

## GRAPEVINE CUTTINGS (April 2001)

By Rob Upson

### OLD TREASURY BUILDING – MELBOURNE

Take a journey up Collins St. to the once called 'Paris End' of Melbourne and at Spring St. you will be confronted by a very fine old public building.

When walking up the wide steps try and ignore the brightly coloured sign that screams the word 'Museum' at you. Go through the main door and you are in the Old Treasury Building. It was designed by a 19-year-old architectural draftsman, John James Clark, and built in 1857 to store the vast quantities of precious metal from the Victorian goldfields. The goldfields produced so much gold that Melbourne's Treasury offices in William St. could not securely contain the weekly convoys of gold bullion. This new building also provided offices for the Governor, the Premier, the Treasurer, and the Auditor General of the young colony.

Restored and opened to the public as a museum in 1994, the building houses three permanent exhibitions.

*Built on Gold* in the former gold vaults tells the story of Victorian gold from the diggings as it passed through the hands of the gold buyers and escort troopers until it eventually left the colony bound for the northern hemisphere.

*Making Melbourne* depicts the development of a struggling settlement town in the 1850s to the modern city of Melbourne of today. All through the initial wealth and population explosion of the gold rush.

*Growing up in the Old Treasury* is the re-creation of the basement apartment of John Maynard, the Old Treasury's caretaker, who lived there with his wife and eight children amidst the gold vaults from 1916 to 1928.

In addition, the museum has a rotating programme of temporary exhibitions. The Governor of Victoria continues to hold his weekly meetings with the Executive Council in the chamber on the first floor.

The Old Treasury Building is well worth a visit, particularly in the year celebrating the sesquicentenary of the discovery of gold.