

LH 34/284/1

SPONSORED BY  
ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL



PRICE 5c.

# ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Registered by Australia Post

## BULLETIN

4/2-6 Louisa Street,  
BIRCHGROVE 2041

July, 1987

Dear Friend and Member,

The July meeting will be held as follows:

Date: Friday, 17th July, 1987 at 8.00 p.m.

Place: Council Chamber, Town Hall, Princes Highway, Rockdale

Business: Election of Office Bearers 1987/88

Syllabus Item: To be decided as time permits, following Elections

Supper Roster: Mrs Lee, Captain and Mrs Abigail

LADIES PLEASE BRING A PLATE

Mr. A. Ellis,  
President and Research  
Officer,

587 1159

Mrs B. Perkins,  
Publicity Officer

587 9164

Mrs K. Hamey,  
Secretary & Social  
Secretary

818 4954

Mrs E. Wright,  
Treasurer

599 4884

Miss D. Row,  
Asst. Treasurer

Mrs E. Eardley  
Bulletin Editor

59 8078

### GIVE LAVISHLY - LIVE ABUNDANTLY

The more you give the more you get, the more you laugh the less you fret;  
The more you do unselfishly, the more you live abundantly...

The more of everything you share, the more you'll always have to spare -  
The more you love the more you'll find, that life is good and friends are  
kind...

For only what we give away, enriches us from day to day,  
Therefore let's do things to help each other, it all makes life worthwhile.

Anon

ALDERMAN RONALD WILLIAM RATHBONE, O.A.M.

Congratulations to you Ron from the President, Arthur Ellis, and Members of the St. George Historical Society, on receiving "The Order of Australia Medal", Queen's Birthday Honours, June, 1987.

This is a well earned and well deserved Honour, your work and interest in the community, particularly in the Rockdale Municipality is well known. The Society records with pride the conferring of this distinguished Honour on one of its founder members and its first secretary. We appreciate your continued interest in our efforts to record local history and express our grateful thanks to you for being Patron, both past and present.

SPECIAL NOTICE

Dear Member,

This, our Annual General Meeting, is very important, do come along and lend your support for the purpose of electing Office Bearers for the coming year. Without your support the Society cannot continue to function. We must also keep in mind the Bicentenary in 1988 which is fast approaching. WHAT WILL WE DO TO CELEBRATE THIS WONDERFUL OCCASION??? Do give some thought to this.

A cheerio to our friends who are not so well. Our best wishes to all for a speedy recovery.

SPECIAL NOTICE    ALL BOOKS NOW AVAILABLE

The St. George Historical Society is pleased to announce that the following books, Nos. 1-7 written and illustrated by the late Gifford H. Eardley for the Society, have been reprinted and are now available. Books Nos. 8, 9 and 10 have been compiled by Mrs Bronwyn Perkins.

No. 1	"The Wolli Creek Valley"	)	
No. 2	"Kogarah to Sans Souci Tramway"	)	Book Nos. 1-8
No. 3	"Saywells Tramway - Rockdale to Lady Robinsons Beach"	)	\$2.50 each
No. 4	"Arncliffe to Bexley Tramway"	)	plus postage
No. 5	"Our Heritage in Stone"	)	
No. 6	"All Stations to Como"	)	
No. 7	"Tempe and the Black Creek Valley"	)	
No. 8	"Early Churches of the St. George District"	)	
No. 9	"Early Settlers of the St. George District"                      Volume 1	)	Books Nos. 9-10
	(Price \$4.00 plus postage)	)	\$4.00 each plus
No. 10	"Early Settlers of the St. George District"                      Volume 2	)	postage

ALL BOOKS ARE AVAILABLE AT OUR MEETING, ALSO MEMBERS BADGES

For your copy of the above books, please contact one of the following:

Miss B. Otton	-	Telephone	59 4259 (after 8.00 p.m.)
Mrs E. Eardley	-	Telephone	59 8078
Mr. A. Ellis	-	Telephone	587 1159
Mrs K. Hamey	-	Telephone	546 3355

NEW MEMBERS AND VISITORS ARE WELCOME

Have you volunteered for the Supper Roster? More help is needed!!!



## Q.V.B. ANOTHER SYDNEY JEWEL...

- The Sydney Morning Herald  
Tuesday 18th November 1986.

Today the copper-domed Queen Victoria Building standing in the centre of the city will take its place again as one of the wonders of Sydney.

After restoration work which took 3 years and cost \$75 million, the grand building erected as a "municipal market on the scale of a cathedral," will be re-opened as a magnificent arcade of specialist shops, boutiques, a food hall and restaurants.

By luck rather than planning, it has survived 90 years of neglect, abuse and threats of demolition. For most of this century, its original galleries, stained glass central dome and the huge, barrel-vault skylight have been hidden behind a mess of added floors and offices.

The restoration, carried out by the development company Ipoh Garden (Aust) Pty., Ltd., is said to be the most extensive of a Victorian public building anywhere in the world. The main central dome, which rises 59.7 metres to its cupola, has been clad with new copper sheathing and its huge stained glass inner dome has been replaced. The galleries gleam with shopfronts of the Victorian era.

While the central business district of Sydney is being re-developed rapidly with new glass and concrete towers, the Queen Victoria Building will stand as a reminder of the city's Victorian era.

The Q.V.B. will indeed be another jewel in the crown of Sydney.

- Joseph Glascott, Environment  
Writer.

## A grand old lady beats the demolishers...

It was touch and go - says Joseph Glascott...

It has taken Sydney almost 90 years to appreciate the Queen Victoria Building, that grand edifice of sandstone topped by roof domes at the City's heart.

When it re-opens to-day (18.11.1986) after one of the largest Victorian building restoration works in the world, the people of Sydney will regain the spectacular retail centre the city fathers intended in 1898.

Indeed, with the Q.V.B.'s rebirth they will gain even more, a galaxy of high-fashion houses, boutiques, restaurants and a food hall connected by under-ground and above-ground pedestrian arcades to the central shopping district and served to its doorstep by public transport and a large car park.

After serious threats of demolition in the 1950's, the Q.V.B. will live again, with people walking its vast galleries, after years of sad neglect when the architectural glories of its interior were either torn out or hidden behind a rabbit warren of tacky partitions.



From its opening on July 21st 1898 until now, the huge edifice of elaborately decorated sandstone, built as a market place with the spaces and stained glass of a cathedral, experienced hard times.

The great building, described as "the world's most magnificent example of a civic market complex" and "a vast palace of Byzantine and Romanesque architectural styles", suffered ignominy.

Traders who had moved to the Haymarket district near the railway and shipping terminals of Central Station and Darling Harbour did not want to return to the new Markets building.

Even the then modern innovation of large lifts, to take horses and carts from street level to and from the basement, could not keep produce merchants in this area, which "The Bulletin" newspaper labelled "the biggest cabbage shop in town".

Shopkeepers would not pay the high rents for the gallery and arcade spaces which the City demanded to recoup the building's costs.

It was a period when Sydney was struggling out of economic depression. The population of the city was only about 450,000.

Perhaps looking for more convivial accommodation, few guests patronised the Coffee Palace, a temperance hotel at the Druitt Street end of the building. Fewer still turned up to concerts and dances in the 500-seat concert hall at the Market Street end.

The building's fate as a retail/market complex was sealed when, only a few years later, the City Council built new markets - Paddy's Market - at the Haymarket.

Criticised as an extravagant white elephant, the building entered a sorry period of neglect and, worse, alterations and infilling as the council sought to find uses for what had become known as its giant folly.

The City Library had moved into the Market Street concert hall by the turn of the century. Wine cellars, including those of Penfolds, took over the basement. Visitors to the library by way of the northern stairs were greeted with a heady aroma of musty books and maturing wine.

The building's sorriest period began when the interior was remodelled between 1934-38 to house the Sydney County Council, the electricity supply authority.

The huge barrel-vault glass skylight was roofed with galvanised iron. The long, balustraded galleries were filled in to become full floors, the superb stained glass of the great central dome was pulled out to provide space for an air-conditioning unit, beautiful iron spiral staircases were hidden behind clipboard walls and the grand Victorian entrances were redecorated in art deco style.

Having lost its interior grandeur, the building for more than 40 years became an undistinguished maze of offices.

But all those years are over. Restored at a cost of \$75 million over 3 years by Ipoh Garden (Aust.) Pty.Ltd., the Q.V.B. is about to start the life it has been denied for 88 years.



The building's historians, Ms Jill Dewez, for the National Trust, and Mr John Shaw for the restoration architects, have not been able to explain fully why the civic fathers of the 1890s decided to replace the original markets between George and York Streets with a building on such a big, elaborate scale.

However, they were certainly in a hurry. Excavations began in March 1893, when the City Architect, George McRae, who designed the building, had produced only sketches and before a choice was made between the four different designs - Gothic, Renaissance, Queen Anne and Romanesque - which he prepared.

As John Shaw will remind us in his coming book on the building (to be published by Wellington Lane Press), it was the period when Henry Lawson, A.B.(Banjo) Paterson and Harry (The Breaker) Morant were writing for "The Bulletin", artists Tom Roberts and Arthur Streeton were painting in Sydney and the schoolboy batsmen M.A.Noble and Victor Trumper played their first games for the N.S.W cricket side.

Sydney had celebrated the centenary of its settlement in 1888 and there was a feeling that the occasion should be marked by a major building.

Civic pride and interstate rivalry probably influenced the size of the project.

The huge Garden Palace exhibition hall in Macquarie Street on the frontage now occupied by the Botanic Gardens had been burnt down in 1882 and there were calls for an edifice to match it, especially since Melbourne had its grand Exhibition Building of towers and domes erected in 1880.

McRae's design of a vast Romanesque civic market place covering the entire George Street block bounded by York, Drutt and Market streets was the answer. The enormous structure, almost 186 metres long and 28.7 metres wide, is still among the largest buildings in the city.

The site had been occupied by city markets from the earliest days of the colony. Governor Macquarie set land aside for markets neary the dairy and stockyards owned by the brothers John and Gregory Blaxland. He gave the name Market Street to the connecting road between George and York Streets. Four long market buildings and a Francis Greenway domed building formerly stood on part of the site.

The massive present building was constructed with sandstone quarried at Waverley and steel beams that were supported on solid trachyte (granite) columns cut at Bowral. It was built in the Great Depression of the 1890s in less than 5 years and cost £261,102/10/9.

It was named in honour of Queen Victoria, whose 60-year reign saw the height of British world-power, and who died a few years later, in 1901, someweeks after Australia's Federation.

-----



Sydney is getting a shopping centre  
unlike any other...

The Queen Victoria Building complex offers a shopping centre unlike any other in Australia.

Housed in Victorian-age splendour in a vast building occupying an entire George Street block are more than 140 shops, restaurants and tourist attractions. By early next year (1987) the number of shops will have increased to 190.

The Q.V.B. is the newest, biggest and most glamorous centre of its kind in Australia. In its galleries and arcades, shoppers will find a huge gathering of fashion houses, from middle range to exclusive designer-label boutiques. Almost every Australian fashion house as well as many leading international houses are represented.

From its lower ground floor to its upper galleries, the QVB will provide for every need of the shopping public.

The lower ground floor, once the old 1890s Markets basement, is now connected by underground arcades to Grace Bros' George Street Department Store at the northern end and to Town Hall Station, near Waltons department store, at the southern end. In addition, another underground link provides a connection to the Town Hall and Sydney Square. This floor is the commuter arcade, offering to meet the everyday needs of train and bus passengers via such shops as a newsagency and a pharmacy.

At the Market Street end a large food hall - to open in the New Year - will provide an international range of cuisines. The hall, to be known as East Street, will contain a street of quick-service food restaurants. Another area will have 7 restaurants offering a variety of ethnic menus in a European garden streetscape.

It will be open 7 days a week for breakfast, lunch, dinner and supper and will cater for after-cinema crowds and theatregoers.

The Grand Walk, on the ground floor arcade, lit with Victorian street lamps, contains stores featuring the middle range of fashion wear.

The ornate galleries on the first and second floors, the Albert Walk and the Victoria Walk, house the specialty fashion shops displaying designer-label wear.

Each of these levels has 2 coffee shops with distinctive themes, such as the Russian Tea Room, Viennese Coffee Lounge and Victorian Tea Salon. Larger restaurants are situated at either end of the building, one overlooking Market Street and the other Drutt Street.

The Lord Mayor, Alderman Sutherland, says that the Q.V.B. will be a tourist attraction to equal the Harbour Bridge and the Opera House.

Special attractions include the Royal Clock, a unique, 6 metre long timepiece built in the shape of Balmoral Castle by the Queen's clockmaker and the keepers of Big Ben in London. Viewers from the top gallery will be able to see animated scenes of British history within castle walls. Replicas of the crown jewels, created by the crown jeweller's craftsmen, can also be

seen on the top gallery.

The Victoria Walk features a wax model of Queen Victoria dressed in full coronation regalia and sitting on a state throne. Copies of Royal paintings as well as a handwritten letter by Queen Elizabeth II to the people of Sydney, are also on display.

The Q.V.B. underground arcades now provide traffic-free pedestrian access from Town Hall Station to the City's retail heart. The arcade under George Street to Grace Bros' store links shoppers via above-ground walkways to Centrepont, Mid-City Centre and David Jones. No longer is the Q.V.B. an island on the wrong side of George Street.

Below York Street, with direct links into the Q.V.B. is a new 720-space car park. It is a controversial area, and required the partial closure of York Street during its construction. It will be open to the public.

Public transport visitors will have ready access through underground arcades from Town Hall Station and bus terminals in York Street.

To-day's (18.11.1986) opening precedes an official opening early next year (1987) at which members of the royal family have been asked to officiate.

-----

When to visit: The Queen Victoria Building will be open 24 hours a day for people wanting to go through it.

The shopping arcades will be open from 7.0a.m.  
Trading hours will be: Monday to Wednesday 8.30a.m. to 6.0p.m.  
Thursday 8.30a.m. to 9.0p.m.  
Friday 8.30a.m. to 7.30p.m.  
Saturday 8.30a.m. to 4.0p.m.

-----

As Old Meets New - Space and Light Return...

-Joseph Glascott.

People who visited the Queen Victoria Building from the mid 1930s, perhaps to attend meetings of the Sydney County Council or to borrow books from the City Library, will be amazed at its transformation.

The reappearance of the vast two upper galleries, the ground floor arcade and the basement in all their splendour is a triumph for present-day architectural sensitivity and building craftsmanship. The overwhelming impact of the restored interior is of space and light, as impressive in its way as the towering modern hotel atriums of the American architect, John Portman.

The inside of the building had been vandalised so seriously by infilled floors that the architects were faced with a daunting task when restoration began in February 1984.

The Sydney firm of Rice Daubney, with long experience in retail and restoration projects, were commissioned in 1982 by Ipoh Garden (Aust.) Pty., Ltd., to refine the original design proposal.



A member of the firm, Mr Ross Gardner was appointed to lead a consultant team. The project was a joint venture with the firm of Stephenson and Turner which had developed the original concept and became architects in association. Mr George Kringas became joint project architect with Mr Gardner.

The philosophy behind the restoration of old buildings was considered at length by the architects in preparing the final design. In restoring the Q.V.B. to its 1898 condition and use, to what extent was it possible or desirable to make it an exact replica of the original while ensuring that it was a commercially viable shopping complex?

A balance had to be struck between the demands of the City Council and the Heritage Council that the grandeur of George McRae's design be revived, and the need to create a modern centre.

Mr Gardner says that the challenge in restoration projects is in relating old and new, both functionally and aesthetically. New work should relate consciously to the old in a way which shows respect for the original. It should not overpower the old by its sheer size, but should follow the scale of the existing building.

In the case of the Q.V.B., a crucial example of blending old and new is provided by the escalators. The developers argued that lifts and stairways would not be sufficient. They pointed out that the restricted access to the upper galleries was one of the reasons for the commercial failure of the Q.V.B. in the 1890s. A compromise was worked out to permit a limited number of escalators to be suspended in the main arcade.

The architects gave the term refurbishment to the Q.V.B. project. They believe they achieved a design which was faithful to the spirit and, to the greatest extent possible, the detail of the original interior while integrating the modern elements necessary for a shopping complex.

But first of all the architects and builders had to rediscover and recreate the interior. The huge steel beams which had been erected in the 1930s to fill in the galleries with solid floors, were cut away. Galvanised iron which hid the huge barrel-vault skylight was stripped away and the glass replaced to allow natural light to stream in (and also provide spectacular day and night views of the roof domes). The Q.V.B. began to regain its cathedral-like spaces.

From old photographs and some of McRae's drawings discovered in council archives, the wrought-iron balustrades and timber handrails were rebuilt and erected on the edges of the gallery walkways.

The richly embossed plaster mouldings of ceilings, column capitals and bases and archway mouldings - all badly damaged by wall partitions and doors - were recreated or repaired. This work took hundreds of man hours. On the ground floor entrances and landings, the coloured floor tiles that were laid in intricate geometric designs, some of which remained, were matched and replaced.

The long rows of shopfronts lining the 3 floors north and south of the central dome foyer were rebuilt of solid, green-painted timber. The windows and doors have been enlarged to provide for modern display.



The colour scheme of the galleries and arcade - red, green, beige and grey blending at roof level into lighter green and coffee cream - was selected to emulate a 19th-century atmosphere without necessarily replicating the original appearance.

The result is an overwhelming interior space of subdued colour filled with light from above.

A striking feature which emphasises the size of the building is the 59.7m-high central dome, which has been uncovered and repaired. The dome was re clad with copper outside. Inside, the huge interior stained glass dome has been recreated. It is a focal point of the building, as it filters light through green and amber panels to the central foyer.

The large wheel windows on the stairways on either side of the dome blaze with colour through stained glass in a snakes-head pattern.

From the first floor gallery, an original iron spiral staircase long hidden behind partitions, is now on show again. Two of the birdcage lifts at the northern and southern ends of the building have been rebuilt.

At roof level, apart from repairs to the main dome and its cupola, the 20 smaller domes are to be resheathed in Muntz metal shingles. The domes will glow again like mosques in a Byzantine city.

Little noticed by people passing at street level are the large marble sculpture groups over the George and York Street entrances. The George Street group depicts Australia distributing honours to commerce and arts, while the York Street group shows civilisation guiding science and the arts.

The National Trust and some building conservationists argued that the street awnings should have been replaced, but this was resisted. One advantage will be that the exterior of the building and its roof line will be more readily seen from street level.

-----

#### Our City Fathers Rode a See-Saw over the Q.V.B...

- Tracey Aubin  
Civic Reporter.

These days Sydney City Council aldermen are proud to have their Queen Victoria Building sitting next to their Town Hall in George Street. But some of their earlier counterparts did not see things in such a clear light.

Close to 30 years ago the then Lord Mayor, Mr Harry Jensen, together with Professor Denis Winston and Mr Harry Seidler (who described it as a monstrosity), headed the list of those who wanted to pull down the building. But each time councils proposed demolition, there were public outcries and aldermen tried once again to devise solutions.

The Town Clerk, Mr Leon Carter, once said in a report that the building had been the subject of more petitions and suggestions about its use than any other in the city.



Andrew Briger, architect and planner, was involved in the first City of Sydney Strategic Plan in 1970. In his own words, the principle was "softly, softly catchee monkey" - one of the major thrusts of that plan was to save the Queen Victoria Building. In May 1971, the Lord Mayor, Sir Emmet McDermott, announced that it would be preserved.

But how, precisely? The debate was to span 12 years, and the agreement for restoration was signed finally on 1st August 1983. In the early 1970s, aldermen believed it would cost in the region of \$10 million. The latest figure is more like \$82 million, when related city intra-structure is taken into account. In those days, too, its most likely future involved community purposes, whereas now the Queen Victoria Building is entirely commercial.

Restoration by Ipoh Garden (Aust.) Pty.Ltd., - which has a 99 year lease on the building - did not begin officially until March 1984, but that was not the end of the setbacks for either the building or the council.

In March this year (1986) industrial bans by the Builders' Labourers Federation kept Queen Elizabeth II away, during a visit to Sydney. Last year, the major row was over whether the building should get awnings. Before that, there were 2 court cases, a flurry from angry shop owners and a protest from a public transport action group.

In 1981 there was trouble when the Lord Mayor, Alderman Doug Sutherland, thought the building was "ideal" for a casino - "better there than some back street of Kings Cross or Darlinghurst."

But, problem-plagued or not, the council is now pleased. Aldermen don't mind that the Q.V.B. which took 4 years to build in the 1890s, has taken so long to renovate, nor that the saga has been running almost as long as the 64 year reign of Queen Victoria. All they are worried about today is that the opening goes well.

-----

2NBC-FM 90.1 - ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1987 - Tuesday evenings - 5.30p.m. - 6.45p.m.

Tape 204	- 5th May	- Resumé Year 4	- A. Ellis
Tape 205	- 12th May	- Rookwood Cemetery In This Plot...	- M. Callister
Tape 206	- 19th May	- Mysterious Birth of our National Anthem	- D. Row
Tape 207	- 26th May	- Persistence Rewarded Part 2 - R.A.H.S.	- D. Row
Tape 208	- 2nd June	- Christina Stead Authoress	- A. Ellis
Tape 209	- 9th June	- Early Methodism in Australia - Part 1	- M. Callister
Tape 210	- 16th June	- Of Interest - 1899 Advertisements	- A. Ellis
Tape 211	- 23rd June	- The Year the Americans First Sailed In.	- A. Ellis
Tape 212	- 30th June	- Early Methodism in Australia - Part 2	- M. Callister
Tape 213	- 7th July	- The Royals in Australia & Kirribilli House	- D. Row
Tape 214	- 14th July	- Historicals Firsts 1. Torres, Tasman, Dampier, Cook	- M. Fleming
Tape 215	- 21st July	- Historical Firsts 2. Phillip, Flinders, 1st Farm James Ruse & First Water Supply	- M. Fleming
Tape 216	- 28th July	- Historical Firsts 3. First Merino, Coal, Blue Mts. Crossing	- M. Fleming
Tape 217	- 4th August	- Historical Firsts 4. Hinterland Explorer John Oxley, First P.O. First Hospital.	- M. Fleming

.....

Apologies for this list not being available for the April  
Bulletin - the typist forgot! Hopefully never again.

.....