

SA Australiana Study Group

44th Meeting, 30th May 2019

We recommend readers to the Australiana Society website
<https://www.australiana.org.au/> and encourage membership.

Attendance: 15



**Chair carved in blackwood by Maud Golley, c 1914.
Height 152 cm, width 85 cm, depth 61 cm.**

Alice (Maud) Golley (1884-1961) completed the *Kelly chair* in 1914. Although she first began to carve on Wedge Island in SA where she grew up, by the time the chair was commissioned, she had been living on the mainland of Eyre Peninsula for over two years and was 30 years of age. In 1914, Maud was unmarried and caring for her mother who had lost her sight. During this year, she also carved a dated frame that supported her hand tinted photograph wearing a red dress which was actually black.

As far as can be ascertained, the chair was her only commission and would probably come as a welcome distraction. There is no record of the transaction of five pounds but both Maud's daughters mentioned it decades apart in a letter from the 1970s and in an interview late last year. The transaction is reiterated by the current family, the descendants of the commissioner, Father Patrick Leo Kelly.

The chair is of magnificent proportions. It features Maud's characteristic nautical motifs and has elaborate rope arms as well as a rope bow at the back of the seat. The support panel is similar to the side of a church pew. Viewed ecclesiastically, the ropes almost funnel the viewer up to an altar adorned with a basket of roses, rose hips and ferns. A dove activates



Side view and back rest

sensory awareness of smell by pointing its beak into the basket of flowers. A second dove indicates the date of 1914 on an unfurling ribbon. Kelp-like tendrils hoist the back support; the negative space between the curls emphasises the celestial tone of the design. The basket is a larger version of that which appeared in a tiny version on an earlier piece known as the Chiffonier carved a decade earlier.

Father Kelly reputedly visited Wedge Island to visit Maud's mother because she was an Irish Catholic. Maud's carving would have been known to him because he was ministering in the parish (the largest in the Commonwealth at that time) when Maud was 'discovered' by Governor Le Hunte as part of Dutton's sailing party and became a national celebrity. Furthermore, another young and single creative woman, Janie De Lacey, lived in the Presbytery of the church of St Mary of the Angels in Port Lincoln because Father Kelly acted as assistant to the older priest who had adopted Janie as a young child. Janie was encouraged to develop her artistic accomplishments in piano and painting. Additionally, Father Kelly's sister gained a First Class Honours degree in Mathematics from the University of Adelaide before Federation. I suspect that Father Kelly actively sought to support Maud as a clever and talented young woman because he was somewhat conditioned to do so. Did he supply her with technical wood carving manuals? Maud's descendants believed that he supplied Maud with blackwood for carving but this has not been substantiated.

The chair has been in private hands since its execution and been passed down the family line. Its excellent condition today is solely due to the educated women who were its custodians. It is hoped that it will become part of a national collection in the near future as the current custodian is the last in her line.

For a more detailed account of Alice Maud Golley, see *Alice Maud Golley, a remote wood carver* by Jodie Vandepier, in "Australiana" vol. 40 no. 4, November 2018.



MERLE ROBERTSON
from Resident Engineers Staff
Adelaide 1916

Gilt French brass carriage clock, presented in Adelaide, 1916. Height (handle up) 15.4 cm.

Engraved with a presentation inscription: *MERLE ROBERTSON / from Resident Engineers Staff / Adelaide 1916.*

Merle Robertson (1898-1969) was born at Quorn, and showed a precocious talent for music, composing at the age of four, and noted as having both a remarkable memory and an extraordinarily sensitive ear. Flourishing under Mrs Nettle, a local teacher, after five years tuition her parents moved to Adelaide to advance her studies. Winning prizes at the Elder Conservatorium for violin and piano, she was also a fine contralto, and her achievements were capped by the award of an Elder Scholarship in 1915 for four years of study at the Royal College of Music. When she left for London on the RMS Mongolia (9 March 1916) her father took leave from the railways to settle her in to London life, and later acted as her manager. It is most likely that his workmates presented the clock to Robertson.

Four years in London and then a rapidly developing professional career saw her return to study, mixing literature and language at Oxford University. Arriving on a visit to Adelaide in 1924 it was noted that she spoke with a slight foreign accent, and had mastered four or five languages. Merle went on to become the toast of royalty and a darling of the New York social set. Known as the “Lioness of the Keyboard”, she tutored the children of the Vanderbilt family, and played with Percy Grainger at Carnegie Hall, as well as with the New York String Quartet.

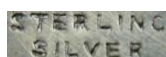
With the onset of WW2 Robertson returned to Adelaide, where on 1 April 1940 she married fellow musician Ludvik Schwab, the date deliberately chosen and a mark of her mischievous sense of humour. Schwab was an outstanding piano and viola player who was to teach at the Elder Conservatorium, where he had a “particularly promising pupil” – Brenton Langbein. In Adelaide they lived at Avenue Park, now Cumberland Park, in a house her mother owned, and where the widowed Robertson stayed until the 1960s. On moving to smaller premises she sold the wonderfully preserved Victorian house to collector and pianist Malcolm Best, leaving him her piano, and the clock.



Edward Fischer, Design for Campbell crest badge c. 1875-90.

Pencil on paper, 12.0 x 7.2 cm. Collection: Geelong Gallery

Purchased with the generous support of the Sunshine Foundation, Suzanne and Robin Hunt and the Dorothy McAllister Bequest Fund, 2002



Campbell clan badge in silver, Edward Fischer, Geelong c. 1875-90. 6.2 x 5.2cm.

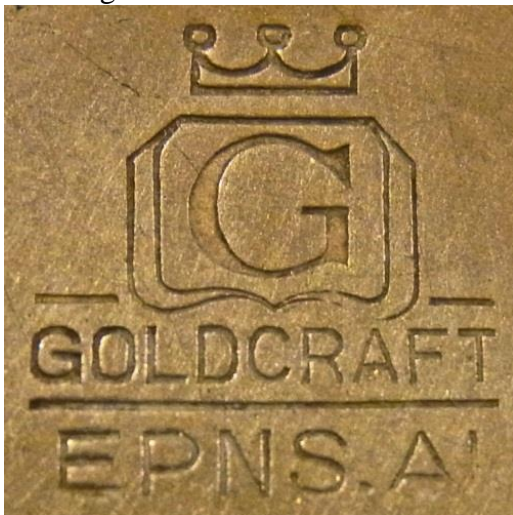
The circular badge with applied motto “Ne Obliviscaris” (*You must not forget*). The design for this badge is a variant on that shown in the pencil sketch held by the Geelong Gallery, with the differing motto for another branch of the Campbell clan. The making of such badges and jewellery was an important part of the business of Edward Fischer (1828-1911), the Vienna born son of a jeweller, as shown by the archive of design drawings from his workshop sold by Christie’s in Melbourne in November 1991. This comprised 98 designs and pattern books in pen and ink, pencil and watercolour, most unnamed but the majority attributed in the sale catalogue to Frederick Woodhouse Senior (1820-1909), well known for his sporting illustrations and designs for gold and silver trophies. As a specialist animal painter, the view of the Geelong Gallery is that the Woodhouse contribution would have been to “round out” detail, particularly of animal figures, thus giving the workshop a more three dimensional idea of what was to be produced. The sketches of the numerous masonic and prize medals, as well as jewellery items, many carrying the Fischer name or initials, are thus most likely from the hand of Fischer himself.

Fischer had arrived in Victoria in the early 1850s, and was in business in Geelong by late in that decade. After a slow start, his talents were recognised, particularly after he had been commissioned to make the first locally manufactured Melbourne Cup in 1865. A succession of annual Geelong Gold Cups from his workshop followed, produced initially in 1873, and then through the next decade. Commissions came from interstate, New Zealand, and even Fiji, a robust endorsement of his skill and value. Selling the business in 1891 he moved to Melbourne, there setting up in Collins Street with his son Harry, and apparently retiring in 1904 leaving Harry to carry on until the business closed in about 1916.



Two electroplated souvenir tea strainers. Length 12.5 cm.

Although almost identical to the two shown below, one of these carries an English maker's mark while its companion is unmarked. The applied enamel badges are for Tasmania and the City of Bendigo.



Two electroplated tea strainers on marked bases. Length 12.5 cm.

The strainers are unmarked, but the bases carry the mark shown above, which is for the Goldcraft Plating Works of Melbourne. Advertising for staff from at least 1937 from their premises in Little Lonsdale Street South Melbourne, the company appears to have moved to Alfred Street South Melbourne in 1948. Although an article in 1952 criticising the sales tax on electroplate mentioned that Goldcraft had closed, the company was still advertising for trade apprentices well past that date, and advertising its wares into the late 1950s.



Handle for a stockwhip, cedar, unknown maker, mid-19thC (?). Length 37.5 cm.

This example with its finely turned decoration and fiddle-back grain was chosen by the owner to illustrate *chatoyance*, a word in the Shorter Oxford Dictionary describing an *iridescent undulating lustre*. This grain structure is the result of stresses in the timber of the growing tree caused, usually by compression, and is an example of reaction wood.



**Souvenir paper knife in fiddle-back blackwood, by Shott & Son, Launceston, 20thC.
Length 22 cm.**

Also chosen to illustrate the characteristic ripple effect of chatoyance or fiddle-back woodgrain patterning, this is an example of the souvenir products made by Shott & Son (founded 1907) over most of the 20th century. Initially umbrella makers and repairers, the firm branched into producing small mementos for tourists out of local timbers, such as egg cups, napkin rings walking sticks and boxes. These were often identified by small paper stick-on labels, or their characteristic application of stamped out silver maps of Tasmania, as on this example.

Shott & Son moved into the 1860 building in George Street Launceston in 1920 from their earlier premises next door, and when the last of the family active in the business died in 1978 the property was taken over by the National Trust. It is now a museum and National Trust shop, and is one of the few examples of an intact early 20th century shop to survive in Tasmania.



A sample of Crows Ash *flindersia australis* (Australian Teak) timber. 7.5x6.0x5.8 cm.

This sample was chosen by the owner to illustrate the ripple effect of stresses on the graining of timber, resulting in the characteristic fiddle-back or chatoyance effect seen on polished woodwork. It is most often seen on the living tree at the junction of a branch with the trunk, where compression caused by the weight of the branch causes the structure shown above.



Two Adelaide Children's Hospital Centenary (1876-1976) award medals encapsulated in acrylic. Both to (Dr) R Cheney, life member 8.10.1976 and Genetics Symposium, August 1976. Diameter 48 mm. silvered bronzed, and struck at Allan J Olson Pty Ltd of Adelaide (210 minted).

The Adelaide Children's Hospital opened in 1879 in North Adelaide. It was run by a board of management and funded by donations, fund raising and government subsidies. The Adelaide Children's Hospital ran the Queen Victoria Convalescent Home for Children at Mount Lofty and Mareeba Babies Hospital. It also purchased and ran Estcourt House at Tennyson. In 1989 the Adelaide Children's Hospital combined with the Queen Victoria Hospital to form the Adelaide Medical Centre for Women and Children.

The Recipient: The 2012 Australia Day honors awarded the recipient, Professor Kevin Cheney of 57/5 Mount Barker Road, Urrbrae SA 5064 an OAM for service to medicine in the field of haematology. His record revealed he was Director of Haematology, Women's and Children's Hospital, Adelaide, 1961-1988; Senior Specialist of Haematology, 2003-2009; Emeritus Haematologist, 1989; Life Member, 1976; former Chair, Laboratory Division; former Deputy Chair, Medical Staff Committee; former Member, Board of Management; former Member, Medical Advisory Committee. Gribbles Professor of Biomedical Sciences, University of South Australia, 1998-2002; former Chair, Human Ethics Committee; former Chair, Advisory Committee in Medical Laboratory Science. Director of Haematology, Gribbles Pathology, 2000-2002; Consultant Haematologist, 1998-2000; Sessional Haematologist, 1990-1991. Director of Haematology and Deputy Medical Director, Adelaide Pathology, 1989-1990. Former Adjunct Professor, University of South Australia. Deputy Director, Blood Transfusion Service, Australian Red Cross, South Australian Division, 1991-1997; Council Member, 1982-1991; Executive Member, 1982-1991. Chairman, South Australian Blood Transfusion Committee, Australian Red Cross, 1982-1991; Deputy Chairman, 1982. Member, National Blood Transfusion Committee, Australian Red Cross, 1982-1991. Honorary Life Member, Australian Red Cross, 1999. Member, Haematology Society of Australia. Member, International Society of Haematology.

As the recipient of the medals is still alive the current owner contacted the recipient by phone on the 5th May 2019 and confirmed with him that the medals were not stolen and must have been discarded during one of his moves.

The medallist, Allan Olson started in the industry as a fifteen year old apprenticed to S. Schlank and Co. and became its managing director. In 1966 he established his own medal and badge making firm and the business is now run by his son, Jeff. For further details on his company go to: <http://www.numismatics.org.au/pdfjournal/Vol25/Vol%2025%20Article%209.pdf>



‘Advertiser Youth Travel’ blazer pocket with Australian Coat of Arms. C 1951-54.

Embroider: not known, but most likely from an Adelaide firm.

Some 303 boys in Australia went on the ‘Youth Travel’ scheme to Britain. The Adelaide newspaper, *The Advertiser*, local councils and others, sponsored the ‘Advertiser Youth Travel’ programme to the UK and at the same time some interstate papers also participated in the scheme during the early 1950s.

In April 1952 an article in *The Advertiser* summed up an early tour: Thirty five boys and leaders sailed from Adelaide on a 17 week tour of Britain and were joined by 58 Victorian boys. Their role was not only to act as ambassadors, ‘but as a magnet to draw other boys and their families to Australia’, The SA governor Sir Willoughby Norrie, the patron of the Youth Travel, said that “Australians in England were regarded as ‘great, loyal friends.’ and when they see your blazers, with the kangaroo and the emu in the arms on the pocket you will find them giving all the help you want”. He added “This is a wonderful opportunity to see the Mother Country, and to get to know other boys, and when you get home you will be able to tell others about your trip.”

Sir Lloyd Dumas of *The Advertiser* said that all the families with whom the boys stayed in England would receive food parcels from SA.



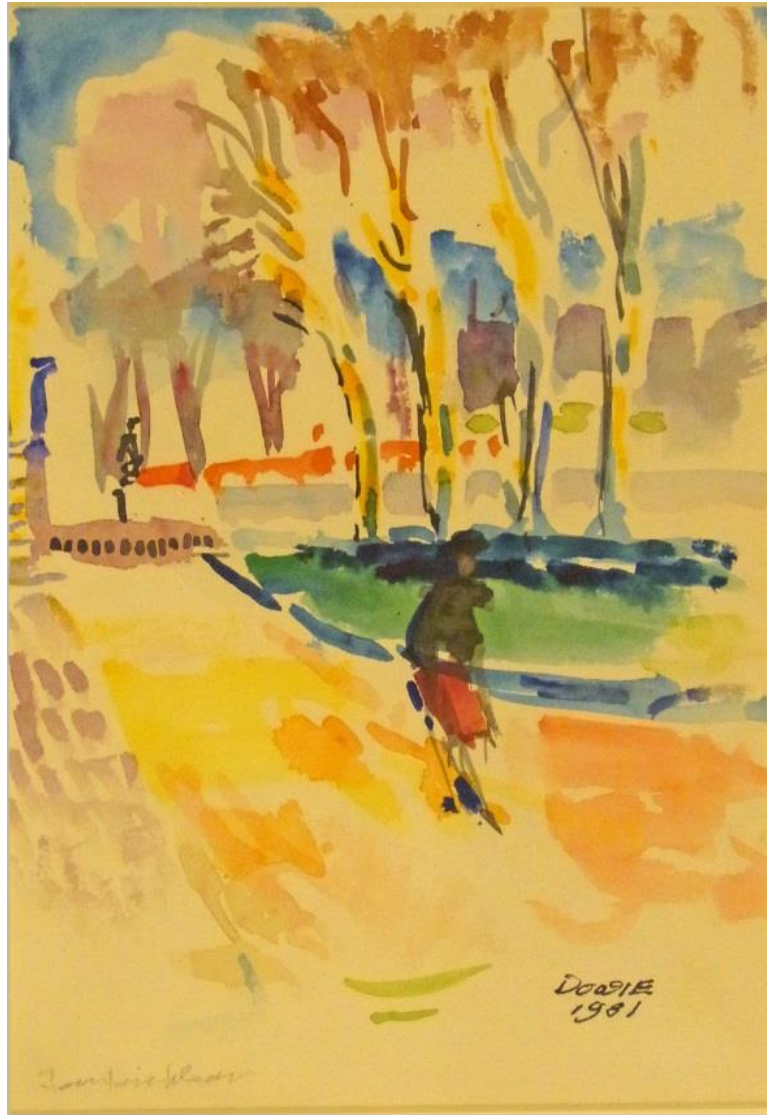
Copy of maquette for the sculpture for the Australian National Railways Commission, 1979, bronze, by Gabriel Sterk. Height 17.3 cm.

Titled on the base "The Ghan Alice Springs", and commissioned to commemorate the arrival of the inaugural passenger train on the Tarcoola-Alice Springs railway on 9 October 1980, the full size sculpture now seen at the Alice Springs Railway Station pays tribute to the Afghan cameleers who had distributed supplies in the outback.

Gabriel Sterk was born in Holland in 1942, and migrated with his family to Adelaide in 1950, where he had his first art lessons, studying with Dora Chapman, who advised him to return to Europe as soon as he could. Capitalizing on his early talent and passion, Sterk returned to Holland where he studied sculpture in Amsterdam at the Royal Academy between 1960 and 1967. Public success came to him when he was awarded a Laureate of the Prix de Rome at the age of twenty seven. His talent for portraiture and equine sculpture resulted in an invited return to Australia, where he set up his own foundry on the outskirts of Hahndorf, and carried out casting for John Dowie, who had recognised his skill as a founder as well as artist.

Moving to France in 1987 Sterk continued to reap commissions and awards, exhibiting widely, later moving to Aix-en-Provence, attracted, as were many others, by the light of Provence. One of his proudest moments was to be requested by the Director of the Cezanne Atelier to provide a bronze statue of the artist to celebrate his centenary in 2006, as Cezanne had been one of the artists he had most admired.

On being contacted by the owner of the above casting, Sterk mentioned that it was one of only two or three copies of the maquette that he had produced.

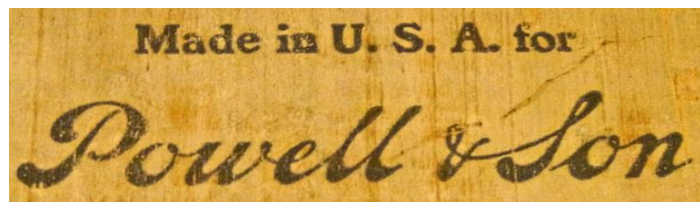
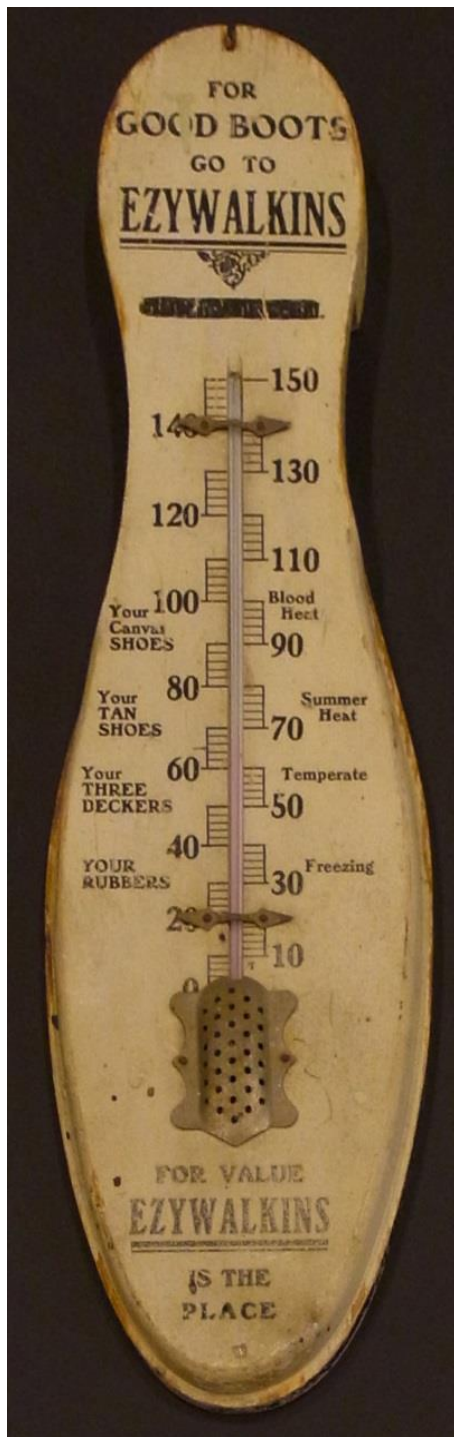


Watercolour painting dated 1981 by John Dowie (1915-2008). 27x18.8 cm (visible).

A colourful watercolour from John Dowie's sketch book showing (probably) part of the English Garden at Fontainebleau in France, dated for 1981, the year he was honoured by his appointment as a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for his service as painter and sculptor.

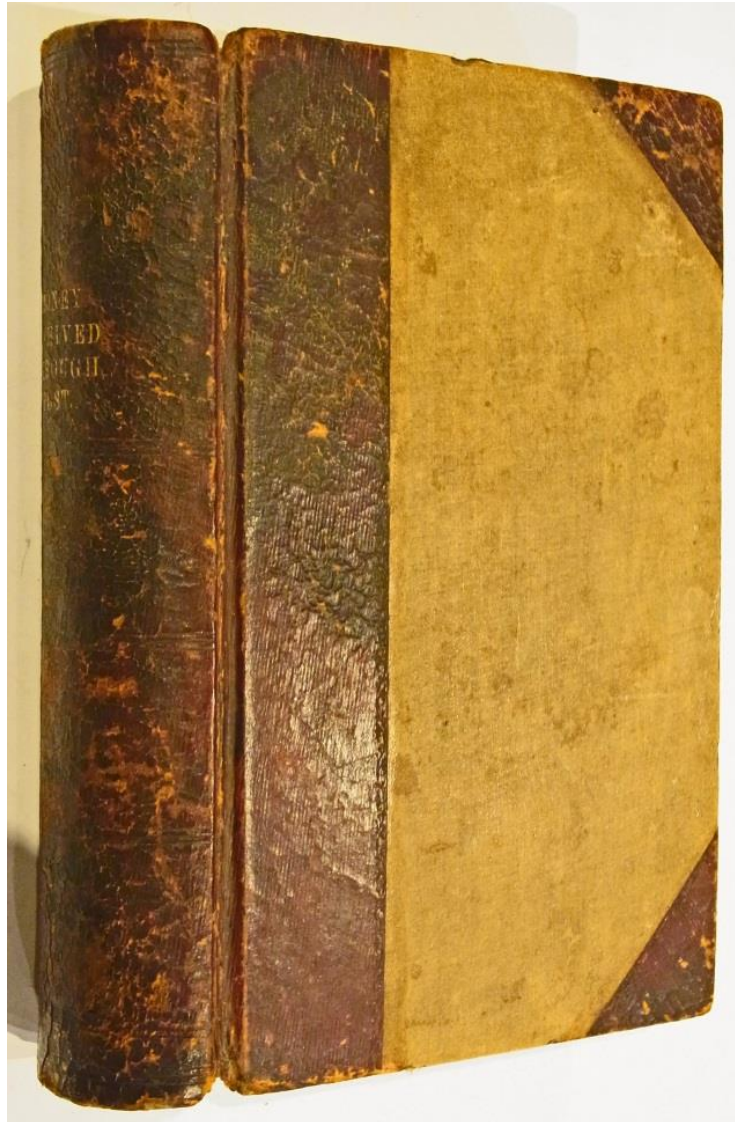
With his talent recognised early, Dowie was studying modelling at the SA School of Art at the age of ten, and by the mid-1930s while still attending classes there was also studying architecture at the University of Adelaide. A war artist during WW2, he returned to Adelaide at its end, joining the progressive Contemporary Art Society of SA as well as Dorrit Black's "Group 9". Friendly with the Haywards of Carrick Hill, he benefited by mixing in their artistic circle before leaving for England and Europe in 1950. There he studied stone sculpture, modelling and bronze casting, before returning to take up his teaching career in 1953. Public sculpture commissions soon followed, but in 1977, dissatisfied with his knowledge and technique, he returned to Europe to further his knowledge. Such was his standing and the love of his public artworks that he was accorded a State funeral.

Apart from the many sculptures by Dowie in his home state, his public works are to be found throughout Australia, and as far afield as Holland, the Solomon Islands, Antarctica, London and Washington. As well as such widespread appreciation of his artistic talents, he is also remembered as "an unpretentious, witty and affable man".



Advertising thermometer for Ezywalkin shoes.

Imported by the Adelaide firm of Powell & Son of King William Street, this thermometer was a promotional vehicle for footwear retailer Ezywalkins in South Australia, established here in 1913 and importing most of its footwear from the parent company in Melbourne. Founded in WA in 1901, the Ezywalkins Melbourne factory opened in 1910, and from the initial SA shop in Rundle Street, by the mid-1920s there were several outlets across the metropolitan area and Mount Gambier, later spreading to Port Lincoln, Port Pirie and into more city suburbs. The company was alive to the value of advertising, and such things as branded button hooks, cigarette cases and children's beach buckets were distributed, now showing up in the market for bygones.



Box in the form of a book, leather on wood. 34.5 x 25.5 x 8.3 cm.

Made with a carcass formed from pine packing case timber, and leather bound, the box bears stamped to one end “Fry’s Cocoa”, and the other end as shown. Gold blocked as for a book title, the spine is stamped “Money Received Through Post”, and the underside is mounted with eight decorative brass studs. Fry’s could trace their history in confectionery making back to Joseph Fry in 1759, and were pioneers in mass market chocolate making in the 19th century. Highly aware of the value of advertising, they distributed counter-top boxes made of pine with eye-catching printed labels for their various products. The body of this item may have been just such a box, or perhaps was made as a special promotional gift.



Silver trophy cup presented at Robe, SA, in 1878. Height 17 cm.

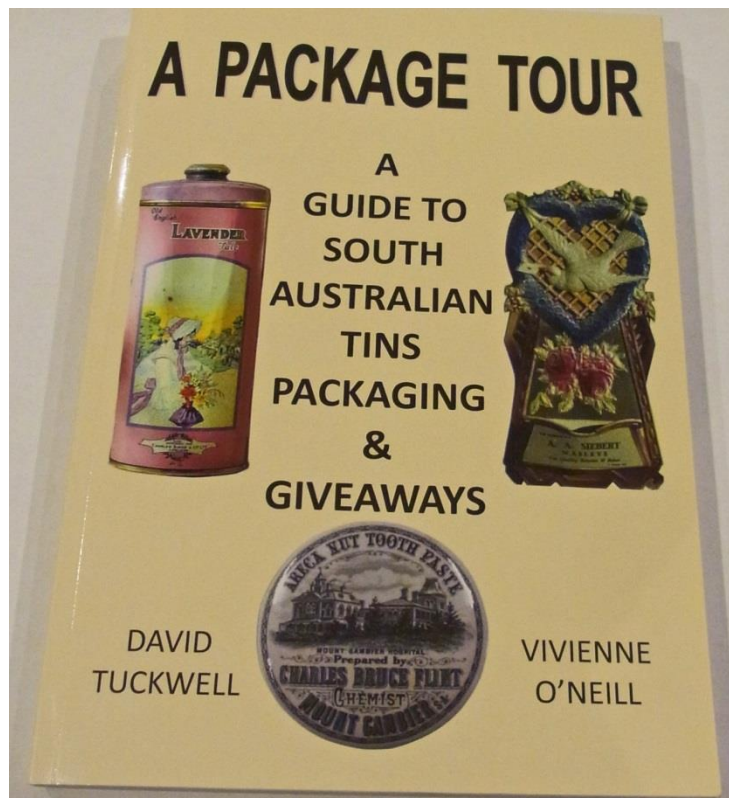
Engraved with the inscription: *For the best Draught [horse] Entire, not over 4 Years old awarded to R. Stockdale 26th Sep. 1878* and inscribed on the reverse *Robe pastoral Agri^l & Hort^l association Show held 26th Sept^r 1878*. This was one of several prizes awarded to Robert Stockdale at this show. Stockdale had been trained as a civil engineer in the “old country”, and owned Lake Eliza station near Robe, where he was a successful breeder of horses, chiefly Clydesdales. Stockdale also took up land on Kangaroo Island, calling the property Karatta station, after his house named Karatta in Robe, but the venture was not a success. It is said that the steamship plying the gulf trade to the island and also christened Karatta took its name from his property. A silver plated tea kettle presented to the captain of the S S Karatta in 1912 was shown at our meeting no. 25 in November 2017.

The trophy cup is hallmarked for Birmingham, 1877, with the marks of the manufacturer, the firm of Hilliard and Thomason of Spencer Street, Birmingham.



Gold prize medallion, mounted as a brooch, unknown maker, c 1878. Diameter 2.7 mm.

Engraved *Robe Pastoral Agricultural & Horticultural Association Show held 26th Sept 1878*, and on the reverse *For the best Draught Stallion awarded to R Stockdale Guy Fawkes*. If there are any markings to the rim of the medallion, they are obscured by the applied gold rim of the mounting. Similar medallions were produced by the two main Adelaide jewellers of the day, Wendt and Steiner, both of whom had outlets in Mount Gambier. Such medallions would also have been within the capabilities of smaller regional jewellers. Robert Stockdale, as mentioned above, bred horses at his nearby Lake Eliza station. He had been described as “...the life and the soul of the Robe Pastoral and Agricultural Society...”, and died at the age of 47 years in 1881



A Package Tour: A Guide to South Australian Tins Packaging & Giveaways

The book shown was published in 2014 by the authors, ISBN: 9780646906171. It contains a remarkable fund of information, and is well illustrated.

For enquiries, contact the authors Vivienne O'Neill at gilbertside@bigpond.com or David Tuckwell at tuckwelldavid@bigpond.com.au



Sir George Hubert Wilkins (1888-1958)

The life and remarkable achievements of Sir George Hubert Wilkins have been brought into focus by the recent establishment of The Wilkins Foundation, and the acceptance of the position of Patron by Dr Richard Harris OAM, joint Australian of the Year in 2019.

Born at Mount Bryan East, South Australia, into a farming family, Wilkins developed an early interest in climatic phenomena, studied engineering in Adelaide and pursued interests in photography and cinematography. Leaving Australia in 1908 he travelled widely, learnt to fly, and over the next decade took part in an Arctic expedition, and acted as a war correspondent and photographer. His first visit to Antarctica in 1920-21 was followed by filming in the Soviet Union, and then a commission to collect rare native fauna in tropical Australia. He pioneered air exploration of the Arctic, then of the Antarctic in 1928-29, followed by his 1930 unsuccessful attempt to reach the North Pole in the submarine *Nautilus*.

Four more expeditions to Antarctica followed during the 1930s, and he also took part in the search for a lost Russian flyer in the Arctic, developed night flying techniques, and carried out scientific observations. Too old for active service in WW2, he acted for U.S. government agencies as well as advising on survival in extreme cold and serving in the U.S. Weather Bureau. His interests in exploration and meteorology, irrepressible curiosity, physical courage and mental endurance resulted in many honours and awards, including a dual Military Cross. Such was the respect accorded to him in the U.S. that his ashes were scattered at the North Pole from the U.S.S. *Skate*.

The Wilkins Foundation has as its aims to bring wider knowledge of Wilkins' inspirational life and achievements to Australians, mainly through school programs. By acting as an educational resource, establishing a Science Scholarship, and inspiring children to be involved in outdoor life and the natural sciences, it is hoped that his legacy will enrich further generations. His name deserves to be recognised alongside those of such Australian heroes of exploration as Sturt, Mawson, Eyre and Stuart.

For further information on the story of Wilkins, and the aims of the Wilkins Foundation, see:
<https://wilkinsfoundation.org.au>