

the balmain
association

NEWS SHEET

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FOUNDED 1965 PO BOX 57 BALMAIN 2041

JUNE 1988

My Fellow Members..

From your President

As predicted, big development issues are looming. Residents who anticipated this and pressed in vain for a comprehensive town plan at the time of the Mort Bay development may well feel antagonised over the proposed sale of the power stations, when, only a short time ago, the authorities refused to admit that these sites could be used for housing, and steadfastly ignored community requests for a rational and broad plan to achieve the most desirable distribution of increased housing and open space on the peninsula. That chance has undeniably gone, but effort is needed to prevent more blunders and, ideally, to secure some gains.

Some useful facts bear repeating. The Balmain Peninsula is tiny (310 hectares compared with Centennial Park's 220 ha) and therefore of minimal significance in the sprawl of Sydney. Our population density is over twice that of the Sydney average while our open space ratio is less than half the Sydney average. We have no bike riding and skate boarding areas for our children. We have no retirement housing for the many of our elderly who wish to leave their privately owned houses but stay on the peninsula. Our roads are inadequate for increased traffic generation. And so on...

These well-worn arguments for better, more appropriate land use can now be bolstered by reference to the Strategic Policy Document produced by the New South Wales Urban Planning and Environment Coalition, of which the Balmain Association is a foundation member. The Document has much to say on a whole range of issues, and residents are encouraged to read it and apply it to justify community aims and needs. For example, while supporting a rational policy of urban consolidation, the Document unequivocally stipulates an open space standard over twice that which exists in this area. On the principle of regional equity, also upheld in the Document, residents here can legitimately argue that open space is a local priority. Foreshore setback and public access are also endorsed.

Statistics and reason favour us. What are the obstacles?

The main determinants of land use are market value, ownership (public or private) and political expedience. Lobbying strategies need to take account of these factors. As we all know, inner city land is extremely expensive, and development pressure is high to realise maximum return on land value, whoever owns it. If the land is privately owned, government purchase for public use is unlikely, and least likely for open space until such time as we have the central funding body proposed by the Urban Coalition.

Continued Page 2 ...

Government aid for Watch House

The Department of the Environment has offered the Association a grant of \$2500 for the restoration of the Watch House. This amount will not be sufficient for all of the renovation planned, and the Association will fund some of the repairs. The work involves the stonework both inside and outside as well as plumbing, painting and carpentry. Currently before the court is our claim on insurance for the damage to the fence and the verandah, caused by the truck careering off the road last year.



Watch House Festival or high spirits?

BALMAIN GARDEN CLUB

ROSE PLANTING TIME

During June and July, rose plants become as dormant as they can be in this climate, and bare-root planting is then done. This requires more care than transplanting from pots which can be done all the year round. If any shrivelling of the green bark is visible they have been out of the ground too long, and are unlikely to be successful. Before planting place them in water to freshen up for a few hours. Never leave an unwrapped bare root plant exposed to air. Ideally, the site should have as much sun as possible away from tree roots and dripping branches, and would have been prepared a month or so previously, with compost and dampened peat and allowed to settle.

The hole should be about 37cm in diameter and depth with a small mound in the centre. Spread out the roots, cut off broken ends, and place the plant over the centre mound. Cover with some of the soil and water to settle the earth between the roots. The union of the root-stock and the budded-on plant should be about 1cm below the surface as the earth will sink further. Cover with more soil and water well to consolidate the planting.

It will need water once or twice weekly, depending on the weather, to just keep damp but not soggy. No fertiliser at this stage. A little genuine blood and bone mixture (not the nasty synthetic stuff) could be sprinkled away from the stems. In August give the plant a little packaged rose food, or any mixture with a low nitrogen content but high superphosphate and sulphate of potash (never muriate of potash). Feed rose plants lightly every 4 - 6 weeks until March as roses are heavy feeders, and they will need mulching in summer with cow manure or rotted leaves or old grass cuttings kept away from the stems. The plant may need staking in the early stages if exposed. Don't expect many flowers from climbing roses for a year or two, as their energies will be going into making branches. Next month I will discuss the potting of roses.

Jessica Murray

From your President continued

Currently, the only realistic way private land can be acquired for open space is as dedication to the local council in return for rezoning. All the major sites on the peninsula need rezoning to be developed. Residents should pressure Leichhardt Council to drive a hard bargain when dealing with developers on private land such as Unilever (6 ha), Monsanto, Ampol and Colgate-Palmolive.

On the publicly owned development sites such as White Bay and Balmain Power Stations, MSB and Elcom land, residents wanting community facilities must counter official desire to sell off prime land, and make it too politically costly to do so. A strong case can be made that no more housing should be built on the Mort Bay site. Another example is that the vacant MSB land between the White Bay Park and the container terminal should become tennis courts, well away from residential areas. Whatever residents want, wishful thinking won't secure anything. Only hard, timely pressure on politicians and the media will, because, in the final analysis, developers, public or private, do whatever they can get away with. Political expedience is the ultimate determinant of land use.

Finally - the Unilever site has been suggested for a high-tech complex with 2000 workers. And rumour is that a Heliport at Pyrmont is being seriously mooted again. Flight paths would affect our area. Be ready...

Jane Ward

COAL MINE EXHIBITION

The exhibition in April of photographs and memorabilia of the Balmain Coal Mine held in the residence of Dr. Robin Jones attracted considerable interest and members of the Association had been invited to display our publications. The activity resulted in good sales and some new members.

BIO-DEGRADABLE

*Her garden really was superb
She cherished every shrub and herb
But trespassers and children losted
Quickly found themselves composted*



The Garden Club meets on the third Saturday of each month at 1.15pm at the Watch House. All interested welcome.

HISTORICAL QUESTIONS, ANSWERS & NOTES

THE BALMAIN ASSOCIATION'S INDEX

Using an IBM compatible computer and a data program based on Lotus (devised by the History Division and local member, John Sullivan) the Historical Index is up and running (despite a few past and inevitably future hiccups). We currently have 2500 entries between the years 1858 and 1877, with the sky being the limit.

The Index is not supposed to be a definitive database, just an index to enable researchers to find sources for more information. (How many times have you re-read a particular book because you are sure that you saw a reference to someone or something somewhere in it?)

The ranges covered in the database include: YEAR, NAME, OCCUPATION, PREMISES NAME, ADDRESS, SOURCE OF INFORMATION and a small NOTES section. The database will be able to answer and supply a variety of questions based on any combination of the above ranges.

It can search for a specific person's name over a period of time, giving occupation and place of residence if known or required. A list of persons with similar names can be extracted.

It will be able to provide a list of the residents of a specific street in a given year or years or provide the number of professions/occupations over a period of time which could show the development of specific industries in particular areas.

In the light of the Balmain Association's urgent need to raise money towards the restoration of the Watch House, there will be a small charge to those who wish to avail themselves of the Index. This will be notified in the future when the Index reaches 10000 entries.

Tikwis Begbie

JESSIE McMAHON

For each of the Saturdays in Heritage Week, 16th & 23rd April, Mrs. Jessie McMahon, the daughter of Sgt. I. Gray, the last occupant of the Watch House, graciously attended her childhood home to act as guide and informant. She travelled from the Central Coast by public transport with a basket of her excellent scones to welcome visitors with a Devonshire Tea.

Jessie has transcribed a tape of her recollections of her life in the Watch House from 1930 to 1947. Printed copies of this warm account of a policeman's family can be had for 50c.



Mrs. Marguerite (Daisy) Beattie visited the watch House on her return from donating an antique 'Balmain' dress to the Power House Museum. The dress had been worn by Miss Elizabeth McCaskie [Johnston] during the Ball in the evening following the opening of Ryde's Town Hall on 8th August 1903. The press described the dress as "old gold covered with black lace, jet and gold ornaments". Mrs. Beattie's mother Mrs. Agnes Gunther [Moodie] of Balmain also attended the function wearing "black silk with guipure trimming".

Does any member of the Association have any knowledge of a boat named "Tom Fisher" built by Beattie & Settree around 1884?



"I sentence you to transportation and may God have mercy on Australia!"

Early marine biologist centenary

Balmain people may be interested in an exhibition in the Macleay Museum of the Sydney University which traces the life of Nicolai Miklouho-Maclay who lived at "Wyoming" (owned by the Deloitte family), Snails Bay from 1884 to 1886. Russian by birth, Miklouho-Maclay was an internationally acclaimed explorer of New Guinea in 1871 and established the first marine biological station in the southern hemisphere at Watson's Bay in 1881. He married Margaret Clark, daughter of colourful Sir John Robertson, ex-Premier of N.S.W. His sons Alexander and Vladimir were born at "Wyoming".



Police have defended the Neighbourhood Watch program in the face of an American survey which said that Australia was the worst country in the world for burglary and car thefts. A spokesman said one could not assume the programs were failing just because there was a high reported incidence of burglaries and car thefts. "Police awareness programs have the effect of encouraging people to report crimes," he said.

A great deal of Balmain is still not covered by Neighbourhood Watch. Residents are urged to support petitions for the start of a group in their area, or to support the existing group. All valuables should be engraved with their driver's licence number prefixed by NSW. Contact Sgt. Warren Jeffers at Balmain Police Station 810 0777 for your group contact or information.



Was it all that free Michelton wine or Bob Nicholls' bonhomie? In any case the launch of his latest book, "The Colonial Volunteers" was an enjoyable event. Guests from all over Sydney moved in and out of the cells and overflowed into the courtyard, mingling with Association members. Bob even sold some of his books, properly autographed of course.

The occasion points up the suitability of the Watch House as a venue for similar happenings. It is already considered an attractive gallery for art and sculpture exhibitions. Contact Steve South on 810 1411 for details.

WANTED

Micro-fische Viewer for the History Room

NEXT MEETING

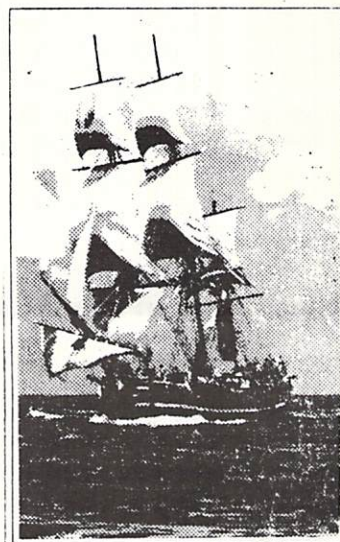
The Balmain Association meets next at 7.30pm on Wednesday 1st June at the Watch House 179 Darling St. Balmain.

Coming soon

FIRST FLEETER'S TEA PARTY

On Sunday 19th June from 2-4pm the Balmain Association will host an Afternoon Tea Party for the Fellowship of First Fleeters. Our visitors will arrive at the Darling St. Wharf and will be met by the band of the 2nd Div Royal Artillery. There are twenty Fellows who

have Balmain ties. They will march to Nicholson St. where Rotary Club members are to unveil a plaque. Miss Dawn Fraser, MP promises her attendance at the function in the Watch House. All members are welcome and help with the catering will be appreciated. How about it you scone-makers?



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".