

Collingwood Historical Society

# Collingwood Town Hall Tours

Sunday 13 July 2014

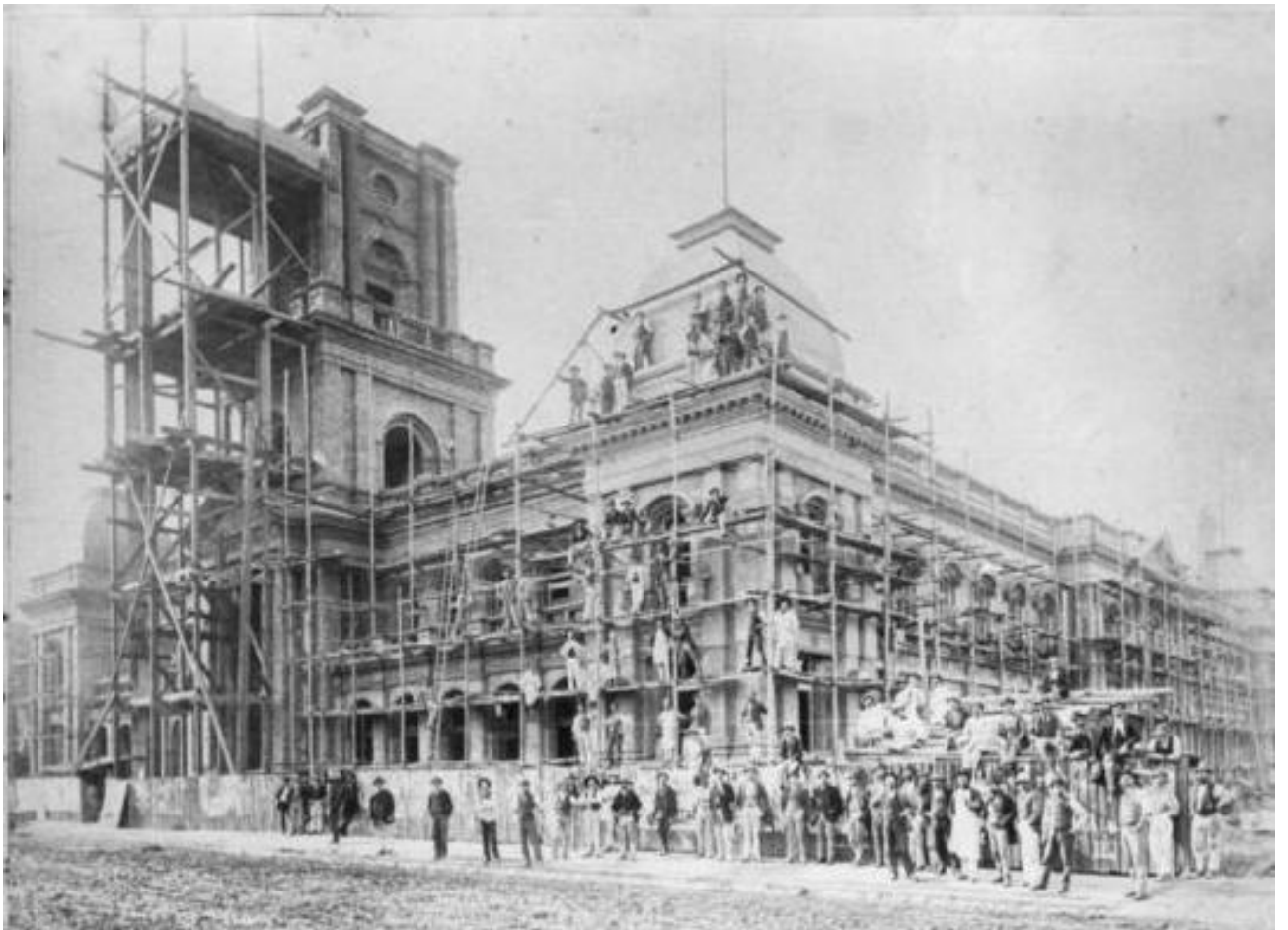


Figure 1: Rudd, *Work in progress* c1886, Yarra Libraries

# Collingwood Town Hall Tours

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Four tours were conducted at the Collingwood Town Hall Community Open Day on Sunday 13 July 2014 by Anne Holmes, Frances Ilyine and Karen Cummings of the Collingwood Historical Society for the City of Yarra.

## **Stop 1: Introduction, Singleton Stained Glass & Significant People**

### **Introduction**

Let's think back to the 1880s: the phrase "Marvellous Melbourne" was coined to describe the city also known as the Metropolis of the Southern Hemisphere. The 1880s was a boom period with land speculation rife and the sounds of building to be heard everywhere. Collingwood might have been a working class and largely industrial suburb, but it was a significant contributor to Victoria's economy. It was one of the earliest municipalities, having been established in 1855, and by 1876 its annual income had reached a level high enough for it to merit proclamation as a city. So Collingwood too was participating in the boom, and it was fitting that the foundation stone of its lavish status symbol was laid right in the middle of the decade, in July 1885.

This was not achieved without several years of argument about funding and location, and whether such a structure should be built at all. Council finally held a referendum to approve taking out a loan of £40,000, but only £12,000 of this loan would be needed for the town hall, despite its grandeur. This was because a significant portion would be paid for by the Victorian government who would operate a Post and Telegraph Office, and a police station and courthouse within the building. This practice was common with 19th century Town Hall building projects as funds from Government Departments helped to offset the initial building costs as well as providing long-term leases which helped with ongoing building costs. At Collingwood the proposed initial Government contribution was £8,000. Income for the project also came from the sale of other Council properties.

The architect was George Johnson, a noted architect of the period. Other town halls of his you may have seen are at North Melbourne, Northcote, Daylesford and Maryborough. He also designed the second portion of Fitzroy Town Hall which was added not long after Collingwood's was built.

The town hall has undergone many changes over the years. We will be trying to give you an indication of the original layout, the current layout, and the intervening changes. The first thing to realise, which is not necessarily apparent today, is that the building was visualised as a number of separate two-storey units: the Post Office and accommodation in the front middle, the library, reading rooms and lecture hall on the north side, the municipal offices and meeting rooms on the southwest corner, the magistrate's court, police station and cells at the southeast corner with accommodation above, and in the middle, of course, the main hall. When you look at the lettering on the outside of the building these separate functions and locations are clearly delineated.

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**Figure 2: Laying the foundation stone, 1885, Yarra Libraries**

We won't be visiting all of these areas. The courthouse operated into the late twentieth century and is now used by Yarra local laws staff. As well accommodation associated with the courthouse was incorporated on the first floor. The police station can now be found at the rear of the town hall in a 1953 construction. In its original iteration barracks were also provided for the police.

There was a major renovation in the late 1930s, partly driven by the deteriorating physical structure. Among other problems plaster was falling from the ceilings of a number of rooms. There were some structural alterations, such as the removal of the staircase which originally led from the downstairs foyer, and decorative changes which reflected the Moderne fashion of the time. This Moderne or Art Deco influence is strongly reflected in the main foyer and the main hall. A large supper room on the east side was also added in the 1930s renovation. The architects for this renovation were the firm of A.C. Leith and Bartlett. In the intervening years many internal alterations have been made to accommodate the expanding number of office staff and changing technology, culminating in the present work which is intended to create a working space that meets the requirements of the twenty-first century, including accessibility. In the 1980s significant external renovations were carried out, with notable work done by master plasterer, Larry Harrigan.

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### Singleton Stained Glass & Significant People

This stained glass window was created by renowned Melbourne firm Ferguson and Urie in honour of Dr John Singleton, with funds raised by public subscription after his death in 1891. The window was originally installed in the Singleton Dispensary in Wellington Street Collingwood but donated to the City of Collingwood in 1979 after Collingwood Community Health Centre moved to Sackville Street.

The enduring legacy of physician John Singleton (1808-1891) dates to his establishment in 1869 of the Collingwood Free Medical Health Dispensary in Wellington Street, where free medical care was given to needy people. Unusually for his time, Singleton was a strong supporter of the employment of women in medical practice. His dispensary has operated continuously until this day, moving in the 1970s to Sackville Street as the Collingwood Community Health Centre (later part of North Yarra Community Health and now part of Cohealth).

You will notice that one of the meeting rooms in this area is named after John Singleton, and the other after Theo Sidiropoulos (1924-1998), the first Greek Councillor and Mayor of the City of Collingwood and the first Victorian Greek MP. As part of the renovation meeting rooms such as these all over the building have been named after significant locals such as Dr Singleton, Theo, and "Rita" Jamieson (below), the first woman elected to Collingwood Council in 1963. We will be mentioning some of these people on the tour but you can read more about the rooms and the their names in the Appendix to this document.



Figure 3: "Rita" Jamieson at inauguration, 1963, Union of Australian Women

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## Stop 2: Lecture Hall & Collingwood Free Library

### Lecture Hall

In the original design of the town hall the north wing was to be used for cultural purposes. A separate entrance from the north side gave access to this area where there was a large room designated as a lecture hall. In fact the lecture hall was just as often used as the supper room for events held in the main hall including the grand balls of the 1880s and 1890s, and the gentlemen were likely to retire to the room adjoining the lobby to the west to smoke and play cards. We know this because newspapers of the time carried extensive descriptions of events such as mayoral balls, even describing the ladies' dresses, and who danced with whom.

Despite its current use as staff work areas, the beauty of this room can still be seen. The lecture hall could be hired by local groups for all sorts of purposes, and was also used for many years free of charge for the regular classes of the Collingwood School of Design. This had been set up in 1871 by Mayor Joel Eade so that young tradesmen could learn technical drawing, mechanical drawing and other related skills. Eade was a builder and architect and this was a project dear to his heart. A room has been named after Eade who was a well-respected councillor for many years and a prominent local citizen, living conveniently on the other side of Hoddle St, near Gipps St. You will notice that the stage still exists, and although the back of the stage has been utilised for staff purposes, the division has been cleverly effected by means of a red glass wall, creating the impression of stage curtains.

### Collingwood Free Library

I'd like you to cast your mind back in history to the 1970s, not so long ago for some of us, but before some of you were born. To 1977 in particular when I started work here at Collingwood Library. I'll talk a bit more about the history of the library when we get upstairs but for the present I just want to give you an idea of what this area of the Town Hall was like in the 1970s. Maybe some of you remember coming here too?

The library office was down in that room on the corner of the building, and the main adult library was through this door. The corridor along which we have just come didn't exist or rather there was a partition across the back of it and then doors at this end. This was where the library stack was stored and for those of you familiar with public libraries of that time it was where our subject specialization books were stored. Sport! My first job as a library officer was in that cupboard. My other job was in the cupboard that used to be here under the stairs. That was the local history collection and my presence in that dusty dark cupboard was somewhat excited by the fact that there was a set of Edinburgh Reviews that John Pascoe Fawkner had owned!

If we move now into the adult library, I'll pass around a photo of what it was like in the 1950s when the library first moved down here. It was pretty similar in the 1970s (our clothes were different) with a desk as you came in storing the Browne system cards we used to manage loans,

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the card catalogue was down that corridor and the rest of room was filled with wooden shelving apart from where there was a table at the back to read newspapers. So there was room for about two people to sit in the library. And there was a door out the back of the library into the foyer - strictly staff only. If you compare the size of this room to the current Collingwood Library around in Stanton Street, you can see what a difference there is. It was mentioned earlier that that Town Hall had been planned in discrete areas, and if we wanted to have dealings with other departments of the Town Hall we had to go out into Hoddle Street go into the separate entrances of the Post Office and the Town Clerk's Department. If we wanted to ask the Hall Keeper assistance with building maintenance, we had to go down Hoddle Street and along Stanton Street to the door leading to the stairs to the first floor and ring the Hall Keeper's bell.

And, of course, this wasn't always the library. After the Town Hall was opened in 1887, what was in 1977 the Adult Library was at various stages a small supper room for people using the Lecture Hall, or a withdrawing room for the men to smoke (and play cards) during functions in the main hall. And there is also a reference in the 1920s to it being a Lodge Room. Of course, after the library moved to Stanton Street in 1978, this became Council offices.



Figure 4: *Collingwood Library - Adult Section, c1950, Yarra Libraries*

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## Stop 3: Collingwood Free Library

Council established a Free Public Library in 1860. Three rooms at the Johnston Street municipal chambers, used by officers during the day, were made available to readers from 6 to 10 pm, and the library opened with 500 volumes, mostly donations. The Library relocated to Smith Street in 1869, and then to the town hall in the 1880s, by which time the collection totalled 3,750 volumes and annual visits numbered 50,000.

When Collingwood Library moved into the new Town Hall its space was all up here on the first floor and consisted of the general library room, a small room on the north-west corner, and separate reading rooms for ladies and for gentlemen.

Free libraries were established as places where worthy readers could spend their evenings after work pursuing self-improvement, a goal seen as more applicable to men. This is reflected in the larger room allocated to male readers. The allocation of a separate space for ladies in the original design reflected the Victorian view that women preferred the propriety of seclusion even in the public domain, while the smaller proportions of the room reflected the fact that the public library of the time was more frequented by men.

Collingwood Council was forward thinking in increasing opening hours to 10 am to 10 pm in 1882, and in introducing free lending by January 1892. In 1950 after the library began operating under the Free Library Service Board of Victoria, the Adult Library and office moved downstairs as we have seen, and the ladies' reading room became offices for the Children's Library which operated in the former main Library room. The men's reading room became the Upstairs Supper Room, prior to its conversion to office space.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it appears that the job of Librarian was one where it helped to be male, not young and to have connections with Collingwood Council. John Paul Bowring who died in the job in 1878 at the age of 64 was the brother of Cr Bowring. He was replaced by Mr Randal Lambert of Fitzroy, who had emigrated from Ireland to Australia in 1855. Lambert who had been a country Bank Manager before his appointment doesn't have any known relationships with Councillors. He was Librarian from 1878 until 1905 when he died suddenly at his home in Paterson Street, Abbotsford, just before heading back to open the library for the evening. He was 78 at the time.

Lambert was replaced in 1905 by a Mr John Lang, J.P. Mr Lang had actually been a Collingwood Councillor for a term from 1881. He had been involved in the Langridge Building Society which struggled during the 1890s depression. Presumably he needed a job and income so Council appointed him as Librarian on the death of Lambert. Lang was 83 when he retired in 1919! There were jokes in the paper at the time about how fit he was and how he might stand for the next elections.

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However, libraries changed and the Cities of Collingwood and Richmond in 1976 established a joint regional library service: Carringbush Regional Library. The new library service was a very different type of library service. It was automated from the start and renowned for its innovation in many areas. Richmond Library was opened in 1977 and a new Collingwood Library in nearby Stanton Street Abbotsford was proudly launched to the community by Mayor Theo Sidiropoulos and former Prime Minister Gough Whitlam in 1978. After that time all the space in the library area of the town hall as well as the Post Office area was converted to Council office space.



Figure 5: Anne Holmes, *Collingwood Library with evidence of origins*, 2012, Flickr



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## Stop 4: Post Office and Post Master's Apartment

As has been alluded to earlier, the different parts of the 1887 Town Hall were all built as separate and self-contained units, in some cases with absolutely no connecting doors or spaces. Such was the case in this area. We are now on a new balcony attached to what used to be the Post Master's apartment and the doors into the northern corridor where we were previously were not added until the late 20th and 21st centuries. We are looking down onto what was originally one of two courtyards. These courtyards provided air and light to the central rooms, as well as a location for toilets, because sewerage had not been introduced to Melbourne at the time the town hall was constructed.

Originally this portion of Collingwood Town Hall contained self-contained Post and Telegraph Offices downstairs as well as accommodation for the Postmaster and his family. Entrance to the Post and Telegraph Offices and the residence was from Hoddle Street via an entrance door to the north of the main Town Hall entrance. An internal staircase led from the ground floor near the Postmaster's Office to the apartment above. The first floor contained two bedrooms, parlour, sitting room, kitchen and a servant's bedroom, while the washhouse with a copper was located at ground level as well as sheds and dunnies. The servant's bedroom which you can see to our right was in fact at a slightly lower level than the residence and was entered from a landing on the stairs. The kitchen was in the same area as the kitchen we just passed through and we will be walking through the parlour and postmaster's bedrooms shortly.

Given that there was accommodation for quite a few people with the Court House apartment, the police barracks, and the Post Office apartment to say nothing of the Hall Keeper's apartment and the Mayor's apartment which we will be talking about when pass over into that part of the building, it is really interesting to speculate what life might have been like up on the first floor of the Collingwood Town Hall. Did the people really stay in their self-contained areas or did they visit each other? Did the kids play with each other? Where did they hang their washing? Where did the children go to school? St Euphrasia's over at the Abbotsford Convent or St Joseph's in Otter Street or the Christian Brothers School down in Nicholson Street if they were Catholic - or else the state school across Hoddle Street?

And how many people formed this community? The ratebooks give us some idea. For example, the 1931 ratebook says there were ten people resident in the Town Hall, but in 1932 there were sixteen reported. Electoral rolls give us an indication of the resident adults. The population would have fluctuated quite a bit depending who was in the positions. As we will see later we know of one time when at least nine people were living in the Post Office apartment. But that wasn't always the case.

The name "Post Master's Apartment" was a misnomer for chunks of time when the person in charge of the Post Office was actually a Post Mistress. These women were usually spinsters and it is hard to know whether they had extended families living with them in the apartment. The

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role is a good example of a career that was available to women at this point and gave them opportunities for responsibilities and promotion as well as in many cases the valuable commodity of accommodation.

One such person was Miss Gertrude Bailey who was Post Mistress at Abbotsford Post Office from its opening until 1905 when she transferred up to Queens Parade to the Clifton Hill Post Office. She was later Post Mistress in Toorak, Sandringham and Sorrento before retiring to Sandringham where she lived until her death in 1939 at the age of 77. Miss Bailey was replaced in 1906 by a Miss Annie Barnett who would have been in her 50s at the time of her appointment. She is also known to have worked as Post Mistress in Newport before her death in Hawthorn at the age of 89.

Mr John Gorman who was Post Master during World War I was also a career Post Master who had held posts at Talbot and Sandringham before Abbotsford, and from 1918 until the late 1930s was Post Master at Coburg. At the time of his post to Abbotsford, Mr Gorman had a wife, Bridget Theresa, and six children, the eldest of whom was born in 1905. So we can speculate that during his appointment there were at least eight Gormans and a servant living in the Post Office apartment.

It was Mr Gorman who was Post Master at the time of the most significant event in the life of Abbotsford Post Office. In 1916 a daring daylight robbery resulted in the theft of £200 in coin and notes (£80 in coin, £80 in £10 notes, and £40 in £1 notes) which Mr Gorman had just brought from the ES&A bank on the corner of Hoddle and Johnston streets. Two of the robbers were initially apprehended in Mordialloc and Fitzroy and later a third was tracked to Adelaide. The robbery and subsequent trial and appeals were much reported in the press of the time with emphasis on the fact that the money was for soldiers' wives and other dependents.

We are not sure exactly when the apartment ceased to be lived in by the Post Master, but certainly by 1977 the apartment was lying abandoned and became available for Carringbush Library to use for extra storage. However, the Post Office section of the building was still completely separate and, to enter the parlour and bedrooms which were used by the library service, staff had to go from the upper corridor onto the balcony and climb in the parlour window! The Post Office at that stage was still operating for business on the ground level.

Unfortunately in the summer of 1978/79 a fire originating in the apartment destroyed much of the original fabric of the apartment and the ceiling of the Post Office. As result the Post Office was closed for a time and re-opened in a purpose-built modern Post Office opposite in Hood Street, Collingwood. The Post and Telegraph business and accommodation area of the Collingwood Town Hall then passed to Council for repair and use as offices. However, the real tragedy of the fire was the destruction of all the nineteenth century archives of the Singleton Health Centre which were at the time stored in the Post Master's apartment. These had been

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donated to the library for safe-keeping after the Collingwood Health Centre moved in 1978 to its current location in Sackville Street.

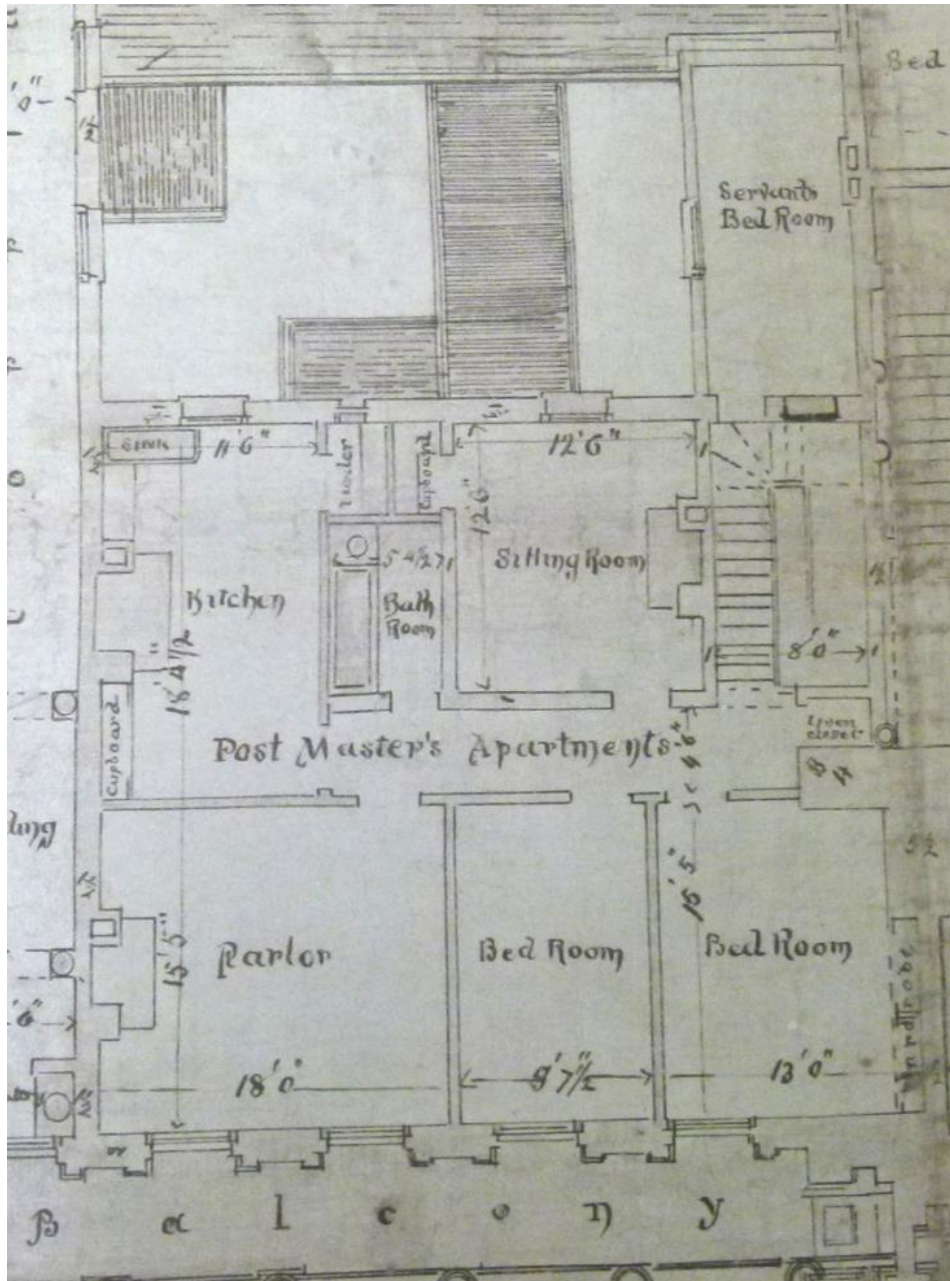


Figure 6: Detail Post Master's Apartments, 1887, City of Yarra

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Figure 7: H. Hume, *Hoddle Street*, c1888, State Library of Victoria

## Stop 5: Clock Tower & Municipal Functions

### Clock Tower

When Collingwood Town Hall opened on 29 March 1887, its 150-foot high tower was without clock and bell. Both were planned to be imported from England and installed by 1888. However, this was not to happen and it was not until August 1889 that the Town Hall clock, previously installed in the Melbourne GPO, formally commenced operations. The purchase of this clock, however, is shrouded in confusion with different stories circulating in the press of Joel Eade donating £300 towards it while another story is that it was Cr Aitken (Mayor for the opening of the Town Hall) who provided the same amount. Whatever may have been the case, at the time of its installation there was a clear statement made by a Councillor that the clock didn't cost Council a shilling despite its cost of £750!

It is likely that along with some private monetary contributions from Councillors, the Victorian government provided the clock in lieu of some portion of its contribution to the building and ongoing lease costs for Collingwood Town Hall. So a strange interpretation of the budget! The clock had been made by Mr Thomas Gaunt of Bourke Street, Melbourne, and the installation was carried out by Mr Ellery, the Government Astronomer, presumably again part of the contribution of the Victorian Government.

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However, the 1.5 ton inscribed bell was ordered, purchased and paid for by Collingwood Council. It was manufactured by the Whitechapel Bell Foundry Company in 1890 for the cost of £198 including shipping from England. With installation the cost of the bell totalled £250.

Some of you may have been up the Tower a few years ago when we had a Collingwood Historical Society tour of the Town Hall. And I understand that further up than we went, right up in the working of the clock, is an area where everyone who has worked on the clock over the years has signed their names. We know for example that a local jeweller/clockmaker Mr George Armfield did some work for Council and there is a family tradition that he worked on the clock. So we are hoping to find evidence of this in that panel once we get a copy of it.

Anecdotal evidence from people attending the tours indicates that the clock was still chiming until the mid 1980s when Council decided to silence it. Again, anecdotal evidence suggested that the reason for this was not mechanical failure but complaints from residents new to the area.

### **Municipal Functions**

Originally the staircase from the main foyer came up into this area. After its removal in the 1937-38 renovations, the space was used as a reception area and for councillors' suppers after meetings. At the front of the building the mayor had his own area of bedroom, bathroom and mayor's room. He did not live here, but could stay overnight after a late evening and could hold meetings with people in the Mayor's Room. In the 1930s a new staircase was installed, taking up the bathroom and half the bedroom. The remaining half of the bedroom became a small committee room.

Let's go into the Labor Room, originally the Mayor's Room and later a larger Committee Room. Despite some alterations, most notably the replacement of the ceiling in the 1930s, being in this room gives you a sense of what it would have been like in the nineteenth century. The fireplace, large windows opening onto balconies, the view across Hoddle St to Collingwood, and the nineteenth century chair. But why is it called the Labor Room? Look at the photographs of the walls and you will see that they are all Australian Prime Ministers. H'mmm perhaps not all the Prime Ministers are here. Yes, you have guessed it, only the Labor Prime Ministers. The Australian Labor Party (ALP) was a dominant force in Collingwood Council for many years. There were several periods where the council was wholly Labor, or with just one independent councillor. In one noted period, from 1960 to 1977, not only was every councillor a member of the Labor Party, but all candidates stood unopposed, so there was not a single vote cast. When one independent councillor managed to get elected in the 1980s, he had to cool his heels in a waiting area while the ALP caucus meeting was held in this room, before finally proceeding to the Council Chamber for the meeting proper.

Paintings and photographs of Collingwood mayors line the corridor leading to the Council Chamber.

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## Stop 6: Hall Keeper's Apartment, Council Chamber & Main Hall



Figure 8: Council meeting, c1890, Yarra Libraries

### Hall Keeper's Apartment & Council Chamber

The hall keeper was a residential position and basically the hall keeper was on call 24 hours a day. It was a busy job, locking up, preparing rooms for events, supervising dances, assisting councillors with meetings and refreshments, as well as a myriad of minor maintenance tasks, but also obviously a popular job, as hall keepers tended to stay for long stints. An exception was the first hall keeper who died on the job in 1891. His wife had done most of the work during his illness and was rewarded by council with the equivalent of two months' salary on her departure. The advertisement for a replacement attracted 105 hopeful applicants, and apparently, according to a letter to the newspaper from one disgruntled applicant, only Collingwood residents were eligible. The salary of £120 per annum plus free residence and utilities would have been attractive at this time as the first rumblings of the depression were being heard. William Alfred Scott started January 1892, then aged about 29 with two small children. In 1897 he featured in the local newspaper in relation to the horticultural show, because he had managed to protect the hall's precious timber floor from the predations of keen horticulturalists who insisted on watering their plants so that they would show to best advantage.

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By 1931 there were seven adults in residence, including his three children, his daughter-in-law and sister, as well as at least one grandchild. He retired in January 1932 after precisely 40 years of service and moved to nearby 138 Gipps St where he died at the age of 86. A photo of him after retirement shows a pleasant round-faced man who looks as though he would have been well-suited to this type of gregarious employment and probably popped round regularly for a chat with his old colleagues.

William's son Henry William Scott (Harry) became the hall keeper and kept the job into the 1960s. There were one or two brief appointments then Bruce Burton was appointed in the early 1970s and was the last resident, retiring in 1989. Bruce had four children who seem to have delighted in their unusual residence. Their maternal grandfather was Councillor G H Pearce.

The former flat has been used for years as office space but two fireplaces remain and there are windows opening on to the second courtyard. Two of the rooms are named after Larry Harrigan, the plasterer who worked on the external renovations in the 1980s, and Peter Petherick, an early rate collector and councillor.

The **Council Chamber**, although large, retains no original furniture and has been changed many times over the years, so holds little interest other than having been the location of council meetings from 1887 until 1994 when amalgamation took place. It would have been a great improvement on the old Council chambers in Johnston St (later the site of Collingwood Technical School) which had been used since 1860, following five years of makeshift accommodation.

### **Main Hall**

Prior to the construction of the Town Hall, rooms for large meetings and social events were in limited supply in Collingwood. As the building neared completion, the town hall committee was besieged by local organisations trying to make bookings for the wonderful new spaces, while council was awaiting the agreement of the governor, Sir Henry Loch, to attend the opening ceremony. This finally took place on 29 March 1887. With the official ceremony completed, the main hall was then used for a variety of civic and community events such as grand balls and receptions, concerts, memorial services, lectures, bazaars, political addresses, public meetings, and even weddings. In the twentieth century it was a popular dance venue, drawing people from other suburbs, and was particularly renowned during the interwar period for this function.

In 1937 to 1938 the town hall was extensively re-modelled by A.C. Leith and Bartlett and much of the current décor of the main hall reflects the Art Deco or Moderne aesthetic of the period. This decorative scheme has been largely retained in the recent building works, but vestiges of the 1887 painting scheme were uncovered intact behind the Moderne mouldings. This comprised dark brown and lighter eau-de-nil paint finishes, divided mid-height by a stencilled frieze incorporating stylised thistles, rendered in gold paint on a sepia-tinted background. Elsewhere, a

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simpler frieze decoration incorporating a 'Greek key' pattern was applied. These vestiges have been retained intact behind the re-attached mouldings.

The most distinctive of the nineteenth century remnants are the balcony and the lower portion of the deep dentillated plaster cornice, of which the upper part is concealed by the 1938 ceiling. The balcony is original, including two supporting cast iron fluted Corinthian columns; seats in the balcony date from either the 1880s or 1920s, with cast iron bases and tilting seats. The main hall contributed to the council income, for example in 1931 £800 was paid in rents.



Figure 9: *Ball at Collingwood Town Hall, c1940, Yarra Libraries*



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## Stop 7: Concluding Remarks

For well over a century, the stunning architecture of Collingwood Town Hall has been a prominent landmark in Hoddle Street and beyond. This comparatively rare example of nineteenth boom-style classicism stands as a monument to architect George Johnson, to the forethought (or perhaps the over-weening civic pride) of the councillors of the time, and to the careful work of the many builders, masons, painters and other tradespeople who have contributed to its magnificence. The significance of the building is rightly acknowledged on local, state and national registers and it has been an important hub for a wide range of municipal, government and community activities since its completion. With the most recent renovation fitting it for the demands of the twenty-first century as both a workplace and forum for a multitude of events, it should be able to serve the local community for the century to come.

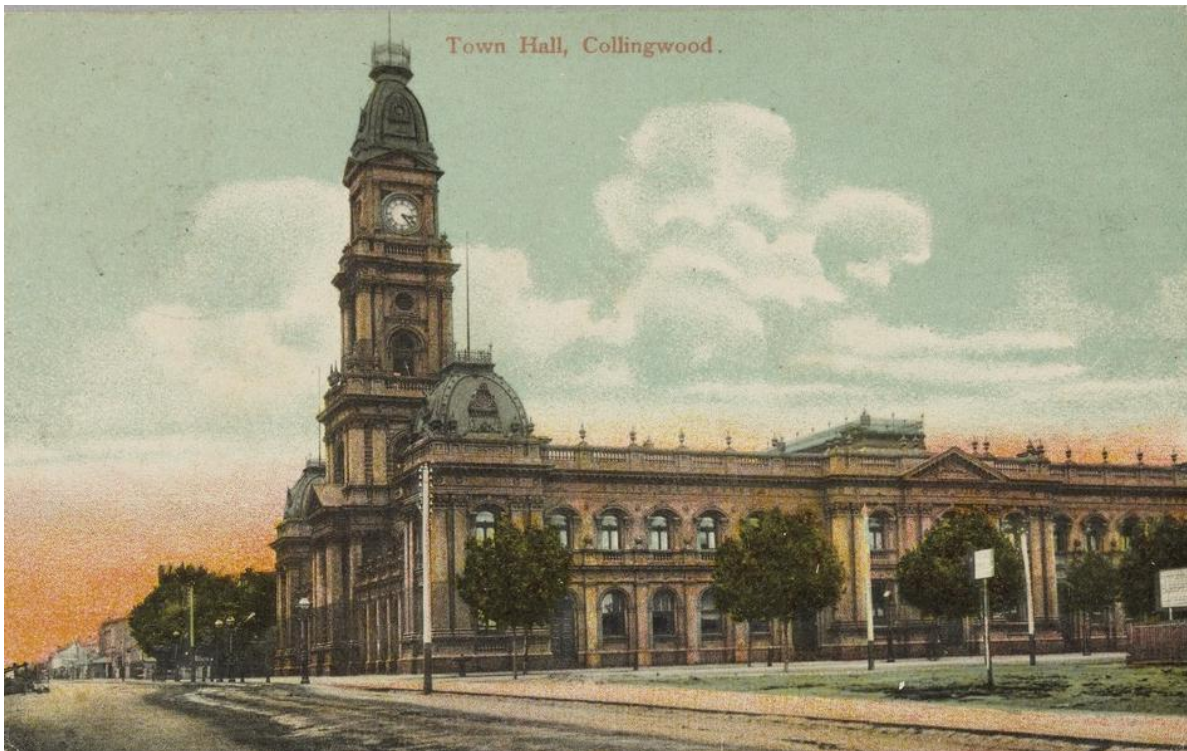


Figure 10: *Town Hall, Collingwood*, c1906, State Library of Victoria

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## Appendix: Room Names

### In the public domain

#### John Singleton Room

The enduring legacy of physician John Singleton (1808-1891) dates to his establishment in 1869 of the Collingwood Free Medical Health Dispensary in Wellington Street, where free medical care was given to needy people. Unusually for his time, Singleton was a strong supporter of the employment of women in medical practice. His dispensary has operated continuously until this day, moving in the 1970s to Sackville Street as the Collingwood Community Health Centre (now North Yarra Community Health).

#### Margaret Oats Room

This lounge room has been allocated particularly for the use of the clients of Family and Children's Services. It is called the Margaret Oats Room, in memory of the 'Angel of Collingwood' who, for over thirty years in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, was a well-known sight in Collingwood, wheeling her laden jeep to the houses of people in need of food, clothing and a kindly ear to listen to their problems.

#### Theo Sidiropoulos Room

Born in Greece in 1924, Theo Sidiropoulos immigrated to Australia in 1954 and became the first Greek-born Collingwood Councillor (1968-78), Mayor (1977-78) and Member of the Victorian Parliament (Member of the Legislative Assembly for Richmond 1977-1988). A leader both locally and in the Greek community, with a strong belief in social justice, Theo stood up and spoke out for migrants and minorities. Theo Sidiropoulos died in 1998 and hundreds of people farewelled him at Collingwood Town Hall.

### Not in the public access areas

#### Town Clerk's Room

From 1855 to 1988 the Town Clerk was the chief officer of the municipality of Collingwood. The first Town Clerk was J. J. Moody (1855-60). W. R. Butcher (1907-31) was Town Clerk for 24 years, while the last Town Clerk, L. Dudley Cook, served Council for 25 years (1962-1987). Altogether there were only ten Town Clerks from 1855 until 1988, when Council changed to a corporate management structure and appointed Geoff Myers as Chief Executive Officer.

#### Rita Jamieson Room

Rebecca "Rita" Jamieson was elected as the first woman on the Collingwood Council in 1963. An active member of the Union of Australian Women and one of a number of women from its Victorian branch who successfully broached the male bastion of Victorian local government, Rita fought to improve conditions for working class women and children, and was involved in the establishment of an after-school program in Collingwood. She was a Councillor until her death in 1970.

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## **Post Master's Office**

The 1887 construction of the Town Hall included separate accommodation for Post & Telegraph Offices, police court and cells. This practice was common with 19th century Town Hall building projects as funds from Government Departments helped to offset the initial building costs as well as providing long-term leases. At Collingwood the proposed initial Government contribution was £8,000. Abbotsford Post Office moved across the road in the early 1980s to a purpose built new building in Hood Street, Collingwood.

## **Ruthven Room**

William Ruthven was a second-generation Collingwood boy, son of a carpenter and educated at Vere Street State School. As a young man he was awarded the Victoria Cross for acts of conspicuous bravery during a battle near Ville-sur-Ancre during World War I, one of only 64 Australians to receive such an honour. Elected to council in the 1930s and serving as mayor in 1945-46, he went on to become a Member of the Legislative Assembly from 1945 to 1961. He was cremated with military honours in 1970

## **Joel Eade Room**

Councillor Joel Eade, a builder and architect who was strongly interested in improving the technical abilities of young artisans and apprentices, established the Collingwood School of Design in 1871 during his mayoral term. Classes were held in the Lecture Hall from the opening of the town hall until into the twentieth century. This area was originally the stage of the Lecture Hall.

## **Pioneers Room**

In 1941, after the Collingwood Bowling Club ceased existence, their former clubrooms were converted by Collingwood Council into a well-equipped and spacious Pioneers' Hall for the use of elderly people. The facility included a dance and concert hall, a reading room, a billiards room, a kitchen, and an office for the committee into whose control Council handed over the Pioneers' Hall. This facility was a precursor to the current Senior Citizens' Club.

**The Supper Room** recognises the former use of the area and the importance of the Collingwood Town Hall to the community during the heyday of the balls and dances held at the town hall from its opening until the 1980s.

## **First Floor rooms not in the public access areas**

### **Labor Room**

Prior to full council meetings, the Labor Caucus met in this committee room, its walls hung with pictures of Labor Prime Ministers. Collingwood Council was dominated by A.L.P. members from 1923 onwards and from 1960 until 1977 a Labor member held every council seat.

### **Harrigan Room**

Master plasterer Larry Harrigan devoted years of painstaking labour and craftsmanship to the restoration of the Town Hall exterior in the late 1970s and early 1980s. More generally, the room serves as a tribute to all the tradesmen and craftsmen who worked on the original structure or have maintained it over many years since.

# Collingwood Town Hall Tours

Sunday 13 July 2014

## **Petherick Room**

Peter Petherick was the first council rate collector and health inspector before being elected a councillor in 1860; his son Edward Petherick assisted his father in his municipal duties and later chronicled much of the local history of the second half of the nineteenth century. Edward became a central figure in the colonial-international book trade and a foremost authority on Australiana.

## **The Chess Room**

commemorates the location indicated on the 1880s plan of a Chess Room associated with the Library. The provision of a space for playing chess and draughts was common in libraries in the nineteenth century, and a number of draughts and chess clubs were active in Collingwood. However there are references to chess being played in the library itself and it appears this room may never have been used for its designated purpose.