

APRIL 1986

NEWS SHEET

150

PO BOX 57 BALMAIN 2041

the balmain association

FOUNDED 1965

EDITORIAL

Residents of Balmain, when expressing an opinion on issues affecting the standard of living in their suburb are sometimes called "yuppies" (or even "loonies"). So-called "gentrification" is criticised because it leads to increased real estate values, threatening the "traditional" population.

One could be excused for thinking that "yuppies" and "gentrification" are new features of life in Balmain. However this suburb has always been home to a wide cross-section of people. The "gentrification" of Balmain happened for the first time well over a hundred years ago, when captains of industry and captains of ships were neighbours with craftsmen and labourers. In those days, as now, the Peninsular had the attractions of closeness to the city and access to the water. The tradition of Balmain as a "working-class area" began later when heavy industry came in the late 19th century.

The character of any suburb is bound to change given a long enough period of time. Whether such change is to be determined by government policy or by the sum total of many private individual decisions is one of today's major but least-admitted issues. Whichever side wins, open spaces, traffic congestion, helicopters and heritage are surely important for all of us.

Controversy over real estate is itself a tradition in Balmain. The suburb is named after William Balmain who was one of the leading "yuppies" of his day - a farmer's son who became Principal Surgeon of N.S.W. He was given the land that now comprises Balmain and Rozelle in mysterious circumstances that have ever since been a challenge to historians.

Norman Bull
PRESIDENT

"CHANGE IS INEVITABLE".

[Benjamin Disraeli]

Sometimes however it occurs a bit too rapidly! The Association's recently published book "Around Balmain" included a small photograph of No.16 Johnston Street (standing on the corner of Johnston and William Street), an odd little cottage described as having two types of early architecture in one building: a stone cottage with weatherboard cladding, much as fibro receives cladding today. Alas, it is no more!

had been placed weatherboard cladding. Removal of the iron roof revealed narrow wooden shingles 4" wide and 10" long.

One wonders what Robert Taylor, purchaser of the land in 1847 for the sum of £39.5.0, would have thought if he knew the price the land alone recently fetched.

Next door to this block of land and part of Peacock's subdivision are Charles' Villas and the identical Elizabeth Villas (29-31 William Street). These two pairs of attic-storeyed attached houses were probably built between 1850



recently demolished, the foundations as shown in the next photograph reveal a simple two room cottage. The construction of the original building known as 'brick nogging' was to say the least different from our usual sandstone cottages. The walls were constructed in several sections. The centre section was timber supports 2'6" apart with no horizontal supports, and the internal walls were planking that had been plastered over. The exterior wall was comprised of, not the usual thick sandstone blocks, but smaller pieces of sandstone only 4" thick over which ultimately

and 1858 by John Sims, a Sydney publican. The houses were bought by a Canterbury market gardener, Charles Rembold, in 1874 and he probably named them after members of his family. The early pattern cast iron balustrading was very likely added during Rembold's ownership. (Leichhardt Historical Journal No. 11 1982).

A proposal is in hand to build a modern four story house including garage level on the site of 16 Johnston Street next door to these old Balmain houses. Such an modern

NEXT MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION WILL BE ON WEDNESDAY 7TH MAY 1986

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

development will surely disrupt the streetscape and spoil the existing character of William Street!

As one of the constitutional aims of the Association is to preserve the historical amenity of the area, it must be of concern to all members that a new building has been proposed for this site which will be totally out of keeping with the existing area's character. The Leichhardt Council's Development Control Plan of November 1982 states that "architectural 'good manners' are of vital importance to the maintenance and enhancement of the area character. The scale, form and orientation of new buildings should be similar and the character sympathetic" - which the proposed new building is not!

In passing it should also be remembered that Robert Taylor built Canterbury Cottage [17 Johnston Street] (later demolished) and Pembroke Villa [19 Johnston Street]. This latter sandstone cottage was recently sold and was erroneously reported as being called Canterbury Cottage. 19 Johnston Street is the site of Pembroke Villa. (Leichhardt Historical Journal No.14 1985)



MORT BAY ACTION GROUP

Mort Bay Residents Take on Authorities

As reported in the Association's News Sheet No.148 in February 1986, representatives of the Mort Bay Action Group (MBAG) have endeavoured to negotiate with Mr. Peter Melser, Community Liaison Officer commissioned by the Housing Department, the Architects, Department of Environment and Planning representatives and members of the Balmain Branch of the Labor Party. The fate of Mort Bay remains uncertain.

Independent Councillors Take the Initiative

Mr. Melser did not invite the two Balmain Aldermen but true to form they heard about the meeting, attended and put their point of view across very strongly. As is well documented they have been fighting for 100% open space on this site for years.

Prior to discussions the MBAG presented a position statement which among other items clearly indicated that the Mort Bay Action Group had been given a mandate at several public meetings to fight for 100% open space and would not entertain any housing on this site irrespective of whether it was private development or State Government.

ALP Member Doesn't Deliver

This was the first occasion that anyone from the Housing Department or the DEP were prepared to disclose exactly what was planned for the site. The MBAG were able to gather some facts and figures on the anticipated number of housing units, occupants and ratio of open space etc. While we are confident of the accuracy of the Housing Department's facts and figures, our local Member of Parliament has stated publicly that they are not correct. He agreed to supply his version of the figures on 15/16 February 1986, but has not done so.

Residents Wary of Manipulation - Stand Firm

The MBAG attended two of the combined meetings to gather the facts for distribution and discussion with residents. The representatives and Alderman Wyner walked out of the third meeting as it was felt that we were about to be manipulated into a compromising position i.e. that it would be stated that the MBAG had assisted and had been involved in the final housing proposal. This was never in fact an issue as MBAG stood firm on 100% open space.

While MBAG did not attend any further meetings, Mr. Melser and the Project Architect met twice a week with a continuous stream of residents who were afforded the rare opportunity

of viewing the proposed plans and stating their objections. These meetings were held on the understanding that they were the forerunner to a public meeting at Balmain Town Hall. Over 100 residents attended these meetings, 10-12 per meeting, and although there were still at least 100 more asking to meet him after the last meeting on 27 February, Mr. Melser called a halt and would not attend any more meetings.

Residents Demand Public Meeting

During the course of the small meetings, Mr. Melser decided he would not have a public meeting due to the seemingly insurmountable opposition to the Housing Department's proposal. When the folly of this backing out of an agreement was brought to his attention he agreed to the public meeting - however will not as yet set a date. Mr. Melser and the Housing Department have been requested to display their final plans at the Balmain Library for at least two weeks before the public meeting to allow those who did not attend any of his meetings the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the proposal.

Open Space an Election Issue

The MBAG now feels that it is unlikely any building on the site can be commenced before the next State Election (although we must maintain a careful watch, just in case). The fight therefore at this stage is mainly political. There are many indications of an early election - March 1987 has been suggested as a likely date. The state of play at the moment is that our present sitting Labor Member and the Wran Government are committed to dense housing development on the Mort Bay site and throughout the Leichhardt Municipality, regardless of the impact on the urban environment, and the critical lack of usable open space. The Liberal Party has made a commitment to making all the publicly-owned land at Mort Bay public open space, but have not yet made a policy statement on urban consolidation.

New Independent Candidate

Dr. Jean Lenane, with a long history of activity in the union movement on community and health issues, has declared herself as an Independent candidate for the seat of Balmain. She is committed to obtaining 100% open space on the Mort Bay site, stopping urban consolidation in the electorate and promoting true representation of the people of the electorate in State Parliament. The Democrats and Greens oppose the proposed development at Mort Bay, and urban consolidation in this area. It is not yet clear whether they will field candidates in the next election.

MBAG is sure that unless there is a dramatic change in the voting pattern in Balmain in the next election, the Government will push all its proposals through as soon as the election is over.

(The above statement from the Mort Bay Action Group is published by the Association in the interests of informing members and residents of current issues in this area that affect the way we live in Balmain!)

BALMAIN - ANOTHER VIEW

It would seem that "Balmain" is never far from the news be it sport, politics or the general stubborn struggle of the people for a better way of life, away from the mines of "Balmain" or "Morts Dock", soap and sail making industries, slaughter house or box factories of its past - a past about which sadly not many of us seem to care! Even our esteemed State Member enunciates about our sporting greats, some born here in mean times, some born into a mean place, where they had to leave Balmain to become great.

There is however another small portion of the history of our great nation in which "Balmain" was very much a part of its beginning.

This small part had to do with a man by the name of "Edward Granville Theodore", Premier of Queensland and Treasurer of the Australian Labor Government in 1919 and 1929. It was said that he introduced Government Bonds that were non-taxable to help save the economy, which is something our

present Labor Government should return to, that is lifting the taxes.

Like most men with ideas before their times, he was ambitious to want to move from a small pond to a bigger one and it was said by his political enemies he did so by bribery and seat buying.

Here is where "Balmain" comes into view. It seems one Mr. Parker Mahony in true political manner won a large sum of money at the races, enough to buy the "Commercial Hotel" in Balmain and that happened in 1927 ["Theodore: His Life & Times by Irwin Young published in 1971].

Let us move to another time and another direction and show that Balmain was not limited to just sport and politics.

In Church Street was born the second son of a second son in the year of 1902. This boy was named "Jim Davidson" ["A Showman's Story: The Memoirs of Jim Davidson", published in 1983], who at the age of fourteen years was struck a blow by the sound of jazz and was never to recover. He worked as an office boy at "Lever Bros" soap factory in the day time, a sort of old-time yuppy, carrying on his love of music after work by playing in many of the old movie houses and dance halls. When "World War II" came he and others formed entertainmt units for our boys overseas and he was to become our equal to the American Glen Miller when he was made Captain and Commanding Officer of the Austrlaian Army Entertainment Unit".

After the War he worked for the B.B.C. and later the A.B.C., which goes to show that with sport, music and fighting politicians "Balmain people" do not have much time to cry.

DAVID RAMSEY

"AROUND BALMAIN" LAUNCH

Perhaps the best way to describe the official launching of "Around Balmain" is to record our thanks:

- * to George Negus for originally agreeing to attend and then suggesting to us an alternative when he himself was called out of town;
- * to Peter Luck for his presence, his charm and magnificent poem, giving us a truly fabulous launching for the book;
- * to the suppliers of sandwiches which fed us amply;
- * to the Mort Bay Action Group and Save Rozelle Bay campaign which provided moral support;
- * to Peter Reynolds, Bob Irving and Bettina Chambers who provided us with "Balmain in Time" as an example o what could be achieved;
- * to Douglass Baglin, Gordon Clarke, Debby and Bob Nicholls, Tikwis Begbie, Anne McLeod and Frances Heathfield, who delved, wrote, re-wrote, researched, typed, proof-read and organised until the book was produced;
- * to the Standard Publishing House which gave us such competent printing as well as invitations and assistance with RSVP's;
- * to (for that evening at least) the extension of Day-light Saving Time for giving us the extra hour of light in which to disport ourselves;
- * to Norman Bull, our President, for providing calm in the face of adversity as well as muscle power in preparing the Watch House for the occasion;
- * and to all those people who came, ate, drank, complimented and particularly BOUGHT COPIES of the book so we could feel the evening was a total success.

It was a great Balmain evening, the book is safely launched, and we now look forward to all our readers coming to the Watch House or going to a bookstore to buy lots and lots more copies so that our Conservation Plan can soon become reality instead of just a dream. Or just fill the handy coupon:

"AROUND BALMAIN" - the Balmain Association's 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.

Secretary
Balmain Association
P.O. Box 57
Balmain 2041

I wish to order the following copies of "Around Balmain" at \$9.95 plus \$1.00 for envelope and postage:

No. of copies

Name:

Address:
.....

My cheque/money order for \$..... is enclosed.

PENSIONERS PLEASE NOTE: Upon presentation of the appropriate documentation "Around Balmain" is available to you at the price of \$5.00 - ONLY from the Watch House, 179 Darling Street, Balmain.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES FORUM

Father Brian Gore, Ross Gittins, Milo Dunphy and Pat O'Shane have all recently given talks to interested audiences to launch the Contemporary Issues Forum.

Formed by a group of Balmain and Rozelle residents, the forum focuses on examining the dominant values in Australian society and the forces which are shaping them. In particular, it is concerned about investigating value systems which go beyond simple materialism.

The discussions are held at 7.30 on Thursday nights at 344 Darling Street, the Parish Centre for the Balmain Uniting Church. Future speakers will include Robert Marr of the Doctors Reform Society; Peter Crawford, M.P.; Nadia Weiner of Centre 2000 and David Penman, the Archbishop of Melbourne.

Further information is available on 810-7244.

THE LEICHHARDT HISTORICAL JOURNAL

Issues of Leichhardt Historical Journal No: 14 are now available at the Watch House. The Journal has articles on:

- * E H Brett, Sailmakers of Balmain
- * Garry Owen and Callan Park
- * The area from Johnston Street to Cameron's Cove, Balmain East. The history of the land and buildings in this precinct.

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.



BALMAIN GARDEN CLUB.

GARDEN TASKS IN APRIL



Clean-Up: Remove tired annuals such as Petunias, Phlox etc. Do not put any diseased old plants on the compost heap, as this means future trouble. Some plants in particular carry virus diseases, among them, are tomato bushes, potato plants, asters, beans and zinnias. The best method of disposal was burning, but now Councils are banning this, so one can only bag them up and give the Councils the problem of disposal.

Bulbs: absolutely the last month to plant. The South African types do best in our climate i.e. sparaxis, freesias, tritonias, ixias and lachenlias, to name a few. Ranunculi and anemones are good for one season only - be sure to plant ranunculi with the claws pointing downwards, and the anemones with pointed end downwards.

Seedlings: many types now available, and more certain than seeds. To name a few - Iceland poppies, snapdragons, primulas, English marigolds, violas and pansies. Manure and fertilise soil before planting. If a little chimney soot is available, put around pansies to improve colour. Also keeps away slugs and snails.

Perennials: now becoming untidy. Cut back all old top growth. Divide up if necessary. Replant new growth of the side pieces and discard the old centre. Hardy types include shasta daisies, carnations, perennial phlox, perennial asters in many colours and perennial sunflowers.

Cuttings: April best month for these. Try some easy ones such as geraniums, fuchsias, marguerite daisy bushes, dianthus, lavender, and rosemary, buddlia and abelia. Take pieces about 6 ins.

Shrubs: Good time to plant new ones, before weather gets cold. Plant no deeper than they were in the container. Buy small ones, as they are less likely to be root-bound and suffer less shock. Plant well back from neighbours fences. Do not prune any now, that will be spring-flowering - prune after flowering.

Geraniums & Pelargoniums: Prune off all lanky old growth back to 3-4 nodes from the base. Replant as cuttings every 2-3 years.

Roses: mostly better in colour and perfume in autumn. Keep dead flower heads removed, back to first leaf before flower. If getting new varieties in June, prepare spots now with peat moss, compost, blood & bone and dolomite! Do not add inorganic fertiliser now.

Chrysanthemums: nearly ready to flower in May. Give last feed. No overhead watering, stake up if necessary. Watch for aphids.

Strawberries: Prepare soil with manure, fertiliser and a little lime. Have narrow long bed, easier to manage later. Use strong runners to plant. Keep runners nipped off plants to give the fruit a help. Replant every 2-3 years in this climate.

Citrus: give an autumn feed - 1/2 cup fertiliser to each square metre well away from stem, and spread out to drip line.

Mushrooms: can now be bought in boxes, fully prepared, and with all instructions. To be kept out of rain but not in dark. No difficulty, except getting tired of them!

Camellias: Disbud to one or two if crowded at tips. Give last feed of fertiliser.

Orchids: Give last feed with soluble, or fish, or seaweed fertiliser. Give more sun as weather cools. Less water as nights get cooler.

Poinsettias: will soon be flowering. Fertilise and water well.

Crepe Myrtle: Cut off all dead flowers. Prune in July when fully dormant. Spray with Benlate if has mildew on leaves.

Pests: always very active in autumn, particularly slugs and snails and aphids. Keep at them.

JESSICA MURRAY

HERITAGE WEEK LOTTERY

The formal drawing of the Balmain Association's Heritage Week Lottery took place on Saturday 19th April. First prize - Dinner at the Manor House - was won by Ticket No: 0144, H. Finnigan of George Street, Balmain. Second prize - A Ride in a tethered Hot Air Balloon - was won by Ticket No: 1153, Diane Schembri. The winners have been notified of the result.

ATTENTION COMET WATCHERS AND MEMBERS

On the assumption that the following article may have been taken into safe-keeping does any member of the Balmain Association have in their possession Miss E. Deloitte's telescope, which was given to the Association nearly twenty years ago.

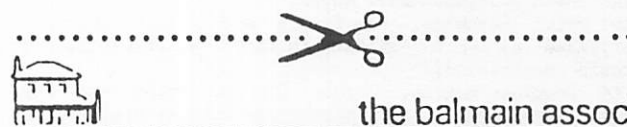
Please ring Frances Heathfield, tel: 818 2307

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

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