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Pen and ink design by
CH Crampton for
Louis Politzer, c. 1940s

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The linocut bookplates of GD Perrottet (1890–1971)

Mark J Ferson, Sydney

George David Perrottet, although technically an amateur artist, was one of Australia's most admired and prolific bookplate designers, producing over 220 bookplates between 1929 and 1964. Brought up in Hamilton, in Victoria's western districts, and Melbourne, in 1928 he moved with his wife and family to Sydney where he practised as an accountant with Howard Smith Ltd. Through membership of the Roycroft Library in Rowe Street, Perrottet met enthusiasts P Neville Barnett, Frank Clune and G Gayfield Shaw and although he had previously made some pen-and-ink designs, executed his first linocut bookplate in 1929. He joined the Australian Ex Libris Society in 1931, and immediately became its Honorary Treasurer, also joining the New South Wales Bookplate Club and during the years of the Second World War, after the demise of the two Sydney societies, the Melbourne-based Australian Bookplate Club. The year after he joined the Australian Ex Libris Society, Perrottet acknowledged the support of president John Lane Mullins with a four-colour linocut bookplate celebrating their friendship and Christmas time.

Interest in the colour linocut had increased in Britain in the inter-war years largely through the work of Claude Flight who evinced a modernistic style characterised by colour, rhythm and movement. His influence was felt through his teaching at the Grosvenor School of Modern Art, London, exhibitions of linocuts organised by him in London and overseas, and his two books, *Lino-cuts: a handbook of linoleum-cut colour printing* (1927), and *The art and craft of lino cutting and printing* (1934). Flight taught a number of Australian artists, including Dorrit Black, Eveline Syme and Ethel Spowers, who studied with him at the Grosvenor School in 1927 or 1928.

It is not known what were Perrottet's influences, but he rapidly developed a facility with the linocut, making finely detailed, multicolour designs from multiple blocks cut with wood-engraving tools. His work was both popular and acclaimed. In 1933 he won both the award for a linocut design, and for the outstanding design by an Australian artist, in the NSW Bookplate Club's International Bookplate Competition. In each of the three subsequent years he received an Order of Merit from the Bookplate Association International, Los Angeles. He was selected to design the bookplate presented to Princess Elizabeth during the 1935 Australian royal visit, which incidentally generated much publicity for the Australian Ex Libris Society. Apart from bookplates, Perrottet linocuts were shown in the inaugural exhibition of the Painter-Etchers' and Graphic Art Society of Australia, 1934.



Pen-and-ink caricature by Syd Miller for
GD Perrottet, 1950



Linocut by GD Perrottet for Princess Elizabeth, 1934



Linocut by GD Perrottet for JL Mullins, 1932

As a further measure of the esteem in which his work was held, Perrottet was the subject of a number of essays and articles published in Australia and the United States. The prestigious American Society of Bookplate Collectors and Designers published in its *Year Book*: 'Bookplates of GD Perrottet' by Camden Morrisby (1932) and 'George D Perrottet, designer and craftsman' by Albert Collins (1942). In addition, his own articles appeared in the *Year Book*: 'Etched plates of Ella Dwyer' (1932) and 'Etched plates of Ella Dwyer' (1942). Tatlock Miller's little magazine *Manuscripts* also featured articles by and about Perrottet: 'The bookplate. VII. GD Perrottet' by HB Muir (no. 9, May 1934) and Perrottet's 'The bookplate: Jaroslav Dobrovolsky' (no. 11, November 1934). In 1942 Muir wrote and published *The bookplates of GD Perrottet*, containing 12 original tipped-in linocuts, in an edition of 275 copies.

Perrottet was a prolific letter writer. His correspondence seeking exchanges or discussing commissions can be found in bookplate collections in many parts of the world. Letters written to fellow artist-collector Ella Dwyer, whose bookplate he designed in 1932, span over three decades from this time, and were accompanied by bookplates totalling some hundreds of examples. Correspondence with Auckland artist Hilda Wiseman records their shared interest in the linocut technique and bookplates in particular over a period of almost 40 years. In 1933 they made an agreement to design a bookplate for one another. Perrottet also designed bookplates for printmakers Ethleen Palmer (1934), Shoji Kozuka, Japan (1935) and Helen Ogilvie (1936); in return he received plates from Kozuka and Ogilvie (the latter designed for



Linocut by GD Perrottet for FCV Lane, 1932

his wife Muriel). The duration of these relationships attest to his long interest in bookplates and it is only in one of his last letters to Dwyer, dated 1966, that Perrottet imparts that he has finally given up collecting:

Bookplates are a very small feature of my life now – as far as execution is concerned, my tally over the last few years is 1961, 5 – 1962, 3 – 1964, 5, since then nothing. I had come to the conclusion that collecting was dead. ... My only other news is that a friend [Harry Muir – Ed.] ... offered to buy my collection, or the major part of it, for presentation to the Flinders University, Adelaide – to be known as the GD Perrottet Memorial Collection, to be added to from time to time by other collectors!

As well as this large collection of bookplates, the Flinders University Library holds Perrottet's set of linocutting tools, many of his letters, and the minute books and papers of the Australian Ex Libris Society, of which he was for many years its Honorary Treasurer. This collection was described in an article by Gillian Dooley in *Newsletter* no. 12.

Further reading

P Neville Barnett, *Woodcut book-plates*, Sydney: The author, 1934

HB Muir, *The bookplates of G D Perrottet*, Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1942

Stephen Coppel, *Linocuts of the machine age*, Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995

A manuscript presentation plate

Jeff Bidgood, Sydney

Following Mark Ferson's article on manuscript bookplates (in *Newsletter* no. 11) my friend in England, Bryan Welch, thought that I would like to add this plate to my collection of prize and presentation plates.

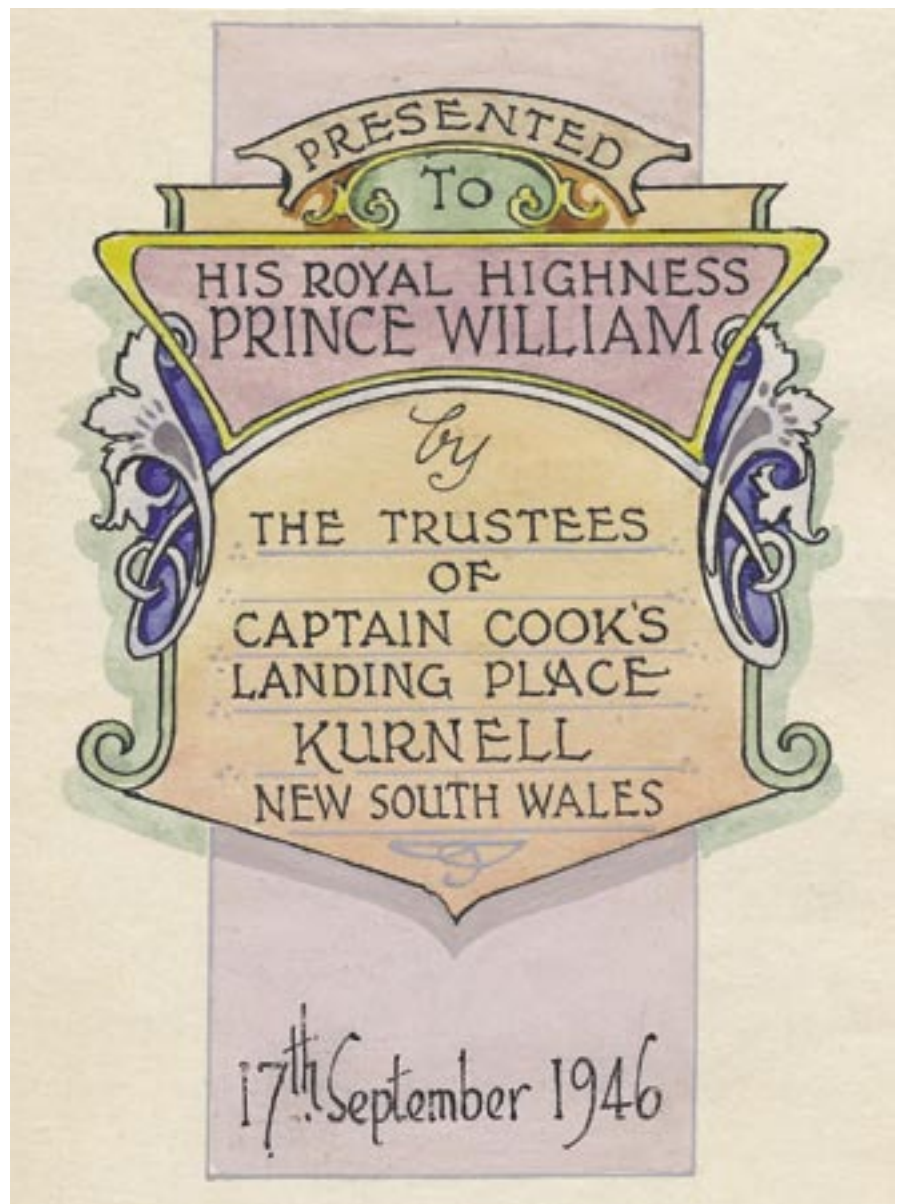
Whilst manuscript or hand-executed presentation plates are a lot more common than manuscript bookplates, this plate is

very different. Usually the plates are carefully (though sometimes roughly) inscribed with details of an event or prize. In some cases they are executed by someone competent in calligraphy. This plate, though, as you can see from the illustration, has been executed and coloured by experts in a manner reflecting the importance of the person and occasion.

Prince William (1941–1972) was the first son of Prince Henry, Duke of Gloucester (1900–1974) and was in Australia in 1946 with his parents, as his father was serving as Australia's eleventh Governor-General (1945–1947).

The occasion for the plate was to commemorate the planting of trees at Captain Cook's first landing place on the east coast of Australia at Kurnell. The planting was, in part, to replicate a planting of trees by Prince Henry's father, Prince Albert Victor (1864–1892) on a visit to Kurnell in 1861. At that time, Captain Cook's first landing place was in private hands. The area did not become Crown Land until 1899 and by the mid-twentieth century, not all of the original trees had survived.

Prince William participated with his father and mother in the tree planting,



Manuscript and hand-coloured presentation plate to Prince William, 1946

of *Araucaria cookii* at the first site and *Araucaria excelsa* at the second. Special memorial spades had been prepared for this purpose and were then to be used for similar tree plantings in the future. Prince William apparently found that they were just too awkward for one of his tender years and used his hands to plant his second tree.

The plate is in a book, *Kurnell, the birthplace of Australia*, by AG Alanson. It was set up and printed by Geo B Phillip and Son, Sydney, in 1933. Originally the booklet was staple bound with, no doubt, a cardboard cover. The staples were removed and the book hand sewn and rebound into a leather cover. The tone of the book reflects a time when the second verse of *Advance Australia Fair* commenced:

*When gallant Cook from Albion sail'd,
To trace wide oceans o're
True British courage drove him on,
Till he landed on our shore*

Further reading

Royal visits to Captain Cook's landing place, Kurnell, Botany Bay, NSW, 1881–1946, Sydney: Government Printer, 1948

Ludwig L Politzer as bookplate promoter

Mark J Ferson, Sydney

Christine Downer, in her article on bookplate collections in the State Library of Victoria (*Newsletter* no. 14), introduces Ludwig Louis Politzer (1875–1954), a Viennese migrant who arrived in Melbourne in 1909. Politzer, an art dealer and writer, spent much energy raising awareness here of European (and Australian) art. In 1925, he joined the Victorian branch of the Australian Ex Libris Society, whose president was RH Croll, and immediately began to promote bookplates in a series of exhibitions. The first of these took place in Melbourne's Sackville Gallery, of which Politzer was the founder and director. The display which consisted entirely of Continental, predominantly German, etched designs, was opened by pioneer etcher John Shirlow, and reviews

were published in both the *Age* and *Herald* (Melbourne). Encouraged by the success of the first exhibition, Politzer was more ambitious in mounting a second exhibition, which took place later the same year at the Queen's Hall, Collins Street. All 232 designs were by foreign artists, mostly from Germany, Austria and Switzerland, and all were for sale. In the catalogue preface, Politzer drew special attention to the work of the deceased artists Max Klinger, Franz von Bayros and Alois Kolb, and also noted, 'these plates are likely to increase in value, as most of them are Original Etchings, and their Editions are strictly limited.'

In 1926 Politzer organised two further exhibitions, in Melbourne in May and in Geelong in July. The Melbourne showing, again at Queen's Hall, comprised 150 designs by continental artists (for sale) and 94 bookplates by Australian artists lent by Croll. *Herald* art critic JS MacDonald again reviewed the exhibition, and noted more positively than in 1925 that 'Bookplates offer a fine field for invention and the pretty cult is spreading.' CH Percival in the *Bulletin* compared the Australian designs which he considered mostly 'mere asides' with the European bookplates, designed with 'tremendous sighs and knittings of the brow.'

A decade later Politzer was again responsible for an exhibit of European bookplates in Melbourne, on this occasion at the Riddell Galleries in Little Collins Street. *Argus* reviewer Harold Herbert, also a watercolourist and bookplate artist, spoke of their technical perfection which nonetheless did not appeal:

We must admire their fine work with an etching needle. ... Most of the designs are too elaborate. A bookplate should be simple. These are not. Nor is there, in most instances, any personal touch about them. ... The point of the book-plate is missed, that is all.

He is also said to have mounted a Sydney exhibition, of which I have been unable to locate any details, and it is very probable that he organised an exhibition of continental

and Australian prints and bookplates at Verity Hewitt's Bookshop in Canberra in March 1940, which the *Canberra Times* advertisement attributed to the 'property of a well-known Melbourne art dealer and collector'.

Politzer was an active member of the Bread and Cheese Club, which was formed in Melbourne in 1938 under the leadership of accountant and collector JK Moir to bring together those interested in Australian art and literature. There was an overlap between members of the Australian Bookplate Club (Melbourne, 1942–44) and of the Bread and Cheese Club. Many Club members had one or more personal bookplates, often designed by other club members, including *Herald* staff artist CH Crampton, Victor Cobb, GD Perrottet (then living in Melbourne), Allan Jordan and William Hunter.

In order to achieve one of its aims of materially assisting artists, the Club mounted several art exhibitions; the first held in November 1940 at Tye's Velasquez Gallery, Melbourne included displays of bookplates. In 1946, the first exhibition of the Bread and Cheese Club Art Group was held at the Myer Gallery, incorporating a display of bookplates by Allan Jordan. Both exhibitions were organised by Politzer, who was further involved in promoting bookplates through his articles in the January 1940 issue of the Club's journal *Bohemia*, and in the October 1950 issue of *Biblio News* (Book Collectors' Society of Australia).

The list of exhibitions with which Politzer was closely associated follows:

- 1 Exhibition of ex libris, Sackville Art Gallery, Melbourne, from 30 March 1925 for a fortnight; consisted entirely of Continental bookplates.
- 2 II. Exhibition of.. Ex Libris Book Plates, Queen's Hall, Collins Street, Melbourne, 5-10 October 1925, LL Politzer, Director; 232 bookplates mainly by German, Austrian and Swiss artists.
- 3 III. Exhibition of.. Ex Libris (Book Plates) Queen's Hall, Collins Street, Melbourne, 3-15 May 1926, Direction: LL Politzer; 150 Continental bookplates mainly by

EXHIBITION

By Fellows of the
Bread and Cheese Club
Art Group



AT THE MYER GALLERY
FROM 2 JULY UNTIL 13 JULY
OPEN 10 A.M. TO 5 P.M. 1946

ALAN E. WARREN, GALLERY DIRECTOR
CATALOGUE: ONE SHILLING

- German, Austrian and Swiss artists and 94 bookplates by Australian artists lent by RH Croll.
- 4 Exhibition of Ex Libris Etchings, Woodcuts, Mezzotints, etc, Davidson Hall, Geelong, under the auspices of the Gordon Art Club, 28–30 July 1926; 301 foreign bookplates, by German, Austrian, Hungarian, Swiss, Czech etc artists (for sale) and 45 exhibits of Australian bookplates lent by RH Croll.
 - 5 Exhibition of European bookplates at Riddell Galleries, 180 Little Collins St, Melbourne, December 1936; arranged by Mr LL Politzer.
 - 6 Continental & Australian etchings, colorprints & bookplates, in the new Picture and Reading Room, Verity Hewitt's Bookshop, Sydney Building, Canberra, 13–30 March 1940 (property of a well-known Melbourne art dealer and collector).

- 7 Australian Art and Literature Exhibition, sponsored by the Bread and Cheese Club, at Tye's Velasquez Gallery, 100 Bourke Street, Melbourne, 18–30 November 1940; managed by LL Politzer; included 'Exhibits of bookplates of well-known Australians' and also 'Exhibit of bookplates by Adrian Feint'.
- 8 Exhibition by Fellows of The Bread and Cheese Club Art Group at the Myer Gallery, Melbourne, 2–13 July 1946; catalogue introduction by LL Politzer.

I wish to thank Glen Ralph, Wilmar Library, Adelaide for drawing my attention to the Riddell Galleries exhibition. References are available on application to the author.

Notes and happenings

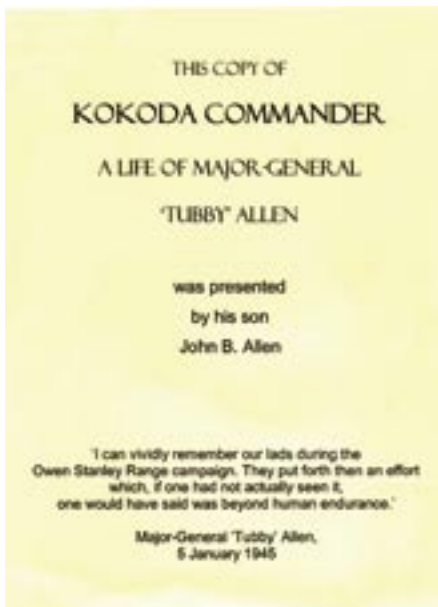
Presentation bookplate:
Kokoda commander. A life of Major-General 'Tubby' Allen, by Stuart Braga
(Oxford University Press, 2004)

Stuart Braga writes: General 'Tubby' Allen commanded the 7th Division on the Kokoda Trail from August to October 1942. He is a sadly neglected figure in Australian military history. I was asked to write his biography by his son, John Allen, whom I have known for many years. The book, however, was not a commissioned biography, but was funded by the Army History Unit, and published as part of their Military History series. Nevertheless it rescued Allen from an undeserved obscurity. John Allen was utterly delighted, and bought many copies to give away to friends. He also presented more than 100 copies to school libraries around New South Wales.

I prepared a presentation bookplate to be placed in each copy. The bookplate bears a comment made by General Allen in a speech in Sydney in January 1945: 'I can vividly remember our lads during the Owen Stanley campaign. They put forth then an effort which, if one had not actually seen it, one would have said was beyond human endurance.' On 27 October 1942, at the cusp of victory, Allen was relieved of his front-line command, given a base command

instead, and within two years was out of the army. A sad and broken man, he died quite young.

The point of this bookplate, and what makes it memorable, is that it reflects a son's filial pride in a father whose distinguished career and magnificent reputation were destroyed by jealous rivals. Sometimes in war the deadliest enemies are on your own side.



'Mirror of the world' exhibition,
State Library of Victoria

I was fortunate to have to travel recently to Melbourne for a conference and managed to take in the State Library among other cultural attractions. The spaces of the level 4 gallery which encircles the interior of the main dome were filled with a mouth-watering, permanent exhibition entitled 'Mirror of the world: books and ideas'. On display were a 4 thousand-year-old Sumerian cuneiform tablet and a selection of beautiful manuscripts and books from the past millenium. One of the exhibition themes is 'The artist and the book' which highlights the involvement of artists in the design and illustration of both trade and private press editions, and in the evolution of the book form. Of note were two small frames of bookplates: four designs in linocut or scraperboard by the late Irena Sibley (the gift or R & K Littlewood) and four drypoint etchings by Robert Jacks.

Sint-Niklaas (Belgium) 2011 Bookplate Competition

We have received details and application forms for the Sint-Niklaas 2011 Bookplate and Small Print Competition, which is inviting entries of original bookplates designed and printed in 2009 or 2010. A number of awards will be made with a value between 250 and 1250 Euros. Entries must be sent in before 1 November 2010. Rules and entry forms are available from the Editor.

Recent publications

- 1 **BIDGOOD, JEFF.** Some reminiscences of the BCSA. *BibliNews and Australian Notes & Queries*, nos. 361-2, March–June 2009, pp 4-12

Designs by N Lindsay, AO Spare, Unk White, R Lindsay, GD Perrottet for prominent early members of the Society

- 2 **MCMULLIN, BRIAN J.** Domestic—colonial—domestic. *BibliNews and Australian Notes & Queries*, nos. 361-2, March–June 2009, pp 29-37

Prize bookplate from Heathcote Road Wesleyan Sunday School, Longton (UK)

- 3 **DOWNER, CHRISTINE.** This book belongs to ... European bookplate collections in the State Library of Victoria. *La Trobe Journal*, no. 84, December 2009, pp 60-75

Extensive discussion of the Politzer and Gartner bookplate collections held by the SLV and how they came to be there; designs by T Bewick, BUKO, Sumiko Euki, M Kislinger, E Kotrba, J Lukavsky, T Marangoni, D Riley, Hitoshi Seimiya, L Wyatt, Motoi Yanagida

- 4 *2010 centenary guide. One hundred. Celebrating the Mitchell Library centenary 1910-2010.* State Library of NSW, Sydney, 2010

Includes image of the DS Mitchell armorial bookplate

Editorial

Thank you for your patience with the somewhat delayed previous issue, cover date December 2009; we are attempting to make

up lost time with this issue of the *Newsletter* which I hope you will enjoy. I have mined my bookplate thesis and updated the material where necessary to bring you two articles which I hope you will find of interest. Their having been a deal of interest in Adrian Feint in the past year, I thought it worthwhile to balance this with information on George D Perrottet, an amateur artist who nevertheless gained popularity and critical acclaim for his over 200 bookplates produced over a span of 35 years. Further, Christine Downer's description of European bookplate collections held by the State Library of Victoria prompted me to pen a short article on Ludwig Politzer, a cultured and multiply talented Austrian immigrant who, among many other accomplishments, played a central role in bookplate exhibitions held in Melbourne and elsewhere before and after the Second World War. Finally I must thank Jeff Bidgood for a further fascinating contribution (also involving Bryan Welch) concerning an Australian manuscript bookplate for a young British royal, and also Stuart Braga for a serendipitously topical (in light of Anzac Day's proximity) note about the presentation bookplate he designed for a book about Major-General 'Tubby' Allen.

MF

New publication

A new book on bookplates published by the Book Collectors' Society of Australia

Mark Ferson: Bookplate artist,
by Jeff Bidgood

A5 paperback, 70 pages
Signed number edition of 50 copies
\$25 per copy to New Australian Bookplate Society members including postage within Australia

To order a copy, please contact
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or email him at
bidgood@tpg.com.au