



James Barnett, Esq., F.R.I.B.A.
COLONIAL ARCHITECT OF NEW SOUTH WALES.

Chapter 1.

The Preparatory Years (1827-1864).

James Barnet¹ was a professional architect who became a long serving member of the New South Wales civil service and for that reason a study of his official career should begin with an examination of his professional training. His career from his arrival in New South Wales in 1854 until 1860 and his work as Acting Colonial Architect from 31 October 1862 until 31 December 1864 is also reviewed in this chapter.

ii.

On 21 August 1860 a notice appeared in the New South Wales *Government Gazette* which announced the appointment of James Barnet to a position of clerk of works in the Office of the Colonial Architect. Who was this young man who had arrived in Sydney in December 1854 and who, since that date, seemed to have experienced some difficulty in settling into regular employment? The position of clerk of works carried an annual salary of £400 and offered security and prospects for advancement. A curious person might

1. Throughout this study the name 'James Barnet' will be used. The entry in *ADB* 3 records his name as 'Barnet, James Johnstone', the name shown on both his and his wife's death certificates. In the numerous files examined Barnet almost invariably signed his name as 'James Barnet'. There were many occasions when his name was incorrectly spelled as 'Barnett' in official papers as well as the press.

wonder whether Barnett was qualified to fill such a position or whether he had been appointed solely as the result of the patronage of influential friends.²

James Barnett was born at Almerclose, a tiny village near Arbroath,³ Scotland on 17 October 1827 the son of Thomas and Mary Barnett. Of his early life little is known. He is said to have attended the local high school before going up to London in 1843 where he was apprenticed to a builder, took instructions in drawing and trained as an architect.⁴

Barnett's father was a builder; probably a successful, self-employed tradesman since there was little likelihood that, as a wage earner he would have been able to maintain a home in Arbroath and, at the same time, assist his son who, as an apprentice, would probably not receive any remuneration.

London in the eighteen-forties was a dynamic city where an apprentice architect might see many superb examples of the work of earlier influential architects and where he might examine the work of men engaged on major construction projects. For example, John Nash, an important architect of the Regency period had died in 1835 and there were many London architects who would have known him and who would have been able to identify and discuss the projects for

-
2. This question is fully examined in A. McMartin, *Public Servants and Patronage. The Foundation and Rise of the New South Wales Public Service 1786-1856*, Sydney, 1983.
 3. Arbroath lies on the railway line between Aberdeen and Dundee. It is dominated by the ruins of the abbey founded in 1178. Ship building and engineering were important industries - J. Brodie, *About Arbroath*, Arbroath, 1904.
 4. D.I. McDonald, 'James Barnett, Colonial Architect, 1865-1890', *JRAHS*, Vol.55, p.124.

which he had been responsible.⁵ Sir John Soane (1753-1837) had been responsible for many fine buildings of which the Bank of England, Tivoli Corner, London and the Chelsea Hospital Infirmary were excellent examples of work which was classical and scholarly in design and execution. Soane had established a museum 'crammed with every possible object that could interest a romantic yet austere architect in the early nineteenth century'.⁶

Many years later a statement was made that Barnett had been strongly influenced by Soane's work; his first major project, the Sydney General Post being cited as evidence of that influence.⁷ Certainly, Barnett had studied architecture with Charles J. Richardson, one of Soane's last pupils and his employee until 1837. Probably Barnett visited the Soane Museum and almost certainly he would have studied Soane's most significant buildings - the Bank of England, the Picture Gallery at Dulwich, the Westminster Law Courts and the Board of Trade Offices in Whitehall. There is no evidence in buildings designed in the New South Wales Colonial Architect's Office during 1865-1890 to suggest that Soane's influence upon Barnett

-
5. J.H. Plumb and Hew Wheldon, *Royal Heritage; The Story of Britain's Royal Builders*, London, 1977, p.198 described Nash's most notorious work, the Brighton Pavilion, as being 'a phantasy in bricks and plaster of a sad, ageing, self-indulgent, very rich King, who possessed taste but little judgment, vivid imagination, and no control'.
 6. P. Kitson, P. Murray and P. Thompson, *A History of English Architecture*, Harmondsworth, 2nd edition, 1979, p.258. For a detailed study of Soane's work see J. Summerson, *Sir John Soane, 1753-1837*, London, 1952.
 7. H.B.E. Andreasson, 'Report on New South Wales Court Houses', processed, p.19 n.d. (c. 1966) (NSW A0 3/3096). He argued that a comparison with the Bank of England might suggest that both buildings may have been designed by the same architect. This claim is rejected by P. Bridges, 'James Barnett, 1827-1904' in H. Tanner (ed.), *Architects of Australia*, Melbourne, 1981, pp.74-75.

if at all, was more than peripheral. Neither architect, however, followed contemporary trends in architectural style in which Gothic Revival was becoming increasingly significant; both preferred classical designs.

An observant young man living in London would have recognised the achievements of Robert Smirke whose Covent Garden Theatre and General Post Office were two of a number of significant buildings for which he had been responsible. Similarly, he would have been aware of the work of Edward Blore who had been commissioned to complete Buckingham Palace. The most exciting project under construction was the Houses of Parliament designed by Charles Barry, 'unquestionably the greatest architect whom Britain possessed in the nineteenth century from 1830 onwards'.⁸ This superb group of buildings was acclaimed as 'having done more to improve the architectural *ensemble* of London, when viewed from a distance than it was possible to anticipate'.⁹

Shortly after moving to London, Barnett began taking drawing lessons from William Dyce and studied architecture with Charles Richardson. The manner of his coming to their notice is not clear; there is no evidence which suggests that he enjoyed the patronage of influential friends. In 1848 Dyce was lecturing at the School of Design, Somerset House where Barnett came under his influence. In that same year Richardson had accepted a position as master of the architectural classes in that institute.¹⁰ Barnett was one of

8. D. Yarwood, *The Architecture of England*, London, 1963, p.395.

9. *The Builder*, Vol.XXIX, 1871, p.820 - quoted D.J. Olsen, *The Growth of Victorian London*, Harmondsworth, 1969, p.64.

10. *DNB*.

his first pupils; in August 1845 he had been awarded a premium of £1-11-6d. for sepia 'architectural drawings'.¹¹

There are no extant records which enable one to establish the form and content of the training undertaken by Barnet or to identify the architect with whom he trained. One must assume that his training followed traditional patterns; an apprenticeship with an established architect who provided his pupil with theoretical and practical training, attendance at lectures and drawing lessons at the Royal Academy or the School of Design and travel in Europe.¹²

Having completed his professional training, Barnet occupied a position of clerk of works to the Worshipful Company of Fishmongers. He was also employed as a foreman of works by T.F. Mathews, a London architect and surveyor. Mathews in 1854 wrote that he had known Barnet 'for the past four or five years' and that he had found him to be 'courteous, active, and diligent in executing all orders'; the works executed under his supervision had given Mathews 'a very great satisfaction and displayed in many cases very good taste and masterly workmanship'. Barnet's accounts and measurements were 'invariably correct' and he had displayed a sound practical knowledge of 'all descriptions of masonry, and general building works'. Barnet also worked for a 'short time' as clerk of works with the London architect, Robert Suter. James Marsland, surveyor of Southwark Bridge Road had known Barnet for ten years and had had 'much intercourse with him on professional matters'. Thomas Bambridge, surveyor of Bethnal Green described Barnet as 'a Steady, Sobert, Honest,

11. Certificate awarded to James Barnet, Session 1845-46 - *BFP*.

12. A detailed examination of training provided is set out in F. Jenkins, *Architect and Patron*, London, 1961, pp.91-107, 160-177.

Industrious and Clever Man'.¹³

These testimonials establish that, for much of the period 1849-1854, Barnet was employed as a clerk of works responsible for the supervision of works being executed on behalf of his principal's clients. There is no extant evidence which shows that he had designed and supervised the construction of any buildings. In 1854 he had applied for a position of surveyor to the Oxford Paving Commissioners but his application was either unsuccessful or he declined an appointment; in any case he would have held such an appointment for a very short period. On 22 July he married Amy Gosling¹⁴ and on 26 August they sailed as emigrants to settle in Sydney.

-
13. *BFP*. According to J.M. Freeland, *Architect Extraordinary: The Life and Times of John Horbury Hunt 1838-1904*, Melbourne, 1970, p.9 Barnet had, at the age of fifteen years (i.e. in 1842) 'just begun a five year carpenter's apprenticeship' which he abandoned to undertake a 'four year study of architecture' under Richardson and that 'For a further nine years' he was employed with the Fishmongers' Company from whose employment he resigned in 1854 to migrate to New South Wales. Richardson had joined the School of Design, Somerset House in 1845 when Barnet was one of his first pupils. The *Dictionary of National Biography* is silent about Richardson's career between 1837 and 1845 and no evidence has been sighted to show that he was teaching architecture. If, as Freeland claimed, Barnet had been employed by the Fishmongers Company for nine years he would have joined it in either 1844 or 1845. Without having had an opportunity to examine the source used by Freeland, one is left in some doubt as to the accuracy of his statement. That doubt is reinforced by a survey of Barnet's career published in 1890 which stated that he had studied architecture for three years with Richardson before accepting employment with the Fishmongers' Company terminating in 1854 - *ABCN*, 12 April 1890.
14. Amy Gosling was born in London c. 1830, the daughter of James Gosling, builder. She died at Forest Lodge, NSW on 30 November 1889 - death certificate sighted. In personal papers examined, Barnet always referred to his wife as 'Mrs Barnet', a convention followed in this study.

iii.

Before following Barnet's career in New South Wales, a brief examination must be made of the forces in England, and more particularly in London, which may have influenced his professional development. Mention has already been made of some earlier architects, for example Nash and Soane, and of the great masters of Barnet's own day, Barry and Blore. Soane and Nash had witnessed changes in English architectural fashion ranging from Strict Palladin to the equally strict dogmas of Greek and Gothic.¹⁵ In 1836, Charles Barry's Gothic design for the Houses of Parliament was preferred to the traditional Greek, Roman or Italian styles more generally favoured for public buildings. Barnet almost certainly would have been aware of the controversy surrounding that decision¹⁶ and he would have been able to examine at first hand the difficulties Barry experienced in executing his plans.

Barnet's attention would probably have been drawn to Pugin's 'extraordinary book', *Contrasts: or a Parallel between the Noble Edifices of the Middle Ages and the Corresponding Buildings of the Present Day showing the Present Decay of Taste* (1836).¹⁷ This publication was to be a focal point in the discussion regarding contemporary styles of architecture - that is, Classical and Italian or Gothic Revival. Barnet would have also been aware of John Ruskin's

15. The Gothic style had been given recognition by the Church Building Commission - see K. Clark, *The Gothic Revival*, London, 4th edition, reprinted 1978, p.96.

16. Clark, *op.cit.*, pp.114-18, 129-30.

17. For a study of Pugin's work see P. Stanton, *Pugin*, London, 1971.

Seven Lamps of Architecture (1849).¹⁸ Nor would he have been ignorant of the tradition that classical architecture was the *correct* and *most appropriate* style for public buildings because it most clearly symbolised the stability and continuity of government.¹⁹

One might wonder what he thought of the thinly-disguised functional magnificence of those large, barn-like structures serving as the King's Cross (1851-52) and Paddington (1852-54) railway stations. An examination of the Crystal Palace (1850) in Hyde Park would have shown Barnet that in a building, 'of transparent Regency elegance', it was possible to utilise the 'positive aesthetic qualities' found in metal and glass in a manner which introduced new and exciting designs into building construction.²⁰

The London architectural scene wherein Barnet developed his professional skills was in a state of transition. Although the traditional Classical and Gothic styles remained unchallenged, there was a steady trend towards contemporary styles involving technological innovations and utilising new building materials. Had he remained in London, Barnet may have taken up that challenge. As it happened, he arrived in Sydney at a time when its most important building to date, the University of Sydney, was being constructed in traditional Gothic architectural styles executed in familiar building materials. Furthermore, he came under the influence of Edmund Blacket, the

18. Clark believed that 'in the history of taste' this book was 'perhaps the most influential ever published' - Clark, *op.cit.*, p.192.

19. J. Summerson, *Georgian London*, London, 3rd edition, 1978, pp.198-211.

20. R.F. Jordan, *Victorian Architecture*, Harmondsworth, 1966, p.126.

University Architect, who was acknowledged as being an architect of superior attainments in the application of classical styles of architecture; styles generally preferred by Sydney's architects although there were examples of the Georgian style to be found in the city.

iv.

Within three weeks of their wedding day, Barnet and Mrs Barnet boarded the 800 ton clipper *Marchioness of Londonderry* (Captain John Williams) which sailed from the Isle of Wight on 26 August and berthed in Sydney Cove on 10 December 1854. The Barnets were part of an anonymous group of '244 emigrants' who had travelled on the ship²¹ of whom many, undoubtedly, would have been attracted to the colony by the lure of the gold discoveries.²²

Barnet most probably travelled as an assisted migrant. The reasons underlying his decision to migrate to Sydney are not clear; perhaps he may have been attracted by the thought of making a fortune on the goldfields but that seems unlikely. No evidence has been sighted which suggests that he moved far from Sydney except in the course of his official duties; there was little likelihood that he had undergone that 'intensive course of "colonization" administered by older Australians and ... conditions of bush life'.²³ Barnet may

21. *SMH*, 11 December 1854.

22. G. Sherington, *Australia's Immigrants 1788-1978*, Sydney, 1980, pp.59-76.

23. R. Ward, *The Australian Legend*, Melbourne, 1958, p.129. According to J.M. Freeland, *op.cit.*, p.9, Barnet had migrated to Sydney in order to avoid 'a closed and deadening life becoming [his] only real prospect'.

have decided to migrate after hearing favourable reports of life in the colonies; David MacMillan has shown that was a decision taken by many Scotsmen.²⁴

As the *Marchioness of Londonderry* moved up Port Jackson, prominent features on the landscape such as the Macquarie Light and Fort Denison would have come to the notice of her passengers. Equally conspicuous was Government House and the many buildings 'piled up, terrace upon terrace',²⁵ which marked the western shore of Sydney Cove. Walking about the rough, badly-formed and poorly-lit streets of the city, a newcomer could scarcely avoid noticing the dilapidated condition of many of its buildings, unworthy of the commercial and administrative centre of the colony of New South Wales where, as the 1851 census had shown, lived 27% of the colony's population.²⁶

There was, however, a number of public buildings and 'sumptuous Shops'; these had been carefully recorded by the artist, Joseph Fowles in 1848. Fowles had also described churches, banking chambers, commercial houses and private residences.²⁷ All of those buildings were in existence in 1854; some served as a reminder that Sydney was a poor imitation of older and more prosperous cities. Godfrey Mundy had been critical of the style of architecture generally adopted which he believed was quite unsuited to the Sydney climate; for example, its 'barefaced, smug-looking tenements, without verandahs

-
24. D.S. MacMillan, *Scotland and Australia 1788-1850*, Oxford, 1967, p.xv.
25. R. Stanley (ed), *Tourist to the Antipodes. William Archer's "Australian Journey 1876-77"*, St Lucia, 1977, p.9.
26. G.J.B. Linge, *Industrial Awakening. A Geography of Australian Manufacturing 1788 to 1890*, Canberra, 1979, p.106.
27. J. Fowles, *Sydney in 1848*, Sydney, 1848. For an examination of his career see Jocelyn Gray, 'Fowles, Joseph', *ADB* 1.

or even broad eaves'. He also condemned the streets as being 'a disgrace to the city and its corporation'.²⁸

A strange assortment of people inhabited the city - former convicts, sailors with time on their hands, prospectors either hurriedly preparing to leave for the diggings or returning with tales of life on the fields. Wealthy emancipists and proud squatters drove about in 'quiet and elegant' carriages; less fortunate citizens might hire a public cab which 'looked more like private carriages than public conveyances'.²⁹

Whatever the impression made on Barnet by the city and its people, it was here that he made his home and where he would live for the remainder of his life.

Barnet is said to have sought a position early in 1855 in the Colonial Architect's Office and, being unsuccessful, he had commenced work as a self-employed builder.³⁰ An examination of extant files held in the Archives Office of New South Wales has not located that application.³¹ There is, however, evidence which shows that he did design and supervise the erection of some houses and a group of shops in the city.³²

In May 1855 he entered an architectural competition organised by the committee of the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts³³ who

28. G.C. Mundy, *Our Antipodes*, London, 1852, 2 vols., Vol.1, pp.42,46.

29. F. Fowler, *Southern Lights and Shadows*, London, 1859, p.13.

30. *ABCN*, 12 April 1890.

31. For example, CAOR: 'Employment, appointments etc., 1854-66' (NSW AO 2/587) and 'Applications for employment, 1859-66' (NSW AO 2/586).

32. James Barnet Papers - Notes and Reports, 1855-1892, Item 2: List of Buildings erected under (ML Mss. 726).

33. The Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts was founded in 1838 - see D.I. McDonald, 'The Diffusion of Scientific and Other Useful Knowledge', *JRAHS*, Vol.54, 1968, pp.176-193.

sought designs for permanent rooms. Premiums of £50 and £20 were offered for the two best designs. Eight entries were received which, in the opinion of the House Committee, showed 'great merit and [were] satisfactory evidence of good architectural skill in the Australian colonies'. Although experiencing no difficulty in selecting the four most outstanding entries, the Committee was unable to choose between entries submitted by 'CD' (Barnet) and 'Sydney' (Alfred Sprigg), each of whom was thought worthy of the first premium. In a ballot conducted by the General Committee, Sprigg's entry was awarded the first premium and Barnet the second.³⁴ Two months later he asked that the Institute honour its commitment.³⁵

Barnet next came under notice on 7 February 1858 when the foundation stone of the Chalmers Presbyterian Church was laid; he had prepared the plans and specifications.³⁶ His part in completing the project is not clear; he was now in full-time employment as a clerk of works at the University of Sydney.

In November 1853 the Sydney University Building Committee had recommended that work commence on the construction of a building to be located on the former Grose Farm, Camperdown. The first stage of the work would consist of essential accommodation only - a library, lecture room, laboratory, office accommodation and a meeting room; 'more elaborate parts' would be added as funds became available. The Committee preferred the Elizabethan style of architecture arguing that additions could be made 'without impairing its general effect

34. Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, Minutes of Meeting, 9 August 1855 - Minute Books, 1853-63 (ML Mss A.4150).

35. Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, Minutes of Meeting, 4 October 1855, *Ibid.*

36. *Empire*, 8 February 1856.

as a whole'.³⁷ Edmund Blacket, Colonial Architect was then invited to prepare plans and specifications and to supervise construction.³⁸

Although a majority of the Fellows had favoured Later Tudor or Elizabethan styles of architecture, Blacket persuaded the Senate that the Gothic style was more appropriate. He argued that an Englishman could not think of a university 'without thinking of Mediaeval Architecture' and invariably associated learning 'in some way or other [with] the forms and peculiarities of the Gothic styles'.³⁹ In that belief, Blacket showed himself to be a traditionalist who was unlikely to experiment in other designs or materials.

By August 1855 work had progressed to a point when Blackett successfully sought approval to employ a clerk of works. Barnett was offered the position.⁴⁰ This association was an important phase in Barnett's career; in the short term he was assured of a regular income. In the long term, he was able to work with a highly-respected architect whose patrons were among Sydney's most influential men and he would be identified with the largest and most important building project as yet undertaken in the colony. Barnett was young enough to learn from his master yet sufficiently experienced to interpret

-
37. Senate of the University of Sydney - Report of Building Committee, November 1853. Blacket Papers, University of Sydney Archives.
 38. H.M. Kennedy, Registrar to E.T. Blacket, 28 April 1854 - Blacket Papers, *loc. cit.* For a study of Blacket's career see M. Herman, *The Blackets - An Era of Australian Architecture*, Sydney, 1963.
 39. E.T. Blacket, 'The Building of a University Group of Buildings', *Architecture*, Vol.18, March 1929, p.65.
 40. Senate, University of Sydney, Minutes of Meeting, 25 August 1855 - Minute Book, University of Sydney Archives.

Blacket's work in terms of his own ideas of what constituted sound architectural practices. At the same time, it was an opportunity to gain experience in the handling of local building materials and in working with colonial tradesmen who believed that they owed a living to no man.

As clerk of works, Barnet would have been given such tasks as his master felt confident he was able to handle and, as that confidence grew so, too, would the range of tasks placed in his care.⁴¹ Blacket seems to have placed much trust in Barnet for, in addition to the many tasks normally handled by a clerk of works, he was entrusted with the task of designing and painting the figures of angels which decorated the hammer beams forming the roof of the Great Hall. Those angels in their fine workmanship were thought 'to reflect their creator's taste and industry'.⁴²

In December 1857 Barnet accepted temporary employment as an extra draftsman with the Sydney City Council for whom he was to prepare plans and specifications for a town hall.⁴³ Those plans were submitted to the Council at its meeting on 7 June 1858 and adopted.⁴⁴

41. In the nineteenth century a clerk of works was employed 'in an omnibus category, which included everything from a draughtsman to the most competent and well-qualified architectural assistant' - J.M. Freeland, *The Making of a Profession*, Sydney, 1971, p.9.

42. *SMH*, 13 July 1859. For a detailed description see F.W. Robinson, 'The Great Hall and Voices of the Past' in Sydney University Union (ed.), *The Union Book of 1952*, Sydney, 1952, pp.60-61.

43. Sydney City Council, Minutes of Meeting, 7 December 1857 - Sydney City Council, Minute Book, 1857-58, p.314, Sydney City Council Archives, 7/10.

44. Sydney City Council, Minutes of Meeting, 7 June 1858 - Sydney City Council, *loc. cit.*, p.505.

This was an ambitious project. The proposed building, would provide office accommodation as well as 'a spacious hall capable of accommodating five or six thousand persons, on occasions of public meetings, balls, concerts, &c'⁴⁵ and that at a time when Sydney's population was less than 95 000 inhabitants.⁴⁶ The design, in the Italian style, combined a 'chaste and elegant appearance, [with] a degree of solidity and grandeur'. The entrance to the hall was to be through a portico 'composed of eight coupled Ionic columns with arches ... [which] support an entablature surmounted by four pedestals, upon which it [was] proposed to place sitting figures emblematical of industry, agriculture, commerce, and justice'.⁴⁷ That was a theme which, in a realistic rather than an emblematic form, Barnet was later to develop on the Sydney General Post Office.

While employed with the Council, Barnet was also responsible for drawing plans and supervising the work of preparing the foundations for an engine house at the Botany Water Works.⁴⁸ In March 1859, he resigned from the Council's employment⁴⁹ to return to the University project, an association which continued until 1860 when he was appointed to a position of clerk of works in the Colonial Architect's Office.

Blacket continued to play an important part in Barnet's life. In 1862, for example, when Barnet was appointed Acting Colonial

45. *SMH*, 10 June 1858.

46. At the 1861 census the population of New South Wales was 357 362 persons of whom 95 789 (26.8%) lived in Sydney - C.M.H. Clark (ed.), *Select Documents in Australian History 1851-1900*, Sydney, 1956, pp.664-66.

47. *SMH*, 10 June 1858.

48. Barnet *op. cit.*

49. Sydney City Council, Minutes of Meeting, 9 March 1859, Sydney City Council, Minute Book 1859-61, Sydney City Council Archives, 7/11.

Architect, sureties for the trust placed in him by the Government were Blacket and Francis L. Merewether, former vice-chancellor and a member of the University Building Committee.⁵⁰

With his appointment to the Colonial Architect's Office on 21 August 1860, Barnet began a career in the civil service which would extend over almost thirty years. He had in 1860 already established his reputation as an architect of ability and he had formed influential associations. Nevertheless, his experience was merely an extension of that gained in London. He had not as yet shown any evidence of a desire to break with tradition; the Chalmers Presbyterian Church, for example, suggested that he was bound by traditions which he had absorbed in London.

v.

When Barnet joined the Colonial Architect's Office he became an officer of the most senior and largest architectural practice in the colony. He had previously worked in a small office under the direct supervision of Blacket; in his new position he would not enjoy that same close relationship with the Colonial Architect. The problems of this large practice are now examined in order to define the nature and complexity of work and the demands made upon Barnet during those critical years, 1860-64 when he was introduced to the problems of public administration, political pressures and the needs of professional architects.

50. Securities Given by Public Servants (Further Return Relating to), NSW LA V&P 1863/64 (2).

The Colonial Architect's Office was responsible for the design, erection and maintenance of public buildings, other than schools and railway buildings, throughout New South Wales. It was also entrusted with a wide range of tasks having very little relationship to that primary function; for example, the cleaning of buildings, the winding of clocks found in public buildings or the purchase of coffins for paupers. Although much of this work was performed under either specific or periodic contracts, the Office arranged and supervised those contracts.

The nature of their work brought the staff into daily contact with other departments through the preparation of plans for new buildings or additions to existing buildings and the maintenance of such buildings. Communications between departments usually operated at ministerial levels so that Ministers were involved in both important policy matters and the minutiae of daily operations. This meant that a minister was able to influence administrative decisions and to do so in a way which often exacerbated existing problems. Secretaries for Public Works, for example, did not always rubber stamp recommendations in relation to the award of contracts nor did they delegate powers of recruitment of staff to their senior officers.

A major problem was the geographical distribution of the work of the Colonial Architect's Office. In Sydney, a number of projects were within walking distance of the Office; others were located in the outer suburbs. Slow and unreliable transport meant that staff making inspections in country centres spent a great deal of time travelling which resulted in fewer on-site inspections. The growth of telegraphic services enabled speedy contact to be made

with a contractor but it was not a satisfactory substitute for an on-site inspection. Poor communications also meant that, on many occasions, the staff in Sydney failed to understand the problems of country contractors and they found difficulty in reconciling varying tenders submitted for the same or a similar project located in another town.

On 1 April 1856 shortly after he had commenced duty as Colonial Architect, Alexander Dawson⁵¹ prepared a report on the organisation of his new Office and the capabilities of his staff. He found that the staff in the Sydney office consisted of four professional officers (two foremen of works,⁵² one draftsman and one temporary clerk of works) who were supported by an equal number of administrative staff. In Dawson's opinion 'the professional assistance [was] so entirely inadequate, as to compel [him] to devote the greater portion of [his] own time to minute supervision, and the inspection in detail of works in hand'; this resulted in the neglect 'of duties of a comprehensive and more important nature'. Although an officer stationed in a country centre was able to supervise the work on public buildings located in nearby towns, 'the great majority of Police and other buildings distributed over the country [was] quite beyond [Dawson's] supervision

51. Dawson had been appointed clerk of works, Royal Engineer's Department, Hobart in 1844; by 1849 he had become Colonial Clerk of Works and came to the attention of Governor Sir William Denison. It was through Denison's influence that he was appointed Colonial Architect of New South Wales - P.L. Reynolds, 'The Evolution of the Government Architect's Branch of the New South Wales Department of Public Works 1788-1911', p.235 (Ph D. thesis, UNSW, 1972).

52. A position peculiar to the Colonial Architect's Office. The occupant of such a position differed from a clerk of works in 'seniority and experience rather than any professional pretensions', Freeland, *op. cit.*, p.9.

or control'. He argued that inspections to remote centres could not be achieved without 'detriment of other business of equal or greater importance'. Although he did not doubt the efficiency of the staff, Dawson believed that he was unable to make the best use of their talents. Furthermore, he considered that the low salaries paid to professional staff did not attract and hold first-class men.⁵³ Dawson's recommendations seeking an increase in the establishment with improved salaries were accepted in part; for example, on 26 October 1857 William Coles⁵⁴ was appointed to a position of clerk of works which had remained vacant for many years. Some minor changes were also made in the establishment.

At 31 December 1860 the Office consisted of the following establishment and permanent officers:

Colonial Architect	Alexander Dawson
1st Clerk of Works	William Coles
clerk of works	John McCracken
	James Barnett
	Mortimer W. Lewis, jnr.
foreman of works	John Sharkey
draftsman	Alfred Cook
Chief Clerk	Henry Chapman
clerk - second class	Alexander Nisbet
assistant clerks	James McShane
	Francis Rowley.

53. Colonial Architect's Department, NSW LA *V&P* 1857/58 (3).

54. Coles had previously served as clerk of works on defence works under Colonel George Barney. In September, 1857, there being no likelihood of new defence works being undertaken in the near future, he sought and obtained a position of First Clerk of Works in the Colonial Architect's Office - CAOR: W. Coles: Appointment as Clerk (NSW AO 2/586).

The temporary staff were one clerk of works, five foremen of works, one foreman of harbour defences and an overseer who worked at the Parramatta Gaol. In addition, provision existed for the employment of a messenger and an office keeper.⁵⁵

Barnet continued to serve as clerk of works until 31 October 1862 when Dawson retired.⁵⁶ He was then directed to act as Colonial Architect being preferred to Coles, his senior both in rank and service. Why was Barnet selected ahead of Coles who had given eight years service to the Colonial Government and who was regarded as being a very competent officer?⁵⁷ Barnet's achievements within the Office were of themselves scarcely such as to warrant his being preferred; perhaps he had influential patrons willing to speak on his behalf.

At the time Charles Cowper⁵⁸ was Colonial Secretary and

-
55. *Statistical Register of New South Wales, 1860* - Civil Establishment, p.101, NSW LA V&P 1861/62 (1). Mortimer W. Lewis was the son of a former Colonial Architect. He was resident clerk at Newcastle and was in charge of an area which extended through the north and north-west of the colony. Although no evidence has been sighted, Lewis seems to have enjoyed a right of private practice; he was credited with the design of the Newcastle Hospital - see W.J. Goold, 'Events in the Sixties', Newcastle and Hunter District Historical Society, *Monthly Journal*, Vol.9, Pt.9, June 1955, p.141.
56. The reasons leading to Dawson's retirement were not made public. His behaviour had, for some time, given cause for concern; in August 1859, for example, he had been suspended from duty until such time as he submitted 'a satisfactory explanation of the reasons for his absence from his duties' - see - to Coles, 25 August 1859, CAOR: W. Coles - Appointment as Clerk (NSW AO 2/586).
57. Minute of Col. George Barney, R.E., 16 September 1857 - Coles to Barney, 12 September 1857 - CAOR: W. Coles - Appointment, *loc. cit.*
58. Cowper was Colonial Secretary in August-October 1856, 7 September 1857 - 26 October 1859, 9 March 1860 - 9 January 1861 and 10 January 1861 - 15 October 1863. For a detailed study of his political career see A. Powell, *Patrician Democrat. The Political Life of Charles Cowper 1843-1870*, Melbourne, 1977.

William M. Arnold,⁵⁹ Secretary for Public Works. Cowper was notorious in his use of political patronage to bind his parliamentary supporters to him⁶⁰ but no evidence has been sighted which suggests that Barnet had been favoured by him. Certainly, as has been shown, Barnet was not without influential friends who may have spoken on his behalf.

Patronage, 'the recruitment of public servants by private recommendation',⁶¹ did not of itself lead to inefficiency in the civil service; it was the abuse of its power which created difficulties when incompetent persons occupied significant positions leading to a break down in morale among subordinate staff. In Barnet's appointment, the civil service gained a competent and conscientious officer.

There does not seem to have been any blatant misuse of patronage within the Colonial Architect's Office during the period with which this study is concerned. Unlike those departments where large numbers of unskilled staff were employed (for example, the Customs service and the Railway), there were few positions in the Office to which inexperienced or incompetent persons might be appointed. Nevertheless, in giving evidence before the 1887 Board of Inquiry into the Public Works Department, Barnet complained that patronage, albeit on a small scale, had caused some problems for him. He pointed out that, at that time, he had on his staff a foreman of

59. Secretary for Public Works in the first Robertson Ministry (1860-61), the third (1861-63) and fourth (1865-66) Cowper ministries. When he entered politics, his politics were radical; later he was identified as being 'a confirmed Liberal by principle, distinct from those who were Liberals for political or other reasons' - C.J. King, 'Arnold, William Munnings' *ADB* 3.

60. Powell, *op. cit.*, 116-38.

61. S.E. Finer, 'Patronage and the Public Service: Jeffersonian Bureaucracy and the British Tradition', *Public Administration* (London), Vol.30, Winter 1952, p.329.

works 'sent ... by the Minister, whose conduct was unsatisfactory but whom he was unable to dismiss.⁶²

There were few opportunities to exercise political patronage in the awarding of contracts for public works because of the procedures followed.⁶³ An examination of Parliamentary debates, metropolitan and rural newspaper reports or departmental files has not uncovered any instance where allegations of patronage exercised in this manner were substantiated. That is not to say that the procedures were above criticism; for example, the form of advertising public works⁶⁴ or the failure to allow sufficient time for contractors to prepare their tenders⁶⁵ were sometimes grounds for complaint. Nor does it mean that major contracts were distributed evenly among the building contractors. In Sydney there was a small number of contractors such as Aaron Loveridge or Hudson Brothers who were extremely competent in handling large-scale projects and it was to them that architects turned when planning large buildings.

The number of staff employed in the Colonial Architect's Office in 1862 had changed slightly since Barnet joined it in 1860; an additional position of foreman of works had been provided and arrangements made to engage a temporary draftsman. As Acting Colonial

62. P.W.D.: Board of Enquiry, Minutes of Evidence, p.239, q.5917 - NSW LA V&P 1887 (2). W.J. Lyne was Secretary for Works at the time but the answer given does not identify him as being responsible for the decision to employ this person.

63. Tenders were invited through the *Government Gazette* and in metropolitan and country newspapers; successful tenderers were notified in the same manner so that these decisions were open to public scrutiny.

64. *T&CJ*, 20 June 1886.

65. "A Contractor" to editor, *Maitland Mercury*, 12 March 1868.

Architect, Barnet's salary had risen from £400 to £800 per annum.⁶⁶

Within twelve months of having commenced duty in the Office, Barnet saw evidence of the demands made upon senior civil servants who were required to prepare submissions and to present oral evidence before Select Committees of the Parliament or other bodies appointed to inquire into other aspects of public administration. In 1861 the Select Committee on Public Prisons, before which Dawson appeared, had found that the prisons were overcrowded, the buildings poorly designed and, on occasion, even those unsatisfactory plans had been altered for the worse so that the result was most unsatisfactory.⁶⁷ These buildings came under the control of the Comptroller of Prisons but the Colonial Architect was responsible for their design, construction and maintenance and it was he who must accept the criticism.

The Select Committee on the Light House near Jervis Bay found that the light house had been erected on a totally unsuitable site. Dawson had given evidence before that committee; he asserted that he had visited Cape St George merely 'to ascertain the description of material procurable for building operations' and that his opinions about the site were those of a private citizen.⁶⁸ It was true that he was not responsible for the selection of the site but, as Colonial Architect he must ensure that a building was erected on the approved site. On this occasion, he had not done so and he was therefore, at

66. *Blue Book of New South Wales, 1862*, p.68 - NSW LA V&P 1863/64 (3).

67. Report of the Select Committee on the Public Prisons in Sydney and Cumberland, p.9, - NSW LA V&P 1861 (1).

68. Report from the Select Committee on the Light-House, near Jervis Bay - Minutes of Evidence, pp.2-3, NSW LA V&P 1861 (2).

least in part, culpable. The Select Committee did not pursue that matter.

Barnet soon experienced a clash with another strong-willed civil servant when he came into contact with Francis Campbell, superintendent of the Tarban Creek Asylum. One of his first quarrels with Campbell arose from Barnet's alleged failure to supply furniture requisitioned by the Medical Superintendent; Campbell claimed that this had resulted in female patients being forced to eat from the floor 'like savages'. Furthermore, he alleged that two years passed before furniture for the men's dining room had been supplied. Barnet argued that on each occasion the fault lay with Campbell who had delayed in placing the requisitions and who had later decided that the men's dining room should be used as a dormitory.⁶⁹

Campbell's antagonism towards Barnet, whom he believed was frustrating his plans, was seen at its worst in lengthy correspondence which involved Barnet and the Principal Under Secretary, to whom Campbell was responsible. On 23 February 1864 Campbell had placed a requisition with the Colonial Architect's Office for the emptying of privies at Tarban Creek. The contractor arrived to commence the work and he came immediately into conflict with the Medical Superintendent over what seemed to be a trivial matter; did the contractor have the right to use for his own purposes the contents of those privies? The contractor, relying on the terms of his contract, argued that he did; Campbell disagreed and refused to allow him to commence work until the dispute was settled. In the ensuing

69. F. Campbell to Under Secretary, Colonial Secretary's Department, 5 December 1862 with minute initialled 'JB 16/12/62' - CAOR: Tarban Creek Lunatic Asylum 1855-63 (NSW AO 2/582).

correspondence between Barnet and Campbell neither was prepared to acknowledge that misunderstandings had arisen nor to attempt to correct them.

This quarrel might have been avoided had Barnet replied immediately to Campbell's first memorandum or sent an officer to Tarban Creek to resolve the issue. He insisted upon a strict application of the terms of the contract which, in his opinion, favoured the contractor. Campbell interpreted that stand as being yet another example of the manner in which successive Colonial Architects had tried to thwart his plans for the Asylum.⁷⁰

Barnet also ran into trouble with the Auditor-General in a manner which showed another aspect of the administrative problems of the Office. He often exceeded his approved credit with a nominated bank and, as a result, he was criticised by the Auditor-General, W.C. Mayne.⁷¹ Although able to answer many of the audit queries raised, Barnet frequently ignored them or insisted that he was not able to attend to them without neglecting other work of the Office. During 1863, for example, his refusal to reply to such queries resulted in Barnet's intransigence being referred to the Under Secretary for Public Works. Barnet remained unrepentant; he insisted

70. This correspondence is located at CAOR: Tarban Creek Lunatic Asylum 1855-63 (NSW AO 2/582). See also, Hospital for the Insane, Gladesville - Dr Campbell to the Colonial Secretary - NSW LA V&P 1870 (2). That memorandum was ignored; although Campbell's successor, Frederic Norton Manning had not yet taken up his appointment, nothing further was to be achieved by following it up - see D.I. McDonald, 'Frederic Norton Manning (1839-1903),' *JRAHS*, Vol.58, 1972, p.191.

71. Mayne was Auditor-General from 18 September 1856 until 10 November 1864 - Hazel King, 'Mayne, William Colburn', *ADB* 5.

that the work load imposed upon the clerical staff by 'Current duties and ... the great number of returns prepared for Parliament and various Departments' coupled with the introduction of a new system of paying accounts and the absence, through illness, of staff, meant that only 'the most pressing daily work' could be finalised. Nevertheless, he assured Rae that the outstanding queries would be settled 'with the least possible further delay'.⁷²

The clerical workload was one cause for delays in handling correspondence; another was the rapid turnover of clerical staff. In 1863 Henry Chapman, Chief Clerk controlled three clerical positions which, during that year, had been occupied by six officers.⁷³ This meant that there was a break in continuity in handling correspondence and inexperienced staff led to reduced efficiency. Given such problems, Barnet's explanation was plausible. He might have also added that many demands were made upon the clerical staff in the preparation of lengthy, detailed statements required when Barnet was summoned to appear before a Select Committee or some other public inquiry.

The work load can be judged from the list of minor contracts completed in a year. In 1863, for example, several such projects were completed for which the Office had been responsible - a magazine at Dawes' Point, sheds at the Government Stores and Officers' Quarters, Victoria Barracks had been erected. Casual repairs and alterations had been made and furniture acquired for 141 buildings

72. Auditor-General to Under Secretary for Public Works, 7 January 1864 with minute by Barnet - CAOR: Audit Office 1862-66 (NSW AO 2/5730).

73. *Blue Book of New South Wales, 1863*, p.68 - NSW LA V&P 1863/64 (3).

scattered throughout the Colony. Work was continuing on the new accommodation for the Australian Museum and scarcely a day passed without a demand coming from Government House that urgent repairs be made to some small piece of furniture. New public buildings had been completed over a wide area of northern, central and southern New South Wales - for example, court houses at Coonamble, Deniliquin, Dubbo, Forbes, Inverell and Mudgee. The total expenditure incurred was £95 052.⁷⁴

The delays in settling accounts often occurred because funds had not been sought to cover particular expenditure. This practice not only attracted the attention of the Auditor-General but also brought Barnet to the notice of the Secretary for Public Works when a contractor complained that he had been forced to seek extended credit from local tradesmen and retailers because progress payments had not been met or a final payment made.⁷⁵ In answering those complaints, Barnet's staff would be diverted from the more important tasks of correcting delays to that of explaining them.

Long distances and inefficient means of transport also contributed to the difficulty of controlling expenditure. In August 1862 Edward Grover had been awarded a contract to erect a post and telegraph office at Armidale. Work in progress had been

74. Colonial Architect's Department (Cost of, and Public Works Carried Out and in Progress to 1st January, 1881), p.5 - NSW LA V&P 1881 (5).

75. See, for example, CAOR: Armidale Post and Telegraph Office 1862-65 (NSW A0 2/575).

duly certified but, when the project was almost completed, Grover found that he must place a second order in Sydney for window glass broken in transit.⁷⁶ As a result, the contract was not completed until 6 July 1863. In October, having not received a cheque in settlement of final moneys owing, Grover appealed to his local member of Parliament. His letter being referred to Barnet, he noted that a payment made on 17 October had 'exhausted the funds in hand' and the account could not be settled until the end of the month.⁷⁷ The delays which occurred were attributable, in part, to the inefficient transport and poor roads which had resulted in the long delay in obtaining suitable building items from Sydney; in part, to failure in Barnet's Office to process the accounts when funds had been available.

Barnet's explanation also suggests that there was no effective control over funds; arrangements should have been made to have funds available to meet progress and final payments on each project as the work proceeded.

Even before Grover's contract was finalised, additional accommodation was being sought for the offices although that provided was in keeping with the instructions issued 'for guidance in preparing plans for these buildings'. Nevertheless, Coles agreed that the accommodation did not meet the staffing arrangements as each office was under the control of a supervisor entitled to residential accommodation. Coles believed that two additional rooms and a

76. E. Grover to M. Lewis, 10 June 1863 - CAOR: Armidale Post and Telegraph Office, *loc. cit.*

77. E. Grover to John Buchanan, M.P., 20 October 1863 with minute initialled 'J.B. 30th October 1863' - CAOR: Armidale Post and Telegraph Office, *loc. cit.*

kitchen might be added at a cost of £500.⁷⁸ The final estimate was £300 for which the lowest tender received was £380. Barnett recommended that this tender be accepted; he thought that 'from imperfect information' the original estimate was probably too low. His recommendation brought a sharp rebuke from A.T. Holroyd⁷⁸ who wrote:

Mr Barnett [*sic*] appears to me has either attempted to mislead me by placing a fictitious Estimate before me or has shewn great carelessness in his Estimate for this work. I am not disposed to adopt Mr. Barnett's proposal to accept Harper's Tender for £380 more than 25 per cent in advance of the original estimate, as I do not wish the Government to be imposed upon.

Barnet was not prepared to accept Holroyd's reprimand; he replied at length and with acerbity:

I feel surprised and sorry that the Minister ... should have signified his disapproval of my recommendation in terms which inpute to me either gross dishonesty or utter incapacity for my Office, to neither of which I respectfully submit, do the circumstances of the case render me amenable.

He argued that an estimate was 'an approximation' based on the cost of the building materials and which reflected 'the judgment and experience of the person by whom it [was] made'. In his experience

78. Under Secretary, Treasury to Under Secretary for Public Works, 12 September 1863 with minute initialled 'WC, 7 October, 1863' - CAOR: Armidale Post and Telegraph Office, *loc. cit.*

professional men and 'practical Tradesmen' rarely agreed upon an estimate. Furthermore, he found that the estimates of tradesmen, working in the same district and aware of local costs, often greatly varied. Barnet then pointed out that he had drawn attention to these matters when recommending that the tender be accepted. In expressing a hope that his explanation would be accepted, he concluded:

I trust this explanation will have shewn that the facts do not justify the imputations in the Minister's minute, the terms of which are calculated to inflict serious injury on my professional character, and materially to impair my influence as head of an important branch of the Public Works Department.

That explanation was not accepted. Holroyd persisted in his belief that Barnet had intentionally misled him.⁷⁹

This exchange, carried on at a time when Barnet was acting as Colonial Architect; his refusal to be brow beaten by Campbell and his insistence that he, rather than others (for example, the Auditor-General) would determine work priorities, reveal a great deal about Barnet's character. He showed himself to be extremely self-confident, firmly believing that he was the best judge of professional matters for which his Office was responsible. Nevertheless, he also displayed an almost foolish indifference to the opinions of persons whose influence might have wrecked his career before he was able to establish

79. Minute of James Barnet, 26 February, 1864; 'ATH', 26 February; James Barnet, 1 March and 'ATH', 6 April 1864. The matter was not settled until December 1864 after tenders had been invited on three occasions - CAOR: Armidale Post and Telegraph Office, *loc. cit.*

his reputation as a competent administrator. Those traits became more inflexible as he became entrenched and secure in his position and, in time, they contributed to his eventual downfall.

In the meanwhile, the question of unauthorised payments made from public funds, and more particularly those made by the Colonial Architect's Office, became the subject of inquiry by a Select Committee of the Legislative Assembly. This examined payments made by Dawson but it was Barnet, now Acting Colonial Architect, who was required to explain them. The Committee was particularly concerned about unauthorised work completed at Government House and the Australian Museum where Barnet had acted as clerk of works. In addition to Mayne and Barnet, the principal witnesses, staff of the Colonial Architect's Office were called before the Select Committee. Oral evidence was supported with detailed statements of expenditure incurred in respect of work completed since 1860 and for particular items; for example, the erection of a terrace wall, the provision of furniture or the erection of a covered verandah. Furthermore, Barnet was required to apportion the cost of minor works completed between various public buildings.⁸⁰

When the Select Committee met on 2 July 1863 Mayne outlined briefly the approved procedures for the payment of accounts for which expenditure had been granted, explained the nature and purpose of Supplementary Estimates, and emphasised that all proposed items of expenditure must be referred to the Governor-in-Council. His answers to specific questions were tentative since he intended to

80. Select Committee on Payments Made Out of Public Funds without Authority of Parliament, Minutes of Evidence: Appendices to evidence of Barnet, *et. al.* - NSW LA V&P 1863/64. The Committee did not report.

submit a return which would identify the payments being examined. That return⁸¹ was submitted on 7 July when Mayne indicated that, except for an amount of £210 voted in 1861, funds had not been sought during 1860-61 for repairs to Government House; the practice had been to include funds for such minor work under a general heading: 'For repairs, alterations, and additions to public buildings generally'. Questioned about expenditure on the Museum, Mayne stated that the Executive Council had authorised a payment of £11 000 in excess of the approved funds and he suggested that details be sought from Barnet.⁸²

In their evidence both Henry Chapman, Chief Clerk and John McCracken, clerk of works revealed that the Colonial Architect's Office records were often incomplete and oral directions were frequently given for work for which formal approval had not been sighted. McCracken admitted that the records of day labour were checked irregularly although the delivery dockets for raw materials were filed and the completed work was measured at frequent intervals.⁸³

When Barnet gave evidence on 22 July, he stated that he was unable to table returns showing details of expenditure incurred at Government House during the previous three years; the preparation of that material required 'a great deal of labour'. Upon further examination, he admitted that he was not able to discuss details of that expenditure. The Committee then turned its attention to the Australian Museum, a project which had been under Barnet's general

81. Select Committee on Public Funds, Appendix A No.1 - *loc. cit.*

82. Select Committee on Public Funds, Minutes of Evidence, W.C. Mayne, pp.2-6 and Appendices A1-6 - *loc. cit.*

83. Select Committee on Public Funds, Minutes of Evidence, p.7, p.168; pp.8-10, *passim, loc. cit.*

control. He agreed that the funds voted had been exceeded by £2 000, being the cost of completing the walls, which had been spent in anticipation of funds being made available at a later date. At the same time, he conceded that adequate protection of the incomplete work could have been provided for £20.⁸⁴

Barnet next appeared on 31 July when he persisted in professing his ignorance of matters for which his predecessor had been responsible. At the same time, his answers to questions which might have been thought to reflect upon Dawson were polite but uncritical of that officer. Once again, he insisted that the preparation of detailed items of expenditure would create a lot of work for the staff. Nor was he more forthcoming about the cost of other work which had been completed. Explaining that an annual contract was let for repairs to Government House, he condemned this arrangement because he was not able either to select or direct the contractor's staff.⁸⁵

Overall, Barnet did not exert himself to assist the Select Committee. Nevertheless, he could not have been expected to be able to provide satisfactory detailed answers to questions about events which had occurred some years previously and for which the records of the Office were incomplete. In reading his evidence, one is left with the impression that he barely tolerated the Inquiry and that he was impatient of the members who did not seem to understand the many problems which arose in meeting the preemptory demands of the Governor's staff which must be met regardless of the availability

84. Select Committee on Public Funds, Minutes of Evidence, pp.12-14, *passim, loc. cit.*

85. Select Committee on Public Funds, Minutes of Evidence, pp.16-18, *loc. cit.*

of funds or the approved procedures.⁸⁶

During 1863 a Select Committee was appointed to inquire into and report upon 'the Disorganised State of the Public Works Department'. The Inquiry found that, within the Department, drunken and disorderly behaviour had been commonplace, staff discipline was lax and work was neglected.⁸⁷ Those charges did not involve Barnet's staff but referred more particularly to the Railway Department.

Nevertheless, supervision of staff was a problem for Barnet. It was difficult for him to supervise the work of his clerks of work when they were engaged on projects away from Sydney or while they were travelling through the region in which they worked. A.S. Patison on one occasion reported that he had travelled by horse from Sydney to Murrurindi, Tamworth and Armidale, a distance of 355 miles, making inspections of works in progress and preparing reports upon the condition of existing buildings. After spending a day in Armidale, he reported

I return to Tamworth in the morning then to
Gunnedah, Narribri [*sic*], Wee Waa, Walgett, and
Fort Bourke and as my horse is near knocked up -
You would oblige me if you would place Thirty 30£,
to my a/c in the City Bank, as I am sure that I
will have to buy another Horse before I get to
the end of my journey.⁸⁸

86. See, for example, Select Committee on Public Funds, Appendix E: Correspondence Between Government House and the Colonial Architect, pp.28-35, *loc. cit.*

87. Progress Report from the Select Committee on the Disorganised State of the Public Works Department - NSW LA V&P 1863-64 (5).

88. A.S. Patison to Col. Arch., 7 August 1863 - CAOR: Armidale Post and Telegraph Office 1862-65 (NSW AO 2/575).

That long journey, of more than 1 000 miles, was undertaken over badly-formed roads, during the winter months when 'the frost on the roof/ cracks like a whip'⁸⁹ and lies heavy in the shadows until well after sunrise. The country through which Patison travelled was sparsely populated⁹⁰ and there was little likelihood of his meeting a friendly companion by day or sharing a camper's warm evening fire. For much of the journey he would have been left to his own devices having limited communication with Barnet.

Another cause of problems in the supervision of staff was the many and varied demands made upon the Office. Those demands are nowhere better illustrated than in the Colonial Architect's file for the Custom Department which is a vivid record of regular demands for the services of tradesmen to undertake innumerable minor tasks such as the winding of office clocks or the removal of rubbish.⁹¹ Each task required the raising of a requisition in the Custom Department which must be approved by Barnet and processed in his Office before arrangements were made for the work to be completed when payment would be authorised. Before a certificate was issued, an officer from the Colonial Architect's Office made an on-site inspection; an inspection which Barnet could only assume had been done unless he made a further check of the work.

On 1 January 1865 Barnet was appointed Colonial Architect. While acting in that position he would have found that its occupant

89. Judith Wright, 'South of My Days', *Collected Poems 1942-70*, Sydney, 1975, p.21.

90. In 1861, except for Tamworth and Gunnedah, none of these towns had a population in excess of 100 persons - see T.H. Coghlan, *Statistical Register for N.S.W. for 1893 and Previous Years*, Sydney, 1894, pp.749-751.

91. CAOR: Custom House, Sydney 1846-66 (NSW AO 2/579).

must be both a competent architect and an efficient administrator with emphasis being placed on the role of administrator. Given the range of his experience, he was well equipped to fill satisfactorily his new position; as yet, he had not found it necessary to permit professional staff to specialise in order to meet the demands of a growing and dynamic architectural practice for which sufficient staff would rarely be available. That was the task which he was to meet during the next thirty years.

Chapter 2.

The Colonial Architect's Office.

On the eve of his retirement in 1890, having served as Colonial Architect for more than twenty-five years, Barnet stated that in 1865 there were some 324 public buildings under his control; at the end of 1889 that number had risen to 1 351 and the staff had increased from seventeen to sixty-four. The Office had been responsible for expenditure 'upwards of six million pounds sterling'.¹ There was no private architect in practice in Sydney during that period who could claim to have a practice comparable either in the range of its activities or the number of staff.²

The Office was a branch of the Public Works Department and it was therefore subject to the traditions and practices of both the Department and the New South Wales civil service. At the same time, it enjoyed a professional relationship with other departments of state, statutory bodies and the trustees of the Australian Museum. An examination is now made of the political and the civil service environment in which Barnet operated as well as the organisation, administration and financial strictures which applied in the Office. The chapter concludes with a study of a number of projects - the

-
1. Abolition of the Office of Colonial Architect (Letter from Mr. James Barnet, late Colonial Architect, Respecting), NSW LA V&P 1891/92 (2).
 2. A comparison with the practice of J. Horbury Hunt, a contemporary of Barnet's and a very active Sydney-based architect, shows that the number of new projects handled in Barnet's Office during 1865-1890 far exceeded the 75 significant buildings attributed to Horbury Hunt during 1870-1899 - J.M. Freeland, *Architect Extraordinary*, Melbourne, 1970, pp.237-38.

Australian Museum, court houses at Singleton, Yass and Gundaroo and the Sydney Mortuary stations - which illustrate the range of political and public pressures to which Barnet was subjected.

ii.

The New South Wales civil service in 1865 was a loosely-knit group of departments which operated independently of each other both in terms of their specialised functions - for example, the provision of public works, finance, or the law - and in areas of common administrative practices, such as the recruitment of staff and the determination of conditions of employment. Recruitment was a function exercised by ministerial heads who, in matters of temporary employment, might delegate that authority to the Under Secretary whereas the salary paid to each member of the service was a responsibility closely guarded by Parliament. As a result, departments were very much under the direct control of the ministerial head who operated in an independent manner although subject to the restraints imposed by Parliament and what was possible in a faction-dominated political climate.

From 1856 and during the whole period of Barnet's civil service career, the Parliament of New South Wales was dominated by a number of factions which Loveday and Martin stated 'were capable of yielding stable government, even if they did not always do so' arguing that the factions had 'long provided a considerable degree of cohesion and stability as judged by the practice of the time'.³ That argument

3. P. Loveday and A.W. Martin, *Parliament Factions and Parties*, Melbourne, 1966, pp.1,5.

was rejected by Nairn who believed that before 1891 'parliament was undisciplined and inept'.⁴ Although that debate is not central to the study of Barnet's career, an examination of his career establishes and supports Nairn's assertion that until 1891 parliamentary government 'would surely have vitiated ... had it not been buttressed by skilful senior public servants and by competent governors'.⁵

Barnet was one of those 'skilful senior public servants'; his colleagues included men such as Edward Cracknell, Geoffrey Eagar, John Rae, R.C. Crichtett Walker and Harrie Wood.⁶ It was they who provided a steady influence in the orderly development of New South Wales during a period of economic bouyancy and frequent ministerial changes.

In order to assess Barnet's achievements as Colonial Architect, attention must be given to his dual role of architect and civil servant. The extent to which he was able to reconcile the demands of his profession of architect with those of the civil servant while maintaining administrative efficiency and satisfying the ambitions and needs of politicians and the public in general, is the yard stick by which his career must be measured. What were the demands made by a profession on its members and did they conflict with those imposed by the civil service?

4. N.B. Nairn, 'The political Mastery of Sir Henry Parkes: New South Wales Politics 1871-1891', *JRAHS*, Vol.53, p.5.

5. Nairn, *op. cit.*, p.9.

6. For a study of the career of these civil servants see *ADB* Vols.3,4 and 6.

A.M. Carr-Saunders and P.A. Wilson established criteria which they believed set apart certain human activities as being professional in character and which distinguished them from activities which might more properly be classified as a trade. They believed that the 'distinguishing and overruling characterization' of a profession was the possession of 'specialized techniques acquired as the result of prolonged training'. Those techniques might be scientific, institutional, or aesthetic; the architect was a person 'trained to formulate a constructive principle to aesthetic ends'. Furthermore, he was concerned with matters which required the exercise of personal judgment and, in his personal relationship with clients, involved a sense of responsibility.⁷ E.H. Farmer believed that the task of architectural design was 'an intuitive rather than an intellectual process'. He insisted that, although utilitarian aspects were important, a building should be 'a work of art, all the more because it must be observed and lived in by many people during its life'.⁸

Although the criteria identified by Carr-Saunders and Wilson were applicable to the professional environment in which Barnett had trained and worked, the same criteria did not apply to the civil service. For example, there were no 'distinguishing and overruling' characteristics which controlled the behaviour of the nineteenth century civil servant. There were no clearly-defined qualifications for appointment to the service; promotion was not necessarily the

7. A.M. Carr-Saunders and P.A. Wilson, *The Professions*, Oxford, 1933, pp.285-87.

8. E.H. Farmer, 'The Department of Public Works, New South Wales: Architectural Activities', *Public Administration*, Vol.21, No.4, December 1962, p.391. Farmer was NSW Government Architect, 1958-1973.

reward of either merit or long experience; codes of conduct were poorly-defined and decisions often arose out of political expediency.

During 1865-1890 senior civil servants in New South Wales demonstrated an ability to organise the resources available to them in meeting defined objectives. For example, Francis Campbell set up sound medical and administrative practices at the Tarban Creek Lunatic Asylum.⁹ His successor, and later the Inspector-General of the Insane, Frederic Norton Manning was acknowledged as 'one of the highest authorities in Australia' in the administration of the hospitals for the insane.¹⁰ John Rae (barrister), Under Secretary for Public Works (1861-1889), had given many years service to the Government before being promoted to the most senior position within his department. William Wilkins, secretary of the Council of Education from 1867 and from 1880 the first Under Secretary of the Department of Public Instruction, was a successful schoolmaster who combined pedagogical skills with ability as an administrator.¹¹

The circumstances under which Rae entered the civil service were unclear. Wilkins had been invited to become the master of the Fort Street Model School, Sydney and was later appointed to the National Schools Board. Campbell had been appointed medical superintendent at Tarban Creek as the result of a notice which had appeared in the *Government Gazette* inviting applications from interested persons whereas Manning owed his appointment to Henry

9. As a medical practitioner, Campbell's case notes were clinical masterpieces - J. Bostock, *The Dawn of Australian Psychiatry*, Sydney, 1968, p.165.

10. *Australasian Medical Gazette*, 20 July 1903.

11. C. Turney, 'Wilkins, William', *ADB* 6.

Parkes.¹² Henry Halloran was a career civil servant whom Parkes appointed Under Secretary in the Colonial Secretary's Department.¹³ Christopher Rolleston, Auditor-General enjoyed a varied career before being appointed Registrar-General and in 1865 Auditor-General.¹⁴ Critchett Walker was another competent civil servant who enjoyed the confidence and patronage of Parkes.

Barnet, Rae, Campbell and Manning were bound by the ethics of their professions which, on occasion, might conflict with the demands of their public offices; Rolleston, Halloran and Critchett Walker would experience no such problem. Campbell always identified with his profession and rarely regarded himself as being a civil servant; neither Barnet, Rae nor Manning found difficulty in adopting a dual role. Nevertheless, Barnet, the architect, would not remain silent when his professional integrity was challenged whereas Barnet, the civil servant, might have adopted a more conciliatory attitude; professional integrity sometimes took precedence over civil service conformity.

These officials were the men with whom Barnet worked and who, from time to time, would be critical of and oppose his plans. Together, they formed a solid core of competent officers who, enjoying a steady tenure of office, were better able than their political masters to develop effective and efficient procedures for the administration of Government business. In so doing, they

12. D.I. McDonald, 'Frederic Norton Manning (1839-1903)' *JRAHS*, Vol.58, p.191.

13. B. Dickey, 'Halloran, Henry', *ADB* 4.

14. C. Cunneen, 'Rolleston, Christopher', *ADB* 6.

were adapting procedures established before 1856 when responsible government was introduced into New South Wales. In later years, they modified many of those early procedures to meet colonial conditions without adopting the reforms slowly introduced in Britain after 1854; for example, until 1895 there was no effective central personnel administration authority.

During 1865-1890 the Colonial Architect's Office was the largest architectural practice in the colony in terms of range and value of projects, staff numbers and geographical distribution of work. These factors required continuity of service among the senior personnel as a counter balance to instability in the office of the Secretary for Public Works. When appointed Colonial Architect, Barnet inherited problems which resulted from ineffectual leadership and the instability of a slowly developing Parliamentary system.¹⁵ Between 1865 and 1890 the portfolio of Secretary for Public Works had been occupied by twenty-one persons; of those, four (J. Byrnes, J. Sutherland, J. Lackey and W.J. Lyne) held the portfolio for at least two terms and John Sutherland was Secretary for Works on four occasions totalling approximately six and a half years.¹⁶ Of those ministers, Sutherland, a builder and contractor; Combes and Garrard, engineers were best qualified to understand the

15. Dawson's retirement 'marked the end of an unsettled period of architectural endeavour, notable for some progressive development, and certainly dominated by an unsure Parliamentary evolution' - P.L. Reynolds, 'The Evolution of the Government Architect's Branch of the New South Wales Department of Public Works 1788-1911', p.256 (Phd. thesis, UNSW 1972).

16. K.J. Cable, 'Sutherland, John', *ADB* 6. On his death it was recorded that he had left behind 'a perfectly clear record ... Where political mud had been flying in all directions he preserved his reputation right through to the end without a spot' - *Australasian Star*, 24 June 1889.

problems of Barnet's Office. Each of the ministers possessed varying levels of administrative skill and placed a different priority on the work of the department. While they would, to some extent, be bound by civil service precedents and practices (for example, the control of expenditure), they depended upon Barnet to clarify and develop their particular objectives in respect of matters for which his Office was responsible.

As the practice grew, Barnet was forced to devote an increasing amount of time to the administration of the Office and less to his profession. For practical reasons, the professional staff tended to specialise in certain areas of the work. Nevertheless, they were not able to exercise individuality in their choice of designs; Barnet exerted control through his refusal to delegate powers of approval of the plans and specifications to another officer so that 'some common quality and consistent character in the work of the office' developed.¹⁷ For example, post offices were frequently of an astylar Italianate design; important buildings were often planned to face a civic square so that they would be seen at their best when viewed from a distance.

Barnet's appointment came at the end of more than two years during which time he had acted as Colonial Architect, a period which enabled him to consolidate his claim to the position. The Government may have sought an appointee from among the ranks of the private profession; there were fifteen persons in Sydney who practised as architects and another eight who combined that profession with

17. P. Bridges, 'James Barnet, 1827-1904' in H. Tanner (ed.), *Architects of Australia*, Melbourne, 1981, p.76.

surveying.¹⁸ Of those twenty-three practitioners, Blacket was the most competent; many of his colleagues were of either limited ability or experience. Within the civil service, Mortimer W. Lewis was most senior in terms of service; Coles in status. Both had already been passed over when Barnet was appointed Acting Colonial Architect.

iii.

Shortly after he commenced duty as Acting Colonial Architect, Barnet had been asked to examine the organisation and to recommend such changes as he believed would improve its efficiency. His report, dated May 1863 was a statement of the role which he believed the Office should adopt; the principles expounded in it were to guide him throughout his official career.

At the outset, Barnet argued that earlier organisational changes had been nothing more than a reflex reaction to external pressures which had failed to achieve a better utilization of the available human and material resources. As a result, the Office responded sluggishly to new demands and it was unable to exercise 'an entirely satisfactory supervision' of works under construction. The professional staff was based in Sydney and it was concerned principally with projects located in the city or suburbs or in preparing plans for other projects. The officers inspected works located in more remote centres as the opportunity arose. Temporary foremen of works stationed at Tarban Creek, Braidwood and Deniliquin

18. See *Sand's Directory for 1865* wherein will be found probably the most complete extant list of architects and surveyors in practice in Sydney at the time.

were expected to make 'inspections and surveys at localities within convenient distances of their respective stations'. In addition, Mortimer W. Lewis, clerk of works supervised public works in Newcastle and other northern centres.

Barnet believed that the number of professional staff in Sydney was insufficient for the work demanded of it. In an unsuccessful attempt to ease the workload, arrangements had been made for copies of plans to be produced by means of lithographic and photographic processes. When visiting country centres, time was lost and 'considerable expenses' were incurred in travel.

He was critical of the arrangements for the supervision of projects located in country centres. This was not a major problem in the Hunter River district where Lewis was stationed. In more remote localities, 'special journeys [became] necessary and the inspections [were] consequently few and insufficient'. In centres where temporary foremen of works were employed, frequent inspections were possible; in others, 'the surveys [were] necessarily infrequent and irregular and [were] at times the cause of complaint'. These arrangements forced Barnet to depend upon the advice of temporary employees who had been selected because of their practical experience rather 'than for their fitness for duties of a more general nature'.

Barnet also complained that an excessive amount of time was spent in making repairs to buildings and furniture; tasks which he did not regard as being appropriate to an architect's office. Contracts must be prepared for all minor works; these required the preparation of estimates of costs and the drawing up of plans and specifications.

The Clerical Branch was responsible for the processing of

correspondence, the preparation and payment of accounts, the compilation of returns and numerous other tasks. Barnet believed that the work was complex and required staff 'of ability and some experience'.¹⁹ He asserted that new procedures introduced to control departmental credits²⁰ made additional demands upon the clerical staff and exacerbated difficulties inherent in the preparation of the many returns which must be submitted to other authorities. Much of this work was handled by the Chief Clerk who was often distracted from such duties as supervision of the clerical staff, taking instructions, collecting information and answering queries. He also acted as cashier and was responsible for the processing of all financial transactions.

Having identified the problems and defects in his establishment, Barnet outlined his proposals to correct them. The first and most important task was that of enlarging the professional establishment; secondly, steps should be taken to recruit 'if possible - Gentlemen of such professional attainments as to qualify them for taking charge of the Department'. He thought that this might be achieved by adopting designations which more correctly reflected the nature of the work performed and by offering 'a liberal scale of remuneration'. At the same time, he would expect staff to have a sound, practical

19. Barnet to Under Secretary for Public Works - Report on the state of his Department, May 1863 - CAOR: Correspondence (NSW AO 2/586).

20. A new system of cash credit had been introduced in January 1863. Under that system, the Bank of New South Wales was required to provide a 'Departmental Credit' (Credit No.2) to an approved monthly amount representing one-twelfth of the total annual vote. A second credit (Credit No.3) was provided to meet the cost of such items as stores, stationery, etc. and special credits were established for such items as 'Public Works and Buildings' or 'Casual Repairs' - Under Secretary, Treasury to Colonial Architect, 31 December 1862 - CAOR: Audit Office, Sydney 1862-66 (NSW AO 2/573).

knowledge of their duties.

In order to reduce delays in the inspection of works in progress and in certifying accounts before payment, Barnet proposed that a permanent officer should be stationed in those districts where there were either large numbers of public buildings or important works under construction. For example, he would station an Assistant Architect (clerk of works) at Maitland; at Bathurst and Goulburn a superintendent of works (foreman of works) would reside.

Barnet was also anxious to introduce a scheme of cadetships. This would enable 'Young Gentlemen desirous of qualifying themselves for employment in either branches of the Department' to undergo training on-the-job.

He believed that the Chief Clerk should be relieved of routine duties and the duties of all the clerical staff should be clearly defined. Nevertheless, 'when necessary all the Gentlemen in the Office would take part in general duties'.

Barnet recognised the need for staff to have access to information about the nature and quality of building materials available in various parts of the colony as well as new building techniques and technological innovations. To that end, he thought that funds should be provided for the purchase of professional and trade journals and a small laboratory should be established where building materials might be tested.²¹

In that report, Barnet emphasised the need to recruit and hold competent staff who would be offered challenging tasks for which they would be held responsible. He was emphatic about the

21. Barnet, Report on the state of his Department, *loc. cit.*

need for staff training and development and he recognised that effective supervision was essential if the Office were to achieve its goals.

Barnet's recommendation that the designations of professional positions be changed was not adopted. It was not until 1890 that the title 'Government Architect' was substituted for that of 'Colonial Architect'; the traditional designations of clerks or foremen of works were retained. There was no immediate adjustment of salaries; for example, in 1865 Barnet was paid £1 000 per annum; eighteen years later he received £1 100.²²

His recommendation that cadetships be introduced was adopted and operated until 1885 when it was abandoned. In arriving at that decision, Barnet recognised the drawbacks of such a scheme. In the first place, it was condemned as being one which allegedly enabled the sons of wealthy parents to receive free professional training while being paid a salary. Furthermore, professional staff were said to be forced 'into a sort of free training class to an unlimited number of politically (or otherwise) nominated cadets' who were often promoted ahead of their teachers.²³

There was some truth in those allegations. The cadets were paid a salary (rarely more than £50 per annum) and they were trained by professional officers. In so far as Barnet's Office was concerned, they did not receive preferred promotion; for example, an examination

22. *Blue Book of New South Wales, 1865*, p.79, NSW LA V&P 1886 (4); *Blue Book, 1883*, p.123, NSW LA V&P 1883/84 (7).

23. Corvus, 'The Civil Service', *The Echo*, 24 November 1883.

of the careers of Alfred Edwards²⁴ and James Peattie²⁵ shows that they were promoted to positions of clerks of works eleven and nineteen years respectively after commencing their cadetships.

Barnet, by 1885, had quite serious doubts about the value of cadetships although he did accept his son, Thomas as a cadet. In evidence given before the 1887 Board of Inquiry into the Public Works Department, he expressed his reservations; he believed that a system, for which there was 'no end of applications', under which cadets received a salary although not competent to 'do anything', was unsound. Furthermore, he asserted that it provided opportunities for political patronage; although responsible for the selection of cadets, his decisions were sometimes set aside by the Secretary for Public Works. He alleged that many of those selected displayed neither interest in nor aptitude for the work. Finally, he insisted that he had 'always fought the system' which had been 'forced' upon him:²⁶ evidence has not been found which would support his claim.

-
24. Edwards had been appointed as a cadet in 1866. He was promoted to a position of clerk and draftsman from 1 January 1868 and on 1 January 1877 he was promoted to a position of clerk of works - see *Blue Book of New South Wales, 1866*, p.80, NSW LA V&P 1867/68 (2); *Blue Book 1868*, p.73, NSW LA V&P 1869 (1); *Blue Book, 1877*, p.109, NSW LA V&P 1877/78 (4).
25. Peattie had joined the Office as a cadet in 1865. He completed his cadetship in December 1873 and was advanced to a position of draftsman on 1 January 1874; nine years later he was promoted as clerk of works - *Blue Book of New South Wales, 1866*, p.80, NSW LA V&P 1867/68 (2); *Blue Book, 1874*, p.80, NSW LA V&P 1875 (2); *Blue Book, 1884*, p.128, NSW LA V&P 1885, 2nd Session, (2).
26. P.W.D. Board of Enquiry: Minutes of Evidence, p.218, qq.5028-43, *passim*. NSW LA V&P 1887 (2). Details of the form which the training followed have not been sighted. It would be reasonable to assume that such training would follow a general pattern of instruction and on-the-job experience - see H.C. Kent, 'Reminiscences of Building Methods in the Seventies under John Young', *Architecture*, Vol.13, No.11, November 1924, pp.5-13.

It was a reform which he had wished to introduce in 1863; he may not have then foreseen the disadvantages which had been his later experience.

Barnet had also sought an increase in the number of professional staff; his request was refused. Indeed, in December 1865 he was directed to reduce his establishment. During the 1866 Estimates Debate 'an earnest desire was expressed that large reductions should be made in the public expenditure'. Ministers were informed that the question was not whether savings could be made but rather deciding the manner in which they would be made 'with the least injury to the Public Service'.²⁷

Within the Public Works Department, heads of branches agreed to offer savings of £25 165 or 7.7% of the Department's Estimate of Probable Expenditure for 1866. These savings would be achieved through a reduction in staff numbers, lower salaries paid to certain staff in the Electric Telegraph Branch and a reduction in incidental expenses. When the Estimates were being prepared, a reduction in staff had already been anticipated and, with the exception of the Railway Department and the Colonial Architect's Office, it was thought that further savings could only result in reduced efficiency.²⁸ Barnet proposed to dispense with the services of six officers and he expected that travelling expenses would be lower than had been estimated because of a reduction in the activities of the Office;

27. Colonial Secretary to Ministers, 28 December 1865 - Retrenchment in the Public Expenditure (Correspondence Relating to), p.18, Item 17, NSW LA V&P 1865/66 (1).

28. Secretary for Public Works to Colonial Secretary, 9 January 1866 Retrenchments in the Public Expenditure, pp.29-30, Item 33, *loc. cit.* The reports of Branch Heads are located at pp.31-40, Items 35-44.

funds sought for new furniture would also be revised. He reported:

I am only enabled to make this proposal in contemplation of a considerable diminution of the work to be performed during the present year. I calculate, moreover, on the cadets, for whom a low rate of remuneration is provided, becoming increasingly useful.

Barnet estimated that his expenditure might be reduced by £14 229;²⁹ an amount considerably higher than that proposed by his colleagues. It represented 56% of the Works Department's total estimated savings.

These proposals were accepted. The long term effect of that decision was that it was not until 1883 that the establishment, which Barnet in 1863 had argued was inadequate, was reviewed and additional permanent staff engaged. Some adjustment had probably been made through the temporary employment of foremen of works for specific projects; their names would not be recorded in the *Blue Book* and their salaries would form part of the overall estimate of expenditure for each project. Thus one experiences difficulty in determining the total work force of the Office at a particular time; that difficulty was reduced through the provisions of the *Civil Service Act of 1884*. In terms of that legislation, the Civil Service Board was required to classify *all* staff and, having done so, it published in the *Government Gazette* a list of all persons employed in the

29. Barnet to Under Secretary for Public Works, 3 January 1866, *Retrenchments in the Public Expenditure*, p.38, Item 39 - *loc. cit.* There were two cadets in the Office who, on 23 March were joined by a third. Their total salaries were £150 per annum - *Blue Book of New South Wales, 1866*, p.80, NSW LA V&P 1867/68 (2).

civil service. The Colonial Architect was shown as employing thirty-eight permanent officers and a similar number of temporary staff; eleven persons were paid at piece rates on a daily or monthly basis.³⁰

How did Barnet direct the work of that staff and in what manner was the Office organised? An examination of extant files reveals that he exercised close supervision over much of the work; for example, all inwards correspondence was seen and outwards correspondence signed by him; plans and specifications were examined and finally approved by him. Asked on one occasion whether he had 'full control over the department', Barnet replied that he was at 'the very centre'.³¹ Nevertheless, as the evidence presented to the 1887 Board of Inquiry into the Public Works Department showed, he was increasingly forced to rely upon his senior staff to supervise contracts.

In 1887, the professional branch was supervised by the First Clerk of Works, William Coles; James McShane, Chief Clerk was in charge of administration. Both officers reported to Barnet and each was responsible for the work of subordinate staff. This broad arrangement was one which had existed in the Office for many years and it was one which Barnet had not sought to change since it reflected a logical separation of functions.

Coles exercised 'general supervision over nearly all the country works, and under his special direction the draftsmen prepare the plans'. Although he did not prepare plans, he might sometimes

30. *Government Gazette* 31 March 1885. Details are set out at Appendix A.

31. P.W.D. Board of Inquiry: Minutes of Evidence, p.218, q.5015-. NSW LA V&P 1887 (2).

roughly sketch his ideas before giving detailed instructions to a draftsman. The completed plans were examined and passed by Coles before being referred to Barnet.³² A clerk, Coles' secretary, was in charge of all contracts and plans held for public inspection. In addition, he performed some accounting functions and checked or prepared certificates of works in progress which were certified by Coles before Barnet authorised payment.³³ The Chief Draftsman, two foremen of works and four clerks of works reported to Coles. He was also responsible for district officers located in Newcastle, Bathurst, Grafton, the New England, and the south and south-western regions of the colony. Each of the clerks of works was generally responsible for a group of buildings.³⁴ Asked whether staff specialised in particular types of buildings, Edward Rumsey, fourth clerk of works explained that the professional staff were 'brought up as architects' and shared the work.³⁵ The two foremen of works were responsible for all furniture and fittings for public offices and the repair and maintenance of buildings.³⁶

District Officers, of whom the most experienced (and senior) was Mortimer W. Lewis, were expected to 'inspect the various works, and to report weekly'. Factors such as distance or public transport influenced the frequency of such inspections. Nevertheless, this

32. PWD: Inquiry; Minutes of Evidence, p.219, qq.5090-93; *loc. cit.*

33. PWD: Inquiry; Minutes of Evidence, p.220, q.5138; p.221, qq.5144-46, *loc. cit.*

34. PWD: Inquiry; Minutes of Evidence, pp.221-22, qq.5164-5186, *loc. cit.*

35. PWD: Inquiry; Minutes of Evidence, p.232, q.5601, *loc. cit.*

36. PWD: Inquiry; Minutes of Evidence, p.245, qq.6094-97, 6102, p.248, q.6228, *loc. cit.*

was thought to be a 'sufficiently close' form of inspection and superior to that which might be exercised from Sydney.³⁷

As Chief Clerk, James McShane was responsible for the work of seven clerks of whom the most senior, assisted by two less experienced officers, was in charge of finances. The remainder of the clerical staff attended to such matters as processing and registering correspondence, undertaking research relating to ministerial correspondence and Parliamentary Questions, or filing records. Asked whether there was sufficient work for the staff employed, McShane replied: 'my word we have, and not much spare time either. There is a tremendous lot of correspondence'.³⁸ That was no exaggeration; in 1886, for example, 18 120 letters had been received, 4 919 replies despatched and 7 579 vouchers prepared.³⁹

An examination of office practices showed that defined procedures were followed. Of those procedures, that relating to the payment of salaries was the most straight-forward;⁴⁰ that following in processing building applications the most tedious.⁴¹

37. PWD Inquiry; Minutes of Evidence, p.216, qq.4953-61, *loc. cit.*

38. PWD Inquiry; Minutes of Evidence, p.242, qq.5992-6003, *loc. cit.*

39. Col. Arch. Office, Public Works Completed During 1886, p.1, Barnet Papers (ML Mss. 726, Item 2).

40. The cheques were drawn by Barnet on pay sheets prepared by the accounts clerk and certified by the Chief Clerk - PWD: Minutes of Evidence, p.225, qq.5294-5308, *loc. cit.*

41. The head of the requisitioning department sought the approval of his Minister who would refer it to the Secretary for Public Works from whom it would be passed through the Under Secretary to Barnet. He would refer it to the Chief Clerk who, in turn, would arrange for estimates of cost to be prepared - PWD Inquiry; Minutes of Evidence, p.240, q.5932, *loc. cit.*

This required frequent consultation with a client department and other interested parties; for example, the local Police Magistrate.⁴²

The clerical staff was also required to prepare the annual and revised Estimates of Expenditure. In 1865 Barnet had been voted funds chargeable to revenue totalling £50 290 consisting of administrative expenses (£6 190), public works and buildings - repairs, alterations and fittings (£43 721), fortifications (£379) and the provision of coffins for paupers (£400). Those funds represented 13.2% of the estimated expenditure of the Department as a whole (£379 462) which was distributed as follows:

Department of Works - ministerial and executive	4 750 (1%)
Railways	119 760 (31.5%)
Harbours and Rivers	22 293 (5.87%)
Colonial Architect))	
Fortifications))	50 290 (13.2%)
Public Works and Buildings)	
Roads and Bridges	149 173 (39.31%)
Electric Telegraphs	27 144 (7.15%)
Fitzroy Dock	6 128 (1.61%)
miscellaneous services	<u>104</u>

The estimated departmental expenditure represented 26.8% of the total estimated expenditure of £1 412 629 for the colony as a whole but excluding Schedules to the Constitution and loan funds.⁴³ In 1879, Barnet sought funds totalling £517 529, the largest amount sought while he was in charge of the Office. That amount included

42. See, for example, the file relating to the Bingara Lock Up - CAOR: Bingara: Lock Up (NSW AO 2/578).

43. Estimates of the Probable Expenditure of the Government of New South Wales, 1866, NSW LA V&P 1865/66 (1).

administrative expenses, £13 253 and public works and buildings, £504 276. It represented 38.44% of the total funds sought by the Works Department (£1 346 156) which, in turn, was 30% of the total expenditure.⁴⁴

During the years 1865-1890 Government expenditure on public works had risen rapidly because of the development of railways and to a lesser extent, roads and bridges.⁴⁵ The funds provided for railways during that period reached a peak in 1886 when £1 892 023 (28% of the total estimated expenditure) was voted for those services. In that same year, £165 767 was sought for the Colonial Architect's Office which represented 17.46% of the estimate for the Department of Works (£950 741); an insignificant amount when compared with the allocation sought for roads and bridges, £647 140 or 68% of the departmental vote. In that same year, the Department received 14% of the total funds provided.⁴⁶

A similar distribution pattern is to be seen in the allocation of loan funds. Between 1856 and 1900, for example, 60% of loan funds sought were to be allocated to railways and tramways; the amount set aside for public buildings was 4.7% of the total loan funds raised.⁴⁷

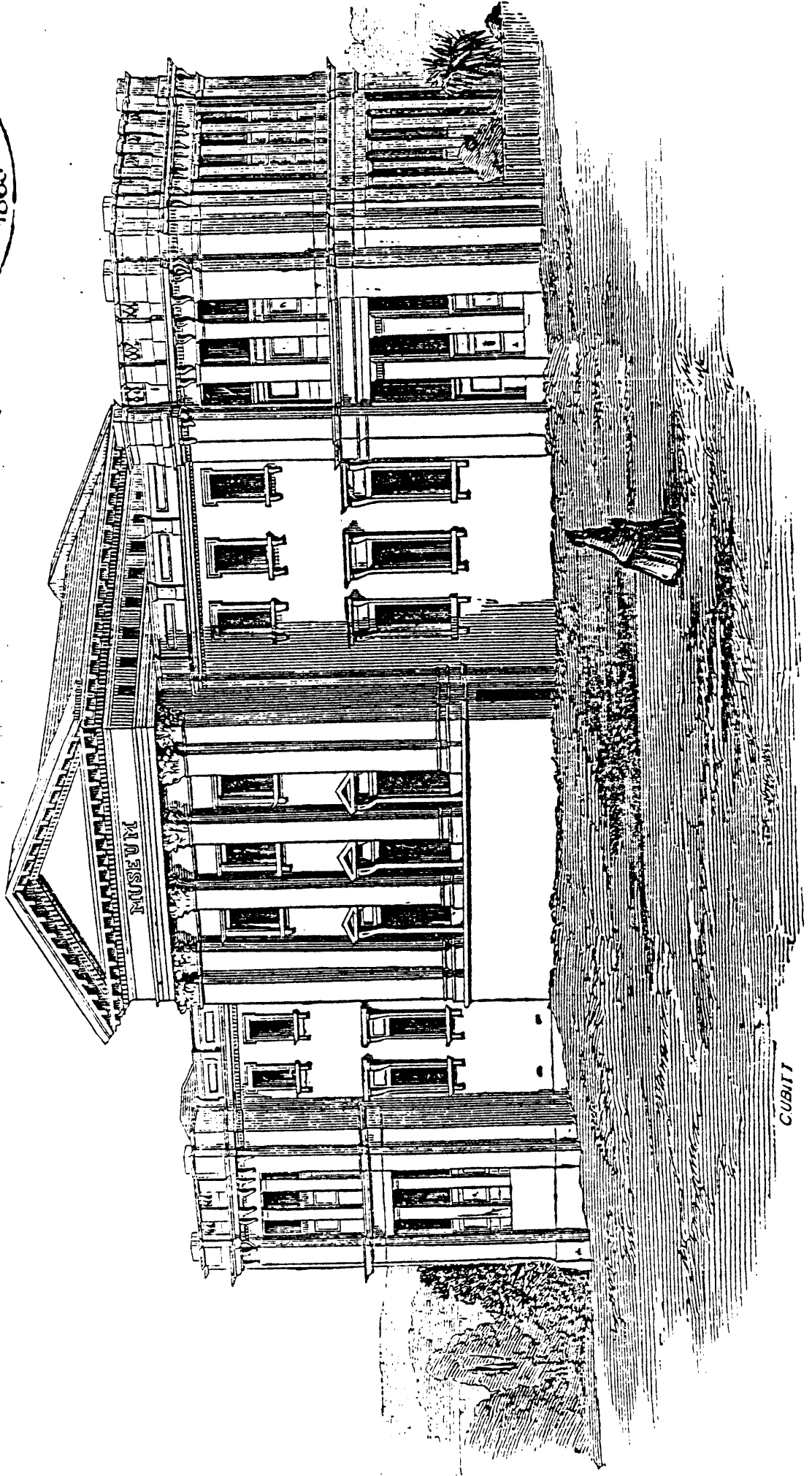
44. Estimates of the Probable Expenditure of the Government of New South Wales, 1879, NSW LA V&P 1878/79 (2).

45. P.N. Lamb, 'The Financing of Government Expenditure in New South Wales, 1865-1900', p.24 (Phd. thesis, ANU, 1963).

46. Estimates of the Probable Expenditure of the Government of New South Wales, 1886, NSW LA V&P 1885/86 (3).

47. Lamb, *op. cit.*, p.155.

BY MR. JUSTICE WISE.—
THE
FREE LIBRARY
SYDNEY.—
1865.—
BENEFITED



CUBITT

THE AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM, FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY CROFT BROS.—(SEE PAGE 2.)

iv.

The problems which Barnet met in combining the dual roles of architect and civil servant will now be examined through a number of projects - the Australian Museum, court houses at Singleton, Yass and Gunderoo and the Redfern and Haslem's Creek Mortuary Stations.

The Australian Museum, for many years, had occupied rooms originally designed for other purposes. In 1846 Mortimer Lewis, snr., Colonial Architect commenced work on the construction of a new building which had been designed in his Office. It was opened in May 1857 and almost immediately the trustees embarked upon an ambitious plan of extensions. Plans and specifications were prepared by Alexander Dawson; the work was not approved until 1861 when funds were provided. Barnet, who had recently joined the Office then prepared a new design and supervised construction of the building.⁴⁸ His plans were based on sketches supplied by Simon R. Pittard, curator and secretary to the Museum.⁴⁹ After Pittard retired, he worked closely with his successor, Gerard Krefft.⁵⁰ Barnet's design, worked up in consultation with those officials, had been praised by

48. I. Ransom and R. Strahan, 'The Building' in R. Strahan (ed.), *Rare and Curious Specimens. An Illustrated History of the Australian Museum 1827-1979*, Sydney, 1979, pp.113-14. Barnet was incorrectly described as the 'Government Architect'.

49. Simon Rood Pittard (1821-1861), studied at the Royal College of Surgeons where he became an anatomical student and research assistant. He lectured in comparative anatomy at King's College, St. George in the East. His appointment as curator of the Australian Museum was sponsored by Richard Owen and W. Macleay - see Ann Piggott and R. Strahan, 'Trustee-Ridden (1860-74)' in Strahan (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.27.

50. Krefft was appointed assistant curator of the Australian Museum in 1860 and in 1864 he became curator and secretary - see G.P. Whitley and Martha Rutledge, 'Krefft, Johann Ludwig Gerard', *ADB* 5.

the trustees;⁵¹ at no time did they suggest that it was either unsuitable or too ornate. In 1864 the building was described as being 'monumental in treatment and of a bold character, suitable for public edifices of this class'.⁵²

The project was not without problems for Barnet. On 22 January 1866, for example, having been informed that their tender had been accepted Brown and Grace, building contractors of Glebe told the Colonial Architect that they had underquoted for the work by £350; 'in justice to [themselves] but very reluctantly' they declined to proceed at the price quoted without having raised the matter with Barnet.⁵³ Next, the lowest and an unsuccessful tenderer, Alfred Usher complained that he had been treated shabbily. He stated that he had been asked to attend at Barnet's Office with two sureties of whom one failed to keep the appointment. Although Usher asserted that he had immediately told the Secretary for Public Works, T.W. Smart⁵⁴ that he was 'prepared with unexceptionable security', he had read in the *Government Gazette* that his tender had been rejected. Encouraged by friends who were familiar with his competence as a tradesman and who were aware of the need to reduce public expenditure, Usher appealed against that decision to

51. G. Krefft to Secretary for Public Works, 1 August 1861 - CAOR: Australian Museum, 1842-66 (NSW AO 2/576).

52. *ISN*, 16 June 1864.

53. George Brown and V. Grace to Col. Arch., 22 January 1866 - P.W.D., Special Bundles: Museum - Additions 1862-66 (NSW AO 2/896).

54. Thomas Ware Smart, retired businessman of private means, was Secretary for Public Works, 20 October 1865 - 21 January 1866 in the second Cowper Ministry - G.P. Walsh, 'Smart, Thomas Ware', *ADB* 6.

both James Byrnes, now Secretary for Public Works and James Martin, Premier and Attorney-General.⁵⁵ Both appeals failed; the contract had been awarded by a previous Secretary for Public Works and Byrnes was neither willing nor able to re-open the matter.⁵⁶

These were tedious matters which Barnet must examine. They did not delay the work however, which, by August 1866, had been advanced to a stage where it was almost completed.⁵⁷ 'When completed', the editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald* wrote, 'this building will be the finest in Sydney, the University alone excepted'.⁵⁸ Later, William Maddock praised this 'large, massive, and beautiful edifice of a bold style of Roman or Grecian architecture'.⁵⁹ In 1890, James Green, an influential art critic, acknowledged it to be one of the best examples of good composition which had come to his notice in the Australian colonies.⁶⁰ Those opinions were not shared by a

-
55. Alfred Usher to Jas. Byrnes, Secretary for Public Works, 23 January 1866 with minute initialled 'JB 24/1/66' - P.W.D. Special Bundles: Museum - Additions 1862/66, *loc. cit.* The second Martin Ministry had taken office on 22 January 1866 with James Byrnes, manufacturer, Secretary for Public Works. After being defeated at the 1872 election he accepted an appointment as valuer in the Railways Branch of the Works Department - see G.P. Walsh, 'Byrnes, James' *ADB* For an examination of Martin's career see B. Nairn, 'Martin, Sir James', *ADB* 5.
56. Usher to Byrnes, 23 January 1866 - *loc. cit.*
57. *SMH*, 22 August 1866.
58. *Ibid.*, 23 October 1866.
59. William Maddock, *Visitors Guide to Sydney 1872* - quoted, E. Ethridge, 'The Australian Museum', *Record of the Australian Museum*, Vol.12, No.12, December 1919, p.384.
60. James Green, 'Sydney Architecture', *ABCN*, 25 January 1890. Green also wrote under the pseudonym 'de Libra'. Before settling in Sydney, he had worked as a journalist with the London *Building News*. He was widely read, had travelled extensively and after 1890 wrote many articles as a critic of art and architecture. He was 'an ardent and extremely vocal follower of John Ruskin' and in his early writing was 'extremely critical of anything slightly savouring of impressionism' - B. Smith, *Australian Painting*, Melbourne, 1972, p.66.

number of the trustees and certain members of Parliament.

Barnet's association with the Museum and more particularly, with Krefft was often mutually unsatisfactory. During December 1862, for example, Krefft had sent requisitions for sundry repairs direct to Barnet (an *ex officio* trustee) who returned them with a reminder that such requests must be made through and approved by the Colonial Secretary who was 'the Ministerial head of his department'. Krefft replied testily that he had acted in accordance with the wishes of the trustees. He reminded Barnet that he would be well aware that the Board met monthly and that, if 'incalculable damage' were to be avoided, urgent repairs should be made quickly rather than be delayed until after the next Board meeting.⁶¹ Krefft failed to recognise the point made by Barnet; that is, the work could not be done without the approval of the Colonial Secretary. On another occasion and for the same reason, Barnet refused to process a request for the cleaning of a water closet. When the matter was referred to him by Krefft, the Colonial Secretary noted the papers: 'I have a difficulty regarding this requisition - Don't [*sic*] the Colonial Architect take charge of these repairs'. Barnet remained unmoved; he was adamant that the procedures, observed 'for a considerable time', which controlled expenditure on repairs to public buildings must be followed.⁶²

Although the Museum had been established by a group of private citizens, it had been incorporated under an Act of Parliament (17 Vic No.2) in 1853 and was dependant upon public funds for both capital

61. Krefft to Col. Arch., 3 December, 15 December 1862 - CAOR: Australian Museum 1840-66 (NSW AO 2/576).

62. Requisitions of Krefft with annotations, May/June 1863 - CAOR: Australian Museum, *loc. cit.*

works and running expenses. As Minister responsible to Parliament under the legislation, the Colonial Secretary must approve the repairs and maintenance which would then be effected. Barnet was not prepared to work outside those procedures.

These exchanges did nothing to develop good working relations. As Colonial Architect, Barnet ignored decisions to which, as a trustee, he had been a party. Kreffft believed that Barnet was interfering with the efficient operations of the Museum.⁶³ This friction was not the only problem affecting the smooth running of the Museum. For some time before 1874 there was a widespread feeling that all was not well; for example, rumours were widespread that certain unidentified trustees were neglecting their responsibilities; stores had been misappropriated and staff directed to undertake private tasks during their hours of official duty. These rumours found a champion in Walter H. Cooper, Member for East Maitland and a former journalist.⁶⁴

On 24 February 1874 Cooper moved in the Legislative Assembly for the appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into and report upon the condition and system of management of the Sydney Museum asserting that, if it should uncover evidence of dishonesty and incompetency among the trustees it would have been worthwhile. He condemned the building. He believed that it had been 'built on a

63. For an examination of Kreffft's relationships with the trustees see Ann Pigott and R. Strahan, 'Trustee-Ridden 1860-1874' in Strahan (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.27ff.

64. Cooper had been earlier employed by the *Sydney Morning Herald*. He was an admirer and supporter of Parkes - A.W. Martin and P. Wardle, *Members of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales 1856-1901*, Canberra, 1959. See also, A.W. Martin, *Henry Parkes: A Biography*, Melbourne, 1980, pp.261-62, 271-72.

wrong plan; the cabinets were deficient and defective ... and the arrangements were faulty'. He alleged that some specimens donated to the Museum had been sent overseas and, as a result, the collections were inferior to and did not bear comparison with 'some of the curiosity shops in Lower George-street'. In his opinion, 'a body of trustees was not the proper body to manage such institutions' because 'persons who were unpaid and irresponsible did not take that interest in the institution they ought to do, and would not devote their time to it'. In the ensuing debate, credence was given to earlier rumours of lack of interest on the part of certain trustees and the dishonesty of others who had enriched their private collections at the expense of the Museum. It was also stated that the enabling legislation gave the trustees access to public funds without imposing conditions of accountability. The motion was adopted and the committee duly elected.⁶⁵

Within the context of this study, that section of the inquiry dealing with the administration of the Museum can be passed over except to note that, as a trustee, Barnet was not able to dissociate himself from any criticism levelled against his colleagues. In its report dated 14 May 1874 the Committee explained that the trustees met monthly or, as necessary; in its opinion, those arrangements were unsatisfactory. The trustees had been found to be 'most irregular in their attendance' and they seemed 'to have been completely lax in their supervision and control of the director'; in such circumstances they were held to be 'justly open to censure for neglect of duty'.⁶⁶

65. Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, 24 February 1874 - *SMH*, 25 February 1874.

66. Report of the Select Committee on the Sydney Museum, NSW LA *V&P* 1873/74 (5).

Several witnesses had been invited to comment upon the suitability of the building and, except Barnet, all had condemned it. Krefft criticised the design and pointed out defects in the building; it was 'far too high' so that visitors entered by way of a long flight of steps, difficulties arose in mounting exhibitions, problems occurred in cleaning, and goods must be carried 'all the way round to the back'. He was critical of the width and fittings of the showcases and complained that too much use had been made of ornate brass and iron fittings; the interior was too highly decorated. Complaints were made about defective blinds, drainage, the water supply and ill-fitting skylights. He stated that his requests for repairs were ignored by Barnet.⁶⁷ Much of Krefft's evidence was corroborated by other witnesses.⁶⁸

On 10 April Barnet had an opportunity to answer his critics. He commenced by outlining to the Committee the arrangements under which the building had been designed and clarified his role in bringing the plans to fruition. He stated that the building had been planned as a museum of natural history and a sculpture gallery; the central hall would be used for sculpture exhibitions and the remainder of the accommodation would provide display areas for natural history specimens. He rejected criticism that the interior was too ornate making the point that visitors would see whatever they sought. Asked whether the museum might be better suited as a library and technological museum, Barnet pointed out that the building was

67. Report on the Sydney Museum, Minutes of Evidence, p.1, qq.11, 14; pp.2-3, qq.15-47; p.87, q.3053; pp.91-97, *loc. cit.*

68. See, for example, the evidence of Alexander Scott and William Wallis - Report on the Sydney Museum, Minutes of Evidence, p.87, q.3053; pp.91-93, *loc. cit.*

too narrow to fit shelving at right angles to the walls and it could therefore not be used for that purpose.⁶⁹

After an on-site inspection and examination of a number of the trustees and staff, the Committee found that the building was not suitable for a museum of natural history. The earlier building designed by Mortimer Lewis, was 'in many respects ... convenient'; that designed by Barnet was 'extremely defective'. It was condemned as being too high and narrow, heavy pillars crowded the interior and ornament has been emphasised at the expense of utility. The Committee thought that this wing, 'ill adapted as it is for its present service', should be used as an Academy of Art and a Technological Museum. The Australian Museum might then be established in a new wing 'free of those defects' and 'on a plan better suited than the present edifice for the exhibition of the collection, and economy of space'.⁷⁰ This criticism was interpreted as 'crushing' since it had been made by men who 'if not architects, [were] yet supposed to be men of taste, and capable of giving an intelligent opinion upon the subject'.⁷¹

Whereas Barnet, as architect, was blamed for the design of an unsuitable building, his patrons (that is, the trustees) were not made to share that responsibility. The Committee failed to recognise that Barnet had prepared plans and specifications in consultation with a representative of the Museum whose responsibility it should have been to ensure that the needs of the museum were brought to

69. Report on the Sydney Museum, Minutes of Evidence, pp.94-97, *loc. cit.*

70. Report on the Sydney Museum, *loc. cit.*

71. *ISN*, 30 May 1874.

attention and recognised in the design of the building. The role of the architect is to interpret the wishes of his patron while, at the same time, being concerned with 'the elusive property of right atmosphere';⁷² required to interpret the wishes of a number of patrons, Barnet's task was unenviable.

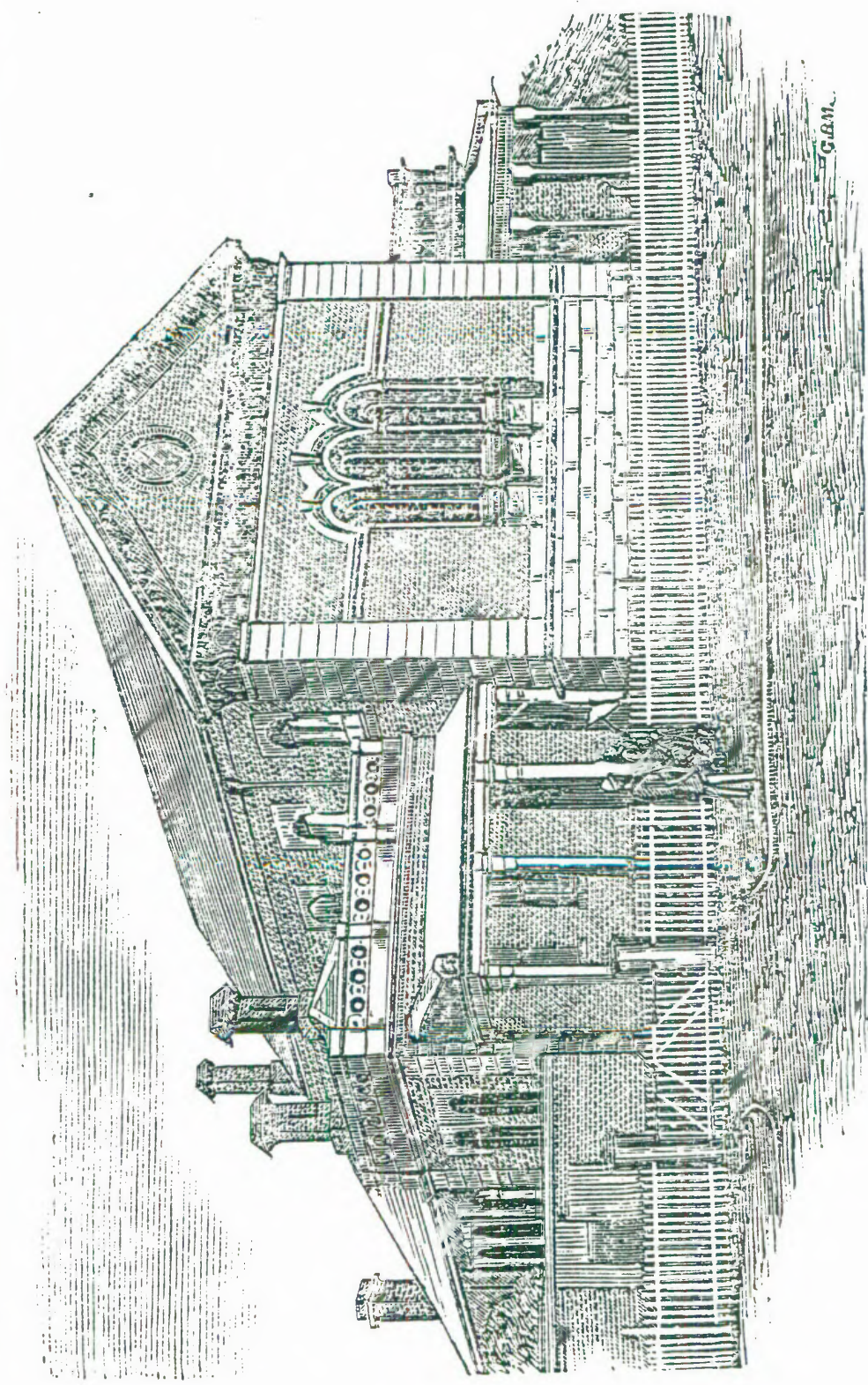
In appearing before the Select Committee, Barnet had the very difficult task of gaining approval of his design. The debate leading to the appointment of the Committee showed that a number of those duly elected to it had already prejudged Barnet. Some members of the Committee, particularly Onslow and Macleay, each of whom was a trustee, welcomed the opportunity which the inquiry provided to distract attention from rumours which implicated them in questionable, if not dishonest, practices. Thus, the question of Barnet's competence emerged as a central point in the proceedings and it was he who suffered public censure; there was no consolation for him in the political motives which had underlined Cooper's demand for an inquiry.⁷³ Nevertheless, the experience provided two lessons. In the first place, it emphasised the invidious task which fell to a senior civil servant who was expected to serve both Government and Opposition, responding to every demand and ignoring ill or uninformed criticism. Secondly, when motives for an action were political, it was the civil servants who became the scapegoats whereas the politicians were often able to avoid blame.

The second example to illustrate the relations which existed between the Colonial Architect and his patrons were the court houses

72. F. Jenkins, *Architect and Patron*, London, 1961, xiii-xiv.

73. Cooper and Parkes were political opponents of William S. Macleay, whom Parkes' biographer described as being one of Parkes' 'more malicious enemies' - Martin, *op. cit.*, p.229.

TOWN AND COUNTRY JOURNAL.



COURT-HOUSE, SINGLETON.

at Singleton, Yass and Gundaroo.

A court had been established at Singleton in 1832 and a court house built in 1841. On 12 March 1866 Alfred MacFarland, chairman of Quarter Sessions and a judge of the District Court complained about the 'miserable accommodation which he believed could only bring the administration of justice into 'odium and contempt'.⁷⁴ In an attempt to force the hand of the Government, a group of citizens purchased a block of land as a site for a court house and, with the support of their local member of Parliament, persuaded the Government that such a building should now be provided.⁷⁵ In September the Singleton correspondent of the *Maitland Mercury* noted that 'very comprehensive' plans which reflected 'much credit on Mr Barnet's skill as an architect and designer' had been prepared.⁷⁶

More than twelve months after a tender was let in February 1867, the *Mercury* reported that, although the 'noble building, unquestionably the finest of its kind in the colony [was] now rapidly approaching completion', tenders had not been invited for the fitting out of the building.⁷⁷ There was a sound reason for that delay. The furniture and fittings were being designed in Barnet's Office and incorporated suggestions made by the Chief Justice and 'several of the leading members of the bar'. The fittings which included a 'very handsome canopy, highly ornamented with mouldings ... exhibiting creditable results of the carver's skill', were made from

74. A. MacFarland to Attorney-General 12 March 1866 - P.W.D.: Special Bundles, Miscellaneous, Part 2, (NSW AO 2/894).

75. Richard Dalton to Minister for Lands, 5 March 1866 - P.W.D.: Special Bundles, Miscellaneous, Part 2, *loc. cit.*

76. *Maitland Mercury*, 6 September, 1866.

77. *Ibid.*, 7 April, 1868.

cedar; they were thought to be 'in appropriate keeping with the handsome building into which they [were] to be placed'.⁷⁸

The Singleton Court House, 'without question one of the best of its kind which has ever been erected in the colony' was regarded as being 'a monument of the genius and ability' of Barnet. The 'faithful and substantial manner' in which it had been constructed was thought to reflect the diligence and care of the foreman of works, William Roberts and the contractor, Cains.⁷⁹

In contrast to that project, construction of the Gundaroo Court House resulted in bitter criticism of Barnet, his officers and the contractor. This project emphasised two problems which often arose when a public building was located in a remote area. The first was that of providing supervision of the work in progress; secondly, there could be no guarantee that a local contractor, whose work was known only at second hand to Barnet, would be competent to meet the terms of his contract. At Singleton, Barnet was able to rely upon Mortimer Lewis to safeguard the public interest. Furthermore, having worked in the Newcastle region for many years, Lewis could be expected to be familiar with and competent to assess the skill of a number of the local contractors. In contrast, Gundaroo was an isolated village, by-passed by the southern railway; there was no resident clerk of works and, as yet, no major public buildings had been undertaken in the region. Those problems were not unfamiliar to Barnet; his Office had erected a number of small buildings in equally remote villages; for example, Coonamble or Inverell.

78. *Ibid.*, 23 May, 1868.

79. *Ibid.*, 23 July 1868. The interior work was completed in November and the keys were then handed over - *Ibid.*, 12 November 1868.

A 'very numerous-signed petition' prepared by citizens of Gundaroo and supported by the Clerk of Petty Sessions had in July 1873 sought the provision of a court house at Gundaroo.⁸⁰ Residents of the village who read the *Yass Courier* would have known that the Colonial Architect had recently wasted public funds on the construction of 'a useless stable' at the dilapidated Yass Court House. They would have also known that, after the work had been completed, Barnett had directed that it should cease.⁸¹ In such circumstances, public opinion was unlikely to regard favourably any project for which the Colonial Architect might be responsible.

The reluctance of the Government to provide a court house was sound reason for disquiet among the residents of Gundaroo. The old building was condemned as a breeding ground for plague because of 'dampness, filth, and dead stinking calves, &c. in close proximity'.⁸³ On 22 July 1874 the magistrates, J.T.A. Styles and Arthur Affleck informed John Sutherland, Secretary for Public Works that they were no longer prepared to conduct courts of petty sessions in the broken-down building.⁸³ Tenders were then quickly invited and that of W. Duncan of Goulburn accepted.⁸⁴

A number of problems arose before the work was completed. On 4 February 1876 the Gundaroo correspondent of the *Yass Courier*

80. *Goulburn Herald*, 9 July 1873.

81. *Yass Courier*, 8 July 1873.

82. *Goulburn Herald*, 8 November 1873.

83. *Yass Courier*, 24 July 1874.

84. Duncan was associated with the construction of St Saviour's Cathedral and St Patrick's College, Goulburn (1874). He had been awarded a contract in 1872 for a temporary post office in that city - R.T. Wyatt, *The History of Goulburn, NSW*, Sydney, 2nd edition 1972, *passim*.

reported that 'an inspector of works' had passed shoddy work. He continued:

Many things in my opinion not "according to locker" might be pointed out in connection with these buildings, but I will only enumerate two, and leave the public to judge. The floor of the court room is more like the floor of a shearing shed where the boards are left open so that the muck can drop through ... Would any person but Government take such works off the hands of a contractor. I say not. The bench of magistrates reported the matter to the Colonial architect but no notice has been taken of their communication.

The decision to spend some £2 000 on 'a commodious and substantial court-house' was condemned; 'a less pretentious building at one-half the cost would have supplied all the wants of the district for fifty years to come'. Supporters of the project argued that '"whatever [was] worth doing [was] worth doing well"' and that advantage should be taken of 'an overflowing treasury to erect works of permanent utility'.⁸⁵ In the opinion of its critics, the building was not a work of 'permanent utility'.

The project had scarcely been completed when the Gundaroo correspondent of the *Yass Courier* again complained of shoddy work having been passed. He noted that a very large crack had developed in the eastern wall, the guttering was defective allowing water to soak the walls, and the contractor had been directed to lift and

85. *Goulburn Herald*, 5 January 1878.

re-lay the floor.⁸⁶ The contractor could not disown such shoddy work; in the terms of his contract he had agreed to complete the work in a workmanlike manner. For his part, Barnet's representative should have insisted that all unsatisfactory work be corrected and there could be no excuse for his negligence.

Nowhere was mention made in either the *Yass Courier* or the *Goulburn Herald* of any influence exerted by Leopold Fane de Salis, the local member of the Legislative Assembly and an old friend of Parkes, in securing so commodious a building for the small village.⁸⁷ The influence of a politician who supported a faction leader in the Legislative Assembly was greater than was later possible under a party system; he might reasonably expect that his support would be suitably rewarded at an appropriate moment.⁸⁸

There is no reason for doubt that Michael Fitzpatrick⁸⁹

86. *Yass Courier*, 2 April 1878.

87. This is examined briefly in E.J. Lea-Scarlett, *Gundaroo*, Canberra, 1972, p.56. de Salis was a squatter residing on the Murrumbidgee River who was elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1864 and appointed to the Legislative Council in July 1874 - Anon., 'de Salis, Leopold Fabius Diet Egan Fane', *ADB* 4.

88. The question of the relationship which existed between members of Parliament and their electorates is examined in P. Loveday, 'The Member and His Constituents in New South Wales in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, Vol.5, No.2, November 1959, pp.202-12. Although a member might claim that he voted according to his conscience rather than the dictates of his constituents, he could rarely ignore the pressure which developed within the electorate. G.R. Quaife, 'Make Us Roads No Matter How: A note on Colonial Politics', *ibid.*, Vol.9, No.1, April 1968, pp.4754 argued that a candidate's stand on local issues was an important factor within electorates.

89. Member for Yass Plains and Colonial Secretary in the First Farnell Ministry of 1877-78. Before entering Parliament he had been Under Secretary for Lands and Works and after 1858 Under Secretary for Lands - B. Dickey, 'Fitzpatrick, Michael', *ADB* 4.

exerted considerable pressure upon his parliamentary colleagues when proposals were put forward for a new court house in Yass. For example, his earlier experience as a senior civil servant would have assisted him in developing persuasive arguments in support of the new building. Barnet would have known of Fitzpatrick's influence: for one reason or another, he seems to have regarded this as an important project. On 11 July 1878, accompanied by William Coles, the First Clerk of Works and a clerk of works, 'Mr. Barnett [*sic*] measured the site for the new Courthouse to be placed on land forming the yard of the existing structure'.⁹⁰ Although he often attended the official opening of public buildings, Barnet was rarely reported as having measured the site.

On 20 July Fitzpatrick, accompanied by a large party which included 'Mr. Barnett', visited Yass to lay the foundation stone of the building. Inviting Fitzpatrick to perform the ceremony, Dr. Perry, mayor acknowledged the town's indebtedness to their local member for his efforts in having the building erected. Perry expressed a belief that local government authorities should be entrusted with the provision of public works; this would place members of Parliament and the Government in 'a more independent position' in that they would be supported by the electorate for 'the equity and general excellence of their measures' rather than because 'they made a bridge here, or a road there for local purposes'. In his reply, Fitzpatrick ignored that proposal; he preferred to speak of the loyalty of his supporters who had encouraged him to press for the new court house.⁹¹

90. *Yass Courier*, 14 July 1878.

91. *Ibid.*, 23 July 1878.

It was a suggestion which ran counter to Government policy and one which, if adopted, would threaten the future of the Colonial Architect's Office. Thus, it could scarcely have been warmly received by Barnet.

Work was completed within eighteen months and the new court house was formally opened on 20 January 1880. In a brief address from the bench, Police Magistrate Leopold Yates praised the 'new and magnificent court house' which 'for elegance of design and artistic workmanship it [had] in the colony but few rivals - most emphatically no equal'; indeed, he thought that it would compare most favourably with many similar buildings found overseas.⁹² Nevertheless, complaints were soon being made about the unsatisfactory internal arrangements of the building. In April 1880 Barnet inspected it and directed the contractor to make approved alterations;⁹³ a few weeks later another inspection, made on this occasion by Coles and the foreman of works, was carried out before the work was finally passed.⁹⁴ Complaints continued to be made about poor-quality acoustics which were not corrected before the Chief Justice, Sir James Martin intervened. Barnet was held responsible for these matters and he was thought to have acted in a most inefficient manner.⁹⁵

92. *Ibid.*, 30 January 1880. For a description of the building see *Ibid.*, 3 February 1880.

93. *Ibid.*, 30 April 1880.

94. *Ibid.*, 11 May 1880.

95. *Ibid.*, 18 April 1882.

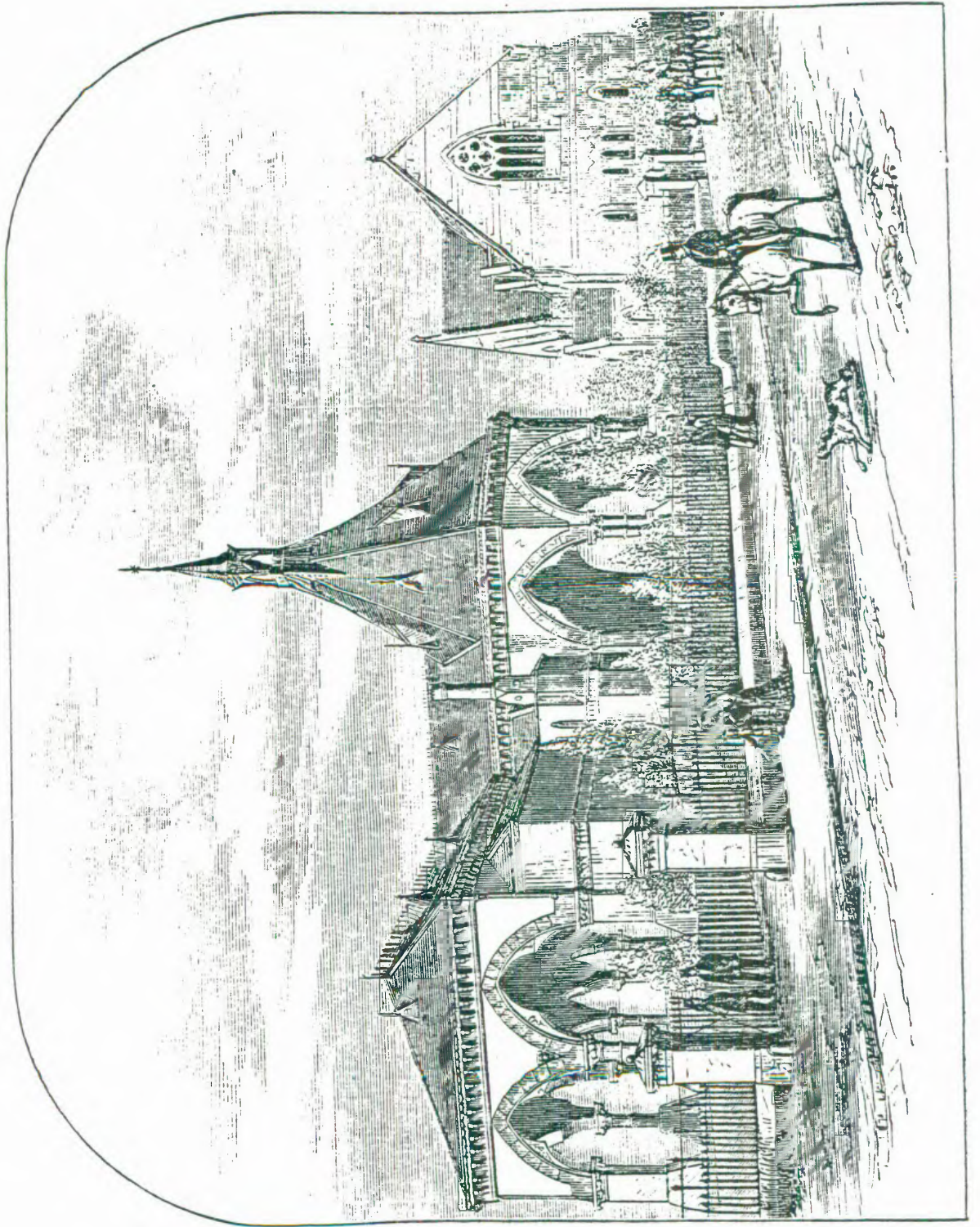
The design of each of the buildings just examined was executed in either the Greek or Italianate style of architecture which revealed Barnet as being an architect bound by tradition. His choice of the Gothic style for our third example, the mortuary stations at Redfern and Haslem's Creek cemetery, was more unusual although it was a reflection of the widely-held belief that this was the most appropriate style for buildings having any association, however tenuous, with religious worship.⁹⁶

Commencement of the work of construction of those mortuary stations was reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 21 February 1867 and Barnet's intention to employ Gothic architecture was approved. Shortly before the work was completed, the *Herald* praised the stations which, 'for more suitable design and more faithful work' could not be matched. It was thought that these 'magnificent buildings' would set the standard for the denominational chapels which were to be erected in the cemetery; anything of inferior design and workmanship would lead to 'a series of ignoble and incongruous edifices'. Barnet was congratulated upon his very successful treatment of a difficult assignment; his clerk of works, Edwin Colley and the carver, Apperley were complimented for having made a significant contribution to the fine quality of the workmanship employed.⁹⁷

In that project Barnet had been free to exercise initiative and imagination and did so within the constraints imposed by civil service procedures and his professional background. At the same time, he had not been subjected to external pressures such as had occurred in the other projects examined. The mortuary stations mark

96. See S. Muthesius, *The High Victorian Movement in Architecture 1850-1870*, London, 1972, pp.161-65.

97. *SMH*, 6, 9 April 1868.



the peak of his career; at no other time did his work receive such unqualified praise for its design, execution and careful supervision. There would be grander and more costly buildings but they would be subjected to much criticism and serve as a means of attacking Barnet's professional integrity.