

the balmain
association

NEWS SHEET

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HIGH RISE FOR COCKATOO ISLAND?

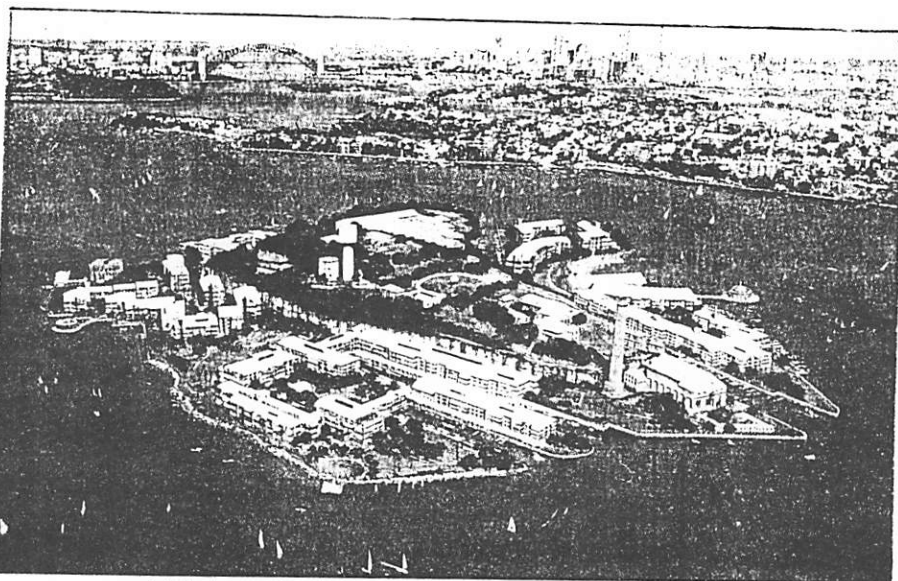
Historic Cockatoo Island, the site of Australia's oldest continuous dockyard, could be sold for luxury residential or tourist development. The Federal Government expects to gain \$120 million from either selling the freehold or granting an extended ground lease. The existing lease held by Cockatoo Dockyard Pty Ltd expires in 1992.

It is probably the most inaccessible of Australia's principal historic sites because of its use as a defence establishment since 1913 when the Federal Government bought the island. Two of Sydney's oldest surviving buildings are the remains of a prison barracks and guard-house built by convicts in the time of Governor Gipps in 1839. There are 14 grain silos that were carved out of the rock but their use was abandoned late in 1841 because storage of grain by governments was then conceived as an interference with free market forces. In the 1870's the silos were pressed into use for water storage. Two can easily be seen today where the excavations for extensions during World War II cut through them. The island is the cradle of the Australian shipbuilding industry. The Fitzroy dry dock was excavated in 1857 by convict labour. The Sutherland dock was the largest in the world when opened in 1890.

In 1863 Fred Ward, 'Captain Thunderbolt', swam to freedom near Elkington Park to be the only successful escapee from Cockatoo.

An Industrial School for Girls and Reformatory was established there in 1871 and to remove the stigma of having been at Cockatoo, the name was changed to Biloela, an aboriginal word for cockatoo.

A spokesperson for State Planning Minister Mr. David Hay said that the State and Federal Governments had agreed to employ consultants to devise an appropriate plan for the island. According to the selling agents, Collier International,



Artist's impression of prospective development of Cockatoo Island.

it is the largest Sydney Harbour waterfront land parcel ever offered. Local architect, Mr. Philip Cox, commissioned by the Government to suggest potential development, said, "It's a marvellous opportunity to do something magic." A mixed residential, recreational, retail and resort development is most likely, with developers needing to purchase a mainland property for car parking and jetty purposes.

Where, you might ask, is available land for this mainland access? Who can afford a waterfront site to build car parking facilities? What impact will this facility have on local residents?

The Birkenhead Centre should be delighted to allocate some existing facilities and traffic would be less disruptive than elsewhere. Balmain and Rozelle residents should examine the proposals carefully to ascertain if their interests will be threatened. Apart from the preservation of heritage there will be concern about pollution, garbage disposal and sewerage. The island must be accessible to everyone. Carefully planned development will be a welcome addition to the area. One of the fringe benefits would be a much improved ferry service west of Long Nose Point.

DON'T SELL PUBLIC LAND

The National Trust last year called for all government owned land and especially waterfront land and heritage sites to never be sold but leased if development is desirable.

Indifferent support has come from a most unlikely person, the Minister for Corrective Services. Admittedly, Mr. Vablsley was trying to justify to his constituents the development of Strickland House, Vaucluse.

The current trendy policy of 'privatisation' will only dispose of public assets for a one time gain which will soon

disappear in government waste and inefficiency and hand outs. This has been vividly illustrated in Britain today. It is nothing else but asset stripping and avoids the real issue of better management. Would anybody seriously advocate the selling of Hyde Park because of its land value? If public land was developed under extended lease future generations would not have the restrictions that occur with private sites especially when they are required for community purposes. Councils have great funding problems in securing sites for parks, playing fields and even car parks.

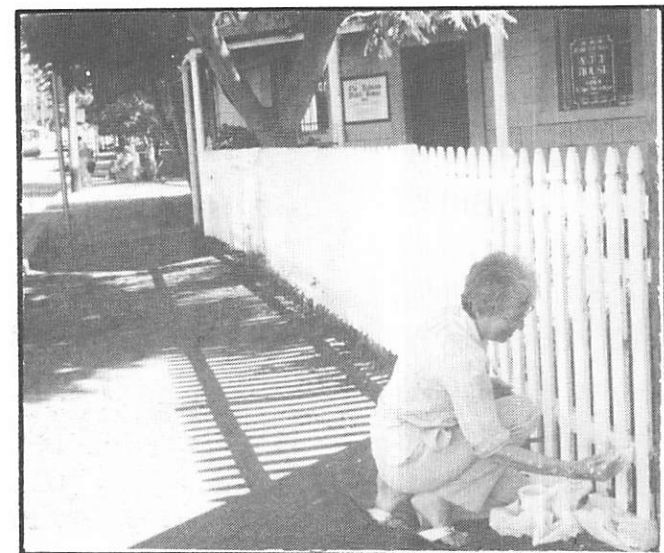
Most of Canberra has been developed under this strategy. The publically owned sites on the Balmain peninsula could return just as much if leased.

HERITAGE WEEK EXHIBITION

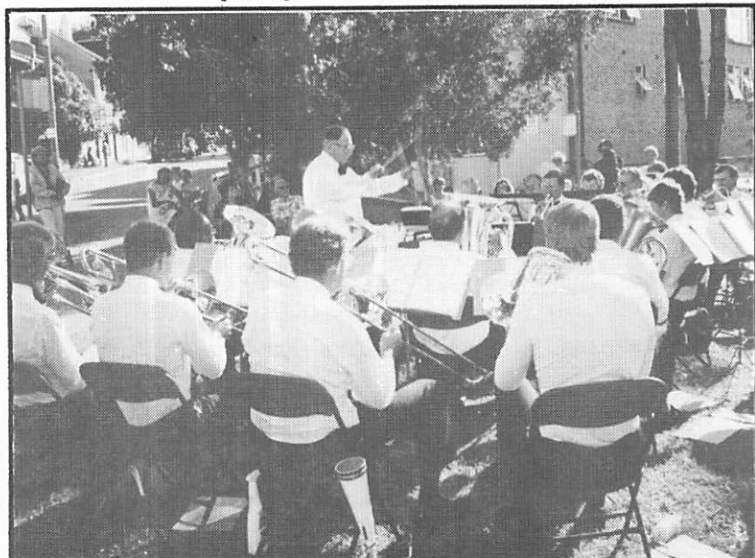
After so many wet week-ends, Saturday 15th April was a sunny, beautiful day, ushering in the Heritage Week exhibition at the Watch House.

Due to the inclement weather beforehand, the painting of the picket fence and verandah posts had been a trial for Debby Nicholls, but with flags and bunting and last minute touches to the display areas, all was in readiness.

The Leichhardt Municipal Brass Band performed promptly at 2pm and was warmly received by the public and drew many of them to the exhibition. "I've passed here many times but have never been inside", was a comment heard many times.



Debby Nicholls painting the last picket



The Leichhardt Municipal Brass Band outside the Watch House



Part of the Heritage Photographic Exhibition



Dawn Fraser, MP & Ald. Issy Wyner opening the Exhibition

Mr. Reg Mitchell from Newcastle, responds to our article about the Soldiers' Memorial Hall at the Congregational Church. Capt. T.R. Macnee was the brother of his grandmother, Isabella Thornton, wife of Reginald Thornton. His cousin has letters from 'Uncle Tom' written from France to his father Geoffrey Thornton. His grandparents gave a bell in the Sydney University War Memorial Carillon in memory of Capt. Macnee.

He remembers attending Sunday School in the hall and the Minister of the Congregational Church living in a corner of the Soldiers' Memorial Hall. He is impressed by the fact that, because of the markets conducted in the church grounds, the old church is again becoming one of the centres of the community as it must have been in the old days.

MORE ON THE THIRD RUNWAY

Some people support the third runway believing that it will be cost effective. It is not generally realised that the Cabinet was not given valid comparisons of costs. The \$1.4 billion differential mentioned in the press release is a red herring. For instance, the estimated cost of laying runway pavement for Badger's Creek was more than double that of the third runway. There is also some doubt about the substantial infrastructure costs that the new runway would require. A bridge over General Holmes Drive would be required as well as the relocation of the MSB Research establishment, not to mention the additional airport facilities that would be needed.

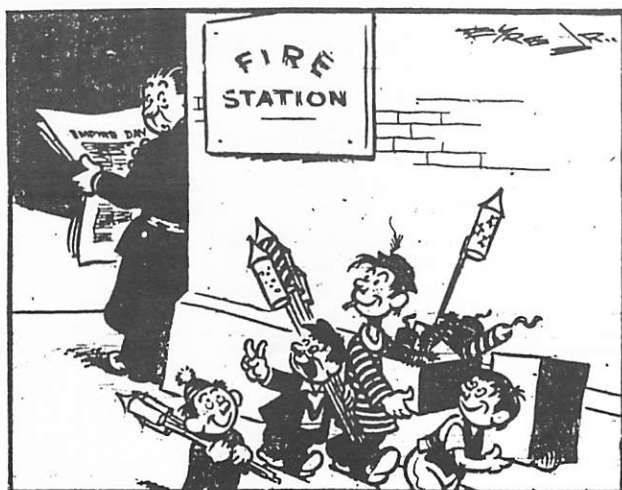
GOURLIES CORNER

BONFIRES

In the 1920-50's, the 24th May was called Empire Day, known to children as Cracker Night. In 1929, 3000 medals, specially struck by the Royal Mint, were despatched to over 100 NSW schools to commemorate Empire Day.

School children had their Assembly and Empire Day service but the biggest attraction was the bonfires and letting off their crackers in the night. Many vacant lots of land, and parks would have a bonfire, and after a week's work by adults and children, a lot of tree branches, old wooden cases, old car tyres and any burnable rubbish was towered many feet high, ready for burning. Punch Park had the biggest fire, and this would attract a few hundred people. The circumference would be about 20 ft. Family groups would come to light their roman candles, rockets, catherine wheels, sparklers, jumpin' jacks, basket bombs and bungers. Their dogs wouldn't be seen for days and Mascot Airport was often closed because of the smoke.

The day was later celebrated as Commonwealth Day and then incorporated in the Queen's Birthday until fireworks were discouraged because of accidents and loutish behaviour.



"See you later, boss!"

BALMAIN VINTAGE YACHT RACE

Bad weather reduced the expected crowd in Elkington Park on Sunday 23rd April for the Balmain Vintage Yacht Race.

Our display was in dire straits until Steve South came to the rescue and provided a small tent to protect our exhibits, including the Slade picture of the 1864 Balmain Regatta, which was the first prize in a guessing competition. Mr. P. Attard of Cammeray bought the winning ticket before he crewed Rankawa, a 40ft ketch competing in the race. The consolation prize was won by Jim Kiloh, the proprietor of the Dry Dock Hotel.

The showers were less frequent when the race began and the old yachts presented a wonderful sight on the Parramatta River. A feature of the day was the appearance of Akarana, New Zealand's Bicentennial gift to the Australian Maritime Museum. Originally built in N.Z. in 1888 to compete in the Victorian International regatta, the 39ft gaff cutter lay neglected in Sydney Harbour until it was shipped back to New Zealand in 1987 to be restored.

BONFIRES BLAZE FOR EMPIRE NIGHT REVELS



THE ENIGMA OF INNER FREEDOM

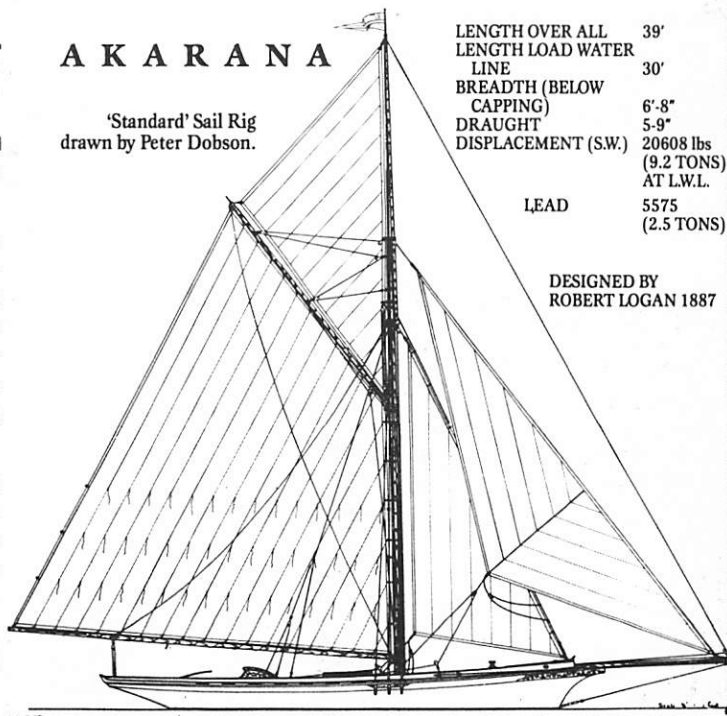
Beginning 8pm on Tuesday 9th May at the Watch House, the Gurdjieff Society of Australia will present a series of introductory readings and discussions based on the teachings of G.I. Gurdjieff, which promote the harmonious development of man. They are concerned with developing a more sensitive awareness to connect with ourselves and the world. There will be no charge and refreshments will be provided for a small donation.

A K A R A N A

'Standard' Sail Rig
drawn by Peter Dobson.

LENGTH OVER ALL	39'
LENGTH LOAD WATER	
LINE	30'
BREADTH (BELOW	
CAPPING)	6'-8"
DRAUGHT	5'-9"
DISPLACEMENT (S.W.)	20608 lbs
	(9.2 TONS)
	AT L.W.L.
LEAD	5575
	(2.5 TONS)

DESIGNED BY
ROBERT LOGAN 1887





BALMAIN GARDEN CLUB

LOVE THE EARTH

When we were young we regarded gardening as a charming hobby. In this enlightened day and age we know that everybody has a moral obligation to plant trees and shrubs, vegetables, etc. In other words to clothe the earth, to combat pollution and soil erosion as well as growing more food.

Why did the people of Africa suffer so badly as a result of their drought? What happened to their farms? Firstly, they failed to realise that every stick and stone, every leaf is precious. On the farms all the trees were cut down and used for firewood — a fatal mistake. The stones were used to build dwellings. As a result storms carried away their topsoil, silted their rivers and left the land sterile. Then came the long, dry spell causing widespread starvation.

We need to learn from them the necessity of building stone retaining walls to conserve the soil. Then to plant trees, vegetables and a wide variety of plants to beautify and preserve the land.

As for the leaves; never burn them, but dig them in or merely use as mulch. Dig little holes and bury organic kitchen matter. Cover well to protect against flies. A rich source of plant food is meat or fish bones, bury them and place a heavy stone on top to make sure animals do not dig them up. Even paper can be shredded and worked into the soil.

Learn to recycle everything into the earth that can possibly break down into plant food. Eventually when you go out into your garden you will look up into your canopy of leaves and know that you have created an oxygen layer to protect the earth as well as beautifying it.

Margaret Ford

Bonny Davidson would dearly like the Park at Mort Bay to be named after Mrs. Vi Baykett who gave a great part of her life to Balmain, and for which she was awarded the O.B.E.

She worked very hard for the Balmain Hospital, Balmain Police Boys Club, school fetes and street stalls. She never sat idle, always knitting for fund raising, even after a tragic illness in which she lost both her legs and nearly all of the tips of her fingers. Her case made medical history at the time. She was the quickest person on artificial legs. Vi spent many hours visiting and encouraging others who had lost their limbs. She will be remembered by many hundreds of Balmainites for her courage and energy. Vi died in Mort St. fourteen years ago. Her husband, Bob, was great in his support of her.



Bonnie suggests that the name Baykett Memorial Park has a true Balmain spirit.

OUR HOUSE WATCH

The Watch House is open Saturday from 1 to 3pm

Call in for coffee

The Balmain Association meets on the first Wednesday of each month at 7.30pm in the Watch House, 179 Darling Street, Balmain.

Send mail c/o PO Box 57, BALMAIN. 2041

Our editorial phone is 818 4954

Interested artists, potters, sculptors etc. who would like to organise an exhibition in the Watch House are urged to contact Steve South on 810 1411. The Watch House can also be made available as a meeting place for local organisations.

Come and spend a few hours on an island and just watch the sailboats drift by at our

SNAPPER ISLAND BARBECUE

Sunday 28th May 10.30am - 3pm

Inspect the Maritime Museum

Cost: Adults \$10 Concession \$6 Children free
Ferry departs Birkenhead Wharf 10.30am
Refreshments available, fireplace, tables & seats.
Huge recreation room if needed.
Contact Kath Hamey 818 4954



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".