

the balmain
association

NEWS SHEET

Vol 24 No 9 Issue 185

FOUNDED 1965

OCTOBER 1989

Mort Bay Park Opening

On Saturday 16th September the Mayor of Leichhardt, Ald. Doug Spedding, together with the Minister of Local Government, Mr. David Hay, unveiled the plaque commemorating the completion of Mort Bay Park.

Two other plaques are in place at the bay end of the sandstone outline of the dry dock. These are part of the Balmain Historical Trail of 63 plaques installed during 1988-89 by the Balmain Association and the Rotary Club of Balmain.

Thomas Sutcliffe Mort, a remarkable man of ideas, was only 21 when he arrived in Sydney in 1838. With little capital he opened an auctioneering business in George Street, Sydney and later specialised in wool auctions. By 1850 he had a massive wool store at Circular Quay.

In partnership with Captain T. S. Rowntree, he had the dry dock built at Waterview Bay in 1854 but he was the sole owner after 1861. He formed the Mort Dock and Engineering Co. in

1872. The bay was renamed after him at this time.

He was instrumental in the establishment of refrigeration for the shipping of meat overseas.

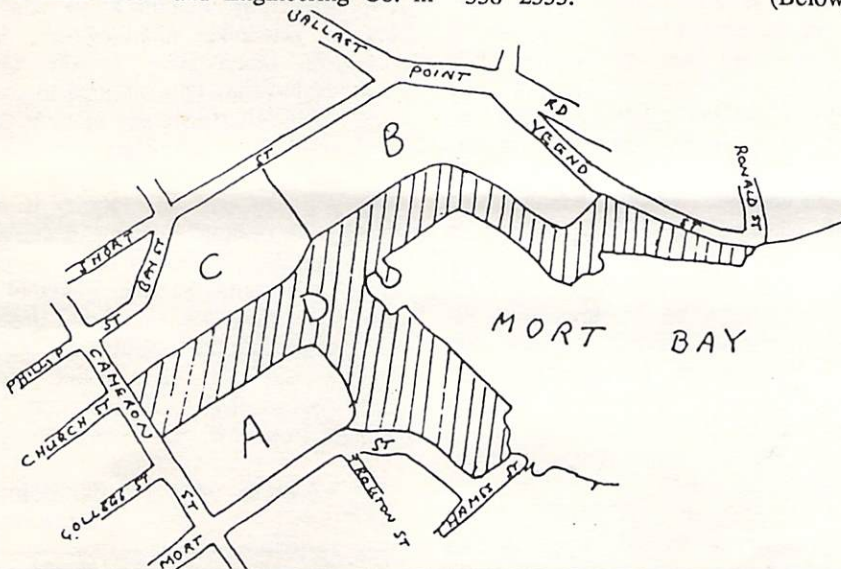
In 1883, five years after his death, hundreds of workers forfeited a day's pay to be present at the unveiling of his statue in Macquarie Place, the first monument erected in tribute to a private citizen of Australia.

The Leichhardt Municipal Band, fresh from a trip to Italy entertained the crowd with popular musical selections before the opening.

The Bandmaster, Mr. Arthur Satchell, announced the formation of a concert band to offer musical diversity to the residents. Interested musicians are requested to contact 358 2555.



(Above) Thomas Mort's statue in Macquarie Place.
(Below) Shaded area on map indicates Mort Bay Park.



Lease Don't Sell

The Premier has announced in the Budget the sale of \$900 million worth of public land in order to fund his programs without having to increase taxes and charges. He is reported as being determined to sell even if the Legislative Council blocked his controversial assets disposal legislation.

The Balmain Association has warned of the consequences of this policy and declares that it is nothing short of the asset stripping of public property. Future generations will pay dearly for this shortsightedness. Only by retaining ownership through leasing arrangements can our heritage be retained and future redevelopment made easier.

Leichhardt Historical Journal No 16

James Gorman V C Remembered at Leichhardt
Leichhardt Presbyterian Church: 1885-1910
Leichhardt West: Original Land Grants and Subdivisions

NOW ON SALE HERE

FIND THE ANSWERS TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- WHERE WAS BALMAIN CEMETERY?
- WHAT WAS THE OLD BUILDING OPPOSITE LEICHHARDT LIBRARY?
- HOW DID THE SUBURB OF LEICHHARDT ORIGINATE?
- WHERE WAS JAMES NORTON'S ELSWICK HOUSE?
- WHY WAS LEICHHARDT CALLED THE "DEPOT OF STINKS"?
- WHY WAS THE HAWTHORNE CANAL BUILT?

AND MORE!

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GOURLIE'S CORNER

J. B. Sharp Furniture Store

This furniture store was situated in Loyalty Square, corner of Darling and Palmer Streets.

Furniture, blinds, curtains and linoleum were the main lines and this business had their own furniture factory behind the store, corner of Palmer Street and Watsons Lane. Mr. J. B. Sharp was a well known and respected gentleman of Balmain. He took a great interest in the Balmain Rowing Club. Many people were employed in his store and it was noted for its big shop display windows.

Prior to World War II, Friday night was late shopping night, as pay day was on that day. Shops closed at 9.30pm and the Salvation Army Band would play outside of Sharp's Store.

There's No Such Thing As A Free Lunch

If you read newspapers closely, you may have noticed advertisements calling for submissions by 13th October 1989 to an Inquiry into Local Government Rating, to be conducted by Mr. Norman Oakes and Sir Nicholas Shehadie. Instigated by the Minister for Local Government, the Inquiry is

"to review the rating and other revenue powers and resources available to local government in NSW to finance the services for which councils are responsible, and report on the changes, if any, which are considered necessary to enable councils to provide those services more effectively."

Submissions are sought from councils, interested organisations and individuals. Because of their varied perspectives and interests, these contributors are likely to have different ideas on what should be done. If you have something to say you should participate in the Inquiry because its outcome may have far-reaching effects on local life: the viability and power of elected councils, the structure and size of our local government workforce, the range and quality of local services, the cost - direct and indirect - to residents and ratepayers and the determination of current and future land use and demography.

Rate-pegging, declining state and federal funding, inflation and increased costs have put real pressure on councils. They have been increasingly complaining that they lack the financial resources

The Salvation Army Hall was situated in Palmer Street, partly on the the present Woolworth's car park. During the 1930s, "free" Magic Lantern picture slides were shown in the hall. It was the rule, boys upstairs, girls downstairs.

J. B. SHARP

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to pay for the number of services that the community expects. These now extend from the traditional garbage collection, street cleaning and park maintenance to childcare and support systems for the elderly and other special needs groups. Only the hardest of hearts would deny that these services enhance community life, but as our cliched heading indicates, they have to be paid for. This Inquiry seems set to take hard look at funding mechanisms and indirectly at what that funding does and the groups it subsidises.

Residents who wish to participate in the debate will need to examine their ideologies closely in the light of their hip-pocket nerves. For example, if services are to be run on user-pay, profit or break-even basis, who would miss out and what services would close? Should councils be allowed to sell or commercialise their facilities to make as much profit as possible? Would such commercialisation be an imposition on adjacent residents? Could councils run the same services with fewer staff? Should state and federal governments increase their funding or take more responsibility for non-traditional local government services?

The issue of rates is central to the Inquiry, as rates are the major source of local government funding. Should rates be pegged or de-regulated? Who would be "driven out" by escalating rates? Who would replace them? Should commercial land use be favoured over residential regardless of the environmental impact because commercial land yields nearly twice the rate base of residential land? Should the acquisition of public open space be neglected because of its lack of rates generation

and its maintenance and insurance costs to councils?

Organisations and groups such as churches and charities which are exempt from rates may come under challenge. Those which operate de facto commercial activities may invite this. But all are under question, if trends are indicated by last year's decision to charge childcare services and neighbourhood centres commercial garbage collection fees.

Pensioners are the most vulnerable group. Some municipalities allow reduced rates to pensioner home-owners, but Leichhardt Municipality is the only remaining local government area to grant a total rebate to pensioners of over five years' residence. This costs between 1 and 1 1/2 million dollars a year.

As you can see, this Inquiry is not dealing with remote academic questions, and if you have opinions or ideas you should write and let the government know what they are. In short, this is an exercise in the setting of social priorities and maximum public input should occur. More details may be obtained from Mr. C. Farley on 223 7700.

Let us know what you think too.
Jane Ward

The Phantom of the Opera and other theatre performers on show at the Balmain Watch House opening at 7pm on October 20th and on October 21st to 22nd 10am - 5pm. Drawings, paintings and etchings by Jan Melville. Enquiries 810 7505

House Names

The practice of numbering houses began in France in 1463 and in Britain it was as late as 1765 that a bill was passed by the Court of Common Council to affix street name tablets and to number houses; however, prior to this, houses were identified by a house name.

Giving houses names goes back far into history and was a tradition carried on by those who came to Australia to establish their homes. There were, in fact, many sources which provided and influenced the use of house names, but generally the names assigned reflected ties with their home country - predominantly the British Isles. We therefore have place names plus many references and sentiments to England, Ireland and Scotland.

DUNROMIN

The British, though, through their extensive Commonwealth connections, became collectors of house names as returning British travellers, civil servants and militia brought back memories in the form of new words from visited countries and adopted these words as house names. As the colonisation of Australia took place, these names were, in turn, transported. Furthermore, in the development from the colonial period, a

great deal of importation of house names occurred due to the vast increase in migration increasing the variances in nationalities. Their house names often became their ties with the home country; in fact almost every country in the world has supplied at least one name.

Events, history and surrounds have inspired more localised choices of house names. Often, the personality of the house itself or its surrounds influenced the choice, with names such as 'The Gables', 'The Abbey', 'Hill Crest', 'Bay View', and many more. Australia's unique fauna and flora provided names such as 'Banksia House', 'Blue Gums', and 'Wattle Tree'.

National sentiment started to grow strongly towards the end of the 1800s with the nationalistic spirit evidenced by "Federation housing" which displayed national symbols and ornaments. In the early 1900s, while there were strong political, economic and other ties with mother England, Australia had begun to stand on her own feet and long suppressed nationalistic sentiments emerged. This was reflected in house names such as 'Cooee', 'The Rising Sun', 'Southern Cross', 'Kookaburra', 'Boomerang', 'Waratah', plus names referring to our own history. Our most original sources have been the Aboriginal languages and include names such as 'Coolangatta' (splendid view), 'Carinya' (happy, peaceful home), 'Noorong' (house), 'Bungarie' (hut), 'Warringah', 'Wahroonga'.

House name signs have varied in their form and have in the past been made on beaten copper, brass lettering on brass plates, stained glass mounted in door panels and windows. In the Federation era and afterwards the most popular form was gold or silver leaf lettering set on a black or mirrored background with a coloured border, glass covered and set into a frame of stained timber. The plaques were often attached under the porch beside the front door.



Most of the earlier homes in Balmain had their own house name as it was not until the late 1880s that house numbers were introduced.

If your home already has its own name, then display it. If it is not shown, then revive it, if it hasn't got one, then make one up. Because after all your home does have its own identity and personality (as do its owners) and by doing this we will all be helping to carry on the tradition of house names.

Russell Scott

This article was reproduced from "Antiques of Australia" with kind permission of Mr. Scott. He specialises in traditional restoration products and his catalogue may be viewed at the Watch House.

THE CENTRAL METHODIST MISSION MONTAGUE STREET SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO

On 18th November 1989 a small group will gather outside the Central Methodist Mission on Montague Street. The occasion is a celebration for the PILCHER family, once of Balmain, followed by afternoon tea at the Watch House hosted by the Association.

Residents may well recall the name when remembering "Pilcher's Pad-dock".

The youngest descendant of F.E. Pilcher will be photographed holding her great grandfather's trowel, used to lay one of the four foundation stones of the CENTRAL METHODIST MISSION hall on the afternoon of 14th November 1914.

The memorial stones face onto Montague St. and are identical with the exception of the names, reading

*This Memorial Stone
was laid by
F.E. Pilcher Esq.,
14th November 1914*

E. Vickery Esq., J.P., W. Druce Esq., J.P., and Rev. F.W. Hymes are the other names on the Memorial Stones.

At that time the Central Methodist Mission had been established in Balmain since 1889 according to the Sydney Morning Herald 14/11/1914.

The Wesleyans of Balmain first held their meetings in Datchett St. in 1845. By 1860 expanding numbers caused the building of larger premises (now the site of Darling Mews - 125 Darling Street). When the Darling St. Church lay in ruins after a storm in September

1876, thought was given to moving the church to a more central location by combining its congregation with that of the little Montague Street Church (Leichhardt Historical Journal No: 13, page 25 & 26). Sands Directories first show a Wesleyan Chapel in Montague St.

in 1877, a Wesleyan Church 1883 and in 1887 a school is added. The Parsonage was located at 1 Montague St.

The Central Mission Hall appears in 1899.

Present research indicates that the original Montague St. Church was on the corner of the east side of Montague Street between Llewelyn and Theodore Streets.

The sketch belows shows how the restored building will look after final touches have been made.



EXHIBITION AT THE WATCH HOUSE

October 20th-22nd Jan Melville
Paintings and drawings
October 25th-29th Bill Berecny
November 3rd-5th Patricia Quinn
Chinese Brush painting
November 10th-12th Klin Sullivan
Pen & wash miniatures of Balmain



BALMAIN GARDEN CLUB

SOILS

People can greatly improve soils, or they can destroy them and the damage is sometimes permanent.

Good soil allows free movement of air and water through the entire content. Good soil also contains plenty of organic material which feeds beneficial soil organisms, both animal and vegetable; these digest raw materials and convert them into plant foods.

Healthy plants will only grow in fertile soils, called loam, where roots can travel freely to find moisture. Therefore, most plants will not grow in arid soils; with low rainfall.

Sandy soils like that which we have in Balmain do not hold water or plant food for long periods, so must be constantly enriched with animal manures and compost, plus fertilisers, then covered with a layer of mulch to stop the surface from drying out. Avoid using lime on sandy soils. Use dolomite instead, but sparingly. Once every second year is enough, but keep dolomite from acid loving plants; such as azaleas, camellias, rhododendrons, daphnes, raspberries and surprisingly - potatoes.

Instead of mixing clay into sandy soils and vice versa, mix plenty of compost into either type of soil to improve their texture. Oxygen must be present in the soil for healthy root growth. This is lost if the soil is waterlogged, when it becomes stagnant and drowns beneficial bacteria. Under these circumstances plants starve to death from lack of air and food. Plants stop growing when they become too hot for comfort; when the air reaches 27 deg C. or over. This is why a mulch will save your garden's life in very hot weather.

Fast growing plants use up foods rapidly. They need extra compost in the soil too. Copy nature for best results. The forest floor is covered with a layer of plant debris, leaves, etc. This is food for all the microscopic plants and animals which help make soils rich as they produce nitrates to feed plant roots.

Margaret Ford

The Balmain Garden Club meets at 1pm on the third Saturday of each month in the Watch House.

The members of the Balmain Garden Club raised \$900 for the Balmain Hospital at their garden stall at the Fete on Saturday 9th September. Well done!

Early Bird

Join now and get 16 months subscription for \$8.00. Inevitably there will be an increase in the annual charge for 1990. A gift of a Balmain Association subscription is a gift for every month of the year and not merely for your News Sheet.

WHAT'S ON

October 15th - Goat Island Excursion
Adult \$10 Family \$25 Child \$5
Ferry departs Wharf 6 Circular Quay 10.45am
Returns 1.15pm. Bookings essential
Contact 818 4954
November 12th - Commemorative Plaque Walk
Booklet launch and History Trail walk on the hour
between 11am-3pm
Rededication of 1914 Memorial Stone
Centenary Mission Hall, Montague Street
by Mr. K. Pilcher - November 18th - 3pm

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

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