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Cover *John Priora,* The Riverview Gold Challenge Cup, *1893. Saint Ignatius' College, Riverview. Photograph Andrew Frolows.*

Plate 1. *John Glover (1767-1849),* The Swilker Oak, *National Trust of Australia (Tas), Clarendon House, Evandale. This beautiful Wilson frame has highly ornamented strapping, understated corner cartouches and a domed profile. Parts of the repeat motif on the strapping are often used as a single decoration on other frames. The artist John Glover gave this painting to a fellow passenger, Charles Weedon, voyaging to Van Diemen's Land in 1831.*

WILLIAM WILSON

Rediscovered Tasmanian Framemaker

Robyn Lake & Therese Mulford

Launceston-based researchers Robyn Lake and Therese Mulford explore the output of another Tasmanian framemaker, William Wilson (1810-1869), whose frames are distinct from those of the well-known Robin Hood, and show how his life encompassed colonial politics as well as work and family.

Robin Vaughan Hood is strongly linked to the history of framemaking in Tasmania. Rightfully so, as he and his son, Robin Lloyd Hood, produced frames in Hobart, Tasmania, for 61 years (1836-1897). Less well-known is William Wilson, who was producing fine decorative gilt frames in Launceston from his arrival about 1842 until the mid 1850s.

Wilson's gilt frames are distinctive and quite easily identified by their characteristic features. He trained at least two apprentices, including his son William Wilson Junior, who had his own shop in Charles Street, Launceston in 1855, and Charles Allen, a family friend later a relation by marriage. By their mid-twenties, both

***Plate 2**. Conway Weston Hart,* Study for portrait of Sir Richard Dry *c. 1855, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston. This is the study for the large portrait hanging in Parliament House, Hobart. The study and the final work are both housed in Hood frames. Another portrait of Sir Richard Dry, now lost, was painted by Robert Dowling and framed by William Wilson.*

young men had given up the trade and sought to earn a living farming in Northern Tasmania, unlike Robin Vaughan Hood's son, Robin Lloyd Hood, who continued the family framemaking business.[1]

Now that many galleries and collectors are re-evaluating appropriate framing for colonial works in their collections, it is appropriate that William Wilson frames, previously overlooked, are reassessed. Too often in the past it has been assumed that colonial works from Tasmania should be framed in Robin Hood-style frames.

***Plate 3**. Frederick Strange (c. 1807-1873),* Portrait of Mrs Ann Waddell *(c. 1846) Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston. This illustrates Wilson's creative use of the compo making it twist and lift. The raised compo is easily damaged.*

One of the reasons for lack of recognition of William Wilson frames is that most frames he produced were made of gilt compo, a putty-like material which is easily damaged; this probably resulted in many being discarded. Another factor is that he made few veneer frames and there was a strong interest in exotic veneers at the time.

William Wilson's story

"Mr & Mrs Wilson came from Hull, England, and saw the first steamship sail up the Humber".[2] This sentence in William Wilson's family Bible is the only glimpse we get of his early years. The vessel was probably the steamboat *Caledonia*, which first exhibited her capabilities on the River Humber in October 1814.[3] For many centuries Hull in Yorkshire had been an important shipbuilding area and trading port. Vessels with goods from both the old and the new worlds would have been a common sight during his childhood.

William Wilson was born on 6 November 1810 in Yorkshire.[4] In 1832, William Wilson, joiner, married Mary Megson, at Christ Church, Sculcoates, Yorkshire.

***Plate 4** Photograph of Frederick John and Maria Wilson (nee Allen), private collection. William Wilson's sons, Frederick and William Jnr, both married daughters of James and Ann Allen.*

The 1835 *Cragg's Directory for Kingston-upon-Hull and Suburbs* lists him as a joiner in Castle Street. He continued to live and work in Castle Street for the next six years, directories showing his trade as carver and gilder or cabinetmaker.[5] From the 1841 Hull Census,[6] we can see that Castle Street was not in the 'fashionable' business area of the town. However, the location seems to have been a suitable one for these trades as some years earlier Roundcival Fletcher, a carver, gilder and painter, had occupied the same premises.

The social standing of framemakers was not high in 19th century Britain. Newspapers and magazines frequently contained stories extolling the advantages of emigration to the colonies. Though there were also reports of the hardships involved, many people were influenced to become part of this gamble, hoping for a better and more secure way of life. One person in Hull with first-hand experience of Tasmania whom William Wilson may have known was the musician, carver and gilder George Peck. Both men were a similar age, followed the same trade, and appear to have had some education during their childhood in Hull. Peck arrived in Tasmania in 1833, on the same ship as Robin Vaughan Hood, and worked in both Launceston and Hobart during his six years in the colony.[7] After his return to England in 1839 Peck successfully exhibited a model of Hobart Town "to encourage emigrants" and during the 1840s he was working in his hometown of Hull[8], later returning to Australia.

William Wilson and his family landed in Van Diemen's Land in late 1841 or 1842. There is a strong possibility that the framemaker William Wilson was the "William Wilson, wife and 2 children" who arrived in the *Royal Saxon* on 22 November 1842.[9] The likelihood is strengthened by the fact that another passenger on the *Royal Saxon* was the musician Joseph Megson (Megson being William Wilson's wife's maiden name). On arriving in Launceston, they lived first in St John Street. George Fuller's manuscript *Recollections of Launceston*, 1836-1847, describing St John Street, tells us that between York and Elizabeth Streets was "Residence of Mr Wilson, Carver and Gilder. House had gable ends and upstairs rooms".

We know from his surviving work that William was a gifted craftsman. What sort of a living he was able to make from framemaking is uncertain. When he arrived in the early 1840s, there was severe economic depression. L. S. Bethel, in *The Story of Port Dalrymple: Life and Work in Northern Tasmania*, states that "Owing to the violent fluctuations in the island's economy between 1830 and 1859, merchants, both wholesale and retail, in the north and south, were always dancing on the slippery verge of bankruptcy". The 1841 Census for Launceston illustrates just how difficult it would have been for a carver and gilder to earn a living. The total free population was 6,534, of whom only 315 were 'Landed Proprietors, Merchants, Bankers and Professional Persons'.[10] These people, and owners of country estates, would have been the most likely purchasers of luxury items such as framed paintings. In Hobart during the 1840s, artists such as Thomas Bock were undertaking commissions for portraits, but Launceston could support few artists.

An advertisement in the Launceston *Cornwall Chronicle* of 2 November 1844 announced "W. Wilson, Carver & Gilder, Looking Glass, Picture Frame and Composition Ornament Manufacturer, Upholsterer etc. has removed from St John Street to Welman Street". The usual flourishes were included in the notice "Friends may rely on their offices, in any of the above branches, being executed in his usual style of excellence with punctuality – and that London prices will be strictly adhered to."

For the next four years, William Wilson, carver, gilder and decorator, worked from the family home in Welman Street.[11] His brick cottage is still there today. Perhaps he felt that the environment, away from the convict gaol and military barracks in the centre of the town, would be better for his family. Though the *Cornwall Chronicle* advertisement of 2 November 1844 stated that orders could be left at Mr Couzens, Chemist, St John's Street, it must have been difficult to conduct the business from Welman Street, some distance from the "business" part of town.

In 1849, William Wilson moved back to the main business area of Launceston, taking over the Charles Street premises formerly occupied by J. W. Bell, auctioneer. In addition to being a "Looking Glass and Picture Frame Maker", he advertised as a "Manufacturer of every description of Ornamental Furniture."[12] The new location would also have given him more opportunity to earn income from the sale of items such as gold and silver leaf, gilt mouldings, and fancy wood veneers. The business continued to operate from this location in 1850 and 1851.

By this time, William Wilson had been living in Launceston for about six years. An interesting insight into his character and standing in the Launceston community is to be found in the Quarter Sessions Report, *Launceston Examiner* of 1 October 1849. The first business of the day was settling the Jury List. Among those seeking exemption from Jury Duty was William Wilson. He tried to show that he did not have sufficient property or income to qualify. As part of his argument, he said that he

> "did not consider personal skill to be personal property, such property (as taken into consideration for qualification), should arise from a permanent source". One of the magistrates, Lieut. Friend, stated "Suppose a man buys a yard of canvas for one shilling, on which he paints a picture which he sells for £100, is that person's skill to be considered personal property?"

Ultimately Wilson admitted that the revenue from his personal labour exceeded the £75 per annum required to qualify for Jury Duty; but "did the magistrates consider personal labour as personal property?" Major Wentworth, in referring to certain observations made, said that English Acts of Parliament were better "framed" than the Acts of Council in Van Diemen's Land. Laughter ensued at the pun. The result of the chairman putting Wilson's request to the vote was 14 for appellant being qualified, four against, so he qualified for Jury Duty.

William Wilson arrived in Van Diemen's Land at a time when Government was conducted without electoral representation. After many setbacks, an Electoral Act was passed to provide for a new Legislative Council of 24, of whom 16 were to be elected by those men in the population who met the necessary property qualifications, and eight nominated by the Crown. The first election in Van Diemen's Land was held on 24 October 1851, and there was much excitement and controversy as the day for nomination of candidates drew near.

The candidates for Launceston were Mr Richard Dry **(Plate 2)**, who had already played a significant part in the political life of Van Diemen's Land for some years as a member of the old Government-nominated Legislative Council,[13] and Mr Ayde Douglas, a lawyer, who first arrived in Tasmania in 1839.[14] Convict transportation was the dominant issue in the election campaign, and both Dry and Douglas were against transportation. However, Dry – a native-born Tasmanian – felt that Tasmanians should have greater representation and a stronger say in their own governance. Douglas was born and educated in England. While critical of some aspects of the existing system of colonial government, Douglas nevertheless felt that there had been benefits that had helped the country and should be retained. Though only about 560 people were eligible to vote in the Launceston electorate,[15] thousands took part in the activities leading up to this important event and showed their allegiance by wearing ribbons or rosettes, blue for Dry and tricolour for Douglas.

It is as a result of this first step towards democracy in Van Diemen's Land that we have the opportunity to find out more about William Wilson. Dry was by far the more popular candidate, but William Wilson campaigned strongly to get Ayde Douglas elected, though he would have known that showing such open political affiliation may well cause difficulties from a business standpoint and alienate customers.

Ayde Douglas had originally been chairman of the committee to elect Richard Dry but, a few weeks before the election, Douglas was persuaded to stand against Dry. At the meeting of friends and supporters called to show support for Douglas, it was William Wilson who moved a motion "to the effect that Mr Douglas was a fit and proper person to represent Launceston". Nomination Day was 21 October and the candidates and their supporters gathered at the hustings in St John's Square.

From editorials and reports leading up to Nomination Day, we know that the *Launceston Examiner* supported Dry and the *Cornwall Chronicle* Douglas, so newspaper reports of what occurred at the meeting differ to some extent. There is no doubt this step towards representative government was something that aroused real passions in the whole population.

The meeting commenced at 12 noon, with candidates and their closest supporters above the crowd on the hustings. William Henty came forward and proposed Richard Dry. Mr Henty "commenced addressing the assembled multitude, but the clamour of the drunken mob rendered him almost inaudible, and he retired after strongly recommending Mr. Dry 'as a tried man - one who would do good to the town if anybody could'". C. J. Weedon seconded the motion, to loud and protracted cheering.

The *Launceston Examiner* continues its report:

> "Mr J. Mitchell proposed Ayde Douglas Esq., Mr W. Wilson appeared as seconder, and during a few moments of silence which were obtained at Mr Dry's solicitation, he (Wilson) expressed his determination to deal with that gentleman's public acts as public property. From that moment for about three-quarters of an hour a continuous volley of hootings, groans, and hisses, was all that could be heard. Mr Wilson maintained his post with indomitable obstinacy until a shower of eggs drove both candidates and their supporters from the hustings."[16]

As a supporter of Douglas, the *Cornwall Chronicle* reported William Wilson's speech in greater detail. Wilson's obvious frustration with Richard Dry's actions as a member of the old Legislative Council is perhaps more despair at the way the Colony was being ruled during this period than genuine dislike of Dry. Though spoken nearly 150 years ago, some of Wilson's comments could equally be voiced by today's voters. He felt that Dry had "never remonstrated with the Government concerning the very great disparity in the expenditure of public money, upon public improvements, much more being lavished upon Hobart Town than upon Launceston". Dry and his colleagues "(totally in contra distinction to our English ideas of patriotism) turned their backs and deserted their posts, at a time when their services were most urgently required to repress the expenditure of an irresponsible government and left the Governor to lord it over us in his heart's content."[17]

That Dry had far greater support was evident, and the *Cornwall Chronicle* report continues "The sheriff after vainly endeavouring to obtain order called for a show of hands, which was declared in favour of Mr Dry, when Mr Douglas demanded a poll, whereupon the hustings were soon cleared by the discharge of a volley of eggs from the crowd; both candidates came in for a bespattering, as well as several other gentlemen."

The result of the Poll for the electorate of Launceston was 516 for Dry and 140 for Douglas. There was no secret ballot at the time, and by looking in the *Launceston Examiner* 8 November 1851, the townspeople could see which candidate each voter had supported. Soon after

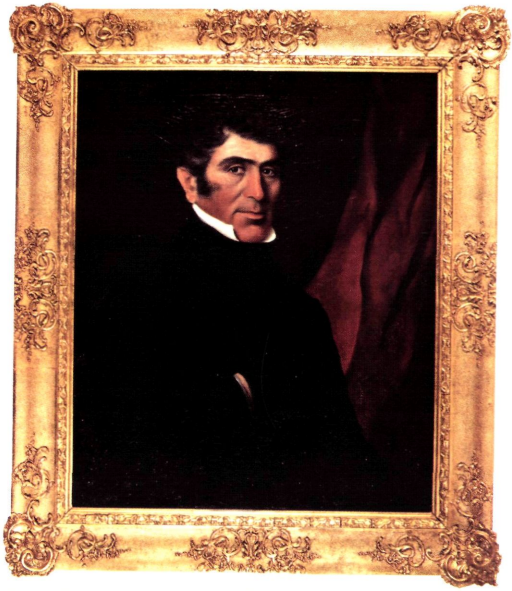

***Plate 5**. Robert Hawker Dowling (1827-1886),* Portrait of William Pritchard Weston, *Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston. The strapping decoration found in the centres is the repeat motif used to create the highly ornamented frame for* The Swilker Oak *by John Glover.*

the election, friends and supporters of Ayde Douglas entertained him at dinner, in testimony of their esteem and regard. Once again William Wilson played a major part in the proceedings, acting as Chairman for the evening's proceedings. During the dinner Wilson "gave the toast of the evening, 'the health of Mr Ayde Douglas', premising by saying that although that gentleman had been defeated upon the present occasion, he hoped the day was not far distant when truth would triumph over faction, and honest independence over the machinations of cliquism."[18] Ayde Douglas was later successful in entering Parliament, and both Dry and Douglas were knighted and served as Premier of Tasmania. William Wilson was to have further connections with both men.[19]

Ill health had forced Dry to resign from Parliament in 1854, and some time later, when it was announced he would leave for England on account of his health, a group of Dry's Launceston supporters decided to show their appreciation of his services to Tasmania by making a presentation to Mrs Dry. The subscribers chose a portrait of Richard Dry in his official costume as Speaker of the Legislative Council. The *Launceston Examiner* of 1 March 1856 reporting on the presentation ceremony states that "The picture was painted by Mr Robert Dowling, in 1854, and is a work of considerable merit. The elegant gilt frame in which it was presented was executed by Mr Wilson of Launceston". The whereabouts of this painting and frame is unknown. Given the earlier political allegiance Wilson had displayed, the connection with Richard Dry might not have given him much pleasure.

In 1852, William Wilson moved back to Welman Street, and no longer advertised as a carver and gilder in annual Directories. The late 1840s and early 1850s saw large scale emigration from Van Diemen's Land, many going to Port Phillip on the mainland, especially after the discovery of gold in Victoria in 1851. For those who remained, making a living often meant changing to another trade, or combining several occupations. An example from the *Cornwall Chronicle* on 22 September 1849 illustrates this:

> "Mr J. F. Schultz begs to acquaint the Gentry of Launceston, and also of the country districts, that he has become the proprietor of the Queen's Head Inn at Perth, and humbly solicits that patronage that he has for many years received from Them. Wines and Spirits of the first order.
>
> NB – Tailoring Business will be carried on as usual."

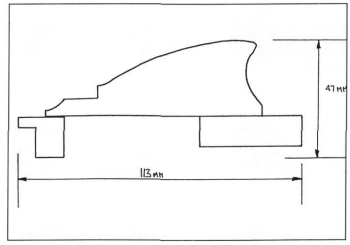

***Plate 7**. This domed profile is usually used with ornamented strapping, as in* The Swilker Oak *by John Glover (Plate 1).*

In a similar way, it is likely that William Wilson continued frame making. The 1854 *Woods Almanack* shows him as a "Wholesale Dealer in Wines"[20], and he is listed as a Wine Merchant in the 1855 *Van Diemen's Land list of all Men Qualified and liable to serve on Juries*. This Jury List contains another interesting entry, "William Wilson Jnr, Carver and Gilder". The Launceston Assessment Roll that year shows William Wilson Snr occupying a house in Charles Street, and next door is a house and shop occupied by William Wilson Jnr[21].

William Wilson Jnr was about 10 years old when the family came to Tasmania. As was the custom in many families at the time, he took up his father's trade. In 1854, William Wilson

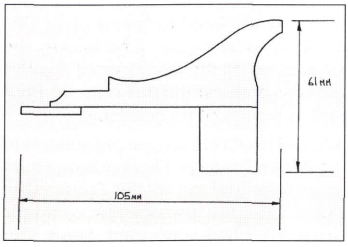

***Plate 6**. This ogee (S) profile is the most typical of Wilson's frames as in the* Portrait of William Pritchard Weston *(Plate 5) and* Mrs Ann Waddell. *(Plate 3) The sides are sometimes unornamented, sometimes netted, sometimes partially or fully ornamented.*

***Plate 8**. Joseph Mathias Negelen (1792-1870), Portrait of a member of the Stevens family, private collection. This cassetta (box) frame with elaborate inner moulding is less typical of Wilson's frames in construction and finish and may be his son's work despite the identical stamp on the reverse.*

Jnr, carver and gilder, married Henrietta Allen at the Chapel House, Cressy.[22] He appears to have been an enterprising young man. By 1856, aged 23, he owned property on the Esplanade and in Westcombe St, Launceston,[23] and in 1859 purchased the 1050 acre property *Sillwood*, near Carrick, in Northern Tasmania.[24] In 1865, William's brother Frederick married Henrietta's sister Maria[25] **(Plate 4)** and the couple lived at *Sillwood* for some years. William Jnr sold *Sillwood* in 1870. He may have had little option but to sell; as the property was heavily mortgaged during his period of ownership.

In the *Catalogue of Works of Art* for the Exhibition held at the Launceston Mechanics' Institute in April 1860, William Wilson Jnr is shown as the exhibitor of five oil paintings.[26] Unfortunately no artist's name or title is shown for any of Wilson's exhibits. At the same Exhibition, the Launceston merchant Charles Weedon exhibited the Glover painting *The Swilker Oak*, which has a stamped Wilson frame **(Plate 1)**. As a young man, Charles Weedon immigrated to Van Diemen's Land, leaving England on the *Thomas Laurie* in 1831. John Glover and his family were also on board this ship, and during the long weeks of the voyage the two men became friends. Glover presented the painting to Charles Weedon as a gift.[27]

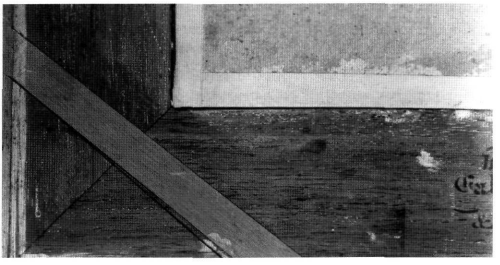

***Plate 9**. This reverse corner with spline is more carefully crafted and is less typical of Wilson's frames.*

William Wilson Jnr's father-in-law, James Allen, had been a Drum Major in the 96th Regiment, arriving in Launceston at about the same time as the Wilson family.[28] One of James Allen's sons, Charles, was a similar age to William Wilson Jnr. When Charles Allen died in 1913, his obituary stated that he was 'brought up to the profession of carver and gilder.'[29] It seems likely both William Jnr and Charles would have learnt the trade from William Wilson Snr in Launceston during the late 1840s. In 1853, Charles Allen went to the goldfields in Victoria, and returned to Tasmania in 1855. He did not continue with his early trade, but purchased properties in the Longford and Westbury districts, and became a successful and respected sheep breeder in his later years.

Strong family ties with the Allen family would have influenced William Wilson Snr's decision to move to Cressy in the late 1850s. By 1852 James Allen had retired from the Army and moved with his family to Cressy (about 45 km from Launceston), becoming licensee of the Cressy Hotel.[30] His wife, Ann Allen, died in 1855[31], and it was after this event that William Wilson Snr became licensee of the Cressy Hotel and continued to hold the license for several years.[32]

By 1861, William Wilson Snr had returned to Launceston, and lived in his Welman Street home until his death on 5 July 1869, aged 58.[33] The death registration entry lists "householder" as his "rank or profession". There was no obituary in the local

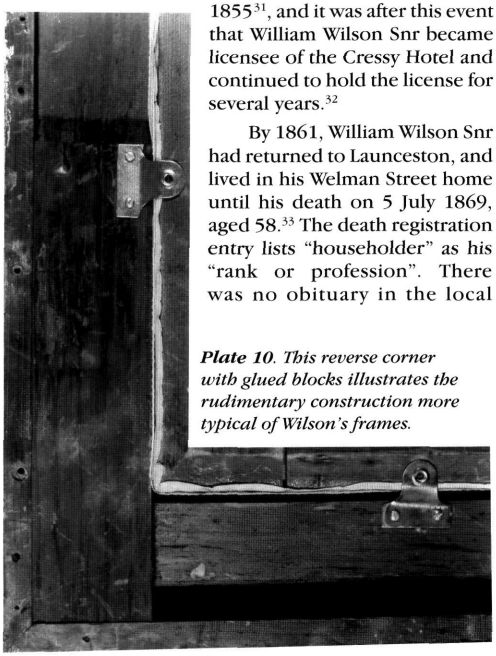

***Plate 10**. This reverse corner with glued blocks illustrates the rudimentary construction more typical of Wilson's frames.*

***Plate 11**. One of Wilson's characteristic mouldings used for either the inner slip or outer frame edge.*

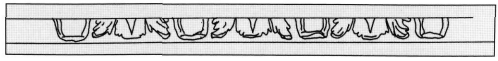

***Plate 12**. One of Wilson's characteristic mouldings used for either the inner slip or outer frame edge.*

paper, so it seems he did not have any significant involvement in local organisations during his later life.

William Wilson's will,[34] written in 1868 the year before his death, describes him as a yeoman, that is "A man holding a small landed estate; a freeholder under the rank of a gentleman; hence vaguely, a commoner or countryman of respectable standing."[35] Perhaps he would be pleased to be remembered as a "yeoman", and this fittingly describes the outcome of all his endeavours in his adopted country. In the early 1840s, he had made the decision to bring his family from Hull, with a population of 66,000, to Launceston where the free population in 1841 was about 6,000. If his motive was to improve the opportunities for his family, it was the right decision. William and Mary Wilson had nine children, five of whom were born in Launceston, and, as with the descendants of many other emigrants, they contributed much to the community. Tasmanian painter and illustrator Geoff Tyson[36] was one of their grandchildren.

William Wilson's work

It is only with the renewed interest in frames in recent years that the work of framemakers has been studied in detail. William Wilson certainly deserves recognition for the creativity he brought to the art of gilt framemaking.

These skills were learnt in his hometown of Hull, Yorkshire, before emigrating to Tasmania.

Ann Bukantas, Head of Art at the Hull City Council's Ferens Art Gallery, says she "suspects the odds on at least some of our local works having been framed by him are quite high."[37] Hopefully with the knowledge of the way he worked that has been gained from study of his Tasmanian frames, some of his English work can be identified.

***Plate 13**. Wilson's ink stamp is generally located on the reverse of the frame. Sometimes accumulated dirt can make the stamp difficult to see.*

Fortunately sufficient known examples of his framemaking in Tasmania survive to let us appreciate his skill. His frames often surround works by Frederick Strange (c. 1807-1873) and Robert Dowling (1827-1886).

Wilson's frames are elegant and have a rich decorative surface. The leaf is usually oil gilt on uncoloured bole. There is a playfulness with the compo where it is shaped over the fingers raising it up from the wooden base giving the frame quite high relief. This high relief not only adds to the feeling of fluidity in the frames, but also makes the frames more vulnerable to damage. Corner mouldings are slightly asymmetrical/off-centre so that reflected light tends to spiral or flicker about the surface of the frame **(Plate 3)**. Wilson is creative in the use of his moulds, often cutting and rearranging all or parts of them to give various effects **(Plate 5)**.

Typical profiles include the 'ogee' (S) profile and rounded profile **(Plates 6 & 7)**. A less typical profile is that of cassetta (box-like) with ornate internal moulding **(Plate 8)**. This cassetta frame is also atypical in terms of its water-gilt surface and its more crafted corner construction which is mitred and splined **(Plate 9)**. This atypical construction and finish may indicate a different hand, perhaps his son's, despite the fact that the label remains the same. Generally, the reverse of the frames is rudimentary, with blocks of wood glued in the corners **(Plate 10)**.

Two frequently used mouldings on the thinner inner slips or outer edge are foliage variations (Plates 11 & 12). His ink stamp "W. Wilson's Cabinet Upholstery Looking Glass & Picture Frame ....." is found on the reverse of frames (Plate 13). Sometimes, accumulated dirt on the reverse makes the stamp difficult to decipher.

The framemaker's approach to his art

Both Robin Vaughan Hood and William Wilson framed paintings **(Plates 1 & 14)** by the well-known painter John Glover (1767-1849). It is difficult to know who was responsible for the choice of frame, the painter or the client. It may be that Wilson's frames were preferred for English and European scenes and Hood's frames for Australian ones. The effect of the frames is quite different. The Hood corner cartouches are large whereas the smaller ones selected by Wilson do not detract from the overall ornamental strapping effect. Wilson's frames have a much lighter quality to them. Profiles also differ: the Hood frame is the more typical 'ogee' whereas the Wilson has a rounded profile. The reverses of the frames are also revealing; Hood's frames are better carpentered than Wilson's.

Both Hood and Wilson also made stretchers. Hood made beautiful Russian-design stretchers whereas Wilson

Plate 14. *John Glover (1767-1849)* "Patterdale", Van Diemen's Land, *1840, W. L. Crowther Library, State Library of Tasmania, Hobart. This work is framed by Robin Hood and is quite different in effect than frames made by Wilson.*

made German-design stretchers. Hood's stretchers are better finished than Wilson's roughly hewn ones.

Robin Hood's story is better known for many reasons, one of which is the survival of some of his moulds and tools[38]. It would be a wonderful thing, now that William Wilson's work is better known and appreciated, if some of his tools and moulds came to light.

Important too, is that colonial paintings, particularly those from Tasmania, no longer be automatically reframed in Robin Hood style frames. William Wilson must now be given consideration.

Authors

Robyn Lake and her husband Denis run an antique furniture restoration business in Launceston, Tasmania. They are currently collecting material on the history of furniture in Tasmania, from settlement to the 1930s. Their extensive research covers the manufacture, importation, sale and use of furniture.

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Sketches by John Hay and Rachael French; photographs by John Leeming (staff of the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery).

Notes

1 T. Mulford, *Tasmanian Framemakers 1830-1930 ~ a Directory*, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston 1997, pp 77-90.
2 State Library of Tasmania, Launceston, Local Studies, Biography files (Wilson).
3 F. M, Pearson, *The Early History of Hull Steam Shipping*, Mr Pye Books 1984.
4 See n 2.
5 Geoffrey Beard & Christopher Gilbert (eds), *Dictionary of English Furniture Makers 1660-1840*, Furniture History Society, W. S. Maney & Son, Leeds 1986, p 990.
6 PRO, Census, Kingston Upon Hull, England, 1841, ED14, p 368.
7 T. Mulford, *op. cit.* p. 101. More information about George Peck can be found on the website www.cinemedia.net/RMIT/rnaughton/PECK_BIO.html.
8 D. Parry (ed,), *Meadley Index to Hull Advertiser & Exchange Gazette*, vol 1 1826-1845, vol 2 1846-1857, Humberside College of Advanced Education, Hull 1987.
9 Archives of Tasmania, CB7/8, p 16, Return of Bounty Payments Refused.
10 ABS T2 'Blue Books', VDL Abstract of Returns of Population & Houses 27/9/1841.
11 *Hobart Town Gazette*, Assessment Rolls, Launceston, Welman St.
12 *Tasmanian Royal Kalendar, Colonial Register, and Almanack* (Wood), 1849 p 230.
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14 *Cyclopedia of Tasmania*, Maitland & Krone, Hobart, 1900, vol. 1 p 74.
15 *Launceston Examiner* 25 Aug 1851 p 6
16 *Launceston Examiner* 22 Oct 1851.
17 *Cornwall Chronicle* 22 Oct 1851.
18 Cornwall Chronicle 29 Oct 1851.
19 William Wilson's will dated 1 August 1868 names Ayde Douglas as one of two Trustees.
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21 *Hobart Town Gazette* 20 March 1855 p 424.
22 Registrar General, Hobart, Registration of Marriages, Longford, 1854 no 1157.
23 *Hobart Town Gazette* 8 April 1856 pp 325, 329, 334.
24 Law & Weston & Archer, Launceston 1911, 'Sillwood' Search Paper.
25 Registrar-General, Hobart, Registration of Marriages, Longford, 1865 no 458.
26 Launceston Mechanics' Institute & Public Library, *Catalogue of Works of Art, exhibited in the Mechanics' Institute, 9 April - 24 May*, Launceston 1860 p 19.
27 Letter to Robyn Lake from Miss Victoria L. L. Cox, Chairman, Clarendon Furniture Committee, National Trust of Australia (Tasmania) 1999.
28 *Launceston Examiner* 4 May 1850, *Saturday Evening Express* 30 July 1938.
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30 *Hobart Town Gazette* 18 May 1852 p 404.
31 Registrar-General, Registration of Deaths, Longford, 1855 no 501.
32 Mitchell Library, CY Reel 2142, Van Diemen's Land - List of all Men Qualified and Liable to serve on Juries, 1858, p 140 and *Hobart Town Gazette* 15 Jan 1856 p 31.
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34 Supreme Court, Hobart, Will of William Wilson dated 1 Aug 1868.
35 J. A. Simpson, & E. S. C. Weiner, *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., Clarendon Press, Oxford 1998 vol. XX p 728.
36 *The Launceston Art Society in Retrospect 1891-1983*, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston 1983 p 42.
37 Letter to Robyn Lake from Ann Bukantas, Head of Art, Leisure Services Department, Kingston Upon Hull City Council, England 1999.
38 Mulford, *op. cit.*

Genesis of the Riverview Gold Challenge Cup

Kenneth Cavill

Dr Kenneth Cavill solves the mystery of who made the only surviving 19th century Australian gold rowing trophy, the 1893 Riverview Gold Cup.

Few of the known Australian gold cups and trophies that were individually designed and crafted in the second half of the 19th century, following on the gold discoveries of 1851, have survived to the present day. A small number of fine racing cups predominate – horse racing has long been one of Australia's national sports.[1]

The severe economic depression of 1892-93, felt to the greatest extent in Victoria, was a period of meltdown for gold cups and personal treasures accumulated in the prosperous 1860s, 70s and 80s. They were converted to bullion. The Great Depression of the early 1930s, felt world-wide, led to a further meltdown as the price of gold bullion doubled.[2] Today, the intrinsic merit and historical significance of these memorable pieces of Australiana is fully recognised but few – not many more than ten – remain.

The Riverview Gold Challenge Cup of 1893 occupies a unique place among the survivors of the 19th century as the only gold rowing trophy recorded. Early provenance was lost so that the name of the maker has remained a mystery until the 1990s.

In 1991, the late Marjorie Graham reported[3] that the Riverview Gold Cup had been designed and made by E. Butcher and Co, manufacturing jewellers of Sydney. Her source was an article in *The Freeman' s Journal*, 13 May 1893, p. 15: "the design for the cup was furnished by the manufacturer, Mr E. Butcher of Pitt Street, who also made the medals." The present article provides a new insight to the maker and to working relationships between jewellers, gold and silversmiths of the period.

Rowing and sculling had become popular sports in Australia by the 1880s with professional sculling races contributing greatly to the public's awareness. In Sydney the city fathers and local communities encouraged the activities of the amateur clubs whose boat houses were built on the foreshores of the Harbour, the Parramatta and Lane Cove Rivers.

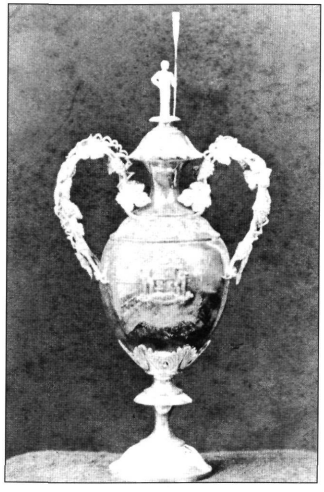

Plate 1. *The Mayor's Cup of 1881, silver, Evan Jones maker. Photograph courtesy Saint Ignatius' College, Riverview.*

In 1881 the wealthy Mayor of Sydney, Alderman John Harris (1838-1911) presented a silver Challenge Cup for competition among Schools' Fours, the cup to be won three times by one school. The Mayor's Cup was contested annually at the N.S.W. Rowing Association Regatta and in 1888, Saint Ignatius' College, Riverview won the race for the third time. The Mayor's Cup became the College's first trophy.[4] The elaborately decorated silver cup **(Plate 1)** is engraved with the City of Sydney's coat of arms, the cover is surmounted with the figure of an oarsman. The maker was Evan Jones, one of Sydney's leading gold and silversmiths.[5]

The successes of Riverview's Fours in 1888 gave impetus to the proposal for an Intercolonial Schools' Challenge Cup. The committee of the St Ignatius' College Rowing Club suggested at the time that a gold Challenge Cup be commissioned for competition on the course at Riverview, the race to be open to all 'Classical Schools of Australia' Fours. Each member of the winning crew was to receive a gold medal and the school they represented was to hold the cup for the year. However the total cost was beyond the resources of the Rowing Club.[4]

It was not until 1892 that the Rowing Club committee stated "their intention of procuring a

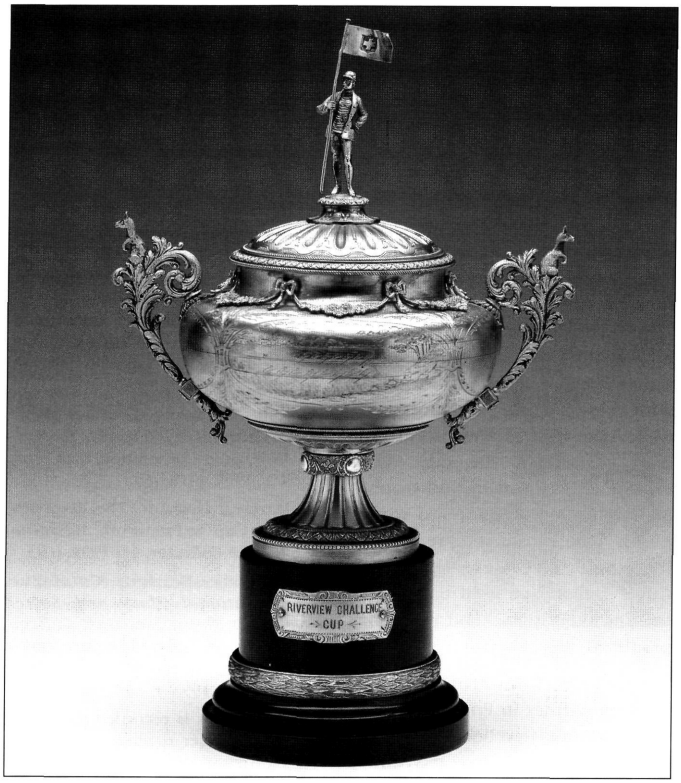

***Plate 2**. Riverview Challenge Cup 1893. E. Butcher & Co, retailer. John Priora, maker. Overall height 32 cm, width 21 cm. Photograph Andrew Frolows, courtesy Saint Ignatius' College, Riverview.*

gold challenge cup to be rowed for annually at the Club's Regatta in connection with the senior eights' race, open to all the Amateur Clubs of Australia."[6] This perpetual trophy was to be held by the winning club for one year and each member of the crew, including the coxswain, was to receive a gold medal showing a laurel wreath in relief and having in the centre the oars and flag crossed. The committee sought donations from the residents of Lane Cove and others interested in rowing. Of the 100 guineas required less than half the sum was subscribed in 1892 – the effects of the deepening depression were evident. Nevertheless the gold cup was commissioned by St Ignatius' College from E. Butcher and Co[7]. The cup **(Plate 2)** was completed and placed on display at the College prior to the Riverview Rowing Club's Regatta held on the Lane Cove River, 27 May 1893.

A contemporary description of the Riverview Senior Eights' Challenge Cup follows. "This trophy is one of the finest specimens of anything of the kind as yet manufactured in the colony. The general ensemble is of a composite character, the façon [appearance] is classic, while the ornamentation belongs more to the Renaissance period. A remarkable feature in the ornamentation is the presence of representations of characteristically Australian species of fauna and flora. Thus the handles which are of Renaissance style, emit at the top the upper portions of the body of the kangaroo, whilst the garland and wreaths, symbolic of victory, are made of leaves and flowers of the waratah. On the front elliptical panel are engraved two eight-oar boats with the crews in full swing. A figure of an oarsman holding the college flag surmounts the lid, and forms an appropriate finish to the whole".[8]

The Regatta was an outstanding success. Some 2,000 spectators on the foreshores, boats and ferries watched the races. Five crews contested the chief event, named the Lane Cove Challenge Eights with the right to hold the Riverview Challenge Cup for one year, which was won by the North Shore Rowing Club.[9] One of the gold medals that were presented to the North Shore Rowing Club's winning crew and coxswain has yet to be sighted. St Ignatius' College competed in the Maiden Fours but not in the Challenge Eights.

The Riverview Gold Challenge Cup is the most significant sporting trophy of the school. A century later, its significance as a rare, individually-crafted gold cup of the 1890s has led to further research. That the trophy was commissioned from E. Butcher and Co is clear. No mark is apparent on the gold cup and in such circumstances the retailer is likely to be named as the maker. In contrast Riverview's first trophy, the Mayor's Cup of 1881, bears Evan Jones' well-known mark.

Evan Jones may well have been approached to design and make the gold trophy. However he was increasingly involved in civic affairs and by 1892, he had disposed of most of his manufacturing plant. The purchaser was Edward Butcher of E. Butcher and Co.[10]

E. Butcher and Co was listed in the Sydney Directories' at 64 King

Street from 1890 to 1893, then at 126 Pitt Street until 1904.[11] There is no further listing of the company. The Riverview Gold Cup would have been ordered prior to the company's move to Pitt Street in 1893. E. Butcher and Co traded as retail and as manufacturing jewellers, after the making of the Cup they were briefly listed as manufacturing goldsmiths and jewellers. In 1905, Edward Butcher moved to 9 Rowe Street, then to 47 Castlereagh Street where he traded as a jeweller and opal merchant until 1912. He was regarded as an authority on Australian gemstones. It has not been established whether he was a practising jeweller, no maker's mark for Edward Butcher has been found so that gemstone jewellery or a trophy made in his workshop is unlikely to be identified unless there is provenance.

Some 50 years after the Cup's genesis the *Commonwealth Jeweller and Watchmaker* interviewed Mr Edward (Ted) Butcher, then one of Sydney's oldest jewellers. He recalled events of the late Victorian and Edwardian years. The interviewer reported "his stock included fine pieces manufactured for him by the late Henry Berthold, the late Gustav Kollerstrom and the late John Priora (artist-jeweller) who made for him the St Ignatius' College (Riverview) Gold Cup which is competed for annually." While the cup may well have been designed by Edward Butcher in consultation with the College, John Priora was engaged to make it.[10]

Trophy cups of the late Victorian period tended to be highly ornamental with designs harking back to the classical era. The bowl-shaped Riverview Challenge Cup **(Plate 2)** is of neo-classical style with cast 'riband and rosette' decoration applied to the body of the cup in the Adam manner. The two cast, vertical handles of Grecian 'anthemion and husk' pattern are fixed to the body. The half-figure of a kangaroo, applied near the top of the anthemion scroll on each handle, is symbolic. Australian flora is not represented (cf. original description of 1893). The cup stands on a spreading circular foot, a patterned rim surrounds the fluted foot, fluted base and the fluted cover. The figure of an oarsman holding the College flag surmounts the cover, while "two eight-oar boats with crews racing" are engraved within the oval cartouche on the matt surface of the cup. The elaborately decorated gold trophy is mounted on an ebonised wood plinth, the gold plaque being inscribed "Riverview Challenge Cup." Decorative gold bands are fitted to the top and bottom of the plinth.

In 1893, John Priora[13] was a working partner in Priora Brothers then trading as jewellers and watch-makers at 50 Park Street, Sydney. Priora Brothers were leading makers of individually crafted jewellery pieces, fine ecclesiastical silver and trophies. The Riverview Challenge Cup is an excellent example of John Priora's craftsmanship prior to 1900, when he established his own workshop at 56 Strand Arcade, off George Street. A full account of his individually designed and crafted work in gold and silver has yet to be documented. His obituary of 1938 concludes "With the passing of the late John Priora the jewellery trade in Australia has lost probably the most interesting, picturesque and outstanding craftsman it has yet known."[14]

The Riverview Challenge Cup, competed for annually, is an enduring reminder of the popularity of amateur rowing as a sporting contest.[15]

Acknowledgements

The kind assistance of Mr Errol Lea-Scarlett, Archivist, Saint Ignatius' College, Riverview, of Professor Ray Stebbins and Mr John Wade has been greatly appreciated.

Notes

1 John Hawkins, "Australian Goldsmiths' Work 1834-1950", *The World of Antiques & Art* no 60, December 2000, pp 12-17; John Hawkins *Nineteenth Century Australian Silver*, Antique Collectors Club Ltd, Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK 1990, Vol 2, pp 258-263.

2 John McIlwraith & Anthea Harris *Striking Gold - 100 Years of the Perth Mint*, Gold Corporation, East Perth, W.A. 1999, pp 81-83.

3 Marjorie Graham "The Riverview Gold Cup" in Patchwork, *Australian Antique Collector*, 41, 1991, p 93.

4 Errol Lea-Scarlett, *Catalogue, Institutional Plate and Sacred Vessels, Saint Ignatius' College, Riverview* displayed on the occasion of a visit by the Silver Society of Australia, 1995.

5 Evan Jones is recorded as making several silver rowing trophies, see John Hawkins, *Nineteenth Century Australian Silver*, pl 144.

6 *Sydney Mail*, 20 May 1893, p 1019; 27 May 1893, p 1092; 3 June 1893, p 1144,

7 See nn 3,6.

8 See n 6.

9 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 May 1893, p 9; Illustrated Sydney News, 3 June 1893, p 14.

10 Short biographical sketch of Mr Ted Butcher in *Commonwealth Jeweller and Watchmaker*, 10 March 1941, p 14.

11 Sand's *Sydney Directory* 1863-1923

12 See n 10

13 [Peter] John [Baptist] Priora (b. Milan 1854, d. Sydney 1938), one of several brothers, Ernesto, Telesforo and Amilcare.

14 Obituary: "Late John Priora", *Commonwealth Jeweller and Watchmaker*, 10 September 1938, pp 51, 53.

15 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 March 1998, p 7.

***Plate 1**. Francesco Vanzetti, design for jewellery for Lady James, 1909. Photograph courtesy Shane Vanzetti.*

Art and Design in Western Australia

Part 5

Perth Technical School – Associated Campuses

Dorothy Erickson

The fifth article on artists and designers in WA to 1914, excerpts from the book *Art and Design in Western Australia*: Perth Technical College 1900-2000, edited by Dr Erickson and published by Central Metropolitan College of TAFE, Perth (RRP $49.50 softcover, $66 hardcover).

Fremantle Technical School campus

Art classes had been offered as evening Technical Art School classes in the Old Boys School in Fremantle from 1898. These were under Francesco Vanzetti and later Kate O'Connor. The first students sat for examinations in 1904 when Linton and John McLeod taught on the Fremantle campus.[1] It was an art

school until the financial emergency of the Great Depression in 1931 when a vocational emphasis was introduced and recreational classes ceased.

Francesco Vanzetti (1878-1967) who taught at Fremantle Tech in the first years was born at Padua, in Italy. He was orphaned at 17 before he completed his architecture and drawing studies at the School of Fine Arts in Florence. He arrived in Western Australia in January 1896 with his uncle, Eugenio Vanzetti, an established mining entrepreneur. Soon after he arrived Vanzetti joined the Society of Arts and became an active member, being described as "the live wire" of the society for whom he took classes and on occasion lived in their premises. [2] He was an accomplished metalsmith, graphic and three-dimensional designer **(Plate 1)**. Vanzetti married Evelyn Baxter in 1903 and built and decorated a cottage in Richardson Street, South Perth near to Linton. [3]

The house was described in the *F. Z. Review*:

> "His own cottage at South Perth is a revelation of the high order of his capabilities: its charm being continually added to by some little gem in repoussé, beaten copper work, enamelling, or wood-carving. The scheme of wall decorations and draperies, the fingerplates, door handles and panels of quaint design make it one of the most interesting houses I have been in" [4] **(Plate 2).**

A list of objects from Vanzetti's sale of February 1912 gives an inside glimpse of a member of the Perth art circle.[5] It was an eclectic mix of local and European art, antiques, and oriental and Liberty and Co. objêts, very much the Aesthetic taste. He had oils and watercolours by Linton and Holdsworth, A. G. Plate and C. V. Harcourt, his own jarrah furniture with repoussé copper plaques, a silver claret ladle and a stool carved by Linton, silver and enamel jewellery and sugar spoon by Gordon Holdsworth, hand-made wrought-iron hinges and handles, a poster by the Austrian Alphons Mucha, Liberty & Co brass candlesticks, Indian repoussé brass bowls, "ancient" Italian brass lamps[6], sculpture, Chinese porcelain, peacock feathers, painter's gear and fencing equipment.

In 1906 the art classes in Fremantle were re-organised under **John McLeod** (c. 1877-1947). A Victorian and a graduate of the Ballarat School of Art, McLeod taught a variety of subjects including Art Leatherwork and Art Metalwork. However at the end of 1911 McLeod resigned from Fremantle and left to study overseas. Legend has it that one of the parents objected to their daughter posing in a bathing costume for the life class and made it impossible for him to remain. [7] Interior designer and painter Daisy Rossi replaced him.

McLeod, who was active in the artistic life of Perth also painted in oils and watercolour, carved wood and made some metalwork but is primarily known as a sculptor. His *Goldfish* painting exhibited with the WA Society of Arts in 1909 was mentioned in reviews for the quality of the still-life portion of the painting. [8] In 1929, Leslie Rees wrote that "Mr J. MacLeod is well known as one of the few modellers and sculptors in the city." [9] His portrait of Doris Pierce demonstrates that skill. His sculpture of Paddy Hannan for Kalgoorlie is his best known work.

McLeod modelled the 1929 plaque commemorating the founding of the colony. Cast in bronze,

***Plate 2**. Francesco Vanzetti, china cabinet designed by Vanzetti with repoussé panels by himself, 1906. This won a prize in the Society of Arts competition. Photograph courtesy Shane Vanzetti.*

it is mounted on the wall of the Perth Town Hall. Fairly plain and somewhat architectural, it incorporates a banksia and sprays of eucalypt foliage. The latter are treated in an Art Nouveau manner. An ornate presentation box from the 10th Light Horse to the 10th Hussars is also known. He exhibited with the WA Society of Arts from 1920-1933.

A large hall-stand by Fremantle dentist **S. B. Mummery**, held by the WA Museum,[10] is reputed to have been made at night classes in Fremantle c 1902. The piece features Australian floral motifs with repoussé panels of beaten copper. These are in a distinctly Art Nouveau style placing Mummery as a student of Vanzetti or possibly McLeod **(Plate 3).**

Daisy Rossi (1879-1974), who taught at Fremantle from 1912-1919, studied at the Adelaide School of Design before arriving in 1905 to join her brother in WA. In Perth she undertook further studies with Florence Fuller and in 1909, using the commission money from a number of portraits, she studied at the Grosvenor School in London and in Paris with Madame Mouchette. After she returned in 1911 she set up a studio at 300 Hay Street, Perth. Rossi married widower George Temple Poole in 1919. A daughter was born in 1920. She gave up teaching but not a career and became the first female member of the Town Planning Board in 1926. When her eyesight began to fail in the 1930s Rossi wrote under the pen name Eva Bright and taught in schools.[11] In 1966 she moved permanently to Victoria to live with her daughter Iseult West. Rossi was followed at Fremantle Technical School by Muriel Southern.

***Plate 3**. S. B. Mummery, hall-stand, repoussé copper and jarrah, c. 1902. Western Australian Museum, photograph Douglas Elford.*

Rossi exhibited paintings in the 1907 *First Australian Exhibition of Women's Work* in Victoria. In 1909 she exhibited her portrait of Bessie Rischbeith with the Western Australian Society of Arts and was praised for its technical qualities. A collection of her wildflower paintings is held by the National Trust (WA) others are in the Art Gallery of WA. Having trained at a design school she exhibited schemes for interiors together with designs for the cushions, curtains, portieres. A reviewer wrote in 1911 "The designs and colour schemes are most artistic, and the work is excellently carried out by Mrs James Parker and Mrs Downing."[12] In 1912 she and Loui Benham took out the tablecloth design prizes at the Society of Arts exhibition.[13] Rossi's were of *Red Flowering Gum* and *Poppy*. Rossi exhibited in her studio in 1915, with Florence Fuller in Sydney in 1917, in the Women Painter's Exhibition in Sydney in 1923 and in 1924 at the Franco-British Exhibition in London. Her student **Rita Kitson Hunter** (Mrs Burtenshaw) painted similar subjects. Hunter's *Flowering Gums* equals the mastery of her teacher. It is an eloquent rendering of the beautiful blossoms.

Muriel Southern (c. 1890 - 1980s) was born in Tasmania and came to Western Australia in 1908 with her father, the science master at Guildford Grammar School and his English wife Mary. She commenced her art tuition at Midland Technical School with Flora Landells in 1910. She is reputed to have also studied with Elioth Gruner and at Julian Ashton's in Sydney.[14] Muriel and her mother, a weaver, had an arts and crafts shop above Book Lover's Library in the Royal Arcade in Perth.[15] Southern taught art at Fremantle Technical School to about 1933 and at Guildford Grammar and St Mary's private schools in the 1920s.

In 1935 **Muriel Southern** organised the *Perth Arts and Crafts Exhibition* after which the *West Australian Women Painters and Applied Arts Society* was formed. It is presumed that the former had some connection with promoting interior design opportunities for women and the latter was a statement of support and solidarity to women artists. About 1938 Southern went to Adelaide to live and marry G. Meikle.

Midland Junction Technical School

Flora Le Cornu (later Mrs Landells) was invited to commence the Art classes at Midland Junction in 1909 and continued there until 1930 when social pressures during the depression forced her to resign. Her students included **Muriel Southern** and **Jock Campbell,** later Superintendent of Art. Landells was followed by Linton for one year then the English metalsmith and art teacher F. B. Fulford. Classes closed in 1937 due to falling numbers when **Walter F. Ramage**, a former goldfields artist, was the art instructor. [16]

Claremont Technical School

The star pupil of Perth Tech in 1912 was **Cecil Ross** who was asked to set up the art classes at Claremont Technical School in 1914. Two of her student works are still extant, a delicately drawn rendering of a pensioner wearing a yellow vest and a still life with stuffed owl (an allegory for learning, with a quill, inkstand and book included in the composition) **(Plate 4)**. In later life she primarily painted delicate landscapes in watercolours, one hanging in the WA Club. Ross continued at Claremont until 1926 when another talented graduate Ethel Isaacson[17] took over, remaining until the School was closed in the 1930s.[18] These suburban campuses were opened because:

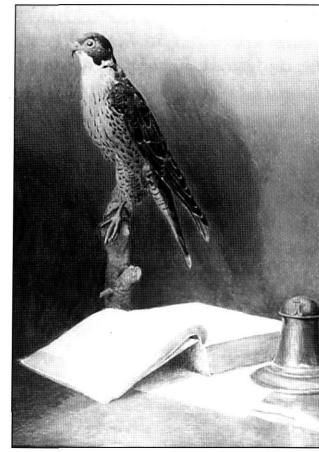

Plate 4. *Cecil Ross (Eagleton),* Still Life with Owl *pencil and wash, student work c. 1911, size 340 x 460. Private collection, photograph Karina Thulleson.*

> "Besides saving the students a considerable amount of expense on train fares, the smaller schools such as Claremont, perform a very important function in providing elementary instruction of such a kind as to enable students to proceed with advantage to the higher classes in the parent School."[19]

(Frances) Cecil Ross (1890 -1976) was born in Western Australia, shared a governess with Judge Burnside's son and was then taught in her mother, Mrs Edith Ross's, school.[20] Ross taught at Christchurch Grammar School and at Claremont Tech from 1914-1926 when she married widower Vernon C. H. Eagleton. No practical subjects were taught at the school but designers such as Rowley Burtenshaw were enrolled in the early years. He went on to become head designer at Caris Bros the jewellers. It was Burtenshaw that recommenced the teaching of Art Metalwork at Fremantle in the 1950s. Ross painted in watercolours but was primarily a teacher rather than an artist.

Art Needlework was taught on all the campuses by **Loui Benham** (1868-1949). Benham commenced on the Perth Campus in 1904 and continued to 1930. She was educated in South Australia. Her aunt Ann Maria Benham was a leader in the design movement there and would have ensured Loui was well taught.[21] Benham's classes were popular and by 1910 extended to the four metropolitan campuses.[22]

Benham strove to emulate the South Australian Design school's success in needlework design and manufacture and various of her students exhibited Art Needlework with the Society of Arts. Some were designed by themselves, some were worked to designs by Miss Benham.[23] In 1911 six of the names mentioned in a review were from the Tech. classes.

> "The piano cover (appliqué) by Miss A. Atwell is striking and uncommon, and the piano drapes, with the quaint dragon designs by Miss L. Benham, executed by Mesdames G. Pearse, P. Robinson and Mrs Strickland are equally good. A lace veil by Miss Vanzetti, cushion covers, firescreen embroidery by Mrs Strickland, opera bag and tray – all from designs by Miss L. Benham - are features of the section, to which Miss Enid Allum, Mrs Oxbrow and Miss Rossi also contribute most successfully."[24]

In 1912 Mrs Lily, also a student, exhibited an embroidered table cover worked to Benham's design. This took the form of moths, the wings worked in heliotrope and blue giving a shot effect. Another strongly geometric design in the same exhibition incorporated black-billed, red-winged birds.[25]

Benham's better students in the early years were the teacher **Alice Glyde, Olive Thompson** and **Olive**

Parrant while **Maeva Hassell** and **Alice Atkins** won prizes in 1910 and **F. Glyde** and **A. Atwell** won scholarships in 1912. Two other students of note were **Enid Allum** in 1914 and the painter **F. V. Hall** in 1918.[26] It was Atwell who made up Daisy Rossi's designs which were exhibited with the WA Society of Arts.[27]

The needlework examiner each year was the redoubtable Bessie Rischbeith. The exam for 1914 is typical and required the students to "explain the method of working Tambour Limerick lace, ... work in 'Hedelbo' or Danish embroidery the design supplied [and] give four examples of Carrickmacross lace on the net supplied."

One of Benham's later students was **Norma Maria Rolland** (1906-1999) the daughter of civil engineer Robert Rolland. She enrolled in Art Needlework in 1925 obtaining a credit pass. Rolland, who also attended the Perth School of Art in Ventnor Avenue, later studied privately with Benham at her Mount Street home. Rolland did not work. Instead she attended to the needs of her father and the social round with her mother. At a later stage she went to the Royal College of Needlework in London to add to her skills. A skilfully worked, Jacobean style firescreen of her making is in the Karrakatta Club **(Plate 5)**. During WWII she undertook cipher work and on discharge, with social attitudes changed, she studied weaving, bought a loom and made a part-time career selling at exhibitions held by the designer Maria Dent in the King Edward Hotel.[28]

There were considerable changes in the Technical School by the time Rolland studied there. Some of these are detailed in the final article.

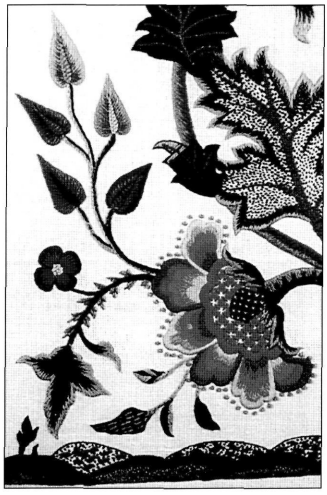

Plate 5. *Norma Rolland, Jacobean crewelwork firescreen, c. 450 x 600 x 200 mm (detail). The Karrakatta Club, photograph Karina Thulleson.*

Notes

1 Letter to his father 1 Nov 1903, AGWA file. Whether this was in the Boys School or the Girls School which was being adapted at this time to become the Technical School is not known.

2 Joseph Gentilli, *Gazette of the University of WA* 17.3 (Sept. 1967), p 34.

3 Shane Vanzetti of Moora possessed photographs of some of these pieces, with some also in the lantern slide collection of 'Good and Bad Design' held in the WA Museum.

4 *EZ. Review* 1 Nov 1904.

5 BL PR 6299

6 These are now in the WA Museum, donated by Hackett who bought them at the sale. They were described in *The Spectator* 9 July 1903.

7 Interview with Jean Lang, 1990, by D. Erickson.

8 *West Australian* 28 Oct 1909, p 8.

9 *WA* 6 Aug 1929, p 20 illustrates his modelled head of Doris Pierce.

10 T75.119.

11 Mary Nunn, "The Wildflower paintings of Daisy Rossi" *Trust News,* vol 196, December 1996, pp 8-9.

12 *Western Mail* 18 Nov 1911, p 50.

13 *WA* 23 July 1912, p 8.

14 Janda Gooding, *Western Australian Art and Artists 1900-1950,* Perth: AGWA, 1987.

15 After 1919 when her father died. During the war her mother had run a Red Cross depot organising "comforts" (hand knitted oiled wool socks etc) for the troops.

16 Ramage had painted Trade Union banners in Kalgoorlie in 1911. The Eastern Goldfields Operative Bakers Industrial Union of Workers' banner is in the WA Museum, accession no CH 74.110. Landells taught at a number of private schools as well as running her own Maylands School of Art. Most notable was at Methodist Ladies College, Claremont where she taught from 1909-1949.

17 Isaacson had credit passes in her subjects at Perth Technical School in 1919-1920.

18 This re-opened in 1968, changing its name to the Claremont School of Art during the 1980s.

19 *PTSAR.* 1908, p 19.

20 Which became Miss Parnell's and later St Hilda's.

21 It is probable she attended the South Australian School of Design.

22 Ada Turnbull taught Art needlework in Coolgardie 1912 onwards. Benham was replaced by Alice Glyde when she took leave in 1908.

23 It is probable she sold her designs. The South Australian of School of Design sold theirs.

24 *WM* 18 Nov 1911, p 50.

25 *WA* 20 Nov 1912 (Society of Arts files AGWA).

26 So far it has not been possible to locate any examples. Researching women's art is time consuming as most change their name on marriage and the inheritors of their work, their daughters, repeat the process. Textiles being useful are also subject to wear and tear and not many pieces survive. Of 76 students in 1914 only six sat the exam allowing us a record of their names.

27 Parrant, Atwell, Allum, Muriel Southern and Kitty Armstrong exhibited embroidery with the WASA.

28 Interviews with Norma Rolland in the 1980s by Dorothy Erickson.

William Champion a Colonial Cabinetmaker?

Milford McArthur

***Plate 1.** Cedar and mahogany toilet mirror with the impressed mark of J. W. Woolley.*

Dr Milford McArthur attempts to establish the possible reasons why William Champion, a former convict, hatter, publican and brewer, has his name on several fine pieces of mid-nineteenth-century Tasmanian furniture.

Introduction

One of the intriguing problems encountered in the study of Australian colonial furniture is to identify who actually made an individual piece. Tradition and culture meant that unlike artists, who customarily signed their work, the percentage of furniture pieces originally produced with an identifying mark or label was small, especially in the case of less formal, carpenter-made or farmhouse pieces.

Within the small group of marked pieces, the original mark does not always survive or remains unrecognised. It may be scratched or rubbed off if in pencil or ink, or scraped off or eaten by silverfish if paper.

Impressed marks are more durable and have been recognised as those of known cabinetmakers' names. An example includes the impressed mark of J. W. Woolley, an early Tasmanian cabinetmaker.[1&2] His mark impressed in a drawer of a cedar and mahogany toilet mirror **(Plates 1 & 2).**

J. W. Woolley's training as a cabinetmaker is documented and it is known that he both trained apprentices and employed cabinetmakers. Evidence for the latter is provided in *The Tasmanian* and the *Hobart Town Courier* of 23 January 1835, when cabinetmakers he employed combined to try to secure a pay rate consistent with wages paid by other masters in the trade.

***Plate 2.** J. W. Woolley's impressed mark in a drawer of the cedar and mahogany toilet mirror.*

On the same day Woolley placed a "Wanted" advertisement in the *Hobart Town Courier*, offering employment for cabinetmakers at "the highest piece prices" in the colony. This advertisement may, however, have been an example of "gulling", where a false or misleading advertisement is placed for political reasons, in this case Woolley's efforts to control cabinetmakers' wages.

A. and J. G. Osborn also used an impressed mark **(Plate 3)** as well as an ink mark.[3] The wording used in their newspaper advertisement[4] on 4 June 1846, that timber was "now being made up into Furniture", suggests that the pieces were made and sold at their "new and Extensive Premises" at Argyle Street, Hobart.

The Significance of Labels or Marks

With a labelled piece of furniture, there are several possibilities for the origin of the piece:

1 *The piece was actually made by the person whose name is written on it.*

There are several recorded examples where a cabinetmaker or apprentice marked a piece, for example, the James Packer specimen cabinet.[3] External sources may also indicate that a particular cabinetmaker made the furniture. For example, the *Mercury* 20 January 1869 reported that Mr Briggs, cabinetmaker to William Hamilton and Sons, had made a new footboard for the bed used by the Duke of Edinburgh on his visit to the property *Mona Vale* in 1868.

2 *The piece was made in the master's cabinet manufactory by an apprentice, journeyman cabinetmaker, assigned convict cabinetmaker, or the master himself.*

A journeyman is one who has completed an apprenticeship and is a qualified mechanic or artisan who works for another. He is distinct from an apprentice on the one hand and master on the other. The role of the journeyman cabinetmaker is important on the basis of numbers alone. They were probably responsible for the production of many fine pieces of furniture. The degree of supervision during production would have varied.

The role of convict cabinetmakers must also have been significant. Quinlan[5] states that due to the large percentage of assigned or probationary convicts in the workforce, "labour seldom ran short". Between 1830 and 1840, 15,709 free immigrants reached Van Diemen's Land in comparison with 45,891 convicts. Therefore unemployment was "a recurring threat" to the free workers because of competition from cheap convict labour. Eventually, workers began to organise in protest.

3 *The marked piece of furniture was sold through a retail outlet but its marking was independent of the maker's label or mark.*

That is, the label identified the retailer not the maker. For example, the furniture may have been made elsewhere in the colony, or imported from another Australian colony.

4 *The mark simply signifies that the person owned the piece at some stage and bears no relationship to the maker.*

One would expect this to be a permanent mark, an impressed mark, for example, rather than a paper label.

5 *A combination of the alternatives listed above.*

From the information available so far, it appears that William Champion marked furniture for exhibition. Anne Watson[6] in 1993 discussed this probability in detail. The recent discovery of a William Champion paper label on a cabinet of similar design to a bookcase bearing William Champion's impressed mark[3] adds to the puzzle, as it implies a common origin.

There is no other evidence that he was the maker, or from where he may have sold the furniture, although the paper label suggests the cabinet may have been sold from Champion's Jolly Hatter's Inn.

Career of William Champion Sr

William Champion was born in England in 1801, and his trade was hat making.[7] He was convicted at Gloucester on 2 April 1823, and sentenced to 14 years imprisonment for receiving stolen goods, which included "two hat blocks and various other articles of great value in the hat making line".[8]

Champion was transported to Van Diemen's Land on the *Asia* in 1824, leaving a wife and child behind in England who joined him at a later date. He arrived in Hobart and commenced work as a hatter in Bathurst Street, assigned to a Mr Munro. In 1829 he made and advertised for sale beaver hats made from the fur of silver grey rabbits, which Captain King had introduced to Betsy Island in 1823.[9]

Several instances of poor behaviour are recorded in his prison record. He was reprimanded in September 1824 for being out after curfew hour and in March 1825 for being absent from the Church muster. In December 1826 he was absent without leave and neglected his duties. He spent 14 days in irons for his misdemeanours.[7] He received a Ticket-of-Leave in April 1832, a Conditional Pardon in July 1834 and a Free Pardon in 1837.

Plate 3. *A. & J.G. Osborn's impressed mark.*

In 1829, Champion bought a brewery in Melville Street from Mr John Blundell. Possibly, the purchase was transacted by his wife as he was still a felon.

On 6 December 1833, Champion became the Licensee of the Jolly Hatters' Inn and remained so until 1852. The family owned it until 1885, when it was sold to Mr Blake.

In 1839, Champion built *Schouten House* in Swansea as a wedding present for his only daughter Esther Maria Champion, who married Frederick William Lewis on 8 October 1839. She ran it as the Swansea Hotel. Lewis died in 1852.[8]

In 1848, Champion obtained two areas of land in Glenorchy and by 1858 the valuation roll records that he owned extensive property in the area. He had brought his parents out from England in 1834 with his two younger sisters, Mahala and Thirza. His mother died in 1838 and in 1852 his father died at William Champion's residence, aged 86.

Another sad loss occurred on 10 March 1853, when William Champion's only son, also named William, died at Melville Street, from dysentery, aged 26, leaving a wife and one child. That child, Wilhelmine Jane Champion, died three days later on 13 March, aged 10 days. On 4 March 1855, William Champion Sr's wife Maria, died.

By 1861, Champion was "in ports beyond the seas" presumably visiting his English relatives. His daughter, Mrs Esther Lewis, a widow, managed the brewery but was in financial difficulty with a mortgage on the business. Champion apparently sent money from England to resolve the debt.

Champion was trained as a bell ringer[10] in England and went on to train bell ringers in Hobart Town. He donated money to strengthen the tower of Trinity Church and had a set of hand bells brought out from England, which are still at the church.

William Champion died at his home at 3 Burnett Street, Hobart, on 25 September 1871, aged 70. His last will and testament[11] described him as a former "victualler", and he left £100 to a nephew in England, and the rest of his estate to his sister, Mrs Mahala Maddock, of Melbourne.

William Champion Jr

The possibility that Willam's son was a cabinetmaker and responsible for the marking and labelling of the furniture must be considered. William junior was born in Hobart on 16 December 1827 and married Ellen Wiseman on 26 May 1852.[12] He died on 10 March 1853.[13]

Champion Jr's occupation is not known. It was not recorded on his marriage certificate and he was listed as a "publican's son" on his death certificate. He did not leave a will. Despite the scarcity of information about his life, it is possible that he was a cabinetmaker, although so far there is no evidence to support this theory.

The Jolly Hatters' Inn: a Social and Industrial Meeting Place

The Jolly Hatters' Inn was important in the history of Hobart as a political, industrial and employment venue as well as for its primary function.[5,8]

It was erected as a hat factory in 1824, and still functioning as such

***Plate 4**. Cabinet with William Champion's paper label on the drawer.*

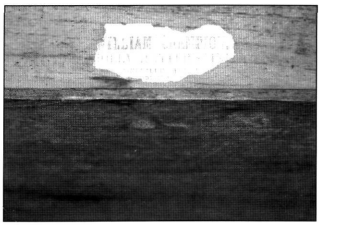

***Plate 5**. William Champion's paper label on the drawer of the cabinet.*

Plate 6. *A cedar whatnot in the National Trust house* Runnymede *at New Town impressed "W. Champion" on the undersurface.*

in 1832.[14] Champion Sr became the licensee of the Inn on 6 December 1833. It became a meeting place for various trade organisations, including the Hobart Town Carpenters and Joiners Benefit Society[15] and functioned also as a "place of call" where employers could come and hire journeymen. This gives another possible connection between Champion and cabinet making, but the nature of the relationship remains unclear.

In the 1847 *Licensed Victuallers' Directory*, Champion advertised the sale of ginger beer and offered accommodation at the Jolly Hatters' Inn. The service of "goods received, booked and carefully forwarded" via "Handley's Public Conveyance" was also advertised, raising the possibility that he acted as an agent for cabinetmakers outside Hobart to send furniture for sale.

Plate 7. *W. Champion's impressed mark on the cedar whatnot at* Runnymede.

Furniture Identified with a Champion Mark or Label

1 William Champion was named as the exhibitor of a "round muskwood turnover table with brass works and springs of Tasmanian manufacture" at the 1851 Great Exhibition in London.[6]

2 A bookcase with the impressed name W. Champion.[3]

3 A cabinet with a paper label on the drawer **(plates 4 & 5)**. The similarity in design of pieces 2 and 3 is evident.

4 A cedar whatnot **(plate 6)** in the National Trust house *Runnymede* at New Town has an impressed "W. Champion" mark on the undersurface of the piece.

Conclusion

Despite some information about Champion's career, the mystery of the William Champion furniture remains. On balance, it seems that William Champion impressed his name on furniture he owned, including that for exhibition. He may also have sold furniture with a paper label for cabinetmakers who used the Jolly Hatters as a sale room. There is no evidence that William Champion or his son (also William) was a cabinetmaker or made any of the pieces.

Acknowledgments

Gillian Winter, State Library of Tasmania, Hobart; Gemma Webberley, *Runnymede*, New Town; Michael Hobden, Battery Point.

Notes

1. C. Craig, K. Fahy & E. G. Robertson, *Early Colonial Furniture in New South Wales & Van Diemen's Land.* Melbourne 1972, p 21.
2. Lewis Woolley, descendant of J. W. Woolley: personal communication.
3. K. Fahy, C. Simpson & A. Simpson, *Nineteenth Century Australian Furniture*, Sydney, 1985, p 40.
4. *Britannia & Trades Advocate*, 4 June 1846.
5. M. Quinlan, *THRA Papers & Proceedings,* March 1986, p 9.
6. A. Watson, "A Champion Table" *Australiana*, November 1993. Anne Watson has a fragment of a stoneware ginger beer bottle impressed 'Wm Champion/ Melville Street/ Hobart Town'.
7. Archives Office of Tasmania, correspondence files.
8. R. Davidson, *A Brief Note on the Jolly Hatters' Inn,* Hobart.
9. *Colonial Times* 28 August 1829.
10. L. Daniels, "The Master Bell Ringer" *Tasmanian Ancestry*, December 1998.
11. Probate Registry, Hobart.
12. *HTC* 29 May 1852.
13. *HTC* 11 March 1853.
14. *True Colonialist,* 16 November 1832.
15. *HTC*, 12 August 1836.

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DATES AND DOUBTS

A Review of Current Australian Nineteenth Century Furniture Dating

R. A. Fredman

Plate 1. *Bookcase. Cedar, mid 19th century. Private collection.*

Bob Fredman speculates on the complex issue of how to date Australian furniture, and suggests that some dates, particularly those based on stylistic analysis, need to be "broadbanded." He continues on this tricky path to discuss authenticity, a subject not aired enough in public.

Once upon a time a piece of furniture was made in the new British colony at Sydney Nobody recorded who the maker w as, when it was made, or exactly what it looked like on completion. Now, more than one hundred years later, we have the problem of trying to find answers to these questions.

Today, formal descriptions of furniture normally comprise a reference to the timber(s), style, estimated date of manufacture and its originality. Timber and style can be described using well-established conventions, but age and originality (or authenticity) rely very much on the judgement of the describer. This paper aims to review contemporary Australian judgements and to address some of the consequential issues.

A number of books and catalogues published over the last two decades provide a reservoir of information on Australian antique furniture. We can assume their authors accurately represent current opinion on furniture description, or alternatively set a standard which will soon become accepted practice. My research is based on these recent works.

Several publications relating to Australian furniture have been reviewed to establish current standards of furniture dating. Analysing the spread of estimated dates of the furniture in these publications, it becomes apparent

that their distribution pattern is unusual. There is a dearth of dates in the 1850s and 1860s, in contrast to a plethora of dates in the 1830s and 1840s.

In reality, furniture production levels (with the exception of imported items such as chairs) must have been much higher in the 1850s-1860s than the 1840s, because the population was higher due to the gold rushes,[1] and the economy was over the 1840-45 depression. The dearth of dates from the 1850s-1860s can be explained only by either a characteristic of the dating methodology, or a widespread lack of interest in the furniture of this period. The reason is possibly linked to the dating methodology, and the justification for coming to this conclusion is discussed below.

Only one source claims to incorporate a "representative cross section" of furniture. This is Fahy, Simpson & Simpson's seminal work *Nineteenth Century Australian Furniture*.[2] Although the authors in this publication have exercised restraint, all contemporary writings show to varying degrees the same trend towards favouring early dates for Australian furniture.

The extent to which the distribution anomaly occurs is best demonstrated in graphical format using data from one of the more recent publications, *Australian Furniture: A Pictorial History and Dictionary 1788-1938*.[3] The estimated dates of manufacture from this book were plotted against their frequency of occurrence to obtain the graph **(Figure 1).** Only furniture types with a large sample number were selected. Another line in Figure 1 shows the non-indigenous Australian population against the same time axis. There is no available data on actual furniture production for this period, so it could be assumed to be proportional to the rise in population. While in reality demand for new furniture in the colonies would have arguably decreased during the disastrous 1840s depression, for the purpose of this exercise the assumption is reasonable. The strong correlation that one would anticipate between the numbers of pieces of furniture in the texts and the population at the same date clearly does not occur. In fact the 1840s is portrayed as a boom time for quality furniture production.

Some authors have hinted that there is an inherent problem in dating furniture. Fahy and Simpson in *Australian Furniture; A Pictorial History and Dictionary 1788-1938* advise that "supposedly older" pieces of a particular type are displayed before those of a later date, thus inferring some doubt. The authors add that exact dating of a piece is "often fraught with difficulty".[4] However they have assigned dates with a precision of five years. This is common practice in the Australian furniture trade and contrasts with European practice where monarchs, decades or even half centuries are commonly used as the unit of manufacture date.

The 1830s decade marks the likely commencement of the Neo-classical style in Australia, so one explanation for the cluster of dates in 1830-1840 is that the earliest possible date rather than the probable date was used to date these pieces. In this

Plate 2. *Chiffonier. Cedar, mid 19th century. Private collection.*

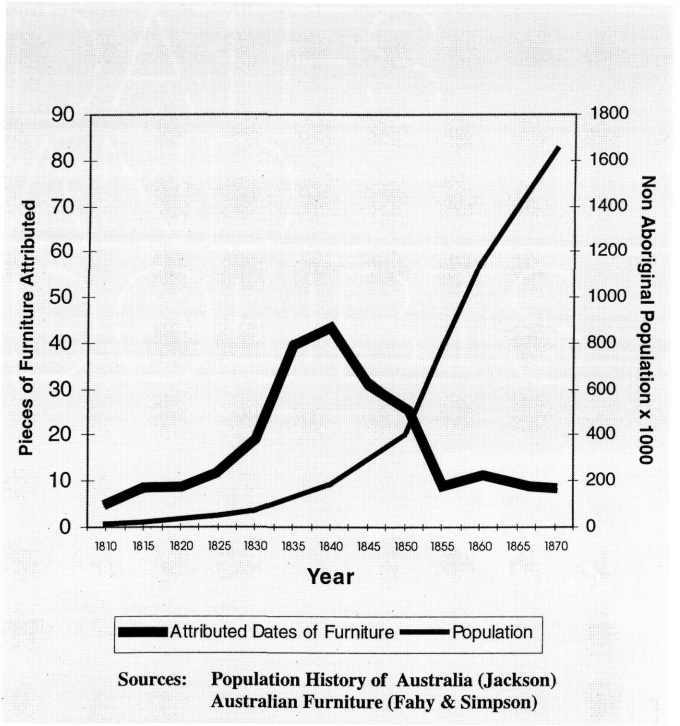

Fig. 1. Graph of Population & Frequency of Published Furniture Dates versus Year.

event, the "circa" prefix attached to the date implies something contrary to the traditional British definition of "accurate to plus or minus 10 years" (i.e. an average). "Circa" used to signify earliest possible date might mean instead for example *accurate to plus 30 or minus zero years.* A piece of furniture so dated, e.g. c. 1840, in reality would correctly be an 1840 to 1870 date range. If such pieces in the texts were given a "probable" date in the British tradition, such as "c. 1860" for this example, the dating anomaly would disappear.

The system of describing furniture by the "earliest possible" date benefits both vendors and owners of the furniture as an earlier date can bring more prestige and value. It does no real harm if the dating is correct and the distinction from "probable" date is understood (which it rarely is). It also compromises the value of descriptions when seen in the context of historical accuracy and will lead researchers and future collectors to the unlikely conclusion that furniture production levels were not related to population and economic factors.

Furniture dating can certainly be a more accurate (meaning correct) science than it is now. One supporting reason for the lapse to "earliest possible" date is the popular reliance on style as the primary determinant of age. Style is easy to see, and the wider principles are relatively easy to learn. However there are many reasons why dating on stylistic grounds is problematic, especially when attempting to be relatively precise (for example to within five years). It is possible to nominate an approximate initial date for the application of a particular style, but a terminal date is generally much less certain. Hence style, while useful as one of the factors in determining a date, has severe limitations if used on its own.

The first publication date of English pattern books or catalogues is often used as evidence of the date of a style and therefore of a particular piece, even though some of these pattern books had very long lives. Loudon[5] for example was published in various editions from 1833 to 1867, and probably had influence until 1880. Hepplewhite's pattern book, known to have been in Australia in 1802, was still deemed to be so useful that a copy was advertised for auction in a Sydney newspaper in 1840.[6] Loudon's later editions and even W. H. Rocke's 1874 catalogue[7] have examples of sofas that would make many "Grecian style circa 1835" sofa owners feel a little uncomfortable. Thus reference to the first date of publication has to be used with care.

Another example of a problem with pattern book dating is described in an authoritative text compiled by Edward Joy.[8] In the preface, Joy describes the oft-quoted John Taylor designs of 1825 as being from his research "so typical of the 1850s" that he has actually dated the designs to 1850 in the text. Even in his home country of England, Taylor's designs must have taken some time to impact on local furniture. This is strong support for not using the first publication date of pattern books.

Furniture is not the only field where popular misconception of the history of styles has been noted. Cox and Lucas[9] lament that "Georgian or Regency is the rather vague stylistic label used to describe almost any structure built in Australia before 1850 that is symmetrical and has small paned windows". They note that the Georgian style "tended

to last considerably longer in this country than in England", which suggests that English models do not provide a good model for colonial stylistic dating.

It is generally accepted that furniture styles as published in the London pattern books had widely variable application outside the main British population centres. In colonies as far distant as Australia the variation might have been at its widest because of the frontier lifestyle of a major proportion of the population. The effect of the cosmopolitan race mix on local style cannot be discounted either. Hence local tastes in furniture style would have had every reason to diverge from the mother country fashions relatively early. English language in Australia for example had already developed a distinguishable local accent by 1820.[10]

It is certainly a challenge to be definitive about the rate of development of Australian furniture style in the absence of much hard evidence on the subject. Lane and Serle examined pictorial records of the period and concluded that the absence of any volume of evidence makes it "difficult to be dogmatic about the rate of change" in Australian style.[11] They did conclude that the Grecian style had a prolonged presence, which again suggests that movements in English style are not immediately transferable to Australian furniture history.

To compound the problems in analysing style, there was significant variation between the early settlements, with Western Australian furniture clearly distinguishable from New South Wales for example. Tasmanian furniture, to the trained eye, can also often be a different style. Alternative styles also emanated from ethnic settlements throughout the country. Hence even broad reference to an "Australian" style needs to be qualified. The study of these variations (and Australian furniture in general) is only a recent phenomenon, possibly because our furniture was long regarded as technically imperfect compared with the British models.

Many factors must be taken into consideration in the assessment of the probable date of manufacture of a piece of furniture. The following list is a guide to the most relevant indicators. None is reliable in isolation, and each has its own field of specialist knowledge that is beyond the scope of this paper to elaborate on.

1 Cabinet-making techniques

Techniques changed with time and this variation is a guide to the era of construction. The first Australian cabinet-makers were trained in Georgian Britain, where the guilds ensured that cabinet-making conventions were well-taught and practised. The work of these artisans is identifiable through the use of standard designs, dimensions and thicknesses. Techniques gradually changed until mechanisation was widespread after 1850 (this varied according to the location). The use of original brass, bone and ebony inlay is a good indicator of early workmanship, while applied mouldings indicate later work. These are simple examples of cabinet-making as a dating tool.

2 Style

Style has its limitations but it does have a place as a part of a wider set of factors. It is generally true that fine Sheraton elements signify early work and that Neoclassical elements such as scroll backs and console legs can feature from 1830 to 1870.

3 Hardware

Dating screws, nails, locks, knobs and hinges is a science in itself. Screws changed in the shape of the slot, thread and tip over time. The Sloan patent in 1847 for the modern shaped screw is a useful landmark, although how quickly it was introduced into local cabinet-making is unknown. Original Bramah locks and later alternative designs are a reasonable indicator of date. Knobs or handles are often replacements and so must be treated cautiously.

4 Timbers

Red cedar, beefwood, rose mahogany, red mahogany, casuarina and a local pine were used at a very early date in Sydney. All except cedar were used with diminishing frequency until the mid 19th century, when imported timbers were also in use. The quality of cedar used in furniture, on average, declined with time. Great care is warranted in examining timbers as most have foreign cousins that can look very similar. Australian timbers were also exported very early, and used to make British pieces such as tea caddies of casuarina veneered on pine.

5 Labels

Genuine labels or stamps are a very useful indicator to date furniture made or retailed by Andrew Lenehan, as he changed address (but not necessarily premises) and labels regularly from 1844 to 1866. However, there are very few labelled Lenehan pieces pre-1850 in the texts. In total there are only about six labelled pieces extant from other makers before1850, so labels are primarily of use for later work. A word of warning is that there may be furniture with forged labels, and some with transposed old labels, in circulation.

6 Records

Very little was recorded in Australia's early days about specific pieces of furniture. As yet, no firm has been found that kept extensive workshop records, as did Gillow of Lancaster for example.

7 Inscriptions

Some pieces have stamped, ink or pencil inscriptions on the timber. There is no guarantee that these are contemporary to the construction of the piece, unless the inscription could not have been applied at any later time because of its location. Do not assume that inscriptions are accurate or even authentic unless corroborated by other evidence.

8 Provenance

As with inscriptions, "stories" other than in special circumstances carry no guarantee of accuracy. However, proper research can be very conclusive and for a good example of the art, "Connections in Queensland Colonial Furniture" by Glenn Cooke is recommended reading. [12]

9 Forensic evidence

Clues to age can occasionally be found by very careful scrutiny. Several years ago there was a piece of furniture on the market advertised as being the ubiquitous "c. 1840", which was possible stylistically. Subsequently, newspaper found glued on the back of a half-column was shown to be a remnant of an 1869 edition.

10 Exhibitions

Documented pieces of Australian furniture were entered in a number of exhibitions in Britain, Europe, USA Australia and New Zealand post-1850. Some of these pieces have been discovered and others may turn up. They are interesting to study, as they tend to be vanguard pieces of the time.

11 Catalogues and Pattern Books

Catalogues are known from the latter part of the 19th century. An early illustrated publication that could have come to Australia is Ackerman's *Repository of Arts* published in London from 1809 to 1828. No Australian pieces deliberately modelled on his designs are known.

12 Tool marks

A number of period tools imparted characteristic use marks which can tell a qualified observer about the period of manufacture, and give an indication of the degree of sophistication of the workshop. Saw marks are an example of the type of marks that can be analysed, although allowance needs to be made for city/country variation.

13 Clock dials

Oatley clocks from the 1820s are often dated on the dials, so if their cases correspond to that date they are a very good indicator of workmanship from that period.

***Plate 3**. Bed. Cedar, blackwood and eucalyptus, mid 19th century. Private collection.*

Conclusion

The characteristics of the cabinetwork are probably the most important factor of all, but only a few possess the necessary knowledge in this field. In 1931 Herbert Cescinsky wrote "The real expert in furniture must begin with a workshop training; what he learns in the handling of timber and the making of pieces he can acquire nowhere else". [13] This advice is as true now as it was 70 years ago. Certainly a number of conservator/cabinet-makers in Australia have very valuable knowledge on furniture dating that needs to be recorded for the benefit of future generations.

Various factors determine the date of manufacture of a piece of furniture and often require special skills to interpret. Once the evidence is collected the process is simple: *the most recent of the dates attributed to each piece of evidence is the probable date of manufacture of that piece of furniture.* Unless extraordinary evidence is found, the date selected should be rounded off to the nearest ten years. This date should have a confidence level of plus or minus ten years and be described as "circa" and a year i.e. "c. 1860". If there is any doubt about it being in this range (i.e. 1850 to 1870), then the piece is best described by a more general method such as monarch (e.g. mid Victorian) or "mid-nineteenth century".

There is considerable justification for broadbanding manufacturing dates into third-century segments i.e. early/mid/late 19th century for describing most pre 1900 furniture found in Australia. Often dating cannot realistically be more accurate than this, and the segments coincide reasonably well with periods of stylistic dominance. For example, mid 19th century (about 1830 to 1870) covers well the Neoclassical style and its variations. Examples of the application of third-century dating are shown in Plates

1, 2 & 3. Each piece of furniture illustrated would have estimated dates of either 1835, 1840 or 1845 under the traditional system.

There is an issue with quarter-century dating (e.g. third quarter 19th century) that warrants its avoidance. While we may have evidence to be accurate for some of the quarters, there will always be the temptation to group mid-century pieces c.1850 into the second quarter ie. 1825 to 1850. This would perpetuate the anomaly in date distributions.

***Plate 4**. Replacement gallery on cedar cabinet. Private collection.*

Authenticity

Any discussion on furniture dating would not be complete without considering authenticity. One cannot help but hear from time to time trade gossip about certain pieces in books, collections or catalogues, along the lines of "Did you know that chest is not right?" Parts or all of it may be new, and disguised (faked) to give the impression that the piece is older or better than it really is. Because faking can carry substantial financial reward, it is likely that it does occur from time to time.

A fake is created with an intent to deceive. This is in contrast to a reproduction, which is a legitimate creation. Unfortunately, with the passage of time reproductions tend to become the equal of fakes if they are mis-identified or passed off as originals. Australia, because of its relatively short industrial history, has not been plagued by these problems like Europe but times are changing. In 1936 antique dealer Joshua McClelland wrote in the Melbourne *Argus* "Faking cedar furniture has already become a lucrative trade in Australia". This early fake furniture must still be in circulation and have gained a good patina by now, meaning that almost certainly some of it has been mis-identified as genuine early work.

Some 1930s reproductions are well documented. A recent edition of *Australiana* featured the work of Francis de Groot, a colourful business identity in Sydney in the period 1920 to 1940. [14] De Groot made and retailed reproduction furniture in the Chippendale and other English styles using Australian timbers. While the works known to date are clearly identifiable as reproductions due to their style which pre-dates settlement, it is interesting to examine their cabinetwork. De Groot's workshop was very competent at copying all aspects of early cabinet-making. There should be no doubt that any reproductions of post-1800 furniture created in the 1930s would now be of very convincing quality and patina and hence easy to mis-identify as an original.

Exposing a fake is a process akin to Sherlock Holmes' method to solve a crime. There is a delightful series of "furniture detective" stories from a vetting committee in a book entitled *The Best of Antique Collecting*. [15] These stories highlight how well-executed fakes are difficult to detect for everyone including dealers, and may become apparent only to very experienced practitioners. Of course the best people at detecting fakes are experienced practitioners who work in the restoration, conservation or faking trades.

Very little has been written exposing furniture fakes in Australia. Ian Evans succinctly refers to commode chairs modified to be "carver" chairs thus: "These fabrications border on forgery." [16] More recently Julian Bickersteth describes evidence that challenges the authenticity of aspects of the "Packer" cabinet in the collection of the National Trust (NSW) at Old Government House, Parramatta. [17] The art fraternity is much better served in regard to exposing fakes with some very public disclosures on mistaken identification, or alternatively fraud, in the Australian art world.

No-one wants to be found owning a fake. Hence fakes tend to remain largely undiscovered and their myths live on. Certain pieces of furniture in high-profile Australian collections beg serious questioning on their purported age and authenticity, but there is little that can be done by true experts to test the claims of age without the owner's cooperation. Sometimes there is a day of revelation, as occurred in 1923 when Adolph Shrager, a British collector who was deceived by a vendor, had his day in court. The controversy surrounding the

case subsequently inspired Herbert Cescinsky to write *The Gentle Art of Faking Furniture*, which is still a landmark text on the subject. [18]

British and American books about fake furniture refer to a number of standard "conversions" which are problems in those countries. These include converting chests of drawers to kneehole desks, making two chests of drawers from one chest on chest, and so on. These particular practices in Australia are limited, but "marriages" of two unrelated bookcase parts are certainly endemic. Whether this constitutes a fake is an academic debate, but knowingly passing them on without recognition of their origins is outright dishonesty.

Good fakes are sometimes made from scratch utilising old timber and recycled panels. Embellishments such as stringing, nulling and crossbanding can be added to such pieces to achieve a convincing result. Reputable dealers do not handle these pieces knowingly, so they often enter the market by other means.

Certain furniture improvements may constitute fakery and others not. Replacing missing parts is legitimate when their design is based on remnant evidence. Repairs become faking when they add a new feature that could be used to "improve" the piece. An example is adding an early reeded edge to a shelf when there is no evidence that the original edge was anything other than plain. Another example is a fancy shape recently applied to what probably was a plain gallery **(Plate 4)**. Changes made early in the history of a piece may, in contrast, be considered legitimate. For example, there is evidence that some Australian furniture made in the 1830-40 era was modified to a more fashionable Grecian style in the 1850s. [19]

For the benefit of the next generation of Australian furniture collectors, I suggest that the industry should adopt a much closer scrutiny of individual pieces, and a more realistic and consistent approach to dating. We are very fortunate to be living in a time when Australian furniture appreciation has come of age, due in no small part to the work of Kevin Fahy and Andrew Simpson. May the momentum be maintained and the issues raised in this paper be given due consideration. Lastly, a message for collectors courtesy Herbert Cescinsky: "A buyer needs a thousand eyes; the seller but one".

Notes

1 The population of the Australian colonies doubled from 405,356 in 1850 to 1,168,000 in 1861. W. Bate, *Victorian Gold Rushes*, Ballarat 1999 p 8.

2 K. Fahy, C. Simpson & A. Simpson *Nineteenth Century Australian Furniture*, David Ell Press, Sydney, 1985.

3 Kevin Fahy & Andrew Simpson, *Australian Furniture; a Pictorial History and Dictionary 1788-1939.* Casuarina Press, Sydney, 1998.

4 *Op. cit.* p 139.

5 John Loudon, *An Encyclopaedia of Cottage, Farm and Villa Architecture and Furniture, Londn 1833.*

6 *Commercial Journal and Advertiser*, 18 November 1840.

7 *Furniture Pattern Book W. H. Rocke & Co. Melbourne,* 1874; *C. Crouch* Australia's First Known Furniture Pattern Book by W.H. Rocke & Co, Melbourne" *Australiana* vol. 21 no 1, 1999, pp 5-11.

8 *Pictorial Dictionary of British 19th Century Furniture Design*, Antique Collectors Club, Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1977.

9 *Australian Colonial Architecture* Lansdowne, Sydney, 1978 p 1.

10 *Macquarie Dictionary* (second revision), preface.

11 *T. Lane & J. Serle, Australians at Home. A Documentary History of Australian Domestic Interiors from 1788 to 1914* Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1990 p 3.

12 *Australiana* vol 17 no 3.

13 Herbert Cescinsky, *The Gentle Art of Faking Furniture*, Eyre & Spottiswoode, London, 1931.

14 M. Bogle, *Australiana* vol 22 no.1.

15 Compiled by the Antique Collectors Club (Baron Publishing, Suffolk, 1981.

16 *Furnishing Old Houses* Sun, Australia, 1983.

17 "The Packer Cabinet Revisited", *The Furniture History Society Newsletter*, no 5, Oct. 1997.

18 See n. 13.

19 Sideboard in author's collection.

Peter R. Walker
Australiana Writing Award

Peter R. Walker Pty Ltd, Dealers in Fine Art, generously continue to sponsor a cash award of $250 for the best article submitted to *Australiana* this year. All articles appearing in *Australiana* Volume 23 will be eligible to receive the 2001 award.

At the Australia Day lunch, Kevin Fahy announced the winner of the 2000 Peter R. Walker Award. John Hawkins again took out the Award for his series "Julius Hogarth – Behind the Shopfront", using Hogarth's bankruptcy papers to reveal the mechanics of the jewellery industry in 19th century Australia.

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A semi-fossilised kauri gum life-size Maori head depicting the finely carved Moko, unique to this unknown individual. Rather than pricking the skin with needles and introducing the pigment at the same time, the pattern was carved into the flesh and coloured with pigment, giving a play of light and shadow along the ridges.

See *Australiana* May 1997 pages 42-43 and "The Mark of the Savage", *National Library of Australia News*, December 1998 for articles on this subject.