

# Jewellery Studies

The Journal of The Society of Jewellery Historians



2016/2  
DOROTHY ERICKSON



*The Society of*  
**JEWELLERY  
HISTORIANS**

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## 2016/2

Editors: Beatriz Chadour-Sampson and Nigel Israel

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# Nineteenth-Century Australian Goldfields Jewellery

DR DOROTHY ERICKSON is an Australian jeweller and historian who lives in Perth, Western Australia. She has exhibited internationally since 1979 with around 40 solo exhibitions. Her work appears in leading museums around the world. She is also an art critic and writer on art, crafts and design with a considerable body of published essays and articles so when, through illness, she was unable to continue making jewellery for a time in the 1980s she undertook a PhD in Art History to add to her teaching, art and design degrees. Erickson has since published four books: *Art and Design in Western Australia*; *Perth Technical College 1900-2000*, *A Joy Forever*; *The Story of Kings Park, Gold and Silversmithing in Western Australia*; *A History and Inspired by Light and Land: Designers and Makers in Western Australia 1829-1969*. Her Welsh maternal great, great grandmother and English great, great grandfather were on the Victorian diggings at Bendigo in the 1850s while her Swedish paternal grandfather owned a gold mine at Broad Arrow in Western Australia in the 1890s so she has family links to both goldrushes.



Left:  
The 'Lola Montez' brooch, 1855  
Gold and rubies, width 8 cm  
Formerly private collection and acquired in 2014  
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra A9876



Front cover:

Right:  
Kalgoorlie brooch by George Richard Addis with company mark  
18ct gold, width 5.5 cm  
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra 2010.304  
Photograph Dorothy Erickson

# Nineteenth-Century Australian Goldfields Jewellery

DOROTHY ERICKSON

The question has been asked why goldfields jewellery of the east and west coasts of Australia is so different in appearance, style and iconography from that of the 1850-70s. Victoria and New South Wales jewellery typically features large Victorian-type bulla brooches, whilst the west coast work of the 1890s-1910 has more affinity to the Aesthetic Movement. The answer is quite obvious: the factors are time, climate and ethnic differences across the continent.

In the 19th century, Australia was not a unified country. It began as a series of separate colonies founded at different times and under varying circumstances and backgrounds. Whilst the colonies on the east coast started as penal settlements in the 18th century, those in Western Australia and South Australia were founded in the 19th century as colonies of free men and women.<sup>1</sup> The climatic differences in a country the size of Europe had a further impact on the type of jewellery sold in various places.

The discovery of gold in the hills of California in 1849, and in 1851 on the east coast of Australia at Bathurst, Bendigo and Ballarat, had been timely, as gold was in short supply in Europe due to the exhaustion of the fabled South American mines. Gold seekers and goldsmiths flocked to New South Wales and the newly proclaimed colony of Victoria hoping to make their fortune (fig. 1).

Between 1851 and 1853 some 200,000 immigrants flocked to Victoria alone. One of these was Ellen Kean, who, writing from Ballarat, stated:

When gold was first discovered here it was what they call surface gold, that is, it was on the alluvial soil and all the capital a man required was a spade, a tent, some tea and coffee and some biscuits and preserved meat. ... They ran mad with luck ....<sup>2</sup>

It is therefore not surprising that people started coming from everywhere. The Victorian capital, 'Marvellous Melbourne', soon became one of the wealthiest cities in the world. Goldsmiths Edward Fischer from Vienna, William Edwards from London and Sylla Denis from France arrived to settle in the booming city. Julius Hogarth, Conrad Erichsen and Christian Qvist from Scandinavia, and John Flavelle from Dublin set up in Sydney in New South Wales while Joachim Wendt from Denmark, and Julius Schomburgk, Carl Eduard Firnhaber and Henry Steiner from Germany migrated to Adelaide, the capital of South Australia. Ernest Leviny brought a team of miners with him from Hungary



Fig. 1  
Mining Camp attributed to D. Tulloch, c.1855-60  
Oil on canvas  
Courtesy Dixon Galleries, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney



Fig. 2  
View of the display 'Australian Style' jewellery  
As shown in *A Fine Possession: Jewellery and Identity*, an exhibition held in the Powerhouse, the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney, (2014-16)  
Photograph by Marinco Kodjanovski

<sup>1</sup> The colonies federated in 1901 to form the Commonwealth of Australia.

<sup>2</sup> Schofield, Anne and Fahy, Kevin. *Australian Jewellery: 19th and Early 20th Century*, Sydney, David Ell Press, 1990, p. 28.

to procure his gold, but they deserted immediately, so he just set up as a jeweller in Castlemaine in Victoria. All of these jewellers made memorable work from Eastern Australian gold. Visitors to the exhibition 'A Fine Possession: Jewellery and Identity' at the Powerhouse, Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences in Sydney during 2014-16<sup>3</sup> will have had a chance to see an impressive selection of the art of these goldsmiths and make comparisons between the work made during the later Western Australian gold rushes and that of the South African and American goldsmiths of the 1890s, which differs significantly (fig. 2). The abundance of the precious metal saw lucky prospectors, and others who profited from the diggings, commission objects to commemorate their good fortune. Due to the fact that the goldsmiths came from all parts of the world there was no standard marking system. Some omitted marks altogether, some simply used their initials, while others added crowns, lions or other fake British marks.

Motifs that can most readily identify Australian-made work of the mid-19th century are the mining tableaux and the unique flora and fauna of the continent.

In the 1850s and 1860s the fashion in jewellery was for a large bulla-style brooch to be worn high up on the neck, at times covering the throat. The great quantities of gold being mined meant the goldsmiths could be generous in their use of the metal, and according to the antique dealer and author Anne Schofield this is one of the hallmarks of Australian-made work of the period.<sup>4</sup> The massive 8 cm-wide brooch presented to the Irish-born, exotic dancer Lola Montez in 1855, today in the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra, is one such example (fig. 3). This shows miners' implements within a shield supported by a kangaroo and emu which were later to become the heraldic animals on the Commonwealth of Australia's coat of arms. The brooch is surrounded by grape vines. Another massive wreath brooch garlanded with mining equipment is in the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences in Sydney (fig. 4). The provenance remains unknown, however an earlier, but similar, mining brooch in the collection made for Mary Anne Austin from gold mined in Bathurst (fig. 5), was commissioned by her husband Edward Austin, a wealthy former convict and bullion dealer. It depicts a miner winching a bucket of ore to the surface within a foliate cartouche decorated with crossed picks and shovels and a miniature sluice cradle. The brooch remained in the family until presented to the museum in 1954 by Una and Winfred Lane. The museum's significance statement for the brooch reads:

In May 1851, a few months after Edward Hammond Hargraves had published his discovery of gold, Bathurst shopkeeper Edward Austin arrived in Sydney with a nugget weighing about 225 grams. According to *The Sydney Morning Herald* (15 May 1851) it created 'a great sensation'. Austin's find fanned the excitement that was to shake the colony and create a rush to the Bathurst region. Choosing to remain in Bathurst, Austin made his fortune by providing diggers with credit to buy mining tools and then afterwards purchasing their gold. He



Fig. 3  
The 'Lola Montez' brooch, 1855  
Gold and rubies, width 8 cm  
Formerly private collection and acquired in 2014  
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra A9876



Fig. 4  
Wreath brooch by an unknown maker, 1853-5  
Gold, width 8 cm  
Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney A9876  
Photograph by Marincio Kodjanovski

<sup>3</sup> Curated by Eva Czernis-Ryl.

<sup>4</sup> Schofield, *op. cit.* note 2, p. 44.



Fig. 5  
The Austin brooch by an unknown maker, 1852  
Gold, width 5.5 cm  
Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney A4478  
Photograph by Marinco Kodjanovski



Fig. 6  
Australiana brooch by Hogarth & Erichsen, 1859  
With woody pear (*Xylomelum pyriforme*), banksias and fern leaves  
18ct gold and gold-bearing quartz, height 5.5 cm  
Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney A6486  
Purchased from Christie's, South Kensington in 1997  
Photograph by Geoff Friend

commemorated his success with this brooch, which he gave to his wife, Mary Ann. For Austin, the brooch underscored a life of ups and downs. Born Elias Arnstein, a Bavarian Jew, he was apprenticed as a tailor when he went to England in 1831. After only two days in London, he was arrested and sentenced to seven years transportation for stealing a ring and two brooches.

The Austin brooch belongs to a group of goldfields brooches of a type made exclusively in Australia from local gold between the mid-1850s and the mid-1860s. Being massive and ostentatious, most of these brooches were melted down, especially when smaller ones became more favoured in the following decades. Some were sold for much-needed cash during the depression of the 1890s. Of the few that have survived, most are not marked, and their provenance has long been forgotten.

Typically, goldfields or digger brooches feature mining equipment on a miniature scale arranged in an oval or rectangular design and worked onto a pin. These tiny mining tools were formed either by sawing or casting, and were then soldered together. The more complex designs incorporated crossed picks and shovels, mattocks, winches, buckets, sluice-boxes, bags of gold, revolvers, and small figures of miners turning windlasses, all set within foliate, wreath-like frames.

Goldfields pins and rings were bought by lucky diggers and merchants to commemorate the travails of the goldfields. A brooch, however, was usually given as a present from a successful digger to his 'woman'. Although expensive, these were also acquired by visitors to goldfields as souvenirs and 'proofs of colonial advancement'. Early goldfields jewellery was often made by adventurous immigrant jewellers who, after unsuccessful attempts as miners on the goldfields, set up jewellery shops in gold townships. By the mid-1850s, a range of goldfields brooches and rings could be commissioned or purchased from large city establishments.

In the mid-19th century the prevailing engrossment with nature led to an intensified interest in the unique flora and fauna of the continent. This, together with the incentive of exhibiting at international exhibitions, saw jewellers anxious to express their newly acquired Australian identity. They began to exploit the flora using motifs such as banksia, woody pear, fern and palm tree, and fauna such as the kangaroo, wallaby and emu. Even lizards and snakes, dingoes, parrots and possums were incorporated into some of the jewellery designs, and a distinct idiom was developed. Hogarth & Erichsen in Sydney became particularly adept and set the benchmark for work of this kind. A brooch which survives in its fitted box with the maker's trade label, now in the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, shows finely detailed native flora surrounding gold-flecked quartz (fig. 6). The accompanying significance statement in the display written by the curator Eva Czernis-Ryl reads:

The Danish silversmith and die-sinker Julius Hogarth, and Conrad Erichsen, a jeweller from Norway, are believed to have been the first Australian jewellers who designed and made gold brooches and bracelets with Australian flora and fauna motifs and sometimes including small figures of Aboriginal



Fig. 7  
Turtle dove Australiana brooch by Denis Bros., c.1860  
Gold-bearing quartz and 18ct gold, height 4.5 cm  
Gift of Kevin Fahy in 1986  
Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney 86/1479  
Photograph by Marincio Kodjanovski



Fig. 8  
Australiana brooch by an unknown maker, 1860-1870s  
With a kangaroo and emu under a tree fern  
Gold  
Private collection

people. Australia's earliest known brooch decorated with an Aboriginal figure with a spear and an emu and kangaroo was made by Erichsen and exhibited at the 1854 Sydney colonial exhibition where it was awarded a bronze medal. From then on, the firm produced a variety of pieces ranging from smaller brooches with an emu and kangaroo beneath a palm or grass-tree (similar to their designs for silver threepenny tokens issued from 1858 to 1860), to elaborate openwork bracelets featuring impressive groupings of native animals and plants and also local gemstones, Moreton Bay pearls and South Australian malachite. Only a relatively small number of these highly original brooches and bracelets made by or attributed to the firm are known to have survived. Only one is marked and two have original presentation boxes. Many jewellers emulated Hogarth and Erichsen's work.

Another brooch of this type is in the extensive collection of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences in Sydney, made by Denis Bros. of Melbourne. It survives with its original box, and features turtle doves holding a banner on either side of a gold-flecked piece of quartz (fig. 7). These brooches have a subtle bloomed finish of 24ct gold, as do many others which were on display in the above-mentioned exhibition in Sydney. These are examples of a particularly popular type which features a kangaroo and emu beneath a tree fern which is native to the east coast of Australia (fig. 8).

A fine series of bracelets made by Hogarth & Erichsen can be found in the following collections: the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney (fig. 9), the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (fig. 10), and Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane. These intricately detailed objects fashioned from Australian gold were often presentation gifts for weddings, for the wives of departing vice-regal officials and

even as colonial wedding gifts for British princesses. The bracelet belonging to the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences in Sydney was proudly described in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 10 June 1858 as a 'rich beauty in solid gold ... a more tasteful and artistic grouping it should be almost impossible to conceive.'

Mrs Alan MacPherson, visiting Melbourne in 1856-7, wrote home:

The ornaments at present exhibited for sale consist principally of brooches, breast pins, and studs which are really often very prettily executed sometimes with gold mixed with quartz in its native state, but more frequently the fine gold is filigreed and is occasionally relieved by stones also found in the colony ... they are really worth getting as proof of colonial advancement ...<sup>5</sup>

Gemstones found in the colonies during this period included sapphire, emerald, topaz, amethyst, citrine, opal, malachite and also natural pearls. Moreton Bay in Queensland was the first known source of local pearls, which were exhibited as early as the 1850s. Commercial pearling soon followed in Western Australia in 1861. A fine example of a Hogarth & Erichsen brooch in a private collection features clusters of pendent pearls (fig. 11). A number of brooches with a wreath-like frame dating from the 1870s have reversible central panels with inserted photograph on one side and gold foliage on the other, sometimes set with small emeralds or other gemstones, as seen on a brooch attributed to Lamborn & Wagner of Melbourne (fig. 12).

A major necklace commissioned from jeweller and silversmith Christian Ludwig Quist by John Watts, a prominent Queensland pioneer pastoralist, politician and philanthropist, in 1867, consists of five carved openwork medallions that contain hand-

<sup>5</sup> Schofield, *op. cit.* note 2, p. 34.





Fig. 9 (above)  
 Australiana bracelet by Hogarth & Erichsen, 1858  
 With a dingo, kookaburra, emu, kangaroo and assorted foliage and flowers  
 18ct gold, height 5.5 cm  
 Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney 97/225/1  
 Photograph by Marinco Kodjanovski

Fig. 10 (below)  
 Australiana bracelet by Hogarth & Erichsen, 1858-60  
 With banksia, waratah, flannel flower, ferns, woody pear and orchids  
 18ct gold, height 5 cm  
 National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne 1999.50



coloured photographs of his family, and the hinged covers are decorated with personal motifs associated with his life (fig. 13). These include a stud horse, merino sheep, cattle, a sailing ship and in the central medallion the 'Advance Australia' arms. The necklace now forms part of the collection belonging to the John Oxley Library in Brisbane. Last but not least, a tour-de-force attributed to Julius Schomburgk was made in South Australia about 1860 and now has pride of place in the collection of the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide (fig. 14). This magnificent High Victorian bracelet shows finely detailed wallabies and rocks in high relief within a cartouche framed by vine leaves with grapes on a rusticated band.

The conclusion from the foregoing is that the goldfields jewellery made during the New South Wales and Victorian gold rushes is massive in weight, typical of the type of design of the time when gold was in plentiful supply and great bulla brooches

were fashionable. This is remarkably different from Western Australian goldfields jewellery which is much simpler in design, although the goldfields were even richer and the resources more abundant. Fashion played its part in this for there was a 40-year time gap from the 1850s to 1890s. A further factor was the climate in Victoria which is more akin to southern England or France, whilst Perth, the capital of Western Australia, has a more Mediterranean or Californian climate, and Kalgoorlie and the other Western Australian goldfields are situated in the dry and dusty desert interior. The jewellery from the east coast probably also reflects the European background of many of the goldsmiths that settled there, whilst the west had, and still does have, a more dominant British heritage.

As previously mentioned the origin of Western Australia was quite different to that of the east coast of Australia. The colony of Western Australia, although it later accepted transportation for a



Fig. 11  
Australiana brooch with Moreton Bay pearls by Hogarth & Erichsen, 1859  
Gold, pearls  
Private collection



Fig. 12  
Locket brooch attributed to Lamborn & Wagner, c.1870  
Gold and emerald, height 6 cm  
Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney 85/195  
Photograph by Marinco Kodjanovski

period of 18 years, was not established as a convict settlement, but as one for gentry. Thus, the structure of the population in the west was significantly different in outlook and social customs. Those who came as settlers in the first few years were, for the most part, younger sons or daughters of minor country nobility, sons of the clergy, and officers who had returned from the Napoleonic Wars and found half pay and peacetime not to their liking. They brought with them their servants and tradespeople to service their needs. Their ways were those of the country gentry, and naturally those attitudes and social mores were transported with them. The social fabric was set in a conservative mould. It was a rural, antipodean existence similar to that of provincial life during the period of Jane Austen in England.

First settled in 1829, the Swan River Colony did not prosper. It was a struggling rural backwater with a tiny population relying mainly on exporting timber, pearls and agricultural products until payable gold was discovered in the late 1880s. Fortuitously, this was found in quantities at a time of worldwide depression, encouraging people with expertise and capital to come to the inhospitable hinterland of the struggling colony (figs. 15-16). The population of the 'Cinderella' colony increased nearly sevenfold during the first 20 years of the gold rushes, and young men out for adventure added to the diversity and colour. Lord Percy Douglas (later the Marquess of Queensberry) was seen reciting poetry and collecting money for worthy causes, while the Hon. David Carnegie and others organized prospecting expeditions. Entrepreneurs, such as the Hon. Mrs Candy, the mother of the Duchess of Newcastle, went about the business of floating mining companies. This meant a rather cosmopolitan clientele for the local goldsmiths, and the repatriation elsewhere of much that they made.

This was all happening against the backdrop of great technological and economic change, which the colony was able to use to its advantage. In the period from the 1880s up to World War I, the wireless telegraph, telephones for general use, trains, trams, motorcars, electric lighting, electric power, cinemas and X-rays were first introduced. Cities flowered almost overnight, and in a short time the shanty towns and miners' shacks of the desert turned into *fine wide streets, lit with electric light, (and) handsome buildings*,<sup>6</sup> in which over 100 goldsmiths were working prior to 1900. The majority of these had a British heritage. Prominent were George Richard Addis, Charles Band, John Caris, Joseph Pearl, Frank Piaggio and the firms Donovan & Overland and Levinson & Sons, who made attractive goldfields jewellery that is recognizable as being Western Australian. Western Australian mining jewellery was much lighter in weight than that of the east coast, for fashions had changed in jewellery and clothing. The hot and dusty western fields were more suited to light cotton clothing for much of the year, and sporting jewellery, name brooches, bar brooches and lace pins were the fashion. Despite their diminutive size, these small jewels can be curiously compelling. While their origins lay in British fashion, and in part

6 Vivienne, May, *Travels in Western Australia: Being a Description of the Various Cities and Towns, Goldfields and Agricultural Districts of that State*, Heinemann, London, 1902, pp. 16 and 190.



Fig. 13  
 The Watts necklace by Christian Quist, c.1867  
 18ct gold  
 Collection of John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland 6681

evolved from the pendant for sophisticated equipment jewellery to commemorate an occasion, they developed into a separate genre. Distinctive work was made utilizing swans or mining implements combined with nuggets or an arch spelling out the name of the mine, town or occasion. A gold nugget (in white quartz) set in an open pierced-work bar-brooch reminiscent of the neo-Gothic designs of English architect William Burges was a souvenir of one of the many Poseidon gold mines operating about the turn of the century (fig. 17). It is set with seed pearls and would have been made between 1895 and 1910. The maker has yet to be identified.

Joseph Pearl, about whom little is known, fashioned miniature stamper brooches featuring the ore-crushing batteries (fig. 18). Frank Piaggio, who had arrived from Adelaide c. 1891, registered

his design of a parallel pick and shovel with pendant bucket as 'WA no. 9' (fig. 19) and Donovan & Overland, a major wholesaler previously in Queensland, registered its very attractive brooch 'WA no. 13' featuring a 'golden hole', mattock, shovel, windlass and bucket, which is seen in various editions under arches bearing the names Leonora, Kalgoorlie (previously Hannan's), Coolgardie, Malcolm, Donnybrook, Marble Bar (fig. 20) and Bullfinch. The 'golden hole' surrounded by quartz rocks, beneath the windlass, was derived from the legendary, or rather infamous, Londonderry strike at Coolgardie. World traveller May Vivienne remarked in her book that she had seen a large block of gleaming white quartz from the Londonderry mine thickly studded with nuggets.<sup>7</sup> The

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 318.



Fig. 14  
Hinged bracelet attributed to Julius Schomburgk, c.1860  
18ct gold, height 6.1 cm  
Gift of Miss Jane Peacock, 1945  
The Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide AA519

strike hole was sealed over while the principals went to London to raise the finance to develop the mine. However, once the money was raised and the mineshaft opened no more gold was found. Was it bad luck or a fraud ?<sup>8</sup>

A gala event in the life of Coolgardie was the International Mining and Industrial Exhibition held there in 1899. By this time gold was bringing in 88% of the colony's wealth, and the exhibition focused on this. Stone and brick buildings were beginning to give Coolgardie an air of elegance (fig. 21). The Exhibition Building, which opened on 21 March, had attracted 55,000 visitors by June, many travelling by train from Perth for this event. Numerous souvenir brooches were made for this occasion, which explains why Coolgardie is the name that most frequently occurs on the mining brooches. The Larard Brothers from Melbourne made some of these mementoes that have the elaborate registration mark used by this firm (figs. 22-23). The crossed pick and shovel design, 'W.A.6', was registered in Western Australia on 17 April 1894. They also registered '6N REG', above '29 3 94', which was the date of registration of the design in Victoria, as 'Vic. 720'. Whether the latter work was for sale in Western Australia or for a revived Victorian gold field has not yet been determined, however the customs duty which was applied between the colonies probably meant that the pieces with Victorian marks were designated for sale on the east coast.

Another type of commemorative brooch was the 'Golden Arrow'

<sup>8</sup> Regarding the Londonderry Saga, see: Spake, Austin, *Londonderry: the Golden Hole*, Hesperian Press, Perth, 1991.



Fig. 15  
The Lady Forrest South mine camp near Coolgardie with grandfather Johann Erickson (fourth from right). The mine was sold to a French syndicate who are also pictured. Grandfather Erickson had later a mine at Broad Arrow.



Fig. 16  
The Hon. David Carnegie ready to set out on one of his exploratory expeditions  
State Library of Western Australia, Perth 4078P

brooch which Dr Victor Streich, the German-born geologist and manager of the Australasia and Australasia North mines who had come from South Australia in 1891, commissioned to celebrate an event at the Golden Arrow mine at Broad Arrow (fig. 24). This was a deep company mine, thus the pick, the emblem of the alluvial miner, is not incorporated in the design. The brooch, with provenance from the Streich family, dates from the late 1890s when the mine had 30 head of stampers at work.

The best known of the Western Australian goldfields jewellers was George Richard Addis, who was born in Victoria to a family from Herefordshire. After training, probably in Melbourne but possibly in South Australia where the family farmed shire horses and had a transport business, he moved to Tasmania and featured in a colonial exhibition in Launceston in 1891-2.



Fig. 17  
Poseidon brooch by unknown maker  
18 ct gold, seed pearls and natural nugget in white quartz,  
width 5.5 cm  
Western Australian Museum, Perth H88.645  
Photograph Douglas Elford



Fig. 18  
The Murchison Stamper brooch attributed to Joseph Pearl,  
1890s  
18ct gold, width 5 cm  
Photograph courtesy of a private collection

He then moved to Western Australia and set up shop in Boulder in 1893 where he often displayed his noted collection of nuggets as well as his jewellery. The attractive Addis mining and nugget brooches all stand in striking contrast to each other. The most notable examples are in the National Gallery of Australia, in Canberra (figs. 25-26), and in the National Gallery of Victoria, in Melbourne. They usually feature the distinctive mattock used on the Western Australian fields, and a number of these also have the sieves used to dry-blow the soil away from the heavier gold. Champagne was reputed to be cheaper than water in the early days on these goldfields, thus washing in a cradle was not economically possible.

One very popular style of brooch made in Western Australia at this time was the 'swans and swags' design of Charles Henry May. May had come out from London in the 1880s to join his uncle, the successful emancipist jeweller Frederick Mason, and became a wholesaler in Perth. His brooches featured the black swan emblem of Western Australia with crescent moons, a popular international motif of the time. Most had a nugget in the centre of the bar brooch but occasionally a stone was set. Other jewellers copied the design, which was seen as a show of support for Western Australia, which, reluctant to join the proposed Commonwealth, had made its first attempt to secede by 1907.<sup>9</sup>

Many of the Western Australian implement brooches have a lot in common with those from the rushes in South Africa with which they are frequently confused. To a tutored eye, a considerable body of the Western Australian work is readily distinguishable with familiar-shaped spades and mattocks. There is, however, another strand of work, usually with pointed shovels or rope, which is more difficult to place and may be Australian or South African. The two rushes were contemporary and the two styles are quite similar. It is most unfortunate that since the objects have become desirable collectors' items, a market in counterfeit pieces has sprung up. More insidious is the practice of adding a Western



Fig. 19  
Hannan's brooch by Frank Piaggio, 1890s  
18ct gold, width 5.3cm  
Private collection



Fig. 20  
Marble Bar windlass brooch by Donovan & Overland,  
late 1890s  
15ct gold, width 5.7 cm  
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra 2010.318.

<sup>9</sup> Western Australians made further attempts in the 1930s, and the notion was raised again in the 1970s.



Fig. 21  
The Coolgardie International Mining and Industrial Exhibition building as seen in: *The Western Mail*, Christmas Number, 1899

Australian name to an otherwise dubious pick-and-shovel brooch confusing matters further.

Differences are also discernible when comparing work made in South Africa and California in the 1890s. The American work, which is marked with 'kt' (the US abbreviation for carat) rather than the British Commonwealth 'c' or 'ct', is distinguished by elongated shovel handles and almost triangular blades to the shovels. The compositions usually incorporate a panning dish and quite often grape leaves. All the examples seen so far have been 14kt. The South African work, which can be 9ct, 15ct or 18ct, is closer in compositional elements to the Australian, and often incorporates rope twisted around the handles and occasionally includes a diamond on the blade. There is also a similar range thought to have been made in Victoria in the 1890s, but no maker's marks are discernible. Canadian work is quite different, and usually has many small distinctive flattened placer nuggets incorporated into the piece.

From 1901 to 1970, 70-80% of Australia's gold production came from the 'Golden West', yet little of the jewellery produced remains in Western Australia. The reasons for this include: the source of the venture capital rarely being Western Australian; many of the presentation pieces made to celebrate the lucky strikes having been sent out of the colony; and much of what was created having met the fate of other jewellery during the Great Depression of the 1930s — it was melted down to obtain much-needed currency. As the wealth departed with the miners and syndicates, these souvenirs and gifts are more likely to be found in the miners' home countries. In recent years a number of pieces have been found in antique shops in the United Kingdom, where their provenance and significance to Australians are not known. They have been valued at little more than the metal content, yet when repatriated to Australia have fetched exceedingly high prices. Perhaps there is a chance for a different sort of gold rush, to forgotten corners of United Kingdom attics, leading to the return of these historic objects to Australia.



Figs. 22-23  
Coolgardie brooch by the Larard Bros. with the registration mark  
15ct gold, width 6.5 cm  
Western Australian Museum, Perth H89.348  
Photograph by Douglas Elford



Fig. 24  
The Golden Arrow brooch, 1890s  
18ct gold, width 6 cm  
Western Australian Museum, Perth CH74.226  
Photograph by Douglas Elford



Figs. 25-26  
Kalgoorlie brooch by George Richard Addis with personal maker's mark  
18ct gold, width 5.5 cm  
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra 2010.304  
Photograph Dorothy Erickson



Fig. 27  
Swans brooch by C.H. May, c.1895-1905  
15ct gold, amethyst, width 5.5 cm  
Western Australian Museum, Perth H88.642  
Photograph Douglas Elford

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