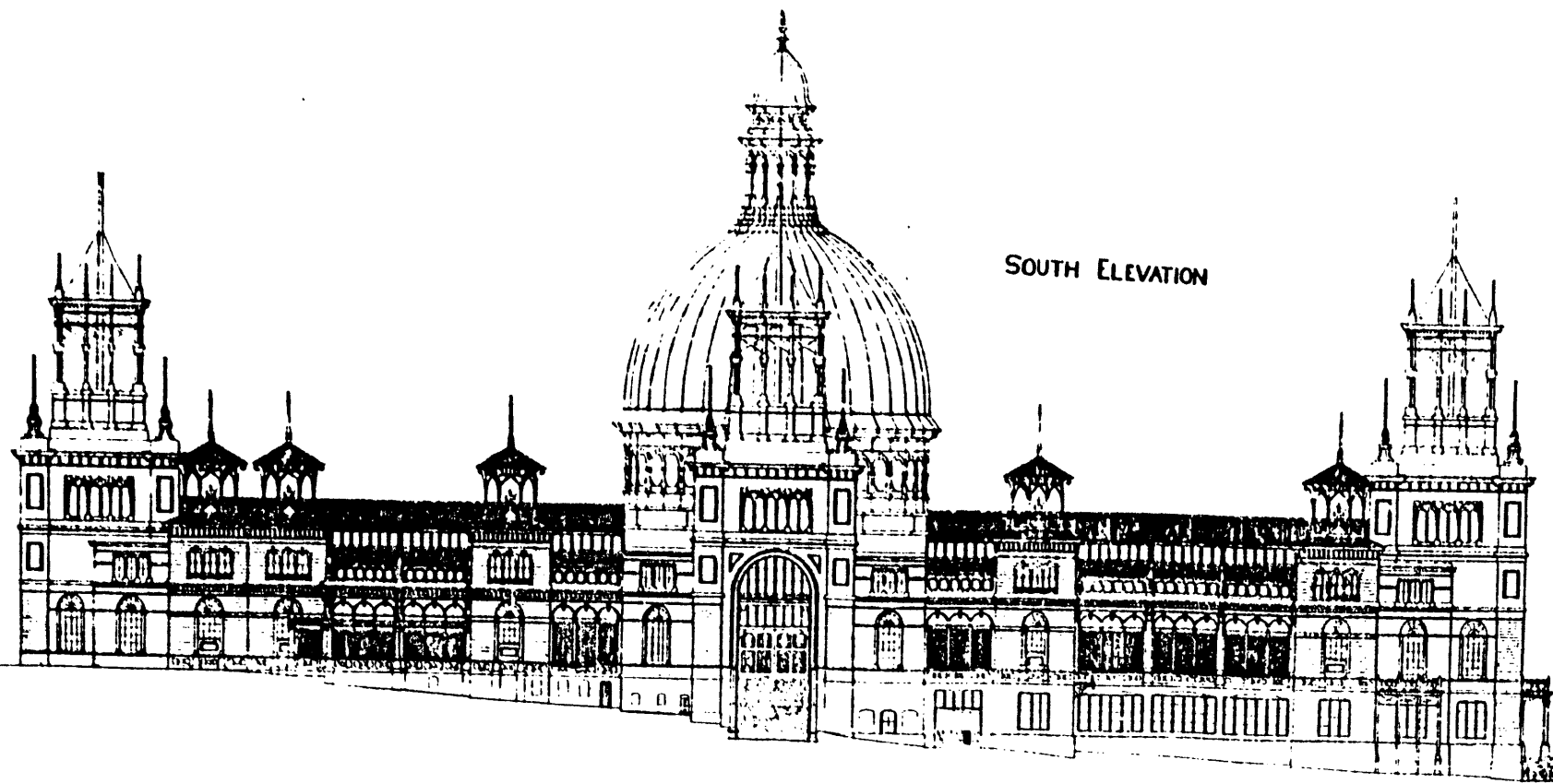


## Chapter 5.

### Barnet and the Politicians.

The year 1879 sets out clearly the difficulties faced by a conscientious civil servant, with weighty public and professional responsibilities, being confronted with the demands of politicians. In December 1878 the Farnell Ministry had accepted responsibility for the proposed International Exhibition to be held in Sydney. That decision placed a heavy burden on Barnet who was expected, at short notice, to prepare plans for the principal and a number of minor buildings, arrange contracts and supervise construction. While that task pressed ahead, there were other projects which could not be neglected; for example, there was an urgent and continuing need to provide additional accommodation at the hospitals for the insane as well as to design and construct a number of light houses along the poorly-marked coast of the colony. These long-range tasks could not be abandoned even though the Government had insisted that the Exhibition Building must be given Barnet's personal attention and take precedence over other work. He met those demands but not without criticism and denigration of his efforts; for his part he refused to be distracted by such opposition from his duty as he saw it. An examination is now made of Barnet's response to those problems.

THE AUSTRALASIAN BUILDER AND CONTRACTORS' NEWS, JAN. 4, 1890.



SOUTH ELEVATION

INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION SYDNEY

## ii.

In April 1878 the Executive Committee of the New South Wales Agricultural Society had decided to sponsor an international trade exhibition in Sydney for which it sought government support through publicity and a public statement of approval.<sup>1</sup> Little attention was given to the selection of a suitable venue; the Exhibition Building, Prince Alfred Park scarcely befitted the large-scale event now planned.<sup>2</sup> On 10 July a suggestion was made that the Government be asked to provide a building;<sup>3</sup> that matter had not been finalised by December when the Government agreed to accept responsibility for 'the entire control and management of the proposed Exhibition'.<sup>4</sup> On 17 December, Michael Fitzpatrick, Colonial Secretary instructed Barnet to prepare a design for the Exhibition Building. Six days later, Barnet submitted a sketch design 'specially adapted to suit the Inner Domain, in accordance with the views of Mr. Fitzpatrick'. The proposed building would provide seven and a half acres of floor space with additional accommodation for refreshment rooms and other facilities; the estimated cost was 'not likely to exceed the amount proposed to be provided', that is, £50 000.<sup>5</sup> That figure was later

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1. Proceedings, Meeting of Agricultural Society, 10 July 1878 - *SMH*, 11 July 1878.
  2. "The Vagabond", 'At the Exhibition', *Ibid.*, 8 May 1878.
  3. Proceedings, Meeting of Agricultural Society, 10 July 1878 - *Ibid.*, 11 July 1878.
  4. *Ibid.*, 4 December 1878.
  5. International Exhibition (Letter from the Colonial Architect to Colonial Secretary) NSW LA *V&P* 1878/79 (7). The letter was one sent by Barnet to the Under Secretary for Public Works.

quoted as evidence of Barnet's incompetence. He asked that the site be fixed upon without delay and he indicated his preference for one located on a section of the Inner Domain, facing Macquarie Street and sloping away to the east. That site provided a training ground for the Governor's horses and a pasture for his cows, a football or cricket practice ground 'and now and again a parade ground for her Majesty's naval and military forces'.<sup>6</sup>

Barnet next sought approval to negotiate with 'a contractor or contractors as [he] may consider best for carrying out the work with such expedition as the circumstances of the case require'.<sup>7</sup> His proposal seemed to be in conflict with the principle of free and open competition and government policy that all public works should be thrown open to tender through notices published in the *Government Gazette*. There were occasions, however, such as this, when direct negotiations took place with a particular firm known to have 'facilities and appliances which others had not, and so could do the work at a less price'.<sup>8</sup> Barnet also requested a free hand in the choice of materials to be used with 'all due care being taken that they will be of a sufficiently durable kind to answer the purpose and time for which the building will be required'.<sup>9</sup>

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6. *SMH*, 5 March 1879.

7. International Exhibition (Letter from the Colonial Architect to Colonial Secretary), *loc. cit.*

8. Select Committee on Tendering, Minutes of Evidence, p.33, qq.224-227. NSW LA *V&P* 1861(2). See also NSW *PD* First Series, Session 1879-80, Vol.1, p.393. Hudson Brothers had been awarded a contract, under these special arrangements, to provide accommodation for men who had unexpectedly arrived in Sydney to work on the New Zealand underwater cable which was opened in February 1876 - *Ibid.*, p.398.

9. International Exhibition (Letter from the Colonial Architect to Colonial Secretary), *loc. cit.*

Before these matters were settled, the Farnell Ministry fell and Parkes formed his third Ministry on 21 December 1878. John Lackey was once again Secretary for Public Works. The change of Ministry raised questions about the new government's intentions but there was no need for concern; an International Exhibition would appeal to the flamboyant Parkes. In 1861 he had acclaimed the Great London Exhibition as 'the very triumph of civilisation - the victory of progress';<sup>10</sup> in 1878 he was unlikely to pass up an opportunity to be part of a 'triumph of civilisation' held in his adopted city and land.

On 4 January 1879 Barnet discussed with Henry Hudson, chairman and managing director of Hudson Brothers the possibility of his firm undertaking construction of the exhibition building. Hudson stated that, if he were formally invited, a younger brother, Robert would supervise the project in accordance with instructions received from the Colonial Architect. Hudson Brothers would purchase the building materials and 'assist in every other way possible to carry out the work economically and expeditiously'. In return, the company sought a commission calculated at seven and a half percent on the total outlay as the work proceeded.<sup>11</sup> Barnet's minute seeking approval of these

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10. quoted A.W. Martin, *Henry Parkes, A Biography*, Melbourne, 1980, p.81.

11. Henry Hudson to Colonial Architect, 4 January 1879 - International Exhibition Building (Arrangement made with Mr John Young), Item 1 - NSW LA V&P 1878/79 (7). The firm, 'Hudson Brothers' had been established in 1860 as a small joinery works by William Hudson and his first son, Henry who were later joined by the other sons - Robert, William and George - G.P. Walsh, 'Hudson, Henry', *ADB* 4. For a study of the formation of Hudson Brothers as a public company see G.J.R. Linge, *Industrial Awakening*, Canberra, 1979, pp.477-78.

arrangements was rejected by Cabinet when doubts were expressed about Hudson Brothers' ability to complete the work within the stipulated time and objections were raised regarding the amount of the commission proposed. Cabinet decided that John Young should be given an opportunity to submit a proposal.<sup>12</sup>

In the course of their discussions, Barnet and Hudson had agreed that the work would commence on Monday, 6 January, the day on which Barnet's proposal was considered by Cabinet. Its decision had placed him in an awkward position, but experience should have warned him that his proposal was likely to be rejected by Cabinet since it was one which favoured one contractor without seemingly having considered the claims of others.

Young, in the meantime had offered to 'arrange and carry out the work in the same manner as [he did his] own works as contractor'. His commission, five per cent on the total outlay, would include the purchase of all plant and materials as well as the arranging of sub-contracts. For an additional five per cent, he would supply a quantity of equipment which later would be removed without cost. He argued that, if the Government were required to purchase that equipment, the total cost of the project would rise by 'about 5 per cent, or perhaps more'. His plant would include 'any labour-saving contrivances the experiences of a builder enables him to apply for any work he may do'.<sup>13</sup>

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12. Minute of Colonial Secretary, 6 January 1879, International Exhibition Building, Item 3 - *loc. cit.*

13. John Young to Colonial Secretary, 7, 8 January 1879, International Exhibition Building, Items 4, 5, 6 - *loc. cit.*

Barnet's report on Young's proposal was a balanced assessment of the relative claims of the two contractors. He believed that the higher rate of commission sought by Hudson Brothers was offset by the arrangement whereby Robert Hudson would be employed full-time on the project. In Barnet's opinion, Hudson was 'a most energetic and competent man' which was a matter of 'great importance in a work of this kind, where expedition and tact in the management of a large number of men [was] so necessary'. Furthermore, the firm possessed 'all the most modern machinery required for woodwork'. He believed that Hudson Brothers should be allowed to revise their proposal to include an estimate of the cost of providing plant. Barnet also explained that Young had not been considered because he was a member of the International Exhibition Commission and he had prepared earlier plans for an exhibition building. Nevertheless, Barnet saw no reason why both firms should not be asked to collaborate.<sup>14</sup>

On 8 January Cabinet approved Barnet's design for the building and decided that the work should be entrusted to John Young, 'a practical and thoroughly competent man' with extensive experience on large-scale construction projects. Another point in his favour was his commission which was lower than that sought by Hudson Brothers.<sup>15</sup> Under the terms of his contract, Young was required to complete the work by 1 August 1879 and he was expected, 'so far as he may find it expedient so to do', to accept Hudson Brothers' offer of assistance without increasing the cost of the work.<sup>16</sup>

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14. Memorandum of Colonial Architect, 8 January 1879, International Exhibition Building, Item 7 - *loc. cit.*

15. Minute of Colonial Secretary, 8 January 1879, International Exhibition Building, Item 8 - *loc. cit.*

16. Memorandum of Agreement with Mr. John Young, International Exhibition Building, Item 10 - *loc. cit.*

The Government next decided that the building would be erected on the site favoured by Barnet. The detailed drawings of Barnet's designs were made by C.H. Blackman who was employed in a temporary capacity as a clerk of works for this particular project.<sup>17</sup>

When the Legislative Assembly met on 22 January 1879 the Government was censured because of the contractual arrangements, Barnet's design, the building materials being used and the estimated cost (£50 000) which was thought to be unrealistic. In that debate, no acknowledgement was made of the tight building programme which meant that Barnet must work outside the approved procedures if the work were to be completed by the stipulated date.

John Lucas, member for Canterbury and a builder by trade approved of the contract being awarded to Young, 'a good man to have the supervision of the work'. Nor did Lucas doubt Hudson Brothers' competence; he had found that they 'did their work faithfully'. Nevertheless, he argued that there were other equally competent contractors and 'eminent architects' who would have sought a lower fee for supervising the work. Lucas believed that Barnet's design was not suitable for the warm sub-tropical Sydney climate; it was 'too hot - too open to the sun'. He condemned the use of iron; not only was it the most expensive building material available but should a fire break out in the building it would be difficult to control because 'no breach could be made ... so as to isolate the burning part of the building'. Lucas would have preferred to use lath and plaster; costs would be reduced, the building quickly

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17. NSW Government Printer, *Notes on the Sydney International Exhibition*, Sydney, 1880, pp.1,8.



constructed, and its appearance would be that of a stone structure.<sup>18</sup>

Parkes defended the manner in which the contract had been arranged. He argued that Young and Hudson Brothers 'stood on an equal footing with the best [contractors] in these Australian colonies'. He insisted that if tenders had been invited in accordance with approved procedures, the project could not have been completed within the time available and it would have been abandoned. Parkes had accepted Barnet's advice in this matter.<sup>19</sup>

The debate was interpreted by the *Sydney Morning Herald* as evidence of 'a general and hearty desire to support the Government in its endeavours to uphold the credit of the colony'. The steps taken to secure the contractors were accepted as being necessary in the circumstances. Nor was there any complaint of the arrangements whereby the contractors would be subjected to Barnet's supervision; the Government was thought to be fully justified in having confidence in the 'ability, energy, and integrity' of all parties.<sup>20</sup>

Work commenced on 7 January and by 13 February sufficient progress had been made to enable Lady Robinson, wife of the Governor of New South Wales to lay the foundation stone of the central tower. Guests present at that ceremony were able to inspect the efforts of

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18. Proceedings, Legislative Assembly, 22 January 1879 - *SMH*, 23 January 1879-. Lucas' fears that the building would be a high fire risk were confirmed on 22 September 1882 when a fire raged uncontrolled and destroyed it - *ISN*, 25 October 1882.

19. Proceedings, Legislative Assembly, 22 January 1879 - *SMH*, 23 January 1879. Parkes had quoted at length from a report prepared by Barnet who outlined the difficulties which would have arisen 'had the usual course of calling for tenders been pursued'.

20. *SMH*, 24 January 1879.

'hundreds of employees' going about their tasks: working the sawmill, laying the floors or placing iron in position.<sup>21</sup> Between six and eight hundred tradesmen were employed on the site according to particular needs at any one time. Two shifts, each of ten hours, were worked utilising electricity, for the first time on a construction site in New South Wales, to light the site.<sup>22</sup>

Barnet's designs were praised; the editor of the *Illustrated Sydney News* noted that he had 'erred so little against aesthetic feeling' relying 'for effect on simplicity and boldness of detail'.<sup>23</sup> James Inglis was impressed by 'the graceful facade and bold architecture of the mighty mass of building' which he believed symbolised 'the glorious promise, the boundless resources, and mighty future which is in store for this wonderful country'.<sup>24</sup>

A number of persons persisted in their disapproval of the manner in which the contract had been awarded to Young and the role played by Barnet in bringing the project to a successful conclusion. Although that debate reveals much about the personal feuds and no-holds-barred style of factional politics, it also demonstrates the pressures placed on civil servants who tried to serve governments formed in such a parliamentary atmosphere.

On 10 June, under privilege of Parliament, John McElhone,

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21. *SMH*, 14 February 1879.

22. *Ibid.*, 5, 13 March 1879.

23. *ISN*, 4 October 1879.

24. J. Inglis, *Our Australian Cousins*, London, 1880, p.142. For details of Inglis' career see Martha Rutledge, 'Inglis, James', *ADB* 4.

(Upper Hunter)<sup>25</sup> made a personal attack upon both John Sutherland, a former Secretary for Public Works and Barnet. McElhone believed that for some time past Hudson Brothers had received preferential treatment in the award of government contracts through influential citizens. He asserted that Sutherland and Barnet had endorsed at least one promissory note given by Hudson Brothers in favour of Mort's Dock and Engineering Company. John Lackey, Secretary for Public Works pointed out that if Hudson Brothers had been awarded a number of government contracts this was an indication of their technical efficiency. He doubted that there was any relationship between Barnet and Hudson Brothers<sup>26</sup> and on 12 June he tabled a minute in which Barnet stated that if such a promissory note ever existed, it must have been a forgery because he 'never put [his] name to a promissory note of any kind for anybody'.<sup>27</sup>

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25. Merchant and politician, formerly a member of the 'Cabbage Tree Mob' of wayward native born youths'. Although 'ribald and at times scurrilous, [he] was more than a mere roughneck' whose 'endless questions in parliament exposed many public wrongs' - Martha Rutledge, 'McElhone, John' *ADB* 5.
26. Proceedings, Legislative Assembly, 10 June 1879 - *SMH*, 11 June 1879.
27. Proceedings, Legislative Assembly, 13 June 1879 - *SMH*, 14 June 1879. A Return to an Order of the Assembly dated 10 June 1879 showed that, contrary to assertions made, Hudson Brothers did not enjoy a monopoly of Government contracts - see Messrs Hudson Brothers (Work Done by, Without Tender or Contract, from 1875 to 1878 inclusive), NSW LA *V&P* 1880-81 (3). A second return to an Order dated 4 December 1879 related to contracts given without tender during 1870-1879. This showed that work had been undertaken for the Railway Department for items of furniture, a contract valued at £145 had been awarded by the Roads Branch; contracts had not been entered into by Barnet or the Harbours and Rivers Branch - see Messrs Hudson Brothers (Particulars of Contracts Given to, Without Tender, from January, 1870, to November, 1879, inclusive), NSW LA *V&P* 1880/81 (3).

Undeterred, McElhone next questioned the cost of the work. Parkes maintained that there was no reason for doubting the figures prepared by Barnet which showed that the total cost of the Exhibition, including transport and other expenses, would amount to about £177 000.<sup>28</sup>

The cost was again questioned on 2 July when the House met as a Committee of the Whole to examine Supply. Parkes had sought an appropriation of £75 000, being the balance of funds required towards meeting expenses of the exhibition. This resulted in a lengthy, bitter debate when serious allegations were made about Barnet's alleged incompetence and corruption in high places. John Dillon (Tenterfield),<sup>29</sup> a supporter of Parkes, believed that the Government had been forced to take over the International Exhibition because of the failure of the Farnell Government to terminate it. He claimed that Parkes had agreed that, as a result of Barnet's inefficiency, his Government had been committed to the construction of an expensive building. Dillon asserted that Barnet was either 'totally ignorant of his profession' or 'his conduct had been anything but clean and open'. He alleged that Barnet's estimated cost of the building was much lower than £200 000 which was generally accepted as being a more precise figure. He demanded to know the names of the beneficiaries of this outlay of public funds insisting that the contractors would

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28. Proceedings, Legislative Assembly, 26 June 1879 - *SMH*, 27 June 1879.

29. Dillon had entered the Legislative Assembly in 1869 as member for The Hunter and in 1877 transferred to Tenterfield. In 1885 he was appointed Crown Prosecutor for the south-west district of NSW - A.W. Martin and P. Wardle, *Members of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales 1856-1901*, Canberra, 1959 and also Martin, *op. cit.*, pp.309-10.

earn a handsome profit to which Barnet had been an accessory. If Barnet 'had lent himself to these men', Dillon believed that he should be dismissed from the civil service; if he had not, but was 'so ignorant of his duties' as to grossly underestimate the cost of a building 'he was utterly unfit to perform the duties of the position which he held.'

Richard Bowker (Newcastle) believed that Parkes alone was responsible for the waste of public funds since he had accepted estimates which were known to have been too low. Bowker thought that Parkes' 'business capacity was very small' and he suggested that the Exhibition Building would stand as 'a monument of [Parkes'] blundering and incapacity more durable than brass'. Alexander Stuart, who believed that Young's remuneration which he estimated to be between £15 000 and £16 000 was excessive, asked that the project be abandoned; such a decision would show that the people of New South Wales had 'achieved wisdom'.

Parkes defended the arrangements and supported the concept of the Exhibition as being likely to bring social and economic advantages to the colony. He admitted that he alone was responsible for the decision to go ahead with the project but he studiously avoided the serious allegations levelled against Barnet. Michael Fitzpatrick pointed out that the Farnell Ministry had accepted responsibility for the Exhibition, Parliament had voted £50 000 for the project and Barnet had been then directed to prepare designs. Fitzpatrick thought that Dillon's charges against Barnet were 'sufficient to make one sick of public life'; to assert that Barnet 'was either a rogue or a fool - was enough to cause any one to quit public life altogether'. Fitzpatrick reminded the House that when he was given

the task, Barnet did not have any plans to work by; 'the thing had been going on from day to day under the most embarrassing circumstances that ever a building was erected in the world'. Finally, he rejected assertions that Young was taking advantage of the Government and praised Barnet as being the most honourable and conscientious person in the civil service.

That opinion was not shared by John Lucas. He argued that Barnet, having deceived the House, could no longer be defended by Parkes. Lucas alleged that Barnet's estimates of the costs of public building had frequently been incorrect. There was a widely-held belief, which Lucas shared, that Barnet was incompetent and should be immediately dismissed; 'He should never have a shilling salary while he [Lucas] was a member of the House to stop it. The Colonial Secretary, if he cloaked the man any longer, would become a partner in the deception'. James Farnell, leader of the former Ministry, defended Barnet against unwarranted and ill-founded attacks which he was unable to refute. Farnell doubted that he had deceived the Government arguing that the original building, which was little more than an idea at the time and which Barnet had costed at £50 000, was smaller than that now under construction.

Parkes did not defend Barnet whom he held responsible for the many problems which had arisen. He argued that the design had been prepared by Barnet on Fitzpatrick's instructions and that, in defiance of other instructions, Barnet had substituted expensive building materials. Parkes assured the House that Barnet was satisfied that the work could be completed within the estimated cost.

McElhone next launched a vituperative attack upon Barnet whom he described as being nothing more than 'a skilled stonemason' who, unable to design any two buildings in a similar style, 'sucked the brains of other people'. McElhone then turned on Parkes whom he accused of having 'lost his head ... for he cared not what the building cost so long as he could do the highfaluting business with distinguished people who should come here'.<sup>30</sup>

Throughout the debate Parkes' behaviour towards Barnet was inexcusable. He had not supported the Colonial Architect with convincing arguments and, on occasion, he was critical of Barnet; for example, Parkes believed that the estimates of expenditure were inaccurate because they resulted from 'some infatuation or another, or from some incompetency' on Barnet's part. At the same time, Parkes conceded that he was 'a hard working, persevering, conscientious good officer' and made the point that Barnet had offered three explanations for the increased expenditure. In the first place, in order to complete the work within the tight time schedule, expensive materials had been substituted for less costly items. Secondly, much more brick work than had been originally planned had been introduced and, thirdly, balconies had been added.<sup>31</sup>

There were other contributory factors. The tight timetable required the employment of a very large work force. During May and June heavy rain had interrupted the work<sup>32</sup> and the project had not been free of industrial unrest in which Parkes had intervened<sup>33</sup> and

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30. Proceedings, Legislative Assembly, 2 July 1879 - *SMH*, 3 July, 1879.

31. Proceedings, Legislative Assembly, 2 July 1879 - *Ibid.*

32. *T&CJ*, 24 May, 5 July 1879.

33. *Ibid.*, 25 April 1879.

which, although shortlived, had meant that additional workmen must be engaged.<sup>34</sup> Arising from complaints about the unsuitability of the picture galleries, William Wardell had been commissioned to supervise the erection of a Fine Arts Gallery.<sup>35</sup> These were matters which Parkes chose to ignore.

The decision to commission Wardell was an extraordinary one, he being a member of a number of committees of the International Exhibition Commission, including the influential Fine Arts Committee, and he had previously offered to supervise, without charge, the erection of an exhibition building. An earlier decision that he design a machinery pavilion had been criticised by John Lucas who argued that Wardell, whom he condemned as being a stranger to Sydney having only a short time before settled in the city after being dismissed from the Victoria Civil Service, had been preferred to a number of competent local architects whose designs he had 'pirated'.<sup>36</sup> Barnet's comments about the decision have not been sighted.

In spite of Barnet's alleged incompetence, the work proceeded rapidly and, arrangements were made for the official opening of the Exhibition to take place on 17 September as planned. On that wet morning, nothing could dampen the enthusiasm of holders of tickets of entry to the ceremony. In a number of celebratory addresses no mention was made of the work of either Barnet as architect or Young and Hudson Brothers as contractors but that was scarcely

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34. *Ibid.*, 3 May 1879.

35. Report of Executive Commissioner, Meeting of International Exhibition Commissioners, 15 August 1879 - *SMH*, 16 August 1879. See also, *Ibid.*, 29 August 1879.

36. Proceedings, Legislative Assembly, 2 July 1879 - *SMH*, 3 July 1879. For an examination of the circumstances leading to Wardell's dismissal see D.I. McDonald, "A Gross Want of Knowledge", *Victorian Historical Magazine*, Vol.43, 1972, pp.820-836.



necessary; their work was visible on all sides, 'a dream on lawny - spaces set' and 'a miracle of dome and minaret'.<sup>37</sup>

The overall cost of the building, which included an extension of the floor space and the provision of facilities such as police barracks, an engine shed for the electric generating plant, postal and customs offices; was calculated by Barnet at £191 817-18s.-1d. of which the major components were wages (£90 382) and timber (£40 305). Young's commission was £8 750 being 5 per cent of £175 000; Hudson Brothers received £1 075 for the hire of a sawmill. The expenses of the Colonial Architect's Office (£1 460) comprised wages, £933 and overtime, £527.<sup>38</sup> Barnet's calculations did not include details of any commission having been paid to Wardell.

When he was initially directed to design and supervise the construction of the Garden Palace, Barnet had suggested that the Government might consider offering him 'some remuneration' for his work; he was told that this matter would be considered after the Exhibition had closed. During February and March 1879 both Parkes and Lackey had assured him that he would receive a bonus. Barnet found that they were in no hurry to honour that commitment.<sup>39</sup> On 27 May 1880 in the debate on Supply, Arthur Renwick (East Sydney) asked whether Barnet's 'eminent service' had been recognised by way of 'honorarium or mead of praise'. Lackey admitted that this had not been done although the Government 'had it in contemplation

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37. *SMH*, 18 September 1879. Henry Kendall had been awarded a prize valued at £100 for his epic poem, 'The Sydney International Exhibition'.

38. Minute of Barnet, 2 June 1880 - PWD: Special Bundles - International Exhibition Building, 1881-82 (NSW AO 2/893).

39. Barnet to Under Secretary for Public Works, 17 December 1881 - BFP.

to make [him] some allowance for the energy and the competency he displayed in carrying out the work'. John Roseby (Shoalhaven) opposed such an arrangement; he believed that 'it was a very grievous error of this distinguished officer which led in the first instance to the undertaking of the Exhibition building'.<sup>40</sup>

That debate may have stirred Parkes' conscience. Arrangements were made to pay Barnet £500, an amount which he believed was totally inadequate 'as a recompense for the arduous and responsible nature of the duties performed'; he asked that the matter be re-considered. In a lengthy minute he outlined the difficulties which had arisen and the pressures under which he had worked. He detailed the reasons for the difference between the estimated and the final cost of the building and he reminded Rae, Under Secretary for Public Works that his efforts to contain the costs had adversely affected his health. In return, he had been offered an amount which he believed was considerably less than a private architect would have demanded and received.<sup>41</sup>

The terms of Barnet's appointment as Colonial Architect have not been sighted so that the validity of his claim to a bonus cannot be tested. Nor, for that matter has it been possible to determine the general practice followed in such matters; a practice which became clearer as legislation was introduced which controlled the terms and conditions of employment of all civil servants. Perhaps

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40. NSW *PD* Session 1879-80, First Series, Vol.111, pp.2549-50.

41. Barnet to Under Secretary for Public Works, 17 December 1881 - BFP.

the Government might have been more generous in the circumstances outlined by Barnet. One needs to bear in mind, however, that his annual salary was £1 000 and the bonus paid was in keeping with that salary. Barnet's assertion that a private architect would have been paid a higher commission was not relevant; he was a salaried officer who was not employed on a project basis.

There could be no excuse, however, for the long delay by the Government in honouring its commitment just as there could be no excuse for half-hearted support when Barnet's professional integrity and personal reputation were being denigrated. Parkes should also have recognised that problems on the project had arisen because of demands that Barnet alter his plans on an *ad hoc* basis rather than being revised after careful consideration.

iii.

While work on the Garden Palace was being hurried along, the Colonial Architect's Office had been engaged on a large number of other projects scattered throughout the colony. These included such diverse tasks as a botanical museum, hospital wards, a reformatory, numerous post offices and telegraph stations, court houses and light houses.<sup>42</sup> Of those projects one of the most urgent and continuing tasks was that of improving the accommodation in the hospitals for the insane. In meeting that problem Barnet was once more frustrated by the inconsistent priorities of succeeding ministries; it was

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42. Colonial Architect's Department (Cost of, and Public Works carried out and in progress to 1st January 1881), p.9 - NSW LA V&P 1881 (5).

another example of the delays and confusions associated with the political system of the times. This problem was further exacerbated by public indifference towards the care of the insane so that there was no pressure upon Governments to invest public funds in hospitals for their care.

Barnet was anxious to improve accommodation but, on many occasions, there seemed to be little that he could do. When first he visited the Gladesville Hospital (formerly known as Tarban Creek) he admitted that he had been exposed to shocking scenes which haunted him throughout his life. He had then resolved that 'if ever he got a chance, he would do what he could to make better provision for the poor people'.<sup>43</sup> Encouraged by Henry Parkes, in particular, and with the co-operation of government medical officers he made slow but significant progress towards reaching his goal.

In 1868 Frederic Norton Manning had been appointed medical superintendent of the Gladesville Hospital. This appointment was important to Barnet since the two men shared a common interest in upgrading the facilities of that institution.<sup>44</sup> Although more tolerant than his predecessor, Francis Campbell, Barnet soon found that Manning was equally obdurate in his demands and left nobody in doubt, least of all the Colonial Architect, that his primary concern was the well-being of his patients. Before taking up his appointment, Manning had travelled abroad to inspect and report on arrangements for the care of the insane; his findings emphasised the primitive

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43. *SMH*, 23 April 1883.

44. Manning was appointed medical superintendent on 15 October 1868 and in March 1879 he became the first Inspector-General of the Insane under the *Lunacy Act of 1878* (48 Vic. No.7) - see D.I. McDonald, 'Frederic Norton Manning (1839-1903)', *JRAHS*, Vol.58, 1972, pp.190-95.

conditions which existed in New South Wales where the two institutions were not fit places in which to treat lunatics. As a result, he recommended dramatic changes to both Gladesville and Parramatta Hospitals which, if approved, would have enabled Barnet to upgrade the facilities at those institutions while designing and constructing other hospitals.<sup>45</sup>

In a second report, Manning made a detailed examination of conditions existing at Gladesville which should have been already known to Barnet whose officers frequently visited the hospital in the course of their duties.

After outlining the inadequate patient and staff accommodation, the lack of facilities for amusement, staff-patient ratios and the patients' clothing and diet, Manning made a number of suggestions aimed at correcting these defects; in particular, he argued that the existing buildings should be abandoned. He condemned them as being 'utterly unfitted for the purposes for which they [were] presently applied'. Furthermore, he insisted that, if Gladesville were to be retained 'for some years to come' as an hospital, extensive alterations and additions must be undertaken.<sup>46</sup>

That report was referred to Eric Bedford, Medical Adviser to the Government and President of the Board of Visitors who supported its recommendations; Barnet denied that there was a shortage of accommodation.<sup>47</sup> He was aware that contracts for additional accommodation

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45. Report on Lunatic Asylums by Dr. F. Norton Manning, 24 October 1868, pp.119-123, NSW LA V&P 1868/69 (3).

46. Hospital for the Insane, Tarban Creek (Report on General Conditions &c. of), p.8, NSW LA V&P 1869 (2).

47. Hospital for the Insane, Tarban Creek, pp.11-12, Items 2, 3, *loc. cit.* For a study of Bedford's career see P. Bolger, 'Bedford, Edward Samuel Pickard', *ADB* 3.

had been arranged<sup>48</sup> and that Manning's recommendations, made at a time when there were widespread demands for retrenchment in the civil service, were not likely to be adopted. In Barnet's opinion, which was rejected by Manning, the existing and proposed accommodation would satisfy expected demands upon the hospital's facilities. Manning made the point that Barnet's assessment did not recognise the need to provide day rooms and dining accommodation as well as dormitories. Furthermore, although Barnet had stated that 112 single rooms were available, Manning asserted that he had failed to recognise that four had been demolished in the course of installing earth closets and another twenty served as staff accommodation or store rooms. He dismissed as impracticable Barnet's suggestion that a large number of patients be transferred to the Parramatta Hospital since the only sleeping accommodation at that institution consisted of dormitories which were unsuitable for patients who were dirty, noisy or violent.<sup>49</sup>

A problem which particularly worried Manning and one over which Barnet was unable to exert pressure was the delay of Governments in reaching decisions about the provision of accommodation. This meant that construction work was rarely commenced before the existing facilities had become grossly overcrowded. In June 1870, for example, overcrowding had reached a critical point so that a deputation waited upon Charles Cowper, Colonial Secretary in an attempt to force his hand. Cowper had previously shown that he was sympathetic towards

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48. Colonial Architects's Department (Cost of, and Public Works Carried out and in Progress to 1st January 1881), p.6 - *loc. cit.*

49. Hospital for the Insane, Gladesville (Report for 1869), p.3, NSW LA V&P 1870 (2).

the needs of the insane and there seemed every likelihood that he would be prepared to act upon the deputation's representations.<sup>50</sup> The deputation outlined details of essential accommodation if overcrowding were to be alleviated. The point was made that both institutions had 'long suffered under the pressure of an over-taxed accommodation' and, as a result, no more patients could be admitted 'with any regard to health, comfort or safety'.<sup>51</sup>

The delegation proposed a number of short-term remedies. In the first place, arrangements should be made to transfer a number of female patients to Tucker's Licensed House.<sup>52</sup> Secondly, Paramatta should become an asylum for criminal insane and, in the absence of more suitable accommodation, idiots and imbeciles. Plans, already prepared in Barnett's Office, to extend the criminal and male divisions of that institution should be adopted and tenders invited immediately. The delegation, however, was adamant that the only satisfactory long-term solution was to establish a number of new hospitals.

Cowper was not surprised at these recommendations since they were 'really a repetition of representations with which he had been constantly assailed ever since he had been a Minister'. He laid much of the blame for overcrowding upon the Imperial Government

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50. The deputation consisted of the members of the Board of Visitors and the medical superintendents of Gladesville and Parramatta - *SMH*, 23 July 1870. Cowper's biographer showed that his 'social activities extended - into a rare concern for the outcasts of the Victorian era - orphans and the insane' - A. Powell, *Patrician Democrat, The Political Life of Charles Cowper 1843-1870*, Melbourne, 1977, p.159.

51. *SMH*, 23 July 1870.

52. George Tucker, formerly of Harcourt's Lunatic Asylum, Pascoe Vale (Vic.) and later at Cremorne, Richmond (Vic.) had moved to Sydney in 1865 when he opened the Bayview House Asylum, Cook's River - see G.A. Tucker, *Lunacy in Many Lands*, Sydney, 1887, Introduction.

pointing out that in 1856 there had been 'scarcely a single [public] building fit for the purposes for which it had been assigned'. While admitting that Gladesville had been overcrowded for a very long time, he insisted that since 1861 the Government had spent large sums of money on both institutions which had not been 'passed by without consideration'. Cowper admitted that a decision regarding hospitals in country centres had been deferred but he doubted that 'any great mischief' had resulted since those hospitals would have soon become inadequate during a period of rapid population growth; that was an argument which failed to impress members of the delegation.

Manning argued that funds had been wasted on 'patchwork repairs and alterations' rather than on the provision of a new hospital. Cowper insisted that such a hospital should be located close to Sydney because a country hospital could not be established in less than two years. That opinion was not shared by Barnet.<sup>53</sup> In opposing Cowper, Barnet overlooked a number of matters which would need to be settled before work on any hospital could commence; for example, identification of a suitable locality and site, preparation of plans and specifications and the provision of funds. Barnet did agree, however, that additional accommodation might be provided at Gladesville through the construction of single cells; a proposal which was rejected by the delegation.<sup>54</sup>

The next attempt to provide accommodation was made in 1871 when Barnet arranged for the Newcastle Military Barracks to be refurbished as an asylum for the care of the aged and imbecile or

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53. *SMH*, 23 July 1870.

54. *Ibid.*



idiotic children.<sup>55</sup> Another move was made in 1873 when Parkes arranged for the purchase of the Callan Park Estate which would be re-developed as an hospital for the insane. Neither Barnet nor Manning, however, was able to convince Parkes that immediate steps should be taken to transfer a number of the quieter male patients from Gladesville to Callan Park where the large house could be converted at little cost. During 1874 a number of female patients were transferred to the Bayview Asylum when steps had not been taken to re-develop Callan Park.

Manning asserted that much of the blame for these delays lay with Barnet; for example, he believed that Tucker had been able to provide a number of comfortable wards at short notice whereas Barnet had achieved very little. He then directly attacked Barnet's administration as being inefficient.<sup>56</sup> This was not the first occasion on which Manning had been critical of Barnet's administration. In 1873, for example, similar complaints had been made and rejected by Barnet as being without foundation and mischievous. He denied that work at Gladesville had been 'slow and dilatory' and he insisted that the attention of his Office to the needs of Gladesville had been 'unremitting' with the work being performed with 'all despatch ... consistent with the necessity for obtaining preliminary authority, carrying out the work by contract after competition, and the obstructions to workmen occasioned by the nature of the establishment and its occupants'.

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55. See D.I. McDonald, 'The Newcastle Lunatic Asylum: "So human a Purpose"', *JRAHS*, Vol.66, 1980, p.20-38.

56. Hospital for the Insane, Gladesville (Report for 1874), p.24, NSW LA V&P 1875 (4).

Barnet also insisted that delays had occurred because 'the officials' often changed their minds while work was in progress. He went on to make the point that proposals to transfer patients to Bayview had been rejected by the Government because the accommodation was of a standard which, if provided at Gladesville, would have been condemned. Cowper had then directed that buildings 'of a cheap and temporary character, but sufficiently substantial' be erected at Gladesville. Barnet alleged that this decision had been opposed by Manning who demanded numerous changes in the plans which resulted in the temporary accommodation becoming 'a substantial and permanent addition ... more perfect in construction and arrangement than any part of the original buildings'. While acknowledging that delays had occurred in completing the work, Barnet made the point that patients had not occupied the new accommodation for some months after the work had been finished. In refuting Manning's allegations that the hospitals for the insane had been neglected by his Office, Barnet pointed out that he had given much personal attention to the work and he had put one of the clerks of works 'in immediate superintendence of the works' as well as a resident foreman of works who was required 'to see the works there properly and diligently carried out'.

In responding to criticism made in Manning's 1874 Report, Barnet condemned it as being 'much exaggerated' or unsubstantiated. He believed, for example, that while it was true that Tucker had been able to provide accommodation at short notice at Bayview, that accommodation was 'of an ephemeral character ... of the most economical description, [designed] to meet a special demand and to last a limited time only'. In contrast, the additions and improvements at Gladesville were of 'a substantial and durable character, [with] every facility

being afforded to the medical officers to vary their opinions and have alterations effected during the progress of the works'. Barnet believed that when allowances were made for the location of the establishment and the strict supervision exercised to ensure sound and faithful workmanship, complaints about delays could not be substantiated.

Barnet was prepared to accept some responsibility for delays in preparing plans and specifications for the proposed hospital at Callan Park. Preliminary surveys had been made but 'the pressure of business ... prevented the completion of a design which demands great time and consideration'. He also admitted that he had been unable to complete the plans for temporary accommodation at Gladesville for which funds had not yet been provided.<sup>57</sup> Barnet might have also argued that he had been directed to give priority at that time, to defence work. Furthermore, he was expected to press ahead with the General Post Office and other public buildings.<sup>58</sup>

Manning's criticism and Barnet's rebuffals were examples of the problems which arose between the Colonial Architect and his clients. Manning had been justified in insisting that the terms of contracts be honoured; he should not have demanded changes in work under construction which exacerbated delays and increased costs. For Barnet the problem was that of satisfying the changing demands of his client, completing work with a minimum of inconvenience to the staff and

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57. Performance of Works at Gladesville Hospital (Report from Colonial Architect), NSW LA V&P 1875 (4).

58. For details of work on hand or completed see Colonial Architect's Department (Cost of, and Public Works carried out and in Progress to 1st January 1881), pp.7-8 - *loc. cit.* Delays also occurred because of incompetent contractors - see, for example, Col. Arch. to Under Secretary for Public Works, 30 June 1876 - PWD: Liverpool Benevolent Asylum - Additions 1876 (NSW AO 2/896).

patients at the hospital, and in ensuring that public funds were not wasted on shoddy or inferior work. His reaction to Manning's criticism was predictable; he would not remain silent under attack from what he believed was unwarranted criticism.

Manning continued to harass Barnet over the accommodation at Gladesville Hospital. Similar problems existed at Parramatta but the various medical superintendents of that hospital lacked Manning's persistence and determination. Furthermore, Parramatta attracted less public attention; it was an asylum for the criminal insane and a number of invalid or incurable patients most of whom had lived there for much of their lives and who had neither friends nor relatives to speak on their behalf.<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, by 1870 the primitive conditions at Parramatta were beginning to be publicised. In that year, the Board of Visitors had inspected the asylum and reported adversely; in July the medical superintendent had been a member of the deputation which had waited on Charles Cowper and whose submission has already been examined. Very little was achieved; it was not until 1876 that a serious attempt was made to improve conditions when the Board had insisted that only a major rebuilding programme would raise the institution to an acceptable standard.<sup>60</sup>

Two years later Manning, now Inspector of the Insane, reminded the Principal Under Secretary that, although £25 000 had been provided in the 1877 Estimates of Expenditure for the provision of temporary accommodation for which plans had been prepared, Barnet had not

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59. D.I. McDonald, 'This Essentially Wretched Asylum' - Parramatta Lunatic Asylum 1846-1878', *Canberra Historical Journal*, September 1977, pp.55-56.

60. Lunatic Asylum, Parramatta (Report from Board of Visitors respecting conditions of), pp.3-6 *passim*, NSW LA V&P 1875/76 (6).

invited tenders.<sup>61</sup> When he visited Parramatta in November 1878 Manning found that no serious attempt had been made to improve the substandard accommodation, to which he had drawn attention in 1868. He was critical that large sums of money had been spent on piecemeal additions and alterations 'on a site ... thoroughly unsatisfactory and unsuitable, and which has, in fact, no single recommendation'. He believed that the existing accommodation could not be improved and he insisted that his earlier recommendation that the site be abandoned, be adopted.<sup>62</sup> Barnet's reaction to that report has not been sighted.

Manning had been granted leave during 1875 and while in England he visited a new asylum being erected at Chartham. He persuaded the architects, Giles and Gough to give him a set of the plans which he handed over to Barnet as a model on which to base those being prepared for Callan Park. The project on which Barnet was about to embark, in close association with Manning, was an ambitious one of major proportions; when completed, the hospital would be expected to serve for many years as the principal hospital for the insane in the colony.

Manning had previously favoured small asylums but, having had some experience in the administration of a large institution, he had changed his mind. He now believed that an institution accommodating between 600 and 700 patients was the most economical size and provided the best range of facilities for staff and patients. Accordingly, he recommended that Callan Park should contain no less than 600 beds 'with a possibility for increasing this number by erecting additional

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61. Additional Buildings for Lunatic Asylums, p.2 - NSW LA V&P 1877/78 (2).

62. Parramatta Lunatic Asylum (Report from the Inspector of the Insane), NSW LA V&P 1878/79 (3).

cottages'. In consultation with Manning, Barnet modified the internal plans of the Chartham buildings and added a large verandah as a concession to Sydney's hot summer climate.<sup>63</sup>

In January 1878 Manning sought approval for the work to commence realising that, because of its 'nature and magnitude', the project could not be completed under five years.<sup>64</sup> His request was ignored and on 17 February 1879 he wrote:

so far as I am aware *this matter is now altogether at a standstill and that nothing is being done in any direction towards carrying out the plans which have been ready for a very long period.* I have indeed not only done everything in my power to assist in the preparation of the plans but have had frequent interviews with each successive minister and the Head of my department on the subject, and my letters and reports addressed to the Colonial Secretary showing the necessity for accommodation for insane patients and urging that the new asylum would be proceeded with, would, if collected, form a bulky volume. The delay has involved me in untold troubles and difficulties in the management of my department - in the past, present and future but is beyond any control or action of mine. I am quite unable to influence the action of the Colonial Architect; and successive ministries, either owing to short tenure of office or from not appreciating the importance of

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63. Inspector of the Insane (Report for 1877), pp.16-18, NSW LA V&P 1878/79 (3).

64. Additional Buildings for Lunatic Asylums, p.2, NSW LA V&P 1877/78 (2).

the subject do not appear to have impressed upon him the necessity for speedy action.<sup>65</sup>

The plans to which Manning referred had been prepared in 1877; whatever earlier plans may have existed were set aside because he believed that the Chartham Asylum represented the most satisfactory design and lay-out for modern hospitals for the insane. It was true that when the Callan Park Estate was purchased in 1875, he had asked that work commence on the new hospital; this could be done only when agreement was reached on the plans and specifications. While correct in stating that there had been several changes of government between 1877 and 1879 and fluctuating interest in the Callan Park Asylum during that period, he was less than generous to Barnet. During that period the Colonial Architect's Office had undertaken several major projects including temporary accommodation at Callan Park and the Garden Palace which had already taken up a great deal of his time.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, Manning could have cited the Garden Palace as evidence of where he believed the Government's priorities lay. Nor did he credit Barnet with being concerned about the well-being of insane patients; it was Barnet, not Manning, who had identified the Callan Park Estate as a suitable site for an hospital for the insane and who had persuaded Parkes that it should be purchased.<sup>67</sup>

Work on the new hospital commenced on 22 April 1880 and it was completed in slightly less than five years. The hospital was seen

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65. Manning to Principal Under Secretary, 17 February 1879, Parkes Correspondence, Vol.48, pp.121-23 (ML Mss A. 918).

66. Colonial Architect's Department (Cost of, and Public Works carried out and in Progress to 1st December 1881), pp.8-9, *loc. cit.*

67. *SMH*, 23 April 1883.





THE NEW ASYLUM FOR THE ISSANE, CALLAN PARK, PARAMATTA RIVER.



as being 'at once a monument to the liberality of this country willing to contribute so large a cost for such a purpose, to the skilful brain that designed it, and to the contractors who built it'.<sup>68</sup> There were other reports which condemned 'this palace for the insane' as an example of 'the liberality of Parliament, and the question arises whether it is not also a monument of imprudence and extravagance'.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, it was an important development in the upgrading of facilities for the care of the insane and was an achievement of which both Barnet and Manning might well be proud.

iv.

Light houses were another group of buildings with which Barnet became associated after 1873. Until then they had not enjoyed a high priority in successive Government's public works programmes; the light house on South Head, Port Jackson was for many years the only significant light to mark the coast line of the colony. In this work, Barnet operated within clearly-defined and strictly enforced specifications imposed by the Marine Board which, unlike Manning, did not interfere with the details of a contract after they had been settled.

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68. *ISN*, 24 October 1885.

69. *The Echo*, 17 June 1885. In 1974 a survey of the buildings was made by J.S. Kerr who praised the design, siting and landscaping of the complex. Barnet's treatment of outlying wards was seen as being an example of 'careful planning on picturesque and commonsense principles' - Director, National Trust of Australia (NSW) to D.I. McDonald, 5 May 1975 encl. J.S. Kerr, 'Report on Callan Park Rozelle', 29 September 1974 (in author's possession).

The Marine Board had been established in 1871 being responsible for the administration of Port Jackson and later, Newcastle. Its functions embraced such matters as the registration of seamen or the control of pilotage services.<sup>70</sup> Later the Board was made responsible for implementing the recommendations of the 1873 Conference on Coastal Light Houses. Barnet's role was that of designing, constructing, maintaining and examining the buildings which constituted each light house and its services. Members of the Board were neither qualified nor competent to undertake those tasks nor did it employ suitably-qualified staff.

The first light house, the Macquarie Light, erected on the coast of New South Wales was designed by and constructed under the watchful eye of Francis Greenway.<sup>71</sup> In 1873 the principal officers of the Marine Departments of the Australian colonies inspected the light house and found that it was 'not sufficiently powerful for so important a position'; accordingly, they recommended that its power be strengthened.<sup>72</sup> Their report was sent to Barnet on 24 September 1875; fifteen months later he noted that much work was required on the lantern and its chamber before a larger light could be installed. A recent inspection had shown that the tower and buildings were 'defective and badly constructed' and the quarters were both 'insufficient and unhealthy'. Barnet believed that a larger building would be required for both the new light and as accommodation for the additional staff who would

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70. *Navigation Act of 1871* (35 Vic. No.7).

71. For a study of Greenway's life see M.H. Ellis, *Francis Greenway. His Life and Times*, 2nd. edition revised, 1953. The Macquarie Light was Greenway's first major work.

72. Conference of the Principal Officers of the Marine Departments of the Australian Colonies, - Report p.11, NSW LA V&P 1873/74 (3).

be employed.<sup>73</sup>

The delay in submitting that report provided Alexander Stuart with an excuse to remove the item from the Estimates of Expenditure; a delay, because no other explanation had been offered, which he believed had been the reason why so large a sum of money had been sought in the Estimates. He argued that the amount was 'of too large a nature to be dealt with suddenly' and he directed that it be referred to Cabinet.<sup>74</sup>

Barnet next included an amount of £15 000 in the 1877 draft Estimates of Expenditure. He praised Greenway's design as being 'good, well-balanced and effective ... possessing a bold and striking outline' and he believed that 'no beneficial object would be gained by altering the original or substituting a new one';<sup>75</sup> the light house as erected mirrored his opinion.

Barnet decided that gas engines should be utilised to drive a series of magnetic-electric machines which would provide the power for the light. He had satisfied himself that electric lighting was reliable before having obtained approval to instal it.<sup>76</sup> That decision was later to lead to an outburst of inter-departmental jealousy during which his role in the installation of electricity was challenged.

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73. Barnet to Under Secretary for Public Works, 27 December 1876 - Light-House at South Head (Reports, Letters and Minutes), p.2, item 2, NSW LA V&P 1877/78 (4).

74. Minute of Colonial Treasurer, 4 January 1877 - Light-house at South Head, p.2, item 4, *loc. cit.*

75. J. Barnet, 'Macquarie Lighthouse', Parkes Correspondence, Vol.25, p.370, (ML Mss CY A895).

76. *Ibid.*, pp.370-71.

On 1 March 1880 Henry Parkes went down to South Head to set the foundation stone of the new building being erected slightly westward of the earlier one. That decision had been condemned in correspondence published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*<sup>77</sup> and later debated in the Legislative Assembly.<sup>78</sup> That was a debate which did not concern Barnet who had not been involved in the selection of a site for the light.

He did, however, come under attack from another and an unexpected quarter. On 23 April 1882 a report published in a metropolitan newspaper stated that the electric light at the light house had been operated 'under the direction of Mr. Barnet'. Edward C. Cracknell, superintendent of electric telegraphs averred that this had been done 'without reference to the electrical staff connected with the Government service who, to say the least of it, should have been consulted'. He argued that the equipment was of a technical character which demanded 'the greatest skill in [its] manipulation and management' and it should not be operated by untrained staff. Cracknell doubted that Barnet had either the time or practical experience 'to take upon himself a branch electrical establishment in connection with his office'. He went on to condemn Paterson, in charge of the Macquarie Light, as being 'merely a gas engineer' who was ignorant of electricity. Cracknell insisted that, if electricity were to be used it was he, not Barnet who should be responsible.<sup>79</sup>

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77. *SMH*, 27 February, 1, 22 March 1880.

78. NSW *PD* Session 1879-80, First Series, Vol.2, pp.1409-13.

79. Superintendent of Electric Telegraphs to Under Secretary for Public Works, 24 August 1882, Electric Lighting of Macquarie Lighthouse (Correspondence Relating to), p.1, item 1, NSW LA V&P 1887/88 (4).

Barnet was in no hurry to reply to this outburst. On 15 September, while not denying the press report, he challenged Cracknell's assertion that the possible use of electricity had come as a surprise to him; that point had been made, for example, in descriptions of the light house published when the foundation stone was laid. Barnet had raised the matter in a memorandum to the Under Secretary for Public Works dated 8 April 1878. Furthermore, on 13 April 1881 he had asked the Telegraph Department to verify the claim made by the suppliers of the equipment that it would be necessary to engage an electrical engineer from England to instal the equipment. In reply, he was told that the Department 'had no one who understood the apparatus'. Learning that Chance Brothers, the suppliers of the electrical equipment, proposed to send out a mere 'supervising mechanic' and having been told by the engineer to the Trinity Board that 'any ordinarily intelligent lightkeeper could manage the machine', Barnet decided that the services of an English mechanic were 'neither necessary nor desirable'. After Cracknell had declined to accept responsibility for the installation, Barnet arranged the trials. In his opinion, Cracknell over-estimated the importance of his department and had raised 'imaginary difficulties in regard to the management of the electric light'. Furthermore, Barnet believed that Cracknell's comments about the manner in which he used his time and his practical experience were in bad taste and did not warrant notice. At the same time, he admitted to having no knowledge of telegraphy but asserted that, regardless of the source of their power, he fully understood the lighting of light houses. He also argued that statements that he had taken on tasks which he was not competent to handle in a satisfactory manner could not be sustained. Barnet also defended

Paterson in whom he had every confidence.<sup>80</sup>

After receiving Barnet's memorandum, Cracknell immediately referred it to the Postmaster-General, Alexander Campbell<sup>81</sup> who, in turn sought the opinion of John Lackey, Secretary for Public Works; Lackey supported Cracknell.<sup>82</sup> Barnet rejected Cracknell's protestations and the opinion of his Minister. He asserted that a contractor engaged to construct a public building was required, in the terms of his contract, to complete the work 'to the entire satisfaction of the Colonial Architect'. On this occasion, that responsibility included the efficient operation of the light. Barnet would hand the work over to the Marine Board only after being satisfied that it met the plans and specifications. He now asked whether, contrary to that accepted practice, the light house was to be handed over to Cracknell to instal the light, a task which in his experience 'may be properly attended to by a mechanic or light-keeper possessing ordinary knowledge or intelligence'.<sup>83</sup>

In defiance of Lackey's direction Barnet arranged, without consulting Cracknell, for another test to be made on 21 September. Further protests from Cracknell gave rise to a conference between the two ministers; a conference of which no record of proceedings were

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80. Minute of the Colonial Architect, 15 September 1882 - Electric Lighting of Macquarie Lighthouse, p.2, item 3, *loc. cit.* Barnet's memorandum dated 13 April 1881 and Cracknell's reply have not been sighted.

81. Campbell was Postmaster-General from August 1882 until January 1883 - Terri McCormack, 'Campbell, Alexander', *ADB* 3.

82. Minute of the Secretary for Public Works, 13 September 1882 - Electric Lighting of Macquarie Lighthouse, p.3, item 6, *loc. cit.*

83. Minute of the Colonial Architect, 19 September 1882 - Electric Lighting of the Macquarie Lighthouse, p.3, item 7, *loc. cit.*

published; in a minute dated 31 September Campbell merely noted that it had taken place.<sup>84</sup> As late as February 1883 Barnet had not handed the work over to Cracknell<sup>85</sup> but the decision was no longer of any significance since the work was now almost completed and about to be passed over to the Marine Board. In reporting that the work had been completed in accordance with the terms of the contract, Alfred G. Edwards, clerk of works stated that everything was in satisfactory working order.<sup>86</sup>

Barnet once again showed his interest in and ability to adopt new technology and did so in a very competent manner. The quarrel with Cracknell was basically one of identifying the division of responsibility between two departments. It was true that Cracknell had utilised telegraphic services which depended upon electricity as their source of power but no attempt had been made by the Government to define the range of his responsibility outside the specialist field in which he operated. Barnet was quite correct in asserting that, as the architect responsible for the design and construction of the Light House, he was responsible for ensuring that it was handed over to the Marine Board in first-class order. In any case, he had given Cracknell an opportunity to become involved in the project; an opportunity which Cracknell passed up.

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84. Electric Lighting of Macquarie Lighthouse, pp.3-4, items 9-13, *loc. cit.*

85. Postmaster-General to Secretary for Public Works, 26 February 1882 - Electric Lighting of Macquarie Lighthouse, p.4, item 14, *loc. cit.* The date on that minute was incorrect; it was initialled 'FAW' (F.A. Wright became Postmaster-General on 5 January 1883) and referred by 'JR' (John Rae) to Barnet on 28 February 1883.

86. NSW *PD* First and Second Sessions, 1882, First Series, Vol.9, p.1687.

Although the most important light on the New South Wales coast, the Macquarie Light was not the first erected according to plans prepared in and supervised by Barnet's Office. The 1873 Conference of Principal Officers of the Marine Departments of the Australian Colonies had recommended that a light of suitable power should be placed on Sugar-loaf Point which was about 120 miles north of Sydney and thirty-two miles from Port Stephen.<sup>87</sup> In its recommendation, the Conference settled a debate which had continued for at least two years and which seemed to lack any priority in the Public Works programme. The matter was now quickly settled; Barnet was asked to prepare plans and the project was completed on 29 November 1875.<sup>88</sup>

During October 1874 Barnet accompanied the Marine Board to Solitary Island where they climbed to the highest point 'in time to see the sun rise out of the sea ... and - built a cairn on the highest part the site for a lighthouse'. A site for residential accommodation was next settled and an examination made of the rock to assess its suitability for building purposes.<sup>89</sup> Although a suitable site had now been selected, the delays in reaching a decision to place a light on this site were not yet over. Barnet's plans for the light house and staff accommodation were not approved until 1878 and it was not until 11 July that work commenced. The contract was completed by 15 March 1880 when the light was lit for the first time and the workmen were free to leave 'their place of almost solitary confinement'.<sup>90</sup>

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87. Report - Conference of the Principal Officers of the Marine Departments, p.11, *loc. cit.*

88. *T&CJ*, 19 February 1876.

89. J. Barnet, Memorandum, October 1874 - Barnet Corres., 1875-1898 (ML MSS 726, Item 1).

90. *SMH*, 15 March 1880.



In September 1883, a tour of inspection of the south coast was made by Barnet and the Board. During that tour, they inspected the Wollongong Light, which was 'in perfect order'; the recently completed light house on Montague Island was found to be 'a splendid structure'. A visit was made to the 'small wooden' light house on Twofold Bay and at Green Cape Barnet accepted the almost completed light house on behalf of the Marine Board. This light house, constructed entirely of concrete, was said to be 'the largest work in this material that the colony can show'. It was 'a splendid piece of work' with walls four feet in width at the base and 'strong enough to resist wind and weather for generations'.<sup>91</sup>

Continuing their tour of inspection, Barnet and his Party next visited the old Cape St. George Light, Jervis Bay which stood on a site which, in the opinion of persons competent to pass judgment, was wrong.<sup>92</sup> Approval had been given to replace that light and steps were now taken to settle on a site for the new one. After examining a number of sites, the party finally agreed that Point Perpendicular, almost at the entrance of the bay, was the most suitable.<sup>93</sup> The Government was not in a hurry, however, to undertake the work which was not commenced until 1897.<sup>94</sup>

Nearer Sydney, Barnet had also been responsible for the construction of a light house on Barrenjoey, selected by the 1873 Conference as a suitable site for a fixed light.<sup>95</sup> When approval

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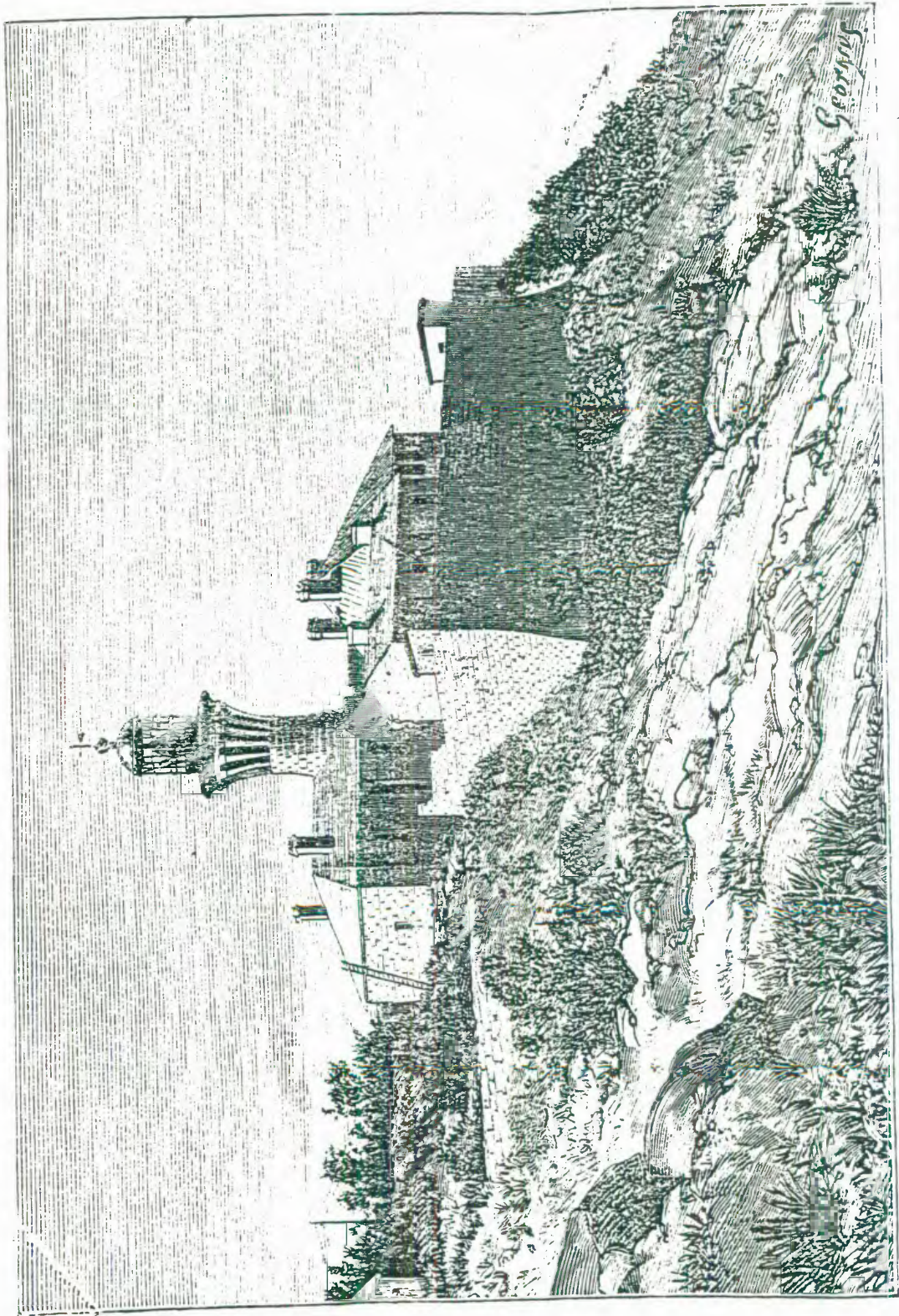
91. *Ibid.*, 22 September 1883.

92. See, for example, Report from the Select Committee on the Light-House, near Jervis Bay, p.5, NSW LA V&P 1861 (2).

93. *SMH*, 22 September 1883.

94. G.P. Murphy, 'Jervis Bay Survivals from Past', *Canberra Historical Journal*, NS.7, March 1981, p.30.

95. Report - Conference of Principal Officers, p.11, *loc. cit.*



THE BARRENJUEY LIGHTHOUSE, BROKEN BAY.—OPENED ON MONDAY NIGHT. (SEE SHIPPING INTELLIGENCE.)

was given for the work to proceed, Edmund S. Spencer, clerk of works in Barnet's Office, was directed to prepare plans, he being familiar with this type of work having designed the Seal Rock Light.<sup>96</sup> In October 1879 a contract was let and six months later, on 15 April a large party which included Barnet, Mrs Barnet and their daughter, Rosa, Parliamentarians and members of the Marine Board travelled to Barrenjoey to lay the foundation stone. The official guests having gathered at the site, Edward Greville (member for Braidwood) presented Rosa with a mallet and silver trowel and invited her to lay the foundation stone. Rosa having performed the ceremony, her father called for three cheers for the Queen and three for the Governor; these were followed by three cheers for Rosa. In responding, Barnet acknowledged the unexpected honour which had been bestowed upon his daughter; an honour which had come as a complete surprise to him.<sup>97</sup> This project was completed by 20 July 1881 and a few days later Barnet again visited Barrenjoey and handed the light house over to the Marine Board.<sup>98</sup>

In the design, construction and lighting of these light houses, Barnet had shown that his staff were able to turn their hands to the difficult task of designing buildings which must be both of a sturdy construction and efficient in design and operation. The provision of the light houses had been a protracted programme because of the priority given to it by the Government but, having gained

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96. PWD Board of Inquiry, Minutes of Evidence, p.222, q.5198, NSW LA V&P 1887 (2).

97. *SMH*, 17 April 1880.

98. *T&CJ*, 6 August 1881.

approval, Barnet soon completed a project to the satisfaction of the Marine Board. As a result, he enjoyed a close and cordial working relationship with the members of the Board who, in turn, were appreciative of his many years of service on their behalf.<sup>99</sup>

Those cordial arrangements were built up through mutual trust and respect. The Board was willing to be guided by Barnet and, having accepted that advice, supported him. At the same time, it did not demand that changes be made in the design and internal arrangements of a building once work had commenced. Too much emphasis should not be placed upon these cordial relationships because that would seem to imply that they were unique. Barnet enjoyed sound working relationships with other senior civil servants, although differences of opinion which arose from time to time were exaggerated when they were used for political opportunism. His conduct towards his peers was formal; there are no private papers which suggest that he formed social contacts with them. In contrast, Barnet did not always enjoy the confidence and support of influential politicians such as Parkes with whom he worked closely over a long period. Nor did he have good relations with his professional colleagues; he was a civil servant whose role threatened the self-interest of private practitioners in the profession. An examination will be made in the following chapter of the nature of the tension which existed between Barnet and those professional colleagues; tension which was exacerbated, to some extent, by decisions taken by Parkes.

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99. Shortly after Barnet retired, Hixson, as Chairman of the Marine Board spoke at length of his work mentioning in particular 'the magnificent structure - the Macquarie Lighthouse'. For his part, Barnet recalled with pride the 'kindly feelings which had always marked their intercourse' - *Australian Star*, 26 November 1890.

## Chapter 6.

### Barnet and the Architects.

Barnet has been shown to have enjoyed cordial, although formal relations with civil service colleagues even when allowing for occasional clashes with some of them. An examination is now made of his relationships with members of the architectural profession from whom he won grudging acknowledgement of his important contribution to the architectural development of the colony. In doing so, a examination will also be made of the part played by Parkes, in particular, in creating tension between Barnet and the profession.

#### ii.

A significant cause of the uneasy relationships which existed between Barnet and the profession was that he occupied the position of Colonial Architect, a position which the Institute of Architects regarded as redundant. Max Freeland has argued that Barnet was not admitted to membership of the Institute 'for no other reason than that of his position' and has pointed out that after he retired Barnet was made an honorary member.<sup>1</sup> That argument was supported by reference to an English tradition which Freeland believed was observed by the Institute; the work of British and European government

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1. J.M. Freeland, *The Making of a Profession*, Sydney, 1971, p.14.



architects, being restricted to 'legal, administrative and maintenance aspects of, and minor alterations to government-owned buildings' was not seen as being the practice of the profession of architect. Furthermore, Freeland thought that, because of the monopoly of public works enjoyed by Barnet, he was not welcome as a member of the Institute.<sup>2</sup>

If the Institute of Architects took the view that the duties of the Colonial Architect's Office did not reflect the practice of the profession, this would have been a misunderstanding of Barnet's work. He was heavily involved in and oversighted the work of professional staff engaged in the design and construction of buildings in the same manner as a private practitioner; the heavy workload of the Office prevented him from giving close personal attention to that work.

A significant reason why Barnet was not a member of the Institute was to be found in its objectives. It had been established to bind the profession together, to discipline its members and to act as a pressure group operating on behalf of those members.<sup>3</sup> As a pressure group, the Institute sought changes in government policies which it believed disadvantaged its members. Thus Barnet's membership would have led to a conflict of interest for him which could not be resolved while he was Colonial Architect or until such time as the Government changed its policy regarding public works. Throughout his civil service career, Barnet had not taken an active role in any professional organisation although, in 1885 he had been elected as an honorary member of the Engineering Association of New South

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2. Freeland, *op. cit.*, pp.13-14.

3. Freeland, *op. cit.*, pp.50-75.

Wales.<sup>4</sup> After he retired, he became an ordinary member of the Association.<sup>5</sup> For some years he had been a member of the New South Wales Zoological Society although he did not actively participate in its affairs until 1892 when he joined the Council.<sup>6</sup> He was an original director of the Civil Service Building Society<sup>7</sup> which had been formed in order to provide financial assistance to its members.<sup>8</sup>

Since he was not committed to the objectives of the Institute of Architects and able to stand apart from its internecine quarrels, Barnet was 'free to serve equally effectively any [political] party, to carry into action any policy, which the sovereign people in its wisdom [had] favoured at the polls'.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, his stand was justified when seen in the context of the experience of his successor, Walter L. Vernon who had been an active member of the Institute and whose appointment had been supported by it; after being appointed,

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4. The Association was established in 1870 and incorporated in 1884 'for the general advancement of Engineering and Mechanical Science, and more particularly those branches of Civil and Mechanical Engineering which tend to develop the resources of Australia' - By Laws, section 1, *Proceedings of the Engineering Association of NSW*, Vol.1, 1885-86, p.xvii.
  5. *Proceedings of the Engineering Association of NSW*, Vol.18, 1902-03, List of Members.
  6. Barnet was a life member and Fellow of the Society - NSW Zoological Society, *27th Annual Report*, 31 December 1905.
  7. At the election held on 14 May 1874 Sir Alfred Stephen was unanimously elected as chairman; the trustees were John Williams, Crown Solicitor and J.S. Farnell, Minister for Lands. The directors elected were A.C. Fraser, Clerk of the Peace (233 votes), T. Richards, Government Printer (197), William Forster, M.P. (173), C.A. Goodchap, clerk, railways (159) and J. Barnet (104) - *SMH*, 16 May 1874.
  8. *SMH*, 21 April 1874.
  9. G. Kitson Clark, '"Statesmen in Disguise": Reflexions on the History of Neutrality of the Civil Service', *The Historical Journal*, Vol.11, No.1, p.19.

he found that his decisions were not free of its criticism.<sup>10</sup>

Among politicians there was a general acceptance of the Colonial Architect's Office as an important branch of the civil service. Parkes, for example, maintained that the Colonial Architect should be entrusted with 'national works' which, however, might be handed over to private practitioners when it was thought to be in the public interest.<sup>11</sup>

This policy was interpreted by some members of the profession as being both a slight upon private practitioners and a failure to recognise that their employment on significant public works, as was done in 'the civilized world', was a means of fostering art.<sup>12</sup>

Barnet does not seem to have enjoyed, as one of the conditions of his employment, a right of private practice. No evidence has been sighted of any buildings which he might have designed in a private capacity after joining the civil service. More significantly, this was not a matter which was ever raised or even hinted at when he was under attack; there seems no doubt that had he enjoyed such a privilege his critics would have not failed to use it against him.<sup>13</sup> The terms and conditions of his employment have not been sighted, but he is known to have received fees as an examiner of patents as did a number of other senior civil servants.<sup>14</sup> That arrangement had

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10. See, for example, his handling of the Kenmore Hospital for the Insane competition - D.I. McDonald, '"a villageful of occupants" - The Kenmore Hospital for the Insane 1895-1900', *Canberra Historical Journal*, September 1973, pp.14-15.

11. NSW PD Session 1883-84, First Series, Vol.15, p.5309.

12. *SMH*, 20 March 1880.

13. When he was appointed Inspector-General of Public Works, Victoria, William Wardell enjoyed a right of private practice, a privilege which was often condemned by his critics - see, for example, *Australian Builder*, 2 February 1861.

14. Fees Received by Civil Servants (Return of, for years 1883-4-5-6-), NSW LA V&P 1887/88 (2). Other senior officers of the Public Works Department who received fees were W.C. Bennett, commissioner and engineer-in-chief, Roads and Bridges Branch and E.O. Moriarty engineer-in-chief, Harbours and Rivers, and W. Coles, First clerk of works.



official sanction; there was little possibility that it was a threat to the livelihood of other professional men.

There were, however, a number of architects and surveyors employed in the civil service who, allegedly, were engaged in private practice 'during the time they were expected to devote their services to the duties for which they were paid salaries by the Government'. Parkes took little notice of such rumours; he did not condemn civil servants who competed with private practitioners although he believed that, if they gave 'their whole and undivided attention to the Government whom they professed to serve', there would be few opportunities for them to threaten the livelihood of other architects through work privately performed. A delegation of architects and surveyors met him on 19 March 1880 to argue that strong evidence existed which established that not only did civil servants engage in private work but that they often did so during official hours. Furthermore, some civil servants were alleged to have acted in such a manner as 'retarded and rendered almost impossible access to Government papers and other information which was very necessary'. Thomas Rowe, President of the Institute of Architects, explained that these complaints did not apply to Barnet's staff; his Office was 'one of the best departments under the Government'. When pressed, Rowe could provide only one instance, that of a surveyor, whose behaviour he found reprehensible. Nevertheless, he was quick to remind Parkes that his members were anxious to undertake government work.<sup>15</sup>

No evidence has been found to link this criticism with Barnet's Office. His was not the only branch of the civil service in which architects, draftsmen and clerks of works were employed nor was he

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15. *SMH*, 23 March 1880.

responsible for the design and construction of school and railway buildings. For example, in 1881 there were 34 draftsmen and 14 assistant draftsmen employed in the Railways Branch; in the Department of Public Instruction there were four draftsmen and clerks of works in addition to an architect.<sup>16</sup>

Nevertheless, the allegations were interpreted as a criticism of practices commonly adopted in both Barnett's Office and that of the Surveyor-General. Although anxious that the matters should be investigated and, if necessary, appropriate directions given to civil servants defining their responsibilities, the *Sydney Morning Herald* emphasised that Parliament had 'never presumed to legislate on the manner in which State officers shall employ themselves beyond those hours [of duty] and it would probably find it inconvenient to do so'.<sup>17</sup> The editor of the *Yass Courier* acknowledged that the deputation had consisted of 'respectable' members of society whose allegations 'were so clear and definite that it seems impossible anything can be urged by the parties concerned'; furthermore, the allegations provided additional evidence of the need for legislation which would control the behaviour of civil servants.<sup>18</sup> Those opinions reflected the slow evolution of conventions which shaped and controlled civil service behaviour.<sup>19</sup>

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16. *Blue Book of NSW, 1881*, pp.56, 98-100, NSW LA V&P 1882 (3).

17. *SMH*, 23 March 1880.

18. *Yass Courier*, 23 March 1880.

19. The *Civil Service Act 1884* (48 Vic. No.24), sections 32-34 made provision for an officer to be suitably punished for 'misconduct' which was a matter of opinion by the Minister or Under Secretary.

The *Daily Telegraph* was convinced that staff employed in Barnet's Office had been tried and found guilty.<sup>20</sup> That conclusion was not supported in letters to the editors of the two major Sydney newspapers.<sup>21</sup>

Although he had not pressed his claim that government work should be open to private practitioners, Rowe had touched on a principal cause of resentment among the private profession. When established in 1832, the Colonial Architect's Office was made responsible for the design and construction of all public buildings in New South Wales. There was a sound reason for that decision; as Morton Herman has shown, there were at that time few architects resident in the colony who could claim to have been first-class men so that the Government was forced to establish its own organisation.<sup>22</sup> As a result architectural competitions were rarely held; one had been organised in 1859 seeking designs for the Houses of Parliament; after the first premium was awarded, the work was postponed and later abandoned.<sup>23</sup> In 1884, Sir Patrick Jennings<sup>24</sup> announced plans to mark the centenary of British settlement in the colony which included 'a gallery of art'; those plans failed to gain support in the Legislative

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20. *Daily Telegraph*, 25 March 1880.

21. See, for example, W. Currie to Editor, *SMH*, 26 March 1880 and "Architect" to Editor, *Daily Telegraph*, 30 March 1880.

22. M. Herman, *The Early Australian Architects and Their Work*, Sydney, 1954, p.112ff.

23. *SMH*, 31 January 1888.

24. Jennings, member for The Bogan was Colonial Secretary (October-December 1885) in the short-lived Dibbs Ministry and Premier and Colonial Treasurer from February 1886 until January 1887. He had been associated with the Victorian (1875) and Philadelphia (1876) Exhibitions and from 1876 until 1887, he was a vice-president of the Agricultural Society of NSW - A.E. Cahill, 'Jennings, Sir Patrick Alfred', *ADB* 4.

Assembly<sup>25</sup> and was condemned by the popular press. The editor of the *Armidale Express*, for example, believed that unless such a building could pay its own way, the Government should not support it.<sup>26</sup> At that time New South Wales was passing through a recession which was reflected in tension within the Ministry which, in turn, led to Jennings's resignation.<sup>27</sup>

Parkes again occupied the Government benches and the responsibility to plan the centenary celebrations now rested with him. On 27 June 1887 he announced his plans; the Lachlan Swamp would be converted into parklands where there would be erected 'an edifice for great national purposes ... a great structure identified with the national life of the country'. Within that building, identified as the 'State House', there would be 'a great hall - for the holding of national assemblages in, commemorative celebrations and services of a national or special character'. In addition to a museum, there would be a public mausoleum 'for the internment of those who have been honoured with a public funeral'.<sup>28</sup>

The proposal to convert the Lachlan Swamp was an imaginative one which was favourably received; the idea of a State House was ridiculed and condemned as being neither of 'tangible benefit to the community' nor of significance as a 'national edifice'.<sup>29</sup> The proposal was interpreted as an attempt by Parkes to demonstrate his

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25. NSW *PD* First Series, Session 1885-86, Vol.22, pp.4402-04; Vol.23, p.5065.

26. *Armidale Express*, 7 September 1886.

27. Cahill, *op. cit.*

28. NSW *PD* Session 1887, First Series, Vol.28, pp.2325-26.

29. *SMH*, 1 July 1887.

initiative and imagination in planning the celebrations.<sup>30</sup>

John Sulman,<sup>31</sup> a young architect recently arrived in the colony, was one of a small group of persons who welcomed the proposal. He believed that the State House would be a building of major significance for which every effort should be made to secure the best possible design through an architectural competition open to the colony's architects. Sulman emphasised that the competition conditions should be explicitly defined and the entries should be judged by an architect 'of the highest standard'. In his opinion there was nobody better qualified than Parkes for that task; he was 'a gentleman of large experience and on whose decision the majority of the competitors would no doubt feel every confidence'.<sup>32</sup>

Parkes was determined to press ahead with the project and he ignored his critics. Architects of the colony were invited to participate in a competition, for which entries would close on 1 September 1887, with premiums of £150 and £100 being offered to the two successful entries. Intending competitors were told that the building must be 'monumental in design and erection, the style of architecture, classic and Corinthian'. The materials to be used would be principally granite and marble with mosaic and stained glass

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30. *Tamworth News*, 1 July 1887. A few days later the editor returned to the subject in an article headed 'Parkes' Folly' - *Ibid.*, 5 July 1887.

31. Born in London c.1850, Sulman was articled to a London architect, H.R. Newton and from 1870 until 1885 he practiced in that city. He migrated to Sydney in 1885 and for some years he was a partner in the firm, Sulman and Power. From 1887 until 1912 he was P.N. Russell Lecturer in Architecture, University of Sydney - *Architecture*, 1 September 1934, p.193.

32. J. Sulman, 'The Proposed State House', *ABCN*, 16 July 1887.

decorations. No assurance was given that the successful competitor would supervise construction of the work.<sup>33</sup> These conditions were condemned. The editor of the *Australasian Builders and Contractors' News* argued that they were 'not by any means calculated to produce satisfactory results, or, indeed, to inspire confidence in the ultimate outcome of the competition'; to restrict competitors in their choice of style, design, 'and general conception of the edifice' was 'simply preposterous ... it [was] certainly destroying the originality of idea'. The point was made that unless the conditions were relaxed, the competition would become 'a sham' and eventually the work would be entrusted to Barnet.<sup>34</sup>

The conditions of the competition were rejected by the Institute of Architects which favoured a double competition in which six competitors would each be awarded a premium of £100 and from whom three would be invited to prepare detailed plans for which they would each be paid expenses to a maximum of £300. The competitor selected from those three contestants would supervise construction of the project. All competitors would be provided with a survey of the site and no restrictions would be placed on the design or the choice of materials except that 'the minimum of wood and iron' should be used. Intending competitors would have six weeks in which to prepare their designs; a further twelve weeks would be allowed to architects selected for the second competition.<sup>35</sup>

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33. NSW GG, 27 July 1887, p.4935.

34. ABCN, 6 August 1887.

35. Meeting of the Institute of Architects, 28 July 1887 - *Daily Telegraph*, 5 August 1887.

When a deputation from the Institute met Parkes, Thomas Rowe insisted that the premiums offered were 'contemptible' being unlikely to encourage private practitioners to enter the competition. This would mean that 'the old state of things [would] continue which should have been altered a quarter of a century ago'; that is, the project would be handled by Barnet. Rowe criticised Parkes' failure to announce the names of the adjudicators. He emphasised that, in the opinion of the Institute, architects must have a free choice in the materials to be utilised. Finally, he insisted that the scale of drawings was 'much too small for the purpose of competition, besides being unusual if not impracticable' and insufficient time had been allowed for the preparation of designs.<sup>36</sup>

G. Allen Mansfield<sup>37</sup>, who was later to be one of the adjudicators for the competition, welcomed the idea of a competition. He made the point that New South Wales 'was almost the only place in the civilized world where the monopoly of the great public buildings was maintained by a public department'. He asserted that the conditions of the competition as announced had 'humiliated' him and they had been 'a slap in the face' to Sydney's architects. Sulman outlined the Institute's proposals and insisted that 'some professional architects' must be appointed to the panel of judges.

After responding briefly, Parkes undertook to reconsider the conditions of the competition. At the same time, he chided members

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36. Deputation to Premier, 29 July 1887 - *Ibid.*, 30 July 1887.

37. Mansfield was the first native-born architect to practice in Sydney. In 1850 he was articled to the Sydney architect, J.F. Hilly and was later taken into a partnership. He was the first president (1871-76) of the NSW Institute of Architects - *Art and Architecture*, Vol.5, 1908, pp.38-39.

of the deputation for their seeming belief that his Government might act 'improperly' in the matter.<sup>38</sup>

In reporting on the proposals, Barnet rejected the idea of two competitions. In his opinion the task of selecting three designs from the six already identified could prove to be 'an invidious task, and afford to the three selected unfair advantages over those rejected, with the possibility also of an injustice being done'. He disagreed with Rowe's criticism of the scale of drawings; it was, Barnet asserted, the scale always adopted in Sydney for all large-scale public buildings. He doubted that competitors required a survey plan of the site; because the building would be set on an elevated plateau, levels were unnecessary. He defended the decision to restrict the style of architecture and, at the same time, expressed a belief that this arrangement would benefit competitors who would thus be placed on an equal footing. In his opinion, the use of granite and marble was appropriate for a 'monumental building' such as was proposed. Barnet did not object to the appointment of professional assessors nor was he opposed to the suggestion that the author of the selected design be engaged, at the usual fee or upon negotiated terms, to prepare working drawings.<sup>39</sup>

That report was the avenue for a bitter attack upon Barnet; his professional competence was denigrated and the administration of his Office condemned. Parkes' ability to have his plans accepted by Parliament was interpreted as evidence of his 'Parliamentary power and generalship'; his weakness was said to lie in his willingness

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38. *Daily Telegraph*, 30 July 1887. The deputation was introduced by Varney, son of Sir Henry, an architect by profession and since 1885 a member of the Legislative Assembly.

39. Report of Barnet, 4 August 1887 - *SMH*, 5 August 1887.



to leave details 'to somebody else' who soon became 'master of the whole position'. That person was evidently Barnet. The leader writer of the *Daily Telegraph* argued that the scheme had been Barnet's; he was the author of the conditions of the competition and, most probably, he would be made responsible for completion of the project. Furthermore, given the record of Barnet's Office for squandering funds 'on extravagant buildings all over the country', the *Telegraph* seriously doubted that the costs would be controlled. Barnet's influence was condemned as being 'a sinister and maleficient one' and readers were reminded that he was 'the same functionary who defaced the General Post Office with the hideously grotesque carvings'. In the circumstances, there were sound reasons why Barnet could not be entrusted with the design and construction of a national monument since he would probably decorate it with similar 'astounding realistic and commemorative sculptures'.<sup>40</sup>

The *Australasian Builders and Contractors' News* supported the *Telegraph* alleging that 'seriously no competition was ever intended'. Barnet's Office was condemned as being 'perhaps the worst administered, the most expensive, and the least requisite of any in the colony'. Had architectural competitions been held, costs would have been reduced and there was a possibility 'that some attempt would have been made to inaugurate a style of architecture peculiarly suited to our requirements and climate'; instead, 'cumbersome structures' had been erected, public funds 'wasted in degree' and the buildings were of an inferior design.<sup>41</sup> The *Builders' and Contractors' News* would have intended that criticism for William Lyne's information

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40. *Daily Telegraph*, 8 August 1887.

41. *ABCN*, 13 August 1887.

as much as anything else. Within four months Lyne was to appoint a board to investigate the functions and operations of his department; an inquiry prematurely terminated by Sutherland in January 1887. In its reports, the Board of Inquiry would express the opinion that Barnet's administration was unsatisfactory.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, the *News* supported the Institute of Architects in its campaign to secure for its members access to public works; a campaign which, as has been already shown, was gathering momentum.

There was no substance in the allegation that Barnet had resisted attempts to establish an 'Australian' style of architecture. Sulman, for example, shortly after settling in Sydney, had found that there was a reluctance among local architects to experiment in the design of buildings which might be identified as being 'Australian' but he did not attribute that reluctance to any particular architect and certainly not to Barnet. In Sulman's opinion, there was a simple explanation; the community had 'quite recently emerged from a struggle with nature for the necessities of life and [was] only just awakening to the need of culture and art'.<sup>43</sup> An examination of buildings erected in Sydney during the 1880's provide no evidence that any Sydney architect had attempted to develop a distinctive 'Australian' style.<sup>44</sup> For Barnet to have done so would have been quite extraordinary, he being the Colonial Architect whose patrons would have been highly critical of any departure on his part from

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42. PWD: Board of Enquiry - Report and Evidence, NSW LA V&P 1887 (2).

43. J. Sulman, 'An Australian Style', *ABCN*, 14 May 1887.

44. See M. Herman, *The Architecture of Victorian Sydney*, Sydney, 1956.

European traditions and practices. The likely response to any such move was no better illustrated than in the continuing criticism of the Sydney General Post Office carvings.

On 1 October the membership of the Board of Examiners was announced; the members were Alfred Barry, Anglican Bishop of Sydney and Primate of Australia; John Hay, President of the Legislative Council and a pastoralist; Edward Knox, M.L.C., sugar refiner and banker; the architects, G. Allan Mansfield and Barnett; as well as J.S. Mitchell and Alexander Oliver, civil servants.<sup>45</sup> The Board was condemned as being 'a medley of talent, of each of whom, with the exception of Mr. Barnett [*sic*] ... and Mr. G. Allen Mansfield, it might fairly be hinted, *ne suter ultra crepidam*'. Parkes was said to have selected Barry 'on account of his high accomplishments and his fitness from being the son of an eminent architect who designed Westminster Hall'. The selection of Oliver was thought to reflect a mistaken belief that a sound legal draftsman would be equally competent as an architectural draftsman. Mansfield's integrity was never in question but there seemed some doubt that he would be able to influence his colleagues on the Board.<sup>46</sup> Sir John Hay had not previously displayed an active interest in the visual arts; he was, however, a supporter of Parkes who had secured him a seat in the Legislative Council.<sup>47</sup>

The Institute was worried by a rumour that, having received the business card of a competitor which revealed his *nom de plume*, Barnett's request that he be stood down had been rejected.<sup>48</sup> When

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45. NSW *GG*, 1 October 1887, p.6573.

46. *ABCN*, 8 October 1887. Parkes had ignored a recommendation from the Institute of Architects that W.W. Wardell be appointed.

47. A.W. Martin, 'Hay, Sir John', *ADB* 4

48. *ABCN*, 15 October 1887.

this matter was raised at a meeting of the Institute, Rowe read a letter addressed to Barnet seeking assurances from him that the rumour was unfounded together with his reply that he could not be expected to notice hearsay or rumours. The Institute then decided that a letter should be sent to the Board of Examiners 'pointing out how the practice that it was rumoured had been indulged in would be likely to affect the decision of the Board'. The editor of the *Builders and Contractors' News* condemned these 'undignified' proceedings which were likely to leave the Institute open to criticism. The point was made that, as a civil servant, Barnet would have had a responsibility to report the matter to his superiors whose task it would have been to decide what should be done. In the opinion of the *News*, the Board could not become involved in a member's private correspondence. Although the editor condemned the rumours as baseless, he thought that Barnet might have written in a more conciliatory manner; however, 'his coldly indifferent answer ... [was] at least more dignified than the agitated state of some of the members of the Institute of Architects'.<sup>49</sup>

Despite the adverse publicity, the competition attracted forty-six entries of which eighteen were judged worthy of further consideration. The staff of Barnet's Office assessed the cubic contents as indicated on the plans of each and calculated the probable minimum cost per cubic foot. On the basis of that information, the Board was unable to select a design 'which would be entirely satisfactory a State House' and yet meet the competition conditions. The Board was then asked to identify the designs 'most entitled to consideration without reference to estimated cost' and,

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49. *Ibid.*, 22 October 1887.

at the same time, to assess carefully those designs which satisfied the conditions. Three designs were then selected; one met the estimated cost of construction but, in the opinion of the Board, it was not suitable.<sup>50</sup>

Parkes condemned the report as being inconclusive but he was not prepared to seek further advice from the Board. Bitterly disappointed, he was reluctant to indicate what would be done;<sup>51</sup> on 22 December 1887 he announced that the project was to be postponed.<sup>52</sup> His announcement was welcomed as there was no doubt in the minds of some people that the building could not be built for the estimated cost; an amount which justified questioning the judgment of persons responsible for calculating it.<sup>53</sup>

In a remarkable *volte face* the editor of the *Builders and Contractors' News* condemned that assertion as being 'an unwarranted imputation upon Mr. Barnett's [*sic*] professional skill, which [was] not born out by facts, but [was] rather contradicted by all the circumstances that [had] transpired over this much bungled proposal'. Parkes 'by his blundering perversity, [had] made a farce of the whole business' and then blamed 'valued officers, who could and would have guided him safely and creditably through his centennial proposals'. The *Herald's* allegation that Barnett had been responsible was dismissed as being 'inconsiderate and untruthful'. The *News* doubted that Barnett would have suffered because of that attack since he had to bear 'blame and much ridicule' for the Post Office carvings

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50. Report of Board, 24 November 1887, *ABCN*, 3 December 1887. These designs were examined in a series of articles - *Ibid.*, 10, 17, 24, 31 December 1887.

51. NSW *PD* Session 1887-88, First Series, Vol.29, p.1684.

52. *Ibid.*, Vol.30, p.2324.

53. *SMH*, 23 December 1887.

which were probably the whim of 'a chief'. Barnet's skill was to be found in 'the splendid public buildings' of Sydney and there seemed to be no doubt that the State House had not been his idea.<sup>54</sup>

This spirited defence of Barnet came from a source which more frequently attacked him; for example, some four months previously, the editor had condemned the competition as a 'sham' arranged in a manner which would ensure that the project was handled in Barnet's Office.<sup>55</sup> Having vented its spleen on that occasion, the *News* did not again criticise Barnet's role and a rumour that he was likely to withdraw from the Board of Examiners was regarded as a matter 'very much to be regretted'.<sup>56</sup> Nevertheless, the competition did nothing to improve his relations with members of the profession; it was more likely to heighten their antagonism towards him.

### iii.

Having failed in his attempt to build the State House, Parkes next decided that the construction of the Houses of Parliament should proceed. This idea was welcomed by private architects as an opportunity for them to participate in the work.<sup>57</sup> They were soon disappointed; Parkes decided that the plans prepared in 1858 would

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54. *ABCN*, 31 December 1887. No details of the advice given to Parkes by Barnet have been found. The only papers held in the files of the Government (Colonial) Architect, NSW Archives Office are the plans of H.M. Robinson's design which was awarded second premium (NSW AO Plan No. 1994).

55. *Ibid.*, 6 August 1887.

56. *Ibid.*, 22 October 1887.

57. *Ibid.*, 5 November 1887.

be adapted.<sup>58</sup>

On 30 January 1888 the foundation stone was laid although final plans had not been approved. This ceremony, quite correctly, was seen to be 'a mere formal matter';<sup>59</sup> the newly-laid stone was to serve as a reminder of yet another unfulfilled promise of a commemoration worthy of the celebrations. More than twelve months later, a suggestion was made that the 1858 plans be abandoned and a competition arranged with premiums 'large enough to make first-class men willing to engage in the venture'. Barnett would be responsible for 'the most important parts of the project, namely the planning, the acoustics, the lighting and heating, and the selection of the materials to be used'; competitors would submit designs for the elevations and ornamental features. Those who favoured this plan believed that it would avoid future complaints; the planning and arrangements of the interior would have been completed by the Colonial Architect in consultation with the 'legislators and officials', competitors would be able to concentrate on the task of 'producing as beautiful and artistic elevations as the money ... would allow' and the public would be given a building 'as perfect in plan and design as it could be made ... and - the new House of Parliament would indeed be worthy of the beautiful and thriving city which would form so fitting a setting'.<sup>60</sup> Nothing came of that proposal; in so far as Barnett was concerned the project was abandoned. For the Institute of Architects it represented yet another disappointment.

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58. *Ibid.*, 7 January 1888.

59. *The Echo*, 7 January 1888.

60. *ABCN*, 11 May 1889.

## iv.

Decisions that monumental state buildings would mark the centenary celebrations would have encouraged Barnett to believe that he would be given an opportunity to design at least one public building, grand in concept and magnificent in scale, which would commemorate the centenary and mark the peak of his professional career. For their part, private architects would have been encouraged by the State House competition, whatever its faults, as being evidence of a change in a long-established and much resented government policy. Both parties were to be disappointed.

The third building project suggested to mark the centenary celebrations was the provision of an art gallery but it had been rejected. There was no doubt that such a building was urgently required. In 1879, for example, the Government had been forced to provide temporary accommodation for the art collections of the International Exhibition. That accommodation was later allocated to the trustees of the National Art Gallery who were to occupy it until such time as a modern gallery could be provided.<sup>61</sup> After the Garden Palace was destroyed by fire in September 1882, Parkes unsuccessfully sought parliamentary approval to set aside that site for a national gallery and another, in Pitt Street, for a free public library.<sup>62</sup> He had intended that architectural competitions would be held insisting that this was not to be interpreted as evidence of his 'distrust' of the Colonial Architect but rather was a desire to obtain Parliament's approval for the projects which would

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61. *Once a Month*, 15 October 1884, Vol.1, No.4, p.299.

62. NSW PD Session 1882, First Series, Vol.7, pp.689,734.



have involved 'the whole of the architectural talent in the colonies'.<sup>63</sup> The *Bulletin* reminded its readers that Barnet, some years previously, had prepared plans for the two buildings<sup>64</sup> which were now set aside.

Parkes' explanation lacked substance. In the past, for example, large-scale additions to the Sydney General Post Office or the construction of the Garden Palace had not been the subject of architectural competitions but this did not result in funds being withheld. Nevertheless, as has already been shown, his decision about the Garden Palace was not free of criticism both within and outside Parliament.

Nothing further was done until March 1883 when a deputation of the trustees of the Gallery reminded George Reid, Minister for Public Instruction<sup>65</sup> that the primitive conditions in which the art collection was housed could only result in its being seriously damaged. Although sympathetic, Reid indicated that there was a number of points which must be settled before the project could be approved; the most important was that of a site for the building.<sup>66</sup>

There seemed to be general agreement that a new building must be built. The old building, riddled with white ants, was subject to wide variations in internal temperatures, threatened with rising damp and was a high fire risk, all of which were conditions conducive to the rapid destruction of the art collection. Trickett, who had succeeded Reid as Minister for Public Instruction<sup>67</sup> on 2 May

63. *Ibid.*, p.737, 869.

64. The *Bulletin*, 2 December 1882.

65. Member for East Sydney and Minister for Public Instruction in the Stuart Ministry - A.W. Martin and P. Wardle, *Members of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales 1856-1901*, Canberra, 1959.

66. *SMH*, 19 March 1883. The members of the deputation were Sir Alfred Stephen, Edward Combes, E.L. Montefiore and E. Du Faur.

67. C. Cunneen, 'Trickett, William Joseph', *ADB* 4.

1884 now condemned as useless a plan prepared by Barnet to enclose the existing building in a brick case.<sup>68</sup>

A more difficult question was that of selecting a suitable site for the gallery. The matter was discussed on several occasions during 1884; for example, a deputation which met Trickett in May was told that he would try to settle the question.<sup>69</sup> On 16 September, Henry Copeland (East Sydney<sup>70</sup>) raised the matter and, in so doing, attacked Trickett for his criticism of Barnet; criticism which suggested that he 'was a person whose opinion was not worth having'. Copeland accused Trickett of withholding information from the House and, during the course of an angry exchange, Trickett alleged that it was Barnet who, 'on dozens of times', had refused to answer requests for information.<sup>71</sup>

Trickett condemned Barnet's plan which, he said, represented 'a very fair and magnificent exterior' having a dome which compared favourably with that of St. Paul's Cathedral, London. He asserted that Barnet had taken plans originally prepared for a library in which he had changed the functions of each of the rooms; for example, one room, 'by a wonderful transformation affected by the pen of the Colonial Architect', had been converted into a picture gallery. Trickett admitted that he preferred the advice of William Kemp, architect in charge of the Architectural Branch of his department.

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68. *Daily Telegraph*, 14 August 1884.

69. *The Echo*, 9 May 1884. The members of the deputation were Montefiore, Du Faur and J.R. Fairfax.

70. Copeland had served as Secretary for Public Works for twelve weeks (5 January - 28 March 1883) before being forced to resign after an incident at a St. Patrick's Day banquet - Martha Rutledge, 'Copeland, Henry', *ADB* 3.

71. NSW *PD* Session 1883-84, First Series, Vol.15, pp.5235-39.

He believed that, as minister responsible for the Art Gallery, he was free to seek the advice of his departmental architect rather than consult Barnet. Alexander Stuart defended the trustees' right to consult a private architect; in his opinion, the work could not be entrusted to the Colonial Architect because the Gallery was not a government instrumentality. In any case, he believed that it would be the Government which would decide to whom the project should be given.<sup>72</sup>

Parkes, now in opposition, defended Barnet. He reminded the House of the traditional role of the Colonial Architect's Office and pointed out that the steps taken by the trustees to consult Horbury Hunt were likely 'to create great dissatisfaction in a very important officer's department' with the possibility that advice 'given under such circumstances would be given without much responsibility'. Edward Combes supported Parkes; although a trustee of the Art Gallery he disassociated himself from the decision to engage Horbury Hunt. In Combes' opinion, Barnet was 'the proper person to prepare the plans' unless the Government had decided that assistance should be given to him through engaging another architect for the project but Combes doubted that this was so. He thought that if he were Barnet, unless asked to prepare the plans, he would feel that he had been slighted.<sup>73</sup>

The opinions of neither Parkes nor Combes carried any weight; Horbury Hunt's design was adopted. Max Freeland argued that the trustees had developed 'a violent antipathy, almost amounting to hatred' towards Barnet because of the Post Office carvings.

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72. NSW *PD* Session 1883-84, First Series, Vol.15, pp.5303-07, 5315.

73. NSW *PD* Session 1883-84, First Series, Vol.15, pp.5309-12.

Furthermore, Freeland believed that the trustees had led the outcry against that work and, to avoid having to trust the Art Gallery project to Barnet, they 'hastily gave the job to Horbury Hunt'.<sup>74</sup> Freeland's conclusion is untenable. Questions about the carvings had been first raised in April 1883 and, although Barnet had then mildly defended his decision, it was only in May 1884 that he made a spirited defence in which he questioned the ability of his critics to understand his designs; that defence was not made public until August 1884. Although some of the trustees, for example, E.L. Montefiore, had participated in the debate about the artistic merit of the Post Office carvings, the controversy had not as yet reached the bitterness which later marked it. There were probably other reasons why Horbury Hunt was consulted; for example, he was well and favourably known to three of the trustees, Fairfax, Stephen and Montefiore, who may have sought his advice. Sir Alfred Stephen later explained that, aware of the damage being done to the Gallery's collections because of the substandard accommodation, the trustees had decided that temporary arrangements must be made. He believed that Horbury Hunt's plan was the most suitable for that purpose.<sup>75</sup>

In each of these projects, Barnet was brought into direct conflict with the Institute of Architects, influential members of the profession, the metropolitan press and the politicians. Underlying that conflict was a misunderstanding of the proper role for the Colonial Architect's Office in the 1880's. Its traditional role, as described by Parkes, was in conflict with the ambitions of a society in which much more emphasis was being placed on the role

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74. J.M. Freeland, *Architect Extraordinary*, Melbourne, 1971, p.111.

75. NSW *PD* Session 1885-86, First Series, Vol.18, p.1915.

of private enterprise in the development of the colony and less on that of the Government. Despite the internicine quarrels which often threatened to split the Institute, it was becoming an important lobbying group in its efforts to achieve its objectives. The senior members of the Institute were men who did not hesitate to denigrate Barnet's work when such attacks suited their purposes while the stand adopted by the politicians at any time was influenced by the forces of faction politics and the turmoil of parliamentary debate. In every case, the protagonists provided the newspapers with good copy so that Barnet became the most publicised civil servant working in New South Wales at the time. These were all forces which Barnet was unable to resist and they, in due time, contributed, in part, to his downfall.