

Editor/President

Dr Mark Ferson
4 Sofala Ave
Riverview NSW 2066
0401 141 890
m.ferson@unsw.edu.au

Secretary

Bronwyn Vost
bronwynvost@bigpond.com

Designer

Mary Keep
marykeep@gmail.com



Frank Marjason: three bookplates ...

By Richard King, Hobart

In 1989 to mark his 70th birthday, the Wagner Society of New South Wales commissioned a bookplate for Richard Wagner's grandson Wolfgang Wagner (1919–2010) from Sydney printmaker Frank Marjason (1914–2011). Frank was at that time a teacher of printmaking and drawing at Willoughby Workshop Arts Centre on Sydney's lower North Shore. I had known the artist's mother when I was young; Gladys Marjason was also an exceptional artist in her own right. In the 1950s she was a great mentor to me, opening doors to the art world and artists of Sydney, and no doubt laying the foundations for my own journey into music and the arts.

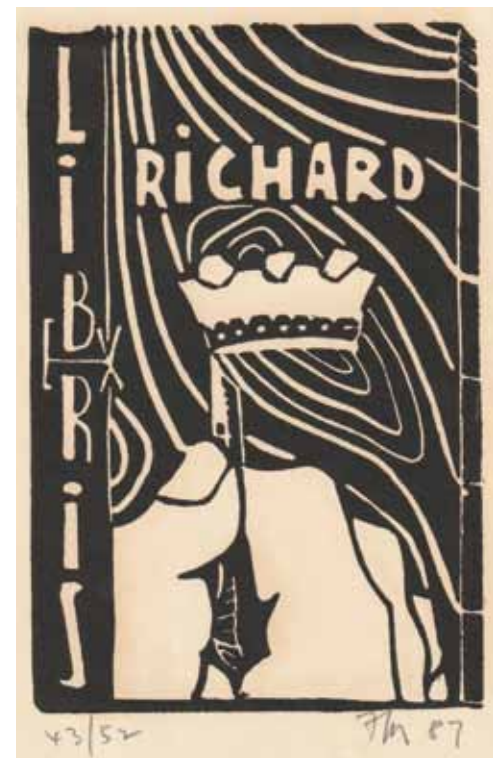
Along with the late Dr Leonard Hansen, we had conceived of the idea of forming a Wagner Society in Sydney to encourage the performance of his 'music dramas', as Wagner called them, and to assist aspiring young singers to further their careers with scholarships. The Society also sponsored singers and musicians in the productions of Wagner's works. The year was 1980.

The first ever meeting of the Society was convened that year by Leonard in Bayreuth, home of the annual Wagner opera festival, with fellow attendees of the festival ... so many people with great enthusiasm ensured its success over the following years. Every year after that date there was always a group of Aussies who had made their pilgrimage to Bayreuth. Our presence was appreciated by so many people who ensured the success of it all, hoteliers as well as those local people who provided accommodation in their private homes, and of course the restaurants and other Bayreuth businesses.

Through the organisation, The Friends of Bayreuth, meetings with the Wagner family were arranged and we were regular guests to

back stage tours and a private dinner with Wolfgang and his wife Gudrun, in the small dining room of the Festspiel house. There were always only about six or eight of us which enabled us to have detailed conversations with Wolfgang who often was the director of one of the productions.

During one of our committee meetings in 1989 the idea of a special gift to mark Wolfgang's 70th birthday was on the agenda, and I suggested a bookplate because it is such a personal item and something we felt sure no one else would have thought of. So it was agreed, and I suggested Frank be commissioned. The design was left to Frank and he came up with the Parsifal motif along with incorporating the W in capitals which



Linocut by Frank Marjason for Richard King, 1987

CONTENTS

Frank Marjason: three bookplates ...	1
Some contributions of women to bookplates in Australia	2
The bookplate of Dennis Wheatley	4
Mary O A Boreham and the English Library, Orotava, Tenerife	5
Notes and happenings	6
Editorial	6



Linocut by Frank Marjason for Wolfgang Wagner, 1989

Right: Linocut by Frank Marjason for the Wagner Society [of New South Wales], 1989

also transforms into the swan, a feature of the opera *Lohengrin*. All were delighted with the concept.

Frank Marjason's art training had begun in early 1930s with a year of night drawing classes at East Sydney Technical College as he was employed by the Commonwealth Bank where he remained for the rest of his working life, interrupted by service during 2nd world war. In the 1960s he studied, also at night, with Louis Kahan in Melbourne and later in Canberra with Tom Gleghorn and John Coburn. He retired from the Bank in 1974 and continued painting whilst exploring various graphic arts, and in 1986 was introduced by Ruth Burgess to the wood-cut and linocut. Frank said that the linocut immediately appealed to him because of its 'speed, simplification of the subject, directness and predictability.' In 1987 he was awarded Drummoyne Graphic Art Prize and his works are in the collection of Drummoyne Council which is now Canada Bay Council.

Following retirement from the Bank, and being the caring man he was, Frank worked for the Smith Family for a further ten years in their aged care homes in Sydney. He saw the people who were at the end of their mortal lives: their individuality; their lost or budding potential as well as their hopelessness. This experience resulted in a book of original linocuts and poems called *Into the truth* which

we published in 1989 at the Print Room Press in a limited edition.

Later on in that year we commissioned another bookplate for the growing reference library the Wagner Society was creating. Around that time I saw an article about the people who had the greatest number of books written about them in all languages the world over. Jesus Christ had by far the greatest number followed by Napoleon and third was Richard Wagner, with over twenty-three thousand! The astonishing thing is, about six to ten new books are written and published about Richard Wagner, the man and or his works, each year. What can be said in these new books that has not already been said in twenty-three thousand others?

I had commissioned a bookplate for my own books from Frank in 1987, again leaving him to create the design. His depiction of the hand using the fine knife to carve out the image must be unique, I think, in the world of the bookplate. Instead of using my surname, King, he substituted a crown — a man of great humour indeed!

All the bookplates were hand printed by the artist in editions of fifty prints. We gave Wolfgang the original linocut block in case he should need to print more for his library.

I am sure, from memory, that Frank also created bookplates for friends and family — research for someone in the future. Frank died in 2011 in his mid-nineties, still active until the day he died.

Some contributions of women to bookplates in Australia

By Mark J Ferson, Sydney

A bookplate, or *ex libris*, is a label pasted into a book to indicate ownership. The essence of the bookplate is the design, which names its owner and says something interesting about the owner's interests or personality. As well as the owner's name they often include the words 'ex libris', meaning 'from the library of'. Whilst some may think of bookplates as a dead artform, bookplate design is enjoying new life in Australia in the 21st century, and has been taken up by many artists, printmakers and booklovers.

The bookplate has an approximately 500-year history, having been introduced in Germany at the time that Johannes Gutenberg started printing from moveable type, with Albrecht Dürer one of its earliest exponents. For the first four centuries of their use, bookplates were mainly of armorial design so that a coat of arms was used to represent the book's owner. As libraries were largely confined to the aristocracy, landed gentry and monastic authorities, they were the ones who commissioned bookplates. Over the last century or so, bookplates became increasingly used by the middle classes and incorporated images other than coats of arms or used text. Messages of the general form of 'Return this book to its owner, or else!' are not uncommon.

Bookplate collecting began in Britain in the early nineteenth century as an offshoot of the gentle pursuit of gathering into albums printed coats of arms, either cut from letterhead or — like postage stamps 100 years later — bought in packets. Collecting took off with the formation in London in 1891 of the Ex Libris Society. The craze was such that newspapers received letters of complaint about people destroying perfectly good books for the bookplates pasted inside their covers.

The pictorial style of bookplate — heavily promoted by the influential art publication *The Studio* (London) and its Editor, Gleeson White — came into its own as artists were asked to make designs in pen and ink, which could then be cheaply printed in large numbers to be pasted into the owner's books. At this time, from the 1890s to World War One, Australia experienced its first phase of interest in bookplates and artists including Norman and Lionel Lindsay, D. H. Souter and Thea Proctor made a name for their designs, often featuring a strong art nouveau aesthetic. Eirene Mort (1879–1977), an influential art teacher and designer, and a founder of the Arts and Crafts Society of NSW, was one of the earliest bookplate artists, her first dating from 1902. She participated in the First Australian Exhibition of Women's Work, held in Melbourne in 1907, where she won the prize for the best bookplate design. Mort's own collection was gifted by her family to the Society in 2018. Our Honorary Secretary, Bronwyn Vost, has arranged for the albums to be conserved — thanks to donations from members — and the bookplates are now being digitised by the Society's Social Media Secretary, Jess Le.

Another period of intense interest occurred in the inter-War period following the formation in 1923 of the Australian Ex Libris



Universal bookplate in pen-and-ink by Thea Proctor, 1899

Society, whose patron was Lady Davidson, wife of the then Governor of New South Wales. As a result of good social connections and clever marketing — any visiting member of the Royal Family was presented with a bookplate designed by a 'fashionable' Australian artist — commissioning a bookplate became the height of 'chic'. Even people who didn't like books had a bookplate designed for them. Australian designers gained international reputations and the collecting and exchange of bookplates became a global pursuit. Key practitioners in this country included Harold Byrne, L Roy Davies, Ella Dwyer, Adrian Feint, Allan Jordan, the Lindsays, George D Perrotet and G Gayfield Shaw.

World War Two killed off the desire for non-essentials such as bookplates, but recent years have seen an upsurge in interest in this art form with some large collections built up and the publication of works on Australian bookplate designers. Whilst the older techniques such as etching and woodcut are still used to make bookplates, and linocuts are ever-popular, many are now designed using innovative forms of computer aided graphics.

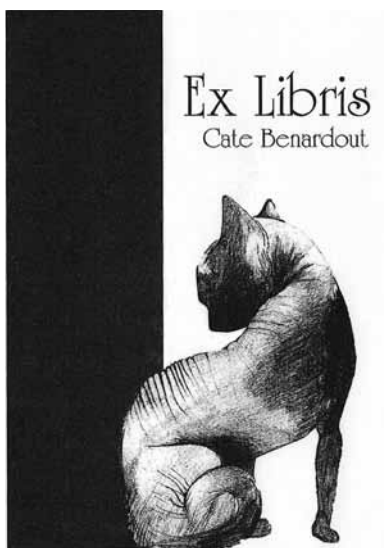
2006 marked the formation of the New Australian Bookplate Society by artist-gallerist Elisabeth Bastian and myself. Members include artists, collectors and others who simply love the idea of bookplates. Many new designs have been commissioned from or



From the top: Bookplate for herself by Eirene Mort, 1911
Two-colour linocut by Mark Ferson for Dr Liz [Cunningham], 1986
Digital design by Jess Le for Juliette Lin, 2020



Hand-painted bookplate by Kathryn Lovejoy for Mark Ferson, 2010
Below: Digital design by Cate Benardout for herself, 2016; winner of the Corrigan Prize for Best Bookplate (Digital)



Hand and computer design by Mary Keep for Val [Hazell], 2007

by members and the Society has forged links with printmaking and art groups such as the Print Council of Australia, Australian Society of Miniature Art, Firestation Print Studio (Melbourne), Megalo Print Studio + Gallery (Canberra) and Carrick Hill (Adelaide). The Society's quarterly, full-colour *Newsletter* is produced by magazine designer Mary Keep, who has also made 90 bookplates to date. To celebrate the Society's tenth anniversary in 2016, we launched a Bookplate Design Award targeting tertiary art and design course students which attracted over 100 entries using both digital and traditional printmaking techniques. And despite the pandemic, in late 2020 printmaker and Society member Brigitta Summers held a two-day course 'Linocut Bookplates from Design to Edition' under the auspices of the NSW Guild of Craft Bookbinders, and Brigitta is hoping to conduct a second course when COVID-19 permits.

Bookplates are widely promoted around the world by active societies in many different countries and an international federation which holds a vibrant congress every two years. Like many other events, the London congress planned for August 2020 had to be cancelled, but bookplate lovers are hoping to get to the San Francisco congress in 2022, coronavirus permitting.

The Society's website includes an Artists' Gallery where we display examples of bookplates executed by members Mary Keep, Jess Le, Kathryn Lovejoy, Rhyl Plant and Brigitta Summers; it can be seen at <http://www.bookplatesociety.org.au/index.php/artists>

The bookplate of Dennis Wheatley

By Dr Michael Taffe, Ballarat

My father was an avid reader of the thriller novels of Dennis Wheatley (1897–1977), popular in the nineteen forties and fifties, but I have never taken to reading them. Maybe it's time I started reading them, but I am not overly enthused by the genre.

In June 2021, just before Victoria's fifth COVID-19 lockdown, I happened upon a

copy of the *Larousse Gastronomique* with the bookplate of Dennis Wheatley on the front free-endpaper. The ribbon at the bottom right of the image gives the name of the English artist Frank C Papé who designed many bookplates including this one for Wheatley in 1928. Papé studied at the Slade and was married to another student, Alice Stringer. Papé also illustrated Wheatley's biography of Charles II, *Old Rowley* (Hutchinson, 1933), and created dust jacket illustrations for the first editions of several Wheatley novels.

The concept for the Wheatley bookplate came from the writer himself, however. The image presents Wheatley naked at the feet of his close friend Gordon Eric Gordon-Tombe, depicted as a faun. For Tombe nothing was sacred and his cynical wit and breadth of reading endeared him to Wheatley. Apparently Wheatley's famous dashing World War 2 spy character Gregory Sallust is his representation of his friend. Gordon Eric (George) Gordon-Tombe was engaged in illegal activities and was murdered in 1922. In Wheatley's concept sketch, he was depicted as the devil, not a faun. The bookplate shows the two pictured in an Eden of lush tropical growth of fruitful abundance. The image recalls the story of Adam and Eve in the garden but with the crucified Christ in the background.

Tombe was also a friend of Aleister Crowley and was heavily into the occult, and Wheatley was introduced to Crowley and was influenced by him. The abundance of fruit, the saxophone and drink represent the pleasures of life in accordance with the popular 1920s revolt against Christian puritanism. Setting Tombe as a satyr incorporates the classical pagan philosophy including sexual freedom rather than Wheatley's original concept drawing of him as a devil.

Beneath the image in script is a quote from Tombe expressing his philosophy and desire for Wheatley to experience all life has to offer suggesting Eve in the garden should have eaten of all the fruits.

Further reading

<http://www.denniswheatley.info/museum> Accessed July 12, 2021.
Baker, Phil. *The Devil is a Gentleman: The life and Times of Dennis Wheatley*. Sawtry UK: Dedalus, 2009

Mary O A Boreham and the English Library, Orotava, Tenerife

By Bryan Welch, London

I bought Oscar Browning's *The age of the Condottieri* (Methuen, 1895) because of the bookplate for Mary O A Boreham by Bessie Innes Young. The bookplate is a curious composition showing the *Mayflower* in full sail on stylized waves reminiscent of a Japanese print with birds, cherry blossom and Mt Fuji. The date '1620' is the year the *Mayflower* set sail from Plymouth, England. I was amused by the design and imagined the *Mayflower* losing its way and ending up in Japan! I have been able to find out very little about the artist Bessie Innes Young except that she was born in Glasgow in 1855, studied at the famous Glasgow School of Art and in Paris at the Académie Delecluse, and died in 1936.



Pen and ink design by Frank C Papé for Dennis Wheatley, 1928

I knew nothing of Mary Boreham until I followed a clue on the book's flyleaf, which is inscribed 'Orotava Library. Dec 1920'. The flyleaf also has several library classification marks and signs of a label being removed. Orotava is an area in Tenerife (one of the Canary Islands, a Spanish territory off the coast of Morocco) with a mild and beneficial climate that was attractive for visitors from Europe.

For what follows I am indebted to Ken Fisher, the former president of the English Library in Orotava, the results of whose researches can be found on the Library's website. Mary Oliver Alsop Boreham and her husband Walter arrived there in 1890 and bought a house. They brought with them their extensive library of thousands of books. Sadly, Walter died of tuberculosis the following year, but his widow stayed on, becoming a generous benefactor to the English community, paying for a new vicarage and contributing stained glass windows to the church. Mary kept open house for friends and visitors to whom she lent books freely. In 1900 her friends, concerned about the many books she must have lost, decided to start a subscription library. Initially the library was housed in the vicarage, but in 1901 the Library Committee voted to raise the money to fund their own building. This would have been a heroic task for the Committee, until Colonel Owen Peel Wethered, ex-chairman of a British brewery, who had settled in the area, offered to pay for the library building. It was finished in 1903 and by the following year the books from the vicarage had

been installed and Mrs Boreham had donated 2,000 more books. In 1912 the Bishop of Sierra Leone, who was visiting the Island, wrote 'They have a wonderful library here of some thousands of books, especially theology and science and travel. From the way in which books were being taken out yesterday, there must be one place left where they do solid reading.'

Some books left the Library in 1915/16 when 421 books were donated for the use of British soldiers and sailors and so were sent to the War Library in London. When Mrs Boreham died in 1917 her daughter donated her remaining 4,000 books to the Library. My book, inscribed with the date 1920, is therefore one of those donated after Mrs Boreham's death. At that time the library possessed over 10,000 books; after they had been catalogued and arranged some 770 duplicates were sent to the wife of the British Consul in Santa Cruz to start a British library there. How and when my volume left the library I do not know. Oscar Browning was in his day the most famous Cambridge don, more famous for his life than for his scholarship. Apart from his memoirs, which are of interest to students of the period, his works are no longer read today, so it's not surprising the book has been de-accessioned. As for the English Library of Orotova, their website shows that it has flourished and developed with the times.

[Bryan has since been asked to return the book to the English Library, without any intimation of how it came onto the open market, legitimately or otherwise — Ed.]



Pen and ink design by Bessie Young for Mary O A Boreham, late 19th century

Further reading

Ken Fisher. 'A tale of two citizens', posted 17 September 2015. <https://englishlibrarytenerife.org/a-tale-of-two-citizens/>

Notes and happenings

Publications

IAN MORRISON. A description of a voyage: The 'Allport' copy of STC 15193. *Script & Print* vol. 44, no. 2, 2020; pp. 69–89

Provenance study including image of the bookplates of previous owner Boies Penrose and of the Allport Collection

JOHN SENDY. *Melbourne's radical bookshops: history, people, appreciation.* Melbourne: International Bookshop, 1983; p. 80
Bookplate depicted for Mrs Margaret Byrd designed by William Hunter, being the wife of the radical bookseller, William Ellis Bird. [Thanks to Jürgen Wegner]

[**UNIVERSAL BOOKPLATES.**] *Frankie* no. 102, Jul./Aug. 2021; facing p. 48

Tear out sheet of 'peel and stick' universal bookplates: 'If found, please contact ...', 'This book belongs to ...' and 'From the library of ...'

Editorial

The pandemic rolls on, but your Society and its *Newsletter* continue and I am thankful to have found working on it a really good way to keep occupied. Likewise I hope reading the *Newsletter* is a pleasant way to wile away some lockdown time looking at objects of beauty and interest. My gratitude is due to our three contributors who have sent in items without any soliciting from me. Richard King has written of the bookplates of Sydney artist Frank Marjason and his commissions for the Wagner Society of New South Wales and for that great composer's grandson Wolfgang Wagner. I was lucky to meet Frank some years ago and talk with him about his bookplates — I have more of them tucked away somewhere, if I could only find them! He was also a prolific painter, and serendipitously my wife Sheree and I featured (but facelessly) in a painting he made in Concord Senior Citizen's Centre of a dance class of which we just happened to be part. Members Michael Taffe (Ballarat) and Bryan Welch (London) have both provided pieces on English bookplates with unusual designs, interesting owners and some mystery about how they ended up where they did. I hope you enjoy the stories as much as I have. I would also like to thank Edwin Jewell for providing copies of bookplates by Lucy Timbrell for his grandchildren Ellie and Max for inclusion in the hard copy edition of the *Newsletter*. Finally, I was hoping to bring you Christine Bell's essay on the Italian bookplates in the John Gartner Collection at the State Library of Victoria, but the pandemic has prevented Christine from obtaining suitable images, so I have filled in with an article highlighting some of the contributions women have made to bookplates in Australia over the past 120 years. As always, if you have any material or ideas for a *Newsletter* article, whether long, short or medium, please let me know.

MF