

City Council of Ballarat.

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THE MAYOR'S ANNUAL REPORT, 1890.

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To the City Council.

GENTLEMEN,-

I have pleasure to submit for your perusal a précis of the Municipal business of the year during which I have enjoyed the esteemed honor of presiding, as Mayor, over the deliberations of the Council of this Corporation.

Finance.

This subject always claims precedence. Thus far through the Financial year. Revenue has come in well, and promises ample justification of the estimate; disturbing elements may always be looked for, but as yet they have been favorable, and, notwithstanding the increasing requirements of every Ward of the City, the Council has been able to provide the means of satisfying them within reasonable bounds. The future distribution of Government Subsidy to Local Bodies is in a state of uncertainty; it is not yet known how the increase voted last Session by Parliament will be divided, but the general absence of satisfaction has brought into existence Leagues by both Shires and Boroughs to agitate in favor of their respective claims to share in the Vote. I must not venture further into details of Finance, because they will be submitted by the City Treasurer in the fulness of time at the end of the Financial year.

Annual Valuation.

The Annual Valuation of Property within the City, just completed, shows a steady increase, which points to the fact that notwithstanding the periodic wave of depression to which this, like all other Communities, has been subjected, the assessable estate of the City continues to increase in extent and value.

Sinking Funds.

The Sinking Funds of our Loans have been scrupulously maintained, and purchases of Stock have been made at good rates; that of the Loan of 1875 now amounts to £18,629 8s. 4d; and for the Loan of 1884, to £1,551 1s. 10d; in addition to which, the last is redeemable at the rate of £800 per annum, which, with its Sinking Fund, will be fully liquidated in 1894.

Public Works.

The Mayoralty was ushered in by the usual demands for special works, increased Ward allowances, and improvement of Reserves: Effort was made, not without success, to meet the pressure; and the Estimate of Expenditure for 1889-90 will bear very favorable comparison with those of preceding years. To enumerate special works for the year in detail would be tedious; let it suffice to say that several long-standing claims have been disposed of: Camp Street has been made worthy of its central position and future usefulness as a relief to the now rapidly congesting traffic along Lydiard Street to the Railway Station; the Central Ward can also boast of a vigorous effort to deal with the vexed question of the wayrights by which it is afflicted; Little Clyde Street, in the

North Ward, has become almost an accomplished fact, after years of agitation; and the South Ward can rejoice in the commencement of a work (to be continued by Government aid next year) which will constitute the main drainage of the Ward, i.e., the channelling of the Redan Creek - a great work of sanitation. Two more blocks of central avenue in Sturt Street are now in process of being kerbed and channelled, to the great improvement of that fine thoroughfare.

Works of ordinary nature that annually recur for extension have not been overlooked, and the details of forming, metalling, channelling and asphaltting may be summarised as follows, without reference to localities:- Beside the usual extensive surface maintenance, the works for 1889-90 have been-forming and metalling roadways, 53 chains; pitched channels, 9,597 sq. yards; brick culverts constructed, 569 lin. feet; bluestone kerbing, 1,150 lin. yards; flagging, 143 sq. yds.; tarred footpaths, 199 chains; footpaths formed and gravelled, 246 chains.

Important works have been effected at the various Reserves of the City, but they can be more appropriately described when that subject is reached.

Water Supply.

It must be gratifying to all Citizens that the efforts of the Water Commissioners, to attain an increased water storage to meet the growing requirements of Ballarat, have been rewarded with success. Details would be sadly out of place here; for all classes it must be a subject for congratulation, and occasion for graceful acknowledgment of the efforts of the Commissioners.

Street Planting.

This has met with constant attention by Mr. Saunders and his staff; it is now so widely spread that extension is less a matter of moment than maintenance and cultivation. In many parts renewals have to take place, sometimes from failure of the original plantation, but more frequently from change of street levels on the line which occurs on the more extended formation of streets and channels; but trees under removal have served a purpose for their time, and the general plantation has at length taken in such possession of the eye that occasional gaps are not observed. The number of trees now in our streets is 5,800, a result that cannot be easily overtaken by any other City. The too frequent applications for a removal of trees for private convenience should be very much deprecated; it often happens that people build, or make alterations to their premises, regardless of the position of a tree, and then desire its removal, merely to fit in with their own arrangements. The Public Estate should not thus be trifled with, and it is submitted that all future applications of that character should be well scrutinised before being dealt with.

Tramways.

It cannot be said that this subject is on a satisfactory footing, either as regards the Council or the Company. The Council is justly dissatisfied with the construction in some parts, and the want of proper maintenance all over. On the other hand, the Directors of the Company are repeatedly asking for concessions to vary their Agreement, on the pleas of the traffic being insufficient to justify rent; that the tariff of fares is too low; and the time table not altogether adapted to Public convenience, or economical working. It will be for the Council to consider these pleas on their merits! Profit or loss do not altogether depend on traffic returns; faulty construction, or inefficient management, are potent factors in determining results! It should be borne in mind that the Council has nothing to do with the present Constitution of the Company, who are but the assigns of the person to whom the original concession was granted; that Ratepayers will hold this Council responsible for the future of the Tramways, as to Public convenience, and value for the concession

to be enjoyed by the Corporation; both of which points cannot be safely settled on the pleas with which the Directors of the Company approach the Council. There is a future before the Company as well as the very short past; there are also promises which, so far, the Directors have stolidly ignored. The Council has never lost sight of the ultimate necessity of substituting electricity for horse traction as a motive power, but did not succeed in inducing the Directors of the Company to do more than give vague promises. The foregoing comments are only intended to indicate that, whatever concessions the Council may be pleased to grant to the Company, regard should be had for the claims of the Corporation in the future more than to the present necessities of the Company. The difficulty of concessions and alterations once settled, the Tramways may be regarded as an invaluable acquisition, and a most important factor in the future progress and develop[ment] of the City.

Since the above was written, we have been startled with the lamentable accident by which Mr. Jas. Cowan, Chairman of Directors, and his Electrician, have lost their lives; negotiations for changes must of necessity be suspended for some time at least; and at this stage it is difficult to see what direction they may take on being resumed.

Sanitary.

I feel happy in being able to report very favorably on the Public Health. The first six months of the calendar year is the period during which infectious disease is mostly present, and the comparative tables of 1889 and 1890 show a very considerable decrease in favor of the latter; the figures submitted by the Health Officer being for Typhoid cases reported 94 in 1889; and 35 in 1890. Reported cases of Diphtheria have been about equal. Taking infectious diseases generally, the numbers for the time when such disease prevail have shown 112 for 1889; whereas only 72 were notified for 1890. It may also be stated that 20 per cent of the cases are brought to Ballarat from other places. The Report of the Central Board of Health (now re-constituted as the Board of Public Health) for 1888-89 quoted the death-rate for the City as 15.10 per 1000—a slight increase on the previous year, but considering deaths in the Charitable Institutions which receive inmates from a wide area of country, it indicates a very low death-rate indeed for Ballarat. This highly satisfactory return must not be taken as a reason for relaxing precaution, or delay of preventative measures. The powers conferred by the recent Health Act should not be allowed to lie dormant. The Council can hardly be held responsible for infection that is taken through the stomach; unwholesome feeding, unripe or damaged fruit, are in many cases accountable for infectious disease, which, once started, may spread; but in the matter of cleanliness the Council has a large field for the beneficent exercise of its authority: Two great questions are constantly *en evidence*, viz., the removal and disposal of night soil; and scavenging so far as it relates to household and trade rubbish; also, the preservation of cleanliness in and about private premises.

Night-soil question.

In a few weeks the scavenging contract will terminate, and the Council should consider the propriety of extending its scope to deal with private and other rubbish. The long-vexed question of night-soil should not be allowed to drift until the consequences of the present loose system are felt; much available evidence has been gathered on this matter, and it is really ripe for some movement in advance. As to state of private premises: Whatever praise may have been accorded to the plan on which the City has been laid out, there can be no doubt that rectangular lines do not always coincide with natural levels for drainage; and when the extension of the City led to the acquisition of freeholds, the "Contract" Surveyors displayed a cheerful disregard of drainage possibilities; the

difficulties are now being felt; often in a conflict between the individual and the council as to private and public responsibilities.

Elected to Board of Public Health.

I have enjoyed the honour of being elected to a seat on the Board of Public Health as representative of the Western Burroughs Group, and I have since given regular and close attention to the duties; I have consequently attained to much experience on sanitary matters, and hope in the future to be of use to this Council as well as to my Constituents.

Botanic/Pavilion/New Greenhouse.

What can be said on this subject that cannot be in terms of congratulations? With ordinary care in maintenance, the beneficent forces of nature are doing the annual duty of improvement, so far as vegetation is concerned. The Gardens do not cease to be a centre of business of the Council to recognise the influx of Country Visitors during the season, and so to provide for their needs as to assure the maximum of enjoyment and convenience for them, with the minimum risk of mischief that might arise for want of regulation when they come in numbers. To that end the Council has at length wisely resolved to construct a Pavilion to improve the means of catering for refreshments, and in the hope of drawing the Pic-nicing to our centre; thus reducing the evil of *débris* being scattered far and wide. The valued site at the Lawn justly demanded that such a building should be ornamental as well as utilitarian. Accordingly, competitive designs were invited for premiums of £25 and £10. The premiated designs were those of Mr. W. H. Piper and Mr. A. J. Tweedie, both of Ballaarat. The former has been engaged to superintend the erection of the one he originated, and if his plan be justified by results, and ornament, and a new attraction, will have been added to our Gardens. A new and enlarged Greenhouse has also been erected, which will greatly increase the means of propagation.

Memorial to late Cr. Claxton.

It would be a grave omission were I to pass over the subject of the Gardens, and especially of the Fernery, without a passing tribute to the memory of our esteemed and genial Colleague, the late Councillor F. M. Claxton. In his day he did good service to this Corporation, and none better than the unremitting advocacy of his pet hobby, "*The Lake and Gardens.*" No public man earned a better title to recognition of his efforts in that regard than he! I am therefore glad that during my Mayoralty a Public Subscription resulted in the erection of a Bust of our departed friend in front of the Fernery. 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.

Lake Wendouree/Rush Cutting.

I pass on, by natural affinity, from the Gardens to the Lake. It goes, without saying, that it fully asserts its popularity; but, sad to say, those who enjoy its recreative capacity little know the trouble and anxiety of maintaining it. The idea of cost may be set aside when compared with its inestimable values and attraction. The trouble is, not the outlay, but how to expend it to best advantage; the Vegetation baffles all foresight and efforts to keep it down. It persists in growing! during winter as if in summer; by night as well as by day. Really, it appears as if there were no other course open but to continue doggedly cutting until, mayhap, some solution of the difficulty may occur.

Difficult and disappointing as efforts to check the vegetation have been, I bear grateful record to the efforts of all who promote aquatic recreation, whether rowing, sailing, or angling.

Improvements to Foreshores/Swans.

Some improvements have been going on at the foreshores by aid of Government Grants: notably the extension of the landing place at the garden side; also banking up and gravelling at eastern and southern shores; the vote is not all expended, and application has already been made for re-vote of the unexpended balance. During the year the Corporation has been indebted to Mr. Chas. Sommers, of Rome, for the gift of four handsome white swans from the Pincian Hill, Rome, they arrived in good condition, and were transferred to open water in April, but, sad to relate, two of them have since died, one from cause unknown, the other from violence. The efforts to introduce these handsome birds have been very unfortunate, but happily a breeding pair remain, and will be well cared for in the hope of progeny.

Pisciculture.

Not much can be said on this subject. Notwithstanding the wonderful results of last year's hatching, but which it was hoped to have many thousands of young trout for the Lake and other waters, we have been deprived of the beneficial results by robbery of the Ponds during the late summer; it is much to be deplored that there are people in our midst who would stultify the efforts of acclimatisation for their own selfish and dishonest purposes. Another misfortune for this season is that the breeding fish so far have not come up to the rill, perhaps owing to want of water; the fear is that they will become over-ripe, and the season may be lost.

Park, and Arbor Day.

I deem it good fortune, personally, that the great works of planting Victoria Park should have been identified with my mayoralty.

The Grant-in-Fee for the Park had been received by my predecessor, whereupon the Council had deemed it time the ground should be utilised; a Committee was accordingly appointed late in June, 1889, but the season was then too far advanced for effective work; it was not, however, lost sight of; in due time I was reminded of the necessity for the work being taken in hand, when it occurred to me as an auspicious time for instituting "Arbor Day" at Ballarat. By happy coincidence, the Ballarat Horticultural Society and the Australian Natives' Association moved in the matter of planting the Park, which gave a public impetus to the movement; and by the time arrangements were completed for celebrating "Arbor Day" on the Queen's Birthday, public opinion was fully seized of the importance of the approaching event. Nearly all invitations to heads of families to be represented were accepted with alacrity. A plan of plantation was carefully prepared, showing varieties of trees, locality of each tree to be planted, as arranged by ballot; also a register of tree, number, and name of planter, to facilitate future recognition. As the birthday date fell on Saturday (most inconvenient for all having business pursuits), the 23rd was arranged for. The elements were propitious! By the appointed hour of 11 o'clock a.m. the company had assembled; at sound of trumpet the work was simultaneously commenced all over the ground; and within half-an-hour 1,250 trees were planted, and I was congratulated on all sides for the arrangement and very successful accomplishment of a great work.

I thank all for their active support, and again take occasion for self-gratulation that the work came to my hand.

Other Reserves.

These have had due attention to maintenance. Certain alterations have been to the Western Oval, which will adapt it more for footballing, while still retaining its usefulness for cricket, &c. The caretaker's house has been removed to the N. W. corner, and faced outwards, whereby his family will be more free from molestation by the high-spirited youths who go there for their sports.

White Flat.

By aid of a small Government Grant obtained by Councillor Lieut.-Col. Smith, White Flat promises to rise out of "the slough of despond" into a state of usefulness, if not, as yet, a "thing of beauty." Its possibilities as a recreation ground are beyond contention! and perhaps, step by step, it may be redeemed from its present chaotic state into another breathing space reserved in perpetuity for a growing city.

Cardigan Square etc.

The Council has not, as yet, seen its way clear to do anything to the latest acquisitions on the western boundary of the Gardens. Their value is undoubted, but there is a limit to achievement for one year, and, so far, all that can be said is that the subject has been duly tabled. Cardigan Square, adjoining the Cattle Yards, will, as a valuable adjunct to the Park, be fenced in without delay.

Markets.

A subject of routine - valuable only as annual records for future reference by whomever it may concern; therefore, I follow the custom of giving returns for 12 months ending 31st July, as under:-

CATTLE YARDS-

Cattle. Calves. Sheep. Lambs
 1890-17,167.....2,132.....258,512.....50,938.
 1889-17,514.....1,643.....402,933.....48,549.

PRIVATE SALE YARDS-

Horses. Dairy Cattle. Pigs.
 1890-3,926.....7,005.....15,872.
 1889-3,625.....6,385.....17,506.

HAYMARKET-

Hay. Oats. Pease. Barley. Straw. Potatoes.
 1890-16,642 tons. 175,395 bush. 31,484 bush. 9,128 bush. 2,217 tons. 5,802 tons.
 1889-14,308 tons. 122,194 bush. 29,097 bush. 10,749 bush. 2,262 tons. 7,694 tons.

Offices at Hay-market.

Some of the Agents doing business at the Haymarket having moved towards improvement in their offices, a Conference was held, which resulted in two Firms making application for a building lease of long term, to which the Council has assented; a point raised as to the power of the Corporation to enter into such a contract was happily disposed of. But it suggests the wisdom of obtaining a Private Act of Legislature to extend the powers of the Council over Reserves, and thus enhance their values.

Events.

The Events of the year have been numerous and noteworthy. Our streets have been embellished by the unveiling of the "Moore" Statue, which took place on December 3rd, 1889, in presence of a large crowd of spectators. The ceremony did not end with the unveiling. A Banquet subsequently took place, at which the originators and workers of the movement received the meed of praise which was justly their due.

Art Gallery.

Another advance in the artistic attraction of the City was afforded by the formal opening of the handsome New Gallery of the Ballarat Fine Arts Associations, in Lydiard Street. This building had been long in construction, but on its completion, and hanging the already fine collection, it realised the fullest anticipations of the Council of the Association. Fortunately, Mr. Jas. Oddie, J.P., F.R.G.S., who may be justly termed the founder of the Art Gallery, had returned from Europe in

time to preside at the opening. The collection is growing apace, several gifts of high value being already on the way out from Europe.

Time Ball.

A very small matter that has exercised the minds of many for years past has been achieved: We have a time-ball at last! It was promised in July, 1889; since when, the whole machinery of Government, in electrical and constructive departments, has been engaged in the work of placing a wicker ball on a staff, and arranging for its being lifted and allowed to drop at a given time once a day; better late than never! I trust residents will not fail to appreciate the outcome of so much long-continued energy!

Direct Shipments.

A movement toward decentralisation was initiated at Geelong, by way of inducing importers of Ballaarat and the Western District to consign their shipments direct to Geelong, but most unaccountably the effort fell flat, and without response; importing Firms did not appear to see the saving that would accrue from freight being landed so many miles nearer to consumers.

Imperial Federation.

In August, 1889, Ballaarat was visited by Mr. G. R. Parkin (of Canada), the accredited travelling Lecturer on "Imperial Federation." Although his visit was hurried, he found time to address a meeting, in terms that set his hearers reflecting over a great subject.

Science Association.

The Delegates of the Australian Association for the promotion of Science also found their way to Ballaarat, to see what was being done in mining and manufactures.

Professor Sydney Dickenson.

In September, 1889, a series of very interesting Lectures, descriptive and illustrative, of New Zealand, were delivered at Ballaarat by Professor Sydney Dickenson; they proved attractive as well as instructive; and opportunity was thereby afforded me to offer an entertainment to Ratepayers and their Families, of which I was very pleased to avail myself.

Visitors/His Excellency the Governor.

Visitors are naturally, involved in the preceding subject of events. Early in December, 1889, the Earl and Countess of Hopetoun paid an official visit to Ballaarat; the distinguished Visitors came in State, and met with a grand Public reception. I had the honor of entertaining them at Lunch, after which they went the usual round of inspection to places of interest. On the following day His Excellency held a Levée at the Town Hall, and then became the guest of the mine owners. I confess I was much impressed with his pleasant urbanity, and in my humble opinion, with his capacity for the very responsible post he has been called on to fill.

His Excellency Earl of Kintore, and others.

Other Visitors of distinction have come, as they always do, to Ballaarat, and I have had the honor of receiving His Excellency the Earl of Kintore, Governor of South Australia, and his Countess. The list of Visitors also comprised Major General Edwards; Lady Constance Combe; an Indian Prince, of most unpronounceable name, and therefore of great distinction in his own Country; beside numerous others, for mention of whom I am precluded by want of space.

Extended Local Government.

In my opinion, time is ripe for considerable extension of the powers of Local Bodies; too much of Government is being directed from the great centre; and it is not to be expected that large Communities, such as that of Ballaarat can expand and meet their various and growing needs while

being dry-nursed, as it were, under the laws and restrictions that may possibly be necessary for places of a few hundreds of people only. The Legislature should confer larger powers, and put more trust in the hands of such men as those who have helped to make Ballarat what it is, and take their places in conducting public business. Deputations to make Government play its part, and to ask for leave to act for ourselves, when occasions arise, are surely a humiliating necessity. Why cannot Local Bodies collect and enjoy all sources of Revenue arising out of business carried on within their own territories, such as fees for Auctioneers' and other Licences ? Why is the distribution of subsidy to Municipalities the subject of annual squabble and political influence, when it could be at once settled on an unalterable basis ? As things are, no Community can obtain fair play without persistent and undignified importunity to Ministers! Main drainage works, such as the Yarrowee Channel and the Gnarr Creek, must remain in abeyance, unsafe and insanitary, until it may please Government to supplement local funds by its dribbling contribution. Why cannot the Town Councils exercise control over the surface of Crown Lands within their boundaries without interference of the Mining Laws, under which a trifling fee can confer a title for occupation without survey, means of identification, or limit of locality ? All these are matters pertinent to extension of Local Government; and if deemed to confer powers too large for the average town, then, I ask, why Ballarat cannot enjoy a separate charter ? Why it cannot be allowed to rise out of the dead level of the Local Government Act, and rank with Melbourne and Geelong.

Tree Planting on Northern Boundary.

I take leave to recommend a work, which, in my humble opinion, should be favorably considered, early commenced, and persistently followed to completion, viz., the systematic plantation in the streets of the northern boundary of the City. Such a work would have, in course of time, a climatic value! it would modify the fierce discomfort of the prevalent northerly winds; the sanitary advantages would be enormous, in winter as well as summer; if trees have a value anywhere, they will have fourfold if so placed as to protect the City from the northern blast. I submit for adoption, that wherever a blank space can be found on that boundary, plant it!

Personal.

The Ballarat group of the Municipal Association of Victoria has honored me as its delegate to the Central Committee.

I desire to convey to Municipal Officers throughout the entire service my appreciation of their efficiency and earnestness. To the Town Clerk, Mr. Perry, I express my sincere thanks for the cheerful aid and invaluable experience he has always placed at my service, and which have done so much to render my term pleasant, and, I trust, profitable.

It now only remains for me to say how very much I have enjoyed my term in the Chair; how much I appreciate the high tone of the Council, over whose deliberations it has been, for me, a pleasure to preside; to acknowledge the efficiency of the Municipal Service; and to retire, thanking you gratefully for the uniform courtesy and support which you have at all times accorded to the Chair.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,
Your most obedient servant,

WILLIAM LITTLE,
MAYOR

Town Hall, Ballarat,
1st August 1890.
