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Propellor Park

by Kath Hamey



Propellor Park. Pic courtesy Duncan McAuslan

A question has arisen concerning the origin of the two propellers which may be seen on the foreshore of Mort Bay in Balmain. They are a pair and are marked 'Shaw Savill' with the name *Cedric*. Both are mounted on concrete bases and are situated on a small reserve next to the tug wharf, the area variously being known as Gilchrist Place or Chatman's Slipway.

Shaw Savill was a shipping company whose activities date back to 1858 when two young men,

Robert Ewart Shaw and Walter Savill, set up business in London as Shaw, Savill and Co and, the beginning, had close links with the early development of New Zealand.

The end of the Second World War saw a further expansion in the number of ships in the fleet and in 1952 the first of a new series of five sisterships, known as the C class was delivered.

The five C Class ships were the *Cedric*, *Cymric*, *Canopia*, *Cretic* and *Carnatic*. The *Cedric* was built by

Harland and Wolff in Belfast. She was the 25th ship that they had built over the years for the company *Cedric* was a 10,189 tonne steel hull ship. She had three decks with a part fourth deck and was powered by twin six cylinder Harland and Wolff Burmeister and Wain single acting opposed piston diesel engines. Her service speed was 32.4 kilometres per hour.

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Neighbours



I have lived in Wharf Road for 40 years this year! In that time there have been many changes – saving the impressive marine villa, ‘Wyoming’; getting Wharf Road listed on the National Estate (sadly this no longer exists!) and a Development Control Plan specifically for Wharf Road to limit over development and subdivisions, and the development of the wonderful Ballast Point Park, to mention some important changes.

In a small way my changing neighbours are a snapshot of how the demographics of Balmain have also changed over the past 40 years.

We bought our lovely old sandstone house in 1982. At that time the house to the east of us was rented by a group of writers - with a small marijuana garden evident from our place. The house to the west was owned by a real estate agent called Alan.

Eventually the house to the east was sold to a real estate agent called Bruce so we had two real estate agents, one on each side of us.

When Alan moved across the road, the house to the west was sold to a barrister called Bruce. So we went from two real estate agents to two Bruces!

When Bruce, the real estate agent sold, Ruth, the barrister moved in. So now we have two barristers. They both still live there and they have been good neighbours for many years.

By Di Garder

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Covid 19 update

Please note that art exhibitions and other events mentioned in this newsletter will be subject to any Covid 19 restrictions that may apply at the time.

From the archives

by Helen Carter

*Death by Demolition -
the lost houses of Balmain*

In 2019 I attended the Glebe Society's exhibition *Villas – Glebe & Forest Lodge pre 1870* at The Tramsheds, celebrating its 50 years (1969-2019) as a community

focus would be on demolished houses in the modern suburbs of Balmain, Birchgrove and Rozelle. During COVID I began to make a list of houses and every day I walked the streets of Balmain with the Balmain Association's publication *Streets, Lanes and Places (SL&P)* in hand to make sure that the houses had disappeared and often the 'red brick flats' were an indication that something had been demolished. Included are villas, cottages and sheds made



'Nutshell Cottage', East Balmain

organisation.

I took home the interesting and beautifully produced booklet that accompanied the exhibition and almost immediately the seeds were planted in my mind to put together a similar booklet for the Balmain area.

Rather than include a few 'marine villas' of the *Balmaine estate* my

of weatherboard, stone and tin. Using photographs (often with their owners outside), drawings and plans these houses are brought back to life and will contribute to a much needed record of this area. My suggestion to produce a book for the Balmain Association was welcomed and I recruited Ray Stevens, a local heritage architect

to join me. A Royal Australian Historical Society grant will help with the cost of its publication and once completed it will complement *SL&P*.

This publication is not produced as an academic work to be scrutinised and criticised but as a book to share the history of 'real estate' in this very early suburb, a snapshot of those who built and/or lived in many of these once loved houses. It is also intended to encourage present owners and visitors to this rare early Balmain area to safeguard what has made it unique – its heritage buildings, its community spirit and its history. Watch this space for notification of the book's launch to be held at the Balmain Watch House - one of the early sandstone buildings saved by community action.



Ravenscourt by Di Garder

The wonderful Italianate mansion on Wharf Road has been painstakingly restored to its original grandeur of the 1880s.

Originally built as a Georgian villa on the waterfront circa 1860, it was developed into the magnificent Italian mansion in the 1880s with the addition of a tower, accessed by an iron spiral staircase and a wide veranda across the front with an ornate cast iron balustrade.

The restoration, which was based on original documents, took over two years.

The owners are nominating the project for the annual National Trust Heritage Awards in the Conservation – Built Heritage category.

This nomination is being supported by the Balmain Association.



Propellor Park Continued from page 1

She had a well-raked stem, cruiser stern, two masts and an oval funnel. There were six

together with packed and unpacked motorcars. On the return voyage the ship carried refrigerated meat, dairy produce, fruit, and general cargo. But after 20 years of hard work she began to show

sailed for Kaohsiung in Taiwan and was scrapped.

The name *Cedric* was an invention of Sir Walter Scott for a character in his novel *Ivanhoe* (1825) which had a Saxon setting.



Pic: Propellor Park 1943 Six maps

hatches served by 22 derricks and accommodation was arranged midships. Her maiden voyage was from London to New Zealand calling at Kingston (for a load of oranges) and Curacao for bunkering.

On normal service *Cedric* made two round trips a year. The route was Antwerp, Rotterdam, London, Las Palmas, Capetown, Fremantle, Geelong, Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Albany, Fremantle, Aden, Suez, Port Said, Hull, Antwerp and London, a total of some 42,715Km.

Outward general cargo comprised machinery, textiles, cement, newsprint, linoleum, and chemicals

her age, and with the advent of containerisation was becoming less suited to the needs of the day. On one occasion while the ship was at Auckland it was noticed that the derricks were badly corroded and that her general state resembled that of a red-rusted hulk. It was also said that conditions on board could be summed up by the message on a T-shirt issued to the crew bearing the legend:

‘When I die I know I’m going to heaven,

I’ve served my time in hell

MV *Cedric* 1974

in November 1976 the 24-year-old ship was sold to Fife Shipping limited of Panama and renamed the *Sea Condor*. The next year she

As was usual with ships of this kind spare propellers were kept in bond at a regular port of call in case of need. Many such propellers, tail shafts, anchors and anchor cables were stored at various places in the Sydney docks including Woolwich, Chapmans, Cockatoo Island and Greenwich, though there was no cranage so that only small propellers could be handled during the war. Gun barrels were also held in these and other storage areas.

On looking more closely at the two propellers under consideration it is clear that they had been spares for the *Cedric* or one of the other C Class ships for use as required. The point is confirmed on noticing that

they are made, not of manganese bronze, a corrosion resistant alloy, as was usual by 1952, but of cast iron. It is also clear that they have been used since the blade tips are chipped. No doubt they were fitted in an emergency as a 'get you home' facility until the next refit when new propellers could replace them.

The identification on the boss of each propeller indicates it is 17 feet 9 inches in diameter, mean pitch 16.6°, and surface development 109 feet.

The shaft cavity has been filled with concrete and the cone is not fitted.

of Duke Street at one time could be found Mrs White who had a slipway for small boats and there was also a canvas supplier named West.

With the advent of containerisation, the Mort Bay maritime scene changed. A terminal was constructed at Mort's Dock which caused traffic problems Balmain's narrow streets. The result was that in 1979 the terminals transferred to Port Botany and most of the docks activity came to an end.

Cedric's propellers, condemned, worth nothing as scrap and their

from Darling Street to the water with private housing. Controversy relating to this continued for some time but a reasonable compromise was reached. The result is that harbourside houses look down on a small waterfront reserve which is maintained by the council. *Cedric's* propellers remain in place on their ready-made bases.

Today these two propellers whether viewed from the foreshore or from a boat on the harbour serve as an appropriate reminder about Balmain's historic maritime past.



The Cedric

It might be supposed that the concrete bases were put down specially to mount the propellers, but this does not appear to be the case.

This waterfront area had for many years been occupied by various docks and workshops. Next to the present tug wharf was Chapman's slipway, then Rowntree's Dock and, beyond by Gilchrist Place, was waste ground known as the cane fields. This was a place for children to play in and also became a dump for rubbish. Beyond the bottom

owners no longer in business became relics and were abandoned on site. One remained, where it had at some stage been placed on an old timber crane brace and the other on the site of an old office building. Along with them there remained on one side of the *Cedric's* propellers, an old cast iron propeller 10 feet in diameter but which bears no visible markings and the other side is a large gear wheel.

Developers acquired the site and were keen to cover the whole area

The Balmain Cemetery, Leichhardt

by Max Solling

In the mid 1860s very little burial ground remained near the City of Sydney. In 1861 the population of Sydney had grown to 56,840 while the aggregate population of Newtown, Redfern, Glebe, Balmain and Paddington, the five largest residential distances ringing the City, was 18,096.

As immigrants from the British Isles rapidly increased the number of urban dwellers, James Combes, Alexander Brown, and Francis William and Barbara Patten, quick to realise the profits that could be made selling off small portions of land to those wishing to bury their dead formed the Balmain Cemetery Company. The Company purchased an area of almost 11 acres in Leichhardt, today bounded by William Street to the north, Derbyshire Road to the east, Norton Street to the west and Allen Street to the south and on 26 January 1868 the first burial in Balmain Cemetery took place.

When some 44 years later in May 1912 the cemetery was closed to further burials, 10,608 persons were buried in the cemetery. In February 1886 the Balmain Cemetery Company transferred the cemetery grounds to Leichhardt Municipal Council and the cemetery remained the Council's responsibility until 1941. In 1941 the *Old Balmain (Leichhardt) Cemetery Act* dedicated Balmain Cemetery as a public park. The Council of the Municipality of Leichhardt was appointed trustees of the park and was required under the Act to maintain it as a rest park and garden area. It is now known as Pioneers Memorial Park,

Leichhardt.

Before any headstones, grave enclosures or other surface structures could be removed, Council had to advertise their intention to remove these objects in local newspapers, which, in effect, gave a relative or friend of any person buried in the cemetery sufficient time to remove the headstone or grave enclosure at their own expense, and with the permission of the Department of Public Health, they could also remove the remains of that person and have them reinterred in a cemetery they desired. In fact on the demolition of Balmain Cemetery only 16 tombstones were removed to other cemeteries.

As far as genealogists were concerned the Act had serious limitations in that it only required Council to compile an index and plan and register of names of persons buried in the cemetery. Since Balmain Cemetery was the major burial ground established within what is now Leichhardt Municipality, from the point of view of the historian interested in individuals who lived and died in this district prior to the First World War the destruction of all the genealogical and historical information, which the inscriptions on the tombstones and monuments revealed is a tragedy.

However one can ascertain from the Burial Register kept at Leichhardt Town Hall, the name of any person buried in Balmain Cemetery, their denomination, age, last residence and in a number of instances, their occupation.

For the past two years the History Sub-Committee of the Glebe Society has built up an extensive biographical register of individuals who made some contribution to the development of Glebe and its neighbouring suburbs during the Victorian and Edwardian periods. An important part of this project was to have the Burial Register, the only documentary evidence of those buried in Balmain Cemetery, photocopied. When an index of the register is completed in 1973 this will be presented to the Society of Australian Genealogists.

Perusal of the register reveals a strikingly high infant mortality rate, particularly between 1870 and 1890 and although it was a general cemetery, most of the people buried there were Anglican.

The tombstone of famous architect Edmund Blacket and his wife Sarah together with 14 other monuments were moved to Camperdown Cemetery in 1941 by genealogist Percy Gledhill. The remains of Blacket and his wife were removed and cremated and the ashes buried in St Andrews Cathedral, Sydney. The tombstone of merchant and politician Robert Towns, after whom Townsville was named, was removed to Townsville at the request of Townsville City Council. All the remaining tombstones were "disposed of at the discretion of the Council".

Apart from Blacket and Towns the bodies of a number of notable people during Sydney's Victorian era are buried in Pioneers Memorial Park. Professor Morris Birkbeck Pell, professor of mathematics and

natural philosophy at the University of Sydney from 1852 to 1877, surveyor and architect Ferdinand Hamilton Reuss junior, who planned the layout of Annandale, Glebe Alderman and founder of the Fitzroy Iron Works, Thomas Tipple Smith, merchant and master mariner William Salmon Deloitte, Captain Thomas Stephenson Rowntree of Northumberland House, Balmain, Colonel Bruce of Stanmore and Reverend John Pendrill, principal of the Glebe Grammar School “regarded as a favourite for gentlemen’s sons”. Others buried in the cemetery are the controversial Canon Thomas Smith, minister at St Barnabas’s, Broadway and Stephen Campbell Brown, MLA for Newtown from 1864 to 1881.

Biographical research currently being undertaken on a large number of individuals reveals that prior to 1890 many of the residents who once lived within what is now Leichhardt Municipality were buried at Devonshire Street Cemetery, closed in 1901 to make way for Central Railway Station, Camperdown Church of England Cemetery, closed in 1950 and St Thomas Catholic Cemetery Lewisham, closed in 1884 although burials in this cemetery continued until 1925.

After 1890 it would appear that the two main burial grounds for the district’s inhabitants were Rookwood General Cemetery opened in 1868 and Waverley General Cemetery opened in 1877, both of which are still in use.

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What’s on at the Watch House

Please check the Balmain Association website www.balmainassociation.org.au for up-to-date information on art exhibitions.



Celebrating the National Trust Heritage Festival 2022

The History Group of the Balmain Association will be presenting an extensive collection of objects from our collection for the National Trust Heritage Festival. Some of the items are from the period when the Watch House was still a lockup.

There will be original handcuffs, police batons and the sergeant stripes from Sergeant Ira Gray, the last policeman to stay in the Watch House.

There will also be a number of items displayed that were found when the local community was involved in renewing the garden.

Our exhibition will be on every Tuesday, 11am to 1pm and Saturday, 11am to 3pm from 16 April to 14 May. We hope to see you there.

What's on at the Watch House

Sophie and Jane Witter are sisters. Sophie is a painter from Tasmania, who recently had a successful solo exhibition in Hobart, while Jane lives in Sydney and works with reclaimed textiles. They share a vision about the importance of creativity and beauty in our everyday



lives. Their exhibition **Play it by Ear** on 21 and 22 May is a celebration of the feminine gaze and the struggle to carve art out of the demands of the domestic space. Please join them for some bubbles at their opening night. Instagram accounts witterjane and wittersophie.

ExtraTexture, a small group of textile and mixed media artists is excited to return to the Watch House with its new exhibition. **Connection** explores the relationship we have with each other, with colour and texture, with place and time but also highlights the diversity with which we approach a common theme. Apart from their individual work, the five artists have three collaborative works on display. The first 'Burano' celebrates their diversity as each have interpreted a photograph taken by one of the members of the island of Burano in the Venice lagoon. 'Rainbow' is a spectacular celebration of their commitment to colour and texture and will have pride of place in the Charge Room. The third collaboration is an installation in the Exercise Yard where visitors can immerse themselves in 'Snippets of Time'. Instagram @extratexture_textile_art Facebook: extraTexture Textile Artists



The Balmain Association Inc. representing Balmain, Birchgrove and Rozelle

Since 1965 we aimed to:

- Improve the living, working and recreational amenities of our area
- maintain all features having natural, architectural and or historical value of the area and keep a permanent collection of historical interest
- seek the cooperation of everyone concerned in the realisation of the above.

Members are welcome to attend the Balmain Association meetings at 6pm on the first Wednesday of each month at the Watch House, 179 Darling Street Balmain. The History Room at the Watch House is open every Saturday from 11:30am to 3pm and every Tuesday from 11am to 1pm.

Website: www.balmainassociation.org.au

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