City of Melbourne Numismatic Collection

By Darren Burgess

The City of Melbourne has a unique collection of items that are important to the cultural and social history of the city. Many of these items are on permanent display in the form of artworks and architecture, while some come out from time to time in exhibitions, such as those held at the City Gallery, next to the Town Hall. Yet others still sit in cabinet drawers, behind locked doors, in a storage room down an anonymous laneway, where no-one sees them.

This project is an attempt to shed light on some of these fascinating little-seen items. They not only tell a story of the City of Melbourne but also of some of the people that have helped shape it over the years. The project's focus is numismatic items, a term that traditionally refers to coins, banknotes and medals. The collection has approximately 200 such items, ranging from examples of pre-decimal coinage through to elaborate exhibition medals. The majority of items described here fit into the coins and medals categories, but this project expands the definition to include badges held in the city's Art and Heritage Collection. Badges were often manufactured by the same companies that produced coins and medals. They also frequently perform similar functions to medals, in that they are used to commemorate events, mark achievements or indicate membership of an organisation.

Made in Melbourne

Abundant skills in engraving and medal manufacture existed in Melbourne at the turn of the 19th century, as the following section, Selling Melbourne, shows; for example, Ernst Altmann, Stokes & Martin and the Melbourne branch of the Royal Mint. But other designers and manufacturers, too, are represented in the city's collection, some of whom are included here. Certainly, the most prolific local maker was, without a doubt, Thomas Stokes.

Thomas Stokes

Thomas Stokes, like many immigrants of the time, came to Australia in the 1850s in search of gold. Born in the England in 1831, he moved to Victoria, and once the search for gold proved fruitless he turned to what he knew: die-sinking and button-making.[1] He set up business in 1856 and soon moved to 115 Flinders Lane. In 1857, he started to issue trader tokens after acquiring a press from WJ Taylor.

The first Australian trader token was a penny, issued by Melbourne grocer Annand, Smith & Co. in 1849. As was the cases in most other countries, token issues were predominantly in response to a shortage of pennies and halfpennies. It didn't hurt that these pieces nicely doubled as an advertisement for one's business when they were given out as change.

Annand, Smith & Co. penny token, 1851. Museums Victoria Collection (NU3529)

At first, companies would import tokens from British manufacturers, such as the Soho Mint and Heaton & Sons of Birmingham. But as the colony's manufacturing capacity grew, local makers provided their own services in this lucrative business. It was lucrative because each token cost less to produce than the value it traded for, even when shipping costs were factored in. Initially, the Victorian government turned a blind eye to these tokens, as private enterprise had solved an immediate problem to most people's satisfaction. It was also saving the Victorian government money, as it cost the government a penny per penny to buy coins from the Royal Mint in England.[2]

Stokes capitalised on this and issued a large number of tokens of differing types for his own business and for others. One customer was Thomas H Cope, a draper with a shop in Gardiners Creek Road (now Toorak Road). One of Cope's tokens, from 1862, is now held in the city's collection. The collection only has a couple of trader tokens, and these were displayed in a 2006 exhibition titled *Melbourne Authentic*, which focused on how the city's coat of arms developed over time.

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[1] This included the buttons for the City of Melbourne's staff uniforms.
[2] The sole purpose of the Melbourne branch of the Royal Mint was originally to strike coins from gold mined in Victoria. It wasn't until 1916 that it started striking silver coins for circulation for the whole of Australia, and it didn't issue copper coins until 1919.

Thomas H Cope penny trader token, 1862. Art and Heritage Collection

In the 1860s, the Victorian government began to clamp down on the use of tokens for payment, leading to a flood of tokens entering New South Wales, where they were still accepted. More than 120 Australian businesses once issued tokens, and they now provide a tangible link to a fascinating period of Australia's history.

Around 1867, Thomas Stokes partnered with George Frederick Martin to form Stokes & Martin. The partnership dissolved in the 1890s and Stokes rebuilt the business as Stokes & Sons; today, it operates as Stokes Badges. Since its establishment, it has produced badges, medals and medallions commemorating many Australian milestones. The City of Melbourne also has a Stokes press, which is still in use to this day, used by the lord mayor to apply the city's seal to official documents.

Stokes & Sons screw press with staff, 1909. Photo courtesy State Library Victoria

Kenneth George Luke

Kenneth George Luke became the partner of a Carlton-based metal-spinning and silverware business in 1921. Four years later he was the proprietor, employing seven people. Over the years, the business continued to grow and it branched into buttons, badges and medallions.

Of the many badges made over the years, this 1964 enamelled example, commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Melbourne Bowling Club, is in the city's collection. The Melbourne Bowling Club, founded by John Campbell in 1864, is the oldest bowling club in Australia and it continues to occupy its original home behind Chapel Street, Windsor.

The front of the badge incorporates '100' in a lawn bowl motif in black enamel, with the date of the club's founding and 'MBC' highlighted in blue enamel and the name of the club in red. The reverse of the badge gives the details of the maker, 'K.G. Luke, Melb.'

Melbourne Bowling Club centenary badge, 1964. Art and Heritage Collection

Henry Newman

Henry Newman was born in 1825 in Riga, at the time part of Russia and now the capital of Latvia. In the early 1850s, he moved to Victoria as a result of the gold rush. He set up a jewellery business on Collins Street, which eventually moved to Elizabeth Street. In fact, if you look up to your left from the right-hand side of Elizabeth Street facing Flinders Street station, you'll still see a sign painted on the side of a building that proclaims that the business did again move.

There are a number of items that associate Newman with the City of Melbourne, including an elegant but totally impractical presentation trowel, which resides in the Museums Victoria collection. It was presented to Amelia Henderson Stewart, who laid the foundation stone for the Princes Bridge on 7 September 1886.

Princes Bridge presentation trowel, 1886. Museums Victoria Collection (HT21118)

The city's collection contains an enamelled badge made by Newman, issued to members of the Manchester Unity Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF). The Manchester Unity IOOF is a non-political, non-sectarian fraternal order founded in Manchester England in 1810. Its main objective is to protect and care for its members and the communities in which they live. This was an attractive proposition in Britain of the early 1800s, especially to non-specialised workers without the protection of a governing association at a time when there was no welfare state. This model spread to Victoria, with Melbourne's branch founded on 7 December 1840.

Any Melburnian will be familiar with IOOF through the outstanding art deco Manchester Unity Building, opposite the Town Hall, on the corner of Swanston and Collins Streets. It acted as headquarters for the organisation, but the building project was primarily designed to provide employment during the Depression of the 1930s.

The badge in the collection features a shield quartered by a red cross, in which there are five stars. In the top left of the shield is an hourglass, representing mortality; in the top right is crossed keys, signifying guardianship; in the bottom left is a beehive, indicating efficient industry; and in the bottom right is a lamb with a banner, denoting faith. At the top is the word 'Victoria', and beneath it 'Manchester Unity' highlighted in blue enamel; at the bottom, 'IOOF' is also in blue enamel. On the reverse the maker's name, 'Newman', is stamped. There is also a loop from which to hang the badge if so desired.

Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows badge. Art and Heritage Collection

Andor Mészáros

Andor Mészáros was born in Budapest, Hungary, in 1900, moving with his family to Vienna at the age of 19. It was there that he studied sculpture and modelling, clearly inspired by his mother, who was a sculptor. He continued his studies at the Académie Julian after moving to Paris, where he met Picasso, and was influenced by the local artists of the time. After his studies, he returned to Hungary, where in 1932 married Erzsébet Back. With the clouds of war gathering over Europe, he immigrated to Australia, arriving in Melbourne in June 1939, with his young family soon to follow.

Some of his early Australian sculpture included carved stone figures for the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney. In the 1950s and 1960s he received large commissions, predominantly with a Christian theme, including works for the Cathedral Church of St Peter in Adelaide (1955) and *Christ Accepts His Cross*, a bronze figure at All Saints Church in Brisbane (1962).[3] Between these large works, he designed hundreds of medals, including *Maternity*, for the King George V Memorial Hospital for Mothers and Babies (1947), the centenary medal for the Government of Victoria (1951), the participant's medal for the Melbourne Olympics (1956) and his *Stations of the Cross* series of 14 art medals (1942–70).

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[3] Kelman Semmens, 'Mészáros, Andor (1900–72)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, adb.anu.edu.au/biography/meszaros-andor-11114/text19789, accessed January 2017.

Maternity, 1947. Museums Victoria Collection (NU20765), photo by Rodney Start

Government of Victoria centenary medal, 1951. Art and Heritage Collection, photo courtesy Noble Numismatics

Melbourne Olympic Games participant's medal, 1956. Art and Heritage Collection, photos Noble Numismatics

The city's collection contains a number of the Melbourne Olympics medals, as well as a very special medal, the Stapley Award. The award is named after Frank Stapley (1858–1944), a prominent Melbourne architect and town planner, a member of Melbourne City Council from 1898 to 1939, and mayor during 1917–18. Some of Stapley's work survives, including the utilitarian yet beautifully designed Edwardian-style tram shelters that can be seen in various places, including on St Kilda Road. In 1936, the area between the Yarra River and Batman Avenue was named Stapley Parade Reserve in his honour. Identical granite drinking fountains bearing the name 'Stapley Parade' were erected at either end of the reserve, which is now Birrarung Marr.[4]

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[4] 'Stapley Memorial Drinking Fountain', *eMelbourne: The City Past & Present*, www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM02119b.htm, accessed 21 January 2017.

In 1965, the Melbourne division of the Australian Planning Institute initiated the Stapley Award, which took the form a medallion designed by Andor Mészáros. It features an adult male opening the way for an infant to step through into the future, with Greek text that translates to 'always forward'. The reverse is engraved, showing that this medal was presented to the city on the award's inauguration, on 23 August 1965. The Planning Institute of Australia continues to award the medal to an outstanding secondary-school project.

Stapley Award medal, 1965. Art and Heritage Collection

In the late 1960s, Andor Meszaros submitted designs for Australia's new decimal currency. Although he was unsuccessful, two of his designs were incorporated into a pattern dollar coin in 1967, which is highly sought after by collectors to this day. He passed away in 1972, but his legacy lives on not only in his works but also in two generations of artists: his son Michael and his granddaughter Anna follow the family tradition of sculpture and medallic art.

Selling Melbourne to the World

In the late 19th century, many cities throughout the British Empire hosted trade exhibitions to promote commerce and encourage immigration. Australia certainly had its fair share; the first major exhibition in Melbourne was held in 1854, partly in preparation for the Paris Exposition Universelle, held the following year. Businesses, governments and individuals all exhibited various items to showcase their latest achievements and innovations.

Melbourne City Council often presented at exhibitions throughout Australia and internationally to encourage people and businesses to relocate to Melbourne. Exhibitions also gave the council a platform to demonstrate what the fledgling colony of Victoria was capable of.

Calcutta International Exhibition

The Calcutta International Exhibition was held in the Indian city now known as Kolkata from December 1883 to March 1884. There were exhibits from around the world, including Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Turkey and the United States of America. As the exhibition occurred pre-Federation, each Australian colony exhibited separately, with representatives from New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria attending.

Victoria did very well, gaining 38 gold medals, 60 silver and 53 bronze. Many of the exhibits were pastoral in nature, and wine producers in the region did particularly well, with 11 gold medals and eight silver.[5]

In May 1884, the *Sydney Mail* reported that while W.P. Brown of Dandenong Road had won a bronze medal for tomato sauce and Sir William J. Clarke of 'Bolinda Vale'[6] won silver for wool, the Melbourne City Corporation had won a bronze medal for its 'panoramic views of Melbourne'. The medal still resides in its original box in the city's collection. It is 51mm in diameter and features a portrait of Queen Victoria on the obverse (front), dressed in the style of the Empress of India. The reverse (back) features an olive wreath, with the words 'Awarded to' at the top; unlike Sir William Clarke's medal, the city's name has not been inscribed. This isn't surprising, as the winner usually had the medal inscribed after the award was presented to them.

Sir William J Clarke's Calcutta International Exhibition medal, 1884–84. Museums Victoria Collection (NU35648), photo by Jon Augier

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[5] Victorian Parliament, *Report of the Royal Commission for Victoria, at the Calcutta International Exhibition 1883–84*, John Ferres, Government Printer, Melbourne,1884.

[6] 'Bolinda Vale' is an historic homestead in the Macedon Ranges that is still standing to this day, with the gardens frequently open to the public.

Calcutta International Exhibition bronze medal, 1883–84. Art and Heritage Collection

Adelaide Jubilee Medallion

Queen Victoria's golden jubilee marked 50 years of her reign and it provided Adelaide with an opportunity to host its first international exhibition. It opened to great fanfare on 21 July 1887 and closed on 6 January 1888, but not before 789,672 people – more than twice Adelaide's population at the time – had paid up to a shilling each to visit. Melbourne City Council was among the prize winners, awarded a first order of merit for its 'photographic views',[7] for which it received a large bronze medal and a diploma. Interestingly, the medals are quite common but the diplomas are considerably rarer. Unlike the Calcutta medal, there was no obvious place on the reverse to engrave the winner's details; but we know this is the council's medal, as the awardee's name is printed on the inside of the lid of the presentation box.

Adelaide Jubilee International Exhibition medallion box (detail), 1887. Art and Heritage Collection

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[7] Adelaide Jubilee International Exhibition 1887, 'Reports of Juries and Official List of Awards', 1889, p. 222.

The reverse of this 75mm-diameter medal simply states 'First Order of Merit', surrounded by a wreath of Australian native flowers, fruits and vegetables. The obverse features a less idealised portrait of an older Queen Victoria than the Calcutta medal, around which is written 'Adelaide Jubilee International Exhibition'. Under the portrait, '1887' is in written in Roman numerals and, in smaller text, the engraver, EA Altmann, is named, with 'Melbourne', indicating the medal was struck by the Melbourne branch of the Royal Mint.[8]

Adelaide International Exhibition, First Order of Merit medal, 1887. Art and Heritage Collection

Ernst August Altmann was a jeweller, die-maker and engraver based in Swan Street, Richmond. He focused on dies for agricultural society medals and on exhibition medals. Altmann was also responsible for the medal commemorating the laying of the foundation stone of Melbourne Exhibition Building, in 1879.

Melbourne Exhibition Building Laying of the Foundation Stone medal, 1879. Museums Victoria Collection (NU33438), photo by Jon Augier

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[8] The Melbourne branch of the Royal Mint opened in 1872. The main building still stands on the corner of William and La Trobe Streets, and today is home to the Hellenic Museum.

Centennial International Exhibition Melbourne

In 1888, the centenary of the First Fleet's arrival was marked by the Centennial International Exhibition in Melbourne. Having already hosted a number of international exhibitions, Melbourne had the infrastructure for such an event. This included the Royal Exhibition Building, in Carlton Gardens, which had been completed at the start of the decade for the opening of the Melbourne International Exhibition of 1880.

The city's numismatic collection holds a bronze medal from the Centennial International Exhibition. Like other medals of the time, the obverse has a portrait of Queen Victoria in full royal regalia. The reverse has a wreath composed of wattle, representing Australia, and oak, representing England, tied with a true-lovers' knot. At the wreath's centre, the Southern Cross is encircled by Latin text that reads 'Artibus dignis honor insignis' (To the deserving arts distinguished honour). The date '1888' appears as Roman numerals beneath the wreath. Very small text to the left of the date reads 'Melbourne Mint' and to the right 'Stokes & Martin S.C.'; the initials 'C.V.' appear just below the ribbon of the wreath. Ernst Altmann, the engraver that designed the Adelaide Jubilee medal the previous year, submitted a medal design and this was selected, but the mint was unable to strike it. So Deputy Master George Anderson engaged Stokes & Martin to engrave new dies.[9]

Centennial International Exhibition medal, 1888. Art and Heritage Collection

As a good numismatist knows, there are three sides to every medal: the obverse, the reverse and the edge. An examination of the edge of any medal frequently reveals who the medal was awarded to. Although Melbourne City Council did enter an exhibit,[10] it was unsuccessful in winning an award on this occasion. So, whose medal is this? The first clue is in the name 'R. Matthews' engraved on the edge.

The exhibition award reports show that R Matthews of Gundagai was awarded a first order of merit for his 'mounted microscopic specimens of local plants'. Robert Christopher Matthews was born near Maitland, New South Wales, on 21 April 1851. He became a member of the Pharmaceutical Society and was heavily involved

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[9] Deborah Tout-Smith, '1888 Melbourne Centennial International Exhibition Medals', *Museums Victoria Collections*, collections.museumvictoria.com.au/articles/2680, accessed 14 January 2017.

[10] Class 11 – General Application of the Arts of Drawing and Modelling, with a model of old city of Melbourne.

in local matters in Gundagai, especially regarding the hospital. He became mayor in 1895 and died in 1901, aged 50, while still serving on the council.

Interestingly, the first order of merit for the exhibition took the form of a silver medal, and, as can be seen, the one in the collection is bronze. Further, there is a report in the *Gundagai Times*, dated 7 March 1890, that states 'Mr. R. Matthews, chemist, received his award – a silver medal – the other day from the Melbourne Exhibition of 1888'. This means that the medallion in the city's collection was probably engraved in error, and as such was not issued. But it has given us the chance to glimpse into the life of Robert Matthews of Gundagai.

Melbourne Milestones

Melbourne City Council was established in 1842.[11] The city experienced rapid growth, especially after the discovery of gold in the newly formed state of Victoria, in 1851. By 1867, there was a need for a new town hall and so the foundation stone was laid on 29 November by the Duke of Edinburgh.[12] Council ordered the striking of 26 medals to commemorate the occasion, and thus started a long tradition of it issuing medals to mark significant events, both locally and globally.

Melbourne Town Hall Laying of the Foundation Stone medal, 1867, by Stokes. Museums Victoria Collection (NU20222)

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[11] Melbourne was first nominated as a town by the *Melbourne Incorporation Act* 1842 and a council was formed. Technically Melbourne didn't become a city until 1849.
[12] The first town hall was built in 1854 and demolished in the mid-1860s.

Queen Victoria's Jubilees

During 1887 and 1897 the issuing of medallions proliferated, especially those commemorating royal occasions, such as the golden and diamond jubilees of Queen Victoria's reign. During both occasions, almost every shire and town council across the country issued medallions, mainly struck by Stokes. Melbourne was no exception. The example in the city's collection has a dual portrait, or jugate, of Queen Victoria facing left: in the left-hand portrait she appears as she did when she took the throne; to the right is a more contemporary portrait.[13] The reverse states 'The Queen's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations / 1897' around the rim, encircling an image of Melbourne Town Hall, with 'City of Melbourne' at its top and 'W. Strong, Mayor' at its bottom. [14] The medallion has a hole at the top with a loop, so it could be worn by its owner, usually suspended by a ribbon.

Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee medallion, 1897. Art and Heritage Collection

City of Melbourne Centenary

The city also celebrated its own history, issuing a medal in 1942 to commemorate the centenary of the council. As World War II raged in the Pacific, jeweller and medal-maker Angus & Coote of Sydney enterprisingly sent a telegram to Melbourne's mayor, Sir Frank Beaurepaire, asking 'Would you be interested in a centenary medallion similar to that we made for Sydney?'

[13] More than 60 types of medallions were issued with this same double portrait, each with a different reverse.
[14] William Strong, Mayor of Melbourne 1895–97.

City of Melbourne Incorporation Centenary medal and reverse die, 1942. Art and Heritage Collection

An initial order was placed for 85 medals to be issued to various dignitaries and council members, whose names were to be engraved on the edge. After striking, sufficient silver remained to strike an additional nine medals, so a total of 94 examples of this 58mm silver medal were struck. The medal dies were sent to the council, and the reverse die remains in the collection, along with a number of medals that were not conferred.

When the war was over, in 1945, Melbourne City Council marked the momentous event with the issue of a medallion, struck by Stokes, to be handed out to Melbourne's schoolchildren. It featured a jugate of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth on the obverse and the city's coat of arms on the reverse, with 'Victory: Europe–Pacific 1945 / City of Melbourne' around the rim. A similar medallion was struck eight years later, in 1953, to commemorate the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.

Victory medallion, 1945. Art and Heritage Collection

Other organisations have marked Melbourne events with issues of medallions, some of which are in the collection. In 1988, the Italian president, Francesco Cossiga, visited Melbourne and opened the Lygon arts festival. To mark the occasion, the Italian Cavour Club,[15] founded by and for Melbourne's Italian immigrants in 1917, issued a silver medallion. The obverse features a portrait of Camillo Benso, Count of Cavour, with the name of the club in Italian and '1917' around the rim. The blank reverse has been engraved with 'Visita Presidente Cossiga / Melbourne Lygon Art Festa' and the festival's opening date of 15 October 1988. The number '925' hallmarked at the bottom indicates that the medal is composed of sterling silver.[16]

Lygon Art Festa medallion, 1988. Art and Heritage Collection

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[15] The club is named after Camillo Benso, Count of Cavour, who became the first prime minister of a unified Italy in 1861.
[16] Sterling silver is an alloy containing 92.5% silver and 7.5% other metals.

City Gifts

Melbourne has a well-deserved reputation as a multicultural city, and this is reflected in the collection in many ways. This includes the many numismatic gifts presented to council over the years from visitors from across the globe – not only from Melbourne's sister cities but also from nations including Armenia, China, France, Germany, South Korea, New Caledonia, Spain and Italy.

Sister Cities

Melbourne has relationships with six sister cities which are Boston in the USA, Milan in Italy, Osaka in Japan, St Petersburg in Russia, Thessaloniki in Greece and Tianjin in China. These relationships are designed to foster cultural exchange and strengthen international ties.

Osaka, Japan

One of the most impressive 'sister city' items is a large medal from Osaka City Council. The Japanese city became Melbourne's first sister city in 1978, and there are a number of items in the collection gifted by Osaka over the years.

This beautifully presented medal resides in its box, complete with a decorative ribbon. The obverse features the city logo in the centre,[17] with the council's name in English on the bottom rim and floral emblems of Osaka above, including cherry blossoms and pansies. The reverse depicts the Osaka council building and stylised leaves of the ginkgo tree across the bottom.

Osaka City Council medal. Art and Heritage Collection

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[17] The main device is a stylised *miotsukushi*, which are used as beacons in the shallow waters of Osaka bay, and reflect the city's close ties to its port.

Thessaloniki, Greece

In the late 1940s, more than 160,000 Greeks migrated to Australia in the wake of World War II and the subsequent civil war. This lead to Melbourne having one of the largest Greek populations in the world outside of Greece. In 1984, Melbourne City Council formalised this strong and mutually beneficial relationship, becoming a sister city to Thessaloniki. The following year, Thessaloniki celebrated its 2300-year history and issued a rectangular medal, measuring 95mm by 60mm, one of which was presented to Melbourne City Council.[18]

Thessaloniki medal. Art and Heritage Collection

St Petersburg, Russia

In 1989, St Petersburg, then known as Leningrad, became Melbourne's fifth sister city. Some 20 years later, in February 2009, then Lord Mayor Robert Doyle visited the city to meet with senior government, business and cultural officials and attend the Days of Melbourne 20th anniversary celebrations. The celebrations were held at St Petersburg State University of Finance & Economics, where the lord mayor was presented with a silver medallion by the university rector.

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[18] King Cassander of Macedon founded the city around 315BC, naming it after his wife Thessalonike, Alexander the Great's half-sister and daughter of Philip II.

St Petersburg medal. Art and Heritage Collection

The obverse features St Petersburg's coat of arms with the city's name in Russian underneath. The reverse features one of the griffins that guard and support the bridge to the university, with 'Griffin Bank Bridge' in Russian above.[19]

The guardians of Griffin Bank Bridge, St Petersburg. Photo by Matvyei at English Wikipedia

Maritime Melbourne

There are a number of medals that illustrate Melbourne's maritime heritage that have been gifted to council. In 1988, the Polish ship *Dar Młodzieży* (The Gift of Youth) visited Melbourne on its round-the-world voyage, and participated in the Parade of Sail, which was part of the bicentennial events in Australia.

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[19] This mythological creature, traditionally with the body of a lion and the wings of an eagle, was reputed to be the guardian of treasure.

Dar Młodzieży commemorative medal, 1988. Art and Heritage Collection

This medal depicts the ship under sail on the obverse, with its name in Polish beneath. Around the rim is 'Merchant Marine Academy / Gdynia – Poland', Gdynia', being the *Dar Młodzieży*'s home port. The reverse has a map of the voyage with key ports marked, and around the rim is 'Round the world voyage / 1987–1987 / tall ship races Hobart–Sydney'. Interestingly, this voyage made *Dar Młodzieży* the first Polish-built vessel to circumnavigate the globe, and it continues to be used as a training vessel by the Gdynia Maritime University.

The Chilean ship the BE *Esmiralda* visited Melbourne in 1995, as part of its 15th training cruise. Nicknamed the *White Lady*, it has something of a chequered past. The ship was launched on 12 May 1953 and since then has been a training ship for the Chilean navy. But during the regime of Augusto Pinochet, between 1973 and 1980, the ship became a floating jail for political prisoners. This dark chapter in its history means its arrival in port was frequently accompanied by protests and demonstrations.

BE *Esmiralda* medallion. Art and Heritage Collection

And the Winner Is …

The awarding of medals for achievement and service dates back more than 2000 years to the time of Alexander the Great. It continues to this day in the form of school awards through to the Olympic Games and the Victoria Cross and more. These medals usually remain with the recipient or their family, although from time to time some find their way into new homes. Researching them can be a challenge, especially if the awardee isn't named on the medal. The city's collection has a couple of interesting pieces that note significant achievements by individuals and groups.

National Chrysanthemum Society of England

In 1951, Melbourne City Council's Parks and Gardens Department became the first organisation in Australia to win a prestigious National Chrysanthemum Society of England medal, which was a major horticultural achievement. The society was founded in Stoke Newington, now part of the London borough of Hackney, back in 1846 to promote the cultivation of the chrysanthemum.

The prize was awarded for the council's entry of 2500 blooms at the Royal Horticultural Society of Victoria's chrysanthemum and fruit show, which opened on 27 April 1951 at the Town Hall. It's worth noting that the best bloom was primrose yellow and exhibited by Lenah Valley of Hobart. A lot of the credit for the council's award should go to the Royal Park district foreman, Frank Keenan, and his team of 25 gardeners, who watched over the blooms around the clock. Councillor William Brens took great pride in displaying the medal to council, and the achievement even hit the headlines in the local press.

National Chrysanthemum Society medal, 1951. Art and Heritage Collection

The silver medal is mounted in a wooden plaque, with the obverse displaying the stylised initials 'NCS' amid an array of chrysanthemum blooms. The reverse features 'National Chrysanthemum Society' around the rim; the hand-engraved centre proclaims 'Parks & Gardens Dept / MCC / 1951'.

Hairdressing Festival

In 1974, the late Ronald 'Ron' Walker CBE became mayor of Melbourne. He went on to become a prominent figure in Melbourne's sporting pantheon and was instrumental bringing the Australian Grand Prix to Melbourne. But before he was awarded his British Empire CBE in 1976 for service to local government, he was presented with a humbler, if not equally interesting, medallion, which still resides in the collection.

Hairdressing festival medallion, 1974. Art and Heritage Collection

The obverse features a jugate of two women facing right: in the foreground, a well-coiffured lady of the past; behind, a young woman with a more contemporary hairstyle. The reverse has been engraved 'Hairdressing Festival / 1974 / to / The Right Honorable / Ronald Walker / Lord Mayor / of Melbourne'. Pictures of the time reveal the lord mayor did indeed have a fine head of hair and, as was the prevailing style of the time.

Glaxo Wellcome Australia Medal

The Town Hall has played host to many events over the years. In 1996, the pharmaceutical company Glaxo Wellcome (now known as GSK) held a ceremony to present Dr Michael Berndt, then at Melbourne's Baker Medical Research Institute, with the Glaxo Wellcome Australia medal for research excellence. The award was initiated in 1980 as the Wellcome Australia Medal, to recognise outstanding achievements in medical research. Between 1980 and 2000, some 20 recipients were awarded a medal in a timber case, along with a plaque and a research grant. In 2000 – recognising the formation of GlaxoSmithKline Australia (GSK) – a new award was commissioned in the form of a trophy and research grant.

Today, Professor Michael Berndt is pro vice chancellor of health sciences at Curtin University, in Perth, and his award sits proudly at home, so it is interesting that a duplicate resides in the city's Art and Heritage Collection. In addition to the Glaxo Wellcome Australia medal, Berndt also received a Distinguished Career Award from the International Society on Thrombosis and Haemostasis in 2003.

The Glaxo Wellcome Australia Medal in the city's collection is still in its timber box, complete with the Wellcome logo (a unicorn) in brass on the lid. Most medals in the collection are struck, which is where an impression is made through powerful force applied to a blank disc, known as a planchet. This medal is different in that it has been cast, meaning molten metal was poured into a mould. The casting process enables the images to be more prominent than can usually be obtained through striking.

The obverse features a high relief portrait of Joseph Edward Nathan (1835–1912), company founder from which Glaxo Laboratories grew. Like many, Nathan came from England in the wake of the gold rush. He arrived in Melbourne on 27 December 1853 and had moderate success as a businessman, before being asked to step into his brother-in-law's business and move to Wellington, New Zealand, in 1856. There he found success in producing milk powder, and then expanded in to pharmaceuticals.

The medal's reverse shows a portrait of Henry Solomon Wellcome (1853–1936), an American pharmaceutical entrepreneur, who, with Silas M Burroughs, founded Burroughs Wellcome & Co. in London in 1880. In 1995, Glaxo merged with Burroughs Wellcome to form Glaxo Wellcome.

Glaxo Wellcome Australia Medal, 1996. Art and Heritage Collection

Conclusion

Although the numismatic items in the Art and Heritage Collection make up only a small part of the collection as a whole, they tell compelling stories on a grand scale. From the opening of the Town Hall to prize-winning chrysanthemums, hairdressing festivals and gifts from around the globe, the history of Melbourne is writ large in these relatively small objects.

In an era in which many things are becoming virtual, the tangible becomes even more important. As we move inexorably towards a cashless economy, with events rarely commemorated with a medal, and with the last of the local manufacturers having left the city, it is more important than ever that these objects and their social and historical significance are recorded. It is good to know that the city's Art and Heritage Collection will remain an eclectic archive of the Melbourne story for generations to come.