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# Bathurst's War Memorial Carillon<sup>1</sup>

Samantha Friend

War memorials can be found in all cities, towns, villages, settlements and localities. Even the smallest settlement has a War Memorial. I am reminded of Lowther in the Central West of NSW – merely a gate leading down to the old coaching inn that now serves as the homestead, a cemetery and an overtaking lane, but it has a proud marble memorial recording the fallen. They are nothing new. The community's desire to remember, to reflect and to honour those who have lost their lives in various theatres of war is strong and Bathurst is no exception.

In King's Parade in Bathurst alone, there are two important memorials. One, known locally as 'The Carillon', is a handsome red brick Art Deco structure containing an eternal flame (now a hologram, but a gas flame until recently). The other is the very elegant Boer War Memorial (unveiled by Field Marshall Lord Kitchener in 1910)<sup>2</sup> which features a soldier at the ready, his rifle with bayonet affixed, looking fiercely towards his enemy. Both record the names of those who lost their lives in conflict.

The idea of a specific campanile (or carillon or bell tower) as a war memorial is unique in Australia, although there are many elsewhere, particularly in France on the battlefields.<sup>3</sup> There are only three carillons in Australia – one in Bathurst, one at Sydney University and one in Lake Burley Griffin in Canberra. Sydney University's carillon is a war memorial, but it is not in a purpose-built campanile – the bells are installed in a tower of the Main Building. The carillon in Lake Burley Griffin was a gift from the British Government to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Canberra and was accepted by Queen Elizabeth II on behalf of the Australian people in 1970.<sup>4</sup>

Built with monies raised by the community to rectify the glaring omission of a memorial in Bathurst, the Bathurst District War Memorial Carillon (to give its full title) was opened with great fanfare and ceremony on Armistice Day in 1933 with crowds of over 15,000 in attendance.<sup>5</sup> However, the Carillon was only partially finished, with the Eternal Flame not being installed until 1945 and the clavier still not installed in 2020.

Like most big projects, the Carillon took some time to get off the ground. In 1915, a memorial was proposed

to commemorate those lost in the Great War, and there were some suggestions – a Memorial Hall, a statue etc. A flagpole was installed in King's Parade to stand as a war memorial but something more substantial was needed. Then in 1919 the idea was raised again but the timing was not right – the end of the war, the Spanish Flu, the Great Depression, returning soldiers needing succour were not conducive to fundraising so the idea was put on hold once again. Despite these challenges, a committee was formed and the proposal agreed to, with the committee holding a competition to design a suitable memorial in 1921. Sadly, the winning designer could not be contacted, and the scheme again went into abeyance.

At a meeting recorded in the *National Advocate* on 25 August 1926, once again the idea to provide a carillon as a memorial to its soldiers was proposed, although there was some dissention from the supporters of a plan to erect a 'handsome statue in King's Parade'. It was going to cost between £10,000 and £15,000 for a tower with 23 bells. The first suggestion was simply a tower but Mr George Hoskins, a prominent citizen and member of the committee had recently returned from England where he had visited the city of Loughborough and seen and heard a carillon being played. The idea of a bell tower had its detractors and some members of the committee doubted whether the community could raise the money required to do justice to the idea. Despite the opposition, the proposal to erect a carillon was accepted! Finally, Bathurst would get a War Memorial rather than a flagpole.

Now came the fundraising efforts. Concerts, dances, balls, competitions, card parties, egg drives, cake stalls – everyone contributed. The villages around Bathurst, for this was to be a Bathurst and District War Memorial, were encouraged to raise money to donate a bell which would have the name of their village inscribed upon it. £20 was the sum required and some villages raised that and more, while some struggled.<sup>6</sup>

John Taylor & Co of Loughborough<sup>7</sup> won the tender for the provision of 35 bells at a cost of over £3,000, to be delivered by September 1928. Now the race was on to build the campanile. John D Moore (1888-1958)<sup>8</sup>, was approached by the committee to design a suitable tower. Moore had been involved in the Sydney



*Opening Day from the Grand Hotel, Bathurst, 1933 (showing the Boer War Memorial) [Bathurst District Historical Society]*

University War Memorial Carillon which was dedicated on Anzac Day in 1928 and built with monies donated by families, individuals, organisations and faculties across Australia, so the precedence of crowd funding had been set!<sup>9</sup> Mr Moore's design for Bathurst was for a tower 100 feet high to get the best from the bells, and was accepted in January 1928. Work began in March 1929 and due to Bathurst's unstable clay soil, deep foundations had to be dug, and a large unsightly concrete block was constructed but then the money ran out, just as the bells arrived. The bells went into storage for the next six years while the tower was completed.<sup>10</sup>

The next six years were busy – money being raised, building work done, money running out, more money raised, and another level installed, but it was hard work. The Depression had struck and there wasn't anything to spare. Once again, the resilience of the community came to the fore and finally on the eve of Anzac Day 1933 the last brick was laid, and the original flagpole installed on top. The Cathedral bells

rang out, the people cheered, and the community was very pleased that they had persevered and not let the Council demolish the unfinished building in March 1932 when it was deemed an eyesore.<sup>11</sup>

The largest bell is inscribed 'Thus Bathurst and her surrounding villages honour their men of 1914–1918. Lest We Forget', the next largest bell is inscribed 'To the ever glorious memory of our fallen comrades. Greater love has no man than this that he laid down his life for his friends.' The third largest bell is dedicated to the nurses of the Great War and is known as the Red Cross Bell. All 35 bells carry the coat of arms of Bathurst and Taylor's insignia.

A carillon should be 'played' with a clavier<sup>12</sup> – a keyboard designed for the purpose, but finances did not run to a clavier for the opening in 1933, so an electric keyboard was installed, which is still in use today. The Carillon has been converted to a clocktower, ringing the Westminster Chimes every quarter hour, with a season tune played at midday and 1 o'clock



*Evans Memorial and half-built Carillon, King's Parade, Bathurst, 1933 [Bathurst District Historical Society]*

(jaunty Irish tunes for St Patrick's Day, carols for Christmas etc). Concerts are held regularly with carillonists coming from all over Australia and indeed the world to play in Bathurst. A very pleasant Sunday afternoon may be spent, sitting in the sun in the magnificent gardens of King's Parade listening to the 'Singing Tower'.<sup>13</sup>

The War Memorial Carillon has always been a huge part of the Bathurst community. Anzac Day and Armistice Day are well attended each year, but these are not the only remembrance days observed. Few weeks pass without some wreaths being laid on the steps of the Carillon in honour of the fallen. Those theatres of war that saw the brave men and women of Bathurst answer the call are displayed proudly on the four sides of the building, up to and including various peacekeeping missions carried out by Australian troops. 2018 saw the installation of a plaque to commemorate

the 24 nurses from Bathurst who volunteered to serve in the Great War. This is one of the few specific war memorials to nurses in Australia. Remarkably, all 24 women came home, some going on to stay in Bathurst, marry and bring up families who are still proud citizens of the district.<sup>14</sup>

Since 1933, monies have been raised in various ways to complete the Carillon. A roof had to be installed as the bell chamber had originally been open to the elements, lightning struck in 2000 which caused damage to the building, new bells were needed, the installation of the clavier was still on hold, and the Eternal Flame, originally a gas flame which coated the inside of the building with thick soot needed to be replaced. In July 2018, the NSW State Government granted \$300,000 to the fundraising committee which provided the funding needed to complete some of the important works.<sup>15</sup> The flame is an integral and important part of

the War Memorial, but the soot and gases were affecting the bells, and so today the flame is represented by a large bronze sculpture and hologram, designed by Terrance Plowright, AOM, an award winning sculptor from the Blue Mountains.

In November 2018, in time for the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Armistice Day, the top tier (as the rows of bells are described in a carillon) was replaced with new bells, again cast by Taylor's of Loughborough, using a better alloy of metal to produce a clearer sound.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, a new tier was installed – a higher octave of bells to bring the Bathurst Carillon up to concert standard. It is hoped the new octave of bells will be known at the 'Peace Bells'.<sup>17</sup>

## About the Author

Samantha Friend is the President of the Bathurst District Historical Society ([www.bathursthistory.org.au](http://www.bathursthistory.org.au)) and the Curator of their collection. The Society has organised the Carillon in Bathurst to be open to the public on a number of occasions and has displays relating to both the Nurses of the First War, and the Carillon in the Historical Museum.

## References

<sup>1</sup> Bathurst Visitor Information Centre, 'Discover the Stories of the Bathurst War Memorial Carillon', YouTube video, 28 April 2020, <<https://youtu.be/4NhV-0a1brw>>

<sup>2</sup> 'Lord Kitchener In Bathurst', *National Advocate*, 11 January 1910, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Tower Bells, *Indexes to traditional carillons in France*, <[http://www.towerbells.org/data/FR\\_car\\_ixs.html](http://www.towerbells.org/data/FR_car_ixs.html)>

<sup>4</sup> National Capital Authority, *National Carillon*, <<https://www.nca.gov.au/carillon>>

<sup>5</sup> 'Opening of the War Memorial Carillon in Bathurst', *Sydney Mail*, 22 November 1933, p. 17; 'Carillon City', *Lithgow Mercury* 13 November 1933, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Alan McRae, *Bathurst's War Memorial Carillon*, published by author, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> John Taylor & Co, *Bathurst, NSW: The War Memorial Carillon*, <<http://taylorbells.co.uk/project/bathurst-new-south-wales/>>

<sup>8</sup> Cedric Flower, *John Drummond Moore (1888-1958)*, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 10 (MUP), 1986, <<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/moore-john-drummond-7638>>

<sup>9</sup> University of Sydney, *9 Facts You Didn't Know About The Carillon*, 24 April 2018,

<<https://www.sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2018/04/24/9-facts-you-didnt-know-about-the-carillon.html>>

<sup>10</sup> Spencer Harvey, *The Story of King's Parade: From Market Place to City Centre*, published by author with sponsorship from Bathurst Regional Council, 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Jan Page, *From Flagpole to Carillon: Honouring Bathurst's World War 1 Diggers*, published by author with the assistance of the Bathurst Family History Group, 2019.

<sup>12</sup> A traditional manual carillon is played by striking a keyboard – the stick-like keys of which are called batons – with the fists, and by pressing the keys of a pedal keyboard with the feet. The keys mechanically activate levers and wires connected to metal clappers which strike the bells.

<sup>13</sup> 'The Singing Tower', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 September 1933, p. 11.

<sup>14</sup> The plaque and subsequent exhibition were the result of work done by local Military Historian Andrew Fletcher who campaigned for the plaque to be erected. The ceremony was attended by representatives of the Australian Armed Forces, the RSL, Red Cross, local and state politicians, families of the nurses and the community. See also Sam Bolt, 'Andrew Fletcher named Bathurst RSL Sub Branch's Carillon custodian', *Western Advocate*, 12 May 2020, <<https://www.westernadvocate.com.au/story/6753537/andrew-fletcher-named-bathurst-rsl-sub-branches-carillon-custodian/>>

<sup>15</sup> Jacinta Carroll, 'Celebrations as Carillon gets \$300k boost from State Government', *Western Advocate*, 4 July 2018, <<https://www.westernadvocate.com.au/story/5506934/carillon-to-get-500000-upgrade-after-funding-announcement/>>

<sup>16</sup> Rachel Chamberlain, 'Bathurst Remembrance Day Service, 2018', *Western Advocate*, 11 November 2018, <<https://www.westernadvocate.com.au/story/5751238/crowd-gathers-in-bathurst-to-honour-service-and-sacrifice-photos/>> and *Bathurst City Life*, November 8 2018, <[https://issuu.com/bathurstcitylife/docs/bcl\\_20181108\\_wholemag](https://issuu.com/bathurstcitylife/docs/bcl_20181108_wholemag)>

<sup>17</sup> Sam Bolt, 'Carillon receives new bells as part of ongoing upgrade works', *Western Advocate*, 21 November 2018, <<https://www.westernadvocate.com.au/story/5779728/a-new-set-of-bells-chimes-into-the-bathurst-war-memorial-carillon/>>