

Celebration of 140th Anniversary of the
Proclamation of the State of Queensland
The Deanery, Friday 10 December 1999, 6.30pm

The Honourable Paul de Jersey, Chief Justice of Queensland

Mr Dean
Your Honours
Ladies and gentlemen

May I first thank the Dean and Mrs Thomas for generously welcoming us this evening into the Deanery. They do so acknowledging the warm collegiality of the Cathedral community. But significantly tonight, we additionally celebrate an historically important anniversary, one of significance to all Queenslanders.

In 1859, this fine building was known in the colony as "Adelaide House", topping "Dr Hobbs Hill". It presented as a grand detached dignified mansion, rather startlingly alone on the top of an obvious hill. Its grounds then extended as far as Queen Street. The owner was Dr Williams Hobbs, a surgeon who had come to the colony from London, and who went on to join the Legislative Council then the Executive Council. Contemporary photographs confirm, as I have suggested, a grand building with a location commanding the colony, a matter obviously not overlooked on the 10th December.

When Queensland separated from the colony of New South Wales in 1859, Sir George Ferguson Bowen, Knight Commander of the Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, was appointed its first Captain General and Governor in Chief. As recorded in Mrs Patricia Ramsay's booklet on this residence, "(the Governor) arrived in Moreton Bay on board HMS "*Cordelia*" on 9 December 1859, and on the next morning was brought up river in the small steamer "*Breadalbane*". After landing at the Botanical Gardens, he was greeted by John Petrie, first Mayor of Brisbane, in his municipal robes, and his wife Isabella and her delegation approached Lady Bowen. After Petrie's welcoming address and the Governor's response, they were escorted to Adelaide House where, from the balcony, (the Governor) proclaimed the establishment of the colony of Queensland". That occurred precisely 140 years ago.

I appear this evening, at the request of the Dean, in judicial robes. They also happen to be the robes of the Diocesan Chancellor. My doing so is symbolic of the enduring independence of our third arm of Government. Incidentally, there are as many as five judges of the Supreme Court within our midst here tonight. Why this

symbolism? Well, Governor Bowen could not install himself. The arms of Government, although generally separate in operation, have a necessary degree of mutual dependence. Hence an important role on this occasion, 140 years ago, for the judiciary. As was required, Governor Bowen was on that day sworn in by the Honourable Mr Justice Alfred James Peter Lutwyche, the first, and then the only, Judge of the Supreme Court of Queensland. Ironically, less than three years later, Governor Bowen was giving consideration to having Mr Justice Lutwyche removed from office: the Judge was given to rather curmudgeonly public criticism of the Government of the day. But we need not tonight go into that. Having taken the oaths of allegiance and office, Governor Bowen proceeded to read the letters patent issued in the name of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, an instrument he had brought with him from London.

In his interesting book, "From the Dreaming to 1915", Professor Ross Fitzgerald records that in reply to an address of welcome, the newly installed Governor announced that "Queensland, the name selected for this new colony, was entirely the happy thought and inspiration of Her Majesty herself! Other designations had been suggested to Her; but the Queen spontaneously determined to confer Her own Royal Title on this new province of Her Empire. It should assuredly then be the constant aim of us all to show ourselves not undeserving of this signal mark of the favour and sympathy of our Sovereign." Fitzgerald goes on to observe that "with this impressive display of pomp, patriotic fervour, and an optimism not even tainted by the discovery that the first Treasury would have a mere 7½d with which to finance "progress", Queensland came into being: "the constitutional Ship of State was put into commission".

Governor Bowen in fact lived thereafter in Adelaide House for two years four months, as Government House, until what was the State's second Government House was constructed, adjacent to the Botanical Gardens. The Governor left Adelaide House in April 1862.

The anniversary of a stable, democratic body politic should not only be acknowledged, but also, certainly in the case of Queensland, celebrated. There is fashionable current debate in Australia about whether the celebration of some national events may not, curiously, gain more significance if the date be changed. But this evening, may we rest content with the truth: we now stand together at Queensland's first Government House, the commanding public edifice from which, 140 years ago to the day, the established independence of our great State was proclaimed.

And now let us hear the terms of that most significant proclamation...