



the balmain
association

NEWS SHEET

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White Bay - the Valley in the shadow of?

After years of being run down, polluted, but relatively peaceful, White Bay has become the Peninsula's next development hot spot. As several major sites are to be redeveloped, the impact will be dramatic, both locally and regionally.

The exact future of the main public properties - the White Bay Power Station, the Coal Loader and the Grain Terminal - is yet to be determined, although there has been considerable media publicity about State and local government schemes for commercial, high tech, residential, recreational and tourist projects linking White Bay with Pyrmont and Darling Harbour. Most of this is still highly speculative and residents can't be sure of what's in the pipeline, except that public open space is a low priority while profit and rates income are high priorities for those making the decisions. The mega-marina back on the books for Rozelle Bay is an indication of the intensity of development envisaged for this area.

Two of the privately owned sites, Ampol and Unilever, seem close to a definite course of development. Ampol (1.78 ha) is likely to become medium density housing. Unilever (6.5 ha approximately) is now set to become both residential and commercial. Leda bought the site from Pacific Properties, who had proposed a totally commercial estate with a generous buffer zone of public open and road closure designed to restrict traffic to the Robert Street route. Pacific Properties had included in their plans an on-site, landscaped area with a pond and two tennis courts for their tenants. They also proposed a reorganisation of the area's public open space with an upgraded Punch Park linked to a new strip of park along Palmer Street, and the relocation of improved public tennis courts away from housing.

Now that Leda own the site, residents are worried that the revised scheme could give them the worst of both worlds - increased business and residential activity, more traffic and less public open space. There is particular concern that housing is proposed along Palmer Street on the land zone 1 for future public open space.

Leda have no specific plans yet, but they aim to be building by January 1990. They are eager to avoid resident opposition, so now is the time for residents to voice their local knowledge and ideas. For example, Leda might be persuaded to build some environmentally appropriate retirement accommodation, much needed in the local private market. An incentive could be the proximity of Balmain Hospital where geriatric services are to be increased.

Leichhardt Council should be taking the initiative in bringing together, in the planning stage, all the interested groups and land owners in the precinct so that a coordinated, community oriented land use scheme can be developed for the sites owned by Leda, Elcom, the Grain Authority, the Maritime Services Board, Leichhardt Council and the Department of Health. There is a rare opportunity here for comprehensive planning and residential input.

Members of the Association who want to be involved may phone me on 818 1454. What do you think should be done with the land and roads in White Bay? What are your concerns and priorities? What should be done to achieve maximum practicable public open space? How should that be utilised? What should be done with the Nurses' Home in Wortley Street?

White Bay's future is of particular concern currently, but we are always interested to hear members' views on any local issue.

Jane Ward

Shelter-belters out of date

from the Sun-Herald 16th April, 1989

Balmain police were upset last week when a demolition gang arrived from the Dept of Public Works to tear down an air raid shelter on the property they share with the courthouse. The shelter, built in 1940, has been used to store police records.

Now it is being demolished to make way for parking facilities for court officials. When police last week challenged the workers over their right to remove the shelter, one produced a demolition order - dated 1948.

While people are used to a certain lethargy in the operations of the Public Works Dept, turning up 40 years late does seem inexcusably slow.

Bonnie Davidson remembers an air raid shelter behind a brick fence on the corner of Cameron and Mort Streets on Mort Dock land.

There was also one near the Thames St. Wharf for residents. Her mothers' home had an air raid siren on the roof, which was tested every Wednesday and Saturday at lunch time. Once when a Japanese reconnaissance plane flew over Sydney, her mother, who had been attending a city theatre, hurried home to find that Bonnie (aged 12) had slept through the siren. 'Boy! How I wish I could sleep like that now!' says Bonnie.

There were shelters at the Rozelle Primary School and on the corner of Albion and Percy Streets.

Concert

**Leon Volorelsky, viola and
Janelle Carrigan, piano**

Presbyterian Church

Campbell Street

Sunday June 25th at 3pm

\$10 including afternoon tea

GOURLIES CORNER

Dunny Lane ran off Bay Street, between the back of Rowntree and Short Street houses. For over 50 years, all the houses had their toilets at the end of their backyards, which was a common sight in the early days. To stand in Bay Street and look along the lane and see the rows of toilets on both sides, amazed many people visiting Balmain.

Before a sewerage system was installed, human waste, called nightsoil, had to be collected in pans from the backs of the outside toilets by a 'nightman'. There are still many little laneways along the back fences of houses that were called the nightman's lane. He would call twice a week and exchange a clean pan for a full one which would be loaded on to his cart and eventually driven to the dumping ground. Here, it was placed in holes and covered with earth, but often it was not done very well and many complaints came to the Inspector of Nuisances.

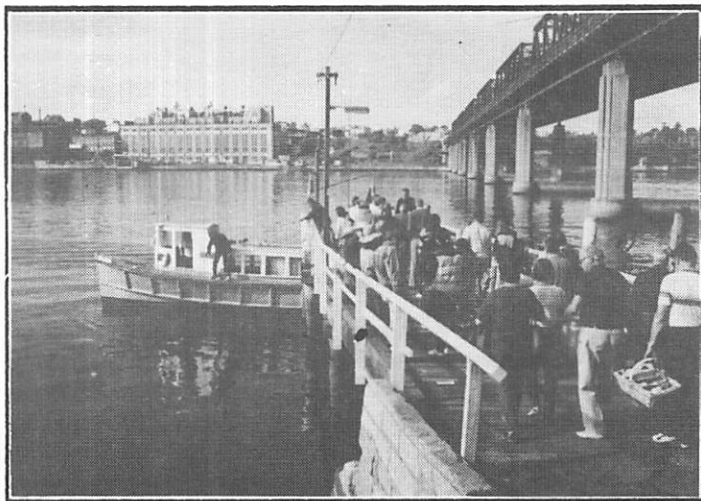
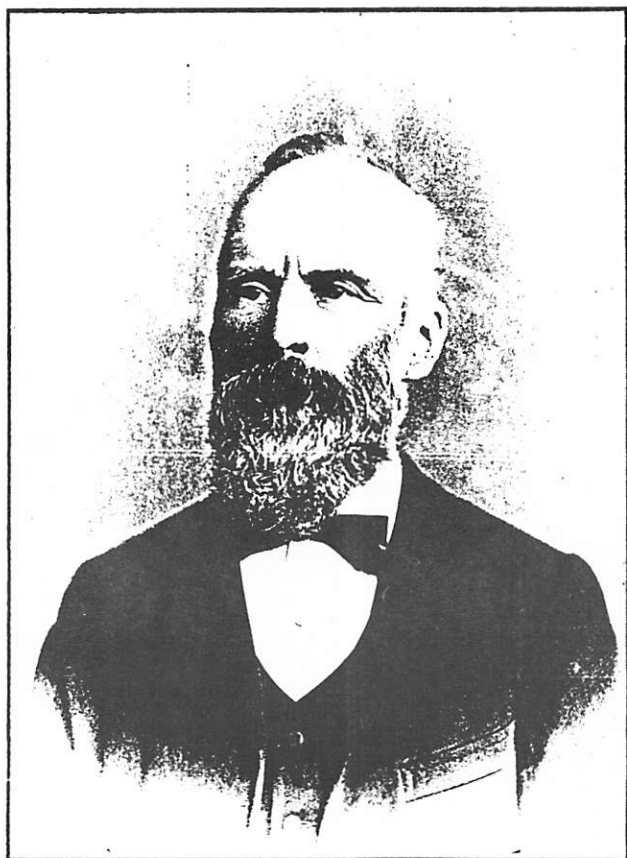
In fact, Council meetings had to devote quite a lot of time discussing what to do about the nightsoil. After one meeting in the 1880s, it was decided to leave it (the problem) in the hands of the Mayor.

In 1876 the nightman was sent to gaol for seven days for failing to do his job properly, but had to be released early to get the pans emptied. Instead he was fined for each case of neglect!

Gary Owen (Callan Park) had two acres set aside for burying nightsoil in 1874. Council decided to stop digging holes when the residents kept complaining so *the nightsoil was loaded on to punts to dump it out at sea instead.*

However, punts were subject to frequent spillages which polluted the surrounding water and foreshores. This happened soon after chutes were constructed at Adolphus Street and 40 tons of nightsoil were dumped into the bay. From *Gathering the Strands* by Jennifer Bates.

From 1886 until 1917 Frederick J. Paris (pictured) of 18 Waterloo Street was Inspector of Nuisances in Balmain.



Members and their friends boarding the ferry for the Association's Barbecue on Snapper Island on Sunday 28th May. The weather was unusually fine and the outing introduced the 48 adults and 15 children to the excellent work of the Sydney Training Depot and the Sea Cadets.

Dear Editor,

On Wednesday 3 May the Balmain Police Citizen's Club sponsored, as part of Law Week '89, a free lecture on *'Your Legal Rights and Duties'*. Guest speakers were local solicitors Peter Colquhoun, Therese Meissner and Tom Williams, and Mr. Roger Dive, a magistrate from Castlereagh Street Court.

The Balmain Association received an invitation three weeks beforehand and I gather that every association in the area received similar notification. In addition, there was a large advertisement in the Glebe.

Bob and I went along to represent the Balmain Association and also because we felt it was a very interesting topic. We assumed many other people would feel the same way. Sad to say, however, this was not the case. For the first half hour we were the entire audience, being joined later by a Balmain citizen who wanted information about certain legal rights.

Because of the low attendance, the four lawyers discussed with us aspects of the law in which we ourselves were interested and generously stayed for the entire hour that it had been anticipated the lecture would last. They were as informative and interesting as we had hoped they would be, and we wish to thank them for their time.

I would also like to take the occasion to express my dismay at the public apathy over such events in Balmain. In a way I suppose, given the lack of interest shown in many of the events sponsored by the Association - as well as in the membership in the Association! - that we should now be inured to this lack of interest, but I hate to accept the 'if you can't beat them, join them' sentiment. Instead I would like to see if this letter generates any response among your readers by fielding the following thoughts:

'Why don't people participate in community activities? Do they find them boring? If so, what would they like instead? Balmain enjoys an outstanding reputation in the media as the home of a concerned, community-orientated group. (Okay, so there are other phrases sometimes used!) Many of the members of the media itself refer frequently in print to Life in Balmain. What do they think is the source of this quality of life? How will it be maintained if organisations like the Balmain Association and the Police Citizens wither away from lack of public support?

In short: Where are you when we need you?

Debby Nicholls

Robert Thomas Ford & Heathfield House

Nineteenth century Balmain was a haven for seafaring men; many of its early inhabitants being sea captains, ship owners, agents and merchants. One such resident was Robert Thomas Ford, a shipping broker & customs agent of Sydney Town, whose fine home was to remain in the family for nearly fifty years.

Robert Thomas Ford, eldest son of London merchant & publisher Robert Ford and his second wife Margaret Brown, was born on 18th January 1807 and christened in the old parish church of St. Catherine Cree, Leadenhall Street in London's East End; heart of the shipping business, and across the road from Lloyds of London. Two more children, Thomas George Ford (1808) & Margaret (1809) were born in the area before R. Ford senior moved the family to Turnham Green in Middlesex (now a western suburb of London) where the rest of his seven sons and five daughters were born. Robert senior died here in July 1830.

Early years of Queen Victoria's reign saw great expansion for the Empire, and it seems inevitable that Robert Ford's descendants would be part of that vast outward movement. Thomas George Ford died at sea off Holland as a lad; another son, Henry Parker Ford, settled in Hong Kong, and another in America; while no less than four of the Ford brothers came to Australia in the 1840s.

John Ford (only surviving offspring of Robert Ford senior's first marriage) was to die unmarried in Tasmania, but no more information about him is currently available. Robert Thomas Ford & his brother William seem to have arrived in Sydney early in 1843; early shipping records are unclear about when and by what ship.

Robert Thomas's first recorded appearance is in an advertisement in the Sydney Morning Herald, 17th July 1844 seeking to buy sheep & share in a sheep station. He also is noted as the agent for the ship Calypso, which docked in Sydney in May 1844. His brother William Ford appears about the same time, after having bought a book-selling & stationery business in George St. (once owned by George William Evans, the noted explorer & surveyor). William was joined by Frederick in 1847, when the business became W & F Ford who, among other books, are chiefly remembered for the publishing of their 1851 Directory of Sydney.

In 1843, **Robert Thomas Ford** married Ellen Pringle in Sydney, a lady some ten years older than him, and the daughter of George Pringle and Sarah Ellsden of Northumberland. **Robert Thomas** had business premises in Bridge Street & Circular Quay at this time. He & his bride lived for a while in Kent Street before buying land to build their house near Grafton Street, Balmain in 1850 [see Leichhardt Historical Journal No15].

Heathfield House (named after Heathfield Terrace, the Turnham Green family home in England), where Robert Thomas & Ellen spent the rest of their lives was a two story building with a large balcony overlooking the water, with three main bedrooms, two servants' bedrooms, outbuildings and a path down to the water with its own jetty, boat house and oyster stakes.

Furnished in a manner befitting a successful Victorian gentleman, a inventory of the house exists in the Mitchell Library. Prepared in January 1864, the house was leased to Samuel Dickinson, for the sum of £100 per annum, during the Ford's temporary absence from Sydney. It makes fascinating reading:

The Drawing Room

1 Round Table; 2 Small Tables; 1 Sofa; 1 Easy Chair; 6 Walnut Wood Chairs - Worked; 2 Papier Mache Chairs; 2 fancy painted Chairs; 1 Small Whatnot; 1 Walnut wood Cabinet; 2 Worked Ottomans; 1 Worked Box Ottoman.

On Mantelpiece: Marble group with Shade?; 2 painted Screens; A Lot? of Shells.

A Chinese Pagoda

Poles; Curtains & Blinds complete; fender; fire irons & Dust pans; 1 Copper coal scuttle & scoop; & 1 Painted Coalscuttle.

Carpet & Hearth Rugs.

1 Card Basket; 2 Large China Vases; A Set of Books & fancy ornaments on Round Table; Simpsons Sketches of the War; A Lot of Art Union Pictures; The Imperial Visit.

The Dining Room

A pair of Bookcases; Dining table; Side Board; Sofa(?); 6 Chairs & 2 Arms; Easy chair with Cushions; A Small round table; A Box Ottoman; A pair plated branch candlesticks; a pair plated candlesticks; 2 Snuffers & Stands.

A pair Calza oil Lamps; Small plated cruet stand; Silver Mustard Spoon; Large plated cruet Stand; Silver Mustard spoon; a plated egg Stand; a plated Liquor Stand and Cut glass Decanters; a plated Cake basket; 2 Quart 4 Pint decanters; a Persian Marble Water Jug; A Papier Mache M7; A Papier Mache Draft Board; Men?; dice & dice boxes.

Pictures: The Waterloo Banquet - Print; Herring fishing by Moonlight - Print; Large Landscape; Large Landscape with Sheep; Large Landscape Italy; Girls Head; 2 Small Landscapes.

1 - 8 day clock Glass Shade; 2 Dark Blue Vases; A quantity of Shells; A quantity of Dresden China ornaments; fender Fire Irons & dust Pan; Copper Coal Scuttle with Scoop.

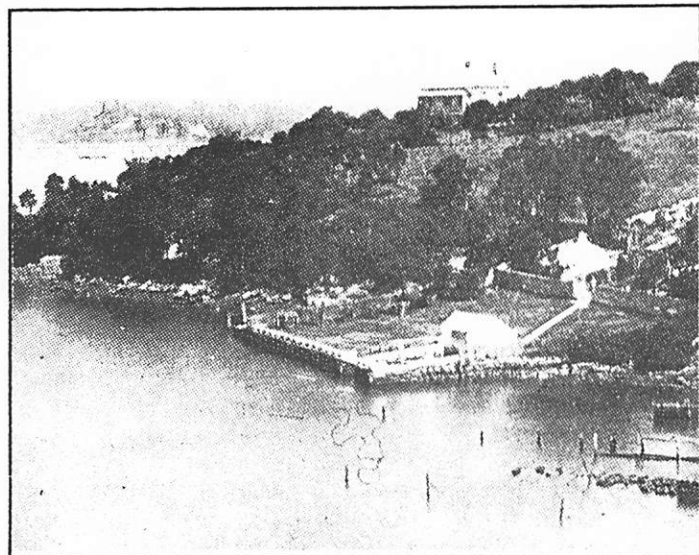
Poles; Curtains & blinds complete.

2 cut glass Salt cellars; 2 common salt cellars; 2 Silver salt spoons; 4 Silver Knife Rests; 1 Silver Butter Knife; 2 Silver Pickle forks; 1 Silver Nutcracker.

6 plated table spoons; 12 plated dessert spoons; 12 plated forks; 1 plated Wine strainer; a case 1 doz. each plated dessert knives and forks; a Set of Table Mats.

[Editor's Note: the wealth of information about the Fords and their house means that this article will be continued in the next News Sheet.]

The picture below shows Heathfield House on the ridge overlooking White Bay that was excavated to accommodate the Container Terminal.





BALMAIN GARDEN CLUB

Some Popular Natives

Bottlebrush. Looks beautiful when flowering alongside its companion plant Beaufortia (Snowball Tree). Plant in a well drained acid, sandy soil. Dig peat moss into the soil, feed with blood and bone.

Illawarra Flame Tree. A slow growing tree, needing rich soil, and ample water but good drainage too. They are grown from seed. Do not prune flame trees, it is not necessary as they have a naturally good shape.

Grevellia Robusta - Silky Oak. Can grow very tall and cast a large shadow, so don't say I didn't warn you. If you are blessed with a large garden consider how spectacular it would be to have a Jacaranda, an Illawarra Flame tree and a Golden Silky Oak all flowering at the same time. Silky Oaks like peat moss dug into the soil, also leaf mould and blood and bone. They can be grown from woody cuttings in a rich mixture using one bucket of coarse sand, one bucket of peat moss, one bucket of potting mix and one cup of blood and bone.

Eucalyptus - Rose of the West (Macrocarpa) or Red Gum. A dense foliaged tree needing hot sun. The flowers are either red, salmon, pink or white. Good drainage is essential. Feed with blood and bone. Eucalyptus is grown from seed.

Christmas Bush - (Ceratopetalum Gummiferum). Prefers a moist coastal position with good drainage. Sprinkle sulphate of iron around the roots in September to improve the flowers. Wood cuttings can be taken in autumn and started under glass.

Guelder Rose. Called the Snowball tree, because that's what the flowers look like. This is a dense, deciduous shrub, which needs to be pruned immediately after flowering. Snowballs flower in the spring and prefer rich, moist, deep soil, well drained and plenty of hosing in summer. Can be layered in late spring to make new plants. Leave undisturbed for six months.

Bauhinia - Butterfly tree or Tree Orchid. This is a small, showy tree with flowers usually gold or red. Young plants need protection from frosts for the first two winters. Feed them osmocote. Cuttings taken in autumn need to be covered by glass. Prune after flowering to preserve a good shape.

Leptospermum - Titree. Prefers sandy loam and dislikes lime. Good drainage is necessary. Add peat moss to the soil. Give plenty of water in summer and do not allow the soil to dry out.

Margaret Ford

Dave Ramsay received a warm Balmain flag waving welcome when he was invited to speak at the Hills District Historical Society on May 24th on his favourite subject - Balmain history.

Many of their members had lived in the Leichhardt area which may have accounted for the reception. He reported that he had suffered only one casualty. A dear old chap had gone to sleep but it was because of his age (he hopes) not from Dave's talk. He was presented with one of their publications for our library. The Hills Society will visit us on September 9th.

COMING SOON

July Excursion

Tank Stream Inspection

Sunday 23 July at 1pm

followed by afternoon tea in the Botanic Gardens

Adults \$10 Concession \$6 Children free

Bookings limited so be early.

Contact 818 4954

Spring Heritage Walk

Woolwich - Kelly's Bush

September 17

OUR HOUSE WATCH

The Watch House is open every 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.



the balmain association
representing

Balmain-Birchgrove &
Rozelle

OUR AIMS ARE TO:

- improve the living, working and recreational amenities 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 cooperation of everyone concerned in the realisation of the above

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Return to: Treasurer, PO Box 57, BALMAIN 2041

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Cheques should be made payable to The Balmain Association