

# *A tale of two phoenixes:*

## *The Colonial Building and its architect William Powell*

*by Stephen Coan*

ON SATURDAY morning, 13 June 2009 Pietermaritzburg was a city in shock. The dramatic image filling the entire front page of the *Weekend Witness* explained why: the dome of the Colonial Building in Church Street incandescent with fire.

The photograph was taken by Angela Hough, a psychologist working at the Rob Smetherham Bereavement Services for Children whose offices in Gallwey Lane overlooked the Colonial Building. “We saw smoke coming out of the main tower just after 12,” she said. “Then flames ... and smoke and fire through the roof. The tower caught alight about 30 minutes later.”

According to a *Witness* reporter on the scene, bystanders “were in awe of

the magnitude and intensity of the blaze that claimed the building and scores of onlookers peered out of their windows in office blocks.”<sup>1</sup> “The roof, with several domes, fell in and the interior was destroyed by the fire, which started in the late morning.”<sup>2</sup>

“Msunduzi Municipality fire engines arrived on the scene within a short time, but fire-fighters seemed to be waging a losing battle as police and Msunduzi traffic officers secured the scene. Church Street was sealed off with emergency tape while scores of people stopped to watch the fire blaze out of control. What started as a small fire just before noon eventually consumed the building from one end to the other. It is believed the fire started on the second

floor, but by 1.20 pm it had reached the far end of the building and engulfed both the first and second floors.”<sup>3</sup>

Pietermaritzburg Tourism director, Melanie Veness, said the destruction of the building was catastrophic for local tourism: “The Colonial Building is one of Pietermaritzburg’s most significant and impressive buildings. It is both architecturally and historically significant.”<sup>4</sup> “It was heart wrenching to stand and watch the flames engulf that beautiful dome and ravage that exquisite facade.”<sup>5</sup>

Adding to the sense of shock was the knowledge that after decades of neglect plans for the building’s refurbishment had been announced in 2004. Renovations had begun in earnest in July 2010 when the site was handed over to contractors GVK-Siya Zama with Nick Grice, of Grice, Small & Petit, as project architect. According to a spokesperson for Grice, Small & Petit, when the fire struck “contractors were halfway through their two-year R80-million contract and had completed 40% of the work required”.<sup>6</sup> “Much of the initial ‘slow’ work had been completed and we were fully on track to finish in the required time.”<sup>7</sup>

Ironically, the danger of fire had been a major concern of the building’s architect, William Henry Powell. In 1899, when the building was still under construction, Powell had written a letter to the public works department urging the colonial government to institute a variety of measures “to render this building less liable to take fire”.<sup>8</sup>

In the days following the fire the damage was assessed and surprisingly, given the extent of the blaze, the prognosis was good. After an inspection on 15 June, Grice said, “the damage was in fact ‘a lot less’ severe than he had ex-

pected.”<sup>9</sup> “Most of what was destroyed was actually the renovations done on the building ... the section worst affected was the part that we were nearly done with.”<sup>10</sup>

Grice said all the walls remained intact and the marble staircase at the entrance was practically untouched while a plan of action on how to tackle reconstructing the building was well under way. “I think that luck was on our side.”<sup>11</sup>

Against all the odds, it looked as though the Colonial Building would rise phoenix-like from the ashes; a resurrection as remarkable as that of the building’s architect who had revived his career and his reputation following a ruinous public scandal.

The story of that scandal is to be found in an unpublished manuscript titled *Each to His Taste* by Sydney Powell, the second of four sons born to Powell and his wife, Anne.<sup>12</sup>

Born in 1877, Sydney’s early childhood was spent in the Powell family home – “a tall old house, with a noisy road (Gray’s Inn Road) at the back and, in front, green peace”<sup>13</sup> – situated in Mecklenburg Square in Bloomsbury, London, where his father had his offices on the ground floor. A brass plate on the door bore Powell’s name above the initials F.R.I.B.A – Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects.

Powell’s exact date of birth is uncertain but he was probably born in 1850; neither is it known where he was educated. It is thought he served articles with a Folkestone architect, Joseph Gardner, in the late 1860s before moving to London where he was employed in the practice of Sydney Smirke. According to a note in his ARIBA nomination papers of 1873, Smirke said he had found Powell’s conduct “had always

been that of a gentleman”<sup>14</sup>. Powell subsequently left Smirke’s office and set up his own practice.

Though Powell lived and worked at a prestigious address he was not concerned with status. “The church we went to was in Red Lion Square, in the midst of a slum area,” says Sydney. “It was anything but a fashionable church, but my father was no devotee of the fashionable, and my mother had little voice in the matter.”<sup>15</sup>

It was a long walk to church and Sydney recalls that walking was a favoured pastime of his father, especially on Sundays. “To walk was the regular thing ... [My father] knew London as a pilot knows the intricate and devious waterways of a great port ... he liked the Surrey side, and we would walk miles along the Blackfriars or the Waterloo Road.”<sup>16</sup>

Though Sydney records that his childhood was “remarkably placid” he goes on to add that the later history of “our family was a history of the undesigned, the unexpected, of bolts, often calamitous, out of the blue”.<sup>17</sup>

At the age of nine Sydney was sent to a preparatory school in Worthing while the family home moved to Elstree in Hertfordshire, just outside London. Sydney’s father accompanied him on the train to Worthing “and with us went another boy and his mother, the wife of a Gray’s Inn barrister. I had never met the boy before, nor his mother; but my father seemed to know her well. Perhaps he had met the barrister professionally or at their club. At any rate, we were both of us new boys, and soon became chummy.”<sup>18</sup>

This arrangement was repeated at the beginning of each term: the two boys, now the best of friends, being accompanied by the two adults. “I sometimes

wondered why they did,” writes Sydney. “It seemed unnecessary, as we were fully capable of travelling unescorted, and did so on the return journey (at the end of term). In the train they used to pay little attention to us, but to be taken up with themselves. At the age I was then, I was innocent enough to draw no inferences from this.”<sup>19</sup>

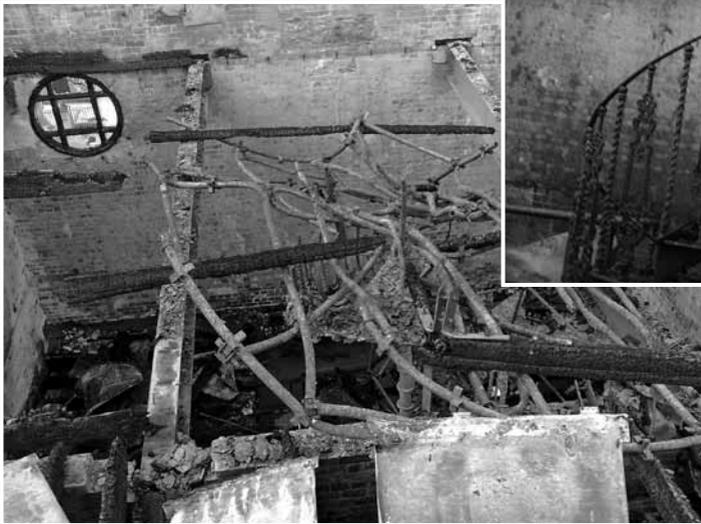
Sydney’s school friend enlightened him: “His father had been down to see him ... and had told him that he must think no more about his mother; that she had gone away and he would never see her again. She had become a bad woman, and he was taking him away from the school because it was my father who had made her bad, and he wished to part his son from the son of that man.”<sup>20</sup>

Sydney had heard nothing of this from home: “Both my parents were still writing, and I hoped for the best. But I did notice that my father’s letters now had his office address on them, while my mother’s were from our home at Elstree.”<sup>21</sup>

At the end of the summer term Sydney returned to Elstree. “At home I found my mother and two younger brothers and was told that I should be seeing my father soon, but that he was now living in London ... My mother had not said a derogatory word of him, and I noticed no change in her appearance or manner. Grown-ups being a law unto themselves, I did not probe into the question of my father’s absence. If he was living in London now, that was his and my mother’s business. It was a grown-ups’ affair altogether. Its effects might be regrettable, but whatever they were they had to be accepted, as one accepts a wet day or a cold in the head. There is always the consciousness of living in a different



*All post-fire damage photos courtesy of Grice, Small & Pettit*





*All restoration  
photos courtesy of  
GVK-Siya Zama*



world from the grown-up; of meeting them only when they stepped on your territory; of never being able to meet them on theirs. When they chose they shut themselves entirely off from you, so that it was impossible to know very much about them. I was a few months past my eleventh birthday.”<sup>22</sup>

The day after his arrival at Elstree Sydney went to London with his elder brother, William, where they met his father. “He was at his office and he took us to lunch, and then out to the Oval where there was a cricket match. He was as unchanged as my mother, and easily the liveliest of our party. For that matter, he was usually the liveliest of any party; but today he was particularly jolly: to have escaped from the office, to see some cricket, and to have us with him. Had I been a little older and known what I knew, I should have thought it all rather mysterious.”<sup>23</sup>

The new school term found Sydney attending Aldenham, a private school near Elstree where his older brother had preceded him. Occasionally their father would visit the two boys and they would go out walking together. One visit stood out in Sydney’s memory: “Our father descended on us and took us in a wagonette to Croxley, where he was staying, in a cottage facing the Green. It was a glorious outing, with green peas and lamb and cherry pie for dinner ... Then, after a happy afternoon, back through the leafy lanes in the summer twilight. That was the last time I saw him for several years.”<sup>24</sup>

“He had gone, we were told, to South Africa and, we, later on, were to follow him. Here was the news, and here was the material for mystery, had I seen it as such.”<sup>25</sup>

“Nine or ten years later I heard the whole story from my older brother – as

much of it, that is, as he could tell me, and as much as I ever heard, for there were puzzling gaps in it. My father had bolted with the lady. It looked, as my brother said, as if he had gone temporarily out of his mind, for after staying a week with her on the Channel Islands, he returned home. Whether they quarrelled, or whether he simply told her that all was over, I never learned.”<sup>26</sup>

“But explanations were necessary, on his part as on the lady’s (their absence not having been accounted for in advance, I suppose) and her husband and my mother then came into possession of certain facts. The immediate sequel was divorce proceedings, instituted by the barrister. The case was fought, and filled, my brother said, columns in the London papers. The husband got his decree. For my father the result was professional ruin, for people then were more particular than they are now, and he was a well-known man. Moreover, although he did not specialise, he did a great deal of domestic architecture. He hung on till he saw that he had no hope of living the scandal down, then decided to go to South Africa, which was booming owing to the discovery of gold there. Almost at once he was on his feet again, and in less than two years had built a comfortable practice and acquired a second reputation. But what he had lost could never, in South Africa, be regained, for he had been on the threshold of a great career.”<sup>27</sup>

Initially Powell and his wife agreed to separate but “it was some time before my mother made up her mind what to do. She had some private means, but not enough to bring up a young family with, and she yielded to my father’s pleadings for reconciliation. But she had taken a hurt which was never quite to heal.”<sup>28</sup> A year after Powell had gone to South

Africa, where he set up an architectural practice in Durban, he was joined by his elder son, William. His wife Anne, together with Sydney and his two younger brothers, Owen and Stewart, followed a year later.<sup>29</sup>

The Powells lived in a house in Ridge Road on the “extreme edge of the Berea, the residential hill suburb”<sup>30</sup> and Sydney attended Durban High School. “With my father and brother I walked of a morning to a bus terminus; and we took first the bus and then a tram for town. I brought my lunch with me and sometimes had it at my father’s office (at 29 Field Street), which was a large block that he had built. His reputation was growing.”<sup>31</sup>

Among the other structures designed by Powell in Durban are the dining hall in the Durban Club (1890); the public baths in Field Street (1891) and Durban Boys High School (1894). In Pietermaritzburg he designed the Victoria Club in Langalibalele (Longmarket) Street (1895), the Victoria Hall at Maritzburg College (1897), and the Colonial Building in Church Street (1895-1901).

A competition for the design of the Colonial Building in Church Street was announced on 18 July 1894, the prize for the winning design was £100. Powell won the competition in February 1895 and was subsequently appointed architect at a fee of £33 953. Edward Gwinnett Bompas was named Resident Clerk of Works to oversee the construction. The building was required to house the staff and records of the Deeds Office, Surveyor General and Audit Department.

Construction did not go smoothly. On 16 April 1896, Powell wrote to J. Barnes, Engineer: Public Works Department, requesting the removal of Bompas, citing several reasons,

including Bompas “not keeping the same hours as the men, being scarcely ever on the scaffold, being employed by the government on other work, [and] undertaking private work”.<sup>32</sup> He also noted that Bompas’s age rendered him “unfit for the arduous task entailed by a full performance of the duties attached to his office”.<sup>33</sup>

By January 1897 the situation had not been remedied and Powell wrote again to Barnes pointing out that Bompas’s inadequacy was “due to his advancing years and the decline of those powers so essential to the holder of such a position”.<sup>34</sup> Powell detailed several errors in construction that had required to be rectified due to Bompas’s poor performance, as well as “serious mistakes made in the setting out of the main front of Block A involving the pulling-down and re-erection of a considerable portion of the work now done”.<sup>35</sup> Bompas was relieved of his duties and appointed to a post in the drawing office of the Public Works Department and a Mr Farley appointed Clerk of Works.

The foundation stone was laid on March 23, 1897, by the Governor of Natal, Sir W. Hely-Hutchinson. Shortly afterwards the masons went on strike and a long debate began about the necessary fire precautions for the building and the type of hydraulic systems required for the provision of water. In a letter of 16 July 1897, Powell noted that “urinal accommodation in the Colonial Secretary’s lavatory [was] likely to prove a nuisance [as] the pressure of water supply on the upper floor is extremely poor and anything but an automatic constant discharge of water would have no chance of keeping the place sweet”.<sup>36</sup>

As sections of the building were finished civil servants took up residence

and the debate about fire precautions continued. On 20 July 1899, Powell wrote a detailed letter “regarding the fire-resisting construction of these buildings, particularly referring to the Deeds, Surveyor General’s, and Audit Departments”.<sup>37</sup>

Powell described how the design incorporated fire resistant features including “solid concrete floors covered with wood blocks, iron and concrete ceilings, and thick walls”.<sup>38</sup> He also had advised that “no wooden fittings should be used” in these departments and that the desks “should be made of cast iron standards, sheet iron desk tops, covered with a veneer of wood for the sake of comfort”.<sup>39</sup>

During construction Powell had further “urged the government to render this building less liable to take fire by the erection of outside iron shutters to the windows of the departments above referred to. We also recommended the government erect fire-resisting doors across the corridors, dividing the three blocks, which, if closed, would prevent these long corridors becoming the means of communication by fire from one block to another.”<sup>40</sup>

Powell had also suggested installing a system of hydrants. “We submitted an entire scheme for fire-extinguishing appliances throughout the building, with plans from ourselves and estimates from responsible persons.”<sup>41</sup> The government had responded saying there was insufficient water pressure to operate hydrants, to which Powell had countered that he be allowed to “insert these hydrants, so that as soon as pressure was obtainable, they could be made use of”.<sup>42</sup> In the meantime Powell advised, “as an alternative measure, we should be allowed to erect tanks within the roofs of the blocks, capable of holding from

10 000 to 20 000 gallons of water, which would be supplied by pumping water from the mains, and available for any emergency”.<sup>43</sup>

In the final paragraph “although not within our province” Powell drew attention to “the practice followed by the civil servants of smoking in the building, having in regard the quantity of inflammable material. It is hoped that in mentioning this subject, it will be understood that our intention is solely the preservation of the building.”<sup>44</sup>

The Colonial Building was completed in 1901 but Powell did not live to see it. His son Sydney records: “my father’s health had been failing for some time past and in 1900 he died – in his fiftieth year.”<sup>45</sup>

During construction it was decided to add another floor to the building but when this decision was taken Powell was already too ill to work. Consequently this floor, the domed top storey, was designed by his son, William, who had joined his father’s practice as junior partner.

Following Powell’s death his widow, Anne, returned to England – “my mother had never liked Natal: the climate did not suit her (and as much as my father liked it, I doubt if it suited his constitution) and she took the two youngest boys back with her to England.”<sup>46</sup>

Sydney’s elder brother, William, continued the Powell architectural practice in Durban, at least until 1903. He was a founder member of the Natal Institute of Architects established in 1902 but his name disappears from the *Natal Almanac* after 1904 and there is no further record of him in South Africa.

However Sydney remained in South Africa and saw service in the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). Sydney also intended to become an architect but dur-

ing his teens he had a stormy relationship with his father and when he was due to be articled to his father, as had been his brother William, “my father told me that he feared we were too much alike in character – by which he meant too self-willed, I think – to pull together in the same office”. Powell refused to be articled to another architect: “This was not from filial affection ... but because I knew that as an architect he had no equal in South Africa.”<sup>247</sup>

Powell then decided to try for an exhibition to gain entrance to university at Oxford in England but this plan came to an end due to problems at school, which led to a violent quarrel with his father. In the meantime, Powell had begun writing. A sonnet was published in the London magazine, *Temple Bar*. Powell’s father was so proud he had copies of the sonnet printed and handed them out to his friends at the Durban Club. “It was a happy incident,” says Powell, “and I can’t remember that we ever quarrelled afterwards.”<sup>248</sup>

Powell finally embarked on a career in the civil service with the help of his father – “[he] knew something about it, for he was engaged in building the new offices at Pietermaritzburg, the capital”.<sup>49</sup> Powell found the work boring but kept at his writing. He saw the advent of the Anglo-Boer War as an opportunity to break “through my confines, if I could find a way of utilising it”.<sup>50</sup> He knew someone in the Public Works Department “who had been granted leave to organise an Indian ambulance corps, and he wanted leaders for it. He said he would take me if I could get leave. I applied for it and got it.”<sup>51</sup>

Powell served with the ambulance corps in the campaign to relieve Ladysmith. “The poorly nourished Indian bearers suffered greatly,” he noted, “but

a young Indian barrister pulled them through. He was one of our leaders, and he took my attention at once by his gentle, bright manner, his aliveness, and his complete unselfishness. His name was Gandhi. I met him afterwards in Durban, and – believe it or not – we had a drink together. In a public bar.”<sup>52</sup>

When Ladysmith was relieved, the corps was disbanded and Powell joined a mounted irregular corps but when they were not sent to the front he resigned.

According to Powell’s nephew, Geoffrey Powell, in his introduction to a reprint of his uncle’s memoir *Adventures of a Wanderer*, during the war Powell “contributed to a Durban paper and he also wrote the first guide book to Durban”.<sup>53</sup>

Powell’s wanderings took him to Southern Rhodesia, Australia, Tahiti and New Zealand. During World War I he was severely wounded at Gallipoli, later marrying his nurse, Margaret. They settled in Australia, where he made a living writing novels for the railway book-stall trade. With a small legacy they bought an isolated cottage in the Blue Mountains where their nearest neighbours were Norman Lindsay, the artist and writer, and his wife. In 1925 Powell decided to move to England to further his literary career. He died there in 1952. During his lifetime he published 15 novels, two volumes of memoirs and a collection of verse.

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After its completion the Colonial Building had a chequered history. In 1910, when South Africa was declared a union, Pretoria became the country’s administrative capital and the building then became the headquarters of the provincial government which subsequently moved to premises in Pieterma-

ritz Street and in the 1970s to Natalia in Langalibalele (Longmarket) Street. The Deeds Office and the Surveyor General's Office remained in the Colonial Buildings before moving to their current premises in Pietermaritz Street.

Though the Colonial Building was a declared a national monument in 1991 its future remained uncertain. "For a while the administration and research staff of the Natal Museum occupied the building while the top floor of the museum ... was being constructed, then it was the turn of the Small Claims Court." Thereafter, from 1997, the Colonial Buildings stood "empty and neglected".<sup>54</sup>

By 2004 the "the sturdy outer facade hid a death trap of collapsing ceilings, wobbly floorboards eaten by woodborers and, in parts, large gaping holes where the floors had simply caved in and where structures like fireplaces had been removed."<sup>55</sup> The deserted building had also attracted the attention of vandals and thieves. "In 1998 the KwaZulu-Heritage Council discovered that thieves had removed all the copper flat-roof sheeting from the roof, allowing the rain to pour into the building. The entire security system had been removed as well as the cast aluminium staircase capping, two tons of lead lining from the toilets and all the cast iron Victorian fireplace hearths."<sup>56</sup>

Over the years various uses for the building were proposed to the city council. "In 1989, the Security Police wanted to use the building as their headquarters but this was opposed by council and the City Residents' and Ratepayers' Association. There was a furore in 1988 when the Department of Justice decided to use the building as the magistrate's court. A high-powered delegation from council flew to Pretoria

to protest that the movement of prisoner and police vehicles would detract from the ambience of Church Street, which had just been pedestrianised. One of the proposals that council was considering was the conversion of the building into an 'upmarket colonial hotel of national importance'. Following a visit by then minister of justice, Kobie Coetsee, plans to use the building as a magistrate's court were put on hold."<sup>57</sup>

"By 1990 there was talk that the building would be sold and in 1992 it was put up for sale, but there were no takers. Former city mayor, the late Pam Reid, along with a group of arts enthusiasts, had made a bid in the eighties to have the building converted into a theatre and opera house complex. Plans were drawn by architect Gordon Small and the cost of the conversion at the time was one million rands. Reid was upset that the scheme was shelved until it finally sank without trace."<sup>58</sup>

Finally, in 2004, plans were announced for the restoration and refurbishment of the building and a project team was appointed by the national Department of Public Works to restore it while also being sensitive to the needs of the new tenants, the Master of the High Court and Justice Department, and architect Nick Grice was appointed project leader. Once his designs and drawings were complete the documentation was handed over to the Department of Public Works who put the project out to tender in 2006.

A tender was subsequently awarded to G. Liviera and Sons but in May 2007 an interim order from the Durban High Court put a hold on matters pending a review and appeal against the decision by the Department of Public Works. This was the result of GVK-Siya Zama having taken legal action over the

awarding of the tender to G. Liviera and Sons. The Durban High Court judgment found in their favour and the site was handed over to GVK-Siya Zama on 25 June 2008 and work began. It was estimated it would take two years to complete the restoration.

Almost exactly a year later the dramatic fire brought restoration to a halt. In July 2009 investigations “revealed that the fire that damaged the Colonial Building was started by a workman’s blowtorch igniting bitumen as he worked on the roof”.<sup>59</sup> But, as noted above, the damage was not as bad as first thought; the restoration resumed and was completed in February 2011. According to a “fact sheet” issued by GVK-Siya Zama at the time, the project included complete refurbishment, renovation, rehabilitation, and waterproofing of the existing building. “Parts of the roof were replaced and re-waterproofed; in most cases this was done using applications such as lead, as it would have been when the building was originally built.”

The interior of the building had required especial attention. “Ceilings and timber floors were replaced; as well as all electrical reticulation and plumbing. A new air-conditioning system was installed, along with extensive steel shelving and archive rooms, all in line with the requirements of the new tenants, the Master of the High Court and Justice Department.” “Where possible, original materials were re-used, where this was not possible, elements were replaced using similar materials as close as possible to the original.”

At a function to mark this event Grice said it had been a “privilege to be able to work on a building of this nature” and he paid tribute to William Henry Powell for his “marvellous control in

conceiving and designing a building like this in the first place”.<sup>60</sup>

#### NOTES

- 1 “Reader snaps the perfect picture”, Kavith Harrilal, *Weekend Witness*, p.7. 13 June 2009.
- 2 “Landmark building gutted”, Sandile Waka-Zamisa, *Weekend Witness*, p.3, 13 June 2009.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 “The history of a city icon”, Sharon Dell, p.4, *Weekend Witness*, 12 June 2009.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Letter from W.H. Powell to J.F.E. Barnes, 20 July 1897, Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, Vol. PWD2/22, PWD1267/1899.
- 9 “T-Rex clears up fire debris”, Angelo C. Louw, p.4, *The Witness*, 16 June, 2009.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 The unpublished manuscript is titled *Each To His Taste – An Autobiography by Sydney Powell*. A photocopy of a section of this manuscript was sent to the author by Sydney Powell’s nephew, the late Geoffrey Powell in 2003 and provided the basis for the article “A Victorian Affair” published in *The Witness* on 29 July 2004 of which this article is a much revised and enlarged version. The original manuscript, as well as books and other material relating to Sydney Powell, was donated to the National Library of Australia in 2003 by Geoffrey Powell where they are held as Papers of Sydney Powell, Bid ID 3646265. *Each To His Taste* is thought to have been written about 1942 and is a sequel to the earlier *Adventures of a Wanderer* published in 1928.
- 13 *Each To His Taste* MS, p.1.
- 14 [www.artefacts.co.za/main/Buildings/arch\\_bottom\\_left.php?archid=1302](http://www.artefacts.co.za/main/Buildings/arch_bottom_left.php?archid=1302). Consulted 16 July 2012. According to this website an example of Powell’s work in London was “illustrated in *Academy Architecture* (1899:6): a house, No 34 Grosvenor Square in the fashionable Free Renaissance style.”
- 15 *Each To His Taste* MS, p.3.
- 16 Ibid., pp.3-4.
- 17 Ibid., p.2.
- 18 Ibid., p.5.
- 19 Ibid., pp. 8-9.
- 20 Ibid., p.9.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Ibid., pp.9-10.
- 23 Ibid., pp.10-11.
- 24 Ibid., p.15.
- 25 Ibid., pp.15-16.

- 26 Ibid., p.16.  
27 Ibid., pp.16-17.  
28 Ibid., p.17.  
29 In his introduction to the 1986 edition of Sydney Powell's *Adventures of a Wanderer* (see note 53) Geoffrey Powell states that a fifth son was born in Durban (p.vi). However there is no mention of this son in the *Each To His Taste* manuscript. Complicating matters, in my article "A Victorian Affair" published in *The Witness* on 29 July 2004 it states "Another son, Norman, was born in Durban." I can find no mention of Norman in my correspondence with Geoffrey Powell and am unable to find a source for "Norman". Perhaps the name was mentioned in a telephone conversation.  
30 Ibid., p.23.  
31 Ibid.  
32 Letter to J. Barnes from W.H. Powell, Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, PWD 2/20, PWD1590/1896.  
33 Ibid.  
34 Letter to J. Barnes from W.H. Powell dated 25 January 1897, Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, PWD 2/29, PWD242/1897.  
35 Ibid. Powell had more success with his recommendation that marble be used for the stairway from the entrance hall. The cost was £660 as opposed to £480 for stone. J. Barnes, Engineer, Public Works Department considered the longevity of marble justified the extra expense.  
36 Letter from W.H. Powell to J. Barnes, 20 July 1897, Pietermaritzburg Archives Repository, Vol. PWD2/22, PWD1267/1899.  
37 Ibid.  
38 Ibid.  
39 Ibid.  
40 Ibid.  
41 Ibid.  
42 Ibid.  
43 Ibid.  
44 Ibid.  
45 *Each To His Taste* MS, p.52.  
46 Ibid.  
47 Ibid., p.36.  
48 Ibid., p.37.  
49 Ibid.p.38.  
50 Ibid., p.50.  
51 Ibid.  
52 Ibid., pp.50-51.  
53 *Adventures of a Wanderer*, Sydney Powell, first published by Jonathan Cape 1928. This quotation is from Geoffrey Powell's introduction to the 1986 edition published by Hutchinson, p.x. Geoffrey Powell (1914-2005), soldier, author and historian, was the only child of Owen Powell, the son of the architect William Powell, and his wife Kitty. During World War Two while serving with the 1st Airborne Division he took part in the battle of Arnhem in September 1944 where he won a Military Cross. After the war Powell served in Java, Malaya, Kenya and Cyprus. He transferred to the Civil Service and for 12 years worked for MI5, on security policy and counter-espionage. On leaving MI5 in 1977, he founded the Campden Bookshop in Chipping Campden and also helped to establish the Campden and District Archaeological and History Society. Among his books are *The Kandyan Wars: The British Conquest of Ceylon* (1973), *Men at Arnhem* (1976) and *Suez: The Double War* (in collaboration with Roy Fullick)(1979); *Plumer: The Soldiers' General* (1990) and *Buller: A Scapegoat?* (1994).  
54 "New lease brings new life", Nalini Naidoo, *The Witness*, 28 July 2004, p.9.  
55 Ibid.  
56 Ibid.  
57 Ibid.  
58 Ibid.  
59 "Blowtorch sparked Colonial inferno", Angelo C. Louw, p.4, *The Witness*, 3 July 2009.  
60 "Restoration: work on city's Colonial Building almost complete", p.3, *The Witness*, 23 February 2011.