

**DINING IN STYLE:  
UNCOVERING THE GASTRONOMIC HISTORY OF BELEURA**

**IAIN ROBERT BUCKLAND  
MA (Gastronomy), BE, Dip Ed**

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**The University of Adelaide**

**FACULTY OF ARTS  
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY**

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Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection*

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## **ABSTRACT**

The objective of this thesis is to produce a gastronomic history of Beleura, an Italianate mansion built from 1863 to 1865 at Mornington, Victoria. Owned by a succession of wealthy families, Beleura has been a family home, private school, vice-regal residence and now a house museum and cultural centre. Beleura is significant not only for its grand architecture and majestic gardens, but also because of the carefully preserved contents belonging to the Tallis family who owned the house for eighty years. John Tallis, the last owner of Beleura, bequeathed the property to the people of Victoria. By constructing a microhistory of food provision at a household level, the thesis provides a commentary on the evolution of culinary practices in Australia from the nineteenth to twentieth centuries. Using a combination of material culture, oral history and documentary evidence, the thesis examines how food was sourced, stored, preserved, cooked and served at Beleura.

Beleura throughout most of its history was essentially a rural property with significant land holdings surrounding it. A large proportion of food consumed in the household was sourced from its own gardens, orchards and pastures. Meals at Beleura were sometimes elaborate, with distinct influences from French and Italian cuisine, but for much of its history, food followed predictable lines, deviating little from the general populace. One area that distinguished Beleura from other houses was the speed of introduction of new technology such as domestic refrigeration. In other ways, Beleura remained steadfastly Victorian in style, particularly in the reliance on domestic staff long after they had disappeared elsewhere. This was reflected in the layout of the house with a distinct separation between service areas and the rooms occupied by the family. This arrangement remained until the end of World War II. Beleura is an ideal place to study the evolution of kitchen design as it has five intact and operable kitchens reflecting different design approaches ranging from the remnants of an early detached kitchen through to a small 1950s kitchen integrated into the living areas of the house.

In the reduced scale of microhistory, artifacts are particularly important because of their direct and intimate relationship to the individuals who used them. This project affords opportunities to consider appropriate methodologies for the interpretation of material culture along with their limitations. Artifacts do not give up their meaning easily and the few accepted methodologies that have been developed for assessing material culture are largely not appropriate for the mostly functional objects that are encountered in kitchens. However, with careful observation and a simplified approach that focuses primarily on the significance of the artifact with respect to gastronomy, the systematic evaluation of familiar household objects can be an effective way to reveal cultural history. The meaning of artifacts can be ambiguous and unreliable, but when combined with documentary evidence and oral history, material culture can effectively evoke the atmosphere of kitchens past and give voice to the usually silent and often forgotten people who have played a role in gastronomic history.

## **DECLARATION**

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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## **ETHICS APPROVAL**

The oral history component of this research project, consisting of five interviews with subjects associated with Beleura, was reviewed and approved by the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee, Approval Number H-2012-173.



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I would like to acknowledge and thank my supervisors Professor Rachel Ankeny and Professor Clem Macintyre. Their enthusiasm for my topic and constructive criticism of this thesis were much appreciated. I would like to also thank Professor Barbara Santich for her inspiration and encouragement to continue my gastronomy research. I am indebted to Anthony Knight, Director of Beleura House & Garden, for his support for the project. I often called on his practical knowledge of the history and restoration of Beleura. The importance of his role in negotiating with John Tallis a process for protecting Beleura for future generations cannot be overstated. Thanks are particularly due to Beleura House & Garden Curatorial and Collections Manager, Ingrid Hoffman and her predecessor Cindy Seeberger, for their patience with my often obscure requests for information. Such dedicated professionals are critical to the management of the Beleura collections. All of the volunteers at Beleura have been very enthusiastic about my thesis topic and this support has helped to keep me motivated in my research. It was also a great pleasure to be able to interview people with personal experience of living at Beleura. Without the valuable testimony of Patsy Kirk, Denise Hassett, John Sutherland, Ian Hunt and the late Alan Eustace, this thesis would be very much the poorer.

Partners play a huge role in any project such as this. The reassuring conversations, soothing cups of tea and wise admonitions to not take it all too seriously are a necessary part of this research. I would therefore like to dedicate this thesis to my wife, Julie, who first suggested that I take a look at Beleura and who believed that I could undertake this project. I also dedicate this thesis to John Tallis who committed his life to the custodianship of Beleura and created a special place of immense cultural significance. Only through such a generous act was this research project possible.

## ABBREVIATIONS

cm – centimetre (length, Metric system)  
kg – kilogram (mass, Metric system)  
lb – pound (weight, Imperial system)  
oz – ounce (weight, Imperial system). 16 oz = 1 lb  
kg/m<sup>3</sup> – kilogram per cubic metre (density, Metric system)  
°C – Celsius (temperature)  
psi – pounds per square inch (pressure, Imperial system)  
kPa – kilopascals (pressure, Metric system)  
kWh – kilowatt hour (electrical energy, Metric system)  
£ – pound (Australian currency, pre-decimalization)

Note: In quoted recipes, the original measurement units have been retained. 1 kg = 2.205 lb

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the project

Gastronomy is the multidisciplinary study of all things connected with the provision of food and drink. The heart of this thesis is a gastronomic history, not of a nation, nor a region or its people, but a single household. Built in the mid-nineteenth century, Beleura is a palatial and architecturally significant house which was occupied by a sequence of influential owners, including the Tallis family for eighty years. Upon the death of John Tallis in 1996, it was restored and converted into a cultural centre and house museum by The Tallis Foundation. Many people are fascinated by the daily life of the occupants of grand country houses, exemplified in the popular media by television programs such as *Downton Abbey* and *Upstairs Downstairs*. British architectural historian Mark Girouard observed that even though there has been ever growing visitation and interest in English country houses, “most people know comparatively little about how they operated or what was expected of them when they were first built.”<sup>1</sup> Australian historian Marilyn Lake suggests that searching historic houses to understand the daily life of domestic servants is often difficult because “they are usually presented and interpreted in such a way as to deny that possibility.”<sup>2</sup> In many house museums, the public are not able to access kitchen and servant areas or when they do, what is seen often has only a limited resemblance to the original layout. There are some excellent examples of historic kitchen presentation such as Calthorpe’s House in Canberra, but these are rare. Some historic houses, such as Ripponlea in Melbourne, have recently opened up previously closed service areas, but due to the absence of most of the original fittings and equipment they are, by necessity, recreations.

Scholarly interest in the culinary aspects of historic properties has also been limited in scope. Architectural historians have considered how kitchens have evolved and changed their function, location and meaning within the home. Social and cultural historians have also focused on the kitchen from the perspective of changing domestic labour and gender relationships, technology and housework. Worthy as these studies may be, in most cases, the

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), v.

<sup>2</sup> Marilyn Lake, “Historical Homes,” *Australian Historical Studies* Vol.24, Issue 97 (1991): 50.

preparation and serving of food and the detailed evaluation of the implements and spaces where these activities take place and their significance in a socio-cultural context are missing or, at best, relegated to being a peripheral issue. British historian Sara Pennell asserts, “The ‘forgetting’ of these goods and this space is not merely to do with their size, or trifling value: these things have been forgotten because their associations – with the domestic, with practical skills rather than ‘arts and mysteries’, with women above all – have rendered them historically ‘small’ and incapable of carrying explanatory value.”<sup>3</sup>

The objective of this thesis is to redress these gaps in the available scholarly literature by developing a history of a specific household from a gastronomic perspective, examining how the social, cultural and technological changes that occurred in Australia across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries affected culinary practices. In doing so, we will pass beyond the green baize door, the traditional division between the family and the servants’ quarters, to uncover how food was prepared, cooked and served. This thesis will use Beleura as a detailed case study and will utilize a wide range of primary documentary sources from the Beleura archives, material culture from the kitchens, pantries and dining rooms and interviews with people closely associated with the house. Was it all champagne and caviar or something simpler? The gastronomic history of Beleura will demonstrate that while the style of eating and drinking in these exquisitely elegant surroundings was at times lavish and flamboyant, it was mostly remarkably ordinary and similar to less prestigious households.

Beleura provides an ideal environment from which to consider a gastronomic history at a household level. Rarely is such a study possible because of the scarcity of detailed evidence on culinary practices in most households. Over time in most houses, the kitchens are renovated regularly, making the historical exploration of these areas impossible. Even in historic house museums the kitchens are often the last rooms to be opened for display and many are converted to offices, storerooms or overtaken by the air-conditioning equipment necessary for modern collection conservation practices.<sup>4</sup> While research from the perspective of a wealthy

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<sup>3</sup> Sara Pennell, “Mundane Materiality, or Should Small Things Still be Forgotten? Material Culture, Micro-Histories and the Problem of Scale,” in *History and Material Culture: A Student’s Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, edited by Karen Harvey, 180 (Abingdon, U.K.: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Note: In May 2015, I visited three homes in the USA designed by arguably America’s most famous architect, Frank Lloyd Wright. None of the homes had original kitchens. In two, an attempt had been made to recreate the kitchen areas, while in the other home the kitchen was closed to the public.

and privileged family may at first appear to have little connection to the broader community, it is only at an unusual house such as Beleura, where the architectural fabric, material culture and documentary evidence have been carefully preserved, that a gastronomic history at a household level can be attempted. Access to these special resources suggests an additional objective for this thesis, a very valuable opportunity to consider the use and limitations of methodologies for the interpretation of material culture and in particular, the everyday artifacts associated with gastronomy.<sup>5</sup> The practical issues associated with the analysis of material culture encountered in this project are documented in Chapter 6. While the interpretation of these artifacts has proven to be challenging and often ambiguous, their systematic study reveals how kitchen design and technology evolved in Australia throughout this period. In particular, this research follows the changing location of the kitchen within the household from a separate, self-contained building, to a back room of the main house and ultimately to become the centre of domestic life. This thesis demonstrates that a defining feature of Beleura was the early adoption of new technology, such as refrigeration and more efficient cooking appliances.

## **1.2 Background to Beleura**

Long-term residents of Mornington will often say that they have never known of the existence of Beleura. Today, as you drive through unremarkable suburban streets on your way to Beleura, there is little to prepare you for what lies ahead until you reach a majestic avenue of tall cypress trees, a remnant of the grand driveway that once marked the approach to the property. Entering through the imposing front gate of Beleura you continue along a winding gravel pathway through an expanse of carefully tended lawn including, in season, clusters of daffodils and a corridor of lemon scented gums. It is a quieter environment, ordered and refined, a world away from the surrounding suburb. Nothing much appears to have changed here for decades, perhaps even centuries. The house sits, as it always has, amidst a grand, European-style garden. The house itself would not be out of place in Northern Italy or an English country estate (Figure 3).

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<sup>5</sup> Note: The study of material culture as an academic discipline flourished in the USA in the years following World War II. In keeping with this background and consistent with the majority of literature on the subject, I have used the American spelling *artifact* in this thesis, rather than *artefact* that is common in the UK and elsewhere.

Beleura was built between 1863 and 1865 by Joseph Reed and Frederick Barnes for James Butchart at Schnapper Point, now called Mornington (Figure 4).<sup>6</sup> Reed and Barnes were highly respected architects in Melbourne at that time, having completed many prestigious public and private building commissions. Beleura was one of a number of grand rural residences built in the Victorian era along Port Phillip Bay between Frankston and Mornington, about fifty kilometres south of Melbourne. Its style is distinctly Italianate, with an imposing portico supported by a long row of Corinthian columns. Butchart did not enjoy it for long as he died at Beleura in 1869.<sup>7</sup> The house was bought by businessman Charles Bright, who was married to Anna Maria Georgiana Manners-Sutton, a daughter of Sir John Henry Thomas Manners-Sutton, the Governor of Victoria from 1866 to 1873. Sir John and Lady Manners-Sutton used the house as their vice-regal summer retreat and lived there full time with their family for a short period before their return to England in 1873. Bright leased Beleura in 1881 for conversion to a short-lived enterprise, Mornington Grammar School.<sup>8</sup> Restored to a private house again in 1883, it was leased to a Member of Parliament, the Hon. Caleb Joshua Jenner, who purchased the house from the Bright family in 1888.<sup>9</sup> After Jenner's death, the house was sold and occupied several times until the property was eventually subdivided in 1915 and marketed for sale as the *Beleura on the Sea* estate.<sup>10</sup>

A significant era for the house began in 1916 when George and Amelia Tallis bought Beleura and a large portion of the land. At the time, the Tallis family owned Santoi, a large Federation style house in Camberwell and they initially used Beleura primarily as a summer residence and rural retreat.<sup>11</sup> As his enthusiasm for farming grew, George Tallis progressively acquired over 2000 acres of neighbouring farming land in Mornington, creating a viable rural enterprise, specializing in Ayrshire cattle.<sup>12</sup> Later knighted, Sir George was best known as chairman of directors of the famous Australian theatrical agency J.C Williamson Ltd from 1913 to his retirement in 1931. He managed an empire of live and moving picture theatres and

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<sup>6</sup> "Tenders Wanted for the Erection of a Villa Residence," *Argus*, July 30, 1863, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>7</sup> "Preliminary Notice, Beleura, Schnapper Point," *Argus*, December 31, 1869, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>8</sup> "Advertising," *Argus*, December 17, 1881, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>9</sup> Anthony Knight, *Beleura Mornington: A Theatre of the Past* (Mornington: The Tallis Foundation, 2009), 33. (Note: This is the official guide book to Beleura and the most comprehensive description of the house and garden, together with the history of the Tallis family.)

<sup>10</sup> Knight, 36.

<sup>11</sup> Knight, 38.

<sup>12</sup> Knight, 65.

was instrumental in bringing to Australia numerous celebrated musicians, actors and dancers from Europe, Britain and America.<sup>13</sup> Many of these stars would have been entertained at Beleura. Sir George had a long-standing professional friendship with Dame Nellie Melba, who was a regular guest at Beleura.<sup>14</sup>

Sir George died in 1948 and his youngest son Jack Tallis (known outside the family as John) took over the property, living there permanently from 1953 until his death in 1996. The house, garden and all contents were bequeathed to the people of Victoria and The Tallis Foundation was established to preserve the property for cultural purposes. John Tallis was an accomplished musician and composer and the house reflects his love of music. Beleura contains an important collection of artwork by well known Australian and international painters, potters and sculptors. The house also is a museum to domestic technology and includes five kitchens from various eras, a wine cellar and pantries complete with bottles, food packets and tins preserved as they were at the time of John Tallis's death. Tallis remodelled the garden in an Italian style, reflecting his extensive travel in Europe and particular love of the Italian landscape and culture. The garden also incorporates functional elements of earlier gardens such as the glass house, vegetable plot and poultry run. John Tallis was a fastidious man and he recorded everything that occurred in the house and garden, leaving behind a comprehensive record of his life at Beleura in the form of diaries, photographs and files of accounts. Anthony Knight, a founding Trustee of The Tallis Foundation and Director of Beleura House & Garden, maintains that John Tallis, born in 1911, was a product of the Edwardian era and his attitudes and habits reflected that time.<sup>15</sup> Tallis lived through many technological, social and cultural changes that transformed Australian society over the twentieth century, changes that were reflected in the layout and planting of the garden and the interior design, art, furniture, clothing, appliances and implements in the house.

### **1.3 The scope of gastronomy**

Addressing the perennial problem of how to make historic house museums (HHMs) relevant, American museum consultant Franklin Vagnone argues, "HHMs fail, at least in part, by their

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<sup>13</sup> Michael and Joan Tallis, *The Silent Showman* (Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 1999), 123.

<sup>14</sup> Knight, 147.

<sup>15</sup> Knight, 43.

inability to draw connections between the real-life quirky and emotional experiences from the House's past and the same sorts of feelings in the visitors' own homes."<sup>16</sup> Food provides an immediate point of connection to a property. It is natural for visitors to an imposing historic property to speculate about what and how people ate in comparison to their own experience. Even in humbler properties it is interesting to consider the daily domestic chores and to contemplate how meals were presented. American food historian, Megan Elias encapsulates this very human curiosity thus: "Knowing what people ate in historic sites can help humanize the absent figures of the past and make tangible the history they lived."<sup>17</sup> This research project aims to produce a gastronomic history of Beleura which will encompass much more than what people ate. French lawyer and cultural commentator, Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, in his 1825 landmark treatise *The Physiology of Taste*, defined gastronomy as "the reasoned comprehension of everything connected with the nourishment of man."<sup>18</sup>

Food historian Barbara Santich refers to our national gastronomic heritage as an Australian food culture, a term that she maintains "encompasses not only what we eat and why, but also how we eat and cook, our beliefs and values concerning food, cooking and eating practices."<sup>19</sup> This definition is a useful expansion of Brillat-Savarin's perhaps more elegant version and an appropriate summary of the broad ranging concerns of gastronomy. While Santich is concerned here with the gastronomic history of a nation, the concerns at a household level are similar, albeit on a smaller scale. I consider culinary practices in this thesis under three headings: firstly the sourcing, storing, preserving of food, secondly the cooking of food and thirdly, serving of food and drink. These are not trivial subjects; they are highly complex human activities, which take place within a broad socio-cultural context. Elias proposes that "food helps to answer larger questions about how cultures change over time and how people define their own cultures."<sup>20</sup> By documenting and evaluating food provision at Beleura over its long history, in particular, the eighty years of Tallis occupation, this thesis will provide insights into the evolution of Australian food culture, albeit necessarily through the filter of

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<sup>16</sup> Franklin D. Vagnone and Deborah E Ryan, *The Anarchist's Guide to Historic House Museums* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 35.

<sup>17</sup> Megan Elias, "Summoning the Food Ghosts: Food History as Public History," *The Public Historian* 34, No. 2 (2012): 13.

<sup>18</sup> Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *The Physiology of Taste*. Translated by Anne Drayton (London: Penguin Books, 1994), 52.

<sup>19</sup> Barbara Santich, *Bold Palates: Australia's Gastronomic Heritage* (Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 2012), 4.

<sup>20</sup> Elias, 14.

one particular household. This will not constitute a biography of the Tallis family as such, but as Santich argues, since gastronomy is concerned with consumption, that is, eating and drinking, “its focus is on people as much as on food.”<sup>21</sup> With such a large amount of material and documentary evidence available from the Tallis family, an element of biography is therefore unavoidable.

The result will be a unique and multi-faceted gastronomic history of Beleura, documenting how culinary practices changed in response to the evolving socio-cultural environment in Australia across the nineteenth and twentieth century.

#### **1.4 Survey of previous academic literature**

If, as Elias suggests, food and culinary practices can be viewed as indicators of the broader changes occurring within society, they are therefore valid and worthwhile subjects for scholarly consideration. Perhaps it is the temporary nature of food or the seemingly mundane nature of these everyday activities that leads to these important areas of research receiving inadequate attention. For instance, in the many historic properties analysed by Australian conservation architect Clive Lucas, in his book on the evolution of the Australian country house, the position and arrangement of the kitchen is only occasionally noted and no detail is given on the activities within those spaces.<sup>22</sup> This is not unusual in architectural texts where considerations of form and function rarely include kitchen spaces. A notable exception is a chapter written by Melbourne heritage architect Phyllis Murphy on the colonial kitchen, but by intent her focus is on pre-1900 buildings and is limited primarily to spatial considerations and kitchen appliances.<sup>23</sup>

While the scholarly study of culinary practices within the context of historic properties may be limited, there is, however, a significant body of research on other aspects of domestic life that has relevance to this thesis. Major areas of domestic study include the impact of technology on

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<sup>21</sup> Barbara Santich, “The study of gastronomy: a catalyst for cultural understanding,” *The International Journal of the Humanities* 5, No.6 (2007): 53.

<sup>22</sup> Clive Lucas, *Australian Country Houses: Homesteads, Farmsteads and Rural Retreats* (Sydney: Lansdowne Press, 1987), 26.

<sup>23</sup> Phyllis Murphy, “The Colonial Kitchen,” in *The History & Design of the Australian House*, ed. Robert Irving, 238 (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985).



housework and the gendered division of labour, the history of technology in relation to specific household services and appliances, the evolution of domestic interior design and the symbolism behind the changing relationship between work and family areas of dwellings. The curatorial management of historic sites and the interpretation of work areas and artifacts is also an area of research with relevance to gastronomic history. Naturally, there is considerable overlap between these topics, but historians, sociologists, psychologists, ethnographers, anthropologists, archaeologists, architects and museum curators all have potentially useful perspectives on domestic culinary practices, but mostly their skills have not been consistently applied to this area of research and certainly not to the full gamut of concerns of gastronomy. This section reviews how this body of literature informs and provides context for this research project.

In the 1970s feminism provided a perspective from which to consider the impact of technology on the time taken to do housework and the division of labour in the home. An influential study by statistician Joann Vanek, published in *Scientific American* in 1974, compared the average time spent on housework in the 1960s with the time taken in the 1920s. The 1920s is a particularly significant period for comparison as it was characterized by the departure of paid domestic staff from most households and the creation of the new role of housewife. Food historian Michael Symons observed that prior to World War I most Australian middle-class families relied on at least one servant to perform household chores.<sup>24</sup> It should be noted in this regard that Beleura was never a typical home, with the ongoing presence of paid domestic staff long after they had disappeared elsewhere.

Vanek's initial assumption was that with greater access to technology, the time spent on housework would have decreased, but she found that "this generalization is not altogether true."<sup>25</sup> Vanek concluded that non-employed women spent just as much time on housework as their forebears, on average fifty-five hours per week in the 1960s, compared to fifty-two hours per week in 1924.<sup>26</sup> Cooking in particular took a little less time in the 1960s but any saving was taken up with shopping and household management.<sup>27</sup> In addition she found that in 1974,

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<sup>24</sup> Michael Symons, *One Continuous Picnic* (Adelaide: Duck Press, 1982), 66.

<sup>25</sup> Joann Vanek, "Time Spent on Housework," *Scientific American* 5, No.231 (1974): 116.

<sup>26</sup> Vanek, 116.

<sup>27</sup> Vanek, 117.

American husbands mostly did not share the domestic workload, apart from a few hours per week, spent mainly in shopping.<sup>28</sup> Bose, Bereano and Malloy considered these same issues in 1984 and came to a similar conclusion, that while technology appeared to reduce the effort of housework, it did not significantly reduce the time involved.<sup>29</sup> They considered technological change in the domestic environment in four areas of likely impact: utilities, appliances, foods and market sector services.<sup>30</sup> Of these, only market services (such as take away food) appeared to make any substantial time saving.

In her influential book, *More Work for Mother*, American historian Ruth Schwarz Cowan addressed the impact of technology on gender relationships and housework, a large part of which is in the kitchen. She argued that during the twentieth century, housework was industrialized in a way similar to factories in terms of dependency on “the larger economic and social system” and “non-human energy sources”.<sup>31</sup> Despite the labour saving potential of many appliances, Cowan concluded that industrialization led to a decrease in male domestic labour while “leaving the work of women either untouched or even augmented.”<sup>32</sup> Susan Strasser, historian of American consumer culture, explored similar themes in her book, *Never Done: A History of American Housework* and formed the conclusion that the increasing demands of motherhood following the loss of domestic help took up any time saved with new appliances.<sup>33</sup> While conceding that convenience foods and fast food in the 1960s and 1970s “offered Mom the chance to dispense with the cooking and the dish washing entirely” and potentially a better and healthier life, Strasser warned of risks in delegating domestic chores to profit-centred private corporations.<sup>34</sup>

Dolores Hayden took the discussion of gender and housework one step further when she examined a specific reform movement, the *material feminists* of the 1920s. Hayden revealed that this movement, which found supporters both in the U.S.A. and in Europe, proposed a complete transformation of household spatial design with the intention of eliminating the need

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<sup>28</sup> Vanek, 118.

<sup>29</sup> Christine E. Bose, Philip L. Bereano and Mary Malloy, “Household Technology and the Social Construction of Housework,” *Technology and Culture* 25, No. 1 (1984): 81.

<sup>30</sup> Bose, et al, 56.

<sup>31</sup> Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York: Basic Books Inc, 1983), 7.

<sup>32</sup> Cowan, 64.

<sup>33</sup> Susan Strasser, *Never Done: A History of American Housework* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982): 262.

<sup>34</sup> Strasser, 311.

for women to cook at all. The *material feminists* promoted kitchen-less apartment hotels with cooperative dining areas and cooked food delivery services to free women for more rewarding activities.<sup>35</sup> These influential books followed earlier pioneering work by British sociologist Anne Oakley. In *The Sociology of Housework*, Oakley considered the nature of housework in a more general sense and suggested reasons for the invisibility of women's work and consequently the low status of housework. In essence, men did "real" work which was performed outside the home, whereas women did housework which was not considered to be a form of work.<sup>36</sup> Oakley claimed that her purpose was to conceptualize housework as work, rather than simply as an aspect of the feminine role in marriage. Her major finding was that over seventy per cent of women surveyed were dissatisfied with housework.<sup>37</sup> This issue is what pioneering feminist Betty Friedan called, "The Problem that Has No Name."<sup>38</sup>

Taking a different approach to gender issues in the kitchen in a more recent study, sociologist Elizabeth Silva examined the impact of two specific technology developments on the gendered division of household labour using a methodology called *actor-network theory*. She considered two significant cooking innovations: the thermostat oven and the microwave, both theoretically designed to save time in the kitchen. Silva argues that conceptions of gender are embedded in cooking technology, so that regardless of any benefits in time saving or effort, a woman remained as the operator.<sup>39</sup> Instruction manuals and advertising reinforced this assumed gender division in the kitchen.

These issues will be explored in more detail in subsequent chapters, but while it is clear that technology has had an impact, those in the past who hoped that technology would revolutionize work in the kitchen were most likely disappointed. Taking a more positive view, Canadian museum curator Barbara Riley proposed three specific technological changes that she believed significantly affected work in the kitchen: provision of reticulated water and sewerage; electrification of the home; and the specialization of household spaces for feeding

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<sup>35</sup> Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist designs for American Homes, Neighbourhoods and Cities* (Cambridge MA & London UK: MIT Press, 1981), 20.

<sup>36</sup> Nona Glazer-Malbin. "Housework," *Signs* 1, No.4 (1976): 905.

<sup>37</sup> Ann Oakley, "From the Sociology of Housework (1974)," Ann Oakley, <http://www.annoakley.co.uk> (accessed May 31, 2015).

<sup>38</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968), 13.

<sup>39</sup> Elizabeth B. Silva, "The Cook, the Cooker and the Gendering of the Kitchen," *The Sociological Review* 48, No.4 (2001): 625.

and cleaning functions carried out by one person.<sup>40</sup> All of these important innovations will be considered with respect to Beleura in subsequent chapters.

British journalist Christina Hardyment has made a specialization of documenting the history of domestic appliances. Often using historic house museums as resources, she has written on the history of kitchen appliances such as the cooking range, refrigerator, microwave, deep freeze and the food mixer. Hardyment isolates the development of the small electric motor as being particularly significant because it “encourages an essentially private pattern of housekeeping and home-making rather than one of community cooperation and specialization of labour.”<sup>41</sup> Hardyment has also considered the relationship between technology change and the design of work spaces. She asserts that the introduction of gas and electric stoves allowed kitchens to become much smaller, paving the way for the servantless household.<sup>42</sup> Industrial archaeologist Marilyn Palmer takes a broad view of technology in her comprehensive survey of National Trust country houses in Britain, in which she documents the history of adoption of innovations such as reticulated water, central heating and lighting. Palmer examines the changes in the way spaces were utilized with new technology and looks at how social relations in the household changed.<sup>43</sup> Some scholars focus on the impact of one particular technology such as economic historian Tony Dingle, who considered the promotion and connection of electricity to homes in Victoria during the inter-war years. Dingle found that electrification led to a rapid increase in demand for new domestic appliances and argues that the room in the house which underwent the greatest transformation was the kitchen.<sup>44</sup> Jane Busch studied the history of competition in the U.S.A. between electricity and gas in the domestic cooker market in the 1930s when marketing was fierce. In that era and later, kitchen design and cooking services were introduced to induce new and retain existing customers.<sup>45</sup> She concluded that when the

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<sup>40</sup> Barbara Riley, “Research and Development of a Domestic History Collection,” *Material History Bulletin* 19, Autumn (1985):59.

<sup>41</sup> Christina Hardyment, *From Mangle to Microwave – the Mechanization of Household Work* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 179.

<sup>42</sup> Christina Hardyment, *Behind the Scenes: Domestic Arrangements in Historic Houses* (London: National Trust Enterprises, 1997), 156.

<sup>43</sup> Marilyn Palmer, “The Country House: Technology and Society,” *Industrial Archaeology Review* XXVII, No.1 (2005): 98.

<sup>44</sup> Tony Dingle, “Electrifying the Kitchen in Interwar Victoria,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 22, No.57 (1998): 119.

<sup>45</sup> Note: In the 1990s I was a member of the then Victorian Government owned Gas and Fuel Corporation domestic gas marketing committee and can attest to the fierce gas/electricity rivalry, particularly for cookers. Privatization of gas and electricity retailers in Australia largely ended fuel promotion by the utilities, being replaced by non-fuel specific appliance promotion from manufacturers and their sales outlets.

technical benefits of each fuel were difficult to convey, advertising became essentially an appeal to “coolness, safety, cleanliness, economy, speed and convenience.”<sup>46</sup> Busch argues that “modernity was linked to social approval.”<sup>47</sup>

Focusing on the history of a particular appliance, Sandy Isenstadt examined the changing status of the refrigerator in American kitchens, documenting the transition from being a central and obvious part of kitchen décor to becoming a silent and largely hidden, built-in component of the modern house.<sup>48</sup> Isenstadt concluded that “the refrigerator of the 1950s encouraged consumption even as it made the infrastructure of consumption invisible.”<sup>49</sup> Concealment of the mechanical components of the refrigerator allowed its symbolic role to be emphasized.<sup>50</sup> Helen Watkins takes the study of the refrigerator a step further by considering the fridge door as a “vehicle in the transmission of social knowledge.”<sup>51</sup> The Tallis family at Beleura was an early adopter of refrigeration, a feature of the house which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

British food historian Peter Brears asserts that fireplaces and stoves have always represented the largest financial investment in the kitchen.<sup>52</sup> Brears has written an eloquent chapter on the evolution of cast iron kitchen ranges in Britain in the nineteenth century. These devices came to be known collectively as *Leamingtons*, after the town in which they were first built and usually incorporated roasting fires, ovens and boiling rings in one impressive unit.<sup>53</sup> There is a particularly fine example in the French kitchen at Beleura which will be discussed in Chapter 2. Sue Bowden and Avner Offer studied the process of diffusion of appliances in communities using economic models and examined why some appliances were adopted more quickly than others. They categorized appliances into those that were time-saving and those that were time-using and concluded, “Time-saving goods can increase the quantity of discretionary time,

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<sup>46</sup> Jane Busch, “Cooking Competition: Technology on the Domestic Market in the 1930s,” *Technology and Culture* 24, No. 2 (1983): 239.

<sup>47</sup> Busch, 240.

<sup>48</sup> Sandy Isenstadt, “Visions of Plenty: Refrigerators in America Around 1950,” *Journal of Design History* 11, No.4 (1998): 313.

<sup>49</sup> Isenstadt, 319.

<sup>50</sup> Isenstadt, 320.

<sup>51</sup> Helen Watkins, “Beauty Queen Bulletin Board and Browser: Rescripting the Refrigerator,” *Gender, Place and Culture* 13, No.2 (2006): 147.

<sup>52</sup> Pamela A. Sambrook and Peter Brears, *Country House Kitchen 1650–1900* (Stroud: History Press Ltd, 2010), 92.

<sup>53</sup> Sambrook and Brears, 111.

whereas time-using goods enhance its perceived quality.”<sup>54</sup> Bowden and Offer found that refrigerators took more than two decades to attain the same level of acceptance that television sets achieved in only one decade.<sup>55</sup> The impact of technology on culinary practices at Beleura will be a major theme of this thesis.

With a large proportion of time being spent in the kitchen, particularly by women, it is understandable that social change in relation to kitchen design should be a subject for scholarly attention.<sup>56</sup> In his 1987 book *Home: A Short History of an Idea*, Canada based architect Witold Rybczynski deviated from the purely architectural viewpoint to examine the meaning of interior domestic spaces. Rybczynski observed, “The great American innovation in the home was to demand comfort not only in domestic leisure but also in domestic work.”<sup>57</sup> With a view that would have put him at odds with feminist scholars such as Cowan and Strasser, he argued that the reduction in time spent on housework flowing from the introduction of new labour saving technology “would eventually make it possible for women to free themselves, once and for all, from their domestic isolation.”<sup>58</sup> Rybczynski explained the demand for domestic ease and comfort in terms of a “feminine idea of the home”; a shift in focus from the drawing room to the kitchen. He proposed that “when electricity entered the home, it was by the kitchen door.”<sup>59</sup>

Following from these sentiments, Australian political historian Clement Macintyre argued that the evolution of domestic spatial arrangements across the twentieth century was a reflection of new social relationships in the family, the result of “a complex amalgam of social, sexual, economic and cultural forces.”<sup>60</sup> Macintyre initially considered how kitchens and service areas were transformed to allow the housewife to perform domestic duties following the exit of servants from most homes after World War I. This process included the introduction of new

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<sup>54</sup> Sue Bowden and Avner Offer, “Household Appliances and the Use of Time: the United States and Britain Since the 1920s,” *Economic History Review* XLVII, No.4 (1994): 728.

<sup>55</sup> Bowden and Offer, 730.

<sup>56</sup> Note: The domestic labour arrangements at Beleura, a very large family home, will be shown to be somewhat non-typical. For instance, John Tallis who was the last occupant at Beleura, lived largely alone in the house from the early 1950s. The extent to which John Tallis employed live-in or day staff to perform domestic duties will be investigated as part of this project.

<sup>57</sup> Witold Rybczynski, *Home: A Short History of an Idea* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987), 155.

<sup>58</sup> Rybczynski, 171.

<sup>59</sup> Rybczynski, 161.

<sup>60</sup> Clement Macintyre, “Now You’re in the Family Zone: Housing and Domestic Design in Australia,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 15, issue 30 (1991): 58.

technology and the application of scientific principles to kitchen design, concepts based on an understanding of the efficiency of assembly line production.<sup>61</sup> After World War II, changing notions of child rearing led to a greater emphasis on creating family spaces within the home. Houses built in the 1950s tended to be more open, with fewer internal divisions and were designed “to both accommodate and facilitate a new suburban culture.”<sup>62</sup> Macintyre concluded that while the layout of houses changed dramatically, both physically and socially, between the 1920s and the 1950s, the home has remained “remarkably static since.”<sup>63</sup>

Dutch cultural anthropologist Irene Cieraad asserts, “The notion of domesticity is one of the most powerful images related to domestic space.”<sup>64</sup> The symbolism of the kitchen is particularly strong. Using primarily European examples, Cieraad surveyed socially driven changes to kitchen design across the twentieth century. In the 1920s, leading domestic science advocate Christine Frederick claimed that new appliances were more reliable and efficient than the servants that they replaced. Cieraad studied how Frederick’s assumption was translated into the design of display kitchens which were optimized for the new technology. She found that time savings from kitchen efficiency improvements were often negated by other changes such as the elimination of the separate delivery door, which forced the housewife to walk to the front door regularly to receive supplies.<sup>65</sup> Cieraad followed the transformation of the labour-saving kitchen into the open-plan kitchen of the late twentieth century; a development that she argues reflects the “democratic values of social equality between men and women, between parents and children.”<sup>66</sup>

Australian human geographer Louise C. Johnson also considered the evolution of kitchen design and stated that in western countries, it changed “in size, location, equipment, look, social relations and value.”<sup>67</sup> Johnson particularly followed the influence of the 1920s domestic science movement on the role of the housewife, which changed from household

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<sup>61</sup> Macintyre, 62.

<sup>62</sup> Macintyre, 67.

<sup>63</sup> Macintyre, 70.

<sup>64</sup> Irene Cieraad, “Introduction: Anthropology at Home,” in *At Home: An Anthropology of Domestic Space*, edited by Irene Cieraad, 3 (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999).

<sup>65</sup> Irene Cieraad, “Out of My Kitchen: Architecture, Gender and Domestic Efficiency,” *The Journal of Architecture* 7, Autumn (2002): 274.

<sup>66</sup> Cieraad, 276.

<sup>67</sup> Louise C. Johnson, “Browsing the Modern Kitchen: A Feast of Gender, Place and Culture,” *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 13, No.2 (2006): 124.

manager to scientific overseer, then on to become economic manager in the 1930s and 1940s, arriving finally at the end of the century as the “superwoman”.<sup>68</sup> Kitchen plans aided these roles, with the scientific kitchen being based on a triangle between the food storage/prep area, the cooking area and the sink for optimum efficiency.<sup>69</sup> Supporting the earlier argument of Macintyre, Johnson asserts that the development of the open-plan kitchen in the 1950s facilitated the multiple roles of housewife/mother, with view lines or “gaze” to enable her to monitor “the front entrance, living room and den, keep an eye on the children, their outdoor play area or their bedroom.”<sup>70</sup> From a twenty first century feminist perspective, Johnson maintains that this “gaze” was two way, with “women active but also subject to the patriarchal gaze.”<sup>71</sup> She views the post-modern kitchen as the “centre of high technology” in an era when family members may come and go, eating or not eating with each other.<sup>72</sup> It is worth noting an earlier paper written by Genevieve Bell and Joseph Kaye, also on the influence of the domestic science movement and model display homes on housework. While reformers such as Frederick saw technology and design as a means of liberating women from domestic drudgery, Bell and Kaye found that there appeared to be little change in hours spent on domestic chores, with women also often wage earners as well.<sup>73</sup> This echoes the earlier conclusions of Ruth Cowan.

Australian historian Michael Bogle has considered the symbolism of kitchen design and argues that the kitchen “exerts powerful influences on architecture and interior design.”<sup>74</sup> Bogle identifies four thematic stages of domestic kitchen development: the camp fire setting of the early colonial period; the nineteenth-century solid fuel fired range kitchen; mid-twentieth-century scientific kitchen; and the kitchen of the future.<sup>75</sup> In terms of symbolism, Bogle equates the camp fire to the “sacred circle” and “pivot point for hunting and gathering.”<sup>76</sup> For Bogle, the kitchen range represents the domestic centre of the family, regardless of whether the home is a modest cottage with an integrated stone hearth or a

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<sup>68</sup> Johnson, 125.

<sup>69</sup> Johnson, 126.

<sup>70</sup> Johnson, 128.

<sup>71</sup> Johnson, 128.

<sup>72</sup> Johnson, 130.

<sup>73</sup> Genevieve Bell and Joseph Kaye, “Designing Technology for Domestic Spaces: A Kitchen Manifesto,” *Gastronomica*, Spring (2002): 50.

<sup>74</sup> Michael Bogle, “A Domestic Revolution: Development of Domestic Kitchens as an Indicator of Cultural Change,” *Journal of Australian Studies* No.42, September (1994): 59.

<sup>75</sup> Bogle, 59.

<sup>76</sup> Bogle, 59.



detached kitchen separated from a large and prestigious dwelling.<sup>77</sup> In a similar vein, Nancy Scanlon follows the historical development of the kitchen in English country houses from the medieval period through to the Victorian era. In her primarily architectural study, Scanlon records the changing use of space, such as the demise of the Great Hall in the restoration period and the evolving relationship between the kitchen and dining areas, where concerns over minimizing cooking smells gave way to efficiency considerations to reduce the distance for transporting meals to the table.<sup>78</sup> Sian Supski conducted some interesting research on the symbolism of kitchen design for post-war immigrant women in Australia in the 1950s. The women surveyed dealt creatively with post-war material shortages to create kitchens that were viewed as both a gathering place and a workplace.<sup>79</sup> Supski concludes that for these displaced women, “kitchens are the repositories of feelings of intimacy and warmth, of security, comfort and belonging.”<sup>80</sup>

Culinary practices are also of scholarly interest to house museum curators/educators who study and present domestic life in order to relate the history of a house and its occupants. Curatorial specialists rely on a range of resources to depict history and a regular focus of academic interest in this context is the role that material culture can play in enhancing the visitor experience in museums. Material culture is the wide range of physical objects or artifacts that humans use in their daily lives. Museum curators are always looking for more effective ways to describe and interpret domestic objects. Hodge and Beranek, writing specifically on house museums, claimed that they were special places because of “the evocative nature of material objects.”<sup>81</sup> Kitchens are highly evocative, more so if the objects directly relate to the former occupants. Suzanne Schell argued for a holistic approach to material culture and proposed that artifacts should be interpreted in “the broader context of social, political, economic, religious and cultural phenomena.”<sup>82</sup> Kim Christensen suggests that “material culture is not a mere reflection of meaning, but past peoples quite actively endowed mass-produced material culture with a wide array of symbolic meanings through

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<sup>77</sup> Bogle, 61.

<sup>78</sup> Nancy Scanlon, “The Development of the Kitchen in the English Country House: 1315–1864,” *Journal of Culinary Science and Technology* 4, 2/3 (2005): 89.

<sup>79</sup> Sian Supski, “It was Another Skin: The Kitchen as Home for Australian Post-War Immigrant Women,” *Gender, Place and Culture* 13, No. 2 (2006): 136.

<sup>80</sup> Supski, 139.

<sup>81</sup> Christina J.Hodge and Christa M. Beranek, “Dwelling: Transforming Narratives at Historic House Museums,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 17, No.2 (2011): 101.

<sup>82</sup> Suzanne B. Schell, “On Interpretation of Historic Sites,” *The Journal of Museum Education* 10, No.3 (1985): 8.

their daily practices.”<sup>83</sup> In a recently published paper, Megan Elias refers to the use of material culture specifically in the context of food history as “summoning up the food ghosts, the long ago essences within cooking pots, cupboards and soup bowls.”<sup>84</sup> Based on the Tenement Museum in New York, Elias has combined material evidence and relevant documents to tell the story of past residents. She concentrates on key historic moments, such as the Panic of 1873 and the Great Depression of the 1930s, because “periods of food scarcity involve the compelling themes of tradition, loss, hunger and ingenuity.”<sup>85</sup> Elias believes that her study leads naturally to discussions of class, race, gender roles and politics.<sup>86</sup> Australian archaeologist Anne Bickford asserts that, to the wealthy and powerful, servants are “not historically significant.”<sup>87</sup> Australian museum management specialist Linda Young considers house museums to be primarily about commemoration.<sup>88</sup> However, too often only the affairs and achievements of the house owners are documented. Young suggests that “the legacy of museums is largely the culture of the dominant class.”<sup>89</sup> Studying gastronomic history through material culture represents an alternative approach which allows the story of the maids, cooks and housewives to be included in the historical narrative, along with the master of the household.

While all of these perspectives are valuable, what is usually missing is the food. Rarely do the authors address the simple question: What did the people actually eat and why? American social historian and material culture commentator, Thomas J. Schlereth concluded, “Social historians, whether interested in material culture as evidence or not, have paid scant attention to eating, assuredly one of human kind’s most common necessities.”<sup>90</sup> To really understand domestic culinary practices, I argue that a more innovative approach may be needed, embracing the multi-faceted nature of gastronomy. In Australia, a number of scholars, most notably Michael Symons and Barbara Santich, have studied and published research on the cuisine and gastronomic history of Australia. In his pioneering work, *One Continuous Picnic*,

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<sup>83</sup> Kim Christensen, “Ideas Versus Things: The Balancing Act of Interpreting Historic House Museums,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 17, No. 2 (2011): 165.

<sup>84</sup> Elias, 15.

<sup>85</sup> Elias, 15.

<sup>86</sup> Elias, 15.

<sup>87</sup> Anne Bickford, “The Patina of Nostalgia,” *Australian Archaeology* 13, Dec. (1981): 6.

<sup>88</sup> Linda Young, “Is there a Museum in the House? Historic Houses as a Species of Museum,” *Museum Management and Curatorship* 22, No.1 (2007): 59.

<sup>89</sup> Young, 67.

<sup>90</sup> Thomas J. Schlereth, “Social History Scholarship and Material Culture Research,” in *Material Culture – A Research Guide*, edited by Thomas J. Schlereth, 164 (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1985).

Symons considered the origins of Australian food culture and concluded that, unlike our mostly British and European ancestors, we are a nation devoid of an agrarian tradition. Symons asserts, “Almost no food has ever been grown by the person who eats it, almost no food has been preserved in the home and indeed very little preparation is now done by a family cook. This is the uncultivated continent. Our history is without peasants.”<sup>91</sup> While acknowledging the hunter-gather traditions of the original occupants of the land, he maintains that the new settlers and generations since have relied on imported food or industrial food produced in factories. Ships from Britain initially brought rations and seeds to establish agriculture for the fledgling Australian communities, but later the development of the railways allowed broad-acre farming to be established, with the produce sent to the cities for processing and export. Symons asserts, “Shipping food around the world, we did not dot our landscape with self-sufficient farming villages.”<sup>92</sup> However, this is a somewhat contentious view and I demonstrate in subsequent chapters that at Beleura at least, a high degree of self-sufficiency was often in evidence.

In a more recent publication, *Bold Palates: Australia’s Gastronomic Heritage*, Barbara Santich examines idioms of culinary expression particular to Australia.<sup>93</sup> She considers the concept of Australian national dishes within the context of an Australian food culture.<sup>94</sup> Santich particularly explores the process by which Australian cooks have imported traditions and “varied, adapted, substituted, took part of one recipe and mixed it with another and created anew.”<sup>95</sup> Santich examines how broad cultural changes in Australian society have altered our food culture and concludes that the result was “an honourable gastronomic heritage” and “a distinctive food culture”.<sup>96</sup> This essentially creative and positive perspective is in stark contrast with Symons’ pessimistic view of Australia’s gastronomic origins. Australian food commentator, Cherry Ripe, has examined similar themes, particularly the role that multiculturalism has played over recent decades in expanding the repertoire of both home cooking and on restaurant menus in Australia.<sup>97</sup> Colin Bannerman has written on the particular way fads and fashions have changed the Australian cuisine. He suggests that many introduced

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<sup>91</sup> Symons, 10.

<sup>92</sup> Symons, 86.

<sup>93</sup> Santich, *Bold Palates: Australia’s Gastronomic Heritage*, 3.

<sup>94</sup> Santich, 4.

<sup>95</sup> Santich, 3.

<sup>96</sup> Santich, 300.

<sup>97</sup> Cherry Ripe, *Goodbye Culinary Cringe* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1993), 3.

exotic foods initially gain popularity and then lose their original distinction, by becoming “progressively simplified, cheapened and adapted to popular taste.”<sup>98</sup> Australia may be particularly prone to such fads because the early settlers failed to create a distinctive food tradition in their new country. Bannerman argues, “Modern Australians have inherited a ‘cuisine of incomers’. It was not found rooted in the native soil but was dumped upon it, suited to neither the climate nor the needs of the people who brought it.”<sup>99</sup> There is an echo of Symons in this assessment, although the sentiment can also be found much earlier in the nineteenth-century writings of Phillip Muskett.<sup>100</sup>

### 1.5 Significance of this research project

While these important perspectives on Australian gastronomy are necessarily broad ranging and generalized, I argue that there is also value in considering the impact of socio-cultural and technological changes at the individual property level. How did these global and national influences affect the daily culinary practices of a household? This approach is not common. In Britain, Christina Hardyment has applied her research on the history of kitchen technology to the organization of work spaces in properties under the care of The National Trust (UK). For instance, in *Behind the Scenes: Domestic Arrangements in Historic Houses*, she documents the modifications made to specific country house kitchens to accommodate the new cast iron cooking ranges that became available in the nineteenth century. Hardyment asserts that these appliances represented a major advance in domestic technology.<sup>101</sup> While her focus in this text is primarily on pre-twentieth-century properties, Hardyment also considers how these households adapted to new gas cookers in the twentieth century.<sup>102</sup> In the U.S.A., Timothy Ellis Revis has documented the evolution of kitchen design in a series of chronological case studies. His approach is primarily architectural and each case study is inevitably limited in depth, but Revis follows the transition in spatial arrangements for service areas used by live-in domestic labour to kitchens designed for use by the housewife alone.<sup>103</sup> Revis claims that “the study of actual kitchens can provide tactile evidence that supports, refutes, or adds new

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<sup>98</sup> Colin Bannerman, *Seed Cake and Honey Prawns* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2008), 31.

<sup>99</sup> Bannerman, 10.

<sup>100</sup> Philip Muskett, *Art of Living in Australia* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1894).

<sup>101</sup> Christina Hardyment, *Behind the Scenes: Domestic Arrangements in Historic Houses*, 147.

<sup>102</sup> Hardyment, 156.

<sup>103</sup> Timothy Ellis Revis, “Historic Preservation and the Twentieth Century Kitchen: A Case for Value Centred Preservation” (Master of Historic Preservation diss., University of Georgia, 2009), 3.

knowledge to current social history.”<sup>104</sup> Jenna E. Higgins has undertaken research specifically on food preservation techniques employed over two centuries at the historic house *Stenton* in Philadelphia.<sup>105</sup> While limited in scope by her topic, her methodology using material evidence, household accounts, personal papers and diaries is relevant to the current project at Beleura.

A book that not only considers the design of the kitchen, but also the activities that go on within it, is journalist Ellen M. Plante’s *The American Kitchen*. Through an amalgam of anecdotes, advertisements, recipes and analysis, Plante builds up a picture of how kitchens and culinary practices have changed from the eighteenth century to the present day in America, examining both the rooms and the women and servants who cooked and carried out household tasks. Plante works her way through from the colonial open cooking hearth, the closed fire range, the domestic science movement and on to the modern open-plan kitchen, which she argues represents a return to the centrally placed kitchen which was common in the eighteenth century.<sup>106</sup> Nancy Carlisle and Melinda Talbot Nasardinov, curators with Historic New England, present a similarly comprehensive view of the evolution of American kitchens.<sup>107</sup> The text reads as a brief history of America with chapters on colonial New England kitchens, kitchens of the Plantation South and kitchens on the Rio Grande. Like Plante, historic recipes are interspersed with the text. Both of these texts are very specific American-based accounts, but there is much of relevance to Australian kitchen developments.

Jacqui Newling, resident gastronomer with the Historic Houses Trust of N.S.W., has recently published a book of stories and recipes from the early nineteenth-century properties in the Trust’s folio.<sup>108</sup> Culinary historian, Allison Reynolds has contributed to a publication on the domestic life of the Heywood family at Carrick Hill in Adelaide, a property which has many parallels with Beleura.<sup>109</sup> The book is not a comprehensive study of culinary practices at Carrick Hill, but includes recipes from family cookbooks, anecdotes from entertaining and

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<sup>104</sup> Revis, 4.

<sup>105</sup> Jenna E. Higgins, “Stenton: A Survey of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Food Preservation Techniques in Philadelphia” (MSc Historic Preservation diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2007).

<sup>106</sup> Ellen M. Plante, *The American Kitchen 1700 to Present: From Hearth to Highrise* (New York: Facts on File, 1995), xi.

<sup>107</sup> Nancy Carlisle and Melinda Talbot Nasardinov, *America’s Kitchens* (Boston: Historic New England, 2008).

<sup>108</sup> Jacqui Newling, *Eat Your History* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2015).

<sup>109</sup> Jill Argent, Margaret Denton, Elizabeth Ellison, Allison Reynolds and Elizabeth Rogers. *Carrick Hill: Heydays of the Haywoods 1940 – 1970* (Adelaide: Friends of Carrick Hill, 2010)

snippets of daily ritual, the result of Reynolds' M.A. thesis research.<sup>110</sup> A recently published book on Heide, the Melbourne home of John and Sunday Reed, gives some insight into dining in post-World War II Australia. *Sunday's Kitchen* is primarily a recipe book and while it provides important information on this influential artist community and the hospitality of its hosts, it is only peripherally concerned with the broader issues of gastronomy.<sup>111</sup> Looking overseas for examples of books with a focus on food in particular houses, *The Fallingwater Cookbook* follows the familiar format of part family history, part cookbook. Recipes aside, the book does produce some interesting insights into daily life in one of Frank Lloyd Wright's most important homes from the perspective of a long-serving cook.<sup>112</sup>

Anthony Knight has written an excellent introductory guide to Beleura, which provides substantial detail on the history of the Tallis family, the furniture, fine art and interior design of the house and the evolution of the garden. Knight also includes basic information on some of the more unusual features of the kitchen areas in the house and relates a number of interesting anecdotes on specific meals and entertaining.<sup>113</sup> This is an appropriate approach for a book that is designed primarily as a guide and souvenir for those viewing the house. However, any systematic analysis of culinary practices is outside the scope of the publication and consequently this thesis should be viewed as complementary, but essentially different in focus to Knight's book.

A reason that gastronomic studies of particular properties are rare is the lack of consistent documentary and material evidence. This problem was identified by Marilyn Lake, who observed that the original work areas in many houses are fast disappearing through renovation.<sup>114</sup> Most properties lose their historical connection to the people who have lived in them over time, but it is the work areas, such as the kitchens, cellars and pantries that can provide useful information on the lifestyle of the occupants and the broader changes occurring

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<sup>110</sup> Allison Reynolds, "Food, Drink and Entertaining at Carrick Hill between 1940 and 1964: As British as it Gets" (MA Gastronomy diss., University of Adelaide, 2006).

<sup>111</sup> Leslie Harding and Kendrah Morgan, *Sunday's Kitchen: Food & Living at Heidi* (Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2010).

<sup>112</sup> Suzanne Martinson, *The Fallingwater Cookbook – Elsie Henderson's Recipes and Memories* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburg Press, 2008).

<sup>113</sup> Knight, 122.

<sup>114</sup> Lake, 53.

in society. Lake writes thus: “Buildings are important to historians because like letters, diaries, photographs and other documents they provide evidence about life in the past”.<sup>115</sup>

What makes Beleura different to many heritage properties is the richness and consistency of the carefully preserved material culture. It is also what makes this research project significant; only at a property such as Beleura could a gastronomic history at an individual property level be considered. Naturally, Beleura has not been immune to change, but change has occurred in an evolutionary manner, not totally erasing the past. The comprehensive restoration of Beleura that took place after the establishment of The Tallis Foundation was undertaken with the greatest care to maintain both the arrangement and the patina of past ownership.

Hence this research project makes significant contributions in three specific areas, the first being to Australian history. History is often written about the exploits and achievements of the rich and famous, but gastronomic history approached as a form of microhistory is just as concerned with the experiences of the cooks, housekeepers, maids, gardeners and suppliers who helped to provide food for the family’s table and whose stories are rarely recorded. While books have been written about the domestic life of grand country houses in Britain, little has been written about such arrangements in Australia.<sup>116</sup>

The second contribution is to the subfield of gastronomic history itself, in that the project examines the evolution of Australian food culture through the example of culinary practices at Beleura. This exploration will show the day-to-day impact of the technological, social and cultural changes that occurred in Australian society through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries on food provision and dining at an individual household level.

The third and potentially most valuable contribution is to research methodology. Rarely has a house with such an array of documentary and material evidence directly linked to its occupants over such a long period of time been available for research. How these resources can be interpreted and integrated coherently into an historical narrative is an important outcome of this project, as are the limitations of the methodology.

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<sup>115</sup> Lake, 49.

<sup>116</sup> Note: See for instance, Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978).

## 1.6 The meaning of objects and their place in historical studies

This project is essentially a gastronomic history, that is, an historical study of the broad range of culinary practices at a specific site, Beleura. Evidence has been collected from this site and elsewhere to determine how food was sourced, stored, preserved, cooked and served at Beleura over a period from 1863 to 1996. Traditionally, historians have relied heavily on documentary evidence for such a study, ideally primary sources, of which there is a multitude at Beleura. Oral evidence is also well accepted in historical studies and forms an important part of this study. There is, however, another less recognized form of evidence which will be highly relevant to this project, namely, material culture.

English cultural historian, Karen Harvey identifies the omission of material culture in most university history programs as a major concern and asserts that “history is impoverished without attention to material culture.”<sup>117</sup> There are many excellent definitions of the term, but Thomas J. Schlereth, American material culture advocate and prolific author on the topic, quotes anthropologist Melville Herskovits’ elegant version: “the totality of artifacts in a culture, the vast universe of objects used by humankind to cope with the physical world, to facilitate social intercourse, to delight our fancy, and to create symbols of meaning.”<sup>118</sup> Yale University art historian Jules David Prown defines material culture as “the study through artifacts of beliefs – values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions – of a particular community or society at a given time.”<sup>119</sup> These two definitions emphasize the role of artifacts as a pathway to understanding culture. British ethnographer and archaeologist Christopher Tilley offers an alternative and simpler definition of material culture as “any humanly produced artifact from a crisp packet to a landscape in the past or in the present.”<sup>120</sup> It is worth noting that the definition of material culture excludes the natural world except where it has been shaped by humans. Harvey sees the value of material culture in terms of the materiality of artifacts, “their shape, function, decoration and so on – they have a role to play in creating and shaping

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<sup>117</sup>Karen Harvey, “Introduction: Practical Matters,” in *History and Material Culture: A Student’s Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, edited by Karen Harvey, 1 (Abingdon, U.K.: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>118</sup>Thomas J. Schlereth, “Material Culture Studies and Social History Research,” *Journal of Social History* 16, Issue 4 (1983): 112.

<sup>119</sup> Jules David Prown, “Mind in Matter – An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 17, No.1 (1982): 1.

<sup>120</sup>Christopher Tilley, “Ethnography and Material Culture,” in *Handbook of Ethnography*, ed. Paul Atkinson, Amanda Coffey, Sara Delamont, John Lofland and Lyn Lofland, 258 (London: SAGE Publications, 2002).



experiences, identities and relationships.”<sup>121</sup> The combination of material culture and documentary evidence is particularly valuable, with Australian historian Alan Mayne describing this approach as the “interweaving of words, things, places and memories in order more fully to understand lives and habitats in the past and their points of connection with the present day.”<sup>122</sup>

The scholarly focus by historians on material culture can be traced particularly to a period following World War II in America. While disciplines such as archaeology, anthropology and art history have traditionally studied artifacts, often by necessity, social historians were searching for an appropriate methodology to consider objects relevant to the study of folklore, consumption and other aspects of domestic life. Thomas Schlereth divides the scholarly interest in material culture in America into three phases: the collecting or classifying period (1876–1948), the descriptive or historical period (1948–1965) and the analytical or explanatory period (1965–present).<sup>123</sup> This post-World War II emphasis on material culture also may have arisen as a reaction to post-modern concerns about bias, editing and certainty in documentary evidence.<sup>124</sup> Archaeologist William L. Rathje expressed this concern by observing that “the printed work often lies about events and is incomplete in its picture of human behaviours, focusing mainly on the doings of powerful individuals.”<sup>125</sup> Henry Glassie, pioneering American folklore historian, stated the case even more bluntly: “The argument is simple. Few people write. Everyone makes things. An exceptional minority has created the written record. The landscape is the product of the divine average.”<sup>126</sup> Glassie criticised the exclusive reliance by many historians on documentary evidence: “This methodological commitment to the written word has mired democratic historiography to the hubs. Most of the world’s societies have been non-literate. They left no literary remains.”<sup>127</sup> As a consequence, scholars began to appreciate the value of material culture and to consider techniques to

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<sup>121</sup> Harvey, 5.

<sup>122</sup> Alan Mayne, “Material Culture,” in *Research Methods for History*, ed. Simon Gunn and Lucy Faire, 60 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012).

<sup>123</sup> Thomas J. Schlereth, “Material Culture Studies in America 1876–1976,” in *Material Culture Studies in America*, edited by Thomas J. Schlereth, 7 (Nashville: American Association of State and Local History, 1982).

<sup>124</sup> Callum G. Brown, *Postmodernism for Historians* (Harlow, U.K: Pearson Education Ltd, 2005), 28.

<sup>125</sup> William L. Rathje, “Modern Material Culture Studies,” *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory* 2 (1979): 10.

<sup>126</sup> Henry Glassie, “Meaningful Things and Appropriate Myths: The Artifact’s Place in American Studies,” *Prospects* 3 (1978): 32.

<sup>127</sup> Glassie, 29.

understand the meaning and symbolism of objects, concepts related to Claude Levi-Strauss's structural anthropology and Roland Barthes' semiotics.<sup>128</sup>

During this early period of material culture research, the interpretation of artifacts was vigorously debated and continues to perplex scholars. American historian William Hesselstine, in a frequently reprinted speech from 1959, posed a critical question: "By what means, by what processes of internal criticism, can these remains be made to divulge the parts they have shared in mankind's past? What questions can these walls answer?"<sup>129</sup> Hesselstine went on to answer his own questions by concluding, "Perhaps, indeed there are no questions which the artifact can answer."<sup>130</sup> This famous challenge was in response to proponents of material culture, such as American art historian E. McClung Fleming, who suggested that for historians to use only documentary sources, is like "consulting only half of our memory of the past."<sup>131</sup> Continuing to the present day, proponents of material culture have lobbied for the recognition of material evidence along with documentary sources in the study of cultural history. In 1964, the *Winterthur Portfolio* was established to provide a journal to publish research on American material culture. Despite the continual stream of articles on the importance of material culture, there have been few practical methodologies proposed for the systematic analysis of artifacts.

Charles Montgomery, furniture expert and curator at the Winterthur Museum in Delaware proposed in 1961 a set of principles for connoisseurship, an early attempt to develop a basis for analysing objects. His fourteen points of comparison included overall appearance, form, ornament, colour, analysis of materials, techniques employed by craftsmen, trade practices, function, style, date, attribution, provenance, condition and evaluation.<sup>132</sup> E. McClung Fleming was one of the first scholars to support claims for the importance of material culture with a comprehensive model for artifact study, which was published in the *Winterthur Portfolio* in 1974. He identified five basic properties of artifacts: history, material, construction, design (including structure, form, style, ornament and iconography) and function

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<sup>128</sup> Richie J. Garrison, "Material Culture," in *A Companion to American Cultural History*, edited by Karen Halttunen, 299 (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008).

<sup>129</sup> William B. Hesselstine, "The Challenge of the Artifact," in *Material Culture Studies in America*, edited by Thomas J. Schlereth, 99 (Nashville: American Association of State and Local History, 1982).

<sup>130</sup> Hesselstine, 99.

<sup>131</sup> E. McClung Fleming, "Early American Decorative Arts as Social Documents," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 45, No.2 (1958): 276.

<sup>132</sup> Charles F. Montgomery, "The Connoisseurship of Artifacts," in *Material Culture Studies in America*, edited by Thomas J. Schlereth, 145 (Nashville: American Association of State and Local History, 1982).

(both intended and unintended). Upon these properties, McClung Fleming proposed four operations to analyse the meaning of the artifact under study: identification (including classification, authentication and description), evaluation (a comparison to other similar objects), cultural analysis (the relationship of the object to its contemporary culture) and interpretation (the meaning and significance of the object).<sup>133</sup> Each operation represents a higher level of analysis, with interpretation being the pinnacle. McClung Fleming provided an example of the model applied to a seventeenth century American court cupboard. This type of analysis is a complex process, but not all of the basic properties are necessarily included in all of the operations. For instance, cultural analysis focuses primarily on the functions of the artifact.

In 1982, Jules David Prown published an alternative and simplified version of McClung Fleming's operations for artifact analysis, based on three stages: description, deduction and speculation.<sup>134</sup> The description stage begins with *substantial* analysis, which is a physical inventory of the object, followed by *content* analysis which considers the subject matter and iconography. Clearly this approach is very much oriented towards works of art rather than functional objects. The deduction stage involves the relationship between the object and the perceiver. This stage focuses empathetically on how the object would be used or observed and includes sensory, intellectual and emotional engagement.<sup>135</sup> Speculation as the final stage considers the meaning of the object, forming hypotheses to be tested from the internal evidence of observation. Unfortunately, Prown does not provide an example of the application of the methodology, but he acknowledges that it is primarily useful for the analysis of fine and applied art. He admits, "Devices – implements, tools, utensils, appliances, machines, vehicles, instruments – constitute the most problematic and, to date, a relatively unproductive range of artifacts for the study of material culture."<sup>136</sup> Prown suggests a reason for this difficulty, noting that works of art are the "products of needs of belief" whereas devices are "products of physical necessity."<sup>137</sup> From Prown's perspective, compared to functionally driven devices, art objects offer a more direct source of cultural evidence and are therefore more successful as

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<sup>133</sup> E. McClung Fleming, "Artifact Study: A Proposed Model," *Winterthur Portfolio* 9 (1974): 156.

<sup>134</sup> Jules David Prown, "Mind in Matter – An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method," *Winterthur Portfolio* 17, No.1 (1982): 7.

<sup>135</sup> Prown, 9.

<sup>136</sup> Prown, 14.

<sup>137</sup> Prown, 15.

subjects for material culture analysis. This qualification is certainly appropriate for the very practical artifacts that are usually found in kitchens. As though responding to Prown's problem, Craig Gilborn proposed in 1982 a methodology for assessing the meaning of the humble Coke bottle. Gilborn asserts that "any thing is worth a thousand words."<sup>138</sup> His method involved operations of ascending intellectual content, similar to McClung Fleming and Prown, which Gilborn termed the descriptive, classification and interpretative operations.<sup>139</sup> His contribution was notable because, unlike his colleagues, Gilborn applied his methodology to an everyday, familiar object, proving that the approach was feasible, albeit in a somewhat simplified form.

Another variation on a material culture methodology was proposed by Canadian architectural historian Gregg Finley in 1990. Finley applied his methodology to the study of Gothic Revival church interiors in order to "establish factual criteria from which to understand prevailing notions of aesthetics and sensibility in nineteenth-century New Brunswick."<sup>140</sup> Finley acknowledged the work of McClung Fleming and Prown, from which he derived his own version of a list of artifact properties: material, construction, function, provenance and significance.<sup>141</sup> He prescribed a two-stage evaluation, with the first stage being an initial sifting process to refine a short list of suitable artifacts for further study. The second stage is a more advanced level of analysis where the meaning of the artifact is assessed in relation to a specific research question, in Finley's case, concerning the aesthetic qualities of the artifacts.<sup>142</sup> Finley's methodology, like those that preceded his, is somewhat imprecise, relying on the researcher reading meanings that are largely sensory and "assimilated not with words.... but through the initial visual encounter with the artifact."<sup>143</sup> Finley recognized the problem and concluded, "The development of procedures for object-reading is still in a primitive stage. Consequently, the requisite techniques tend to be tedious and idiosyncratic, adhering to the particular intellectual temperaments and disciplinary agendas of individual

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<sup>138</sup> Craig Gilborn, "Pop Pedagogy: Looking at the Coke Bottle," in *Material Culture Studies in America*, edited by Thomas J. Schlereth, 184 (Nashville: American Association of State and Local History, 1982).

<sup>139</sup> Gilborn, 187.

<sup>140</sup> Gregg Finley, "The Gothic Revival and the Victorian Church in New Brunswick: Towards a Strategy for Material Culture Research," *Material History Bulletin* 32, Autumn (1990): 7.

<sup>141</sup> Finley, 8.

<sup>142</sup> Finley, 10.

<sup>143</sup> Finley, 10.

scholars.”<sup>144</sup> Once again, Finley’s methodology appears to be more appropriate to art works where aesthetic qualities are paramount and is less relevant to utilitarian objects.

In a 1994 paper, British historian Susan M. Pearce also proposed a material culture methodology, a variation on McClung Fleming’s approach. Pearce collapsed McClung Fleming’s five properties into four: material (including materials, design, construction and technology), history (including function and use), environment (all spatial relationships) and significance (emotional or psychological messages).<sup>145</sup> Pearce added the environment property because she believed that McClung Fleming had neglected to include a spatial component for an object.<sup>146</sup> These four properties are then expanded into eight sub-properties and instead of a fixed sequence of four operations as proposed by McClung Fleming, Pearce selected from a table of study techniques, those that were appropriate to each sub-property. Hence, a comparative study may be relevant to the material property, site recording for the environment property and the application of psychological systems to the significance property.<sup>147</sup> She asserts that to really judge the significance of an artifact, we must grasp its psychological role. Pearce believes that this lies at the heart of artifact studies.<sup>148</sup> When dealing with an owner, perhaps long gone, I argue that this is perhaps the most challenging part of the process and is common with the interpretative final stage of the other methodologies outlined. Pearce’s objective is to provide a systematic way to analyse artifacts, but she admits that this complicated methodology will not necessarily apply to all objects, nor can all objects be analysed to the same depth.<sup>149</sup> Once again, art objects offer much greater scope for this type of analysis than functional implements.

The scope of gastronomy fits very well within the discipline and methods of microhistory. Microhistory, or *microstoria*, is an approach to social and cultural history formulated largely in Italy from the 1960s by practitioners such as Carlo Ginzburg. It had precedents in two earlier schools of historical study, *History from Below* centred in Britain and the German

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<sup>144</sup> Finley, 11.

<sup>145</sup> Susan M. Pearce, “Thinking About Things,” in *Interpreting Objects and Collections*, edited by Susan M. Pearce, 126 (London: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>146</sup> Pearce, 127.

<sup>147</sup> Pearce, 129.

<sup>148</sup> Pearce, 130.

<sup>149</sup> Pearce, 131.

equivalent, *Alltagsgeschichte* or “everyday life history”.<sup>150</sup> These movements in their various manifestations had two traditions, one being strongly oriented towards an antiquarian and ethnographic version of everyday life and the other a highly politicized “critical culture version”.<sup>151</sup> Traditionally historians have concentrated on large events and powerful people, but there is also value in considering the everyday response of individuals and households to the broader changes in society. American historian John Brewer asserts that microhistory is concerned with “the lives, beliefs and practices of those who have previously been ‘hidden’ from history.”<sup>152</sup> Icelandic historian and founder of the Centre for Microhistorical Research, Sigurour Gylfi Magnusson has elucidated the process thus: “By reducing the radius of the research (or the scale of observation) we open up opportunities to distinguish elements in people’s lives and society that might otherwise pass unnoticed.”<sup>153</sup> This approach is well suited to gastronomic history, for which material culture, with its personal relationship to individuals and families, becomes very important. American folklorist Simon J. Bronner proposed, “Objects are tangible references people use to outline the worlds they know, the one they try to cope with, and those they aspire to or imagine.”<sup>154</sup> Diaries, letters and personal artifacts are important resources in microhistory and will be a major part of this thesis.

In the context of this project, the analysis of material culture allows Beleura to, in a manner of speaking, tell its own story and reveal its history through the everyday items that were used by the occupants and the spaces they inhabited. Marilyn Lake asserts that housework, including cooking, has a complex history and much of it can be ascertained from looking at the house itself.<sup>155</sup> Social historian Mary Johnson referred to this approach as “doing history with the dirt on” and in this sense, has much in common with archaeology.<sup>156</sup> Archaeology is defined by Christina J. Hodge as “a memory practice of assemblage, the creation of a new and partial

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<sup>150</sup> Sigurour Gylfi Magnusson, “Social History – Cultural History – *Alltagsgeschichte* – Microhistory: In-Between Methodologies and Conceptual Frameworks,” *Journal of Microhistory* (2006): 5.

<sup>151</sup> John Brewer, “Microhistory and the Histories of Everyday Life,” *Cultural and Social History* 7, Issue 1 (2010): 91.

<sup>152</sup> Brewer, 90.

<sup>153</sup> Magnusson, 20.

<sup>154</sup> Simon J. Bronner, “Visible Proofs: Material Culture Study in American Folkloristics,” *American Quarterly* 35, No.3 (1983): 318.

<sup>155</sup> Lake, 54.

<sup>156</sup> Mary Johnson, “What’s in a Butterchurn or a Sadiron? Some Thoughts on Using Artifacts in Social History,” *The Public Historian* 5, No.1 (1983): 77.

whole from collected – and recollected – fragments.”<sup>157</sup> By reflecting on objects, their purpose, shape, colour, age and mode of manufacture, linkages can be made to the owners, thereby creating the historical narrative.<sup>158</sup>

McClung Fleming asserted that an artifact “bears the mark of its culture.”<sup>159</sup> While material culture may be more commonly associated with the study of archaeology and art history, its use in gastronomy seems to be highly appropriate, given the interrelationship between food and culture.<sup>160</sup> My research at Beleura attempts to apply an appropriate methodology for the interpretation of the meaning of artifacts, although in recognition of the inherent uncertainties in such an approach, the study uses both material and documentary sources. British social historian Anne Laurence supports this cautious approach to material culture with respect to buildings, observing that while the evidence from the built fabric is important, it is unreliable in itself. She concludes that “it is the combination of the fabric with the documentary evidence that makes the real contribution of material culture to our understanding of early modern societies.”<sup>161</sup>

Hesseltine concluded his critique of material culture in 1959 by stating:

It is the essence of anti-intellectualism to say that these walls cannot talk. Of course they can talk. It is only that we cannot talk to them, cannot ask them questions and cannot understand the answers. But until artifacts can be subjected to internal criticism and made to bear their witness, the task of historical methodology is unfinished.<sup>162</sup>

It is clear that while advances in artifact analysis have been made since these comments, there is still much to learn. An important objective of this research project is to draw some

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<sup>157</sup> Christina Hodge, “A New Model of Memory Work: Nostalgia Discourse at a Historic Home,” *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 17, No.2 (2011): 119.

<sup>158</sup> Barbara G. Carson, “Interpreting History through Objects,” *The Journal of Museum Education* 10, No.3 (1985): 24.

<sup>159</sup> Fleming, “Early American Decorative Arts as Social Documents”, 277.

<sup>160</sup> Barbara Santich, *Looking for Flavour* (Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 1996), 90.

<sup>161</sup> Anne Laurence, “Using Buildings to Understand Social History – Britain and Ireland in the Seventeenth Century,” in *History and Material Culture: A Student’s Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, edited by Karen Harvey, 107 (Abingdon, U.K.: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>162</sup> Hesseltine, 100.

conclusions about the relative value and limitations of material culture, particularly in relation to the discipline of gastronomy.

### **1.7 Project research methodology**

The principal objective of this research project is to construct a gastronomic history of Beleura based on evidence of culinary practices described or alluded to in primary documentary sources such as diaries, estate valuations, family photographs, personal cookbooks, correspondence and domestic accounts. Extensive use is also made of the vast inventory of material evidence in the house and oral history.

The thesis is divided into chapters based on eras of ownership at Beleura: the pre-Tallis era (1863–1916), the early Tallis inter-war period (1916–1948), the John Tallis post-World War II era (1948–1970) and the John Tallis modern era (1970–1996). The introduction to each chapter provides background information from relevant primary and secondary sources to identify the significant social, cultural and technological changes that may have influenced culinary practices at Beleura during that period. For a house, these socio-cultural changes are enacted within the context of physical spaces. A great deal can be learnt from the shape, size, fittings, decoration and the relationship between these spaces such as the kitchens, dining room, scullery, larder, pantries, cellar and the connecting hallways. It is therefore appropriate to include a section in each chapter on the way that successive owners changed these service areas at Beleura, particularly in comparison to the principal design trends of the time. In this way, the house itself will become the largest and perhaps the single most important artifact of material culture to be studied.

Ruth Schwartz Cowan describes food preparation as a “work process” which involves the “treatment of raw or semi-raw foodstuffs” as well as “the procurement of those foodstuffs and prior preparation.”<sup>163</sup> For consistency and convenience, culinary practices for each chapter and era of ownership at Beleura are considered in three parts: the sourcing, storing and preserving of food; the cooking of food and the serving of food. Where available, both documents and artifacts are examined for each of these categories. Because of the potentially large number of

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<sup>163</sup> Cowan, 12.



artifacts available at Beleura, it is not possible to fully evaluate all of them according to any of the methodologies previously discussed. Many objects are simply used as catalysts to reveal aspects of Beleura's gastronomic history which are not included in any documentary account. However, one key artifact is considered in each category as a case study for more detailed evaluation. The two questions that need to be addressed are firstly, what process should govern the selection of artifacts for evaluation and secondly, what methodology is most appropriate for extracting their meaning?

Beleura has an abundance of artifacts associated with culinary practices in various parts of the house, but they are not equally distributed across the time frame to be studied in this project. For instance, in the pre-Tallis era (prior to 1916) there are only a small number of objects that have a clear provenance and connection with Beleura and the selection of objects for detailed evaluation is therefore not difficult, as they can mostly all be included. In contrast, in the Tallis era after 1916, the choice of objects is immense and it would be impractical and unnecessary to include them all. A selection process is clearly required. Artifact analysis is about extracting meaning from objects, breaking down the barriers of their physical state. For this reason my rationale for selection will be on the basis of a highly personal selection of those artifacts that suggest the greatest significance, or in plainer language, those that speak to me with the "loudest voice". These artifacts may not be the most valuable, the rarest or most aesthetically pleasing, but they will be selected because they say something significant about the family and culinary practices at Beleura. This process is equivalent to the first stage of Finley's methodology for artifact assessment.<sup>164</sup>

Significance may be subjective, but it is not an unusual means of selecting artifacts. It is a subject at the heart of the museum curator's role, so much so that the Commonwealth of Australia has published a guide to assessing significance of cultural heritage. The guidelines proposed are based on four main values for assessing significance: historic, aesthetic, scientific, research or technical, social and spiritual.<sup>165</sup> Not all artifacts will embody all of these values, but some may possess several. The degree of significance in any category is determined by five comparative criteria: provenance, representativeness, rarity, condition and

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<sup>164</sup> Finley, 8.

<sup>165</sup> Heritage Collections Council, *Significance: A Guide to Assessing the Significance of Cultural Heritage Objects and Collections* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2003), 11.

interpretive potential.<sup>166</sup> Most of the artifacts that are available at Beleura with relevance to gastronomy possess significance from historic, research and social values. The degree of significance is high primarily due to provenance (belonging to the Tallis family), but all of the other criteria are also important because of the exceptional nature of Beleura.

Once the selection has been made, there remains the challenge of determining the most appropriate evaluation methodology. This is no simple task. Objects are acquired by consumers usually to satisfy a combination of motivations, both functional and symbolic. For instance a person may buy a new appliance to achieve a particular function, but select a certain brand or technology because it confers status and the admiration of others.<sup>167</sup> Aesthetics, derived from cultural, social and personal influences, has a significant bearing on the symbolic value of an object to the owner.<sup>168</sup> Not all objects have a symbolic value; some are purely functional and are difficult to interpret by the complex methodologies proposed by McClung Fleming, Prown, Finley and Pearce, who almost exclusively apply their methods to art, craft and architectural objects. Prown acknowledged the problem and proposed that the form of functional objects is almost entirely determined by their purpose.<sup>169</sup> A simpler methodology for assessing the functional artifacts that might be found in a kitchen is clearly required.

Most material culture scholars acknowledge the pioneering work of McClung Fleming and hence, there is no reason to veer too far from his methodology. Pearce and Finley argue that some artifact properties can be combined or regrouped for simplicity, but that is a relatively minor deviation from his methodology. More importantly, both of these later researchers add *significance* to his list of properties. I argue that significance is not a property than can be immediately assessed in the preliminary stage of analysis, but an outcome of the interpretation process from which meaning and therefore the object's significance can be appreciated. Pearce adds the spatial relationship property *environment* and there is some value in adding this to the list of properties to be considered. I therefore propose to assess the selected artifacts according to a methodology which considers the following properties: material, construction, design,

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<sup>166</sup> Heritage Collections Council, 11.

<sup>167</sup> Alet C. Erasmus, Sune Donoghue and Nadine C. Sonnerberg. "The Pertinence of Status Factors in Consumer's Consideration of Major Household Appliances," *Journal of Family Ecology and Consumer Sciences* 39 (2011): 49.

<sup>168</sup> Erasmus, et al, 49.

<sup>169</sup> Jules David Prown, "Style as Evidence," *Winterthur Portfolio* 15, No. 3 (1980): 198.

function, history and environment. However, because of the acknowledged difficulty in assessing functional objects, the rigid application of this methodology is not feasible. A flexible approach is more appropriate and in the spirit of McClung Fleming three intellectual operations will be performed on the properties of each selected artifact. I refer to these operations as identification, context analysis and interpretation. The context analysis phase incorporates McClung Fleming's evaluation (comparative study) and cultural analysis (relationship to the culture of the time). These three operations are analogous to Gilborn's descriptive, classification and interpretive operations. They also conform to the tasks in the methodology for assessing significance suggested in the Commonwealth of Australia guide: analysing the object, understanding its history and context and identifying its value for communities.<sup>170</sup>

Resources are critical to the successful completion of any research project. In this instance, the resources available are wide ranging, with many unique to Beleura and the families that have occupied the house. The State Library of Victoria holds several important documents from early owners of Beleura, some making references to food. There is also a wealth of primary documentary evidence specifically relating to the Tallis family, including the archived papers of Sir George Tallis which are held at the National Library of Australia.<sup>171</sup> The John Tallis Research Centre has been established at Beleura, which contains an extensive collection of papers relating to the various owners of the property, including the personal papers of John Tallis. It also includes a valuable photographic record of the restoration of the house and garden following the death of John Tallis in 1996. Never before has this archival material, nor for that matter the house itself, been studied from the perspective of gastronomy. With large quantities of material still remaining to be catalogued, resources previously unexamined were identified in the process of this research. For instance, a collection of hand-typed recipe cards was found in unrelated material, most probably belonging to Dorothy Tallis, Sir George Tallis's daughter-in-law, who managed domestic duties at Beleura in the 1930s. If, as suspected, they were used at Beleura, the cards provide a unique insight into food cooked during that period and will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

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<sup>170</sup> Heritage Collections Council, 11.

<sup>171</sup> Note: Copies of these papers are also held in the Beleura House & Garden Collection.

Primary sources relevant to gastronomy are rare in the field of social and cultural history, as diaries mostly record the larger, more significant events of life and few people include accounts of daily meals in their correspondence. John Tallis was an exception in that he regularly wrote in his diaries about all kinds of domestic issues, often including accounts of food consumed at home and in restaurants. Tallis was a keen diarist and correspondent, with many of his papers surviving. Letters from his travels abroad and most of his diaries from 1972 until his death in 1996 are available for study at Beleura. Tallis kept receipts for everything, including years of invoices from his food and drink suppliers, offering a very valuable catalogue of his food preferences in the post-1948 period. Tallis acquired a collection of cookbooks over the years and many have revealing notes indicating recipes that were attempted. Several recipes have also come to light that have been hand-written by Tallis, making it highly likely that they were used at some time. Sunday Millicent Carnegie, John Tallis's elder sister, methodically collected recipes in a well-organized scrap book. This personal cookbook, which is now held at Beleura, is a useful indication of food commonly served in the family in the 1950s and 1960s.

Oral history also has a critical role in this thesis. Patsy Kirk (née Tallis), a granddaughter of Sir George Tallis, lived at Beleura in the 1930s when her mother effectively ran the household. She graciously agreed to relate her memories of the time to me. Alan Eustace was a friend of John Tallis from 1952 and regularly cooked for him on weekends during the 1950s and participated in social events at Beleura. Fortunately, he kept a journal of his days at Beleura, including information about social functions and special meals. Not long before he died, Alan Eustace agreed to be interviewed and to make his records available for my research. Other living friends and associates of John Tallis have also contributed recollections of meals and entertaining at Beleura. John Sutherland, who acted as caretaker at Beleura for over eighteen years left behind valuable notes on his household duties, including shopping lists and inventories of frequently cooked recipes. Now living in Bali, he also agreed to an email interview for this research project. Director of Beleura House & Garden, Anthony Knight, has been very supportive of this project. He was a key agent in the transformation of Beleura from a private home to a house museum and vibrant centre for the arts. He knew John Tallis personally and oversaw the careful restoration of the house after his death in 1996. He

has ably directed the house and garden museum ever since and is a valuable source of knowledge of the construction, history and contents of the property.

Finally and most significantly, Beleura is a treasure trove of material culture with direct connections to previous owners. From the trivial to the sublime, all manner of artifacts concerned with food and drink are analysed in this thesis and combined with documentary evidence to produce a unique and colourful gastronomic history of Beleura.



*Figure 2. Aerial photograph of Beleura property as it is today  
Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection*



*Figure 3. Beleura entrance, west façade and drive-way*  
*Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland*



*Figure 4. Mornington looking south east towards Beleura Hill*  
*Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland*

## CHAPTER 2. THE PRE-TALLIS ERA (1863–1916)

### 2.1 A villa residence at Schnapper Point – the nineteenth-century socio-cultural context of Beleura

While the primary focus of this thesis is on the eighty years of Tallis family occupation of Beleura during the twentieth century, it is useful to consider briefly the historical, architectural and geographic context in which the house was originally built. A study of the original design of the house and the significant modifications that were made to the service areas during the nineteenth century will also assist with understanding the provision of food at Beleura in the twentieth century. Beleura has fortunately evolved in a way that has preserved much of the evidence of earlier functions. An examination of the culinary practices of Beleura's first owners, as far as they can be ascertained from documentary sources and material culture, also provides a context from which to consider later developments in Australian gastronomy.

Writing about Beleura for the National Trust in 1974, archivist and historian Mark Richmond made the perceptive observation, "Much of the history of Beleura is the story of young men who migrated to Victoria from Scotland, England, or Ireland, young men whose youthful ambition and enterprise brought them the kind of rewards which are symbolized by ownership of a house like Beleura at Mornington."<sup>172</sup> James Butchart was one of these ambitious young men. He emigrated to Melbourne from Auchtermuchty, Fifeshire in Scotland in 1842, amassed a fortune from a number of enterprises and began building Beleura in 1863 on a prominent point on Port Phillip Bay.<sup>173</sup> It was the first of several large mansions to be built at that time between Frankston and Mornington on the Bay.

When Butchart arrived in Victoria, he initially worked for James MacArthur, son of John MacArthur, who pioneered sheep grazing in New South Wales.<sup>174</sup> Six months later, Butchart went to work for John Hepburn at Smeaton Hill near Ballarat, Victoria, where higher pay was

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<sup>172</sup> Mark Richmond, "Beleura – Victoria," in *Historic Houses of Australia*, 161 (South Melbourne: Cassell Australia, 1974).

<sup>173</sup> John Hetherington, *Witness to Things Past – Stone, Brick, Wood and Men in Early Victoria* (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1964), 95.

<sup>174</sup> Alexander Henderson, *Henderson's Australian Families: A Genealogical and Biographical Record* (Melbourne: A. Henderson, 1941), 227.

offered. A partnership in a sheep and cattle run with Henry Davis in 1845 first brought Butchart to the Mornington Peninsula, but the relationship did not last.<sup>175</sup> Financial success eluded Butchart until the discovery of gold in Victoria in 1851. Butchart went into partnership with William Kay in a stock and station agency in 1853 and was well placed to supply meat to the diggers on the Victorian goldfields. The newly established firm, Kay and Butchart, with offices in Great Bourke Street, Melbourne, profited from the strong demand for mutton and beef and the resulting high prices made Butchart a very wealthy man.<sup>176</sup> By 1862 he was ready to build a house that reflected this new wealth and perhaps because of his familiarity with the Mornington Peninsula, he chose to buy 190 acres of land on Beleura Hill overlooking the sea at Schnapper Point, now Mornington.<sup>177</sup> This land was purchased from the Hunter Brothers, early graziers on the Peninsula, whose homestead was located where Beleura is today. There were a small number of pioneering farming families who had settled in the area twenty years before Butchart such as the Balcombes, who bought the Checkinkurk property (later renamed the Briars) at Mt Martha from Captain James Reid in 1843 and the McCraes who had a substantial land holding at Arthur's Seat.<sup>178</sup> Author and journalist John Hetherington suggested that Butchart had different ambitions to his neighbours and had settled on the Peninsula "with the idea, not so much of farming the land, as of living graciously, in the manner of a squire."<sup>179</sup> In the early years of his life in rural Victoria, Butchart had lived in slab huts with very rudimentary facilities.<sup>180</sup> When he later had the means and land to build his mansion, he is understandable that he would want to express his new status in society by building a house that embodied the architectural fashions of the time.

Richmond described Beleura as "a large rectangular building of rendered brick, whose chief glory—apart from its setting—was a most elegant Anglo-Palladian colonnaded verandah."<sup>181</sup> Architectural historian J.M. Freeland observed, "In commercial and domestic architecture of the 1860s the aim was to impress the passer-by not by ponderous dignity but by aggressive

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<sup>175</sup> Hetherington, 97.

<sup>176</sup> Hetherington, 98.

<sup>177</sup> Hetherington, 99.

<sup>178</sup> Hunter Rogers, *The Early History of the Mornington Peninsula Including Frankston and Westernport* (Melbourne: Hallcraft Printers, 1968), 20.

<sup>179</sup> Hetherington, 99.

<sup>180</sup> Letter from Glenisla, 13 December 1846. Extracts from letters of James Butchart covering period 1841–1853, MS BOX 15/7. State Library of Victoria.

<sup>181</sup> Richmond, 162.



display, with the affluence and material display of the owner.”<sup>182</sup> Beleura fulfils this function admirably. A simple advertisement in the *Argus* newspaper in 1863 announced, “Tenders are required for the erection of a villa residence at Schnapper Point. Plans and specifications at the office of Reed and Barnes, architects, 9 Elizabeth Street.”<sup>183</sup> Joseph Reed and Frederick Barnes were the pre-eminent architects of the time and while no evidence exists apart from this advertisement, it is a reasonable assumption that Reed was the architect of Beleura. Reed’s practice perfectly aligned with Butchart’s ambitions. Freeland asserts, “The mood of the town was set on acquiring and displaying all the Victorian virtues – respectability, culture and materialism – and Reed gave it an architectural expression.”<sup>184</sup> Early buildings by Reed in Melbourne include the Melbourne Public Library (1854), Geelong Town Hall (1855), Collins Street Baptist Church (1862) and several buildings for Melbourne University. The Corinthian colonnaded verandah is a prominent design feature in many of these buildings, as it is at Beleura. Reed’s Italianate leanings were reinforced by a trip to Italy in 1863 and Beleura could be seen as the logical outcome of that influence. While Reed was not alone in his love affair with Italian architecture, the effect on Reed’s design can best be seen in the Collins Street Independent Church (1867). Reed accepted few domestic commissions, most being for clients who had engaged him on commercial projects, such as Sir Redmond Barry, Clement Hodgkinson and Sir F.T. Sargood. At Sargood’s Ripponlea (1868), Reed utilized exposed polychrome bricks, similar to his façade treatment at the Independent Church, deviating markedly from the earlier rendered brick construction of Beleura.<sup>185</sup>

Building Beleura would have been extremely difficult. In 1863 the Main Roads Board completed the first major road to the Peninsula from Mordialloc Creek to Schnapper point via Frankston.<sup>186</sup> While mail coaches travelled daily between Melbourne and the Royal Hotel on the Esplanade at Schnapper Point, transport of heavy building materials would have been impossible. Sea transport was the only practical option, as a pier had been built at Schnapper Point in the 1850s and boats travelled to and from Melbourne regularly as a strategy to

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<sup>182</sup> J.M. Freeland, *Architecture in Australia* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1974), 146.

<sup>183</sup> “Tenders are required for the erection of a villa residence,” *Argus*, July 30, 1863, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>184</sup> Freeland, 127.

<sup>185</sup> David Saunders, “Joseph Reed 1722–1890,” in *Architects of Australia*, edited by Howard Tanner, 63 (South Melbourne: The Macmillan Company of Australia, 1981).

<sup>186</sup> Leslie M. Moorhead, *Mornington – In the Wake of Flinders: Historical Survey* (Mornington: Shire of Mornington, 1980), 50.

encourage development.<sup>187</sup> The granite blocks upon which Beleura was built were probably locally sourced, but other materials would have most likely been transported from Melbourne by boat, unloaded onto bullock carts and then hauled up the cliffs to the building site.<sup>188</sup> The earliest surviving photograph of Beleura, looking remarkably like it does today, shows a well-dressed gentleman standing on the verandah surveying the view (Figure 5).<sup>189</sup> It is tempting to presume without evidence that this figure is James Butchart, but whatever the truth, he sadly did not live in the house for long, as he died on 11 November 1869 and by 31 December, Beleura was advertised for sale.<sup>190</sup>

Charles Edward Bright purchased Beleura in 1870. Bright had emigrated from England in 1854 to establish a shipping business with his brother and William Hamilton Hart.<sup>191</sup> Bright Brothers and Co., which later became Gibbs, Bright and Co. prospered, providing Bright with a substantial income and important contacts in the rapidly growing Melbourne community.<sup>192</sup> On 25 June 1868 Bright married Anna Maria Georgiana Manners-Sutton, a daughter of Sir John Henry Thomas and Georgiana, Lady Manners-Sutton at St John's Church, Toorak. Sir John, who became Viscount Canterbury in 1869, was the Governor of Victoria from 1866 to 1873 and when Bright purchased Beleura, the vice-regal couple, along with their family and an assortment of friends, often spent summer holidays at Mornington.<sup>193</sup> When Government House in Toorak was being refurbished for the arrival of the new Governor, Sir George Bowen, Lord and Lady Canturbury lived at Beleura full time until their departure for England on 28 February 1873.<sup>194</sup> When the lease on Government House in Toorak expired in 1874 and prior to the completion of the new Government House, then being built in the Botanic Gardens, Beleura was once again leased from Charles Bright as a temporary vice-regal residence for Lord and Lady Bowen.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Moorhead, 72.

<sup>188</sup> Hetherington, 99.

<sup>189</sup> Photograph in the Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>190</sup> "Preliminary Notice, Beleura Schnapper Point," *Argus*, December 31, 1869, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>191</sup> *Charles Edward Bright C.M.G.* Unpublished manuscript produced by Bright descendents. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>192</sup> Marguerite Hancock, *The Wives of Victoria's Governors 1839–1900* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001), 107.

<sup>193</sup> Hancock, 108.

<sup>194</sup> "Summary for Europe," *Argus*, January 30, 1873, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>195</sup> "Introduction," *Argus*, January 28, 1874, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

In 1881, Bright leased Beleura to Benjamin T. Paine Backhouse for use as the Mornington Grammar School. The School had been operating since 1878 from Wolfdene, another property in Mornington, but the move to Beleura represented a significant expansion. Backhouse proclaimed, “As a home for boys its advantages cannot be surpassed. The grounds (200 acres extending to the beach) while furnishing opportunities for recreation, isolated from undesirable influences, also provide accommodation for the ponies of pupils who may wish to keep them, and supply the luxuries of a dairy farm to the household.”<sup>196</sup> A good summary of Beleura’s situation in the 1880s can be found in the School Prospectus: “It is distant one mile from Schnapper Point, a favourite watering place on Port Phillip Bay; seven miles from Frankston Railway Station, and thirty two miles from Melbourne. A daily coach passes the gate, and during the summer months the steamers afford a frequent and pleasant mode of transit.”<sup>197</sup>

The enterprise was short lived and in 1883 Beleura was leased to the Hon. Caleb Joshua Jenner (Figure 6). Jenner came to Melbourne from England in 1850 and established a merchant and coal supply company which prospered and expanded during the gold rush. He was elected to Parliament in 1863 and was a prominent member of the Melbourne Baptist Church. Jenner and his wife Eliza Anne had regularly visited Schnapper Point for holidays and their leasing of Beleura could be seen as a natural development of growing interest in the area. In 1888, Jenner purchased Beleura from Bright and he lived there until his death in 1890.<sup>198</sup> The house continued to have vice-regal connections, with the *Argus* recording a visit by the Governor and Lady Loch to Beleura as guests of the Jenners in December 1885. Refreshments were taken before the Governor and his party called at the Shire Hall.<sup>199</sup>

The Jenners lived at Beleura at a time when two important technological developments significantly changed the lifestyle of the community, namely the extension of the railway and the introduction of a gas supply to Mornington. The Mornington Shire resolved on 17 July 1875 to promote an extension of the railway to Mornington, but it took until 1882 for the

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<sup>196</sup> Prospectus for Mornington Grammar School. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>197</sup> Prospectus for Mornington Grammar School.

<sup>198</sup> *The Jenners – The Story of Caleb Joshua Jenner after his Arrival in Australia in 1850 and Pen-Portraits of his Children and Grandchildren* Unpublished manuscript produced by Jenner descendents, 1978. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>199</sup> “The Governor’s Visit to Mornington,” *Argus*, December 3, 1885, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

railway to be extended from Caulfield to Frankston and not until 10 September 1889 for the line to be completed to Mornington.<sup>200</sup> On 2 June 1888 a meeting was held at Mornington to consider replacement options for the kerosene streetlights that lit the town at that time. Both gas and electricity were considered, but a proposal from Hutchison and Co. was selected for the construction of a black coal carbonizing gasworks in Barkly Street, Mornington. In July 1889, twenty new gas streetlights went up in Mornington. The Shire Council bought the gasworks in 1893 and operated the plant until it was taken over by the Gas and Fuel Corporation in 1955. The plant was shut down in 1958, when brown coal gas was piped in from a Lurgi plant in the Latrobe Valley.<sup>201</sup> How far the gas reticulation system spread is difficult to ascertain, but an article in the *South Bourke and Mornington Journal* in reference to gas supply in Dandenong in 1910, infers that while gas was potentially available for lighting in houses, it was mainly used by shops and hotels. Since electricity supply was still some years away, houses were primarily lit by kerosene and candles.<sup>202</sup> Since there is no evidence of gas lighting at Beleura, it can be assumed that a similar situation existed in the Mornington area.

After Jenner's death in 1890, Beleura was advertised for sale but did not sell and remained in the family until 1899. The sale notice referred to Beleura as "one of the most elegant and complete family residences in the Colony."<sup>203</sup> The property was eventually sold to pastoralist Robert Smith, who owned Beleura until 1911. In 1911 Beleura was sold to grazier William Edwick, who was responsible for modernizing a number of features of the house, including installing leaded glass to many windows and terra cotta basket weave pattern floor tiles to the colonnade.<sup>204</sup> A most significant development followed in 1915 when Edwick sold Beleura to the Hill, Williams and Inglis syndicate. Led by Mary Williams, the syndicate prepared the Beleura property for sub-division and the *Beleura on the Sea* estate was offered for auction on 8 January 1916.<sup>205</sup> The estate included "183 Choice villa sites, 8 acreage acres and

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<sup>200</sup> Moorhead, 120.

<sup>201</sup> Ray Proudley, *A History of the Gas Industry in Victoria* (Melbourne: Hargreen Publishing Company, 1987), 349.

<sup>202</sup> "Electric light for Dandenong," *South Bourke and Mornington Journal*, October 20, 1910, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>203</sup> "Important Sale of Valuable Freehold Properties in Mornington," *Argus*, November 13, 1890, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>204</sup> Nigel Lewis and Richard Aitken, *Beleura Conservation Plan* (Melbourne: Nigel Lewis and Richard Aitken Pty Ltd, 1999), 37.

<sup>205</sup> Anthony Knight, *Beleura Mornington: A Theatre of the Past* (Mornington: The Tallis Foundation, 2009), 35.

HANDSOME RESIDENCE with 34 acres.”<sup>206</sup> George and Amelia Tallis purchased Beleura and several large parcels of land at the auction and a new era began for the property.

## 2.2 Evolution of Beleura and arrangement of the service areas

Through this procession of owners, the layout of Beleura evolved, reflecting design fashions of the mid- to late Victorian era. By the time George and Amelia Tallis purchased the property in 1916, most of the significant changes to the house layout had been completed. Beleura would, however, continue to evolve in less substantial ways right up to the modern era. It is not possible to provide a definitive early floor plan of Beleura in the absence of detailed documentation. However, an examination of real estate sales notices in newspapers and estate valuations, combined with a little archaeology, can offer a reasonably plausible picture of changes that occurred to the layout of the house at different stages through the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. To systematically study the changes to layout it is helpful to establish at the outset, a room reference system. For simplicity and consistency, I will use throughout this thesis the room descriptions used in the *Beleura House & Garden*, John Tallis Research Centre (Table 1) and the room numbering system used in the *Beleura Conservation Plan*, Existing Floor Plan (Figure 7).<sup>207</sup>

Current room description	Room number in Figure 7.
John Tallis kitchen	23
Dining room	10
Vestibule one	14
Cellar	-
Working kitchen	18
French kitchen	19
Larder	20
French breakfast room	21
Sunroom	22

<sup>206</sup> Advertisement for the *Beleura-on-the-Sea* auction. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>207</sup> Lewis and Aitken, 36.

Winter garden	27
Box room	28
Laundry	32
Annex kitchen	33
Small flat kitchen	42
Boiler room	-
Store room	25

*Table 1. Room numbering system for the service areas of Beleura. See Appendix b. for complete list of room numbers and descriptions.*

Following the death of James Butchart in 1869, the Preliminary Notice for the Sale of Beleura, lists all the rooms of the house, including pantry (brick), storeroom, cellar, kitchen, scullery, washhouse and laundry.<sup>208</sup> Conventional wisdom is that the original Butchart layout was largely rectangular in shape (area shaded red in Figure 7) with the possible addition of rooms 1 and 2.<sup>209</sup> This is significantly smaller than the house today and does not allow enough space for the service areas identified in the sale notice. It is possible that the pantry and store room could have been in rooms 18 and 25 respectively and the other rooms external to the main house. Window ledges, door sills and other façade details on these rooms are identical to the main house, but these features could have been carefully matched when the house was extended. Nigel Lewis and Richard Aitken, authors of the *Beleura Conservation Plan* suggest that it is unlikely that the sale notice would have singled out the pantry as being made of brick if the storeroom was also brick, as would be the case with this option.<sup>210</sup> A more likely solution is that rooms 18 and 25 were added by later owners (area shaded yellow in Figure 7), meaning that in 1869, all of the service areas would have been external to the main house. Underneath the French kitchen (room 19), are the remains of an earlier brick pier and timber beam construction which could be the remains of the original kitchen (Figure 8). This arrangement is consistent with design practice in the mid-nineteenth century, as it was common to build the kitchen separate to the main house to prevent the entry of kitchen smells into the dining area and also as protection from fire. A good example of a similar arrangement is the National Trust owned property Como (1855) in the inner Melbourne suburb of South

<sup>208</sup> “Preliminary Notice. Beleura Schnapper Point,” *Argus*, December 31, 1869, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>209</sup> Personal communication with Anthony Knight, Director, Beleura House & Garden.

<sup>210</sup> Lewis and Aitken, 35.

Yarra, where the kitchen is external to the house and accessed via a flagstone back-verandah and corridor.<sup>211</sup>

Australian historian Michael Bogle asserts, “The kitchen is the centre for the consuming passions of family life, its role as the social nexus of a home makes it one of the most sensitive indicators of cultural change.”<sup>212</sup> The location of the kitchen is therefore a key element in determining the early evolution of Beleura. Freeland argues, “The main change in the planning of houses of 1860 was the kitchen, having crept closer and closer to the main building now became attached to it.”<sup>213</sup> The integration of the kitchen into the house became possible in the mid-Victorian era largely due to the introduction of the cast iron kitchen range with enclosed firebox.<sup>214</sup> Beleura is very fortunate to have an original example of this technology in room 19. Initially imported, but later manufactured locally, this new type of range represented a very significant technological development in kitchen appliances and will be discussed more fully later in this chapter. The closed fire range largely replaced the earlier open hearth kitchen fireplace in many households, significantly lessening the fire risk and improving working conditions in the kitchen. It is likely that room 19 at Beleura was built over the old kitchen to house a new closed range at the same time as room 18. Evidence for this assumption is seen in the alcove with decorative brick lintel, revealed in restoration, built into the wall separating the two rooms, which appears to have been specifically designed for the cast iron kitchen range still in place today (Figure 9). The question remains as to who built the kitchen extension?

Unfortunately, the newspaper notice for Bright’s sale of Beleura gives no detail of room layout.<sup>215</sup> The estate valuation compiled after Jenner’s death in 1890 provides some important clues, including the listing of a “Schoolroom and Back Verandah” with an item of contents noted as a “filter”.<sup>216</sup> Room 18 is distinguished by having a *Jeffery’s Germ Proof Filter* installed above the sink, a significant artifact which will be discussed in detail later. Since this

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<sup>211</sup> John Foster, “Como – Melbourne,” in *Historic Buildings of Australia 1*, 103 (South Melbourne: Cassell Australia, 1977).

<sup>212</sup> Michael Bogle, “A Domestic Revolution: Development of Domestic Kitchens as an Indicator of Cultural Change,” *Journal of Australian Studies* No.42, September (1994): 59.

<sup>213</sup> Freeland, 131.

<sup>214</sup> Peter Timms, *Private Lives: Australians at Home since Federation* (Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2008), 24.

<sup>215</sup> “Wednesday November 7 – A Spring Meeting,” *Argus*, November 3, 1888, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>216</sup> “In the Estate of the Late Hon. C.J. Jenner – Valuation of Furniture at Beleura.” Beleura House & Garden Collection.

room is adjacent to the back verandah it suggests that room 18 is the schoolroom listed in the valuation and must date from the years when Backhouse operated the Mornington Grammar School. Bright owned Beleura at that time and since it appears that rooms 18 and 19 have always been connected, this lends support to the argument that he may have built these rooms in preparation for the use of the house as a school. In the nineteenth century, pre-refrigeration, kitchens were often linked to an adjoining nest of supplementary rooms including a larder for perishable food such as meat and vegetables, a pantry for non-perishable and cooked food, bread and dairy, and a scullery for rinsing food and washing dishes.<sup>217</sup> These rooms can be identified at Beleura and whether they were built by Bright or Jenner is a matter for conjecture, but if Bright built the new kitchen then it would make sense that he also built the other associated rooms, as they were integral to the efficient functioning of the nineteenth-century kitchen. The restoration of Beleura after 1996 revealed white-tiled walls and an early water supply in the current French breakfast room (room 21) making it a strong candidate for the scullery. The slate shelves and terracotta tiled floor in the current box room (room 28) makes it a likely larder. Room 20 in Victorian times would have been the pantry, sometimes referred to as a dry larder, as distinct from the wet larder (room 28).<sup>218</sup>

In the service areas in Victorian households, an important room was the butler's pantry. Mark Girouard, who has written widely on life in country houses, suggests that the butler's pantry was an important buffer between the main house and the kitchen, a room where plate and drinking ware were stored.<sup>219</sup> Room 18 at Beleura would fill this role perfectly, particularly with easy access to the store room (room 25) and the cellar. The glass-fronted dresser at one end of the room, identical to one in room 19, is ideal for storage of plate and glassware. Catherine Seiberling Pond, in her book on the history of the pantry, observes that the butler's pantry "was a place to serve food and keep it warm, to wash the finest dishes and glassware, and to polish the silver. Symbolically, it was a place between servant and sire."<sup>220</sup> At Beleura, the large porcelain sink and timber draining boards would have assisted the butler in his duties. The layout of the Victorian kitchen and associated rooms is shown in Figure 10.

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<sup>217</sup> June Freeman, *The Making of the Modern Kitchen: A Cultural History* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2004), 25.

<sup>218</sup> Pamela A. Sambrook and Peter Brears, *Country House Kitchen 1650–1900* (Stroud: History Press Ltd, 2010), 177.

<sup>219</sup> Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 280.

<sup>220</sup> Catherine Seiberling Pond, *The Pantry: Its History and Modern Uses* (Layton, Utah: Gibbs Smith, 2007), 45.



Isabella Beeton, who guided many Victorian households, identified five principles of kitchen design:

1. Convenience of distribution in its parts, with largeness of dimension. 2. Excellence of light, height of ceiling, and good ventilation. 3. Easiness of access, without passing through the house. 4. Sufficiently remote from the principal apartments of the house, that the members, visitors, or guest of the family, may not perceive the odour incident to cooking, or hear the noise of culinary operations. 5. Plenty of fuel and water, which with the scullery, pantry, and storeroom, should be so near it, as to offer the smallest possible trouble reaching them.<sup>221</sup>

The layout of the Beleura kitchen and service area during this era would have met these requirements admirably. Beeton would also have approved of the closed fire range at Beleura, which was modelled on the Leamington kitchener, a design with which she was familiar.<sup>222</sup>

Lewis and Aitken suggest that Jenner may have been responsible for the addition of the distinctive tower to Beleura (above rooms 20 and 21) which functioned as a hidden location for a water tank. He probably also added the guest wing, rooms 15, 16 and 17 (the area shaded blue in Figure 7).<sup>223</sup> It is interesting to note that in the original advertisement for the sale of Beleura following Jenner's death in 1890, the layout drawing of the property shows an impression of the plan view of Beleura which looks, more or less, complete as we know it today, minus the annex rooms 32, 33 and 34 (area shaded green in Figure 7).<sup>224</sup> This leads to the conclusion that most of the significant extensions to Beleura were carried out prior to 1890. Servants were clearly relied upon for many household chores, indicated by the regular listing of servant's bedrooms in the sale notices and valuations. It is most likely that rooms 32, 33 and 34 were added after Jenner's family sold Beleura, built either by Smith or Edwick as additional servant quarters. They were certainly in existence prior to the purchase of Beleura by the Tallis family in 1916 and are possibly the "2 servants' rooms" identified in the *Beleura on the Sea* sale advertisement.<sup>225</sup> Edwick is also credited with having made some major

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<sup>221</sup> Isabella Beeton, *Beeton's Book of Household Management* (London: Chancellor Press, 1982. Originally published as, *The Book of Household Management* (London: S.O. Beeton, 1861), 25.

<sup>222</sup> Beeton, 27.

<sup>223</sup> Lewis and Aitken, 37.

<sup>224</sup> Sale Brochure for Beleura, November 1890. BeleuraHouse & Garden Collection.

<sup>225</sup> "The Magnificent Villa Residence, Beleura," *Argus*, December 18, 1915, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

roofing changes, closing in skylights and re-roofing the house with corrugated iron sheeting. He may also have been responsible for the rear verandah (room 27 prior to being closed in).<sup>226</sup> Lewis and Aitken also attribute the construction of bath/dressing rooms 23 and 24 to Edwick (area shaded brown in Figure 7).<sup>227</sup> Service room functions at Beleura would undergo further evolution under the Tallis ownership, along with several additions, but these will be discussed in later chapters.

### **2.3 Sourcing, storing and preserving food**

There are very few documents directly relating to owners of Beleura from the nineteenth century, apart from a number of early letters of James Butchart (pre-Beleura), a letter from the Hon. Mrs Bright to her parents in England and the previously noted 1890 valuation of Jenner's estate. None of these give any detailed information on culinary practices at the house, although they do contain several oblique references to food which will be considered in due course. Clues can also be found in the diaries and letters of owners of other properties on the Mornington Peninsula at the time. With rudimentary road and water access, Melbourne was many hours away, meaning that purchased foodstuffs could not be relied upon and needed to be supplemented with whatever could be caught or grown locally. Brenda Niall, in her biography of early Arthur's Seat settler Georgiana McCrae, records diary entries that suggest that the McCrae household diet was "boiled rice with milk and sugar; salt beef and damper; and whatever fish and game they could catch and kill themselves."<sup>228</sup> Niall observes, "They lived simply; and the abundance of fish and game as well as a good vegetable garden, some poultry, wheat and barley made them almost self-sufficient."<sup>229</sup>

James Butchart had experienced a similar environment when he lived at Mt Eliza in 1845, working for Henry Davis. Butchart wrote in a letter to home, "We have a fine garden and about ten acres in cultivation. The barley we will cut next week; we also have some beautiful

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<sup>226</sup> Lewis and Aitken, 37.

<sup>227</sup> Lewis and Aitken, 37.

<sup>228</sup> Brenda Niall, *Georgiana – A Biography of Georgiana McCrae, Painter, Diarist, Pioneer* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1994), 178.

<sup>229</sup> Niall, 181.

wheat and fine potatoes.”<sup>230</sup> Butchart also wrote that there were plenty of fish in the nearby Bay and they were also growing “strawberries and plenty of cherries”.<sup>231</sup> It can only be assumed that when he purchased 190 acres of his own land at Schnapper Point in 1863, a few kilometres south west of Mt Eliza, he planned to develop a similarly productive property. Perhaps, in the brief five year period that Butchart lived at Beleura, he had insufficient time to improve the productive capacity of the land. Certainly, the sale notice after his death makes no mention of the agricultural aspects of the property, promoting instead the “superior and elegant” qualities of the “Gentleman’s Country Seat”.<sup>232</sup> By the time of Jenner’s death in 1890, the property had certainly been improved. The sale brochure for Beleura features a description of the then, twenty-five acres of grounds, as “stocked with the choicest flowers, plants and shrubs, fruit and vegetable garden and well-grassed paddock”, lending support to the idea that the household was at least semi-self-sufficient in many foodstuffs, despite improvements in transport and local infrastructure.<sup>233</sup>

Of the documents that survive from the owners of Beleura during this period, the valuation inventory made after Jenner’s death in 1890 is most useful, as it lists a number of items that relate to the storing and preserving of food at this time.<sup>234</sup> Under the “kitchen” is listed a meat safe, a device which British kitchen antiques authority Mary Norwak describes as, “cube-shaped, with a hipped roof” and “made of japanned iron with sides of wire mesh.”<sup>235</sup> Japanning was a process of making the iron rustproof by coating the surface with a layer of black lacquer, a decorative technique popular in the Victorian era. The meat safe was sturdily built and often incorporated a shelf and a lock on the door. The unit was designed to be hung from the ceiling, ideally in the larder where it was cool and well ventilated. A particularly Australian version of the meat safe was the Coolgardie Safe, invented by Arthur McCormick in 1890 and a common device in many households for storing meat and other perishable food, until the widespread commercial production of ice made ice chests more practicable. The Coolgardie Safe was often home-made and generally consisted of a hessian covered timber and wire mesh frame, with a galvanized iron tank perched on top. The edge of the hessian

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<sup>230</sup> Letter from Mt Eliza, 4 December 1845, Extracts from letters of James Butchart covering period 1841–1853, MS BOX 15/7. State Library of Victoria.

<sup>231</sup> Letter from Mt Eliza, 4 December 1845.

<sup>232</sup> “Preliminary Notice. Beleura Schnapper Point,” *Argus*, December 31, 1869, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>233</sup> Sale Brochure for Beleura, November 1890.

<sup>234</sup> “In the Estate of the Late Hon. C.J. Jenner – Valuation of Furniture at Beleura.”

<sup>235</sup> Mary Norwak, *Kitchen Antiques* (London: Ward Lock Limited, 1975), 74.

trails in the water, allowing moisture to seep down the sides of the safe. When the safe was placed in a breeze, heat was absorbed from the interior through evaporation of the water in the hessian. An innovative feature of many Coolgardie Safes was the placement of the legs in tins of water to prevent ants gaining access to the food inside.<sup>236</sup> We have no way of knowing which type of meat safe was in the Beleura kitchen, but one rather hopes that it was the uniquely Australian version.

Curiously, the larder (room 28) is not mentioned in the Jenner valuation, but perhaps there were no chattels in that room to be listed. Stepping into the room today, an immediate drop in temperature can be felt, confirming that the larder is a very effective cool-room, even on the hottest days. The thick and heavy slate shelves that are fitted in the larder at Beleura were recommended practice pre-refrigeration and quite common, particularly in rural properties, for storage of perishable foodstuffs such as vegetables, dairy products, eggs and meat. The Perth *Sunday Times* described the ideal larder, as having “walls and floors of glazed tiles.... slate shelves and round corners, so that not a scrap of dirt can lurk in hiding”; the larder “although it is cool, is perfectly dry.”<sup>237</sup> Beleura’s larder does not have tiled walls, but meets the other requirements admirably. The location of room 28 also appears to be perfect for a larder, as British food historian and curator Pamela Sambrook observes that some early houses adopted a policy, “where larders might be accommodated in outbuildings connected to the back door of the kitchen or scullery by a covered walkway. The larder could then be fitted with windows all round for good ventilation and an overhanging roof to give shade to the walls.”<sup>238</sup> Beleura’s larder, while still connected to the house, has a separate entry off what was probably then a roofed but open back terrace, adjacent to the main entry to the kitchen for easy access (refer Figure 7).

Under the “dairy” in Jenner’s estate valuation is listed a butter churn and a pickling tub.<sup>239</sup> Most farms had a dairy, separate from the kitchen, where butter and cheese were produced from fresh milk. On a large farm, butter would be made once or twice a week by first separating the cream from the milk, then agitating the cream in a butter churn. It usually takes

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<sup>236</sup> Powerhouse Museum, “Coolgardie Safe,” Powerhouse Museum, <http://powerhousemuseum/collection/database/?irn=260620> (accessed July 29, 2013).

<sup>237</sup> “The Ideal Larder,” *Sunday Times*, July 14, 1929, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>238</sup> Sambrook and Brears, 178.

<sup>239</sup> “In the Estate of the Late Hon. C.J. Jenner – Valuation of Furniture at Beleura.”

several hours to separate the butter from the butter milk, after which it is washed, beaten and worked to remove surplus liquid. Decorative marks were often pressed into the butter.<sup>240</sup>

Pickling was a common means of preserving meat in the Victorian era. Prior to the discovery of bacteria and the scientific mechanism of decay, households retarded the spoiling of meat by a salting and/or pickling process. Meat was sometimes dry-salted, where the meat pieces were rubbed hard with salt then packed in a “deep salting or powdering tub” with the prime pieces packed at the bottom and a board placed on top with a heavy weight.<sup>241</sup> Alternatively, a wet pickle could be used containing a variety of ingredients specific to the type of meat. A typical wet pickle according to Sue Shepherd, author of *Pickled, Potted and Canned*, is “3 pints of water, ½ lb coarse salt, 1 oz of saltpetre, 3 oz of sugar with herbs such as bay leaves, crushed thyme and cloves, peppercorns, crushed juniper berries, allspice or nutmeg all tied up in a muslin bag.”<sup>242</sup> Pamela Sambrook describes the process of pickling: “Meat would be steeped in the pickle in deep tubs or earthenware crocks, some big enough to stand on the floor, the smaller ones on the settle. If salting or pickle tubs were made of wood they were usually lead lined.”<sup>243</sup> Sambrook claims that meat would keep in a wet pickle for up to twelve months providing the liquid was boiled, skimmed and topped up with new salt each month.

No details are given in any document regarding the arrangement of the pantry (room 20). One can only assume that it had open shelves similar to those that currently exist. Jenner’s valuation notes a “cheese dish”, probably for storing small amounts of cheese made in the dairy.<sup>244</sup> The pantry at Beleura is ideally situated beside the kitchen. A distinctive feature of the pantry in Victorian times would have been the increasing number of industrially processed and packaged food products on the shelves. Maggie Black asserts, “By the end of the Victorian era, the cook’s store cupboard and larder in the middle-class city home of the 1890s were as full of packets and cans as any modern kitchen.”<sup>245</sup> Black contends that in Britain, processed, packeted, bottled and canned foods made life easier, but only for those who could

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<sup>240</sup> Norwak, 39.

<sup>241</sup> Sambrook and Brears, 185.

<sup>242</sup> Sue Shepherd, *Pickled, Potted and Canned: The Story of Food Preserving* (London: Headline Book Publishing, 2000), 55.

<sup>243</sup> Sambrook and Brears, 185.

<sup>244</sup> “In the Estate of the Late Hon. C.J. Jenner – Valuation of Furniture at Beleura.”

<sup>245</sup> Maggie Black, *Victorian Cookery* (London: English Heritage, 2004), 19.

afford them.<sup>246</sup> The rural location of Beleura probably ensured that, for the time being at least, locally grown and sourced foodstuffs would still have predominated in the pantry. However, with the inauguration of the railway to Mornington in 1889, travel times to Melbourne dropped dramatically, opening up access to a whole range of new food products from the industrial age. The 1880 Melbourne International Exhibition featured a number of local food manufacturers, including an elaborate display from the Red Cross Preserving Company of South Yarra. The Official Catalogue notes, “Last year the company made and sold 20,000 cases of jams, besides jellies, marmalade, tart fruits, bottled fruits, candied peels, pickles, sauces and vinegars.”<sup>247</sup> In the 1888 Centennial International Exhibition, the Port Melbourne based Swallow & Ariell Company proudly promoted sixty-nine varieties of biscuits on their display.<sup>248</sup> Barbara Santich contends that it was the invention of baking powder in England in 1850 and the development of a local version of the product by Sydney chemist A. Abraham in 1852 that led to a proliferation of home cake making in Australia in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>249</sup>

As outlined in the methodology section of the introduction to this thesis, one key artifact will be identified in each category as a case study for more detailed evaluation. The selection of artifacts in this chapter is not difficult, as only a limited number of items exist from this period with direct provenance to Beleura. One of these objects is the Jeffery’s Germ Proof Filter. A key requirement in the service area of the household for food preparation, preserving, cooking and cleaning up was a ready supply of clean water.

### **2.3.1 Artifact evaluation 1 – Jeffery’s Germ Proof Filter**

**Identification:** The Jeffery’s Germ Proof Filter located in the working kitchen (room 18) consists of two components; firstly, a wall-mounted, primary filter unit with a cylindrical, metallic outer case and cast end caps, 7cm diameter and 30cm high, and an inner porous filter element; secondly, a white, glazed, cylindrical stoneware water storage vessel in two pieces,

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<sup>246</sup> Black, 15.

<sup>247</sup> *Official Record of the Melbourne International Exhibition 1880–81* (Melbourne: Mason, Firth and McCutcheon, 1882), ci.

<sup>248</sup> *Centennial International Exhibition 1888–9: The Official Catalogue of the Exhibition* (Melbourne: M.L. Hutchinson, 1888), 73.

<sup>249</sup> Barbara Santich, *Bold Palates: Australia’s Gastronomic Heritage* (Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 2012), 186.

24cm diameter and 51cm high, with a supply tap fitted in the lower half (Figure 11). The primary filter unit is supplied with water, via an isolating valve, from the domestic water mains running behind the sink, with the outlet of the filter connected to the stoneware storage vessel via a length of tubing. Engraved in the surface of the stoneware vessel is the name “Jeffery’s Germ Proof Filter”. According to a description of the unit in the *Western Mail* the primary filter unit can be installed in the water supply pipe in any position and should be cleaned by back-flushing with water once a day through the valve located in the lower end cap.<sup>250</sup> The Jeffery’s Filter was made in two sizes, with the smallest unit capable of filtering 13–14 gallons of clear water in 24 hours and a larger size unit able to filter twice that amount. The clean water that passes through the filter unit is stored in the stoneware vessel ready for use. It is assumed that the filter installed at Beleura is the smaller unit intended for domestic purposes.

**Context analysis:** An essential requirement for food preserving and preparation is a ready supply of clean water. The Mornington Peninsula did not have a reticulated water supply until well into the twentieth century and prior to that, as is the case in many rural areas in Australia still today, Beleura had to rely on underground springs or rainwater run-off from the roof.<sup>251</sup> When Beleura was built, water was initially collected from two 75,000 litre, underground, brick-lined tanks located in the northern part of the garden, which are thought to pre-date the house. These tanks have distinctive bell-shaped, brick tops and were filled by a spring which has since dried up (Figure 12).<sup>252</sup> In the 1880s two further underground tanks were built closer to the house (each 100,000 litre capacity) to collect rainwater from the roof, in what is now called the tower courtyard.<sup>253</sup> Water must have been collected from these wells by a hand pump or bucket. In the nineteenth century, water carrying would have been a laborious chore for housekeepers and kitchen staff. Marilyn Palmer wrote that at Shugborough Hall in Staffordshire, England, in the 1890s, house maids had to make nine journeys per day, per

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<sup>250</sup> “Disposal of City Refuse – Cr Traylen’s Report,” *Western Mail*, August 26, 1893, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>251</sup> Note: The State Rivers and Water Supply Commission began work to connect the Mornington Peninsula to a reticulated water supply in 1916 and by 1930 most of the northern Peninsula towns, including Mornington were connected. From Yarra Valley Water, “History of Melbourne’s Water Supply,” Yarra Valley Water, <http://www.yvw.com.au/home/waterandsewerage/waterqualityandsupply/historyofmelbournewatersupply/index.htm> (accessed August 11, 2013)

<sup>252</sup> Kate Philip and Anthony Knight, *The Garden at Beleura – Garden Tour Guiding Notes* (Mornington: Beleura House & Garden, 2009), 17.

<sup>253</sup> Philip and Knight, 19.

occupied bedroom to carry water from a tap in the basement for washing, cooking and cleaning.<sup>254</sup> Water fetching at Beleura would have been no less a burden, providing substantial motivation for construction of the water tank and tower above the kitchen and service area in order to deliver piped water to the house. While it is not known who built the tower at Beleura, it is likely that it was either Bright or Jenner (Figure 13).<sup>255</sup> Disregarding the uncertainty of its construction, it is intriguing to contemplate how water was pumped up to the tank, well above the level of the roof, several decades before electricity or electric motor powered pumps were available. A hand pump, wind-mill pump or even a steam-driven pump are possibilities, as examples from this era exist elsewhere, but there is no material or documentary evidence to support any of these particular options at Beleura. Later in the twentieth century, Sir George Tallis would install an electric motor driven pump for lifting water to the tower tank, from another large, above ground, riveted steel tank which he had constructed. While mains supplied water was desirable and a great advancement, water was also a potential source of disease.

The mechanism of disease propagation was little understood until the medical profession slowly accepted the *germ theory* in the late nineteenth century. While the concept of a *germe reproducteur* had earlier been postulated by Pierre Fidele Bretonneau (1771–1862), it was not until the publication of a paper in 1882 by German researcher Robert Koch (1843–1910) on the infectious nature of tuberculosis that the *germ theory* gained widespread acceptance.<sup>256</sup> In his paper, Koch wrote that “the bacilli which are present in the tuberculous substances not only accompany the tuberculosis process, but are the cause of it.”<sup>257</sup> This radical discovery replaced the previously common belief that the observed presence of micro-organisms in a sick patient was either a coincidence or alternatively due to changes brought about by the illness itself.<sup>258</sup> In France, Louis Pasteur’s (1822–1895) research into the action of yeasts in fermentation processes supported Koch’s proposition that micro-organisms were responsible for many human diseases.<sup>259</sup> Germs, as these micro-organisms were commonly called,

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<sup>254</sup>Marilyn Palmer, “The Country House: Technology and Society,” *Industrial Archaeological Review* XXVII, 1 (2005): 101.

<sup>255</sup>Lewis and Aitken, 37.

<sup>256</sup>John Cule, “The History of Medicine,” in *Medicine – A History of Healing*, ed. Roy Porter, 36 (London: The Ivy Press Limited, 1997).

<sup>257</sup>Cule, 36.

<sup>258</sup>Cule, 35.

<sup>259</sup>Cule, 35.



captured the imagination of medical researchers in the late nineteenth century and were blamed for many of the common epidemic diseases of the day, such as cholera and typhoid. Medical historian Terrie M. Romano suggests that the *germ theory* “carried with it a kind of simplicity and attractiveness, which ensured its acceptability in the minds of many.”<sup>260</sup> Joseph Lister (1827–1912) extended Pasteur’s work on fermentation to propose that germs in the air could be responsible for infections commonly found in wounds. This led to procedures for infection prevention which transformed hospitals in the late nineteenth century.<sup>261</sup>

Public health authorities had long known about the connection between contaminated water and disease. John Snow (1813–1858) effectively ended an epidemic of cholera in London in 1854 by banning access to a particular water pump in Soho.<sup>262</sup> Even before this event, manufacturers had started to develop filtration systems for removing contaminants from domestic water supplies, at least for households that could afford them. Ceramic water filter technology was pioneered by John Doulton in 1827, long before germ theory was revealed, with Queen Victoria an early customer. Doulton had founded a pottery at Lambeth on the banks of the River Thames in 1815. His son, Henry Doulton introduced the Doulton Manganous Carbon water filter in 1862.<sup>263</sup> He was knighted by King Edward in 1901 and the firm granted a Royal Warrant of Appointment in recognition of its contribution to health and sanitation products.<sup>264</sup>

Doulton ceramic water filters were displayed at the International Exhibition in Melbourne in 1880, with the *Argus* noting the “increasing attention that is being devoted to sanitation in the mother country.”<sup>265</sup> This display appeared to motivate local manufacturers to copy or improve on the Doulton device, with J. Jeffery of Fitzroy exhibiting his own prototype ceramic water filter at the International Exhibition in 1888.<sup>266</sup> Jeffery applied for a patent in 1891 for an

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<sup>260</sup> Terrie M. Romano, “The Cattle Plague of 1865 and the Reception of the Germ Theory in Mid-Victorian Britain,” *History of Medicine and Applied Sciences* 52, No.1 (1997): 76.

<sup>261</sup> Philip Wilson, “Healers in History,” in *Medicine – A History of Healing*, edited by Roy Porter, 194 (London: The Ivy Press Limited, 1997).

<sup>262</sup> Cule, 37.

<sup>263</sup> Southern Cross Pottery, “History of the Doulton Ceramic Filter Candle,” Southern Cross Pottery, <http://www.southerncrosspottery.com.au/royal-doulton-history.htm> (accessed August 6, 2013).

<sup>264</sup> Royal Warrant Holders Association, “WWRD United Kingdom – Royal Doulton,” Royal Warrant Holders Association, <http://www.royalwarrant.org/directory?query=doulton&=Go> (accessed August 20, 2015)

<sup>265</sup> “Exhibition Supplement,” *Argus*, October 6, 1880, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>266</sup> “Exhibition Supplement,” *Argus*, September 25, 1888, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

“improved water filter”.<sup>267</sup> The Jeffery’s Germ Proof Filter was advertised regularly in numerous newspapers in Australia and New Zealand during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Advertisements with the heading “How to Escape Typhoid Fever”, carried endorsements from an unnamed Professor of Hygiene at Melbourne University and a C.R.Blackett, Government Analyst, Melbourne.<sup>268</sup> Gregory Hill, in his book on the early potteries of Brunswick in Melbourne, identifies the Jeffery’s Filter as having been manufactured by the Alfred Cornwell Pottery in Phoenix Street, Brunswick.<sup>269</sup> The stoneware storage vessel of the Jeffery’s unit is very similar to another Cornwell made filter, the W. Candy water filter, both having a white Bristol glaze.<sup>270</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century there were two principal approaches to domestic water filtration. The first was the double ceramic vessel comprising an outer impervious skin, made of glazed stoneware, and an inner replaceable, porous vessel acting as the filtration unit, through which the water trickled depositing any impurities. The second approach was a compact cylindrical vessel containing a charcoal bed filter, installed under pressure in the water supply pipe.<sup>271</sup> It would appear that the Jeffery’s Germ Proof Filter employed both types of filtration for maximum effect.

**Interpretation:** Typhoid was a particularly serious problem in Melbourne in the nineteenth century, with one newspaper report in 1890 recording the occurrence of 772 cases of typhoid over a four week period. The article concluded that “unless some drastic remedy is soon provided, there is every likelihood of a panic arising in Melbourne over the unhealthy state of the city.”<sup>272</sup> It was perfect timing for Jeffery to market his water filter, although it was not the only Australian-made ceramic filter at that time. A Whites Dripstone Filter and an Abbott terracotta water filter are in the collection of the Powerhouse Museum and a stoneware ceramic filter made by Bendigo Pottery is in the National Museum of Australia, all probably dating from this period.<sup>273</sup> The Jeffery’s Filter installed at Beleura differs from these other units in its ability to provide continuous water filtration through the primary filter installed in the supply pipe. Since a filter is listed in Jenner’s estate valuation in 1890 and as the Jeffery’s

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<sup>267</sup> “Jeffery Patent Automatic Filter Company,” *Queenslander*, September 5, 1891, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>268</sup> “The Jeffery Germ Proof Filter,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, February 1, 1896, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>269</sup> Gregory Hill, *The Potteries of Brunswick* (Shepparton: Shepparton Art Gallery, 2000), 20.

<sup>270</sup> Hill, 26.

<sup>271</sup> David De Haan, *Antique Household Gadgets and Appliances* (Poole, Dorset: Blandford Press, 1977), 11.

<sup>272</sup> “The Melbourne Typhoid Season,” *Evening News*, February 15, 1890, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>273</sup> Powerhouse Museum registration numbers 89/1303 & 89/1306; National Museum of Australia object no. 2006.0109.0004.

unit appeared to come onto the market around 1888, it is most probable that Jenner was responsible for installing it at Beleura at this time.<sup>274</sup> Because the Jeffery's Filter is designed to be installed in the supply pipe of a reticulated water system, the tower and filter must come from the same time period, lending support for an upper limit on the date for construction of the tower, namely 1890. Jenner had a strong, personal reason for doing all he could to prevent typhoid, as his daughter Emily died of the disease at Brighton in 1879, in the house that he and his wife Eliza Anne lived in prior to moving to Beleura.<sup>275</sup> With the potential energy of the stored water in the tower located tank, there would have been sufficient water pressure to operate the Jeffery's Filter in its location above the sink. It would have provided a source of comparatively clean water in what was probably the butler's pantry.

Whether or not ceramic filters were capable of removing water-borne bacteria is a moot point. They reached their height of popularity between 1860 and 1910, with the 1883 edition of Mrs Beeton's *The Book of Household Management* recommending their use. However, by the 1909 edition of Beeton's book, the recommendation had changed to boiling the water to be used in the kitchen. Filters were then viewed with some scepticism and Beeton's book warned that unless the filter element was cleaned regularly, these devices could actually contaminate water.<sup>276</sup> Regardless of their efficacy, the presence of the Jeffery's Filter in the Beleura kitchen is a poignant reminder of an earlier time when good quality drinking water could not be taken for granted as it is in most parts of Australia today. It speaks of the terrible tragedy of death from water-related diseases such as typhoid and cholera and of the frantic efforts to find a solution to what was a major health crisis in Melbourne in the nineteenth century.

## 2.4 Cooking at Beleura

It is no exaggeration to claim that Beleura was a house built on meat. James Butchart's fortune, from which he was able to build his mansion, came largely from the sale of mutton and beef to the diggers on the goldfields. While there is no direct evidence of what was cooked and eaten at Beleura, assumptions can be made from letters, newspapers and from

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<sup>274</sup> "In the Estate of the Late Hon. C.J. Jenner – Valuation of Furniture at Beleura."

<sup>275</sup> *The Jenners – The Story of Caleb Joshua Jenner after his Arrival in Australia in 1850 and Pen-Portraits of his Children and Grandchildren* .

<sup>276</sup> Christina Hardyment, *From Mangle to Microwave: The Mechanization of Household Work* (Cambridge: Polity Press in association with Basil Blackwell, 1988), 149.

contemporary cookbooks. In a letter to his father from Smeaton Hill, James Butchart wrote, “the usual fare of Men and Masters is damper, mutton and tea.”<sup>277</sup> While Butchart’s early life was rough and no doubt changed when he acquired wealth, the mutton-centred diet was common in Australia, even into the twentieth century. Santich suggests that “lamb has a special place in our hearts (or bellies).”<sup>278</sup> In 1988 Teow, Wahlquist and Flint reported on an oral history study they conducted with elderly Australians who could remember their eating habits at the turn of the nineteenth century. They concluded from the responses, that with ninety per cent of the non-indigenous inhabitants at that time of British origin, “cooking techniques used were basically British with the baking, stewing, grilling or frying of meat. Vegetables were inevitably plainly boiled or roasted.”<sup>279</sup> Doyen of British cooking, Marguerite Patten, suggests that “while the cooking may have been good, the family dined on the same dishes week after week.”<sup>280</sup> Monotony may have been the principal characteristic of Victorian-era British fare, largely due from Patten’s analysis, to a limited choice of ingredients. There is little reason to think that Beleura would have been much different, although with access to a range of fresh produce, a greater variety of meals would have been theoretically possible.

The only documentary evidence of something that may have been cooked at Beleura in the nineteenth century is contained in a letter by the Hon. Mrs Bright, wife of Charles Edward Bright. Mrs Bright was travelling back to Australia by ship after visiting her parents Viscount and Viscountess Canterbury in England, following the conclusion of their vice-regal duties in Melbourne. She was clearly impressed by a dish from the daily seaboard menu prepared by the ship’s cook and wrote in a letter to her parents, “We have the most excellent dish called ‘Hot Pot’ which would be the very thing for luncheons out shooting in the cold weather. It is a kind of twin sister to Irish stew. Mrs Ferguson has given me the recipe which I have no doubt is excellent. It is baked in a tin and then put into a china dish, something after the fashion of a

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<sup>277</sup> Letter from Smeaton Hill, 10 December 1843, Extracts from letters of James Butchart covering period 1841–1853, MS BOX 15/7. State Library of Victoria.

<sup>278</sup> Santich, 151.

<sup>279</sup> B.H. Teow, M.L. Wahlquist and D.M. Flint. “Food Patterns of Australians at the Turn of the Century,” in *Food Habits in Australia - Proceedings of the First Deakin/Sydney Universities Symposium on Australian Nutrition*, 60 (Melbourne: Heinemann Publishers Australia Pty Ltd, 1988).

<sup>280</sup> Marguerite Patten, *Marguerite Patten’s Century of British Cooking* (London: Grub Street, 1999), 5.

raised pie china dish only this shape.”<sup>281</sup> A rough sketch of the dish is included in her letter, which resembles a high sided casserole with a lid. The recipe is as follows:

Recipe for Hot Pot - Take some chops (or thin part of mutton or lamb), the fat must be taken off. Brown them in a pan with some potatoes all cut up like apples for a pie. Put them into a stone jar (which is better than the tin and can be covered with a cloth when sent up) first some chops (cut up) and then potatoes alternately in layers, some stock and an onion, some salt and pepper and a few whole potatoes on the top and bake in the oven for three or four hours. (Oysters improve it very much, also kidneys and I think a little bacon).

To please me do try this, it is so very excellent and will be a change for your luncheons. Another good thing is gingerbread rolled out like wafers – they are called brandy snaps and are very good.<sup>282</sup>

Mrs Bright’s enthusiasm may well have led her to pass the recipe on to her own cook when she returned to Beleura, though we have no direct evidence to confirm this. It is most unlikely that she would have cooked it herself, but the inclusion of the recipe in her letter intriguingly hints at several aspects of her character. At a time when someone from the upper echelons of society would have had little contact with food preparation, let alone kitchen staff, Mrs Bright demonstrated a high degree of initiative and commitment when she approached the ship’s cook for a recipe that she clearly enjoyed. She was evidently comfortable conversing with staff on such domestic matters. Sharing of recipes is a common cross-generational practice in many families and the inclusion of this recipe in her letter reveals a touching degree of intimacy with her parents. Viscount and Viscountess Canterbury would not normally have been expected to concern themselves with such details, but one can only hope that “Hot Pot” was added to the household cook’s repertoire as their daughter suggested. Mrs Bright also reveals her fondness for gingerbread in the last paragraph of the recipe, having found a new variety in the form of brandy snaps. In another letter home, she confessed to eating gingerbread for consolation in times of stress and recorded a humorous incident from the

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<sup>281</sup> Letter written on 28 September 1875. Letters written on-board the S.S. Great Britain from the Honorable Anna- Maria Georgiana Bright to her parents, the Viscount and Viscountess Canterbury, beginning 27 August 1875 and finishing at Beleura on 1 November 1875, MS 12973, BOX 1718/5. State Library of Victoria.

<sup>282</sup> Letter written on 28 September 1875. Letters written on-board the S.S. Great Britain from the Honorable Anna- Maria Georgiana Bright to her parents, the Viscount and Viscountess Canterbury.

voyage: “The children found their way to one of my gingerbread tins and finished them all up. They don’t know fortunately, that I have another tin in reserve.”<sup>283</sup>

The recipe is also interesting from a culinary perspective. The recipe is not particularly well structured for an amateur in the kitchen and was probably originally written by and for an experienced cook. Quantities of ingredients are missing, as are details of several cooking steps. How many chops or potatoes are to be used and how many people will this recipe serve? How much stock is to be used and what type? There is no mention of the fat to be used for browning the chops and potatoes. The advantage of baking in the casserole appears to be that it can be served straight to the table, or “sent up” covered with a cloth as the recipe states. The recipe is clearly written from the kitchen staff’s perspective.

Accurately measured and described recipes were a relatively recent phenomenon in the 1870s. While there were a number of writers of cookbooks in the early Victorian era, Eliza Acton and Isabella Beeton emerged as the most influential from the period, earning lasting reputations principally through producing easy to read and reproduce recipes for home cooks.<sup>284</sup> Acton in the preface to the 1855 edition of her book *Modern Cooking for Private Families* stated that her recipes contain some novel features, “The principal of these is the summary appended to the receipts, of the different ingredients which they contain, with the exact proportion of each, and the precise time required to dress the whole.”<sup>285</sup> Acton placed her list of ingredients at the end of the recipe, whereas Beeton in her 1861 *The Book of Household Management* placed the list of ingredients at the head of each recipe. Food historian Linda Civitello contends that Beeton’s book is a “masterpiece of organization.”<sup>286</sup> This is certainly true, but British biographer Sheila Hardy argues that many of the ideas and recipes in Beeton’s book were “shamelessly plagiarized” from Acton’s work.<sup>287</sup> Contemporary British cookery teacher and writer Delia Smith boldly asserts, “Eliza Acton is the best cookery writer in the English

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<sup>283</sup> Letter written on 31 August 1875. Letters written on-board the S.S. Great Britain from the Honorable Anna-Maria Georgiana Bright to her parents, the Viscount and Viscountess Canterbury.

<sup>284</sup> Jennifer Davies, *The Victorian Kitchen* (London: BBC Books, 1989), 23.

<sup>285</sup> Eliza Acton, *Modern Cookery for Private Families* (London: Southover Press, 2002. Originally published 1855), 2.

<sup>286</sup> Linda Civitello, *Cuisine and Culture - A History of Food and People* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 257.

<sup>287</sup> Sheila Hardy, *The Real Mrs Beeton: The Story of Eliza Acton* (Stroud: The History Press, 2011), 10.

language.”<sup>288</sup> These opinions aside, the frequent reprints of both author’s works, even to the present day, stand as testament to their importance in the field of culinary literature. Given the popularity of these authors at the time, one might expect the source of Mrs Bright’s recipe to be one of these texts. Unfortunately, a search in both books does not reveal a specific recipe for “Hot Pot”. However, a broader search, pursuing her comparison of the dish to Irish stew, found several clearly related recipes.

Acton’s book includes two recipes for Irish stew: a basic one common to many books and a second given as “A Baked Irish Stew” which closely resembles Mrs Bright’s “Hot Pot”, particularly in the use of a ceramic casserole for a baking dish and the layering of mutton and potatoes. It opens with the instruction, “Fill a brown Nottingham jar with alternate layers of mutton (or beef), sliced potatoes, and mild onions; and put in water and seasoning as above; cover the top closely with whole potatoes (pared), and send the stew to a moderate oven.”<sup>289</sup> Acton advises that the dish is “suited only to a *quite plain* family dinner” (italics Acton’s).<sup>290</sup> Plain it may be, but British food historian Colin Spencer declares that “Irish stew made with mutton, onions and potatoes could not be more basic, yet if made with care with all the fat skimmed off it is a fine dish.”<sup>291</sup> Mrs Bright’s suggestion of adding oysters, kidneys or bacon is interesting, making the dish a little less plain than Acton’s advice suggests. Kate Colquhoun, in her study of British cuisine, refers to the Regency period practice of using oysters to flavor sauces, a time when oysters in England were abundant and inexpensive.<sup>292</sup> Clarissa Dickson Wright asserts that by the mid-Victorian era, oysters which were once “everyman food”, had become scarcer due to damage inflicted on oyster beds by industrial effluent.<sup>293</sup> Despite their cost, Beeton includes a recipe for beef-steaks and oyster sauce in her book, showing that while perhaps a luxury, the practice of flavouring with oysters remained in fashion.<sup>294</sup> This may account for the cook’s inclusion of oysters as an option in Mrs Bright’s recipe, presumably if the budget allowed. The rocks around Port Phillip Bay near Beleura could probably be relied upon for a supply of oysters if required.

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<sup>288</sup> Delia Smith, Foreword to Hardy, 7.

<sup>289</sup> Acton, 214.

<sup>290</sup> Acton, 215.

<sup>291</sup> Colin Spencer, *British Food - an Extraordinary Thousand Years of History* (London: Grub Street, 2011), 179.

<sup>292</sup> Kate Colquhoun, *Taste – The Story of Britain through its Cooking* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007), 264.

<sup>293</sup> Clarissa Dickson Wright, *A History of English Food* (London: Random House Books, 2011), 249.

<sup>294</sup> Beeton, 280.

There is nothing remarkable about this simple dish, apart from the fact that a wealthy and privileged member of upper-class society should find it so appealing. In this respect this lone recipe speaks quite eloquently of the day-to-day cuisine potentially served at Beleura, which may not have been too far removed from less grand households. While the food may have been humble, the appliance on which it was cooked at Beleura was certainly not. One of the defining areas of technological change in the Victorian era was the kitchen range.

#### **2.4.1 Artifact evaluation 2 – The cast iron closed fire kitchen range**

**Identification:** A cast iron closed fire kitchen range (Figure 14) is located in the French kitchen (room 19). It fits neatly within a recess in the wall between rooms 18 and 19. The range is 151cm wide, 73cm high and 65cm deep. In the centre, behind two hinged doors is the fire grate which contains the burning fuel and hot ashes behind a row of removable, vertical iron bars. Fine ashes fall through the grate into a removable tray below for easy disposal. The range was designed to use any solid fuel, but the presence of a coal scuttle in an inventory tends to favour coal as the fuel.<sup>295</sup> On either side of the fire grate are two ovens, one usually for roasting and the other for baking. Hot combustion gases circulate around the ovens and under the horizontal, cast iron top of the range, which is at a comfortable working height and includes three hot plate zones for simmering. The rear of the alcove containing the range is covered in small white ceramic tiles. Three small doors in the tiled rear surface allow access to clean the flues. Above each of these doors are three flat-plate dampers, which can be inserted into or out of the flue gas stream to control draught around the components of the range. Skilful positioning of the dampers controls the airflow and hence the temperature in the ovens (the higher the airflow, the higher the temperature). Access doors under each oven allow for cleaning. The cast iron surfaces have been blackened, a finish that must be reapplied regularly. The heavy hinged oven doors have decorative locking catches and round handles painted silver. There is no maker's identification or date of manufacture, but the range is very similar in layout and decoration to other units from the 1880s installed in properties such as Como in South Yarra and Villa Alba in Kew.

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<sup>295</sup> "Clearing Sale – Beleura, Mornington," *South Bourke and Mornington Journal*, July 22, 1915, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>



**Context analysis:** Perhaps it is an unconscious link to our cave-dwelling past, but families have always had a strong affinity for open fireplaces and roasted meat, the barbeque being its modern day manifestation. Phyllis Murphy claims, “For many centuries a fire in the hearth was a source of great comfort to the human race.”<sup>296</sup> For the new settlers of Victoria in the first half of the nineteenth century, many families initially lived in rough bush camps and cooked on open fires with a frying pan and a tin billy. When they could afford to build a home, the hearth took on a special significance, becoming a symbol of domesticity, “an agreement to respect a regime of regularly prepared meals in a traditional setting.”<sup>297</sup> The hearth was an important symbol in many cultures but in Britain a new phase of the Industrial Revolution was underway, leading to innovations in materials technology and new appliances that would make the open hearth less desirable.<sup>298</sup>

Prior to the nineteenth century, work in the kitchen of wealthy households usually revolved around a massive open fireplace, with a variety of devices used to spit roast skewered haunches of meat. To ensure the meat was roasted evenly, the spits were turned by hand, mechanical spring mechanism, or in some particularly ingenious cases, by treadmills operated by specially bred “turnspit dogs”.<sup>299</sup> By the mid-eighteenth century, a common method of rotating the spits was by a smoke jack, which used the powerful updraft of the chimney to turn a small turbine, connected with gearing to the spit.<sup>300</sup> Large kitchens often had a separate charcoal-fired stove for more gentle cooking tasks such as stewing, making sauces and preserves.<sup>301</sup> Frequently there was also a separate brick oven for baking. More humble houses had scaled down versions of these fireplaces and pots could simmer, suspended on stands over the fire. The problem with open hearth fires is that most of the heat is lost to the kitchen space or to the chimney, making for very inefficient cooking and high fuel consumption. Improvements started to appear in the late-eighteenth century, with cast iron roasting ranges being built into the fireplace, comprising a cradle like grate made of horizontal bars supported on legs, often with adjustable vertical cast side plates to alter the width of the fire to suit the

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<sup>296</sup> Phyllis Murphy, “The Colonial Kitchen,” in *The History & Design of the Australian House*, ed. Robert Irving, 233 (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985).

<sup>297</sup> Bogle, 61.

<sup>298</sup> L.T.C. Rolt, *Victorian Engineering* (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1970), 179.

<sup>299</sup> Sambrook and Brears, 95.

<sup>300</sup> Sambrook and Brears, 96.

<sup>301</sup> Sambrook and Brears, 100.

piece of meat to be roasted.<sup>302</sup> A logical next step was to incorporate a cast iron oven into one end of the range, but leaving the fire open.<sup>303</sup> Because radiant and conductive heat was only available from the fire through the side plate, heat distribution within the oven was very uneven. Count Rumford (1753–1814), American soldier and scientist, wrote in an influential essay in 1799 of the open range that “more fuel is frequently consumed in a kitchen range to boil a tea kettle than with proper management would be sufficient to cook a dinner for fifty men”.<sup>304</sup>

The open range persisted well into the nineteenth century and it is likely that some variant of it would have been installed in the original Beleura kitchen, long ago demolished. When the new service area was built, this range was probably replaced with the cast iron closed fire range now seen in the French kitchen.<sup>305</sup> This device represents the pinnacle of Victorian cast iron kitchen range technology. Historian Andrea Broomfield, who specializes in Victorian gastronomy, colourfully refers to these multi-function ranges as the “Cadillacs of cooking”.<sup>306</sup> Their origin stems from a patent issued in February 1802 to George Bodley of Exeter for the first practical closed fire cooking range with a continuous cast iron top over the fire to prevent the combustion products from escaping prematurely up the chimney. From the central fire grate, hot combustion gases were passed underneath the top plate and around the sides and underneath the ovens, up the back of the range, across a boiler section and into the chimney. This convoluted flow of hot gases ensured that a much higher proportion of available energy was utilized than with the open range and provided uniform heat for a number of cooking tasks, as well as hot water for the kitchen.<sup>307</sup> Closed cast iron range manufacture was taken up in the 1820s by William Flavel in his foundry at Leamington Spa. His “patented kitchener” became very popular, so much so that all closed ranges became known generically as “Leamington kitcheners”.<sup>308</sup> The typical closed range consisted of two ovens, one for baking the other for roasting, located either side of the central fire grate. The top plate was for slow

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<sup>302</sup> David J. Eveleigh, *Firegrates and Kitchen Ranges* (Oxford: Shire Publications Ltd, 2008), 15

<sup>303</sup> Eveleigh, 16.

<sup>304</sup> Quoted by: Eveleigh, 23.

<sup>305</sup> Note: An intermediary step in many households was the installation of a colonial oven. Constructed of sheet steel, they were lighter than the cast iron closed range and therefore more adaptable and cheaper to install. (See Murphy, 237)

<sup>306</sup> Andrea Broomfield, *Food and Cooking in Victorian England – A History* (Westport CT: Praeger Publishers, 2007), 112.

<sup>307</sup> Sambrook and Brears, 109.

<sup>308</sup> Eveleigh, 24.

cooking with saucepans and frypans, but removable inserts often were included to provide faster heating from direct contact with the flue gases. With continuing consumer preference for roast meat from an open fire, closed range manufacturers attempted various solutions to offer a similar mode of cooking. Some such as the Gold Medal Eagle had opening doors for direct radiant heat from the fire grate.<sup>309</sup> Others attempted to increase flue gas flow around the roasting oven to improve heat transfer and deliver crisp skin meat as the diner expected.<sup>310</sup>

The closed fire range became the dominant kitchen appliance of the nineteenth century, including smaller models suitable for cottages. Flavel displayed his kitchener at the Sydney International Exhibition in 1879 and at the Melbourne International Exhibition in 1880, but even before these events, imported closed fire ranges had begun to replace earlier open ranges.<sup>311</sup> American cookstoves were being imported to Melbourne by E.C. Wheelock in the 1850s.<sup>312</sup> The cookstove was a free-standing, cast iron closed fire alternative to the bricked-in range and while they were essentially different appliances, both included an oven, burners and often a water heater.<sup>313</sup> Closed fire ranges and cookstoves provided greatly reduced fuel use, a cooler and cleaner kitchen environment and combined a number of appliances into one. It was not long before local cast iron foundries began to manufacture their own versions of the closed range, with a number exhibiting at the 1880 and 1888 Melbourne International Exhibitions. In 1880 the *Argus* carried an advertisement for Jenkins and Laws, Melbourne manufacturers of kitchen ranges “of improved design and superior workmanship”.<sup>314</sup> *The Australian Housewife’s Manual* of 1883 included advertisements for closed fire ranges made by James McEwan & Co of Elizabeth Street, Melbourne and F. Pullinger of Russell Street, Melbourne.<sup>315</sup> A McEwan range is installed at Villa Alba in Kew and a Pullinger is in the kitchen of Como in South Yarra, both dating from the 1880s.

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<sup>309</sup> Sambrook and Brears, 111.

<sup>310</sup> Eveleigh, 27.

<sup>311</sup> Miles Lewis, “Australian Building: A Cultural Investigation,” Miles Lewis, <http://mileslewis.net/australian.building/pdf/09-services/9.01-heating.pdf> (accessed January 28, 2015).

<sup>312</sup> Advertisement for American cooking stoves, *Argus*, August 31, 1857, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>313</sup> Ellen M. Plante, *The American Kitchen 1700 to Present: From Hearth to Highrise* (New York: Facts on File, 1995), 41.

<sup>314</sup> Advertisement, *Argus*, December 17, 1880, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>315</sup> *The Australian Housewives’ Manual* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2012. Originally published, Melbourne: A.H. Massina & Co., 1888)

Unfortunately, there is no indication of the manufacturer of the range at Beleura, although it is similar to others in design and function from the 1880s. Who installed it is also unknown, but as discussed earlier in this chapter, the alcove in which it is located, in the wall between rooms 18 and 19, would appear to date from Bright's period of ownership. Therefore, it is likely that room 19 was designed around the closed range, which would have been installed sometime between 1870 and 1883. The new range would have allowed the kitchen to be under the same roof as the main household. This would have been a major advance on any previous detached kitchen in terms of convenience and efficiency. It is interesting to note that the listing of kitchen implements in the Jenner valuation (seven saucepans, two baking dishes and one frypan), is consistent with the operation of a closed fire range with a flat cooking surface and an oven.<sup>316</sup> The closed range continued to be used as the principal cooking appliance at Beleura until the 1930s when its function appears to have been taken over by a newer version.<sup>317</sup> It was also supplemented by an electric stove some time after the connection of electricity to the Beleura area in 1926.<sup>318</sup> Whereas many households in Melbourne transferred from solid fuel ranges to gas in the early twentieth century (such as at Como), Beleura did not have this option until much later and was, in fact, not connected to gas until 1989.

**Interpretation:** A half a tonne of black cast iron sitting in the kitchen has an undeniable presence. While during this period, cast iron solid fuel ranges were common even in modest homes, a model as large and presumably expensive as the one installed at Beleura would only have been found in the most prestigious households. Considerable status would have also been conferred upon whoever could operate the range successfully, something quite difficult to achieve. Christina Hardyment elaborates on their problems:

Close stoves have a magnificently competent appearance, but many were imperfectly designed. Although sold on the strength of their supposed economy with fuel, they could actually use more coal than an open range. They were in effect furnaces, burning at a

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<sup>316</sup> "In the Estate of the Late Hon. C.J. Jenner – Valuation of Furniture at Beleura."

<sup>317</sup> Note: Refer to Chapter 3 for further discussion of the cast iron range and its replacement.

<sup>318</sup> Note: While electricity was connected to Mornington around 1922, the transmission network may not have included the Beleura area until after 1926. *Construction and Local Government Journal*, July 7, 1926, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

tremendous heat and careless cooks who left the wrong dampers out could melt fireboxes and crack the boiler.<sup>319</sup>

The cook had to be strong to lift the heavy pots and pans, dexterous to manoeuvre them around the hot plates and ovens, intelligent to manipulate the various dampers and fuel loads to control cooking temperatures. Without thermostats, the cook also needed particular skills and experience to regulate oven temperatures. The cooks would put their hands in the oven to “feel” the temperature. Sometimes a piece of heavy writing paper was placed in the oven to test the temperature, timing how long it took to reach certain shades of brown.<sup>320</sup>

The kitchenmaid also required considerable fortitude to deal with the daily grind of cleaning and preparing the kitchen range for the cook to begin the breakfast service. Before most other staff were on duty, the kitchenmaid had to rake out the spent ashes in the range and clean the flues to ensure that none were blocked with soot. Special brushes were created to facilitate this dirty, but necessary job. Before laying sticks, paper and coal into the grate ready for ignition, black lead had to be applied to the iron body of the range. Specialist in Victorian cooking practices, Jennifer Davies elaborates on the process:

The black lead (which was a mixture of carbon and iron) was purchased in sticks. It was mixed with a little drop of turpentine and then put on a brush in the same way as shoe polish. One brush had to be used to put it on, another to brush it off and another to bring up a shine. If the range was still warm from the night before, the shine came up much more quickly.<sup>321</sup>

The cast iron closed fire range may have conferred status on the Beleura kitchen, but clearly at the expense of the kitchen staff who spent long hours to maintain it and exerted hard, physical labour to operate it to produce meals for the family. British technology historian David de Haan argues, “In the eyes of the manufacturer ranges were marvels; in the eyes of the cook they were treasures especially for baking but in the eyes of the over-worked kitchenmaid they

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<sup>319</sup>Christina Hardyment, *Home Comfort: A History of Domestic Arrangements* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1992), 130.

<sup>320</sup>Patten, 12.

<sup>321</sup>Davies, 55.

were the bane of their life.”<sup>322</sup> While it was hot and at times dangerous to use, it was much safer and cleaner than previous open fires and therefore represented a major advance in cooking technology, at least until gas and electric stoves became available.

## 2.5 Serving food at Beleura

Just as the Victorian era marked a transition in cooking technology from open to closed fire ranges, the era also marked a progressive change in food service styles. In the seventeenth and eighteenth century, France dominated culinary practices in Europe and a style of food service, thought to have been initiated by Louis XIV at Versailles around 1650, swept through European society. This style later became known as *service à la française*, which, according to British art and cultural historian Sir Roy Strong, “reflected the seventeenth century’s concern for order, balance, good taste and elegance.”<sup>323</sup> In June 1810 at a reception in Clichy near Paris, this approach suddenly changed when the Russian diplomat Prince Borisovitch Kourakine served his guests in an entirely novel manner.<sup>324</sup> This event marked the beginning of a decline in *service à la française* and the transition to the new *service à la russe* which occurred through the nineteenth century changed the way people ate, reflecting broad socio-economic and cultural changes occurring in society. Culinary historian Cathy Kaufman contends that it was a case of flavour taking precedence over style.<sup>325</sup> In his study on the evolution of the table, Hans Ottomeyer claims, “The *service à la russe* became the progressive way to combine the attitudes of a gourmet with the behaviour of an elegant and prosperous host.”<sup>326</sup>

The two styles of service differed markedly in approach. With *service à la française*, the meal was presented usually in three services, each consisting often of a large number of dishes. Guests would enter the dining room and be confronted with a large table, already carefully arranged with dishes for the first service. The dishes would be regularly spaced around the

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<sup>322</sup> De Haan, 3.

<sup>323</sup> Roy Strong, *Feast: A History of Grand Eating* (London: Jonathon Cape, 2002), 231.

<sup>324</sup> Strong, 297.

<sup>325</sup> Cathy K. Kaufman, “Structuring the Meal: The Revolution of Service à la Russe,” in *The Meal: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery 2001*, ed. Harlan Walker, 126 (Blackawton, Totnes: Prospect Books, 2002).

<sup>326</sup> Hans Ottomeyer, “Service à la Française and Service à la Russe: Or the Evolution of Table between the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” in *Food and Material Culture*, eds. Martin R Scharer and Alexander Fenton, 112 (East Lothian: Tuckwell Press, 1998).

*surtout* or decorative centrepiece of the table and the number of dishes would be selected to suit not only the number of guests, but also the importance of the occasion. During each service, guests would serve themselves portions from the dishes nearest to them and pass around dishes to other diners. Out of reach dishes could be accessed by servants. No glasses or wine bottles would be on the table. Servants would deliver glasses of wine individually to guests on a tray. After each service, the dishes would be removed by the servants and replaced with a new selection. The sequence of food presented in the three services followed a pattern based on an understanding of ideal food combinations. French cultural analyst, Jean-Paul Aron, identified the following common sequence for the formal meal: soup, the remove, entrée, first entremets, the roast, second entremets and then desserts.<sup>327</sup> The remove or *relevé* is a small dish which was meant to “reassure” the diner with its solidity after the soup, but before the main course. The entrées were serious, solid dishes. The entremets allow the stomach to relax and prepares and restores the digestive system for the substantial meals ahead. They could be a sweet dish, vegetables or perhaps fish. Dessert was an important conclusion to the meal and according to Aron, intended to “soften the blow of departure, that plunge into the void which engulfs the eaters until their next indulgence.”<sup>328</sup> Even in more modest households, the sequence was similar, even if a little simplified.

Kaufman describes *service à la française* as “a self consciously elegant display with its rule-bound choreography of dishes.”<sup>329</sup> The effect may have been wonderfully elegant but the principal problem with the service was that the dishes quickly became cold. The service also took an inordinate amount of time and diners began to tire of the involved process.<sup>330</sup> *Service à la russe* may have initially been a novelty, but it progressively won over diners who embraced the new fashion. While the sequence of courses remained similar to that described by Aron, in the *service à la russe* style they were presented to diners one dish at a time, similar to meals today. Carving was no longer performed at the table, but undertaken in the kitchen or at a sideboard in the dining room. All of the courses in each sequence were presented by the

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<sup>327</sup> Jean-Paul Aron, *The Art of Eating in France: Manners and Menus in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 114.

<sup>328</sup> Aron, 114.

<sup>329</sup> Kaufman, 123.

<sup>330</sup> Aron, 160.

servants to everyone present.<sup>331</sup> This meant that the kitchen could deliver the courses of the meal to the diner in optimum condition and presented exactly as the cook intended.

The introduction of *service à la russe* brought a significant change to the relationship between the diners at the table. Kaufman identifies the communication benefits inherent in *service à la française* and claims that it “encouraged a sense of communion amongst diners”.<sup>332</sup> While the level of communication may have often been on the “please pass the pheasant” level, dining was certainly a communal experience. On the other hand, social rank considerations may have meant that the lower-status guests were left with the poorest parts of the meal. None of this occurred in *service à la russe* as Ottomeyer observes, “Everybody was offered a similar portion and everybody got the same share of the food.”<sup>333</sup> In post-revolutionary France, this egalitarian ideal must have had some appeal. *Service à la russe* also gave the cook direct access to the diner through the plates placed before them. This new relationship laid the foundation for the role which was to become the *chef de cuisine*. The chef structured the meal and the diner was reduced to “an audience for a predesigned plate, rather than participants in structuring their own plate.”<sup>334</sup>

Alan Davidson in *The Oxford Companion to Food* claims that “service à la this or that is of limited interest.”<sup>335</sup> This suggests that such a choice was only relevant to those wealthy enough to afford elaborate dining, but as such, it is a consideration at Beleura. There are no documents from the nineteenth century that describe any meals at Beleura, let alone the service style adopted. Jacqui Newling contends that while *service à la russe* was introduced into England in 1829 the older style remained in favour in Australia for much longer.<sup>336</sup> The valuations and sale notices for Beleura consistently include servant’s rooms, suggesting that there were sufficient staff to be able to perform either form of service if required. One can imagine the *service à la française* used for special occasions or in the case of the Bright family, for when the vice-regal couple were in residence. However, by the late nineteenth century, *service à la russe* would have been the preferred style for the majority of meals.

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<sup>331</sup> Aron, 161.

<sup>332</sup> Kaufman, 125.

<sup>333</sup> Ottomeyer, 113.

<sup>334</sup> Kaufman, 127.

<sup>335</sup> Alan Davidson (Second Edition Edited by Tom Jaine), *The Oxford Companion to Food* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 712.

<sup>336</sup> Jacqui Newling, *Eat Your History* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2015), 190.



Crisp-skinned roast meat was difficult to produce on the new closed fire range, making it a more suitable cooking appliance for *service à la russe*, where there was less emphasis on the roast.<sup>337</sup> Strong suggests that *service à la russe* was not without its difficulties, as more servants were required to distribute meals and the service depended on “a plenitude of cutlery and porcelain.”<sup>338</sup> Certainly not everyone was impressed with the new style and Edward Abbott, the author of Australia’s first cookbook, argued that “it is scarcely a favourite mode for an Englishman” and that dinners “à la russe are merely a refined adaptation of the cheap ham and beef shop.”<sup>339</sup> Despite these objections, *service à la russe* steadily gained in popularity, a trend which Strong attributes to “the emergence of an extremely rich new middle class.”<sup>340</sup> Broomfield asserts that ultimately the desire to appear modern may have been the principal reason for the demise of *service à la française* and that the older style of service was identified with the generation past, at a time when most families were looking ahead to a new century.<sup>341</sup>

Apart from the main meals of the day, the Victorian era was characterized by another important food serving ritual, namely, afternoon tea. This was as much about symbolism and social engagement as nourishment and the daily event was responsible for the creation of a whole armoury of carefully designed tea related artifacts which can provide a valuable insight into the era.

### 2.5.1 Artifact evaluation 3 – The Bright family silver tea set

**Identification:** In 2007 the Trustees of Beleura acquired a collection of silverware from descendents of the Bright family, who owned Beleura from 1870 to 1888. The Bright silverware collection includes a comprehensive range of flat-ware (knives, forks, dessert spoons, teaspoons, etc) and hollow-ware (bowls, urns, dishes, pots). Many of the pieces in the collection are engraved with the crest of the Manners-Sutton family, which is described as a Peacock in Pride Proper. Other pieces feature the Bright family crest which is a lion rampant

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<sup>337</sup> Broomfield, 116.

<sup>338</sup> Strong, 299.

<sup>339</sup> Edward Abbott, *The English and Australian Cookery Book: Cookery for the many, as well as for the upper ten thousand* (Hobart: The Culinary Historians of Tasmania, 2014. Facsimile of 1864 edition, Samson Low, Son, and Marston, London), 186.

<sup>340</sup> Strong, 299.

<sup>341</sup> Broomfield, 121.

with axe. A feature of the collection is a sterling silver tea set comprising sugar bowl, milk jug, teapot and a hot water kettle on a stand with spirit burner.

The sugar bowl, milk jug and teapot (Figure 15) are of squat form with gadrooned decoration and were made in 1804 by Thomas Ellerton and Richard Sibley I, London (hallmark TE over RS).<sup>342</sup> The teapot features an ebony handle and all three items bear the Manners-Sutton family Peacock in Pride Proper crest. The hot water kettle, stand and spirit burner (Figure 16) are neo-classical designs, George III period, made in sterling silver in 1783 by John Schofield, London (active 1776–96, hallmark IS). The spirit burner is contained within the stand for keeping the kettle hot. The kettle was made in two pieces and silver soldered together and features ivory handle and finials. Engraved on the kettle are crests from the Bright and Heywood families (the kettle was made to celebrate the marriage of Richard Bright and Sarah Heywood).<sup>343</sup>

**Context analysis:** Silver has a long history of use for artifacts of ceremonial or ritual value, particularly where food and drink is involved. The metal has often been used for decorative, ritual objects in Christian churches, although little of the silver from medieval Britain survives. Apart from religious applications, silver also became a desirable material for the manufacture of luxury domestic objects.<sup>344</sup> Silver dining objects can be separated into flat-ware (knives, forks, spoons, etc) and hollow-ware (bowls, urns, dishes, etc). Over the last three centuries there has been steady technological development in silver processing which has greatly reduced the cost of manufacture. Silver objects can be made in several ways, the earliest and most expensive being from sheets of sterling silver, the purest practical grade, which is 92.5 per cent silver alloyed usually with copper.<sup>345</sup> Old Sheffield Plate was developed in 1740 by Thomas Bolsover in Sheffield and became popular in the second half of the eighteenth century, as it was about one fifth of the cost of sterling silver.<sup>346</sup> It is made by fusing thick silver plates to copper bars under pressure in a furnace. The resulting ingot is beaten and then rolled into thin sheets from which objects such as teapots and trays can be

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<sup>342</sup> Note: Information provided in lecture by Kevin Murray, 7 May 2013, Beleura House & Garden, Mornington.

<sup>343</sup> Database records. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>344</sup> Elizabeth De Castres, *A Guide to Collecting Silver* (London: Bloomsbury Books, 1985), 10.

<sup>345</sup> Paul Atterbury (Editor), *Antiques: An Encyclopaedia of the Decorative Arts* (London: Octopus Books, 1979), 189.

<sup>346</sup> *The National Trust Manual of Housekeeping* (Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2006), 310.

made. A third and more recent production method involves the electrical deposition of silver onto a nickel/copper/zinc alloy substrate and is called electroplate silver (EPNS). It was invented by John Wright of Birmingham and patented by the Elkington Company in 1840 and largely replaced Old Sheffield Plate within twenty years of it first being used. Unlike Old Sheffield Plate, where the silver is fused to the copper base prior to the object's manufacture, electroplating takes place after the object is formed in the base metal. This makes it highly suitable for mass production and therefore a cheaper alternative to earlier forms of silverware.<sup>347</sup>

The Restoration of the monarchy in England in 1660 brought prosperity and an increase in demand for luxury goods such as domestic silverware. A desire to replace much of the ecclesiastical silver lost or melted down during the English Civil War also created a demand for the work of silversmiths, mostly located in London, providing an impetus for design and innovation.<sup>348</sup> Elizabeth De Castres, writer on English silver, argues, "The eighteenth century saw the gradual evolution or arrival of practically all of the domestic silver we now take for granted."<sup>349</sup> The Bright silver tea set is a good example of English design and is particularly fine, made from sterling silver by well known and highly respected English silversmiths. The Victoria and Albert Museum collection in London includes examples of silverware from Ellerton, Sibley and Schofield. The V&A catalogue notes that "Schofield was one of the leading goldsmiths of the late-eighteenth century and his work demonstrates the highest quality in terms of manufacture and design."<sup>350</sup>

Mrs Bright's parents visited Beleura regularly, spending their summer holidays on the Peninsula until they returned to England on 28 February 1873.<sup>351</sup> It is a reasonable assumption that the Bright silver tea set was used by the vice-regal couple when dining or taking afternoon tea with their daughter and son-in-law at Beleura. Afternoon tea was a feature of Victorian society and it is known that it was a regular practice at Government House. Thomas Anne

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<sup>347</sup> *The National Trust Manual of Housekeeping*, 310.

<sup>348</sup> De Castres, 16.

<sup>349</sup> De Castres, 18.

<sup>350</sup> Victoria and Albert Museum, "V&A Search the Collection," Victoria and Albert Museum, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/078585/cruet-set-schofield-john/> (accessed August 27, 2013).

<sup>351</sup> Hancock, 108.

Ward Cole recorded in her diary that she was served strawberries, tea and cake on several visits to Lady Canterbury at Government House, Toorak.<sup>352</sup>

**Interpretation:** An understanding of how the Bright family tea set may have been used can be gained from examining tea consumption practices in British society during the nineteenth century, customs that would have been maintained in the early community in Melbourne. Tea serving was primarily a pastime for women and Australian historian Penny Russell argues that in nineteenth-century Australian society, female social rituals were “valued more as a symbol of British civilization retained in the wilderness than for their contribution to colonial society.”<sup>353</sup> Tea consumption has had a long association with British culture. Tea specialist and historian Jane Pettigrew credits Catherine of Braganza, the wife of Charles II with making tea fashionable in England, anointing her as the first tea drinking Queen of England. The Portuguese were importing tea to Europe and Catherine probably introduced the beverage to the English court when she arrived in 1662.<sup>354</sup> Pettigrew argues that despite tea being expensive, records from the upper classes show a very gradual increase in tea consumption through the last decades of the seventeenth century.<sup>355</sup> There is a very strong correlation between taxation on tea and its consumption. In 1723 there was a fourteen per cent duty on imported tea plus an excise tax of five shillings/lb, limiting tea drinking to the wealthy. In 1784 these taxes were cut drastically and in one year tea consumption in Britain rose from five million to eleven million lb/annum.<sup>356</sup> Pettigrew observes that “in all but the poorest households the day began with breakfast of tea served with bread and toast and butter.”<sup>357</sup> By the end of the eighteenth century, tea was established in Britain not only as the fashionable refreshment offered to visitors, but also drunk by all members of the household throughout the day.<sup>358</sup> Tea was usually served with sugar and from the early eighteenth century often with milk, giving rise to demand for stylish sugar bowls and milk jugs. Teapots, hot water kettles, tongs, sugar spoons, cups and saucers were all part of the tea serving process.

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<sup>352</sup> Diary of Thomas Anne Ward Cole, MS 10570, MS BOX 1472-1487, State Library of Victoria.

<sup>353</sup> Penny Russell, “In Search of Woman’s Place: An Historical Survey of Gender and Space in Nineteenth Century Australia,” *Australasian Historical Archaeology* 11 (1993): 29.

<sup>354</sup> Jane Pettigrew, *A Social History of Tea* (London: National Trust Enterprises Ltd, 2001), 22.

<sup>355</sup> Pettigrew, 24.

<sup>356</sup> Pettigrew, 40.

<sup>357</sup> Pettigrew, 66.

<sup>358</sup> Pettigrew, 76.

Elegant silver hot water kettles became popular for wealthy families in the 1760s.<sup>359</sup> The method for making tea involved a servant bringing hot water in a kettle to the table, where it was kept warm by a spirit burner. The lady of the house took tea from a locked tea caddy, brewed it at the table with hot water in a teapot and distributed cups of the beverage to her guests. Pettigrew claims that the practice of taking afternoon tea was started by Anna Maria, wife of the 7<sup>th</sup> Duke of Bedford, in 1841 to avoid “a sinking feeling” in the middle of the afternoon during the long gap between lunch and dinner.<sup>360</sup> Visitors to the Duchess’s home knew that she could be found in the tea room from 5.00pm to 5.30pm. This established a practice for inviting guests to afternoon tea, either verbally or by sending a note or card.<sup>361</sup> Afternoon tea was usually accompanied by an assortment of cakes. The previously noted preference of Mrs Bright for gingerbread and brandy snaps would make these ideal afternoon tea treats at Beleura.

How well the afternoon tea ritual translated from Britain to Australia is a subject for speculation, but Santich observes that the average annual per capita sugar consumption in New South Wales for the period 1907–1909 was 104 lb, 25 lb more than in England.<sup>362</sup> There is little doubt, judging by the prevalence of cake and biscuit recipes in Australian cookbooks of the time, that the teatime experience was very similar to Britain. As in Britain, afternoon tea was a women’s world. Santich argues, “If mutton chops were men’s food, cakes and biscuits and afternoon tea goodies belonged to the domain of women; theirs was not only the consumption but also the production.”<sup>363</sup> Michael Symons argues that nineteenth-century Australian attitudes to food were based on well established models; the “rough male attitude to food” emanating from the bush tucker that fed the early colony and a softer female model based on a quality of “daintiness”.<sup>364</sup> Daintiness was ideally expressed in the food associated with afternoon tea: lamingtons, rainbow cake, brandy snaps, ginger nuts and drop scones.<sup>365</sup>

By the mid-nineteenth century, tea had become a universal beverage and emerged as a symbol of respectable society. Russell highlights the role of the tea ritual as a status symbol and

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<sup>359</sup> Pettigrew, 85.

<sup>360</sup> Pettigrew, 102.

<sup>361</sup> Pettigrew, 108.

<sup>362</sup> Santich, 186.

<sup>363</sup> Santich, 187.

<sup>364</sup> Michael Symons, *One Continuous Picnic* (Adelaide: Duck Press, 1982), 138.

<sup>365</sup> Symons, 139.

observes, “Women’s elaborate social rituals of calls and tea drinking began to delineate good society, their taste in dress and in decorating their homes combined with their husband’s wealth to establish the status of the family.”<sup>366</sup> Tea drinking may have had a special significance for the wealthy but it was not limited to high society. Commentator on English tea culture, Julie E. Fromer, argues that tea had a unique role in Victorian England as “an icon that mediates between various subject positions within the larger category of English national identity.”<sup>367</sup> Tea consumption crossed class boundaries, “appearing at the humblest suppers and gracing the table of Queen Victoria, creating a universal English habit.”<sup>368</sup> Michael Symons suggests that Australia was built on tea, a portable, convenient beverage which represented a more civilized alternative to alcohol. Australia also offered a profitable new market for tea, an easily transportable product of the British Empire. Symons concludes, “It is little wonder that Australians, detached from English society at this period, became the world’s heaviest tea drinkers.”<sup>369</sup> With everyone drinking tea, it would have been a challenge to assert any sort of class superiority through the afternoon tea ritual, except by employing more expensive, more elegant implements. With its imposing silver tea kettle and matching tea set, engraved with family crests, redolent of old world prestige, privilege and power, the Bright silverware would have created a powerful impression on any afternoon tea participant at Beleura. No one could have doubted that this was a family of influence.

## **2.6 Beleura before the Tallis era**

Documentary sources for developing a culinary history of Beleura during this period are very limited, with only newspaper real estate advertisements, an estate valuation and several letters providing any useful information. Only a few artifacts from this period survive.

When James Butchart began building Beleura in 1863, it was standard construction practice for houses to have a detached kitchen, due to the risk of fire from open hearth fireplaces. This was common in all dwellings, from humble cottages to expensive and elaborate mansions. Evidence of an earlier building under the current French kitchen, leads to the hypothesis that

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<sup>366</sup> Russell, 29.

<sup>367</sup> Julie E. Fromer, *A Necessary Luxury: Tea in Victorian England* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2008), 3.

<sup>368</sup> Fromer, 12.

<sup>369</sup> Symons, 20.

Beleura initially conformed to this principle, but when cast iron, closed fire ranges became available, the service areas were rearranged to bring the kitchen under the main roof of the house. It is difficult to confirm the precise evolution of the kitchen areas, nor who was responsible for the building modifications, but the closed fire range, still seen in the French kitchen today, represented a very significant technological advance. The appliance transformed many Victorian era houses, improving both safety and the working conditions of domestic staff. By the end of the nineteenth century, the layout of the service areas of the house had been established along well accepted Victorian household principles. The result was a central kitchen, surrounded by a nest of rooms with specific functions. An elaborate house like Beleura relied on a team of domestic staff with specialist duties. The interior of the house was designed to facilitate these labour arrangements, segregating work areas for food storage, meal preparation and cooking from other family and guest areas of the house. A key room in the Victorian household was the butler's pantry which marked the transition from family zone to the servant work areas.

Mornington was developing as a business centre in the late nineteenth century and a growing range of fresh produce and manufactured foodstuffs would have been available in the town, particularly after the extension of the railway in 1889. In addition to purchasing some commodities, Beleura would have produced a large proportion of food for the household from its own gardens and surrounding pastures and orchards. With electricity unavailable until well into the twentieth century, Beleura staff would have had to rely on traditional food preservation techniques such as bottling, salting and pickling, using the larder as a cool storage room. The valuation of the estate at the time of Jenner's death in 1890 provides several useful references to items in daily use at Beleura, such as a butter churn, pickling tub and meat safe. None of these items remain in the house today. Water is an essential commodity for food preparation and the Jeffery's Germ Proof Filter in the working kitchen is a functional reminder of the very real fear of water-borne disease that permeated families in Australia in the late-Victorian era.

There are no documents detailing specific meals at Beleura during this period, but secondary sources provide general accounts of the established food culture in Australia, which had its origin in British cooking techniques and ingredients. Meals generally consisted of baked,

grilled, fried or stewed meat with simply cooked vegetables, particularly potatoes. The only document that may hint at the style of food potentially cooked at Beleura is a single, surviving recipe collected by the Hon. Mrs Bright and included in a letter to her parents. The recipe for “hotpot”, consisting of mutton chops, onions and potatoes, is consistent with the meat-oriented diet of the Victorian era. The closed fire range was ideal for cooking stews of this kind, which were simmered in flat bottom, cast iron saucepans on the large horizontal hot plate surface on top of the ovens.

The nineteenth century saw European serving practices change from the elaborate banquet style *service à la française*, to the simpler, sequential course, *service à la russe*. Beleura would have followed these trends, apart perhaps from formal dining occasions. Separate from the main meals of the day, an important social occasion and food serving ritual in the nineteenth century was afternoon tea and the various owners of Beleura would no doubt have retained and enjoyed this particular tradition as a remnant of British civilization. The Bright silverware is a powerful reminder of the status-laden symbolism of this popular and predominantly female social ritual.

With the arrival of the Tallis family in 1916, a new era opened for Beleura, an era marked by technological, social and cultural change. It was also an era punctuated by severe political and economic turmoil in the form of two World Wars and the Great Depression. Through their pivotal role in the world of Australian theatre, the Tallis family would also bring to Beleura, glamour, celebrity, art and music.





*Figure 5. Earliest known photograph of Beaura (without tower) c1868  
Source: Beaura House & Garden Collection*



*Figure 6. Beaura c1880s when Caleb Joshua Jenner was in residence  
Source: Beaura House & Garden Collection*

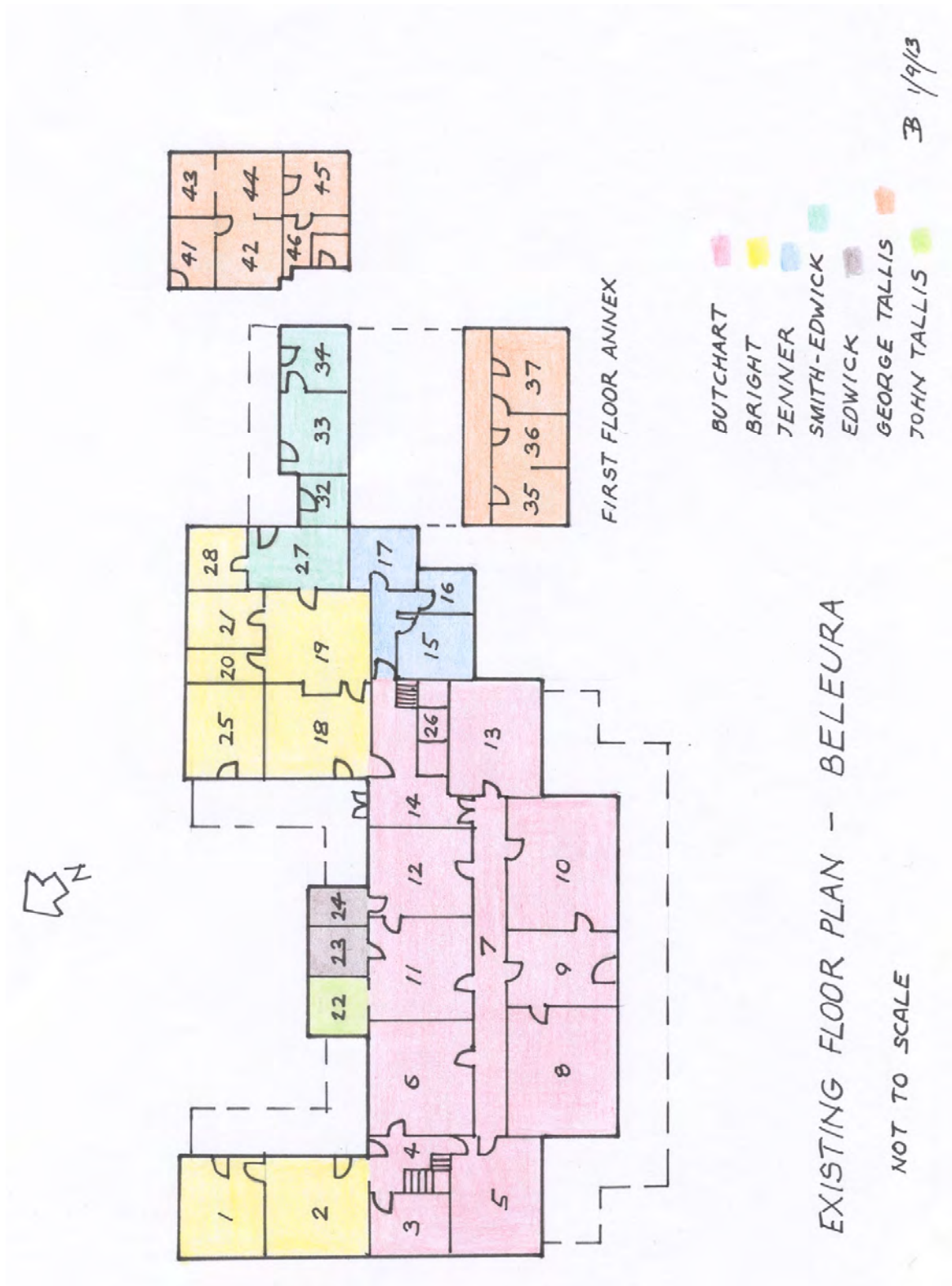


Figure 7. Floor plan of Beleura – stages of development  
 Source: Lewis, Nigel and Richard Aitken. Beleura Conservation Plan. Drawing by Iain Buckland.



*Figure 8. Remnants of brick piers from early detached building under floor of current French kitchen  
Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection*



*Figure 9. Alcove in French kitchen for cast iron stove – under restoration post-1996  
Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection*

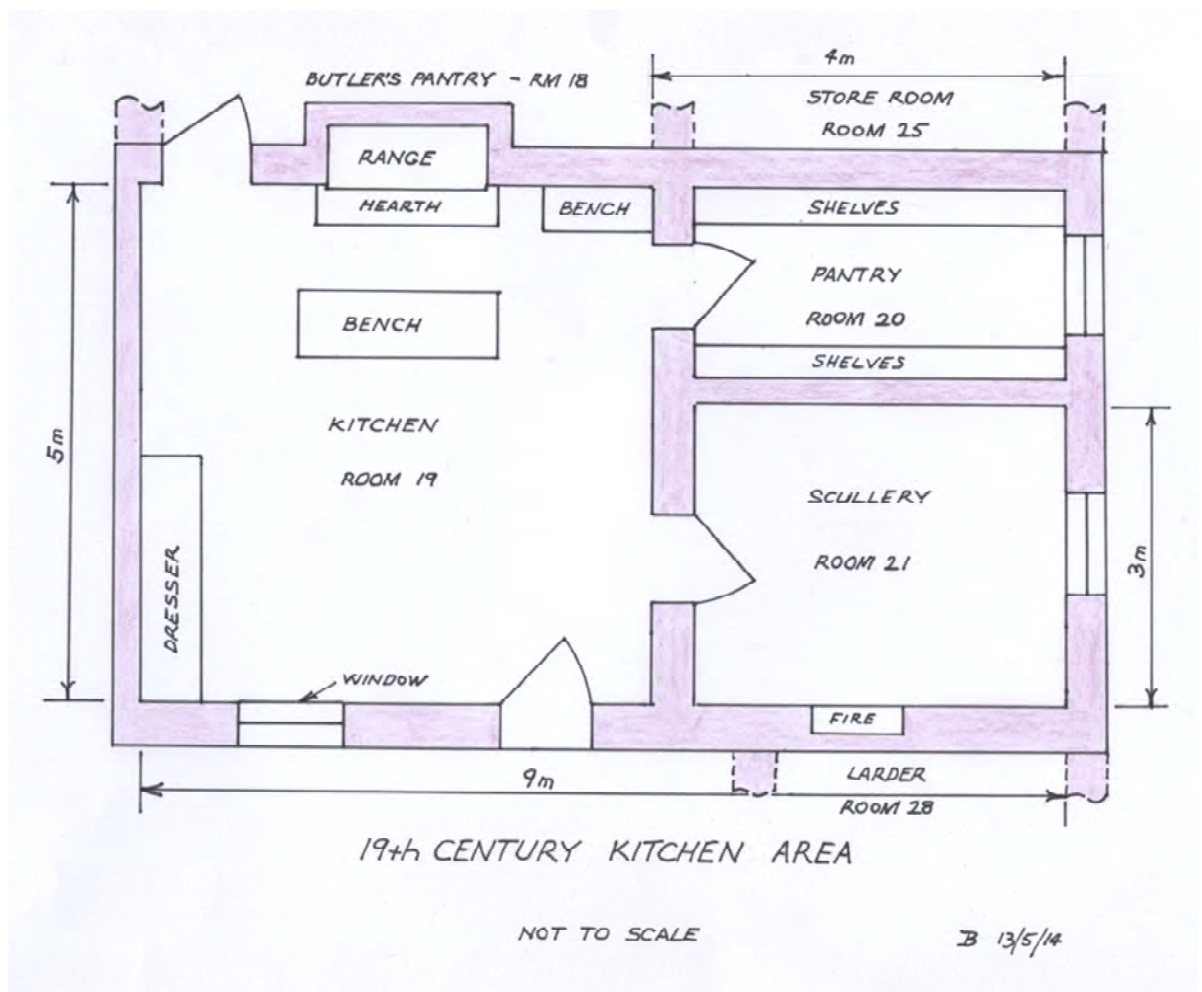


Figure 10. Floor plan of Victorian kitchen (French kitchen) and associated rooms  
 Source: Drawing by Iain Buckland



*Figure 11. Jeffery's Germ Proof Filter in the working kitchen at Beleura  
Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland*



*Figure 12. Underground brick water storage vessels with bell-shaped tops (under restoration)  
Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection*



*Figure 13. Beleura tower and enclosed water tank above eastern courtyard  
Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland*



*Figure 14. Cast iron closed fire range in the French kitchen at Beleura  
Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland*



*Figure 15. Bright family silver tea set by Thomas Ellerton and Richard Sibley I  
Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland*



*Figure 16. Bright family silver hot water kettle by John Schofield  
Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland*

## CHAPTER 3. THE EARLY TALLIS YEARS (1916–1948)

### 3.1 George and Amelia Tallis acquire Beleura – social and technological change in the early twentieth century

As Mark Richmond observed, Beleura was owned and developed by a series of ambitious and wealthy young men from Scotland, England and Ireland, with George Tallis being the Irishman.<sup>370</sup> George Tallis (1869–1948) came to Australia from Callan, County Kilkenny in 1886.<sup>371</sup> He travelled on the *Orizaba* with his older sister Charlotte and within a week of docking at Port Melbourne, Tallis had found a position as secretary to James Cassius Williamson of the theatrical agency Williamson, Garner and Musgrove. As his experience grew, Tallis was appointed Treasurer to the Theatre Royal and Princess Theatre and then Business Manager in charge of companies touring Australia.<sup>372</sup> Under J.C. Williamson’s mentorship, Tallis’s influence and financial interest in the company expanded, resulting in his appointment as a director. When Williamson died in 1913, Tallis assumed the role of Managing Director, a position he held until his retirement in 1931.<sup>373</sup> He was knighted in 1922 for services to the theatre and for fundraising work during World War I (Figure 18).<sup>374</sup>

In 1898, Tallis married Amelia (Millie) Young (1874–1933), a popular performer in comic opera who came from a famous theatrical family. Her sister, Florence Young, was described by the *Argus* in 1920 as “the greatest favourite ever known to Australian audiences.”<sup>375</sup> George and Amelia had four children: George Cassius (known as Mick) Tallis (1901–1990), Jeffery Andrew (Pat) Tallis (1904–1988), Sunday Millicent (Biddy) Tallis (later Carnegie) (1907–1995) and Jack Morton (John) Tallis (1911–1996).<sup>376</sup> The family lived in palatial houses in the best Melbourne suburbs befitting an influential theatrical identity. From 1906 to 1920 the family lived at Santoi in Camberwell, a Federation house set in grounds with

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<sup>370</sup> Mark Richmond, “Beleura – Victoria,” in *Historic Houses of Australia*, 161 (South Melbourne: Cassell Australia, 1974).

<sup>371</sup> Michael Tallis, Joan Tallis and Sue Knight. *In Search of the Sun* (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1988), 14.

<sup>372</sup> Tallis, Tallis and Knight, 17.

<sup>373</sup> Michael and Joan Tallis, *The Silent Showman* (Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 1999), 123.

<sup>374</sup> Michael and Joan Tallis, 187.

<sup>375</sup> “Miss Florence Young – Her Death Announced,” *Argus*, November 20, 1920, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>376</sup> Tallis, Tallis and Knight, 318.



roaming kangaroos, wallabies and emus.<sup>377</sup> From 1920 until 1932 the family lived at Grosvenor in Malvern, a Victorian Italianate mansion featured in *Australian Home Beautiful* in 1926.<sup>378</sup>

When the Tallis family acquired Beleura at the *Beleura on the Sea* auction in 1916, their intention was to initially use it as a holiday retreat. The distance between their home and Mornington was not an issue as Sir George was an enthusiastic motorist and a foundation member of the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria (Figure 19).<sup>379</sup> He travelled overseas regularly, sometimes accompanied by his wife or one of the children, to view and negotiate rights to potential productions for his Australian theatres (Figure 20). His grandson Michael Tallis has calculated that between 1920 and 1940 Sir George was away from his Melbourne home, interstate or overseas at least half the time.<sup>380</sup> Summer and weekend breaks at Beleura must have been a welcome respite from the travel, irregular hours and continual stress of the theatre business. While there are few documentary records of life at Beleura, clues can be found from testimonies given by various family members in the book *In Search of the Sun*, compiled in 1988 to commemorate one hundred years of the Tallis family in Australia. Youngest son John Tallis recorded, “Beleura was a real family home, generally quite crowded, comprising bedrooms mostly, and a living and dining room. Large kitchen and laundry facilities were needed, and extra staff had to be brought from Grosvenor, creating further problems for mother.”<sup>381</sup> Beleura was the perfect place to entertain touring theatrical celebrities and none was more famous than Dame Nellie Melba. Since Melba died on 23 February 1931, her visits to Beleura must have occurred primarily in the 1920s.<sup>382</sup> Sadly there are few specific accounts of her presence at Beleura but Bidy Carnegie, Sir George and Lady Tallis’s daughter, recalled, “Melba stayed at Beleura and wrote letters to me. Many of them were written on Beleura note paper and delivered from her room to my room by her Italian maid! She obviously thought the world of me.”<sup>383</sup> To this day, the bedroom where Melba stayed at Beleura is called the Melba bedroom (room 6) and the Melba bathroom (room 3) features a dual fresh water/salt water supply, a special treat for Melba who liked to bathe in

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<sup>377</sup> “Permit under Section 9 of the Game Act 1896, dated 28 August 1911”, Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>378</sup> “Modernizing an old colonial mansion,” *Australian Home Beautiful*, May 7, 1926.

<sup>379</sup> Anthony Knight, *Beleura Mornington: A Theatre of the Past* (Mornington: The Tallis Foundation, 2009), 53.

<sup>380</sup> Michael and Joan Tallis, 173.

<sup>381</sup> Tallis, Tallis and Knight, 135.

<sup>382</sup> Pamela Vestey, *Melba: A Family Memoir* (Melbourne: Phoebe Publishing, 1996), 244.

<sup>383</sup> Tallis, Tallis and Knight, 129.

sea water. This facility required a member of staff to run down the pathway on the cliff face in front of Beleura to pump sea water to the house, heat the water through the house's hot water system and then flush out the pipe work with fresh water after Melba's bath to prevent the system from corroding. All this was achieved through a complicated system of pipe work and valves.

Beleura also enabled Sir George to fulfil some serious farming ambitions. Apart from the acres acquired at the *Beleura on the Sea* auction, Tallis progressively added 2000 acres of prime Mornington Peninsula agricultural land to the property.<sup>384</sup> Tallis and his farm manager bred Ayrshire cattle, for which they were awarded a number of prizes at the Royal Agricultural Show of Victoria.<sup>385</sup> Tallis also enjoyed his orchard, with his granddaughter Patsy Kirk (née Tallis) recalling, "He adored his apple orchard, and spent many hours polishing apples with Judge Wasley carefully wrapping them in green tissue paper grading and sorting out the different varieties before packing them in special boxes for his friends."<sup>386</sup>

World War I and the Great Depression left deep marks on Australian society. During World War I, many of the theatres under the J.C. Williamson umbrella were used to raise funds for the war effort.<sup>387</sup> The Tallis family was not immune to the depression and when Sir George retired from J.C. Williamson Limited in 1931, after forty-five years with the Firm, he leased Grosvenor and moved the family permanently to Beleura. It is doubtful that Sir George's financial position was truly threatened, but there must have been sufficient concern within the family for Patsy Kirk to later observe, "The crash of the world share markets in 1930 changed our lives."<sup>388</sup> A further rearrangement occurred when Lady Tallis died at Beleura in 1933, while Sir George was travelling in England. Sir George's eldest son, Mick Tallis, with his American wife Dorothy and their two children, Patsy and Michael, moved into Beleura. Mick Tallis recorded, "Dorothy was responsible for the running of the house, and this was no small

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<sup>384</sup> Michael and Joan Tallis, 180.

<sup>385</sup> "Royal Agricultural Show of Victoria Supplement," *Portland Guardian*, September 29, 1927, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>386</sup> Tallis, Tallis and Knight, 144.

<sup>387</sup> Michael and Joan Tallis, 142.

<sup>388</sup> Tallis, Tallis and Knight, 143.

task. There was a staff of three servants, a nurse, a cook and a full-time gardener and there were endless disputes and frictions.”<sup>389</sup>

The era in which Sir George purchased and owned Beleura was defined by great economic, political and social upheavals. These turbulent times, together with sweeping technological changes, would also have an impact upon culinary practices in most households. Tony Dingle asserts that the kitchen “is arguably the room in the house which has undergone the greatest transformation during the last century, both in terms of its appearance and layout, as well as the equipment employed in it.”<sup>390</sup> This transformation, which began in the early twentieth century, was caused largely by the rapid decline in the availability of servants, in association with the introduction of new technology and energy sources. In nineteenth-century Australia, most houses with detached kitchen areas relied on paid domestic staff to prepare and serve meals. In an elaborate dwelling such as Beleura, a large number of staff would normally have been employed to undertake the myriad specialist tasks required for the efficient management of the household. Michael Symons observes, “No family was considered middle class without at least one maid to clean, wash, make beds, answer the door and cook.”<sup>391</sup> While the invention of the closed fire range improved kitchen conditions considerably in the second half of the nineteenth century, kitchen duties were still physically taxing and of low status.<sup>392</sup> Ruth Schwartz Cowan in her book *More Work for Mother* considers the reasons for the decline in servants and suggests that women who once would have worked as maids preferred to work in the growing number of factories being built in industrializing countries. Cowan argues, “Working in a factory, whatever its hardships may have been, was better than living and working in someone else’s house.”<sup>393</sup> Cowan quotes statistics for the decline in paid domestic labour in New York City, with 188 servants for every 1000 families in 1880, dropping to 141 per thousand in 1900 and down to 66 per thousand in 1920.<sup>394</sup> In Australia the situation was somewhat similar, with Symons suggesting that in the nineteenth century, one in ten families had a servant. As in the U.S.A. and the U.K., the paid domestic workforce declined rapidly in

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<sup>389</sup> Tallis, Tallis and Knight, 102.

<sup>390</sup> Tony Dingle, “Electrifying the Kitchen in Interwar Victoria,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 22, Issue 57 (1998): 119.

<sup>391</sup> Michael Symons, *One Continuous Picnic* (Adelaide: Duck Press, 1982), 66.

<sup>392</sup> Louise C. Johnson, “Browsing the Modern Kitchen: A Feast of Gender, Place and Culture,” *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 13, No.2 (2006):125.

<sup>393</sup> Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 126.

<sup>394</sup> Cowan, 122.

Australia after World War I, with working women preferring fruit peeling or chocolate dipping in the factories of Melbourne and Sydney to domestic service.<sup>395</sup> Australian historian Marilyn Lake, in her paper on the evolution of the Australian home, concludes, “A major turning point in the history of housework was the disappearance of the domestic servant.”<sup>396</sup>

Out of this domestic labour crisis emerged the housewife, the new sole occupant of the kitchen, with the expectation that she would perform all the tasks previously undertaken by a team of servants, keeping the family happy, clean and healthy. This seemingly unrealistic goal was made possible by the timely introduction of new energy sources, gas and electricity, along with a host of new, labour-saving appliances. Cowan argues that any labour saved was not usually from work performed by women, with the total time spent on housework remaining much the same. For instance, the introduction of a gas or electric stove saved time chopping wood, but in most households this was a predominantly male task. The time spent on the female cooking tasks was largely unchanged.<sup>397</sup> Susan Strasser acknowledges that technology saved time, but argues that any savings were quickly reallocated to “the expandable new task of consumption, like the other new task of motherhood.”<sup>398</sup> Appliance manufacturers and energy suppliers wasted no time in promoting the claimed time and labour-saving benefits of their new products. Electric and gas stoves, refrigerators, electric mixers, toasters, kettles and other new domestic appliances were heavily promoted in the post-World War I decades to appreciative housewives. Cowan asserts, “Many of the rules that tyrannize housewives are unconscious and therefore potent.”<sup>399</sup> These expectations provided opportunities for the marketing profession. Despite their best efforts however, the take up of major appliances appears to have been much slower in Australia than elsewhere. In his research on the electrification of Victorian homes, Tony Dingle quotes from a 1923 national survey of appliance sales where it was claimed that 75% of electricity connected homes in Australia had an iron, 20% an electric radiator, 1% a toaster and only 0.1% a stove.<sup>400</sup> An initially low electricity connection rate was a contributing factor to the slow growth in appliance sales, as a Victorian survey in 1922 showed that while 70% of the homes in the State had access to

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<sup>395</sup> Symons, 67.

<sup>396</sup> Marilyn Lake, “Historical Homes,” *Australian Historical Studies* 24, Issue 97 (1991): 50.

<sup>397</sup> Cowan, 62.

<sup>398</sup> Susan Strasser, *Never Done: A History of American Housework* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 262.

<sup>399</sup> Cowan, 210.

<sup>400</sup> Dingle, 124.

reticulated electricity, only 116,944 homes were actually connected, representing 34% of the total number of homes and 48% of homes in connected areas.<sup>401</sup> Dingle argues that Australians did not invest in major electrical appliances such as refrigerators and stoves until after World War II, two decades later than in the U.S.A.<sup>402</sup> A significant factor was cost, as the cheapest electric stove in 1927 cost £23 with an additional installation fee of £9–£15, compared to an installed cost of £7 for a gas stove.<sup>403</sup> Australian consumers also appeared to have a strong preference for retaining their gas stoves and to using gas as a cooking medium where available. This was perhaps the result of aggressive marketing campaigns by gas companies, particularly in Melbourne.<sup>404</sup> The ice chest was also retained in many households in Australia until after World War II. The ice delivery van was a regular sight in the streets of Australian cities in the 1950s.<sup>405</sup>

While new appliances may have helped to fill the labour void left by departing servants, the emerging discipline of industrial engineering was also employed to redesign kitchens to help the housewife cope with her myriad of chores. *Principles of Scientific Management* published by Frederick Winslow Taylor in 1911 had a great influence on early twentieth-century factory design and was applied by mass production exponents such as Henry Ford to improve the efficiency of manufacturing.<sup>406</sup> Time and motion studies and notions of workplace efficiency from Taylor's work were later adapted to the kitchen by domestic reformers such as Christine Frederick and Lillian Gilbreth, who called for the transformation of the house into a modern, clean, hygienic and above all efficient environment.<sup>407</sup> Janice Williams Rutherford, in her biography of Christine Frederick, argues that she “enthusiastically embraced and promoted technology, scientific management, modernization and consumerism.”<sup>408</sup> Rutherford claims that while her outlook was modern, the context of her work was very much based on the assumption that a woman's place was in the home, echoing the sentiments of her predecessor

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<sup>401</sup> Note: There was no national survey of electrical connections in Australia until 1947, at which time the connection rate was 80%, similar to Britain and the United States. Dingle, 124.

<sup>402</sup> Dingle, 125.

<sup>403</sup> Dingle, 123.

<sup>404</sup> Dingle, 125.

<sup>405</sup> Personal recollection from my own family home in the northern suburbs of Sydney in the 1950s.

<sup>406</sup> Genevieve Bell and Joseph Kaye, “Designing Technology for Domestic Spaces: A Kitchen Manifesto,” *Gastronomica*, Spring (2002): 48.

<sup>407</sup> Bell and Kaye, 49.

<sup>408</sup> Janice Williams Rutherford, *Selling Mrs Consumer: Christine Frederick and the Rise of Household Efficiency* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 5.

and American pioneer of domestic organization, Catharine Beecher.<sup>409</sup> Lillian Gilbreth, on the other hand, had studied psychology at the University of California and worked in a consultancy business with her husband Frank, applying Taylor's scientific management principles to industrial clients in America in the 1920s. After her husband's death in 1924, Gilbreth began lecturing and writing on design practices to improve household efficiency. Sociologist and Gilbreth scholar Laurel D. Graham asserts that Gilbreth brought to domestic kitchen design "a more rigorous technical foundation as well as a new psychological spin."<sup>410</sup> As a sole home-maker (Gilbreth preferred this term to housewife) with eleven children and a busy career, Graham believes that the media helped to transform Gilbreth into a credible and influential authority on domestic science.<sup>411</sup> In 1927 she was invited by the American Gas Association to design a model efficiency kitchen which toured America and was influential not only on kitchen design but also in encouraging the acceptance of new gas appliances.<sup>412</sup> This was a forerunner to the kitchen design services which were established by many gas and electricity retailers as an adjunct to energy marketing in various parts of the world including Australia.<sup>413</sup>

Nineteenth-century kitchens, with their cluster of special purpose rooms, required too many steps to be negotiated efficiently. In the absence of domestic staff, new one-person kitchens became smaller, but with spacious benches and built-in cupboards at hand. These design trends flowed through to Australia and in 1935, the *Australian Women's Weekly* described the modern kitchen as follows:

Everything in the way of furniture and fittings has been devised to save labor, stooping and steps. In fact all the furnishing equipments are made of the right height to obviate unnecessary stooping while cooking preparations and washing up are in process. And with the modern streamline effect no ledges are there to collect dust and grime. An

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<sup>409</sup> Rutherford, 5.

<sup>410</sup> Laurel D. Graham, "Domesticating Efficiency: Lillian Gilbreth's Scientific Management of Homemakers, 1924–1930," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 24, No.3 (1999): 636.

<sup>411</sup> Graham, 656.

<sup>412</sup> Graham, 659.

<sup>413</sup> Note: These services continued in Australia until the energy utility privatization process in the 1990s saw most of them abolished.

outstanding attraction is the continuous table-top which goes all round the walls, for it leaves a clear space in the centre of the kitchen.<sup>414</sup>

This arrangement is in stark contrast to common nineteenth-century domestic design practice, where the long food preparation table was the centerpiece of the kitchen.<sup>415</sup> The *Weekly* continued the theme in 1937, extolling the virtues of the modern kitchen: “You have highly efficient equipment to use, every appliance at your elbow to take the effort out of the work, and the whole room arranged in such a convenient way that cooking becomes almost automatic.”<sup>416</sup> *Australian Cookery of Today*, written in the late 1930s, included an introductory chapter on *The Modern Kitchen*. Under the heading, *Time and Step Saving*, the author extols the virtues of logical planning and arrangement of equipment to minimize physical movement in the meal preparation, cooking and washing up processes.<sup>417</sup> Dutch cultural anthropologist Irene Cieraad asserts, “During the first half of the twentieth century the kitchen and its equipment became synonymous with the image of a professional housewife.”<sup>418</sup> These design trends naturally took time to filter through to Australia and not all homes built in this period automatically followed the advice of domestic science experts.

The question thus to be addressed is how was Beleura affected by these social and technological developments? Firstly, with regard to the widespread disappearance of servants during this period, Beleura appears to have been immune to this trend, setting it apart from other less advantaged households. A clue to the number of staff employed at Beleura during the early Tallis period can be found in the first floor extension (rooms 35, 36 and 37 in Figure 7) built by Sir George above the detached nineteenth-century servant quarters (rooms 32, 33 and 34).<sup>419</sup> Presumably, these new asbestos cement sheet clad rooms and verandah were built to house additional staff. The cook was known to live in the ground floor rooms 33 and 34.<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>414</sup> “And now shall we talk on modern kitchens?” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, March 2, 1935, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>415</sup> Michael Bogle, “A Domestic Revolution: Development of Domestic Kitchens as an Indicator of Cultural Change,” *Journal of Australian Studies* No.42, September (1994): 62.

<sup>416</sup> “Where it’s a thrill to cook...,” *Australian Women’s Weekly*, July 10, 1937, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>417</sup> *Australian Cookery of Today* (Melbourne: The Sun News Pictorial), 12.

<sup>418</sup> Irene Cieraad, “Out of My Kitchen: Architecture, Gender and Domestic Efficiency,” *The Journal of Architecture* 7, Autumn (2002): 263.

<sup>419</sup> “Valuation of Property Known as Beleura Situated Esplanade, Beleura Hill, Mornington – In the Estate of the Late Lady Amelia Tallis.” Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>420</sup> Personal communication with Ms Patsy Kirk (née Tallis) who is a Trustee of the Tallis Foundation and lived at Beleura from 1933 to 1940, conducted 25 June 2013.

The additional ground floor detached wing containing rooms 41 to 46, also built by Sir George, may have been further staff quarters. There is evidence that an early laundry existed in room 41.<sup>421</sup> *In Search of the Sun* provides numerous personal accounts from Tallis family members of staff at Beleura at various times, including housemaids Shirley and Christina, cook Marie, tutor Fraulein Schaff and an assortment of gardeners and farm managers.<sup>422</sup> Jean Chalmers, who joined Beleura in the 1930s to help Dorothy Tallis manage the household, moved with Mick and Dorothy's family to their new house Key West in 1940 and remained with them for over thirty years, demonstrating that some staff became defacto family members.<sup>423</sup> The death of Sir George Tallis in 1948 brought to an end the heavy reliance on live-in staff to manage the house, although paid domestic labour, whether full or part-time, would always be a part of life at Beleura. In this regard, Beleura would always be out of step with the vast majority of households.

Details of technological innovations that may have influenced culinary practices at Beleura will be discussed in following sections of this chapter. It is worth making an initial and important observation, however, that the Mornington area was connected to the electricity grid relatively late compared to suburban Melbourne and Beleura had no access to a reticulated domestic gas supply until the 1980s. The precise date that Beleura was connected to electricity is unclear, but it appears that the electricity supply from Morwell was completed for the main portion of Mornington in August 1922.<sup>424</sup> A notice in the *Construction and Local Government Journal* of July 1926 announcing the intention of the Shire of Mornington to borrow £1000 for the improvement and extension of the electric lighting scheme for the Beleura and Bendigo-on-Sea area, suggests that 1926 is a likely date for connection of the house to mains electricity.<sup>425</sup> Whatever the actual date of connection, the delay in the availability of a reliable electricity supply would have affected the introduction of new appliances at Beleura, compared to Melbourne and other parts of Victoria. John Tallis makes an intriguing reference in *In Search of the Sun* to the electricity supply at Beleura: "Electricity was never reliable, as it was generated on the premises and I remember that hot water was always at a premium."<sup>426</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> Personal communication with Ms Patsy Kirk (née Tallis).

<sup>422</sup> Tallis, Tallis and Knight, 124.

<sup>423</sup> Tallis, Tallis and Knight, 102.

<sup>424</sup> "Supply of electricity – Mornington and Lilydale," *Argus*, July 25, 1922, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>425</sup> No title, *Construction and Local Government Journal*, July 7, 1926, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>426</sup> Tallis, Tallis and Knight, 135.



Tallis appears to be confusing an electricity generator with the coke (later oil) fired hot water boiler that is located in the basement room at Beleura (under room 28), but more reliable evidence can be found in the sale notice for the *Beleura on the Sea* estate in December 1915, which includes a reference to “electric light fittings with electric generating plant”.<sup>427</sup> This appears to confirm that Beleura had a petrol or diesel engine driven electricity generator prior to mains connection. It is known that there was an early generator at Manyung, another bayside Victorian mansion at nearby Mt Eliza.<sup>428</sup> Delco Light Company of the U.S.A. exported to Australia a stand-alone generating set which was advertised as a “country house lighting plant”.<sup>429</sup> It was evidently not uncommon for rural properties to instal their own generators, although as the name of the Delco unit suggests, the capacity of these early plants may have been limited and primarily used for lighting. Delco was also the manufacturer of Frigidaire refrigerators, but it would appear that Beleura had to wait for this domestic innovation or any other major electrical appliance until after the connection of mains electricity.

### **3.2 Evolution of Beleura and development of the service areas**

When the Tallis family purchased Beleura in 1916, it came with a typically Victorian kitchen work area for a house of this size and importance, comprising a cluster of rooms with specific functions as described in Chapter 2. While some of the rooms changed function and others evolved in design, I argue that during the early years of Tallis occupation, the arrangement of the kitchen area remained Victorian in style, largely due to continued access to work performed by a team of paid domestic staff. Three key documents for determining how room function changed from 1916 to 1948 are the valuation of Beleura in the Estate of Lady Tallis made in 1933, the valuation made following the death of Sir George in 1948 and the valuation made in 1951 when John Tallis took over the property, prior to him making any further alterations. Another key resource is the personal testimony that I obtained from Patsy Kirk

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<sup>427</sup> “The Magnificent Villa Residence ‘Beleura’ with 34 acres,” *Argus*, December 18, 1915, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>428</sup> Personal communication with Diane White, Mornington and District Historical Society, conducted 14 November 2013.

<sup>429</sup> “Electric light for country houses – Delco Light,” *Daily Telegraph*, October 14, 1920, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

(née Tallis), who has an excellent memory of her childhood life and domestic arrangements at Beleura from 1933 to 1940.

The 1933 valuation lists the current French kitchen (room 19) as the sole kitchen, continuing the room's role from earlier times. The valuation identifies in the description of this room, an "Aga stove. Connected to hot water service".<sup>430</sup> This appears to be a reference to the cast iron closed fire range discussed in detail in the previous chapter. However, this range, which can still be seen in place today, is of much earlier design than an AGA cooker, which was first manufactured in Britain in 1929 and only became popular in the 1930s.<sup>431</sup> It is possible that the AGA brand spread quickly and was used as a generic reference to all solid fuel ranges, in a similar fashion to Hoover and vacuum cleaners. Patsy Kirk confirmed the use of a cast iron range in the 1930s, as the children of the household were instructed to keep away from the hot surfaces to avoid burns.<sup>432</sup> Florence King was a nurse to Sir George from 1946 to 1948 and in an interview with Beleura Director Anthony Knight in 2008 she recalled the family dog sleeping in the kitchen in front of the warm cast iron range.<sup>433</sup>

There is an alternative and, on balance, more likely explanation for the reference to an "Aga stove" in the 1933 and 1951 valuation (stove not mentioned at all in the 1948 valuation).<sup>434</sup> It would appear that an early AGA solid fuel cooker was installed in front of the old cast iron closed fire range in room 19, as part of the modernization program initiated by Sir George and Lady Tallis at Beleura. They may have seen an AGA in their travels to Britain and Europe in the early 1930s, resulting in them becoming very early adopters of the brand in Australia.<sup>435</sup> Patsy Kirk and Florence King's testimonies would be just as valid for a coke-fired AGA cooker, which would have been operated in a very similar, but more efficient way to the earlier Victorian era range. There is evidence to support the AGA hypothesis in the form of an invoice from a local tradesman, E. Ashby, dated 23 October 1961, which lists work

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<sup>430</sup> "Valuation of Property Known as Beleura Situated Esplanade, Beleura Hill, Mornington – In the Estate of the Late Lady Amelia Tallis."

<sup>431</sup> AGA Rangemaster Limited, "1920s: The Birth of the AGA Range Cooker," AGA Rangemaster Limited, <http://www.agaliving.com/about-us/history.aspx> (accessed January 4, 2014).

<sup>432</sup> Personal communication with Ms Patsy Kirk (née Tallis).

<sup>433</sup> Transcription of an interview conducted by Anthony Knight with Florence King, September 2008. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>434</sup> Note: In the manufacturer's literature, both AGA and Aga are regularly used in reference to the cooker.

<sup>435</sup> Note: Levin & Co Ltd opened their agency for AGA cookers in King Street, Sydney in 1938. "Economical cooker for the country," *Land*, January 7, 1938, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

undertaken during October at Beleura, including one item described as, “Take out Slow Comb. stove and boiler, fix new bolt in corner of SC stove, take out concrete slab, clean out range, put SC stove in laundry, put coke boiler in yard.”<sup>436</sup> Another item follows concerning the reconditioning of a stove hot water boiler. The last item of work in that month includes the description: “Clean soot from 3 range flues, cut cement obstruction from main flue, clean out stove, free 3 dampers, clean down stove and tiles....pick up electric stove.”<sup>437</sup> The inevitable conclusion is that these tasks appear to refer to two solid fuel stoves, one removed and another restored, confirming the hypothesis that an unnamed but most likely AGA cooker, was located in front of the much earlier cast iron range. The layout of tiles seen today on the floor in front of the nineteenth-century range would also suggest that some other appliance was once in place. The old cast iron range has three flues/dampers and the last work item from the invoice suggests that once the AGA had been removed, the old range was cleaned up and boiler reconnected, probably as part of a total refurbishment of the kitchen in preparation for the installation of a new electric stove in room 19. There would not have been room for three stoves in the French kitchen.<sup>438</sup> An estate valuation made in 1962 makes no reference to an AGA, but merely lists a double oven fuel stove (presumably the existing nineteenth-century cast iron range) and a Vulcan electric stove (no longer in place as it was removed during restoration post-1996).<sup>439</sup>

It would therefore appear that the mysterious AGA was used from the early 1930s right up until the installation of the first electric stove in the French kitchen in 1961. Another final piece of corroborating evidence for the existence of the AGA cooker emerged from an email interview I conducted with Ian Hunt, a close friend of John Tallis and architect who made some important modifications to Beleura in the 1950s. Hunt recalled meals being cooked in the French kitchen on an AGA cooker. He was quite familiar with the AGA appliance, having seen many on his visits to grand country houses in Britain, even noting their various colours. He observed that “they were well insulated and very economical.”<sup>440</sup> It is significant that even

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<sup>436</sup> “Accounts by E.G. & A.C. Ashby, 9 Esplanade, Mornington.” Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>437</sup> “Accounts by E.G. & A.C. Ashby, 9 Esplanade, Mornington.”

<sup>438</sup> Note: Another factor may have been the closure of the Mornington gasworks in 1958, which would have made sourcing coke for the AGA difficult.

<sup>439</sup> “Valuation of Property Known as ‘Beleura’, Esplanade, Beleura Hill, Mornington. Owner: J.M. Tallis esq.” Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>440</sup> Personal communication by email with Ian Hunt who was a regular visitor to Beleura, conducted 31 March 2013.

though the new and much more efficient electric stove was available, once the AGA had been removed, the old cast iron range was cleaned and repaired, ready for service. It is as though the electric stove could not be fully trusted, a sentiment probably felt by many experienced cooks.

The 1933 valuation also identifies a pantry (room 20), while another room is listed as a scullery with “copper sink, wooden draining board and cupboards”. Patsy Kirk confirms that the scullery in the 1930s had moved to the room now known as the winter garden (room 27). It had moved to this now enclosed verandah space, to make way for the conversion of the previous nineteenth-century scullery (room 21) into the maids’ sitting room (including an open fireplace), as listed in the 1933 valuation.<sup>441</sup> The creation of this staff room would have greatly enhanced their working conditions, providing some respite from the heat of the kitchen. The larder (room 28) appears to have continued in its original function in the early Tallis years, as it can be identified in the 1933 valuation as a “Store Room with plaster walls and ceiling, fitted with shelves”.<sup>442</sup>

The room that underwent the greatest change in this period was the butler’s pantry (room 18), which the 1933 valuation lists as the “Housemaid’s Pantry” indicating that there probably was no butler.<sup>443</sup> While primarily still a buffer zone and a place for serving food, ironing and cleaning glassware, this room was beginning to take over other functions with the installation in the late 1920s of an electric refrigerator and in the mid to late-1930s, an electric stove. The refrigerator is not specifically listed in the 1933 valuation since moveable contents are not included. The Frigidaire, six door, timber cased refrigerator made by the Delco Light Company, Dayton, Ohio, U.S.A. will be described in detail in the next section, but this appliance was manufactured probably between 1924 and 1926 and installed at Beleura sometime after 1926 when mains electricity was connected. It takes up a whole wall of room 18 and represents an important part of the transition of the butler/housemaid’s pantry into a fully-fledged, self-contained kitchen.

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<sup>441</sup> “Valuation of Property Known as Beleura Situated Esplanade, Beleura Hill, Mornington – In the Estate of the Late Lady Amelia Tallis.”

<sup>442</sup> “Valuation of Property Known as Beleura Situated Esplanade, Beleura Hill, Mornington – In the Estate of the Late Lady Amelia Tallis.”

<sup>443</sup> “Valuation of Property Known as Beleura Situated Esplanade, Beleura Hill, Mornington – In the Estate of the Late Lady Amelia Tallis.”

Another element of this transition was the installation of the first electric stove at Beleura in room 18.<sup>444</sup> This new kitchen appliance was manufactured by Moffat and is first listed in the 1948 valuation of the estate made after the death of Sir George as a “Moffatt 6 Point 3 Plate Elec. Stove”.<sup>445</sup> The Moffat stove also appears in a 1951 valuation made for John Tallis, listed in the kitchen along with the Frigidaire refrigerator.<sup>446</sup> The Moffat stove was extremely popular in the 1930s with an advertisement claiming, “Next to a good home, a good stove is essential to a woman’s happiness. That’s why you should consider a Moffat Electric Range.”<sup>447</sup> It is difficult to determine when this stove was first installed next to the sink in room 18, but Patsy Kirk remembers a stove in this location when she lived at Beleura in the 1930s.<sup>448</sup> It marks the start of a move away from the solid fuel stove, a move not fully completed until the 1960s, long after the take-over of Beleura by John Tallis. A 1955 instruction booklet for a GEC electric stove can be found on a shelf in room 18, suggesting that a GEC stove was installed around that year.<sup>449</sup> Given that a stove would have a life well in excess of 10 to 15 years, the probable date for the installation of the Moffat stove would be late 1930s or early 1940s, although it could have been even earlier. Regardless of the exact date, the Moffat stove was installed at Beleura at a time when many families were buying new gas or electric stoves. Kirk recently donated to Beleura an *Electric Cookery Book* belonging to her mother Dorothy Tallis. It was published by the State Electricity Commission of Victoria to encourage electric cooking and even includes a photograph of a Moffat electric stove, similar to the appliance that would have been installed at Beleura. This was a time of fierce competition for gas and electric appliance sales and the little book’s unknown author overflows with enthusiasm for the new electric cooker: “Now, quietly, there has entered homes a great working power – not the magic power of dreams, but the electric power of reality.... This is the Electric Age!”<sup>450</sup> While there is no publication date given, the National Library of Australia estimates it to be 1940–1949 and it is quite likely that Dorothy Tallis

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<sup>444</sup> Note: The XCEL electric stove now located in room 18 is not original. It was purchased by Anthony Knight in 2000, to simulate a 1940s style stove and replaced a stove purchased by John Tallis probably dating from the 1970s.

<sup>445</sup> “Valuation of Furniture and Personal Effects Contained in ‘Beleura’ Esplanade Mornington – in the Estate of the Late Sir George Tallis.” Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>446</sup> “Inventory and Valuation of Furniture and Effects as Situated at Beleura, Mornington, 28 November 1951.” Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>447</sup> “Here’s a Host of Useful Xmas Gifts,” *Sunday Mail*, December 3, 1933, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>448</sup> Personal communication with Ms Patsy Kirk (née Tallis).

<sup>449</sup> Note: A GEC stove is included in a list of contents for room 18 in the 1962 valuation made by E.Jacobs and Lowe, Mornington, confirming that a GEC appliance was probably installed in 1955.

<sup>450</sup> *Electric Cookery Book* (Melbourne: State Electricity Commission of Victoria, undated), 3.

received the booklet when the Moffat stove was purchased for Beleura or when a similar stove was installed in her new home Key West in 1940.

Although the transformation of room 18 into a kitchen may have begun in the 1930s, there is little evidence of any modernizing influence from the domestic science movement, with the exception of the two new electric appliances. The layout remains to this day, much as it was in the nineteenth century, apart from adoption of the near mandatory cream and green colour scheme of the 1930s. Newspaper articles on new houses and renovations inevitably specified cream and green appliances in similarly coloured kitchens.<sup>451</sup> A particular feature of 1930s kitchen design was the installation of a plethora of cupboards for specific purposes. A kitchen design feature article in a 1937 edition of the *Argus* asserts, “The pantry has disappeared as an adjunct to the modern kitchen and has been replaced by cupboards placed in convenient positions around the walls. Fitted with flush panel doors these cupboards present an unbroken surface which does not collect dust. They are designed for the storage of foodstuffs or kitchen equipment.”<sup>452</sup> Room 18 at Beleura persistently retains mostly open shelves for storing kitchen equipment and the separate pantry (room 20) with its open shelves was maintained as the primary room for the storage of dry foodstuffs. The layout of room 18 in this period was much as it is today (Figure 21).

### 3.3 Sourcing, storing and preserving food

As with the pre-Tallis era, sadly, there are no documents that describe in any detail culinary practices at Beleura during this period. *In Search of the Sun* records the collective memory of several generations of the Tallis family regarding many aspects of life at Beleura. However, as with most families, food is not generally discussed apart from incidental references. However, Beleura has a remarkable collection of artifacts belonging to the Tallis family, some items dating back to the earliest years of their ownership of the house. The kitchen and service areas are no exception and are full of appliances and implements associated with preparing and serving meals.

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<sup>451</sup> Note: A common notice in the social pages of Australian newspapers in the 1930s was for “cream and green teas” hosted for brides prior to their wedding day, presumably to give presents of cream and green kitchen ware for their new home. “Cream and Green Kitchen Tea.” *Sunday Mail*, April 16, 1939, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>452</sup> “Kitchen Planning is Important,” *Argus*, August 19, 1937, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

Between the World Wars, Mornington experienced steady if not spectacular growth and the staff at Beleura would have had no problems in obtaining a wide variety of fresh and processed food for the household. Continuing a trend which began in the Victorian era, an ever-increasing range of convenience foods was making its way onto pantry shelves, most of which would have been available in Mornington. Referring to the British market, but just as applicable to Australia, David J. Eveleigh contends that “by the 30s almost every kind of domestic and foreign fruit, meat, game, fish and vegetable was available in tins at prices which most people could afford, at least occasionally. Never was the tin opener more needed.”<sup>453</sup> Fergus Macdonald, a resident of the district from the 1930s, observed that even though the permanent population of Mornington in 1937 was less than 2000, there were about 60 businesses in Main Street, including “four hotels, four butchers, two chemists and a couple of delicatessens, a news agency, three grocers and a mixture of small shops including bakeries, greengrocers, men’s wear, real estate agents and garages.”<sup>454</sup> Mornington was well connected to Melbourne by road, rail and by boat and produce would have been readily available or easily ordered. In the years before the Tallis family moved permanently to Mornington, Sir George undoubtedly would have packed any special food provisions from Melbourne suppliers into his car for the regular journey from Santoi or Grosvenor to Beleura.

While Beleura, no doubt, had its fair share of processed food, it also had the luxury of a large expanse of arable land and consequently continued to be well stocked with its own produce, both from the large vegetable gardens around the house, tended by permanent gardeners and from Sir George’s productive orchards. The quality of Sir George’s Ayrshire cattle was well known and it is not hard to imagine the occasional beast being slaughtered for home consumption. Shooting was also a common pastime, with family and guests armed with shotguns providing some additional wild protein on an irregular basis (Figure 17). *In Search of the Sun* includes a recollection from Bidy Carnegie of shooting rabbits at Beleura with her elder brothers Mick and Pat: “I had to carry the bag with the rabbits and before we got home they would give me the pen knife and I had to de-gut them.”<sup>455</sup> Patsy Kirk recalled that in the 1930s meat, probably game, was hung in what is now the marble floored laundry (room 32).<sup>456</sup>

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<sup>453</sup> David J. Eveleigh, *A History of the Kitchen* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2007), 93.

<sup>454</sup> Fergus Macdonald, *Growing up in Paradise* (Mornington: self published, 2008), 2.

<sup>455</sup> Tallis, Tallis and Knight, 123.

<sup>456</sup> Personal communication with Ms Patsy Kirk (née Tallis).

The availability of home-grown produce at Beleura also meant that room 28 continued to function as a larder during this period, a fact confirmed in discussion with Kirk.<sup>457</sup> This was a time when the increasing popularity of processed food in the broader community was shrinking the fresh food storage areas in most homes. Catherine Seiberling Pond observes, “Why have a pantry when you could do your shopping more frequently or make food from a box instead of from scratch? Farmwives still canned and some women still ‘put up’ preserves, but it had become more of a pastime than a need.”<sup>458</sup> In this respect, Beleura deviated from the norm, retaining both pantry and larder for their original Victorian era functions.

With an abundance of fresh seasonal produce available, food preservation would have been an important task for kitchen staff at Beleura. Many domestic kitchens of the era relied on the Fowlers Vacola kit to bottle fruit and vegetables for long-term storage and Beleura was no different. A Fowlers preserving outfit was identified in the 1948 valuation document and today there are still numerous Vacola jars stored in the box room (room 28).<sup>459</sup> In 1915 Joseph Fowler set up a company in Melbourne to manufacture bottling kits including a sterilizer, bottles, lids, rings and a thermometer. He sold the kits door to door until establishing a shop in Burwood Road, Hawthorn. He created the Fowlers Vacola Manufacturing Co Ltd in 1934 and invented a cartoon character Mrs B. Thrifty to market the kits to housewives nationwide.<sup>460</sup> A Fowlers Vacola instruction book dating from the 1930s featuring Mrs B. Thrifty remains in the Beleura collection.<sup>461</sup> A reporter for the Hobart *Mercury* praised the Fowlers Vacola bottled produce at the Hobart Royal Show in 1928: “The quality of the fruit indicates what may be accomplished by the woman in the house with the aid of a Fowlers ‘Vacola’ fruit bottling outfit. These outfits are said to have proved their worth in thousands of homes throughout Australia as the method is so simple, scientific and sure that a child can operate the outfit.”<sup>462</sup> Popular cookbooks of the day, such as the *Green and Gold Cookery Book* and *The*

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<sup>457</sup> Personal communication with Ms Patsy Kirk (née Tallis).

<sup>458</sup> Catherine Seiberling Pond, *The Pantry: Its History and Modern Uses* (Layton, Utah: Gibbs Smith, 2007), 66.

<sup>459</sup> “Valuation of Furniture and Personal Effects Contained in ‘Beleura’ Esplanade Mornington – in the Estate of the Late Sir George Tallis.”

<sup>460</sup> Victoria Peel, “Fowler, Joseph (1888–1972),” Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre for Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/fowler-joseph-10230/text18085> (accessed February 22, 2014).

<sup>461</sup> *Mrs B. Thrifty says ‘From Orchard to Bottle the VACOLA way* (Melbourne: Fowlers Vacola Manufacturing Co. Ltd. undated)

<sup>462</sup> “Fowlers showing their fruit bottling outfit for the first time at the Hobart Royal Show,” *Mercury*, October 20, 1928, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>



*Golden Wattle*, usually included chapters on preserving fruit and vegetables using screw-top jars or Vacola jars.<sup>463</sup>

The traditional skill of preserving fruit and vegetables may also have helped the family cope with rationing during and immediately after World War II. While there are no documents from Beleura that refer to rationing, it was a fact of life for all Australian families regardless of wealth or status. Rationing was not as severe as in Britain, but from 1942 a coupon system came into force for the purchase of clothing, tea, sugar, butter and meat. Milk and eggs were also rationed from time to time to favour vulnerable groups during periods of shortage. The purpose of rationing was to manage shortages and to control civilian consumption in the hope that more of the household income would be saved and potentially invested in war loans to support the Australian war effort. The adult ration for these food staples was as follows: tea ( $\frac{1}{2}$  lb/5 weeks), sugar (2 lb/fortnight), butter (1 lb/fortnight) and meat ( $2\frac{1}{4}$  lb/week).<sup>464</sup> With a large vegetable garden, orchard, poultry run and a herd of prize winning cattle, life could not have been too difficult at Beleura, at least from a food perspective. Reminders of the war were never far away, as a large contingent of American troops from the Pacific campaign were housed for periods of rest and recuperation at the Balcombe Army Barracks at nearby Mt Martha. Mick and Dorothy had moved out of Beleura in 1940 and into their new home Key West a short distance away on the cliff top of Beleura Hill. Dorothy regularly entertained groups of American soldiers at Key West during the war years, providing some home cooking and a boost to morale for the troops.<sup>465</sup>

A supply of fresh water for the kitchen is essential to food preparation, cooking and clean up. The connection of Beleura in the mid-1920s to the electricity grid provided Sir George with an opportunity to improve the domestic water supply, by installing an electrically driven pump to lift collected storm water from the roof to the tower above the house for distribution to the scullery, housemaid's pantry and bathrooms. Sir George built a small shed in the garden area in front of the staff quarters, incorporating a riveted steel tank into its roof. In the lower room was installed a Briton Ltd centrifugal pump (made in Sydney) coupled to an electric motor

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<sup>463</sup> *Green and Gold Cookery Book* (Sydney: New Holland, 1999. Originally published 1923), 229 and *The Golden Wattle Cookery Book*. 30<sup>th</sup> Edition (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1999. Originally published 1926), 207.

<sup>464</sup> Australian War Memorial, "Rationing of Food and Clothing During the Second World War," Australian War Memorial. <http://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/homefront/rationing/> (accessed March 4, 2014)

<sup>465</sup> Personal communication with Ms Patsy Kirk (née Tallis).

made by General Electric (U.S.A.). While all the pumping equipment is still in place on its original concrete plinth, the tank above the room and its associated piping was removed during the house's restoration after 1996. It is not possible to precisely know the intended piping arrangement, but it was clearly an industrial standard installation and would have been a reliable water supply for the house.<sup>466</sup> While there is no remaining evidence of an earlier installation, given Sir George's love of motor cars and engines, it is conceivable that the electric motor was a replacement for an earlier petrol engine drive, but that must remain speculation. Sir George was clearly keen to use available technology to improve the domestic services. His water pumping arrangement satisfied the needs of the house until mains water became available to the Beleura Hill area.

Electricity supply and the development of small electric motors in particular, facilitated an even more significant development in the kitchens of Beleura; the purchase of the first refrigerator. This would pave the way for substantial changes to the storage and preservation of food in the household.

### **3.3.1 Artifact evaluation 4 – Frigidaire refrigerator**

**Identification:** Located in what was the housemaid's pantry (working kitchen, room 18) is a Frigidaire electric refrigerator, made by the Delco Light Company in Dayton, Ohio, U.S.A (Figure 22). The refrigerator has a steel frame and an outer casing finished in dark polished timber. The external dimensions are 147cm wide, 164cm high and 62cm deep. The name plate states that it was supplied by Warburton and Franki, 380 Bourke Street, Melbourne.<sup>467</sup> Six doors with chrome plated handles reveal five individual refrigerated spaces for produce lined in white enamelled sheet metal and a sixth space containing an ice maker and freezer space (Figure 23). The refrigerant condenser/compressor unit is external to the refrigerator and is located in the adjacent broom cupboard. The condenser unit has a name plate stating that it is a

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<sup>466</sup> Note: The Powerhouse Museum in Sydney has in its collection a Briton pump from the State Theatre dating from 1927. It was used for pumping refrigerant. Powerhouse Museum, "Pump single stage centrifugal," Powerhouse Museum, <http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database/?irn=160697&search=briton+pump&images=&c=&s=> (accessed February 28, 2014).

<sup>467</sup> Note: A 1920s photograph of Bourke Street in the State Library of Victoria collection (Image H32492/2420) shows a Delco Light sign above the Warburton and Franki building located between Elizabeth and Queen Streets, presumably where Frigidaire products were sold.

Frigidaire Electric Ice Cream Cabinet. Frigidaire started making ice cream cabinets in 1924, but the brand was separated from Delco Light Company in 1926, making the date of manufacture for the Beleura refrigerator sometime between these years.<sup>468</sup> The assumed connection of Beleura to mains electricity in 1926 also points to the unit being installed shortly after that time. A service note inside the refrigerator confirms that the Frigidaire was well maintained and used by John Tallis right up to his death in 1996.

**Context analysis:** The aim of refrigeration is to slow down the decomposition of food, that is, to prevent it from spoiling. For instance, while plant cells continue to live at lowered temperatures, their biochemical activity is slowed, along with the microbes that would otherwise proliferate and spoil the food.<sup>469</sup> Similarly, the bacteria and enzymes that would spoil meat work at a slower rate at lower temperatures. Freezing retards the decomposition process of meat even further by stopping biological processes that are dependent on water.<sup>470</sup> The principle of mechanical refrigeration which evolved from experimentation in the early nineteenth century was the vapour compression cycle. Jacob Perkins developed the first practical refrigeration machine using this cycle in London in 1834, using ether as the refrigerant.<sup>471</sup> The refrigerant is passed through tubes set around the space to be cooled and heat is absorbed when the liquid refrigerant is evaporated. The search for the best refrigerant initially led to the use of compressed ammonia and sulphur dioxide in the refrigeration cycle.<sup>472</sup> The refrigerant is circulated around a closed cycle by a compressor usually driven by an electric motor and the heat is dumped outside the refrigerated space via a heat exchanger, called the condenser unit. While mechanical refrigeration based on this cycle was invented and introduced in the mid-nineteenth century, its initial use was primarily for commercial food storage and food transportation. Ice boxes were the only form of food cool storage available for the home, with ice often being cut from natural sources or supplied from commercial ice freezing works. Michael Symons provides a graphic account of the “fevered crowds” greeting the arrival of ice in Sydney in the 1850s, cut from the frozen Wenham Lake near Boston,

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<sup>468</sup> The Frigidaire Corporation, *The Frigidaire Story – 50 Million Products in 50 Years* (Detroit: The Frigidaire Corporation, 1966), 4.

<sup>469</sup> Harold McGee, *On Food and Cooking – The Lore and Science of the Kitchen* (London: HarperCollins, 1991), 167.

<sup>470</sup> McGee, 101.

<sup>471</sup> R. Radermacher and K. Kim, “Domestic Refrigerators: Recent Developments,” *International Journal of Refrigeration* 19, No.1 (1996): 61.

<sup>472</sup> Amy Higgins, “The Refrigeration Revolution,” *Machine Design* 73, No.7 (2001): 60.

Massachusetts.<sup>473</sup> This supply of ice was shipped world-wide for ice boxes and for cool drinks. Journalist Amy Higgins asserts that it was a shortage of natural ice due to unusually warm winters in the United States in 1889 and 1890 that encouraged the development of domestic refrigerators.<sup>474</sup> Mechanical refrigeration cabinets started to come onto the market around the world in the early twentieth century, a time when many homes were first being connected to an electricity supply. In 1902, only eight per cent of American homes had mains electricity.<sup>475</sup> As previously noted, the electricity take up in Australian homes was even slower. Australia did, however, play a significant role in the development of commercial refrigeration, largely due to the potential economic benefit of using the new technology for transporting frozen Australian meat by sea to the lucrative British market. After several aborted attempts, the first successful shipment of frozen meat from Australia to England was on the *Strathleven* in 1879, with the mutton selling in London for four times the wholesale price in Australia.<sup>476</sup>

The domestic refrigeration industry was based almost exclusively in the United States. Early models of domestic refrigerator were the Isko and the Domelre which was a contraction of Domestic Electric Refrigerator. General Electric made the Audiffren machine in 1911 and Kelvinator became a major innovator in the industry by introducing the thermostatic switch with its first refrigerator in 1918.<sup>477</sup> In 1920 there were over 200 home refrigerators on the market in the USA.<sup>478</sup> The Guardian Refrigerator Company of Detroit introduced in 1916 the first integrated unit with the compressor housed in the lower part of the cabinet rather than the usual location, external to the machine. By 1918 Guardian had only made forty units, but the company was purchased by W.C. Durant, President of General Motors, who changed the name to Frigidaire, establishing what would become a major brand in refrigeration to the American and world market. Initially production continued in Detroit, but in 1921 the business was moved to Dayton, Ohio, where the refrigerators were made by Delco-Light Company, a subsidiary of General Motors. An employee of their competitor General Electric, in a company internal report, observed: “The Frigidaire has by far given the best account of itself of any of the machines that I have seen, but they all have the difficulties incident to more or

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<sup>473</sup> Symons, 61.

<sup>474</sup> Higgins, 60.

<sup>475</sup> Christina Hardyment, *From Mangle to Microwave: The Mechanization of Household Work* (Cambridge: Polity Press in association with Basil Blackwell, 1988), 28.

<sup>476</sup> Barbara Santich, *Bold Palates: Australia's Gastronomic Heritage* (Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 2012), 162.

<sup>477</sup> Radermacher and Kim, 61.

<sup>478</sup> Higgins, 60.

less unreliable automatic control.”<sup>479</sup> Such problems must have been resolved, as in 1926 the Frigidaire business had become so large that it was decided to separate from Delco-Light and a dedicated plant was built at Moraine City, south of Dayton.<sup>480</sup> Frigidaire earned a reputation for innovation in the 1920s, introducing the one-piece metal food compartment liner and the porcelain on steel cabinet exterior, still used on modern refrigerators. By 1929, Frigidaire had built one million units and by 1932, two and a quarter million.<sup>481</sup> General Motors retained the Frigidaire Corporation until 1979, when it was sold to White Consolidated Industries (WCI). Frigidaire was sold to its current owners, AB Electrolux of Sweden in 1986.<sup>482</sup>

If the Frigidaire was bought for Beleura shortly after 1926, it was at a time when ownership of refrigerators in Australia was unusual. Refrigerators, such as the Frigidaire, were mostly imported from the United States and were expensive. In 1923, when both Frigidaire and Kelvinator were starting to mass produce refrigerators, the cost of a domestic sized unit in the United States was about \$900, at a time when the average American household annual income was about \$2000.<sup>483</sup> Prices rapidly fell, but even the small Frigidaire model, advertised for £75 in Adelaide in 1928 and promoted as “Better at a LOWER COST”, would have been a very expensive purchase for the majority of Australian households.<sup>484</sup> To compare the situation in Britain, refrigerators were still very expensive in the 1930s. Elizabeth David, long before she was an icon of gastronomy, purchased a small refrigerator for her rented London flat with money given to her as a 21<sup>st</sup> birthday present in 1934. Her biographer, Artemis Cooper, writes that David’s friends thought it a great extravagance as the cost then was almost as much as a car.<sup>485</sup> As Dingle observes, major appliance sales did not accelerate in Australia until after World War II, when wartime armament factories were converted for appliance manufacture. Dingle identifies cost barriers to the sale of electrical appliances in Australia, not only in terms of the high cost of appliances, but also the cost of wiring a house and the actual energy cost of

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<sup>479</sup> A.R. Stevenson, *Domestic Refrigerating Machines* (Schenectady, N.Y: General Electric Company, 1923), 380.

<sup>480</sup> The Frigidaire Corporation, 4.

<sup>481</sup> The Frigidaire Corporation, 5.

<sup>482</sup> Electrolux International, “History of Frigidaire,” Electrolux International, <http://www.frigidaire-intl.com/history.asp> (accessed March 3, 2014)

<sup>483</sup> Jeri Quinzio, *Of Sugar and Snow – A History of Ice Cream Making* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 176.

<sup>484</sup> “Frigidaire Electric Refrigeration,” *News*, February 22, 1928, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>485</sup> Artemis Cooper, *Elizabeth David: Writing at the Kitchen Table* (London: Michael Joseph - Penguin Group, 1999), 44.

purchasing electricity.<sup>486</sup> In 1955 only sixty-seven per cent of Melbourne homes had a refrigerator.<sup>487</sup> In 1926, only the wealthy could have afforded a refrigerator, but that did not stop retailers actively marketing them. An advertisement in the *West Australian* announced, “An Engineering Achievement – The New Frigidaire – The QUIET Automatic refrigerator.”<sup>488</sup> The *Mercury* extols the virtues of the Frigidaire: “Tiresome stooping for food is not necessary with Frigidaire. All food shelves are placed at a convenient height from the floor. All surfaces are smooth and all corners rounded making Frigidaire as easy to keep clean as a china dish, yet Frigidaire is sold at a surprisingly low price, due to the tremendous buying power of General Motors Corporation to which the Frigidaire Corporation belongs.”<sup>489</sup>

**Interpretation:** In considering artifacts at Beleura from this era there is one with undisputed significance, the Frigidaire refrigerator. It overwhelms room 18 with its presence, similar to the cast iron range’s domination of room 19. Helen Watkins asserts that the introduction of refrigerators transformed the kitchen, removing the need for the pantry and the larder.<sup>490</sup> This may have occurred in many homes but it was not the case at Beleura. Was the refrigerator just a functional purchase or were there other meanings for the Tallis family?

On a purely functional level, a refrigerator is a device that creates a cold environment. Cold is not a quantifiable commodity; it can be defined as the absence of heat. The cold environment keeps food from spoiling and refrigerators were promoted in the 1920s as appliances that would protect the family from illness. In an obviously sponsored piece of journalism, the *Launceston Examiner* declared in 1928:

Night and day Frigidaire is safe-guarding the health of millions of people in more than 500,000 homes. It protects their food from the ravage of invisible microbes and ensures them against illness. While they are awake or while they sleep, Frigidaire – reliable, dependable, economical – is quietly working on their behalf. The food compartment of

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<sup>486</sup> Dingle, 123.

<sup>487</sup> Dingle, 124.

<sup>488</sup> “An Engineering Achievement,” *West Australian*, November 13, 1929, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>489</sup> “Tick-Tock-Tick-Tock: Every Thirteen Seconds a New Frigidaire,” *Mercury*, October 9, 1929, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>490</sup> Helen Watkins, “Beauty Queen Bulletin Board and Browser: Rescripting the Refrigerator,” *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 13, No.2 (2006): 145.

Frigidaire maintains protection which properly preserves food – without waste, without spoilage – so that there is no danger of sickness or disease.<sup>491</sup>

Perhaps the health benefits of refrigeration appealed to Sir George and Lady Tallis. While there may be some advertising exaggeration in the *Examiner* article, American social researchers Craig, Goodwin and Grenner, found there to be some truth in the claims. In their study of the effects of the introduction of commercial refrigeration in the 1890s in America, they conclude that refrigeration “reduced illness and increased net nutrition – above and beyond the improvements in the quality and quantity of food.”<sup>492</sup> They attribute the steady increase in stature of the average American since 1890 at least partly to the role of refrigeration.<sup>493</sup>

Refrigerators were also a symbol of modernity and when General Motors acquired the Frigidaire Corporation in 1918, they were aligning the appliance with that other powerful twentieth-century symbol, the motor car. American architectural historian Sandy Isenstadt argues that refrigerators were seen as a large step towards modernization of the house in the early twentieth century, “material progress fostered by industrial technologies, was explicitly linked to modernism.”<sup>494</sup> Isenstadt asserts that the aim was to make the refrigerator stand out as a statement of leisure and prestige, where technology was equated to labour saving. Of course reducing the work load may have been less important to the Tallis family than other benefits, since Beleura had a team of staff on hand to perform domestic duties. Early advertisements “spotlight the refrigerator itself, often in theatrical terms.”<sup>495</sup> Perhaps this sense of drama appealed to the theatrical interests of Sir George. It is quite likely that the refrigerator was purchased at the same time as the heating system was upgraded as part of a general modernization of Beleura in the 1920s, introducing domestic services which Sir George and Lady Tallis would have experienced and enjoyed on their frequent trips to America. The heart of both systems is the compact electric motor, a device which transformed many homes including Beleura. It is commonly believed that Lady Tallis saw the Frigidaire in the U.S.A.

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<sup>491</sup> “Frigidaire Electric Refrigerator,” *Examiner*, October 10, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>492</sup> Lee A. Craig, Barry Goodwin and Thomas Grennes, “The Effect of Mechanical Refrigeration on Nutrition in the United States,” *Social Science History* 28, No.2 (2004): 332.

<sup>493</sup> Craig, et al., 331.

<sup>494</sup> Sandy Isenstadt, “Visions of Plenty: Refrigerators in America Around 1950,” *Journal of Design History* 11, No.4 (1998): 312.

<sup>495</sup> Isenstadt, 313.

and shipped one home for Beleura. However, as there was a local agent in Melbourne actively promoting sales around that time, it is more likely that the refrigerator was purchased locally and the nameplate appears to confirm this assumption.

The *Brisbane Courier* in 1926 outlines the perceived benefits of the Frigidaire: “By means of this apparatus, ices, sherbets and other dainties may be made and so lighten the work of entertaining.”<sup>496</sup> Food historian Michael Symons has written eloquently about the enduring obsession that Australian food writers and advertisers appear to have had in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century with “dainty” food. This trend was embraced, perhaps even created, by the growing number of processed food manufacturers in Australia in the inter-war period. Manufacturers of products such as chocolate, desiccated coconut, custard powder and gelatin could see a potentially lucrative market for their products by “coaxing housewives to adopt profitable frills.”<sup>497</sup> A good example of this approach is the Davis Gelatine recipe book published in 1932 titled *Davis Dainty Dishes*, which provides recipes for delights such as prawns in jelly, sheep’s tongue shape, green pea salad, crab savoury, apple snow and Dutch flummery.<sup>498</sup> Symons suggests, “You could show your refinement by simple things such as *oysters au naturel*, some fish daintily prepared, a fine cheese, crisp celery, a perfect salad, the choice and arrangement of dishes.”<sup>499</sup> This leads to the hypothesis that one strong motivation for the purchase of the Frigidaire may well have been to provide a variety of chilled and delicate foods for entertaining, for which Beleura was the perfectly refined setting. The serving of a generous selection of “dainties” to their guests at parties, together with cool drinks and cocktails with ice blocks, would have placed the Tallis family at the forefront of fashionable society at the time and the refrigerator was necessary to achieve the desired effects. One 1928 newspaper article promotion declared, “Engineers employed by the Frigidaire Corporation have developed a bare cooling coil which is fitted with freezing trays, in which dainty cubes of ice and a great variety of frozen delicacies are made to the delight of the hostess and the enjoyment of the household.”<sup>500</sup> How could one resist such treats?

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<sup>496</sup> “Cool and Fresh Food,” *Brisbane Courier*, December 22, 1926, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>497</sup> Symons, 139.

<sup>498</sup> *Davis Dainty Dishes* (Sydney: Davis Gelatine (Aust) Ltd, 1932)

<sup>499</sup> Symons, 139.

<sup>500</sup> “Food Problem – Importance of Refrigeration,” *News*, February 22, 1928, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>



Perhaps it is a result of the marketing hyperbole, but it is easy to see the Frigidaire refrigerator at Beleura as the ever reliable, silent protector of family health, the source of good food and nourishment. At a time when refrigerators were uncommon, the overwhelming presence of the Frigidaire in the kitchen would have made a considerable impression on visitors, except that in the case of Beleura it remained tucked away in the servants-only section of the house where no one could see it. The appeal of the Frigidaire to Sir George and Lady Tallis may have been the perceived comfort that it could provide, comfort that they clearly appreciated in their American travels. While they respected and largely preserved the Victorian layout of Beleura and retained the staff to manage it, technology was upgraded where it really mattered, as was the case with the electric stove and the refrigerator as well as the water supply and central heating. All of these innovations were made possible with a reliable electricity supply. One could also speculate that the Tallis family were responsible and benevolent employers, who tried to make tasks easier for their staff where possible. In an era when most servants left their employers to work in post-World War I factories attention to these issues may have been necessary to retain staff. In the 1926 *Australian Home Beautiful* article on Grosvenor, it was noted that “one of the most pleasing things about this lovely home is the attention accorded the staff quarters. These are well planned, airy and bright and the sitting room includes everything necessary to comfort and cheer, even a piano.”<sup>501</sup> These comforts may account for the length of time that many staff appeared to stay with the family and it can probably be assumed that a similar approach was taken at Beleura. It should be noted that unlike similar scale houses in Britain, the division between domestic staff and the family was not as fixed in Australia and the green baize door which traditionally separated the two was not impermeable.<sup>502</sup> These are themes that will be amplified in the next section of this chapter.

### 3.4 Cooking at Beleura

There are only two cookbooks belonging to the Tallis family that have survived at Beleura dating from the pre-1948 period: a 1907 edition of *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* and a 1912 edition of Nicolas Soyers's *Soyers's Standard Cookery*. The *Mrs*

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<sup>501</sup> “Modernizing an old colonial mansion,” *Australian Home Beautiful*, May 7, 1926, 23.

<sup>502</sup> Note: An indication of the more casual nature of the family-servant relationship in some households in Australia can be seen in the painting *Home from the Market* by Victorian artist Eugenie Durran (1889–1989) in the Geelong Art Gallery. Painted in 1916 it shows the mistress conducting a friendly conversation seated at the kitchen table with two kitchen maids. It is hard to imagine this level of interaction in an English country house.

*Beeton* is included in a 1962 valuation of Beleura made for John Tallis, but not in any earlier document.<sup>503</sup> It is tempting to imagine this quintessentially Victorian handbook radiating its influence throughout the kitchen areas at Beleura, providing sound advice to the resident cook. In reality we do not know when the text was purchased, but since there are some notes in the text in the handwriting of John Tallis, we know that he made some use of it. Whether or not it was used in the inter-war period, Isabella Beeton would certainly have found the cooking practices and appliances at Beleura during this era familiar as well as the layout of the kitchen and associated rooms. Some commentators have criticized the regular updates given to *Mrs Beeton* in the twentieth century as diluting the original text and blamed the popularity of the book for holding back innovation in British and by association Australian cooking.<sup>504</sup> That may be true, but few would deny that Mrs Beeton's book was a major achievement, with British food historian Nicola Humble asserting, "As a cultural object its status is immense: reissued in countless guises, presented to generations of young women as a guide to setting up home, it represents traditional domestic virtues as skills, its solid heft promising authoritative counsel on any culinary conundrum."<sup>505</sup>

If *Soyer's Standard Cookery* belonged to the family during this period, it would certainly have provided a more modern influence. Nicolas Soyer was the grandson of Alexis Soyer, society chef, promoter of soup kitchens for the poor and transformer of British army cooking in the Crimean War. Nicolas Soyer was also a chef and wrote the book specifically as an easy-to-use cookbook, rather than a household management handbook, differentiating himself deliberately from Beeton.<sup>506</sup> Soyer included many recipes using his somewhat quirky invention, *paper-bag cookery*, a technique designed to retain flavor and nutritive value in food. Writing about the application of the technique to fish, Soyer claimed, "The delicate flavours cannot but be retained by a method which allows nothing to escape, and the fish will be found far superior in taste, appearance, and digestibility."<sup>507</sup> Once again, we can only speculate if the Tallis family cook used this method.

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<sup>503</sup> "Valuation of Property Known as 'Beleura' Esplanade, Beleura Hill, Mornington. Owner: J.M. Tallis esq."

<sup>504</sup> Colin Spencer, *British Food - an Extraordinary Thousand Years of History* (London: Grub Street, 2011), 309.

<sup>505</sup> Nicola Humble, *Culinary Pleasures: Cookbooks and the Transformation of British Food* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), 8.

<sup>506</sup> Nicolas Soyer, *Soyer's Standard Cookery* (London: Andrew Melrose, 1912), x.

<sup>507</sup> Soyer, 102.

Until 1948, most meals at Beleura were still cooked on the solid fuel range in room 19. As World War II approached, some simpler meals may have been cooked on the newly installed electric stove in room 18. The cook would no doubt have appreciated the cleaner working conditions and the thermostat temperature control on the electric oven would have taken much of the guesswork out of baking. These changes are consistent with a trend that appeared to be occurring world-wide; a trend towards simpler meals. Referring to English menus in the early twentieth century, food writer Arabella Boxer argues, “The pomposity of the Edwardian meals that dominated the early years of the century was a thing of the past; meals became shorter and more informal, and the dishes themselves more light-hearted. Meals were rarely more than three courses, except for a formal dinner, and a more relaxed attitude became the norm.”<sup>508</sup> Boxer provides a definition of English food during the 1920s and 1930s: “It lies at the other end of the spectrum from robust peasant dishes, for it is basically bland in flavour, although the accompanying sauces and garnishes are often sharp, sour or spicy.”<sup>509</sup>

Boxer also proposes two significant outside influences on English food during this period, which initially affected primarily the “moneyed upper classes and the intelligentsia.”<sup>510</sup> The first influence came from the United States through English men marrying American women, who brought back to England many of their food preferences. While not differing greatly from English cooking, Boxer argues that some dishes thought to be uniquely American, such as pumpkin pie and cheesecake, reflected their common English origins and were descendents from Stuart times.<sup>511</sup> The second influence on English food, according to Boxer, came from France through the popular cookbooks and newspaper articles of Marcel Boulestin, who moved to London in 1906 and became the first television chef in 1937.<sup>512</sup> The Tallis family certainly fell into that small, affected class identified by Boxer and curiously, Beleura was subject to both influences. Sir George’s son Mick married Dorothy France from Columbus, Ohio in 1925. They had met while Mick Tallis was studying engineering at Harvard University in Boston. As previously noted, Dorothy Tallis helped to run Beleura in the 1930s and no doubt exerted considerable influence over the household. Unlikely though it may seem,

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<sup>508</sup> Arabella Boxer, *Arabella Boxer’s Book of English Food* (London: Fig Tree, 2012), xiii.

<sup>509</sup> Boxer, xv.

<sup>510</sup> Boxer, xvi.

<sup>511</sup> Boxer, xvii.

<sup>512</sup> Boxer, xx.

Boulestin was also an influence at Beleura but not until the 1950s. This unusual connection and influence on Beleura will be considered in detail in the next chapter.

The assumption here is that Australian cooking largely followed the English tradition during this period, as it did in the Victorian era. This view is given support by the food historian Barbara Santich, with an example of the changing taste for sheep meat in the early part of the twentieth century. Australia was then a major exporter of sheep meat to England and when the English taste preference shifted from mutton to younger hogget and lamb, Australian farmers responded to supply this important market.<sup>513</sup> Lamb became more readily available and Australian tastes changed such that across the decade of the 1930s, lamb as a proportion of total sheep meat consumption increased from 13% to 17%.<sup>514</sup> Beef and veal remained however, the most popular meat in Australia, representing 63% of the total meat consumed in 1938/39, while pork accounted for only 4% of the total.<sup>515</sup>

Being wealthy and well-travelled, the Tallis family would have been expected to follow the latest food trends, but unfortunately there are no accounts of meals cooked at Beleura during this period, apart from a recollection by Bidy Carnegie of “superb dinner parties”, cooked by Marie who apparently was “a wonderful cook, when she was not on it!”<sup>516</sup> Evidently Marie was partial to sherry, sometimes at inappropriate times.<sup>517</sup> Florence King recalled another cook/housekeeper, Christine McKellar, preparing meals at Beleura.<sup>518</sup> Since McKellar was Scottish, it is possible that the influence in the kitchen may have been more F. Marian McNeill than Mrs Beeton.<sup>519</sup> John Tallis later wrote of Sir George’s fondness for Scottish cooking, no doubt developed from trips to Scotland to play golf at Gleneagles, which potentially influenced his choice of cook.<sup>520</sup> Although the cook was Scottish, her influence may in reality have only been minor, perhaps limited to oatmeal for breakfast and shortbread biscuits as a

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<sup>513</sup> Santich, 172.

<sup>514</sup> Note: While lamb as a proportion of total sheep meat consumption in Australia increased across the 1930s, the consumption of sheep meat in general remained flat. The 30% increase in total meat consumption that occurred in the 1930s was largely due to a 60% increase in beef and veal consumption.

<sup>515</sup> Alison M. Kingsland, “Australia’s Fat Lamb Industry,” Review of Marketing and Agricultural Economics, [ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/8364/1/14110395.pdf](http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/8364/1/14110395.pdf) (accessed July 20, 2016)

<sup>516</sup> Tallis, Tallis and Knight, 124.

<sup>517</sup> Tallis, Tallis and Knight, 102.

<sup>518</sup> Transcription of an interview conducted by Anthony Knight with Florence King, September 2008.

<sup>519</sup> Note: F. Marian McNeill (1885–1973) through her 1929 book *The Scots Kitchen*, was one of the acknowledged authorities on traditional Scots cuisine.

<sup>520</sup> “Recollections of some of the business trips abroad by GT.” Beleura House & Garden Collection.

tea-time treat. Malcolm Prentis, author of the book *The Scots in Australia*, argues that while the Scots did assert an influence on Australian cuisine, it was “subtle and taken for granted”.<sup>521</sup> As migrants to Australia, the Scots tended to become “invisible ethnics”.<sup>522</sup>

It is difficult to confirm the style of cooking at Beleura during this period. There are no diary entries or letters detailing meals, but a set of hand-typed recipe cards found during the course of this research project gives a very good indication of dishes cooked for both family meals and parties.<sup>523</sup> The cards are very significant because unlike published recipe books which may or may not be used, hand-written or in this case hand-typed recipes, usually indicate a strong intention to cook from them in the future. The cards therefore represent the closest record of what may have been cooked at Beleura in the inter-war period. There are forty three uniform style cards, with black, hand-typed text. Each filing card is 20cm long and 12.5cm wide, ruled and cream in colour. There are recipes for sauces, cakes, soups, jams, breads, meat dishes, desserts and ice cream (Figure 24). Refer to Appendix c. for a full list of recipe cards. There are also two dinner menus for six people and a menu and table setting for a dinner party with a date given as 21 February 1928 (Figures 25 and 26). This is the only date given on the cards and a clear indication of approximately when they were collected. There is a hand-written note included with the cards from John Sutherland, John Tallis’s last caretaker, indicating that he was aware of them and may have used them in more recent times.

The origin of the cards is unclear, as there is no author given and while they may have belonged to one of the Beleura cooks, a strong case can be made for their source being Dorothy Tallis. Some cards have hand-written notes in black ink on them (one principal hand, but several minor notes in other hands), amplifying the instructions. The principal hand has written the date and also added, to most cards, the estimated cost of each recipe in dollars and cents. Since Australian currency in 1928 was pounds, shillings and pence, the costs must be written in American dollars. Tallis was the only American at Beleura and when I asked Patsy Kirk to compare the writing on the cards to letters in her possession, she was of the opinion that the principal hand was “definitely” her mother’s.<sup>524</sup> This leads to an intriguing problem, in

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<sup>521</sup> Malcolm Prentis, *The Scots in Australia* (Sydney: University of N.S.W. Press, 2008), 240.

<sup>522</sup> Prentis, 241.

<sup>523</sup> 43 hand-typed recipe cards. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>524</sup> Personal communication with Ms Patsy Kirk (née Tallis), 11 April 2014.

that when Mick and Dorothy Tallis married in 1925, they returned to Australia soon after and therefore, if the recipe cards were compiled from around 1928, the costs should have been quoted in Australian currency. One solution could be that Tallis completed the cards in America as a young woman, brought them to Australia when she married and inserted the 1928 menu card later, as that particular card does not include costs. It is tempting to assume that Tallis used the cards, or at least passed them on to the cook, when she took over the new and no doubt daunting task of managing Beleura after Lady Tallis died in 1933. Of course, oral history is fallible, but putting aside Kirk's confirmation, there are other clues to the American origin of the cards:

- 1) Recipes for muffins (not English style) and waffles suggest American cookery. These recipes came to Australia eventually, but not generally until much later when the influence of American troops stationed here during World War II affected local food habits.
- 2) Chili sauce recipe would not have been common in Australia at the time, but was popular in America. A similar recipe can be found in *The Boston Cooking-School Cook Book*.<sup>525</sup>
- 3) The spelling of "omelet" on a card is the American spelling rather than the European/British version, "omelette".
- 4) The recipe for Parker House Rolls was a specialty of the hotel of that name in Boston. They were created in 1855 and a recipe is also in *The Boston Cooking-School Cook Book*.<sup>526</sup>
- 5) In the recipe for griddle cakes, the use of Graham flour is suggested as an alternative to white. Graham flour was a type of coarse wholemeal flour advocated by early American food reformer, the Rev. Sylvester Graham.<sup>527</sup>
- 6) Use of the term "broiling" rather than "grilling", suggests American usage.<sup>528</sup>

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<sup>525</sup> Fannie Merritt Farmer, *The Boston Cooking-School Cook Book* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1928), 732.

<sup>526</sup> Farmer, 54.

<sup>527</sup> Alan Davidson (Second Edition Edited by Tom Jaine), *The Oxford Companion to Food* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 356.

<sup>528</sup> Davidson, 99.

What do the recipe cards tell us apart from their source being American? The recipes have a definite school-like quality about them, which supports the theory that they may have been compiled by Dorothy in a formal cookery school context in America, perhaps something like Miss Farmer's School of Cookery in Boston, close to where Dorothy's family lived.<sup>529</sup> The recipes are quite complete, with a measured list of ingredients followed by a logical method, number of servings and the cost (both filled in by hand). Some methods also have detailed additional hand-written notes such as a recipe for white sauce, which has a complete typed "Method 1" and a typed heading "Method 2", with the instructions for this method added in ink. It is as if the student cook has been given a typed recipe card with the expectation that the blanks would be completed in class. In the same recipe, a heading "Uses of White Sauce" is typed and the list of uses added in neat handwriting. The inclusion of the cost is interesting, as they were written clearly for a cook who was required to carefully manage a food budget.

There are no *entrée* (or *appetizer* in American parlance) recipes, apart from one soup (brown soup stock) and two recipes for oysters (an oyster stew and sauté crumbed oysters) which could pass as *entrées*. There are several light meals such as cheese soufflé, omelet (foamy), baked hash and two versions of Welsh rarebit. For meat, there is a detailed method for roasting and broiling, baked stuffed chicken, broiled and baked fish, two simple veal dishes, beef stew, beef pot roast and several offal dishes using liver, heart and sweetbreads. There are recipes for sauces (6), bread (2), cakes (6), fruit desserts/confections (6), ices and ice creams, salad dressings (2), jams (2), recipes for hot chocolate, coffee and tea, recipes for fruit punch and lemonade. Interestingly there are no recipes for vegetables as main meals or as side dishes. An unusual inclusion is a detailed recipe for making fondant, a confectionary which was popular in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, but which the *Oxford Companion to Food* states has now been relegated to a minor role as a filling for chocolates.<sup>530</sup> A curious distinction is made in several recipes, where a Dover egg beater is specified for griddle cakes, cocoa and mayonnaise, but a Daisy egg beater singled out for the sponge cake. The rotary egg beater was

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<sup>529</sup> Note: Fanny Merritt Farmer was the Principal of the Boston Cooking School from 1894 to 1902, after which she established Miss Farmer's School of Cookery. When Farmer died in 1915, the School was taken over by her associate, Alice Bradley. Farmer's recipes were characterized by accurate measurements, deviating markedly from earlier practice where quantities were highly approximate. Farmer particularly favoured the standard cup and teaspoon measurements and in this way, the Beleura recipe cards are consistent with Farmer's approach. Carolyn P. Berdanier, "Fannie Farmer: The Madame LaFarge of the Kitchen Revolution," *Nutrition Today* 40, No.5 (2005): 238.

<sup>530</sup> Davidson, 311.

a significant advance over hand whisking for cooks in the late nineteenth century and the Dover device gained popularity as one of the most popular models. An advertisement in the *Boston Cooking-School Cook Book* declares: “The Original and Only Genuine Dover De Luxe Egg Beater – The Mother of them ALL.”<sup>531</sup> A Dover egg beater is not amongst the numerous appliances at Beleura, but in room 18 a Swift Whip beater with patent ball bearing drive, made by Propert Australia in Sydney in the 1930s, would have performed a similar function.<sup>532</sup>

While the two undated dinner menus could be samples, the one dated 21 February 1928 is clearly an actual dinner. One of the undated dinner menus includes roast beef, browned potatoes, buttered cauliflower, bread and butter. This is not elaborate fare, but good simple food that could have been found on almost any table at the time and all for a stated cost of \$2.23 for six people. The other undated menu is similar, except with porterhouse steak and spinach, at a total cost of \$2.16. The dated dinner party menu includes veal chops, potato puffs, bread and butter and relish. Once again, this is a simple meal relying on the ever-popular chops, although the use of veal rather than lamb makes it a little different. Vegetables do not rate a mention in this menu, apart from the potato puffs, which have their own recipe on the menu card. We will never know if these basic recipes and unpretentious menus were ever prepared at Beleura, but the survival of this remarkable set of cards would suggest that they were considered useful and may therefore be representative of food prepared in the household. This may be surprising for a wealthy and privileged family, but it would be in keeping with Sir George’s relatively modest Irish background and his apparent liking of Scottish food.<sup>533</sup> Scottish cuisine, while not unsophisticated, is unfussy, fresh and wholesome at its core, something Sir George may have admired.

The scarcity of vegetables in the recipe cards is not surprising in an era when nutritional science was still a relatively new and developing discipline. While the connection between certain foods and disease prevention was suspected, the vitamins responsible were not

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<sup>531</sup> Farmer, 842.

<sup>532</sup> CHB Settlers Museum, “Swift Whip Egg Beater,” NZ Museums, [http://www.nz museums.co.nz/account/4013/object/161171/Egg\\_Beater\\_-\\_Swift\\_Whip](http://www.nz museums.co.nz/account/4013/object/161171/Egg_Beater_-_Swift_Whip) (accessed March 12, 2014)

<sup>533</sup> Note: Sir George was born in 1869 in Callan, County Kilkenny. He was the youngest of ten children. His parents, John and Sarah ran an off-licence spirit and grocery store. George was a cadet reporter with the *Kilkenny Moderator* newspaper before travelling to Australia. Michael and Joan Tallis, 10.



revealed in many cases until the early twentieth century.<sup>534</sup> Canadian sociologist Robyn Smith contends that it took the scientific community an exceptionally long time to agree on the existence of vitamins and their role in nutrition and that World War I acted as a catalyst to resolve the uncertainties, because of the dietary problems suffered by both soldiers and civilians at that time.<sup>535</sup> It would take some time before the general public understood the importance of vitamin-rich foods in their diet. However, with Beleura surrounded by large vegetable gardens and orchards, it is hard to believe that there was any lack of essential vitamins in the food prepared for the family.

In *What the Doctor Ordered*, Santich examines the evolution of dietary advice in Australia over the last 150 years and argues that three distinct phases can be identified. Phase one was “the protein era” (nineteenth century) when meat in particular dominated the diet. Phase two was “the vitamin era” (first half of twentieth century) when world-wide research efforts revealed the role and nature of vitamins in a healthy diet. Phase three has continued to the present day, which Santich calls “the low-fat era”, a time when concerns about saturated fats and cholesterol have directed dietary advice.<sup>536</sup> The model provides a useful explanation for some of the changes in nutritional awareness between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, changes that took some time to be reflected in recipes and cookbooks. Applying the Santich model, the Tallis recipe cards were written during the “vitamin era”, but well before any general consciousness of health issues with regard to saturated fat consumption. Hence, butter, lard and cream are liberally used in many of the recipes. The inclusion of wholemeal Graham flour in the recipe cards is something of a deviation from the “white bread” norm.

Innovations in materials technology are usually first applied to specialized industrial design and later filter down to mass-market domestic products. In the case of aluminium, the development of an economical refining process quickly led to the metal’s application to humble pots and pans. Later, the material gained prestige through its association with the aircraft industry.

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<sup>534</sup> Louis Rosenfeld, “Vitamine-vitamin. The early years of discovery,” *Clinical Chemistry* 43, No. 4 (1997): 683.

<sup>535</sup> Robyn Smith, “The emergence of vitamins as bio-political objects during World War I,” *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 40 (2009): 180.

<sup>536</sup> Barbara Santich, *What the Doctor Ordered: 150 Years of Dietary Advice in Australia* (South Melbourne: Hyland House Publishing Pty Ltd, 1995), x.

### 3.4.1 Artifact evaluation 5 – Stronglite, AGA and Pyramid cookware

**Identification:** The working kitchen at Beleura (room 18) houses a large collection of aluminium cookware of varying dimensions, including saucepans, kettles, double boilers, asparagus steamer, colander and fish poacher (Figure 27). Most have dark green Bakelite handles that are riveted to the aluminium body of each saucepan. Larger saucepans have two handles. The body of each piece of cookware has been formed from aluminium by the process known as *deep drawing*. This sheet metal forming process involves a punch which is the shape of the part to be formed and a matching die cavity. The punch forces the sheet metal down into the shape of the die cavity and is suitable for highly malleable materials such as aluminium which can be formed without the application of heat.<sup>537</sup> Malleability is the property of a material that allows it to be deformed without fracture.<sup>538</sup> Deep drawing is ideal for mass production, allowing items such as cookware to be produced at the lowest cost. Ten pieces are part of a set made by AGA in England. The kettles were also made by AGA. One double boiler was made by the Australian company Stronglite, while another was made by BCM Pyramid in England. The items are stored on open shelves in room 18 and have been well used with dents and scratches in evidence. Precise dating is difficult but most would have been made in the 1920s and 1930s.

**Context analysis:** David J. Eveleigh contends that the mainstay of the Victorian kitchen was the large, oval-bellied boiling pot made from cast iron. This heavy and durable implement was ideal for cooking boiled meats, the subject of many recipes in Victorian cookbooks.<sup>539</sup> Sarah Pennell argues that in poorer homes in England, the cooking hearth was both the structural and psychological heart of a home and consequently cooking pots acquired considerable value, such that they would be handed down through the generations.<sup>540</sup> Michael Bogle suggests a similar emphasis on the hearth and fire in early homesteads in Australia.<sup>541</sup> Heavy cast iron pots were the only cooking implement that could evenly distribute the heat when suspended over an open hearth fireplace. These cast iron pots initially had a round base, but with the

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<sup>537</sup> Deutschman, Aaron D., Walter J. Michels and Charles E. Wilson. *Machine Design – Theory and Practice* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1975), 149.

<sup>538</sup> Deutschman et al, 90.

<sup>539</sup> Eveleigh, 71.

<sup>540</sup> Sara Pennell, "Pots and Pans History: The Material Culture of the Kitchen in Early Modern England," *Journal of Design History* 11, No. 3 (1998): 202.

<sup>541</sup> Bogle, 62.

introduction of the closed fire range, the cast iron cooking pot was produced with a flat base suitable for heating on top of the range. There are several examples of this type of cooking pot at Beleura. Other smaller saucepans and frying pans were often made from copper, with an inner tin lining to prevent contamination of food with verdigris. The tin lining had to be renewed regularly to ensure that the pot was safe to use.<sup>542</sup> Cast iron was heavy and difficult to clean; copper was expensive to buy and maintain. In the early nineteenth century a number of companies experimented with coating cast iron with enamel. The Vollrath Manufacturing Company of Sheboygan started making enamelled ironware in 1874, followed by enamelled steelware in 1892.<sup>543</sup> Other brands such as Sanitrox, Agataware and Judgeware became available and enamelled cookware quickly became popular, remaining so until the 1930s, when it was largely overtaken by aluminium and Pyrex glass cookware. Aluminium cookware was introduced during the 1890s but it was initially costly and considered inferior to the alternatives. By 1910 the quality had improved and the price had fallen to a point where aluminium cookware started to gain in popularity.<sup>544</sup>

Danish scientist Hans Christian Oersted is credited with extracting aluminium metal from its ore for the first time in 1825, but it was not until 1854 that French chemist Henri Sainte-Claire Deville developed a process for refining commercial quantities of the metal. Deville's aluminium ingot was shown at the 1855 World Exhibition in Paris and Napoleon III was reported as the first person to have dined on aluminium plates.<sup>545</sup> The electrolytic process for refining aluminium metal from aluminium oxide (bauxite) was separately invented by American Charles Hall and Frenchman Paul Héroult in 1886 and further improved in 1887 by Karl Josef Bayer, an Austrian scientist working in St Petersburg. This process, still used today, enabled ingots of the metal to be produced cheaply from bauxite. The Pittsburgh Reduction Company was founded by Captain Alfred E. Hunt in 1888, later becoming the Aluminum Company of America or ALCOA, a company which came to dominate world production of aluminium.<sup>546</sup>

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<sup>542</sup> Jennifer Davies, *The Victorian Kitchen* (London: BBC Books, 1989), 63.

<sup>543</sup> Ellen M. Plante, *The American Kitchen 1700 to Present: From Hearth to Highrise* (New York: Facts on File, 1995), 103.

<sup>544</sup> Plante, 178.

<sup>545</sup> Rusal, "History of the Metal," Aluminium Leader, <http://www.aluminiumleader.com/en/facts/history> (accessed September 26, 2013)

<sup>546</sup> James M. Rock, "A Growth Industry: The Wisconsin Aluminum Cookware Industry 1893–1920," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 55, No.2 (1971): 88.

Aluminium is approximately one third of the density of iron (2697kg/m<sup>3</sup> compared to 7852kg/m<sup>3</sup>).<sup>547</sup> It is easy to see how aluminium would be adopted by the fledgling aircraft manufacturing industry that grew out of air-warfare technology in World War I. Aluminium was an excellent substitute for the timber and fabric originally used to make fighter aircraft. Aluminium with its properties of high strength (particularly when alloyed with other metals), low weight and resistance to corrosion continues to be an attractive material for the aerospace, automotive, ship building and instrumentation industries. Aluminium is particularly suited to the *monocoque* style of construction which became popular with aircraft and later with cars, where the skin of the body is a stressed member and integral to the overall strength of the craft or vehicle.<sup>548</sup> Classic examples of early aircraft of this design that became heroes of World War II are the Douglas DC3 (Dakota), the Supermarine Spitfire and the Hawker Hurricane. Interestingly, not all aircraft of that period adopted aluminium, a good example being the de Havilland Mosquito, which successfully continued to use wooden construction.<sup>549</sup>

ALCOA in America turned to cookware as a market for potential growth in demand for aluminium. In 1901 the Aluminium Cooking Utensil Company was founded in Wisconsin, which became the centre of U.S. aluminium product manufacture with four other companies also establishing aluminium cookware plants in the state.<sup>550</sup> These products were eagerly purchased by housewives, who were influenced by the domestic efficiency movement in the 1920s to replace their heavy cast iron cookware, time consuming copper saucepans or easily chipped enameled steelware. When Australian manufacture began in the mid-1920s, it relied on imported ingots of aluminium. In Australia, the first aluminium was not produced until the Bell Bay plant opened in Tasmania in 1955 using imported bauxite. Australian bauxite was first mined at Weipa, but not until 1961.<sup>551</sup> The Stronglite brand of aluminium cookware was made from 1926 in Redfern, Sydney by Animart Industries. In an article celebrating thirty years of manufacture, it was claimed that prior to the establishment of Stronglite, imported pots and pans were “either thin and flimsy or heavy iron things with awkward, hot handles.”<sup>552</sup>

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<sup>547</sup>Energy Business Centre. *Physical Characteristics of Selected Materials* (Melbourne: State Electricity Commission of Victoria, 1991), 5.

<sup>548</sup>J.E. Gordon, *The New Science of Strong Materials* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968), 165.

<sup>549</sup>Gordon, 166.

<sup>550</sup>Rock, 89.

<sup>551</sup>Suzette Worden, “Aluminium and Contemporary Australian Design: Material History, Cultural and National Identity,” *Journal of Design History* 22, No.2 (2009): 157.

<sup>552</sup>“New Deal in Cooking,” *Argus*, February 15, 1956, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

One particular Stronglite aluminium saucepan achieved unusual fame through being part of the contents of a house in Rose Bay destroyed by a shell from the Japanese submarine I-24 that attacked Sydney on the night of 7 June 1942. The saucepan, bearing a large hole in its side from the explosion, was recovered from the house and is now in the Australian War Memorial.<sup>553</sup>

The other aluminium saucepans at Beleura are made in England. Little is known about the BCM Pyramid brand apart from regular advertisements in the Australian press, some as early as 1922. The advertisements regularly emphasize the quality of the saucepans, particularly the thickness (using ¼ inch plate) which helps to prevent distortion from heat. The cookware was said to have a “perfectly flat base for quicker cooking with less heat.”<sup>554</sup> The Pyramid products were also supposedly designed specifically for the electric stove. Most of the aluminium cookware at Beleura was made by AGA Heat Limited, which began manufacturing their cast iron solid fuel cookers in Shropshire in the West Midlands of England in 1929. Presumably the company began manufacturing aluminium cookware shortly after that date, although AGA also made cast iron cookware, of which there are some particularly good, heavy examples at Beleura. An AGA advertisement for its solid fuel stove from a 1934 edition of *Punch* shows AGA aluminium pots and a kettle on the stove-top of similar design to those at Beleura (Figure 28).<sup>555</sup> An advertisement in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1946 claims that the AGA cookware was specially made for electric or AGA fuel stoves and were made from thicker plate than their competitors.<sup>556</sup> Considering that the AGA brand has always been oriented towards promoting its cast iron products, right up to the present day, there must have been considerable consumer pressure for the company to diversify in the 1930s into aluminium. The presence of this comprehensive set of AGA saucepans at Beleura strongly supports the argument made earlier in this chapter that there was once an AGA cooker in front of the nineteenth-century range in the French kitchen.

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<sup>553</sup> Australian War Memorial, “Damaged saucepan from submarine attack on Rose Bay, NSW,” Australian War Memorial, <http://www.awm.gov.au/collection/RELAWM30408/> (accessed February 12, 2014)

<sup>554</sup> “Pyramid Triple Aluminium Saucepans,” *Sunday Mail*, December 5, 1948, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>555</sup> AGA History and Ephemera, “The Aga cooker – the heart of the planned kitchen,” AGA Central, [http://www.agacentral.com/images/ephemera6/aga-ad\\_large.jpg](http://www.agacentral.com/images/ephemera6/aga-ad_large.jpg) (accessed February 12, 2014)

<sup>556</sup> “Extra Heavy Aluminium Saucepans,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, October 11, 1946, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

Given that the glamour use for aluminium was aircraft manufacture, an imaginative campaign was promoted in Britain during World War II known as “Saucepans for Spitfires”.<sup>557</sup> The objective was to encourage households to donate their aluminium pots and pans to the government to manufacture Spitfire components. Evidently, aluminium was not actually in short supply, but it was thought that the campaign might be good for morale, by making the public feel as though they were contributing something to help defeat Hitler.<sup>558</sup>

Most of the aluminium pots and pans at Beleura have Bakelite handles, another new material in the 1920s, which allowed the pot to be lifted without the need for protection from burns. This material merits some separate consideration as it was the beginning of another significant era – the age of plastics. Bakelite is a thermosetting plastic made by reacting phenol with formaldehyde. A thermosetting plastic is a polymer composed of long molecular chains cross-linked with covalent bonds. This means that once formed, the thermosetting plastic cannot be reformed, even with the application of heat. Thermosetting plastics are rigid, brittle and heat resistant, making them excellent as electrical insulators or handles for saucepans.<sup>559</sup> Bakelite was developed by Leo Baekeland in 1907 and first patented in 1909. The phenolformaldehyde resin that he produced was naturally amber coloured, but with the addition of wood flour or cotton flock it changed to dark brown, red or green. Production expanded very quickly and by 1930, the Bakelite Corporation occupied a 128 acre factory at Bound Brook, New Jersey.<sup>560</sup> After the original Bakelite patent expired in 1927, the American Catalin Corporation took over Bakelite production and with different fillers, produced a new version of the phenolformaldehyde resin, Catalin. Available in fifteen new colours and marbled effects, the material became very popular for a wide range of applications both industrial and domestic.<sup>561</sup> Resins like Bakelite and Catalin were the start of a range of new plastic materials that were inexpensive and adaptable. They could be made to simulate more expensive materials such as exotic woods and ivory and came to symbolize the Art Deco era of the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>562</sup>

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<sup>557</sup> The National Archives, “Saucepans for Spitfires,” The National Archives, <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/homefront/life/salvage/default.htm> (accessed March 18, 2014)

<sup>558</sup> The National Archives, “Saucepans for Spitfires.”

<sup>559</sup> Susan Mossman, “Plastics, Thermosetting,” in *Encyclopedia of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Technology*, edited by Colin A. Hempstead and William E. Worthington, 593 (London: Routledge, 2004).

<sup>560</sup> American Chemical Society, “History of Bakelite,” American Chemical Society, <http://www.acs.org> (accessed February 24, 2014)

<sup>561</sup> Mary Ellen Snodgrass, *Encyclopaedia of Kitchen History* (New York: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2004), 45.

<sup>562</sup> Victoria and Albert Museum, “Art Deco Objects in Detail,” Victoria and Albert Museum, <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/a/art-deco-objects-in-detail/> (accessed February 24, 2014)

**Interpretation:** History of design scholar, Suzette Worden, argues that “aluminium became associated through the twentieth century, with multiple attributes including preciousness, versatility, economy, strength and lightness.”<sup>563</sup> Strength, lightness and preciousness were attributes strongly linked to aluminium’s use in aircraft manufacture, while economy was exemplified by its application in low-cost cookware. These somewhat opposing attributes have never quite been reconciled, with science historian Eric Schatzberg arguing, “From one perspective aluminum has met these expectations, becoming the most important non-ferrous metal of the present age. From another viewpoint, however, aluminium has never quite fulfilled the ambitions that its proponents imagined for it.”<sup>564</sup> Schatzberg suggests that when considering consumer demand, the symbolism imbued in a material is just as important as the material’s physical and chemical properties. The prestige associated with aluminium’s use with aircraft did not necessarily translate to everyday objects such as saucepans.<sup>565</sup> Despite these reservations, the number of aluminium pots and pans in most homes, including Beleura, multiplied from the 1920s until relatively recently.

The meaning that appears to have been successfully conveyed is one of modernity. Schatzberg concludes, “Key to the faith in aluminum’s future was the metal’s symbolic association with modernity and the ideology of technological progress.”<sup>566</sup> Technological progress was at the heart of the domestic science movement and as such, the perceived benefits of aluminium cookware were consistent with the objective of making the kitchen into an efficient workplace. Aluminium cookware was popular for a very long time, with Schatzberg identifying the 1950s as the “golden years” for the metal.<sup>567</sup> In the 1980s, concerns about greenhouse gas emissions and climate change led to a reassessment of aluminium, in particular the metal’s embodied energy.<sup>568</sup> These issues have become even more prominent in recent years, with alternatives being canvassed for a whole range of aluminium products in an attempt to reduce global carbon dioxide emissions. Other concerns about the potential connection between the long-

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<sup>563</sup> Worden, 155.

<sup>564</sup> Eric Schatzberg, “Symbolic Culture and Technological Change: The cultural History of Aluminium as an Industrial Material,” *Enterprise and Society* 4, June (2003): 226.

<sup>565</sup> Schatzberg, 230.

<sup>566</sup> Schatzberg, 235.

<sup>567</sup> Schatzberg, 240.

<sup>568</sup> Note: Embodied energy is the energy required to manufacture a material. The electrolytic process for refining aluminium requires large amounts of electricity, mostly derived from fossil fuels. This is a major source of greenhouse gas emissions in many countries including Australia.

term ingestion of traces of aluminium in the diet and the early onset of Alzheimer's disease may also have tarnished the image of aluminium in the minds of consumers.<sup>569</sup>

These are modern concerns and thinking back to the 1930s it is easy to sense the relief that must have been experienced by Beleura's cook, when she finally put down her heavy cast iron pots and felt the almost impossible lightness of the new aluminium cookware.<sup>570</sup> This may be another testament to the Tallis family's concern for the health and welfare of their staff or perhaps evidence of the lobbying power of the cook. It is worthwhile returning to the arresting and poignant description of food history research conducted by Megan Elias in New York tenements, as summoning "the food ghosts, the long ago essences within the cooking pots, cupboards, and soup bowls."<sup>571</sup> Saucepans are full of meaning and examining them draws us close to the family who ate food from them.

Christina Hardyment asserts that the technological and social changes that impinged on kitchens and cooking during the early to mid-twentieth century essentially ended the long established culinary practices of Britain's great country houses. With a tone of nostalgia, Hardyment observes, "Larders shrank into refrigerators, sculleries to dishwashing machines and copper batteries de cuisine into a set of Teflon coated pans. The lofty kitchens fell cold."<sup>572</sup> The Teflon pans and dishwasher may have come later at Beleura, but similar changes significantly altered both kitchen design and technology during this inter-war period. The transition to aluminium cookware in the 1930s was a strong indication that Beleura was embracing the modern world and turning its back on the past, at least as far as cooking was concerned.

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<sup>569</sup> Mary A.M. Rogers and David G. Simon, "A Preliminary Study of Dietary Aluminium Intake and Risk of Alzheimer's Disease," *Age and Aging* 28 (1999): 205.

<sup>570</sup> Note: A more likely scenario is that the retirement of cast iron cooking pots occurred much earlier with the introduction of enamelled steelware, but as there are no examples at Beleura and no documents which mention them, this intermediate step to aluminium cookware cannot be confirmed.

<sup>571</sup> Megan Elias, "Summoning Food Ghosts: Food History as Public History," *The Public Historian* 34, No.2 (2012):15.

<sup>572</sup> Hardyment, 169.



### 3.5 Serving food at Beleura

It was appropriate in the previous chapter to focus on the style of food service because of the significant transition that had occurred over the nineteenth century from *service à la française* to *service à la russe*. However, in the inter-war years after the Tallis family purchased Beleura, it is more revealing to consider where the serving took place. Beleura has a beautiful and spacious formal dining room, which was no doubt used to spectacular effect at dinner parties, but in the photographic record, the family is more often shown consuming meals on the front lawn or away from the house entirely on picnics.

*In Search of the Sun* includes a brief description by Bidy Carnegie of formal dinner parties at Beleura: “A butler supervised the staff while they served dinner, which was always a very formal affair; dinner jackets for men and long frocks for the women.”<sup>573</sup> She also recalls some dinners being prepared by two Italian chefs who were hired for special occasions to supplement Beleura staff.<sup>574</sup> It is worth remembering that the operation of Beleura during the inter-war years was still firmly Victorian. Patsy Kirk remembered these dinner parties as events where the children were strictly confined to the area allocated to children and staff; that is, on the kitchen side of the green baize doors.<sup>575</sup> These doors, common in many Victorian households, are located between the vestibule (room 14) and the long hallway (room 7) and mark the division between the living and working areas of staff (and the children also at Beleura, who had their own exit door from the vestibule) and the rest of the family. Children were sometimes invited to join family and guests in the dining room and entertainment areas, but rarely according to Kirk.

The valuation records show that there was more than enough expensive crockery, glassware and cutlery to host lavish dinner parties in the formal style. The 1948 valuation lists a fifty piece Royal Worcester dinner set, fifty pieces of Tuscan china, fifty piece Johnson Brothers dinner set, thirty piece set of Booths china, forty-six crystal glasses of varying sizes and a veritable armory of electroplate silver cutlery and utensils.<sup>576</sup> It is worth bearing in mind that a

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<sup>573</sup> Tallis, Tallis and Knight, 124.

<sup>574</sup> Tallis, Tallis and Knight, 124.

<sup>575</sup> Personal communication with Ms Patsy Kirk (née Tallis).

<sup>576</sup> “Valuation of Furniture and Personal Effects Contained in ‘Beleura’ Esplanade Mornington – in the Estate of the Late Sir George Tallis.”

fifty piece set of china would be about eight dinner places. The extended dining room table would have been comfortable with eight people seated.

The recipe cards referred to in detail in the last section also give an insight into formal dinners. On the reverse side of the 21 February 1928 dinner menu card is a place setting for the hostess (Figure 26).<sup>577</sup> This dinner pre-dates Dorothy Tallis's residence at Beleura but may give an indication of the serving style that she later followed. The drawing shows a place for a large bread and butter plate, a chop plate and a potato dish, indicating that the hostess was to pass the food around to guests rather than for the guests to be served ready plated meals. People served themselves from the communal plates, showing a degree of informality. Only a waterglass is shown in the place setting, raising the question of whether wine or other alcoholic drinks were served at the meal. If the drawing was made in America before Dorothy moved to Australia, then it is highly unlikely that the place setting would have included alcoholic drinks, as the country was then in the grip of Prohibition. On 17 January 1920, the Eighteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution enacted a prohibition of essentially all alcohol consumption. Serving alcohol was an offence until the act was repealed in 1933.<sup>578</sup> Sir George and Lady Tallis would have experienced Prohibition on their trips to the U.S.A. in the 1920s, but the collection of various types of crystal glasses listed in the 1948 valuation, including some described as "hock glasses", would suggest that they enjoyed wine with their meals at Beleura.<sup>579</sup> The place setting drawing also shows a complex array of cutlery. Apart from the normal personal knife, fork and spoon, there is also a set of larger hostess serving implements (knife, fork and spoon). The American origin of these cards is once again emphasized by the inclusion of the small salad fork, even though no salad is listed in the menu. Perhaps an appetizer salad is assumed.

Biddy Carnegie also recorded an account of afternoon teas, following the family's favourite summer activity, lawn bowls: "Delicious afternoon teas were wheeled out on to the verandah or across the drive to the bowling green by Shirley or Christina who were part of the Beleura

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<sup>577</sup> 43 hand-typed recipe cards. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>578</sup> Linda Civitello, *Cuisine and Culture – A History of Food and People* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 324.

<sup>579</sup> "Valuation of Furniture and Personal Effects Contained in 'Beleura' Esplanade Mornington – in the Estate of the Late Sir George Tallis."

staff at that time.”<sup>580</sup> There are numerous photographs in the Beleura archive of the family enjoying tea on the lawn, usually served from an auto tray. The auto tray was very well used at Beleura and consisted of a three level, wooden trolley on wheels (Figure 29). A photograph shows the family utilizing the auto tray with the top level laden with tea and coffee pots, the middle tray supporting a variety of cakes on plates and the lower level with used cups and plates (Figure 30). Dorothy Tallis was so fond of the auto tray that she gave one to Shirley, the long-term parlourmaid, as a present when she married Frank Thompson in 1940.<sup>581</sup> Having wheeled the heavily laden trolley across the lawn regularly during her service at Beleura, one can imagine that Shirley may not have considered it the most welcome gift. Coffee making appears to have been something of a passion at Beleura, perhaps again reflecting an American influence. Several interesting devices were available to brew the beverage at Beleura, including an English Cona glass, vacuum coffee maker and a collection of French made filter coffee pots in various sizes. The Salam filter coffee pots are made of electroplate silver in two parts (the upper part containing the filter element), with dark red Bakelite handles (Figure 31). They were an early type of plunger or French Press. Both types of coffee maker probably date from the 1930s.

An intriguing extension to morning/afternoon tea or coffee is the early morning wake-up beverage. Sir George had the perfect solution to the delivery of his morning cup of tea in the form of another piece of new technology from the 1930s, the Teasmade (Figure 32). The concept of having a boiling water kettle and teapot assembly designed for bedside use, originated with a design by Samuel Rowbottom in England in 1891. This pioneering device was fueled by gas and needed a clock which was later added by James Alfred Greenhalgh in 1893. The clock started the water boiling at a predetermined time, providing a morning cup of tea automatically. The first electrically powered bedside tea-maker was designed by George Absolom in 1932, now with a reading light, and was sold under the new name, Teasmade. In 1936, Goblin bought the rights to the device and changed the name to the now familiar, Teasmade. The unit at Beleura is a Goblin Teasmade, made in the United Kingdom between 1936 and World War II, when production was temporarily stopped.<sup>582</sup> The interesting question is why did Sir George need a Teasmade when he had more than enough staff to make him a

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<sup>580</sup> Tallis, Tallis and Knight, 124.

<sup>581</sup> Letter from Dorothy Tallis to Shirley Trewin, Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>582</sup> Teasmade, “Teasmade History,” Teasmade, <http://www.teasmade.com/history.php> (accessed March 27, 2014)

cup of tea when he awoke from his late nights at the theatre? Perhaps he preferred his privacy in the morning, or else it may be another example of Sir George's love of new technology. He seemed very willing to embrace new technology, whether it be a new car, refrigerator or in this case, an automated tea-maker.

Mention must be made of cocktails, consumed as a preamble to formal gatherings or relaxed sundowners on the colonnaded Beleura verandah. The 1948 valuation lists twelve crystal cocktail glasses in the Beleura inventory for the dining room.<sup>583</sup> Joyce Tallis, Pat's wife, admired Lady Tallis's skill with the cocktail shaker: "Lady Tallis mixed the most superb Martinis. I can see her now, standing there and shaking away like crazy. She was an utterly delightful woman with great charm as had Sir George, who could charm a bird off a tree."<sup>584</sup> Cocktails were a feature of the Art Deco era and a beautiful electroplate silver cocktail shaker at Beleura is typical of this design movement. Made by London firm Farrow & Jackson, probably in the late 1920s, it includes a top filling aperture with silver lid, a pouring spout with cork stopper and in the lower half of the shaker a separate cavity accessible through a threaded plug in the base. The lower section is filled with ice or ice water for cooling the contents of the shaker (Figure 33).<sup>585</sup> The availability of ice, originally naturally sourced but later the product of refrigeration, led to the development of cocktail shakers. Dublin beverage historian James Murphy argues that they evolved from silver teapots and were regarded in the early twentieth century as a "symbol of elegance".<sup>586</sup> Cocktails can be traced to the early nineteenth century, originating in the triangular region of the United States around Boston, Albany and New York.<sup>587</sup> They became very popular worldwide and reached their height of popularity between the World Wars. Murphy contends that following World War II cocktails "helped to replace sacrifice with party-going pleasures."<sup>588</sup> Joseph M. Carlin, author of *Cocktails: A Global History*, asserts, "The cocktail is a civilized drink for smart, hip and

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<sup>583</sup> "Valuation of Furniture and Personal Effects Contained in 'Beleura' Esplanade Mornington – in the Estate of the Late Sir George Tallis."

<sup>584</sup> Tallis, Tallis and Knight, 121.

<sup>585</sup> Silver and Grey, "An unusual vintage cocktail shaker." Silver and Grey, <http://www.silver-and-grey.com/vintage/2014/01/an-unusual-vintage-cocktail-shaker-the-igene-by-farrow-jackson.html> (accessed March 24, 2014)

<sup>586</sup> James Murphy, "Shaken not Stirred – the Evolution of the Cocktail Shaker" (paper presented at the 1<sup>st</sup> Dublin Gastronomy Symposium, College of Arts and Tourism, Dublin. June 5-6, 2012), 5.

<sup>587</sup> David Wondrich, *Imbibe* (New York: Penguin Group U.S.A., 2007), 179.

<sup>588</sup> Murphy, 10.

enlightened people.”<sup>589</sup> Cocktail culture would certainly have been totally consistent with the theatrical world inhabited by Sir George and Lady Tallis and it is not difficult to imagine elegantly dressed guests sipping cocktails at Beleura. By the 1960s the cocktail had ceased to be fashionable, only to be resurrected in the twenty-first century with people nostalgic for more glamorous times.<sup>590</sup>

Lady Tallis’s martinis would have contained the mandatory gin and dry vermouth, but some commentators argue that this popular cocktail possesses a symbolism well beyond those simple ingredients. David Wondrich asserts that the dry martini is a “quintessentially American contraption”, “flashy and a little bit vulgar”, inducing “an unreflective overconfidence”.<sup>591</sup> Wondrich also argues that the electricity required to produce the ice, which is briefly used to cool the cocktail and is then discarded, is typical of America’s profligate use of natural resources.<sup>592</sup> American food writer and Manhattan cocktail aficionado James Villas has written a hopefully tongue-in-cheek comparison between Manhattan and Martini drinkers:

Contrary to what some might have you believe, devoted Martini fanciers still slug down their silver bullets day and night: at lunch, in the office, after work in bars, throughout a meal, and whenever a situation calls for getting smashed. Urbane Manhattan aficionados, on the other hand, make a veritable ritual of their cocktail, rarely indulging anytime except right before dinner, never exceeding more than two drinks, and generally respecting the object of their bibulous passion as the genteel but powerful aristocrat that it is.<sup>593</sup>

Cocktail enthusiasts are clearly passionate people and if Lady Tallis shared that passion then that may lead to another possible reason for the purchase of the Frigidaire at Beleura; to provide ice for making the perfect martini.<sup>594</sup>

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<sup>589</sup> Joseph M. Carlin, *Cocktails: A Global History* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2012), 9.

<sup>590</sup> Murphy, 7.

<sup>591</sup> Wondrich, 168.

<sup>592</sup> Wondrich, 168.

<sup>593</sup> James Villas, “A Few Choice Words about the Manhattan,” in *The Penguin Book of Food and Drink*, edited by Paul Levy, 43 (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1996).

<sup>594</sup> Note: While the Martini is a blend of roughly three parts gin to one part dry vermouth, the Manhattan is two parts American Bourbon whiskey, one part Italian sweet vermouth and a dash of bitters.

Having examined the service of meals in-doors, then on the lawn, the next consideration is meals served away from Beleura entirely – the picnic and its perfect accompaniment, the fitted picnic basket.

### 3.5.1 Artifact evaluation 6 – Coracle fitted picnic basket

**Identification:** The Coracle fitted picnic set was made in England in the 1930s and consists of a wicker basket with lid attached by leather hinges and secured with leather straps and buckles (Figure 34). It measures 60cm long, 40cm wide and 25cm high; inside the case, the lid is lined with green leather. Leather straps hold cutlery, a set of six knives (Made in England, Coracle Firth stainless steel, with plastic handles), six forks and six teaspoons, all stainless steel. There are six green hard plastic plates, six green plastic teacups with handles and saucers, three green plastic tumblers (no handles) and three cream Thermos lids probably used as additional cups. The set also includes a green plastic salt and pepper set, two green plastic lidded condiment jars and three rectangular sandwich tins with green metal lids. Also included is a bottle opener marked *Ballarat Bitter* and a maroon Thermos insulating flask of modern design. Advertisements from the 1930s and 1940s show similar Coracle sets containing two Thermos flasks, but these original pieces have been lost or broken and replaced with the modern equivalent. There are three early Thermos flasks in the dresser in the working kitchen at Beleura (room 18), all good candidates for originally being part of the Coracle picnic basket. This particular Coracle picnic basket is one of two at Beleura, the other probably made earlier, as it has enamel plates rather than plastic.

**Context analysis:** A *Sydney Morning Herald* advertisement declared that Coracle picnic sets were “Not just picnic sets, but picnic sets from the most famous manufacturer in England. Everything including the teaspoons, knives and forks, plates, tins and the basket or case is made under one roof. Each piece is a speciality. These are the picnic sets that pop open in the grouse land of Scotland and at England’s smartest point-to-point meetings.”<sup>595</sup> A later advertisement from the Sydney department store Anthony Hordens made a special Christmas

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<sup>595</sup> “New English Picnic Sets at Pre-War Prices,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, September 13, 1941, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

appeal for the Coracle picnic set: “Ideal for that Christmas Picnic! For those who like a little incidental comfort with their ants and sand flies.”<sup>596</sup>

The green plastic, from which the items in the picnic set are made, is a thermosetting plastic with the proprietary name of Bandalasta. Following on from the success of Bakelite, a thiourea formaldehyde resin was discovered by Edmund Rossiter in 1924, while working for the British Cyanides Company. This thermosetting alternative to Bakelite became known as Bandalasta and was formed into a wide range of products.<sup>597</sup> Brookes and Adams of Birmingham took over production of Bandalasta in 1925. Like Catalin, Bandalasta was useful because it was heat-proof, durable and could emulate more expensive, natural materials such as porphyry and onyx, which, according to one contemporary article, it did “with nauseating effect.”<sup>598</sup> Most commonly, it was produced in a range of solid colours, cream or marbled effects. Coracle picnic sets began being made with Bandalasta plates from about 1935. Some Coracle sets were made under contract for Harrods of London.<sup>599</sup>

Boiling the billy was an integral part of the picnic experience, but the invention of the Thermos flask made the ritual redundant. The vacuum flask was invented in 1892 by James Dewar, an Oxford University scientist. The principle of the Thermos flask is that of a double skin evacuated glass vessel, which prevents heat transfer from or to the hot or cold fluid contained within. The first commercial production began in 1904, when two German glass blowers founded Thermos GmbH. In 1907 they sold the business to three companies, located in America, England and in Canada, which took responsibility for manufacture in their respective regions. In 1928 Pyrex glass was used for the first time to make the flask even more durable. The company continues to make the flasks today, based on the same principle.<sup>600</sup> A Thermos flask became an essential picnic basket inclusion.

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<sup>596</sup> “Ideal for that Christmas Picnic!” *Sydney Morning Herald*, December 3, 1948, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>597</sup> Mossman, 594.

<sup>598</sup> *Times*, “Pretty Polymers,” October 8, 1994.

<sup>599</sup> Applecroft, “Bandalasta Picnic Sets,” Applecroft, <http://www.applecroft.co.uk/bandalasta/picnic.htm> (accessed February 25, 2014)

<sup>600</sup> Thermos LLC, “Our History,” Thermos LLC, <http://www.thermos.com/history.aspx> (accessed March 28, 2014)

The motivation for the fitted picnic set was the personal mobility created by the increasing popularity of the motor car. Many brands such as Coracle tailored the basket or case to fit the boot space of specific cars. What to pack on a picnic is a matter of debate, but Barbara Santich argues that in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, sandwiches were the mainstay of the picnic, but other food such as hard boiled eggs, tarts and fruit were also popular.<sup>601</sup> The lidded tins in the Coracle basket are clearly purpose made for the ubiquitous sandwich. Mrs C.F. Leyel and Miss Olga Hartley in their influential book, *The Gentle Art of Cookery*, published in 1925, suggest, “There is as much art in making sandwiches as in preparing a French menu, and many hostesses who offer their friends indifferently cooked but pretentious lunches could, with far less trouble, gain an epicurean reputation if they were content with the simplicity of wine and sandwiches.”<sup>602</sup> American food historian Walter Levy maintains that while there may be considerable difference of opinion as to the picnic menu, one overriding principle is that “more is better.”<sup>603</sup> Levy cites a literary illustration of this principle from Kenneth Grahame’s *The Wind in the Willows*, when Water Rat recites to Mole the contents of his picnic basket:

‘There’s cold chicken inside it,’ replied the Rat briefly;  
‘coldtonguecoldhamcoldbeefpickledgherkinssaladfrenchrollscresssandwichespotted  
meatgingerbeerlemonadesodawater-’  
‘O stop, stop,’ cried the Mole in ecstasies: ‘This is too much!’  
‘Do you really think so?’ inquired the Rat seriously. ‘It’s only what I always take on  
these little excursions; and the other animals are always telling me that I’m a mean  
beast and cut it *very fine!*’<sup>604</sup>

**Interpretation:** Sir George Tallis was a serious motoring enthusiast who at various times owned a 1904 Humberette, a 1905 De Dion Bouton, a 1920 Marmon, a c1930 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> litre Bentley and his last car, a 1938 MG saloon, the last three being perfect for carrying a large picnic basket.<sup>605</sup> A photograph in the Beleura archive shows Sir George and his son Pat enjoying lunch in the Gippsland bush from a picnic basket similar to the Coracle set (Figure

<sup>601</sup> Santich, *Bold Palates: Australia’s Gastronomic Heritage*, 100.

<sup>602</sup> Mrs C.F. Leyel and Miss Olga Hartley. *The Gentle Art of Cookery* (London: Quadrile Publishing Limited, 2011. Originally published 1925), 335.

<sup>603</sup> Walter Levy, *The Picnic – A History* (Lanham, Maryland: AltaMira Press, 2014), 24.

<sup>604</sup> Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows* (New York: Borders Press, 2000), 11.

<sup>605</sup> Knight, 53.



35). This particular journey was with the Marmon. Sir George in suit, tie and hat is enthusiastically consuming what appears to be some variety of open tart or pie. In his other hand is a cup of tea, presumably made from hot water carried in the picnic set's Thermos flask. The satisfied expression on Sir George's face appears to confirm that he was very fond of picnics. Perhaps it was his love of driving and passion for the motor car, together with a desire to get away from business every so often that made the picnic set such a well-used item at Beleura. Picnics have had an almost universal appeal since the early twentieth century, particularly as an escape from urban life. Levy observes, "The outdoor picnic thrives because it gets people away from their routine and workaday living."<sup>606</sup> Santich elaborates and suggests that picnics were "from the earliest days, a pastime for the masses as well as social entertainment for the upper classes. It was associated with leisure and holidays; it was also a way of coming to terms with the bush, of appreciating a different aspect of nature."<sup>607</sup>

The term *picnic*, is thought to have come from the French word, *pique-nique*, although it originally meant dining indoors.<sup>608</sup> It appears to have been the English who transformed both the word and its meaning, such that a *picnic* was definitely outdoor dining. Levy identifies Jane Austen as one of the first literary users of the term, with two outdoor picnics occurring in Austen's novel *Emma* (1816).<sup>609</sup> Mobility is the key to the appeal of the picnic. French gastronome Julia Csergo claims that a picnic suggests "a rustic and rural meal or a meal on the grass, an informal meal associated with relaxation, freedom, a pause and pleasure."<sup>610</sup> While a picnic can occur in any location and within any cultural framework, Csergo defines the essence of a picnic as "eating out of doors, when people take their food along with them."<sup>611</sup> Santich adds that for many, the picnic is an opportunity to deliberately seek out locations of natural beauty.<sup>612</sup> Levy proposes, "Usually a picnic in a green place reinforces the cathartic desire to be in a natural setting, and picnics on grass or a lawn, in a park grove or a

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<sup>606</sup> Levy, 45.

<sup>607</sup> Santich, 78.

<sup>608</sup> Levy, 35.

<sup>609</sup> Levy, 17.

<sup>610</sup> Julia Csergo, "The Picnic in Nineteenth Century France – A Social Event Involving Food: Both a Necessity and a Form of Entertainment," in *Eating Out in Europe: Picnics, Gourmet Dining and Snacks in the Late Eighteenth Century*, edited by Marc Jacobs and Peter Scholliers, 139 (Oxford: Berg, 2003).

<sup>611</sup> Csergo, 139.

<sup>612</sup> Santich, 81.

forest are the prevailing environments.”<sup>613</sup> For wealthy people such as the Tallis family it may also have been a time to relax away from the formality and attention of servants.

What then can be the meaning of the fitted picnic basket in this context? The picnic set is more than a simple basket; it is fitted with straps and containers to organize the food, plates and utensils and make the process of serving the meal more convenient and efficient. In this way it is the outdoor equivalent of the indoor domestic science inspired kitchen of the 1920s. The ever-ready nature of the fitted picnic basket is a constant reminder of the ability to escape. Everything in its place, just add food and off you go to another more pleasant environment. The fear of forgetting something on a picnic appears to have been one motivation for buying a picnic set. A David Jones department store advertisement warns, “Christmas should mean the happiest of picnics, with hours spent out of doors, but a picnic can mean work ending in frayed tempers, unless there is a fitted picnic case handy.”<sup>614</sup> Domestic efficiency as the source of health, happiness and contentment was a powerful message for the housewife of the inter-war period, both on the picnic rug as well as in the kitchen.

The electric refrigerator and aluminium cookware, considered in the previous artifact evaluations of this chapter, were the result of new technology. The fitted picnic basket in this evaluation is no exception. The invention of thermoplastic materials such as Bakelite and Bandalasta made heat and breakage resistant utensils possible and the Thermos flask, based on an innovative thermodynamic principle, provided picnickers with their hot cup of tea. The association of the picnic set with the motor car also ensured that it retained its relevance in a world that was becoming increasingly dependent on personal motorized transport.

### **3.6 Beleura under the Tallis family during the inter-war period**

In the early Tallis era there are still no documents that describe actual meals or entertaining at Beleura. However, there are two cookbooks that were used in the household and a unique set of hand-typed recipe cards belonging to Dorothy Tallis, which together provide a tantalizing glimpse into how food may have been prepared during this period. The oral testimony of Patsy Kirk is a very valuable aid to understanding both the spatial and social arrangements at

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<sup>613</sup> Levy, 48.

<sup>614</sup> “How to be happy on a picnic,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, December 6, 1950, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

Beleura, as seen through the eyes and memory of a young girl growing up in the household in the 1930s. We are also very fortunate to have a house full of artifacts, many from this period, which create a powerful impression of domestic life at Beleura. It is not an unambiguous impression and it is often difficult to unravel the meaning of everyday artifacts, but without them, our understanding of culinary practices at Beleura would be very deficient.

The early Tallis period at Beleura was dominated by turbulent world events; World War I and II with the Great Depression in between. George and Amelia Tallis purchased Beleura in 1916, when Australia was grimly immersed in World War I. The house provided a comfortable place of rest and recreation for the family and an elegant setting for Sir George to entertain guests from the theatrical world in which he played a dominant managerial role. This was a time of great social, cultural and technological change; a time when the domestic environment was to alter forever for most families. Servants were common in the nineteenth century in middle and upper-class homes, but after World War I domestic labour was difficult to source as workers accepted better paying jobs in factories and offices. A new role was created, that of the housewife, who took over the responsibility of running the household and along with it, a whole set of expectations about health, cleanliness and efficiency that were derived from a domestic science movement originating in the United States, which swept the world in the 1920s. Fortunately, technology came to the aid of the housewife, with the development of a range of labour-saving appliances, made possible by the rapidly increasing connection of homes to electricity and gas supplies. While some commentators claim that any time or work saved was merely redeployed in meeting new standards of hygiene and child care, the marketing and sale of new appliances was relentless, with refrigerators, electric and gas stoves, vacuum cleaners and a host of small electrical devices introduced to many homes.

In 1916, Beleura was typically Victorian in layout and function and remained that way mostly until 1948. While it was not immune to the changes occurring in this period, Beleura resisted many. The service area rooms had familiar Victorian household functions such as the scullery, pantry, larder and housemaid's pantry. Servants were retained through the inter-war period, with Sir George building new accommodation at Beleura for staff. Food was still mostly cooked on the solid fuel, cast iron range by the live-in cook. Evidence seems to point to the installation of a new AGA cooker in front of the old nineteenth-century range. This would

have led to a significant reduction in fuel use. The connection of electricity to Beleura came late compared to many homes in Victoria, but when it did come in 1926, Sir George and Lady Tallis installed a large Frigidaire refrigerator, central heating, an electric stove, an electric motor pumped water supply and a number of small electric appliances. The Tallis family maintained the function of most rooms, with a clear division between servant and children's activity areas and the rooms used by the rest of the family and for entertaining. The room that was changed most during this period was the housemaid's pantry which, with the installation of the refrigerator and electric stove, started on the transition to becoming the working kitchen. The refrigerator was no doubt a great help in storing fresh produce from the garden and orchard, but the Fowlers Vacola bottling kit was also much in demand for preserving food.

Along with new technology came new materials such as aluminium and thermoplastics such as Bakelite and Bandalasta. Heavy cast iron pots were set aside in favour of lighter, easier to clean, aluminium cookware. Plastics were used for lightweight, heat resistant handles and plates for the picnics that the Tallis family regularly enjoyed. The casing for the Teasmade that automatically delivered Sir George's morning cup of tea by his bedside each day was made from a plastic material, as were the casings of radios that dominated household entertainment of the era.

In the majority of homes, these technological advances allowed the housewife to cope with domestic duties without the assistance of servants. In the wealthy and privileged Tallis family, this was not a priority, so the adoption of these new appliances must have been for other reasons. It is clear that the Tallis family was a good, responsible employer with many staff remaining with the family for years. The introduction of modern technology may have partly been to improve the working conditions of staff. I also argue that Sir George, in particular, embraced the modernism of the inter-war era and loved motor cars and other expressions of technology.

If Dorothy Tallis's recipe cards are indicative of the food prepared at Beleura, then family meals were relatively simple and dinner parties unostentatious. The food at Beleura appears to have been generally consistent with dietary practices in Australia at the time, largely following the English cooking tradition, with meat predominating and vegetables playing a supporting

role. Food was served formally in the dining room on occasions, but the Beleura garden was also regularly used for casual meals and afternoon teas. Cocktails, which were very popular in the Art Deco era of the 1930s, were a regular feature of entertaining at Beleura and no doubt contributing to a sense of style and occasion for visitors.

In 1948, Sir George Tallis died and to avoid the property being sold, John Tallis decided to take over Beleura and to make it his home. It was a decision that would secure the future of Beleura and lead to further evolution of food and cooking.



*Figure 17. Hunting party at Beleura c1920s. Sir George Tallis centre, Lady Tallis on the right  
Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection*



*Figure 18. Sir George Tallis c1928  
Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection*



*Figure 19. Sir George Tallis with his 1920 Marmon  
Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection*



*Figure 20. Lady Tallis, Charlie Chaplin and Sunday Millicent (Biddy) Tallis, c1925  
Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection*

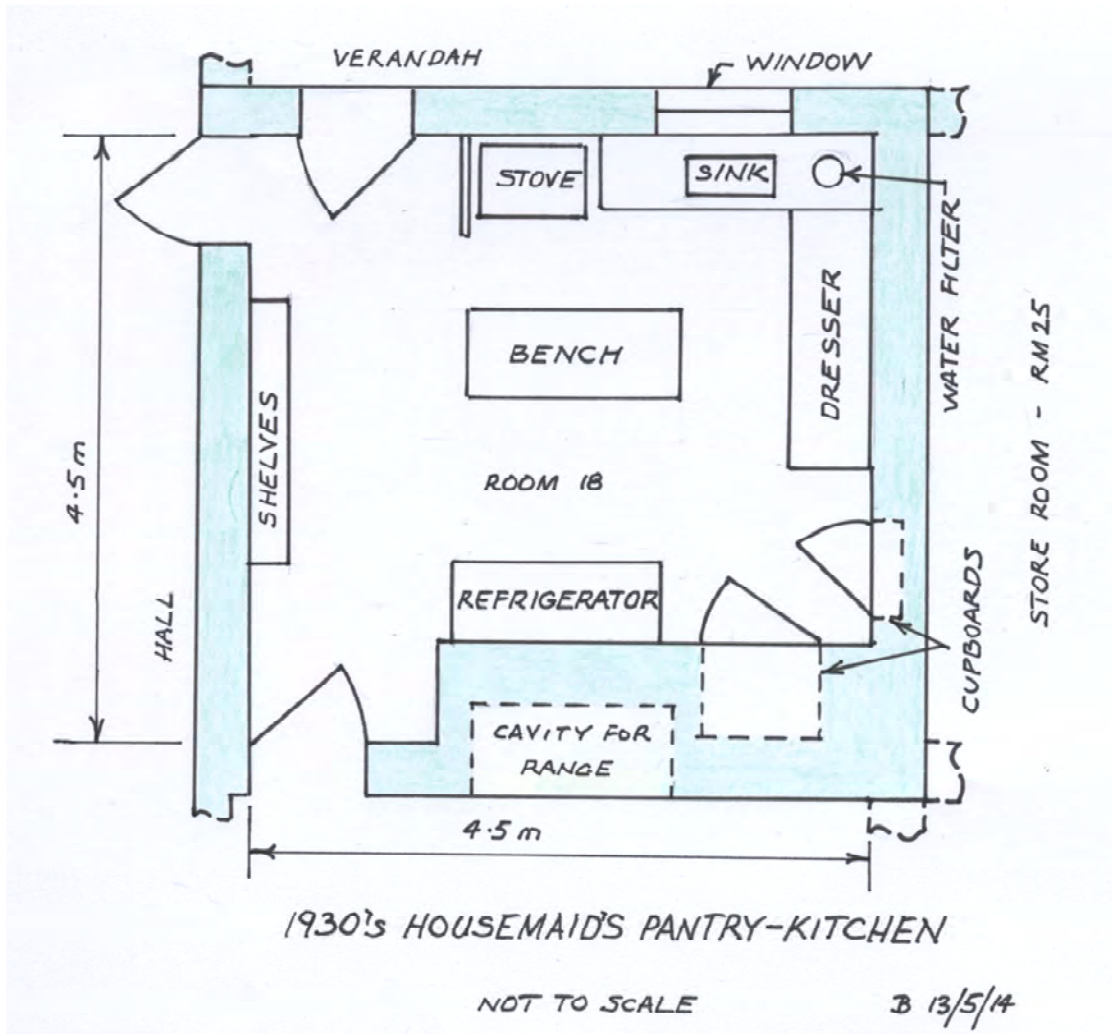


Figure 21. Floor plan of working kitchen (Housemaid's pantry)  
 Source: Drawing by Iain Buckland





*Figure 22. Frigidaire refrigerator in the working kitchen at Beleura  
Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland*



*Figure 23. Ice maker and freezer space in Frigidaire refrigerator  
Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland*

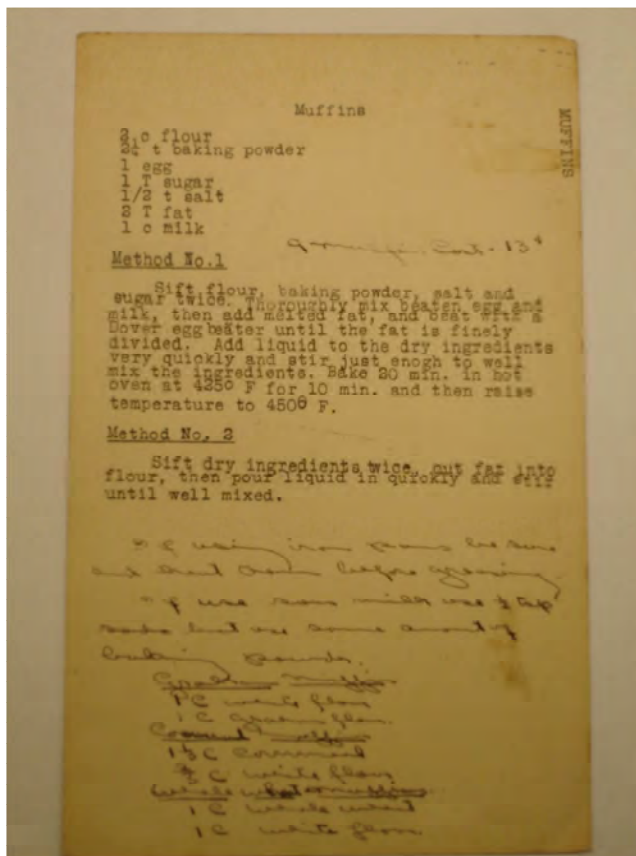


Figure 24. Dorothy Tallis typed recipe card with hand-written notes  
 Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection

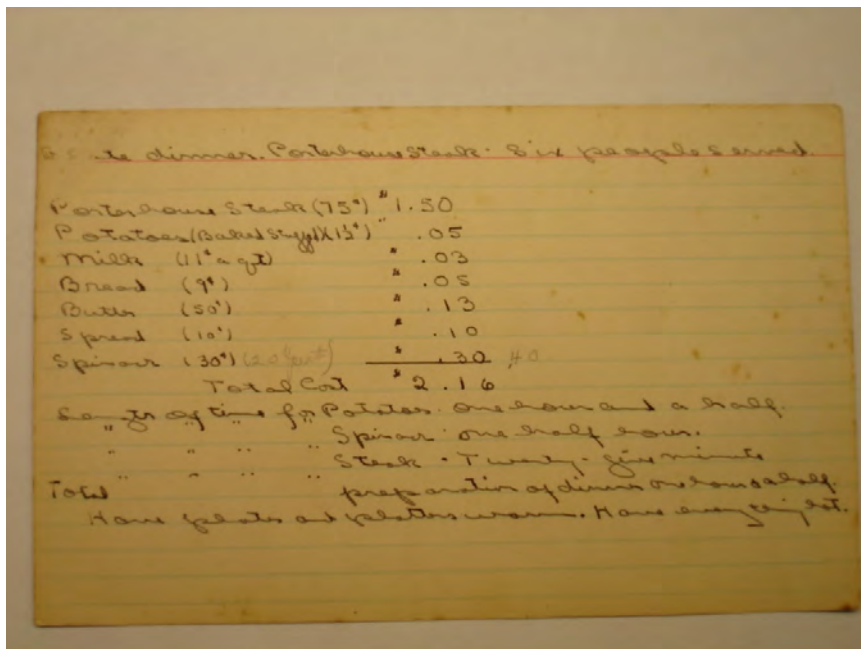


Figure 25. Costed dinner party menu for six people  
 Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection

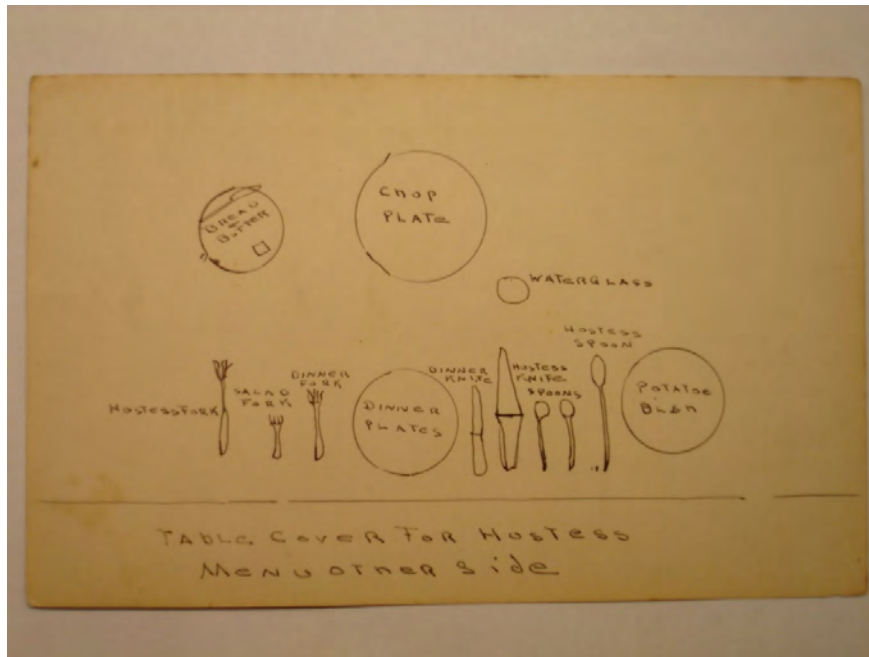
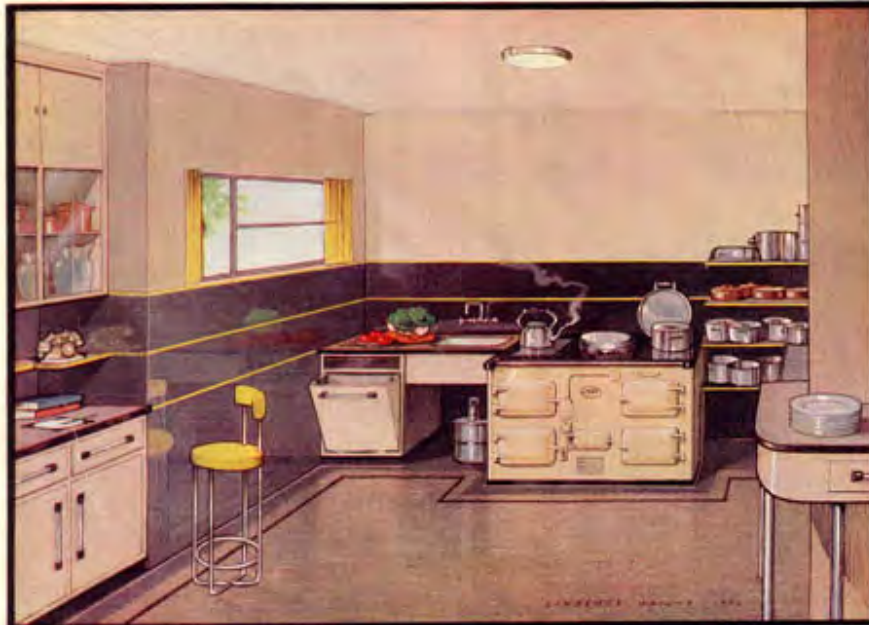


Figure 26. Place setting design for dinner party 21 February 1928  
Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection



Figure 27. Aluminium saucepans in the working kitchen at Beleura  
Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland

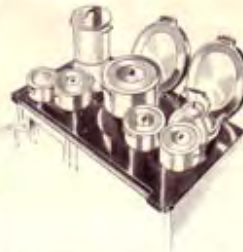


Kitchen design by Mrs. Daisy Braddell.

Photograph by Lawrence Wright.

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This model fits in, in addition to a broiling plate and simmering plate, a large flat griddle 17 1/2" x 12" of polished stainless. Maintained automatically at a constant temperature, it greatly increases the effective cooking area.

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Here's a cool and collected kitchen designed by Mrs. Daisy Braddell. The small sink beside the cooker is for cook's convenience. Plenty of cupboards too, a big window and nowhere for dust or dirt to collect. Let this well-known woman designer help you. Write to the address below for the folders which give full details, plans and elevations of these contemporary kitchens. They are free and so is the Aga Book which goes with them. Send for them now.

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 (Incorporated in England)  
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 Showrooms - 20, North Audley Street, W.1.  
 (Just opp. Selfridge's) Phone - MAYfair 5131 (4 lines)

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Figure 28. AGA advertisement from a 1934 edition of Punch magazine  
 Source: AGA Central, [http://www.agacentral.com/images/ephemera6/aga-ad\\_large.jpg](http://www.agacentral.com/images/ephemera6/aga-ad_large.jpg)



*Figure 29. Wooden auto tray in the working kitchen  
Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland*



*Figure 30. Tallis family and friends enjoying tea on the front lawn at Beleura  
Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection*



*Figure 31. Salam French press coffee pots  
Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland*



*Figure 32. Teasmade by Goblin with Susie Cooper crockery in Sir George's bedroom  
Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland*



*Figure 33. Farrow and Jackson silver plated cocktail shaker  
Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection*



*Figure 34. Coracle fitted picnic set  
Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland*



*Figure 35. Sir George and Jeffery Andrew (Pat) Tallis having a picnic c1928  
Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection*



*Figure 36. Biddy Carnegie (née Tallis) and friends at the Mornington races with picnic basket c1945  
Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection*



## CHAPTER 4. THE POST-WORLD WAR II YEARS (1948–1970)

### 4.1 Following the death of Sir George Tallis, John Tallis inherits ownership of Beleura

Jack Morton Tallis, known as John, was born in Melbourne on 15 December 1911, the youngest child of Sir George and Amelia, Lady Tallis. John Tallis was destined to be the musical member of this entertainment focused family. Sir George no doubt had ambitions that his son would write music for the family theatrical business and from an early age encouraged his study of piano and composition. In 1929, John Tallis embarked on a sea voyage to Europe that would change his life. In Paris he studied composition with the famous organist Marcel Dupré and piano with Henri Etlin, who was reputed to have been a pupil of one of Chopin's students (Figure 37).<sup>615</sup> In 1931 Tallis moved from Paris to London to study at the Royal College of Music. He would spend, on and off, most of the 1930s in Europe acquiring not only musical skills, but also a preference for European culture, which would later manifest itself in his taste for architecture, art, garden design and even food. On his 1929 voyage, the *S.S. Otranto* called into Naples and Tallis wrote in his diary, "I can see myself coming back to Naples to have a real look around. There is something about it that fascinates me."<sup>616</sup> This fascination with Italy and Italian culture lasted a lifetime. One of his favourite books was *The Leopard*, by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, the story of a wealthy, aristocratic Italian family in decline. Tallis regularly read the book over his life time and saw the film after its release in 1963. Perhaps he empathized with the principal character, the Prince of Salina, and saw something of the Tallis family in the story.

John Tallis applied his European musical education primarily to composing music for the piano and for scores to accompany ballet performances. Australian music historian Joel Crotty maintains that the post-war period was a particularly productive time for Tallis, with the completion of five original ballet scores between 1946 and 1952 ranging in instrumentation from solo piano to full orchestra. Sadly, it was not until the 1990s that this achievement was

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<sup>615</sup> Michael Tallis, Joan Tallis and Sue Knight. *In Search of the Sun* (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1988), 136.

<sup>616</sup> John Tallis, "The Adventures of a Musician in Search of Music – 1929 Diary of a Voyage to Europe and After." Beleura House & Garden Collection.

properly recognized.<sup>617</sup> Tallis was Music Director for The Australian Ballet Society formed in Melbourne in 1946, a forerunner to The Australian Ballet. He is perhaps best known for his 1952 score, *The Sentimental Bloke*, composed for The Ballet Guild, another early Melbourne ballet company.<sup>618</sup>

After the death of Sir George Tallis in 1948, the family's interests had diversified and none of the four children wanted to move into Beleura. At a family conference, John Tallis agreed to live in and maintain the house, rather than have it sold. Tallis had been living in a flat at Ardoch in East St Kilda and planned to build a new house at Mornington on land that he had already purchased. Post-war shortages of building materials delayed construction and the house was never built. Tallis was never totally happy about his decision to live at Beleura, admitting in the family biography in 1988, "It was a momentous decision, and not wholly a wise one."<sup>619</sup> In 1953, before fully settling into Beleura, Tallis decided to make another trip to Italy, a journey that would prove to be the last of his overseas travels (Figure 38). In many respects it was a return to a more carefree, earlier time, before the serious responsibility of running Beleura began to dominate his life. Tallis had prearranged to buy a small Fiat Topolino 500 to drive around Italy. In letters to his brother, he frequently wrote about the difficulties of negotiating the traffic in the cities and of having used up "some of his nine lives."<sup>620</sup> Tallis had the car shipped back to Australia after his holiday, along with crates of Italian statuary which he set about installing on the parapets around Beleura. Sections of the garden would also be transformed to the Italian style.

The era was characterized by a sense of optimism and relief that the tragedy and deprivations associated with war were perhaps, at last, at an end. However, the Korean War reminded Australians that armed conflict was never far away and the Cold War created a lingering fear of global nuclear annihilation. Australia also embarked on a long period of conservative government with Sir Robert Menzies as Prime Minister. It was a period of great creativity with the Australian population awakening to new art, architecture, fashion and food, much of it

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<sup>617</sup> "Eulogy by Joel Crotty from the Funeral for John Tallis, 23 December 1996." Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>618</sup> Alan Brissenden and Keith Glennon, *Australia Dances: Creating Australian Dance 1945–1965* (Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 2010), 157.

<sup>619</sup> Tallis, Tallis and Knight, 139.

<sup>620</sup> "Letters from Europe, John Tallis to Mick Tallis, April to November 1953." Beleura House & Garden Collection.

derived from a post-war surge in numbers of migrants from Europe. To address anticipated labour shortages, the Australian Government embarked on a sustained immigration program which helped lift the population of the country from 7.5 million in 1945 to 13 million in 1975. About 3 million migrants and refugees arrived during this period.<sup>621</sup> The first edition of *Cooking the Australian Way*, published in 1966, highlighted the influence of post-war migration on what was previously an essentially British food culture, noting an increasing interest by Australians in the cookery of other nations and a demand for new ingredients.<sup>622</sup> Michael Symons describes the typical early 1950s Australian cafe meal as “steak and chips, bread and butter, tea (white or black, the latter with lemon), and ice cream with passionfruit or rockmelon.”<sup>623</sup> This bleak restaurant scene was enriched by the food habits of “New Australians”, with restaurants specializing in the cuisines of other countries opening around Australia, particularly in the capital cities.<sup>624</sup> Restaurateur and food commentator, Stephanie Alexander, reminisces in her autobiography about the best known Melbourne restaurants of this era. Long running establishments such as Mario’s, The Latin and Florentino’s were all run by Italian families. Alexander asserts that there were very few other quality restaurants in Melbourne prior to the 1970s, although the leading hotels also had dining rooms, but of varying quality.<sup>625</sup> Long-serving South Australian Premier Don Dunstan wrote in his 1976 cookbook that “migrant groups, particularly the Baltic, Yugoslav, Italian, German and to a lesser extent, Greek, influenced Australian food habits for the better.”<sup>626</sup>

Newly-arrived migrants may have improved restaurant menus and expanded ingredients in the shops, but they were not the only cultural infusion in the 1950s. Food journalist John Newton argues that an equally important influence, particularly in Melbourne, was the Olympic Games held in that city in 1956. Lygon Street in 1950s Melbourne was already a favourite destination for migrants looking for familiar food, but Newton claims that it was the European Olympic teams that boosted the popularity of the food precinct. Carlton was one of the few places in Melbourne, where restaurants remained open until eight or nine in the evening, at a time when

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<sup>621</sup> Australian Government, “Changing Face of Modern Australia 1950s–1970s,” Australian Government, <http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/changing-face-of-modern-australia-1950s-to-1970s>, (accessed July 6, 2014)

<sup>622</sup> Shirley Cameron and Suzanne Russell, *Cookery the Australian Way*. 7<sup>th</sup> Edition (Melbourne: MacMillan Education Australia, 2010), xi.

<sup>623</sup> Michael Symons, *One Continuous Picnic* (Adelaide: Duck Press, 1982), 221.

<sup>624</sup> Cameron and Russell, xi.

<sup>625</sup> Stephanie Alexander, *A Cook’s Life* (Melbourne: Lantern, 2012), 139.

<sup>626</sup> Don Dunstan, *Don Dunstan’s Cookbook* (Adelaide: Rigby Limited, 1976), 28.

hotels closed at six.<sup>627</sup> A fortunate offshoot of the Games was the arrival of Swiss chef, Hermann Schneider, who was cooking for the French and Belgian Olympic teams. Schneider settled in Melbourne after the Games and ran a number of influential European-style restaurants, including the very fashionable *Two Faces*.<sup>628</sup> Another significant non-migrant influence on Australian cookery in the 1950s and 1960s was international travel. In 1966 Qantas introduced the Boeing 707 long-range jet airliner to its overseas routes, making travel to Europe and the USA much quicker and cheaper.<sup>629</sup> Migrants may account for the number of new Italian restaurants that opened around Australia in the post-war years, but there was no significant migration from France to explain the dominance of the French restaurant or interest in French gastronomy during this period. Travel was certainly a factor and it is significant that future influential culinary figures, such as Stephanie Alexander, frequently chose France for their first overseas trip.<sup>630</sup> Symons asserts that there has been a firmly held association in Australia and elsewhere between fine dining and French cuisine that dates back to the 1850s.<sup>631</sup>

This was a time when the writings of Elizabeth David, Julia Child and Robert Carrier introduced many people around the world to the cuisines of France and other countries of the Mediterranean. In the introduction to Elizabeth David's *A Book of Mediterranean Food* published in 1950 she wrote, "The ever-recurring elements in the food throughout these countries are oil, the saffron, the garlic, the pungent local wines; the aromatic perfume of rosemary, wild marjoram and basil drying in the kitchens; the brilliance of the market stalls piled high with pimentos, aubergines, tomatoes, olives, melons, figs and limes; the great heaps of shiny fish, silver, vermilion or tiger striped."<sup>632</sup> For the shell-shocked people of Britain and to a lesser extent Australia, still recovering from wartime rationing, this must have been a description of paradise. British food historian Nicola Humble dramatically evokes David's

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<sup>627</sup> John Newton, *Wog Food - An Oral History with Recipes* (Sydney: Random House Australia, 1996), 26. (Note: Six o'clock trading for pubs ended in 1966 in Victoria.)

<sup>628</sup> Alexander, 55.

<sup>629</sup> "Penthouse in the Sky," *Australian Women's Weekly*, June 17, 1959, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>630</sup> Alexander, 69.

<sup>631</sup> Symons, 114.

<sup>632</sup> Elizabeth David, *A Book of Mediterranean Food* (London: Grub Street, 2008. Originally published 1950), v.

impact: “In 1950 – bang! – Elizabeth David burst onto the culinary scene like a firework, like the rising sun, like the clear note of the church bell on a Greek island.”<sup>633</sup>

These cultural influences and demographic changes resulted in the publication of “foreign” recipes in magazines and newspapers, marking a distinctive and flavorsome deviation from the principally British food tradition in Australia. Popular Australian food writers such as Maria Kozslik Donovan in the *Age* and Jean Bowring in the *Australian Home Beautiful*, regularly featured recipes from other countries, although often modified for Australian tastes. With the unfair benefit of hindsight, some of these recipes had only a very vague connection to their gastronomic origins. For instance, the ingredients list for a Malayan recipe in a Jean Bowring article in 1963, indicates some cultural confusion: “Two pounds of stewing steak, half teaspoon salt, half teaspoon thyme, pinch pepper, one medium onion, one and half teaspoons chopped parsley, one and half tablespoons red wine, half cup fresh breadcrumbs, half cup finely grated carrot, one hardboiled egg (chopped), three cooked bacon slices, one tablespoon salad oil, one cup condensed beef consommé, one dessertspoon grated cheese.”<sup>634</sup> The ubiquitous chow mein appeared at this time, once again unrecognizable to anyone actually from China. Nevertheless, these “foreign” recipes marked a significant break from Australia’s anglo-centric culinary past.

The media had a strong influence on Australian cuisine in the post-war era, particularly through the new communication channel, television. If, as Colin Bannerman argues, modern Australians have inherited a “cuisine of incomers”, then the lack of a deep culinary tradition would make it susceptible to food fads and fashions.<sup>635</sup> Television played a major role in spreading new culinary ideas during the 1950s and 1960s. Bannerman asserts, “For a cuisine is not made in field, factory or kitchen and certainly not in restaurants, but in the printing presses and broadcasting stations.”<sup>636</sup> Bannerman also argues that along with the influence of migrants from Europe came a strong realignment of Australian culture towards America. Perhaps this was a result of Australia’s link with American armed forces in World War II, or maybe the influence of early television programs, but Bannerman cites as an example of American

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<sup>633</sup> Nicola Humble, *Culinary Pleasures: Cookbooks and the Transformation of British Food* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), 121.

<sup>634</sup> Jean Bowring, “From Budapest to Bombay,” *Australian Home Beautiful*, May, 1963.

<sup>635</sup> Colin Bannerman, *Seed Cake and Honey Prawn* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2008), 10.

<sup>636</sup> Bannerman, 34.

influence, the brief enthusiasm in the 1960s for Hawaiian food in Australia.<sup>637</sup> Pineapple appeared in many recipes published in Australia at that time, helped no doubt by the marketing efforts of Queensland pineapple processors. Bannerman also attributes the “Chinese food fad” of the same period in Australia to the absorption of an American food fad, rather than any influence from the small local Chinese community.<sup>638</sup>

Post-war prosperity suited food manufacturers, who applied research from wartime rations production to peacetime food technology.<sup>639</sup> This led to a new range of tinned, dried and frozen convenience foods, for the shelves of perhaps the most enduring phenomenon of the post-war era, the supermarket. The self-service grocery shop was not new, but the supermarket with everything the housewife needed under one roof was an innovation that blended perfectly with increasing private car ownership and refrigerator sales. Prior to the war, car ownership was just seventy-seven per thousand Australians, but by 1961 it had risen to two hundred per thousand.<sup>640</sup> Refrigerator ownership had risen from a low pre-war base to seventy-three per cent of homes by 1955.<sup>641</sup> With just one stop, the family could make a weekly trip to the shops, park in the generous car park and carry all the food supplies they needed in the boot of the car to store in the refrigerator at home. G.J. Coles & Co. opened Melbourne’s first supermarket in Balwyn North in 1960. The American Safeway company formed a partnership with local grocery shop owner Bill Pratt to convert his self-service shop in Frankston into a supermarket in 1963. Pratt later headed a new Australian Safeway company and quickly established a chain of stores across Victoria to compete with Coles, including one at Mornington in 1967 (Figure 39). In 1985, the Safeway supermarkets in Victoria merged with Woolworths and became part of that national brand.<sup>642</sup> Symons asserts that Australians fell in love with the supermarket because of their enthusiasm for obtaining a bargain: “Australians have long treasured cheapness and its companions the cut-price, the bargain and the discount.”<sup>643</sup> Supermarkets were so successful that they changed the nature of town planning. Previously, shopping strips followed the tram and train lines around

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<sup>637</sup> Bannerman, 65.

<sup>638</sup> Bannerman, 53.

<sup>639</sup> Symons, 172.

<sup>640</sup> Symons, 178.

<sup>641</sup> Symons, 178. Note: This is an average figure for the country, with greater ownership in Queensland (77%) than, say, Victoria (67%). Refer to Tony Dingle, “Electrifying the Kitchen in Interwar Victoria.” *Journal of Australian Studies* 22, Issue 57 (1998): 124.

<sup>642</sup> Bill Pratt, *My Safeway Story – Making it Happen* (Melbourne: Brolga Publishing, 2006), 150.

<sup>643</sup> Symons, 181.

Melbourne, but with the advent of the supermarket and its attached car park, the city could spread away from the public transport network, making new suburbs completely car dependent.

Following World War II, housewives everywhere began physically and emotionally rebuilding the family home as a haven to nurture children and men took off their uniforms and went to work to pay for the materials and appliances. The quest for the model home suited companies that were re-establishing markets for electrical appliances and munitions factories were quickly reconfigured to produce refrigerators, stoves, washing machines and a host of small domestic appliances. The competition for market share in the supply of domestic energy also intensified in the 1950s. The Gas and Fuel Corporation of Victoria was created in 1950 to unite a number of separate gas production and distribution companies in the State. Major gasworks which came under the new Corporation's control were located at West Melbourne, Highett and South Melbourne.<sup>644</sup> The Shire-owned Mornington gasworks was transferred to the Gas and Fuel Corporation in 1954. These plants converted black coal into town gas, although one of the first tasks of the new Corporation was to build a new Lurgi Process gas plant at Morwell using Latrobe Valley brown coal, with the intention of then closing the smaller suburban gasworks.<sup>645</sup> Natural gas from Bass Strait did not become available in Victoria until 1969, when there was a major program launched to convert existing coal gas appliances to run on the new fuel.<sup>646</sup>

The State Electricity Commission of Victoria (SECV) was responsible for the generation, distribution and sale of electricity. While both gas and electricity production bodies were State-controlled authorities, competition for customers in some sectors was fierce, no more so than in the kitchen. Both bodies established kitchen design and cookery services to encourage consumers to buy ovens, cook tops and hot water units to boost demand for their respective energy source. The gas and electricity marketing teams regularly attended and sponsored public events, produced a host of free cookery publications and developed programs for the new communication medium, television. Some of the publications were quite sophisticated

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<sup>644</sup> Ray Proudley, *A History of the Gas Industry in Victoria* (Melbourne: Hargreen Publishing Company, 1987), 216.

<sup>645</sup> Proudley, 216.

<sup>646</sup> Proudley, 263.

and wide reaching in influence. For instance, the Gas and Fuel Corporation published a monthly pamphlet titled *Home Service*, with the aim of disseminating cookery and entertaining ideas, as well as promoting gas as a fuel. The May 1958 edition, distributed to 82,000 Victorian households, featured Italian cuisine with a selection of authentic recipes that would not be out of place in a publication today. With carefully written instructions and a useful explanation of terminology and pronunciation, the tone was educational and it is interesting that John Tallis chose to keep a copy of this publication in the Beleura kitchen.<sup>647</sup> The Electrical Development Association of Victoria published information on the all-electric kitchen.<sup>648</sup> The Women's Gas Association was formed in 1955 to promote gas appliances.<sup>649</sup> The choice between electric and gas appliances may have been a major decision for many post-war new home owners, but the issue was irrelevant to Beleura (and many other non-metropolitan areas of Victoria), as gas was not connected to the house until the late 1980s.

#### **4.2 Evolution of the Beleura kitchens**

Unlike the period that followed World War I, when the kitchen and other work areas in many houses were radically altered and compressed to allow the housewife to manage a new, servantless household, changes to the kitchen following World War II were generally less substantial, but nonetheless significant. Home building and child rearing were the new focus of the post-war family and the positioning of the kitchen at the very heart of the home, reinforced this emphasis. Clement Macintyre suggests that from the 1950s, the status of the kitchen was elevated to become the “nerve centre of the house”, legitimately a part of the living area of the home and no longer relegated to out of sight, back areas.<sup>650</sup> Nicola Humble asserts that the centrally placed kitchen of the 1950s home was, “the place where the young wife bound her husband to her with her culinary skills, where she supported his business career by producing impressive dinners for his boss and clients, where the mother prepared for the family bonding ritual that was the daily evening meal.”<sup>651</sup> New houses were generally

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<sup>647</sup> “Let’s Cook with the Italians.” *Home Service*, Gas and Fuel Corporation of Victoria, May, 1958. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>648</sup> Advertisement for brochures, *Cooking Electrically and Planning the Electric Kitchen*, *Australian Home Beautiful*, April, 1961, 45.

<sup>649</sup> Proudley, 235.

<sup>650</sup> Clement Macintyre, “Now You’re in the Family Zone: Housing and Domestic Design in Australia,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 15, Issue 30 (1991): 65.

<sup>651</sup> Humble, 137.



smaller than pre-war dwellings and were opened up with fewer internal divisions, the kitchen separated from the dining and living areas by benches, a hatch or see-through dividers.<sup>652</sup> This allowed the housewife/mother to easily monitor from the kitchen, the children's activities and oversee entertaining and recreation. Louise C. Johnson in her study of gender, power and culture in the kitchen, coined the term "women's gaze" to describe this observational activity, which is only possible with the redesign of the layout of the houses to provide view lines.<sup>653</sup> The working triangle, a concept devised by the domestic science movement in the 1920s, continued to govern kitchen design in the post-war era. This concept specifies a triangular relationship between the location of the sink, cooking appliance and refrigerator/storage area, with an optimum maximum walking distance of twenty feet (6.1 metres) between them. Johnson suggests that this relationship leads to six basic kitchen layouts: the single line kitchen, the parallel or galley kitchen, the U, L and F shaped kitchen and the island kitchen.<sup>654</sup>

These design principles can be regularly seen in house plans from journals and newspapers from that period. The *Australian Home Beautiful* magazine consistently presented model house plans with kitchens linked to both dining rooms and living rooms, sometimes delineating spaces with sliding doors or servery hatches. Post-war new houses were often small and in a June 1962 plan, the magazine showed a two-bedroom home with a kitchen and utility room arranged to allow supervision by the mother of the children's bedroom and play area.<sup>655</sup> By June 1965, the magazine pronounced, "There's a discernible trend towards bigger family kitchens, planned to double as dining-room and family or play-room."<sup>656</sup> There is a frequent emphasis in *Australian Home Beautiful* in the 1960s on efficient kitchen planning to minimize steps and to create benches that were well lit and designed to provide long and continuous work surfaces. Many of these ideas are reminiscent of the scientific management kitchen of the 1930s, with the exception that appliances in the post-war home were more likely to be built-in, even concealed, to provide flowing, uninterrupted surfaces to the eye. Sociologists Martin Hand and Elizabeth Shove argue that in the 1950s kitchen, the emphasis

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<sup>652</sup> Macintyre, 68.

<sup>653</sup> Louise C. Johnson, "Browsing the Modern Kitchen: A Feast of Gender, Place and Culture," *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 13, No.2 (2006): 128.

<sup>654</sup> Johnson, 126.

<sup>655</sup> "Children under control," *Australian Home Beautiful*, June, 1962, 98.

<sup>656</sup> "Kitchens you can LIVE in," *Australian Home Beautiful*, June, 1965, 21.

was on “automation, integration and customization.”<sup>657</sup> Automation promised freedom for the housewife from chores and reduced labour, a benefit exploited with effect by the manufacturers of electric ovens with built-in timers.<sup>658</sup> Concealed storage was very important; to have everything at hand but out of sight.<sup>659</sup> As the kitchen was elevated from back room to centre stage, aesthetic considerations became important. Hand and Shove assert, “Kitchens embody a new kind of aesthetic, one which leisure, beauty and sociability figure alongside themes of functional efficiency.”<sup>660</sup>

The marrying of scientific efficiency principles with a modernist aesthetic was practically demonstrated in Melbourne in 1949 at the *Modern Home Exhibition*. A model home, designed by architect Robin Boyd, was constructed within the Melbourne Exhibition Building, demonstrating the principles of efficient, low-cost, house construction. The home included furniture by Grant Featherstone and Clement Meadmore, who would go on to become important modernist designers. The *Argus* proudly proclaimed, “The kitchen which is the place dear to every woman’s heart, is a haven of modern gadgetry – everything has been included to make women’s work a real pleasure.”<sup>661</sup> In opening the exhibition, the Minister for Housing, Mr A.G. Warner rallied the assembled crowds, by declaring, “We must forget Yesterday, concentrate on Today, and develop Tomorrow.”<sup>662</sup> Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow were the names assigned to display areas within the exhibition. Australian design commentator, Judith O’Callaghan describes the basis for this distinction as “Yesterday was cast as the villain, Tomorrow as the hero and Today as somewhere in between.”<sup>663</sup>

Humble maintains that the housewife’s role in the post-war era was popularly perceived as “desirable, exciting and glamorous” and critical to the management of the house.<sup>664</sup> Magazine advertisements and television programs reinforced this image. While it is easy to criticize this role model from a contemporary perspective, Christina Hardymont maintains that “to

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<sup>657</sup> Martin Hand and Elizabeth Shove, “Orchestrating Concepts: Kitchen Dynamics and Regime Change in Good Housekeeping and Ideal Home, 1922–2002,” *Home Cultures* 1, No.3 (2004): 243.

<sup>658</sup> “The Hotpoint built-in look!” *Australian Home Beautiful*, May, 1963, 62.

<sup>659</sup> “10 rules of kitchen planning,” *Australian Home Beautiful*, May, 1964, 41.

<sup>660</sup> Hand and Shove, 244.

<sup>661</sup> “Science in the home,” *Argus*, October 20, 1949, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>662</sup> “Minister’s plea for housewives,” *Argus*, October 21, 1949, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>663</sup> Judith O’Callaghan, “The House of Tomorrow,” in *Modern Times: The Untold Story of Modernism in Australia*, edited by Ann Stephen, Philip Goad and Andrew McNamara, 160 (Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2008).

<sup>664</sup> Humble, 136.

understand the general enthusiasm for home making at all levels of society, we have to bear in mind how deprived women had been both of normal home life and of any opportunity to express their own individual domestic creativity during and after the war years.”<sup>665</sup> It would not be long, however, before the true position of the housewife would emerge. The kitchen servery hatch may have been a handy way for the housewife to connect with her guests while preparing the meal, but Humble argues that it also “symbolized her apartness, her immurement in an eternally domestic space, watching the rest of life through a window.”<sup>666</sup> The reality was that by the end of the 1950s, “the dream of domestic bliss had turned sour.”<sup>667</sup>

These trends in post-war house design provide a useful background from which to consider the small scale but important changes that were made in the 1950s to the layout of Beleura. It should be noted that Beleura was out of step with the post-war emphasis on the housewife. Beleura was not a normal family home. While there were some live-in staff and regular visits by friends and relatives, the home was essentially the domain of one man, John Tallis. Key documents for determining changes made at this time are the property valuations made for Tallis in 1951 and 1962. The 1951 valuation describes the room arrangement, much as it was given in the 1948 valuation after the death of Sir George. The housemaid/butler’s pantry (room 18), which was in the process of conversion to a kitchen in the 1930s, after the purchase of the Moffat electric stove, is clearly identified as the main kitchen in the 1951 valuation.<sup>668</sup> In the 1962 valuation, the only change to room 18 was the replacement of the Moffat stove with a new GEC model.<sup>669</sup> As previously noted, the GEC stove was probably installed in 1955. The 1962 valuation also lists a Vulcan electric stove and a new General Electric refrigerator in what is described for the first time as the French kitchen (room 19). The installation of this new Vulcan stove, as discussed in the last chapter, coincided with the removal of what is believed to have been an AGA cooker dating from the 1930s. This change occurred in 1961 with the new electric stove installed beside the nineteenth-century cast iron range, which received an overdue refurbishment and clean up (Figure 40).<sup>670</sup> The old cast iron

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<sup>665</sup> Christina Hardyment, *Slice of Life: The British Way of Eating Since 1945* (London: BBC Books, 1995), 40.

<sup>666</sup> Humble, 139.

<sup>667</sup> Humble, 139.

<sup>668</sup> “Inventory and Valuation of Furniture and Effects as Situated at Beleura, Mornington, 28 November 1951.” Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>669</sup> “Valuation of Property Known as ‘Beleura’, Esplanade, Beleura Hill, Mornington. Owner: J.M. Tallis esq.” Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>670</sup> “Accounts by E.G. & A.C. Ashby, 9 Esplanade, Mornington.” Beleura House & Garden Collection.

range had been hidden for thirty years behind the newer AGA appliance. Whether it was restored for intended use or for static display is unclear. However, the new Vulcan electric stove, together with the GEC model in room 18, marked a significant change towards easier to operate and clean cooking appliances, but with the option of still using the earlier, familiar solid fuel range. When John Tallis settled back into Beleura after his overseas travels in 1953, he had to manage with much less domestic assistance than previously available. Consequently, he set about making areas of the house more comfortable for himself as the frequently sole occupant of this very large house. He converted what was the scullery into a casual, indoor sitting area, now known as the winter garden (room 27), but described in the 1962 valuation as the French courtyard. It was a comfortable room to which Tallis regularly retreated to pay his accounts, phone orders through to his suppliers and tradesmen or to read the papers (Figure 41). Another alteration was the conversion of the maids' sitting room into the French breakfast room (room 21).

The most significant change to Beleura in this period was the commissioning of Tallis's friend, architect Ian Hunt, to convert a bathroom (room 23) into a small galley-style kitchen and create a new, adjacent sunroom (room 22) in what was previously an open courtyard. The 1962 valuation names these two rooms as a kitchenette and bamboo room, presumably because of the bamboo furniture purchased by Tallis for the sunroom. Why he felt a need to create yet another kitchen is a moot point, but perhaps it can be understood from the perspective of his frequently expressed desire to make Beleura more manageable and easier to heat in winter. The room arrangement was certainly compact and efficient, with the new kitchen and sunroom opening off the music room (room 11) and adjacent to Tallis's bedroom (room 12). In winter, Tallis could shut himself off from the rest of the house if desired. In general terms, the new kitchen conformed to the principles of design discussed previously, even down to its blue and white paint scheme typical of the time (Figure 42).<sup>671</sup> The kitchen is long and thin, with light falling on work surfaces from an east facing window. The stainless steel sink is on one side and the small electric stove and refrigerator are on the opposite side (Figure 43). The 1962 valuation lists these as a Westinghouse three hotplate stove and an STC refrigerator.<sup>672</sup> There is ample storage in cupboards and drawers, even though the overall

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<sup>671</sup> Note: My own family built a house in Sydney in the 1950s and a blue and white galley kitchen was included, with open access to the dining area.

<sup>672</sup> "Valuation of Property Known as 'Beleura', Esplanade, Beleura Hill, Mornington. Owner: J.M. Tallis esq."

dimensions of the room are modest. A servery hatch opens into the new sunroom, allowing the cook to remain connected to guests. The sunroom has a small dining table for casual meals. If it was not for the large and elaborate mansion that surrounds this small kitchen, it could easily be a part of one of the fashionable modern homes of the 1950s. If further evidence is required that this renovation reflected the popular 1950s design aesthetic, Hunt also created as part of his brief, a new fit-out for the music room, including tailor-made, built-in cupboards for all of Tallis's records and stereo sound equipment. The fitted cupboard was very much a part of the 1950s modernist approach to removing clutter in interior design.

It is indeed fortunate for this project that Tallis and Hunt decided to create a new space for this kitchen, rather than replace or grossly modernize one of the earlier kitchens. Take away some of the modern appliances and the older kitchens are precisely as they were when originally built. Tallis seemed to want alternative kitchen spaces, so that by the 1960s, he had a choice of five in which to prepare meals, including one in the annex flat (room 33) and one in the small flat (room 42) (Figures 44 and 45). While each kitchen had an electric stove and a small refrigerator, the large Frigidaire in room 18 continued to be the main food storage appliance. Tallis had a similar attitude to dining arrangements, with several alternative spaces for serving meals, apart from the very formal and rarely used main dining room. In an email interview, Hunt remembered many meals being eaten in the small vestibule (room 14) that links the working kitchen with the long corridor. Hunt also suggested that while the new kitchen was fully functioning, he believes that it was never really intended for serious cooking.<sup>673</sup>

### **4.3 Sourcing, storing and preserving food**

In previous chapters there were few documents relevant to Beleura that recorded culinary practices directly. There are occasional references to food in family recollections but not detailed enough to be particularly helpful. In the post-war era, the range of resources available is very different, largely due to John Tallis being a fastidious record keeper. Files of accounts, now stored in the Beleura archives, are a unique and valuable documentary record of actual purchases made by Tallis. He was also an enthusiastic although irregular diarist and in the later decades of his life, his very personal diary entries provide a detailed account of living at

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<sup>673</sup> Personal communication by email with Ian Hunt who was a regular visitor to Beleura, conducted 31 March 2013.

Beleura including, unusually, regular references to food. These diary entries will be examined in detail in the next chapter. Particular friends and assistants to Tallis also recorded their experiences at Beleura, enriching the potential choice of primary resources that can be analysed. Some friends were also available for interview.

Without a barrage of servants, Tallis needed to make some important adjustments to domestic practices, including potentially buying his own food, using the refrigerator and cooking. Alan Eustace, one of Tallis's long-term friends, recalled shopping with him in Main Street, Mornington during the 1950s. Eustace said that Mornington had a very good butcher, baker and green grocer. Tallis was very fond of fish and Eustace would sometimes accompany him to the Mornington Pier to buy fish from local fishing boats.<sup>674</sup> We do not know if Tallis also used the local Pratt's self-service store in Mornington during the 1950s, or the Safeway supermarket that replaced it in the 1960s, but it is clear that he was a regular and loyal customer of two other great food institutions in Melbourne, the David Jones and Myer food halls. David Jones was primarily used for buying kitchen items and gift hampers for special occasions, whereas the Myer Food Hall was for weekly groceries. Regular telephone orders were made to the Myer Food Hall and the invoices carefully filed to create what is now an invaluable record of food at Beleura in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>675</sup>

The earliest date for a filed Myer Food Hall invoice is 11 March 1958 and the latest is from 1966. Why the invoices stopped is not clear, but it appears likely that Tallis decided to make more of his purchases locally from Mornington delicatessens, which began to stock the types of foods that he required. These local deli orders will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. The Myer invoices show a predominance of processed food, which is not surprising considering the expansion of food manufacturing that occurred in Australia and elsewhere after the war. Processed foods were also easy to deliver without the risk of spoilage, so they suited Tallis's preference for making telephone orders. Two examples of new processed food items included in the orders are packets of dehydrated nasi goreng and bahmi goreng. These packets would have included all the dried ingredients necessary for making an approximation of these classic Indonesian rice and noodle dishes and very closely resembled the army ration

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<sup>674</sup> Personal communication with Alan Eustace who was a regular visitor to Beleura, conducted 26 February 2013.

<sup>675</sup> "Myer Food Hall Accounts." Beleura House & Garden Collection.

meals common towards the end of World War II. A regular item on the Tallis orders was tinned soup. These were not your average local brands, but usually tins of imported Baxter or Crosse and Blackwell soup in flavours such as real and mock turtle, bird's nest, Royal game, ox tail, lobster, mushroom, tomato, asparagus, chicken gumbo, wild duck, clam chowder and turkey soup. Other specialist items included tins of paté de foie gras, Danish and Russian caviar, pheasant paté, Stilton cheese and truffles. Amongst these specialties are more everyday items such as tinned champignons, cumquat marmalade, French mustard, Jacob's shortbread, Plumrose ham, tinned frankfurts and mayonnaise. A curious German flavour pervades some of the orders with packets of salzbrezel (pretzels), spitzkuchen (triangular-shaped chocolate coated cakes), pumpernickel bread, sahn (cream) pudding and Bahlsen brand biscuits. This interest in German products may be due to the lingering influence of Tallis's pre-war travels in that country. Tallis made several trips to Germany and Austria in the 1930s, the last being an extensive motoring trip with his father in 1936, coinciding with the Berlin Olympic Games.<sup>676</sup> The other obvious influence on Tallis's grocery orders was Italy, an outcome of his 1953 trip which was the fulfilment of a long-held passion for all things Italian. Products with Italian origins include Bertolli olive oil, motta amaretti biscuits, tinned sugo doro, jars of antipasto, Shippam's pesto, Milano dressing and Cirio vinegar.

Ian Hunt asserts, "John Tallis was a modest man, without any display of the grandeur that might have seemed to outsiders to have been appropriate, considering his background and owning a stately mansion like Beleura."<sup>677</sup> Contrary to this view, the above list of groceries would appear to be significantly more expensive and much more exclusive than the average household weekly shopping list. It does appear that in the 1950s at least, Tallis enjoyed luxury food items, although mostly of the pre-packaged variety. His taste would become much simpler as the years progressed, but this will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter when there is supporting evidence from personal diaries and other sources.

Apart from these sometimes exotic food deliveries, Tallis maintained the vegetable garden for fresh vegetables and herbs for the kitchen and for a time kept poultry in the elaborate cage now restored and still housing Rhode Island Reds today. On the shelf at Beleura was a copy of the seventh edition of *Poultry Farming*, a manual produced by the Victorian Department of

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<sup>676</sup> Tallis, Tallis and Knight, 136.

<sup>677</sup> Personal communication by email with Ian Hunt.

Agriculture in the late 1940s.<sup>678</sup> Hunt noted, “The large kitchen garden was always well stocked and well maintained. I specially remember the delicious fresh-picked sweet corn for example.”<sup>679</sup> Meat was supplied by various local butchers in Mornington and Mt Eliza, depending on Tallis’s perception of their quality and value. Later, he would record often in his diary which butchers were in or out of favour. Eustace recalled a delightful story of a joint shopping excursion to the butcher in Main Street Mornington, sometime in the 1950s. Tallis funded his lifestyle through a range of local and overseas investments and his later diaries reveal that his moods changed depending on the state of the stock market and economic forecasts. On this particular shopping trip he had just heard unsettling economic news and Eustace said that the planned purchase of steak for dinner was suddenly changed to sausages as would befit diminished economic circumstances. The sausages were deemed excellent and Tallis promised to buy them again.<sup>680</sup>

In the organized kitchen of the post-war era it was important to have at least one set of colourful canisters to store bulk ingredients. This trend began much earlier with the production of anodized aluminium canisters, but as new and inexpensive plastic compounds became widely available in the 1930s, kitchen canisters started to appear using these new materials. The thermosetting phenolic resin Bakelite was the first plastic material to be cast into canisters, but because it had only limited colour options, kitchen canisters were more commonly made from the later developed plastic, urea formaldehyde, which used fillers to create a wide variety of solid colours and marbled effects. Another resin variety, Melamine (melamine formaldehyde), like all thermosetting plastics, was hard, brittle and heat resistant and therefore ideal for kitchen and dinnerware. Melamine was once thought to be a serious competitor to ceramics for table ware, but ultimately found perhaps its most popular application as a component of Formica surface laminates.<sup>681</sup> Thermoplastic resins that can be formed, heated and reshaped, became popular in the 1950s because they were much easier to mould accurately into complex shapes than thermosetting resins. Thermoplastics quickly replaced most thermosetting resins because of their adaptability to mass production.<sup>682</sup>

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<sup>678</sup> *Poultry Farming* 7<sup>th</sup> edition (Melbourne: Department of Agriculture, estimated date 1944–1948)

<sup>679</sup> Personal communication by email with Ian Hunt.

<sup>680</sup> Personal communication with Alan Eustace.

<sup>681</sup> Steve Akhurst, “The Rise and Fall of Melamine Tableware,” *Plastiquarian*, <http://www.plastiquarian.com/styr3n3/pqs/pq32.htm> (accessed September 7, 2014)

<sup>682</sup> Susan Freinkel, *Plastic - A Toxic Love Story* (Melbourne: The Text Publishing Company, 2011), 24.



Polystyrene was a common thermoplastic compound used for kitchen canisters, available in a wide range of colours and transparent forms.<sup>683</sup> Bannerman refers to canisters made from plastic as “the new wave of ‘cheap and cheerful’ kitchenware that helped to bring some life back into Australian homes after the austerities of World War II.”<sup>684</sup> Beleura has three interesting sets of Australian-made plastic kitchen canisters. There are two sets made by Walter Barr Pty Ltd, branded as Clear-Vue canisters, named as such because of the clear window through which the contents can be identified. An advertisement in the *Sunday Herald* proclaims, “If you take pride in your kitchen you’ll love CLEAR-VUE – the new, smartly styled windowed canister set that tells you instantly what each holds....that warns you of contents running low.”<sup>685</sup> There is a cream and green set in the working kitchen (room 18) and a blue and white set in the John Tallis kitchen (room 23). There is another cream and green set of canisters in room 18, branded as an “Eon Registered Product”. These are helpfully labeled for cloves, nutmeg, pepper and cream of tartar. Other popular brands of plastic kitchen container in the 1950s were Nally, Gay and Bristolite ware.<sup>686</sup>

Technological change was less frenetic during this period, as Beleura was already well ahead of many Australian homes with respect to appliances. As previously cited, Dingle argues that most homes in Australia did not commit to major appliance purchases such as refrigerators until after World War II.<sup>687</sup> However, at Beleura, the big Frigidaire refrigerator in room 18 was already well established and continued to be the main storage unit for fresh food. Over time, Beleura gained additional smaller refrigerators in each of the kitchens, but they appeared not to diminish the status of the Frigidaire. Despite the convenience of refrigeration, older forms of food preservation such as bottling continued to be used for long-term storage of produce. Thelma Horton was an important figure in the Beleura kitchens in the 1950s and was responsible for bottling fruit from the gardens which were managed by her capable husband Clarrie. They worked as a duo at Beleura for over thirty years and were much respected by the

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<sup>683</sup> “Plastics will treat you right,” *Argus*, October 13, 1955, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>684</sup> Bannerman, 11.

<sup>685</sup> “Clear-Vue the kitchen canister with the window,” *Sunday Herald*, July 27, 1952, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>686</sup> “For your kitchen,” *Argus*, October 31, 1955, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>687</sup> Tony Dingle, “Electrifying the Kitchen in Interwar Victoria,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 22, Issue 57 (1998): 125.

Tallis family. Thelma Horton also bottled fruit for John Tallis's sister, Bidy Carnegie, who lived nearby.<sup>688</sup>

#### 4.3.1 Artifact evaluation 7 – QPC meat press

**Identification:** The QPC meat press is a cast aluminium alloy mould for evenly compressing mixtures of meat and other ingredients into cold loaf-shaped food products. It was made in West Brunswick, Melbourne by Quality Patterns and Castings (QPC). The press has a bright metallic finish and came in four sizes, 2½lb, 5lb, 10lb and 20lb. The QPC press stored in the working kitchen (room 18), is one of the small 2½lb models with dimensions 21cm long, 11cm wide and 10cm high (Figure 46). The press consists of a loaf-shaped bowl with a lid that rests on top of the contents and exerts an even pressure over the surface as an attached bar is pushed down. Ratchets on either side of the bowl lock the lid in place, once the compression is applied.

**Context analysis:** The principle behind pressing food is to compress the cooked meat and other ingredients into a loaf, then cover the exposed surface with a layer of gelatinous stock to delay the entry of bacteria and extend the storage life of the food. The stock may be the protein-rich cooking liquid from the meat alone or it may be enhanced by commercially prepared gelatine. Originally, gelatine was prepared laboriously by hand, boiling down calf or pig ears and feet to release the fibrous protein found in animal skin and tissue.<sup>689</sup> This would have been a time consuming chore for many home cooks, who were no doubt relieved when pre-prepared gelatine in powder form became available in England in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>690</sup> The Davis Gelatine company were clearly proud of their product, declaring in the 1932 edition of *Davis Dainty Dishes*, “No expense is spared in making Davis Gelatine, the very zenith of excellence.”<sup>691</sup>

While sweet jellies are more familiar to modern tastes, there is a long history of meat-based jellies. English food historian and jelly expert, Peter Brears, has identified recipes for pork and

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<sup>688</sup> Personal communication with Alan Eustace.

<sup>689</sup> Peter Brears, *Jellies and their Moulds* (Totnes: Prospect Books, 2010), 21.

<sup>690</sup> Brears, 25.

<sup>691</sup> *Davis Dainty Dishes* (Sydney: Davis Gelatine (Aust) Ltd, 1932), 1.

chicken meat cooked, then covered in calf's feet derived jelly dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Today these products might be called brawn.<sup>692</sup> The process is related to the old English technique of *potting*, where food such as meat or fish is protected from spoilage by placing it in a pot, which is then sealed by a layer of fat such as butter. The French equivalent is making a *confit*, often applied to duck which is sealed under a layer of duck fat and pork *rillettes* with pork fat.<sup>693</sup> Recipes for jellied meat loaves often require a weight to be placed on a plate to compress the top of the loaf. The QPC meat press provides an easy way to apply an even pressure to the surface of the food once it has been covered in jelly. Sheep or ox tongue is often treated in this way. Anne Mason, popular 1950s Melbourne cookery writer and author of *A Treasury of Australian Cooking*, offers a recipe for Ring Moulded Tongues and recommends an alternative method using a meat press.<sup>694</sup> The QPC press can also be used to make brawn and various terrines, popular cold dishes for summer entrees, luncheons or picnics.

**Interpretation:** How did the meat press find a place in the post-war kitchen at Beleura? During this era, older forms of food preservation such as bottling and jellying comfortably coexisted with the new refrigeration technology. Beleura has many well-used Fowlers Vacola jars to prove the point. In a hot climate such as Australia, setting a jelly could be quite a challenge and consequently, instead of replacing older practices, refrigerators made the production of jellied foods much easier. Cookbooks from the 1950s usually included numerous recipes for both sweet and savoury jellies, with a recipe for chicken and ham rainbow mould from *The Hostess Cookbook* a typical, fashionable example.<sup>695</sup>

The depression and wars years had also bred a natural frugality. Waste not, want not; preserving food was part of good kitchen practice and turning cheaper cuts of meat into acceptable meals was a means of survival in the past. With refrigeration, a pressed and jellied salad was a creative way to utilize leftovers, with the added advantage of being able to be prepared well in advance of any meal. *The Joy of Cooking* boasts, "Any clever person can take

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<sup>692</sup> Brears, 57.

<sup>693</sup> Alan Davidson, (Second Edition Edited by Tom Jaine). *The Oxford Companion to Food* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 631.

<sup>694</sup> Anne Mason, *A Treasury of Australian Cooking* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1962), 62.

<sup>695</sup> Helen M. Cox, *The Hostess Cook Book* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson Ltd, 1961. Originally published 1952), 118.

a few desolate-looking refrigerator leftovers and glorify them into a tempting molded aspic salad or mousse.”<sup>696</sup> Jellying was very much a part of the established British food tradition and in the immediate post-war years it was still the dominant cuisine in Australia. While at Beleura there was little need for such economy, the various cooks would have followed this tradition. It would take several decades before jellied tongue would lose its appeal, if indeed it ever had any. Today, few people would willingly eat such a dish although I can honestly say that as a child I quite enjoyed it.

From a technology perspective, the cast aluminium press is of significance because of its association with the many metal casting works that once existed in the inner northern suburbs of Melbourne. While the date of manufacture of the QPC press is not stated, an advertisement in the *Argus* dated 20 January 1951, calls for applications for a labourer at the QPC foundry.<sup>697</sup> Most of the foundries are long gone, apart from several specialist art foundries such as Meridian Sculpture in Fitzroy and Coates and Wood Fine Art Foundry in Northcote. Other old foundry buildings have been converted to open-plan apartments for the burgeoning inner Melbourne property market.

#### **4.4 Cooking food at Beleura**

While the majority of live-in staff disappeared from Beleura after Sir George died in 1948, it is doubtful whether John Tallis could have managed to run the property and household successfully without the regular assistance of an assortment of full and part-time housekeepers, cooks and gardeners, many staying for years. Ian Hunt recalled the pleasure of being served breakfast in bed on weekends by the resident housekeeper of the time.<sup>698</sup> Tallis even enlisted help from friends such as Alan Eustace, who regularly visited Beleura on weekends during the 1950s and was somehow co-opted into cooking. Eustace modestly suggested that his cooking was the principle reason why he was so welcome at Beleura.<sup>699</sup> Whether or not this was the case, Eustace met Tallis through a common interest in travel, particularly to Italy. He was an enthusiastic, self-taught cook, who had the foresight to keep a

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<sup>696</sup> Irma S. Rombauer and Marion Rombauer Becker, *The Joy of Cooking* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1966), 95.

<sup>697</sup> “Advertisement,” *Argus*, January 20, 1951, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>698</sup> Personal communication by email with Ian Hunt.

<sup>699</sup> Personal communication with Alan Eustace.

notebook with lists of recipes he regularly cooked at Beleura and menus that he prepared for special dinner parties and the people who attended. This notebook, safely kept by him for sixty years and now in the Beleura archives, is an intriguing time capsule revealing the style of food cooked at Beleura for everyday and special occasions in the early post-war era. The brief hand-written notes paint an incomplete but wonderfully colourful picture of life at Beleura and of food culture in Australia at a time when the society was opening up to a multitude of influences.<sup>700</sup>

Eustace's notebook reveals a distinctly French style in many menus, consistent with an attitude common in Australia in the 1950s that considered French cuisine to be the pinnacle of culinary practice. An indication of this trend was the proliferation of French restaurants at the time and the success of books written by people such as Elizabeth David and Julia Child about French and Mediterranean food. Many of the cookbooks on the shelves at Beleura, purchased by or given to Tallis, deal with French and Italian cooking. Eustace regularly used two cookbooks as sources for recipes at Beleura. One was by the influential London based French chef Marcel Boulestin, *The Best of Boulestin* and the other was *Every Lady's Cookbook* by Miss Lucy Drake, popular cookery teacher at Swinburne College and a favourite of his mother.<sup>701</sup> Eustace was also a fan of David's early cookbooks and it is an interesting coincidence that she was also influenced by Boulestin. David's biographer, Artemis Cooper, acknowledges her respect for Boulestin, writing, "She greatly admired the way he wrote about food, and the fresh, simple elegance of his dishes."<sup>702</sup> In the introduction to *A Book of Mediterranean Food*, David selects a quotation sourced from Boulestin to emphasize the importance of garlic in cooking: "It is not really an exaggeration to say that peace and happiness begin, geographically, where garlic is used in cooking."<sup>703</sup> The fear of garlic is a recurring theme in many pre- and post-war British cookbooks and the bulb's use on the Continent was an excuse by some writers to denigrate European cuisines. Humble asserts that "garlic represented the last ditch defense of the British against the onslaught of the food of

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<sup>700</sup> Note: I met Alan Eustace in February 2013 and we discussed his experiences at Beleura on several occasions. Very sadly, he died in June 2014 while I was writing this thesis and I am very grateful for these discussions and his notes, as they were crucial to my understanding of food at Beleura during this period.

<sup>701</sup> Personal communication with Alan Eustace.

<sup>702</sup> Artemis Cooper, *Elizabeth David: Writing at the Kitchen Table* (London: Michael Joseph - Penguin Group, 1999), 46.

<sup>703</sup> David, v.

other nations.”<sup>704</sup> Conversely, she argues that garlic was at the centre of the food revolution created by David.<sup>705</sup> Elizabeth Smart and Agnes Ryan, authors of a 1950s book on French cooking, offer some helpful advice to housewives trying to introduce garlic and that other dubious ingredient, olive oil, to their families: “If you don’t tell them, the chances are they won’t know they are eating them, they’ll only wonder how you managed to get that subtle flavor. Many a man has enjoyed a garlicky dish unbeknown to himself.”<sup>706</sup> This attitude places Eustace in the more adventurous cook category as he had no fears of using garlic. Amongst the dishes listed in his notebook are many that would now be regarded as classics, although in the 1950s they would have been quite unusual, recipes such as Minestrone Soup, Paprika Veal, Hungarian Goulash, Veau au Vin, Paupiettes de Veau Clémentine, Boeuf Stroganoff, Filet Rossini, grilled spatchcock, Boeuf a la Mode, Macaroni Bolognese, Cauliflower Polonaise and Strawberries Romanoff. Eustace also lists simpler, everyday recipes such as steak and kidney pie, macaroni, chicken soup, curry and cheesecake.<sup>707</sup> Eustace told me that Tallis had one enduring demand for his food, “it had to be tasty and it had to be moist”.<sup>708</sup> Tallis could not abide dry or tough meat. Sauces were very important, with Eustace recalling that a roast chicken was usually drowned in gravy for Tallis’s benefit.

The notebook also gives menus for a number of dinner parties prepared by Eustace at Beleura, including, as an example, the menu for Tallis’s birthday celebration on 15 December 1954. The guests started with leberwurst paté, stuffed olives and anchovies, followed by herring salad. The main course was chicken with pineapple and rum, French beans and finishing with strawberries for dessert. Not all menus are complex; some are intended as Sunday evening, casual buffets. One particularly memorable dinner recorded by Eustace on a separate card inserted in his notebook was a party held at Beleura on 30 January 1959 for Jim Palmer, another member of their social circle (Figure 47). In the manner of most of the more formal dinner party menus in the notebook, it is written in French. Eustace explained that even though neither he nor any of his friends were fluent in French, it seemed appropriate at the time.<sup>709</sup> This could be seen as a rather self-conscious appeal to sophistication, but it also reflects the

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<sup>704</sup> Humble, 121.

<sup>705</sup> Humble, 121.

<sup>706</sup> Elizabeth Smart and Agnes Ryan, *French Cookery* (London: Spring Books, undated, most likely 1950s), 9.

<sup>707</sup> Food and menu notebook belonging to Alan Eustace. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>708</sup> Personal communication with Alan Eustace.

<sup>709</sup> Personal communication with Alan Eustace.

high status given to French cuisine at the time. For a group of friends interested in travel it may also have been a reminder of another more exotic world abroad. The menu started with Hors d'Oeuvre Jacques and Paté Beleura, then Mousse de Saumon and Salade de Concombres. Main course was Caneton Coburg with Sauce à l'Orange, accompanied by Pommes Berrichonne and Petits Pois. Dessert was Rhum Baba Pierre. Café noir rounded out the party. No specific recipes are given, but there are several recipes for caneton (duckling) in Elizabeth David's books, which may have been the inspiration for the classic French main course.<sup>710</sup> Wine was also specified for the party, including Seppelts Rutherglen Flor Fino (1953), Mt Pleasant Traminer bin 11 (1952), Mt Pleasant Hermitage bin 22 (1953) and Rhinecastle Port (1930).<sup>711</sup> Eustace confirmed in conversation that Tallis ordered his wine from the Rhinecastle cellars in Queen Street, Melbourne.<sup>712</sup> The care with which wines were chosen for the party is significant in itself, as this was a time in Melbourne when beer was the beverage of choice and wine consumption was much less common. For this special meal, each guest at the dinner had a place tag with a hand-written menu. Tallis wrote to Eustace after the dinner to express his thanks, "I have never tasted better, and you certainly excelled yourself."<sup>713</sup>

Eustace was clearly a most capable cook, as he recorded in his diary an elaborate dinner party which he prepared at Beleura on 3 July 1955 for guests including visiting English-Canadian pianist, composer, lyricist and singer, Anna Russell. Russell was famous for her comic and somewhat sacrilegious interpretations of opera, particularly Wagner. The dinner started with oyster cocktail, then chicken consommé. Roast duck with orange and fruit stuffing was the main course with sautéed potatoes, Cauliflower Polonaise, avocado salad and orange in cognac. The dinner concluded with cheese, port and cognac (Figure 48). Unusually, this dinner was served in the formal dining room at Beleura to celebrate its redecoration (Figure 49). Eustace was clearly very pleased with the evening, "It was a hilarious, never to be forgotten dinner party."<sup>714</sup>

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<sup>710</sup> Elizabeth David, *French Provincial Cooking* (London: Grub Street, 2007. Originally published 1960), 409.

<sup>711</sup> Food and menu notebook belonging to Alan Eustace.

<sup>712</sup> Personal communication with Alan Eustace.

<sup>713</sup> Hand-written letter on Beleura letterhead paper from John Tallis to Alan Eustace, 31 January 1959. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>714</sup> Anthony Knight, *Beleura Mornington: A Theatre of the Past* (Mornington: The Tallis Foundation, 2009), 234.

Due to increased work responsibilities at the end of the 1950s Eustace was unable to stay at Beleura so frequently. A good example of one of his later menus can be found typed on a sheet of Beleura letterhead, dated 3 November 1960. Tallis had hand-written the guest list for the dinner for eight, which included the renowned Australian violinist and Mornington resident, Dorcas McClean. Eustace continued the French flavor by starting with Quiche Lorraine (with a 1953 Hunter River Margaret Riesling), followed by main course of Poulet Chasseur accompanied by Pommes Florentine, Petits Pois Anglais and Carottes au Beurre (with a 1955 Chateau Longueville Pauillac). Fromage Stilton, Salade and biscuits rosemary was followed by Mousse Rhum au Chocolat (with a Demi Sec Jean Bouchard). This was a menu worthy of one of the popular French restaurants of the day.<sup>715</sup>

One interesting aspect of the dinner party menus and lists of recipes cooked by Eustace at Beleura is the predominance of French cuisine and the relative scarcity of Italian recipes in his repertoire. There are only four recipes in his notebook of Italian origin: Minestrone Soup, Spaghetti Italienne, the inevitable Spaghetti Bolognese and risotto. This is surprising considering the strong affinity that both Eustace and Tallis had with Italian culture and is indicative of the somewhat overwhelming French influence amongst the European culture-focused sector of the Australian population in the 1950s. For comparison, it is interesting to consider the cooking style at another Euro-centric household in 1950s Melbourne, the artist community of Heidi at Bulleen. In their book, *Sunday's Kitchen*, Lesley Harding and Kendrah Morgan discuss the predilection for French cooking of the household's matriarch, Sunday Reed. Like Eustace, she was strongly influenced by Elizabeth David's books and also regularly used Marcel Boulestin's *Simple French Cooking for English Homes*. Reed was cooking recipes from these books as late as the 1970s.<sup>716</sup>

It is interesting to contemplate how much Tallis cooked during this period. He certainly appeared to prefer to let others do the cooking, but logic would say that there must have been times when he was left to his own devices with obliging friends absent and staff away. In a hand-written letter to Eustace dated 19 October 1963, Tallis jokes, "Have just cooked one of my inimitable Irish stews for (name illegible) for tomorrow's dinner. If he says it gives him

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<sup>715</sup> "Dinner menu, 3 November 1960." Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>716</sup> Leslie Harding & Kendrah Morgan, *Sunday's Kitchen: Food & Living at Heidi* (Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2010), 64.



indigestion I intend to brain him with one of the Aga's saucepans!"<sup>717</sup> Hopefully this was not necessary as the AGA saucepans are very heavy. Tallis's later diaries show that over the years he regularly cooked this and other simple dishes. Perhaps it was a result of his father's Irish origins, but Tallis seemed particularly fond of Irish stew. Tallis's handwriting can be clearly seen annotating recipes in several cookbooks on the shelves at Beleura, giving a good indication that he may have cooked these particular dishes. If so, curried mince with rice, from a 1953 *Good Housekeeping's Family Recipes* supplement, may have also been in his repertoire.<sup>718</sup> The 1955 *GEC Cookery and Instruction Book for Use with Electric Cookers* that accompanied the new appliance installed in room 18, has markings on a number of recipes. These recipes include celery soup, bread and butter pudding, baked custard, sultana or raisin pudding, queen of puddings and Eve's pudding. The predominance of puddings is an interesting and typically Australian emphasis of the selection. *The Gourmet Cookbook* of 1955 has markings on recipes for apple charlotte, cucumber in sour cream, Lorraine custard and zucchini and tomatoes, a somewhat eclectic mixture of culinary styles. Other books of the era on the Beleura shelves may also have been used but have no markings to confirm specific recipes. These include Edouard de Pomiane's *Cooking in Ten Minutes*, Anne Mason's *Cook a Good Dinner* and Poppy Cannon's *Unforbidden Sweets*.

There is another intriguing document that demonstrates that Tallis not only cooked but took sufficient interest in food to collect recipes that appealed to him. In the working kitchen (room 18) is a recipe for lemon pudding on a foolscap-size card in handwriting that is clearly that of Tallis (Figure 50). The recipe must have been written in the pre-decimalization period (pre-1966), as a cost is given for making the dish in pence rather than cents. The recipe is for a suet-based steamed pudding flavoured with lemon juice and adds to the small repertoire of puddings from the GEC appliance cookery book that Tallis probably made from time to time. As with any recipes, it is difficult to know if they were ever used, but a hand-written recipe suggests a much higher probability of being made.<sup>719</sup>

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<sup>717</sup> Hand-written letter on Beleura letterhead paper from John Tallis to Alan Eustace, 19 October 1963. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>718</sup> *Good Housekeeping's Family Recipes*, 1953. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>719</sup> Hand-written recipe card for lemon pudding. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

The Society of Gourmets' *Oh for a Man who Cooks*, published in 1957, is another cookbook on the shelf at Beleura and while it does not have any notes or markings to suggest specific use, its presence hints at another important influence at the time – the concept of the *gourmet*. The gourmet, invariably male, was a person who aspired to the finer things in life, preferably foreign. Nicola Humble observes, “Men in the late 1950s wanted to be connoisseurs, dinner jacketed, elegant and worldly-wise, like James Bond dining in the Casino Royale.”<sup>720</sup> These were men who definitely had their martinis very dry and shaken not stirred. Early celebrity chefs such as Robert Carrier, or on the local front Graham Kerr and later Don Dunstan, were suitable role models for budding gourmets. The Society of Gourmets was a Sydney based fraternity consisting of Lloyd (Deke) Coleman, Ted Moloney, Carlos Zalapa, Sigurd Klingenberg and John Walker who met once a month to cook and share meals. The book followed their 1952 publication, *Oh for a French Wife*, which conformed to the assumption that gourmet food was inevitably French. The title was inspired by Deke Coleman's wife, who was actually Belgian but had a passion for all things French and was evidently a wonderful cook.<sup>721</sup> *Oh for a Man who Cooks* is significant not just for the role model that it promoted but also for the multicultural quirkiness of the recipes. While most recipes have a French flavour, there are also sections featuring recipes from Mexico and Tahiti. Margaret Fulton, who went on to become one of Australia's most popular food writers, was a close associate of members of the Society of Gourmets in the 1950s. In her autobiography she describes a dinner party held by Deke and Louise Coleman who were at the apex of the Society of Gourmets:

After lively conversation over pre-dinner drinks we went into the beautiful dining room: the finest antique Limoge dinner service, French Christofle and old American silver, fine crystal glasses – all the trappings of the cosmopolitan, privileged, moneyed, successful trend-setters were in evidence. I wasn't prepared for our hostess's naturalness or simple charm. We had a clear sparkling consommé, with a simple garnish, fillet of beef with Béarnaise sauce, a French salad and a superb Grand Marnier soufflé for dessert.<sup>722</sup>

Whether by coincidence or by deliberate imitation, the dinner parties at Beleura have much in common with this description and it is quite likely that the friends who gathered to enjoy the

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<sup>720</sup> Humble, 152.

<sup>721</sup> Margaret Fulton, *I Sang for my Supper* (Sydney: Lansdowne Publishing Pty Ltd, 1999), 95.

<sup>722</sup> Fulton, 103.

elegant meals prepared by Alan Eustace and served in the grand dining room and other locations in this ornate and stylish house aspired to the lifestyle of the gourmet and saw themselves as highly-cultured style setters in a rather bland 1950s Melbourne. This assumption appears to be confirmed in a letter written in 1954 by Dr Max W. Guymer, an associate of Tallis: “And I want to thank you for the experiences like eating in best restaurants, the car rides, theatres, operas and many other things. These I just took for granted but it was through you and I see and now realize well that I learned the pleasures of good living.”<sup>723</sup>

If further evidence is required for the possible style of cooking in the 1950s at Beleura, a personal cookbook collated by Bidy Carnegie provides some interesting comparisons. Carnegie lived in a small cliff top cottage, Blue Waters, across the road from the north gate of Beleura. Tallis often shared regular and special occasion meals with his sister and her friend Jane Pearce at Blue Waters and brought them vegetables and fruit from the Beleura garden. The cookbook shows a similar combination of recipes to Eustace’s notebook; traditional British-based fare interspersed with recipes from new, multicultural sources. The cookbook includes many newspaper cuttings, particularly Maria Kozlik Donovan’s column, *Epicure’s Corner*. This column from the *Age* features recipes such as Prawns a la Mediterranee, fish chowder (New England style), Creole Jambalaya, Pallo Mexicano, Omelette aux Champignons à la Normande and Serbian fish. Other newspaper articles are included from the *Sunday Telegraph* (“Two Savory Rabbit Ideas”), the *Herald* (Salads by Jean Forward), the *Sun* (Jean Bowring’s scallop recipes) and the *Australian Women’s Weekly* (“International Look at Chicken”).<sup>724</sup> This eclectic range of recipes is typical of the 1950s. Such a selection would have been unthinkable in a pre-war personal cookbook in Australia.

These documents and oral histories provide a surprisingly detailed story of food prepared and served at Beleura. As with earlier eras at Beleura, there is also a wide range of artifacts which complement and enhance this narrative. A brochure in the Beleura collection is titled *Modernise – Sunbeamise Your Living*.<sup>725</sup> In the post-war rush to modernize kitchens many Australian homes acquired new Sunbeam appliances and Beleura was no exception. Founded

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<sup>723</sup> Hand-written letter from Dr Max W. Guymer to John Tallis, 5 August 1954. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>724</sup> Bidy Carnegie’s Cookbook. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>725</sup> Sunbeam Corporation. *Modernise – Sunbeamise Your Living* (Melbourne: Sunbeam Corporation Limited, no date given).

in America, the Sunbeam Corporation has had a long association with Australia. Sunbeam electrical appliances were first imported into Australia by Coopers Engineering Company (CEC), whose company name was changed to Sunbeam in 1946.<sup>726</sup> While the company remained American owned until 1987, Australian appliance manufacture began in 1948 with the ubiquitous Mixmaster. This electric food mixer was highly popular in Australia and sold 750,000 units in ten years.<sup>727</sup> An advertisement in the *Australian Women's Weekly* extols the virtues of the appliance to the 1950s housewife: "Mixmaster does the tiring arm-work of cooking, baking, getting meals...makes ingredients go further...saves time and money."<sup>728</sup> The Beleura kitchens have an early variation on the Mixmaster, called the Sunbeam Beater-Mix, which also dates from the 1950s. It is smaller than the Mixmaster and the motor/beater unit can be detached for hand mixing. Beleura also has a Sunbeam Automatic Frypan in the working kitchen (room 18), a popular cooking device at the time.<sup>729</sup> Just as earlier cooks valued the invention of the oven thermostat for the ability to set and leave food in the oven, the electric frypan with its inbuilt thermostat-controlled heating surface, aimed to also remove the need to watch food cooking. In an era when time saving was often expressed as a virtue, the electric frypan was massively popular. Colin Bannerman observes, "In the 1950s the electric frypan took Australian kitchens by storm. It could do just about everything from fried eggs for breakfast to braised steak and steamed pudding for dinner."<sup>730</sup> The advertisements declared: "Cooks whatever you like EXACTLY the way you like it."<sup>731</sup> Because the heating element is in direct contact with the food, the advertising rhetoric sometimes did not match the results, with cooking described by Bannerman as "alternating periods of furious bubbling and grateful resting."<sup>732</sup> This seemed to make no difference to sales as almost every household used one.<sup>733</sup>

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<sup>726</sup> Powerhouse Museum, "Sunbeam Mixmaster," Powerhouse Museum, <http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database/?irn=355448&search=sunbeam> (accessed September 14, 2014).

<sup>727</sup> Sunbeam Corporation Limited, "About Sunbeam," Sunbeam Corporation, <http://sunbeam.com.au/Content/About-Us/> (accessed September 14, 2014).

<sup>728</sup> "3 minutes in the new Sunbeam Mixmaster," *Australian Women's Weekly*, February 11, 1950, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>729</sup> Note: An instruction book for a Sunbeam Controlled Heat Automatic Frypan in the Beleura archives is dated 1958, confirming that the appliance was purchased in the late 1950s.

<sup>730</sup> Bannerman, 108.

<sup>731</sup> Advertisement, *Australian Women's Weekly*, February 11, 1959, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>732</sup> Bannerman, 108.

<sup>733</sup> Note: Of all the artifacts at Beleura dating from the post-war era, the Sunbeam appliances are, for me, the most redolent of the time. Perhaps this is because of my own mother's attempts to bake sponge cakes in her Sunbeam Frypan or the way it came with us on numerous holidays as though it was part of the family.

#### 4.4.1 Artifact evaluation 8 – Namco pressure cooker

**Identification:** The seven pint (24cm diameter and 17cm high) Namco *Magician* pressure cooker currently stored in the working kitchen (room 18) was one of a range of Namco pressure cookers made by the Overseas Corporation (Australia) Ltd in Australia. Namco pressure cookers were manufactured in Australia from 1947.<sup>734</sup> Both the body and lid have been manufactured in cast aluminium, with the base machined for a perfectly flat surface, suitable for gas and electric cookers. The coarse, granular finish on the unmachined surfaces of the body suggests that the cooker was sand cast. The close fitting, flanged locking lid has a rubber seal. The two handles are made from black Bakelite. An indicator weight that controls the pressure in the cooker and alerts the cook when the set pressure has been achieved is located on a vent pipe in the centre of the lid (Figure 51).<sup>735</sup>

**Context analysis:** Pressure cookers evolved from pressurized canning retorts. The American company, National Presto, introduced the first cast aluminium domestic saucepan style pressure cooker in 1939. World War II diverted all aluminium to armaments production and consequently, pressure cooker manufacture did not begin in earnest until after the War.<sup>736</sup> Pressure cooking is based on the physical principle that the boiling point of water increases with increasing pressure. For instance, if the boiling point of water at atmospheric pressure is 100°C, then the boiling point will be 108.5°C at 34.5kPa (5psi) above atmospheric and 115.3°C at 69kPa (10psi) above.<sup>737</sup> Food will cook faster at the higher temperatures. In practical terms this also means that poorer quality meats will be tenderized very quickly, while retaining flavour. The Namco instruction book for the pressure cooker at Beleura implies that almost anything can be cooked more quickly in a pressure cooker. Headings for recipes in the booklet include soups, fish and sea foods, meats and poultry, stuffings for meat and poultry, fresh vegetables, dried vegetables, frozen vegetables, cereals, desserts puddings and fruit cake, fresh fruit and dried fruit.<sup>738</sup>

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<sup>734</sup> Anne Mason, *Cook a Good Dinner* (Melbourne: Whitcombe and Tombs Pty Ltd, undated), 121.

<sup>735</sup> *Namco Pressure Cooker – How to Use and Maintain – with Recipes for all Occasions* (Melbourne: Overseas Corporation (Australia) Ltd, 1949), 8.

<sup>736</sup> National Presto Industries Inc, “Company History,” National Presto Industries Inc, <http://www.gopresto.com/information/history.php> (accessed September 16, 2014).

<sup>737</sup> Marguerite Patten, *Pressure Cooker Cookbook – The Basic Basics* (London: Grub Street, 2010), 9.

Note:kPa (kilopascals) and psi (pound per square inch) are SI and Imperial units of pressure respectively.

<sup>738</sup> *Namco Pressure Cooker – How to Use and Maintain – with Recipes for all Occasions*, 2.

The Overseas Corporation had evolved from the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation (CAC) that made aircraft for the war effort at Fisherman's Bend in Melbourne. Housewives had been called upon during World War II to donate their aluminium saucepans for use in making aircraft components, but the campaign had been so successful that at the end of the war there was a pile of saucepans remaining. Pressure cooker manufacture was seen as a solution to the glut of aluminium and an opportunity to capitalize on the growing popularity of the appliance. John Storey, who had been an executive with the CAC, employed a very young Margaret Fulton to demonstrate pressure cookers to housewives and to lead the sales campaign. In her autobiography, Fulton admits that despite her inexperience in sales, the enterprise was a great success: "I grew, and so did the corporation. We were selling pressure cookers like hot cakes. So well, in fact, that we were soon running short of aluminium."<sup>739</sup> Well before local smelting of aluminium, imported raw material stocks were required to meet demand for the appliance.

Pressure cookers were extensively advertised in the 1950s as the housewife's salvation. The tone of the Namco instruction book turns dramatic, in proudly claiming that the pressure cooker "is the answer of Science to woman's eternal cry – 'Save me from endless drudgery in the kitchen'."<sup>740</sup> Namco go further, declaring that the pressure cooker is the "household miracle of the age" and "the most dramatic development of recent times".<sup>741</sup> Certainly many housewives in the 1950s agreed and added a pressure cooker to their kitchen implements. Contemporary pressure cooker advocate Juanita Phillips argues, "At a time when good quality food was expensive and hard to come by, pressure cookers became an essential household item."<sup>742</sup> Later, Namco changed the material of construction from aluminium to stainless steel, no doubt to assuage concerns over aluminium contamination. If the aim of the pressure cooker was primarily to reduce cooking time, then it is easy to see that the invention of the microwave cooker would pose a major threat to continuing sales. Forgotten for many years in advanced countries, their use has continued in the third world with Fidel Castro advocating pressure cookers as an energy saving device for families in Cuba and approximately eighty per cent of the urban population of India owning one.<sup>743</sup> Pressure cookers appear to be regaining

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<sup>739</sup> Fulton, 43.

<sup>740</sup> *Namco Pressure Cooker – How to Use and Maintain – with Recipes for all Occasions*, 5.

<sup>741</sup> *Namco Pressure Cooker – How to Use and Maintain – with Recipes for all Occasions*, 4.

<sup>742</sup> Juanita Phillips, *A Pressure Cooker Saved My Life: How to have it all and keep it all together* (Sydney: HarperCollins, 2010), 44.

<sup>743</sup> Phillips, 181.

popularity in Britain and Australia, if advertisements and new specialist publications are a guide.<sup>744</sup> New locking systems and pressure relief valves have been designed to enhance safety and ease-of-use, leading to many old brands such as Fissler and Silit being recently revived. Unfortunately, the Namco pressure cooker has not returned to date, although parts and seals are still readily available.<sup>745</sup>

**Interpretation:** Long after they were popular as kitchen appliances, the term *pressure cooker* is still used to describe a stressful, high-pressure life, as in the phrase “to live (or work) in a pressure cooker environment”. Most people who grew up in the 1950s would have their own pressure cooker story. Accounts abound of exploding pressure cookers with meals ending up on the ceiling. British food doyen of the 1950s, Constance Spry, had a cautious opinion of the pressure cooker: “It is a valuable ally...but the feckless and the dreamers and those who wander away and forget what is in hand should, in the interest of everybody, leave it alone.”<sup>746</sup> I recall my own family kitchen and as a child being extremely wary of the pressure cooker’s ominous presence on the stove-top; the way it hissed and gushed steam was unsettling. Its considerable weight gave it a gravitas amongst the conventional aluminium saucepans. For a time, my mother used it for everything from corned beef to lamb chops and vegetables, even using it for steamed puddings and baked custards. The question is: why did John Tallis need one?

Using dated but in this instance, apt terminology, Tallis could be described as a “gentleman of leisure”. How was time so precious, that he needed a pressure cooker to speed up the production of meals? Just as in earlier eras, the answer might lie merely in an interest in modern technology. It could also be evidence of the pervasive nature of marketing. Namco claimed, “The possession of a Namco Pressure Cooker stamps the housewife as a woman of intelligence and discernment who is well abreast of the times.”<sup>747</sup> Despite there being no housewife, how could Tallis ignore such an appeal? We do not know how often he or his various cooks fired up the Namco pressure cooker, but it appears to have been well used. Alan

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<sup>744</sup> For example: Catherine Phipps, *The Pressure Cooker Cookbook* (London: Ebury Press, 2012).

<sup>745</sup> Pressure Cooker Centre, “Shop pressure cookers and spare parts by brand,” Pressure Cooker Centre, <http://www.pressurecooker.com.au/Shop-Brands> (accessed September 16, 2014).

<sup>746</sup> Alex Renton, “If you can’t stand the pressure, stay out of the kitchen,” *Times* (London), September 6, 2012, via Academic OneFile, <http://www.gale.cengage.com/AcademicOneFile/>

<sup>747</sup> *Namco Pressure Cooker – How to Use and Maintain – with Recipes for all Occasions*, 7.

Eustace observed that while Tallis enjoyed food he was far happier when someone else cooked. While he did cook at times, it was clearly not a chore he enjoyed.<sup>748</sup> Perhaps this is a clue to Tallis's relationship to the pressure cooker. It provided a means by which he could minimize time in the kitchen doing things he preferred not to do. Time saving was therefore just as important to him as to anyone else, because it freed time for more rewarding purposes. Once again, Beleura was not so different to less opulent households.

#### **4.5 Serving food at Beleura**

There are no documents that record exactly how food was served at Beleura in the post-war era, but the personal recollections of both Ian Hunt and Alan Eustace provide some valuable insights. The theme appears to have been informality on all but the most special occasions; the ornate dining room was rarely used. An exception was the previously discussed dinner that Eustace prepared to celebrate the visit of Anna Russell to Beleura.<sup>749</sup> Another was a visit by Welsh actor Emlyn Williams to Beleura. Hunt recalled this as being a very grand occasion, with the full battery of silver and glassware being deployed.<sup>750</sup> For everyday meals, the vestibule, the sunroom and the French kitchen all were regularly used. Meals were also served outside on the eastern terrace. Even though the style may have been informal, Tallis carefully planned each meal. The table for a formal occasion was often prepared a week in advance, but the result was always elegant. Eustace remembered Tallis as always being apprehensive about big dinner parties, but on the day he was quite convivial and generous. It appears that Tallis was at his best with small groups of friends.<sup>751</sup> Meals would usually start with sherry as an aperitif, often served with olives, cheese or a paté and biscuits. Rarely was an entrée served, but the main course was usually followed by a dessert, often fruit in summer. Main courses were “good serves, but not over large”.<sup>752</sup> Eustace emphasized that Tallis hated waste. At dinner parties, Tallis had a particular habit of insisting on personally washing dishes between courses. Despite saying that he found this very annoying, Eustace rather fondly recalled an enduring image of Tallis with a tea-towel hung over his shoulder.<sup>753</sup>

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<sup>748</sup> Personal communication with Alan Eustace.

<sup>749</sup> Food and menu notebook belonging to Alan Eustace.

<sup>750</sup> Personal communication by email with Ian Hunt.

<sup>751</sup> Personal communication with Alan Eustace.

<sup>752</sup> Personal communication with Alan Eustace.

<sup>753</sup> Personal communication with Alan Eustace.



These first-hand recollections are important resources which complement the few available documents. The fact that there are guests from the post-war era at Beleura still with quite vivid and detailed memories of cooking, serving and eating food is itself a comment on the importance of these tasks in the daily life of the household. However, as in earlier chapters, there are also important artifacts relating to serving food, so many in fact that only a few can be considered in any detail. Tallis had access to the extensive collection of crockery, cutlery and glassware that had been acquired by Sir George and Lady Tallis. Most of these pieces are still in the house today and it is obvious that there was more than enough to allow Tallis to cater for even the largest party with style and elegance. He also acquired some new pieces, reflecting his personal taste. A particularly passion of the family appears to have been the tea and dinnerware designed and manufactured in England by Susie Cooper. While this large and significant collection was acquired over time, with some pieces possibly purchased pre-war, a receipt from The Myer Emporium dated 28 April 1954 indicates that at least some items were purchased by John Tallis in the 1950s.<sup>754</sup> Other pieces in the present collection at Beleura came from Bidy Carnegie who must have shared her brother's enthusiasm for this famous designer.

Susie Cooper studied at the Burslem School of Art and in 1929 established her own enterprise in Burslem, designing and decorating white ware blanks made by a selection of local potteries. In 1931, she moved her business to the Crown Works, adjacent to Wood and Sons, one of her pottery suppliers. This site would be her design headquarters for nearly fifty years. Biographer of Cooper, Bryn Youds argues, "Susie Cooper is a name synonymous with excellence in ceramic design; she was without question one of the most important and most prolific of all British designers."<sup>755</sup> Cooper's designs are bold and colourful, with many pieces displaying elements of the Art Deco style of the 1930s. Beleura has a wide range of Susie Cooper tea and dinner ware including the famous *Kestral* jug, teacups, saucers and side plates in the *Endon* green and pink floral pattern from 1938. There are also soup bowls, dinner plates, a meat platter and egg cups, some using the spiral ware version of the *Endon* pattern (Figure 52). The 1962 Valuation lists amongst the kitchen items, a ninety-four piece Susie Cooper dinner and

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<sup>754</sup> Receipt from The Myer Emporium for purchase of tea and dinnerware by Susie Cooper, Burslem, England, 28 April 1954. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>755</sup> Bryn Youds, *Susie Cooper: An Elegant Affair* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1996), 5.

tea set.<sup>756</sup> Most are marked, “Susie Cooper Production – Crown Works – Burslem, England”. While the tea and coffee ware may have been purchased pre-war, the dinnerware must have been purchased by John Tallis as they were not available until after 1958.<sup>757</sup>

In the last chapter, a coffee making theme was identified in the Tallis family at Beleura, which continued under John Tallis in the 1950s. In the Beleura working kitchen there are two Moka Express stove-top espresso coffee pots (27cm and 21cm high models), made in Italy from cast aluminium with black Bakelite handles. Invented by Alfonso Bialetti in 1933, the Moka Express was made from aluminium because Mussolini had placed an embargo on the civilian use of stainless steel, to support armaments manufacture.<sup>758</sup> As Italians grappled with the economic hardships of the depression era, the little espresso pot was intended as a way to enjoy good quality coffee at home at minimal expense. The octagonal shaped Moka Express was much copied but the original can be identified by an image printed on the side of the pot of a comical man with a moustache known as *l’omino coi baffi*. Today it is estimated that nine out of ten Italian households own one.<sup>759</sup> These appliances were probably purchased by Tallis during or following his travels in Italy in 1953. Apart from the two in the working kitchen, there are three more in the John Tallis kitchen (room 23), all of different capacities (Figure 53). They are strongly associated with Italian coffee culture and no doubt allowed Tallis to reminisce and relive his travels. They would have been unusual in the 1950s amongst families of British origin, as tea was still the preferred beverage. Symons asserts that apart from beer perhaps, tea was the undisputed national drink.<sup>760</sup> If coffee was made at home, it would most likely have been with one of the new American-style electric percolators that became available in the 1930s, certainly not an espresso pot. Italian-style coffee making came to Australia post-war with the boatloads of immigrant Italians, but was yet to take hold in the population at large. Ero Milano imported and installed the first licensed espresso coffee machine in his University Café in Lygon Street in 1952. It would start a revolution in coffee culture in

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<sup>756</sup> “Valuation of Property Known as ‘Beleura’, Esplanade, Beleura Hill, Mornington. Owner: J.M. Tallis esq.”

<sup>757</sup> Youds, 52.

<sup>758</sup> Galla Coffee, “Moka Express Stove-Top Espresso Maker,” Galla Coffee, <http://www.gallacoffee.co.uk/coffee-knowledge/history-of-stove-top-espresso-make>. (accessed September 22, 2014).

<sup>759</sup> Hilary Greenbaum, “Who Made the Moka Express?” *New York Times*, [http://6thfloor.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/09/01/who-made-the-moka-express/?\\_php=](http://6thfloor.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/09/01/who-made-the-moka-express/?_php=) (accessed September 22, 2014).

<sup>760</sup> Symons, 169.

Australia.<sup>761</sup> For John Tallis in the 1950s, making coffee in the stove-top espresso pot must have made him feel very Italian indeed. La dolce vita.

#### 4.5.1 Artifact evaluation 9 – Murano glassware

**Identification:** Located in a glass-fronted cabinet in the vestibule (room 14) is a very fine collection of Italian glassware. The pieces were handmade in Murano, an island in the waterway adjacent to Venice famous for its glass manufacturers. They were purchased by John Tallis on his 1953 trip to Italy and he had them shipped home to Australia through a customs and shipping agent. In a letter to his brother and sister-in-law, Mick and Dorothy Tallis, written from the Hotel Regina, Venice, 2 June 1953 he recorded purchasing the glassware and six eighteenth century stone putti (which were later located on the parapets around Beleura).<sup>762</sup> The glasses are in sets of seven: water goblets, brandy balloons, red wine glasses, white wine glasses, sherry glasses and champagne glasses. There are also seven small plates, two candlestick holders and a large dish (Figure 54). The body of each vessel is made from deep ruby coloured glass, while the clear glass stem is crafted into the shape of a dolphin and contains gold flecks. The candlesticks have the shape of a dragon, again with gold flecks.

**Context analysis:** The island of Murano is made up of a group of islets separated by canals with palazzos and churches giving the impression of a smaller version of Venice. What particularly distinguishes Murano from Venice is its tradition of glass making dating from the thirteenth century.<sup>763</sup> Glass making originally took place in Venice, but in 1292 the Grand Council decreed that the glasshouses were to be relocated to the island of Murano to reduce the risk of fire.<sup>764</sup> Glass making factories in elegant old buildings were established along the canals of Murano and while the fortunes of the enterprises have varied over the centuries, the Island is highly regarded for art glasswork in both traditional and contemporary styles. The main constituent of glass is silica (silicon dioxide) originally derived from river pebbles but now from quarried sand. With the addition of a soda flux (sodium carbonate), the mixture fuses into glass at about 800°C. This differs from the northern European glass making tradition

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<sup>761</sup> Newton, 28.

<sup>762</sup> “Letters from John Tallis to family from Europe 1953.” Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>763</sup> Norbert Heyl and Rosa Barovier Mentasti, *Murano: The Glass Making Island* (Treviso: Edizioni Grafiche Vianello, 2006), 15.

<sup>764</sup> Jo Marshall, *Glass Source Book* (London: Collins & Brown Limited, 1990), 48.

which uses potash flux (potassium carbonate). The flux lowers the melting point of the glass and helps the viscous liquid to flow making it easier to work. Lime (calcium carbonate) is also added as a stabilizer. This type of glass is often called soda-lime glass.<sup>765</sup> Northern European glassmakers, such as those from the Bohemian tradition, favoured heavily etched and cut glass surfaces. Rosa Barovier Mentasti, a descendent of one of the oldest Murano glass families asserts, “The Venetians, on the other hand, wanted to exalt the very specific features of glass, which made it a unique material: transparency, polychromy, fragility and above all, ductility and the ability to be blown thinner and thinner when incandescent.”<sup>766</sup>

The design and decoration of the set of glassware is traditional, but the date of manufacture is not known. It is assumed that they were new in 1953. The ruby glass bowls of the goblets are hand blown. The hand worked dolphin stem is common to many pieces from Murano and is made in this instance from aventurine glass, which was first made in Murano in the fifteenth century. The glass with its gold flecking imitates the mineral of the same name, which is a form of translucent quartz with mica inclusions.<sup>767</sup>

**Interpretation:** The obvious and assumed reason for Tallis buying the collection of Murano glassware was as a decorative, but useful souvenir of his trip to Italy in 1953. It was also part of his renovation of Beleura which gave the house a more overt Italian style. This included new plantings in the garden and placement of the stone putti, also purchased in Italy, onto the parapets above the portico at the front of the house. Tallis was inspired by the Italian mural paintings he had seen on his trip to commission Melbourne artist Wesley Penberthy to paint murals on the ceilings of the dining room and drawing room. Penberthy had already painted the entrance hall ceiling in 1951 before Tallis set off on his journey to Italy, but on his return he continued the work into the other two rooms. The paintings may not have been what Tallis had intended with Anthony Knight proposing, “John Tallis was never totally reconciled to these ceilings, but the fact that they still exist suggests he maintained an uneasy acceptance of them. His visitors found them somewhat startling – visitors still do.”<sup>768</sup> The paintings are

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<sup>765</sup> Heyl and Mentasti, 105.

<sup>766</sup> Heyl and Mentasti, 102.

<sup>767</sup> Corning Museum of Glass, “Chemistry of Glass,” Corning Museum of Glass, <http://cmog.org/article/chemistry-glass> (accessed September 24, 2014).

<sup>768</sup> Knight, 159.

certainly arresting in their vibrant colour and voluptuous imagery. The ceilings are very Italian, but a little unsettling.

How often the Murano glassware was used is uncertain, with both Alan Eustace and Ian Hunt recalling that items such as these were kept for very special occasions. They would have been very fragile and difficult to wash. Knight confirmed that the Murano glassware was originally in the library (room 13), but the pieces were moved into the vestibule during restoration of the house, after Tallis's death. Knight also believes that the glasses were rarely and perhaps never used. They had sat for so long on a painted surface that they were difficult to remove. He also understood that Tallis bought seven of each item to allow for one to be broken.<sup>769</sup> Hunt characterized Tallis as "a modest man" and perhaps the use of such flamboyant and intricate glassware was out of keeping.<sup>770</sup> Tallis obviously intended to use the Murano glassware otherwise he would not have bought such a wide range of styles or deliberately purchased surplus pieces to account for some breakages. Perhaps his decision falls into the "it seemed a good idea at the time" category, a situation familiar to most travellers who return home with inappropriate souvenirs. The glassware, however, made an excellent display in the library, where guests could admire them and where Tallis could quietly remember a simpler life in Italy, without the often onerous responsibility of managing Beleura.

#### **4.6 Beleura in the years following World War II**

John Tallis may have expressed regret about deciding to take over Beleura after the death of his father in 1948, but visitors and researchers today collectively rejoice that his action saved the property from possible subdivision and perhaps even the house from demolition. The 1950s and 1960s were not kind to historic houses, with many replaced by modern, more "appropriate" dwellings. Before settling into life at Beleura, Tallis embarked on a trip to Italy which reinforced his love of all things Italian, motivating him to make changes to the garden, the interior and exterior of the house, according to his ideas of Italian style. Joseph Reed, the fashionable society architect who designed Beleura, made a similar trip to Italy one hundred years earlier, a trip that profoundly influenced his future designs and no doubt steered his

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<sup>769</sup> Personal communication with Anthony Knight, Director, Beleura House and Garden. 29 September 2014.

<sup>770</sup> Personal communication by email with Ian Hunt.

concept for Beleura in 1863 towards the Palladian style. Tallis's efforts were therefore very much in keeping with the original inspiration for Beleura.

Tallis's trip to Italy in 1953 coincided with an awakening in post-war Melbourne to new art, architecture, fashion and food, much of it derived from a post-war surge in numbers of migrants from Europe. New ingredients started to appear in shops and on the shelves of the latest phenomenon, the supermarket, the perfect match to cars and refrigerators. With just one stop, the family could make a weekly trip to the shops, park in the generous car park and carry all the food supplies they needed in the boot of the car to store in the refrigerator at home. The era was not marked so much by new technology, as the improvement and proliferation of existing appliances. Post-war optimism led to significant investment in converting armament factories into domestic appliance manufacturing facilities, leading to intense marketing to secure sales of everything from refrigerators and stoves to bench-top appliances. Automation was a key theme of advertising, with many housewives looking to technology to free up time. New energy sources were not the issue, but electricity and gas utilities fought over potential customers in contestable markets such as cooking, home heating and hot water production.

Beleura was already well equipped in this regard, with the Frigidaire continuing to provide exemplary service. However, a number of new Sunbeam appliances entered the kitchens at Beleura and increasingly electric stoves were used for cooking, rather than the old solid fuel range in the French kitchen. New post-war houses had kitchens that were now a central part of domestic life. Dining rooms were often attached to kitchens, which were in turn separated from living areas by see-through partitions or serving hatches. The post-war emphasis on responsible child rearing meant that mothers increasingly demanded kitchen work spaces that facilitated the simultaneous supervision of children's play areas including, if possible, the backyard. Kitchen designs were characterized by integrated appliances and fitted cupboards, providing seamless storage and work surfaces. Beleura continued to use the French kitchen and the working kitchen, but added a new galley-style kitchen, which largely conformed to the design practices of the 1950s, even down to the popular blue and white colour scheme of the time. The kitchen was attached to a new casual sunroom with a convenient serving hatch connecting the two rooms. Rather than remodel or reuse existing kitchens, Beleura was left

with five functional kitchens, including one in each of the external guest/staff rooms. All were used at different times of the year and for different occasions.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Beleura continued to run much as it had in Victorian times, with domestic staff performing most household tasks. When John Tallis took over Beleura after 1948, he could no longer rely on a small army of staff to run the household, although a number of part, full-time and sometimes live-in staff assisted with gardening, cleaning and cooking at various times. Tallis was a regular customer of the Myer Food Hall and made weekly orders for often exotic grocery items that were delivered to the house. Visitors to Beleura recall that a wide range of produce was also available from the garden with freshly picked vegetables, fruit and herbs a feature of many meals.

Tallis did some simple cooking when necessary, but he also enlisted the help of cooperative friends at weekends. Alan Eustace, a long-time friend, regularly cooked for Tallis and left behind a wonderful written record of everyday meals and entertaining at Beleura. This valuable document demonstrates that while many meals were basic, there was also a very distinct French flavour to special occasion menus, influenced by the fashionable passion in the 1950s for writers such as Elizabeth David and Marcel Boulestin. Given Tallis's interest in Italy, it is surprising that very few dishes appear to have been cooked from that culinary tradition. Despite the grand architecture and interiors of Beleura, meals were often simple affairs, served in the vestibule, sunroom or one of the kitchens. The grand dining room only came alive for the most formal occasions, when the good silver, crockery and glassware were used to spectacular effect. Such occasions were often planned weeks in advance. Despite these flourishes, the common opinion of John Tallis was that he was a modest man who was most at ease entertaining small groups of friends.

Unlike earlier eras when documentary evidence of culinary practices at Beleura was scarce, the post-war, early-modern era allows for the study of diary entries, notebooks and personal cookbooks as well as oral histories supplied by long-standing friends of Tallis. It is easy for the historian to fall back on such familiar sources, but once again, Beleura is very unusual amongst historic house museums in possessing a wide array of relevant artifacts to supplement documentary evidence. Artifacts do not reveal their meaning without considerable conjecture

and assumption. Documentary evidence is also often difficult to interpret, as it is rarely complete or devoid of bias. These issues will be an even greater challenge in the next chapter, where the diaries of John Tallis will bring a new and highly personal perspective to the study of the culinary history of Beleura.



*Figure 37. John Tallis at the piano in Paris c1930  
Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection*





*Figure 38. John Tallis in Italy 1953  
Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection*



National Library of Australia nla.pic-vn4550783-v

*Figure 39. New Safeway supermarket, Main Street, Mornington 1967  
Source: National Library of Australia, nla pic-vn4550783*



*Figure 40. French kitchen at Beleura pre-restoration showing cast iron range and electric stove  
Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection*



*Figure 41. Winter garden at Beleura  
Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland*



Figure 42. John Tallis kitchen at Beleura  
 Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland

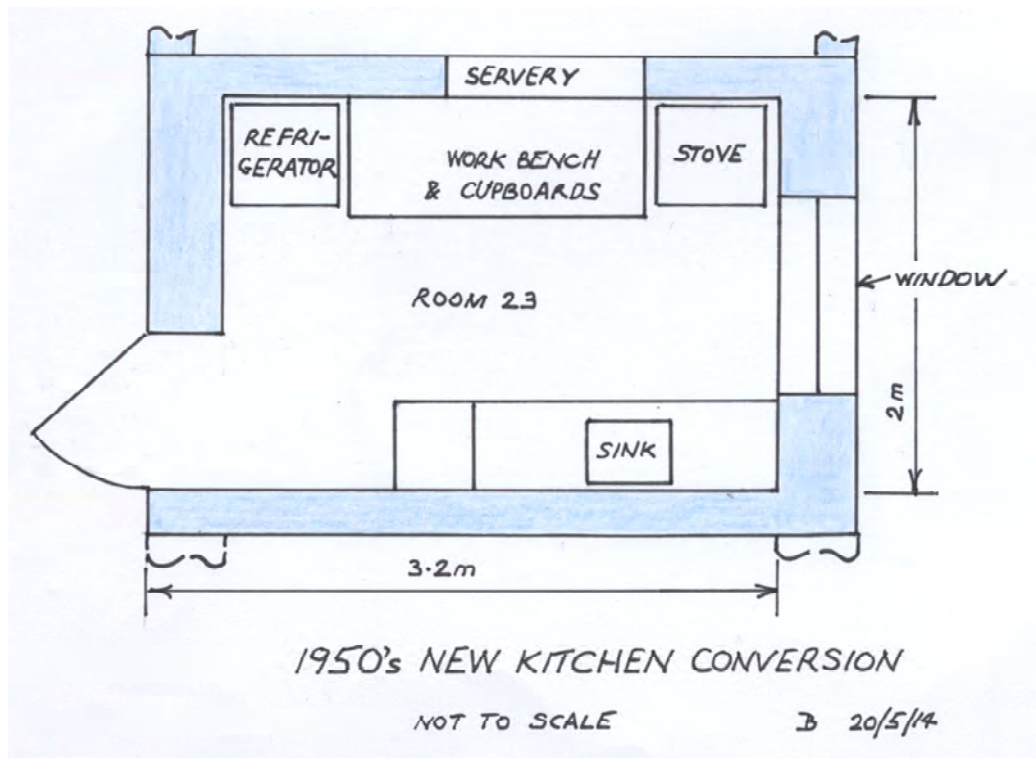


Figure 43. John Tallis kitchen floor plan  
 Source: Drawing by Iain Buckland



*Figure 44. Annex flat kitchen at Beleura  
Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland*



*Figure 45. Small flat kitchen at Beleura  
Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland*



Figure 46. QPC meat press  
Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland

• dinner d'anniversaire  
 • hors-d'œuvre jacques  
   • pate beleurs  
 • mousse de saumon s. madagascar  
   • salade de concombres  
     • canedon coburg  
     sauce à l'orange  
     pommes beurrées  
     petits pois au beurre  
   • rhum baba pierre  
     • tarte noir  


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 seppets reuduglas flor. finc 1953  
 mt. pleasant manure len. 11 1952  
 mt. pleasant hermitage ben 22T 1953  
 shirecliffe pvc 9.3. 1930.  
 for jimmy 30.1.59.

Figure 47. Menu card for dinner cooked by Alan Eustace at Beleura, 30 January 1959  
Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection

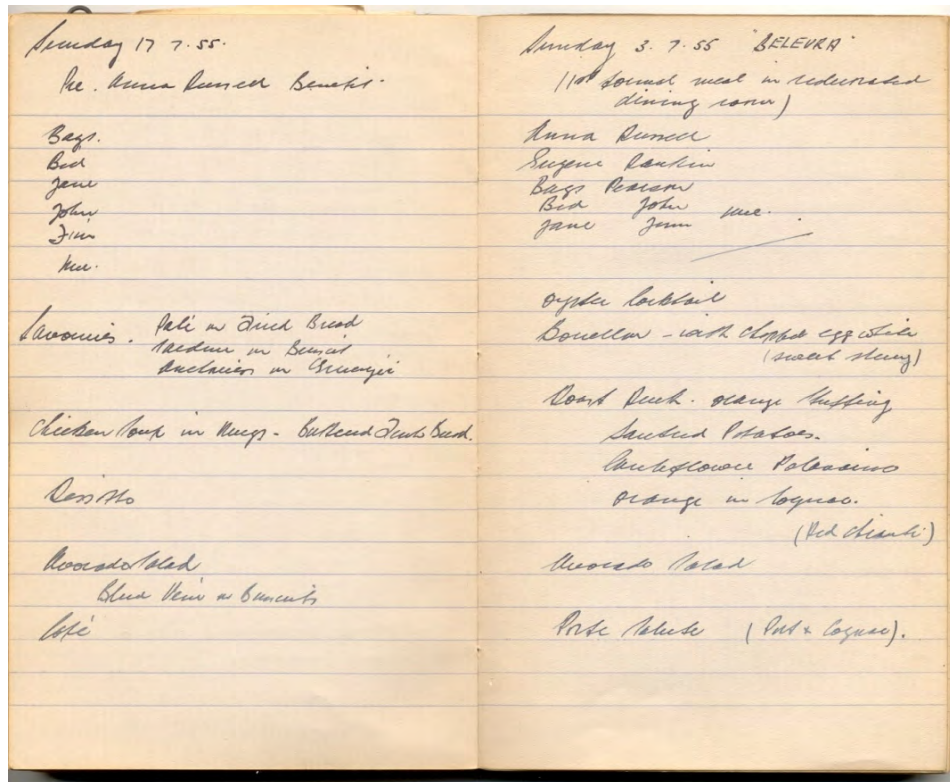


Figure 48. Anna Russell dinner at Beleura, 3 July 1955. Alan Eustace notebook  
 Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection



Figure 49. Formal dining room at Beleura as it is today  
 Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland

Lemon Pudding, Baked (Pudding au citron)

Ingredients: 8 oz. breadcrumbs, 2 oz flour, 4 oz finely chopped suet, 4 oz sugar, 2 lemons, 2 eggs, milk.

Method: Mix breadcrumbs, flour, suet and sugar together; add the well-beaten yolks of eggs, the lemon juice, and the finely grated rinds, add milk gradually until a stiff yet thoroughly moistened mixture is formed. Turn into a buttered basin and steam for about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to 3 hours. Serve with cruff flour or sweet melted butter sauce.

Time -  $3\frac{1}{2}$  hours Average cost 9d, Sufficient for six or seven persons.

Sweet Melted Butter

Ingredients -  $\frac{1}{2}$  pt. milk or water, 1 oz butter,  $\frac{1}{2}$  oz flour,  $\frac{1}{2}$  g. sugar, a pinch of salt.

Method - Melt the butter in a sauce pan, stir in flour, and cook well without browning. Time 15 to 20 minutes. Average cost  $2\frac{1}{2}$ d, if made with milk. Add milk or water and stir until it boils. Simmer 2 or 3 minutes, then add sugar, a pinch salt, and serve.

Figure 50. Recipe for lemon pudding - written by John Tallis  
Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection



*Figure 51. Namco pressure cooker c1950s  
Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland*



*Figure 52. Susie Cooper soup bowls, Endon floral pattern  
Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland*





*Figure 53. Moka Express stove-top espresso coffee pots  
Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland*



*Figure 54. Murano ruby glass with dolphin stem  
Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland*

## CHAPTER 5. THE MODERN ERA (1970–1996)

### 5.1 John Tallis negotiates a turbulent political landscape and prepares Beleura for a new future

As John Tallis entered his sixties, life at Beleura had settled into a pattern. His daily routine revolved around maintaining and improving the garden, supervising the upkeep of the house, practising and composing music and socializing with his select group of friends. A number of his friends were musicians and impromptu concerts were regularly held around the 1872 Steinway piano in the music room (room 11). Apart from occasional housekeepers and other staff, Tallis continued to essentially live alone at Beleura during this later period of his life, although members of his family were not far away. Brother Mick Tallis and his wife Dorothy still lived at their Beleura Hill cliff top house, Key West.<sup>771</sup> Tallis also maintained a close relationship with his sister Biddy Carnegie and her companion Jane Pearce, who continued to live at their cottage Blue Waters, across the road from the north entrance to Beleura.<sup>772</sup> Biddy and Jane made annual winter trips to the Gold Coast and Tallis was always pleased to see them return. In 1988 a reunion of the extended family took place at Beleura to celebrate one hundred years of the Tallis family in Australia.

Tallis somewhat compulsively wrote a diary for most of the 1970s and 1980s and while there are big gaps in his writing in the later years, he returned to regular entries in 1994 and continued until his death in 1996. He often castigated himself for neglecting his diary, but I am grateful that he took the trouble to record such a comprehensive account of life at Beleura during this period. Unusually, Tallis's diary documents many meals taken with friends both at Beleura and in restaurants, invaluable information for understanding culinary practices at the time. Previous to the 1970s there are only two diaries by Tallis in existence (neither with any reference to food): one covering his travels in Europe in 1929 (a beautiful work which includes original sketches by Christian Waller) and a very brief diary in 1955. Why this is so is unclear, although it is possible that some diaries may have been lost. Another possibility is that he simply felt a greater need to record his activities as he grew older, to monitor progress on his various projects and to comment on events in the world around him. Tallis was an

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<sup>771</sup> Note: Dorothy Tallis died in 1987 and Mick Tallis in 1990.

<sup>772</sup> Note: Biddy Carnegie died in 1995, a year before John Tallis.

accomplished pianist and his accounts of daily music practice and innovative methods for improving technique are fascinating and worthy of separate study.

A major theme in Tallis's diaries is his continual and sometimes epic struggle to maintain Beleura to the standard that he expected. After the trip that Tallis made to Europe in 1953, he rarely travelled very far again. This was due to his overwhelming sense of responsibility towards Beleura. In 1974 he wrote in his diary, "The house must come first at all times."<sup>773</sup> He regularly worried about the risk of vandalism and theft and vowed to have someone on hand at Beleura at all times to deter intruders. Over the years, various housekeepers and gardeners fulfilled this house-sitting function. Beleura has a complicated roof structure and there are many places for leaves to accumulate, blocking gutters and downpipes. Tallis was constantly vigilant about the very real possibility of water inundation and in one memorable downpour he donned his bathing suit and went out in the middle of the storm with the gardener to clean the gutters.<sup>774</sup> Similarly, Tallis was often found pumping out the cellar which sometimes filled with water in heavy rain. Tallis exerted similar energy on keeping the garden tidy, reserving a particular hatred for the persistent, spreading weed oxalis. It was perhaps inevitable that the never-ending work on the house and garden would limit the time available for his music, with Tallis complaining, "All my hopes in music now seem to have vanished – am preoccupied with just living."<sup>775</sup>

Tallis went into central Melbourne most weeks, where he had an apartment in Spring Street which he often used as a base when conducting business, attending concerts and dining in city restaurants. Unlike his father, he was not a confident motorist and he usually hired a car and driver to take him to and from the city. Despite Tallis's generally simple tastes he seemed to enjoy travelling to the city in the Rolls Royce that one of his drivers operated. He wrote in his diary with some disappointment, "Splendid ride in Rolls – thought people would look, but they didn't seem to bother."<sup>776</sup> In the local Mornington area he drove his Rover 2000 short distances to the shops and to regularly inspect his rural property in Somerville. Most of his needs could be met locally. Mornington was now a busy business centre for the Mornington

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<sup>773</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1974. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>774</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1974.

<sup>775</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1974.

<sup>776</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1976. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

Peninsula. Freeways made transport of goods to Mornington and the Peninsula easier than ever before, although it is ironic that at a time when the population was steadily rising, the train line to Mornington was closed in the early 1980s and the station site used to build a supermarket and car park complex.<sup>777</sup>

Monash University music history scholar, Joel Crotty, argues that Tallis's place in the history of Australian music rests on his scores for ballet composed between 1946 and 1952. After this creative period, Tallis was largely forgotten in the music world and Crotty asserts that it took almost another forty years for the academic music community to properly assess and appreciate his contribution to Australian music history.<sup>778</sup> Crotty successfully convinced Tallis to participate in the Monash Australian Composers Series and invited him to be the 1995 Composer-of-Honour. This belated recognition came just in time for Tallis to be personally involved in the concerts and after months of preparation he appeared satisfied with the experience. His diary records that after the celebration concert he had a "pleasant and happy lunch" at Stephanie's restaurant.<sup>779</sup>

Without obvious heirs and in unpredictable health, Tallis was determined to secure a sustainable future for Beleura. After a long period of careful negotiation, Tallis developed a plan with the National Trust for Beleura to be preserved for the benefit of future generations. Tallis died on 18 December 1996, three days after he had celebrated his 85<sup>th</sup> birthday. He had led an active life right up until the end. His beloved Beleura was transferred into the care of the Trustees of The Tallis Foundation whose designated aim is to maintain the property in such a condition "as to make Beleura and its gardens and contents available for the people of Victoria as a place of historic and educational interest."<sup>780</sup>

The last decades of Tallis's life coincided with a dynamic period of evolution in Australian society, politics and culture. Following years of conservative federal government, the 1970s marked the emergence of a re-energized Australian Labor Party, which took power from the

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<sup>777</sup> "Railway Maps of Victoria 1980," <http://www.vrhistory.com/VRMaps/Vic1980.pdf> (accessed November 26, 2014).

<sup>778</sup> Joel Crotty, *Eulogy for John Tallis*, St Peter's Anglican Church, Mornington, 23 December 1996. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>779</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1995. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>780</sup> Anthony Knight, *Beleura Mornington: A Theatre of the Past* (Mornington: The Tallis Foundation, 2009), 21.

Coalition under the leadership of Gough Whitlam in December 1972. The Party's "It's Time" slogan symbolized a desire by many Australians to embrace the world in a much more confident manner. Barry Jones, who was a long-serving science minister in later Labor Governments, suggests that the Party came to power with three great aims: "to promote equality, to involve the people of Australia in the decision-making process of our land and to liberate the talents and uplift the horizons of the Australian people."<sup>781</sup> Turning away from Britain, Whitlam and his Government began a process of engagement with Asia, with the highlight being the diplomatic recognition of China. Gough Whitlam's tenure as Prime Minister was prematurely terminated by the dismissal of the Government by the Governor General on 11 November 1975.

Whitlam's era was a turbulent time and while he had strong supporters, he also had many critics. Even a Labor Party luminary such as Jones admits, "The impact of post-industrial change, the oil shock of 1973–74 and the growth of a global economy made the Whitlam Government seem ill prepared."<sup>782</sup> Jones also suggests that the wages explosion and rapid rise in unemployment took their toll on the Whitlam Government's popularity and obscured its achievements.<sup>783</sup> Political commentator Alan Reid summed up Whitlam's chances of success in the election that followed the dismissal of his Government, "With the economy ailing, unemployment increasing, inflation soaring and business activity slackening, Whitlam could hardly parade proudly the success of his Government's past performance in the field of economic management."<sup>784</sup> Michael Sexton identified internal as well as external problems with the Whitlam Government, blaming Labor's "larger failure to attain mastery over the bureaucratic machine" for its downfall.<sup>785</sup> Tallis was no fan of Whitlam or his Government and there are many critical comments in his diary, leaving no doubt that he thought that the future of Australia at that time looked very bleak. Inserted in his diary are several articles written by Melbourne journalist Maxwell Newton, cut out from the *Sunday Observer*. The theme of most of the articles is typified by one titled "Whitlam leads us into darkness".<sup>786</sup> Whether real or imagined, Tallis constantly feared financial ruin during this period. On 8

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<sup>781</sup> Barry Jones, *A Thinking Reed* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2006), 197.

<sup>782</sup> Jones, 197.

<sup>783</sup> Jones, 197.

<sup>784</sup> Alan Reid, *The Whitlam Venture* (Melbourne: Hill of Content Publishing Company, 1976), 427.

<sup>785</sup> Michael Sexton, *Illusions of Power – The Fate of a Reform Government* (Sydney: George Allen and Unwin Australia, 1979), 111.

<sup>786</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1974.

August 1974, Tallis bleakly wrote: “Thank God for fire in study – Am practically living in this room now, as I’m frightened to turn on heating.”<sup>787</sup> There can be little doubt that Tallis was chronically pessimistic, but the diary entries struck a depressing low point on 28 September 1974 when he wrote: “I’m never optimistic – but things are worse than I imagined they would become and look like getting more so.”<sup>788</sup> Tallis expands on the theme in his summary of the year written on 31 December 1974: “The end of another year! And what a year! But 75 could even be much worse, I’m afraid. There is a terrible feeling of sullen gloom pervading the whole country.”<sup>789</sup> Even the “dismissal” could not budge Tallis’s negative thoughts, indicated by his entry for 11 November 1975: “Incredible day! Thoughts of the appalling implications of such an event came crowding in on me.”<sup>790</sup> Tallis even blames Whitlam for the lack of Christmas cards that year, writing in December 1975, “It signifies the terrible change in social graces since that terrible Whitlam Government came to power.”<sup>791</sup> Symbolic of his mood at this time, on 3 April 1976, Tallis decided to sell his beloved Fiat Topolino which he drove around Italy in 1953. He wrote: “Well that’s the end of my little car – after 20 years. Years then full of hope for the future – now each succeeding all is filled with sorrow, disappointment and foreboding.”<sup>792</sup> In a happier post-script to this sad event, in October 1996 Tallis saw a small 1954 Fiat advertised in the local paper. It reminded him of the earlier car that he had reluctantly sold and in a moment of not very practical nostalgia, Tallis decided to buy it just months before he died.<sup>793</sup> Italy was never very far from his mind. The car has been carefully restored and is now on display at Beleura, along with his Jaguar and Rover 2000.

Malcolm Fraser who led the Coalition Government that replaced Whitlam’s, could not immediately resuscitate the country’s economy, but other social and cultural changes began making an impact on Australian society, continuing the outward focus of the Whitlam years. The fall of the South Vietnamese Government in Saigon in April 1975, led to an exodus of refugees. Four hundred were selected initially from camps in Guam, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia for resettlement in Australia. Over the next two decades Australia would settle more than 100,000 Vietnamese refugees. In the early 1980s, the refugee program would be

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<sup>787</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1974.

<sup>788</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1974.

<sup>789</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1974.

<sup>790</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1975. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>791</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1975.

<sup>792</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1976.

<sup>793</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1996. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

expanded to an annual intake of up to 22,000. Along with the Vietnamese, other refugees from Laos, Cambodia, Eastern Europe and Central and South America were settled.<sup>794</sup> As with the southern European migrants of the 1950s, these newcomers from Asia made many contributions to Australian society, with one of the more visible being the establishment of restaurants serving cuisine from their homelands. In Melbourne, the suburbs of Footscray, Richmond and Springvale in particular became synonymous with South East Asian food, with numerous restaurants and Asian grocery shops lining the shopping strips that in earlier times would more likely have been run by Southern European migrants. These shops were not just patronized by the new settlers, but many Australians also embraced these cuisines, reinforcing and complementing their experiences travelling in Asia. Colin Bannerman argues, “The Chinese boom of the 1960s and 1970s was overtaken by the Thai fad of the 1980s and 1990s.”<sup>795</sup> Curiously, there were not that many Thais living in Australia at that time, so the popularity of the cuisine must have been driven, at least partly, by Australian travel to that region. Bannerman proposes that the media played a large role in creating the Thai food fad, suggesting that “it seems just possible that Thai food caught on mainly because it happened to bubble to the surface of media consciousness at the right time – as Australians were tiring of Cantonese and Hong Kong, and finding Vietnamese too bland.”<sup>796</sup> Vietnamese food would be appreciated in its own right later on.

These cultural influences and others that were brought by migrants from India, the Middle East and Africa, profoundly changed Australian eating habits, which would never return to the predominantly Euro focus of earlier decades. Demographer Bernard Salt observes, “It’s almost as if, after rejecting ‘wog food’ in the 60s, then discovering Mediterranean dishes in the 80s, Australians are now measuring their social sophistication by culinary diversity. We welcome newcomers with some interrogation: ‘Welcome to Australia mate. What have you got to eat?’”<sup>797</sup> In the foreword to one of Stephanie Alexander’s cookbooks Claudia Roden writes, “Australian cooks have cast off the shackles of Anglo-Saxon cooking traditions. They have

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<sup>794</sup> Refugee Council of Australia, “History of Australia’s Refugee Program,” Refugee Council of Australia, <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/rhp-hist.php> (accessed November 16, 2014)

<sup>795</sup> Colin Bannerman, *Seed Cake and Honey Prawns* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2008), 68.

<sup>796</sup> Bannerman, 68.

<sup>797</sup> Bernard Salt, “The past is a different country, with a limited palate and fewer conveniences,” *Weekend Australian*, October 25-26, 2014.

absorbed the influences of their immigrant communities, are looking at the great cuisines of the world for inspiration and expertise, and are making the most of their resources.”<sup>798</sup>

Australian travel increased rapidly from the 1960s to the 1980s. When cheap airfares began in the mid-1960s there were about 100,000 Australian departures overseas per year. In 1972 that figure had risen to 500,000 and in 1976 it was over a million.<sup>799</sup> Having experienced the “real” food of diverse cultures in their travels, it was no surprise that Australians embarked on a search for authenticity in restaurant menus. The chop suey that was dubiously presented as Chinese food in earlier years was replaced with a multitude of regional specialities.<sup>800</sup> Elizabeth Chong established her famous cooking school in Melbourne in 1961 and it continues to this day. In 1989 she introduced the Elizabeth Chong Gourmet Club to promote authentic Chinese food.<sup>801</sup> Gilbert Lau’s Flower Drum Restaurant in Little Bourke Street even achieved chef’s hat status in the *Age Good Food Guide* and was the *Age* Restaurant of the Year from 1999 to 2002.<sup>802</sup> This was a long way from the cheap and cheerful suburban and country Chinese takeaway. By the 1990s, there was a plethora of ethnic food experiences on offer in Melbourne ranging from regional variations on familiar cuisines such as Puglian Italian and Sichuan Chinese to entirely new options such as Cajun/Creole, Portuguese and Korean.<sup>803</sup> This trend towards authenticity was fed by the rise of the celebrity chef, who began to appear in the 1980s on our television screens to expose viewers to ever more exotic cuisines. International examples of celebrity chefs from this era include Madhur Jaffrey, Claudia Roden, Antonio Carluccio, Valentina Harris, Ken Hom and Mireille Johnston, each with their own BBC television program and accompanying cookbooks. Initially these programs were primarily focused on education and entertainment, but increasingly the message of this type of program was more to do with marketing. Nicola Humble suggests, “As TV cooking programmes have become more sophisticated, it has become clear that the real product is not the food but the

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<sup>798</sup> Stephanie Alexander, *A Cook’s Life* (Melbourne: Lantern, 2012), 206.

<sup>799</sup> Michael Symons, *One Continuous Picnic* (Adelaide: Duck Press, 1982), 225.

<sup>800</sup> Note: Many Australian cookbooks of the 1950s and 1960s included recipes for dishes such as chop suey or chow mein. The Victorian Housewives’ Association’s *Food without Fuss* includes a Chinese One Dish meal including the ingredients beef, vegetables, chicken noodle soup, rice and soya sauce. These early, so called, Chinese dishes were of greatly varying style.

<sup>801</sup> Elizabeth Chong, “About Elizabeth,” Elizabeth Chong, <http://elizabethchong.com.au> (accessed December 1, 2014)

<sup>802</sup> Flower Drum, “About Flower Drum,” Flower Drum, <http://flower-drum.com/about/> (accessed December 1, 2014)

<sup>803</sup> Claude Forell and Rita Erlich (Editors). *The Age Good Food Guide 93/94* (Melbourne: Anne O’Donovan Ltd, 1993).



presenter.”<sup>804</sup> Australian TV chefs began in the 1970s with Graham Kerr and Bernard King and later included such diverse personalities as Peter Russell-Clarke, Margaret Fulton, Ian Parmenter, Gabriel Gate and Stephanie Alexander.<sup>805</sup> Charmaine Solomon wrote her landmark *The Complete Asian Cookbook* in 1976 and Tess Mallos, *The Complete Middle East Cookbook* in 1979. Both have consistently remained in print and have developed loyal followings world-wide. Bannerman argues that “celebrity chefs lifted food and cooking from everyday necessities of life and turned them into popular entertainments....They made us enthusiastic consumers of fashions, fads and cuisines.”<sup>806</sup>

Travel and migration were not the only influences on Australian food; wealth played a part as well. The 1980s world-wide economic boom created another period of optimism in Australia led and encouraged by the larrikin Rhodes Scholar and trade union leader Robert J. Hawke, who became Prime Minister in 1983 and remained in power until 1991.<sup>807</sup> The confidence of the Australian people was boosted by winning the America’s Cup yacht race in 1983 and a host of internationally successful rock music bands (INXS, Men at Work, Mental as Anything, AC/DC and Midnight Oil) became unofficial ambassadors for the country. In the 1980s the Hawke Government had its sights set firmly on Australia becoming an internationally focused market, floating the Australian dollar and reducing tariffs and other trade barriers. New found wealth had an impact on food with Artemis Cooper observing, “The economic boom of the eighties had ushered in the age of the yuppies: the young upwardly-mobile professionals, who had money to burn on designer clothes and designer food....Triumphant piggery was in the air.”<sup>808</sup> While she was commenting on British society, similar trends were occurring in Australia and many a celebrity chef emerged to capitalize on the new attention being given to food. Restaurants opened everywhere, many with fashionable outdoor tables and patronage grew. In Melbourne, established restaurant owners such as Stephanie Alexander, Mietta O’Donnell and Hermann Schneider moved into larger, more palatial premises to create temples of fine dining for those who could afford their prices. Relaxation of liquor trading

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<sup>804</sup> Nicola Humble, *Culinary Pleasures: Cookbooks and the Transformation of British Food* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), 241.

<sup>805</sup> Bannerman, 93.

<sup>806</sup> Bannerman, 94.

<sup>807</sup> National Archives of Australia, “Australia’s Prime Ministers,” National Archives of Australia, <http://primeministers.naa.gov.au/primeministers/hawke/fast-facts.aspx> (accessed December 4, 2014)

<sup>808</sup> Artemis Cooper, *Elizabeth David: Writing at the Kitchen Table* (London: Michael Joseph (Penguin Group), 1999), 308.

laws in most states allowed a more European style of food and beverage service. Cooper suggests, “Now it was not only acceptable to talk about food, one could show off one’s knowledge.”<sup>809</sup> For Australian diners, this was a long way from the steak and chips of the post-war café.<sup>810</sup>

One outcome of the multitude of Australian celebrity chefs in the media and increasing consumer interest in food is the perennial emergence of the question regarding the existence or otherwise of an Australian cuisine. Michael Symons was the first food commentator to comprehensively contemplate the existence of an Australian national cuisine in his landmark book *One Continuous Picnic*, although he acknowledges that the notion had been explored much earlier by Dr Philip E. Muskett.<sup>811</sup> Barbara Santich also grapples with this topic and suggests that the discussion about an Australian national cuisine may have even predated Muskett, quoting a reference by Marcus Clarke in 1874 to an “Australian food system”, written several decades before Australia became a single nation.<sup>812</sup> Bannerman asserts that there is no general agreement on “whether we are to pin our national pride on the cookery of the people or the cookery of the elites.”<sup>813</sup> Does Peter Russell-Clarke typify Australian food or is it more the style of Neil Perry or Stephanie Alexander? Personalities aside, does the essence of the Australian cuisine perhaps lie in the quality and range of ingredients available as much as by the cooking style or any particular dish? Despite the uncertainty surrounding the answers to these questions, the Australian identity has been regularly linked with food, a marketing opportunity that has been cleverly exploited by Australian tourism authorities. In a very successful advertisement that ran from 1984 to 1991, comedian Paul Hogan encouraged Australians to “slip an extra shrimp on the barbie” to feed the hordes of overseas tourists flocking to our shores.<sup>814</sup> Food has featured in numerous Tourism Australia and state tourism campaigns, most recently in the “Inviting the World to Dinner” initiative launched in November 2014.<sup>815</sup> *Fusion cuisine* is a term often applied to modern Australian food, defined by Humble as “ingredients and methods of one or more distinct national cuisines to produce

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<sup>809</sup> Cooper, 309.

<sup>810</sup> Symons, 221.

<sup>811</sup> Symons, 259.

<sup>812</sup> Barbara Santich, *Bold Palates: Australia’s Gastronomic Heritage* (Kent Town: Wakefield Press, 2012), 15.

<sup>813</sup> Bannerman, 94.

<sup>814</sup> Bill Baker and Peggy Bendel, “Come and Say G’Day!” Association of Travel Marketing Executives, [http://www.atme.org/pubs/archives/77\\_1998\\_11926.cfm](http://www.atme.org/pubs/archives/77_1998_11926.cfm) (accessed December 4, 2014)

<sup>815</sup> Tourism Australia, “Inviting the World to Dinner,” Tourism Australia, <http://www.restaurant.australia.com/en/> (accessed December 4, 2014)

something new.”<sup>816</sup> Whether it is called Pacific Rim or East West, fusion cuisine would appear to be a logical expression of the multicultural society that developed in Australia in the latter part of the twentieth century. It is significant that Humble identifies the USA and Australia as the principal exponents of fusion cuisine, both with large, dynamic migrant populations.<sup>817</sup>

A copy of the the *Age Good Food Guide* from 1993 sits on the shelf in the working kitchen (room 18) at Beleura. John Tallis fully enjoyed the opportunities for eating out, although his diary records that he was very critical of what he perceived as poor quality or over-priced meals. He dined at many famous Melbourne restaurants including La Chaumiere, The Society, Maxim’s, Fanny’s, The Florentino, Stephanie’s and regional establishments such as Lake House at Daylesford, the Queenscliff Hotel and Delgany at Portsea. He also dined at notable Melbourne hotel restaurants such as the Southern Cross Hotel, the Hotel Australia, the Hilton Hotel and the Windsor Hotel. On 11 December 1974 Tallis wrote in his diary, “pretty ordinary meal at Southern Cross.”<sup>818</sup> He regularly ate at local Mornington restaurants, expressing concern in his diary when they disappointed him or changed hands unexpectedly. Tallis seemed happy to try new food experiences, perhaps a result of his early travels abroad. Even though unwell at the time, he was determined to go to the highly regarded Paul Bocuse restaurant in Melbourne for his birthday on 15 December 1995, almost exactly one year before he died. Tallis wrote that day, “Lovely meal, most expensive, but worth it.”<sup>819</sup>

This era was also significant because of changes that were taking place in the dynamics of family life, changes that would also impact on culinary practices. After World War II, millions of housewives rushed into the kitchen to cook meals for their working husbands and their growing children. They even entertained the husband’s boss to help promote his career, a role that the media of the day idealized. In Adelaide, the *Mail* observed, “Big business has discovered the woman behind the man makes all the difference to the value he has to the firm.”<sup>820</sup> Christina Hardyment argues that the dinner party was the highpoint of socializing, “the occasion when the wife’s domestic prowess won the approval – or disapproval – of the

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<sup>816</sup> Humble, 248.

<sup>817</sup> Note: A good example of the ongoing fusion process is the recent opening in Melbourne of a restaurant specialising in Mexican and Chinese cuisines. Whether these foods merge on the plate or merely combine to expand the menu choices is yet to be seen, although such novel combinations are often short-lived.

<sup>818</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1974.

<sup>819</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1995.

<sup>820</sup> “Boss’s Eye on Wives,” *Mail*, November 10, 1951, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

outside world.”<sup>821</sup> Women in cookbooks were usually shown serving. A photograph in *The Lily Wallace New American Cookbook* included the caption: “The young hostess prepared the main course before her guests arrived. Here she brings it in on a silver tray, piping hot.”<sup>822</sup> The front cover of *Food without Fuss* shows the glamorous wife preparing food at the stove, surrounded by her three well-behaved children and obedient family dog.<sup>823</sup> By the 1970s, the shine had gone off this dream of domestic bliss; women were looking for something more in life. Even the armoury of new electric appliances and the streamlined, fitted kitchen could not compensate for the drudgery of domestic chores or the loneliness of suburban life. In her influential 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan gave voice to what she termed “The Problem that Has No Name”, the silent yearning by many millions of housewives, expressed in the simple question, “Is this all?”<sup>824</sup> Friedan provides a devastating assessment of the lives of women in American households in the post-war era, when she writes, “Millions of women lived their lives in the image of those pretty pictures of the American suburban housewife, kissing their husbands good-bye in front of the picture window, depositing their stationwagonsful of children at school, and smiling as they ran the new electric waxer over the spotless kitchen floor.”<sup>825</sup> Other activists such as Germaine Greer would mould these thoughts into a feminist ideology, or as Greer herself states: “Then genteel middle-class ladies clamoured for reform, now ungentle middle-class women are calling for revolution.”<sup>826</sup>

The theory was that new appliances would free women from domestic drudgery, but the reality was different. As discussed in Chapter 3, Ruth Schwartz Cowan asserts that with many of the technological innovations that were introduced into households, very little if any time was saved by women; it was merely reallocated to other chores. However, Cowan is more positive with one aspect of technology, believing that it “facilitated married women’s workforce participation not by freeing women from household labour but by making it possible for women to maintain decent standards in their homes without assistants and without

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<sup>821</sup> Christina Hardyment, *Slice of Life: The British Way of Eating Since 1945* (London: BBC Books, 1995), 59.

<sup>822</sup> Lily Haxworth Wallace (Editor), *The Lily Wallace New American Cook Book* (New York: Books Inc, 1946), 847.

<sup>823</sup> Victorian Housewives’ Association. *Food without Fuss* (Melbourne: Verona Press Pty Ltd, undated, most likely 1950s).

<sup>824</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968), 13.

<sup>825</sup> Friedan, 16.

<sup>826</sup> Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch* (London: Granada Publishing Limited, 1971), 11.

a full-time commitment to housework.”<sup>827</sup> According to Australian Bureau of Statistics figures, for the key 25–44 years age group, the participation rate for women in the workforce has increased from around 40% in 1966 to 75% in 2011.<sup>828</sup> This age group would once have seen a large and permanent drop off in workforce participation rate as women married and had families. Today, while there is a small dip in participation for the principal childbirth years, many women return to work after pregnancy, a phenomenon that was rare in earlier eras. In August 2014, women comprised 45.4% of all employees in Australia, but the employment was skewed towards part-time and casual work.<sup>829</sup>

The increasing involvement of women in the workforce has left much less time for home duties including cooking. Women are still taking primary responsibility for food provision in most families, a convention that Cowan argued “is so deeply embedded in our individual and collective consciousness that even the profound changes wrought by the twentieth century have not yet shaken it.”<sup>830</sup> Cowan made this conclusion in 1983 and the question has to be asked whether anything has changed since? Have three decades of television cooking shows encouraged men to step up and take greater responsibility in the kitchen? One large-scale U.S. study conducted in 2013 showed that the proportion of men who cooked has increased from 29% in 1965–66 to 42% in 2007–08. While this is encouraging, no account was taken of frequency of cooking and one suspects that for a number of men, managing the weekend barbeque counts as cooking. The study concludes thus: “Women continue to spend more than twice the amount of time cooking than men, suggesting that traditional attitudes towards responsibility for household food preparation persist.”<sup>831</sup>

For women to manage both work outside of the home and domestic responsibilities, they have had to save time on cooking wherever possible, relying on three main strategies: firstly by using new, more efficient kitchen appliances; secondly by using pre-prepared convenience

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<sup>827</sup> Ruth Schwartz Cowan, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 210.

<sup>828</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, “Fifty years of labour force – now and then,” Australian Bureau of Statistics, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/1301.0Main+Features452012> (accessed November 26, 2014)

<sup>829</sup> Workplace and Gender Equality Agency, “Gender Workplace Statistics at a Glance – August 2014,” Workplace and Gender Equality Agency, [http://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/Stats\\_at\\_a\\_Glance.pdf](http://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/Stats_at_a_Glance.pdf) (accessed November 26, 2014)

<sup>830</sup> Cowan, 150.

<sup>831</sup> Lindsey P. Smith, Shu Wen Ng & Barry M. Pokkin. “Trends in U.S. home food preparation and consumption: analysis of national surveys and time use studies from 1965–66 to 2007–08,” *Nutrition Journal* 12, April (2013):5.

meals and thirdly by outsourcing meals where possible. In terms of new appliances, just as the development of the electric oven thermostat helped women cope with the loss of servants post-World War I, the microwave oven was advertised in the 1970s as the means by which women would be saved from domestic servitude. Open University Professor of Sociology Elizabeth Silva claims that the microwave was developed in order to “eliminate the demands of cooking.”<sup>832</sup> However, their uptake was relatively slow with many users reluctant to radiate their food with microwaves. In Britain in 1987, only thirty per cent of households had a microwave, although by 1996 that had grown to seventy-four per cent.<sup>833</sup> Australian households may have adopted them more quickly and an indication of the acceptance of microwave ovens is the inclusion of a column in the *Australian Gourmet* magazine from the early 1980s dedicated to recipes designed for the appliance. Microwave ovens were not the only new electrical appliance on the market. They were joined by a procession of vertical grills, egg steamers, bread makers and rice cookers. Bannerman argues that these devices were all cooking fads that swept Australia from the 1970s, claiming to save time and effort, but he concedes that for most of them “the time spent assembling them, cleaning all their bits and storing them again after use can be greater than the time ‘saved’.”<sup>834</sup> Silva also argues that the operating instructions and controls for microwave ovens are complex, making the preparation of meals often more complicated than conventional ovens.<sup>835</sup>

The substitution of home cooked with pre-prepared convenience meals relied on the refrigerator/freezer or increasingly the stand-alone freezer, for storage and the microwave for cooking. Frozen convenience meals packed the shelves of the freezer section of supermarkets. Families living in the sprawling suburbs of Australian cities became ever more dependent on supermarkets for food and other household supplies, continuing their relationship with the car and refrigerator established in the 1950s and 1960s. Safeway merged with Woolworths in 1985, the year that Coles merged with Myer to become one of the world’s largest retail chains.<sup>836</sup> The supermarket sector has become ever more concentrated and by December 2013, Woolworths and Coles collectively represented 72.5 per cent of supermarket sales in

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<sup>832</sup> Elizabeth B. Silva, “The Cook, the Cooker and the Gendering of the Kitchen,” *The Sociological Review* 48, No.4 (2001): 619.

<sup>833</sup> Silva, 620.

<sup>834</sup> Bannerman, 112.

<sup>835</sup> Silva, 621.

<sup>836</sup> “The deal to create one of the world’s largest retail chains,” *Canberra Times*, August 7, 1985, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

Australia.<sup>837</sup> Even if convenience meals were not bought from the supermarket, cooking in bulk then freezing the surplus became a workable solution to the modern family's need for quick meals. Writing about the 1970s, Humble nominates the domestic freezer as "the labour saving device of the decade" and observes that cookbooks from the era increasingly included recipes that made use of this new appliance.<sup>838</sup> With both parents inevitably working and children involved in an ever increasing number of activities outside the home, the family sit down meal was a rarity and looking like a relic from the past reserved for special occasions. The freezer/microwave combination suited this environment very well.

With respect to the option of outsourcing the cooking, a major influence on family eating habits was the arrival of the multinational fast food chain outlets in Australia. Kentucky Fried Chicken developed in the U.S. by Harland "Colonel" Sanders opened in Australia in 1968, followed by McDonalds and Pizza Hut in 1970. These franchised stores spread rapidly across the country and soaked up a proportion of household disposable income, money that may have previously gone to buying fresh food. Symons rather cynically asserts, "Instead of peeling potatoes, consumers now peeled open a clammy cardboard box and tugged the corner off a plastic sachet. Instead of choosing their own recipes, they put their faith in the corporate chef at McDonald's 'Hamburger Central' in Chicago."<sup>839</sup> Despite this distinctly corporate version of eating out, it no doubt allowed hard-pressed working mothers a bit of time off.

Beleura was as susceptible as any household to advances in technology and there were regular updates to kitchen appliances during this time. Gender divisions in the kitchen were not relevant, since Beleura was not a normal family household. There was no housewife and certainly no children in residence. Housekeepers, friends and quite often Tallis himself prepared and cooked most of the daily meals as they did in the 1950s and 1960s, although as Tallis grew older, more meals were brought from outside the home. It is interesting to note that as in earlier years, there were both male and female housekeeper/cooks providing domestic assistance. They played a vital role in running the household.

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<sup>837</sup> Roy Morgan Research, "Market Share Narrows between Coles and Woolworths While Aldi Makes Gains," Roy Morgan Research, <http://www.roymorgan.com/Findings/5427-market-share-narrows-between-coles-woolworths-while-aldi-makes-gains-201402120013> (accessed November 25, 2014)

<sup>838</sup> Humble, 214.

<sup>839</sup> Symons, 205.

## 5.2 Continuing evolution of the Beleura kitchens

The disappearance of servants after World War I and a new emphasis on child rearing and family interaction following World War II resulted in the kitchen moving steadily from back areas of the house to become, as Clement Macintyre argues, “the nerve centre of the house.”<sup>840</sup> In the 1950s, spaces variously termed family, living or rumpus rooms, adjacent to the kitchen, were elevated to the status of the “family zone”.<sup>841</sup> Macintyre suggests that despite the significance of these design changes, both at a physical and social level, the pattern of domestic architecture “has remained remarkably static since.”<sup>842</sup> Boston based museum curators Nancy Carlisle and Melinda Talbot Nasardinov propose, “Colors, styles, scale, and materials have changed according to fads and fashions, but the desire for efficiency and unified kitchen design remains.”<sup>843</sup>

In the modern kitchen, little stands between the cook and the dining area apart from the island bench and with the kitchen on permanent display, opportunities exist for much greater self expression. Martin Hand and Elizabeth Shove argue that “cooking and eating feature prominently, not as obligations or domestic duties but as sociable, lifestyle activities.”<sup>844</sup> This approach aligns with the culinary world exhibited and promoted through television food programs, where celebrity chefs show viewers how to create the latest fashion in food, often from exotic locations around the world or from designer kitchens. Washington journalist Megan McArdle in her cleverly named article, *The Joy of Not Cooking*, reports statistics showing that in the 1950s, the housewife in America spent on average about 20 hours a week preparing food and clearing up, whereas in 2011 that figure was down to just 5.5 hours per week (4.4 hours for those who worked outside the home).<sup>845</sup> As the time spent cooking has plummeted, the size of new kitchens has doubled from 1975 to 2005, primarily to accommodate the proliferation of kitchenware required in “the gourmet kitchen”.<sup>846</sup> The home

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<sup>840</sup> Clement Macintyre, “Now You’re in the Family Zone: Housing and Domestic Design in Australia,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 15, Issue 30 (1991): 65.

<sup>841</sup> Macintyre, 68.

<sup>842</sup> Macintyre, 70.

<sup>843</sup> Nancy Carlisle and Melinda Talbot Nasardinov. *America’s Kitchens* (Boston: Historic New England, 2008), 169.

<sup>844</sup> Martin Hand and Elizabeth Shove. “Orchestrating Concepts: Kitchen Dynamics and Regime Change in Good Housekeeping and Ideal Home, 1922–2002,” *Home Cultures* 1, No.3 (2004): 246.

<sup>845</sup> Megan McArdle, “The Joy of Not Cooking,” *The Atlantic*, May (2011): 35.

<sup>846</sup> McArdle, 36.



owner's prosperity and sophistication can be demonstrated by specifying the latest and most expensive appliances and the incorporation of exotic materials into the kitchen construction. McArdle applies the term "anticook" to refer to the person who rarely cooks but has an enormous kitchen.<sup>847</sup> The modern kitchen of the 1970s had bright colour schemes, polished wood cupboards and laminate bench tops, whereas the post-modern version in the 1990s, was more likely to feature granite or marble bench tops, glass splash backs, stainless steel appliances and designer lighting. Dishwashers have become compulsory and the barista quality espresso machine has become a common feature of many an under-used modern kitchen. A defining feature of the post-modern home has been the redefinition of outdoor spaces into increasingly permanent alternative living areas, with strong linkages to the indoor family areas. This has given rise to one large, indoor/outdoor, kitchen-meals-family area.<sup>848</sup>

These developments meant little at Beleura, as the construction of the Ian Hunt sunroom/kitchen in the 1950s was the last serious modernization initiative undertaken. Confirmation can be found in a limited valuation that John Tallis commissioned in 1994, which shows a similar arrangement and function of rooms as the 1962 valuation. Tallis's later building projects were minor and mainly designed to allow him to occupy the small flat (rooms 41–46) comfortably during the winter months. In May 1975 the diary records for the first time that Tallis moved into the small flat for winter, ostensibly to save on heating the main house. The central heating system which was originally designed for coke was at this stage burning oil. With the oil price shocks in the 1970s, the cost of heating Beleura must have increased dramatically, so Tallis's move to the small flat seems logical and prudent. It is also understandable that when natural gas became available in Mornington, Tallis would have been keen to convert to this much cheaper and cleaner fuel. A note in the basement boiler room suggests that the boiler was converted to gas in 1989.<sup>849</sup>

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<sup>847</sup> McArdle, 36.

<sup>848</sup> Louise C. Johnson, "Browsing the Modern Kitchen: A Feast of Gender, Place and Culture," *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 13, No.2 (2006): 129.

<sup>849</sup> Note: With the roll out of natural gas to replace town gas in Victoria from 1969, natural gas achieved a very high penetration in certain domestic applications, particularly for space heating and for cooking. Electricity competed with natural gas over the domestic hot water market, with off peak electricity tariffs allowing more or less parity pricing with gas. SEC and Gas and Fuel marketing campaigns were a regular feature in Victoria until privatization in the mid 1990s.

To be fully self-contained, Tallis had an upright piano moved into the small flat so that he could practice without moving back to the main house. The diaries show that Tallis cooked in most of the kitchens of the house at different times. Entertaining friends often took place in the French kitchen. Even in winter when he was installed in the small flat, Tallis continued to cook in the main house. He wrote that the practice was “Rather cumbersome, but I may be able to get into a smooth running routine.”<sup>850</sup> Each kitchen had a refrigerator and an electric stove, although the main refrigerator remained the old Frigidaire. It is difficult to know the manufacturer of each of these appliances, as those items more recently purchased by Tallis have been removed during the conversion of the house into a museum. Curators must make such decisions about the appropriateness of display items, but unfortunately it makes the interpretation of the evolution of the service areas of the house very difficult. The most useful source of information is the 1962 valuation which lists a Vulcan electric stove and a General Electric refrigerator along with the old solid fuel stove in the French kitchen (room 19); a GEC stove and the old Frigidaire in the working kitchen (room 18); a Westinghouse stove and an STC refrigerator in the John Tallis kitchen (room 23); a small Vulcan stove and a Hallstrom refrigerator in the annex flat (room 33) and a Roden stove and Prestcold refrigerator in the small flat (room 42).<sup>851</sup> When Tallis died in 1996 most of the major appliances were still in place except for the GE refrigerator in the French kitchen, which at some stage had been replaced with a new Fischer and Paykel model. A new Roden electric cooker replaced the GEC model in the working kitchen in 1986.<sup>852</sup> This can be seen in a pre-restoration photograph, with a range hood over the stove that is known to have been purchased in 1978.<sup>853</sup> Tallis’s diary reveals that there was a dedicated large freezer (a brochure in the archives suggests that it was a GEC unit purchased post-1962) in the box room (room 28) which was replaced in 1994 by a smaller freezer under the bench in front of the old cast iron stove in the French kitchen.<sup>854</sup> The other major item of interest purchased in the early 1990s was a Lemair Pony bench-top dishwasher located above the sink in the working kitchen which will be discussed in a later section in more detail.

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<sup>850</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1975.

<sup>851</sup> “Valuation of Property Known as ‘Beleura’, Esplanade, Beleura Hill, Mornington. Owner: J.M. Tallis esq.” Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>852</sup> “Owner’s Manual Roden Multicook Electric Cooker” (with purchase date of 9 September 1986 on the front cover). Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>853</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1978. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>854</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1994. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

What this means is that while the arrangement of the kitchens remained largely unchanged from the immediate post-war era, they were mostly equipped with updated electrical appliances. There was also a formidable range of portable electrical appliances scattered across the kitchens. In the restoration and conversion of Beleura into a museum post-1996, the electric stove, freezer and refrigerator were removed from the French kitchen (Figure 55). The new stove and range hood were removed from the working kitchen and replaced with the current XCEL stove (rather oddly, the dishwasher remained). The original refrigerator and stove in the John Tallis kitchen were replaced with the current Thorn and Creda models. There is no doubt that these changes “tidied up” the kitchens ready for public display and realigned them with the eras in which they were built, but some authenticity has been lost in the process. Regardless of how one views this strategy, the result has left the kitchens looking very much as they were when first used.

One feature of post-war Australian culinary practice that has not been addressed in this thesis so far is the popularity of the barbeque, a device with its origins in America. Peter Timms asserts that while meals were often brought outdoors in summer, “What really gave the patio a sense of purpose, however, making it something everyone had to have, was the barbeque.”<sup>855</sup> Magazines were filled with plans for elaborate barbeques and any self-respecting husband was meant to know how to build one.<sup>856</sup> By the 1990s, barbeque equipment had reached a level of sophistication similar to the indoor kitchen. Whether or not people actually used the barbeque to its full capability was not the point, as Timms argues, “It’s a symbol of our relaxed attitudes; our supposed love of the great outdoors; our affluence; and our fantasies of social equality.”<sup>857</sup> It is easy to understand the appeal of the Paul Hogan “shrimp on the barbie” advertisement both to the potential tourist and to the average Australian keen to maintain the myth of our bush origins and larrikin free spirit. As Timms suggests, the barbeque ritual “was a corrective to the prissy sophistication of the dining room.”<sup>858</sup> Tallis was fond of eating and entertaining outdoors on the back terrace in suitable weather and the presence at Beleura of a rusty, portable barbeque, attests to the occasional enactment of this culinary ritual in the past.

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<sup>855</sup> Peter Timms, *Private Lives: Australians at Home since Federation* (Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2008), 30.

<sup>856</sup> “Barbeque Cooking”, *Australian Home Beautiful*, January, 1948.

<sup>857</sup> Timms, 35.

<sup>858</sup> Timms, 32.

### 5.3 Sourcing, storing and preserving food

In the early 1980s a large, new Safeway supermarket was opened in a two story, sprawling shopping complex at the southern end of Main Street in Mornington. The event probably did not impress Tallis, as he clearly disliked supermarkets and there is no evidence that he used them. Sometime in the late 1960s, early 1970s, Tallis transferred his telephone grocery orders from the Myer Food Hall to local delicatessens who would continue to discretely deliver food direct to Beleura. Meat was the exception which he purchased personally, mainly from a butcher in Mt Eliza. After buying eye fillet steak one day, Tallis pronounces, “Meat there, I think, better than in Mornington.”<sup>859</sup> He regularly records driving to Mt Eliza to purchase meat, often staying for a haircut or eating lunch at a café. Tallis also seemed to enjoy cooking seafood occasionally brought to the back door of Beleura by visitors with a surplus from fishing trips. On one occasion it was a flounder, another time whiting. Even a lobster arrived one day, although Tallis cut himself preparing it.

Consistent with Tallis’s habit of retaining even minor household paperwork, a very informative set of invoices exists in the Beleura archives for groceries purchased from the Franz Gourmet International Delicatessen at 53 Main Street, Mornington from June 1975 to April 1985. The invoices reveal weekly purchases of staples such as butter, cream, sugar, rice, pasta, eggs, bread, biscuits, tinned soups, cheese, tea and coffee (Figure 56). Tallis favoured English Breakfast tea, his jam was most often grapefruit marmalade and the cheese was usually plain grated, parmesan or Stilton. Denise Hassett who had been live-in caretaker and occasional cook at Beleura from 1971 to 1972 took over the Franz Delicatessen in June 1978. It appears that Tallis had been on the verge of stopping his orders from the Deli because he felt that they were becoming too expensive, but after meeting Hassett in Main Street and hearing of her takeover plans, he decided to continue his weekly orders.<sup>860</sup> Tallis was clearly loyal to previous staff, as his diaries provide numerous examples of him supporting and remaining in contact with people who had worked at Beleura over the years. The weekly grocery orders changed little over time, except that after Hassett took over the Deli, pre-cooked meals started to appear, perhaps because he was familiar with her cooking from when she was in residence. On 29 July 1978 Tallis wrote in his diary that Hassett delivered a Beef Stroganoff with the

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<sup>859</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1974.

<sup>860</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1978.

usual weekly order.<sup>861</sup> This marks a new phase in Tallis's food provision, at a time when he did not appear to have a live-in cook. Tallis never enjoyed meal preparation, admitting in 1974, "Meals still an awful chore."<sup>862</sup> Delivered meals provided a convenient alternative to cooking or relying on helpful friends. Prepared meals provided by the Franz Delicatessen included Tuna Mornay, Beef Goulash, veal casserole, Chicken a la King, Osso Bucco, beef in wine, curry and rice, squab in cranberry sauce and Coquille St Jacques. Desserts delivered included mango mousse, apple crumble, apple strudel, apricot cream pie and at Christmas the inevitable pudding. It was an arrangement that suited Tallis at the time.<sup>863</sup>

Long before Denise Hassett took over the Franz Delicatessen, Tallis had experimented with ordering pre-cooked meals. In 1973 he noticed an advertisement in the *Mornington Leader* for a *Dial-a-Dinner* service. For \$2/meal, Mrs Moore delivered a lunchtime meal consisting of three homely courses such as soup/salmon casserole/apple pie or soup/silverside/sago plum pudding. A different combination for each weekday made this service a handy and economical form of meals on wheels which Tallis seemed to appreciate as a change from his own cooking.<sup>864</sup>

In a similar fashion to groceries, alcoholic beverages were ordered from several suppliers and delivered to Beleura. Invoices retained from 1977 to 1983, initially from Boyle's in Main Street Mornington and later from Ritchies in Frankston show a wide spread of wine styles (rose, riesling, semillon, chardonnay, chenin blanc, shiraz, malbec, cabernet sauvignon). The wine was made predominantly by Australian winemakers such as Mt Avoca, Stanley Leasingham, Seaview, Quelltaler, Richmond Grove, Lindemans, Pewsey Vale, Brown Brothers, David Wynn and Siegersdorf. The vintages were mostly modest and common in local bottle shops, although one order for six bottles of Penfold's Grange Hermitage stands out. Regular orders for spirits such as vodka, gin, vermouth, brandy and blended whisky confirm Tallis's fondness for cocktails, particularly martinis. Beer was only occasionally ordered (Fosters). The 1970s was a period of increasing wine awareness in Australia, although Beleura was already well ahead with regard to wine consumption.<sup>865</sup>

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<sup>861</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1978.

<sup>862</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1974.

<sup>863</sup> Invoices from Franz Deli 28 June 1975 to 27 April 1985. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>864</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1973. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>865</sup> Invoices from Boyles and Ritchies 1977 to 1983. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

A significant person during this era was John Sutherland, who came to Beleura looking for work in November 1978. He started as a part-time gardener, won favour with Tallis and stayed to eventually become his full-time live-in housekeeper, cook and carer. After Tallis's death in 1996, Sutherland stayed on to assist with the conversion of Beleura into a house museum. During his time working for Tallis, Sutherland created shopping lists to ensure that the larder (room 20) was stocked with his favourite brand groceries. In an email interview, Sutherland noted that the products had to be of best quality and Australian made where possible. This was a significant deviation from the 1950s when a high proportion of his preferred groceries from the Myer Food Hall were imported.<sup>866</sup> There were always six tins of everything on hand, which Tallis regularly rotated on the shelves. Many of the tins and packets remain in place in the larder, carefully preserved to this day (Figure 57).<sup>867</sup> There is nothing remarkable about the groceries in Sutherland's lists; any home would have had similar foods. For instance there was SPC tinned fruit, Campbell's soups, Rosella tomato sauce, McCormick's herbs and Edgell's canned vegetables. Uncle Toby's minute oats, stock cubes, sugars, long grain rice and McAlpine's plain and self-raising flours were also on the list.<sup>868</sup> Sutherland progressively took over the cooking, probably leading to fewer meals being ordered from outside. This coincided with the transfer of weekly grocery orders in 1986 to the local Beleura Hill Milk Bar operated by John and Jan Francis and later by Peter and Margaret Poel, who continued to fulfil orders from Beleura until the wake following John Tallis's funeral in December 1996. These were once again basic provisions, with meat bought elsewhere. The shop occupied by the Beleura Hill Milk Bar was owned by the Tallis family and Sutherland offered this as a possible reason for Tallis persisting with ordering groceries from them, even though the prices were much higher than the supermarkets.<sup>869</sup>

Tallis was justifiably proud of his vegetable garden with many notes in his diaries indicating that he had a ready supply of seasonal vegetables at most times including tomatoes, peas, beans, cauliflower, potatoes, sweet corn, butternut pumpkin, lettuce, cabbage and zucchini (Figure 58 and 59). Surplus produce was sometimes frozen for long-term storage. Tallis notes

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<sup>866</sup> Personal communication by email with John Sutherland who assisted John Tallis at Beleura from November 1978 to December 1996, conducted 13 February 2015.

<sup>867</sup> Note: A close examination of the larder shelves show that there were still many imported food products in the kitchen, including tins of sauerkraut from Germany and Baxters Scottish partridge. See Appendix e. for full list of larder items.

<sup>868</sup> Shopping list – written by John Sutherland. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>869</sup> Personal communication by email with John Sutherland.

freezing large quantities of peas and beans in December 1973.<sup>870</sup> More traditional preservation methods were also employed. In February 1974 Tallis recorded that Mrs Sullivan (housekeeper 1972–1980) bottled a glut of tomatoes and fruit using the Fowlers Vacola kit previously discussed in Chapter 3. A little later that year, he also recorded his own efforts (perhaps with a little help) in making marmalade. Evidently the taste was satisfactory but it failed to set properly.<sup>871</sup> Self-sufficiency was a major concern for Tallis in 1974 and he decided to reintroduce some livestock to the Beleura landscape. To facilitate the transport of cattle by truck, it became necessary to build a loading ramp and cattle race. Sitting on the south lawn at Beleura, it remains a unique artifact of this period.

### 5.3.1 Artifact evaluation 10 – Cattle race and loading ramp

**Identification:** A cattle loading ramp is a prominent and surprising feature of the south lawn at Beleura (Figure 60). The ramp is intended for loading and unloading cattle from a truck. It comprises a funnel shaped race which directs the animals, one at a time, into the sloping ramp structure. The ramp is 1 metre high and 3.7 metres long, giving it a slope of about 15 degrees. The race is 10 metres long, 2.5 metres wide at its mouth and 1 metre wide at the narrowest part at the entry to the ramp. It is of rugged, hardwood timber construction which has been painted green. The wooden components are nailed and bolted together. Both the race and the ramp have side rails to prevent the animals escaping. There are several cleats on the ramp floor to stop the animals from slipping. There is plenty of room around the ramp for manoeuvring a truck into loading position.

**Context analysis:** Cattle loading ramps are as old as the livestock industry. While the function is obvious, there are subtleties to the design. The ramp needs to be sturdy enough to take not only the weight of the animals but also the additional loadings due to animals colliding with the retaining rails. It should allow easy manoeuvring of the truck into loading position in all weathers, without risk of the vehicle becoming bogged. The slope of the ramp is quite specific, so that the cattle are not deterred from running up into the truck. According to one manual, the height of the loading ramp should be 1.17 to 1.2 metres and if the length is 3.5 metres then an

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<sup>870</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1973.

<sup>871</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1974.

ideal maximum slope should be 1 in 3 (18.4 degrees).<sup>872</sup> Steeper slopes may cause the cattle to baulk or slip. Ideally, the sides of the ramp should be fully clad to prevent the cattle from becoming distracted, although in the case of Beleura, as with many ramps, the sides are of open rail construction. In most respects, the Beleura ramp and race conform to the recommended specification.

**Interpretation:** On 31 July 1974 Tallis wrote, “Have been toying with the idea of getting a cow. Some chooks too might be helpful.”<sup>873</sup> On 9 October a cow and calf arrive at Beleura to graze on the lush grass on the south lawn. To facilitate their transport, a cattle ramp was built on 18 December 1974. By introducing livestock to Beleura, Tallis was unconsciously aligning himself with a potent movement towards self-sufficiency that swept the world in the 1970s. Humble argues that this was a time when a significant group from the middle classes “turned their back on the consumer culture to run small holdings and attempt to produce their own food without chemicals or cruelty.”<sup>874</sup> Humble also suggests that this approach was also taken up by many who were victims of the economic turmoil of the era and who were forced to live on restricted budgets.<sup>875</sup> Tallis was far from poor, but he often wrote that maintaining Beleura was becoming a substantial financial burden and a move towards self-sufficiency, realistic or otherwise, may have seemed an attractive proposition.

While it is appealing to see Tallis as some kind of aging hippy, his motivation was practical and political. After the Labor Party came to power in 1972, the Government was faced with a series of economic upheavals, with rising inflation, unemployment and regular industrial unrest dominating the news. Tallis was very concerned about the consequences of what he saw as the Government’s poor economic management, which he feared might lead to shortages of basic commodities such as milk. His fears were excessive but not unreasonable, as petrol rationing caused by transport workers’ strikes had become a regular occurrence. Reluctantly, he sought his own insurance against catastrophe by adopting this self-sufficiency initiative: “Fancy having to consider such things! But it’s indicative to what a state this poor country has

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<sup>872</sup> Evan Powell & John Lapworth. *Cattle Yards – Design, Materials and Construction* (Brisbane: Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries, 2006), 41.

<sup>873</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1974.

<sup>874</sup> Humble, 185.

<sup>875</sup> Humble, 186.



fallen. What does the future hold?”<sup>876</sup> While this at first seems a surprising initiative, Tallis would have remembered his father’s prize-winning Ayrshire cattle that were bred at Beleura in the 1930s. Tallis had also spent time at Braehour, his uncle’s farm near Wagga and would have been familiar with cattle management practices. The cattle loading ramp would have been used regularly as Tallis found it necessary to move the cattle back to his Somerville property from time to time when feed was low at Beleura. During the dry months, Tallis had to resort to hand feeding.

Tallis enjoyed having the animals at Beleura, but it is not known if the cow was ever milked. Their benefit may have been more psychological than economic, as Tallis wrote not long after they arrived, “They give over a peaceful atmosphere.”<sup>877</sup> He included comments about the cattle regularly in his diary, which remained at Beleura at least until 1981, when the last entry for them was written. He was thrilled when a calf was born, expressed concern when they were sick and complained when the animals misbehaved. The cattle ramp is a poignant reminder of a time when Tallis was rediscovering the farming spirit of his father, Sir George. The cattle provided a valuable distraction from the economic doom and gloom of the 1970s, even if they probably never fulfilled their original purpose.

#### **5.4 Cooking food at Beleura**

As has been established in the last chapter, John Tallis cooked regularly, both for himself and for guests, at least until the 1980s. He sometimes begrudged the effort involved: “A lot of preparation I’m afraid for quite a simple meal. I feel I must be getting past all that now.”<sup>878</sup> When Tallis cooked, many of his meals were of the grilled steak or roast chicken and vegetable variety. However, there were times when he attempted a limited range of favourite dishes, many of which he noted in his diary. Some recipes are marked in cookbooks, but as it is not clear when these dishes were prepared, the diaries are a more reliable record of the era.

Tallis continued to cook his “inimitable” Irish stew, as well as Chicken a la King, Salmon Kedgeree, roast leg of lamb, corned beef, Osso Bucco and Steak Diane. The results were

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<sup>876</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1974.

<sup>877</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1974.

<sup>878</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1973.

occasionally disappointing: “Sometimes my cooking turns out badly – or am I getting more particular?”<sup>879</sup> Other times, the meal was “v. good” in the shorthand that Tallis frequently used in his diary when something pleased him. On 7 September 1977 Tallis wrote: “Excellent dinner with oysters (a luxury for me from Mt Eliza) cold lamb, hot vegies and v.good French pancakes from packet frozen.”<sup>880</sup> For guests, Tallis often would cook a main course and combine it with a bought dessert, such as a cake from a local bakery. Denise Hassett, who still lives in Mornington, provided some valuable insights into Tallis’s cooking skills. Hassett confirmed that when she was in residence at Beleura in the early 1970s, she provided Tallis with meals several days per week (usually meals she was cooking for her own family), with other meals either cooked by him or bought from local shops. She was responsible for showing Tallis how to cook Kedgeree using tinned pink salmon, a dish he made regularly. Hassett said that Tallis insisted on buying premium quality meat, even for recipes such as his favourite Irish stew.<sup>881</sup> This was potentially the cause for Tallis’s frequent complaints about the quality of his meat, as cheaper cuts of meat are normally recommended for slow cooking. Fillet steak may be fine for Steak Diane, but will usually result in a tough stew. Hassett occasionally cooked for Tallis’s sister, but Biddy Carnegie was firm that she was not to buy the extravagant meat preferred by her brother.<sup>882</sup>

Despite his protests about cooking being a waste of time and effort, Tallis appeared to take a higher than average level of interest in food, with a diverse array of cookbooks on the shelves in the Beleura kitchens. The collection includes volumes by international chefs and food writers Giuliano Bugialli, Roger Verge, Fredy Girardet (autographed copy), Anne Willan, Mary Berry and local culinary luminaries Beverley Sutherland Smith, Tess Mallos, Gabriel Gate and Geoff Slattery. Surprisingly, for a man with somewhat conservative political leanings, Tallis even had a copy of a cookbook written by ex-Labor Premier of South Australia, Don Dunstan. Tallis also had a full set of the Time Life *Foods of the World* series, demonstrating an interest in multicultural cuisines.<sup>883</sup> Tucked in a copy of Mary Berry’s *Popular French Cookery* is a letter from Mary Bell, who wrote a popular column in local

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<sup>879</sup> John Tallis Personal Diar – 1976.

<sup>880</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1977.

<sup>881</sup> Personal communication with Denise Hassett, who was housekeeper at Beleura 1971–1972, conducted 3 February 2015.

<sup>882</sup> Personal communication with Denise Hassett.

<sup>883</sup> Note: A complete listing of all cookbooks at Beleura is included in the Appendix d. to this thesis.

newspapers *Over the Garden Fence*. Tallis had evidently written to her asking for sweet corn recipes. In response, Bell sent copies of her recipes for corn cheese pie, corn and mushroom casserole, chicken corn chowder, corn chowder with rosemary, corn on the cob BarBQ and corn fritters. Hopefully Tallis found some interesting ways to use up the frequent oversupply of corn from the Beleura garden.<sup>884</sup>

The last diary entry referring to a meal cooked by John Tallis was a dinner prepared for friends on 9 February 1980, with a main course of Steak Diane and sautéed potatoes.<sup>885</sup> As Tallis grew older he began to rely more on meals bought from local caterers such as Denise Hassett at the Franz Delicatessen. There may have been others times when Tallis cooked for himself, but the diary entries become fewer after 1980 (with no references to cooking) and cease altogether from 1987 until a sudden resumption of interest in the diary in 1994. From these last diaries, it appears that most meals were prepared by one or other of Beleura's housekeeper/cooks, supplemented with occasional pre-cooked meals bought from shops such as Houghton's Fine Foods of Barkley Street in Mornington. On 16 January 1996, Tallis wrote that he enjoyed Houghton's Thai fish cakes.<sup>886</sup> He does, however, complain about Houghton's non-delivery policy. As in the immediate post-war era, friends were also occasionally coopted into cooking. A thank you letter written in 1988 following a dinner party refers to the "fine cooking ability" of Tallis's long-term friend, Jim Palmer.<sup>887</sup> Over the years, Palmer regularly cooked meals at Beleura.

John Sutherland became the principal, live-in cook for Tallis in his later years and left behind a very important and unusual document in the form of a foolscap spiral bound notebook containing a hand-written, weekly record of many of the actual dishes that he cooked. For instance, in the week beginning 30 April 1993, Sutherland cooked beef balls and mushroom ragout, tuna spaghetti casserole, tomato and onion pie, roast lamb, green beans armondine (Figure 61). Desserts listed were bread and butter pudding, pears in red wine and lemon

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<sup>884</sup> Letter from Mary Bell to John Tallis (undated). Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>885</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1980. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>886</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1996.

<sup>887</sup> Hand-written letter from Dr John and Heather Spencer to John Tallis, 1 February 1988. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

snow.<sup>888</sup> Sutherland was methodical in his approach to cooking and provided cookbook page numbers for many of the recipes. The notebook only documents meals cooked in 1993, but the record is probably typical of meals cooked around this time. If Sutherland's notes are a reliable indication, Tallis still maintained a healthy appetite, despite occasional protests in his diary that he was no longer interested in food. Evening meals regularly consisted of two courses with a lighter dish for lunch. The choice of meals seems to reflect Tallis's taste, including some of the simple dishes cooked in earlier times by Tallis himself (Irish stew and Kedgeree appear frequently) and more complex ones in a French style, similar to those previously cooked by Alan Eustace.

Sutherland recorded the cookbook references by a letter code. For instance, a dish with BSS after it means that the recipe came from Beverley Sutherland Smith's *A Taste for All Seasons* which is on the shelf in the small flat (room 42). Some letter codes refer to books no longer at Beleura, but some speculative research has found most of the sources. Sutherland Smith's book was used for recipes such as mushrooms in white wine, mushroom stuffed eggs, stuffed chicken breasts, meat balls with sage, chicken livers in wine and tarragon, casserole of eggplant, veal in wine, compote of rhubarb, apple regency, Russian apricot pudding and orange charlotte. Mary Berry's *Popular French Cookery* was used for leeks with cheese, veal casserole, burgundy beef, rabbit pie, sauté of cod, apple custard tart and peaches in brandy. Ellen Sinclair's *The Australian Women's Weekly Original Cookbook* was used for a range of dishes including devilled wine chops, Veal Cordon Bleu, spaghetti sauce, tuna spaghetti casserole, egg and bacon pie, Italian lamb shanks, pilaf, caramel bananas and chocolate mousse. A number of recipes also came from *The Australian Women's Weekly New Cookbook* including savoury lambs fry, devilled pork chops, Irish stew, veal ragout, cheese soufflé and refrigerator cheesecake. The popular American cookery manual, *The Joy of Cooking* was also occasionally used for recipes such as Vichyssoise, pumpkin soup, veal terrine and honey apples. Sue Russell's *Cooking for Two* was used for simple cassoulet, Moussaka, pork chops in cider, lemon garlic kidney and Sole Veronique. A dessert recipe for cream cheese and pineapple came from Edouard de Pomiane's *Cooking in Ten Minutes*. Sutherland was also fond of using community cookbooks such as one published by the Waihaorunga Country

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<sup>888</sup> Menus for JMT 1993 – cooked by John Sutherland starting 19 March 1993. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

Women's Institute in 1978 and the Scots Sunday School Auxiliary Shepparton Members and Friends cookbook.<sup>889</sup>

There is no obvious pattern to the recipes used by Sutherland, which were mostly from popular cookbooks of the time. The Australian books in particular reflected a growing multicultural influence on Australian cuisine and an emphasis on fresh produce. Sutherland's notebook includes French recipes, Italian dishes, Greek and traditional British fare. There are no recipes showing any Asian influence, which is somewhat out of step with Australian food culture of this period. However, a bottle of soy sauce in the larder and a leaflet for a Chinese takeaway café in Mornington on the kitchen noticeboard indicate that the household was not immune to Asian food. It might be expected to find an overt Italian influence given Tallis's love of Italy, but there are as many if not more French recipes in the notebook. This profile is perhaps not surprising, since Tallis spent a large portion of his formative years studying music in France in the 1930s. One particular episode provides evidence for a continuing Italian theme late in his life. Tallis was very fond of a good risotto and in May 1995, he set off with his driver on a journey to Melbourne to buy genuine Arborio risotto rice. After a restorative lunch at the Regent Hotel, he visited Enoteca Silena, the Italian food importer in Carlton and returned to Beleura later in the day with the rice and a bundle of risotto recipes. The recipes, together with this newfound inspiration, must have been passed on to the cooks, as Tallis recorded on 26 August 1995, "Molly cooks an excellent smoked salmon risotto."<sup>890</sup> Molly Muke cooked for Tallis on weekends from 1995 to 1996 to give Sutherland a break.<sup>891</sup> Another part-time cook, Marcia Williams, was responsible for a rare positive diary entry from Tallis: "The day I had one of the best risottos I have ever eaten in years." The diary also records that Williams response was "Thank God for that!"<sup>892</sup> Williams continued to rise to the risotto challenge, with Tallis proclaiming after another successful meal, "I have the best risotto I've eaten since being in Italy – and that's some time ago! It certainly is a marvellous dish

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<sup>889</sup> Menus for JMT 1993 – cooked by John Sutherland starting 19 March 1993.

<sup>890</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1995.

<sup>891</sup> Note: From 1994 to 1996 a number of part-time cooks are mentioned in the Tallis diaries including, Molly Muke, Marcia Williams, Robyn Duffy, Lillian O'Sullivan and Barbara Gerard. In John Sutherland's copy of the *Australian Women's Weekly Cookbook*, a pencil note by Sutherland refers to Molly Muke as the "offal queen" presumably because she regularly cooked meals for John Tallis with liver, kidneys and tripe. Another note also refers to Muke and Duffy as the pastry cooks. John Sutherland's evident cooking skills did not stretch to pastry.

<sup>892</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1995.

when made properly.”<sup>893</sup> It is easy to presume that just as Tallis bought an old Fiat Topolino car, only months before he died, as a reminiscence of happy times in Italy in 1953, the quest for the perfect risotto may have played a similar function.

Sutherland also documented a small selection of Tallis’s favourite recipes, perhaps as a guide for the part-time cooks who assisted on the weekends. They were written on two cards for ready reference, one for mains and another for desserts (Figure 62 and 63). The mains consisted of soup (tomato etc), brains with brandy sauce, savoury mince, spinach crepe in white wine sauce, scrambled eggs with sherry, omelette, crème salmon with lemon sauce, Chicken a la King, risotto (chicken), smoked cod with white sauce and soufflé. The desserts consisted of crème caramel, cheesecake, lemon delicious, lemon meringue, trifle, Crepe Suzette, baked custard, rice pudding, ice cream, junket, jelly and ice cream, steamed pudding and creamed rice. The lists were written in November 1996 a month before Tallis died. Tallis had suffered from digestive problems for some time, but they did not seem to inhibit his eating significantly until the very last years. From the diaries it is impossible to fully understand the extent of Tallis’s health issues, but it seems likely that the recipe cards were intended to help the cooks provide a range of easy to eat, but tasty food at a time when his health was definitely not good.<sup>894</sup> While Sutherland undoubtedly played an indispensable role at Beleura, comments made in notes that were written by Tallis to Sutherland reveal that there were often disagreements regarding household priorities. Tallis regularly expressed concern when he thought that the maintenance of Beleura was being neglected and one note made the suggestion, “I think we’ll have to cut down a little on the cooking – though nice as it is. As other important things, such as verandahs, etc. seem to get neglected.”<sup>895</sup> This appears to confirm that Sutherland was a good cook, but perhaps overdid this part of his duties at times.

John Tallis’s 85<sup>th</sup> birthday was celebrated at Beleura on 15 December 1996 with a small group of relatives, Molly Muke, John Sutherland and Chigi his little dog. The diary records that guests ate blackforest cake bought from Beleura Hill cakeshop with French champagne and champagne cocktails in the library. The diary entry for the day was written later by

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<sup>893</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1995.

<sup>894</sup> List of main courses and desserts – written by John Sutherland, November 1996. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>895</sup> Hand-written note from John Tallis to John Sutherland, 2 May 1993. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

Sutherland, as Tallis had died at the Bush Hospital in Mornington on 19 December 1996. Apparently Tallis had enjoyed his last birthday.<sup>896</sup>

As with previous eras, there is a large amount of material culture related to cooking, but of such a non-spectacular and familiar nature, that it would appear to be almost superfluous. It can be argued that apart perhaps from the microwave cooker and dishwasher, there are few new technological advances in the kitchen belonging exclusively to this era. Beleura had the usual proliferation of small appliances such as a juicer, blender, deep fryer, toasters, kettles, mixers, a can opener and even a pasta maker. Bannerman asserts that Australian food culture has evolved under the influence of a long sequence of food fashions and fads, with the media being a powerful agent of change.<sup>897</sup> Beleura was not immune to these fashions in food, particularly when they were associated with claimed health benefits. The Romertopf earthenware dish in the French kitchen is a well-used reminder of one of those fads.

#### **5.4.1 Artifact evaluation 11 – Romertopf earthenware casserole**

**Identification:** Sitting on top of the cast iron stove in the French kitchen is a Romertopf earthenware casserole dish (Figure 64). It has a deep base designed to contain a whole chicken and has a close fitting earthenware lid. It is terracotta in colour, blackened and greasy from regular use. Its dimensions with lid are 28cm long, 14cm high and 18cm wide. The exterior surfaces are decorated with raised graphics depicting stylized poultry and fish. The Romertopf brand is deeply etched into the lid surface which also includes an integrated handle. The Romertopf casserole was made in Ransbach, Germany and is still in production.

**Context analysis:** The Romertopf is designed to be used in the oven and is based on early unglazed, Roman-style earthenware cooking vessels, a design said to be thousands of years old.<sup>898</sup> Mediterranean food specialist Paula Wolfert asserts, “Most food – and Mediterranean food in particular – tastes better cooked in clay.”<sup>899</sup> The Romertopf casserole is principally a steamer, as the dish is soaked in water prior to cooking. When the dish heats in the oven, the

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<sup>896</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1996 – entry written posthumously by John Sutherland.

<sup>897</sup> Bannerman, 14.

<sup>898</sup> Wendy Philipson, *Romertopf Cooking is Fun* (Ransbach: Eduard Bay Ltd, 1971), 9.

<sup>899</sup> Paula Wolfert, *Mediterranean Clay Pot Cooking: Traditional and Modern Recipes to Savor and Share* (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Inc, 2009), ix.

water is released as steam through the pores in the earthenware, cooking the food with a minimum of liquid without the risk of becoming dry or burning. When all the water is released as steam, the final stage is dry cooking which browns the food if desired. The manufacturer claims that this process retains the flavour and vitamins of the food which is cooked without the need for added fats.<sup>900</sup> Wolfert suggests that the Romertopf is particularly good for cooking whole chickens and large pieces of lamb or beef, especially tougher cuts which are tenderized in the steaming process.<sup>901</sup> Romertopf claim, “If you suffer from any disturbance of the stomach or liver, if you want to slim or stay slim, or if you are just a normally healthy person who attaches some importance to staying normally healthy, then you will find this method of cooking ideal for you.”<sup>902</sup> The company was founded in 1967 and the clay for manufacturing the dishes is sourced nearby in Ransbach, Germany. At the time of the company’s 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, it had made 25 million casserole dishes.<sup>903</sup>

**Interpretation:** Romertopf quote in their literature a German proverb which states, “There’s no better doctor than a good cook.”<sup>904</sup> John Tallis would probably have agreed with that adage, as he embraced a variety of dietary regimes to cure his digestive problems, seeking new solutions when one proved to be ineffective. In 1994 Tallis began eating porridge for breakfast, noting in his diary, “seems to result in an immediate improvement in my well-being.”<sup>905</sup> At other times Tallis believed in the curative powers of rice and eggs, although he was just as likely to later write that these foods disagreed with him. A perennial cause of concern for Tallis was the potential harm caused by years of cooking in aluminium utensils. In 1995 Tallis wrote, “Could I have been poisoned somehow? I’m blaming the alfoil in which I’ve been cooking for months and months.”<sup>906</sup> In 1996 he experimented with a “vinegar cure” guided by a book by Emily Thacker.<sup>907</sup>

Alcohol consumption was another regular subject for self-examination. Cocktails, so much enjoyed by Tallis, were scaled back over the years in an attempt to improve digestion and

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<sup>900</sup> Philipson, 10.

<sup>901</sup> Wolfert, xv.

<sup>902</sup> Philipson, 10.

<sup>903</sup> Romertopf Ceramic GmbH & Co, “The Company,” Romertopf Ceramic GmbH & Co, <http://www.roemertopf.de/english/ueberuns.htm> (accessed January 13, 2015)

<sup>904</sup> Philipson, 1.

<sup>905</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1994.

<sup>906</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1995.

<sup>907</sup> Emily Thacker, *The Vinegar Book* (Canton, Ohio: Tresco Publishers, 1994)



sleeping patterns.<sup>908</sup> The beloved martini was the first casualty. Initially Tallis believed that champagne was kinder to his stomach than spirits, exclaiming in a diary entry: “More champagne! However, it certainly has less toxic effects on me than spirits. Perhaps I should only drink champagne!”<sup>909</sup> Later, his home remedy became white wine, although that soon proved to be more of an irritant than a solution, writing: “Perhaps I’m overdosing the white wine which I’m having in place of martinis which I much prefer!”<sup>910</sup>

Many diary entries in the 1970s record Tallis cooking a chicken for a planned meal with guests at Beleura. The blackened condition of the Romertopf suggests that this dish may well have been used to cook many of these chickens, a practice very much in keeping with the low-fat dietary advice prevalent in the 1970s. As has been previously noted, Barbara Santich divides the history of dietary advice in Australia into three stages, with the third being the low-fat era that became prominent following the promotion of the purported connection between high blood cholesterol levels and heart disease.<sup>911</sup> It proved not to be so simple, but from the 1970s until quite recent times, book after book was published offering new low-fat recipes for health and most significantly, weight loss. On the shelves at Beleura are examples of cookbooks with a health focus such as *Poly-unsaturated Cookery*, *Cooking Without Oil*, *The Quick and Easy Raw Food Cookbook*, *Don’t Forget Fibre in Your Diet* and *The Sugar-Free Cookbook*.<sup>912</sup> Tallis clearly showed a strong interest in the connection between food and health, perhaps fostered by a suspicion about the limitations of conventional medicine. In later years Tallis showed a spirited disdain for doctors no doubt leading to his enthusiasm for self-help health solutions. In July 1996 Tallis wrote: “Perhaps after all I’ll be able to get the better of John Spencer.”<sup>913</sup> Dr Spencer was a local general practitioner and while Tallis’s spirit was admirable, sadly his optimism was unfounded, as he died five months later. The blackened, well-used Romertopf could be viewed as a symbol of Tallis’s search for better health in his later life.

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<sup>908</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1978.

<sup>909</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1978.

<sup>910</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1979. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>911</sup> Barbara Santich, *What the Doctor Ordered: 150 Years of Dietary Advice in Australia* (South Melbourne: Hyland House Publishing Pty Ltd, 1995), x.

<sup>912</sup> Note: Refer to Appendix d. for complete listing of cookbooks at Beleura.

<sup>913</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1996.

## 5.5 Serving food at Beleura

There are no detailed descriptions of serving food at Beleura during this era, but one can assume that John Tallis continued to dine and entertain at various locations within the house including the French kitchen, the vestibule, the wintergarden, the study, music room, the sunroom and the small flat. The formal dining room would have been used only on very special occasions as before. On 19 October 1980 Tallis records, “I use the dining room for the first time in about 20 years – but just for drinks.”<sup>914</sup> This was an occasion to entertain guests with a new recording of his composition *Fantasy for Violin and Piano*. John Sutherland prepared savouries and champagne cocktails were served. The drawing room was also rarely used for its original purpose, but on 31 December 1976 Tallis invited his sister and her companion for New Year’s Eve drinks, recording the occasion in the diary thus: “Decide to use drawing room – first time for years and years and it looked lovely.”<sup>915</sup> Another diary entry from 1974 gives a good indication of how Tallis conducted dinner parties:

Good deal of cooking during the day to prepare evening meal for Denise and Ray Shepherd and Harry Hutchins. All is ready by the time they arrive soon after 5pm. Am able to show them the garden – have leisurely drink – then dinner at 7. We eat in the old kitchen where I can have everything at my finger tips. V. good meal, I think, with about 12 vegetables from the garden. They leave about 9.30pm.<sup>916</sup>

One can only wonder and admire how Tallis managed to use twelve different vegetables. The old kitchen is another name for the French kitchen, where many dinner parties were held. Sometimes, as in this example, it is clear that Tallis cooked himself. At other times, he bought food from local caterers and quite often friends brought dishes to share. In May 1973 Tallis recorded a dinner catered by Mt Eliza Cakes, including Lasagne, Chicken Cacciatore, trifle and chocolate mousse. He pronounced it “quite good”.<sup>917</sup>

Afternoon tea appears to have continued as an occasional feature at Beleura, a fondly remembered family tradition dating back to the 1930s. Tallis recorded in his diary serving a

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<sup>914</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1980.

<sup>915</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1976.

<sup>916</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1974.

<sup>917</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1973.

Devonshire tea for visiting friends in 1972.<sup>918</sup> Guests were often invited for morning or afternoon tea, as a less complicated way for Tallis to entertain. Coffee was a continuing theme at Beleura with a Bodum coffee plunger a new addition to the working kitchen. In the 1970s this was a stylish way to prepare and serve coffee, a modern expression of the Salam French press coffee maker that was used at Beleura in the 1930s.

Despite having a house full of crockery and cutlery from earlier eras, Tallis regularly bought new pieces, particularly to stock the small flat, his cosy winter abode. In 1977 Tallis wrote that he bought some new cutlery from Vogue House in Mt Eliza, “as I can’t stand that Japanese stuff any longer.”<sup>919</sup> On 24 April 1979 Tallis bought a new tea set for the sunroom from Melbourne department store, Buckley and Nunn: “I hate that Noritake set I have there. Plates too big and cup poor shape.”<sup>920</sup> Why he had this peevish attitude towards the Japanese-made crockery and cutlery when there were so many other choices available in the Beleura kitchens is not clear. Perhaps it was merely the desire for something new. As Tallis grew older, his health issues began to take precedence over style. With food often causing him discomfort, meals were no longer particularly enjoyable experiences. Comfort was a more important issue and when Molly Muke made an “excellent” oxtail dish for Tallis he wrote, “Serve meal in the old kitchen for first time for a long while and it is warm there.”<sup>921</sup> While Tallis was never an enthusiastic cook, his later years were marked by an increasing reliance on others for cooking and consequently the serving style may not have been entirely under his control. As late as 1996, Tallis resolved to have one meal each day served in the French kitchen, rather than always eating in the music room. The French kitchen had been the location for many pleasurable, social meals in the past.<sup>922</sup>

Perhaps it is a product of familiarity, but it is difficult to find significant artifacts associated with serving food from this period. One aspect of culinary practice that has not so far been addressed could be considered as the final phase of serving. No meal is complete without the washing up.

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<sup>918</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1972. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>919</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1977. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>920</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1979.

<sup>921</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1995.

<sup>922</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1996.

### 5.5.1 Artifact evaluation 12 – Lemair Pony bench-top dishwasher

**Identification:** A Lemair Pony Model DW1 dishwasher is installed on the bench top in the working kitchen (room 18). It is connected via a hose to the cold water tap in the sink and is plugged into a normal power point. Its date of purchase is not known but assumed to be early 1990s. The machine can accommodate four full dinner place settings, or forty medium sized glasses. It has five wash programs and uses thirteen litres of water per cycle.<sup>923</sup> The external dimensions of the dishwasher are 53cm long, 50cm high and 46cm wide. The inner surfaces are stainless steel, while the outer skin is made from anodized aluminium with a plastic control panel on the front (Figure 65). On the side of the dishwasher is an Australian energy rating label which rates the unit at three stars or an annual calculated energy use of 176kWh (kilowatt hour).

**Context analysis:** An article in the *Canberra Times* in 1989 declares, “The Pony is Australia’s newest compact bench-top dishwasher. Distributed by Lemair it fits in tricky spaces such as tiny corporate kitchens and alcoves.”<sup>924</sup> Lemair was established in Australia in 1956 and developed a reputation for economically priced domestic appliances. The Lemair brand continues today as a part of the Home Appliance Group of McPherson’s Limited. The Company’s focus is now mainly on small refrigerators and washing machines for the camping and caravan market, with product sourced from South East Asia.<sup>925</sup>

The invention of the dishwasher is attributed to Josephine Cochrane, a wealthy socialite who lived in Shelbyville, Illinois. She wanted to find a machine that could wash dishes more quickly than her servants, but without breaking them. Not finding such a machine, she designed her own comprising a vessel with wire cages for supporting the dishes, which were washed under a soapy water spray. She was awarded a patent for the machine on 28 December 1886 and the company which she established to manufacture the dishwashers later became the KitchenAid Company.<sup>926</sup> The machine was originally operated by hand, but Cochrane

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<sup>923</sup> “Big or small they spell timesaving,” *Canberra Times*, May 9, 1989, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>924</sup> “Big or small they spell timesaving,” *Canberra Times*, May 9, 1989.

<sup>925</sup> Lemair Home Appliances, “What we do,” Lemair Home Appliances, <http://lemairappliance.com.au> (accessed January 24, 2015)

<sup>926</sup> United States Patent and Trademark Office, “Woman Invented Dishwasher,” Department of Commerce, <http://www.uspto.gov/news/pr/2001/01-62.jsp> (accessed January 20, 2015)

patented another design in 1917 which used an electrically powered centrifugal pump to provide the water spray. These early dishwashers were primarily purchased for hotels and restaurants, but they began to be installed in homes in the 1920s. However, it was not until the invention of a fully automatic dishwasher in the 1950s that domestic sales really began to grow. Since then, the dishwasher has steadily evolved with new machines offering better use of internal space and ever decreasing water and electricity consumption.<sup>927</sup>

In the early 1960s world annual dishwasher production was about 700,000 units, predominantly in the U.S.A. By 1975, this figure had increased to 5.5 million units, with roughly 40% of U.S families owning a dishwasher.<sup>928</sup> In Australia, the acceptance of dishwashers was much slower. In 1994 only 25% of Australian households had a dishwasher, rising to 35% in 2002 and 45% by 2008. In 2008, three quarters of Australian households with a dishwasher used it at least once a week and a third reported using it daily.<sup>929</sup>

The energy rating label on the side of the appliance was attached as part of a program initially introduced in Victoria and N.S.W. in 1986. This provides an earliest possible purchase date for the appliance. The program expanded to become a mandatory national labelling scheme in 1992, requiring key domestic appliances to be tested, rating them from between one and ten stars. The more stars, the more energy efficient the appliance and the lower the energy use. The label must state the energy star rating and the energy use per year in kWh when tested to the relevant standard.<sup>930</sup>

**Interpretation:** One of the many colourful stories reported by Alan Eustace from his time at Beleura in the 1950s and 1960s was that of Tallis obsessively washing dishes after each course of a dinner party. The image of Tallis with a tea-towel draped over his shoulder is a wonderful

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<sup>927</sup> F. Rosa, E. Roviada, S. Graziosi, P. Giudici, C. Guarnaschelli and D. Bongini. "Dishwasher History and its Role in Modern Design" (paper presented at Third IEEE History of Electro-Technology Conference HISTELCON, Pavia, September 5-7, 2012), 2.

<sup>928</sup> J.H.M. Weenan, "Trends in Dishwashing Appliances – The Development of the Dishwasher Market," *Journal of American Oil Chemists' Society* 55, No.1 (1978): 213.

<sup>929</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, "Whitegoods," Australian Bureau of Statistics, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/0/0E43C98B32A7FE85CA25750E00109A1D?opendocument> (accessed January 21, 2015)

<sup>930</sup> Energy Efficiency Working Group, "The Energy Rating Label," Department of Industry and Science, <http://www.energyrating.gov.au/about/energy-rating-labels/> (accessed January 21, 2015)

antidote for any impression that life was all elegance and refinement at Beleura.<sup>931</sup> The purchase of the new dishwasher in the early 1990s marks a distinct change of approach to washing dishes. We cannot know his motivation, but when Tallis decided to purchase the dishwasher, presumably at the request of John Sutherland, he was continuing the tradition established earlier by Sir George Tallis of equipping Beleura with the latest appliances. It is significant that the unit selected was a rather uncommon bench-top model and it is possible that this choice was made to avoid modifying the kitchens. The only real space for installing a dishwasher was in the working kitchen (room 18) and a conventional floor standing unit would have been difficult to incorporate, requiring the kitchen benches to be rebuilt and extensive re-plumbing. Was this a conscious decision? We will never know, but in these last years of his life, the diaries indicate that Tallis was becoming increasingly aware of the need to preserve Beleura for the future: “I have thoughts of see [*sic*] the vicar – and hastening the transfer of the house to the National Trust.”<sup>932</sup> Tallis was still aware of technology at this stage in his life and prepared to accommodate change but not at the expense of the integrity of Beleura’s interior design.

## 5.6 Beleura in the modern era

Diaries provide very personal insights into a life and in the case of John Tallis these insights included food and drink. They are valuable primary source documents which show that Tallis was becoming increasingly concerned about the impact of political and economic change on his life at Beleura in the 1970s. The dreaded Whitlam government was blamed for all manner of disasters and Tallis responded to the political turmoil in some unusual ways including buying a cow and calf as protection from future milk shortages. There was also refreshed interest in keeping poultry and the vegetable garden to support self-sufficiency. There were few changes made to the structure of Beleura in this era, only minor modifications to facilitate Tallis’s seasonal relocations to different parts of the house. Some electrical appliances were upgraded and various new ones installed including a dishwasher and microwave oven. Natural gas was eventually connected to Beleura, many years after most other households, but only to provide space and water heating.

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<sup>931</sup> Personal communication with Alan Eustace who was a regular visitor to Beleura, conducted 26 February 2013.

<sup>932</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1996.

Just as the post-war era heralded an influx of migrants to Australia mostly from Europe and around the Mediterranean, the 1970s saw the pool of migrants expand to encompass refugees from conflicts in South East Asia. They brought with them, as before, new ingredients and cuisines to enrich Australian society. Australians were also travelling more frequently abroad, with the experience of new cultures raising culinary awareness and expectations. These influences resulted in a rapid expansion in the variety and sophistication of restaurants in Australian cities. Tallis made the most of these dining opportunities, regularly visiting some of Melbourne's famous establishments during this period.

As with the immediate post-war years, Tallis had to live without the retinue of staff normally associated with a residence the size of Beleura, making do with a steady stream of mostly part-time housekeepers, gardeners and cooks. His diaries confirm that during the 1970s Tallis regularly cooked basic meals for himself and for guests from a small repertoire of recipes including his favourite Irish stew, Kedgeree, silverside and roast chicken. Tallis ordered basic provisions from several local delicatessens and increasingly bought ready-cooked meals which he supplemented with vegetables from the garden. Tallis was troubled in his later years with digestive problems leading to a focus on simple, but tasty meals during the 1980s and 1990s, certainly with little of the flair that was achieved by Alan Eustace in the 1950s. Entertaining at Beleura was nowhere near as grand as in the past, but Tallis received regular visits from friends and relatives who often brought dishes to share with him in simple meals and afternoon teas. John Sutherland, housekeeper and cook at Beleura for many years, left behind valuable lists of Tallis's favourite recipes, many from popular Australian cookbooks of the time as well as classic dishes from earlier books. The diaries, lists, cookbooks and years of receipts from local delicatessens, provide a very comprehensive picture of food at Beleura during this era.

Having introduced various Italian design elements into the garden and the house over the years, Tallis appeared to experience regular bouts of nostalgia for Italy as he grew older resulting in a rather irrational purchase of a small 1954 Fiat car just two months before he died. Memories of past travel in Italy together with a belief that rice was beneficial to his digestion also launched Tallis on a quest to find the perfect risotto. He pursued this quest with

a passion and his various cooks during the 1990s had to rise to this challenge. Several times he wrote that he had tasted the best risotto ever and one wonders if this obsession helped him to maintain his appetite through periods of ill health and discomfort. How much Tallis was in touch with contemporary food trends during this period is a moot point. His risotto obsession, regular visits to notable restaurants, acquisition of new cookbooks and interest in his vegetable garden indicates a higher than average gastronomic awareness, although this was understandably limited by his later increasing dependence on food prepared by others.

Throughout this period, Tallis continued to play piano and worked on his compositions. It must be remembered that he was a serious musician, dedicated to improving his piano technique which he achieved by inventing some innovative practice methods. However, Tallis's enduring legacy was his determination to transfer Beleura upon his death to The Tallis Foundation that would preserve the property as a place of learning and appreciation of the arts. Only through this generous act was this thesis possible.





Figure 55. French kitchen at Beleura as it is today  
Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland

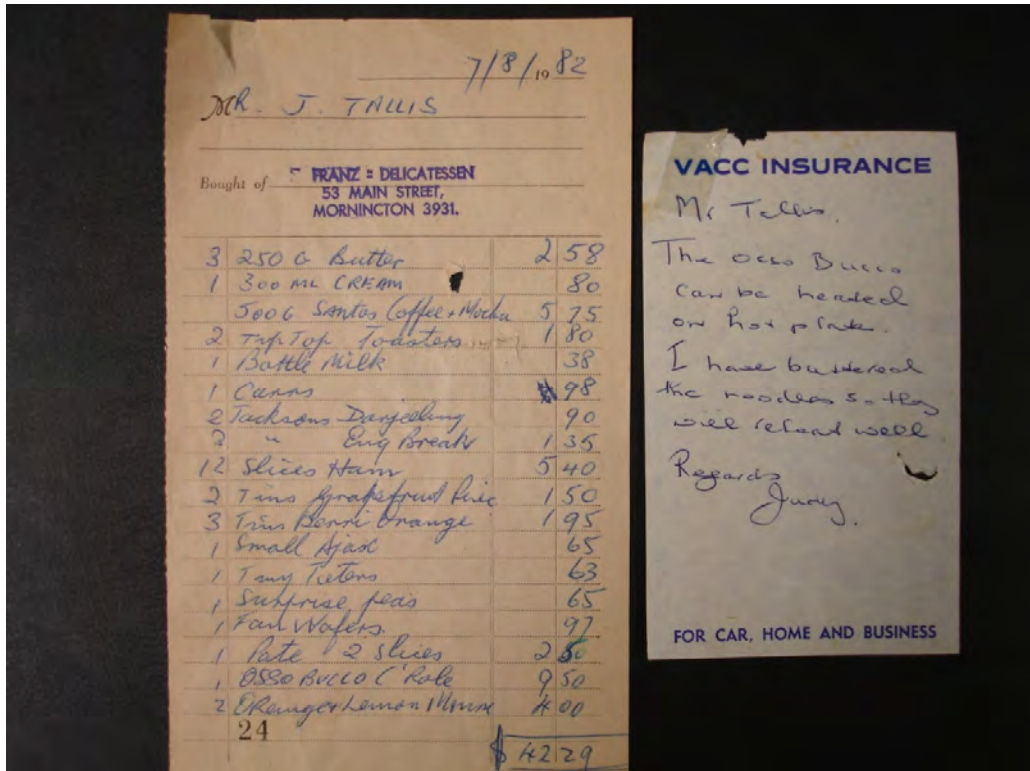


Figure 56. Franz Deli invoice and re-heating instructions  
Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection



Figure 57. Canned food containers from 1996 preserved on a larder shelf  
Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland



Figure 58. Beleura vegetable garden and glass house  
Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland



*Figure 59. Beleura vegetable garden and poultry run  
Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland*



*Figure 60. Cattle race and loading ramp on front lawn at Beleura  
Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland*

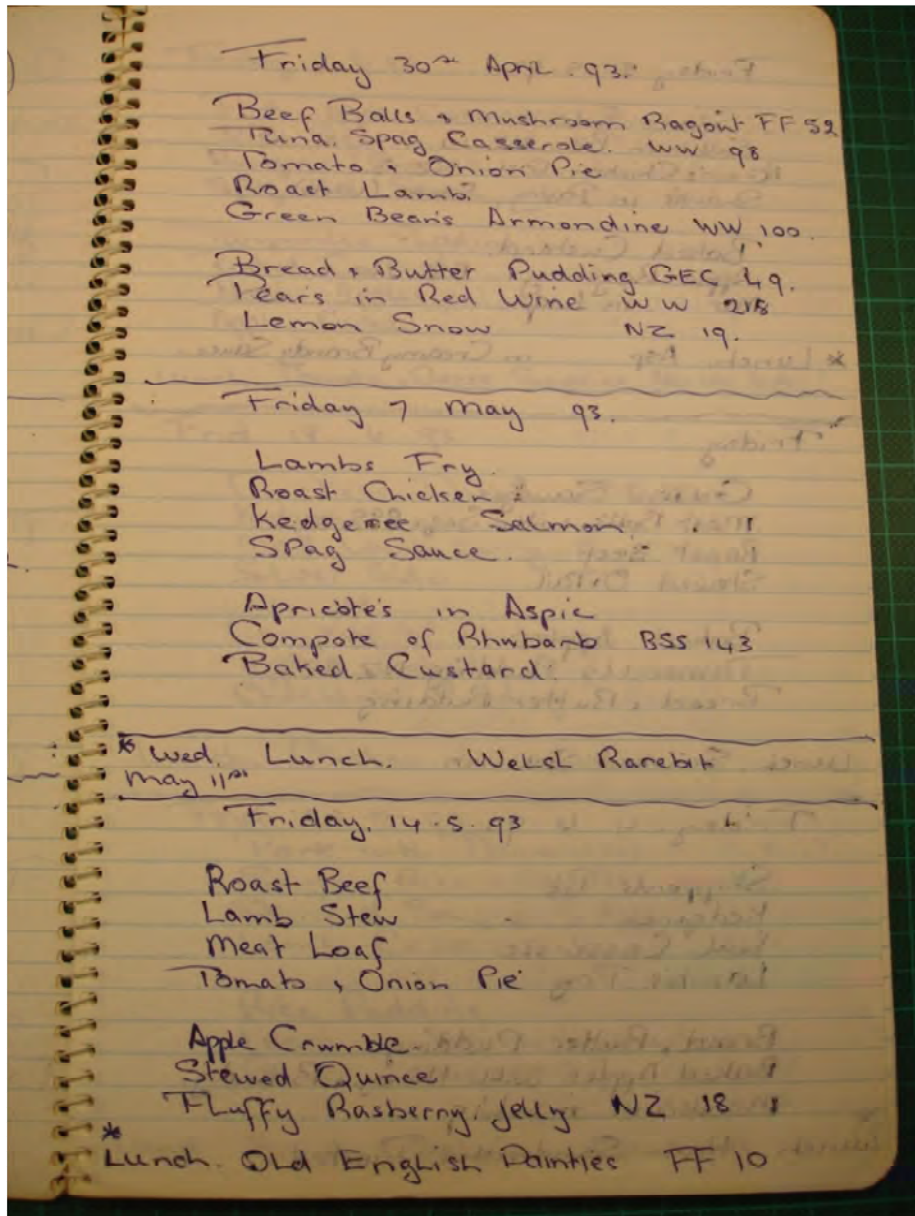


Figure 61. Sample page from Menus for JMT 1993 – recipes cooked by John Sutherland  
 Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection

Soups Tomato. - ect - ect. <sup>Nov 96</sup>  
Brains with a Brandy Sauce  
Savoury mince  
SPinnach. Crepe in White Wine  
Sauce  
Scrambled. Eggs. with Sherry  
OmLETTE.  
Cremē. Salmon. with Lemon Sauce  
Chicken a La. King  
Rissotto. (Chicken).  
Smoked. Cod. in White Sauce.  
SoufLE

Figure 62. List of main courses – written by John Sutherland, 1996  
Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection

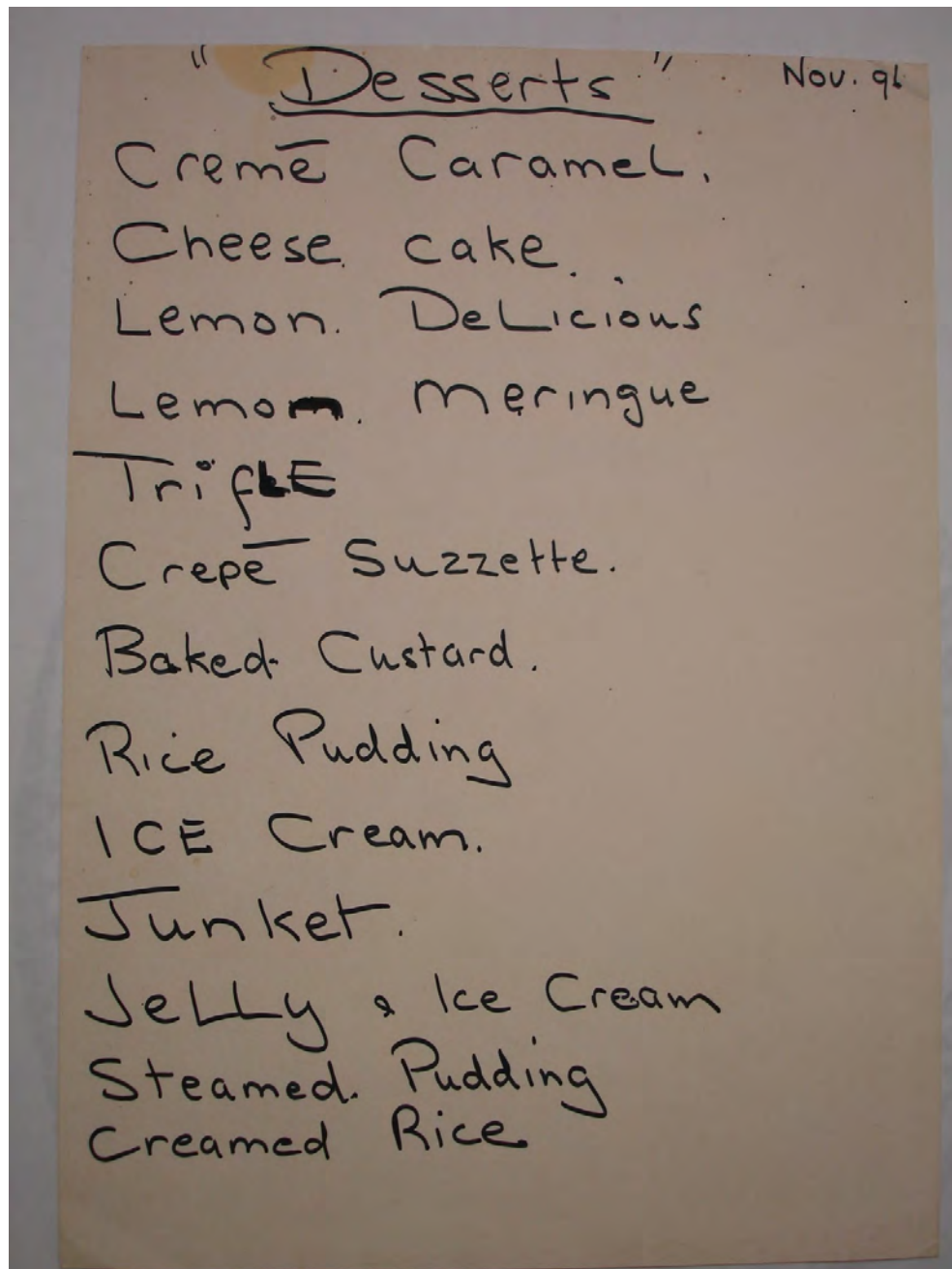


Figure 63. List of desserts – written by John Sutherland, 1996  
Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection



*Figure 64. Romertopf earthenware casserole on the cast iron stove-top  
Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland*



*Figure 65. Lemair dishwasher in working kitchen at Beleura  
Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland*

### **6.1 The mystery of the AGA cooker**

One of the most confusing and intriguing artifact studies conducted in the course of this thesis concerned the nineteenth-century cast iron range, now a dominant feature of the French kitchen. This impressive and typical Victorian-era range has been somewhat overshadowed by the persistent and mysterious suggestion of the presence of an early twentieth-century AGA solid fuel cooker at Beleura. Consideration of the presence or absence of the AGA cooker revealed a number of important issues regarding the study of material culture and documentary evidence. Faced today with the very obvious presence of a nineteenth-century cast iron closed fire range in the kitchen, it seemed a reasonable assumption that the reference to an AGA cooker in a 1933 estate valuation was an error.<sup>934</sup> In this valuation it would have been easy to refer to the much older range as an AGA, using a popular brand at the time in a generic sense. If it was an error, then it was repeated in a 1951 valuation. It was not until another document surfaced, in the form of a 1961 builders invoice, that the truth was revealed. An AGA cooker had been installed in front of the old cast iron range, probably in the early 1930s, but it was removed by the builder for unknown reasons in 1961. The Victorian appliance was uncovered and restored as though an AGA had never existed. This bizarre sequence of events was confirmed by a chance visit to Coolart, the country homestead built in 1895 for the Grimwade family at Somers, not far from Beleura. The Coolart kitchen was originally fitted with a McKewan cast iron range, which at some stage had also been concealed behind a replacement AGA cooker, now removed to reveal the original range. It would appear as though this was a common form of kitchen renovation in the 1930s. The cast iron ranges were probably too heavy to remove and easier to leave in place.

The AGA cooker has exerted an influence over this thesis more by its absence than its presence and so it is only fair to consider it more closely. Dr Gustav Dalen, a Nobel Prize winning Swedish physicist, invented the world's first heat storage cooker in 1922. By 1929,

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<sup>933</sup> This heading alludes to a title given by Deborah Edwards, Senior Curator of Australian Art at the Art Gallery of NSW, to her 2004 exhibition on the history of portrait sculpture at The National Portrait Gallery, Canberra. The phrase seemed appropriate to the issues surrounding the study of artifacts in a more general sense.

<sup>934</sup> "Valuation of Property Known as Beleura Situated Esplanade, Beleura Hill, Mornington – In the Estate of the Late Lady Amelia Tallis." Beleura House & Garden Collection.



his invention had been developed into the AGA range cooker and was being manufactured in the AGA Heat Limited factory in Smethwick, U.K.<sup>935</sup> Like earlier solid fuel closed fire ranges it was also made of cast iron, but its main benefit over other appliances was the use of the insulating material *Kieselguhr*, which helped the AGA retain heat and therefore save fuel.<sup>936</sup> Christina Hardyment suggests that the concept of the AGA can be described very simply as “a massive metal fire-unit kept at a very high temperature, around 900°C, by the thermostatically controlled combustion of the solid fuel inside it.”<sup>937</sup> With no convection currents to cause heat loss, it was guaranteed to use no more than one and a half tons of coal or coke a year, significantly less than other ranges.<sup>938</sup> The installation of a new, higher efficiency AGA cooker is totally consistent with Sir George and Lady Tallis’s mission to upgrade the kitchen technology at Beleura in the 1920s; it is only surprising that they were able to acquire one in Australia so soon after its invention. The AGA cooker tells quite a story, despite no longer being present, particularly about the rapid introduction of technology at Beleura, a defining point of difference with other residences at the time. The purchase of the Frigidaire refrigerator is further evidence of this technology focus, although it should be noted that if a reticulated electricity supply had been available sooner at Beleura, then refrigeration and indeed electric cooking, may have made an even earlier appearance.

The conclusion from this episode is that the presence of an artifact can sometimes be distracting and will often conceal the complicated circumstances of its survival. To understand an artifact’s history with greater accuracy, documents are needed and it was fortunate that Beleura had the necessary documentary evidence to explain the mystery of the AGA cooker. Archaeologist William Rathje argues for the use of material culture in human behaviour studies and warns of the potential bias in written records.<sup>939</sup> However, in this example, it was the interpretation of the artifact that was problematic. In retrospect, all of the documents relating to the AGA cooker proved to be accurate; it was the overwhelming presence of the old cast iron range that was misleading.

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<sup>935</sup> AGA Rangemaster Limited, “1920s: The Birth of the AGA Range Cooker,” AGA Rangemaster Limited, <http://www.agaliving.com/about-us/history.aspx> (accessed April 6, 2015).

<sup>936</sup> David De Haan, *Antique Household Gadgets and Appliances* (Poole, Dorset: Blandford Press, 1977), 7.

<sup>937</sup> Christina Hardyment, *From Mangle to Microwave: The Mechanization of Household Work* (Cambridge: Polity Press in association with Basil Blackwell, 1988), 121.

<sup>938</sup> Hardyment, 122.

<sup>939</sup> William L. Rathje, “Modern Material Culture Studies,” *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory* 2 (1979): 10.

A corollary to this issue of absence is another concern about presence, in this instance of non-authentic appliances. If artifacts are to be used to relate the narrative of culinary practices then care must be taken to validate that the artifacts do in fact belong to the house. For instance, the Creda stove in the John Tallis kitchen and the XCEL model in the working kitchen appear to be authentic, but are in fact recent purchases intended to restore the rooms to what is considered to be their original state. This curatorial strategy can be confusing and conceals the development of the service areas. Thankfully, the Beleura archives catalogue thoroughly documents the provenance of all objects in the house and any confusion was easily resolved.

## 6.2 The problem with artifacts

The value of interpreting material culture with respect to cultural history and the development of the discipline was discussed in Chapter 1. In 1958 McClung Fleming argued that for historians to consider documents in isolation was like “consulting only half of our memory of the past.”<sup>940</sup> The consideration of material culture may be desirable, but the example of the AGA cooker demonstrates that the analysis of artifacts is often challenging and limited by practical considerations. Artifacts are more than a set of aesthetic or design principles; they embody a relationship with the owner, the nature of which, I would argue, can only be known from personal testimony or through documentary evidence. American cultural historian Richard Grassby suggests that possessions have a personal symbolic value which may be difficult to define without documentary evidence. He offers a useful example: “Clothes in a drawer have no meaning, but when worn they become a uniform with social and moral implications.”<sup>941</sup> The same could be said for an object in a kitchen drawer.

The ornate silver tea service which belonged to the Bright family at Beleura provides a useful illustration of these issues. These fine examples of English silverware are ideal for a formal McClung Fleming style analysis. However, no amount of information on the design or construction can reveal how or, indeed, if, these objects were actually used. While it is tempting to imagine them in use for vice-regal tea parties, it is possible that they were never

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<sup>940</sup> E. McClung Fleming, “Early American Decorative Arts as Social Documents,” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 45, No.2 (1958): 276.

<sup>941</sup> Richard Grassby, “Material Culture and Cultural History,” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 35, No. 4 (2005): 597.

used for their intended purpose and were merely for display.<sup>942</sup> There are no documents detailing teatime rituals at Beleura in the pre-Tallis era. These considerations aside, the fact that the Brights possessed these exquisite pieces says something about the family's status and aesthetic sense.

Similarly, the cattle run on the front lawn at Beleura could have been subjected to formal artifact evaluation leading to the conclusion that it is an excellent example of rustic Australian timber farm construction, designed to recommended practice. However, without the John Tallis diaries, the purpose of the cattle run would have been undervalued and the reassurance and satisfaction that the cow and calf gave Tallis during the turbulent Whitlam era would not have been appreciated.

It should be re-emphasized that Beleura is an unusual household and the existence of so many artifacts is a product of the long tenure that the Tallis family had at Beleura and the unusual circumstance of the contents of the house never having been dispersed. The affluence of the family no doubt had an influence on their collective decision not to sell Beleura after the death of Sir George in 1948. In relation to artifact collections, Grassby suggests, "Most goods that survive belonged to the rich or to public bodies."<sup>943</sup> With respect to their likelihood of survival, artifacts are no different to documents, which Henry Glassie argues belong only to the literate minority.<sup>944</sup> This leads to an inevitable conclusion that the interpretation of artifacts is ambiguous, unreliable and difficult to generalize. Grassby asserts, "Artifacts do not usually offer a clear message or even an adequate picture of everyday life. Their survival depends on so many random factors that no consistent body of rules can be established to judge their representativeness."<sup>945</sup>

Archaeologists are highly experienced in interpreting material culture. Shards of pottery and glass are the currency of this discipline and in the absence of other evidence they have provided much of our understanding of ancient cultures. The problem with gastronomic

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<sup>942</sup> Note: Anna Maria Bright was the daughter of Sir John Manners-Sutton, Governor of Victoria from 1866 to 1873. The vice-regal couple regularly stayed at Beleura with their daughter and son-in-law for summer holidays.

<sup>943</sup> Grassby, 597.

<sup>944</sup> Henry Glassie, "Meaningful Things and Appropriate Myths: The Artifact's Place in American Studies," *Prospects* 3 (1978): 32.

<sup>945</sup> Grassby, 597.

history is that food is temporary and leaves few remains. Beleura had its own archaeological dig several years ago when the original underground dome-topped water tanks were excavated. In the early twentieth century these tanks were used as a dump for household rubbish and the study uncovered many fragments of plates and other ceramic vessels. Apart from a fragment of an early Mickey Mouse saucer, perhaps a legacy of American Dorothy Tallis, and several pieces from glass jelly moulds, there was little to aid our understanding of culinary practices amongst the rubble.<sup>946</sup>

### **6.3 The problem with documents**

In support of artifact studies, Rathje argues that documents are only left by “powerful individuals” and this is certainly true at Beleura.<sup>947</sup> Documents may have come to the rescue in the case of the AGA cooker, but there are also practical issues with the use of certain documents, suggesting the need for caution. One of the reasons that the AGA reference was considered suspect, was the variability in the descriptions and inclusions in the estate valuations, making them appear to be rather unreliable documents. The diaries of John Tallis are very valuable resources for this thesis. However, there is an inevitable bias in the very personal nature of the entries which necessitates validation from other sources. In this thesis, the testimonies of people associated with Beleura were very important validating tools, although they raise other concerns about the fallibility and selectivity of memory. Continuing the theme of presence and absence, the conspicuous absence of diaries from Tallis in the 1960s and 1980s makes one wonder what they would have contained if they had existed and been lost or destroyed.

Specific to gastronomic histories, cookbooks also present problems as documents or indeed artifacts. An unannotated cookbook is of little value, as it is not known if it was actually used. While a battered cookbook would definitely indicate some use, a pristine volume may or may not have been used depending on the care of the owner. It may indicate an interest in matters culinary, but not much else beyond “armchair” cooking. Even a suspected food stain suggesting use may be misleading. In my close inspection of the Beleura cookbooks, a

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<sup>946</sup> Personal communication with Kate Moffatt, historical researcher at Beleura House & Garden, John Tallis Research Centre, 18 June 2015.

<sup>947</sup> Rathje, 10.

potential food stain could just as easily be foxing in an old book. One step up in usefulness is a cookbook with inserts or hand-written notes. There is a strong chance that such a text was used and individual recipes can often be identified even if the frequency of use is unknown. There are several of these in the Beleura collection. The hand compiled cookbook, such as that owned by Biddy Carnegie, or the folder of recipes compiled by John Tallis indicates a desire to use the recipes, even if, once again, this is not guaranteed. At the pinnacle of this hierarchy of cookbooks is the hand-written or typed recipe such as Dorothy Tallis's recipe cards. The effort needed to record these recipes suggests a strong desire to use them. In another category altogether are the lists of page numbered recipes from cookbooks used by John Sutherland in 1993. If only everyone was as considerate to the gastronomic researcher, but even with such certainty of use, several abbreviations that he used for cookbooks remain unresolved.

#### **6.4 An approach to artifact studies**

The value of artifacts to social and cultural history may lie more in the feelings and memories they evoke than in any intrinsic property that can be analysed in the object. Grassby observes, "Artifacts can convey a sensory perception of the past through sight, smell, touch, and texture."<sup>948</sup> Material culture can be used to "reconstruct the pattern of meanings, values and norms shared by members of society."<sup>949</sup> This objective is very much within the realm of what museum curators try to achieve in historic houses, recreating an era or the environment in which a particular person lived. It can be very effective in the kitchens and food preparation areas because food is so intimately associated with our daily lives. During the course of this project I have had the privilege of occasionally conducting guests through Beleura and I can testify to the power of material culture to convey domestic life experiences and enliven imaginations. So many of the artifacts in the Beleura kitchen areas are unfamiliar to modern homes, that their function can only be explained by viewing the object. To gaze upon the cast iron stove conjures the image of the hard-working cook, manipulating the oven flues to set the correct temperatures and heaving the heavy pots from the range top much more effectively than any document.

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<sup>948</sup> Grassby, 594.

<sup>949</sup> Grassby, 592.

Grassby poses the critical question: “Do goods possess intrinsic meaning or is culture responsible for creating it? Do people impose meanings on things or do they discover it in them? Can the study of artifacts be integrated with cultural theory?”<sup>950</sup> I argue that the study of material culture cannot stand alone; it is insufficient in itself without supporting documents. However, the combination of documents with material culture tends to reduce any inherent limitation in either form of historical evidence. The flexible, simplified approach to artifact evaluation used in this thesis has proven suitable for revealing gastronomic history, although it shares the limitation of more complex methodologies where supporting documentation is unavailable to provide verifying detail. No amount of analysis would reveal why, for instance, Sir George bought the Frigidaire refrigerator. It is doubtful that he used it himself, so was it to make life easier for the staff or was it an expensive status symbol? Perhaps he used it for midnight snacks after the theatre. The best we can hope for is to be able to use artifacts in order to empathize with the people of the day. One glance at the Jeffery’s Water Filter can allow us to grieve for the loss of a child to typhoid and the Murano glass can bring back happy memories of foreign travel. Artifacts allow us to engage our senses with history as well as our intellect. History scholar Karin Dannehl argues, “To pick up an artefact is to engage with the past on so direct and so immediate a level it approaches something magical. The experience of weight, surface texture, sound and smell are part of the physicality of objects.”<sup>951</sup>

Some artifacts at Beleura lend themselves to detailed evaluation, such as the Bright silver, but that is because of their very obvious artistic value. Other items do not require such treatment and with the number of artifacts available, selection for analysis remains problematic. While I believe the artifacts identified for detailed consideration in this thesis are significant in relation to the gastronomic history of Beleura, the same could be said for many other items not selected for analysis. There is no solution to this dilemma, but it makes research at Beleura a very special, but at times frustrating experience.

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<sup>950</sup> Grassby, 592.

<sup>951</sup> Karin Dannehl, “Object Biographies – From Production to Consumption,” in *History and Material Culture: A Student’s Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources*, edited by Karen Harvey, 130 (Abingdon, U.K.: Routledge, 2009).

## **CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSIONS ON CULINARY PRACTICES AT BELEURA**

The objective of this thesis was to produce a gastronomic history of Beleura, an Italianate mansion built from 1863 to 1865 at Mornington, Victoria. The house was built by James Butchart with money acquired from livestock sales to the Victorian goldfields. Owned by a succession of wealthy families, Beleura has been a family home, a summer retreat, a private school, a vice-regal residence and now a house museum and cultural centre. Beleura is significant not only for its grand architecture and majestic gardens, but also because of the Tallis family who owned the house for eighty years. John Tallis, the last owner of Beleura, bequeathed the property and all of its contents to the people of Victoria.

A major problem with constructing a gastronomic history of a household is the commonplace nature of eating and drinking. It is easily taken for granted and few people leave a written record of their grocery shopping, what they cooked or how they entertained. Not so at Beleura where individuals such as John Tallis, Alan Eustace and John Sutherland kept comprehensive records of these everyday activities. Why they kept such documents is a mystery, but these simple, unadorned documents provide valuable insights into domestic life in a grand house in Australia in the mid to late twentieth century. In most households, material culture relevant to gastronomic history is also usually limited, as kitchens and their appliances are regularly updated. Once again, Beleura is unusual because the evolution of kitchen design across the nineteenth to twentieth centuries can be seen in the five kitchens that grace the house. The location and function of other food related service areas can also still be determined. While there is an abundance of material culture and documents at Beleura relating to gastronomy, these resources are not evenly distributed across the eras and so the extent to which we can ascertain the household's gastronomic history is variable, at times very detailed, but often incomplete or non-existent.

A defining difference between Beleura and less elaborate houses has been the enduring presence of paid domestic staff throughout its history. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century in most developed countries, middle-class homes were defined by a reliance on servants, who performed the majority of household chores until after World War I. After this tumultuous period, the majority of servants found work in newly emerging factories more

attractive and rewarding. Not so at Beleura, where paid domestic workers were present right up until the death of John Tallis in 1996, although in his later years, their role had become more carers than servants. The Tallis family appeared to have a benevolent attitude to their staff with many staying for years in service and moving from one Tallis home to another. Clearly the wealth and status of all of the families who owned Beleura through the course of its history influenced significantly the social relationships and cultural practices within the household including those relating to food. Wealth also allowed the owners of Beleura to be early adopters of new cooking, food preparation and storage technology, whether it be the cast iron closed fire range in the 1880s, the Frigidaire refrigerator in the 1920s or an AGA high efficiency cooker in the 1930s. A new electric stove was also installed in the late 1930s, but electric cooking would probably have been embraced at Beleura much earlier if mains electricity connection had spread to outer Melbourne and rural areas more quickly. Technological innovation was perhaps less obvious post-World War II, but John Tallis regularly purchased the latest trend in small electrical kitchen appliances such as blenders, juicers, egg cookers, bread makers and even a pasta machine.

Within the structure of Beleura evidence can be found for all of the major transitions that occurred in the design of kitchens and associated work areas from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. Footings under the present French kitchen suggest a previous detached kitchen from when Beleura was first built. With open hearth fireplaces, kitchens were separated from the main house to prevent fires. Kitchens were able to move in under the roof of the main house with the invention of the closed fire range. At Beleura, the 1880s French kitchen with its centrally placed closed range is a very typical example of a late Victorian-era kitchen space, located out of sight at the rear of the house. It was and still is surrounded by a nest of rooms with specific functions such as the butler's pantry, larder, pantry and scullery. This servant domain is separated from the family area by a green baize door, a familiar feature found in similar houses. The butler's pantry itself bears some evidence of the next major transformation that occurred to many kitchen spaces. Under the influence of the domestic science movement that helped housewives to cope with the loss of servants after World War I, the Victorian-era suite of food storage and preparation rooms collapsed into just one and kitchen shelving, benches and cupboards were redesigned to improve work efficiency. At Beleura these changes were kept to a minimum, as the butler's pantry largely continued its



Victorian-era function. During the 1920s, the butler's pantry began a transition into a small kitchen with its chic cream and green colour scheme and the installation of newly developed electrical appliances, with pride of place going to the Frigidaire refrigerator and Moffat electric stove. Sir George and Lady Tallis were regular visitors to the United States and were no doubt influenced by the latest domestic technology that they encountered on their travels. Later house design trends in Australia, such as the transformation of the kitchen into a central living and family area, can also be seen at Beleura in the design and placement of the new kitchen that John Tallis had built within an old bathroom in the 1950s. This kitchen was painted in a very fashionable blue and white colour scheme and was designed as a compact galley with servery access into the adjoining sunroom, a feature common at the time. While there were no children at Beleura post-World War II, this new kitchen was at the centre of John Tallis's social life, with many a party spilling out onto the adjacent terrace and into the neighbouring music room.

As befitting a rural property, a large proportion of food consumed at Beleura throughout its history was sourced from its own gardens, orchards and pastures. This was a necessity in its early years, as Mornington was relatively remote from the markets of Melbourne. Perishable food was stored in the cool larder and dry goods in the pantry. Pre-refrigeration, meat was preserved by pickling and an early valuation inventory from Beleura included a pickling tub. In the Tallis era, production of food was more a hobby than a necessity, with Sir George taking great pride in his prize winning beef cattle and his Beleura branded apples. Even in the modern era, John Tallis enjoyed serving his guests a wide assortment of vegetables from the garden. His cow however, was more for show than for milk, although he had the comfort of knowing that he could survive any threatened dairy shortage during the dreaded Whitlam years. By the 1950s Mornington had become a thriving local business centre and most fresh produce and groceries would have been available. John Tallis combined local food purchases with weekly orders delivered to Beleura from the Melbourne Myer Food Hall. Tallis retained the invoices for these goods, creating an unusual record of his food preferences in the 1950s and 1960s, revealing a somewhat exotic mix of luxury processed and packaged foods, mostly from the United Kingdom and Europe. These orders appeared to cease in 1966 and most food was thereafter sourced locally.

In the introduction to this thesis I posed the question, was food at Beleura all champagne and caviar or something simpler? The answer should be a non-committal, yes and no. There is little evidence of what was actually cooked at Beleura until the 1950s. There is only one recipe from the nineteenth century associated with the house, copied in 1875 from a ship's cook by the Hon. Mrs Bright, the wife of the second owner of Beleura. She wrote with enthusiasm to her parents about the recipe, suggesting that it may have been passed on to the Beleura cook. Consequently, a simple mutton "Hot Pot" may have been on the menu at some meals. No doubt, on other occasions, the menu would have been rather more elaborate, but we have no evidence that would confirm this supposition. During the 1930s there is testimony from several sources to confirm formal dinner parties at Beleura, but once again no detail of any menus. We may gain some insight into the foods potentially cooked from a set of hand-typed recipe cards that belonged to American born Dorothy Tallis, who helped to manage the Beleura household after the death of Lady Tallis in 1933. If these recipes were typical, then the style was simple and wholesome, following the British tradition with some uniquely American influences. In the 1950s, Alan Eustace who cooked regularly for his friend John Tallis at Beleura, recorded many of his meals in a small notebook. These hand-written menus and lists of recipes, all mostly written in French, suggest that this short period was a time when the champagne and caviar proposition may in fact have been valid. John Tallis and his circle of friends enjoyed dining in European style, consistent with the trend at the time in Australia of regarding French cuisine in particular as the pinnacle of sophistication. It was a time when Elizabeth David and later Julia Child were teaching the world about French and Mediterranean cooking. Tallis and some of his friends had recently visited Europe and they, along with many other Australians, were embracing new food experiences in a post-war period of economic prosperity and growing cultural diversity.

As John Tallis grew older his tastes appear to have become simpler. While he continued to employ housekeepers and sometimes friends as cooks, his diaries from the 1970s also show that he regularly cooked simple meals for himself. His favourites were dishes like Irish stew, Chicken a la King, Salmon Kedgerree, roast leg of lamb, corned beef, Osso Bucco and Steak Diane. Later, Tallis came to rely more on pre-prepared meals from local delicatessens and meals cooked for him by live-in staff. John Sutherland was housekeeper and cook at Beleura from 1978 and recorded in a notebook recipe references for dishes that he cooked in 1993.

Relying on a range of contemporary and classic cookbooks, Sutherland's notebook includes French recipes, Italian dishes, Greek and traditional British fare, providing a very comprehensive picture of food at Beleura at this time. There are no recipes showing any Asian influence, which is somewhat out of step with Australian food culture of this period. Tallis had a long-term love of all things Italian and one of the expressions of this influence was his abiding passion for risotto. Right up until his death in 1996, he never ceased searching for the perfect risotto and went to considerable trouble to source the best Arborio rice for his cooks. A collection of stove-top espresso makers at Beleura also shows an Italian influence at work in the kitchen. In his diary, Tallis often complained about the drudgery of household tasks including cooking, but I argue that he showed an above average awareness and interest in good food, demonstrated by the wide range of cookbooks on the shelves at Beleura and the frequent visits that he made to many of Melbourne's more famous restaurants of the period.

An unexpected outcome from this project has been personal confirmation of the strong interest that visitors to historic properties have in the food that was served in these settings. Perhaps it is the recent deluge of media interest in food and cooking, but visitors warm quickly to any discussion of the historical context of food and are ready to relate their own family food histories. Kitchen artifacts are excellent aids to discussion, usually eliciting comments such as, "I remember my mother/grandmother using one of those when I was a child." One seminar that I conducted included an invitation for attendees to bring along their family cookbooks and I was deluged with bulging cookery scrapbooks and food stained texts. Food memories are persistent and cherished. Megan Elias argues that knowing what people ate in historic sites helps to "humanize the absent figures of the past."<sup>952</sup> It is hoped that visitors to Beleura can appreciate something of the character and life style of John Tallis and earlier owners of the house through this means.

Most accounts of historic houses or house museums pay limited attention to culinary practices. Recipe books from such properties are relatively common, but the broader concerns of gastronomy are rarely considered. This thesis has demonstrated that the systematic study of food, its sourcing, storage, preservation, cooking and serving, can be an effective conduit through which to reveal not only gastronomic history but also technological, social and

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<sup>952</sup> Megan Elias, "Summoning Food Ghosts: Food History as Public History," *The Public Historian* 34, No.2 (2012): 13.

cultural history. Architectural history can also be enhanced by scholarly consideration of the evolving layout of the kitchens, pantries and other service areas of a dwelling, be it large or small. In so doing, acknowledgement can be given to the activities of the housekeepers, scullery maids, butlers, cooks and housewives who provided for the daily needs of the occupants of the household.

Perhaps a graphic way to sum up the food served at Beleura would be to imagine a menu that typifies the style of the house and its owners. There is little doubt that the meal must start with one of Lady Tallis's "legendary" pre-dinner martinis, ideally served on the terrace. The entrée would be Alan Eustace's so-called Beleura pâté, minestrone soup or perhaps avocado with crab meat. Main course would have to be John Tallis's "inimitable" Irish stew, served with a selection of seasonal vegetables from the Beleura garden. Dessert would be Eustace's spectacular orange soufflé or a simple baked rice pudding followed by coffee from a stove-top espresso pot. Australian wines would be served throughout, but French champagne would be ideal with dessert.

This imaginary menu is not a decadent meal and there is nothing here that you could not find in a more typical middle-class home. The Beleura meal may be simple, but it would be memorable because of the elegant surroundings in which it is served, the first-class crockery and table ware and the delightful musical accompaniment of John Tallis and his talented friends. If this all seems too much, then afternoon tea could be served in the garden from a very elegant auto tray, shelves groaning under the plates of cakes and scones, tea and coffee. The sound of lawn bowls softly clinking can be heard in the distance and the call of "Game, set and match" from the tennis court.

## APPENDICES

### a. List of owners of Beleura and dates of occupancy

- James Butchart 1862–1870



*Figure 66. James Butchart*  
*Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection*

- Charles Edward Bright 1870–1888 (Beleura leased to Benjamin T. Paine Backhouse for Mornington Grammar School 1881–1882 and to Caleb Joshua Jenner 1883–1888)



*Figure 67. Charles Edward Bright*  
*Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection*

- The Hon. Caleb Joshua Jenner 1888–1899



*Figure 68. The Hon. Caleb Joshua Jenner*  
*Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection*

- Robert Smith 1899–1911



*Figure 69. Robert Smith*  
*Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection*

- William Ernest Albert Edwick 1911–1915
- Syndicate of John Hill, Mary Williams and John Inglis 1915–1916 (property subdivided as Beleura on the Sea estate)
- George and Amelia Tallis 1916–1948
- Jack (John) Tallis 1948–1996
- The Tallis Foundation 1996–present<sup>953</sup>

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<sup>953</sup> Nigel Lewis and Richard Aitken, *Beleura Conservation Plan* (Melbourne: Nigel Lewis and Richard Aitken Pty Ltd, 1999).

**b. Room numbering and description system for Beleura**

1. Sir George's bedroom	26. Linen cupboard
2. Sir George's bathroom	27. Winter garden
3. Melba's bathroom	28. Box room
4. Vestibule 2	29. Verandah
5. John Tallis study	30. Entrance verandah
6. Melba's bedroom	31. Annex verandah
7. Long hall	32. Laundry
8. Drawing room	33. Annex kitchen
9. Entrance hall	34. Annex bathroom
10. Dining room	35. Annex sitting room
11. John Tallis music room	36. Annex sitting room
12. John Tallis bedroom	37. Annex bedroom
13. John Tallis library	38. Annex balcony
14. Vestibule 1	39. Annex balcony
15. Guest bedroom large	40. Courtyard
16. Guest bathroom	41. Small flat lounge
17. Guest bedroom small	42. Small flat kitchen
18. Working kitchen	43. Small flat sitting room
19. French kitchen	44. Small flat living room
20. Larder	45. Small flat bedroom
21. French breakfast room	46. Small flat bathroom
22. John Tallis sunroom	47. Small flat bathroom
23. John Tallis kitchen	48. Carport
24. John Tallis bathroom	49. Workshop
25. Store room	50. Office

*Table 2. Complete room numbering and description system for Beleura*

Current room descriptions consistent with the Beleura House & Garden, John Tallis Research Centre cataloguing system and room numbering system according to the Beleura Conservation Plan, Existing Floor Plan (Figure 7 in this thesis) <sup>954</sup>

<sup>954</sup> Lewis and Aitken, 36.

### c. Dorothy Tallis's recipe cards

The 43 hand-typed recipe cards that purportedly belonged to Dorothy Tallis include recipes in the following categories:

Sauces and dressings – Chili sauce, mayonnaise salad dressing, French salad dressing, apple sauce, white sauce, maitre d' Hotel butter, tomato sauce, sauce tartare, mint sauce

Soup – Brown soup stock

Preserves – Grape conserve, orange marmalade

Bread and pastry – Waffles, bread (quick process)

Light meals – Welsh rarebit, cheese souffle, omelette

Seafood main meals – Oyster stew, sauté oysters, broiled fish, baked fish

Meat main meals – Liver, heart, sweetbreads, creamed sweetbreads, sweetbread cutlets, roast beef, lamb or mutton, broiled porterhouse steak, baked stuffed chicken, veal cutlet, pressed veal, Swiss steak, baked hash, beef stew, pot roast

Fruit confections and candy – Stuffed dates, stuffed prunes, fondant

Cakes – Muffins, griddle cakes, white sponge cake or angel food, sponge cake, plain cake, cake frosting

Desserts – Grape fruit in half shell, fruit cocktail, baked apple

Ices and sherbets - Ice cream, French ice cream, lemon ice, orange ice, fruit ice

Beverages – Chocolate, cocoa paste for iced chocolate, coffee, tea, cocoa, fruit punch, lemonade

Menu 1. Plate dinner – roast beef, browned potatoes, buttered cauliflower, bread & butter.

Menu 2. Plate dinner – porterhouse steak, potatoes, spinach, bread & butter

Menu for Wednesday, 21 February 1928 – veal chops, potato puffs, bread & butter, relish.

Table cover for hostess – menu 21 February 1928 <sup>955</sup>

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<sup>955</sup> 43 hand- typed recipe cards. Beleura House & Garden Collection.



#### **d. List of cookbooks in the Beleura kitchens**

Cookbooks are distributed across four of the five kitchens at Beleura and the following list is grouped according to where they currently reside. Those specifically referenced in this thesis are listed with full publication details in the Bibliography.

##### **Working kitchen**

Australian Women's Weekly. *Menu Planner* (1992)  
Berry, Mary. *Popular French Cookery* (1972)  
Cannon, Poppy. *Unforbidden Sweets* (1958)  
Dyer, Sarah. *A Pocket Book of Herbs* (1982)  
Fowlers Vacola. *Fowlers Method of Bottling Fruits and Vegetables* (20<sup>th</sup> Revised Edition)  
*GEC Cookery and Instruction Book for the Use with Electric Cookers* (1955)  
Kaufman, William. *French Dinner Party* (1971)  
Kaufman, William. *Indian Curry Dinner Party* (1971)  
Kaufman, William. *West Indian Dinner Party* (1971)  
Philipson, Wendy. *Romertopf Cooking is Fun* (1971)  
Pomiane, Edouard de. *Cooking in Ten Minutes* (1948)  
Sanitarium. *Make it So Good – The Healthy Alternative to Milk* (1995)  
Soyer, Nicolas. *Soyer's Standard Cookery* (1912 edition)

##### **French kitchen**

Beeton, Isabella. *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management*. (1907 edition)  
Bloomfield, Pip and Annie Mehra. *The Gourmet Barbeque* (1985)  
Bugialli, Guiliano. *The Taste of Italy* (1985)  
Dunne, Sarah. *Party, Cocktail and Buffet Recipes* (No.5)  
Hamman, Mary (Ed). *Life Picture Cookbook* (1958)  
Horsely, Janet. *Sugar Free Cookbook* (1983)  
Howells, Marion. *Popular Italian Food* (1972)  
*Irish Cooking* (1991)  
Jones, Bridget. *The Book of Claypot Cooking* (1993)  
McCulloch, Norma. *Deep Freeze Cookery* (1971)  
Slattery, Geoff. *Good Food No Fuss* (1994)  
Sutherland-Smith, Beverley (Ed). *Cork, Fork and Ladle* (1975)  
Varnom, John. *French Bistro Cooking* (1988)  
White, Osmar. *Guide and Directory to Australian Wine* (1972)

##### **Annex kitchen**

Burkitt, Denis. *Don't Forget Fibre in Your Diet* (1979)  
Davies, Derek. *Foods of the Orient – Japan and Korea* (1979)  
Dunstan, Don. *Don Dunstan's Cookbook* (1976)  
Fulton, Margaret. *Superb Restaurant Dishes* (1982)  
Gippsland Schools. *Is Emu on the Menu* (1981)  
Hill, Margaret. *The Pampas Pastry Cookbook* (1981)  
Hodgson, Moira. *The Quick and Easy Rawfood Cookbook* (1971)  
Hudson, Margaret. *The Mixer Book* (1972)  
Klingenberg, Sigurd, Carlos Zalapa, Frank Keane, John Walker and Ted Moloney. *Oh for a Man Who Cooks* (1957)

Mallos, Tess. *Greek Cookbook* (1976)  
 Mason, Anne. *Cook a Good Dinner* (Undated)  
 Reader's Digest. *The Cookery Year* (1974)  
 Ringrose, Helen. *Poly Unsaturated Cookery* (1974)  
 Girardet, Fredy. *The Cuisine of Fredy Girardet* (1987)  
*The Gourmet Cookbook* (1955)  
 Time-Life. *Foods of the World* (British Isles, Germany and Latin America)  
 Verge, Roger. *Cuisine of the Sun* (1979)

### **Small flat kitchen**

Blackman, Grant. *Australian Fish Cooking* (1978)  
 Bosi, Leone. *Italian Desserts and Pastries* (1974)  
 Cantrell, Rose. *Polish Cooking* (1978)  
 Gaté, Gabriel. *French Cuisine for Australians* (1981)  
 Goode, John. *World Guide to Cooking with Fruit and Vegetables* (1973)  
 Larmouth, Jeanine and Roberta Wolfe. *The Passionate Palate* (1975)  
 Mitchell, Kenneth. *The Flavour of Singapore* (1973)  
*New Larousse Gastronomique* (1977)  
 Russell, Sue. *Cooking for Two* (1971)  
*Step by Step Cooking – Soups and Sauces* (1978)  
 Sutherland-Smith, Beverley. *A Taste for All Seasons* (1978)  
 Time-Life. *Foods of the World* (India, Vienna's Empire, Italy, Spain and Portugal, Scandinavia, America)  
 Willan, Anne. *Great Cooks and their Recipes* (1977)



Figure 70. A selection of John Sutherland's cookbooks  
 Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland

**e. List of preserved grocery items on the shelves in the larder (room 20)**

Food items on the larder shelves are those in stock at the time of John Tallis's death in December 1996. Contents have been removed to preserve packets and tins.

**Tins:**

Baxter's Scottish partridge  
SPC baked beans  
John West asparagus  
Edgell green beans  
Windsor Farm asparagus  
Raynard & Roquelaure midnight cheese soup with onions  
Campbell's Soup – split pea & ham, tomato, vegetable, cream of asparagus, cream of celery  
SPC tropical fruit salad  
SPC peaches  
Heinz apples  
McKenzie's baking powder  
Socomin vegetables  
Sanitarium nutmeat  
Yeos Singapore hot curry sauce  
Sugodoro Italian-style sauce  
Hengstenberg sauerkraut  
Sleutel's spinach  
Huile bamboo shoots  
Tang Chun bamboo shoots  
Cica pomarola spaghetti sauce  
Kon Tiki chowder  
Seakist chunky tuna  
Seakist mackerel  
Chatka crab meat  
Maori Chief whitebait  
Fancifoods whitebait  
Pecks butter clams  
John West Scottish sardines  
Alpha Creek Halva  
Heinz Big Red tomato soup  
Hamper Lite corned beef  
SPC crushed tomatoes  
Edgell baby peas  
Plumrose cocktail frankfurts  
No knead baker's yeast  
Edgell mushrooms  
Sleutel's Bruine Bonen  
Lindsay sliced olives  
Watties spaghetti  
La Gina diced tomatoes  
Masterfood's liverwurst spread  
El Divino tomato paste

Cadbury cocoa  
Kings rich old English fruit cake  
Walker's shortbread  
Famous Amos chocolate chip cookies  
Carnation evaporated milk  
Nestle sweetened condensed milk  
Sunshine instant milk powder  
Ensure Plus – high calory liquid nutrition – vanilla  
Twinings camomile tea  
Continental chicken stock  
Nestle Milo  
Keen's curry powder  
Keen's mustard powder  
Cavendish assorted biscuits for cheese  
Taylors of Harrogate Yorkshire Tea  
Twinings lapsang souchong tea  
Robert Jackson & Co Russian tea  
Fortnum and Mason Dargeeling tea  
Else & Niels Brinch orange pekoe tea  
McKenzie Spices – nutmeg, cumin, pepper, mixed spice, mace, minced onion, dried parsley

**Packets:**

Candy Lane glucose barley sugar  
White Wings plain flour  
McKenzie cream of tartar  
Cooking salt  
Gourmet House wild rice  
O-So-Lite easy flo instant mixing flour for gravies and sauces  
Betta original cone cups  
Continental cup-a-soups, beef, tomato, chicken noodle, cream of chicken, pea and ham, cream of mushroom  
Jessica Walker hand made chocolates  
Houghton's plum pudding  
Roberto's espresso coffee  
Purdey's fruit pudding  
Kookaburra macaroni  
Sunrice Arborio rice  
San Remo spaghetti  
Maggi spaghetti  
Tandaco dry yeast  
San Remo instant lasagne  
San Remo fusilli  
Carman's muesli  
Sanitarium wheat bix  
Unibic sponge fingers  
Kellogg's corn flakes  
Candini croutons  
Caffé Aurora coffee beans

Tipiak polenta  
Parson's custard powder  
Abundant Earth buckwheat pancake mix  
Oetker custard powder  
Tandaco prepared suet mix  
Panni potato dumpling mix  
Knoll's potato dumpling mix  
Oxo beef stock cubes  
Carr's assorted biscuits for cheese  
Madura green tea  
Lipton Royal Ceylon tea  
Robur tea  
Ricola herb tea mix  
Herba linden flower tea  
Walker's Highland oatcakes  
Carr's table water crackers  
Roka cheese crispies  
Kitanihon rice crackers  
Grissol croutons

**Glass Jar/Bottles:**

Coca Cola  
Zapple sparkling apple juice  
Kirks tonic water  
Kirks dry ginger ale  
Kirks soda water  
Stock jars – semolina, self-raising flour, pearl barley, sultanas, white and brown sugar, icing sugar  
Pickled onions – home preserved, labelled "Mrs Beeton's recipe"  
Queen vanilla essence  
Bickford's black currant cordial  
Schweppes Duet orange and lemon cordial  
Superior soy sauce  
Aperitif Byrrh  
Brand's calf's foot jelly  
Lupi olive oil  
Wild about fruit – apple vinegar  
Veelman Diat Konfiture – raspberry/blackberry jam  
Assorted home made jams – quince, orange marmalade  
Macadamia Plantation macadamia nuts  
HP sauce  
Hain apple cider vinegar  
Schwartau caramel sauce  
Merrybud ginger topping  
White Crow tomato sauce  
Fountain mint sauce  
Baxter's green pepper jelly  
Cross and Blackwell mushroom ketchup

Hain's natural cucumber dill dressing  
 Hunza coconut pineapple juice  
 Reese pineapple syrup  
 Kraft cheese whiz  
 Lea and Perrins Worcestershire sauce  
 Lavazza espresso coffee  
 ETA peanut butter  
 Holbrook's beefshot  
 Kraft Bonox  
 Kraft vegemite  
 Promite

f. Sample page from Alan Eustace's notebook

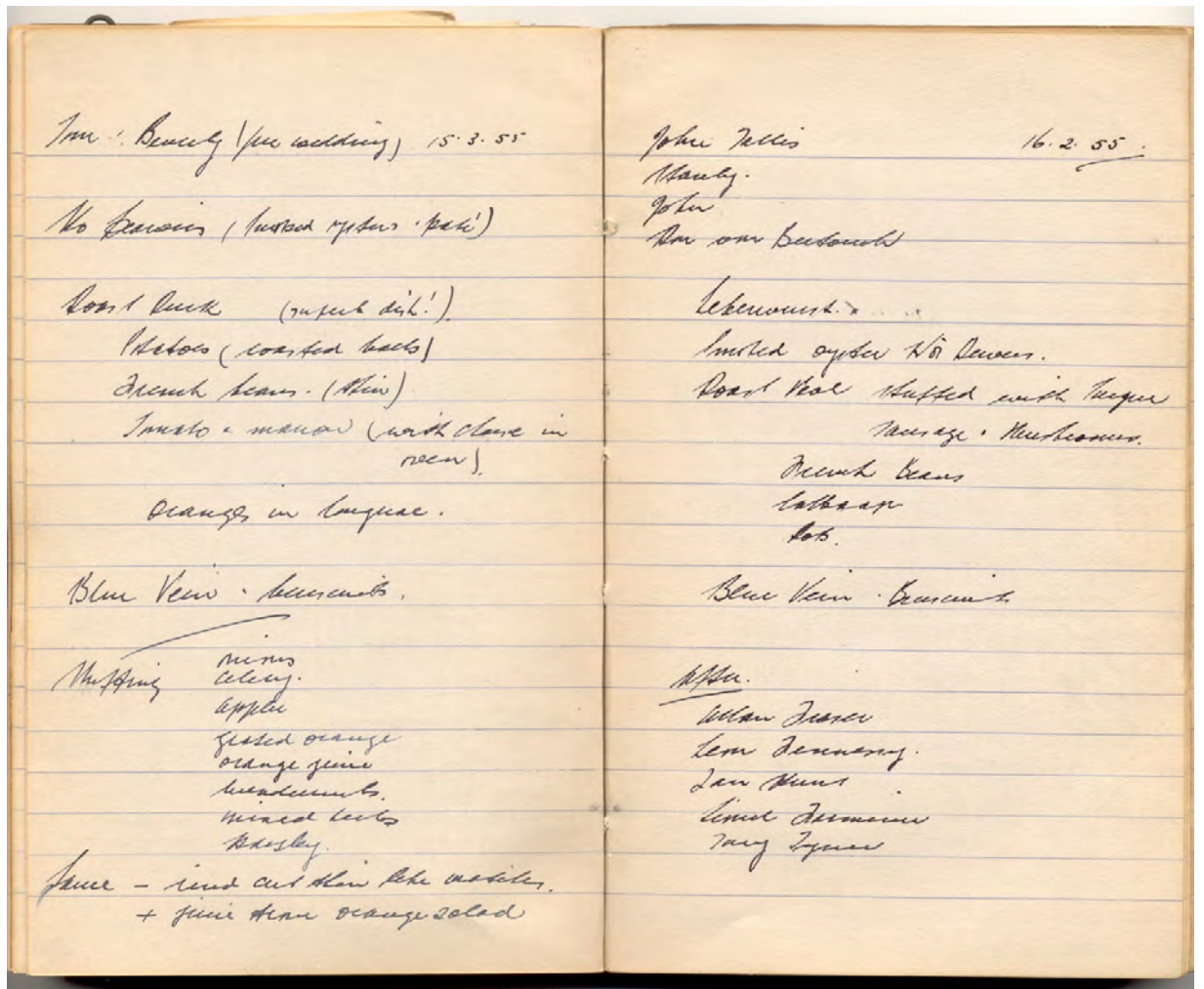


Figure 71. Dinner parties at Beleura, 16 February and 15 March 1955. Alan Eustace Notebook  
 Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection

g. Sample page from John Tallis diary

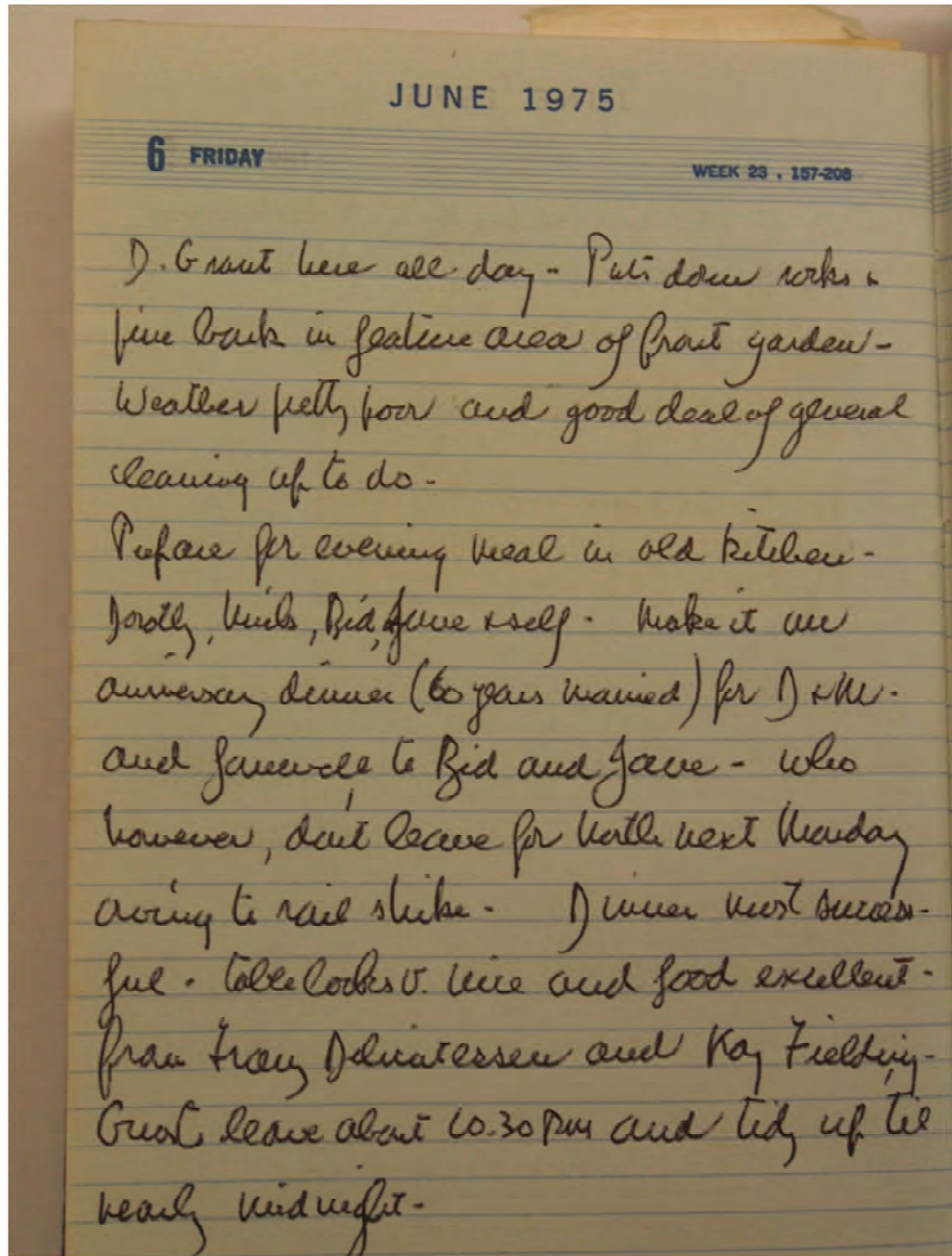


Figure 72. John Tallis diary entry 6 June 1975  
Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection

## **h. Beleura in twelve recipes**

The following brief selection of recipes is representative of food served at Beleura through the eras of ownership discussed in this thesis. All of the recipes are known to have been used at Beleura, mostly through documented references to cookbooks from Alan Eustace or John Sutherland and in some cases from the diaries of John Tallis. The recipes have been reproduced exactly as given in the referenced cookbooks including the original measuring units.

### **Minestrone Soup**

This can be made with all sorts of vegetables, the usual mixture being tomatoes, celery, carrots and onions, thinly sliced and first cooked slowly in just enough butter to cook them, for a quarter of an hour. Add a bouquet, a handful of macaroni or spaghetti broken in small pieces, water (allowing for reduction), salt and pepper, bring to the boil and simmer for half an hour. Serve with it Parmesan cheese.<sup>956</sup>

This soup was cooked at Beleura by Alan Eustace regularly during the 1950s. Most of his menus were strongly French influenced, so this soup may have been included in recognition of John Tallis's interest in Italy. It also would have been a good use of vegetables from the garden. The actual recipe is not known, but this one came from *The Best of Boulestin*, a favourite cookbook of Alan Eustace.

### **Pickled Onions (a very Simple method, and exceedingly Good)**

Ingredients: Pickling onions; to each quart of vinegar, 2 teaspoonfuls of allspice, 2 teaspoonfuls of whole black pepper.

Mode: Have the onions gathered when quite dry and ripe, and, with the fingers, take off the thin outer skin; then with a silver knife (steel should not be used, as it spoils the colour of the onions), remove one more skin, when the onion will look quite clear. Have ready some very dry bottles or jars, and as fast as they are peeled, put them in. Pour over sufficient cold vinegar to cover them, with pepper and allspice in the above proportions, taking care that each jar has its share of the latter ingredients. Tie down with bladder, and put them in a dry place, and in a fortnight they will be fit for use. This is a most simple recipe and very delicious, the onions being nice and crisp. They should be eaten within 6 or 8 months after being done, as the onions are liable to become soft.<sup>957</sup>

Despite modern refrigeration, John Tallis and his cooks frequently used more traditional food preservation methods. A search in the current larder found two preserved bottles of pickled onions labelled "Mrs Beeton recipe" suggesting that this famous volume, a feature of the French kitchen, was the source of the recipe.

### **Mushroom Stuffed Eggs**

Ingredients: 6 hardboiled eggs, 30g butter, 1 small white onion, finely chopped, 125g finely chopped mushrooms, 2 tablespoons white wine, little salt and pepper, 2 teaspoons mayonnaise, 1 tablespoon, cream.

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<sup>956</sup> Elvia Firuski and Maurice Firuski (Editors). *The Best of Boulestin* (New York: Greenberg, 1951), 55.

<sup>957</sup> Isabella Beeton, *Beeton's Book of Household Management* (London: Chancellor Press, 1982. Originally published as, *The Book of Household Management*. London: S.O. Beeton, 1861), 233.



Method: Cut eggs in half lengthwise, remove yolks and mash. Melt butter, add onion and cook until softened. Add mushrooms then white wine, salt and pepper and cook until all the liquid has gone and mushrooms are soft. Remove from the heat; add mayonnaise, cream and mix this with the mashed egg yolks. Fill into the whites and press together; the filling should be rather heaped.

Sauce, ingredients: 60g butter, 2 tablespoons plain flour, 2 cups of milk, ¼ teaspoon dry English style mustard, salt and pepper, 60g finely chopped gruyère cheese.

Sauce method: Melt butter; add flour; cook 1 minute until foaming. Add milk, seasonings and stir until boiling and thickened. Cook gently a couple of minutes. Remove from heat; add cheese and stir until melted. Check for seasoning. Pour a little sauce into a greased shallow ovenproof dish. Place eggs on top, cover with more sauce. Bake in a moderate oven, 180–190°C for 20 minutes until bubbling.<sup>958</sup>

John Sutherland prepared this recipe from a Beverley Sutherland-Smith book in 1993, a dish typical of the lighter style of food that John Tallis preferred in his later years. Tallis was very fond of egg dishes which were an essential part of the daily menu at Beleura.

### **Veal Terrine**

Line the bottom and sides of a mold with strips of bacon, overlapping them ever so slightly, Strew with: 1 tablespoon chopped parsley, 1 tablespoon chopped onion.

Pound very thin: 2 lbs veal scallops, cut in ¼ inch thick slices

In pounding the veal, use your mallet with a glancing action, as sketched, page 383, and the meat will not stick to it. Have ready: 2 lbs finely sliced ham, chicken or pork

Overlay the bacon with a layer of the thin pounded veal. Season it with: A grind of pepper, a pinch of thyme, a pinch of powdered bay leaf

Put down a layer of the thin-sliced ham. Continue to build layers of parsley and onion and veal, seasoning and ham. Cover the top with overlapping bacon strips. Pour about: A cup of white wine, a dash of brandy

Over the meat layers until all the crevices are filled with liquid. Set the pan in a larger pan of hot water. Bake at 300° about 2 hours or until done. As soon as you remove the meat from the oven, cover with heavy aluminum foil and weight the layers with a brick. When the meat has cooled a grease-covered jelly will have formed, which keeps the meat in prime condition. To serve, slice very thin. Use for hors d'oeuvre or as a main informal luncheon dish. Store refrigerated any that remains covered with clarified butter.<sup>959</sup>

John Sutherland also noted this recipe in his list of meals cooked in 1993. It came unusually from Irma S. Rombauer's *The Joy of Cooking*, one of only six recipes he recorded using that source. It is a rather labour intensive dish, but would suit the QPC meat press that can be seen in the working kitchen.

### **Irish Stew**

Cut up about two pounds of neck or mutton (either the middle or scrag end) and trim off the superfluous fat. Coat a stewpan with some clarified dripping and put in the onions, cut into rather thick slices, and the meat, and fry without browning for a quarter of an hour; then remove the meat and stir in the flour, and when mixed with the fat in the pan add about a pint

<sup>958</sup> Beverley Sutherland-Smith, *A Taste for All Seasons* (Sydney: Summit Books (Paul Hamlyn), 1978), 87.

<sup>959</sup> Irma S. Rombauer and Marion Rombauer Becker. *The Joy of Cooking* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1966), 435.

of warm water; replace the meat, cover the stewpan and put it into a moderately hot oven. Cut up some potatoes (about two pounds) into quarters, and two carrots, two turnips and a stick of celery into rather large dice shaped pieces, and after the stew has cooked for an hour put in the vegetables and let it simmer for another hour, or rather longer, according to the temperature of the oven. Dish up the meat in a circle with the carrot and turnip in the middle, and put the potatoes round the dish; add a tablespoon of finely minced parsley to the sauce, let it boil up, and pour it over the meat and vegetables.<sup>960</sup>

In a 1963 letter from John Tallis to Alan Eustace he referred to having made his “inimitable” Irish stew for a friend. It was a dish he recorded cooking many times. The exact recipe is unknown, but this version from *Soyer’s Standard Cookery* seems appropriate. This text belonged to the family and is now on the bench in the working kitchen.

### **Haddock Kedgeriee**

Ingredients: 500g smoked haddock, 2 hard boiled eggs, 1 cup rice, 90g butter, salt, pepper,  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup chopped parsley, 2 teaspoons lemon juice

Method: Cook rice in large quantity of boiling water until tender, 12-15 minutes; drain. Poach fish until tender. Shell and chop eggs. Melt butter in saucepan, add boned, flaked fish and rice. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Stir in chopped eggs, heat thoroughly. Add lemon juice and half the parsley; reserve remainder for garnish. Serves 4 as an entrée, or 2 as a main dish.

Salmon kedgeriee: Substitute 250g can of salmon for the haddock; drain and add with rice, to melted butter in pan, as above.<sup>961</sup>

Kedgeriee was a firm favourite of John Tallis. Denise Hassett, one time resident of Beleura, claims that she was responsible for showing Tallis how to prepare it for himself. The version that is recorded in the Tallis diaries uses tinned salmon rather than the more traditional smoked haddock. Once again, the exact recipe is not known but this version comes from the *Australian Women’s Weekly Cookbook*, a reference that was regularly used at Beleura.

### **Chicken a la King**

Ingredients: 1.5kg chicken, 1 small green pepper, 30g butter, 125g sliced mushrooms, 2 teaspoons grated onion, 1 tablespoon flour, salt, 1 cup milk or cream, 1 cup chicken stock, 3 egg yolks, 2 teaspoons lemon juice,  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon paprika,  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon celery salt, 2 tablespoons dry sherry

Method: Steam chicken until tender; remove meat from bones and cut into large dice or pieces. Remove pith and seeds from green pepper; blanch in boiling water 5 minutes. Drain and chop finely. Heat butter in saucepan, add green pepper, mushrooms and grated onion; sauté a few minutes. Sprinkle with flour and salt, cook, stirring, 2 minutes. Gradually blend in milk or cream and stock; add chicken. Stir over gentle heat until sauce thickens, simmer for 3 minutes. Stir a little of the sauce into beaten egg yolks, return to saucepan. Add lemon juice, paprika and celery salt. Reheat very gently, stirring, but do not allow to boil. Just before serving, stir in the sherry. Serves 4–6.<sup>962</sup>

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<sup>960</sup> Nicolas Soyer, *Soyer’s Standard Cookery* (London: Andrew Melrose, 1912), 168.

<sup>961</sup> Ellen Sinclair, *The Australian Women’s Weekly Original Cookbook* (Sydney: Golden Press Pty Ltd, 1977), 42.

<sup>962</sup> Sinclair, 82.

This was a typical dish of the 1970s and John Tallis records making it in his 1975 diary. He pronounced it as “successful”.<sup>963</sup> The recipe comes from the *Australian Women’s Weekly Cookbook*.

### **Risotto with Smoked Salmon**

Ingredients for 4 people: 400g Vialone Nano Ferron rice, 800g vegetable stock, 150g smoked salmon, 1 sprig rosemary, 60g butter, pepper, Caroli extra virgin olive oil, 1 tablespoon butter, 1 onion.

Method: Allow the butter to melt with the rosemary. Add the salmon which has been cut into small pieces. Add pepper and remove from the flame. In another saucepan, sauté some chopped onion in a little extra virgin olive oil. Toast the rice for 2–3 minutes, stirring often. Add the boiling vegetable stock, stir gently, cover and lower flame. Allow the rice to simmer gently for 17–18 minutes. Once cooked add a knob of butter, the salmon and stir gently. Serve hot.<sup>964</sup>

John Tallis was particularly fond of risotto and encouraged his various cooks to make it regularly for him. He arranged to be driven to Carlton in May, 1995 to visit the Italian food supplier Enoteca Sileno and returned to Beleura with some Arborio rice and a bundle of recipes. This was one of those recipes.

### **Soufflé d’Orange**

Squeeze the juice out of three oranges and chop very finely the skin of one, being careful to peel it very thin, so that there is no pith at all. Take a spoonful of potato flour (or ground rice), mix it well with the orange juice and a cup of milk, add sugar, bring to the boil, stirring well till it thickens to the consistency of an ordinary Béchamel sauce.

Add then the chopped orange skin and the yolks of two eggs, which you stir in well with a wooden spoon over a slow fire. When it is very thick put it to cool. After that add the whites of three eggs whipped to a stiff froth, put the mixture in a soufflé dish, buttered and sprinkled with sugar and cook like any soufflé for about twelve minutes. Five minutes before serving, sprinkle a little sugar on the soufflé in the oven.<sup>965</sup>

Alan Eustace was a very good cook and his notebook records him making an orange soufflé as dessert for a dinner party at Beleura on June 25, 1953. He pronounced this to have been his best dinner party, but I suspect that he may have exceeded this in later parties including one for visiting singer Anna Russell. The exact recipe is unknown but this one comes from his favourite Boulestin cookbook.

### **Bread and Butter Pudding**

Ingredients: 5–6 thin slices of bread and butter, 1–2 tablespoonfuls sugar, 1 pint milk, 1–2 tablespoonfuls sultanas, a little chopped candied peel, 1 egg

Method: Grease a 1 pint pie dish. Cut the bread and butter into neat triangles and arrange these in layers with the dried fruit and sugar. Beat the egg, add the milk and pour this over the bread. Leave to stand for ½ hour before baking, occasionally pressing the bread down into the milk

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<sup>963</sup> John Tallis Personal Diary – 1975. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>964</sup> “Risotto with Smoked Salmon” recipe sheet supplied by Enoteca Sileno, Melbourne. Beleura House & Garden Collection.

<sup>965</sup> Firuski, 305.

with the back of a spoon. Dust with sugar before cooking. Use the third runner from the top and bake at 400–425 for 40 minutes.<sup>966</sup>

John Tallis preferred simple food. Desserts tended towards the classic British puddings and there is nothing more typical than bread and butter pudding. This recipe comes from a 1950s GEC electric cooker instruction book, which contains John Tallis's hand-written notes in places suggesting use. John Sutherland also made this recipe from the same book in 1993 indicating that it was a firm favourite.

### **Baked Rice Pudding**

Ingredients: ½ cup rice, ¼ cup castor sugar or brown sugar, 2½ cups milk, 30g butter, ½ teaspoon vanilla

Method: Place all ingredients except butter in a lightly greased ovenproof dish; stir to combine. Dot with butter. Bake in moderately slow oven 55–60 minutes.<sup>967</sup>

Continuing the classic pudding theme, John Sutherland recorded making rice pudding on several occasions in 1993 and on his well-used copy of the *Australian Women's Weekly Cookbook*, "Rice Pudding" is written on the front cover. It clearly was a popular dish.

### **Champagne Cocktail**

Ingredients: 1 white sugar cube, 1–2 dashes Angostura bitters, 1 measure of brandy, 4 measures of chilled Champagne, orange wheel to decorate (standard bar measure 25ml)

Method: Put the sugar cube into a chilled Martini glass or champagne flute and saturate with the bitters. Add the brandy, then top up with the chilled Champagne. Decorate with an orange wheel and serve.<sup>968</sup>

While it is tempting to include a martini recipe in honour of Lady Tallis, John Tallis often made champagne cocktails for special occasions, recording the events in his diary. They were served at his last birthday on 15 December 1996. French Champagne was preferred.

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<sup>966</sup> *GEC Cookery and Instruction Book for the use with Electric Cookers* (London: The General Electric Co. Ltd, 1955), 49.

<sup>967</sup> Sinclair, 212.

<sup>968</sup> *The Classic Cocktail Bible* (London: Octopus Publishing Group, 2012), 166.

### i. The Beleura garden

This thesis has been concerned with changing culinary practices at Beleura and an important element of food provision has been the garden. A garden has been a feature of Beleura since it was first built. The sale notice following the death of James Butchart in 1869 included a comment on what would have been a fledgling garden: “The grounds around the dwelling house are most tastefully laid out and are in strict keeping with the elegant structure which they surround.”<sup>969</sup> When the house was sold again after the death of Caleb Jenner in 1890, the advertisement noted a more developed garden: “25 acres are laid out as garden, stocked with the choicest flowers, plants and shrubs, fruit and vegetable gardens, and well grassed paddocks.”<sup>970</sup> The garden has always been a mixture of decorative features, fruit and vegetables.

When Sir George Tallis purchased Beleura in 1916 he progressively acquired 2000 acres of surrounding land. Lady Tallis established a vegetable garden, with the intention of the family being self-sufficient in fruit and vegetables whenever they were in residence. Sir George was more interested in his Ayrshire cattle and fruit orchards.<sup>971</sup> Various decorative features of the garden created during Sir George’s ownership were designed by Edna Walling and Harold Desbrowe-Annear. The Tallis family often used the garden for entertaining and enjoyed eating outdoors. The garden was also used occasionally for theatrical productions (Figure. 73)



*Figure 73. Beleura vegetable garden c.1930s  
Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection*

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<sup>969</sup> “Preliminary Notice, Beleura Schnapper Point,” *Argus*, December 31, 1869, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>970</sup> “Important Sale of Valuable Freehold Properties in Mornington,” *Argus*, November 13, 1890, via Trove, <http://trove.nla.gov.au>

<sup>971</sup> Kate Philip and Anthony Knight, *The Garden at Beleura – Garden Tour Guiding Notes* (Mornington: Beleura House & Garden, 2009), 19.



Figure 74. Ballet production at Beleura in 1928 by students from Weber & Rice Health College  
Source: Beleura House & Garden Collection

After the death of Sir George and the agreement within the family that youngest son John Tallis would take over the property, development of the garden continued, but in a rather different style. Tallis travelled to Italy in 1953 and was clearly inspired by the gardens and houses that he visited. In letters home he compared Beleura favourably with Italian villas and when he returned to Australia, he began to transform Beleura's gardens into a more overt Italian style. Anthony Knight, Director of Beleura House & Garden, met Tallis on many occasions and has summarised his garden philosophy as, "little mention is made of plants, much is made of the concept of the central axial vista – of sculpture, garden ornament and trees, in particular lemon scented gums, pines and cypresses. He wrote of water, fountains, a hidden temple, a summer house and a kitchen garden. In essence – The Italian Paradise Garden."<sup>972</sup> These features remain part of the garden today and have been expanded by The Tallis Foundation in keeping with the style that John Tallis initiated.

Visitors to Beleura today can enjoy not only tours of the house and garden, but also attend a range of lectures, opera productions and musical performances. In this way, John Tallis's wish that Beleura should become a centre for the arts has been faithfully fulfilled. Knight concludes, "And so one must see Beleura and its garden as a theatre of the past where a vanished world is inhabited, not by people like you and me, but by people who acquire an aura of mystery, a patina, by dint of their becoming part of the fabric of their house."<sup>973</sup>

<sup>972</sup> Kate Philip and Anthony Knight, 5.

<sup>973</sup> Anthony Knight, *Beleura Mornington: A Theatre of the Past* (Mornington: The Tallis Foundation, 2009), 24.



*Figure 75. Japanese Garden at Beleura  
Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland*



*Figure 76. Lady Tallis Rose Garden  
Source: Photograph by Iain Buckland*

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*Figure 77. Picnic on the front lawn at Beleura 1930s. Bidy and John Tallis on the left, Dorothy Tallis right.  
Note early Cona coffee maker on the table  
Source: Collection of Beleura House & Garden*