



Page from the 'W' section showing the spurious entry titled *The Probable Origin & Antiquity of the Natives of NS Wales* (1846) by 'F Wakefield'. Manuscript Catalogue of Australiana, c. 1870, Australian Manuscripts Collection, MS 15996

Manuscript Catalogue of Australiana

Australian Manuscripts Collection MS 15996

Acquired 2008

This catalogue is one of the earliest known attempts to compile a bibliography of publications relating to Australia. Arranged alphabetically by author in a neat hand, it contains some 3875 books and pamphlets published up to around May 1870, and is bound in vellum. It was purchased at auction for the Library through funds provided by the State Library Foundation.

The tantalising question is: who compiled it? The volume carries the binding label of Melbourne bookseller HT Dwight and it includes some notes, in a different hand from that in which the main catalogue is written, about properties linked to Dwight in 1872. In another hand is a loose 1904 letter relating to other Dwight family properties. And there is also a loose slip in yet another hand, detailing a scarce 1841 imprint not listed in the catalogue. So Dwight is a possible ‘suspect’ as compiler. There is, however, no mention of this work in his entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*¹.

Another suspect is the great Melbourne and Australian bookman EA (Edward) Petherick. In 1865, he started compiling a bibliography of Australian publications but let the project drop when he went to England in June 1870 to be bookseller George Robertson’s agent there.² The latest date of any publications listed in the catalogue is early May 1870: there were six of these. This suggests the possibility that Petherick worked on the project from 1865 to shortly before he left for England, leaving the alphabetical entries on slips to be written up into an alphabetised catalogue by an amanuensis. And there is other circumstantial evidence relating to certain entries that suggests he could have been the compiler.

The Catalogue lists several titles that are not found in other sources. One of these is a spurious publication: F Wakefield, *The Probable Origin & Antiquity of the Natives of NS Wales* (1846). There is no known copy of this title and it is almost certainly a doubling or mistranscription of the entry, William Hull, *Remarks on the Probable Origins and Antiquity of the Natives of New South Wales* (1846). Until this and other unrecorded entries are checked against Petherick’s later manuscript bibliography of Australiana, held in card form in 16 boxes in the National Library of Australia, Edward Petherick can only remain a ‘person of considerable interest’ in solving the puzzle of who was the compiler of this pioneering bibliography of Australiana.