

fairhall

NEWSLETTER OF
THE FRIENDS, GUIDES
AND VOLUNTEERS

ISSUE 7 | NOVEMBER 2012



THE JOHNSTON
COLLECTION

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Front Cover |
Sampson pottery / [Minton]
figure [Chinese flower seller], England
porcelain, polychrome enamel decoration
The Johnston Collection (A0516-1989)

Back Cover |
Trevor Smith
Chinese Tea Caddy, 2010
mixed media

Thanks

The Johnston Collection gratefully acknowledges the support of The Copland Foundation.

We also gratefully acknowledge the support of The Friends of The Johnston Collection towards the production and distribution of *Fairhall*.



REJOICE! the 10th anniversary Christmas at The Johnston Collection 2012 has opened, and we welcome back selected creations made over the last five years of spectacular Christmas tours.

It has been wonderful to get back in touch with past contributors, from Castlemaine (2007-2008), Bendigo

(2008-2009), Geelong and the Bellarine Peninsula (2009-2010), Warrnambool and the Western District (2010-2011) and Wangaratta/North East (2011-2012). All the contributors and individuals have, without hesitation, made their works available. It is heartwarming to know that they have been kept, and that many are now cherished family heirlooms.

We are also working on house-museum tours for 2013. These will be based around an overarching theme of 'strong women' inspired by the bicentenary of the publication of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. For the annual 'William Johnston and his Collection' tour, *Fairhall* will be arranged by Barbara Brownlow and Alexandra Brownlow of Brownlow Interior Design, Toorak. Later in the year, as part of our 'House of Ideas' series, Melbourne-based artist Rosslynd Piggott will curate *Fairhall*.

The lecture series continues from strength to strength. We are delighted to welcome back our regular speakers. If you haven't yet seen some of our new speakers such as Eugene Barilo von Reisberg and Peter McPhee, we strongly encourage you to do so next year.

As we look ahead, it's also good to look back at what has been achieved over the year. We have seen The Johnston Collection send out a regular e-newsletter since January and start its Facebook page in March. We have also gained a lot of media attention during the Romance Was Born tour.

The Friends have had another exceptional year of events and activities. Tremendous thanks must go to Robert and the committee members who initiated and organised a superb and widely enjoyed programme. The AGM in August farewelled four stalwarts of the committee who have contributed so much during their tenures. At the same time we welcomed new committee members who have not only a brilliant programme of events to work from, but will also bring their new ideas and approaches.

Thank you as always to Anne Glynn and all involved with *Fairhall*. Please support the newsletter by not only reading but also researching and writing for it.

From all of us on the team, I would like to thank everyone who has been involved with The Johnston Collection this year. Holiday greetings to all and we look forward to working with you in 2013.

Louis Le Vaillant, Director | Curator
The Johnston Collection



Christmas is not far away and that means a new tour, *Rejoice! Christmas* at the Johnston Collection. This year is the tenth anniversary of the Christmas tour, so to celebrate, this newsletter is focusing on various aspects of Christmas, past and present. What did Charles Dickens

really think of Christmas? How did Christmas as we know it today originate? Our annual Christmas recipe is one you may like to try for the Christmas table.

Fairhall would like to welcome the fifteen new guides and volunteers who have completed the first stage of their training, and are beginning their new roles with the opening of the Christmas tour. Their various skills and expertise will be very welcome. Wendy Babiolakis will have some help in the library and Angela Hesson will receive welcome assistance in the curatorial department. The new volunteer guides may also be interested to read how their training compared to that of the class of 2006.

I would like to hear from any of The Friends of The Johnston Collection who have a collection that they may like to write about. In this edition we will discover a little more about what our assistant curator, Angela Hesson, likes to collect when not working at the Collection.

How well do you know The Johnston Collection? Let's test your memory and knowledge with a quiz.

On behalf of The Johnston Collection we hope you have a very happy Christmas and a safe and enjoyable New Year and we look forward to seeing you at a tour, lecture or Friends' event in 2013.

Anne Glynn
Fairhall Newsletter Editor



Theo Hunter, 7 Ottawa Rd, Toorak, 2008
Collection of Peter and Suzy Rowland



I have recently returned from a wonderful trip to England, Italy and France.

There were many highlights including the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the Olympic Games – and a memorable visit to Dennis Severs' house museum in Spitalfields, London. It is under the brilliant direction of David Milne

(who recently visited The Johnston Collection) and is well worth a visit if you are in London.

It has been a highly successful year for the Friends. Last time I presented the *Fairhall* report we were about to have an evening at Kay Craddock's *Antiquarian Bookshop*, which was a great success. Kay gave a superb talk and was asked many questions – a most entertaining evening in this fascinating shop.

In June there was a visit to *Love and Devotion* at the State Library of Victoria. This exquisite exhibition was co-curated by Susan Scollay, and we were very fortunate to hear Susan deliver a wonderfully informative presentation.

August was the month for the AGM, this year at the Menzies Foundation in East Melbourne, with Lesley Kehoe of Lesley Kehoe Galleries (specialists in Japanese Art) as our brilliant guest speaker.

Morning Tea at Fleur Gibbs' home was wonderful – she is yet another fascinating woman and her apartment is breathtaking both in its outlook and its beautifully collected and cared-for contents.

We look forward to our Christmas Party at the exquisite Toorak house of Suzy and Peter Rowland. Suzy is a popular and enthusiastic supporter of TJC and FJC, with a lifelong interest in the decorative arts. Peter, a well-known Melburnian, is the organiser without equal of many great Melbourne events and the country's leading caterer for many years. I am also pleased to report we have many new members and there was a welcome for them in October.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to the following hard-working and loyal committee members, who are retiring from their roles: Sharon Groher, Jane Morris, Louise Box and Liz Cromwell. All of them have done a splendid job and this was duly acknowledged at the AGM. I would like to say Sharon's abilities as Treasurer and Jane's legendary organising abilities as Secretary will not be forgotten.

We would also like to warmly welcome new committee members Wendy Babiolakis, Sheila Butler, Sue Logie-Smith and Patricia McKendrick, who are generously volunteering their time, skills and ideas to FJC.

I look forward to seeing you all soon.

Robert Thomson, SIDA President,
The Friends of The Johnston Collection





FRIENDS' RECENT EVENTS

A VISIT TO FLEUR GIBBS'

1. Georgia Hutchison and Rosalind Wells
2. Sue Sweetland and Hugh Rattan
3. John Balmford, Dani Balmford, Elisabeth Douglas, Donald Hossack
4. Sue Logie-Smith, Wendy Stephens, Helen Hunwick
5. Fleur Gibbs and Robert Thomson

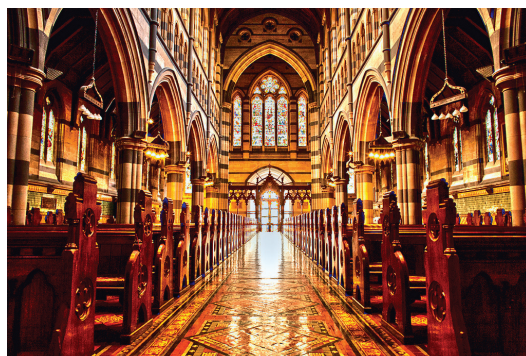
NEW MEMBERS' NIGHT

6. Diana Dolan, Eveline Charles, Diana Killen
7. Mary Bourne, Tony Preston, Sheila Butler
8. John Wakefield, Gary Jenkins
9. Cecilia Newman, Chris Newman, John Chambers, Sue Logie-Smith



FRIENDS' UPCOMING EVENTS

The final event for the year will be The Friends of the Johnston Collection annual Christmas Party on 4 December 2012. All welcome as it is always entertaining and enjoyable. More details to follow.



In 2013 there are very interesting events being proposed – St Paul's Cathedral, Percy Grainger Museum, Baillieu Library and a morning visit to a private home. More details to follow.



Welcome TO FRIENDS NEW MEMBERS

Lindy Bajurnow	Grevis Beard
Matthew Bird	Sheila Butler
John Chambers	Loreen Chambers
Eveline Charles	Lady Susannah Clarke
Allan Hamilton	Christine Hubay
Celia Jones	Irianna Kanellopoulou
Diana Killen	Michael Kirwan
Patricia McKendrick	Brenda McRae
Cecilia Newman	Ann Preston Flint
Eleni Primenta	Jennifer Ross
Elizabeth Sansom	Margaret Slaney
Suzanne Spinner	Catherine Thomson
Margaret Webster	

ORIGINS OF CHRISTMAS

It is Christmas Day in our Georgian townhouse in the North of England. Let us imagine we are a family in York so that those of us who have visited *Fairfax House* can more easily set the scene.



In the Age of Reason our elegant family is sitting in their Drawing Room, which is festooned with swags of evergreen, celebrating Christmas. But now let us delve behind this idyllic scene to some of the pagan, pre-Christian antecedents of this festival, reflecting our exotic, eclectic and chequered history. Our lyrical musings will take us back to the Romans, to Turkey and to the northern traditions of the Viking world, by way of ancient druidical rites.

Our Georgian family is admiring their garlands of evergreen: holly, rosemary, laurel, bay, ivy box and yew. But then so too did the Romans before them, during their midwinter festival of Saturnalia, and commercial garland sellers are depicted in the frescoes of Pompeii. Mistletoe is considered inappropriate by the church, due to its druidical associations; Pliny saw two white-clad druids shin up a tree and cut down the mistletoe on it to cure infertility. In a similar vein, in Yorkshire we drape mistletoe around a sphere surmounted by a ring of candles with red apples suspended beneath, known colloquially as the Kissing Bough. One only hopes the apples are securely attached. Saturnalia was the great feast of Saturn, the agricultural god of the Golden Age when humans lived a bucolic existence in harmony with nature. It was also a time of peace and joy to all men, just like Christmas! Our family are, of course, celebrating Christmas on the 25th December, which co-incidentally is exactly the same day chosen by Julius Caesar in 45 BCE as the shortest day, and which later became Dies Natalis Sol Invictis, the Birthday of the Unconquerable Sun. Yet another propitious birthday on the same day as the birth of Christ!

Now let us turn our thoughts towards Turkey. The mummers, the young men and women dressed in their concealing strips of fabric and their headdresses, have visited our family and performed their traditional

entertainment for a small remuneration. A tradition since the Crusades, not only have we seen King George (the mummer) slay the Turkish Knight, but now he has somewhat regretted it:

‘Only behold and see what I have been and done
Cut and slain my brother just like the evening sun.’

Remaining in Turkey, St Nicholas was the 4th century Bishop of Myra in the south west of the country, and a supporter of children and unfortunates. He gave secret gifts to the needy, including bags of gold to three poor girls to serve as their dowries and protect them from prostitution. A number of Georgian ladies have not been so fortunate.

On a more cheerful note, there have been Christmas presents for the children of our family. For antecedents to the giving and receiving of gifts at this midwinter season, let us look to the mythology of the North. The Norse god Odin led a great Yule hunting party through the sky, riding his leaping eight-legged horse Sleipnir, who later may have been mistaken for a reindeer. Odin, who had a long beard, just like Santa, leaves gifts and candies in the shoes of good children who have left carrots, straw or sugar for his steed.

As Georgians our family do not yet have a Christmas tree (this is possibly brought to England by Queen Caroline of Brunswick in 1820 for a children’s party at Windsor) but Odin has yet again set the precedent. At the festival of Blot, male slaves were sacrificed to him and hung from the branches of a tree, although admittedly this was once every nine years and not every year.

So now let us leave our family enjoying their delicious Yorkshire pie in Georgian splendour. Merry Christmas.

Helen Annett

Above | Thomas Couture, *Romans of the Decadence*, (depicting the festival of Saturnalia) 1847, oil on canvas, Musée d’Orsay

STAFFORDSHIRE STORY



TOM KING

Staffordshire potteries district, England
figure (*Tom King*), circa 1870
earthenware, glazed
195 x 53 x 109 mm
The Johnston Collection (A0704-1989)

In the Johnston Collection there is a figure of Tom King the highwayman, mounted on a horse, holding a pistol in his right hand. He is wearing a black coat and tricorn hat. Tom King was famous for being a partner of highwayman Dick Turpin, so the moulded figures were often shown as pairs. There is no date of birth recorded for Tom, however he died in 1735, when he was accidentally shot by Dick Turpin in Epping Forest.



(RICHARD) DICK TURPIN

Staffordshire potteries district, England
figure (*Dick Turpin on Black Bess*),
circa 1840-1850
earthenware, lead-glazed
206 x 49 x 110 mm
The Johnston Collection (A0705-1989)]

Dick Turpin was the son of an Innkeeper. He entered into partnership with Tom King, and they made their living as highwaymen stealing horses. They operated in Epping Forest in the early part of the 18th Century. It was here that Dick accidentally shot and killed Tom, when he was aiming to shoot an Innkeeper. Dick escaped to Yorkshire, where he was arrested four years later and executed in April 1739. He is seen here mounted on his horse Black Bess and holding a pistol in his right hand. He is wearing a long green coat and a tricorn hat, with a plume.

The story of Turpin, his famous mare Black Bess and King was popularised in Harrison Ainsworth's novel *Rockwood* (1834).

Sandy Gumley



CHARLES DICKENS & CHRISTMAS

Charles Dickens loved Christmas. There are many accounts in letters and reminiscences describing his enjoyment of all aspects of the festival: 'Such dinings, such dancings, such conjurings, such blindman's buffing, such theatre goings, such kissing-out of old years and kissing-in of new years as had ever taken place.'

His daughter Mamie in her book, *My Father as I recall Him*, writes:

'Christmas was always a time which in our home was looked forward to with eagerness and delight, and to my father it was a time dearer than any other part of the year, I think'.

In fact when Dickens died, a little barrow girl in London asked 'Mr Dickens dead? Does this mean Father Christmas is dead too?'

The *Sunday Telegraph* of London in 1988 gave Charles Dickens the title of 'The Man who Invented Christmas', but this is obviously not true. December celebrations go right back to the Roman pagan festival of Saturnalia, but it was Dickens who rescued Christmas and restored it to its rightful place.

In *Sketches by Boz*, Dickens writes 'Christmas Time! That man must be a misanthrope indeed in whose breast something like a jovial feeling is not roused, in whose mind some pleasant associations are not awakened, by the recurrence of Christmas.'

We find exactly the same exuberance in the description of Christmas celebrations at Dingley Dell in the *Pickwick Papers*: feasting, drinking, kissing under the mistletoe, blindman's buff, and story-telling around blazing log fires.

'This' said Mr Pickwick, 'this is indeed comfort!'

But of course, it is *The Christmas Carol* that most people think of when they associate Dickens with Christmas. Dickens wrote *The Christmas Carol* in six weeks; six thousand copies were produced by 21 December and were sold out within four days. *The Christmas Carol* was an instant success, and within a year or two of its appearance, its sales in America had outstripped those of the Bible.

Scrooge is a tight-fisted old miser who famously replies, 'Bah! Humbug!' when his nephew wishes him



a Merry Christmas, and it is Scrooge's nephew who iterates what Dickens thought about Christmas:

'I have always thought of Christmas time as a good time: a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time: the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely and to think of people below them as if they were fellow-passengers to the grave and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys. And, therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe that it *has* done me good and *will* do me good; and I say, God bless it!'

The three Spirits of Christmas past, present and future convince Scrooge of the error of his ways, and he wakes up on Christmas morning a completely changed man. After that, 'It was always said of him that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man alive possessed the knowledge'. So to Dickens we owe Christmas as a major holiday, a time of giving to the less fortunate, and a time for family and friends to meet together. He did not see Christmas as a particularly religious festival but as a time of general benevolence. I think he would have been appalled at the commercialisation of Christmas that we see today.

One word of warning: we must always remember that there is a much more important side to Dickens than the celebration of Christmas. He spent his life and his writings in condemning all the evils and injustices of the society in which he lived and especially the neglect and oppression of children. In fact, his daughter Kate must have felt this when she said in a letter to George Bernard Shaw 'If you could make the public understand that my father was not a joyous, jocosely gentleman with a plum pudding and a bowl of punch you would greatly oblige me.' Christmas was important to Dickens; but other things were far more important.

Elisabeth Neales
Branch Secretary, The Dickens Fellowship

Left, above | John Leech, *Mr Fezziwig's Ball*, 1843
wood engraving, illustration for Charles Dickens's
Christmas Carol: Marley's Ghost

Left, below | John Leech, *Scrooge's Third Visitor*, 1843
wood engraving, illustration for Charles Dickens's
Christmas Carol: Marley's Ghost



ORIGINS OF SAYINGS

Toffee Nosed refers to the habit of using snuff. If not adequately inhaled it would drip onto a gentleman's moustache leaving a toffee coloured stain!

Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater

Families rarely bathed, often only once a year. The head of the household would enjoy a clean, hot, soapy bath followed by the other males. Then the woman, followed by the children and finally the babies. By this time the water was so dirty, you could lose someone in it – hence this saying.

Dirt Poor and Threshold

Floors were made of dirt. Only the wealthy had something other than dirt. Hence *dirt poor*. The wealthy would have slate floors which would get slippery in winter, so they spread thresh (chaff) on their floors. As winter wore on they added more thresh until when you opened the door, it would all spill outside. A piece of wood was placed at the entry to avoid this happening, hence threshold.

Peas porridge hot, peas porridge cold, peas porridge in the pot, nine days old

This refers to a large cauldron, that was hung on a spit over the kitchen fire and contained meat, game, vegetables, whatever was available. At night it was left to get cold, then boiled up again the following day, usually adding more ingredients to it. Sometimes the pot would have bones in it up to a month old!

Bringing home the bacon and Chewing the fat

Families who could afford a piece of pork or bacon would feel very special. This was a sign of wealth and showed that the man could 'bring home the bacon.' They would cut off a small piece to share with visitors who would all sit around to *chew the fat*.

Upper Crust Bread was divided according to status in the house/family. Workers got the burnt bottom part of the loaf; the family got the middle, and guests got the top or *upper crust*.

Diana English

Editor's note: The origins of idioms are notoriously difficult to prove definitively. If you know of other stories associated with these sayings we would be interested to hear them.

RECOMMENDED READING

THE ARCANUM

Janet Gleeson, Bantam Books, 1998

This is a fascinating novel about Johann Frederick Bottger, the man who discovered the recipe for porcelain in Europe.

It is set in Germany in the early 1700s when Augustus of Saxony was ruler. This tale is based on a true story and traces the life of Bottger and others, in the quest to find the formula to make porcelain that was also known as 'white gold'.

A critic wrote 'it was a formula for which others were prepared to lie, cheat, steal or kill in order to possess.'

An enthralling and informative book.

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS: AT HOME IN GEORGIAN ENGLAND

Amanda Vickery, Yale University Press, 2010

This is a story about what goes on behind closed doors and deals with all classes in society in Georgian England. We learn about people at home such as a gentlewoman who lives in an Oxfordshire mansion in 1680, a bachelor clerk in London lodgings in 1830, genteel spinsters, widowers and professional couples and servants. A funny, pleasurable and engaging book.

Karina James

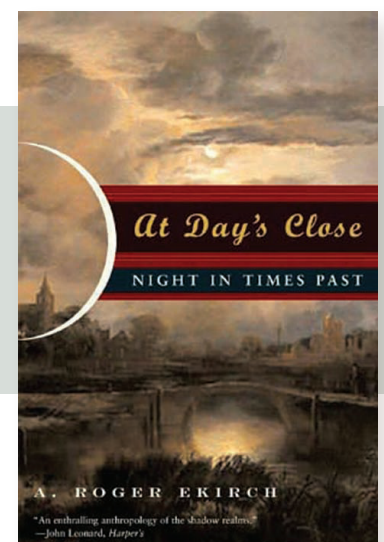
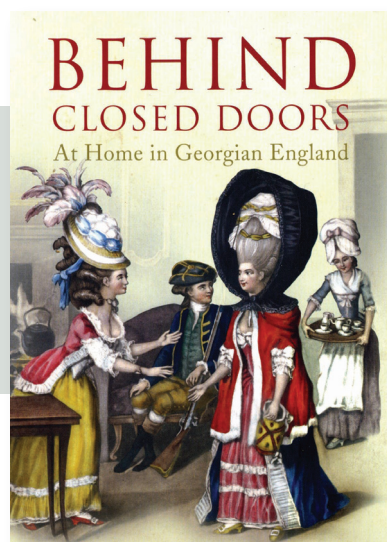
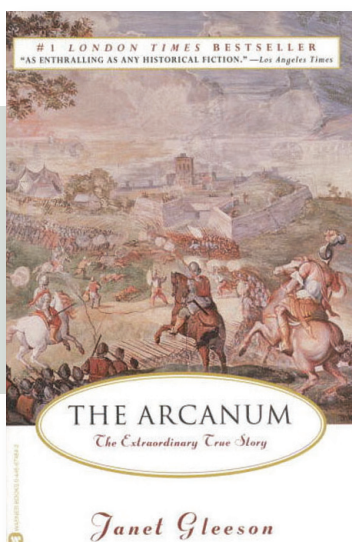
AT DAY'S CLOSE: NIGHT IN TIMES PAST

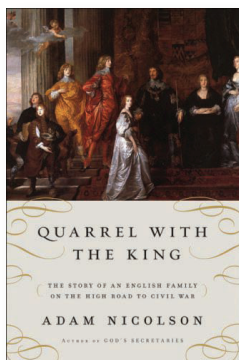
A. Roger Ekirch, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005

At Day's Close explores a remarkably rich and vibrant history of the hours of darkness prior to the Industrial Revolution. Environmental issues impinged on the peace of mind of the populace whether in the city or the country. The majority of urban dwellings abutted the street, and as you may imagine had very poor insulation. The noise of revelers, brawling drunkards and clanging fire bells is something we can relate to, but add to this the inevitable infestations of lice, fleas and bedbugs and one can begin to see that sleep did not come easily to all. For those who could not or would not sleep there were always the diversions of crime, amorous liaisons, gambling and drinking to while away the hours. Again, not too different to today, but when street lighting was first installed it caused great problems for prostitutes and criminals, the lamps now being witnesses of illicit behaviour. Such was the initial distrust of street lighting that throughout Europe there were wide spread protests, but for many urban dwellers it made life a little safer from the organised gangs of thieves who had their work curtailed.

It is very hard for us to imagine our lives being lit only by candle or firelight. To place ourselves in the pitch blackness of a dark night, no glow from distant town or city, no street lights, we can begin to understand the change in thinking that has taken place since the advent of access to lighting. One can appreciate the belief in magic and the supernatural as just some of the real and imagined perils that encroached after sunset. Our inherent distrust of the dark can seem perfectly justified after reading this enthralling narrative, to quote from the book 'in the night, every cat is a leopard'- Italian proverb

Wendy Babiolakis



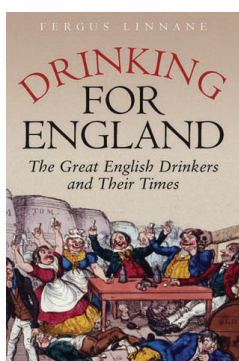


ACQUISITIONS

QUARREL WITH THE KING: THE STORY OF AN ENGLISH FAMILY ON THE HIGH ROAD TO CIVIL WAR

Adam Nicolson

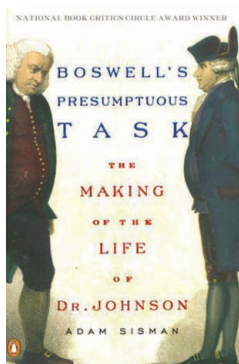
Tells the story of the first four Earls of Pembroke, their wives, children, estates, tenants and allies, following their high and glamorous trajectory from the 1520s through 1650.



DRINKING FOR ENGLAND: THE GREAT ENGLISH DRINKERS & THEIR TIMES

Fergus Linnane

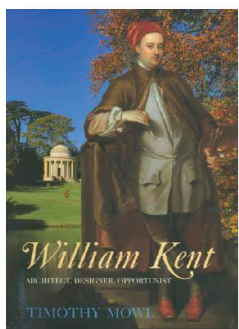
This compelling book takes the reader on a heady tour of ale houses and inns, bars and taverns, palaces and clubs, telling the story of the English addiction to the bottle.



BOSWELL'S PRESUMPTUOUS TASK: THE MAKING OF THE LIFE OF DR. JOHNSON

Adam Sisman

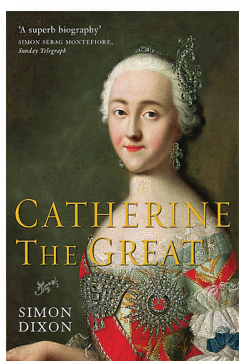
Traces the friendship between Boswell and his great mentor and provides a fascinating and original account of Boswell's seven year struggle to write *The Life*.



WILLIAM KENT: ARCHITECT, DESIGNER AND OPPORTUNIST

Timothy Mowl

Recounts the journey of William Kent from con man to one of the artistic geniuses of his age.



CATHERINE THE GREAT

Simon Dixon

This is an intimate and revealing biography which examines the lifelong friendships that sustained the Empress throughout her personal life.

HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW THE JOHNSTON COLLECTION?

- 1 Where was William Johnston born and when?
- 2 Where was William Johnston's country property *Chandpara*?
- 3 When did The Johnston Collection open to the public?
- 4 What colour are the walls in the downstairs hallway?
- 5 What is the oldest painting in the collection?
- 6 What was the name of William Johnston's shop in High St, Armadale?
- 7 When William Johnston lived at *Fairhall*, where was his bedroom?
- 8 What was one of the first items that William Johnston bought when he went to England that now stands in the Green Drawing Room?
- 9 Where was William Johnston's first paid job?
- 10 When did William Johnston buy *Fairhall*?

? Turn to page 18 for the answers



ARTS & CRAFTS MOVEMENT 1860–1890

This was an English movement that reacted against the perceived banality of mass produced design resulting from the Industrial Revolution. It held that there should be a return to the honesty of medieval craftsmanship that suggested the charm, personality and workmanship that had now been lost, and initiated a revival of pride and appreciation of the decorative arts.

The movement began in the second half of the 19th century with the reformist ideas of art critic, John Ruskin, A.W.N. Pugin (Gothic Revival, see *Fairhall* Issue 2) and designer William Morris, who were later joined by the artists of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, Edwin Burne-Jones, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the architect Philip Webb. The movement proposed that art should be useful as well as aesthetically beautiful. William Morris is famous for his quote 'Have nothing in your house that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful.' He defined beauty in art as the result of man's pleasure in his work, and used his Kelmscott Press to publish the ideas of the movement in England and abroad. The Arts and Crafts movement ran parallel with the Aesthetic movement, which advocated perfection in beauty and the notion of 'Art for Art's Sake.'

The interior of Arts and Crafts houses were unpretentious and avoided the idea of being designed merely for beauty. Considerable time, effort, and often expense, went into the design of a room intended to look artlessly unplanned. Many houses featured ceiling beams or timbering in the manner of a medieval hall, with wood panelled walls. Cotton or linen were preferred fabrics for window treatments rather than silk. Floors were generally wooden with woven carpets that anchored the furniture arrangement. Wallpapers were popular, especially those designed by William Morris, with emphasis on flowers, birds and other motifs from nature.

Arts and Crafts ceramics, metalwork and embroideries all emphasised the appearance of being hand-crafted. Painted tiles framed the fireplace. Decorative stained glass was an important product from Morris's workshop and





was very popular. Furniture forms were simple rectilinear shapes in oak or mahogany with detail that emphasised the handmade quality of the furniture. Even machine-made furniture from the later period suggests the same handcrafted look. Seating, whether straight back chairs or benches, were cushioned rather than fully upholstered.

The interest in The Arts and Crafts movement led to the formation of many guilds throughout Britain with the same aim of elevating the status of handcrafts to that of fine arts. The movement influenced the Arts and Crafts movement in America and shared the same ideals. However American designers and artists concentrated on the materials rather than the decoration and used industrial production to assemble the furniture and finish by hand. This combination made their designs more affordable and therefore accessible to a wider audience.

Above | William Morris's Red House, designed by Philip Webb, 1859

Below | Morris Chair, an adjustable back chair designed by Philip Webb for Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., 1866

Left | William Morris, Strawberry Thief designed 1883 with birds drawn by Philip Webb



WHAT'S ON WHERE

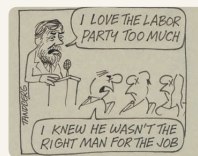
GUSTO: A CULINARY HISTORY OF VICTORIA



is a free temporary exhibition at The State Library of Victoria until April 2013. There are guided tours every Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday at 1pm.

Detail from Jean Bowring, *Cake icing and decorating*, Melbourne, Colourgravure Publications, Herald and Weekly Times, 1950, Beverley Wood collection.

THE CHANGING FACE OF VICTORIA



tells the story of people, places and events that have shaped Victoria. MIRROR of the WORLD showcases many of the rare, beautiful and historically significant books held in the collections. These are permanent exhibitions at the Dome, State Library of Victoria and guided tours are available.

Ron Tandberg, 'I love the Labor Party too much', 1991, ink on paper, gift of Barry Jones, 2011.

MARKREE HOUSE MUSEUM & GARDEN



This museum opened early in 2011 and was the bequest of Henry Graham Baldwin (1919-2007) to the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. It was one of the largest bequests ever made to an Australian museum. It includes property, a financial endowment and over 4,200 items of fine and decorative art and historical memorabilia.

Henry Baldwin was a third generation Tasmanian. He played significant roles in the state's history. His family history features strongly in the Markree displays.

The home was built for the Baldwin family in 1926 by Bernard Ridley Walker (1884-1957). The house and garden is a fine example of the Arts and Crafts Movement in architecture and design.

Markree is open for pre-booked tours between Tuesday and Sunday.

145 Hampden Road, Hobart, TAS 7000

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Sue Flanagan

FIGURAL ART NOUVEAU

I don't recall any dramatic event that triggered my enthusiasm for figural Art Nouveau – I think the rather unromantic truth is that I began collecting after writing an undergraduate essay on the subject about twelve years ago.



Above |
maker unknown, France
paper knife, c.1900
bronze

Far right |
J. Sola, France, ewer,
circa 1900, pewter

I have always been interested in the literature, art and design of the *fin de siècle*, and in particular the ways in which femininity was represented during that period. The inkwells, pintrays, teaspoons and other objects that I collect are, I believe, beautiful things, but they also reflect some fascinating shifts in perceptions about gender, sexuality, and the role of decorative art.

The late 19th century was a particularly rich period in women's history: it saw the emergence of the suffrage and women's rights movements, and also some of the earliest detailed investigations into gender and sexuality. Figures such as the *Femme Fatale* and *New Woman* rose to prominence in this period, challenging, in their varying expressions of power and dissidence, the ubiquity of the Victorian ideal of the 'angel in the house.'

As the century drew to a close, traditional perceptions of feminine beauty shifted toward a stronger and more enigmatic archetype. In the applied arts, the female form was no longer merely a passive decorative feature; her presence had become more assertive and more disquieting. Often, she appeared to dominate the object rather than to picturesquely and passively augment it. Female subjects became metamorphic, captured in a continual process of transformation. Women seemed to melt into water or flow out of flames. They squirmed out of the earth, they disappeared into the wind. Where clothing was included it became more revealing, and animal companions were transformed from songbirds and spaniel puppies to snakes, spiders and insects, designed to unsettle.

These were figures grounded in mystique and eroticism, much of whose appeal lay in their detachment from the mundane realms of the practical and the everyday. Yet it was out of the spheres of the serviceable and the utilitarian that some of the most provocative imagery emerged. Ornamenting household objects such as lamps, pintrays and tableware, we see the iconic feminine types of 19th century art and literature rendered in a very domestic, very

accessible medium. The choice of materials also reflects this domestication – pewter, spelter, copper and brass were inexpensive and well-suited to mass production, and the majority of pieces remained unsigned.

One of my favourite objects is a paper knife dating to around the turn of the century, in which the blade takes the form of a woman's hair. If you think about Symbolist and Pre-Raphaelite painting, you might recall that flowing hair is an essential aspect of feminine iconography, but here we see this ethereal, otherworldly motif applied in a very practical and rather aggressive way. There is such an interesting play here between hard and soft, between enticement and danger, between function and ornament.

It is also interesting to note that it was for a female rather than a male consumer that the majority of figural Art Nouveau pieces were designed, and consequently this profusion of seductive, metamorphic feminine subjects must be understood, at least in part, as a response to female taste.

Because they are inexpensively produced, and perhaps also because their aesthetic is so excessive, these objects are sometimes considered 'kitsch', a label which doesn't bother me in the slightest. I love the idea that something so common and accessible could carry such provocative messages, and in practical terms, mass-produced objects are much more affordable than 'high art' equivalents. I have purchased a couple of pieces through auction houses, but most of my collection was found at antique markets and online. French eBay has proved to be an especially fruitful resource.

I particularly enjoy the incongruous aspect of figural Art Nouveau pieces – the idea that these little objects might have slipped, without notice or occasion, into the middle-class households of the late 19th century, quietly undermining, in their iconography of subversion and desire, the core principles upon which these households were founded.

Angela Hesson



Above | Venice, Italy, *mirror, console*, 1820 / late 19th century
timber, gesso, polychrome, 1950 x 1260 x 180 mm
The Johnston Collection (A0018-1989 and A0035-1989)



BLACKAMOOR SUITE

Love them or hate them we cannot fail to have noticed that within the Collection we have some impressive pieces incorporating blackamoor figures designed in the Baroque manner.

The Venetian tradition which produced this kind of elaborate furniture began in the mid 17th century, with the desire for furniture of this type enjoying a renaissance in the late 19th century, reflecting the widespread desire for opulence.

These pieces consist of a mirror, en suite console table, both utilising blackamoor figures in the form of *putti*. There is high decoration with simulated foliage, draped and tasseled material and rocks or coals at the base. The wood used is pine with gesso plaster, and a polychromed and gilded surface in a *trompe l'oeil* style. Initial testing of paints used puts the date of manufacture after 1824, and it is regarded as Venetian in design with flamboyant Moorish influences. One can make all sorts of assumptions about the symbolism of the pieces. One suggestion is that it is representative of heaven and hell - the upper-most figure being in the style of Christ as the *putto* appears in the Crucifix position, the lower *putti* in the manner of attendant angels, with the console top representing the earth, and the figures beneath dancing on hot coals representing Hades. Or it could be merely a fantasy, a miscellany of images from the Baroque period.

The fascination with blackamoors can be traced back to Europeans' first encounter with people of colour. The movement of North Africans into Spain and Portugal and the beginnings of the slave trade created an interest in such 'exotic' people and on a rudimentary level, it became very fashionable to have a 'blackamoor' page boy or personal servant, a perfect foil for the pale skinned beauty of the women.

The other two pieces in the Collection are of a Nubian woman and man who are represented in decorative sculpture as virtual servants, designed to hold shells/trays. Full body depictions take many forms, always useful, often seen holding bronze candle sconces, incorporated into small stands, tables, or gueridons (named after a black vaudeville actor popular in Paris in the mid 17th century). Significant sculptors of religious figures and blackamoors were Venetians Andrea Brustalon (1662-1732) and Giacomo Piazzetta (1640-1705) - father of the famous Venetian painter Giovanni Battista Piazzetta.

Wendy Babiolakis

CLASS OF 2006

On Thursday 20 July 2006 a group of women came together to commence a cultural journey. They were from a variety of backgrounds and interests but they were to discover a common bond through the first formal Volunteer Guide Training Program.

Conducted and devised by Director|Curator Nina Stanton, it was a concentrated examination of the objects in The Johnston Collection. However, to understand these objects in their wider contexts the participants were conducted through a history of ceramics, wood, silver, glass and painting, to more specific areas such as Georgian furniture and miniature portraits. The emphasis was on the eras William Johnston favoured, the 17th and 18th century, and the countries from which he collected, in particular England and France.

But before the program began there was a selection process to 'endure.' Endure, because it was challenging and forced prospective guides to find new skills within themselves.

Nina asked us to bring to the interview a small object, and give a short talk on it.

Wendy Lee was one of the prospective guides and she chose to bring not one object but two. One had a personal history, the other a military history, but both were from Borneo, where Wendy had spent her early married life.

The first was a delicately decorated British gold sovereign on a fine gold chain. Wendy had been given two sovereigns, one dated from 1864 and the other, on the chain, from 1893 by her husband's grandmother, as in Chinese culture only gold or money is given as a wedding gift. The second item was a Portuguese miniature cannon. The Portuguese had sold their cannons throughout Asia and the miniature cannon was a replica, not a toy, which was used as a sample of the manufactured weapon. Wendy interlinked the personal associations of these items with the colonial history of Borneo.

Yvonne Hildebrand was another member of the group. She had arrived in Australia from Holland in 1971 but it was not until she remarried that she felt she could start developing new interests.

She completed an antiques course at Holmesglen TAFE which led to her guide application. The objects she chose to bring to the interview were two pieces of silver representing two aspects of her personal history



A montage featuring some of the 2006 intake of guides at The Johnston Collection. From left to right: Yvonne Hildebrand, Dani Balmford (creator of the image), Deirdre Basham, Robin Ives, Wendy Lee and Barbara Summerbell.

and two different values. The first was a repoussé silver matchbox holder manufactured in Holland in the 19th century, featuring a gathering of five men. She had bought it from an opportunity shop for the price of \$2. It was not hallmarked, as is customary in Holland, but had an indicator that it contained 80% silver, which would be described in the British market as white metal. The second object Yvonne bought in New Zealand. She paid \$250 for two silver napkin rings, with a British hallmark of Birmingham 1895, an example from the provincial English centres outside London who used their own systems of marks to guarantee the Sterling or Britannia standards.

Like Wendy, Yvonne had brought a narrative with her, which, for Nina, was a necessary element to turn a volunteer into a good guide. On being accepted for training Yvonne felt her life had changed, as the course gave her unforeseen confidence in herself. For Wendy the course was 'like taking a university course without paying for it.'

This cultural journey had provided not only an education in the decorative arts and an alternative way to unravel history, it had also facilitated a unique opportunity for those taking part to reassess their personal capabilities.

Barbara Summerbell

ICE CREAM

Summer is approaching and a favourite dessert at this time of the year is ice cream. Much of the history of ice cream is unproven folklore. We know that Alexander the Great (356–323 BCE), loved honey and nectar flavoured ice and that Nero the Roman Emperor (37–68 CE) had a passion for snow brought down from the mountains and flavoured with different fruits. Some people speculate that Marco Polo in the 13th century brought the idea of flavoured ice back to Italy after his travels in China.

When Catherine de Medici of Florence married the French King, Henry II in 1533, she took with her recipes for a frozen ice / granita and soon French cooks were making this delicious dessert.

It is unknown when dairy ice cream was first made, but it was shown that sweet cream (the richest part of milk) developed a firm consistency as it chilled and became known as 'Iced Cream.' This could be flavoured with seasonal fruit. It is thought the recipe was perfected in France or Italy in the 17th century.

Ice cream became the *pièce de résistance* at court dinners of Louis XIV of France and Charles II of England, and both had royal icehouses built. Serving of ice cream showed one's wealth and status, so it was initially reserved for nobility. In 1670 the first ice cream shop selling ices and sherbets was opened in Paris by Sicilian, Francisco Procopio, and was hugely popular. Mrs Mary Eales, confectioner to Queen Anne, published the first English ice cream recipes in 1718, after which it spread to cafes to be eaten as a confection. Favourite flavours were pistachio, brown bread, pineapple and berry.

In 1853 in England, William Fuller patented an ice cream freezing machine that used salt and ice:

'With one hand the operator turned a central handle which rotated the bowl-shaped vessel containing the preparation to be frozen, with the other, using a spaddle, he scraped down the ice crystals as they formed. The turning and scraping continued throughout the freezing process.'

The availability of this machine may have led to a craze in consumption of ice cream in the 1850s despite warnings that eating ice in summer was dangerous and a potential cause of illness.

A small cup with a handle was devised for eating ice cream, made from glass or faience. However, by 1760



John Bull at an Ice Cream Café, 1815,
Robinson Library, Newcastle University

Recipe: FROZEN CHRISTMAS PUDDING

⅓ cup cherries, pipped and cut in half
 ½ cup raisins, chopped
 ⅓ cup mixed peel, chopped
 1 teaspoon mixed spice
 1 teaspoon cinnamon
 1 teaspoon nutmeg
 2 ½ cups thickened cream
 1 ½ cups pure icing sugar
 4 egg whites
 1 tablespoon brandy
 ⅓ cup toasted almonds, halved
 2 teaspoons cocoa, dissolved in 2 teaspoons hot water

METHOD:

Combine fruit, spices and brandy in bowl and leave overnight. Whip cream stiffly adding half the sugar. In another basin whip egg whites until stiff, then gradually beat in remaining sugar. Fold cream and egg whites together, add fruits, nuts and dissolved cocoa.

Pour into lined 5 cup pudding basin. Freeze until firm. Enjoy.

Sue Flanagan

both Meissen and Sèvres were producing an entire range of porcelain double-handled cups and ice cream pails. Edible cones were first mentioned in French cooking books as early as 1825 and showed how one could roll a cone from 'little waffles.' This was much more appetising than the previous paper or metal cones.

Until the invention of the 'frigidaire' in the USA in 1915, salt or saltpetre was added to ice to enhance its freezing qualities. Ice cream was served at the great dessert tables of European royalty and American presidents and continues to be a favourite dessert today.

Anne Glynn

Read more on your favourite topics touched on in this issue of *Fairball...*

STAFFORDSHIRE STORY

page 7

PUGH, P.D. Gordon, *Staffordshire Portrait Figures & Allied Subjects of the Victorian Era (including the Definitive Catalogue)*, Antique Collectors Club: Barrie & Jenkins, 1970.

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page 12

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THE ART OF DINING – PART 5: ICE CREAM

page 17

GLANVILLE, Philippa and Hilary Young (eds), *Elegant Eating: Four Hundred Years of Dining in Style*, V&A Publications, 2004

DAVID, Elizabeth, *Harvest of the Cold Months: The social history of Ice and Ices* Michael Joseph, 1994

ANSWERS (FROM QUIZ ON PAGE 11)

- 1 Lilydale, 6 June 1911
- 2 Tylden
- 3 November 1990
- 4 Red
- 5 Edward Lord Montagu painted in 1601 by Robert Peake
- 6 Kent Antiques
- 7 The Blue Room
- 8 The Chippendale neoclassical style breakfront bookcase purchased in 1950 from Christies for 1,600 guineas
- 9 Buckley & Nunn
- 10 1952 for £6,500

Below |

Susan White (The Embroiderers Guild, Victoria, North Eastern branch), *Fanning the Flames* (detail), 2011



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If you have an interest in and would like to help us enable more people to access and enjoy this very special place, why not apply to volunteer?

If you would like further information please contact us on +61 3 9416 2515 or info@johnstoncollection.org for an application form.



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