

1828 – Selina Tomlins

What we see in this image

This left facing $\frac{1}{2}$ length miniature portrait shows the young Mrs Selina Tomlins (ca.1807-1835) at about 21 years of age. She wears a sky blue silk day dress with short, puffed sleeves (possibly with further puffs of silk or net continuing to the wrist) set low on the shoulder, either side of a wide lace-trimmed neckline, filled-in with a sheer white muslin chemisette-tucker with a ruffled lace collar, forming a V-neckline at the front and rising high behind the neck, in a modified revival of a 16th century Elizabethan-style standing ruff.

Her face is framed by dark, glossy ringlets and she wears a 'cornette' (a bonnet-style day cap) of spotted muslin, its softly gathered crown trimmed with a blue ribbon and double-frilled brim, creating a highly sentimentalised appearance. A small gold brooch is pinned to the front of her smooth fitting bodice, belted with a striped ribbon at the moderately high waist and fastened with a rectangular gold buckle, drawn to one side.

What we know about this image

Richard Read's simply conceived miniature portrait of Selina Tomlins, wife of Audit Office clerk, George Tomlins (ca.1803-1854) is focused on dress and personal presentation, and represents the growing class of free immigrants (she had arrived in Sydney in 1824) who were beginning to pour into the colony. Their world was urban rather than landed and their interests coincided more with emancipated convicts and the Australian-born lower and middle classes. Painted in 1828, by this date the classical taste in dress had given over to a

more romantic spirit, encouraging a shift away from the vertical, columnar line to a more triangular silhouette achieved through a widening of the shoulder line and at the hem. Like all transitional phases, this period gave rise to some curious experimentations and novelties inspired by a range of revivalist styles.

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State Library of NSW 1998

1828 – Selina Tomlins

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Download Image



Creator
Read, Richard jnr (1796-1862)
Inscription
On card taped to back: 'Painted by / R. Read, / 89 Pitt Street / Sydney / New South / Wales. 1828. / Mrs G. Tomlins'.
Medium
Watercolour on Ivory
Background
To follow
Reference
To follow

1828 – Mrs Jane Penelope

Atkinson

What we see in this image

This front facing $\frac{1}{2}$ length miniature portrait shows the young Mrs Atkinson (1807-1854) at about 21 years of age. She wears a rather informal style of dress which is an unusual choice for a portrait.

Her dark blue day dress (perhaps a type of riding habit) has a plain high-necked bodice fitted with a wide, contrasting turn-back collar of cream fabric bordered with a narrow red stripe and tied in a soft bow at the neck like a scarf above long, full sleeves making it a practical and comfortable garment for more active pursuits. Her dark curly hair falls in ringlets around her face, either side of a centre part and below a ring of plaited hair supporting a [tortoiseshell] comb in the shape of a crown. She also carries a gold watch and fob, linked by a heavy gold chain, across the front of her gown at the natural waistline.

What we know about this image

Jane Penelope Atkinson, nee Reibey (1807 – 1854), was born in Sydney, the 3rd daughter of Thomas Reibey (1755 – 1811) and emancipist merchant Mary Reibey, nee Haydock, (1777-1855). On 11 Sep 1824, aged 17, Jane (known as Penelope) married merchant and auctioneer John Atkinson (1795 – 1893), in Sydney. Between 1826 and 1832, the couple settled on one of Mary Reibey's properties in Wilberforce, NSW, and had 6 children and before their departure for Launceston, Van Diemens Land in mid-November 1834. Jane Atkinson died (aged 47) at Launceston, Tasmania, on 9 October 1854.

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1828 – Mrs Jane Penelope Atkinson

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Download Image



Creator
Read, Richard jnr (1796-1862) attrib.
Inscription
To follow
Medium
Watercolour on Ivory
Background
To follow
Reference
To follow

1826 – Captain John Piper

What we see in this image

This life-size, left-facing, full-length, standing $\frac{3}{4}$ profile portrait depicts the 53-year-old Captain John Piper in a commanding pose. Its landscape setting is immediately identifiable as the eastern foreshore of Sydney Harbour, with a distant view to Henrietta Villa, Piper's recently-completed prestigious waterfront home at Point Piper, forming an appropriate backdrop.

Piper is shown in a civil uniform of his own design, thought to have had custom-made for him in London by a leading tailor. As befits the owner's position and bearing, this outfit is cut along naval lines and made-up in a dark blue woollen cloth, the double-breasted jacket with standing collar and gold epaulettes at the shoulder, fastening with two rows of large brass buttons, worn over a fine white linen shirt with a peaked collar, slim-fitting trousers and fine leather shoes, or boots, with an ornamental gilt dress sword slung from the left hip, and holds a black top hat in his left hand. A gold watch and chain, set with pendant fobs, is also visible hanging down below the cropped front edge of his jacket at the waist.

What we know about this image

Following a long and successful career as a colonial administrator, Captain John Piper (1773-1851) was appointed chief customs officer for Sydney in 1814; in lieu of a salary he received 5% of all monies collected. At the peak of his service he was receiving thousands of pounds a year. As one of the wealthiest individuals in Sydney, Piper could now afford to indulge in the level of living he had always wished for and a home worthy of his newly-acquired eminence. In 1818 Governor Macquarie granted Piper 190 acres [77 hectares] of land to be known as Point Piper. Henrietta Villa, built between 1816 and 1822, was completed at a cost of at a cost of £10,000 and considered to be the most elegant house in Sydney at the time.

Piper's star was only in the ascendancy for a few short years. He proved lax in his duties as naval officer, and was suspended from his position by Governor Darling, who demanded the customs deficiency be made good, and Piper was forced to auction off his property and belongings in May 1826.

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1826 – Captain John Piper

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Download Image



Creator
Earle, Augustus (1793-1838)
Inscription
Unsigned
Medium
Oil Painting
Background
Subject is posed with a distant landscape view to his home, Henrietta Villa at Point Piper, Sydney.
Reference
To follow

1826 – Mrs Laycock

What we see in this image

This right facing $\frac{3}{4}$ length miniature portrait of Mrs Laycock is the earliest surviving, authenticated colonial portrait by Richard Read Junior.

Hannah Laycock (aged about 68) has been posed seated on a cedar carver chair. She wears a high-waisted, fawn-coloured day dress with an 'epaulette' shoulder detail extending out above long loose sleeves with three self-fabric bands at the wrist to bring in their fullness. The style of the bodice of her dress is obscured by a sheer [spotted] lace 'fichu' or kerchief with a scalloped edge, draped over her shoulders and reaching to a point below her waist, covering a separate linen collar. She has a sky blue, fringed shawl wrapped across her back and around her arms and wears a 'corvette' (bonnet-type day cap) of sheer white fabric, tying under the chin and gathered over the crown, trimmed with band of pale blue ribbon and a rosette, the soft double-frilled brim framing her dark brown hair which is arranged in short curls around her face. Mrs Laycock wears small pendant earrings, several rings, and long gold chain from which two ornaments are suspended.

What we know about this image

Hannah Laycock, née Pearson (1758-1831) was married to Thomas Laycock (1756?-1809), Quartermaster of the NSW Corps. She arrived in the Gorgon in September 1791, and left again for England in about 1805. She returned to the colony in 1810 after her husband died. The Laycocks had three sons and three daughters, including Thomas Laycock. An early land grant recipient in the Canterbury area, Hannah Laycock settled on her 500-acre grant named 'King's Grove' (after Governor Philip

Gidley King), now Kingsgrove, NSW, but is also listed as residing in Pitt Street, Sydney, at the time this portrait was made.

The miniature portrait of Mrs Laycock by Richard Read Jnr (1796-1862) reveals the artists characteristically prosaic approach to portraiture. The majority of his portraits are either half or three-quarter length. Using a sparse, elegant design with cool, matt colours, the sitters are set against a plain background and appear detached, almost solemn. The greatest attention is given to the face which is built up from strokes of watercolour or pencil and, on occasion, he also used white body colour to model costumes and details. Richard Read Jnr rarely signed the face of his portraits but often inscribed them in some detail on the back. Read Jnr operated from 89 Pitt Street between 1826 and 1835, and then from 45 Pitt Street. According to his ad in the Sydney Monitor, in November 1826, R. Read junior's miniature portraits – 'painted on Ivory in a superior style' – could be acquired for prices 'from One Guinea to Five'. Most of Read's surviving portraits date from this time onwards.

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1826 – Mrs Laycock

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Download Image



Creator
Read, Richard Jnr (1796-1862)
Inscription
LLHS: 'R. Read, 1826'; in ink on back: On back in ink 'Sydney Sept. 29th 1826. Painted by R.Read Jnr, No. 61 Pitt St. Sydney, New South Wales. Mrs Laycock'.
Medium
Watercolour
Background
Subject posed on a [cedar] carver chair.
Reference
To follow

1826 – A Government Jail Gang, Sydney N. S. Wales

What we see in this image

This streetscape records fourteen portrait figures, mostly convicts waiting for the day's work duty allocation, standing outside the Hyde Park Barracks, on Macquarie Street in Sydney. Opening in May 1819, the Barracks housed a diverse and motley crew of repeat offenders. Augustus Earle's finely observed view records a wide array of convict garb worn by Barracks inmates including details of the cut and construction of 'punishment' trousers worn by chain gang convicts which were made to button on the outside of each leg to enable their easy removal over leg irons, as well as the manner of wearing leg irons when walking. Some convicts used their leisure time to make cabbage tree hats (as worn by the third, fifth and eighth convicts) which were cooler on the head and gave protection from sunburn than the standard issue woollen hats (seen second from the left) which offered no sun protection, or the leather caps with semi-circular flaps (mid-foreground) which could be pulled down to give some sun protection but absorbed the heat. Convicts sent to the Hyde Park Barracks weren't always lucky enough to be issued with socks or stockings and there was also a chronic shortage of shoes as evidenced by the number of bare ankles and feet in this image.

What we know about this image

According to evidence supplied to the Bigge Royal Commission in 1819, on landing in NSW each convict received a clothing issue comprising a coarse woollen jacket and waistcoat of yellow or grey cloth, a pair of duck (cotton) or cloth (wool) trousers, a pair of worsted stockings, a pair of shoes, two cotton or linen shirts, a neck handkerchief and a woollen cap. In the 1820s the Board of Ordnance took over the supply of convict clothing and all items made or used by government convicts were marked or stamped with broad arrows or the letters 'PB' (Prisoners Barracks). Convicts sent to the Barracks received a further issue of two striped shirts which clearly distinguished the wearer as a repeat offenders, and

convicts names and numbers were also written on their clothes to discourage theft or barter.

This work is dated from the time of Augustus Earle's stay in Australia (1825-1827). It was published in his 'Views in New South Wales and Van Diemens Land: Australian scrap book' (1830) with the accompanying text:

'Every person in England is aware that for certain offences men are transported to New South Wales but there are few, except those who have visited the colony, know how they are disposed of after they reach their places of destination. When they land they do not go to gaol but are assembled in the Prisoners Barracks Yard and there inspected by the Governor, Superintendant (sic) of Convicts and the Officers of the Ship which brought them. And it is truly astonishing to see such men, under such circumstances and after so long a voyage, look and behave so well. They are immediately assigned to such Settlers as may want them, and they accompany their new masters, in the capacity of servants; their ration and clothing is arranged by the Government, and generally speaking they are comfortably off: but for any fresh offence Government take them back, and then they are placed in gangs, and toil at the public works, where they have harder duty, less liberty, and reduced rations and for still repeated crimes, are banished to remote penal settlements. The annexed subject is one of the Government gangs being told out of the barracks for the daily work, and given in charge of a soldier who acts as overseer.'

During the first years of settlement in Australia, clear categories of distinctive convict dress or uniform were never satisfactorily enforced due to irregularities of supply from England. As a result, convicts and free working class people in the colony all wore very similar kinds of clothing largely consisting of basic, uniformly drab, ready-made garments known as 'slops' which was the term for any type of coarse loose-fitting mass-produced clothing and the standard dress of the

urban working classes at the time. A lack of distinguishing dress meant discipline was difficult to maintain in the colony and this was further exacerbated by the assignment system.

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1826 – A Government Jail Gang, Sydney N. S. Wales

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Download Image



Creator
Earle, Augustus (1793-1838)
Inscription
Imprint LLHS: 'A. Earle, 1830'
Medium
Hand-coloured [engraving]
Background
Subjects posed outside Hyde Park Barracks, Sydney.
Reference
To follow

1826 – Ann Piper and her children

What we see in this image

This family portrait is typical of the style of painting known as a 'conversation piece', which traditionally showed a landed gentry family informally posed in the home or on their estate. This rare, life size, colonial example shows Mary Ann (nee Shears), wife of Captain John Piper, and four of her ten children. Mrs Piper had turned 35 on 2 August 1826, and would

appear to have everything that colonial Sydney could offer; wealth, social position, a charming healthy family, fashionable imported clothes and a grand house on the best site in Sydney. Although there are numerous pictures of the exterior of the Piper family home, Henrietta Villa, Augustus Earle's portrait of Mrs Piper and her children is one of the few surviving views of its interior.

For her family portrait Mrs Piper has chosen to wear a sheer, red gauze gown with short, puffed sleeves and a gathered bodice over a long-sleeved, white underdress with a wide, flat collar and tucked edges. The high waist is marked with a belt, fastened on the left hand side with a rectangular gold buckle, above a long, tubular skirt falling to her ankles, its sheeress revealing the pin-tucked bands on her underdress extending from just below her knees. She also carries a white shawl, which may have of borders of 'broderie anglais' (white work) embroidery, and wears an elaborate indoor cap, trimmed with ribbons, silk flowers, lace and sheer gauze streamers. Mrs Piper wears several rings on each hand, pendant earrings and a gold watch, suspended from a long gold chain looped up and tucked into a small pocket concealed in the round waistband of her gown.

The interests or pastimes of each family member indicated by their clothing and possessions. The children in this image are aged from approximately four to ten years. Thomas Piper (b. 21 September 1816), on the far left, wears a brass-buttoned, black schoolboy outfit, or 'skeleton suit', with a white neck ruff and carries an archer's bow. In the centre of the image the youngest boy, William Sloper (b. 25 August 1822), who beats a drum, is dressed in an unusually tailored, and jauntily militarised, version of the type of frock and pantaloons worn by little boys until they were breeched at about the age of five. The two girls wear identical outfits – coral necklaces with white muslin dresses, their high-waists marked by pale pink sashes – and are shown with more

devotional interests; the large book on the stool closest to Eliza Anne (b. 26 July 1818) is perhaps a bible, while the pair of service books lying on the table nearest to Anne Christa Frances (b. 24 June 1820) would be carried to church on Sundays – the Pipers were devout Presbyterians.

What we know about this image

Mary Ann Shears married Captain John Piper, military officer and public servant by special licence in 1816. It is believed they had met and formed an attachment during Piper's term of service on Norfolk Island in about 1806. This happy family picture must have been completed after the birth of John and Mary Ann's tenth child, and eighth son Frederick Octavius, on 2 June 1826 but before his death three months later in Sept 1826. Several other Piper children born before 1826 are also missing from this painting, including Hugh Hewitt Piper (b. 1813) who had been killed in a riding accident on 8 July 1825, which explains why the painting could not have been commissioned in 1825; Ann would never have worn a red dress so soon after the death of a family member.

A number contemporary accounts give clear impressions of Henrietta Villa, including that of the artist, Augustus Earle, in his 'Views of New South Wales' (1830):

The interior of the building corresponds with the taste displayed in the gardens, and the grand saloon is not only unrivalled in this Colony but would rank high as a chaste specimen of architecture in any part of the world. . . . At every turn you see comfort and splendour, and one is much in doubt which most to admire – the elegance of the building as a work of art or the comfort of the house as a residence.

Joseph Lycett, published his 'Views of Australia' in London in 1824, and also described Henrietta Villa:

The interior of the Villa is filled up in a style that combines elegance and comfort. The principal apartments are a

spacious Dining Room, a Banqueting Room and a Drawing Room; all furnished in the most tasteful manner.

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1826 – Ann Piper and her children

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Download Image



Creator
Earle, Augustus (1793-1838)
Inscription
Unsigned
Medium
Oil Painitng
Background
Subjects are posed in front of a [stone] chimney breast, in a domestic setting suggestive of their home, Henrietta Villa, at Point
Reference
To follow

1821 – Mrs Celia Wills

What we see in this image

This right facing $\frac{1}{2}$ length miniature portrait shows Celia Reibey (1803 – 1823) at about 18 years of age. It is likely to have been painted in Britain during her visit there in 1820-1.

Celia is portrayed in evening dress and wears a very high-waisted, royal-blue gown [possibly of silk velvet] with short, puffed sleeves and a wide, low neckline with fine white lace edging, revealing a sheer white muslin 'tucker' which has been carefully arranged in scalloped folds to show off her youthful décolletage. Her light brown hair is centre parted and brought up into a high roll at the back, with a corsage of roses on the right, and bunches of ringlets arranged over each ear. She wears pendant pearl earrings, a long fine gold chain looped loosely several times around her neck, and carries a brightly-coloured tartan stole, possibly also of silk velvet.

What we know about this image

Celia Wills, nee Reibey (1803 – 1823), was the eldest daughter of Thomas Reibey (1755 – 1811) and prominent female emancipist and colonial business woman Mary Reibey, nee Haydock, (1777-1855). In March 1820, Celia Reibey, and her younger sisters (Eliza and Jane) travelled to England and Scotland with their mother, returning to Sydney the following year. On 12 June 1822, Celia married Thomas Wills (1800-1872), son of her father's business partner Edward Spencer Wills (1778-1811) but she died 15 months later, in October 1823, having given birth to a daughter in March of that year, who died as an infant (aged 11 months and 5 days) on 11 April 1824.

The following death notice appeared in the Sydney Gazette, 2 Oct 1823, p. 3:

At the residence of her mother in George-street Sydney, after an indisposition of some few months, Mrs WILLS, in her 21st year. This amiable young lady was the eldest daughter of Mrs Reibey. In June 1822, she was united to Mr Thomas Wills, to whom she bequeathed a pledge of tenderest affection – a sweet little girl. Shortly prior to her confinement, about four months since, Mrs Wills caught a violent cold, which fastened on the lungs, and originated a rapid consumption. We have not much occasion to say, that the deceased is deservedly lamented; the many mental adornments, and attractive virtues, with which she was gifted, will long retain cherished in the bosom of her numerous relatives, and host of surviving friends. To delineate the grief of the astonished widower, and young father, is a task to which our pen is quite incompetent. 'HER SUN IS GONE DOWN WHILE IT WAS YET DAY'

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1821 – Mrs Celia Wills

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Download Image



Creator
To follow
Inscription
To follow
Medium
To follow
Background
To follow
Reference
To follow

1821 – ‘The entrance of Port Jackson, and part of the town of Sydney, New South Wales.’

What we see in this image

This plate is part of triptych (three-part set) of views which, when joined together form a panoramic landscape view taken from the vantage point of Observatory Hill in Sydney. This section of the panorama looks north across 'the magnificent Harbour of Port Jackson – its rocky and picturesque Shores – its numerous Islands and inlets – the Town of Sydney – the beautiful and Romantic Scenery of the Vicinity...' (Prospectus for the prints) and includes the small convict cottages of The Rocks (in the middle ground) as well as larger civic establishments like Governor Macquarie's grand new gothic mansion (on the far left) set in its private domain.

Major Taylor's panorama offers one of the more informative depictions of the city of Sydney in its early years. It presents a flattering portrait of the Australian colony showing the harbour filled with trade and military ships, with the settlers and convicts clearing and working the land. Topographical artists often included people in their work. Such figures were intended to educate the viewer about the appearance and customs of unfamiliar places. In the foreground of this image two uniformed and shakoed soldiers stand in the yard of a brick dwelling, the lady of the house is near the door wearing a narrow, white, high-waisted day dress with a ruffled neckline and shading herself from the sun with a parasol. A small child and the range of animals including chickens, a puppy and a domesticated kangaroo, lend an air of authenticity to the scene as do the numerous servants going about their assigned work and the convicts industriously employed in cutting sandstone to provide building materials for expansion of the settlement.

What we know about this image

Major James Taylor (1785-1829), a topographical draughtsman attached to the 48th Regiment, arrived in Sydney in 1817. By

1820 Sydney was a town of 12,000 inhabitants, about a third of whom were convicts. In that year Taylor made three original watercolours drawings with the stated hope that prints based on his watercolours would be 'of service to the Colony' (Taylor to Alexander Berry, 28 Feb 1820). On his return to England in 1822 Taylor arranged for the engraving and printing of a three-sheet panoramic print based on his drawings.

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1821 – ‘The entrance of Port Jackson, and part of the town of Sydney, New South Wales.’

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Download Image



Creator
Taylor, James (1785-1829); engraved by R. Havell & Sons
Inscription
Imprint: London: Colnaghi & Co., 1823.
Medium
Hand-coloured Aquatint
Background
To follow
Reference
To follow

**1820 – Elizabeth Heneretta
[i.e. Henrietta] Villa
situate about four miles Down**

the Harbour from Sydney Cove the seat of John Piper Esqr. Naval Officer etc. etc. of Port Jackson.

What we see in this image

This finely-rendered house portrait of Henrietta Villa, set on the waterfront at Point Piper on the eastern foreshore of Sydney Harbour, includes 18 figures:

- Five boatmen clustered near the water's edge are wearing white uniforms with short jackets and caps;
- Another man with this group stands with his hands in the pockets of his buff-coloured trousers and wears a light-coloured top hat, and a long dark blue coat over a white shirt;
- Standing higher up, as the grounds slope towards the house, is a group of three guests comprising a woman dressed in a light blue, high-waisted gown, with a cream bonnet and a small blue parasol, and two men – one in the red coat and bicorne hat of a [NSW Corps] officer and the other, a civilian, wearing a long tan-coloured coat with white trousers and a brown top hat;
- Further up, in the centre of the image, another group of men, all three civilians, wear various combinations of tail coats, long frock coats, light-coloured trousers and tall hats;
- Higher still, on the right, a man in a blue tail coat, tall

hat and white trousers stands with three women clad in high-waisted white dresses and bonnets, two carrying small blue or green parasols;

- Two boys standing on the verandah wear short blue jackets, white pants and caps;

- Another pair of guests enter the house, the woman wearing a tall-crowned bonnet and a short, blue jacket (or Spencer) over a high-waisted white dress, while the man wears the red jacket of a military uniform.

Henrietta Villa was the property of Captain Piper, and named in honour of Governor Macquarie's wife. Built between 1816 and 1822, at a cost of £10,000, the house was variously described as a naval villa and a marine pavilion. It was considered the most elegant house in Sydney at the time and became a symbol of progress in the colony. The location of Henrietta Villa was idyllic, a gracious building set on a headland jutting majestically into Sydney Harbour. When this drawing was executed the building was not yet finished – the verandas covering the long windows are absent. Although the estate was not fully occupied until May 1822, Piper entertaining lavishly even before the family took up permanent residence at Point Piper. The house was demolished in the 1850s

What we know about this image

Sailing into Sydney Harbour in May 1825, visiting English artist Augustus Earle declared, 'The first pleasing object which breaks suddenly on the sight after having entered the Port, is Point Piper, so called from a worthy Gentleman of that name, choosing this spot for his residence'. Captain Piper's Henrietta Villa was a single-storey residence which terminated in two pavilions, each surmounted by a saucer-shaped cupola inset with a series of windows that lit the rooms beneath. One pavilion housed a ballroom, or banqueting hall, designed in the shape of St Andrew's cross. The gardens

were laid out with imported English trees and a row of small brass cannon was positioned in front of the house; these were fired by Piper to salute his friends as they sailed up the harbour to attend his festivities:

'...no expense has been spared I am told to ornament this fairy palace;... he does the thing properly, for he sends carriages and four, and boats for those who like the water, and returns his guests to their houses in the same manner. He keeps a band of music, and they have quadrilles every evening under the spacious verandahs (sic). At the table there is a vast profusion of every luxury that the 4 quarters of the globe can supply...'

On 2 December 1819, a 'fete champetre' was held, which was reported by the Sydney Gazette. Among the guests officers of the 48th Regiment, officers of the French ship L 'Uranie; and many of the more important members of the colony: 'About 100 Ladies and Gentlemen sat down to dinner; after which the merry dance' commenced, which was kept up with great spirit; and on the party leaving Henrietta Villa, they were saluted by a discharge of fifteen guns.' Piper hosted opulent parties at Henrietta Villa for the leading members of Sydney society, dispensing an unrestrained hospitality unrivalled in Australia for decades afterwards.

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**1820 – Elizabeth Heneretta [i.e. Henrietta] Villa
situate about four miles Down the Harbour from
Sydney Cove the seat of John Piper Esqr. Naval
Offcier etc. etc. of Port Jackson.**

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Download Image



Creator
Read, Richard Jnr (1796-1862)
Inscription

LLHS in pencil (probably in the artist's hand) below the image as above; and on back: 'Painted by R. Read junr. March 1820
Sydney N.S. Wales.'

Medium

Watercolour Drawing

Background

To follow

Reference

To follow

1817 – The Costume of the Australasians

What we see in this image

This scene depicts colonial men of various types as seen by the artist on the streets of Sydney in about 1817. It shows the different strata of colonial Sydney society – civil and military officers, free settlers, soldiers, emancipists and serving convicts – in an apparent easy co-existence.

The ten figures, from left to right, include:

1. a government official wearing a large bicorne hat, trimmed with a black ribbon rosette, and a three-piece suit of dark cloth comprising a tail coat and waistcoat, buttoned over a white linen shirt with a pleated front, his trousers tucked into knee high, tasselled hessian boots. This could be Governor Macquarie's secretary, John Thomas Campbell, in civilian dress;

2. an emancipist or 'ticket-of-leave' man in a loose-fitting, grey 'slop' suit worn with a frill-fronted shirt, low crowned hat and brown leather shoes;

3. an 'exclusive' or free settler carrying a large green umbrella and wearing a wide-brimmed hat (perhaps made locally of cabbage tree palm) with a long, brown 'duster' coat over a buff-coloured waistcoat with a stand collar, and a white linen shirt with a pleated, frilled front and a pointed collar, above wide-legged white [moleskin] trousers with buff-coloured, deep, side-buttoning cuffs and brown shoes buckled over the instep. NB: Large green umbrellas, probably imported from India, were regularly listed in the sales advertisements of Sydney retailers at this time.

4. a saluting bandsman in a tall shako with looped rows of white plaited cords (caplines) across the front and tassels hanging down one side, wearing a blue woollen uniform of short, braided jacket with a yellow lining, stand collar and cuffs, and matching trousers tucked into tall hessian boots;

5. a soldier wearing the uniform of the 48th regiment with its distinctive 'shako' with badge and gold braiding, and a red woollen jacket with white collar, cuffs and facings, over a linen shirt with stand collar, pleated, frilled front and a black neckcloth, his white trousers with side braid, marked at the waist with a red sash with looped corded and tasselled trim (perhaps attached to a message pouch). He also carries a 'shillelagh' (typically made from a stout knotty stick with a large knob at the top) perhaps displaying an association with

Ireland;

6. a government convict (perhaps privately assigned) carrying a large burden on his head and wearing the standard issue leather cap with a brown 'slop' suit, brown leather shoes and no stockings.

7. another free settler wearing a fine [imported] straw hat, and a short blue jacket with white cuffs and rolled back edges (perhaps sheepskin lined) forming a collar, over a white waistcoat with a turn-back collar and a linen shirt with frilled front and stand collar, and white trousers. He also carries a riding crop or swagger stick and wears brown leather boots fitted with silver spurs;

8. a government convict carrying a log across his shoulders wears a three-piece woollen suit in the yellow 'canary' wool (Parramatta cloth) of the repeat offender, with a standard issue folding leather convict cap, brown leather shoes and no stockings;

9. another soldier, his hand raised in greeting, wears a blue cap with a black peak, trimmed with a white pop-pom and a gold cap band, with a double-breasted, braided, long-tailed red wool coat and white trousers.

10. a convict clerk wears an ill-fitting blue 'slop' suit with his standard issue leather convict cap and brown leather shoes, also worn without stocking

What we know about this image

This drawing is a primary source for the history of clothing in Australia. Distinctive in its social inclusiveness, and its tone of amiable satire, it includes rare images of convicts and provides a splendid record of how class and status in a penal colony were instantly recognisable by dress.

Edward Close (1790-1866), soldier, engineer, settler,

magistrate and member of the Legislative Council, arrived in New South Wales in 1817. Following colonial service as engineer at Newcastle, NSW, Close resigned his commission and was granted land at Morpeth on the Hunter River. Close would have recieved some training in topographical rendering during his training as a military officer; his coastal and landscape watercolours are the most convincing of his drawings. Lacking academic training, he was naturally less successful with anatomy which explains the naiveté of the figure compositions in this image, but this is more than made up for by his careful observation of the social and clothing codes in operation around him on his arrival in the colony.

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1817 – The Costume of the Australasians

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Creator
Edward Charles Close (1790-1866) attrib.
Inscription
In ink along lower edge: 'The Costume of the Australasians'
Medium

Watercolour
Background
To follow
Reference
To follow