

## Report of Australiana Society Queensland branch 6<sup>th</sup> meeting 10<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Jennifer I welcomed the group to the first meeting of 2021. It was a lovely convivial night with lots of friendly conversation and the exchange of information and reminiscences. The range of the items brought along for discussion showed that Australiana members have a wide range of interests and knowledge about Australia's history and heritage. Perhaps unsurprisingly for Brisbane, established relatively late in Australian history and, until fairly recently a less wealthy population, many of the objects were 20<sup>th</sup> century, with a couple of 21<sup>st</sup> century examples. Australiana continues to be made!

Discussions ranged widely and included some interesting aspects of the multi-cultural settlement of Brisbane as well as the flourishing arts and crafts of the later 20<sup>th</sup> century.

I thank the owners of the items for the following information and contributions.

David Bedford, Chair, Queensland Branch

### Show and Tell Items in order of discussion

#### 1. **Wooden sculpture of a Frill Necked Lizard,**



**Signed CH and dated 1935.**

**Size: 24.5 x 10.5 x 4.5 cm.**

Carved from a block of plain-figured Queensland maple timber. Ex Caressa Crouch and Carl Gonsalves Collection. Possibly made by John Castle Harris.

The identity of the person who made this has not been confirmed and may never be so. To the best of the owners' knowledge no other similarly signed carved timber items have been found to date. However, after 1935 John Castle Harris began making pottery that frequently featured Frill Necked Lizards with similar detailing. Harris's signature on the pottery items is quite different to this incised signature. However, as one pottery expert in the meeting commented, it would be expected that would be so given the different nature of the materials and the tools used.

The owners would be very grateful for any information or feedback from members about the carver.

**2 & 3. Pottery items by Larissa Warren, Mt Tamborine, Queensland, 2020**



2



3

**2. Bowl, earthenware, wheel thrown Mt Tamborine clay with glaze  
Impressed beneath base: LW. Size 7.5 x 9 c. (diam.)**

**3. Larissa Warren (unsigned), Lidded bowl, white stoneware handbuilt and inlaid with Mt  
Tamborine clays. Size 5.5 x 7.8 cm (diam.)**

These two pieces are barely six months old as they were presented to me when I opened Larissa's exhibition at 360° Design last December. I can assert that not only are these two pieces Australian, they are also Queenslandian and Tambourineianan.

Larissa Warren has been actively involved with ceramics for the last 10 years, has exhibited widely and been awarded prizes such as the 2018 Siliceous Award for Ceramic Excellence for a work entitled 'Room and Pillar'. In recent years Warren has been using this idea of geological strata in her work which suggests the passage of eons of time and further the time it takes for strata to be worn down and produce the clay which is her medium. Industries have sprung up to exploit the known properties of these clay bodies — potters make use of such commercially available clays and are thus free to express their creativity with different decorative techniques. Although clay comes in many colours the final effect when the clay is fired in the kiln is less well controlled.

Establishing a sense of the uniqueness of location has been a significant aspect of the Studio Pottery movement in Australia in the Post World War Two period in which the influence of Japanese ceramics has been marked. More particularly Larissa had located nine sources for Tamborine Mountain clays primarily from community conversations and especially her research into the Morris sisters and their home and gallery space, The Poplars —the current owners allow her to dig the creamy clay from their backyard. Other clay samples come from farmers or property owners who are digging a few metres or more down to put in pathways or pools etc where the clay is uncontaminated. (She now has a reputation as the 'clay lady'. The clay body is very high in iron and kaolin as a result of the shield volcano (Mt Warning) of some 20 million years + of lava / ash overflow and then heat and pressure.

Mt Tamborine has literary underpinnings as four writers have extensively represented life on the mountain: Mabel Forrest (Most famous for her ‘Moth of Moonbi’); nationally regarded poet and conservationist Judith Wright (resided 1948 to 1975) and more recently Raymond Curtis and Eve Curtis. Larissa has been an Art and Media teacher for 18 years and in 2019 made the decision to concentrate on her art full time when she and her family established themselves on Mt Tamborine.

Larissa has researched the local ceramic tradition beginning with the Morris sisters Isobel and Joyce who established the Tamborine Pottery in Wongawallan Road in the 1940s as an adjunct to their tea rooms. They used clay from their own property to produce a host of small decorative wares for thirty years from c. 1945 which have now become appreciated and collectible. Doris Aagaard, a friend to the Morris sisters, was also a well-regarded Queensland wood carver who started the Tamborine Mountain Creative Arts (now housed next to the Heritage Centre) in the late 1950s. It was through her friendship with Aagaard that Frances Carnegie (d. 1988) established herself here in 1960. Like Isobel, Carnegie was a former student of L.J. Harvey, the important exponent of hand-built pottery in Brisbane. She also had experience with contemporary wheel throwers Harry Memmott and Milton Moon. She brought this skill to the Mountain when she also taught Aagaard. She has documented this research in an article ‘Wild women, wild clay’.

Larissa has conducted numerous tests of these clay bodies and in her exhibition showed the effects of the clays when subjected to different firing temperatures which were shown in assemblages of wheel thrown vessels. One can SEE the varicoloured layers of native clay she used in her nerikomi \* porcelains. Her work is positively an expression of the locale.

Glenn R. Cooke

\*The Japanese root neri means ‘to mix’ komi means ‘to press into’ confirming that vessels of varicoloured clay are hand built. An English equivalent is ‘agate ware’ made in the Staffordshire potteries during the 18th century in which contrasting coloured stained clays were pressed into a mould.

#### 4-8. Examples of immigrants’ retention of religious beliefs in Australia

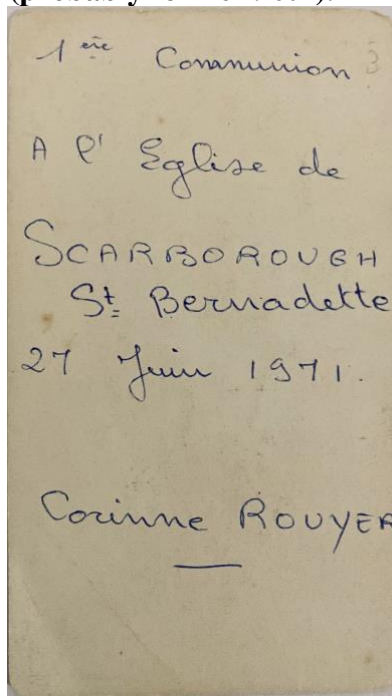


4. Confirmation certificate in German given to Fritz Hinze on 7 March 1888

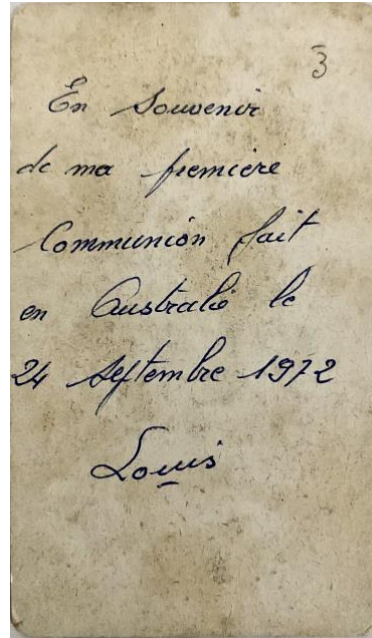




5. and 6. Two framed certificates for Apostolic Blessings presented to May Landener in 1975 (for her 87th birthday) and 1978 (probably for her 90th).



7. Souvenir of communion for Corinne Rouyer, 1971 (front and rear of card)



### 8. Souvenir of communion for Louis Rouyer, 1972 (front and rear of card)

Our participant, who is not related to the people named on these certificates, has found them in antique markets in Annerley and elsewhere in Brisbane and was interested by the social history that they represent. They contain information about the origins of Australian immigrants and their attempts to retain their original religious beliefs and, in the last two items, their actions to pass those on to their children. The artwork on the certificates themselves also talks about aesthetic changes over time.

Confirmation certificate in German given to Fritz Hinze on 7 March 1888 at the Lutheran church at Gilston, which is a village in the Advancetown/Beechmont area, in the Gold Coast hinterland near the Hinze Dam (constructed in 1976 and subsequently upgraded twice). The area around the nearby Nerang, Logan and Albert rivers was a well-known area for settlement by German immigrants coming to Queensland from the 1860s.

Two framed certificates for Apostolic Blessings presented to May Landener in 1975 (for her 87th birthday) and 1978 (probably for her 90th). These each contain a different photo of Pope Paul VI. The first certificate is in quite an ornate, somewhat old fashioned "illuminated manuscript" style, while the latter (only by 3 years) has a drastically revised, stripped-down, modernist imagery. Both are signed with a handwritten dedication in Latin and have the impressed seal of the Holy See. The signatures near the seal are the same on each but are quite unclear. They do not appear to be the name of the then Papal Nuncio in Australia.

Two "holy picture cards" given as souvenirs of a boy's and a girl's first communion. Both have dedications on the back in French. Accompanying these were five religious cards from various places of pilgrimage in France (not photographed). The reverse of the boy's card reads: *En souvenir de ma premiere Communion fait en Australie le 24 Septembre 1972 Louis*. The girl's card has written on the back: *1er [premier] Communion a l'Eglise de SCARBOROUGH St Bernadette 27 Juin 1971 Corrine Rouyer*.

Their parents, Georges Charles and Marie Therese ROUYER were granted Certificates of Australian Citizenship in August 1969 with their daughter Corrine Marie Therese. In 1970 they had relations who resided in Deception Bay, not very far from Scarborough.

These items are of interest because they indicate some of the variety of immigrants to Australia in the post-WWII era and the attempt by those immigrants to retain at least some of the elements of their origins.

The presentation of these items was followed by an interesting discussion about the areas that participants in the meeting grew up in and the wide variety of nationalities represented in those areas. There was some nostalgia expressed for the now lost cultural differences of such former icons as the Blue Bird and Paragon cafés and some distinctive stores, now all replaced with the likes of McDonalds etc.



## 9. Framed brush ink drawing of a brushtail possum by Kathleen Shillam



Signed lower right. Size: 20 x 30 cm.

A dynamic and graphic depiction of a common Australian native animal, the Brushtail Possum. Kathleen Shillam (née O'Neill) and Leonard (Len) Shillam were a prolific and talented husband and wife team of artists and sculptors working in Brisbane from the 1930s. They met at Brisbane Art College in 1932 and lived their lives in the suburb of Brighton. The Shillams are best known for their sculptures and Kathleen produced a series of small bronze sculptures of Australian animals.

## 10-12. A collection of Australiana scarves

Scarves are believed to have originated in ancient Egypt and examples are depicted on bas-reliefs and sculptures from Rome, China and Assyria. However, it wasn't until the 19th and early twentieth century that scarves became a popular fashion accessory.

Looking back on past examples and the range of subjects depicted, it is clear that scarves offer a statement about more than just the taste of their time. They can be chroniclers of places, personalities and events, and powerful articles of social, cultural and political communication.

The three examples seen here demonstrate some of their potential. The first two date from the late 1950s/or early 60s – an era when 'modern' easy-care and affordable synthetic fabrics attracted a new market and created opportunities for innovative graphic designers.



10. 'Neil' of Australia (dates unknown) 'The City of Canberra', Silk acetate, Size 67 x 67cm.

The owner would welcome any information on the maker, 'Neil', a forgotten and seemingly undocumented Australian company that specialized in scenic designs of this kind, especially for souvenir tea-towels.



11. Unknown Maker (dates unknown) 'Queensland', Silk rayon, 67 x 67cm.



## 12. *Le géographe Carré*



**12. Designed by Sandra Laroche for ©Maison Hermès, Paris, 1st edition 1992, Silk Jacquard, screen printed by hand. Size 90 x 90c, Private collection**

The third scarf depicted is by Hermès of Paris, who have a long history of producing such items having introduced the first ready-to-wear graphic silk scarf in 1937.

The owner writes:

'Le Géographe' is a beautiful *carré de soie*, rich in content, meaning and detail. It was issued in 1992 as part of Hermès' 1992 Spring/Summer 'Year of the Sea' collection. It was designed by Australian Sandra Laroche and was the first scarf produced by the prestigious French apparel and leather-goods house on an Australian theme.



'Le Geographe' is an homage to the expedition undertaken between 1800 and 1803 by Nicholas Baudin to map the coast and to observe and document the geography and natural history of New Holland. The vessels *Naturaliste* and *Géographe* left Le Havre in October 1800 with nine scientists including zoologist François Péron, artist/guénner Charles-Alexandre Lesueur and cartographer and naturalist Louis de Freycinet.

On July 18, 1801 a similar expedition set sail from Great Britain led by Captain Matthew Flinders with orders to chart and map the southern coast of *Terra Australis*. Flinders' ship *Investigator* reached Cape Leeuwin on December 6, 1801. On 8 April 1802, *Investigator* and *Géographe* accidentally met off the South Australian coast and both captains exchanged information about their discoveries at a location that Flinders later named 'Encounter Bay'.

The design of the scarf pays homage to this momentous event with oval portraits of Baudin, Péron, Leseur and Flinders flanking a map of Australia, surrounded by emblems of the French Republic and native flora and fauna. Kangaroo and anchor motifs also are woven into the jacquard silk. '

**The Artist:** Sandra Laroche was born in Queensland and moved to Sydney from Brisbane in 1965. In her early years, she worked as a children's book illustrator and as a freelance artist, taking night classes at Sydney Technical College. 'Le Geographe' was inspired by a scale model of the vessel produced c 1990 by her husband Michel Laroche for the Australian National Maritime Museum.

The success of 'Le Geographe' led to further commissions from Hermes. *Au Clair de la Lune*, *Fleurs d'Hiver* and *Per Astra Ad Astra* are all examples of her work and she was featured in the exhibitions, 'The World of Silk', (Powerhouse Museum, 1993) and 'The Australian Scarf' (Hyde Park Barracks, 1994).

### 13. Kangaroo shaped pottery centrepiece for a flower bowl





**Unknown maker, early 20<sup>th</sup> century, pottery with blue and brown glaze, pierced in numerous places to hold flower stems. Signed underneath. Size 16 h 13 diam. cm.**

Sometimes described by the generic name of a 'flower frog' which is quite inaccurate for a kangaroo, these items were placed in bowls of water to help with arranging flowers. The owners purchased this in Sydney many years ago, simply because they liked it. The inscribed signature underneath appears to read 'Norm' underlined with a flourish. The owners would be very appreciative of any information that a member might be able to provide as to who Norm was and where the kangaroo was made.

#### **14. Turned bowl, *Xanthorrhoea preissii***



**David Bedford, 2021, Bowl turned from an old, dead xanthorrhoea stump.  
Size 11 h 40 diam. cm.**

Stumps of xanthorrhoeas (sometimes called grasstrees) this size are rare, although *X. preissii* is one of the largest and presumably fastest growing xanthorrhoeas. The plant was probably about 600 years old when it died some years ago. I obtained the stump as a gift from a woodworking friend who found it on his rural



property near Denmark, Western Australia. I have taken a long time to decide how best to turn it because it was difficult to know how to begin. That was partly because the stump was convex below and convex above and I didn't want to waste any of it. Eventually, I decided to hand-saw the stump across horizontally, which gave me two bowl blanks. This bowl was turned from the larger portion. I have deliberately removed the rougher edges but left some 'live edge' to the bowl, including some root-stumps, as well as the naturally formed void. Xanthorrhoeas are very unusual monocotyledonous plants because they have a special form of secondary thickening and therefore produce a kind of true wood. The radiating lines from the centre are not medullary rays, they are 'leaf traces' – the vascular bundles that led to the leaves. I polished it with a product made in Geelong by uBeaut products, called Shellawax Glow, a mix of hard shellac, wax and a very fine polishing compound called Tripoli powder. The mix is applied while the lathe is stopped then the lathe is re-started, and the polishing rag is pressed against the blank spinning at 800-1000 rpm. That generates heat, sets the shellac, waxes and polishes in one operation. uBeaut are another example of Australian innovation (no financial connection). The author's collection.