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AUGUST 2008 Vol. 30 No. 3





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Australiana

August 2008 Vol. 30 No. 3 ISSN 0814-107X

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Australiana, the magazine of

The Australiana Society Inc., is published in February, May, August and November and is available only by subscription.

Editor: John Wade

Subscriptions 2008

Household.....\$55

Institutions.....\$60

Life.....\$550

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Index

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All articles appearing in *Australiana* in 2008 are eligible for the Peter Walker Fine Art writing award sponsored by Peter Walker Fine Art, Adelaide.

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Design: Kylie Kennedy, JQ Pty Ltd
Printers: Peninsula Colour, Brisbane

Cover: Anonymous, Bouquet of flowers, c. 1860, gouache, glaze, 22.5 x 18.3 cm, Eliza Younghusband album (1856-65). National Library of Australia, nla.pic-vn4189024-s18

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Nature's craft: the Eliza Younghusband album

Colonial sentiment albums from the 1850s and 1860s display a particularly rich example of hitherto unexplored 19th-century Australian visual culture.

Containing a combination of drawings and prints, keepsakes and botanical specimens, typically from multiple contributors, these albums embody two-dimensional crafted collections meant for exchange and display among family and friends.¹ As a representative of this dynamic genre, the Eliza Younghusband album created between 1856 and 1865, housed at the National Library in Canberra, features a number of images that highlight the potentially sophisticated aesthetic vocabulary of sentiment albums achieved through a complex merging of art, science, and media.²



Molly Duggins

The second daughter of William Younghusband (1814–1863), a wealthy South Australian pastoralist, merchant, and politician responsible for developing riverboat trade along the Murray River, Eliza Younghusband compiled her album in the years leading up to her marriage to Henry Frederick Shipster at North Adelaide in September 1864. A gift from her mother, it is inscribed on the first page ‘Lillie Younghusband, From dear Mama, Adelaide Oct. 1856’.

Like many middle and upper class women of the period, Eliza displayed an interest in botanical illustration, conditioned in part by contemporary sociological and biological perspectives

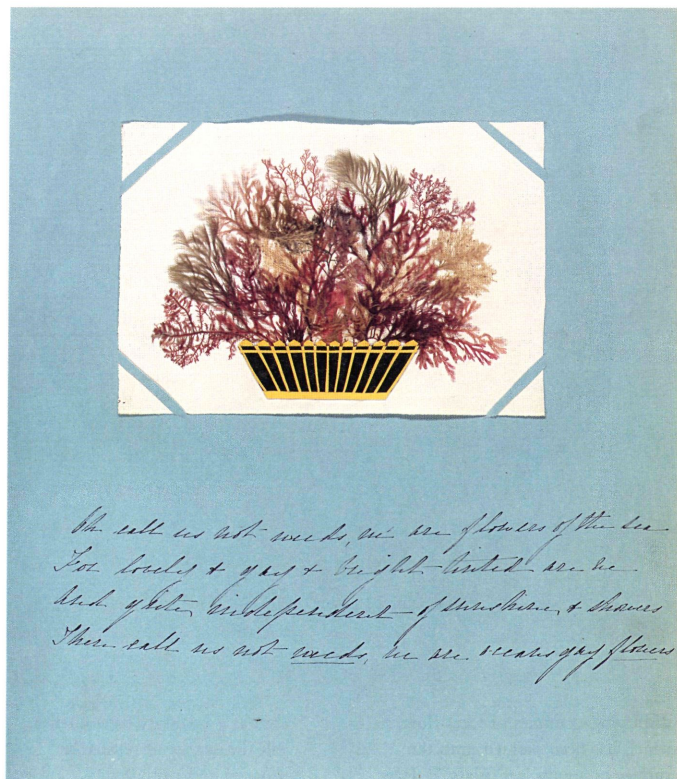
Plate 1 Anonymous, Bouquet of flowers, c. 1860, gouache, glaze, 22.5 x 18.3 cm, Eliza Younghusband album (1856–65). National Library of Australia, nla.pic-vn4189024-s18

on femininity, which advocated botany as a morally acceptable pursuit suitable to the feminine disposition. This gendered view is expressed in a letter to the editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*:

We take this opportunity to recommend to our country women a more active interest in the natural sciences generally but Botany particularly as the world of Plants... is particularly fitted, to attract the attention of the fair sex... who admire the beauties of nature, and tend them with womanly care and anxiety.³

A number of delicately rendered floral compositions in Younghusband's album allude to the strong amateur tradition of flower painting in colonial Australia, in which artists such as Fanny Anne Charsley, Fanny and Harriet de Mole, and Harriet and Helena Scott, took up the brush as a socially-sanctioned pastime to ward off the *ennui* of a strange and empty land, to capture its exotic flora on the page, and to give form to their nostalgic memories of the lush foliage of their homeland (plate 1).⁴ These botanical watercolours, based on careful observation and accurate depiction, suggest the close interrelationship that existed between art and botany during this period before the standardisation of scientific disciplines in the latter half of the 19th century.

The artistic conventions that governed such compositions influenced the decorative arrangements of natural specimens that soon infiltrated album pages in the era of popular collecting, in which colonial Australia played a seminal role. Younghusband's album contains a number of examples of this trend, a notable illustration of which is a seaweed collage delicately arranged to resemble a bouquet of ocean flowers in a decorative green and yellow panelled cut-out paper basket (plate 2). The stylistic antecedents for such



imagery are firmly based within the visual culture of popular natural history in Victorian Britain; namely, the taste-decreed vogue for decoratively displayed specimens, particularly shells, seaweed, and ferns, which developed out of the tradition of grotto-work and its associations with Romanticism and the Gothic Revival.

Such aesthetic trends have been largely ignored in academic and market discourse, yet are worthy of study in their subtle appropriation and amalgamation of the dominant scientific, artistic, and exhibitionary movements of the era.⁵ They represent an intriguing manifestation of cultural digestion at the vernacular level.

Within a colonial context, however, the aestheticisation of nature in album imagery takes on new meaning. Not only does it represent an appropriation and self-conscious construction of the

Plate 2 Anonymous, Pressed seaweed collage in a yellow and green paper basket, c. 1865, seaweed, coloured paper, 9 x 13.2 cm, Eliza Younghusband album (1856-65), National Library of Australia, nla.pic-vn4189024-s29

natural environment, but it also suggests the colonising impulses of possession and subjugation on a more personal level. As such, it becomes a crafted form of propaganda with civilising and defining functions meant for exhibition at the heart of gentrified society: the drawing room. There, decontextualised and domesticated on the album page, nature is refashioned into a sanitised and beautified version of itself, meant to convey the perfect union of civilisation and the native environment.

In the Eliza Younghusband album, one image that demonstrates this type of aestheticising approach is an oil painting of a verdant lake scene



Plate 3 Anonymous, Lake scene on a gum leaf, c. 1860, oil on a gum leaf, 9.5 x 9.6 cm, Eliza Younghusband album (1856-65). National Library of Australia, nla.pic-vn4189024-s11

displaying examples of local flora, which has been painted onto the surface of a gum leaf (plate 3). Here, the artist has inscribed a leaf, plucked from nature, with the civilising strokes of a paintbrush dipped in a medium which encapsulates the European high art tradition. The manipulated leaf becomes the subject, canvas, and frame in a complex relationship in which it represents both an actual part and the symbolic whole of the Australian bush. Within the image, nature has been circumscribed, contained and then decoratively enhanced and preserved for display.

Mounted in the centre of a blank page, the composition visually alludes to the taxonomic presentation of botanical specimens, the collection of which within the colonial environment was inextricably linked to the progress of empire. As stressed in the *Tasmanian Journal of Natural Science* in 1842:

As colonisation enlarges the territory of any civilised people, so

also, as a necessary consequence, will the empire of science be widened and cultivated.⁶

The colonial contribution to the advancement of scientific knowledge centred upon the collection and cataloguing of new specimens, in which Australia was bountiful. Albums from the period serve as a testament to this botanical collecting craze shadowed with imperial undertones, with specimens of Australian flora commonly featuring in their visual programs.

The lake scene in Younghusband's album is no exception: in appropriating a native leaf, the artist subscribes to a fundamental colonial agenda. However, this botanical composition was not created for the scientific sphere, but for limited public display within the domestic realm. In this sense, the manipulation of natural materials serves the purpose of domesticating and civilising nature, rather than purely documenting it.

This form of manipulation is also apparent in another composition that

features watercolour cut-outs of flowers and a butterfly on a pressed leaf, thus combining the traditional genre of flower painting with collage (plate 4). In terms of its technical approach, collage mirrors the colonial process; in this composition, the flowers and butterflies have been separated from their original papery confines as if plucked and removed from nature. These artificial specimens have then been arranged to create a decorative effect, transforming the significance of the leaf support from a fragment of captured nature into a drawing room decoration.

With these aesthetic transformations, the artists in the Younghusband album are contributing to a new type of collective imagery associated with the Australian landscape. Long before the Australian Impressionists created an iconic sunny southern land in their painting, colonial album compilers and contributors were experimenting with constructed images that were uniquely Australian and semi-idealised in their conscious embellishment of the natural environment.

This happened off the page as well. In his detailed account of the launch of the barge *Eureka* on the Murray River in August 1853, journalist James Allen Jr describes the decorative profusion of flowers that adorned the deck of the barge for the inaugural ceremony in which Eliza Younghusband played a ritual role:

The ceremony of christening was performed by Miss Eliza Younghusband, who wore a wreath of pretty native flowers in her hair, and who altogether presented a most interesting appearance.⁷

According to Allen, the ladies present added immensely to the decorative appeal of the vessel and it is possible to consider Younghusband's role

Plate 4 Anonymous, Collage of flowers and a butterfly on a leaf, c. 1860, watercolour cut-outs on a pressed leaf, 16.4 x 12.4 cm, Eliza Younghusband album (1856-65), National Library of Australia, nla.pic-vn4189024-s35

as that of a performer who embellished her own figure with appropriated native flora to create an image of an idealised Australian maiden.⁸

As part of the public domain, the images in Eliza Younghusband's album as well as her ceremonial performance contributed to a nascent genre of national imagery inspired by the wondrous variety and uniqueness of Australian nature. Composite creations, such images metaphorically allude to the mosaic nature of a burgeoning colonial society characterised by a disparate synergy, just as their creators' incorporation of, and experimentation with, diverse and novel media reflect the colonial urge for conquest and discovery.

Molly Duggins is a PhD candidate at Sydney University where she is pursuing a degree in art history. Her research interests include 19th-century albums and the collage aesthetic within 19th-century visual culture. She can be contacted by email at mdug3194@usyd.edu.au



NOTES

- 1 The scrapbook and commonplace book are variant terms used to describe the category of albums under discussion. The practice of assembling such albums most likely developed in England and Germany towards the end of the 18th century.
- 2 Album of Miss Eliza Younghusband (c. 1840-?), South Australia, 1856-1865, National Library of Australia.
- 3 W. Woolls (1814-93), letter to the editor, *Sydney Morning Herald*, n.d., as quoted in Sara Maroske, "The Whole Great Continent as a Present": Nineteenth-Century Australian Women Workers in Science', in Farley Kelly, (ed.), *On the Edge of Discovery*, University of Melbourne Press, Melbourne, 1993, p. 24.
- 4 On colonial women botanical artists, see the introduction in Joan Kerr, *The Dictionary of Australian Artists: Painters, Sketchers, Photographers and Engravers to 1870*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1992.
- 5 One notable exception is the work of David Elliston Allen, who discusses the fern trend in his book, *The Victorian Fern Craze: A History of Pteridomania*, Hutchinson & Co., London, 1969. See also Carol Armstrong and Catherine De Zegher, (eds.), *Ocean Flowers: Impressions from Nature*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2004.
- 6 Quoted in Judith Johnston, 'The Very Poetry of Frogs: Louisa Anne Meredith in Australia', *Natural Eloquence: Women Reinscribe Science*, Barbara Gates and Ann B. Shteir, (eds.), University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1997, p. 101.
- 7 James Allen, Jr, *Journal of an experimental trip by the 'Lady Augusta' on the River Murrumbidgee*, C.G.E. Platts, Adelaide, 1853, (Australian facsimile editions; 202), National Library of Australia, accessed electronically at <http://users.esc.net.au/~pereilly/ladya.htm>, Peter J. Reilly, 1995, 12 May 2007.
- 8 A thorough analysis of performance and nationalism in colonial Australia can be found in Anita Callaway, *Visual Ephemeris: Theatrical Art in Nineteenth-century Australia*, University of NSW Press, Sydney, 2000.

Conway Weston Hart: little-known colonial artist who made his mark

We do not know when or where he was born, when or where he died, but we do know that several charming portraits painted in oils are attributed to Conway Weston Hart, both in Tasmania and later in Victoria. They date to circa 1850-1861, the decade we know with certainty he was working in Australia, possibly arriving as rumours of gold discoveries circulated more widely. Hart then vanishes from local records; however evidence of a subsequent sojourn to Calcutta, India has emerged.¹

Below left: Conway Hart (attributed), Australia, active 1850s, *Portrait of Mrs Elizabeth Allport* (1835-1925), unsigned and undated, c. 1856, oil on canvas, in contemporary gilt frame, 58.8 x 43.5 cm. Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, State Library of Tasmania, Hobart (portrait 1)

Below right: Conway Hart (attributed), Australia, active 1850s, *Portrait of Mrs Mary Morton Allport* (1806-1895), unsigned and undated, c. 1855, oil on canvas, in contemporary gilt frame, 122.5 x 95.5 cm. Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, State Library of Tasmania, Hobart (portrait 2)





Above: Conway Hart, Australia, active 1850s, *Portrait of Elizabeth Selab Miller*,
c. 1855 Hobart, oil on canvas, 34.5 x 25.5 cm (sight). M.J.M.
Carter AO Collection 2006, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide (portrait 3)

Hart didn't enjoy critical acclaim during his relatively brief stint in the Australian colonies, rather the brutal opposite. What he undeniably achieved, however, was gaining the confidence of a small circle of the elite gentlemen and gentlewomen of his day, from whom he gained commissions to paint their likenesses.

Works attributed to him reveal that his clientele included dignitaries, politicians, members of the judiciary and their wives – standard fare for a recently arrived artisan in the Port Phillip settlement and clearly an indication he was rubbing shoulders with first-to-second generation settlers in and around Melbourne.

During 1855-1856, Hart received £300 in lieu of a commission to paint a massive 9-foot (2.74 m) canvas of Sir Richard Dry, speaker of the Tasmanian Legislative Council,² an indication perhaps of some doggedness on his behalf.

The ultimate impetus forcing Hart's departure from Australia may have been ongoing scathing reviews directed towards his portraits, such as one found in the *Journal of Australasia* subsequent to the 1858 Victorian Society of Fine Arts Exhibition. The reviewer wrote

Mr Conway Hart has a very clever trick – and the trick is – of colouring; but his pictures are positively painful to contemplate, from the utter absence of anything like drawing. We can only recommend Mr Hart

prosecute a severe course of study in figure drawing.³

Those reviews appear not only to be grossly insensitive (as was apparently the norm), but to some extent untrue.

Surviving works attributed to Hart number less than a dozen oil paintings and while unsigned, continue to be housed within their original and ornate gilt frames. Most of his known output is now held publicly.

A number and variety of telltale signs allow Conway Weston Hart's handiwork to be identified with reasonable certainty. Characteristics common to the five Hart portraits illustrated include:

Fur-lined cloaks are arranged around the sitters in portraits 2 and 4, and just behind the sitter's right hand in portrait 5, possibly resting on a chaise longue which Emily Mackenzie herself is softly leaning on.

Portraits 2, 3, 4 and 5 are all posing the same way, in the body dexter position, the whole stance facing our left. Only portrait 1 is body sinister, facing our right.

Bands of luscious pearls adorn the wrists in Portraits 3, 4 and 5.

Glittering gold jewellery either on the fingers, wrists and/or around the necks (extending to the bust line) in Portraits 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Richly coloured drapery is used as a backdrop in Portraits 2, 4 and 5.

A solid structure such as a classical column, a mantelpiece or garden retaining wall can be observed in Portraits 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Tassels hang suspended in the background of Portraits 3 and 4.

Creeping vines or foliage sneak into view in Portraits 2, 3 and 5.

Conway Hart, Australia, active 1850s, *Portrait of Mrs John Pinney Bear*, mid 1850s Melbourne, oil on canvas, 57.5 x 42.5 cm. Gift of the Friends of the Art Gallery of South Australia on the occasion of the re-opening of the Gallery 1996, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide (portrait 4)



All gilt frames can be identified as made in the Hobart workshop of Robin Lloyd Hood (1828–1916) or his father, Robin Vaughan Hood (1802–1888).⁴ Frames surrounding Portraits 1 and 4 are identical, as are the smaller frames pictured in Portraits 3 and 5.

While differing in shape, green vases exist in Portraits 2 and 4, both interior views.

Hart has painted delightful flowers in Portraits 1, 2, 3 and 4.

At least one hand is rather poorly rendered in Portraits 1, 3 and 5.

Emily Mackenzie's portrait is accompanied by extensive biographical information, and the back of the canvas has further information affixed by a friend of Emily's daughter, Evelyn Beatrice Mackenzie. The friend donated Mackenzie family voyage diaries to the National Gallery in Canberra; copies of these diaries remain with the portrait. This note asserts that the Mackenzies were one of the pioneering families who arrived in Melbourne during 1837 and 1841.

Emily Cordelia Mackenzie married John Mackenzie, who is listed in the 1853 *Port Phillip Directory* as a Commission Agent at 72 Queen Street; and in the 1861 *Sands, Kenny & Co's Melbourne Directory* as a warehouseman at 32 Elizabeth Street Melbourne for Younghusband & Co. Conroy (sic) Hart is listed in the same 1861 directory at 60 Elizabeth Street. By 1874, John Mackenzie is listed as a real estate agent, at 88 Collins Street Melbourne.⁵

John Mackenzie also achieves an entry in Paul de Serville's text in relation to the so-called upper class residing in Victoria during the period 1850–1880.⁶

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author acknowledges research in relation to C.W. Hart undertaken by Peter Walker of Peter Walker Fine Art Adelaide, included above.

Andrew Morris is a Victorian collector who specialises in colonial paintings and banknotes



NOTES

- 1 Referring to contents of a media release issued by the City of Ballarat, dated 4 January 2007, in relation to a donation of a pair of Conway Hart oil portraits to the Ballarat Fine Art Gallery. The portraits are of goldfields Police Magistrate Charles Prendergast Hackett and his wife Frances Ann Hackett (nee Day). Hackett was meant to read the Riot Act to angry diggers who burned down Bentley's Eureka Hotel, one of the events leading up to the Eureka Stockade rebellion. In addition, the assertion that Hart travelled to India post-1861 is supported by a gift to the National Library of Scotland during 1999–2000, described as '47 albumen prints by Schwarzschild and Conway Hart of Calcutta, January 1863.'
- 2 Joan Kerr (editor) *The Dictionary of Australian Artists - Painters, Sketchers, Photographers and Engravers to 1870*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne 1992, p. 349. See the Dictionary of

Conway Hart, Australia, active 1850s, *Portrait of Mrs Emily Cordelia Mackenzie* (1826–1876), unsigned and undated, c. 1850, oil on canvas, in contemporary gilt frame, 36.0 x 27.0 cm. Private collection (portrait 5)

Australia Artists Online www.daao.org.au for a more recent biography of Hart.

- 3 *Ibid* p 350
- 4 The frame surrounding Conway Hart's massive painting of Sir Richard Dry, 1856, is attributed to Robin Lloyd Hood as illustrated in Therese Mulford *Tasmanian Framemakers 1830-1930 a Dictionary*, Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery, Launceston 1997, p. 79.
- 5 *Port Phillip Directory* 1853 p 88. Sands, Kenny & Co's *Commercial and General Melbourne Directory for 1861* p 244 & 300. Sands & McDougall *Melbourne and Suburbs Directory for 1874* p 21
- 6 Paul de Serville *Pounds and Pedigrees The Upper Class in Victoria 1850-80*, Oxford University Press, p. 417

Ruth Simon (1924–2008)

John Hawkins

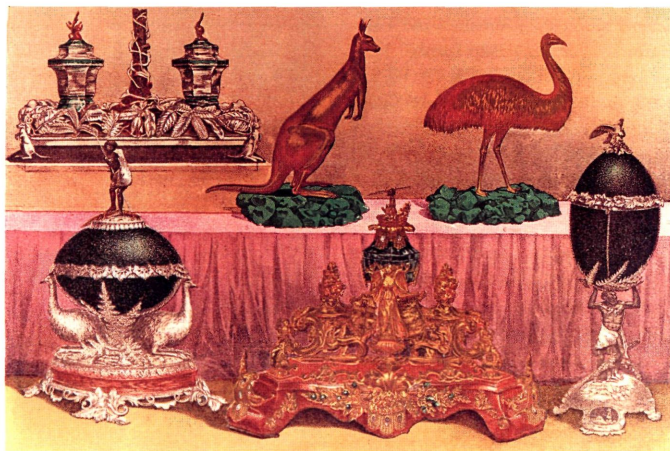
I had the pleasure of knowing Ruth Simon as both a friend and client for forty years. Ruth first came to my house, Tarella, in Sydney in 1969 to purchase the silver and gold inkwell made by Julius Hogarth for showing at the London International Exhibition of 1862 and illustrated in Waring's *Masterpieces of Industrial Art and Sculpture*. I had purchased this inkwell from the leading dealer Mallet in London for a very high price as an Australian curiosity; despite this Ruth immediately agreed to the purchase and a long and happy association began.

Living in Bellevue Hill, Ruth moved in the 1970s to a beautiful house in Point Piper created in the elegant neo-Georgian style by the Sydney architect Espie Dods from an existing home. He fitted the house with cedar period doors and created rooms to house her ever-expanding collections of Australian decorative arts.

Advised by Bill Bradshaw, Ruth acquired two key items of casuarina veneered furniture by Lawrence Butler of Sydney, made before 1820. Bill also supplied her with the Gother Mann work table from Greenwich House and was to be a major influence in the formation of her Australian furniture collection.

In England, Paul Kenny discovered for her what was probably Governor Brisbane's Oatley clock, the finest example still in private hands. This was complemented by the Sydney-made ivory cased and geared, gold-mounted watch by Marcus Benjamin for Hardy Brothers, exhibited at the Chicago Exhibition of 1893 which I had purchased from Max Kerry, a clock and watch dealer in Melbourne.

With her interest in breeding and showing dogs, Ruth was the obvious candidate for the Alexander Dick silver dog collar presented to 'Tiger' for



killing 20 rats in 2 minutes 2 seconds in 1834. The journalist David McNicoll, then working for Kerry Packer at Consolidated Press, had brought the collar to my attention. Tiger's collar was a present to Ruth from Marion, her daughter, who shared her interest in breeding and showing dogs. Marion and Ruth travelled to Russia and Hungary in 1976 looking for suitable sires for their successful Arab horse breeding stud, Ruth demanding to be taken as protection in case of abduction.

On a visit to New York, Ruth discovered a superb unmarked figure in gold of an Aborigine mounted on a polished section of an elephant's tooth, but she was, because of the tooth, unsure of its authenticity. On her return and after consultation we decided to acquire the figure but it had been sold. It later reappeared in London with David Lavender whose areas of expertise in jewellery, miniatures and silver has given him a leading presence in these fields for nearly 60 years. David, a long time friend, sold me the figure and it finally joined the Simon Collection, some five years after its first sighting and thereby justifying her first instincts. Her collection of Australian gold jewellery was

second to none, with a Hogarth & Erichsen gold brooch in its original case and a fine gold link bracelet by the same makers.

When we were together at a Grosvenor House fair in London, Ruth spotted a Robin Hood Huon pine Tasmanian work table being used as decoration on an art dealer's stand. I had completely missed it, but she was blessed with that sure eye, for she knew exactly what she was looking for and at.

A joint interest in New Zealand greenstone goldfields jewellery saw us compete over many years in a friendly and pleasurable way. With a branch of the family business in New Zealand, her interest in New Zealand furniture, particularly by the Auckland cabinet-maker Anton Seuffert, developed.

Over the years she put together the finest collection of New Zealand furniture in private hands, the key parts of which have been retained by the family. Always interested in improving her collection she sold her first Seuffert desk, which I had purchased at the Woburn Abbey Antique Centre for £1,000, and replaced it with the magnificent example still in her collection – all this before 1975. She was a true pioneer in the field.

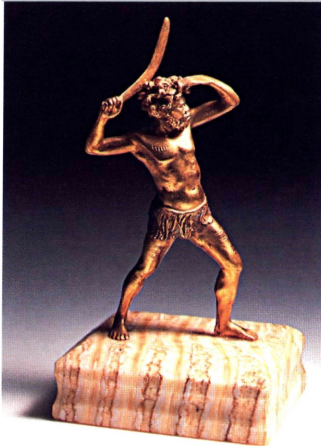
On the occasion of their golden wedding anniversary, Peter, her husband, companion and friend gave her the 1874 Geelong Gold Cup made by Edward Fischer. As a result, the first of the three Australian gold cups previously given an export licence by the Australian Federal Government returned to Australia.

With an early interest in Australian pottery, particularly Lithgow, her horizons spread to encompass all facets of ceramics with Australian connections: Worcester china painted by Ellis Rowan, Moorcroft and Doulton. From Richard Dennis in London she purchased the 1939 Exhibition Moorcroft waratah vase and carried it home on the plane so as to prevent any possibility of damage. Advised by Alan Landis, her ceramic collection was encyclopedic, for she was always on the lookout for important Australiana or Australian ceramics to add to her collection.

I remember when the series of S T Gill watercolours of the interior of wool broker Henri Noufflard's house in Bligh Street, Sydney, came up for sale at Sotheby's Melbourne in 1983. It was agreed that I should act for her in the sale. Before the mobile telephone, it was those present in the saleroom who purchased, and one could view the opposition. This made the event so much more fun. It was an expensive night but the battle was won and much to her delight another key historical item joined the collection. She promptly lent them to Elizabeth Bay House for a publication and exhibition.

She will be remembered for her group of Johnston family portraits – of Esther Julian the Jewish convict girl of 15, who was given protection by Colonel George Johnston, the first European ashore at Port Jackson, and overthrower of Governor Bligh, by whom she had Julia and Robert and five other children before marrying him in 1814. These four portraits comprise a most important group of colonial Australian family portraits.

The collection contained many other important objects, from the Governor Macquarie chest (now in the State Library



of NSW) to the Robert Prenzel longcase clock, but its real strength was its diversity and its reflection on European settlement of Australia for over 200 years. David Cloonan catalogued the collection over ten years ago and it then included over 1,500 items. This catalogue, in an edition of three copies, will be one of the great collectors' items of the future.

A generous lender to important exhibitions, she was a support to me when, with Cherry Jackaman and the National Trust (NSW), we put together the pioneer *Australian Silver* exhibition at Lindsay on Darling Point in 1973. Soon after the family generously funded the rewiring of Lindsay. Together with Kevin Fahy, David Ell and the National Trust, she was the backbone of the first general



Australiana exhibition, *First Fleet to Federation*, in 1976.

It was with this spirit of cooperation and enthusiasm for the subject that she welcomed anyone or any group with similar interests to her last home on the waterfront at Point Piper. You were sure of a warm welcome and a magnificent view over Sydney Harbour. She will be sadly missed by her many, many friends and admirers, for there will never be another Ruth Simon.

Ruth is survived by her husband Peter Simon AM, daughter Marion, three grandchildren and seven great grandchildren, being the ninth generation on their grandmother's side of this remarkable Australian family.

Whalebone arbours in Tasmanian gardens



Whaling was Australia's first export industry and, while whales were sought mainly to boil down their flesh to make oil for lighting, there was a wide range of by-products. While sailor's scrimshaw on teeth and pan bones is well known, in Tasmania whalebone was used sometimes to create garden ornaments.

Margaret Bayley c. 1890 in front of a sperm whale jawbone, Runnymede, New Town, Tasmania. Albumen paper print. Runnymede Collection RDE 2003Ph 4 62 1 w[1]. Reproduced by permission of the National Trust of Australia (Tasmania)

Warwick Oakman

In the process of researching what may have a precedent for inclusion in a 19th-century Tasmanian garden, as well as plants, invariably questions of garden ornaments and structures arise. It soon became obvious that 19th century examples with a local provenance were very rare. Along the way, I was told idly in passing 'Oh, but Lady Franklin had whalebone arbours'. A hunt through the reprints of her diaries didn't help validate this comment. While excellent texts have been written on the whaling

industry in Tasmania, nothing appears to have survived concerning its impact on Tasmanian gardens. It struck as a wonderfully loopy Victorian and vernacular use of this once common by-product of the whaling port of Hobart.

Eventually, two wonderful images were found accidentally, and a forgotten aspect of Tasmanian colonial gardens came to the surface once again.

In the first image, taken c. 1890, the young Harriet Bayley stands with welcoming smile, entreating us to enter her cubby house, beneath the jawbone, including teeth, of a sperm whale.

Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* was a sperm whale, which measures up to 18m in length and is the largest living mammal.

This image is taken in front of her home *Runnymede* on the shore of New Town Bay in the Derwent Estuary. *Runnymede* was the home from 1864 of the leading whaling family of Hobart. The Bayleys lived at *Runnymede* until 1963, and continued their whale-fishing until the end of the 19th century, long after the decline of the practice around the mid 19th century, when kerosene became a substitute fuel for whale oil. Nothing remains today of this arbour, though archaeology may yet uncover it.



The Garden at Boa Vista, New Town, c. 1880 (now demolished). Reproduced by courtesy of the Archives Office of Tasmania

Runnymede also sported, above this arbour, striped banks of red and white geraniums, the pennant colours of the Bayley ships and whalers.

The sperm whale *Physeter macrocephalus* is the largest of the tooth whales and the most valuable of the species hunted by 19th-century whalers. In 1828, it was worth two and a half times¹ that of the Southern Right Whale, *Eubalaena australis*, also known as the black whale, which was widely slaughtered by the bay whalers of the Derwent Estuary and coastal Tasmania.

The jawbone has been planted vertically in the ground after being dragged up from the bay. It would have been seen as a rare trophy, the intact teeth more usually removed for working into scrimshaw.

The second image is a much less rickety affair, confidently inserted into the gardenesque front of *Boa Vista*, New Town. The image, c. 1880, shows the southern elevation of the grandest colonial house to be built in Hobart, facing Hobart on the ridge of New Town. *Boa Vista* was built about 1830

as the home of Colonial Surgeon Dr James Scott (1790–1837). Scott was interested in natural history, art, architecture and wrote extensively on his findings. Dr Scott was also the patron of convict artist William Buelow Gould, commissioning the famous *Book of Fish* in 1831–32, now in the Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, Hobart.

Whether the artfully planted bones date from Scott's time or later is now unknown. The *Boa Vista* arbour was formed of the jaw-bones of the Southern Right Whale, a whale fed via a series of balleen 'harps' that sifted krill and plankton. The baleen was removed and used for upholstery webbing and women's corsets in the 19th century. The whale is without teeth and the jawbones are broader. It is a nice contrasting use of species.

What becomes apparent is how much more inventive and home-spun Hobart gardens were, and that the themes were international via the whaling trade links. The only surviving examples of whalebone

garden art from the 19th century that I have been able to find are in Monterey, southern California. Here the headquarters of the Old Monterey Whaling Company, built in 1855, still sports a front walkway made entirely of whale vertebrae. The bone was cut into diamond patterns, while the edges to the paths are made of abalone shells. How wonderful it would be to see some of these lost vernacular garden trimmings reconstructed in such places as Arthur's Circus, in Hobart's Battery Point – cottages which are the former homes of whalers and merchant seamen.

Taking whalebones from carcasses washed up is now illegal without a scavenger's licence, and Parks & Wildlife officials must now inspect any whale products by prior to sale to ensure that they are old collected specimens. However, enough old relics must exist throughout Tasmania for someone to remake another whalebone arbour. It is a plangent reminder of the 19th century's ghastly approach to the Gods of the Sea, the whales.

Colonial furniture: provenance and its pitfalls

The task of establishing provenance can be very difficult, and most providers of provenance do so in good faith. But good faith is not always enough. The present article examines current practices in relation to providing provenance and concludes that some of them are less than satisfactory. The providing of provenance could be significantly improved without any disruption to the buying and selling process. All that is necessary is to state the known facts, not to draw conclusions without stating the facts on which they are based, and to take care not to overstate the significance of the facts that are disclosed. That would not only help to increase knowledge and understanding, but it would add to confidence in the market and to the respect in which the industry is held.

David St L Kelly¹

INTRODUCTION

The term 'provenance' has been defined by the Heritage Collections Council as 'a documented history of an object's existence, ownership and use'.²

Consequently, it includes facts relating to an item's maker and the date when it was made. 'Provenance' might be interpreted as including information about the general style of an item and any particular design on

which it appears to have been based. It might even include other reasons for 'attributing' the piece to a particular maker, such as similarities with other pieces that are known to have been made by that person. But that is not the meaning normally ascribed to the term. In this article, 'provenance' is limited to *information that relates directly to the particular item itself*, and not to other factors from which one might be able to make inferences concerning its origins or other associations.

Provenance is most likely to be important to collectors of colonial furniture, whether individuals or public institutions.³ It is often provided by the

writers of books and articles dealing with specific items of colonial furniture. But its main importance is in the context of a sale of colonial furniture, whether by an auction house, a dealer or a private vendor.

Other things being equal, provenance enhances the value of an item.⁴ It may do so in a variety of ways.

- Firstly, it can help in identifying the person who made the item, and even the date when it was made. An item made by a well-known furniture-maker is likely to be considerably more valuable than a similar item whose maker is unknown. Other things being equal, the earlier an item is, the more valuable it is likely to be.

- Secondly, it can help in establishing that the maker of the item, though *not* specifically identifiable, was one of a group of people of special historical interest, such as the convicts transported to one of the colonies.⁵ That special *historical connection increases the value of the item*.

- Thirdly, it can help in establishing a close link to a famous person, event or place. An item that is associated with a famous person or event is likely to be considerably more valuable than a similar item without that attraction. So, the Governor King casuarina secretaire bookcase,⁶ the Governor Macquarie rose mahogany 'Strathallan' and Dixon Galleries cabinets⁷, the Dorothea Mackellar cedar breakfront bookcase⁸, the Henry Parkes cedar secretaire⁹, the Alfred Hill cedar centre table¹⁰ and the Perth 'Foundation Tree' casuarina work box,¹¹ are made even more valuable (though most of them will

never come up for sale) by their connections with the relevant people and events.

In some cases, the increase in value produced by this type of association with a famous person or event is staggering, even in the case of relatively modern and quite unexceptional items. For example, a 20th-century standard rocking chair once owned by President John F Kennedy fetched US\$442,500 at Sotheby's Jackie Onassis auction in New York in April 1996. A second realised US\$332,000 at a Guernsey's auction in March 1998. A third realised US\$96,000 at a Sotheby's auction in New York in February 2005. But for the Kennedy connection, these chairs would have been sold for only a tiny percentage of the figures realised.

- Fourthly, the further back one can establish the history of an item, the less the risk that the item is a partial or total fake, or a reproduction.¹² If one can establish that the history of an item goes back before, say, the 1980s, the risk that the item is a fake is significantly reduced, since the faking of colonial furniture was less common before the 1980s than it has been since. Similarly, the further back one can establish an item's history, the less the risk that it is a later reproduction rather than a colonial or early colonial item.

- Fifthly, even if the provenance of an item does not go back more than a few years, it may provide a buyer with some comfort about the authenticity of the item. If the provenance shows that the item is or was owned by a respected institution or collector,¹³ or sold previously by a reputable auction house or dealer, or exhibited at a significant exhibition, or was for sale at a significant fair (eg. an AADA fair, where items are scrutinised by experts before being accepted for inclusion), a buyer may feel more confident of the item's authenticity than he or she would have felt in the absence of that information.¹⁴

- Sixthly, the further back one can establish the history of an item, the less

the risk that it belongs to someone other than the vendor. If an item is stolen and then sold, whether by the thief or an innocent third party, the buyer does not normally obtain a good title.¹⁵ There are exceptions in some jurisdictions¹⁶, such as sale in *market overt* (eg, sale from a shop; and, possibly, sale at a public auction), but they need not detain us here.

TYPES OF PROVENANCE INFORMATION

Provenance information is either documentary or oral. The former is generally preferred to the latter mainly because it is more likely to be reliable.

DOCUMENTARY INFORMATION

For present purposes, 'documentary information' includes writing, paintings, sketches, drawings, photographs and other visual images. 'Writing' includes any mark on or in an item of furniture that helps to identify its maker, its date of manufacture, or its original, or a later, owner. It also includes any other written information concerning the item, whatever its form.

Documentary information can be classified in various ways. The most useful for my purposes is into internal information and external information. Internal information is information contained on or in the relevant item. External information means all other information about the item.

'INTERNAL' DOCUMENTARY INFORMATION

In most cases, detailed provenance information is concerned with establishing the identity of the maker¹⁷ of an item, or a line of ownership back as far as possible towards its original owner.

The maker

In some cases, the item itself bears a maker's 'standard', or 'trade', mark¹⁸ or label¹⁹. These were rarely used by

furniture-makers until the second quarter of the 19th century.²⁰ Even then, they were used by only a limited number of furniture-makers. Many marks and labels have been found on colonial furniture.²¹ Among the more important ones are:

NSW: James Oatley, John Clarke Jr, John Hill Jr, Edward Hunt, Charles North Hunt, Joseph Sly, Andrew Lenehan and Henry Woolley

VDL/Tas: King's Yard, Hobart,²² William Hamilton, James Whitesides and Joseph Woolley

Qld: John Carey and John Mason

SA: George Debney, Peter Gay, Mayfield & Co, John Olding & Co
Vic: George Thwaites, Alcock & Co,²³ Wallach Bros and W H Rocke & Co.

Even so, the vast majority of items of colonial furniture, particularly those made in the country, do not carry a maker's mark or label. But there may be other indications on an item as to its maker.

Some items of colonial furniture carry pen or pencil names or signatures or initials. In the absence of a specific claim or additional evidence²⁴, it cannot be assumed that a name, signature or initial is the maker's.²⁵ First, it may be that of a contributor to the final product, such as a carver,²⁶ a painter,²⁷ a French polisher,²⁸ a tapestry worker,²⁹ a woolworker,³⁰ a metalworker or a glass supplier.³¹ Second, it could be that of an owner, a carrier, a repairer, a retailer³² or even a pawnbroker. However, many pen or pencil inscriptions name the relevant person as the maker. In the case of colonial items made in South Australia by German immigrants, this form of identification appears to have been relatively common.³³ Elsewhere, it was rather less common. Nonetheless, examples exist. They include the following.

- The famous casuarina specimen cabinet, now held at Old Government House, Parramatta, has a pencil inscription under the drawer: 'James Packer Sydney New South Wales an a Prentice.'³⁴ Packer

is understood to have been an apprentice to the famous, but elusive, early Sydney furniture-maker, Lawrence Butler.

- An early cedar and native cherry desk c 1835 bears a pencil inscription naming its makers as George Wilkin and Robert Graham.³⁵
- A musk and huon pine work table, 1844, has an inscription identifying Francis Ben Dale of Sydney as its maker.³⁶
- A cedar chest of drawers c1845 has an inscription on its base: 'H Linn, Maker, Greenside'.³⁷
- A cedar slope front desk with the mark 'AJ', which has been taken to refer to Andrew Johnson, a person who arrived in Sydney in 1802 and settled on the Hawkesbury, where he died in 1849.³⁸
- The Wallalong cedar breakfront bookcase, 1863-4, contains three pencil inscriptions by Edwin Pegg, an employee of John Hill and Co, indicating that it was made by that firm.³⁹
- An occasional table of cedar and various native woods c 1865, now held by the Australiana Fund, was found to contain within its column a piece of sandpaper with the name of the Brisbane furniture-maker, Peter Thomle, on it.⁴⁰
- A cedar chest of drawers c1846 is marked in ink with the name 'Osborn's Cabinet Manufactory'.⁴¹

Much less commonly, an item bears a special plaque which, while probably not that of the maker, nonetheless records the name.⁴² One example is a jewel cabinet presented by the National Agricultural and Industrial Association of Queensland to the famous colonial entrepreneur Jules Joubert, and bearing a silver plaque naming Peter Thomle, the Brisbane furniture-maker, as its maker.⁴³

Line of ownership

Information concerning a line of ownership of the item back as far as possible towards its original owner is

the second main type of provenance. In most cases, identifying the original owner is more valuable than identifying a later owner. However, that is not necessarily so when the later owner is a famous person. The value of the identifying information depends on its age. A contemporaneous note is obviously preferable to a considerably later one, since the latter may well be based on family tradition rather than personal knowledge.

One clear indication of ownership of an early item is an impressed broad arrow mark on it. That mark (sometimes with a 'BO' Board of Ordnance or British Ordnance mark as well) indicates that the item was owned at some stage by the Crown.⁴⁴ The practice was apparently introduced in England by Henry Sydney, Master of Ordnance to William and Mary, in the late 17th century, and was famously used in Massachusetts to identify trees requisitioned by the Crown for naval masts – a significant source of anger among the colonists.

Some people assume that a broad arrow indicates that the item was made by convicts. That is not necessarily so. True, convicts wore clothes marked with broad arrows. But that was because the clothes were owned by the Crown, not because they were made by convicts. Even so, a broad arrow mark on a very early item certainly raises the possibility that it was made by convicts. Considerable furniture was made during the early years of colonisation in the Crown lumberyards in Sydney, Hobart, Brisbane and a number of other centres. During those years, there were no free artisan furniture-makers.⁴⁵ However, furniture-makers are known to have been in business in Sydney at least from the early 1800s.⁴⁶ We simply have no idea of the extent to which the Crown⁴⁷ made use of them.

In later years, the practice of marking Crown-owned items continued. The marks were usually in the form of a reference to the sovereign – as in 'VR' (Victoria Regina) with a Crown. But as government grew more complex, more specific marks identifying the particular government department or agency

became more common. As in the case of the earlier broad arrow mark, the practice was not adhered to strictly. Consequently, the lack of the relevant type of mark does not mean that the Crown did not own the item.

Information on private ownership may also be found on an item of colonial furniture. However, the presence of a name on an item of furniture does not necessarily mean that it is the name of an owner, any more than that it is of the maker.⁴⁸ Additional information is necessary.⁴⁹ A name combined with a claim to ownership is the best indication.

The earliest known example of this type of information is on a c 1830 cedar chest of drawers that was sold by Sotheby's in 1987.⁵⁰ An ink inscription on the base of a drawer records the transfer of the chest by Mary Ann Thomas to her daughter, Amy Catherine Chapman, on 12 September 1834 in the presence of named witnesses. The chest also contains a pencil inscription recording the next inheritance of the chest.

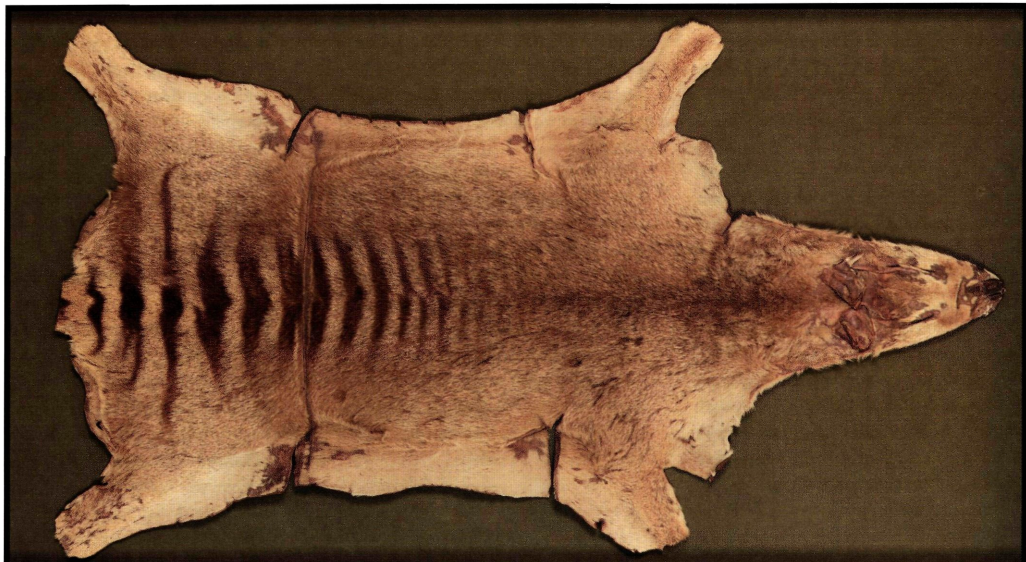
Another early example is a portable writing desk believed to have been made at the Moreton Bay Lumber Yard for Andrew Petrie who arrived as a free settler in Brisbane in 1837. It bears a brass plate on its top: 'Andrew Petrie, 1st August 1838'.⁵¹

The Governor King beefwood secretaire bookcase contains a note written in the late 19th century by King's granddaughter, Elizabeth Gidley King, stating that it was made for Governor King in 1803, and setting out how she had inherited it and how it was to continue to be passed on to King's descendants.⁵²

The Lawson clothes press contains an inscription in a drawer: 'Wm Lawson Esq. J.P. Prospect', which is regarded as a reference to William Lawson, the early explorer and pastoralist.⁵³

The Parkes secretaire⁵⁴ bears an inscription, possibly by a carrier, 'with care, Sir Henry Parkes Parramatta'.

In rare cases, an item bears a presentation inscription that identifies the original or a later owner.



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A teapoy of various native woods bears a silver plaque with the inscription: 'presented to The Revd B Carvoso, as a mark of Esteem by the brethren at Melville St Chapel Hobart Town Van Diemen's Land Jan 20, 1830'.⁵⁵

A cedar and native cherry desk c1835 that was made by George Wilkin and Robert Graham, has a silver plaque attached to its superstructure: 'In memory of William Michael Finlay 1957'.⁵⁶

The Joubert jewel cabinet bears the inscription: 'Jules Joubert/Commissioner for New South Wales/The National Agricultural and Industrial Association/Queensland 1876'.⁵⁷

Similarly, a cedar, blackwood, huon pine and myall travelling writing desk c1860 carries the inscription:

'Presented to Captain Pasley, R. E. Inspector General of Public Works in Victoria by the Officers of the Department of Public Works'.⁵⁸

Other examples are a myall hall chair c 1854, presented to Governor Latrobe by the Melbourne City Council;⁵⁹ an ornamental column of Tasmanian woods presented to HRH Prince Alfred in 1868 by the Order of Oddfellows Friendly Society, Hobart; and a lectern presented to All Saints Cathedral, Bathurst in 1873 by B O Holtermann and L Beyers.

In a very small number of other cases, an item carries a handwritten or other statement which does not actually name the original owner, but from which he or she can be identified. Early examples include the Nepean table,⁶⁰ the Foy/Kingdon casuarina long case clock,⁶¹ and the casuarina⁶² Surgeon White table. A later example is a huon pine occasional table⁶³ c 1890, bearing a stencilled mark for 'Hillview', the summer residence of the Governor of NSW near Bowral, which was bought for vice-regal use in 1882 and remained so until 1957.⁶⁴

'EXTERNAL' DOCUMENTARY INFORMATION

External documentary information takes a wide variety of forms. These include makers' invoices and receipts and other pre-sale or post-sale documents; government or private payment records;

house inventories; newspaper and journal articles; original and secondary records of exhibitions held during the colonial period; paintings, sketches, drawings and photographs; and retailers', repairers' and carriers' labels.

As in the case of internal written evidence, it may help in identifying the maker, the date of manufacture, or the original or a later owner. Some types of external information are more restrictive in their ambit. A record of an item that is limited to its having been shown at an exhibition, or to its having been sold at a particular auction or by a particular dealer says nothing about the maker, the date of manufacture, or the original, or a later, owner of the item.

Makers' invoices and receipts and other pre-sale or post-sale documents

The following cases have been noted of this type of written information.

- Craig, Fahy and Robertson, *Early Colonial Furniture*,⁶⁵ referring to receipts from John Cox, Joseph Sly and Thomas Roberts, dating from 1835-41, in relation to furnishings for 'Lyndhurst', Glebe.
- K Fahy et al, *Nineteenth Century Australian Furniture etc*, identifying a sideboard, chair and serving table as having been part of a consignment from Bell & Button, 21 March 1865, to Mr C Armytage, of 'Como'.⁶⁶
- John Hawkins,⁶⁷ attributing furniture at 'Woolmers', near Launceston, to Gillows (Lancaster and London) and Ferguson & Sons (London) on the basis of a 'concept design' document by Gillow provided to the owners of 'Woolmers'.
- Graham Cornall,⁶⁸ concerning a cedar table c 1835 bearing a handbill advertising the furniture-maker, Charles Best.

Government or private payment records or house inventories

Examples include the following.

- The Government House (Parramatta and Sydney) inventory 1821,

performed by H C Antill, listing numerous items by type and wood.⁶⁹

- A list of payments for new furniture for Government House, Sydney,⁷⁰ compiled by the Colonial Architect's Department, NSW, c 1862-66, enabling the identification of John Hill & Co as the maker of a drawing room suite for Government House, Sydney.
- An inventory of 'Woolmers', near Launceston, on the death of its owner, Thomas Archer, in 1850.⁷¹

Newspaper and journal articles

These include the following.⁷²

- *Illustrated Tasmanian Mail*, Christmas number, December 1927, 'Old furniture in Tasmania', referring to a cedar secretaire desk made by George Wilkin and Robert Graham, and bearing the King's Yard, Hobart, mark.⁷³
- *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 April 1914, concerning a cedar cabinet made for Sir Joseph Banks, presented to the National Herbarium, Sydney, by the British Museum.⁷⁴
- *The Empire*, 22 May 1856, concerning the cedar Ceremonial Chair made by J Hill & Son for the President of the Legislative Council.⁷⁵
- *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 June 1857, describing in detail a cedar sideboard made by Andrew Lenehan for Government House Sydney.⁷⁶
- *'Queenslander'*, 23 August 1873, describing a cedar davenport made by J W Carey for a William Pettigrew.⁷⁷
- *Brisbane Courier*, 22 August 1878, describing a chiffonier made by Joshua Ebenston for John Deucher of Glen-gallan Station, Darling Downs.⁷⁸

Original and secondary records of colonial and other exhibitions

The following are accepted as having been among the items shown at exhibitions held during the colonial period.

- the cedar Broughton writing box, exhibited at the Victorian Industrial Society's Exhibition, 1851.⁸⁰

- a musk and cedar occasional table exhibited at the Great Exhibition, London, Tasmanian Court, 1851.⁸¹
- a blackwood writing box by John Wood, exhibited at the Intercolonial Exhibition of Australasia, Melbourne, 1866-7.⁸²
- a cabinet by W H Roche & Co exhibited at the 1880-81 Melbourne.⁸³
- a easy chair made by William Stanway, exhibited at the International Exhibition, Melbourne 1880-81.⁸⁴
- a W H Roche & Co sideboard which was exhibited at the Melbourne International Exhibition in 1880-81.⁸⁵
- a W H Roche & Co sideboard which was exhibited at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London in 1886.⁸⁶
- a cedar and various other native woods centre table by H Hugentobler and C Sturm exhibited at the Melbourne International Exhibition, 1880-81.⁸⁷
- a dressing table, wash stand and wardrobe by Wallach Bros, Sydney, exhibited at the Centennial International Exhibition, Melbourne, 1888, NSW Court.⁸⁸
- cedar chairs by Edward Wilhelm Verdict, made for the NSW Commissioners for the World's Columbian Exhibition, Chicago, 1893, and now held in Government House, Sydney.⁸⁹

Paintings, sketchings, drawings and photographs

The following items have been used in establishing the provenance of colonial items.

- a pencil and watercolour sketch by Henry Gritten of a cedar armchair, believed to have belonged to Bishop Nixon, in situ in St David's Church, Hobart. It is now held by the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.⁹⁰
- a pencil drawing by Conrad Martens of the entrance hall to Government House Sydney, c1855, showing a cedar hall chair in colonial gothic style.⁹¹
- a drawing of a cedar bookcase c

1890 attributed to Edmund Joseph Cox and held by the NGV, Melbourne.⁹²

- early photographs of the Anglo-Indian furniture at Horsley Park brought there by its first owner, Charles Weston, in the 1830s.⁹³
- an illustration of a W H Roche & Co blackwood sideboard in *The Cabinet Maker and Art Furnisher*, 1 May 1886.⁹⁴
- a contemporaneous photograph of the maker, L A Riddle, alongside a cedar sideboard cabinet made c1890.⁹⁵

Retailers', repairers' and carriers' labels

The following examples have been noted.

- the label of Alexander Moore, who appears to have been purely a retailer, on many colonial items.⁹⁶
- an inscription by a retailer, Thomas Ambrose Gaunt, on a cedar barometer c 1885.⁹⁷
- imported clocks bearing the names of local retailers (who sometimes had the cases made locally).⁹⁸
- two repairers' bills, inside the Joubert-Thomle jewel cabinet, helping to establish the whereabouts of the cabinet during the early 20th century.⁹⁹
- inscriptions on a musk and huon pine work table c 1844 by F B Dale, Sydney, noting that the cloth bag was re-covered by named repairers/owners in 1856, 1872, 1894, 1897, and 1972.
- inscriptions by repairers/servicers of long case clocks noting their names and the dates of service.
- shipping information on the Hunt travelling chest c 1840, concerning the ship *Royal Charter* on whose maiden voyage Edward Hunt travelled from Sydney to Liverpool in 1856.¹⁰⁰

ORAL INFORMATION

Despite the numerous examples given earlier in this article, documentary evidence, particularly early

documentary evidence, is available only infrequently. In the majority of cases, the sole available provenance is oral. In most of those cases, it is both limited and sketchy. It is usually provided by the owner of the relevant item, or by his or her agent. It is often based solely on the owner's own knowledge of the item, in which case it will certainly go back no more than to his or her childhood. In other cases, it may also include family tradition about the item. Often, it goes no further back than to the most recent purchase of the item from a named dealer or auctioneer.¹⁰¹ In some cases, not even that information is available. The provenance is simply the name of either the collection¹⁰² or the family in which the item now resides, or the family from which it was purchased or is being sold. There may also be a snatch of 'history' such as 'in the family'¹⁰³ for at least 20 years'; or 'brought to Melbourne from Tasmania 60 years ago'.

Despite its shortcomings, family tradition can be extremely valuable in establishing provenance.¹⁰⁴ Furniture that remains in situ in a colonial building is an obvious case. But family tradition is important in many cases where the item in question is no longer in situ. The gothic, heraldic, Macquarie easy chair¹⁰⁵, for example, is accepted as having been handed down from Governor Lachlan Macquarie through his family until it was presented to the Vancouver Museum, Canada. That museum, in turn, presented it to the forerunner of the Powerhouse Museum in 1961.¹⁰⁶ Much the same history is now ascribed to the second of the Macquarie chairs, which is used as the Chancellor's chair at Macquarie University in Sydney.¹⁰⁷

Similar family provenance is critical in the case of both the 'Strathallan' and the 'Dixson Galleries' collector's chests.¹⁰⁸ Family tradition has also been important in relation to items that have been provenanced to colonial ancestors of many families, including the Clements,¹⁰⁹ Mort,¹¹⁰ Tebbutt¹¹¹

and Throsby¹¹² families. It has been a particularly important factor in establishing the provenance of items from the Barossa Valley and other German settlements in South Australia.¹¹³

Again, two items of furniture have been traced to commissions by Sir William Macarthur in the mid-19th century: a table made in Paris from coachwood that had been exhibited at the Paris International Exhibition in 1855, and now at Camden Park; and the similar table that Macarthur had made from the same wood and now in Government House, Sydney.¹¹⁴ Another example is the long case clock by James Oatley, marked no 5, apparently held by members of the Gatehouse family since its acquisition by ex-convict and early landholder and brewer in Newtown, George Gatehouse, who died in 1839.¹¹⁵

PROVENANCE AND DATES OF MANUFACTURE

Information relating to an item's maker or to its line of ownership is often helpful in establishing the date when the item was made.

Maker's marks and labels incorporate the date of manufacture only rarely. Marks and labels can nonetheless assist in the dating of an item by indicating a period within which it was made. In some cases, the period is too long to be of much significance. Joseph Sly's impressed mark, 'J. SLY,' indicates a date range between 1834 and 1861. Labels that include an address can be more helpful, but only if the maker moved business reasonably often. Andrew Lenehan is a good example, having been recorded at 10 different addresses between 1843 and 1873,¹¹⁶ the longest period at any one of them being at 179 Castlereagh St between 1858 and 1866.¹¹⁷

In some cases, an inscription identifying the maker is combined with a note of the date when the item was made. This appears to have been a

practice among some German immigrant furniture-makers in South Australia.¹¹⁸ It was less common elsewhere. However, notable examples include:

- a desk by George Wilkin and Robert Graham bearing the date 'December 11 1835'.
- the musk and huon pine work table by Francis Ben Dale, dated '1844'.
- A cedar and huon pine chest c 1844, with a partly illegible, vellum label recording the giving of the contents (silver gilt communion articles) to the Church of St John the Baptist, Hobart Town, by 'Margaret' in 1844.
- the inscription on the Wallalong cedar bookcase by Edwin Pegg, referring to the date of manufacture as 1863-4.
- a blackwood writing box by John Wood, bearing in ink the date 1866¹¹⁹.
- the Peter Thomle pencil inscription on sand paper inside his cedar and various native woods occasional table, dated 'July 1879'.

Inscriptions and presentation plaques identifying the original or a later owner can sometimes be helpful in dating a piece, but rather less obviously than in the case of marks, labels and inscriptions. Where a date is given, it is almost certainly not the date of manufacture, but the date of acquisition or of the attachment of the inscription or plaque. However it obviously indicates that the item is earlier than the stated date. Equally obviously, an inscription that gives the name of the original or a later owner indicates that the item was made before that person's death.

Oral information is less likely still to be of much assistance in establishing the date of manufacture of an item. There may, of course, be a family tradition that the item was made in a particular year - even by a named furniture-maker - but that degree of specificity is unusual. And it suffers from the relative unreliability of family tradition.

THE RELIABILITY OF PROVENANCE INFORMATION

In some cases, the availability of various types of provenance information results in something approaching a reliable and relatively complete¹²⁰ history of that item. A recent example is found in the provenance provided in the Bonhams & Goodman catalogue for its sale in Sydney on 24 July 2006. Lot 1063 was a small work table, said to be made c 1790s from beefwood and tulipwood.¹²¹ The table was believed to have been made for Sir Andrew Snape Hamond (1738-1828), a senior British naval officer and an ancestor of the vendor. Attached to the table was a handwritten note: 'Sent from Botany Bay by Doctor White, surgeon of the Navy the planks of this table made up in London, Beef Wood'. 'Doctor White' was taken to be John White (1756?-1832), Surgeon-General to the First Fleet, who remained in the infant colony until his resignation in 1796. His appointment to the First Fleet had been influenced by Snape Hamond, and he named his property of 100 acres, in what is now Petersham, 'Hamond Hill Farm'.¹²² The catalogue traced the passing of the table from one generation of the Snape Hamond family to the next, right down to the present vendor. It supported the claim with an assessment by a handwriting expert that the note was likely to have been written by Sir Andrew Snape Hamond.

But this type of provenance is rarely available. In most cases, the provenance provided in relation to an item is far less complete. It must always be examined critically. There are at least four reasons.

FIRST, THE MAKER OF THE PROVENANCE STATEMENT MAY STATE A CONCLUSION WITHOUT PROVIDING THE FACTUAL INFORMATION THAT SUPPORTS IT.

For example, we are told by K Fahy, *First Fleet to Federation, Australian*

Antiques, that a four poster cedar bed was a gift by Governor Macquarie to Charles Whalan, his confidential orderly sergeant;^{122a} by K Fahy and A Simpson, *Australian Furniture*, that a cedar bookcase 'is provenanced to Wollongorang, near Breadalbane, (NSW)¹²³; that a cedar bookcase c 1870 'is provenanced to Sir Redmond Barry';¹²⁴ and that a cedar chest 'belonged to William Champ (1808-1892) who was appointed commandant of Port Arthur in 1844'.¹²⁵ Similarly, C Craig, KFahy & E G Robertson, *Early Colonial Furniture in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land*, say that a cedar wardrobe is 'from Camden Park and was made for the house';¹²⁶ that a table 'belonged to a daughter of the Rev. Samuel Marsden and came from the Parsonage at Parramatta which was built in 1815'¹²⁷; and that an assigned convict, Penman, made a cedar bookcase and a cedar secretaire bookcase for Riccarton, near Campbell Town, Tasmania, a property owned by Marion Davidson, who married John Nicolson.¹²⁸ Again, we are told by K Vidler and G Dodd, *1988 Commemorative Collection of Fine Colonial Furniture*¹²⁹ that a cedar drum table c 1825 has a provenance to 'Colonel Fitzgibbons, Hobart to 1895';¹³⁰ and that a cedar carver c 1835 was made for 'Lumpy Dean', a ticket of leave convict of large proportions.¹³¹ We are told by Graham Cornall, that a cedar sideboard c1840: 'was made for Thomas Burbury around 1840. ... Upon his death the sideboard was moved to 'The Extons', the Oatlands home of his daughter, Caroline.¹³² And again, that a cedar sideboard c 1830 was 'part of the original furnishings of the homestead of Willippa station in the sparsely populated southern Flinders Ranges'.¹³³ Finally, Sothebys tells us that the provenance of a number of items sold from the Hannon Collection was Thomas Young, an early Hobart solicitor, and 'thence by descent'.¹³⁴ In each case, the facts supporting the conclusion are left unstated.

Now, the fact that the authors did not set out any supporting

information for their conclusions does not mean that they had none. In most of the examples cited, supporting information would have been available. But there are different types of supporting information: some written, some merely oral; some compelling, some not. Without knowing the relevant information, it is impossible to make an independent assessment of the conclusions stated by the authors.

Take, for example, the Penman items from Riccarton. The statement by Craig et al was unequivocal: the items were 'made' by Penman. But the evidence is rather weaker than one might hope. Fahy et al, *Nineteenth Century Furniture* attribute the items to Penman, now identified as 'James' Penman, a convict cabinetmaker who arrived in Van Diemen's Land in 1829, but the attribution is now much less confident. The items are not described as 'made by Penman'; instead: 'Penman is believed to have made'¹³⁵ some fine pieces of furniture at Riccarton ... '¹³⁶ I am not aware of any other information supporting the earlier decisive statement by Craig et al. One can only presume that it was based on family history provided to them by the then owner of the pieces, Mrs A D Nicolson, a descendant of Marion Davidson.¹³⁷ Of course, the quality and workmanship of the items suggest that a cabinetmaker, not a carpenter, made the items, and the fact that Penman has now been identified as having been within the suggested category may be thought significant support for the oral history. But family history it remains.

SECOND, THE MAKER OF THE PROVENANCE STATEMENT MAY PROVIDE FACTUAL INFORMATION, BUT IT MAY BE INACCURATE

Provenance information can be deliberately falsified to add value to an item. Makers' marks and labels may seem incontestable. But they may not always be what they appear to be.¹³⁸

There are anecdotes of makers' labels having been transferred from original, damaged items of colonial furniture to items in better condition, and even to faked 'colonial' items. There are also anecdotes that makers' labels and stamps have been forged and used on both genuine and faked colonial items. One case from a reliable source involved a sideboard that was closely inspected for a label when it first came up for auction. There was none. But a label miraculously appeared when the item was auctioned again some time later!

A dishonest vendor can falsify other provenance information as well. For example, modern photocopying and printing techniques facilitate the forgery of written evidence. While scientific testing of a document may reveal the fraud, that opportunity is available only in rare circumstances.

But the greatest risk of all is that a vendor may give false oral information in relation to an item. It is easy to allege that an item has been in the same (unidentified) family for more than a century¹³⁹ when, in fact, it has been sold and resold in the antiques market several times in the last 20 years. For those unfamiliar with the item's history, it may be impossible to discover the lie.

Under privacy principles, an auctioneer is not entitled to reveal the name of the vendor without his or her consent. And a fraudulent vendor is unlikely to provide that consent. Even if he or she did provide it, the name of the 'family' does not advance the enquirer's knowledge. The vendor could give his or her name, or simply make up a name. Any further questioning would then be met either with a privacy objection or with a statement that nothing else was known about the item.

Most inaccuracies are not the result of deliberate falsification, but of errors made in good faith. Written historical information may be open to two or more interpretations, and can easily be misread. But the greatest risk of inaccuracy lies in the fact that a great

deal of oral provenance is based not on the vendor's personal knowledge, but on information passed down through the family.¹³⁹ Family tradition of this type often incorporates myths. While myths can themselves be created deliberately, most arise through misinformation, misunderstanding or faulty memory. As J M Houstone stated in 'The Collins caster':

How often one finds that family history matters handed down by word of mouth becomes twisted or embellished.¹⁴⁰

A simple example is provided by experience in buying a set of dining chairs in Adelaide several years ago. The vendor was insistent that the chairs had been brought out to South Australia by her grandfather, an immigrant from Perth, Scotland. A photograph of the grandfather was duly pointed out. But the provenance seemed unlikely since the chairs were apparently made of cedar rather than mahogany. The vendor's error was confirmed when the chairs were examined later and found to bear barely legible remnants of the label of the prominent Sydney furniture-maker John Hill & Co. The chance of their having been taken by someone to Scotland, and later brought from there to South Australia, seems remote.

THIRD, THE MAKER OF THE PROVENANCE STATEMENT MAY PROVIDE ACCURATE FACTUAL INFORMATION, BUT HE OR SHE MAY DRAW INFERENCES FROM THOSE FACTS THAT ARE NOT WARRANTED.

A statement of provenance often does more than record factual information. It draws inferences, on the basis of that information, concerning the authenticity of the item. Those inferences may sometimes be

unwarranted. They should be treated with scepticism, simply because the vendor may be tempted to draw inferences that support his or her financial interest.

This risk is exemplified by the catalogue entry for lot 824 in the auction conducted by Bonhams & Goodman in Melbourne on 24 April 2007. Lot 824 was a tea caddy bearing a brass plaque exhibiting the family crest of Lieutenant-Governor David Collins¹⁴¹ and supposedly made for him in the very early years of the 19th century. The catalogue referred to the fact that doubts about the authenticity of the box had been raised after an earlier auction of the item.¹⁴² It then made the following claim:

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 furnishing and a national treasure.¹⁴³

The catalogue proceeded to set out information aimed at establishing the tea caddy's provenance to Collins through his grand-daughter, Eliza Cowpland-Dixon.¹⁴⁴ The tea caddy's recent history commenced with an auction sale in Launceston on 2 May 1998. That auction was of the effects of one Susan Smith. Susan Smith was born an Allen. The family home of the particular Allens was 'Allenvale', a property north of Launceston on the Tamar River. In the 1890s, Allenvale adjoined a property called 'Windermere'. Windermere was owned by John Cowpland-Dixon, who was married to Eliza Cox, a grand-daughter of Collins. The catalogue continued:

It is assumed that, somewhere in the 1890s, the tea caddy was acquired by the Allen family (Susan Smith being from that family) at 'Allenvale' from their neighbour, Eliza Cowpland-Dixon,

at 'Windermere'; by then an elderly widow without any family and the granddaughter of Lt Governor Collins

The catalogue then raised the possibility (nothing more) that Eliza Cowpland-Dixon had inherited the tea caddy from her mother, Eliza Collins (later, Cox), the illegitimate daughter of David Collins. How, then, did Eliza Collins (Cox) acquire it? A number of Collins's friends (described as 'unofficial guardians' of Eliza), including the Reverend Knopwood,¹⁴⁵ bought items at the auction sale of Collins's belongings shortly after his death in 1810. One of them could have bought the tea caddy and given it to Eliza as a memento of her father.

The preceding paragraphs constitute a fair summary of the lengthy information presented in the catalogue to directly support the claim that Collins owned the tea caddy.¹⁴⁶ That information comes nowhere near justifying the inference based on it: that it is '*beyond reasonable doubt*' that Collins was the original owner of the tea caddy. That inference was based on a mixture of assumptions and speculation. The catalogue entry assumed the truth of the claim that it was supposed to establish.¹⁴⁷

FOURTH, EVEN IF THE MAKER OF THE PROVENANCE STATEMENT HAS NOT DRAWN UNWARRANTED INFERENCES FROM ACCURATE FACTUAL INFORMATION, A BUYER MAY BE TEMPTED TO DRAW THEM.

It is, of course, easy to misunderstand factual information. The presence of the mark or label of a known colonial furniture-maker may lead a buyer to infer that that person made the item, but that does not necessarily follow. Andrew Lenehan and Charles North Hunt are just two furniture-makers among many who are known to have

retailed furniture imported as well as making their own furniture in the colonies. They appear to have attached their labels to both types of item. A furniture-maker might also add his mark or label when repairing or altering an item made by some other maker. That possibility appears to have been overlooked in the literature.¹⁴⁹

A buyer may also be at risk of drawing unwarranted inferences from other types of accurate provenance information. An accurate statement that an item is being sold by the grandson of a famous person may tempt one to infer that the item belonged to that famous person. But the stated fact does not by itself justify an inference that the item was either owned by that person or was connected with him or her in any other way, apart from the fact of its connection with the person's grandson. After all, the item might well have been bought by the grandson himself. An added accurate statement that it was inherited by the grandson rules out the possibility that it was purchased by him, but still fails to establish any additional connection with the famous person. The grandson could have inherited the item from the other side of his family. Alternatively, he could have inherited it from the same side as the famous person, but it may have been first acquired by an ancestor other than that person. In each case, the connection between the item and the famous person is negligible. It adds little, if any, value to the relevant item.

An accurate statement that the item comes or came from a particular colonial house does not *by itself* establish that the item was owned by any particular resident in that house. The value of the statement depends on whether there is additional evidence that it was in the house during colonial times. Furniture is bought and sold too regularly for one to be confident that a particular item being sold from a particular house was in that house more than a century ago!

Evidence directly supporting the proposition that the item was in the house during colonial times is rarely available. In the absence of that evidence, all that one can say is that it is possible that the item was in the house during colonial times. Certainly, the possibility is much higher than in the case of an item with no such provenance. But, without more, it remains only a possibility.

So, the statement by C Craig, K Fahy and E G Robertson, *Early Colonial Furniture in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land* that a dwarf long case clock by James Oatley 'was made c 1820 for Major Henry Antill A.D.C. to Governor Macquarie' is not established merely by the fact that 'this clock stood on its cedar bracket at Jarvisfield, near Picton, the residence of Major Antill and his descendants'.¹⁵⁰ That fact cannot warrant the conclusion either that the clock was made for Major Antill, or that he personally owned it. Of course, the authors may well have had additional information that did warrant their conclusion. But that is not the point. Even respected authors can be guilty of wishful thinking or of being misled by family tradition into accepting a conclusion that is not warranted by the facts. The facts themselves need to be presented if one is to have any chance of assessing the correctness of their conclusion.

The point was nicely made by Susanna de Vries-Evans in her 1991 article 'A Tale of Two Tables'.¹⁵¹ One of the tables dealt with in the article was a library table that formed part of the furnishings of 'Subiaco', a colonial Georgian mansion at Rydalmere NSW which was originally built for Hannibal Hawkins Macarthur, nephew of John Macarthur, to a design by John Verge.¹⁵² Then known as 'The Vineyard', Subiaco was sold when Macarthur became insolvent at the beginning of the great depression in 1843, and eventually became a Benedictine Abbey. The Church sold it in the mid-twentieth century and it

was demolished in 1961. The library table went to auction at Sotheby's 'Heronswood House' sale in 1989. Referring to the catalogue entry for the table, de Vries-Evans wrote:

Sotheby's scrupulously attributed the table to Subiaco rather than to Hannibal Macarthur, though the latter attribution would have made the table far more valuable. There is, however, a possibility that the table could have been purchased by Hannibal in his final years and sold with the house. Unfortunately, although the diary of Hannibal's daughter Emmeline mentions some of the furnishings of the house and describes her father working in the library, there is no mention of a library table.

The point is that, although the Subiaco table came from Rydalmere, there was no evidence that it had been in the house during the lifetime of the original owner or, indeed, at any time before 1901. It is possible that it was, but nothing more.

An accurate statement that the item comes from a family with known colonial ancestors does not *by itself* establish that the item was owned or used by any of those ancestors. A family 'tradition' to that effect is usually simply inadequate. At best, it is based on the vendor's understanding of matters of which he or she has no direct knowledge. The tradition may have been handed down to the vendor by older relatives. But only in rare cases could any of them have had any direct knowledge about events in colonial times. Evidence directly supporting the proposition that the item was owned and used by the family during colonial times is rarely available. In the absence of that evidence, all that one can say is that it is possible that the item was owned and used by ancestors during colonial times; and that one or more descendants of those ancestors believe or believed that that was the case.

CONCLUSION

Provenance statements should be read and assessed with great rigour. The relevant factual information may be lacking, a conclusion being drawn on the basis of unstated premises. Purely factual information that is presented may be inaccurate, either through deliberate deception or as a result of misinformation, misunderstanding or faulty memory. A provenance statement that goes beyond statements of fact and draws inferences from those facts should be analysed with particular care. Vendors and their agents have a clear interest in putting the best light possible on the factual information they present. There is a substantial risk that they will, in good faith, draw inferences that are not supported by the evidence presented. And there is a risk that buyers will themselves draw unwarranted inferences from the information presented to them.

STANDARDS OF CONFIDENCE

Claims that the authenticity of an item, or that the original owner or the identity of the maker have been established beyond reasonable doubt, or even on the balance of probabilities, should be treated with scepticism. The concept of proof beyond reasonable doubt is almost always inappropriate, because it sets the bar far too high. Very few items of colonial furniture have been provenanced beyond reasonable doubt. At the very most, proof on the balance of probabilities (that is, that the likelihood of the fact being true is more than 50%) is all that should be sought. That, after all, is the civil standard of proof – the standard that would be applied if a case arose in which the information supplied in a provenance statement was challenged in a court.

But even probability may not be relevant to a particular buyer in assessing a provenance statement. The main value of provenance is in

reducing the buyer's risks in buying the item. It is up to the buyer in each case to determine the level of risk that he or she is willing to take. A particular buyer may be unwilling to take a risk of 90%, but willing to take one of 50%. Another buyer may be unwilling to take a risk of 50% but willing to take one that is 20%. Indeed, the level of risk acceptable to a particular buyer may well vary depending on the amount of the purchase price. Assessment of a provenance statement should be done objectively, of course, but determining the acceptable level of risk is highly idiosyncratic. Incorporating legal standards of proof in such a process is unduly technical and unlikely to be of much assistance to anyone.

If that is correct, probability should not be regarded as the touchstone of provenance. A significant *possibility* may sometimes be sufficient. There is at least one case in which an author has, with good reason, adopted such a test. Caressa Crouch's attempt to create a list of convict-provenanced furniture¹⁵³ was expressed as based on the inclusion of each of the following types of item.

- items with a mark indicating that they were made in one of the early Lumberyards - the King's Yard, Hobart, being the only one known to have such a mark.¹⁵⁴
- items with documentation/provenance of being convict-made.
- items from convict-built buildings whether built-in or free-standing.
- items with an impressed broad arrow mark (with or without a 'BO' ('Board of Ordnance'¹⁵⁵ or 'British Ordnance') mark as well).

Ms Crouch recognised that the list would be over-inclusive in the case of the broad arrow impressed mark, which indicates Crown ownership, not convict-made.¹⁵⁶ But the chances were that *early* Crown-owned furniture was made by convicts. Her list would also be over-inclusive in including all early items

that came from convict-built buildings. Some of the original furniture may have been made by free artisans; and not all furniture standing in those buildings would be original anyway.

Moreover, a number of items that Crouch listed fall into none of the stated categories. Those items appear to have been included on the basis that, because they were owned by early settlers who were known to have employed, or were likely to have employed, ticket of leave convicts, there was a distinct possibility that the items had been made by convicts.¹⁵⁷ Whether the term 'convict-provenanced' can bear such an interpretation might be questioned. But Crouch made it quite clear that she was using an extended sense of the term.

Given the context of the drawing up of the list for the purposes of an exhibition on convicts in Australia by the Historic Houses Trust of NSW and the paucity of examples of items *undoubtedly* made by convicts, there was obvious value in listing items that could well have been made by convicts. In that context, Crouch's use of an extended sense of 'convict-provenanced' is justifiable. However, the use of a similar extended sense of that phrase, or of 'convict-made', in an auctioneer's or dealer's catalogue, should be strongly discouraged. In the absence of a clear and prominent explanation of the special meaning being employed, it would be seriously misleading to use either of those phrases in that context.

PROVENANCE AND TERMINOLOGY

Probably the main systemic problem with provenance statements is the lack of consistency in the way provenance information is expressed, and the lack of clarity of some of the expressions used. Particular care is necessary in choosing the words appropriate to provenance statements that go beyond a recitation of known facts. Expressions indicating the strength of provenance vary from 'it is conceivable

that' or 'it is possible that'; to 'it seems likely that' or 'it is probable that'; on to more confident statements that something is 'almost certain'; and finally to definitive statements such as 'made by X' or 'commissioned by Y' or 'part of the original furniture for Z'.

'It is conceivable that' was used by Christies in a 2000 catalogue in relation to a cedar library bookcase which it traced from the present vendor to Geoffrey Eager (1818-1891). The entry recorded that Eager married Mary Ann Bucknall, a niece of W C Wentworth, in 1843. It continued: 'It is conceivable that the present bookcase was purchased by him at the time of his marriage.'¹⁵⁸ It is equally conceivable that he bought it 10 years later! Anything is *conceivable*. The phrase should never be used in a provenance statement. It tells one nothing.

'It is possible' is almost as unhelpful. Just about anything is *possible*. For *possibility* to be relevant, it has to be a significant or 'real' one. There must be some independent information raising or suggesting the possibility, or the statement is worthless. 'It is likely' and 'it is probable' introduce a much more significant statement than one relating to mere possibility. But neither should be used unless it is clear that the statement is more likely to be true than not - that is, that the chances of its being true are greater than 50%. And that is a difficult hurdle to leap in the case of most provenance statements. It seems not to be reached by statements such as 'probably part of [the property's] first set of dining chairs',¹⁵⁹ when that statement is based solely on the apparent age of the chairs. There are simply too many unknowns for one to be able to talk in terms of probability in such a case.

Even more difficult to sustain is a statement in the form of 'it is almost certain that'. This leaves open the possibility of error, but only just. Such a degree of confidence is unlikely to be well-based.¹⁶⁰ Statements of the form

'made by X' or 'commissioned by Y' or 'part of the original furniture of Z House' go much further than near certainty. They all assert without qualification that the relevant fact is true. Such an assertion should only be made if there is compelling and reliable written evidence that the statement is, indeed, true. None of the statements should be made where the sole information is oral family history. That form of information is not compelling.

Rather than in terms of possibility, probability, near certainty or fact, a provenance statement may be couched simply in terms of thought¹⁶¹ or belief¹⁶² or repute.¹⁶³ A relatively common one is 'It is believed that'. There are two problems with phrases like that. First, the passive form is less informative than the active one because it does not identify the actor. Consequently, 'it is believed' immediately prompts the question 'by whom?' And that reveals an ambiguity. Does it mean by the author alone? Or does it mean by the author and by informed people generally? But ambiguity does not end there. Perhaps the statement has nothing to do at all with the belief of the author. Perhaps it means only believed by the (usually unnamed) person who told the author that that was the family tradition. Clearly, if the passive form is to be used, it should be used only in a context where it is made clear just whose belief is being referred to.

So, in *Australian Furniture etc*, Fahy & Simpson say that a cedar bookcase c 1855 'is believed, by family provenance, to have been made by William Henry Hudson'¹⁶⁴ and that a cedar panel on a blackwood bookcase 'was carved by Alberta Marguerite Dehle according to family provenance'.¹⁶⁵ Again, in *Memories*, G Cornall states that a cedar chiffonier c 1845 'was, by family repute, made on the property by an assigned convict';¹⁶⁶ and that a cedar desk c 1865 'was, by family repute, designed for Sir John Forrest, the Premier of Western Australia'.¹⁶⁷ And, with commendable candour, John Buttsworth states of a

cedar bed c 1845 'it was lot 106, catalogued as "Ex-Governor's rooms, Berrima Jail" as claimed by the family. However, research to date has not been able to confirm this claim.'¹⁶⁸ Finally, the Australian National Museum says, in relation to a sea chest in its possession, that it is 'reported to have been owned by First Fleet Henry Kable (also spelled Cabell); and that 'Family oral history states that the First Fleet convict Henry Kable brought the wooden chest with him on board the convict transport Friendship in 1787-1788.' In none of these numerous cases could anyone reasonably complain of having been misled.

Second, the statement 'it is believed that' or 'it is thought that' may involve the implied additional statement that there are reasonable grounds for the belief. If the maker of the statement were challenged about its use, he or she might possibly have to establish that the maker not only believed in the truth of the statement, but also had reasonable grounds for that belief. It is doubtful whether that risk is appreciated by those who make the relevant statements!

All of this suggests that, apart from exceptional cases, it would be much better if provenance statements were restricted to recting the known facts, and if conclusions that go beyond those facts were left unstated. After all, why state that an item was made by a particular maker, when that conclusion is based solely on stylistic similarities with marked pieces by that maker, or by family tradition to that effect? And why state that an item was part of the original furniture in a particular house, when it is impossible to be certain of that fact; or that it is 'probable' that it was bought by a noted, early colonial figure, when it is impossible to assess whether the chances of that being true are, indeed, more than 50%. If the item came from that house, or from descendants of that colonial figure, and there is a family tradition to the relevant effect, why not simply say so, and leave it at that?

NOTES

- 1 My thanks go to Helen Kelly and Jody Wilkinson for valuable comments on drafts of this article.
- 2 *Significance: A guide to assessing the significance of cultural heritage objects and collections*, Commonwealth of Australia, 2001, pp 8, 37, 48, 69; http://sector.amol.org.au/publications_archive/collections_management/significance.
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 *Ibid.*, p 37: 'Artworks of doubtful or incomplete provenance have less value than those with a clear sequence of owners.'
- 5 See C. Crouch, 'Convict-provenanced furniture in Australia', *Australiana*, vol 20 no 1, Feb 1998, p 7. See also text at n 153. A convict does not cease to be so for this purpose by being pardoned or serving his or her term. Cf Crouch, *op cit*, 15, treating clocks made by James Oatley after his conditional pardon in 1821 as not 'convict-made'.
- 6 K Fahy and A Simpson, *Australian Furniture, Pictorial History and Dictionary*, Casuarina Press, Sydney, 1998 ('F & S'), p 150-1, fig 14.
- 7 F & S, p 198, Plate 63; J McPhee, 'Two Early Collector's Chests in the State Library of New South Wales', *Australiana*, vol 26 no 2, Feb 2006, p 5. See also F & S, p 206 (English box sent to Charles Whalan by Lachlan Macquarie Jr in 1828 and now held at Old Government House, Parramatta).
- 8 F & S, p 165, pl 28.
- 9 F & S, p 334, fig 336. The desk was apparently sold as part of Parkes's estate in 1896.
- 10 G. Cornall, *Memories, A Survey of Early Australian Furniture in the Collection of the Lord McAlpine of West Green* ('Cornall'), Australian City Properties, Perth, 1990, p 180.
- 11 Now in the Western Australian Museum. It was apparently made in England from a WA she-oak cut down to symbolically lay the foundation of Perth in 1829. See K Fahy, C Simpson & A Simpson, *Nineteenth Century Australian Furniture*, David Ell Press, Chippendale, NSW, 1985 ('F, S & S'), p 205.
- 12 Eg, by Francis De Groot in the early 20th century. See M Bogle, 'Antiques of the Future', *Australiana*, vol 22 no 1, Feb 2000, p 19.
- 13 www.Chappellmccullar.com/notes, 16 December 2007: 'More recent provenance, absent knowing its original owner, might not be helpful in attribution, but can argue for the quality of the piece. For instance, a mid 18th-century serving table in our inventory was part of a collection assembled in the early part of the 20th century by the furniture historian R.W. Symonds, one of the leading intellectual lights in the English furniture field. We always include this when citing the piece's provenance.'
- 14 This type of provenance can be a double-edged sword. A collector or institution, for example, may have deaccessioned an item because it was not of high quality. See, eg, www.Chappellmccullar.com/notes, 16 December 2007: 'Sometimes [deaccessioned] works have little meaning to the museum's main focus and could be fine quality works, or, to be blunt, they are just poor quality works and the museum does not want them taking up space in their storage rooms'.
- 15 Hence the move to restore to their rightful owners works of art confiscated, stolen or looted by the Nazis during the Third Reich.
- 16 The market overt exception exists in SA, WA and Tasmania. It was abolished in England in the 1990s.
- 17 'Maker' is, of course, ambiguous. It may mean the owner of the business or the person who made the item (in some cases, of course, there is no difference between the two). In rare cases, the marks of both are found on an item. See, eg, F & S, p 301, fig 262 (cedar and native cherry desk, with pencil inscription of its makers, George Wilkin and Robert Graham, plus a King's Yard, Hobart, mark). For a post-colonial example, see F & S, p 192, pl 54 (pencil inscription by Hermann Thumler, the maker of a blackwood bookcase, 1906, which bears a Whitesides ink inscription as well).
- 18 'Mark' is usually in the form of an impressed stamp. However, it also includes an incised mark and a stencil. For an example of an incised mark, see F & S, p 399, fig 234 (pencil inscription 'E Pegg', behind the drawer of a cedar blanket chest c 1870).
- 19 'Label' is normally of paper. However, it may be a metal or other plate.
- 20 The earliest 'mark' is that of James Oatley, clock-maker, who engraved his name on the dials of long case clocks in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century. However, he did not build the clock cases and, in that sense, is not a furniture-maker. For details of his life and work, see K Fahy, 'James Oatley and his Long Case Clocks - A list and bibliography' *Australiana*, vol 14 no 3, Feb 1992, p 5; Id, 'James Oatley and his Long Case Clocks', *Australiana*, vol 26, no 3, Aug 2004, p 22. The earliest known labels of furniture-makers are of John Clarke Jr, dating from 1832-7 (cedar desk; cedar work table, bookcase), when he was at 22 Castlereagh St Sydney; and Alexander Broughton, dating from 1832-6 (cedar wing wardrobe) when he was at 28 Macquarie St, Hobart Town.
- 21 F & S, p 18ff, contains an extensive list of Australian furniture etc makers, retailers and other persons connected in some other way with the manufacture of furniture.
- 22 The Government lumberyard, with the mark KY or YK with a broad arrow (originally, 3 cuts to represent the head and shaft of an arrow). The mark may not have been applied consistently: C Crouch, 'Convict-provenanced furniture in Australia', *Australiana*, vol 20 no 1, Feb 1998, p 7. The King's Yard produced furniture until 1835, when it was taken over by the Royal Engineers, whose mark was R.E.D. For description, and a detailed listing of the items bearing the King's Yard mark, see C Crouch, p 7; F & S, p 77; p 474, fig 540 (cedar sofa table); p 301 fig 262; P Mercer, 'A rare early Tasmanian desk returns to its place of origin', *Australiana*, vol 19 no 3, Nov 1997, p 70. Considerable early furniture was also made at the Sydney, Parramatta and other lumberyards and agricultural establishments in NSW: Craig, Fahy & Robertson, *Early Colonial Furniture in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land* ('C, F & R'), Georgian House, Melbourne, 1972, p 9f; F & S, p 38,41, 64-5; J Hawkins, 'The Art of the Furniture-maker from the First Settlement 1788-1820 - Part 2', *Australian Antique Collector*, 26th ed, 1983, p; R Crosbie, 'Clandestine furniture in the Macquarie Era', *Australiana*, vol 15, no 3, Feb 1993, p 14; Idem, 'The Carpenter's Workshop and Furniture Making at the Sydney Lumberyard in 1821 and 1822', *Australiana*, vol 16 no 2, May 1994, p 42 at 45. However, no items with identifying marks, such as 'SY', 'PY', etc have yet been located: C Crouch, p 7.
- 23 For biographical information on, and various marks and labels used by, these furniture-makers, see F & S, pp 18ff.
- 24 See, eg, Cornall, p 197 (chest of drawers c 1865, with ink signature 'Shaw' on the back. Shaw has been identified as Charles Shaw, a cabinetmaker who worked in Ballarat, where the chest was found, between 1862 and 1866); *ibid* p 260 (identifying 'GW' in chalk under the seats of 6 chairs as George Wansbrough, from whose property the chairs were obtained. Wansbrough was known as a carpenter).
- 25 See, eg, F & S, p 389, fig 214 (dressing chest with the inscription: 'Riedle Sandhurst'. No maker with that name has been recorded).
- 26 Cf the easy chair at St James's Church, Sydney: n 105.
- 27 Eg, F & S, p 503, fig 502 (signature of Miss Bell, Hobart, on the painted top of a huon pine occasional table by Samuel Smith of Hobart); and F & S, p 214, fig 94 (monogram of John Mather on a cabinet exhibited by W H Locke & Co at the Melbourne International Exhibition, 1880-81).
- 28 F & S, p 282, fig 221.
- 29 F & S, p 459, fig 305 name of Mary Morton Allport on the tapestry on a blackwood and pine pole screen c 1850).
- 30 Eg, F & S, p 322, fig 317 (name of Louisa Peterson on a Berlin woolwork pane on a cedar firescreen).
- 31 *Ibid.*
- 32 Several items of furniture marked or labelled with the name of W Champion were formerly thought to have been made by him. It now seems likely that he was not the maker, even though in one instance he used the word 'fecit', making that claim. See A Watson, 'A "Champion" Table', *Australiana*, vol 15, no 4, Nov 1993, p 98; M McArthur, 'William Champion: a Colonial Furniture-maker?' *Australiana*, vol 23 no 1, Feb 2001, p 23.
- 33 For examples, see N Ioannou, *The Barossa Folk, Germanic furniture and craft traditions in Australia*, Craftsman House, Roseville East, NSW, 1995, p 88-9 (Baltic pine wardrobes c1889), 91 (cedar chest of drawers c 1888, Karl Launer); p 95 (Baltic pine dresser, 1893, Karl Launer); p 98 (Baltic pine table, 1881, Karl Launer); p 100 (cedar and Baltic pine dining chair, 1882, Karl Launer); p 104 (Baltic pine wardrobe, 1865, Karl Launer); p 108-10 (Baltic pine wardrobe, C W Schaefer); p 126 (Baltic pine apprentice blanket box, 1878, Ewald Gratz); p 130 (Baltic pine blanket box, 1900,

- Gotthold Tamke; p 149 (blackwood parlour table, 1894, Bernhard Freytag).
- 34 F & S, p 210, fig 89.
- 35 F & S, p 301, fig 262. The desk also bears the King's Yard, Hobart, mark.
- 36 C, F & R, p 144, fig 155; F, S & S, p 493, fig 471. See also F & S, p 208, fig 87 (writing box inscribed in ink by its maker, John Wood).
- 37 F, S & S, p 103.
- 38 C Crouch, *op cit* p 12, referring to K Fahy in *Antiques Australia - First Fleet to Federation*, Golden Press, Sydney, 1976.
- 39 F & S, p 184, fig 46. See also F & S, p 387, fig 209 (cedar chest of drawers under the top of which is pencilled 'Matthias Hemme 8/12/75'); and F & S, p 216, fig 97 (cedar cabinet bearing a pencil inscription 'Carl Wilhelm Schaedel').
- 40 F & S, p 450, fig 505.
- 41 F & S, p 277, fig 207.
- 42 F & S, p 243, fig 141.
- 43 'Rediscovered, the Joubert jewel cabinet', *Australiana*, vol 25, no 3, Aug 2003, p 97.
- 44 For examples of broad arrow marked furniture, see G Dodd & K Vidler, *Colonial Rarities*, The Rustic Charm, Sydney, 1987, p 8 (a cedar travelling trunk with a brass plate on top: 'Captain Grant, 78th Highland Regiment, box no 3'); F & S, p 490, fig 564 (a cedar clothes press with inscriptions suggesting a provenance to Governor Macquarie, and with broad arrows on drawer locks and drawer bases).
- 45 C. Crouch, *op cit*, p 13. Cf R A Crosbie, 'The carpenter's workshop and furniture making at the Sydney Lumbyard in 1821 and 1822', *Australiana*, vol 16 no 2, May 1994, p 42 at 45, suggesting that most government furniture would have been made at the Lumbyard after 1817. See also F & S, p 414-5, fig 460, (a cedar table at Rouse Hill (built c 1818) which is 'likely to have been made at the Paramatta Lumbyard', apparently on the basis that Richard Rouse was appointed superintendent of Works at Paramatta in 1805. Some furniture made at the lumbyyards and other government establishments appears to have been destined for private, not public, ownership. For details, see R A Crosbie, *op cit* p 45.
- 46 C, F & R, p 9ff; F, S & S, p 39-40.
- 47 Eg, F & S, p 527, fig 550, 551 (bookpress c 1875).
- 48 See n 25.
- 49 See F & S, p 144, fig 6, where the name 'Mr Gunn/ Broadmarsh' is taken as a police magistrate, William Gunn (who owned property in the area), or one of his sons.
- 50 *Important Australian Colonial Furniture and Works of Art, Heronswood House, Moss Vale NSW*, 14 October 1989, p 65-6.
- 51 C. Crouch, *op cit*, p 15.
- 52 F & S, p 150-1.
- 53 F, S & S, p 329.
- 54 F & S, p 334, fig 336.
- 55 *Ibid*, p 201, fig 69.
- 56 F & S, p 301, fig 262. See also n 35.
- 57 The cabinet is believed, on good grounds, to have been bought from Thorne by the Association. See D & H Kelly, 'Rediscovered, the Joubert jewel cabinet', *Australiana*, vol 25, no 3, Aug 2003, p 97.
- 58 F, S & S, p 397, fig 233.
- 59 F, S & S, p 444, fig 352.
- 60 Terence Lane, 'Nineteenth Century Art in the National Gallery of Victoria', NGV, Melbourne, 2003.
- 61 John Hawkins, 'The Botany Bay Wood in English Furniture (Pt 2)', *Australian Antique Collector*, 49th ed, Jan-June 1995', p 68.
- 62 This is the identification given in the catalogue. However, it may be scrub beefwood (red silky oak), *Stenocarpus salignus*.
- 63 Bonhams & Goodman, *Catalogue*, Sydney, 24 July 2006, p 74, lot 1063.
- 64 F & S, 454, fig 508.
- 65 C, F & R, p 14, based on the Macarthur papers (Bowman), vol 6.
- 66 P 361, fig 150; p 431, fig 310; p 515, fig 527.
- 67 'The 1839 Gillows commission to furnish Woodmen in Tasmania for Thomas and Susannah Archer', *Australiana*, vol 24, no 1, Feb 2002, p 1.
- 68 P 156.
- 69 *Appendix to the Bigge Report*, Bonwick Transcripts, Series I, reproduced in part in F, S & S, p 41-3.
- 70 R Griffin & A Toy, 'Respecting the Past; Furnishing the Future', Furniture History Society Australasia Inc, *Newsletter* no 47, January/February 2008, p 3.
- 71 F & S, p 261, fig 178.
- 72 Other examples are set out in the next category: exhibitions.
- 73 F & S, p 301, fig 262.
- 74 C, F & R, p 147; Crouch, *op cit*, p 12.
- 75 C, F & R, p 85.
- 76 F & S, 348, fig 356.
- 77 F & S, p 298, fig 258.
- 78 F & S, p 289, fig 238.
- 79 For discussion of the role played by these exhibitions, see P Hoffenberg, *An Empire on Display*, Univ Cal Press, Berkeley, 2001; J Auerbach, *The Great Exhibition of 1851, a Nation on Display*, Yale UP, 1999; J Auerbach and P Hoffenberg (eds), *Britain, the Empire, and the World at the Great Exhibition of 1851* (forthcoming).
- 80 *The Age*, 30 January 1851; J B Hawkins, 'The Broughton Travelling Writing Desk', *Australiana*, vol 16, no 3, Aug 1994, p 70.
- 81 F & S p 446, fig 498, with impressed marks of W Champion - see n 32.
- 82 *Official Catalogue*. F & S, p 208, fig 86.
- 83 *Illustrated Australian News*, 31 December 1880 & 16 April 1884; T Lane, 'A Souvenir of Marvellous Melbourne: W H Rocke's 1880-81 Exhibition Table', *Art Bulletin of Victoria*, no 33, 1993.
- 84 *Illustrated Australian News*, 6 November 1880: F & S, p 242, fig 138.
- 85 *The Leader*, 9 October 1880; F & S, p 214, fig 94.
- 86 *The Cabinet Maker and Art Furnisher*, 1 May 1886: F, S & S, p 368, fig 161.
- 87 F & S, p 406, fig 450; Melbourne International Exhibition 1880, *Official Catalogue of Exhibits*, South Australian Court, 88 *Sydney Mail*, 16 June 1888: F & S, p 379, 429, 511, figs 408, 474, 585.
- 89 F & S, 264, fig 184; World's Columbian Exhibition, Chicago, 1893, *Catalogue of the Exhibits in the New South Wales Court*.
- 90 F & S, p 224, fig 111; *Heritage in Handwood: Early Tasmanian Handwood Furniture*, Tasmanian Museum, Hobart, 1991, p 5.
- 91 C, F & R, p 84.
- 92 F & S, p 190, fig 52.
- 93 C, F & R, pp 190-91.
- 94 F, S & S, p 368, fig 161. The sideboard was exhibited at the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London in the same year.
- 95 F, S & S, p 369, fig 163.
- 96 F & S, pp 92-3.
- 97 F & S, p 312, fig 283.
- 98 F, S & S, p 40.
- 99 'Rediscovered, the Joubert jewel cabinet', *Australiana*, vol 25, no 3, Aug 2003, p 102.
- 100 Sotheby's, *Important Australian Colonial Furniture and Works of Art, Heronswood House, Moss Vale NSW*, 14 October 1989, p 41-2 (lot 42).
- 101 Examples include G Dodd and K Vidler, *1988 Commemorative Collection of Fine Colonial Furniture*, The Rustic Charm, Mosman, 1988, pp 42, 44, giving provenance to John Buttsworth for a pedestal sideboard and a double ended couch, both c 1835.
- 102 For examples, see F & S, *seriating*; Cornall, p 163, Allen collection (pine chair c 1860); p 220 (pine and zinc food cupboard); p 148, Carney collection (eucalypt and pine dresser c1855); p 113, Russell Collection (eucalypt pine and tin dresser c1855); p 59, Dallwitz collection (red gum table c1839); p 73, Fleming collection (blackwood and cedar chair c1860); p 223, Holub collection (pine cupboard front c1870).
- 103 For examples, see Cornall, p 67, Calvin family (cedar sideboard c1835); p 119, Gottlieb Linde family (eucalypt and pine cupboard, c1865); p 190, Moeser family (dresser or work-bench c1880); p 192, Hilder family (cedar sideboard c1830); p 224, Post family (pine and zinc dresser, c 1865); p 237, Rosenweig family (pine wardrobe c1880).
- 104 See, eg, Heritage Collections Council, *Significance, A guide to assessing the significance of cultural heritage objects and collections*, p 65.
- 105 Attributed to William Temple (maker) and John Webster (carver), partly on the basis of their names being incised on a wooden plaque on another very similar chair made for Archdeacon Scott that is now in St James's Church, Sydney. See J Bickersteth, 'The Three Macquarie Chairs', *Australiana* vol 14 no 1, Feb 1992, p 11; F & S, p 231, fig123; Crouch, 'Convict-Provenanced Furniture in Australia' *Australiana*, vol 20 no 1, Feb 1998, p 7.
- 106 F & S, p 231, fig123; A Watson, 'Governor Macquarie's Armchair', in Elizabeth Bilney (ed), *Decorative Arts and Design from the Powerhouse Museum*, Powerhouse Publishing, Sydney 1991, p 54; A Watson, 'The Macquarie Chair - A Well-Travelled Piece of History', *Craft Australia*, no 3, Spring 1984, p 69.

- 107 See www.lib.mq.edu.au/Im/chair/html
- 108 E Imashev, 'Rare and curious: the Dixon Galleries and Strathallan collector's chests', *Australian Antique Collector*, 41, Jan-June 1991; E Ellis, *Exotica: the Macquarie Collector's chests in the Picture Gallery, State Library of NSW*, State Library of NSW Sydney, 2005; A McCormick (ed), *The Strathallan Cabinet Catalogue prepared by Anne McCormick for Ruth Simon*, Hordern House, Sydney, 1991; J McPhee, 'Two Early Collector's Chests in the State Library of NSW', *Australiana*, vol 26 no 2, Feb 2006, p 5.
- 109 Lieutenant Hanbury Clements, two specimen cabinets: A Watson, 'Shipwrecks, shells and sheep: the Hanbury Clements collector's cabinets', *Australiana*, vol 28, no 3, Aug 2006, p 8.
- 110 F & S, p 367, fig 385 (silky oak double ended couch);
- 111 F & S, p 458, fig 514 (cedar sideboard).
- 112 F & S, p 254, fig 18 (Oatley clock); p 266, fig 36 (bookcase); p 444, fig 353, (hall chair).
- 113 Cornell, *seriatim*.
- 114 R T Baker, *Cabinet Timbers of Australia*, Sydney, 1913, p 95; F, S & S, p 37.
- 115 *Australian Financial Review*, 31 January 2008, p 45, recording the recent sale of the clock. The article claims Gatehouse commissioned the clock from Oatley in the 1840s. That cannot be right, as Oatley 5 is dated 1820, and Gatehouse died in 1839. See F & S, p 292, fig 245.
- 116 Only if one does not count the general address 'Castlereagh St' as separate from the specific numbered addresses in Castlereagh St later in his career
- 117 F, S & S, p 82.
- 118 See n 33.
- 119 *Official Catalogue*, F & S, p 208, fig 86.
- 120 Even in the example that follows, the maker's name remained unknown.
- 121 Catalogue, p 74.
- 122 *ADB*, vol 2, pp 594-595; www.adbonline.anu.edu.au.
- 122a P 52, Figure 86
- 123 P 169, fig 31.
- 124 P 185, fig 47.
- 125 P 197, fig 62.
- 126 C, F & R, p 165; fig 185.
- 127 P 126, fig 128.
- 128 P 49, fig 17; p 54, fig 22. Caressa Crouch repeats this, but adds a cedar sideboard and a cedar 8-legged table also illustrated in C, F & R, pp 110, 122: Crouch, *op cit*, p 16.
- 129 *The Rustic Charm*, Mosman, 1988.
- 130 P 20.
- 131 P 74.
- 132 P 192.
- 133 *Ibid*. In the last case, it is stated that the Hilder family is believed to have owned land near Adelaide before moving to Willippa, and that 'it is most likely that this sideboard was imported from NSW for that earlier property.
- 134 *The Spring Auction Series, Including the Hannon collection of Australian Furniture*, Hobart, 14 November 1999, lots 822 (cedar armchair), 842 (cedar reclining armchair), 846 (musk framed sewing cushion), 864 (cedar and native cherry sofa table), 909 (cedar linen press).
- 135 Emphasis inserted.
- 136 P 135.
- 137 Crouch, *op cit* p 16.
- 138 After all, signatures on paintings are regularly faked. Why not labels and marks on furniture, as well? An opportunity like that is unlikely to be missed!
- 139 Thus eliminating the risk of relatively recent manufacture. See n 12.
- 139a In some cases, as in the case of Barossa Valley furniture, through a wider, community group rather than just the family. For examples, see N Iannou, *The Barossa Folk, Germanic furniture and craft traditions in Australia*, Craftsman House, Roseville East NSW, 1995
- 140 *Australiana*, vol 29, no 3, August 2007, p 33.
- 141 Collins was Deputy Judge Advocate of NSW from 1788, and Lieutenant Governor of Van Diemen's Land from 1804 until his death in 1810.
- 142 That history is set out in detail in the August 2003 issue of *Australiana*, in a highly informative and valuable account by Caressa Crouch: 'The 'David Collins' box and miniature portrait', *Australiana*, vol 29 no 3, Aug 2007, p 18-30. Her account drew attention to the doubts that arose concerning the tea caddy's authenticity, and the basis of those doubts: p 22f. The present article does not deal directly with those doubts nor their basis.
- 143 Catalogue, p 30
- 144 This part of the auction catalogue is reproduced in C Crouch, 'The 'David Collins' box and miniature portrait', *Australiana*, vol 29 no 3, Aug 2007, p 29.
- 145 *ADB*, vol 2, p 66-7; www.adbonline.anu.edu.au
- 146 The catalogue claims that the tea caddy was 'probably' made by James Grove, a convict whom Collins met and socialised with on the voyage of the *Calcutta* to Port Phillip, where Collins was to establish a new colony. I do not deal with that claim in this article. The evidence offered for it does not materially affect our analysis of the 'new research' offered by the catalogue to establish that Collins owned the tea caddy. And the information used to support the 'probable' claim is as convincing as the claim that Collins was the owner of the tea caddy.
- 147 That does not mean that Collins was not the owner of the tea caddy. It just means that the catalogue's 'new research' does not establish his ownership.
- 148 The point is made in C, F & R, p 15. F, S & S mention the following as both makers of local furniture and retailers of imported furniture: Charles North Hunt, Sydney (p 45); Andrew Lenehan, Sydney (p 53) (advertisement in a trade directory in 1857); Newton & Lamb, Sydney (p 57); Charles Rogers, Goulburn (p 67); Francis Murray, Brisbane (p 85); W J Westlake, Brisbane (p 93); John Hicks, Brisbane (p 95); T L Fawcett, Adelaide (p 102); Samuel Crook, Melbourne (p 146); W H Rocke & Co, Melbourne (p 158); J K Purves, Melbourne (p 149); Wilson & Turner, Geelong (p 179); Emanuel Steinfield, Ballarat (p 181).
- 149 For a recent example, see Tulloch Auctions, *Catalogue*, sale 29 March 2008, lot 37, a set of rosewood dining chairs. The catalogue noted 'Each of these 8 chairs comes complete with an ivory label for S and H Jewell - London W.C. An identical label can be found on the table (lot 38) which is of a far later period. It seems that these chairs may have been consigned to Jewells for the purpose of restoration ...'.
- 150 P 93, fig 69.
- 151 *Australian Collectors Quarterly*, Nov/Dec/Jan 1990-91, p 16.
- 152 *ADB* vol 2, pp 535-537; www.adbonline.anu.edu.au
- 153 C Crouch, 'Convict-Provenanced Furniture in Australia', *Australiana*, vol 20 no 1, Feb 1998, p 7.
- 154 See n 22.
- 155 F Terry, 'Broad Arrow as Mark of the Board of Ordnance', nq.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/citation/5-6/DX/224/294-e
- 156 See text at n 45
- 157 See, eg, items 10, 11, 12, 16.
- 158 Christies, *Catalogue*, 'Decorative Arts', 19-20 June 2000, p 55.
- 159 J Buttsworth, *Australian Colonial Furniture*, Colonial Living Press, Drummoyne, 1987, p 12.
- 160 Cf a chest which, according to family tradition, was made by William Hamilton, handed down to his daughter Anne Jane on her 13th birthday in 1845, and has since been handed down to the youngest daughter on her 13th birthday, the owner in 1972 being Hamilton's great-great-granddaughter: C, F & R, 160-61. 'Almost certain' may be appropriate in this case.
- 161 Eg C Crouch, *op cit* p 12, concerning a desk 'thought to have been used by Mrs John McArthur at Elizabeth Farm, Parramatta'.
- 162 C, F & R, p 57, fig 26 (cedar desk); p 60, fig 31 (cedar desk); p 137, fig 143 (cedar side table); F, S & S, p 135 (various items); Cornell, p 207, (cedar bookcase c 1875). Sothebys, *The Spring Auction Series, Including the Hannon collection of Australian Furniture*, Hobart, 14 November 1999, lot 853 (blackwood and huon pine cylinder-top bureau); 858 (cedar carver chair)
- 163 Sothebys, *The Spring Auction Series, Including the Hannon collection of Australian Furniture*
- 164 P 181, fig 43.
- 165 P 196, fig 58.
- 166 P 144.
- 167 *Ibid* p 208.
- 168 *Australian Colonial Furniture, Colonial Living Press*, Drummoyne, 1987, p 50.



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Above: A fine and rare Australian colonial cedar long-case clock, Tasmanian c1830

Top: Photo by Claire Baker. Courtesy of the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage & the Arts.

Tasmanian Aboriginal shell necklaces – Mārthinnā/Marthinna

Tony Brown

In his article entitled 'A Suggested History of Tasmanian Aboriginal Kangaroo Skin or Sinew, Human Bone or Skin, Shell, Feather, Apple Seed and Wombat Claw Necklaces' in the February 2008 issue of *Australiana*, John Hawkins proposed that Tasmanian Aborigines began making shell necklaces only *after* contact with Captain James Cook in 1777. Hawkins has clearly accessed a variety of the literature to compile his theory, but unfortunately he has missed some important references, which refute his basic premise.

During the late 1960s, the late Rhys Jones excavated a large open shell midden site at West Point on Tasmania's west coast. This site, where people had gathered and eaten shellfish, had a basal (bottom layer) date of $1,850 \pm 80$ B.P., and a top layer of $1,330 \pm 80$ B.P. In other words, carbon dating showed that people were gathering and eating shellfish there until between about 560 and 700 AD.

The excavator found several small pits filled with burnt and smashed fragments of human remains which he interpreted as the remains of cremations (Jones 1967). In one pit, the bone fragments were accompanied by several small shells with holes drilled through them. Rhys Jones interpreted these as possibly the shells of a necklace – a grave goods necklace.

Re-examination of the illustrations in that article shows that the position and size of the holes in the shells are uniform, which is consistent with the

George Washington Walker, label for a necklace (which has since disappeared), dated Hobart Town 1834, in the Quaker records at the University of Tasmania, accessed at <http://eprints.uta.edu.au/6141>. Courtesy University of Tasmania Library

holes being manufactured rather than occurring through natural processes. The position of the holes in the shells matches those illustrations by Lesueur of the threading of shells on the shell necklaces and in Petit's watercolour of the necklace worn by Bara-Oourou.

Hawkins also suggests that there is no Tasmanian Aboriginal word for 'shell' or 'necklace'. Vocabularies assembled by members of D'Entrecasteaux's expedition of 1792 and published by Labillardière in 1800 include the word *canlaride*, defined as

Infant Son of Boazar
This simple Necklace
worn by the Aborigines of
Van Diemen's Land is called
by them "Mārthinnā" from
the shells of which it is com-
posed being so designated
in their language. They are
found on various parts of
the coast, but do not generally
exhibit a lustrous appearance
in their natural state: this
is the result of aboriginal
ingenuity. After perforating
holes with their teeth, or with
a needle, the shells are strung
& suspended over a smould-
ering fire made of fresh
grass. The pyroligneous acid
which becomes condensed on
the surface brings off the
outer coating of the shells
& causes them to assume
their present variegated
hue. A necklace of this
kind has been worn, it is
said, in an English Ball-
room! May this humble
Re=

'*couronne de coquillages*', a 'crown of shellfish', to describe a necklace of shells.

The Aboriginal voice is often encountered through secondary sources such as letters and journals. An archival note – a label for a necklace which has since disappeared – by George Washington Walker and dated Hobart Town 1834 in the Quaker records at the University of Tasmania notes:

This simple Necklace worn by the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land is called by them "Marthinna", from the shells of which it is composed being so designated in their language. They are found on various parts of the coast, but do not generally exhibit a lusted appearance in their natural state: this is the result of aboriginal ingenuity. After perforating holes with their teeth, or with a needle, the shells are strung & suspended

over a smouldering fire made of fresh grass. The pyroligneous acid which becomes condensed on the surface brings off the outer coating of the shells, & causes them to assume their present variegated hue. A necklace of this kind has been worn, it is said, in an English ball-room!...

Plomley in his 1976 Tasmanian Aboriginal word-list also cites *Marthinna* as meaning necklace of shells. *Marthinna* and *Mārtinnā* are clearly orthographic variants of the same word.

In conclusion, there is existing strong archaeological evidence of shell necklaces being made prior to European contact. The 18th-century French literature records the wearing of shell necklaces by Tasmanian Aborigines. Plomley in his Tasmanian Aboriginal word-list cites several other Tasmanian Aboriginal words for *both* shells *and* necklaces. G.A. Robinson in

Friendly Mission makes several mentions of shell necklaces and the use of shells as beads. Considering that there is no direct Aboriginal voice for these times, the overwhelming picture that clearly emerges from these various historical sources is that shell necklace making was an integral part of Tasmanian Aboriginal culture.

It is my opinion, and that of other Tasmanian Aboriginal community members, that there is clear, unequivocal evidence to suggest that Tasmanian Aborigines were making shell necklaces long before James Cook ever came to Tasmania and long before Europeans decided to leave their own shores.

Tony Brown is Curator of Indigenous Cultures, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart.

John Hawkins replies

I am unsure if Tony Brown, Curator of Indigenous Cultures at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, has in fact read my article on Tasmanian Aboriginal shell necklaces.

I was certainly aware of Rhys Jones's excavations at a midden site at West Point in the 1960s, but decided against giving any further credence to this report. I had noted that its contents are prominently referred to in the *Strings Across Time* – *Tasmanian Aboriginal Shell Necklaces* exhibition at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery (QVMAG) in Launceston.

I quote from Rhys Jones's original article

These prehistoric remains could be any age between the time of arrival

of the Tasmanians and the time of their extinction [sic]. If we wish to place them in a chronological order we have to excavate sites under controlled conditions and date the deposits using radiocarbon dating techniques. In one pit the bones were accompanied by several dozen small shells with holes in them and they *may* [my emphasis] be the remains of some sort of necklace.

With regard to the use of the words *Marthinna* or *Canlaride*, I suggest he re-reads my article carefully, on pages 30-31.

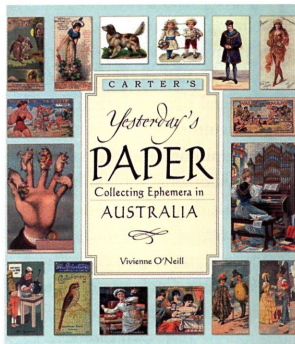
I have recently written an article for the *QVMAG Newsletter* on the subject

of G.A. Robinson and the Barclay/Forrester silver cup which I valued some 20 years ago as a gift to the Museum under the forerunner to the Cultural Gifts Program. The cup is not mentioned in the Museum's most recent publication *Treasures of the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery*. The Museum authorities decided against publication of my article and it has now been published in *The World of Antiques and Art*, June 2008.

I suggest that this head-in-the-sand attitude to Tasmanian history by our museum authorities over Aboriginal matters does not serve their descendants well.

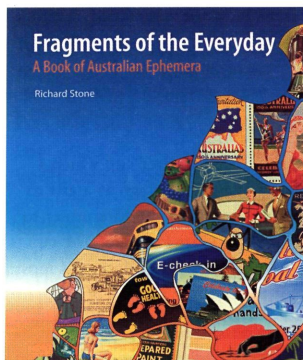
John Hawkins

Book Reviews



VIVIENNE O'NEILL,
*CARTER'S
YESTERDAY'S PAPER:
COLLECTING
EPHEMERA IN
AUSTRALIA*,

JOHN FURPHY PTY LTD,
MELBOURNE 2007



RICHARD STONE,
*FRAGMENTS OF THE
EVERYDAY: A BOOK
OF AUSTRALIAN
EPHEMERA*,

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF
AUSTRALIA, CANBERRA 2005

Two Australian books on ephemera published in the last two years, Vivienne O'Neill's *Yesterday's paper: collecting ephemera in Australia* and Richard Stone's *Fragments of the everyday: a book of Australian ephemera*, represent a growing interest in the subject in this country. Both provide essential reading, each focusing on a different part of the topic: Stone's work is an overview of the National Gallery of Australia's substantial ephemera collection estimated at over 300,000 items, while O'Neill's publication explores the many-faceted world of ephemera collecting in Australia.

Reviewed by Michael Lech

Ephemera covers all manner of manuscript and printed material, much of it seemingly insubstantial and designed for a short life: everything from railway tickets to postcards, political flyers to old cookbooks. The topic is potentially enormous and is perhaps the reason that both O'Neill and Stone provide unsatisfactory definitions. Stone uses the 1970s definition of pioneering UK ephemera historian, Maurice Rickards: 'ephemera represents the minor transient documents of everyday life'. This definition was coined when the subject area was in its infancy and now seems slightly timid and outdated.

O'Neill defines ephemera by providing examples: 'old letters, receipts, theatre programmes, newspapers... and so on' and states that it is not intended to last either because it is needed only for a short time or is made from non-durable

materials. Although descriptive, O'Neill's definition is hardly very concise.

Perhaps the definition problem can never be fully overcome because of the nature of the word itself. After all, its variant *ephemeral*, suggests not just a limited lifespan but also something that is unimportant, a notion clearly not matched by the worth attached to this material by collectors, institutions and a growing number of historians.

The increased interest in ephemera can be partly attributed to online auctions, which according to O'Neill have 'opened enormous windows of collecting opportunity.' Stone explains that much of the antiquarian trade had been reluctant to deal in ephemera because of huge potential volumes, storage implications and difficulty in pricing for a limited market. Online auctions, however, now allow for swift sales from a vast possible

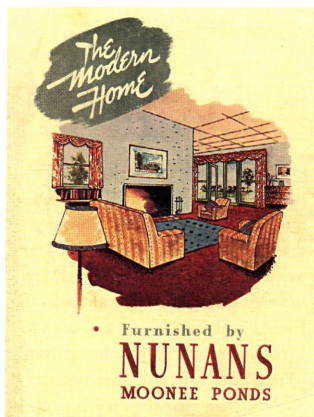
market. Collections can be sourced easily from almost any country in the world and collectors can be sitting at home in even the remotest parts of Australia. And best of all, although some ephemera is rapidly rising in price, much of it can still be had for relatively little money. O'Neill also reminds the reader that collectors clubs have always been and continue to be an important way for collectors to meet, swap knowledge and even material.

Although O'Neill claims to be introducing 'a wide, though not exhaustive range of ephemera which is within reach of the average collector', the enormous variety of material included is bound to be eye opening to many readers. O'Neill's book is well illustrated and all items are provided with approximate dollar values. Chapters are generally divided by theme such as sports and special events, commercial ephemera or the dinner table, though occasionally when the subject area is particularly large, division is by type such as postcards, periodicals or comics.

Each chapter begins with a short history or overview of the original use of many items and is rounded out by references allowing collectors to read further in their particular area of interest. Working as a dealer in South Australia with her husband Ian Bullock, O'Neill is well aware of collecting trends and the idiosyncratic nature of some collectors, for example, those playing-card collectors who only seek out jokers, much to the ire of others who collect full packs!

Although *Yesterday's paper* is to be commended, O'Neill fails to mention that Australian institutions, especially libraries at national, state and local levels, actively collect ephemera. Perhaps institutions have been unsuccessful at promoting this area of their collecting and as Stone writes, the 'spectre of benign neglect' often hangs over ephemera collections because of the difficulty of controlling, ordering and categorising this material.

Fragments of the everyday is clearly an attempt by the National Library of Australia (NLA) to show that ephemera is



Cover design for: J. Nunan Pty Ltd, *The modern home: furnished by Nunans Moonee Ponds*, Moonee Ponds Vic, c 1920s, from Richard Stone's *Fragments of the everyday*. Courtesy Caroline Simpson Library & Research Collection, Historic Houses Trust of NSW, Sydney

an important and growing part of its collection. Stone's excellent introductory essay provides a fascinating insight into the NLA's approach to collecting and categorising ephemera. He introduces the reader to areas not covered by O'Neill such as 'junk mail', which he describes as representing 'the feral branch of the ephemera family' because there is so much of it and it is usually unwanted. Nevertheless, the NLA has deemed it an important collecting area: for a three month period in 1998, every item of junk mail was amassed from three different suburban locations in Canberra, providing a time capsule of Australian social and popular history.

Fragments of the everyday is broken up into just four chapters covering broader areas than O'Neill's *Yesterday's paper*, though the NLA's collection of theatre and performing arts programs and fliers was omitted and will hopefully appear in a future volume. Following Stone's essay, the remainder of *Fragments of the everyday* becomes a kind of picture book, comprising images mostly of covers of the NLA's ephemera with captions listed at the back of the book. This sometimes creates an imbalance of style over substance especially when, for example, a

304-page catalogue from Smith's Sport's Store is placed alongside and given the same space as an ES&A Bank brochure consisting of just two-folds. One may argue that the worth of one item over the other cannot be judged on size alone, but the reader is surely losing out by the failure to include any interior detail of the substantial Smith's catalogue.

Although both books focus on the Australian experience, a fair amount of the ephemera illustrated originates from overseas. This, of course, should be expected: in the case of commercial ephemera for example, Australia has always relied on foreign-made consumables to satisfy the local population. But no matter what its origin, a piece of ephemera held by a collector or institution is often one of only a very small number known to exist and sometimes even the only surviving copy. This is a sobering thought in our throw-away society, especially when some of this ephemera was originally produced in huge quantities.

It is great to see the recent publication of two Australian books on ephemera but perhaps unsurprising when one considers the enormous influence of online auctions on this subject area. It is admittedly outside the scope of both books, but it would be wonderful to see future publications or articles on how collectors use their ephemera collections and the way researchers and historians have been interpreting Australian history through ephemera.

Yesterday's paper and *Fragments of the everyday* provide excellent introductions to the story of ephemera in Australia from the viewpoint of collectors and institutions respectively. Vivienne O'Neill and Richard Stone are to be congratulated on their books.

Michael Lech is Assistant Curator of the Caroline Simpson Library & Research Collection, Historic Houses Trust of NSW, Sydney, and Secretary of the Australiana Society

The Australiana Society Inc.

President's Report 2007

The Australian Society turns 30 years old in 2008. From a small group of collectors based in Sydney, we have grown into an organisation which now produces a scholarly journal that is a leader in its field, with around 500 subscribers nationally and internationally. We have a loyal band of members, a hard-working committee and dedicated authors who write for our publication. We have generous private collectors, dealers, institutions and others who support our events program. We have sound finances, committed advertisers and a strong membership base.

Our publishing program is universally regarded as our greatest strength, but has its limitations. Perhaps the biggest omission is our inability to attract well-researched articles on ceramics and the minor subjects of Australiana. Furniture is well served, but we need people to pursue the lesser-known areas, such as pokerwork. These are generally the less expensive collectables – and in these areas we will attract more young collectors.

For me, there is something even more important about the Society than the magazine. As I reflect and write this in our country hotel, my most enduring thoughts are with the friends and friendships that are the backbone of my involvement, from its foundation, with the Australiana Society. Now that the membership is scattered, we need to cater more to the social needs of the members, by organising more widespread events and by providing greater links to those who want them.

2007 was a gruelling year because we lost two of the staunch supporters of the Society, Kevin Fahy AM and Caressa Crouch. They were not just leading lights in the Australiana field, but my valued advisers and much-loved friends. It would never have been possible to be President of this Society without their wise counsel and support. Losing both of them in one year was devastating for their families and for the Society. Fortunately their legacy thrives.

I am not seeking election as President this year. With a new business to

establish, I do not have enough time and energy to devote to the task, and the Society needs a change. The Society is a lot stronger now than when I became President in 1999, and the new President and committee have the opportunity to take it to greater heights.

Our interests may be in inanimate objects, but our enjoyment of them is immeasurably enhanced by the friendships we form along the way. I would not know or understand anywhere near as much if it were not for my friends' honest, perceptive and free observations.

The solitary collector, advised only by those with a vested financial interest, leaves himself or herself too vulnerable. Collectors who work in a social and intellectual vacuum are easily duped. Besides, you need an audience to listen to you brag about your successful hunting. I urge you all to use your membership to attend events and make friends with other collectors.

I wish the new President and committee well in 2008, and thank everyone for their support over the last eight years.

John Wade

Treasurer's Report

Year ended 31 December 2007

Our Society achieved a cash surplus of \$12,510 during the 2007 calendar year, a result that exceeded the 2006 surplus of \$5,470.

The primary reason for the improvement however, rested with the decision not to publish a November 2007 issue of *Australiana* magazine.

At 31 December 2007, overall the Society had a healthy \$55,000 invested in cash and investment reserves (the prior year was \$42,000)

I would like to thank John Wade and other Committee members for their assistance in making my role as honorary Treasurer that much easier.

I look forward to continued support from renewing subscribers, donors, advertisers and our other supporters.

Andrew Morris CA
Honorary Treasurer

Profit & Loss Statement

| | 12 Months to 31/12/2007 \$ | 12 Months to 31/12/2006 \$ |
|---|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Income | | |
| Subscriptions from Members | 24,847 | 22,766 |
| Advertising in Australiana | 5,582 | 9,118 |
| Australia Day & Raffle | 0 | 1,610 |
| Interest Received | 2,195 | 838 |
| Donations Received | 650 | 1,227 |
| Sponsorship - Peter Walker Fine Art | 0 | 300 |
| Sales of Australiana | 482 | 1,261 |
| Sundry Income (Meetings & Events) | 36 | 965 |
| Total Income | 33,792 | 38,085 |
| Expenditure - Australiana | | |
| Production | 16,116 | 21,617 |
| Postage | 2,504 | 3,958 |
| Stationery | 416 | 573 |
| Writing Awards | 0 | 300 |
| | 19,036 | 26,448 |
| Expenditure - General | | |
| Australia Day | 364 | 1,480 |
| Website | 553 | 597 |
| Membership Brochure Publication | 0 | 1,163 |
| Insurance | 485 | 530 |
| Merchant & Bank Fees | 441 | 490 |
| General Meeting & Event Expenses | 164 | 750 |
| Subscriptions to RAHS | 200 | 155 |
| Travel - Interstate Meetings (SA & Qld) | 0 | 964 |
| Corporate Affairs Filing Fees | 39 | 38 |
| | 2,246 | 6,167 |
| Total Expenditure | 21,282 | 32,615 |
| SURPLUS FOR YEAR | \$12,510 | \$5,470 |

Balance Sheet

| | 31/12/2007 \$ | 31/12/2006 \$ |
|--|------------------|------------------|
| Assets | | |
| Cash at Westpac Bank | 12,245 | 11,452 |
| Donations Account (Westpac) | 356 | 354 |
| Interest Bearing Term Deposit (Westpac) | 45,747 | 33,638 |
| Subscribers & Other Debtors | 30,157 | 25,281 |
| Total Assets | 88,505 | 70,725 |
| Less Liabilities | | |
| Creditors & Suppliers Owed | 7,438 | 0 |
| Subscriptions Raised in Advance (for 2008) | 24,486 | 26,423 |
| GST Payable | 1,884 | 2,115 |
| NET ASSETS | \$54,697 | \$42,187 |
| Members' Accumulated Funds | | |
| Balance Brought Forward | 42,187 | 36,717 |
| Surplus for Year | 12,510 | 5,470 |
| MEMBERS' FUNDS | \$54,697 | \$42,187 |

Colonial gold to turn forbidden leaves

I have read with interest the well-researched article on Louis Kitz and his gold presentation 'paper-knife' in *Australiana*, May 2008.

I purchased this important object as lot 173 in the Sotheby's Melbourne sale on 12 May 2006, although it was not illustrated in the catalogue. The descendants of Sir William à Beckett sold other items of family silver in this sale and the importance of this gold object was seemingly not understood by the auctioneers.

I suggest that it is in fact a *page turner*, not a paper-knife, a fact not lost on Sir William:

I shall doubtless, find it as useful as it is ornamental, it will help me to explore many a pleasant



volume, whose leaves my judicial labors no longer forbid me to open.

damage or wearing gloves was, for a literate and careful man, achieved with a page turner, in this case of pure Australian gold.

The turning of the pages of valuable illustrated books without causing

John Hawkins



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Pont Rean, c. 1926

Oil on Canvas on Composition Board
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Signed on reverse

Max Meldrum is regarded as one of Australia's most important teachers and theorists of the inter-war period. His pupils included Clarice Backett, Justus Jorgensen, Percy Leason and Arnold Shore. His ideas also influenced the development of Australian Modernism through the work of Roy de Maistre, Roland Wakelin, Lloyd Rees and William Frater.

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The First Australian Poem in Print

Watts (Susanna) Original poems and translations; sold by all the booksellers in Leicester, 1802. Half-title present, browned, pp.vii+[I]+144, 8vo., contemp. calf, defective, rebaked bookplate of Frances Maydwell Boone, early owner's signature (Eliza Hyde, Lowesby) on binder's preliminary blank (Ferguson 346)

O *Original poems and translations* was published in 1802. In addition to Watts's own poems, it contains a few works by others, including *The Prologue*, supposed to have been spoken at the opening of the theatre at Botany Bay. This Prologue was said to have been recited before the first dramatic performance in Australia, given on 16 January 1796, at a temporary theatre in Sydney. The performance, acted by convicts, was a double bill consisting of 'Revenge: a tragedy in five acts' by Edward Young, and a farce by Thomas Vaughan called 'The Hotel'. The Prologue is the first Australian verse to appear in print. Playbills for this theatre are the earliest printing in Australia. There are no extant playbills for the performance at which the Prologue was given. They are all later, although reference is made to a playbill of 30 July 1796 (not for the Revenge/Hotel performance), the so-called 'black tulip' of Australian printing.

Authorship of the Prologue is not known. It has been attributed to the notorious and plausible Irish pickpocket, George Barrington who, although himself transported, managed to secure a warrant of emancipation and become superintendent of convicts and high constable at Parramatta. No evidence, however, has so far been found which might support his, or indeed anyone's, claim to be the author. Watts states that it is written anonymously 'By a Gentleman'. She acknowledges the Barrington suggestion in a note immediately preceding the poem - 'this Prologue is supposed to have been spoken by the celebrated Mr. B—rr—ngt—n.' It was not until 1810 that this verse was published in Australia when it appeared in the form of a broadside of the first of Michael Robinson's Royal Birthday Odes.

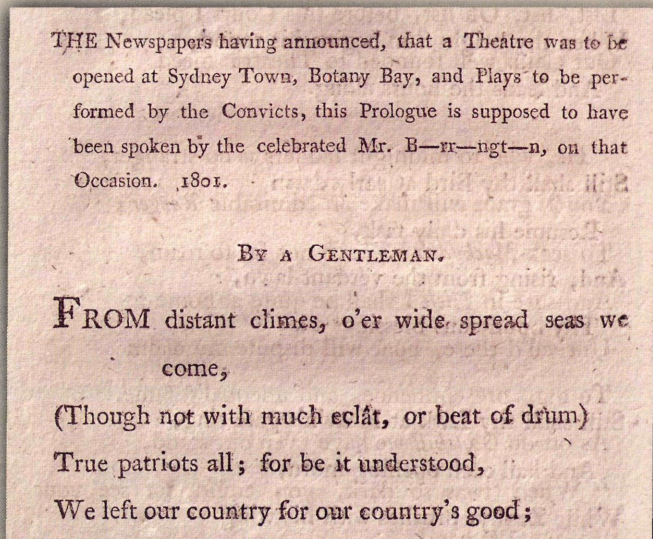
The recent discovery of the 1796 'black tulip' Playbill, for a production at the same theatre on 30 July 1796, printed in Australia, discovered in Canada and now in the National Library, Canberra has drawn attention to the importance of this book and its enclosed Prologue.



The volume is surprisingly scarce; it is over fifteen years since a copy has appeared for sale.

A rare opportunity is presented for the discerning collector to obtain a copy of the first printing of the iconic words:

"We left our country for our country's good"



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