Chapter IV

Sir Charles Nicholson: The First Patron

Of the three acknowledged founders of the university, Nicholson, Merewether and Wentworth, Sir Charles Nicholson is the only one who could be described as an aspiring connoisseur, if not as a cognoscente. He was the university's most significant nineteenth-century benefactor in terms of works of art. In the very narrow range of secondary material dealing with colonial art collections, Nicholson has been credited with importance by David Macmillan, yet has been ignored by other writers.¹ Macmillan's article, 'The Nicholson Gift', is subtitled 'The University of Sydney's Legacy from Australia's First Great Collector'. Whilst this article makes some unsubstantiated claims regarding Nicholson, asserting that 'when he arrived in Australia from England in the 1830s he had already formed mostly by purchase an impressive collection', Macmillan provides a valuable introduction to the collection, with references to the 'Blue Lady', now thought to be by a follower of van Dyck, the Michiel Coxcie Adam and Eve which he merely called a Flemish painting, and the Woolner medallion W.C. Wentworth. Robert Holden in his 'Fine Art Exhibitions and Collections in Colonial Sydney 1847-1877' discusses the colonial collections of Thomas Barker, A.B. Spark, T.W. Smart and T.S. Mort at length, but he dismisses Nicholson as a collector because his collection was not open to the public and does not mention the University of Sydney in the context of collections.² A large proportion of Nicholson's collection was, in fact, eventually to become public property when it was given to the university. As a result, parts of Nicholson's collection have survived intact, whilst the four collections mentioned above and dealt with by Holden, have been dispersed. In other literature, only passing references are made to Nicholson's collection, but no analysis or evaluation of it is made.³ There is considerable difficulty in writing about Nicholson's collection due to lack of provenance of the works. Research to date has revealed little positive information. That many of Nicholson's papers were burnt in a fire at his home, Totteridge Grange, Hertfordshire, England in 1899 is confirmed by family documents left to the university by his only surviving descendant, Sir John Nicholson, who died in 1987.
Nicholson's benefactions to the university reveal a remarkable catholicity of taste. It would appear that his collections were assembled on a random basis, although he did show some preference for portraits and had a strong interest in classical antiquity. His collection can be related to his wide-ranging interest in history, religion, architecture, archaeology and aesthetics, as revealed in his 'Recollections of Italy', an address delivered at the University of Sydney in 1862. There he recounted details of works of art and antiquities seen on his journey 'from one of the extreme southern points of the Roman Empire, Syene on the Nile, to what formed one of the headquarters of its northern frontier, York, taking in Italy'.

In evaluating Nicholson as a benefactor, the generosity of his gifts to the university must be acknowledged. Nicholson made much of his benefactions, however, ensuring that the 'value' of his gifts was appreciated by drawing attention, in his letters of donation, to the financial considerations relating to his gifts. There is no doubt of the expense he incurred in relation to the stained glass for the Oxford window in the Great Hall, for instance, and little doubt regarding the antiquities, but the situation regarding donations of the paintings and some of the tapestries suggests a mixture of motives, his generosity was tempered with opportunism. Before undertaking a detailed analysis of Nicholson's various benefactions to the university, it is relevant to draw attention to two matters regarding his picture collection not taken into account in any previous literature.

First, Nicholson's picture collection was not assembled for donation to the university - it was a private collection, for the enjoyment of Nicholson himself and his friends, and as Holden rightly says, never opened to the general public. Although Nicholson felt himself to be quite well-informed in matters of art, his motives for assembling a collection seem to have been, on the whole, similar to those of other well-to-do middle-class Englishmen, which were (as John Ruskin pointed out in 1858) 'for mixed reasons, sometimes to fill a corner of a passage - sometimes to help the drawing room talk before dinner - sometimes because a painter is fashionable -
occasionally because he is poor - not infrequently we may have a
collection of specimens of painting, as we have specimens of minerals
or butterflies ..."  

Such was the character of Nicholson's collection of works of
art in 1862 when he resigned as chancellor of the university and
returned to England where he remained for the rest of his life.
By 1865 he had determined to wind up his affairs in Sydney as
he had married and decided to live in England. After business
arrangements had been made by Nicholson regarding the disposal
of his establishment in Sydney in 1865, he wrote to Alexander
MacDonald at the university grandly indicating that he had resolved
'upon making a final disposition of the various articles consisting
chiefly of bookcases, tapestry, paintings and a few other works
of art belonging to me which are at present deposited at the
university'. 6 The list of paintings from this letter is quoted below.
Nicholson also expressed the wish that his former colleagues Sir
William Manning, Sir Alfred Stephen, Mr. (later Sir) E. Deas Thomson,
Dr. Woolley (all leading figures in colonial society) and Alexander
MacDonald himself, should 'select any one picture you may fancy
from the remainder of the collection'. Another letter appears in
the university Benefactions Book, obviously wrongly dated 22 February
1860, from the same address in London as the above letter, although
Nicholson was living in Sydney in 1860. In that letter also Nicholson
gave his pictures to the university, but he also remarked that 'in
the absence of any better works of art they (his pictures) may
serve to cover the otherwise bare walls ... in the university
buildings'. 7 Such a comment indicates that not only did Nicholson
not value these works highly, but also that he no longer wanted
to keep them, or in other words, he wanted to get rid of them.

This leads to the second point, for in fact, the gift of Nicholson's
pictures to the university and his former colleagues was hardly
the gracious benefaction that it appeared to be from his letter of
1865. In 1862, three years before his letter of donation in which
specific works are listed, an auction notice had appeared in the
*Sydney Morning Herald*, advertising 'A highly important sale' of
the entire contents of Nicholson's house, Lindesay, at Darling Point.
The sale was also advertised in the Empire under the heading in large type 'Magnificent oil paintings by Eminent Masters'. Separately listed in both advertisements are no less than ninety-two paintings, ten statues and a quantity of tapestry. Included in the list is every article subsequently given to the university in 1865, except the Gobelin tapestry Joseph, the items given to the Nicholson Museum and Nicholson's works of art made in the colony, including the Marshall Claxton portrait of an unknown lady, and six Woolner portrait medallions. (It must be assumed that Nicholson took them to England with him.) From the auction list, thirty-three items have been or are now at the university. As these thirty-three paintings include some of the most impressive-sounding items from the auction list it is obvious that the sale was a failure.

The fact that so many of the paintings did not sell at the auction remains a problem. Nicholson himself took little apparent interest in the auction. He left Sydney for England via India the previous month. It was not only the paintings subsequently donated to the university which failed to sell, for other works from the auction list were given to friends and business associates. For instance, Nicholson gave the Ceres, which he attributed to Paul Veronese when he exhibited it at the Society for the Promotion of Fine Arts in Australia exhibition in 1847, to one of his partners in a landholding in southern New South Wales. The St. Jerome, attributed by Nicholson to Jusepe de Ribera, but probably a copy of the painting in the Prado, Madrid, was hanging at the de Lartet family house 'Wynella' in 1945 but was subsequently given to Sancta Sophia College at the University of Sydney, where the display of flesh in the painting was not appreciated. When last heard of this painting was at St. Patrick's Seminary, Manly. Apart from these paintings and those given to the university, the fate of the other paintings listed for Nicholson's auction is not known.

Initially it may seem surprising that Nicholson's paintings did not sell, for in 1861 and 1862 the art scene in Sydney was quite lively. There were three private collections similar to Nicholson's, which were open to the public. These collections, owned by T.S. Mort (specializing in watercolours), T.W. Smart (oil paintings) and J.F. Josephson (sculpture) were, like Nicholson's collection, acquired
in England or the continent, not in Australia. All the big collectors bought overseas, not at local auctions. It may be thought that these collections pointed to some degree of colonial expertise in the fine arts: indeed Smart's collection of one hundred and fifty paintings was 'calculated to produce the best possible effects in the elevation of the intellectual taste of a large and important class in the community'. Nevertheless, comparison of the purchase prices of Smart's paintings, acquired largely from Lord Northwick's sale, with prices for authentic works by the same artists sold about the same time, indicates that most of Smart's paintings must have been fakes or copies. 12 By 1879 it was common knowledge that Australia was a dumping ground for the inferior works of art which glutted the English art market. 13 The fate of Smart's and Mort's collections was similar to Nicholson's. Interest in the collections faded. Smart's collection was auctioned after his death and of the works which sold, most realised under half the original purchase price. 14 Mort's collection was also auctioned, but most of the paintings were dispersed among his widow's friends. The difficulty of selling this type of painting in the colony may be explained by the following comment:

The average moneyed man in Australia is not much of a judge of painting. If he wants a picture to adorn his new house he goes and pays big prices to eminent artists in England or on the Continent. The statuettes in the Hall he will buy in Italy - must be right if they come from Italy, you know - he trusts the taste of others ... 15

Therefore, it seems that not only the major collectors, but also the casual purchaser of paintings did not buy on the local market. Whatever the reason that Nicholson's paintings failed to sell, he himself obviously did not value them enough to ship them to England.

The revelation of Nicholson's attempt to sell his pictures complicates the situation and puts a less than illustrious complexion on his image as a benefactor. When describing his benefactions to the university in a letter to F.L.S. Merewether in 1898, Nicholson failed to mention the pictures at all. Indeed, Nicholson considered his art collection 'comparatively insignificant' though good enough for colonial consumption. 16 This rather cynical attitude does not tally with his later reputation as a great benefactor. It was only in an endeavour to sell that he began to inflate the importance of
the paintings. After the failure of the auction he decided to gain at least some value from the works by setting himself up as a benefactor and donating the works to the university, an expeditious action which would give him social status in England, where he had decided to live, as well as enhancing his reputation in the colony. Nevertheless, whatever Nicholson's original intentions for his collection, he eventually gave a large number of his pictures, together with other items yet to be discussed, to the university. Much of this collection survives and provides valuable insights into nineteenth-century taste and society.

The scope of Nicholson's collection at the university will now be examined. Apart from the presentation of archaeological specimens in 1860, Nicholson's gifts to the university began with the donation of the Gobelin tapestry *Joseph and his Brethren* (1772). Other tapestries followed as did a number of pictures. In his letter of donation of 1865, Sir Charles listed what he thought to be the most important, as follows: the description but not necessarily the attributions are accurate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plate</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Full size portrait of a naval officer from Stowe Sir P. Lely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Portrait of a lady 17th century supposed to be Countess Clifford</td>
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<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Original portrait of Catherine Cornaro, Queen of Cyprus</td>
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<td>48</td>
<td>Very valuable portrait of James I of England by Janssens</td>
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<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Portrait of Anne of Denmark wife of James I</td>
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<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Head of a Roman Cardinal from the Scala Collection, Rome</td>
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<td>51</td>
<td>Head of a Venetian Nobleman</td>
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<td>52</td>
<td>Portrait of Nicolo (sic) Politico Venetian school</td>
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<td>53</td>
<td>Portrait of Charles I School of van Dyck</td>
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<td>54</td>
<td>Head of a Venetian Nobleman</td>
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<td>55</td>
<td>Copy of Chandos Shakespeare</td>
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<td>56</td>
<td>Original portrait of Machiavelli by Bronzino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Adam and Eve, 15th cent. school of Van Eyck</td>
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Additional paintings given by Nicholson include Angelica Kauffmann's *Cupid distressed by Three Graces*, several versions of St. Sebastian, two crucifixions and other religious pictures including a *Madonna* after Carlo Dolci, several picturesque landscapes, allegorical pictures, Marshall Claxton's *Portrait of an unknown lady* and the portrait medallions by Thomas Woolner. Works of art retained by the descendants of Sir Charles have been given or left to the university in the twentieth century. These include a portrait drawing by Sir Charles Nicholson by Koberwein, and a watercolour by
Edward Blore Interior of the Great Hall. Recently acquired on
the death of Nicholson's one remaining descendant, Sir John Nicholson,
are a watercolour by Sir Thomas Lawrence of his mistress and their
son, two albums of watercolour drawings which include two brush
and wash numbered drawings by John Constable, a study by Wilkie
for the portrait of George IV at Holyrood, a landscape by Reinangle,
studies by Richard Westall and Thomas Stothard, and a number
of drawings of buildings by the architect Edward Blore, plus a fragment
of a Rembrandt etching. 18 Nicholson himself left his enormous

date Captain Cook by W.G. Nicholl, c. 1854, at the university,
and the Hermes statue which belonged to Sir Charles was given
by the Nicholson family in 1934.

In addition Nicholson gave the university the imposing silver
epaergne which he received in 1856 in recognition of his position
as speaker in the Legislative Council of New South Wales. The
epaergne, of monumental proportions, includes in its ornate decoration
the Australian coat of arms and an engraved outline of the Australian
continent. Amongst other decorations there are three male figures,
representing 'religious learning' with the university motto at its
feet (sidere mens eadem mutato), 'justice' which holds a sheet
engraved 'sic fortis eturia crevit' and 'monarchy' which bears a
crown on a cushion and a caduceus. Above all is a draped female
figure holding a wreath with a tri-star coronet. 19 The overloaded
decoration and sentimental iconography is typical of silver testimonials
of the Victorian era. The inclusion of the coronet, a reference
to the English peerage, is a little surprising, for although Nicholson
received a knighthood in 1852 he was not elevated to the baronetcy
until 1859. Another strange element is the juxtaposition of the
caduceus which undoubtedly refers to Nicholson's profession of
medicine, with the crown. The piece was made in England by the
London silversmiths Smith and Nicholson in 1856, although the Sydney
firm of silversmiths Brush and McDonnell were producing work of
high craftsmanship for example the university mace, at the same
time. As will be shown later, Nicholson did not usually patronise
colonial artists or craftsmen, although in this case the choice may
not have been his.
Nevertheless it was through Nicholson's efforts that the university acquired the silver and myall wood ceremonial mace. Correspondence between Sir Charles, Deas Thomson and the Governor, Sir Charles Fitzroy, led to presentation of the mace on behalf of Queen Victoria in 1854. The mace was made in New South Wales by Brush and McDonnell to a design by E.T. Blacket. It was included in the Natural and Industrial Products of New South Wales Exhibition at the Australian Museum, Sydney in 1854. As the university coat of arms was not formally granted until 1857 (also an initiative of Nicholson's) three years after the mace was presented to the university, these must have been inscribed later in the space left, to accompany the coats of arms of royalty and New South Wales which were included in the original design. The acquisition of the mace indicates the intention to follow English ceremonial traditions at the university, and corresponds with the ideas of associationism related to the Great Hall.

Whilst in London on university business, Nicholson took the responsibility of procuring the stained glass for the windows of the Great Hall as well as the windows of the Caesars (not extant) and the windows showing his own coat of arms. The two latter sets were installed in the rooms which originally housed the Nicholson Museum and which were finished at the same time as the Great Hall. This is a case in which the gift was specifically designed for the university. Nicholson, himself, donated the Oxford window.

A number of medieval and renaissance documents and a Hebrew twelfth-century manuscript, an early copy of Magna Carta, important illustrated manuscripts (thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth-century), an ikon (probably) as well as collections of wax impressions of English historical seals and some original historical seals were all given by Sir Charles. Of the thirty-three medieval and renaissance documents received, six were given by Sir Charles Nicholson in his lifetime, these are all in Latin, three dated from the thirteenth century and three from the fifteenth century. They include land grants, letters patent and theological treatises. The balance of twenty-seven manuscripts was received by the university from Sir Charles Nicholson's estate in 1924 and 1937. Amongst a group received in 1924 is a
twelfth-century florilegium in Latin, a fifteenth-century Italian translation of La Prima Guerra Punic a and educational tracts by renaissance scholars including Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini who was to become Pope Pius II in 1458. 21

Nicholson also donated various gifts unrelated to any of the above, such as the collection of bones from a midden in the Channel Islands and a Pacific Islander's skirt made of strips of leather and shells. These assorted items do not, of course, concern this writer, except as an indication of the taste displayed in Nicholson's collection.

Nicholson's best known, and in his own eyes the most significant and valuable benefaction was the gift of archaeological artifacts including Etruscan, Egyptian and Greek antiquities, which formed the foundation of the Nicholson Museum. These items were given in 1860 with certain conditions. The antiquities will be discussed from the viewpoint of taste in collecting. A detailed study from an archaeological viewpoint of Nicholson's donations to the Nicholson Museum has already been written but is not published to date. 22 Nicholson's important Hermes statue, given by his sons for the Nicholson Museum, has also been discussed elsewhere. 23 In summary, then, Nicholson's benefactions to the university include tapestry, paintings, medieval documents, seals, medallions, sculpture, archaeological artifacts and stained glass.

Nicholson's gifts to the university have been briefly outlined above, and it may now be asked what was the taste and style of Nicholson as a collector? This must be considered first in the context of his own interest in the arts and of other colonial collections, because it appears that Nicholson's works of art were acquired whilst he was living in New South Wales. 24 Nicholson is acknowledged as 'the most erudite collector in the colonies in the first half of the nineteenth century' by Holden, but as stated earlier he does not discuss Nicholson's collection, taste or contribution to the art scene. Although there were other individuals in the colony who collected paintings, and some who had more paintings than Nicholson, and although some collectors of paintings also had various other items, there was no-one in the colony whose collection as a whole had such a wide range as Nicholson's.
Nicholson's interest in the fine arts was made apparent early in his sojourn in the colony, when, in 1842, he delivered two lectures to the School of Arts, Sydney on 'The Application of the Principle of Taste to the Arts', but his incipient interest in collections is also illustrated even earlier in his years in the colony, by the fact that he was the first curator of the museum attached to the Mechanics Institute and held that office from 1835-1838, and from 1838 to 1840 was joint curator. 25 When the Society for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Australia was formed in May 1847, Nicholson was elected as the first president and held continuous office during the 1847 and 1849 exhibitions. The object of the society was 'to foster and encourage art in this country and to afford instructive amusement to the community by establishing periodical exhibitions and by the gradual formation of an academy and gallery of painting and sculpture in Sydney'. 26 The first exhibition of the society, held in 1847, showed three hundred and eighty works and the committee was 'obliged to reject many pictures for want of space', although the 'assigned authorship of paintings' was accepted without comment. 27 Paintings from Nicholson's private collection were included in this exhibition. That the exhibition was well supported by influential people can be seen from the fact that six hundred season tickets at a guinea each were purchased, and other individuals attended at one shilling entrance fee, whilst artists were admitted free of charge. 28

Although Nicholson did not continue to exhibit his paintings in later exhibitions arranged by the Society for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Australia, his interest in the arts continued. Before he left the colony in 1862 he delivered a lecture at the University of Sydney on his travels in Italy, in which he described his impressions of the art he had seen. To a colonial audience this lecture may have sounded most erudite. 'Painting and sculpture', Nicholson said:

may be said to owe their revival to Italy. As early as the twelfth century we find the stiff and barbaric forms of Byzantine art giving place to efforts inspired with an intuitive sense of natural grace and beauty. In Cimabue, Orcagna, Beato Angelico and Giotto we have a rapid and wonderful progression from old conventional forms to styles which though not free from traditional influences are full of life and vigorous nature. 29
He indicated his preference for the work of Andrea del Sarto to that of Titian and found the Sistine chapel 'sublime' and 'terrible'. The tone and content of this lecture is conventional and does not depart from standard art histories of the day, for example, Mrs. Jameson's *Memoirs of Early Italian Painters* of 1846. Giotto, mentioned by Nicholson, was first praised by William Young Ottley in 1808 and in 1833 Lady Calcott published the monograph on the Arena Chapel, but theirs were advanced views. In January, 1842 the *Art Union* reported on Paul Delaroche's *Hemicycle*, which included all the artists referred to by Nicholson. Haskell argues that in Delaroche's choice of artists for the *Hemicycle* he 'satisfied the consensus of informed opinion'. Therefore it is evident that Nicholson was 'up-to-date' with one of the more recent re-instatements in the arts - painters before Raphael. Yet although Nicholson shows awareness of these recent developments he did not fully understand them (as can be seen from the following analysis of his collection), however it seems that he was better informed than others in the colony. He played a prominent part in the development of a considerable and growing interest in the fine arts in the colony over the thirty-odd years of his stay in the country.

As far as Nicholson's paintings go and the taste shown in his collection, a survey of the paintings loaned for the 1847 exhibition organised by the Society for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Australia will give some indication of the taste of the exhibitors and should also show whether Nicholson followed the prevailing fashion. Holden dismisses Nicholson's contribution to the exhibition in favour of a discussion of A.B. Spark's exhibits which are described as 'old masters'. Indeed, Spark was one of the main contributors with his loan of fourteen canvasses, but Nicholson loaned eleven paintings, three casts from the antique and a model of a Greek temple, a contribution which cannot be ignored. At the date of this exhibition Nicholson's taste does not seem markedly different to that of other exhibitors. Nicholson did not lend any works by colonial artists and Spark included only one - a pencil drawing by Samuel Elyard. The paintings lent by Nicholson included works attributed to Paul Veronese, Watteau, Zuccarelli and Salvator Rosa plus another by an unknown Dutch artist, whilst Spark's loans
included works attributed to Hondekooter, Pat Nasmyth, J.P. Gillemans, des Paliere, Jacques Jordaens, Stroehling, Claude, and Brueghel. The great majority of the works exhibited in this exhibition were by English, Flemish or Italian painters and most were labelled either 'artist unknown' or 'after' another master or engraver. Only a few collectors gave definite attributions to their paintings, these lenders included Nicholson, A.B. Spark, W.C. Wentworth, A. McLeay and Dr. McRae. The writer of Bell's *Life in Sydney* of 14 April, 1847 in retrospect rejected many of the attributions of 'old master' works in the exhibition. It is also worth noting that of the twenty-eight paintings by colonial artists shown, most were exhibited by the artists themselves. In these early days in the colony it seems that a similar taste prevailed amongst all who were interested in paintings. In fact, paintings were sometimes passed from owner to owner, for instance in 1843 Nicholson gave Sir Thomas Mitchell a 'picture of Charles I ... a present intrinsically valuable' as Sir Thomas noted in his diary.\(^{33}\) It is not known whether this was the same picture exhibited at the 1847 Society for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Australia exhibition by Alexander McLeay and entitled *Portrait of Charles I, 1641* Lely. In any case, the composition of the 1847 exhibition indicates that Nicholson's taste in pictures at this time was virtually the same as that of the other exhibitors.

Nevertheless, although Nicholson's selection of paintings for that exhibition was quite similar to that of other exhibitors, there were collectors in New South Wales such as Smart and Mort, whose collections of paintings became more extensive and who eventually owned a greater number of pictures than Sir Charles did. The composition of the collections of these three men changed and more definite preferences emerged. Some individuals collected objects other than paintings, and some combined paintings and other objects. T.S. Mort, for instance, added armour and weapons of war to his collection of fashionable water colour paintings.\(^{34}\) The Macleay family collected 'rare and unique specimens' of natural history including a world famous collection of insects with a considerable number of type specimens, as well as birds and fish.\(^{35}\) Sir James Martin collected garden statuary and commissioned sculptors working in Australia to produce decorative pieces such as the *Flora* by
William Lorando Jones and a copy of the Choragic Monument of Lysicrates from Walter McGill. He also owned two sphinxes among other garden decorations which were placed in a landscape designed to resemble the garden of an archon of ancient Greece. 36 Another eclectic collector about whom little has been written was Joshua Frey Josephson (1815-1892) who became Lord Mayor of Sydney in 1848. Although he loaned only one work to each of the 1847 and 1849 exhibitions of the Society for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in Australia, in 1861 on a journey to Italy, he purchased some thousands of pounds worth of statues and pictures as well as examples of Wedgewood and Minton china and porcelain. He opened his collection to the public in 1862. 37 Whilst the question of patronage in relation to artists working in the colony has been addressed in the Artist and Patron exhibition of 1888, it appears that European and English pictures were far more popular than colonial works amongst collectors in New South Wales in the mid-nineteenth century. The question of a taste for European as opposed to colonial works has not been addressed to date.

Although Nicholson patronised local art activities whilst he was in the colony, research to date reveals that his interest in colonial artists was limited. Only two received his patronage - both were Englishmen who each spent a short time in the colony before moving on, namely Thomas Woolner and Marshall Claxton. Although Nicholson carried on an active correspondence with Adelaide Ironside before his marriage, and offered to raise money for her journey to Italy, he did not buy her paintings nor did he encourage her in her ambition to 'fresco the university'. 38 Nor did Nicholson commission any work from Conrad Martens although his friends the Macarthurs did and Martens painted (in collaboration with E.T. Blacket) the View of the Proposed Building for the University which is in the University Collection, but was paid for by Blacket. 39 The other colonial collectors mentioned above developed associations with colonial artists, for instance Spark and Mort patronised Conrad Martens and Maurice Felton. 40

At the same time, however, the collections of these men, like Nicholson's, were comprised mainly of European and English art.
Mort's collection concentrated on English watercolourists, with a few genre paintings in oils, one or two animal paintings and a copy of Reynold's Lady Hamilton. The 1861 catalogue of Smart's collection of one hundred and fifty-four oil paintings lists a mixture of genre, landscape, religious and allegorical works, with one portrait, a so-called van Dyck, Ann of Austria. Neither of these collectors showed any interest in portraits, and whilst Nicholson's preference in 1847 was for landscape, by the 1860s when he deposited his paintings at the university, his preference had changed to historical portraits and his collection contained only a few landscapes, religious and allegorical paintings. This interest in historical portraits was not seen in any other known private collections in the colony. Nevertheless, even although Smart, Mort and Nicholson each preferred different subjects in their paintings, it is impossible to assert that by the 1860s there was a distinctive colonial taste in paintings, or that Nicholson's taste in paintings varied significantly from that of other colonial collectors.

What can be asserted from the foregoing brief survey of the few documented colonial collections is that whilst there were other collections in New South Wales which contained a greater number of paintings than Nicholson owned and although some of these collections were eclectic in some degree, there is no known collector whose interests ranged over the diversity of objects (tapestry, paintings, medieval documents, seals and illustrated manuscripts, portrait medallions, sculpture, archaeological artifacts and stained glass) which engaged the attention of Nicholson. Thus it must be agreed that although there was no distinctive colonial taste, Nicholson's collection, in its range and scope, was indeed significantly different from other colonial collections.

In what ways can Nicholson's taste - that of an English expatriate - be compared to the taste of nineteenth-century English collectors? The collection of George Salting (1836-1909), the greatest benefactor of the National Gallery, London, the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum would be an appropriate example for comparison, as he and Nicholson were well acquainted. George Salting was one of the first graduates of the University of Sydney, although he spent only a few years in the colony. As a young
student he attended Eton College, but emigrated to Sydney with
his father. Upon graduation from the University of Sydney, he
returned to live permanently in England where he formed his
collection. When in Sydney, Lindesay at Darling Point was the
home of the Salting family, who occupied it after Sir Charles
Nicholson moved out. Further evidence of a close association
between the families is revealed by the fact that Nicholson interrupted
his wedding trip to return to London for the funeral of George Salting's
father. George Salting and Sir Charles became friends for more
than one commentator has remarked that 'Mr. Salting, the great
collector, was a visitor to Nicholson's house', Hadleigh House,
Devonshire Place, London, which was built in the style of a
French chateau. The assembling of a collection was an interest
common to both men. In spite of the fact that Salting was both
a graduate of the University of Sydney and a friend of Sir Charles,
however, the university was not, unfortunately, included among
Salting's benefactions. George Salting's personal reputation
was one of wealthy squalor, yet items in his collection were of the
highest quality. His collection, which revealed a sophisticated
taste, included carpets, bronzes, seventeenth and eighteenth-
century Chinese porcelain, English miniatures, ivories, lacquer,
illustrated manuscripts, bronze medals by Pisanello and others, Italian
tapestry and paintings, amongst which are works by Vermeer, Jan
Steen, Fragonard and Constable. Salting was interested in the
objects themselves and 'their particular degree of perfection'.
The enormous range of Salting's collection encompassed and exceeded
all the categories of objects (except antiquities) which were included
in Nicholson's collection - that is, illustrated manuscripts, tapestry,
medallions and paintings - although Nicholson's paintings were
nowhere near the quality of Salting's and were often of doubtful
attribution. The question of the authenticity of Nicholson's pictures
will be discussed below, but in my assessment of the taste displayed
by Nicholson, his collection will initially be taken at its face value.
So, with the exception of the Roman, Greek, Egyptian and Etruscan
antiquities, the range of Nicholson's collection was less expansive
than Salting's, in fact, it could only be described as pale and less
sophisticated by comparison. Nevertheless Nicholson's collection
was not unusual in its eclecticism when seen in the English context.
Lady Eastlake, the influential writer on Victorian taste, referred
to 'catholicity of taste' as a true test of a real lover of art for art's sake. 50

While it has been demonstrated that Nicholson's collection resembled Salting's in some ways, it lacked the items in Salting's collection which pointed to a sophisticated taste - that is, paintings by artists such as Fragonard, Vermeer and Constable, although Nicholson did own two Constable drawings. But in the 1850s when Nicholson was collecting, works by Vermeer and Fragonard would have been within the price range of other items in Nicholson's collection. For instance, Vermeer's Lace Maker was set at £68/5s in 1848, but it must be added that the work of Vermeer was seldom recognised until Thoré took it up in the 1860s. In the 1850s there was no market at all for Fragonard who was still regarded as a decadent painter. 51 On the other hand, while Constable drawings were plentiful when Nicholson was assembling his collection, from the 1840s the paintings were fetching prices out of Nicholson's range. Therefore, it seems that Nicholson's choice was not wholly determined by financial considerations, for he could have purchased similar paintings to those in Salting's collection. While Nicholson's taste in paintings was more conservative than that of one of the leading English collectors of the day, George Salting, there was one uncommon acquisition in Nicholson's collection which cannot be labelled conventional or conservative.

This Flemish painting, attributed by Nicholson to 'school of van Eyck' is an Adam and Eve which is part of an altar-piece by Michiel Coxcie (1497-1592). It must have been acquired by Nicholson at least fifteen years before the purchase of Salting's first Netherlandish painting, Robert Campin's Child Before a Fire Screen, acquired by Salting after 1875. 53 Nicholson's purchase of this painting by Coxcie is of interest for a number of reasons. In several different contexts Nicholson referred to this painting as an 'early painting, fifteenth century, school of van Eyck'. 54 He therefore obviously thought that was what he had bought, but in fact it wasn't. The Coxcie painting bears no resemblance at all to any of van Eyck's works. Michiel van Coxcie was a Flemish artist of high Renaissance period, who was influenced by Michelangelo
and Raphael. His only connection with van Eyck was that he executed a copy of the Ghent Altarpiece for King Phillip II of Spain. The reason Nicholson was interested in a painting which he thought to be 'school of van Eyck' is probably that van Eyck is attributed by Vasari with the invention of oil painting and therefore is seen as an important figure in the progress of art. Vasari's Lives, although translated into English in part in 1685 were published in an almost complete translation by Mrs. Jonathon Foster in 1850. This translation would thus have placed Vasari's views before the Victorian reading public. Yet, Nicholson's misattribution of the Coxcie painting shows his complete ignorance of Renaissance art. He obviously had not seen the two van Eycks owned by the National Gallery of London, the Arnolfini Wedding acquired in 1842 and A Man in a Turban acquired in 1851, although he spent several years in London in the 1850s. The Coxcie painting, which was probably sold to him as 'school of van Eyck' was undoubtedly very cheap, for instance, at the Ralph Bernal sale of 1855 a painting attributed to 'school of van Eyck', A Female Saint, was sold by Christies for three guineas. A real van Eyck, the Arnolfini Wedding, cost the National Gallery £630 in 1842. Nicholson's Coxcie is cropped below the knees of the figures, which would not have increased its value. Notwithstanding the misattribution of the painting, the Coxcie is the most interesting and probably the best of Nicholson's painting collection.

When Nicholson returned to the colony in 1859 no other colonial collections contained Flemish works such as Nicholson's Coxcie. However, T.W. Smart was in England in 1859 where he purchased two Netherlandish paintings from the Earl of Northwick's sale. According to Holden, Smart was the best informed colonial on matters of European art, but it appears that Nicholson's interest in what he thought was an early Netherlandish painting preceded that of Smart, whose Mabuse was undoubtedly a fake or a copy. Although Nicholson exhibited an interest in 'Netherlandish' painting his attribution of the robust Adam and Eve to the school of van Eyck leave considerable doubt about his expertise. On the whole, in both English and colonial contexts, Nicholson's taste was conventional, certainly not adventurous but rather conservative.
As already noted the university did not receive all the paintings in Nicholson's collection which contained a range of Italian, Flemish, English and Spanish paintings with subjects varying from religion to landscape, but concentrating on portraiture. A number of unspecified works which can be identified by comparison to the auction list were given, but in his letter of donation, already quoted, Nicholson specifically listed thirteen works which were to be given to the university. They were all historical portraits, except for the 'van Eyck' Adam and Eve; these portraits relate principally to influential figures in British and Italian history.

We should consider why Nicholson specifically chose portraits for the university. Nicholson desired to make the best of his collection, and having failed to sell it, saw that it could be of value to the university, if not as an art collection of some aesthetic value, then at least of historical interest. By selecting the portraits particularly the emphasis upon the works would be changed from the perspective of the work of art to that of an historical document. In common with many Englishmen of the day, Nicholson was interested in the past and curious about individual historical figures, as can also be inferred from his enthusiasm for the novels of Sir Walter Scott which he read aloud to the end of his life. The foundation of the National Portrait Gallery, London in 1858 may also have contributed to Nicholson's interest in historical portraits, for he was in London from 1857-9. It cannot be a coincidence that Nicholson's gift to the university included a copy of the Chandos Shakespeare (now lost). The original of this portrait (c.1610) was the first acquisition by the National Portrait Gallery. It was acquired from the Buckingham collection, the same source which Nicholson claimed for some of his paintings. The aims of the National Portrait Gallery were expressed by Lord Palmerston, who believed that portraits were intended to be didactic, a means of reassurance regarding man's place in the cosmos and of England's economic position in the world of commerce. Nicholson may have seen his collection in these terms. In a small way, his collection of historical portraits would transfer such sentiments to the unruly colony of New South Wales via their placement in that great new cultural institution, the University of Sydney. Moreover, a collection of portraits would
emulate the picture collections of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. The 'new' University Galleries for the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford had been opened in 1845. When the first exhibition of 'University and College Portraits' was held at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge in May and June, 1884, the writer of the catalogue essay expressed a desire to publish a catalogue of all the Cambridge pictures. These were all portraits and all oil paintings.  

plate 52 The portrait of the Italian Renaissance poet and humanist, Angelo Poliziano, included in Nicholson's list, is of relevance in the context of the emulation of university collections. As early as 1711, Sir Thomas Hearne listed 133 of 200 portraits in a seventeenth-century frieze in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. Poliziano appeared in the frieze, which was covered by a false ceiling in 1831. 62 There was also a frieze of portraits of famous people at Durham University in the ancient library of Bishop Bosin, painted in 1668 by Gian Battista van Erssell. Poliziano did not appear amongst the thirty-three heads, although according to Juliana Hill, the space from which one portrait is missing was probably for Poliziano. It is most unlikely, however, that the missing portrait is the one now at the University of Sydney, because the Durham works are on wood supports, whilst the Sydney portrait is on canvas. Other series of heads of famous men of the Medici were not unknown in England. William Roscoe, the English biographer of Lorenzo de' Medici (1795) had a group of forty in his study in 1833. 63

The many representations of Poliziano all originate in the two heads of Poliziano with two other humanists portrayed in the Ghirlandalo frescoes in the Santa Maria Novella in Florence. Many existing versions of Poliziano are copies of copies of the original frescoes, made from the first copy painted for Paolo Giovio, Bishop of Nocera (1483-1552). Giovio was one of the first of the princes and scholars of renaissance Italy to decorate their palaces with series of portraits of famous people, often humanists. His collection at Como has now been dispersed. 64 The Giovio version of Poliziano, however, established a pattern for all subsequent depictions of his features. Nicholson's head of the humanist closely resembles a portrait of Poliziano bought by Sir William Somerville (1860-1932) for a few
shillings in Northumberland at the end of the nineteenth century. The composition is the same but there are variations in the colour.

As there is no provenance attached to the university portrait Poliziano, it is impossible to know whether Nicholson purchased it on his tour of Italy, or in England. Nevertheless its existence at Sydney indicates a desire by Nicholson to emulate — probably in the first instance — collections of portraits of famous figures and types — later to transfer this to an historical portrait collection at the University of Sydney. The other Italian portraits listed in Nicholson's letter of donation, Roman Cardinal, Machiavelli (now lost) and two heads of Venetian noblemen also fit the pattern of collections of portraits of notable Italians.

Nicholson's list includes one more Italian portrait, Caterina Cornaro. She was a Venetian patrician (c.1450-1510) who in 1472 married Giacomo il Lusignano, King of Cyprus. After his death in 1473 she assumed power, but in 1489 abdicated in favour of the Venetian state, which in recompense bestowed upon her the city of Asolo. Her court there was eulogised by Pietro Bembo in his Gli Asolani (1505). The portrait is a well-known type of Caterina Cornaro, portrayed as a widow and showing the pallid flesh set off by the dark mourning habit. Harold Wethey in his catalogue raisonné of Titian portraits postulates an original of this type by Titian. He notes several versions, similar to Nicholson's, which may reflect the lost Titian. Another version, not referred to by Wethey, is the slightly smaller portrait in the Niedersachsisches Landesmuseum, Hanover, in which the pose and dress are identical to the university version, although the pearls of the necklace are larger. The facial features in the Hanover portrait appear from photographic evidence to be more sensitively portrayed. The Hanover version lacks the sea view and column of the Sydney and Nicosia portraits, but the Hanover is the only version which, in common with the Sydney portrait bears an inscription. The Hanover portrait was purchased in Rome from August Kestner in 1836.

One must assume that the portrait was purchased by Nicholson because of his interest in the Italian Renaissance, and perhaps as a souvenir of his 'grand tour' of Italy, rather than from knowledge
of a connection with Titian, for although the Lindesay auction list
describes the work as an 'original portrait of Caterina Cornaro'
the artist is not named, as is the case for the other paintings listed. 69
No other versions of the portrait of Caterina Cornaro apart from
Nicholson's now at the University of Sydney are known in Australia,
either in the 1850s or at present.

It is obvious that to create a cohesive group appropriate for
presentation to the university, Nicholson selected a group of historical
portraits from his existing collection to provide an instant heritage
for the colonial university, modelled on the Oxbridge tradition. None
of these related to Australian history, the only such reference
connected with Nicholson is the Captain Cook stained glass window.
As well as the Italian portraits, the group includes a number of
English figures. Among these is a full-length portrait of a naval
officer, dressed in seventeenth-century costume similar to that of
Henry Rich Earl Holland (1590–1649) from the studio of Daniel Mytens. 70
In both these portraits the ribbon (probably the Order of the Garter)
is worn over the right, not the more usual left, shoulder, suggesting
that both works may be copies of engravings showing a mirror image
of the original. Another common element is the sailing ship beneath
a cloudy sky. The globe in the university portrait shows the two
Americas. Presumably this work was acquired as an example referring
to English exploration and colonial conquest. Other portraits show
famous historical figures such as James I and his wife Anne of Denmark.
which reveal Nicholson's interest in Scottish history. The portraits
Charles I - a head and shoulders portrait in armour said by Nicholson
to be school of van Dyck - and Countess (sic) Clifford by a follower
of van Dyck, continue the interest in British history and in particular
the nineteenth-century revival of popularity of van Dyck. Lady
Clifford is reputed to be 'Elizabeth Martin (born 1637) of Lindridge,
Devon who married Sir Thomas Clifford, later Lord Clifford, one
of the ministers of Charles II's cabal'. 71 The similarity of the
Clifford portrait to one of Henrietta Maria, wife of Charles I, which
is discussed in the following section on the authenticity of these
paintings, must have been known in the nineteenth century, as
in the album of photographs at the university in which the portrait
appears, the label reads 'Portrait of Henrietta Maria (Countess
Clifford?)'. 72 Portraits of Charles I and Henrietta Maria said to
be by van Dyck were held in many English collections in the nineteenth century. Anne of Denmark and James I are the subjects of portraits in the Royal Collection, and that of the Dulwich Picture Gallery, and are also found in many of the grand houses of England. The aristocracy also tended to have portraits of themselves, for instance the Clifford family have portraits of all their forebears except for the one at the university. Nicholson may have seen at least one of these aristocratic collections as a child, for his father was the agent for the Earl of Egremont who had an extensive picture collection. In the acquisition of these portraits Nicholson was probably motivated by an interest in history and influenced by the formation of the National Portrait Gallery, and in giving them away his aim appears to have been didactic. Instead of acting like other middle class nouveau riche collectors, who may have satisfied their interest in history by reading Edmund Lodge's Portraits of Illustrious Personages of Great Britain (1849-50) and who bought nineteenth-century English paintings depicting historical themes by William Powell Frith and others, Nicholson concentrated on collecting historical portraits.

What of the other works of art given by Nicholson, but not listed in his letter of donation, and which have been identified from the Lindesay auction list? For a man described by Bishop Broughton as a sybarite who was not a friend of the church, Nicholson owned a large number of religious pictures. They are all Italian works, and are either copies, such as that of Mary Magdalene by Titian or 'school of' for instance St. Sebastian by Gennari, school of Guercino. Nicholson may have seen these works as examples of great masters rather than as religious pictures. The Dutch Gentleman, school of Rembrandt, a panel painting of an unknown man holding a glove is certainly an example of skilful painting, and is one of the best paintings in Nicholson's collection.

A leaning towards 'sybaritic' taste is revealed by the Venus Repelling Cupid, a provocative full-length reclining nude based on a copy by Pontormo after Michelangelo's Venus and Cupid. A version of this painting was acquired for the British royal collection in 1734 and another exists in the Uffizi. Nicholson's Venus is probably a nineteenth-century copy for the overt and robust sexuality of
the Fonttormo copy is, in the university version, watered down to a coy Victorian prettiness, yet is still calculated to titillate. The other work in this category is Angelica Kauffmann's The Disarming of Cupid, also a coquettish work, but here with neo-classical references. It is one of Kauffmann's most popular compositions, and was produced as a stipple engraving by William Wynn Ryland in 1777, used as a pattern for a Derby biscuit porcelain group modelled by J. Spangler and was also used as a plate decoration. There are a number of known versions of this work, and an identical painting is held in the Iveagh Bequest at Kenwood House, London in an identical frame. There was a profusion of Kauffmann paintings in the great houses of London, for instance thirteen were let into the walls of the dining room of Sir Culling Eardley's mansion Belevedere, and fifteen paintings were in the Marquis of Exeter's collection at Burleigh House. There was also one at the National Gallery, but according to Waagen, although Kauffmann's was an 'effeminate but agreeable talent ... this generally feeble and studied style of art no longer satisfies the taste of our day', that is 1854. Again we see an indication of the conservative taste noted previously. Not included in the auction list, but thought to have been given by Nicholson, Marshall Claxton's Portrait of an Unknown Lady is also a rather 'pretty' painting. If this painting was acquired by Nicholson, it was probably for friendship's sake, as Claxton occupied rooms at Sydney College when the university commenced operations there, and he won the competition for the design of the first university seal, therefore would have been well known to Nicholson.

The provenance and authenticity of these paintings is a difficult question to address in view of the already-mentioned lack of archival material on Sir Charles Nicholson. Although various claims regarding authenticity and provenance were made by Nicholson in his letter of donation of 1865 and the same claims had previously appeared in the Lindesay auction notices, the above discussion of some of the paintings has indicated that many of them were copies, 'after' or 'school of'.

The one painting from Nicholson's donation list which has been the subject of some intermittent investigation is number two on the list, Portrait of an Unknown Lady of the Seventeenth Century.
Supposed to Be Countess Clifford. As previously mentioned this painting is represented in a nineteenth-century photograph album, where it is labelled 'by Lely', and other attributions written on the same page read 'van Dyck' and 'Cornelius Johnson (1593-1664). The 'Johnson' note was probably made in 1926 as another note in the same hand bears that date. In 1954 the painting underwent extensive restoration by D.J. Setelik, a graduate in painting and conservation from the Prague Academy of Fine Arts, who was employed by the university to carry out conservation work on the picture collection. The painting was in poor condition but because of the 'Royal visit to the university, the painting was required to be given an acceptable appearance' and therefore the treatment was rather rushed. Chemical analysis revealed that the support (flax fibre) was identical with seventeenth-century canvases and that media used included lapis lazuli usually not used after the seventeenth century without admixtures. Therefore Nicholson's claim that the work was of seventeenth-century origin was probably correct.

This technical evidence is supported by the former Keeper of the Queen's Pictures, Sir Oliver Millar, but he rejects Setelik's assertion that the picture is almost certainly from the hand of Sir Peter Lely, commenting that 'this appears (though the photograph is imprecise) to be a portrait of the 1630s, perhaps by a pupil of van Dyck and certainly using one of his best-known patterns. It cannot be the famous Lady Anne Clifford who was much older at that date. It is certainly not by Lely'. The Lady Anne Clifford referred to is from a different family but is mentioned because there are some well-known portraits of her. Although Macmillan gives no references to authenticate his identification of the sitter of this painting as Elizabeth Martyn, wife of the first Lord Clifford, support for the identification is given by Sir Edward Benthall, once owner of Lindridge (home of Elizabeth Martyn) and by Lord Clifford of Ugbrooke, who asserts that this is the missing portrait of the first Lady Clifford which was probably sold during the long and impeccable widowhood of the third Lady Clifford. The first Lady Clifford, thought to be the portrait at the university, is the only portrait missing from the historical portraits of all the Lords and Ladies Clifford at Ugbrooke Park.
The Clifford portrait is painted to a van Dyck pattern, the original design for which is van Dyck's Elizabeth Howard, Countess of Peterborough in which the dress and particularly the skirt, sleeves and left hand are very similar. The gesture of the right hand in the Clifford portrait relates to a well-known van Dyck portrait Queen Henrietta Maria in the British royal collection. Of peripheral interest is the fact that Thomas, First Baron Clifford of Chudleigh (1630-73), married to Elizabeth Martyn, who was a member of Charles II's cabal was painted by Sir Peter Lely and the portrait remains with the family at Ugbrooke.  

Other works from Nicholson's donation letter on which Sir Oliver Millar gave an opinion are:

- plate 46 (1) Full size portrait of a Naval Officer ... Sir Peter Lely
- plate 48 (4) Very valuable portrait of James I of England by Janssens
- plate 49 (5) Portrait of Queen Anne of Denmark wife of James I

The University Collection photograph album attributes the Naval Officer to Dobson, others are attributed as Nicholson listed them. The Naval Officer, according to Sir Oliver is 'probably not English - certainly not by Dobson and perhaps painted by a provincial Dutch artist c.1640. James I not James I, I am afraid and certainly not by "Janssens", i.e. Johnson, and Anne of Denmark is a reduced version of van Somer's full-length signed and dated 1617 in the royal collection'.

The Adam and Eve discussed earlier, although not 'fifteenth-century school of van Eyck' as Nicholson asserted, is by a known painter though of a slightly later era, Michiel Coxie. The portraits of Caterina Cornaro and the male portrait heads, also already discussed, are obviously either copies or part of repeated series. Nicholson's donation list number 12, the 'original portrait of Machiavelli by Bronzino' is lost and no photograph remains. It is possible that this may have been authentic if the single criteria of the current prices being paid for works similar to Nicholson's is taken as a basis for argument. There was no demand for Bronzino's works before 1882 and in 1855 four Bronzinos were sold at auction for under £10 each. Of the other pictures given by Nicholson on his departure for England and already discussed, all are copies except the Angelica Kauffmann which
exists in many versions none of which are signed, but nevertheless thought to be authentic. Works acquired from Nicholson or his family after the 1860s are genuine (i.e. the Woolner portrait medallions, Marshall Claxton, portrait of Nicholson by Koberwein etc.).

Although Nicholson claimed to have some expertise in the area of 'Taste and the Visual Arts', his knowledge appears to have been superficial as has been pointed out. It is now impossible to know if he was duped by the 'more than six and a half thousand forgeries which entered England in 1838' and in other years, as reported by the Art Journal, or whether he subscribed to the sentiments expressed by Waagen in 1857, when on inspecting Northumberland House he discovered

in the gallery, a magnificent and splendidly decorated apartment ... the following copies of well-known works ... Raphael's School of Athens copies by Mengs in 1755 ... etc. The idea of making this admirable selection of the most celebrated works and having them copied by able artists, affords me a new proof that the English nobility possesses not only money but knowledge and taste to employ it in the most worthy manner.

The first suggestion is most believable, in view of the doubtful claims regarding provenance of the works, which will now be discussed.

In Nicholson's donation letter, the Naval Officer is said to have come from Stowe and the Head of a Roman Cardinal from the Sciara collection in Rome. Among the pictures in the Lindesay auction list which came to the university, the Naval Officer, Countess Clifford, James I, and Anne of Denmark are listed as from the Buckingham Collection at Stowe, and A Landscape and view of a Seaport, Italian Landscape and Head of a Roman Cardinal from the Sciara collection. To date only one mention of the Sciara collection has been found, which does, at least, establish that there was such a collection.

Extensive searches have been conducted amongst Stowe material for references to the above works which Nicholson claimed came from that collection. A list of works of art at Stowe was published by the English Connoisseur in 1767, but there is no mention of
pictures similar to Nicholson's in that inventory. The Stowe papers reveal very little of relevance. The Seeley guide of 1820 mentions one seventeenth-century naval figure, Admiral Russell, Earl of Orford and 'a curious picture' of James I, but no mention of 'Countess Clifford' amongst the gallery of family portraits. The Stowe Catalogue of 1848 notes that the 'odd picture of James I has the name of "Sir Robert Rich" painted on the canvas'. There is no visible inscription on the university portrait. Nor is there any similarity to any of the Nicholson paintings in the inventory of Avington House (the second Grenville residence). An enquiry to the foremost expert on Stowe House was passed on to Mr. Colin Anson an expert on pictures from the Stowe sale, who supported the advice received from the Huntington Library, adding that the Admiral Russell Earl of Orford is now lost. Inventories of the 1839 Christie's sale of 30 November and 6 December, following the death of the first Duke, did not show any works corresponding to Nicholson's, although after the 1839 sale it was said (according to Anson) that there were a number of dark old pictures to be seen at the London dealers of the day. Sales of these pictures were anonymous and it was not widely known whence the pictures came. Anson's advice on the four individual works was similar to that received from Sir Oliver Millar. He also suggested that unscrupulous dealers might have added a Stowe provenance to paintings whose origins were doubtful. This may explain Nicholson's claims, although if so, it would be further evidence of his lack of practical knowledge in the area of paintings. As far as is known, however, Nicholson was not in England in 1848 when the Stowe sale took place. The suggestion by Sir Oliver Millar that Nicholson's collection was 'perhaps put together with a certain Scots frugality' seems likely. All the same, even if the paintings had come from Stowe, their authenticity would not have been guaranteed, as a number of the works in the Stowe sale were copies.

It may be that the Stowe provenance seems unlikely, but there is a remote possibility that some of the pictures were in the Stowe catalogue as unnamed items, particularly the Lady Clifford as there was an indirect Clifford connection in the ancestry of the first Duke of Buckingham's wife, Eliza Brydges, but in the sixteenth rather than the seventeenth century. On the unlikely speculation
that some of Nicholson's works of art had belonged to his father who could have acquired them whilst he was the agent for the Earl of Egremont, an enquiry was made at Petworth, but searches in their archives revealed nothing. Numbers inscribed on the verso of some of Nicholson's paintings have been checked with Christie's auction numbers, but this endeavour was also unsuccessful.

In summary, evidence assembled through an examination of Nicholson's picture collection indicates that his taste was closely related to that of conservative English collectors and that his intentions in giving his paintings to the university - in spite of his earlier unsuccessful auction - were both didactic and designed to imitate the Oxbridge tradition. Sadly it seems that the authenticity of the paintings is in most cases questionable and that the claim that some of the works came from Stowe cannot be substantiated at all. Thus it seems that Nicholson was not particularly interested in the paintings themselves as works of art, but that he saw them as instruments which could initiate a tradition which would further reinforce ties between England, the mother country, and her colony of New South Wales so that it would be in fact Sidere Mens Eadem Mutato.

*plate 15*  Nicholson gave the university a number of tapestries, but only two survive. Little is known of their provenance, but details of Nicholson's attitude towards them and their probable market value when he acquired them contribute to the overall impression of Nicholson's taste and the effect it had on the university. The only gift by Nicholson which has been on continuous display since it was received by the university is the Gobelin tapestry, *Joseph and his Brethren* (1773). It was loaned for the adornment of the Great Hall on the occasion of the first Commemoration and inauguration of the Hall, held on 18 July, 1859. The loan was converted to a gift in 1862 when Nicholson had delivered to the university 'a large piece of Gobelin tapestry which I have occasionally permitted to be hung on the walls of the Great Hall. I leave this in your charge and enclose the key of the case in which it is contained'. The tapestry was presented before the Lindesay auction of Nicholson's pictures and other possessions, including other tapestries, and thus cannot be seen as a gift of questionable or dubious value like the pictures,
and it may have been acquired specifically for the Great Hall. Nicholson obviously regarded it as an important piece because he gave specific instructions for its hanging:

If the Authorities of the University will undertake to have an appropriate frame work for the hanging and due presentation of this beautiful work of art in a suitable position in the Hall, with a curtain to protect it and a lining of wood at the back I shall be ready to cement the loan into a gift and am willing that it should be so deemed. In the meantime I place the Tapestry in your hands and trust that it will be carefully preserved.

The university senate accepted the 'valuable work of art' and undertook to send a description of the hanging, but the 'wood at the back' has not yet been installed, one hundred and twenty-six years later.

In the same way that Nicholson stressed the 'munificence' of his gift of paintings and publicly inflated their importance whilst privately not valuing them himself, he also made clear that the Joseph tapestry was a gift of significant value. His letter continues:

I have no desire to enhance the value of an immediate or prospective gift but I believe that a similar piece of Gobelin could not be produced at the present day from the Imperial manufacture for less than fifteen hundred pounds.

Nicholson's estimate of the cost of the manufacture of this tapestry may have been correct, but it was most unlikely that a similar tapestry would have been woven in the 1860s in view of the decreased activity at the Gobelin factory after the French Revolution. If Nicholson bought the tapestry at auction, which he probably did, he would have paid much less than £1500. In 1852 a late eighteenth-century Gobelin panel (16'6" x 9'6") with a similar religious subject to the Joseph (The Death of Ananais) sold at Christie's for £108/18/-, but this was a very high price and was the first tapestry panel sold by Christie's at over £100. The sale price for the same panel two years later, in 1854, was a mere £6. The low price for tapestry was due to changes in society largely resulting from the French Revolution. European aristocrats who retained large mansions no longer had money to commission tapestries and the houses of the nouveau riche were not suitable for wall hangings and in France particularly tapestries were unpopular because they were regarded as the taste of kings. There was some fashion for tapestry in England,
however, where they were hung in the Gothic revival baronial halls which were fashionable additions to English country houses for the wealthy who had antiquarian interests. Examples of tapestry are not found in other colonial collections as far as is known, but Nicholson had 'a quantity of very beautiful Flemish tapestry' at Lindesay although none of his residences were large enough to house the Joseph tapestry. The Great Hall at the university offered the perfect location, however, and at its inauguration it was reported that:

plate 14

The walls were hung with exquisite specimens of Gobelin Tapestry brought from England by Sir Charles Nicholson. One easily distinguished by the peculiar shading of its colours is an original bearing the date 1772 (sic). The subject represents 'Joseph and his Brethren'.

To date details of Nicholson's purchase of this tapestry are not known. Sales of series from which the Joseph comes are known in Paris in 1907 and 1912. Nicholson was travelling in Italy in the 1850s and purchased works of art from dealers there. It is possible that he also acquired the Joseph tapestry there as it once belonged to the Papal Chamberlain, Count Onesti. It has always been common knowledge that Nicholson was the donor of the Joseph tapestry which has always been valued by the university (several conservation treatments have been carried out). Nicholson's inference that he paid a high price for it is written into the university archives and has never been questioned although it seems probable that he acquired it rather cheaply, nevertheless the gift, supposedly at a high price, has contributed to Nicholson's reputation as a benefactor.

plate 61

The only other remaining tapestry is a Flemish piece entitled Triumph of Diana from a well-documented series entitled Triumphs of the Gods and Goddesses. The entire set of the original weaving can be seen in the Museum voor Schone Kunst, Ghent, Belgium, where a tapestry room was constructed specially for their display. The original series of five pieces was woven in the atelier of Urbanus Leniers (b. Brussels 1674, d. 1747), and Kendrick Reydams II (b. Brussels 1650, d. 1719). They held the monopoly on the cartoons which were specifically ordered by them in 1717 from Jan van Orley (1665-1735) and Augustin Coppens (1668-1740), the former specialised
in figures and the latter in landscapes. Weaving from the Diana cartoon continued until 1734 and because of the monopoly restriction on the cartoons there is no doubt that the university example is authentic. The university Diana is smaller than the first weaving and there are some variations on the right side, but the figure of Diana, one attendant nymph, dog and game are identical in size and design to the Ghent version. The landscape background and sections of the tree trunk of the university Diana are taken from another cartoon in the series The Triumph of Apollo. The nuances of colour in the drapery of the goddess’s garments are meant to simulate the variations of colour possible in a painting but the lack of knowledge of technicalities of the dyes used to produce new colours in the eighteenth century led to uneven fading of tapestries in this series. The university tapestry is less faded than those at Ghent, probably because it has only recently been hung after being in storage for many decades. It has a narrower border than the Ghent version which includes the coat of arms of the Old Town of Ghent in the centre of the upper galloon. The entire upper galloon is missing from the university Diana but the galloon on the other three sides is similar to the example of the Diana tapestry at the Hermitage Museum, Leningrad. Eleven editions of the series are known. Extant examples include a version in the Hermitage which has variations in the design. In 1926 the complete series hung at the home of Sacheverel Sitwell, Renishaw Hall, Derbyshire, England. His family purchased the tapestries in London from the collection of Phillipe Egalité, Duc d’Orleans. Sitwell, who considered these tapestries one of the marvels of the eighteenth century, remarked also on another edition of the series ‘mois grand que les notres’ at Lord Leicester’s house Holkham Hall, Norfolk.

In view of Nicholson’s claims that some of his paintings came from the Buckingham collection at Stowe, it is worth noting that Thomas Martyn, writing in 1767, mentions that at Stowe in the State apartments ‘the walls are adorned with curious (i.e. skilful O.E.D. 1771 meaning) pieces of Tapestry viz. The Triumph of Diana, ditto Mars, ditto of Venus, ditto of Bacchus, ditto of Ceres.’ It is much more likely that Nicholson bought the tapestry sold by John Matthew Gutch esq. F.S.A. of Common Hill, Worcester on 26 March 1858. It was described for the auction, which Nicholson attended,
as 'Gobelin' but represented Diana, her dogs and attendant nymphs and was of approximately the same dimensions as the university Diana. 116

If, as argued above, Nicholson, in his collection, aspired to an erudite and conservative taste and was in some aspects didactic, and if through it he aimed to establish at the university a moral and political climate which would further strengthen the bonds with England, how does the subject matter and content of these tapestries support this assumption? It has already been shown that Nicholson attached some importance to the Joseph tapestry. The subject is a religious one, yet at no time was the Great Hall where the tapestry was hung, intended for religious ceremonies, nor was Nicholson himself, in his early years, particularly religious, although he had a scholarly interest in the Bible. 117 But there are several aspects of the scene depicted which would have attracted Nicholson and the content could be read in a way which supports the above suggestion. The tapestry shows Joseph as a wise ruler not only loving his dependent relations but prudently providing for them. In the eyes of a nineteenth-century viewer this scene would have had a didactic significance pointing to a moral. Could it be that Joseph was seen as a metaphor for England, caring for her dependent colonies, providing for them and receiving grateful gestures in return? Although this interpretation is pure hypothesis, the message of reconciliation and family ties would have been welcomed by many of the elite of the colony at a time when debate about introduction of a new system of government for the colony and the discovery of gold were just two unsettling facets of colonial society. There is no doubt, however, that the setting in Egypt would have appealed to Nicholson's passion for Egyptian antiquity, although the only iconographical indication of Egypt is a single palm tree in the left background.

The Diana tapestry does not support the above argument, it is not didactic, and should be seen as purely decorative. It has never been hung in an official room at the university (although at the time of writing it is hung in a private room at the university) but it is noted as hanging in the Warden's room early in the twentieth century. 118 As noted earlier the collection of tapestry was
practically extinct in European countries in the nineteenth century, although as I have shown there were some examples in England but only amongst the wealthy. Thus again, a conservative taste is revealed and to some extent an individual preference.

The question of Nicholson's collection of antiquities must now be examined. Does this collection also reveal conservative taste, and if not, how does it relate to other nineteenth-century collections? It has already been claimed that Nicholson's taste differed from Salting's in relation to the collection of antiquities and also from that of colonial collectors, for Nicholson's was the only collection of antiquities in the colony. In 1860 he gave the university four hundred and eight Egyptian objects and one hundred Greek vases as well as other pre-historic Etruscan and Roman objects. While such a collection was unique in New South Wales, the situation amongst European collectors, however, was quite the opposite in spite of the example of Salting quoted above.

In England the widespread enthusiasm for antiquities was shared by William Long (b. Sydney 1839), the Cambridge student and son of an ex-convict turned publican. William Long established an interest in antiquities at the University of Sydney one year before Nicholson made his grand gift. The university Calendar for 1860 lists amongst the donors for 1859:

William Long Esq. (Trinity College, Cambridge)
Two casts from the METOPES of the Parthenon in the Elgin Collection in the British Museum
Four casts from the PANATHENAIC FRIEZE of the Parthenon in the Elgin Collection in the British Museum
Cast of the statue of THESEUS in the Elgin Collection
Cast of ILISSUS or RIVER GOD in the Elgin Collection.

The casts of Theseus and Ilissus are not now known, but the other six were built into the walls of the southern vestibule of the main building of the university quadrangle. They provide an appropriate setting for the entrance to the original Nicholson museum which Nicholson himself ensured was built to receive his 1860 gift of antiquities, but Long was not acknowledged by Nicholson as the donor of the casts. No doubt his convict father was an embarrassment although he had become rich and lived at Tusculum, adjacent to Sir James Martin.
To return to Nicholson, in discussing his Egyptian collection it should be remembered that Egypt has been the victim of tomb robbers and collectors of curios since the days of the Pharaoh, but by the 1830s the acquisition of Egyptian objects by European collectors had reached outrageous proportions. Egyptian artifacts were so commonplace by 1832 that William Hazlitt remarked that 'any eighteenth-century squire had collections of Egyptian hieroglyphics and mummies'. It is not appropriate here to analyse all the causes of this phenomenon, but its impact was widespread.

Architecture, furniture design and fashion in England were affected by the craze. The Duke of Buckingham built an Egyptian Hall at Stowe in 1805 and Bullock's Museum in Piccadilly, which opened in 1812, had an extraordinary pseudo-Egyptian facade. The new Crystal Palace, opened in 1854, had an Egyptian Court in which the Colossi of Abu Simbel were reproduced. There were countless other examples. Many museums also had Egyptian collections. The British Museum's Egyptian collection had been founded by Sir Hans Soane in 1756 and later in 1802 received the Rosetta Stone while Vivant-Denon had assembled the enormous Egyptian collection at the Louvre to mention only two examples. The eighteenth-century antiquarian interest in Egyptian curios gave way, in the nineteenth century, to a more scholarly interest in the scientific recording of these artifacts, but tomb robbery was still rife.

By the 1840s Egypt had become easily accessible to travellers through the opening of the overland route from England to India. A journey from Australia could be undertaken via India and the Red Sea overland from Suez or Kosier then across the desert to Thebes and the Nile. The journey continued via the new P. and O. steamers from Cairo to London. The new route facilitated heavy traffic and catered for wealthy tourists who flocked to Egypt. This route would have been available to Nicholson when he visited Egypt in 1856-57. Egyptology became both a scholarly and fashionable pursuit. One scholar remarked that 'it would be hardly respectable, on one's return from Egypt, to present oneself in Europe without a mummy in one hand and a crocodile in the other'. Although it was customary to acquire Egyptian artifacts from hawkers and curio dealers in situ, some Egyptian objects were sold at auction.
and brought relatively high prices. In 1859 Sotheby's sold a sixth-century BC Saitic bronze hawk (17¾" high) for £20/10/- and a similar cat (16" high) for £10. 123

An examination of the taste displayed in Nicholson's collection of Greek vases must be seen in the context of the history of the collection of Greek pottery, which by contrast to Egyptian collecting, began in the eighteenth century. The earliest scholarly work on Greek pottery did not appear until Sir William Hamilton published a catalogue on his first collection in 1786-67. 124 Huge numbers of Greek pots have come to light, and for technical reasons, almost all are authentic. 125 By the middle of the nineteenth century large numbers of them were in circulation. The director of the Rome Monte di Pieta from 1830-57, the Marchese Campana, had a collection of 3,800 Greek vases. 126 In common with French mirrors, Persian rugs and gothic candlesticks, Greek vases were familiar items in the English household. 127 Between 1795, when Sir William Hamilton sold 180 Greek vases for £4,724 or approximately 25 guineas per vase, and 1848 when the Duke of Buckingham sold a red-figure vase for £24/3/- through Christie's at the great Stowe sale, the commercial value of Greek pottery remained almost static. But by 1856, however, prices for good quality vases had risen steadily to occasionally reach over £100: the Earl of Orford sold a fine truncated sphere vase for £129/2/- in 1856. 128

Etruscan bronzes came on the market from time to time and could be purchased for around £100. Roman bronzes were not so expensive, the Duke of Buckingham sold two at the Stowe sale for much less than he had paid for them (for instance a bronze figure of Theseus which was purchased for £200 sold for £53/11/-). A high relief sarcophagus sold for £39/18/- in 1842. 129 Of course it was not bronze, but it was Roman and there was a sarcophagus included in Nicholson's gift to the university.

Although it appears that Nicholson did not acquire his objects at auction, the prices quoted indicate the demand for the articles. Nicholson stated that he acquired the Egyptian, Greek, Etruscan and Roman artifacts during his visit to Italy and journey down the Nile which began at 'Syene' or Aswan in 1856. 130 Nicholson
assembled this collection at a time when the craze for Egyptian artifacts was at its height and when Greek vases - which had been included in many eighteenth-century collections such as the Buckingham - were nevertheless bringing an increasing price at auction, which indicates a new wave of enthusiasm for them.

The importance Nicholson attached to his collection of 'Etruscan, Greek, Roman and Egyptian antiquities' is indicated by his employment of Joseph Bonomi to compile a 'Catalogue of Egyptian and other Antiquities collected by Sir Charles Nicholson', published in London in 1858. Bonomi (1796-1878) was well-known in England as a specialist in Egyptology who worked as a draughtsman, illustrator, cataloguer and producer of casts in situ from Egyptian statues. He was employed by J.G. Wilkinson to illustrate his famous Ancient Egyptians and by the British Museum, Hartwell House and the organisers of the Crystal Palace's Egyptian Hall. Nicholson thus placed his collection of antiquities in illustrious company, and no doubt Bonomi's agreement to undertake the catalogue indicates that in his view it had considerable merit. Today, Nicholson's original collection is regarded as uneven, but it does contain a number of first-class pieces such as the Eighteenth-Dynasty portrait of Horemheb and the black figure cups painted by Sakonides and the Brygos painter. Other items such as Roman sepulchral inscriptions and inscribed blocks from the Nineteenth-Dynasty tomb-chapel of Mose are of value for their archaeological interest. There are a few fakes but not sufficient to conclude that Nicholson lacked discernment in this area of his collection.  

It is very doubtful if the significance of Nicholson's generous gift of antiquities was understood by more than a handful of individuals in the colony in 1860 when he made the donation. Nicholson himself however, in offering his collection of 'Etruscan, Greek, Roman and Egyptian antiquities' to the university coyly pointed out (as usual) that he had 'no desire to enhance the value of the donation in saying what is nevertheless the fact, that the formation of the collection which I now offer to the university has been attended with much personal labour and no inconsiderable pecuniary outlay'.

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Nicholson's collection of Egyptian, Etruscan and Roman antiquities, whilst it was unique in the colony, accords with fashionable European taste. Of course, neither Nicholson nor any other nineteenth-century collectors regarded objects such as these as works of art, but like the portraits they were didactic material. Nicholson saw them 'as supplying materials interesting in themselves and most important in the illustrations of various branches of historical, philological and classical enquiry'. 134

The various aspects of Nicholson's benefactions which have been addressed in the preceding discussions, lead to an assessment of his overall taste and its effect upon the university. Taken as a whole the preferences revealed in Nicholson's benefactions manifest the breadth of his cultural interests. But he was a complex personality whose tastes varied with each section of his collection. The preferences expressed in the picture collection were conservative with one exception. His interest in classical (Greek and Roman) antiquities follows a well-established eighteenth-century fashion, the Egyptian collection reveals a scholarly interest in classification and history which was at a high point of popularity in England when Nicholson was collecting. On the other hand his tapestries revealed an idiosyncratic taste. Although he is regarded by some writers as Australia's first great collector his taste was English, yet in the English context his collection was relatively insignificant. In the colonies there was only a handful of people trying to assemble collections and in the 1850s and 1860s there does not appear to have been an identifiable Australian taste. In his early years in the colony Nicholson saw himself as an arbiter of taste and felt himself to be well enough informed on the subject to deliver lectures on 'the Application of the Principle of Taste to the Arts' in 1842 as already mentioned. 135

Unfortunately there is no record of these lectures, however, it was reported that 'Dr. Nicholson' who was Vice-President of the School of Arts in 1842, and other officials of the institution, were 'bringing together the higher classes of society to gratify their polished taste, rather than to impart useful instruction to that body for whose exclusive benefit the Institution was formed'. 136 This assessment of Nicholson's lectures from the popular and somewhat
radical press, may have had some credibility. 'Taste' was an eighteenth-century concept, which according to David Hume involved moral and cultural values and a 'sensibility' to beauty. Sir Joshua Reynolds linked it with 'genius', but it was also related to rules and manners in polite society. 137 But by the nineteenth century, on the other hand, Wordsworth was questioning the concept of 'taste' as shallow and opposed to ideas of 'truth', 'passion' and 'dignity' which he found in nature's common man. 138 It could be said that Nicholson was catering for an audience which had aspirations to gentility, even though Sydney's main reason for existence less than two years previously had been as a penal colony, the bulk of whose citizens had less status even than Wordsworth's 'common man'.

Throughout his days in the colony Nicholson retained his didactic attitude which appears to have been the strongest motive for his donation of what he regarded as the best of his collection. His primary incentive, which must be related to his taste, can be expressed in his own words - 'in a country like Australia where all is new, objects comparatively insignificant in themselves yet illustrative of the manners, religion and thoughts of those who lived during earlier periods of the world's history possess a value and interest far beyond that which would belong to them in European states'. 139 As Diane Sachko Macleod points out, in the Victorian context, donations of private art collections to the public should be regarded as similar to other socially ameliorating activities like the setting up of Mechanics Institutes. 140 In regard to one such donation the Art Union commented that 'the salutary influence of ART on the universal mind requires no argument: it is impossible that a people can be coarse or vicious whose sources of enjoyment are refined and intellectual'. 141 Nicholson expressed such sentiments when he donated a collection of casts from the antique to the Australian Museum:

In presenting them to the public of New South Wales, I have been influenced by the hope that they may be instrumental in exciting a taste - especially amongst the native youth of the colony for that branch of the fine arts of which the originals of these casts are the most cultivated examples. 142

Therefore, Nicholson's overall taste can be identified with aspects of English attitudes towards collecting, which, as in Nicholson's case, had strong didactic tendencies.
In what ways have Nicholson's benefactions affected the university and the wider community? One could ask also whether Nicholson's benefactions had any effect upon his own image either in England or in Australia? In relation to the university it has been suggested that Nicholson's aims regarding his donations were didactic: he sought to reinforce ties between colonial and English institutions and to provide an instant heritage for the university. Have these aspirations been fulfilled? Before attempting to assess the overall effects of Nicholson's benefactions the effects of various categories of gifts will be discussed.

The first to be considered are the Joseph tapestry, the stained glass windows and the mace, which are all associated with the Great Hall, the architectural style of which owes much to Nicholson's influence as pointed out in Chapter I. Since it was donated, the Joseph tapestry has hung in the Great Hall and together with the stained glass windows, contributes markedly to the atmosphere of history, English tradition, formality, richness and dignity which strikes one immediately upon entry. The acquisition of the silver mace, which significantly appears in the H.W. Phillips portrait of Nicholson, obliged the university to follow a tradition taken directly from English universities: that of the Esquire Bedell, who bears the mace, a symbol of the authority of the university senate, when preceding the academic procession. The creation of an instant heritage was certainly the intention of Sir Charles, and it cannot be denied that with the help of these benefactions, he succeeded brilliantly.

Nevertheless, whilst many commentators, in writing on Sydney generally, praised the Great Hall and its contents, its effect on the community was principally to provide a visible link with England. The effect of the Great Hall and its contents upon the taste of the community was commented upon by Nicholson's daughter-in-law when she visited Sydney in 1897. She wondered at the 'bad taste of the present Sydneys with such an example (as the Great Hall) before them'.

Although Nicholson's pictures and tapestries were hanging at the university, it must be admitted that, apart from the Joseph tapestry, they aroused very little interest, either at the university or in the wider community. Indeed, when Professor Badham, the principal of the university, delivered the inaugural address at the
opening conversazione and art exhibition of the New South Wales Academy of Art, he did not refer either to Nicholson or his pictures, nor were any paintings from the university included in the exhibition. Although there was a committee of senate convened in 1880 to 'ascertain the safe custody of the antiquities and pictures given by him (Nicholson) to the university', the committee's only report omitted any reference to the pictures or tapestries. The community must have been aware that there was a collection of paintings at the university, for it is recorded that the offer of a 'Mr. Fielding' to clean and restore the pictures at a cost of £59 was declined by the university senate in 1880. Later, in 1888 when the New South Wales Commission for the Centennial International Exhibition invited the university to lend works of art for the exhibition, the university declined. Evidence suggests that it was not only the works of art which lacked attention at this time, for in 1883 Richard Twopenny commented on the failure of the university to attract 'any considerable number of students', and noted that 'there is an indolence and laissez faire about the Sydney University ... (and) not until there is a thorough reformation of the whole style, tone and management will there be any real progress'.

There are no records to indicate that Nicholson's pictures were ever shown publicly in the nineteenth century, although from photographic evidence, they were hung in the university senate room and the registrar's office, not areas frequented by students or the general public. Thus the effect of the paintings in the nineteenth century was minimal because they were not seen. In the early twentieth century H.E. Barff, the registrar, arranged for conservation (some of it disastrous by today's standards) and he attempted some research on some of the paintings between 1903 and 1912. Such activity indicated some interest, but again no marked influence on the immediate or wider community.

After some years of languishing unacknowledged, the paintings achieved some measure of public and international recognition through an article which was written by Professor David MacMillan, then archivist, and published in the Connoisseur Year Book 1957, referred to earlier. The article included two reproductions of the 'Lady in Blue', the Coxcie and the Woolner portrait medallion of Wentworth,
and asserted that Sydney University was richly endowed with items of interest, all presented by Nicholson. At this time little had been written on individual art collections or benefactors in Australia, although several articles by the conservator employed by MacMillan, D.J. Setelik, appeared a couple of years earlier. MacMillan's interest in the paintings was not pursued or taken up by others. Both Setelik's and MacMillans articles deal with the style and possible provenance of the paintings. Neither refer to Nicholson's donation as a group of historical portraits, which it has been suggested here was intended by him to be didactic. Nicholson's paintings have, therefore, only been a source of interest from time to time. Except for Lady Clifford which seems to have been on constant view, they have been in storage for at least thirty years, but the current revival of interest in colonial history has aroused some interest in the collection some items of which have been restored and rehung.

In contrast, Nicholson's donation of four hundred odd articles of antiquity with which the Nicholson Museum was founded has been of great significance, although the original collection now forms a very small part of the Museum collection. The Nicholson Museum is known as Australia's foremost museum of antiquities, lending the university great prestige in this area. In fact there is no other collection in Australia which is comparable in significance. The reason that such a distinguished collection grew out of Nicholson's original benefaction is doubtless due to the fact that Nicholson gave express instructions that a curator should be employed from the start and he ensured that the original main building included a space for the Museum (at the expense of the clock tower which was added later). Nicholson designed the collection 'to enable the Professors to avail themselves of their aid (objects in the collection) in the illustration of classical lectures'. Sydney was the first university to use a collection of antiquities for teaching purposes, although there were at the time collections of antiquities at both the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford and the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. The introduction of archaeology to the curriculum of the university was undoubtedly a result of the Nicholson donation of antiquities, although no research has been carried out to support this assertion. In the nineteenth century the university also gained some international recognition through the association between the Nicholson Museum
and the Egypt Exploration Society, through whose auspices the Nicholson antiquities were listed at the Egyptian National Museum at Gizeh. On the local scene the Nicholson antiquities and the Museum have had no perceptible effect on the art world. Nicholson himself never envisaged this, but the idea was postulated by Professor Joseph Burke. He suggested that the antiquities had possibilities as a resource for Australian artists who could use them in the same way as European artists such as Paul Klee, Brancusi and Picasso used similar European collections.

There is no question that Nicholson's personal reputation was enhanced as a result of his benefactions to the university. In the nineteenth century one anonymous English writer praised him for his 'taste, ability and munificence' with which he so richly endowed the university, and suggested further that 'he will prove in the future of Australia what Sir Hans Sloane is to us in reference to the British Museum'. The colonials certainly did not see Nicholson in this light when he finally departed from the colony in 1862. Then it was to his political and mercantile activities that the local media referred and in so doing made some sour remarks about his baronetc, social tastes and ambition. The leader writer of the Empire pointed out that:

On returning to Sydney after his elevation to a baronetc, he soon became disgusted with the democratic tendencies of its government and people and on the separation of Qld. declared his intention of becoming a denizen of that very pretentious and would-be aristocratic colony ... things did not run smoothly there ... and we are informed that he had conceived of getting (Rockhampton where he had invested somewhat lavishly in land) erected into a separate colony. It is said he confidently anticipates getting the appointment of Governor if he is successful in his separation project ... The people of that rising settlement will probably be surprised to learn that they are to have greatness thrust upon them.

The Empire was not a conservative paper and despite Nicholson's great involvement in colonial life and his contribution in setting up the university, he did not win over the currency lads such as Charles Harper, who farewelled him with a biting epigram:
So Sir Charles goeth home, with his coals to Newcastle, That is, with his Title, since with him it goes: And there it may suit, as a personal tassel, Though here it appears just as silly to those Who dare think, as the reed in a Blackfellow's nose, Whereby he would hint the sublime estimation In which he is held (by himself) in his nation. 158

Although the media had praised Sir Charles for his benefactions when the Great Hall was opened in 1859 and noted his contributions to the windows and of the tapestries, to date no references have been found to Nicholson in the role of benefactor and art lover upon his final departure from the colony.

Nevertheless his reputation as a collector was again posited almost a century after the anonymous English writer had compared him to Sir Hans Sloane, when Rachael Roxburgh remarked that had Nicholson's collection, 'Australia's first great art collection chanced to remain at Lindesay, Sydney might have had a museum analogous to London's Wallace Collection'. 159 It is obvious, however, that this writer was not familiar with the pictures.

Upon the centenary of Nicholson's arrival in the colony (1934) his sons gave the famous Hermes statue to the university, and on that occasion the reputation and influence of Sir Charles, as it was then perceived, was outlined by Professor Todd, as follows:

But in respect of his ... services to the University of Sydney and through it, to the culture of a whole continent Sir Charles Nicholson stands alone ... To him we owe the priceless treasures of the Museum of Antiquities which bears his name, a collection which is now, and must always remain unique in Australia; to him, whether as giver or prompter of the gift, we owe all the splendid windows of stained glass which adorn this Hall: to him all the tapestries and almost all the pictures which delight our eyes and refresh our spirits; to him the enrichment of our Library with valuable printed books and manuscripts ... His especial care was the aesthetic culture of the University the necessity, in a new and materially minded country, of cultivating good taste in literature and art. He was the first and greatest of our spiritual benefactors, the man who ensured that this ... University founded in British lands beyond the seas, should become and remain worthy of its name and heritage. 160

By 1934 Nicholson's reputation as a great benefactor was firmly established and had subsumed his personal reputation as a snob,
at least in the estimation of the currency lads and lasses and their descendants.

Todd's summary of Nicholson's influence is just in many ways and indicated that Nicholson's benefactions were well-known in 1934, but it also reflects the attitudes of the time, when Australia still saw itself as an 'outpost of the British Empire' and a place which should reflect English standards, values and interests. Therefore, if Nicholson's aim had been to cement British and colonial relationships, the above address indicated that he succeeded and that the bond remained until at least 1934 when the address was first delivered and possibly until 1947 when it was reprinted upon the death of Sir Sydney Nicholson.

In summary, Nicholson's own reputation was significantly enhanced by his benefactions, not only in Sydney but also amongst his friends in England, but the university also gained in many ways as outlined above. Nicholson's didactic intentions only succeeded in direct relationship to the Nicholson Museum. If he had ideas of imparting moral standards and exemplars to live by through his collection of works of art, it cannot be said that any evidence survives to suggest that this idea was ever comprehended by the university community. It could, however, be confidently asserted that the foregoing analysis shows that Nicholson's benefactions established links between the colonial university and the British tradition and thus reinforced ties between the colony and England, although it could never, in fact, be 'the same under southern skies'.