

MARCH 1986

NEWS SHEET

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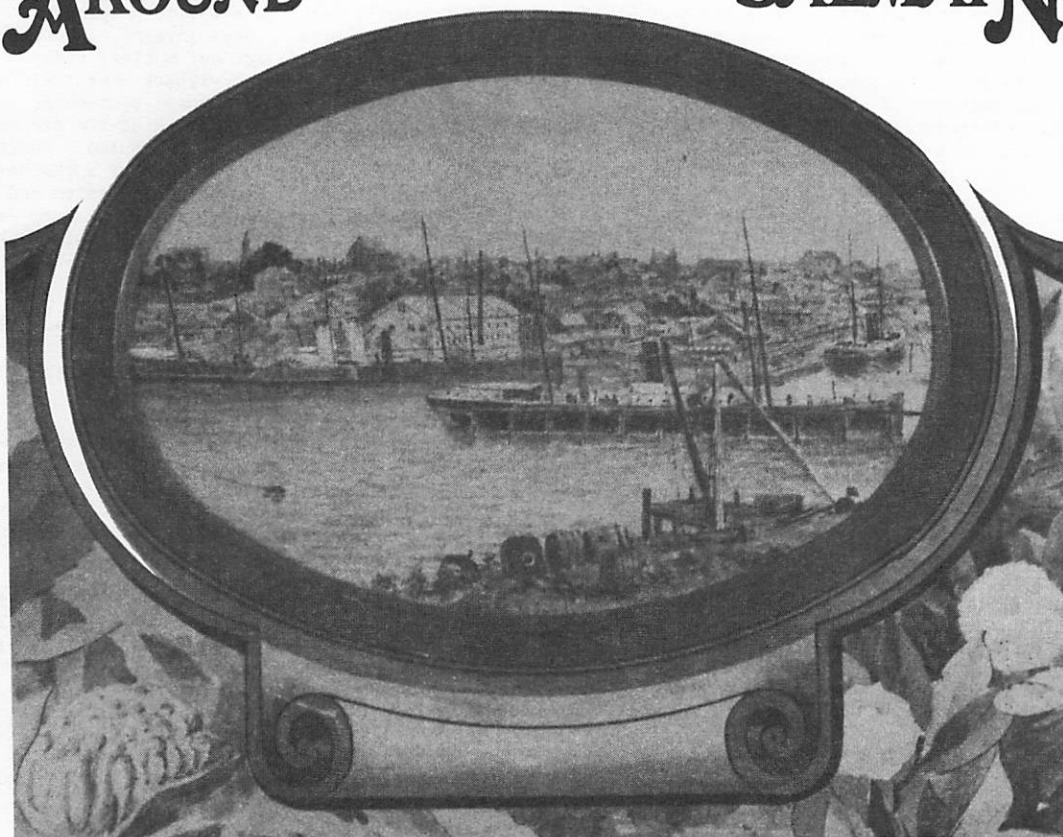
PO BOX 57 BALMAIN 2041

the balmain association

FOUNDED 1965

AROUND

BALMAIN



AROUND BALMAIN

A Second Record of an Historic Suburb
And Some Of Its Buildings

Photographs by
Douglass Baglin and Gordon Clarke
Compiled by Debby Nicholls

Published by The Balmain Association
Balmain 1986

Produced by the Balmain Association to provide the "book about Balmain" which so many people ask for at the Watch House and at bookstores. GEORGE NEGUS has kindly accepted an invitation from the Association to help us launch "AROUND BALMAIN" on:-

14 MARCH 1986, 6 P.M. AT THE WATCH HOUSE, 179 DARLING STREET, BALMAIN.

ALL WELCOME - LIGHT REFRESHMENTS - BUY A COPY AND HELP THE CONSERVATION OF THE WATCH HOUSE.

The 56-page book contains over 100 pictures, both past and present, of houses, churches, schools and other public buildings in the area together with brief descriptions. The book is available at \$9.95 from the Balmain Association, P.O. Box 57, Balmain 2041.

NEXT MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION WILL BE ON WEDNESDAY 2ND APRIL 1986

7.30 P.M. AT THE WATCH HOUSE, 179 DARLING STREET, BALMAIN

EDITORIAL

The Community Liaison procedure by the Department of Housing (Housing Commission) has now reached the end of its first stage. Opinions of various residents and organisations are being collated into a de facto "Environmental Impact Study" by a firm of consultants. In the near future this statement will be made available and the latest plans for the Mort Bay Development will be on public display.

It is interesting, to say the least, that the Dept. of Housing has employed this process before commencing work at Mort Bay. On one hand Community Liaison can be seen as a valid attempt to gain feedback so that the final results will be acceptable to as many residents as possible. On the other hand some residents have seen the procedure as an elaborate hoax to allow the Department to claim the development is going ahead with the blessing of the community.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the Community Liaison exercise is that it is the bureaucrats, not the politicians who have gone to the community. One recent weekend members of the ALP tried to disrupt a public meeting (of the MBAG), at another public meeting (of the East Balmain Residents Action Group) our elected representative declared that the system allowed him to be "little more than a glorified clerk".

Take advantage of the Community Liaison procedure. Even though the bureaucrats are determined to re-structure Balmain, perhaps they are the only people who are willing, or able, to listen to residents.

Norman Bull
PRESIDENT

The following submission by Mr. Peter Melser of the firm MSJ Keys Young should have been published in our last newsletter.

STATEMENT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING

Community Liaison began with a series of interviews with community leaders and residents interested in the Mort Bay Development. These initial meetings led to a number of conclusions which guided the design of the Community Liaison process. Many of the major concerns of residents have been identified, listed and formulated as issues for examination.

In future, while further issues will continue to be identified, the emphasis in the liaison process will move to discussing the basis and ways of addressing these resident concerns through design and other aspects of the development proposal. This process will therefore become a joint resident and Department of Housing assessment of the social and other effects of the Mort Bay Development.

PETER MELSER

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY CONCEPT

A SUMMARY

The concept of the Open University may be described as the using of radio, television, film and audio & video cassettes to make Tertiary Education available to a much larger number of people.

Is there a need for an Open University in Australia?

In January the Sydney Morning Herald reported that 30,000 young people in N.S.W. alone, who were very capable of undertaking Tertiary studies would not get a place because there just weren't enough places available. Apart from these young people there are many others who would like to study part time to improve their qualifications. In the United Kingdom, where the Open University has functioned for more than 15 years, 60,000 students are undertaking part time Tertiary study. About one third of these students are teachers whose own classroom teaching benefits greatly from the updated, interesting and attractively presented material

which they receive. So the benefits of the Open University spread widely and help in the constant battle to hold the adolescent attention in competition with the thrills, bangs and violence of commercial television.

It has been suggested that the Headquarters of the Open University in Australia could be located at Mort Bay Balmain. What would this mean for Balmain? The Open University runs as an enormous mail order operation, thus the Headquarters is a campus without students. Academics and television technicians co-operate to produce the material transmitted by television, radio and mail. Many academics, film and television people already live in Balmain. If anyone would like to have more details on how the Open University is daily coming closer to being a reality in Australia they are welcome to contact me on 810-2727 between 8 pm & 9 pm on Wednesdays.

Having the Headquarters of the Open University in Balmain would also be a way of helping to alleviate the social difficulties of unemployment, youth boredom and drug addiction which afflict our Society today. This way of helping can be achieved without overstraining the limited physical resources of our small peninsula. In the early 1970s town planners were proud of the statistic that one-third of the people who lived in Balmain worked in Balmain. Boat building and small engineering works have declined in the past ten years but Film, Television and Education are the Industries of the Future. Perhaps one day one-third of the people who live in Balmain will again work in Balmain.

ROBIN JONES

BALMAIN THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME?

Who can be sure of that? This piece however deals with events already planned or under consideration.

First some background. Balmain was in decline before 1918. Water Board records show that out of 7,394 rateable blocks there were 6,995 houses and 397 vacant blocks.

With the advent of the Harbour Bridge and the garden city concept - closely identified with the family car, migration as in other major world cities, was to the north shore or its equivalent green perimeter.

The value of property in Balmain dropped to not much more than the value of the land it stood on! Conversely to the outwards spread of population industry developed as more cost effective, in the central area and took advantage of cheap land, i.e. Dickson Primer.

Leafing through David Liddle's "Balmain Book" and the other excellent book by Tony Stephens and Annette O'Neill "Larrikin Days", an image will emerge of a hard working, hard fighting, egalitarian and maritime community. The Second World War and proximity to Cockatoo Dock brought the prospect that one stick of Japanese bombs could straddle Balmain, so this accelerated the exodus.

Many houses stood empty until the influx of migrants after the war.

My house for example was occupied by the Navy as offices for the ship repair yard 'Poole & Steele' but at War's end stood empty. Now the reverse trend of settlers mainly from the north shore, also sees a change in the industrial scene, triggered mainly by containerisation. This requires main road access, pushing many medium size factories out to Silverwater, now more central to the Sydney conurbation and network of freeways.

Containerisation is forever embossed on Balmain and spelled the end of most ship repair waterfront industries, releasing foreshore land and shrinking the workforce. Cockatoo Island, Goat Island and Sydney Harbour Ferries together with White Bay and Glebe Island terminals employ much of the remaining workforce.

Rental accommodation available shrunk to one per cent in

Sydney as a whole and less in this area, besides a dramatic increase in numbers on waiting lists for public housing currently by eight thousand to forty four thousand three hundred and two. There are estimated to be fifteen thousand young persons homeless in Sydney even with 98 youth accommodation centres overcrowded according to Youth and Community Services.

There is now and properly so, a growing concern on the waterfront about the inroads made against wharfage, this has surfaced in the heliport issue.

Taken together with this is the policy of Leichhardt Council and other inner city councils to encourage light industry to stay on. Much of Leichhardt is zoned for light industry.

No government of any complexion will change this. It constitutes good town planning practice and reduces daily mobility of the workforce. Proper and enforced environment controls make this desirable, since a city port has many other functions than mere dormitory suburbs!

The city-west link road will improve egression from Balmain, at the same time access to Rozelle Bay will improve by reduced traffic through the Crescent. For this reason the bicentennial park should be developed as planned.

A regional park needs good access from a substantially populated area.

The proposal to re-site M.S.B. workshops on part of what was genuinely once a park is evidently to release Goat Island as an historic site in time for the bicentenary.

In practice about as many Sydneysiders will visit Goat Island as now visit Fort Denison unless it's a regular ferry call. Even so it seems erratic to establish maritime workshops at Rozelle Bay, when the Navy are to move out of Garden Island with much the best workshops and a dry dock built in the 1940s regarded as the largest in the southern hemisphere!

Closer to home there are a string of industrial sites which one way or another will be re-developed. As these conform to what were planned approaches to a proposed second harbour bridge they need to be watched.

Having talked to someone at Transfield Pty at the time of the bridge scare, I do not think a future government likely to revive that scheme!

So White Bay Power Station next to the coal loader which was extended as a stop gap measure and the Lever & Kitchen site could or will be vacated. I have real doubts about the coal loader, M.S.B. regard it as a profitable operation, but the power station as I have often repeatd is a prime site for an oxygen producing green active recreation area and needed in Rozelle Valley.

The Lever & Kitchen site with the exception of its offices which will remain and the National Trust classified 'Copra Shed', should in part be retained for light industry, the company will make over its northern car parks as an extension of White Bay Park (at least in part).

The site always of concern, Ampol is also to be vacated though Kurnell is rapidly becoming a major time bomb. These noxious plants are blooming there in greater numbers.

Ampol I am told, plan to develop that site on the lines of the Grafton Street development which D.A. only won approval in the High Court. That site should be landscaped as a green buffer zone. This will complete the division of the industrial estate from residential land.

Removal of Ampol sets in train removal of Sydney College of the Arts who have been asked to consider Balmain High School.

Much as I like SCAZA, (was a student last year) we must view with alarm prospective closure of our new foreshore high school. In 1983-4 I proposed that SCAZA together with the N.S.W. Conservatorium of Music should move to the old colonial building in Callan Park. The Con. got a flat no

from Macquarie Street, however something of that sort could emerge when Darling Harbour is complete.

My own project, Rozelle Festival Arena well supported in the profession, was also well received by the Bicentennial Authority and we gave an accredited costing for stage one, of two point five million. However the Bicentennial Authority is bound by a statute that the land must be owned by the local authority. Leichhardt town planners objected on the grounds that it would affect natural land forms on the foreshore - in fact the site is a recently manufactured land form!

There was also objection on grounds of traffic - the adjoining Leichhardt Oval sees crowds of fourteen thousand and more.

Bearing in mind that the eleven hundred seat theatre would cater mainly for the Aboriginal and Islanders Dance Theatre (who received standing ovations on their overseas tour and a rave press), together with the Australian Theatre for Young People - neither of which has a regular home stage.

Besides this R.F.A. would provide a fine venue for Dept. 'Eds.' Drama in Education Programme - these children would be bused in - parking objections are a nothing!

Overseas visitors would remember Sydney for a fine performance of Aboriginal and Islanders Dance Theatre in Iron Cove longer than an hour in the eleven million dollars Space Theatre - a glorified planetarium, or transit on the equally cosmetic 'Dizzy Land' monorail!

But the Premier's Department and our outstandingly good government architects, have the scheme on file.

This then is the background of change as I see it. More public housing in Balmain will not much affect the political climate but it will save our high school and hospital - we will never have an olympic pool or six sports ovals but the Dawn Frazer Pool and the two sports fields at Balmain High School are available and even Concord has no golf course yet Balmain produced Jan Stephenson!

And also for the future let's replace confrontation with communication.

DENNIS GRAFTON

WHAT DOES THE ASSOCIATION DO?

A frequently asked question which can be answered as follows:-

- it maintains the historic Balmain Watch House;
- opens the Watch House to the public on Saturdays between 1.00 p.m. and 3 p.m.;
- has a social evening every Friday night at 8 p.m. at the Watch House;
- makes the Watch House available for meetings of other local organisations.
- provides guided tours of Balmain to interested groups and Historical Societies on request.
- publishes books and leaflets of historical interest.
- helps other groups communicate with the community by publishing up to a 1,000 copies of this newsletter.
- conducts historical research and assists with enquiries into family histories etc. where possible,
- meets on the first Wednesday night of each month at 7.30 p.m.

TEAPOT STUDIOS - 354 DARLING STREET

Our thanks to Terry Langham at Teapot Studios for sign-writing which will be in use at the Watch House. Teapot Studios supply creative signwriting, banners, etched glass, stained glass and also laminating.



BALMAIN GARDEN CLUB.

SWEET PEAS



Origin: The sweet pea species was first discovered in Sicily in 1697 by a monk. He sent some seeds to a friend in England in 1700. These produced a puny plant with small dark-red flowers, but with a marked vanilla-type perfume. Some efforts at development yielded little improvement over a long time. The poet Keats is said to be the first person to call them "sweet peas". In 1870 an English gardener saw their potential and devoted much time to developing them. In 1908, the first flower with wavy petals appeared and then the race was on. Unfortunately some varieties lost their perfume in the craze for size and colours. This has happened to other flowers, notably roses and carnations.

Mid-March is the time to consider planting sweet peas. Indeed, the old saying was "Get the sweet peas in by St. Patrick's Day" for winter and early spring flowering. They are a joy to behold either in full bloom in the garden, or in a vase in the house for their colour and perfume.

Situation: preferably full sun and good drainage, as they do not like wet feet, though they need adequate water.

Preparation: dig up ground thoroughly and incorporate plenty of manure, plus complete general fertiliser, or compost if available. After digging, sprinkle lime or dolomite (2 to 4 ozs. to the square yard) over, and leave for a day or two, then rake it in. Attach some wire netting to some stakes and put in ground before planting so as to not disturb the seeds.

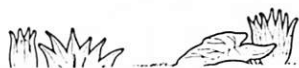
Sowing: soak the dark coloured seeds in water for a few hours as they have a tough skin - some people nick the hard covering with a razor blade. These dark seeds will produce the strong colours of maroon, purple and deep reds. The light-coloured seeds do not need soaking as have softer skin, and produce the lighter colours of pink, yellow, blue and white. Sow the seeds 3 to 6 inches apart and 1 inch deep. At the ends of the row sow some 3 inches apart to use for replacements if all do not germinate. Can be transplanted while really small, but do not actually like it. When the plants are small push in some twigs or small sticks for the tendrils to attach themselves to accelerate their growth and they will quickly pull themselves up to their permanent supports on the netting.

It is just as easy to grow the best, so buy a good brand of seed - "Multi-flowered Mixed" is a good one. A good brand should give 6 to 9 blooms on each stem. As they grow, cut away any tendrils inclining to twist around flowers or stems. Actually some experts believe in removing many of the tendrils as giving more nourishment to flowers. Not much skill is needed to grow sweet peas but to improve quality if exhibition blooms are required, give liquid fertiliser, disbud to get big flowers and limit each plant to 3 runners.

All legume plants, including sweet peas are considered to improve soil by increasing the nitrogen content.

JESSICA MURRAY

THE BALMAIN GARDEN CLUB meets the 3rd Saturday in each month (except December and January) at 1.15 at the Watch House, 179 Darling Street, Balmain. Good gardening library available for members. All interested welcome.



FRIDAY NIGHT AT THE WATCH HOUSE

The Watch House is open to members and local residents on Friday evening from 8 p.m. for a B.Y.O. social evening. This is an ideal opportunity to meet other Balmain residents, discuss local issues, the weather or whatever takes your fancy - freedom of speech a specialty - without fear of incarceration in the Lock-up!



THE GLADSTONE PARK BANDSTAND
BALMAIN

When and why was this Bandstand dismantled?
Does anyone know?

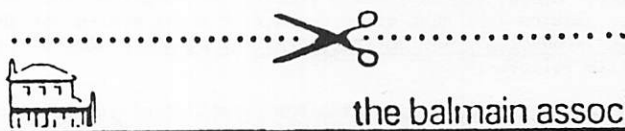
Please phone Peter Reynolds
Leichhardt Historical Journal
810 8560 697 4850 697 4848

JOIN the balmain association

meaning BALMAIN BIRCHGROVE ROZELLE

OUR AIMS ARE TO:

- * improve the living working and recreational amenity of our area
- * maintain all features having natural architectural and/or historical value
- * compile and record the history of the area/keep a permanent collection of items of historical interest
- * seek the co-operation of everyone concerned in the realization of the above



the balmain association

MEMBERSHIP FORM

(OPEN/RENEW)

PO BOX 57 BALMAIN 2041

NAME:

ADDRESS:

TELEPHONE: (HOME) (WORK)

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION (including News Sheet delivery in Balmain Birchgrove Rozelle)

Single	\$ 4.00
Family or Household	\$ 6.00
Pensioner or Student	\$ 1.00
Organization	\$12.00

Add \$3.00 to above rates to have News Sheet posted.
Cheques made payable to "The Balmain Association".