



the balmain association



"Clontarf" as National Trust architect
David Sheedy has "restored" it

"CLONTARF" 6 Wallace Street, Balmain

When a certain reputable Balmain alderman recently tried to win votes and influence ratepayers by asking "Hey, Mister Mayor, can anyone tell me the name of the architect who built "Clontarf"? I suggest he should have been jailed for despoiling the area", he certainly raised a question that has been a long-running puzzle in the crossword of Balmain's history.

"Clontarf" for some time has been under the historian's microscope and certain, though minute, details of ownerships and tenancies have come into focus. No certain evidence of the architect's identity has come to light as yet.

By examining the "details" within the context of the times, however, a glimpse of the answer to our respected local representative's question can be observed.

Following a purchase of 8 acres of land (bounded by Darling Street, Adolphus Street, Ewanton Lane and the waterfront), on 7 August 1837, Robert Blake built nine cottages as a speculative venture. The buildings were Mount Shamrock (1837), Moorefield (1839), Wallscourt Lodge (1840), Clontarf (1844), an unnamed cottage (1844), Mary Villa (1845), two more unnamed cottages (1845) and Shannon Grove (1848).

Blake, the New South Wales Under Sheriff, kept Mount Shamrock to himself and leased the other cottages. By 1853, he had built Kinvarra, Eyreville and Wrenvale thus increasing the value of his holding which was then valued at £25,000.

For reasons unknown, Blake commissioned a leading Sydney architect, John Bibb, to design Moorefield as the centrepiece of the estate. Bearing in mind, Blake's official rank and position in Sydney society, it is a distinct possibility that he retained Bibb as the architect for the other buildings including, of course, Clontarf.

Although historical facts of architects' work in Sydney in the 1830s and 1840s are now somewhat thin upon the ground, the above suppositions could be very close to providing an answer to the aldermanic question. There is no answer, however, to the second part of his statement.

Peter Reynolds.

"CLONTARF"

"Clontarf" the 1844 Georgian cottage fighting for its life in Wallace Street has generated considerable interest recently.

Council, at a site inspection with the National Trust, adopted its expected stance of general insouciance (even the keys to get in had been left at the Town Hall) but they did at least agree to take no action for the next few months.

Since the site inspection the Association and the National Trust have been able to interest at least four diverse groups in the possible restoration and/or use of the building. These are; a local pre-school kindergarten group, the Folk Music Federation of Australia, a manufacturing company and the University of New South Wales. A report from the kindergarten group is included elsewhere in this issue.

There are many difficulties to be overcome before any of these groups takes on the task of restoration, but the response of four groups in the matter of a few weeks justifies the Association's claim that there is a future for this building. To demolish it now would be outright vandalism.

As announced in the May Newsheet, the Association has offered to Council \$320 plus labour in order to help make the building weatherproof and vandalproof. Naturally these resources would be made available to any group which set out to restore the building fully.

CLONTARF KINDERGARTEN

A group of residents interested in saving Clontarf recently met to discuss its possible use as a kindergarten. The Department of Youth and Community Services has recognised that there is a clear and urgent need for an additional kindergarten in the Balmain area and has confirmed that the building would be ideal for an initial group of 25 children. An extension could be added at a later date to give pre-school facilities for 50 Balmain children.

A letter has been sent to Council requesting that no firm decision be made on the future of Clontarf for three months. This will enable the group to formulate detailed plans and recommendations for restoration of this historical site.

The group needs as much support as possible from local residents and business people. If you can help in any way please contact Peter Horribin 82 3266.

council report

LEIGHARDT COUNCIL MEETING, JUNE 1, 1976

"Clontarf" - the cottage on the Ward Stoves land - was reconsidered by Council - letters from the National Trust requesting preservation and from the Balmain Association offering money and labour were read and the recommendation for demolition passed last year was again suspended pending a report from the National Trust on restoration possibilities, a works inspection and pending replies from Old Sydney Town, who are to be asked if they would demolish and re-erect the building, and from Council's architects who are to report on the uses of a new building.

LEIGHARDT COUNCIL MEETING, JUNE 15, 1976

The question of Council's attitude to Labour Government proposals to amalgamate inner city councils was raised when Woollahra Council's letter asking for Leichhardt to join it in opposition was deferred and a letter (apparently secret) from the Local Government Association seeking indications of assistance in opposing amalgamations was considered and similarly deferred. The Council resolved to approach the relevant minister so that it could be told what it should do and the Mayor undertook to consult residents.

The Council has set new records for disposal of business at each of its last three meetings, successively 9.20pm, 9.10pm & 9.9pm.

leichhardt planning forum

THE 1976 TOWN PLAN

Representatives of the Leichhardt Planning Forum, the group which organised the petition against Council's 1976 Town Plan, will be meeting with the N.S.W. Minister for Local Government and Planning, Mr. Harry Jensen, on June 30, in order to put the residents case against the Plan.

The Planning and Environment Commission completed its assessment of the Plan some weeks ago and for its part Council met Mr. Jensen on June 23. Rumours are that the P.E.C. report condemned the Plan. On the other hand it can be assumed that Council and the Consultant Town Planner tries to defend the Plan by any means they could.

The Planning Forum will be submitting the following letter to Mr. Jensen as the basis for rejection of the Plan. The letter features the irrational stance Council has taken in first, altering the '74 Plan, and second, its offhand treatment of the unprecedented unified opposition shown by residents towards the '76 Plan.

The Hon. H. Jensen, MLA,
Minister for Local Govt. and Planning.

Dear Sir,

Following changes made by the present Leichhardt Council this year to the 1974 Draft Statutory Planning Scheme, the Forum canvassed residents to establish their views on these changes. The resulting petition condemning Councils' amendments was signed by about 16,000 people in only three weeks. To put this in perspective, the number of signatories is greater than the total number of first preference votes cast in the 1974 Local Government elections, and more than twice the number of votes cast for those aldermen supporting the amendments.* The petition requested that the 1974 Scheme should be certified for exhibition without amendments.

It has been demonstrated by the petition that Councils' amendments to the 1974 Scheme do not meet the requirements of the people. The people want a plan and a planning process which begins with a recognition of the value of existing people, existing places and existing environments, which permits of change but only after thorough detailed pre-planning.

The interests of residents, and of the metropolitan area will be best served by:

- (a) Residential densities as set out in the 1974 Plan which
 - prevent high rise buildings and over-development
 - are consistent with regional population objectives
 - were arrived at after proper and detailed planning studies consistent with recommended P.E.C. planning methods
 - involved consultation with residents
 - will permit redevelopment where necessary compatible with local needs and aspirations.
- (b) The policy of the 1974 Plan that in those areas of the Municipality which have special problems and opportunities or others which perhaps could benefit from some redevelopment, detailed local 'action plans' should be prepared with the participation of residents. These should be carried out before redevelopment is encouraged by planning codes.
- (c) Removal of the inner urban radial expressway reservation. These expressway reservations have caused disruption and anxiety to residents and disenchantment with expressways as a solution to transport problems is now widespread.

Because of the very substantial response to the petition we are confident that public opinion does not favour Council's amendments. The town planning issue has been shown to be one readily understood by people and it has cut across traditional political allegiances. Opposition to the amendments has united virtually all social and age groups in the Leichhardt community.

Furthermore, exception must be taken to the way in which Council has proceeded in making these changes. It has been done without an electoral mandate for the changes, without prior notice to the community, without planning studies, and without giving due weight to numerous expressions of community concern and opposition.

Any decision which compromises the 1974 Plan and its essential principles or involves further delay in the implementation thereof will only frustrate and alienate the community.

We therefore request certification of the 1974 Scheme without amendments.

* Copy of text of the petition is enclosed; the signed petition having been submitted to the P.E.C. along with an amplifying submission from the Planning Forum.

Yours faithfully,
etc.

ferries

Balmain - North Sydney Service

The ferry service from Balmain to North Sydney which started on a trial basis in February this year is here to stay. An Association delegation recently met with the private ferry operators and the new Minister for Transport, Mr. Cox, and all agreed that since the trial started patronage had risen. They will keep the new service going.

The major problem, that of bus co-ordination at McMahon's Point has been overcome and buses now reliably meet the ferries.

Mort Bay Service

The extra calls at Thames Street wharf, which started in February, will also continue. In addition, Yeend Street wharf will soon be added to the Thames Street call in Mort Bay. Repairs to the Yeend Street wharf have been more extensive than originally thought necessary, but the reopening date is now only a couple of weeks away, July 19.

Fares

How to turn something simple into something complicated!

There should be one fare for the ferry between Balmain and the Quay, but as from June 27 there are now three, depending on what ferry you catch. Government ferries cost 25 cents, Stannard ferries, the small morning ferries cost 30 cents while Hegarty ferries, the small evening ones, cost 35 cents.

'balmain village fair'

Urgent call - the new committee for the Village Fair require an interested person to take phone calls during business hours.

The Fair is to be held on Saturday, 20th November, 1976, from 2 pm to 10 pm.

miscellaneous

NEWSHEET COLOUR SUPPLEMENT

Enclosed with this Newsheet is our first "Colour supplement"; the Public Transport Commission's map showing train, bus and ferry routes for the whole metropolitan area.

ANL AND CONTAINERS

Another Accident

June 24 saw the re-enactment of the tragic accident of 18 months ago - fortunately no one was injured this time. But there was a horrible familiarity to it all; the same street, Mort Street, the same sized truck, a semi-trailer carrying two containers, same cause, brake failure, same result, rolling back and jack-knifing through a wall.

It gives residents no comfort to say "we told you so". Until the trucks are taken off Balmain's narrow and hilly streets it will happen again and again and again.

Tasmania Ferry

News broke a couple of weeks ago that the "Australian Trader", the Sydney - Tasmania passenger ferry, was to cease operating on July 3. This will remove completely the original ANL justification for the development of the Mort Bay terminal; "a thriving tourist business with a few units of cargo etc. etc."

The danger now is that the vacant wharf will be modified and used for more freight movements. This will not happen immediately but it would be a different story if the economy picked up before the problems of Botany Bay had been resolved.

POO POWER

A few years ago the bright-eyed bearded wonders who dreamed up the idea of alternative technology thought they would solve the world energy problem by turning their own muck into methane. They did have a point. If you compost animal muck anaerobically and at the right temperature, you get off a gas which is 65% methane. And that, is a very good fuel.

Unhappily, the human animal is not a very prolific shitter. You and I produce only a paltry half pound of the stuff per day. If you digest that under perfect conditions you might, with luck, get off a whole cubic foot of methane. Its calorific value would be something less than one-fifth of a kilowatt-hour, or about 680 Btu. With that you could boil almost precisely three pints of water a day. Although I'm a pretty conservative user of energy, I have to declare that three pints of boiling water will neither cook for me, heat my house, nor run my motor vehicle. End of story?

New Scientist.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

M.S.B. - Moribund Shipping Bureaucracy
Under the NSW Noise Control Act 1975 it is the responsibility of the Maritime Services Board to control the noise from Shipping, ports and harbour facilities as well as pleasure-craft activities.

Judging from correspondence in the Sydney Morning Herald recently, the M.S.B. is not interested in controlling the noise from pleasure-craft. Nor, it appears, is the M.S.B. interested in applying the State Pollution Control Commission's noise control criteria to commercial shipping.

More than a year ago a number of residents in the Mort Bay area of Balmain telephoned complaints to the M.S.B. whenever they felt the noise from ships using the ANL terminal was disturbing. The complaints were invariably at night when ships such as the Australian Searoader and the Hyogo Maru generated high noise levels or used their ship address com public address systems.

The complaints were received with little interest and no sympathy. The calls were never acknowledged even though acknowledgements were requested. On the 5th December 1975, a detailed report, including noise measurements, was sent to the M.S.B. Despite many telephone calls, admissions that the Board had received the report and had made confirmatory measurements of their own, neither a reply or a written acknowledgement has been received from the Board. In the meantime, residents continue to put up with the noise while the M.S.B., no doubt, hopes that they will forget the noise exists.

The measured noise levels show however, that at times the noise from ships in Mort Bay can be incredibly bad and that noise control measure should be applied.

Why is the M.S.B. neglecting its responsibilities under the Noise Control Act? The noise control measures that would have to be applied are unpalatable and would probably make the terminal unusable so there are pressures to ignore the Noise Control Act. But if governments pass legislation then they should be prepared to comply with it, not only to the letter, but also to the spirit (the Noise Control Act has no teeth).

The Noise Control Act was passed to give quick relief to people suffering from high noise levels. If the M.S.B. cannot acknowledge a letter within six months, how long will they take to control a noise nuisance?

Fergus Fricke,
Rowntree Street, Balmain

THE GREAT TRAIN RIDE

Railway lands and rights-of-way are under-utilised. To publicise this claim and to promote the "north-western commuter line" the Glebe Society and the Railways Historical Society have arranged a train ride.

A special train will depart Redfern Station at 11 am, Saturday, July 24. It will go to Canterbury Station then return along the goods line which passes through Leichhardt, Lilyfield, Annandale, over the Federal Park and Wentworth Park viaducts at Glebe and on through Pyrmont back to Redfern.

This is a rare opportunity to travel on this line now used only for freight - it could be a high speed commuter line. Come on the trip and see for yourself.

Afterwards there will be a barbeque lunch (bygog and food, fires provided) "underneath the railway arches" in Federal Park off The Crescent, near Harold Park.

Tickets for the Great Train Ride are \$3 per head, children half-price or family ticket \$8.

Order your tickets immediately using the cut-out form below (closing date 10th July).

Enquiries - Jim Coombs 660 0026
Dorothy Perkins 660 7623

Mr. J. Coombs,
P.O. Box 100,
Glebe. 2037

Enclosed herewith my cheque/payment of
..... for tickets @ \$3 for
the Train Ride, Saturday, 24th July.

NAME:.....

ADDRESS:.....

.....

PHONE NO:.....

BOOK SALE

Following the closure of the Children's Library 18 months ago, it was decided to sell the books. A sale was held at the Watch House on Saturday, June 5, and over a 2-hour period, \$350 worth of books passed into the eager hands of children and parents alike.

A follow-up Street Stall was held on Saturday, June 26 in Darling Street Shopping Centre and over \$50 was made.

AT HOME - Bring your own smorgasbord

Many members will no doubt remember the very pleasant luncheon get-together held several months ago at the home of Neil and Helen Oates to provide an opportunity for members to meet informally, particularly new members and members with young families who may have problems with child minding.

Following the success of that occasion, Jenny and Vern Reid have offered their home as the venue for our next 'At Home', which will take place on Saturday, July 10.

So when Saturday morning shopping is done why not bring your own bread, cheese, salami children, etc. and eat in the glorious company of other members at 30 Gipps Street, Balmain. Hope to see you there.

WINTER CRAFTS AT BALMAIN COMMUNITY CENTRE

French Polishing with Chris Gallagher

A useful course for all those owning and loving old furniture is being offered at Birchgrove Creative Leisure Centre, 29A B-llast Pt. Road, Birchgrove, on Monday evenings at 6 pm. A few vacancies exist. Enquiries at the class or phone 82 2727. Fees \$15 for 10 weeks.

Painting & Sketching with Gerard Oosterman
Long standing Association members will remember Gerard Oosterman who has returned to Balmain after spending 3 years teaching in Community Centres in Holland and doing commissions for the Dutch Government. Gerard is interested to teach a week-end group in painting, sketching, lino-cuts and wood-cuts. Anyone interested should contact Gerard on 82 5048.

Woodwork and Boatbuilding

Looking forward to boating next spring & summer? Noel Grey, well known local home maintenance expert and boatbuilder is teaching at the Centre on Thursday nights at 7 pm, commencing 8th July. Enquiries 82 2727.

watch these dates !!!

July 6, Tuesday, 8.00 pm and

July 13, Tuesday, 8.00 pm

Leichhardt Council Meetings, Town Hall
Norton Street, Leichhardt.

July 10, Saturday, from noon on

Bring your own Smorgasbord to Jenny and Vern Reid's at 30 Gipps Street, Balmain (see note this issue).

July 17, Saturday

Camellia Show, Town Hall, Hunter's Hill

July 18, Sunday, 2.30 pm

Balmain Garden Club - Rose Pruning
Demonstration at 1 Rose Street, Birchgrove (Enquiries - 82 2812).

July 21, Wednesday, 8.00 pm.

Association Night Out at Pawan's Thai
Restaurant, 300 Darling Street, Balmain
(see separate insert)

July 23 to August 7, 8.00 pm

Balmain Theatre Group's production of
"Wind in the Branches of Sassafras
Trees".

August 11, Wednesday, 8.00 pm

Association Annual General Meeting in
Lower Town Hall, Balmain.
Election of Management for 1976/77 -
members are requested to come along and
participate.

NOTE: Nomination forms are available
from Margaret Dobson (phone 82 2774) or
at the next Management meeting at the
Watch House on July 7, 1976. Nominations
close August 4, 1976.

membership form

I wish to open/renew my membership with the
Balmain Association and enclose \$.....*
subscription.

Name.....

Address.....

.....Telephone.....

Send to:

The Hon. Secretary, The Balmain Association, P.O.
Box 57, Balmain, 2041.

*Subscription rates: Single membership \$2.00
 Family \$4.00
 Pensioner / Junior \$0.20

next general meeting

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 11, 1976 - 8.00 p.m.

LOWER TOWN HALL, BALMAIN

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

ELECTION OF MANAGEMENT FOR 1976/77

ALL MEMBERS PLEASE ATTEND
FRIENDS ALSO WELCOME - TEA AND COFFEE
PROVIDED