

Exploring Local History (100254 – Carol Liston)

Assignment: The Early History of Richmond School of Arts.

8th November, 2010.

The Richmond School of Arts (RSOA) is a historic building opened in 1866. It is in the Hawkesbury district “Macquarie town” of Richmond, 65km north west of Sydney. The school’s location in central Richmond, its architectural style, its storied history and its continuing use today as a vibrant community hub all mark it as a location of significant heritage value.

There are many features of the RSOA which encourage further study. It has been under the continuous administration of the Richmond Literary Institute (RLI) since its inception. Many other Schools of Arts and Mechanics’ Institutes elsewhere have fallen by the wayside (one need only look at the neglected SOA building in Windsor, built in 1861). Many have closed, been sold, no longer function for their original purpose, or have been turned over to Councils or the State for upkeep, and have become neglected. This continuity results in a helpful collective memory about the history of the place, particularly through the minute books of the RLI. The earliest entry is dated 21st June 1858, being the original subscription list of those who formed a common intent to promote the aims of the RLI and to secure funding for the construction of a permanent building. This original minute accords with a story reported in the SMH about the formation of

the original SOA committee¹ (amid florid speeches). These minutes are largely continuous through to the current day. I have perused the fragile original bound volume held at the RSOA, but have worked largely from the microfilmed copy held at Windsor Library.

As a community hub, the RSOA acts as a palimpsest through which the life of the Richmond community has been recorded for the last 144 years. It has been a place of adult education, a library, the local Council chamber, as a hall for balls, weddings, and political functions, as a polling place, motor-registry, Masonic lodge, theatre for the dramatic and musical arts, an art gallery, and a locus for clubs with interests ranging from lapidary, through horticulture and on to dancing.

Further, the history of this SOA has not been greatly studied, except by way of one brief and inexhaustive monograph compiled for another purpose². The rich history told through the RLI minutes have never been transcribed or studied except in vignette, nor have contemporary accounts been collated and reconciled.

¹ Attachment H, RICHMOND. (1858, June 28). *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW : 1842-1954), p. 5. Retrieved November 9, 2010, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13018006>

² Rozzoli, Ronald. *Richmond School of Arts; History and NSW Acts and Regulations*. Paper presented in the "Schools of Arts and Mechanics' Institutes: From and For the Community", at the Sydney Mechanics School of Arts Conference, 2002. This centres largely on the legislative status of SOAs and MIs generally.

My personal affinity with the RSOA arises as a resident of Richmond, as a member of the *Hawkesbury Historical Society* and of *The Richmond Players*³, a dramatic society that has been an anchor tenant of the RSOA since 1955. A comprehensive history of the RSOA is manifestly needed. This unit has been a motivating and organising influence, but the constraints of this assignment are frustrating. There is much I would relate by way of preparatory good work I have done towards this more major project, but which may be of peripheral value to the narrower assignment at hand. As the purpose of this unit is to skill and inspire students to pursue Local History, I beg your indulgence. Rather than presenting you with a beautiful little cameo, in parts I shall be describing the scaffold for something bigger. I couldn't help it. My focus in this brief overview then (at your suggestion), is one brief chapter of its history; it's founding and opening in 1868, along with a flavour of the Richmond of that time.

Sources: The primary source has been the microfilmed minutes of the RLI from 1858 onward. As this SOA is still governed by special legislation⁴, the original minutes, deed and other information are held by the RLI themselves. This microfilm has never been digitised or transcribed. Since the commencement of this unit I have spent 1 afternoon a week at Windsor Library digitising the entire minutes and have so far managed to complete digitising the first 11 years (to January 1869), being some 131 pages. The legibility of the microfilm is poor in many places. I have sought contact with several groups of volunteers for help in

³ <http://richmondplayers.com.au>

⁴ Trustees of the Schools of Arts Enabling Act, No. 68, 1902 as amended. The RLI boast this makes the SOA the "Property of the

transcribing the minutes⁵. I have also secured permission to use these documents for historical study⁶.

Another primary source is the NLA Trove website, with the digitised newspaper of record being the Sydney Morning Herald. The Hawkesbury Gazette did not commence publication until 1888 and is neither digitised nor indexed. I have written to the NLA advocating that the Hawkesbury Gazette be added to their slate of newspaper digitisations⁷. I do not believe anyone has accessed or used references in the SMH relating to the RSOA, as all the Trove OCR was uncorrected gabble. I spent (too) much time correcting (effectively completely re-typing) many stories in the Trove database relating to the RSOA.

I discovered the SOA title deed is still held by the RLI in Richmond, a request from the State Library to hold it being refused by the Institute. It has never been conserved or scanned, so I undertook this task. I intend to perform a digital restoration to improve its legibility (the ink from the reverse has leached through). The incomplete work in progress is attached⁸. The reverse of the deed shows the appointment of new trustees to the SOA in an unbroken succession from the 1860s through to the 1980s, when the role of traditional trustees was succeeded by the incorporated association of the RLI acting as a collective trustee.

Secondary sources included Ron Rozzoli's monograph for the SOA conference and a folio of handwritten notes and paper clippings held by Michelle Nichols at

⁵ Such as the volunteers of the on-line group, the Distributed Proofreaders, <http://pgdp.net/c/>

⁶ Letter requesting permission to use RLI minutes, Attachment A

⁷ Letter to National Library of Australia, Attachment B

⁸ Original title deed of Richmond School of Arts, 1871, Attachment C

Windsor Library (and who generously gave me nearly an hour of her time as I discussed my desire to do a larger survey of the SOA history).

A conservation management plan for Richmond park, adjacent to the SOA was undertaken in 2003, sponsored by Hawkesbury Council⁹. This also provided valuable information.

Information sourced from the Audit registry of the NSW government, at State Records in Kingswood was indeed illuminating, but lays outside the scope of time selected for this brief overview.

Early Richmond: The context of the RSOA

The layout of Richmond was largely determined by the visit of Lachlan Macquarie in December 1810, with the Governor determining the ideal location of key Richmond landmarks like St Peter's Church, its cemetery, and the main streets¹⁰. The area known variously as *The Grand Square* or *The Market Square* became the focal point, now occupied by the oval and its grandstand. Macquarie was generally noted as generous in his allocation of lands for recreation and town squares. This land was owned by Nicholas Bayly and William Bowman, but was secured in return for other grants elsewhere. James Meehan, the

⁹ *Richmond Park Conservation Management Plan* by Morris, Jack and Britton for Hawkesbury Council, 2003.

http://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0010/6301/RICHMOND_PARK_Richmond.pdf

¹⁰ I will be narrating a dramatic re-enactment of Macquarie's journey at the upcoming bi-centennial dinner for the Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society, where these words (verbatim or dramatized, I cannot say) are attributed to Macquarie:

"We rode over the greater part of the common formerly marked out in the time of Governor King // afterwards over that part of it I deemed most eligible and convenient for erecting a township on. // Which we at length fixed on at the extremity of the common near Pugh's Lagoon where we intended to have the church, // the school house and burying ground on a very beautiful elevated bank, above this fine basin of fresh water and within 200 yards of it."

government surveyor then laid out the grid pattern of Richmond on 10 January 1811, with three rows of seven town sections¹¹.

In 1821, the western strip of the square, from Windsor St to March St were portioned off for civic uses. A watch house (1821) was built, and land reserved for a Post Office (1875), a court-house and school. A pound for stray livestock and a masonic lodge also at times occupied this space. A School of Arts on the corner of March and West Market Streets was presumably long in prospect before its actual construction, and the land was known as “The Pound Paddock” because of what it backed on to. The founding meeting of 1858 notes that land had already been secured, and George Bowman, already a resident of over 40 years standing, recalled a time when there were only “four huts” in the village.

By the 1860s, Richmond was growing. The railway reached Richmond in 1864, and by 1866 there were five hotels, four churches, two stores, a number of Schools (1 government and several private), two banks and over a thousand inhabitants. Sadly, there is definitively no photographic image of the SOA before 1879¹².

It is significant to our understanding of the demography of the area to know that, when Richmond was declared a borough in 1872, its rate-income was the lowest on average of all the forty-one boroughs then extant.

¹¹ Street layout of Richmond, circa 1816 from University of Sydney Cartography. Attachment D

¹² Earliest known photo, 1879, Attachment E.

The School of Arts Committee – founding.

On the 21st June 1858 a subscription list “in aid of the Building Fund of the Richmond Mechanics Institute and School of Arts” was drawn up, consisting of 115 names, and with a median contribution of £1. A notable exception is George Bowman, a local grandee & resident at Toxana, the most handsome residence in Richmond¹³. His contribution of £100 was repeated again ere construction was finished, and came on top of the donation of other land for the construction of St Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, a stone’s throw from the SOA, in 1845¹⁴. Some £211 was placed in an account (to no great benefit) and the Society met but once until 11th of October 1861, when “a number of inhabitants of Richmond, feeling interested in the Richmond Mechanic’s Institute & School of Arts, and wishing to resuscitate the same, met at the school room, Market St, to take into consideration the desirability of taking steps to carry their object into effect.” Chaired by the Reverend James Cameron (and Mr Bowman’s son-in-law), they resolved to invest the money at a greater rate of return. George Bowman was elected the President of the committee, with Dr Selkirk as Vice-President, Henry Hort Brown as Treasurer and Frederick Withers as Secretary. These names were to be prominent in the development and life of the School of Arts for a further 30 years. Mr E Miller was appointed Librarian and it would appear the acquisition of books commenced immediately, well before they had a proper home. Their location prior to the SOA opening was the Presbyterian vestry.

¹³ Again, see the contemporary account in Attachment H.

¹⁴ <http://www.richmonduniting.org.au/aboutus/history/history.htm>

Of note, the committee adopted that “the object of this Society is to disseminate Scientific and other useful knowledge by the following means. First, by lecturers, to be from time to time delivered on subjects calculated to enlighten and improve the mind. Second, the establishment of a reading room for the use of members. Thirdly, by the aid of a Library of useful and entertaining knowledge; and fourthly, by the formation of classes of mutual instruction.” These and other such by-laws were formulated and presented to a public meeting in January 1862.

The SOA Library operated from 7 to 8pm each Monday, with one volume per subscriber per week being permitted, and infringements carrying a penalty of one penny.

December 1862 saw the fund standing at £482, and was further boosted by a government offer to match funding pound for pound up to £300 in 1864. The committee was now in a position to scope out the building, with the committee resolving in August 1863 “to procure plans for the proposed building of the School of Arts”. Negotiations with the Colonial Architect to have plans drawn “gratuitously” were accepted, after an offer from the Windsor School of Arts to re-use their plans was politely declined.

Construction and opening.

By far the best records of the ceremonies of the founding-day (10th January 1866) and opening day (27th August 1866) come from the Sydney Morning Herald, there being no paper local to the Hawkesbury in that era. Never

transcribed before, the full accounts of both events are attached¹⁵. Of note at the founding is the role of Mary Ann Bowman, who laid the stone, and a curious mention of the intent to construct a clock tower. Evidently, the spire, never transpired.

The School of Arts opening was a grand affair, with the extended remarks of Sir Henry Parkes, at that time the Colonial Secretary, a valuable historical record. 500 locals squeezed in to the new hall (denying even some ladies the ability to sit, to some consternation), with the aims of the SOA re-iterated as a home for learning, and intellectual betterment. A Reverend Lang underlined this point when expressing the hope that in the new Library, “he trusted that the books would be judiciously selected, and that it would not be filled up with sensational novels and such literary trash.” It must have been the case that his moral outlook was not entirely shared, as evidenced by a fierce debate in 1879 which deplored, then banned, dancing, only to have the matter overturned after a “well attended meeting”. My space here exceeded, these, and other vignettes from the history of the Richmond School of Arts will have to wait until a fuller treatment is possible.

Bibliography:

¹⁵ Attachments F and G, drawn from scans at 1866 'RICHMOND.', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW : 1842-1954), 16 January, p. 7, viewed 7 November, 2010, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13124753>

1866 'OPENING OF THE RICHMOND SCHOOL OF ARTS.', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW : 1842-1954), 30 August, p. 2, viewed 6 November, 2010, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13136118>

1. Archives of the Sydney Morning Herald, accessed through the website of the National Library of Australia (with emendations amounting to a complete re-typing by myself).

Key articles:

RICHMOND. (1858, June 28). *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW : 1842-1954), p. 5. Retrieved November 9, 2010, from <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13018006>

1866 'RICHMOND.', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW : 1842-1954), 16 January, p. 7, viewed 7 November, 2010, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13124753>

1866 'OPENING OF THE RICHMOND SCHOOL OF ARTS.', *The Sydney Morning Herald* (NSW : 1842-1954), 30 August, p. 2, viewed 6 November, 2010, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article13136118>

2. *Richmond Park Conservation Management Plan* by Morris, Jack and Britton for Hawkesbury Council, 2003.

http://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/6301/RICHMOND_PARK_Richmond.pdf

3. Rozzoli, Ronald. *Richmond School of Arts; History and NSW Acts and Regulations*. Paper presented in the "Schools of Arts and Mechanics' Institutes: From and For the Community", at the Sydney Mechanics School of Arts Conference, 2002.

This centres largely on the legislative status of SOAs and MIs generally.

4. Minutes of the Richmond Literary Institute, being the Committee of the Richmond School of Arts, 1858-
Hawkesbury City Library Microfilm collection.

5. Title deed of the Richmond School of Arts.

With thanks to Michelle Nichols, Hawkesbury Library and Mr Ron Rozzoli of the
Richmond Literary Institute Committee.

FOUNDATION CEREMONY FOR THE RICHMOND SCHOOL OF ARTS.

[From our Correspondent]

School of Arts - The ceremony of laying the foundation stone of the building which is being erected for this institution took place on Wednesday last, the 10th instant. A large concourse of people assembled to witness the event.

The weather was pleasant and the whole arrangements of the committee appeared to be highly satisfactory. Punctually at the appointed time (5 pm), Miss M. A. Bowman, who had been requested by the committee to lay the stone, arrived on the ground. Mr Bowman, president of the institution, having conducted his daughter to the spot and finding all things ready, commenced the proceedings by stating the object of the meeting, and expressing the satisfaction it gave him to see the building at last commenced, to observe the interest manifested by the community in the undertaking.

The vice-president (Dr Selkirk) gave a brief history of the institution, adverting to the difficulties with which the committee had had to contend, and concluded an appropriate speech by presenting, in becoming terms, to Miss Bowman, on behalf of the committee, a handsome silver trowel, which bore a suitable inscription, and also a mallet of myall-wood grown and manufactured in Richmond. The trowel was much admired. A bottle containing copies of the daily papers and the current coins of the realm was then placed in the cavity prepared for it. The bottle also contained a parchment, which bore the following inscription

"The corner stone of this building [for the Richmond School of Arts] was laid on the 10th day of January, 1866, by Mary Ann, daughter of George Bowman, Esq., of Richmond, in the 29th year of the reign of Her Majesty Queen Victoria. The right Hon. Sir John Young, Bart, K.C.B., being the Governor in Chief of this Colony, and the Hon. Charles Cowper, Colonial Secretary. Officers of the Institution George Bowman, Esq., John Selkirk, Esq., surgeon; Henry Hort Brown, Esq., surgeon. President, George Bowman, Esq., Vice-president: John Selkirk, Esq., surgeon. Honorary secretary: Rev. James Cameron, A.M. Treasurer: Henry Hort Brown, Esq. Committee: George Bowman, Esq., John Selkirk, Esq., Rev. James Cameron, Henry Hort Brown, Esq., Alexander Leith Forbes, Esq., A.M. Mr. William T. Price, Mr. William Sullivan, and Sloper Cox, Esq. Contractors for the building: Messrs. Caleb Crisford and William Tomkinson."

The stone having been lowered into its place, Miss Bowman, after handling the tools as directed, said:—"I now declare this stone duly and truly laid on the foundation stone of the hall of the Richmond School of Arts, and may the Divine blessing rest on the undertaking." This announcement was followed by three hearty cheers from the assemblage for Miss Bowman. The Rev. J. Cameron then, in a few neat well-chosen

remarks, returned thanks on behalf of his sister-in-law Miss Bowman, for the honour the committee had conferred upon her in asking her to lay this stone, and she would, he said, had she been accustomed to public speaking, no doubt cordially have thanked the committee for the beautiful trowel so gracefully presented to her by the respected vice president of the institution. She would, probably, also have expressed her best wishes for the success of the undertaking, and her hope that it might realise the most sanguine expectations of its promoters. All this, at least, she would probably have said, if she had tried to make a speech ; how much more she might have said he know not, nor would he attempt to indicate. The Rev. Gentleman then expatiated on the difficulties that had beset their path in the early stages of the undertaking, and remarked that, although the time might appear long, the community ought to bear in mind the small amount that had been placed at their disposal, and how difficult it is to erect a handsome structure with means wholly inadequate. The total amount of local subscriptions did not much exceed £350, and of that amount more than one-half had been given by one individual. The president had himself given £200, and but for the aid recently received from him, they should not now have been in a condition to proceed with the building. The plan, he said, embraced, besides the hall, a tower, from which the beauties of the town and neighbourhood may be surveyed, and in which a public clock might conveniently be placed. By the side of the hall will be a range of rooms, which, while providing every convenience for the institution, might one day become serviceable as municipal chambers. The hall alone is to be erected at present. Of this the contract cost is £750, the whole of which sum may be said to be already in hand. More, however, would be required for various purposes, and he hoped that liberal donations would be presented ere they separated. It was his earnest desire that the institution might long continue to confer important benefits on this community. If it were for nothing else but to provide our town with a spacious public room, this undertaking would be worthy of all support; but, besides this, he hoped, when the library and reading room have been fitted up, that it would be a source of attraction to our young men, and that they would be induced to spend their evenings in more profitable employment and in more befitting places than many of them do at present. The Rev. gentleman concluded an able speech by wishing all success to the Richmond School of Arts. He trusted that, when its founders have passed away and been forgotten, it would long continue to be a source of enlightenment and a centre of all wholesome influences to the whole community.

Mr. G. M. Pitt, having made a few appropriate and humorous remarks, called for three cheers fur Mr George Bowman, which were heartily responded to, followed by three more for the committee and other officers of the institution. A hat having been placed on the stone, a sum, amounting to nearly £13, was obtained, after which the meeting dispersed, much gratified apparently with the happy occasion

The Sydney Morning Herald - Tuesday 16 January, 1866 (page 7).

OPENING OF THE RICHMOND SCHOOL OF ARTS.

(page 2)

[*From our Correspondent*]

THE large hall which has for some time past been in course of erection, to be used as a School of Arts, having been recently completed, was opened on the afternoon of Monday last, and the proceedings were quite eventful for the usually quiet town of Richmond. The building is only part of the plan intended, forming the main hall of the institution, and is fifty feet in length by thirty feet wide. It is lofty and airy, by reason of there being no ceiling, being arched inside at the rafters, and is capable of seating 400 persons comfortably. Want of funds has precluded the possibility of erecting the out-offices and ante-rooms at present, but even now the building is a great ornament to the town, and reflects the highest credit upon its promoters.

The proceedings of the day were commenced by a tea-soiree, at which about 400 persons, young and old, sat down. The tables were plentifully supplied with cakes and confections, and were attended to by a number of ladies. The walls of the building being tastefully hung round with flags and ever-greens, had a very imposing and pleasing appearance. Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves, and after a couple of hours had been spent in this way the tables were cleared for the more important and intellectual part of the evening's entertainment.

At 7 o'clock the hall was filled to overflowing, not less than 500 persons having literally squeezed themselves within the walls. It was impossible to find seats for even some of the ladies who graced the proceedings with their presence.

Mr George Bowman, J.P., was called upon to preside, and around him on the platform we noticed the Hon. Henry Parkes, M.L.A., Dr Long, Dr Steel, Mr W. Bowman, J.P., Mr W. Walker, M.L.A., Dr Selkirk, Mr Powell, J.P., and the Rev. Messrs Garnsey, Sinclair, and Fidler; besides other gentlemen of local influence.

The Chairman made a few remarks expressive of his gratification at their being at length in a position to open their hall. He trusted it would be found highly beneficial to the young men of Richmond. He called upon the Secretary, Mr Forbes, to make a statement respecting their financial position, &c.

Mr Forbes stated that the Treasurer's accounts for building purposes show receipts to the amount of about £768 19s. 7d. This includes grants of £300 from the Government. The whole cost of the building was about £870. The hall had yet to be seated, and roof to be stained in order to preserve the wood and improve its appearance. The cost of these two items would be about £90. A suitable fence was required, and an addition to the library. A sum, therefore, little short of £300 was needed. Hence the necessity for

the appeal which was to be made that evening, and which he hoped would be well responded to.

The choir now sang, "The heavens are telling."

The Hon. Henry Parkes was called upon first to address the meeting, and was loudly applauded on rising. He said - He could not but express his gratification at being present, and thank them for the honour they had done him in asking him to take part in the proceeding. He hoped to see spring up in connection with this noble hall a society which would be the means and have for its object the intellectual improvement of the people of Richmond. To aid the accomplishment of this it was highly essential to have frequent lectures on popular subjects, and by men of talent and high literary fame; and, moreover, to establish classes in different branches of learning, such as grammar, geography, the modern languages, and, above all things, history. If this principle was pursued, he was sure that the institution which they had met to inaugurate could not fail to produce an enduring blessing to this community. The young people, he thought, would do well to review their lives and ask themselves how far they had advanced in literature, and how far their efforts had been successful in making themselves good and useful members of society. If, indeed, we all went through this self-examination to see if we had done anything to improve the condition of those around us, we should be all the better for it, and reap a thousand benefits by such a course. And he knew no other way by which this could be so well done as by such institutions as Schools of Arts, (Cheers.)

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These institutions in England were all self-supporting, and it was desirable that they should be so. If this institution under such a principle prospered the greater would be the satisfaction, and the more proud they would be to rally round it and support it. He (Mister Parkes) hoped they would raise a society that would be capable of educating the youth of the place, and if so it would be ever an honour to them and their children. If such societies were of use in crowded cities, they were more so in towns such as Richmond, where there were greater facilities for the contact of mind with mind, from which intellectual culture only could rise. Now that's a spacious hall had been erected, it behoved them not to leave it useless, but to make their intellectual ark. He had seen with gratification the good effects from the instruction obtained from the class of institutions to which this belonged. He had known boys and young men who had risen to an honourable position in the literature of the world, who, but for similar institutions, would have had their talents remain in obscurity. In Sydney from day to day could be seen the vast good which the School of Arts was doing there, and he felt that in this town it would be impossible to overestimate the benefits which may be produced. He trusted such would be the case. A good library should be their first aim, in which should be found a careful selection of useful books, not only in science, but history, and all works which would give sound information in the Department of political science, and that would impart sound views on the Constitution of the land to which they so proudly belong. Any such he did not think foreign to the intentions of such an institution. It was all so desirable to have for perusal all the English and American papers; also those of Canada and the other colonies. It was impossible to know too much of the world, and particularly of the glorious Empire to which they were attached. (Cheers).

In travelling through the country he could not help noticing how the progress of these institutions varied. Some had splendid libraries; others, little or none at all; and in almost every town where there were such institutions, there was something distinctive in their character. This hall might be favourably compared with almost any in the country, and he (Mr Parkes) sincerely trusted it would be rendered to good account. It must be exceedingly gratifying to their venerable chairman (Mister Bowman) that he could mingle and join with them on such an occasion as the present. He hoped Mister Bowman would live long to see the objects of this institution meritoriously carried out. Englishmen know that all good depends on self energy; and that we must work out our own happiness, wealth, and honourable fame. This was the principle he wished to see grow up and flourish in this town of Richmond, a principle of self reliance which would make this institution ever redound to the pleasure of themselves, and be one of the most honourable in the colony (Loud applause)

The choir then sang a piece of music.

Doctor Steel, having been called upon, was loudly applauded on rising. He had great pleasure in meeting so many smiling faces in one building in Richmond -- a building which was eminently creditable to the district and those gentlemen who had been mainly instrumental in its direction. Knowing that their labours had been so far crowned with success, it would be unbecoming to omit the name of one whose whole heart was set upon the work. It was the Rev. James Cameron, who had been a fellow student with himself, and though at present 16,000 miles away, he was sure it would be very gratifying to him to know that this institution had now been opened under such favourable circumstances. We live in a time when knowledge is not confined to the select few who only in their academic hall once enjoyed the sweet immunities of hearing learning distilled from philosophic lips. Books were now scattered far and wide, and literature with them, and that wisdom which once could only be obtained by the rich was now available for the improvement of the poor. It was the grand principle of Lord Bacon to combine utility with progress, though entirely foreign to all that had gone before. We desire that everyone might have it in his power to share in the wisdom of the age, and be enabled to take an honourable part in that work for which they were destined. It would be well to remember what Lord Bacon had said: That "Reading made a full man, conversation a ready man and writing an exact man." This, he thought, would be an excellent motto for such an institution as this. Reading was one of the most important objects which this institution should foster. He had oft times been gratified to see working men with horny hands reading with serious intent, and taking notes, thus gathering wisdom and going forth as useful members of society. It was by reading that men gained knowledge, and it was not right that we should be satisfied when our school days were over. The schoolmaster but gave the magic key, by the proper use of which knowledge could be found and the mind stored with wisdom, such as Socrates never aspired to. (Cheers.) It was one of the glorious blessings of the age in which we live that by reading we could become members of the past and a brother of every genius who had impressed his soul upon the literature of his country. There was no power by which we could gain so much information, and for this reason he hoped that every

inducement would be held out for the practice of reading by this institution. If there were proper books procured, on important subjects, they would be sure to demand an attraction far exceeding the temporary exercise of the best works of fiction. It was another great consequence that people should be able to give proper utterance to their sentiments, an accomplishment which was best obtained by practising speaking with one another. By this means the wits were sharpened as a grindstone sharpens a knife, and thus it was that many of our great statesman and orators rose to command the attention of the world. Many died in their first attempt, but every effort gave greater power. Demosthenes went to the seashore, and addressed the waves at the top of his voice to get over the difficulty of stammering, and he was one of the greatest of orators. Through the instrumentality of such an institution as this it was that such great ends might be obtained. But there were some who spoke a great deal with little wisdom. The best way to cure such an evil would be to put on paper what was to be said. By this means the best thoughts would be concentrated, and what ever was said would be said well. He strongly recommended this system to beginners. He (Doctor Steel) would like to see the young men who were present make a resolution to keep up this institution, and strenuously support the object for which it had been erected, and be able from this to date, as it were, the intellectual birth, and to say there it was they first resolved to improve themselves and set a better example for the generations yet to come. (Applause).

The meeting was next addressed by Doctor Lang, who rose amidst much cheering. After a few preliminary observations, the reverend gentleman said, when this institution got its library, he trusts that the books would be judiciously selected, and that it would not be filled up with sensational novels and such literary trash; but filled with books of history and biography, to teach them the great facts of the past and make them familiar with those great men who had spent their lives for the benefit of their race. He congratulated them on the direction of this hall, and trusted the young men of Richmond would turn it to profitable account, and use it as far as they could in every way that tended to dignify human nature and advance the proper objects of the institution (Continued cheers.)

Reverend Mister Garnsey: He never before had the pleasure of addressing so large an audience, in which it was extremely gratifying to observe a mixture of Windsor and Richmond faces. He thought if they just fixed in their minds the good things that had already been told them they would reap large benefits. If Schools of Arts were properly managed they were capable of doing an infinity of good; but he did not believe they always produced the anticipated results. He had been connected with a similar institution in Windsor for six years past, which was carried on very successfully, notwithstanding that there were many difficulties to be encountered. Even now they were wanting in many important respects. They had not yet the instruments all means at their command for pursuing their studies in the grand works of nature. He trusted Richmond would not be so neglectful in this respect; at present there was every appearance of Windsor being surpassed altogether. He offered the Richmond people his sincere congratulations, and trusted the institution, now inaugurated would meet with abundant prosperity. (Cheers)

Mister Walker, MLA: so much has been said that little remained for him. He congratulated them in having, after many difficulties, succeeded in erecting so commodious a hall. He had been president of a similar institution in Windsor for several years, and was well acquainted with which mode to be adopted to make such establishments work successfully. It was not a mere building that was required, as many an agent, for it would be found no easy matter to carry on operations afterwards. In Windsor they had met with great difficulties, but by perseverance of these had been overcome in a great measure. A good library, lectures, classes, and debates were highly essential to their prosperity. Men who have risen to honour and fame have been spoken of as men without education because they had never taken a degree at a university; but it was quite competent now, by aid of these institutions to gain attainments which would qualify a man to fill the highest offices of the State. John Stuart Mill was an instance of the truth of this. He had never been to school in his life, and yet he was one of the first scholars of the age. These institutions had been opposed by men who thought "that a little learning is a dangerous thing"; but now the prevailing opinion was that a little learning was better than none at all, and was calculated to make everyone possessed of it a better citizen and a better man. He hoped the institution would flourish, and that there would never be caught to regret its establishment. (Cheers)

The Reverend Mister Sinclair thought that the multiplication of these institutions evinced a lively regard for the interest of education. The working man is taught to regard himself as a man that has a work to perform in the accomplishment of his own perfection; and it was one of the leading objects of these societies to aid him to this end. Much knowledge could be gained without severe mental energy. The reading of the great facts in science could be brought down to us, and afterwards have the effect of elevating our whole soul. Thus the working classes became conversant with the great facts of astronomy and geology, and became acquainted with the glories of the world, and of that Being who controls all things by His laws. If the moral and intellectual advancement of this community be gained, this building will not have been corrected in vain.

The Rev Mister Fidler appealed, in eloquent terms, to the benevolence of the audience while a collection was made.

A vote of thanks to the ladies who had taken a prominent part in the day's proceedings, and to the choir, were accorded by acclamation; also to the distinguished visitors who appeared on the platform.

Mister Parkes then rose, and proposed a vote of thanks to the chairman, which being suitably responded to, the choir sang "God save the Queen", in which the meeting joined.

Thus was brought to a close, at about 10 o'clock, the most successful and interesting meeting ever held in Richmond.

The Sydney Morning Herald - Thursday 30 August, 1866

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