

150 YEARS OF THE MELBOURNE TOWN HALL

YOU ARE
CORDIALLY
INVITED



CITY OF MELBOURNE



YOU ARE
CORDIALLY
INVITED

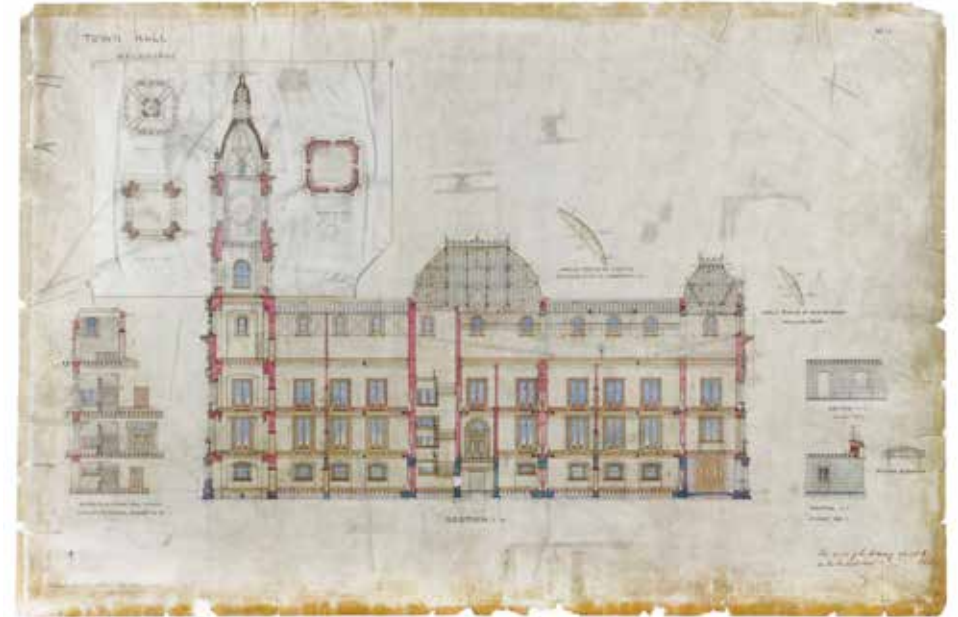
Enter here...

Imagine Melbourne Town Hall as an immense time machine.¹

Through this portal, we might travel from one moment in time to the next, seeing all the events and people this majestic building has ever hosted, gazing upon an extraordinary array of human feeling and endeavour.

You are cordially invited to enter this realm. For that is the Town Hall's primary objective – to be a welcoming place for the people. Through the building's corridors, chambers, glorious auditorium, balconies and service-ways, and along its main frontages on Swanston and Collins Streets, it is of course impossible to imagine everything that has happened here during the past 150 years.

Yet, since its opening ceremony in August 1870, Melbourne Town Hall has been the heart of this city's local civic life, the seat of governance and a focal point for hot political debate and cultural activity. It has been vital in shaping the city's fabric and its collective psyche – just as town halls around Australia and the world are centres for their own locale's evolving cultures.



Reed and Barnes
Architects and
Surveyors,
Elizabeth Street,
Melbourne

*Melbourne Town
Hall – section I and K,
1 July 1867*
Ink on paper
89.3 x 120.5 cm

City of Melbourne Art
and Heritage Collection

Line drawing by
Albert Charles
Cooke. Engraved
by Samuel Calvert.
(detail)

*Bird's Eye View of
Melbourne, 1880,*
c. 1880

Ink on paper

74.5 × 116 cm

City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection

Invader | When John Batman arrives, the valleys between hills form lovely expanses of grassland, studded with yam daisies. **It is 1835.** There is the manna forest, a 'dense tea-tree scrub' alongside the Birrarung (Yarra), and the occasional giant redgum.² This is the 'picturesque and park-like' landscape with excellent soil that Robert Hoddle describes.³ Its inhabitants, the Boonerwung and Woiwurrung (Wurundjeri) of the Kulin Nation, custodians of the region for tens of thousands of years, manage this land carefully. But the white intruders can neither see this nor countenance a sophisticated culture being at work. They want to drastically alter this place of deep connections, bringing streets, buildings and commerce.

Child | His father, Bebejan, and uncle Billibellary are Wurundjeri ngurungaeta, or clan leaders, and he is 11 years old when he watches his uncle and other Elders meet the white men.⁴ They receive gifts as part of a 'treaty'. **It is 6 June 1835.** This boy, Beruk, will eventually be known as William Barak, a revered leader and defender of his people's connection to these traditional lands. Many will be sent to Coranderrk Aboriginal Station. Others will die of the diseases brought by the white men. Barak's own wife and son die of tuberculosis. And some will be killed, such as the two Aboriginal men paraded through the streets in 1842 and executed by hanging in a 'deliberate act of public theatre' to inspire terror in the Aboriginal population.⁵

Convict | He is among a gang of convicts marking out Hoddle's grid of streets, overseen by a superintendent paid five shillings a day.⁶ **It is 1837.** He calls it hell, but others call the settlement Bearbrass. They remove trees, flatten hills, fill in gullies and generally impose a linear pattern that takes 'no notice of natural contours'. On one of these lines





— To the Editor of the Argus —

a writing—I wish to draw your attention to the many dangerous places in Melbourne that exist, in the shape of crab holes, more especially in the neighbourhood of public houses, from whence persons occasionally issue, not at all times in a state to preserve their equilibrium. The other night, a new chum, coming out of an hotel not a hundred yards from the Buck's Head, got into one of those infernal holes, and would have met with an inglorious end had not timely assistance arrived. I am of opinion that, instead of the beautiful Town Council, with the talented Mayor at their head, bothering their brains so much about a Town Hall, they should first take into consideration the safety of the Burgesses who support them, as, of course, were there no Burgesses, there would be no Town Council, and no Town Hall. I shall not trouble you at present with any further remarks, thanking you for inserting this, I am, Mr. Editor, yours. &c.

PRO BONO PUBLICO
Melbourne 9 Sept 1850

a pub is built, the Royal Hotel. In it, on 3 December 1842, the first 12 councillors elected take their oath of allegiance to Queen Victoria. The town has about 5000 people, and Melbourne's first mayor is a brewer, Henry Condell. There is no town hall for him.

Correspondent | He writes letters to *The Argus*, complaining about expensive plans for a town hall (Council is renting the Mechanics Institute).⁷ **It is September 1850.** The town has 'infernal holes' pockmarking the muddy byways, 'especially in the neighbourhood of public houses'. Recently, a chum almost met with 'an inglorious end' near the Buck's Head. Instead of 'the beautiful Town Council, with the talented Mayor at their head, bothering their brains so much about a Town Hall', they should first consider safety – for 'there would be no Town Council, and no Town Hall' if citizens fall down holes near pubs. Soon there will be much larger holes around Victoria: the gold rush is imminent.

Councillor | Dr Augustus Greeves once owned a pub at Queens Wharf. He is on the Works Committee to choose a town hall site. Some want it on a four-hectare allotment at Eastern Hill (where the state's Parliament now stands), but Greeves prevails in his desire for it to be at the Swanston and Collins Streets corner. This is 'a comparatively remote area' that helps weaken 'the old centre of gravity' at Queens Wharf.⁸ The first Town Hall is started, just two blocks north of the new Princes Bridge. **It is 1851.** Melbourne is now the capital of the colony of Victoria. Tree stumps have been grubbed out all over the place, streets have been paved, footpaths gravelled and steam trains will soon run at Flinders Street, but newspapers say 'the whole city is gold mad'. So, the gold rush labour-drain slows construction of the first Town Hall,

Maker unknown
Ceremonial mallet,
c. 1867
Blackwood
33 x 15 x 12 cm
City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection

Overleaf
Patrick Pound
*Street Views of
Melbourne Town
Hall (detail), 2020*
Postcards
Commissioned by
the City of
Melbourne, 2020
City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection



THE TOWN HALL, MELB.



Town Hall, Melbourne



Town Hall, Melbourne



Opposite Left
Archibald McDonald

G. G. Munro in fancy dress, 1870

Hand-coloured photograph, card
16.4 × 10.8 cm

City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection

Opposite Right
Archibald McDonald

Mrs G.G. Munro in fancy dress, 1870

Hand-coloured photograph, card
16.4 × 10.7 cm

City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection

which ends up being a dull pile despite being envisioned as a large and commanding edifice. By the late-1860s it is demolished in favour of a grander second empire–style building by architects Reed and Barnes. It is made partly with olivine basalt, known locally as ‘bluestone’.

Duke | Prince Alfred, the Duke of Edinburgh, uses a blackwood mallet to lay the new Town Hall’s foundation stone. **It is 29 November 1867.** He is the first royal family member to visit Australia. Two years later he returns to lay a capital in the clocktower, named Prince Alfred’s Tower, which will eventually (1874) hold a London-made clock, after Melbourne maker Thomas Gaunt fails to win the job. On his third trip, the duke is the first official guest in the completed Town Hall, opened in August 1870. The building has a larger main hall than first planned, thanks to petitioners with a democratic spirit wanting to ensure it is a place for the debate of political and other issues.⁹ Zoom in on Albert Cooke’s drawing of 1880 Melbourne, population 280,000, and you can see a clot of traffic outside the Town Hall. This is just before the Melbourne Electric Company installs an arc electric lamp in Swanston Street. Later, in 1888, the Council buys the old Police Court building next to the Town Hall for £140,000 for the future Council administrative offices.

Fancy-dresser | She and her husband join the multifariously costumed guests streaming up the steps to the Swanston Street door. **It is 11 August 1870.** It is the Town Hall opening ball, thrown by Lord Mayor Samuel Amess at his own expense. A spectator ‘might fancy himself away from every-day matter-of-fact Melbourne’, looking at ‘a fairy palace’.¹⁰ Corridors and rooms are enlivened by merry-makers, and ‘a number of persons actually lost themselves, and the most anxious inquiries might often be heard as to “Which is the way out?”’



Opposite Top
E. Whitehead & Co.

Menu for the
inaugural dinner
of Lord Mayor
Benjamin Benjamin,
1887 (detail)

Paper, ink

15.8 × 10.6 cm

City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection

Opposite Bottom
Talma & Co.

Dame Nellie Melba on
the concert platform
at Melbourne Town
Hall, 1902

Gift of Isabel Anne
[Mrs George]
Stogdale, 1995

Stogdale collection of
Melba photographs,
Pictures Collection,
State Library Victoria

Overleaf
Patrick Pound

*Street Views of
Melbourne Town
Hall* (detail), 2020

Postcards

Commissioned by
the City of
Melbourne, 2020
City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection

Dinner guest | She is wondering about the menu. The tables have been elegantly decorated in honour of the inaugural dinner for the Right Worshipful Mayor Mr Benjamin Benjamin. **It is 9 November 1887.** She is looking forward to oysters 'on the shell' and turtle soup, though she might pass over the boar's head for the more succulent chicken, ham and game pies. These evenings are all about exclusivity;¹¹ she sits through 15 toasts, beginning with Her Majesty and ending with 'the ladies'. In between are all those men: excellencies, judges, ministers, even 'the prosperity of Melbourne'. The press members, at number 14, are just ahead of the ladies.

Soprano | She loves a farewell and tonight's concert is the last of a series given to Melburnians on her long-awaited return to Australia. She was born Helen Mitchell, but Madame Nellie Melba has honoured the city through her adopted name, having made her debut at this Town Hall 18 years ago at a Liedertafel concert. Now she is back. **It is 8 October 1902.** It's been a success: from her Sydney and Melbourne concerts she has made £21,000. Thousands turn out tonight at the Town Hall, and people are 'practically sitting on the stairs'. A 'flashlight photograph' is taken of the audience, whose members feel fortunate to have her gracing the Town Hall while 'still at the zenith of her fame'.¹²

Stunt double | She has just had a part in the world's first feature-length film, *The Story of the Kelly Gang*, and Elizabeth Tait is at the Town Hall for its gala premiere (it also screened earlier in the day at the Athenaeum, just up the street).¹³ **It is 26 December 1906.** For the past six months, her director husband Charles has engaged cinematograph operators and others for the moving picture, costing nearly £1000. Elizabeth can't wait to see how it is received, and wonders if the Town Hall crowds will notice she is the stunt double for the role of Ned Kelly's sister Kate.





A Footprint of Memory

Opposite Left
Maker unknown

Printing block,
Melbourne Town
Hall, c. 1920s

Lead

14 × 9.5 × 2 cm

Printed impression
by Kate Gorringe-
Smith, 2020

Kozo paper

20 × 15.5 cm

City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection

Opposite Right
Maker unknown

Image showing
installation or
maintenance of
Melbourne Town
Hall's clock, undated
Photographic paper

26 × 22 cm

City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection

Driver | Enthused, he has been watching cars appear in greater numbers on the city's streets since the 1890s. But now the place is in chaos, as the horse era dissolves and the Council gets ready to introduce new traffic laws that will make cars drive on the left and indicate when they turn. Eventually, Council will introduce traffic lights, pedestrian crossings and street signs.¹⁴ **It is June 1914.** As he drives noisily down Bourke Street, he cannot imagine the other sorts of things this Council will do: make a section of this street car-free, introduce American-style parking meters (1955), limit the traffic down Swanston Street and even debate (in 1947) banning cars entirely from the whole of central Melbourne.

Soldier | He has arrived at the Town Hall to sign up for the new recruitment campaign. It's a hot, stuffy night, but there are few vacant seats as Lord Mayor Sir David Hennessy opens and city organist Dr Price plays his selection. **It is 10 January 1917.** The war has been grinding on but the number of recruits has been declining: from 7536 in February 1916 to only 552 by December.¹⁵ The Town Hall has been a centre of recruitment, but also a place where anti-conscription speakers and conscientious objectors have had their say – except, of course, for suffragette Adela Pankhurst, debarred by the Council from making her anti-war speeches at the Town Hall. It was a decision described as 'petty, arrogant and intolerant'.¹⁶

Nurse | She has been living through the influenza pandemic, and the Town Hall has been a meeting place to coordinate responses and rules, as well as a base for inoculation. This week alone Victoria has had 73 deaths, and there is a shortage of nurses.¹⁷ **It is 26 April 1919.** The Council is planning to hold a postwar peace celebration, but



Opposite Top
Simon Learmonth

Wire model,
Melbourne Town Hall,
c. 1998–99

Wire

91 x 101 x 32 cm

City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection

Opposite
Bottom Left

T.W. Cameron

'Venereal diseases
and the gift of life',
1924

Reproduction print
of glass lantern slide,
ink on paper

55.5 x 53.5 cm

City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection

Opposite
Bottom Left

T.W. Cameron

'Human pitfalls –
dealing with venereal
diseases', 1928

Reproduction print
of glass lantern slide,
ink on paper

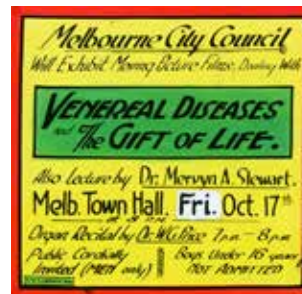
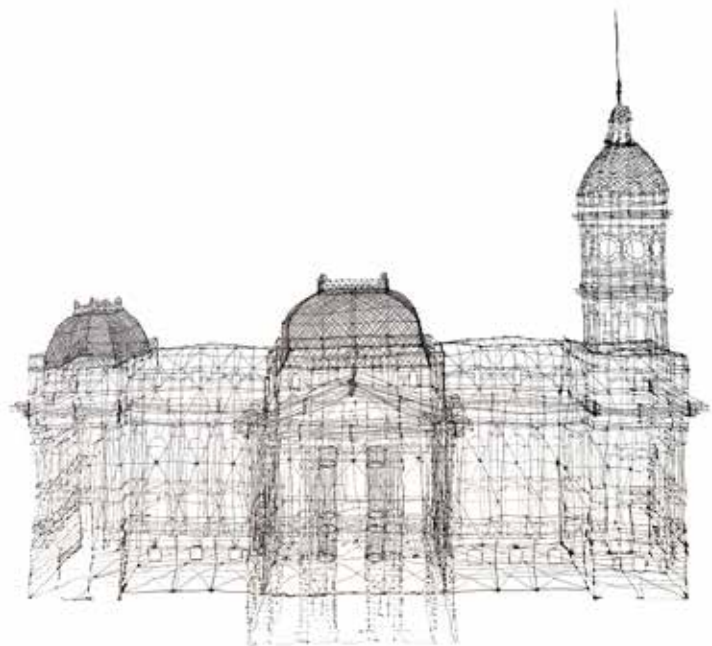
55.5 x 53.5 cm

City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection

Councillor Frank Shillabeer deprecates encouraging crowds into Swanston Street because of the pandemic.¹⁸ Soon, though, theatres, schools and other venues will start to reopen; by September the special influenza hospitals will start to close, though authorities warn that abatement in cases could be followed by another wave.¹⁹

Looter | The police have gone on strike, so he joins the rioters during Melbourne Cup weekend, smashing windows and pilfering. **It is 4 November 1923.** Homemade armbands are issued for volunteer special constables – mostly returned soldiers – and the Riot Act is invoked. Damage amounts to many thousands of pounds, and trains and trams are cancelled. The 'special police', who amass outside the Town Hall, the centre of the action, are armed with batons and control the situation. More than 100 people go to hospital.²⁰

Physician | He is presenting 'an exhibition of moving pictures' about the scourge of venereal disease, and people are 'cordially invited' to the lecture.²¹ **It is 25 July 1924.** This is a century before epidemiologists are globally viewed as heroic, yet Dr Mervyn Stewart has been vocal about typhoid, smallpox and diphtheria in the past. Venereal disease is his new focus, and by 1926 he gets 14,000 people to attend a series of men-only and women-only lectures, some at the Town Hall. He estimates 10–15 per cent of the population has contracted VD, and about 8–10 per cent of the mothers in a local maternity hospital alone have been infected, bringing blindness, deafness and mental illness to their newborn.²²



THE TOWN HALL, MELB.

Town Hall, Melbourne



Preceding Spread

Patrick Pound

*Street Views of
Melbourne Town
Hall (detail), 2020*
Postcards

Commissioned by
the City of
Melbourne, 2020
City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection

Right

Edwin G. Adamson

Fire-damaged
Melbourne Town Hall,
1925

Photographic paper
19.5 x 16.2 cm
City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection



Parent | She is asleep with her children in the temperance hotel, the Victoria Coffee Palace, when the Town Hall, next door, catches fire in the early hours. **It is 1 February 1925.** The manager, Mrs Mitchell, gets the housemaids to knock on guests' doors. Luggage is thrown over the balcony, guests go into the street in their night attire and one elderly woman tosses £100 into the street (later retrieving the notes).²³ In the fierce conflagration, the concert hall is left a shell; the chains used to hang about 20 oil paintings, mostly of former mayors, remain. Burning sparks float past the Coffee Palace, but it endures unscathed. In 1927, the Town Hall reopens with a municipal concert, and it is praised as a larger, more beautiful building than before, an 'unmixed blessing' of the fire.²⁴ The Town Hall has been extended, devouring the Victoria Coffee Palace.

Critic | World War II is breaking out in Europe, while yet another vicious war is unfolding at the Town Hall, where Prime Minister Menzies has just helped open the Herald Exhibition of French and British Contemporary Art (without airing his well-known distaste for modern art). **It is 16 October 1939.** During its extended run, the exhibition is thronged by enthusiastic crowds, totalling about 45,000 viewers. Yet the director of the National Gallery of Victoria, JS MacDonald, is disgusted by this exhibition, which he has refused to host, describing the modern art movement as 'the product of degenerates and perverts'.²⁵ Herald critic Basil Burdett is proud of the show, having been sent to Europe many months ago by Sir Keith Murdoch to amass works for display by the likes of Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Cézanne and Paul Gauguin.

Below

Stokes & Sons

Uniform buttons,
City of Melbourne
Brass

Each 2 × 2 cm

City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection

Opposite

Maker unknown

Melbourne Town
Hall illuminated for
royal visit, 1954

Paper

59.2 × 66.8 cm

City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection



Streetsweeper | He has a long career ahead of him, employed by the Council on a cleaning route taking in the Town Hall's two street frontages. **It is 1940.** He fetches the trolley, brooms and pans from the service entry. His gold buttons, boasting the city's coat of arms, glitter. First, he polishes the bannisters, including the one that a woman slid down, to be found 'quite dead';²⁶ they still talk about that. Nearby is the flower kiosk kept by Leslie Stevenson.²⁷ And over there is the first elm planted, by Mayor Gatehouse, in 1875.²⁸ Around the corner are the lovely-and-clean Town Hall toilets. And there's the Talma photographic studio building, where his mum once posed – she'd been on the stage! It's a city to be proud of, especially now in wartime, so he does his best to clean up matchboxes, tram tickets and bits of paper – though, as the Town Hall posters say, 'our manpower is limited'.²⁹ Hopefully they'll do something about the rats soon.

Sovereign | She'll only be at the Town Hall for five minutes (4.50–4.55pm), enough time to thank the lord mayor, give a brief welcome speech 'with that pretty upward glance... that is part of her charm', and be handed a large bouquet of flowers by a little girl in a pretty frock.³⁰ **It is 25 February 1954.** It is her first visit to the colony, and Queen Elizabeth II is 27. She's just had a cuppa – no sugar – at Parliament House, unaware the lord mayor has a specially made tea service waiting. Crowds nearly breach the barriers, for this is the 'Greatest Day in City's History'.³¹ She'll return repeatedly, though they might never again light up the Town Hall as magnificently as tonight. In 1970, she'll be back for the bicentenary of Captain Cook's landing and be pictured at this Town Hall with Princes Philip and Charles.





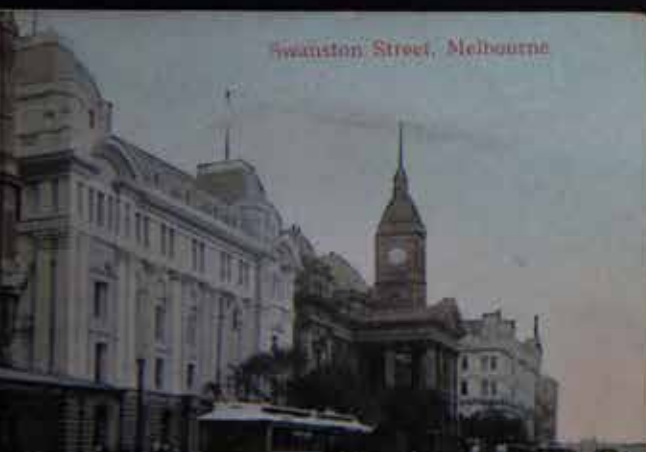
to be a happy one.



Swanston Street, Melbourne



*Swanston St.
About Town Hall
Melbourne*



Swanston Street, Melbourne



Melbourne. Swanston Street and Town Hall



Preceding Spread

Patrick Pound

*Street Views of
Melbourne Town
Hall (detail), 2020*

Postcards

Commissioned by
the City of
Melbourne, 2020
City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection

Opposite Top

The Beatles at
Melbourne Town Hall,
16 June 1964

John Lamb

Courtesy Nine
Publishing

Opposite Bottom

Crowds awaiting the
Beatles' appearance
on the portico
balcony, 16 June
1964

Courtesy Nine
Publishing

Opposite Right

Lionel Rose on
the portico balcony,
29 February 1968

Published in *The Age*,
1 March 1968

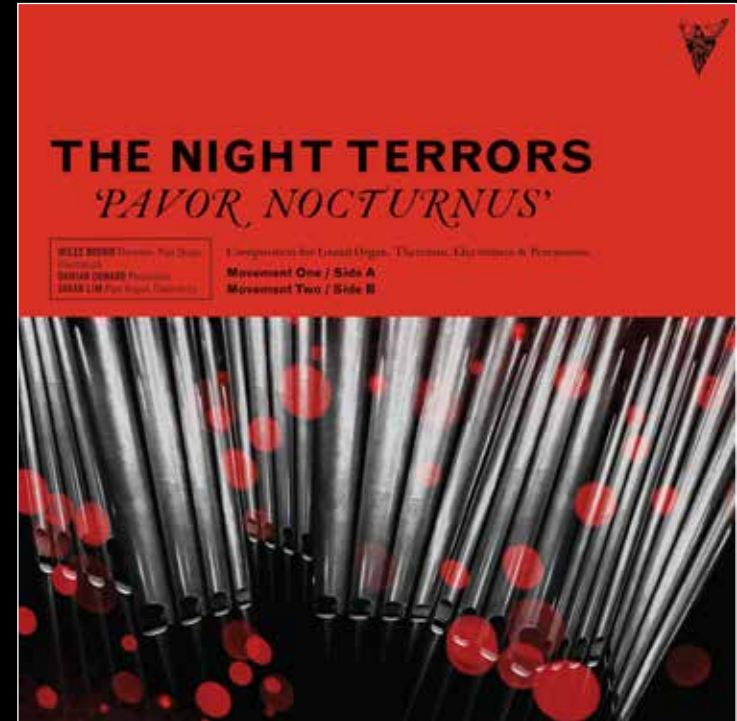
Courtesy Nine
Publishing

Builder | He is fitting a window in Melbourne's first skyscraper, looking down across the city. **It is 1958.** From 1916, there has been a 132-foot (40-metre) height limit, but the City of Melbourne has now approved, 'in principle', the construction of buildings above the prescribed limitation.³² As he looks down, he imagines how this place has grown, knowing that in the 1890s the first 'skyscrapers' – nine storeys high – were erected. This one, ICI House, is 19 storeys and is in the international glass-curtain style. The city is changing. Before long, the Eastern and Western Markets and the streets' gorgeous verandahs will be gone, and the new Arts Centre and National Gallery of Victoria will go up. By the early 2000s, there will be high-rises everywhere, including the 91-storey (297-metre) Eureka Tower, on Southbank.

Musician | The screaming! Ringo notices some fans fainting below them, before the Town Hall portico. On the balcony, he, John, George and Paul cannot stop smiling. Paul waves a boomerang at Lord Mayor Edward Leo Curtis, who is giving them a Town Hall reception, to which 450 people have been invited. **It is 16 June 1964.** After a didgeridoo lesson, the balcony greeting and a stint in the main hall, they have an impromptu sing-song on piano for the Curtis kids, who love these boys, The Beatles.

Boxer | He stands on the Town Hall balcony, waving to the 10,000-strong crowd below. He is the world's new bantamweight boxing champion, Lionel Rose. He tells a reporter: 'I didn't think so many people cared'. All traffic is stopped along Swanston Street and the crowd roars its approval. **It is 29 February 1968.** It takes 10 minutes to get from the car to the Town Hall for the reception. Lionel says: 'I won the title for my family, my race and Australia'. Chants of 'We want Rose!', eventually draw this 19-year-old onto the balcony. He is later named inaugural Indigenous Australian of the Year.





Opposite

New War

Trouble in the Air,
LP album cover

Designed by Luke
Fraser, Grin Creative

Above

The Night Terrors

Pavor Nocturnus,
LP album cover

Designed by Luke
Fraser, Grin Creative

Opposite Top

Vietnam War
protesters,
Melbourne Town Hall,
8 May 1970

Bruce Postle
Courtesy Nine
Publishing

Opposite Bottom**Maker unknown**

ABBA on the portico
balcony, 5 March
1977

Courtesy David Fyfe
and Luke Rogers

Protester | She links arms with politicians, journalists and the Vietnam Moratorium Committee chairman, Dr Jim Cairns. 'Peace!', they cry, 'Stop the war!' Protesters are pressing around the Town Hall's edges and up and down Swanston, Bourke and Collins Streets. They are peaceful. **It is 8 May 1970.** Melbourne rallies have always been part of its street life, with 'rowdy, impassioned mobs' demonstrating 'on all manner of political and social issues'.³³ Yet the Town Hall itself has not always welcomed all citizens; gatekeepers unavoidably practise 'selective access', despite the ideals inspiring the Town Hall's foundation.³⁴

Fan | He has been waiting for eight hours and wears an ABBA T-shirt, cap and badges. Luke Rogers is 12 years old and optimistically clutches an autograph book. **It is 5 March 1977.** Squeezed against the barriers, the crowd boos at some Bay City Rollers fans, dressed in tartan. Then ABBA arrives in a black limousine. The screaming of these thousands of fans is impossibly loud. As the group goes inside the Town Hall, Luke is trembling and crying and wanting them to see this so they know how much he loves them. From the Town Hall balcony, Frida throws down flowers, which a friend catches and shares; Luke gets a carnation, later pressing it in a book. A film crew records the boy in passing. Months later, seeing the movie, he is astonished to see himself, filmed that glorious day at the Town Hall.³⁵

Designer | It is Victoria's 150th anniversary and she has co-designed a temporary landscape down the city's main thoroughfare, an immense lawn unrolled along Swanston Street. **It is February 1985.** After months of preparation, Sonja Peter sees her vision come to life: overnight,



Opposite

Maker unknown

The Greening,
Swanston Street,
1985

Courtesy Sonja Peter

hundreds of workers lay 13,250 square metres of fresh grass along four blocks, between Flinders and Lonsdale Streets, and 240 mature trees and palms in bespoke planters are craned into place, alongside thousands of flowers.³⁶ The Greening inspires people to see the place differently. It's just for the weekend, but almost everyone wishes it would stay.

Lord Mayor | She is seated in the high-backed lord mayoral chair, believed to have been made for the first Town Hall in 1853. **It is 10 August 1987.** She is Lecki Ord, the first female lord mayor. She is 39 and an architect. She is used to being the only woman in meetings and never lets anyone speak over her. Attention to her gender becomes a nine-day wonder.³⁷ As the city's motto says, *Vires acquirit eundo!* (We gather strength as we go!), and so she and the Council get down to business for coming celebrations, which bring Queen Elizabeth, Prince Charles and Margaret Thatcher on visits, 200 years after the First Fleet. Her Council embarks on a bid for the Olympics, and she contributes much to strategies to encourage inner-city living. Council emphasises strategic thinking, particularly in social and physical planning. Her two children see all this, coming with her to the Town Hall for Council commitments after school and at weekends.

Acrobat | She is performing with Circus Oz at the Town Hall, swinging so high. **It is 20 September 1989.** How much talent this hall has hosted! She's been told about the Salvation Army's 'out-there' 1900 multimedia performance, melding short films, glass slides, hymns and music with a spiritualist's oration. The Melbourne Symphony Orchestra has long called the place home, ABC concerts are legendary and this is the place for important memorial services marking everything





Above

Lin Tobias

Program, Circus Oz
performance, 1989

Paper

22.4 x 22.7 cm

Donated by Patricia
Goble, 2008

City of Melbourne Art
and Heritage Collection

Opposite Top

Maker unknown

Nelson Mandela,
Honorary Freeman
certificate, 1990

Ink on paper

39 x 33.5 cm

City of Melbourne Art
and Heritage Collection

Opposite Bottom

Nelson Mandela
at the Melbourne
Town Hall during
his Australian visit,
25 October 1990

Ray Kennedy

Courtesy Nine
Publishing

from international massacres to local people of note. And there have been aria contests, mayoral balls, crazy stage designs, celebrities, evangelists, muscle men, hairdressing competitions, cooking demonstrations, union uprisings, art shows, writers festivals, comedy festivals, book and zine fairs, immunisation drives, voting booths, horticultural shows ... now it's a circus.

Broadcaster | Two young women, Deb Welch and Lisa Bellear, are co-hosting 3CR's live Town Hall broadcast, at which Nelson Mandela is addressing the unions. **It is 25 October 1990.** He thanks the people for helping to bring down South Africa's apartheid system and to secure his freedom, after 27 years as a political prisoner. Following an impassioned speech, Mr Mandela receives the Honorary Freeman Certificate and addresses the chamber of councillors. Among the guests, including politicians and council workers crammed into the upstairs gallery, is former lord mayor Kevin Chamberlin, who describes Nelson Mandela as a warm character.

Educator | Committed to writing in the history of Aboriginal nations through her public artworks, Dr Fiona Foley is commissioned by the City of Melbourne to make a sculpture. *Lie of the Land* is installed on Swanston Street, outside the Town Hall. **It is 19 May 1997.** Its unveiling comes the week before the inaugural Australian Reconciliation Convention, at which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island delegates turn their backs on Prime Minister John Howard for his dismissive attitude, refusal to say 'sorry' and for describing their plight as a 'blemish' on Australian history. *Lie of the Land* comprises seven sandstone pillars, each inscribed with a word: blankets, knives, looking glasses, tomahawks, beads, scissors and flour. These are taken from



Fiona Foley

Lie of the Land,
1997

Sandstone
7 pillars, each
300 x 100 x 50 cm

Accompanying
soundscape by
Chris Knowles

Photograph by
Collin Bogaars
Commissioned
by the City of
Melbourne, 1997

City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection



Batman's 1835 treaty, according to which these items were traded with Wurundjeri Elders for a vast tract of land, including what is now central Melbourne. A soundscape in local Aboriginal, Chinese, Portuguese, Dutch, French, Indonesian and English languages accompanies the seven pillars. The work speaks to 'land swindles, sexual violations and wholesale massacres' of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people since colonisation.³⁸ Intended as a temporary commission, the art work is later moved to Melbourne Museum, due to the permanent nature of the materials.

Princess | She is the princess-in-waiting for Moomba and she is seated before a wall of photos showing many kings and queens who have graced this annual parade past the Town Hall. **It is 2004.** Moomba has been going since 1955 and its title is from an Aboriginal word. For the photos her artist aunty Destiny Deacon is taking, she has been dressed up beautifully, as has her fellow royal, a princeling. They wait.



Destiny Deacon
(KuKu and Erub/Mer)

Princess in Waiting,
2004

Light jet print from
Polaroid original
120 x 110 cm

Commissioned by
the City of
Melbourne, 2004
City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection

Overleaf Left

Patrick Pound

*Street Views of
Melbourne Town
Hall (detail), 2020*

Postcards

Commissioned
by the City of
Melbourne, 2020

City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection

Overleaf Right

Patrick Pound

*Town Halls of the
World (detail), 2020*

Postcards

Courtesy of
Patrick Pound





Bryony Jackson

Coming Back Out Ball,
2017

Courtesy Bryony
Jackson and All
the Queens Men

Cleaner | He vacuums, dusts and polishes the extraordinary amounts of Australian blackwood that feature in the Council Chambers, an ornate and romantically-lit room that is heavy on Italian and English Renaissance style. **It is 9 August 2010.** Today they are celebrating a century since the chambers were opened, when dozens of men filed in at noon to have their photos taken. There's a lot to keep clean – the pillars of marble (from New South Wales!), the bronze caps, the cedar furniture. All this décor is in Australian materials, with gumnuts and other local flora, and none of it has changed since it opened – though they did have to modify the toilets on level two when the first woman councillor (Clare Cascarret) was elected in 1967. She refused to attend the all-male lord mayor's dinner because it was a 'men's do' that she considered unimportant to her Council career.³⁹ Before and since then, there have been many firsts, breakthroughs, squabbles, signings of the councillors' 'protest book', and many, many lord mayors and councillors who have endured cheering and booing from the galleries. They've even watched the lord mayor bang his rarely used gavel so hard that the top flew off.⁴⁰

Couple | They remember standing outside the Town Hall in 1972 when they came to the gay-lib demo across the road in the temporary City Square, setting off through the city with about 300 others, holding placards and proclaiming their sexuality. Tonight, decades later, they dance in each other's arms inside the hall for the Coming Back Out Ball. **It is 7 October 2017.** Coming out is something you do endlessly in different ways; sometimes it's routine, other times it's joyous and proud. Melbourne City Council has been ahead of the curve: since 2007, it has had a relationship register to recognise LGBTQI couples. Now, this ball comes two months before same-sex marriage is made a national, legal right.

Opposite Top

Naretha Williams
Blak Mass, LP album
cover (detail)
Designed by Luke
Fraser, Grin Creative
Photograph by
Christopher
Sutherland

Opposite Bottom

Maker unknown
The grand organ,
Melbourne Town Hall,
c. 1920
Photographic paper
15.4 × 20.4 cm
City of Melbourne
Art and Heritage
Collection

Overleaf

Patrick Pound
*Town Halls of the
World* (detail), 2020
Postcards
Courtesy of
Patrick Pound

Artist | She is a Wiradjuri woman and she is making an experimental piece of music for the City of Melbourne. Her name is Naretha Williams and she is combining the grand organ with electronics to realise her complex progressive compositions for a live performance. **It is 2019.** She also makes an album of the work, calling it *Blak Mass*, which contemplates the collision between civic history and the impact of colonisation on First Peoples and Country, exploring themes around identity, place and the unseen.

Resident | She lives in the CBD and has watched the City of Melbourne's revolutionary Postcode 3000, launched in 1992, bring tens of thousands more people to live in what was once a deserted wasteland after 6pm: from around 3800 CBD dwellers in 1986 to 10,700 in 1996,⁴¹ and now about 55,700.⁴² She is wondering about the city of the future, especially in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. **It is June 2020.** She loves how the Council's laneway commissions have used creative arts to lead the way, and she hopes independent creatives will boldly make it a place to flourish amid new and challenging conditions.

Organist | Will he have to disinfect the organ's keys each time he plays? **It is November 2020.** This place has been here for 150 years, and the first organ was a beauty, built by Hill and Son of London and first played in 1872. They had to rebuild that £15,000 organ. Then it became 'a hill of charred remains' in the 1925 fire, its pipes acting as chimney flues, allowing flames 'to obtain a good hold on the ceiling'.⁴³ The Town Hall's new grand organ arrives in 1929, made of Californian red pine, Queensland maple and metal. Into the 21st century it remains – clear and strong – the voice of the Melbourne Town Hall.





this is quite a respectable picture
but wait till you see the
original. Not.



I am
spending
a few
days
here.



THE TOWN HALL, LEEDS

How do you like our Town Hall?

Eden



Clinton Town Hall

Before the fire.

This is our Town Hall & Public Library. I
do not think it is as large as yours.
Best wishes.

Ruby Wallace



Endnotes

1. Gratitude to commissioned artist Patrick Pound for this evocative description.
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5. Tony Birch, 'Tunnersminnerwait and Maulboyheenner are with us: mourning, memory and presence', *Executed in Franklin Street*, exhibition catalogue, City Gallery, Melbourne, 2015.
6. Bernard Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1979, p.17.
7. 'Town Hall versus Streets', *The Argus* (Melbourne), 12 September 1850, p.3.
8. Barrett, *The Civic Frontier*, p.66.
9. Graeme Tucker, 'A Palace for the Citizens? A Social and Cultural History of the Melbourne Town Hall', MA thesis, Monash University, 1993, p.120.
10. 'Inauguration of the New Town Hall, Melbourne', *Illustrated Australian News for Home Readers* (Melbourne), 10 September 1870, p.162.
11. Tucker, 'A Palace for the Citizens?', p.16.
12. 'Madame Melba Final Concert', *The Age* (Melbourne), 8 October 1902, p.4.
13. 'Amusements', *The Argus* (Melbourne), 27 December 1906, p.5.
14. apo.org.au/node/118621; accessed 22 July 2020.
15. 'Our Honour at Stake', *The Argus* (Melbourne), 10 January 1917, p.9.
16. 'Miss Pankhurst on Labor. Inspiring Election Address', *The Socialist* (Melbourne), 27 April 1917, p.1.
17. 'Influenza Epidemic, the Week's Record', *Weekly Times* (Melbourne), 26 April 1919, p.32.
18. 'Peace Celebrations', *The Age* (Melbourne), 6 May 1919, p.8.
19. 'Abatement of Influenza', *The Age* (Melbourne), 4 September 1919, p.8.
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22. 'Health Lecture for Women', *The Age* (Melbourne), 14 September 1926, p.11.
23. 'Melbourne Town Hall on fire', *The Age* (Melbourne), 2 February 1925, p.9.
24. 'New Town Hall, Official Opening Concert', *The Argus* (Melbourne), 16 December 1927, p.16.
25. Shane Carmody, "'Vain, Aggressive and Somewhat Quarrelsome": The Enduring Impact of Sir Sydney Cockerell on the Melbourne Collections', *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, vol. 13, no. 4, p.441.
26. 'A Curious Case', *The Herald* (Melbourne), 18 October 1870, p.3.
27. Sergt. L.J. Stevenson', *The Age* (Melbourne), 14 February 1942, p.3.
28. 'Tree planting in Melbourne', *The Age* (Melbourne), 25 May 1875), p.2.
29. 'Cleaner Streets – or else!', *The Herald* (Melbourne), 6 May 1943), p.3.
30. 'Sunshine, cheers for the Queen', *The Age* (Melbourne), 25 February 1954), p.1.
31. *The Age* (Melbourne), 25 February 1954, p.1.
32. prov.vic.gov.au/explore-collection/provenance-journal/provenance-2018/ici-house-and-birth-discretionary-tall; accessed 21 July 2020.
33. Malcolm McKinnon, *We Protest!*, exhibition catalogue, City Gallery, Melbourne, 2018, inside cover.
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35. Gratitude to Luke Rogers for sharing his eloquent unpublished essay on this day in his life.
36. killyourdarlings.com.au/2016/09/imagine-a-city-swanston-st-party; accessed 11 July 2020.
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38. Timothy Morrell, 'Collector's Dossier: Fiona Foley', *Art Collector*, no. 50, October–December 2009, p.96.
39. Just a "Storm in a Tea Cup", *The Age* (Melbourne), 31 October 1967, p.9.
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Overleaf

J.P. Shilo
Jubjote,
 LP album cover
 Designed by Luke
 Fraser, Grin Creative

