



The Quarterly Bulletin  
*of the*  
National Gallery of Victoria

VOL. III No. I  
1948

IN VIEW OF THE GENUINE INTEREST EXPRESSED BY NUMEROUS READERS OF OUR BULLETIN, and by members of the newly-formed National Gallery Society, the present issue seems an appropriate one in which to give some slight account of the birth and early years of this institution.

Eighty-seven years ago—six years after the founding of the Melbourne Public Library in 1844—the Trustees of that body met to decide how best the sum of £2,000 might be spent on the purchase of works of art. Their deliberations resulted in the acquisition of “casts of some of the choicest statues . . . coins, medals and gems,” as well as “representations of remarkable architectural works of all countries, taken by the process of photography.”

In 1861 the Museum of Art, on the south side of the ground floor of the Library, was formally opened by the Governor of the Colony, Sir Henry Barkly. Various other works of art to the value of £2,300 were donated to the Collection, and in 1863 “a Royal Commission was issued empowering the gentlemen therein named to inquire into the subject of the Fine Arts in Victoria, and to submit a scheme for the formation of a Public Museum, Gallery and Schools of Art.” . . . In 1882 Mr. G. F. Folingsby was appointed Director of the Art Gallery and Master of the Art School.

The 1863 Commission was also entrusted with the responsibility of determining how the sum of £1,000 should be spent to the best advantage “in the commencement of a Public Gallery of Art.” This modest sum, plus an additional £1,762, was placed at the disposal of Sir Charles Eastlake, then President of the Royal Academy, “to select for the Gallery pictures of a suitable description.” With this amount, eleven works were bought, one of which is reproduced on this page.

Such was the humble origin of the National Gallery of Victoria. Until the beginning of the present century, money for the upkeep and development of the collection was hopelessly inadequate to the growing cultural needs of the community. During the first critical years, many public-spirited individuals, either as Trustees or private donors, did much to assist and enrich our National Gallery. Amongst them the following names, picked at random from official records of the period, show the extent to which leading citizens interested themselves actively in the institution:—Sir Redmond Barry (first President of the Trustees), Dr. Gilbee, Mr. Thomas Clark, Hon. W. A. C. a’Beckett, Sir Charles Holroyd, Sir Archibald Michie, Mr. James Smith, Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, Dr. Thomas Black and the Reverend Dr. Bromby.

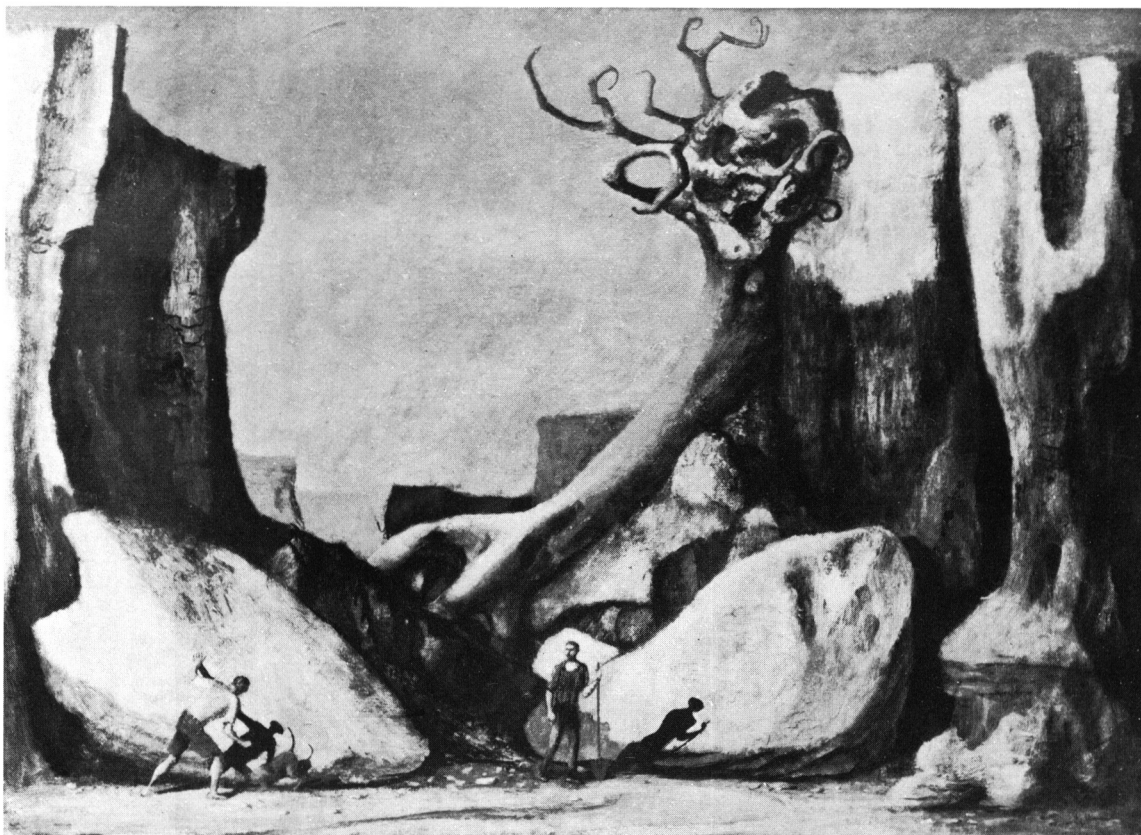
When we reflect that the City of Melbourne was less than twenty years old when the first Gallery purchases were made, we should remember with gratitude those early Trustees and pioneers of culture in Victoria, who laid the foundations of a collection unrivalled in the Southern Hemisphere to-day.

DARYL LINDSAY.



HORSES AND PIGS. By J. F. Herring.

*Purchased 1864.*



THE RABBITERS. By Russell Drysdale.

*Purchased 1947.*

RUSSELL DRYSDALE'S "THE RABBITERS" is one of the most recent National Gallery purchases of contemporary Australian paintings. By way of interesting contrast and comparison we reproduce on the opposite page a farmyard scene, "Horses and Pigs," by J. F. Herring, which was one of the first eleven pictures bought in England for the National Gallery of Victoria by Sir Charles Eastlake, in 1864. Herring, who was born in 1795 and died a year after the purchase of our picture, was generally considered one of the leading sporting and animal painters of his day. He began life as a house painter, and at one time drove a mail coach, which earned him the nickname of "the artist coachman." Though possibly a better example of his work might have been selected to represent him overseas, "Horses and Pigs" is a sound bit of painting in the Victorian manner. It belongs to its own period—just as Russell Drysdale's "Rabbiters" belongs to the present century.

Utterly dissimilar in outlook and expression, it may be claimed for Drysdale and Herring that both painters build up their pictures on a solid technical knowledge.

Russell Drysdale was born in England in 1912 and came to Australia as a small child. He received his first training from George Bell in Melbourne, and subsequently at the Grosvenor School in London. He is an artist of serious intention, who takes infinite pains and limitless time to accomplish what he sets out to do. In "The Rabbiters" we have a stylized, but intrinsically Australian landscape, in which the arresting figures seem to epitomize the insignificance of man in a grotesquely primitive setting.





VISITORS TO THE ART MUSEUM DURING RECENT MONTHS will have noticed that a great deal of rearrangement has been going on, with a view to showing individual exhibits to greater advantage. Lack of adequate floor space, dingy paintwork, and insufficient staff to cope with the handling of important pieces, are some of the contributing factors to long-delayed reforms in this direction. However, much thought and a minimum of expense has resulted in a considerable lightening of the gloom of certain minor courts and annexes

Photographs on the opposite page show the new arrangement of the landing leading from the Buvelot to the Connell Collection. Unsightly wooden barricades, formerly considered necessary to keep an unruly public at bay, have been replaced by corded ropes, which in no way impede a clear view of the exhibits.

Objects of major importance in Fig. I. is the superb English eighteenth century semi-circular satinwood dressing commode, recently purchased in London. A smaller French commode with elegant, simple lines and painted panels looks at home with a gilded eighteenth century Italian arm chair.

In Fig. II. the Sheraton satinwood dressing-table, writing desk and bookcase were formerly in Lady Hamilton's villa at Naples. The bookcase is flanked by a handsome pair of Adam torcheres, elaborately embellished with rams, satyrs, garlands and other classical motifs typical of the period, and surmounted by a pair of bronze and ormolu seven-light Empire candelabra.

---

THE NEWLY-FORMED NATIONAL GALLERY SOCIETY has already proved its practical value by providing the necessary funds to enable the appointment of Mr. Arnold Shore as official Guide Lecturer to the Institution. Mr. Shore will be pleased to assist readers of the Bulletin in locating items mentioned in these pages.

FREE LUNCH-TIME LECTURES in the new Lecture Hall, Swanston Street entrance, resume on Thursday, 15th April, at 1.15 p.m., and will be held on the second and fourth Thursday of every month until further notice.

A NEWLY ANNOTATED AND REVISED EDITION of the National Gallery Catalogue is in preparation. We regret that owing to unprecedented demand experienced during the past year, copies of the current issue are no longer available for sale to the public.

COVER DESIGN of this issue shows the head, from the three-quarter length "Portrait of the Lady," by Gerard Terborch, Felton Bequest, 1946.



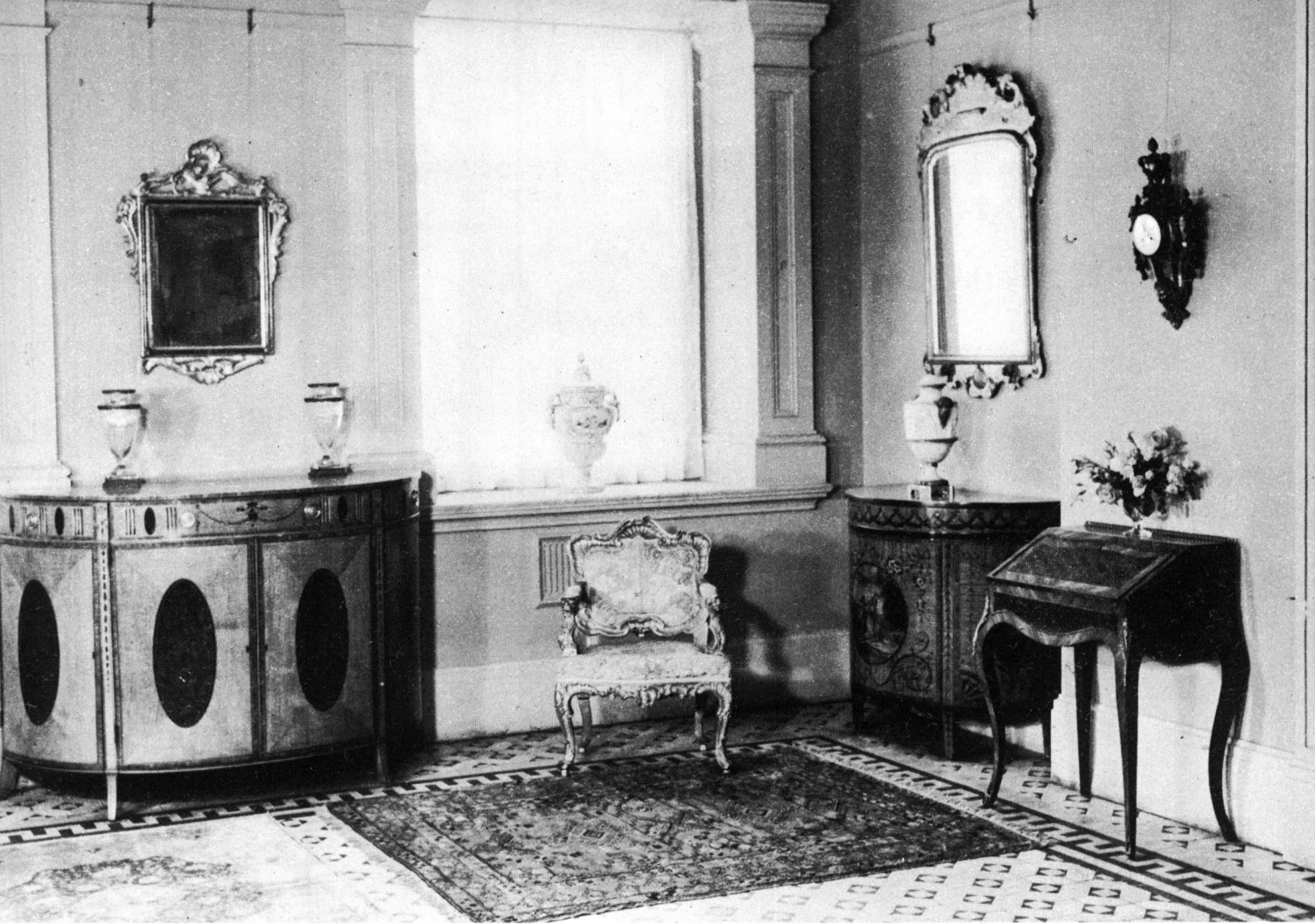


Fig. I.

*Approaching the Connell Collection from the Buvelot Gallery, the visitor ascends a flight of shallow marble stairs terminating in a tessellated landing, where a collection of English and Continental furniture is attractively displayed.*

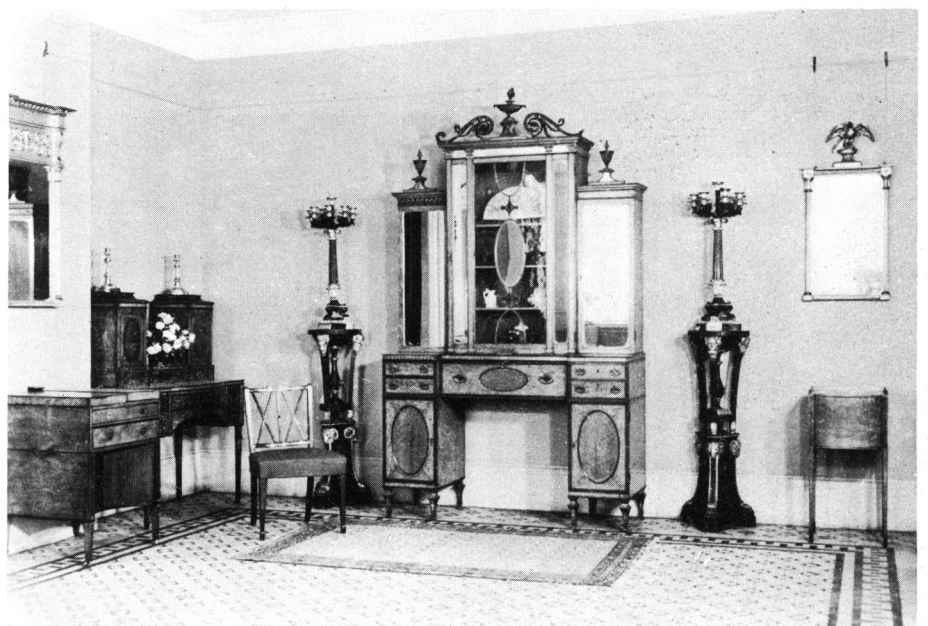


Fig. II.

GEMS FROM THE ART MUSEUM.

No. 9.

SWEETMEAT DISH. ENGLISH.

Maker, John Plummer.  
HALL MARK, YORK, 1633.

*Felton Bequest.*

Compared with the massive plate of the period, the silver dishes and saucers produced from about 1630 until the early years of the reign of Charles II. are characterised by an unusual thinness and delicacy.

The circular sweetmeat dish reproduced on this page is a typical example of early seventeenth century craftsmanship, and one of the rarest pieces in our collection. The scalloped rim and two handles in the form of shells give lightness and individuality to a formal embossed design of radiating compartments surrounding a central flower surmounted by a shield.

The rather primitive and conventional decoration is characteristic and almost peculiar to the sweetmeat dish. It has been suggested by one authority that the Carolean silversmiths derived the little punched flowers, rosettes and small pearl-like ornaments from contemporary book covers.

ROBERT HAINES.





ENGLISH MONUMENTAL BRASSES.

1. Anonymous. Felbrigg, Norfolk. Circa 1480.  
 Inscribed: Domine sancte misere nobis: Paraclete sancte domine misere nobis.

2. Sir Thomas de Cobham, Cobham, Kent. Circa 1365.  
 One of the famous brasses of knights and ladies in Cobham Church.

Brass rubbings are made by placing a thin paper on the brass and rubbing it with a soft pencil, which traces the raised surfaces and leaves the incised lines showing white. Traced surfaces are later filled in with black ink. Dark parts have to be imagined as brass, white lines as incisions, and background as stone matrix.



## FROM THE PRINT ROOM.

The monumental brass rubbings reproduced on the previous page are two of those shown in an exhibition of church rubbings held in the Print Gallery during the past year.

Memorial brasses occur in England from the latter half of the 13th century to the 17th century. This form of tomb became very popular in England, where many more church brasses exist than on the Continent. The figure was cut out of the brass plate in silhouette, and the lines indicating garments, mail, hair, hands, etc., were incised. The brass was then fixed to a stone matrix. These brass images originally followed the types evolved in the round figure work of sepulchral effigies, but the material favoured strong stylization and through the centuries certain fundamental types are adhered to. The hands are almost always shown in an attitude of prayer, the figures are given in frontal view, and only in the 16th century do we find an attempt to introduce three-quarter views and an indication of depth and plasticity of the figure. In these later brasses the essential charm of the clear pattern and simple line of the earlier type is lost by over-elaboration. The brass of Sir Thomas de Cobham belongs to the best period of this type of memorial image; the anonymous figures from Felbrigg show how, despite alterations, the essential types were adhered to during the centuries.

URSULA HOFF

## RECENT ACQUISITIONS TO THE ART GALLERY INCLUDE—

### OILS.

The Rabbits, Russell Drysdale	.....	Purchased
Le Lavandou, Rupert Bunny	.....	Purchased
Woman Drying Her Hair, Constance Stokes	.....	Purchased
Tree Portrait, Dorothy Thornhill	.....	Purchased
Moonrise Over the Derwent, J. Carrington Smith	.....	Purchased
Surry Hills Street, George Lawrence	.....	Purchased
St. Ives, Ambrose Paterson	.....	Purchased
The Spot for a City, Dora Wilson	.....	Purchased
Sitting Room Interior, Grace Cossington Smith	.....	Purchased

### WATER COLOURS.

View of Sydney Harbour, Conrad Martens	.....	Purchased
Drought (Arkaba), Hans Heysen	.....	Purchased
The Arkabas, Flinders Ranges, Hans Heysen	.....	Purchased
Night Time, Alice Springs, Eric Thake	.....	Purchased
Setting for Romeo and Juliet, William Constable	.....	Purchased
Old Farmhouse, Mulgrave, R. Malcolm Warner	.....	Purchased

### MISCELLANEOUS.

Chalk Drawing, Degas	.....	Felton Bequest
Etchings by A. J. Bauer, Seymour Hayden, D. Y. Cameron, A. Van Dyck, J. M. Whistler, Frank Short	.....	Felton Bequest
Lino Cuts and Drawings by Eric Thake, Ethel Spowers, Percy Watson, William Dobell, Derwent Lees, Jacques Callot, Noel Counihan	.....	Purchased

### ART MUSEUM.

Important additions to the Collection include a pair of Chinese Caldrons, T'ing	.....	Felton Bequest
Babe's Head, Bronze, Jacob Epstein	.....	Felton Bequest
Rare Queen Anne Walnut Settee, upholstered in Soho tapestry	.....	Purchased
Bookcase and Secretaire, Mahogany	.....	Purchased
Pottery Bowls, Klytie Plate and Allan Lowe	.....	Purchased
Early 17th Century English Tapestry	.....	Purchased

## GENEROUS DONATIONS TO THE NATIONAL GALLERY AND ART MUSEUM INCLUDE—

Three Water Colours	.....	Presented by the Royal Australian Air Force
Elizabethan Wineglass, Horn	.....	Presented by Miss Maria Hanley
The Letter, Agnes Goodsir	.....	Bequeathed by the Artist
30 Modern Japanese Woodcuts (stages of printing)	.....	Presented by E. W. Boswell, Esq.
Drawing, by Edward Lear	.....	Presented by H. Paget, Esq.
Chinese Ivory	.....	Presented by Peter Boode, Esq.
Norwegian National Costume	.....	Presented by Mrs. V. A. Boyle

### TRUSTEES OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA.

Sir Keith Murdoch (Chairman)	Allan R. Henderson, LL.M.
J. D. G. Medley, M.A. (Vice-Chairman)	A. T. Smithers, A.I.C.A.
H. W. Kent (Treasurer)	D. Max Meldrum
R. D. Elliott, C.M.G.	E. N. Dewar (Secretary)

### FELTON BEQUESTS COMMITTEE.

The Hon. Sir Frank Clarke, K.B.E., M.L.C. (Chairman)
Major-General H. W. Grimwade, C.B., C.M.G.
Sir Alexander Stewart
The Hon. Sir Owen Dixon, K.C.M.G.
Sir Keith Murdoch (Representative of the Trustees of the National Gallery of Victoria)
Colin G. Rigg (Secretary)

Director of the National Gallery	- - -	Daryl Lindsay
Assistant Director	- - -	Robert Haines
Assistant Keeper of the Prints	- - -	Dr. Ursula Hoff
Hon. Curator of Chinese Art	- - -	H. W. Kent
Guide Lecturer	- - -	Arnold Shore
Head of the National Gallery Schools	- - -	William Dargie
Drawing Master	- - -	V. Murray Griffin
Assistant Drawing and Painting Master	- - -	Alan Sumner