

HENRY E. HOLT

# AN ENERGETIC COLONIST

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HAWTHORN

HENRY E. HOLT

Thomas Holt was an extremely active settler who found plenty of scope in the Sydney of the 1850's. His interests stemmed from speculation of pastoral properties and extended to, a founding role in the AMP Society, a premature encouragement of railway building by private enterprise, selective breeding of sheep and the culture of oysters, for which Sydney is today renowned.

He also involved himself in alpaca breeding, entertained widely and still found time for works of charity.

His life spanned much of Sydney's early history and his activities – retraced here by Judge Henry Holt – are an important contribution to the history of New South Wales.

**\$6.95**

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# AN ENERGETIC COLONIST

*A Biographical Account of  
the Activities of the late  
Hon. Thomas Holt, MLC*

BY

HENRY E. HOLT

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# Preface

This compilation is the outcome of my yielding to the persuasion of the late Dr C. H. Currey and certain of my relatives not to idle away my time in retirement but to devote some of it in research into the activities of my grandfather. As he died some years before I was born I have been unable to call on any direct personal knowledge of him and have had to rely on written records and, where these are conflicting (as is not unusual), to select those which appear to be the more reliable.

In succeeding pages I have endeavoured not to intrude my own personal views but to deal with the varied activities of the subject impartially and factually, with sources indicated, leaving to any reader the facility of making his or her own assessment of personal attributes.

Doubtless some activities have escaped notice, but time is not limitless, space is not boundless, nor is a reader's interest inexhaustible.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to the personnel of various public and private institutions who so readily and willingly made information available. These include those connected with the Library of New South Wales, including the Mitchell Library, the Archives Authority of New South Wales, the National Library of Australia, the Library of Parliament of New South Wales, the library of the Lands' Department, Sydney, the Registrar General's Department, Sydney, the Australian Mutual Provident Society, the Bank of New South Wales through its archivist Miss P. Quinn and Miss I. Smyth, the State Library of Queensland and Miss M. C. Carter of its Archives Section, who made such thorough and extensive searches into Queensland land holdings.

I am also indebted to my brother, Dr W. G. Holt, for making available his extensive collection of notes, original documents and newspaper cuttings and to my cousin, T. A. Holt, who entrusted to my care and scrutiny a large and historically valuable collection of documents, including many originals, which fortunately were preserved by his grandfather, the late F. S. E. Holt, and his father, the late T. S. Holt, and many of which recently have been deposited by T. A. Holt in the Mitchell Library, Sydney, and the State Library of Queensland. Extracts and summaries from original documents in the Mitchell Library, Sydney,

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have been reproduced with the kind permission of the Council, to the extent to which it has authority, and permission by the Bank of New South Wales to reproduce extracts from records of its amalgamated banks is gratefully acknowledged.

H. T. E. Holt

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>A.D.B.</i>	<i>Australian Dictionary of Biography</i>
<i>A.H.S. Jo.</i>	<i>Journal and Proceedings of the Australian Historical Society</i>
H.P.	Holt papers, in the possession of T. A. Holt
M.L.	Mitchell Library
P.R.O.	Public Records Office
<i>R.A.H.S. Jo.</i>	<i>Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Australian Historical Society</i>
<i>R.H.S.Q. Jo.</i>	<i>Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Queensland Historical Society</i>
S.L.Q.	State Library of Queensland
<i>SMH</i>	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>
<i>V &amp; P</i>	<i>Votes and Proceedings</i>

# 1

## Early Years in Europe, 1811-42

Thomas Holt was born at Horbury, near Wakefield, Yorkshire, on 14 November 1811, the eldest of five sons of Thomas Holt and Elizabeth (*née* Ellis), his wife, in their family of thirteen children. 'Thomas' was frequently used as the sole Christian name in the Holt lineage, as far back at least as the seventeenth century<sup>1</sup>.

Thomas Holt senior was one of the oldest and most respected of the wool manufacturers and merchants in Leeds and a man who held staunch liberal views, as did his own father<sup>2</sup>.

Young Thomas was educated principally at the establishments of Mr Tolson of Pontefract and of the Rev. Richard Cope, LL.D, of Wakefield.

The latter, a popular Independent Minister, wrote in his autobiography:

I might mention the names of many of our pupils as eminent for their talents and character. Among these were sixteen who became ministers of the Gospel, and Sir Joshua Rowe, late Chief-Justice of Ceylon, and the Hon Thomas Holt, MP, of New South Wales<sup>3</sup>.

At the age of fourteen (1825 or 1826) Thomas Holt left school and went to his father's business, into which he subsequently was admitted as a partner. After spending three years in Leeds, he proceeded to London as a wool-buyer. When about twenty-one years of age he left England to represent the Leeds house in the wool markets of the Continent, where for ten years, with the exception of occasional visits to England, he was constantly engaged in purchasing foreign wools, and resided in Spain, Prussia, Austria, Hungary, Poland and Russia<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Family Tree; Family Register; *Moreton Bay Free Press*, 5 May 1856; *SMH* 7 April 1856; 1854 II N.S.W. VP of Legislative Council, p. 36.

<sup>2</sup> *SMH* 16 June 1859.

<sup>3</sup> *Moreton Bay Free Press*, 5 May 1856; *SMH* 8 September 1888.

<sup>4</sup> *Moreton Bay Free Press*, 7 April 1856, 5 May 1856; F. Boase, *Modern English Biography* (1892).

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His wool-buying operations commenced in Spain and were successfully conducted there for three years, until the quality of Spanish wool deteriorated, but he found the social conditions there revolting and in startling contrast to those in England, where he had enjoyed a comfortable dependence on British justice and personal security.

In Spain he found that the pay of officials was merely nominal and that, in order to live, it was their accepted practice to resort to bribery and corruption. For a time he lived in the house of a *corregidor*, or local judge, and, when a case was to be tried, he saw parties to the suit coming with presents to the judge, the highest bidder getting the verdict<sup>5</sup>. He also found that, when whole villages were occupied by robbers, the only way to travel safely was to compound with them and they then provided an escort of two riding in front of one's coach and two riding behind. Although he viewed this situation with great indignation, as a stranger he was obliged to take it as it existed<sup>6</sup>.

After leaving Spain in 1835, he and his brother (probably William) were admitted into partnership with their father and a foreign branch of the Leeds business was established in Berlin for the purchasing and sorting of wool for the house in Leeds<sup>7</sup>.

His parents' selection of schools in England had been made to give him a liberal education and outlook rather than one confined to any particular religious denomination<sup>8</sup> and so, freed from bigotry and class discrimination, he was able during his travels on the Continent to become friendly with people of many different creeds and in many walks of life, staying at monasteries and with members of other religious organisations and studying the social conditions of workers in the despotic countries<sup>9</sup>. His travels also enabled him to become a proficient linguist in Spanish, German and French and this assisted him to glean information which proved to be of value in later years. He also learned the art of swordsmanship and, although he does not appear to have been involved in a duel, he found the teaching of his old fencing master, 'Never look at the hand, look at the eye!' of assistance in assessing the next move of an antagonist in other fields of action<sup>10</sup>.

He was introduced also to the hydropathic system of treating ailments and became friendly with Vincenz Priessnitz, its leading exponent in Austria, who treated princes, generals, ministers of State and people from England and America without charge. He recalled later that,

<sup>5</sup> *SMH* 3 June 1859, Vol. III *Parliamentary Debates*, 18 May 1880.

<sup>6</sup> *SMH* 21 August 1863.

<sup>7</sup> *SMH* 7 November 1843.

<sup>8</sup> *The Empire*, 23 July 1863.

<sup>9</sup> *SMH* 16 April 1866; *The Empire*, 24 September 1863.

<sup>10</sup> *SMH* 8 February 1858.

When he was at Olinitz he was told that a gentleman of the Austrian Army wished to join him in a chaise. He consented; but to his horror, found that his companion's flesh was all decayed; and the horrid stench from the decayed flesh was intolerable. This person went with him to Priessnitz: he spoke to half-a-score patients, to know if they had any confidence in this Priessnitz. He said if this fellow did not cure him, he would put an end to his own life. A few months afterwards, he (Mr Holt) met this officer in Vienna, and hardly knew him. He was once more the handsomest man in the Austrian Army. He told him he felt like a newborn man. Before he went to Priessnitz he used to take mercury enough to kill a dozen horses and his flesh was almost eaten from his bones. Medicine never put new flesh and blood on a man as hydropathy did. The Turkish bath was working wonders<sup>11</sup>.

Physical fitness was his constant aim, in furtherance of his belief that a '*mens sana*' existed only in a '*corpore sano*', and, in pursuit of this aim, notwithstanding discomfiture, he and his brother, William, eighteen months his junior, during the winter of 1840-41 followed the principles of hydropathy and systematically took a cold bath in the river Elbe by breaking the ice when it was frozen over for 97 days<sup>12</sup>.

The two brothers married in Berlin on the same day, 20 March 1841, two sisters daughters of Christian Friedrich Eulert, a merchant in that city. William married Marie and Thomas married Johanna Maria Sophia Charlotte, the youngest daughter, who was born in Berlin on 12 January 1822. The marriage ceremony was performed by the Rev. Berduskeck<sup>13</sup>.

The partnership in the wool business was dissolved in 1842, when their father retired, at a time when Australian wools were becoming more sought after than fleeces grown on the continent of Europe<sup>14</sup>.

Probably young Thomas Holt would have continued as a wool-buyer in Europe had he not read in German the second edition of Dr John Dunmore Lang's book *An Historical and Statistical Account of New South Wales*, which was translated into German in 1840<sup>15</sup>.

This book described the colony of New South Wales and its potential, particularly its agricultural and pastoral industries; the following extracts from it could hardly have failed to attract a young wool-buyer's interest.

The capabilities of the Colony for the increased production of

<sup>11</sup> *The Empire*, 30 September 1863.

<sup>12</sup> Letters William Holt to F. S. E. Holt, 11 February 1878 and 22 December 1878 (H.P.).

<sup>13</sup> Family Tree; *Moreton Bay Free Press*, 5 May 1856. Genealogy from Dr O. Neubecker, 16 November 1968.

<sup>14</sup> *Australian Encyclopedia* (1958). Vol. IV, p. 524; *SMH* 8 September 1888.

<sup>15</sup> Second ed (1837) (M.L.): German translation (1840) (M.L.).

wool are literally inexhaustible . . . As there is an unlimited extent of pasture to the northward, as well as to the southward and westward, the quantity of wool that will be exported from the Colony in a few years hence, will be great beyond belief in England.

Further, to an energetic young man with strong religious beliefs, the following exhortation quoted in the book must have proved persuasive.

Be not slothful to go, and to enter to possess the land. When ye go, ye shall come unto — a large land — a place where there is no want of anything that is in the Earth (*Judges*, xviii, 9.10)<sup>16</sup>.

Nearly thirty years later, Holt wrote to Dr Lang:

I sometimes think, if the Rev. Dr Lang had never written a book about N.S.W. and that book had never been translated into the German language and I had not read that book, where should I be at the present time<sup>17</sup>.

By 1842, notwithstanding a serious drought in New South Wales, Dr Lang's predictions were proving correct. Exports of wool from the Colony to the United Kingdom had continually increased and, in that year, nearly one-quarter of the sheep's and lambs' wool was from Australia and was commanding more and more attention at prices which ranged from 8d to 1/11d per pound at Liverpool wool sales<sup>18</sup>.

20 July 1842 was an eventful day for young Thomas Holt and a perfect summer's day in south-east England: The twenty-three-year-old Queen of England drove in an open carriage in Hyde Park, laughing and chatting with the Princess of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha and seemingly oblivious of recent attempts upon her life. Only three days previously the convict ship *Marquis of Hastings* had sailed for Hobart Town with its complement of convicts which included Francis, sentenced to transportation for life for firing at Her Majesty<sup>19</sup>.

20 July 1842 found Holt, with his young wife and her maid, aboard the tiny barque *Helvellyn* lying in The Downs, a favourite anchorage off Deal protected by the treacherous Goodwin Sands, while Captain Tullidge and his crew made final preparations for a voyage to Australia<sup>20</sup>.

The *Helvellyn* was smaller than Cook's *Endeavour*, of 368 tons, only half the length of a Manly ferry. It had just discharged a cargo of wool from Australia and loaded a general cargo for the return trip.

<sup>16</sup> 1837 ed pp. 365, 373, 164.

<sup>17</sup> Holograph letter to Dr Lang, 12 September 1870 (Papers of Rev. J. D. Lang, vol. VII, 1005-06 (M.L.)).

<sup>18</sup> *SMH* 17 and 18 November 1842.

<sup>19</sup> *The Times*, 21 July 1842; *SMH* 17 November 1842.

<sup>20</sup> *SMH* 17 November 1842; 18 November 1842.

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In July 1842 there was considerable industrial unrest in Britain; colliers and men in iron works were rising at Shrewsbury and in Staffordshire potteries' employees were still out of work<sup>21</sup>.

As he watched the *Helvellyn's* final preparations it must have been an exciting, though soul-searching, few hours for this stockily-built Yorkshireman of thirty, rugged in appearance and short in stature, with fair hair and blue eyes. He was giving up a comfortable life and a business in which he had made many friends and connections. He was leaving his own family and personal friends and transplanting his young wife into a strange country far from her relatives and friends. He was leaving, perhaps for ever, the white chalk cliffs and green fields of the land of his birth.

But the decision had been made and, despite the perils of a long voyage in this tiny ship, he had the confidence of a resolute young man in his judgment and foresight, backed by the courage and strength of his beautiful, tall and willowy partner for life.

So, as sails were set on the *Helvellyn* and she made her way down the English Channel, he and his wife, in complete reliance on Divine providence, settled down to enjoy as best they could a long voyage of 119 days.

<sup>21</sup> *The Times*, 21 July 1842.

## 2

# Sydney 1842-43

### 1 *Arrival*

On 16 November 1842<sup>1</sup> the *Helvellyn* sailed into Port Jackson through its protecting dark cliffs, past a lighthouse and signal station on the South Head and a quarantine ground and its ominous tomb-stones beside the North Head. Passing the floating light alongside the Sow and Pigs, the ship proceeded past picturesque bays, coves, white beaches and rocky islets, with here and there white villas and cottages and their green lawns contrasting with the ever-present dark green and brown of scrub and gum trees which abutted the rocky foreshores.

Pinchgut, then a small fort or battery, was next passed and the castellated mansions and windmills on the heights of Woolloomooloo could be seen; then Fort Macquarie with its battlements and cannons; old Government House, 'a long low building with a spacious verandah in which sentinels were pacing to and fro', its green lawns sloping towards the water's edge; new Government House, looking like a palace of white marble, and, on the other side of the Cove, Dawes Battery; sailing ships rode at anchor while numerous small craft, sailing boats and wherries moved hither and thither<sup>2</sup>.

The steam dredge *Hercules* was dredging in Sydney Cove, where Circular Quay had recently been built up by 600-700 convicts. Since 1841, transportation of convicts to the eastern mainland colonies had ceased<sup>3</sup>. In 1842 Sydney had become incorporated and declared a city and, in the first popular election in the colony held on 1 November, John Hosking had become its first Mayor<sup>4</sup>.

Sir George Gipps was Captain General and Governor in Chief of New South Wales, Van Diemen's Land and their dependencies; a severe

<sup>1</sup> *SMH* 17 November 1842.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs Meredith '*Notes & Sketches of N.S.W.*' (1839-44) (M.L.): J. Skinner Prout, *Sydney Illustrated*, (1842-43) (M.L.).

<sup>3</sup> *Peeps at the Past* by Jas Tyrrell (1914) p. 42; *Old Times* Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 19-21.

<sup>4</sup> *Official History of N.S.W.* (1788-1883), p. 92; *Peeps at the Past* p. 6; *SMH* 17 November 1842.



financial crisis prevailed and sheep were being sold at a few pence, cattle for 7/6d and horses for 17/-<sup>5</sup>.

The total population of the Colony (which then included what are now Victoria and Queensland) was under 160,000 but, despite the financial depression, the building of substantial houses in the city was proceeding<sup>6</sup>.

In Pitt Street, from Hunter Street to Campbell Street, there were mainly cottages, with gardens in front, and few two-storeyed buildings existed before 1850<sup>7</sup>. On the western side of George Street were the large military barracks, then occupied by the 99th Regiment, which was relieving the 80th<sup>8</sup> and this street was considered the Pall Mall or the Park of Sydney where, up and down its hot, dusty, glaring, weary length the fair wives and daughters of the 'citizens' enjoyed their daily airing. The Domain was unfashionable because maid servants and their sweethearts resorted there on Sundays and this ruined its character as a place for their mistresses to visit<sup>9</sup>. There was nothing but furze bush from Woolloomooloo to Macleay Street. Hyde Park was known as the race course and used for cricket matches and Mr Justice Stephen recalled that he had often seen the ball knocked into Elizabeth Street<sup>10</sup>.

This was the appearance of Sydney when the *Helvellyn* berthed on 16 November 1842, at Campbell's Wharf, on the western side of Sydney Cove, in typical droughty weather, with the temperature around 70° and high winds dispersing any clouds, but carrying large quantities of dust<sup>11</sup>.

The voyage from England had been uneventful; only two vessels, both bound from England to India, had been sighted. The only passengers on the *Helvellyn* were shown as 'Mr and Mrs Holt and servant and Miss Sly; intermediate Messrs Cormack and Flashburn'<sup>12</sup>, while the only record of the voyage of the *Helvellyn* appeared in a letter to the captain, almost certainly penned by Holt, which was printed in the paper the following day<sup>13</sup>.

To Captain C. R. Tullidge of the *Helvellyn*

Dear Sir

Before the breaking up of our little party, we cannot do less than return to you our warmest thanks for the constant and unwearied

<sup>5</sup> *Old Times*, vol. I Pt. 2, p. 94; vol. I Pt. 1, p. 48, *SMH* 14 October 1843.

<sup>6</sup> *SMH* 20 June 1844; *The Australian* 23 November 1842.

<sup>7</sup> *Old Times*, vol. I No. 1 pp. 19-21; *Peeps at the Past*, p. 54.

<sup>8</sup> *SMH* 18 November 1842.

<sup>9</sup> Mrs Meredith *Notes & Sketches of New South Wales* (1839-44), (M.L.).

<sup>10</sup> *Old Times*, vol. I, No. 2, p. 112.

<sup>11</sup> *The Australian*, 18 November 1842; *SMH* 24 November 1842.

<sup>12</sup> *SMH* 17 November 1842.

<sup>13</sup> *SMH* 17 November 1842.

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care you have taken to make us in every respect (as far as it laid within your power) comfortable and happy, during the voyage we have made with you from London to this Port.

Instead of having, as we anticipated and dreaded, a long, weary, sickly and monotonous voyage, we found the days and weeks to glide away so quickly and agreeably, that we can look back at every future period to the time we passed aboard your ship, as a pleasant variety in our voyage through life.

We can bear witness (as far as we are able to judge) to your talents as an able navigator, and to your unwearied care and watchfulness in the navigation of the ship by night and day, and also to the great care you took of the owners' interests, even in the smallest minutae. We were more than once as astonished as gratified at the accuracy with which you foretold to the hour when we should come in sight of Islands, and our confidence in you was unbounded when we were witnesses how quickly your eye could perceive the coming of a Squall, and ere it reached us you had the sails reefed and taken in, in perfect readiness.

We cannot conclude this letter without bearing witness to the civility and attention shown to us by the officers and men on board, and also to the excellent order that reigned throughout.

We were further highly gratified that you sailed your ship on the TOTAL ABSTINENCE system and trust that you will ever continue to abominate the use of LIQUID FIRE, which in no case is necessary for health, but in millions of cases has been the ruin of the soul and body.

Wishing you ever health, happiness, and prosperous voyages.

We remain, dear Sir,  
Yours very sincerely,

(Signed by all the cabin passengers)

Although total abstinence may have prevailed among passengers and crew, liquid fire abounded in the *Helvellyn's* hold where, among cases of wearing apparel (silks, bonnets, shoes, parasoles, etc.), caroteels of currants and raisins, iron bedsteads, a carriage, an organ, loaf sugar and other commodities, were stowed many hogsheads of brandy, cases of port wine, quantities of French, Spanish and Rhenish wines, casks of beer and porter as well as other spirituous liquor<sup>14</sup>.

After landing the Holt party stayed at Petty's Hotel, which had been established in 1834 in York Street<sup>15</sup> in the same building which in 1970

<sup>14</sup> SMH 21 November 1842.

<sup>15</sup> Information from the late Mrs E. J. Holt to Dr W. G. Holt; *Peeps at the Past*, p. 54.

was occupied by the Australian Red Cross Society (NSW Division). There were no public sewers in Sydney, the streets were very defective, dust, flies and mosquitoes abounded and it is doubtful whether the advantages of being once again on dry land outweighed the discomforts of shipboard life<sup>16</sup>.

On the day of landing Holt first met Thomas Sutcliffe Mort and, either on the same day or very shortly afterwards, met Thomas Ware Smart, both of whom were destined to become notable personalities in the Colony<sup>17</sup>.

Soon after his arrival he also met Charles Kemp and John Fairfax who had purchased the *Sydney Herald* the year before, ten years after its commencement, and in August 1842 changed its name to the *Sydney Morning Herald*<sup>18</sup>; these four were later closely associated with Holt in many activities and business enterprises.

Before the end of 1842 Holt cautiously commenced to invest a modest amount of capital in mortgages over property at Raymond Terrace, Wollongong and Sydney<sup>19</sup>. These advances were made through a solicitor, George Allen (one of the first solicitors to be admitted in New South Wales and founder of the firm which eventually became Messrs Allen, Allen & Hemsley) and his son, George Wigram Allen (then an articled clerk to his father, later associated with Holt in extensive land transactions and knighted in 1877)<sup>20</sup>.

In January 1843 the Legislative Council was formed, thereby giving constitutional freedom to the colonists by enabling twenty-four of its thirty-six members to be elected by the people<sup>21</sup>.

February to December 1843 was an economic nightmare; in March the Bank of Australia closed its doors. Other banks also failed and in May there was a run on the Savings Bank for two days and 1300 mechanics and labourers were out of employment. The depression also hit men on the land, commercial men and bankers, while real property became unsaleable at any price approaching its real value<sup>22</sup>.

By June 1843 Holt and his wife were residing in Pitt Street, Sydney, and the following advertisement appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 17th of that month:

<sup>16</sup> Flanagan, *History of New South Wales* p. 48.

<sup>17</sup> *SMH* 3 May 1877, 24 August 1865.

<sup>18</sup> *R.A.H.S. Jo.* No. 5, p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> Registry of Deeds, Book 2 Nos. 670, 671, 792 and 845.

<sup>20</sup> *R.A.H.S. Jo.* No. 35, p. 303.

<sup>21</sup> 5 January 1843; *Official History of N.S.W.* (1788-1883) p. 92; Flanagan, *History of New South Wales*, p. 60.

<sup>22</sup> S. H. Roberts, *The Squatting Age in Australia* (1835-47) p. 191 *et seq*; Flanagan, *History of New South Wales* p. 66-69; *SMH* 7 November 1843; 'Diary of A. B. Spark' (1836-56) (M.L.).

## *An Energetic Colonist*

Wanted a respectable and steady woman who understands plain cooking and is willing to make herself generally useful. A good character from her last place is indispensable and an English or Scotch girl would be preferred. Apply to Mrs Holt, Pitt-street South, near Liverpool street.

### 2 *The Pfandbriefe System of Government Debentures*

In August 1843, on a motion in the Legislative Council by Richard Windeyer, a Select Committee was appointed 'to consider the means of staying the further evil consequences to be apprehended from the monetary confusion lately and still prevalent in the Colony'<sup>1</sup>.

The 'confusion' had been brought about largely as a result of the banks lessening their discounts on new transactions, thereby diminishing the amount of notes in circulation. The necessity for this was said to be mainly attributable to the serious drought conditions, the large expenditure on immigration to the colony from England and heavy over-speculation. A number of witnesses, principally bankers and some merchants, gave evidence before the 'Select Committee on Monetary Confusion' which was chaired by Mr Windeyer.

The first witness to be examined was Holt, only ten months in the country, who testified that he was aware of the state of great distress of the country, that property was unsaleable at anything like its value and that he had embarked some capital in the colony since his arrival. He gave as his opinion that a solution to the monetary difficulties might lie in the issue by the Government of a form of debentures founded upon a system which then existed in Germany. He gave detailed evidence of this system, known as the Pfandbrief System, which had first been introduced into Silesia in 1769, to relieve the unparalleled scarcity of money which existed in the reign of Frederick the Great in consequence of the Silesian War. The system was one of negotiable, interest-bearing notes and pledge certificates issued by the Government on the security of land; Holt had experienced the efficacy of the system in the course of his wool-buying transactions in Germany.

Most of the bankers and merchants who gave evidence were opposed to the introduction of the system which would have interfered considerably with that then carried on by the banks. The Monetary Confusion Committee recommended the adoption of the Pfandbrief System, with modifications to suit the conditions of the Colony, and Mr Windeyer introduced a 'Confidence Bill', based on the Committee's recommendation. Although opposed by some members of the Council, notably

<sup>1</sup> *Official History of New South Wales* (1788-1883), pp. 95-97.

Mr Lowe (later Viscount Sherbrook) who criticised it trenchantly, it was passed by eleven to nine<sup>2</sup>.

An important hurdle, however, had not been cleared because the Governor was required, under section 34 of the new Act, to recommend the Bill before it was passed and, as he had not done so, the Speaker reported on 12 December that the Governor on behalf of Her Majesty had withheld assent from the Bill<sup>3</sup>, which never became law. The financial depression was severe and on 30 November A. B. Spark wrote in his diary<sup>4</sup>:

St Andrew never had his day held less in honour in the Colony before, no dinners, no toasting, no balls nor other revelry, for men's minds are full of anxiety, doubt and despondency.

### 3 Investments

During the year 1843 Holt continued, through the George Allens, to invest further capital upon mortgage of real estate and in the purchase of real estate. Purchases included

1 A terrace of eight recently-erected houses, extending northerly from the intersection of Macquarie and Hunter Streets, one house facing Hunter Street and seven facing Macquarie Street, the total frontage being about 146 feet to Macquarie Street and about fifty-six feet to Hunter Street (adjoining John Tawell, the notorious Quaker's cottage)<sup>1</sup> which Holt called 'Horbury Terrace', Horbury being his birthplace. The houses were three-storeyed and, in addition, had cellar kitchens which opened upon the level of their yards at the rear and all but one had access to Hunter Street by a partially covered passage at the rear<sup>2</sup>. The purchase price paid by Holt was £2,556 but the property was subject to a mortgage for £2,000, which Holt later repaid.

The front windows of the terrace looked over the harbour, Heads, light house, Government House, gardens, North Shore and the Domain while, from the western windows, could be seen George Street to Darling Harbour and beyond, Pyrmont and Balmain. The Legislative Council in 1843 was quite close, having taken over the northern wing of the Sydney Infirmary<sup>3</sup>.

The following advertisement appeared in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 14 July 1843.

<sup>2</sup> SMH 7, 18, 21, 22, 23, 25, 28, 29 November 1843, 9 December 1843.

<sup>3</sup> SMH 25 November 1843; *Official History of New South Wales* (1788-1883).

<sup>4</sup> 'Diary of A. B. Spark' (M.L.).

<sup>1</sup> 7 R.A.H.S. Jo., 79 (Photograph).

<sup>2</sup> Registry of Deeds, Books 3 and 4, 19 January 1843, 30 June 1843.

<sup>3</sup> SMH 1 March 1843: 23 R.A.H.S. Jo., 197.

*An Energetic Colonist*

To let, one of those new and convenient houses in Macquarie-street, near the entrance to the Domain, and adjoining the house occupied by Dr Bellisario<sup>4</sup>. Rent moderate. Apply to Mr Thomas Holt, junior, Pitt-street South, near Liverpool-street.

In the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 12 January 1844, another advertisement read.

HORBURY TERRACE

To let, that very pleasant and healthy residence, situate No. 4, Horbury Terrace, Macquarie-street, containing Drawing and Sitting Rooms, four Bed Rooms and Store Room, together with kitchen and outhouses.

This House is very replete with fixtures, being hung with bells, fitted up with sideboards, cupboards, etc. and commands a most delightful view.

Apply to the undersigned,

Thomas S. Mort,  
Auctioneer and Broker.

- 2 Part of the Chippendale Estate, for £177<sup>5</sup>.
- 3 Lot 34 of Strawberry Hill Estate, in Elizabeth Street (surrounding what became Holt Place, near Belvoir Street) for £240<sup>6</sup>.
- 4 333½ acres at Narawa (or Narzawa), south of Liverpool, for £1200, upon which was a residence<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Dr John B. Belisario, a dentist, was one of the first men to give a general anaesthetic in Australia. (*SMH* 5 November 1940).

<sup>5</sup> Registry of Deeds, Book 3, 27 February 1843.

<sup>6</sup> Registry of Deeds, Book 4, 30 June 1843.

<sup>7</sup> Book 3, 30 March 1843; Book 5, 22 September 1843.

# 3

## Liverpool 1843-53

The 333½ acres Holt purchased lay a mile south of where Liverpool railway station now is and to the east and west of Cowpasture's Road (now Hume Highway); part of the site now occupied by the Liverpool Golf Links and the Mala residential area at Casula being comprised in the area.

Prior to being incorporated in 1843, Liverpool had been a thriving agricultural centre, largely created by cheap convict labour drawn from the penal station established there. Shipping came up the George's River to discharge stores at the town's wharves and to re-load with agricultural produce. After the transportation of convicts practically ceased in 1841, the large commissariat store at Liverpool and the penal station were abandoned, the military detachment withdrawn and the district's population became denuded and many houses were vacant<sup>1</sup>.

### 1 'Sophienburg'

Holt named his property 'Sophienburg', at the suggestion of his wife, Sophia<sup>2</sup>, and they lived there for over nine years. The property included ten acres of ornamental grounds and orchards surrounding a residence built on an elevated position with panoramic views. Containing ten rooms together with outhouses, it was approached by a broad, well-planted avenue with brick lodges at the gates. The rest of the property was laid out in cultivation and grazing paddocks on which were several farm homesteads<sup>3</sup>.

With the assistance of an overseer<sup>4</sup> Holt, who was in business in Sydney, carried on farming operations at 'Sophienburg' and upon part of 1300 acres of the Liverpool Common at Cabramatta Creek which he had leased<sup>5</sup> from the Government but part of which he sub-leased. He

<sup>1</sup> W. L. & O. Havard, *Liverpool, Story of an Historic Town*.

<sup>2</sup> *SMH* 10 March 1853.

<sup>3</sup> *SMH* 25 August 1865.

<sup>4</sup> *SMH* 13 June 1846.

<sup>5</sup> 21 years' lease from 1 January 1848 (Book 28, No. 393, General Register of Deeds).

was also interested in growing grapes there from vines imported by William Macarthur from the Rhine<sup>6</sup>.

His interest in public affairs led to his being elected one of the three Councillors in the District Council of Liverpool<sup>7</sup>, and the following year, he was appointed a Magistrate of the territory and its dependencies<sup>8</sup>. Disturbed by reports of the sufferings of the Irish during the great famine following the failure of the potato crops about 1845, he joined Dean McEnroe and the Rev. Dr Gregory in devising a plan of relief, headed the subscriptions and became<sup>9</sup> joint secretary with William Montague Manning (Solicitor-General) of the Relief Committee.

In 1846 he was one of twenty-six residents in and around Sydney selected to furnish information to a Select Committee as to the state of public roads and bridges in their district and to supply suggestions. He condemned both roads and bridges in his district (dangerous stumps stood six to twelve inches out of the ground on the Liverpool Road and some of the bridges were in a very dangerous state) but made various recommendations, one being to erect more toll gates on the Cowpasture and Campbelltown roads to raise funds for repairs<sup>10</sup>.

During his occupation of 'Sophienburg' three sons and two daughters were born to Holt and his wife but one daughter (Elizabeth) died at birth (5 September 1844) and one son (Edwin Thomas, born 6 October 1848) died at the age of four from scarlet fever. The surviving children were Frederick Samuel Ellis (born 22 June 1846), Alfred William (born 6 March 1851) and Alice Sophia Ellem (born 12 January 1853)<sup>11</sup>.

A godfather to Frederick was Dr Ludwig Leichhardt, a friend of Holt's, who had returned from his 3,000-mile exploration of the route from Moreton Bay to Port Essington in March 1846<sup>12</sup>.

Frederick contracted scarlet fever at the same time as Edwin, the disease depriving him of his hearing, but, overcoming the disability, he later became his father's private secretary, in which he displayed considerable ability and business acumen. Eventually his deafness brought about his death in 1902, when he was run over by a train<sup>13</sup>.

'Sophienburg' was a convenient stopping place for travellers to Camden, Campbelltown and distant places on the southern road and many enjoyed the hospitality offered there. One visit, which was to lead to momentous results following discussions over lunch, was made by T. S.

<sup>6</sup> Macarthur Papers, vol. 37A, p. 56 (M.L.).

<sup>7</sup> *SMH* 14 May 1844.

<sup>8</sup> *SMH* 24 July 1845.

<sup>9</sup> *SMH* 10 March 1853.

<sup>10</sup> *V & P of the Legislative Council*, 1846, vol. II p. 509.

<sup>11</sup> Family register and *SMH* 6 September 1844.

<sup>12</sup> *SMH* 26 March 1846.

<sup>13</sup> Notes on joining the Congregational Order of the Church of Christ (M.L.); *SMH* 10 February 1902.



Mort and the Rev. W. H. Walsh, in 1848, when the idea of forming a provident society was conceived, but this will be referred to more fully later.

Another visit about 1844 was from Mrs Caroline Chisholm, 'the Immigrants' friend', and her large party. This visit would probably never have been heard of had not Holt, eighteen years later, criticised Mrs Chisholm for directing emigrants to go to Victoria instead of New South Wales, during the last years of her work<sup>14</sup>. His remarks were misinterpreted by Mrs Chisholm as being a general criticism of her whole work for immigrants and stung her into writing a long letter from which the following is extracted:

On the eve of my leaving this Colony for England, in March 1846, he formed one of a committee (as per enclosed list) of thirty-four gentlemen in order to present to me a testimonial for services rendered to this colony. He also subscribed a guinea to my testimonial. Can Mr Holt also have forgotten that on the occasion of my passing by his place at Liverpool, on my way to the districts of Tumut, Murrumbidgee, and Yass, with a large party of emigrants, he so far approved of my exertions, that he feasted the party with a sumptuous breakfast, offering me at the same time money, should I stand in need of it for my party, when I informed him that Mr Bradley had given me authority to draw upon him for any funds I might require for the support of the people?<sup>15</sup>

The misunderstanding was cleared up in further correspondence<sup>16</sup> and Holt later defended Mrs Chisholm against criticism levelled against her in the Legislative Assembly<sup>17</sup>.

## 2 Wool

While residing at 'Sophienburg', Holt commenced business as a wool merchant and had a two-storeyed wool and general store, two houses below the Haymarket on the east side of George Street south<sup>1</sup>. His first export of thirty-one bales was consigned to England on the *Hindoo* on 17 August 1844<sup>2</sup>, and, in the succeeding twelve months, he exported nearly 1,000 bales.

Invitation to do business was inserted in daily newspapers,

<sup>14</sup> *The Empire*, 5 June 1862.

<sup>15</sup> *The Empire*, 13 June 1862; see also M. Kiddle *Caroline Chisholm* (Melb. 1950) p. 130.

<sup>16</sup> *The Empire*, 19 June 1862, 26 June 1862.

<sup>17</sup> *The Empire*, 5 November 1862.

<sup>1</sup> Book 15, No. 712, General Registry of Deeds.

<sup>2</sup> *SMH* 19 August 1844.

*An Energetic Colonist*

Wool &c — The undersigned is a cash buyer of wool; or will make liberal advances on wool or produce, consigned to his friends in England.

Wools re-packed and sorted.

Thomas Holt Jun.  
136 George Street, South<sup>3</sup>

Holt carried on this business for over nine years until he retired and, in the year 1853, exported over 1600 bales. It was the practice of wool merchants who consigned wool to England to have the proceeds of sales there applied to the purchase of merchandise which was then shipped to Australia and sold to local merchants. During 1853, Holt imported such goods as linseed and castor oil, softgoods, beer, gin, brandy, earthenware and soap, in addition to boxes of sovereigns<sup>4</sup>.

He had a small dwelling-house adjoining his wool store in which he stayed when prevented by business from returning to 'Sophienburg'. In the early hours of the morning of 5 January 1854, the wool store and most of its contents were destroyed by a fire believed to have been caused by lightning during a severe thunderstorm. The store was full of wool ready for shipment, refined loaf sugar, a piano, a gig and miscellaneous merchandise, including extensive consignments of clothing and other soft goods by recently-arrived vessels.

The damage to the buildings and goods was estimated at between £3,000 and £4,000 and, although Holt was then a director of the Sydney Fire Insurance Co, the goods were not insured at all and the buildings were insured for only £620 which the company's board was happy to pay immediately.

Various rumours circulated about a Chinese who was employed at and was sleeping on the premises. One rumour was that he had perished in the fire, another that he had been seen running past the railway terminus with his clothes on fire and yet another that he had run away, for fear that he would be charged with incendiarism, but no solution of the mystery of the missing Chinese has been found and it seems probable that he finally joined his ancestors in circumstances unconnected with the fire. Holt was residing that night in his dwelling-house and was quickly at the scene of action but, although the insurance company's fire engine arrived soon after, it was unable to save the store, which was destroyed within an hour. The engine however, prevented the fire from spreading to adjoining premises, except for the window sashes of Anthony Hordern's new building, which caught alight, and the back windows, shingles and rafters of Holt's dwelling-house, which were

<sup>3</sup> *SMH* 28 August 1848.

<sup>4</sup> *SMH* from 31 January 1853 to 21 November 1853.

destroyed. Holt had planned an early retirement from his wool business before the fire precipitated his decision to retire.

### 3 Fire Insurance

Prior to the 1830s there was no fire insurance in New South Wales then, for a short time, two companies operated but, by the end of 1843, no insurance office in the Colony wrote fire business<sup>1</sup>.

In the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 April 1844, a letter to the editors, over the initials 'P.H.G.' was printed, in which the dangers of property being uninsured were stressed and a suggestion made that an association similar to that of the Gotha Mutual Fire Assurance Co of Hamburg might with advantage be introduced into the colony. The letter explained the system: A company would be formed of insurers, the liability of members would be limited to four times the amount of premiums paid, no single risk could exceed £3,000 and the profits would be divided among members at intervals. The anonymity of 'P.H.G.' might have been preserved forever, had not the letter contained three errors which required correction. A further letter correcting these errors disclosed that it was Holt who had forwarded the 'P.H.G.' letter to the *Herald*<sup>2</sup>.

The idea of the mutual principle system, based on the Gotha Association, proved attractive and on 29 July 1844 a provisional committee comprising Holt and ten others was formed to receive applications for insurances and, when £10,000 had been offered, to call a meeting for the election of directors<sup>3</sup>.

In September 1844 six directors of the newly formed *Sydney Fire Insurance Company* were elected consisting of Thomas Ware Smart, Chairman; Charles Kemp, Deputy Chairman; Thomas Agars, Thomas Aspinwall, Thomas Holt Junior, and William Ranken Scott<sup>4</sup>. The company advertised that it was then the only institution in the colony in which property could be insured against fire and that it was then intended, for the time being, to restrict insurances to Sydney and its immediate vicinity<sup>5</sup>. This restriction was not retained for long and, in January 1845, the company notified the appointment of agents in numerous country towns, including Bathurst and Goulburn<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> *The Empire*, 5-6 January 1854; *SMH* 6-7 January 1854.

<sup>1</sup> *The Policy Weekly*, vol. LIII (New Series) No. 2569, 21 January 1954, Supplement pp. 18-20.

<sup>2</sup> *SMH* 27 April 1844.

<sup>3</sup> *SMH* 31 July 1844 and 5 August 1844.

<sup>4</sup> *SMH* 3 September 1844 and 16 September 1844.

<sup>5</sup> *SMH* 3 September 1844.

<sup>6</sup> *SMH* 1 January 1845.

## *An Energetic Colonist*

Early in 1852 the company extended its operations to Melbourne, where its firemarks on numerous buildings indicated an extensive business. The company's fire mark consisted of a copper oval having on it a golden fleece (a sheep suspended by a sling) and the inscription 'Fire Insurance, Sydney'<sup>7</sup>. One old fire mark in Sydney, although painted over, is still visible on the wall of 123 Bourke Street.

It was written that, with the discovery of gold in the 1850s, the 'fire bug' came and that a wave of incendiarism literally burned the company out of existence<sup>8</sup>. This statement was, however, totally incorrect. It is a fact that the company suffered its first loss of any magnitude in 1853 when Kent Brewery was damaged by fire to the extent of £8,802 but half of this amount was borne by several English offices<sup>9</sup>; in that year, the total amount insured with the company was £926,225 and its funds had increased to about £14,000<sup>10</sup>.

In 1854, after ten years' operations, some members of the original board were still directors, including T. W. Smart, Chairman; Charles Kemp, deputy chairman; Thomas Holt Junior and W. R. Scott. In that year the company was still advertising that it was established on the Saxe-Gotha Company

which established, on the occasion of the great fire in Hamburg, the soundness of its principles. It then paid all losses in full without inconvenience to its members<sup>11</sup>.

About this time competition from English insurance companies intensified and it was found that the Gotha principle, involving the liability of members to contribute four times the amount of their premium, was a severe handicap when competing with the lower premiums charged by the English companies and the non-liability of their members to contribute to losses<sup>12</sup>.

Accordingly the business of the old Sydney Fire Insurance Company was transferred to a new company known as the Sydney Insurance Company which was incorporated as a joint stock company<sup>13</sup> with a capital of £250,000 divided into 25,000 shares of £10 each, the liability of the shareholders (proprietors) being unlimited but there being no liability on the part of insurers. The new company was

formed with the view of securing a portion of the profits to be derived from an important and useful business — exclusively colonial — and

<sup>7</sup> *Victorian Historical Magazine*, vol. VIII, October 1921, No. 3, p. 92.

<sup>8</sup> *The Policy Insurance Weekly Supplement* (supra), p. 30.

<sup>9</sup> *SMH* 4 May 1853.

<sup>10</sup> Ford's *Australian Almanac*, 1853; *SMH* 4 May 1853.

<sup>11</sup> *SMH* 6 July 1854.

<sup>12</sup> *SMH* 7 November 1855.

<sup>13</sup> 19 Vic 2 October 1855.

to preserve the income of the old company from passing into the hands of the English companies, and thereby becoming a loss to the country generally<sup>14</sup>.

The business of the old company transferred to the new company amounted to £1,767,000 and there was a reserve of £20,000 in hand<sup>15</sup>.

The first directors of the new company were Charles Kemp, Chairman; Thomas Holt, deputy Chairman; J. F. Josephson, S. D. Gordon, M. E. Murnin and John Fairfax<sup>16</sup>, of whom Kemp, Holt and Josephson were directors of the old company. Holt continued to serve intermittently as a director of the new company until shortly before he left for an extended trip to Europe in 1865<sup>17</sup>.

The company functioned successfully but its struggle to preserve itself as a wholly colonial company was gradually overcome by a powerful English rival, the Commercial Union Assurance Company, which in January 1881 purchased outright the Sydney Insurance Company, paying £13,750 for the goodwill and £10,000 for its premises at the corner of Pitt and Hunter Streets, Sydney, opposite the old *Herald* offices<sup>18</sup>. Now known as the Commercial Union Assurance Co of Australia Ltd, the company still operates successfully.

#### 4 *The Sydney Railway Company*

The 'railway mania' in Europe in the 1840s, following George and Robert Stephenson's production of the 'Rocket' in 1830, had its repercussions in New South Wales where, from 1841, several unsuccessful attempts to form railway companies were made<sup>1</sup>.

Holt, with a few others, firmly believed that the time had come for the construction of railways in the colony and in 1846, when an attempt was made to form a company to establish a main line to Goulburn and another to the Hawkesbury and Nepean Rivers by raising three-quarters of the capital in England and one-quarter locally, he became a provisional director and subscribed towards the expense of surveying the route<sup>2</sup>.

This attempt failed, largely due to the financial troubles in Britain,

<sup>14</sup> SMH 6 November 1855.

<sup>15</sup> SMH 7 November 1855 and 23 November 1855.

<sup>16</sup> SMH 6 November 1855.

<sup>17</sup> Moore's *Almanacs*.

<sup>18</sup> Edward Liveing, *A Century of Insurance, the Commercial Union Group of Insurance Companies (1861-1961)*; *The Policy Ins Weekly Supplement* (supra) p. 45; *The Australian Insurance-Banking Record*, 10 January 1881, p. 16; SMH 20 January 1881.

<sup>1</sup> *The Australian*, 6 March 1841, Select Committee on Railways 1848, Evidence of Dawes (M.L.).

<sup>2</sup> SMH 9-12 May and 15 August 1846.

and following a bitter attack on the project by the *Morning Chronicle*<sup>3</sup> which described it as 'a disgraceful transaction' and inferred 'fraud and deception and treachery' and 'an attempt to plunder our fellow-countrymen at home of their cash'. The *Sydney Morning Herald*<sup>4</sup> did its best to counter this attack but the damage had been done.

In 1848 a Select Committee, appointed to examine the 'practicability and expediency' of introducing railways in the Colony, reported that the period had arrived when railways ought to be commenced and that special inducements should be held out to encourage such undertakings, including a guaranteed dividend not exceeding 6 per cent on the first £100,000 of capital subscribed and also that there should be a Government investment of up to £30,000.

As a result of the report by the Select Committee, Charles Cowper in 1848 called a meeting, at which a provisional committee of sixteen was formed to make preliminary arrangements for establishing a railway company. A deputation of six was appointed to wait upon the Governor to ascertain the views of the Government. Local committees for outlying districts were also formed and Holt became a member of both the Sydney and Liverpool provisional committees and one of a deputation of six to wait upon the Governor<sup>8</sup>.

On 10 October 1849, a Private Act (13 Victoria) was passed by the Council to incorporate 'The Sydney Railway Company', and awaited the Royal Assent. The Act recited that the making and maintaining of railways in the colony of New South Wales would be of great public utility and that it was deemed advisable to grant encouragement to such enterprising persons as might be desirous and willing to make and maintain such railways by granting to them an Act of Incorporation. It then enacted that William Bradley, William Bowman, Thomas Barker, Charles Cowper, Thomas Holt the younger, Arthur Jeffreys, David Jones, Moses Joseph, Charles Kemp, Robert Lowe, Samuel Lyons, Archibald Michie, Thomas Sutcliffe Mort, Abraham Moses, Charles Nicholson, George Oakes, John Norton Oxley, Robert Porter, Henry Gilbert-Smith, Charles Throsby, William Walker, Edward Weston and Adolphus William Young, subscribers, should be united into a company for making railways. The capital was fixed at £100,000, divided into 20,000 shares of £5 each.

Charles Cowper was at first elected both president and manager but, on Holt pointing out that this dual capacity was illegal, Cowper resigned as president and became manager only. Thereupon the board of

<sup>3</sup> 13 May 1846.

<sup>4</sup> 14 May 1846.

<sup>8</sup> Vol. I, Minute Book of the Sydney Railway Company (M.L.); 21 November 1848, Railway Papers vol. I (M.L.); *SMH* 6 March 1849, 27 September 1849.

directors of the company comprised: J. Lamb, president; William Bradley, Daniel Cooper, mc, Thomas Holt Junior, Charles Kemp and Charles Nicholson, mc<sup>9</sup>.

On 3 July 1850 'the turning of the first turf' was performed in heavy rain at the Cleveland Paddock by Mrs Keith Stewart, in the presence of the Governor<sup>10</sup>. The performance was, however, insubstantial because the Act had not yet received the Royal Assent and at that time only £15,000 had been subscribed, of which £10,000 had to be paid to the Treasury. The lack of funds was attributed by the directors to 'the apathy of some of their fellow-colonists and undisguised hostility of others' and 'the paralysing effect produced by being compelled to wait, month after month, in anxious suspense for the decision of the Home Government, on matters upon which the whole success of the project depends'<sup>11</sup> (i.e., dividends guaranteed by the Government).

Disheartened by the delay in obtaining the Royal Assent, J. Lamb, D. Cooper and Dr Nicholson resigned as directors and W. Bradley and T. Holt expressed their intention of doing so, but agreed to continue until successors were appointed. Bradley did resign but Holt remained on the board, doubtless because his friends T. S. Mort and T. W. Smart, as well as Thomas Barber, joined the board in October 1850. Charles Kemp was their president and Charles Cowper manager.

At long last, early in 1851, it was announced that the Royal Assent had been given to the Act and that the Home Government had confirmed a guaranteed rate of interest of 5 per cent on capital invested<sup>12</sup>. Thus was born the first public railway system in the colony and it appeared that work would be able to commence in earnest. Accordingly a tender for the first four and half miles from Haslem's Creek to Ashfield of the Sydney to Parramatta line was accepted<sup>13</sup>.

The work from Ashfield was progressing satisfactorily when news came of the discovery of gold in the Bathurst area. It caused so many railway workers to seek their fortunes on the gold fields that the Government was requested to import labourers from England<sup>14</sup>. In 1852 the Sydney to Parramatta work was slightly advanced but was delayed because no iron rails had arrived from England and the plating of wooden rails with thin bars of iron proved too expensive<sup>15</sup>. Funds, at this time, were running short and the directors were forced to apply to

<sup>9</sup> Sydney Railway Company Papers (M.L.); Vol. I, Minute Books of the Sydney Railway Co (supra).

<sup>10</sup> Second report of the Sydney Railway Co (M.L.).

<sup>11</sup> Directors' Report, 12 February 1851 (M.L.).

<sup>12</sup> Vol. I, Minute Books (supra).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid and the Company's fourth report, 1 July 1851 (M.L.).

<sup>14</sup> The Company's sixth report (M.L.).

<sup>15</sup> SMH 27 September 1855.

the Government for assistance. The Government agreed to lend up to £150,000 in the proportion of three-fifths public money to each two-fifths subscribed by private capitalists on condition that half of the directors should be Government appointees and that the company should mortgage its assets to the Government<sup>16</sup>.

There were, at that time, 9,624 of the original shares of the company unable to be sold, although available to the general public. Mort, Holt, Smart and Darvall showed their confidence in the company by applying for all these shares, Mort and Holt 3,406 each, Smart and Darvall 1,406 each<sup>17</sup>. There was some criticism that they were speculators but, even though the shares did appreciate in 1853 to 30/- above par, Holt sold none of them<sup>18</sup>. The *Sydney Morning Herald* congratulated its fellow-colonists, after their long struggle with difficulties and discouragements, on being 'no longer ridiculed as visionaries' and noted that 'the shares of the original company, which, even with a Government guarantee of five per cent, long went a-begging, have all been eagerly bought up'<sup>19</sup>.

But misfortune still dogged the company's endeavour. Strikes in England in the early part of 1853 held up the making of iron rails and the wooden iron-bark rails, which had to be used in advancing the work, cut up within a month of use. 'It took two horses to draw six waggons at the rate of four miles an hour whereas, with iron rails, we can send them along at the rate of twenty-five miles an hour'<sup>20</sup>.

In August 1853 the execution of the Deed of Mortgage to the Government was completed and the new board, under the Act 16 Victoria No. 39, entered on its duties. The Government representatives on the board were the Hon F. S. L. Merewether, MLC (Auditor-General), Thomas Barker, MLC, and H. G. Smith. The company's representatives on the board were to have been Cowper, Kemp and Smart but Cowper, because he objected to being displaced as president by the Governor-General in favour of Merewether, resigned and Holt, who had been retired in 1851 under the provisions of the early statute, was elected to fill his place on the board<sup>21</sup>.

During 1853 labour was imported from England and, by the end of the year, the last batch of five hundred railway immigrants had arrived<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> Proceedings of the Executive Council, November 1852; the Company's seventh report (M.L.).

<sup>17</sup> Select Committee on Roads and Railways, 1854, Evidence of C. Kemp p. 19.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 21.

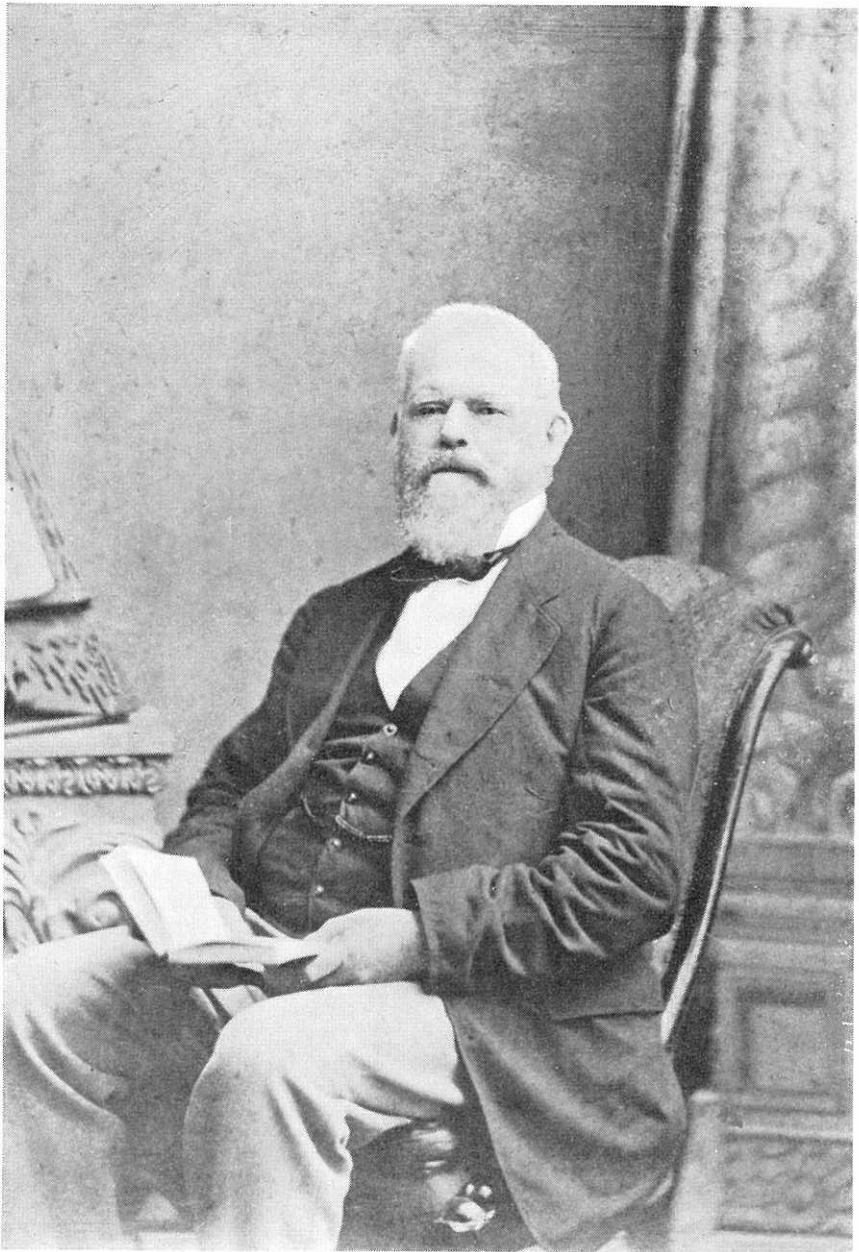
<sup>19</sup> *SMH* 23 April 1853.

<sup>20</sup> Select Committee on Roads and Railways, Evidence of Kemp (p. 12) and Randle (p. 22).

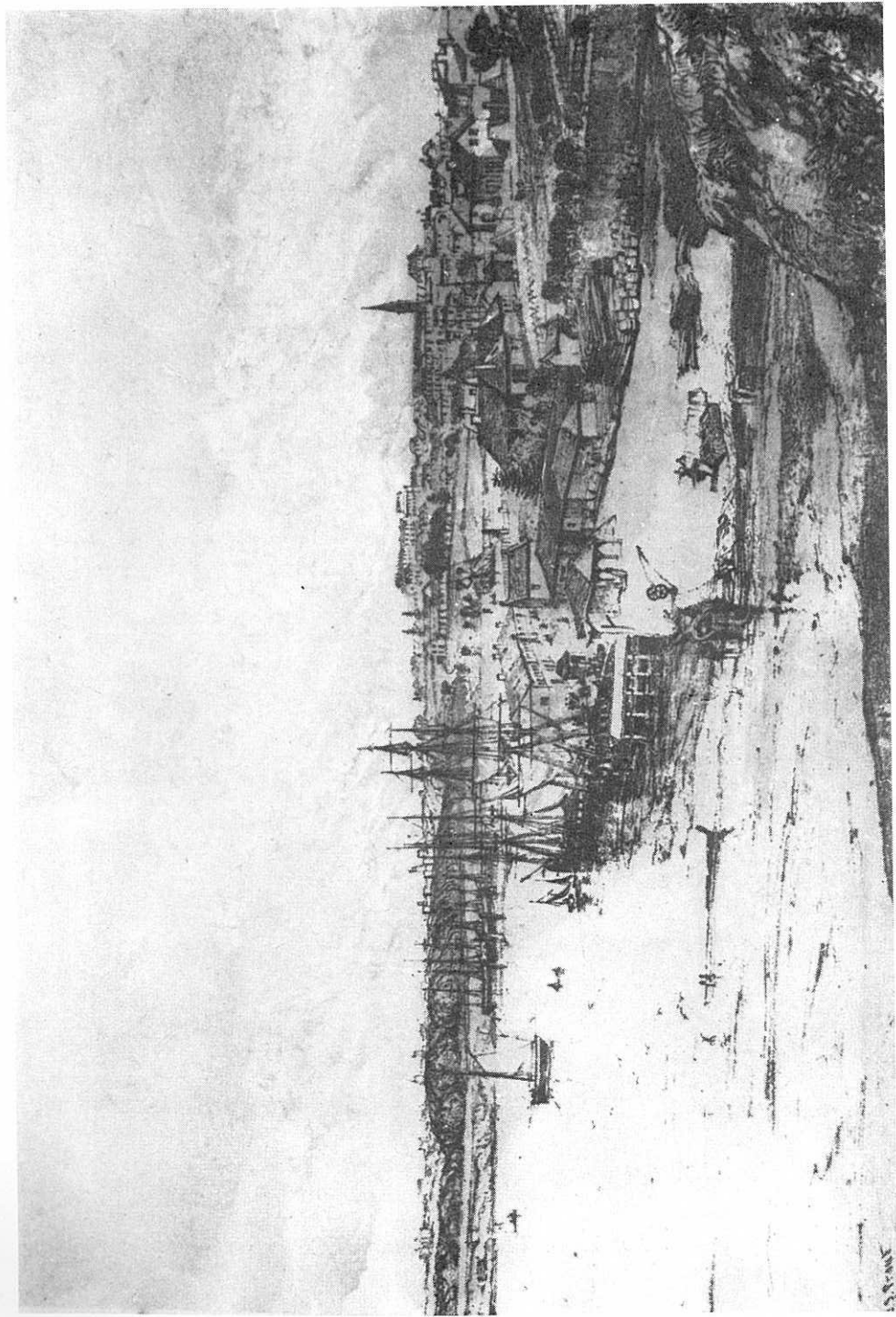
<sup>21</sup> Ninth report of the Sydney Railway Company (M.L.); minutes of directors' meetings 8-29 August 1853; Special meeting of shareholders, 26 September 1853; Vol. II, Minute Books (*supra*) 30 November 1852.

<sup>22</sup> Minutes of Directors' Meeting, 12 December 1853 (M.L.).





*The Hon. Thomas Holt, MLC*



*Sydney Cove in 1842 with Campbell's Wharf on the western side*

Even then labour was so scarce that the company had to offer a reward of £20 for information leading to the conviction of parties illegally employing immigrants under engagement to the company<sup>23</sup>.

In the first half of 1854 the first shipment of iron rails was received. The Government raised £100,000 by debentures to complete the loan of £150,000 and the capital of the company was increased by the issue of 20,000 new shares of £5 each (of which only 16,688 were taken up). Nearly two miles of permanent way had been laid<sup>24</sup>.

The Council then appointed a Select Committee, under the Chairmanship of Charles Cowper, to investigate the whole project. The Committee reported in November 1854 that 'an experiment, extending over five years has proved that the colonists will not advance any funds for railway purposes unless the Government is prepared to guarantee the interest upon them and also, in addition, to provide capital to a much greater extent than that raised by private individuals. Your Committee consider that the Government has already gone to the utmost extent justifiable in carrying out this principle and as it seems to be now acknowledged that private companies cannot succeed in constructing railways without Government aid upon a scale which ought not to be conceded, your Committee recommend that these important works should be taken up by the Government' and 'equitable compensation made to the shareholders'<sup>25</sup>.

Following the report of the Select Committee, a Bill was introduced in the Council to give effect to its recommendations. During debate on the Bill James Martin, supported by Mr Macarthur, moved that the Government 'should not leave it in the power of the company to say whether they would dispose of their property in the line to Parramatta or not'. This motion raised indignant protests at a meeting of shareholders. Kemp claimed that it 'would have sapped the foundations of all confidence in the justice and integrity of the Government'. Holt characterised it as an 'unprincipled and dishonest proposition' which 'would have fixed an indelible stain on the previously honourable character and standing of this colony, which would have been productive of consequence the most disastrous'. Mort regarded it as an 'unjust demand', while Darvall saw in it 'a desire to centralise all power in the state in the hands of the Government, to return in fact to the same state of things which existed a few years back'<sup>26</sup>.

At the time of the shareholders' meeting, however, the Bill had

<sup>23</sup> Minutes of Directors' Meeting, 6 February 1854 (M.L.).

<sup>24</sup> Tenth Report of the Company; Vol. II, Minute Books, pp. 276-363 (M.L.) *SMH* 27 September 1855.

<sup>25</sup> Final report of the Select Committee, 15 November 1854, (1854 NSW *V and P* Vol. I).

<sup>26</sup> Vol. II Minute Books (*supra*) 3 January 1855; *SMH* 4 January 1855.

already been rushed through the Council and was assented to on 2 December 1854<sup>27</sup>.

The Act contained provisions

- 1 limiting the powers of the Sydney Railway Company to making a line of railway from Sydney to Parramatta
- 2 authorising the Governor-General to appoint three Commissioners of Railways to make and maintain railways throughout New South Wales
- 3 giving power to the Governor-General to borrow money upon the security of the general revenues of the colony by the sale of debentures and to appropriate £400,000 for the year 1855
- 4 giving the Government power to purchase the railways and works of the Sydney Railway Company for a price which might be agreed upon between the Governor-General and the company with compensation not exceeding 7 per cent on paid-up capital.

There was, therefore, no alternative left to the shareholders at their meeting on 3 January 1855 but to favour a dissolution of the company and a sale of its property to the Government by its directors. At this time Mort and Holt held between them £35,000 stock of the Company, a large portion of which was held in trust by the Great Nugget Vein Gold Mining Company<sup>28</sup>. At this time, also, only three and a quarter miles of double and six and a half miles of single track was actually laid.

The first three Commissioners of Railways, appointed under the Act were Captain E. W. Ward, RE, and Messrs Barker and Kemp<sup>29</sup>. Of these Kemp had been a director of the company since its inception and Barker had also been a director for some time.

Work was speeded up and on 18 August 1855 the first experimental trip to Parramatta, with over sixty passengers, was made in 39½ minutes. At a reception to mark the event, Merewether announced that the Sydney Railway Company would go out of existence in the near future and that 'thanks were due to the directors for their labours over many years under the greatest possible disadvantages'<sup>30</sup>.

Shortly after this event a transfer of the works and property of the Sydney Railway Company to the Government was executed on behalf of the company by Merewether, Smith and Holt and on 3 September 1855, the Railway Commissioners formally took over the Sydney to Parramatta line, the price paid being the amount of the company's

<sup>27</sup> 18° Vic. No. 40.

<sup>28</sup> Select Committee on Roads and Railways (supra), Evidence of Kemp, p. 21.

<sup>29</sup> Vol. II, Minute Books (supra), pp. 474-5.

<sup>30</sup> SMH 20 August 1855.

paid up capital (£161,245) together with a bonus of 7 per cent<sup>31</sup>.

The total cost of the line to Parramatta was £480,000<sup>32</sup> and Kemp estimated that, if the company had been supported by the public in 1849 the line to Parramatta would have been completed before the gold discovery for a cost of about £150,000.

The official opening of the Sydney to Parramatta line was on 26 September 1855, a wet and gloomy morning when thousands of people flocked to the terminus at Cleveland Paddock to see the departure of the vice-regal train.

The shops throughout the city were shut from earliest dawn . . . thousands who before were adverse to railways, thousands who sneered in their ignorance of the advantages they offered, thousands who were timid as to the capabilities and safety of a colonial line — now became staunch friends of railway enterprise . . . the shrill whistle of the engine was a precursor of the waving of flags, hats and handkerchiefs, the salute of artillery and the nearby cheers of assembled thousands . . . while none can deny every praise to the Commissioners, under whose direction the line has been completed, no liberal man will refuse even a larger share of praise to those public spirited men, who devoted their money and time to an enterprise of the highest moment to the progress of the country, at a time when the enterprise was almost universally looked upon as visionary and absurd.

The entire rolling stock then comprised four engines with tenders from Robert Stephenson & Co and several teak carriages from Birmingham, 'richly fitted up in the most modern and fashionable style'. Trains ran six times daily from 6 am at approximately two-hourly intervals<sup>33</sup>.

A public ball on 2 October 1855 completed the opening celebrations but the important aspect, that this was the first railway in the British Empire to be nationalised, passed practically unnoticed.

##### 5 *The Australian Mutual Provident Society*

In 1848 the only two offices writing life insurance in Australia were the Australian Fire and Life Assurance Company and the Derwent and Tamar Assurance Company, but neither of these companies operated on the mutual system principle nor were the benefits of their policies protected against creditors in the event of insolvency<sup>1</sup>.

Holt was disturbed by the plight of an old gentleman acquaintance,

<sup>31</sup> Sydney Railway Company Papers (supra).

<sup>32</sup> Vol. II, Minute Books, 26 November 1855.

<sup>33</sup> *SMH* 27 September 1855.

<sup>1</sup> Supplement to the *Policy Insurance Weekly*, vol. LIII (N.S.) 2569; Insolvency Acts of 1841 and 1843, 5 Vic. No. 17 and 7 Vic. No. 19.

living in affluence and supporting a wife and large family, who had been suddenly reduced to penury by his insolvency. He decided to find a solution to protect a man's savings for a deferred or old-age annuity, in the event of insolvency, without injustice to creditors<sup>2</sup>. Although he was not a lawyer, Holt drafted a bill to protect deferred annuities up to a certain amount per week after the assured attained the age of fifty and had been a subscriber for six years. This bill became law in 1850<sup>3</sup>.

In 1848, shortly after drafting the bill, Holt was visited at 'Sophienburg' by his old friend, T. S. Mort, Mrs Mort and the Rev. William Horatio Walsh (later a Canon of St Andrew's Cathedral and a Senior Fellow of St Paul's College)<sup>4</sup>. The Morts were driving Walsh to their property at Camden to give the overworked and underpaid clergyman a much-needed holiday.

Walsh was concerned about his financial position in the event of his health failing or his death and, over lunch, an earnest conversation took place among the three men about an insurance scheme to provide for old age, insolvency and dependents but, as the schemes involved a number of legal questions, it was arranged to seek the assistance of William Perry, Official Assignee, and Charles Lowe, solicitor.

The first recorded meeting took place on 31 August 1848, at the office of William Perry at 470 George Street. It was described in the first minute book of the Society as 'a meeting of several persons desirous of establishing a provident society to be styled the Australian Mutual Provident Society'. Those present were the Rev. W. H. Walsh (in the chair), Messrs Thos Holt, T. S. Mort, W. Perry and C. Lowe<sup>5</sup>. Perry agreed to act as secretary and did so until 1854. During the next few months further meetings were held to which a number of persons were invited, but little interest was evinced.

On 15 December 1848, however, a momentous meeting was held at which the Society actually came into existence. It was attended by only M. E. Murnin, G. A. Lloyd and T. Holt in an upper room, opposite the Barrack Gate, over a grocer's shop above the door of which was suspended a gilt coffee pot<sup>6</sup>. (The premises were then 487 George Street and a bronze plaque on the premises of Richard Hunt & Co Pty Ltd, now 314 George Street, marks the site.)

The meeting appointed S. A. Donaldson, Charles Cowper and T. S. Mort, trustees; A. Michie, chairman of directors; T. W. Smart, T.

<sup>2</sup> *SMH* 3 May 1877.

<sup>3</sup> 14 Vic. No. 11.

<sup>4</sup> *AMP News & Views*, vol. VI, No. 40:24 *RAHS Jo.* 340.

<sup>5</sup> *AMP Society*, Minute Book, vol. I; *AHS Jo.* vol. III, p. 588.

<sup>6</sup> *SMH* 24 January 1877.

Holt, David Jones, M. E. Murnin and F. Ebsworth, directors; with G. A. Lloyd, Jeremiah Murphy and W. R. Scott as auditors.

The first meeting of directors was held on 19 December 1848. A code of rules was adopted on 28 December 1848 and, on that date, the Society was registered under the Friendly Societies' Act.

At first business was conducted only three days a week for one hour each day (8-9 p.m.)<sup>7</sup> and the first proposals for insurance were not received until 24 January 1849 — and then only upon the lives of one of the directors, F. Ebsworth, and the secretary. Holt took out policy No. 6 for a deferred annuity, his proposal being dated 31 January 1849.

Considerable caution was exercised by the board of the Society in accepting proponents and each applicant was required to appear personally before the directors and be subjected to searching questions<sup>8</sup>. It was inevitable that some mistakes would be made and Professor Smith, when Chairman of the Society in 1877, referred to a case where, in August 1850, a lady

represented as 63 years of age, and of very infirm health applied for an annuity in consideration of £300 paid down. The directors, thinking she was not long for this world, agreed to give her £45 per annum. But wonderful is the life-giving power of an annuity; surely the nearest approach to the elixir vitae ever discovered! This good lady, from that day to this, for six-and-twenty years, has come regularly every quarter to draw her allowance<sup>9</sup>.

In the early days of the Society the Secretary received no salary, nor were there any directors' fees, and the rent of the office was less than 10/- per week. Some weeks passed before the Society had its name painted on its office door and much longer before its first carpet was purchased<sup>10</sup>.

Under the Society's early rules there was a limit of £500 on the life of any one person and, if a member left the colony, his policy was forfeited<sup>11</sup>. Also, if an assured died 'from casualty by collision with the aboriginal natives of any part of New Holland, or in consequence of injuries sustained in such collision', the policy became void<sup>12</sup>.

At the end of its first year, the Society had a credit of £93.13.2 and, during its first three years, it was fortunate that no members died, because such an occurrence could have forced it out of existence.

Having survived the first few years the Society steadily progressed and

<sup>7</sup> *AMP Centenary booklet, 1849-1949; Old Times*, vol. I, No. 1, p. 65.

<sup>8</sup> *AHS Jo.*, vol. V, p. 34.

<sup>9</sup> *SMH* 24 January 1877.

<sup>10</sup> Minute Books of the A.M.P. Society.

<sup>11</sup> First Annual Report of the A.M.P. Society.

<sup>12</sup> *A.M.P. News and Views*, Vol. III, No. 23, December 1954, p. 3.

### *An Energetic Colonist*

was forced to acquire larger premises: Gill's Hotel in 1851, Mort's Chambers in 1854 (each in Pitt Street and subsequently purchased by Holt) and in 1858 the north-eastern corner of Pitt and Hunter Streets. (The Society's later moves to other premises in Pitt Street and then to Sydney Cove occurred after Holt ceased to be a director<sup>13</sup>.)

Holt was a director of the Society for over thirteen years (having resigned when appointed Colonial Treasurer in the first Parliament but having been subsequently re-elected) and was chairman of directors in 1850, 1851, 1852, 1854, 1855 and 1858.

During that time he was able to see one of his principal aims for the Society fulfilled. This was an extension of the protection of benefits of policies against creditors. Since 1850 annuities had received protection but life policies were not so protected. In 1857 this position was rectified and proceeds of life policies, within certain limits, became protected in an Act incorporating the Society. By this Act the Society became the first insurance office in the world to issue policies subject to this protection<sup>14</sup>.

Another of Holt's aims for the Society was that it should be conducted on the mutual system principle and this principle was adopted at its inception and continued throughout. Speaking on this subject at a meeting of the Society in 1859, Holt said

If the Society had been established on the proprietary system, the case would have been widely different. Then in all probability the shares would have been held by Sydney capitalists, and it would have been for them one of the most profitable companies in the Colony; but all the profits which would have been divided amongst the shareholders if it had been a proprietary company are now divided amongst widows, orphans and the aged. The Society was established for the sole purpose of doing good, and that object was carried out. The originators of the Society would have scouted the idea of making a profit out of the bread of widows, orphans, and the aged<sup>15</sup>.

In 1862 there was a divergence of opinion among the directors upon advancing money on church properties and Holt was displeased when the majority of directors granted a loan to the Newtown Congregational Church, of which he was a member, only on condition that he gave his personal bond. The Society's solicitor later rendered a bill of costs in this transaction which Holt considered to be an overcharge and 'most monstrously unjust'. The majority of the directors were of a different opinion but Holt felt so deeply on the subject that he resigned from

<sup>13</sup> A.M.P. *News and Views*, vol. IV, No. 30.

<sup>14</sup> 20 Vic, 18 March 1857; G. Forbes, *History of Sydney* (1926) (M.L.).

<sup>15</sup> *SMH* 8 September 1888.



the board. He made it clear, however, that although he took a warm interest in the Congregational Cause, he would as earnestly resent what he conceived to be an exorbitant charge made against a Jewish synagogue or to the meanest subject, as he would to the Congregational Church<sup>16</sup>. After his resignation from the board, Holt continued his interest in the Society and took an active part at its general meetings and whenever the Society's interests were before Parliament but never sought re-election.

At the laying in 1885 of the foundation-stone of the Brisbane branch offices R. B. Sheridan, MLA recalled his attendance at several early meetings called to establish the Society.

At the next meeting Mr Thomas Holt presided, and that gentleman was really the founder of the Society. His words, when it was fairly launched, were, 'Now, gentlemen, you have established a Society which is destined to become the most powerful institution in the Southern Hemisphere', and now no-one could say that Mr Holt was not a true prophet<sup>17</sup>.

Since the Society's inception, its history has been one of progress and expansion in every State of the Commonwealth, the United Kingdom and New Zealand. In building and investing its funds for the benefit of policy-holders it has taken a major part in Australia's development in many ways, particularly those relating to agricultural and mineral operations. During the year 1969 its income exceeded \$393 million, its total assets were almost \$2,255 million and total claims paid to policy holders and beneficiaries since 1849 amounted to more than \$1,325 million.

## 6 *Squatting Accounts and Pastoral Interests*

Apart from his wool-buying activities, it appears that Holt's first association with the pastoral industry was through his friend, Thomas Sutcliffe Mort.

About 1848 or 1849, while engaged in auctioning and selling station properties, Mort conceived the idea of finding a new class of buyers by assisting them with advances on the security of their squatting properties upon commission, as no other selling agents at that time would finance squatting transactions. In doing this Mort foresaw that wool and other produce from the properties would pass through his hands for sale, and such was the result.

For keeping the squatting accounts Mort charged a commission of

<sup>16</sup> *SMH* 14, 16 August 1862.

<sup>17</sup> Report of proceedings at the laying of the Foundation-Stone of the new Branch Offices, Brisbane, on Friday 25 September 1885; *A.M.P. News and Views*, vol. VI, No. 40.

five per cent, together with a commission upon sales of produce and on payments, amounting in all to about fifteen per cent. As he was unable to undertake the whole of the financing himself, he had an understanding with Holt that any squatting account of which he undertook the agency should be shared with the latter<sup>1</sup>.

A different arrangement between the two men then arose in connection with certain properties under the following circumstances. About the time of the gold discoveries (1851) Mort had an intending purchaser for a Queensland property whom he told that, if he bought, Holt and Mort would advance the residue of the purchase price or that, if he preferred, he did not doubt that he could get Holt to take an interest with him. This man purchased the property and afterwards Holt agreed to take an interest in the property on condition that Mort did the same. The purchase was made at a time when stock were at a low price and the property was later sold at a profit of several thousand pounds to each of the parties<sup>2</sup>.

During the years 1851-53 Holt became the transferee of several runs but it is impossible from the available records to ascertain whether he was beneficial owner, mortgagee or in partnership with Mort or anyone else. It seems probable, however, that the runs were taken merely as security on squatting transactions. The runs transferred to Holt during these years were

1 'Cudgee' (or 'Cadgee'), about eight miles south-west of Bodalla. This had been part of Benjamin Boyd's extensive holding in the Monaro which, when he suffered financial disaster, he transferred to his brother, William Sprott, who transferred to Holt in 1851 and Holt transferred to C. J. Byrnes the following year<sup>3</sup>.

2 'Waterloo', near Glen Innes in the New England and Macleay District, which Mort transferred to Holt in 1852 and Holt re-transferred to Mort in 1853<sup>4</sup>.

3 'Rimbanda', in the New England and Macleay District, of which Holt became transferee in 1853 and transferred it the following year<sup>5</sup>.

4 'Barraba', in the Liverpool Plains district, was also transferred to Holt in 1853 and transferred by him about a year later<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Appeal Book in *Wentworth v. Lloyd II*, i; Mort's evidence 359, 362, 391, 430, 450 (M.L.).

<sup>2</sup> *Wentworth v. Lloyd* (supra): evidence of Mort, pp. 384-86.

<sup>3</sup> *N.S.W. Government Gazettes*, 1848, pp. 1381, 1849, 1167, 1851, 1070, 1852, 1115.

<sup>4</sup> *N.S.W. Government Gazettes*, 1851, pp. 1070, 1854.

<sup>5</sup> *N.S.W. Government Gazettes*, 1853, pp. 1693, 1854.

<sup>6</sup> *N.S.W. Government Gazettes*, 1856, pp. 468.

## 7 Alpacas

In 1850 considerable interest was aroused among pastoralists by a proposal to introduce alpacas into the Colony for the value of their fleeces and because they thrive on poor country. T. S. Mort, who had made a study of the subject, stimulated interest in the proposal in a paper read before the Australian Society in September 1850<sup>1</sup>. Meetings were held in Sydney during November 1850 to raise funds to import 150-200 alpacas, Mort and Holt being members of the committee and, with others, contributing £50 each to the fund<sup>2</sup>.

Exportation of alpacas was prohibited by the Peruvian Government but, notwithstanding this, Charles Ledger, a merchant of Peru, was invited by the New South Wales Government to New South Wales in 1851 to see if the conditions in the Colony favoured the raising of alpacas. Ledger was optimistic and was commissioned by the New South Wales Government to procure a number of the animals and bring them to the Colony. He spent five years collecting them and preparing them for the long sea voyage and, after travelling through Peru, Bolivia and the Argentine mountains at great risk and enduring considerable hardships and privations (including being twice imprisoned), arrived in Sydney in November 1858 with a mixed flock of 280 alpacas, llamas and vicunas<sup>3</sup>. The flock was taken to Collingwood, near Liverpool, where Ledger proposed to sell it by public auction in February 1859, asking the exorbitant price of £45,000.

Other consignments of alpacas had also arrived in the colony; the Victorian Government was showing some interest in acquiring the flock and some pastoralists in New South Wales were anxious to retain the flock in New South Wales<sup>4</sup>. So, when the flock was not sold at auction, public meetings were called in Sydney and Holt was one of a committee appointed to form a company to purchase the flock and to defray the expenses of a number of Peruvian natives who were tending it. By then public interest had flagged and, even though the Government offered to pay half the price provided the public would raise the other half, it was considered that any attempt to form a company would fail and that undertaking was abandoned<sup>5</sup>.

The New South Wales Government then purchased the flock for £15,000 and also undertook management at a cost of £1,000 per year<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> 24 *R.A.H.S. Jo.*, 347; *Australian Almanac*, 1857.

<sup>2</sup> *SMH* 8-23 November 1850.

<sup>3</sup> *Official History of New South Wales 1788-1883*, p. 299; J. H. Heaton, *Australian Dictionary of Dates and Men of the Time*, Part II, p. 10; *Agricultural Gazette of New South Wales*, May 1923.

<sup>4</sup> *SMH* 8 February 1859; Victorian Parliament, Accounts & Papers re Alpacas

<sup>5</sup> *SMH* 22, 23, 30 March 1859.

<sup>6</sup> *Official History of New South Wales* (supra) p. 299; J. H. Heaton (supra) p. 10.

Ledger was appointed superintendent and experimented with some success in the inter-breeding of the alpacas and llamas at Liverpool. An attempt was made to interest the public in alpaca meat, described as 'splendid venison'<sup>7</sup>: when seven alpacas were killed and stuffed to be sent to the International Exhibition in London. The animals had not then been shorn for two years and it was expected that over a ton of wool would be produced, the first substantial export of Australian alpaca wool<sup>8</sup>. The vicunas, however, proved untameable and all had died by 1861<sup>9</sup>.

The alpacas did not realize the sanguine anticipations held for them, Ledger resigned as superintendent owing to misunderstandings and returned to Peru and the Government in 1864 ordered that the flock be sold at auction. The greater portion of the flock had been born in the colony and was at 'Wingello Park', Marulan, and as difficulty arose in obtaining the reserve price at the auction sale the animals were given away to squatters and land-owners<sup>10</sup>.

Holt obtained some alpacas, which he kept and bred on his properties 'The Warren' (Marrickville), and 'Arthursleigh' (Marulan). Some he gave to Henry Parkes for his new property at Landsdown Bridge on the Georges River in 1871, and others he gave to various lunatic asylums, 'to amuse the patients'<sup>11</sup>.

## 8 Gold

After the gold discoveries of 1851, in the eastern colonies of Australia many men and institutions became involved in the search for and the purchase of the precious metal. Holt was one of those involved, although incomplete records and the prevalent practice of non-disclosure of all members of a syndicate render it difficult to determine the extent of his involvement.

It appears probable, however, that, because of his close association with T. S. Mort in business ventures, he may have partnered Mort in his extensive purchases of gold dust<sup>1</sup>, particularly, as in February 1853 Holt's name was tendered as security when Mort obtained a cash credit of £5,000 from the A.J.S. Bank to buy gold dust on the Ovens gold fields<sup>2</sup>. During that year, both Mort and Holt also obtained credit

<sup>7</sup> *The Empire*, 30 August 1861, 3 September 1861.

<sup>8</sup> *SMH* 21 December 1861.

<sup>9</sup> *Agricultural Gazette of New South Wales*, May 1923, p. 341.

<sup>10</sup> *SMH* 21 December 1861. See generally 'Introduction of Alpaca and Llama into New South Wales'. Original Papers (Archives of NSW 7/2659).

<sup>11</sup> Letters from Holt to Parkes, 25 May 1871, 17 November 1871 & 23 May 1873 in vol. XVI, Parkes correspondence (M.L.).

<sup>1</sup> *SMH* January-April 1853.

<sup>2</sup> A. J. S. Bank, Board minute book No. 1, 2 February 1853.

from the same bank for some tens of thousands of pounds in both New South Wales and Victoria.

Mort and Holt were also associated in the Great Nugget Vein Gold Mining Company which will be referred to later.

Another of Holt's friends who purchased gold dust extensively was George Alfred Lloyd, a well-known Sydney auctioneer who had his own bullion office at 474 George Street<sup>3</sup>, and who, in one five-month period during 1853, exported over 10,000 ounces valued at more than £37,000<sup>4</sup>.

It is quite probable that Holt was associated with Lloyd in the purchase of gold dust because earlier they had jointly purchased gold; in December 1851 at a public auction attended by the Chief Justice, the Colonial Secretary, several MLCs and many leading merchants. The 'Brennan' nugget (described as 'the largest lump of gold in the world', weighing over twenty-seven pounds, with a diameter of nine inches and circumference of 21 inches) was knocked down to Lloyd and Holt for £1,155. Lloyd and Holt were also associated in the formation of the Sydney Gold Escort Company, referred to later.

The Great Nugget Vein at Louisa Creek, near Mudgee, New South Wales, was first revealed in July 1851 when an aboriginal boy 'observed a speck of glittering substance upon the surface of a block of quartz, upon which he applied his tomahawk, and broke off a portion'; this nugget yielded 160 pounds (troy) of pure gold. Later the 'Brennan' nugget, purchased later by Lloyd and Holt, and the 'King of the Water-worn Nuggets', which weighed 157 ounces, were found nearby<sup>5</sup>.

The Great Nugget Vein claims were purchased by John Croft, Robert Tooth, Edwin Tooth and T. S. Mort with the intention of forming a company. This company, known as The Great Nugget Vein Gold Mining Company, was incorporated in December 1852 with Mort and Holt as two of the directors and became the first company in the Colony to be formed for the working of auriferous lands<sup>7</sup>.

The company endeavoured to operate the site to the best of its ability and resources<sup>8</sup> but without success. It then arranged with a wealthy mining company, the Colonial Gold Company, to work the claims on terms which left a good percentage of the profits for the Great Nugget Vein Company while leaving the risk of failure and the expense of

<sup>3</sup> SMH 6 November 1852, 1 January 1853, March and April 1853.

<sup>4</sup> SMH from 8 February 1853 to 22 June 1853.

<sup>5</sup> *Old Times*, vol. I, No. 4, pp. 251 and 254.

<sup>6</sup> SMH 10 July 1852; J. H. Heaton, *Australian Dictionary of Dates and Men of the Time*, pp. 110-11; *Official History of New South Wales 1788-1883*, p. 179; *Old Times*, vol. I, No. 4, 8 December 1851.

<sup>7</sup> SMH 7 and 10 July 1852; Deed of Settlement of the company 1 September 1852 (M.L.); Incorporating Act, 16 Vic. (28 December 1852).

<sup>8</sup> SMH 14 May 1853.

working the claims to the Colonial Gold Company. The latter spent between £30,000 and £40,000 on the workings but was unable to make a success of them and abandoned the claims.

The Great Nugget Vein Company then tried the novel experiment in June 1856 of employing men for 1/- per day on condition that they gave one-fifth of the gold they obtained to the company, but this experiment failed because of the small receipts and the company was forced to surrender its claims<sup>9</sup>.

Soon after the claims were surrendered a sensational mass migration to the Great Nugget Vein resulted in many large nuggets and great quantities of gold being recovered; Louisa Creek became the richest diggings in the western gold fields, with over two thousand diggers busily engaged most of them making £1 and some from £10 to £100 a day<sup>10</sup>.

T. S. Mort informed a meeting of the company's shareholders that it had been proved, beyond all doubt, both in Melbourne and here, that gold-diggings did not pay the capitalist. The men employed always managed to secrete the gold, and it was impossible to prevent them from doing so. The temptation was very great, and they had a notion that what they dug out of the earth they might keep<sup>11</sup>.

It was decided to dissolve the company. At the time, about seventy-five per cent of the amount of paid-up shares had already been returned to shareholders, either as returns of capital or as dividends<sup>12</sup>. T. S. Mort and Robert Tooth suffered the worst because their combined holding totalled £17,850; Holt never held more than five hundred shares, the maximum allotted at the time of formation, so his loss was comparatively slight<sup>13</sup>.

The Sydney Gold Escort Company came into existence partly because of the difficulty found by Sydney men working on the rich Victorian gold-fields at Mount Alexander, Bendigo and the Ovens River in sending their gold dust to relatives and business associates in Sydney and partly because it was desired to keep pace with Melbourne and Adelaide by securing a fair proportion of the 'golden traffic' for Sydney.

Mort, Lloyd and Holt were among members of a provisional committee appointed for the projected company but, when the company was established in January 1853 with G. A. Lloyd as its chairman, Mort and Holt became shareholders though not directors<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> *SMH* 22 July 1856, 20 January 1857. <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 8 July 1856, 15 July 1856.

<sup>11</sup> *SMH* 22 July 1856.

<sup>12</sup> *SMH* 20 January 1857.

<sup>13</sup> See generally papers relating to Great Nugget Vein Gold Mining Co (M.L.); 24 *RAHS Jo.* 358; A. Barnard—*Visions and Profits* (Melb) 1961.

<sup>14</sup> *SMH* 15 November 1852, 16 November 1852; 5 January 1853; *Official History of New South Wales* (1788-1888) p. 204.

Equipment for the enterprise included gun carriages, each capable of carrying thirty thousand ounces of gold, one hundred horses for the long journey (necessitating fifteen stages), 'twelve Colts navy revolvers, ten razeed double-barrelled fowling pieces'<sup>15</sup> and uniforms for the officers and gentlemen cadets who comprised the corps and who were sworn in as special constables.

Before leaving on their first trip to the south they were inspected at Government House, Sydney, by the Governor-General, Sir Charles FitzRoy, who expressed approval of their appearance in 'blue stable jacket and trousers of the same, neatly trimmed with narrow silver lace, small jackboots of enamelled leather and blue military cap . . . well mounted on powerful-looking horses, and armed with a six-barrelled revolver and double-barrelled carbine'<sup>16</sup>.

After loading £10,000 worth of bank notes and specie in solid cedar boxes at the company's office, the escort commenced its first journey south 'amid the warm and continued cheering of assembled thousands, at a walking pace down George Street'<sup>17</sup>. Five weeks later the escort returned to Sydney, without incident, carrying ten thousand ounces of gold dust (valued at £3.10.0 per ounce) and £7,000 in specie. Conveyance charges were 1/3d per ounce for gold dust from Mount Alexander and Bendigo, 1/- from the Ovens River and half per cent for specie<sup>18</sup>. As the first escort returned to Sydney another had already left for the Ovens River; it was intended to send one every ten days.

Hopes of success were high, in February 1853, particularly after the new gold discovery at Ballarat, and the company's shares were at a premium of twenty-five per cent<sup>19</sup>. But troubles lay ahead. The winter of 1853 was the severest then on record, the price of forage rose, the cost of replacing horses increased fourfold and, worst of all, the Sydney community failed in its support. In nine months of operation the company lost over £6,000 and, although the Legislative Council in December 1853 recommended a grant of £5,000 to the company on condition that it continued its operations for another year, this condition was too onerous and hazardous.

In February 1854 the shareholders, on the motion of Captain Towns and Holt, decided to seek the assistance of the Government in view of the great importance of the company to the colony; if such assistance were not forthcoming before 31 March 1854, they recommended that the company be dissolved. To the company's request for assistance the Colonial Secretary replied that the Government had no funds without

<sup>15</sup> *SMH* 5 January 1853.

<sup>16</sup> *SMH* 13 January 1853.

<sup>17</sup> *SMH* 14 January 1853.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 5 January 1853.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 23 February 1853.

the concurrence of the Legislative Council and the company was, therefore, forced to cease its operations<sup>20</sup>.

### 9 *The Sydney Chamber of Commerce*

Although the Sydney Chamber of Commerce was formed in the 1820s it became active only in 1851 when a suitable site for an Exchange Building became available. The building however was not completed until 1857, due to the shortage of labour following the gold discoveries<sup>1</sup>.

Holt took an active part in the establishment and work of the chamber from 1851 and was an early shareholder in the Royal Exchange Company<sup>2</sup>.

### 10 *The Australian Joint Stock Bank*

The formation of a new bank was foreshadowed at a meeting of the Sydney Chamber of Commerce in July 1852. G. A. Lloyd, then a large buyer of gold, recalled that when gold was first discovered, the banks would not purchase it but that, when enterprising customers proved its profitability, the banks began to find that dealing in bullion and gold was their peculiar business and that merchants and traders had no right to be gold buyers. Lloyd indicated that, if the power of issuing notes on the deposit of gold dust were conceded to all banks, he knew of large capitalists who would form a company to issue notes on gold deposits; to form, in a word, a great trading bank<sup>1</sup>.

On 18 October 1852, a meeting of Sydney commercial men was held at the Royal Hotel in George Street to consider the expediency of establishing a new joint stock bank in Sydney. Views were expressed that, since the recent discovery of gold and the consequent increase of commercial transactions, there was a large accumulation of capital seeking investment and the profits realised by existing banks afforded ample encouragement for the formation of similar institutions, whilst the prospects of business were such as to preclude the idea of any hostile feeling towards existing institutions.

Holt was appointed a member of a provisional committee, comprising William Bradley, MLC, Thomas Barker, T. C. Breillat, J. B. Darvall, Clark Irving, M. E. Murnin, John Walker and others, to prepare a prospectus and bring up a report. The capital was to be £250,000 in

<sup>20</sup> Papers relative to the Sydney Gold Escort Company, 1854, 2 N.S.W. V & P of the *Legislative Council* (M.L.).

<sup>1</sup> 3 *A.H.S. Jo.* 589.

<sup>2</sup> *Cyclopedia of N.S.W.*, p. 637.

<sup>1</sup> *SMH* 9 July 1852.



twenty-five thousand shares of £10 each, with a limitation of eight hundred shares for any proprietor. Holt took up five hundred shares and advised his willingness to be a candidate for the office of director on the first board.<sup>2</sup> A ballot in November 1852 for the election of the first five directors from ten candidates resulted in Holt receiving the highest number of votes, his co-directors being T. W. Smart, MLC, (elected chairman) J. B. Darvall, MLC, J. R. Young and T. C. Breillat<sup>3</sup>.

The new bank was established under a deed of settlement<sup>4</sup>, opened for business at 397 Pitt Street North on 24 January 1853<sup>5</sup>, and was incorporated on 3 September 1853<sup>6</sup>. In 1855 Holt was elected Chairman and 'he reported that he had received into his custody the key of the Gold Treasury from the late Chairman, Mr Smart<sup>7</sup>'. In the same year Holt was appointed Inspecting Director to represent the board at the bank and to advise the manager until a permanent appointment was made<sup>8</sup>.

The following year the board recorded that

The resignation of the office of Inspecting Director by Mr Holt, whose able and zealous services have been of great value to the Bank, is accepted with regret by the directors, who are glad to understand that this Bank will still have the advantage of Mr Holt's frequent presence, when the manager, Mr Wrench, may have the assistance of Mr Holt's large experience<sup>9</sup>.

In 1856, upon his appointment as Colonial Treasurer, Holt resigned from the board, which instructed the manager to 'convey expressions of regret on the part of the directors at their being deprived of his valuable counsel and advice and to carry to him their best wishes for his success in conducting the honourable post of Colonial Treasurer he now occupies'<sup>10</sup>. In 1857 he again became a director, was elected chairman for the second time in 1861 and remained in that office until his retirement in 1862.

The bank met its first real troubles when a number of insolvencies occurred in 1859 and 1860, during the depression, and when losses were brought about by the swindler Miranda. These troubles were exacerbated, during Holt's chairmanship, by dissension on the board in 1861, between two directors, Clark Irving and R. M. Robey (both had been partners

<sup>2</sup> *SMH* 19 October 1852, 28 October 1852.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 27 November 1852.

<sup>4</sup> Deed of Settlement, 29 December 1852.

<sup>5</sup> *SMH* 20 January 1853.

<sup>6</sup> 17 Vic (3 September 1853).

<sup>7</sup> Minutes of Board Meeting 2 February 1855, 16 February 1855.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Minutes of Board Meeting 4 January 1856.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 July 1856.

in a sugar refining business but, at that time, were associated with rival sugar interests), and between Robey and the rest of the board.

Robey claimed that Irving had wrongly obtained payment for himself of accounts totalling £18,000 which resulted in the Bank being the loser. He also claimed that, as a result of the board's wrongful decision to reduce his firm's overdraft, his firm had been forced to sell its property at Sugar Work's Bay, North Shore, at a heavy loss. He then advertised in daily newspapers his intention of moving to refer to a committee of shareholders a claim for compensation.

At a meeting of shareholders in July 1861, the majority of the board reported having seen with much pain that Robey had adopted the very unusual and prejudicial course of advertising and considered his claim to be without foundation<sup>11</sup>. Robey's claim was tried in February 1862 in an action in the Supreme Court lasting three days, before a special jury of twelve. A majority of three-fourths brought in a verdict for Robey with £3,500 damages. Holt was a witness at the trial<sup>12</sup>.

At the board meeting Robey pressed for a hearing of his differences with Irving<sup>13</sup>. J. B. Darvall regretted that the personal quarrel between Robey and Irving could not have been settled in the proper way, having in mind 'a twenty-four-foot ring, and not the ring of the Supreme Court'. The meeting finally decided that the shareholders should not interfere in the dispute as the Supreme Court was open to the parties.

Robey then circulated shareholders with a pamphlet in which he attacked Clark Irving and also the directors, including Holt, who had reduced his overdraft. He asserted that 'Irving and Holt were all influential at the Board. Breillat and Fairfax were sadly deficient in resolution and decision, one or both of them generally doing what Mr Irving did and neither of them venturing to vote against a proposition made and enforced by Mr Holt.' Robey also claimed that Holt was 'imbued with particular notions' and 'afflicted with such an ungovernable temper that he was a most undesirable director'. Holt read these claims and candidly admitted that he was imbued with particular notions — as he did not agree with Robey — confessing also that his temper was not very even and that Mr Robey's presence on the board did not sweeten it.

Both Irving and Robey were asked to resign from the board. Irving did resign but Robey refused and the board suspended him, subject to confirmation by the proprietors at a meeting held on 9 August 1861. Holt refused to take the chair because he considered it was a question between the directors and the shareholders, but he did point out that one ground for Robey's suspension was the advertisement in the newspapers

<sup>11</sup> Seventeenth Report of the Board, 26 July 1861.

<sup>12</sup> *SMH* 27 February 1862.

<sup>13</sup> Minutes of General Meeting, 26 July 1861

which had considerably depreciated the value of the bank's shares. Irving denied Robey's charges against him and, the next day, circulated a pamphlet dealing more fully with the charges and stating that 'Robey will have full opportunity of making his statements on oath in the action for libel I have brought against him'<sup>14</sup>. (The following year, after a four-day trial before a special jury of twelve in the Supreme Court, the jury found a verdict in favour of Irving and the trial judge, Wise, certified for his costs. Holt was called as a witness at the trial<sup>15</sup>.) The meeting confirmed the suspension of Robey and, at a later meeting, J. Brewster and J. B. Rundle were elected directors in place of the dissidents.

At the next half-yearly meeting of proprietors on 31 January 1862, Holt retired by rotation in accordance with the terms of the Deed of Settlement and never again sought re-election, but he attended general meetings of the company until 1866 and finally disposed of his shareholding in 1868.

The A.J.S. Bank continued to operate successfully until 1893, when the worst crisis in Australian banking occurred and all but nine of the twenty-two trading banks were obliged to suspend payment. The A.J.S. Bank suffered reverses from which it never fully recovered and its assets were taken over by the Australian Bank of Commerce in 1910. In 1931 the Bank of New South Wales took over the interests of the A.J.S. Bank in the Australian Bank of Commerce when the Bank of New South Wales amalgamated with the Australian Bank of Commerce<sup>16</sup>.

## 11 *St Paul's College*

Under the chairmanship of Sir Alfred Stephen, Chief Justice, Holt became in December 1852 a lay member of a committee formed to promote the establishment of a college to be in permanent alliance with the University of Sydney. The college was to comprise a hall, chapel and library, with residences for a warden and vice-warden and rooms for forty students, and its purpose was to provide for the moral and religious superintendence of the youth of the Church of England, after the model of the Colleges at Oxford and Cambridge<sup>1</sup>. Close associates of Holt on the committee included Charles Kemp, T. S. Mort, J. F.

<sup>14</sup> Report of proceedings of shareholders of the Australian Joint Stock Bank at meetings on 26 July and 9 August 1861, at the Banking House, George Street, Sydney, and pamphlets circulated by Clark Irving and R. M. Robey dated 31 July and 10 August 1861 respectively (M.L. 308 p. 9).

<sup>15</sup> *SMH* 22 February 1862.

<sup>16</sup> R. F. Holder, *The History of the Bank of New South Wales*, 43 *R.A.H.S. Jo.* 97. The original records of the A.J.S. Bank were kindly permitted by the Bank of New South Wales, through its Archivist, Miss Patricia Quinn, to be inspected and notations made.

<sup>1</sup> 'The origin and foundation of St Paul's College', M.S. in Mitchell Library.

Josephson, T. W. Smart, James Barker, Captain King, RN, Charles Cowper, James Mitchell and Edward Knox. Mort and Smart headed the list of subscribers with donations of £525 and £500 respectively while several others, including Holt, gave over £200 each<sup>2</sup>.

The name originally proposed for the college was Queen's College, but in July 1853 this was changed to Trinity College and, in November 1853, it was finally decided that the college be called St Paul's<sup>3</sup>. In January 1856 an Act to incorporate the college was proclaimed<sup>4</sup> and, on St Paul's Day, 25 January 1856, the foundation-stone was laid by the Governor-General, Sir William Denison.

By November 1856 over £12,000 had been subscribed by private individuals and, as the Government had agreed to contribute a sum equal to that subscribed by individuals, contracts approved by the architect, Edmund T. Blacket, were entered into and the college was built the following year<sup>5</sup>.

## 12 *Sale of Horbury Terrace*

At an auction sale in 1853, conducted by T. S. Mort, seven of the eight terrace houses (lots 1-7) were sold on Holt's behalf for a total price of £8,600<sup>1</sup>.

The terrace houses on lots 1-5 were demolished much later for the erection of 'Wyoming' (John O'Brien of 'Wyoming', old Junee, being the part-owner in 1908)<sup>2</sup>. Two of the original terrace houses still exist, that on lot 6 being now occupied by the A.N.Z. Bank (in the 1870s it was owned by William Bede Dalley)<sup>3</sup> and that on lot 7 being occupied by the Clune Gallery<sup>4</sup>. The passage way from Hunter Street which ran at the rear of the terrace houses still remains.

Lot 8 was held by Holt until 1857, when he sold it to Saul Lyons, merchant, for £2,000<sup>5</sup>. In 1889, after Lyons' death, it was sold for £5,000 by his daughter to T. F. Knox and E. C. Merewether, acting on behalf of the Trustees of the Australian Club<sup>6</sup>. The terrace house on lot 8 was demolished in 1938<sup>7</sup> and an annexe to the club was built there. This annexe was then demolished, together with the rest of the club premises, when the site was cleared in 1970 for a new building.

<sup>2</sup> *SMH* 3 June 1853; 1 November 1853.

<sup>3</sup> MS. in Mitchell Library, referred to above.

<sup>4</sup> 18° Vic. 1 December 1854.

<sup>5</sup> *The Empire*, 10 May 1856.

<sup>1</sup> *SMH* 1 and 2 March 1853.

<sup>2</sup> Primary Application No. 15353, Registrar General's office.

<sup>3</sup> Primary Application No. 39692, Registrar General's office.

<sup>4</sup> Primary Application No. 41202, Registrar General's office.

<sup>5</sup> Deeds Registry, No. 109 Book 49.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, No. 204 Book 413 and No. 14 Book 488.

<sup>7</sup> *Australian Club Centenary Booklet*, p. 37.

### 13 *First Candidature for Parliament*

Holt's first entry into the political arena of the colony was in March 1853 when, in response to a requisition from a number of merchants, he offered himself as a candidate for the representation of Sydney in the old Legislative Council, in place of John Lamb who had retired<sup>1</sup>. The nomination of candidates took place at the hustings in Macquarie Place; about two thousand citizens assembled at a meeting presided over by the Mayor of Sydney.

The candidates were Henry Parkes (later Sir Henry Parkes, Premier and Colonial Secretary of New South Wales for many years, then an importer of toys and a journalist who ran *The Empire* newspaper) nominated by Messrs Piddington and Samuel Peck; William Thurlow, a lawyer and alderman of the city, nominated by Messrs Fisher and Driver and Thomas Holt, a wool-buyer, nominated by Messrs T. S. Mort and Castella.

The meeting was lively, with emotions freely vented, and groans, cheers, incessant whistling and shouting made the task of speakers difficult. Parkes' speech was received with mingled cheers, hisses, hooting and groans. He singled out Holt for trenchant criticism as being

a merchant prince, a German prince with his Chinese subjects, He (Parkes) would never run the good ship of the state against the Pfandbrief shoal, nor beat her to pieces against Coolies' heads (cheers and laughter). Whatever storms might arise, he would never be so blind as to take such will-o'-the-wisps for a light-house; and when he piloted the ship into haven, it would be a haven with a good old English name, and not such an outlandish place as Sophienburg. He would not allow her to sail under the German, and still less under the Chinese flag. (Roars of laughter.) He merely mentioned these things to show how utterly foreign and un-English were the ideas of his honourable opponent, Mr Holt. His labour system was Chinese — his monetary theories were Silesian — his very home bore a foreign name, (cheers and groans); and how therefore was he likely to be able to carry out a commercial policy fitted for British merchants and suited to British notions?<sup>2</sup>

Thurlow was received with immense and repeated cheering when he addressed the gathering. His criticisms were confined to Parkes and his nominators and to Holt's nominators, T. S. Mort 'the fashionable auctioneer', and Castella, 'a wool washer'.

<sup>1</sup> *Moreton Bay Free Press*, 5 May 1856.

<sup>2</sup> Parkes was at that time an importer of both German and Chinese merchandise (advertisement, Ap. 18, p. 10) (M.L.).

Holt was received with partial cheering and disapprobation which kept up during his address and frequently made him inaudible to the reporters. However, he disclaimed the title of prince, asserted that he was a true-born Englishman and aroused great laughter when he said that 'Sophienburg' had been so named, not by himself but at the suggestion of his wife.

After giving a short account of his doings in the colony, he indicated his attitude towards the gold laws, which he considered were radically bad and should be remedied to put the gold digger on a footing with other classes. Education he considered of the highest importance for the growing youth and to prevent the good that gold had brought being squandered by the profligacy of the next generation. He also advocated the reduction of rates for ocean postage and pointed out that, whereas he paid one half penny per pound for the carriage of wool to England, one pound of letters cost seven hundred times that amount for each pound, each letter costing 14d<sup>3</sup>.

A poll having been demanded by Parkes, voting took place two days later and resulted in Thurlow being elected with 1249 votes, while Parkes received 466 and Holt 84<sup>4</sup>.

#### 14 *The Hunter River Railway Company*

When it appeared in April 1853 that the Sydney Railway Company had good prospects of succeeding, 'a highly respectable and satisfactory meeting of gentlemen . . . assembled at the Royal Hotel, Sydney, for the purpose of establishing a company for the purpose of forming a railway from Newcastle to Maitland . . . on the motion of Mr Holt, William Charles Wentworth, Esq. took the chair'.

The meeting was informed that the carriage of hay, coal and grain was expected to make the line a paying proposition, that the coal export would be over 73,000 tons a year, that from the Agricultural Company's mines alone the export was 50,000 tons every year and that the people of Sydney were at the mercy of that company as to coal prices.

It was decided to form a company with a capital of not less than £100,000, divided into twenty thousand shares of £5 each, but the enthusiasm was such that 53,400 shares were subscribed for on the spot, so the available shares were agreed to be allotted pro rata<sup>1</sup>.

Referring to this meeting Charles Kemp later swore:

The shares were all taken up by about fifty persons. It was at a time when money was very flush, and interest very low and then nearly three times the amount of shares were applied for. But I do not know

<sup>3</sup> *SMH* 10 March 1853.

<sup>4</sup> *SMH* 12 March 1853.

<sup>1</sup> *SMH* 22 April 1853.

how the company was started. I knew nothing about it till I went to the meeting at the Royal Hotel. An anonymous circular was issued which induced me to attend<sup>2</sup>.

Over twenty years later Holt revealed how the company was initiated.

He had just returned from Newcastle where, at that time, coals were taken to the ships' sides in carts. And he happened to say in the smoking room of the Australian Club<sup>3</sup>, in the presence of Mr Wentworth, Mr Bradley and other gentlemen, that he thought a railway would pay, when Mr Wentworth said, 'Why not get up a company?' He asked Mr Wentworth if he would draw up the prospectus? but he said there was no necessity for a prospectus as the shares would be quickly taken up. They passed resolutions merely, and the company was formed. In fact more than double the number of shares were applied for than were for disposal<sup>4</sup>.

A temporary committee for the proposed company comprised Sir Charles Nicholson (Speaker of the Legislative Council), W. C. Wentworth, MLC, T. W. Smart, W. Bradley, Captain King, RN, J. B. Darvall, Dr Douglass, T. S. Mort, Thomas Holt Junior, J. E. Ebsworth, Charles Kemp, S. D. Gordon, David Jones, John Reeve, Dr James Mitchell, John Gilchrist, John Croft and J. F. Josephson<sup>5</sup>.

Two members of the committee had earlier opposed the formation of the Sydney Railway Company, W. C. Wentworth, objecting that it was 'presumptuously premature' and J. B. Darvall that 'the most fitting mode of inland communication for Australia was the good old system, slow but sure, of bullock-teams<sup>6</sup>'.

In May 1853, W. C. Wentworth approached the Government for a guarantee of five per cent interest on capital but the Government would only agree to four per cent and required a mortgage of the company's property<sup>7</sup>.

In September 1853, Holt became chairman of the temporary committee and, in October 1853, the fifty-three subscribers for shares were united by Act of Parliament<sup>8</sup> into a company for making the railway, with a capital of £100,000. The first directors were H. G. Douglass, S. D. Gordon, T. Holt, J. F. Josephson, Charles Kemp and John Reeve<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Select Committee on Roads and Railways, 1854. Evidence of Kemp, p. 60.

<sup>3</sup> Holt was elected a member of the Australian Club on 6 February 1847. (Records of Australian Club, Candidates Book).

<sup>4</sup> *SMH* 13 March 1875.

<sup>5</sup> 1853 Vol. I New South Wales *V & P of the Legislative Council*.

<sup>6</sup> *SMH* 23 April 1853.

<sup>7</sup> 1853 Vol. I New South Wales *V & P of the Legislative Council*.

<sup>8</sup> 17° Vic. (1853) 10 October.

<sup>9</sup> *SMH* 9 November 1853.

The company sent £20,000 to England for plant and a thousand tons of rails which could be used in the work of construction and afterwards could be permanently laid down. The company also received sanction from the Government for five hundred railway labourers to emigrate from England at the end of 1854 and early in 1855<sup>10</sup>.

The Sydney Railway Company made available to the company the services of its engineer-in-chief, Wallace, who expressed a most favourable opinion of the proposed undertaking<sup>11</sup>.

But, as in the case of the Sydney Railway Company, rapidly rising costs seriously affected the company. The estimated cost of forming the eighteen miles from Newcastle to Maitland rose to £300,000 without the purchase of land or rolling stock. In addition the company was unable to increase its capital until the whole of the original capital was paid up, and much remained outstanding. The largest shareholder then was John Reeve, with 4254 shares<sup>12</sup>.

In these circumstances it was not surprising that the Select Committee on Roads and Railways in 1854 recommended that the interests of the Hunter River Railway Company should, together with the interests of the Sydney Railway Company, be purchased by the Government. Consequently the terms of the Act (18° Vic. No. 40, already referred to in connection with the Sydney Railway Company) applied also to the Hunter River Railway Company. In March 1855, a meeting of the company's shareholders decided that it was expedient to dissolve the company and to sell its undertaking to the Government on terms to be decided by the directors<sup>13</sup>. The price finally agreed upon was the amount of the paid-up capital, £54,337, but without any bonus, because the Government was responsible for the five hundred railway workers who had just migrated from England<sup>14</sup>. Twenty years later Holt is reported to have said that, if the Government had allowed the proprietors to retain the Hunter Railway, he felt sure that the shares would have gone up to one hundred per cent premium<sup>15</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> *SMH* 9 November 1853.

<sup>11</sup> Select Committee on Roads and Railways, 1854. Evidence of Kemp.

<sup>12</sup> Select Committee on Roads and Railways, 1854. Evidence of Gale, p. 48 and Kemp, p. 67.

<sup>13</sup> *SMH* 30 March 1855.

<sup>14</sup> Sydney Railway Company papers (M.L.).

<sup>15</sup> *SMH* 13 March 1875.

See also:

'The Early History of the Railways of N.S.W.' George Gilder 17 *RAHS Jo.* 215 (1931).

'Thomas Sutcliffe Mort: a National Benefactor', J. Jervis 24 *RAHS Jo.* 329 (1938).

'The Sydney Railway Company, 1848-1855', Alan Birch 43 *RAHS Jo.* 49 (1957).

*Visions and Profits*, A. Barnard, Melbourne (1961).



15 *Sale of 'Sophienburg'*

In March 1853 Holt sold 'Sophienburg', together with his leases of 1300 acres of the Liverpool Common, to another wool merchant, James Henry Atkinson, for £3,000 but reserved from the sale the mill stones, dressing machines and smutting machines then on the property<sup>1</sup>.

About the same time Atkinson also acquired the adjoining estate of 'Collingwood' and, when the railway to Liverpool was constructed in 1856, he created there a depôt for produce of the southern districts in an attempt to induce teamsters to unload at Liverpool and send their loads by rail to Sydney. He also erected an abattoir, wool-washing and fell-mongering establishment and at 'Sophienburg' an irrigation system and scientifically-planned piggery<sup>2</sup>.

Atkinson retained 'Sophienburg' for about nine years<sup>3</sup> and it is probable that, during this time, the sketch of Sophienburg House, now in the Mitchell Library<sup>4</sup>, was made by Caroline Louisa Calvert (*née* Atkinson).

<sup>1</sup> Memorandum of Sale, 8 March 1853, No. 568 Book 26 Deeds Registry.

<sup>2</sup> W. L. and O. Havard, *Liverpool. The story of an historic town.*

<sup>3</sup> *The Empire*, 6 and 10 December 1862.

<sup>4</sup> M.L. A4501.

# 4

## Newtown 1853-64

### 1 *Camden Villa*

Early in 1853, after the birth of their daughter Alice, Holt and his wife decided to sell 'Sophienburg' and move closer to the city. Their young son Edwin had died there just before Christmas 1852, from scarlet fever and their son Frederick had lost his hearing from the same malady.

Holt's business interests had increased. He was an active director of six companies, as well as conducting his wool business and pastoral activities — a nine-mile trip each way, by horse transport over rough roads, between 'Sophienburg' and his wool stores or counting-house in Queen's Place<sup>1</sup> (now Dally Street) was time consuming and often necessitated spending the night at his dwelling-house in George Street. He had then also decided to retire from the active business of wool-buying, to devote more time to his commercial, pastoral and other interests<sup>2</sup>.

Holt and his wife found a suitable property which the trustees of the Union Bank of Australia, as mortgagees from Robert and Annie Bourne, were selling in exercise of their power of sale. 'Camden Villa' stood in about ten acres of land to the north-west of the intersection of what are now King and Camden Streets, Newtown. The name had been given to the property by Robert Bourne, a Tahitian missionary who assisted to inaugurate the Congregational movement in Sydney in 1828<sup>3</sup>, and was taken from the name of the London Missionary Society's vessel, *Camden*.

In September 1853 the property was conveyed, for a consideration of £4,000, to Holt who later disposed of about two acres fronting Newtown road (now King Street)<sup>4</sup>, considerably enlarged and improved the house and surrounded it with attractive gardens, flowers, shrubs, orchards and

<sup>1</sup> Newspaper cuttings, vol. 92, pp. 49-50 (M.L.).

<sup>2</sup> *SMH* 10 March 1853.

<sup>3</sup> *Australian Encyclopaedia*, vol. 2, p. 497.

<sup>4</sup> Deeds Registry, No. 28 Book 843: Certificates of Title, vol. 2, Fol. 46 and vol. 3 Fol. 63.

green paddocks<sup>5</sup>. He also had a large plantation of bananas, and creepers covered many of the gum trees<sup>6</sup>.

Four children were born at 'Camden Villa' to Holt and his wife: Walter Henry (24 August 1854), Florence Marie (20 November 1856), Annie Isabella (11 August 1858) and Emmeline Augusta (3 January 1862)<sup>7</sup>. During his ten years at 'Camden Villa', Holt was engaged in many public activities, was a director of several companies and had extensive interests in pastoral properties and in city and suburban land.

## 2 *Further Pastoral Interests 1853-64 — 'Murrumbidgee' and 'Reeve's Gipps' Land' Properties*

In 1853 T. S. Mort decided to extend his squatting transactions by inducing some of his friends to join him in the outright purchase of station properties with the intention of re-selling at a profit.

The first of these speculative transactions was the purchase from W. C. Wentworth and John Reeve by T. S. Mort, T. W. Smart, T. Holt and A. Morris of 'Murrumbidgee' station, comprising the runs named 'Tala', 'Yangar', 'Nap Nap' and 'Paika', together with about 43,000 sheep and 3,700 cattle, for £50,287.10.0. This property, Mort considered, was 'one of the most valuable properties ever sold in the colony'. Three months later Mort, Smart and Holt sold their interests to their co-purchaser, A. Morris, at a price which showed each of the vendors a profit of £5,000 and, enabled the property to increase very largely in value<sup>1</sup>.

Another speculative transaction was the purchase by T. S. Mort, Robert and Edwin Tooth, King, J. Croft and T. Holt from John Reeve of his 'Gipps' Land' property. This speculation however was unsuccessful because of a large loss from foot-rotted sheep and the property was sold at a loss when it was found that the stations were not adapted for sheep<sup>2</sup>.

### *'Arthursleigh'*

Having sold 'Sophienburg', where he had carried on farming and grazing, it was not unexpected that Holt would seek some suitable property not too far from Sydney where he could continue these interests. So, a few days after purchasing 'Camden Villa', he bought nineteen thousand acres near Marulan, partly bounded by the Wollondilly river and close to where that river joined Paddy's river. The property had originally been granted to Hannibal Hawkins Macarthur, a pioneer of the locality and an

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Glassop, *Jubilee History of Newtown*, p. 82 (M.L.).

<sup>6</sup> *Gardener's Magazine*, No. 2, 1865, p. 128 (M.L.).

<sup>7</sup> Family Register.

<sup>1</sup> Appeal book in the case of W. C. Wentworth v J. C. Lloyd & Others (M.L.), Exhibit 89 and Evidence of Mort, pp. 343, 358, 359, 431.

<sup>2</sup> The above Appeal Book, Evidence of R. Tooth, pp. 7 & 8 and Mort, 389.

elder brother of John Macarthur, and had been carried on by Hannibal Macarthur as a grazing station until he was affected by the depression in the 1840s and had become insolvent. The Australian Trust Company, in exercise of its power of sale as mortgagee, sold the property on 7 September 1853 to Holt for £11,764.19.9<sup>3</sup>.

There was a homestead on the property and outbuildings, including a large woolshed one hundred and twenty feet by forty-five feet, with granite walls two feet thick and a lofty roof, probably built by convict labour for Hannibal Macarthur. The old Great South Road passed through 'Arthursleigh' (which, in 1820, had been named 'Eden Forest' by Governor Macquarie<sup>4</sup>) but the road was in a shocking condition in 1861 when Holt wrote:

I have just travelled through the Bargo Brush on the Great Southern Road, but such a road I unhesitatingly say, never existed in any other civilized country. Dr Leichhardt met with nothing like it on his over-land journey to Port Essington. The mail driver said he had been twenty-two hours coming thirty-two miles<sup>5</sup>.

By 1864 the roads had been metalled but this made the bullocks footsore, so a horse dray had to be substituted. In that year Holt had punts made to facilitate crossing the Wollondilly river. Sickles were then used for harvesting but, in 1873, excitement prevailed when a mowing machine was first used for cutting lucerne<sup>6</sup>.

Shortly after purchasing 'Arthursleigh', Holt had the fences renewed, clearing done, leased from the Government about 20,000 acres of preemptive land and then advertised the estate in 1859, to be leased in various sized farms<sup>7</sup>. By 1864 he had portions of the property leased and was himself conducting pastoral activities on another portion with the assistance of a superintendent. In the early part of that year he introduced over 9,500 sheep, including some fine cross Leicester and Southdown rams. At first native dogs were a menace but were overcome by the use of strychnine (7/6d per ounce) and by high and substantial fences around the paddocks. He also sowed large quantities of perennial-rye and other grasses to improve the pastures and in 1867, while on a trip to Europe, purchased in Germany over eight tons of various grass seeds (including perennial-rye, burnet, rib-grass, cocksfoot, and sheep's fescue) for use at 'Arthursleigh' and 'Sutherland'<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Deeds Registry No. 262 Book 40.

<sup>4</sup> 7 RAHS Jo. 217; 25 RAHS Jo. 416.

<sup>5</sup> James Jervis, *A History of the Berrima District, 1798-1961*, p. 61.

<sup>6</sup> Correspondence F. S. E. Holt with T. Holt, in 1864 (H.P.) and letter W. H. Holt to H. T. E. Holt, 17 October 1909.

<sup>7</sup> SMH 4 May 1859.

<sup>8</sup> *Goulburn Herald*, 20 July 1867.

In 1864 he and his son Frederick (aged seventeen) took turns staying at 'Arthursleigh' to supervise the running of the property and this valuable experience later assisted Frederick to run extensive stations in Queensland for his father and afterwards for himself.

The first shearing in 1864 yielded sixty-two bales, many of which weighed above the 520 pounds the scales could register; these were carted to the nearest rail head at Picton for carriage by rail to Sydney, the railway to Marulan not being opened until 1868<sup>9</sup>. To mark the completion of shearing, a tea was held, attended by the shearers, shepherds, tenants, employees and a few free-selectors and their children; three wethers and a pudding containing forty-five pounds of dried fruit were included in a menu for over one hundred<sup>10</sup>.

'Arthursleigh' was later used as a training place for Holt's other sons, Alfred and Walter.

Holt increased his freehold holding in the district by purchases from the Crown and, in 1871, bought 'Wingello Park' estate from Edward Payten for £2,618<sup>11</sup> and some land near Marulan railway station.

In the early 1870s Holt became more involved in Queensland properties which his son, Frederick, supervised for him, leasing large areas of 'Arthursleigh' to various tenants. In 1877 he agreed to lease to his son Alfred for life 5,450 acres of 'Arthursleigh', with nearly all the stock on the property<sup>12</sup>. (It is possible that this agreement was later varied or cancelled.) He also leased 'Carrigan's', 'Gibraltar' and 'Wangaratta' (6,000 acres) to the Badgery Bros, 'Kerraway' to M. W. Hillas and 'Junction Estate' (3,840 acres) to Hillas and Pearce<sup>13</sup>.

In 1880 Holt purported to lease to Alfred eleven thousand acres (later found to be a true area of over 13,200 acres) for ninety-nine years from 1 July 1880, but this document not being in the form required by the Real Property Act and unable to be registered, created some difficulty after Holt's death in 1888.

By his will Holt devised 'Arthursleigh', 'Detley', 'Wingello Park', 'Kerrawarra' and land near Marulan railway station, all known as "Arthursleigh", to his trustees for Alfred for life. But, as Alfred preferred a ninety-nine-year tenancy to one for life, he renounced the devise as far as it applied to the 13,200 acres. It then required an equity suit to order the trustees to execute a proper memorandum of lease of the 13,200 acres from 1 July 1880; this was done and a proper lease executed in 1891.

<sup>9</sup> SMH 7 August 1868.

<sup>10</sup> Correspondence F. S. E. Holt to T. Holt in 1864 (H.P.).

<sup>11</sup> Conveyance 3 November 1871 registered Book 127 No. 530.

<sup>12</sup> Memorandum of Agreement between T. Holt and A. W. Holt, 22 November 1877 (H.P.).

<sup>13</sup> Rent Book of the Australian Trustees of the will of T. Holt (H.P.) Valuation of Richardson & Wrench, 11 December 1888 (H.P.).

### *An Energetic Colonist*

In 1912 Alfred transferred the unexpired residue of the lease to Hugh Campbell who desired to subdivide into farms but, because of provisions for re-entry and the right of distress, it was impossible to give security of tenure to transferees. A private Act then had to be passed to do this<sup>14</sup>.

At the time of his death in 1888, Holt owned over 26,500 acres which he left in his will to his son Alfred, with the remainder going to Alfred's family. A great-grandson of Holt, the late E. T. W. Holt, inherited most of the original property<sup>15</sup>.

#### *Runs in New South Wales of which Holt became transferee from 1853 to 1855*

These properties were held by Holt for short periods of a year or two but the information available is insufficient to determine whether they were speculative transactions or held by mortgage. Indications in the search, however, point to their being speculative transactions.

The properties were

New England and Macleay district: 'Rimbanda' (38,400 acres), 'Wellingrove' (50,000 acres) and 'Pindari' (40,000 acres).

Lachlan District: 'Cuba' (153,600 acres).

Liverpool Plains district: 'Barraba'<sup>16</sup>.

#### *Runs in Queensland*

In March 1854 James Leith Hay, Norman Leith Hay and Thomas Holt Junior, applied to lease five runs situated in either the district of Leichhardt or the district of Port Curtis and their applications were accepted by the Government in 1855<sup>17</sup>. The runs were 'Ulogie', 'Bundalba', 'Banahah' (later changed to 'Banana'), 'Thuriba' and 'The Bluff', each having a carrying capacity of four thousand sheep and each comprising twenty-five square miles.

It is probable that the runs were taken up as a speculation but no information is available as to their use during the four years before they were transferred, in 1859, to Robert Towns and Alexander Stuart<sup>18</sup>.

During 1857 and 1858 William Butler Tooth and Thomas Holt each acquired a lease of conterminous runs sixty miles from Rockhampton in the district of Leichhardt, Tooth's lease being 'Bahia' and Holt's 'Rio', each comprising twenty-five square miles<sup>19</sup>. In 1858 Tooth and Holt each

<sup>14</sup> Campbell's 'Arthursleigh' Subdivision Act (15 October 1913).

<sup>15</sup> Certificate of Title, vol. 6014 Folio 87.

<sup>16</sup> *New South Wales Government Gazettes* 1848, 1849, 1853, 1854 Vol 2, 1855 and 1856.

<sup>17</sup> 1856 *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 1595.

<sup>18</sup> Report of Archives Officer of S.L.Q.

<sup>19</sup> 1858 *New South Wales Government Gazette*.

transferred their runs to a syndicate comprising themselves and Peter McIntosh, the last named working both properties which were known as 'Rio'<sup>20</sup>. Tooth in the same year transferred runs known as 'Monte Video' and 'Olinda' to the syndicate<sup>21</sup>.

In 1860 Tooth and Holt sold their interests in the stations and stock of 15,700 sheep, together with some cattle and horses, to McIntosh for £13,575. McIntosh gave promissory notes and a mortgage back to Tooth and Holt to secure the sum<sup>22</sup>.

It was at 'Rio' in 1861 that Alexander Kennedy, then a young emigrant from Scotland, was first employed by McIntosh for a wage of £30 per annum and, liking the land, became the famous and wealthy pioneer of the outback of Queensland whose life story has been so vividly portrayed by Sir Hudson Fysh<sup>23</sup>.

All McIntosh's promissory notes were due and owing in 1862, when Tooth sold his interest in the mortgage debt, stock and station to Holt for £8,187.11.0<sup>24</sup>.

In the same year McIntosh purchased 'Uranna' runs Numbers 1-6 (188 square miles), then known as 'Wealwandangie' and, as he owed £16,500 under his mortgage of 'Rio', he brought 'Wealwandangie', with its stock of 9,000 sheep and 250 head of cattle, into the security when Holt advanced him a further £5,236.10.11 (*See* later under 'Wealwandangie')<sup>25</sup>.

In 1864, with Holt's consent, McIntosh sold 'Rio' and 'Bahia' to John Robertson and John Bird, with 13,220 sheep. Robertson and Bird mortgaged the station and stock back to McIntosh to secure £7,520<sup>26</sup>.

Between 1856 and 1859 Robert Tooth transferred the following runs to a syndicate comprising Thomas De Lacy Moffatt, Thomas Holt and Robert Tooth.

Moreton and Darling Downs districts: 'Winton', 'Rayleigh', 'Dulhunty Plains' (also known as 'Teviot Brook' or 'Coochin Coochin') and 'Broomfield' (totalling over three hundred square miles).

New England and Gwydir districts: 'Pallaranga' and 'Borango' (totalling over one hundred square miles).

<sup>20</sup> Report of Archives Officer of S.L.Q.

<sup>21</sup> 1859 *New South Wales Government Gazette*.

<sup>22</sup> Deed 6 January 1860 registered No. 22 book 16, Deeds Registry Sydney, (H.P.) now (S.L.Q.).

<sup>23</sup> Hudson Fysh—*Taming the North* (Sydney 1933), *Daily Mirror* 4 September 1957.

<sup>24</sup> Unregistered Deed, 14 February 1862 (H.P.), now (S.L.Q.).

<sup>25</sup> Deed 17 February 1862 registered in the Supreme Court, Brisbane, No. 39 Book 2, (H.P.) now (S.L.Q.).

<sup>26</sup> Deed 14 November 1864 registered in Brisbane, No. 111 Book 4, (H.P.) now (S.L.Q.).

*An Energetic Colonist*

About 1859 Moffatt, Holt and R. Tooth transferred to a syndicate comprising Ewan Wallace Cameron (a partner in T. S. Mort & Co), Holt and R. Tooth, the following runs:

New England and Gwydir districts: 'Carbucky' and 'Frazer's Creek' (totalling nearly two hundred square miles) and also 'Pallaranga' and 'Borango' already referred to.

Moreton and Darling Downs districts: 'Winton', 'Rayleigh', 'Dulhunty Plains' and 'Broomfield' already referred to.

About 1859 T. De Lacy Moffatt also transferred to the syndicate of Cameron, Holt and R. Tooth, 'Yarrell Creek' and 'Wondul' (totalling one hundred and seventy-five square miles) in the Moreton and Darling Downs districts.

Between 1862 and 1865 the syndicate of Cameron, Holt and Tooth transferred to Holt leases of the runs 'Winton', 'Rayleigh', 'Pallaranga', 'Borango' and 'Frazer's Creek', which leases were subsequently transferred by Holt as follows

'Winton' in 1869 to M. C. Machardy, manager of the London Chartered Bank of Australia

'Rayleigh' in 1874 to Benjamin Buchanan and Henry Mort

'Pallaranga' and 'Borango' in 1868 to F. H. Dangar

'Frazer's Creek' in 1866 to M. C. Machardy (mentioned above)<sup>27</sup>.

It is impossible to say whether any of these runs were in fact beneficially owned by the syndicates or by Holt, and circumstances rather indicate that the transfers to the syndicates and Holt were by way of security only.

In 1858 Holt and J. Berry applied for and were granted a lease of a twenty-five-square-mile run in the Wide Bay and Burnett districts<sup>28</sup>, 'Boocalgopal', which they transferred to J. D. McLean in 1861; although no details relating to the property have been ascertained, it would appear to have been acquired for the purposes of resale.

In 1858 Holt and his brother-in-law Edward Joy became transferees of a run in the Leichhardt district of forty-seven square miles known as 'Bungaban Back' from J. Walker. The run was transferred by Holt and Joy to a Bank in 1861 and it is probable that they held it by way of security only<sup>29</sup>.

W. B. Tooth successfully applied for forfeited leases of eight runs, each of twenty-five square miles, in the Maranoa district in 1858 and the leases were transferred the same year to W. B. Tooth and Holt. These were 'Staines', 'North Bambilla', 'Apps Court', 'South Muccadella', 'North

<sup>27</sup> *New South Wales Government Gazettes*, 1859, 1862, 1863, 1866, 1868 and Report of Archives Officer of S.L.Q.

<sup>28</sup> *New South Wales Government Gazette*, 1858.

<sup>29</sup> Report of Archives Officer of S.L.Q.



Colgoon', 'North Wallumbulla', 'North Yambugle' and 'Bungorin Bungorin'.

The first three were later found to be in the western reserve and so were forfeited. No information is available regarding the next two, other than that they were forfeited when rent was unpaid during the drought in 1865. The last three appear to have been sold, the first to the Tooth family in 1880, the next in 1861 to D. Coglean and the last also in 1861 to J. Christian and H. Cardell<sup>30</sup>.

On 1 February 1860, William Butler Tooth mortgaged 'Jingi Jingi' (two hundred square miles) to Holt but this appears to have been a temporary accommodation only because Tooth the following year became a mortgagee of the same property from E. A. Hickey to whom it would appear he sold the property<sup>31</sup>.

In 1861 Clark Irving transferred to W. B. Tooth and Holt eight runs in the Maranoa district, each of twenty-five square miles, known as 'Pannonia', 'Oberina', 'Yalebone', 'Humboldt', 'Lander', 'Burckhardt', 'Bruce' (all later called 'Brucedale') and 'Park'. From the scant information available it would appear likely that this was a speculative transaction because, although no transfer from them is registered, one J. Mattinson mortgaged the first seven of these runs to W. B. Tooth in 1863. 'Park' was eventually transferred in 1880 to members of the Tooth family<sup>32</sup>.

In the Wide Bay and Burnett districts Thomas de Lacy Moffatt in 1862 transferred to Holt the lease of a twenty-five-square-mile run known as 'North Traverston'. It appears probable that Holt held the lease by way of security only, because the previous year one R. W. Mayne mortgaged to Moffatt cattle then about to be taken to Traverston. The lease of the run was forfeited for non-payment of rent in 1868<sup>33</sup>.

### 3 *Real Estate in the City and Suburbs of Sydney*

During his residence at 'Camden Villa', Newtown, Holt embarked upon extensive dealings in city and suburban land.

#### *The Western Side of Botany Bay*

In November 1853, he purchased from the Crown, for £415, eighty-two acres just south of Banksia and fifty-six acres to the west of Rocky Point Road<sup>1</sup>. This land he subdivided into blocks of six to nineteen acres for

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Run Register; Q.S.A. S.C.T./C.D.2.

<sup>1</sup> Crown Grants Serial No. 91 Fols. 24 and 25.

farming and, from 1854 onwards, sold them by private contract and at public auction<sup>2</sup>.

In 1862, he purchased from G. A. Lloyd about one hundred acres on the shores of Townson's Bay (now Kogarah Bay). Townson's Bay was named after Dr John Townson and his brother Robert who had been granted 3,500 acres alongside the bay, where they had a fine orchard and residence. Holt subdivided and sold the one hundred acres<sup>3</sup>.

In 1862 Holt purchased for £70 one and a half acres on the extreme tip of Tom Ugly's Point from J. C. Laycock. In 1877 he leased it to A. R. Emerson, Hotelkeeper for 4/6 a week and later sold to him in 1884<sup>4</sup>.

'Ugly' was said to be an abbreviation of 'Waggerly', the aboriginal word for 'lame'; Tom Waggerly was a lame aboriginal who lived on the point. The old inn at Tom Ugly's Point and its featherless parrot were well-known. It was claimed that the parrot lived for over one hundred years and, having travelled for many years round the world with an old sea captain, would recite some peculiar tales to the delight of patrons in the hotel bar.

A hand-operated punt connected Tom Ugly's Point with Horse Rock Point, on the opposite side of George's River, but after sliding its live cargo into the river on some occasions and jamming its mechanism in mid-stream on others, it was replaced by a steam punt and later by a bridge<sup>5</sup>.

Holt for a time leased 'Rocky Point House', which had been built in the late thirties by Robert Cooper Junior on a hundred-acre grant to a Miss Ritter, whom Cooper married.

Holt changed the name of the house to 'Sans Souci' (without care), the name of an estate of the King of Prussia which he had visited. He intended to use it as a residence but it is related that 'Mrs Holt was not seized with an overwhelming desire for quietude'; on the contrary, she positively refused to live at 'Sans Souci'. Later it was purchased by W. E. Rust who had formerly run the Sir Joseph Bank's Hotel, Botany, famous for its menagerie. Rust opened 'Sans Souci' as an hotel and Holt frequently entertained large parties there<sup>6</sup>.

Rocky Point had in early days been the headquarters of shell-gatherers who dragged the sea bottom with nets, the shells being converted into lime in a kiln run by Jerry Flynn at Flynn's Flat. Fishermen

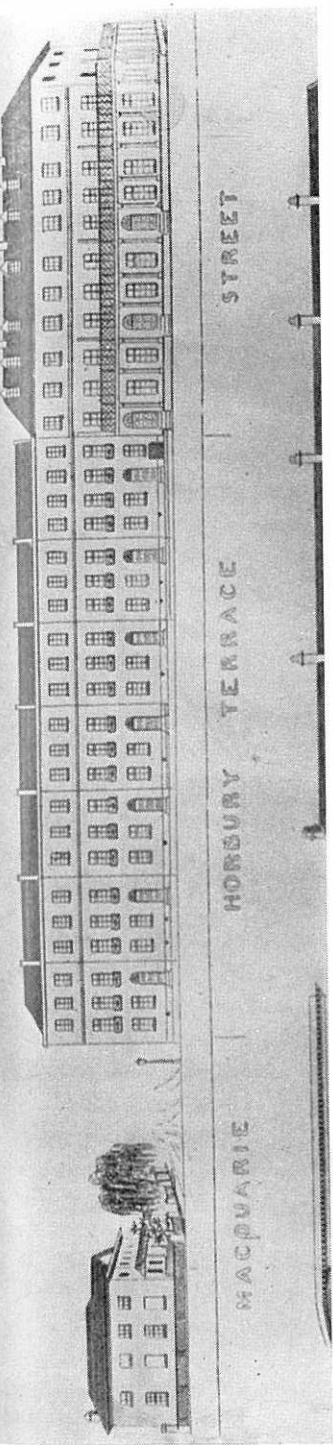
<sup>2</sup> Registry of Deeds, Book 40, No. 33, Book 49 No. 239, Book 62 No. 300, Book 65 No. 690.

<sup>3</sup> Registry of Deeds, Book 76, No. 853, Certificates of Title vol. 1 fol. 31, vol. 25 fol. 8; *Evening News*, 17 September 1904.

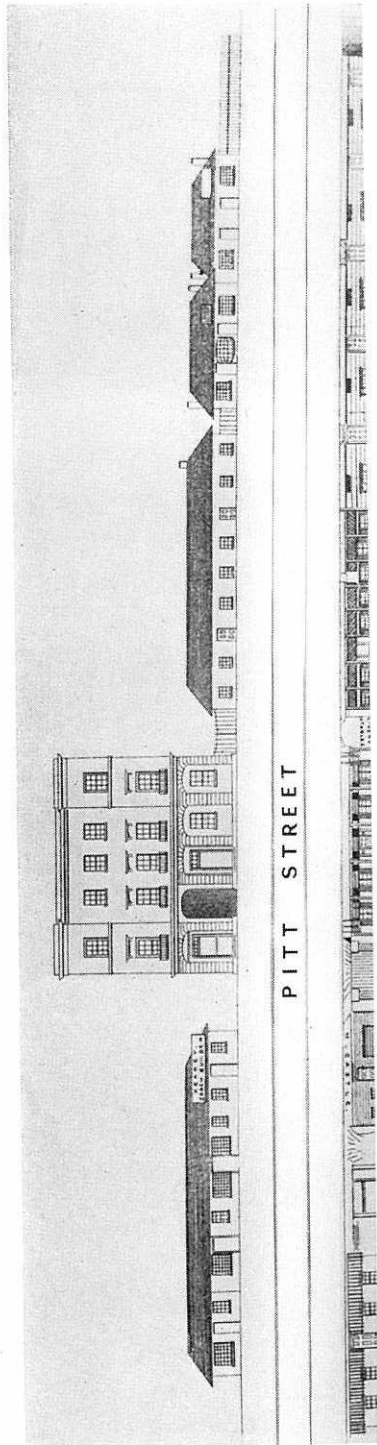
<sup>4</sup> Registry of Deeds, Book 76, No. 631, Certificate of Title vol. 5 fol. 114, Transfer No. 84993, Lease 31 October 77.

<sup>5</sup> *Evening News* (supra).

<sup>6</sup> 7 RAHS Jo. App. C, p. 30; 13 RAHS Jo. 99; Philip Geeves & James Jervis Rockdale. *Its Beginning and Development*, p. 56.



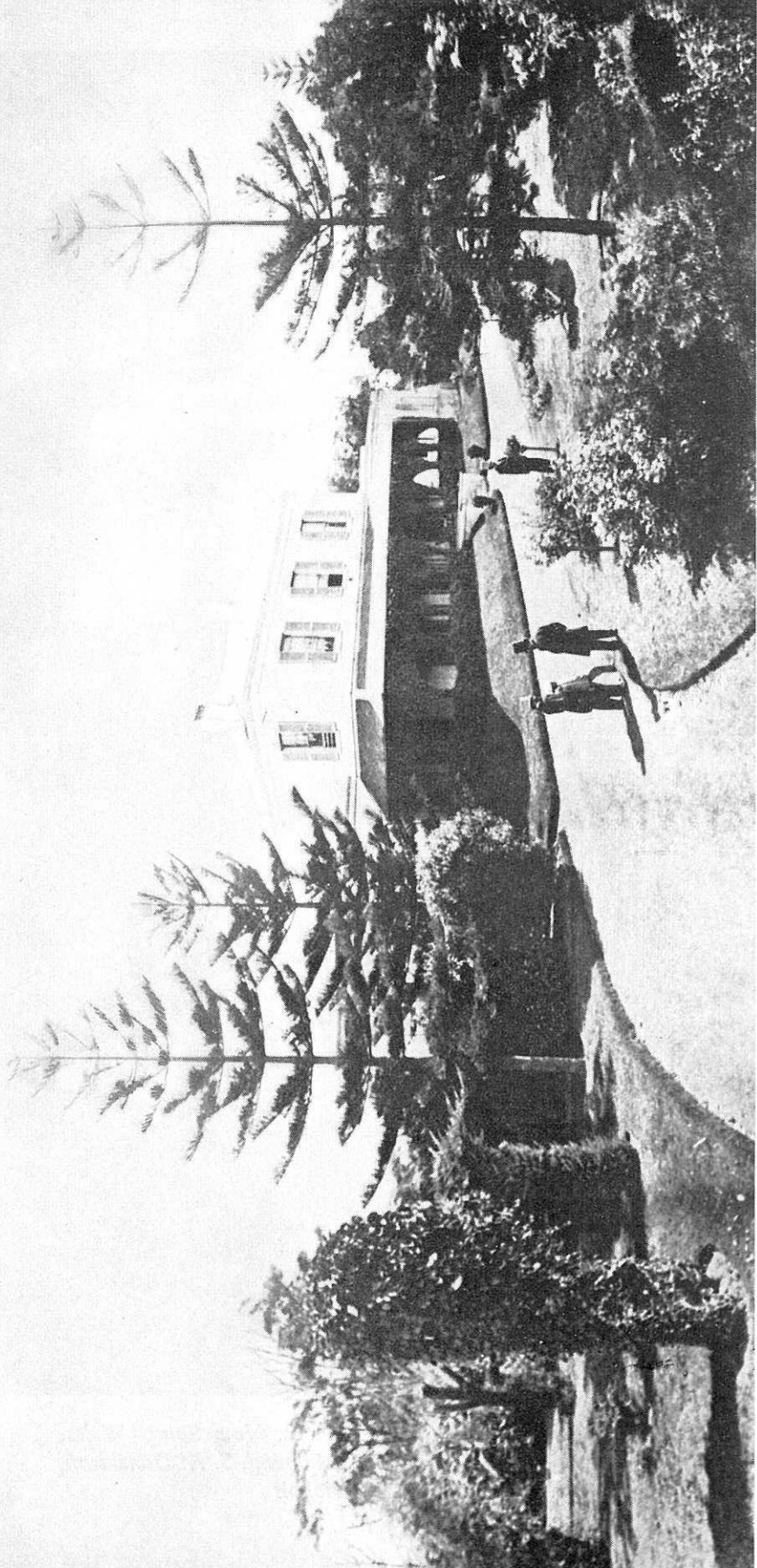
*Hornbury Terrace at corner of Hunter and Macquarie Streets, Sydney. The adjoining buildings were occupied by Clark Irving and Miss Thompson's Seminary and on their sites later was erected part of the Australasian Club*



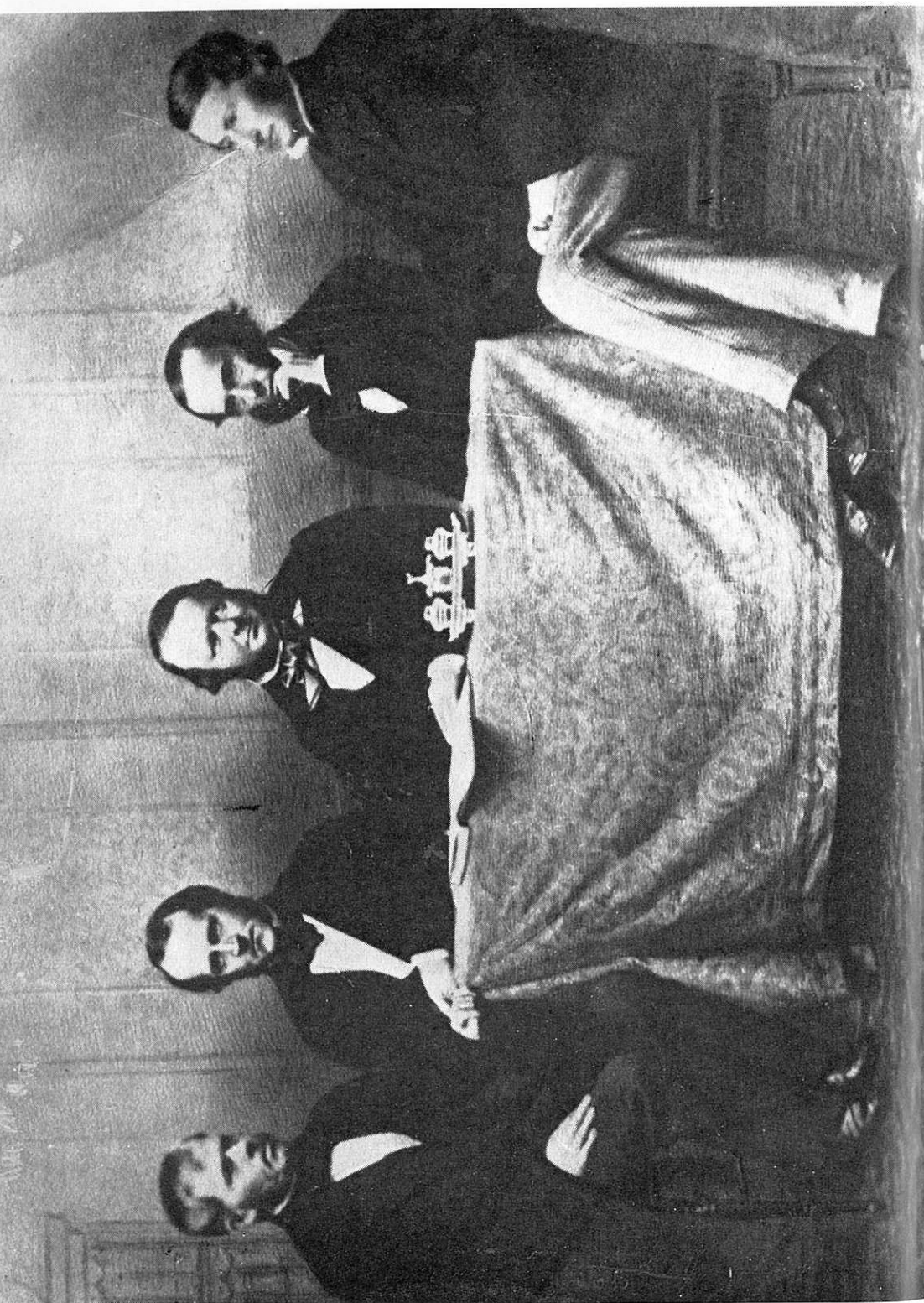
*The three-storied building on the west side of Pitt Street became Gill's Hotel in 1846 and later Denison Chambers. To the north lay John Old Connell's row of weatherboard cottages.*

*Over page: Sophienburg, Liver-pool*





*Camden Villa, Newtown, later Camden College*



*First Ministry under Responsible Government, New South Wales, 1856. From left to right: T. Holt, W. M. Manning, S. A. Donaldson, J. B. Darvall, G. R. Nichols*

and wood-cutters also plied their trades there and later some fine houses, notably Sir Joseph Carruthers', were erected there<sup>7</sup>.

By 1870 Holt had purchased a further three hundred acres adjoining Botany Bay, which he subdivided in an attempt to form a new township named Scarborough<sup>8</sup>. Some of the streets were named after his birth-place, Horbury, and his children, Frederick, Alfred, Walter, Alice, Annie, Florence and Emmeline. These names (except that of Frederick which was changed to Chuter Avenue) still remain.

In 1870 dissatisfaction of the residents of West Botany with the state of the roads and the water supply led to Holt taking an active part in having West Botany formed into a municipality when he addressed a large meeting of residents at Tempe Family Hotel, Cook's River<sup>9</sup>.

By 1877 the area between Newtown and George's River was being rapidly settled and Scarborough had become a favourite watering-place. Samuel Cook (a friend of Holt's and later general manager of the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Sydney Mail*) headed a deputation to the Minister for Lands to make provision for a public park of 180 acres. The Minister agreed with the proposal but, as he could not promise to buy any private land, did so on condition that Holt donated some of his land<sup>10</sup>.

The condition was somewhat onerous, but to Mr Holt's lasting honour, be it recorded, he at once accepted it, surrendered his freehold, and thus enabled the trustees to secure and proceed with the formation of the park . . . The park was about half-a-mile from the beach. There should be a broad boulevard leading to the beach. There shall be! said Mr Holt, the proprietor of the intervening land, and forthwith surveyed and set apart a three-chain road<sup>11</sup>.

Samuel Cook was also instrumental in having the long strip of land adjoining Lady Robinson's Beach proclaimed as a public park and Mr Abbott, then Minister for Lands, wrote 'in notifying the park, it is to be called "Cook Park" after Mr Samuel Cook, who was the first person to ask for it, and doing so has rendered good service to the colony, and more especially to the people of Sydney and the suburbs'<sup>12</sup>.

It has been said that the name 'Seven Mile Beach' was altered to 'Lady Robinson's Beach' because the Governor's wife, when being entertained by Holt, remarked that it was a good place for a gallop on horseback.

<sup>7</sup> *Evening News* (Supra).

<sup>8</sup> Certificates of Title Vol. 98 Fols 65 & 66, Vol. 280 Fol. 212, Vol. 282 Fol. 65, Vol. 284 Fol 216.

<sup>9</sup> *SMH* 9 June 1870; F. A. Larcombe, *History of Botany, 1788-1963* (M.L.).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid* 1 September 1877; 3 September 1877.

<sup>11</sup> Francis Myers, *Botany, Past and Present* p. 63 (M.L.).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid* p. 64.

Some credence may be attached to this by the action of the Mayor in asking the Council, in 1874, to make the change of name as being 'the wish of one of the principal landholders in that neighbourhood'<sup>13</sup>.

*Balmain and Strathean Estates*

In 1800 William Balmain, one of the surgeons with the First Fleet, was granted five hundred acres of land at what later became known as 'Balmain', as well as land at Windsor and Meadowbank.

In 1801 Balmain (who died in England in 1803) sold all three grants for £17.10.0 to Dr John Borthwick Gilchrist (who appears to have been in India at the time and never to have visited Australia)<sup>14</sup>.

Some of the 'Balmain' property was sold in 1818 and, when Dr Gilchrist died in 1841, his trustees sold the balance of the property under a decree of the Chancery Court in England<sup>15</sup>.

Thomas Holt and Thomas Stephenson Rowntree, a master mariner of Strathean Cottage in the Hamlet of Balmain, acquired substantial holdings in the 'Balmain' estate and in 1853 also became joint tenants of over twenty acres of the estate by conveyance from the Gilchrist trustees<sup>16</sup>. On part of this twenty acres stood 'Waterview House', said to have been built by either Captain McLeod or Sir Alfred Stephen and later occupied by Mr Stenhouse, a well-known solicitor<sup>17</sup>.

Part of the 'Balmain' estate adjoining Waterview Bay (now Mort Bay) became known as the 'Strathean' estate<sup>18</sup>.

In 1854, Thomas Sutcliffe Mort commenced to have the Waterview Dry Dock built, the foundation-stone of the first pier of the dock being laid on 25 February 1854<sup>19</sup>.

In 1854 and 1855 Holt and Rowntree sold<sup>20</sup> their respective interests in about fifty acres, comprising most of the Strathean Estate and parts of the adjoining 'Balmain' estate, to T. S. Mort, the consideration being £10,000 to Holt and £2,500 to Rowntree and the Waterview Dry Dock (Mort's Dock) and adjoining premises were largely constructed on the land conveyed. This dock played a very important part in the development of the Port of Sydney from the time of entry of the first vessel in March 1855<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> *Rockdale: Its Beginning and Development* (supra) p. 71.

<sup>14</sup> Deed of Grant to Balmain, 26 April 1800. Abstract of title of Trustees of J. B. Gilchrist. (ML) 14 RAHS. Jo. 245.

<sup>15</sup> Decree of High Court of Chancery, 13 May 1851; Powers of Attorney 22 August and 17 November 1851, in above abstract of Title.

<sup>16</sup> Registry of Deeds, Book 35 No. 584, 31 December 1853.

<sup>17</sup> S. N. Hogg, *Balmain: Past and Present* (ML): 14 RAHS. Jo. 261.

<sup>18</sup> Roll 120, Registrar General's Department.

<sup>19</sup> 24 RAHS. Jo. 325.

<sup>20</sup> Deed's Registry, Book 38, Nos. 431 and 432.

<sup>21</sup> SMH 29 March 1855; 24 RAHS. Jo. 325.



*North Harbour*

Pursuant to a proclamation of 22 July 1853, lot 61 mentioned therein was sold to Holt by the Crown for £37.10.0 and Crown Grant was issued<sup>22</sup>. Lot 61 comprised twenty-five acres at North Harbour, in the Parish of Manly Cove, and was described as lying to the north-west of the township of Balgowlah and bounded by a stream, a line to a marked tree and by the township of Balgowlah.

In 1860 Holt sold lot 61 to David Parker of Sydney and William Nicholson of Maitland for £125<sup>23</sup>.

*Kingston Estate*

In 1803 Captain Thomas Rowley of the 102nd Regiment (NSW Corps) was granted by the Crown 240 acres, known as 'Kingston Farm', with a reservation to the Crown of all timber deemed fit for naval purposes. 'Kingston Farm' lay in the district of Petersham Hill and was bounded on the north by Parramatta Road, on the north-east by Bligh's grant (also called 'The Orphan Ground' and later 'Grose Farm'), on the south by Codd's and Blaxland's farm and on the west by Colonel Johnstone's 'Annandale' farm<sup>24</sup>.

In 1835 James Holt (relationship if any to Thomas Holt untraced) purchased an area of approximately 153 acres, the major part of 'Kingston Farm', for £1,000 and this area became known as the 'Kingston' estate<sup>25</sup>.

On 9 June 1854, Thomas Holt's brother, Joseph Holt (a wool merchant at Leeds in Yorkshire) agreed with James Holt of 'Basing Cottage', near Basingstoke, Hants, to purchase 'Kingston' estate on behalf of Thomas Holt for £150 per acre<sup>26</sup>.

The 'Kingston' estate was divided into 'North' and 'South Kingston'. 'North Kingston' was bounded by Parramatta Road, Australia Street for its full length, Bedford, Trade, St Mary's, Ross and Denison Streets and thence to Parramatta Road. 'South Kingston' was bounded by Trafalgar, Liberty and London Streets, Stanmore Road, Aubrey Street and thence to Trafalgar Street, and also included an irregular parcel of about five acres to the east of the above and south of Trafalgar Street.

In December 1854 James Holt, for a consideration of £23,078, con-

<sup>22</sup> Land Grant, Serial No. 91 p. 26, 21 November 1853.

<sup>23</sup> Deeds Registry Book 69 No. 676, 23 October 1860.

<sup>24</sup> Grant by Philip Gidley King to Thomas Rowley, 9 August 1803 (ML); 11 *RAHS. Jo.* 125; 15 *RAHS. Jo.* 298; 16 *RAHS. Jo.* 274; *The Sun* 11 December 1912; Lease and Release, Lucas & Another to Levey (ML).

<sup>25</sup> Attested copies of title of Thomas Holt to Kingston Estate (ML).

<sup>26</sup> Deeds Registry, Book 33 No. 748.

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veyed the 'Kingston' estate to Holt<sup>27</sup>. 'North Kingston' was subdivided into 770 allotments and 'South Kingston' into 370<sup>28</sup> and, by 1861, Holt had sold 480 allotments of 'North Kingston' (mainly those closest to the railway line) but only about sixteen allotments of 'South Kingston'.

A deed of Partition, 5 July 1861, then disclosed that the estate was purchased and paid for with the moneys of Thomas Holt, Thomas Ware Smart, Thomas Sutcliffe Mort and George Wigram Allen, in equal portions, but were conveyed to the said Thomas Holt for greater facility in selling and disposing of the same and whereas considerable parcels have been sold it has been agreed that the residue be partitioned according to the schedule hereto<sup>29</sup>.

By the Deed of Partition the unsold lots were distributed between the four partners, Holt being allotted about 140 which he continued to sell. The whole estate would appear to have realised slightly more than double its purchase price<sup>30</sup>.

*Richardson and Wrench's Property in Pitt Street*

In 1858 Robert Pemberton Richardson left the land sales department of Mort and Company and commenced business on his own. This venture was stated to have been 'engineered and financed by Thomas Holt', following a dispute with Henry Mort (T. S. Mort's brother) while T. S. Mort was overseas. In 1860 Richardson entered into partnership with Edward Wrench, who had been manager of the A.J.S. Bank<sup>31</sup>.

On 26 May 1860, Holt purchased for £1,500 from E. A. S. Teillard the southern portion of lot 6, section 38, with a frontage to Pitt Street of forty feet and depth of one hundred and forty-four feet<sup>32</sup>.

On 25 July 1860, Holt leased this portion to Richardson and Wrench for ninety-nine years, at a yearly rental of £150, with an option of purchasing for £2,000 within seven years<sup>33</sup>.

On 30 July 1860, Richardson and Wrench acquired the northern portion of lot 6, section 38, from Teillard and his mortgagees and commenced to erect premises on the southern portion<sup>34</sup>.

In January 1863, Richardson and Wrench exercised their option to purchase the southern portion, which Holt conveyed to them<sup>35</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> Deeds Registry, Book 35 No. 405.

<sup>28</sup> Deposited Plans Nos. 1 and 7.

<sup>29</sup> Deeds Registry, Book 86 No. 642.

<sup>30</sup> Sales recorded in the Deeds Registry.

<sup>31</sup> Alan Barnard, *Visions and Profits*, pp. 137-139, 222.

<sup>32</sup> Deeds Registry, Book 67 No. 185.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid* Book 68 No. 547.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid* Book 76 No. 435.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid* Book 82 No. 73.

*'Forest Lodge' Estate*

This estate adjoined Bishopsthorpe and Toxteth Place (George Allen's property) and was bounded by Orphan School Creek and, what are now, Arundel Street, Mt Vernon Street, Jarocin Avenue, Hegarty Street and Hereford Road.

'Forest Lodge', at the corner of Pymont Bridge Road and Ross Street, after which the estate was named, had been erected by Ambrose Ross on land sold to him by John Tawell, but is not now in existence<sup>36</sup>.

The estate had been subdivided in 1845 by David Jones into a large number of allotments<sup>37</sup> and, in May 1861, Richardson and Wrench, at the request of mortgagees exercising their power of sale, auctioned the estate (less several allotments, including that on which 'Forest Lodge' stood). At this public auction Edward Joy (a brother-in-law of Holt) purchased the estate for £1,950, subject to a mortgage of £2,296 and to the mortgagor's (Thomas Woolley) equity of redemption<sup>38</sup>.

It appears probable that Joy purchased as an agent for a syndicate comprising Randolph John Want, Thomas Ware Smart, Thomas Holt and George Wigram Allen: in February 1862 the estate was partitioned among those four men<sup>39</sup>.

Under this partition Holt acquired twenty-one lots having frontages to Parramatta Old Road (now Arundel Street), Lodge, Forest, Ross, Short, Junction, Cross and Foss Streets, Woods, Pymont Bridge and St John's Roads<sup>40</sup>.

In November 1862, the estate was again auctioned by Richardson and Wrench, and a few lots were sold at from 20/- to £3.5.0 per foot<sup>41</sup> but from 1863 onwards Holt appears to have disposed of his share profitably<sup>42</sup>.

#### 4 *Congregationalism*

The Congregationalists, or Independents, were among the first of the religious organisations represented in the colony. As early as 1798 their missionaries had preached in Sydney and Parramatta and they were opposed to State aid to religion<sup>1</sup>.

Holt and his forbears were not originally Congregationalists but he became one because his father had placed him at school with a Con-

<sup>36</sup> 15 RAHS. Jo. 304.

<sup>37</sup> SMH 10 July 1845.

<sup>38</sup> Deeds Registry, No. 830 Book 73, 11 May 1861.

<sup>39</sup> *ibid* Nos. 472, 832, 833 and 834 Book 80.

<sup>40</sup> Deeds Registry, Book 80 No. 833.

<sup>41</sup> *The Empire*, 22 and 29 November 1862.

<sup>42</sup> Deeds Registry, Book 81 No. 304, Book 82 No. 220, Book 93 No. 324, Book 98 No. 826.

<sup>1</sup> *Cyclopedia of New South Wales* (1907) p. 390.

gregationalist minister, the Rev. Dr Cope of Wakefield, who had at his school not only Congregationalist pupils but also those belonging to other religious organisations, including the Church of England and the Quakers<sup>2</sup>.

Being a member of this democratic religious organisation probably accounted for Holt's independence, liberality of views and catholicity, evidenced by his numbering among his friends members of various religious denominations, and for his benefactions being distributed among worthwhile causes, irrespective of creed or nationality.

Among his close friends in the Congregational community were the Rev. John West, John Fairfax, George Allen, Joseph Thompson, Andrew Garran, David Jones, G. A. Lloyd and the Rev. S. C. Kent. John Fairfax and David Jones, both deacons of the Pitt Street Congregational Church, as well as G. A. Lloyd, were also associated with Holt in various commercial undertakings.

In the 1850s Holt was also associated with Fairfax and Jones in plans to improve the flow of ordained agents of the Colonial Missionary Society from England to Australia, attended an inter-colonial conference held for that purpose with the Rev. John West in Sydney in 1857, and was a donor to the fund<sup>3</sup>.

Reference has already been made to Holt's unsuccessful motion in the First Parliament, that the Speaker on taking the chair should read the short sixty-seventh Psalm. That motion was lost when T. A. Murray claimed that 'members might acknowledge the Lord by showing that they dealt honestly with the rights of the people'<sup>4</sup>.

This was not the first attempt to have the business of Parliament commenced each day by an invocation of the Divine blessing. Dr John Dunmore Lang, had in 1843 unsuccessfully moved the motion in the first Legislative Council<sup>5</sup>.

Other unsuccessful attempts were made by Holt to have prayer introduced in the House and in 1862, when the member for Newtown he temporarily succeeded when he moved that the business of the House be commenced by the Speaker reading this prayer:

May the blessing of the Almighty attend our counsels, and may He guide us to the advancement of the welfare and happiness of the people whose interests are committed to our care.

The motion was carried by eighteen to seventeen<sup>6</sup> but, a few days

<sup>2</sup> *SMH* 29 April 1864.

<sup>3</sup> John Garrett and L. W. Farr, *Camden College; SMH* 1 November 1864.

<sup>4</sup> *Official History of New South Wales 1788-1883*, p. 259; *Moreton Bay Free Press*, 16 June 1856.

<sup>5</sup> *Official History of New South Wales 1788-1883*, p. 94.

<sup>6</sup> *The Empire*, 25 June 1862.

later, Peter Faucett moved its rescission, whereupon a long and acrimonious debate ensued in which opponents of prayer in the House vented their ill-feeling and finally the motion for rescission was carried by twenty votes to nine<sup>7</sup>. Subsequently it was asserted that the vote was taken when Jewish members, who had voted for Holt's previous motion, were absent from the House engaged in their Sabbath devotions<sup>8</sup>.

When the foundation-stone of the Congregational Church in King Street, Newtown, was laid in 1856 by Dr Ross on a site given by John Fairfax, Holt contributed a substantial sum towards its erection<sup>9</sup> and later became a deacon of the church. He also became a committee member of the Congregational Home Missionary Society in 1858<sup>10</sup>.

In 1862 the foundation-stone of a school room for the Newtown Congregational Church was laid. Although this school room was to be under the supervision of the Church and a place where Sunday School would be held, it was to be connected with the national system of education and was not to be run on denominational lines. The school room was to be seventy feet by thirty-three feet and was estimated to cost £1,000; Holt subscribed £400 on condition that a similar amount was raised. The stone was laid by Holt's daughter, Alice, aged nine, who made an appropriate speech to the large assemblage. Underneath the stone was placed a sealed bottle containing copies of the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Empire* for that day and copies of the two speeches on education made by Holt<sup>11</sup>.

As has already been related, Holt's interest in Newtown Congregational Church was indirectly responsible for his resignation from the board of the A.M.P. Society.

## 5 Further Political Activities Between 1855 and 1864

### 1855 Election

Holt's next attempt to enter political life (if it may be so euphemistically described) was in 1855 when he stood as a member of the old Legislative Council for the remote electoral district of the United Pastoral Districts of Clarence and Darling Downs, in the place of G. F. Leslie who had resigned<sup>1</sup>. The Crimean War, with the siege of Sebastopol, was then largely overshadowing local politics.

In a letter to the electors published in the local press, Holt wrote that

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*, 28 June 1862.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, 30 June 1862.

<sup>9</sup> *SMH* 11 April 1871. W. Chubb, *Jubilee History of the Municipality of Newtown (1862-1912)* (ML).

<sup>10</sup> *Waugh's Australian Almanac* 1858, (ML).

<sup>11</sup> *The Empire*, 24 January 1862.

<sup>1</sup> *SMH* 6 March 1855.

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he was offering himself as a candidate at the suggestion of some of his friends in Sydney; that he was a squatter with no inconsiderable number of sheep and cattle, besides being otherwise largely interested in pastoral properties and that he would advocate the abandonment by squatters of waste lands if he believed their occupation prejudicial to the colony's prosperity. He did not, however, believe that their occupation was prejudicial because the uncertainty of the gold fields compared unfavourably with exports of wool and tallow. He also wrote that he was in favour of free trade and better education<sup>2</sup>.

Four candidates, all squatters, offered themselves: T. De Lacy Moffatt, Gordon Sandeman, Thomas H. Hood and Thomas Holt Junior. On nomination day Moffatt withdrew, Holt was unable to be present and was not nominated and a poll was held some days later.

On polling day no returning officer presided at Casino because he became lost trying to find his way in the bush. However, there were only nineteen voters in the police district of Casino, so the absence of the returning officer could not alter the result; T. H. Hood therefore was elected<sup>3</sup>.

#### *1856 First Parliament*

Responsible government had been conferred upon New South Wales by the Constitution Act of 1855 and the first general elections for the newly-constituted Legislative Assembly were to be held early in 1856<sup>4</sup>.

Holt received a requisition signed by several electors of the Stanley Boroughs (Brisbane and Ipswich) to be nominated for that seat and consented<sup>5</sup>. Nehemiah Bartley was one of the signatories and wrote an entertaining account of the origin of the requisition and the course of the elections<sup>6</sup>.

There was much party feeling between the town of Ipswich (bastion of squattocracy) and Brisbane. An Ipswich newspaper<sup>7</sup> predicted that Holt would be sent back to Sydney 'with a flea in his ear', while a Brisbane newspaper<sup>8</sup> called on the Brisbane electors to thwart the combined efforts of the people of Ipswich, 'who would advance the interests of Ipswich at the expense of Brisbane' and to 'vote to a man for Holt'.

Holt, practically a stranger to the electorate, was prevented from coming to Brisbane until a week before the elections and, on arrival by

<sup>2</sup> *Moreton Bay Free Press*, 23 January to 6 March 1855.

<sup>3</sup> *SMH* 22 and 27 March 1855.

<sup>4</sup> *Official History of New South Wales 1788-1883*, pp. 251-257.

<sup>5</sup> *Moreton Bay Free Press*, 31 March 1856.

<sup>6</sup> Nehemiah Bartley, *Opals And Agates* (1892) p. 142: Address by Sir Raphael Cilento, *RHSQ. Jo.* (1965-66).

<sup>7</sup> *The North Australian*, 7 April 1856.

<sup>8</sup> *Moreton Bay Free Press*, 7 April 1856.

the steamer *Shamrock*, was unable to cross the river bar. An important meeting had been arranged for that evening, so several men went by boat to the bar and rowed Holt up the river for his first meeting on 31 March. Holt pledged himself to support separation, gave his views about education, immigration, state support of clergy, opposed a nominated upper house, supported repairs of roads and bridges and drew attention to the lack of police at Sandgate, where white residents were in danger from the natives. The big meeting was enthusiastically in favour of Holt, apart from some young men who 'annoyed both speakers and hearers by their ceaseless and meaningless yellings'<sup>9</sup>.

Two days later 'our party went up, by the *Bremer* to the Moggill coal pits, thence on to Ipswich, by the *Ballarat*; we had iron staples and ropes to keep the crowd from the table on the hotel verandah at the meeting, but they broke through the ropes; the meeting was stormy, and the hotel noisy all night'<sup>10</sup>. At the meeting fist-fights and near-riots occurred and speeches were drowned out by hecklers<sup>11</sup>.

'Next day back to Brisbane, firing the steamer's cannon, all the way, in honour of the event. . . . The nomination was on the 4th April; Holt was ill, but spoke well'. This was at Kangaroo Point and Holt wrote that he spoke with great pain but did not want to disappoint the electors; 'on my return, and just before going to bed, as I was crossing the yard, I fell down in a swoon and if a waiter had not found me, I know not what would have become of me'<sup>12</sup>.

'Polling day was four days later, 7 April 1856, and when the scoreboard went up it showed: Holt 320; Richardson 317; Macalister (the squatters' nominee) 190; and Forbes 170. But there was an astonishing sequel — and I do not mean the high-spirited roping-off of Queen Street that ensued, or the two huge hogsheads of ale set up in the roadway or the light supplied by the burning in effigy of the squatters' 'nominee', to see to drink them dry; I mean the fact that chance election made Brisbane the capital of what was to be the colony of Queensland three years later'<sup>13</sup>.

Holt and Richardson thus became the elected representatives of Stanley Boroughs in the first Parliament under responsible government.

In January 1856 Stuart Alexander Donaldson was charged by the Governor with the duty of forming the first responsible ministry but, up to the date of the dissolution of the old Council — 29 February — was unsuccessful. However, on the completion of the general elections, he succeeded in forming a first ministry as follows:

<sup>9</sup> *Moreton Bay Free Press*, 7 April 1856.

<sup>10</sup> *Opals and Agates* (supra).

<sup>11</sup> *RHSQ. Jo.* (1965-66) (supra).

<sup>12</sup> *Moreton Bay Free Press*, 7 April 1856.

<sup>13</sup> *Opals and Agates* (supra).

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Stuart Alexander Donaldson, Colonial Secretary

Thomas Holt, Colonial Treasurer

William Montagu Manning, Attorney-General

John Bayley Darvall, Solicitor-General

George Robert Nichols, Auditor-General and Secretary for Lands and Works

William Colburn Mayne, Representative of the Government in the Legislative Council.

The first Parliament assembled on 22 May 1856 and, on 3 June, Holt unsuccessfully moved that the Speaker on taking the chair should henceforth read the sixty-seventh Psalm<sup>14</sup>. The seats of all ministers were declared vacant but later they were all re-elected (except Darvall) and Holt became the first Colonial Treasurer under responsible government on 6 June 1856<sup>15</sup>.

On 17 July Holt attended a national banquet to commemorate the introduction of responsible government, held in the Prince of Wales Theatre. Nearly six hundred sat down to dinner and there were four hundred ladies in the boxes<sup>16</sup>. The first ministry was short-lived; Donaldson announced its resignation on 25 August 1856, because of an insufficient and uncertain majority in the house<sup>17</sup>.

Charles Cowper then formed a new ministry which did not include any of the former ministers and, in October, Henry Watson Parker formed a further ministry with Donaldson as Colonial Treasurer, making his first financial statement in November. In September 1857 another new ministry was formed under Charles Cowper<sup>18</sup>.

In November 1856, the question of separation of Moreton Bay from the colony of New South Wales was before the House. Richard Hargrave (a representative of New England and the Macleay) objected to the inclusion of New England in the new colony and to the line being drawn south of the 30th parallel, on the grounds that eight thousand persons in that area had not presented their views to the Chairman and that the trade and financial interests of New England lay in New South Wales rather than in Moreton Bay.

Holt admitted that he was a separationist but found good reason to complain of the proposed mode of separation. He therefore voted with thirty-four others in favour of Hargrave's objection and only four voted against it<sup>19</sup>, but his vote brought serious repercussions.

<sup>14</sup> *Official History of New South Wales, 1788-1883.*

<sup>15</sup> *SMH* 1 July 1856.

<sup>16</sup> *SMH* 11 August 1856.

<sup>17</sup> *SMH* 27 August 1856.

<sup>18</sup> *Official History of New South Wales, 1788-1883.*

<sup>19</sup> *SMH* 6 November 1856.



When news of it reached Brisbane great excitement prevailed; vile abuse was levelled against Holt for allegedly breaking his pledge to support separation. Some who a few months earlier had joyfully burned his opponent's effigy, now just as joyfully and with undisguised fickleness, set alight a guy representing Holt. Slanders were indiscriminately hurled against him and local papers in Brisbane, together with *The Empire* in Sydney, lent their aid to propagate them. Holt indicated his principal slanderers as Robert Cribb, a man of great influence in the north who had bitterly opposed him in the 1856 elections, and Henry Parkes through his newspaper, *The Empire*. It was even suggested that Holt had mysterious designs to ruin Brisbane and make Port Curtis (where he was represented as having large possessions) the seat of government. As a result a requisition said to contain four hundred signatures was sent to Holt calling on him to resign<sup>20</sup>.

In a letter to his original proposer and seconder in June 1857, Holt pointed out that the question of separation had never really been before the Assembly and that Hargrave's resolutions involved only two questions: 'first, whether the Boundary Line should be south of the 30th degree, which I am not aware you ever desired; and secondly, whether the wishes of the inhabitants should be consulted, on which point I have adhered to the opinion expressed prior to my election.' He enclosed a letter of resignation to the Speaker which he requested should be sent if the constituents who voted for him wished him to resign.

The letter was discussed in Brisbane at a stormy meeting which finally resolved that Holt, by his vote in favour of Hargrave's resolutions, had violated his pledges to the electors of the Stanley Boroughs and had injured the cause of separation. The meeting also recorded disapprobation of the way in which Holt treated the requisition and declined to repeat the request or to forward any other communication to him<sup>21</sup>.

Significantly, however, it did not require Holt's proposer or seconder to forward to the Speaker the resignation which was in their hands. This may have been inadvertent or because mention was made of his exertions for Treasury reforms, his plan for the issue of £10 debentures, his having established the issue of lithographic plans of land sales and his services in the cause of education. It was also claimed that Holt was the man for them if he could stand all that had been said against him.

Whatever the reason the resignation was never sent to the Speaker and Holt continued to represent Stanley Boroughs until the First Parliament was dissolved on 19 December 1857.

<sup>20</sup> *SMH* 22 and 28 December 1856; *The Empire* 6 July 1857; *SMH* 8 January 1858, 8 February 1858.

<sup>21</sup> *The Empire*, 6 July 1857.

While Colonial Treasurer, Holt approved of a grant of £30,000 for public buildings in Brisbane. It was used for a gaol but had the effect of establishing Brisbane, rather than Ipswich, Cleveland or Gladstone as the permanent site of Government<sup>22</sup>.

Always an ardent advocate of adequate education for all classes, Holt was particularly disturbed by the school commissioners' report that no more than half the children of the lower classes attended school and that most teachers, in both the national and denominational systems, were persons who had failed in other occupations and were utterly inefficient as teachers.

In two lengthy speeches in December 1856<sup>23</sup>, he stressed the benefits of education to society and the individual by referring to the position in other countries and quoting from speeches and writings of famous men. He considered the function of the state to be that of inspection, not direction, and was opposed to compulsion unless other methods failed. He believed, however, that parents and children would be sufficiently attracted if suitable persons as teachers were adequately remunerated, accorded a proper status and subjected only to periodical visits by competent inspectors. He also advocated the abolition of the national and denominational boards. But his recommendations failed to gain the support of the House<sup>24</sup>.

The previous month (November 1856) he had opposed the issuing of £100 debentures, repayable either in Sydney or in England without regard to exchange, because they would place colonial holders at a disadvantage. He proposed that debentures of £5 or £10 would encourage the labouring classes to become economical and the possessors of wealth and claimed that the English peasant was discouraged from looking upon property as something which he could possess whereas the German peasant looked upon the country as made for himself and his fellow men and desired to have a stake in it. When Treasurer, Holt had urged S. A. Donaldson to issue such debentures<sup>25</sup>.

Mr Cowper indicated that the Government intended to carry out much of what he had advocated, so Holt withdrew his motion<sup>26</sup>.

During the term of the First Parliament, Holt opposed the principle of nomination to the Upper House, showed himself to be a free trader and generally inclined to liberal opinions, paid a good deal of attention to financial subjects in which his ability was indisputable; but his strength lay rather in a spirit of perseverance than in energy and mental power. Being afflicted with a speech impediment, he was regarded as

<sup>22</sup> Address by Sir R. Cilento, *R.H.S.Q. Jo.*, 1965-66.

<sup>23</sup> 2 and 12 December 1856 (M.L.).

<sup>24</sup> *SMH* 13 December 1856.

<sup>25</sup> Letters-Donaldson Ministry (1856-57), 14 June 1866 (ML).

<sup>26</sup> *SMH* 12 November 1856.

a poor speaker and by stenographers as a helpless subject to report<sup>27</sup>. He could hear with only one ear and, if he missed the first part of a speech, was unable to follow the rest of it properly<sup>28</sup>. This probably answered the *Empire* reporter's question, 'Why does Mr Holt go to sleep and pull violently at his hair?'<sup>29</sup>

Notwithstanding these disabilities his contributions to debates in Parliament contained much common sense and evidenced considerable research into the subjects on which he spoke, though they often lacked brevity. It was not until later years that his ability as a speaker increased.

The first Parliament was dissolved on 19 December 1857. Holt had successfully moved an amendment postponing for six months the second reading of a Bill to impose an assessment on runs in the unsettled and intermediate districts and to increase the rents of lands leased for pastoral purposes within the settled districts.

### 1858 Second Parliament

After the hostile demonstrations in Brisbane, he did not again contest Stanley Boroughs, his place being taken by Benjamin Cribb with John Richardson the other elected member. He was however invited to stand for Cumberland (South Riding) and reluctantly consented to do so, explaining that he would not have exchanged his quiet and happy privacy for the stormy sea of politics if he were not convinced that it was his duty to do so<sup>30</sup>. His opponents were Stuart A. Donaldson and Edward Flood, while Henry Parkes contested Cumberland (North Riding). Holt restated his views on education, public lands and electoral reform and, in addition, favoured vote by ballot after seeing cases of gross intimidation in the Stanley Borough election. He also stated that he was not an employer of Chinese, nor was he in favour of Chinese immigration into the colony<sup>31</sup>.

Goaded by criticism that he had failed to resign the seat of Stanley Boroughs, upon being so requested and after his promise to do so, and upset by what he termed being 'grossly slandered by Cribb' and by 'venomous articles' printed by Parkes, he considered that his character had been attacked. Unwillingly, but in defence of his credit, he retaliated strongly against Cribb and Parkes, claiming that Parkes' vindictive feeling towards him arose solely from his refusal to lend Parkes £500

<sup>27</sup> *Moreton Bay Free Press*, 5 May and 16 June 1856. *The Empire*, 11 September 1856.

<sup>28</sup> Notes on joining the Congregational Order of the Church of Christ (ML).

<sup>29</sup> *The Empire*, 18 August 1856.

<sup>30</sup> *SMH* 8 January 1858.

<sup>31</sup> *SMH* 8 January 1858.

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after a previous failure to honour an earlier loan. A bitter dispute ensued between them which was ventilated in the daily press and from which no reconciliation appeared ever to be likely. But time eventually proved an effective healer and in later years the two became quite friendly<sup>32</sup>.

In the Cumberland (South Riding) election, Edward Flood and S. A. Donaldson were elected with 1258 and 950 votes respectively while Holt polled only 774<sup>33</sup>.

In the Cumberland (North Riding) election, T. W. Smith and Henry Parkes (later knighted) were elected<sup>34</sup>.

In the Mitchell Library a parody on Ben Bolt, referring to Holt's defeat at the elections, is preserved<sup>35</sup>.

'All art is imitative' Shelley (via Mr Fowler)  
Imitation III

Picked up not a hundred miles from Kellet House  
Tom Hxxt  
and (Ben Bolt)

O don't you remember dear prosy Tom Hxxt  
Dull Thomas, with tongue so strong  
When he rose on his legs every member would bolt  
For his speeches were dreary and long  
Elections are now nearly over and soon  
The House of Assembly will meet  
But that tongue will no longer its melody tune  
For dear Thomas, possesses no seat

But that tongue, &c.

O don't you remember each long debate,  
Education was then our care  
How quickly the members their seats would vacate  
When Thomas addressed the chair  
The chair still stands in the self same spot,  
And near it the Speaker's mace  
But the Stanley Boroughs another have got  
And dear Thomas expelled in disgrace

But the Stanley Boroughs, &c.

O don't you remember that ministry's reign  
When a Premier my heart was so proud

<sup>32</sup> *SMH* 14 January 1858, 28 January 1859, 8 February 1858; *The Empire* 2 February 1858.

<sup>33</sup> *SMH* 1 February 1858.

<sup>34</sup> *SMH* 5 February 1858.

<sup>35</sup> AL79 (ML).

*Newtown, 1853-64*

But I lost my discretion when driven insane  
By the yells of a passionate crowd  
But if once again I that office should fill  
For the sake of our brotherly love  
Those tones which of yore the Assembly did thrill  
Shall be heard in the House up above.

*South Cumberland Election*

Tom Tom put up for one  
Obliged from Moreton Bay to run  
But Tom was beat, and has no seat  
And now is sore at his defeat.

*1859 Third Parliament*

This was the first election to be held under the new Electoral Reform Act. After his defeat in Cumberland (South Riding), Holt did not intend again to enter the area of public politics. At the last moment, however, he was persuaded to stand for Newtown by a number of electors and was the last candidate to enter the field<sup>36</sup>.

The election was most orderly and well-behaved; all candidates were well-known, respectable men and included a solicitor, a draper and a pastoralist. They held almost identical views on the principal questions of the day such as education, opening up waste lands, financing new railways, opposition to State aid to religion and opposition to Chinese immigration. Macarthur was noted as a battler, but even he could find no foe. The whole election lacked the fire and excitement of Holt's earlier contests.

On nomination day, after all candidates had addressed the assembly and been accorded a respectful hearing with generous applause, the returning officer (T. C. Breillat) called for a show of hands for each of the candidates and announced that the largest number had been held up for Holt. A poll was then demanded for the other candidates<sup>37</sup>. The poll, held two days later, reversed the decision of the show of hands, the votes showing Alexander Macarthur 354, S. C. Brown 222, E. S. Hill 219 and Thomas Holt 149.

On the declaration of the poll harmony prevailed until it was disrupted by Holt's assertion that, under the new Electoral Act, he had not employed a paid canvasser but had been told that one of the candidates had employed seventy-five.

In the ensuing consternation Macarthur and Hill hastened to deny that either had employed a single canvasser. Brown asserted that Holt's

<sup>36</sup> *SMH* 3, 14 and 16 June 1859.

<sup>37</sup> *SMH* 16 June 1859.

expression was uncalled for and denied that he had employed anything like seventy-five canvassers<sup>38</sup>.

### *1861 Fourth Parliament*

In the elections for the fourth Parliament Holt did not again contest the Newtown seat and, although requested to stand for Ashfield, did not contest that seat either<sup>39</sup>.

In June 1861, however, Alexander Macarthur resigned from the Newtown seat upon his appointment to the Legislative Council and a by-election for Newtown became necessary. Holt had intended to make a short visit to Europe but, when approached to stand for election, agreed that probably he would postpone his visit if elected<sup>40</sup>.

On nomination day party feeling ran unusually high but, apart from two or three electors who 'endeavoured to demonstrate their arguments by an appeal to physical force' and were restrained by the police, the meeting was fairly orderly. There were only two candidates, Holt and his former opponent, S. C. Brown.

As the riots against the Chinese at Lambing Flat had only just occurred, the Chinese question was an important one. Holt's view was that the Chinese should be prohibited from digging for gold and such a measure would automatically restrict their large-scale immigration. Education was also an important public question and Holt criticised the large expenditure of money on Sydney University 'to produce philosophers' and on the fine building of St Paul's College, with its costly 'Professor' and scarcely a student, when half of the children of the poorer classes were receiving no education at all. (Some years earlier however he had been a member of a committee formed to establish St Paul's College and donated liberally to it.)

Internal transport was much in the public mind; the solution proposed by Holt was that, instead of having to wait a long time for costly railroads with steam transport financed by heavy taxation, cheap tramroads with horse-drawn wagons travelling ten miles an hour would open up the country quickly. Charles Cowper who had been on the Railway Board with him for many years, supported the tramway scheme and advice from experts showed that a line could be laid from Sydney to Goulburn within twelve months at the cost of only £1,500 per mile.

Holt discomfited his lawyer opponent by referring to two legal matters. Firstly, he advocated the simplifying and cheapening of the method of conveying land (by a system akin to the Torrens system) which, he claimed, was opposed only by lawyers. Secondly, he advocated amend-

<sup>38</sup> *SMH* 20 June 1859.

<sup>39</sup> *SMH* 11 July 1861.

<sup>40</sup> *SMH* 29 June 1861.

ments of the Insolvency Act which, as it stood, often enabled lawyers to receive either the whole or the greater part of a debtor's estate, to the detriment of creditors.

On most issues Brown was in agreement but he supported the construction of railroads in preference to tramroads. However, he strongly deprecated Holt's intrusion of personalities into the election by referring to lawyers and sought to counter its effect by seeking the electors' sympathy for himself, a comparatively poor man, seeking to combat the influence and power of a wealthy opponent<sup>41</sup>.

At the close of proceedings a show of hands favoured Holt but Brown demanded a poll which was taken two days later and resulted in Holt's election by 470 votes to 445. After the declaration of the poll Holt 'was seized upon by a number of his more energetic supporters, and having been carried to a vehicle provided for the purpose, was drawn in triumph to his committee-rooms'<sup>42</sup>.

Holt remained in the fourth Parliament until its dissolution on 10 November 1864.

In 1862, when there was a move to have the two emigration lecturers (Henry Parkes and W. B. Dalley) recalled from England, Holt strongly opposed it, mainly on the ground that the lecturers were attracting capitalists.

He would ask what would become of the working population if it was not for the capitalist. Were the capital of England to be reduced one-half, it would throw one-half of the people out of employment. If people in the city paid high rents, it was not the fault of the capitalist; it arose from want of it, which prevented the building of more houses; for, if houses were not required, they would not be built. The supply depended upon demand. He hoped the day would come when the working men would be their own landlords<sup>43</sup>.

The lack of adequate defences for Port Jackson was of considerable concern to the House from time to time. Sir William Denison had earlier provided for an inner defence only but later this was considered inefficient and various schemes were devised for outer defences. One suggestion required the entire closing of the Heads; Holt was not in favour of this because it would affect commerce, but he was in favour of a boom defended by masked guns<sup>44</sup>.

The Italian warship *Cristofero Colombo* caused alarm when she proceeded all the way up the harbour to Farm Cove without giving any

<sup>41</sup> *SMH* 11 July 1861.

<sup>42</sup> *SMH* 13 July 1861.

<sup>43</sup> *The Empire*, 5 June 1862.

<sup>44</sup> *The Empire*, 11 June 1862.

salute. Holt considered it desirable, in the unsettled state of affairs, to allow no foreign armed vessel to pass the Sow and Pigs without special permission from the Government<sup>45</sup>.

When it was rumoured that war with Russia had been declared, he voiced the feelings of many; although suggestions for the defence of the harbour had been made nineteen years earlier, nothing had been done by the Government and 'we were really defenceless'<sup>46</sup>.

When it was proposed to introduce the Torrens system of titles to land to overcome the complications and delays associated with the transfer of land, Holt acted as a member of the Select Committee to consider and report upon the Land Titles Declaration Bill<sup>47</sup> and, when it became law, he used its provisions extensively.

He strongly supported a successful endeavour to have the tram rails removed from Pitt Street on the grounds that the rails used had driven ordinary traffic out of the street, that land in Pitt Street had depreciated in value from their use and that their original object of enabling goods to be conveyed from Circular Quay to the Railway Station had been found to be useless<sup>48</sup>.

In 1863, when Charles Cowper introduced a Bill to promote elementary education and amalgamate the two existing boards, Holt proposed that education should be vested instead in a responsible Minister, but the ministerial crisis prevented the Bill becoming law<sup>49</sup>.

In the course of numerous debates Holt called on his personal experiences to illustrate his points. During debate on the Pawnbrokers Bill (which provided for the limitation of the rate of interest chargeable by pawnbrokers to forty per cent — just double that in England), he protested that he had been ashamed, when travelling through despotic countries, at the careful means taken for relieving the necessities of the poor compared with the indifference shown in his own country where it was pitiable to see extortionate charges levied by pawnbrokers on the poor wretches who went to them. He claimed that if the Government were to lend money at five per cent or perhaps ten per cent to poor people on such a system as prevailed on the Continent, it would be a great protection to those they assisted, whilst a good profit would be left after paying expenses. (While the Pawnbrokers Bill was before the House, a petition purporting to be from 630 borrowers protested against the reduction of interest they had to pay from 240 per cent to forty per cent; Holt labelled it the 'Pawnbrokers' petition')<sup>50</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> *SMH* 14 February 1878.

<sup>46</sup> *SMH* 11 April 1878.

<sup>47</sup> *The Empire*, 12 June 1862.

<sup>48</sup> *The Empire*, 18 June 1862.

<sup>49</sup> *Official History of New South Wales 1788-1883* p. 378.

<sup>50</sup> *The Empire*, 4 October 1862.



He spoke in favour of the abolition of state aid for public worship, in a debate on the Public Worship Prohibition Bill.

He thought the fact of a minister like the Rev. Mr Kemp putting his engagement for £400 a-year in the fire, was a great argument in support of voluntaryism . . . He remembered, some thirty years ago, there was a sum of £1,000,000 voted in England for the building of churches. He had been in some of these churches and their congregations were hardly greater than was the congregation of a state-paid church near Sydney only a few weeks ago, when only two persons attended and it was announced to them that 'the cove said they might go home, there would be no service there that day'. That would never happen under the voluntary system<sup>51</sup>.

In a debate on the Claims against the Crown Enforcement Bill, he claimed that there were many cases of the Government selling land twice over. He had bought land not long since which Sir Daniel Cooper claimed as his own after Holt had purchased it. He had fenced it in and Sir D. Cooper threatened to bring an action of ejection against him which, if he (Holt) should lose, he would be left without any remedy against the Government. He did not think Cooper's claim just. He believed that Cooper held six hundred acres with no title at all — land worth £50 an acre.

The law had its origin in the idea that the King could do no wrong — that such a law as this did not obtain in despotic countries where the divine right of Kings was upheld. The King of Prussia had an action brought against him by a miller, for building a palace in a situation that obstructed the wind from the mill. He (Mr Holt) saw the building when he was in Prussia. If that was the law in despotic countries, why should they, with responsible government and universal suffrage, allow the subject to remain without the right of action against the Crown?<sup>52</sup>

(It was Frederick the Great who wished to buy the mill and, because the miller refused to sell, built the obstruction. The miller succeeded in his action for damages. An aftermath occurred about 1840 when the miller's descendant, being in financial difficulties, offered to sell the mill to the King for a certain price. The King however made him a present of an amount equalling the price and, in addition, allowed him to keep the mill<sup>53</sup>.)

Speaking on a proposal to amend the law of evidence, by the Criminal Cases Amendment Bill, to permit an accused to give evidence on his own

<sup>51</sup> *The Empire* 17 July 1862.

<sup>52</sup> *The Empire*, 18 October 1862.

<sup>53</sup> *SMH* 6 May 1875.

behalf, Holt objected that it was injurious to an accused in that it led to the detestable and oppressive system of cross-examination by prosecuting counsel. This was the practice in all despotic countries, the first witness called being the prisoner who was tortured to extract, if possible, indications of guilt<sup>54</sup>.

In moving the adjournment of the House to consider the case of a man confined in Parramatta Asylum, where he alleged gross mismanagement existed and where a patient was debarred from communicating with his friends, Holt was reported as saying

A neighbour of his, now a wealthy man, had been confined for a long period in a lunatic asylum in England. He had been placed there by his relatives who had a design to get possession of his property. The gentleman he referred to, however, at last succeeded in escaping and working his way out here as foremast hand in a merchant ship. Here he had succeeded in amassing considerable wealth, and had made himself rather famous in connection with improvements in the breeding of cattle<sup>55</sup>.

In 1863, when the contractor for the Richmond-to-Windsor railway was forced to give up his contract, one hundred and fifty navvies were thrown out of work and took possession of the plant. Holt claimed that the Government had no right to hand over the plant belonging to the sureties until the wages were paid.

He had lived in despotic countries, and there he found that the interests of workmen were more cared for than here, where we had our free representative institutions. The Government had a right to satisfy claims of these workmen<sup>56</sup>.

### *Fifth Parliament*

Holt's wife and several of his children left for Europe early in 1864 and, as he intended to join them there, he did not stand for re-election and his former opponent, S. C. Brown, was elected unopposed for Newtown.

### *6 Select Committee on Immigration*

In 1854 Holt was one of seven witnesses called before a Select Committee on Immigration, consisting of the Colonial Secretary, the Colonial Treasurer, James Macarthur, A. Macleay, Henry Parkes, Captain Dumaresq., Captain King, Charles Cowper and James Martin.

<sup>54</sup> *The Empire*, 1 November 1862.

<sup>55</sup> *The Empire*, 29 November 1862.

<sup>56</sup> *The Empire*, 24 September 1863.

Each witness had his attention directed to different aspects of the problem of immigration, Holt's being directed to agricultural, commercial and banking affairs, upon which he assisted the Committee and also indicated that the regulations were too complicated and restricted and prevented a large number of persons emigrating. He believed, however, that lectures in England would be beneficial and that other means should be employed to publicise Australia. The Committee adopted some of his recommendations, including those favouring the use of handloom weavers as shepherds and better methods of disseminating information in England<sup>1</sup>.

### 7 *Literary Interests*

Holt was an avid reader, possessed an extensive library covering a wide range of subjects and, in 1855, was a shareholder and member of the committee of the Australian Library and Literary Institution, other members of the committee including Sir Charles Nicholson, Dr James Mitchell, MLC, Rev. W. B. Clark and Professor J. Smith. Each share of £25 in the Institution entitled the holder to be admitted to the reading room by a token which was transferable while other members paid £3 annual subscription. The Institution was not however well patronised and became unfinancial, Dr Lang attributing its unpopularity to the position of the building (at the corner of Bent and Macquarie Streets); it was out of the question to think that young men on dark wintry nights would come up the hill with the roads so bad in the neighbourhood. Mr Daintrey attributed the poor attendance to the price of books having decreased so that people preferred to lay out their £3 in new books rather than go to the Institute in the evening.

In 1857, when T. S. Mort was about to go to England, the Rev. Dr Woolley suggested the establishment of a free library and refreshment institution for young men as a memorial to Mort, who favoured the proposal after having heard speeches by Dickens, Bulwer, Thackeray and Sir James Stephen at the opening of the Manchester Free Library. A committee, of which Holt was a member, was formed to examine the proposal but the institution does not appear to have eventuated.

In 1861 Holt again became a member of the committee of the Australian Library and Literary Institution and recommended selling its expensive site and moving the books to cheaper, leased premises in Exchange Building. This was agreed to but no offer could be obtained for the site and, during the remainder of the time that Holt served on the Committee (1862, 1863 and 1864) the site was not sold. The Institution struggled on in financial difficulties until 1869, when the

<sup>1</sup> *V & P of the Legislative Council*, vol. II, 1854, p. 32.

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Government purchased the building and books for a sum which, after meeting outstanding debts, left the shareholders nothing. The Institution was then re-opened as the Free Public Library of Sydney and in 1895 the name was changed to the Public Library of New South Wales<sup>1</sup>.

Holt also interested himself in the newspapers and periodicals of the day and was on intimate terms of friendship with John, Charles and James Fairfax and their editors of the *Herald* and other publications, the Rev. John West, Samuel Cook, and Dr Andrew Garran, also Henry Parkes who started *The Empire* in 1850. Parkes conducted it for seven years as the leading organ of liberal progressive views in the colony. It was recalled that Holt 'lost a small fortune in his endeavours to keep *The Empire* newspaper afloat at A goodly time

For it was in the golden prime  
of Editor Henry Parkes'.

He also liberally helped to start the *Month* magazine and contributed to every periodical published in the colonies<sup>2</sup>. (The *Month* was a literary and critical journal edited by Frank Fowles, and later by J. S. Moore, which ran from about 1857 to 1860.) He also offered prizes for essays on various subjects, such as land legislation, won by Samuel Cook<sup>3</sup> and water supply, won by Mr Auk Smith.

J. R. Houlding dedicated his book *Australian Capers or Christopher Cockle's Colonial Experience*<sup>4</sup>, to Holt as 'the friend and patron of all that tends to develop the material resources, promote the intellectual advancement, and secure the moral and religious well-being of Australia'. The book won the approval of N. D. Stenhouse, Rev. S. C. Kent of Camden College and Rev. Joseph H. Fletcher, principal of Newington College.

### 8 *Death of Holt's Father*

Early in 1856, Holt's father, Thomas Holt, died at his residence, Wedderburn House in Harrogate, to which he had retired from business in 1842<sup>1</sup>. Up to this time Holt had always described himself as Thomas Holt Junior.

<sup>1</sup> F. M. Bladen, *The Origin and Development of the Public Library of New South Wales* (M.L.), *SMH* 20 January 1857, 19 February 1857, 28 November 1861.

<sup>2</sup> *The Bulletin*, 12 February 81.

<sup>3</sup> *SMH* 4 July 1910.

<sup>4</sup> London, 1867 (ML).

<sup>1</sup> *Moreton Bay Free Press*, 5 May 1856.

### 9 *New South Wales Savings Bank*

In 1857, Holt became a trustee of the bank, which had been established in 1832. The bank's hours of business, in 1857, were:

Hours of attendance for deposits

To receive deposits: Sats. 6.30-9 o'clock.

Thursdays, 12 to 2 o'clock afternoon.

To make payments to depositors:

Mondays 11 to 2 o'clock afternoon.

Bank closed for first and second weeks in January each year<sup>1</sup>.

### 10 *The Union Club*

Holt had since 1847<sup>1</sup> been a member of the Australian Club, the stronghold of Toryism, but, with the advent of responsible government in 1855, the new Victoria Club was formed in Sydney to provide for the more liberal group led by John Robertson.

It soon became apparent that party enmity would be fostered by the existence of two clubs whose members had such divergent views and so, in an endeavour to reduce enmity and to bring together members of all political parties in social unity, the Union Club was formed in 1857.

With some other members of the Australian Club, Holt became a member of the Provisional Committee to assist in the formation of the new club and became a first Trustee under the presidency of James Macarthur, MP. The annual subscription was then £7.10.0 per annum<sup>1</sup>.

### 11 *Litigation in the Sydney District Court*

Holt was the defendant in an action, Wilford v. Holt, brought against him in 1859, in the recently established Sydney District Court. The action was heard before Judge Cheeke and the newspaper report is set out below, as the case was historically important, being the first in the Sydney District Court in which a defendant successfully defended.

This was a suit to recover £14.15.0, the value of crops of barley, beans, onions and potatoes, upon which plaintiff had a lien and of which defendant had taken possession. A German named Kling and his partner occupied some ground belonging to defendant. He had borrowed £9.15.0 from plaintiff and also owed him £5 for five weeks' labour, at £1 per week. Kling, not being able to pay that money, told plaintiff that he could have whatever crop there was on the ground. He immediately went to the landlord, Mr Holt, who, taking

<sup>1</sup> *Australian Almanac*, J. Cox & Co. (1857) p. 191.

<sup>1</sup> Records of the Australian Club, Candidates' Book.

compassion on him, told him he could have whatever there was on the ground. Mr Holt then gave Kling and his partner £2 each to leave the land, telling the in-coming tenant to let Wilford have whatever was on the ground. Floods occurring, however, the crops then on the ground were destroyed. As Mr Holt had merely out of kindness, and without undertaking any liability, allowed plaintiff permission to remove the crops, and as plaintiff had last January summoned Kling for the amount now claimed, thereby showing that he looked to him only, a verdict was given to the defendant<sup>1</sup>.

## 12 *Pitt Street Properties*

In 1861, Holt commenced to purchase property in Pitt Street, Sydney, and by 1872 owned over an acre of land there. The greater part was in the vicinity of Angel Place (formerly Terry Lane or Place, then Martin Lane).

### *Mort's Building and Store in Terry Lane*

These buildings stood on lot 21, section 37 of the City of Sydney, and had been granted in 1837<sup>1</sup> to John Connell, a free settler who arrived in the colony in the early years of its settlement. It appears, however, that Connell occupied this land long before it was granted to him, probably under a lease from the Government<sup>2</sup>.

John 'Old' Connell had a row of weather-board cottages on the land fronting Pitt Street. He lived in one for over fifty years, from about 1799, and when it became so dilapidated that it threatened to fall down, built another cottage outside it<sup>3</sup>. He became a wealthy merchant, dying in 1849 at the age of ninety-two after which his grandson, John Connell Laycock, became the owner of lot 21 and in 1851 leased it to Thomas Sutcliffe Mort. Buildings on the land then comprised sale and store rooms where Mort carried on his business as an auctioneer. Lot 21 had a frontage of about sixty feet to the western side of Pitt Street and an average depth of 185 feet to the Tank Stream at its rear. On its northern boundary was a laneway known as 'Mort's Gateway' or 'Mort's Passage' which gave access via other lanes to George and Pitt Streets, the Tank Stream being crossed by a small bridge<sup>4</sup>.

From about 1854 to 1858 the business of the A.M.P. Society was

<sup>1</sup> Roy H. Goddard, *The Union Club, 1857-1957*; SMH 9 January 1857.

<sup>2</sup> Certificate of Title, vol. I, Fol. 60.

<sup>3</sup> Return of leases by Sir T. Brisbane, As 80 (ML); Bonwick Transcript p. 35 (ML).

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Fowles, *Sydney in 1848*; 6 RAHS. Jo. 83.

<sup>5</sup> A.M.P. *News and Views*, vol. 4, No. 30.

conducted in two rooms of Mort's building, which the Society leased<sup>5</sup>.

John Connell Laycock mortgaged this and other properties in 1860 (see Sutherland) and, when he defaulted, his mortgagee sold by auction lot 21, on which stood Mort's building and the store in Terry Lane, to Holt for £8,325<sup>6</sup>.

Holt leased the premises from 1875 to importers and warehousemen (members of the firm of Prince, Ogg & Co) but in 1889 lot 21 was resumed by the Government under the General Post Office (Approaches Improvement) Act of 1889 and sold.

In 1970 the Colonial Mutual Life Building (corner of Pitt Street and Martin Place), most of the eastern half of Challis House (Martin Place) and part of Angel Place occupied lot 21.

### *Holt's Building and Store*

The land on which Holt's building was erected had a frontage of sixty-two feet to the western side of Pitt Street, ran back to the Tank Stream about 140 feet, and part of it adjoined where the northern wall of the Angel Hotel now is. The land on which the store was erected had a frontage to the western side of Terry Lane (Angel Place) of about 110 feet and its rear boundary was on the Tank Stream.

The two parcels had been granted in 1817 and 1840, the first to Samuel Terry and the second to his wife<sup>7</sup>, and comprised part of lots 22, 22A and 22B of Section 37 of the City of Sydney, another part being the land which the Angel Hotel occupies. Mrs Terry resided on the property until her death, when her Trustees sold to Holt, in August 1861 for £6,535<sup>8</sup>. The son of the purchaser of the portion on which the Angel Hotel now stands described the property when occupied by Mrs Terry.

Where the Angel Hotel stands was the southern end of the private dwelling of Esther Terry. It was a two-storied building, and built in the shape of a hollow square. On the Angel Hotel end, it was built to a depth of seventy feet by twenty feet. It then ran along the street to Hoffnung's buildings. The northern end was built on from Pitt Street right down to the Tank Stream, about 180 feet from Pitt Street. This building comprised the stables, coach-house, harness-room and servants' quarters. In the centre of the yard, formed by the sides of the building, was an immense cask on a pole, made into a pigeon-box, with about forty holes in it; but the place was literally alive with pigeons, as

<sup>5</sup> 6 RAHS. Jo. 74; Commemorative Booklet of A.M.P. Society, 1962.

<sup>6</sup> Search at Registrar General's Department.

<sup>7</sup> Certificate of Title vol. I, folio 14.

<sup>8</sup> Search at Registrar General's Department.

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the stables and coach-houses were breeding-places when the place was left neglected<sup>9</sup>.

Holt leased the property to Charles Moore, an auctioneer, and in April 1862 employed George Allen Mansfield as architect to erect a building known as 'Holt's building' which comprised a show-room, sale-room, warehouse and stables for Charles Moore. Part was let to G. A. Mansfield, who became one of the first tenants of the building<sup>10</sup>.

Davis Marks & Co succeeded Charles Moore & Co<sup>11</sup> and, in the 1920s, the land and building were purchased by Swain & Co Ltd from the Trustees of the Estate of Thomas Holt. When Swain's moved to George Street the Angel Arcade and Shops were constructed on the site.

The land fronting Terry Lane was leased by Holt to members of the firm of Prince, Ogg & Co which erected bulk stores and sub-let them in 1891 to Lark Sons & Co<sup>12</sup>.

About 1925, the bulk stores were demolished and Wingello House was constructed on the site by the Trustees of the Estate of Thomas Holt. In 1960 Wingello House was sold to L. J. Hooker & Co Ltd and renamed Hooker House.

### *Union Chambers*

This property, lot 2 of section 38 of the City of Sydney, had a frontage of about forty-four feet to the eastern side of Pitt Street near the south-eastern corner of its intersection with Hunter Street<sup>13</sup>.

In February 1862, Holt purchased it for £5,700 from Stuart Alexander Donaldson, his colleague and leader in the first responsible Parliament of New South Wales. There were two old buildings on the land, which Holt leased to Gibbs, Shallard & Co, printers. In 1884, an attempt was made to sell the premises by auction<sup>14</sup> but, when this proved unsuccessful, the old buildings were pulled down and a new building of stone and brick, with slate roof, known as Union Chambers, was erected for Holt about 1886 and sublet by Gibbs (of Gibbs, Shallard & Co) as offices<sup>15</sup>.

In the 1920s Union Chambers was sold by the Trustees of the estate of Thomas Holt and on its site now stands Century House, Friends' Provident and Century Insurance Offices, which adjoin the Australia and New Zealand Bank Ltd.

<sup>9</sup> *RAHS. Jo.*, vol. VI, p. 82; vol. VII, p. 76.

<sup>10</sup> Letter G. A. Mansfield to the Trustees of Estate of Thomas Holt, 27 September 1892 (HP).

<sup>11</sup> Letter Davis Marks & Co to F. S. E. Holt, 23 February 1890 (HP).

<sup>12</sup> Letter L. F. Dixon to W. H. Holt, 29 October 1890 (HP).

<sup>13</sup> Certificate of Title, vol. I, fol. 15.

<sup>14</sup> *SMH* 13 September 1884.

<sup>15</sup> Insurance policies Nos. 2,277,722 and 2,340,569 with the Liverpool, London & Globe Insurance Co Ltd (HP), now (ML).



*Denison Chambers*

It is convenient to deal with this property here although it does not fall within the Newtown period.

Lot 20 section 37 of the City of Sydney had a frontage of about fifty-five feet to Pitt Street and an irregular depth of about 180 feet to the Tank Stream at its rear<sup>16</sup>.

If Martin Place, as it now exists between George and Pitt Streets, were quartered, lot 20 would occupy approximately the north-eastern quarter, with the Cenotaph at its south-western corner. Lot 20 was resumed in 1889 by the Government under the General Post Office (Approaches Improvement) Act of 1889.

In the 1830s, Saul Lyons erected a large private residence for himself on the land, which he occupied until it became Gill's Hotel, in 1846<sup>17</sup>. Gill's Hotel was noted as being one of the best houses in Sydney at that time and was described as being a handsome stone edifice of a unique design. When Martin Gill moved his hotel in 1846 from George Street to Pitt Street he advertised Gill's Family Hotel as 'comfortable and convenient for families or single gentlemen also, possessing that great luxury in the summer, a beautiful bath'<sup>18</sup>.

In 1851, the A.M.P. Society rented the ground floor for three years at £30 per annum<sup>19</sup>. By 1861 Francis Giles, a draper and silk merchant, owned the property, which he mortgaged, defaulted under the mortgage and the mortgagee in December 1871 sold the property to Holt for £10,000<sup>20</sup>.

The northern boundary of the property, then called Denison Chambers, adjoined Mort's Building, the southern boundary abutted on to vacant land intended to be part of a street in front of the General Post Office and the Tank Stream at the rear of the land had been covered over at the time of sale.

In 1875 Holt leased Denison Chambers to W. P. Woolcott, a house and estate agent. This lease was intended to be surrendered if and when a new lease to Thompson and Giles, executed by Holt in escrow, took effect. The lease never took effect, the Colonial Mutual Life Assurance Society took an assignment of Woolcott's lease but then the whole property was resumed<sup>21</sup> in 1899.

When the Government sold portion of the resumed property in 1892,

<sup>16</sup> Certificate of Title, vol. 150, fol. 23.

<sup>17</sup> 6 RAHS. Jo. 74, 83; Joseph Fowles, *Sydney in 1848*; W. G. Verge — *John Verge, his ledger and his clients* (1962) (M.L.) p. 62.

<sup>18</sup> SMH 19 November 1845.

<sup>19</sup> Commemorative Booklet of A.M.P. Society 1962.

<sup>20</sup> Search at the Registrar General's Department.

<sup>21</sup> L. F. Dixon's Case for Opinion of Counsel, 11 February 1892, and his letter to S. Cook, 21 August 1889 (H.P.), now (ML).

the auction sale plan showed that cellars (the wine cellars of Gill's Hotel<sup>22</sup>) extended 9' 6" under the northern footpath of Martin Place from the building line.

In 1970 the only parts of allotment 20 which are built upon are a strip approximately eleven feet wide on which are erected the southern sides of the Colonial Mutual Life Building and the southern side of the eastern half of Challis House; and a small portion upon which part of the Cenotaph stands. The remainder of the allotment is either part of the carriage way or the northern footpath of Martin Place (now called Martin Place Plaza).

### 13 *The Troublous Beginning of Martin Place*

When Thomas Holt first purchased land in Pitt Street in 1861, the General Post Office had been since 1830 housed in a small building in George Street on part of the present site. In 1863 the G.P.O. was moved to Wynyard Square to allow a new building to be erected on the George Street site and the George Street half of the new building, west of the tower, was completed and occupied in 1874<sup>1</sup>. When the western half was nearly completed the following was written<sup>2</sup>:

This imposing building stands in what will be St Martin's lane, a new street, and will occupy its entire length, a distance of 345 feet. It will connect George and Pitt Streets, affording a long-desired and much needed channel of communication between those thoroughfares at this point . . . its lofty elevations of chaste Italian architecture have that grandeur of effect appropriate to a public building fitted for so important a purpose as the headquarters of the inland and foreign correspondence of a large and prosperous country such as N.S.W. is destined to become at no distant day. The building is of free-stone, on a massive base of grey granite, carried on columns highly polished with carved capitals all of the same durable material. . . . The three central arches of George Street arcade have their spandrils finished with appropriate carvings in effective relief, representing Science, Commerce, Literature, and the Arts, the central arch having a finely executed Royal arms, the stone of which was placed in its present position, nearly four years ago, by HRH Prince Alfred.

Although the western end was completed in 1874, the eastern end could not be commenced until the Government had secured the land

<sup>22</sup> Insurance Policy No. 2,264,596 with the Liverpool & London & Globe Insurance Co Ltd 10 November 1881 (H.P.), now (ML).

<sup>1</sup> J. W. Kitto, *History and Organisation of the Post Office* (M.L.).

<sup>2</sup> *Illustrated Sydney News*, March 1874.

between the completed part and Pitt Street<sup>3</sup>. Eventually this was done and the Pitt Street end was commenced about 1881 and completed, including the tower, about 1886. The completely remodelled building, as it now stands, was not put in hand until 1924<sup>4</sup>.

In 1886, when the new building was opened, there was no public road from George to Pitt Streets between Hunter and King Streets and only one private right of way, Mort's Passage. In 1865 the lane in front of the proposed Post Office site and on its north was no more than thirty-two feet wide<sup>5</sup>. Two years later it was extended but, even with the extension, the Government owned only an irregular-shaped piece of land sixty-three feet wide at the George Street end and fifty-five feet at the Pitt Street end. This lane was used as an unsatisfactory thoroughfare but there were many proposals that a proper street should be formed.

From 1874 to 1888 negotiations to obtain more land to widen Post Office Street on the north had engaged the attention of six Governments. In 1874 Sir Saul Samuel, then Postmaster-General, proposed resuming the whole of the land owned by Perkins on the George Street end and by Holt on the Pitt Street end to make Post Office Street one hundred feet wide and to sell the excess land resumed so as to recoup the Government for money paid on resumption. Negotiations were commenced but never concluded and the matter was dropped.

In 1877 John Davies, then Post Master General, proposed that the street should be a uniform width of sixty-three feet, provided that Holt and Perkins donated sufficient of their land to enable it. The owners declined and the P.M.G. then suggested that a wall should be erected on the northern side which would have served the dual purposes of screening the unsightly sides of the buildings on the land and preventing owners having a frontage to the new street, but it was not done.

In 1878 Mr Burns, then PMG, proposed arbitration between the Government and the owners and, if Perkins and Holt would not agree to arbitration, that a wall should be erected; Perkins, however, became seriously ill and the proposal was not pursued. The Railway Department erected, on the George Street end of the lane, a temporary building known as the Central Railway Office and until 1883 nothing more was heard of the matter<sup>6</sup>.

In August and September 1884 the Stuart Government again brought the matter up. It was proposed to resume enough land for a street in front of the GPO, eighty or ninety feet wide and, in addition to resume more land to the north which could be sold by the Government. So

<sup>3</sup> *Official History of New South Wales 1788-1883*, p. 528.

<sup>4</sup> J. W. Kitto (*supra*).

<sup>5</sup> *SMH* 11 July 1889; *RAHS. Jo.* vol. XIII, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> *SMH* 19 April 1888 and 11 July 1889.

confident was the Government of having the Bill passed that it had agreed to pay W. H. Paling £1300 per foot for his property facing George Street adjoining Perkins' land<sup>7</sup>.

Objection was taken that the Government sought to indulge in the vicious practice of land jobbing and it was pointed out that, if it were right for the Government to resume so much land, it might as well resume all the land as far as Hunter Street. It was also insinuated that members of the Government were guilty of corruption. It was urged by others however that, if only sufficient land to construct the actual street were resumed, the land owners would be left with a frontage to Post Office Street and would profit at the expense of the country by having those valuable frontages. Petitions were lodged against the Bill which was not cordially received and it was ultimately abandoned and stopped by prorogation<sup>8</sup>.

In 1886 Mr Suttor, then Post Master General, proposed that a galvanised iron fence be erected on the northern boundary with the view of making the street about seventy-five feet wide and that Holt and Perkins each give up about twenty feet of their land. Perkins offered a three-foot frontage free but would not part with the rest of his frontage without the concurrence of his lessees, Messrs Thompson and Giles. Holt was willing to sell eleven feet of his Pitt Street frontage at half the price the Government agreed to pay for Perkins' property. This offer was declined and the proposal also fell through<sup>9</sup>.

Holt was then in England in very ill health. Samuel Cook wrote that he was impressed by Thomas Holt's feeling of resignation to the will of his Creator and added. 'He seems to be troubled only about the post office place matter<sup>10</sup>.' On 16 September 1886, Holt wrote to his son, F. S. E. Holt, 'I look upon all negotiations with the Government for the sale of Denison Chambers as at an end and I am not sorry for it. Why cannot the Government be content to take what they require to widen the street and pay for it at a valuation, the same as they have always done, without wishing to make an exception of me and Perkins?'

In 1887 negotiations were again commenced. Thompson and Giles in addition to their lease from Perkins then had an agreement for lease from Holt of Denison Chambers, conditional on agreement with the Government being reached and Woolcott surrendering his lease. Under this conditional agreement for a lease they had to erect new premises. They commenced arrangements with a builder, W. H. Jennings, to have new buildings erected along the whole of the northern side of Post

<sup>7</sup> *SMH* 27 August and 4 September 1884.

<sup>8</sup> *SMH* 5 September 1884 and 19 April 1888. Letters L. F. Dixon to Estate T. Holt 2 October 1889 & 9 March 1891 (H.P.), now (ML).

<sup>9</sup> *SMH* 19 April 1888.

<sup>10</sup> S. Cook to F. S. E. Holt, 3 May 1886 (H.P.), now (ML).

Office-street. They were drapers with an extensive business, specialising in blankets, quilts, antimacassars, mantel drapes, doyleys, mats, etc.<sup>11</sup>

Perkins agreed to convey seven feet of his George Street frontage free of charge, provided that the Government obtained the concurrence of Thompson and Giles; Holt's agent agreed to convey seven feet of his Pitt Street frontage free of charge if paid for the other seven feet, the value to be submitted to arbitration, and provided that arrangements were made with Thompson and Giles. Thompson and Giles however wanted £35,000 as the price of their concurrence, to set against the depreciation of their stock, cost of removal, rent of new premises, the price of the seven feet of space and the necessary alterations in the building. That offer was declined by the Government<sup>12</sup>.

In November 1887 Holt wrote from England to his attorneys (S. Cook and F. S. E. Holt) suggesting that

the opportunity should not be lost of making the 'P.O. place' one of the most attractive places in Australasia, if not in the world, and this can easily be done by having beautiful granite columns on the north, the same as the south side.

In order to do this, I, as the proprietor of half the land between Pitt and George Streets, would contribute towards the cost provided Mr Perkins (the owner of the adjoining land on the George Street side) and our tenants would do the same, and of course provided that the Government would also assist in making this portion of the City exquisitely beautiful — I suggest that Mr Perkins, I and our tenants should each contribute equally a sufficient amount to pay for the cost, without interest, in twenty-five years.

As the Government could borrow money at a very low rate of interest to any extent, it would be but a small contribution for them to make, towards such a desirable object . . . I think the space above the footpath on the first floor might be made into a balcony, and shops might open into it, the very same as opening into the footpath below. I would also suggest that the P.O. place should be flagged, so that it could always be kept clean.<sup>13</sup>

About this time, Giles of Thompson and Giles died and his partners wished to be relieved of the conditional agreement to lease and their arrangement with W. H. Jennings.

In April 1888, as a result of negotiations by the Government, Mr Roberts, the PMG in the Parkes Government, proposed that £15,000

<sup>11</sup> *SMH* 30 May 1888.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid*, 19 April 1888.

<sup>13</sup> Memo from T. Holt to his Attorneys written from Halcot, 21 November 1887 (H.P.), now (ML).

be expended to purchase frontages to George and Pitt Streets, to make Post Office-street seventy feet wide for pedestrian traffic only, and to compensate lessees<sup>14</sup>. Sir Henry Parkes supported the proposal and stressed that Holt would not sign the contract unless the matter were completed before 1 May.

Mr Dibbs, Leader of the Opposition, objected to the proposal and said that 'he had had an amendment prepared by a legal friend which would effectually dispose of the testy old gentleman. He was a very exacting, close-fisted hard old man to deal with, and a very offensive old gentleman. He knew him well'<sup>15</sup>. (Later Mr Dibbs apologised for his remarks<sup>16</sup>.) Mr Dibbs' amendment was a proposal that the Government resume sufficient land not only to form a street one hundred feet wide, but of depth sufficient to enable frontages to that street to be sold or leased by the Government at high prices and thus enable compensation to owners and lessees to be made. He intended that the new street should be a passage for vehicles as a safety valve for Hunter and King Streets and that the City of Sydney, on account of its importance and age as the mother city of the Australian group, deserved, at least, in front of its finest buildings, a street proportionate to the character of the building.

A vigorous debate ensued. Mr Reid said he had been told that it was intended to erect a Coffee Palace facing the G.P.O. and enquired whether it was intended to restrict lessees to any particular business.

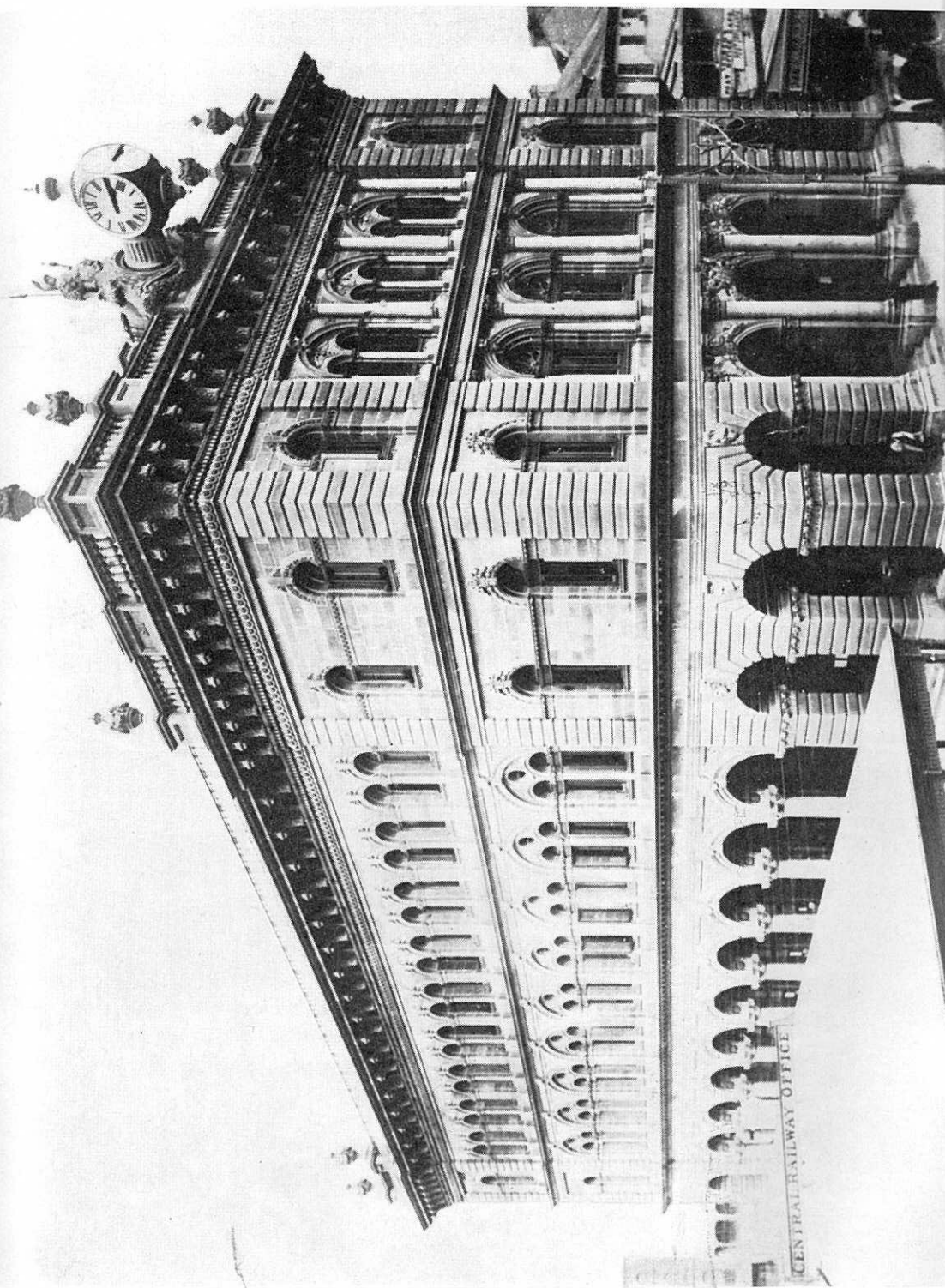
Mr Roberts failed to see that the G.P.O. was so extremely beautiful and wonderful as to justify an expenditure of about a quarter of a million of money to compensate those interested (Perkins, Holt, Thompson and Giles, Palings, Prince Ogg and Co and others) simply to allow the people this better view when the whole matter could be settled for the paltry sum of £15,000. His statement that Thompson and Giles would require at least £100,000 compensation was greeted with laughter, Mr Dibbs pointing out that, not long before, Messrs David Jones and Co's establishment was pulled down and re-erected within twelve months; that the business of that firm was on all fours with that of Thompson and Giles but that David Jones removed their stock into premises belonging to Mr Keep and carried on their business and why could not Thompson and Giles do precisely the same thing?

Sir Henry Parkes said he thought it would be false in principle to buy land in order to sell it again to make a profit out of it, even for the purpose of making improvements. Mr Reid said he was only trying to prevent the public from getting a villainously bad bargain. He was trying to prevent men who had a large strip of land from getting a villainous profit out of the necessities of the public.

<sup>14</sup> *SMH* 19 April 1888.

<sup>15</sup> *SMH* 26 April 1888.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid*, 1 June 1888.



*Central Railway Office alongside the General Post Office,  
Sydney, in 1889*



*Demolition of buildings to form the new Martin Place (1892)*



Mr O'Sullivan wanted to prevent the Government from playing into the hands of two or three plutocrats who were living abroad and taking their money from the colony and said he thought the Government should resume the property and let the people themselves get the benefit of the unearned increment. Mr McElhone strongly objected to giving any Government the right to rob private individuals of their property.

He maintained that the present street without any additional width was wide enough, and he did not believe in the high falutin about getting a good view of the Post Office. The people ought to have something else to do besides admiring the Post Office<sup>17</sup>.

During the adjournment of the debate a petition signed by one thousand leading citizens was presented. This favoured the Government's proposals to pay £15,000 compensation and form a street seventy feet wide.

On the resumption of the debate Mr Garvan advocated that,

by resuming a space 340 feet wide, they could make a thoroughfare through from George Street to Macquarie Street one hundred feet and, by means of land resumed, could carry out the work without its costing the country one shilling. It was necessary a thoroughfare such as that he advocated should be made, for King-street had long been too narrow for traffic, and would become more congested, for he believed that Sydney was destined to become the finest city on the face of the globe<sup>18</sup>.

Mr Frank Smith considered the turns would be too sharp to allow vehicular traffic on the proposed street.

Mr Carruthers favoured the proposal to pay £15,000 for a street seventy feet wide and said that his experience was that, where the valuation of land purchased by the Government was made by arbitrators, the Government had been compelled to pay very high prices and instanced the purchase by the Government at Darling Harbour. Mr McElhone interposed, 'That was a swindle. The Minister for Lands was one of those who fleeced the Government.' The Chairman of Committees ruled that this outburst was calculated to cause disorder and called on Mr McElhone to withdraw it. As he would not withdraw it and instead walked out of the Chamber, he was named as being guilty of contempt.

Much argument ensued as to what course should be adopted in regard to Mr McElhone, whom J. P. Abbott described as 'the father, the grandfather, and the progenitor of disorder in the House'. Finally it was agreed that Mr McElhone 'be committed by the warrant of the Speaker to the custody of the Sergeant-at-Arms attending this House,

<sup>17</sup> *SMH* 27 April 1888.

<sup>18</sup> *SMH* 31 May 1888.

and by the said Sergeant-at-Arms kept in safe custody during the pleasure of the House<sup>19</sup>. The following day Mr McElhone was admitted to the Bar of the House to make an apology. He grudgingly did so but challenged the power of Parliament to arrest him outside the House and concluded, 'If the Sergeant-at-Arms had come to take me out of my house last night something more would have come of it. I would like to see the officer who would have entered my dwelling-house, for if he had he would not have left it alive. I am sorry that I refused to withdraw the words and apologise, and I have no doubt the statement I made was true; but being true it was unparliamentary to make the statement, and it was due to the members of the House to make this apology.' He then left the Chamber, whereupon Mr Abbott moved that he be discharged from custody and said that, although he did not think the House would endorse it as an apology, yet 'for a man of the Hon Member's temperament he had done as much as could reasonably be expected'. Some, however, considered that Mr McElhone had shown his contempt by adding a deeper insult and the motion of Mr Abbott was futile<sup>20</sup>. Fear was expressed that, if the apology were accepted, the House would become the laughing-stock of the press and public and that Mr McElhone had done great injury to the parliamentary institutions of the country.

During the continuance of the debate on Post Office Street it was disclosed that W. H. Jennings was the agent for a powerful Melbourne syndicate which was interested in building on the land occupied by Thompson and Giles. Mr Dibbs said, 'There is a syndicate, and there is a lot of Calico Jemmy friends of the Premier in it. The Syndicate was to bag £250,000 at the expense of the Colony.' Sir Henry Parkes denied that any syndicate had been in communication with the Government and claimed that the Government had dealt solely with W. H. Jennings as the selected agent of all parties concerned<sup>21</sup>.

When the matter next came before the House, Sir Henry said the Government was not disposed to proceed with the debate until it had satisfactory information regarding the syndicate<sup>22</sup> and, on the following day, said, 'All I can say is, I wish I had seen the last of it. As soon as we are satisfied with regard to the matter, we will go on dealing with it.'<sup>23</sup>

In February 1888 Thompson and Giles had been trying to arrange with a wealthy Melbourne, and perhaps partly Sydney, syndicate to erect buildings on Denison Chambers site to the value of £25,000 or

<sup>19</sup> *SMH* 31 May 1888.

<sup>20</sup> *SMH* 1 June 1888.

<sup>21</sup> *SMH* 1 June 1888.

<sup>22</sup> *SMH* 7 June 1888; 8 June 1888.

<sup>23</sup> *SMH* 8 June 1888.

£30,000 and W. H. Jennings was acting as a go-between in relation to Thompson and Giles and the Government<sup>24</sup>. This arrangement was apparently concluded because, on 2 March 1888, Thompson and Giles entered into an agreement with Jennings to assign their leases from Perkins and Holt on the basis that the street was to be seventy feet wide. Jennings agreed to build on Perkins' land a five-storey building and another building on Holt's land. Compensation for resumption from the Government for the leases was to go to Jennings but there was a right to cancel the agreement if Thompson and Giles could not obtain the leases or if the Government made the proposed Post Office Street wider than seventy feet<sup>25</sup>.

In July 1888 a young architect prepared plans (on the basis that Post Office Street was to be seventy feet wide) for a central arcade, to run north from the centre of Post Office Street to Hunter Street, and for three other arcades, running from Pitt Street to George Street to cross the central arcade. The plans are still in existence<sup>26</sup> and the architect later became well-known as Sir John Sulman.

The Post Office Street matter was not further dealt with during that session and, on 4 September 1888, Samuel Cook (co-attorney for Thomas Holt) wrote a letter to Holt in England about a conversation 'our mutual friend the banker' (probably Mr Neill) had had with the Premier.

Sir Henry Parkes said that he had no intention of proceeding with the matter next session, and further that the Post-Office-street was not likely to engage the attention of the Government again in any way; that the conduct of T. and G. was so bad that he could not believe them if they said they were willing to abide by their agreement with Jennings; that they had acted in a childish manner, and were not worthy of further notice. Mr N. said that the Premier spoke with so much decision and seemed so angry that it seemed useless to pursue the subject further. I asked him if he thought the Premier would be inclined to deal with the proposed new street in any other way? He said, No: he was quite decided to have nothing more to do with it.

A postscript to the letter added:

The enclosed extract from today's *Herald*, 'alleged attempt to bribe the premier', will probably account in some degree for the angry mood of Sir H.P. when our friend called on him. It is supposed to be a discreditable 'put up' job as the police would describe it. There have

<sup>24</sup> Draft letter S. Cook to T. Holt, 8 February 1888 (H.P.).

<sup>25</sup> Copy Agreement Thompson and Giles with W. H. Jennings, 2 March 1888 (H.P.), now (ML).

<sup>26</sup> Plans (H.P.), now (ML).

been several attempts made recently to injure the Premier's private character as well as his political reputation<sup>27</sup>.

Sir Henry Parkes' financial position was generally regarded as inadequate for his obligations and, as a result, he and his family were forced to accept financial assistance from friends, including Holt. Sometimes this assistance was seized upon as being for some sinister purpose but this appears unlikely as Sir Henry preserved correspondence relating to it<sup>28</sup>. A draft letter from Samuel Cook to Holt refers to one such gift from Holt to Lady Parkes who was then ailing<sup>29</sup>.

Thomas Holt was never to receive Samuel Cook's letter of 4 September 1888. He died in England on 5 September 1888.

Meantime the passageway in front of the G.P.O. remained a disgrace to the city and posters erected on the buildings were subjected to disgusting mutilation. In the *Echo* of 8 September 1888, attention was drawn to conditions in an article which complained, 'It is hard that people's feelings of common decency should be outraged by sights such as the one which for days past has been only too prominently visible in the busy passage alongside the G.P.O.' By May 1889 the unsightly Railway Office had been pulled down, the hoardings, fruit and coffee stalls had disappeared and a clear right-of-way of fifty feet had been made right through from George Street to Pitt Street. In addition a galvanised iron wall was made on the north boundary with a grass plot three or four feet wide by the side of the wall<sup>30</sup>.

In June 1889, nine months after Holt's death (Mr Perkins having also died), Postmaster-General O'Connor, introduced a Bill to resume land for a street ninety-five or one hundred feet wide in front of the G.P.O. and, in addition, to resume further land north of that so as to give frontages to Post Office Street for building purposes. By disposing of the further land the Government expected to defray the cost of Post Office Street and of the resumption. At this time it was expected that the new street would be named O'Connor Street<sup>31</sup>.

The objection in principle to the resumption of land beyond that required for the street, which Thomas Holt had fought so hard to maintain, was carried on by two of his sons who resided in NSW. In a petition<sup>32</sup> to the House, F. S. E. and A. W. Holt objected to the resumption of land not actually required for the formation of the street, which was being resumed for the purpose of trafficking to help defray the

<sup>27</sup> Copy of letter (H.P.), now (ML).

<sup>28</sup> Parkes' Correspondence (M.L.).

<sup>29</sup> Draft Letter, 8 February 1888 (H.P.).

<sup>30</sup> *The Daily Telegraph*, 11 May 1889.

<sup>31</sup> *SMH* 28 June 1889.

<sup>32</sup> Petition 2 July 1889 (H.P.), now (ML).

cost of the improvement scheme. They claimed that the principle involved in the Bill was vicious

- 1 as legalising an unnecessary invasion of the rights of private property,
- 2 as subjecting them to an interference and to disabilities to which other subjects were not exposed and
- 3 as involving a dangerous principle in further Acts under which the Government could become the largest holders of city property and traffic therein for all time.

The petitioners also asked to be heard by counsel.

When, at the outset, the request to be heard by counsel was not acceded to by the House, some members cried 'Shame!' It was claimed to be the first occasion Parliament had refused to hear counsel<sup>33</sup>. Messrs O'Connor and J. P. Abbott appealed to the emotions of members by trenchantly criticising the owners as selfish, greedy and stubbornly resistant to the improvement of the city, insolent in the ordinary transactions of life and so deserving no consideration at the hands of the House<sup>34</sup>. The speeches evoked letters from 'Semper Aequitas' (probably Samuel Cook), referring to official documents and the suppression of another document, which demonstrated that many statements of the P.M.G. and Mr Abbott were incorrect and misleading and that the owners had in fact co-operated to meet the Government (which he likened to Ahab who coveted the Jezreelite Naboth's land)<sup>35</sup>.

Some members deplored that the sacred rights of the individual should be oppressed by a majority and considered that the Government was going beyond its legal rights. One member, however, hailed the Bill with gratification as the first time in the history of legislation that the Government had deliberately asserted the principle that the unearned increment in land should be the property of the State and not of the individual<sup>36</sup>.

On the third reading of the Bill the House reversed its decision and heard counsel at the Bar of the House. In a lengthy address, Mr Pilcher, QC, relied on the rule stated in Stephen's Commentaries that, although the interests of the citizen must give way to the public welfare, privilege should never be further invaded than the necessity of the public interest demands. He contended that no objection had ever been raised to the Government resuming sufficient land to make the street, the objection was that it was outside the rule for the Government to resume land for the purposes of selling it in order to pay for the cost of making the street.

<sup>33</sup> Letter in *SMH* 16 July 1889.

<sup>34</sup> *SMH* 28 June and 11 July 1889.

<sup>35</sup> *SMH* 3, 13 and 16 July 1889.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid*, 11 July 1889.

Mr O'Connor replied that Mr Pilcher had given him 'nothing to answer (laughter) and that he believed from the way Mr Pilcher handled this matter that he never had a worse case, and that was saying a good deal (great laughter)'. He claimed that, as the owners were to receive the marketable value of their land, they had no grievance.

The Bill was then passed and forwarded to the Legislative Council<sup>37</sup>, where Mr Pilcher from the foot of the table within the Bar submitted that it was not a safe principle to lay down to enable a Government to resume land adjoining a proposed public work so as to recoup itself the cost of such public work and make a profit; such a principle had never been approved by the English Parliament or sanctioned by any English judge<sup>38</sup>.

In the debate which followed, some members contended that the Bill amounted to filching property, that no man's property would be safe, that no Government should become a land jobber and that it would open to wrong-doing a door that would not easily be closed. But Sir William Manning, Sir Alfred Stephen and Julian Salomons swayed the Council by asserting

- 1 that the Government, by opening the street, would create a frontage and give to the property a greater value than it otherwise would have and that the proprietors should not derive all the benefit from the creation of the new street
- 2 that the proposal in the Bill was not new, but a well-established practice sanctioned by the Supreme Court of England,
- 3 that the object was not to make money but to improve, beautify and adorn that portion of the city and
- 4 that owners had no right to the increased value created by the Act of the State<sup>39</sup>.

After the third reading the Bill was returned to the Legislative Assembly with small amendments, which were accepted<sup>40</sup>. The solicitor to the petitioners prepared another petition<sup>41</sup> to the Governor against the allowance of the Bill but this did not succeed and the Bill was assented to on 27 September 1889, and became the General Post Office (Approaches Improvement) Act 1889.

The question of petitioning the Queen against the allowance of the Act was then referred to the English trustees of the will of Thomas Holt through one of their number, (J. E. C. Munro, an English barrister)<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>37</sup> *SMH* 7 August 1889.

<sup>38</sup> *SMH* 18 September 1889.

<sup>39</sup> *SMH* 19 September 1889.

<sup>40</sup> *SMH* 20 & 25 September 1889.

<sup>41</sup> Letter L. F. Dixon to F. S. E. Holt, 24 September 1889 (H.P.), now (ML).

<sup>42</sup> Letter L. F. Dixon to S. Cook, 2 October 1889 (H.P.), now (ML).

Mr Munro wrote that the only course open to them on that side would be to petition the Crown and they were advised that, in all probability, the Crown would decline to exercise its veto on the ground that, if the Bill is within the powers of the New South Wales Legislature, it ought not to interfere in a local matter and if it is not within the powers of such Legislature, the question ought to be raised first in the Courts of New South Wales, from which an appeal would lie to the Privy Council<sup>43</sup>. So no further action was taken by Holt's trustees.

In November 1890 the resumed land was rapidly being cleared to provide a street one hundred feet wide, with a view to selling or leasing the rest<sup>44</sup>. Meantime, on 2 October a fire had destroyed many buildings from Moore Street to Hosking Place along Castlereagh Street and part of Pitt Street. This paved the way for widening Moore Street to the same breadth as the street opposite the post office, as far as Castlereagh Street and, after considerable pressure was brought to bear on the Government, it passed an Act in 1891 to enable the City Council to resume properties and sell new frontages<sup>45</sup>.

It was then considered necessary, for the convenience of the public including purchasers or lessees of the resumed land between George and Pitt Streets, to extend the lane connecting Chisholm Lane and Angel Place so that a public thoroughfare between Pitt and George Streets (to be designated 'Martin Lane') should be available for public use. An Act for the purpose, known as the General Post Office (Approaches Improvement) Act Amendment Act, 1892, was assented to on 6 February 1892.

On 15 February 1892, the whole of the resumed land not required for Post Office Street (later called Martin Place), together with the land between the resumed properties of Perkins and Holt through which the Tank Stream ran, was put up for auction sale in eleven lots<sup>46</sup>. Lot 1 was at the George Street corner with a frontage of forty feet to Martin Place and a depth of approximately seventy-eight feet alongside George Street. Lot 11 was at the Pitt Street corner, also with a frontage of forty feet to Martin Place and a depth of approximately seventy-two feet alongside Pitt Street. The remaining lots had frontages of approximately thirty feet to Martin Place. Lots 1 to 9 had Martin Lane and lots 10 and 11 Bells Chambers as their northern boundaries.

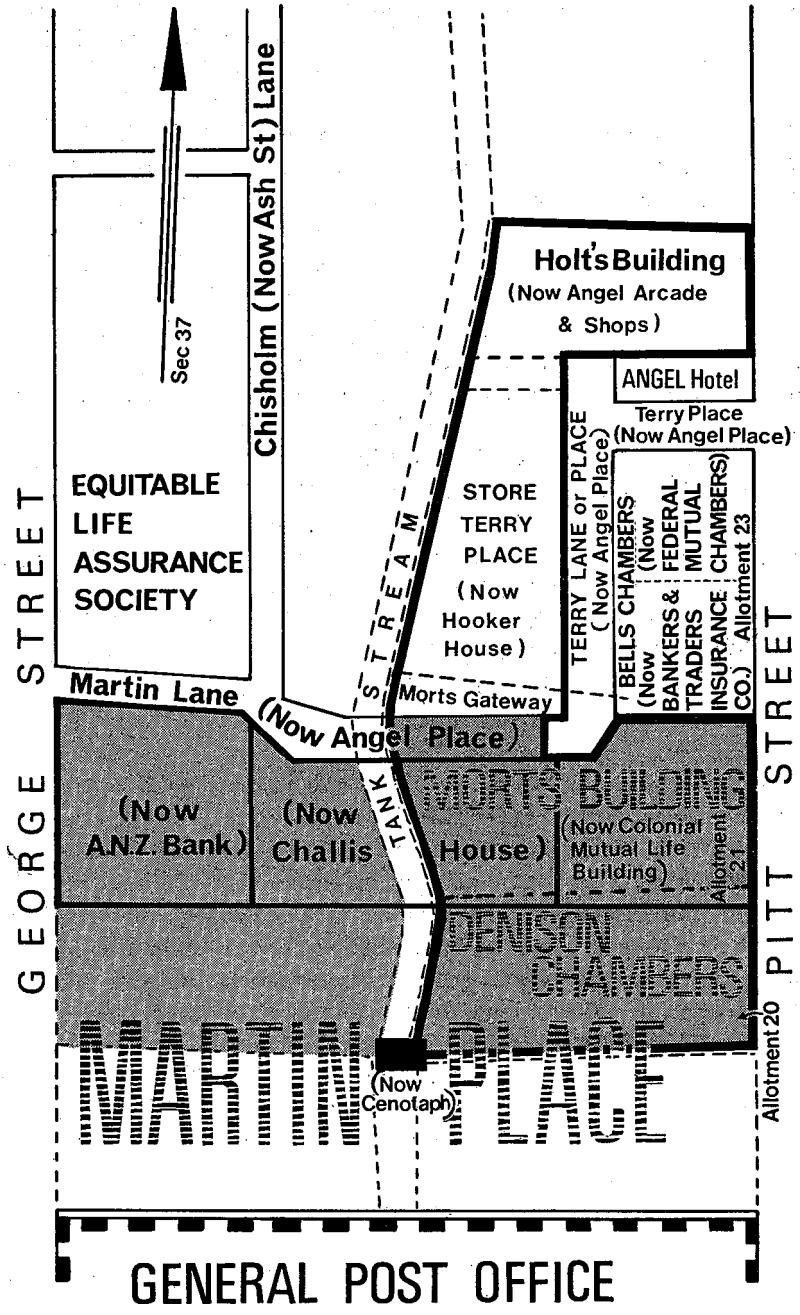
In the auction plan an ornamental pavement forty-eight feet wide was shown directly in front of the G.P.O. with a footpath on the northern side fourteen feet five inches wide, the carriageway being only thirty-seven

<sup>43</sup> Letter J. E. C. Munro to F. S. E. Holt, 10 December 1889 (H.P.), now (ML).

<sup>44</sup> *SMH* 8 November 1890.

<sup>45</sup> *RAHS. Jo.* Vol. XIII, p. 19.

<sup>46</sup> *SMH* 16 February 1892.



GEORGE STREET

PITT STREET

Chisholm (Now Ash St) Lane

EQUITABLE  
LIFE  
ASSURANCE  
SOCIETY

Holt's Building  
(Now Angel Arcade  
& Shops)

ANGEL Hotel

Terry Place  
(Now Angel Place)

STORE  
TERRY  
PLACE  
(Now  
Hooker  
House)

TERRY LANE or PLACE  
(Now Angel Place)

BELLS CHAMBERS  
(Now  
BANKERS & FEDERAL  
TRADERS MUTUAL  
INSURANCE CHAMBERS)  
CO.) Allotment 23

Martin Lane

Morts Gateway

(Now Angel Place)

(Now  
ANZ. Bank)

(Now  
Challis  
House)

Now Colonial  
Mutual Life  
Building)  
Allotment  
21

(Now  
Cenotaph)

Allotment 20

GENERAL POST OFFICE

Sec 37

S T R E A M



feet seven inches wide. These measurements, however, were altered and the footpath directly in front of the G.P.O. became twenty-two feet, that on the northern side eighteen feet and the carriageway sixty feet.

Only three lots were sold, lot 9 at £1000 per foot, lot 10 at £1,200 per foot and lot 11 at £1,500 per foot, the total purchase money being £126,000. These lots were bought on behalf of the Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York: upon lot 1 fronting Martin Place and George Street there was a reserve of £1,749 per foot, the highest bid being £1,700 and on lot 8, fronting Martin Place there was a reserve of £999, the highest offer being £975. The remaining lots were passed in without any bidding.

The Hon W. J. Lyne, Minister for Public Works, said that he was very well satisfied at the prices the three allotments brought and that, unless the Government received an exceptionally good offer for the remaining allotments, it would not sell for some time to come<sup>47</sup>.

The financial depression followed and it was not until July 1900 that the next sale took place, when lots 1, 2, 3 and 4 (the four blocks on the George Street end) were purchased by the Bank of Australasia for £91,034<sup>48</sup>, much lower than the reserve fixed eight years before.

There was then, and still is, a subway from the G.P.O. to Martin Lane under portion of that land and, as the Entrance was irregular and inconvenient for building purposes, the Bank and the Government each agreed to exchange a small portion of land abutting Martin Lane and an Act of Parliament was passed to validate the transaction<sup>49</sup>.

In 1903 the Bank of Australasia erected the building which now stands, at a cost of £122,626. In September 1951, the Union Bank of Australia Ltd and the Bank of Australasia merged and became the Australia and New Zealand Bank Ltd which now occupies the building.

The remaining four blocks (lots 5, 6, 7 and 8) were not sold until January 1906, when they were auctioned by order of the Hon C. A. Lee, Minister for Public Works. In the conditions of sale it was noted that the Tank Stream ran through the property in a covered brick sewer about fifteen feet below the top of the kerb of the footpath, that the Government should construct, at the expense of the purchaser, the foundations up to street level over the Tank Stream, that all old buildings on the land were to be pulled down and that a completely new building, extending over the entire frontage to Martin Place, should be erected by the purchaser. The reserve price was fixed by the Under-

<sup>47</sup> *SMH* 16 February 1892.

<sup>48</sup> Information from the Manager, ANZ Bank, Martin Place and S. J. Butlin, *Australia and New Zealand Bank*.

<sup>49</sup> General Post Office (Approaches Improvement) Act, Further Amendment Act, 1901.

### *An Energetic Colonist*

Secretary at £500 per foot and the University of Sydney, through its Registrar, H. E. Barff, agreed to purchase all four lots at that price, totalling approximately £67,000<sup>50</sup>.

On those four lots Challis House was erected and still stands, named after John Henry Challis who, in 1880, bequeathed property to the value of £276,000 to be applied to the general purposes of Sydney University. The income from investments of this fund maintains several Challis Chairs in various subjects at the University<sup>51</sup>.

From the sale of the resumed land the Government thus realised less than £284,000 and had to pay Holt's Trustees £130,000 compensation for the actual value of land resumed in 1892. It settled Sir William Ogg's claim for £200,000 by a payment of £108,000<sup>52</sup> and offered Thompson and Giles £40,000 in settlement of their claim for £130,000<sup>53</sup>. It also had to compensate Perkins' estate and Palings. The nett result was that, despite the sanguine predictions voiced in Parliament, no unearned increment became available but Martin Place was formed.

#### 14 *Sutherland*

At an auction sale conducted on instructions from a mortgagee, in August 1861, Holt purchased about 4,600 acres of freehold land, mainly at Sutherland and a small portion at Holsworthy. Five years earlier he and another had sold 1500 acres of the same land as mortgagees. Events which led up to the 1861 auction sale are not without interest.

From 1828, John Connell, a free settler who became a wealthy merchant in Sydney, began to acquire land at Sutherland and Holsworthy and, at the time of his death in 1849, owned over 3,000 acres there.

His daughter Margaret had married Captain Thomas Laycock, formerly of the NSW Corps and involved in the Rum Rebellion. They had two sons, John Connell Laycock and Elias Pearson Laycock. Captain Laycock and Margaret died when their two sons were small children. John Connell became their guardian, educated them and later set them up at 'Kurnell', where they were supposed to look after cattle and horses on his Sutherland property. This they failed to do properly, the stock became wild and almost valueless and, in the 1840s, George Simpson purchased them for £30. Many men were employed in catching

<sup>50</sup> University of Sydney, Papers re Challis House (M.L.).

<sup>51</sup> Calendar of the University of Sydney (1952) pp. 312 & 478.

<sup>52</sup> Letter S. Cook to F. S. E. Holt, 17 April 1891, Copy letter H. Gorman to Under-Secretary, Public Works Department, 17 October 1892 (H.P.), now (ML).

<sup>53</sup> Letter S. Cook to Managing Trustee Thos Holt's Estate, 22 April 1891 (H.P.), now (ML).

them; the cattle were killed for beef and the horses, after being tamed, were driven to the Horse Rock (now Sylvania) and swum across to Tom Ugly's Point<sup>1</sup>.

By his will John Connell left the whole of his estate, which included land in addition to the Sutherland and Holsworthy land, to his two grandsons, J. C. and E. P. Laycock, as tenants in common<sup>2</sup>. In 1851 J. C. and E. P. Laycock agreed upon a division of all John Connell's estate, as a result of which J. C. Laycock acquired about 1600 acres of the Sutherland property, mainly on the Kurnell Peninsula and adjoining Cronulla Beach, while E. P. Laycock acquired over 1500 acres near Woolooware and Gwawley Bays, Towra Point and Woronora<sup>3</sup>.

In 1852 E. P. Laycock sold his 1500 acres to Archibald Allardice for £1,323<sup>4</sup>. The following year, Allardice was granted a further sixty-two acres on Taren Point<sup>5</sup> and in 1854 mortgaged the Sutherland and other property to Holt and M. E. Murnin to secure an advance of £3,500<sup>6</sup>. He later mortgaged these and other properties to other mortgagees so heavily<sup>7</sup> that he became financially embarrassed and in 1856 insolvent. Thereupon Holt and Murnin, in exercise of their power of sale, sold approximately 1600 acres of the Sutherland and Holsworthy land to J. C. Laycock for £2,000<sup>8</sup> and J. C. Laycock became the largest private owner of land at Sutherland.

Up to that time Sutherland had not attracted much public interest and the few other private owners held less than six hundred acres. In 1856 the Government held the first auction sale of land in the Sutherland district<sup>9</sup> but reserved 1500 acres on the east coast from Cape Solander to Boat Harbour (Endeavour Heights) for fortifications and also other areas, including the Cronulla Peninsula. Little interest was evinced at the auction sale but thereafter J. C. Laycock acquired over seven hundred acres<sup>10</sup>. By 1858 he owned 4,500 acres and had settled at Kurnell.

Mr Laycock, when anxious to get to town, would not take the long road round about by George's River, but, getting into his boat, tied the horse astern, and forced that good brute to swim while he pulled

<sup>1</sup> E. E. Lavington letter 17 July 1906; Notes of R. Longfield 20 March 1914 (In possession of Captain Cook's Landing Place Trust); Bonwick Transcript (ML): W. C. Wentworth's Legal letter book (ML); F. Myers, *Botany Past and Present* (ML).

<sup>2</sup> Probate of John Connell's will. Series I, No. 2026.

<sup>3</sup> Deed of Partition, 29 March 1851, No. 520, Book 20.

<sup>4</sup> Conveyance, 18 October 1852, No. 256 Book 24.

<sup>5</sup> Grant, 22 July 1853, Serial No. 90.

<sup>6</sup> Mortgage 9 June 1854, 717 Book 32.

<sup>7</sup> Mortgages No. 646, Book 33, No. 838, Book 34, No. 73, Book 44.

<sup>8</sup> Conveyance 18 March 1856, No. 488 Book 44.

<sup>9</sup> *SMH* 17 January 1856, 26 June 1856.

<sup>10</sup> Grants Index 1856-1857, Registrar General's Department.

right over to La Perouse; there he would ride round by Long Bay and across the swamps to Randwick, and make back by the same route on his return<sup>11</sup>.

In 1858, J. C. Laycock mortgaged his 4,500-odd acres to W. G. Moore to secure an advance of £2,000<sup>12</sup>, and later purchased another 220 acres from the Crown. He also became the elected representative of the Central Cumberland district in the Legislative Assembly. The year 1860, however, proved a disastrous year for him after he had purchased from J. T. Neale, for £30,000, land in Castlereagh and King Street, Sydney, upon which the Prince of Wales Theatre and other buildings stood (part of the site where the Theatre Royal now stands). The Prince of Wales Theatre had only been completed in 1855 and was the largest theatre in Australia, with seating capacity for 3,000 and a stage nearly one hundred feet in depth<sup>13</sup>.

Laycock gave a series of mortgages back to Neale over this land together with his land at Sutherland, Holsworthy, as well as other land in the city of Sydney and in Queensland and covenanted to insure the buildings in Castlereagh and King Streets for a total of at least £17,000<sup>14</sup>.

In October 1860, six months after his purchase of the theatre, a disastrous fire broke out in an adjoining bakery which practically destroyed Laycock's theatre and adjoining buildings and resulted in the death of two persons and serious injury to others. The theatre and adjoining buildings were insufficiently insured, in breach of Laycock's covenant to insure and as income from the property ceased, he was unable to meet his monetary commitments<sup>15</sup>.

Neale was overseas at the time of the fire but, the following year, he sold substantially all the mortgaged properties by auction to meet the mortgage debt and expenses. The theatre and adjoining sites, which had been purchased for £30,000, realised only £12,700<sup>16</sup>, but the rest of the mortgaged property was sold at reasonable prices and the proceeds, together with £8,000 insurance, satisfied the mortgage debts and expenses<sup>17</sup>.

Before the Sutherland property was auctioned, Laycock sought to interest Holt as a purchaser, he and Holt then being fellow members of the Legislative Assembly. Laycock and his young son, Elias Connell Laycock (later champion sculler of England and Australia) personally

<sup>11</sup> Francis Myers, *Botany Past and Present*, p. 16 (M.L.).

<sup>12</sup> Mortgage, 18 August 1858, No. 795 Book 56.

<sup>13</sup> *SMH* 15 March 1855.

<sup>14</sup> Registry of Deeds, Nos. 577 to 584, Book 66; 10 *RAHS. Jo.* 277.

<sup>15</sup> *SMH* 4 October 1860.

<sup>16</sup> Conveyances Nos. 716, 717 and 769, Book 73.

<sup>17</sup> Conveyances No. 843, Book 73, Nos. 666 & 318, Book 74, No. 20, Book 88.

conducted Holt over the Sutherland property<sup>18</sup>. Holt's inspection doubtless impressed him and, when the public auction sale took place, his bid of £3,275 for approximately 4,600 acres at Sutherland and Holsworthy was the highest. He succeeded Laycock as the largest landholder in the district<sup>19</sup>, and subsequently purchased a further forty acres from Laycock which were not submitted at the auction sale.

The statements in 10 *R.A.H.S. Jo.* p. 277, which have frequently been repeated, that 'J. C. Laycock owned twelve thousand acres at Kurnell . . . the whole of the 12,000 acres were sold to the late Hon Thomas Holt for £3,000 (five shillings per acre)' are incorrect. The auction sale, on 14 August 1861, at which Holt was the highest bidder for approximately 4,600 acres, was advertised by Mort & Co in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 10 August 1861. (See illustration on facing page.)

Three of these properties warrant further description.

### *The 'Birnie Estate'*

This occupied practically the whole of the Kurnell Peninsula (excluding the Government Reserve at Endeavour Heights) and included the landing place of Lieutenant James Cook on 29 April 1770 (civil time), the burial place of Forby Sutherland a few days later, and the area where Major Ross with his party of convicts cleared the first land on the east coast of Australia while Governor Phillip was exploring the possibility of Port Jackson being a more suitable site for settlement, in January 1788<sup>20</sup>.

The Birnie Estate was named after Captain James Birnie who was granted seven hundred acres (plus one hundred and sixty acres of salt-water marshes) by Governor Macquarie in 1815, the area being known as 'Half a Farm'<sup>21</sup>. Captain Birnie was a whaling skipper who believed that whales visited Botany Bay at certain seasons and intended to form a whaling station there. To enable his boats to reach land he cut a channel in the rocks at Kurnell (still visible below the Solander Monument) and built a small cottage on the foreshore<sup>22</sup>. When he found that whales did not frequent Botany Bay, he sold his grant (then called 'Alpha Farm') in 1828 to John Connell, for £500, and Connell erected a cottage there the same year<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> 14 *R.A.H.S. Jo.* 295.

<sup>19</sup> Conveyance No. 666, Book 74.

<sup>20</sup> *Historical Records of New South Wales* vol. I, pt. II, pp. 121, 169; vol. 2, p. 663; Wells, *A Geographical Dictionary or Gazetteer of the Australian Colonies* (1848) p. 382 (ML).

<sup>21</sup> Grant 10 June 1815, Old Serial No. 8, p. 83.

<sup>22</sup> 10 *RAHS. Jo.* 278: Notes of R. Longfield, 20 March 1914 (in possession of Captain Cook's Landing Place Trust).

<sup>23</sup> Registry of Deeds B/372, 373; 11 *RAHS. Jo.* 37.

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TERMS—at sale.

**MORT and CO.** have been instructed by **THE MORTGAGEE**, to sell by public auc- tion, at the Rooms, Pitt-street, at 11 o'clock, on **WED- NESDAY, 14th August**, The following valuable properties, in the county of Cam- berland.

1. **THE BIRNIE ESTATE**, of 1080 ACRES, at Botany Bay, to which it has a very large frontage, and extends back to the sea coast, being bounded on the east by the Government reserve. There is a large extent of good swamp land upon the property, and also a very pretty homestead fronting the bay, consisting of a weatherboard verandah cottage, con- taining hall and six rooms; a stone house of rooms adjoining, with detached kitchen, laundry, stable, and other out-buildings, paddock, &c.
2. This is a very choice property, abounding in beauti- ful views, and, from its position, commands good fishing and shooting. It is well worthy the attention of any one seeking a nice country residence in the metropolitan county.
- 2.—**FARM** of 770 ACRES, adjoining the Birnie Estate, to which it would make a desirable addition. There is a very large frontage to Quibray and Weoney Bays, and some very **RICH CABBAGE-TREE AND BRUSH LAND**.
- 3.—A **FARM** of 73 ACRES, close to lot 2, consisting chiefly of lightly timbered land.
- 4.—**CONNELL'S 520 ACRES**, at the head of Gunna- malla Bay, Port Hacking, and extending over nearly to Woolowarre Bay. Some very good land on this farm, and also some very valuable timber, consisting of oak, ironbark, and mahogany.
- 5.—100 acre **FARM**, on Woolowarre Bay, one of Mr. Connell's earliest selections. Large water frontage, good land, and very valuable timber upon it.
- 6.—**THREE FARMS** south of lot 5, abounding in valuable timber.
- 7.—The **OLD FARM** of 1000 acres, originally a grant to Gregory Blaxland, Esq. Upon it is a homestead, consisting of cottage, barn, stockyard, and three large paddocks cleared, and part of which have been under cultivation. There is a considerable extent of fencing on this property. It was formerly worked in connection with the Castle Connell prop- erty. It consists chiefly of good forest land, abound- ing in valuable timber for splitting and sawing, chiefly woolly-but, gum, ironbark, and forest oak.
- 8.—**FARM** OF 166 ACRES, adjoining the Old Farm, and bounded on the opposite side by a fresh-water creek, running into Ewoy Bay.
- 9.—**MITCHELL'S 50-ACRE FARM**, at Port Hack- ing—a very beautiful spot.
- 10.—**TOULA POINT FARM**, of 98 acres—a very early selection by Mr. Connell, which formerly formed portion of his horse-run. The views from almost every part of the farm are very beautiful. It has a large frontage to Botany Bay.
- 11.—**COMMON'S POINT FARM**, of 62 acres. One of the most beautiful spots in the district, nearly sur- rounded by water, and a large portion of good land upon it.
- 12.—Five Farms, adjoining Common's Point, and in connection with it would form a very pretty home- stead. They contain 212 acres 3 roods 30 perches.
- 13.—**CASTLE CONNELL ESTATE**. It consists of 180 acres, on which is some of the best land in the district. There is a comfortable cottage residence of six rooms, built of brick and stone and shingled roof, with detached out-offices. Also, an orchard of about eight acres.
- 14.—Five Farms, adjoining the Castle Connell estate, with large water frontage, and consisting principally of the same description of land, fit for wheat or hay crops, orchards, &c. Some valuable heavy timber upon these farms.
- 15.—Two Farms of fifty acres each, on the right bank of the Warranora River. Some rich alluvial land on them.
16. **FARM** OF 50 ACRES, on the left bank of the Warranora River, where the track from the country to the west crosses that river on the way to George's River Punt. Valuable for its position.

The extent which this advertisement has reached, leaves no room for any lengthened comments. Mort and Co., therefore, content themselves with announcing that the properties **ARE POSITIVELY TO BE SOLD**, and that they are well worthy the attention of capitalists who may be disposed to purchase with an eye to the future, or those who may be on the look out for homesteads in the metropolitan county. It is well-known that they comprise some of the very best lands in the district; inspection is therefore invited.

The fullest information may be obtained at the Rooms, Pitt-street.

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The remaining 380 acres in 'Birnie Estate' never belonged to Birnie but a promise of a grant of eighty acres to T. Lawrence was purchased in 1829 by John Connell for £40 in Spanish dollars<sup>24</sup>. John Connell received a grant direct from the Crown for the balance of three hundred acres known as 'Quibray' in 1835<sup>25</sup>.

The two Norfolk Island Pines (which are still alive) were planted in 1845 in front of Birnie's cottage. They were obtained by a Mr Shuttleworth, a Sydney solicitor who visited Kurnell to shoot quail, from a sailing-ship captain and given to E. P. Laycock who took them in candle boxes to Kurnell<sup>26</sup>. When E. P. Laycock was married in 1844, the newlyweds sailed across Botany Bay to Kurnell in a small open sailing boat. The blacks were then very numerous, though they gave little trouble, but the black snakes were very plentiful and troublesome<sup>27</sup>.

Mr Justice, superintendent for J. C. Laycock during the 1850s and later for Holt, lived in the cottage at Kurnell and ploughed the ground for sowing corn behind where the main flagstaff now stands<sup>28</sup>.

#### *The Old Farm of One Thousand Acres*

The block of one thousand acres was originally promised to Gregory Blaxland for his part in crossing the Blue Mountains, but the promise was sold by Blaxland to John Connell who received the grant in 1835<sup>29</sup>.

#### *'Castle Connell' Estate of 180 Acres*

The 180-acre block was granted to John Connell in 1833<sup>30</sup>, and was called 'Castle Connell'. The timber for the houses erected on the two blocks was cut at saw pits at the 'Duck Pond' or 'Jimmy's Brush', and the 'Old Farm' was cleared and cultivated by Connell with the help of Government men. In the 1840s the farm and buildings were neglected and the buildings fell into ruin<sup>31</sup>, but the buildings appear to have been restored at the time of the advertisement in 1861.

After the auction sale of his Sutherland and Holsworthy properties, J. C. Laycock had eighty head of cattle hauled by rope from the fore-

<sup>24</sup> Grants Register No. 22, p. 318, No. 29, p. 50, and No. 180, Book C and Grants 33/107 and 41/34.

<sup>25</sup> Grants Register No. 41, p. 22.

<sup>26</sup> Interview by W. Houston with Longfield 22 January 1905 (in possession of the Captain Cook's Landing Place Trust). 10 *RAHS. Jo.* 276.

<sup>27</sup> Letter of E. E. Lavington, 17 July 1906 (in possession of the Captain Cook's Landing Place Trust).

<sup>28</sup> Interview by W. Houston with Justice 24 April 1905 (in possession of Captain Cook's Landing Place Trust).

<sup>29</sup> Grant No. 33/182.

<sup>30</sup> Grant No. 33/68.

<sup>31</sup> Notes of R. Longfield, 14 October 1913 (*supra*); Francis Myers, *Botany: Past and Present* (1885) (ML).

shores of Kurnell to the ship's side, then hoisted to the deck and transported to his station property at Glenreagh, the site of the present township of that name near the Clarence River<sup>32</sup>. Laycock subsequently (from 1864-66) represented the Clarence electorate in the Legislative Assembly<sup>33</sup>.

The 4,600 acres Holt purchased at the 1861 auction sale were in blocks of various sizes, largely scattered throughout the district of Sutherland. He thereupon set about consolidating his holding by securing whatever suitable land was available, much Government land still remaining unsold after the poor responses to the auction sales in 1856 and between 1861 and 1862. Holt thus increased his holding by purchasing from the Crown, at the ruling rate of £1 per acre, about 5,400 acres (Carter's Island, however, being £2 per acre). From 1863 to 1875 he purchased another 2,000 acres, mainly at £1 per acre. His purchases included Weeney Bay (327 acres) and Gwawley Bay (180 acres), believed to be the only privately-owned bays in New South Wales. In 1963 Gwawley Bay, then owned by the Smith Estate, was officially valued at £80,000<sup>34</sup>.

The only other substantial holdings in the eastern half of Sutherland were those acquired by Patrick Dolan fronting Burraneer Bay, which he farmed to support his wife, four daughters and his son, Dominick, until his death when his family inherited his holdings<sup>35</sup>. Dolan's holding rendered a block of forty acres bought by Holt from J. C. Laycock in 1861, inaccessible except by water. In 1873, Holt sold the block to Charles York<sup>36</sup>.

While Holt was in Europe in the early part of 1868, his attorney R. C. Walker, furnished a report<sup>37</sup> on the Sutherland estate which gave detailed information about the work done by Holt since his purchase and the then state of the property. In 1861, nearly all the estate was virgin land covered with scrub and timber, while the only grasses were native.

After 1861, an intensive programme was commenced, first to clear a large part of the estate, then to cultivate suitable parts and grow pasture on others. Scrubbing was carried out each year; extensive burning was employed when natural bush fires did not occur and most of the forest timber was ringbarked, leaving only some good trees for shade. One good shade tree which was left was in No. 3 Woollooware Paddock (approximately where Dolan's Road now joins Sutherland Golf Links), described as being 'a very handsome Red gum tree measuring over

<sup>32</sup> 10 RAHS. Jo. 277.

<sup>33</sup> *Official History of New South Wales* (1788-1883).

<sup>34</sup> *The Sun*, 6 March 1963.

<sup>35</sup> Will of Patrick Dolan who died 6 October 1871, Series III No. 5193.

<sup>36</sup> Transfer No. 9984.

<sup>37</sup> Report of R. C. Walker in January and April 1868 (H.P.).



twenty feet in circumference and capable of shading over one thousand sheep under its beautiful curly branches'.

In suitable places, imported grass seed was planted and the seed from these grasses was collected and sowed in other parts. Holt also introduced Buffalo grass into several paddocks. Lehane, who worked for Holt, told his son that Holt imported the seed and raised the first crops<sup>38</sup>. The grass was an import from South America where it is commonly known as 'St Augustine Grass', but as it has a very low germination rate — two or three per cent — it is generally propagated by runners<sup>39</sup>.

Family legend has it that the original distribution of buffalo grass seed was made by tying small bags of the seed around the necks of sheep; old employees also recalled that Holt carried runners in his pockets while riding, and he planted them in many parts, and there are references in Walker's report of 1868 to several patches of the grass in various paddocks.

By 1868 the whole estate was divided, into eleven paddocks by split-post and rail fences and subdivided, by brush fences, into over sixty smaller paddocks. On the western side of Towra Point, seventy acres had been cleared, ploughed and sown with corn in 1865 and a good corn shed built; Pelican Point was being used in the 1860s by shell gatherers who had erected 'rude huts'. The entrance to Gwawley Bay had been bridged by Holt with a pile and slab bridge four hundred yards long, between Sandy Point and Cummins (Taren) Point, and rams were being kept in a seventy-two acre paddock on the latter point.

Shell Point Paddock (where a drive-in theatre now stands) was covered with black wattle, briar, ti-tree and oak with a patch of fine timber; the Tyreel Point Paddock No 1 (now Lilli Pilli) had been scrubbed and in 1868 was first-class grazing land. At Crossing Point residents from the other side of Port Hacking swam their horses across the river to Gogerly's Point; Tyreel Point Paddock No 2 (now Willarong Point) was thickly covered with scrub and timber into which eighty heifers were put to eat the long grass. The Corn Paddock (west of Gwawley Bay and south of Sandy Point, where Belgrave Street now is) was a barren ti-tree swamp in 1861 but by 1868 had been drained, cleared and ploughed, with eight acres under corn. The Oyster Bay paddocks had been scrubbed and ring-barked and, in 1868, had 1900 sheep running on good feed there; the Woolshed Paddock (approximately where Miranda now is) adjoined the Oyster Bay paddocks and in it was a good bark wool-shed on the hill. The Gynea Ground (where Gynea now

<sup>38</sup> Letter from Frank Cridland to Dr W. G. Holt, 14 March 1927.

<sup>39</sup> J. H. Maiden, *Forest Flora of New South Wales*, vol. 6, pp. 142, 178; F. Turner, *Census of Grasses of New South Wales* (1876) p. 55.

is) — so-called because of the *Gyneas* or Gigantic Lilies which grew abundantly there and were used for paper manufacture — contained a good feeding paddock, with shepherd's hut. Double Bay Paddock (where Como now is) was a large paddock, with a good shepherd's hut, at the entrance to the Woronora River, where kangaroo and other native grasses afforded abundance of food and alongside the river was 'The Old Woman's Bonnet', a cave which afforded shelter to sportsmen and fishermen.

Walker reported

None of the land after leaving the Gynea ground in any of the paddocks west of Oyster Bay Paddock, is suitable for cultivation except the small portion pointed out in the outside Waranora — the whole of the ground being either too rocky, or too poor for the plough . . . The estate comprises about twelve thousand acres; upon which there is now nearly 522 head of cattle, one thousand nine hundred sheep and thirty head of horses and ponies — the estate would carry in all seasons in excellent condition, without sheep, about one thousand four hundred head of cattle, or sheep without cattle, about five thousand — but as the grass improves it would take more stock every year. It will feed more cattle in proportion than sheep in its present condition, as on account of there being so much coarse feed which cattle will eat and sheep will not look at.

In 1864 transit across the George's River from Tom Ugly's Point to Horse Rock (Sylvania) was facilitated by a public punt provided by the Government. At the inauguration ceremony Mr Dolan said that he had

purchased land from the Government on the faith of having a punt there and a public road thereto. He was glad to say the Government had redeemed their pledge as to giving the punt and he had no doubt but we should yet have a public road, too, from the Government. Nor must we omit to mention the name of Mr Holt, who, in order to carry out this enterprise, had promised to give £30 a year towards working the punt<sup>40</sup>.

About 1867 Holt erected a punt house on the Horse Rock side of George's River. This house remains and is sometimes referred to as the Holt 'gatehouse'<sup>41</sup>. In Walker's 1868 report he referred to the Punt Paddock as being used for keeping the working horses in and continued

In the paddock at the extreme north point is a punt house, built of stone, containing four rooms and two kitchens. The punt belongs to

<sup>40</sup> SMH 14 November 1864.

<sup>41</sup> *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader*, 20 April 1966 and 23 August 1967.

the Government, and works from the point mentioned to Tom Ugly's Point, a portion of which, where the punt lands, also belongs to the estate. The punt is for the convenience of travellers on the main road to Wollongong, but as there is no provision made by Government for working the punt, and not sufficient traffic for anyone to lease it — the puntman is paid from the estate 10/- per week and he gets all he can make from the traffic.

While Holt was in Europe (1866-68) he increased his knowledge of agricultural and pastoral requirements by visiting establishments in England, Germany and France. He found that Germany could supply grass seeds cheaper than other countries and, while there, purchased and consigned forty-four casks of various grass seeds to be sown on his Sutherland and Arthursleigh properties. The consignment included three to four tons of Perennial Rye, one ton of Burnet, three tons of Rib-grass, five hundredweight each of Cocksfoot and Sheep's Fescue, two hundredweight of South Meadow grass and one hundredweight each of Annual Meadow grass and Yarrow<sup>42</sup>.

After continuous clearing, burning and seeding, Holt introduced more sheep on to the estate, but the devastation caused by dingoes and footrot forced him to abandon his attempt to run them successfully. At one time, he was obliged to have thirteen thousand sheep affected with footrot destroyed and buried at Towra Point, with a covering of sea weed to assist their decomposition and to procure fertilisation of the soil. It was estimated that he spent about £40,000 on wages alone in the improvement of the estate<sup>43</sup> and in 1872 he was still clearing and burning heavily<sup>44</sup>.

In the 1870s he increased his herd of cattle by local purchases and by bringing them by sea from his Queensland properties. But they did not do well and he was forced to abandon any large-scale attempt to run cattle. In leasing his one and a half acres at Tom Ugly's Point in 1877, he provided for 'a secure stockyard for the security of cattle that may be crossing in mobs to or from Sutherland by the punt'<sup>45</sup>.

Holt then turned to exploring the fine stands of ironbark and blackbutt. The timber was loaded at Sylvania or by way of a canal, known as 'The Drain', into Woolooware Bay<sup>46</sup>.

Not long after Holt acquired the Sutherland estate he became interested in the subject of oyster culture and urged colonists to produce oysters for consumption instead of merely dredging for them and burning the shells

<sup>42</sup> *Goulburn Herald*, 20 July 1867; *SMH* 8 July 1867.

<sup>43</sup> *Australian Encyclopedia*, vol. IV, p. 524.

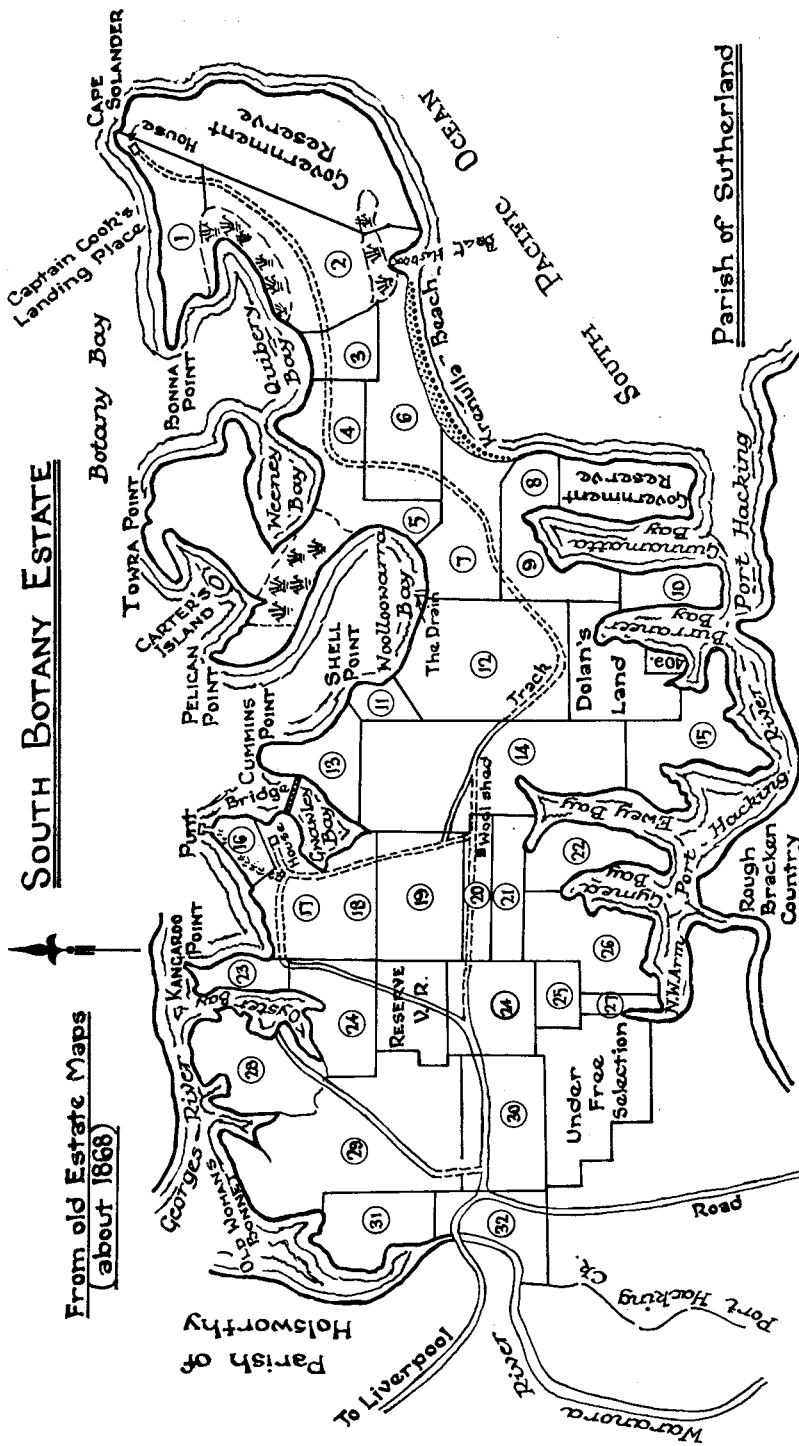
<sup>44</sup> Diary of W. H. Holt (1872) in the possession of Dr W. G. Holt.

<sup>45</sup> Lease 31 October 1877, Thomas Holt to Albert Emmerson (H.P.), now (ML).

<sup>46</sup> *SMH* 26 January 1963; *People*, 24 February 1965; *Daily Mirror*, 2 May 1960.

# SOUTH BOTANY ESTATE

From old Estate Maps  
(about 1868)



## Paddocks enclosed by rails, leg, wire, or brush fences

- |                     |                         |                       |                                      |
|---------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| ① Bonna             | ⑨ Gunnamatta Bay        | ⑰ Building            | ⑳ Dent's Creek                       |
| ② Boat Harbour      | ⑩ Burraneer             | ⑱ Gawley Bay          | ㉑ Cymca Bay (1&2)                    |
| ③ English Grass     | ⑪ Shell Point           | ⑲ Old Farm            | ㉒ North West Arm                     |
| ④ Weaney Bay Point  | ⑫ Woollogoorie (1 to 4) | ⑳ Wood Shed           | ㉓ Green Point                        |
| ⑤ Cabbage Tree Flat | ⑬ Cummins Point         | ㉑ Horse               | ㉔ Double Bay (1 to 3)                |
| ⑥ Sandy Flat        | ⑭ Ewey Bay (1 to 5)     | ㉒ Ewey Bay Point      | ㉕ Cymca Ground                       |
| ⑦ Duck Ponds (1&2)  | ⑮ Tyrael Point          | ㉓ Kangaroo Point      | ㉖ Waranora                           |
| ⑧ Reserve           | ⑯ Homestead or Punt     | ㉔ Oyster Bay (1 to 4) | ㉗ Outside Waranora<br>(£ Govt. Land) |

for lime, as had been done for many years. Botany Bay was a fine natural breeding-ground for oysters. Lieutenant James Cook, on the first day of his arrival in 1770, noted in his journal that there 'lay vast heaps of the largest oyster shells I ever saw', and, three days later, sent 'Mr Gore with a boat up to the head of the bay to dridge for oysters'.

Before leaving for Europe in 1866, Holt converted Weeney Bay into a breeding-ground for oysters by placing timber there to attract spat. He read that oyster culture had become an extensive and profitable industry in England, France and Italy and, while in Europe, sought to increase his knowledge of the subject. He had read Dr Kemmerer's accounts of his experiments with oyster culture in the Ile de Ré, in the Bay of Biscay, and made a special trip from Paris to visit the old doctor, who showed Holt his four thousand parcs and claires which, in six years, had accumulated oysters to the value of £100,000.

Walker in 1868 had reported that both Weeney and Gwawley Bay were suitable for oyster beds and, on his return later that year, Holt found that the timber which he had had placed in Weeney Bay was covered with oysterlings as 'white as snow'. He then decided to have a system of oyster claires on the eastern bank of Gwawley Bay, then part of the estate and the entrance to which had been enclosed by a bridge on piles.

The claires were, in effect, fattening pits about two feet deep, around whose margin a trench was excavated a yard or two wide and an extra foot deep, to equalize the temperature when the shallower water became too hot or too cold. A cut in the side of the claires enabled the water to be kept at a required level and the tides supplied fresh water and food in summer and purified them by allowing the surface coating of blackish mud to drain off. In autumn, when the oysters were fattening, the cuts in the sides were stopped up and the oysters then developed the greenish colour so much appreciated by the French.

Constructing the claires was a gigantic task undertaken by about two hundred excavating contractors, some of the claires being thirty feet wide, though the average width was fourteen feet. There were about three hundred claires running either parallel or at right-angles to each other round the bay and their total length was thirty miles one furlong. At an average cost of 4/2d per rod, they cost over £2,000. In addition, flood-gates and dams were constructed on the lines of the best systems which Holt had seen in France and an oyster overseer, Charles Lockhart, was appointed to superintend the venture. The claires were filled with oysterlings collected from Weeney Bay and other areas in the vicinity and the place then became the first oyster farm in the Colony.

From June 1872 to March 1873, Holt purchased for £500 nearly twenty thousand bushels of spat which was conveyed in 6,500 bags

by bullock-waggons from Cowan Creek, Pittwater and Port Hacking and tipped into Weeney Bay to develop into oysterlings for transfer to the claires. Weeney Bay, which was also part of the estate, was enclosed by a line of piles driven in close together across the entrance to keep out poachers.

The claires created much public interest and the many visitors to view them included the Governor, Sir Hercules Robinson, members of Parliament, the Chief Justice and other public men.

But the experiment did not succeed because it was found that green oysters fattened in stagnant claires, though acclaimed in France, were not as palatable nor as wholesome as those fattened by natural means. To remedy this, the flood gates and dams were done away with and the claires allowed to have the full benefit of the ebb and flow of the tide. This effected a considerable saving in the expense of management, as well as a vast improvement in the oysters for a time, but then mud silted over the oysters, smothering many, while others were unable to survive the heat in summer. Holt succeeded in raising and selling some, but not sufficient to make his outlay profitable.

In 1876 he was appointed chairman of a Royal Commission, with the Hon J. Bowie Wilson and J. S. Farnell, MLA, to enquire into the best mode of cultivating oysters, using the natural oyster beds, and what legislation was necessary to carry out these objects. The Commission took evidence from inspectors of oyster fisheries on various rivers, heard the evidence of numerous witnesses and Holt gave the benefit of his own experiences. The Commission reported that the climate of New South Wales was pre-eminently suitable for the breeding, growth and fattening of oysters which, under proper management, might be produced in the greatest perfection, greatest profusion and probably at a cheaper rate than in any other part of the world. The Commission also, with the assistance of counsel, settled a draft Bill to promote and preserve oyster cultivation in the colony<sup>47</sup>.

Holt had been paid three guineas for each sitting of the Commission by the Government but, at a later date, exception was successfully taken to this payment, on the ground that it contravened an earlier resolution of the Assembly that no individual should receive remuneration for services to the State while a member of either House<sup>48</sup>.

In 1879, Holt complained in the Legislative Council that nothing practical had been done by the Government about the Bill proposed by the Commission; it was not until the following year that oyster leases were introduced.

Although Holt's venture did not succeed as a profit-making scheme, it

<sup>47</sup> Report of Royal Commission appointed 29 September 1876 (M.L.).

<sup>48</sup> *SMH* 25 April 1877.

did provide valuable information and paved the way for the present immense oyster culture industry in Botany Bay, one of the finest natural oyster fattening grounds in the world. Although oyster culture is still faced with the hazards of extremes of temperature, natural enemies and pollution, Holt's experiences and experiments assisted to combat them and, long after his death, his descendants were still producing small quantities of edible oysters, though not on a commercial scale<sup>49</sup>.

In 1870, a movement was set on foot to commemorate the centenary of the discovery by the British of the eastern part of Australia by holding an exhibition. To house the exhibition an ungainly structure was erected, in great haste, in Prince Alfred Park and was opened by the Governor, the Earl of Belmore, in January 1872<sup>50</sup>.

With the same object of commemorating the centenary in 1870, Holt at his own expense engaged the Bush brothers, well-known stone masons, to erect an obelisk at Kurnell to perpetuate the memory of the great navigator. The sandstone for the monument was conveyed from a nearby quarry on horse-drawn slide and, before its erection, Holt examined carefully Cook's Journal and had soundings taken by his superintendent, Mr Justice, to ensure that it should be as near as possible to the actual landing place. The cost of erection was £100<sup>51</sup>.

The obelisk had two brass plates, one reading

Captain Cook landed here 28 April A.D. 1770. This monument was erected A.D. 1870 by the Hon Thomas Holt, MLC.

Victoria Regina. The Earl of Belmore, Governor.

The other plate had an extract from Cook's *Journal* of 28 April 1770. The monument was enclosed by a dwarf wall surmounted by spear-headed iron palisading. (The palisading has long since disappeared but the monument remains and is the focal point of annual celebrations commemorating the landing and also Cook's birthday<sup>52</sup>.)

Soon after its erection Holt arranged an historical pilgrimage to Kurnell, attended by a party of sixty and including the Governor and Countess of Belmore, the Chief Justice, Sir Alfred Stephen, and Lady

<sup>49</sup> Reference has also been made to the following: Memoranda showing oyster spat purchased since June 1872 and details relating to construction of claires (H.P.), now (ML).

Vol. I, *Parliamentary Debates*, 18 December 1879; *Sydney Mail*, 10 February 1872; *SMH* 30 December 1872; *SMH* 26 November 1873; *The Sun* 30 April 1938; *The Land* 8 May 1953; *People* 2 March 1960; *Daily Telegraph Supplement* 28 November 1966; T. C. Roughley, *Oyster Culture on the George's River, New South Wales* (M.L.).

<sup>50</sup> *Old Times*, vol I, No. 3.

<sup>51</sup> *The Illustrated London News*, 15 March 1888; Mr Houston's notes of an interview with Mr Justice, 24 April 1905, in the possession of the Captain Cook Landing Place Trust.

<sup>52</sup> *The Illustrated London News*, 17 April 1871.

Stephen; the Premier, Sir James Martin, and Lady Martin; Sir William Montague Manning and Lady Manning, T. S. Mort, Mr and Mrs T. C. Breillat, the Hon J. Docker, MLC, G. W. Allen and M. H. Stephen, MLAS, J. J. Calvert, members of the Holt family and P. Gidley King. The guests were received at 'Sans Souci' where they lunched and then embarked on T. S. Mort's steamer *Bronzewing*. It was intended to stop the steamer over the spot where the *Endeavour* had anchored, but a heavy sea prevented this. Instead, the party landed at Kurnell and inspected spots of historic interest. The guests 'expressed their gratification in respect to the monument both as to its appearance and site' and P. Gidley King interested them by showing them the original journal of his grandfather (then Lieutenant and later Governor King), recording incidents on the voyage of the First Fleet and also some original letters to his grandfather from Sir Joseph Banks. The party then returned to 'Sans Souci' for dinner and 'immediately after dinner the carriages were ordered, so that the excursionists might reach town before dark'<sup>53</sup>.

On occasions Holt entertained guests at Kurnell but the next large party at which he was host was about ten years later when Prince Albert Victor and Prince George of Wales (later King George V) were present in Sydney on HMS *Bacchante* as midshipmen, in August 1881. Holt had just agreed to lease the Sutherland estate to the Holt Sutherland Estate Land Company. The Chairman of that company, G. F. Want, had suggested that, if the princes could be induced to plant trees near the obelisk, it would be a pleasant memorial of their visit to the colony. The fixture was not made by Sir John Robertson until the day before, so preparations had to be made with expedition. Holt's son, Walter, attended to all the arrangements<sup>54</sup>.

The steamer *Swansea* was chartered to take the princes, their party and about sixty guests from La Perouse across the bay to Kurnell. A short account of the expedition was published in *The Cruise of HMS 'Bacchante' 1879-1882* compiled from the private journals, letters and notebooks of the princes.

We reached Bo-Bong pier about 1 pm and there the Hon Thomas Holt met us with several members of the Upper and Lower Houses, and we went at once on board the steamer he had chartered to cross the bay . . . When we drew near Point Sutherland we stopped and got into the Custom House boats, and from there we landed at the very rocks upon which Captain Cook describes himself in his Journal as having first set foot, Saturday, April 28th 1770. Mr Holt had given us copies of Cook's chart and extracts from his Journal written during the

<sup>53</sup> Unidentified newscutting (H.P.), now (ML).

<sup>54</sup> Inscription by Thomas Holt in a presentation copy of *The Cruise of HMS 'Bacchante', 1879-1882* to W. H. Holt.



stay of the *Endeavour* in the bay, and so we were able to realise the scene completely . . . Reading Cook's words on the spot today we see that his description of the place, like that of all others which he visited, is most accurate, down to the smallest detail. The only two things which are here now but were not here then are a brass plate, with an inscription, to commemorate Cook's landing, (it was fixed fifty years ago by the Royal Society on the face of the rock a little to the east of the landing-place as the nearest available spot,) and the sandstone obelisk with its iron rails, that Mr Holt erected on the spot in 1870. Near this we planted four trees, one of which was the *Araucaria Cookii*, which Cook discovered in New Caledonia. Lunch meanwhile had been spread upon the turf. A hungry dog ran off with a goose, but we chevied him up the slope and made him drop his prey. After we had drunk the health of the Queen, and Prince and Princess of Wales, we had to start home. Before this, however, we drank Mr Holt's health, and thanked him warmly for his hospitality.

The *Araucaria Cookii* was planted by Prince Albert Victor and in 1970 was still alive; but the other three trees died long ago.

The daily press, reporting the expedition, contained the following:

The meal was a good one, and the fact that it was partaken under difficulties seemed to give it additional zest, Prince Edward [Albert] and Mr Garbett shared between them a little table improvised by turning a wine-case upside down; the Mayor sat cross-legged, like a turk or a tailor; Prince George tried a variety of postures, and at last settled into a squat; and the rest of the party reclined in classic fashion, or managed in some other way to acquire pains in their joints and stiffness in their muscles. But all ate heartily, and a running fire of jest and laughter was maintained around the tablecloth<sup>55</sup>.

As a memento of their visit Holt had Hardy Bros make an artistic blotting pad, paper knife and paper weight with Australian emblems for each of the princes, which were sent to Holt in England the following year for presentation to them<sup>56</sup>.

About ten years after Holt's death in 1888, the Minister for Lands suggested to Holt's son Frederick that an area of land, including that on which the monument and Forby Sutherland's grave were situated, should be donated to the people. Frederick advised him that this could not legally be done by him but referred him to the Company<sup>57</sup> and the end result was that in 1898, an area of about 250 acres at Kurnell was

<sup>55</sup> *SMH* 10 August 1881.

<sup>56</sup> *Sydney Mail*, 25 March 1882.

<sup>57</sup> Draft letter of F. S. E. Holt, 27 February 1899 (H.P.), now (ML).

resumed by the Government and in 1899 was dedicated for public recreation and proclaimed a public park under the name of Captain Cook's Landing Place<sup>58</sup>.

Under the provisions of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1967, the area was increased to about seven hundred acres by the addition of a coastal strip from Cape Solander to Cape Bailey and became the Captain Cook's Landing Place Historic Site. In 1968 a further hundred acres to the south was added to the area. On 29 April 1970, the bicentenary of the landing of James Cook at Kurnell, Her Majesty the Queen, His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, and Her Royal Highness Princess Anne attended a re-enactment of the landing at Kurnell. The official dais was situated at the Cook monument and, after the re-enactment ceremony, the Queen planted a Norfolk Island pine tree nearby at the invitation of the President of the Captain Cook's Landing Place Historic Site Trust, W. J. Holt, a great-grandson of the Hon Thomas Holt who had erected the monument one hundred years previously.

In 1879, James Murphy exhibited at the Sydney Exhibition a diamond-drilling plant which he had brought from America. At that time it was anticipated that the Bulli coal seams extended under the Sutherland Estate and Holt, although not himself prepared to finance the exploratory work<sup>59</sup>, agreed, on 23 July 1879 to lease to Fitzwilliam Wentworth and John Coghlan practically the whole of the Sutherland estate with the right to mine for coal on a royalty basis, the agreement to take effect after the discovery, by the diamond-drill, of a profitably workable seam of coal. Coghlan and Wentworth had an agreement<sup>60</sup> between themselves that Wentworth should finance Coghlan in his work of boring for coal and that, if a profitable seam should be discovered, Coghlan would sell his interest in the lease to Wentworth for £20,000. It was the opinion of the Rev. W. B. Clarke, an eminent geologist, and other geologists of note that coal existed on the estate at a payable depth and much time and expense was devoted to boring and prospecting for coal without beneficial result<sup>61</sup>.

Early in 1881 negotiations were entered into between Holt, Coghlan and J. H. Want for a lease of the Sutherland Estate and, in April of that year, it was decided that a company should be formed to lease it<sup>62</sup>. Before such a lease could be given it was necessary that the agreement by Holt to lease the estate to Wentworth and Coghlan should be can-

<sup>58</sup> Notes re dedication as a public park in the Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay — W. A. Gullick (1901). Letter C. S. Arndale to the Under-Secretary, Department of Lands 14 June 1957.

<sup>59</sup> Registry of Deeds No. 705, Book 212.

<sup>60</sup> Agreement 24 July 1879 (H.P.), now (ML).

<sup>61</sup> Memo for Mr Simpson of Counsel, undated (H.P.), now (ML).

<sup>62</sup> Entries in Bill of Costs of Want, Johnson & Scarvell (H.P.), now (ML).

celled. This lease was accordingly abandoned<sup>63</sup> on payment to Holt of an amount owing under the lease and £3,000 paid to Wentworth and Coghlan together with the allotment to Wentworth and Coghlan of one fourth of the shares in the company. As from 1 July 1881, Holt leased<sup>64</sup> the Sutherland estate to the Holt Sutherland Estate Land Company Limited and that company thereafter leased to Coghlan and other members of his syndicates the coal and certain other minerals under the estate which included lands at Bottle Forest and Waltersfield.

The late Frank Cridland, in his book *Port Hacking, Cronulla and Sutherland Shire*, recounted the disappointing history told to him by James Murphy of various boring operations for coal, one three hundred yards north of Cronulla Hotel, another at Harnett's paddock (valuable equipment being lost in both) and then at Dent's Creek. In all these operations many thousands of pounds were spent in efforts to find payable coal.

In February 1887,<sup>65</sup> Professor Sir Edgeworth David furnished a report of his attendance at the bore on the left bank of Dent's Creek (at Gynea), one and a half miles east of Sutherland. The boring was then being done by the Department of Mines for the syndicate, then known as the Sydney Coal Company. He reported that the bore was then the deepest and largest in Australia, being 2307 feet deep and with a diameter of three inches. Two seams, one about four feet which was sixty-five feet above another of about five feet were then discovered, which Professor David believed were a continuation of the Bulli seams, but he reported that

the great depth, at which the seams occur, and their thinness as compared with the principal seams of coal now being wrought in the colony, considered in conjunction with the high percentage of ash in the lower seam leaves the question as to whether they can at present be profitably worked open to grave doubts.

The report was insufficiently optimistic and the project was eventually abandoned<sup>66</sup>.

As early as 1878 Holt had been aware that the estate could not profitably be used for depasturing sheep or cattle and that his oyster culture attempt was not successful; moreover his interests in the Legislative Council and in other public affairs as well as in his Queensland properties and 'Arthursleigh' demanded most of his time. He therefore

<sup>63</sup> Agreement 8 July 1881 (H.P.), now (ML).

<sup>64</sup> Memorandum of Lease registered No. 50990, dated 1 September 1881.

<sup>65</sup> Report 3 February 1887 (H.P.), now (ML).

<sup>66</sup> See generally *The Land*, 8 May 1953; *Daily Mirror*, 2 May 1960; *Parade*, August 1962; Keith Bates, *The Story of Sutherland Shire*.

decided to cease further experiments at Sutherland and to leave its development to others. Early in 1878 he offered to lease for twenty-one years, with the right of purchase, two hundred and fifty acres on the Kurnell Peninsula, including Cook's landing place but reserving the right to minerals (coal etc.). An advertisement<sup>67</sup> claimed that the site could not be surpassed for a grand hotel and marine villa, but failed to attract a lessee.

In January 1879, just prior to his wife's departure for Europe, he agreed<sup>68</sup> to lease to his son Alfred, the whole of the Sutherland estate (except Gwawley and Weeney Bays and an area of land adjacent to Sutherland House) for £300 per year for a term of years, with a right to Holt to terminate the lease on one year's notice. The agreement reserved the right to bore for coal, to permit a railway to be constructed through the estate and to resume possession of any part that might be required for subdivision as towns or villages. He also sold to Alfred cattle, alpacas and llamas then on the property.

Apparently this agreement was terminated by mutual consent; Holt leased the estate to Wentworth and Coghlan on 23 July 1879. This lease was cancelled by mutual agreement on 8 July 1881<sup>69</sup>, and various negotiations finally terminated in an agreement of 1 September 1881<sup>70</sup>, whereby Holt leased to the Holt-Sutherland Estate Land Company (Limited) about 12,200 acres, part of the Sutherland Estate, and certain minerals thereunder, for fifty-six years at a yearly rental of £1,000 for the first year, increasing each year to £3,000 for the fourth year, where it remained constant for twenty-five years, and thereafter to £5,000 for the rest of the term from 1 July 1881, with power to the company to lease any part of the land for the unexpired residue of the term of ninety-nine years (computed from 1 September 1889) and reserving a royalty to the lessor on coal raised. The part of Sutherland Estate which Holt reserved from the lease was about seven hundred acres around Sutherland House which included Gwawley Bay and the oyster claires. Holt was at first averse to giving the company the right to grant leases beyond its term of fifty-six years but finally agreed to do so with the object of encouraging the buildings of towns, villages, villas, manufactories etc on the estate<sup>71</sup>. He also leased for the same term to the company an area of forty-one acres at Bottle Forest and fifty-five acres known as 'Waltersfield'.

Within a few months from the date of the lease the company, through

<sup>67</sup> *SMH* 8 January 1878.

<sup>68</sup> Agreement 17 January 1879 (H.P.), now (ML).

<sup>69</sup> Agreement 8 July 1881 (H.P.), now (ML).

<sup>70</sup> Memorandum of Lease registered No. 50990, dated 1 September 1881.

<sup>71</sup> Letters T. Holt to Want, Johnson and Scarvell 8 April 1881, 6 May 1881 and J. W. Johnson 9 May 1881 (H.P.), now (ML).

Richardson and Wrench<sup>72</sup>, submitted ninety-nine years' leases to auction, The Sylvania Subdivision averaged £4.12.6 rent per annum per acre, water frontages about £5.2.0, Sutherland railway township blocks £12.9.0, while suburban five-acre blocks averaged £3.9.0. At two sales seven hundred and fifty acres were disposed of. Parts of the estate were resumed for railway purposes, and the opening of the Illawarra railway to Sutherland in December 1885 led to the establishment of Sutherland, Como, Heathcote (Bottle Forest) and Waterfall townships<sup>73</sup>.

Holt died on 5 September 1888 and, subject to the payment of annuities charged on the estate, devised the Sutherland Estate to his son Frederick for life, then to Frederick's eldest son for life and so on in tail male.

The serious financial depression of the 1890s, however, resulted in the company's tenants falling into arrears with their rents and the company itself exhausting its capital and still being unable to pay the rent reserved under the lease; these financial difficulties were not assisted by the first Land and Income Tax Act being enacted in 1896.

Negotiations between the company and Frederick and his eldest son, T. S. Holt, resulted in an agreement to release arrears of rent totalling over £5,400 and to reduce future rents, as well as an agreement by Holt's widow to reduce her two annuities charged on the estate from £1,000 to £400, to consent to a reduction of rent and to forego arrears<sup>74</sup>. This led to the passing of the Holt-Sutherland Estate Act, 1900<sup>75</sup>. An Act was necessary to bind persons entitled under the will after the death of Frederick and T. S. Holt. A new company, known as the Holt-Sutherland Estate Company (Limited) was also incorporated in 1899 to take over the lease of the old company.

Under the Act of 1900, the lease of the estate was extended to fifty-six years from 1 July 1899, the rent was reduced to £1,250 per year, plus ten per cent of the clear net annual profits of the company for five years, and thereafter fifteen per cent of such profits; and royalties on coal were reduced. The new company was also given power to lease for ninety-nine years from 1 July 1899, without the necessity of submitting to auction and given power to reduce existing rents.

A most important provision enabled the company to convert any leasehold into freehold on payment by the tenant of twenty-five times the amount of the annual rent. The capital sum from this conversion was then to be invested and the interest thereon paid to the new company for the balance of the term of each lease and then held by the trustees of the will of Thomas Holt for the persons entitled under his will.

<sup>72</sup> Certificate of Richardson and Wrench, 8 March 1882 (H.P.), now (ML).

<sup>73</sup> *SMH* Sutherland Feature, 10 October 1958.

<sup>74</sup> Copy Deed 27 December 1899 (H.P.).

<sup>75</sup> Assented to 20 October 1900.

### *An Energetic Colonist*

The effect of the 1900 Act, combined with the Government's release of most of its defence reserve on the Cronulla peninsula, was to alter the character of the Sutherland estate. Until 1900 only about 1683 acres had been leased by the Holt-Sutherland Estate Land Company (Limited), mainly for farming purposes, but after the 1900 Act about 8,732 acres were converted to freehold allotments for home settlement and development, leaving only about 2703 acres unalienated by 1955.

Meantime, to enable company reconstruction and to effect variations of rentals and percentage of net profits to beneficiaries, the Holt Sutherland Estate Company (Limited) went into voluntary liquidation in 1916 when the Holt Sutherland Company Limited was incorporated; this company in turn went into voluntary liquidation in 1933 when the Holt Sutherland Company (1933) Limited was incorporated. The last-named company's name was changed in 1960 to the Holt Sutherland Company Pty Limited, under which name it still carries on business<sup>76</sup>.

Other aspects of the Sutherland Estate are interestingly recounted by the late Frank Cridland in *The Story of Port Hacking, Cronulla and Sutherland Shire*<sup>77</sup>. A present-day tour of the former estate reveals its remarkable development into extensive outer suburbs of Sydney within the flourishing Shire of Sutherland.

#### 15 *The United Fire and Life Insurance Company of Sydney*

By 1862 the population of New South Wales had increased to around 360,000, commercial and pastoral activities had developed and railways were gradually opening up outlying districts. Several British insurance companies had agencies in the colony, but slow overseas communication retarded their activities. The AMP Society was flourishing in the field of life insurance and the Sydney Insurance Company was writing a considerable amount of fire insurance.

There appeared, however, to be scope for another local insurance company and in 1862 a prospectus was issued for the United Fire and Life Insurance Company of Sydney, proposing a capital of £500,000 and containing the names of thirty-five Sydney businessmen who signified their intention of becoming shareholders and who are now regarded as having been the founders of the company. Included in the thirty-five were five who had been associated with the formation or development of both the AMP Society and the Sydney Fire Insurance Company: T. S. Mort, Hon Charles Kemp MLC; T. W. Smart MLA; Thomas Holt, MLA (who had recently resigned from the board of the AMP Society) and John Fairfax.

<sup>76</sup> Information from A. B. Holt.

<sup>77</sup> Sydney, 1924.

On 1 September 1862, a Deed of Settlement creating the United Fire and Life Insurance Company of Sydney, a Joint Stock Company, was executed by all shareholders and in December of the same year the Company was incorporated. It did not enter the field of life assurance to any appreciable extent, but confined its business mainly to fire and marine insurance and obtained an amending Act in 1868, to extend its activities in marine insurance<sup>2</sup>.

The liability of the Company's shareholders for its debts was unlimited until the disadvantages of this position became apparent after the great 1890 fire in Sydney destroyed the block bounded by Pitt, Castlereagh and Moore Streets and Hosking Place. The Company was registered shortly afterwards under the Companies' Act as a limited liability company and its name changed to the United Insurance Company Limited. Under this name the Company still operates successfully, with its head office at the corner of George and Hunter Streets, Sydney, and with branches throughout Australia and overseas<sup>3</sup>.

#### 16 Sale of 'Camden Villa' and Establishment of Camden College

In 1863, Holt offered his residence 'Camden Villa' and its nine acres of grounds to the Congregational denomination for a theological college and a grammar school, to be run in conjunction with the college but in which nothing sectarian was to be introduced. The house and grounds were valued at £8,000 and Holt offered to give pound for pound the amount subscribed to the extent of £4,000 on condition that the whole amount was raised by subscription<sup>1</sup> because

he thought it better that every member of the Congregational body should have the opportunity of saying he had contributed to the College and that he had a brick in the building<sup>2</sup>.

It has been suggested that Holt was probably influenced in making this gift by the Rev. J. G. Fraser, MA, DD who had a most persuasive manner and later became warden of Camden College<sup>3</sup>. This could be so and would be consistent with Holt's account:

The idea never occurred to him of making an offer of it for a college, until Mrs Holt, who had for a long time been most anxious to go home to see her aged mother, determined to postpone her visit

<sup>2</sup> *The Empire*, 11, 19, 27 February and 3 March 1868.

<sup>3</sup> *The First Century: The story of the United Insurance Company Limited, 1862-1962*, by H. S. Innes.

<sup>1</sup> John Garrett and L. W. Farr, *Camden College*.

<sup>2</sup> *SMH* 29 April 1864.

<sup>3</sup> Letter 18 July 1967, Rev. L. W. Farr to H. T. E. Holt.

### *An Energetic Colonist*

no longer and the idea suddenly occurred to him that when she went home he would take advantage of her absence, and build another house and at the same time offer this for a college<sup>4</sup>.

The first College Council, elected in April 1864, comprised the Rev. John West (President), the Rev. S. C. Kent, J. E. Vetch and Thomas Johnson, Messrs John Fairfax, Andrew Garran, Thomas Holt, David Jones, Josiah Mullens, R. P. Richardson, Joseph Thompson and Samuel Thompson.

The College and school opened in July 1864 and, by April 1865, the whole of the £4,000 purchase money had been raised and paid<sup>5</sup>. The Rev. S. C. Kent became the first principal and resident chaplain of the school at which, an advertisement stated, 'The sleeping apartments are lofty, spacious and well-ventilated. Each boy will be provided with a separate bed', while day pupils, for a small fee could be 'accommodated with stalls for their horses'<sup>6</sup>. The college and school were carried on there from 1864 to 1876 when, owing to dwindling finances, the school was closed and the college moved elsewhere.

Holt served on the Council of Camden College for some years and became a Trustee in 1875 but, when the financial position worsened, he stubbornly opposed proposals to sell the property and, when the Council decided otherwise, resigned. The property was then subdivided and portion was sold. After the sale Camden Theological College was for many years without a permanent home, until the present premises in Glebe were secured in 1910<sup>7</sup>. Even though Holt terminated his active association with the College he retained his interest in the establishment and in 1879 made a donation of £500 to the College<sup>8</sup>.

The unsold portion of the property was disposed of for £10,000 shortly after Holt's death in September 1888, and the proceeds were to be applied in re-constructing the grammar school as the Congregational Boys' College at Homebush, Sydney<sup>9</sup>. In the heavily built-upon area of Newtown little now remains to indicate the position of 'Camden Villa', apart from the street names of Camden, College, Holt and Kent.

<sup>4</sup> *SMH* 29 April 1864.

<sup>5</sup> T. Glassop, *Jubilee History of Newtown: SMH* 29 April 1865.

<sup>6</sup> *SMH* 1 June 1864.

<sup>7</sup> Letter 3 July 1967, Rev. L. W. Farr to H. T. E. Holt.

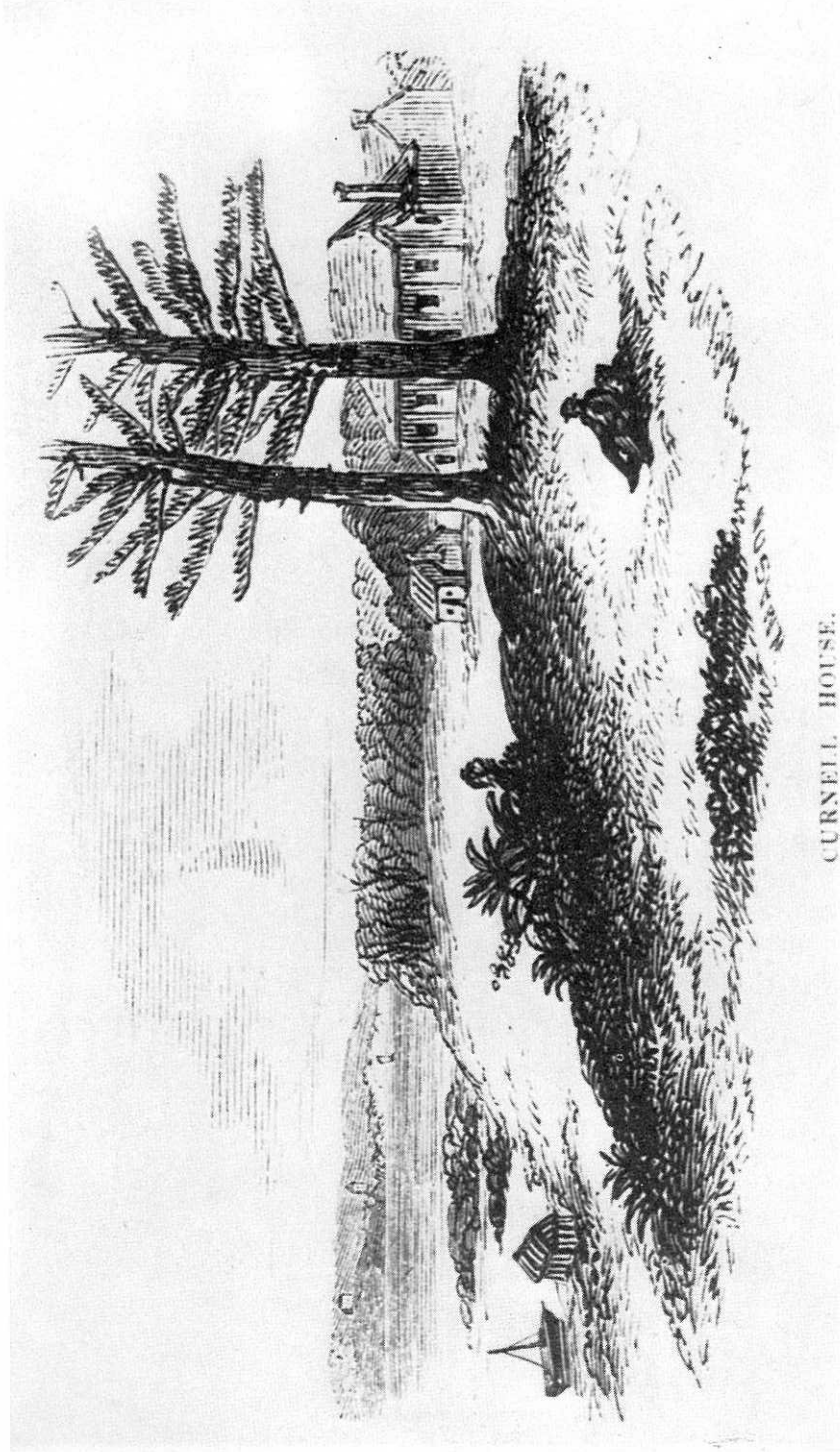
<sup>8</sup> Letter 16 January 1959, the Congregational Union of N.S.W. to H. T. E. Holt.

<sup>9</sup> *The Australian Independent*, 15 September 1888.





*The eastern end of new Martin Place after Denison Chambers was demolished (1892)*



CURSTELL HOUSE.

*Curstell House (1857-60) showing two Norfolk Island pine trees planted in 1845 and still alive in 1972*

## 5

### Cook's River, Marrickville, 1864-80

When it was arranged to transfer 'Camden Villa' to the Congregational body, Holt had already commenced a new residence at Marrickville. He was unable to accompany his wife to Europe on her urgent visit to see her aged mother, because his parliamentary duties required his presence in the colony, so he decided to join her overseas as soon as he was free and, in the meantime, to supervise building operations.

In addition to his parliamentary duties Holt was fully occupied with other public duties, including the Public Library of New South Wales and Camden College Council and private affairs, including the board of the Sydney Insurance Company and his various properties in Queensland and New South Wales.

On 12 January 1864, Mrs Holt took their four daughters and youngest son Walter, aged nine, together with their governess, Miss Jessie Dodds, and a nurse by the sailing ship *La Hogue* (1331 tons) on a five-month voyage to England<sup>1</sup>. They had a cabin in the stern and the youngest son, Walter recalled that an enterprising voyager in a small canvas-covered boat was towed part of the way for a small fee, coming aboard only in bad weather.

Holt remained in New South Wales with his two sons Frederick, aged eighteen, and Alfred, aged thirteen, residing either at his Arthursleigh property or in temporary quarters known as his 'shooting box' at his Marrickville property. His sister and her husband, Edward Joy, who was associated in business ventures with Holt, also stayed from time to time at the 'shooting box'<sup>2</sup>.

Frederick not long before had returned from an extensive visit overseas with his tutor, the Rev. Thomas Arnold, a Congregational minister of Snail's Bay, Balmain, who had made a close study of deafness and who developed Frederick's faculty of speech and acted as his tutor during a

<sup>1</sup> *SMH* 13 January 1864; Information from late Miss A. I. Holt to Dr W. G. Holt.

<sup>2</sup> Correspondence F. S. E. Holt to T. Holt during 1864 (H.P.): *SMH* 26 January 1963.

long tour of Europe and Asia, including Palestine, finally settling in England at Northampton for some considerable time, where Frederick's education was more rapidly advanced before returning to Australia<sup>3</sup>.

1 'The Warren'

The new residence, known as 'The Warren' was situated in 130 acres bounded by Cook's River, Old Illawarra Road, the Warren Road and Unwin's Bridge Road, the area being part of Dr Wardell's two-thousand-acre estate, between Newtown and Cook's River, where he had been murdered by an escaped convict<sup>1</sup>.

Holt had purchased the hundred and thirty acres between 1857 and 1859, for £5,000<sup>2</sup>, and soon afterwards, enclosed the whole area (except where bounded by Cook's River) with a thick stone wall six feet high, at a time when there was considerable unemployment. Holt decided to assist the unemployed but, so that it would not appear to be a charity, offered 2/6d a day for each man's labour. Many men travelled long distances by foot to quarry the stone and build the wall, but, irrespective of what time they arrived, each received half-a-crown at knock-off time. At times, one hundred men were so employed<sup>3</sup>.

Holt had long been interested in the subject of acclimatisation of flora and fauna from overseas; his interest in alpacas has already been noted and, following the advocacy in the Sydney press of the importation of game animals including elands, salmon and rabbits<sup>4</sup>, he introduced sixty wild rabbits from England and others from Tasmania and New Zealand to 'The Warren'. There they soon multiplied and he and his friends spent days shooting them<sup>5</sup>. He has been blamed for rabbits becoming a pest throughout Australia but his introductions were confined by the wall. Wild rabbits had been introduced into Australia, not only with the First Fleet, but by others, particularly in Victoria, from where they soon commenced to overrun parts of New South Wales<sup>6</sup>.

An Acclimatisation Society had been formed in Victoria and, as a result of an address from Edward Wilson representing that Society, the Acclimatisation Society of New South Wales was established in 1861. Holt was proposed as one of the members of the Council and offered to

<sup>3</sup> Copy letter F. S. E. Holt to his mother 26 July 1898 (H.P.): *SMH* 10 February 1902.

<sup>1</sup> *History of Marrickville, 1861-1936* (M.L.): vol. 2. A.D.B. sub Wardell.

<sup>2</sup> Primary application No. 32 (1863); Certificate of Title, vol. 3 folio 202.

<sup>3</sup> *SMH* 11 July 1868; *The Sydney Echo*, 13 July 1890; *The Sun*, 24 August 1919.

<sup>4</sup> *SMH* 3 December 1860.

<sup>5</sup> *The story of John Fairfax* by J. F. Fairfax p. 145; (M.L.): *Sydney Echo* 31 July 1890.

<sup>6</sup> *The Land*, 8 May 1893; *Parade*, August 1962; *The Sun*, 30 April 1938; *Daily Mirror*, 2 May 1960.

place his one hundred and thirty acres at the disposal of the Society for seven years at a nominal rental of 5/- per annum, reserving to himself the right of admission and to houses which he had erected for his own accommodation, an offer described as 'a noble and generous one'.

To promote the objects of the Society, Holt invited the Governor (Sir John Young) and a number of public men to his property to a luncheon at which all the viands consumed, animals, fruits and vegetables had been introduced into the colony and acclimatised, including 'delicately flavoured rabbits and unusually fat lambs'. After lunch the guests strolled over the grounds to view the animals and also a number of blackbirds and thrushes, the gift of Edward Wilson, which were enclosed in aviaries built in the bush<sup>7</sup>. Later Holt introduced on to the property kangaroos, some of which he imported from Tasmania and others which Henry Parkes gave him, as well as squirrels. The kangaroos did well for a time but later were either killed or escaped over the wall<sup>8</sup>.

Holt employed G. A. Mansfield as his architect to build 'The Warren' which was said to have been designed on the lines of an ancestral castle in Germany where his wife was born<sup>9</sup>. The house was built on the summit of a hill from stone quarried on the property, most of the stonework being completed by the end of 1864<sup>10</sup>. The building must have been completed by April 1866 because in that month a picnic was tendered to him at 'Sans Souci', prior to his departure overseas. Holt said that he 'hoped to have the pleasure of seeing his friends once more, on his return from England, in the house which he had lately erected'<sup>11</sup>.

'The Warren' contained about thirty rooms; the dining room could seat fifty to sixty for a meal and there was a large ballroom<sup>12</sup>. The picture gallery was over one hundred feet long and fifteen feet wide; Holt later filled it with a large collection of French engravings, oil and water-colour paintings, bronzes, statues, *bas-reliefs* and other works of art purchased at the Paris Exhibition of 1867, after he had joined his wife and family in Europe<sup>13</sup>. T. S. Mort and T. W. Smart, some years earlier, had demonstrated the cultural interest promoted by such collections, Mort at his residence 'Greenoaks' and Smart at his residence 'Mona', both at Darling Point<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> *SMH* 31 October 1861; 4 November 1861; 5 November 1861.

<sup>8</sup> Letters, 23 March 1871, 25 May 1871, 23 May 1873 from T. Holt to H. Parkes vol. 16 (*Parkes Correspondence (M.L.)*).

<sup>9</sup> *The Sun*, 24 August 1919.

<sup>10</sup> Letter 24 December 1864 from F. S. E. Holt to T. Holt (H.P.).

<sup>11</sup> *SMH* 16 April 1866.

<sup>12</sup> Letter 5 November 1879, from T. Holt to John Little (*Parkes' correspondence*, A923 (M.L.)); Letter T. Holt to Sir Henry Parkes (*Parkes' correspondence*, A886 (M.L.)). *The Sun* 24 August 1919.

<sup>13</sup> *Illustrated Sydney News*, 17 March 1870.

<sup>14</sup> 24 *RAHS. Jo.* 348. *SMH* 13 July 1861; Barnard, *Visions and Profits*, p. 53.

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In the basement of 'The Warren' were the kitchen, with large cooking-ranges and the still-room, or cool larder, to store food and to set milk in shallow basins for the collection of cream<sup>15</sup>. Lamps and candles provided the only illumination until 1872, when it was lit by gas<sup>16</sup>.

The lodge, built in castellated form at the gateway on Illawarra Road, lay about a mile from the house, with which it was connected by a driveway through an avenue of trees<sup>17</sup> and a large room in the lodge for some time was used by students of Camden College to preach in<sup>18</sup>. A number of cottages for men employed on the property, constructed to be in keeping with the main building, were scattered about the grounds<sup>19</sup>, and it is said that there was an underground tunnel from the house to Cook's River, a mile distant, which was once used by enterprising burglars to enter the house and steal some family plate<sup>20</sup>.

On the river front Holt erected bathing sheds and Turkish baths and, there he had his 'Macpelah'<sup>21</sup> where six burial vaults were hewn from solid rock near the edge of Cook's River and a memorial tablet let into the rock<sup>22</sup>. In 1879, he wrote 'Thank God it has not yet received a tenant'<sup>23</sup>.

Several oyster 'claires' fifty to one hundred feet long and twelve to fifteen feet wide were formed on flat land acquired outside 'The Warren' boundaries, apparently now part of Tempe Recreation Reserve<sup>24</sup>.

Around 'The Warren' was a garden, enclosed by wire-netting, with a large orchard and orangery, while part of the land was set apart as a farm<sup>25</sup>. A coach-house and stables housed carriages and horses, including a private omnibus which was used for transport to and from Sydney and outlying districts<sup>26</sup>.

After his return from overseas, in 1868, he and his wife frequently extended hospitality to their friends at 'The Warren', where many stayed and were entertained with excursions to 'Sans Souci', the oyster claires at Sutherland and shooting. Visitors included the Governors of New South Wales and Queensland, the Earl of Belmore, Colonel Blackell, the John Robertsons, Henry Parkes, Dockers, Laidleys, J. F. Josephsons, Sir James Martin, Dr Garran and Count Metaxa<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> *The Sun*, 24 August 1919.

<sup>16</sup> Diary of W. H. Holt, 24 June 1872 (in the possession of Dr W. G. Holt).

<sup>17</sup> *The Sydney Echo*, 13 July 1890.

<sup>18</sup> *SMH* 11 April 1871.

<sup>19</sup> *The Sydney Echo*, 13 July 1890.

<sup>20</sup> *The Sun*, 24 August 1919.

<sup>21</sup> *Genesis* XXIII.

<sup>22</sup> Vol. 92 Newspaper cuttings, pp. 49-50 (M.L.).

<sup>23</sup> Letter 3 November 1879, T. Holt to J. Little (Parkes' Correspondence A923 (M.L.)).

<sup>24</sup> Letter November 1960, T. H. Compagnoni to H. T. E. Holt; Cert. of Title vol. 1 fol. 8 Primary appl. 19, vol. 92 Newspaper cuttings (M.L.).

<sup>25</sup> *Sydney Echo*, 13 July 1890.

<sup>26</sup> Diary of W. H. Holt, 1872 (supra).

<sup>27</sup> Diary of W. H. Holt, 1872 (supra): *Illustrated Sydney News*, 17 March 1870.

Holt was very fond of children and schoolchildren and their teachers were often invited to take their hundreds through the art gallery, search for rabbits and play and picnic in the grounds, where they were supplied with buns, lollies, nuts, oranges and tea. The first of these invitations in October 1869, included four hundred or five hundred children from the Wesleyan and Public School of Newtown and the Church of England School, St Peters. This was the first entertainment of its kind ever given by the owner of a home around Sydney<sup>28</sup>.

It is related that one day the bullock-driver at 'The Warren', 'whose principal duty was to plough, was found to be missing. It was known that he had been "on the spree", but Mr Holt went to his hut to ascertain when he was going to work. The bullock driver was married to an aboriginal woman. Holt, accompanied by his friend Samuel Cook, arrived at the hut door, and called out "Maria!" The gin came out, and Holt said, "You know where Billy sit down?" "No," replied the gin, with the usual stolidity of her race. "You go find him," continued Holt. "Baal mine know where Billy go," returned the gin indifferently. Holt, seeing that it was useless to expect to obtain any information, was turning away when some bullocks (one with a bell on) came slowly past, feeding. "What you put bell on bullock for?" he asked. "Like it make tingle, tingle. Know where bullock sit down," replied the gin. "Well, you go up along of store. Tell storeman give you new bell and strap." "Whaffor?" asked the gin. "So you can put it alonga Billy's neck to show where he sit down," returned Holt. The gin looked at him a moment as if she did not quite understand. Then she realised the absurdity of placing a bell on a man's neck to show where he was, and she laughed till the tears rolled down her cheeks. Holt and his companion, as they walked away, laughed as much at the black gin's appreciation of the joke as at the joke itself<sup>29</sup>.'

## 2 Personation Charges

Holt had intended to go to Europe early in 1865 to rejoin his family<sup>1</sup>, but was delayed by a hurtful experience in February of that year. He was charged with the offence of personating a voter at a parliamentary election.

There were two Holts entitled to a place on the roll of the Glebe Electorate, William Holt and Thomas Holt, but the rolls were in such an imperfect state that neither of the names was properly entered and one Thomas Robert Aut was wrongly entered as Robert Holt. William Holt

<sup>28</sup> *Illustrated Sydney News*, 17 March 1870: *The Empire* 1 November 1869.

<sup>29</sup> *Sydney Echo*, 31 July 1890. Vol. 159 Newspaper cuttings (M.L.).

<sup>1</sup> Letter 20 April 1866 from T. Holt to Sir John Young (P.R.O. 1825. C.O. 201/542, p. 354 (M.L.)).

voted early in the day; the Returning Officer and the Poll Clerk each marked on their own separate list a different name as having voted. Thomas Holt, when he arrived later to vote, was told by the Poll Clerk that his name had been voted for already. Holt believed that he had been personated and was about to leave when the Returning Officer, who alone had authority so to decide, called him back and told him that he could vote. Holt then voted<sup>2</sup>.

The defeated candidate for the Glebe Electorate, Daniel C. Dalgleish, a former member of Parliament, was described by David Buchanan (once MP for Morpeth) as a Scotchman and engineer who was 'a most imperturbable and unalloyed nuisance in the House'<sup>3</sup>. He issued a summons against Holt, charging him with the offence of personation<sup>4</sup>, an offence for which a maximum sentence of two years' imprisonment could be imposed.

Captain Scott, the Police Magistrate who heard the charge at the Central Police Office, Sydney, decided that he had nothing to do with the motive or belief under which Holt acted, however innocent, and so committed him for trial at the Central Criminal Court<sup>5</sup>. This decision aroused considerable astonishment, resentment and indignation in the community which were voiced in various ways.

The Rev. John West, an old friend of Holt's, in a long leader in the *Sydney Morning Herald*<sup>6</sup> (of which he was then editor), appears to have been unduly influenced by his personal feelings (doubtless accentuated by the fact that, three months earlier, Dalgleish had unsuccessfully prosecuted John Fairfax and James Reading Fairfax for alleged criminal libel<sup>7</sup>). He suggested that the Magistrate's decision may have been subconsciously swayed by class influence;

the rich are the pariah caste where the mob is master . . . there are those in this community who take a pleasure in the humiliation of gentlemen whose stations have made them conspicuous. To see a person in the position of Mr Holt involved in such an accusation is to such men as refreshing as the most potent draught. To find him 'Committed for trial' produces an association of ideas which raises into ecstasy and song a certain class of sweeps, bone-grubbers, and small dustmen; not that they believe in his guilt, but that they rejoice in his trouble and hope that it may in some way or other contribute to his impoverishment and degradation.

<sup>2</sup> *SMH* 18 March 1865; *Sydney Mail*, 8 April 1865.

<sup>3</sup> *Political Portraits of some of the Members of the Parliament of New South Wales* (Sydney, 1863).

<sup>4</sup> *SMH* 9 March 1865.

<sup>5</sup> *SMH* 14 March 1865.

<sup>6</sup> *SMH* 14 March 1865.

<sup>7</sup> *SMH* 23, 28, 29 and 30 November 1864, 1 December 1864.



In letters expressing indignation and sympathy, other friends voiced their opinions. T. S. Mort from Bodalla<sup>9</sup> wrote that, although Captain and Mrs Scott were very old friends of his, he felt intensely how it behoved every man who respected the liberty of the subject to raise his voice in solemn and, if need be, public protest against so grievous a wrong as that of which Holt was the victim.

John Fairfax, writing from Warwick<sup>10</sup>, England, expressed the indignation and anger with which he read the account of the police officer who committed Holt, 'the decision of Capt. Scott being in the teeth of positive and clear evidence' and suggested that Captain Scott be dismissed as punishment.

The Rev. John Graham<sup>11</sup> wrote that he trusted it was weakness and not wickedness which led the Magistrate to 'adopt such an unjust, unwarrantable and utterly inexpedient conclusion' and that 'my dear old deacon and friend David Jones proposes driving Mrs Graham and myself out to the Warren to see you next Thursday'.

Alfred (later Judge) McFarland<sup>12</sup> wrote of his surprise and pain at the proceedings and his astonishment that any Magistrate should have allowed himself to be imposed upon as Capt Scott seemed to have done, concluding 'The Attorney General will, of course, scotch the proceeding, when the papers are laid before him.' McFarland correctly forecast the action of the Attorney General who intimated to Capt Scott that he did not intend to put Holt upon trial<sup>13</sup>.

Undeterred by the Attorney General's weighty decision and inflated with his own conceit, Dalgleish immediately issued another summons against Holt for the same alleged offence<sup>14</sup>. The Rev. John West wrote to Holt<sup>15</sup>

Were it not for the inconvenience you must suffer from the conduct of Dalgleish I should be far from caring at his new attempt. It leaves no doubt of his malice and I hope none of his responsibility.

The second charge was heard at the end of March 1865 by a Bench of two Magistrates (Messrs Raper and Chapman). Dalgleish prosecuted in person and Holt was represented by Messrs Johnson and Roberts. In opening his case Dalgleish said he would offer evidence that would startle the magistrates, as he had privately intimated to them. Mr Johnson said he was astonished to hear that anyone would have the temerity to make

<sup>9</sup> Letter T. S. Mort to T. Holt 23 March 1865 (H.P.), now (ML).

<sup>10</sup> Letter John Fairfax to T. Holt 24 May 1865 (H.P.), now (ML).

<sup>11</sup> Letter John Graham to T. Holt 18 March 1865 (H.P.), now (ML).

<sup>12</sup> Letter Alfred McFarland to T. Holt 14 March 1865 (H.P.), now (ML).

<sup>13</sup> *SMH* 22 March 1865.

<sup>14</sup> *SMH* 23 March 1865.

<sup>15</sup> Letter John West to Holt 23 March 1865 (H.P.), now (ML).

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a private communication to their Worships in reference to a pending case and not less astonished that any gentleman in the Commission of the Peace would receive it. Both their Worships denied that any private communication had been made to them<sup>16</sup>.

For four days the case dragged on without any of the promised 'startling' evidence being produced.

The Magistrates exhibited humour and patience but Chapman got tired at last and told Dalgleish that he was not in the Legislative Assembly and that he would be committed if he was not more discreet. . . .<sup>17</sup> As he shook his locks at the admiring bystanders who were in fits of admiration, he talked like a book

While still the wonder grew  
How one small head could carry all he knew<sup>18</sup>.

The Magistrates unanimously dismissed the prosecution upon the evidence of the prosecutor without calling for a reply.

Every witness refuted the charge; every material word proved that it was without the slightest foundation. Those who meant to support it were, under the able manipulation of Messrs Johnson and Roberts, made to disprove it<sup>19</sup>.

The actions of Captain Scott and Dalgleish had infuriated Holt and, now that the case was over, his many old friends sought to pacify him and deter him from taking any precipitate action which later he might regret. Dr A. Garran, editor of the *Sydney Mail*<sup>20</sup>, wrote:

Allow me to say, not as a journalist but as a friend, that I hope you will reconsider your determination as to Capt Scott, and not allow your vexation to assume the form of revenge. At present you stand well with the public. Everybody sympathises with you, and feels that you have been grossly injured. There is not the most nebulous shadow of a shade of suspicion of impropriety in your conduct. But there will be a reaction of opinion if you show too bitter a feeling towards Capt Scott. People will then say that Mr Holt is now the prosecutor and has learnt from Mr Dalgleish the spirit of vindictiveness. Pray do not give occasion for this.

<sup>16</sup> *SMH* 30 March 1865.

<sup>17</sup> *SMH* 6 April 1865.

<sup>18</sup> *SMH* 6 April 1865.

<sup>19</sup> *SMH* 6 April 1865.

<sup>20</sup> Letter A. Garran to T. Holt, 12 April 1865 (H.P.), now (ML).

The Rev. John West, editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*<sup>21</sup>, wrote:

What I dread is that the just indignation you have felt at a very offensive affair may lead you to some expression not suitable to your dignity as a statesman and your duties as a Christian.

A crowded meeting at the Newtown School of Arts on 24 April 1865 presented Holt with an address signed by about 1800 inhabitants of Newtown, expressing sympathy with him in his late trials and indignation at the annoyance he had so unjustly suffered. Thanking the meeting, Holt said he could not understand Dalglish's action. They had sat on the same side of the House together and not an unpleasant word passed between them,

On one occasion Mr Dalglish claimed fraternity with him, and asked him if he was not a member of the Samaritan Lodge of Freemasons. He (Mr Holt) said 'Yes'. Mr Dalglish said a poor Mason was in distress and that he was making a subscription for him, whereupon he (Mr Holt) immediately wrote out a cheque for £5 and gave it to relieve his brother in need, just as he would have done for Mr Dalglish. . . . He (Mr Holt) had no revengeful feelings towards Captain Scott. His intention had been to apply for leave to file a criminal information against him, but he had now abandoned the intention (Cheers). . . . Captain Scott must be taught a lesson and he intended to enter an action against him in the Civil Court. He would hand over any damages to charity.

Holt also referred to an inquiry by a Select Committee into Captain Scott's behaviour, in July 1862<sup>22</sup>. The meeting unanimously carried a resolution that the prosecution of Holt was vexatious, unChristian and without foundation<sup>23</sup>.

After this J. B. Darvall<sup>24</sup> wrote:

I hear that you think of taking proceedings against Scott. The result of these proceedings can not place you in a higher position than you now occupy with the verdict of the whole community in your favour but you may arouse sympathy for him and, if defeated, people would forget the merits of the case and confound a verdict for him into a verdict against you. . . . In short, without presuming, I strongly advise you to be magnanimous and to spare him and yourself the expense and irritation of law proceedings.

<sup>21</sup> Letter John West to T. Holt, 18 April 1865 (H.P.), now (ML).

<sup>22</sup> Papers of Select Committee, printed 19 December 1862.

<sup>23</sup> *SMH* 25 April 1865.

<sup>24</sup> Letter J. B. Darvall to T. Holt 1 May 1865 (H.P.), now (ML).

Notwithstanding these adjurations Holt issued writs out of the Supreme Court claiming £5,000 against Capt Scott and £2,000 against Dalgleish. The action for malicious prosecution against Dalgleish came before Mr Justice Cheeke and a jury of four in August 1865, when Sir William Manning, qc, Mr Martin, qc, Mr Isaacs and Mr Dalley appeared for the plaintiff, Holt, and Mr Salomons appeared for the defendant, Dalgleish<sup>25</sup>. In his evidence Holt said<sup>26</sup>,

I never claimed to vote for 'Robert' Holt; I would sooner have my hand cut off, or my head; such an idea would never enter my mind . . . The prosecutions caused me much loss of time and annoyance, but incomparably more on account of my relatives and friends in distant parts of the world; no amount of money can repay the sufferings I have endured; I would sooner a hundred thousand times that Captain Scott had brought a pistol and shot me on the spot.

Dalgleish swore in defence<sup>27</sup>:

I have known Mr Holt, the plaintiff, about five years; we were members of the Assembly at the same time; nothing arose between us to cause malice or ill-will on my part towards him; we never had a quarrel . . . I knew nothing against Mr Holt as a private citizen; I thought him to be a good and charitable man and a large employer of labour; in the prosecution I had no other object than the ends of justice.

Salomons addressed the jury<sup>28</sup>.

History afforded many instances of men who had stood high in the estimation of society, yet had been convicted in the end of various crimes. Sir John Dean Paul was not less wealthy than Mr Holt, yet he had been transported. The Rev. Dr Dodd was not less pious, yet he had been hanged. Fauntleroy, the banker, was not less charitable, yet he also was publicly executed. . . . He had merely quoted their cases to show that reputation and character were not conclusive.

Salomons addressed for over two hours but Sir W. M. Manning's address was very shortly reported. Mr Justice Cheeke in summing up, told the jury<sup>29</sup>,

With reference to damages, whether men are rich or poor, high in society or low, when they come into a Court of justice all distinctions are levelled. They stand upon the floor of the Court as man against man.

<sup>25</sup> *SMH* 22 August 1865.

<sup>26</sup> *SMH* 24 August 1865.

<sup>27</sup> *SMH* 24 August 1865.

<sup>28</sup> *SMH* 25 August 1865.

<sup>29</sup> *SMH* 25 August 1865.

If you come to the question, you will find such damages as are reasonable between the parties concerned.

On the fourth day the jury retired about 5 pm and returned at 8 pm with a verdict for the plaintiff for £500 damages. What happened then in Court is reported as follows<sup>30</sup>:

Mr Isaacs said: May it please your Honour. I am instructed, on behalf of my client, Mr Holt, to say that the sole object he had in view in instituting the proceeding was to vindicate his character from what appeared to be a gross aspersion cast upon it without any possible ground. Having obtained this object by the verdict of the gentlemen of the jury, in regard to whom there can be no possible suspicion of partiality or other improper feeling, he now desires neither damages nor costs.

The Court was densely crowded, and the cheering which followed this announcement was most enthusiastic.

*Mr Salomons*: May it please your Honour. After the address of my learned friend I wish on behalf of my client (who is not in a state of mind to speak) to say that as Mr Holt has acted in this generous and noble manner he feels towards him as he is bound to feel — the greatest respect — and offers his thanks. And naturally he is inclined to think that a man who acts in this manner is entitled to be believed when he pledges his word as a man of honour. (Renewed cheers.)

*Mr Holt* said: I have freely forgiven Mr Dalgleish for all the pain and annoyance he has caused me and I offer him my hand. The offer was accepted and the litigants shook hands. On leaving the Court Mr Holt was greeted with rounds of applause.

In a leading article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 26 August 1865, it was written:

We should be glad to think that such an example will have its weight upon the future conduct of the defendant. He has many times appeared before the public with accusations which, if believed, would have consigned to infamy the persons he accused. In every instance when brought to legal test his imputations have failed . . . We know of no instance in our colonial experience of such frequent attempts by one man, as have occupied our courts of justice, and been at the same time met by such signal and ignominious defeat.

Dalgleish then wrote<sup>31</sup>:

<sup>30</sup> *SMH* 25 August 1865.

<sup>31</sup> *SMH* 29 August 1865.

*An Energetic Colonist*

To Thomas Holt Esq., Cooks River

Sir — Impressed with the conviction that the generosity of your action, at the close of the proceedings yesterday, demands from me a more ample acknowledgment than that made by my advocate in Court, I have no difficulty in tendering you the assurances of my deep regret for the suffering which you have been occasioned.

It is due to myself to reiterate that which I have always affirmed, and to which, under the sanction of an oath, I have deposed, that, in the institution of proceedings against you I was not consciously actuated by any feeling of malice. I am of course aware that the tribunal to which you appealed has pronounced against me on this ground; but the testimony of my conscience is my support and consolation under the circumstances which would otherwise be of the most distressing character. With the expression of my sorrow for the pain you have undergone in the course of the investigations instituted by me — not for the purpose of causing you suffering, but, as I then believed, in the discharge of a public duty.

I have the honor to be Sir  
Your most obedient servant  
(Sgd) D. C. Dalgleish

Sydney 25 August 1865

P.S. You are at liberty to use this in any way you think fit — DCD.

This letter brought the following reply<sup>32</sup>:

'The Warren' near Sydney  
26 August 1865

Mr D. C. Dalgleish, Sussex Street, Sydney.

Sir, —I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter of yesterday's date, with which I am very much pleased.

I will forward copies of it to Mrs Holt (who is in Germany) and also to my relatives in distant parts of the world, and I am sure that they will feel highly gratified with it.

With the shaking of our hands on Thursday I trust that every particle of unkind feeling that may have previously existed in our minds was COMPLETELY SHAKEN OFF. Let the past be forgotten, and for the future let us both strive to promote peace and goodwill amongst our fellow-countrymen, as far as our influence extends. By doing this, we shall not only be adding to the happiness of others, but also increasing our own.

Believe me to be, faithfully yours,  
(signed) Thomas Holt

<sup>32</sup> SMH 29 August 1865.

The civil trial was described in the following, taken from an unidentified news-cutting

HOLT V. DALGLEISH

The Court is assembled and luncheon is O'er  
The people are crowding the Banco Court floor —  
Such a crowd that you scarce can get in at the door.  
And the plaintiff is there with his counsellors four —  
Great Manning the lofty and Martin whose store  
    of fun and of fancy makes everyone roar;  
Cute Isaacs whom no one can e'er think a bore,  
Grave Dalley, that hard working slave of the law;  
The Puer Hebraicus, famous for jaw,  
For his wit so refined, and his manner so courteous to all, and his  
    voice 'tween a sneak and a snore;  
And the dainty defendant, great Daniel, who swore  
That while he could blather he'd never work more  
But a living pick up, like a lazy old squaw,  
By kicking up rows at a gentleman's door  
All these are assembled, as often before —  
Arrayed for the battle and eager for war.

Then Mr Justice Cheeke of whom I'd like to speak  
With all the great respect that's due unto a first-rate beak  
    Opens the sport  
    That is, the Court —  
And starting the horses — the Counsel I should say —  
    Isaacs gallantly leading  
    By reading the pleading  
    They are off ere 'Jack Robertson' anyone could say.

Then quickly did keen Manning  
Poor Daniel sharply scanning  
His tough hide soundly tanning  
Expose his paltry planning  
    His dirty tricks.  
In vain his Counsel chatters  
The jury coarsely flatters  
Foul words around bespatters  
They're left like two poor 'hatters'  
    In hopeless fix.

So the battle was ended — the victory won —  
And everyone said it was capital fun

*An Energetic Colonist*

For the Jury declared when the fighting was done  
That Holt had a character — Daniel none  
And then just to teach this rough son of a gun  
That 'twere better in future such mischief to shun  
That 'twere well ere again he so worries and hounds  
An honest man down — to make sure of his grounds  
    They enliven the joke  
    Make him sorry he spoke  
By fining poor Daniel five hundred pounds  
    But rather most curiously  
    He whom injuriously  
    Daniel had libelled and treated so furiously  
    With a grand generosity  
Forgives fallen Daniel his blackguard atrocity  
    Forgives him the fine  
    And the costs of the shine  
(And I'd not be surprised should he ask him to dine)  
    At which all the folks clap  
    While this crest-fallen chap  
    Sneaks off home in the dark like a rat from the trap.

Two months later Holt's civil action against Captain Scott for assault and false imprisonment (in committing him to trial, holding him to bail and keeping him in custody) was heard before Mr Justice Cheeke and a jury of four in the Supreme Court<sup>33</sup>. Messrs Martin, qc, and Isaacs appeared for Holt, instructed by Messrs Johnson and Johnson and Messrs Salomons and Rogers appeared for Captain Scott, instructed by Mr Driver.

It was necessary for the plaintiff, under an Act for the protection of Justices of the Peace, to prove that Captain Scott's actions were done maliciously and without reasonable cause. To prove this the depositions of the proceedings before Scott were tendered and evidence given that Mr Driver, who was an MLA, who appeared for Dalgleish in the prosecution of Holt and then was Scott's solicitor in the action, had strongly urged Scott to commit Holt because he was a rich man; declaring that Scott could never again commit a poor man for such an offence if he failed to commit Holt. Evidence was also given that Mr Driver was Chairman of a Select Committee appointed in 1862 to enquire into the conduct of Scott, at which Driver and other members of the Committee had put a number of offensive questions to Scott and, in the report of the Committee, Scott was charged with gross incompetency and his dismissal recommended.

<sup>33</sup> *SMH* 31 October 1865; 1 November 1865.



Further evidence related to a conversation which Scott had in an omnibus, at the time of his hearing of Dalgleish's charges against Holt, with Mr Justice Hargrave (then Solicitor-General) and Mr Johnson; Scott said that he could not see that the 'charge had been made out' or 'how it could be made out' or words to that effect. From these circumstances Mr Martin urged the jury to find that Captain Scott's committal of Holt was due to an improper motive which might have been a desire to court popularity or to please some person or that he was acting under the pressure of Mr Driver.

Heavy damages were not sought and up to the last moment an admission from Scott that he had acted wrongly would have been accepted by Holt. No witnesses were called for the defence but Mr Salomons contended that a magistrate was not liable for any act done by him in the exercise of a discretionary power given by the statute, that there was no proof of corrupt motives and that there was no absence of reasonable and probable cause.

The Court was crowded during the whole trial, which excited a great deal of interest and, after a retirement of three-quarters of an hour the jury returned with a verdict for the defendant. On the announcement of the verdict a few of those present attempted to cheer, but the attempt was promptly suppressed by the officers of the Court<sup>34</sup>.

Holt was convinced that the verdict of the jury demonstrated that the statutory protection<sup>35</sup> afforded to justices of the peace was so complete that malice could rarely, if ever, be proven against a magistrate to the satisfaction of a jury and that Scott was a person who, being utterly ignorant of the law, incapable of understanding the bearing of evidence and susceptible to the influence of others who possessed his confidence or excited his fears, was not fit to hold the responsible position of Police Magistrate. In a fifty-nine page letter<sup>36</sup> to the Governor, Sir John Young, he elaborated these views and sought the removal of Scott from his office. The Governor referred the case to the Attorney-General (James Martin) who gave his opinion that the report of the Select Committee of the Assembly and the result of Holt's action against Scott must be sufficient to obviate the necessity for further enquiry.

This opinion was communicated to Holt, who was then overseas and replied that the Attorney-General (who had been Holt's Counsel in his action against Scott) had told him, after carefully going into the case before trial, that he felt certain that, if there was no friend of Scott's on the jury, Holt would get a verdict notwithstanding the Act, 14 Vic No. 43.

Certain remarks in Holt's letter were interpreted by Sir John Young

<sup>34</sup> *SMH* 1 November 1865.

<sup>35</sup> 14 Vic. No. 43.

<sup>36</sup> 20 April 1866.

as broadly charging him (Sir John) with partiality, because Scott was his cousin, but Sir John pointed out that Scott had been appointed by Sir William Denison's Government before he (Sir John) came to the Colony. Sir John adhered to his original decision, acting on the advice of responsible advisers, not to take any action in the matter and forwarded all the papers to the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos.

Holt considered appealing to Her Majesty and remained in Europe longer than he intended so that he could be present on the appeal, if required, but no appeal was made<sup>37</sup>.

### 3 *Visit to Europe 1866-68*

After the trial of his action against Scott, Holt was free to rejoin his wife and family in Europe after completion of preparations for his departure. Shortly before leaving he was tendered a number of farewell functions.

Camden College gave him a large luncheon party, the inhabitants of Newtown staged a banquet at which he was presented with an address engrossed on vellum expressing their sense of obligation and attachment to him.

. . . as one who ably represented this constituency in Parliament, as a liberal contributor to our local charities, as a large employer of labour, as an earnest supporter of our several Churches without undue regard to denominational peculiarities and as a staunch friend to our educational institutions, we have long admired the course you have pursued through evil and good report, and shall anxiously look for your return to our neighbourhood with your excellent family. . . .

An address, signed by one hundred and twenty members of the Loyal St John's Lodge, Independent Order of Odd Fellow, Manchester Unity, was also presented to him by members of the Lodge, dressed in the regalia of the order. He received another address from his workmen at 'The Warren'<sup>1</sup>. His final farewell function was a picnic at 'Sans Souci' attended by seventy representatives of various religious denominations and all shades of political opinion<sup>2</sup>.

On 21 April 1866 he departed, with his son Alfred (aged fifteen), on RMSS *Madras* (1230 tons) for Galle and thence by overland route to England. The forty-five passengers included an old friend, Captain Crozier.

After a separation of two and a half years from his wife and some of

<sup>37</sup> C.O. 201/542 pp. 319-413 (P.R.O. 1825-26, M.L.).

<sup>1</sup> *SMH* 11 April 1866.

<sup>2</sup> *SMH* 16 April 1866.

his children a joyous reunion took place and, after nearly a quarter of a century's absence from the country of his birth, he had the pleasure of again meeting relatives and friends and revisiting places which had remained dear in his memory.

Their son, Walter, was already at school in Berne. Alfred was placed at school in Lausanne, and Holt, with his wife and daughters, travelled extensively through Europe, visiting Italy, Germany, Switzerland and France. In 1867, he took a house at Autueil, a suburb of Paris, where his brother Joseph and his wife stayed with them<sup>3</sup>. The house was near the Champs de Mars where the Paris Exhibition then covered over forty acres, attracting over six million visitors and at which New South Wales was represented. At the Paris Exhibition Holt purchased a large number of sculptures and paintings which he, later, installed in the art gallery at 'The Warren'.

Mere sightseeing was insufficient to satisfy his restless and inquiring mind and he sought to improve his knowledge of overseas conditions which could be of assistance in his adopted country. Rural interests in England, France and Germany interested him and he visited many sheep farms and made an intensive study of pasture improvement. As has already been mentioned he also purchased a large quantity of grass seeds to improve his Arthursleigh and Sutherland properties<sup>4</sup> and made a special trip from Paris to the Ile de Ré to inspect Dr Kemmerer's experimental oyster culture.

He also sought to inform himself about the procedure and practice of the French law courts and, for this purpose, engaged a French barrister and attended many trials<sup>5</sup>, the information gained being used in the Legislative Council.

In Italy he had an audience with the Pope which had been arranged by Lord Talbot<sup>6</sup>.

While in France he visited his sister whose husband had inherited a castle (Château de la Place) from a Mr Lee, an Englishman who was a large landed proprietor in France. While there he learned much about a supposed remedy for many physical ills which had been discovered by Lee. This was a mixture of brandy and salt, used both internally and externally for many ills, including sprains, gout, jaundice, dysentery, cancer and bites of serpents. Holt wrote an article which was published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*<sup>7</sup>, and which concluded, 'I do not think a couple of tablespoons (the maximum dose) of brandy, salt and hot water, can do any harm, although the one ingredient (brandy) has caused the ruin of many — very many — souls and bodies.'

<sup>3</sup> Information from the late Miss Annie Holt to Dr W. G. Holt, June 1945.

<sup>4</sup> *Goulburn Herald and Chronicle*, 20 July 1867.

<sup>5</sup> *Liverpool Centenary Booklet* (ML).

<sup>6</sup> *SMH* 22 July 1868.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*, 22 May 1868.

Having remained overseas longer than he intended, to be present if an appeal were made to Her Majesty in Scott's case, and having found no appeal made, he decided to return to Australia as soon as possible to have 'The Warren' in order for the return of his wife and daughters and to relieve his attorneys, his son Frederick and Mr Walker, of their arduous duties.

Holt returned with his son Alfred by the P & O steamship *Bombay* (1200 tons) from Galle, leaving his son Walter at school in Switzerland, and arrived in Sydney on 9 July 1868.

A number of his friends had arranged to charter a steamer to welcome Holt on the harbour, but the arrival of the mail packet at early dawn frustrated this project<sup>8</sup>. A meeting was then held at the Chamber of Commerce to decide some suitable way of testifying the personal regard of his friends and of congratulating him on his safe return to the colony. The meeting decided in favour of a public dinner rather than a picnic at 'Sans Souci' because the daylight was too short in July. Deputations from both Newtown and Marrickville presented him with addresses of welcome and the *Sydney Morning Herald's* leading article welcomed the re-appearance of a colonist who had reciprocated the obligations he had incurred.

The public dinner, held in the new Hotel de France, was a happy function, attended by one hundred representatives of various classes of citizens and chaired by the Hon John Hay, MLC, at which eulogistic references were made to the guest of honour<sup>9</sup>. The dinner was the subject of a leading article in the *Brisbane Courier*<sup>10</sup>, where it was referred to as being of more than ordinary importance, and a manifestation of the strong and genuine feeling against the system of absenteeism which had been a great bar to the solid progress and prosperity of the colonies. It lamented that Queensland was a poor colony because the greater part of the profits of its most important industry had to be sent out of the colony to mortgagees who resided elsewhere and expended them there.

Mrs Holt and their four daughters, with two governesses and one servant, left Plymouth on 5 September by the *Parramatta* (1521 tons) and arrived in Sydney on 24 November 1868 to take up residence at 'The Warren'.

#### 4 *Legislative Council of New South Wales*

On 28 September 1868, Holt was appointed to the Legislative Council on the nomination of Sir John Robertson and took his seat on 13

<sup>8</sup> *SMH* 10 July 1868.

<sup>9</sup> *SMH* 11, 13, 28 July 1868.

<sup>10</sup> 29 July 1868.

October of the year<sup>1</sup>. Thirteen years later, shortly before leaving Australia, he, Sir Alfred Stephen, Sir John Robertson and Mr Docker had become the oldest members or past members of the House and those who had most regularly attended its sittings<sup>2</sup>.

During his membership of the Council he took part in many debates, particularly those relating to educational, social, fiscal and juridical subjects. He was also on many occasions a member of Select Committees appointed to inquire into matters before the House and was frequently included on the Standing Orders and Library Committees of the Council<sup>3</sup>.

When a public petition called in question the inequality of criminal sentences imposed by Cheeke, J. an instance was given of an old man, convicted of petty theft in a dwelling-house without violence, being sentenced to three years hard labour, whereas a man found guilty of manslaughter with violence and brutality received only twelve months' hard labour. The old man complained that if he had murdered the man from whom he took £5 he would have got off with a twelve-month sentence. Holt suggested that the appointment of a minister of justice and the establishment of a Court of Appeal, as in France, would enable such inequalities to be remedied<sup>4</sup>. (Both these suggestions were later adopted and Holt's friend, George Wigram Allen, became the first Minister of Justice, in December 1873<sup>5</sup>.)

Holt strongly supported the Matrimonial Causes Bill, insisting that

If there had been no cases of adultery in the Colony the Act was not needed; but, if there had been a single case, he thought the Divorce Act ought to be passed. He did not think the five Anglican bishops in the Colony had been in a position to judge the merits of the Act. If one of them had had an adulterous wife his sentiments might have been changed . . . None but married members had hitherto participated in the debate; and he trusted that those who were bachelors would abstain from offering opinions on the subject, for he thought it was patent that they were not competent authorities (laughter). The bill did not in the slightest degree interfere with the discipline of any church. He greatly admired the preservation of church liberties. When he was in Australia he had been much struck with the liberties and

<sup>1</sup> *Official History of N.S.W. (1788-1888)* p. 722; letter 5 September 1868 inviting T. Holt to become a member of the Legislative Council (H.P.): *Illustrated Sydney News*, 27 September 1868.

<sup>2</sup> *N.S.W. Parliamentary Debates*, 1 September 1881.

<sup>3</sup> e.g. *The Empire*, 16 November 1871, 3 May 1872; *SMH* 7 November 1872, 5 November 1874. 30 January 1875, 18 November 1875, 4 February 1876; 14 December 1876. *N.S.W. Parly. Debates* 29 October 1878, 30 November 1877, 12 September 1878.

<sup>4</sup> *The Empire*, 22 April 1870.    <sup>5</sup> *Official History of N.S.W. (1788-1883)*, p. 761.

immunities allowed the Jews in that country. They were permitted the exercise of the privileges they had enjoyed in the time of Christ. Among them was divorce; and a Jewish friend of his told him one day that he had obtained a divorce from his wife because she had an unendurably bad breath (laughter). He did not think there was an instance upon record of the House of Lords refusing divorce where there had been adultery in the case<sup>6</sup>.

Some time after this bill became law, the Matrimonial Causes Act Amendment Bill came before the House on several occasions. This measure proposed to give the same rights to women in divorce matters as then enjoyed by men but met with considerable opposition. Holt supported it

He was fighting a battle on behalf of the ladies of the Colony. He contended that, under the present system, women were treated worse than they were in a Turkish harem<sup>7</sup>.

Sir Alfred Stephen opposed it and quoted the opinions of the Lord Chancellor and other eminent English judges to support him. Holt said that

the simple point they had to deal with was the giving of equal justice to husband and wife and he had listened with repugnance to all the learned verbiage with which this plain question had been surrounded. If the Legislative Council was a great legal authority, they were not to throw aside the exercise of their common sense on the subject<sup>8</sup>.

The bill eventually became law<sup>9</sup>.

When it was proposed to subsidise the establishment of a line of steam mail packets to go via the United States of America to England, Holt looked upon it as far more important that we should be connected with the United States than with England. In a very few years she would be the greatest nation on the face of the earth<sup>10</sup>. Two years earlier he had urged the subsidising of mail steamers to and from San Francisco believing that, with an over-population of America, there would be an exodus to Australia<sup>11</sup>.

He was concerned with the preservation of timber, not only red gum and turpentine, but other trees and in 1873 urged the Government to take immediate steps to preserve them<sup>12</sup>. It was 1881, however, before the Government moved and Holt deplored that there had been so much

<sup>6</sup> *The Empire*, 20 October 1870.

<sup>7</sup> *SMH* 26 May 1876.

<sup>8</sup> *SMH* 6 December 1878.

<sup>9</sup> Sec. 1, 44 Vic. No. 31.

<sup>10</sup> *SMH* 24 April 1873.

<sup>11</sup> Letter 25 May 1871, Parkes Correspondence p. 365 (ML) A886.

<sup>12</sup> *SMH* 4 December 1873.

delay during which valuable timber, including cedar and ironbark, had been destroyed<sup>13</sup>.

He fathered a bill, in 1874, to legalise the marriage of a man with his deceased wife's sister, claiming that the measure had the support not only of the English Church, but of the Jews. He failed then to have the bill passed but, the following year, despite opposition and the suggestion that he had a personal interest — to which he replied 'My wife has no sisters living' — the bill was passed<sup>14</sup> and became law (39 Vic. No. 20).

He continually advocated the cause of the labouring class, believed that trades unions did a great amount of good and, had it not been for them, the working men of England would have been little better than serfs<sup>15</sup>. He opposed amendments to the Real Property Act, which might prevent working men from understanding it, on the basis that the Act was largely 'a poor man's Act'<sup>16</sup>. He considered 2/6d per day for a juryman was too low for a fair day's work<sup>17</sup> and spoke strongly in favour of limiting the working hours of young females<sup>18</sup>. He further claimed for the labouring class the opportunity of making small investments in Government securities, as was done in France<sup>19</sup>. He considered the Sydney Savings Bank a useful institution but, as it was only under the control of the Government for appointment of trustees and for guaranteeing £60,000 of the £1,250,000 deposited, contended that it should be solely a Government institution and discontinue its practice of advancing money to other banks<sup>20</sup>. In opposing the Colonial Wine Sale Act Repeal Bill, he urged that the sale of colonial wine should be encouraged and recounted that, in Spain, where wine was sold at 1½d per gallon, he had never seen a drunk Spaniard though he has seen drunken Englishmen there<sup>21</sup>.

He continually opposed magistrates being given greater responsibilities, doubtless still suffering from being himself wrongly committed for trial by a magistrate, calling them 'men without education, character, or anything else to recommend them, having been appointed merely because they had rendered some service to former Governments'.

When in Paris, I said to a barrister, 'Are any of your Juges de Paix appointed from among non-professional men who have never studied

<sup>13</sup> *NSW Parl. Debates* vol 5, (pp. 3-6).

<sup>14</sup> *SMH* 26 February 1874; 5 March 1874; 26 March 1874; 13 May 1875; 3 June 1875; 23 July 1875; 17 February 1876.

<sup>15</sup> *SMH* 18 August 1876.

<sup>16</sup> *SMH* 29 March 1878.

<sup>17</sup> *SMH* 18 April 1878.

<sup>18</sup> *SMH* 28 June 1877.

<sup>19</sup> *SMH* 18 August 1876.

<sup>20</sup> *SMH* 25 November 1875.

<sup>21</sup> *SMH* 20 January 1876.

the law?' 'Nonsense,' he said 'It would be monstrous'; and he was amused at my ignorance in asking such a question. 'But,' I said, 'suppose the Minister of Justice has some friend or relation whom he wished to make a Juge de Paix, could he not do so?' 'No,' he said 'No man in his senses would ever do such a thing.' Yet my honourable friend opposite does it every day; he has done it not once or twice, but hundreds of times. A list of 250 unpaid magistrates appeared in the *Gazette* not many days ago, and not one of the number has ever studied the law<sup>22</sup>.

His experiences, both when maliciously prosecuted for impersonation in 1865 and during his study of the treatment of persons on trial there and in France, probably influenced him to move the House, on several occasions, that persons on trial should not be required to enter the dock, except in special circumstances, and that they should be at liberty to sit or stand at their option. Humanity, he stressed, required that those whom the law presumed to be innocent should not be subject to this extra strain and torture; the practice was unjust, cruel, degrading and unnecessary. Having attended trials in Paris he found there no dock and an accused was allowed to be seated.

Although usually supported by a former Attorney-General, Sir George Innes, and others, he never succeeded in overcoming the opposition of men with long experience of criminal trials, such as Sir Alfred Stephen, Sir William Manning, Edward Butler and W. J. Foster, who claimed that it was better to leave these matters in the discretion of the Court. His motions were invariably defeated<sup>23</sup>. A final effort to give effect to his proposals was to move an amendment to the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, which included a provision giving the presiding judge the power to order an accused to enter the dock (except in libel or simple assault) or to allow him to remain on the floor of the Court, and to sit down if the judge should see fit. But his amendment was defeated<sup>24</sup> and the Bill became law<sup>25</sup>.

He contended further that the office of Master in Equity should be abolished and that the present Master (A. T. Holroyd) should not be appointed an additional judge on the Supreme Court. He knew Holroyd well, having been a co-director with him for seven years until 1862 on the board of the AMP Society, and was well aware of his forceful and overbearing personality. In addition he had had his Pymont land

<sup>22</sup> *SMH* 28 July 1876; 19 July 1877; 28 February 1878; vol. 5 *Parl. Debates* (1881) pp. 3-6. *The Empire* 25 February 1869; 4 March 1869; 5 March 1869.

<sup>23</sup> *The Empire*, 22 April 1870; *SMH* 16 March 1876; 24 March 1876; 7 April 1876; 28 April 1876; 9 February 1877, 7 March 1878; 10 October 1878; Printed Report of Speech on 6 March 1878 (M.L. 042 p. 464).

<sup>24</sup> *NSW Parl. Debates* 31 August 1881.

<sup>25</sup> Sec. 335, 46 Vic. No. 17; now Sec. 400 Crimes Act, 1900.



case (Attorney-General v Holt & Ors) delayed in Holroyd's office for over three years, while Holroyd was endeavouring to fill two offices at the same time; he was also disturbed by Holroyd's most unbearable temper, abuse of professional men and incompetence.<sup>26</sup>

When De Salis introduced the Conciliators Appointment Bill, based on the Danish system of courts of conciliation, Holt supported the principle of compelling intending litigants, before being allowed to commence an action, to attempt to have their differences settled by respectable men who had studied the law and were chosen because of their good sense and conciliatory spirit. This system obtained also in Germany and France and, in the latter country, it was claimed that about seventy-five per cent of the cases were settled without the necessity of going to court. He suggested that the late Chief Justice (Sir Alfred Stephen) should be a conciliator with a salary of about £4,000-£5,000 per annum. The bill, however, failed<sup>27</sup>.

He believed that there would be a great saving of time and inconvenience if certain petty offences were dealt with by a fine without the necessity of attending Court (as is now done with certain traffic offences).

When he was in Berlin it was an offence to smoke in the streets and he, being inadvertently guilty of that offence, was accosted by two police officers who took his name and address and, without being summoned before any court, he received a notice informing him that he was fined one or two dollars which he was directed to pay into the Treasury within a certain period but, at the same time, intimating that, if he had any objection to offer, he could attend at a certain time and place to do so<sup>28</sup>.

In 1879, he introduced a bill to amalgamate the two branches of the legal profession, but failed to have it passed<sup>29</sup>.

He opposed a bill to give the University Senate the power, without examination, to confer the degree of MA upon BA graduates, as at Oxford and Cambridge, and claimed that university examinations were mere shams.

Look at the examinations in England. Lord Eldon said that he was examined for his degree in Hebrew and English History. For the first he was asked what was the Hebrew for 'Place of the Skull' and replied 'Golgotha'; and for the latter was asked 'Who founded the University of Oxford?' and his answer was 'Alfred'. So he passed his

<sup>26</sup> *SMH* 25 April 1879; 31 August 1881; Letter T. Holt to Minister of Justice, 11 March 1880 (*New South Wales V & P* (1879-80) vol. 3).

<sup>27</sup> *New South Wales Parliamentary Debates*, 3 August 1881.

<sup>28</sup> *SMH* 8 November 1878.

<sup>29</sup> *SMH* 9 May 1879.

exam. Why should they not all be M.A.'s at that rate and why should the title be restricted to a select few?

This produced yet another clash with Sir Alfred Stephen, who was nettled by Holt's remarks<sup>30</sup>.

At one time Holt believed in denominational schools but, after serving on the Council of Education and notwithstanding opposition by the Church of England, the Roman Catholics and his own denomination, the Congregationalists, he was convinced that the State educational system was the best for the people. He asked:

Where is the breach of trust in Parliament withdrawing from denominational schools the Endowment which it thought proper for a time to give them? It reminds me of an incident which occurred in Rome. An Englishman was in the habit of giving a small sum to a beggar, and because he thought fit to discontinue it the beggar sued him, alleging that he depended upon the alms which the gentleman had given him. It is the same in regard to denominational schools. . . . Bigotry was not confined to one church. He remembered well in a case of his own that, having a child at the point of death, and the doctor recommending that it be baptised, he baptised it himself in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. A clergyman, however, refused to pronounce the burial service on the ground that the child had not been baptised. Complaint of this was made to Bishop Broughton, who gave the clergyman a rap over the knuckles<sup>31</sup>.

One of his last acts in the Legislative Council was to move the adoption of an address in reply to the Governor's speech when he said he knew of no country where such universal prosperity, from the highest to the labouring classes, existed other than in the United States of America.

If we compare what has been done by the Government of the two Knights [Sir Henry Parkes and Sir John Robertson] since they joined one another with a determination to work solely for the benefit of the country, with what was done by their respective Governments when they sat on opposite sides of the Assembly, I think we shall have reason to be proud of their union.

Reviewing Acts which had been passed since he entered the Council, he thought that the Public Instruction Act exceeded in importance all others which had been passed in the Colony, 126 new schools had been established and twenty-four thousand children, not previously attending school, had been brought under regular instruction.

<sup>30</sup> *SMH* 17 May 1877.

<sup>31</sup> *N.S.W. Parliamentary Debates*, 13 November 1879, 11 March 1880.

### *Cook's River, Marrickville, 1864-80*

He believed the time had arrived to restrict Chinese immigration, although he had not always thought so when the influx was small.

I think former Governments made mistakes in allowing our gold and tin mines to be overrun by foreigners who had no stake in the country. If those foreigners had engaged in shepherding or in agriculture, they could have been useful to the country but they went away to other countries with the wealth they took from our soil.

In regard to the Government's proposal to open another two hundred and fifty miles of railway he said:

I remember when railways were first constructed in the Colony, having been a director with you, I think, Mr President, in the company originally formed to carry out a railway scheme. We thought then a great deal of spending a sum of £10,000 and constructing a few score miles of line. Our ideas have since been much expanded. We now think as little of a few millions of pounds as we did of a few thousands at that time<sup>32</sup>.

Holt left for Europe on 23 September 1881 and resigned from the Legislative Council on 16 December 1883.

### 5 *Sydney Water Supply*

While overseas (1866-68) Holt was asked by Lord Talbot how Sydney was supplied with water and the only answer he could give was that in wet weather it was well supplied, but in times of drought it was very likely to run short. Lord Talbot wondered that the people of Sydney did not get a better supply and Holt told him that the subject had been thought of, and that before long something would be done<sup>1</sup>. In fact, from an early date, Holt had been interested in having the water supply to Sydney improved and his activities in this regard appear from the following brief resumé of efforts made to improve the supply.

In the early years of Sydney's settlement the stream flowing from Hyde Park to Sydney Cove was the only source of water supply. When drought threatened this supply in 1790, tanks were excavated in the vicinity of Hunter Street to conserve some of the water and the stream became known as the Tank Stream. As early as 1795 this stream was being polluted by pigsties erected along its banks and, in 1824, John Busby, an English engineer, reported that its supply was being augmented by private wells and by water brought in barrels from adjoining swamps and lagoons, but that this water was inferior and prejudicial to health.

<sup>32</sup> *New South Wales Parliamentary Debates* Vol. 5 — Session 1881 — pp. 3-6.

<sup>1</sup> *SMH* 22 July 1868.

As a result of Busby's recommendations a tunnel (two and a quarter miles long with an average width of four feet and height of five feet), known as 'Busby's Bore', was constructed to bring water from the sandhills south of Sydney, known as the Lachlan Swamps (in Centennial Park) to Hyde Park from where, by 1844, some houses and fountains were supplied with water by reticulation pipes while those houses not so supplied had to have their water conveyed in carts from the reservoir. At this time the Tank Stream was used mainly as a sewer and was not covered over until about 1860<sup>2</sup>.

By 1851, Busby's tunnel was in a defective state when over two hundred Sydney business men (including Thomas Holt) petitioned the Government to increase the supply to Hyde Park reservoir from Botany or Cook's River, by an expenditure of £30,000, to be raised as a loan<sup>3</sup>. In 1852, a Commission investigated the position<sup>4</sup> and, as a result, the Busby Scheme was extended by using the watersheds of Waverley, Randwick and Botany to fill a number of dams, which were constructed to supplement the supply, and water was also pumped by three engines to the Crown Street reservoir from the Botany Stream before falling into Botany Bay<sup>5</sup>. The Lachlan and Botany Swamps, however, became drier and less retentive; water had to be shut off altogether at night and during the day users were warned to be frugal. In response to public demand a Royal Commission was appointed in 1867 to examine the position of Sydney's water supply.

In July 1868, while the Royal Commission was still proceeding, Holt was invited to place his views upon the water supply before a meeting of the Mayors and Aldermen of a number of municipalities. He suggested a dam across Cook's River which, if it proved successful, should connect with a dam on George's River. He offered, if the dam across Cook's River should be constructed by the municipalities and should prove a failure, to pay every shilling of the expense. He further offered to advance money on the bond of the corporations, to repay him only if the rest of the work relating to Cook's River proved successful and the water was made pure. At the meeting Holt also read a report from G. A. Mansfield, an architect, as to the practicality of damming George's River from Tom Ugly's Point. A committee was appointed to investigate the proposals<sup>6</sup>. No record has been found of the result of this investigation but, in October 1869, after spending two years

<sup>2</sup> J. F. Campbell, 'The Valley of the Tank Stream' 10 *RAHS. Jo.* 63; *The Cyclopaedia of NSW* (1907) p. 217.

<sup>3</sup> Petition to the Legislative Council, December 1851 (M.L. A285 p. 39).

<sup>4</sup> *SMH* 31 March 1876.

<sup>5</sup> *The Sydney Mail*, 17 January 1874; *The Cyclopaedia of New South Wales* (1907), p. 217.

<sup>6</sup> *SMH* 1 August 1868.

examining witnesses and inspecting, the Royal Commission made its report.

It concluded that there were only four plans which came into competition with one another:

- 1 the existing Botany scheme, defended by Bell, the City Engineer
- 2 the Warragamba scheme, on which Lieutenant Woore, one of the Commissioners, bestowed his patronage
- 3 the George's River Scheme, which found a stout advocate in Holt and
- 4 the Upper Nepean Scheme, to which the Commission, as a body, gave its recommendation<sup>7</sup>.

The Commission's report aroused considerable interest and controversy and was discussed by the Royal Society of NSW, of which Holt was a member; the Philosophical Society of NSW in 1866, became the Royal Society of New South Wales and was an original donor to the last-named Society's building fund<sup>8</sup>.

The Commission found that Holt's scheme of damming the George's River possessed two main weaknesses: it might take a long time for the salt to be entirely removed and, if the dam were made thoroughly sound by masonry, it would cost too much, while if made of loose material it was doubtful whether it would answer the purpose<sup>9</sup>. These findings were challenged. David Lennox, the famous bridge builder, held strong views on the importance of George's River as a water supply for Sydney and considered that the sooner the work was commenced the better<sup>10</sup>. Lennox had been the engineer for the Liverpool dam built by convicts under the charge of Major Christie, who wrote that 'within one week of the saltwater tide being arrested, the water above the dam was used by the inhabitants, and was no longer even brackish'<sup>11</sup>.

Holt refused to accept the Commission's findings as irrevocable and, in a letter to Henry Parkes, advocated a dam consisting of parallel embankments of loose stones, with interstices filled with sand, which could be constructed by convict labour and whose cost would be 'a mere nothing'<sup>12</sup>. He maintained that a dam at Cook's River, supplemented by a dam at George's River, was the answer and gave a large picnic to members of Parliament and mayors, with lunch and dinner at 'Sans

<sup>7</sup> Report of Commission on Water Supply of Sydney and its Suburbs; *SMH* 22 & 25 October 1869, 3 & 5 November 1869.

<sup>8</sup> *SMH* 18 November 1869, Minutes of the Philosophical Society of New South Wales 13 August 1856, vol. LV *Journal and Proceedings of the Royal Society of New South Wales* Letter 16 July 1970 from the Secretary of the Royal Society of New South Wales to H. T. E. Holt.

<sup>9</sup> *SMH* 25 October 1869.

<sup>10</sup> 6 *R.A.H.S. Jo.* 224; *SMH* 7 February 1871. <sup>11</sup> *SMH* 25 July 1870.

<sup>12</sup> Letter 1 February 1872 T. Holt to H. Parkes (ML Ap. 18/32).

Souci', 'on very fine George's River oysters', to explain the scheme. All present agreed that legislative action would be necessary to provide the funds<sup>13</sup>.

Using the pseudonym 'Aqua', Holt offered small money prizes for the best essays dealing with various aspects of water supply and Mr Justice Hargrave consented to adjudicate upon the fifteen essays submitted. These supported the view that the water would be purified from salt within a short time and that the proposed dam was a feasible proposition. The winning essay was by 'Chloride of Sodium' (Mr Auk Smith, an eminent hydraulic engineer from Victoria) which Holt forwarded to Parkes with a letter in which he maintained that, for £100,000 or less, ninety thousand million gallons of water then running waste could be secured by the dam. This would place New South Wales in a better position than Victoria and save the people of Sydney and a large part of the County of Cumberland from the horrors of a water famine. In urging speedy action on the proposal, he quoted Dr Franklin: 'For want of a nail the shoe was lost; and for want of a shoe the horse was lost; and for want of a horse the rider was lost, all for the want of a nail'<sup>14</sup>. In the Legislative Council Holt pressed the Government to prepare a measure for the better supply of water, instead of letting a plentiful supply run into the sea<sup>15</sup>.

The retention of the existing Botany scheme received strong support from the Mayor of Sydney who organised inspections of the Lachlan and Botany watersheds by large parties on horseback<sup>16</sup>. The Upper Nepean Scheme also had its supporters. One of these was Mr Moriarty, the brother of the Engineer-in-Chief for Harbours and Rivers who had originated the scheme. Mr Moriarty decried the George's River scheme in a letter which Holt termed 'slanderous', and forwarded a copy of his answer to Henry Parkes<sup>17</sup>.

Holt continued to press upon Parkes expert advice which he had received and urged Parkes to have the dam constructed from Tom Ugly's Point. He insisted that 'the extra cost of the convicts working at the dam, instead of idling their time in the gaols, would be very inconsiderable, as they must be clothed and fed wherever they are'<sup>18</sup>.

In November 1873 Holt arranged with Parkes for a large picnic

<sup>13</sup> *SMH* 23 January 1872.

<sup>14</sup> Letter, 24 July 1872, from Mr Justice Hargrave (unidentified newspaper cutting); letter T. Holt to H. Parkes, 20 July 1872 (M.L. vol. 16 Parkes Correspondence); letters T. Holt to H. Parkes 22 August 1872, 7 November 1872 (M.L. vol. 16 Parkes Correspondence) and A.886).

<sup>15</sup> *SMH* 6 November 1872.

<sup>16</sup> *The Empire*, 10 January 1873.

<sup>17</sup> Letter T. Holt to Henry Parkes, January 1873. (M.L. Vol. 16 Parkes Correspondence, A886).

<sup>18</sup> Letter T. Holt to Henry Parkes, 25 February 1873 (M.L. Vol. 16 Parkes Correspondence, A886).

at 'Sans Souci', preparatory to proceeding fifteen or twenty miles up the George's River by the Government steamer *Thetis* to inspect the source of the proposed water supply for Sydney and the site of the proposed dam from Tom Ugly's Point, which could also be used for the projected railway across George's River to Illawarra. Holt arranged for omnibuses to pick up the party at the Houses of Parliament and to transport it to 'Sans Souci'. The party comprised about fifty, including the Chief Justice (Sir James Martin), ministers, members of Parliament and others<sup>19</sup>.

But fate decreed otherwise. The *Thetis* ran aground on a sandbank, having failed to answer her helm, and the excursion up the George's River could not proceed. Instead, the party 'whetted their appetites on oysters', crossed the river in boats to see the oyster claires, returned for lunch at 'Sans Souci' and amused themselves by playing quoits. Thus the opportunity for influential parliamentarians to see the proposed source of water supply was lost. The most the party did was to agree that the damming of George's River would probably cost only one-fourth of the expected cost of the Upper Nepean Scheme<sup>20</sup>.

In succeeding years the quality and quantity of the supply from Botany watershed by the City Corporation deteriorated considerably. Numerous letters in the press from scientists, doctors and others complained of its contamination by nightsoil, dead animals, contents of garbage bins, stable refuse etc. One doctor described the water, then being drunk in Sydney, as 'worse than the worst London water in 1865'. Holt likened the Sydney Corporation as being under the guidance of a lifeless crew, like the crew in Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* and asked whether there was not 'death in the pot' to the unfortunates compelled to drink the water<sup>21</sup>. The deteriorating water supply was the subject of heated debates in both Houses until, eventually, the Government was aroused from its lethargy and appointed W. Clarke, an English hydraulic engineer, to investigate the position<sup>22</sup>.

Clarke, after an extensive investigation, recommended about 1878 that the Upper Nepean Scheme should be adopted. Holt then asked the Government to pause before carrying out this recommendation to spend over a million pounds to bring water sixty-three miles to Sydney, as if there were no means of storing water nearer Sydney<sup>23</sup>. He claimed that, although Clarke was a respectable engineer, he had done nothing but sewerage works; that he was preferring a scheme costing £1,250,000 to experimenting with the George's River Scheme at a cost of £90,000,

<sup>19</sup> Letters T. Holt to H. Parkes 30 October & 10 November 1873 (ML Parkes Correspondence, A923 & A658).

<sup>20</sup> *SMH* 26 November 1873.

<sup>21</sup> *SMH* 14 October 1873; 3 February 1874.

<sup>22</sup> *SMH* 17 & 30 July 1875; 4, 5, 7, 11 August 1875. 31 March 1876.

<sup>23</sup> *SMH* 11 September 1878.

and that his objections to the George's River Scheme appeared to be imaginary. As an earnest of his belief that the salt content would rapidly disappear, Holt stated in the Legislative Council, that he 'would be willing to deposit £10,000 in any bank to be forfeited if the water was not sweet'. It was apparent, at that time, that Holt was fighting a lost cause, but his energy and persistence to the last led Sir John Robertson to remark that Holt seemed to have 'a bee in his bonnet' when dealing with the George's River Supply<sup>24</sup>.

About 1879 work commenced on the Upper Nepean Scheme from Pheasant's Nest and about 1887 water flowed through numerous tunnels, cuttings and pipes to supply Sydney<sup>25</sup>. Since that date Sydney frequently experienced water shortages, notwithstanding many extensions and improvements, and in 1968 the Water Board approved a scheme to bring water from the Shoalhaven River, at a cost then estimated at \$117,000,000<sup>26</sup>.

### 6 *St Andrew's College*

When it was decided in 1868, to build a Presbyterian College within the University of Sydney, Holt became a subscriber to the St Andrew's College building fund<sup>1</sup>.

### 7 *St Paul's Church of England, Kogarah*

This church, in Rocky Point Road, was constructed in 1869, Holt being a subscriber to the cost of its construction<sup>1a</sup>.

### 8 *'The Warren' Lodge Chapel*

In the late 1860s Holt built a lodge at the entrance gates to 'the Warren' on the corner of Illawarra and Warren Roads, Marrickville. This later became the terminus of a horse-drawn bus which plied between the city and what was known as 'Warren Gates'<sup>1b</sup>.

In the lodge he erected a room larger than usual for the students of Camden College to preach in and for his daughters to conduct Sunday School classes in<sup>2</sup>. He did not expect that the room would be more than half-filled but, in December 1870, Arthur A. Aspinall, a student of

<sup>24</sup> *SMH* 24 July 1879.

<sup>25</sup> *The Cyclopaedia of New South Wales* (1907), p. 217 et seq.

<sup>26</sup> *SMH* and *Daily Telegraph*, 29 May 1968.

<sup>1</sup> *SMH* 9 September and 22 October 1868.

<sup>1a</sup> Philip Geeves and James Jervis, *Rockdale: Its Beginning and Development*, p. 63.

<sup>1b</sup> Letters from T. H. Compagnoni to H. T. E. Holt, 1 November 1960.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. 92. Newspaper cuttings, p. 97 (ML).



### *Cook's River, Marrickville, 1864-80*

Camden College, was invited to take an interest in the people of the district and the result was that the 'Lodge Chapel' soon became so crowded that it became necessary to build a church nearby<sup>3</sup>.

#### 9 *Marrickville (Now Roseby Memorial) Congregational Church*

In March 1871, 'the Rev. S. C. Kent of Newtown formed a fellowship, amongst the foundation members being the Hon Thomas Holt and Mrs Holt, Mr and Mrs Beckman, Mr and Mrs Moncur and Mr and Mrs and Miss Weeden'<sup>1</sup>.

Holt offered £200 on condition that a like sum was raised for the erection of the church. This was done, a block of land was obtained opposite the Warren Gates and the foundation-stone of the Congregational Church, Marrickville, was laid on 10 April 1871. Holt's daughter, Alice (then aged eighteen) laid the stone at a large gathering which included her parents and made an appropriate speech. The new church was to be built of stone, to seat three hundred and to cost £700. 'Its site is one of the prettiest parts of the Illawarra Road, opposite the Lodge at the entrance of the Warren.'

The foundation-stone laying proceedings were continued into the evening and tea was being served in a large bush house when a Chinese lantern caught alight. Some alarm was caused, but the men beat out the fire with their sticks. That evening Holt 'called on Mr Aspinall, a student of Camden College, who had been unanimously adopted by the church as its future pastor' to address the meeting<sup>2</sup>.

In October 1871 the church was completed and was 'dedicated to the Divine Service and Mr A. A. Aspinall had been called there to labour'. (Aspinall never completed his course as a student of Camden College but became a Presbyterian minister and founder of the Scots College, originally in the delicensed New Brighton Hotel, Lady Robinson's Beach in 1893, and later at Bellevue Hill. The Rev. W. Mathison became pastor of the Marrickville church in May 1872<sup>3</sup>.)

The Church built in 1871 was altogether inadequate by 1883 when, with its acres of meadow land being rapidly cut into building sites, its country lanes being converted into roadways, its fields into flower gardens and its sparse and scattered population increased and massed, Marrickville is developing into a large and important suburb<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> SMH 11 April 1871.

<sup>1</sup> *History of Marrickville, 1861-1936* (ML).

<sup>2</sup> SMH 11 April 1871.

<sup>3</sup> *Camden College* (supra); Minutes of the General Assembly October 1871 and 1872; *History of Marrickville* (supra) p. 81; *Rockdale: Its Beginning and Development* by Philip Geeves and James Jervis, p. 121.

<sup>4</sup> SMH 1 October 1883.

So the 1871 church was considerably altered and enlarged by removing its bell-gable, piercing the front end wall with a triple shaft window, adding a spire and tower and doubling the accommodation by the addition of a transept<sup>5</sup>. When completed it became known as the Roseby Memorial Congregational Church, Thomas Roseby (1844-1918) having been present when the foundation-stone of the original church was laid in 1871 and later having been a minister in the church for twenty-three years<sup>6</sup>.

When Holt's son Frederick, whose hearing had been seriously impaired in his youth, complained in 1875 to his father of his difficulty in obtaining religious instruction, his father wrote tender and affectionate letters to his son offering advice. These letters are preserved in the Mitchell Library and, as a result of them Frederick was received into membership of the church at Marrickville<sup>7</sup>.

Holt was a deacon of the Marrickville church for some years and in 1880 a delegate to the Congregational Assembly<sup>8</sup>.

#### 10 *Consumers' Gas and Oil Company*

In 1869, Holt became Chairman of the Provisional directorate of a company to be known as the Consumers' Gas and Oil Company which was to have a capital of £150,000 in £1 shares. His fellow provisional directors were the Hon John Hay, MLC, James Henderson, Richard Lloyd, CE, George W. Lord, MLA, T. S. Mort, F. L. Sentis and T. W. Smart, MLA.

It was intended that the company should compete with the Australian Gas Light Company by purchasing the Hartley Kerosene Company's mine and plant, manufacturing gas at Pymont and selling gas and oil to consumers in and around Sydney. Its prospectus contained a report by its consulting engineer, A. K. Smith, CE, FRSA (engineer for the Melbourne Gas Company and consulting engineer for other gas works in New South Wales and Victoria), claiming that the supply by the existing gas company was inadequate to the demand, of inferior quality, too expensive and that there was a good field for a second company which could adequately supply good gas at a reasonable price<sup>1</sup>.

This attempt to form an opposition company, the third attempt in six years, goaded the Australian Gas Light Company into taking speedy

<sup>5</sup> *SMH* 1 October 1883.

<sup>6</sup> Inscription in the Roseby Memorial Church; *SMH* 11 April 1871.

<sup>7</sup> Notes on joining the Congregational Order of the Church of Christ (ML 248.H.).

<sup>8</sup> Letter from the Congregational Union of N.S.W. to H. T. E. Holt 16 January 1959.

<sup>1</sup> *SMH* and *The Empire*, 8, 10, 11 September 1869.

action. In the daily press<sup>2</sup> the Rev. Ralph Mansfield (secretary of the A.G.L. Company since 1836) strongly refuted the claims of Mr Smith, showed that the Company's average profits were only eleven per cent per annum, and further sought to discourage the new company by reference to the policy in England of refusing competing companies the necessary legislative sanction to excavate streets and perform other works<sup>3</sup>.

Correspondence, published in the press between 'X' and 'No Monopoly' expanded the case for and against a new company and it was claimed that over one thousand intending consumers had signed a pledge to take the new company's gas<sup>4</sup>.

The new company then announced that 11 October 1869 would be the last day for lodging applications for shares<sup>5</sup>. No further reference to the new company has been traced in the newspapers subsequent to that date and no bill was brought before Parliament. In the Australian Historical Society's *Journal*, J. M. Forde stated:

In 1869 an attempt was made to start a rival company, but, as I am told, the existing company secured a controlling interest in the shares, and so killed the venture<sup>6</sup>.

This statement appears to be incorrect, as enquiry from the Australian Gas Light Company revealed that the company did not buy any shares in the proposed company and there was no record in its minutes or letter books, to indicate that such a course of action was possible or intended<sup>7</sup>.

During September and October 1869 extensive improvements were in progress on the premises of the A.G.L. Company at Darling Harbour which were designed to enable the prospective requirements of the city to be adequately supplied and to reduce the cost to the consumer<sup>8</sup>.

With the ventilation of the facts in the daily press it is not improbable that both promoters and prospective shareholders were deterred from proceeding further with the new company. Holt's own home 'The Warren', however, was first lit with gas in June 1872<sup>9</sup>. The late Mr Justice Piddington narrated that Holt, being upset at the cost of his gas bill, reduced his consumption of gas but found his bill higher. He complained of this to Thomas Buckland who informed him that, during

<sup>2</sup> *SMH, The Empire*, 18, 20, 21 September 1869.

<sup>3</sup> *SMH and The Empire*, 18, 20, 21 September 1869.

<sup>4</sup> *SMH* 22, 23, 27 September 1869.

<sup>5</sup> *SMH* 2, 5 October 1869.

<sup>6</sup> 'The Genesis of Commerce in Australia' by J. M. Forde, 3 *AHS. Jo.* 586.

<sup>7</sup> Letter and enclosure from the Secretary of the A.G.L. Co. 29 February 1968 to H. T. E. Holt.

<sup>8</sup> *SMH* 28 September; 8 October 1869.

<sup>9</sup> Diary of W. H. Holt (in the possession of Dr W. G. Holt).

one quarter, he (Buckland) used no gas at all but found his bill higher than ever.

Holt: What did you do, Tom?

Buckland: I went down to the company and saw the secretary. I didn't call him a scoundrel but got pretty near it.

Holt: What did he say?

Buckland: He told me no mistake was possible, and took me around the place and explained the whole working of the meters. *Thomas, they can't go wrong. He proved it. They can't go wrong.*

Holt: Well, what did you do?

Buckland: I paid the bill and went out and bought some shares in the company. They're the best investment I ever heard of. *They can't go wrong, Thomas*<sup>10</sup>.

## 11 *Meat Preservation*

### *Canning and Manufacture of Meat Extract*

The 1860's found Australia with an expanding pastoral industry, an inadequate local consumer market and exports mainly confined to tallow from boiling down surplus stock, while Europe's sustained demand for meat could not be satisfied.

In 1870 Holt chaired a meeting of forty-eight members of a provisional committee to form a meat preserving company to export products to London<sup>1</sup>, took up fifty shares in the company<sup>2</sup> and the company was later incorporated as the Sydney Meat-Preserving Co (Ltd), with the object of preserving meat and vegetables<sup>3</sup>.

It commenced operations early in 1872 on its 146 acre property at Haslem's (or Hacking) Creek, canning meat, manufacturing an extract of meat on Liebeg's process, in addition to boiling down cattle and sheep<sup>4</sup>, and much of the produce was exported to England. There were complaints locally that the canned product was tasteless except where vermicelli, carrots or macaroni had been introduced, but reports from England (to which place 400,000 pounds was shipped in six months of 1873) were satisfactory<sup>5</sup>.

The company carried on some operations on the same site continuously until 1964, when the works were closed, but still remained in existence as a subsidiary of F. J. Walker Limited<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> A. B. Piddington, *Worshipful Masters* (Angus & Robertson Ltd, Sydney, 1929).

<sup>1</sup> *The Empire*, 31 March 1870, 7 April 1870.

<sup>2</sup> Information from the secretary, F. J. Walker Ltd. (Holt disposed of his shares eighteen months later).

<sup>3</sup> Act 34 Vic. 17 June 1871.

<sup>4</sup> *The Empire* 15 December 1871.

<sup>5</sup> *SMH* 19 April 1873, 10 February 1874, letters to the Editor in November 1874.

<sup>6</sup> Information from the Secretary, F. J. Walker Limited.

### Refrigeration

T. S. Mort's deep and frustrating involvement in Morris' and Nicolle's experiments in refrigeration is interestingly recorded in Alan Barnard's *Visions and Profits*. In February 1868, Mort had promised a meeting of influential men in Sydney that he would send some hundreds of tons of refrigerated meat abroad within two months but, although money was subscribed for that purpose, he suffered humiliation by being unable to fulfil his promise<sup>7</sup>. Notwithstanding this failure he continued to support Nicolle in his experiments and succeeded in establishing a large freezing works at Darling Harbour with a slaughter house at Lithgow Valley both of which, in 1875, he disposed of, together with patent rights, to the N.S.W. Fresh Food and Ice Co Limited, in which he had a substantial interest<sup>8</sup>.

In September 1875 a party of parliamentarians (including Holt) and other public men were invited to inspect the freezing and slaughter works and sat down to a luncheon at which all the edibles, pigeon-pies, turkeys, roast beef and mutton, poultry, salads and sweets had been prepared many weeks or months earlier and frozen<sup>9</sup>. Mort then offered to return the money subscribed in 1868, which lay idle in the bank, but it was resolved that this course would be undesirable. He had already spent £100,000 on the venture and, as it was not convenient for him to find sufficient money to make a shipment to England, he announced that he intended to have the freezing operations confined to local markets.

This announcement prompted P. A. Jennings, Edward Knox, John Hay, Thomas Holt, J. B. Watt and John Alger to write Mort a letter<sup>10</sup> emphasising the national importance of finding an outlet for surplus Australian meat to the European markets and asking him to indicate his ideas as to the conditions under which stockowners and others interested might arrange for the purchase and shipment by him to England of a trial shipment<sup>11</sup>. Mort replied that he would be glad to undertake the matter if owners of stock and others were willing to place at his disposition a sufficient sum (£20,000 to £25,000) to make a trial shipment of three hundred to five hundred tons.

In November 1875, at a meeting at the Agricultural Society's rooms, Mort and Nicolle read papers on refrigeration while meat and five

<sup>7</sup> *SMH* 5 February 1868, 4 September 1875.

<sup>8</sup> Papers of T. S. Mort and N.S.W. Fresh Food and Ice Co 1873, 1882 (ML).

<sup>9</sup> *SMH* 4 September 1875; J. H. Heaton, *Australian Dictionary of Dates and Men of the Time*.

<sup>10</sup> 13 November 1875.

<sup>11</sup> Papers relating to T. S. Mort and N.S.W. Fresh Food and Ice Co. — letter 17 November 1875 (M.L.).

*An Energetic Colonist*

samples of oysters from Holt's claires, all of which had been preserved by refrigeration, were exhibited. Mort claimed that Holt had,

in the extensive claires which he has formed, not only laid the foundation of handsome fortunes for his children, but set an example to his fellow colonists, which I know he is most desirous they should follow, and which, if followed, will certainly lead them on to fortune also.

Mort also stated his pleasure in being asked to frame a plan by which he might be able to arrange a shipment overseas<sup>12</sup>.

The idea to raise funds for a trial shipment was supported by correspondents to the *Herald*<sup>13</sup>, and a circular was issued to pastoralists and others soliciting their co-operation in either making donations or subscribing £1 for every one hundred of their cattle and £1 for every one thousand of their sheep (a plan which had already been agreed to by seventy-five stockholders including Holt)<sup>14</sup>. By March 1876, over £20,000 had been subscribed<sup>15</sup>, in 1877 cattle were purchased and refrigerating machinery installed in the ship *Northam* but, on 9 July 1877, when the departure of the ship was already overdue, the refrigerating machinery broke down owing to the action of nitrate of ammonia on the coils of the evaporators. Nicolle reported that it would take three weeks to repair but, the captain protesting strongly against any further delay, the ship left with a staff to repair and work the machinery but without the meat, most of which had to be retailed to the public in Sydney<sup>16</sup>.

T. S. Mort died on 9 May 1878 without having seen his project succeed. But his enthusiasm and example persisted in the minds of others and led to a public meeting in the Exchange on 23 October 1879, where a subscription list was opened for a shipment of three hundred quarters of beef and one hundred carcasses of mutton in a refrigerator fitted under the Bell Coleman process. Holt was a member of the committee formed to receive subscriptions to purchase and ship the meat and was an original subscriber to the fund.

The meat was shipped on the steamer *Strathleven* which arrived in England in February 1880, becoming the first shipment of refrigerated meat to Europe from Australia<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> *SMH* 18 November 1875.

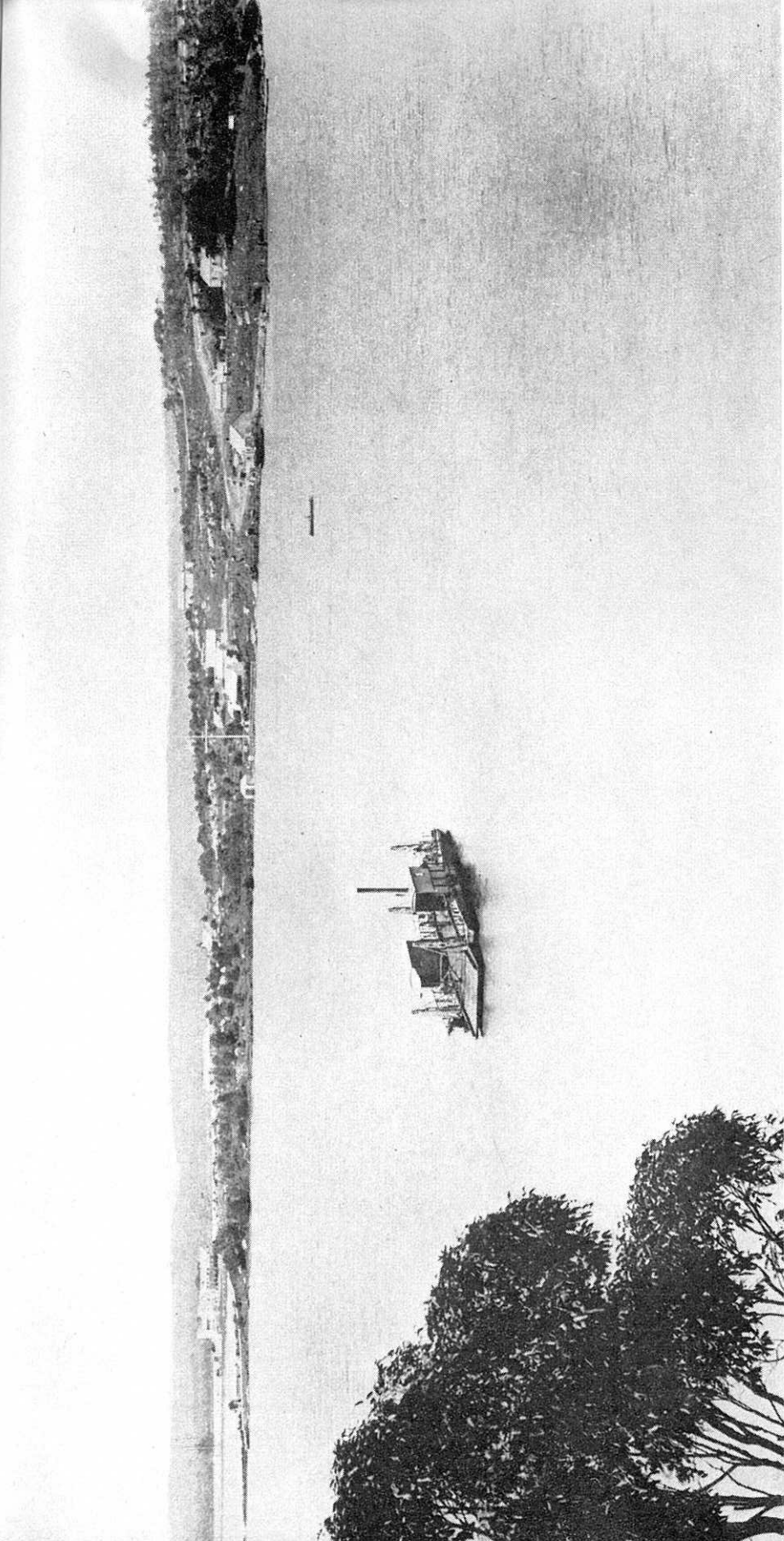
<sup>13</sup> *ibid* 19 November 1875, 22 November 1875.

<sup>14</sup> Circular 15 December 1875 (Papers of T. S. Mort and N.S.W. Fresh Food and Ice Co (1873-1882) (ML)).

<sup>15</sup> *SMH* 13 March 1876.

<sup>16</sup> Report of directors of N.S.W. Fresh Food and Ice Co. 30 August 1878 (ML).

<sup>17</sup> Papers of T. S. Mort and the N.S.W. Fresh Food and Ice Co (1873-1882) (ML).

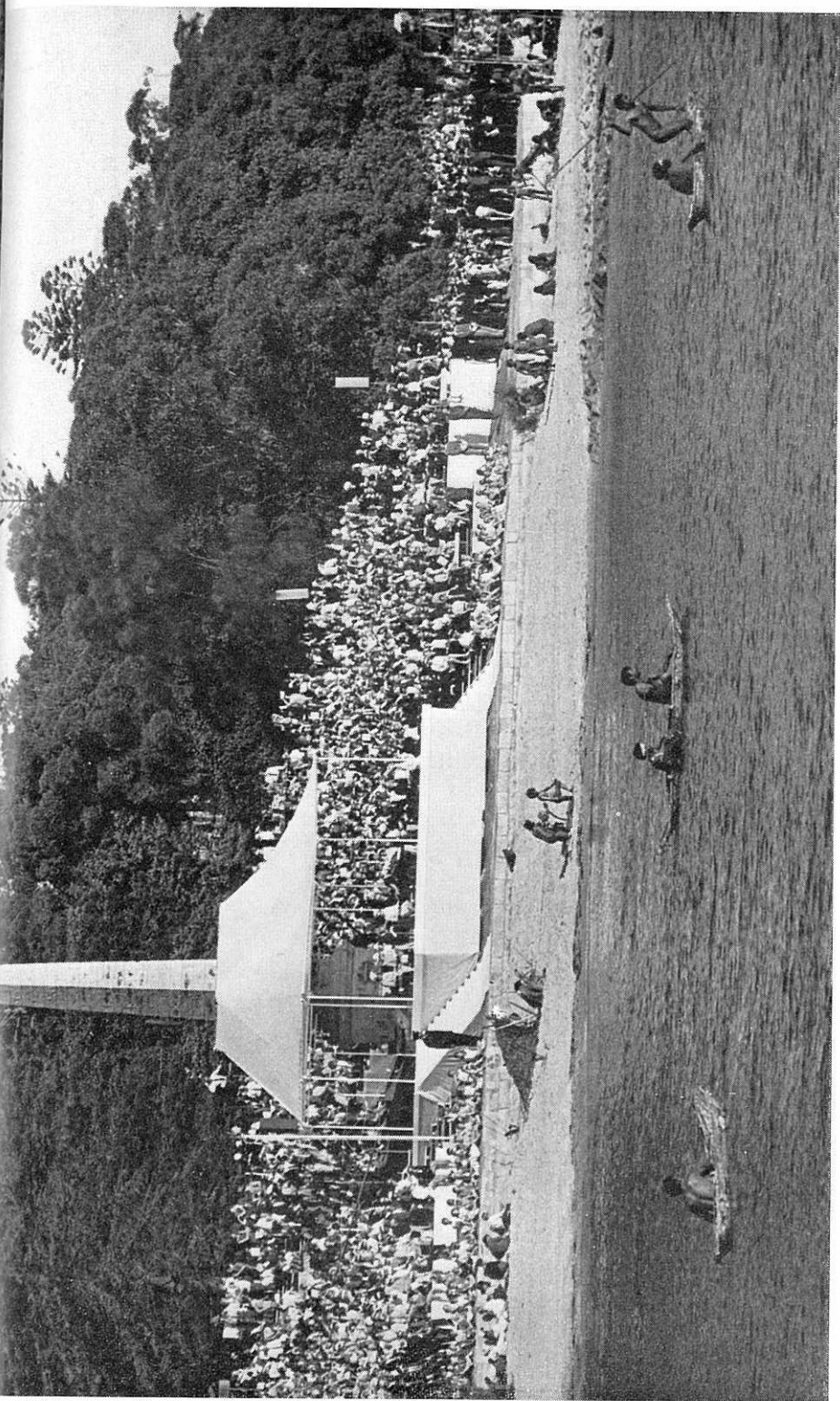


*George's River showing steam house punt and punt house (partly obscured by trees), with Sutberland House in distant left*

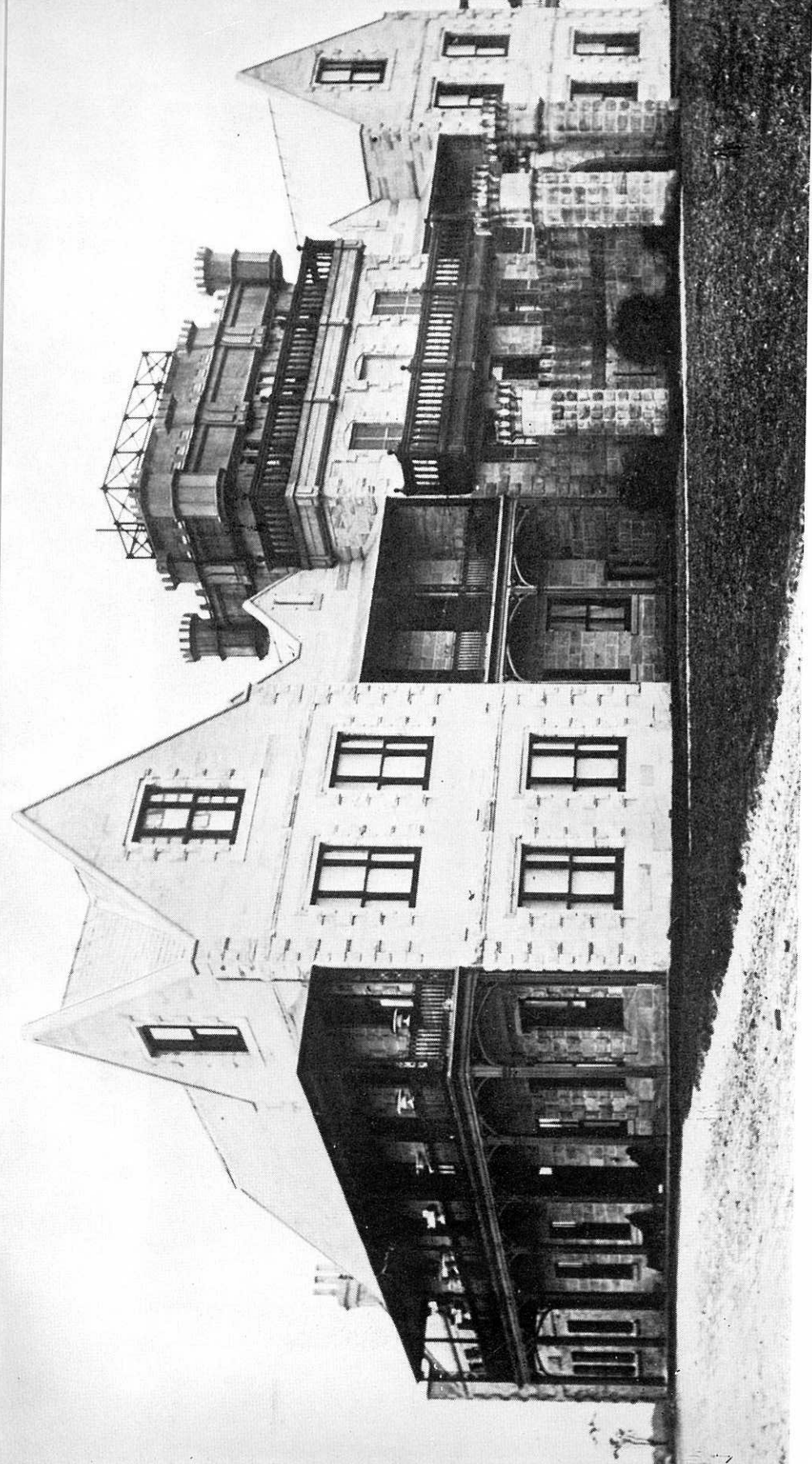


*The obelisk at Kurnell, Botany Bay (1889)*





*The obelisk at Kurnell on the occasion of the Bicentenary Celebrations (29 April 1970) of Captain Cook's landing*



*Sutherland House*

12 *Further Pastoral Interests in Queensland*

'Wealwandangie' (*Home of the Fishes*)

Situated on a tributary of the Nogoia River, Cona Creek, this property was near Springsure, two hundred and twenty miles from Rockhampton, in the Leichhardt district. The Nogoia River has been described as an attractive river with 'deep and silent pools which reflected the evergreen trees and shrubs which lined its banks affording shelter to the scrub turkeys and malley hens, whilst fish and wild fowl abounded in the quiet waterholes'<sup>1</sup>. The name 'home of the fishes' was probably appropriate.

The first lessees of part of 'Wealwandangie' (Uranna runs 1-6, each being sixteen hundred acres or twenty-five square miles) were J. C. and P. F. Macdonald, in 1861<sup>2</sup>. In that year P. F. Macdonald sold 'Cullinlaringo', forty miles distant, to H. S. H. Wills who, with eighteen other whites including women and children, was brutally massacred by the blacks within a fortnight of his arrival and notwithstanding his friendly advances<sup>3</sup>.

In 1862 the Macdonalds sold 'Uranna' Nos. 1-6 to Peter McIntosh who, in the same year, obtained a lease of the 'Cymro' run (twenty-six square miles). 'Wealwandangie' was then in a very primitive state and Peter McIntosh took Alexander Kennedy with him to assist in erecting a rough homestead, dams and fences, most of the labour being done by Kanakas imported from the South Sea Islands. In his book *Taming the North*, Sir Hudson Fysh, from information obtained direct from Alexander Kennedy, described the life and conditions at Wealwandangie in the 1860s.

When 'Rio' was sold in 1864 Holt arranged with the A.J.S. Bank to take up McIntosh's account but the Bank imposed a condition that Holt should give his own bond<sup>4</sup>. At this time McIntosh had considerably increased his stock and, when he mortgaged 'Wealwandangie' to the Bank, he included thirty-one thousand sheep, three hundred cattle, forty bullocks and fifty horses to secure advances up to £25,000 and also gave a second mortgage to Holt<sup>5</sup>. Edward Joy, Holt's brother-in-law, then joined Holt in the account of McIntosh and both advanced further moneys<sup>6</sup>.

In April 1866, Holt went to Europe, leaving Joy (who held a one-

<sup>1</sup> E. B. Kennedy, *The Black Police of Queensland*.

<sup>2</sup> Report of Archives Officer of S.L.Q.    <sup>3</sup> Jean Bull, *Historic Queensland Stations*.

<sup>4</sup> Minutes of the A.J.S. Bank, 16 September 1864.

<sup>5</sup> Mortgages Nos. 106 and 111 Book 4 registered in the Supreme Court of Queensland, November 1864 (H.P.), now (S.L.Q.).

<sup>6</sup> Agreement 9 March 1870 between P. McIntosh, T. Holt and Edward Joy (H.P.), now (S.L.Q.).

quarter share in the partnership) as his attorney. Each of the partners advanced further moneys to McIntosh and Holt also became surety for large cash credits from the Bank to McIntosh in 1868<sup>7</sup>, before his return from Europe in July of that year.

1866 to 1871 were serious years of depression, with a drought in 1868 and severe floods in 1869. Financial difficulties overtook McIntosh; his cash credits were reduced and Holt paid off the Bank in April 1868 and also arranged to have all McIntosh's consignments of wool made through the Bank for sale in London where Holt's brother (Joseph) was to protect its sale<sup>8</sup>.

Notwithstanding the extension of further credit to McIntosh, conditions in the sheep industry continued to deteriorate, wool prices dropped, sheep could not be sold for meat and many had to be slaughtered and boiled down for tallow. Although the demand for meat in England was considerable it could not be met from Australia because no means existed of transporting it such a long distance. At that time T. S. Mort, Augustus Morris and Nicolle were experimenting with refrigeration by the liquefaction of ammonia, but installation of this process in ships was still far distant<sup>9</sup>.

In 1869, McIntosh found it impossible for him to continue at 'Wealwandangie', his commitments then exceeding £43,000<sup>10</sup>, and he assigned his equity of redemption to Holt and Joy after they entered into possession of the property and they in turn released McIntosh from his personal liability to pay<sup>11</sup>. Statements that the mortgagees foreclosed on 'Wealwandangie' are incorrect<sup>12</sup>. After McIntosh left 'Wealwandangie', he raised some funds and purchased 'Lorne' on the Barcoo, to which place he and his wife, with Mr and Mrs A. Kennedy, made a long journey by buggy and on horseback and there A. Kennedy became his manager until McIntosh died in 1876<sup>13</sup>.

The partnership between Holt and Joy terminated because, while Holt was absent in Europe, Joy as his attorney sanctioned a payment of £1,000 to James John, maintaining that he had authority to do so. Equity proceedings were instituted by Holt but the matter was eventually referred to arbitration by Matthew Henry Stephen (later Mr Justice M. H. Stephen) who found in Holt's favour. Joy then sold his interest

<sup>7</sup> Minutes of the A.J.S. Bank from 27 March to 24 April 1868.

<sup>8</sup> Minutes of the A.J.S. Bank, 27 March 1868, 24 April 1868; 8 June 1869, 23 August 1870.

<sup>9</sup> SMH 5 February 1868.

<sup>10</sup> Report of G. Eagan, 23 June 1869 (HP), now (S.L.Q.).

<sup>11</sup> Two Deeds, 9 March 70, unregistered (HP), now (S.L.Q.). Endorsement on deed registered No. 106 Book 4.

<sup>12</sup> *Taming the North* (supra) 42, 46 and *Springsure Centenary, 1859-1969*, p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> *Taming the North* (supra) 53, 61 and Mrs Jane Black, *North Queensland Pioneers*.

in 'Wealwandangie' to Holt for £24,000<sup>14</sup>. In September 1870 the A.J.S. Bank transferred the runs 'Uranna' 1-6 and 'Cymro' to Holt<sup>15</sup>. Holt then had Howard Macdermott as his manager and his son Frederick became supervisor of the property in the Leichhardt district, named after Dr Leichhardt who discovered it in 1844 and who had become Frederick's godfather in 1846.

Frederick reported in 1871 that the carrying capacity of 'Wealwandangie' was estimated at forty thousand sheep and five thousand cattle and that it was then used to put into condition stock and sheep waiting to be taken by drover to 'Arthursleigh', where they were fattened for sale or retained for wool production. Some cattle were driven as far as Melbourne for sale, others were sold to the Central Queensland Meat Preserving Company while, as it was impossible to grow first-class wool in the climate, over 18,500 poor quality sheep were sent to Laurel Bank to be boiled down for tallow. Seventeen Kanakas, previously engaged by McIntosh at the prevailing rate of £6 per annum, were employed on the station and six more were due to arrive. They were mainly employed in fencing, drafting sheep and minor jobs. Macdermott proved himself an efficient manager and reduced the expenses of running sheep on the property to half what they had been in McIntosh's time<sup>16</sup>.

It appears that, in January 1873, Frederick entered into partnership with his father, purchasing a half-share of 'Wealwandangie' and its stock from his father for £11,000<sup>17</sup>. Macdermott remained on as manager and Frederick (then aged twenty-seven) controlled the property for a salary<sup>18</sup>. There were then 29,300 sheep and 1,095 cattle on the property and, during the year, a further 14,334 sheep came from Banchory and 1077 cattle from Salisbury Plains, while over eleven thousand sheep were disposed of (nearly all being sent to Arthursleigh) and 828 cattle sold<sup>19</sup>.

Another son of Holt's, Walter, who had been studying engineering at Mort's Dock, came to 'Wealwandangie' for experience because his father thought that it would be more profitable to be a squatter than to continue with engineering<sup>20</sup>.

In October 1873 Walter (then aged nineteen and much impressed by the vastness of the station) furnished a detailed report<sup>21</sup> on the

<sup>14</sup> Memo of Agreement 25 May 1870: letters from E. Joy to Roxburgh, Slade & Spain, 12, 15, 16 August 1870 (HP), now (S.L.Q.).

<sup>15</sup> Minutes of A.J.S. Bank, 6 September 1870: Run Register.

<sup>16</sup> Report of F. S. E. Holt, 16 June 1871 (HP).

<sup>17</sup> Abstract of F. S. E. Holt's Wealwandangie Purchase Account to 31 December 1873 (HP), now (S.L.Q.).

<sup>18</sup> Letter 12 June 1873 from F. S. E. Holt to T. Holt (HP).

<sup>19</sup> Photocopy of account for year 1873 (HP), now (S.L.Q.).

<sup>20</sup> Diary of W. H. Holt entry 4 August 1872 (in possession of Dr W. G. Holt).

<sup>21</sup> Report of W. H. Holt, 30 October 1873 (HP).

property to his father, in which he mentioned that the fencing round one paddock alone was about fifty miles long. He also reported that the splendid season then being experienced would fully repay the great loss of the previous year through worm disease.

About 1875 Holt added another twenty thousand acres to 'Wealwandangie' when he obtained a lease of the run known as 'Vandyke Creek', although it appears that he had cattle on that run in 1873<sup>22</sup>.

No record has been discovered explaining the termination of the partnership between Holt and Frederick, although it probably occurred when Frederick became more involved in 'Salisbury Plains', another property of Holt's, and Walter in 'Wealwandangie' where he became in September 1879 a member of the first Divisional Board of the Shire of Bauhinia<sup>23</sup>. In that year Walter accepted his father's offer to lease both 'Wealwandangie' and 'Banchory' on condition that he paid his father an annuity<sup>24</sup>. In February 1881, Walter also took up about four hundred square miles of land in the Flinders River area, in the vicinity of the Gulf of Carpentaria.

In August 1881, a few weeks before leaving for Europe, Holt disposed<sup>25</sup> of his interests in 'Wealwandangie' (consisting of runs known as 'Uranna' 1 to 6, 'Cymro' and 'Vandyke Creek' or 'Spring Creek') and in 'Banchory' and 'Islay Plains', together with all stock and personal effects thereon, to his son Walter, in consideration of natural love and affection and certain monetary bonds given by Walter to his father. In 1883 Walter increased 'Wealwandangie' by purchasing the unexpired term of a lease of 'Reedy Flat' and, in 1884, leased 'Nimbula' Nos. 1 and 2.

The whole of the pastoral holding was consolidated under the provisions of the Land Act 1884, under which it was divided into 236 square miles resumed area (part of 'Uranna' Nos. 2 and 4 and all of 'Uranna' Nos. 3, 5 and 6 and 'Reedy Flat') and 371 square miles leased area<sup>26</sup>.

Walter had as his manager Thomas Slatyer, from about 1883, a conscientious and industrious man and a staunch Presbyterian who would ride twenty-eight miles to conduct a church service at Springsure on Sundays<sup>27</sup>.

On 10 August 1891 Walter sold 'Wealwandangie,' with about ten thousand head of cattle and four hundred horses to William Irving

<sup>22</sup> Ibid; Report of Archives Officer of S.L.Q.

<sup>23</sup> *Springsure Centenary Booklet 1859-1959*, p. 25.

<sup>24</sup> Letter 13 October 1879 W. H. Holt to T. Holt (HP).

<sup>25</sup> Deed 18 August 1881 between T. Holt and W. H. Holt registered in the Supreme Court of Queensland No. 258 Book 17.

<sup>26</sup> Report of Archives Officer of S.L.Q.

<sup>27</sup> *Springsure Centenary 1859-1959*, p. 13.

Winter-Irving of Melbourne and James Alison of Sydney and, in 1968, 'Wealwandangie' holding was known as 'Kareela'<sup>28</sup>.

*'Salisbury Plains'*

Between 1861 and 1863 one Charles Powell became the lessee of about five hundred square miles in the district of Kennedy, near Bowen and Port Denison, known as 'Salisbury Plains'. This property comprised runs known as 'Salisbury Plains', 'Woontoon Vale', 'Caley (Kaili) Valley', 'Springfield', 'The Pocket', 'Molongle', 'Upstart Plains', 'Wangaratta' and 'Wangaratta South'. In November 1864, Powell mortgaged these runs to Holt and his brother-in-law, Edward Joy, to secure about £27,000<sup>29</sup>.

In 1866 Powell sold his interest to Octavius Armstrong and Alfred Hippomene Wilmington who then mortgaged 'Salisbury Plains', together with about seven thousand head of cattle and eighty horses to Holt and Edward Joy to secure the sum of over £29,000<sup>30</sup>.

In the following three years bad seasons were experienced, the amount owing under the mortgage increased to over £38,000 and the mortgagors were seriously in default. In exercise of their power of sale the mortgagees agreed to sell for only £22,500 to John Robertson and J. G. McDonald but, when the intending purchasers became insolvent, this agreement was cancelled<sup>31</sup> and in 1869 Holt purchased from Joy his interest in the mortgage from Armstrong and Wilmington<sup>32</sup>.

In the same year, under the provisions of the Crown Lands (Alienation) Act 1868, large portions of 'Salisbury Plains' were resumed, the Act having the effect of cutting by half the acreage of stations in settled areas in a bid to encourage closer settlement. Holt (being registered as holder although only a mortgagee) was then granted a lease of the remainder, consolidated as 'Salisbury Plains' and containing 228 square miles, adjoining the Elliott River, Wangaratta Creek and Molongle Creek<sup>33</sup>.

E. B. Kennedy in *The Black Police of Queensland* wrote an interesting account of the work of the Native Mounted Police, formed to protect the whites, particularly inoffensive shepherds who were being murdered by the blacks. About 1870 Kennedy spent some weeks at Salisbury

<sup>28</sup> Letter W. H. Holt to H. T. E. Holt, 23 June 1909; Report of Archives Officer (supra).

<sup>29</sup> Mortgage 14 November 1864 referred to in Report from Archives Officer (supra).

<sup>30</sup> Mortgage 31 January 1866 registered in the Supreme Court of Queensland, No. 199 Book 5 (HP), now (S.L.Q.).

<sup>31</sup> Agreement dated 20 January 1869 and Memo of Cancellation 1 November 1869 (HP), now (S.L.Q.).

<sup>32</sup> Transfer of Mortgage 7 January 1869 registered in the Supreme Court of Queensland 4 October 1869, No. 101 Book 8 (HP), now (S.L.Q.).

<sup>33</sup> Register of Leases, Book 1, p. 102, 11 November 1870.

Plains and wrote how impressed he was by the work of stockriders there in working cattle, particularly the rough-riders who came each year to break in demon buck-jumpers for 20/- or 30/- a head, which they did without a fall 'though more than one rider spat blood prior to lighting his pipe'.

By 1871 the mortgagors were greatly in default. Holt had gone into possession under the mortgage and all parties wished to be relieved of their burdens. Holt offered to sell to the mortgagors at a reduction of up to £15,000 from their debt to make an allowance for bad times. This offer was refused and Armstrong went to 'Cootherstone', Peak Downs, and Holt then offered Wilmington the management of 'Salisbury Plains', which he accepted. It was then agreed between them that the mortgagees should be released from their liability to account and the mortgagors should be released from their debt, this, in effect, making Holt (as the transferee from Joy) the sole owner of the station and stock<sup>34</sup>.

Wilmington continued to manage 'Salisbury Plains' and Holt's son, Frederick, became supervisor of it and other Queensland stations for Holt<sup>35</sup>.

From 1874 Holt and Frederick increased the area of 'Salisbury Plains' by taking up further leases and by the purchase of freehold property. Among the leases acquired by Holt was 'Narrien Plains' No. 1 (fifty square miles) in 1874 and 'Tondara' (fifty-five square miles) in 1879. Freeholds purchased included the homestead block at 'Caley Valley' part of 'Tondara' and stockyards at 'Bobs' and 'Finlay Creeks'<sup>36</sup>. (In the 1960s T. A. Holt, a great-grandson of Holt's, owned a property at 'Bethungra', near Cootamundra, which he named 'Tondara' and where he bred quarter horses and stud cattle.)

Although no deed has been discovered, it appears certain that, in June 1879, Holt transferred 'Salisbury Plains' and other Queensland property to his son Frederick on condition that Frederick paid him an annuity<sup>37</sup>. In 1886 Holt wrote to Frederick that he did not require further payments of the annuity 'unless I require the money or you become extravagant or make any foolish speculation and then only for the annuity as it becomes due and not arrears'<sup>38</sup>.

In 1879 there were 10,962 head of stock on 'Salisbury Plains'<sup>39</sup> and about that time Francis and Edgar Holt, sons of Holt's brother William, came from Canada to seek their fortunes in Australia. Francis was

<sup>34</sup> Deed 17 January 1871 (HP), now (S.L.Q.).

<sup>35</sup> Letter 4 June 1872 from W. H. Wilmington to F. S. E. Holt (HP).

<sup>36</sup> List of deeds and plan (HP), now (S.L.Q.).

<sup>37</sup> Statement of Accounts, 1 July 1879, to 31 December 1886 (HP).

<sup>38</sup> Letter T. Holt to F. S. E. Holt, 16 September 1886.

<sup>39</sup> Statement of Accounts, 1 July 1879 to 31 December 1886 (HP).



in poor health and Wilmington extended kindly hospitality to him at 'Salisbury Plains' where he was studying to become a land surveyor<sup>40</sup>. There he suffered a disaster when his tent with all his papers for his forthcoming examination were burnt and this event so aggravated his ill health that he committed suicide in April 1881 at the age of thirty-six.

In 1881 Holt wrote to Frederick, 'This is a property I recommend you to stick to, as long as you live, for it is a property easily managed and inspected, and well situated for selling the surplus stock<sup>41</sup>.' Holt was not endowed with the prevision to foresee the devastating droughts of 1883-85, and 1888, when 'Salisbury Plains' lost over 4,300 head of cattle<sup>42</sup>. He did however reconsider his earlier recommendation when he wrote to Frederick, in 1886,

I should very much like to know how much 'Salisbury Plains' is paying you. I wish it were sold at your price and the money safely invested in fixed deposit in the Bank. There are some persons it would suit admirably — and be almost invaluable to them. A person for instance who has a large fattening station in the interior — to which he could send his store stock and also use 'Salisbury Plains' with the large quantity of purchased lands for a stud herd. A property like 'Salisbury Plains' should fetch a fancy price<sup>43</sup>.

Holt died in 1888 and in 1889 portion of 'Salisbury Plains' was resumed for the purposes of a railway<sup>44</sup>; then, in the early 1890s, came the severe economic depression which in 1895 forced Frederick to mortgage the station and livestock. The station then covered five hundred and thirty-three square miles made up from the following areas: freehold (30), pastoral leases (204), grazing rights (206) and occupational licences (93)<sup>45</sup>.

In April 1895 Frederick sold the station with about twenty thousand head of cattle to the Darley Bros, Sir Frederick Darley, Chief Justice of New South Wales, being a partner, subject to the mortgage of £8,000, for £18,000<sup>46</sup>. Frederick then helped his manager, Wilmington, to stock a property which Wilmington acquired at 'Windsor Park', Brandon, on the Lower Burdekin<sup>47</sup>. 'Salisbury Plains', in the circumstances, was

<sup>40</sup> Letters William Holt to F. S. E. Holt 30 June 1879, 22 December 1879, 11 July 1880, 20 January 1881, 29 June 1884, 26 July 1881 (HP).

<sup>41</sup> Copy extract from letter 30 November 1881 T. Holt to F. S. E. Holt (HP).

<sup>42</sup> Statement of Accounts (HP).

<sup>43</sup> Letter 16 September 1886 T. Holt to F. S. E. Holt (HP).

<sup>44</sup> Letters 1 and 27 April 1889, Foxton & Cardew to F. S. E. Holt (HP).

<sup>45</sup> Memorandum 5 January 1895 (HP).

<sup>46</sup> Account of Trebeck Son & Co 11 April 1895; Letter Cape Kent & Gaden to F. S. E. Holt, 29 December 1897, 11 March 1898 (HP).

<sup>47</sup> Draft letters from F. S. E. Holt 17 July 1895 and 20 July 1898 (HP).

sold at a low figure but it was fortuitous that it was sold at that time because, three months later, the tick pest made its appearance.

Subsequent owners of 'Salisbury Plains' included the Beak Pastoral Co Pty Limited and, in 1946, H. J. C. N. and C. Barrett. In 1957 the property was subdivided into northern and southern sections, the northern section was opened as grazing homestead leases with priority of application to the lessees and W. H. Gough applied for a lease of the southern section<sup>48</sup>.

### *'Banchory' and 'Islay Plains'*

In April 1872 these two properties were advertised<sup>49</sup> for sale on behalf of the mortgagees (Bank of Australasia).

'Banchory' was described as a magnificent squatting property on the Belyando River, in the district of South Kennedy, Queensland, within forty miles of the township of Clermont, two hundred and fifty square miles held under the Queensland Pastoral Leases Act of 1869 at a moderate rent for twenty-one years, with twenty thousand sheep, 315 cattle and fifty-two horses. Paddocks enclosed an area of 128 square miles and there were numerous creeks, rich flats with saltbush and herbage. The runs were close to Peak Downs gold fields and copper mines and the local market afforded a good outlet for fat stock.

### *'Islay Plains'*

This was described as being held under the same Act at the low rent of £88 per year. It was unstocked and could be carried on as a separate station, but it had been and could again be worked in conjunction with the 'Banchory' run, twenty-five miles distant. It was richly grassed with plenty of saltbush and herbage and could be used for fattening stock.

The properties were auctioned by G. F. Want on 16 April 1872, together with three other properties, but although the three other properties were sold at auction<sup>50</sup>, 'Banchory' and 'Islay Plains' were not and appear to have been acquired by Holt shortly afterwards when he became registered as the transferee. At that time the district of South Kennedy was experiencing a severe drought, so severe that the local member of Parliament for Clermont was forced to resign his seat because the drought required his presence on his property.

At the time of sale 'Banchory' consisted of runs known as 'Banchory', 'Banchory Mains', 'Blue Mountains Peak' No. 1 and No. 2, and 'Islay Plains' consisted of runs of 'Islay Plains' and 'Bervie (or Berwick) Downs'.

After Holt purchased these properties A. Piddock Thompson became

<sup>48</sup> Report of Archivist of S.L.Q.

<sup>49</sup> *SMH* March and April 1872 advertisements by G. F. Want of auction sale.

<sup>50</sup> *SMH* 17 April 1872.

his manager and Holt's son Frederick became the supervisor<sup>51</sup>. In 1874 and 1875 Holt added to these properties by acquiring the leases or licences of 'Spring Lawn' (twenty-five square miles), 'Banchory South' (twenty-five square miles) and 'Horbury Grove' (forty-three square miles).

Although there is no registered transfer, it appears that one Joseph Holt (unidentified, but Holt had a brother, nephew and cousins of that name) acquired an interest in these properties. In the 1874 accounts<sup>52</sup> Joseph Holt was shown as having a half-share in the proceeds of surplus wool with F. S. E. Holt and, on 22 February 1879, Joseph Holt mortgaged to Thomas Holt 'Banchory', 'Banchory Mains', 'Blue Mountains Peak' No. 1 and No. 2, 'Banchory South', 'Spring Lawn', 'Islay Plains', 'Bervie (Berwick) Downs', 'Horbury Grove' and all cattle and horses bearing the brands HV4 and J7V, the former being the 'Banchory' brand and the latter the 'Islay Plains' brand . . . running and depasturing under the general superintendence of the mortgagor. The consideration for the mortgage was stated to be £20,000 of which £1,500 was to be paid in cash and the balance payable by promissory notes<sup>53</sup>.

In March 1881, Joseph Holt purchased at auction the unexpired term of the lease of a run known as 'Recruit' (twenty-five square miles) which became part of 'Banchory' station and which he transferred, in the same year, to Holt's son, Walter<sup>54</sup>

On 18 August 1881, a deed was entered into between Thomas Holt and his son Walter, making Thomas Holt the mortgagee of 'Banchory' and 'Islay Plains' together with the cattle, horses, etc thereon by virtue of divers indentures made between Joseph Holt and Thomas Holt. By this deed Thomas Holt transferred the amount of \$18,500 secured by mortgage together with his right and title in the properties to his son Walter.

In 1882 Walter purchased the unexpired term of the lease of 'Upper Banchory' (fifty square miles)<sup>55</sup> which brought the total area of 'Banchory' to 325 square miles, while 'Islay Plains' was 190 square miles. Both holdings were consolidated and brought under the provisions of the 1884 Land Act (Queensland). Walter ran 'Banchory' and 'Islay Plains' for five years and, in 1886, transferred them to Donald MacVean, John Fleming Boadle and Hugh Reid Boadle<sup>56</sup>. 'Islay Plains' was resumed by the Crown in 1922, when held by Thomas Borthwick and Sons Australia Ltd, but 'Banchory' in 1968 was held by Stanbroke Pastoral Co Ltd<sup>57</sup>.

<sup>51</sup> Letter 2 July 1873 A. P. Tompson to F. S. E. Holt (HP).

<sup>52</sup> (H.P.).

<sup>53</sup> Report of Archives Officer of S.L.Q.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Registered in the Supreme Court of Queensland, No. 258 Book 17.

<sup>56</sup> Report of Archives Officer of S.L.Q. <sup>57</sup> Ibid.

*'Chatsworth'*

The last property to be acquired by Holt in Australia was in 1880 when, with his son Frederick acting as his agent, he purchased a station known as 'Chatsworth', on the Burke River in the North Gregory district of Queensland.

The previous owners were T. Hungerford and R. S. Sheaffe, who had mortgaged the property to the Bank of New South Wales and, by order of the Supreme Court of Queensland, the property was submitted to auction in Sydney on account of Messrs Hungerford and Sheaffe.

The station was sold as comprising about 1,478 square miles, divided into runs known as 'Lindesfarne', 'Chatsworth' Nos. 1 to 11, 'Pershore', 'Mayfield' Nos. 1 to 4, 'Stanbroke' E and W and 'Ivanhoe' Nos 1 and 4, together with one thousand and two hundred head of cattle at £5.5.0 per head, twenty-five horses at £12 per head and plant, stores etc for a total purchase price of £6,800<sup>58</sup>.

Shortly after the purchase it appears that Holt disposed of the property to his son Frederick, but no deed of disposition has been traced. Frederick found that the figures in the contract for cattle, horses and stores were overstated by nearly twenty per cent and also claimed that leases of three of the runs had been forfeited because the Bank of New South Wales, as holder of the leases, had delayed in transferring them. Disputes involving lengthy correspondence ensued, with Holt and Henry Mort acting as mediators between the parties. As a result Hungerford and Sheaffe repaid over £1,000 to cover the shortages but the Bank refused to admit its liability in regard to the forfeited runs. Frederick brought proceedings in equity against the Bank, which claimed that it did not recognise any relations existing between them and further that it had already transferred all the runs to Hungerford and Sheaffe. As the transfers to Hungerford and Sheaffe had not in fact been registered, the Bank, on receiving a guarantee from Holt to hold it harmless from all consequences, acceded to Frederick's request and executed transfers of all runs to him. Steps were then taken by the Bank's Queensland manager to obtain a reversal of forfeiture of the three runs. They must have been successful because no notification of forfeiture of the runs was registered and the leases were eventually transferred to Frederick<sup>59</sup>.

Frederick employed as his manager, W. H. Etheridge, stocked the station with cattle from 'Wealwandangie' and 'Salisbury Plains' and increased its size by another 401 square miles by acquiring leases of runs

<sup>58</sup> Contract and Conditions of Sale, 21 April 1880 (H.P.), now (S.L.Q.).

<sup>59</sup> Correspondence from 23 October 1880 to 31 May 1881 in the possession of the Bank of New South Wales. Board Minutes of the Bank of New South Wales 22 June 1880 to 7 June 1881.

known as 'Kiama', 'Allandale' Nos. 1 and 2 and 'Windsor' Nos. 2, 3 and 5<sup>60</sup>.

Early in 1882 good rains fell in the north and in April of that year Frederick sold the station, with 3,300 head of cattle and forty horses to Ernest James Stevens for £25,000, cattle then being valued at £4 per head<sup>61</sup>. It was a handsome profit and Frederick showed his gratitude to his manager by giving him a percentage of the sale price as a bonus, as well as several saddle horses and saddles.

By 1903 William Collins had acquired substantially all the above runs, which had been consolidated under the name of 'Chatsworth', and later under the provisions of the 1902 Land Act (Queensland) large areas were resumed for closer settlement which included the whole of 'Kiama' and much of 'Mayfields' and 'Chatsworth' Nos 2 and 3. In 1968 the Australian Estates Company Ltd held part of the original 'Chatsworth' station<sup>62</sup>.

### 13 *The City Bank*

The City Bank was established in 1863. About two years later, a serious financial depression occurred in Sydney, largely brought about by a fall in the price of wool, the native war in New Zealand and a severe drought which affected pastoral and mining interests. So serious was the protracted drought that the Governor, Sir John Young, proclaimed Friday 12 January 1866, a day of humiliation and prayer, to be observed by all public offices and most commercial interests.

During the difficult period of the depression the Bank suffered serious losses. Rumours, however, so exaggerated these losses that Holt, T. W. Smart and L. W. Levy were invited by the Board on 17 January 1871 to make a special audit of the accounts of the Bank as at 31 December 1870. None of those men was at that time connected with the Bank. The special auditors' report was not a favourable one but it expressed confidence in the future of the Bank, 'if more prudently managed'; the Bank took the unusual course of writing off £2 per share to provide for bad or doubtful debts and, at the same time, declaring a dividend at the rate of eight per cent.

In January 1871 Holt and George Thornton became candidates for a vacancy on the directorship of the Bank. Thornton (who had been a first director and a director during the troublous period) withdrew his candidature and Holt was elected. Early in 1871 another vacancy

<sup>60</sup> Letter and Accounts from W. H. Holt to F. S. E. Holt, 9 January 1881, 10 June 1881 and accounts from drovers 23 April 1882 (H.P.).

<sup>61</sup> Letter 25 January 1882 from Macdermott, Loughnan and Scarr to F. S. E. Holt. Contract of Sale 17 April 1882 (H.P.), now (S.L.Q.).

<sup>62</sup> Report of Archivist of S.L.Q.

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on the board occurred when William Tucker retired by lot and Thornton again stood for election but withdrew his candidature after Holt had expressed his views upon the duties of banks' directors.

An extract from the minutes of a special general meeting of the proprietors of the Bank on 30 March 1871 reads:

The following letter was handed in by Mr Holt and read by the Manager, but was subsequently withdrawn on the condition that the meeting be adjourned to give other shareholders an opportunity of offering themselves for election.

To the Directors of 'The Warren', 30 March 1871  
The City Bank, Sydney.

Gentlemen

In terms of clause XII of the 5th part of the Deed of Settlement, I hereby resign my office as a Director of the City Bank:

One reason for my doing so after having held office only about two months, is the apathy of the shareholders in the affairs of the Bank, as shown by only one shareholder offering his services as a Director, and that Gentleman one of the old Directors who sat at the Board, when some of the ruinous accounts, were brought into the Bank. In my humble opinion, no man is fit to be a Director (however estimable he may be in private life) if he cannot say *no* to applications for loans or discounts, made by men, for enormous amounts, without any, or only worthless securities.

In resigning my seat at the Board I take this opportunity to thank you, each and all for your uniform kindness and courtesy towards me, and I think I can truly say that not a single bad debt has been made during the two months, I have had the pleasure to sit with you at the Board.

I have the honour etc

(Signed) Thomas Holt

PS I request the Chairman will be so good as to read this letter at the Meeting of the shareholders this day.

After considerable discussion Mr Thornton withdrew his candidature and the meeting terminated, the Board intimating their intention to convene another meeting for the filling up of the vacant seat at an early date.

The vacant seat was filled at a special general meeting on 28 April 1871. Thornton did not stand and the Hon W. Foster was appointed but Thornton, after Holt's resignation in 1873, again became a director in 1874 and was also chairman of directors for many years.

The real reason for Holt's tendering his resignation in January 1873

is not free from doubt. He had been defeated in an election by the directors of a chairman and there was apparently some disagreement regarding correspondence of J. L. Montefiori on the subject of the Bank's London Agency. Both matters appear in the minutes and efforts were made by the directors and the manager to have Holt reconsider his decision. The manager reported that he had a long interview with Holt at 'The Warren' and that 'he submitted the correspondence of Mr Montefiori with the London Joint Stock Bank but that he found him inexorable to all the arguments he could use to induce him, Mr Holt, to withdraw his letter tendering his resignation as a Director of the Bank'. A general meeting of shareholders also expressed the opinion that Holt should again be requested in the interests of the Bank to reconsider his decision and this was communicated to him by letter, but without avail. James Watson, MLA, was elected in his place<sup>1</sup>.

#### 14 *Iron*

In 1872, no iron was being produced in the colony of New South Wales, although much was needed. In letters to the press and to Sir Henry Parkes, Holt suggested that malleable charcoal iron should be produced by reducing rich iron ores in Spanish Catalan forges, without the necessity of an expensive blast furnace. He further suggested that the Government should promote the industry by providing one or two Catalan forges to test the ores, by giving instruction, and by offering a liberal award for the first hundred tons produced<sup>1</sup>. Some iron had, earlier, been produced by the Fitzroy Ironworks at Mittagong, but production had proved unprofitable without tariff protection and such protection was withheld, being contrary to Sir Henry Parkes' policy<sup>2</sup>.

Holt's letters stimulated interest. A leading article in the press asked, 'Why not do in New South Wales what has been done in Spain for hundreds of years, and which is still being done at a profit?'<sup>3</sup> Letters from other correspondents claimed that the method would prove wasteful and too expensive and that the Swedish method of puddling iron ore in a furnace was preferable<sup>4</sup>.

Holt replied that the simple question was whether it would pay; he believed that, with a super-abundance of wood, one could afford to be

<sup>1</sup> Minute Books of the City Bank in the possession of the Bank of New South Wales 20, 21, 24, 27, 31 January 1873; 4 February 1873, 7 March 1873. *Jubilee Souvenir of the City Bank of Sydney, 1863-1913*. *The Empire*, 26 January 1871.

<sup>2</sup> SMH, 2, 16 December 1872; Letter 1 January 1873, Holt to Parkes (ML) 13 April.

<sup>3</sup> Jose and Carter, *The Australian Encyclopedia*, vol. I, p. 671; R. Else-Mitchell, 'Mittagong and District', 26 RAHS. Jo. 418.

<sup>4</sup> SMH 3 December 1872.

<sup>5</sup> SMH 4, 12 December 1872.

extravagant and that it would pay. He suggested the formation of a School of Mines and claimed that, if rails for railways extensions were made from malleable iron, the saving would exceed fifty per cent<sup>5</sup>.

The suggestion for Catalan forges was not adopted. In 1875 a blast furnace at Lithgow commenced operations but was not a financial success until C. H. Hoskins purchased it in 1908 and the Federal Government, the following year, provided for a system of bounties on pig-iron and steel made from Australian ores<sup>6</sup>. The Fitzroy Ironworks revived in 1876 for a short period, but were later demolished<sup>7</sup>. It was not until 1915 that the Broken Hill Proprietary Co Ltd opened its works at Newcastle for the manufacture of iron and steel.

### 15 *Public Activities*

Holt had frequently entertained large gatherings of public men at breakfast either at 'The Warren' or at Sans Souci Hotel, prior to making an excursion by steamer to view his oyster claires or to examine his proposal to dam Cook's River or the George's River to provide an adequate water supply for Sydney<sup>1</sup>.

He also attended many public dinners, parliamentary and otherwise. These included his presiding at a dinner to Charles St Julian on his appointment as Chief Justice of Fiji, at which Prince Joseph Cerna of Fiji was present, and his acting as steward at the public dinner to the Hon Charles Cowper prior to his departure for London as Attorney-General<sup>2</sup>. He was also President of the Sans Souci Regatta under the patronage and in the presence of the Earl of Belmore, with luncheon at the Sans Souci Hotel<sup>3</sup>.

### 16 *The Agricultural Society of New South Wales*

During the 1870s Holt was an energetic member of the Society, a member of its Council during the organisation of the International Exhibition at Prince Alfred Park and Vice-President of the Committee for the Ball, attended by the Duke of Edinburgh, which was held in the Exhibition building<sup>4</sup>. He was, for some years, a Vice-President of

<sup>5</sup> *SMH* 2, 16 December 1872.

<sup>6</sup> *The Australian Encyclopedia* (supra) vol. I, p. 671.

<sup>7</sup> *RAHS. Jo.* Vol. 26, p. 418 (supra).

<sup>1</sup> Diary of W. H. Holt, 27 January 1873; Parkes Correspondence (A886 p. 372, A923, vol. 16, p. 658) (M.L.). *SMH* 23 January 1872, 30 December 1872.

<sup>2</sup> *SMH* 10 July 1878, 30 November 1878, 22 April 1872, 14 February 1871.

<sup>3</sup> *The Empire*, 5 April 1870.

<sup>4</sup> *The Empire*, 8 April 1870, 24 September 1870, 13 October 1870: *SMH* 31 August 1870.



the Society and, in that capacity or as a member of the Council served the Society for most of the 1870s<sup>2</sup>.

At the Metropolitan International Exhibitions, organised by the Council of the Society in 1872 and 1876, he lent for display many of his valuable water colour pictures and bronzes which he had purchased at the 1867 Paris Exhibition and also some large photographs taken in Rome and other European cities<sup>3</sup>.

Thomas Mort recommended that the Society should add oyster farming to its pursuits and insisted that Holt should read a paper before the Society embodying his experiences<sup>4</sup>. Oyster culture was, however, a minor activity compared with Holt's pastoral and agricultural interests both in New South Wales and Queensland where he sought to improve his pastures, herds and flocks. In 1878, he was awarded the prize for the best bull, 'Imperial Purple thirty-fifth', by the Queensland Pastoral Society<sup>5</sup>.

In 1878, when a Commission was formed in New South Wales to select and forward exhibits to the Paris Exhibition of that year, he was appointed a member, chairing meetings of the commissioners, and later receiving a letter from the Prince of Wales thanking him for his services and enclosing a portrait<sup>6</sup>.

### 17 *Royal Prince Alfred Hospital*

The hospital was established largely as the result of public subscriptions to a fund for a 'national memorial of gratitude for the preservation of HRH the Duke of Edinburgh', when the Duke had recovered after being shot in March 1868 by O'Farrell at a picnic at Clontarf<sup>1</sup>.

Holt was absent in Europe when the fund was originated but later served on the general committee and was one of a sub-committee appointed to find a suitable site on which to erect the hospital, then known as Prince Alfred Memorial Hospital<sup>2</sup>. His photograph, displayed in the hospital, bears an inscription stating that he was a founder and director of the hospital from 1873-83<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> *SMH* 16 April 1872, 30 April 1872, 10 March 1876.

<sup>3</sup> *SMH* 15 November 1872, 15 January 1876, 27 August 1878, 30 September 1879, 3 October 1879.

<sup>4</sup> *SMH* 18 November 1875.

<sup>5</sup> Silver Cup in possession of Dr W. G. Holt.

<sup>6</sup> *SMH* 9 January 1878; Letter 12 December 1878 (HP), now (M.L.).

<sup>1</sup> *SMH* 8 May 1868.

<sup>2</sup> *The Empire* 22 October 1870.

<sup>3</sup> Letter January 1959 from Mr Venness, Secretary to R.P.A.H., to H. T. E. Holt.

18 *Council of Education*

In January 1873, Holt accepted a seat on the Council of Education, constituted by the Public Schools Act 1866, which had been introduced by Henry Parkes. When Holt took his seat his fellow members were George Wigram Allen, MLA, W. A. Duncan, Hon Henry Parkes, MLA, and Professor John Smith, MD, then President. In 1873, Parkes and Allen resigned and were succeeded by Sir Alfred Stephen and S. C. Brown, MLA<sup>1</sup>.

From 1848 to 1866 education in the colony was administered by the Board of National Education and the Denominational School Board, a dual system of secular and church control which proved unsatisfactory. As early as 1856, Holt had introduced a bill to abolish the two Boards but, as the bill also provided for the transfer of the control of schools to the denominations subject to government inspection, it had failed to secure approval.

The 1866 Act marked an important stage in the rise of national education and the decline of the earlier denominational system, not only by abolishing the two Boards but by restricting the operation of denominational schools, to prevent their competing unnecessarily with public schools in less populated areas.

The principal functions of the Council of Education after 1866 were to exercise a general superintendence of all public schools, close down a number of denominational schools, open up new public schools in country districts, frame regulations, appoint and remove teachers and inspectors and arrange for the training of teachers<sup>2</sup>. Members of the Council, who belonged to various denominations, acted in a voluntary capacity but devoted many hours each week to its work and continuously stood the incessant fire of hostile criticism. At the beginning of 1876 there were 1028 public schools with 1500 teachers; an average week's work of the Council was to attend to forty schools being built, forty schools being repaired and 160 applications for expenditure of money<sup>3</sup>.

Although the desire of Parliament, that new schools should be opened throughout the country, was clearly indicated by its increasing the education vote each year, the Council found itself frustrated because it had no power to select sites for schools, and applications for approval of sites resulted in voluminous correspondence and irritating delay<sup>4</sup>. Wearing by its efforts, the Council requested Sir Alfred Stephen to frame

<sup>1</sup> Parkes Correspondence, A923 (ML); *SMH* 11 May 1874.

<sup>2</sup> S. H. Smith and G. T. Spaul, *History of Education in New South Wales 1788-1925*; Alan Barcan, *A Short History of Education in New South Wales*; C. Turney, *Pioneers of Australian Education*.

<sup>3</sup> *SMH* 31 January 1876.

<sup>4</sup> *SMH* 4 January 1876, 10 January 1876.

a bill to enable it to select sites. Sir Alfred drew a draft bill which was sent to the Government in 1874, only to be mislaid, necessitating the submission of a fresh draft. Eventually the Robertson Government, without assigning any reason, refused to introduce the bill, whereupon the President of the Council of Education, Professor John Smith (also a member of the Legislative Council) in January 1876 moved for leave to introduce the bill in the Legislative Council. In his speech he revealed that applications for twenty-six sites up to 1874 and the greater part of those applied for in 1875 had not been settled; that the Council of Education had been blamed for obstructing the spread of public schools and that most, if not all, of the Council members felt that the time must come for them to be relieved of their responsibility.

The President of the Legislative Council ruled that the bill could not be sent to the Assembly in its present form, and Professor Smith was forced to withdraw his motion; but not before Sir Alfred Stephen had intimated that his resignation would probably be before the Board on the following day<sup>5</sup>.

Sir Alfred did not resign but Holt did and S. C. Brown also ceased to be a member at the end of the year<sup>6</sup>. At the time of his resignation (the beginning of 1876) Holt had served for three years on the Council and had taken a prominent part in the deliberations of that body, which was then effecting a steady progress in the working of the public schools system. In other ways he also showed his interest in education; by contributions to day and Sunday schools and by gifts of many valuable areas of land for school sites and masters' dwellings<sup>7</sup>.

At the time of Holt's resignation, it was apparent that the Council's work had so increased that a voluntary Board was unable to cope with it and that responsibility should be transferred to the Government<sup>8</sup>. Nevertheless it was not until 1880 that the Council went out of existence, on the enactment of the Public Instruction Act, which placed education under the control of a responsible Minister, made education compulsory and eliminated state aid to denominational schools.

### 19 *The Funeral Reform Association*

In 1874 the Very Rev. Dean Russel of Adelaide set in motion an agitation which resulted in an association being formed for reforming funeral customs, to lessen the cost of interment and thus relieve relatives,

<sup>5</sup> *SMH* 28 January 1876.

<sup>6</sup> Reports of the Council of Education, printed in 1875-6 and 1876-7 *N.S.W. V & P*; *SMH* 3 February 1876.

<sup>7</sup> *SMH* 11 May 1874, 8 September 1888; *The Australian Independent*, 15 September 1888.

<sup>8</sup> *SMH* 13 January 1876, 1 February 1876, 5 February 1876.

often burdened by medical expenses and the loss of the wage-earner, from following the customary practice of having expensive funerals<sup>1</sup>.

T. S. Mort had long held similar views (probably inspired by Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*) and, in a letter to the *Herald*, set out his views, inviting fellow colonists who agreed with him to forward their names so that he could arrange a meeting. He was deluged with letters from many leading colonists earnestly sympathising and, at a largely attended public meeting in October 1874, a committee including members of Parliament, clergy, lawyers and businessmen was appointed to draw up the conditions of the Association<sup>2</sup>.

Holt was a member of the committee which drew the articles binding on all members of the Association to use plain coffins and to dispense with palls, scarves, hat bands, gloves, mutes, plume-bearers, mourning coaches, plumes, trappings, funeral processions and elaborate mourning clothing<sup>3</sup>. By the end of 1875 the Association in New South Wales numbered over five hundred members and it was claimed to render a real service to the poor by discouraging the former ridiculous display at funerals<sup>4</sup>.

In his will, executed some months before his death in 1888, Holt followed the precepts of the Society by directing that his funeral should be plain and inexpensive.

## 20 *Henry Parkes*

Whatever enmity Parkes had created in Holt's mind by his attacks during the 1853 elections, by his 'venomous articles' in *The Empire* in 1858 and by his failure to honour promises, it appears to have been resolved by 1862. In that year Holt strongly supported Parkes' retention as one of the Immigration Commissioners in England and, when Parkes eventually returned, in 1863, they sat together in the fourth Parliament until its dissolution in November 1864.

In October 1870, following a second bankruptcy, Parkes resigned from Parliament and from the Council of Education and, although again re-elected for Kiama, was deeply depressed. Holt wrote<sup>1</sup> to him, offering his sympathies and monetary assistance for his family. In a note of 19 November (missing), Parkes apparently accepted both and revealed his worries because, in forwarding £25 to Parkes, Holt wrote<sup>1</sup>:

<sup>1</sup> *SMH* 6 November 1874.

<sup>2</sup> *SMH* 14 October 1874.

<sup>3</sup> *SMH* 28 October 1874, 3 November 1875.

<sup>4</sup> *The Melbourne Argus*, 23 November 1875; *SMH* 6 December 1875.

<sup>1</sup> Parkes Correspondence, A886, p. 357 (ML.).

Permit me to suggest that you should not look back to the past, in a melancholy desponding spirit, but rather look forward to the future with cheerfulness and hope and this — not so much on your own account as for the sake of the 'dear and innocent' who are dependent upon you. You have many friends and warm admirers and of this you could scarcely have had a stronger proof, than your recent re-election to the Assembly. I feel a confidence in my mind, amounting to an absolute certainty, that if you would only make a right use of the immense talents with which providence has endowed you, that you would not only be eminent (as you now are) but also *wealthy*. But you will never become wealthy by trade, that is buying, or selling. 'There are diversities of gifts' as St Paul says and your 'gift' in my humble opinion is not to buy or sell. At the Bar you would get plenty of briefs and large fees, and from those, who would not patronise you, in a shop or store.

But if I were you, I think I would strive to get an office under Government where you could be useful to the public and amply provide for your family. No one has had better opportunities than you have had and *soon will have again*.

Shall be very happy to see you any time at 'The Warren' where we can have a long chat and give you a bed.

Parkes' reply to this letter has not been sighted but it would appear that he took exception to one portion of the letter because Holt again wrote, on 25 November 1870:

My dear Mr Parkes

I am favoured with yours of the 23 inst and am much grieved that there should have been one expression in my letter which has pained you. I can assure you that nothing could possibly be further from my intention than that of saying one word that would cause you the slightest pain. When I spoke of making 'a right use' of the talents God has given you, it never occurred to me that such a construction could possibly be put on these words, as would imply that you had hitherto made a 'bad use of whatever ability you possess'. Indeed, I think the whole context of my letter shows that I could not possibly have had any such intention. I look upon your talents as being of too high an order than to be used for mercantile pursuits and therefore in using talents for buying and selling which Providence designed for high office in the community I considered was not making a 'right' or what would be better expressed probably a 'wrong use of them'. Dr South says there are many men in the pulpit who ought to be following the plough, and there may be many men following the plough who would be an ornament in the pulpit. But it does not follow, nor would

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it I conceive imply, that either the one or the other were making a 'bad use', although a mistaken use, of the talents God had given to them.

I am most anxious to set myself right with you on this matter, as it would be an unpardonable cruelty to say one word to wound your feelings at this time.

I quite agree with you that your work 'will stand as good a chance of enduring as that of any of our contemporaries if you were' (which God forbid) 'to drop into the grave tomorrow'.

It is for this reason that I should like to see you permanently employed in the Public Service.

I am going to Goulburn tomorrow but expect to return on Tuesday next. I shall be glad to hear when I may expect you at 'The Warren'.

Believe me to be

Yours very truly (in haste)  
Thomas Holt<sup>1</sup>

Eighteen months later Parkes became Premier of New South Wales, which position he occupied intermittently for many years. He showed his appreciation of Holt's encouragement by sending him various publications, including his book on England and a copy of his speeches. He also sent him kangaroos and squirrels for 'The Warren', while Holt reciprocated by sending Parkes alpacas and corresponded with him on the subject of establishing direct steamer communication with San Francisco<sup>2</sup>.

Their close acquaintanceship resulted in visits by Parkes to 'The Warren' and, apparently, to an exchange of confidences, one of which Holt regretted and sought to cure in a private letter where he wrote<sup>3</sup>:

I find I made a great mistake in speaking to you this morning about a certain 'complaint' for which I have already had a lecture and shall probably have a 'curtain lecture', I have to ask you, therefore, kindly to *forget* what I told you, or otherwise, I may be subjected, to not one — but many curtain lectures, which, of course, every married man must naturally tremble to think of.

The Parkes' ministry resigned in February 1875, following the release of the bushranger Frank Gardiner by the Governor, and Parkes did not become Premier again for two years. The relationship between Parkes and Holt is revealed in the following two letters, apropos of Dr Garran, a close friend of Holt's:

<sup>1</sup> Parkes Correspondence, A923 p. 455 (ML).

<sup>2</sup> Letters 11 February 1871, 23 March 1871, 25 May 1871, 17 November 1871 Parkes Correspondence (ML).

<sup>3</sup> Letter 24 October 1872 Parkes Correspondence (ML).

Ashfield, September 1st 1875

My dear Mr Holt

I have several times thought of writing to you in reference to our conversations respecting Dr Garran. I have hesitated to do so from a feeling of reluctance to trouble you with any matter so purely personal to myself. But I should be very sorry if you were to form the impression that I lightly value this offer of your good services in this matter or any others.

Dr Garran has persisted in attributing to me conduct which, if I could have been guilty of it, would make me infamous in my own eyes. He has pursued this course, sometimes in the face of well known facts, at other times, where the facts have not been so apparent, in the face of the fair probabilities to be derived from my whole public life. I am willing to believe that Dr Garran, for some cause or causes unknown to me, looks upon me as an unprincipled scoundrel, and is therefore perfectly sincere in doubting every word that falls from my lips and in attributing to me in all my actions some base sinister purpose. This is the only explanation which I can put upon Dr Garran's course consistent with honesty in his estimates of my character. In this case what would be the use of my trying to *unpoison* a mind so steeped in prejudice against me; Life is too precious to me at sixty years of age to make the useless effort. If I cannot live without the help of Dr Garran I am quite content to die. Nor have I anything to gain in which the assistance of the *Herald* would be of value to me, even if I could go out of my way to seek it.

In reality I am indifferent to office, which never was very attractive to me; and I would not take any special pains to save my seat in the Assembly. In both positions I have found my purest intention discredited and my best actions maligned. And history tells me this has been the fate of men at all times who have thought for themselves and have refused to truckle to others, in their public struggles. I hope I have learnt to expect nothing better. Believe me, my dear Mr Holt, I am very sensible of the proffer of your kind offices. My refusal of your mediations — if I may use the word — only means that it is best that things should take their course. I have no ill will towards Dr Garran, and I hope I have none towards living man or woman. But on the supposition that Dr Garran is an honest man, he does not know me, and never will know me.

Yours faithfully,  
Henry Parkes.

'The Warren', near Sydney  
7 September 1875

My dear Mr Parkes

I have thought it best to take a separate sheet to write to you about Dr Garran. I believe that you have thoroughly misunderstood him, and therefore it is, that I wished to bring you together. Dr Garran is a really good fellow at heart, and has neither prejudice or ill-feeling against you; and has done you many a good turn, of which you are not aware. So far from Dr Garran looking upon you as 'an unprincipled scoundrel' he looks upon you as *the first* statesman in the colony — of this I am certain. The 'attacks' made upon you in the *Herald*, such as counting the House out etc you should only laugh at them — they certainly are not done maliciously — not even when you lay yourself open to them, by a very strong letter to the *Herald*. If Dr Garran had any strong prejudice against you, I should certainly know it, and would never have attempted to bring you together. You are not the only person, who has found his purest intentions discredited, and his best actions maligned, but what does it matter? Posterity will do you justice.

You say you are 'in reality indifferent to office'. My opinion is that you should make up your mind to one of two things — either to be in office, or striving to be in office, or give up politics entirely. I believe that God has gifted you with talents that better fit you for office than any other man in the colony, and that you will have to answer for it, if you bury them in a napkin.

But, if you are indifferent, you can never hope long to succeed. Do not halt between two opinions. If you are determined to be a statesman you may be one and you ought to be one and you will find Dr Garran and the *Herald* useful, if you wish to have their support.

In haste

Yours very truly  
Thomas Holt<sup>4</sup>.

Other letters from Holt to Parkes are preserved in the Mitchell Library<sup>5</sup> and relate to a number of subjects, including arrangements for Vice-Regal picnics, an increase in pension for Sir Alfred Stephen and various personal matters.

<sup>4</sup> Autograph letters to Sir Henry Parkes, etc. A63 pp. 67-74 (ML).

<sup>5</sup> Parkes Correspondence, A886 (ML).



## 21 *The Illawarra Railway*

In the early 1870s it had become apparent to many that a railway from Sydney to Illawarra was an urgent necessity because of the lack of adequate ports and other facilities to enable coal, iron ore, kerosene shale and farm produce to be brought from the Illawarra districts for disposal in Sydney.

In 1873, it was proposed to form a company to construct a narrow gauge railway from Sydney, crossing George's River by bridge or train-ferry at Rocky Point, then following the old South Coast Road via Bottle Forest along the Illawarra Range to Woonona, thence to Wollongong, Kiama and Bomaderry. Advice was sought from Cecil Darley, a well-known engineer, as to cost and the best route for a survey<sup>1</sup>. But the proposal failed to attract the necessary support and, in the same year, a memorial was presented to the Government praying for a line of railway to be surveyed from Port Jackson to the Shoalhaven. As a result the Government had a survey made, but only as far as Wollongong.

In 1875, as a result of a public meeting at the Masonic Hall, in Sydney, a deputation comprising nine members of Parliament (including J. B. Watt, R. Owen and T. Holt) and other well-known citizens (including T. S. Mort, J. W. Wilshire and the Rev. Dr J. D. Lang) waited upon the Colonial Secretary and Minister for Works to urge the Government to place a sum of money on the estimates for the purpose of constructing the line to the Illawarra districts.

R. Owen pointed out that Newcastle would not be injured by such a railway because Newcastle could not adequately supply the demand for coal, thereby causing many ships to leave that port in ballast only because of the delays. T. S. Mort, prophetically<sup>2</sup>, forecast that Sydney would be able to get its water supply from Illawarra and that the railway should be proceeded with, accompanied by a scheme for water supply.

Holt said that he and Mort were veterans in the cause of railway construction in the colony, being originators of the Sydney Railway Company and the Hunter Railway Company, but that he had seen so much of private railway companies in the colony that he never would take part in another private company for the construction of a main trunk line. He appreciated that it was difficult to speak without being accused of being interested (mainly because of his Sutherland holding) but,

<sup>1</sup> Letter from John Biggar to Cecil Darley, 8 March 1873, enclosing draft prospectus of the Wollongong and South Coast Railway, Liability Limited. (Darley Papers, pp. 42-45, ML. A3144.)

<sup>2</sup> In 1968, the Sydney Water Board approved a gigantic scheme for the supply of water from the Shoalhaven River. (*SMH* 29 May 1968).

whether or not he owned land between Sydney and Wollongong, he would be just as eager to see this line of railway carried out, as he believed it would be for the good of the colony. He was astonished that the Government was so anxious to construct railways into the interior, to lands where ten thousand acres would not yield as much as one acre in this district, while they hesitated to construct this railway.

John Lackey, the Minister for Works, said the Government was fully alive to the importance of the question and they would give it their best attention<sup>3</sup>.

In March 1876 the Mayor of Sydney presided at a large public meeting in the Masonic Hall at which Mr Dibbs and Dr Lang propounded opposing views and which was reported thus.

Those who were in favour of the railway were resolved to silence Mr Dibbs, those who sympathised with Mr Dibbs returned the compliment by shouting down Dr Lang and thus, between the two parties, the meeting fell to the ground<sup>4</sup>.

The matter was also debated in Parliament the same year but not approved, mainly because of the expense involved. In 1881 however, the Public Works Act (44 Vic. 28) was passed, authorising the raising of a loan of over £1,000,000 to build the line from Sydney to Kiama. In December 1885, the railway line from Sydney was opened to Sutherland<sup>5</sup>. Difficulties of terrain prevented the line being a straightforward constructional work and, in addition, the line was later authorised to be extended to Nowra (Bomaderry). Through rail traffic between Sydney and Wollongong, however, was established in October 1888 and in 1893 the extension to Bomaderry was opened.

## 22 *Attorney-General v Holt and Others*

Yet another worrying legal proceeding lay ahead of Holt. Its origin, course and aftermath were as follows:

Lieutenant-Colonel (later General Sir) Edward Macarthur, was the owner in fee simple of four allotments of land, portion of his 'Pyrmont' estate, on which were several buildings. They were in Murray Street, Pyrmont, and had a frontage to Darling Harbour of about 235 feet<sup>1</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *SMH* 13 March 1875.

<sup>4</sup> *SMH* 11 March 1876.

<sup>5</sup> *SMH* 10 October 1958.

For a more detailed account see: 'The Story of the New South Wales railways' by E. C. Rowland, 40 *R.A.H.S. Jo.* p. 244, and 'Illawarra: A Century of History, 1788-1888' by James Jervis, 28 *R.A.H.S. Jo.* 65, 129 and 192.

<sup>1</sup> Plans in vol. II, N.S.W. Commissioner of Land Claims (ML, A275) and in *N.S.W. V & P of the Legislative Assembly (1879-1880)*.

which ran north commencing a short distance from where the north-west end of Pyrmont Bridge now is. Murray Street at that time continued north beyond Union Street but is now part of Darling Island Goods Yard. In 1853 (or 1856) Macarthur leased these allotments to Holt for approximately ninety-nine years at an annual rental and on the understanding that Holt should be entitled to obtain permission from the Government to extend a wharf from them on to the adjacent land in front, which was covered by water.

In 1861 Holt applied to the Government for permission to extend a wharf into the waters of Darling Harbour in front of the leased lands from 'my property' in Murray Street. His application was refused because the Government proposed to extend the railway from Ultimo through the property. When the proposed extension of the railway was abandoned, Holt through his agent in 1868 renewed his application in the same words.

Although Holt had not applied to purchase the land covered by water the Crown Lands Department sent Holt appraisement forms, which the Under-Secretary of Lands later admitted amounted to an offer by the Government to sell Holt those lands at their appraised value. Holt signed the form appointing his own appraiser to act with the Government appraiser and clearly indicated in it that he proposed to extend a wharf from his 'leasehold' property.

Numerous advertisements by the Minister for Lands appeared in the *Government Gazette*, calling for objections on the part of anyone interested, but no objection was received. The appraised value was paid by Holt to the Treasury and, on 1 June 1872, a grant was issued to Holt for the land. On 22 November 1872, Holt sold and transferred the land, including the leasehold, to Messrs Goodlet and Smith (timber and galvanised iron merchants), who constructed a wharf there. After the wharf had been erected, however, the trustees of Macarthur's estate complained to the Lands Department that the grant should not have been made because Holt was only a leaseholder from Macarthur of the adjacent shore land.

Holt expressed his willingness to make arrangements, with the consent of Goodlet and Smith, to permit the grant to revert to the representatives of Macarthur's estate at the termination of the lease but these arrangements could not be effected.

On 20 August 1875, an information was filed on behalf of the Attorney-General by the Crown Solicitor, praying for a declaration that Holt was not entitled to the grant and that it might be delivered up and cancelled on the grounds that the grant had been obtained by Holt's misrepresentation of his estate and interest in the land and that the grant had been obtained by surprise and misrepresentation of the facts.

Evidence was taken before the Master in Equity. The only witness called by the Crown was the Under-Secretary of Lands who conceded in his evidence that there was no misrepresentation or concealment on the part of Holt and that it was impossible that the Governor or the Minister for Lands had been taken by surprise or deceived by the documents which contained the only representations made by Holt.

The suit eventually came on for hearing before Mr Justice Hargrave in August 1879. After hearing the evidence taken before the Master and the submissions of counsel for the Crown, the Judge did not call on counsel for the defence but dismissed the information with costs. The Judge decided that 'the word "proprietor" applied to Mr Holt's case, where he was a tenant for a long period of the land having water frontage to Port Jackson'<sup>2</sup>, although in a preliminary argument on Goodlet and Smith's plea earlier he had expressed a different view<sup>3</sup>.

He also held that

the charges of fraud contained in the information and which were not borne out by the evidence, were introduced, no doubt, by the pleaders. Never was there a case more flagrant than this, every difficulty was placed in the way of the defendant; every question put by him as to the practice of the department was objected to and refused<sup>4</sup>.

Against this order the Attorney-General, in September 1879, appealed to the Full Court, comprising Hargrave, Faucett and Sir William Manning, JJ. In giving their judgment<sup>5</sup> Hargrave said:

Here no one was deceived, or was alleged to have been deceived. The Attorney-General, doubtless, had a great deal to do; but in a case affecting character, as this did, it was difficult to conceive how any-one, after becoming aware of the nature of the evidence, could have undertaken to bring the case into Court.

Faucett said

There was no ground whatever for saying the Crown was misled. . . . If they were deceived it was by their own negligence.

Sir William Manning said

The evidence showed that there had been no deceit legal or moral, or cognisable in equity. Mr Holt called himself 'proprietor' which was a question of law with regard to which he might be innocent. But

<sup>2</sup> *SMH* 19 August 1879.

<sup>3</sup> *SMH* 16 February 1876.

<sup>4</sup> *SMH* 19 August 1879; 2 S.C.R. (N.S.W.) Eq. 37 and 1 S.C.R. (N.S.) Eq. 21.

<sup>5</sup> *SMH* 24 September 1879; 2 S.C.R. (N.S.W.) Eq. 44.

in a formal document Mr Holt, in two places, used the word 'leaseholder'. It appeared he had his doubts in the matter, and thus called attention to the nature of his estate in a manner as specifically as there was any occasion for him to do. It appeared, also, that he was willing to recognise the right of Mr Macarthur's trustees to the reversion.

The appeal was therefore unanimously dismissed with costs, and counsel for the Crown advised against any further appeal.

Indignant at the damage to his reputation from the unfounded charges of the Crown which had hung over his head for four years, and stung by a verbal altercation with Crown Solicitor John Williams in the Master's office, Holt wrote on 18 November 1879 a letter to the Minister of Justice. He complained of the gross abuse of functions of office by the Crown Solicitor and requested that his conduct be specially enquired into. He also complained that the information had untruthfully alleged that he had represented himself as being seized of the land in fee simple in possession and had suppressed any mention of the appraisal form which, in itself, would have refuted the first allegation. He further wrote

It is not enough for me that the Court acquitted me and censured my accusers; I desire that no-one else shall be subjected to the same wrong and to the same ignominy. Had I been a poor man, or without nerve, I might have weakly submitted to be harried without redress, especially as Mr Williams had intimated that the Crown would spare no pains or expense. But I was determined to withstand my opponents to the very utmost, and now that I have succeeded I am not content with my personal success, but I desire that you, Sir, should use the influence of your high office to prevent any similar improper action on the part of your subordinates, by which the dignity of the Crown may be impaired and the honour and the property of Her Majesty's subjects may be imperilled.

The Crown Solicitor replied on 21 January 1880, claiming that he was acting on instructions from former Attorneys-General and that the primary Judge in Equity was originally of the opinion that the meaning of 'proprietor' did not extend to leaseholders. He further defended his conduct and the course of the action notwithstanding the Court's finding. He concluded by throwing down the gauntlet in a personal challenge.

I should explain that the intimation given by me that the Crown would spare no pains or expense occurred in this way: On one occasion while we were waiting in attendance at the Master's office, Mr Holt, in the arrogant, boasting, and offensive manner which he is pleased at times to assume, remarked that he would persevere to the end and

spend any amount of money on the case. As I thought that this remark was made for my benefit, I replied that the Crown also had money at command, and would not be deterred by any fear of expense from doing whatever the justice of the case required.

I have no personal feeling against Mr Holt, and have given him no cause to think I have — it may be that it is one of his mental peculiarities to imagine that every one placed in adverse relations to him must in any proceedings adopted be actuated by motives of self-interest or malice.

Mr Holt will be pleased to find that the production of his letter has been asked for in the Assembly; he is thus relieved from all fear that it, his latest and most characteristic effort, will be lost to the world. I do not doubt but that it was written, and the insulting imputations in it elaborated, with a view to its publication in some such manner.

The challenge was accepted in Holt's letter to the Minister of Justice (11 March 1880) in which he described the Crown Solicitor's letter as rambling and disingenuous and no answer to his. He wrote

Mr Williams has somewhat unnecessarily expressed his opinion that I shall be pleased at finding that the production of my letter has been asked for in the Assembly. I can assure him that I am very much more pleased at finding his letter appended. He has done his best to damage my reputation and to impugn the decision of the Court, and I am gratified to find that the utmost he can do is so utterly powerless. His defence utterly breaks down at every point, as I will now proceed to show.

In a fifty-eight-page letter Holt proceeded to enumerate the facts, appending a transcript of material parts of the evidence before the Master-in-Equity, claiming that the impenetrable reserve of the Crown Solicitor had foiled all attempts to find out who originated the charge, alleging that the method, then in existence, of the Crown Solicitor being able to obtain costs from the public instead of being paid a salary, was wrong and averring that it was the costs and nothing but the costs which the Crown Solicitor wanted in this case.

He also quoted from a letter from the former Attorney-General, the Hon W. B. Dalley, who signed the information, saying that he had no personal knowledge of the circumstances of the case and that the Crown Solicitor was the person to give the information. Holt also wrote

I have no recollection of the occasion on which Mr Williams accuses me of having shown unbecoming temper; but considering that my character was at stake — that I was charged with deceiving high

officials, and could not get from my accuser who these persons were — that I was a single individual fighting against the whole power of the Crown — may I not be pardoned if I sometimes showed excessive excitement? At the trial of the Dean of St Asaph, Erskine said

The only difficulty which I feel, in resisting so false and malevolent an accusation, is to be able to repress the feeling, excited by its folly and injustice, within those bounds which may leave my faculties in their natural and unclouded operation.

If a trained barrister like Mr Erskine could feel so stirred by a charge (which was not against himself), an untrained layman who is the subject of a false accusation, surely had a good plea in mitigation.

Williams answered on 10 April 1880 in a long letter which contended that, although Holt's in respect of bulk was a very formidable manuscript, it merely expanded the abuse in his previous letter and furnished no new evidence in support of his charges. He then emphasised that all the evidence, including the appraisal form, was before counsel who would use his own discretion in inserting whatever allegations he considered necessary in drawing the information.

The relevant papers and correspondence relating to the Pymont land and the information of the Attorney-General v Holt and Others were ordered to be printed by the Legislative Assembly and appear in *Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly 1879-80*.

On 13 April 1880, Captain Onslow, moved in the Legislative Assembly<sup>6</sup>, that

in the opinion of the House the serious charges made against, and the imputation cast, on the character of Mr John Williams, the Crown Solicitor, by the Hon Thomas Holt, MLC, in his letter to the Minister of Justice dated the 18th November 1879 were totally unfounded and altogether unjustified.

Attorney-General Wisdom thought the motion should not have been made, as the head of Williams' department had done nothing to call for the interference of the House. Mr Pilcher said he thought Mr Holt would not have entertained the idea that Mr Williams was actuated by personal ill-feeling if he had been better acquainted with the phraseology of equity pleaders. Mr Farnell said Mr Williams was instructed by the Department of Lands to defend the rights of the Crown and he had done no more than his duty. Mr S. C. Brown thought that the Attorney-General or Minister for Justice should, in justice to Mr Williams, make a

<sup>6</sup> SMH 14 April 1880.

minute on the papers in the case. Mr McElhone urged that if any party could be said to have been victimised in the business it was the Macarthur family, to whom the property belonged. Sir Henry Parkes advised the withdrawal of the motion, and this was done.

The Attorney-General on 15 April 1880 minuted his opinion that the charges against the Crown Solicitor were entirely without foundation and that the papers showed that Mr Williams had nothing to do with the initiation of the case but, throughout the whole of the proceedings, was simply acting under instructions received in his official capacity.

The following day, in a leading article<sup>7</sup>, the *Echo* criticised Captain Onslow for wasting time with his motion, reiterated shortly the circumstances and continued

Under these circumstances, can any one wonder that a gentleman who had been charged with offences he never committed, and the disproof of which accusations was all the time in the possession of the Government, should attempt to discover some motive for the outrage inflicted upon him? And this is one of the points in regard to which public curiosity is not yet satisfied . . .

The present case, however, is not likely to form a precedent. Its record will remain as an evidence of gross injustice. Mr Holt, by his courage and determination, has achieved a triumph which cannot fail to have beneficial results in protecting society against similar iniquitous suits . . .

The colony has reason to feel dissatisfied with the course taken by the Crown in the case referred to, and may be pardoned for some irritation that the time of the Assembly also should be frittered away in the discussion of motions which, if not quixotic, can only be described by a term still less complimentary.

On 11 May 1880 Captain Onslow moved the adjournment of the House to make an explanation because the avenues of the press had been closed to him by the *Echo*, the *Telegraph* and the *Evening News*, even though he had been prepared to pay for the insertion of his letter as an advertisement:

People said that he was quixotic in defending Mr Williams, but it seemed to him that the charge against that gentleman required refutation, and he was glad to have the opportunity of referring to these papers again. He might state that he was not personally interested in this matter, but his children or his grand-children would get a reversion of some property. He was glad he had had the opportunity of bringing the matter before the public. He was aware that it was

<sup>7</sup> The *Echo*, 16 April 1880.



unwise for an individual to enter into a controversy with editors of newspapers. They generally had the best of you in some way or another. Years ago Mr Holt was spoken of as one of the foremost men in the colony. He was forbidden to pass any reflections on members of Parliament, and his respect for Mr Holt was, perhaps, as great as that of the editor in question. Galileo and some other astronomers were remarkable for discovering spots on the sun, and he remembered that, when the Koh-i-nor was brought to England, a jeweller discovered a flaw in it, notwithstanding its being supposed to be pure. He would see if there was no flaw in their Cook's River diamond. . . .

Captain Onslow read lengthened extracts from the correspondence he had referred to, and remarked that if anybody had any desire to compile a volume of the curiosities of literature he would find ample material in that correspondence. . . .

The bulk of correspondence might, however, be made use of by the officials in the Lands Department for examples of letter writing. He would advise them to find their own quotations, and not imitate Mr Holt's example by getting Mr Gammon<sup>8</sup>, or anybody else, to find quotations for them. As far as the worship of the golden calf was concerned, the proprietors of the *Herald* appeared to be as devout worshippers as the Hebrews of old.

The *Herald* replied shortly<sup>9</sup>. It adhered to its original opinion that the decisions of the Courts were 'something in the nature of a censure on the way in which activities are instituted in the Crown Law Office'. It also pointed out that the blunder originated in the Lands Department and continued:

The Government, having discovered its negligence and mistake, should have adopted some form of remedy that would have admitted that mistake, and left them to pay the penalty of it. Instead of that they cover up their own blunder, by making a charge of misrepresentation against Mr Holt. The charge could not be sustained, and broke down before the Court, on the mere hearing of the Crown's case. This was in itself a sufficient condemnation of the course pursued. . . .

It is absurd to say that the forms of law being very rigid, it is impossible to admit that the Crown has done wrong, and that therefore any mistake that it has made must be got over, by charging some private citizen with mal-feasance. It is no consolation to be told that

<sup>8</sup> The proper name of Dr Andrew 'Garran' was 'Gammon' but Mr Fairfax changed it because he would not hear of his paper being edited by anybody called Gammon. (*The Bulletin*, 15 June 1901) vol. 112, Newspaper Cutting (ML).

<sup>9</sup> *SMH* 13 May 1880.

the terms of an indictment are merely formal, and that if you receive a piece of official paper telling you that you are a cheat and a liar, and generally a scoundrel, you are to consider it of no importance, as it is only a convenient way of correcting a blunder of some clerk in the Lands' Department. It requires a very meek man to submit to this peculiar legal treatment, and Mr Holt is not a competitor with Moses for the palm of meekness. Setting up the Crown Solicitor as the representative of Government in the matter, he has retorted with compound interest. That a case like this, the merits of which are discernible at a glance, should have been three years dragging through the Equity Court, is a scandal on our administration of justice.

### 23 *Sale of 'The Warren'*

When early in 1879<sup>1</sup> his wife and daughters again left for Europe, Holt was building a new residence at Sylvania. Later that year he decided to join his family in England and sell 'The Warren', which the Government was interested in purchasing as a residence for the Governor<sup>2</sup>. It was sold, together with two smaller areas adjoining the 129 acres for £50,000 by private contract to a syndicate of three through Messrs Hardie and Gorman, on 26 October 1880, a special condition providing that possession should be given on 1 February 1881<sup>3</sup>. The sale to the Government, however, never eventuated, and the estate was purchased by Excelsior Building Society which subdivided and sold it. The mansion, with twelve acres of land, was purchased by the Roman Catholic authorities for a convent for French Carmelite nuns who arrived under the Rev. Mother Prioress Mary of the Cross in 1884, and were removed from Villa Maria to 'The Warren' in 1886<sup>4</sup>.

The nuns of this mendicant order wore sandals, enjoined extreme bodily austerity with prolonged prayer and had strict vows of silence, inscriptions on the walls of 'The Warren' reminding them of these vows<sup>5</sup>. All ornate furnishings, including the marble chimney pieces, the large staircase leading to the ballroom and other fittings were removed and disposed of to Mr Broinowski (author of *The Birds of Australia*) who built, from the stone of the stables, an adjoining house, 'Jesmond'. The order erected crosses on high points of the exterior of 'The Warren' and a large statue of the Madonna and Child on the observation platform.

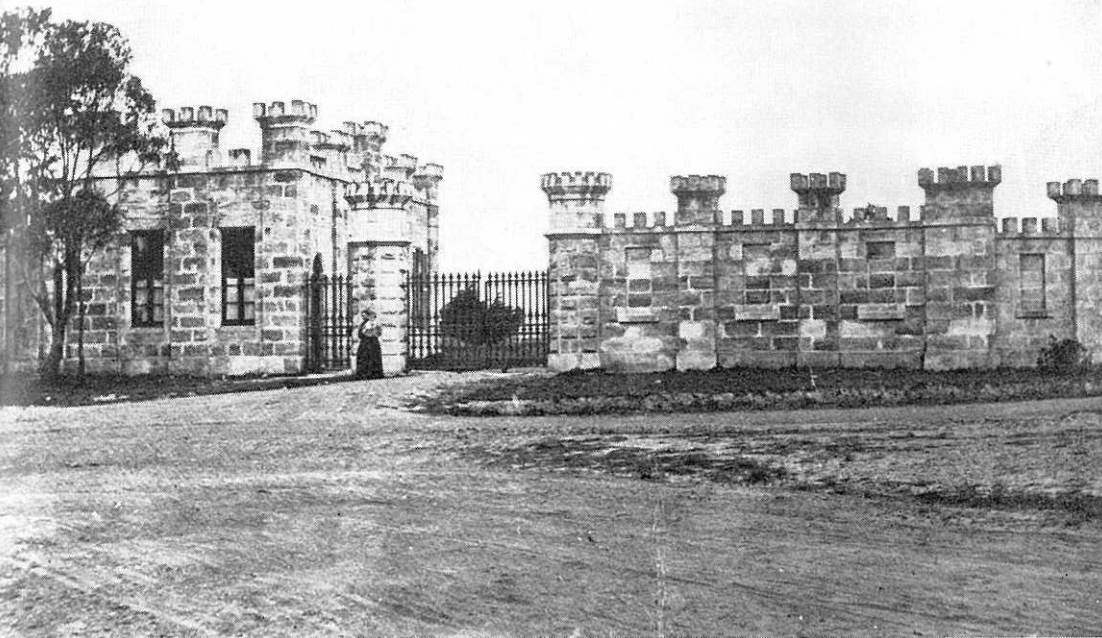
<sup>1</sup> *SMH* 23 January 1879.

<sup>2</sup> Letters T. Holt to J. Little, 3 November 1879, 5 November 1879, Parkes' Correspondence ML. A923.

<sup>3</sup> Hardie and Gorman's Sales Book for 1880, ML. A4009; Transfer No. 44327 dated 24 November 1880, to Russell Barton.

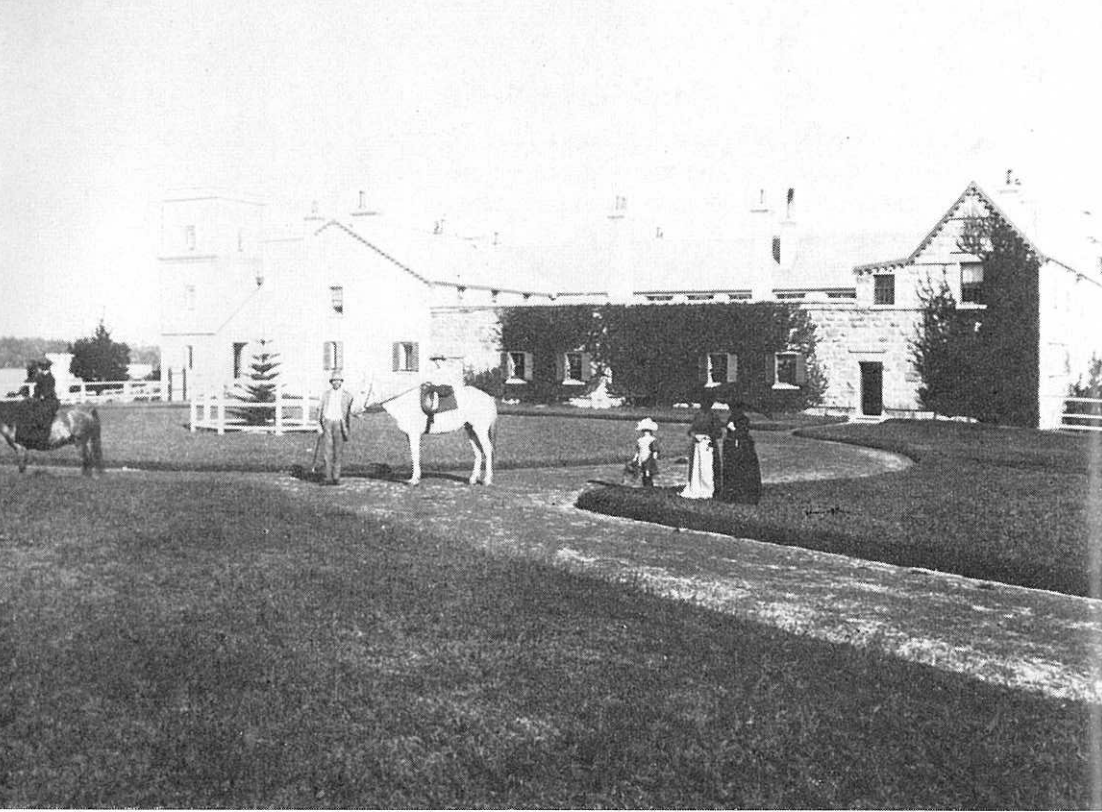
<sup>4</sup> *Sydney Echo*, 31 July 1890.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from T. H. Compagnoni, 1 November 1960, to H. T. E. Holt.



*The Warren, Marrickville (about 1870). Above: The Warren Lodge and gates. Below: The Warren Art Gallery*





*Views of Sutherland House*



Later the nuns moved to other quarters and left 'The Warren' in the care of caretakers who were unable to prevent its being despoiled and all the thick ground glass windows being wilfully smashed. At the beginning of the 1914-18 war it was taken over as an artillery training camp and, in 1919, the building was resumed and demolished by the State Housing Board. The grounds were then sub-divided and built on and no trace remained of the old home<sup>6</sup>.

The site of 'The Warren' was at what is now Richardson's Lookout in Warren Park where a sundial (the metal dial of which, in 1967, had been removed from its steel bolts) bears an inscription on a metal plaque on its base, which reads:

To record the site of the home of Thomas Holt, MLC, 1842 to 1883  
Erected 6 February 1937 by T. S. Holt, Esq.<sup>7</sup>

Two or three of the castellated pillars, which probably stood at the entrance gates near the Lodge or at the entrance to the mansion, must have been removed, stone by stone, and could be seen, in 1967, in front of an old house at the back of a sand factory in Cary Street, near Carrington Road and Mackey Park.

#### 24 'Sutherland House'

When Holt's wife and four daughters left Australia in January 1879 it was their intention to reside abroad for some time<sup>1</sup> and his intention to join them in England<sup>2</sup>. He was delayed because of the equity proceedings by the Attorney-General and therefore occupied some time in completing the building of what was to be his last residence in Australia.

This was 'Sutherland House' at Sylvania, facing Gwawley (or Gawley) Bay beach near Sandy Point, from where he had constructed a bridge across the mouth of Gwawley Bay to Cummins Point (now Taren Point). In 1967 two only of the original piles of the old bridge still remained to mark the position of the bridge and extensive dredging must have necessitated the removal of others which had not already collapsed.

A large part of Gwawley Bay had been formed into oyster claires by Holt but the rest, although owned by Holt, was a trawling ground under the Fisheries' Act where fishermen with their nets, were a constant source

<sup>6</sup> *The Sun*, 24 August 1919.

<sup>7</sup> *History of Marrickville, 1861-1936*; newspaper cuttings, vol. 92, pp. 49-50 ML. T. S. Holt was the eldest son of F. S. E. Holt who, in turn, was the eldest son of Thomas Holt. 1842 was the correct year of arrival in Australia by Thomas Holt but he left Australia on 23 September 1881.

<sup>1</sup> Power of Attorney from Jessie Dodds, 21 January 1879 (H.P.); *SMH* 23 January 1879.

<sup>2</sup> Letter 3 November 1879 from Holt in Parkes Correspondence, ML. A923.

of interest and sold freshly-caught fish to bystanders<sup>3</sup>. By 1967 much of Gwawley Bay had been reclaimed and an extensive canal system formed, alongside which attractive residences with frontages to the canals at Sylvania Waters were built, the whole resembling a 'little Venice'.

'Sutherland House' was a commodious residence containing thirty-five rooms, including an 'organ room', used as a small church by local residents, a lodge at the entrance, stables, three cottages for employees, salt-water swimming bath, boat shed, flower and vegetable gardens<sup>4</sup>. There was then no bridge across George's River and transit was either by punt or boat.

After 'The Warren' was sold in October 1880, Holt moved most of his furniture, statuary, paintings and engravings from there to 'Sutherland House', where he lived with his son Frederick and Frederick's wife and family until he departed in September 1881 for Europe.

After his departure Frederick and his family continued to live there until the financial depression of the 1890s<sup>5</sup>. Early in 1894 Frederick leased<sup>6</sup> the residence with its furniture, statuary, paintings etc and about one hundred acres of land to a Mrs Hamilton who ran it for some years as the Sylvania Sanatorium, an accommodation house mainly for 'families desiring a change from the fatigue of city life and for weary travellers'<sup>7</sup>.

Frederick was killed when run over by a train in February 1902 and his son, T. S. Holt, and his family lived at 'Sutherland House' for some years<sup>8</sup>.

In April 1908, 'Sutherland House' with five acres of land, together with thirty-eight lots into which the thirty-three-acre property had been subdivided, was put up for auction. The waterfrontage blocks were sold at from 21/- to 41/- per foot and the other lots from 8/- to 18/- per foot, but 'Sutherland House' with its five acres of land was passed in at £1450<sup>9</sup>.

In 1915 it was purchased for £3,000 by one Hillman, the building being insured for £2,000 and the furniture for £1,000. Late in 1918 Hillman sold the furniture by auction and arranged for demolition of the house after tenders for the purchase of materials closed on 18 December. The previous evening, however, while the caretaker was absent for only an hour, the house caught fire and was totally destroyed,

<sup>3</sup> Letter 20 April 1894, F. S. E. Holt to Cape, Kent and Gaden (HP).

<sup>4</sup> Letter 25 April 1894, Cape, Kent and Gaden to J. C. Hamilton (HP); R. D. Mackie, *Sutherland Shire*.

<sup>5</sup> Letters (HP).

<sup>6</sup> Letter 25 April 1894 Cape, Kent and Gaden to F. S. E. Holt (HP).

<sup>7</sup> Letter 30 July 1894 from J. C. Hamilton and Circular headed 'A New Sanatorium' (HP).

<sup>8</sup> Letters in 1906, 1907 to T. S. Holt & wife (HP).

<sup>9</sup> *SMH* 15 and 21 April 1908.

*Cook's River, Marrickville, 1864-80*

only portion of the walls and towers and a large cellar remaining. The caretaker thought that the place was wilfully set alight during his absence and another person saw figures of two men on the parapet when smoke was issuing from the house. An inquiry was held at which the Coroner returned an open verdict<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> The *Sun* 18 December 1918; The *Propeller* (Hurstville) 20 December 1918; 24 January 1919 and 21 March 1919.

## 6

### Final Years in Europe 1881-88

On 23 September 1881, Holt left Sydney by the P & O steamship *Cathay* (2983 tons) for Southampton and London via Bombay<sup>1</sup>. On arrival in London he rejoined his wife, daughters and their companion of many years and former governess, Miss Jessie Dodds, all staying at the Langham Hotel, Grosvenor Square, prior to visiting Scotland<sup>2</sup>.

The year 1882 was mainly spent in travel on the European continent and, in November of that year, he wrote to Sir Henry Parkes that they were

constantly on the move except when we stop a few days or weeks at one of the interesting places we meet with on our travels. We have been about a week in Venice and think of remaining here another week and then going to Bologna and then to Florence and then to Naples, etc. We spent almost three months in Switzerland and I prefer the grandeur of the scenery of that splendid country to the palaces, paintings and statuary of Italy. From the experience I have had during the last twelve months I am inclined to think that Solomon was not infallible when he said 'the eye is never satisfied with seeing' for I think I shall not be sorry to have a little rest for them. I think that we shall settle down for two or three months at Amsterdam to which city the Government has appointed me to be the Representative Commissioner, an honour I highly appreciate and will do my utmost to promote the interest of the Exhibition, as far as New South Wales is concerned<sup>3</sup>.

In February 1883 he and his family were at Pompeii<sup>4</sup> and in March

<sup>1</sup> *SMH* 16 September 1881, 24 September 1881.

<sup>2</sup> Information from the late Miss A. I. Holt to Dr W. G. Holt.

<sup>3</sup> Letter T. Holt to Sir Henry Parkes, 13 November 1882 (HL). In August 1882 Lord Loftus had appointed Sir Saul Samuel and T. Holt as Representative Commissioners to act on behalf of the Colony in all things connected with the 1883 Amsterdam Exhibition at which the United Kingdom, India, Victoria and N.S.W. were represented — Register of Patents No. 11, pp. 456-457.

<sup>4</sup> Photo of 27 February 1883 in possession of Dr W. G. Holt.



of that year, while at Pisa, his daughter Florence Marie contracted typhoid fever and died at the age of twenty-six, on 22 March 1885<sup>5</sup>.

It would appear to have been after the Amsterdam Exhibition that Holt and the rest of his family visited Munich in September 1883<sup>6</sup> and by that time travel had become somewhat fatiguing. Later that year, while visiting the grottoes of the famous stalactite caves at Adelsberg, Austria, he caught a severe cold which developed while at Nice into a dangerous illness, with congestion and haemorrhage of the lungs. His kidneys also became affected and, after some months, when able to travel, he consulted an eminent French doctor in Paris, who advised him not to eat asparagus. On arrival in London he saw Dr Kidd an eminent physician, who advised him 'to eat largely of asparagus' so, faced with contradictory advice, he decided to follow Dr Kidd who 'spoke with such an authoritative air, as if he were an oracle, and he had such piercing eyes, as if he could see through his patients' whereas the French doctor was very modest in giving his advice. Later, Holt read that asparagine had a deleterious effect on the urinary organs and believed that Dr Kidd's advice had aggravated, if it did not cause, his kidney disease<sup>7</sup>.

Early in 1884, he again became seriously ill and, because of his distrust in the treatment by medical practitioners on the allopathic principle, in May 1884 he entered Smedley's hydropathic establishment at Matlock, Derbyshire, where he underwent a course of treatment from which he believed he derived much benefit<sup>8</sup>. His distrust in allopathic treatment was not of recent origin as, for a long time, he had been a firm believer in hydropathy and homoeopathy, a belief which he had shared with many of his contemporaries in New South Wales, members of Parliament and other associates, including Benjamin Buchanan, T. S. Mort, Rev. Canon Walsh and W. C. Windeyer.

In the late 1830s he became an admirer and personal friend of the noted hydropathist Priessnitz in Austria and was convinced that the cold water treatment, as well as Turkish baths, worked wonders. In the early 1860s he supported the Sydney Homoeopathic Dispensary and, both in and out of Parliament, advocated the introduction of the homoeopathic principle of treatment into public hospitals, asserting that members of his own family had been murdered by allopaths<sup>9</sup>.

In 1872, when appointed to a select committee of the Legislative

<sup>5</sup> Family Register.

<sup>6</sup> Letter T. Holt to F. S. E. Holt, 7 September 1883 (HP).

<sup>7</sup> Letters from T. Holt to F. S. E. Holt, 29 November 1883 and 15 September 1886 (HP).

<sup>8</sup> Letter T. Holt to F. S. E. Holt, 6 June 1884 (H.P.).

<sup>9</sup> *SMH* 29 August 1861; 11 December 1876; *The Empire*, 29 August 1861, 30 September 1863.

Assembly to report on the Vaccination bill, he had stated that he was opposed to it in all its stages and that he believed cleanliness, produced by the use of plenty of water, was the best preventative against small pox. He promised however that, if his name were not removed for making those remarks, he would do his utmost as a member of the select committee<sup>10</sup>.

In 1875, when opposing the Medical Practitioners' bill in the Legislative Council, he had claimed that he owed the health which he enjoyed to hydropathy, that homoeopathy had saved his wife on two occasions; that forty years earlier at Vienna he had been treated for fever and had been bled and physicked until he shuddered with horror at the sight of his doctors but that, in spite of all this, he had recovered. He also instanced the case of Benvenuto Cellini who, when upon the point of death and having been treated by the Pope's physician, was completely restored to health by having, through an accidental circumstance, been permitted to drink a quantity of cold water, which had been strictly prohibited<sup>11</sup>.

Holt's wife and daughters accompanied him to Smedley's Hydropathic establishment to see him comfortably settled there, in May 1884 and returned to London to look for a suitable home for the family in England. They found a residence, 'Halcot', at Bexley, Kent, which Holt leased. 'Halcot' was a large white mansion, situated in attractive grounds, part of old London Bridge forming a parapet to one of the terraces<sup>12</sup>. Holt rejoined his family there after his discharge from the hydropathic establishment. The relief obtained proved to be temporary only and it was found that he was suffering from Bright's disease with the co-existence of dropsy.

Late in 1885, and again in June 1886, he suffered serious attacks and, on the latter occasion, when he found that doctors could afford him no relief by draining his legs and indicated that there was nothing they could do to save his life, he determined to administer to himself hydropathic treatment and, with the assistance of his attendant, precipitated a violent crisis. His legs became a mass of sores and very painful and, fearing again to consult a doctor, he sent for a hydropathist from Smedley's who attended him and also had one of the experienced bathmen from Smedley's to continue treatment. As a result of this treatment Holt believed that the disease had entirely disappeared but he was again only experiencing a temporary relief<sup>13</sup>. After receiving an invitation from Sir Henry Parkes to a dinner in May 1887, for the

<sup>10</sup> *SMH* 31 July 1872.

<sup>11</sup> *SMH* 7 May 1875.

<sup>12</sup> Letter W. H. Holt to H. T. E. Holt 31 October 1909.

<sup>13</sup> Letter S. Cook to F. S. E. Holt, 22 January 1886 (HP). Letter T. Holt to F. S. E. Holt, 15 September 1886 (HP).

surviving members of the first Legislative Assembly at Parliament House, Sydney, he wrote, 'I have been on the verge of the grave since I last had the pleasure of seeing you and am still an invalid and unable to read or write much'<sup>14</sup>.

While at 'Halcot', and although an invalid, he devoted himself to the amelioration of the conditions of the London poor, assisting the Salvation Army in its charitable works and aiding the schemes of the Rev. A. Mearns and Dr Barnardo<sup>15</sup>.

All kinds of institutions that had for their primary object the relief of the poor were helped, irrespective of the section of the Church of Christ to which they belonged. The winter before last something like twelve thousand were assisted to free dinners, and during the past winter over twenty thousand in London were benefited by Mr Holt's generosity, and to each of them was given some present which would, in a measure, brighten their dark and cheerless lives. There were gatherings of the halt, maimed, and blind, sandwich men, seamstresses, widows, tramps, waifs and strays, thieves and vagabonds, out of work dock labourers, and representatives of the great army of the unemployed, in companies varying from three hundred to one thousand five hundred, according to the size of the halls in which they were entertained. These sights will never be forgotten by those who witnessed them. Not only were their bodies looked after, but Mr Holt's great desire was to bring them to the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Not only in London and other places was he mindful of the distress of the poor, but in his own immediate neighbourhood all that thoughtful and loving care could suggest, and a liberal hand could supply, was done to alleviate the want that abounds there during the winter months. Crayford Baptist Church was made the centre of an extensive system of relief; several thousands had food, clothing and firing supplied to them in their homes, besides giving liberally to every deserving charity in the locality. On the occasion of the Queen's Jubilee, the Bexley Heath Cottage Hospital was enlarged through his munificence. Not many days before he passed away, Mr Holt tried to bring a little sunshine into the heart of earth's sorrowful ones by entertaining in his own grounds the inmates of the Dartford Union, and also by sending over three hundred of the poor of St Giles' district to enjoy a day among the Surrey hills.

Space will not permit a recital of acts of generosity to Orphan Houses, Hospitals, Asylums, Institutions, and Missions of every description.

<sup>14</sup> Letter T. Holt to Sir Henry Parkes 15 September 1887 (Auto letters of notable Australians (ML)).

<sup>15</sup> The *Australian Independent*, 15 September 1888; *Australian Encyclopedia* (1958) vol. 4 p. 524; P. Mennell, *Dictionary of Australian Biography* 1886-87.

For the last three years he was unable to take any active part in the distribution of his charity, being almost a confirmed invalid, but he was always represented by Mrs Holt and the members of his family . . . During the last few months of his life, Mr Holt had printed a pamphlet, which he had written, entitled *Christianity, the Poor Man's Friend*, which he circulated gratuitously among the poor and the different charitable societies, to the extent of over eight hundred thousand<sup>16</sup>.

In November 1887 there was a happy reunion when his son Walter, on a short visit from Australia, stayed at 'Halcot' and attended dinners given by his father, at one of which he took the chair after Sir William Macarthur had vacated it<sup>17</sup>.

Holt's benevolence in England was not universally received with favour; articles in the *Sydney Bulletin*, which six years earlier had lauded his philanthropy when it was directed to local objects, now derisively and cynically criticised his disposal of income from Australia upon English charities, suggesting that he was seeking a knighthood<sup>18</sup>.

Doubtless the *Bulletin* critics were unaware that Holt was continuing his benefactions in Australia through his attorneys. These benefactions included £200 to the Superannuation Fund for old and sick Congregational Ministers, an offer to build a church at Sylvania, a donation of the whole of the compensation moneys to be received for land resumptions for the Illawarra Railway towards charitable institutions in Sydney as well as other monetary gifts to charity<sup>19</sup>.

A native colonist, the Hon W. B. Dalley, MLC, was also unaware of Holt's dispositions through his attorneys when he wrote:

As he showed us here how fortune was to be won by labour, perseverance and high intelligence; so he has sustained his own and our character as colonists by showing in England how the gifts of fortune are to be dispensed and enjoyed by a noble, gracious Christian hospitality<sup>20</sup>.

During his illness, for three years Holt suffered severe pain patiently and without complaint and was always thinking of something to give others pleasure; but it was not until the day before he died that he would again consent to see a specialist physician. Dr Carfrae of London was sent for and attended him.

His beloved wife and daughters, together with other relatives and

<sup>16</sup> *The Christian* (London), 28 September 1888.

<sup>17</sup> Diary of W. H. Holt (in the possession of Dr W. G. Holt).

<sup>18</sup> *The Bulletin* (Sydney) 12 February 1881, 23 April 1887, 18 June 1887.

<sup>19</sup> Letters T. Holt to F. S. E. Holt, 29 November 1883, 7 July 1884 (H.P.).

<sup>20</sup> Letter W. B. Dalley to F. S. E. Holt, 3 October 1886 (HP), now (ML).

friends, were present when the Rev. T. F. Waddell, of Crayford Baptist Chapel, read him the *twenty-third Psalm* and *John XIV*, for which he thanked him and said 'Good evening'. He later said, 'A word of prayer' and Mr Waddell prayed. The Rev. B. W. Chancellor, of the Iron Church, Bexley, arrived just before he passed away peacefully, as if asleep, at 7 pm on 5 September 1888<sup>21</sup>.

Two years earlier, after a severe attack, he had secured a site at Abney Park Cemetery, near that of his friend the late Rev. Thomas Binney, where he had a family vault erected. His remains were deposited in this vault after a funeral attended by over four hundred which included his immediate family, other than his three sons who were in Australia, relatives, some colonial friends, including Sir Saul Samuel (then Agent-General for New South Wales), Sir William Ogg and William Yardley, as well as many of the London poor. At the expressed wish of the deceased, plumes and feathers were dispensed with, everything being plain and unpretentious<sup>22</sup>.

Memorial sermons were given on the following Sunday, at the Iron Church, Bexley, by the Rev. B. W. Chancellor, at Crayford Baptist Church by the Rev. T. F. Waddell and at Bloomsbury Mission Hall, Soho, by William Harrison<sup>23</sup>.

His widow, with her daughters and Miss Dodds, continued to reside at 'Halcot' for another two years and then purchased a property which she named 'Waratah' at Chislehurst, Kent, where she lived, with her daughters Alice and Annie and Miss Dodds, until she died on 8 May 1910 aged eighty-eight. Her daughter Emmeline also lived there on visits to England but ill-health forced her to reside most of her time at Barbadoes, British West Indies, where she died.

The family vault at Abney Park received the remains of Holt's widow in 1910, their daughter Alice in 1913 at the age of sixty, Miss Dodds, in 1921 at the age of ninety and their daughter Annie in 1949 at the age of ninety.

Six months before his death Holt had made his will. The late Sir Robert Garran, in his book *Prosper the Commonwealth*, recounted his memory of a visit to 'The Warren' with his father, Dr Andrew Garran, and recalled that he earned some fees at the bar 'arguing about the meaning of Holt's will, which, for economy's sake, he had drawn himself on a law stationer's form. Its interpretation cost his estate much more than a solicitor's charges for drawing a will.'

Sir Robert's memory of Holt drawing his will himself on a law

<sup>21</sup> Letter Miss A. I. Holt to W. H. Holt, 6 September 1888 (in the possession of Dr W. G. Holt).

<sup>22</sup> *SMH* 13 September 1888; *The Bexley Heath and Erith Observer*, 15 September 1888.

<sup>23</sup> Printed pamphlet (in the possession of Dr W. G. Holt).

stationer's form was faulty; an examination of over twenty pages of highly technical legal provisions contained in his will and codicil of 6 and 13 March 1888 and an old letter revealed that the will was actually drawn by Messrs Burn and Berridge, the family solicitors in England, who sent it to Holt who, in turn, made some alterations and had it engrossed<sup>24</sup>. However Sir Robert was correct in judging the interpretation of Holt's will costly to his estate; its construction necessitated several applications to the Court, including one concerning its elaborate entail provisions and the effect of the Conveyancing Act of 1919 upon them.

By his will Holt disposed of the whole of his property apart from minor bequests valued in England at £37,716 and in Australia at £297,523 to his widow, children and their descendants. He included an annuity to Miss Dodds and liberal allowances to his friends, Professor J. E. C. Munro, a barrister in Manchester, for acting as one of the trustees of his English estate, and to his old friend, Samuel Cook, for acting as one of the trustees of his estate in Australia.

Holt's memory has been perpetuated in various ways: there are written and pictorial records, the Cook Monument at Kurnell, the names of streets and localities, the sundial on the site of 'The Warren', and a bust in the possession of the AMP Society. There is a memorial mural in the new administrative building of the Sutherland Shire Council Chambers donated by his great-grandson, T. A. Holt, who also provided in 1956 over ten acres of land at North Sutherland and substantially assisted in the erection thereon of the Thomas Holt Memorial Village. This charitable organisation which has continued to expand and in 1970 provided housing and amenities for 150 elderly people, is an appropriate memorial to the Christian philanthropist whose name it bears.

<sup>24</sup> Copy letter F. S. E. Holt to A. W. Holt, 19 June 1889 (HP).

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