a ship-threatening injury below the waterline, or cleaning and repair after a long voyage), so two questions must be answered: was the *Investigator* coppered and did Flinders, who was very particular in regard to the management of his ship, express any concerns about serious problems with the *Investigator's* hull so soon into his voyage?

The answer to the first question is that the *Investigator* had been thoroughly re-coppered as part of an extensive refit in the Royal Navy's dockyard expressly for the voyage, and as a further precaution the coppering was extended 'two streaks higher than before'.<sup>26</sup> The answer to the second question is partly, but not unequivocally answered by Flinders, who wrote concerning his practical purpose for visiting the Sound and the general nature of the repairs done while the *Investigator* was in Princess Royal Harbour: 'King George's Sound had been chosen as the proper place in which to prepare ourselves for the examination of the south coast of Terra Australis, and I sought to make the best use of the advantages it might furnish. The first essential requisite was a place to secure shelter, where the masts could be stripped, the rigging and sails put into order, and communication had with the shore, without interruption from the elements...<sup>27</sup> ...On Monday [14 December 1801], the topmasts were struck, and our various duties commenced'<sup>28</sup> (which included a thorough survey of the Sound using the ship's boats). Flinders, who was usually meticulous in recording significant matters concerning his ship, made no mention of any problems with the hull.

Later events provide incontrovertible evidence that the *Investigator's* timbers beneath her copper sheathing in December 1801 were indeed sound. After her second arrival in Port Jackson in June 1803, having completed an epic circumnavigation of the continent, her upper works were in such a deplorable state that she was promptly condemned<sup>29</sup> and subsequently stripped and hulked. Two years later Governor Philip King wrote to Sir Joseph Banks on 20 May 1805 and commented: 'The truth is, altho' her top was rotten as possible, yet her bottom has been proved tight and very seaworthy, ...'<sup>30</sup> Five years on, having been patched up sufficiently to sail back to England, she was condemned by the Navy Board in July 1810 and sold for a considerable sum, 'for the sake of her bottom which was still sound.'<sup>31</sup>

Therefore, regardless of the scrimshander's depiction of the hull

as planked rather than sheathed in copper, there can be no real doubt that the careened vessel is not the *Investigator*. However, one final point remains to be resolved: Hawkins cited Brown's diary<sup>5</sup> (his note 30) as his eyewitness authority for the careening of the *Investigator* in Princess Royal Harbour. A careful perusal of the diary reveals that Brown made no mention whatsoever of the nature of the work done on the ship. He did, however, unwittingly provide conclusive evidence that she floated quietly at anchor for the 23 days spent in that harbour. Brown's daily entries reveal that he remained on board to work on his plant collections at various times and slept in his cabin on 18 of the 22 nights the *Investigator* was at anchor. If she had been careened her decks would have been canted to such a high angle that Brown could not possibly have made use of his quarters.

### What other events in Australia might the scrimshawed scenes commemorate?

Hawkins identified and dismissed two other careenings that occurred during the early period of maritime survey and exploration in Australia – that of James Cook's *Endeavour* in the Endeavour River in 1770 and of the schooner *Casuarina* (purchased by Nicolas Baudin in Sydney in 1802) in King George's Sound later that year. There are at least two other significant events, but both can be similarly dismissed. The scene of the first of these was sketched by Charles Lesueur when in Sydney with Baudin from June to November 1802,<sup>22</sup> and shows *Le Géographe* careened on the eastern side of Sydney Cove, at Cattle Point, just to the right of the *Investigator's* anchorage (plate 9), for the purpose of checking, repairing and cleaning her coppered bottom.<sup>32</sup>

The other event was the potentially disastrous stranding of Dumont D'Urville's *Astrolabe* and *Zélée* on Warrior Reef in Torres Strait on 1 June 1840. That scene was sketched by the expedition's artist Louis Le Breton, and shows both ships canted over at a high angle and helpless.<sup>33</sup> The details that he so precisely reveals and D'Urville's own graphic account<sup>34</sup> emphatically rule against this incident being the inspiration for the r/h scrimshaw scene.

### The box's provenance

Sadly, no other revealing clues have been discovered that establish where the box was made or with what intent. Inquiry into its Australian provenance<sup>35</sup> has revealed that for many years the piece was in the possession of James Parry (1873-1960), son of James Parry an auctioneer in Manchester, England, who migrated to Australia with his wife and two young children, Nell and James, in 1907. The family settled in Arncliffe, NSW, where four more



Plate 5.  
Lid of sewing  
box - with  
permission.

children were born. According to eldest daughter Nell (now deceased), the box had been in the family for as long as she could remember, but it has not been established whether James obtained the box before leaving England or after settling in Australia. However, considering that he had previously been a seaman, that he is known to have brought out several unusual and desirable firearms (indicating he had previously made discerning acquisitions), and that in Australia the family lived in very modest circumstances, it seems more than probable he acquired the box during his earlier travels.

When the box passed to Nell it was complete and in fine condition, but she later gave it to a niece who carelessly stored it in a shed where it deteriorated and became damaged. Nell subsequently retrieved it and in 1982 sold it to the person who eventually consigned it to Gowans Auctions in Tasmania, as already described.

### Further questions and musings

Intrinsically the 'Arncliffe' box (to give it a name) is a rather homely artefact. Can it really be a commemorative piece or was it simply intended for a mother, wife or sweetheart? Hawkins suggested that any of the *Investigator's* 'most illustrious' crew members such as 'artists Ferdinand Bauer and William Westall, botanist Robert Brown, naturalist Peter Good and Midshipman, and later Governor of Tasmania, John Franklin, ...could have been the inspiration for making such an important box.' But if it was so inspired and intended to record a significant historical event why didn't the maker inscribe it with the pertinent details, or at the very least provide the date and place? After all, there are quite a few examples of early scrimshaw that do commemorate whaleships and other vessels, events and places, as well as some poignant ones that are sentimentally inscribed to a person.<sup>19, 36</sup> There is of course no answer to that question, but the absence of any inscription or autograph strongly suggests that the box has no historical significance whatsoever.

Returning to the scenes, it appears that some sort of pictorial decoration was planned at the outset or during the box's construction because the scrimshander had scribed precise vertical margins to the front panel that his freehand work does not transgress and these lines are hidden by the applied tortoiseshell. Striking features are the mismatch in the size of the scenes, the dissonance between the two in conception and draughtsmanship – one cramped, formal, minimally rendered and flat; the other lively, cluttered with interesting detail and with considerable perspective – and the curious lack of a drawn margin separating



Plate 6. Detail of the right-hand scrimshaw scene. Photo by John Wade with permission of Clyde Bank Committee of Management.

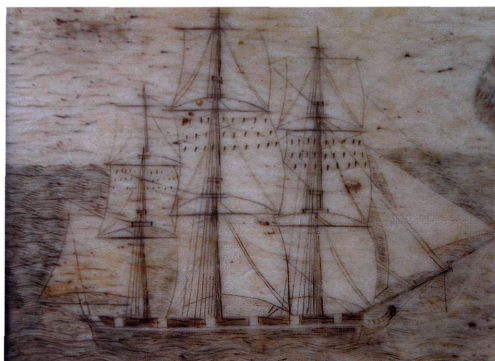


Plate 7. Detail of the left-hand scrimshaw scene. Photo by John Wade with permission of Clyde Bank Committee of Management.



(Right) Plate 8. Detail from Benjamin Russell's *Sperm Whaling with its Varieties, Boston, 1870*. Author's Collection.

the two at their junction. A further incongruity is the fanciful hatched-in mass over-hanging the horizon in the l/h scene that abuts but is not in conformity with the dark cliffs in the r/h scene. Unfortunately the scribing is so crude and the rendering of detail is so inconsistent, haphazard and sketchy<sup>37</sup> that it is not possible to determine whether or not it is the same ship in both scenes.

Is the r/h scene an original sketch or was it copied from an illustration? I have not been able to identify the location or find a similar published image, nor have several colleagues motivated by the same questions. The clumsy work and filling-in of many parts of the scene<sup>37</sup> strongly suggests that the scrimshander sketched directly onto the pan bone from memory or whim rather than from a previously prepared drawing. Nevertheless the main features are essentially prosaic and much of the detail rings true. We see a vessel being repaired in a small, protected inlet where there is a modest shore establishment capable of handling the task. There is an indication of a small slipway or tramway running past the barn-like building towards the open shed, which could be for building small boats or for moving supplies and produce to and from the shed, i.e. the locality may be a small shipyard or a work-station servicing some sort of remote enterprise, but if the latter the absence of a jetty is puzzling. The inlet may be part of a larger port, but what can be seen is too cramped to accommodate much shipping and there is no evidence of a town or village.

Was the box made on board ship or on shore in a workshop? Again, there is no certain answer, but I incline to the former view because many examples of scrimshaw of known provenance in maritime museums demonstrate again and again that artful, sophisticated and well-crafted pieces were indeed made at sea from whalebone, whale ivory, baleen, shell and exotic woods. With innate or learned skills, all that was required were simple tools, inspiration and patience – and the spur of wiling away the long periods of dull tedium of voyages to distant whaling grounds, which could drag on for three, four or more years.

As described by one ex-whaleman:

The great jaw pans were sawn off, and placed at the disposal of anybody who wanted pieces of bone for 'scrimshaw,' or carved work. This was a very favourite pastime on board whalers, though, in ships such as ours, the crew had little opportunity for doing anything, hardly any leisure during daylight being allowed. But our carpenter was a famous workman at 'scrimshaw,' and he started half a dozen walking-sticks forthwith. A favourite design is to carve the bone into the similitude of a rope, with 'worming' of smaller line along its lays. A handle is carved out of a whale's tooth, and insets of baleen, silver, cocoa-tree, or ebony, give variety and finish. The tools used are of the roughest. Some old files, softened in the fire, and filed into grooves something like saw-teeth, are most used; but old knives, sail needles, and chisels are pressed into service. The work turned out would, in many cases, take a very high place in an exhibition of turnery, though never a lathe was near it. Of course a long time is taken over it, especially the polishing, which is done with oil and whiting, if it can be got – powdered pumice if it cannot. I once had an elaborate pastry-cutter carved out of six whale's teeth, which I purchased for a pound of tobacco from a seaman of the *Coral* whaler, and afterwards sold in Dunedin, New Zealand, for 4162 10s, the purchaser being decidedly of opinion that he had a bargain.<sup>38</sup>

In regard to the second possibility it has been suggested that the

box could be a French prisoner-of-war piece (i.e. from the period 1793–1815, when England and France were almost continuously at war), but quite apart from considerations of the box's likely age it is difficult to imagine how those unfortunates, incarcerated for years in hulks or in prisons ashore, could obtain slabs of pan bone, whale's teeth and tortoiseshell. Surviving examples of their work, and especially their elaborate and intricate ship models, show that they relied on the limited range of materials at hand. The hulls of larger ship models were usually made of wood, and the external decking, planking or sheathing, as well as the superstructure, masts, spars, figurehead and fittings were all fashioned from relatively small pieces of bone saved from their meat allowance.<sup>39</sup>

What of the box's age? In the absence of forensic analysis of the original materials we are left with considerations of its design and construction, the evidence of the scenes, inference and speculation. The characteristics of the vessel depicted in the l/h scene indicate that she was probably built in the late 18th or early 19th century,<sup>40</sup> and if the latter she could have been working well into the 1840s or even later. And since there is no evidence that she (or the vessel in the r/h scene) was a whaler the only direct connection with whaling is the nature of the box itself. If the scrimshander was a member of the crew it seems reasonable to infer that he later served on a whaleship where he had ready access to pan bone, whale's teeth and tortoiseshell. Thus, theoretically at least, the box could have been made in the early 1800s or as late as the 1860s, depending on the maker's age and career at sea. However, Stuart Frank, who has extensively investigated the origins and development of engraved pictorial scrimshaw, dates the work to the middle third of the 19th century.<sup>41</sup> It is certainly an ambitious piece and probably represents an unhurried project undertaken on one of the longer whaling voyages typical of the 1840s and later, when whales were becoming less abundant and whalers had to work harder and longer to 'fill up', criss-crossing the oceans from whaling ground to whaling ground.

Stylistically the box offers few clues to the nationality of its maker. The singular carved 'feet' are perhaps its most striking feature and are reminiscent of the 'ball and claw' feet of many items of 18th century English furniture, but this association is tenuous and in any case the latter design was widely copied and varied by later furniture makers there, in America, Australia and elsewhere well into the early 20th century. If the maker had had a significant career at sea he would have been exposed to many stylistic influences and, significantly, he would almost certainly have seen many scrimshaw walking sticks with 'clenched fist' handles of whale ivory.<sup>42</sup> All things considered – the box's known provenance, probable age, the scrimshaw scenes, and relative output of such work – he was most likely American or English.

These speculations lead to the questions: was the scrimshander motivated to craft similar distinctive pieces, and have any found their way into collections? A search, necessarily limited to published images of scrimshaw work in British, American and Australian collections, revealed two 'cabinet work' items that displayed similarities,<sup>43, 44</sup> but neither could be ascribed to the same person.

So, it would seem, unless a more revealing provenance or another and documented piece comes to light that can be attributed to the same hand, the 'Amcliffe' sewing box will remain yet another anonymous and intriguing artefact of the whaleman's art.



NOUVELLE - HOLLANDE : NOUVELLE GALLES DU SUD.

Vue de la partie occidentale de la Ville, de SYDNEY Capitale de l'Colonie Anglaise, aux Terres Australes, et de l'Embarcadere de la riviere de Port-Jackson (Act.)

De l'Imprimerie de l'Anglais.

Plate 9. Engraving after Charles Lesueur of *Le Géographe* careened on the eastern side of Sydney Cove (detail). The rigged ship at anchor and stern-on is the *Investigator*. Author's Collection.

## Acknowledgements

I am indebted to John Wade for the photographs of the scrimshawed scenes, to Caressa Crouch for her comments on the evidence of those scenes, to Trevor Cross (and through him to the vendor) for information on the box's pre-sale history in Australia, to Stuart Frank for his penetrating comments on the nature of the engraved scenes and the probable age of the box, and to Rhys Richards for a copy of Captain Thomas Dennis' journal.

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## Notes

- 33-39 Main Road, Moonah TAS 7009.
- Typescript catalogue, Auction Code S11/0502, 5 pp., item 124.
- Measurements taken by John Wade.
- Generically whalebone, but when scrimshanders required thin slabs or plaques of bone, these were cut from the rear portion of a sperm whale's lower jaw, termed the pan, where on either side it flares in the vertical plane to hinge with the skull. Here the bone is wide, relatively thin and, most desirably, is more finely textured than are most other parts of the skeleton. In any case the skull and the rest of the skeleton were discarded when the unwanted carcass or kreng was cut adrift as soon as it was stripped of its blubber and spermaceti.
- T.G. Vallance, D.T. Moore & E.W. Groves, *Nature's Investigator: The Diary of Robert Brown in Australia, 1801-1805*, Australian Biological Resources Study, Canberra 2001, pp. 94-108.
- M. Flinders, *Voyage to Terra Australis*, 1814, vol. 1 (Libraries Board of SA facsimile, 1966), p. 19: 'Before hoisting up the boat, a small hawke's-bill turtle was picked up; and between this time [31 July 1801] and that of anchoring in Funchal Road [3 August 1801], several others were seen, and a second, weighing about thirty pounds, was caught.'

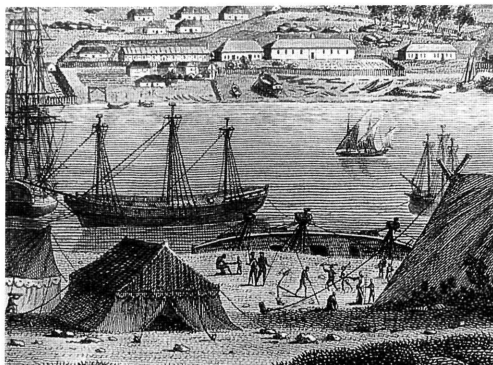


Plate 9a. Detail from Engraving after Charles Lesueur of *Le Géographe* careened on the eastern side of Sydney Cove (detail). The rigged ship at anchor and stern-on is the *Investigator*. Author's Collection.

- Peter Mercer, *A Most Dangerous Occupation*, National Trust of Australia (Tasmania), Hobart 2002, p. 5. The focus of this work is Tasmanian whaling.
- G. Jackson, *The British Whaling Trade*, A. & C. Black, London 1978, p. 105 *et seq.*
- E.A. Stackpole, *The Sea-Hunters. The New England Whalemens During Two Centuries, 1635-1835*, J.B. Lippincott, Philadelphia & New York 1953, chapter 10.
- 'An Act for the further encouraging the Southern Whale Fisheries' [21st June 1798], 38 Geo. III. Cap. 57. This Act allowed British whaleships (though still under licence) to prospect the seas between 51 degrees East and 180 degrees West of London, and to the south of 15 degrees South latitude.
- M. Steven, *Trade, Tactics and Territory; Britain in the Pacific 1783-1823*, MUP, Melbourne 1983.

- 12 R. Langdon (Editor), *Where the whalers went*. Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, Research School of Pacific Studies, ANU, Canberra 1984. This is an index of surviving logbooks relevant to Australia, but does not include the *Elligood's* visit.
- 13 Flinders, *op.cit.* pp. 55-56.
- 14 J.S. Cumpston, *First visitors to Bass Strait*, Roebuck Society Publication No. 7, Canberra 1973 p. 47.
- 15 G.C. Ingleton, *Matthew Flinders, Navigator and Chartmaker*, Genesis Publications, Surrey 1986 vol. 2, p. 126.
- 16 R. Richards, 'The cruise of the *Kingston* and the *Elligood* in 1800 and the wreck found on King Island in 1802', *Great Circle* 23 (1), 1991 pp. 35-49.
- 17 The term bay whaling is frequently used collectively for two rather different forms of right and humpback whaling from bays strategically chosen in relation to their inshore migrations. *Bay-whaling* was an option for open-sea whaleships, which were securely moored in convenient bays while their boat-crews hunted nearby waters. Their prey was laboriously towed back to the ship, where the carcasses were flensed alongside and the blubber boiled down in try-pots on the main deck, as at sea. *Shore-whaling* was a fixed land-based operation located at a site from which whales could be hunted and the carcasses towed back and into shallows within reach of sheerlegs – two or more poles lashed at the top to suspend a block and tackle to hoist strips of blubber as they were cut free (see sketch on p. 21 in M. Nash, *The Bay Whalers, Tasmania's shore-based whaling industry*, Navarine Publishing, Woden ACT 2003). Try-works were set up nearby, with a stock of barrels for the oil; the crews lived in huts and launched the boats from the beach. Remote stations were serviced by small vessels, which brought in fresh stores and equipment and shipped out the oil.
- 18 W.J. Dakin, *Whaleman Adventurers*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney 1934, chapter 3.
- 19 For instance see R.W.D. Ball, *Nautical Antiques*, Schiffer, Atglen PA 1994; E.N. Flayderman, *Scrimshaw and Scrimshanders*, N. Flayderman & Co, New Milford CT, 1972; M. Lawrence, *Scrimshaw; the whaler's legacy*, Schiffer, Atglen PA 1993; M. McManus, *A Treasury of American Scrimshaw*, Penguin, New York, 1997; Janet West, 'Scrimshaw in Australia, with special reference to the nineteenth century. Part Two: Classification, description and analysis of the artefacts', *Great Circle*, Vol. 9 (1), 1986 pp. 26-39; Janet West and A.G. Credland, *Scrimshaw the art of the whaler*, Hull City Museums & Art Galleries/Hutton Press, Beverley, East Yorkshire 1995.
- 20 Flinders, *op. cit.*, folio of charts, Plate II, Sheet 1 of the Southern Coast. The small cove opposite the anchorage is marked 'Tents'.
- 21 *Ibid.* p. 55.
- 22 Ingleton, *op. cit.*, Plate Section Four, plate 11, reproduces a painting by J.W. Lancashire, 1803, and a later painting attributed to G.W. Evans. Both are views of Port Jackson that show two hulks, which Ingleton identifies as the *Investigator* and *Supply*. On p. 173, fig. 119, he also identifies the *Investigator*, fully rigged and at anchor, in an engraved scene of Sydney Cove, after Charles Lesueur, published in the Atlas to F. Péron, F. and L. Freycinet, *Voyage de découvertes aux terres Australes ... Historique ...*, by C. Lesueur, C. and N. Petit, J. Milbert, Paris 1807, plate 38. The engraver has added some detail to the *Investigator* not clearly evident in Lesueur's original sketch of 1802, which is reproduced in T. McCormick *et al.*, *First Views of Australia 1788-1825. A History of Early Sydney*. David Ell Press/Longueville Publications, Sydney 1987, plate 64.
- 23 Flinders' artist, William Westall, is not known to have made any detailed drawings of the *Investigator*. See T.M. Perry and D.H. Simpson (Editors), *Drawings by William Westall*, Commonwealth Society, London 1962.
- 24 Ingleton, *op. cit.*, pp. 431-2, figs 251-2.
- 25 *Ibid.* Appendix 1.
- 26 E. Scott, *The Life of Captain Matthew Flinders, R.N.*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney 1914 p. 174.
- 27 Flinders, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
- 28 *Ibid.* p. 57.
- 29 *Ibid.* vol. II, pp. 274-5.
- 30 *HRNSW*, vol. 5, p. 626.
- 31 Ingleton, *op. cit.*, p. 428a.
- 32 *HRNSW*, vol. 4, p. 953, Commodore Baudin to Governor King, 11 July 1802.
- 33 H. Rosenman, *Two Voyages to the South Seas ... by Jules S-C Dumont D'Urville. Vol. II: Astrolabe and Zélée 1837-1840*. MUP, Melbourne 1987, plate facing p. 540.
- 34 *Ibid.*, pp. 543-548.
- 35 Information from the vendor received via Mr Trevor Cross of Perth, WA.
- 36 H. Forster, 'Mr Nan Kivell's scrimshaw', in *Paradise Possessed, the Rex Nan Kivell Collection*, Canberra, National Library of Australia 1998, pp. 65-69.
- 37 Apart from the shrouds, much of the standing and running rigging has been omitted; where ropes are included they are roughly sketched in. In the r/h scene heavy cables that would have been run ashore to heel the ship over are not shown (but note a thick stern cable to an anchor? in the shallows); the upper masts would normally be sent down but here only the fore-topgallant-mast and fore-topmast have been struck. Elsewhere an abrupt mass unconvincingly connects the foreground and beach at the extreme right and the lines depicting a flat sea beyond the careened ship are drawn at an impossible angle.
- 38 F.T. Bullen, *Cruise of the "Cachalot"*, D. Appleton, New York, 1899. pp. 83-84.
- 39 E.C. Freeston, *Prisoner of War Ship Models, 1775-1825*, Conway Maritime Press London 1987.
- 40 Kieran Hosty (Australian National Maritime Museum), pers. comm. to John Wade, dates the vessel in the l/h scene was built by the nature of the beakhead, lack of figurehead, overlong wooden bowsprit cf. overall length of vessel, single dolphin striker (stanchion below the bowsprit), placement of the standing rigging, absence of copper sheathing, and the stern decorations and windows.
- 41 Stuart M. Frank, pers. comm., email of 11 September 2003. See also S.M. Frank, 'The origins of engraved pictorial scrimshaw', *Antiques* 142 (4), 1992 pp. 510-521.
- 42 Bullen *op. cit.* indicates that walking sticks were a favourite project of scrimshanders. Simple 'clenched fist' handles are common; fists or hands clutching an item such as a short rod, snake or fish are rather less so. Whalebone/whale ivory walking sticks are very well represented in many public and private collections, e.g. West, *op. cit.*
- 43 Sotheby Parke-Bernet auction catalogue of the Barbara Johnson Whaling Collection: Part I, (New York, 11-12 December 1981), item 422 (illustrated), is a miniature slant-front desk of pine (22.5cm wide x 30 cm high), veneered with plaques of tortoiseshell, all edges trimmed with pan bone and the drawer knobs and ball feet of whale ivory. The piece is believed to be of American origin.
- 44 *Ibid.*, Part IV (New York, 16-17 December 1983), item 476 (illustrated), is a dove-tailed pan bone jewellery box (22cm wide x c.7.5cm high) with a single drawer (17cm x 2.5cm); a mirror inside the lid is held by whalebone cleats inlaid with diamonds of abalone shell; silver name-plate on top. ■

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# More than a memory – the art of Elizabeth Parsons

VERONICA FILMER

*Art was one of the amateur vocations women were allowed to follow in the 19th century, but with few exceptions their work was politely forgotten. Veronica Filmer resurrects another female artist*



Elizabeth Parsons (1831–1897), *Chinaman's hut, Daylesford, c. 1880*, watercolour. Collection: Parsons family

Men dominated the Melbourne art world of the 19th century. Eugene von Guerard and Louis Buvelot were often in the headlines during the 1860s and 70s. Artists of the Heidelberg School including Tom Roberts, Arthur Streeton, Frederick McCubbin and Charles Conder succeeded them from the 1880s. The activities of these gentlemen are closely investigated and documented.

Largely overlooked and forgotten, however, are the contributions made by women artists of the period. While the achievements of a number of women artists have been acknowledged over recent decades, including Louisa Ann Meredith, Ellis Rowan and Georgiana McCrae, who left behind written records of their lives, there are countless others who remain in virtual anonymity.

The exhibition, *More than a memory – the art of Elizabeth Parsons* features the work of one such artist. Now little known, Elizabeth Parsons was one of the leading professional women artists of her day. With over 55 paintings, drawings and watercolours, this display highlights the talents of a much-underrated artist who had mastered the skill of landscape painting and was highly regarded by her peers.

Elizabeth Parsons was born in Isleworth, England on 27 November 1831, daughter of a gardener, William Thomas Warren, and Elizabeth, née Keens. Elizabeth and her four older brothers were raised at *Holly Lodge*, the main residence on the family's 60-acre market gardens in Worton Lane, Isleworth.

Elizabeth held a variety of jobs before pursuing a career in art, including that of governess and manager of a toy shop. By 1860, Elizabeth took lessons from various leading drawing masters, including Ramsay Richard Reinagle (1775–1862) who taught John Constable; Thomas Miles Richardson (1813–1890); and John Duffield Harding (1797–1863) who taught John Ruskin.

Elizabeth went on sketching expeditions in the London area, the north of England, Scotland, the south west of England, Devon and Cornwall. In 1864 she travelled to Barbizon in France, a region that had been made famous by the work of *plein air* artists such as Jean Millais, Theodore Rousseau and Diaz de la Pena. They had popularised the concept of painting landscape outdoors directly from nature, using intimate homely subjects and clear natural colours. Together with the lessons provided by her English teachers, Elizabeth was to follow this method of painting throughout her entire career.

Elizabeth first exhibited in 1869, when she contributed seven pictures to the annual Society of Female Artists exhibition. Elizabeth forwarded a number of sketches to noted Scottish artist Peter Graham, who, residing in London, declared that 'there is much beauty in each of the drawings'.<sup>1</sup> This was a promising beginning for the ambitious artist.

Family circumstances, however, interrupted Elizabeth's plans to establish herself in England's art world. She had married widower George Parsons in 1868, and moved with him and his two sons to Poltescu, Cornwall, where Parsons was manager



*Elizabeth Parsons*  
(1831–1897),  
St Mawgan,  
Cornwall 1868,  
watercolour.  
Collection: Estate of  
George Parsons

of the Lizard Serpentine Marble Works. In 1869, George lost his position at the Marble Works and the family decided to migrate to Australia. They arrived in Melbourne in 1870 aboard the famous steamship *Great Britain*.

Within a month, Elizabeth, still determined to pursue an artistic career, had placed a portfolio of her work in Powl's Fine Art Gallery in Collins Street and invited noted art critic and writer for the *Argus*, James Smith, to review her drawings and watercolours. Smith regarded the works favourably, and wrote that 'she deserves to take rank amongst the best of our amateurs, and she certainly excels some of those who call themselves professionals.'<sup>2</sup> This was high praise indeed from one who, together with many of his contemporaries, regarded women artists as being strictly amateur, their efforts more suitable in the home than in the public arena.

When the Victorian Academy of Art held its inaugural exhibition at the end of 1870, Elizabeth showed five watercolours with views in Devon, Cornwall and at Loch Lomond, Scotland. Each of them, according to James Smith, 'may be cited as a good example for students in this branch of art.'<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth continued to exhibit with the Academy of Art until 1888 when it merged with the Australian Artists' Association to form the Victorian Artists Society. Elizabeth exhibited with the Association, formed in opposition to the amateur nature of the Victorian Academy of Arts exhibitions, during its brief two years of existence (1886–88) and then with the VAS until the year before she died.

Elizabeth contributed to various other exhibitions, including the Victorian Exhibition (1872), London International Exhibition (1873), Victorian Intercolonial Exhibition (1875),



*Elizabeth Parsons* (1831–1897), Carlton Gardens in 1871, 1871, pencil and wash. Collection: Parsons family



*Elizabeth Parsons* (1831–1897), View across Loutit Bay 1880, watercolour. Collection: Parsons family

*Elizabeth Parsons*  
(1831–1897),  
Schnapper  
Point,  
Mornington,  
c. 1880,  
watercolour.  
Collection:  
*Parsons family*



Colonial and Indian Exhibition, London (1876), Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition (1876), NSW Academy of Art exhibition (1877), Melbourne International Exhibition (1880), several Sydney Art Society exhibitions, Bendigo Juvenile and Industrial Exhibition (1886) – where she won a First Award in the Watercolour Landscape section – Melbourne Centennial International Exhibition (1888–89) and the New Melbourne Art Club (1894).

From 1872, Elizabeth listed herself as a professional artist in the Sands & McDougall trade directories. Although she leased a studio in Flinders Lane in 1873, Elizabeth usually worked from home, where she was raising her two stepsons and her own children who, by 1876, numbered five. She was a dedicated and popular teacher who published a series of drawing books to assist her students in learning how to draw various elements of the landscape.<sup>4</sup>

Through her involvement in exhibitions and teaching, Elizabeth became well-known in the Melbourne art scene. In 1875 Elizabeth earned the distinction of being the first woman elected to the Victorian Academy of Art council. This position not only reflected the high personal regard in which she was held but, more importantly, it acknowledged her status as a professional artist. Although the VAA exhibitions drew criticism for the many works by amateur artists that were shown, the council members themselves were well-respected artists, with Chester Earles (1821–1904) as president and Francis B. Gibbes (1815–1904) as secretary.

Elizabeth was re-elected the following year after which, through work and family commitments, she ended her term on council. Not until 1900, when the Academy had become the Victorian Artists Society, was the next woman, Jane Sutherland,



*Elizabeth Parsons* (1831–1897), *A deserted gully, Spring Creek, near Daylesford 1882, sepia with white highlight*. Collection: *Parsons family*



*Elizabeth Parsons* (1831–1897), *Hop picking at Myrtleford, c. 1883, watercolour*. Collection: *Parsons family*



Elizabeth Parsons (1831–1897),  
*Rickett's Point* 1884, watercolour.  
Collection: Parsons family

elected to council.

Similarly, Elizabeth Parsons was the only woman whose work was included in the Art Union of Victoria's 1880 illustrated publication of Henry Kendall's *Orara*. Established in 1872, the Art Union purchased the works of selected artists to be distributed through an annual lottery in which winning subscribers could select a painting of their choice. Each year, one of the paintings on offer was reproduced as a print that was given to each subscriber. For the 1880 subscriber print, however, the Art Union committee decided to publish a poem and announced a competition for artists to send in drawings for 13 engravings to illustrate specified passages in the poem. Elizabeth, with her rural image of peasants in a field accompanying the verse beginning 'But while the English autumn filled her lap/ With faded gold, and while the reapers cooled ...,' was one of nine artists chosen. Her inclusion was further testament to the esteem in which the artist and her work were held.

By the mid 1880s, Elizabeth increased her social activities. Her work as an art teacher kept her in touch with the interests and issues confronting a younger generation of artists. The desire for greater professionalism in the arts, the influence of the *plein airism* of the Barbizon painters, and the determination to create a distinctly Australian art style, were all concerns with which Elizabeth sympathised. Her own art work, founded on *plein air* principles, was not out of place in the new movement.

At the same time, she joined the Buonarroti Club from 1886–87. The Club had formed in 1883 as a social semi-Bohemian club for artists, musicians and writers, the majority of whom were 'young budding artists, mostly all enthusiasm.'<sup>5</sup> Here they exchanged ideas, exhibited art works and read prose. When the Club ceased at the end of 1887, Elizabeth started her own artistic and literary society shortly afterwards, 'Stray Leaves', founded on similar principles to that of the Buonarroti Club.

Although Elizabeth retired from professional art in 1889, she continued to hold Stray Leaves meetings until at least 1892. She



Elizabeth Parsons (1831–1897), *North East Valley, Dunedin, New Zealand*, by evening star, c. 1884, wash. Collection: Parsons family



Elizabeth Parsons (1831–1897), *Mount Alfred, Head of Lake Wakatipu, New Zealand* 1884, watercolour. Collection: Parsons family



Elizabeth Parsons (1831–1897), *The country church 1888*, watercolour. Collection: Parsons family

continued to exhibit her works, with two major studio exhibitions from her home in 1890 and 1896. Comprising 90 works, these exhibitions were designed to dispose of her vast collection of paintings and drawings that had accumulated over three decades of art practice. Indeed, the pictures remaining from her 1896 exhibition were then sent to the auction house of Gemmell, Tuckett & Co. in Collins Street for dispersal.

Unfortunately, Elizabeth left no personal writings to offer an insight into her thoughts and her daily life. She did however, leave a body of work that reveals the talents of an early Australian artist, one whose efforts contributed to the growing recognition of professional women artists.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Age*, July 1890

<sup>2</sup> *Argus*, 25 June 1870

<sup>3</sup> *Argus*, 26 December 1870

<sup>4</sup> This was the *Drawing book of Australian landscape* series comprising *Buildings, &c* (1882), *Trees* (1883) and *Landscapes*. No copies of the last have been located: possibly it was not published as originally intended.

<sup>5</sup> Edmund Gilks, *An Antipodean club: an account of the Melbourne fine art club, called Buonarrotti after Michel Angelo Buonarrotti*, unpublished manuscript, State Library of Victoria, ms10116.

Veronica Filmer is Registrar at the Geelong Gallery. She is a graduate of the University of Melbourne and has curated a number of exhibitions for the Geelong Gallery including *Making their mark: colonial artists of the Western District* (1996) and *Travels with Charles Travers Mackin* (2002) ■

The paintings and drawings in the exhibition *More than a memory - the art of Elizabeth Parsons* comprise picturesque views in Britain, New Zealand and Australia. Elizabeth and her family spent many summer holidays travelling through Victoria. Her watercolours and drawings feature scenes in Melbourne and its surrounds, Geelong, the Macedon Ranges, South Gippsland, the Bright region and Tasmania. Her bold, open and assured style are evident in these works that are a testament to the achievements of this extraordinary woman and can be seen from 10 April to 13 June 2004, at the Geelong Gallery, 03 5229 3645 or [www.geelonggallery.org.au](http://www.geelonggallery.org.au)

# Australian Art Pottery 1900-1950

JOHN WADE

*A new landmark publication does credit to our potters*

Almost every collector of Australiana would have some Australian pottery. In spite of its fragile material, there is a lot of it around. Some people of course collect it with an obsessive passion, with display cabinets and rooms full of it. This new landmark publication aims to present some of the best pieces that have been preserved.

It is worth reflecting on the history of publications on Australiana. Forty years ago, the White House had been furnished with American antiques and the energetic young President John F. Kennedy proudly displayed scrimshaw, emblematic of his home state of Massachusetts, on his desk in the Oval Office. In Australia, it was mainly the refined ladies and gentlemen of the National Trust who tried to interest Australians in our own heritage, through lobbying, preserving historic houses, and exhibitions.

We were well behind the United States. There were no books on Australian antiques, few dealers, and few collectors who specialised in the area. Launceston doctor Clifford Craig, Kevin Fahy and Graeme Robertson gave us *Early Colonial Furniture in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land* in 1972. The National Trust (NSW) Women's Committee mounted their *First Fleet to Federation* exhibition in 1976, following it up with a book based on the exhibition the next year. More exhibitions were mounted and catalogues produced on aspects of Australian decorative arts, notably by the National Gallery of

Victoria and other national, state and regional art galleries. We even produced some ourselves.

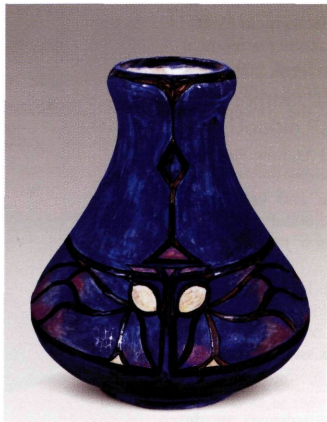
Marjorie Graham produced the first serious surveys of the history of Australian ceramics (1979) and glass (1981), and Peter Timms the first on art pottery (1986). John Hawkins published his magisterial two-volume work on silver in 1990, and in the same year Kevin Fahy and Anne Schofield produced their book on jewellery, followed two years later by another written by Graham Cocks, Ken Cavill and Jack Grace.

In ceramics, Noris Ioannou wrote on South Australian potteries and folk art. Geoff Ford and Gregory Hill published several major works on Australian pottery. In Queensland, Glenn Cooke and Deborah Edwards compiled a wonderful book on L.J. Harvey and his students, and in Western Australia, Dorothy Erickson wrote her doctorate on WA jewellers, and then a series of articles and publications on other WA craftsmen and craftswomen. Last year Dorothy Johnston wrote *The People's Potteries* on the post-World War II potteries of Sydney, and there have been a few other books dealing with individual potteries or regions.

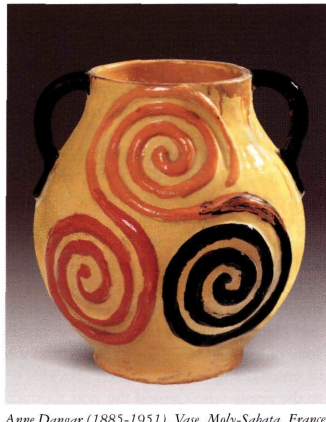
Much useful information can be found in the *Dictionary of Australian Artists* and *HERitage*, two books conceived and directed by the late and much-loved Professor Joan Kerr. A series of authoritative articles in magazines such as *The Australian Antique Collector* (now *The World of Antiques and Art*) and *Australiana* began to appear.



Annie Mitchell (1875-1961), Vase, Adelaide SA, glazed earthenware, c. 1935, h 15.5 cm



Enid Busby (1903-88), Vase, Bathurst NSW, 1923, glazed earthenware, h 17 cm



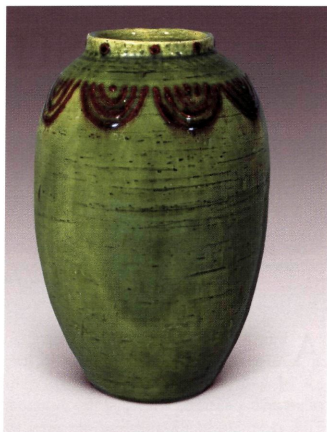
Anne Dangar (1885-1951), Vase, Moly-Sabata, France, 1930-51, glazed earthenware, h 38 cm, National Gallery of Australia



*Marguerite Mabood (1901-89), Wall Mask 1935, Melbourne Vic, glazed earthenware, h 21.5 cm. Roy Morgan Research Centre*



*Marguerite Mabood (1901-89), Figurine of an imp seated at a potter's wheel, 193, Melbourne Vic, glazed earthenware, h 11 cm*



*Dorothy Nasworthy (1890-1978), Vase, Brisbane Qld, glazed earthenware, 1932, h 16 cm*

The Australiana Society and our magazine (then a newsletter) were founded in 1978 – the same year that Tamie Fraser established the Australiana Fund, an initiative to furnish the four official residences located in Canberra and Sydney with distinctively Australian furnishings. Modelled on the White House and aiming to provide our national leaders with domestic environments that reflect our heritage, Mrs Fraser's concept was pursued by Hazel Hawke. Prime Minister Keating, with his foreign appetite for French clocks and Thai tables, was less enthusiastic.

Andrew Simpson was the driving force in conceiving the Australiana Society and getting its original group together. He is a long-established dealer (and now photographer and publisher) who has dealt exclusively in Australian antiques, mostly furniture. His first book, written with Christina Simpson and Kevin Fahy, appeared in 1985 on his favourite subject, furniture. A second book, *Australian Furniture: A Pictorial History & Dictionary*, also written with Kevin Fahy, in 1998.

Now Andrew Simpson is the publisher of another substantial book, this time on Australian art pottery – a book which sets new standards for scholarship, photography and book production. Simpson is the person who put the concept and the team together.

Kevin Fahy, John Freeland, Keith Free and Andrew Simpson himself are the four editors. Kevin Fahy has devoted the past 50 years or so to developing appreciation and knowledge about Australian antiques, advising the National Trust and museums, and was awarded an AM for doing it. John Freeland and Keith Free are both collectors.

Twenty-four contributors write essays on broader subjects, mostly state-based surveys, and dictionary entries on 118 potters and china painters, which form the vast bulk of the book. But it spite of its bulk, weighing in at two and a half kilos, there is plenty of entertaining reading, which provides enlightening background to the artists who created the pots themselves.

For the collector and dealer, the great value is in the biographical entries, and the accompanying photographs and captions. These are drawn from public and private collections,

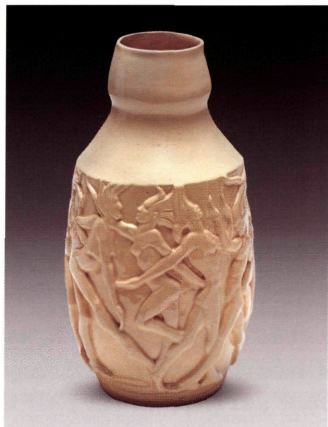
mostly the latter, and the majority of the photographs are the work of Andrew Simpson. His technical skill as a photographer is exceptional, and he has ensured a universal, consistent high standard throughout the book. Combining the brilliant photographs with the insightful essays brings a greater understanding of what the artists were trying to achieve, the



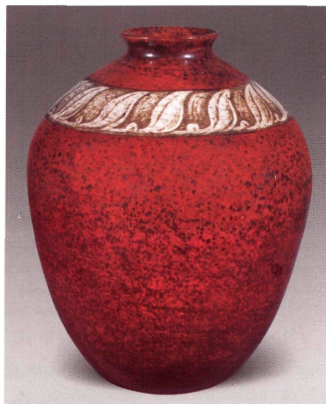
*Grace Secombe (1880-1956), Regent Bower Bird, Sydney NSW, glazed earthenware c. 1940, h 27 cm*



Maudie O'Reilly (1886-1971), Kookaburra, London England, glazed earthenware 1926, h 28.5 cm



Kyrie Pate (b. 1912), Lamp Base, Melbourne Vic, glazed earthenware 1941, h 33 cm. National Gallery of Australia



Napier Waller & John Knight, Vase, Melbourne Vic, glazed earthenware, 1936, h 25.2 cm. Trustees of the Waller Estate, Melbourne

influences on their work, and the problems they faced.

The book is a pleasure to look at and read, destined to become a standard reference work. The large number of collectors of Australian pottery will ensure that, like the standard reference works on furniture, that it will keep its value in the years to come.

#### AUSTRALIAN ART POTTERY: 1900-1950

Kevin Fahy, Keith Free, John Freeland and Andrew Simpson  
Casuarina Press, Woollahra NSW, ISBN 0 9581758 X, 480 ill,  
372 pp, \$295 02 9518 0577

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The Edwin Pegg Bookcase, Sydney, c.1864  
Constructed with superb New South Wales flame cedar with good original 19th century patination, illustration No. 46, pp.194 Australian Furniture, Fahy and Simpson, Casuarina Press, Sydney 1998.  
\$30,000 – 40,000

# Australian furniture design before WWII

SIMON JACKSON

*Popular histories of design in Australia tend to stress WWII, and often specifically the year 1945, as a 'watershed' time for the development of industrial design and modernism in Australia. In fact, there was much activity prior to the War.*

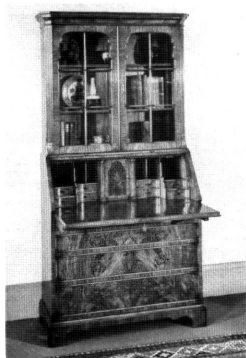
The year 1936 seems to have been important in Australia's industrial development. The search for an aeroplane on which to base Australia's war effort occurred in this year as did Government support for the development of an Australian-made automotive engine. 1936 also saw the publication of an early overview of tendencies in local furniture design. A nine-page review entitled 'Australian Furniture' appeared in the important local journal *Art in Australia* exploring the choices offered to the consumer – either antique reproduction or modern. In the former camp, the article reproduced illustrations of furniture styled in 'the French 'provincial' manner' or 'Queen Anne style' veneered in English walnut. These reproduction pieces were manufactured by companies such as Stuart-Low Furniture Studios of Sydney (plate 1) or by Captain F.E. de Groot (plate 2).

Despite these, modern works dominated the article. Local designer Frederick Ward's furniture was given prominence. A modern austerity and simplicity are evident in Ward's square-legged chairs with their plain fabric seats. The Modernist credo of 'truth to materials' is evident in Ward's often 'unfinished' or raw timbers – paint is not used to disguise the timber (plates 3, 4). The 1936 article suggested reasons why modern Australian furniture was being designed, manufactured and eagerly bought by the public:

The outlook with regard to furniture has changed considerably during the last few years. Until comparatively recently, in the houses of people of discrimination and taste one naturally expected to find either 'antiques' imported from abroad or costly reproductions. Persons of only moderate incomes have to be contented with Victorian cedar and mahogany, bargains picked up at dealers...To-day the position is quite different, and the number of people starting off to furnish their homes who engage upon a search for the 'antique' is extremely small. Three main factors are responsible for this altered attitude: firstly, the development of built-in furniture, which is definitely part of the architectural scheme; secondly, a desire for comfort and efficiency; and thirdly, a growing enthusiasm for 'modernity'.<sup>1</sup>

The article also considered the furniture designed by local architects. It argued that furniture in Australia in the early 1930s began to be designed in sympathy with architecture:

The furniture is made for the house, or the room, often designed in collaboration with the architect, in the same way as the mantelpiece or staircase. The best contemporary furniture is therefore marked by the same characteristics as contemporary architecture, sound planning and 'workability', simplicity of form, and interest obtained by the use of fine materials rather than applied pattern or ornament.<sup>2</sup> [my emphasis]



(Far left) Plate 1. Queen Anne bureau bookcase veneered in English walnut, made by Stuart-Low Furniture Studios, Sydney. Source: 'Australian Furniture', *Art in Australia*, 16 November 1936, p. 87.

(Left) Plate 2. Queen Anne reproduction sideboard with block front panels, veneered in figured Queensland walnut, made by F.E. de Groot. Source: 'Australian Furniture', *Art in Australia*, 16 November 1936, p. 85.

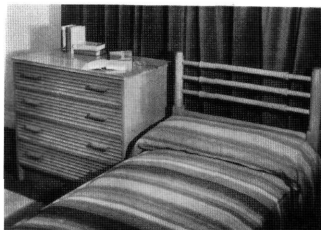


Plate 3. Chest of drawers in figured mesquite wax polished, and bed in silky oak, designed by Frederick Ward of Myer Emporium Ltd., Melbourne. Source: 'Australian Furniture', *Art in Australia*, 16 November 1936, p. 82.

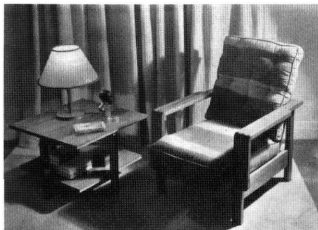


Plate 4. Easy chair and table in waxed Tasmanian blackwood with lamp in waxed red gum. The upholstery is in Michael O'Connell linen. Designed by Frederick Ward of Myer Emporium Ltd., Melbourne. Source: 'Australian Furniture', *Art in Australia*, 16 November 1936, p. 81.

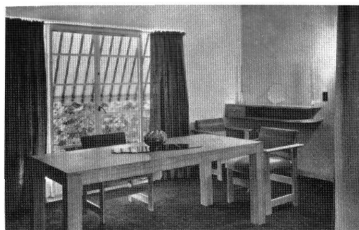


Plate 5. Furniture in a dining room off a Melbourne living room, carried out in fiddleback grained Mountain Ash with a waxed finish. Newton & Grounds, Architects. Source: 'Australian Furniture', *Art in Australia*, 16 November 1936, p. 83.

This recognition of the importance of the architect is undoubtedly correct as furniture design was taught at this time in Australia only within architectural courses. By contrast, industrial design was not taught as a separate discipline in tertiary institutions for another decade.<sup>3</sup> Several architects had work shown in the same article. The architectural team Mewton and Grounds had an example (plate 5); while the company Ricketts & Thorp at Rockdale NSW manufactured furniture designed by architects Fowell, McConnell and Mansfield (plate 6), and by Samuel Lipson. Edward Billson's furniture designs for the Branchflower company were also featured. The illustrations in the article reveal the furniture by these different designers to be similar in their economy of form, lack of ornament and in their geometric simplicity. The dominant international influence upon these progressive designers was a generalised version of Art Deco.

Furniture designed by architects to complement specific architectural spaces seemed to be a desirable new goal. The article drew upon the words of English architect Wells Coates who had earlier written 'Very soon it will be considered quite as fantastic to move accompanied by wardrobes, tables and beds, as it would seem today to remove the bath or heating system.'<sup>4</sup>

Writing some twenty years later in 1952, important local architect and design critic Robin Boyd reflected on this leading role architects played in the 1930s in Australia. He claimed: "Built-in" was the new catch-phrase of 1933.' The result was that previously freestanding pieces of furniture became unified. The bath was no longer freestanding on cast iron clawed feet but was now to be set against a wall and bricked up, or was sunken into the floor. The wash basin was no longer visually supported in free air on a pedestal or by its own plumbing, but was now embedded in a cupboard. Wardrobes became built into niches provided in the walls of

new modernist homes - no longer would many be free standing. According to Boyd, who was deferring to Le Corbusier's famous words:

Architects dreamed of the kitchen as a machine for cooking in, with every piece of equipment a standard height, depth and colour, arranged in gleaming, continuous rows. To this end they had the cupboards made in precise bands...By 1939 the dresser was losing popularity and after World War II it had all but disappeared. The furniture manufacturers who made the kitchen settings had by this time accepted the built-in approach and were making modular unit cupboards that could be screwed into the wall in a continuous run.<sup>5</sup>

This tendency in modern architecture was to continue. Advertisements in 'home' journals in the 1930s show the emerging house designs with flexible plans that were to become prevalent after WWII, where the kitchen replaced the dining room for informal meals, and also became an area for receiving guests. Gone was the 'front' or 'best' or 'sitting' room. According to retired builder Robert O'Donnell, active in the domestic building arena in Melbourne during the 1960s and 1970s, the builder and cabinet-maker also began to play a greater role in the manufacture of furniture. 'Built-in' breakfast nooks constructed by the builder began to replace separate tables and chairs. American Formica adhesive veneering and the later Australian Laminex version gave the consumer a hygienic, easy-to-clean surface, and gave the builder a quick laminate for covering basic timber bench tops and table tops.<sup>6</sup> Clearly, new ideas were being eagerly explored in Australia prior to WWII, which were to inform subsequent furniture design.

Dr Simon Jackson is a Lecturer in Industrial Design and Interior Design at the National Institute of Design, Swinburne University of Technology, at Prahran, Victoria.

## Notes

1 'Australian Furniture' *Art in Australia*, 16 November 1936, p. 80.

2 *ibid.*

3 The Melbourne Technical College, now Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University, introduced a Diploma Course in Industrial Design in 1946.

4 'Australian Furniture', *op. cit.*, p. 80.

5 Robin Boyd. *Australia's Home*, Melbourne, 197, p. 108.

6 Conversation, Robert O'Donnell, 10 November 1997 ■



Plate 6. Writing desk veneered in English birch with a recessed base of Queensland walnut polished to a natural finish. The chair is upholstered in cream leather. Designed by Fowell, McConnell & Mansfield, Architects, made by Ricketts & Thorp Ltd. Source: 'Australian Furniture', *Art in Australia*, 16 November 1936, p. 84.



## Amanda Addams Auctions Calendar for 2004

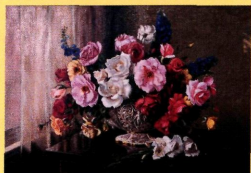


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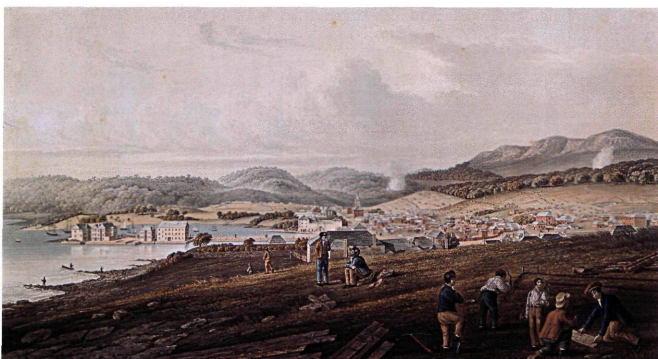
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coloured 32.3 x 60.0 cm image

Provenance: Dr Clifford Craig;

Christie's, 13.10.1975, lot 539;

private collection, Hobart and Sydney  
Possibly the only known copy of this  
extraordinary print.

P.O.A.



# The Schatzkammer and the Antipodes

JOLYON WARWICK JAMES

*Silver specialist Jolyon Warwick James looks at the Central European influences on some mid- to late-19th century Australian silversmiths*

Those familiar with both European Mannerism and late 19th-century Australian silver have long noted an observable connection. While often alluded to,<sup>1</sup> this connection was not the subject of specific focus until relatively recently, being first aired in a lecture by the writer, in April 2001.<sup>2</sup> Here we seek to set out some parameters to further our understanding of how, and to what extent, Mannerist inspiration was processed into the mid/late 19th-century Australian repertoire.

At the outset it is apposite to warn against a Euro-centric vision of Australia in the mid 19th century. Any notion of a cohesive, ordered and traditional society can be readily abandoned. Australia, a series of separate colonies, was only just moving away from its primary function as a repository for transported criminals.<sup>3</sup> It had no long-standing tradition of guilds, formal apprenticeships, museums, galleries, libraries or design schools for the decorative arts. Most of those who had come freely<sup>4</sup> were the relatively unknown, possessing little and wishing to make good. They were not the established wealthy, or those with status choosing to change from a

European life. If they had been, significant information might now be obtainable concerning their lives prior to migration. A better understanding is obtained if the vast, largely uninhabited<sup>5</sup> and unexplored<sup>6</sup> continent is seen in 'frontier' terms. It may very well have been this very lack of restriction that gave a freedom of expression to the silversmiths. Theirs was the task of meeting the demands of the newly (and hugely) rich who wished to display their wealth, much of which derived from the Gold Rushes of the 1850s.

The model of Australian silver shown here (**plate 9**) was first proposed by the writer in 1985.<sup>7</sup> We can see that in Australia there was no skilled indigenous labour force to benefit any local silversmithing industry. During these early years, not only the skills, but the tools and raw materials, all had to be imported. This early period, up to the 1850s, is termed the 'colonial' period of production. That is to say, objects made followed the styles and forms of the 'colonising' country. Thus in Australia objects made were distinctly in the British style, with little attempt to vary from this, other than where the limitations of materials or skills came into play.



Plate 1. Partridge, silver, silver-gilt, mother of pearl, rubies and emeralds, Jörg Ruel, Nuremberg c. 1600, ht 26.7 cm. Gilbert Collection, London



Plate 2. Cup and cover with eagle head, silver gilt and polished turban shell, Jacob Frick, Constance c. 1590 to 1600, ht 24.3 cm. Gilbert Collection, London



Plate 3. Cup in the form of a hawk, silver, gilt, coconut shell and semi-precious stones, Samuel or Hans Kässbörner, Ulm, c. 1600, ht 22.2 cm. Gilbert Collection, London



Plate 4. Cup and cover, silver-gilt, ostrich egg and cold enamel, TC in monogram, Zurich c. 1620-1630, ht 30 cm. Gilbert Collection, London



Plate 5. Standing cup and cover, silver and emu egg, Henry Steiner, Adelaide, c. 1865, ht 29 cm. National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, presented through the Art Foundation of Victoria by John and Jan Altmann, Founder Benefactors, 1985. Photograph courtesy J.B. Hawkins

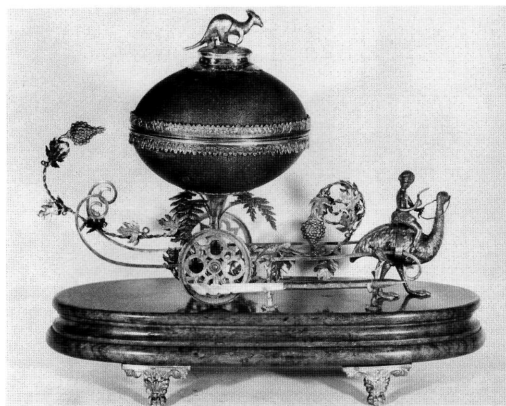


Plate 6. Inkstand, silver, gilt, emu egg and blackwood (*Acacia melanoxylon*), James McBean & son, Melbourne, c. 1909, ht 28.3 cm, l 34 cm. National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, presented through the Art Foundation of Victoria by John and Jan Altmann, Founder Benefactors, 1979. Photograph courtesy J.B. Hawkins

In the second half of the 19th century, a certain inventiveness appeared. While the colonial idiom continued, it was overshadowed by new forms powerfully characterised by the use of Australian motifs and decorative features, and incorporating the use of local materials. This so-called 'Australian period' may be broadly divided into two. Firstly, there are those items adapted from, but not copying, British forms. Secondly there are those with a distinctly European mid 16th to early 17th century Mannerist inspiration. We wish to focus on the second of these, the 'Australian Schatzkammer' forms.

Mannerism was an offshoot of the Renaissance style. In silver it was characterised by objects often incorporating materials or depicting subject matter considered rare, curious or possessing special properties by the standards of the day. Such items were prized for their unusual form and exquisite workmanship rather than for any useful function they might serve (often conspicuously absent). They were regarded as perpetual and inviolable features of a special Treasure Chamber or *Schatzkammer*. They were never to be altered, sold or melted down even in times of great need – a fate more commonly befalling objects in other Treasuries. Such high-mindedness has resulted in a number of these historical collections surviving today, for example that of the Wittelsbachs in Munich, the Electors of Saxony in Dresden, and Emperor Rudolph II of Prague (dispersed, now partly in Vienna). Undoubtedly the style was the preserve of only the very wealthy. Though the collections are most strongly associated with the German princes, they had also featured in Italy and France.<sup>8</sup>

In 19th-century Australia, the use of an emu egg to form the bowl of a cup (plate 5) immediately, if superficially, captures the mood of European Mannerism, where an ostrich egg (plate 4) was often employed. A number of decorative motifs and images endorse the connection – for example the use of the 'Atlas' figure as shown in the Steiner cup and cover (plate 5), and tree trunk stems to objects (plates 6 & 7). The naturalistic bases, often rocky, sometimes with animals, foliage and human figures (plates 5 & 7) also have their earlier counterparts<sup>9</sup>. Overall the mood clearly reflects the supremacy of form over function. This is also notable in the awkward Australian inkstands (plates 6 & 7) and the ungainliness exhibited by the hawk and eagle cups (plates 2 & 3). Creations purely for display, without even lip service to function, can be found in the Schatzkammern and also in mid/late 19th-century Australia. Compare, for example, the partridge (plate 1) and the lyre bird (plate 8).

Other comparisons are more problematic. Perhaps the Mannerist 'Style Rustique' with its foliation and animalia, provided some inspiration for the decorative additions to the Steiner cup (plate 5) and the content of the 'grotto' scene in the inkwell (plate 7). The 'grotto' idea itself may have been 'lifted' from the Renaissance, or it may be a misnomer, and an accidental inclusion from another design source.<sup>10</sup> Looking at the emu egg ink stand with its bizarre propulsion of an aborigine on an emu (plate 6) and its strange cargo, it is tempting, but probably mistaken, to think of Antwerp Mannerism and the designs for 'fantastic cars' by Cornelis Bos<sup>11</sup> (albeit without the enveloping strapwork).

On more solid ground, the use of the Aborigine figures (plates 5, 6, & 7) seems to reflect the mid 19th-century European curiosity about other cultures and races, echoing the Renaissance attitude to the blackamoors and use of his image in art.<sup>12</sup> The eagle and the hawk cups (plates 2 & 3) combine

materials of novelty and curiosity, with (animal) subject matter of significance and cultural importance to the Europeans of the 16th and early 17th centuries. In mid 19th-century Australia, similar sentiments might have related to the use of such materials as emu eggs, native timbers and foliation, and the representation of the lyre bird, emu, kangaroo, and wombat etc.

An examination of the authorship of some of the Australian 19th-century pieces goes a long way towards explaining the suggested Mannerist design inspiration.

Of the pieces which are generally seen as having such antecedents, we note that many of the makers had emigrated from Germany. Thus we have items marked for Henry Steiner (arrived 1858, from near Hanover) (**plates 5 & 8**) and Jochim Matthias Wendt (arrived from Schleswig Holstein 1854) (**plate 7**). Both are generally regarded as being retailers as well as manufacturers and craftsmen. This presents us with the perennial problem of 'maker' versus 'sponsor' and the role of third parties such as the 'vendor'. Other names are more certainly those of artist/craftsman,<sup>13</sup> for example Charles Edward Firnhaber (Germany, arrived 1847) and Julius Schomburgk (Freiburg, Prussia arrived 1850). The latter has actually been credited with making the 'Atlas' figure cup (**plate 5**) for Henry Steiner<sup>14</sup> who acted, in this case, as the retailer.

All of the aforementioned silversmith/jewellers, plus others including August Brunkhorst (from Hanover, arrived 1877)<sup>15</sup>, worked out of Adelaide. The city had a strong German community. All would also appear to have been apprenticed or had their training in Germany. It would thus be very hard to imagine that the Mannerist style of object and the content of the European Schatzkammer was not extremely familiar to them.

In line with the earlier warning, we must note that understandably very little is known of them prior to their migrating. What these silversmiths and jewellers brought with them when they migrated, is largely unknown. What pattern books and tools they arrived with, if any, is largely a mystery. What they certainly did bring with them was a design familiarity and a manufacturing capability.

It appears that much of the force behind the Mannerist-inspired items made in Australia in the second half of the 19th century came from silversmiths in Adelaide. However they were not entirely alone. Among others, for example, were the Sydney manufacturer Christian Ludwig Qwist (from Denmark, arrived c. 1853). From 1860 he worked for the Scandinavian duo of Hogarth, Erichsen & Co before setting up in business on his own.<sup>16</sup> In Victoria, the silversmith Edward Fischer (from Austria, arrived 1857) had some very interesting designs for cups drawn up, drawing strongly on Mannerist inspiration.<sup>17</sup> Again, a Germanic, or at very least north European connection, is in evidence.

While accepting a yet to be quantified Mannerist input into 19th-century Australian silver through the offices of immigrant craftsmen, there are certainly some grey areas. For example, the earliest surviving mounted emu egg (1859) is credited to the English migrant silversmith William Edwards<sup>18</sup> of Melbourne.<sup>19</sup> His early output may be fortuitous or opportunistic 'souvenir art', rather than deriving from any personal familiarity with Mannerism. Works by London-born Evan Jones and by William Kerr of Londonderry, both working in Sydney,<sup>20</sup> also need to be considered. Their relevant output had uncertain levels of influence from other Australian manufacturers. Certainly, Jones had been 'apprenticed' to Hogarth & Erichsen and later Qwist.<sup>21</sup> Equally a domestic

(Australian) borrowing of ideas may apply to the inkstand (**plate 6**) made by T.P. Lewis of Melbourne, and retailed by James McBean c. 1895. Its authorship appears to have no first hand European connection, although there may be an altogether different explanation for its intriguing appearance.

Our attention so far has been on a number of German immigrants and their output. We should note two things. Firstly, this does not ignore the general role of patronage, another important ingredient in determining the nature and style of any output. Within the parameters which concern us here, the tastes of the very suddenly and massively wealthy appear to have been less critical in influencing output than the abilities of the suppliers to offer new and desirable alternative propositions from within their repertoire. The prevailing style seems to have been more 'production driven' rather than 'demand determined'. Hence our focus on the craftsman rather than the customer.

Secondly, we note that the output, in so far as it appears to reflect a Mannerist mood, does so selectively. For example, we do not find the mounted hardstones and rock crystal, or items incorporating precious and semi-precious stones seen in the Schatzkammer. This is understandable because the argument of design inspiration is based on the substitution of those materials used in Mannerist Europe by those available (at the time) in Australia. Stylistically we do not find in the mid/late 19th-century Australian oeuvre, any of the exquisitely tortured and exotic vases and urns either of the Italian Renaissance<sup>22</sup> or from Antwerp Mannerism,<sup>23</sup> nor the latter's use of enveloping strapwork. However, all this sits comfortably with the inspirational link being essentially with a German form of Mannerism transmitted through a number of German immigrants. There do not appear to have been any French, Italian or Dutch immigrant craftsmen coming to Australia at this time, who exerted any significant influence on designs.

The question is to what extent Australian silver of the second half of 19th century was inspired by Mannerist antecedents. Since this, as can be seen, would almost certainly have been largely defined by the immigrant German craftsman, it is on them that future research must continue to focus. This will no doubt ultimately reveal much more about this rather unusual artistic connection separated by half a globe and almost half a millennium.

Jolyon Warwick James is an international silver consultant, valuer and lecturer, who is resident in Sydney, Australia.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For example see exhibition catalogue edited by Eva Czernis-Ryl, *Australian Gold and Silver 1851-1900*, Powerhouse Publishing, Sydney, 1995 pp. 19 & 57, exhibition at the Sydney Mint Museum, March 1995 to March 1996.

<sup>2</sup> Entitled 'The Schatzkammer and the Antipodes, a silver connection', it was first delivered on 27 April 2001 to Adelaide ADFAS. Developed and modified it was more recently presented to the Silver Society (UK) in London, on 20 January 2003, entitled 'A European heritage: nineteenth-century silver in Australia.' It appeared in the *Silver Society Journal* no. 15, 2003 as a summary of the lecture.

<sup>3</sup> James McClelland's *Convict Pioneer and Immigrant History of Australia* lists the last convict ship to NSW as 1849, to Tasmania as 1853, and last of all, to Western Australia 1868.

<sup>4</sup> Free settlers did not start to arrive until the early 1820s. See Eva Czernis-Ryl, *op.cit.* p. 10.



Plate 7. Presentation inkstand with hunting scenes, silver and emu egg, J.M.Wendt, Adelaide, c. 1875. Ht 27 cm. Inscribed 'to R.C. in grateful recognition'. Powerhouse Museum, Sydney 85/412

<sup>5</sup> In 1851 the non-Aboriginal population of Australia was 437,665. Despite the Gold Rushes of the 1850s dramatically increasing the population, it was still only 1.6 million by 1870. See Eva Czernis-Ryl, *op.cit.* pp. 38 & 25.

<sup>6</sup> For example, the continent had not even been traversed through the centre on the north south axis, till Burke and Wills, in 1861 (south to north).

<sup>7</sup> Jolyon Warwick James, 'Australian Silver', *The Antique Collector* May 1985. Unfortunately the diagrammatic representation of the model (accompanying the text and illustrations), had printing errors and was reproduced correctly in the following issue. The model has since been considerably expanded and modified, as shown here.

<sup>8</sup> A very useful and informative reference is Geza von Habsburg *Princely Treasures* (1997)

<sup>9</sup> See for example Hayward, *Virtuoso Goldsmiths 1540 to 1620* (1976) illustrations 269, 270, 473 etc and Hemmarck, *The Art of the European Silversmith 1430 to 1830* (1977) illustrations 178, 187, 206 and others.

<sup>10</sup> J.B.Hawkins used the term 'cameo scene' in *19th Century Australian Silver* (1990) Vol II, colour pl. 57 p. 89, for a very similar inkstand. Another, very similar object by Wendt was described by Christie's Australia (sale 9 April 2003 lot 390) as having a 'diorama'.

<sup>11</sup> See Sune Schele, *Cornelis Bos A study of the origins of the Netherlands Grotesque* (1965), pls 34-36 & 47.

<sup>12</sup> See for example the nautilus shell snail with Blackamoor 'jockey' by Jeremias Ritter, Nuremberg c. 1630, in Roth, *J.Pierpont Morgan, collector: European Decorative Arts from the Wadsworth Atheneum*, (1987) p. 88. In a different medium, see the painting 'The Paston Treasure' Norwich Castle Museum.

<sup>13</sup> For a fuller discussion of this see J.B.Hawkins, *op.cit.*

<sup>14</sup> *ibid* vol. II p. 106, pl. 361.

<sup>15</sup> Brunkhorst purchased Steiner's business in 1884, see Eva Czernis-Ryl, *op.cit.* p. 31.

<sup>16</sup> Eva Czernis-Ryl, *op.cit.* p. 25.

<sup>17</sup> Designed by Frederick Woodhouse senior, for Fischer. See Christies Australia 25 November 1991 lot 461, item XVII illustrated on the front cover.

<sup>18</sup> See J. Culme, *Directory of Gold and Silversmiths, jewellers and allied traders 1837 to 1914* (1987) vol. I p. 138 & vol. II mark 14707 p. 312.

<sup>19</sup> Eva Czernis-Ryl, *op.cit.* p. 23.

<sup>20</sup> See J.B.Hawkins *op.cit.* vol. I ch. 3 & 4.

<sup>21</sup> Eva Czernis-Ryl, *op.cit.* p. 28. However do not necessarily assume a formal European style of apprenticeship complete with 'indenture', 'wanderjahr' and 'masterpiece' – and most probably visits to Schatzkammern.

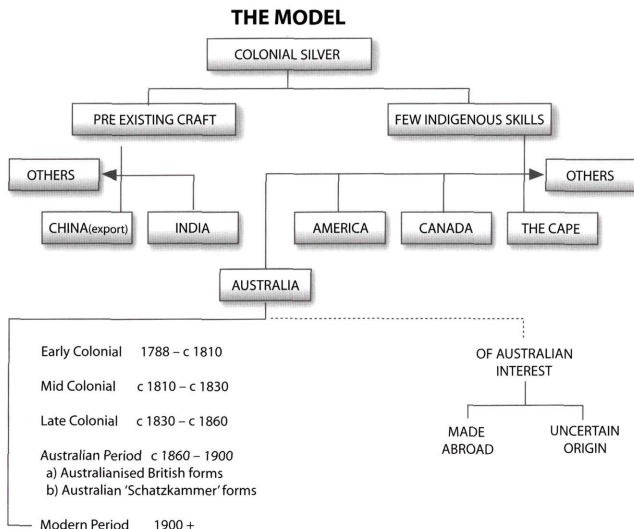
<sup>22</sup> See for example the engraved designs of Enea Vico and others in Elizabeth Miller, *16th Century Italian Ornamental Prints in the Victoria and Albert Museum* (1999) pls 238 – 241.

<sup>23</sup> See for example Hayward, *Virtuoso Goldsmiths 1540 to 1620* (1976). Cornelis Floris pls 196 – 199, Erasmus Hornik pls 202 – 203, and Hans Vredeman de Vries pl. 208 etc. ■



(Left) Plate 8. Lyrebird presentation piece, silver, gilt and on an ebonyised wooden base, Henry Steiner, Adelaide, c. 1880, ht 55 cm. Powerhouse Museum, Sydney A10623

(Right) Plate 9. The much developed model of Australian silver first published in *The Antique Collector* (U.K.), vol 56 No5, May 1985



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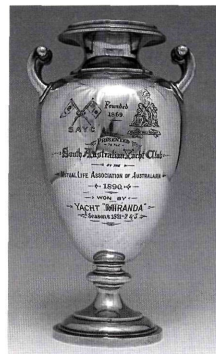
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# AUSTRALIANA SOCIETY INC.

## *Annual Report 2003*



### President's Report 2003

In 2003, we celebrated our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Back in 1978, at Andrew Simpson's instigation, a small group of young people got together to set up an interim committee, and organised a meeting in David Cloonan's showroom in Rushcutters Bay on 2 December. From that the Society was born.

In 25 years we have grown considerably. Our principal activity is producing a magazine that keeps us in touch with our membership, which is substantial in NSW and growing in the other states. Up to now, our event program ran only in Sydney. We have agitated for members to organise events all over Australia. Thanks to Ian Stephenson in Canberra, and Jennifer Storer, Therese Mulford, Warwick Oakman and Robyn Lake in Tasmania, our program will expand in 2004 to include events for members in the ACT and Tasmania.

As I mentioned last year, the Committee decided to allocate some of our surplus funds to develop *Australiana* magazine in 2003 – to expand the print run, the number of pages and the colour content. As well as providing more space for editorial and advertising, this has proved a useful marketing exercise, as the extra copies we distribute are instrumental in attracting new members. Consequently, the annual deficit we predicted is much less than we budgeted.

We experimented with other editorial changes to the magazine during the year. Not all can be pursued with our limited resources. I apologise for the magazine sometimes appearing later than we would hope: the best cure for this is for members to submit articles earlier rather than later.

While Peter Walker generously continues to support his \$250 *Australiana* writing

award, we are very grateful to the anonymous donor who initiated a \$100 prize for the best article submitted by an amateur writer. This has given well-deserved recognition to new and non-professional authors. The respective winners in 2003 were Robyn Lake from Tasmania and Andrew Morris from Victoria.

All contributors to *Australiana* deserve a special mention for their efforts in researching, writing and gathering illustrations. As most contributions are original, I would like to commend our authors for their courage in floating new ideas and theories. Only by doing this will we expand our knowledge and create debate.

Paul Gatto produced an index and contents to *Australiana* and we thank him again for updating this vital reference work, which is available on the website or on disc.

Membership has grown again to a new high, through offering a good product in *Australiana* magazine and our events program, and through a variety of marketing initiatives. Members are exceptionally loyal; we recovered many of those who were slow to renew their subscriptions, and we have a very low rate of attrition.

I would like to pass on our condolences to the families and friends of members who have passed away, including James Kane and Robert St John. Several committee members were able to represent the Society at the funerals of Caroline Simpson and Joan Kerr.

Emails and our website continue to be cheap and effective means of regular communication with a majority of members. Thank you to all those who provide their email address for our frequent communications, and for your

feedback. However, we will continue to mail out notices with our magazines, and if necessary in special mailouts.

All our meetings and events were enjoyable, informative and a good opportunity for socialising or discussing collecting. I would like to thank those who organised them or hosted us, including Axi's for our Australia Day lunch, the Powerhouse Museum, the Mint, the Museum of Sydney, Lawsons, Hordern House, and the owners of *Horsley and The Cottage*, Mulgoa. Michael Reid, Martin Terry, Sue Hunt, Brian Andrews, Megan Martin, Robert Griffin, Andrew Crellin, Anne McCormick, Helen Kerfoot, James Broadbent, Kate Butler and Lindie Ward deserve our special thanks.

Help us build up the membership. Many people, on seeing our magazine for the first time, say how come they never saw it before? So please don't keep the Society a secret, and if you give away your latest copy to a potential new member, you can always ask for a new one.

Finally, I must thank all those who have supported the Society in a multitude of ways, and encourage you to continue to do so. Our role, to enhance appreciation, understanding and preservation of *Australiana*, is a worthwhile one and if we don't do it, who will?

**John Wade**

President

29 March 2004

### Treasurer's Report 2003

I have pleasure in submitting my report and the accounts of the Australiana Society at and for the year ended 31 December 2003. The financial report is all about measuring what the Society and Committee has done

with the resources of the Society. And I have to report that the Society is in sound financial condition.

While it is important that we account to you, the members, on the financial management of the Society, I am keen to report that the financial results show the outcomes of some active initiatives of the Committee. More important though, are the management and financial strategies of the Committee on an ongoing basis; otherwise we could be driving into the future with our eyes in the rear view mirror!

The Society is about 'researching, collecting and preserving Australia's heritage' and this is done through people – you the members. With our management and financial focus on member services, we have:

- Increased our membership from 344 members to 403 members. Our non-renewal rate is low, at 36 in 2003.
- Increased advertising income by 11%.
- Continued expansion and strengthening of our world-class journal by revising and expanding content and colour coverage.
- Expanded our event program and increased its coverage.
- Presented our premiere event – the Australia Day lunch.

The achievements of the Society are largely through the contributed and voluntary efforts of many members. If your name is not mentioned directly please just look at the health of the Society's financial position and take some pride in your contribution.

I would like to thank personally Greg Johansson for his major help in compiling this report and our President John Wade for his personal efforts towards increasing membership, increasing advertising and the hours of work involved in improving the production of *Australiana*.

The Society has benefited from donations and support from Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC, Bill Chapman, Prof. Ken Cavill, Dr Andrew Churchyard, Dr Robert Edwards AO, Hordern House, Jennifer Hutchinson, Hurnall's Antiques, Tim McCormick, Justin Miller, Price Tiles, Ian Rumsey, Andrew Simpson, Sotheby's, Shapiro Auctioneers and Peter Walker.

I look forward to participating in Society events and sharing our great passion for *Australiana* in the coming year.

Caressa Crouch  
Honorary Treasurer  
29 March 2003

## The Australiana Society Inc. Income & Expenditure Statement

	2003	2002
<b>Income</b>		
Subscriptions	20,235.76	17,162.87
<i>Australiana</i> back copies sales	496.36	1,899.73
<i>Australiana</i> advertising	8,381.80	7,563.58
Australia Day dinner, raffle & auction	4,565.33	5,855.51
Donations - Peter R. Walker	250.00	0.00
Donations	986.83	676.36
Interest Received	963.13	615.15
Sundries	0.00	31.82
Total	35,879.21	33,805.02
<b>Expenditure – Australiana</b>		
<i>Australiana</i> production	25,550.00	16,019.32
<i>Australiana</i> postage	3,301.70	2,851.01
<i>Australiana</i> stationery	332.40	647.55
Peter R. Walker Writing Award	500.00	0.00
Sub total	29,684.10	19,517.88
<b>Expenditure – General</b>		
Brochure production	909.09	1,057.27
Web site	1,035.65	1,463.64
Corporate Affairs fee	35.45	221.81
Subscriptions to R.A.H.S.	147.00	142.00
Stationery & postage	0.00	617.39
Insurance	693.00	515.00
Australia Day dinner	3,149.99	3,556.57
Bank charges	28.64	9.46
General Meeting expenses	589.73	515.57
Merchant fees	169.95	0.00
Sub total	6,758.50	8,098.71
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>36,442.60</b>	<b>27,616.59</b>
Net Surplus (deficit)	-563.39	6,188.43
Total Surplus (deficit)	-563.39	6,188.43
<b>BALANCE SHEET AT 31 DECEMBER</b>		
<b>Accumulated Funds</b>		
Balance brought forward	26,774.91	20,586.48
Add surplus (deficit)	-563.39	6,188.43
Peter Walker Award		
(paid from accrual in 2002)	0.00	0.00
Total equity	26,211.52	26,774.91
Represented by:		
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Cash & Investment Account	25,207.52	27,186.53
Donations Account	1,178.81	676.25
Trade Debtors	1,563.50	285.00
GST Refundable	151.55	0.00
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>28,101.38</b>	<b>28,147.78</b>
Less Current Liabilities		
Accounts Payable	-1,889.86	-1,372.87
<b>Net Current Assets</b>	<b>26,211.52</b>	<b>26,774.91</b>

# Amy Harvey, Western Australian china painter

DOROTHY ERICKSON

*Amy Harvey was recognised in her home state with an exhibition in 1991, but is not so well known in the Eastern States.*

Born in 1899 at Boulder on the West Australian goldfields, Amy Ruth Harvey was one of six children of gold worker Phillip Harvey and his wife Alice, a dressmaker. A bright girl, Amy was educated at the scholarship schools of Eastern Goldfields High School until 1915 and then Perth Modern School, where her art teacher was the painter Millicent Kimber. From 1915 Harvey subscribed to *Keramic Studio*, a New York art magazine which contained monotone and colour reproductions of decorated china and analysis of the design process.

Girls had little choice of profession then, so Harvey became a teacher. After a short wartime course at Claremont Teacher's College, she was sent to teach in the country near Toodyay; from there moved to Bally Bally near Beverley, and in 1921 to Maylands Primary School. Here she met the china painter Flora

Landells and became a student at her Maylands School of Art. They became lifelong friends.

In 1929 Harvey had problems with her voice, transferred to the Correspondence School and became involved in educational radio broadcasting. She retained an interest in the natural flora she had seen while teaching in the country. Her earliest pieces such as one c. 1930 featuring a bottlebrush is in a naturalistic style and readily saleable. Her income from china painting equalled half her teacher's salary.

When she married Harold Peirl in 1937 she was obliged to resign, as the Education Department did not employ married women. This gave her more time for her artwork. However she took private students in her South Perth home, passing on her skills to others.

She developed a body of distinctive work, which, with its rich colour and strong geometric design base, was modern for the time. She painted both naturalistic and abstracted nature. The representational work sold very well, but few of the abstract pieces sold and remain in the family.

Harvey was an enthusiastic member, office bearer and exhibitor with the WA Women's Society of Fine Arts & Crafts, a



Waratab, vase  
c.1935, porcelain  
blank painted with  
overglaze enamel



Red Bugles, plate, 1947, porcelain blank painted with overglaze enamel

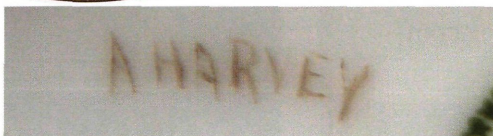


*Bottlebrush, vase,  
c. 1930, porcelain  
blank painted with  
overglaze enamel*

*(Left) Sturt Desert Pea,  
plate, 1947, porcelain  
blank painted with  
overglaze enamel*



*Amy Harvey's painted mark*



supportive organisation with many intelligent and well-educated women members. In the first exhibition of the Society, her work attracted praise from the critic for the *West Australian*, Charles Hamilton, who wrote 'Pottery painting by A. Harvey is very good – especially a Waratah Vase and a small ashtray. 'P.S.T.' was not so sure; of another exhibition he wrote 'Various ladies showed painted china, Mrs Peirl's decorative work being rather unusual.

Amy painted Australian wildflowers in two styles, a naturalistic style and a more modern geometric style. While the naturalistic sold very well, much of the more striking work remained unsold and is held by the family.

In 1947, with painter and fabric designer Ira Forbes-Smith and painter Bessie Saunders, she held a major exhibition at Newspaper House. Her work with its rich colour and strong geometric design base was so modern for the time. It attracted praise from critic Charles Hamilton in his review 'Three Exhibit Watercolours, Painted China, Oils and a varied collection' published in the *West Australian* on 22 July 1947. He wrote Amy Harvey 'shows some good china painting, sound in design and craftsmanship. Her naturalistic and conventional designs are well drawn and harmoniously coloured. Two large vases and a loving-cup are specially noteworthy for relation of pattern to containing shape, treatment of plants to form good pattern and brightness and clarity of colour ... The collection sets the tone for a very interesting and stimulating exhibition.'

*Red Bugles* was exhibited in this exhibition. The flowers in

shades of red outlined in black are arranged with geometric precision against a tripartite blue background. The leaves, folded to fit the circular space, are in shades of green outlined against cream sections near the rim. Three seed-like sections provide a central focus. Another design featuring a Sturt Desert Pea is more fluid, while the earlier piece c. 1930 featuring a bottlebrush is far more naturalistic. A Kangaroo Paw plate painted in 1977 has the same well-ordered geometric design combined with accurate observation of nature.

In 1951 when there was a shortage of teachers, Peirl taught at Girdlestone and Applecross High Schools. She retired in 1963 and returned to china painting until in her eighties, and died about 1990. A retrospective exhibition of her work was held in the Alexander Library in Perth in 1991. A coloured catalogue accompanied this, retrieving Harvey from relative oblivion.

Amy marked her work by painting 'A. HARVEY' in capitals on the base; sometimes she added the date.

#### **Further information**

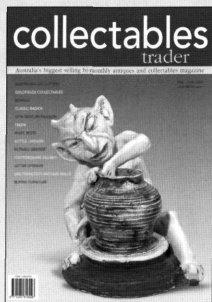
Philippa O'Brien, *The Wildflower Image: The Painted China of Amy Harvey*. LISWA, Perth 1991.

Dr Dorothy Erickson is a practising contemporary jeweller who exhibits regularly in Australia, Japan and Europe. She researches and writes about Western Australian jewellers and artists.

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## Australiana Encouragement Award

To encourage new writers, an award of \$100 will be given for the best article by a first-time writer or collector published in *Australiana* this year. Dealers, curators and those who earn income from antiques or decorative arts are ineligible.

Articles do not have to be lengthy but should be illustrated. A Style Guide is on the website or available from the editors.

The 2003 awards were given to Robyn Lake for her comprehensive article on George Peck, and to Andrew Morris for his clever detective work on C.H.T. Costantini. Both articles are substantial contributions to Australiana scholarship.

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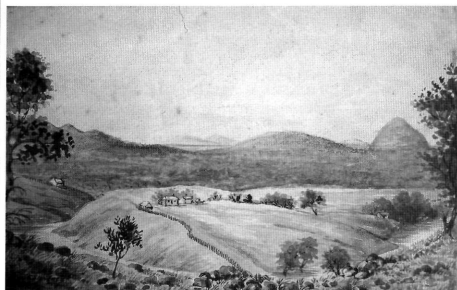
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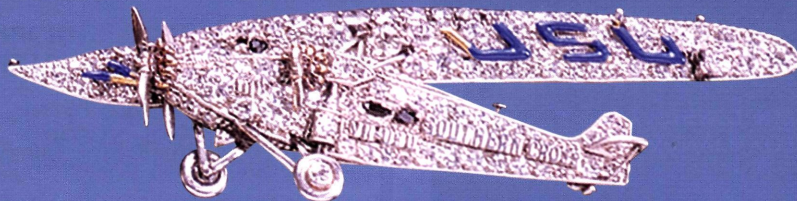
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A diamond and platinum brooch given by Charles Kingsford-Smith to his wife to commemorate his epic flight with Ulm across the Pacific. Modelled in the form of a Fokker Avro X trimotor monoplane, it is pavé set with diamonds with sapphires forming the windows, platinum lettering on the fuselage 'VH-USU Southern Cross', and blue enamel on the wings, 5.8 cm. long.

The Right Hon. Lord Stonehaven, Governor General of Australia, in the introduction of the record of their flight wrote, "when Squadron Leader Kingsford-Smith and his gallant Australian and American companions left San Francisco on their attempt to fly across the Pacific Ocean, no one is likely to forget the anxious interest with which the radio messages announcing their progress were received, or the feeling of thankfulness and pride called forth by their success." The feat was equally noteworthy on account of the boldness of its conception, the courage and skill of its execution and the careful preparation which preceded it. The courage and endurance displayed by Kingsford-Smith, Ulm and their companions in their daring flight from Oakland to Brisbane via Honolulu and Suva will forever rank as one of the most intrepid adventures in the annals of aeronautics.

Charles Kingsford-Smith wrote "Above us as we emerged from the murk, glittered the Southern Cross, the constellation whose name we were proud to bear on our ship. It winked out a genial welcome to us after the stress of the battle far below. It glimmered on the port bow like a shower of diamonds in a vault of the deepest blue... The Southern Cross was to us the symbol of success. It seemed to hang there beckoning its namesake with the three droning motors." Smith and Ulm *"The Great Trans-Pacific Flight"* page 169.

Photo: Courtesy of Christie's Australia.

