

Time Begins: Geelong's *(Austin's)* Town Clock



Market Square 1856

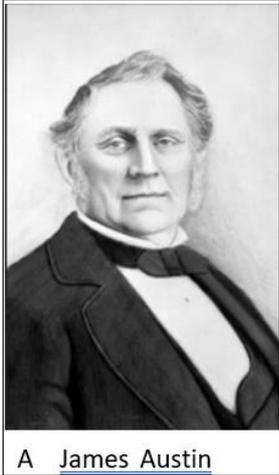
Harry Roberts

The Beginning -

Before you start reading view the video for background and context. [youtu.](#)



Great projects, objects and events begin with vision. One man's vision created a much loved timepiece which provided the correct Australian Eastern Standard Time for Geelong residents. It became an iconic and unique landmark for a proud and growing town.



A James Austin

James Austin, Geelong Town's second Mayor, and wealthy, self-made philanthropic pioneer, had that vision. He also possessed the civic contacts and financial means to make his vision come to life.

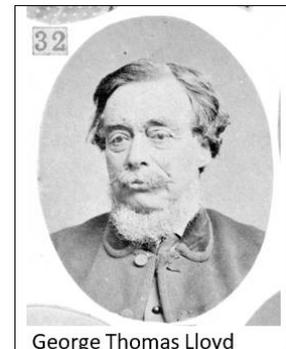
His vision: a Clock and Tower for Geelong's Market Square. The year was 1851.

James Austin's ambitious vision of a civic chronometer needed to be created and brought to life and that's where problems began.

Was the clock and tower to be erected as he requested? An easy question, but a complicated answer. It was implied and thought that the obvious place to position the tower and clock would be Geelong's Market Square, bordered: on the north by Malop Street, the east, by Yarra Street, the south by Little Malop Street and the west by Moorabool

Street. However, some people in the local community, and some members of the Town Council, had other ideas.

Geelong's Market Square was a logical place to erect a tower and clock. It had been a neglected area in the town's heart. In May 1845, before Geelong's first Town Council was established in 1849, Mr. George Thomas Lloyd wrote to Governor Gipps to recommend the swampy land in the centre of the fledgling town be designated as a reserve. It was thick with trees and the land was not suitable to build upon. Approval was granted.



George Thomas Lloyd

"DISTRICT COUNCIL OF GRANT

THURSDAY MAY 1ST, 1845

Present, Mr. Austin, Chairman; Mr. Sheppard, and Mr. Lloyd.

Mr. Lloyd brought forward the motion of which he had given notice, namely, that a letter should be addressed to his honor the Superintendent, requesting that the northern half of block 18, (at present a swamp in wet weather) should be reserved with a view to promote the healthiness of the town.

Mr. Sheppard said that he did not wish to oppose the motion, although he thought that a square, or place of promenade should be in a more elevated part of the town.

The motion was carried.."¹

¹ Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer, Saturday March 3 1845 page 2

This land, over the generations, was to undergo a metamorphosis and eventually became a central economic hub for the City of Geelong. At that time, Geelong was administered as the District Council of Grant.

Little money was expended, and no effort was made, to make this wasteland, attractive. In 1850 it was reported to be in a terrible, and unkempt state, although a drawing from that year shows a better image. Perhaps the Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer were being harsh or the artist generous.



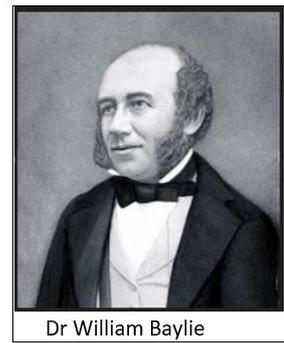
C. Courtesy Geelong Regional Library Heritage collection

Geelong Advertiser's observations tell it, as it was, on November 13th 1850

"Our Market Square - it is a misnomer and should have been called a domestic wilderness spoiled. Neither Bush nor town, it is too dirty for the one and too wild for the other. The centre of Corio - it is a desert, in summer a desert a dust hole, in winter a bog. The square is as unsightly as it is uncleanly, and it looks like so many acres of melancholy, promising a fine retreat to a hermit, or a misanthrope -it is too gloomy for a possum. Its presence is as awful as it is ill looking. It is a hollow heart, a vacancy dash where there should be the throb of commercial life and activity. It gives the lighter nature, being a vacuum occupying space, which no man can traverse without yawning and an inward dread of his if its desolating aspect, for it is tabooed to the Blue Devils."²

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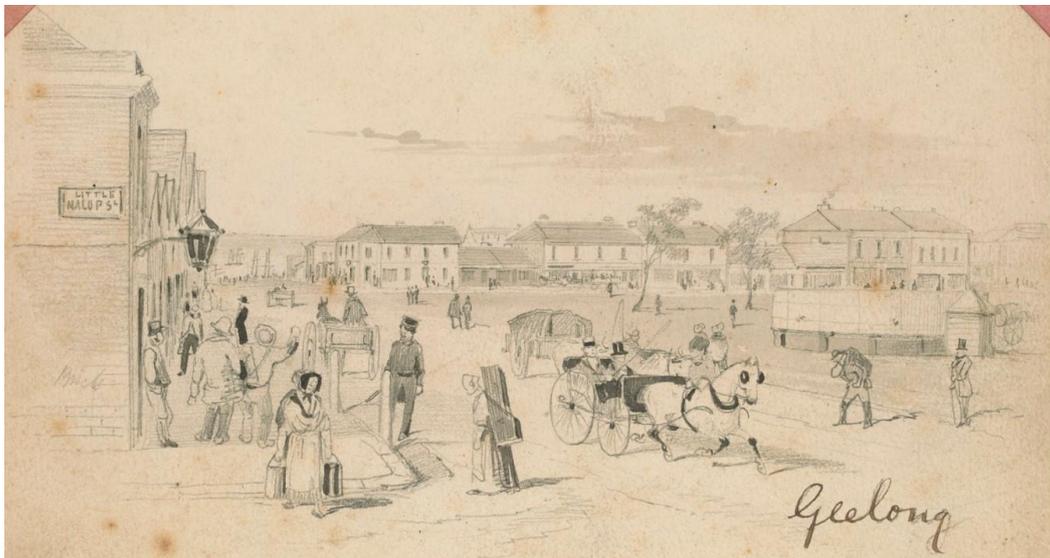
Civic pride eventually prevailed and in 1853 Mayor Baylie set about improving the appearance. No doubt, the discovery of gold to the north had an influence on Geelong's popularity as a gateway to the rich diggings. Its port was the closest point to Ballarat and many transient visitors bought goods and supplies before making their journey. People of every station in life and every description, passed through the port and onward to make their fortune.



Dr William Baylie

One person to visit during this period was an artist who followed these gold hungry men to find their 'Eldorado'. His name was Stuart Thomas Gill. We can visualize the town and the Market Square, because of the artwork. He too was transiting on his way to sketch life on the Ballarat Goldfield. His views of Market Square, circa 1853 have been passed down to us from the time before photographs captured real life.

S. T. Gill drew the streets bordering Market Square and parts of the Square.

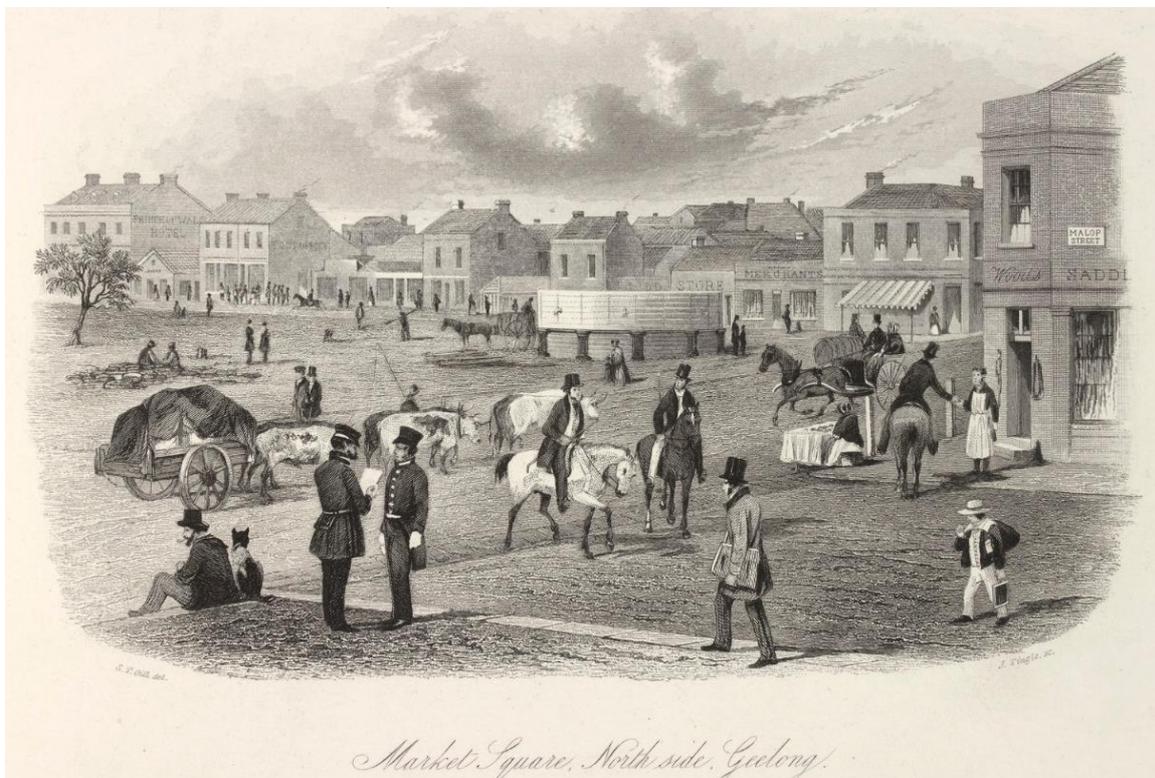


E Gill, Stuart Thomas, Market Square Geelong, Courtesy: State Library of Victoria Ref 11879



Market Square, looking NE from Malop St. Geelong.

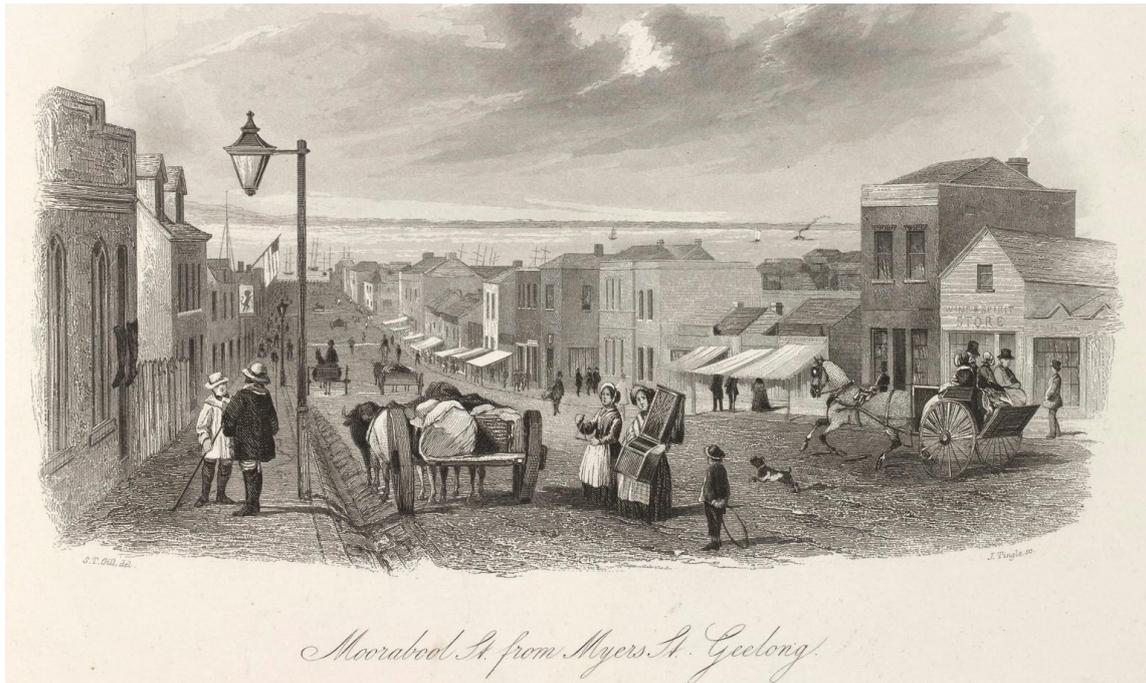
F Gill, Stuart Thomas, Market Square, looking NE from Malop Street. Geelong Courtesy State Library of Victoria



Market Square, North side, Geelong.

G Market Square, North side Geelong Courtesy: State Library of Victoria

Moorabool Street was also sketched.



H Gill, Stuart Thomas, Moorabool Street from Myers Street, Geelong Courtesy: State Library of Victoria

How did this celebrated civic chronometer begin its life?

At the end of his tenure as Mayor, in 1851, James Austin decided the town needed a Clock and he pledged a large sum of £200 towards its manufacture.

Geelong was still a developing town when the idea of a town clock was mooted and to have such a valuable, reliable chronometer was functionally and aesthetically important. In 1853 talk of a town clock and tower was changed to action to acquire a clock and tower. The task of making this vision a reality fell on the shoulders of the man who first recommended land be set aside for a Market Square – Mr. George Lloyd. He had left the colony and was residing in London.

Geelong's Town Council instigated the quest for the clock in its June 1853 meeting Geelong Advertiser on June 2nd, reported the town would also provide £100 for the framework

"Town Clerk

Mr. Myles informed the council that instructions had been given to Mr. G T Lloyd, to purchase a clock,

"...for the use of the public of Geelong to be erected in some part of the Market Square, and requested that the council would give an additional sum of 100 pounds for the purpose of the framework for the ornament. He had not yet received the money from Mr. James Austin, but of course acted in the matter upon the gentleman's promise as confidently as if he held the 200 in his hands.

*Moved by Councillor Myles, seconded by Councillor Baylie, that the Mr. TG Lloyd be further advised to draw up the town council to the extent of £100 for the purpose of procuring A suitable tower for the clock. Carried. The meeting then adjourned”*³

In 1853, George Thomas Lloyd had travelled to England and he was given the responsibility to organize for a clock design, manufacture and shipment. The design included a very Australian kangaroo weathervane at the top of the finial.

George Lloyd recorded in a later memoir that had received his commission to obtain an iron tower and clock.

“Shortly after my arrival in [London] in the year 1853, I received a Commission from the Municipal Corporation of Geelong, Victoria, to obtain an iron tower, suitable for the placing and reception of a handsome town clock, value £200, “presented by Mr. James Austin on his retirement from mayoralty.”⁴

Correspondence to Mr. Lloyd was sent by the Town Clerk. The July meeting noted the outgoing correspondence.

... also, to G T Lloyd, Esq., transmitting a draft for £300 for the purchase of a town clock and tower...”⁵

As arrangements were being made news came that Mr. James Austin had announced his departure from Geelong to return to his home in England, due to family reasons. A Farewell Dinner was organized for him at Mack’s Hotel on February 27th 1854. Mayor Baylie proposed a toast to Mr. Austin’s health and wished him well on his forthcoming trip home to England.

James Austin was flattered and overcome by the honour of a civic farewell. Councillors expressed their gratitude for his services and financial contribution to the community. James Austin responded, claiming to be a poor public speaker and a person who had trouble expressing his feelings. He reminisced about his first days in Geelong and recalled when he first arrived kangaroos fed in the paddocks and natives lived where the town now stands. He had seen every building in town constructed.

“ I came here a poor man, with the desire, like many more to become a rich man. I have been lucky, and I am rich, and thank God for it... His worship referred to the Town Clock. I pass that by – for I have another object in view. We see many orphans here – children abandoned by their parents, or whose parents , through crime, are in prison. ... my solicitor, who is present, will have instructions to hand over £500 towards the building of the Geelong Orphan Asylum. It is an institution much needed, and one that you cannot put up too soon.”⁶

The reported wrote:

“After a few more toasts, and assays at eloquence, the company broke up, after an evening of pleasure, unmarred by a single ‘*contre temps*’.”⁷(disagreement)

³ Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Thursday June 2 1853 page 2

⁴ Jillong Pocket : Then and Now Photographs, JillongPocket.wordpress.com page 122

⁵ Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Wednesday, 20 July, 1853 page 27

⁶ Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer, Wednesday 1 March 1854 p 4

⁷ Ibid page 4

Discussion about the tower and clock went quiet for some time, but in September, 1854 the Town Council discussion began again concerning possible locations for the tower. Conflicting views held and expressed.

Alderman William Burrow and Councillor Deering recommended Market Square.

Councillor Riddle, although not opposed to the Square location, thought a more prominent location would be better and he suggested the Church Hill. (ie. at the top of Moorabool Street).

Councillor O'Farrell was strongly opposed to Market Square, and observed:

“... the Tower and Clock would be literally buried in the Market Square, and of no possible use to any of the inhabitants, but those living in the immediate neighbourhood: he would have the Town Clock placed on such an eminence as could be seen from the Barrabool Hills or from Lake Connewarre.”⁸

Alderman Bright agreed with Councillor O'Farrell. He believed that placing the Tower and Clock in Market Square would be:

“..like placing a candle under a bushel, and not one tenth the utility to the community, as though erected upon one of the many eminences surrounding this beautiful town.”⁹

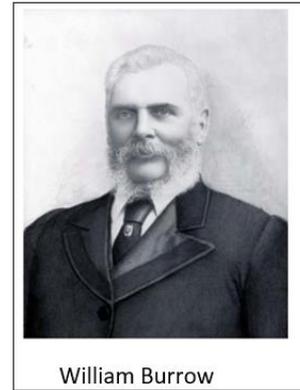
Councillor Deering brought the focus back to the purpose of the clock as a “Town Clock” and had:

“hitherto laboured under the impression that it was a Town Clock they were about to have out from London; but the observations that had just fallen from the last speakers, it was about to commence a ‘country block’. He had imagined that most country gentlemen conducted their business when in town, and upon such occasions took the opportunity of correcting their watches; and this could be best done by having it placed in Market Square.”¹⁰

The Chairman thought such a ‘beautiful and ornamental piece of construction’ should not be in the suburbs. The motion to place the Tower and Clock in Market Square was postponed.

London, England, 1854.

While Councillors in Geelong argued about its placement, progress with the Tower and clock’s construction was being advanced in London. By the end of 1854 the clock was constructed and ready to ship. News of the wonderful tower was proudly boasted in the *Illustrated London News* on December 30th, 1854.



⁸ Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Wednesday, 13 September, 1854 page 4

⁹ Ibid Page 4

¹⁰ Ibid Page 4



J Illustrated London News Masthead C, 1854

British residents received a detailed description of the Tower's features in the London newspaper and the article praised the skill and design of British people. It likened Geelong to Liverpool in the north west of England. The tower was erected on Mr. Moore's premises in the London suburb of Clerkenwell and it was ready to be sent to Geelong. The article stated Market Square was the tower's ultimate destination and it praised Governor Gipps for allocating a Town Square of eight acres for '*promoting the health of the place*'.

Praise was not sustained by the *Illustrated London News* and scorn was leveled at members of the Geelong Town Council, stating:

“... we regret to learn that this sanitary measure is likely to be nullified by the cupidity and narrow-minded policy of certain members of the Town Council, who are desirous of converting this fine area into a fish and cabbage- market.”¹¹

Exalting the tower and clock's features, the *Illustrated London News* in an article headed “IRON CLOCK-TOWER FOR GEELONG” . The article described the tower and clock's many features and gave a precise description and an illustration of the structure was included. A summary of those features, below, highlights its characteristics and dimensions.

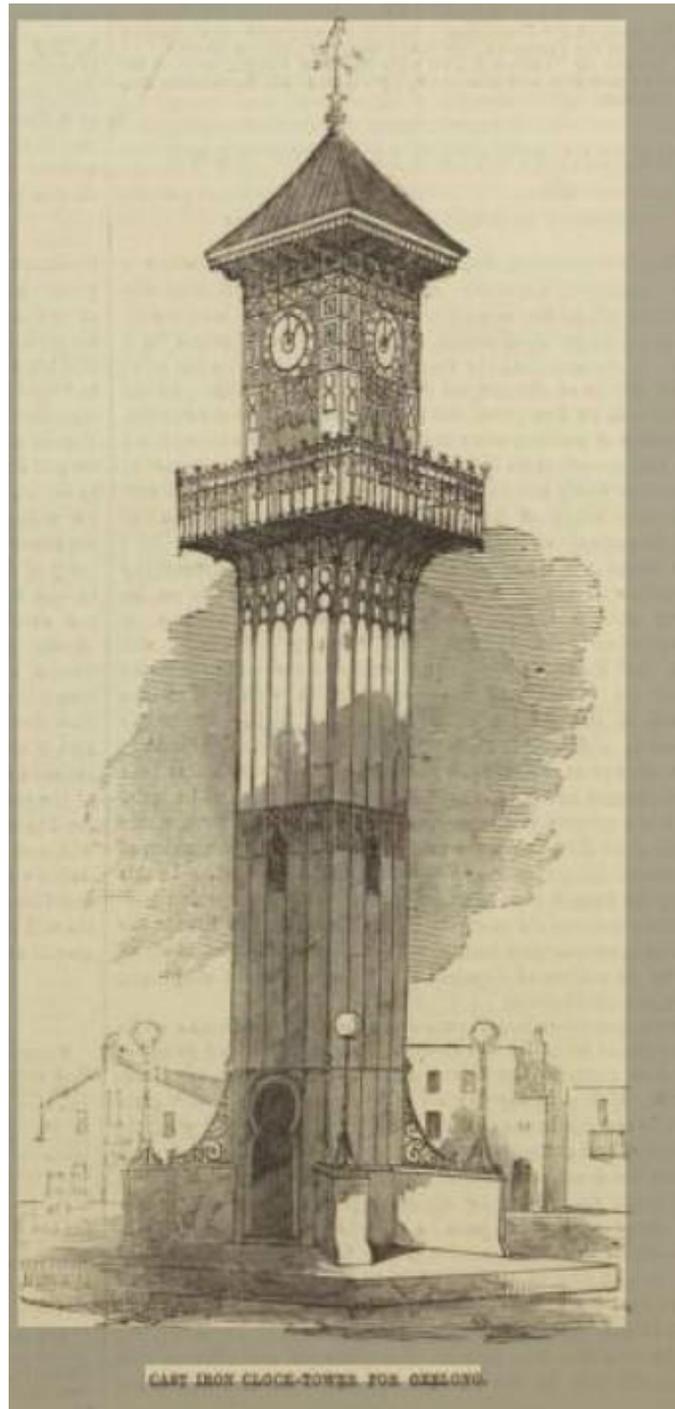
The tower was the first to combine an iron frame and tiles, which provided scope for various forms of exterior ornamentation. Commenting on the tower's strength, it stated it is stronger than a house or church, with a metal net stretched over an inner rib and plastered over. A space between the plastered inner wall and exterior tiles made the tower comfortable inside in winter and summer temperatures. Constructed from cast iron, the tower's structure was designed to be erected faster than stone and to prevent oxidization of the cast, wrought iron an elaborate construction was devised of 'dovetails, snugs and sockets' and then completely covered with lead.

¹¹ The Illustrated London News December 30 page 690

- * Height 60 feet
- * Shaft width 7 feet
- * Iron framework
- * Doorway of Moorish style
- * Good space for weights
- * Four lamps at the base
- * Tower has singular use – clock
- * Ornamental tiles near Gallery
- * 14x11inch stone coloured tiles
- * Tile exterior made by Minton
- * Balustrades and footway of elegant ironwork design
- * Frame of dovetail and socket joints are run with lead.
- * Designed by James Edmeston
- * Clock - Four illuminated dials

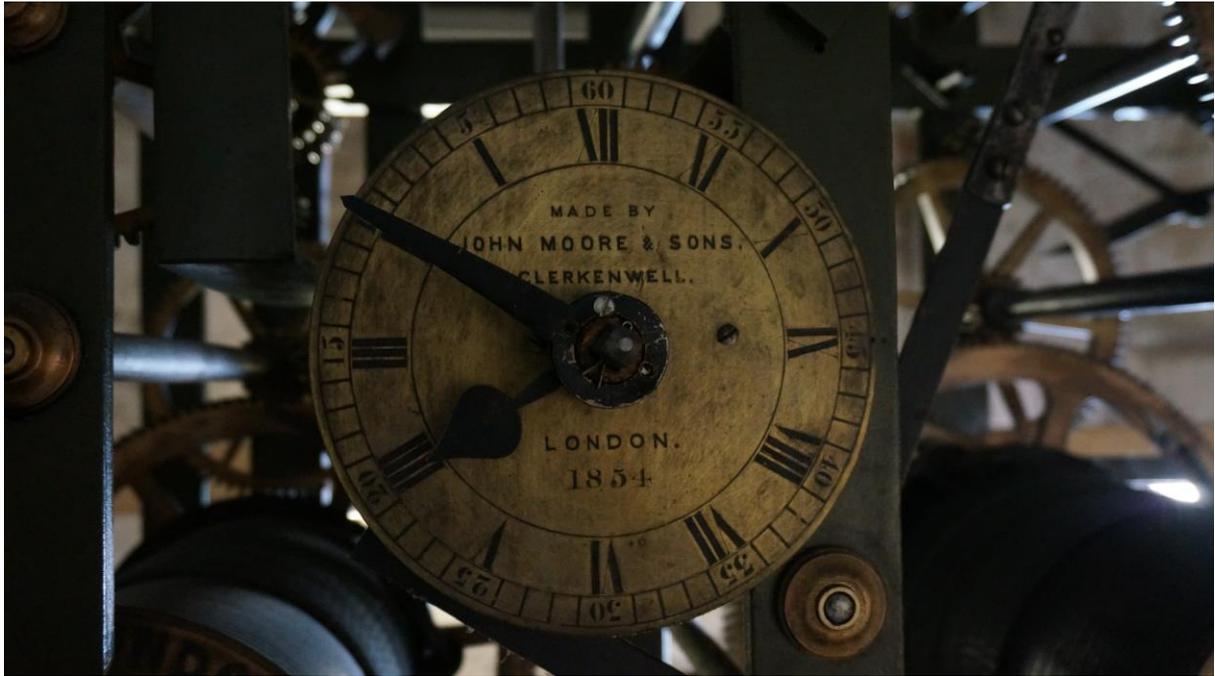


K Actual clockface today



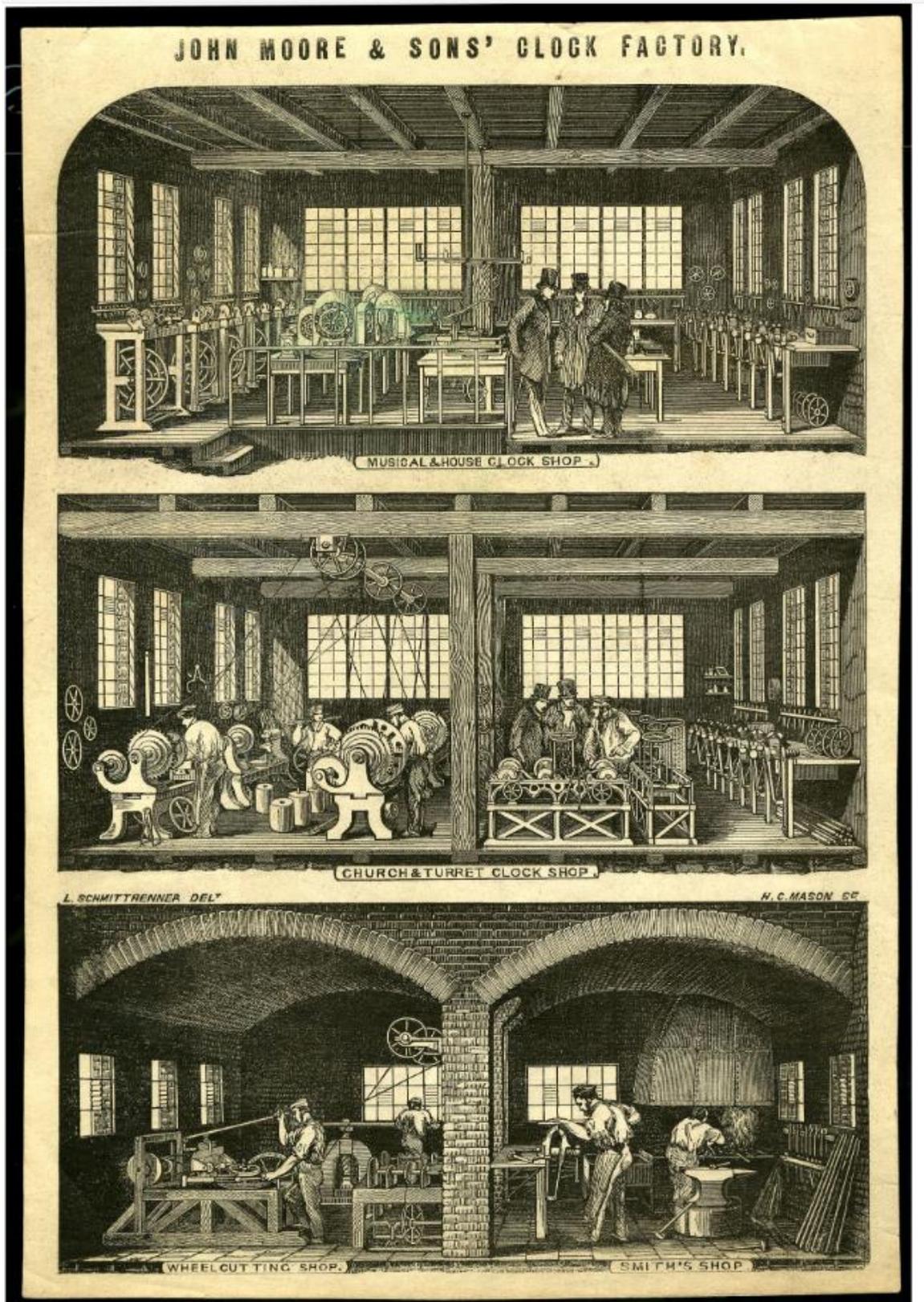
L Cast Iron Tower for Geelong Courtesy:

Illustrated London News, December 30, 1854 p689



M Photograph of the original mechanism still working today.

Mr. George Lloyd had opted for a turret clock for the tower, to be constructed by renowned clockmaker John Moore and his sons, Benjamin and Josiah, who themselves had an impeccable reputation.



Courtesy [gear-shop-england-1840-1870s-3-story-plant-clockmaker.JPG \(1775x2500\)](#)
([blacksmithandmachineshop.com](#))

It was anticipated the Tower would arrive in April 1855 and a letter from Mr. Lloyd verified that speculation. Correspondence from Mr. Lloyd informed them the tower and clock would be sent

about February 14th, 1856. A subsequent letter informed the of a delay, but eventually the clock arrived ¹² on the Aallottar, a barque of 55 tons. She docked in Geelong's Outer Harbour at Point Henry on November 2nd, 1855. Aallottar's manifest shows clearly the clock was on board. The barque cleared the Heads on November 1st and came straight to Geelong after a journey taking 112 days from London.

Verification of that arrival was published on November 12 in the *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer*.

Two days later, a short article explained its position was still on the ship waiting for 'lighters' to unload the tower.

"The site, we believe, has already been fixed in the Market Square, and its erection without loss of time will confer a great public benefit. " ¹³

From Point Henry, Aallottar was brought into the Geelong inner harbour. Due to her draft of fourteen feet three inches she struggled to sail over the notorious sand bar and she ran aground, but didn't sustain any damage. Aallottar tied up to Moorabool Street Wharf on November 20th as the *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer* recorded the following day.

By Saturday December 8th, 1855 the clock had landed, but there was a break in part of the pedestal or column of the tower and the problem prompted the *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer* to postulate three important questions:

Who shall bear the cost of repair?

Who will do the repair? And

Where should the tower and clock be erected?

The writer cleverly raises many contemporary issues in his discussion of the answers. His sarcasm is very cutting and humorous.

He claims the Geelong Corporation can't pay the bill to repair the column, because they have no funds. Subscription of the burgesses would cover the cost, but once they contribute, they can have a say in where it is erected.

Two prominent suggestions were circulating at the time as to the clock's location. One place was the top of Moorabool Street at the intersection of McKillop Street and the Market Square. The logic of having the tower on top of the hill was so the wider community can see the time. The newspaper reporter commented that residents at Indented head might:

"... dispense with their time pieces and invest in telescopes, and – we don't know how they would manage, because they wouldn't see the clock – perhaps it would be better for them to keep their watches." ¹⁴

¹² *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer* Wednesday 17 October, 1855 page 2

¹³ *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer* Wednesday 14 November 1855, page 2

¹⁴ *Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer* December 8 1855, page 2

Residents in Chilwell and Irishtown : "...would be amply provided."

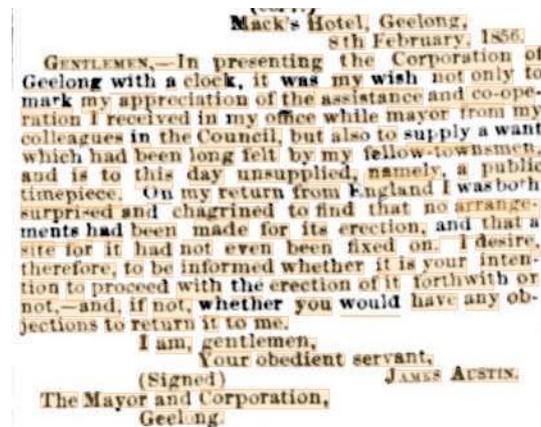
In arguing for the Market Square site, he is scathing in his summation of the benefits, while criticising Town Council neglect and ineptitude.

"Simply, that it is the centre of business, a hollow square, constantly charged by tax gatherers, surrounded by expensive erections contiguous to the wharves, shipping, warehouses – a desert kept up as a desert by the Corporation, a cherished nuisance channeled all round about to protect hideous, gnarled gum trees, some withered by paralysis and other pushing out their branches in cramped contortions and agony."

15

The reporter's brilliant sarcasm sums up the past appalling performance of the city fathers in selecting places for public buildings. He chides them for building the Town Hall at the site of a dam and the Telegraph Office outside the town central business area. Concluding and extending his sarcasm he writes that because the Market Square is the best place for the Tower and clock, it is probably the least likely place it will be erected and "*... the clock will be put as far out of town as possible.*"¹⁶

A state of paralysis appeared to afflict the Corporation of Geelong, regarding the erection of the clock. On his return to Geelong, from London for a short visit, James Austin was less than impressed about the delay. A copy of James Austin's letter to the Mayor and Corporation, dated February 8th, 1856, was printed in full in the newspaper. Up to the day of printing the letter in the newspaper, on Thursday, 28 February, Mr. Austin had not received a reply.



Mack's Hotel, Geelong,
8th February, 1856.
GENTLEMEN,—In presenting the Corporation of Geelong with a clock, it was my wish not only to mark my appreciation of the assistance and co-operation I received in my office while mayor from my colleagues in the Council, but also to supply a want which had been long felt by my fellow-townsmen, and is to this day unsupplied, namely, a public timepiece. On my return from England I was both surprised and chagrined to find that no arrangements had been made for its erection, and that a site for it had not even been fixed on. I desire, therefore, to be informed whether it is your intention to proceed with the erection of it forthwith or not,—and, if not, whether you would have any objections to return it to me.
I am, gentlemen,
Your obedient servant,
(Signed) JAMES AUSTIN.
The Mayor and Corporation,
Geelong.

N Letter by Mr. James Austin to the Mayor of Geelong Courtesy: Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Thursday 28 February 1856 p2

Disappointed, if not angry that he had not received a reply by February 21st, James Austin wrote another letter, again printed in the newspaper on February 28th. The speculative solution to the clock's repair and erection suggested by the Editor of the Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer, had come to fruition. James Austin's letters achieved the objective he desired: to begin the process of erecting the clock, but there were unexpected outcomes that I am sure, he did not foresee from his erstwhile friends.

¹⁵ Ibid page 2

¹⁶ Ibid page 2

Geelong, 23rd February, 1856.

GENTLEMEN,—Referring to my letter of 5th instant, to which I cannot but think the courtesy of an acknowledgement was due, I have again to call your attention to the subject of the public Clock being most anxious to see some movement made in the matter before I return to England.

If, as I have been informed, the Corporation are prevented from erecting it by a want of funds, I would respectfully suggest for your consideration, the following plan:—Let a meeting of the inhabitants be called, and a committee appointed to receive subscriptions for the purpose of erecting it. With regard to the difficulty in fixing on a site, I would propose that each subscriber of £1 should have one vote, and for each additional £1 one additional vote, as to the locality in which it should be placed. The spirit of emulation thus excited would, I venture to predict, induce subscriptions sufficient not only to erect the tower, but also, perhaps, a neat stone sub-structure, on which to place it. If this proposal meets with your approval, I will be glad if you will call such a meeting at once, as I am anxious to see the matter decided on before leaving 1st proximo; and I will be most happy to give my best assistance in carrying out such an arrangement.

Your obedient servant,
(Signed) JAMES AUSTIN.

The Mayor and Corporation,
Geelong.

O Letter by Mr. James Austin to the Mayor of Geelong Courtesy: Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Thursday 28 February 1856 p2

At long last, some action was about to commence. A Notice Paper was published on March 3rd, 1856 for the following day's meeting at 2pm. Point two of that Notice was:

HIS DEER GENTLEMEN:

2.—To consider and order on arrangements to be made for the Erection of the Town Clock and Tower, recently received from England, in connexion with certain letters on this subject, received from James Austin, Esq.

P Notice of Town Council meeting Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Monday 3 March 1856 p2

Instead of expressing contrition and apologising about the delay of erection of the clock tower, or the Corporation's lack of courtesy in not acknowledging or replying to Mr. Austin's correspondence, SOME members of the Council mounted a vicious personal attack on Mr. Austin. Prior to Mr. Austin's departure to England, these same men had praised him at a farewell dinner in his honour. Now the much-feted former mayor and leading citizen was reviled and belittled. Some prominent members of the Council took turns in injecting their venomous and spiteful remarks.



James Noble

Dutifully, the Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer, *apparently no close friend of the Corporation based on their sarcastic December 8th article*, recorded the conversations at the meeting and printed them the next day on Tuesday 4 March 1856.

Both letters were read at the Council meeting, by the Town Clerk,. Alderman Noble made the first comment.

"...in the first letter the phrase occurred 'in presenting the Corporation with a clock' but Mr. Austin had not done this. He gave (the Council) £200 and they subsequently got a clock which cost £700 or £800. Now as Mr. Austin was so anxious to

get back the clock, he (Alderman Noble) would have no objection to give it up on condition of Mr. Austin repaying the balance.”¹⁷

Councillor Richardson thought Alderman Noble’s amount was undervalued and Alderman Richardson wanted to add another £200 for erection costs.

Mayor, Dr. Alexander Thomson, believed the letters should be withheld from view and discussion until Mr. Austin withdrew ‘certain expressions’. He added:

“The language in the first letter was very improper – indeed, he considered it impertinent. Mr. Austin was in no position to demand what they (the Council) meant to do, and he (the Mayor) should move that the letters should not be received.”¹⁸

The Mayor also had no objection to returning the clock to Mr. Austin for the sum of £830.

Alderman Noble moved :

“...‘that the clock and tower be returned to Mr. James Austin in accordance with his request, on condition that he repays the Council the sum of £830.”¹⁹

The TOWN CLERK – That is exclusive of interest.

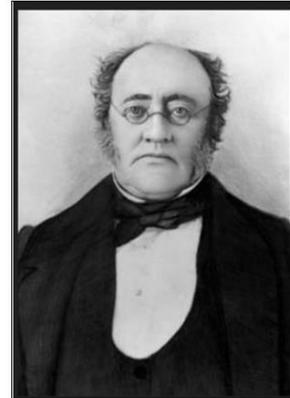
Ald. Noble – We won’t mind the interest”

Mayor Thomson observed that if Mr. Austin did not “... *take the matter in his own hands.*” Council would have to decide where the clock was to be placed and if residents did not know that information, they would be reticent or refusing to contribute any funds to its erection. He then outlined the issues with the top of the hill site. The Moorabool Street/McKillop Street junction required owners on all four sides to forfeit twelve feet of their property and Mr. Gray, one of the four, would not give “.. *a single foot.*” Market Square appeared to be the only logical place.

The meeting progressed and the Councillor Noble’s motion was seconded by Councillor Waldock.

Councillor Richardson then moved an amendment;

“That his worship the Mayor do call a meeting at an early date, in the Town Hall, in order to give the burgesses an opportunity to express their opinion on the site for the town clock, and to take steps for providing ways and means to erect the same.”²⁰



Dr Alexander Thomson

¹⁷ Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Monday 5 March 1856 page 2

¹⁸ Ibid page 2

¹⁹ Ibid page 2

²⁰ Ibid page 2



John Richardson

Speaking to the amendment, Councillor Richardson believed the public should be:

“...disabused of the impression that the gentleman had given them the clock, as he did not give one fourth the cost of it.”²¹

He said the majority of residents would view the clock in the Market Square.

Councillor Lowe wanted to know if the gift of the clock was conditional upon it being located in the tower, and the response was the money was given without conditions.

To their credit and evenhandedness, some Councillors did side with Mr. Austin’s concerns, although they conceded his letters may have caused offence to some on the Council. They spoke highly of his philanthropy to the community.

“Councillor Ryan thought it was bad taste to fall out with Mr. Austin for giving them £200. It was natural after his long absence that the gentleman should enquire about the clock, and feel somewhat annoyed at nothing having been done in the matter. The letters were not, perhaps, as respectful as they might be, but the Council need not take notice of this, as he was sure Mr. Austin meant no insult to them.”²²

John Richardson Courtesy State Library Victoria id 2542749 fnwp004956

Councillor Waldock was not satisfied and suggested if the public were indebted to Mr. Austin then he should also be indebted to them for making him rich! He also cited the fact that he recently asked Mr. Austin for a donation to the Mechanics Institute and he refused.



R. M. Treacey

Alderman Treacey strongly and vehemently stood up for Mr. Austin’s philanthropy.

“..no man ever left these shores who had given such handsome donations to our public institutions as Mr. Austin had done. He had given £200 to the Council and the council might add £5000 to that sum if they liked. Mr. Austin might well feel surprised and disappointed at finding that nothing had been done in this matter. The speaker briefly enumerated the various munificent donations of Mr. Austin to our charitable institutions previous to his departure for England: and also an instance in which he had acted very kindly and remitted a claim on a widow, on whose property he held a mortgage for £200. Let them not forget the good acts of Mr. Austin, even though he might not be able to suit the nice tastes of some gentleman.”²³

Councillor Lowe added he had money in his pocket from Mr. Austin to donate to local charities.

Mayor Thomson admitted his friendship with Mr. Austin for many years and regretted being “obliged” to speak of the letter as he did.

²¹ Ibid page 2

²² Ibid page 2

²³ Ibid page 2

Councillor Noble's motion and Councillor Richardson's amendment were put to the vote, and both passed with a small majority.

How sentiments had changed toward James Austin since his official farewell dinner.

No more was heard of James Austin for a long time and he refused to buy his clock back.

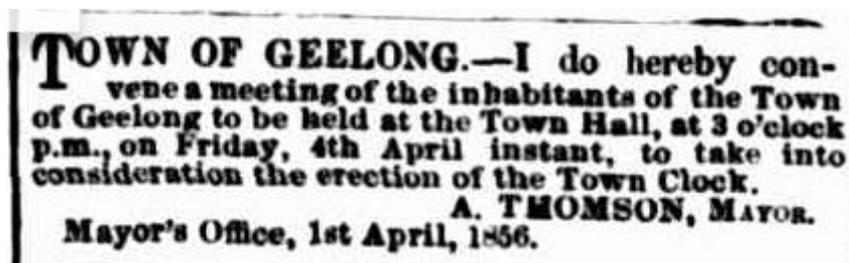
Geelong Advertiser's Editor, Mr James Harrison, must have enjoyed personifying the Tower and Clock and using that pseudonym to write to himself on March 8th

"THE TOWN CLOCK

To the Editor of the Geelong Advertiser.

Sir, - Here I have been on the floor of the Town Hall for a length of time, anticipating to be elevated to the position to which I am titled; to be, in fact, 'the observed of all observers.' But yesterday my nerves were rather shaken when I heard that I was not worthy of acceptance - my pride was touched a bit too. The Town Council say that my former master must take me back again, but Mr. Editor, if you can use your influence, don't let him. I've plenty of friends out of doors, who will willingly give me a lift into a position and I don't want a voyage home again. I promise to do my work well if the townspeople will only keep me. *The Town Clock* " ²⁴

And so it was, the tower and clock stayed, not because of the Editorial, but because Mr. Austin refused to buy it back. If nothing else, Mr. Austin's letters created a burst of activity by the Town Council. The first thing they did, as recommended by Alderman Richardson, was to place an advertisement in the newspaper on Wednesday, April 2nd, 1856



U Advertisement for a Town Meeting about the clock Courtesy: Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Wednesday 2 April 1856

On Friday 4th April, the newspaper reminded residents of the 3 pm meeting at the Town Hall to consider the erection of the Town Clock. The article also suggested that: "The best site for the clock will probably be the chief question for discussion. The meeting will also consider the steps to be taken to meet the expenses of its erection." ²⁵

²⁴ Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Saturday 8 March 1856 page 2

²⁵ Geelong Advertiser Friday 4 April page 3

THE TOWN CLOCK.—The Mayor has convened a meeting of the inhabitants for 3 o'clock, this afternoon, at the Town Hall, to take into consideration the erection of the Town Clock. The best site for the clock will probably be the chief question for discussion. The meeting will also have to consider the steps to be taken to meet the expenses of its erection.

V Advertisement for a Town Meeting about the clock Courtesy: Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Friday 4 April 1856

At 3pm sharp the meeting was convened and chaired by Mayor Thomson with 40 people in attendance and more arriving later. As predicted, Mayor Thomson said it was an opportunity for Geelong's inhabitants to have their say on the tower's erection and means of financing the project. Using a drawing of the tower and clock, he ran through the placement options. Mayor Thomson spoke about the top of Moorabool Street and the impediments to the proposal by adjoining land holders. He then spoke about Market Square, and being controlled by Council, they could do what they like there. A third option mentioned was Gheringhap Street. Mayor Thomson concluded that there were insufficient members of the community at the meeting to be representative of the whole town and the Council's desire was to meet the wishes of the public. He indicated the Tower must be in a position favourable to the greatest number in order to maximise donations.



W Christ church top of Moorabool Street – suggested clock site opposite c.1853

“A report had been received from the Town Surveyor, saying it would cost £300 to erect the tower. £1030 had already been expended on the clock and tower; £200 having been presented by Mr. Austin and £830 in addition defrayed by the corporation. If the public could meet the further sum of £300 the clock could be erected.”²⁶

Councillor Myles said the tower needs to be in a place to ornament the town and be most useful.

Mr. Paull said he wanted to be able to see the clock in Chilwell.

Mr. Down countered the suggestion saying the old inhabitants thought the town centre was in Market Square and at that time, Chilwell was the bush. The old inhabitants wouldn't put it there.

Arguments continued for various locations and for various reasons until Councillor Richardson strongly argued for Market Square, countering previous assertions. He moved a motion that it should be the Market Square. Mr. Hedrick seconded the motion and McKenzie agreed with it.

Mayor Thomson put the motion to the vote, and it was carried by a show of hands with Mr. Paull the only dissenter.

To close the meeting, A committee to collect subscriptions was formed comprised of: Mayor Thomson, Alderman Burrow, Alderman Bright, Messrs.' Bryan, Cowie, Paterson, John Noble and Wm. Bell.

Now the final decision was made to place the tower and clock in Market Square the job of erecting it was put out to tender and an advertisement was placed in the newspaper on May 1st

TOWN OF GEELONG.—Clock Tower.—
Notice is hereby given, that fresh tenders will be received until Monday the fifth May next, at 12 o'clock, noon (and not later) from parties willing to contract for the Mason Work and the erection of the iron tower for the reception of the Town Clock) in the Market-square, Geelong.
Specifications (as altered) may be seen, and full information afforded, in reference to the above works, on application to the Town Surveyor, at his office, Town Hall.
The tenderers will be held bound by their tenders, and no excuse of mistake will be entertained.
The tenders must be addressed to the Chairman of the "Clock Committee," and deposited in the tender box, at the Town Hall.
The lowest, or any tender, will not necessarily be accepted.
WILLIAM WEIR,
Town Hall, April 30, 1856. Town Clerk.

X Advertisement for Construction Tender

A question arose as to who had the job of winding up the clock? Sarcastically, the person who asked the question in the newspaper naughtily quipped:

“Who will venture among the swamps of the Market Square in the rainy season?”

²⁶ Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Saturday 5 April 1856 page 2

Unless it be the town inspector, there is no man in Geelong tall enough to keep his head above the mud in such a perilous enterprise.”²⁷

Prior to the construction process the Town Surveyor had to take necessary measurements in order to mark the precise location of the tower. The earlier comment regarding mud appeared to be realized even before a sod of earth was turned.

“A rumour prevailed for a short time that one man of the surveyor’s party being of a rash temperament and, consequently, not exercising sufficient vigilance in crossing the desolate region in which he was employed, had stuck fast and would require to be dugout.”²⁸

However, a reporter discovered it was just a rumour.

Work began in earnest by May 12th, under the successful tenderer Mr. James Leggatt. Nearly £300 has been raised and part paid. Foundations would take a considerable sum and another £150 would be required for erection and painting.

An unintended result of the Town Surveyor’s report was the request to cut down the old trees that had survived in the Square. Apparently, they were not just a visual obstruction, but damaged by abuse over many years. Reluctantly, it was agreed they would meet their end at the sharp end of an axe.

Wet weather near the end of May did delay the planned laying of foundations and effort to raise the tower. Funds were also starting to run low. Eventually, considerable work on the foundations was completed in June and on July 1st a ceremony was held in Market Square for the laying of the Foundation Stone.



Y Laying the Foundation Stone by Mayor Thomson, 1 July 1856

²⁷ Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Friday 9 May 1856 page 2

²⁸ Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Saturday May 10 1856 page 2

Photographer, Joseph Turner, took a photograph of Geelong residents gathered in Market Square on July 5th, 1856. The photograph purports to be that of the laying of the Town Clock foundation stone. It was laid by Doctor Alexander Thomson.

“THE TOWN CLOCK – On Tuesday morning, at 10:00, a considerable number of persons assembled to witness the ceremony of laying the foundation stone for the Town Clock, which was performed by his worship the Mayor of Geelong, Alexander Thomson Esq. ...The Mayor then performed the ceremony of laying the stone amidst great cheering, and when the task was completed 9 times 9 was given for queen and country, and 3 times 3 for the Mayor, who smilingly bowed to the compliment saying, ‘well gentlemen I wish you a good morning’.”²⁹

The day was exactly five years since the separation of the colony of Victoria from New South Wales.

Finishing touches to foundations and the tower were almost complete and it was ready to be raised, but incessant rain prevented work on the site.

Funds were quickly being eroded by construction costs and a special request was made for more subscriptions to be given to the treasurer, Mr. Bryan. A special meeting of the “Clock Committee” met on July 24 at the Town Clerk’s Office. Previous reports of £383 being raised were incorrect and the sum was £100 less. Another £150 was needed. Banks were to be targets for contributions to make up the shortfall. The Bank of Victoria, the Bank of Australasia and the Union Bank had already committed funds, but not the London Charter Bank. Councillor Burrow was hopeful that the Bank of New South Wales would also provide a donation. More canvassing in the community was required, too.

Mr. Leggett’s work was praised by the Council for its meticulous detail, and he was also to be considered for the ironwork tender that was to be advertised.

By August 6th the installation date for the clock and tower was estimated to be one month away. This was a surprising estimate given that by August 20th it was still, “... *in a horizontal instead of a perpendicular position.*” The Argus newspaper commented:

“I very much doubt if one of the terrible gales of wind we are sometimes visited with, do not capsize the tower, clock, and all.”³⁰

The predicted date of tower construction was on the mark, because by October 15th. It was reported ;

“THE GEELONG TOWN CLOCK-The town clock is nearly completed. In a few days the hands will be affixed to the dials and the opportunity afforded our townsmen of knowing the correct time of day. Mr. Leggett has fulfilled his contracts, and the committee have reason to be satisfied with the manner in which they have been executed. The painting of the base or stonework has to be deferred until the warm and settled weather as the saturated state of the stone, caused by the continued

²⁹ Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Thursday 3 July 1856 page 2

³⁰ The Argus Wednesday 20 August 1856 page 5

and heavy rains, prevents its being executed for the present in a satisfactory manner.”³¹

A lack of funds still dogged the Committee, but the Bank of Australasia came to the rescue by allowing the ‘Clock Fund’ to be overdrawn until the deficit could be erased.

Consternation continued regarding the Tower’s ability to withstand the force of gales that periodically lash the township.

“In vain, His Worship the Mayor assured the foreboders of calamity that he had seen it standing on an exposed site in London, where for many months it had bid defiance to all sorts of atmospheric visitations, despite the fact that its foundations were not then of so solid a description as it has been rendered by the stone groundwork to which it is presently securely bolted.”³²

The hands of the clockfaces at this time had still not been fastened, but the bell had pealed successfully, but softly. A gilded Kangaroo weathervane was placed on top as per the original design.

Finally, in the last few days of October, 1856, the clock’s hands were finally fitted and the clock’s mechanism was regulated by Mr. William Paterson, a watchmaker and jeweler, who was in charge of the Clock installation and calibration. He gave instructions to Thomas Wright on how to complete the task. Mr. Wright continued to maintain the running of the clock until 1880.

News of the clock’s completion was worthy news, even in Melbourne. The *AGE* newspaper printed an account from its Geelong correspondent.

“The tower and clock are well worth a visit from the curious, but we would by no means recommend ladies to make trial as the staircase and ladders are very steep and difficult of ascent. The mechanism of the clock is very beautiful, and the proportions are on a scale larger than one is prepared for from an outside view. The pendulum, for instance, it's about 10 or 12 feet long, and the weight attached there too something formidable. The bell for striking the hours is not very loud not so much from deficiency of size, but from the smallness of the hammer, a defect is not readily remedied, as the works are not calculated for a hammer of larger size. In the morning and evening, however, when the streets are quiet, the striking office hours may be heard several streets off.”³³

³¹ The Age, Melbourne Wednesday 15 October 1856 page 5

³² Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Saturday 25 October 1856 page 2

³³ The Age Melbourne Friday 31 October 1856 page 5



Z The 'colorized' version of the 1856 photograph (below). Probably close to the way residents would have seen it.

The Square had been neglected until the tower was erected, but its presence led to civic pride and beautification of the area. By July, 1860 a market building was erected between the clock tower and Little Malop Street. Another prominent building to be sited in the Square was the Exhibition Building, constructed in 1879 for the Industrial and Juvenile Exhibition. Later, gardens were established, fences and pathways were constructed and the Traill and Hitchcock fountains, a small rotunda and Queen Victoria Monument were installed in the Exhibition Building's forecourt. Small stalls were also setup on the Square's perimeter. Horse drawn transport and later motorized transport used the Square as a meeting point for passengers.

A crucial event, that made the clock tower's future untenable, was the *Geelong Market Site Act of 1910* which allowed the Council to allow shops to be built on Square frontages and leases to be granted for 25 to 50 years..

VICTORIA.

 ANNO PRIMO
GEORGII QUINTI REGIS.

No. 2263.

An Act to enable the Council of the Town of Geelong to grant Building Leases of portion of the Land known as the General Market Site and for other purposes.

[30th November, 1910.]

1A Courtesy: https://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/hist_act/gmsa1910190/

Julius Solomon's Building was the first to benefit in 1913, and the frontage along Moorabool Street from Malop to Little Malop Street blocked the view of the clock. More buildings were to follow.



1B Trail's Fountain (postcard) c 1906



1C Queen Victoria (postcard) c 1906



1D Hitchcock's Fountain (postcard) C 1906



1E Market Square from Malop St c 1890



1F Stalls at Market Square 1910



1G Moorabool Street frontage c 1905

Perversely, clock's attraction resulted in its ultimate downfall. As a central business location, new buildings were constructed. Instead of a pleasant green recreational space first envisaged by George Lloyd and the Town's administrators in 1849, the Square now became a commercial space. Once attracted by fountains statues, gardens and pleasant walkways, Geelong's public were attracted by the commercial offerings in modern shops and office buildings. Eventually, the Town Clock was obscured. High buildings dominated the space, clustering round the tower and blocked residents' views of the timepiece and appreciation of its architectural beauty.

By 1923 Geelong was a City, and the tower and clock's time had expired. Council led and directed redevelopment of Market Square saw the clock tower classified as redundant and obstruction to progress.

Geelong's unique clock tower, crafted to Britain's highest standard of manufacture and Victorian design, measured time in the town for the span of a human lifetime. Its illuminated display was on the clockface by which Geelong people measured and calibrated their daily routine. As a precise measurement of time, it was the means by which individual citizens and businesses could recalibrate their own subordinate and imprecise timepieces. Market Square, with the tower and clock in residence, was like the Greenwich Park in London. It was the Town, then City, Centre's zero longitude to define Geelong's hemispheres of boundary of East and West.

That story begins in 1922.

View a selection of photographs, presented as chronological collage, were taken over the next 67 years. They show how the area changed over time. See that at momentsintime.net.au/



Foundations July 1st 1856



1856



1857



Late 1850s



1850/1860



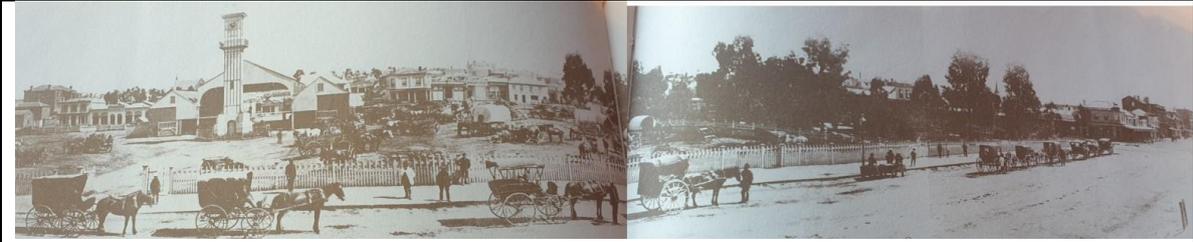
1860s



Late 1860s



Early 1870s



1870s



Early 1880s



1890s



1918



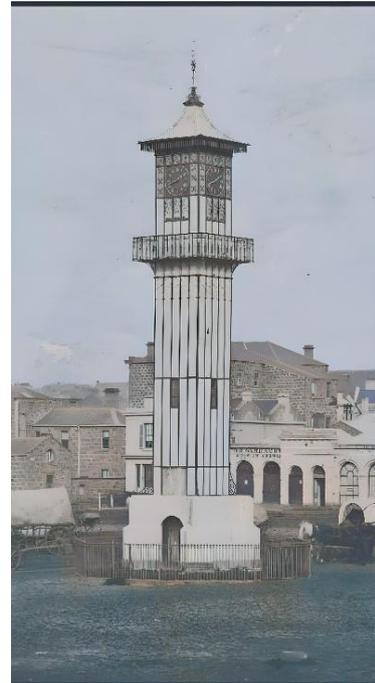
1918

Demolition of the Clock Tower

Geelong, October, 1923

Once the civic pride of Geelong, and studied by student and professional architects, the iconic clock tower faced demolition. It had stood the test of time, and told the time, in Market Square, its home since 1856. Geelong citizens had regarded the tower an ageing family friend. It was a monument many people had known since their own birth and had been present for the time span of a human life. For 67 years it was an institution, an ambassador for, and tribute to, the pinnacle of Victorian Period technology and craftsmanship.

Geelong's unique clock tower was crafted to Britain's highest standard of manufacture and Victorian design. Created by Mr. Moore's clockmaking skills in London, the clock was the chronometer by which Geelong people measured and calibrated their daily routine and existence. Its measurement of time was the authority and standard by which individual citizens recalibrated their subordinate and imprecise timepieces.



Located in Market Square, it became the metronome that dictated the city's rhythm. Erected in the late 1856, the tower and clock witnessed hopeful gold diggers trundling passed to seek their fortune. It farewelled soldiers marching off to fight the Boers in Transvaal, South Africa in 1900 and celebrations of World War I Armistice in 1918. The clock just didn't tell time, it marked the passage of time. Its slender clock's hands moved to indicate the time just two days before the opening of Geelong's Railway Station. It had witnessed history and now was about to become history.



1I Mafeking procession 1900 Courtesy State Library of Victoria



1J World War I Armistice celebration in Moorabool St 1918 Courtesy Geelong Advertiser

Skeletal, tall and redundant, Geelong's clock tower, was reduced to a worthless, empty shell in preparation for its demolition. Vanquished, sad and forlorn, the stately tower still stood erect, proud and prominent until its last few moments. Once the most dominant feature, it was now encircled and besieged by modern buildings that competed for its space. Only the Tower's reliable clock could be seen above them. Demolition was imminent, modernity had won.

The beginning of the end for the tower began on March 7th, 1922, when Geelong City Council's Market Committee decided it was time to upgrade Market Square. **It was not the original intention that the clock tower be demolished.**

"On the MARKET SQUARE QUESTION.= All members of City Council were invited to be present in regard to this matter and there were also present :-



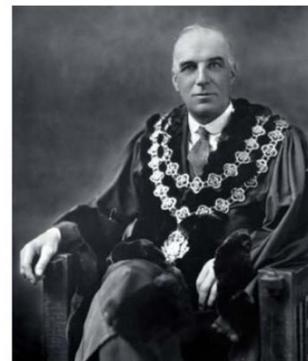
Councillor Brownbill

Cr. Moody, Cr. Ritchie, Cr. Jacobs, Cr. Hearne and Cr.Carr" ³⁴

Mayor, Alderman Hitchcock, Alderman Brownbill, Alderman King, Councillors McCann, Pettitt, Thear, Walls and Williams were present too.

Mayor Hitchcock moved:

"That the time is now opportune to formulate a scheme for leasing all available land on the building leases in the Market Square." ³⁵



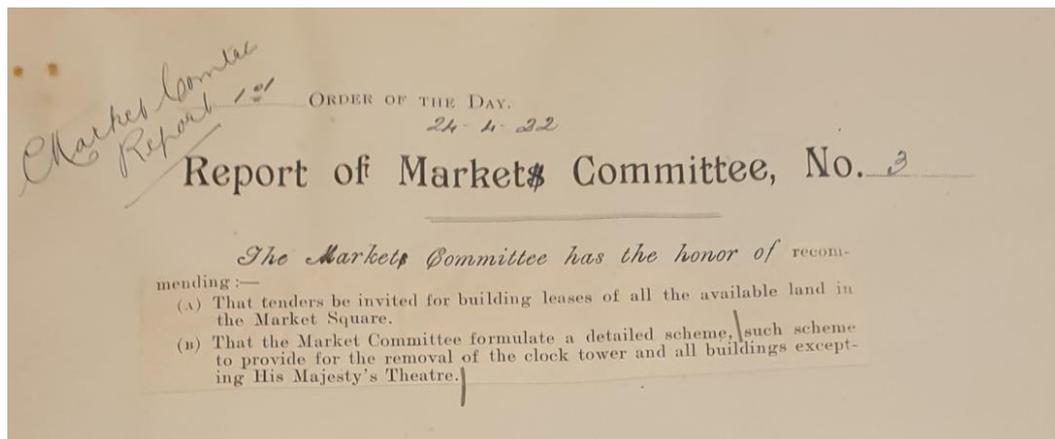
Councillor Thear

The motion was seconded by Councillor Thear.

A further motion by the Mayor and seconded by Councillor Ritchie was

"That in furtherance of the scheme all buildings except the theatre be removed, and that the clock be erected elsewhere."³⁶

One month later the ORDER OF THE DAY, Report of Market Committee No 3 was recorded:



1M Courtesy: Geelong Regional Library Heritage Centre Market Committee documents

³⁴ Market Committee minutes, March 7 1922 Minute Book page 146

³⁵ Ibid Minute Book page 146

³⁶ Ibid Minute Book page 146

MAY 1922

The intention to keep the clocktower was affirmed at the May 16th, 1922 Market Committee meeting when Mayor Hitchcock moved :

“That a ground plan be prepared allowing the theatre and Clock to remain in their present positions and that the clock be made a feature in the centre of a street running through Malop to Little Malop Street.”³⁷”

Mayor Hitchcock and Alderman King really instigated the formal planning of the Market Square’s redevelopment when on May 23rd 1922 it was moved :

“That a plan be prepared of the Market Square for leasing the Market Square land, such a plan showing outside measurements and suggested thoroughfares, to be submitted to a special meeting.”³⁸

That plan was drawn and formed part of the Conditions of Tender. The street was to be constructed midway between Moorabool Street and Yarra Street to the east side of Jacob Street and His Majesty’s Theatre. It was just named ROAD.

JUNE 1922

In June, Mr liiffe Gordon Anderson {also known as Ian Gordon Anderson designed the Geelong West Town Hall} as a ‘professional man and citizen’, was called upon to inform the Market Committee of his ideas about the utilisation of Market Square for building leases. A vote of thanks was passed for Mr Anderson and one result was that the removal of the clock to another position in the Square be referred to Councillors Pettitt and the Surveyor.

Sentiment appeared to change toward the clock after Mr Anderson’s contribution . In that June 6th meeting Councillor McCann moved and Alderman King seconded:

“That the matter be brought up at next meeting and that the removal of clock to another position in the Square be referred to Councillor Pettitt and the Surveyor for a report.”³⁹

JULY 1922

City Survey for Geelong Mr H. L. Tisdall drew the plan, and it is dated July 26th, 1922 The plan is shown below and shows exactly where the Clock Tower was to be position in the middle of the road, forming the centre of a roundabout. This vision of a clock feature in the street was never materialised. Buildings to the west of Jacob Street had been developed by Mr Julius Solomon.

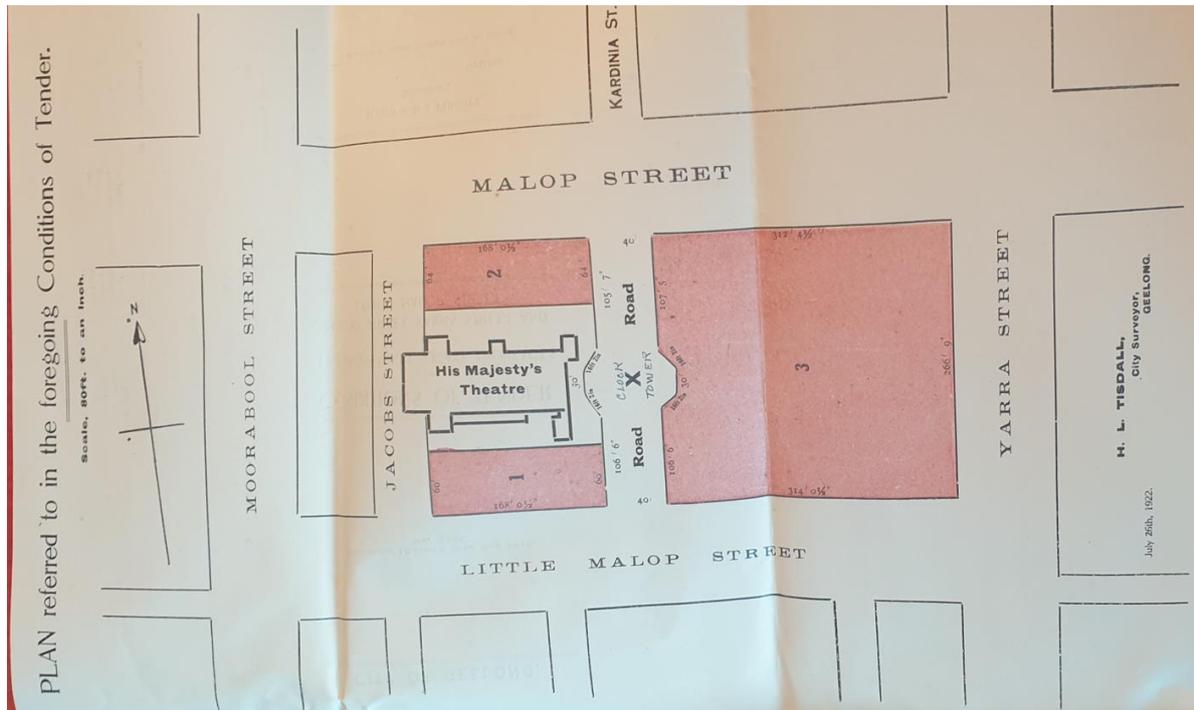
AUGUST 1922

³⁷ Market Committee minutes May 22nd, 1922 Minute Book page 157

³⁸ Market Committee minutes May 22nd, 1922 Minute Book page 157

³⁹ Market Committee minutes June 6th, 1922 Minute Book page 158

A full meeting of the City Council authorised the conditions and plan of tender for Market Square and the Town Clerk was authorised to affix the Corporation's seal

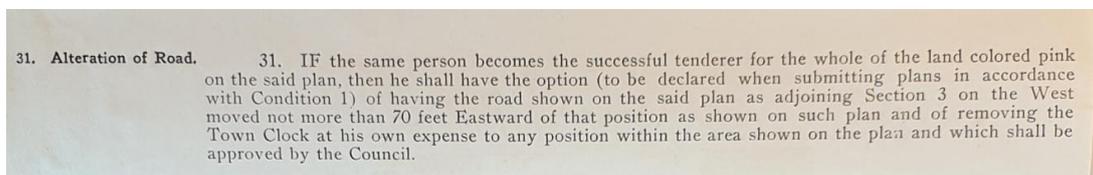


1 N Courtesy: Geelong Regional Library Heritage Centre, Market Square Reports file contained "CITY OF GEELONG Geelong Market Square Act 1910, No 2263 CONDITIONS OF TENDER

It's interesting to observe that, despite the multiple locations suggested by the council, the successful person to tender for the building contract was bound to Clause 31 of the Tender agreement to:

"... Removing the Town Clock at his own expense to any position within the area shown on the plan and which shall be approved by the Council."⁴⁰

That clause is shown below.



1 O Courtesy: Geelong Regional Library Heritage Centre, Market Square Reports file contained "CITY OF GEELONG Geelong Market Square Act 1910, No 2263 CONDITIONS OF TENDER 1922

DECEMBER 1922

⁴⁰ Geelong Regional Library Heritage Centre, Market Square Reports file contained "CITY OF GEELONG Geelong Market Square Act 1910, No 2263 CONDITIONS OF TENDER

It was at the December 19th, 1922 meeting of the Market Committee when tenders were discussed. Two tenders were received; one from Mr E. O'Connell for section 1 of the three sections advertised and another from Mr. John Henry Tait for all three. The Market Committee report had no recommendation about which of the two tenders should be granted and left the decision up to Council. Mr John Henry Tait won the tender for all three sections of the Market Square development.

On the same day, the Council met and a motion was put by Mayor Hitchcock:

“That Mr John Tait be invited to meet this Council in Committee in Conference and discuss what class of shops he proposes to build and other details with him at some convenient date to be arranged.”⁴¹

JANUARY 1923

The meeting was held and the January Council heard about Mr Tait's plans. John Tait was accompanied by his brother, Frank, MR Sheperd and his architect and Council advisor Mr I G Anderson.

John Tait indicated his building would be two storeys high, but could build a three storey if necessary. He estimated building cost to be between £100,000 and £150,000.

The other person to tender was Mr O'Connell, but he withdrew if the Tait tender was accepted.

Not all Councillors were happy that John Tait be awarded the tender. Alderman Wrathall in particular favoured Mr O'Connell and said his plan was better than Mr Tait's. A subcommittee met and recommended that no tender be accepted and instead, individual lots be auctioned.

An amendment was moved, by Councillor Thear and seconded by Councillor Ritchie which was the opposite to the initial motion”

“That the tender of Mr Tait be accepted.”⁴²

A division was called for and motion was lost and the Amendment was carried. By ten votes to six.

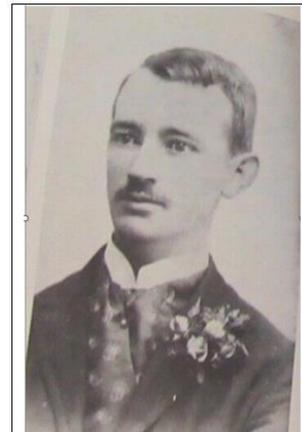
Subsequently, Mr Tail responded that he had received notice that he was successful and paid a £2,000 deposit in War Bonds.

⁴¹ Geelong City Council meeting minutes 19th December 1922

⁴² Geelong City Council meeting minutes 20th January 1923

John Henry Tait was one of five boys in a family of nine children. John Tait was a practising lawyer until 1902 and then joined his brothers as entrepreneurs in the concert, film and theatrical industries. The Tait family were pioneers in the Australian Radio industry in 1924. He frequently worked on projects with his brothers, Frank, Charles, Nevin and Edward.

<https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/tait-john-henry-9241>



John Henry Tait

MARCH 1923

In March 1923 Market meeting ideas of moving the tower were now mainstream. There was no talk about demolition or keeping the tower in the same location. It was moved by Councillor Brownbill that Mr Ian Gordon Anderson be asked to submit proposals for the clock to be moved to the corner of Yarra and Little Malop Street. March was a busy month for planning the sewerage and stormwater draining plans starting to be addressed by council.

APRIL 1923

April's meeting recommended the current tenants in Market Square be told to vacate their building, so they could be demolished. However, there were still amendments needed to plans and the details of new building constructions that had not been received. Separate building leases had been approved for Mr. Tait. That necessitated approval for a new road to be constructed between Malop and Little Malop Streets.

Among the many suggestions for the relocation of the Tower it was suggested Transvaal Square would be appropriate, but many disagreed thinking the clock would be "hidden from view" by the buildings of the Electric Supply Company. Many residents, just like 1856, believed the top of Moorabool Street would be the best relocation site.

Contributing to the discussion in the press was Mr. W. E. Curnow. Headed, *What about the Clock? Inspection site To-Day*, Mr W.E Curnow wrote he was 'in accord' with the suggestion of the top of Moorabool Street because, it would serve the east and a large portion of South Geelong and would not interfere with traffic flow.

Another contributor, "Pro Bono Publica", suggested the north end of Kardinia Park would be better at the intersection of Latrobe Terrace and Noble Street.

Not in favour of saving the clock nor of placing it in a prominent position, contributor, "What's O'clock" suggested the clock is '*neither use nor ornament*' and he would relegate it to an '*out of the way place*', because it had outlived its usefulness. He wrote that it should be demolished, but if it did exist, moved out of Geelong in the east, south or north of the city toward the You Yangs.

A report to Council on April 23rd, 1923 by City Surveyor, Mr. H.L.Tisdall, refers to Architect Anderson's suggested location of the Clock. His report stated that:

"No provision has been made for dealing with the Market Square Clock, but the architect now makes an application to erect same at the corner of Little Malop and Yarra Street to be framed in

the face of the parapet at an angle of 45degrees to each street, a drawing of this proposal will be submitted later."⁴³

The proposed location is diagonally opposite where the clock ultimately resided.

MAY 1923

On May 9th the Market Committee recommended that Council grant three separate leases to Mr John H Tait, who resided at Her Majesty's Theatre in Melbourne, and that the first to be erected be the building that has a frontage to Little Malop Street eastward of Jacob Street. This allowed Mr Tait to complete the project in sections and release these for lease when completed, instead of waiting for all three to be completed first.

JUNE 1923

On June 20th when Mr. John N Tait came to Geelong with his solicitors, it was suggested the clock be moved to the south west corner of the square, but council had to decide.

"Definite action has at last been arrived at by the City Council in regard to the ultimate destination of the clock in the tower in the Market Square. The latter has been leased by Mr. John H Tate, who is erecting buildings on the frontages for letting purposes. The matter came up on a recommendation from the Market Committee as follows:

'That the town clock be erected as a central feature in the Malop St. frontage of the new Market Square building at the expense of Mr. Tate, subject to the plan for the structure taking the clock being approved by this council, and provided also that Mister Tate should demolish the tower which is to remain the property of this council.' "⁴⁴

Alderman Pettitt who was the Committee chairman recalled how tenders were called for the removal and re erection of the clock and tower. The estimates would be a huge expense. It was thought removal cost would be £600 and renovation £100.

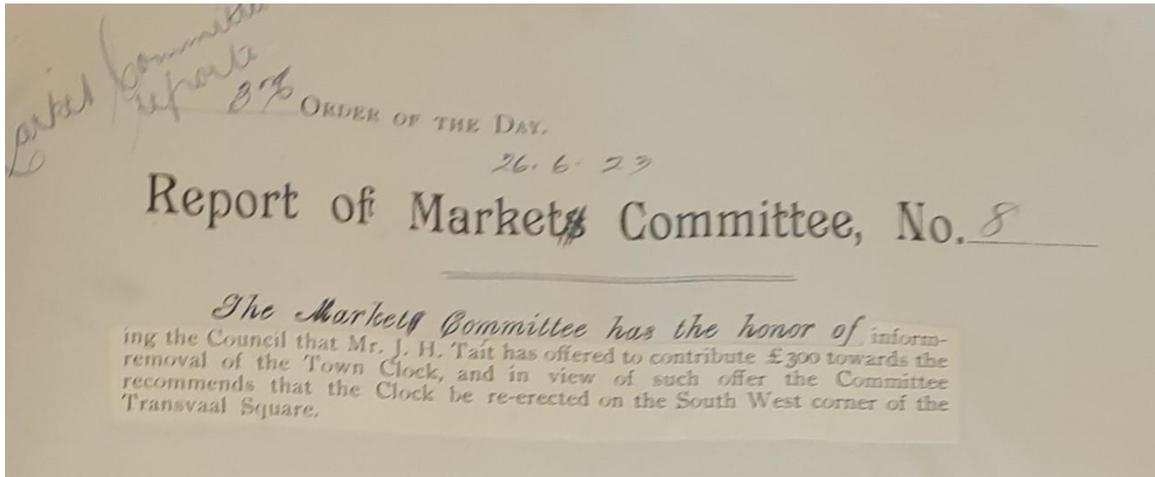
Below, the typed note, in pencil, was written Total estimated cost of removal £450

Progress on the Towers fate was advancing rapidly. In the Council meeting of June 26th. At last, there was firm action. The Market Committee informed the Council that Mr. Tait had offered 300 toward the clock's removal and the Market Committee recommended Transvaal Square as their preferred location. It was then moved that the entire Council inspect the proposed sites at 2.30 pm on Friday, June 29th.

On June 30th the Gelong Advertiser reported

⁴³ City Surveyor's Report Page 2 to the Chairman and members of the Market Committee, Geelong City Council 23rd April 1923.

⁴⁴ Geelong City Council meeting minutes June 20th



1 QCourtesy GRL HC Reports of the Market Committee.

An agreement was reached regarding the removal of the clock. It was decided the clock would be removed if the price of the tender for its removal is satisfactory and if not, "... the clock will remain there until removed by the lease."⁴⁵



Councillor Hearne

It recorded that Councillors Hearne, McCann, Moody, Ritchie, Thear, Walls, and Williams, as well as the Mayor and Alderman Pettit and Brownbill, inspected various sites. They went to the Transvaal Square, the entrance to Eastern Gardens and near St Andrew's Church. Finally, they agreed the best location would be at the Intersection of Sydney Parade, Sydney Avenue and Fitzroy Street.

"The ground offers a splendid site and the clock when in position would be seen for a considerable distance as it would stand on an eminence which from all points of view can not be surpassed."⁴⁶

Finally in agreement, Council advertised for tenders to relocate the tower and clock to the Sydney Parade and Sydney Avenue site.

Once news of a new site for the tower and clock was circulated more opinions began to be expressed.

JULY 1923

⁴⁵ Geelong Advertiser 'The clock goes East Result of inspection' Saturday 30 June page 4

⁴⁶ Ibid page 4



July 17th Market Committee were informed:

No tenders were received for the REMOVAL of the TOWN CLOCK and re-erection at the intersection of Sydney Parade and Sydney Avenue. Two tenders were received for the removal of the clock itself, not the tower.

AUGUST 1923

August was the month when all the crucial decisions were made regarding the fate of the Tower and clock. On August 1st it was reported that

15 Tender for Tower removal Courtesy Geelong Advertiser

Midway through August, the architect for Mr Tait was suggesting the tower and clock be moved to Eastern Gardens, near the statue of Queen Victoria, where trees could be planted to highlight it. Leaving the tower in Market Square wouldn't 'honour the generosity of the donor', because it would be obscured by modern building.⁴⁷

Shortly afterwards the tower's fate and that of the clock as separate entities, were determined at the August 21, 1923 meeting. Mr Tait wrote to Council to include the clock in his proposed building. Council agreed on the condition that:

"...the clock being erected as a central feature in the Malop Street frontage, subject to the plan for the structure taking the clock, being approved by this Council."

Moved by Cr Williams and seconded by Mayor Joseph King

It was decided that Messrs Tait should demolish the Tower which remains the property of this Council."⁴⁸

Unfortunately, the repositioning of the tower was not possible, because there were no responses to the request to re-erect the tower, even though Messrs J and N Tait had offered £300 to assist. Accordingly, the architect for Mr. Tait, Mr I.G Anderson was advised that he could remove the town clock to any other site **in Market Square** approved by Council, in accordance with Clause 31.

Councillor Walls indicated that Councillor Solomon had offered to erect the clock in the tower of his building at the Malop and Moorabool Street corner.

⁴⁷ Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Monday August 20th page 5

⁴⁸ Geelong City Council Market Committee August 21st 1923

Councillor Ritchie objected stating that the Council had already agreed, nine votes to two that the new clock site had been determined.

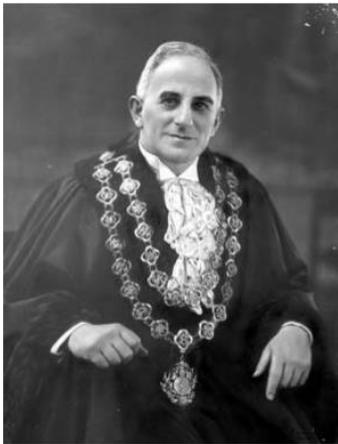
Alderman Pettit, chairman of the Market Committee moved at a Council meeting :

Councillor Ritchie Courtesy Geelong Regional Library

“That the town clock be erected as a central feature of the Malop St. frontage off the new Market Square buildings at the expense of Mr. Tait subject to the plan for the structure taking the clock being approved by this council and provided also that Mr. Tate should demolish the tower which is to remain the property of this council.”⁴⁹²⁹

He assured everyone that the clock still remained the property of the council. He claimed that the location would make the location the “Collins Street of Geelong”.

Councillor Ritchie wanted the clockfaces to be illuminated at night, but that suggestion appeared to fall flat.



1 T Councillor Julius Solomon

The tower was in the way of the current building program, especially the draining of the site. There was mistrust in Mr Tait’s intentions by some councillors. Councillor Jacobs stated he would not allow a clock to be placed just anywhere in between the demolition and re-erection and installed in proper order.

OCTOBER 1923

In late October the clock was removed and stored in the basement of the City Hall. It remained there until a site had been prepared for its re-location.

By October 18th there was no chance of a last minute reprieve, because plans for the demolition were about to be enacted. Time was up for the Tower and clock! The Geelong Advertiser’s article, “Going, Going”, reported that the mechanism of the clock would be removed during the week and the intention was to demolish the tower. It meant the Council realised a loss of £2,000 in monetary value, not to mention the aesthetic value. Lost also was an attraction for the city, but the clock’s ownership was still retained by the council. The newspaper’s reporter lamented :

“The disappearance of the old tower will cause a pang of regret among the older generation of Geelongites and though probably it will not draw a single tear from the youthful elements which care for none of those things.”⁵⁰

It was hoped that at least the tower’s foundation stone would be saved and repositioned in the new buildings, but it wasn’t.

Messrs T Wright and Co, who were watchmakers in Malop Street, were successful in their tender to remove the clock mechanism and they began their work on Tuesday, October 23rd. They first removed the clock’s hands. Undaunted, the clock’s bell still faithfully chimed on the hour, but its handless chimes were its own death knell. It was noted that there some humorous moments when

⁴⁹ City Council Market Committee August 21st 1923

⁵⁰ Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer ‘Going Going’ October 18 page 4

the clock was being dismantled, but the prevailing attitude was one of regret at the tower demolition. The reporter remarked:

“While the clock will be stored away temporarily and will be re-erected at a later date, the tower, with its wonderful spiral stairway of ancient masonry, will be pulled over bodily with the City Council’s steam roller after steel bolts have been cut at the foundations.”⁵¹

Another flurry of protests began from the public. In a “Letter to Editor on the same day, “CHITTY ON TORTS” wrote the Citizens of Geelong should have applied for a warrant of injunction to stay the “hand of the despoiler”

As the moment of demolition neared, vitriol from the public had escalated and venomous remarks flowed in a frenzy in ‘Letters to the Editor’. Under the heading *AN ACT OF VANDALISM* F.J.N wrote:

“Sir, Do the citizens of Geelong possess any sentiment whatever? The contemplated demolishment of that wonderful old historical landmark, “The Town Clock” is pure and unadulterated vandalism, and yet does not seem to evoke any storm of protest. Surely now that a somewhat belated attention has been drawn to this proposed crime, immediate and effective steps should be taken to call a halt in the matter.”⁵²

F.J.N was critical of the lack of engineering aptitude to remove the clock to a new location.

Another contributor named “INDIGNANT” compared the act of demolishing the Tower to that of German actions during World War I.

“During the last European war, almost every newspaper published in Australia contained articles condemnatory of the Huns fiendishness in destroying public buildings, churches, clock towers, etc. in the countries invaded by them. The Huns’ actions in doing so were held up for execration as the actions of savages, and rightly so, too, but the cool, deliberate vandalism the actions of those exercising authority in this matter of destroying the clock tower, leave the Huns far behind.”⁵³ 34

Just before the clock was scheduled to be removed and the tower demolished a final attempt was made to halt demolition. Geelong Advertiser’s Editorial picked up the cudgels for the fight, belated as it was. An article pleaded for somebody to donate £50 to; “launch an application for an injunction restraining the City Council from proceeding further with the demolition of the Market Square Clock.” Councillor Jacobs had given his support, but realised that if it was retained the proposed new Market Square buildings would hide it from view. Moving the clock to another site would cost approximately £1000

In a further last-minute effort to save the clock tower Geelong Advertiser Editor, James Harrison, summed it up by asking:

WHY NOT SAVE THE CLOCK!

⁵¹ Ibid October 23ed page 4

⁵² Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer ‘ Letters to the Editor’ October 26 1923 page 4

⁵³ Ibid page 4

“Somewhat belatedly, an increasing section of the Geelong public is waking up to the fact that an act of vandalism is being committed in its midst. Months ago the ‘Advertiser’ voiced its regret at the proposed removal of the old landmark, the Austin clock. Today, instead of mere removal we are faced with demolition, and instead of regret there is therefore angry protest. It is certainly justified. The clock tower in many ways is a unique structure. The few who have sneered at it have simply shown their ignorance... As a matter of fact, the clock is of shapely and artistic proportions. Buried among the unsightly old buildings which for so long disfigured the square, it had of course no chance to be rightly judged.”⁵⁴

The editorial commented that as the other buildings fell in the redevelopment, the tower remained and “could not fail to catch the eye with decidedly pleasing effect.” He suggested to keep it, repaint and re-gild it. However, the clock was in the process of demolition, even though Council members were not unanimous in the decision for it to go, and they were aware of the public indignation.

‘Letters to the Editor’ on the same day helped to give the cause a stronger voice. “Pedreda” wrote that the Council’s actions were ‘an act of stupidity and it was vandalism and egregious blundering’. Perhaps, he suggested, the Council should declare a public holiday so that the “... citizens may witness the stupendous piece of destructive folly the Council intends to perpetuate.”

Another writer, C.T.F.R. calls out an S.O.S. saying the structure is “..one of the finest pieces of work of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere.” In a most moving and emotive contribution he wrote:

“Iconic, unique and architecturally inspirational, the famous tower has been obliterated. No thought was given to posterity or symbolic reverence to our pioneering past.”⁵⁵

One resident, emotional and unhappy the Geelong City Council’s decision not to move the tower to a new location, had written to the Geelong Advertiser. She expressed and released her anger and grief, in the hope that the tower would be spared.

*“For **seventy-two years** its hands have indicated the time. (1,2) For **seventy-two years** its grand old bell has sweetly chimed the hours. (1,2) And for **seventy-two years more** - and aye even more than that - it is willing and fit to continue doing so. (1) But **no!** the vile hands of man must destroy it, because it stands in the way of **making money**. (1,2) The old clock is a gift. (1,2) What a sacred thing! (1,2) It is not too late, **even yet**, for those at the helm to stop this disgraceful act. **And may they hear this SOS**, for I feel it is sweetly in concord with those whose hearts, like mine, grieve to see such an ungodly thing.”⁵⁶*

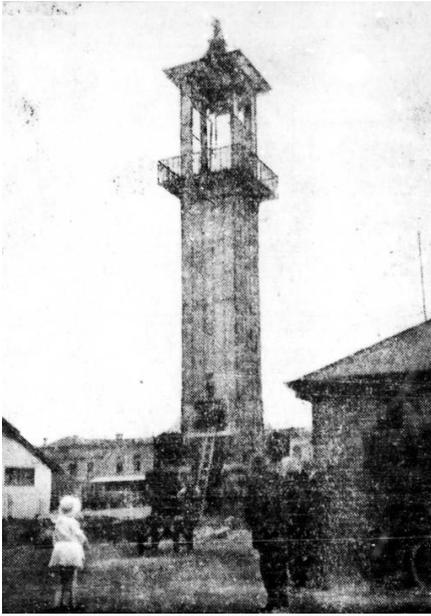
By October 29, the workings of the clock had been removed, cleaned, and then stored. The City Council had no intention of scrapping the clock, just the tower.

⁵⁴ Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer ‘Editorial’ October 27, 1923 page 4

⁵⁵ Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer ‘Our Clock and Tower, move to secure injunction October 27 page 5

⁵⁶ Ibid page 5

Geelong City Council met on October 30th and the Geelong Advertiser reporter incorrectly thought it might have discussed public agitation and change its mind about demolition, but that didn't happen. On October 30th, in Market Square, it was demolition day.



Empty hollows eerily filled the positions where four majestic, illuminated clock faces once viewed the world; and the world viewed them. It's iconic kangaroo weathervane was removed, never more to give direction or feel the vagaries of the wind.

Heavy links of the chain girdle, that coiled round the tower's narrow, delicate torso, were fixed and tightened beneath the viewing platform, squeezing any glimpse of pride from the noble, Victorian structure. An uncompromising steel cable was attached to the chain on the tower and the other end to a Council steam roller. Large anchor bolts were cut, severing it from its sturdy foundations. Connections that had stood the test of time, now severed, had no resistance to a

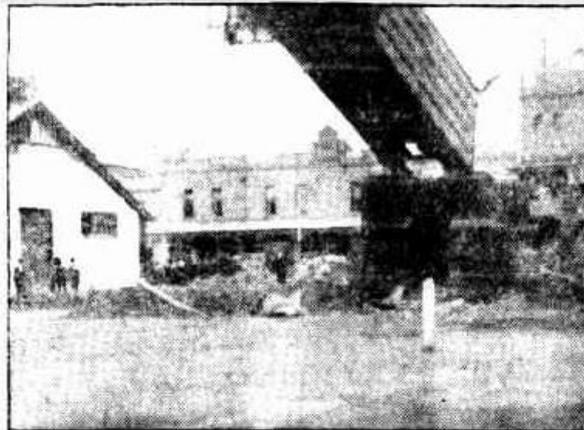
cable pulled by a heavy steamroller. Mechanical force and steam powered muscle was applied by the machine manufactured in a new century. Slowly and steadily the force increased and tiny fissures, then fractures, formed on former, firm foundations.

First a tilt, then a rock, followed by a shake and then suddenly and inevitably...

CRASH!

In freefall, even the tower's internal spiral staircase was unable to offer last second resistance or support for its tiled, ornamental carapace.

Heartrending and excruciating, the deafening noise reverberated through the community. Residents, hearing the fall, recorded the resultant boom in their long term memory.



TOTTERING TO ITS FALL

Falling dust and detritus, from years of resisting storms and gales, now mixed and mingled with the tower's structural iron entrails and smashed cosmetic tiles. Eviscerated, it lay prostrate, twisted, tangled and unrecognisable onto the solid, earthen floor.



AFTER THE GRAB

Residents gathered to witness the calamity, as much to grieve, as it was to view the destruction of an object that had been their constant and reliable companion.

Many years after the fall of the tower, Charles Demllo, then in his adult years, recalled the significant event of its demolition. As a primary school boy, Charles was keen to see the tower fall, so he was able to get out of school. He recalled the day it fell.

“As befits a town bred by commerce, the Market Square shows up early, together with the Town Clock, almost always referred to as the Austin Clock. Something like an historical crime was committed when that clock tower was reduced to rubble...

On the day of the tower's destruction I begged off school early by telling Miss Martin, who taught me at Swano (Swanston Street Primary School) through grades four, five and six, a lie. Fittingly, I suppose, I still only managed that run all the way to the Square to be in time to see the dust settling and that instrument of misguided strength, the steamroller with its cable still attached, standing by and looking smug. I salvaged some bits from the pile, tiling and cast iron interwoven so that I suppose wrecking is less violent means may have been impractical. The pieces have long been lost, but I did prize them for a while.”⁵⁷

No longer a monument to be venerated it was now a monument to mourn.

Vale Geelong/Austin Clock tower, Anno Domini, October 30, 1923.

After the dust settled and residents realised what they had lost, the anger and disgust continued to be expressed in the newspaper. Even residents from outside Geelong, in disbelief at the event, contributed to the expressed anger. The day after demolition Geelong Advertiser's article, "TOWER DEMOLISHED OLD LANDMARK PULLED DOWN NOW A BATTERED HEAP, set the tone.

“All discussions as to whether the tower of the Market Square Clock should be preserved or demolished were emphatically ended soon after the Meridian yesterday; and what was a beautiful creation of wood, stone and iron now lies in the dust – a shattered heap o'er which Sentiment will doubtless shed a tear.

⁵⁷ Investigator magazine, Geelong Historical Society 'Pictorial Reflections by Charles Demllo' June 1989 pages 47 & 48

However, the deed is done, and neither lamentations nor injunctions will now avail to undo it”⁵⁸

At a subsequent Council meeting when Market Committee recommendations were being discussed, Councillor Ritchie that his former protest about the Clock’s removal be recorded in the meeting minutes.

He continued with his apparent anger.

“He maintained the Council carried a resolution to have it removed to a site at the intersection of Sydney Ave. and Fitzroy streets, and that they should have adhered to that resolution.”⁵⁹

Council’s defence was that no tenders for the removal of the tower came forward when they were advertised, therefore the Council was free from any liability. It had an agreement with the owner of the new Block Buildings that the clock would be re-sited there.

An Editorial on October 31st title, “An irrelevant point” criticized some City Councillors for implying it was improper to criticize the decision to demolish the clock because they paid for most of the cost for the tower and clock’s erection. He claims it doesn’t matter who erected the tower or who paid for it. Complaints by writers, he claims, are about what the community has lost and how precious that object was to them and their town. Other towns have wanted a clock and tower like the one that has just been pulled down. He concluded that the clock’s ‘mutilated remains’ in the new Tait tower will probably only be visible from one street instead of three.

NOVEMBER 1923

When news of the tower’s demise reached Melbourne’s Architectural community, their disappointment was also communicated.

“At a monthly meeting of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects in Melbourne on Tuesday evening reference was made to what was called the wanton destruction of a choice architectural feature of Geelong’s landmark in the clock tower.”⁶⁰

Students of architecture visited Geelong to sketch the old tower and clock, as well as other prominent buildings.

⁵⁸ Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer October 31 1923 page 5

⁵⁹ Ibid page 5

⁶⁰ Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Friday, ‘THE DEMOLISHED TOWER MELBOURNE ARCHITECTS EXPRESS REGRET’ November 2 1927 page 4

Two more letters of regret were printed on November 1st. One letter came from G.F. Walter who condemned the vandalism by the council. He said it appeared they have, 'no regard, reverence or sentiment in their composition for historical records of the city.'

A second letter, by A.F. Silcock, was remarkable and clever. He lived outside Geelong, but had visited regular intervals over the years. Mr. Silcock felt a great regret at the loss of the tower and 'landmark' which he likened to; '... the death of a living thing at the hands of an executioner.'

He was moved to craft a poem about the tower's importance to people titled THE OLD TOWN CLOCK.

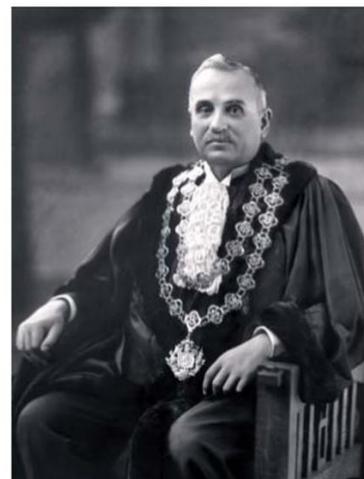
Surely there's sentiment sufficiently strong
 For a thing that has told you the time for so long—
 That has spoken the hour one, of each passing day—
 To preserve the old tower from passing away;
 And erect it once more in a popular place
 Where your people can look the old clock in the face,
 And say, "You remind us of those that have passed
 And your time-telling stroke shall strike out to the last."
 I hope such is the intention if it can now be done. Yours etc. —
A. F. SILCOCK.

View the video reenactment of the towers demolition



<https://youtu.be/8yb0leXgeB4>

Almost two weeks later, perhaps after the impact of the Tower's loss was felt, there seemed to be efforts by some councillors to rationalise their decision. Alderman Walls, a strong supporter to tear down the tower, mentioned that although the clock's resurrection may be three or four years away it would be placed in a conspicuous position. Councillor Jacobs agreed, saying it will, '...command a good view in the centre of the city'. Alderman McCann said he had consulted the contractor and determined it would have a commanding position.

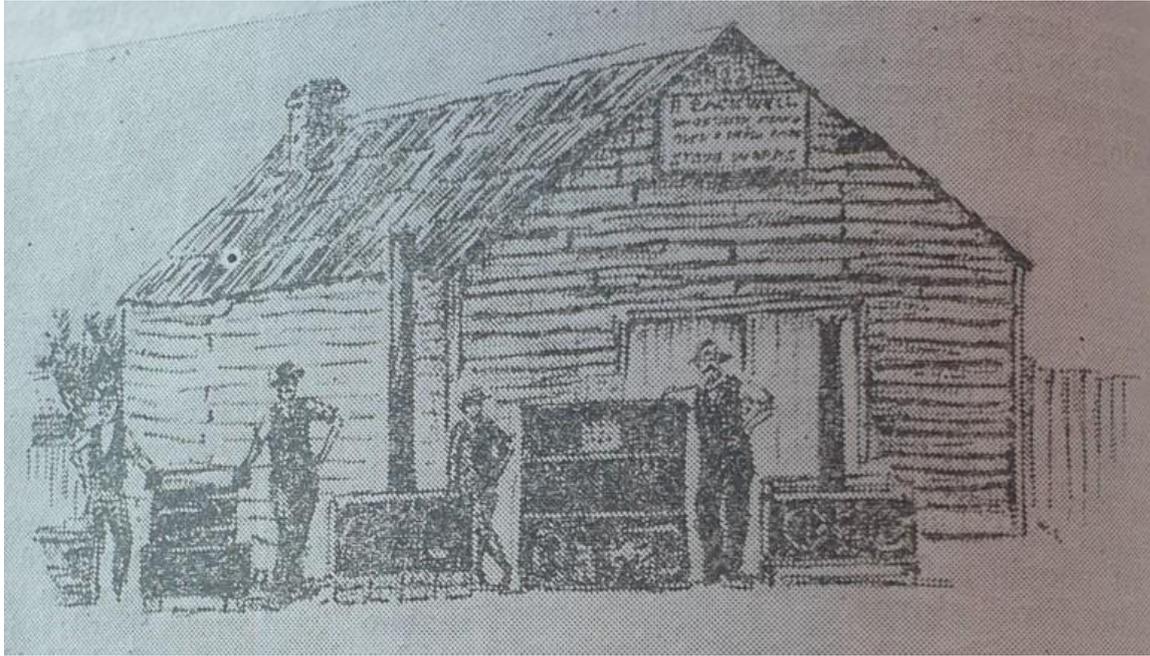


Alderman Walls

After the demolition, some people, like Charles Demllo, collected souvenirs, but on a larger, more professional scale, metallic remains proved valuable. Shattered metallic remnants of grotesquely twisted wrought still function. Reduced to scap metal, precision manufactured parts had a domestic incarnation. Backwell's Stove Works in Aberdeen Street transformed wrought iron fragments into stoves for commercial and domestic consumers and other domestic goods.⁶¹

Backwell's Foundry bought the scrap iron and melted it to construct stoves of various sizes and with various features. Many homes in Geelong, perhaps unknowingly had a piece of the tower - in their kitchen!

⁶¹ Investigator 1972 volume 7 issue 1 pages 18, 19 & 20



1Z Photograph Courtesy of Geelong Historical Society Investigator magazine, 1972 volume 7 issue 1 page 20

Born from civic generosity and pride, but destroyed by civic indecision and apathy toward heritage, Geelong 's prominent tower was a sentinel to the measurement of local time. Austin clock and tower stood innocently in the road of progress and development. It was ultimately a victim of fiscal progress. The tower and clock pre-date London's Big Ben (Elizabeth Tower) and the clock started to tick two years and seven months before that famous London landmark. Sadly, our architecturally admired tower has gone, but the clock still ticks on! It is still with us today with its original, four illuminated faces still informing city residents of the correct Australian Eastern Standard Time.

Looking through the prism of history, and with the benefit of hindsight, motives and issues can become clear, whereas in the day when decisions were made, they were influenced by sentiment, civic responsibilities and pecuniary interest. An objective and distant examination of the times, technologies and events may now illuminate a different perspective. Consider this interpretation.

When individual wristwatches and fob watches were expensive the town clock was essential, but as the community expanded its residential boundaries and individual timepieces became cheaper the town clock was more of an ornamental feature.

Constructed with a complex, fragile, interwoven, wrought iron internal frame and clad with fragile and small individual tiles, (together with an ornate decorative iron fretwork and balcony) the tower was extremely difficult to dismantle and expensive to relocate.

Then arose the decision of a suitable central and prominent position for its new home. Appropriately placed in the domestic and commercial epicentre of Geelong in 1856 the tower catered for community needs, but as Geelong commercially developed and expanded, and the residents grew more numerous, the tower's position was becoming an obstacle. A central position was no longer required, but a new position where it could be seen was important.

Geelong, from 1856 to 1923, was transformed from a small, rural, adolescent town into a vibrant modern adult city. Commercial and public buildings were allowed to be constructed in Market Square and future re-purposing of Market Square land meant the clock's days were numbered. Market square became expensive commercial real estate in the city centre. Values of monetary development were championed ahead of heritage aesthetic and architectural qualities. No consideration was given to maintaining a central, green recreational space at the heart of the city. The tower became expendable, but the clock could still perform a valued role and there was the sentimental influence to retain an heirloom. Relocating just the clock into a modern prominent building, that was built to last for decades, could meet all the civic commercial and social criteria.

So, based on these factors, we can perhaps understand the logic of the City Councillors at that time.

View the clock tower in Market Square from 1856 until 1923 <https://youtu.be/0RljU8enQrc>



The Resurrection

Austin's clock and tower stood innocently in the road of progress and development. Sadly, the architecturally admired tower has gone, but the clock ticks on today! Its original, four illuminated faces, facing to four Cardinal Points of the compass, continue informing city residents of the correct Australian Eastern Standard Time. Residing in Market Square in the Colonial Mutual Life Tower (Block Buildings) that face Malop Street, the clock is pre-eminent among other city timepieces.

Situated in Geelong's commercial hub, its location is no longer like London's Greenwich Park, but it is still the place from which Geelong measures its longitudinal boundary of East and West.

Geelong's clock was released from its exile in the basement of the City Council building in 1926. Fully restored and ready to resume its daily duties, the Clock was firmly encased into the building which is its present home.

According to the Geelong Advertiser:

"... ere long it will be removed from its temporary resting place and overhauled and placed in the tower of the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society's building in Malop Street which is near completion.⁶² "

News of the clock's resurrection was published on the front page of the Geelong Advertiser on Wednesday, October 26 1927. It newspaper extolled the benefits if its location of the new Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society in the new Block Building in Market Square:

"The building has incorporated the old with the new, inasmuch as it is ornamented with the Town Clock which for many years adorned the Austin tower in Market Square. It is symbolic as a link of the past ... It is the only commercial building having a Clock Tower in Geelong."

Absent from the dome's top is the iconic kangaroo weathervane which was once mounted on the tower's finial.

⁶² Geelong Advertiser, Thursday 7 Oct 1926 page 6 and page 3 Wednesday 13 oct 26

2A Tower today



Memories of the clocktower lingered well past its demolition. On April 13th, 1927 an article entitled "ONCE WE HAD A SPIRE Also a clock Tower Geelong Architect's Warning Against Vandalism"

Architect, Mr. R. H. Davies spoke at a meeting of Architects at a Geelong Rotary Club luncheon. He had just returned from a four year European trip. He complimentary of the many fine buildings in Geelong and said it was our duty to preserve them from demolition and despoilation. He commented on the tower in Bruges, St Marco in Venice and the St Mark's Campanille. Expressing his regret, he said:

"Geelong once had a Market Square which gave distinction and character to its city. It also had a clock tower which in its modest and unassuming was not greatly inferior in point of beauty to its more famous ancestor in Venice. Alas that our

Market Square is no more, and our clock tower has been levelled to the dust."⁶³

Perhaps we need to heed his call and follow his advice on preservation of our prominent buildings.

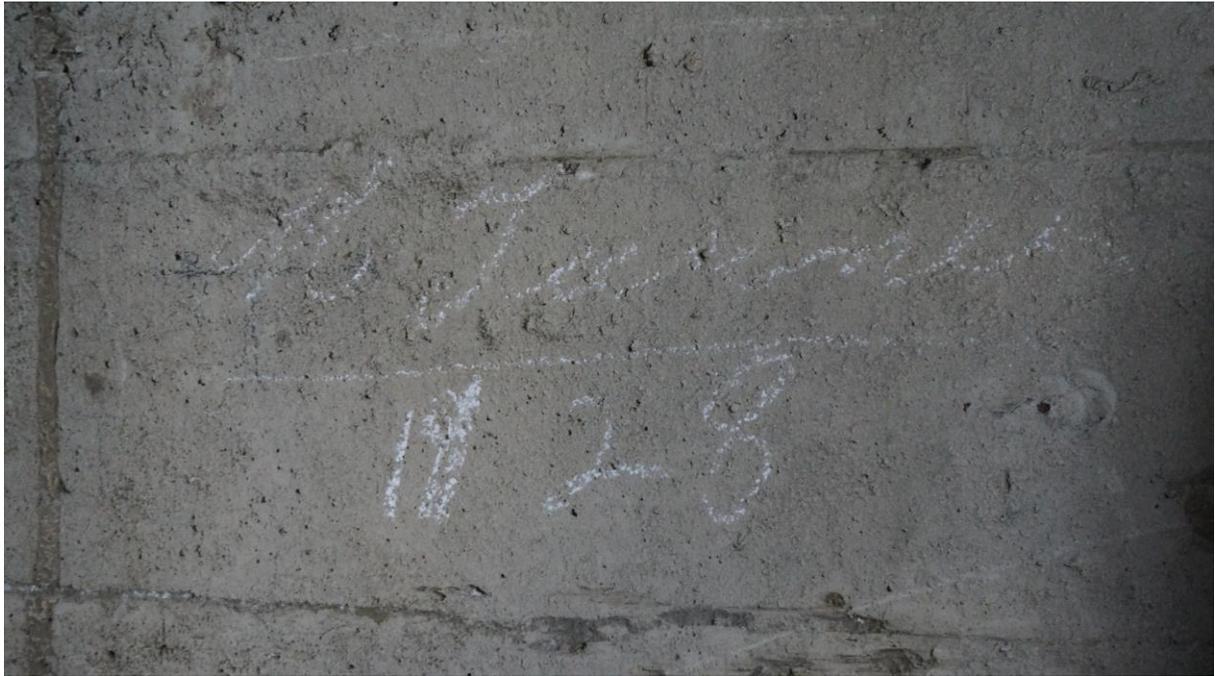
My visit to the inside of the tower revealed a fully operational clock as it was manufactured in 1854. No modern devices or timekeeping accoutrements have been added to the vintage mechanism over the decades.

View the Video of the clock still working today. <https://youtu.be/-Okyeyep-ww>



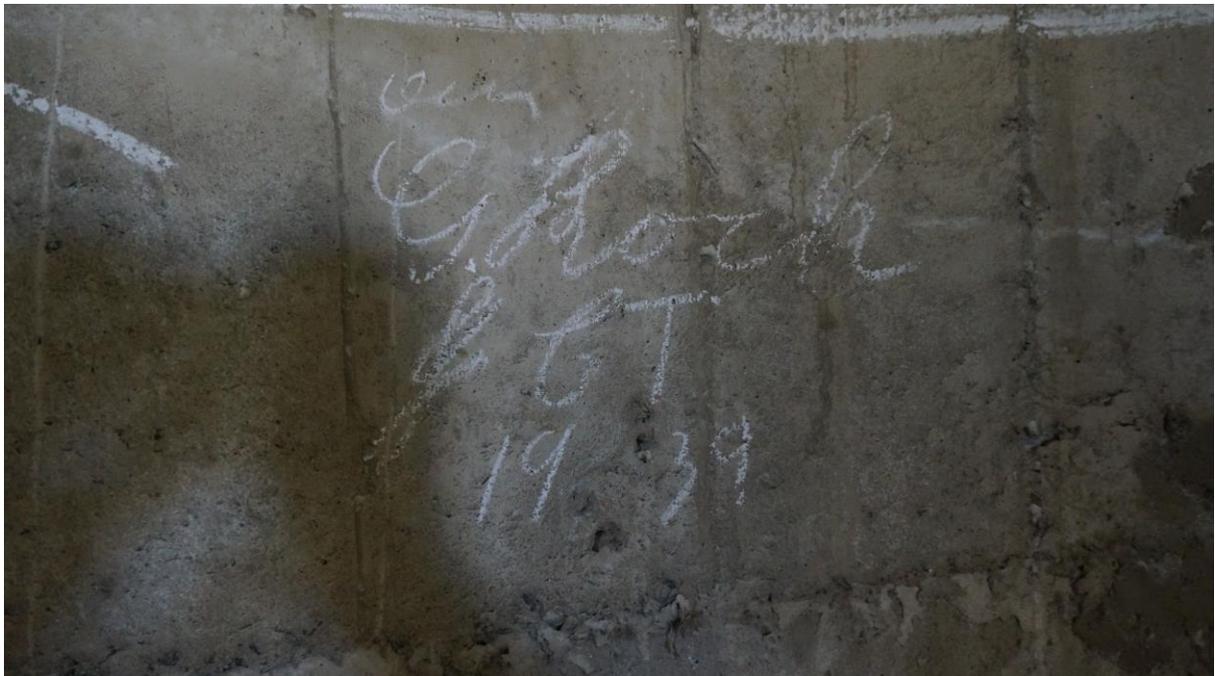
It certainly would meet the criteria of a 'Grandfather Clock'. It is a modern day symbol for Geelong's 'father time'. It appears that the person who commissioned the clock may have left his mark on the wall. It's hard to decipher but looks like H Turner, 1928

⁶³ Geelong Advertiser April 13, 1927 page 7



2B Inside the tower Name 1 Harry Roberts 2023

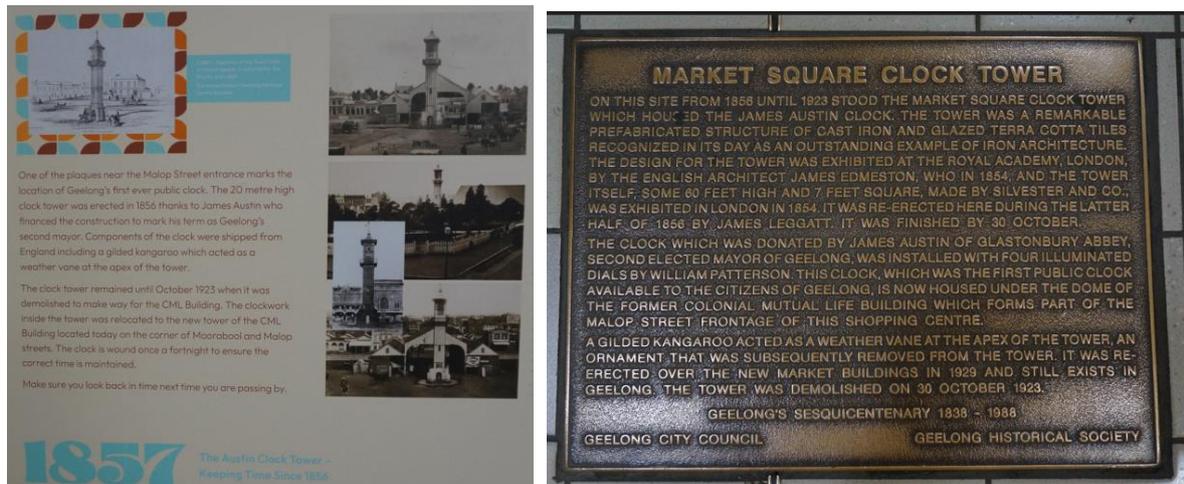
The second inscription seems to be G Rock J C T 1939.



2C Inside the tower Name 2 Harry Roberts 2023

A public record of the tower and clock's existence has not been forgotten. When the Market Square was last developed in 1985, Geelong City Council recognised the tower and clock's place in

history on the site. Pictures and illustrations, with a brief explanation of the clock's origins in the Square were placed on the Centre walls, adjacent to the original clock's location.

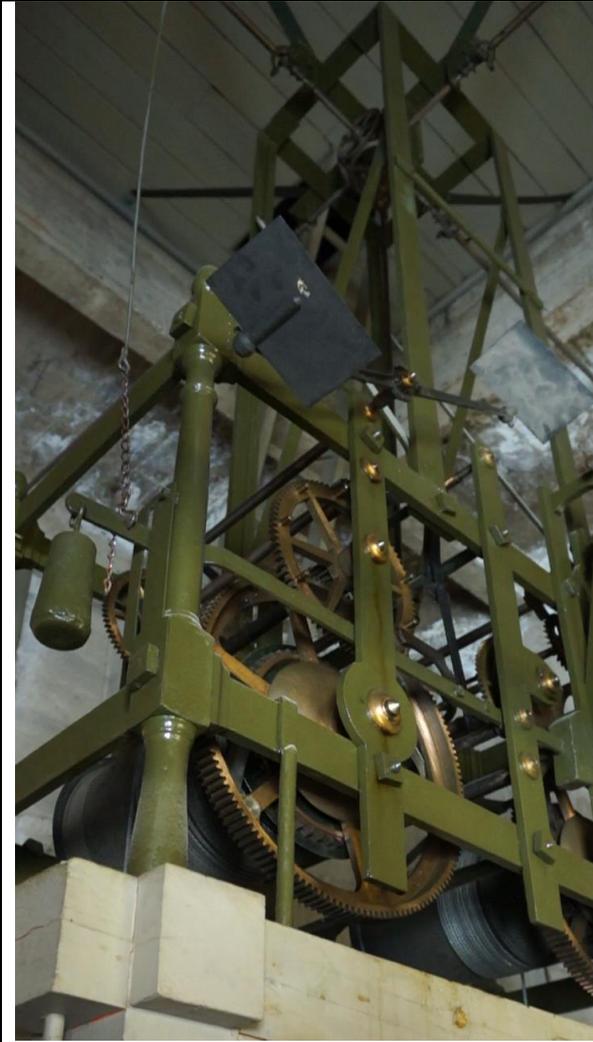


Photographs by Harry Roberts

It also commissioned Geelong Historical Society to create a plaque for the City's 150 year anniversary to explain the tower and clock's origins and fate. The plaque is positioned on the tiled floor in close proximity to where the original tower stood.

Today, the mechanism is still in the ownership of Geelong City Council and is in excellent condition. Market Square managers, Frank Knight, wind the clock every two weeks and make sure it is maintained to ensure its continuous operation. It appears the connection between the rear of the clockface and the clock mechanism has been extended, because the width of the original tower was narrow.

A collection of photographs shows the clock today. The bell and counterweight were not accessible and in the dark parts of the tower and are not shown.



Clock mechanism front view



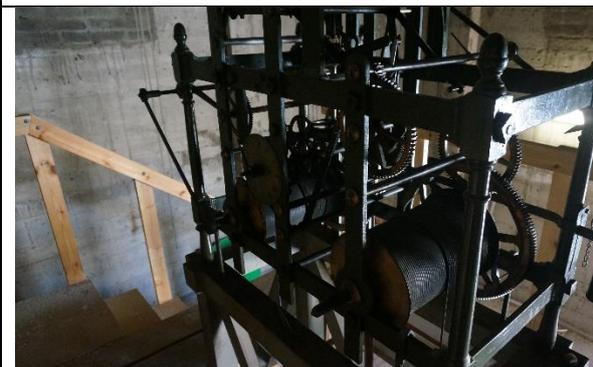
Clock Mechanism side view

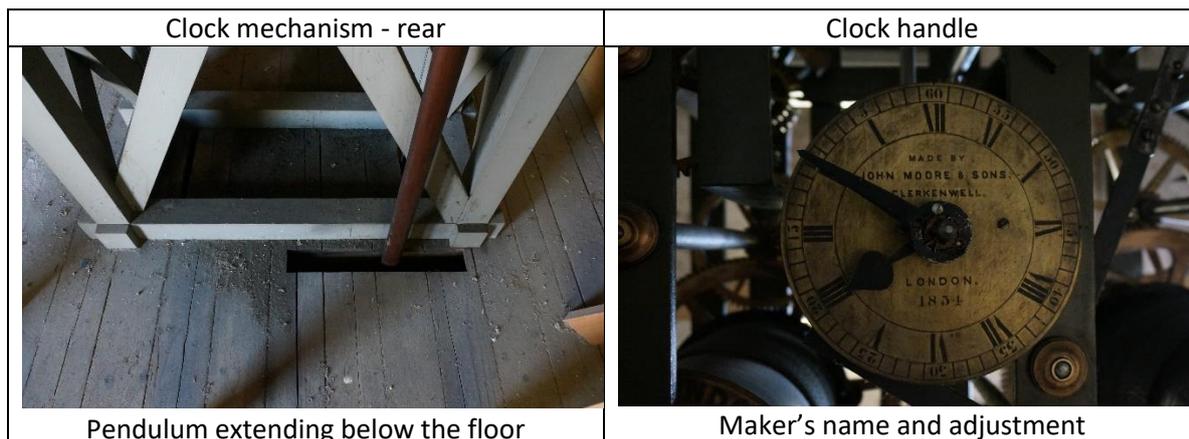


Link to four faces



Rear of clock face





2D Various clock photographs 2023 Harry Roberts

Fortunately, the old Town Clock is still with us and looks down on our daily lives.

After 167 years of exposure to Geelong's fickle weather, the patina on the clock's four faces testify to their antiquity. Their luminosity is fading, but the clock mechanism still beats strong and proud in its domed tower. The clock's pendulum continues to swing rhythmically with the times, but its bell is seldom heard above the cacophony of the city's foot and motorised traffic. Wound fortnightly and maintained by Market Square centre managers, Frank Knight, the clock's measurement of time is ceaseless and constant.

A new 'Age of Enlightenment' now directs city councillors to conserve and preserve our past, and heritage protections are in place to strengthen their arm against reconstruction based on selfish, ephemeral and economic desires.

New Market Square development is in its planning phase, but the clock and its domed tower remain safe from the modern architect's pen and the Wrecker's ball and dozer. Our Town Clock measures our time. Our ability to preserve our Town Clock measures our respect for former generations.

Let's hope the clock 'ticks on' into a new century and Geelong's future residents will see it's faces and kindly reflect on our present times, times long past and Mr. James Austin who had the generosity and vision to erect a Town Clock.

View the final comments video

<https://youtu.be/rdITKKD22Ao>



Footnotes

1 Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer, Saturday March 3 1845 page 2

2 Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Wednesday 13 November 1850 page 2

3 Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Thursday June 2 1853 page 2

4 Jillong Pocket : Then and Now Photographs, JillongPocket.wordpress.com page 122

- 5 Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Wednesday, 20 July, 1853 page 27
- 6 Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer, Wednesday 1 March 1854 p 4
- 7 Ibid Page 4
- 8 Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Wednesday, 13 September, 1854 page 4
- 9 Ibid page 4
- 10 Ibid page 4
- 11 The Illustrated London News December 30 page 690
- 12 Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Wednesday 17 October, 1855 page 2
Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer, Tuesday March 27 1855 page 2
- 13 Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Wednesday 14 November 1855, page 2
Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer, Tuesday Wednesday July 11 1855 page 2
- 14 Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer December 8 1855, page 2
Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Wednesday 17 October, 1855 page 2
- 15 Ibid page 2
- 16 Ibid page 2
- 17 Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Monday 5 March 1856 page 2
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- 24 Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Saturday 8 March 1856 page 2
- 25 Geelong Advertiser Friday 4 April 1856 page 3
- 26 Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Saturday 5 April 1856 page 2
- 27 Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Friday 9 May 1856 page 2
- 28 Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Saturday May 10 1856 page 2
- 29 Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Thursday 3 July 1856 page 2
- 30 The Argus Wednesday 20 August 1856 page 5
- 31 The Age, Melbourne Wednesday 15 October 1856 page 5
- 32 Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Saturday 25 October 1856 page 2

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- 34 Market Committee minutes March 7th 1922 Minute Book page 146
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- 37 Market Committee minutes May 22nd, 1922 Minute Book page 157
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- 40 "CITY OF GEELONG Geelong Market Square Act 1910, No 2263 CONDITIONS OF TENDER Clause 31
- 41 Geelong City Council meeting minutes 19th December 1922
- 42 Geelong City Council meeting minutes 20th January 1923
- 43 City Surveyor's Report Page 2 to the Chairman and members of the Market Committee, Geelong City Council 23rd April 1923. Geelong City Council meeting minutes 20th January 1923
- 44 Geelong City Council meeting minutes June 20 1923
- 45 Geelong Advertiser 'The clock goes East Result of inspection' Saturday 30 June page 4
- 46 Ibid page 4
- 47 Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Monday August 20th page 5
- 48 Geelong City Council Market Committee August 21st 1923
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- 50 Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer 'Going Going' October 18 page 4
- 51 Ibid October 23rd page 4
- 52 Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer ' Letters to the Editor' October 26 1923 page 4
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61 Investigator 1972 volume 7 issue 1 pages 18, 19 &20

62 Geelong Advertiser, Thursday 7 Oct 1926 page 6 and page 3 Wednesday 13 oct 26

Photographs

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A Alderman James Austin Courtesy Geelong Regional Library Geelong City Council Mayoral Photographs Collection Record ID 111626

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E Gill, Stuart Thomas, Market Square Geelong Courtesy: State Library of Victoria Ref 11879

D Gill, Stuart Thomas, Market Square, looking NE from Malop Street. Geelong Courtesy State Library of Victoria (Note it should be south west) Courtesy: State Library of Victoria Ref

E Market Square, North side Geelong Courtesy: State Library of Victoria Ref

F Gill, Stuart Thomas, Market Square, looking NE from Malop Street. Geelong Courtesy State Library of Victoria

G Market Square, North side Geelong Courtesy: State Library of Victoria

H Gill, Stuart Thomas, Moorabool Street from Myers Street, Geelong Courtesy: State Library of Victoria Ref

I Councillor Burrows Courtesy Geelong Regional Library Geelong City Council Mayoral Photographs Collection

J Illustrated London News Masthead C, 1854 TROVE

K Actual clockface today Courtesy: Harry Roberts

L Cast Iron Tower for Geelong Courtesy: Illustrated London News, December 30 , 1854 p689

M Photograph of the original mechanism still working today. Courtesy Harry Roberts

N Letter by Mr James Austin to the Mayor of Geelong Courtesy: Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Thursday 28 February 1856 p2

O Letter by Mr James Austin to the Mayor of Geelong Courtesy: Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Thursday 28 February 1856 p2

P Notice of Town Council meeting Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Monday 3 March 1856 p2

R Dr Alexander Thomson Courtesy Geelong Regional Library Geelong City Council Mayoral Photographs Collection

S Councillor John Richardson courtesy State Library of Victoria

T Councillor R. M. Treacey courtesy State Library of Victoria

U Advertisement for a Town Meeting about the clock Courtesy: Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Wednesday 2 April 1856 p3

V Advertisement for a Town Meeting about the clock Courtesy: Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Friday 4 April 1856 p3

W Christ church top of Moorabool Street – suggested clock site opposite st gill c.1853 slv id 265031 fn sk0102-135-p0116

X Advertisement for Construction Tender Geelong Advertiser and Intelligencer Thursday 1 May 1856 page 2

Y Laying the Foundation Stone by Mayor Thomson, 1 July 1856 State Library Victoria IF H1949 Photographer Joseph Turner

Z The ‘colorized’ version of the 1856 photograph (below). Probably close to the way residents would have seen it. Courtesy State Library of Victoria ID 1800772 Filename nc000565

1A Act of parliament number 1910 Courtesy:
https://classic.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/hist_act/gmsa1910190/

1B Trials Fountain (postcard) c 1906 Courtesy: State Library of Victoria H 42147

1C Queen Victoria Statue (postcard) Courtesy: State Library of Victoria id170906 fn 52979

1D Hitchcock’s Fountain (postcard) C 1906 Courtesy: State Library of Victoria id 1680782 fn 02206

1E Market Square from Malop St c 1890 Courtesy: State Library of Victoria id 1800753 fn Nc000569

1F Stalls at Market Square 1910 Courtesy Geelong Regional Library

1G Moorabool Street frontage c 1905 Courtesy Geelong Regional Library

1I Mafeking procession 1900 Courtesy State Library of Victoria

1J World War I Armistice celebration in Moorabool St 1918 Courtesy Geelong Advertiser

1K Councillor Brownbill Courtesy Geelong Regional Library Geelong City Council Mayoral Photographs Collection

1L Councillor Thear Courtesy Geelong Regional Library Geelong City Council Mayoral Photographs Collection

1M Report of Market Committee No. 3 Courtesy: Geelong Regional Library Heritage Centre Market Committee documents April 4th 1922

1 N Courtesy: Geelong Regional Library Heritage Centre, Market Square Reports file contained”CITY OF GEELONG Geelong Market Square Act 1910, No 2263 CONITIONS OF TENDER July 1922.

1O Courtesy: Geelong Regional Library Heritage Centre, Market Square Reports file contained”CITY OF GEELONG Geelong Market Square Act 1910, No 2263 CONDITIONS OF TENDER 1922

1P Mr John Henry Tait

- 1Q Reports of the Market Committee No 8 Courtesy: Geelong Regional Library Heritage Centre Market Committee documents 26 June 1923
- 1R Councillor O. Hearne, Courtesy Geelong Regional Library Geelong City Council Mayoral Photographs Collection
- 1S Tender for Tower removal Courtesy Geelong Advertiser
- 1T Councillor Solomon, Courtesy Geelong Regional Library Geelong City Council Mayoral Photographs Collection
- 1 U Tower fall Courtesy Geelong Advertiser November 5th 1923 page 6
- 1V Tower fall Courtesy Geelong Advertiser November 5th 1923 page 6
- 1W Tower fall Courtesy Geelong Advertiser November 5th 1923 page 6
- 1X 'Letters to the Editor Geelong Advertiser November 1st, 1923
- 1Y Alderman Walls Courtesy Geelong Regional Library Heritage Centre
- 1Z Photograph Courtesy of Geelong Historical Society Investigator magazine, 1972 volume 7 issue 1 page 20
- 2A Tower today – Harry Roberts 2023
- 2B Inside the tower Name 1 Harry Roberts 2023
- 2C Inside the tower Name 2 Harry Roberts 2023
- 2D Various clock photographs 2023 Harry Roberts

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the most helpful staff at the Geelong Heritage Centre who supplied me with some obscure publications on the Market Square and copies of the Geelong City Council, the Market Committee and Market reports from 1922 and 1923.

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