

# 1817 – The Costume of the Australasians

## What we see in this image

This scene depicts colonial men of various types as seen by the artist on the streets of Sydney in about 1817. It shows the different strata of colonial Sydney society – civil and military officers, free settlers, soldiers, emancipists and serving convicts – in an apparent easy co-existence.

The ten figures, from left to right, include:

1. a government official wearing a large bicorne hat, trimmed with a black ribbon rosette, and a three-piece suit of dark cloth comprising a tail coat and waistcoat, buttoned over a white linen shirt with a pleated front, his trousers tucked into knee high, tasselled hessian boots. This could be Governor Macquarie's secretary, John Thomas Campbell, in civilian dress;

2. an emancipist or 'ticket-of-leave' man in a loose-fitting, grey 'slop' suit worn with a frill-fronted shirt, low crowned hat and brown leather shoes;

3. an 'exclusive' or free settler carrying a large green umbrella and wearing a wide-brimmed hat (perhaps made locally of cabbage tree palm) with a long, brown 'duster' coat over a buff-coloured waistcoat with a stand collar, and a white linen shirt with a pleated, frilled front and a pointed collar, above wide-legged white [moleskin] trousers with buff-coloured, deep, side-buttoning cuffs and brown shoes buckled over the instep. NB: Large green umbrellas, probably imported from India, were regularly listed in the sales advertisements of Sydney retailers at this time.

4. a saluting bandsman in a tall shako with looped rows of white plaited cords (caplines) across the front and tassels hanging down one side, wearing a blue woollen uniform of short, braided jacket with a yellow lining, stand collar and cuffs, and matching trousers tucked into tall hessian boots;

5. a soldier wearing the uniform of the 48th regiment with its distinctive 'shako' with badge and gold braiding, and a red woollen jacket with white collar, cuffs and facings, over a linen shirt with stand collar, pleated, frilled front and a black neckcloth, his white trousers with side braid, marked at the waist with a red sash with looped corded and tasselled trim (perhaps attached to a message pouch). He also carries a 'shillelagh' (typically made from a stout knotty stick with a large knob at the top) perhaps displaying an association with Ireland;

6. a government convict (perhaps privately assigned) carrying a large burden on his head and wearing the standard issue leather cap with a brown 'slop' suit, brown leather shoes and no stockings.

7. another free settler wearing a fine [imported] straw hat, and a short blue jacket with white cuffs and rolled back edges (perhaps sheepskin lined) forming a collar, over a white waistcoat with a turn-back collar and a linen shirt with frilled front and stand collar, and white trousers. He also carries a riding crop or swagger stick and wears brown leather boots fitted with silver spurs;

8. a government convict carrying a log across his shoulders wears a three-piece woollen suit in the yellow 'canary' wool (Parramatta cloth) of the repeat offender, with a standard issue folding leather convict cap, brown leather shoes and no stockings;

9. another soldier, his hand raised in greeting, wears a blue cap with a black peak, trimmed with a white pop-pom and a gold

cap band, with a double-breasted, braided, long-tailed red wool coat and white trousers.

10. a convict clerk wears an ill-fitting blue 'slop' suit with his standard issue leather convict cap and brown leather shoes, also worn without stocking

## **What we know about this image**

This drawing is a primary source for the history of clothing in Australia. Distinctive in its social inclusiveness, and its tone of amiable satire, it includes rare images of convicts and provides a splendid record of how class and status in a penal colony were instantly recognisable by dress.

Edward Close (1790-1866), soldier, engineer, settler, magistrate and member of the Legislative Council, arrived in New South Wales in 1817. Following colonial service as engineer at Newcastle, NSW, Close resigned his commission and was granted land at Morpeth on the Hunter River. Close would have received some training in topographical rendering during his training as a military officer; his coastal and landscape watercolours are the most convincing of his drawings. Lacking academic training, he was naturally less successful with anatomy which explains the naiveté of the figure compositions in this image, but this is more than made up for by his careful observation of the social and clothing codes in operation around him on his arrival in the colony.

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**Hover on image to zoom in**



## 1817 – The Costume of the Australasians

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**Download Image**



<b>Creator</b>
Edward Charles Close (1790-1866) attrib.
<b>Inscription</b>
In ink along lower edge: 'The Costume of the Australasians'
<b>Medium</b>

Watercolour
<b>Background</b>
To follow
<b>Reference</b>
To follow

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## **1811 – Thomas Laycock, wearing the uniform of the 98th Regiment**

### **What we see in this image**

This right facing,  $\frac{3}{4}$  profile portrait is one of a pair of miniatures of Thomas Laycock and his wife Isabella (nee Bunker) which are believed to have been painted in England in about 1811. It shows the newly-promoted Thomas Laycock in the uniform of the 98th Regiment a foot; Laycock had received his promotion to the rank of captain on 27 September 1811.

Laycock is clean shaven, his dark brown hair stylishly is coiffed, left longer and curled on top, and brushed forward over the temples.

At this time all British infantry wore red woollen jackets.

Officers' jackets (as shown in this portrait) were made of a bright scarlet cloth, well-tailored and close fitting, often padded to exaggerate the outline. The uniform jacket of the 98th Regiment a foot was brass-buttoned and double-breasted, with button-back lapels, white facings and stand collar; the practice of distinguishing regiments by different coloured facings had been in general use since the early 18th century. The jacket is worn with a black neckcloth, a tasselled gold epaulette at the shoulder denoting the rank of captain is fastened over a white cross belt with the regimental insignia (98) clearly displayed on the cross-plate.

### **What we know about this image**

Thomas Laycock (1786?-1823), soldier and explorer, was the son of Thomas Laycock (1756?-1809), Quartermaster with the NSW Corps, and his wife Hannah (1758-1831). He came to Sydney with his mother on the Gorgon in 1791. He entered the New South Wales Corps, was commissioned as an ensign in December 1795, and promoted lieutenant in 1802.

After serving at Sydney and Norfolk Island, he was made Quartermaster at Port Dalrymple in 1806, under Captain Anthony Fenn Kemp. Laycock later returned to Sydney where he became the only casualty in the January 1808 Rum Rebellion; while searching Government House Laycock fell through a manhole onto his 'principal joint'.

On 1 June 1809, Laycock married Isabella Bunker, daughter of Eber Bunker. Following Governor Macquarie's arrival six months later, the newly married Laycocks departed for England, sailing aboard HMS Dromedary on 18 March 1810. After serving in the American war of 1812, Laycock sold his commission, sailing for Sydney with his wife and two sons aboard the Fame. Leaving on 8 March 1817, Isabella took ill during the journey and died suddenly at sea on 12 May 1817. Left with two young children to raise, Laycock was quickly remarried to Margaret (née Connell) on 8 July 1817, at St. Philips Church, Sydney,

with whom he had a further two children.

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**1811 – Thomas Laycock, wearing the uniform of the  
98th Regiment**

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## Download Image



<b>Creator</b>
To follow
<b>Inscription</b>
To follow
<b>Medium</b>
Watercolour on Ivory
<b>Background</b>
To follow
<b>Reference</b>
To follow

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# 1811 – Isabella Laycock

## What we see in this image

This right facing,  $\frac{3}{4}$  profile,  $\frac{1}{2}$  length miniature portrait shows Isabella Laycock (1787-1817) at 24 years of age, dressed in the close-fitting, vertical or columnar 'Neo-Classical'

style of the early nineteenth century. This style sought to emulate the sophisticated figure-revealing, classical silhouette of the Roman Empire; white was the preferred colour during this era, with fine white muslin the favoured fabric

Isabella wears a simple evening dress of very fine white muslin, the sheerness of which can be seen through the short, puffed sleeves revealing the slim shapeliness of her upper arms. The wide, low square neckline shows off her youthful shoulders and is trimmed with bands of white work embroidery and fine lace above the finely tucked, or shirred, bodice which has a very high waistline, marked just below the bust with a softly gathered sash or ribbon tied in a small bow at centre front above a tubular skirt. She wears no jewellery and her long, naturally curly brown hair has been simply arranged with a centre parting, a high bun at the back and side curls framing her face.

## **What we know about this image**

This miniature portrait of Isabella Laycock is one of a pair believed to have been painted in England in about 1811, created two years after her marriage to Thomas Laycock (1786?-1823) on 1 June 1809, between the birth of her two sons John (1810) and Thomas Jnr (1815), Isabella's sudden death at sea on 12 May 1817.

Isabella Laycock was the daughter of the whaler Eber Bunker (1760-1836), who brought his wife and family of five children to the colony in August 1806, setting up home at a place known as Bunker's Hill in the Rocks overlooking the Harbour. Following the death of Isabella's mother in March 1808, Eber Bunker married Margaret Macfarlane. After Governor Macquarie's arrival in Sydney in late 1809, the newly married Laycocks departed for England, sailing aboard HMS Dromedary on 18 March 1810. In England, on 27 September 1811, Laycock was promoted

to the rank of captain in the 98th Regiment a foot. After serving in the American war of 1812, Laycock sold his commission and sailed for Sydney with his wife & two children aboard the Fame. Leaving on 8 March 1817, Isabella took ill during the journey and died suddenly at sea on 12 May 1817. Left with two young children to look raise, Laycock quickly married Margaret (née Connell), on 8 July 1817, with whom he had a further two children.

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**1811 – Isabella Laycock**

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<b>Creator</b>
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To follow
<b>Medium</b>
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<b>Background</b>
To follow
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To follow

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# 1810 – Captain Eber Bunker

## What we see in this image

This left facing 3/4 profile portrait miniature shows Eber Bunker at about 57 years of age. He is elegantly portrayed in a dark blue, double-breasted woollen jacket with double-notched lapels and brass buttons, worn over a white waistcoat and linen shirt, with a stand collar and finely pleated, ruffled front, a white stock wrapped around the throat, tied

in a small bow at the neck. Bunker is clean shaven; his dark grey hair has been left in long curls on top, cropped close around the sides, and brushed forward at the front, with a curled fringe arranged across his brow.

## **What we know about this image**

Captain Eber Bunker (1760-1836) was a master mariner and landholder who has been called the 'father of Australian whaling'. Commander of the William and Ann, one of three whaling ships chartered for use as convict transports for the third fleet in 1791, on arrival in the colony Bunker took his ship, and another vessel of the Third Fleet, Britannia, on the first whaling expedition in Australian waters, returning to Port Jackson with a whale each which they then boiled and processed on shore. Bunker made several return whaling expeditions to New South Wales before bringing his family to the colony in August 1806, and set up home at a place known as Bunker's Hill in the Rocks overlooking the Harbour. Following the death of his first wife Margrett in March 1808, Bunker married Margaret Macfarlane. After the death of his second wife while he was away at sea. Bunker was married a third time, on 28 April 1823, to Ann, widow of William Minchin. By this time Bunker had become a landholder at 'Bulanaming', Bankstown and the Hunter Valley. He made a final whaling voyage in the Alfred to the Santa Cruz Islands in 1824-25, and died at 'Collingwood', near Liverpool, on 27 September 1836, aged 74.

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**1810 – Captain Eber Bunker**

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<b>Creator</b>
To follow
<b>Inscription</b>
On back: 'Captain Eber Bunker/ 1760-1836 / The first of the Whalers/ Arrived New South Wales 1791...'
<b>Medium</b>
Watercolour on Ivory
<b>Background</b>
To follow
<b>Reference</b>
To follow

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## 1808 – The arrest of Governor Bligh

### What we see in this image

This caricature records the culmination of events which began at around 6pm on 26 January 1808, when 4000 soldiers of the NSW Corps, under the command of Col. George Johnston, marched from their Barracks, along Bridge Street, to Government House, Sydney, with the intention of arresting Governor William Bligh. It took an hour and a half to find Bligh who had

concealed himself, in full-dress naval uniform, upstairs in a servant's room, where he destroyed documents he did not want to fall into the hands of the mutineers. According to his enemies he was found hiding under a bed.

This image shows these events taking place in a bedroom and witnessed by three soldiers wearing the uniform of the NSW Corps; during the trial in London, Lieutenant William Minchin recalled that on entering the room there were already two or three soldiers there (Sergeant John Sutherland, Corporal Michael Marlborough and Private William Wilford) but that the Governor was standing up.

The soldier leaning down to drag Bligh out from under the bed can be ranked as a corporal by the pair of chevrons, point downwards (since 1802), on the upper arm of his red woollen jacket. The standing figure (far right) is clearly portrayed with a single epaulette on his right shoulder denoting the rank of Lieutenant. This is, therefore, most probably Lieut. William Minchin (1774?-1821). He also wears the top hat of an officer with black trousers tucked into tasselled 'hessian' boots, and carries a sword at his side.

The two soldiers wear tall, black cylindrical 'stovepipe' shakos with peaked visor and a brass regimental badge attached to the front. This type of shako was worn by British Army infantrymen from around 1799 until the end of the Peninsular War (1808-1814). The red and white side plume, or cockade, worn on the left side of the shako behind a black cloth rosette, enabled commanders to distinguish who was who on a battlefield; white at the top of the plume indicated 'Infantry' and red at the base 'English'. The men also wear white cross belts over their red woollen jackets, above grey trousers and low cut, flat black shoes, or pumps.

## **What we know about this image**

The 'Arrest of Governor Bligh' is an image of propaganda.

Despite its being the only surviving visual account of these event, its content must be treated with some scepticism. The watercolour first came into the possession of the NSW Government in 1888, from the descendants of Lieutenant Colonel George Johnston, and was transferred to the Mitchell Library in 1934.

It is likely that this caricature is the one commissioned from an unknown artist by Sergeant Major Thomas Whittle (c.1764-1822), a NSW Corps soldier known to have participated in the Bligh's arrest on 26 January 1808, with Lieut. William Minchin (1774?-1821), who appears as the standing figure on the far RHS of this image. Sergeant Whittle is believed to have displayed this image in his house, enshrined between two candlesticks, a couple of days after the rebellion.

The genesis of the watercolour of Bligh's arrest appears to have been a dispute that blew up between Bligh and Whittle. According to contemporary newspapers accounts of the incident, it seems that Bligh had asked Whittle to remove his house because it stood in the way of town improvements. Whittle protested and Bligh angrily abused him. Possibly in the spirit of revenge, Whittle, who later gave evidence at the trial in London as having seen the Governor just after his arrest, commissioned this drawing of Bligh being pulled by soldiers from under the bed.

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## 1808 – The arrest of Governor Bligh

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**Download Image**



<b>Creator</b>
To follow
<b>Inscription</b>
On back: 'Sketch of Bligh's / arrest by / Lieut. Minchin'; 'Govn Bligh' ; and 'Govn. Bligh under the Bed'
<b>Medium</b>
Watercolour
<b>Background</b>

Shows interior view of Government House, Sydney.

**Reference**

To follow