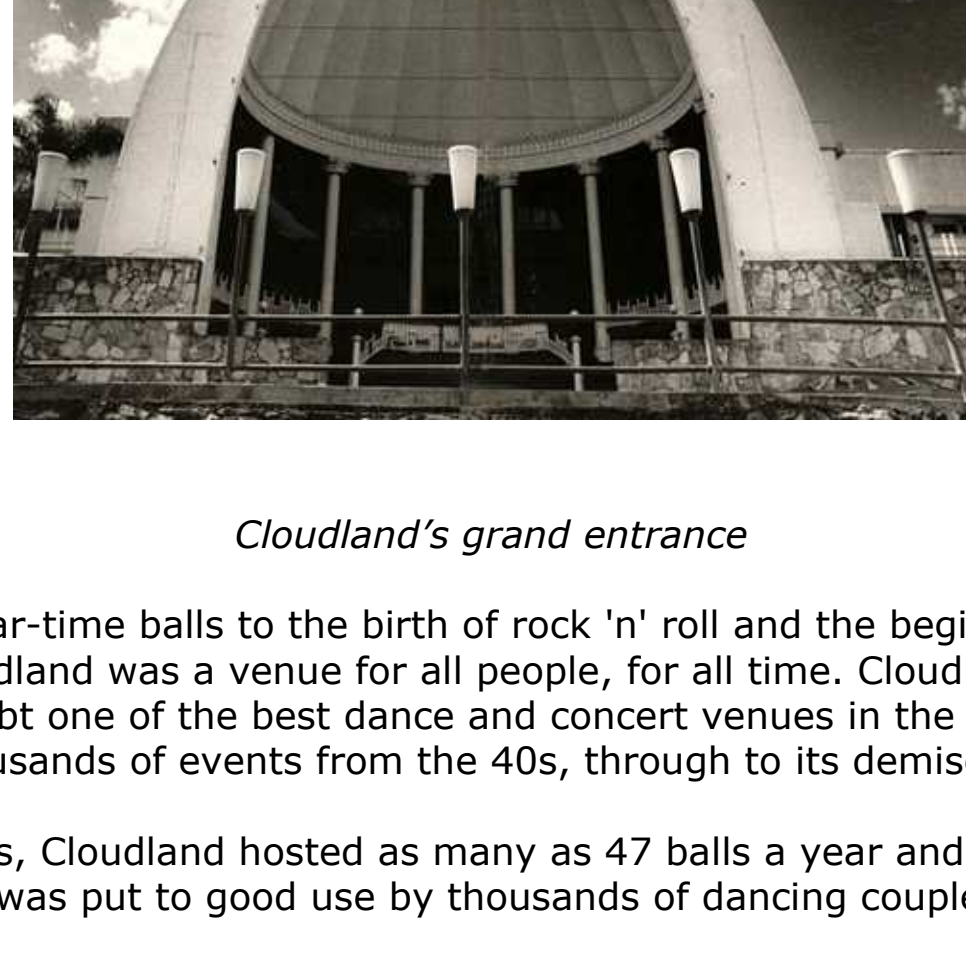


## State-approved Vandalism in Brisbane.

Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen was notoriously known for authorising the demolition of some sixty city buildings during his time as Premier. These were not just any old buildings — most of them were significant buildings of Brisbane's heritage. As a result, Brisbane soon became known as "*the demolition capital of Australia*".

Of all the buildings demolished between the mid-1970s and late 1980s, two stand out in people's memories — the **Bellevue Hotel** demolished in 1979, and **Cloudland** demolished in 1982.



Cloudland's grand entrance

From the war-time balls to the birth of rock 'n' roll and the beginnings of punk - Cloudland was a venue for all people, for all time. Cloudland was without doubt one of the best dance and concert venues in the country, hosting thousands of events from the 40s, through to its demise in 1982.

In the 1940s, Cloudland hosted as many as 47 balls a year and the sprung dance floor was put to good use by thousands of dancing couples.



From the 1950s through to the 1980s, Cloudland was the home of Australian and international musical acts. Rock 'n' roll legend Buddy Holly played three of his six Australian concerts at Cloudland in 1958.



Jerry Lee Lewis performing at Cloudland on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1958

Australia's own king of rock 'n' roll, the legendary Johnny O'Keefe, played at Cloudland in the late 1950s but wasn't given billing as a 'rock' act - rather, he was described as a more demure 'jazz' performer.

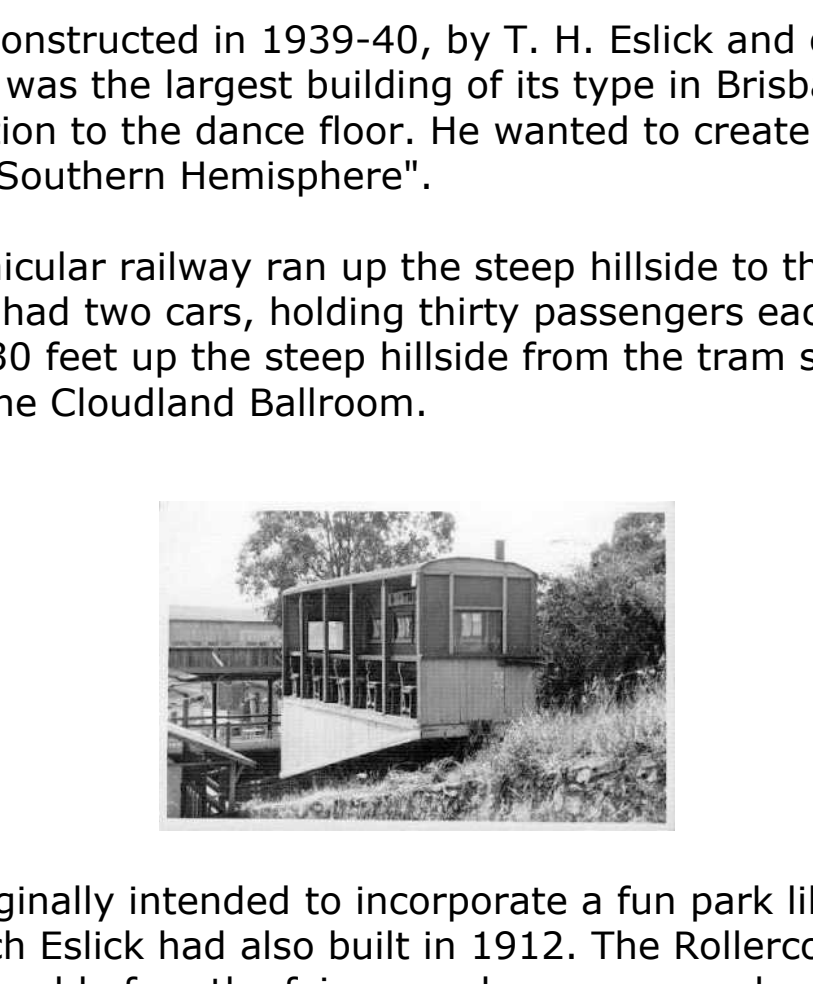
In the early 1960s, promoter Ivan Dayman took the reins and turned Cloudland into a major live music venue signing top 'beat' bands including Tony Worsley and The Blue Jays, Normie Rowe, Ronnie Burns and Mike Furber.



Rock 'n' Roll dance presentation 1957

Other famous acts performing at Cloudland include Split Enz, XTC, The Sports, Cold Chisel, The Stray Cats, The Saints, Australian Crawl, Echo & the Bunnymen, Midnight Oil, UB40, The Go-Betweens, and The Clash. In 1980, taking to the Cloudland stage, a young Keith Urban won "best young male" at the ABC Country Music Show.

Developers moved in at 3 am in November 1982 and illegally demolished this amazing building, full of chandeliers, tiered seating around the dance floor, domed sky lights and rich decorative detail. The citizens of Brisbane were devastated, especially the ex-servicemen and their sweethearts who had once enjoyed R & R from the worst fighting in WW2.

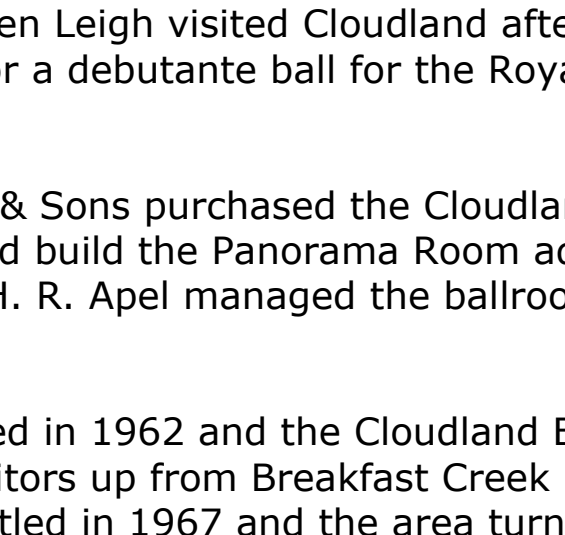


Thus the iconic Cloudland Ballroom was demolished overnight, following on from the demolition of Brisbane's historic Bellevue Hotel just 3 years earlier. The event sparked a massive outcry from the local Brisbane community against Queensland's so-called development-at-any-cost Premier, Joh Bjelke Petersen. These events changed the way Queenslanders saw and valued their heritage.

### Historical Summary (from Wikipedia with corrections and additions)

Originally called "Luna Park", Cloudland Ballroom was a famous Brisbane entertainment venue located in Bowen Hills. It was demolished in 1982 and the site was eventually developed into an apartment complex.

On its hilltop site above Brisbane, Cloudland's distinctive parabolic laminated roof arch, nearly 18 metres high, was highly visible.

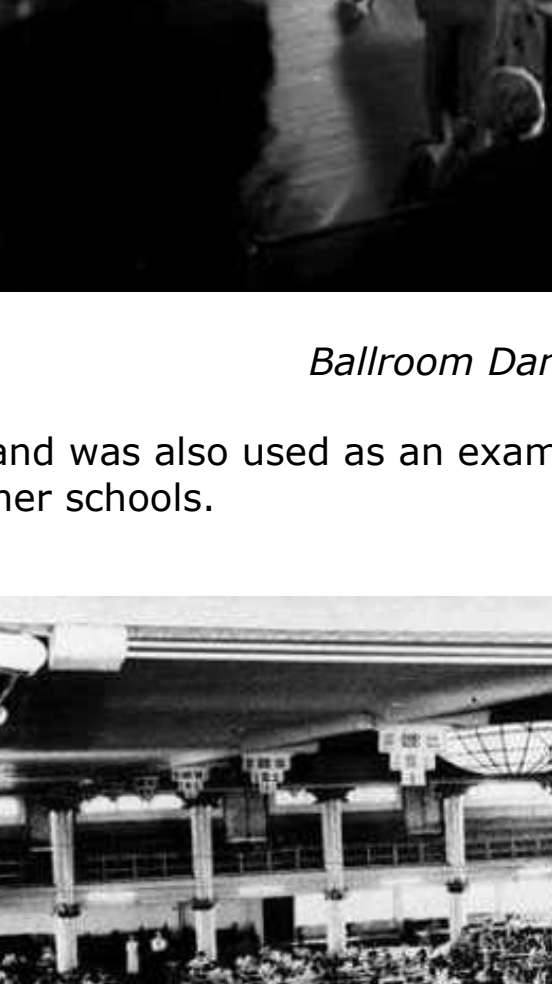


Cloudland was constructed in 1939-40, by T. H. Eslick and opened on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1940. It was the largest building of its type in Brisbane. Eslick paid particular attention to the dance floor. He wanted to create the "best ballroom in the Southern Hemisphere".

An open-air, funicular, ran up the steep hillside to the rear entrance of Cloudland. It had two cars, holding thirty passengers each. They would carry patrons 330 feet up the steep hillside from the tram stop on Breakfast Creek Road to the Cloudland Ballroom.



The site was originally intended to incorporate a fun park like Luna Park Melbourne, which Eslick had also built in 1912. The rollercoaster at Luna Park was destroyed before the fair grounds were opened.



Eslick disappeared soon after Cloudland was opened so the building was left abandoned until 1942 when the United States military took over the ballroom as offices and a headquarters. When Cloudland was re-opened after the war in April, 1947, the name Luna Park was dropped and the building was thenceforth known as Cloudland Ballroom.

Cloudland was purchased by sisters, Mya Winters and Francis Rouch, for 16,000 pounds and re-opened on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1947. On 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1948, Laurence Olivier & Vivien Leigh visited Cloudland after doing the play "*School for Scandal*" for a debutante ball for the Royal Society of St. George.

In October 1954, Apel & Sons purchased the Cloudland Ballroom. Mr. Apel commenced to plan and build the Panorama Room adjacent to the ballroom for various functions. H. R. Apel managed the ballroom from 1954 through to February 1964.

The funicular was closed in 1962 and the Cloudland Bus Service was introduced to bring visitors up from Breakfast Creek Road. The funicular was eventually dismantled in 1967 and the area turned into a car park.

Promoter, Ivan M. Dayman of Dance Promotions Pty. Ltd., took over the lease of the ballroom and the Panorama Room around 1965.

As a pop/rock/old time music venue, Cloudland hosted thousands of dances and concerts in the 50s, 60s and 70s, including a number of notable events. Cloudland hosted three of the six concerts performed by rock 'n' roll legend Buddy Holly on his only Australian tour in February 1958.

Resident bands from the late 60s to its closure included *The Sounds Of Seven*, *The Highmarks*, and *The Seasons of the Witch*. The dance format in those times covered old-time through to rock 'n' roll.

The venue was a classic World War II structure. Inside it had hard timber floors, decorative columns, sweeping curtains, domed sky lights and chandeliers. Cloudland also had an upper circle of tiered seating which overlooked the floor and stage. An impressive tall domed entrance was also visible from surrounding suburbs. Cloudland Ballroom was said to be the best dance and concert hall in Australia during that time.

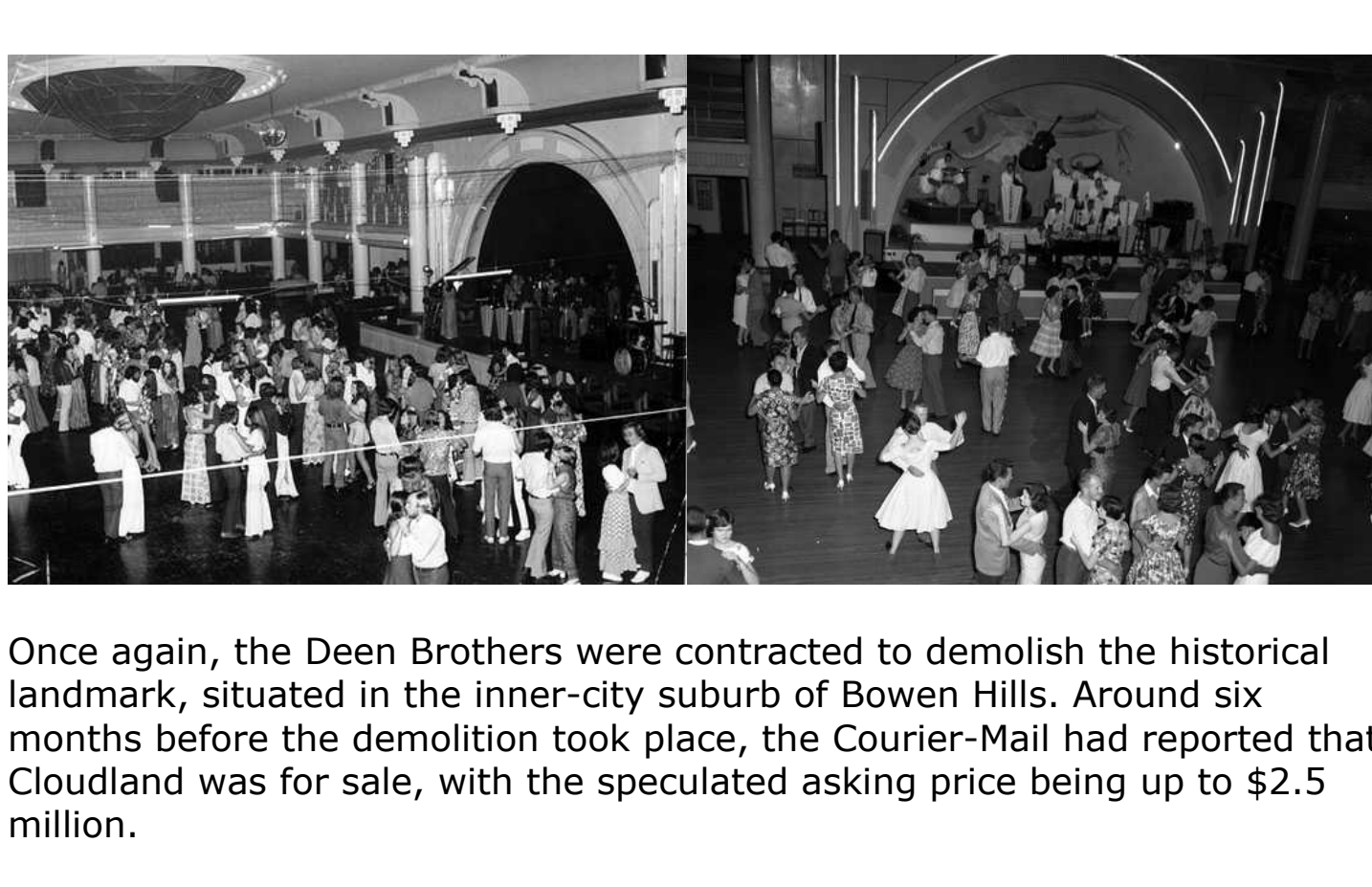


An upper circle of tiered seating overlooked the floor and stage — ca.1950

### "All we leave behind is the memories":

Demolitions and political protests in the era of Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen by Kylie P. Challenor (blog from 24 January 2011).

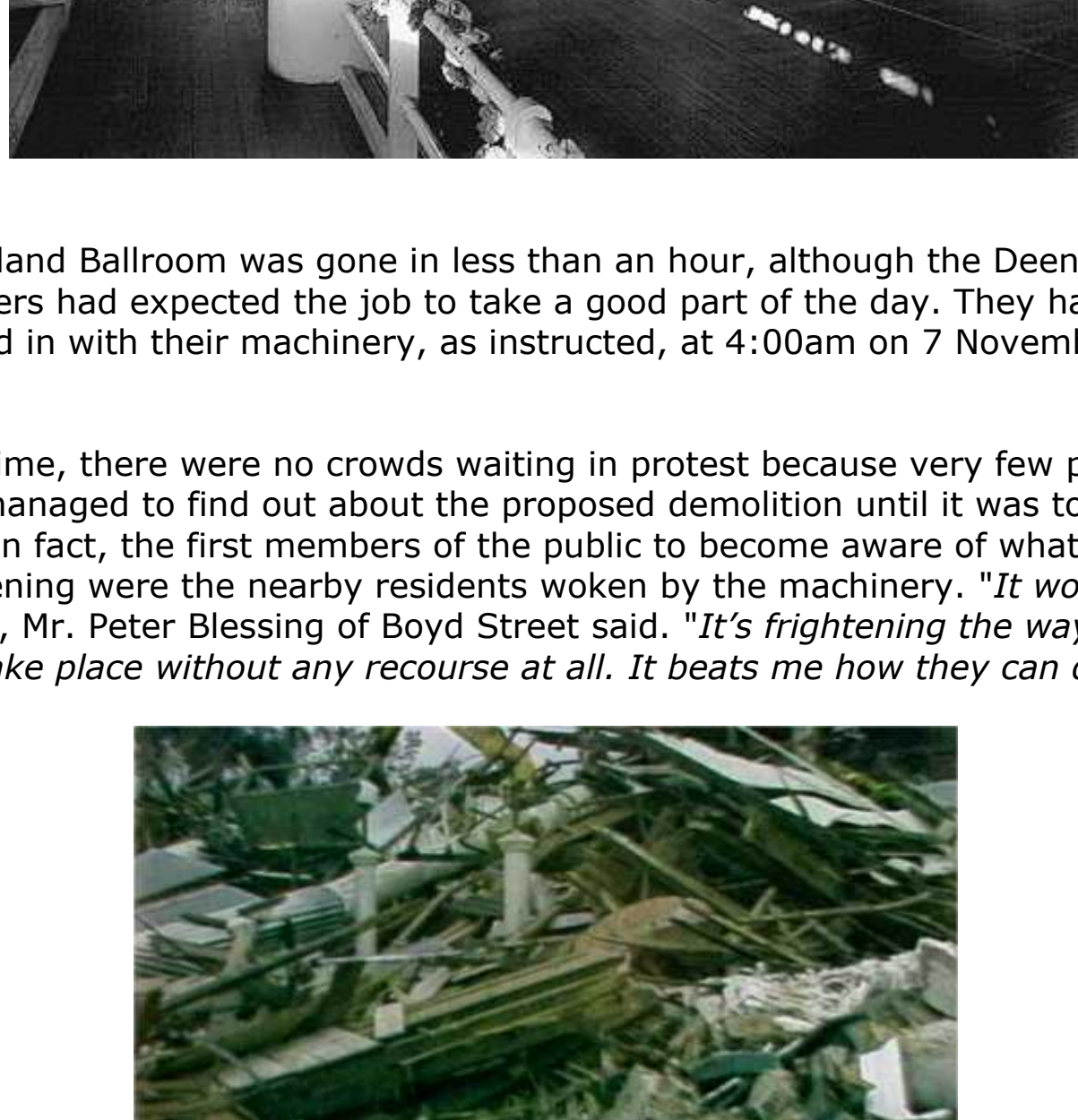
The Bellevue Hotel was arguably the most famous of the midnight demolitions (presumably due to the sheer number of people who turned up to watch it fall). However, it is important to remember that most members of the public had no physical or emotional connection to it, since it had been frequented primarily by politicians in its final years standing. On the other hand, Cloudland Ballroom was a venue that had been an important part of the lives of many people of all ages — from those who had attended the ballroom dances of its heyday (some of whom had started romances there), to those of the younger generation who had attended punk music concerts, university examinations and even Sunday markets.



Once again, the Deen Brothers were contracted to demolish the historical landmark, situated in the inner-city suburb of Bowen Hills. Around six months before the demolition took place, the Courier-Mail had reported that Cloudland was for sale, with the speculated asking price being up to \$2.5 million.

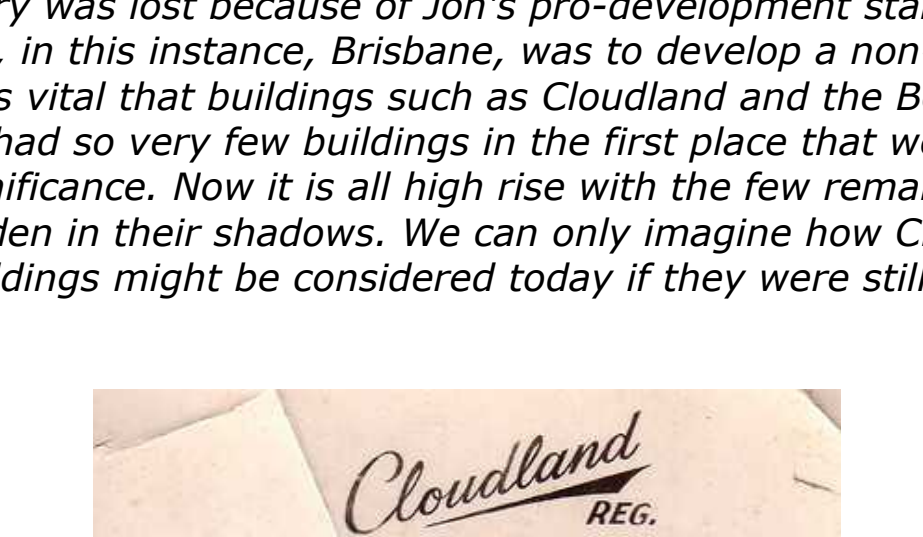
**LUNA PARK UNSOLD**—No bids were received when Luna Park, Bowen Hills, of 6 acres 38.1 perches, with all buildings, including Cloudland ballroom, was offered at auction yesterday on behalf of the mortgagor. At the official opening of the Park in August, 1940, it closed down in January, 1941, and was valued at \$2,500,000 and been invested in the property by the company.

At that time, the La Boite Theatre and Community Arts Network of Queensland was planning a thirties and forties revival ball to bring attention to the fact that the ballroom was under threat. According to organizer, Bruce Dickson, the event was taking place "...in an effort to remind Brisbane people of the loss that would occur if it was destroyed...In other capital cities you could destroy 50 per cent of the historical buildings overnight and still have much more than we have in Brisbane." In fact, Cloudland was commonly known around the city as the "Social hub of Brisbane".



Cloudland Ballroom was gone in less than an hour, although the Deen Brothers had expected the job to take a good part of the day. They had moved in with their machinery, as instructed, at 4:00am on 7 November 1982.

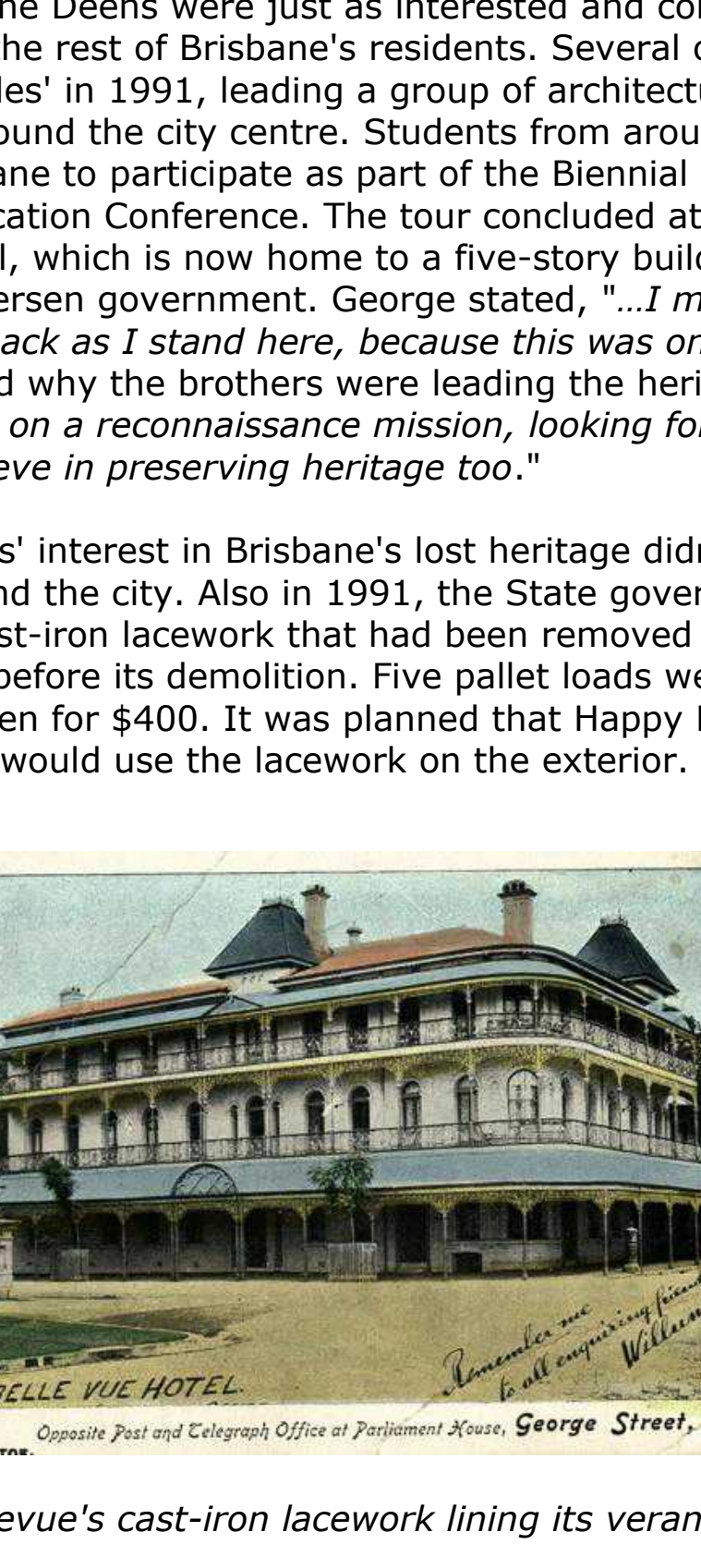
This time, there were no crowds waiting in protest because very few people had managed to find out about the proposed demolition until it was too late. In fact, the first members of the public to become aware of what was happening were the nearby residents woken by the machinery. "It was the baby", Mr. Peter Blessing of Boyd Street said. "It's frightening the way this can take place without any recourse at all. It beats me how they can do it."



It wasn't only the public who weren't warned of the impending demolition of Cloudland; the State government and the building's owner had also failed to notify the Brisbane City Council, from whom they required permission in order to legally carry out the demolition. Although Cloudland was not owned by the government (it was owned by real estate promoter Peter Kurts), the media and the public still held Bjelke-Petersen and his Country Party personally responsible for failing to protect Brisbane's heritage.

The maximum fine for demolishing National Trust-listed buildings was \$200; the Cloudland penalty was only \$125. Clearly, this measly fine was hardly a deterrent for individuals, let alone the State Government. After the demolition of Cloudland, the public made it very clear that they were not happy with what had occurred. People from almost all corners of Brisbane and its surrounds had some kind of connection to the place. An anonymous interviewee stated:

"I heard about Cloudland mostly through my elder siblings. It was also a very visible landmark. Everyone in Brisbane knew of Cloudland (as well as people from Redcliffe where my family lived). Its importance to Brisbane's musical history was lost because of Joh's pro-development stance. If Australia and, in this instance, Brisbane, was to develop a non-Indigenous history, it was vital that buildings such as Cloudland and the Bellevue Hotel be kept...We had so very few buildings in the first place that were of historical significance. Now it is all high rise with the few remaining buildings hidden in their shadows. We can only imagine how Cloudland and the other buildings might be considered today if they were still standing."



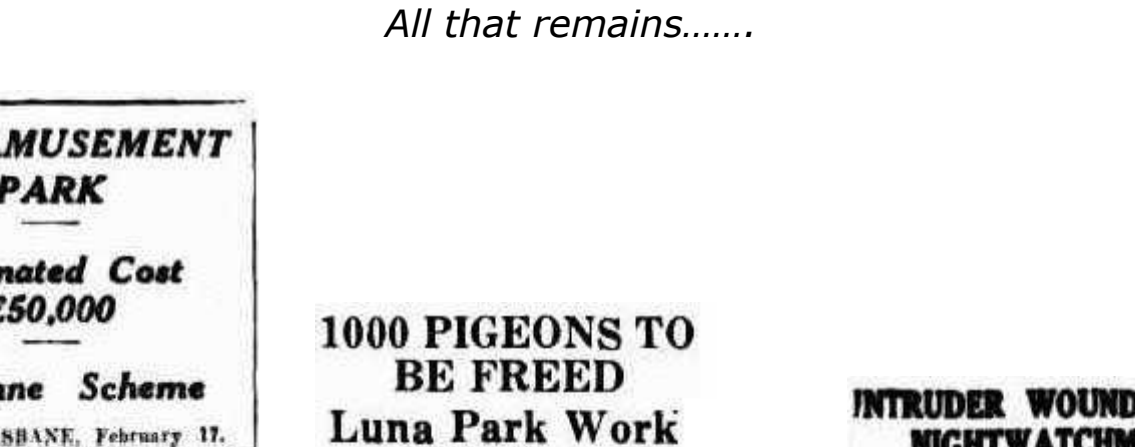
A photographic memento of one couple's night out at Cloudland.

It seems a strange notion that a demolition company could become so well known (if not notorious), that almost everyone in Brisbane could name them. In fact, that is exactly what happened with the Deen Brothers, who were the infamous demolition firm contracted by the State government to demolish heritage-listed buildings up until Joh's reign as Premier ended. They, along with Joh Bjelke-Petersen, were the target of public outrage when building after building was reduced to rubble.

The five brothers — Happy, Louie, George, Ray and Funny — were proud of their work, despite the outrage constantly directed towards them. In actual fact, the Deen Brothers were simply doing what most of us do every day — their jobs. Being contracted by the state government meant a huge boost in the company's profits, as well as the added 'bonus' of becoming a household name and consequently the most well-known demolition company in Queensland (and perhaps even Australia).

It turns out that the Deens were just as interested and concerned about local heritage as the rest of Brisbane's residents. Several of them even became 'tour guides' in 1991, leading a group of architecture students on heritage walks around the city centre. Students from around Australia had travelled to Brisbane to participate as part of the Biennial Oceanic Architectural Education Conference. The tour concluded at the former site of the Bellevue Hotel, which is now home to a five-story building constructed by the Bjelke-Petersen government. George stated, "...I must admit a few memories come back as I stand here, because this was one of our best jobs." When asked why the brothers were leading the heritage walk, George answered, "We're on a reconnaissance mission, looking for more sites. No seriously, we believe in preserving heritage too."

The Deen Brothers' interest in Brisbane's lost heritage didn't stop with a one-off tour around the city. Also in 1991, the State government held an auction for the cast-iron lacework that had been removed from the Bellevue Hotel's verandas before its demolition. Five pallet loads were sold, including one to George Deen for \$400. It was planned that Happy Deen, who was building a house, would use the lacework on the exterior.



Bellevue's cast-iron lacework lining its verandas.

Since the Bjelke-Petersen era, the Deens have also had a hand in the demolition of other significant buildings in Brisbane, including Festival Hall after it was sold to Devine Limited in 2003.

Public outrage in the Sir Joh era was something that the State government wanted to inhibit at all costs. Up until 1977, street marches and protests had been theoretically a legal right — although, in many cases the police force had been seen to be excessive, as was the case with the Springbok tour. When people began protesting the export of uranium from Queensland ports, Bjelke-Petersen declared that all street marches would be illegal from that point on. Rather than applying through the courts for a march permit, the public would need to apply through the police, who had the authority to grant (or, more accurately, not grant) a permit under the Traffic Act. Joh announced that, "Protest groups need not bother applying for permits to stage marches because they won't be granted."

People continued to protest illegally, and they were consequently arrested and, worse, bashed by the police. The term 'police state' became a reality, as senior police reported directly to the Premier:

"...they knew I was always rock solid behind them and they reported to me who were the students of the university who were giving all the trouble... just as they did in the SEQEB electricity strike, everybody came to me for general direction."

Shortly after protesting had been outlawed, in October 1977 one march resulted in a total of 662 people being arrested!

Source: <http://kyliechallenor.blogspot.com/2011/01/iconic-buildings-of-brisbane.html>



Cloudland Apartments built after the demolition.



All that remains.....

<p><b>BIG AMUSEMENT PARK</b></p> <p><b>Estimated Cost £50,000</b></p> <p><b>Brisbane Scheme</b></p> <p><b>BRISBANE, February 17.</b> The City Council's finance committee today considered favourably a proposal for a Brisbane amusement park at Breakfast Creek similar to Luna Park in Melbourne.</p> <p>Mr T. H. Kellik, who built Luna Park and has built amusement parks in Canada, the United States, South Africa, and other countries, sought to purchase or lease for 10 years 8½ acres of land between Sandgate and Breakfast Creek for his Brisbane scheme.</p> <p>The project includes a modern aquatic swimming pool with seating accommodation for 5000 spectators and a large hall for dancing and other entertainings.</p> <p>The estimated cost is £50,000. The plan would convert a stretch of waste land into Australia's biggest amusement park.</p> <p>The finance committee has referred the project to the council officials for the preparation of the terms of the lease.</p>	<p><b>1000 PIGEONS TO BE FREED</b></p> <p><b>Luna Park Work Begins</b></p> <p>The release of 1000 pigeons by members of the Queensland Homing Pigeon Society will mark the first step in the construction of the new Luna Park at Bowen Hills, Brisbane, tomorrow afternoon.</p> <p>The Deputy Governor (Sir James Blair) will turn the first sod and immediately afterwards the contractor (Mr. W. O. Kerr) will take over, and excavation operations will begin.</p> <p>The ceremony will also be attended by the Lord Mayor (Alderman Joneal) and the Brisbane Municipal Concert Band will play.</p> <p>One thousand invitations to attend the opening have been sent out by Luna Park (Brisbane) Ltd. The official hostesses will be Mrs. T. H. Kellik, Mrs. M. V. Crowder (wife of the young son of the late Mr. James Cowlishaw, and who was born on the Cowlishaw Estate, where the park is to be constructed), and Miss Mabel Cowlishaw.</p>	<p><b>INTRUDER WOUNDED BY NIGHTWATCHMAN</b></p> <p><b>Fire At Brisbane's Luna Park</b></p> <p><b>BRISBANE, March 16.</b> A man was shot as he ran through the partly constructed ballroom of Luna Park, Bowen Hills, while it was on fire, at 8 o'clock last night.</p> <p>A trail of blood was found near the scene of the fire, which is believed to have been set deliberately.</p> <p>Nightwatchman Rouson Burnall was investigating the blaze when he saw a man run across the ballroom. He called to him to stop, but the man ran on and Burnall fired a shot into the air and then a shot at the man.</p> <p>Burnall heard the man cry out as he continued running.</p> <p>Detonatives made inquiries at hospitals and from private doctors last night and early this morning to see if anyone had sought medical attention.</p> <p>The fire caused slight damage.</p>
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