



# Town Hall

## GYMPIE



## Design and origins

The Gympie Town Hall is a two-storey masonry building with several neo-Classical design elements, including the use of columns, decorative corning and robust quoins at the building's corners.

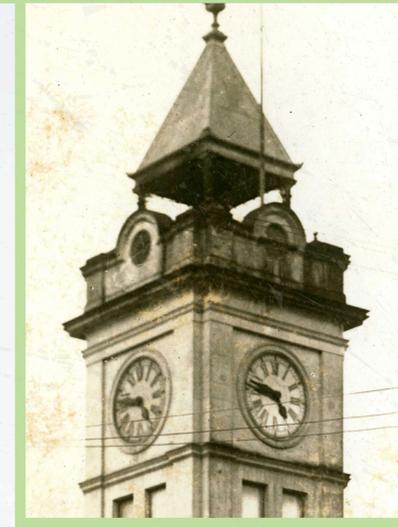
The Heritage-listed building was designed by brothers John and George Clarke, who won a competition to design both the Brisbane and Gympie Town halls in 1884. After some consideration by councillors during the late 1880s, only the western wing and clock tower were initially built.

The work was completed in 1890 by builder Joseph Jew, with prominent local architect Hugo Du Rietz supervising construction.

The building was officially opened by William Smyth, MLA for Gympie, on 4 March 1891 and the first Council meeting was held in the new chambers on that date, with John L. Matthews as Mayor. Former Mayors William Ferguson and Edward Bytheway were involved during various phases of planning and construction.

## The Town Hall clock

The Town Hall clock was installed soon after construction of the building. Built by Flavelle, Roberts and Sankey, of Brisbane and London, the clock needs to be wound once every five days. Staff in charge of winding the mechanism can reach the tower from the first floor of the Town Hall via a narrow staircase, with timber ladders providing access to the clock and bell chamber. For safety reasons, the tower is not accessible to the public.



## Extensions, interior usage and modifications

Extensions were added to the Town Hall in 1937-39. The architect for this work was Charles Griffin of Brisbane, using the Clarke Brothers' original plan as a basis. The extensions were built by the Marberite Company of Brisbane, and opened by State Treasurer Frank Cooper at 3pm on Saturday 21 October 1939.

The extensions provided new offices for the City Engineer and City Inspector, both on the ground floor. The top floor of the new section included a panelled public reception hall and a miniature balcony facing the main street. The Gympie East Post Office was situated on the ground floor, which was rented from Council for an initial cost of £130 a year.

The main entrance to the vestibule was widened with a floor of Terazzo pavement, a composite material which may be poured or pre-cast, patterned with marble chips, then polished to a smooth finish.

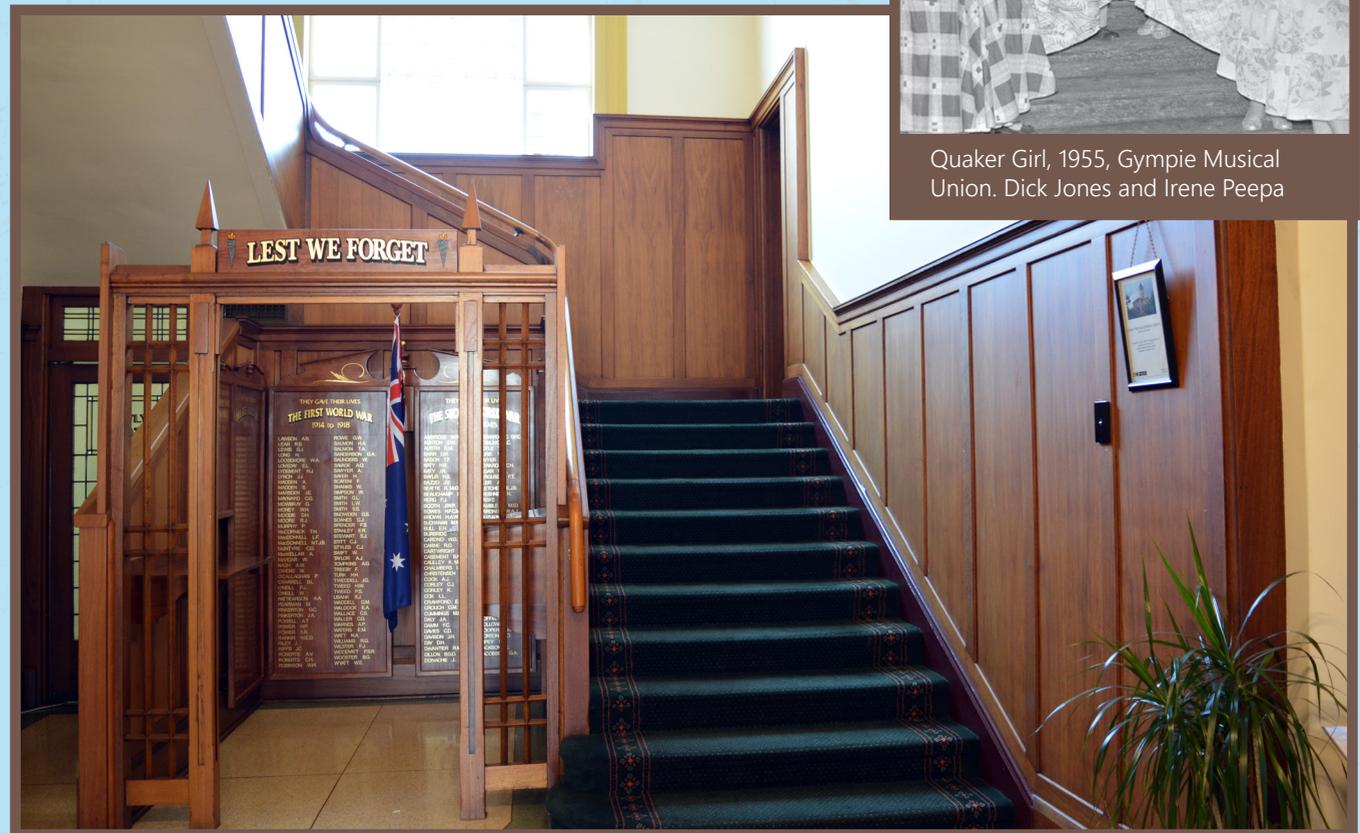
The ground floor now houses a foyer space, a memorial board enclosure with decorative timber screens, counters to serve the public, and a range of administrative offices.

Next to the memorial board, an elaborate timber staircase leads up to the first floor. Natural light enters the stairwell through the large arched leadlight window which is framed by wall mounted Art Deco light fittings. The vaulted ceiling over the stair forms an archway to the upper vestibule.

Located on the first floor are the council chamber and vestibule, meeting rooms, several administrative offices, kitchen, enclosed verandah, and staircase providing access for staff to the clock tower.



Quaker Girl, 1955, Gympie Musical Union. Dick Jones and Irene Peepa



## Council Chambers

On 14 October 1982 the new City Council Meeting Chambers were opened by then Premier (later Sir) Joh Bjelke-Petersen. After the merger of Gympie City and Widgee Shire in 1993, meetings of the Cooloola Shire Council moved to the Old Bank Building, on the corner of Nash and Channon Streets. However, following the merger of Cooloola Shire with Kilkivan and part of Tiaro Shire in 2008, meetings eventually returned to the Town Hall Boardroom.

The Council Meeting Chamber – commonly called the Boardroom – is a finely detailed room featuring timber-paneling right around the perimeter walls, including the columns. Early wall-hung pendant lights add another reminder of the region's heritage.

The Councillors Room is situated on the right as one moves from the vestibule to the Boardroom. This room is traditionally used for interviews between members of the community and councillors, providing a quiet area where ratepayers can raise issues with their elected representatives. The furniture in this room is from the old Gympie City Council.

The Committee Room is situated on the left as one proceeds to the Boardroom, and is directly across the hall from the Councillors Room. It is used for committee meetings and council staff meetings and may be used at times by other public organisations. The table and chairs once furnished the Gympie Butter Factory Office. They were presented to Council by Cr Rob Priebe, a prominent figure in the local dairy industry. The maple armchairs with brown leather upholstery are from Widgee Shire Council.

The gold scales in the glass display case to the left of the stairwell were used to measure gold during the Kilkivan Gold Rush. They were also used by the Forestry Department Office at Imbil for weighing seed samples, from circa 1939 until Australia's conversion to the metric system in 1972. Research is ongoing into the history of the weights and measures in the other glass cabinet, located on the right of the vestibule.

The basement in the Town Hall building has been used for different purposes over the years, including a blood bank and storage area for council records and memorabilia.

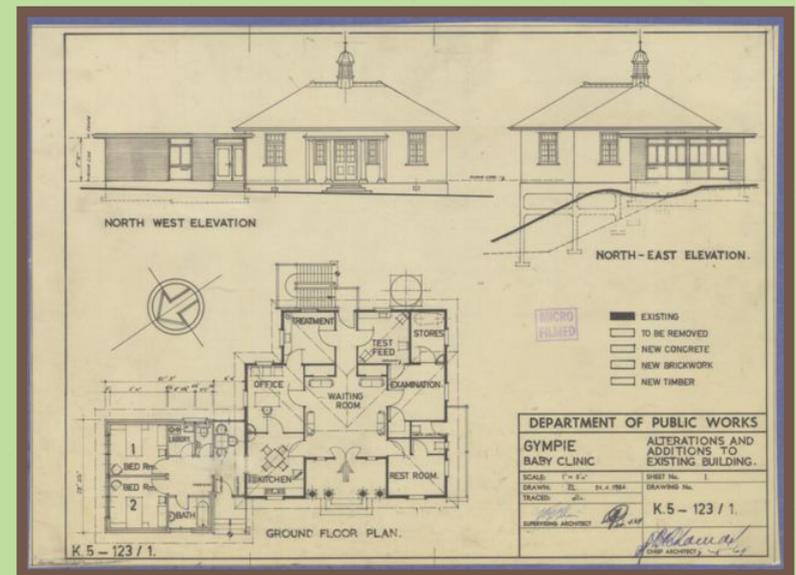
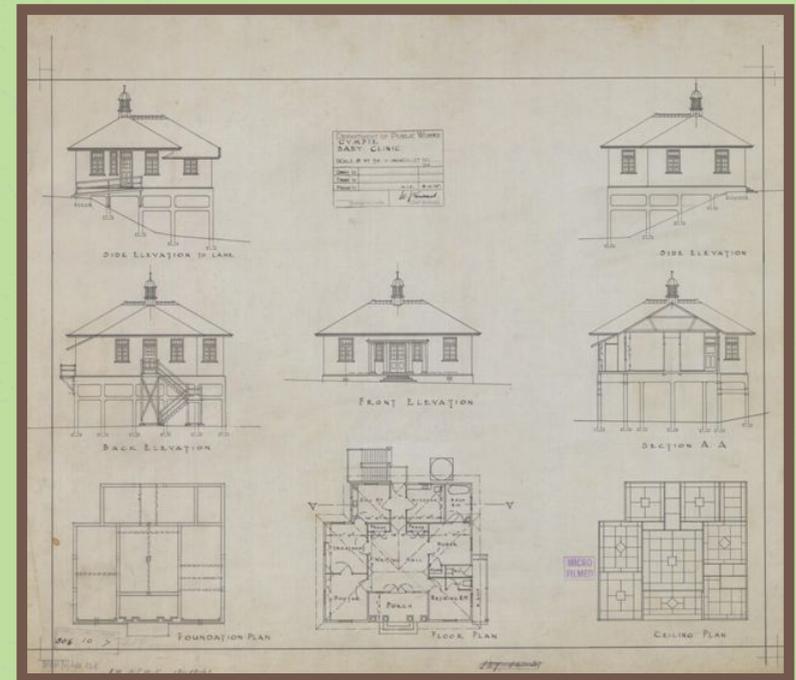


# The Gympie Town Hall Reserve – other buildings

Early in the 1920s, an Art Deco style male toilet block was constructed on the Town Hall Reserve site, facing Mellor Street. The building is one of only two such designs in Queensland (the other is at Mareeba).

A baby clinic incorporating a female public toilet was also constructed in the Town Hall Complex during the 20s. Connected via a walkway to the Town Hall, it was built by the Department of Public Works, and opened on 24 April 1926 by the Minister for Works, James Kirwan. The establishment of baby clinics throughout Queensland followed the introduction of the 1922 Maternity Act, as part of a popular movement to improve the health of mothers and babies.

Called the Maternity and Child Welfare Clinic, the building followed the standard “temple design” then in use throughout the State, featuring Doric pillars and a tiled roof. It incorporated a waiting room for mothers, infant treatment room, kitchen, bathroom, ladies’ retiring room and a day room for the nurses. Two nurses were appointed, with one stationed permanently at the clinic while the other visited mothers in their own homes. The Maternal and Child Health Clinic services were eventually transferred to the Gympie Regional Hospital in 1992.

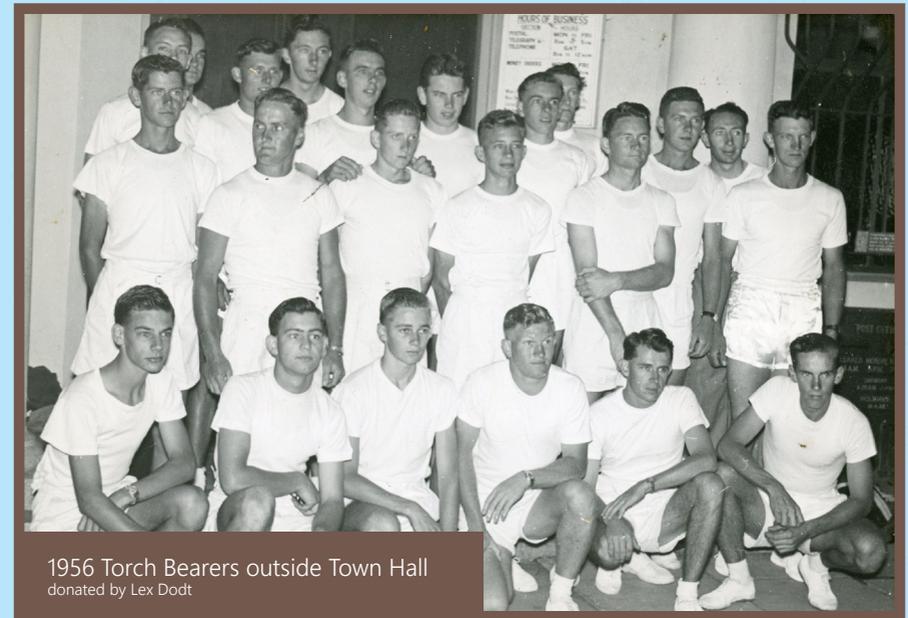


## Torch Bearers - 1956 Olympics

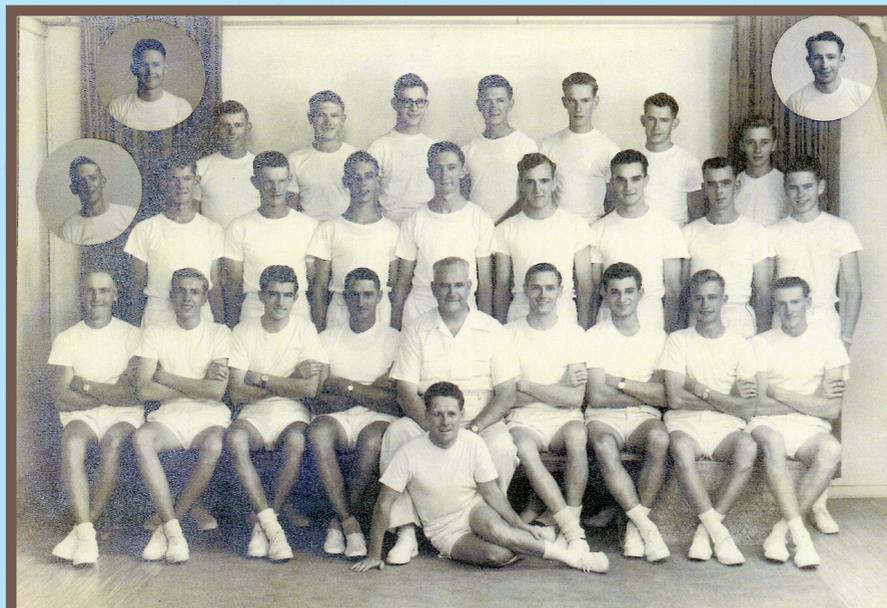
The Olympic torch arrived at Gympie Town Hall at 3.17 am on Thursday 15 November 1956, on its way down the east coast of Australia from Cairns to Melbourne. It was carried during the entire journey by foot runners, or bearers.

A community reception was held outside Town Hall, with Gympie Mayor Ron Witham taking charge of the torch and people turning out in their pyjamas to witness the event. Each torch bearer carried the torch a mile before passing it onto the next runner.

Gympie had 26 bearers, who were all photographed in front of Town Hall.



1956 Torch Bearers outside Town Hall  
donated by Lex Dods



**BACK.**—H. BATH; G. BROWN; N. R. CUMMINGS; W. HALL; B. CROSS; D. CARLSON; R. YESBERG.  
**STANDING.**—B. McLENNAN; L. DODT; P. RUTKIN; B. WATERS; E. DUN; B. SHEPHERD; K. CHAPMAN; R. FREESTUN.  
**SITTING.**—L. ROBERTS; R. PEARCE; P. COMINO; W. JAMIESON (President); Ald. R. WITHAM (Mayor); M. L. WEBSTER;  
C. COMINO (Secretary); D. GAMBLING; M. HAMILTON.  
**FRONT.**—T. BRENNAN    **INSETS.**—Q. BIRT; E. GRADY; G. GRANT.



1956 Olympic flame arriving in Gympie  
at the Fiveways

Gympie  
Regional Libraries



GYMPIE  
REGIONAL  
COUNCIL

