

*Blue silk Empire-line dress, About 1800–1813  
National Museum of Australia, On display in  
Settlers and Settling In, Horizons gallery.*

*Rear view of blue silk Empire-line dress,  
About 1800–1813, National Museum of Australia*

# Springfield

## SETTLES IN

In December last year a new exhibit became part of the National Museum of Australia's *Horizons* gallery. *Settlers and Settling In* features about thirty objects drawn from the *Springfield* Merino Stud and Faithfull family collections. Among the material on display is a rare military shako, a circumferentor made by prolific Italian instrument maker Angelo Tornaghi, a name plate from the door of an early Sydney ladies college, and a beaded cricket belt worn by the captain of the Sydney University Cricket team in which Edmund Barton played. Each object reflects the Faithfull family's experiences as soldiers, surveyors, teachers and pastoralists, and in so doing helps us to explore themes of early Australian migration and colonial settlement.

A thorough examination of the history of any of the objects on display in *Settlers* reveals a provenance that extends beyond the well-documented story of *Springfield* and the history of wool growing and pastoral development. Each of these objects has embarked upon a journey through time; many of them crossing vast oceans and national boundaries to be passed down through generations. Many of the objects connect with significant figures and events in Australia's history and establish important relationships between rural and urban societies. They have been cherished and valued by family collectors, and have now been passed into the hands of Museum professionals who have spent months cataloguing, photographing, researching and treating them for long-term storage and display.

*Settlers and Settling In* features an early nineteenth-century blue silk Empire-line dress. The dress is a favourite among many of the staff who have worked with the Faithfull family collection, and it is popular with Museum visitors, Jane Austen enthusiasts, costume and textile experts, and those who simply love a fancy frock. However, this dress is not significant for its aesthetic appeal alone. It is almost 200 years old, and like many of the individuals featured in *Horizons* it comes with a migration story.

Dating and identifying the original owner of the dress has been a collaborative effort between the Museum's curatorial, registration and conservation staff, experts working within the costume and textile field and the collection donors. The dress has been dated between 1810 and 1813 and we are almost certain it belonged to a Devonshire woman, Ann Deane, mother of Mary Deane, who would later marry pastoralist and founder of *Springfield*, William Pitt Faithfull. While unsure about the details of Ann Deane's life, we know she married Thomas Deane at Upton Pyne in Devon in 1807, and by 1813 had given birth to four of her six children.

The particular style of the dress has prompted several Museum visitors and staff members to ask whether it is an example of nineteenth-century maternity wear. The high waist, bib-front and looser fit would have offered Mrs Deane some comfort during her pregnancies. However fashion during this period was experiencing a classical revival inspired by Grecian robes, and the Empire-line style was popular among British and European women – with and without child.

Photos: Dean McNicoll





*Springfield homestead and William Pitt Faithfull, National Museum of Australia.*

Dress styles changed dramatically during the course of the nineteenth century and no fashion-conscious woman of this period would have worn an Empire-line dress beyond the late 1820s. Why then did Ann Deane keep this dress? It is not an 'occasion piece' but an everyday dress that shows signs of having been worn regularly. If Ann Deane was pregnant with four children when this style was fashionable, perhaps the dress was of great sentimental value to her. Or rather than reflecting nostalgically on the past, was she thinking of the future when she decided to preserve this garment? Among the vast range of ephemera that forms part of the Faithfull family collection, Museum staff found her will:

This Indenture bears witness that I Ann Deane late of Sydney now an Inmate of *Springfield* near Goulburn being of sound disposing mind and memory make this as my only Will and testament. Alas I have but little to give yet I hereby give devise and bequeath unto my daughter Ann Deane all and every thing that I may die possessed of mainly my wearing apparel

Ann Deane may have had an emotional connection with the dress but her will also suggests that a dress – particularly one made of valuable silk such as this – would have been an important family heirloom.

This heirloom travelled to Australia with Ann Deane when she and her son Robert, daughters Ann and Mary and grandson Edgar migrated to New South Wales in 1838. Ann Deane's husband Thomas had died over a decade earlier, and her children had been receiving an annuity of 1000 pounds a year from their Uncle Robert Deane, a captain in the West India Company marines, who died in 1827.

Australia, for the Deanes, and for many British immigrating during the nineteenth century, offered hope of a better life. Nevertheless, we are not sure why the Deane family left their Devonshire home. Unlike many of Britain's labouring poor who emigrated as assisted passengers, the Deanes were an educated family with some capital, who purchased their own fares to Australia,

but their decision to emigrate may have been governed by the overall economic and social instability of Devon, which was feeling the effects of the Industrial Revolution.

Wool and lace manufacturing industries within the Devonshire area were experiencing a difficult period of adjustment, as manual-based tools such as handlooms and spinning wheels were being replaced by less labour-intensive steam-powered looms and other machinery, though it appears the Deanes were not employed within the textile industry (although sewing samplers, lace doilies and other examples of embroidery within the collection reveals they were very accomplished in needlework).

When the Deane family embarked upon the three-month sea voyage to Australia in early 1838, the blue silk dress was not the only cherished possession among their luggage. The Faithfull family collection contains a range of objects and material brought from England by the Deanes, including sketches and paintings of English land and seascapes (by daughters Ann and Mary), scrapbooks filled with newspaper clippings, recipes and poetry, books – many of which have been inscribed with affectionate messages from friends left behind – and a number of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century dresses.

The dress would have shared a trunk with an extravagant green and floral brocade dress (c.1750) and a striking red, green and gold-striped silk dress (c.1785), both with wide skirts made voluminous by hip panniers. The dresses brought to Australia by the Deanes are among the rarest and oldest in the National Historical Collection.

After arriving in Sydney, the daughters Ann and Mary established the Misses Deane's school in Macquarie Place, a private institution where, according to a contemporary advertisement, young ladies were received as 'Parlour Boarders', to be educated in the usual departments of 'Polite Learning'. Girls were taught English, French, history, geography, and plain and ornamental needlework, for seventy guineas per annum. Music, drawing, dancing, Italian, writing, arithmetic and 'use of the globes' were

Photo: Dragi Markovic



Gallery Shots – Settlers and Settling In module,  
National Museum of Australia

also offered. An advertisement published in September 1838 by Sydney printer James Tegg presented the Misses Deane's school as a 'rare occurrence in scholastic education' where 'the discipline of a School will be combined with the comforts and indulgence of a home'. Macquarie Place was one of Sydney's smartest addresses until the 1840s, and a school for young ladies in this area would have been highly regarded. Lady Jane Franklin, wife of Sir John Franklin, the Lieutenant-Governor of Tasmania, refers to the Misses Deane's school in her diary of 1839, noting that the daughters of her acquaintance Lieutenant William Cox were pupils there. More significant in tracing the journey of the blue silk dress and other objects belonging to the Deanes was the attendance of Alice and Susannah Gibson. The Gibson girls were the nieces of William Pitt Faithfull, founder of *Springfield*, and it was during visits to the Deane's school that he met Mary.

Mary Deane and William Pitt Faithfull were married in 1844, and it was through this union that the dress found its way to *Springfield* in Goulburn. When William Pitt's new wife left Sydney and moved onto the property she brought her mother, sister and nephew. Mary and William Pitt Faithfull had nine children between 1845 and 1859, and it was their eldest daughter Florence who became the caretaker of the dress once her mother and aunt had passed away. Florence Faithfull became an avid collector, keeping hundreds of items left by family members when they moved away or died.

In the early 1950s Florence's niece and namesake, Florence 'Bobbie' Maple-Brown, was faced with the momentous task of sorting through the remarkable collection of material that had accumulated at *Springfield* for over 100 years. During renovations of the main homestead Bobbie converted two rooms of the nine-bedroom mansion into what was to become known as the Faithfull Family Museum. The blue silk dress and many others collected during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were hung in a wardrobe in the Family Museum, springing to life now and again when younger generations of the Maple-Brown family used them for dress-ups.

When the *Springfield* Merino Stud and Faithfull family collections arrived at the National Museum of Australia in late 2004 staff marvelled at the condition of the costumes and accessories. Five generations of care, the dry climate of Goulburn, and the dark cool wardrobe where the dresses had hung for over fifty years had preserved their vivid colours and largely prevented deterioration.

When the blue silk dress was selected as part of the *Settlers and Settling In* exhibit, the Museum's textile conservators set to work preparing it for display. The garment spent time in the freezer to eradicate any insects that may have been nestling among its silk folds. It was then vacuumed and carefully washed and pressed to reduce some of the stains and creases. Minor repairs were carried out – particularly to the blue silk ribbon that would have tied in a bow at Ann Deane's back – reinforcing and stabilising the dress for display.



Photo: Dragi Markovic

Gallery Shots – Settlers and Settling In module,  
National Museum of Australia

For its age this dress is in remarkable condition, but over almost 200 years it had lost its undergarments and accessories. Conservation staff recreated an appropriate petticoat and a small roll-shaped bustle pad that would have been tied below Anne Deane's shoulder blades to help lift the fabric – an important feature of the Empire-line style. Other necessary undergarments worn beneath this seemingly free-flowing dress would have included a shift, a chemisette to fill the low neckline and a soft corset complete with a busk (a centrally positioned strip of wood, bone or metal) to ensure correct posture. Ann Deane would have completed her outfit with a shawl, round-toed shoes, gloves, a fan and perhaps a parasol.

Visitors to the *Horizons* gallery can enjoy this beautiful example of early nineteenth-century costume and learn of its journey through history until March 2007, when another dress from the Faithfull family collection will take its place.

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