

THE HISTORY OF THE JABOT

– RAVENSDALE COURT TAILORS

– BRUCE WALMSLEY S.C.

On Thursday 30 May 2013, our very own [Henry Jolson OAM QC](#) presented to the Victorian Bar, through the Bar Council, a framed prototype jabot, which he had designed through *Ravensdale Court Tailors*. It was registered at the Register of Designs on 17 November 1988, and for a number of years thereafter until the mid 90's.

Ravensdale Court Tailors, for those on the list who weren't around at that time, opened in 1986 as a provider, as the name suggests, of all Court dress requirements, and it additionally positioned itself as the Bar's own Henry Bucks.

It was built in the space currently occupied by barristers' clerk, Ricky Howells, and before him, Peter Roberts, and was the street-scape from the very early days of Owen Dixon Chambers West, from 1986 to its closure in 1994.

It was inspired by Henry's desire to avoid the retirement of the third generation of Court Tailors in this town,

J. Ravensdale and Son, who coincidentally, and conveniently, resonated with Eade and Ravenscroft, who had operated out of London for 300 years. The idea was for the bar to have its own court tailor. That inspiration led your Editor to join Henry in the venture. We were its proprietors, although both busily in practice as barristers.

When the Family Court of Australia discovered the dangers of operating a Court, likely to arouse personal passions, on a relatively casual, informal basis, where the hapless, unsuccessful litigant could very easily both blame and identify the 'undressed' Judge, sitting a few metres away, it came to Ravensdale, who dressed it formally for the first time in 1988, wigs included. (We seem to be slowly moving away from the entire ensemble, generated as long ago as the trial and execution of King Charles 1 in 1648, and spread throughout the British Empire in the Halls of Justice ever since, with some courts today recognising, and providing helpful lists of judges who either wear or do



Photos: (left) [Henry Jolson OAM, Q.C.](#), John Kelly and [Bruce Walmsley S.C.](#); (right) the jabot

FOLEY'S LIST

not wear wigs, with encouragement to those who appear before them to follow the lead. Moving, but moving ever so slowly – Editor)

At about the same time as reform in the Family Court, Ravensdale helped design, and provided, the simplistic, all covering robes worn by the members of the High Court of Australia.

Getting back to the Jabot; barristers dressed for Court in the decades leading to the late 80's were in transition from the traditional two-stud connected, starched, winged collars, to a collarless shirt, with added bands-tied bib, to an assortment of covers, some of which resembled an enthusiastic, but cautious, diner, using a serviette to cover the danger area, to the more romantic image of 'the bunch of lace at his throat' immortalized in The Highwayman.

It was an ambitious technical task to replicate the look of the wing collar protrusion, in combination with the bands apparently dangling from the tied bib, in the cotton, washable and velcro-fastened end-product. We had a great deal of help. We got it to work, and it is now the staple wear for barristers, solicitors, Judges and associates throughout Australia.

A small but important part of the contribution of the Victorian Bar, through its proud members, to what we now like to call our profession of Australian Lawyers.

Well done Henry.

- *Bruce Walmsley S.C.*
Editor

