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The Architecture of Scientific Sydney

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A special building for pure science in Sydney certainly preceded any building for the arts – or even for religious worship – if we allow that Lieutenant William Dawes’ observatory erected in 1788, a special building and that its purpose was pure science.^[1] As might be expected, being erected in the first year of European settlement it was not a particularly impressive edifice. It was made of wood and canvas and consisted of an octagonal quadrant room with a white conical canvas revolving roof nailed to poles containing a shutter for Dawes’ telescope. The adjacent wooden building, which served as accommodation for Dawes when he stayed there overnight to make evening observations, was used to store the rest of the instruments. It also had a shutter in the roof. A tent-observatory was a common portable building for eighteenth century scientific travellers; indeed, the English portable observatory Dawes was known to have used at Rio on the First Fleet voyage that brought him to Sydney was probably cannibalised for this primitive pioneer structure.

The location of Dawes’ observatory on the firm rock bed at the northern end of Sydney Cove was more impressive. It is now called Dawes Point after our pioneer scientist, but Dawes himself more properly called it ‘Point Maskelyne’, after the Astronomer Royal. Dawes was simply a naval lieutenant who volunteered for service under Phillip. The Reverend Dr. Maskelyne was the man who obtained astronomical instruments on loan from the Board of Longitude so that this particular naval marine could make observations useful for English shipping in the Pacific (the applied science aspect of the place), and in order to record an expected comet for British scientists (the pure science role, and the explanation for the building’s speedy erection).

Dawes used the observatory for four years, but when he returned to England in 1791 he took his borrowed instruments back with him and the structures were abandoned. The observatory apparently collapsed, but by the end of the year Collins reported that the wooden building was being used as a guardroom, a platform for a flagstaff and a cannon having been erected beyond it. Science rapidly gave way to a modest display of military strength and the original purpose of the building was soon forgotten.

The only visual evidence we have of the appearance of the observatory is Dawes’ own rough sketch in a letter. At Old Sydney Town at Somersby, the scientific building has been chosen for recreation rather than the military one, despite its short life and this somewhat meagre evidence of its appearance. Some of the instruments used in the original building still exist at the National

Maritime Museum, Greenwich and have been reproduced for this replica, so we can now pride ourselves on Sydney's scientific, rather than militaristic origins – an aspect of the colony then only of interest to a few gentlemen in England.

Governor Brisbane's observatory at Parramatta of 1822 was the next observatory in Australia.^[2] It was a private gentleman's whim, erected at Brisbane's own expense, although the British government took it over and continued to maintain it after he left – until 1847 when it was dismantled. The instruments would have been sold off the following year had it not been for Captain Philip Gidley King's intercession, although largely because of disputes about a site no building to house the stored instruments eventuated for another ten years. In 1858 a temporary building at South Head was used by the government astronomer (Reverend William Scott) for a short time until the new permanent building in Sydney was completed later in the year. Philip Parker King had suggested that the best point for a permanent observatory in Sydney would be on Fort Phillip; its time ball would then be visible from all parts of the Harbour. This was the site ultimately selected. The new observatory replaced Fort Phillip, a defence work erected under Governor King in order to provide a defence for the town after the Castle Hill convict rising. So the new observatory stood (and still stands) on an old rampart and the wheel turned full circle. Defence replaced science; then science replaced defence.

By June 1858 the new building was complete enough to allow meridian observations, and the instruments from Brisbane's old Parramatta observatory were placed in it. It was designed by the Colonial Architect, Alexander Dawson^[3], and consisted of an astronomer's residence, a library, a 'computer's room' and a centre square tower 58 feet high carrying a time ball that dropped every day at 1.00 p.m. A 12 foot square shed was erected in 1865 to the south of the main building, for thermometers, and a small magnetic observatory was also added then. A Government Printer photograph of c.1870 shows the building we see today – now restoration has been completed.^[4]

Yet in 1907 demolition of the Sydney Observatory seemed inevitable. A writer in the *Sydney Morning Herald* commented:

Let us hope that though the Observatory may go to a better site, the present generation will not rudely sweep away the historic remains where our pioneers built forts and raised guns to protect their small town [against their own people, I might interpolate], and science stepped in and raised her tower and aided the work of the community with her astronomical and meteorological observations and formed her base for shipping reports and signalling.^[5]

The tower with its time ball was always the major public identification for this building and its visual importance helps explain the style of the architecture. The Observatory was, I believe, the first important building in New South Wales of this asymmetric Italianate villa form – a style normally confined to stately residences. (It had, for instance, already been used for the Governor's house at Toorak, Melbourne). But in Sydney, The Governor was lodged in the English architect Edward Blore's Tudor castellated towers; Italianate classicism was mainly employed for commercial buildings, especially the large number of banks erected in the 1850s. The Observatory's major role was to represent science as the handmaid of commerce, helping to guide ships taking gold back to England. Hence the general style of the building was appropriately allied to a fashionable commercial style. The unique tower on the hill nevertheless proclaimed a special importance for science in the landscape particularly when it was seen from Darling Harbour, the commercial shipping area. (Sotherby's Australia has recently discovered a

romantic evening oil painting of the Observatory from Darling Harbour by Frederick Garling, dramatically reinforcing this image.)

When less obviously allied to commercial shipping interests or to London's gentlemanly obsessions, scientific building was less dominant in both form and location. The Australian Museum building is a case in point. Although the natural history of Australia was also of vital interest to gentlemen scientists in Britain and New South Wales, the commercial possibilities of flora and fauna were more limited. Collections had been formed ever since Sir Joseph Banks arrived in 1770, but the possibility of a public museum to house them locally did not develop beyond an odd room in somebody's house or government building until 1846. Passionate advocacy by people such as Alexander Macleay had resulted in a paid Government Zoologist for the colony (paid from England of course); but voices, such as Governor Bourkels in 1835 raised in favour of putting the natural sciences into an independent building were countered by equally persuasive tongues against such extravagance. William Charles Wentworth was one opponent; another was the editor of the *Sydney Monitor* who wrote:

Zoology and Mineralogy, and Astronomy, and Botany, and the other sciences, are all very good things, but we have no great opinion of an infantile people being taxed to promote them We might as well give salaries to painters, sculptors, and chemists, as to botanists, astronomers, and Museum collectors^[6] – an opinion apparently still current in Canberra.

Nevertheless, powerful advocacy from above won out. In 1845 the Colonial Architect, Mortimer Lewis, was asked to design a museum building to cost no more than 3,000 pounds.^[7] Construction began in January 1846 on the corner of William and College Streets, facing William Street. Lewis' building was modestly domestic in appearance and Greek in style. As well as the exhibits (to be housed in the large hall under a dome and behind a portico in antis), the building also had to house the museum staff and their families and provide a proper board-room for the committee of management.

From the end of the first year of building – when only the foundations had been put in for a third of the voted money it was clear that Lewis had greatly underestimated both the time and cost involved in realizing his design. In August 1849 Lewis resigned, to avoid being dismissed. He left an unroofed shell; 7,416 pounds had been spent and there was evidence of considerable fraud in the costs of materials and labour. The chaste Colonial Greek building was investigated by an independent firm of architects (Robertson and Duer), who discovered that materials had cost more than their contracted prices and then had not been incorporated into the building but directed off site after delivery dockets had been signed. Wages were paid to non-existent workmen and Lewis' accounts about these transactions were suspiciously confused. The dome – as well as Lewis – was removed from the incomplete building. A plain hipped roof went on by 1850 and the building was ready for occupancy by the museum staff and committee of management by March 1852. The exhibition hall for the specimens and the public, however, remained useless, since it still had no gallery or showcases. Enough extra money was granted from the public purse in 1853 and 1854 to construct these, but no access staircase to the gallery was built. The gallery remained a storage space, reached only from the private quarters of the Museum until 1857. Then it was completed, only to prove quite inadequate in size for the increased demands that had arisen during the twelve years it had been building, despite by then having cost some 16,000 pounds. Four months after completion, Alexander Dawson produced plans for a major extension of more monumental Palladian form. Hardly surprisingly, the government refused to fund this.

So the Australian Museum remained a modest Regency building, domestic in its exterior appearance and major use, and limited in its interior public space. This single exhibition room was, nevertheless, the grandest public hall the city could boast. In 1854 it housed an 'Exhibition of the Natural and Industrial Products of New South Wales' prior to selected exhibits being sent to the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1855 – the first major representation of colonial products to be seen overseas. (A few exhibits from the colony had been sent to the 1851 London International Exhibition, the first of these gigantic collections of objects from all parts of the world, but these had not been officially organised through a local £ommittee and were not on the scale of the 1854 effort for Paris.)

Colonial rivalry may have had something to do with N.S.W.'s brave display, since Victoria was also sending a major contribution to Paris for 1855. Sydney's exhibition was opened by the Governor General, Sir Charles Fitzroy, who arrived in suitable splendour to dwarf the building. Fitzroy read his opening speech in the exhibition hall in front of William Nicholas' gigantic plaster statue of Captain Cook – a statue that was never cast in bronze and subsequently disappeared.^[8] The classical statues adorning the exhibition when Fitzroy opened it were plaster casts owned by Sir Charles Nicholson. They had been included only for local artistic ambiance, casts of antique statuary (probably imported) being quite unsuitable for export to Paris, of course. What did go to France were lumps of gold, samples of wood, models of buildings and photographs of Sydney's progress – the whole vastly more 'natural' than 'industrial'.

The same sort of colonial rivalry that helped inspire Sydney's 1854 exhibition also seems to account for the fact that extensions to the museum were provided a mere four years after completion. By 1856 Melbourne had a grand Italianate building (by Reed and Barnes) to house its 'national' museum, art gallery and library. Sydney then had only the private Australian Subscription Library erected in the 1840s at the corner of Bridge and Macquarie Streets (by Henry Ginn), Lewis's simple Greek museum, and no sign or hope of a public art gallery. (Nicholson's statues continued to be displayed at the museum as a slight sop to the arts, and occasional art exhibitions continued to be held there with borrowed works from private collections.) Dawson's successor, the Scottish architect James Barnet^[9], designed an immense Renaissance-style, domed and porticoed combined Museum, Library and Art Gallery that would utterly annihilate Melbourne's; it was never built, although it remained a fixed ideal until well into the twentieth century. A somewhat grander version of Dawson's more modest 1857 proposal to extend the Museum was, however, preferred.

By 1866 one of Barnet's wings following this modified design – the facade to College Street – was finished. As a contemporary newspaper noted: 'Sydney was greatly impressed by its large sandstone bulk resting on a stylobate twenty feet high and with its Corinthian piers forty feet high bearing flowery capitals caved by Walter McGill.' The interior was, however, less overwhelming, as a Legislative Assembly Select Committee noted in 1872:

The edifice is too high and too narrow; the approaches from the street are incommodious; the windows are wrongly placed and faulty in design; the interior is crowded with heavy pillars which waste the space and obstruct the light; the internal walls are broken by angles and recesses; there is a useless gallery above the second floor; and there is in every part of the building abundant evidence of the architect's desire to subordinate utility to ornament.^[10]

Most of the faults seem to have been due to this continuing desire to outdo Melbourne without sufficient revenue to complete anything but the facade of one wing. Yet, despite this report,

which also stated that ‘The fittest kind of ornamentation is that which is accomplished by the judicious arrangement of the exhibits themselves’ and proclaimed that ‘The interior of a Museum should be as nearly as possible rectangular’, the public purse only opened for competitive facadism, not functional display. A building that looked impressive when visitors drove past it, or reproduced well in engravings and photographs, was more important evidence of local support for the natural sciences than one that actually housed collections and specimens adequately.

In 1890 funds were voted to add a third floor over the original building and bury Lewis’ design under Roman splendour matching Barnet’s. But the only real exhibition space then added was an extra gallery above the old one. External homogeneity was all that really mattered. The newly-appointed Colonial Architect, Walter Liberty Vernon, provided an accurate and careful continuation of Barnet’s design and, although Lewis’ core is still buried in the building, this is now very difficult to discover from the outside.



Figure 1. Connelly, Statue of Thomas Mort, Macquarie Place, Sydney.



Figure 2. Tommaso Sani, Statue of Allan Cunningham, Department of Lands, Sydney.



Figure 3. S.T. Gill, 'Cunningham's Monument Botanic Gardens Sydney', from *Sydney Illustrated*, Sydney, Allan and Wigley, 1856.



Figure 4. Tomaso Sani, 'The Professor', (Archibald Liversidge) spandrel sculpture on General Post Office, Sydney, completed 1883.



Figure 5. William Kemp. Sydney Technical College, designed in 1891



Figure 6. Detail of carving over main door, Sydney Technical College.



Figure 7. Lucien Henry, dado design, late 19th century. From R.T. Baker, *Australian Flora in Applied Art*, Sydney, Government Printer, 1915.

Figure 8. Philip Cox, New South Wales Institute of Technology extension, incorporating the old Fruit and Flower Markets, Haymarket.



Unless commercially viable, public homage to science in Sydney remained similarly skin deep. Allegorical statues and reliefs carefully labelled ‘Science’ – so one could tell them from Agriculture, Industry or the Arts – appeared as occasional tributes to its valued role in the community, although normally placed on public buildings dedicated to quite unscientific purposes. For instance, the former Colonial Secretary’s Office of 1879 on the corner of Bridge and Phillip Streets still bears a large marble lady by Simonetti^[11], labelled ‘Science’, along with other female figures representing Labour, Art, Wisdom, Justice and Mercy, while the George Street side of the G.P.O., built in 1866-74 (the first section of a proposed great building over a whole city block) also incorporates a female allegorical relief figure of Science on one of the ground floor spandrels. She was probably carved by Walter McGill, the sculptor who did the Museum’s capitals. Like the statue on the Colonial Society’s Office, she is simply one figure among several: the Arts, Commerce and Literature.

Yet, even this sort of superficial and unspecific public acknowledgement of the role of science in the community remained rare. Scientific achievements remained largely dependent on the work of a few dedicated individuals capable of funding their ‘hobby’ When they did so, they were not publicly commemorated.

Captain Cook and Governor Bourke were remembered in bronze at public expense, while Governor Phillip received a giant monument by Simonetti at the end of the century. Political and commercial success was also given public acknowledgement in the form of statues to its great men – including the anti-museum Wentworth, whose marble lifesize statue by Italian Tenerani^[12], paid for by public subscription, now stands in the Great Hall of the University of Sydney. Thomas Mort^[13], the great wool auctioneer and exporter, was commemorated by a

bronze statue by the English sculptor Connelly in Macquarie Place. (see Figure 1) But the only naturalist to be publicly commemorated was Alan Cunningham[14], who was given an obelisk in the Botanic Gardens and a statue (by Tomaso Sani)[15] amongst the host on the Lands Department building – tribute to his role in opening up the land rather than homage to his less financially profitable natural history discoveries. (see Figure 2). Australian plants may be depicted beside him, but Cunningham’s colleagues on the building are the explorers (such as Hume, Hovell, Mitchell and Bass) and the politicians – including Robinson and Parkes who opened up New South Wales for settlement. (see Figure 3).

The most disinterested public sculpture to a man of science I know of in Sydney is that on the Pitt Street side of the G.P.O., completed with the second phase of the building in 1883. It is, reputedly, of Archibald Liversidge, Professor of Chemistry at the University of Sydney[16], and was carved by the Italian, Tommaso Sani, under James Barnet’s general direction. It is, however, only a section of one of four spandrel sculptures.

All the G.P.O. spandrel sculptures caused a great public outcry when they were completed. Their naturalistic style and their semi-comical references to real people were considered most inappropriate for the permanent medium of architectural carving. For instance, the postman appears to be a portrait of the post-master general, Francis Wright, delivering a letter to a servant girl who is flirting with him. The architect of the building was also there, Barnet being depicted as a Michelangelsque God still dreaming of his combined museum, gallery and library building (in the background). Liversidge was included in the spandrel representing Sydney’s professions – as ‘the Professor’ – along with Sir James Martin as ‘the Judge’.[17] They formed a pair with Commerce and Mining. (see Figure 4)

Questions were asked in Parliament about these relief sculptures and a Select Committee was set up to decide whether they should be removed. The President of the English Royal Academy, Lord Leighton – a lifelong Classicist announced on seeing photographs of the controversial works: ‘You have indeed an uphill fight where such things are possible’. Such a furore over modestly realistic representations in stone implies that the sculptures somehow posed a real threat to establishment values. Like the buildings that housed them, scientific pursuits were moving away from exclusively British interests, from being the province of the governor or resident gentlemen of means or even from being allied with privileged institutions such as the Australian Museum and Sydney University. At the G.P.O. the ordinary person was being publicly invited to view the various activities of the colony – including science – depicted in a style he or she could understand, although, as yet, no building allowing significant participation in such activities was being contemplated by 1883.

Sydney University’s architectural monument to science was next on the scene. The Macleay Museum, designed by George Allen Mansfield[18], Australia’s first native-born architectural member of the R.I.B.A. and the architect of History House, was erected in 1885-86. As a monument the Macleay Museum is, I think, singularly unsuccessful. Its liver-brick is totally out of harmony with Edmund Blacket’s Main Building and its location ensured it was always overshadowed by its predecessor. The Macleay’s style is debased Tudor, with thin crenellations, modest towers and coarse proportions – a mean imitation of Blacket’s careful pattern-book Anglomania. Its display areas consisted of an uninspired piling up of display galleries on the Australian Museum Model (now destroyed). Altogether it came a very poor second to the sensitive, stylish and sophisticated Medical School by James Barnet – also begun in 1885 on the other side of the Main Building at Sydney University. At least the Macleay was finished first. It was a quick job, completed in a year in order to satisfy conditions for a major benefaction,

whereas Thomas Anderson Stuart, Professor of Medicine, was determined to have a great architectural monument, even if this was not able to be completed for five years.

The Macleay Museum had to be quick and cheap because the University was not going to receive the great Macleay collection of insect, plants and books unless it provided housing for it. But this undistinguished architectural solution appears to have affected the public perception of the collection, and the Macleay Museum has never quite attracted the audience it deserves. Nevertheless, by 1886, Science was at least publically commemorating the increased accessibility of its activities and collections for all scholars, not just for gentlemen of means. Sir William Macleay's gift is at least an appropriate symbol of this voluntary transference of scientific power and activity. A final stage would be to make the scientific pursuits available to everyone although working-class science, of course, had to be labelled Applied rather than Pure. Still, practical applicability had been an essential condition for the creation of Sydney's scientific monuments from the first.

The erection of the Sydney Technical College and its adjacent Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences in Ultimo – a group of grand buildings designed by William Kemp in 1891 indicates this particular coming of age (see Figure 5). Architecturally, these buildings seem to me to be the most significant among all I have mentioned. Earlier buildings had been attempts at exact emulation of models established elsewhere. The M.A.A.S. and the Technical College, although inspired by overseas' examples, have not as simple emulative a relationship to Britain or to Melbourne as the Observatory or Museum had. Not were they a cheaper and less technologically innovative echo of London's 1851 and 1862 International Exhibition buildings (with a dash of Philadelphia's 1875 creation) as Barnet's short-lived International Exhibition building in the Domain (1879-1882) had been. The American Romanesque style, with its round arches, heaviness and modern mixed materials, was diluted with a strong dose of English neo-Norman, inspired particularly by the example of Alfred Waterhouse's Natural History Museum at South Kensington, London (1873-81). But the extended Palladian facade of the 'Tech.', in particular, seems characteristically local in form.

There were also strong and obvious assertions of nationalism in the Australian plants and animals in the capitals of the pilasters and columns of the Technical College building, carved by McIntosh and Fillans: kangaroos, wombats and echidnas and, over the main door, Australian lizards. (see Figure 6) Like the architectural style, such ornamentation was a mixture of traditional and local forms, the national motifs themselves probably being determined by an extremely influential French teacher at the Tech., Lucien Henry, who inspired a whole generation of decorative artists and sculptors to use Australian flora and fauna in their designs. (Henry himself was particularly fond of the waratah.)^[19] (see Figure 7)

One of the people most influenced by Henry was his colleague, Richard Baker, who organised a permanent display of Australian decorative arts at the Museum and subsequently published *The Australian Flora in Applied Art: Part 1 The Waratah* (Sydney), 1915). The book was illustrated with designs by Henry and his students. More notably, perhaps, Baker also collected specimens of Australian marble for exhibition and wrote a pioneer book about them. (He wrote other important books on the trees, woods and grasses of Australia.) Such national awareness, intended for a local rather than British audience, seems to have emanated almost exclusively from the Sydney Tech. and it is therefore appropriate that its buildings echo its preoccupations at the time. Michael Dysart's concrete monster on Broadway for the Tech. of the 1970s (NSWIT), done under the auspices of the Government Architect's Office, Philip Cox's NSWIT extension into the old Fruit and Flower Market buildings in the Sydney Haymarket, and the Powerhouse

Museum now completing for 1988 are, I think equally obvious indicators of social values. (see Figure 8)

There is no escaping the mixture in scientific architecture – as in everything else – of money and mind: of crass commercialism and high-minded disinterested research. Certainly, when we examine the architectural monuments we have created for scientific purposes, both motives and achievements are very mixed. Science in Sydney has not only remained the poor relation of commerce, bureaucracy or government, it also pales into insignificance against the monuments to Medicine or Education. The only time Science begins to look good is when we compare its buildings to our nineteenth-century monuments to Art and Culture.

One wing of the thin, but impressive, facade of the Australian Museum was completed in 1868; the N.S.W. Government Architect, W.L. Vernon, finished the equally thin facade of the National Gallery of N.S.W. in 1902. Until 1969 the Art Gallery was Sydney's supreme example of skin-deep public homage – a one-room deep temple in front and a low shed behind. Science may not then have scored so badly in comparison, but where is its Opera House today? It seems unlikely that the Government Architect's office will provide either external glory or internal revelations at the new Powerhouse Museum. Nuclear reactor stations such as Pine Gap seem likely to remain the most dramatic, expensive and revealing architectural monuments to Science we now create.

NOTES

The Editor expresses his thanks to Dr. Terry Smith, Candy Bruce and Sarah Workman for their help in securing these footnotes and the illustrations in Dr. Kerr's absence.

1. William Dawes (1762-1836), naval officer astronomer and surveyor, arrived Sydney with the First Fleet. He laid out many of the first streets of Sydney and explored the Upper Nepean area. His papers are held at the Mitchell Library. [\[Return\]](#)
2. Sir Thomas Brisbane (1773-1860) built at this family home at Brisbane House the second observatory in Scotland. At Parramatta he made the first observations of stars in the southern hemisphere since the mid-eighteenth century. He built a third observatory at Makerstoun in 1826 and later became president of the Edinburgh Astronomical Institution. [\[Return\]](#)
3. Alexander Dawson (b. 1817) first worked in Hobart before being invited to Sydney in 1856 by Governor Denison to replace Weaver as Colonial Architect. [\[Return\]](#)
4. Sotheby's (Sydney) 17th October, 1984. (Schooner at Anchor against Sydney Panorama). [\[Return\]](#)
5. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 April 1907. [\[Return\]](#)
6. *Sydney Monitor*, 20 July 1833. [\[Return\]](#)
7. Mortimer William Lewis (1796-1879) was at first town surveyor under Sir Thomas Mitchell before becoming Colonial Architect in 1835. Fifteen years later he was forced to resign from the post when an official enquiry into the cost of the museum placed the fault with Lewis. He consoled himself by building the Gothic revival Richmond Villa. [\[Return\]](#)

8. The statue was exhibited by Sir Charles Nicholson and is presumably the same as that exhibited by Nicholl in London at Westminster Hall in 1844 and then dismissed by the press as a “tame crabbed looking person”. [\[Return\]](#)
9. James Johnstone Barnet (1827-1904) held the position of Colonial Architect from 1865 to 1890, during which time he was responsible for the design and construction of close to 1500 projects, including the G.P.O., the Colonial Secretary’s Office, the Lands Department, the Public Library, the Medical School at the University of Sydney, and the Exhibition Building in the Botanical Gardens. [\[Return\]](#)
10. Report of the Select Committee on Sydney Museum, *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly of N.S.W. 1873-4*, Vol. 5, 828. [\[Return\]](#)
11. Archille Simonetti (1838-1900) came to Australia from Rome in 1871. He was appointed instructor of sculpture and modelling at the New South Wales Academy of Art in 1875 and later, in the early 1890s, ran an “Atelier” from his studio in Balmain. He is best known for his portrait busts of prominent colonial society and for the Memorial Fountain to Governor Phillip in the Botanic Gardens Sydney which was executed between 1889 and 1897 at the cost of \$13,000. [\[Return\]](#)
12. Pietro Tenerani (1789-1869) was an Italian neoclassical sculptor with an international reputation. An extract from a letter from Wentworth to Thomas Barker dated 11 August 1858 was published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (22 October 1858) for the benefit of the subscribers to the ‘Wentworth Testimonial’: “I think I wrote you from Rome to say to you that I have given my Statue to Tenerani, the most eminent sculptor of Rome, who is to finish it in three years from the date he commenced it, last May.” [\[Return\]](#)
13. Thomas Mort (1816-1878) wool auctioneer and businessman. He gave the land for St. Mark’s Church, Darling Point, and commissioned Blacket to design it. As well, he contributed generously to the building of both St. Andrew’s Cathedral and St. Paul’s College, Sydney University. The bronze statue of Mort was executed in 1883 at a cost of 3,000 pounds. [\[Return\]](#)
14. Alan Cunningham (1791-1839) botanist and explorer was a protégé of Sir Joseph Banks at Kew Gardens before being appointed to the Sydney colony in 1816. For the next fourteen years he explored much of the eastern coast of Australia, always collecting and cataloguing botanical specimens. A writer for *The Month* (undated journal c.1839 M.L.) wrote of the obelisk: “The pillar has been placed in the dirtiest little puddle of stagnant water it would be possible to find in the entire colony.” [\[Return\]](#)
15. Tommaso Sani (1839-1915) came to Sydney from Italy in the later 1870s. The Postmaster General involved himself in the G.P.O. controversy on Sani’s behalf and the carvings were saved. The affair however had a dampening effect on Sani’s career and he was declared a bankrupt in 1889 and again in 1895. [\[Return\]](#)
16. Archibald Liversidge (1846-1927), Professor of Chemistry and Mineralogy at the University of Sydney. Active in almost every area of science in the colony, Liversidge was at the peak of his career when Sani chose him to represent Science in the G.P.O. sculptures. [\[Return\]](#)
17. Sir James Martin (1820-1886), journalist, politician and chief justice. Martin spent a small fortune beautifying ‘clarens’, his mansion at Potts Point. He commissioned Walter

McGill to make a life-size replica of the Choragic monument of Lysicrates (now in the Botanic Gardens). [\[Return\]](#)

18. Mansfield had a prospering architectural practice and it was said that at one time his annual income rose to 10,000 pounds. Not everyone was pleased by his success and J. O'Davey, a former employee of Mansfield, wrote in his 'Reminiscences': "Batty Langley was his textbook. Smugness was his style an respectability his manner." Due to Mansfield's improvidence and his drinking, in later life his wife was forced to take in boarders. [\[Return\]](#)
19. Lucien Felix Henry (1850-1896), artist and teacher, was a political exile who came to Sydney in 1880 and taught at the Mechanics' School of Arts and the Sydney Technical College. Henry produced work in sculpture, architecture and design and was one of the first to advocate the use of Australian flora and fauna in design, and was particularly drawn to the waratah as a motif. His best-known work is perhaps the designs for the stained-glass windows in the Sydney Town Hall. [\[Return\]](#)

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