“will only reveal itself over time, through community interactions and ongoing explorations … in public art, community events and in personal journeys” (19).

Robert Vincent elaborates on this theme in his essay, “A Very Different World View,” arguing that the company’s former office “is not an isolated object but part of the wider collection and context that is Queenstown itself” (26). (Gaunt and Vincent were writing in May 2009. In 2010, staff from the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery and the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office commenced appraisal and transfer to their respective institutions of artifacts and company records; the reference library remains *in situ* at Queenstown.)

Ironically, Robert Sticht—who introduced the smelting processes that transformed the dense rainforests around Queenstown into a desolate moonscape for generations—was an early advocate for protection of Tasmania’s natural environment, a proponent of wilderness tourism, and a campaigner against industrial development on the Gordon River. His name is also memorialised in Queenstown’s public library. In western Tasmania, at least, the story of books and the story of landscape are inextricably entwined.


Reviewed by Elizabeth Webby

This handsomely produced volume makes a substantial contribution to our knowledge of reading in colonial Australia through its detailed examination of the records of a Tasmanian community library. As Keith Adkins explains, the manuscript catalogue of books and loans register of the Evandale Subscription Library, now held in the archives of the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston, “is unique in colonial Tasmania, and possibly the English-speaking world” (2). Very few other early records of library borrowings have survived, and none it seems includes as much detail about what was borrowed, besides listing donations to the library and the periodicals as well as books held in the collection.

Before making a detailed examination of these records, however, Dr. Adkins provides seven earlier chapters that set the library and its borrowers in a number of helpful historical contexts. He opens with a chapter, “Building on British Traditions,” that summarises the history of books and libraries in Britain from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries, noting the difference between circulating or commercial libraries and subscription ones, the growing significance of the novel and of periodical literature and the growth of bookselling. Given that the Evandale Library was established by the Reverend Robert Russell, a Presbyterian minister, and that many of the library’s subscribers were also members
of his church, Adkins focuses here particularly on Scotland, its publishing centre of Edinburgh and the ideas and practices of the Scottish Enlightenment.

In chapters two to four the focus shifts to Tasmania, as Adkins examines the books read by early colonists, the development of bookselling and publishing in the colony, and the growth of various types of library. While these chapters draw on earlier research by others, they include much new material, such as the section on convict station probation libraries, a topic Adkins has covered at greater length in a recent article in *Script and Print* (34.2 [2010]: 87–93). As he notes, the opening four chapters serve to “illustrate the literary, intellectual and social climate in which the Evandale library was founded” (36).

Chapter five introduces an earlier Tasmanian community library that served as a direct inspiration for the one at Evandale, the Bothwell Literary Society, founded in 1834. This was, according to Adkins, “the first community-based library in a country town in Tasmania—and, possibly, in Australia” (49). Although one should always be wary about proclaiming anything “the first,” I believe in this case the qualification is unnecessary. While begun as a discussion group, by their second meeting the gentlemen behind the Bothwell venture had decided they needed a library. Another Presbyterian minister, the Reverend James Garrett, chaired this meeting and among the subscribers were Robert Russell’s two brothers, Philip and George. Although the minute books for Bothwell have survived from 1834–56, along with a catalogue of the library published in 1856 and many of the actual books, there is no record of library borrowings as for Evandale.

After a chapter on the development of Evandale as a settlement, chapter seven provides an overview of the history of its library, established in 1847 with donations of 500 books; amazingly, it was still functioning until just after World War II. Adkins’s account, however, concentrates on the period until 1861, the one for which the most detailed borrowing records survive. In a departure from the practice of earlier subscription libraries in Sydney and Hobart, as well as the one at Bothwell, there appears to have been no attempt to exclude former convicts via balloting for membership, with several being regular borrowers from the library. As was the case with all lending libraries by the mid-nineteenth century, novels were more frequently borrowed than other types of books, making up 48 of the 50 most borrowed titles. While Sir Walter Scott’s novels were as popular in Evandale as elsewhere, an anomaly was the heavy borrowing of novels by Anna Eliza Bray, one of the many imitators of his historical romances. As Adkins notes in his detailed discussion of library borrowing in chapter eight, considered as individual novels, Bray’s were more popular than Scott’s, perhaps because many subscribers had by then acquired their own copies of the *Waverley Novels*.

In most other respects, the Evandale holdings and borrowings reflect trends elsewhere in Australia, though it is surprising to see so many of Jane Austen’s novels in the library. Adkins mistakenly assumes that Austen was as popular then
as she is today, reading the low level of borrowing of her works as ‘an indication of her widespread popularity: that is, subscribers had most likely read, and perhaps even bought, her works long before’ (122). Unlike Scott, however, Austen was not widely read during the nineteenth century, with very few of her works featuring in sales of private libraries, for example. Since works published in Australia or by local authors also rarely featured in libraries at this time, it is no surprise to find so few in the Evandale library: only Caroline Leakey’s novel _The Broad Arrow_ (1859), borrowed seven times between August 1860 and November 1861, and Louisa Anne Meredith’s _Notes and Sketches of New South Wales_ (1844), acquired in 1848 as part of _Murray’s Home and Colonial Library_. Adkins rightly notes the importance of periodical literature to colonial readers in providing information as well as entertainment, while also helping to maintain links with Britain. British periodicals were obtained in both parts and bound volumes and, while there are no records for borrowing of parts, bound volumes made up 9.6% of the total borrowings from the library between 1847 and 1861. The most often borrowed were the generalist magazines _Chambers’ Edinburgh Journal, Bentley’s Miscellany_ and _Chambers’ Miscellany_.

While most of those subscribing to the library were men, Adkins assumes that male borrowers also borrowed books for their wives and other family members. One female subscriber, Elizabeth Ralston, then in her seventies, borrowed 150 books between March 1847 and January 1857, of which two-thirds were fiction and poetry, and many of the remainder bound volumes of periodicals. It is, however, clear that men also read novels. Robert Russell, for example, donated Bulwer Lytton’s novel _Devereux_ (1829) and was one of the most consistent borrowers from the library, though his taste differed from the library average in that he borrowed more biographies and fewer novels. Even so, as he was not married, the novels he did borrow were presumably intended for himself. As well as several titles by Scott, they included Charlotte Bronte’s _Jane Eyre_ (1847), Jane Austen’s _Emma_ (1816), Charles Dickens’ _Bleak House_ (1853) and _The Old Curiosity Shop_ (1841), and five of the six books most frequently borrowed from the library, all fairly recent novels. In contrast, the loans made to schoolchildren after William Kidd (the Evandale schoolmaster) became librarian in 1856 were mainly works of non-fiction.

In addition to his own analyses of the library holdings, borrowings and borrowers, Keith Adkins provides twenty-five tables and five appendices that provide valuable information for others wishing to follow up his work. As Wallace Kirsop notes in his Preface to _Reading in Colonial Tasmania_, Adkins’s work is “a significant addition—carefully documented and presented—to the overall cultural map of European civilisation at its margins” (xiv), as well as an important contribution to both local and international book history.

Reviewed by Charles Stitz

In introducing this work, the author provides the following background information:

The popular notion of the antiquarian or second-hand bookseller as an amiable eccentric, hunting treasure, ‘sleuthing’ or engaged in flirtatious literary banter with transatlantic female customers remains as potent as ever, but most people know that the chief activity of any ordinary flesh-and-blood bookseller they are likely to encounter is rubbing out an old price and pencilling in a new and higher one. A customer may be curious to know what the bookseller paid for his wares, as indeed may the dealer himself. If he pays wildly various prices for stock, has a poor memory or numerous employees, and does not sell his books instantly or in the distant future, but in the perilous middle-ground (in which memory has already faded, but cost has not yet become irrelevant) the bookseller will probably find it useful to leave some record in the individual book of the price paid. If he does not wish all the world to know that figure, and to enable ill-bred colleagues to mock, cajole and chisel on that basis, he must take pains to disguise it. A price-code is the obvious means.

For the uninitiated,

An orthodox price-code consists of a series of non-repeating letters (usually a proper name, or a memorable word) that may be used to correspond to certain numbers (usually 1–9). When pencilled inside a book, it is generally used to conceal from the outsider the price paid for the volume, often a strikingly different figure from that which is now asked.

Thus, under the code KINGALFRED formerly employed by Bernard Quaritch, the letters ADD pencilled in a book would have signified an original purchase price of £500, the D in this code representing zero.

Ian Jackson was born in Montreal, but now calls Berkeley, California home. Under the nom-de-plume EXHUMATION (also one of his personal book-codes, presumably now superseded) he has written and published a witty and informative work on this little-publicised book-trade practice, revealing the codes used by more than a hundred booksellers and bookstores across the globe, but mainly in North America and the United Kingdom. He is careful, however, to respect the commercial confidentiality of his colleagues, and writes that codes still in active use by booksellers are printed anonymously and without comment unless he has received permission to identify them or they have already been recorded in print.

Price-codes, not necessarily limited to the book-trade, have been in use for a very long time. Most of the examples quoted in this work were used in the nineteenth