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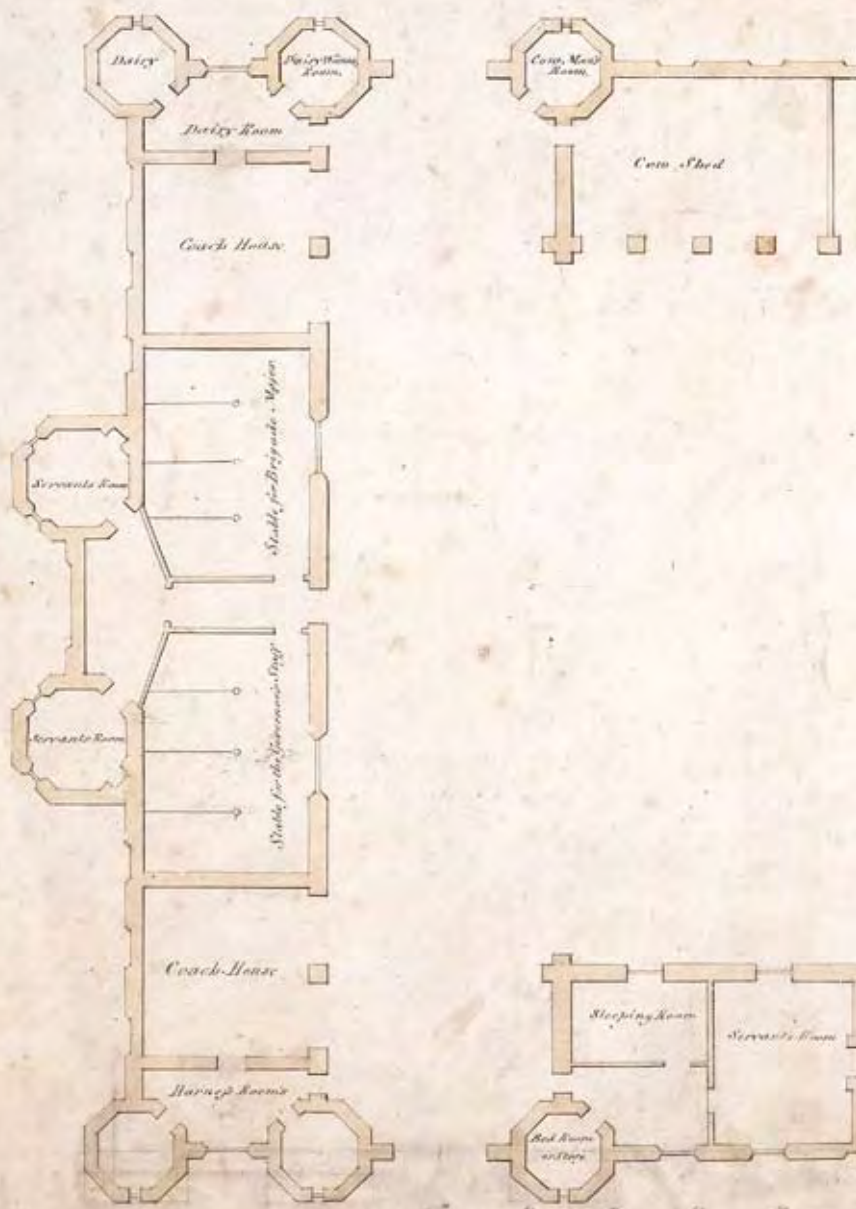
# EQUINITY



IN THE PICTURE GALLERY



Scale of Sixty Feet.



Scale of Ninety Feet.

PLAN and ELEVATION of the GOVERNOR'S STABLE

# EQUINITY

IN THE PICTURE GALLERY



State Library  
of New South Wales

The Picture Gallery presents highlights from the State Library's collections. The State Library acknowledges the generous support of the Nelson Meers Foundation and the assistance of the volunteer guides in the Picture Gallery.

**A free exhibition from 8 October 2007 to 13 January 2008**

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**Fine art prints of artworks from this exhibition can be ordered from the Library Shop, telephone (02) 9273 1611 or email <[libshop@sl.nsw.gov.au](mailto:libshop@sl.nsw.gov.au)>.**

Cover: *A meet of the Melbourne Hunt Club* (detail), 1893, Herbert James Woodhouse, ML 463

Inside cover: *Plan and Elevation of the Governor's Stable and Offices at Sydney, New South Wales, 1820*, 1820, Francis Greenway, V1/Pub/Gov S/1

## Foreword



*Equinity* brings to light a selection of some 40 fine examples of equestrian art drawn from the State Library's collections, with many displayed in our galleries for the first time. This exhibition focuses on the engagement of colonial artists with the horse as a subject and considers how their works relate to the significance of the horse in nineteenth century Australia.

On display are oil paintings, pencil drawings, watercolours, aquatints and lithographs by both professional and amateur artists from the colonial period. This selection of paintings not only reveals the impressive achievements of artists categorised as 'sporting artist' or 'animal painter' (and who therefore are little known), but also highlights the horse in works by artists well known for their contributions to other artistic genres.

Selected by curator Lisa Loader, these works provide us with a wide-ranging view of the colonial horse. They demonstrate the ubiquitous presence of the horse and highlight its value to the European settlers who came to these shores from the late eighteenth century.

Regina A Sutton

NSW State Librarian & Chief Executive

# Equinity



The first documented members of genus *Equus* to set foot on the continent were nine horses obtained from the Cape of Good Hope and transported to Port Jackson with the First Fleet in January 1788. Seven were government owned (one stallion, three mares and three foals), with two horses owned by marine officers.<sup>1</sup>

The horse population of the colony increased — slowly at first — through quality imports and local breeding to number 4532 by 1822, significantly less than the number of people of European origin at the time (approximately 26 500).<sup>2</sup> The early horse imports were driven by the enormous passion for horse sports, the suitability and profitability of breeding, and the need for reliable horses to assist with developing the colony. Horses had become so plentiful by 1870 that the Hon. John Creed observed: ‘almost everyone in the country had a saddle-horse’.<sup>3</sup>



Above: *Promenade  
Coogee Beach*,  
c. 1870–1895,  
Harold Brees, V/2

Pictorial records featuring the horse can be found from as early as 1804 in a depiction of the Castle Hill uprising.<sup>4</sup> Horses featured in almost every aspect of nineteenth century life and appear within narrative artworks depicting scenes of exploration, trade, and bush and city life. The demand by owners to have prized horses documented, and to acquire works depicting horse sports, saw professional artists produce a significant number of such works.

Although the content of these works is Australian, the form is predominantly British, adhering to the pictorial conventions for sporting and animal art widely promulgated through engravings and prints that were readily available in the colony. The majority of professional artists working in the colony during this period were born and trained in Europe.

Lisa Loader  
Curator

## Portraiture



During the early nineteenth century, Arab horses and thoroughbreds were brought to the colony in significant numbers for breeding and sports such as racing, steeplechasing and hunting. There was a sharp increase in thoroughbred arrivals from the 1830s when these pursuits were well established. <sup>5</sup>

This increase in blood or pedigree horse ownership generated a significant market for professionally painted equine portraits by specialists such as Edward Winstanley, Joseph Fowles and Frederick Woodhouse Senior — all arrived in the colony between 1833 and 1858.



The demand for such works, by owners keen to celebrate their equine possessions and document important sporting achievements, is evident in the way artists advertised their services in the press. For example, Joseph Fowles stated in 1858 that he would ‘paint pictures of Australian “cracks” and will dispose of engravings of horses from his own pictures’.<sup>6</sup>

In early nineteenth century Britain there was a strong demand for equine portraits, as indicated by artist Ben Marshall on his reason for going to Newmarket:

I have good reason for going. I discover many a man who will pay me fifty guineas for painting his horse, who thinks ten guineas too much for painting his wife.<sup>7</sup>



The British approach to equine portraiture provided the model for colonial artists, with George Stubbs particularly influential in the development of this genre. Stubbs extensively documented the emerging English breed, the thoroughbred, during the second half of the eighteenth century.

Colonial equine portraits, such as *Flying Buck*, based on a work by Frederick Woodhouse Senior, comfortably fit within the genre’s parameters. The pose varied little: the horse was usually presented in a full-length side-view with head in profile, sometimes including informative props or background; racehorses were often depicted at a racecourse, with jockey up and grooms or owner present.

Above left: *Nazeer Farrib: A high caste Arab, the property of Jas. Raymond Esqr. of Varroville*, 1846, Edward Winstanley, ML 282

Above right: *Race horse and jockey*, c. 1850, Joseph Fowles, ML 427

—  
Opposite page: *Flying Buck: The winner of the first Australian Champion Sweepstakes, October 1st 1859*, c. 1859, De Gruchy & Leigh after Frederick Woodhouse Senior, DG XV\*/Gen/7

Portrait commissions of champion racehorses, prized steeplechasers, hunters and blood horses were obtained from the *petit bourgeois*, the wealthy, and high-ranking government officials. These works of portraiture — along with lithographic prints that could be mass-produced and sold to the general public — provided a reliable source of income for a number of artists.



The horse was also depicted in the portraits of colonial residents to enhance the owner's status, as in *Commissioner Henry Bingham* (artist unknown). Publican Stephen Butts chose this approach (*Stephen Butts on a white horse, Macquarie Street, Sydney*, by Joseph Fowles). Butts' portrayal references those of political leaders and royalty who are similarly shown on horseback in oil paintings from the sixteenth century onwards. This painting also demonstrates Butts' great pride in his possessions.

The white horse appears regularly in colonial equestrian works, and this is likely for two main reasons: the availability of Arab horses and for their symbolic qualities of purity, valour and bravery.



The emergence of photography in the late nineteenth century ultimately led to a decline in commissions and the end of an era in equine portraiture. Frederick Woodhouse Senior commented on this situation:

A Melbourne Cup always meant £100 to me and the work occupied about a fortnight, but photography knocked me out. Now an owner can get a picture of his horse in a sixpenny weekly, or for nothing — wrapped round the meat.<sup>8</sup>

Photography was to have a significant impact on the related field of sporting art, as it changed the manner in which artists depicted the gait of the horse in motion.

Opposite page: *Beagle*, an Australian bred horse by *Skeleton*, the property of *Capt. PP King, RN*, 1839, James Lethbridge Templer, SV\*/Hors/5

*Commissioner Henry Bingham*, c. 1840s?, artist unknown, ML 632

—  
Below: *Stephen Butts on a white horse, Macquarie Street, Sydney*, c. 1850  
Joseph Fowles, DG 250



## Sporting pursuits

Horse sports were popular from the early days of settlement and typically centred on racing, steeplechasing and hunting. Most equine portrait artists produced images of sporting pursuits as original works and prints. For a number of artists sporting art was a particular focus.

Race meetings were held at Parramatta and in the Hawkesbury River district soon after settlement. The first official race meeting in NSW was held over three days in October 1810 on the Old Race Course (now known as Hyde Park). This meeting, organised by officers of the 73rd Regiment, confirmed that the sport of English racing had been ‘successfully transplanted in the colony’.<sup>9</sup>

The earliest recorded steeplechase event in the colony was staged over five miles (8 km) between the Sydney suburbs of Botany and Coogee in 1832.<sup>10</sup> The popularity of this sport saw a series of three annual steeplechase events being held during the mid 1840s, the Hawkesbury Stakes. This race was held over a three-mile (4.8 km) course at Mr Charles Abercrombie’s estate, located at present-day Birkenhead Point. Scenes from the first race of this series are shown in *Five-Dock grand steeple-chase, 1844*.

Mounted hunts were organised from the early 1800s and quarry included the kangaroo, emu, wallaby and dingo. Formal hunt clubs, soon established in districts where sportsmen settled, retained many of the British hunt’s customs, along with its status as an upper-class pastime.<sup>11</sup>

*A meet of the Melbourne Hunt Club* by Herbert Woodhouse shows members closely adhering to the formal dress of the English



hunt. The quarry of these hunts continued to be native animals until imported species, such as the red deer, fox and hare, became available in the 1870s.

Artworks depicting horse sports, popular in Britain from the early eighteenth century, led to artists developing conventions in the choice of phase or stage shown. This approach is evident in representations of colonial sports. The scenes depicted in *Five-Dock grand steeple-chase* reflect stages usually included in British works of similar race events, including the start or first leap, floundering in the brook, clearing a fence or wall, and the finish. The prints of British artist Henry Thomas Alken were influential in depicting steeplechasing, effectively providing a template for colonial artists.

In typically British style, *A meet of the Melbourne Hunt Club* focuses on the most formal phase in the standard hunting narrative: the meet. This phase is less frequently represented in colonial works as most artists chose to depict the thrill of the chase. These works often show the hunter in a downhill gallop negotiating an array of natural obstacles in pursuit of native quarry, with a landscape of eucalypts and grasstrees. Samuel Thomas Gill's depictions of the hunt — and the availability of his lithographs such as *The chase* — were particularly influential in the representation of colonial hunting scenes by other artists.<sup>12</sup>

Sporting artists also developed a style of treatment for a group of horses galloping called the 'rocking horse' or 'hobbyhorse' gait, with front and back legs fully extended. W Scott's depiction of *A race meeting at Petersham* is a good example of this treatment. This work also shows the common practice of flattening and elongating the horse to suggest speed, while stretching the head and neck to emphasise effort.<sup>13</sup>

Opposite page: *The brook, Five-Dock grand steeple-chase*, 1844, Thomas Balcombe after Edward Winstanley, PXD 659

*The stone wall, Five-Dock grand steeple-chase*, 1844, Thomas Balcombe after Edward Winstanley, PXD 659

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Below: *A race meeting at Petersham* (detail), c. 1845, W Scott, V1/Race/1





The work of British photographer Edwarde Muybridge during the 1870s had a dramatic effect on the use of this pictorial convention. For the first time, a sequence of photographs captured by a series of cameras demonstrated how a horse galloped. The resulting images showed that a horse's feet were indeed all off the ground at one



moment, but it was when they were bunched together under the body. Muybridge's photographs revealed the fallacy of the 'rocking horse' gait, which was phased out after his photographs were published.

Above: *Kangaroo hunting*, n.d., in 'HO Lamb, The Floral Album', 1862, Thomas Balcombe (attributed), PXA 7123 f.77

## More work than play

The horse in colonial Australia was employed as a draught animal for agriculture and industry, and as a saddle, pack and carriage animal for leisure, transportation, exploration and livestock management. Artworks by both professional and amateur artists extensively document the horse in these roles. The mounted bushranger and stockman were particularly popular, along with scenes of the working carriage horse.

Below left: *Mortimer William Lewis out driving*, c. 1838–40, Edward Winstanley (attributed), SV\*/CARR/1

Below right: *View of a man on horseback* (detail), 1892, Percy Frederick Seaton Spence, DG SV\*/GEN/33



Artists depicted the variety of horse-drawn passenger vehicles from Cobb & Co coaches traversing the countryside, to private gigs going about the town. Many of these images reference the compositions of British artists whose works were widely available as prints and engravings. For example, FG Lewis and Edward Winstanley's *New Post Office, George Street, Sydney* is derived from James Pollard's coaching prints.

The driving of horse-drawn vehicles was considered a sport when undertaken by a gentleman and was regularly included in the repertoire of colonial artists. Works focusing on other aspects of colonial life, particularly stock work and bushranging, also reference conventions of sporting art in their depiction of the horse in motion.





Above: *Outward bound*, c. 1862–1863, Samuel Thomas Gill, PXA 1983 f.19

Below: *Bushranger and police, Sep 17, 1875* (detail), 1875 George Hamilton, DG SV\*/GEN/17

Settlement of outlying regions accelerated during the 1830s and the stockman was increasingly in demand. It is from this period that illustrations of stock work begin to appear, mostly produced by amateur artists directly involved in station activities.<sup>14</sup> The drawings in John Stirling's 'Sketches in the Station Wyong N.S.W 1884' are typical examples. Professional artists including Samuel Thomas Gill and William Strutt depicted this facet of colonial life from the 1850s.

The stockman is often shown rounding up cattle, galloping down a hillside or over rough country, riding out to or returning from stock work, or undertaking duties in cattle yards. In works such as William Strutt's *Black Thursday 1850: The track of death*, the mounted stockman is depicted battling the harsh conditions of the

Australian bush. Artworks of the late nineteenth century begin to show the stockman in an heroic manner, as in Percy Spence's *View of a man on horseback*.

It was predominantly stockmen, with their superior horsemanship and bush knowledge, who became bushrangers.



Right: *Party landed from HMS Rattlesnake*, 1849, Thomas Huxley, DG SV\*/EXPLO/1

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Opposite page: *The Start of the Burke and Wills exploring expedition from Royal Park, Melbourne, August 20, 1860, 1861*, William Strutt, ML 373

*Landing horses from Australia* (detail), c. 1834, Artist unknown, DG SV\*/Hors/1(a)



Their horsemanship was central to the bushranging myth<sup>15</sup> with bushrangers often depicted in flight at great speed on their impressive (and often stolen) mounts.

Instances of bushranging escalated from the mid-nineteenth century. This was due to the discovery of gold in the 1850s and later, in the 1860s and 70s, to poor squatters' sons being drawn to the more exciting and profitable life of bushranging. Passenger coaches such as Cobb & Co were frequently robbed.

Horsemanship was the key to successful land exploration for much of the nineteenth century. Horses were employed in this field from as early as 1802, when George Caley explored the region west of Sydney, although exploration parties were not usually fully mounted until the late 1840s.<sup>16</sup> Horses participating in expeditions ranged from Timor ponies to the colonial saddle horse the Waler, named after its place of origin, New South Wales. By the 1870s camels were replacing horses to explore the arid inland.

Amateur on-the-spot works, such as *Party landed from H.M.S Rattlesnake* by Thomas Huxley, typically depict the horse as part of a significant milestone or novel event. Professional artists



were more likely to feature the horse within a standard narrative sequence that may include the departure, early stages of the journey, expedition threatened by adverse conditions, and the return.<sup>17</sup>

Walers, predominantly a mixture of Arab and thoroughbred, were used in the colony and exported for use as remounts by the British Army. The first shipment of 32 left the colony for India in June 1834. These horses were in demand until the 1930s. Artworks such as *Landing horses from Australia* highlight some of the difficulties associated with this trade. Subsequently, 'Waler' became the term commonly used for an Australian horse abroad.<sup>18</sup>





Above: *The chase* (detail),  
c. 1856, Samuel Thomas  
Gill, PX\*D 384 f.24

These artworks reveal the spirit of colonial life and the significant role of the horse.

Horses were the focus of leisure and sporting pursuits, provided unparalleled assistance as working animals and attracted revenue to the colony through the export trade in *Walers*. For these reasons the horse was a valuable commodity throughout the nineteenth century and held in high esteem.

The settlers' desire to recreate aspects of the English lifestyle is also reflected in these works, highlighting the adaptations required to accommodate the unique environment of colonial Australia.

The influence of British cultural forms on depicting colonial life is evident, due in part to the ready availability of sporting prints and engravings by British artists, along with the fact that most professional artists working in the colony were born and trained in Europe.

## Footnotes

1. Keith R Binney, *Horsemen of the first frontier (1788–1900) and the serpent's legacy*, Volcanic Productions, Neutral Bay, 2005, p. xvi

2. Carol J. Baxter (ed.), *General muster and land and stock muster of New South Wales 1822*, Sydney, ABGR in association with the Society of Australian Genealogists, 1988.

3. Nanette Mantle, *Horse and rider in Australian legend*, Carlton, Miegunyah Press, 2004, p. 41

4. *Ibid.*, p. 5

5. Jack Pollard, *The pictorial history of Australian horse racing*, Sydney, Lansdowne Press, 1981, p. 22

6. Joan Kerr (ed.), *Dictionary of Australian artists*, Sydney, Power Institute of Fine Arts, University of Sydney, 1984, p. 271

7. Judy Egerton, *British sporting and animal paintings, 1655–1867: A catalogue*, London, Tate Gallery for the Yale Center for British Art, 1978, p. 191

8. Colin Laverty, *Australian colonial sporting painters: Frederick Woodhouse and sons*, Sydney, David Ell Press, 1980, p. 46

9. Pollard, *op.cit.*, p. 14

10. *Ibid.*, p. 48

11. Mantle, *op.cit.*, p. 99

12. *Ibid.*, p. 106

13. Laverty, *op.cit.*, p. 38

14. Mantle, *op.cit.*, p. 65

15. *Ibid.*, p. 148

16. Glen McLaren, *Beyond Leichhardt: Bushcraft and the exploration of Australia*, South Fremantle, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1996, p. 31

17. Mantle, *op.cit.*, p. 162

18. AT Yarwood, *Walers: Australian horses abroad*, Carlton, University Press at the Miegunyah Press, 1989, p. 16

# Item list

For more information about these images as well as thousands of others in the Library's collections, go to the State Library's pictures and manuscripts catalogue online at <www.sl.nsw.gov.au>.

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*Stephen Butts on a white horse, Macquarie Street, Sydney*, c. 1850  
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Presented by Sir William Dixon, 1938  
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**2** Joseph Fowles (1810–1878)  
*Captain Frederick John Butts and a fellow officer of the 77th (East Middlesex) Regiment of Foot, Hyde Park, Sydney*, 1858  
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DG 251

**3** Artist unknown  
*Commissioner Henry Bingham*, c. 1840s?  
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**4** IW Dean  
after Henry Bernard Chalons (1770–1849)  
*Skeleton: The celebrated entire Irish race horse*, 1832  
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Sir William Dixon Library  
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**5** James Lethbridge Templer (1811–1845)  
*Beagle, an Australian bred horse by Skeleton, the property of Capt. PP King, RN*, 1839  
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**6** Joseph Fowles (1810–1878)  
*Race horse and jockey*, c. 1850  
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**8** De Gruchy & Leigh  
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*Flying Buck: The winner of the first Australian Champion Sweepstakes, October 1st 1859*, c. 1859  
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DG XV\*/Gen/7

**9** Joseph Fowles (1810–1878)  
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**13** Thomas Balcombe (1810–1861)  
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Bequeathed by DS Mitchell, 1907  
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**14** Thomas Balcombe (1810–1861)  
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*Five-Dock grand steeple-chase*, 1844, 1844  
*No. 3: The stone wall*  
Hand-coloured lithograph  
Bequeathed by DS Mitchell, 1907  
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**15** Thomas Balcombe (1810–1861)  
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*Five-Dock grand steeple-chase*, 1844, 1844  
*No. 4*  
Hand-coloured lithograph  
Bequeathed by DS Mitchell, 1907  
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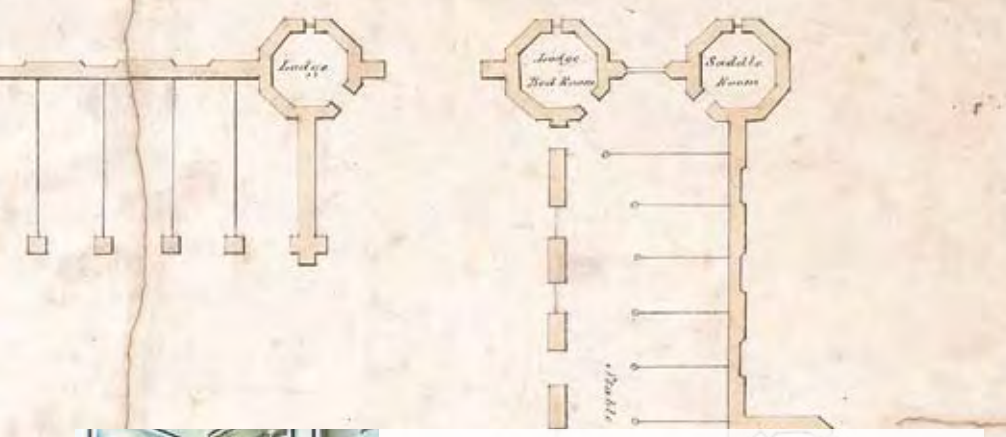
**16** Vincent Brooks (1815–1885)  
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**17** W Scott  
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- 24** Edward Winstanley (1820–1849) (attributed)  
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- 27** Joseph Backler (1813–1895)  
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- 32** George Hamilton (1812–1883)  
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*Hard-pressed or flight of a bushranger*, 1874  
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- 39** Artist unknown  
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Purchased 1970  
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## More work than play



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