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The Australiana Society

www.australiana.org

info@australiana.org

ABN 13 402 033 474

Australiana

PO Box 2335

BONDI JUNCTION NSW 1355

Tel 02 9389 4404 or 0408 212 242

info@australiana.org

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The artist photographer and the work of the Rev John Dixon

NINETEENTH-CENTURY ARTIST-PHOTOGRAPHERS USED PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHS AS THE BASIS TO CREATE THEIR OIL PORTRAITS, OFTEN BY PAINTING DIRECTLY OVER THE PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINT. NEW EVIDENCE SHOWS THAT AN AMATEUR TASMANIAN ARTIST, THE REV JOHN DIXON, USED THIS TECHNIQUE, PAINTING OVER PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN CHERRY.

Plate 1. John Dixon, over a photograph by George Cherry, *Bishop Nixon*, 1860. Oil over photograph over two layers of canvas; with original gilt slip, 75.5 x 65.5 cm. Inscribed in pencil on stretcher: 'Geo Cherry Esq / Photographer / Macquarie St / by Mr Nash's Box [?] / Jan.y 25 60'. Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston, gift of Rt Rev W.R. Barrett, 1962



John McPhee

Soon after its discovery, photography became the predominant visual imagery of the 19th century. Through newspaper photography, film, television and video, it continues to dominate our lives today. However, while miniature and watercolour portrait painting were almost made obsolete by the invention of photography, the 19th-century claim that the invention of photography meant the death of painting was nothing more than sensational.

From its beginning, artists of all kinds used photography in innumerable ways, but most significantly to study the human figure. Undoubtedly the most important impact photography had on the artist's practice was in portraiture. Inexpensive photographs, *cartes-de-visite* [adv] and larger cabinet photographs in particular, meant the work of the portrait miniaturist and painter was no longer the preserve of the well off. The great majority of the population, even servants and labourers, could afford to, and did, have their photographs taken. They were collected, exchanged, often across the world, and preserved in family

albums, and were valued as mementos of others far distant, or no longer living.

However, an interaction between portrait painting and photography in the second half of the 19th century resulted in an extraordinary hybrid. Not content with adding colour to daguerreotypes or *cartes-de-visite*, a few artists made use of photographs as the basis for large-scale paintings, invariably portraits, in watercolour, pastel and oil.

Tasmania produced some of the most exceptional of these artist photographers. There, the best-known portrait painters, Thomas Bock (1790–1855), Benjamin Duterrau (1767–1851), and Henry Mundy (c 1798–1848), died as photography was being introduced. Other than Robert Dowling (1827–1886), whose Tasmanian portraiture was executed either before his London training or from London and during occasional visits to Australia, few traditional portrait painters managed to establish a successful practice in the later 19th century.

Those who flourished, or at least attempted to make some kind of living from portraiture were the artist photographers. Of these the most significant is the Irish political convict W.P. Dowling, whose very accomplished pastel portraits over a photographic image dating from the 1860s are seldom identified as having a photographic base. Some later artist photographers, like J.W. Beattie (1859–1930), in Hobart, and R.J. Nicholas, active in Launceston from about 1883 to about 1895, established large commercial studios. They employed many photographers and assistants, including those who worked at re-touching, and drawing and painting over, as well as painting from, photographs.

Artist photographers undoubtedly played a significant, albeit almost unacknowledged and undocumented, part in 19th-century Australian portraiture.

The exhibition, *The painted portrait photograph in Tasmania 1850–1900*, at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery is largely drawn from its own collection, with a few loans from private and institutional lenders. It documents the development of the work of the artist



photographer from the earliest hand-coloured daguerreotypes, the extraordinary watercolour, pastel, and oil painted photographs of Frederick Frith, W.P. Dowling and R.J. Nicholas, and the last gasp of the practice, when charcoal and wash was used to heighten the effect of a photograph in the last years of the 19th century.

One of the most remarkable works in the exhibition is the Rev. John Dixon's well-known portrait of Bishop Nixon, the Anglican Bishop of Tasmania from 1842 to 1862 (plate 1).

John Cowpland Dixon, the son of an Anglican clergyman, was born in England in about 1819. From St John's College, Cambridge, in 1848 the London Society for the Propagation of the Gospel sent him as a missionary to Nova Scotia, Canada. In 1855 he arrived in Launceston with his wife and in the following year was appointed chaplain at Jerusalem (now Colebrook). In June 1861 Dixon was transferred to Windermere on the Tamar

Plate 2. Detail of printed exhibition label stuck to lower left surface of the painting: '537 / INTERCOLONIAL EXHIBITION AUSTRALIA / TASMANIA / 1866 / Exhibited by: Rev John Dixon [hand written in ink] / Residence: Windermere [hand written in ink]'

River. After the death of his first wife in 1876, Dixon married Eliza Cox in 1877 at a time when the parishioners were complaining of pastoral neglect. He retired in 1883 and returned to London where he died in 1885.

Dixon is obviously an amateur painter. The portraits of Bishop Nixon, 1860, and a posthumous portrait of William Race Allison, 1868, are the only two paintings positively identified as his work. Both are painted over photographs, both probably by George Cherry.

Dixon's portrait of Bishop Nixon is far from the man described in 1847 as, 'a

remarkable man both in appearance and character, good-looking, coal-black hair...piercing black eyes, and full, rather thick lips,... extremely anxious to be correct with regard to costume and all other points of etiquette...' By 1860 Nixon had been working hard in the colony for nearly twenty years and ill health had begun to take its toll. This painted photograph captures a different man.

All background detail and almost any suggestion of the chair in which Nixon sits, as well as his hands, which are hidden or painted over, has been painted out. Nixon's black clerical garb, almost indistinguishable from the background, melts into this dramatic darkness. His clerical collar helps focus the viewer's attention on the face, surrounded by black curls. It is fleshy, almost bloated and shadowed with stubble. Nixon's expression appears sullen and distant rather than Byronic. It is a man worn out by his duties and at the end of his career.

The corners, both upper and lower, of the painted image have been over-painted to create an oval image. This may be the artist's original composition or a later alteration and the result of re-stretching or re-framing. The surviving frame appears to be the original gilt slip, which kept glass from the surface of the painting, and was once part of a more elaborate frame now missing.

The exhibition label, stuck to the surface of the painting, from the Melbourne Intercolonial Exhibition held at the Public Library in 1866 records the work as catalogue 537, exhibited by the Rev John Dixon of Windermere in Tasmania (plate 2). In 1879 this portrait was lent by J Whitefoord to the Launceston Fine Arts Exhibition where it was acknowledged in the catalogue as 'Painted from an enlarged photograph', rather than actually painted over a photograph.

These catalogue entries have previously been considered proof that the portrait photograph was taken and then painted by Dixon. However, a recent discovery throws more light on Dixon's working methods.

In the course of examining and preparing works for this exhibition, the portrait had its wooden back removed. It appeared as if the red cedar panels had never before been removed and I was excited at the possibility of there being some inscription on the reverse, as there had been with several other works prepared for the exhibition. But there was nothing except a very clean canvas over which the paper onto which the photograph had been printed had been stuck down. However, in the course of closer examination of the painting's support, the conservator, Mar Gomez, noticed a pencil mark on the stretcher, and peeled away the canvas to reveal an inscription. In a fine copperplate hand was written, '*Geo Cherry Esq / Photographer / Macquarie St / by Mr Nash's Box [?]/ Jan'y 25 60*'.

The discovery of this remarkable inscription indicates that the work was created six years earlier than previously thought, and most importantly confirms the photographer as George Cherry (1820-1878), one of the finest photographic portraitists working in Tasmania. The reference to 'Mr Nash's box' is puzzling but probably refers to the use of an enlarger, then newly being employed to create the large scale print that forms the basis of this photographic portrait.

During research into the life of William Race Allison (1812-1865), the subject of a painted photograph by John Sharp (1823-1899) and William Frith (1819-1871), a fascinating reference to another portrait by the Rev John Dixon was found.

In 1858, at the age of 43, Allison was married by Bishop Nixon at St George's Church, Battery Point, Hobart, to 16-year-old Bessy Leach, the daughter of the headmaster of the church's Normal School. The youngest of their five children was born after the death of Allison, who died at 'Richmond Park', Richmond, in 1865. In that year an impressive monument, originally in St George's Burial Ground, and now in St David's Park, Hobart, was erected by public subscription in memory of

Allison's service as a member of the colony's Legislative Council and House of Assembly for twenty years.

In 1868 another posthumous memorial was commissioned to commemorate Allison's efforts in 1855 to raise money to establish the first Campbell Town Benevolent Hospital. The 1868 Report of the Campbell Town Hospital records that

A number of subscribers, having suggested that a portrait of the late William Race Allison should be presented to the Hospital, in recognition of the eminent services rendered to the Institution by the deceased gentleman, a subscription has been made, and a portrait is now being painted by an artist of ability, which the Trustees have every reason will be worthy of the object in view.

An undated newspaper cutting gives more information regarding the portrait and its painter recording that the commissioners had

...procured the services of a talented amateur who occasionally executes such works, and a few days since they had the pleasure of adorning the walls of the institution with a work of art of which all concerned may well be proud. The artist is Rev. J. Dixon of Windermere on the Tamar and the result of his labours is an admirable likeness in oil, at a very moderate cost.

Like the portrait of Bishop Nixon, this portrait (plate 3) is thinly painted in oil onto the paper surface of the photograph which is stretched over, and stuck down to, the canvas. Like the earlier painting, Dixon has darkened the surrounding detail to focus attention on the head. He seems to have deliberately chosen a photograph in which the hands of the sitter are partly obscured, as his inability to cope with the difficulty of painting fingers is obvious when looking at the sitter's left hand, entangled in his hair. Otherwise the portrait has a similar

brooding quality to that of the portrait of Bishop Nixon.

These two portraits by Dixon owe much to the photographs by George Cherry over which they are painted.

George Cherry was born in England in about 1820. Educated to join the Church of England ministry, he chose to become a painter and photographer. It is not known when he arrived in Australia but he is first recorded as having established a daguerreotype studio in Hobart in 1848. Obviously this business was not a success, as in 1849 through the influence of friends Cherry was appointed assistant superintendent of convicts on Norfolk Island. Cherry found his position difficult as he constantly objected to the ill treatment of the convicts and left the following year to return to working as a photographer in Hobart.

In 1852 Cherry was advertising lithographic views after photographs of Norfolk Island and in the *Mercury* on 20 July 1855 he described his carefully coloured portraits as '...equal to the finest exhibited by himself or any other artist in the colonies'. In 1858 he exhibited miniature portraits, probably painted photographs, and a view of Macquarie Street, in the Hobart Town Art Treasures Exhibition.

Cherry worked at a variety of locations in Hobart between 1852 and 1867 – the year in which he purchased Frith's collection of portrait negatives, thereby acquiring Frith's clientele. In 1868 he was one of several photographers appointed to cover the tour of Tasmania by the Duke of Edinburgh and the royal party, known as the 'Flying squadron'. Later that year he travelled around the north-east of Tasmania as an itinerant photographer specialising in *adv* portraits. After a long illness, Cherry died in 1878.

Cherry's daughter, Ada Whiting, worked as a colourist for Johnstone & O'Shannessy, one of Melbourne's most fashionable photographic studios and as a successful miniaturist. Unusually, Henry James Johnstone's partner was Miss E.F.K. O'Shannessy, one of few



women owner-photographers working in the late 19th century.

Until a study is made of the individual style of some of the most significant Australian portrait photographers working in the 19th century, in particular George Cherry, but also many others, there is not much we can determine or say about their work. From the examination of a number of *adv* portraits, Cherry appears to be an inventive and extremely competent photographer capable of images which capture much more of the sitter's personality than most of his contemporaries ever achieved.

These two photographs, chosen by an aspiring artist as the basis for his painted portraits of two important public figures, can only give us an inkling of Cherry's ability as a photographer. They are extraordinary survivors of their time.

Plate 3. John Dixon, over a photograph, probably by George Cherry, *The late William Race Allison*, 1868. Oil over photograph on canvas; in original gilded frame, 77.5 x 63.5 cm. Campbell Town Health and Community Service collection

The exhibition, *The painted portrait photograph in Tasmania 1850-1900* will be shown at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston, 23 November 2007 to 23 March 2008

John McPhee is an art historian, consultant curator and art adviser, who has worked previously in the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, the National Gallery of Australia and the National Gallery of Victoria.

Looking for **Kitty:** Brisbane's Kitty Art Pottery



KITTY BREEDEN HAS BEEN AN IMPORTANT FIGURE IN THE HISTORY OF QUEENSLAND CERAMICS SINCE THE END OF WORLD WAR II, ALTHOUGH HER SIGNIFICANCE HAS BEEN OVERLOOKED IN RECENT YEARS. SHE WAS QUEENSLAND'S MOST PROMINENT POTTER DURING THE 1950S AND EARLY 1960S UNTIL CARL MCCONNELL AND MILTON MOON ESTABLISHED THEIR DOMINANCE.

Glenn Cooke

Kitty Breeden began her career in Brisbane in the early 1950s, a period which marked the transition from the hand-built art pottery school established by L.J. Harvey to wheel-thrown studio pottery. At this time, Hatton Beck was teaching at the Central Technical College and Carl McConnell was among his students. Other potters such as Harry Memmott and Milton Moon figured in a more commercial tradition, as they were taught by Mervyn Feeney.

Breeden was born in Soest, Holland in 1933 and began her career as a traditional 'hands on' apprentice with the potter Nol de Bruin of Soestdijk at the age of 14. At the pottery she produced commercial lines by the use of jigger and jolly during the day, and gained her throwing and decorating skills at night. De Bruin's constant references to shape, form and space educated her about the importance of form in ceramics.



Top: Plate 1. Kitty Breeden packing pottery
Above: Plate 2. Kitty Art Pottery premises



Her family decided to migrate to Australia and arrived in Queensland in 1952. Subsequently Kitty Breedon returned to Europe in 1958 where she visited exhibitions and gained experience in decorating the folk pottery of Tolmino Bellini in Monte Lupo, Italy. This was not the end of Breedon's training as she visited Europe in 1978 when she was potter-in-residence at the Ceramic Work Centre, Heusden, in Brabant, the Netherlands.

Breedon is unique among Queensland potters as her training was entirely in Europe. The skills she brought with her enabled her, even at a young age, to establish herself as the most prominent potter in Brisbane during the 1950s (plate 1).

Breedon had been producing ceramics in Brisbane for several years already when her connection with Holland was promoted at the celebrations of Australia's 1,000,000th migrant in 1955 at McWhirter's department store in Fortitude Valley. However, the ceramics she exhibited there show no vestige of her native Holland – the distinctive chubbiness of her shapes is Breedon's own formal vocabulary.

With Les Blakeborough (b. 1930) and Ivan Englund (b. 1915), she was one of the three potters selected for Australia's first entry at the XXV Concorso Internazionale della Ceramica d'Arte, Faenza in 1967. This was not Kitty's first connection with Faenza as she had

returned to Europe to study with Tolmino Bellini in Monte Lupo in 1958. She did not subscribe to the dominant influence of the British potter Bernard Leach, as the pieces she exhibited at Faenza well demonstrate. Kitty Breedon regards her work as European in sensibility, as indeed is the work of David and Hermia Boyd, and consequently has been neglected in the succeeding decades as most Australian potters have reinforced the Leach tradition's links with Japan.

THE KITTY ART POTTERY

Breedon produced art pottery during her extensive career, but our interest here focuses on the commercial pottery she established – the Kitty Art Pottery in Brisbane. The Kitty Art Pottery began as a small commercial pottery behind the family home at Stoneleigh Street, Albion, in 1953 (plate 2). At first, she responded to filling the need for decorative wares that had previously been supplied by European makers and which had ceased because of the restrictions of World War II.

Kitty started working solo, but when managing both production and sales of her pottery proved too demanding for her working alone, her father Jacob (1910–94) came in to help. Jacob (plate 3) brought a practical approach to Kitty's artistic flair, as he had formerly worked as a shipbuilder and architectural draftsman. Initially Jacob

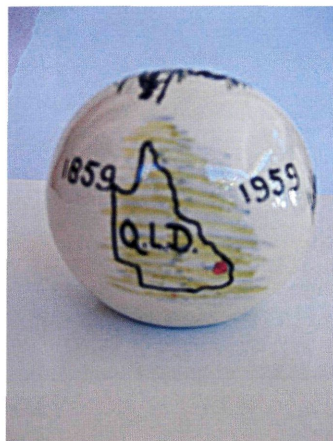
Above left: Plate 3. Jacob Breedon decorating pottery

Above right: Plate 4. The stall at the 1955 Queensland Industries Fair with Jacob at the front, Kitty (seated) with her sister Clair and brother Stanley

got on his pushbike to market the pottery's products, largely through suburban pharmacies. They also sold small gift lines through suburban jewellers and gift shops such as Bronte in George Street, which was owned by Caroline and Agnes Barker.

Carl McConnell came to work at the pottery in 1954. He wasn't as accomplished a thrower as Kitty was then (he developed his formidable skills later) but he proved invaluable to the fledgling business because of his mould-making ability. He had learned his techniques – an essential skill for the nascent pottery – at ACI Industries' glass factory in West End and passed them on to Jacob.

McConnell was an accomplished builder of kilns and, with the assistance of Jacob, he built the kiln that was in use for most of the life of pottery. Later, Jacob built another kiln. The first clays they used came from Ferro Corporation in Sydney, then Jacob ordered a large supply from England. Kitty recalled that it was very good clay indeed and it lasted for years. Their last supplier was Mervin Feeney



Above left: Plate 5. Kitty's mother Jannette and brother Stanley at the 1959 Queensland Industries Fair

Above right: Plate 6. Hemispherical ashtray decorated for Queensland's centenary in 1959, h 7 cm

Left: Plate 7. Early wares showing Delft decoration

Below left: Plate 8. Early wares showing decoration inspired by folk pottery



(1914–2003) of Ipswich who began making his own clays in the late 1950s.

Ferro also supplied their glazes and underglazes, but later they were ordered from Russell Cowan's ceramic supplies in Sydney. Kitty and Jacob decorated the wares but other Dutch migrants including Kees van der Maat and Theo Beulalker frequently helped them.

The pottery's first major success was at the 1955 Industries Fair organised by the Queensland Chamber of Manufacturers, and held at the Royal National Association showgrounds from 9 April–5 May that year (plate 4). The Delprat family of Mt Tamborine sponsored their participation. A condition of entry in the fair was that the product had to be completed there, and to fulfil this



condition they started preparing the bisque-fired pieces three weeks before so that the items could be decorated and glaze-fired in situ. They advertised as soon as the fair opened and people began queuing around the stand for their hand-finished souvenirs. The pottery's debt of £1,400 before the fair was cleared in three weeks. The success of their stand was further recognised with the award of a silver medal.

Shortly afterwards a local wholesaler, Hoffnung & Co. Ltd of Charlotte Street, took over the distribution of their products and very successfully as the pottery was soon supplying small souvenir wares throughout Australia. The pottery was at its peak of financial success at the time of the Queensland Industries Fair for the State's Centenary Year of 1959, which was held 2-23 May and under the same guidelines as the previous fair.

Their stand (plate 5) was decorated with pseudo-Aboriginal motifs which were increasingly popular after the 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne and in the pottery's own production. On this occasion the stand was awarded a bronze medal. The small hemispherical ashtray illustrated (plate 6) was produced at this time.

The re-entry of Japanese ceramics to the Australia market in the early 1960s began the demise of the small-scale

pottery industry throughout Australia, in Sydney as well as the much smaller centre of Brisbane. To make up for the reduced sales, Kitty and Jacob started a school to teach pottery at the Albion Studio. The classes proved so popular that, as she had married by now and was having her own family, Kitty also gave classes at 4 Agar Street, Rosalie.

Kitty promoted the pottery by holding exhibitions of her students' work, such as that at the basement of Brisbane City Hall during the Warana Festival in September from 1962. At the 1964 exhibition, 60 students displayed 250 pieces of their work ranging from ashtrays, 3-feet high ornamental vases, sculptural pieces and lamp bases to a statue by a commercial artist Mrs Len Brose of Wellers Hill.¹

By the time of the 1965 exhibition at the Warana Festival (shared with students of Ipswich Technical College where Kitty also taught), the commercial pottery had finally ceased production. Three truckloads of material, including the moulds, went to the tip.²

Some of the early pieces produced by the commercial pottery had cobalt decoration in the style of Delft ware (plate 7), but these were not popular and production soon ceased. Other early wares were painted with flowers in a European 'peasant' style (plate 8). Jacob also carved some pieces in imitation of

Above left: Plate 9. Wares incised with Aboriginal motifs

Above right: Plate 10. Promotional display of coffee mug

Below: Plate 11. Small aqua blue vase, h 8 cm

folk pottery but these examples were a very minor part in an output which catered essentially to popular tastes and souvenir wares. Indeed, souvenirs went all over Australia as far afield as Thursday Island, Darwin and Broome. These were decorated with the pseudo-





Aboriginal motifs (plate 9) which became widely popular after the Melbourne Olympic Games in 1956.

The bulk of the production was small decorative wares such as coffee mugs (plate 10), vases (plates 11 & 12), ashtrays (plate 13) and the miniatures essential to embellish that essential part of Australia's interior decor, the shadow box. Special commissions were occasionally undertaken such as when the pottery produced mugs decorated with Cooktown orchids for Ampol in 1961 (plate 14), or sporting mugs (plate 15).

The early pieces have been marked consistently with an incised 'Kitty' but as production developed, an impressed mark of Kitty enclosed within a map of Australia was used.



Far left: Plate 12. Small vase with abstract black and yellow decoration, h 7 cm

Left: Plate 13. 'Black stump ashtray' decorated with pseudo-Aboriginal motifs, 4.5 x 11 x 11 cm

A foil label was occasionally used when Kitty was overseas.

The process of the rise, success and demise of the Kitty Art Pottery is probably very similar to the numerous small potteries (especially in Sydney) that flourished after World War II. There is one aspect that many have in common: the potteries depended on the skills of the immigrants who flooded into the country after the war and who responded to the need for stylish and decorative wares after the decade of austerity. And while most of the production of these potteries is quite modest, they document a more personal chapter in Australia's ceramic history and provide an engaging field for the collector.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author would like to acknowledge the help of Kitty Breeden in the production of this article.

NOTES

1. *Courier-Mail*, Brisbane, 23 Sep 1964.
2. Discussions with Jacob Breeden. Jacob regrettably destroyed the pottery moulds before retiring to Palm Beach, Gold Coast, in 1977. Kitty continued to teach until 1987, when the pottery was finally closed down.

Glenn R. Cooke was appointed the first Curator of Decorative Arts at the Queensland Art Gallery in 1981. He has published extensively on aspects of Queensland's visual and cultural history and in 1999 was appointed Research Curator, Queensland Heritage, Queensland Art Gallery.



Far left: Plate 14 Mug decorated with Cooktown orchid, h 16.2 cm. This was a promotional mug produced for Ampol in 1961. It is made of a denser clay than the other mugs

Left: Plate 15. Pair of mugs decorated with sporting motifs, h 16.5 cm. The golfing mug was made for the Monto Golf Club



The man in a blue jacket.

John Glover's Van Diemen's Land paintings: a clue, or just coincidence?

Andrew Morris

As is often the case, once an artist's work has been showcased so spectacularly, such as in the 2004 *tour-de-force* exhibition of John Glover (1767–1849), his work has been re-appraised for what it is: superb. Auction results are but one tribute to that proposition.¹

Although 63 years old when he voluntarily emigrated to Van Diemen's Land in 1831 to join other members

of his family, and already an extremely wealthy man, Glover continued to paint for the apparent joy that it brought him.

One of the poignant outcomes of this concentrated display of Glover's efforts is that his landscapes painted while in VDL are now collectively (and uniquely) referred to as *the Colonial Picturesque*.² Glover is regarded as Australia's first colonial artist to portray our quirky eucalypts accurately, and to render them with an almost reverential admiration that seems to suggest a kind

[Patterdale Landscape with Rainbow]
c. 1832, watercolour 21.0 x 32.4 cm.
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra,
Joseph Brown Fund, 1979.
John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque
catalogue no. 68

of iconic status as Australia's national bush symbol.

Others have critiqued the idiosyncrasies surrounding a Glover work when objectively attempting to date a European panorama to his post-emigration period, while he was living in Van Diemen's Land. The Antipodean



Landscape with Piping Shepherd (after Claude) 1833, oil on canvas 72.5 x 111.5 cm. Private collection. John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque, catalogue no. 71

influences on Glover's post-1830 European landscapes are many and varied, and were certainly profound when compared with his understandably preconceived pre-1831 palette.

He was a prolific sketcher. Based upon rough drafts made while travelling in Europe, Glover's VDL-painted European subjects include oddities such as trees that take on something of the 'openness' of eucalypts, or hills with the blondness of many of Glover's Tasmanian landscapes.⁴

Intense blue skies often make for a striking backdrop (which in reality would elude many an English, Irish, Scottish or Welsh day), as does the artist's colonial habit of including a tree stump reminiscent of foreground logs in

his Australian topography.⁵

At times, framing might provide the primary point of VDL-attribution. The ornate gilt frame surrounding *Conway Castle* (private collection, Victoria, ex Sotheby's 24 November 2003, lot 62) was made by the largely unheralded VDL colonial framemaker William Wilson (1810–69). The spiral-shaped, overstated corner cartouches, the moulded compo patterned and ornamented inner slip, the outer frame edge and the frame's domed profile, all match Wilson's known handiwork.⁶ The cedar stretcher supporting *Conway Castle's* canvas was most likely manufactured by Glover's son, John Richardson Glover, providing a further link to Van Diemen's Land.⁷

Provenance of a Glover painting of a European scene may substantiate that he painted a picture in VDL between 1831 and 1846.⁸ *Conway Castle* can be traced reliably to one of its original owners, Thomas Daniel Chapman (1815–84) of

'Sunnyside', Newtown, Hobart.⁹ Chapman was Premier of Tasmania from 1861–63.

By the end of 1834, Glover had painted and amassed an exhibition-sized batch of pictures, 68 in all, which he consigned to his son-in-law John Lord in London during January 1835. Thirty of these were of British or Italian subjects; the rest were 'descriptive of the scenery and customs of the inhabitants of Van Dieman's [sic] Land'. The catalogue noted that 'with the exception of a Portrait (No. 57 of 68) and the last four numbers (No's 65–68 of 68), the whole of the pictures enumerated in the foregoing Catalogue have been Painted by Mr Glover, in Van Dieman's [sic] Land'.¹⁰

The 1835 exhibition included two pictures, either of which could be the *Conway Castle* illustrated here. Number 42 is the strongest candidate, listed as *Conway Castle, North Wales*, while number 61 is *The River Conway near its Source, North Wales*.¹¹ Apart from the

presence of Conway Castle, the bright blue sky upper left quadrant, the original and still current William Wilson frame and a link to one of the work's original Tasmanian owners, all confirm that Glover created this Claudean painting in VDL. It is probably one of the two that travelled back to England for his 1835 exposition. Glover continues to pay tribute to his mentor, as the large framing tree speaks volumes about the earlier influences of Claude Lorrain (1604/5–82) on him.

Conway Castle may have contributed a lot more though, something far more tangible. I suspect that Glover has painted a direct and obvious clue within *Conway Castle* that positively identifies other European-subject paintings to his post-1830 colonial VDL period.

Five paintings illustrated in this article are dated *after* Glover settled into colonial life in Van Diemen's Land; three of these are European scenes. John Glover may well have been a creature of habit, as all works include a curious-looking stock-keeper and his faithful dog. What links them is the stock-keeper's dark blue coat (or cloak), brown trousers and a black hat.

Checking the colour illustrations in the extensive catalogue of paintings and drawings that accompanied the 2003-4 exhibition confirms that of about 35 pre-1831 Glover paintings with staffage (not just of stock-keepers or drovers), at a stretch about five were dressed in blue and only one of those appeared to be a stock-keeper or drover.¹²

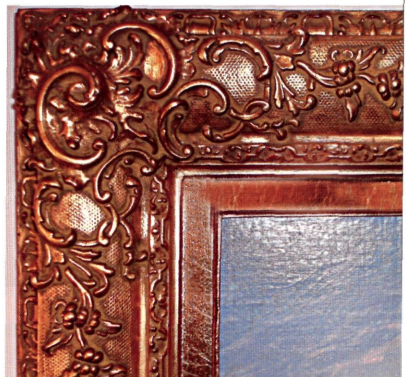
Of all the stock-keepers depicted by Glover post-1830 in the catalogue, only a couple show him dressed differently, such as *Moulting Lagoon and Great Oyster Bar, from Pine Hill* (c. 1838), where he is wearing a red jacket and is identified as a convict.¹³

The stock-keeper and his dog in *Patterdale landscape with rainbow* (c. 1832) and *Patterdale Farm* (c. 1839) are both eerily comparable to the stock-keeper and canine painted in *Conway Castle*.

Is this just pure coincidence or has Glover repeatedly left some kind of colonial VDL clue? Enchantingly, the

latter appears closer to the truth. Could the man in the blue jacket be a representation of Glover himself?

Andrew Morris is an accountant with particular interests in Australia's early banking institutions and their banknotes, and more recently in colonial convict artists and their art (primarily from Van Diemen's Land). He is Treasurer of the Australiana Society.



Conway Castle North Wales, c. 1832-1834,
oil on canvas 64.0 x 68.5 cm.
Private collection





[At Matlock-Mist Rising]
signed lower right
'John Glover
1814',
oil on canvas
71.0 x 94.0 cm.
Private
collection
(pre-emigration)

NOTES

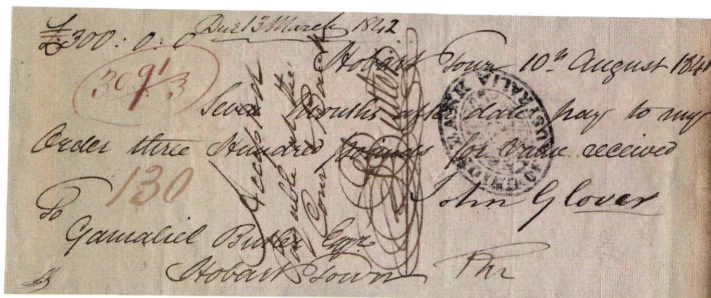
- 1 *Australian Art Sales Digest* - www.aasd.com.au - 2005 auction results for John Glover include (1) *House on the Derwent, Van Diemen's Land* (Australian scene) c. 1835 oil on canvas, 48.2 x 98.0 cm, Sotheby's Melbourne 23 May 2005 lot 6 estimate \$700,000-1,100,000, sold for \$1,450,500 (2) *Hayfield Near Primrose Hill* (British scene), c. 1817 oil on canvas, 77.0 x 115.0 cm, Christie's Melbourne 19 April 2005 lot 42 estimate \$120,000-180,000, sold for \$167,300 and (3) *(Landscape with Buildings on Hill)* (European scene), oil on canvas, 49.0 x 69.2 cm, Christie's Melbourne 22 March 2005 lot 23 estimate \$40,000-60,000, sold for \$59,750.
- 2 David Hansen, *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque*, Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery & Art Exhibitions Australia, Hobart 2003.
- 3 *Ibid* pp 266-267 'Table of Surviving or Recorded Sketchbooks', where the highest

numbered book is 102.

- 4 Tim Bonyhady, *The Colonial Image Australian Painting 1800-1880*, Ellsdy Press, Chippendale 1987, p 29, referring to *Castles in Italy near Ortricoli: a Broken Friar and a Thief being taken to prison*, 1841 oil on canvas, 78.6 x 114.6 cm, National Gallery of Australia.
- 5 John McPhee, 'Glover, John', in Joan Kerr (editor), *The Dictionary of Australian Artists - Painters, Sketchers, Photographers and Engravers to 1870*, Oxford UP, Melbourne 1992, p 304. A good example of both of these attribution points is *Durham Cathedral*, 1838 oil on canvas, 76.7 x 114.5 cm, Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery, Hobart.
- 6 An almost identically decorated Wilson frame is illustrated in Therese Mulford, *Tasmanian Framemakers 1830-1930 a Directory*, Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery, Launceston 1997, p 125. Wilson framed other John Glover paintings, *ibid* p 127. See also Robyn Lake &

Therese Mulford, 'William Wilson: rediscovered Tasmanian framemaker', *Australiana*, February 2001, pp 4-11.

- 7 Advice from Nevin Hurst of Masterpiece @ IXL Hobart (when specifically commenting on the stretcher used for *Comney Castle, North Wales*); John McPhee *The Art of John Glover*, Macmillan, Artarmon 1980, p 30 and Erica Burgess in Hansen *op cit*, p 244.
- 8 Though he died in 1849, the artist's last known watercolour is dated 1846: *Corroboree of Natives in Van Diemen's Land*, 1846 watercolour, 9.5 x 17.1 cm, Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery, Hobart.
- 9 Sotheby's Melbourne 24 November 2003 lot 62.
- 10 McPhee *op cit*, pp. 32-35, where the catalogue that accompanied the 106 New Bond Street London exhibition is included.
- 11 *Ibid*.
- 12 Hansen *op cit*, pp 135-241.
- 13 *Ibid*, p 232.



Left: Promissory Note illustrating Glover's signature. Courtesy John Pettit of John Petit Rare Banknotes

Opposite page:

Top: *Patterdale Farm*, c. 1840, oil on canvas 76.6 x 115.2 cm stretcher, 98.0 x 136.5 cm frame. Art Gallery of New South Wales, purchased 1974. John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque catalogue no. 87

Bottom: *(Italian Landscape)* 1841, oil on canvas 77.0 x 115.0 cm. Ballarat Fine Art Gallery, gift of Robert Scott 1924. John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque catalogue no. 90



The 'David Collins' box and miniature portrait

Caressa Crouch

As our pride in Australiana has risen, so have prices and unfortunately so has the temptation to gain higher remuneration for items which have been 'improved' or even created with the intention to deceive. This is a worldwide phenomenon and Australia is not exempt.

Usually some people are aware of questionable items being sold, generally through auction, but these doubts cannot be expressed in public. The unlucky purchaser may be unaware of this until they put the item up for resale. The trade and collectors often presume that an item of dubious parentage can be disposed of through another auction without repercussions, on the presumption of 'buyer beware'.

One fake that has been forensically investigated is the celebrated 'Oath of the Freeman' (1638-39), the first printed document from America.¹ The finding of what purported to be the only known copy was remarkable, and duped many experts. Investigative articles in the *Maine Antique Digest* from 1985 to 1993 exposed the fake.² The sale faltered due to problems with the *provenance* of the document; in other words, its chain of ownership was questionable.

How can a buyer at auction find out if the object they have purchased is as described in the catalogue, if suspicions arise later? Where there are serious doubts, the right approach is to get legal and expert advice to recover the purchase price from the seller. David and Helen Kelly's article

'Misdescription at auction: whose responsibility?'³ helps explain a consumer's rights and protections under the *Trade Practices Act*, in particular Sections 74 and 52, when relating to auctioneers' descriptions and responsibilities, and the contract obligations to a buyer implied by charging a buyer's premium. This is yet to be tested in the courts.

In Australia, the recent case history of the 'Collins' box and portrait has highlighted the issue of preserving provenance when items are sold progressively through several auctions and by different auction houses.

There is no suggestion here that the auction houses have attempted to deliberately mislead buyers; they have merely fulfilled their obligation to the vendor(s) by arguing a case, based on information available to them. However, the recent retirement of journalist Terry Ingram – after some 38 years of writing 'The Saleroom' and 'Smart Money' columns in the *Financial Review* – has seen the loss of an enquiring public voice. He had been avidly read by those in search of the story behind a sale or exhibition.

Terry Ingram's reporting on the 'Collins' box and miniature played an important part in charting their chequered course through auction sale rooms around the country.

THE CASE OPENS: SEPTEMBER 1998 AUCTION

In September 1998, Wemyss Fine Art Auctioneers Pty Ltd auctioned a deed box and ivory portrait miniature allegedly of, and once the property of, Lieutenant-Colonel David Collins (1756-1810), Deputy Judge Advocate of

New South Wales under Governor Phillip from 1788, and then Lieutenant-Governor of Van Diemen's Land from 1804 until his unexpected death in office in 1810.

Wemyss, a specialist auction house, was established in 1996 at 10 Wentworth Avenue, Sydney with Antony Davies as Managing Director. Among its notable achievements was the sale of the Lt Hanbury Clements cedar pair of cabinets to the Powerhouse Museum.⁴

Wemyss catalogue of the 12/9/98 sale lists the 'Collins' deed box as Lot 51⁵, which was described as:

A highly important early Colonial Deed Box, Tasmanian, circa 1805, made for Lieutenant-Colonel David Collins (1754/6-1810), the fiddle back blackwood veneered rectangular cedar box later cut to a sarcophagus shaped tea caddy (circa 1830), the hinged lid inset with a rectangular brass cartouche with canted corners engraved with the crest for David Collins (a camel's head, erased, proper) and the Gothic initials 'D.C.', the engraving attributed to James Grove (1769-1810) Australia's first silversmith. 33 x 18 x 16 estimate \$20,000/30,000.

The catalogue added the following notes:

James Grove, a talented engraver and silversmith, was transported to Australia for forging banknotes. He was befriended by David Collins, and became his close friend, receiving a pardon on his arrival in Hobart and within a short time



possessing 'one of the best houses in the settlement' where he frequently entertained the Governor. A silver pepper caster dated 1805 (exhibited Mitchell Library, Sydney, Q606/T) attributed to James Grove, is engraved with an identical crest and monogram for David Collins. James Grove is also known to have engraved a fine silver plaque for Governor Collin's coffin in 1810. James Grove died just one month later and was buried alongside David Collins (J.Warwick James/J.B.Hawkins, *Nineteenth Century Australian Silver*, Antiques Collectors Club, England, 1990, Vol. 2, pp 206, 253-255) The later tea caddy interior of the casket has been removed, exposing the cedar carcass, which is made with horizontal panels with opposing strips at each end, fastened by mortise and tenon joints. Light lines indicate the positioning of the two tea caddy

divisions. The high quality of the work would perhaps have countered probable warping from the use of unseasoned timbers. The ends have been recut at shallow angles to allow a more fashionable sarcophagus shape, and the thick blackwood veneers reapplied. The baseboard, in cedar, is chamfered at one end, and may be a replacement piece recycled from a drawer base, or may be the original rectangular base, which could have had chamfered edges on all four sides, simply cut down to suit the smaller size. The brass cartouche also has traces of an engraver's preliminary punched sketch markings across the top; the letters 'D' and 'N' are just visible.

The 'Collins' ivory portrait miniature was listed as Lot 52, and described as:

An extremely rare Portrait Miniature of Lieutenant David

Collins (aged approximately 20 years), circa 1775, in civilian dress, painted on ivory within an oval double sided ground glass frame with rope-twist gold bezel and pendant loop, quartered woven panels of hair verso with the monogram 'C' finely set in graduated seed pearls. 6.5 cm. Estimate \$8,000/12,000.

An historical background note further explained:

David Collins joined the army after attending Exeter Grammar School, and became a lieutenant in 1771. He fought in America, where he was married and promoted to the rank of captain in 1779, took part in the relief of Gibraltar in 1782, and retired on half-pay to Rochester in Kent. He was appointed Judge-Advocate by the Home Office in 1786, in preparation for the voyage of the First Fleet under Captain Phillip to

Van Diemen's Land [sic]. In 1804 Collins was responsible for establishing the city of Hobart on the Derwent River, opposite the site of the settlement begun by Lieutenant John Bowen six months earlier. Governor Collins died in 1810, and was buried in Hobart. (J Warwick James, J.B.Hawkins, *Nineteenth Century Australian Silver*, Antique Collectors Club, England 1990, vol.2, pp 206, 253-255, C M H Clark, *A History of Australia*, vol 1, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1962, pp 74-235)

Wemyss supplied additional information to prospective bidders via copies of an 'Object Appraisal', prepared by R. S. Gurney of Furniture Conversation Services and dated 28/9/1998, in which Gurney states: 'As is, the box presents well and could easily be of early 19th-century origin, showing no signs of recent interference or modification.' Ray Gurney describes, and illustrates with an accompanying drawing, where the base sides have been cut 'from converted bread boarded panels, again possibly cedar, (probably from the inner writing surfaces of a lap desk) butt jointed and nailed'.

The Gurney report further details:

The inlaid brass plaque is well set in, of good colour, the edges rolled over and even partially corroded. There are no indications that it has been recently modified and it appears to be of the same age as the rest of box. The engraving on the plaque is over a previous, virtually erased, engraving. An enhanced computer scan of the plaque shows that the remnants extend across the plaque in two rows parallel to the upper and lower edges and set in fairly evenly from the sides. This needs to be checked with a higher resolution scan using a raking light (or other methods) to confirm this. If the placing of the earlier engraving is

confirmed, it would indicate that the plaque was possibly reused, without alternations of its general dimensions, when the box was created or that, once in the box, it was erased then re-engraved at a later date.

It was also noted that the brass in the immediate vicinity of the end of each pushed in point decoration of the Collins engraving is still slightly raised above the general surface. Normal procedure would be to dress the finished engraving back to a smooth surface. It would be of interest to compare this engraving with the other known example in terms of composition and technique.⁶

Julian Bickersteth, International Conservation Services Pty Ltd, provided a second appraisal report for the 'Colonial Deed Box and Portrait Miniature', dated 24 September 1998, in which he wrote:

This box is, in my opinion, unaltered from the day it was made, apart from the replacement of the baseboard. Its construction is most unusual, utilising a novel method of triangular pieces attached by tongue and groove joins to create the double angle on each corner. This indicates that it is unlikely to have been made by a trained cabinetmaker, but rather by a joiner working from an illustration. His lack of experience in construction techniques, plus the paucity of materials available to him at the early stage of the colony, are represented by the following indicators:

- Solid cedar top of significant weight (and therefore likely to topple the box over) rather than a constructed top.
- Thick veneer cut with an ordinary saw rather than a veneer saw (representing both lack of tools plus abundance of resources, i.e. finely figured blackwood).

- Constructional technique of base already referred to, and the difference in thickness between the sides in the lid and the sides in the base.
- Join in the veneer along the back of the lid, which a cabinet maker would never have allowed.
- Hand made hinges, evidenced by file marks.
- Hand made screws evidenced by their uneven slots, and their different head sizes.
- Hand made carrying handles (largely lost) which instead of being braised to their back plates, penetrate through and are set into the timber sides.

The unaltered state of the box and its poor repair further confirm its age, assisted by the desiccated state of the shellac varnish and the even dry colour of internal surfaces. The exception to the material colour is the base, which has certainly been added later (it protrudes too far below the veneer and is set too far in, even allowing for shrinkage, its chamfered edge bears no relationship to the box, and there is evidence of previous nail holes under it) but it has been in position some considerable time judging by the staining, the corrosion of its nails have caused the cedar [to stain].

I examined closely the brass cartouche under microscope. It has been in position for a very long time, and I would suggest original to the box. It sits slightly proud, but all the edges are worn down to the surrounding cedar surface (clearly visible by microscope) indicating the longevity of its placement in the top. In my opinion, I therefore reiterate I have found no evidence to suggest the box is other than originally described in the catalogue entry, other than being in its original format, i.e. it has not been cut down. It is an extraordinary object,

both historically and from a furniture viewpoint.⁷

Anthony Davies supplied further information regarding his own research into the portrait miniature, conducted at the Mitchell Library, Sydney, in which he stated:

...at the Library I viewed a number of illustrations of portraits with similar dress and hairstyles dating from as early as 1760 as late as 1820. Collins' portrait may have been painted between 1775 and 1787 when he joined the First Fleet (we had described it consistently with this as circa 1775) and so the styling on the figure in the miniature is consistent with it being of David Collins.

I then compared the miniature with the transparency held by the Mitchell Library of David Collins painted 15 to 20 years later, and there are numerous obvious points of similarity between the two which are quite unmistakable, and which are distinctive enough to be quite different to anything else found by us in similar portraits of the period. Obviously the point of a portrait miniaturist was to capture with some accuracy the appearance of the sitter, and any distinctive features would have formed the basis of the portrait. In this case the similarities are extremely clear.

We also compared the monogram 'C' in seed pearls with monograms on portraits dated to the mid 1790s in the Library's collection (in rather poorer condition) and found that the Collins monogram's rather simpler, consistent with the fashion of the 1770s-80s, the 1790s monograms having become considerably more elaborate. The move in fashion towards this more elaborate style of decoration in the late part of the 18th century is also apparent in the use of bright cut engraving and



wriggle work on silver objects and jewellery, and there are many examples which I can show to illustrate this, that being a field in which I specialised in London for many years. The monogram of the Collins miniature is an extremely fine example of monogram pearl-work in exceptional condition.

The frame of the miniature is interesting in that it is more elaborate than most illustrated and may enable the miniature to be attributed to an artist at a later date. It has a twisted wire-work border in rolled gold and appears to be from a provincial source, possibly Bath, where there were a great many miniaturists working at that time. The bevelled edge of the glass is also unusual and an old-fashioned feature for the period. Bevelled examples are recorded from the 17th century to the mid 18th century, after this most miniatures were framed in oval-cut ground glass with smooth edges. By the 1790s this feature would be considered unusual.⁸

THE HAMMER FALLS:

During the auction viewing, both 'Collins' items created a lot of interest, but I personally had doubts. In my opinion, the box might have been made up from older pieces taken from a lapdesk, utilizing the aged edges. The box appeared to have sustained considerable damage, which would explain why the bottom of the box had been replaced with another old piece of cedar, and the damage to both handles. It did not explain why the blackwood veneer showed remarkably little damage—veneered boxes usually show wear on edges.

Other oddities were the lack of a lock—it is difficult to fit a new/old lock without showing signs of tampering—the differing thickness between the sides of the top and bottom of the box, and the presence of a brass cartouche which had been re-engraved over an older, erased engraving.

The two items were presented together, as relating to Collins. However, in my opinion, there was no definite likeness between the known portrait of Collins and the 'Collins' miniature. I couldn't understand why



David Collins would choose not to be painted in his Lieutenant's dress uniform. I was also unsure about the presence of woven hair behind the seed pearl monogrammed 'C' on the back of the miniature, which I had presumed to be a form of mourning jewellery.

But I wasn't going to miss watching the lively auction action as these two items changed hands. And a lively auction it turned out to be.

Lot 51 (the box) was knocked down to Buyer No. 40 for \$30,000 and Lot 52 (the miniature) to the same buyer for \$54,000, plus 10% buyers premium.

A PROVENANCE CONTROVERSY EMERGES:

Once sold, the preservation of the 'Collins' provenance was extremely important for the objects on-sale to a collector or cultural institution. More information soon came to light when Martin Stevenson reported the outcome of the Sydney sale in Launceston's newspaper, *The Examiner*:

Box, portrait go for cool \$82,000

An early 19th century Tasmanian document box knocked down for \$33 at a house contents auction in Launceston in April has been sold to a Sydney bidder for \$33,000. A tiny portrait of Hobart's first Governor, David Collins, which sold at the same Launceston auction for \$480, reached an astonishing \$59,400 at the same auction conducted by Sydney fine art auctioneer Wemyss.

Both items have been authenticated by Sydney experts as once having belonged to Collins, founder of European settlement in Hobart in 1804.

Both pieces at the Launceston sale were sold to a Latrobe antique dealer who, in turn, had then auctioned to a Launceston fine arts dealer before in turn being offered to another party who offered them to Wemyss.

Wemyss knocked down the miniature to a private buyer despite spirited bidding from Hobart's Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

Wemyss managing director Antony Davies, said yesterday that his firm was 'absolutely satisfied that the two items are authentic'. 'Three of Australia's experts in the field have examined them and found the wood and aging consistent with

claims made to their provenance,' Mr Davies said.

The portrait, estimated as likely to bring in between \$8,000 and \$10,000, is believed to have been painted around 1775.

The box, of cedar with brass engraved fittings, is believed to have been made by convict engraver and silversmith James Grove in 1805.⁹

Back in Sydney, Antony Davies had allegedly been told by the vendor that the box and the miniature were bought at the same deceased estate auction held by Van Diemens Land Realty P/L on 2 May 1998, the principal and auctioneer being Kaye Pickett. The sale was conducted on behalf of the estate of the late S. Smith Antiques and General, of 153 Penquite Road, Launceston. The miniature (Lot 109) was identified as, 'Oval Georg. Miniature on Ivory in 9ct frame', and sold for \$470. However, no blackwood box is described among the 225 lots listed in the catalogue.¹⁰

The vendor had allegedly assured Antony Davies that the blackwood-veneered box was contained in a sundry box lot of kitchen items and, therefore, had not been separately listed. The only box lot recorded as selling for \$30 (i.e. the price quoted by Martin Stevenson as \$33 less premium) was Lot 177: 'box carving boards, knives etc.' No other box lot was recorded as fetching a \$30 sale price.

Within days of the Wemyss sale, Ms Kaye Pickett had supplied Wemyss Buyer No. 40—Derek McDonnell and Anne McCormick, the principals of Hordern House—with a copy of the Van Diemens Land Realty buyer's invoice for the Smith Estate Auction. It listed Lot 109: 'miniature on ivory' at \$470, plus two other items purchased: Lot 148: 'pair antique lamps' at \$130, and Lot 172: '4 pieces of china' at \$145, plus buyer's premium.

Could someone else (other than the Wemyss vendor) have bought a box lot containing kitchen sundries and a

blackwood-veneered box, or was it ever there? Could a blackwood-veneered, sarcophagus-shaped box be overlooked, placed in a job lot in an auction of 225 lots, and then further overlooked by saleroom-savvy Launceston dealers, nine of whom were registered for the 2 May 1998 auction?

Ms Pickett, the auctioneer, was not just another real estate agent auctioning the contents of a house. Kaye Pickett has been a major force in promoting the appreciation of Australian furniture through her exhibition sales at the Evandale Market Hall, Evandale, Tasmania. During her ownership of Tulloch's Auctions in Launceston, she conducted specialist Australian sales—a phenomenon unknown on the mainland at the time.

Collaborating with Tony and Juliana Hooper, leading Australiana dealers in Melbourne, the catalogues of her sales contain gems of Australiana now housed in collections around the country. Ms Pickett was also a valuer for the Federal Government's Cultural Gifts Program for over 20 years.

Kaye Pickett's eye for colonial furniture was exceptional and she would not have overlooked a blackwood-veneered box, no matter how damaged, amongst a box of kitchen sundries. All the items relating to the deceased estate had been packed away and Pickett had personally lotted each individual item, grouping only a few in cardboard boxes. Ms Pickett did recall discussing two antique miniature portraits on ivory and one small antique watercolour portrait of a lady (which she remembered had a Sotheby's saleroom sticker on the back) with Pauline and William Carden – Mr Carden was the partner of Mrs Smith and the consignor of her estate to Van Diemen's Land Realty.

The spotlight now turned on Lot 109: 'Oval Georg. Miniature on Ivory in 9ct frame'. Of the three small portraits offered at the 2/5/98 sale, the other two were purchased by renowned Launceston portrait collector John

Millwood, who had searched his extensive collection of Sotheby's catalogues for a small watercolour portrait numbered Lot 115 and matching the description of the item bearing a '115' Sotheby's sticker in the Smith effects. A Sotheby's sale held in Melbourne on 24 July 1989 had listed three miniatures with Lot 115 described as:

115

A miniature of a Lady, circa 1830, with brown curly hair showing beneath a white lace cap tied with several pink ribbons, wearing a black dress with white lace collar and pink shawl draped over one shoulder, rectangular 7.5 cm by 5.8 cm \$300/400.¹¹

Lot 115 was subsequently sold by Sotheby's for \$286 on 24/7/89. Coincidentally, descriptions of two other lots in Sotheby's catalogue for this Melbourne sale matched the remaining two miniatures offered at the Launceston sale. However, although the dimensions of all three miniatures matched, the Sotheby's catalogue did not describe Lot 117: miniature of a gentleman: as having either a seed pearl monogram or hair on the back.

Five days after the Sydney auction, on 17 September 1998, Hordern House wrote to Antony Davies of Wemyss formally withdrawing their offer to purchase Lots 51 and 52, on the basis that the items could not be proved to be as they had been represented.

Hordern House issued the following press release on 9 December 1998:

On 18th September 1998 Hordern House rescinded the sale of a miniature portrait alleged to be that of Lieutenant-Colonel David Collins and a deed box, also alleged to have been made for Lieutenant-Colonel David Collins. Hordern House stands by this decision. It has been recently asserted by Wemyss Auctioneers that Mr

Davies of Wemyss has spoken to Mr William Carden, the party who allegedly consigned the miniature and the deed box to an auction conducted by Ms Kaye Pickett in Launceston, and that Mr Carden has confirmed that both the box and miniature were sold in the auction conducted by Ms Pickett. *This fact is critical for Anthony Davies to establish that the portrait and the box are what they are said to be.*

(NB: italics added)

Hordern House has been informed by Mr Carden that:

- a) until Mr Davies showed Mr Carden the deed box allegedly sold in the auction conducted by Ms Pickett, Mr Carden had never seen it before;
- b) Mr Carden is unable to identify the box as having belonged at any time to Susan Smith, the deceased partner of Mr Carden, and the person who is alleged by Mr Davies to be a descendant of George Allen and a member of the Cox family.
- c) Mr Carden is unable to identify the box as having been inherited by himself from Susan Smith.

Hordern House also believes that the miniature was purchased by Susan Smith in July 1989 at Sotheby's Melbourne, where it was catalogued as lot number 117 'A Miniature of a Gentleman, circa 1805'.

Hordern House continues to maintain that the miniature and the deed box did not both come from the auction sale conducted by Ms Kaye Pickett. Hordern House will vigorously defend proceedings brought against it by Wemyss.¹²

In the *Financial Review*, 10 December 1998, Terry Ingram described Antony Davies' reaction and the auction house's intention to re-offer the two items for sale:

A portrait miniature claimed to be of Governor Collins of Tasmania and to have been in his and related

family hands for 180 years is now said to have been bought at Sotheby's Melbourne as the portrait of an anonymous gentleman in 1889. However, this is being denied by Mr Antony Davies, director of Wemyss which recently sold the miniature. His denial is on the grounds that he was at Sotheby's when the 'anonymous gentleman' miniature was catalogued, and would have recognised it this time around if it were the same.

The miniature in dispute was knocked down most recently to Sydney rare book dealer Ms Anne McCormick at the Wemyss auction held in Sydney on September 12 for \$59,500.

Ms McCormick said this week that she had rescinded the sale of the miniature catalogued as Governor Collins, and of a deed box also supposedly belonging to Governor Collins which she purchased for \$33,000 in the same Wemyss sale. Mr Davies is reofferring the two items at the sale in Sydney on Saturday and has said he will charge the 'defaulting purchaser' (Ms McCormick) the difference. The two items were offered by Wemyss with the verbal note that they had turned up at an estate sale in northern Tasmania earlier this year.

Wemyss plans to reoffer the item with a constructed history supposedly tracing the descent through Collins, Cox and Allen family to their inheritance by Mr Will Carden of Launceston, who was the partner of the now deceased Ms Susan Smith, whose lineage was distinctly 'blue-blood' Tasmanian.

Ms McCormick has now produced new circumstantial evidence that the miniature was purchased at Sotheby's 10 years ago and has quoted Mr Carden as indicating that he had no knowledge of the deed box. Mr Carden has confirmed this to *Saleroom*.

The new auction records show that Ms Smith bought three portrait miniatures at a sale at Sotheby's in

Melbourne in July 1989.

One of the miniatures, purchased for \$550, broadly matches the description of the Collins portrait. Lot 117 in the Sotheby's sale was a 'miniature of a gentleman', circa 1805, probably by Frederick Buck, and a brief description.

The northern Tasmanian (Launceston) sale on May 2 included the 'Collins' portrait and two other portrait miniatures, both with Sotheby's lot numbers attached and clearly bought at that Sotheby's sale.

Mr Davies said that the 'Collins' portrait was not in the style of Buck, so it could not be the same one.

According to Mr Davies' reconstruction of the provenance and events, which he insists was not crucial to the first sale to Ms McCormick, but is being stressed in the catalogue of the coming reofferring, both the miniature and the box would have come up in the sale on May 2, the miniature being individually lotted with no claim to a Collins connection, the deed box cum tea caddy unnoticed in a cardboard box containing 'sundry items.' They would have been purchased by the same buyer (Mr Will Lowe, of Invermay), who would have sold the miniature to another dealer who sold it on to the Wemyss consignor.

The Wemyss consignor would subsequently have bought the box from Mr Lowe and 'reunited' the 'Collins memorabilia'. However, this week Mr Lowe was unprepared to comment on the affair, saying it 'was all in the past'.

Mr Carden, however, said that while it was 'quite possible' he could be mistaken, he had lived in the house where the box would supposedly have been housed for eight months and could not recall seeing it or handling it.

Ms Kaye Pickett, who organised the auction in Launceston, said she was completely aware of every item in the

sale and spent considerable time placing selected items in boxes. She had not seen the box, but the 'Collins' miniature had been lotted and—sold as a Georgian miniature in an ivory [sic] frame—made \$470. Mr Davies said it was understandable that in the circumstances of the Launceston sale—a packed house and limited viewing time—the box might not have been seen by the numerous flossickers who frequent such sales.¹³

DECEMBER 1998 AUCTION

On 12 December 1998, the two 'Collins' items were again put up for sale by Wemyss at Wentworth Avenue, Sydney, in a sale of 'Important Portrait Miniatures'. The deed box was now Lot 21 and described as: 'A highly important early Colonial Tea Caddy'. The miniature was Lot 22, and had aged by a decade from 1775 to 1786/7. Minor changes to the original catalogue text included the addition of 'Colonel of the Royal Marine Forces' and the replacement of 'Rectangular cedar box later cut to a sarcophagus shaped tea caddy (circa 1830)' with 'sarcophagus shaped cedar and blackwood box'. James Grove had become Collins's 'neighbour' instead of 'his close friend'.¹⁴

The new catalogue entry for Lot 21 further noted:

The high quality of the work has evidently been compromised in some areas by the lack of proper equipment and tools in the early colony. The thick blackwood veneers and high degree of improvisation undertaken by the craftsman are consistent with an early date circa 1805, and Collins of course died on 24th March 1810, making this the earliest piece of colonial cabinetwork to yet appear by at least five years.

The significance of the item being a tea caddy rather than some more utilitarian object prompts some remarkable questions about the



lifestyle of the early settlers and their aspirations for their new world ... It has also been suggested that the plaque has been re-used from an earlier item probably fitted to or carried on a ship, as have been the hinges and carcase timbers; further evidence of the extremely early date of manufacture prior to the arrival in Hobart Town of proper cabinet-making and machine equipment. \$20,000/30,000

Condition:

Fine original patination with old warping to the uppermost left panel of veneer, and three old losses of veneer with staining, two further minor losses to top, chips and losses to edges of veneered sides and front, rear veneered panel lifting at edges, base probably replaced later, rust staining in timber by the handmade screws and nails, which are fixed in place. Old wear to the engraved plaque and its edges. Carcase: cedar and mahogany with blackwood solid lid,

encased in figured hand-cut blackwood veneers, the interior with indications of former tea caddy fitments. The brass drop handles broken, with cast and pinned construction. Minor cleaning of old finish over right side.

References & Reports:

(available for viewing at Wemyss) Julian Bickersteth, International Conservation Services, Sydney 1998; Report on the construction, origin of materials and intake nature of the item

Ray Gurney, Furniture Conservation Services, Sydney 1998; Report on the construction, origin of materials and intact nature of the item

See: *Nineteenth Century Australian Silver*, J.B. Hawkins, Antique Collector's Club, England, 1990, Vol.2, pp206, 253-255.

Provenance:

A substantial amount of research has been conducted and collated to follow the probable history of this item over the past 180 years, by descent through the Collins family to 1829; then by

descent through the Cox family to the 1870s - 1890s, when it would have been in the possession of Eliza Cowpland Dixon (née Cox, of Collins) who died without issue on 26th April 1897.

It then passed by descent through the Allen family of Launceston, her neighbours.¹⁵

SALEROOM SCENE:

Antony Davies was at the rostrum for the 12/12/98 sale and, when Lot 21 came up for auction, he is alleged to have described the blackwood-veneered box as 'an extremely important tea caddy of Lieutenant Governor Collins...the earliest known object to be manufactured in the colony. There is a card table at Government House (Parramatta) 1814 but this is earlier.'

Mr Davies proceeded to auction the box which reached \$21,000, at which point he allegedly announced: 'this bid is referred and the bid will be discussed directly afterwards'. Although I was present at the auction,



I was unable to see who had been bidding, or to whom Lot 21 was knocked down.

Lot 22, the portrait miniature, was up for sale next. Again an extensive new catalogue entry had been prepared:

An extremely important Portrait miniature of Judge Advocate to the First Fleet Lieutenant-Colonel David Collins, (1754/6 - 1810), attributed to William Wood, circa 1786/7, in informal judiciary costume, with short curled hair,

powdered and with formal black button arrangement, white waistcoat, crimped and ruffled white jabot and white stock, with a blue sky, clouds and trees background, oval 6 cm, in a double sided convex glass case with bevelled edges, gold band with rope-twist boarder and pendant loop, and verso a quartered panel of lacquered hair with a fine large monogram 'C' in graduated seed pearls ... The departure of the First Fleet was delayed due to shortages of supplies,

and the ships lay in Portsmouth Harbour for several months. Collins is known to have made several trips to London to negotiate with the Home Office for further supplies and better conditions, and it is likely that on one such occasion he sat for this fine portrait, considered an important early work by William Wood (1769 - 1810), a follower of George Engleheart.

Collins was unable to take with him on the voyage his wife, who was to remain in England, however whilst the ships waited to depart he developed an association with **Mrs Hannah Eddington**, the wife of a transported convict on board his ship, and who was travelling to Australia as a free settler. Mrs Eddington was removed to Collins' quarters and in fact the affair continued for many years, resulting in the issue of several children in Hobart Town where both eventuated. A contemporary note records the fact that Mrs Eddington's pet dog escaped as the First Fleet was due to leave, and David Collins expended some effort to find the dog in time for departure day. The fleet of eight ships finally sailed on 13th May 1787 ... His daughter Eliza Eddington (Collins) later married James Cox, on 1st May 1829, who built Clarendon, in Evandale, the Cox estate extending over much of the area to the south and west of present day Launceston, below the Tamar River.

James and Eliza Cox (née Collins) had eleven further children. Of the Cox née Collins children, the first died in infancy, the second (George) died after 2 years and the third, and consequently eldest child, Eliza, married the Rev. John Cowpland Dixon of Windermere and the Tamar, when she was 48 years. The property Windermere is adjacent to the property then known as Allanvale from whence this and the previous Lot were inherited. Eliza

Cowpland Dixon died without issue on 26th April 1897.

\$50,000/60,000

Condition: excellent, some loose dry mould and old dust within case ...

Provenance: a substantial amount of evidence has been collected and collated to follow the probable history of this item over the past 180 years, by descent through the Collins family to 1829; then by descent through the Cox family to the 1870s; and by descent through the Allen family of Launceston.¹⁶

According to the new catalogue entry prepared by Weyms, further research now suggested that the portrait miniature showed David Collins after he had received his appointment as Deputy Judge Advocate of New South Wales on 24 October 1786. This explained the absence of military uniform and Collins' depiction 'in informal judiciary costume'. The catalogue suggests the miniature was painted while Collins was waiting for the First Fleet to set sail under Captain Arthur Phillip in May 1788. During this time Collins would have had to go up to London on occasion to negotiate with the Home Office, and on one of these trips he may have sat for his portrait, now described as 'an important early work by William Wood (1769 – 1810)'.

MISTAKEN IDENTITIES:

At this point, the catalogue researcher goes on to conflate two of Collins' three known mistresses—Ann Yeates, Hannah Powers and Margaret Eddington—into one person: a 'Mrs Hannah Eddington'.

Margaret Eddington could not have sailed on the First Fleet as Collins' mistress. She was not born until 1793. Her father, Thomas Eddington, was transported on the Second Fleet in 1790, and her mother was also sent out to Australia as a convict in 1791.

Hannah Powers accompanied her husband on board HMS *Calcutta*, which sailed from England in April

1803, when Collins was instructed to establish a new settlement at Port Phillip, where he was to be Lieutenant-Governor. After the Port Phillip settlement failed, Collins moved the colonists across Bass Strait to the Derwent River in Van Diemen's Land and, rejecting the site at Risdon Cove chosen by Lt John Bowen, established a settlement at Sullivan's Cove, later Hobart Town.

The catalogue researcher also confuses the story of an escaped pet dog, relating this as a First Fleet incident. In his *Reminiscences*, John Pascoe Fawkner records that Lieutenant-Governor Collins delayed the sailing of the HMS *Calcutta* (1803) to pacify his mistress, Hannah Powers, who had left her fancy dog ashore.

Another confusing statement in the catalogue entry reads: 'Mrs Eddington was removed to Collins' quarters and in fact the affair continued for many years, resulting in the issue of several children in Hobart Town where both eventuated.' The number and sequence of David Collins' mistresses and recognised children is indeed confusing, but Alison Alexander's book (1987) thoroughly explains the Collins family tree.¹⁷

First, while Judge-Advocate in Sydney, Collins' mistress was Ann Yeates, who bore him a daughter Marianne (September 1790) and a son George (born 1793) both taking the surname Collins. In 1804 these two children did come down from Sydney visit their father in Hobart Town and both returned to Sydney. George Collins later joined HMS *Buffalo* as a midshipman.

Second, Hannah Powers was Collins' mistress during his tenure as Lieutenant-Governor charged with establishing the settlement at Port Phillip, and later in Hobart. There was no issue from this liaison.

Finally, Hannah Powers was superseded by a very young Margaret Eddington. In 1808/9 Eddington bore David Collins a daughter, known as Eliza Collins. She had previously borne a son who was known as John

Eddington. The illicit relationship between Collins and Eddington was the reason Governor Bligh had removed his daughter, Mary Putland, from Government House, Hobart Town, where they had sought asylum following the 1808 Rum Rebellion in Sydney. Mrs Putland was sent back on board the HMS *Porpoise* because Collins was openly 'walking with his kept woman (a poor, low creature) arm-in-arm about the Town, and bringing her almost daily to his office adjoining the House, directly in View of my Daughter'.¹⁸

On 24 March 1810, David Collins died intestate, leaving no provision for any of his children. Eliza Collins was only an infant at the time of her father's death. However, an unknown benefactor ensured she had land and livestock and she attended at a private girls' school, 'Ellenthorpe Hall' at Campbelltown, from which she left to marry James Cox, one of the wealthiest men in Tasmania.

POST SALE REPORTS:

Following the 12/12/1998 auction, and the sale of the two disputed 'Collins' items, legal action between Hordern House and Weyms was settled on the basis of the provenance evidence collected by Hordern House.

Wemyss web site reported the successful sale of both items, claiming a world record price for Lot 22: the 'Collins' miniature. Antony Davies repeated this on his ABC talkback radio sessions and when he conducted 'Antique Appraisal' days at nursing and retirement homes around NSW. In 1999, an article in *Pittwater Life*, a free Sydney Northern Beaches monthly magazine, also highlighted the 'Collins' items among Davies' career achievements:

Antony has made a few really exciting discoveries during his career, the most recent of which is the most critical collection of portrait miniatures to be found in Australia, which included the Cox

& Loane Family Collections. He also discovered some highly important early colonial items belonging to the first governor of Tasmania—a portrait miniature and a deed box. The deed box is the oldest known in Australia, and the miniature portrait of David Collins brought a world record price of \$56,250!!¹⁹

So where is the ‘Collins’ miniature now? In 2006, Antony Davies wrote in *The Australian*:

Caroline Simpson, passionate about early Sydney’s trade and society, acquired a superb collection for historic Clyde Bank in Fort Street, Sydney. Most of the collection was given by her four children after her death to the Historic Houses Trust in a bequest worth around \$12 million, and much of this is now on view in The Mint building in Macquarie Street. Mrs Simpson’s purchases included furniture, stunning aquatints, Chinese armorial porcelain made for Sydney families, and a portrait miniature of David Collins, Judge Advocate of the First Fleet. Her collection filled the beautiful Fort Street house, which operated as a museum of early Sydney until her death in 2003.²⁰

FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE PROVENANCE:

In July 2000, two years after the original Launceston sale, the beneficiary of the late Sue Smith, instigated legal action through a local legal firm, to recover the discrepancy in the sale prices realised, citing Kaye Pickett’s alleged negligence in preparing the catalogue and conducting the auction. An alleged discrepancy of approximately \$82,000 was calculated on the basis of the difference between the original sale prices of the Launceston house clearance sale and the Wemyss sale results as published

in *The Examiner* newspaper report of 17 September 1998.

Kaye Pickett’s indemnity insurance provided for an insurance investigator to prepare documentation for the case. This investigation failed to uncover evidence of the blackwood-veneered box having being in Sue Smith’s possession. In fact, William and Pauline Carden provided statements that Mr Carden had never seen the box.

As a consequence of Terry Ingram’s *Financial Review* articles, Ms Alderson, an artist friend Sue Smith, had contacted Hordern House to confirm that she had been present at the Sotheby’s viewing when Smith inspected the miniatures. Mrs Smith eventually purchased the three miniatures, and Ms Alderson could remember the miniature of the gentleman and the seed-pearled initial on the back of the frame.

The most important information to emerge, however, was a detailed inventory of household furniture and effects on account of Mr W.J. Carden, ‘Allandale’, prepared for the real estate firm of Harrison Humphreys P/L in November 1994. The inventory, compiled by the experienced auctioneer Harry Hoagman, provides a detailed room-by-room listing of items such as ‘19 wine glasses, 4 thermos flasks, small polyester cooler’ in a kitchen cupboard drawer; ‘teak corner cupboard with 18 panel astragal glass door’ with a detailed shelf-by-shelf listing of its bric-à-brac contents; plus a ‘Miniature on ivory—portrait of a gentleman’ in the lounge room.²¹

No blackwood sarcophagus-shaped box was listed by the compiler, Mr Hoagman, now deceased. Hoagman ran the antique section of Websters, the premier auction house in Tasmania and the first to run specialty auctions. He was a knowledgeable antique appraiser and had worked on countless country clearance house sales.

Affidavits were obtained from various people who inspected the Van Diemen’s Land Realty house clearance prior to the sale on 2 May 1998,

particularly those who had private viewings before opening. Nine dealers had registered as buyers for the 2/5/98 auction but not one recalled seeing a blackwood box.

Bill Lowe, the buyer of Lot 109 (the miniature) sold it within days to Russell Venn, another Launceston dealer, who sold it in turn to Kevin Dahya of Grange Antiques, Latrobe, Tasmania.

Four months later, in September 1998, the miniature surfaced at Wemyss auction rooms in Sydney, this time paired with the box and giving the impression that the two items belonged together.

APRIL 2007 AUCTION

Nine years later, on Tuesday 24 April 2007, after viewings in Sydney, the box reappeared in Bonhams & Goodman’s first Melbourne Decorative Arts and Fine Furniture sale, with an estimate of \$60,000 – \$80,000. Now ‘Lot 824: The Collins Australian Blackwood and Cedar Tea Caddy, circa 1805, probably by James Grove’²², the Collins silver pounce pot – bearing the Collins crest and cited in John Hawkins’ *Nineteenth Century Australian Silver*²³—was also listed in this sale, along with a number of pieces of fine cedar furniture.

An extremely detailed provenance was published in Bonhams & Goodman’s catalogue. Although cedar is mentioned in the auction lot heading there is no mention of this timber in the description, which detailed the box’s construction as:

pale mahogany pieces salvaged from the canted writing slope of a Georgian writing compendium, and recut to form a rectangular box, the exterior veneered with thick sheets of hand cut figured blackwood wattle, the lid of the box made from a solid piece of blackwood wattle with veneer applied to the edges and sloped panels.

On the critical issue of provenance, the 2007 catalogue reconstructs this account of the box’s history:

Provenance: Private collection, New South Wales, Wemyss Auctioneers, sold at auction 1998, the sale did not proceed and subsequently sold by private treaty to the current owner. Kevin Dahya, Grange Antiques, Latrobe, Tasmania, William Lowe of Launceston, Tasmania, acquired at the auction of the estate of the late Susan Smith née Allen formerly of the homestead, 'Allenvale', Tamar River, Launceston, Tasmania conducted by Kaye Pickett of Van Diemens Land Realty, Saturday, 2 May 1998 at 153 Penquite Road, Norwood on behalf of William Cardin, husband to Susan and beneficiary of the estate, Susan Smith, née Allen, wife of William Cardin by descent from [sic]. The following is largely circumstantial but beyond reasonable doubt: Susan Smith's family, the Allens of 'Allenvale', Tamar River, Launceston adjacent to the homestead, 'Windermere'. The caddy acquired by the Allens from the family and descendents of Rev. John Cowpland-Dixon of 'Windermere'. Rev John Cowpland married Eliza Cox, grand daughter of David Collins, first Governor of Van Diemens Land, Eliza Cox b 13 February 1830 at 'Clarendon' to James Cox and Elizabeth née Eddington (Collins). Elizabeth Eddington, the illegitimate daughter of Governor Collins, former Judge Advocate to the First Fleet. This tea caddy was purchased in Launceston in 1998 at house clearance auction of the estate of Mrs Susan Smith of 'Allenvale', Deviot, Tasmania, who had died some years earlier. It was subsequently in the same year offered for sale by Wemyss Auctioneers, Sydney when it was sold but returned after the buyer raised questions to its authenticity. New research now makes a case beyond reasonable doubt that this little tea caddy was made for the first Governor of Tasmania around 1805 and is consequently one of the earliest recorded pieces of Australian



furniture or furnishings and a national treasure. A Tasmanian, Mrs Smith had moved back to Launceston from Melbourne and had built a modern house in Deviot which she named 'Allanvale' in reference to her family home near Windermere on the Tamar River. We are advised that according to Mrs Smith's husband, William Cardin, the tea caddy had been used as *a deconative item on a kitchen dresser in her Deviot home, retained by her with items she had inherited from her family at 'Allanvale'* [italics added]. The Launceston auction sale contents were consigned by Mr William Cardin, partner to the late Susan Smith. Upon the death of Mrs

Smith, Mr Cardin had leased her Deviot house 'Allanvale' with its contents intact to an English family. On their departure in 1998 he arranged for the contents of the house to be packed and removed by a local auctioneer to his Launceston home for convenience of auction. The tea caddy was sold as a part of a lot of kitchen equipment and had not been separately catalogued by the auctioneer. Mrs Smith's maiden name was 'Allen' and her family home was a 19th century property 'Allenvale' is located very nearby the 19th century home and church 'Windermere', which still survives but is partly subdivided into a

housing estate. In the 1890s the properties were adjoining farms. It is assumed at some time in the 1890s, the tea caddy was acquired from their neighbour, Eliza Cowpland-Dixon, at 'Windermere', by then an elderly widow without any family and the granddaughter of Lt Governor Collins.²⁴

The auction catalogue also provided background history on David Collins and the convict engraver James Grove.

Very properly, Bonhams and Goodman had mentioned in their catalogue that the item's authenticity had previously been questioned. However, in the eight and a half years since it was previously auctioned, the box had now morphed into: 'a decorative item on a kitchen dresser in her Deviot home, retained by her with items she had inherited from her family at Allamvale'.

Kaye Pickett also informed James Hendy, Bonhams & Goodman decorative arts and antiques expert, that the catalogue was incorrect in reporting that she had auctioned the box on 2 May 1998.

Ms Pickett asserts:

Tim Goodman communicated with me stating that he was not prepared to withdraw it but would make an announcement prior to its being auctioned that I deny that the box was in my auction, he requested that I email him these instructions which I did.²⁵

Lot 824 was not withdrawn from the sale but doubts were once again at the forefront of many collectors minds. During the auction, Tim Goodman allegedly announced from the rostrum that 'Kaye Pickett could not recall the box being at her auction.' In spite of the auctioneer's best efforts on behalf of the vendor, as is his obligation, on this occasion the box did not sell.

THE CASE CONCLUDES:

Notwithstanding the 'circumstantial' evidence presented by Bonhams & Goodman in their 2007 catalogue, the documented provenance evidence suggests

that the 'Collins' miniature and box were never paired goods coming from the same source. Some have speculated that the historical importance of the box may have been 'enhanced' by the re-engraving of the plaque with David Collins' crest.

I'll leave the last word to Antony Davies, who wrote last year in *The Australian*:

The reality is that as the market develops and historical information is researched and clarified, the importance of some items over others becomes apparent and some objects, previously thought to be of value, are relinquished as almost worthless by serious collectors.

Another interesting effect is created as prices for the best items soar, and dealers, collectors, auctioneers and institutions compete for the finest stock. There's a limited stock, and when not everyone can discover the rare colonial piece, or be the successful buyer, rivalry, jealousy and greed step in. Sadly, antique dealers can and do diminish the historical significance of important early items by making the market suspicious of an object for no better reason than that they have missed the opportunity to deal with it themselves.

A whisper there, a derogatory remark there, and all the diligent research in the world won't help some items find a new home. It's hardly something to be proud of and the net result is bad for everyone.

How do you avoid being put off a possible important purchase by ignorant rumour mongering?

The only way is to do the research yourself and satisfy yourself as to the facts. Don't listen to idle gossip.²⁶

NOTES

- 1 James Gilreath (ed.), *The Judgements of Experts: Essays and Documents about the Investigation of the Forging of the Oath of the Freeman*, American Antiquarian Society, Worcester MA 1997
- 2 *Maine Antique Digest*, December 1985 pp 26-27

- A; March 1986, p. 7 - A; April 1986, pp. 10-13-A; June 1986, pp. 26-31-A; July 1986, pp. 1-8-C; December 1986, p. 5-A; February 1987, p. 12-A; March 1987, p. 18-A; April 1987, pp. 4-6-A; June 1987, p. 3-A; July 1987, p. 3 - A; November 1987, pp. 1-7-D, 36-37D; March 1988, p. 5-A; December 1988, p. 24-26C; April 1993, p. 32-B.
- 3 David St L. Kelly & Helen J. Kelly, 'Misdescription at auction: whose responsibility?' *Australiana* vol 25 2003 "no 1 p 20.
- 4 Anne Watson, 'Shipwrecks, shells and sheep: the Hanbury Clements collector's cabinets', *Australiana* August 2006, p 5ff.
- 5 Wemyss Auction Catalogue Important Colonial Furniture, 12 September 1998
- 6 Furniture Conservation Services Object Appraisal Blackwood veneered box 28/9/98.
- 7 International Conservation Services Pty Ltd Report by Julian Bickersteth on the Colonial Deed Box and Portrait Miniature 24th September 1998.
- 8 Facsimile message from Wemyss 2 Oct 1998.
- 9 Martin Stevenson, *The Examiner* 17 September 1998.
- 10 Auction catalogue Van Diemen's Land Realty P/L 2 May 1998.
- 11 Sothebys Melbourne, 24 July 1989 lot 115.
- 12 Hordern House press release 9 December 1998.
- 13 Terry Ingram, *Australian Financial Review*, 10 Dec 1998.
- 14 Wemyss *Important Portrait Miniatures* catalogue 12 December 1998.
- 15 *Ibid*.
- 16 *Ibid*. The researcher who prepared the catalogue entry incorrectly states that the First Fleet sailed to Van Diemen's Land instead of New South Wales.
- 17 Alison Alexander, *The Wives and Mistresses of Van Diemen's Land Governors*, Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 1987.
- 18 *Historical Records of Australia* 1;7, p. 126,128.
- 19 *Pittwater Life* April 1999
- 20 Anthony Davies, *The Australian* June 2006
- 21 Harrison Humphreys Pty Ltd, *Inventory of household furniture and effects on account of Mr W. J. Carden 'Allandale'*.
- 22 Bonhams & Goodman *Decorative Arts and Fine Furniture* catalogue 24 April 2007
- 23 J B Hawkins, *Nineteenth Century Australian Silver*, Woodbridge 1990, vol 2 p 206f.
- 24 *Ibid*.
- 25 Email copy sent Tim Goodman from Kaye Pickett to C Crouch
- 26 Antony Davies, 'Dinki-di blossomed with Federation' *The Australian* 11 October 2006

The Collins caster

J.M. Houstone

On 24 April 2007, Bonhams & Goodman sold an unmarked silver caster at its Melbourne decorative arts sale for \$408,000 (including buyer's premium) – an extraordinary price. The caster, approximately 14 cm high and weighing just over 2oz, is engraved: 'The first piece of/ plate/ made in V.D. Land 1805/ and used on the anniversary of the Birthday/ of H. M. George III.'

On the upper body of the caster is engraved the crest of David Collins, the first Lieutenant Governor of Tasmania, and the initials 'D.C.' Below this, on the lower part of the body, is a coat of arms apparently relating to the Collins family.

The caster had previously attracted attention in 1977, when it was purchased by collector and dealer Geoffrey Stephens at Sotheby's, London, for about £400. While some doubts were voiced as to its authenticity at that time, Stephens always maintained his belief in it and, after returning to Australia, claimed it was made in Tasmania by the convict James Grove.

Mr Stephens unsuccessfully auctioned the caster at Webster's Launceston in March 1978, when it was passed in at \$1,700. It remained in the possession of Stephens' widow until the recent Bonhams & Goodman sale. However, in 1984, Jolyon Warwick James published the caster in the *Australian Antique Collector* accepting Mr Stephens' arguments of the Collins connections.¹

David Collins (1756-1810) sailed to Australia with the First Fleet in May 1787, as Governor Arthur Phillip's Judge-Advocate, and returned to England in 1796. Seven years later he was commissioned to act as Lieutenant Governor of a new settlement to be





birthday), the caster could have been made in the new settlement. As Mr Warwick James observed in a recent article, 1805 Hobart was 'largely a row of tents'.

The inscription on the caster also raises concerns. It defies belief that, at the time of manufacture, the maker would have contemporaneously engraved the words: 'The first piece of plate made in V.D. Land ...' This self-serving inscription has obviously been added later.

In 1855, Marianne Laetitia Chase, Collins's illegitimate daughter (by then living in Tasmania) sent the caster for display at the Universal Exhibition of Industry in Paris as part of the Tasmanian contribution. It was contained in a musk wood box, which was sold with the caster by Bonhams & Goodman. Stylistically, the box dates to the mid-19th century and, as Mr Warwick James acknowledged in his 1984 article, it was doubtlessly purpose-made to protect the caster en route to the exhibition.

Marianne Laetitia Collins was born on 13 September 1790 in Sydney. She was baptised at St Phillip's, Church Hill on 16 November 1791. Her mother Nancy (Ann) Yeates, a First Fleet convict, had been sentenced to death on 9 July 1785 for housebreaking and stealing 36 yards of printed cotton. Yeates was reprieved, and the sentence commuted to seven years' transportation on 17 August 1785. At the time of her conviction, she was believed to be 19 years old.

On the voyage Nancy formed a relationship with Joseph Theakston, a seaman on the *Lady Penrhyn*, and Joseph Yeates was born at sea in 1788. He was baptised at St Phillip's, Sydney on 16 March 1788. Nancy Yeates also bore David Collins a child – George Reynolds Collins was born on 26 June 1793 and baptised at St Phillip's on 23 April 1794.

In August 1796, David Collins sailed for England on the *Britannia*, returning home to his wife Maria Collins. Nancy Yeates also returned to

formed at Port Phillip, then part of New South Wales. Collins arrived there from England in October 1803 with a party of about 450 settlers, of whom some 150 were marines and civil staff, the remainder being convicts. The expedition did not call at Sydney.

Collins soon decided that Port Phillip was unsuitable for settlement and, in February 1804, the settlers began to move across Bass Strait to the Derwent River in Van Diemen's Land. After first considering and rejecting Risdon Cove, the site of an earlier settlement, Collins decided on Sullivan's Cove as the settlement site, and this became the future town of Hobart. The primitive conditions

facing the settlers on arrival are obvious. There was no accommodation other than tents, and it was not until 21 July 1804 that Collins was able to write to Lord Hobart: 'I have nearly got all my People under cover and I hope in a few days to have a storehouse completed'.²

The provisions and equipment brought from England by the expedition for the new settlement were catalogued.³ This comprehensive list details the tools and hardware provided and, while Collins complained about the poor quality of the tools, there is, needless to say, no mention of specialist silversmith's tools.

It seems extremely dubious then that, prior to 3 June 1805 (the King's

England in 1796, her sentence having expired. She sailed back to Sydney with her children in 1799. On 13 November 1800, Nancy married James John Grant, a Scottish convict and former lawyer, at St John's Parramatta. Grant died on 10 April 1812 and there appear to be no children of their union.

There is a suggestion that Marianne and George Collins may have visited their father in Hobart on one occasion prior to his death.⁴ George, then aged 14, enlisted in the Navy and was serving on HMS *Porpoise* in 1807. On 15 February 1806, Marianne Collins married Samuel Rodman Chase at St Phillip's, Sydney, the Reverend Samuel Marsden officiating. No evidence has been found that David Collins visited Sydney for the wedding or otherwise prior to his death in 1810. Chase was a mariner and shipping records show he made several trips to Tasmania in the years 1806–1810. After her 1806 marriage Marianne may indeed have accompanied her husband on such a trip and may have visited her father.

However, by this time David Collins had formed a new association with Margaret Eddington and, in the years 1807–1809, she bore him two children, Eliza and John, who were baptised on 14 January 1810 in Hobart.

Marianne Collins was only five years old when her father left for England in 1796, and she had no contact with him until at least 1805. Collins was in Hobart and Marianne was in Sydney. He was in a new domestic situation with two new children. Her involvement with her father prior to his death, on 24 March 1810, must have been fleeting in the extreme. David Collins died virtually penniless leaving his lawful wife Maria, as a Captain's widow, a pension of only £36 a year.

Sometime after her father's death, Marianne and her husband moved to Tasmania. The *Sydney Gazette*, 26 July 1826, published an extract from the *Colonial Times*, Van Diemen's Land, 23 June:

By the loss of the little Government vessel which lately sailed for Maria Island, we regret to state, that a widow and a large family are deprived of a father and husband. Mr S. Chaise [sic] was the master of that vessel. He was an experienced navigator, and had been many years in the maritime service in these Colonies. We therefore trust that the Government may afford some relief to his disconsolate wife and orphan children, as they are left wholly unprovided for.

I suggest that Marianne Chase would have had no personal knowledge of the presentation of a caster to her father in 1805. Any information would have passed to her orally from family members or friends. How often one finds that family history matters handed down by word of mouth becomes twisted or embellished!

When the caster was sent off to Paris in 1855, Mrs Chase was 64 years old and it was almost half a century since her father's death. There seems little doubt the inscription was added to the caster, and it was housed in the musk wood box, at the same time.

The shape of the caster is unusual too; it does not conform to the standard shape of an English pepper pot of the period. John Hawkins, a respected authority on Australian silver, has suggested that it is in fact a pounce pot—a container to hold sand or pounce which was sprinkled on ink to dry the writing of a quill pen. A pounce pot sounds a more likely gift to a Governor who habitually prepared correspondence and reports. The writer has never encountered a pepper pot as a presentation piece. The suggestion that it was used at a formal dinner given by a Governor on the King's birthday in 1805 sounds unlikely.

The caster has been marketed with a strong attribution to James Grove as the maker. This attribution requires an extraordinary leap of faith. Grove was included in the motley collection of



convicts who were sent to Port Phillip with the Collins expedition in 1803. He was an engraver and die sinker by trade, based in Birmingham, convicted at Warwick Assizes in March 1802 for the possession of printing plates for producing counterfeit banknotes, and sentenced to death. The sentence was commuted to transportation for life and he left England on board the transport *Calcutta* in April 1803.⁵ Grove was never a silversmith and there is no evidence of his making any articles in silver in England or Australia.

Being an educated man of some



means, Grove received special treatment both before his departure from England and on the journey to Port Phillip. He was accompanied by his wife and young son. Collins certainly befriended him and he was given his own cabin on the *Calcutta*. In Warwick James's 1984 article, he described Grove's friendship with Collins as 'lifelong'; the men had no contact before 1803 and both were dead by 1810.⁶

Grove's candidature as the maker of the caster appears to rest solely on the following propositions:

1. He carved objects in bone on board the hulk *Captivity* in Portsmouth harbour prior to his transportation.⁷
2. He carved coconut shells for Governor King, Collins and Captain Woodruff in Australia.⁸
3. He drew three pairs of charts for Captain Mertho and made several topographical drawings.⁹
4. He assisted in building Collins's house and built his own house.

5. He *engraved* the silver plate for Collins's coffin in 1810.¹⁰
6. Collins recommended his conditional pardon, referring to him as 'a very ingenious, useful and well behaved man'.¹¹

Why these matters single him out as the maker of the caster is not clear. Among the 300 convicts who arrived at the Derwent in 1804, the following trades were represented: blacksmith, locksmith, tinker, tinman, brass founder, watchmaker, plater, gilder and a silversmith, John Margets. If it is believed that the caster was made at Sullivan's Cove, why were none of these tradesmen considered as the possible maker?

Considering these various matters, the writer believes it most unlikely that the pepper pot/pounce pot was made in 1805 at the Derwent. It is even less likely that James Grove was its maker.

However, the naïve construction and style of the caster do strongly suggest an unsophisticated place of

manufacture and certainly such an object could have been made around that time in Sydney. Compare the snuff box given by Lieutenant Gray to Governor King in 1801, which was purchased by the National Museum of Australia at Sotheby's, Melbourne in early 2006. There seems little doubt that the snuff box was probably made in Sydney and it exhibits a similar crude style.

Alternatively, it is possible that the caster was made at the Cape of Good Hope, where Collins' fleet called on the way to Port Phillip in August 1803. Cape silver of the period was often unmarked. The fleet also called at Rio de Janeiro, where Collins bought (*inter alia*) a clock. The caster could have been acquired there.

There seems little doubt that the caster belonged to David Collins. The only matters subject to doubt are when, where and by whom it was made, how Collins acquired it, and what it was used for.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We are very grateful to Bonhams & Goodman for generously providing photographs of the Collins caster.

NOTES

- 1 *Australian Antique Collector* no 28 July - December 1984 p 46
- 2 *Historical Records of Australia* series III vol 1 p 247
- 3 *Ibid* pp 7-9
- 4 Mollie Gillen, *Founders of Australia* Library of Australian History 1989 p 397.
- 5 *Australian Dictionary of Biography* vol 1 p 490
- 6 'Select letters of James Grove, convict, Port Phillip and the Derwent', first published in the *Papers and Proceedings of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association* vol 8 nos 1& 2 pp 5-7.
- 7 *Ibid* p 5
- 8 *Ibid* p 8
- 9 *Ibid* p 8
- 10 *Australian Dictionary of Biography* vol. 1 p 140
- 11 *HRA* series III vol 1 p 32

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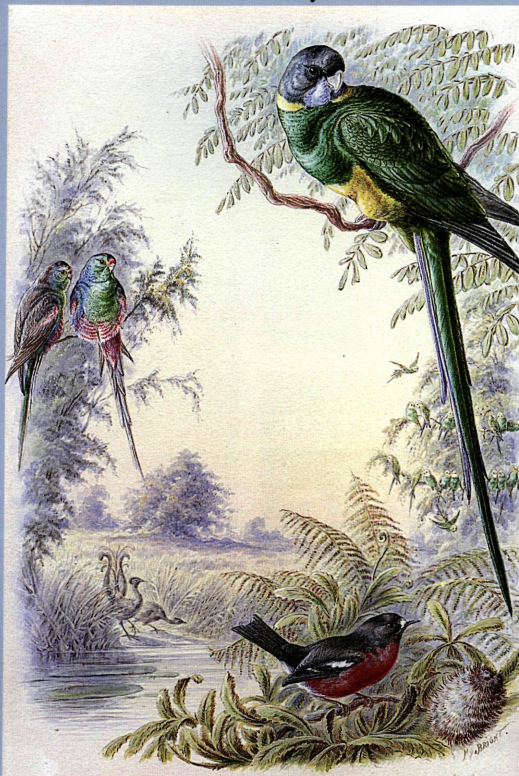


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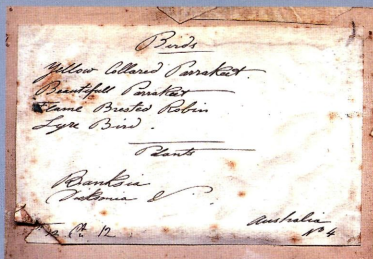
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