Grand Prix
CITY OF MELBOURNE

The Argus

Sunday, 2 a.m.

RIOTS IN THE CITY

UNPRECEDENTED SCENES.

Window-Smashing & Looting.

APPEAL BY THE MINISTRY.

CITY OF MELBOURNE

For 100 years or more,
was the civic heart of M
symbolically or geograp
kinds of practical ways

Melburnians were familiar with the town hall, inside and out. All the functions of the City of Melbourne were quartered there, and the public halls were in steady use for balls and dinners, concerts, exams, meetings, charity bazaars and the like.

Aside from its familiarity and central position, the town hall had, as it still does, the distinction of being the lord mayor's 'palace' – making it a natural focus for displays of pageantry and power.

the town hall truly Melbourne – not just phically, but in all s.

Among the treasures and oddments in the City of Melbourne's Art and Heritage Collection is a small range of objects, numbering hundreds of identical or sequential items that exemplify the town hall's role during outbreaks of strife and celebration. At such times, medals, badges, buttons and armbands were distributed from the town hall as emblems of authority or commemoration.

Many of these were issued, but not all of them. The remaining hundreds are the surplus. This exhibition revels in the seeming abundance of these relative few, while leaving room for one to wonder how they came to be unclaimed.

SPECIAL CONSTABLE ARMBANDS 1842–1923

On the eve of the 1923 Spring Racing Carnival more than a third of Melbourne's police went on strike. Australia's only police strike, it was triggered by poor pay and conditions, and, especially, by the introduction of inspectors (or 'spooks') to monitor police constables on the job.

With the streets relatively unpoliced on Derby Day, Saturday 3 November, the city centre was delivered, according the *Argus* newspaper, 'into the almost unhindered hands of mob rule'. Hordes of brawling ruffians smashed windows and looted shops, derailed a tram and ran an uproarious two-up school at the city's busiest intersection. The block bounded by Swanston, Bourke, Elizabeth and Collins streets bore the brunt of the mayhem, ideally situating the town hall as emergency-response headquarters.

That night, announcements flashed onto screens at city and suburban cinemas, calling for volunteers to enrol at Melbourne town hall as special constables, or 'specials'. By midnight, some 500 were sworn in – and 1500 more the next day. Many of them had fought in the Great War under Generals Monash, Elliott and McCay, who now came forward to lead Melbourne's Special Constabulary Force.

Once sworn in, the specials assembled in the town hall basement to be issued with an armband and a baton. Batons were in short supply until the hall-keeper discovered a quantity left over from the last occasion special constables were called upon to keep the peace.

This mustering at the town hall was nothing new. The legislation that created the township of Melbourne in 1842 authorised the mayor, in times of crisis, to read the Riot Act and recruit special constables. At election times, as well as during sectarian conflict, the upheaval of the gold rush, tensions following the Eureka Stockade, riots over land

OPPOSITE
Special constables outside Melbourne town hall (Melbourne Library Service)

Maples Limited Glass & Specialty Makers PLANTS

SPECIAL EDITION, 10 P.M.

The Herald

Palace PYJAMAS

Price 1½d.

RIOTING AND LOOTING TAKE PLACE IN CITY STREETS

LAWLESS ELEMENT RUNS AMOK

Windows Smashed and Shops Looted in Bourke and Swanston Sts.

Leviathan Stores Ransacked

TRAM SERVICE IN CITY TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED

RIOT SCENES LOOTED

Town Hall

LIST OF VICTIMS

Jewellers and Clothiers

RIOTERS IN CITY

THE CONTINGENCY ARMIES

Rise From Workers

POLICE CHARGE RIOTERS

Rioters Finally Dispersed

S.O.S. TO STRIKERS

Police Association Urges Men to Resume

CALAMITY FEARED

The executive of the Police Association met tonight, and decided to appeal to the strikers to return to duty.

Mr A. J. Gill, secretary of the Victorian Police Association, stated that the following resolution had been passed by the committee of the Association tonight:—

"The opening of the committee of the Victorian Police Association, after carefully and anxiously considering the present position of affairs, while there are grievances that could be redressed and surrounding that could be remedied, are of opinion that such are not sufficient to justify the present action of the police, and consequently the men, by their action, are jeopardising the safety of the city, and endangering the lives of the citizens, and therefore strongly urge the members of the police force to return to duty forthwith.

"In consideration of these recommendations, the meeting of representatives of the Association, after hearing the statements of the deputation, and other matters of the position in regard to their grievances.

"In the event of this request being unheeded, the Association resolves to treat its best efforts towards securing the withdrawal for every man concerned.

"Mr Gill added that the executive of the Police Force were members of the Association. He hoped that the men would agree to both the resolution, because the Association deprecated such methods as had been employed.

CONSTABLE INJURED

Former "Herald" Attached

RIOTS DOES PLUNDER

Rare Pieces in Lantern

CLEARING STREETS

Force From Headquarters

TRAMS NOT ATTACKED

MAN KILLED

Swanston St. Accident

MOTOR CYCLE OVERTURNS

ONE MAN KILLED

TRAFFIC CONTROL

Rail and Tram Plan

"DOING THE BLOCK"

Force Gets Today

STOP PRESS

FIRE AT RICHMOND

Shed Destroyed

SHOT IN WINE CAFE

Two Men Wounded at Balaclava

MAN GIVES HIMSELF UP TO POLICE

THE CITY UNDER THE RULE OF THE HOOLIGAN

Lawless Crowds Loot Shops in Bourke and Swanston Streets

THOUSANDS OF POUNDS WORTH OF GOODS STOLEN

Police Charge With Batons

JEWELLER'S SHOP GUARDED BY ARMED MEN

DEFIANT SPEECHES

Strikers Hold Meeting

ROYAL COMMISSION SUGGESTED

GO BACK TO THE BEAT

Police Association Urges Men to Resume

PROMISES TO MAKE EFFORTS TO SECURE FAIR TREATMENT

THIS SPREAD
Pages from special editions of *The Herald*, 3 & 4 November, 1923

FOLLOWING SPREAD
Special Constable armbands

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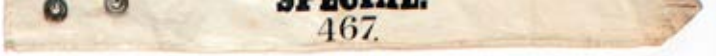
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PREVIOUS SPREAD
Special constables driving a section of yesterday's mob from Russell Street into Little Collins Street', *The Herald*, 5 November 1923

ABOVE AND OPPOSITE
Special constable armbands (detail)

reform and the 1890 maritime strike, to name a few, volunteers were regularly summoned to the town hall to be sworn in and then armed with 'batons of the most implacable hickory' (*Argus*, 1 September 1860). After the crisis passed, the mayor would call for the return of batons, ready for the next crop of specials. So it comes as no surprise that a supply of batons – or even of armbands – turned up in a storeroom in 1923. Specials had most recently been called up in 1917, to meet the threat posed by 'evil disposed and seditious persons' (i.e., pacifists) protesting the war, and in 1919 during a protracted strike on the docks (Public Record Office Victoria: VPRS 3183, unit 141).

During the police strike of 1923, additional batons were fashioned from pick handles, broomsticks and lengths of solid rubber cart tyre. In vain, commanders warned against their indiscriminate use. *The Argus* noted the specials' habit of 'whirling their batons whenever they proceeded through crowds' and dubbed them 'the brethren of the baton'.

By the end of Cup Week the crisis was over and most of the specials were demobilised. More than 5000 had enrolled at the town hall to fill the gap left by just 636 striking police. Indeed, but for the tumult of Derby Day, it was said to have been 'the quietest crime week in the history of Victoria' (General McCay, 12 November 1923, Public Record

Office Victoria: VPRS 3183, unit 168). The premier vowed that not one of the striking policemen would be reinstated; their jobs went instead to members of the Special Constabulary Force.

During the 1923 police strike an armband was, to begin with, the special constable's only mark of identification; later, a hatband was added. Some 6000 armbands were said to have been available for issue, each bearing a unique number. No explanation has been found as to why, with more than 5000 specials enrolled, 300-odd armbands in numbered runs between 404 and 950 were unissued.

Remarkably, each armband is hand-sewn, the idiosyncratic sizing, stitching and button placement a testament to exigency. We do not know who made them in such quantities at short notice. Perhaps some were sewn by the specials themselves, or by the female volunteers who served them meals at all hours in the town hall supper room. Or might these be armbands left over from some earlier deployment? At any rate, they cannot post-date 1923, as that was the last occasion on which special constables were called out. So many armbands, yet not a single baton remains.

AIR RAID PRECAUTION WARDEN BADGES 1939–45

In September 1939, just 24 hours after Australia joined the war against Germany, Melbourne was fleetingly at the frontline. The first Allied shot of World War II was fired from Point Nepean at a German ship attempting to flee Port Phillip Bay – just as happened at the outset of the Great War.

Melbourne's preparations for war were well underway. For months past, a district warden for Air Raid Precautions (ARP) had been based at the town hall, recruiting and training wardens to protect city businesses and buildings in the event of an attack. The day after war was declared – the day of the first shot – the town hall was inundated with volunteers for ARP duties.

Initially, those deemed suitable were 'men of more than 45, of reasonable physical fitness, who were well known and respected members of society, able to control crowds and prevent panic' (*Argus*, 29 June 1940). Soon, though, women of all ages swelled the ranks of ARP wardens.

The municipality of Melbourne was divided into 11 zones, further split into sectors, each staffed by a brace of volunteer ARP wardens. According to a training manual:

These Wardens have important duties to carry out, including assessment of air raid damage, reporting it concisely and correctly, guiding and assisting the various arp services sent to deal with it, and giving leadership and general assistance to the members of the public.[8] (Air Raid Precautions, State Emergency Council for Civil Defence, 1941, pp. 8–10)

The 'various ARP services' included first-aid posts, decontamination squads, demolition and rescue parties, fire spotters and messengers (boy scouts on bikes).

OPPOSITE
On Sunday, 1 November 1942, city-wide drills employed simulated 'bombs' and 'casualties' to test the ARP's readiness for an attack. (State Library of Victoria)

OUSE 63
ARP

ARP
VICTORIA
BE682
WARDEN

The central city buildings suitable for shelter during air raids were marked on plans held by the city's wardens. Trenches were dug in public parks to give basic shelter from bombardment, sandbags were stacked against shop windows to minimise blast damage and 'brownouts' (to stifle illumination that might aid enemy targeting) made the city thrillingly dingy after dark.

With the outbreak of war with Japan in December 1941, Australians expected air raids any day. And they came, bringing panic and the threat of invasion, with the attack on Darwin in February 1942. Later that year damaging raids were made on Broome and Townsville, which turned out to be the farthest south that the Japanese planes could reach. Maritime attacks and submarine sightings, however, occurred all down the east coast during 1942–43.

As the war staggered on, with no credible air raid threat to southern Australia, ARP measures in Melbourne began to seem unnecessary, even ridiculous. Participation dwindled well before war came to an end.

OPPOSITE
ARP wardens' badges were issued to recruits at the town hall. But how many were actually worn? In photos, wardens are chiefly identifiable by their armbands and tin helmets. The regulation gasmask carried in a satchel strapped to the chest would have obscured a lapel-badge.

ABOVE
A warden walks down a deserted Bourke Street during ARP exercises, November 1942
(State Library of Victoria)

WORLD WAR TWO VICTORY MEDALS 1945

Victory in Europe (VE) Day, in May 1945, was a cause for only muted rejoicing in Australia, as war continued in the Pacific. But following the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the start of August, Australian authorities began planning for Victory in the Pacific (VP) Day. With Japan's surrender, on August 14, came two days of public thanksgiving and jubilation. The war was over.

National victory celebrations were scheduled for mid-1946, by which time most of the troops would be home. In the meantime, Melbourne City Council mounted its own program of celebrations. On 15 and 16 August, traffic was diverted from the centre of the city, leaving the streets free for dancing, singing, bands, vaudeville acts and the hundreds of thousands of revellers who flocked 'into town'. Church bells and clock chimes rang for hours on end and, to make up for the years of brownout, skyrockets and floodlighting turned night into day.

In Little Bourke Street, Melbourne's Chinese community entertained the victory crowds with non-stop fireworks and by 'playing the dragon' – the first time the ceremonial dragon had performed in almost 20 years.

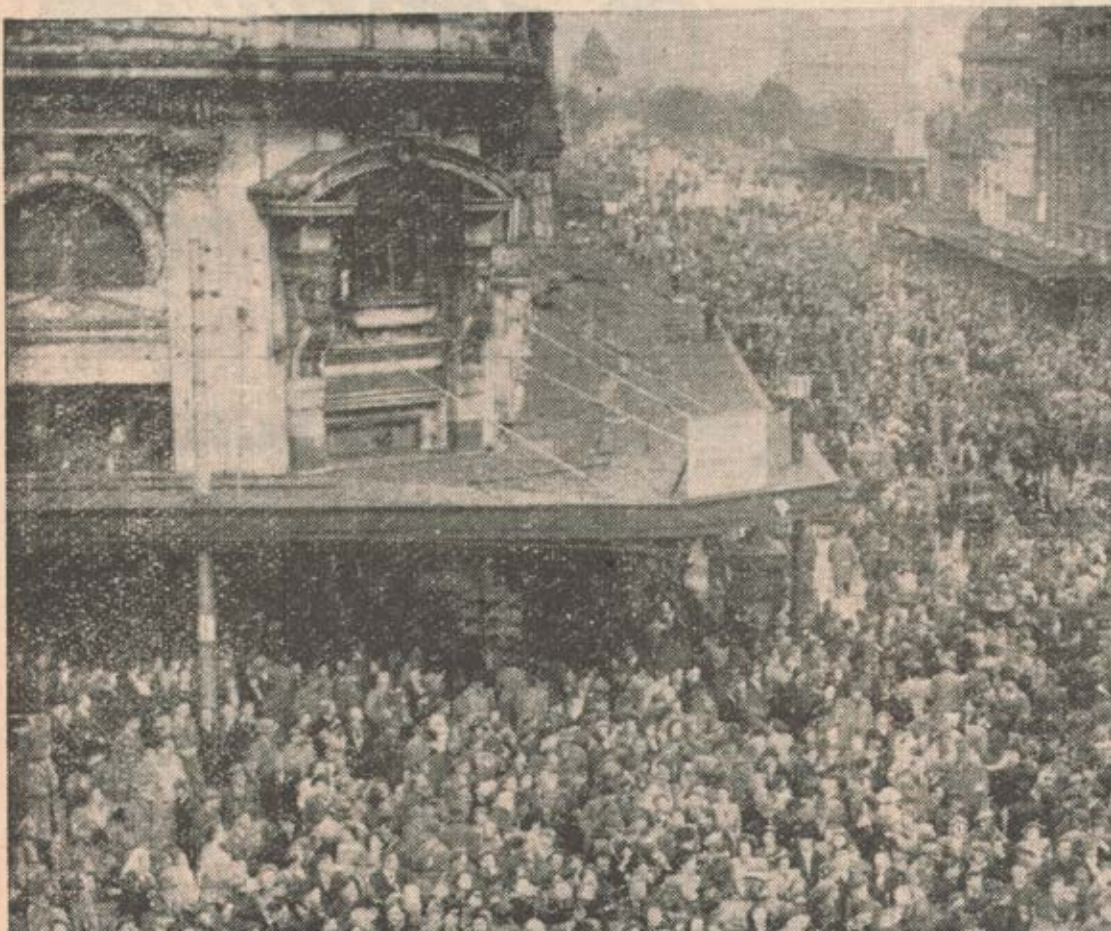
Melbourne schoolchildren were granted a holiday in early December and, over three days, 10,000 of them were treated to a day at the zoo as guests of Melbourne City Council. Arriving by charabanc (bus), each child was given a strip of tickets for refreshments and for rides on the merry-go-round, ponies, elephant and miniature train – and a commemorative medal. Although inscribed with the word 'victory', the medals were presented, said the Council, 'as a gesture of peace' (*Argus*, 12 December 1945). Victory and peace sound a lot alike, at least to the victors. (A national Peace Day, not Victory Day, had marked the end of the Great War.)

OPPOSITE
Victory Day revellers outside the GPO (State Library of Victoria)

Keep On Buying! WAR SAVIN

EUROPE – PACIFIC. 1945 • CITY OF MELBOURNE
VICTORY

DENSE MASSES THRONG STRE



EETS TO CELEBRATE VICTORY

CORONATION MEDALS 1953

The declining health of King George VI had resulted in the proposed royal visits in 1949 and 1952 being cancelled. So, in 1953, upon the coronation of Elizabeth II, Melbourne was well and truly ready for a royal occasion.

With the new Queen due to visit Melbourne, the Council considered her coronation celebrations 'an ideal rehearsal for the royal visit'. Melburnians obviously agreed, converging on the city in unprecedented numbers on coronation night, 2 June. That the enthronement of a monarch 17,000 kilometres away could excite such fervour seems astonishing now – but remember, the advent of TV was still three years off.

Sightseeing, square-dancing and pride in the empire were evidently enough to elevate the spirits. (Hotels, as usual, closed at six.) Collins Street was festooned with fairy-lights and the town hall's exterior was lit to give the effect of 'a floating building' (*Argus*, 20 May 1953). Inside, the coronation ball was under way, its centrepiece a 10-metre-high painted replica of Windsor Castle. That backdrop remained in place the next day for a coronation party attended by 3000 children from city orphanages and institutions. They were treated to films, singing, variety acts and, as they left, a package of afternoon tea – to save the hall from crumbs. But the Council's chief gesture to the city's children was the presentation of commemorative medals to primary and secondary school students on coronation eve, Monday 1 June. On that day, state schools followed a standard program of celebrations 'designed to develop a feeling of national pride and a distinct and sincere loyalty to the Throne' (*Argus*, 27 May 1953). After singing the national anthem – 'God Save the Queen' – and saluting the flag, children recited a solemn declaration:

'Remembering that the Queen, at her Coronation, is making a promise that, with God's help, she will try to rule wisely and well, I also promise that I will loyally serve my Queen and my country, obey the laws, and, by working hard, do my best to be a good and useful citizen.' (ibid.)

At Princes Hill State School, in Carlton, children of eight nationalities made the pledge and stood in line for their medals.

OPPOSITE
Queen Elizabeth II
Coronation Medal (1953)

FOLLOWING SPREAD
Coronation medals,
obverse and reverse

CORONATION OF QUEEN ELIZABETH

CITY OF MELBOURNE

CITY OF MELBOURNE STAFF UNIFORM BUTTONS

In recent times, City of Melbourne parking inspectors' bright-buttoned uniforms made them familiar figures of civic authority on the city streets. Earlier, though, the official 'bling' had been worn mainly by those with a ceremonial town hall role, including councillors and the town clerk when, on special occasions, they donned their garb of office. Not only decorative, the buttons, of brass or gilt, served as insignia and identification in a pre-SmartCard era.

The hall-keeper wasn't the only member of staff to wear a uniform studded with buttons. But his role at the town hall uniquely placed him to witness and participate in the events represented by objects on display in this exhibition. James (Jimmy) Dewar joined the town hall staff in 1913. A Scotsman, he had served in the Boer War and in India as a member of the Royal Highland Regiment (the Black Watch). In 1919, he became hall-keeper, a position that combined literally 'keeping the hall' – responsibility for bookings and use of the upper and lower town hall – with a more ceremonial role as the lord mayor's valet, or batman.

Indeed, there was something of a town hall superhero about Jimmy Dewar. In his 24 years as hall-keeper, he would act as 'guide and philosopher' to a dozen lord mayors (*Sun News-Pictorial*, 10 November 1932, p. 10). At their inauguration, it was he who lifted the chain of office from their predecessor's shoulders and placed it on theirs. It was his broguish bark of 'Pree silence!' that cut through the hubbub in the Council chamber or at town hall banquets to announce the lord mayor's entrance. 'His dour manner, dry wit, and tact have won him many friends', noted one news columnist, 'and his special cocktails are secrets which many have envied' (*Argus*, 27 May 1939). Bodyguard, toastmaster, confidante: Dewar was all that and more.

OPPOSITE
City of Melbourne uniform buttons

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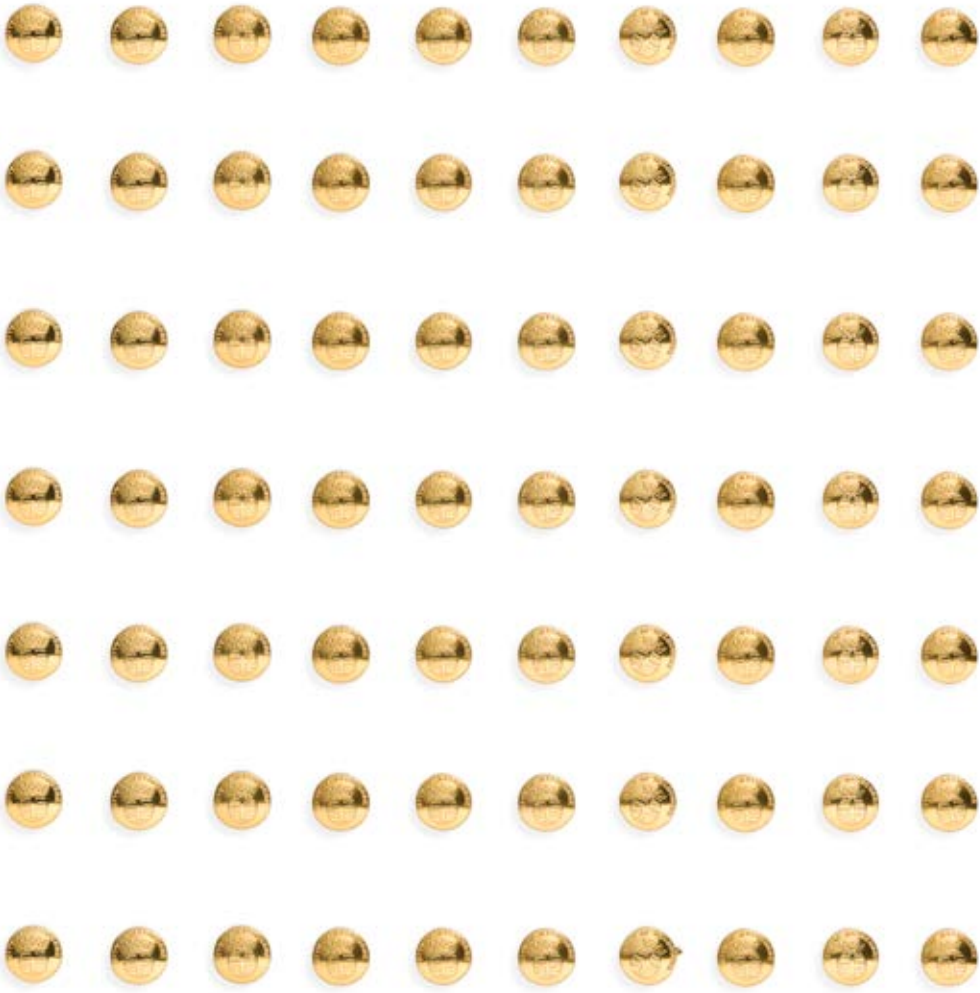

At the height of the police strike rioting in 1923, it was Dewar who discovered a cache of batons in a basement storeroom to arm special constables against the bottle-wielding mob. (Dewar lived in quarters at the town hall, and afterwards would claim the expense of 'evacuating' his family to the beach for their safety – and of a gun, for his own.)

In 1939, the calamitous Black Friday bushfires were still smouldering when he accompanied the lord mayor on a tour of the 'fire-swept areas' east of Melbourne. For the relief of the fire crews, he took with him four-dozen bottles of beer, handing them out along the way. When fire menaced the mayoral car on the Acheron Way, 'with typical determination' Dewar urged the driver onwards (*Argus*, 14 January 1939). And when the Rajah of Sandur's emissary called at the town hall, Dewar greeted him in Hindi with *'Tum kaisa hai'* (How are you?), having learned to 'sling the bhat' (to talk) during his Indian posting (*Argus*, 2 August 1939).

His staff at the town hall included an assistant hall-keeper and a junior page or messenger. Each was issued with two uniforms: one for everyday, the other for formal occasions. Both featured a plethora of brass buttons. Except for a brief interlude of maroon in the 1930s, town hall livery was uniformly navy blue.

Jimmy Dewar retired from the town hall in 1943. His son, also Jimmy, would be chauffeur to six lord mayors between 1945 and 1955, before joining the hall-keeper's staff.

OPPOSITE
City of Melbourne uniform buttons have changed over time. But each design features an element of the City's coat of arms. Some of the buttons in the collection are unused; others, presumably cut from discarded uniforms, have fragments of thread and worsted attached, or are dulled and dented from wear.

ABOVE
Municipal man of action Jimmy Dewar (circled) waits outside the town hall to open the Prince of Wales' carriage door. His '20 minutes' chat' with the prince (the future Edward VIII) would form Dewar's fondest memory (City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection).

Special:
A surplus of badges, medals, armbands and buttons mass-produced for issue from Melbourne town hall in times of strife and celebration.

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14 May – 14 August 2015

City Gallery
Melbourne Town Hall

melbourne.vic.gov.au/citygallery

ISBN 978-1-74250-962-4

ABOVE
City of Melbourne uniform button.

Thanks to
Heather McKay, Melbourne Library Service; Clare Williamson, State Library of Victoria; Robert Heather, State Library of Victoria; Sergeant Terry Claven, Victoria Police Museum: Ralph Stavely, Victoria Police Historical Society, Inc.; The City of Melbourne's Arts and Culture Branch and its Art and Heritage Program; Stephen Banham at Letterbox, whose inspired design made SPECIAL special.

In order that the streets may be kept clear of people to-night, the last tram will leave the city at 6 o'clock and the last train at 7 o'clock.

MINISTRY'S PROCLAMATION.

Urgent Appeal for Volunteers.

On behalf of the State Ministry the Attorney-General (Sir Arthur Robinson) made the following announcement last night:—

"The gravity of last night's events emphasises the seriousness of the position with which the community is faced. Never in the history of the State have such disreditable excesses occurred in the City of Melbourne. The responsibility for these excesses rests on those who have been false to their oath of duty. It now devolves upon every loyal citizen of military age to rally to the support of constituted authority and ordered Government. A resolute determination on the part of the public to maintain law and order can only have one ending—the complete rout of the mutineer. These have not shrunk, in breach of solemn trust, from leaving the city at the mercy of the worst elements of the underworld.

"This is no industrial dispute or class fight. The security of poor and rich alike depends upon the maintenance of law and order. If the basic principle upon which our civilised community life is founded is destroyed, what security is there for