

City of Geelong Urban Conservation Study
Significant Sites



**T E Bostock Memorial, E H Lascelles
Chemical Laboratory & Textile & Wool
Building Complex**
6-2- Fenwick Street

History

William Pye (schoolmaster) and Edmund Sasse (professor of drawing¹) started their boys School of Art and Design in 1869, providing for mainly building and engineering apprentices. Four years later classes for girls were provided. It proved to be the forerunner to the General Gordon Memorial Technical College opened in 1887.²

Fronting Fenwick Street, Alexander Davidson's design for the first building was extended in 1889, 1891 and 1916.³ Five years later, the first stage of this complex, the E H Lascelles Chemical Laboratory, was built along Gordon Avenue in the memory of '...the father of the Geelong Wool Trade and pioneer of the Mallee...'⁴. The memorial stone was laid by Howard Hitchcock⁵.

George King's period as secretary and then principal, included most of this new construction as well as the Bostock Memorial Science Building (wool oriented) commenced 1928.⁶ By then the name of the complex had become the Gordon Institute of Technology and its scope much broader than the first art and design school.⁷

The Bostock Building was considered a tribute to its namesake as well as providing a fitting continuation of the E H Lascelles Chemistry Laboratory.

Thomas E Bostock (1863-1922) was both a Geelong councillor (1894-1909, mayor 1905-7) and woolbroker. Educated in England, at Brighton Grammar, he joined Strachan Bostock & Co. in 1889 and became managing director of wool-brokers Strachan Murray & Shannon, a council member of Geelong Grammar and enthusiastically supported many sporting endeavours, particularly the Barwon Heads Golf Club.⁸ Bostock also was a major force in rationalizing Geelong's water supply and sanitation.

1 WD1880
2 GTP p.38
3 Willingham card 186
4 Long, p22 quote
5 September 1921
6 F.ST. laid by Hon. Don Mackinnon 13.7.28
7 V&R V2 p1076
8 GA 14.7.28 p1; Gibney & Smith, V1, p71

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tion in the Edwardian era. This led to the Cardew report and no small measure of controversy.¹

Hundreds paid tribute to the late Bostock at the laying of the foundation stone by the Hon. Donald Mackinnon, with newspaper reports describing Bostock as one of Geelong's greatest citizens. H H Washington was the chairman of the Bostock Memorial Committee and E N Belcher, honorary secretary.

The product of their labours was described in the *Geelong Advertiser* as a Modern adaptation of the Roman Renaissance. It had stately Ionic columns with arched openings and metal fittings adding lightness to the blocking (or rustication) of the columns. The approach was balustraded in the form of a 'quadrantal' piazza and entered a 'charming' domed octagonal hall enriched with niches and archways. Beyond this were ante-rooms and a large lecture room for technical classes associated with the wool industry. The architects were Laird & Buchan and the contractors, Burns Brothers² while the general effect aligned closely with the nearby Peace Memorial. The added storeys reduces this resemblance.

During the war years, the technical needs of the nation rose in priority. Parallel with this was the growth of the textile curricula, providing for a major four-storey Textile & Wool wing. Constructed in the period 1944-51, its entrance block abutted the Lascelles Building on the west and added a storey to both the Lascelles and Bostock buildings.³ This was presumably designed in the early 1940s by Percy Everett, Public Works Chief Architect and opened in 1951 by Sir John Northcott.

Description

Resembling at first the nearby Peace Memorial, this now three and two-storeyed storeyed cement-rendered building complex was described as Modern Roman Renaissance, once the one-storey first stage was completed in 1928. Similar to the contemporary Greek Revival government-designed schools such as the Melbourne Emily McPherson School of Domestic Economy, its design showed more affinity to the Public Works Architect, E. Evan Smith's, neo-Georgian and neo-Baroque civic architecture of the 1920s (234 St. Kilda Road former Police Depot; Ivanhoe Primary School, Waterdale Road), although more eclectic in concept.

Stylized Ionic Order columns and pilasters provide most of this complex's 1928 architectural character. Their bold forms, the rich string-mouldings, balustrading, and smooth-rusticated backing walls assist in emphasizing the ground-level, as counterpoint to the severity of the 1946 upper floor and new west wing.

A 1937 aerial view shows the two memorials as originally conceived, contrasting with a 1947 view which shows the Modern-Classical styled 1944 Textile and Wool wing superimposed on the existing complex. At the entrance of the 1944 wing was a bas-relief bearing the official title of Gordon Institute of Technology, providing the vehicle for the school's new modern image.⁴

Today's complex is a successful fusion of three buildings and two complementary but contrasting stylistic eras: the Beaux Arts classical revival legacy and the Modernistic interpretation of the same classical inspirations. One's severity and asymmetrical massing counter the other's ornamental symmetry and trabeated design.

Early views also show Date Palm rows and Cotton Palm (?) specimens, as part of what is now an almost non-existent landscape treatment for the adjacent nature strips (road widening?).

External Integrity

(Integrity to 1928 form)

The parapet wall has been substantially replaced with a new storey; the eastern arcade has been glazed-in (sympathetically) and the segment-arched pediments over each north-facing pavilion removed from the surviving parapet wall.

Compared to its 1946-7 form it is near unchanged except for replacement for the 1944 main entry doors with a shutter.

Streetscape

A major corner building in the complex, given its transition from the late Victorian era stylism of the first Gordon wings, on the south, to the Modern-Classicism of the Textile School on the west.

Significance

Historically, the complex is symbolic of two important figures in both Geelong's and the Gordon's history and serving as quasi-public buildings over the seventy years since they were commenced.

Architecturally, the complex is a stylistic hybrid but nevertheless a skillful one in the integration of two contrasting aesthetics. It also relates closely to the adjacent Peace Memorial and, as a sequence of three major design concepts probably by the same architect (Percy Everett), it throws some illumination on the apparent successful fusion of differing stylistic eras. As a hybrid, it also provides a visual transition from the earliest buildings to the 1940s designs.

1 Investigator 3.81, p25f

2 GA 14.7.28 p.1

3 see Long, p.43, 1947 view; p.35

4 see Long, p.51