

PO BOX 57 BALMAIN 2041

the balmain association

JUNE, 1987

161

FOUNDED 1965

AT LAST - A USE FOR CLONTARF COTTAGE

by Dennis Grafton

Clontarf Cottage has not been a dwelling house in recent times - probably as far back as the 1930s.

It served as an office for the adjacent brush factory which later became Wards Stoves. Both the galvanised iron factory and the cottage were in an advanced state of disrepair when the factory moved out.

The factory moved to Rozelle partly as a result of complaints about the noise nuisance and at the time nearby residents were greatly relieved.

The site and other sites in that block had been zoned many years earlier as 'open space' under the old County of Cumberland planning scheme.

Wards Stoves (as were other firms in similar circumstances) were required to clear the site of the factory buildings but the cottage, being classified by the National Trust, was not so affected.

However, the Council wanted to demolish the cottage to make way for the park and would not agree to restore the cottage, the cost of which even then was very high. So the cottage remained and further deteriorated and the factory site remained as an eyesore.

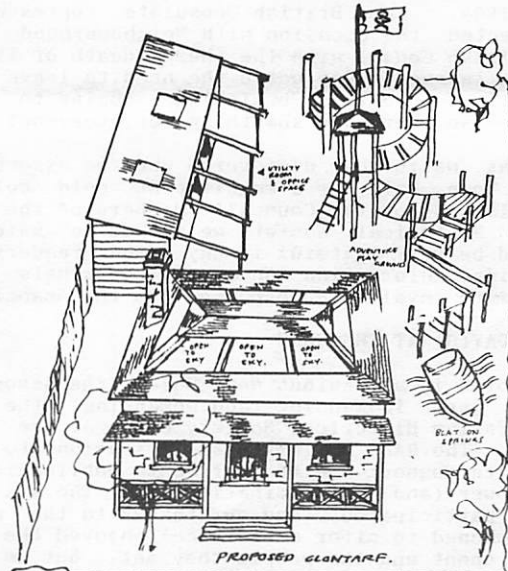
Over the intervening years there were major changes so that with a dramatic increase in fore-shore open space and a shortage of accommodation for the aged the Council decided to do a trade-off with the then Housing Commission to use the factory site for the present pensioner development and in return obtain funds for the restoration of the cottage.

The Housing Commission had estimated that re-surfacing the internal stonework alone at \$40 000. The present cost on this basis would be about \$60 000. However, the funds transferred to and held by Leichhardt Council were \$190 000. Council decided that these funds would be insufficient for an exact replication to the standard to which Elizabeth Bay House and Ewerton have been restored.

Further there have been no viable proposals for community use and such properties are hard to protect unless occupied - an exception being the Watch House with its barred windows and general design features.

Some members of the Association think, as do some Aldermen and Council staff, that the cottage is of no special merit and could be demolished. Others would prefer to see it preserved as one of a group of early buildings.

The proposal outlined below seeks to solve this dilemma. Essentially the existing stone structure can remain with some repair and removal of brick accretions. The stone need not be replaced, only cleaned.



A heavier than normal hardwood roof frame would replace the burned-out roof and together with the restored verandah could be part-roofed with cedar shakes to be open to the sky, as in the drawing. This would house lighting and provide for suspensions.

The doors and windows to be fitted with steel grilles and the internal floors paved and provided with under drains.

With some lighting and a new annex at the rear this would then become an attractive exhibition space, particularly for sculpture. The Society of Sculptors until two years ago had a stone building in the Argyle Cut as their headquarters but since this was demolished have had no exhibition venue.

The President of the society, Ann Cohn, has expressed enthusiasm for the proposal, and it would also form an extension to the Watch House as an exhibition space, perhaps as a larger concept providing a basis for a Balmain Arts Fair.

The sculptors could take on the design of the adventure playground and I feel some of the resident architects' and planners' groups would provide design services and supervision for the project.

The remaining funds could then be invested by Council and the interest used to provide maintenance costs. Projects like this where the community and the arts come together are common in the Low Countries and Scandinavia and I hope this contribution to the News Letter will open constructive discussion.



THE NEXT MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION - WEDNESDAY 1st. JULY 1987 AT THE WATCH HOUSE, 7.30 pm.

ASSOCIATION ACTIVITIES

OUR DAY AT VINEGAR HILL

The Association recently accepted an invitation from the Blacktown Council to attend its 5th Commemorative Ceremony for the Battle of Vinegar Hill - a rebellion by Irish convicts which took place in 1804. The British Consulate representative connected the occasion with Neighbourhood Watch, the Irish Consul with the theme "death or liberty" and a learned judge noted the need to leave one's political problems behind when coming to a new land - so there was something for everyone!

...as we further discovered when we assembled at the Town Hall for a magnificent cold collation compliments of the Council! Members of the Blacktown Historical Society we talked to said they would be very grateful if any of our readers could provide information on any of the rebels and/or soldiers involved - responses c/o the Association.

OUR DAY(S) AT THE SHOW

As noted in a previous News Sheet, the Association took part in manning (and womanning) the Royal Australian Historical Society booth at the Easter Show. The RAHS had extended invitations to societies throughout NSW to contribute publications and manpower (and a participation fee!) The six of us who participated (and our thanks to the members who phoned to offer assistance) enjoyed the hours they spent and the people they met, but we cannot say it was a financial success - our sales did not equal our fee! We welcome suggestions from readers as to other venues for sale of our publications...

POST OFFICE CENTENARY

Advance notice is given of a talk which will be given by the Historical Officer of Australia Post on 20 August at the Watch House to celebrate 100 years of the Balmain Post Office. The Post Office will be en fete for the day, too, and Association envelopes available for special postmarking. Full details in our next News Sheet.



Clontarf (continued from page 1)

The Management Committee of the Balmain Association has long been committed to the importance of preserving Clontarf. The most recent issue of the "Leichhardt Historical Journal" (see further information at end of article) lists the following reasons for Clontarf's significance as its age, materials, form and scale; its association with the Banks family; its conversion from domestic use to foundry; and its connection with Robert Blake.

With this in mind, when the Sculptor's Society proposal for the future use of Clontarf was received, the Association responded as follows:

"In principle, the Association agrees with your proposal, as one of the aims of the Balmain Association is to preserve the historic character of the area. Thus any effort to have the cottage restored would have our full support.

"However, as you are now aware, the cottage and surrounding site have been the centre of considerable controversy between Leichhardt Council and residents of the immediate area for many years. Thus close liaison between residents and

THE BOX BRIGADE

Intrepid conservation warrior Kath Hamey has returned almost unscathed from her latest battle in her struggle to master the horrors that lurk in our historical archival collection. She reports:

"Faced with some acid-free library board on a cutting board, and armed with a steel rule, pencil, set square, bone folder (?) and Stanley knife, your fledgling archivists (T. Begbie was there in a similar role) proceeded, with much mumbling and measuring of centimetres to produce a series of - boxes.

Some with lids for the storage of newspapers, others with flaps for manuscripts and the piece de resistance, a box for an individual book, tied with tape. Hence 'red tape.' used for official documents.

The instruction on the use of a 'Vapour Tent' for insect and mould treatment was interesting and will be useful for some of the books in the Association's collection.

Storage Techniques The storage cabinet should be placed against an inner wall if possible, away from sunlight, as this reduces the fluctuation in temperature. Stainless steel filing cabinets or a wooden cupboard or chest of drawers were recommended. Ensure that the wood is well sealed with a varnish to prevent fumes from deteriorating the material stored.

Commercial photograph albums should never be used as they are acidic and extremely damaging to photographs. Colour photographs and slides are made from dyes which change and fade in time and plastics such as the polythene, will deform with age, sticking the photographs and causing deformation of the emulsion. Mylar (polyester) envelopes are much safer.

Work parties at the Watch House will demonstrate these techniques."

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From what Kath says, those albums with the see-through stick-down sheets that I've been using for years for my priceless works of art may turn out to be not all that good for the family snaps after all.



Council would be essential to ensure the needs of both parties are satisfied. If, for example, the Cottage was renovated by Council and the Sculptor's Society made 'Caretaker' allowing part of the Cottage and its curtailage available for community use, this may provide a satisfactory compromise."

The Association has also written to the Leichhardt Council drawing attention to the rapidly deteriorating condition of the Cottage, reminding it of the amount it received from the Department of Housing in return for the adjoining lease, and asking for a commitment to have the cottage restored and landscaped.

LEICHHARDT HISTORICAL JOURNAL No. 15 RELEASED Contents:

Replacing the Dome on the Balmain Town Hall
The Suburbanization of Birchgrove
The Municipal Council and other Local Institutions
From Cameron's Cove to Adolphus Street

Available for \$8.50 from the Watch House

HISTORICAL QUESTIONS, ANSWERS & NOTES

Sister McEwen of Glebe is writing a history of the Good Samaritans. Sister McEwen, a keen-minded 85 year old, is seeking additional information about the Convent in Jane Street, Balmain.

The Australian Town and Country Journal, 18/11/1876 stated that the building was for the Sisters of the Good Shepherd and was to be completed "within a few weeks".

MORRISON & SINCLAIR AND THE MOTOR YACHT LAURABADA.

The Association has received a letter from Messrs. Burns, Philp & Company Limited seeking background information about a motor yacht, LAURABADA, which was built by Morrison & Sinclair Pty. Limited, Shipbuilders & Ship Repairers, 125 Louisa Road, Balmain in 1924.

Morrison & Sinclair Pty. Limited were at the above address on 1 April 1964; but could any members advise if the firm was taken over by some larger concern, who would now have the records of the LAURABADA. Or are there any members of the Morrison or Sinclair families still living in the area who could be contacted?

THE BIJOU THEATRE

Now that planning permission is before Council for the redevelopment of the Bijou Theatre site, 371 Darling Street, does anyone have any information about this old Theatre/Cinema?

MISSING HOUSES IN ROWNTREE STREET

Mrs. McVey of Hurstville has written asking whether anybody knows what happened to the missing house numbers in Rowntree Street: Nos. 161, 163 and 165. Nos. 157 & 159 appear to have been built at a later date and are large blocks of land in comparison to the terrace houses 155 & 153.

HIRAM HENRY PIERCE Mrs. McVey's great-grandfather was an American mariner who worked on one of his family's vessels, either a trader or whaler, plying out of Boston. He married ANNIE ELIZABETH JONES at the Scots Church, Sydney on 20th March 1866. Two children were born in America and five children in New Zealand. Three more children were born when the Pierce family finally settled in Australia.

Hiram Pierce died at 163 Rowntree Street in September 1901, his occupation being listed as "Engineer's Labourer." Mrs. McVey wonders whether her great grandfather may have worked at Mort's Dock.

The Pierce family have associations with 52 & 97 Mort Street, 7 Edward Street and 2 Goodsir Street in Rozelle as well as Rowntree Street.

FRANCIS (FANNY) BROWN

Mrs. Prue Johnston of Kianga is seeking information on the above who died 26/10/1870 at the age of 85 and was buried at Balmain Cemetery. Francis's father RANDLE was a soldier.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

of

THE BALMAIN ASSOCIATION

will be held at the Watch House on

Wednesday 12 August, starting at 7.30pm.

All welcome, particularly any potential office bearers - some of you must be able to do better than the present incumbents, or at least that's the impression we get. As an inducement, and undoubtedly in flagrant contravention of all electoral rules, your management committee has decided that funds will stretch to wine and cheese etc. So, all of you turn up and thus financially ruin the Association!



FORTHCOMING CONCERTS

at

CAMPBELL STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The Taverner Consort - Songs of Love and Lamenting
A program of Tudor Songs directed by Susan Briedis with Robert Johnson, alto; Audley Green, harpsichord; Tommie Andersson, lute; Susan Blake, cello.

Sunday 21st June at 3 p.m.
Tickets \$8 and \$3

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David Leviston and Erica Booker - flute and piano.
The second of the 1987 season of recitals with a program consisting of:

Handel - Sonata in E Minor
J.S. Bach - Sonata in E flat Major
Chopin - Impromptu in F sharp Major
Enesco - Cantabile et Presto
Schubert - variations "Ihr Blumen alle"

Sunday 28 June at 3 p.m.
Tickets \$8 and \$5



PAINTING THE TOWN

You may remember that last year a representative from the Department of Planning and Environment came to Balmain to look at Darling Street, with the idea of implementing a Heritage Colours scheme on shop fronts. One of the reasons for remembering would be that a similar scheme has lately been mentioned in the press with regard to Oxford Street.

Well, some of our members were recently present at a function attended by Peter Crawford (our local Member, for any of you who may be new to the area and/or not politically minded) and he said that the idea, although nothing has been done yet, has by no means been abandoned. We will use these columns to keep you up to date on any developments which may take place in the near future.

BALMAIN GARDEN CLUB

GARDEN TASKS NOW

ANNUALS: Finish planting seedlings for late winter and spring i.e. cinerarias, iceland poppies, pansies, primulas, violas, cornflowers, wall-flowers, snapdragons, verbenas etc. It's now too late to plant stocks and also too late for seeds. Protect plants with 'Defender'.

PERENNIALS: Cut back to ground old foliage and flower stalks of perennial phlox, per. asters, shasta daisies etc. Dig up and throw away the old centre pieces and replant the side pieces.

CUTTINGS: This is the last month for these until spring, as the weather will get too cold for growth. Try geraniums, carnations, veronicas, roses and pieces of shrubs.

CAMELLIAS: Now into their flowering season. Plenty of camellia shows to see in the next two months. See before buying additions to your stock.

ROSES: Prepare spots for planting (peat moss, blood and bone, compost). July is last planting month for bare root plants, but these days many are sold in pots and with care can be planted all the year round. I find they come on better than the bare root plants, less shock probably. Go over your established roses and cut out any dead pieces and very old branches, thus lessening work when pruning in July.

PASSION FRUIT VINES: Prune well back now.

GINGER LILLIES: Cut right back to the ground. Fertilise. The cut-off pieces make good compost with their larger leaves. If clump is getting too big, thin out roots.

CHRYSANTHEMUMS: Now well into flowering. The smaller flower heads do best against rain. After flowering finishes cut back to ground and thin out as per other perennials.

INDOOR PLANTS: Reduce watering, especially for tropicals such as crotons. Use lukewarm water when really required. No fertilisers in winter.

LILIUMS: Take up, thin out and replace. Must not be left out of the soil.

CINERARIAS: Watch for leaf miner markings and spray with systematic spray such as Rogor, if they are present.

DAHLIAS: When flowering is finished, cut off tops. They can be left in the ground, though sometimes they rot, but mostly seem to come up again intact, in their season, as they are fairly tough.

BULBS: Should all be in by now, though ranunculi and anemones will still do alright, though planted late.

VEGETABLES: Plant broad beans, lettuce and onions. **SWEET PEAS:** Nip out tips when 6 inches high and reduce tendrils.

CITRUS: May need a copper-based spray against fungi.

Jessica Murray.



Another justification for the monorail turned up at the basket-weavers collective monthly meeting the other day.

"How else are they going to get people to visit the Darling Harbour Scheme?"

COMMUNITY NOTICE BOARD

We would like to draw your attention to a superbly produced book on one of our justly famous local institutions --- The Balmain Christian Brothers High School.

Their profusely illustrated centenary magazine, published a short while ago, is, as they say:

A little bit of history,
Some nostalgia,
A few legends.

The school, in Thames Street, opened in 1887 with a staff of three Brothers from the Order. According to one account they found their work "indeed most disheartening" as "the boys are very backward, ... they are in fact half-wild, and all the Brothers say they never got a harder task than the improving of the young Balmainites".

My, haven't times changed.

The story of how this challenge was met and has continued to be met over the next 100 years makes a fascinating yarn. Try and lay your hands on a copy of the book if only to read the account of how the hole to make the playground was filled. I won't even tell you on what page it appears so you'll have to find it for yourselves. It'll be well worth it though I promise you.

ETHEL MAY

We regret to have to announce the recent death of Ethel May, one of the Association's founding members and its second secretary. She will be sadly missed by all who knew her.



the balmain association
representing
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 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.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Return to: Treasurer, P.O. Box 57, Balmain 2041

NAME:

ADDRESS:

TELEPHONE: HOME:

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION (including News Sheet Delivery in Balmain-Birchgrove-Rozelle)

Please circle ... NEW MEMBER / RENEWAL

Single/Family/Household	\$ 8.00
Organisation	\$12.00
Pensioner or Student	\$ 1.00

Add \$5.00 to above rates to have News Sheet posted.

Cheques should be made payable to "The Balmain Association".