



## Talking Notes for Friends of the Ballarat Botanical Gardens

Frederick Moses Claxton

Born in Suffolk, England - September 1832. Died Ballarat - 13 March 1888, of English cholera, at his residence at 41 Webster Street. Arrived in Australia early 1853, first settling in Geelong. Married Miss Dalton at Geelong 854 when aged 22. Approximately 1956 moved to Linton, thence to Ballarat where he became a bookkeeper to McNaught and Boyd, wholesale storekeepers and wine and spirit merchants; then traveller in the firm and finally manager.

Claxton and his brother-in-law bought out the business and in 1862 they ran the wine and spirit store at the south east corner of Mair and Armstrong Streets. Claxton next commenced business on his own account as an auctioneer. It was in this position that he was better known. George Crouch bought the block of land at Point Lonsdale from Claxton and later built on it the first house on the Point.

1864 first joined the Ballarat City Council - Mayor three times.

Member Water Commission, Hospital, Benevolent Home, Orphanage Committee, Masonic Lodge.

Trustee Christ Church, Anglican Cathedral Board.

20 years Chairman of Directors Magdala Mine, Stawell.

Identified with a number of district miners.

Legal Manager, Hepburn Estate, in which he was a shareholder.

Investor.

Foundation Member of the City Fire Brigade.

Left a widow, 3 sons, 3 daughters, and an aged mother.

### History of the Claxton Monument

Frederick Moses Claxton was Mayor of the City of Ballarat between 1872-1877. Claxton's pet hobby was said to have been the lake and gardens and it was in recognition of his contribution to the development of both that this memorial bust, paid for through public subscription, was erected outside the fernery in 1890. Historian Weston Bate has described Claxton as the man "who above all others had fostered the lake and the gardens and stuck to his vision." In 1890 he was recognised as a hero. The Mayors Report for that year expressed the Council's gratitude for Claxton's contribution to the Gardens:

*May it long remain to recall the memory of one who did so much to promote the development of that place of public resort of which we are all so proud.*

**Description**

The Claxton Memorial consists of a white marble bust and pedestal set on a cement rendered base with pressed cement dolphins, the whole being set on a basalt plinth in a rendered brickwork pond. The pond is surrounded by a low cast and wrought iron fence.

**Significance**

The FM Claxton Memorial is a significant memorial structure and is of primary significance to the Garden. It is one of relatively few sculptures which recognise the work and dedication, particularly in fostering the development of the Lake and Garden, of one of Ballarat's leading figures in the later nineteenth century.

**Survey**

In the survey of Ballarat sculptures carried out in 1983, its current condition was described in detail. The present assessment is that little has changed since then. The detail is summarised as follows:

The sculpture shows chipping to the ears and back of bust with staining and mould growth. The pedestal base is sound but the dolphins are badly damaged and the centre of the pedestal eroded and chipped. The cast iron railing requires total reconstruction, paintwork and rendering require major attention.

**Estimated Cost**

It is estimated that the cost of total restoration will be in the vicinity of \$20,000.