

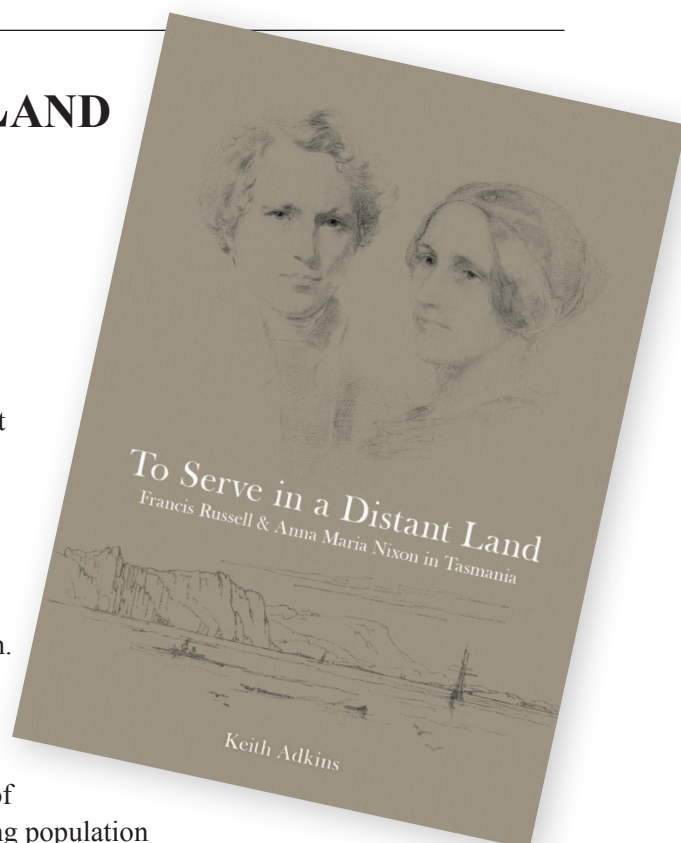


TO SERVE IN A DISTANT LAND

**Bishop Francis Russell Nixon
and Anna Maria Nixon
the Tasmanian years 1843–1863**

by **KEITH ADKINS**

Francis Russell Nixon (1803–79) was appointed as the first Anglican Bishop of Tasmania (then Van Diemen's Land) in 1842, and arrived in the island colony the following year. He served in that role until 1863 when ill-health forced his retirement. His period of office coincided with the final decade of the convict system and the subsequent growth of the free colony, and the decline of the Aboriginal population. Clerical issues were dominated by the hitherto inadequate provision of religious services to the convicts, by tensions between factions within his own denomination and the differences of opinion concerning the status of the Church of England in the colony, and by the need to supply the growing population with churches, priests and educational facilities.



Nixon was a cultured and educated man, with a special personal interest in art which was shared by his wife, **Anna Maria née Woodcock**. They were key figures in colonial art, both as artists in their own right and in the promotion of drawing and painting in particular. The Bishop was also an early amateur photographer, and his well known images of the exiled Aborigines then living at Oyster Cove are a valuable record of their captivity. He is also well known to historians for his missionary voyage to the Aboriginal–European community in the Bass Strait islands, published as *The Cruise of the Beacon* in 1857.

This account of the Nixons' twenty years in Tasmania examines the Bishop's role as the colony's leading churchman, as well as telling the personal stories of the couple and their family, enlivened by reference to a large body of correspondence sent by Anna Maria to her relatives in England. Their contribution to art in the colony is described and a large number of the couple's artworks are brought together for the first time, with over forty of their works reproduced, along with several images of themselves by other leading artists.

KEITH ADKINS graduated from the University of Tasmania with First Class Honours in 1996 for his dissertation *Wynkyn de Worde: successor to the Caxton Press*; and was awarded a PhD in 2004 by the same institution for his work on the history of books and reading in Tasmania. He is the author of *Reading in Colonial Tasmania: the early years of the Evandale Subscription Library*, published in 2010.

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