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BRO. DR. WILLIAM BLAND 1789 - 1869

Tonight I will deal very briefly with Bro.Dr.William Bland M.L.A. who was a most important character in the growth & development of Australia's (N.S.W. in particular), medical & political systems.

Having spent over forty-seven years in the aviation industry, it was in the 1970's that the mention of Bland's 'invention' during the 1840's of aerial vessel which was intended to travel from England to Australia in five weeks which really brought the name Bro.Doctor William Bland to my attention. Unfortunately his invention never flew and was never actually constructed in anything other than model form. Dr.Bland's dirigible design, which was in effect a hydrogen filled balloon (helium being used in today's airships). The aircraft was approximately ninety feet long with an attached gondola and weighed, when loaded with full fuel, about three & a half tons, the total lift of the aircraft was estimated at approximately five and a half tons.

Note: Bland's design was over fifty years in advance of the first flight by Zeppelin's dirigibles and some think that he gained useful design ideas from Bland's work of the 1840/50's.

Bland is a difficult character to deal with as he was involved in so many different & important areas of Australian and New South Wales history. Indeed so many of the features of his life occurred concurrently, that I will address a subject and deal with it chronologically, and then attempt somehow to loosely bring them together. Again, Bro.Dr.William Bland, although a very important character in the Colony's history, does not seem to rate a mention in many of the history books dealing with that period, if one reads through the index of the various books on 'Colonial' times and you will find in those alphabetical listings such names as Blair, Blaxcell, etc, but a notable omission tends to be William Bland.

Forthright speaking was the forte of Dr.William Bland as long ago as 1857 he might well have been described as having earned the title of being a 'whingeing Pommy' - except that he was the colony's leading doctor colony and the real pioneer of medical hygiene in N.S.W. One of his complaints was about the stench which drifted from what were then described as "manure grounds", where human excreta was dumped. (The suburbs in question were Rose Bay & Double Bay. He was also aghast at the enormous infestation by rats of most of Sydney and in particular the "Rocks" area, pollution of the city's harbour by the 'contents of our drains', and 'the offal from our abattoirs' being either left to rot in the back streets behind the slaughter houses or just thrown into the drains - such as there were. His concern on this occasion was in respect of the repeated outbreaks of diseases such as cholera, bubonic plague, etc, to which Sydney as a city, was periodically subjected to until as late as 1905.

A further comment by Dr.Bland on the Sydney of the 1850's was the shocking state of Sydney's health & hygiene standards at that time.was that:-

