

the balmain
association

NEWS SHEET

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GOAT ISLAND EXCURSION

A group of Balmain Association members and friends visited the neighbouring Goat Island on Sunday October 15th. They were escorted by a guide from the Maritime Services Board who was able to help with the following historical background.

Goat Island stands a decent boomerang throw from East Balmain, a natural watchtower rising to a summit of 40 metres which explains the native name 'Mel Mel', meaning 'the eye'. It may have derived its name from the practice of keeping goats there, safely away from Sydney Town.

It was as a quarry that Goat Island had its first official use in 1831, by Captain Charles Wilson and his Department of Public Works against the advice of the Surveyor General, Major Thomas Mitchell, who valued the eastern point for the purpose of defence. The site was abandoned soon after.

The need for the safe storage of gunpowder away from the centre of population made the island a sensible location as it was accessible to large ships. Governor Bourke decided to implement Darling's 1826 proposal for an arsenal.

In January 1833 the Sydney Herald reported that 'the ironed gangs on the hulk *Phoenix* were landed on the island for the first time and had been set to work preparing the ground and a wharf for a gunpowder complex'. The site on the western side of the island involved substantial quarrying to level the ground and this provided the stone for the buildings.

To eliminate the time consuming daily transport of the convicts to and from the hulk, three portable wooden "boxes" were constructed by a private contractor. These boxes - see insert - (approximately 14ft long, 6ft wide & 6ft high) housed 20 men - 5 on each of 4 bedboards. By 1836 the number of boxes had increased to twelve.

Because of the lack of incentive schemes later introduced into convict works and with mobility handicapped by irons, work proceeded slowly. Eight

aborigines were included in the convict workforce. At Gov Bourke's instigation in 1835, legions were removed from second class convicts resulting in what Bourke described as an increase in work 'with an alacrity unknown before'. He also boldly allocated a teacher for the convicts.

The magazine and cooperage were completed in 1836, the barracks and guardroom in 1838 and the stone wall with loopholes and sentry box soon after. The magazine is a building of massive construction with windowless walls, nearly 2 metres thick, supported by immense buttresses. Unusual and skilfully crafted octagonal ventilation shafts placed at regular intervals along the walls were designed to stop drafts and sparks from entering the magazine. These and many other convict buildings are still in use by the MSB. The splendid barracks, a single-storey Regency building, contains a museum including artifacts commemorating the pilot vessels 'Captain Cook I, II, III'.

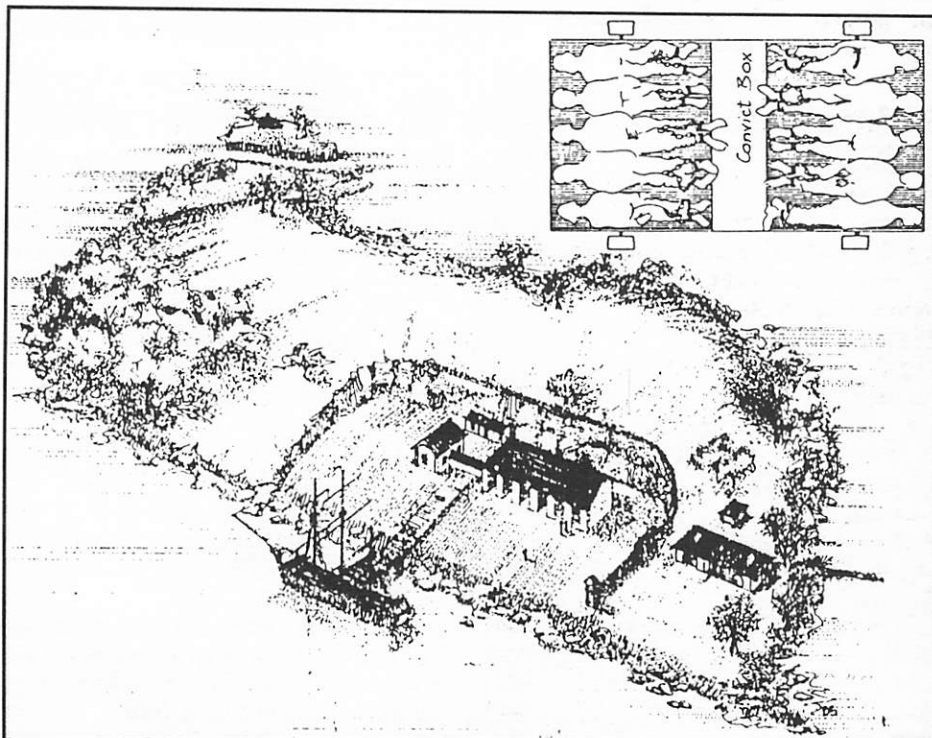
One prisoner who deserves special mention for his rebellious and unbreakable spirit was Charles 'Bony' Anderson. In 1834, at the age of 18, he was sentenced to seven years transportation for smashing windows in a brawl. The authorities on the island saw him as an incorrigible rogue and the officers did everything in their power to break

him. After one of his attempts to escape he was sentenced to be chained to a rock for two years. He was fastened by his waist by a chain 26 ft long and with trumpet irons on his legs. A hollow scooped out of the rock large enough to admit his body served for his bed and his only shelter was a perforated wooden lid which was locked over him at night. He was fed by means of a pole with which his food was pushed to him. He was in full view of the residents of Balmain and his cries caused them to protest against his treatment. He remained unrepentant for 6 months and was sent to Port Macquarie.

The once handsome residence of the Harbour Master on the summit is in an appalling state due to neglect and vandalism and the original Water Police Station built in 1838 on the eastern point is in no better condition. The MSB is to be moved to Pyrmont and the future of Goat Island is under threat of development especially under the present government's policy of selling public land.

Commanding such wonderful vistas on all sides and with many historical buildings, Goat Island should be preserved as a heritage site and made available for the people of NSW.

The sketch shows Goat Island as it was in 1839. Note the goat-like shape.



GOURLIE'S CORNER

Corner Shops

These small shops were known as after hours or "back street shops". Up to 1960s, about 50 of these shops operated in Balmain, and their hours ranged from 6am until 10pm. The owners were hit with many licenses, such as for tobacco, milk, small-goods and after hours trading. Restricted selling of groceries after 6pm daily and 12.30pm Saturday, until 6am the next working day.

After the restricted selling hours, all grocery shelves had to be panelled in with plywood shutters and they were padlocked at the end so that no contact could be made with the groceries. Covering the shelves with cloth or canvas was not permitted as this gave the shopkeeper easy access to grocery items.



Inspectors from the Department of Labour and Industry made regular visits to these small shops after 6pm to check that only soft drinks, milk, bread, lollies, biscuits and small-goods were sold. Biscuits in those days were in bulk, not packets and came in small and large returnable tins.

On Sundays, no shop was allowed to open between 10.30am and 12.30pm as these were known as "Church Hours". Shop doors were closed but many items were sold through a side window or back gate. The penalty for illegal trading was very severe and shopkeepers were very aware of being caught.

Some of these corner stores have now been converted into residences, their painted glass windows now screen someone's living-room. Others still have faded signs advertising products long since taken off the market.

Below is a 1936 price list for Arnott's Biscuits.

William Arnott Ltd., Biscuit Price List

SUBJECT TO 10 PER CENT. TRADE DISCOUNT. - 1936

Lines marked * are exempt from Sales Tax	No. 14 size tins about 12lbs. net, tins 1/6 ea.		No. 3 size tins at		No. 2 size tins at	
	or No. 6 size tins about 4lbs. net, tins 1/- each.		per doz.		per dozen	
Afternoon Tea	0	10			22	6
Arno Shortbread (Regd.)	1	3 1/2			43	0
Assorted	0	10				
Assorted Creams	1	3				
Assorted Savouries (1/2-lb. packets)	1	0 1/2				
No. 1 Assorted Creams 1-lb Tins (Tins extra 3d. each) 21/6 doz.						
Banana Creams	1	0				
Bon Bon Creams	1	1 1/2				
Best Assorted	1	4				
Butter Cream	1	0 1/2				
Butter Nut Cookie	1	1 1/2				
Butter Oat Cake	0	11				
Cabin, small	0	6 1/2				
Cabin, best quality, Square	0	6 1/2				
Cafe Cream	1	0				
Cherry Ripe	1	1				
Cheese (small)	1	0 1/2			28	0
Cheese (Large)	1	0 1/2				
Chocolate San Toy (Tins extra 1/- each) ..	1	10				
Chocolate San Toy (Special Red Label Tins) 29 0 per dozen						
Chocolate Finger Biscuits (Tins extra 1/- ea) 1 10						
Chocolate Finger Biscuits (in Special Red Label Tins) 29 0 dozen						
Chocolate Ass'd Biscuits (Tins extra 1/- ea) 1 10						
Chocolate Assorted Biscuits (in Special Red Label Tins) 29 0 dozen						
Chocolate Fruit Biscuits (Tins extra 1/- ea) 1 10						
Chocolate Fruit Biscuits (in Special Red Label Tins) 29 0 dozen						
Chocolate Monte	1	1 1/2				
Cocoa Nut, Crystallised	0	11				
Cocoa Nut, Plain	0	11				
Cocoa Nut Crisp	1	0 1/2				
Club Cheese	1	3				
Cracknell, small or large	1	9 1/2				
Creamy Flake Puff	0	11 1/2				
Creamy Chocolate	1	0 1/2				
Crystallised Cocoa Nut Bar	0	11				
Currant Luncheon	0	11				
Custard Cream	1	1 1/2				
Date Sandwich	0	11				
Dudley Cream	1	1 1/2				
Empress	1	0				
Empire	1	2				
Fair Motorist	41	9 per doz.				
*Fairy Cakes (Iced)	1	1 1/2				
*Fairy Cakes (not Iced)	1	1 1/2				
*Fairy Cakes (Jam)	1	1 1/2				
Family Assorted (Tins extra 1/- each) ..	36	0 per dozen				
Gaiety	1	1 1/2				
Ginger Nut	0	10			32	0
Biscuits in 1/2-lb packets one penny per lb extra						
Biscuits in 1/2-lb. packets two pence per lb. extra.						

ALL PRICES SUBJECT TO SALES TAX RULING AT DATE OF DELIVERY

Balmain History Trail

What do Neville Wran, Australia II, Sir Henry Parkes, Cinesound, Frederick Ward and Edmund Blacket have in common? They are all famous names included in the Balmain History Trail plaques booklet.

The Balmain Association is holding a guided walk on Sunday 12th November to view some of the 63 historical plaques. The walks will start on the hour between 11am - 3pm from the Watch House at 179 Darling Street. The cost is \$3 including the booklet.

Take the opportunity to inspect the newly decorated Watch House and pen and wash sketches of Balmain by Klin Sullivan.

Wyoming Reprieved

An application to develop the site at 25a Wharf Road, Birchgrove has been rejected by Leichhardt Council. It would have resulted in the demolition of historic "Wyoming" a 120 year old Victorian Italianate villa built for Quarton Levitt Deloitte, the 'father of rowing' in NSW.

Deloitte was a foundation member of the Birchgrove Park Trustees and was prominent in the formation of the Balmain Cricket Club of which he was president 1902-1906 and patron until his death in 1929.

The house was also the home of Russian marine biologist, Nicolai Miklouho-Maclay and his Australian wife, Margaret (daughter of a former Premier of NSW, Sir John Robertson). Their

two sons were born there although Nicolai spent only one year in the house as he left there to explore New Guinea. He was the founder of the marine biology station at Watsons Bay and his exploits are well known in the country of his birth.

Soviet Consul-General Mr Issac Stcherbakov made an impassioned plea for the retention of the building and the proceedings were recorded for transmission over Russian TV networks. The decision has been supported by the Minister for Planning, David Hay.

Congratulations!

After the Leichhardt Council meeting that elected Ald Issy Wyner as Mayor, when he was decked out in his mayoral robes, local MP Dawn Fraser was heard to say, "You've got more gold than I have, Issy".

Colonial Secretary

Sir Henry Parkes was the first Colonial Secretary to occupy the building known since 1959 as the Chief Secretary's Department completed in 1880 to James Barnet's 1863 plans. The room was open to the public on Tuesday, 24th October to mark the centenary of Parkes' "Tenterfield Oration" in which he made a plea for the federation of Australia.

Recently restored, the room is formal and ornate with elaborate, moulded ceilings and carved walnut furnishings. A book cabinet hides a private staircase to the ground floor which Sir Henry used to escape unwanted visitors.

Henry Parkes was the youngest child of a Warwickshire tenant farming family. An ivory turner by trade, he arrived in New South Wales on 25th July 1839 and over the next 50 years became a powerful figure in forging the Australian nation. At first he aligned with the radicals in the new colony in working for a "Great Federal Republic". By the early 1850s his republicanism had evaporated and he had joined the liberal movement before he won a seat on the Legislative Council in 1854.

A talented journalist, he founded *The Empire* newspaper which was the organ for liberal and radical views of the mid 19th century. At the age of 40, Parkes was elected to the first Legislative Assembly in March 1856.

Throughout his life he was continually plagued by financial difficulties and these forced him to resign from Parliament on four occasions. During his



Sir Henry Parkes at his desk in the Colonial Secretary's Room.

Parliamentary career he had held the seats of Sydney City, Cumberland, East Sydney, Kiama, Mudgee, Canterbury, Tenterfield, Argyle and St. Leonards. In all he was Premier and Colonial Secretary six times over a span of 20 years.

He first became Premier and Colonial Secretary in 1872 until his Ministry resigned in 1875. He was Premier again in 1877 (when he was knighted) and 1878-1883. In January 1887 he formed his fourth ministry and his ministerial salary helped him through his third bankruptcy. His Ministry resigned in January 1889, a month before his 2nd marriage which offended society a year

after his first wife's death. He was invited to resume leadership 1891 and served 8 months.

From 1888 until 1892 he rented Hampton Villa in Grafton Street Balmain. The residence has a commemorative plaque as part of the Balmain History Trail.

Sir Henry Parkes was a self-educated man with a keen interest in history, art and literature. His rooms in the Chief Secretary's Building reflect his taste in art, furniture and books. He married three times and had seventeen children. He died in April 1896, one month short of the age of 81.

Heritage Colours

Have you noticed a recent flurry of painting and decorating of Balmain buildings in heritage colours?

In Darling Street, Balmain Framers and the Cricketers Arms Hotel have shown the way for other shop owners. The Old Rectory, Montague Street has matched the colour scheme of the resplendent Methodist Mission Hall next door and the second hand goods shop opposite looks fresh again.

Not to be outdone we have given the Watch House a birthday with painting in heritage colours. Consultant, Mr Ian Samson, suggested the colour scheme and Mr H. Weegen & Son were able to complete most of the work just in time for the mop brigade standing by to clean up for Jan Melville's exhibition on Friday October 20th.

Save Callan Parklands

A meeting of 500 people on 25th October in Leichhardt Town Hall unanimously disapproved of the State Government plan to sell the waterfront half of Callan Park. They heard pleas from the Mayor, Ald Issy Wyner and Ald Nick Origlass as well as local MP, Dawn Fraser.

The NSW Department of Health owns the property and says it wants to raise money for "upgrading the public hospital system". It is feared that the Greiner Government will rush ahead with development planning without waiting for a Heritage Study of the area, and with little regard for the value of Callan Park to the people of Sydney.

Callan Park is Sydney's biggest waterfront park. It spreads from Balmain Road down the slopes to a sweeping waterfront at the eastern shore of Iron Cove. Only Centennial Park can boast a larger area of green space. It will become increasingly important when the Balmain Power Station and Chemplex sites are developed.

This proposed sell-off is just another example of how NSW Inc threatens the quality of life. Good government is not only about balancing books, otherwise why not sell Hyde Park (it is much more valuable). When the public assets have been sold the financial problems will still be there.

We urge all concerned people to write to the Minister of Health, Mr. Collins and the Minister of the Environment, Mr. Moore to express their outrage.

More historical information can be had from Leichhardt Historical Journal No 14 priced \$12.

EXHIBITION AT THE WATCH HOUSE

November 3-5 Patricia Quinn
Chinese Brush painting

November 10-12 Klin Sullivan
Pen & wash Balmain scenes

November 24-26 December 2-3 Helen Engle
Pottery



BALMAIN GARDEN CLUB

ROOTS

The root spread of trees and shrubs is wider than their branches. If the soil is well drained, and contains plenty of compost, great numbers of fibrous roots occur. Moist soils that are well drained result in deep rooting.

Humus in the soil encourages earthworms who aerate the ground. Stony, shallow soils produce shallow, spreading root systems. Fine root hairs drink mineral salts as they absorb moisture from the soil. This is called osmosis. If too much plant food is applied, plants wilt. Then they need to be heavily watered to save them.

Plants transpire much water through their leaves after heavy rain, or excess hosing; especially if cloudy and cool conditions continue. Therefore plants can be made sick at the roots if pruning is done at that time. Reduce watering at pruning time, and reduce watering in cold weather to prevent root sickness. Never prune at budding time for the same reason. One benefit of pruning is that it causes plants to send their roots deeper into the soil in search of fresh nourishment.

Deep roots help plants through hot, dry weather. Deep roots also anchor plants firmly to the ground so that wind will not blow them over sideways.

Margaret Ford

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

Please Note

Your contributions will need to be renewed next month. As forecast last month, annual subscriptions have been increased by a small amount, namely, individuals/households now cost \$10 and organisations \$15

A History of Early Electricity Supply in Sydney

Electricity supply in the Sydney region had early beginnings relative to the development of electric technology.

David Dunstan will speak on power station development on Thursday, 23rd November at the Institution of Engineers Auditorium, Eagle House, 118 Alfred Street, Sth Milsons Point. He will mention the Balmain Power Station.

WHAT'S ON

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

Sunday November 26th - Rozelle Festival
Elkington Park - Stall volunteers please
Saturday 16th December - Christmas Drinks
All welcome

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

NAME:

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.....

PHONE. HOME: BUS:

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION (incl News Sheet delivery in Balmain-Rozelle)

Please circle: ... NEW MEMBER/RENEWAL

Single/Family/Household.....\$10.00

Organisation.....\$15.00

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