

Australiana

FEBRUARY 2007 Vol. 29 No. 1





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COVER: After Joseph Karl Steiler, *Lola Montez*, oval miniature initialled PH, watercolour on paper on card, h 8 w 6 cm.

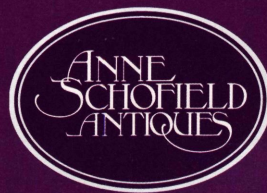
The original by J.K. Steiler was painted in 1847 and hung in King Ludwig of Bavaria's Residenz (now Residenzmuseum) in Munich. Georg Dury painted a copy in 1848, now in the Stadtmuseum, Munich. Private collection

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Gold Rush drama

ON STAGE AND OFF

Paul Hundley
& John Wade

The discovery of gold in Australia echoed the California gold rush of 1849 in many ways. Gold brought people and wealth to both countries, dramatically changing their societies and environments. Life on the goldfields was mostly hard work, but Sunday was a day of rest. The lucky ones who had gold or money could spend Saturday night at a hotel or sly grog shop. Dance rooms attached to hotels became popular meeting places.

As goldfield camps developed into towns, amusements became more diverse and sophisticated. Miners were entertained by touring British and American actors, circuses, and minstrel groups performing in theatres, halls, tents and hotels.

Few performers made more impression on 19th-century Australia than Lola Montez (1820-1861), legendary for her daring 'Spider Dance', where she whirled about searching for a spider in her knee-length skirts. She toured Australia in 1855-56, nearing the end of her career, where her famous act was as much appreciated by the diggers as it was condemned by polite society.

On 6 June 1855, Lola Montez had

sailed with a small troupe from San Francisco on the *Fanny Major* on a ten-week voyage to Sydney. Arriving unannounced on 16 August, she quickly arranged six performances of *Lola Montez in Bavaria* at the Victoria Theatre, the start of an impromptu Australian tour that would include Melbourne, Adelaide and the Victorian goldfields.

Newspaper advertisements heralded Lola Montez and her provocative performances. The *Sydney Morning Herald*

advertised on Wednesday 22 August 1855

Royal Victoria Theatre. - The lessee has the honour to announce that Madame LOLA MONTES and her Trans-Atlantic Company will appear TO-MORROW for the first time in the interesting and eventful drama, entitled LOLA MONTES IN BAVARIA.

High expectations turned to swirling controversy, as the next day the *SMH*



After Joseph Karl Steiler, *Lola Montez*, oval miniature initialled PH., watercolour on paper on card, h 8 w 6 cm The original by J.K. Steiler was painted in 1847 and hung in King Ludwig of Bavaria's Residenz (now Residenzmuseum). Georg Dury painted a copy in 1848, now in the Munich Stadtmuseum. Private collection, Sydney

CATALOGUE.

Catalogue of
the sale of
Lola Montez's
jewellery by
Duncan &
Co., San
Francisco
9 September
1856

MARKS	NO.	LOT	DESCRIPTION.
	1		1 very rich and beautifully wrought raised Intaglio Brooch
	2		2 fine gold Bracelets, curiously worked in filagree
	3		1 Malachite Brooch, richly set in gold, from Barri mines
	4		2 gold Studs, green enameled, with rubies
	5		1 rich set gold Jewelry—Brooch and Earrings, set with garnets
	6		1 unique and very elegant diamond leaf Brooch
	7		1 Turquoise opal and ruby set gold Bracelet, with Locket, of very fine workmanship
	8		1 pr diamond locket Earrings, in blue enamel
	9		1 rich and high cost gold enameled Bracelet, set with hair
	10		1 carbuncle Locket and gold Necklace
	11		1 pearl and enameled Locket and gold Necklace
	12		1 rich gold Bracelet and Locket, set with pearls and carbuncle

MARKS	NO.	LOT	DESCRIPTION.
	13		1 very beautiful diamond set Watch, with massive gold chain. The Watch is a fine timekeeper, enameled and set with diamonds. The chain is exquisitely wrought in fine gold
	14		1 pr pearl Earrings, set in clusters of grapes
	15		1 high cost and finely wrought turquoise and gold Necklace and Cross
	16		1 very elegant diamond Brooch, of new design, forming an enameled watch with 8 diamonds
	17		1 set 3 pearl and ruby Studs
	18		1 gold blue enameled knot Brooch, with Locket
	19		1 superb diamond Bracelet, forming a snake with head set with diamonds and rubies
	20		1 rich Brooch, set with fine emeralds, with heart pendant
	21		1 diamond Bracelet, of elegant design, 12 diamonds and 1 ruby
	22		1 superb diamond Cross, composed of 10 diamonds of the purest water and great brilliancy
	23		1 pr diamond cluster Earrings, 25 diamonds of large size and superior quality
	24		1 very beautiful Bracelet, with gold enameled Watch, encircled with 36 diamonds of large size and great beauty
	25		1 diamond and enameled Ring, 1 diamond, 2 emeralds
	26		1 rich diamond and Turquoise Ring

MARKS	NO.	LOT	DESCRIPTION.
	27		1 magnificent diamond Ring, containing 6 large diamonds of the purest water
	28		1 very rich diamond Ring, set with 5 fine diamonds
	29		1 diamond Ring, richly set with 5 diamonds
	30		1 rich diamond Ring, set with 4 diamonds
	31		1 very hand-some opal and ruby Ring
	32		1 rich turquoise and pearl Ring
	33		1 magnificent diamond solitaire Ring, of great beauty and value
	34		1 do do do
	35		1 do do do
	36		1 superb diamond cluster Brooch, exquisitely set with 25 large diamonds
	37		1 diamond cluster Brooch, containing 9 fine diamonds
	38		1 diamond cluster Brooch, set with 13 fine diamonds
	39		1 pr diamond solitaire Earrings, 2 diamonds of the largest size and purest water
	40		1 exquisitely wrought and enameled massive gold Geneva Necklace with Cross, a rare and valuable piece of jewelry
	41		1 massive Australian gold Chain, of fine workmanship
	42		1 magnificent diamond Bracelet, set with 78 diamonds, and forming one of the most costly pieces of diamond work in the state

MARKS	NO.	LOT	DESCRIPTION.
	43		1 large diamond solitaire Ring, an almost shaped diamond of great beauty
	44		1 very large and beautiful diamond solitaire Ring, one of the finest diamonds in the sale
	45		1 large diamond cluster Ring, 10 diamonds set in green enamel
	46		1 rich diamond Ring, 3 fine diamonds
	47		1 superb diamond Ring, 13 diamonds set in a square
	48		1 rich diamond cluster Ring, 8 fine diamonds
	49		1 diamond Ring, set with 7 diamonds of great brilliancy
	50		1 very handsome diamond and ruby Ring, 7 diamonds and 4 rubies
	51		1 diamond and ruby Ring, 3 diamonds and 2 rubies
	52		1 unique and extremely beautiful diamond and ruby Brooch, containing 27 fine diamonds and 4 rubies
	53		1 superb carbuncle and massive gold Bracelet
	54		1 set diamond and carbuncle Brooch and Earrings, containing 64 diamonds
	55		1 diamond Scarf Pin, of rare workmanship; a Persian gem of art
	56		1 thistle Brooch
	57		1 turquoise Ring
	58		1 tortoise shell and silver Bracelet
	59		1 pr ruby and sapphire Earrings

MARKS	NO.	LOT	DESCRIPTION.
	61		1 set Hungarian Jewelry
	62		1 pr Australian gold Earrings
	63		1 large pearl Pin
	64		1 large Pearl, sunset
	65		1 large diamond Cross, set with — large diamonds
	66		1 pr large diamond solitaire Earrings, 4 diamonds
	67		1 magnificent diamond set Comb, containing 257 diamonds of great beauty
	68		1 large diamond solitaire Ring
	69		1 large and very beautiful diamond Cross, 23 fine diamonds
	70		1 diamond Cross, 6 fine Diamonds
	71		1 very fine diamond Ring, 5 large diamonds
	72		1 rich diamond cluster Ring
	73		1 large diamond Brooch, 35 diamonds
	74		1 rich diamond and pearl Brooch
	75		1 large and high cost diamond and opal Bracelet, ± diamonds
	76		1 pr diamond and emerald Earrings
	77		1 massive Australian specimen Bracelet, with three pendants

Massive Australian Gold Jewelry.

MARKS	NO.	LOT	DESCRIPTION.
	78		1 gold Chain Hook
	79		1 Australian nugget of Gold
	80		1 oval Australian gold specimen Brooch
	81		1 large Australian gold specimen Brooch, of beautiful workmanship, with pendant
	82		1 Australian gold specimen Vest Chain, with effigy of a miner
	83		1 small Australian gold specimen Brooch
	84		1 massive and beautifully wrought Australian gold Brooch, with drops
	85		1 very beautifully made Australian gold specimen Brooch, with drops
	86		1 Australian gold Scarf Pin—the Emen
	87		1 Australian gold Scarf Pin
	88		1 very large and finely wrought Australian gold Victoria presentation Brooch
	89		2 massively and curiously wrought Australian gold specimen Bracelets and massive gold specimen Brooch. The whole forming a large Nooklace. This is the richest work of the kind that has ever left Australia and well worth the particular attention of purchasers of the European market, or as home presents. Nature and art are most skillfully combined in the manufacture, forming a unique and valuable set of jewelry.

in one or two of the Sydney weekly journals. We all know that every person *will* find some excuse for his conduct, and therefore I am not surprised to hear Lola Montez affirm that her Company have broken their engagements with her, by not playing such parts as might be assigned them. This theme is too theatrical to enter upon publicly, but I will merely say to you that according to justice, honesty, and benevolence, her conduct in deserting her Company is as wrong as wrong can be. She cared not for them what was it to her their being left unprovided for, suffice she could do without them. and, therefore, any subterfuge to get rid of them. This is Lola Montez' first good and noble action in the colonies of Australia. I am Sir, yours, &c., ONE OF LOLA

MONTEZ' COMPANY
P.S. Lola Montez knew full well that she would scarcely need the assistance of her company in Australia, their services being valuable only in China and India, where there are no actors; consequently, *fearing* she might not be enabled to engage a Company in Australia to accompany her. She as a matter of caution, preferred paying the extra expense to running the risk; therefore, the very least she could have done would have been to have kept them with her during her tour in the colonies, and then paid their passage back to their homes.

Lola denied wrongdoing, sailing on the steamer *Waratah* to Melbourne and defying the bailiff's attempt to issue a summons on behalf of her sacked

troupe of actors.

Lola Montez in Bavaria opened in Melbourne on 13 September, supplemented with short romantic comedies and eventually, from 19 to 24 September, the Spider Dance. Critics were divided. She played the Theatre Royal in Geelong, then a second stint in Melbourne before taking a steamer to Adelaide.

Backstage at Adelaide's Victoria Theatre, amateur artist John Michael Skipper (1815-1883) sketched Lola dancing her spider Dance is a knee-length skirt, and smoking in the Green Room during her successful two-week Adelaide season starting 26 November. News of the Allied victory at Sebastopol prompted a benefit for The Patriotic Fund, under Masonic patronage. The entertainment culminated with Lola dancing the Spider Dance (no doubt a tamer



Maker unknown, massive gold miner's brooch set with garnets presented to Lola Montez, Melbourne Victoria 1855, engraved on the obverse 'VICTORIA' and on the reverse 'Presented Melbourne Dec. 28 1855 to Madame Lola Montez by her Friends in Victoria as a proof of their esteem'. Sold Duncan & Co. auction, San Francisco, 9 September 1856, lot 88. Gold and garnets, h 6.9 L 8 cm. Private collection, Sydney

version) before the Governor and Lady MacDonnell, with 'a more than average attendance of ladies.'

Adelaide's Masons convinced Lola to present a benefit performance for the widows and orphans of Sebastopol, the Masons attending the performance in full regalia. Melbourne's *Morning Herald* in December carried a report from Adelaide:

'Prior to the departure of Lola Montez and her troupe for Melbourne in the *Havilah*, they were yesterday presented with several articles of jewellery by a number of members of the Free and Accepted Masons of Australia as tokens of remembrance.'

From 18–28 December Lola was back in Melbourne, giving another benefit on Christmas Eve at George Coppin's Olympic Theatre for the 'Ethiopian serenaders', the Backus Minstrels. On the 28th, the day she sailed for Sydney on the steamer *City of Sydney*, admirers presented her with a massive inscribed gold brooch, possibly in recognition of her charity four days before, although we are so far unable to locate a reference to the presentation. From 7 January 1856 Sydney saw another two weeks of performances.

Lola and her troupe returned to Melbourne on 6 February for a provincial tour, inaugurating the Victoria Theatre in Ballarat. But a critical letter in the *Ballarat Times* infuriated her, and she and the editor, Henry Seekamp, laid into each other with whips in the bar of the United States Hotel in what *Melbourne Punch* satirised as 'the Battle of Ballarat'. It helped build audiences, as did her informal visits to the diggings, where she displayed her Californian mining know-how and empathised with the miners – independent, self-made people like herself.

Another whipping, this time by her

manager's wife Mrs Crosby, left Lola worse off but helped promote her new show at George Coppin's Royal Amphitheatre; she evidently held no grudge against Coppin for once satirising her Spider Dance. Then she was off to Bendigo and Castlemaine before sailing from Melbourne to Newcastle to catch the schooner *Jane A. Falkenberg* bound for San Francisco on 22 May 1856. Early on the morning of 8 July, near Hawaii, her lover Frank Folland went up on deck to clear his head after a birthday celebration, and was never seen again.

Meanwhile, the *Julia Ann* with Ester Spangenberg aboard was wrecked 3 October on an atoll, and the passengers rescued on 18 December. On 30 December 1855, Ester departed from Tahiti on the *Lucas*. After her return to San Francisco in March 1856, Ester produced a play at the American Theater owned by the Chapmans, a famous American theatre couple. Although no copy of the play, *A Trip to Australia or Lola Montez on the Fanny Major*, can be found, it was advertised in the *Alta California* newspaper and produced on four consecutive nights from 31 August to 3 September 1856.

A report in the *San Francisco Californian* of Sunday, 6 September 1856 gave Ester's take on the play's scathing reviews:

American Theater:- A "dramatic Triple", written by a lady of this city, entitled "A Trip to Australia, or Lola Montez on the Fanny Major", was produced here on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings.

The quid nuncs of the "dailes" have generally condemned the "effort" as one of great stupidity, a verdict in which we partially agree. One of our critics says of it – "We are perfectly satisfied that of farces it is the tamest; of all plays the dullest; of all works of art, the most absurd." The critic also says,

that were not the author a lady, he would speak of the Play with severity.- We would like to know what his ideas of severity are, if he has not already laid it on rather thick. The lady who wrote it has certainly failed on placing her name among the dramatists of the age, and to whom, in the hour of her blighted ambition, we offer our heartfelt commiseration. We had yesterday the honor of a visit from the authoress, who complained bitterly of the "hypercritics" of several of our papers, as well as of the actors who took the several characters, whom she charges - through the influence of the "divine Lola"- was having formed a conspiracy to kill her production. To us it did seem as if certain performers tried how stupidly they could render their parts, not failing, at the same time, to make the most ludicrous mispronunciation [sic] of words. For instance, melliflous, was pronounced meli-flute-ous; commemoration, com-mon-oration, etc. Actors do sometimes take it into their heads to kill a play- a task which they can most effectually accomplish...

The acrimony between Ester and Lola raises questions as to the lengths that they would go to score points against each other. Lola had returned to San Francisco on 28 July 1856, in time to sabotage Ester's play.

Although Lola had already earned \$4,000 from two weeks on stage in San Francisco, she resolved to sell her jewels to benefit the widow and children of Frank Folland. Her jewellery was consigned to the auctioneer Joseph Charles Duncan for sale on 9 September 1856; Duncan later fathered the famous dancer Angela Dora (Isadora) Duncan (1877-1927). Ester's play *A Trip to Australia*, or *Lola Montez on the Fanny Major* lampooning Lola had finished a week before the auction.



Maker unknown. Massive gold miner's brooch set with garnets presented to Lola Montez, Melbourne Victoria 1855, engraved on the reverse 'Presented Melbourne Dec. 28 1855 to Madame Lola Montez by her Friends in Victoria as a proof of their esteem'. Sold Duncan & Co. auction, San Francisco, 9 September 1856, lot 88. Gold and garnets, h 6.9 L 8 cm. Private collection, Sydney

Lola Montez was a single woman in a world controlled by men. As an actress, she may have had opportunities to become the mistress of the composer Franz Liszt, a rich Paris publisher and the King of Bavaria, but Lola had to provide for her superannuation. All her life she had acquired gifts of jewellery from her admirers. Audiences, mostly men, on the goldfields adored Lola. In Ballarat, miners hurled gold nuggets onto the stage.

This was a celebrity sale. Newspapers claimed that more than 5,000 curious people inspected the 89 lots Duncan & Co put up for sale in San Francisco. Duncan's advertisement itemises thirteen pieces of 'Massive Australian Gold Jewelry' (lots 77-89):

MASSIVE AUSTRALIAN GOLD JEWELRY

Lot 77

1 massive Australian specimen bracelet with three pendants

Lot 78

1 gold Chain Hook

Lot 79

1 Australian nugget of Gold

Lot 80

1 oval Australian gold specimen Brooch

Lot 81

1 large Australian gold specimen Brooch, of beautiful workmanship, with pendant

Lot 82

1 Australian gold specimen, Vest Chain, with effigy of a miner

Lot 83

1 small Australian gold specimen Brooch

Lot 84

1 massive and beautifully wrought Australian gold Locket

Lot 85

1 very beautifully made wrought Australian gold specimen Brooch, with drops

Lot 86

1 Australian gold Scarf Pin-the Emeu [emu]

Lot 87

1 Australian gold Scarf Pin

Lot 88

1 very large and finely wrought Australian gold Victoria presentation Brooch
Lot 89

2 massively and curiously wrought Australian gold specimen Bracelets and massive gold specimen Brooch. The whole forming a large Necklace. This is the richest work of the kind that has ever left Australia and well worth the particular attention of purchasers of the European market, or as home presents. Nature and art are most skilfully combined in the manufacture, forming a unique and valuable set of jewelry.

We can identify among these 89 catalogued lots at least another five which are probably Australian. These are:
Lot 3

1 Malachite Brooch, richly set in gold, from Burri Burri mines [Burra, SA]
Lot 5

1 rich set gold Jewelry – Brooch and Earrings, set with garnets
Lot 41

1 massive Australia [sic] gold Chain of fine workmanship
Lot 54

1 superb carbuncle and massive gold Bracelet

Lot 62

1 pr Australian gold Earrings

Doris Foley quotes a report of the sale in the San Francisco *Daily Evening Bulletin*

The attendance at Mr. Duncan's sale was very large and the bidding very spirited. The articles appeared to bring fair prices for second-hand jewellery. Mr. Duncan said that all that was possible to cause folks to estimate them properly, i.e. highly. A diamond set watch, No. 1, upon the catalogue brought \$233; No. 14, a pair of pearl earrings, \$29.50 ... Thus prices did not range so high for the jewelry of one of the noblesse as appeared to be expected. The Countess herself did not appear to be present. If the lady had delivered

the articles to the purchasers from her own fair hands perhaps an additional value would have been attached to them.

The brooch (lot 3) with 'Burri Burri' malachite, clearly from Burra in South Australia, is probably one of the pieces of jewellery presented by South Australian Masons in Adelaide in December 1855.

Lot 88, the Victoria presentation brooch, still exists, though the maker, the actual occasion of its presentation and its presenters are yet to be identified precisely. A massive Australian gold bracelet was seen on an American television antiques program. The list of jewellery of just this one woman gives an idea of how much 'massive Australian gold jewellery' was made in the 1850s, and how much is lost, most of it misguidedly melted down for bullion.

The list also indicates the characteristics of Australian 1850s jewellery. It was massive, it used gold profusely, and it used other Australian materials such as green malachite from Burra. Australian motifs featured, such as the emu and gold miner, and possibly flora and fauna in the designated 'specimen' bracelets or brooches. Lola possessed brooches, bracelets scarf pins and earrings, as you would expect for a woman, but the 'Vest Chain, with effigy of a miner' is more likely what a man might wear, and may have been given to Folland.

By July 1857, Lola had ceased acting and dancing. Older, wiser, more sanguine and often ill, Lola assisted by Chauncey Burr turned to lecturing, using her stage skills, considerable powers of the mind, and often her own reminiscences. After America, she toured Ireland and England. Back in New York, she suffered a stroke from which she was slowly recovering when she caught pneumonia on Christmas Day. She died, surrounded by Biblical quotations and on the eve of Civil War, on 17 January 1861.

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Abroad with the Australian cricket team

Cherie McKeich

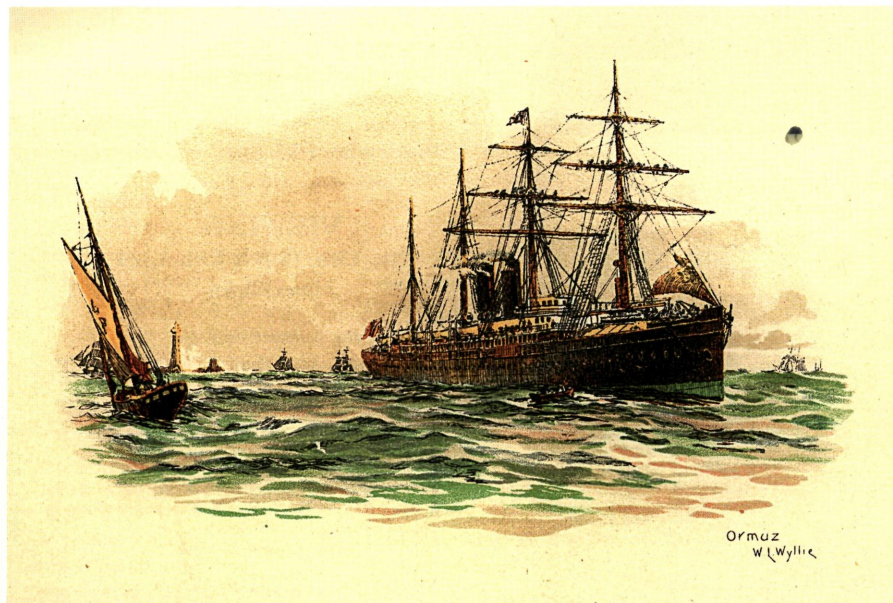


Colonial Australians going abroad felt they were a part of the superior British 'race', even when going to combat the Home Country on the sporting fields. Cricketer Frank Laver's travel photographs taken on the 1899 tour to England – from Ceylon to Europe opened the eyes of a group of young Australians to the world.

The game of cricket, with its imperial heritage and distinct ties with the British colonial system, has been described as 'the umbilical cord of Empire linking the mother country with her children' (Mangan 1986:153). In the mid 19th century, the matronly game was a means of civilising the unfettered inhabitants of the colonies, becoming 'the main vehicle for transferring the appropriate British moral code from the messengers of Empire to the local populations' (Stoddart 1988:658).

During cricket's golden age in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the vernal Australian teams' ascending ability to defeat the English 'at their own game' was deemed a significant accomplishment for a country aspiring to define its national identity and cultivate a sense of nationhood (Kaufman 2005:101). For a youthful colonial society like Australia, excellence at cricket became a way, symbolically at least, of severing the imperial ties. An article in the September 1899 edition of the *Review of Reviews* observed:

The passion for cricket burns like a flame in Australian blood, and, in the case of an All-England Eleven, the passion is intensified by an unfulfilled yearning on the part of young Australia to triumphantly thrash the mother country! (in Harte 2003:201)

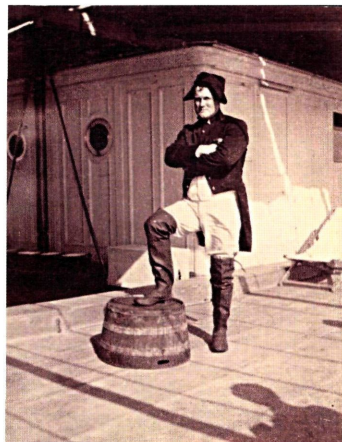


Above left:
Frank Laver

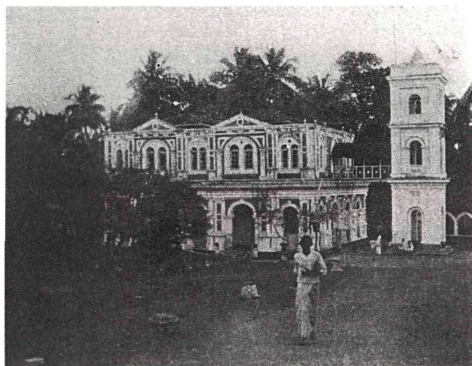
Left: SS Ormuz,
from *Orient
Line Guide*
1896. The
steamship was
in service to
Australia
1887-1911



Above left: Spar fighting on SS *Ormuz* 1899, taken by Laver



Above right: Events in fancy dress relieved the boredom on board SS *Ormuz*, taken by Frank Laver during the Australian cricket team's voyage to England, 1899



Right: Buddhist temple, Colombo, from Laver's book

Cricketing success heralded the emergence of an Australian imperialism and a sense of independence in the push towards Federation. The period was flavoured by an extended knowledge of the outside world and a heightened desire to see it. A burgeoning tourism industry permitted increasing numbers of Australians to journey 'home' to Britain as well as to experience – in pre-multicultural Australia – rare encounters with foreign worlds (Pesman, Walker & White 1996: 37).

Australians tended to write extensively about their travel experiences. The vast record of diaries, books, letters, newspaper and magazine articles extant is testament to the significance attached to the travel experience, to the relationship between travel and writing about one's travels and to the compulsion for those tales to be published for a wider audience (Pesman in Davison *et al.* 1998: 650).

As a member of the Australian cricket team, Frank Laver (1869-1919) had opportunity to tour England three times, twice as player-manager. In 1905 he published the modestly titled *An Australian cricketer on tour*, a conversational narrative inspired by ardent responses to the letters he sent home, of his and the Australian cricket team's travels during their 1899 and 1905 trips to England. Laver's

intention was 'to deal chiefly with the social aspect of the tours, and of my own particular experiences and adventure' in a style 'which would appeal not only to the cricket enthusiast, but also to that large section of the gentle public whose interest in cricket is of a less ardent character' (Laver 1905: vii-viii).

Laver devotes a lengthier section of his book to the 1899 tour, when the team travelled to England via the Suez Canal, in order to provide readers with a glimpse into the usual experiences of an Australian cricketer on tour. In 1905, the team travelled to England via Fiji, New Zealand and Canada. As the 1899 tour itinerary was also the predominant route taken by Australian travellers during this period, the present study will focus on these chapters.

In addition to writing, Laver was a keen amateur photographer and, evidently unconcerned to appear the wide-eyed tourist, amassed a vast photographic collection that provides us with a gloriously expansive visual account of his travels in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, through Asia, Europe and Britain as well as New Zealand, Fiji and Canada. The collection of over 1,000 photographs is housed in the Melbourne Cricket Club Museum, due to reopen in November 2006.

While employed with the Museum, I had the good fortune of cataloguing each individual print and album, developing a divergent fascination with Laver that was decidedly *unrelated* to cricket. There was evidently more to be said about touring with the

Galle Face Hotel, Colombo.



Above: Galle Face Hotel, Colombo, established in 1864, postcard

Below left: Montague Noble in a 'jinricksha', Colombo

Below right: Australian cricketers Warwick Armstrong, Albert Cotter, M.A. Noble, A.J. Hopkins and Frank Laver in tropical outfits of safari suits and pith helmets, Colombo, 1899

Australian cricket team than simply what matches were played, where, or how many runs were scored.

When in 1899 Laver set sail with the tenth touring Australian cricket team, the concept of mass tourism was flourishing. The cutting of the Suez Canal in 1869 reduced the Australia-England voyage from an arduous four months to little over a month, making the journey more accessible, reliable and safer. Moreover, shipping companies

transformed the travel experience by building large passenger liners that promised a journey of pleasure and recreation, rather than being the test of endurance of bygone days (Pesman, Walker & White 1996: 37). The introduction to the *Orient Guide*, published in 1896, reassures its passengers:

Twenty or thirty years ago a sea voyage was still regarded by all but the hardy few as a dire necessity,





only to be resorted to in the last extremity. The ocean was looked upon not as a highway but as a barrier, hindering access to distant lands more effectively than successive ranges of Alps or Andes would have done ... Today, the ocean voyage has lost its terrors; our seas have become the great high roads of the world ...

The Australian cricket team sailed on the SS *Ormuz*, which departed from Sydney and stopped at Melbourne, Adelaide, Albany (a coaling station), Colombo, Suez, Port Said, Naples and Gibraltar before reaching its final destination, London. The *Ormuz*, launched on 29 September 1886, 6,031 gross tons, was built in Glasgow for the Orient Steam Navigation Co. She accommodated 106 first, 170 second and 120 steerage class passengers.

They occupied the SS *Ormuz*'s first saloon – class and status being as

critical at sea as it was on land – and were supplied with an array of entertainments to ease the time. Laver describes tournaments of quoits and shuffleboard, and games of cricket played between married and single, and first- and second-class passengers. Classical music could be listened to in the music-room or, for something less highbrow, 'coon songs' sung on deck. A grand fancy dress ball which the cricketers attended donned in a panoply of costume, is humorously captured by Laver in both photograph and print:

Some of the make-ups were very quaint and amusing, the funniest being probably that of Jim Kelly, Victor Trumper, and Joe Darling. The first two mentioned, with the aid of pillows, increased the dimensions of their chests to an extent that would have caused German officers to turn green with

Above left: Australian cricketers wearing safari suits and pith helmets, Colombo, 1899

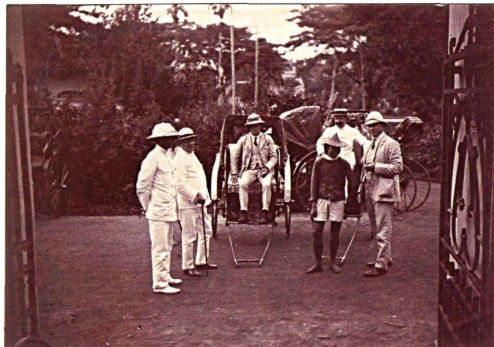
Above right: Australian cricketers make a pit stop near Colombo, 1899

Below left: Australian cricketers in rickshaws, Colombo, 1899

Below right: Cricketers and other men return from a rickshaw jaunt in Sri Lanka, 1899

envy. They blackened their faces, and wore high sea-boots and bath-towel turbans. Shouldering old brooms, like trained soldiers, they acted as a sort of body-guard to the Khalifa (Joe Darling), whose costume would have passed for a clown's (p. 13).

The journey to England provided for many Australian travellers their first contact with the foreign, when disembarking in the exotic port of Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka).





Above left: Cricketers Warwick Armstrong and Albert Cotter try carrying baskets, native-style in Sri Lanka, 1899



Above right: Cricketers Frank Laver and A Cotter try carrying baskets, native-style, Sri Lanka, 1899

Below left: Native juggler on SS *Ormuz* in port, from Laver's book

Below right: Frank Laver and M.A. Noble riding donkeys, 1899

Colombo was often the initial experience of the world beyond Australia and was thus constructed as the 'other' – 'remote and irrelevant to the real world' (Pesman 1996: 156).

Laver describes the 'strange and interesting native life' of Ceylon where he rides a 'jinricksha' carriage past the native quarters to 'observe the life and habits of the dusky inhabitants' before being ferried to the Galle Face Hotel for tea (p. 5). The exotic, lush

surrounds of the 'Oriental City' rather captivated Laver, inspiring an almost Lewis Carroll-style passage:

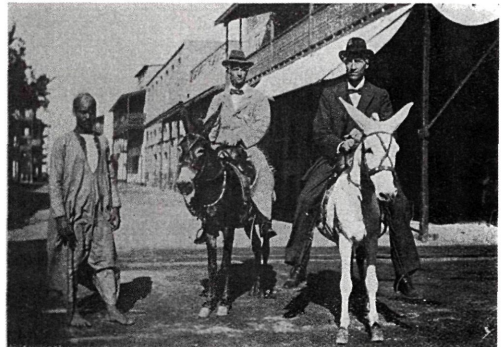
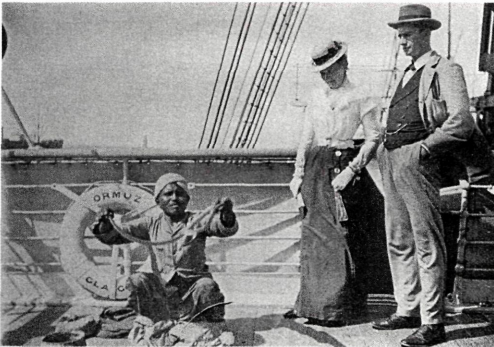
There [the Galle Face Hotel] we alighted for refreshments, and before continuing our drive saw Hindoos turn nuts into trees, and produce pigeons out of apparently empty boxes, whilst a cobra watched the proceedings through his spectacles (p. 6).

Photographs of the holiday in Ceylon reveal Laver and members of the Australian team mingling among the lush palm trees and gardens, conspicuous in their pale tropical suits, wearing pith helmets and smoking pipes. When natives of Ceylon accompany them, it is in the capacity of guide, manning the 'jinrickshas', assisting with the team's automobile, or as beggars, as evinced in a photograph of Monty

Noble, seated aloft in his jinrikisha and passing money down to a pleading local woman.

Despite increased ease, the time and expense required to journey abroad ensured travel remained the preserve of the middle class. It is perhaps for this reason that Australian travellers were unusually observant of the social structures, not only the sights, of foreign cultures. They were obsessed with the notion of cleanliness, as a measuring rod of civilisation and, often in contrast, as an indication of the superiority and modernity of Australia's social norms:

At its worst and most basic, it sprang from an obsession with dirt as a supreme test of social efficiency, the traveller, a disdainful visitor running a superior finger through the dust on a foreign window sill (Pesman, Walker & White 1996: xv).





Above left: Montague Noble feeding pigeons in Venice



Above right: Pompeii with Mount Vesuvius beyond, c. 1899

In Laver's accounts, this view is most evident in 'that delightfully situated city of stench' – Naples. The city was both the first European port reached by Australians as well as being the poorest and most overcrowded in 19th century Europe (Pesman-Cooper 1991: 47). While Laver is evidently entranced with the picturesque beauty of Naples, his attention is occupied more by the filthiness of its inhabitants:

Half-naked children defile the narrow footways without any remonstrance from the gay, gesticulating crowd; but the almost as scantily attired men and women are nearly as filthy in their habits as the youngsters ... Crowds of blind, crippled, and deformed beggars, pleading for a few centimes in such a pitiable manner that it is hard to refuse, follow the tourist wherever he goes. On most of these poor creatures one finds painful running sores, brought on in many instances by uncleanness. A few applications of soap and water would have a most beneficial effect (p. 21).

At the same time, Australians considered Europe the epitome of high culture, possessed of ancient histories and classical civilisations. Numerous photographs in Laver's collection capture the Australian team standing stoically before the antiquarian monuments of Pompeii, and he writes in detail of climbing Vesuvius (all the while repining at what rogues and thieves the Italian

guides were). This is not untypical behaviour – having received some form of education in the classics, the Australian tourist would likely record more on Pompeii than any other monument in Italy (Pesman 1996: 47-48).

Laver proceeds with an impassioned historical critique of 'that most famous of ancient cities, Rome', emphatically concluding 'It makes one wonder whether the only country [Great Britain] that has ever had greater sway over the world than the Romans had will one day have as little. I think not, unless its people, like the Romans, yield to indolence and licentiousness.' (p. 23).

After touring Italy, Laver and the team travelled overland via Switzerland, Belgium and Versailles, telling of charmed evenings spent at the theatre and opera – that is, indulging in the 'real' culture only to be found in Europe. In Paris they climb the Eiffel Tower, attend theatre at the Folies Bergère, and make a brief, ill-judged visit to the infamous Moulin Rouge where they were invited to watch a 'ballet dance'.

We went, but finding it was no place for us we hastened away, Alf Noble capsizing two or three chairs in his hurry to do so. Making our exit through the big hall, we noticed that great progress had been made in the go-as-you-please performance. We felt we had fled in the nick of time (p. 34).

In spite of Laver's quite critical observations of the foreign cultures

encountered, he is careful to distinguish himself as an acculturated *traveller* by indulging in the un-touristy behaviour of consuming the local cuisine:

I don't consider a man travels the country properly unless he enters to a certain degree into the customs and peculiarities of the people. In Italy I tried macaroni, although what I saw of its manufacture did not tend to make it very appetising. In Germany I ate some of the fermented cabbage called 'sauerkraut' [sic], and in Frankfort masticated some of the world-renowned bags of mystery known as Frankfort sausages. I have yet to taste French snails.

Test cricket provided for Frank Laver and the Australian cricket team the opportunity to travel, a luxury usually the preserve of the Australian middle class – 'a middle class often seen as not being particularly relevant to the creation of Australian culture or society, least of all when enjoying the frivolity of leisurely overseas travel' (Pesman, Walker & White 1996: xi). However, Frank Laver's photographs and writings as a tourist being imbued with the cultural and historic importance of cricket, has altogether produced a uniquely valuable document of a significant period in Australia's colonial past.



Frank Laver and Montague Noble in Pompeii

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Cherie McKeich was employed in the Melbourne Cricket Club Museum from 2004-2006 in Collections and as Curatorial Assistant, and is now a collections registration officer at Museum Victoria, Melbourne.

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From earliest times small craft were universally used worldwide to cross rivers, lakes, bays and harbours. Long before steam and motor came into use, these boats relied on oar, sail and tide to provide the only means for exploration, passenger transport and the movement of goods in expanding communities. Watermen or boatmen and lightermen all played their part in this industry, for example on the River Thames for as long as London had existed, but their importance in the early days of new colony at Sydney Cove cannot be overlooked. Orders and traditions emanating from England, as well as previous occupations of convicts and settlers with waterways experience, would have determined procedures to be used in the developing harbour.¹

Captain Arthur Phillip in 1788 found the original landing place at Botany Bay unsuitable for settlement. His subsequent explorations by boat led to moving the fleet to Port Jackson where Sydney Cove would provide a safer anchorage, a greater supply of fresh water and better soil for farming.

The 'extensive' harbour took time to explore both by boat and on foot. During the first ten years, as the settlement expanded, it became evident that more small boats were needed for fishing as a way to supplement the shortage of food, for carrying goods from ship to shore, for private excursions and for transporting convicts from one work area to another.

By 1795 a Government Boatshed had been established at the Government Wharf, Sydney Cove, where the boat builder in charge was Daniel Paine (Payne).² Paine had arrived with the

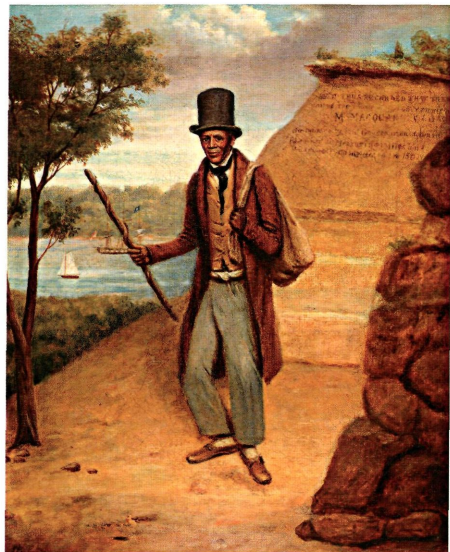
returning John Hunter in 1795.

Misuse of boats made outside the Government approved boatshed caused a General Order to be issued 18 July 1796:³

It having been represented to the Governor that there are several people in the settlement who employ themselves in building boats for any person who chose to employ them, and without having obtained any permission for such purpose, a liberty which has crept into the settlement in opposition to all former orders and regulations on this lead; and as it is well known that notwithstanding the convenience attending the having boats for various uses in this extensive harbour

Jacob William Jones,
*View in Sydney Cove, 1845.*¹
Dixson Gallery, State Library of
New South Wales





J.B. East, *Billy Blue*, 1834. Oil painting, 63 x 50 cm. Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW, Sydney¹³

many abuses have been practised thro' their means, it is therefore hereby ordered that no person whatever do presume to build boats of any size or description without having obtained permission in writing, signed by the Governor for the time being, or such person as he may authorize for the purpose. It is also ordered that all boats at this time in the possession of individuals be forthwith taken to the boatshed at Government Wharf, where Mr Paines (sic), the master boat-builder, will have orders to cut a number on their stern, which number the owner is to keep painted or marked with white. Of the boats thus numbered the Provost-Marshall will keep a register agreeable to a form which will be given to him. All boats, after a convenient time having been allowed, which may be found without being numbered by Mr Paines (sic) will be liable to seizure.

(signed) Jno Hunter

Just eight years after settlement, this was the first act to place some control on the building and use of boats and registering them by number. It is not

known how many boats were numbered after the 1796 order. A further and more stringent order appeared on 9 October 1797 regarding the securing of boats when unattended, no doubt a necessary precaution due to the number of attempted convict escapes by boat: 'they must not be found with oars, masts, sails or rudders in them.'⁴

The successful leaving of the colony by William and Mary Bryant with their two children and seven other convicts on 29 March 1791 had opened ideas of the possibilities of escape even if only five of the eleven arrived in London, July 1792.⁵ Their six-oared boat under the control of Bryant, a smuggler with boating experience before his arrival in Sydney Cove, had been used for fishing in the harbour. One of the surviving convicts, John Butcher, when pardoned, requested permission to return to the colony. This was granted providing he joined the New South Wales Corps.⁷

The Government General Order of 6 July 1803 lists the prices to be charged by the registered boatmen: passengers one shilling each, children six pence, as well as separate prices for sheep, goats, and parcels. The boatmen plying between Sydney and Parramatta were reminded

'to be more circumspect in their conduct towards their passengers' and to 'always keep tight, furnished with at least four oars in case the passengers may wish to assist in rowing and with one mast and sail.'

The passage between Sydney to Parramatta and the reverse was regulated 'by a bell to be rung at the Hospital [Sydney] and Parramatta wharves half an hour before the departure of the boat, to give notice to those who mean to take a passage by it. The boats to leave Sydney Wharf at the first low water and Parramatta at the first high water.' This was to assist the rowers by using the incoming and outgoing tides. Due to timing of the tides, this last direction was changed on 17 July 1803 so boats were directed to leave 'at eleven am in the forenoon from each place.'⁸

The first private boat building yard, started by James Underwood at the mouth of the Tank Stream, began operating in 1803. Later the building of larger boats moving with sail and oar like the *Rose Hill Packet* in 1831, and the *Surprise* by steam and sail, improved the trip to and from Parramatta.⁹

By the 1805-6 Muster, 25 boatmen were listed.¹⁰ They had arrived by various ships, from the First Fleet in 1788 to 1803. Were they boatmen back in their native land? One of the early notable names in this listing was William (Billy) Blue - 'The Old Commodore' - sentenced to seven years transportation on 11 October 1796 for stealing 20 lb of raw sugar. His arrival on the *Minora* in December 1801 meant he only had two years to serve. A colourful 'Negro' character who took up the oars of a boatman wearing top hat and tails, a sack on his back, ferrying between Dawes Point and Blues Point.

He was to become popular with Governor Macquarie, who used him on many occasions to transport himself and family around the harbour.¹¹ One of his advertisements appeared in the *Sydney Gazette* 2 August 1807

William Blue respectfully informs the public that he being the only waterman licensed to ply a Ferry in

this harbour, they will be accommodated with a tight and clean boat, an active oar and an unalterable inclination to serve those who honour him with their command.¹²

Billy Blue's portrait was painted by T.B. East about 1834.¹³

Another well-known character was Solomon Wiseman who had been a lighterman on the Thames before his arrival on the *Alexander* in 1806. He became famous for the first ferry service on the Hawkesbury River and the area of his home and settlement is still called Wiseman's Ferry.¹⁴ The central male character in Kate Grenville's novel *The Secret River*, a Thames boatman, is based on Solomon Wiseman.

The Government General Orders in 1813 directed numbers, 'limited to four watermen' licensed to ply Port Jackson.¹⁵ This was to cost them 'ten shillings sterling' and they were to only ply 'to and from the Hospital Wharf... moored by 9pm each night.'

This did not agree with the next Muster in 1814¹⁶ when the number of watermen/boatmen listed had grown to approximately 22, and continued to grow until concern was shown in 1833 about the number of licenses being issued. Governor Macquarie during his term of office, 1810-21, had issued many orders to try and control the numbers and quality of services. After almost 30 years, even though regular amended passenger and goods rates as well as regulations appeared in the *Government Gazette* and newspapers, often listing in great detail destinations around the Harbour, to some it now appeared out of control.

Six watermen signed a memorial or petition to the Governor on 9 August 1833:¹⁷

To His Excellency, Major General Bourke, Governor in Chief.
The Humble Memorial of the undersigned Watermen of the Harbour of Port Jackson. Herewith;
That the late Governor Macquarie instituted a code of rules for the regulation of the Watermen of this



Waterman's Cottage, 12 Darling Street, Balmain built 1841 'McKenzie the Waterman' lived here as late as 1907¹⁸

Harbour fixing the rate of charges and requiring them to take out an Annual License, and, with the view of insuring to them a fair substance, limiting their number to six. Some years afterwards, however the increased trade and shipping of the Port were deemed sufficient to employ a greater number, and the Licenses were accordingly extended to twelve. That since the establishment of His Majesty's Customs Department in the Colony the Licenses have been granted the Controller thereof, who has so far departed from the fostering policy of Governor Macquarie as not only to have greatly increased the number of Licenses, but to have abolished limitation altogether, granting Licenses to all who choose to apply for them. That the consequence of this innovation have been truly painful to your Memorialists and their families. Shop-keepers, Publicans and others have purchased boats and plied them by their servants; and with competition so unfair Your Memorialists who are the original holders of Licenses, and whose living depends upon their Boats exclusively, find it next to impossible to keep

from starvation. Wherefore Your Memorialists humbly appeal to the paternal protection of your Excellency, and implore your Excellency to take the premises into your humane consideration and limit the number of Licensed Watermen to twelve.

And Your Memorialists will ever pray.

William Vaughan

John Seabrook

Charles King

John Phillips

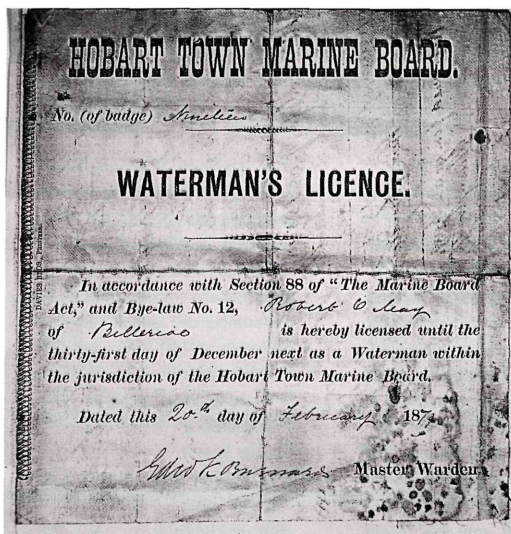
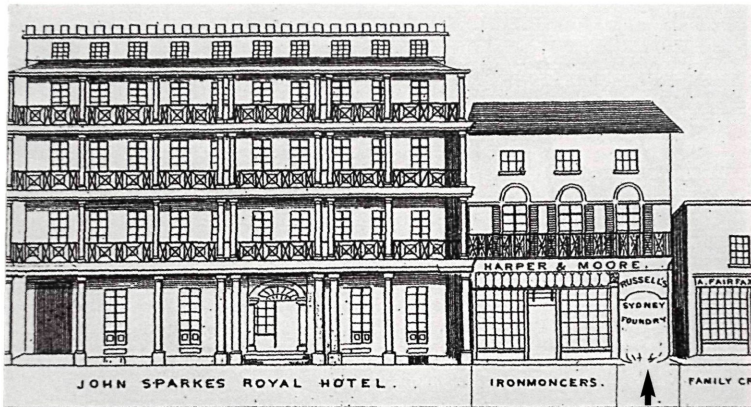
Thomas Jones

William Hubbard

all of these have held a License a number of years

Sydney 9th August 1833¹⁸

This petition perhaps caused some reaction from the Colonial Secretary's Office to engage in a more stringent control of the boatmen, for soon afterwards it contacted Mr James Blanch to prepare 'brass badges of registration.' Blanch's foundry was one of the first of its type to be established in the Colony, originally in Pitt Street 1821, later at 78 then 71 George Street, Sydney. In the *Sydney Gazette* of 1822 and 1826 James Blanch describes himself as a 'Mathematical and Philosophical Instrument Maker, Brass Founder, Brazier



Above:
Foundry
entrance gate
to 'Russell's
Sydney
Foundry',
George Street,
from Fowles,
Sydney in 1848

Left:
Waterman's
Licence,
Hobart,
Tasmania,
1879

and Plater, and General Worker in Silver and Brass.¹⁹

Arriving on the ship *Fanny* in January 1816, convict James Blanch was required to serve seven years for a stealing offence in 1814. When obtaining his ticket of leave in 1821 he proceeded to set up his foundry. In answer to the Colonial Secretary's order and request for the cost of the proposed badges the records dated 14 October 1833 show:²⁰

In reply to your letter dated the 10th Instant, I beg to inform you the price of each of the Brass Tickets for Licensed Boatmen and Porters, made according to Pattern, will be Five Shillings Sterling. James Blanch.

A memo on a letter from James Blanch 20 May 1834 states that 'A boatman, wishing to ply with a boat for hire in Sydney Cove and Darling Harbour' should be licensed and would 'receive a Badge on which shall be inscribed his name and number of his license, which he shall wear firmly sewed to his coat or jacket on the left breast.'²¹

Another letter from James Blanch to The Honourable The Colonial Secretary 13 January 1834 acknowledges the receipt of 50 brass badges for Licensed Boatmen by the Police Magistrate.²² On 16 April 1834 the Police Office Sydney reports another 25 badges received for licensed 'Watermen' and since this was not enough, a request was made and approved to order ten more, this time to be engraved by the supplier.²³

The terms 'boatmen', 'watermen' and 'lightermen' are used to describe the men plying Port Jackson over this period. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* notes 'boatman' as one who hires out his boat/provides transport by boat, while 'waterman' is a boatman plying for hire. One and the same? A 'lighterman' loads and unloads ships, not brought to wharf, by lighter, usually a flat bottom boat.

The inclusion of 'porters' as well as 'boatman' on Blanch's first order makes it either an error in description or the possibility that both were included on the first badges. No

LICENSED BOATMAN BADGES, SYDNEY

Known Sydney licensed boatman badges are named and numbered to

Name	Number	Collection
George Prince	No. 95	Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney
Thomas Fielder	No. 98	Private collection
Joseph Reynolds	No. 186	Mitchell Library, Sydney
Will'm Davis,	No. 281	Mitchell Library, Sydney
George Barnett	No. 431	Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney
John Chapman	No 524	Private collection
Thomas Steel	No. 585	Private collection
Charles Bullock	No. 638	Private collection

One for Watsons Bay has been recorded with no known details.

Top left:
Licensed Boatman
Sydney badge no. 95,
George Prince,
98 x 83 mm. Australian
National Maritime
Museum

Below left:
Licensed Boatman
Sydney badge no. 638,
Charles Bullock,
private collection

Top right: Thames Free
Waterman Badges:
Silver Clad Arm Badge
No. 3614, awarded to
James Charles Upton
24 June 1809, 106 x
123mm;

Below right: Bronze
Breast Badge No. 6022,
awarded to James
Isleworth Dyckhoff
(Dyckoff) 1814,
118 x 118 mm. An
apprenticeship of seven
years was required to
obtain a Thames Free
Waterman's License.
Manuscript Section,
Guildhall Library,
London



example has been located and only 'boatmen' are mentioned in all further orders.

Eight Sydney boatman badges (see page 22) have been found to the present time and the earliest is badge No. 95 named for George Prince, now held by the Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney. The 'Prince' Badge is believed to have been issued before 1840.

James Blanch's foundry was situated in

George Street, Sydney next to the original Royal Hotel. After his death in 1841, his widow sold it to Peter Nichol Russell who carried on and expanded the business. The entrance gate with Russell's name on it is visible in Joseph Fowles, *Sydney in 1848*.²⁴

The headstone of James Blanch and his family, moved from Devonshire Street Cemetery in 1901 to make way for Central Railway, can still be seen at the Bunnerong Memorial Garden,

Botany, Sydney in the Wesleyan Methodist Section.²⁵

Low's Directory of 1844 list 20 'watermen' mostly living in the Rocks area, including George Prince and Thomas Fielder.²⁶ The 1851 *Ford's Directory* lists George Prince among others again, this time living in Harrington Street, while some of the fellow licensees were now spread around the Harbour to Balmain and the North



Left: 'Doggetts' Red Coat and badge, William Giles East winner, 1887 National Maritime Museum London.³⁷

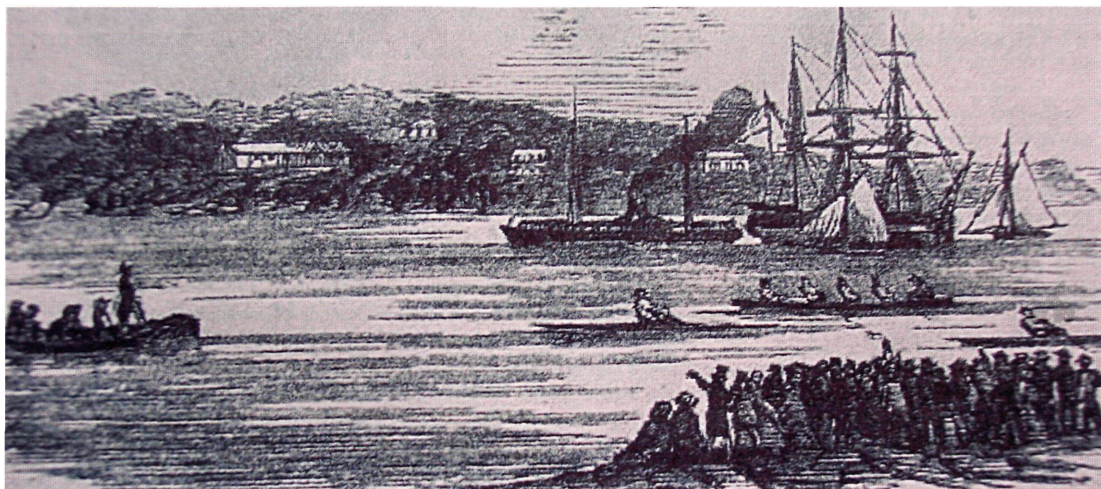
Below: Rowing Races on Port Jackson, 1800s.³⁵

Shore.²⁷ George Prince, Waterman, died in 1853 aged 58. He was living at 2 Prince Street, The Rocks at the time.²⁸

A Petition from 'Licensed Watermen' dated 7 July 1853 protesting over certain fines for overcharging, contained over 60 signatures.³⁰ While it appears that there were at least 85 badges produced in the first year 1833-4, by 1858 about 300 or more had been ordered.

All of these badges listed are convex, oval, cast in brass, 83 x 98mm, with two small holes side by side on the four points of the compass to facilitate sewing to jacket breast or sleeve. There is no record where the pattern for the badges, referred to by James Blanch in his letter dated 14 October 1833, came from. A number of convicts arriving in Port Jackson had been employed in London or elsewhere as watermen, for example John Owen who arrived in the First Fleet on the *Scarborough* sentenced for seven years. Was the pattern based on the well-established London example?

The need for control of the waterways in Sydney Harbour may have used the established system of the River Thames as a guide. The Thames Free Watermen had a badge to be worn on the arm or breast made from silver, sheffield plate or brass bearing the arms of the Watermen's Company in the upper half and the Arms of



Silver medal won
for a Waterman's
Skiff, 1878.
Obverse: Hunter
River/A &
H/Association/Mai-
tland Show/1878.
Reverse:
Awarded/to/Mr
Edward
Sheppard/for/
Waterman's
Skiff/with two
sliding seats
(51 x 60mm)



the City of London in the lower section, plus a number but no name.

The London Watermen established under the Watermen's Guild was regulated by a statute of Henry VIII in 1514. As early as 1680 the London Fire Insurance recruited watermen to service the waterfront along the Thames. By 1796 there were approximately 12,000 watermen in the London area.³¹

Other colonies in Australia used a similar system on their waterways, although badges have not been seen. Hobart, Tasmania, for instance issued Watermen Licenses under the *Marine Board Act*. One 'licence' on record was to Robert O' May with badge No. 19 issued 20 February 1879 and renewed annually by stamp endorsement on the reverse of the original; viz. 1880, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86. (Maritime Museum of Tasmania.) The issuing of licenses continued until at least June 1917 when No. 92 was issued to Edgar Laurence but according to the Archives Office of Tasmania, Hobart, from 1892 onward the word 'Badge' had been crossed out.

Brisbane (Moreton Bay) may have wished to use a similar registration when they applied to the Colonial Secretary Office in Sydney in 1855 to 'forward Watermen (Boatmen) Badge as a pattern

for same required at Moreton Bay.'³²

After some years of unsteady management the Sydney Boatmen formulated a constitution setting up the United Watermen's Benefit Society of Sydney in 1844 for the relief of sick and aged members. A copy of the Rules and Regulation made in 1860 is in the Mitchell Library stating the 'meetings were to be held at the Watermen's Arms', licensed to Mr John Lord, Harrington Street, Sydney.³³ At that time Joseph Thompson was president, John Lord, treasurer and Charles Prince, secretary – all signatories on the 1853 petition. According to Old Sydney by Chum, 'John Lord was a Lighterman in the old days and proprietor of the Waterman's Arms in Harrington Street which stood on the eastern side next to the Old Watch Tower.'³⁴

Another tradition founded in London was favoured by the Sydney boatmen – a rowing race. Despite all the restrictions placed by authority on the boatmen of Sydney Harbour, time was found to test their skill as oarsmen. Challenge races were organised between them and crews of visiting ships as early as 1805. Captain John Piper organised a challenge race between crews in 1818 awarding a 200 guinea prize to the winner. By 1828, a

regular regatta was being held for both rowing and sailing. This was and still is held 26 January, Australia Day in Sydney Cove.³⁵

The traditional London Race was instigated by a notable London actor of the 1700s, Thomas Doggett, who gave a special watermen's scarlet coat and silver badge for the winner of a race rowed for by six young Free Watermen in honour of the day George I came to the British throne, 1 August 1715. At Doggett's death in 1722 he left a sum of money to continue the custom. This race is still held on 1 August each year from The Swan London Bridge to The Swan Chelsea.³⁶

The regattas in New South Wales held races for waterman's skiffs, specially designed boats used for the transport of goods and people. One such vessel entered by Edward Sheppard in the Hunter River Agricultural & Horticultural Association Show won a Silver Medal in 1878.

Presumably this skiff would have been used as a racing boat on the Northern Rivers district of NSW. These river competitions encouraged the sport of rowing and produced a number of entries in the World Championships held both in Australia

and overseas with Australia, between 1876 and 1914, winning 32 World Championships out of 45 races. Edward Trickett and William Beach were among the noted rowers, and Beach became Australia's first world champion in any sport in 1884.³⁸

From the earliest days of settlement the boatmen of Port Jackson lived and brought up their families in and around the historic Rocks area of Sydney, many in Cumberland, Harrington and Gloucester Streets as shown in the directories of the time. The wharves around Sydney Cove, named Government Wharf and Hospital Wharf in the early days, became their work place and so their livelihood, the many pubs their entertainment. The cost of a trip to the furthest place in the Harbour, Watson's Bay, in 1842 was five shillings³⁹ but they visited all the stops around the Harbour. Pinchgut Island, Bradley's Head, Darling Harbour, Dawe's Point, Miller's Point, Neutral Bay and Balmain, all well known places to a lover of that 'extensive harbour.'

It is uncertain just for how many years the boatmen of Port Jackson were issued with a badge like the ones shown. Such information is hard to trace as control of the workings of the Harbour and the relevant records passed from one government authority to another. Further details may be located in the future to give more detail to the important beginnings of the workings of Sydney Harbour as we know it today.

With the forming of the Sydney Harbour Trust in 1901 to control the waterways of Sydney, a notice was issued by the Commissioners 'to discuss the advisability of altering the regulations regarding Waterman's Badges' dated 6 September 1902. Seemingly no decision was made on the badges as the 'matter was dropped some years ago' according to the Acting Harbour Master in February 1905 but 'the forms of licenses to be printed on parchment....was approved.'⁴⁰

J.S. Prout in his *Sydney Illustrated* 1842-3 lavished praise on the Harbour and a waterman named John Brennan 'to see it in all its beauty, and variety, and fantastic

windings, it is necessary to look on it from different positions, or to call in the aid of a waterman, well acquainted with the localities...'⁴¹

This short history of the boatmen of our beautiful waterways and their badges, no doubt worn with pride, may show how important they were to the development of Sydney Harbour. For almost a century they formed a network of service bringing fresh produce to the City daily from outlying areas as well as ferrying people. Gradually, changes occurred in the make-up and usage of the busy waterway with the building of bridges and wharves, larger powered boats providing faster methods of transport encroaching on the need for the humble oar. They were our original ferrymen.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	<i>Australian Dictionary of Biography</i>
BDM	Records Births Deaths and Marriages
CS	Colonial Secretary
HRNSW	<i>Historical Records of New South Wales</i>
ML	Mitchell Library
SAG	Society of Australian Genealogists

‘Whare Tau’

FEDERATION OPULENCE IN THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS

Patrick De Gabriele

Photographs: Richard Miller

The village of Exeter in the Southern Highlands of NSW is notable for its concentration of historically and architecturally interesting homes. ‘Whare Tau’ is high on the list of such places, and is particularly appealing because of the craftsmanship of the building, seen in the finely detailed and very well preserved interiors, and because of its associations with two important Australian families.

The story of ‘Whare Tau’ has its origins in the life of the ‘cattle king’ James Tyson (1819-1898). He was born near Narellan, NSW, the third son of transported thief Isabella Tyson (née Coulson), who had arrived in Sydney in 1809 accompanied by her free husband William. Moderately successful as pastoralists, James Tyson

and his brother John got their big break in 1852 when they took a mob of cattle to the Bendigo goldfields and established a slaughterhouse and butcher shop. They sold out just over three years later for £80,000. John died in 1860, and James went on to build a huge pastoral empire, finally amounting to over 5 million acres in three states.

When James Tyson died in 1898, he left an estate that realised the staggering amount of £2 million, and a reputation for civic service, personal generosity and abstemiousness. On his death Banjo Paterson wrote an embarrassingly laudatory poem T.Y.S.O.N., in which he is drawn as humble, grizzled, eagle-eyed, companion of swaggies, etc – the great Australian role model.

Tyson died unmarried and intestate. The largest share was inherited by his only surviving sibling, his sister Frances Sheil, whose eldest son Denis built ‘Whare Tau’. Denis Sheil purchased the land (by then a parcel

of 35 acres) in 1903, and built the house between 1903 and 1906. There is a local tradition that Denis was a poor man who suddenly came into a vast amount of money, but in fact he already owned two dairy farms amounting to over 1,000 acres. At any rate, Denis spared no expense on ‘Whare Tau’.

The name *Whare Tau* (pronounced locally as ‘where to’) means ‘first house’ in Maori. The Sheil family does not appear to have any New Zealand connection, so we can only assume the name was a matter of fashion.

After a brief period (1945-1958) in the hands of the Mason family, the house was bought for £11,000 by Irene Hope Meek, the daughter of Sir Joseph Meek, chairman of Lever & Kitchen. Sir Joseph established the firm in Australia, and gave us the iconic brands of Sunlight, Pears Soap, Rinso, Lux and others. Miss Meek was very active socially, and introduced the Brownies into Australia, remaining their patron until her death in 1992.



1. Whare Tau, built circa 1903-6



splendid gardens, high on a hill on the edge of the village. The exterior (plate 1) is dignified rather than grand, and shows many of the fashionable features of the period: an asymmetrical façade, a complex roof with a bracketed timber gable screen and terracotta chimney pots, a variety of window shapes, multiple panes in the big arched window, great attention to detail in the red brickwork, and so on. Some 19th-century design elements persist, such as the slate roof (which was giving way to the red Marseilles tile roof in fashion, as seen in the stables) and a certain elaboration to the verandah woodwork and cast iron columns and valance; but this is undoubtedly a 20th-century building.

We know who built 'Whare Tau' - Alfred Stephens & Co of Bowral - but we do not know who designed it. Architecture was, by the end of the 19th century, a thoroughly professional occupation. Even if we allow for the survival of the old idea that a basic knowledge of architecture was part of a gentleman's education, the design finesse of 'Whare Tau' argues for a competent architect. The exterior and the floor plan are not particularly adventurous, but they are harmonious (to use a Victorian term), well proportioned and functional.

When we step inside, the hand of a designer becomes apparent. The floor plan is traditional: once across the tessellated verandah and past the cedar door with leadlight panels, we are in a central hall (plate 2) flanked by a morning room and a drawing room (plate 4) to the right, with bedrooms to the left and ending in a single big room. The effect is one of grandeur and opulence, achieved in a fairly small space by the clever use of scale, especially in the depth of the ceilings and the oversized door cases. It is difficult to believe this is the work of an amateur, however talented.

Tyson's money may have been the origin of 'Whare Tau', but his spirit does not exactly permeate the house. Paterson wrote:



Top left: 2. The hall, classical in feeling

Top right : 3. A cedar door by the Sydney firm of Saxton & Binns

Above : 4. The drawing room. Bernadette Smith's fine collection of orientalia is evident

Left: 5. A cedar door case. Note the playfully carved acorns

The property was then bequeathed to a Mrs Lillian Thurtell; and in 1995 'Whare Tau' (by then whittled down to 6.5 acres) was bought by Bernadette and David Smith. This was a very good thing for the house - although it

was structurally quite sound when they bought it, Dr and Mrs Smith spent much love and effort in restoring it.

The house, accurately described in its National Trust listing as 'Federation Queen Anne', sits surrounded by

Right: 6.
A leadlight glass
panel in the front
door,
maker unknown

Far right: 7.
Wunderlich
drawing room
ceiling in
untouched
condition

Below: 8. Part of
the garden with
dunny, tank
stand, stables
and cottage



*I never care to make a splash
I'm simple, but I've got the cash
I'm T.Y.S.O.N.*

The interior, which may be described as classical eclectic, is far from simple, and makes quite a splash. It is characterised by a joyful exuberance, lots of colour and a lavish use of fine materials. The idea of 'correctness' has been well and truly abandoned; and we find elements from the Baroque (in the short columns and pilasters at the end of the hall) as well as an Adamesque classicism in the wonderful door cases (plates 3 & 5) and an Art Nouveau touch in the leadlight glass panels (plate 6).

The stamped metal ceilings are particularly striking. All made by Wunderlich, they vary in elaboration according to the importance of the room. The drawing room ceiling (plate 7) gives us a glimpse into building and decorating processes in the first decade of the 20th century. The ceiling panels would have been purchased 'off the peg' from a catalogue. In fact *The Wunderlich Manufacturers Abridged General Catalogue* of 1910 identifies the component parts of this particular ceiling. They are 'extra deep enriched panels in steel' (catalogue no. 747) and

a 'zinc centre flower, 36 in. x 36 in.' (catalogue no. 792). The factory sent out the metal panels primed but unfinished, and with advice to the decorator 'use only oil paints ... three coats should be applied ... the last coat should be flatted' and so on. An unknown (and doubtlessly local) decorator finished the ceilings. The quality of the work is high, and colours have survived in remarkable untouched condition.

The woodwork was supplied by the large Sydney building materials firm of Saxton & Binns – the company's paper label was found by Dr Smith attached to the sash box of a kitchen window. Window frames are painted; and the doors, door cases, deep skirting boards and picture rails are in polished

cedar. In its trade catalogue of August 1904, the company describes itself as 'suppliers and manufacturers', and offers a huge range of items from lengths of moulding to six-roomed cottages; so we can reasonably conclude that the impressive cedar joinery is the work of Saxton & Binns. The tiny acorns carved among the dentils in the door cases (plate 5) provide a playful detail for the sharp-eyed.

When the Smiths purchased the property in 1995, they embarked on the restoration of a sound building in need of a tidy-up. The only substantial addition was a bathroom *en suite* to the main bedroom and second bedroom. This small room diagonally balances the bulk of the drawing room that projects onto the side verandah,





Top left: 9. The cottage, Tullyish, circa 1897-1903

Top right: 10. The combined coach-house and stables, contemporary with the house

Centre: 11. A rare late 19th-century rural survival – the corn-drying shed

Above: 12. The servants' bell system, installed 20 years before mains electricity came to Exeter

and in its proportions and detail is very sympathetic to the original fabric. A large arched window (copied from a window in the façade) was installed in the kitchen, and a few windows moved. Externally, the rear patio was enclosed to form a large bowed family room; and two lean-tos were removed.

One had covered a woodpile; the other had housed a gas plant, which had been made redundant by the arrival of electricity in Exeter in 1926.

David Smith was the owner-builder for this work, which was carried out by Darren Phillips, the Smiths' son-in-law who went on to found the aptly named company *The Craftsmen*. Fine workmanship in the restoration, carried out by a small number of passionate and committed people, reflects the quality of the original building. An excellent example is provided by an arched doorway, moved by the Smiths to the maid's room. The move necessitated much new plaster work, carried out with great skill by a plasterer whose name is now lost to us.

The gardens (plate 8) may have been disrupted to allow access to the house on the occasion of a 'deceased contents auction sale' conducted by Binskin (in association with Alison McSweeney) in June 1993. They are now in excellent condition. Beside the main house stands a small cottage, 'Tullyish', probably built by Edward Miller, who owned the property between 1897 and 1903, and named by Irene Meek after a family property (plate 9).

A combined coach house and stables, built at the same time as the house, stand nearby (plate 10). A rare survival is the oldest building on the property, a late 19th century corn drying shed (plate 11), made of slat-sided timber and probably erected when the property was in the hands of the Badgery family.

We leave the house with a final detail, an electric bell system for

calling servants, made and signed by P.A. Bissaker, Plumber, Bowral (plate 12). Powered by a battery and installed during construction of the house (a good twenty years before mains electricity came to Exeter), this neatly symbolises what 'Whare Tau' represents – currency of design, quality of construction and pride in work.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Out of the woodwork

Jenny Springett

The mood in the classroom is pensive and industrious. Sitting comfortably at waist-high purpose-built benches, chisels and mallets set out neatly in front of them, seven young women dressed immaculately in white ankle-length cotton dresses are learning to carve wood. The light from an open window shines down onto one lone man, set apart from the others, appearing distinctly out of place. There is an aura of poise and elegance about the teacher, also a woman, who is standing quietly and confidently near her students, overseeing the progress of their work.

This photograph, discovered while flipping through the pages of *A Quarter of a Century of Technical Education in New South Wales*, has a lot to say. It was taken at Sydney Technical College around 1908, in the midst of an era where at first glance it seems a little odd that

these delicate, young, early 20th-century women were learning to carve wood. What is even more unexpected is that the teacher was also a woman – Miss Ruth Bannister, who had earlier acquired a sufficient level of technical competence and artistic skill in the craft to be in charge of woodcarving in the Architecture Department. Miss Bannister's woodcarving classes are described as 'a course of three years' instruction, including the preparation and execution of simple designs in various styles of ornament.'²

Directly beneath the photograph on the same page, another one depicts a classroom full of carved furniture, part of an exhibition of students' work in 1904. If it were possible to step magically into the page and casually wander around the room, what can only ever be a glimpse for us through the photograph would unquestionably come to life as an exceptional array of carved furnishings and other household items. It is not the type of craft commonly believed today to be one that women

engaged in at that time.

Woodcarving classes for women were extremely popular at the turn of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th, both here and around the world. The volume reveals that similar classes were held at technical colleges at Goulburn, Bathurst, Armidale, West Maitland and other country centres in NSW. They were very fashionable interstate, held in most capital cities and in major satellite towns. A quote describing a class at Bathurst tells part of the story: 'the main bulk of the students in this class come from ladies engaged in home duties who make use of this accomplishment for decorative purposes.'³

Three years after the student exhibition in the photograph was held and around a year before the photograph of the woodcarving class was taken in Sydney, a much more noteworthy event took place in Melbourne. For the many woodcarving women at the time it was an event to distinguish itself as a major focus of attention and anticipation.

Mid-afternoon on 23 October 1907, an



THE WOOD-CARVING CLASS-ROOM.

Woodcarving class, Sydney Technical College, c. 1908, from *A Quarter of a Century of Technical Education in NSW*, Sydney, Government Printer, 1915



estimated crowd of 15,000 eagerly settled themselves into the main auditorium of the Melbourne Exhibition Building to play a historic role in the Opening Ceremony of the First Australian Exhibition of Women's Work. Packed into every gallery room of the centre, exquisite examples of fine arts, applied arts, domestic crafts, photography, and cookery, to name a few, were elegantly displayed in order to attract the attention and praise of every visitor.

Taking pride of place in several of the main galleries were over 350 pieces of carved furniture. Paintings hung on the walls and pieces of painted china and other complementary crafts were artistically placed all around. The total exhibition display of over 16,000 handcrafted or hand-painted works of art stood as a tribute to the creative and technical skills of so many women from all corners of the country.

The largest number of woodcarving entries came from Victoria, but NSW was well represented in most of the ten classes. Smaller groups of women from Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia sent pre-selected pieces of hand-carved furniture and household items to complete the display. Works from every state were well distributed in both the amateur and open sections. However it was the Tasmanians who, by proportion won the most prizes: six in all, including 'Best in Show' by Ellen Nora Payne for a carved china cabinet with long, decorative metal hinges. The other two Tasmanian prizewinners were Sara Squire Todd with a second prize for a carved panel and Dora Walch, who won a first prize for a carved chair.

Ruth Bannister, the teacher from Sydney Technical College pictured in the photograph described above was among the 76 NSW entrants, exhibiting an overmantel, a chair, carved panel and frame. She won a first prize in the Open Section. It is possible that some of her students in the photograph were exhibitors, however it is more likely that any exhibitors came from classes in earlier years.

Other notable NSW women who sent



Top: Emily Rose Twynam (1843-1910, Goulburn, Sydney NSW), Jacobean hall chair dated 1907. Collection: National Trust of Australia (NSW), 'Riversdale' Goulburn NSW

Above: Emily Rose Twynam (1843-1910, Goulburn, Sydney NSW), Jacobean hall chair dated 1907. Collection: National Trust of Australia (NSW), 'Riversdale' Goulburn NSW

Dining chair carved by a group of 62 students and associates of Sydney-based woodcarving teacher Suzanne Gether. The label (underneath) is either a delivery or insurance docket dated August 1907.

Collection: National Trust of Australia (NSW), 'Saumarez', Armidale NSW



works to the exhibition included Miss Suzanne Gether, another well-respected woodcarving teacher in Sydney and one of the earliest (1906) members of the Society of Arts and Crafts of NSW. Suzanne Gether was instrumental in coordinating the carving of an exquisite dining room suite by a group of her students and associates for the exhibition. It was so well received at the Australian event it was subsequently shipped to London for display in the NSW Court of the Franco-British Exhibition in 1908.

Gertrude King and Elizabeth Soderberg were other members of the Society of Arts and Crafts of NSW who sent their work to Melbourne for the exhibition. Like many of the others, Gertrude King taught woodcarving and over following years, the Art Gallery of NSW purchased a carved box with a cicada design and the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences purchased an oak chair. Elizabeth Soderberg exhibited a carved chair and a panel at the exhibition but later became better known for her repoussé work in metal than her woodcarving.

Exhibitors at the Women's Work Exhibition were not always aligned to either local technical colleges or arts and craft groups. One in this category from NSW was Emily Rose Twynam from 'Riversdale' at Goulburn, who sent a particularly stunning entry in the form of a carved Jacobean chair. Other entrants, from the Armidale homestead 'Saumarez', were Mary White with a coal box and her sister Doris, who exhibited a French armchair.

Roughly a third of the total entries in

the woodcarving section came from Victoria. However only a few of the substantial number won prizes of any significance. Annie Beal won a first prize for a Gothic chair, and Sarah Dunbar a third prize for a carved hallstand and a silver medal. Other Victorian prizewinners included Elsie Birch with two first prizes, Alice Russell with a first prize, Daisy Richardson with two second prizes and Florence Gatehouse with a second prize for a carved hallstand. As an indication of the social standing of many of the woodcarving entrants, the name Emily A'Beckett, daughter of William A'Beckett, appears on the exhibitor list.

Two South Australian participants in the Women's Work Exhibition stand out from the rest. Maude Golly (Baillie) was a talented woodcarver from Wedge Island, near the Spencer Gulf, who exhibited a carved chair. Charlotte Benda who taught at the Adelaide School of Mines between 1900 and 1910, won a second prize. Only a handful of entries were sent from Queensland, although woodcarving was just as popular there as elsewhere. Two who subsequently became active members of the Queensland Arts and Crafts Society were Sara Bott who exhibited a silky oak chest of drawers and a set of frames and Mrs Foott, with a writing desk and bookcase.

Much attention has been given over the years to the individual women associated with the First Australian Exhibition of Women's Work, particularly the prize winners. However there were just as many, if not more, around this time or just beyond it, either learning to carve or already proficient in the craft, who were never



Dining chair carved by a group of 62 students and associates of Sydney-based woodcarving teacher Suzanne Gether. The chair was part of a dining suite that was exhibited at the First Australian Women's Work Exhibition in 1907 and then at the Franco-British Exhibition in London in 1908. Collection: National Trust of Australia (NSW), 'Saumarez', Armidale NSW

involved in this historic event. Details of the lives and the works of most of these amateur woodcarving women have been all but lost.

Through the existing records and the stories told, it appears that hundreds, if not thousands, of Australian women took up woodcarving around this time. To most it was simply a pleasurable activity: a hobby where any



Mary White (1882-1948, Armidale NSW), Australian designed chest. Mary White was the eldest of five woodcarving sisters who lived at 'Saumarez', Armidale NSW. Collection: National Trust of Australia (NSW), 'Saumarez', Armidale NSW

accomplishment added a little more style and distinction to the furnishings of their homes. A number of women pursued the craft for many years, developing a personal style and displaying their pieces at local art and craft and agricultural shows, often winning awards.

It was not uncommon to find women putting their woodcarving skills to use for their local churches or cathedrals, often collaborating with a designer and working as a team. Examples of this include the carved pulpit of St Andrew's Church, Westbury, Tasmania carved by Ellen Nora Payne

around 1905. Other Tasmanian pieces include the altar and tabernacle at St John's Church, Richmond, carved by Evelyn Brettingham-Moore and her daughter Marie. Constance Evans, a professional carver from Sydney is well known for the carved side altar at Christ Church Cathedral, Newcastle. The carved alms box at St John's Cathedral Brisbane was completed in 1901 by a group of women including Edith Robinson, a woodcarving teacher from Toowoomba.

Much of the work of the countless number of talented hobbyists is still retained as cherished heirlooms in family collections. Relatives recount stories from the lives of their woodcarving mothers, grandmothers and aunts with pride and delight. The wider the net is cast to collect information on these women, the more connecting threads appear. What often began as a teacher-student relationship sometimes developed into a strong bond of friendship. Such was the case with Charlotte Benda in Adelaide and one of her students, Clara Black, who carved many items before her marriage in 1915. The five White sisters from Armidale, including the eldest, Mary (the most prolific

sister who carved throughout her life), were all taught by Suzanne Gether during their final years of schooling at Ascham in Sydney.

Other close connections are found among the women of the Archer family in Queensland. Woodcarving was a favoured craft for Daisy Archer, her twin sister Jessie Allen, Daisy's daughter Joan Archer and Doris Aagaard, her niece. Not only was woodcarving a shared family skill but the interest extended into the community with a close circle of friends.

For as many instances where connections are clearly seen, there are just as many where any connections are, as yet, unable to be found. However, among the relatively unknown women there are still some fascinating tales, including an account of the extraordinary life of Kathleen Freeman in a book *Yield not to the Wind*, written many years later by her daughter, Margaret Clarence. A photograph in the book shows intricate carved furniture her mother made to decorate her home on Fulakora, in the Solomon Islands.⁴

Although bound by a shared commitment to the skills and artistic accomplishments of woodcarving, the range of design ideas and motifs executed by this loose network of women could not have been wider. Although early designs were mostly derived from pattern books based on themes from Art Nouveau and the Arts & Crafts Movement, others can be seen evolving from other areas. Some women found inspiration from their family backgrounds, as in the case of the Nordic designs favoured by the Archer family, originally from Norway.

Others began following a growing trend around that time of incorporating motifs from the Australian bush into their designs, or working as much as possible with Australian timbers, as seen in the work of some of the more prolific and

better known carvers like Ellen Nora Payne and Charlotte Benda. Some, like Annie Collins from Inverell developed a unique personal style with local themes. Chip carving, with its distinctive geometric formal designs, exemplified in the distinctive work of Bessie Cole from South Australia, continued to be a favoured style by many others.

The first decade of the 20th century when these woodcarving women were working at their peak was a unique era in Australian history. More than a century had passed since first European settlement, time enough to produce a relatively secure and prosperous society. The signs of advancement towards a truly Australian cultural identity were beginning to emerge. This movement towards a uniquely Australian individuality was starting to be reflected in the creative work of a whole generation of well-educated and enterprising women in many creative fields. These woodcarving women, particularly those who exhibited, took on commissions or established a place in the community to teach, are an excellent example of this.

The loss to the cultural and social history of Australia would be great if the lives and work of this broad community of woodcarving women were left to fade into obscurity. However, examples of their fine craftsmanship are not easily unearthed. When they are, generally through family connections, a commitment to the skills of both artistic discipline and design is clearly revealed. Treasured by their relatives, it is unlikely that even a few of the exquisite documented pieces these women left behind will ever find a place in the public domain.

These women who carved wood were an integral part of a generation of Australian women for whom a life with new meaning and direction was starting to be found outside the home. The loosening of the ties of domesticity and an opening up of opportunities in the



artistic community for women was beginning to give many a growing sense of pride and independence. They were part of a generation whose creative achievements helped to establish a platform on which future generations of Australian women would subsequently build. It is time their lives and the work they left behind are more widely recognised, and celebrated.

Top: Two Adelaide woodcarving friends, teacher Charlotte Benda and student Clara Black

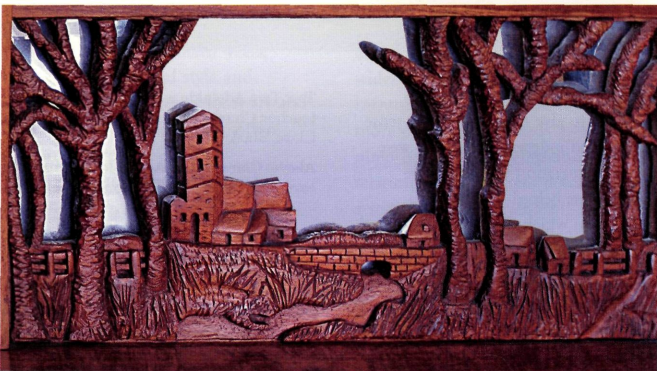
Above: Clara Black, Adelaide, detailed carving from the top of a longcase clock



Top: Bessie Cole (South Australia), chip-carved settle

Centre: Annie Collins (Inverell NSW), unusual curved sideboard, mid 1920s

Bottom: Annie Collins (Inverell NSW), local scene carved on the back



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Jenny Springett (BA Social Science) is a Sydney-based artist and freelance writer. She is passionately involved in researching women's domestic crafts since colonial times. This essay won 2nd prize at the 2006 Coves Historical Writing Competition at the NSW Writers Centre.

NOTES

- 1 Sydney Technical College, *A Quarter of a Century of Technical Education in NSW*, Government Printer 1915 p 167
- 2 *Op cit* p 166
- 3 *Op cit* p 289
- 4 Clarence, Margaret, *Yield not to the Wind*, Management Development Publishers 1982 p. 34

Kevin Fahy AM (1932-2007)

John Wade

Sydney University was different fifty years ago. Professor James Rivers Barrington Stewart really would have preferred to secede from the University. Archaeology students such as Kevin Fahy were commanded to attend the eccentric Professor of Archaeology's country property 'Mount Pleasant' at Bathurst for tuition. For the students' diversion, the Professor and his wife Eve kept a flock of turkeys for them to feed.

Historic houses, their history, their contents, their owners and their foibles however become one of Kevin Fahy's lifelong passions.

One summer day, Kevin and a small group of friends paid ten shillings each for a private visit to historic 'Fernhill' at Mulgoa, on Sydney's western outskirts. When a grass fire flared, Kevin, Leo Schofield and others hastened to beat it out with wet wheat sacks. For putting out the fire and saving his house, the owner generously refunded the entry fee.

Archaeology too remained an interest. Kevin located the site of entrepreneur James King's colonial pottery works at Irrawang in the Hunter Valley, guiding Judy Birmingham to the site where in 1967 the first proper excavation of an historic site in Australia began, and where hundreds of archaeology students gained their first field training on a 'dig'.

Kevin went on to become the authority in the study of Australian decorative arts, with an unmatched record of co-authoring seven books on furniture, silver, ceramics and jewellery, published between 1972 and 2004. Two hefty furniture books and the most recent study, *Australian Art Pottery* (2004), were produced in collaboration with Andrew Simpson.

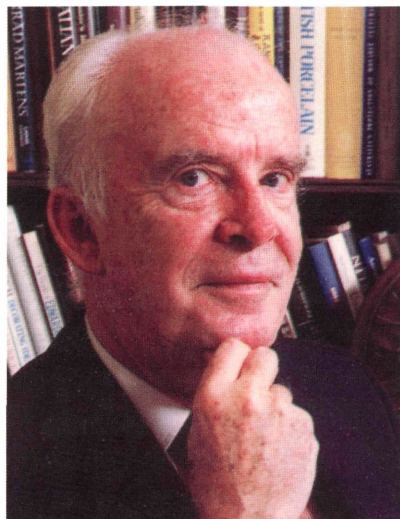
Born in the year the Sydney Harbour Bridge opened, Kevin graduated from St Ignatius' College, Riverview in 1950. Two of his classmates, Monsignor Tony Doherty and Father Ed Campion, officiated at his funeral service in the college chapel, attended by hundreds of mourners.

Kevin acquired all the best qualities from the Irish Catholic family with hotel interests into which he was born. He was gregarious, loyal, enjoyed food and drink, and lovingly devoted to his family, who regarded him as the patriarch. He had been the senior male since his father died young, and Kevin had the responsibility of looking after his mother and three younger sisters – a responsibility that he carried out unselfishly, extending eventually to his niece and eight nephews, and their children.

In the 1960s, understanding was growing that Australia had a past, that Australians had been producing art and crafts, using local materials and seeking to make their works distinctively Australian. Preservation and restoration were fashionable then, led in NSW by a very active National Trust.

Kevin began to apply his archaeological training to the study of Australian history. He befriended heritage leaders such as Rachel Roxburgh, Dame Helen Blaxland and the independently minded ladies of the National Trust Women's Committee, always managing to steer clear of politics and retain the respect of everyone.

With young friends such as Leo and Anne Schofield, David Ell and Bill Blinco, he began seeking out Australian furniture and historical artefacts. At first, Australian furniture could be acquired quite cheaply – certainly more cheaply than British imports. A few dealers, like the colourful Phyllis and Lester Binns of Hunter's Hill, Stanley Lipscome and Bill Bradshaw, now doyen of the



antique trade, handled some choice examples. Kevin bought a few good pieces, but gave up collecting for himself and turned his attention to helping the National Trust acquire items for its historic properties, especially Old Government House and Experiment Farm at Parramatta. Kevin became *the* Australian guru.

Kevin would never have made a bureaucrat. He was far too generous with information, passing on what he knew to anyone who asked. Any curator or exhibition organiser who sought his advice got it, and there were many – at the National Trust, the Powerhouse Museum, the Historic Houses Trust of NSW, the Australian Fund, the National Gallery of Victoria, the Queensland Museum. Private collectors and dealers got equal support – unless they were 'shonky', as Kevin would have said, privately.

A trip anywhere with Kevin was revealing. He would chatter away about where the grand houses used to be, who used to live there, and salacious gossip such as where a prominent man had installed his

mistress – especially if she had an 1830s cedar sideboard. Kevin was a wonderful storyteller and even though you may have heard a story before, it was worth listening again for the eloquent delivery, the subtle changes from the last time, and the reactions of those who had not heard it before.

The child born in the Depression was careful with money, but never mean. He nurtured a reputation for thrift by telling stories against himself, but he was always generous, especially to his niece and nephews. Young people were drawn to his openness and sense of fun. His urbanity and wit ensured a stream of dinner invitations, with no expectation that they be returned. A generous-hearted neighbour not only cooked him dinner every Monday, but organised a spectacular lunch as her own tribute when he was awarded his AM for his work in studying and promoting *Australiana*.

Kevin was an occasional prankster. When a Hindu family moved in next door to a friend, Kevin nonchalantly told him that they planned to demolish the house and build a temple. He even showed his friend a copy of the development application in the council agenda. When his apoplectic friend confronted the meeting to oppose the proposal, the councillors were non-plussed. Kevin had slipped fake pages into the ‘agenda’.

All this was in spite of a severe skiing accident in the mid-1960s, which nearly killed him. After nine months in hospital he recovered, and forced himself to walk again, though later he was always supported on a walking stick. The courage and tenacity he showed in recovering from his accident kept him going for another forty years.

In 1978, he was a founding member of the *Australiana* Society, and served

continuously in various guiding roles on its committee, especially as editor of *Australiana* magazine. He was the one person everyone approached to discuss *Australiana*. His legacy is the knowledge that he put down on paper, but many will miss his ongoing advice, his cheery ‘hello there’ greeting and his regular phone calls.

Kevin died suddenly, leaving his sisters Judy, Helen and Rosilea, his niece Julieanne and eight nephews, many great nieces and great nephews. His charm, his questing mind, his generosity of spirit, and his eternal optimism will forever inspire those people fortunate to have known him. His publications will stimulate many more for years to come.

NOTE

This is an expanded version of the obituary which appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 3 March 2007

Letter to the editor

The Caroline Simpson Library at the Historic Houses Trust complex in the Mint Building, Macquarie Street, Sydney contains a bound run of the trade journal, *The Cabinet Maker and Complete House Furnisher*.

On a recent visit to research design sources for Arts & Crafts furniture in blackwood and Tasmanian oak manufactured in Launceston by Coogans Limited, I came across the following in the September 1904 issue on page 84.

Messrs S. Timings & Co., of Gt. Hampton Street, Birmingham, are cabinet and general brass and iron founders’ patentees. Among their lines are castors of every description, including light iron castings and they also work at all kinds of stamping and piercing. The cabinet furniture is made in a variety of styles by them, so that they are able at once to supply the retailer with whatever he

may require to match up furniture with which he is dealing.

In my article on J.M. Haenke in *Australiana*, November 2006, Vol 28, No 4, I suggested that the copper panels may have been made in Tasmania, as evidenced by the display at the Tasmanian Arts and Crafts Society in 1903. The true source is now apparent and would suggest that either J. & T. Gunn or Haenke had read this journal and ordered panels of this design from Timings in Birmingham.

The cost of constructing the Albert Hall was incorrectly stated. The cost of the Launceston Exhibition 1891–92, to include building, was £14,480-19-1d.

I am currently working on a connection between Haenke and Coogans for publication in *Australiana*.

John Hawkins, ‘Bentley’
Mole Creek Road, Chudleigh Tas 7304



Copper panel by Messrs. S. Timings & Co., Birmingham, c. 1904



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Mortimer Menpes (Aust 1855-1938)



A Retainer of the Maharajah of Cutch
Oil on Board
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Signed lower left

*Exhib: Messrs Dowdeswell and Dowdeswell,
The Durbar, 1903, Cat No. 10
Illust: Menpes, The Durbar, Black and Co. London,
1903, Plate 7*

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*Silver hand raised and enamelled salt, pepper & two spoons by Allan Cameron Walker (1864-1931)
Tasmanian architect and craftsman.*

Walker established the Arts & Crafts Society of Tasmania, becoming its first President in 1903.

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