

Editor/President

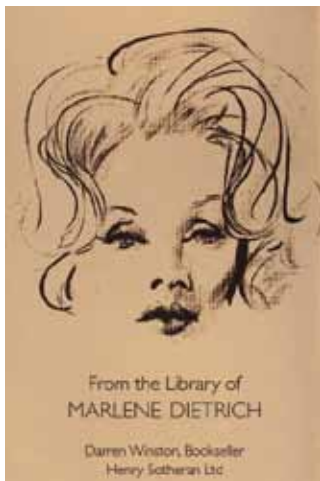
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Posthumous bookplate for Marlene Dietrich's books, 2012

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The Victor Singer Collection: bookplates lost, and now found

By Christine Bell, Melbourne

Pursuing a collection requires a little luck and much persistence. When John Gartner was interviewed on tape sometime in 1996, he reminisced about his life and experiences as a bookplate collector. He spoke frankly about those Australian artists and collectors who had made significant contributions to the ebb and flow of creating and collecting. One collector whom he had admired was Victor Singer, a German-Jewish refugee from Hamburg:

Vic Singer lived in Camberwell not very far from where I was living at the time — he was one of our foundation members ... He had an incredible collection of bookplates ... We became very close friends.

Gartner remembered hearing of the death of Singer in the following words:

His wife rang me and told me that he was very sick. And then the next thing, well you saw in the paper that he had died. But he would have been a great asset to collecting in Australia.

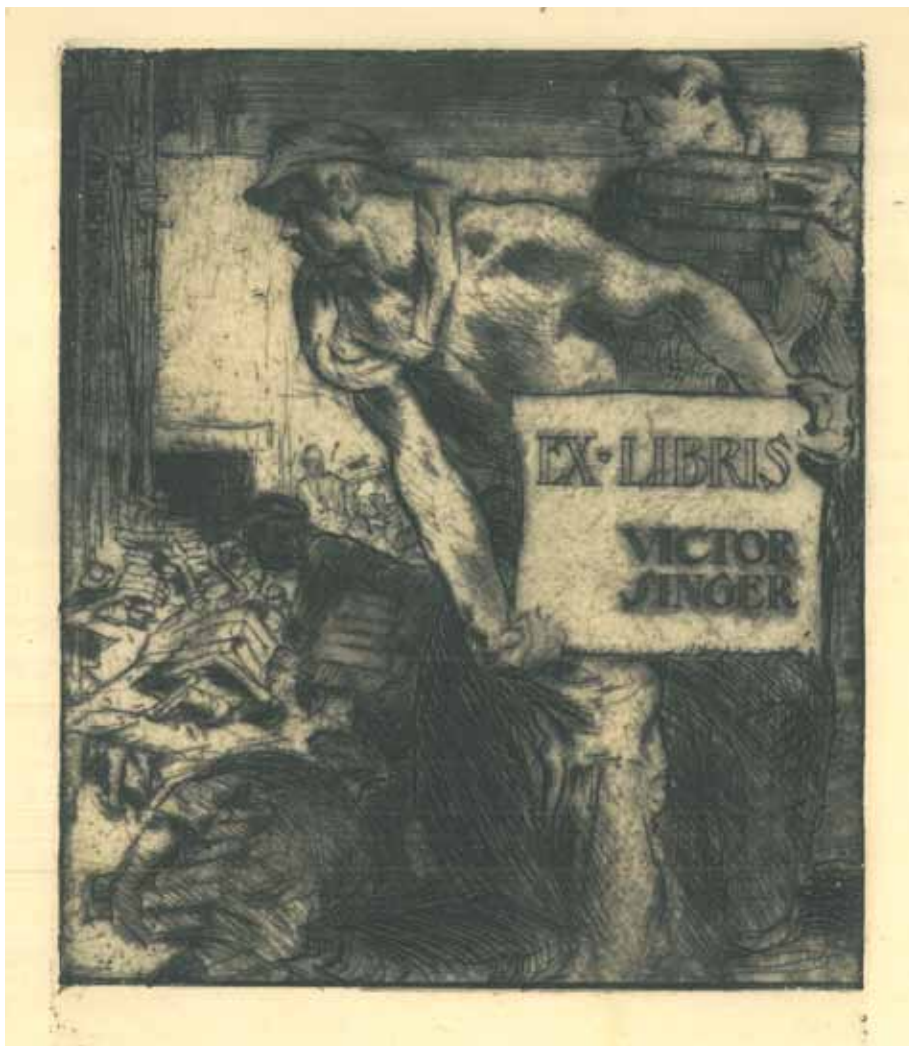
On reading this in 2009, it became somewhat of an obsession to track down this remarkable collection; it became necessary to trace Singer's voyage from Hamburg to Australia, and to find any members of his family still in Australia.

A death certificate is invaluable in tracing surviving family members, and so it proved in this search. An elegant and moving tombstone in the Jewish section of the Melbourne General Cemetery had four names on it, giving dates and places of birth and death, the last with a date of 2011. This meant that there must be at least one member of the family in Melbourne, who arranged for a stonemason to cut the letters. Two of Singer's three grandchildren were found, one living in California, the other living locally in Melbourne. The third had died in Capetown in 2011.

Singer was born in Konin in Czecho-slovakia in 1877, a town on the Elbe about 70 kilometres east of Prague. He married Berta Heller in Karlsbad, Austria, sometime in 1901. Their daughter Hanna was born in Karlsbad in 1903, as was a son, Kurt two years later.

It is not clear when Singer moved to Hamburg, or why, but between 1910 and 1935 his company, **Kunstantiquariat und Verlag für Graphik**, was located at 1 Oberstrasse, Neuer Wall 9. He was described on his death certificate as an 'Art Merchant', a description which did not, in his grandchildren's view, entirely reflect reality. Gartner remarked that Singer had brought with him from Germany some 'big wood engravings' that Gartner was asked to hand print from, and that he made half a dozen copies of each. I assume these were blocks for bookplates, as Gartner said that he and Singer had swapped a few copies.

After Singer's death from cancer on 10 September 1943, the family negotiated the sale of his important collection of prints to the National Gallery of Victoria.¹ Supposing that the bookplate collection had also been placed in an historical or library collection, I wasted time by looking in all the wrong places. In fact, the collection remained in the family until sold many years later. It was in the estate of a theatrical entrepreneur in about 2010, when it went to auction in two parts. The Australian bookplates were sold as a separate lot and are now in a private collection in Melbourne. The international bookplates passed to a rare book dealer, who divided the collection again into three parts, and remained there until Edwin Jewell found them early in 2015. They have now been purchased, with the assistance of two donors, for the State Library of Victoria, where they will stay.



Left: Etched bookplate by Frank Brangwyn for Victor Singer, 1906

Below left: Etched bookplate by Kurt Leyde (German, 1881–1941) for Hanna Singer

Evidence that John Gartner had handled the collection extensively at some date is proved by the existence of a number of postal envelopes for his short-lived publication, *Design*, produced in three issues only, in 1940.² These were used to hold plates by various artists, some of which existed in multiple copies, with notes on them giving prices: 18 @ 3/- each, for example, the price for plates by the German artist Max Klinger (1857-1920). The collection was obviously much larger than the 2000 or so plates in it today, and it is clear that it has been sifted through by several hands. They may have come with Singer's baggage on board ship, or they may have arrived with his son-in-law Max Segall, who was already living with his wife in Sydney when Singer arrived in Fremantle on the *Ulysses* on 6 February 1939. Detached from albums, bookplates would have been more easily portable for a couple who were almost literally running for their lives when they left Hamburg just before Kristallnacht on 9 November 1938.

The collection's main emphasis on Czechoslovakian and German artists reflects Singer's personal history, that of a man born in one country and living in another. Most of the artists were Singer's contemporaries. Dr Colin Holden, a Melbourne art historian with a special interest in prints, believes that this is important as one of a small number of collections of European works of art assembled by members of the German-Jewish intelligentsia who arrived in Australia before the outbreak of World War Two. He believes that its representation of not only German artists, but those of broadly Germanic culture, reflects the importance of the former Hapsburg Bohemian world with its centre in Prague.

The stars in the collection are four: Frank Brangwyn (English, 1867-1956) with 53 examples, including a personal plate for Singer; Emil Orlick (Czech, 1870-1932) with 39 plates; Max Klinger (German, 1857-1920) with 18 plates, and the tragic



Michel Fingesten (Czech, 1884-1943) with 13 plates and a birth announcement. Singer was strongly interested in the work of Willi Geiger (German, 1878-1971), who designed two of his personal plates. Geiger's work was exhibited at Singer's Hamburg gallery in 1919, and 84 examples remain in the collection today. Neither of the personal plates is as strong as the sometimes ferocious

designs that Geiger favoured of figures on gallows and coils of barbed wire. The Czech artist, Josef Vachal, was also collected in depth, and there are now 82 plates and a greetings card, as well as two personal plates for Singer.

There are numerous examples by artists working in the *Jugendstil* period, from Art Nouveau to Art Deco. The coverage is wide,

although some artists are represented with only one or two examples. This is enough to give some idea of the taste of the collector, but again one must be cautious because of the depletion of the collection over the years. Czech and German artists dominate, but there are smaller collections by country including United States examples for individuals as well as universities and libraries. Few Polish and Hungarian plates are held, and surprisingly few Dutch or Belgian examples. The only Australian plates now remaining are one each by Gayfield Shaw and Helen Ogilvie. There are some 30 armorials, dating from the late 16th and early 17th centuries, including those for the Dukes of Bavaria by Saedler.

It has taken four months to list, re-house and box the collection into an acceptable archival arrangement, so it is already accessible, if not yet catalogued. Lists can be sent to anyone who might be interested in viewing the collection, which is an important addition to the strongholdings of international bookplates already in the State Library. During the 19th century, it was considered important that Australian public collections should reflect those of international status. This vision has narrowed, sometimes myopically, with unfortunate results, but a cheering sign is that, while not a collecting priority, international bookplates continue to be acquired by the State Library, through purchase, gift and exchange. The lack of foresight in not collecting Australian bookplate material is another matter, and one perhaps not to its credit. But, as the Editor said in the September number of the *Newsletter*, other accounts are yet to be written.

References

- [1] Sheridan Palmer. *The centre of the periphery*. Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2008
- [2] Maurice B Keain. *Bibliography of the Hawthorn Press*. Adelaide: Marble Hill Press, 1996; p. 85, entry 463S.



4-colour linocut by Adolf Kunst (German, 1882-1937) for Victor Singer, c. 1915

The Society's December 'Show and Tell', Sydney

By Mark J Ferson, Sydney

On the evening of Tuesday, 8 December, admittedly rather close to Christmas, a small group of members (and a friend) had the pleasure of assembling at the newly settled apartment of our Secretary, Bronwyn Vost, to show and discuss treasures of a bookplate or related nature.

Mark Hildebrand volunteered to kick off discussion by showing an image of L Roy Davies' wood-engraved bookplate for himself, as found on page 66 of P Neville Barnett's *Pictorial book-plates* (Sydney: The author, 1931). Much speculation ensued as to whether the image had been printed into the book from the original block or from a zinc process block which had in turn been reproduced from an original print. With no prior notice, and right on cue, Bronwyn brought out for comparison a print of the same design, which we knew to be original as it had been signed in pencil by the artist. We may have been able to convince ourselves that the book version of the image had lost some detail compared to the actual bookplate, although another explanation is that this variation was related to the printing process rather than the block itself. To add further to

this hypothesis, the image in my copy of *Pictorial book-plates* is slightly different to the two images examined on the night. But, it must be noted that the colophon page (p.[144]) in the book includes the statement that the author is 'deeply indebted also to the makers of the process blocks, Messrs Hartland and Hyde'. Were all images made from process blocks or only some? I suspect we will never know!

James Fellows, who brought a friend Nik Linkiewicz, begged to discuss an item of ephemera of family and undoubtedly more general interest — a 1913 postcard addressed to his great uncle, sent from the United States and with the slogan P. A., ie Pushing America, in preference to the newer national designation, U. S. of A! James also read out a very evocative and entertaining short poem he was inspired to compose after visiting the Fabergé exhibition held in Sydney in July 1996.

Connecting the themes of postcards and printmaking, Bronwyn showed a signed original Eirene Mort linocut from 1932 depicting a west-looking view down the harbour from the Macquarie Lighthouse towards the, then, just completed Sydney Harbour Bridge framed by the glorious rays of the setting sun; she contrasted this with a modern postcard of a similar view, Lighthouse in the foreground and Bridge in the near distance.

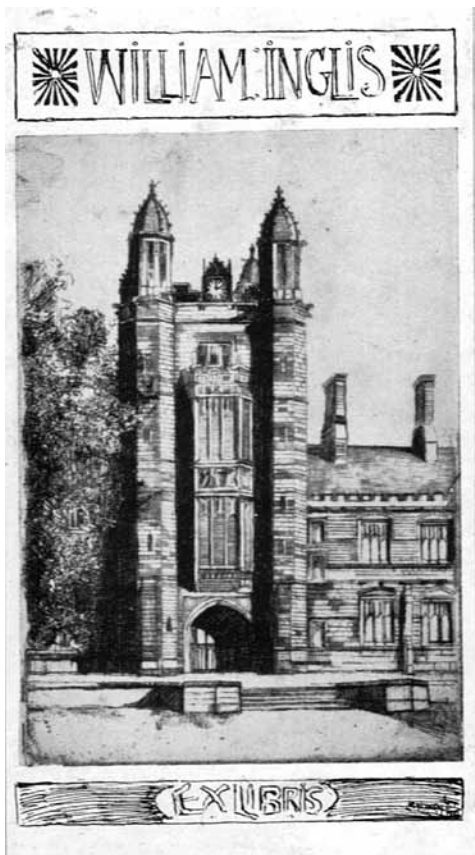
Mark Ferson showed a very recent book-plate find, an original etched bookplate for Violet Inglis, signed by the artist in pencil 'Sydney Long ARE'. Long is a recognised Australian painter and printmaker active



Image of L Roy Davies' wood engraved bookplate for himself, c. 1931, from p. 66 of *Pictorial book-plates*



Etched bookplate by Sydney Long for Violet Inglis, c. 1930s

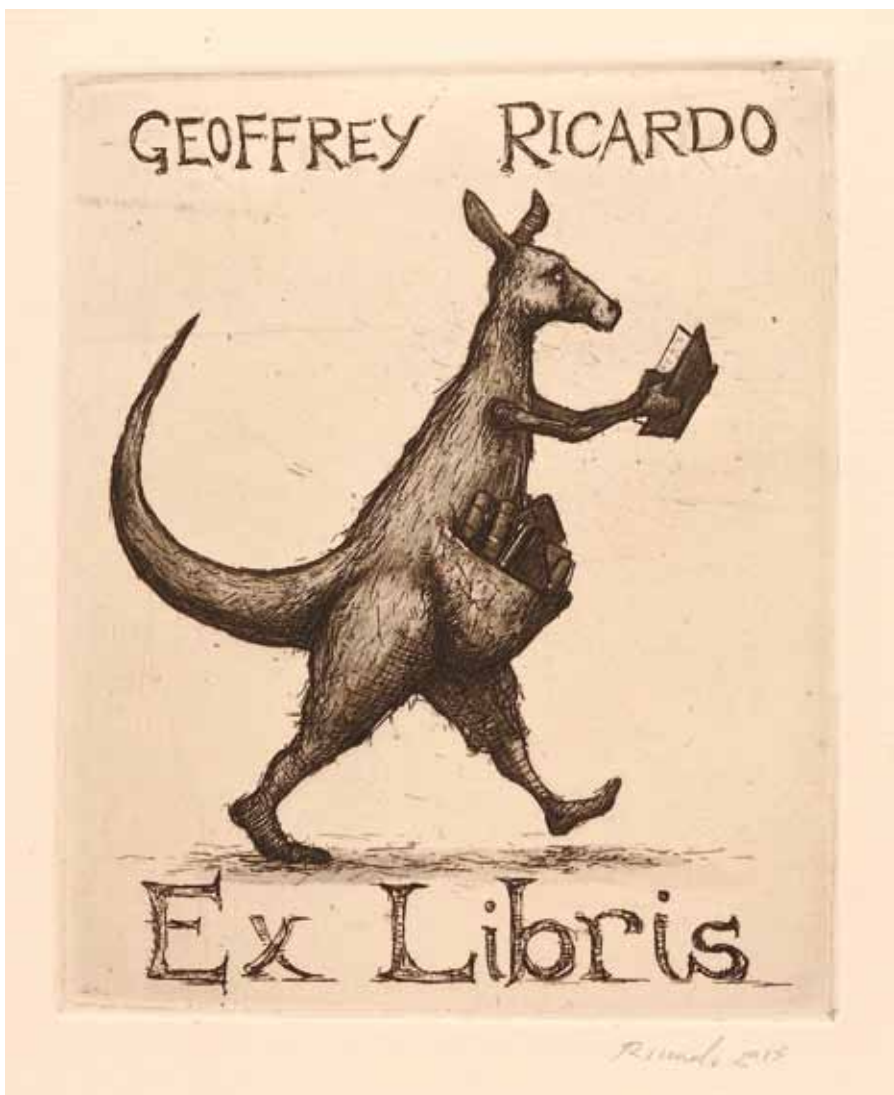


Process bookplate by Sydney Long for William Inglis

from the end of the 19th century and early 20th century; he was the foremost exponent of art nouveau style in painting. The bookplate marked the owner of a copy of F E Baume, *Half-caste* (Sydney: Macquarie Head Press, 1933), inscribed by the author 'To my friend Violet Inglis'. The several books containing this bookplate or the design for Violet's son William Inglis had been acquired by Society member and secondhand bookseller, Paul Feain, who contacted Mark to let him know. The latter consulted a number of books cataloguing Long's etchings, none of which mentioned the Violet Inglis print, and so this bookplate does appear to be a 'new discovery' – thank you, Paul!

After this, Mark passed around copy number 360 (of 600) of *Collected poems of Arthur Albert Bayldon* (Sydney, The author, [1932]), containing Lionel Lindsay's wood-engraved bookplate for John Lane Mullins, and the author's inscription 'To a lover of the beautiful! John Lane Mullins whose ready sympathy with my literary efforts will be ever gratefully remembered by Arthur Albert Bayldon.' This inscription is characteristic of the recipient, reflecting Mullins' appreciation of the arts coupled to his wide and generous patronage of a large number of Sydney artists and writers.

A number of apologies were received for the meeting, including from Nick Ingleton, Brenda Heagney, Mary Keep and Jean Anderson; but those who were able to make it had a lovely and interesting evening and we are grateful to Bronwyn for her hospitality.



Australian Bookplate Design Award 2015, and Victorian touring exhibition

Library at The Dock, Docklands, Melbourne, 28 November – 19 December 2015; Gallery On Sturt, Ballarat, 10 March – 7 April 2016; Patterson Street Gallery, Bentleigh, 9 June – 7 July 2016; Blarney Books, Port Fairy, 1 – 29 October 2016.

The Keith Wingrove Memorial Trust conducts **The Australian Bookplate Design Award**, which in 2015 was open to Australian and international artists, graphic designers and students in the production of bookplates. This round was judged by Professor Sasha Grishin, Adjunct Professor of Art History at the Australian National University; Jane Scott, CEO and Artistic Director of Craft Victoria; Pamela Irving, Melbourne-based visual artist and Des Cowley, Acting Manager, Collection Development and Discovery, State Library of Victoria, and prize winners were announced on 7 December.

Etching/aquatint by Geoffrey Ricardo for himself, 2015 (Australian Bookplate Design Award 2015)

Best Australian Bookplate Design (Prize \$7,500 plus medallion) and Best Australian Etched Bookplate (Prize \$1,000 plus medallion), were both awarded to **Geoffrey Ricardo** of Victoria for his etching and aquatint for himself; Best International Bookplate Design (Prize \$2,500 plus medallion) to **Rumen Nistorov** of Bulgaria, etching and aquatint for Hua Shaoying; Best Australian Relief Bookplate (Prize \$1,000 plus medallion) to **Megan Fisher**, of Victoria, for

her hand-coloured linocut for her children; Best Australian Tertiary Student Design (Prize \$500 plus medallion) awarded to **Janie Frith** of Chisholm TAFE Institute, Victoria, for her charcoal drawing with digital lettering, for herself; Best Australian Primary Student Design (Prize medallion, and the student's school to receive art materials valued at \$1,000), awarded to **Jeremy Thorpe** of Victoria, for his linocut for himself.



Mezzotint (self portrait) by Kerrie Cleverdon for herself, 2015 (PressNorth Printmakers)

Belonging: in the Tropics A bookplate exchange folio by PressNorth Printmakers

Perc Tucker Gallery, Townsville,
12 February – 27 March 2016

Jo Lankester, President of PressNorth Printmakers, based in Townsville, Qld, has kindly provided information on this upcoming exhibition.

There are 23 members of PressNorth Printmakers participating in this exhibition creating an open edition pertaining to the theme of 'Life in the Tropics', reflecting contemporary ideas and narratives of regional artists in North Queensland. The participating artists are: Ann Bartholomeusz, Vincent Bray, Laura Castell, Angela Cheung, Kerrie Cleverdon, Belinda Curry, Gai Copeman, Sandy Fisher, Emily Hill, Sandi Hook, Julia Jefferson, Alan Junior, Sheree Kinlyside, Jo Lankester, Karen Landt-Isley, Margot Laver, Hannah Murray, Jill O'Sullivan, Irene Rae, Margaret Robertson, Zelma Schulten, Gerald Soworka, and Sandra Wright.

Printed by Red Rag Press, with the voluntary help of PressNorth members, is a colophon folio containing the title pages. Red Rag Press is North Queensland's only fully equipped letterpress, etching and bookmaking studio. A monograph of PressNorth Printmakers and participating artists, written by Sandra Wright, a founding member of the group and previous Vice President, will accompany the folio.

PressNorth Printmakers value the experience of participating in an exchange folio for a number of reasons including the opportunity to participate in an exhibition, have their work seen by locals and visitors to Townsville, and collecting prints by their peers at the cost of producing their own edition. PressNorth Printmakers was formed in 2009 by a group of Townsville-based printmakers who wished to share knowledge and skills. PressNorth Printmakers strive to forge connections with like-minded groups and individuals and gain recognition as an instrument for the learning, diversity and excellence in printmaking. This project was made possible by the voluntary efforts of the Management Committee and steered by participating PressNorth members.

See <http://pressnorthprintmakers.com/projects/bookplates-exchange-exhibition/>

Notes and happenings

Churchill bookplates at State Library of NSW

Jürgen Wegner kindly drew my attention to a bookplate curiosity at the State Library of New South Wales in the Amaze gallery: 'Design, proofs and finished bookplate featuring Sir Winston Churchill's coat-of-arms, November 1955.' On display was a group of etchings by G Gayfield Shaw, a prolific and internationally recognised Sydney bookplate designer from the 1930s onwards. Querying the State Library's on-line manuscripts and pictures catalogue revealed that these items were part of the

Gayfield Shaw 'Collection of original designs, proofs and finished bookplates; with some sympathy cards and other engravings, 1931–1956'. Mostly Gayfield Shaw's own designs and etchings, the collection includes the Windsor Castle Library bookplate by George W Eve, 1911. An outline of Gayfield Shaw's art career can be found through the Design & Art Australia Online database at <https://www.daa0.org.au/bio/g-gayfield-shaw/biography/>

36th FISAE International Ex-Libris Congress, Vologda, 22–27 August 2016
— Exhibition call for entries

The Society recently received from Sergei Ptukhin, Congress President, notice of the invitation to submit entries to the world bookplate exhibition accompanying the



Proof for etched bookplate by G Gayfield Shaw for Sir Winston Churchill, 1955

36th FISAE Congress to be held in Vologda, Russia, in August 2016. Bookplates designed during 2014 to 2016 using any technique — but all ‘are to be printed’ — are to be submitted in triplicate, and entries must be postmarked no later than **1 March 2016**. This information does not appear to be available yet on the Congress website, but further details including an application form are available from the Editor.

12th International Exlibris Exhibition,
Ruse, Bulgaria, September –
October 2016

The Lyuben Karavelov Regional Library in Ruse, Bulgaria, is seeking international entries for its annual bookplate competition. Four copies of bookplates made using any technique, but incorporating the text (and theme) — *Ex vino, ex veritas* — are to be submitted, with entries postmarked no later than 31 May 2016. Information is available on the library website <http://www.libruse.bg/konkursi-proekti/vhod-exlibris> or the Editor can provide entry forms and a copy of the regulations.

Recent publications

FRANCES ATKINSON. Under the covers: bookplates offer a window into ‘untold histories’. *Age* (Melbourne), 28 Nov 15

<http://www.theage.com.au/entertainment/under-the-covers-bookplates-offer-a-window-into-untold-histories-20151128-gl8qti.html>

DYLAN RAINFORTH. Geoffrey Ricardo’s kangaroo etching wins Australian Bookplate Design Award. *Age*, 8 Dec 15

www.theage.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/geoffrey-ricardos-kangaroo-etching-wins-australian-bookplate-design-award-20151208-gli6qy.html

Both *Age* articles refer to the Australian Bookplate Design Award 2015 conducted by the Keith Wingrove Trust (see above).

MARK FERSON. Beautiful handmade bookplates, Ascham School, Sydney. *Biblioneus and Australian Notes & Queries*, no. 388, Dec. 2015; pp. 154-7

Shows four hand-painted prize plates dating from 1916-20, including one by Madeline E King

RICHARD BLAIR. An investigation into Brian Morrissey’s notebook: the 70 year reading list of Marion Helena Stephenson. *Biblioneus and Australian Notes & Queries*, no. 388, Dec. 2015; pp. 163-73

Reproduces the bookplate by Henry J Ford for Morton & Helena Stephenson, c. 1920

Letter to the Editor

Dr Neil Radford, a bibliophile and former University Librarian at the University of Sydney, wrote to me earlier this year about H B Cadell, whom readers may remember as the recipient of the Fort Street Boys High School prize for Best Junior Female Impersonator, 1935 (reproduced in *Newsletter* no. 28, March 2013). Neil had undertaken some internet research and found that on leaving school Harold Bruce Cadell (1920-2012) joined the NSW Maritime Services Board, which supported him to take qualifications as an accountant; he also took leave to enlist in the Australian Army, from which he was discharged in 1943 with the rank of lieutenant. Cadell rose to become Secretary of the Maritime Services Board and his long career is summarised in the Sydney Ports Corporation centenary history *First Port Future Port – Celebrating 100 years:*

Among those working with the MSB in the 1980s, when the organisation began its sweeping process of change, were several whose careers and memories stretched back to the early days of the MSB.

Typical of the career paths that the MSB offered promising young people is that of Harold Cadell, who retired in January 1984 after nearly 48 years with the MSB. Cadell, the first new employee of the MSB after it was formed in 1936 from the merger of the Sydney Harbour Trust and the Department of Navigation, began work as a junior clerk. He went on to become vice-president of the Board.

Neil adds: Unfortunately I don’t think he had a proper bookplate, but it’d be fun to speculate what he would have had on it if indeed he had owned one!

Editorial

Another tardy issue of the *Newsletter* — my apologies — but we hope nonetheless that you will find it an enjoyable one. My sincere thanks go to Melbourne member Christine Bell for her fascinating description of Victor Singer’s seemingly lost bookplate collection. The State Library of Victoria has acquired the European component of his collection — whilst the Australian works are in the possession of a tantalisingly un-named local collector. With some dating back well over a century, many of the European works are by preeminent artists of the era and represent the highest standard of art and design even if in the small format of the bookplate.

I have taken the opportunity of the December number to record or draw attention to lesser and greater events in the Australian bookplate world: not just our small but pleasurable Sydney ‘show and tell’ meeting, but also the announcement on 7 December of the winners in the Keith Wingrove Trust ‘Australian Bookplate Design Awards 2015’; whilst early 2016 brings the interest of the PressNorth Printmakers bookplate portfolio exhibition in Townsville’s Perc Tucker Gallery.

Finally, apart from my pleasant duty of wishing members and friends all the best of art and life in the coming year, I should note that the Committee is seeking suggestions for ways to celebrate the Society’s 10th anniversary in late 2016. Please contact Ronald Cardwell, Bronwyn Vost or myself with any ideas you might have — we **MUST** get started on the planning!

MF

