ONE ROOM, 220 YEARS OF STORIES

Minister for Lands, Tony Kelly, speaking today at the Bridge St plan room, called a new book about the settlement of the NSW, a significant landmark publication for the state.

Mr Kelly said that ‘Jewels in the Crown – the history of the Bridge Street Plan Room and Crown Plans 1788-2008’, offers a unique glimpse into the rich history of European settlement in this country.

“The book is based around the Department of Lands’ Bridge Street plan room which houses a collection of nearly a million original NSW Crown plans recording property information dating back to the first Crown land grant to James Ruse in 1792.

“It is one of the largest and most significant collections of survey plans in Australia featuring such highlights as the original plans of the Great Western Road over the Blue Mountains, described by the Sydney Herald in 1833 as “the most magnificent and stupendous piece of work known in the annals of road making”.

“It is the first time the room’s rich historical records and stories have been made available to the general public.

“The book showcases the skill of surveying and drafting of the time including anecdotes such as the test of a good draftsperson, which was said to be their ability to legibly write the Lord’s Prayer on the back of a postage stamp.

“It also documents the history and construction of the Lands building as one of Sydney’s most outstanding examples of Victorian architecture, also touching on the legend of the ghosts who are rumoured to walk the corridors.

“Great figures of colonial exploration including Mitchell, Oxley, Evans and Meehan, who all contributed to the plan room and its legacy, are also captured within the pages of the historic book.

Mr Kelly said the book will be distributed to the National Library, the State Library and the Powerhouse Museum to ensure ongoing access for all of the community.

“The plans have been progressively converted to digital format for online access ensuring they are protected and preserved for future generations of Australians.

“The original copies will be held by State Records for permanent archiving”, Mr Kelly said.

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