

# BALLARAT TOWN HALL CLOCK BELLS

## and CHIME or "CARILLON"

The City of Ballarat is indeed blessed with a fine peal of English Bells and a Carillon, which more properly should be described as a "chime". It is rather unusual to find a peal of such bells outside of church towers. Currently there are only four sites in the world, namely Manchester, Adelaide, Rockingham (Perth) and Ballarat. Ballarat Town Hall Bells consists of 8 bells, the lightest (treble) 254kg, and the heaviest (tenor) 1117kg. This peal, despite a suggestion by a former resident of Ballarat to the Editor of the "Ballarat Star" in the early 1860's to emulate Geelong, there was only initial enthusiasm to the idea.

The reason for their installation rests largely upon the extraordinary attachment Ballarat had for the Royal Visit of H. R. H. Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh in December 1867. So successful was the hospitality of Ballarat that he subsequently returned for a day at the races at Dowling Forest.

The Prince continued his tour and the resulting happenings can best be described by Professor Weston Bate from his book "Lucky City": "Those bells rang out an astonishing postscript, for they were a public penance for the fact that a Ballarat man, H J O'Farrell, a demented, alcoholic, Irish produce-dealer from the Market Square, shot the Duke in the back (fortunately hitting his braces) during a public picnic at Sydney on Thursday 12 March 1868. Ballarat was so shocked that five or six thousand men

crowded into the Alfred Hall (built for the Duke's visit to Ballarat), on Saturday 14 March, to purge themselves (the Star's expression) of even the slightest association of O'Farrell with Ballarat. Officials and clergy of every description attended. Ballarat's colourful history had seen no more eclectic, united or fervent assembly. Shouts of rage greeted every mention of O'Farrell and uncontrollable cheers any reference to the Duke. Four major emotions were apparently expressed: hatred of the assassin, horror at the thought that he might have been a Fenian, sympathy for the victim, and, loyalty to the Crown. Everywhere in Australia, people were distressed, but at Ballarat, they were distracted. Hardly any business was done at the Corner on Saturday morning and crowds gathered at the telegraph office where regular bulletins describing the Duke's condition were posted. When his recovery was announced the following Wednesday, extraordinary scenes occurred, and on Thursday Ballarat people unfurled their flags and lit up transparencies again. On the Sunday when most clergy said special prayers for Alfred's recovery, the Protestants were quick to moralize. Dr Cairns, a Presbyterian, hoped that the Prince would now feel that he too was mortal. However, the Catholics forgot to pray and the most Christian statement came from the Jews, who took the opportunity to praise God, not mortify man.

The absence of Catholic prayers confirmed many in the suspicion that O'Farrell was a Fenian and that the Irish were involved. But sectarian bitterness was a minor element in the main fuss that ensued, even though Tuesday 17 March was St. Patrick's Day. The spotlight fell on a theatrical man, Frederick Lyster who, just after hearing of the shooting but before the assassin's name was known, was heard to speak out strongly against all secret societies, whether Fenian or Orange. The troubles of England, Ireland and Scotland, he felt, should not be allowed to disturb Australia, blessed as it was with the advantages of a monarchy but the freedom of a republic. When pressed to defend his unpopular view that the shooting had been the work of a madman, not a Fenian, he is alleged to have sworn that he saw no reason anyway to be so concerned about "any-son-of-a-Royal-Highness".

Lyster's reputation was lynched on the spot. A meeting was held at the Mechanic's Institute on Friday night to investigate the truth of the accusation against him, and he was called on to make an abject apology. His brother, W S Lyster, was so concerned for the family opera company that he decided to give two monster charity concerts in the Alfred Hall to wipe out the stain of his brother's indiscretion. It is no wonder then, than when Peter Cazaly of Drummond Street suggested the purchase of memorial bells to be inscribed with an account of the dastardly attempt on Alfred's life, and to speak out in loud sonorous tones about the loyalty of Ballarat. The idea was seized upon and carried out as though the health of the whole nation was at stake.

With the earlier idea being resurrected and the present Town Hall plans being prepared, the Town Hall tower was enlarged to accommodate the Alfred memorial Bells. The bells were cast at what is now known as Whitechapel Bell Foundry, then known as Mears and Stainbeck. This foundry has been in existence since about 1570 when bell such as Big Ben, and the Bow Bells of "Oranges and Lemons" fame were cast. By the time the peal



had arrived in Ballarat, the public had subscribed about 2/3 towards the cost of £1,300. The council gave the bank a guarantee for the balance, at an interest of 9%. The bells pealed out for the first time at 6.00am on Christmas Day.

When the bells, reached their Centenary they were rung at the more civilised hour of 8.00am. The bells have heralded and marked many historic occasions since Christmas Day 1871. They traditionally greet a Mayor on his/her installation, and ring in the New Year.

In 1981, the bells were removed from the tower, along with the carillon, to the original foundry in London, to be refurbished and rehung in a new metal frame, to replace the original oak frame. The cost of this work along with recasting the Carillon was \$74,151 all of which was met by a generous benefactor.

## TOWER AND CARILLON

(extract from Mayor's report, City of Ballaarat -1873)

Clock: During the year the whole of the remainder of the clock and carillon have been received and erected, and are now going regularly. The effect of the sound of the carillon has not realised expectations, and is contemplation to try them in a different situation, but no action has yet been decided on, as their present position is that selected by Messrs Moore and sons, the manufacturers. It is evident they are far too high, and the room they are hung in is unsuitable.

The following is a general description of the clock:

It is an eight-day turret clock, with four glazed iron skeleton dials with copper hands. It is arranged to strike the hours and quarters on the Alfred memorial Bells. The quarters are struck on the first four bells as follows (the bells are numbered 1-4)

First Quarter - 1324; Second Quarter - 2134 - 1234; Third Quarter - 2314 - 3214 -1324; Fourth Quarter - 2134 - 1234 - 2314 - 3214.

The hour is struck by the large tenor bell. The striking apparatus is so arranged that the bells can be rung at any time without interfering with it.

The weights of the clock are carried down in spaces left in the three corners of the tower as far as the floor of the belfry. Underneath each weight is a large wooden tank filled with sand, resting on a strong iron girder, so as to avoid all accidents in case of the weight falling. The necessity for this will be seen when I mention that the largest weight that is for the quarters weighs 161/2 cwt (838kg); the weight for the hour striker 91/2 cwt (482kg); and that for the dial pendulum, 3 cwt (152kg); and that for the carillon, 4 cwt (203kg); the weight for the pendulum is 4 cwt (203kg)

The carillon consists of sixteen bells, and the clock will play them four times a day viz 8.00am, noon, 4.00pm and 8.00pm. There are seven tunes, thus giving a different tune for every day of the week. As follows:

Sunday - Evening Hymn "Sun of my Soul"

Monday - "Bluebells of Scotland"

Tuesday - "Home Sweet Home"

Wednesday - "Merry Bells of England"

Thursday - "Swiss Air"

Friday - "Rule Britannia"

Saturday - "Caller Herrin"

## Dials

The dials were originally intended to have ground glass centres, with opal glass between the figures, which were to be painted red, with gilded hands. The effect of this not being sufficiently distinct at a distance, various methods were tried, and

ultimately it was decided to leave the figures red and paint the hands black, having the centre part of the dial coated with white opal, the same as the rest of the glass. The lighting of the glass at night has occasioned considerable difficulty. The plan now in use is that adopted by the Ballaarat Gas Company, who have contracted to light up the dials from dusk in the summer and 6.00pm in the winter, until 10.00pm on six nights of the week, and until 12.00pm on Saturdays, 105 pounds per annum. The clock is set on two iron girders placed across the tower to receive it, and is enclosed by an elegant glazed structure, so as to enable it to be seen without being touched, and at the same time to keep it protected by dust. The total of the clock up to the present is 2,077 pounds 17 shillings 9 pence.

The dials are 2.7 metres in diameter, and are 29 metres above the footpath. The tower is approximately 41 metres high.

*References (1) "The Lucky City - The First generation in Ballarat, 1851 - 1901", page 164 (2) Mayoral report of the City of Ballaarat 1873*

## REFURBISHMENT

A \$2m refurbishment OF Ballaarat's historic Town Hall in Sturt Street has successfully addressed the need for more office space, a desire to preserve a piece of local history, and a commitment to making the building more accessible and inviting for residents. Considered one of Ballaarat's most significant buildings, the Town Hall has been restored to its former grandeur, exposing some of the original ceilings, and replacing some of the hard plaster arches in the front foyer. Architects have successfully combined 'old with new' maintaining the building's facade while creating an interior which lends itself to a thoroughly modern approach, including a counter-free customer service system designed to deliver the highest quality service to the Ballaarat community.

Accessibility has been a key priority in the building works, with a lift installed to improve access to the first floor meeting rooms and Council Chamber.

People with hearing difficulties have been given particular consideration, with the installation of a hearing or induction loop in the Council Chamber

Energy efficiency is another feature of the building. The lighting system is both energy and cost efficient. If a room is vacated the lights automatically turn off; and if there is a lot of natural light entering a room from windows, the lighting system will automatically adjust by lowering levels in that area.

The new Council Chamber is located in the northern end of the Museum Room on the first floor of the Town Hall.

While the grand, traditional trimmings of an 1870 building remain, Council has gone to great lengths to create a more customer-friendly environment to encourage more people to make use of the facilities and services provided by Council and to take a more active part in Council affairs.

## APRIL CRYPTIC CROSSWORD SOLUTION:

**ACROSS:** 1. Misses; 4. Breath; 7. Ale; 8. Slam; 10. Crab; 11. Mist; 12. Ache; 13. Amen; 15. Ann; 17. Rest; 19. Pence; 21. Wisps; 22. Enigmas; 23. Arums; 25. Strip; 28. Byre; 29. Coo; 31. Magi; 32. Bawl; 33. Flag; 34. Coat; 35. Sock; 36. Use; 37. Shears; 38. Rattle.

**DOWN:** 1. Mishap; 2. Stamen; 3 & 29. Santa Claus; 4. Began; 5. Agrees; 6. Habits; 9. Mincemeat; 14 & 10. Merry Christmas; 16. Negro; 18. Sprig; 20. Ens' 21. Was; 23. Abacus; 24. Urbane; 26. Ragout; 27. Pickle; 29. See 3 down; 30. Offer.