



THE *Springfield* Collection

AN EXEMPLARY CULTURAL GIFT

In late 2004 a team of staff from the National Museum of Australia spent several weeks at *Springfield Station*, in the Southern Tablelands south of Goulburn, packing and documenting nearly 1500 objects relating to the history of this pioneering merino sheep station. The '*Springfield Collection*' comprises an incredible range of material highlighting aspects of the pastoral economy (shearing equipment, wool samples, framed photos of stud rams etc) as well as all the paraphernalia of the household, illustrating the everyday lives of the property owners, the Faithfull and Maple-Brown families, from the early 1800s until the present day.

Family group at Springfield c. 1890
Faithfull family patriarch, William Pitt Faithfull, at centre, and Lucian Faithfull seated to his left. Standing to his left may be Florence and an unknown child. Lilian and Aunt Deane are to the right. William, Lilian and Aunt Deane all hold Australian terriers, while Lucian is accompanied by his kangaroo dog.



The 'Big House' at Springfield, 2004. The two-roomed museum was on the second floor to the far RHS of the house. Photo George Serras



The collection has now been transported to the Museum's Mitchell repositories for receipting and documentation. It will then be assessed by specialist valuers, prior to the official transfer to the National Museum via donation through the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA), Cultural Gifts Program.

The current owners of *Springfield*, Jim and Pamela Maple-Brown, Jim's sister Diana Boyd and their extended families are all highly aware of the significance to a wider group of people of continuing to preserve the historical objects relating to the property. Importantly, the objects speak not just of the work and economic success of the stud, but of the lives of the people who lived and created the *Springfield* story. The family are keen to share these stories with the audiences of the National Museum. As Jim Maple-Brown said recently in a newspaper article covering the expected sale of the property, he and his family wanted to get 'all the things that are of value to the Museum where they'll be looked after'.

History of Springfield


The *Springfield* story has its origins in 1827 when William Pitt Faithfull applied to take up land on the Goulburn Plains. He arrived in June the following year and built up *Springfield* as a source of food and supplies for the convict chain gangs who were constructing roads out from Sydney. By 1838 *Springfield* was ideally placed to supply sheep to those travelling south to Melbourne, and William Pitt took advantage of this by establishing *Springfield* as a merino stud.

In 1844 William Pitt married Mary Deane, who, with her sister Anne ('Aunt Deane') and her surveyor brother Edgar, moved to *Springfield*. The following year the first stone homestead, which today forms the foundation building of the 'Big House', was built, and by 1850 *Springfield* was well established and prosperous. William and Mary's family also prospered and in the fifteen years between 1844 and 1859 they had nine children, all of whom lived into adulthood.

It was their fifth and youngest son Augustus Lucian Faithfull who inherited *Springfield* on the death of William Pitt Faithfull in 1896 and who developed *Springfield* as a major merino stud. While managing and later owning the property, Lucian and his wife Ethel never lived in the Big House, which by the terms of his father's will was given over for her life to his older sister Florence. Florence (or 'Aunty Flory') never married or left *Springfield*, staying there from her birth in 1851 until her death in 1949, a period of ninety-eight years. It is largely this long occupancy and control of the Big House which resulted in the *Springfield* Collection. As other members of the family moved away or died, Florence would just close off their old room, thereby preserving the contents.

At Florence's death in 1949 the Big House was still firmly part of the Victorian era, without electricity, heated by wood fires and only managed with the help of a large team of servants. Renovations were finally undertaken by Lucian's second daughter, Florence, or 'Bobbie', who inherited *Springfield* through her father. In 1923, when she had married Irwin Maple-Brown they had resided on his Fonthill Station at Lake Bathurst, but they returned to *Springfield* to live with Bobbie's mother in 1944. The resurgence of profitability in the merino industry after the end of the Second





World War meant that in 1951 Bobbie and Irwin had the money to renovate the Big House. It was at this time that Bobbie carefully sorted through the considerable contents of the nine-bedroom mansion and decided to establish the *Springfield* or Faithfull Family Museum.

She selected two rooms in the older part of the house which had been occupied by Edgar Deane and had remained unchanged since his death. Many of his old surveying instruments were still stored in these rooms and to these she added a multitude of other family treasures including books, documents and photographs, devoting one of the rooms almost entirely to a vast array of clothing and accessories.

At the same time a large quantity of documents and books, now known as the 'Faithfull Papers', were presented to the National Library of Australia.

These rooms became a favourite place for Bobbie Maple-Brown who had become the custodian of family history. Luckily, Bobbie passed on this knowledge to her daughter-in-law, Pamela, who had married Bobbie's son Jim in 1947. She also imparted much information to author Peter Taylor, who taped her recollections for two publications about the history of *Springfield* (*Springfield: the story of a sheep station*) and her own life (*An Australian Country Life*), which were both published in 1986 by Allen & Unwin.

Today, Pamela Maple-Brown is the acknowledged family historian. Since she and Jim moved into the Big House in 1983 she has largely been responsible for the continued preservation of the *Springfield* Museum into the twenty-first century. The family has been invaluable to Museum staff during the packing of the *Springfield* Collection and unstinting in their information, help and hospitality. During the valuation process they will continue to provide information, and Museum staff will conduct oral history research with the family and others associated with *Springfield*, including many who worked and lived on the property.

The Springfield Collection

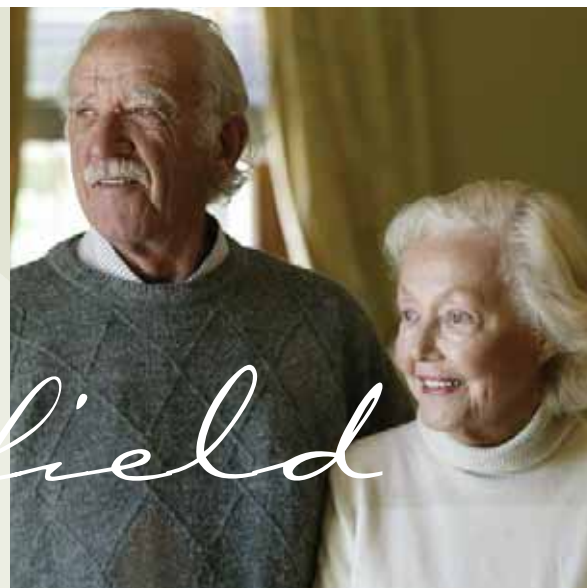
The *Springfield* Collection will become the largest donation to the National Museum made under the Cultural Gifts Program. Its significance lies not just in the number and range of objects and the wide coverage of important aspects of colonial history. What gives this collection exceptional value is the rich and secure provenance of the objects, the strong connections between objects (including photographs and official documents, personal reminiscences and letters), which enhances the collection's power to evoke a sense of the real fabric of life of their owners and users.

A good example of this is the landau carriage, which was ordered from Brewsters in New York by William Pitt Faithfull for his daughter Florence in 1889. It cost nearly \$US2000 dollars and was especially designed for the Faithfull family. As William Pitt was very tall and often wore his top hat while driving, the coach had to be made two to three inches higher than usual. The metalwork was silver-plated and the harness, identified with the family crest, was ordered from the highest quality leather and workmanship, recommended to be 'of the very best in every respect, but plain and nothing gaudy'. The quote comes from the paperwork associated with the original order, including Brewster's final account. There are many photographs of the landau taken in the 1890s, pulled by a pair of fine black horses wearing the stylish harness, and demonstrating the pride of the family in this beautiful carriage.

Clothing provides another important focus into the *Springfield* Collection. Garments dating from the early 1800s are made in silk and fine lace, with beaded ball gowns, wedding dresses including matching shoes and hats, children's clothing replete with fancy-if impractical-bonnets, school and military uniforms with insignia, and riding habits, including those specifically designed for ladies riding side-saddle and others (more daring) who chose to ride astride in the black silk 'free and easy' riding underwear. The objects appear in portrait photographs at weddings or in studios, or more informal family pictures posed on the verandas or at picnics on the grass.



Shearing the rams at *Springfield*, December 2004. Approximately 8000 sheep were shorn in little over one week. This may be the last shearing conducted on the *Springfield* property if in the future it ceases to be a merino stud.
Photo: George Serras



Jim and Pamela Maple-Brown at *Springfield* 2004
Photo: George Serras

These help many of the *Springfield* garments to come to life on their original wearers. Oral history suggests that many the clothes also extended their lives, if not their original purposes, by becoming dress-ups for younger generations of the Maple-Brown family.

Many other objects in the Collection are similarly supported, and their information extended, by documents and photographs. One such lively encounter is still recorded by weapons, a painting, an embroidered banner, photographs and documents, as well as several gold medals and a good dash of family oral history. This incident relates to the successful defeat of Ben Hall's gang after an attack on William Pitt Faithfull's four older sons in 1865. The story goes that Percy and George were accompanying their younger brothers Monty and Reggie to Goulburn on their return to King's School after the Christmas holiday break. When bailed up by bushrangers Ben Hall, John Gilbert and Johnnie Dunne, they returned fire. After quite a battle in which many shots were fired (and during which Gilbert shot his own horse in the head by mistake), the boys escaped their assailants and made it safely back to *Springfield* homestead. The next day Hall retaliated by sneaking back and stealing several *Springfield* thoroughbreds. Eleven years later the NSW government presented the brothers with a gold medal for bravery. Gold was scarce at the time, but William Pitt had three replicas made so that each son involved in the incident would be individually recognised.


The large number of photographs included in the *Springfield* Collection are especially important, not only for the context they often provide for an object, but for their ability to make the sheep station and many of those that lived on it come alive. Some of the black and white and sepia photographs are of exceptional quality, and they give unique insights into the *Springfield* story which would be unable to be provided by words alone.

Many of the old photos record regular events at *Springfield* such as Empire Day, when the whole station stopped work to celebrate, or picnic race meetings. In others special occasions have been captured. One records the day in 1895 when Lucien and Ethel Faithfull returned to *Springfield* in the new landau carriage after their honeymoon; while another was taken in 1898 when the wedding of Lilian Faithfull to Station manager Hugh Anderson

was celebrated by the entire *Springfield* population of over 100 people. In both of these instances it is amazing to see the main entrance to the Big House decorated with wreaths of flowers and adorned with banners and flags.

The photographs also bear witness to other family traits. Many show their obsession with various domestic animals, and not just the grand and famous stud rams, such as *Grand Prince* or *Royal King*. They shared a passion for fine horses, a variety of pet and working dogs and even for tame birds. Mary Faithfull (wife of William Pitt) for example, kept four caged parrots. These are described in a personal reminiscence written by her niece Hope Faithfull describing visits to *Springfield* in the 1880s. They can also be glimpsed, perched on chairs or arms, in various early photographs. Before the 1890s the long exposure times needed for photographs meant that people usually look very stiff and formal, whereas animals such as dogs (and definitely birds), just could not stay still and so turn into fluffy or feathery blurs!

There has already been a great deal of publicity about the intended gift to the nation of the *Springfield* Collection and many members of the public have contacted the Maple-Brown family and the Museum to offer advice and other assistance, their own recollections or just to find out more information. This interest suggests that this is indeed an exemplary Cultural Gift which will result in enriched information about our cultural heritage or even further cultural gift donations.

The Museum believes that the Certificate of Donation for the *Springfield* Collection will be signed this financial year ahead of a decision by the Cultural Gifts Committee. When legal title to the Collection has passed to the National Museum of Australia, staff will prepare the objects for exhibition and public access at the earliest opportunity. 

Carol Cooper, Manager,
Registration

