

South Brisbane Town Hall Tower Clock

South Brisbane Town Hall, in Vulture Street, was built in 1892 with an impressive tower with provision for four six foot diameter clock dials but it was not until 1904 that the council could afford the £100 for a clock. This was the eleventh installation, and the first tower clock built by the company. In December 1904, the *Courier* reported:

A short time ago the South Brisbane Municipal Council entered into a contract with the Synchronome Company of Australasia for the installation of a synchronome clock in the turret of the South Brisbane Town Hall. The work, which was carried out under the supervision of the manager of the company (Mr. A. G. Jackson), was successfully completed a few days ago, and the appearance of the Town hall is considerably improved as the result of its latest acquisition. The clock is fitted with four dials 6ft. 10in. in diameter, which work in conjunction with six smaller ones in the other offices from a seconds beat controlling pendulum placed in the town clerk's office. The mechanism of the clock is of a very simple character, and there is a total absence of the heavy swinging pendulum usually connected with other large timepieces. The dials are illuminated by ten incandescent electric lights, the current for which is supplied by the Brisbane Tramways Company. The lighting has been so arranged that the electric current can be switched on and off automatically. The whole of the mechanism in conjunction with the clock has been designed by Mr. Jackson, and manufactured at the company's workshop in Ann Street. Much interest has been taken in the installation of the clock, which is the first of its kind fixed up in Australia.

Although the clock was described elsewhere as the 'first electrically driven tower clock erected in Australia', it is in fact *electrically controlled*, but driven by a weight which has been manually wound up each week for nearly one hundred years. For many years, including during World War `II when the building was taken over by the American Military Police and Prison Administration, this was the particular responsibility of Jock Jackson, but in 1978 the job was taken over by Government Horologist, Greg Baker. The original installation is still in operation, with a simple weight-driven mechanism to move the hands on each half-minute when released by the electrical impulse from the controlling pendulum. The photograph, taken by A.G.Jackson before installation, shows the winding square, and the weight at the right which maintains power to the clock during winding. A fly to limit the speed is mounted on the top of a worm originally taken from a cream separator. The controlling pendulum is of the original deadbeat type, in a cedar case, and was originally powered by 'carporous cells'.

Since the dissolution of the City of South Brisbane in 1925, the building has had many different occupants but the clock , which may actually be the world's first electrically controlled tower clock, has continued to tick on in tribute to its maker.