

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE PORTRAIT OF ESTHER ABRAHAMS?*

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ABSTRACT

To the Jewish community in Australia, Esther Abrahams (1767–1846) needs no introduction. The story of a young and apparently Jewish woman from London who was sentenced to transportation in 1786, and later became the ‘first lady’ in the early colony, has been told and scrutinised many times. The portrait that depicted her as a respectable Mrs Esther Johnston was painted much later. It has been provisionally attributed to one of the best known early colonial painters and became an iconic image of Australian Jewish history. We are familiar with Esther’s sharp eyes and slight smile under the ruffled white bonnet, yet the portrait’s provenance and whereabouts were hardly ever questioned. This article reviews the core historical details of Esther’s life and discusses the discovery of the original painting, and other family memorabilia in the least expected location.

KEYWORDS: Convicts and Early Settlers, Esther Abrahams, Arts Jewish Portrait, Trevor Kennedy Collection, National Museum of Australia.

Esther Abrahams and her story

When the Old Bailey court in London sentenced masses of the city’s petty criminals to transportation in the 1780s, it brought devastation

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to many lives and families. But for some, being condemned ‘beyond the seas’ provided unexpected chances and opportunities. The young Esther Abrahams – the name under which she was recorded in the Convict Index in December 1786¹ – surely had some luck on her side in an otherwise dire situation. She was in her teens and a milliner apprentice when she was caught shoplifting in London. After a prolonged period in prison, during which she bore a child, Rosanna, Esther was sentenced to seven years transportation.² She departed in January 1787 and after a long journey with several stopovers, landed in Sydney on 26 January 1788 as one of the 262 convicts on the *Lady Penrhyn*, *Scarborough*, *Alexander*, and other ships, later known as the First Fleet. Listed amongst those in charge of the human cargo from London was George Johnstone [sic], 1st Lieutenant of Marines and an Aide-de-Camp to the Governor.³ And this is about as far as the recorded historical facts support the romance on the ship.

Once aboard the convict transportation ship, Esther’s story became the subject of fiction writing and filled many pages of Australian authors.⁴ The legend has it that *en route* to Sydney, with a baby daughter in her arms, she caught the eye of the 23-year-old and handsome Marine Officer in charge, the very same Lieutenant George Johnston (1764–1823).

Evaluating the merit of these historical fictions, which often declare themselves to be *true* accounts, is a daunting task for historians. Life in the early colony was unimaginably harsh, lonely and dangerous. Life stories, pieced together from detailed reports in the local newspapers, letters, diaries and other records, artworks, songs and surviving traditions, often do not need embellishments 200 years later. A potential approach to comprehending these constructed modern narratives could be through a comparison with the work of those colonial artists who were depicting the city life from the 1830s. Among them Macle hose and Fowles deserve a special mention.⁵ Presenting fictional Sydney with clean and orderly streets, immaculate and bustling with activity, they were designed to attract prospective immigrants from Britain and to install pride and enthusiasm in the local society. In similar fashion, modern writers can capitalise on the appeal of rags to riches tales to attract an audience where traditional, and often dry, historical accounts with footnotes may have not succeeded.

Besides, multiple versions of Esther’s story can also be ‘found in Australian historical writing despite the slight evidence on which any

version can be based', asserted historian Sybil Jack in 2011.⁶ Moreover, Jack provided a reasonable base for re-examining Abrahams' Jewishness, in support of the hesitation expressed, for example, by the late Rabbi Apple.⁷

Nevertheless, whether religiously educated or not, there was no Jewish faith structure, tradition or clergy to turn to on Esther's arrival in Australia. It was not until the late 1820s, with the arrival of free Jewish settlers, that more structured Jewish religious life, which is conditional on *minyan*, could emerge in Sydney. The first communal prayer was held in Sydney in 1828⁸ when, coincidentally, the first census in the colony, recorded 95 Jews living in New South Wales.⁹ Not surprisingly then, when over time, as Esther and Johnston welcomed more children into their de facto family, they were recorded as baptised in the Church of England, and the couple eventually married as a Christian couple in 1814, aged 50 and 47.

Historical records confirm that along the way, Esther, assisted by groups of convict servants, proved to be capable of running the day-to-day affairs of their large Annandale estate,¹⁰ farmhouse and stabling; and she also did so in Johnston's absence when he was on duties in other parts of the colony, or summoned back to Britain.¹¹

As a lady of the house, who was made briefly the Lieutenant-Governor's 'First Lady' in the early 1800s by her husband's circumstances, it is not surprising that Esther put on her best and sat down for a portrait. It would have been around the time after her wedding that the portrait in question would have been commissioned. We can only guess who came up with the idea. It is possible that both George and Esther realised that such a portrait would enhance their reputations once their relationship was legal. An earlier full length portrait of George Johnston was painted in 1810 by English artist Robert Dighton (1751–1814). It shows George standing in his military uniform, in charge of the large consignment of soldiers camping in the background.¹² In 1825, after George Johnston's death, Richard Read Junior replicated this portrait, and it is now part of the Trevor Kennedy Collection at the National Museum of Australia.¹³

As Johnston prospered and received large grants of land, Esther continued her command of the property and associated affairs. However, her husband's untimely death in 1823 seems to be a turning point in Esther's life. It brought to the tragic end a seemingly well-matched union, leading Esther to seek solace in alcohol. Adding to the dismay,

although the Annandale estate was bequeathed to her legally, a bitter family dispute with her own children followed. By now grown-up and successful, some accused Esther of being a drunk incapable of looking after herself, let alone the family property.

Portrait of Esther Abrahams

The portrait, now held in one of the most prominent art collections in Australia, belongs to a special group of Jewish portraits painted for Sydney patrons around the middle of the nineteenth century. The Victorian penchant for portraiture brought to the colony around 1830 also captured the interest of the Jews of Sydney. The genre became increasingly popular with the middle class in Australia, who used the portraiture to show off their social and economic standing. In addition, Jewish portraits manifested a certain cultural sophistication, which could be seen as an important aspiration of Jewish emancipists in the colony at the time.

We find several such Jewish portraits in major Australian public collections, usually donated by the sitter's descendants. Some were painted by sought after fashionable artists, and some by unknown, yet still accomplished painters. Portraits most commonly depicted a seated full-front or slightly turned figure on a plain background. There was usually little indication pointing to the Jewishness of the sitter. Instead of the sitter's piety, his or her portrait focused on the individual's status as a private citizen, achieving wider social inclusion and conformity.¹⁴ These artworks represented in public galleries have been largely attributed and provenanced. They are also included in online databases and accessible for research.

However, it became apparent during my research work that the portrait known as that of Esther Abrahams has had gaps in its provenance and the location of the original was not known. Thus, despite the iconic status of the portrait in contemporary Australia, finding the original and obtaining a high resolution with permission to publish, became a rather larger project than initially planned.

Search for the original portrait

In the age of ubiquitous digital image, Esther Abrahams' portrait has been embraced and adopted beyond the boundaries of the Jewish community. Celebrated for being a woman, smart and pioneering, the framed reproduction of Esther's portrait hangs, for example, in the headquarters of Sydney's Fellowship of First Fleeters.¹⁵ In 2002,

the Glebe Society Inc. constructed a Bicentennial pavilion in Esther Abrahams' name,¹⁶ decorated with a large bronze plaque and historical information. Whether illustrated in print¹⁷ or online¹⁸ the image has been infinitely copied, cropped and even flipped from side to side, re-colourised, and copied again, the image has illustrated novels, articles, blogs and stories, and alas Esther's features became more and more washed out and fine details lost. Where was the original all this time? The answer presented itself unexpectedly, and, in the end, it was the social media that brought results. But before searching online, the pursuit started in the real world of the Archives of the Australian Jewish Historical Society in Sydney and State Library of New South Wales.

It seems that the reproduction of the portrait first appeared in public in 1966 when it accompanied the already mentioned study by George Bergman. The black-and-white reproduction is titled:

ESTHER JOHNSTON (née ABRAHAMS-JULIAN)/
wife of Lt.-Colonel George Johnston, of Annandale./
(from a picture in possession of Mrs. Rita Lingham,
of Mosman, /a descendant of Commander Robert



Fig. 1. *Portrait of Esther Abrahams, gelatin silver print, slightly faded and damaged, c. 1870–1900 of a painting later [provisionally] attributed to Richard Read Senior, c. 1824. 15 x 10.5 cm. Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Box 19, PBX 314/2-4018.*

Johnston, R.N., son of Esther).¹⁹

A decade or so later, it illustrated the ground-breaking Jewish history book *Australian Genesis: Jewish Convicts and Settlers 1788–1850*, and its second edition.²⁰ As acknowledged by the authors in 1974, the black and white photo of Esther Abrahams' portrait was again made available by a descendant of the Johnston family.

An old photograph of great interest was found in the box of 'Johnston' family documents and correspondence in the State Library NSW.²¹ (Fig. 1) It is an image which was reproduced in the catalogue of Sotheby's art auction in Sydney in October 1985. Presented within the category of 'Australian School, Early 19th Century', as Lot 7, was *A Portrait of Esther Abrahams (Mrs. George Johnston)*, 61 by 46 cm, with no further details provided. Presumably then purchased by a private collector, the original portrait disappeared from public sight for many years, and it seems that it was this auction catalogue image which served as a base for further reproductions.

A couple of handwritten pencil annotations and a stamp can be read on the verso of the original photograph. (Fig. 2)

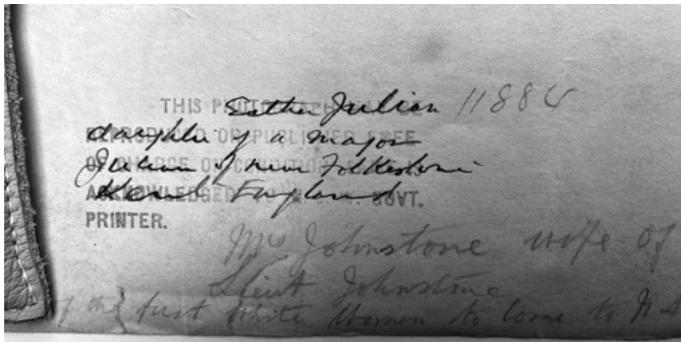


Fig. 2. Verso of the above photograph. Esther Julian, daughter of a Major Julian of New Folkstone, Kent England. Mrs Johnstone wife of Lieutenant Johnstone [sic].

Although not dated, they were possibly added at the time of the artwork's auction, or around 1985, and can provide a few interesting information. The stamp reads 'This photograph may be reproduced or published free of charge on condition credit is acknowledged to N. S. W. Govt. Printer.' This could indicate that the image was printed from a pre-existing glass plate for the purpose of the auction catalogue. In a pre-digital era, it was probably a more suitable method of quality

reproduction than engaging a studio-photography of an original painting which may have not been located in Sydney.

Further, a note scribbled at the back ‘Esther Julian daughter of a Major Julian of New Folkestone Kent England’, may lead to future research of Esther’s origins and her faith. There are three surnames puzzled over Esther’s story by historians: Julian by birth, Abrahams by assumed father of her first child born out of wedlock, and Johnston by marriage in Sydney in 1814. Regardless though, Esther remains - as pencilled in the last note at the back of the photograph, ‘Mrs Johnstone [sic] wife of Lieut. Johnstone [sic] one of the first white women to come to New South Wales.’

It is therefore assumed that the portrait was auctioned, and its last open public viewing recorded in 1985. Afterwards, traces of the original painting began to dwindle, and neither enquiry placed to the auction house, nor several historians and art collectors could shine any light on the puzzle. It was time to search online and, indeed, social media brought the breakthrough.

Collection of Ruth Simon and Trevor Kennedy

Before his untimely death, the late Trevor Kennedy (1942–2021), a prominent Australian media and business figure and avid collector of colonial Australiana, donated a large volume of his collection to the National Museum in Canberra. In turn, the Museum published the outstanding gift on their social media. Among the Johnston family portraits was the *long-lost* portrait of Esther Johnston, née Abrahams, listed by the Museum among the highlights.²²

Soon, it was possible to suggest some of the pre-Kennedy provenance of the portrait, and the Johnston family collection. It is believed that Ruth Simon (1924–2008), a well-known benefactor of the Jewish community and an exceptional Australiana antiques collector, purchased the Esther Abrahams’ portrait in 1985 at the Sotheby’s auction mentioned earlier. According to Peter Fish, a Sydney-based antiques reporter, ‘After her [Ruth Simon’s] death, the Simon collection passed to Hawkins [antique dealer John Hawkins], who reportedly sold it to media figure Trevor Kennedy.’²³

Among works by some of Australia’s most significant colonial artists, the Kennedy Collection at the National Museum of Australia includes three paintings associated with the Johnston family of Annandale: the portrait of Lieutenant-Colonel George Johnston by Richard Read,

an oil portrait of his wife, Esther Abrahams by unknown artist, and a watercolour miniature portrait of Rosanna Nichols (née Abrahams) by Richard Read, discussed later in this article. However, according to John Hawkins, the latter did not come to Kennedy's holding from the Ruth Simon collection.²⁴

Of course, being posted online, the secret was soon out, and popular genealogical websites, such as WikiTree, quickly claimed the image of the original and its whereabouts in a post, following the author's sharing the provenance information.²⁵ At last, we can hope that in future, the presence online of Esther Johnston, alias Julian and Abrahams, will feature the true colours she deserves.

Viewing of the original portrait of Esther Abrahams

While it was exciting to progress with the provenance of the painting, it was time to book a viewing of the original in the National Museum collection. The painting is not on display, and it was a privilege to arrange a behind the scenes visit to the Museum's Mitchell Repository in Canberra last year.²⁶

The painting in Fig. 3 presents a bust-length portrait of a well-to-do lady dressed in her best, Esther's dark curly hair covered in a fashionable

Fig. 3. *Esther Johnston, née Abrahams, about 1820s, artist unknown, oil on canvas, 61 x 46 cm. From the Collection of Trevor Kennedy, 2021. 2020.0002.1546. Photo: National Museum of Australia.*



bonnet of white lace and blue ribbons. But no frills or finery can hide the resolute and strong features. Esther's slightly turned head points her piercing gaze to the viewer and her closed lips give a subtle and confident smile. The palette is rather subdued, giving the prominence to the subtle reflection of the fabric edges and the golden brooch. The painting style can be described as linear, especially in the face features, yet becomes more bravura and expressionist in the depiction of the lace and velvety fabric. The painting is not signed, and although in the past it has been attributed to Richard Read Snr,²⁷ according to the curators at the National Museum of Australia, the artist's attribution remains inconclusive.

However, it can be suggested, that some leads can be followed in establishing the identity of the artist. In 2011, the portrait of the eldest daughter of Esther and George Johnston, Julia Johnston, resurfaced to the Sydney art market, and was subsequently purchased by the State Library of New South Wales (Fig. 4). On a close-up examination, it reveals some surprising findings.



Fig. 4. *Miss Julia Johnston* by Richard Read Senior (c.1765-c.1827), 1824. Watercolour on paper, signed and dated. 42.0 x 33.0 cm (in frame). Purchased from Day Gallery, Paddington, 2019. Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, ML 1521.

According to Mitchell Library records, this full-length portrait was painted [and signed] by Richard Read Senior when Julia Johnston (1796–1879) was 28 years old. This attribution by signature and dating provided sufficient reason to consider, at least momentarily, that the same artist could have also portrayed Esther, around the same time. The well-known colonial artist Richard Read (c. 1765–c. 1829) was transported to Australia as a convict in 1813. By the 1820s, talented and prolific, Read established himself as a portraitist of the privileged and influential. Once his son Richard Read *junior*, a free settler and artist, joined him in 1819, Read the senior began referring to himself as such to prevent confusion between the two.²⁸

While the style of the watercolour portrait of Julia Johnston displays more differences in the technique and the mood of the portrait, than similarities, a few features are of interest. Where Esther seems in command of her life, Julia appears delicate and hesitant, equipped with paraphernalia of the rich along with a shawl, parasol and poodle. Both ladies' heads are turned slightly right, highlighting their wide open eyes and prominent noses. But it is the jewellery under their chin that may speak about their close personal relationship. A sizeable round brooch, probably an opal set in gold rim with pearls, adorns both Julia's white lacy hem and Esther's ruffled neck-bow. On top of a pearl necklace, Julia wears a golden cross on a long thin chain. Seemingly oblivious, she left the chain caught by the brooch, shifting it off-centre on her chest. The meaning behind this detail may never be known.

Julia's portrait was painted in the year after her father died in January 1823. With an eye for detail, the artist captured the Johnston's grounds, hot and dry in the harsh Australian light. The sombre mood may be explained by the stone structure behind Julia. It is the family burial vault, built in a corner of the garden in summer 1820 after Julia's brother George (Esther and George Johnston's eldest son), died aged 30 following his injury in a horse accident.

Meeting Rosanna, the eldest daughter of Esther Abrahams

A miniature, third-length portrait of Rosanna Abrahams, the earlier mentioned 'baby in Esther's arms' and half-sister of Julia Johnston, was also included in the viewing in the National Museum's Repository (Fig. 5). The black signature across the left top edge, obscured by the frame and glaze, apparently identifies Richard Read, the artist who painted the portrait of Julia Johnston, as we have seen, around the same time.

Rosanna, her head slightly turned, is posed against a soft, pink-brown background. She has beautiful youthful features framed with dark and fashionably styled hair ringlets. The gentle curves of her shoulders are covered in a simple faintly pink top with silk ribbon tied around her neck. Just like her mother Esther, Rosanna's gaze confidently meets the viewer's eyes. It is not difficult to see why some historians suggested that her father was a Sephardi Jew in London named Abrahams.²⁹

Fortuitously, a hand-written letter associated with this portrait, was also presented for inspection at the National Museum. It was from Ms



Fig. 5. *Portrait miniature in cover of Rosanna Nichols by Richard Read Senior (c.1765-c.1827), 1824. Watercolour on paper, signed, original leather and velvet cover, gold frame with glass, 7.6 x 7 cm. From the Collection of Trevor Kennedy, 2021. 2020.0002.2038. Photo National Museum of Australia.*

Margery Adams of Kent, U.K., dated 10 February 1985 and addressed 'To whom it may concern'.³⁰

The letter identifies Rosanna Abrahams (1787–1837) as the subject of the portrait miniature. Rosanna, alias Julian by birth, Nichols and Stewart by marriages, was the baby born to Esther out of wedlock in Newgate prison. Ms Adams further confirms that the miniature portrait was in possession of Miss Clara Nichols but provides no details on how the item came to her possession. Miss Nichols is most probably the Clara Rosa Nichols (1859–1928), granddaughter of Rosanna Abrahams and Isaac Nichols (1770–1819).³¹ In addition, Ms Adams' letter conveys

that Clara Nichols ‘quarrelled’ with her family but was, nevertheless, aware of the pioneering role her family played in the early history of Australia. In closing, Ms Adams writes that she is sending the miniature portrait to her relative in Queensland, Australia, rather than to her own children in the UK. Being written in February 1985, it can be assumed that the provenance statement was provided in advance to the intended Sotheby’s auction which took place in Sydney in October 1985, as mentioned earlier. However, it was not possible to establish with certainty that the miniature portrait of Rosanna Abrahams was auctioned in the same auction as the portraits of Esther and George Johnston.

Is it really Esther Abrahams in the portrait?

This question was on the author’s mind throughout the entire research journey. Finally, the last piece of the puzzle was discovered in the National Library of Australia’s Digital Pictorial Collection.³² Fig. 6 shows both Esther’s and Julia’s portraits displayed in the drawing room of one of the former Johnston residences, which remained by family successions in the property of the Johnston descendant.³³ It is now believed that sufficient documentation and visual records have been gathered to confirm



Fig. 6. Drawing room, Horsley NSW, detail. Part of an album of 24 photographs by Henry King, documenting the Horsley estate around 1900. 15.5 x 21 cm. National Library of Australia Bib ID 8151624. The framed portrait of Esther is visible in the centre to the left of the door, and Julia’s portrait hangs to the right of the fireplace. Photo National Library of Australia.

that Esther Johnston, alias Abrahams, sat for the examined portrait.

In the album of the old photograph from the Horsley, NSW estate images of other rooms, such as sitting room, dining room and bedroom display typical colonial furniture, artworks on wall-papered walls, clocks on mantelpiece, porcelain decorative plates, plants, rocking chair, sofa, bookcase, hunting trophies, yet seemingly not a single sign of Jewish, Christian or any other faith was present.

Johnston's family memorabilia in major public collections in Australia

Considering the Johnstons' substantial wealth, position of influence and family size, it comes as no surprise to find additional significant historical items pertinent to the family in other Australian public collections. Among them, a large golden centrepiece is regarded as highly valuable for its origin, elaborate design and historical relevance.³⁴ It is a two-handled urn-shaped trophy cup with cover, elegantly fashioned by a renowned London silversmith and inscribed to George Johnston in remembrance and esteem by the Duke of Northumberland in 1815.

The next item is a beautiful full-length white 'cotton dress probably worn by Julia Johnston' from the collection of the Powerhouse Museum.³⁵ Described as 'extremely rare and significant example of provenanced early colonial Australian dress' it is, indeed, of similar fashion and pattern shown on the portrait of Julia Johnston, illustrated in Fig. 4. Dated to mid-1830s, it documents local professional skills as well as fabric, fashion trends and social life of the elite of the time.

Conclusion

This article brought to light the long concealed portrait of Esther Abrahams whose life has been the subject of both research and fiction. Esther has been proudly claimed by the Jewish community as the first Jewish woman in Australia. Yet, much of her early life is still a mystery. Some historians also question her Jewish origins, and art historians re-examine the portrait artist's attribution. For now, though, Esther's face returns to the public view, framed in fine silk lace, a poignant reminder of the start of her challenging life's journey. In addition, this article has introduced some of the visual legacy left by a large and influential early colonial family in Australia, until now scattered in various public and private collections.

Esther Julian Abrahams Johnston died in 1846, aged 78/79 and was buried in the family vault at Annandale alongside other members of

the extended family. The entire Johnston Memorial was transferred to the Anglican section of Waverley Cemetery in the 1880s, ahead of the Annandale House's demolition in 1905. The cemetery structure represents a notable historical mausoleum, designed, interestingly, in a style referencing the Egyptianising architecture of the colony's first, York Street Synagogue, consecrated only two years before Esther's death (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7. Detail of the Lieutenant George Johnston Family vault at Waverley cemetery, after 1905, Bronte, Waverley Council, NSW. Photo with permission.

Endnotes

- 1 Order in Council No. 4, dated 22 December 1786, Index Name Convict 1788–1801, p. 23. State Records New South Wales, INX-77-2321. Call Nos. RAV/FM6/610, MAV/FM6/527.
- 2 Convicts-Australia-Registers. data.qld.gov.au/dataset/british-convict-registers/Abrahams, Esther. id 69518; and Old Bailey Proceedings Online, Punishment Summary, 30 August 1786, Ref. No. s17860830-1. <https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/record/s17860830-1>
- 3 <https://search.records.nsw.gov.au/>, Convicts-Australia-Registers. Several variations of the surname *Johnston* exist in literature: *Johnstone* see Fig.

- 2; SLNSW, Box 19, PBX 314/2-4018; *Jonston* in H.L.Rubinstein, 'Esther Abrahams', 2021, <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/abrahams-esther>.
- 4 For example, Jessica North, *Esther: The Extraordinary True Story of the First Fleet Girl Who Became First Lady of the Colony*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 2019. <https://www.amazon.com/Esther-Extraordinary-Story-Became-Colony/dp/1760527378>; Paul Taylor, *The Rise of Esther from Prisoner to First Lady*, Sydney, Kindle edition, 2018; Alan Roberts, *Marine Officer, Convict Wife: The Johnstons of Annandale*, Barbara Beckett 2008; Calvin Johnston, *The Officer and His Lady: The 200 Year Old Love Story That Began Australia's History*, Oxenford, Wisemothers Publishing, 2020.
- 5 James Macle hose, *The Picture of Sydney; and Strangers' Guide in New South Wales for 1838, Embellished with Forty-three Engravings of the Public Building and Picturesque Land and Water Views in and near Sydney*, Sydney, Macle hose, Hunter Street, 1838; and Joseph Fowles, *Sydney in 1848, Illustrated by copper-plate engravings of its principal streets, public buildings, churches, chapels, etc.*, Gibbs, Shallard & Co, 1878.
- 6 Sybil Jack, 'Who did she think she was', p.17, citing Raymond Apple, *The Great Synagogue: A History of Sydney's Big Shule*, Sydney, UNSW Press 2008, p. 177.
- 7 Sybil Jack, 'Who did she think she was', p. 17, citing Apple's *History of the Great Shule*, Sydney, UNSW Press 2008, p. 177.
- 8 Reported in Editorial (no title), *The Sydney Monitor*, 16 August 1828, p. 5 that 'The Gentlemen of Jewish persuasion have finally resolved on instituting the rites of their own ...'
- 9 Hilary M. Carey, 'Religion', p. 4. In comparison, 19 people were identified as Pagans, 11,236 as Catholics, and 25,248 as Protestants. The majority from each group lived in Sydney; see also Charles Price, 'Jewish Settlers in Australia 1788–1961', p. 392 and Appendix I. The majority of Jews still being destitute convicts or emancipists.
- 10 Two watercolours in the collection of the State Library of NSW depict the Annandale house, farmhouse and estate nestled within a vast fenced farmland; Samuel Elyard, Annandale, 1877, watercolour, DG V*/Sp Coll/Elyard/8; J.C. Hoyte, Annandale House, n.d., DG V1A/9.
- 11 For an extensive account of archival sources, see George F.J.Bergman, 'Esther Johnston. The Lieutenant-Governor's Wife'. *Australian Jewish historical Society Journal (AJHSJ)*, 1966, vol. 6, part 2, pp. 96–100.
- 12 Lt. Col. George Johnston, 1810, watercolour, by Robert Dighton. Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, a1528248. Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, ML 511, a1528248.

- 13 The watercolour portrait is now in the National Museum of Australia. <https://www.facebook.com/nationalmuseumofaustralia/posts/object-feature-the-trevor-kennedy-collection-highlights-the-johnston-family-port/161655646003564/>
- 14 Jana Vytrhlik, *Treasures*, pp. 87–9. See, for example, portrait of Elizabeth Solomon by Richard Noble (1806–82), 1862, held in the Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2011P13.
- 15 <http://www.fellowshipfirstfleeters.org.au/library.html>
- 16 <https://glebesociety.org.au/plaques/esther-abrahams-pavilion/>
- 17 *History, Memory, Collection, Community*, Sydney, The Sydney Jewish Museum, 2019, p. 34.
- 18 <https://sydneyjewishmuseum.com.au/news/the-women-on-exhibition/>
- 19 George, F. J. Bergman, ‘Esther Johnston,’ p. 101.
- 20 John S. Levi and George F. J. Bergman, *Australian Genesis: Jewish Convicts and Settlers, 1788–1850*, Sydney, Rigby, 1974, p. 22 and portrait in colour, flipped sideways, in second edition in 2002, facing p. 83.
- 21 Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Box 19, PBX 314/2-4018.
- 22 <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=161651716003957&set=pcb.161655646003564>.
- 23 Peter Fish, ‘Collector Unveiled,’ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 October 2008.
- 24 John Hawkins, ‘Ruth Simon (1924–2008),’ *Australiana*, August 2008, vol. 30, no. 3 (August 2008), p. 13.
- 25 Personal email correspondence with Heather Stevens, October 2023. <https://www.wikitree.com/photo.php/7/7b/Abrahams-190.jpg>
- 26 I thank Megan Parnell and Jacquelyn Morris of the Collection Documentation & Access Team for facilitating my visit in December 2023.
- 27 *History, Memory, Collection, Community*, Sydney, The Sydney Jewish Museum, 2019, p. 34.
- 28 <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/read-richard-2577>
- 29 H.L. Rubinstein, ‘Esther Abrahams,’ 2021, <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/abrahams-esther>
- 30 Letter from Margery Adams ‘To whom it may concern,’ 1985, pen on paper, 20 x 15 cm, printed address in heading, a single 2-sided page, NMA AR00337.002.
- 31 Entries in <https://peopleaustralia.anu.edu.au/>; and <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Abrahams-660>.

- 32 <https://heritagecollection.fairfieldcity.nsw.gov.au/nodes/view/1406>
- 33 <https://heritagecollection.fairfieldcity.nsw.gov.au/nodes/view/1402>
- 34 The Duke of Northumberland's Cup with Cover presented to Lieutenant-Colonel George Johnston, 1814, hallmarked for London silversmith William Elliot (1762–1854), silver-gilt, H 38.5 x W 25.5 cm, Museum of History NSW, V92/49-1:2. <https://vernon.mhns.wa.gov.au/objects/16758/cup>
- 35 White cotton dress, c. 1836, H 113 cm, NSW, Powerhouse Museum Collection 2015/21/1. <https://collection.powerhouse.com.au/object/497409>