

INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS.

OF

NEW SOUTH WALES.

OPENING ADDRESS

BY

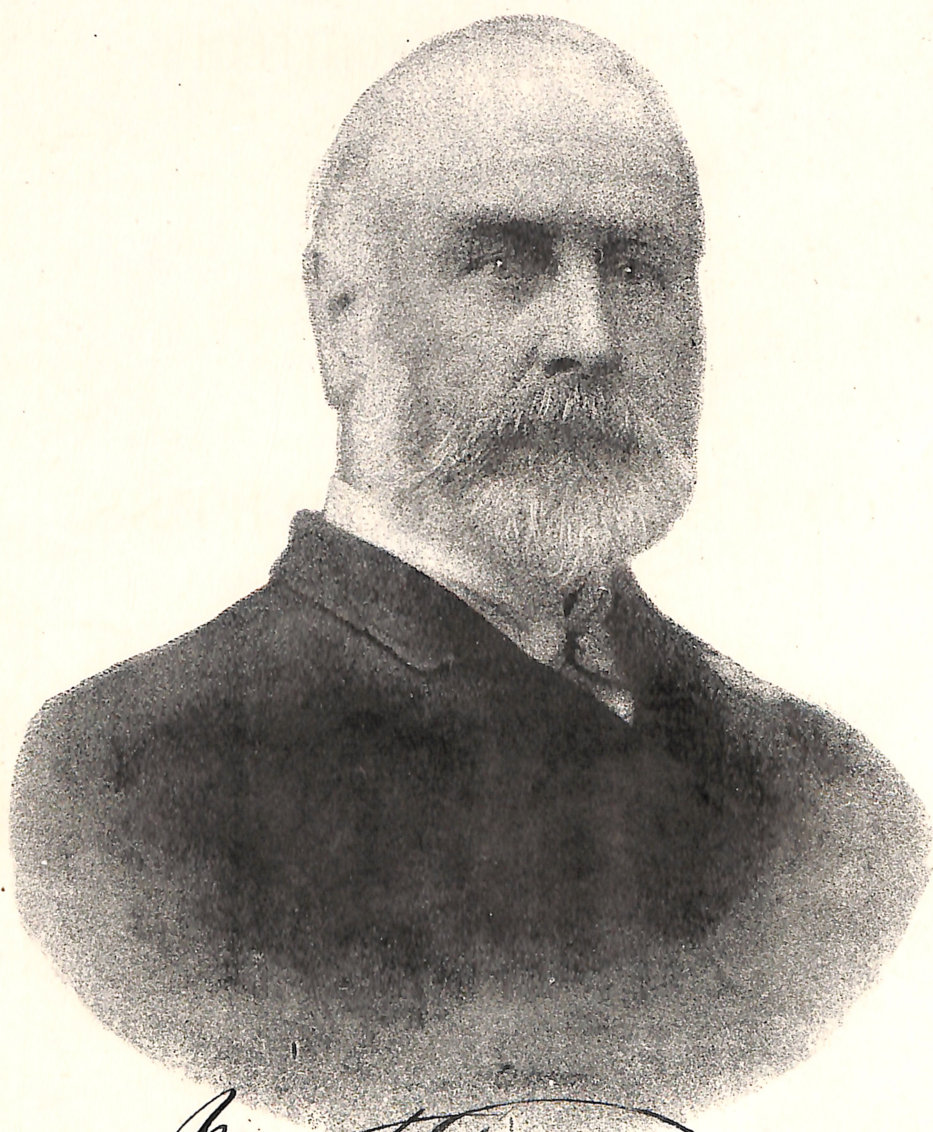
THOMAS ROWE, F.R.I.B.A., President.

DELIVERED MAY 2ND. 1888.

Early History, its Struggles and its Present Position.

SYDNEY :

RE-PRINTED FROM *The Building and Engineering Journal*,
OFFICE, 6 CLARENCE STREET.



Yours truly
J. M. Brown

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Institute of Architects of New South Wales.

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Early History, its Struggles, and its Present Position.

GENTLEMEN,—In the latter part of the year 1870 I sent round a circular letter inviting the architects then practising in the city to meet at “The Chamber of Commerce,” for the purpose of considering the propriety of establishing an Institute of Architects. After much discussion it was unanimously agreed to form such an institution, and it was determined to call a meeting at an early date to draw up rules and regulations for its proper guidance.

The records of this first meeting I cannot find at present, so am unable to state who were present ; but much hard work was accomplished by a few zealous members of the profession in framing the proposed rules and regulations for the new society.

The success of the young Institute was very slow and discouraging, the meetings were but few and far between, and even then but very indifferently attended ; yet a few determined spirits, whose motto was “Nil desperandum,” were constant and untiring in their labours.

The first meeting that is recorded was held at my office on February 21st, 1871. Present : Messrs. Hunt, Reuss, Backhouse, McBeath, Rowe, and Ryan.

The first recorded business was very suggestive of our aims. To show the warm desire of those present to do something not only to advance the architectural branch of art but to aid and forward its much-neglected sister branches in furtherance of these objects, the following resolution was carried :—“That we now form ourselves into a society for the promotion of architecture and the fine arts.” And in the rules of the society printed

in 1871, clause 2, these objects are enlarged to embrace "a diffusion of the knowledge of architecture, fine art, civil engineering, and for general scientific information and friendly intercourse amongst its members."

The first *Patron* was the then Governor—The EARL OF BELMORE.

President—GEORGE ALLEN MANSFIELD.

Vice-President—THOMAS ROWE.

Treasurer—WILLIAM MUNRO.

Hon. Sec.—BENJAMIN BACKHOUSE.

Committee—MESSRS. DAVEY, MACBEATH, and F. H. REUSS.

Besides these gentlemen, the *Members* numbered seven, viz. :—MESSRS. E. BELL, BREES, BRADBRIDGE, HUNT, HILLY, RYAN, and F. BELL.

It was arranged that the annual meeting should be held in January of each year, and eleven intermediate meetings—one on the second Monday in each month.

As an evidence of the enthusiasm and the good intentions of our founders, I may state that from this date—February, 1871—until September of the same year, fourteen meetings and adjournments were held, besides ten committee meetings.

The inaugural gathering was a great success. It was held at the Exchange, the Governor being present, and the room was filled with ladies and gentlemen, including the chief patrons of Art in the colony. The walls of the Chamber of Commerce were entirely covered with interesting specimens of architectural design lent by the members, no one being allowed to exhibit his own work, and the large table was covered with architectural books.

His Excellency the Earl of Belmore was received and escorted to the dais by the President, Vice-President, and officers, while the band played the National Anthem. The President delivered an excellent speech, which was followed by a brief address from the Vice-President, and the Governor having examined the principal objects of interest round the room, expressed his pleasure at being present, and his interest and good wishes for the future welfare of the Institute.

The room was crowded with visitors during the whole evening, and so deep an interest was taken that the rooms were kept open by request for several days and nights. The clergy were particularly interested, and some could be seen seated for hours studying the books on Ecclesiastical Architecture.

Among the many actions taken during the early period of the Institutes' existence, was the introduction of a scale of architectural charges.

The following is an instance of the change that has taken place :—"The Vice-President consented in deference to the wishes of the President and Members to remove his name from a board attached to a building in course of erection."

The late Professor Badham became an honorary member, and gave his consent to the use of a room in the Public Library for the meetings of the

Institute. Then we find Mr. T. J. Crouch, a Melbourne Architect, becoming an honorary member.

Towards the end of September, 1871, the Institute was joined by its present Treasurer, Mr. Jas. MacDonald, who has seldom, if ever been absent from any of the meetings. The first paper read before the Institute was by the Vice-President, subject—"A Review of Ecclesiastical and Secular Architecture."

In consequence of the formation of the Academy of Arts in October, 1871, Mr. Horbury Hunt brought forward a motion to alter the title of the Institute to (Royal) Institute of Architects of N.S. Wales, thus curtailing its objects within the reasonable bounds of architectural advance, and the promotion of intercourse amongst members of the profession generally.

In November, 1871, a paper was read by the Hon. Sec., Mr. Backhouse, on "Air, and its Vitiating;" but great difficulty was experienced in obtaining publicity of the proceedings of the Institute. This was overcome by a deputation, comprising the President and office-bearers, having an interview with the late Mr. Fairfax, and Mr. McBeath's paper on "Sewerage" was printed both in the *Herald* and the *Empire*.

In 1872 a strong desire was expressed that rooms be rented and a Secretary appointed. The illness of the Prince of Wales caused much discussion on drainage matters, and leading articles appeared in the daily papers referring to the Institute and its usefulness, and expressing a hope that it would promote and procure a better state of affairs in sanitary matters.

A paper by Mr. Horbury Hunt was read in April, 1872, on "The Moral Relation of Architect and Client," and much discussion ensued. The subject of ownership of drawings was also debated on May 14, 1872, being then unsettled by the English R.I.B.A.; but the matter dropped without a definite decision being arrived at.

On June 11, 1872, Sir Hercules Robinson became Patron of the Society, and on August 13th a paper was read by George Allen Mansfield, Esq., the President, on "Healthy Homes," which was followed by Mr. MacDonald's paper on "Ventilation."

About this period the unfortunate and serious illness of the President compelled his absence from the chair until May 13th, 1873. This was especially unfortunate, as during a considerable part of that time the proposed Building Act was under discussion. At this period the number of dwelling-houses in Sydney was 15,100, and only 6477 of these were connected with sewers, a state of matters which showed the insanitary state of the city at that time.

On May 20th, by request of the City Council, the Building Act was discussed by a special committee of the Institute, and their recommendations drafted into the proposed Bill. This important work occupied the attention of the Institute till the 12th August, 1873, a great many alterations being made, and many fresh clauses introduced touching, roofs, ceilings, parapets, separate windows to rooms, drainage, theatres, and fire-proof arrangements for same, egress, ventilation, &c. A suggestion for

the appointment of a Board of Health, &c., was also at this time made by the Institute.

From this date until May, 1876, the functions of the Institute ceased for a time, just when its influence for good appeared to be extending in every direction.

In May, 1876, another effort was made to continue the work of the Institute, and *Nil Desperandum* was our motto for the occasion. I was then chosen to be the President, the late Mr. MacBeath, Vice-President, Mr. MacDonald, Treasurer, and Mr. Davey, Hon. Sec. In June, 1878, after a lapse of two years, another meeting was held at the Temperance Hall, only four members remaining loyal to the Institute, viz., Messrs. MacBeath, Davey, MacDonald and myself.

There is no record of any meeting of the Institute—in fact, no further meeting was held until a special one, which was called on May, 31st, 1883, at the rooms of the Surveyors' Institute. At this meeting Messrs. MacBeath, MacDonald, Davey, and myself were again the only representatives of the old Institution, but a special circular followed by a post card was issued to every member of the profession, soliciting their attendance. As a result the following gentlemen put in an appearance at the time appointed, and the same evening signed the membership book, viz., Messrs. Blackmann, Parkes, Blacket, Thompson, Hobbs, Martin, Evans, Kent, Mayes, Despointes, and Watkins. Next month the annual meeting followed on June, 14th, when Messrs. Smedley and Arthur Blacket were added to the Roll of Fellows. At this meeting I had the honour of being again elected President, and Mr. Cyril Blacket was elected Vice-President, Mr. MacDonald being again chosen Treasurer.

A lengthy discussion occupied the principal part of this meeting relating to the question of the "Secretary," many of the members wishing to have a paid secretary appointed. On reference to the rules, this was found not to be in accordance therewith, and it was resolved to alter this as soon as funds would permit, and to engage a secretary at a salary or honorarium to perform all the duties, and be in daily attendance at the office.

A special meeting was held on August 14th for the purpose of amending some of the rules, and another took place on September 18th for the same purpose. At both of these meetings a great deal of both interesting and valuable information was elicited respecting the values of sandstone and brick for building purposes.

The next meeting was held on 11th December, an interval of three months, and another interval of three months takes us to April 1st, 1884, when I tendered my resignation as President on account of an intended visit to Europe. A motion contrary to this was, however, carried, and it was arranged that Mr. Cyril Blacket should act until my return, and a dinner was afterwards given to bid farewell to the President and wish him a hearty God-speed.

About this time I called on Mr. Fletcher Watson, and the following arrangement was made :—The Institute were to rent a room, paying for furniture, and supplying stationery, stamps, &c. Mr. Watson to attend to all the work of the Institute as secretary, and to have use of the room in lieu of an honorarium.

On June 30th, 1884, the annual meeting was held, and a balance-sheet showing £55 in hand was produced.

The meetings have since been continuous, averaging one each month, besides Committee meetings six times a year.

At a meeting held in June, 1885, it was determined to hold a Sanitary Conference, and to communicate with the various municipalities in order to obtain information on the existing systems. A circular was, therefore, drawn up, printed, and sent to each municipality, embodying the following questions :—" *Amount of Population*"; "*No. of Houses*"; "*Water*"—if Metropolitan supply, by meter, or by roof, and the description of tank used;—" *Waste Water*, how disposed of; if by drainage in house; or if by outside drainage. "*Closets*," if patent valve closets, if earth closets, approximate number; or if sunk pits, approximate number and how constructed; if box or pan, how the soil is removed, and at what time. "*Ash-pits*"—if provided, and how emptied. If Building Act in force. "*Lighting*," if by gas, quality of same. "*Baths and Wash-houses*"—Is there any system of public baths or wash-houses? "*Mortality*"—particulars as to deaths from fevers, and preventible diseases. Finally: Personal remarks, suggestions, or complaints.

This document was submitted at a general meeting and approved of. The Press took the matter up, and encouraged the Institute in its endeavours to bring about a better state of affairs. While the Institute was making preliminary arrangements, the Royal Society decided to hold a public meeting to discuss the necessity of a Public Health Bill, and the matter was very ably dealt with, the Primate taking an active part.

The conference was held in the vestibule of the Town Hall, and tended to draw public attention to the many deficiencies in sanitary matters, seriously affecting public health in the city and suburbs. The opening address and speeches were all of a practical kind, the conference lasting several days, while very many interesting exhibits were shewn by sanitary engineers, plumbers, and others.

The success was not so great as the promoters wished it to be, many keeping aloof who should have supported the endeavours, and the greatest difficulty being experienced in obtaining speakers who were experienced in the subject. Very many important topics were, however, brought forward, including Sanitation, Ventilation and Cremation.

The experiment was fairly successful, but it proved a great drain on our exchequer. A shorthand reporter was employed and every speech was recorded, and these are now lying in the archives of the Institute, through want of funds they have never been printed.

Several interesting papers have been read at the monthly meetings, including Mr. Cyril Blacket's paper on "The White Ant," Mr. Green's on "Queen Anne Architecture," Mr. Rowe's on "Lightning Conductors," etc., etc.

The Institute was still very weak and struggling, till the friendly aid so much needed came at last in the form of a proposal from the Palladian Society—a number of architects associated together, who agreed to amalgamate providing certain conditions were agreed to.

Representatives of the Institute met the Palladians by invitation at the Royal Hotel, and after dinner the terms of the amalgamation were determined on. This happy state of affairs was in a great measure brought about by our friends, Messrs. Sulman, Green, Hennessy and others.

In consequence of this amalgamation the rules and bye-laws were revised, which necessarily occupied much time. The good results are now apparent, valuable additions have been made to our roll of membership, which now embraces nearly all the senior members of the profession, and consists of the following gentlemen :—

Patron—Lord Carrington. *President*—Thomas Rowe, F.R.I.B.A., *Vice-President*—John Sulman, F.R.I.B.A. *Treasurer*—Mr. James MacDonald. *Committee*—Messrs. H. C. Kent, John F. Hennessy, John Smedley, S. M. Green.

Secretary—Mr. P. F. Watson. *Fellows*—Messrs. R. C. Blackhouse, J. B. Barlow, Arthur Blacket, James H. Bolster, Edward H. Buchanan, W. H. Bell, W. Wright-Campbell, W. G. Coward, J. J. Davey, Thomas Dingle, W. A. Drake, J. Stuart-Edwards, J. S. E. Ellis, F.R.I.B.A., William J. Gordon, Charles G. Gordon, A. C. Graham, I. M. Green, C. W. Goodchap, Charles A. Harding, John F. Hennessy, J. J. Hine, Edward Hobbs, J. E. Holland, J. B. Hotson, J. Horbury Hunt, E. Jeafferson-Jackson, J. E. Kemp, Harry C. Kent, W. Kenwood, Robert Kuntsmann, C. Manfred, G. Allen Mansfield, F.R.I.B.A., John W. Manson, F. B. Menkens, W. Martin, G. A. Morell, A. F. Myers, J. MacDonald, J. P., George McRae, Thos. A. Playfair, William Pritchard, Varney Parkes, Thos. F. Ransom, F. H. Reuss, senr., F. H. Reuss, junr., G. B. Roskell, H. M. Robinson, Thos. Rowe, F.R.I.B.A., J. J. Sheerin, C. H. Slatyer, John Smedley, J. B. Spencer, John Sulman, F.R.I.B.A., F. D. G. Stanley, F.R.I.B.A., A. A. Tayt, Herbert Thompson, A. Thornley, W. L. Vernon, F.R.I.B.A., Aston J. Watkins, Herbert E. Wardell, F.R.I.B.A., Alfred Wood, Herbert E. Wardell, J. T. Walcot, Henry A. Wilshire.

Associates—Messrs. William Blacklock, Andrew Bennet, Theo. A. Kemmis, G. V. F. Mann, L. L. Ramsay.

Students—Messrs. T. F. Cosh, Harold B. Canna, Victor Wiltshire, J. Burcham Clamp, and H. Jefferis.

The enlarged membership roll led to the necessity of procuring more commodious accommodation for the efficient working of the Institute. The present rooms were taken and furnished, and it was deemed necessary to make fresh arrangements with our energetic Secretary, whose duties were thus greatly increased, and who till this time had received but a small salary.

The library is slowly increasing, and the proceedings of the R.I.B.A. and English and Continental architectural periodicals are now always to be found on the tables for the use of members.

At this point it is meet that I should allude to the extreme regret we all feel at the loss the Institute has sustained by the untimely death of our late friend and brother, Mr. J. Stuart Edwards, who was a most promising member of the profession, a perfect gentleman, and a valuable friend. I

am sure the members of the Institute join with me in feelings of heartfelt sympathy for his bereaved friends and his partner.

This brief history now brings us to the present autumn session. I am glad to see so many present, and trust that a still deeper interest will be manifested in the affairs of the Institute. I feel that I have held the office of President too long; and having borne, with others, "the heat and burden of the day," am conscious that the time is fast approaching when I must take a less active part, leaving the work to younger men.

There is yet much hard work before us—many abuses to rectify that can only be accomplished by your giving them your assiduous attention. The seed must be sown; then the harvest will in all probability be reaped.

Amongst the first things our Institute must grapple with will be the amendment of the Building Act, for it is totally unfitted and inadequate to our present wants. The style and mode of construction of the buildings in our city is rapidly changing year by year, and land becoming so valuable necessitates lofty buildings being erected.

The time is coming when nine—ten—twelve-storey buildings will be attempted; fireproof floors must be resorted to, provision made for the various kinds of material used, asphalt, cement, double-pressed and glazed bricks, iron, terra-cotta, steel, bronze, marble, traegerwellblech, and granite. Fireproof floors, roofs, and staircases, will have to be introduced in dwelling houses, offices, and artisans' homes, as well as in the warehouses.

Hydraulic power must also, of necessity, be introduced, to give quick access of goods and passengers to the highest floors, which will then prove most valuable for offices, both in point of health and by their being removed from the horrible noise caused by using hardwood blocks for the street paving. Improvement must also be made in our water supply, by pumping water to high-level reservoirs, in order to meet the difficulty of reaching the high buildings by gravitation, in case of fire. Ample provision should also be made for fire escapes in all classes of buildings—a precaution now in many instances utterly unprovided for; and electricity must soon form an important item in the lighting of our streets, houses, and parks. The gearing, scaffolding, and engines employed in the erection of these lofty buildings of the future, will have to be looked after by competent inspectors. My firm has now no less than three engines at work on one building.

Another matter requiring strict attention from our authorities is to be found in the rapid disfigurement of our streets by unsightly awnings over the pathways, and in the allowance of all sorts of advertisements—longitudinal signboards above the friezes—across the path, low down, high up, and over the roofs of awnings, in all sorts of entrances, in painted wood, calico, rags and jags of all sorts and sizes, very much like an old English "Show Fair" in a country town, only the clown at the door is wanted to make it complete.

The advertising mania is going beyond all bounds, and travellers are frequently astonished at our excesses. No one should be allowed to annoy his neighbour by erecting such dangerous disfigurements—dangerous no less from fire than from storm.

The time has come I think when professional men should be employed to assess the City and Suburban properties—more particularly City properties. I fail to see how an unprofessional man can do justice to such important valuations, “the rule of the thumb” must, far too often, be brought into use.

I am glad to say that architectural competitions, however unjust they may often prove to be, show signs of improvement. This Institute has been appealed to in order to assist in drawing up conditions, the regulating of the premiums and the appointment of adjudicators.

In saying this I refer more especially to the “Walker Memorial” and State House competitions. Professional judges of the highest type should at all times be consulted, for it is utterly impossible for laymen to give a correct opinion, though there are, of course, exceptions to the rule. How can merchants, and others, who have never given the subject any study, form an opinion? The thing is utterly absurd, and practically unworkable.

I must strongly condemn the practice of architects taking artied pupils for the very short term of three years, because it is unjust to the pupil and to his parents or guardians. The term should never be less than five years, and six would be better still, and even then the ordinary pupil would have to go as an improver for two or three years.

I trust that the following motions carried during the year will prove beneficial to the pupils:—“That the gold medal of the Institute be given for the best design for a building to be decided upon at the time of competition. The work to be done in the rooms of the Institute and under the supervision of the secretary,” and “That the President’s prize and also the Vice-President’s prize be awarded as first and second awards for the best sketches and measured drawings of any portion of an existing public building.”

I might here suggest that this Institute may now with advantage be affiliated with the parent Institute, and then the medals and prizes of the R.I.B.A., will be open to our students under the federation terms laid down. This would afford an opportunity to the young men of the profession to endeavour to obtain the honours so liberally offered.

I do not think it will be egotistical, on the part of the Institute, to claim that the members of the profession practising in New South Wales have frequently to thank it for many of their privileges. As an instance of this its bye-laws for regulating our professional charges have been already in evidence in our Law Courts. I beg to offer my hearty congratulations to the members on their possession of such cosy comfortable quarters, and my very best wishes for the future well-being and prosperity of the Society. Many members have laboured long to bring this about, and those who have worked thus have, I am sure, deserved the thanks of every good citizen, and now that we are a strong and united body, I trust that every member will strive to the full to exercise that gentlemanly conduct, and professional etiquette towards others, which are the evidences of true professional instincts.

The prospects of the young but aspiring architect of this great Colony are very promising. There is an expanse of country possessing all that is

required to facilitate growing greatness in which we may vie with the mightiest of existing nations. With what marvellous resources for architectural improvement are we bountifully furnished!

We have a variety of scenery and climate that will admit of an application to our buildings of all styles of architecture as they now exist on the Continent of Europe; nor could we desire better means than are now in our possession to render their construction facile and their existence of long duration.

Immense forests of timber of every variety, inexhaustible stores of mineral wealth, combined with natural and increasing facilities for transportation, exist in unparalleled abundance. With these advantages, and the combined energies and intelligence of thousands of freemen, we have, indeed, much to hope for.

Already we have written "permanency" and "fitness," and set the stamp of "beauty" on many of our prominent edifices; yet a vast field lies before us. And while our intelligence should scorn servile imitation, we may kindle from the undying sparks of antique art a flame of our own that will blaze up and illuminate our temples and our homes.



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