



20th ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL EDITION



PICTURED ABOVE | *Fairhall*, then and now

WELCOME

On 30 November 2010, we celebrated the 20th anniversary of the opening of The Johnston Collection at a special event at Government House. Mr Johnston had a vision for the Collection to be situated in *Fairhall*, and here we are 20 years later.

There has been a continuing contribution by professional people who have ensured that Mr Johnston's ideas for the future of the Collection have been realised. Their foresight continues to assist The Johnston Collection in its endeavour to become the premier house museum specialising in 18th to mid 19th century fine and decorative arts in Australia.

Many of those people have contributed articles to this special edition newsletter, detailing their involvement. I would like to thank them all for their energy, expertise, and generosity.

Twenty years on, their contributions have enabled us to understand the process of establishing the museum, and given us some 'behind the scenes' information. Other articles tell us about the man - William Robert Johnston.

Due to the foresight of Anthony Knight and the Australian Decorative and Fine Arts Society, volunteer guides and helpers were introduced into the museum in 1999. They are now an integral part of the Collection. The Friends of The Johnston Collection was established in 2000, and the Collection is much richer for its endeavours.

We are all working towards the same target - to increase our knowledge of fine and decorative art, and to ensure that The Johnston Collection stays at the forefront of Australian heritage.

Anne Glynn

Newsletter Coordinator

Contributions to the *Newsletter* may be forwarded to: anneglynn@netspace.net.au

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THE FIRST DIRECTOR

Judith Thompson (Judith Heaven)
Inaugural Director (1989-1991)

I left my position as a decorative arts curator at the Art Gallery of South Australia to become the Foundation Director of The W R Johnston Trust. When I arrived in early 1989 there was no office, not even a paper clip or a pencil, and all of Bill Johnston's collection was in storage. There were inventories of hundreds of items, mostly very basic lists made by Joel's following Bill's death: items in his townhouse, country house, shop and in storage in Melbourne and London.

The Trustees had engaged David McCabe, museum designer, and Susan Abasa from the Art Museums Association to advise on the appointment of a director and the initial setup; Peter Lovell as heritage architect; John Patrick as garden advisor and later, conservators and restorers were also engaged. At this time, there had been difficulties obtaining council permission to run the East Melbourne house as envisaged, and so a lease had been taken on *Banyule* at Heidelberg with a view to using this instead.



PICTURED ABOVE |
Judith Thomson, Inaugural Director (1989-1991)

I purchased basic equipment and set up a temporary office, soon moving to *Banyule*, followed by truckload after truckload of stored items, furniture and small items in boxes. Gradually, I identified each item from the basic lists and began

numbering and relisting, basic cataloguing, identifying objects for A, B or C grade collections. (A was the main collection and best items, B a secondary or back-up collection and C items were the least significant.)

It was also necessary to liaise with the architects about the East Melbourne houses, identify items needing conservation or restoration and begin organising the restoration of furniture. Almost every item of seat furniture required reupholstering and recovering and most other furniture required at least cleaning and basic conservation. It was a mammoth task, made slower by the need for many lists to be compiled for each task, but by this time, I had the assistance of a very hard-working secretary.

Many items needed extensive work and specialists were sourced and engaged for this. Local sources were, of course, given priority and many of the lovely textiles were ordered through Melbourne wholesalers, some being special-weave orders from Europe, woven on original, narrow looms. I estimated the amounts needed for each job and began scheduling upholsterers and restorers. Still lacking some special materials, the Trustees agreed for me to go to the UK in early 1990, where with the help of textile curators, I located and ordered textiles, and hand-woven, traditional braids and trims for Regency furniture. I was so pleased when I found the amazing Chinese-yellow silk, and also some of the simpler but special Georgian-type fabrics.

Banyule had not proved viable, but negotiations on using the East Melbourne houses had finally proved successful. By this time, I had identified and appointed most of the staff needed to run a house museum. I made the final selection of A Collection items and when approved by the trustees and the National Trust, began cataloguing and organising the last of the restoration. Less detailed cataloguing was done for the B Collection and some of this was moved for storage and display at Government House.

The setting up of the East Melbourne premises was a lot of hard work and planning but devising effective room displays, selecting floor coverings, curtains, items for display, uses of rooms etc, was a lovely challenge. Robert Buckingham, the Public Programmes Manager, and I devised tours around what was permissible, e.g. I arranged for visitors to meet at the Hilton and be transported by minibus.



PICTURED ABOVE |

The White Room, *Fairhall*, circa 1990

We opened in November 1990, exhausted but proud of our achievements and delighted with the praise received from peers and public alike.

Now, many years later, I can recall some magic moments during the preparation phase. One piece which had not been destined for a great future proved to have traces of original, painted decoration, and after reupholstering and the removal of later paint, led to the creation of the Morning Room (now The White Room) and the selection of the colours there!

Another great joy was deciding to try the old kitchen as a more modest room with printed curtains, coir floor-cover and dozens of the charming Staffordshire figures which always made me smile when I saw them. The joys of seeing items take on a new life when restored and displayed in context cannot be underestimated.

I wish all the staff and volunteers well for ongoing joys and successes.



RECOLLECTIONS OF *FAIRHALL* AND THE W R JOHNSTON TRUST

David McCabe

To start my reminiscences I hunted in vain for Anthony Knight's informative catalogue, and then realised that along with all the history of previous projects, it was burnt in a fire at my office on Eel Pie Island, Twickenham. Like victims of many Australian bushfires I can empathise, you still go to get things that have been long destroyed! *'Human memory is a marvellous but fallacious instrument'* to quote Primo Levi.

The period I worked with the Trustees, following a call from Margaret Gurry, coincided with the build up to 1988, Australia's bicentenary. I am precise on the date, as I am now sitting in Putney, London at Mr Johnston's pine Edwardian workroom table. It was purchased from the Trust on 1 December 1987 at the clearing of spare shop stock. My wife was expecting our son Thomas, born 2 December 1987. I received a call from Honor, I feared the worst, *'Come home immediately! This filthy table has been delivered and I will not let them put it in the kitchen, the top is rotten and covered with bird droppings!'* Neighbours in Highett Street rallied round with hot water, white spirit, scrubbing brushes and beeswax. Mr Johnston would have been proud - in two hours it was delivered into prime position in the kitchen, though it never would have made the front window at Kent Antiques.

My initial role was the museum advisor prior to the appointment of the first curator. On the interior design side I contributed to the concept of the presentation of the house. Like any reconstruction there were many options for the interpretation. Working with the architects Allom, Lovell, we tried to keep the spirit of Mr Johnston's interiors where they were self evident; in fact only three rooms and the hall were recognisably complete as decorated spaces.

Inevitably rooms were much improved in the quality of finishes, but some typical 1960s decorating ideas like using black and white linoleum tiles in the hall were deliberately not upgraded to marble. The "missing" bedroom at *Fairhall* was recreated based on the decoration of the master bedroom at *Chandpara*, Mr Johnston's country house in Tyldon. Other new display rooms, like the Morning Room and Blue Room, were based on the fashion for strong colours by London decorators like David Hicks in the 1960s.

The W R Johnston Trust looked at other historic house options to provide a satellite exhibition gallery, keeping *Fairhall* for very limited visitation. The economic downturn at the end of the 1980s prevented this happening. The key problem then for the Trust was the planning by-law that prevented the house being open to the public, with local opposition to the museum and to any change of use. I think (with deference to the memory quotation above) my major contribution was the idea of the minibus. I couldn't see the objection if visitors were to park and meet at the hotel and then be dropped off at the door. Most residents' concerns in the planning appeal were over competing for parking and the dread of crowds of visitors peering in their front windows.

With this method accepted and in place as part of the planning permission, the next key concern was *Fairhall's* viability. I don't think any feasibility study was ever undertaken: it probably would have been negative. The sort of questions frequently asked by cynics at the time, "Was it too elitist? Was it too unfashionably anglophile? Were there enough people interested in the history of the decorative arts?" The answers must have been "No", "No" and thankfully, after 20 years of caring for historic houses and their collections, a resounding "Yes."

THE FURNISHINGS OF GOVERNMENT HOUSE, MELBOURNE

Tom Hazell AO
Deputy Chair, The W R Johnston Trust

The palatial residence and offices provided by the Government of Victoria for the representative of the Queen, Empress in the second half of the 19th century, were the grandest and biggest in the Empire. Nothing like Government House, Melbourne, was attempted in other colonies and, even in India, the grand buildings tended to be multi-purpose in their usage. Melbourne, in the latter half of the 19th century, was the greatest and richest city outside the United Kingdom; indeed on a world scale, it surpassed New York and Buenos Aires in wealth, style, and optimism.

The furnishings of the State Apartments of Government House, Melbourne, are remarkably intact and in good condition as a result of restorations and refurbishments of the 1980s. However, the private side of the House presents a different story. With the exception of the

Governor's office, or study, the furnishings up to the 1980s presented a very mediocre appearance with few items of quality and next to nothing worthy of such a grand residence. It was clear that something had to be done and the opportunity to do so came about through The W R Johnston Trust. The Trustees had made a choice from the enormous quantity of furnishings bequeathed to the Trust by the late William Johnston to establish the Collection at *Fairhall*. But the quantity selected was far too much for the house museum. At that time, I was a staff member of The Office of the Governor and had a prime responsibility for the maintenance and restoration of Government House. Arrangements were made for all the furnishings, surplus to the immediate needs of The Johnston Collection, to be safely stored at Government House and for the House to use such of the furnishings as it thought appropriate. The arrangement, still in place after 20 years, has worked very well and both parties have benefitted from it.



PICTURED ABOVE |
India
table, 1840 / 19th century
Mahogany, marble
750 x 1800 mm (diameter)
The Johnston Collection (A0016 -1989)
Currently on display in the Council Room,
Government House

The furnishings suit well the fine, Neoclassical interiors of Government House and add significantly to their beauty. Every acknowledgement is made as to the provenance of the furnishings, so it might be said that the arrangement works both ways. Government House receives many hundreds of visitors every year and most of them would be aware of the part played by The Johnston Collection in the proper presentation of the official residence. It is good to know that an agreement put into place so long ago continues to function well.

MEMORIES

Anthony Knight OAM, Director (1991–2000)
Director, Beleura House and Garden



PICTURED ABOVE |
Anthony Knight in *Fairhall*

William Johnston – or Mr Johnston – loomed rather large on my horizon when I was in my early 20s. My brother Philip and I often visited his antique shop – although it was hardly a shop, more a beautifully presented showroom presided over by a super elegant Angus Winneke who we thought for some time was Mr Johnston himself. When I summoned the courage to ask him about the splendid *bureau plat*, now a jewel in The Johnston Collection, which I lusted after, I was told that it was not for sale, absolutely not. On a later visit I found a rather large man sitting on it – I suggested that he should not (still lusting after it, and perhaps consequently feeling a little proprietary) to be told that he would sit on it if he wanted – given that it was his. So I met Mr Johnston, and often afterwards when seeking to buy was told that Mr Johnston did not wish to sell.

It was astonishing, then, to find myself so many years later involved in setting up The Johnston Collection and subsequently, when at a trustee meeting voicing my opinion, to be told by Rodney Davidson and John Rogan they had just appointed me Director. And so started a wonderful journey – one I enjoyed and hated giving up.

I still miss being surrounded with all those beautiful things – especially the ones I had coveted so many years ago. I miss talking about them and sharing my fascination with mankind's creativity. I am amazed that ten years have passed since I left, and grateful that the Collection, Friends and Volunteer Guides are still flourishing. My visitors at Beleura often tell me about their recent wonderful visits to The Johnston Collection.

Congratulations.

A TRIBUTE TO NINA STANTON

Director (2000–2008)

Helen Raftis, Volunteer Guide (1999 – present)

Over the last twenty years, The Johnston Collection has become a cultural centre which offers entertaining and innovative programmes on many aspects of fine and decorative art. Whilst past talented Directors have contributed to its success, it was Nina Stanton who helped define the Collection's present role. During her time as Director, Nina brought about a change in emphasis and direction which saw the Collection transformed from being "a nice place to visit for a day out," to one which offered visitors an awakening and rewarding cultural experience.

She developed programmes on an academic level, aimed to encourage people to learn about objects, their place within social history, and their value within the spectrum of the decorative arts. To achieve this Nina drew in people with expertise and knowledge, who assisted with the development of many of the in-depth programmes that were presented as a series of lectures to the public.

Colourful brochures, publications and books were written to complement the programmes. This innovation by Nina has added immeasurably to the quality and variety of information available to visitors.

Under Nina's direction, the Volunteer Guides underwent a continuing rigorous training programme on many levels. The Guides were educated to understand and appreciate the beauty of the Collection, and how objects in themselves, when researched, have a story to tell. These stories were put together with variety, flair and imagination, and formed part of the many tours presented to the public by the Guides.

The regular rearrangement of Mr Johnson's house, *Fairhall*, by well-known and respected personalities, has been a great success and still continues. Nina saw this as fitting given that the late Mr Johnston displayed furniture in changing household settings at Kent Antiques, and that he expressed a wish in his Will that this practice continue at *Fairhall*.

Christmas at The Johnston Collection is an ongoing and prestigious event each year. One can only describe it as a coup for Nina, in that so many talented artisans and craftspeople were, and are still, prepared to give voluntarily of their time over

an eighteen month period to ensure *Fairhall* is “dressed” for the occasion. The Gallery too, of which Nina was so proud, is transformed into a festive delight with many beautiful gifts for sale.



PICTURED ABOVE |
Nina Stanton outside The Johnston Collection,
2007

As Director of The Johnston Collection, Nina conscientiously honoured and fulfilled the expressed wishes of the late William Johnston to bring enjoyment and pleasure to all who visited the Collection, and to educate people to look at objects and appreciate their beauty as he did. In so doing, Nina demonstrated a great understanding of the cultural heritage of The Johnston Collection, and simultaneously augmented and enhanced its image.

BUILDING ON A LEGACY

Louis Le Vaillant, Director (2008 – present)

William Johnston established a pattern of purchasing properties with the proceeds from the sale of antiques he brought back from England after World War Two. The first property Johnston acquired was *Fairhall* in 1952. The Johnston Collection museum complex, as we now know it, comprises a row of three terrace buildings from 150 - 156 Hotham St.

The house museum building, 154-156 Hotham Street, was built in 1860 for James Cumming [John Macintosh] and was originally single fronted. It was extended sideways to its current double fronted arrangement in 1870.

William Johnston purchased *Cadzow*, as it was then known, in 1952 for £6,500. He altered the

exterior front of the Victorian house, changing the single window in the Green Drawing Room to two, in order to create the appearance of a Georgian symmetrical front. He increased the window bars and changed the colour of the exterior from tan to a stony grey. He also repurposed the interior rooms into three flats, or perhaps four, which he subsequently rented. Around the same time, he renamed the house *Fairhall*.

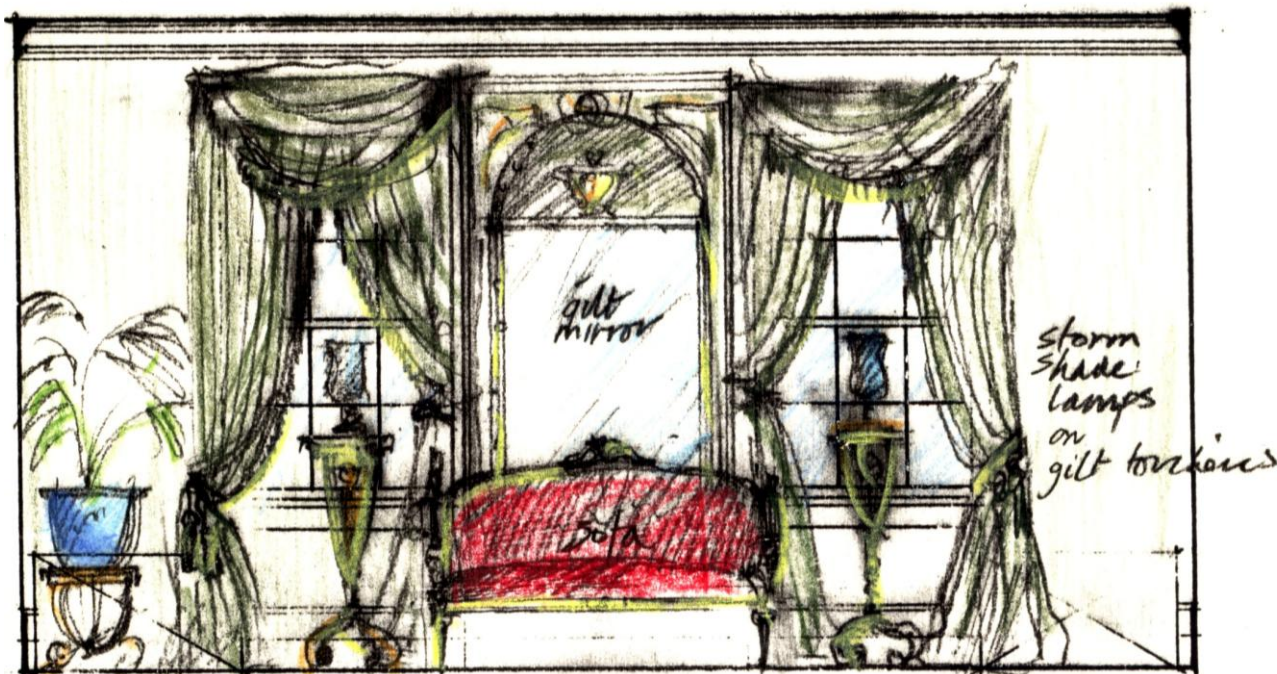
In 1972 Johnston undertook further renovations to *Fairhall*, as he was about to move in for the first time since he purchased it. He altered the Green Drawing Room by removing the back wall and extending the room into the former veranda space. A new back wall was formed with a series of arch-topped French doors.

Paired columns were introduced to the Yellow Room. The marble, the ceiling, windows and doors, and the columns were reused from *Casa d'España*, a large town house he had owned in Carlton that was being demolished at this time. At some time Johnston also laid the black and white tiles in the front hallway and the Yellow Room. At the time of his death, Johnston's real estate, including *Fairhall* and the Administration Building, was bequeathed to the National Trust of Australia (Victoria). The Trustees established the Museum in 1986. Between 1986 and 1989 the use, purpose and function of *Fairhall* were discussed by the Trustees, and external advisors were hired to assist with this process.

Fairhall was initially to be converted back from the flats, with the ground floor expected to display the Collection, and a flat for the Director upstairs. Subsequently, 152 Hotham Street was to become the Administration Building with an associated flat. At this time the Trustees were also negotiating the lease/use of Banyule, an historic Gothic style property in Heidelberg, as a storage and outreach property for the Collection.

M Barlow of AT Cocks and Partners Ltd, Melbourne, prepared the formal application for the Planning Permit for the Museum at *Fairhall* to the City of Melbourne.

A conservation study proposal for the establishment of a decorative arts museum at 152-154 Hotham Street was developed by Peter Lovell of Allom, Lovell and Associates Pty Ltd Conservation Architects, Melbourne, and was presented to the Trustees in December 1987.



PICTURED ABOVE |
David McCabe's sketch for a possible layout of
The Green Drawing Room (detail), 1990

Lovell went on to supervise the restoration and refurbishment of both buildings.

David McCabe was design consultant for the Collection. When he first viewed the house he found it 'curiously impersonal: there are no photographs, no books, no memorabilia. And there was no proper bedroom.'

After submitting various design approaches, it was agreed by all concerned simply to 'enhance any obvious stylistic themes already there.' The allocation of rooms in *Fairhall* remained largely the same, with the exception of the Blue Room, which was converted from Mr Johnston's bedroom to present as 'a breakfast room with a 'Ham House' feel.' Existing colour schemes were kept.

At that time "The objective in the presentation of the house [was] to maintain and build upon the atmosphere created by Mr Johnston. This atmosphere is seen as a combination of a fashionable London town house (circa 1960s *Country Life*), with a thematic approach to a number of the rooms. It [was] not considered that the finishes and decoration need necessarily be faithfully reproduced or copied in this process provided that the overall approach and tonings [were] maintained."

Trustee John Rogan expanded on what the stylistic themes might be: "We are anxious to ensure that Bill's style and connoisseurship will be

reflected, and that involves a fulsome approach to furnishing – an almost cluttered style reflecting comfort and pleasure in lots of objects."

Significant research, and a rigorously considered and articulated treatment of house, furnishings and interpretation was undertaken by Judith Thompson, who was the inaugural Director between March 1989 and August 1991.

English trained and Melbourne based Landscape Architect John Patrick conceived and designed the garden schemes. The plan created a flower garden in the English manner, in order to highlight Johnston's love of gardening. This has been altered since its original hard-scaping, as other sculptural elements and plants have been introduced since 1991. In recent years water restrictions have reduced the ability to maintain the vision of the initial planting scheme.

The manner of interpretation of the *Fairhall* building and the collection, within the terms of the *Deed of Trust*, has continued to be discussed after *Fairhall's* opening on 19 November 1990. The woven rush mats and loose floor collection carpets were replaced with fitted carpets in the early 1990s. A veranda was added to the first floor rear in 1993. Due to visitor demand, a ground floor kitchen and first floor bathroom were recreated in their original locations in mid 1997. These are not replications of the originals in *Fairhall*. Recently, gallery-style lighting systems have been installed, providing additional illumination for visitors on house tours.

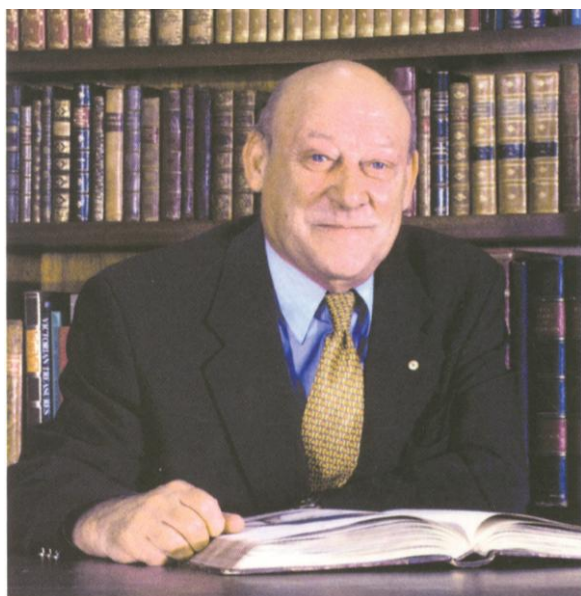
The *Deed of Trust* (1 June 1987) establishes the overarching direction of the Collection, in that it

was “established as ... a place of historical and educational interest for the permanent display therein of the W R Johnston collection for the benefit of the people of Victoria.” *Fairhall* is used to display works from the Collection and is currently rearranged for three themed tours per year. As it continues to evolve and adapt to changing audiences, this sound background will enable us to build upon a legacy.

The W R Johnston Trust would like to acknowledge the support of The Copland Foundation grant towards its Future Vision project

CONTRIBUTIONS TO FAIRHALL

Adapted from Rodney Davidson’s (AO OBE) contributions to the 25th Anniversary Newsletter, 2008



PICTURED ABOVE |
Rodney Davidson, Patron, The W R Johnston Trust, 2007

Twenty five years ago William Robert Johnston, an antique dealer and collector, breathed life into an inspirational plan.

He bequeathed his estate to the people of Victoria, for their enjoyment and education – an estate which included his East Melbourne residence, *Fairhall*, and an important collection of Georgian and Regency antiques and works of art.

His legacy is a museum unique in Australia. Like the Frick in New York and the Wallace Collection in London (both former private homes), a great

part of The Johnston Collection’s charm lies in its ‘at home’ ambiance: visitors feel as if they have been invited into Mr Johnston’s house and the host will shortly join them.

According to Rodney Davidson, whilst The Johnston Collection has gone from strength to strength in recent years, the real worth of this extraordinary museum cannot be calculated. ‘Bill Johnston’s legacy is priceless’ he says.

The success of The Johnston Trust during its first 25 years has been wonderful. Its Collection and its endowment fund have both markedly expanded, along with the number of visitors to the Collection and the attendances at talks and seminars – all greatly increased and most rapidly booked: sell outs that leave many disappointed.

This extraordinary realisation of Bill Johnston’s vision is due to the support of many. The Friends, the Volunteer Guides, the Honorary Advisors and the Staff and all the others who help and support the Trust are at the heart of our success story.

INTERVIEW WITH LAURIE CAREW

Anne Glynn, Volunteer Guide (1999 – present)

How and when did you meet William Johnston?

When working at Georges Department store as Visual Merchandising Manager and Exhibition Display Manager. One of my jobs was to organise exhibitions. At one of those John Rogan recommended WJ to show some of his furniture. I liked him the first time I met him. I had the greatest admiration for him, and he was very kind.

He kept a lot of his life very much to himself - it wasn’t correct to pry so I didn’t ask. As a result we got along very well. Towards the end he got agitated at the shop, especially when customers couldn’t make up their mind or were fussing about and wasting his time so he would tell them to go or come back tomorrow.

Did you ever go to London and stay at Greenwich?

Yes, in 1984 I went to Greenwich for a couple of weeks. The house had three storeys and the *Cutty Sark* was moored at the end of the street. I went to an auction with him and it was fascinating to see such a genius in action because he could see the potential in a piece of furniture and know how to restore it to make it saleable.

WJ was known to have quite a temper. Were you ever the recipient of that, or did you ever witness his moods?

I was a witness to his temper at Chandpara. He was livid about something; he pulled out a drawer full of cutlery which crashed onto the floor. The cat became so scared that it threw itself at the door, and its claws caught into the wood making the cat hang there. The temper wouldn't last long, though, and he never held grudges.



PICTURED ABOVE |
William Johnston outside 14 King William Walk, Greenwich (courtesy of Laurie Carew)

What was Chandpara like?

I have only happy memories about going to Chandpara because it was marvellous to get away at weekends. WJ would come and collect me from the station. Chandpara was a lovely old country residence with large rooms and high ceilings. It was nothing lavish but WJ was very happy there. I particularly loved the Blackamoor mirror that was in the vestibule. There was plenty of fresh air yet, it was cold inside - the only heating he had was in one room.

I liked to potter around the garden when WJ was cutting his roses and bougainvillea archways. We both loved the company. He loved clipping plants back, and I would rake up. We used to chat about

anything and everything. I felt quite at home there. The end of the garden had been planted with beautiful trees by Baron von Mueller. All the trees were a different colour green but he had the foresight to visualise the whole arrangement. WJ installed a pool and the water reflected the formation of these trees. It was a beautiful sight. I was there when the gates were put up - they came from the Maharajah's palace in India. I feel we got along well because I was a country boy from Deniliquin and used to the cattle and willing to help him at the farm if need be.

Did WJ have many parties there?

I only remember one and that was for Bill's last birthday, with about twelve people attending. Ahmed did all the cooking. Bill didn't give a speech, as he was rather shy about talking about himself. He usually kept his special pieces locked up for security purposes but he did use them that night.

Do you recall if WJ had a favourite item in his collection or was there something he was most proud?

The cup that came from his maternal grandmother inspired him to collect. He was also proud of the red and the green chandeliers that he had in his shop. Liberace wanted both but he only got the red one and the green one is now in the yellow room upstairs at *Fairhall*. Trust Bill Johnston to tell Liberace that he could only have one!

What are your memories of Fairhall?

WJ loved the kitchen with the smell of food cooking. It was crammed full of Staffordshire pottery and had a nice atmosphere. I considered myself fortunate to go there and have a little meal and a chat with WJ and Ahmed and often John Rogan, then ask them to have a meal at my place a couple of weeks later. They appreciated it as much as I did.

The present Green Drawing Room was a show room and used only on special occasions. This room reminded him of the drawing rooms that he frequented in England. There was a long table near the step that we would eat at from time to time. Even though Bill was frugal, he would buy up at auction because he got so much pleasure out of the pieces and he knew that others would too. By instructing that as a museum, the house should not be roped off like other museums, he ensured a free feeling and domesticity. He had so much foresight.

Tell me about the shop.

WJ loved buying furniture and creating beauty with it. After I retired from Georges, Bill asked me to help him at the shop (Kent Antiques) He gave me free rein to arrange the furniture wherever I wanted. It made the shop look as though new furniture had arrived. Angus Winneke, who had designed the interior of the Tivoli, worked as the salesman when WJ wasn't there.

Was Christmas important to Bill Johnston?

No he didn't celebrate it and probably spent that time at *Chandpara*.

MEMORIES OF KENT ANTIQUES

Anne Barry

I was acquainted with Kent Antiques having purchased a sea chest from Mr Johnston some time previously. I went there with a friend the day before he left on his last trip overseas. He was busy repricing his stock, and wanted us out of the shop as quickly as possible. When we left, he sent one of his staff to ask us back, but we did not go. We were surprised by his outburst.

Until I went through the premises with Mr Johnston's Executors, I did not realise the extent of the property. The shop reopened the day after Melbourne Cup Day, 1986. Entry was through a small gate set into large double iron gates. This area was cobblestoned and there was a door into the shop which was always kept locked. I was told that Mr Johnston's containers were unpacked in this area in the presence of Customs Officers - a privilege extended to him. I was present when the container of items from India was opened. The portrait of a man in a yellow jacket came in that container. This painting is often displayed in the upstairs drawing room.

The shop was very large with a significant frontage to High Street. A staircase led up to the floor above, and the newel posts were beautifully carved. There were numerous rooms without doors. One narrow room had hundreds of pieces of glass for chandeliers, including the green one, so it is certain it was put together from some of these numerous pieces. I don't think there were replacement pieces for the pink one. These lights were always on at night and drew attention to the shop and its beautiful contents.

The stock was well displayed and there were always vases of flowers, which Mr Johnston would bring back from Chandpara after the weekend. There was great variety of items in the shop - fold over tables, dining tables and chairs, occasional tables, grandfather and other clocks, barometers, and the bookcases displaying china and glass. The best items were displayed in lovely china cabinets. Upstairs there was a kitchen with table and chairs and facilities to heat up meals. There was also a roof garden where the pair of yellow eagles stayed.



PICTURED ABOVE |
William Johnston at Kent Antiques, Armadale

Before the shop was reopened, various experts came to suggest items which should be kept for the Collection. Also other people from National Trust properties came to see what could be used for their displays. Mr Johnston did not like Victorian furniture so there was not a lot that they needed. There were always people asking for items they had attempted to buy from Mr Johnston years before and he had refused to sell to them. "They must be here somewhere," they would say, but they were usually not in the shop. Laurie Carew came in each week and advised which items should come down into the shop, and arranged decorative pieces to enhance the furniture.

When I went to work in the shop, Ahmed Moussa and Reg were the staff. Reg only stayed for a

short time. We were not busy in the first few weeks, so the Executors decided to have a sale. On the first day there was a large crowd outside waiting for the doors to open at 9.30 am. One lady had arrived early with a chair to sit on near the door. She bought some Staffordshire pieces. Two men raced upstairs after a pair of chairs. The one who failed went home bitterly disappointed.

After Ahmed left to open his own business, Deirdre Brown [wife of former trustee, Bill Brown] joined me in the shop and we traded along happily until the shop closed. I remained at the shop for some time afterwards until the collection went into storage awaiting the set up of the house museum, *Fairhall*.

My time at the shop was a great experience and one I thoroughly enjoyed.

THE NEXT PHASE

Peter Watts AM

Chair, The W R Johnston Trust

In celebration of 20 years since the opening of *Fairhall*, I firstly want to thank all those who have done such a remarkable job in nurturing TJC and developing it to the point it has reached today. This includes present and former trustees, staff, guides, volunteers, friends, donors, lenders and ambassadors. Together, they have achieved remarkable things in a relatively short time. With a largely new group of Trustees, and a new Director, it is inevitable that there will be a fresh look at The Johnston Collection. How thankful we are that we have inherited such a great legacy to build on.

Now to the future. As you are all aware, we purchased 148 Hotham Street earlier this year, 2010, so that we now own the full run of houses from *Fairhall* to Powlett Street. This was an opportunistic acquisition as the place was available, and at a price we could just afford. I say opportunistic because we were not quite ready to make such a large commitment.

In the past 12 months we have been preparing an overview of all aspects of the operation of TJC in preparation for developing a long-term Strategic Plan. The aim of this plan is to define a clear and sustainable future for TJC. In looking at all aspects of TJC, we are examining the underpinning documents that led to its establishment, its day to day operations, planning

framework, programs, finances, collection policies, storage requirements, staffing, competitors and so on. When this is complete we will gather the various support groups and brainstorm the future of TJC. We want this to be a collaborative process so that we benefit from the experience of those who know the place best.

At the same time, we have commissioned an architect to explore possibilities for improving circulation, display opportunities and 'back of house' facilities. Whilst this work proceeds, TJC continues to receive visitors at a growing rate and we need to keep pace with that growth, and at the same time support our staff, guides and volunteers. It can be a difficult juggling act – a further reason to clearly articulate our future direction.

There is no doubt that TJC has a bright future, and I look forward to working with all our supporters as we consolidate our successes, and define an ongoing and exciting future for this very special place.

GUIDING AT THE JOHNSTON COLLECTION

Karina James, Volunteer Guide (1999 - present)

In August 1999, a small group of members from the Melbourne and Yarra branches of ADFAS (Australian Decorative and Fine Arts Society) came to The Johnston Collection to begin our training as volunteer guides under the direction of the then Director, Anthony Knight. Prior to this, guiding had been conducted around *Fairhall* by members of the staff, and the house itself largely remained unchanged in room design. The exception was for the Christmas tour, when Anthony waved his magic wand and the house was transformed with its lights and Christmas trees.

In January 2000, Nina Stanton succeeded Anthony as Director|Curator and life changed at The Johnston Collection. The rooms and their contents were altered, and pieces were brought in from Government House where they had been stored. The contents of the Collection were documented and the notes expanded on each piece.

As guides, we were involved in this process, but more importantly, we were very busy expanding our knowledge base as well as refining our skills as guides. Nina set us a broad and intensive education program with guest lecturers, training

sessions, copious notes and as least three themed tours per year, as well as the Christmas tour. In accordance with the will of Mr Johnston, the house changed frequently, and more education programs as well as house tours were offered to the general public. New exhibitions were shown and lectures given in the Kent Room, then in the superb environment of the new gallery.

This exciting direction has been further developed by our current Director|Curator, Louis Le Vaillant, who has sourced people with expertise in specialist areas of the decorative arts to present lectures to the general public. These presentations have involved the guides and provide valuable learning experiences, as extensive research in each subject is undertaken.

As we welcome and support a new group of guides to the Collection, I would like to say that life as a volunteer guide has been, and still is, an absorbing, demanding, fun and a fabulous experience. It is a privilege to say "I am a guide at The Johnston Collection."

THE FRIENDS OF THE JOHNSTON COLLECTION

Robert Thomson, President, The Friends of the Johnston Collection

The Friends of The Johnston Collection was founded in 1999 as a support group for The Johnston Collection, in line with many such groups throughout the world. Since that time the group has gone from strength to strength, and the binding aspect has been the important work of a wonderful cultural institution.

Of course one of the really appealing aspects of the Friends has been friendships that have developed; we have great fun and always make sure our events are enjoyable, as well as meaningful. We like the members to think they are insiders at the Collection with priority bookings for lectures, an informative newsletter and always a fascinating and varied line up of events.

The variety of functions over the last ten years has been extremely interesting, for example, visiting a number of houses (always very popular), parties and lectures at well known businesses such as Kozminskys, Francis Dunn Antiques, and Sotheby's previews. A new development has been "Welcome to the Friends" for new members, which are held at the Collection. Even our Annual

Meetings have, in recent years, been held at interesting houses - this year was at *Villa Alba*, Kew, one of Melbourne's famous historic houses. Particularly gratifying, especially in the last couple of years, has been (through the generosity of our members and the success of our functions) the ability to purchase items for the Collection. Just a few examples have been a really good camera, a lectern for the Gallery, which has been a great help for our speakers, and most recently an exciting overseas purchase - we secured from London an extremely rare Staffordshire glazed red ware hexagonal teapot circa 1740-45.

Many Friends have been members since the group's foundation, and there is a deep commitment to the Collection, which we are continually trying to foster.

FAIRHALL REARRANGEMENT

Lynne Landy

Being asked to 'rearrange' a long-established and well-loved collection of fine antiques and porcelain is an enormous challenge, particularly when it's necessary to do this within 48 hours!



PICTURED ABOVE |
Lynne Landy seated at the *bureau plat*, The Johnston Collection, 2002

The challenge was thrown to me when my husband John was Governor of Victoria, and our tight schedule meant that I didn't have the luxury of spending hours on each room and making regular visits. A morning spent at *Fairhall* with a notebook and camera in hand gave me my initial inspiration, and I decided to turn the house from a 'gentleman's residence', into a country house with more feminine appeal.

With the aid of two strong men, the first job was to take down all the battle paintings that were hung in several rooms. I also attempted to 'declutter' some of the spaces, removing furniture and putting away some ornaments. I'm sure Mr Johnston would have had a fit – but it was all with good intentions.

In the Green Drawing Room, I moved the *bureau plat* from a side wall to the centre of the room, overlooking the rear courtyard. I felt that a woman would prefer this leafy outlook, and the change of location seemed to open up the space a little. Other furniture I moved into conversational groupings, and imagined friends coming for tea and chatting by the fireside.

One major challenge, which caused consternation from my 'helpers,' was to move an enormous black console and mirror from the ground floor to the top of the staircase. This allowed the piece to be viewed in a much better light and it was very striking in its new location, but it was so heavy!

In the bedroom, the battle scenes were replaced by smaller works and as many flower paintings as I could muster within the Collection. Small chairs were placed either side of the fireplace and my own embroidery basket spilled onto a small table. A stack of inviting novels and a tea tray with floral china were added to the small writing desk. Feminine perfume bottles from my own collection were introduced to the bathroom plus a tizzy shower cap behind the door.

The dining room was a favourite place to redecorate, and I was allowed the joy of looking through all the china storage cupboards to bring a new mood to this charming room. I discovered a number of cut glass and silver jugs and these were gathered together on the mirrored sideboard, which seemed to shimmer under the lights. The table was set with floral dessert plates and crystal glasses with a single fresh flower placed in tiny glasses at each setting.

It was a great honour to have the opportunity to move these precious pieces around to give the house a new look, and certainly made me personally very aware of what a wonderful legacy Mr Johnston left for the people of Melbourne. *Fairhall* is a treasure trove indeed.

THE GALLERY

Anita Simon, Volunteer Guide (2004 – present)

Our Gallery has added a wonderful new dimension to the activities of The Johnston Collection; in fact its potential is probably only limited by our imaginations!

It has been an ideal space to display our museum pieces in the context of their period (e.g. Regency), their type (e.g. miniatures, carpets, porcelain, etc.), or their cultural origins. We have also extended this concept to talks and films connected with particular objects and, even further, to activities inspired by certain periods or museum items, such as 'Jane Austen Dressing,' individual craft activities, High Teas, etc.



PICTURED ABOVE |
Nina Stanton at the Gallery's inaugural exhibition, 2007

The first – very creative – activity in the gallery was initiated by our then Director, Nina Stanton, together with art collector Robert Allison who specialised in modern figurative works. His nine paintings and one sculpture were linked with related paintings and objects from The Johnston Collection. At first the objects were compared simply in terms of visual elements such as light, line, colour, form, decoration and movement. However, as we discussed the items with both the collector and the individual artists, an intriguing three-way conversation emerged amongst creator, collector and curator in relation to each pairing. The outcome was not only a fascinating study of the artists' work, but also an account of what each reveals about his or her world, whether by design or inadvertently.

In Nina's own words, she was hoping to inspire our guests to "new ways of seeing, interpreting and enjoying the fine and decorative arts," particularly across many different periods. Interestingly, the modern works helped people relate more closely to the old pieces.

It has been exciting observing the many and varied uses of the Gallery, whether for guide training, with all the advantages of super-duper technology, or for the impressively bountiful Christmas display table for our emporium. Probably the nicest use is for convivial gatherings of wine and fun among our own Johnston Collection family!

ITEM FROM THE COLLECTION

The "HOPE" Plate - a fascinating history

John Wilson

Among the treasures in The Johnson Collection is a Worcester dinner plate from the famed "Duke of Clarence" Dinner Service, also known as the "Hope" service. This dinner service has a fascinating background. It was commissioned in 1790 by William, Duke of Clarence (1765-1830), later to become King William IV. The Duke had commissioned a service that was to be painted with figures in a landscape, and vying for this commission were two of the important porcelain factories of the time, Derby and Worcester.

The Worcester factory, then under the management of John Flight, had submitted three designs to the Duke, who much to the dismay of the Derby factory, chose one of the Worcester designs. The one he chose featured central sepia monochrome panels with a classically draped figure of a maiden in various similar poses, allegorical of Hope and Patience at the water's edge, alluding to England's (and William's) close connection to the Navy, sailors, and the sea. The borders were executed in underglaze blue superbly gilded with paterae, stars, and dots. The very fine gilding at the Worcester factory at this time was carried out by Mrs Charlotte Hampton, who had been employed by John Flight in 1789.

Central to the success of Flight's designs were the figural panels, painted by the noted porcelain artist John Pennington. A masterful draughtsman, in his early work Pennington excelled in the medium of monochrome painting.

The "Hope" service, comprising some 260 pieces, took a whole year to produce and cost the Duke 800 Guineas. Its completion greatly enhanced the reputation of Worcester as a manufacturer of the very highest quality porcelain under royal patronage.

The Duke of Clarence had joined the Royal Navy at the age of thirteen, became a Captain in 1786 and was appointed Rear Admiral in 1789, before retiring from active service in 1790. It is reasonable therefore to conclude that this dinner service was commissioned to mark the end of his career as an active sailor.



PICTURED ABOVE |
ENGLAND

plate – 1790-92
porcelain, gilt
249 x 26 mm

The Johnston Collection (A0416 - 1989)

The Duke was great friends with Horatio Nelson, and this association led to the mistaken belief in the late 19th Century that the "Hope" service had been made for Nelson. This error seems to have originated from the fact that when the service was sold by Christies in 1893 as part of the estate of the 20th Earl of Errol, the said Earl had stated in his will that the service had belonged to Nelson, and Christies had so catalogued it.

The correct provenance was thus. When William died it passed to his daughter Elizabeth FitzClarence, who married the 18th Earl of Errol, and it was passed down to the 20th Earl. The service was broken up following the Christies sale in 1893, and parts of the service appear on the international market from time to time, albeit at ever increasing prices. The Maritime Museum at Greenwich has pieces from this service in its collection, as does the Worcester Museum.

THE GUIDES' FAVORITE PIECES

Portrait of Elizabeth Pelham

Barbara Summerbell



PICTURED ABOVE |
ENGLAND

Mary BEALE

untitled (portrait of Elizabeth Pelham) - 1683

oil on canvas

1200 x 1000 mm

The Johnston Collection (A0954 – 1989)

This portrait of Elizabeth Pelham was painted in 1683, before her marriage to Lord Montagu. Mary Beale was the first woman to make a living as a portrait painter in a highly competitive, male dominated post-Restoration London. Her contemporaries were the artists, Tom Flatman, Godfrey Kneller and Sir Peter Lely. She was supported by her husband who bought the linen and prepared her canvases, mixed her paints and experimented with pigments to produce paints that would then be sold to other artists. Mary received 83 commissions which provided an income of £429.

Pembroke Table

Wendy Lee

The term 'Pembroke table' has been used for small tables that have side flaps and a drawer below the top, and first developed in the second half of the 18th century. Thomas Sheraton described them as 'a type of breakfast table, from the name of the lady who first gave orders for one of them.' If Sheraton was correct, then the first such table may have been commissioned by Elizabeth, Countess of Pembroke (wife of the 10th Earl), who was a Lady

of the Bedchamber to Queen Charlotte and was adored by George III. The top of the Pembroke table in the Collection is edged with fine penwork or hot wire work. The motif for this decoration is carnations. The drawer and legs of the table have also been decorated with penwork - here the motif is feathers.

Breakfront Bookcase

Anne Glynn

This Chippendale style Neoclassical bookcase dates to 1770. It was one of the first items Mr Johnston bought in England. He purchased it in 1950 from Christies for 1,600 guineas. He chose not to sell it but did display it in Georges "Best of Britain" Exhibition in 1972.

It is made from Cuban mahogany and is oak lined with adjustable shelves. The lower half is fitted with numerous drawers with the main centre one being a foldout writing desk. The four latticed glazed doors have 13 astragal glazed panels and original brass handles. The bookcase is shown to advantage with the intricate fretwork of the scrolled swan neck pediment at the top.

The bookcase was formerly from the property of Lady Violet Beaumont, the daughter of a wealthy Edwardian financier.



PICTURED ABOVE |
ENGLAND

breakfront bookcase - 1765

Cuban mahogany, pine, oak, glass

2667 x 2311 x 660 mm

The Johnston Collection (A0001 - 1989)

Soup Tureen

Christine Newcombe

Soup tureens became popular during the reign of George III. The majority of them had an oval body. In our case, the body is fluted and is supported by four cast feet in the shape of reversed scrolls. The cover is surmounted by a curvilinear handle. The engraved coat of arms on the tureen derives from a later date. It is a combination of the coat of arms of the Stoner family and that of the Blundell family. As Thomas Stoner married Catherine Blundell in 1795, it is likely that this addition to the tureen occurred at this time. The Stoner family has lived at Stoner Park at Henley-on-Thames in the Chilterns near Windsor for over 800 years.



PICTURED ABOVE |
ENGLAND

Alexander JOHNSTON

soup tureen – assayed London, 1755

Sterling silver

263 x 390 x 200 mm

The Johnston Collection (A1255 – 1989)

Bureau Plat

Dorothy Morgan

There is no argument about the origins of this piece. Made by Parisian *ébéniste* or cabinetmaker Jean-David Fortanier between 1745 and 1749, this *bureau plat* (flat desk) is constructed from kingwood, partridge wood and tulip wood veneered onto an oak and pine carcass, with a leather top and embellished with ormolu mounts at the feet, knees, corners and drawers. Made during the reign of Louis XV, the curving lines of the desk top and drawers, the cabriole legs and asymmetrical foliate metalwork are typical of the Rococo, the dominant French style of the 18th century.

This desk is an example of the luxurious and even ostentatious trappings of the French aristocracy, which were destroyed or sold off and scattered

during and after the French Revolution. The real mystery is how this desk found its way to Egypt, for it was in Cairo that Mr Johnston bought it, almost certainly from a dealer who was selling some of deposed King Farouk's effects after his forced abdication in 1952. Certainly Mr Johnston told friends and customers that it was once part of King Farouk's household furniture, and that it was reputed to be the desk at which the king signed his abdication papers on Saturday 26 July 1952, before fleeing to Italy.

Sir James Duke & Nephew Service

Wilma Oxley

The 21 pieces of the dessert service were made by the Burslem firm of Sir James Duke & Nephews who took over from Samuel Alcock & Co. They began producing fine Parian ware and decorative porcelain accessories in 1860. These were similar to pieces produced by Alcock & Co., which was unsurprising as Sir James had purchased the Alcock moulds. This dessert service has been meticulously hand painted and each plate bears an exquisite example of an English flower. The name of each flower and its pattern number are also hand painted on the back of each dish in gold script. Sadly Sir James Duke & Nephews ceased their work three or four years later when costs made it uneconomical to continue. The business was taken over by Hill Pottery Co Ltd., but lasted only until 1867, marking the end of the very exclusive and rare hand painted ware which we at The Johnston Collection enjoy so much nearly 150 years later.



PICTURED ABOVE |
ENGLAND

Sir James Duke and Nephews, Hill Top Pottery,
Burslem, Staffordshire

plate from a dessert service – 1812-1815

porcelain

21 x 230 mm

The Johnston Collection (A0370 - 1989)

Toussaint Clock

Pamela Gates

The “Gilded African” was the name given by Napoleon to Toussaint L'Ouverture, the liberator of the slaves in Haiti. He was a slave freed just before the slave uprising in this French colony in 1791. He became Haiti's military leader and organizing genius. The ‘Ouverture’ in his name, meaning ‘opening’ was given to him because of his seizing the advantage in his swift moving campaigns, and opening the pathway to freedom. This clock is a caricature of him made by the Swiss clockmaker Jean David Maillardet (1768-1834).

Portrait Miniature Collection

Dani Balmford

Painted between the mid 18th and early 19th centuries, many of The Johnston Collection's miniature portraits are by notable miniaturists of the period. They include John Smart, James Scouler, Richard Cosway, Samson Towgood Roche and Anne Fordstone Mee, as well as the official miniature painters to King George III, Jeremiah Meyer and George Engleheart. Most of the miniatures in the Collection are water colour on ivory, which allowed a translucent, luminous quality to be obtained in the skin tones. The quartet of the Jolly family with the detailed backgrounds by James Scouler, are particularly significant.



PICTURED ABOVE |
ENGLAND

James SCOULER

Portrait miniature of Miss Mary Jolly - 1783
watercolour on ivory
119 x 92 mm (approx.)
The Johnston Collection (A0779 – 1989)

Regency Rosewood Trio

Deidre Basham

The sofa table and two card tables were purchased by Mr Johnston from an auction in Perth on his way home from overseas travel. The card tables have rounded rectangular hinged tops inlaid with a brass scrolled border. This top is supported by a tapering concave column, *quatre partie* plinth with four brass inlaid, scrolled, splayed legs with brass lion's paw caps and castors. The sofa table is similar but has two blind drawers and two frieze drawers with brass handles in the form of shells and wheat sheafs. The plinth has brass inlaid Prince of Wales feathers and stylised honeysuckle flowers. The structure of the tables is beech and pine with a rosewood veneer. The suite was featured on *The Collectors* television program several years ago.



PICTURED ABOVE |
ENGLAND

sofa table – circa 1810

rosewood, brass

710 x 933 x 713 mm

The Johnston Collection (A0088 – 1989)

Minton Cup

Karina James

This little cup is very significant to The Johnston Collection. William Johnston's maternal grandmother (Grandma Friedrichs) gave it to him when he was about eight years of age. He kept it all his life, and stated that it was this cup that started his passion for collecting. It is a London shape Minton cup with chicken bone shaped handle, dated 1811. Thomas Minton first made porcelain at Stoke on Trent in 1797. The body of this porcelain lent itself to finely painted tableware, in particular the tea service which often featured classic designs of English garden flowers.

THE JOHNSTON COLLECTION 20TH ANNIVERSARY FUNCTION, GOVERNMENT HOUSE, 30 NOVEMBER 2010



PICTURED ABOVE | JO Watts, Professor David de Kretser AC, Governor of Victoria, Jan de Kretser, Peter Watts AM



PICTURED ABOVE | Andrew Dixon receives his certificate from Governor de Kretser



PICTURED ABOVE | Joe Groher, Lisa Arrowsmith, Neil Arrowsmith, Sharon Groher (with her certificate)



PICTURED ABOVE | Anne Glynn, Wilma Oxley



PICTURED ABOVE | Julia Armour, Helen Raftis, Kay Miller



PICTURED ABOVE | Dani Balmford receives her certificate from Governor de Kretser



PICTURED ABOVE | Karina James, Sholto James, Judith Davis



PICTURED ABOVE | Deidre Basham receives her certificate from Governor de Kretser



PICTURED ABOVE | Laurie Carew, Lynne Dowling



PICTURED ABOVE | Alwynne Jona, Judith Conroy, Bill Brown, Gerard Vaughan, Deidre Brown



PICTURED ABOVE | Anne Bell, Andrew Bell, Pamela Gates, Christine Newcombe, Annette Miller



PICTURED ABOVE | Maggie Cash, Louis Le Vaillant



THE JOHNSTON COLLECTION

- INCORPORATING -

*Fairhall House Museum, Gallery, Reference Library, Emporium
Ambassadors & Friends*

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Contact the Friends:

friends.johnstoncollection@bigpond.com

THE JOHNSTON COLLECTION STAFF

Louis Le Vaillant

Director | Curator

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Cynthia Longmire

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Anne Neri

Curatorial Volunteer

Wilma Oxley

General Assistant

Helen Sophos

Administrative Assistant

Elaine Sutton

Archivist

Contact us:

T: (03) 9416 2515

F: (03) 9416 2507

E: wrjohnston@bigpond.com

www.johnstoncollection.org