

STATE TREASURES

What makes an object a "State Treasure"? To me, the object should have significance beyond that of its own community. It should be associated with an important person or event - possibly with someone or something that helped shape Australia's history.



Patriotic drawing, Warooka Museum.

Photo courtesy Jenny Oldland, Pioneer Printing Office, Yorketown

History curators have worked out criteria for determining the significance of objects. To list the main ones, an object or collection may be particularly significant if it:

- was designed, manufactured or used locally
- was in common use
- was the first or last of a kind or series
- demonstrates a change of scale or technology
- reflects creative or technical accomplishment
- was associated with a famous personality, event or place, or with wider historical themes.

Most museums in this State have objects or collections which are important not only to their own history, but to that of the wider community as well. Which objects in your collections do you think have this wider significance? If you believe that they are "State Treasures", write in with your assessment. Send in black and white photos as well as descriptions of the object/s, and we'll publish examples in each issue. For this issue, I've selected a couple from museums I visited recently in the southern Yorke Peninsula.

Patriotic drawing

Patriotic drawing by George White, a local artist, of the main street in Warooka, 1916, flanked by British and Australian flags. Drawn in pen and ink on a wooden base, with a carved wooden frame. The text reads: 'Greetings from Warooka, while the subtext says: 'Success to the Allies and God Bless Our Boys,' and "designed for the Warooka Patriotic Sports and Races, Sept 22nd 1916." The drawing is thought to have been auctioned at Warooka during a patriotic fundraising day in 1916. It was donated to the Warooka Museum by a local family in the early 1980s.

This picture seems to me to be a 'State Treasure,' representing one response of a local community to an event which was cataclysmic for Australia. It was executed at a time of great uncertainty as to the outcome of the war, but after some of the more horrifying battles, at Gallipoli and on the Somme, when there had also been considerable anguish and deprivation at home. It is significant because of its association with these events.

Stump Jump Plough

This adorns the entrance area to the Ardrossan National Trust Museum, part of the building which formed the original factory of Clarence Smith, inventor of the stump-jump plough.

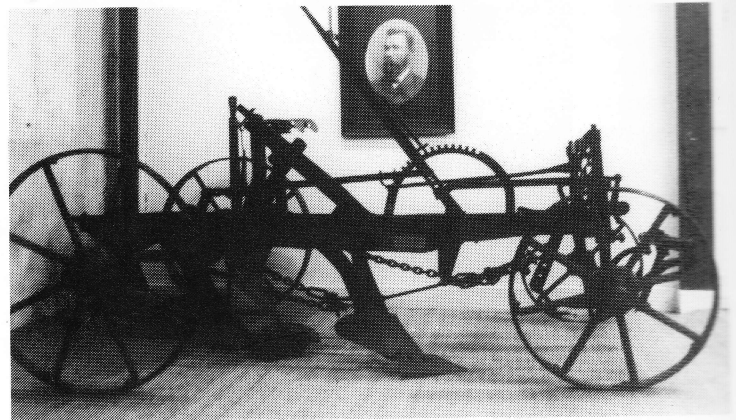
The plough on display is an example of those made at the factory. It is a four-furrowed plough, probably made in the 1890s, with a spring release which was a later development of the fundamental mechanism. It is of cast iron construction and has been restored by members of the museum. The portrait of Clarence Smith, the inventor, shares pride of place in the museum's display galleries.

I argue that this item is a "State Treasure". It is one of a handful surviving from the Smith foundry. Most of the others are also in the Ardrossan Museum, but they are in worse condition and not so old. There are one or two in other museums - Kadina for example - but they do not have the distinction of being in the original foundry. (This is not to say that they aren't still significant!). The object represents creative accomplishment, a change of technology, and one with sweeping implications for Australia's agriculture - it probably was as important as

the Ridley stripper in this regard. In addition it was designed and manufactured in the same building that now gives it pride of place as an exhibit.

The portrait of the inventor is also of interest and significance, and it is appropriately exhibited with the plough which made him famous.

Geoff Speirs



Clarence Smith plough
Photo courtesy G. Speirs