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Calligraphic design by
Audrey Hutchinson
(England), for J Gartner,
1983

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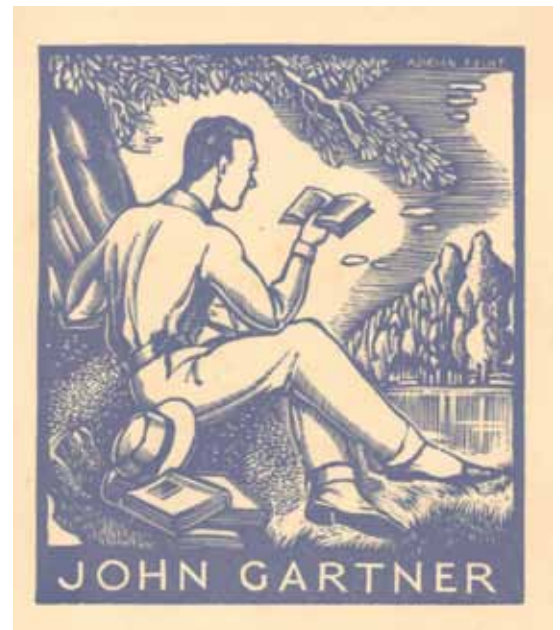
Characters in Australian bookplate history: John Gartner and the Australian Bookplate Club

By Mark J Ferson, Sydney

The Australian Ex Libris Society had been established with much fanfare in 1923 through the society connections of founding president John Lane Mullins and a group of other passionate collectors and promoters, with P Neville Barnett in the vanguard. The Society survived the Great Depression and gained a high membership in the mid-1930s, including a sizeable Melbourne contingent led by Victorian vice president Robert Henderson Croll. By the end of 1939, despite the demise of the Australian Ex Libris Society following the death of Lane Mullins, the Victorian branch had managed to maintain its membership at the same level as five years earlier. Croll's 'fascinating pursuit' continued to motivate Melbourne collectors, and on 25 November 1941 a meeting was called by 'organiser' John Gartner to form the Australian Bookplate Club. Officers were elected, with Croll as president, Gartner as secretary-treasurer and V S Hewett as vice-president, as well as an assistant secretary and a small committee. The constitution, which replicated that of the Australian Ex Libris Society devised 18 years earlier, specified the objects of the new society as being the promotion of bookplate use and exchanges, the involvement of artists, the holding of exhibitions and publication of literature on the subject. After six months, the club had 23 Victorian members, of whom 13 had belonged to the Australian Ex Libris Society, and in addition eight New South Wales, five South Australian and three United States members.

Apart from Croll, the driving force behind the formation and activities of the club was Melbourne printer John Gartner (1914-1998). He undertook training in printing at the Melbourne Technical College and also spent

time at the Melbourne Public Library where he was guided by assistant librarian A B Foxcroft to the work of the private presses. He began to correspond with the leaders of the craft and in 1933 came into contact with Ben Fryer who influenced him to found the Victorian Division of the Printing Industry Craftsmen of Australia. Gartner established the Hawthorn Press in 1937 which functioned solely as a private press until 1945, when he took over a commercial printing business. Around 1936 he had become interested in bookplates, probably through contact with fellow-printer V S Hewett, who was the production manager at the Specialty Press, Melbourne, and a member of the Australian Ex Libris Society for the previous four years. The same year, Gartner designed a typographic bookplate for himself, and began corresponding

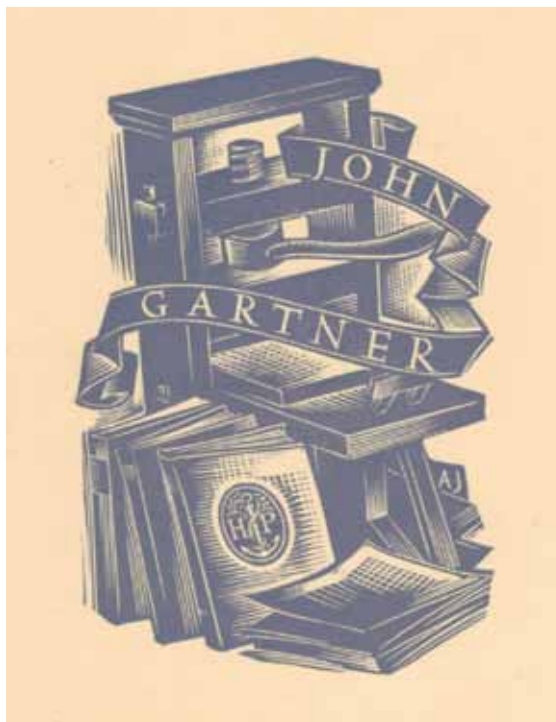


Wood-engraving by A Feint for
J Gartner, 1941

and exchanging with Barnett, Croll, Eric Thake, Adrian Feint and other Sydney collectors.

When I interviewed Gartner's widow, Zelma, in 2000, she described her late husband as 'a people person' and recalled that he had been a collector all his life, especially of anything to do with printing, and was also most interested in Australian art and with the technique of wood engraving. The latter interest led to Gartner approaching Adrian Feint in 1939 to design Gartner's first pictorial bookplate, after which they struck up a close friendship. The next year Gartner wrote, and published at the Hawthorn Press, a booklet outlining Feint's bookplate work, and in 1941 he wrote 'Adrian Feint's bookplates' for Ure Smith's *Australia National Journal* which he reprinted at the Hawthorn Press in a limited edition of 200 copies. Feint visited Gartner on many occasions during the war years and from 1942 he was engaged to produce decorations for a number of Hawthorn Press books, beginning with its printer's device. Gartner also utilised the services of Melbourne teacher and commercial artist Allan Jordan (1898-1982), whose wood engraved illustrations and other decorations enhance more than a dozen Hawthorn Press books from the 1940s. Jordan executed a series of wood-engraved bookplates between 1939 and 1958, including designs for Gartner dated 1944 and 1950. Gartner's other bookplates from this period by Melbourne artists comprised designs by W Hunter (1943), C H Crampton (1944) and Thake (1944).

With the founding of the Australian Bookplate Club, Gartner marshalled his organisational abilities in the direction of strengthening the club's membership and its activities, and utilised his typographic abilities and the Hawthorn Press to the benefit of the club's bright if brief publication program. Following the *Constitution and list of foundation members*, he edited two issues of the club newsletter, dated April 1943 (with a tipped-in Feint bookplate) and May 1944. The more important Hawthorn Press publications were the checklists of the bookplates of prominent artist-members. The first of these concerned Melbourne



Wood-engraving bookplate by Allan Jordan for J Gartner, 1944

artist Eric Thake and a second published under the Australian Bookplate Club aegis was devoted to Eirene Mort. Between these two booklets, Gartner published under his own name a checklist of the designs of Victorian etcher William Hunter. All comprised a preface, checklist and 5-7 tipped-in, original bookplates and they were raffled or sold to club members or others interested in bookplates. Gartner considered these illustrated checklists an innovation in Australia, although the first of these works had in fact been produced in respect of the bookplates of Adrian Feint by the artist himself in 1928.

The idea and format of the two Hawthorn Press checklists were taken up by Adelaide collector and Club member Harry Muir who published checklists of the bookplates of Norman Lindsay and George Perrottet at his Wakefield Press in 1942 and 1944. Despite the apparently successful beginnings of the Club marked by its talks to members, publications and an increase in new bookplate designs in 1942-1944, it does not appear to have survived beyond 1944. In retrospect, both John and Zelma Gartner felt that the war killed off interest in bookplates. This view is supported by contemporary evidence, in the form of a

letter from the beginning of 1943 from collector Sydney Blake to Jane Windeyer, in which he expresses the same sentiments:

Right up to the time of the War, I was interested in the collection of continental bookplates and was corresponding with a number of European artists. Since the outbreak of war however I have completely given up all thoughts of collecting bookplates, books, and the graphic arts all of which interested me.

An alternate or additional reason is the illness and death of Victorian figurehead R H Croll, and this is certainly the opinion of club member and veteran bookplate designer Eirene Mort, who noted in December 1947 in a letter to fellow artist-collector Ella Dwyer, after Croll's death:

The Bookplate Club seems to have faded out. It went into recess during Mr Croll's long illness, & though they hoped to start again with renewed vigour, I wonder whether they will. I always liked that Club – it was so friendly and enterprising ...

Despite the cessation of organised bookplate collecting activities in Australia with the fading away of the Australian Bookplate Club, Gartner continued to

commission and swap bookplates, and turned towards Europe as a source of bookplate designers, but that is another story.

References are available from the author.

Have bookplate will travel: Gretta G Rowell, Louis M Dillman and Lord de Tabley's A guide to the study of book-plates

By Mark J Ferson, Sydney

In conscientious preparation for my wife's and my holiday to North America last September, I sought advice from some Sydney book collectors regarding good secondhand bookshops in Los Angeles, our point of arrival where we were to stay for a few days with a long-lost cousin. Ronald Cardwell firmly recommended the Caravan Book Store in downtown LA, and my very helpful cousins found time to deposit us there for half an hour whilst they unsuccessfully sought a completely legal car-parking space.

My enquiry of the owner as to the whereabouts of bookplate books led me to a shelf of desirables and, as a token of my request and visit as much as anything else, I settled on a copy of The Hon J Leicester Warren's *A guide to the study of book-*

plates (ex-libris). Published by John Pearson, London, in 1880, this was the first English book on bookplate collecting, coming just before (and perhaps stimulating) the great fashion for bookplate collecting which erupted with the formation in 1891 of the London-based Bookplate Society.

The presence inside the book's front cover of a nautical bookplate — one of my bookplate collecting themes — sealed the deal and US \$95 changed hands. The bookplate is a pen and ink design of a fully-rigged sailing ship by prize-winning cartoonist C K Berryman with text 'Gretta G Rowell, Oct. 1925'. I have been unable to find out anything substantial about the owner except that in 1930 she was residing with her husband and adult children in Pasadena, and had a further bookplate designed in 1932 by J W Jameson, also featuring a sailing ship.

Once home, I looked at my acquisition more carefully and found some other tantalising clues to its provenance in the form of a small pencil note inside the back cover 'Dillman Sale 3/21 07'. The internet is a wonderful thing; a search led me to a digitised version of the University of California's copy of the catalogue of *The private library of Louis M Dillman of Chicago ... for sale at auction Thursday afternoon and evening, March 21, 1907, by The Anderson Auction Company, 5 West 29th Street, New York*. An unknown hand, but possibly a staff member of the auction house, has marked the catalogue, and at the top of the front cover a manuscript notation reveals that 614 lots comprising 1055 volumes were sold for some cents over \$14,658. Page 9 lists six bookplate books, of which lot 79 was Warren's *A guide to the study of book-plates*, described as 'First Edition, and very scarce', and the same hand records its sale for \$4.20. Mr Dillman is regrettably an unknown quantity to me except that the catalogue introduction intimates that he was a great book collector — this sale was of only a portion of his private library — and other internet sources reveal him as the president of the American Book Company (founded 1890), which specialised in educational books.

Now to turn to *A guide* and its author

John Byrne Leicester Warren (1835-95) who became third and last Lord de Tabley, and was a gentleman of strong friendships and broad interests including as a poet, an observer of natural history, and a collector of coins and books. It is perhaps worth quoting one of those friends, Edmund Gosse:

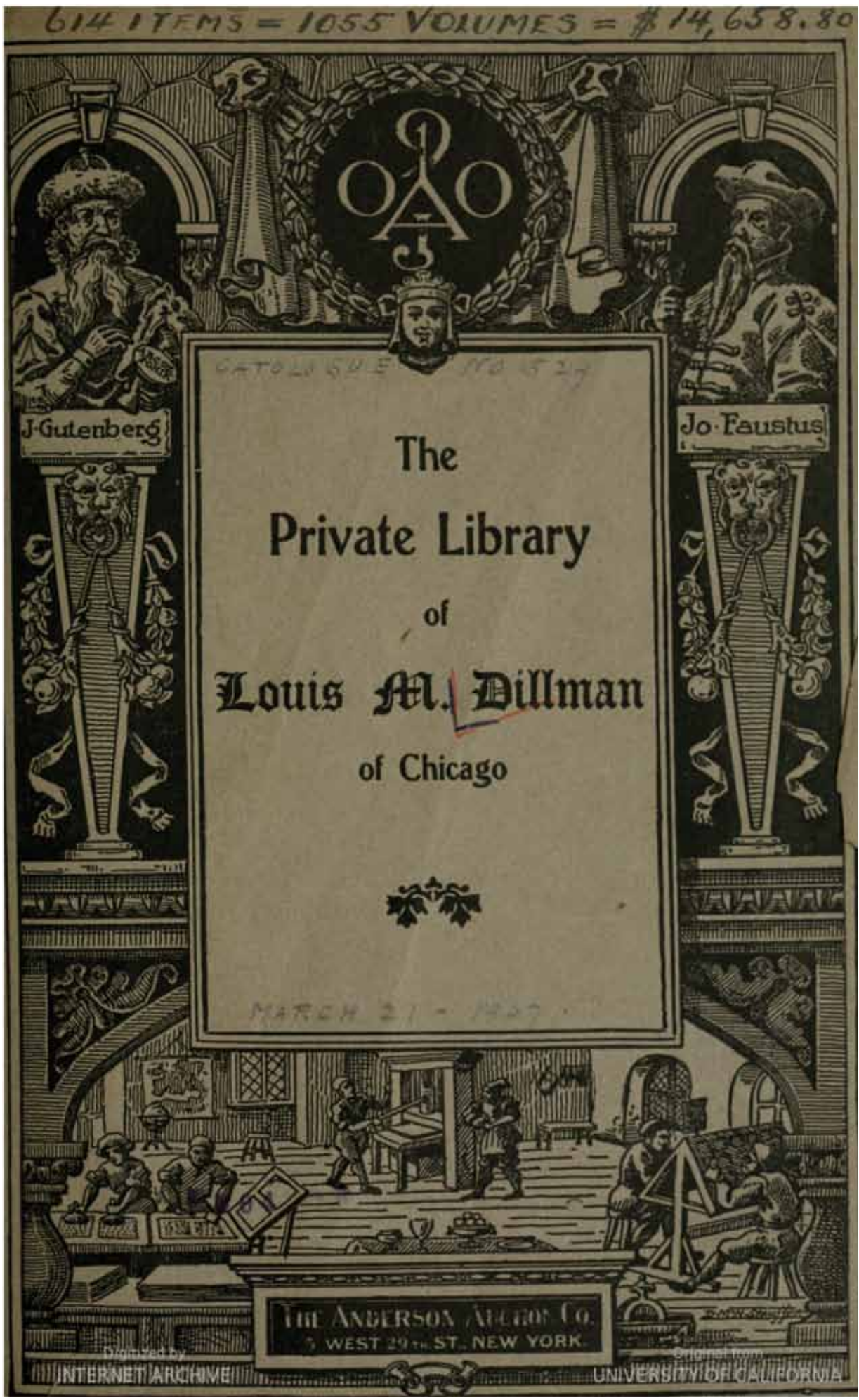
His love of books extended to a study of those marks of ownership which are known as ex-libris, and in 1880 he published A guide to the study of book-plates, a handsomely illustrated volume which has been the pioneer of many interesting works, and of a whole society of students and annotators. He was led to the historical study of bookplates by his love of heraldry ... (Gosse, Critical kits, London, 1896; p. 192)

In *A guide*, Warren took a systematic approach, and established a vocabulary of bookplate styles, including Jacobean and Chippendale armorials, allegorical and landscape styles. He paid particular attention to dated bookplates, as evidence of the historical development of the artform, and included a chapter of quaint quotations, referred to as 'Mottoes directed against borrowers'. Some mottoes are long and in Latin, and my schoolboy learning is of no use to me, but brevity is also valued, and 'Peruse and return' appears on various bookplates in either Latin or English. The last chapters of the book give various tables of English engraved designs and foreign dated bookplates. The author concludes with: 'The novelties of this work will soon become the commonplaces of the science of bookplates.' Truly a collector after my own heart!

Almost inevitably, after we returned home from holidays, I had a chance to re-examine my own library — like de Tabley's, my 'books lie strewn over sofas and armchairs' (Gosse, p. 193) — and found my own copy of *A guide*; thankfully it was of the second edition, 1900, in much poorer condition than my new acquisition and devoid of those wonderful clues to provenance which can make the 'science' of bookplates such a rewarding pursuit.



Pen and ink design by C K Berryman
for Gretta G Rowell, 1925



614 ITEMS = 1055 VOLUMES = \$14,658.80

CATALOGUE NO. 527

The
Private Library
of
Louis M. Dillman
of Chicago

MARCH 21 - 1907

THE ANDERSON AUCTION CO.
5 WEST 29TH ST. NEW YORK.

Digitized by
INTERNET ARCHIVE

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Louis M Dillman auction catalogue, 21 March 1907 (Digitised by Internet Archive, original from University of California)



Engraved bookplate by C W Sherborn for Lord de Tabley, 1888
(Wikimedia Commons)

Bookplates as social history: *The Courier-Mail* and *The Sunday Mail* Sand Gardens Competition

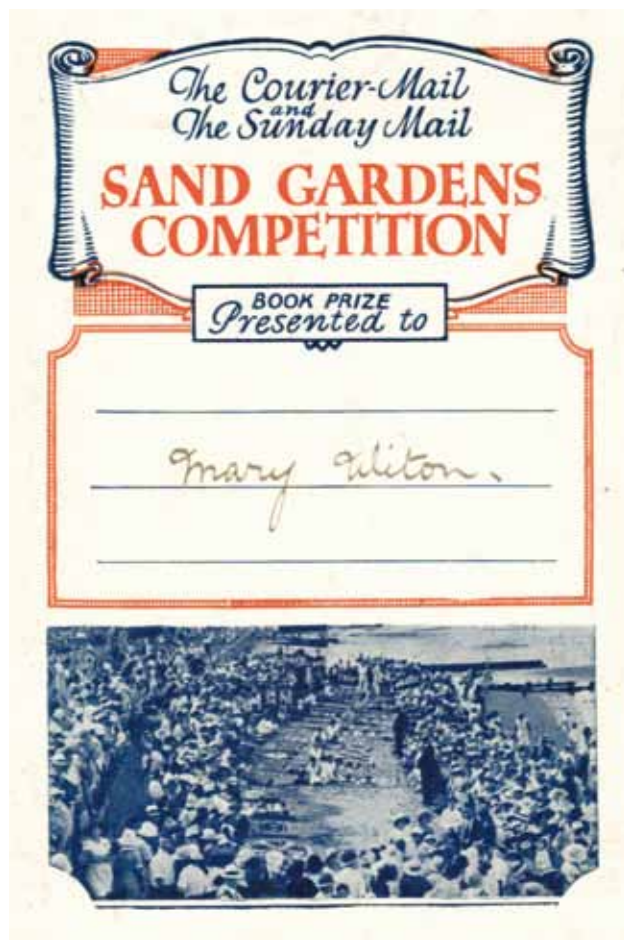
By Mark J Ferson, Sydney

It was perhaps not the most artistic bookplate, lying seemingly forlorn among the shelves of Brisbane's Archives Fine Books on an endpaper torn out of a long forgotten discarded book — although its decided 1930s look did immediately engage the Art Deco part of my collecting brain, and so I had to buy it (for \$5) — but it introduced me to a previously unfamiliar story of sun, sand and child health; where else but Queensland!

The sand garden competition was a now forgotten Queensland institution that began not long after the end of World War I and only faded out in the early 1940s as anxiety about World War II overtook the community. The competitions grew out of the movement which focussed on improving the health of the children living in our towns and cities, and exposure to sun and clean air played an important role. The promoter of this activity was

Martin Hambleton (pseudonym of Thomas E Martin), who conducted a children's page for the Brisbane *Daily Mail* and later the *Sunday Mail*, and these newspapers supported the competition as event organisers and with prizes, as did the various coastal municipal councils responsible for the beaches where the competitions were held. In addition to promoting a healthy lifestyle, the idea of the organisers was to encourage creative design, originality and sense of beauty among the participants who were children aged up 14 or 15 years. Each year, the coming competition, held during the summer holiday period from around Christmas to the middle of January, was advertised in the newspaper in early December. An initial competition round was held at a large number of south-eastern Queensland beaches (and occasionally in northern New South Wales) and finalists from this preliminary round were entitled to compete in the grand final. The first year of the competition was held over the 1921-22 summer and from the later years of the decade, the competition was heavily promoted by the *Courier-Mail* (formed after the amalgamation of the *Daily Mail* and the Brisbane *Courier*) and *Sunday Mail*, and each event appears to have attracted hundreds or, in the case of the grand finals, thousands of visitors to the beaches where they were held. They created such an impact that in 1936 the *Courier-Mail* backed a proposal from the Queensland Amateur Swimming Association that beach swimming classes be held in conjunction with the sand gardens competitions, reflecting the concern expressed at the time by the mayor of Southport Council that many visitors to the beaches, often attracted from inland parts of the State, could not swim.

Monetary prizes were awarded to the winner and place-getters in the preliminary and grand finals, whilst books were awarded to 2 or 3 children considered runners up. The bookplate shown here must have been pasted into one of the book prizes awarded to Mary Urton. Through the wonders of the National Library of Australia 'Trove' on-line access to the collection of digitised Australian newspapers, the name Mary Urton can be found a number of times in connection with



Prize bookplate for the Sand Gardens Competition, *Courier-Mail and Sunday Mail*, c. 1935

the sand gardens competition. The first of these is in the Saturday 30 December 1933 edition of the *Courier-Mail* where it is reported that Mary won second prize in the competition held at Sutton Beach, Redcliffe (a Brisbane suburb) on the previous day, with a reduced number of entrants due to the rain. One year later, on Boxing Day 1934, Mary won the competition held at Woody Point, whilst the following year, again on Boxing Day and again at Woody Point, Mary won a book prize. So it seems very likely that the bookplate dates from the 1935-36 competition round. One other interesting point relates to the photographic image which forms the bookplate's lower panel; an article in the 21 January 1934 edition of the *Sunday Mail* reporting the sand garden competition grand final held the day before at Sandgate Beach includes an almost identical photograph of the scene shown on the bookplate – so the 1933-34 season image became the 1935-36 season bookplate!

Pursuing Mary's name in Trove reveals a further chapter to her story; in 1936

the Brisbane *Telegraph* newspaper, in an obvious attempt to seize the initiative from its rival the *Courier-Mail*, in the issue of Saturday 5 December 1936, announces a series of competitions to be held at major beaches in which children will make maps of Queensland in relief in the sand, using only materials that can be found on the beach. Presumably using the skills she honed in the sand gardens competition, Mary Urton, aged 14 years, won the map modelling competition held at Sutton's Beach, Redcliffe, two days before Christmas. No book prizes were awarded ...

Further reading

Elizabeth Nunn. *Sunshine and shadow: a study of the well-being of Queensland's children during the inter-war years*. Master of Philosophy thesis, Griffith University, 2009; pp. 99-117

'Sand craft at Sandgate. Championship contest. Won by a Paddington girl'. *Sunday Mail*, 21 Jan. 1934, p. 4

'Seaside mayors welcome swimming scheme. Popularising the beaches. QASA president is pleased'. *Courier-Mail*, 20 Aug. 1936, p. 19

'Holiday beach competitions. Attractions for children. Sponsored by "The Telegraph"'. *Telegraph* 5 Dec. 1936, p. 14

Notes and Happenings

Recent publications

Ex-libris — from the shelves of a Mechanics' library. *Useful knowledge* (Magazine of the Mechanics' Institutes of Victoria Inc.), no. 37, Winter 2015, p. 33

Shows bookplates for the Mechanics-Mercantile Library, San Francisco

Andrea Curr. The Book Nook Library: a family affair. *Biblinews and Australian Notes & Queries*, no. 387, Sept. 2015, pp. 121-7

Shows the bookplate for the Book Nook Library, Liverpool

Ex-libris – from the shelves of a Mechanics' library. *Useful knowledge*, no. 38, Spring 2015, pp. 31-3

Shows two versions of bookplates for the Echuca Mechanics Institute Library in situ in six books still extant from the Library. One was from 1877, printed by R G Foyster of Echuca, and the other from c. 1886, printed by Mackay and Foyster, Echuca.

Editorial

Just a brief editorial note on this occasion as I have written all the material for this number of the *Newsletter*. But I record this fact by no means grudgingly as to write for pleasure is an enjoyable pursuit and two of the items reflect the fun of both acquisition of and research about a new bookplate discovery. I anticipate that the December issue will have some very interesting articles written by others. And I should take this opportunity to apologise for the lateness of this September number. **MF**

