

Appendix D

A Perplexing Comment

In 1979, the historian Lysbeth Cohen wrote: ‘the first ever [piano] to be landed in the colony, brought by Surgeon Worgan with the First Fleet ... is now in the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences’,¹ in Ultimo, Sydney (in 1988, the museum was renamed the Powerhouse Museum). Regrettably, Cohen provides no evidence in support of her statement.

The instrument to which Cohen refers is a square piano by Longman & Broderip, dated 1782–98?, currently housed in the Powerhouse Museum.² No evidence can be found that links this piano with the First Fleet.

A conversation held between the author and the museum’s Curator of Musical Instruments, Michael Lea, on Monday, 6 August 2012, provided the following information (Lea sourced the information from the museum’s archival material).

1. The Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (Powerhouse Museum) purchased the instrument in 1954 from a Keith Ball, an interior designer, who worked at a shop in North Sydney on the corner of the Pacific Highway and Mount Street, on the lower side. Ball had only a fringe interest in antiques, preferring instead to pursue modern reproductions of antique furniture.³
2. No provenance details were provided at the time of purchase.
3. At the time of purchase, Ball provided the museum with a history of Longman & Broderip’s firm, beautifully handwritten in copperplate.
4. Prior to selling the piano to the museum, Ball had purchased the piano from the antiques dealer William Bradshaw.
5. The museum’s then curator, Mr Brown, dated the instrument 1779–80. (This dating is erroneous, as the instrument’s nameboard inscription reveals that at the time the instrument was made, Longman & Broderip occupied premises at 26 Cheapside and 13 Haymarket. Longman & Broderip acquired their second address, at 13 Haymarket, on Sunday, 29 September 1782. Assuming that the

1 L. Cohen, *Elizabeth Macquarie, Her Life and Times* (Sydney: Wentworth Books, 1979), p. 38.

2 Powerhouse Museum Collection, Registration no. H5300. See photograph ‘H5300 Square Pianoforte, Longman & Broderip, London, 1782–1798’, in *Powerhouse Museum Collection Search* 2.53.

3 Information concerning Mr Ball is derived from a conversation held on Monday, 6 August 2012 between the author and Stewart Symonds, who, at one time, worked (for approximately one year) alongside Ball for the same North Sydney firm.

- piano's nameboard is original, the inscription's inclusion of the Haymarket address indicates that the instrument dates from 1782 or later.)
6. Presumably in ca 1954, Brown spoke to Bradshaw about the instrument. Bradshaw remarked that it was 'the only one he'd seen of this period, and is a museum piece'. Did Bradshaw mean the only *Longman & Broderip* of this period he had seen, or did he mean the only *square piano* of this period he had seen? (The context within which Bradshaw made the remark is not known; Brown recorded Bradshaw's remark on a note that forms part of the Powerhouse Museum's archive.) Assuming Brown recorded Bradshaw's words accurately, Bradshaw's enthusiasm appears to have overpowered his remembrance of things past.
 - a) If he meant the only *Longman & Broderip* of this period he had seen then, surprisingly, he had forgotten the Longman & Broderip square piano he had purchased from the Mat(t)hews family in 1942⁴—an instrument he had not only sold between 1943 and 1949, but had also believed was Elizabeth Macarthur's piano (if not the First Fleet piano).⁵ In his sales register, Bradshaw dated this instrument 1780.⁶
 - b) If Bradshaw meant the only *square piano* of this period he had seen then his memory had become truly clouded, as he had seen, acquired and sold several late eighteenth-century square pianos by the time the museum acquired the 1782–98? Longman & Broderip.⁷
 7. The Powerhouse Museum has no supporting evidence in relation to any connection between George Bouchier Worgan and the Longman & Broderip square piano dated 1782–98? (Registration number H5300) currently housed in its collection.

4 See 'Sources of Information' and 'Tea, Cake, Convivial Company and a Proposed Provenance', in Appendix B, this volume.

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6 I am indebted to Brian Barrow for providing me with a copy of a letter written to him by Paul Kenny, a very close friend of William Bradshaw, dated Thursday, 23 May 2013, in which Kenny transcribed some of the entries found in Bradshaw's sales registers. These entries contain the dates on which Bradshaw sold various pianos. Since Barrow purchased his 1785/86? Longman & Broderip square piano from Bradshaw along with an unrestored Aeolian orchestrelle, the relevant entry in Bradshaw's sales register, '29/5/69 Orchestrelle & Piano case date 1780', strongly suggests that the specified piano case is Barrow's 1785/86? Longman & Broderip square piano. In the entry, Bradshaw erroneously dates this piano as 1780.

7 For example, Bradshaw would have seen (probably at the earliest, during his teens) the 1785 square piano by George Pether (fl. 1775–94) that was owned by Vere Mathews, Bradshaw's maternal aunt. See 'Tea, Cake, Convivial Company and a Proposed Provenance', in Appendix B, this volume. Bradshaw's sales registers reveal that by 1952, he had sold at least five square pianos (see Plate 328d). The dates of sale associated with these square pianos as listed in Bradshaw's sales registers are: 17 June 1941; 26 March 1945; 28 May 1949; 14 July 1952; and 8 October 1952. These dates exclude the Longman & Broderip square piano Bradshaw purchased from the Mat(t)hews family in 1942.

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