



NEWS SHEET

154

PO BOX 57 BALMAIN 2041

the balmain association

FOUNDED 1965

GHOST BUSTER!!

A GHOSTLY GATHERING AT THE BALMAIN WATCH HOUSE!!

BALMAIN SPIRITS ARE INVITED TO A PARTY AT THE WATCH HOUSE

179 DARLING STREET

AT 8:00 P.M. ON SATURDAY 20TH SEPTEMBER

B.Y.O. - PRIZES FOR BEST GHOSTLY FANCY DRESS (OPTIONAL) and BEST GHOST
STORY - ALL MEMBERS, FRIENDS, GUESTS AND LOCAL RESIDENTS WELCOME !!!!

To assist catering RSVP on 810.1611 or 810.7391 please if possible

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 1986

The following was presented at the AGM on 13th August by Norman Bull:

The past twelve months have been a busy time for the Balmain Association. Reading the Presidents Report for 1984-85 I see that many of our activities in 1985-86 have been a continuation of plans that were laid down last year.

The year "began" with our 20th birthday party, a milestone for any organisation but a proud achievement for a voluntary organisation relying for survival on fund-raising activities, subscriptions and donations.

The highlight of the year was the successful launching of our book "Around Balmain" in March. This was the culmination of the work of many members and friends of the Association, lead by the ever-cheerful and tireless Debby Nicholls. We were honoured by the presence of Peter Luck at the book launch who kindly allowed us to reprint in our news sheet his poem which he composed in honour of the occasion.

Later in the year the study "Towards a Conservation Plan For the Watch House" became the basis for applications for government funding for use in restoring the Watch House. So far the results of the applications are unknown but a successful result will enable the building to be maintained faithfully to a particular period in history.

Maintaining the Watch House is probably the single most important activity of the Association. Not only is it our official headquarters but it is also the meeting place of the Balmain Garden Club and, from time to time, other local groups. The Watch House provides a thread of continuity in the lives of many local residents and is a place of interest for many visitors, whether they be casual sightseers or members of organised tours.

Our Friday night socials, which began in January, have

added another dimension to the life of the Watch House and it is hoped they will continue to increase in popularity.

Early in the year the Association made the Watch House available for Community Liaison meetings organised by the Department of Housing as part of the process of preparing for the proposed Mort Bay development. It may be a sign of our "coming of age" in our twenty-first year that a building saved from developers many years ago can be the location of debates for and against another controversial development proposal.

Recent years have seen the formation of various action groups in the area to fight particular causes, for example the Clontarf Park Action Group and the Mort Bay Action Group. Such groups tend to achieve a level of publicity which overshadows the Balmain Association and over the last year there has been a certain amount of doubt among our members regarding the usefulness - or future direction - of the Association. In my opinion the strengths of the Association are its continuity of existence, its possession of a fine building to use as a headquarters and community centre and the fact that it depends on no single issue to give it a reason for being. We have among our members a number of different skills and interests which all make a valuable contribution. The common link among members is their enjoyment of being involved in the community in which they live.

Future plans for the Association include using the Watch House as an exhibition centre and to provide a modest catering facility on Saturday afternoons. To assist in these plans we now have a small oven, donated by Carol Bennett and hope to soon have a refrigerator. In such ways the Association should be able to continue to develop as an organisation with a wide appeal to the community.

My year as President has been an education, but an enjoyable one. No President's Report would be complete without a word of thanks to the "mindes" and in the case of

NEXT MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION WILL BE ON WEDNESDAY 1ST OCTOBER 1986

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

the Association this means the members who do the real work while I stay at home preparing speeches. Appreciation is due in particular to:

- Frances Heathfield for handling our correspondence and minutes and for being here each Saturday to welcome visitors
- Paddy Draper and his successor Warwick Purser for managing our finances
- Tikwis Begbie and Jeremy Arnott for preparing our news sheet and to Tim Davis and his team for distributing it
- Tikwis Begbie again for answering historical enquiries and keeping our archives in order
- Debby Nicholls for compiling "Around Balmain"
- Steve and Michelle South for their recent work on the kitchen doors and for arranging for the charge room chimney to be cleaned and donating a firescreen and fire irons
- all the other members of the Association who give their time and energy to sell books, run raffles and promote the Association in many different ways.

Finally, I would like to state my personal wish that the Association should continue to be a permanent fixture in a time of change - and sometimes conflict - in Balmain and through the news sheet provide a forum for different points of view on the future development of this suburb.

DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHIC PROJECT

CAN YOU HELP?

One of our members, Sue Stock, is undertaking a documentary photographic project of the Balmain Waterfront as part of her studies at Sydney College of the Arts.

Sue would like to borrow any old photographs of the Balmain Waterfront and would also like to interview and photograph long term residents who may have interesting stories to tell about the waterfront.

Sue Stock may be contacted on 818.3016 A/H

HISTORICAL QUESTION & ANSWER

This question and answer column, we hope, will interest readers of our newsletter and may help us gain information we may not otherwise find. Can you help?

1. Mrs Pearce wants to know where in Wharf Road her grandfather, Thomas Salisbury, lived between 1875 and 1880. The name "Midway House" means something to her, but she says it could not be "Midhurst" as this, she understands, was built in 1880.

Another member of her family, Alexander Cormack also lived in Wharf Road and there were only five houses there at that time. If you have old titles relating to Wharf Road any reference to these names would help her in compiling her family history.

Thomas Salisbury rowed from Snails Bay to Erskine Street as he was an engraver and coppersmith with his own business in Hunter Street.

2. Mr and Mrs Shelberg had an ancestor, William White of 24 Mansfield Street who was a butcher between 1860-1890. In 1880 he donated land for a church. He and his wife Mary had ten children, some of whom lived in the family home in the late 1890's. Information concerning the White family, the church land or of butchers in the area during that time would be helpful.

3. Keith Heywood needs information about the family of John Hardman, stonemason, who married Mary Medcalf and resided in Balmain between 1843 and 1870. Their children were Henry, William, Sarah (Keith's great-grandmother, born in 1843), James, Mary, Emily, Amelia, Frances, Charlotte, John, Samuel and Thomas.

ROZELLE BETWEEN THE YEARS 1956 - 1966

The following is a brief account of what life was like in Rozelle during the period 1956-1966. Stephen P. came to Australia with his parents and family in 1956. They were Greek Cypriot immigrants. Soon after arriving his parents purchased a house, No.21 Parsons St. Rozelle. The house still stands today although many others in the street have been demolished. About a dozen houses were demolished in the early 60s to make way for Manettas. The house Stephen lived in has undergone somewhat of a face-lift since his family left in 1966. The house was originally a bakery. It was at some stage in its history converted to a house with the front being completely cement-rendered after the family left. By 1957 Stephen's father had a job in the shoe trade and his mother was teaching Greek language to the students at Rozelle Public School.

Stephen attended Rozelle Public School from 1956 to 1960. In 1961 he was fortunate enough to be one of only three boys from his class to be accepted into Fort Street Boys' High School. The other students went either to Ibrox Park and Leichhardt Girls' or to the technical high school which was located just behind Rozelle Public School and the buildings of which are now part of the public school.

Stephen told me a lot about the games played by the kids during these early days. There was a timber yard, cnr. Mullens St. and Parsons St. just near where he lived. The kids used to collect scrap wood from the yard and make up bows and arrows. They played cowboys and Indians in the middle of the street. They also made sling shots from the scrap wood. At the Crescent St. end of Parsons St. there was an ice works. Parents used the ice to keep the old ice chests operating, but the kids took every opportunity to collect "spare" pieces of ice and have ice throwing competitions.

Weekends were a lot of fun for the kids of Rozelle in the early years. Everyone was very poor, but it didn't stop them from enjoying life. A favourite pastime was to go to the movies. The movie theatre was then located at the corner of Rowntree St. and Darling Street. This building later became a roller-skating rink, but is now disused. Stephen used to pay 1/3d. to get into the movies and he spent 6d. on a packet of Jaffas at the interval. Another favourite weekend pastime was to go down to the water at Iron Cove in front of the Balmain Power Station. The kids would gather with fishing lines and wait for the power station to emit the warm water, which it did every afternoon. The warm water enticed schools of large yellow jackets. The boys always took a good dinner home. Stephen commented that the water was always very clear in those days. If the boys got tired of fishing, they used to cross the Iron Cove bridge and have a swim at the Drummoyne Baths. This was a favourite swimming area for the kids, and a popular meeting place on hot weekends. The kids, though poor, were very industrious. They earned themselves pocket money by collecting all the old bottles around the area.

Stephen only remembers one park in the area. This was Easton Park on Lilyfield Road. The kids used to like playing in this park because if they became bored with the ballgames they could always

go down to the tiny beach, just below the Catherine St. bridge. Here they would paddle in the water and chase the turtles which were abundant in this waterway. The Rozelle Goods Yard and Railway now occupies this portion of the land. There is no water there now.

Stephen was telling me many things about the changing face of the area. One of the most noticeable things is the demise of the corner store. One of Stephen's favourite ones was at the corner of Moore and Crescent Streets. This is now an Architect's office. This corner store was owned by Mr. & Mrs. Clarke. They were very popular with the children because they used to give away free lollies. The kids never had very much money so they appreciated the Clarkes for their generosity. Another popular corner store was opposite (cnr. Mansfield and Moore Streets). This has since been converted into a house and was, up until 1984, occupied by one of the stars of "Number 96". It has a distinctive red telephone box in the backyard. There was also a butcher's shop in Mansfield Street. It is now a French good shop called Maison Pate. Stephen also remembers a barber's shop on Victoria Road (opposite Jillies Diner). The shop now sells plumbing goods. It has changed hands many times since the early 60s. The last owner died fairly recently, of cancer.

Stephen was adamant that the area was less polluted then than it is now. There was no coal loader then. Wheat was the only thing loaded from White Bay. The White Bay Power Station was then in full operational order, but Stephen claims it created no major pollution problem. The only problem it caused was created by the vibrations. Quite often the windows in his house would shake, and if someone put a glass of water on the table, the glass would shake. It also tended to be very noisy at night when everything else was quiet. Apart from that, he says there was no grit or soot to be found on window ledges or railings, as there is today. The only coal in the area was small loads brought in by truck to a storehouse at the end of Parsons Street. This was bought by people for personal use in fireplaces. There was much less pollution from traffic during the late 50s and early 60s. Victoria Road was only two lanes at that time. Stephen says he remembers many houses being pulled down to make way for the big six-lane highway we now know. He also remembers the reaction of the local residents when the large block of units on the corner of Victoria and Hornsey St. was being constructed. Everyone was very proud that something new and modern was being built in their area!

Obviously there have been many changes in the Rozelle/Balmain area since these days. It is not now the poor Industrial suburb it once was. But the overall character has remained the same. The terrace house and the air of history is still as evident today as it was in the early years.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

On behalf of the Rozelle Combined Pensioners of N.S.W., we support the Mort Bay Housing Project, because we need more people in Balmain and too much has been lost already on the pensinsular in the way of shops, businesses and the East Balmain Post Office. There are NO facilities for the aged and it's time we had pensioner units and low cost housing for low income earners on all levels. Our Prime Minister has asked the children to stay longer in schools and when they graduate surely they too are entitled to be able to have housing they can afford. As a resident of Balmain for

forty -four years, I believe in the project at Mort Bay: 50% housing and 50% waterfront parkland, the 211 unit complex of which 41 are units for pensioners and a proposed forty room hostel in close proximity to Balmain Hospital and the after care of the domiciliary nurses, not to mention whole families and children to be accommodated. Should the needs be, I would want to be in Balmain and not cast out into the outer western suburbs. Thank you.

Grace McLeod J.P.

Hon. Secretary

Combined Pensioners Association, Rozelle Branch

"IN SUPPORT OF THE MORT BAY PROPOSAL" BY MICHELLE SOUTH

Much has been said in opposition to the Mort Bay Project. This time I would like to put forward some points in favour of the project. First, much of the reason why the current Housing Commission list is so long (anywhere between five and ten years) is because people are waiting for housing which is close to the city and to their places of work. If we are to do anything to help solve the urban sprawl of Sydney, and the many social problems which have gone hand in hand with this, the only solution is to move into, not out of the city. Since we do not have access to acres of vacant land in the inner city areas, it leaves the Housing Commission with limited alternatives. It either acquires and renovates houses which already exist (and it is doing this in areas where prices permit e.g. Erskineville and Waterloo) or it pulls down existing houses and rebuilds, or it uses what vacant land there is to build new accommodation. It appears obvious to me from other Housing Commission projects that no matter which choice the Housing Commission makes, someone will complain.

I feel the most important issue concerning the Mort Bay project is the one which is last to be considered, i.e. the basic issue of humanity. We are talking about people, poor and homeless people. Is housing for people not more important than bigger parks, more playing fields, etc.? People don't sleep in parks (or rather they do, and this is the problem we are trying to solve). Balmain already has beautiful harbourside parks which many other suburbs would love to have. Sure, we may have slightly more cars in the shopping centre on weekends. But can't we put up with any slight inconveniences to give a few more people a chance? In any case, many of the cars on Saturdays come to the Balmain Markets from areas outside Balmain.

It seems to me that the most popular opinion on public housing in general is that "public housing is O.K. so long as it is not on my back door step!" Well, I'm sorry for the residents of Balmain who are opposed to the project, because this time it is on your doorstep! All I can say is that I hope your attitude changes when the project is completed. These new residents will be our neighbours, and there is room for all of us, both rich and poor, to live together harmoniously in Balmain.

GRANT MAYO

With sadness the passing of Grant Mayo, who died suddenly in July, is recorded here. Grant had been a member of the Association for many years and his attention to maintaining the monthly membership lists made the distribution of this news sheet possible. We offer our condolences to his family.



THE BALMAIN GARDEN CLUB



COFFEE GROWING IN BALMAIN

In Sydney, small coffee plants are occasionally on sale as indoor plants, and if used as such will stay small plants, never producing flowers or fruit.

Some years ago, I purchased one, and after 2 years indoors put it outside in the ground, in a sheltered spot which was not the best one, as it was in the lowest part of the property. This was a mistake, as cold air comes downwards, and stays in the low areas, and coffee trees are extremely susceptible to cold. After growing to about 5 feet, it died overnight in a frost here, which is an extremely rare happening in Balmain, near the sea. The plant was completely burnt, looking as if scorched in a bushfire.

I bought 3 more Coffee Robusta plants (the only type available here) and planted them much higher on the slope. Though I have often hurled imprecations at the surrounding bamboos of 3 neighbours, perhaps they helped to give shelter during our recent "Big Cold" in July, as the trees, now 8-9 ft. in height, are doing fairly well. Some outside leaves are scorched on the edges, going yellow, and will probably drop off. The temperature didn't go to zero or less, but just near enough. I went out late one night and took the temperature near by, as if they were patients in Intensive Care; it was 2 degrees Centigrade. Thinking over the procedures in South Australia on fruit farms and vineyards, when frost threatens, of hosing down all trees and lighting smoky fires near them, to raise the local temperature, I finally decided they would just have to take their chance, as I myself was becoming a case of hypothermia and needed to go back to bed. I think they will survive O.K. They are grown as a small copse close together which, I think, helps.

Coffee trees are rather pretty small trees about 10 ft. with wavy glossy leaves and white flowers in rows with red berries like small cherry plums. They bear 3 crops a year - up to now, about a kilo of kernels each. These trees are fertilised 2 or 3 times a year with several handfuls of commercial Complete Mixed Fertiliser. Need plenty of water in Summer. Don't seem to mind our rather poor greasy sand type of soil, shallow and our sandstone.

Ex-Sydney folk who live on Hawaii, where coffee grows well, tell me that their climate of temperatures only varying 5 degrees a year, is what coffee really likes. When the red berries are ripe (edible but insipid) - the birds help, by removing some of the flesh - place the berries in water for 48 hours to soften the flesh and remove same by hand, it's rather tedious peeling it off. Dry the kernels thoroughly, probably best in a baking dish in the oven, because if they are put away damp in a jar, they may go mouldy. Of course they can be roasted in the oven, stirring frequently till they brown up, but we prefer to put a handful at a time in a stainless steel bowl or saucepan on top of the stove and stir until they are the required colour, and then grind them. At least a large tablespoon of the ground beans are required for a good cup of coffee. It tastes just the same as the bought pure coffee, freshly ground, at a supermarket.

By the time you read all this, you may decide that bought instant coffee is less trouble. You may be right!

JESSICA MURRAY

ASSOCIATION ACTIVITIES

At the AGM on 13th August the following were elected as office bearers of the Association for 1986-87:

President: Norman Bull
 Vice-President: Bob Nicholls
 Secretary: Debby Nicholls
 Treasurer: Warwick Purser
 Committee: Frances Heathfield
 Jeremy Arnott
 Michelle South
 Steve South
 Tikwis Begbie

The AGM was the best attended for several years and the refreshments which were organised by some of our enthusiastic members after the meeting were greatly appreciated by all present.

Thank you to our good friend Lillian for donating a watercolour painting of a Balmain streetscape for the Watch House. Also, Mrs Grainger has placed on display in the Watch House a painting of the harbour at sunset.

The Watch House is open EVERY Friday night for a BYO social gathering from 8:00 P.M. - come along and enjoy our open fire and relaxed company. It is also open on Saturdays from 1:00 P.M. - 3:00 P.M.

Should you wish to contact the Association, phone:
 Norman Bull, President - 810.1611 a/h
 Debby Nicholls, Secretary - 810.7391 a/h

JOIN the balmain association

meaning DALMAIN 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".