

STORIES FROM THE NATIONAL HISTORICAL COLLECTION



Below: Doulton ceramic jug
Photo: Dragi Markovic

Left: Doulton Kangaroo Figurine
Photo: George Serras

Objects in the National Historical Collection have fascinating stories to tell. Over the coming issues *Friends* will take a closer look at an object or objects, and the connections they make to Australia's history and culture.

KANGAROOS FROM THE TERENCE LANE COLLECTION



One of the most engaging exhibits in the *Nation* gallery is the collection of kangaroo objects collected by former National Gallery of Victoria curator, Terence Lane, and displayed as 'Hopping Mad', an exhibit dealing with this symbol of Australia.

The 190 objects in the Terence Lane collection show that designers have long been interested in the kangaroo. Lane spent twenty years building this collection, fascinated by the ingenious ways in which he saw the kangaroo incorporated into decorative designs: 'In the 1970s, when I seriously began to collect kangaroos, my interest was always design-based. I never ceased to be amazed, and sometimes amused, by the way designers and crafts-people all over the world manipulated this Australian symbol to their own ends.'

Of the many kangaroo objects of all dimensions and materials in 'Hopping Mad', one in particular attracted my attention, an object produced in the nineteenth century by the Doulton pottery company. British manufacturers had recognised by the late 1870s that Australian flora and fauna provided many creative opportunities. Doulton was particularly inspired by Australian motifs, and its Lambeth and Burslem studios developed a range of 'Australian' pieces for the 1879 Sydney International Exhibition. Doulton established a Sydney distribution agency in 1883, and also expanded its range of wares depicting Australian flora, fauna, and pioneering history.

A ceramic jug by nineteenth-century British ceramic artist Hannah Barlow, of Doulton's Lambeth pottery in South London, is part of the Terence Lane collection. Barlow was one of Doulton's star ceramic artists. As a child, she observed nature closely, and was encouraged to sketch the plants and animals she encountered on walks through the countryside. Later in life she kept a small private zoo. In 1868 Barlow entered the Lambeth School of Art, and in 1871 became the first woman artist to work at Doulton's Lambeth workshop.

The Hannah Barlow jug on display in 'Hopping Mad' is a representative example of the late-nineteenth-century Doulton Lambeth style, and is of salt-glazed stoneware in pale earthy colours enlivened with a glossy blue glaze and incised patterning. Barlow was strongly influenced by the work of Japanese artists, and was able to draw on paper or incise on wet clay almost instantaneous likenesses of various animals. The central portion of the jug carries one of Barlow's characteristic 'sgraffito' sketches: she is well-known for her spirited renderings of dogs, horses, sheep and English country scenes, but this time her subject is, of course, kangaroos. The frieze of five kangaroos on the Hannah Barlow jug in the Terence Lane collection has been formed with the fewest possible lines, yet represents the animals in realistic stances and in a naturalistic, grassy setting.

Barlow's use of this motif continues a tradition dating back to the late eighteenth century, when representations of the kangaroo based on drawings from the *Endeavour* voyage were all the rage in England. Her interest in the kangaroo as a decorative motif may have been aroused by preparations for the Sydney International Exhibition in 1879. Barlow's first dated example of a kangaroo motif appears on an 1878 tea set sold only in Britain. Her kangaroo designs were particularly popular in England, and appeared regularly on her work for Doulton. 🇦🇺

Roslyn Russell – with thanks to Guy Hansen, Curator, *Nation*