

Lord Dashalong and the hidden world of bookplates

Bookplates appear frequently in old and rare books. Some make you want to avert your eyes, but others have great artistic and historic appeal, feeding an active collecting community. Artists talented in woodcuts, linocuts, engravings and miniatures have often created bookplates that have considerable artistic imagination, and there has been much written on them. A couple of New Zealand examples are the work of Mervyn Taylor and Hilda Wiseman¹, the first expert in wood engraving and the latter in linocuts and miniatures of indigenous birds and flowers. A range of their work, particularly from the thirties, is easily found on line, and in the occasional second hand book. Taylor in particular didn't restrict the scale of his work; in his later years he went to the other extreme, producing a number of murals.²

If you have a historical mind however, it is the information provided from the bookplate that tickles the fancy. It might show that the book has belonged to someone notable, or just interesting, and what can be particularly nice is the association that comes from book ownership with others, perhaps the author or historical figures or events. Its part of provenance, and can add value, not unnoticed by dealers. So here are a few examples close to hand in early books on New Zealand and China.

William Yate was probably one of the least suitable of men to respond to the call to be a missionary. He came out to New Zealand in 1827, after a quick trip to Sydney brought back a small press and printed the first printed pages in New Zealand, their quality widely claimed as pretty dreadful. He took leave without permission, was accused of homosexuality, dismissed by the Christian Missionary Society, and offended his colleagues by promoting himself in his book published in 1835.³ In my copy there is the book plate of Octavius Browne on the inside front cover, it is not much more than his name printed with a decorated border. This is a nice side-issue, a circle of relationships and cross-Tasman travel in these early days. Octavius Browne (1809-1876) arrived in New Zealand in 1839, mooched around the Coromandel, Hauraki Gulf area trading spars with his brother and resisting the women offered for marriage from local chiefs, and then was present at the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. He returned to Australia, and after some time, being disheartened by attempts at settling, returned to England. He married, and then in 1847 sailed back to Melbourne where he became a successful farmer before returning to England in 1854, dying there in 1876. His life, assembled from letters, has been published on line.⁴

Browne must have had considerable interest in New Zealand before sailing, out, since he was among a number of previous settlers and visitors, and those with interest in immigration, such as Charles Enderby, John Nicholas and Joel Polack, who gave evidence at the 1838 House of Lords Select Committee of Enquiry into the state of things in New Zealand.

There is a splendid watercolour of Browne by Georgiana Huntly McCrae, painted in Melbourne in the 1840s, after his return from New Zealand. It is the archetypal depiction of



Octavius Browne, painted by Georgiana McCrae in Australia in the 1840s. National Gallery of Victoria.

the bright young British lad out for some adventure and profit in the new colonies. Georgiana McCrae was sister-in-law of Alexander McCrae who also sailed to the Bay of Islands, as ensign in Captain Richard Cruise's militia, arriving on the *Dromedary* in 1823. Cruise wrote his own iconic account, published in 1823⁵, and McCrae's own journal was later published in 1928⁶. Georgiana McCrae also painted Alexander's portrait.

Browne would have acquired Yate's book in London, perhaps seen as required reading for his colonial adventures. In all, it's an example of how old books can be more than print and paper.

Another Londoner with great interest in immigration schemes for New Zealand, Australia and Canada, and who also appeared before the House Select Committees on New Zealand, was Sir William Molesworth. He was a leading radical British politician and associate of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, helping in the establishment of the New Zealand Association and then Company in the 1830s. On the first NZ Company ship sailing to NZ, the *Tory*, was Wakefield's brother Col. William, his problematic son Edward Jerningham (who practiced hypnosis on Charles Heaphy on the voyage out), the company's naturalist, Ernst Dieffenbach, and their surveyor Heaphy. The latter was the future explorer and militiaman who was the first to win the Victoria Cross in New Zealand, although only after some vigorous lobbying since it wasn't the thing to award the medal to soldiers not in the regular army. Heaphy wrote an account of his early years, published in 1842.⁷

On the inside cover of my copy of Heaphy's book is the bookplate of Sir William Molesworth. Molesworth never came to New Zealand, though his brother Francis sailed out in an early voyage on the *Oriental* in 1840 with the Company supporter the Hon Henry Petre. Petre's father, Lord Petre, was a prominent support of immigration and the NZ Company, and reputed to have said, when questioned, how could he not be a supporter of colonisation, if nothing else it might solve the problems of what do with his children. Francis Molesworth bought land, but returned to England in 1846, though he left his name in a Wellington street. Sir William was eventually made Colonial Secretary in London in 1855, but died a little later. He would have had some acquaintance with Heaphy, being instrumental in the *Tory* sailing, ahead of British Government approval of Wakefield's immigration scheme. One side issue of Molesworth's bookplate is that it is inside a soft cover book, which you don't see a lot. This was the period when publishers were now issuing books in printed covers, particularly a comparatively slight work of only 142 pages.



Molesworth's bookplate depicts his family coat of arms, by far the most common illustration of this and earlier times. A similar one is that found in my copy of William Howitt's 1865 two volume history of Australia and New Zealand⁸. He had written an earlier history of colonisation in 1838⁹ from the safety of England, but in 1852 sailed for Australia with his sons and spent a couple of years there in the goldfields. He was a prolific author and wrote his history on his return to London, published in 1865. The bookplate in my copy, another coat of arms, is that of the Hopetoun family. The 7th Earl of Hopetoun (1860-1908),

whose estate was Hopetoun House, Scotland's finest grand estate, had an Australian connection, being Governor of Victoria at the age of 29, and then Governor General of the newly formed Commonwealth of Australia in 1900, having been created the 1st Marquess of Linlithgow. He is likely to have acquired the volumes sometime after their publication date of 1865, when he was only 5 years old. The books are unlikely to have been owned or read by his father, who is passed over quite quickly in the biographies, it being noted that he '... died of typhoid at the age of 42 after a brief life devoted to Paris and the Pytchley Hunt.'¹⁰

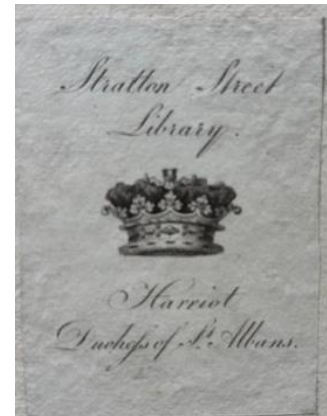
Another bookplate shows a link between both the secretary of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society and assistant secretary of the Aborigines Protection Society, Louis Chamerovzow, and a noted British art collector, John Sheepshanks. Chamerovzow wrote a fine, and very scarce work on *The New Zealand question and the rights of the aborigines*, published in 1848.¹¹ In that work he writes: *We simply deny to any Nation the right, on the plea of discovery, to seize upon another country which, at the moment of its being discovered, is already inhabited.* You will get the flavour of the book and the Society. This copy was owned by John Sheepshanks, (1787-1863), who after successfully running the family textile business, retired in the 1830s and devoted himself to collecting modern English art, which he left as the foundation collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum. He also had some reputation as man concerned with working class rights, and may have been connected with the Anti-Slavery Society. The Sheepshanks family was also related to Wilberforce, and the connections make sense of Sheepshanks' ownership of the book.

Early books on China went directly into the libraries of great families, particularly books which were products of the Macartney Embassy to Peking in the 1790s, famously mentioned by Jane Austen in *Mansfield Park*, published in 1814. The first of these, rushed out in 1795 and published before the official account written by the second secretary to the Embassy, Sir George Staunton, was by Lord Macartney's valet, Aeneas Anderson.¹² The book plate on the inside cover of my copy is that of the 2nd Earl of Sefton (1772-1838), sportsman and gambler, also known as Lord Dashalong for his habit of racing through the London streets in his carriage and four. He was a friend of the Prince Regent, and doesn't seem to have had any connection with Macartney or China; he doesn't actually give much of an impression of being a reader at all. His family seat was Croxteth Hall, the library of which is included in the bookplate.



The third in charge in the Embassy, Sir John Barrow, was very sneering about Anderson's account, suggesting it was full of inaccuracies, and after all, it was written by a valet. Ironically, Barrow's own account of the Embassy was later heavily criticized in turn for inaccuracies and for using other accounts. Barrow published his account of the mission in 1804, and three years later, wrote an account of the life of Lord Macartney, which included the first publication of Macartney's own journal, surprisingly a slightly neglected read these days. Barrow was close to Macartney from early days, and through his subsequent career, notably in South Africa; he went on to be a significant figure in the Admiralty in the 19th C. The bookplate in Barrow's life of Macartney¹³ is that of the Stratton Street library of Harriot Beauclerk, Duchess of St Albans, illustrated with the ducal coronet. The duchess started life

as a beautiful Irish actress (its all true!), initially marrying the ageing Thomas Coutts of banking fame in 1815. He died in 1822 leaving her very wealthy, and she then married William Beauclerk, 9th Duke of St Albans in 1827, having purchased her townhouse at 78 Stratton St, Picadilly, the address on her bookplate. William was 23 years her junior, and when she died in 1837, she left her fortune to her step-granddaughter Angela Burdett-Coutts (daughter of Thomas Coutts from his first marriage). Angela was the great friend and patron of Charles Dickens, bankrolling his philanthropic efforts such as establishing a refuge for fallen women in London. Well, that's all a long way from China, but the Duchess clearly saw that a library was an essential part of a role in London's highest society.



Barrow wrote another book based on his voyage with the Macartney Embassy, this on Cochin China (Vietnam) which was visited at the same time, and published in 1806.¹⁴ My copy has the armorial bookplate of Sir George Strickland. It could have belonged to any of three of the baronets, the 5th dying in 1808, his son the 6th in 1834 and his brother the 7th, who was slightly, though not much, more notable, as a politician in the years of the Reform Bill, plus being active in the Anti-Slavery Society. The family seat was Boynton in Yorkshire.

Around twenty years after Macartney, the British Government decided to try again and sent out a new embassy led by Lord Amherst, and comprising some old China hands such a George Staunton, John Francis Davis, Robert Morrison, along with the naturalist Clarke Abel and Captain Basil Hall, most of whom wrote accounts. The Embassy was a disaster, with Amherst refusing to kowtow and not having the Enlightenment sensibilities of Macartney, failing to get an audience with the Emperor, something that Macartney at least achieved by graciously bending the knee. The official account was by Henry Ellis, the second in command, taking care to include the word 'correct' in his title, perhaps to ensure he wasn't beaten by an unseemly version of an Aeneas Anderson.¹⁵ My copy has the bookplate of 'Charles, first Viscount Eversely of Heckfield in the County of Southampton'. Charles Shaw-Lefevre, 1st Viscount Eversley (1794–1888), was a whig politician, a bit run of the mill, until appointed Speaker of the House of Commons in 1839 in Melbourne's administration, retaining the post through changes of Government to 1855, becoming the second longest serving Speaker. He must have bought the book after 1855, since it was then that he was elevated to the peerage as Viscount Eversley, or else went through his existing library sticking in new bookplates reflecting his new nobility. According to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, he had "a high reputation in the House of Commons for his judicial fairness, combined with singular tact and courtesy." Perhaps he should have been sent to meet the Jia Qing Emperor instead of Amherst; although the latter's failure didn't stop him from becoming Governor-General of India.



Another voyager to China in the same period was the ship's surgeon, James Johnson. He sailed aboard the HMS *Caroline*, sent to the East Indies in 1803 with the news of the outbreak of war with France. The *Caroline* spent three years in the area between Bengal and China, written up by Johnson in an engaging account published on his return in 1807.¹⁶ Given the activities of the *Caroline* against the French, the armorial bookplate in my particularly fine copy has some interest in being: "Bibliothèque de M., Le Comte du Pont-Aubevoye d'Oysonville, Capitaine de Vaisseau", with his signature handwritten on the title-page. André Charles Théodore du Pont



D'aubevoye D'oysonville, Comte d'Oysonville (1784-1863) was a notable 19th C French navy officer, Capitaine de Vaisseau, that being the highest rank ship's captain in the navy. He joined the navy in 1802 and was later particularly famous for saving most of his men in the wreck of his command, the *Superbe*, off Paros in the Cyclades in Greece in 1833. The book is in such good condition that I suspect that Le Comte didn't really read it.

We go back a century to one of the great overland expeditions or missions to China. The Russian Tsar, Peter the Great sent one of the first official missions to China in 1719-1721, led by Lev Ismailov. John Bell, a Scottish physician well known to the Tsar, was a member of the mission. He had previously travelled in Persia for the Russians and after the China expedition, visited Constantinople where he married a Russian women with the un-Russian name of Mary Peters, before returning to Scotland in 1746. It was another 20 years before Bell decided to write his account, as recorded in the Quarterly Review (reviewing Ellis's account of Amherst's embassy)¹⁷: *'The history of this book is somewhat curious and not generally known. For many years after Mr. Bell returned from his travels, he used to amuse his friends with what he had seen, refreshing his recollections from a simple diary of occurrences and observations. The Earl Granville, then President of the Council, on hearing some of his adventures, prevailed on him to throw his notes together into the form of a narrative, which when done, pleased him so much that he sent the manuscript to Doctor Robertson, with a particular request that he would revise and put it into a fit state for the press. The literary avocations of the Scottish historian at that time not allowing him to undertake the task, he recommended Mr. Barron, a professor in the University of Aberdeen; and on this gentleman consulting Doctor Robertson, as to the style and the book of travels which he would recommend him to adopt for his guide, the historian replied "Take Gulliver's Travels for your model, and you cannot go wrong." He did so, and Bell's Travels has all the simplicity of Gulliver, with the advantage which truth always carries over fiction.'*

Bell's account of some three years of travel through Siberia and into China, published in 1863¹⁸, went into three editions and was still being referred to by writers on China through to the end of the 19th C. It's a great read. At the front of Vol. 1 is a very long list of subscribers, including many of the great and the good. One of them is Thomas Dundas, of Quarrell, in Scotland. And the bookplate in Vol. 1 is that of Thomas Dundas Esq, Upleatham, Yorkshire. The Dundas family was one of the wealthiest in Britain, mainly thanks to Sir Lawrence Dundas (1710-1781), the so-called 'Nabob of the North', who made his enormous wealth in trade, banking, property and canals. His son Thomas (1841-1820), who inherited something like £200M in today's money, was a politician and in 1794 was raised to



the peerage as the 1st Baron Dundas. This was his book, his estate being Upleatham, though it was pulled down in 1897 by a descendant, the Marquis of Zetland (how the nobility continued its upward trajectory). The Thomas Dundas of Quarrell in the subscribers' list looks like a nephew of the 'Nabob' and thus a cousin of the Lord Dundas of the bookplate. The book is in a contemporary binding with the bookplate attached after the binding, suggesting that the 2 vols might have been bound for Dundas himself. By the way, subscriber's lists are interesting reading. There in Bell's book, among the dukes, lords and bishops is Adam Smith. No mention of his great friend and fellow philosopher David Hume, but perhaps he lent him his copy.

Lastly, because you can go on forever on this subject without providing much of interest, I acquired a more recent book on China, Nicholas Dennys' book on Chinese folklore, published in 1876.¹⁹ Dennys was a journalist and civil servant who joined the Consular service in China in 1863. He subsequently resigned to edit the China Mail in Hong Kong until 1876, writing a book on the Treaty Ports, plus this study and classification of Chinese folk tales. While regarded in the West as a pioneer in the study, particularly in his attempts to relate Chinese fables and mythology with those of other cultures, the Chinese apparently didn't find much original in the work.²⁰ My copy has the bookplate of Dr Oscar Fischer (1885-c1980). Fischer was an Austrian lawyer who travelled to Shanghai in 1910 to take part in a trademark case for the Austrian consulate and ended up staying in private practise in the law firm Musso, Fischer and Wilhelm. The bookplate was designed by Fredrich Schiff (1908-1968), a notable cartoonist and graphic artist, who with good foresight arrived in Shanghai in 1929 and stayed safe from the Nazis, running a school of applied art, and having his cartoons, with their humorous view of Shanghai society, published in local newspapers.²¹ He left in 1947 to live in Buenos Aires until returning to Austria in 1954.



Dr Fischer had a son, Edmond, born in Shanghai in 1920 (d. 2021) who won the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1992, along with the great biochemist Hans Krebs. I knew of Fischer's published work during my (much inferior) research career, with an interest in protein kinase activation of plant enzymes.

There is one other piece of information to extract from the bookplate. It is signed, with a flourish, by Sir John Galvin (1908-1994). He started out in the newspaper business in Australia, New Zealand and England in the 1930s, then moving to South East Asia and investing in mining and shipping, becoming a multimillionaire. He moved to the US in the 1950s, becoming the greatest cattle baron in California. Amongst all this business and wealth, he presumably had time to acquire, and perhaps read, good books, although this particular copy has an unused feel to it. Flourishing your name across the bookplate of a previous owner somehow has the feeling of a multimillionaire about it.

[Thanks to Matt Wills at Harrington's in London for Dennys' book, and notes on the bookplate.]

¹ Georgia Prince. 'Wiseman, Hilda Alexandra', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, first published in 1998. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/4w22/wiseman-hilda-alexandra> (accessed 13 December 2024)

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- ² Holloway-Smith, Bronwyn, ed. *Wanted: The Search for the Modernist Murals of E. Mervyn Taylor*. Auckland, Massey University Press, 2018.
- ³ Yate, W. *An account of New Zealand; and of the formation and progress of the Church Missionary Society's mission in the Northern Island*. London: Seeley and Burnside. MDCCCXXXV (1835).
- ⁴ <https://www.mahurangi.org.nz/2020/03/03/octavius-browne/>
- ⁵ Cruise, R.A. *A journal of a ten months' residence in New Zealand*. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, Paternoster-Row. 1823.
- ⁶ McRae, A. *Journal kept in New Zealand in 1820 by Ensign Alexander McCrae, of the 84th Regiment, together with relevant documents*. (ed. F.R.Chapman, notes by J.C.Andersen). Alexander Turnbull library, Bulletin No.3. Wellington. Government Printer. 1928.
- ⁷ Heaphy, C. *Narrative of a residence in various parts of New Zealand. Together with a description of the present state of the Company's settlements*. London, Smith, Elder and Co., 65, Cornhill. 1842.
- ⁸ Howitt W. *The history of discovery of Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand, from the earliest date to the present day*. Two volumes. London, Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts and Green. MDCCCLXV [1865].
- ⁹ Howitt W. *Colonization and Christianity: a popular history of the treatment of the natives by the Europeans in all their colonies*. London: Longman, Orme, brown, Green & Longmans. 1838.
- ¹⁰ <https://hopetoun.co.uk/about/history/>. Accessed 21 June, 2022.
- ¹¹ Chamerovzow, L.A. *The New Zealand question and the rights of the aborigines*. London: T. C Newby. 1848.
- ¹² Anderson, Aeneas. *A Narrative of the British Embassy to China, in the Years 1792, 1793, and 1794; Containing the Various Circumstances of the Embassy, with Accounts of Customs and Manners of the Chinese; and a Description of the Country, Towns, Cities, &c. &c.* London: J. Debrett, 1795.
- ¹³ Barrow, J. *Some account of the public life, and a selection from the unpublished writings of the Earl of Macartney. The latter consisting of extracts from an account of the Russian empire; a sketch of the political history of Ireland; and a journal of the Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China. With an Appendix for each volume*. London: printed for T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1807.
- ¹⁴ Barrow, J. *A Voyage to Cochinchina, in the Years 1792 and 1793:...* London: Cadell and Davies, 1806
- ¹⁵ Ellis, Henry. *Journal of the Proceedings of the Late Embassy to China; Comprising a Correct Narrative of the Public Transactions of the Embassy, of the Voyage to and from China, and of the Journey from the Mouth of the Pei-Ho to the Return to Canton,* London, John Murray, 1817.
- ¹⁶ Johnson, James. *The Oriental Voyager, or Descriptive Sketches and Cursory Remarks, on a Voyage to India and China in His Majesty's Ship Caroline, performed in the years 1803-4-5-6. Interspersed with extracts from the best modern voyages and travels*. London: Printed by Joyce Gold, for James Aspern, Cornhill. 1807.
- ¹⁷ *Quarterly review*, vol 17, p 464, 1817.
- ¹⁸ Bell, John, *Travels from St. Petersburg in Russia to Diverse Parts of Asia*. Glasgow: for the Author by Robert and Andrew Foulis, 1763.
- ¹⁹ Dennys, Nicholas Belfield *The folklore of China, and its affinities with that of the Aryan and Semitic races*. London, Trübner & Co; "China Mail" office, Hong Kong, 1876.
- ²⁰ <https://www.orientalistica.com/en/articles/2852/215487>
- ²¹ <https://archive.metromod.net/viewer.p/69/2952/object/5138-8100869>