

the balmain
association

NEWS SHEET

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Precincts, please!

Leachhardt Council is currently showing commendable initiative in displaying for residents' comments the development plans for the Ampol, Unilever and Monsanto sites.

Information and models have been available at the Leichhardt Administration Centre, the Rozelle Peninsula Festival and are now at the Balmain Library for the first two weeks of December. Other major developments will similarly be put forward for public comment, and Council is keen to receive residents' submissions on individual projects and their cumulative effect.

This process of communication between residents and local government would be greatly improved by the implementation of a precinct committee system in the Leichhardt Municipality. Such a system has been an outstanding success in North Sydney and it is being adopted by increasing numbers of municipalities such as Waverley, Manly, Liverpool, Wollongong and the City of Melbourne. The Urban Environment Coalition, which represents over 400 resident groups including the Balmain Association, advocates the establishment of precinct committees in all local government areas.

Unlike resident action groups and other local associations, precinct committees have a direct, continuing link with Council. Precinct committees work closely with local council departments in a formal relationship that channels information and viewpoints between residents and council. The precinct committees have no legal rights in council decisions, but their input is valued by council which, on a very systematic, regular basis, knows what residents want and think. This adds weight to council's dealings with other authorities and with developers, and it defuses the volatility

that can bedevil local government proceedings. Residents benefit by knowing that their views are taken into account and by being well informed and regularly consulted. Council staff can plan and administer more effec-

North Sydney, it no longer has even a ward system to simplify and streamline dealings between residents and their elected representatives. Most residents find it extremely confusing and overwhelming to deal with Council

and all the 12 aldermen on any specific or general issue. Much of the anger and confusion is brought to organisations such as the Balmain Association which, at present, do not have the resources or the formal power to do the detailed work that can only be managed through a precinct committee system, fully supported by residents and Council.

Given the marked local variations in the Leichhardt Municipality, the frequency and complexity of issues and the lack of a ward system, the adoption of a precinct committee system is timely and desirable. The Balmain Association proposes the introduction of this scheme in 1990 as our project to mark our 25th year of busy existence.

Have a happy and safe Christmas and New Year.

Jane Ward



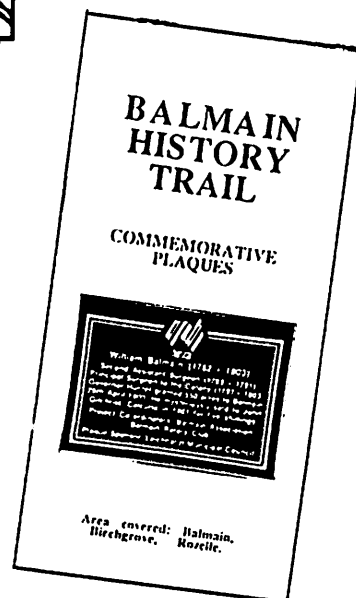
SEASON'S GREETINGS



tively and elected representatives can make more informed and rational decisions.

In North Sydney there are now 24 precinct committees each representing between 400 and 1200 households. The committees meet once a month and discuss issues affecting their areas, ranging from minor maintenance to major planning matters. Two full-time Council staff service the committees and each committee has an annual council grant of \$300 to pay for photocopying and leaflets. There are 54 notice boards throughout the municipality to which precinct committees have keys. Continual communication occurs on all development proposals and local issues.

The Leichhardt Municipality would particularly benefit from the introduction of precinct committees, as, unlike



Available for \$2.00 plus large s.a.e.
or at the Watch House.

GOURLIE'S CORNER

Children of the
1920-30s

I have recalled a lot of the adult history of Balmain so I feel it is worthy of mention to how boys and girls spent their time and effort. Imagination played a very big part in their lives as shortage of money prevented them from buying toys.

Most groceries came in a wooden case and these were always available. With an axle and two wheels and two shafts a barrow could easily be assembled to be pulled along for gathering horse-manure which was plentiful on the roads. The barrow was widely used for doing the family shopping or gathering small pieces of wood for the fuel stove or copper.

A billy-cart could be made with the box and four wheels on two axles and rope as reins on the front swivelling axle. It could carry a good load of firewood from various timberyards. There was always a thrill going down hill with a load on!

The girls mainly had their hop-scotch chalked out on the footpath and many hours were spent along with their skipping. In the latter, either a single rope was used or a double rope with a girl at either end. When the turns were hotted up, the cry was salt, vinegar and pepper.

The yo-yo came out in the 1930s and was a great hit providing you had



a shilling to buy one. Demonstrations by American promoters could be seen at lunch time or after school. Another similar item trying to break into the market was the diabolo. This was shaped like a cotton reel and worked by two sticks with string attached. Unfortunately the children never took to these like the yo-yo.

Cubby houses were a common sight on a paddock or dead-end street. Built of scrounged corrugated iron, timber with potato bags for the blinds and floor cover, these gave many hours of fun. A fire would be lit outside and many a potato was roasted in the ashes.

School holidays were often spent picking blackberries in season. Many paddocks in Balmain afforded the opportunity and a favourite one was in Palmer Street (opposite Wortley Street) which still exists today. Two sheets of corrugated iron were all that was needed, one to walk on, the other to throw on the bushes to lean on and do your picking. A tin billy was used for the gain, and the idea was for Mum to make a blackberry pie, but many were eaten before getting to the table.



History Trail Walk

Because of the downpour on the 12th November the History Trail walk has been rescheduled for Australia Day, Friday, 26th January 1990.

The walk will depart from the Watch House at 2.30pm and conclude at Peacock Point for refreshments. Cost \$7 incl booklet and drinks. Come and help celebrate the start of our 25th year.

PHOTOGRAPHIC ACQUISITIONS

Mr. C. Ford has donated to the Association two photographs of early residents of Balmain: Mr. Frederick Ford and his wife Clarissa nee Jones, the second daughter of David Jones. Frederick Ford's private residence is shown as "Alfred Cottage, Nicholson Street, Balmain" in Ford's Directory of 1851 (refer Leichhardt Historical Journal No: 12, page 17).

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor

I wish to thank Ann and David Ramsay for inviting me to the Balmain Association's visit to Goat Island.

I often had occasion, as a young girl, to visit the Island with my parents. Their very close friends, Ilma and Alec Harcourt, resided on the Island as Alec was Harbour Master some 45 years ago.

We were collected from the Quay and landed on the northern side. The walk up to the main house was very pretty as the gardens were very well tended.

It is very sad to see the Harbourmaster's house and the other dwellings in their present state as they were always so well kept.

It was very interesting to go through the museum and see some history of the Island.

regards

Judy Jackson

Dear Editor

The last part of the old Balmain industrial sites has been sold for residential use or some say a private geriatric hospital. Ironically the Colgate Palmolive site was sold to a doctor, Robert Hampshire, (as was the first land sale made by Dr Balmain to Dr J B Gilchrist). The sale almost closes the book on the old industrial sites which are bound by the same narrow streets that echoed to the sound of the horse drawn carts and workmens' hobnail boots. Balmain streets were laid out to suit the people who owned the factories with houses around them for their employees. It is these houses that are now owned and not rented. The catch is that workmen had no horses or carriages and today's motor cars are as long as the houses are wide and the streets are speed traps if cars are not parked on the footpath.

The Balmain Association in recognising the problem is attempting to have a member on the Leichhardt Municipality Traffic Committee. There is need for realistic and unique solutions to keep our streets safe for everyone.

A Merry Christmas to all members
Dave Ramsay

Friends of Birchgrove Oval

A meeting of interested people was held on Monday 4th December to uphold the standards of Birchgrove Oval and the surrounding park. The caretaker's cottage is being restored by the Leichhardt Council largely from the urging of this group.

They are also anxious to encourage the Council to more effectively manage dogs in the grounds.

A PLEASANT LINK WITH OLD BALMAIN

On Tuesday, 14th November 1914, some 700 local residents of Balmain met in Montague Street, behind the Post Office in Darling Street at 3pm for an important civic event.

The Mayor of Balmain and local dignitaries, were present to witness the laying of four foundation stones of the new Hall of the Central Methodist Mission by the Rev. F.W. Hynes, Mr. W. Druce (Mission Committee Member and Manager of the E.S. & A. Bank), Mr. Ebenezer Vickery (Mission Committee and local Solicitor) and Mr. F.E. Pilcher, Master Baker and leading business man of the district.

The champion Balmain Municipal Band was in attendance, there was much hymn singing and recital of prayers, and no little sermonising as one might expect.

On Saturday, 18th November 1989, 75 years later almost to the day and also at 3p.m., the History Division of the Balmain Association staged a modest commemoration of the original stone laying, this time in the presence of four generations of the family of the late F.E. Pilcher, one of the original group. Present at the commemoration was the silver and ivory trowel presented on the first occasion and now a piece of the Pilcher family memorabilia. Attempts to locate descendants of the other three foundation stone "layers" had been unsuccessful.

The commemorative group comprised Mr. Kenneth Pilcher, sole survivor of the original family, of Hunters Hill; his grandson, another Frederick Pilcher, with his wife and great-grand-daughter, Cleo, who came from Canberra for the occasion; together with 5 more second generation grandsons and grand-daughters, 7 third generation great-great grandsons and daughters and 4 fourth

generation members of the family plus sundry wives and husbands.

The whole party adjourned for afternoon tea at the Watch House where they were joined by the Mayor of Leichhardt, Ald. I. Wyner and Mr. Bruce Baudinet, who designed and carried out the restoration and renovation of the Central Methodist Mission (which was officially opened last month).

Introducing Mr. Ken Pilcher, the President of the Balmain Association, Jane Ward, emphasised that this was a most unusual event, as this was the first time she could recall a "hands on" contact with a family group of this size.

In a brief speech Mr. Pilcher commented that his father was not a Methodist, but at a meeting, had offered to match, pound for pound up to £200, any sum raised by donation from those present. As this was 1914, every man wore a hat, so it was not difficult to pass a few around and very shortly some £350 had been given, which with Mr. Pilcher's £200 made a total of £550, or more than 10% of the quoted price of the building, being £5070.

"To put this in 1989 terms and personalities, the original F.E. Pilcher's gesture would be the equivalent of John Elliot giving \$8000 to the ALP towards the cost of new headquarters", said Mr. K. Pilcher.

Also present was Mr. Cam Ford whose great-great-uncle Robert Ford built, in 1850, "Heathfield House" [ref. Newsheet Nos 181 & 182 and Leichhardt Historical Journal No 15]. "Heathfield", yet another gracious building long disappeared from Balmain in the interest of "progress", was the Pilcher family home from 1906 to 1913.

Mr. Fred Pilcher, on behalf of the Pilcher family, handed to the History Division of the Balmain Association



Ken & Dorrie Pilcher, grandson Fred and great-grand-daughter, Cleo.

excellent copies of half a dozen old photographs, taken about 1906 to 1908, of "Heathfield", with tennis on the court, some family groups and photocopies of a brochure issued by the F. Pilcher Baking Company to mark the opening of the new bakery in 1913.

During afternoon tea, Mr. Ken Pilcher told the audience that they were now truly in "Pilcher Territory", for just a few metres down Darling Street on the corner of St Johns Street was a building, now demolished, where his father ran a bakery from 1902 until 1906.

On the Pilcher family's return from England early in 1914, they moved to the Point House at Huntley's Point. The bakery now in Balmain Road, right at the gates of Callan Park (where it supplied 'old' bread) continued the link with Balmain until 1926, when Frederick Pilcher sold out to Hackshalls Ltd., to become ABBCO and more recently a member of the Fielder Group.

Thus the Pilcher link with Balmain was severed after 34 years. However in the past few years a great-grand-son, the well-known Olympic yachtsman James Cook has built a waterfront home in Birchgrove, where he lives with his wife and two little girls, Tessa and Ellie. Both were christened in St. John's Church, as where four of the original family. Tessa started this year at Birchgrove Primary where 2 great-aunts and uncles went in the early 1900s - so history repeats itself.

Finally, Mr. Ken Pilcher expressed the hope that this event might stimulate recollections amongst some older local residents which could embellish the information known to the Association.



Four generations of the Pilcher Family enjoy afternoon tea at the Watch House

Condolences

The Balmain Association regrets the passing of Mrs. Mary Brown and extends our sympathies to George Brown and family on their recent bereavement. The Brown family have always been most supportive to the community.

Editor's Thanks

The Editor would like to thank Tim and Jenny and family as well as their team of News Sheet deliverers for their great efforts over the past year. Please come for Xmas drinks with me at the Watch House at 4pm on Saturday 16th December.

Seasonal Greetings to all members.

Val Hamey



BALMAIN GARDEN CLUB

Some Companion Plants

Back in history, farmers mixed their flowers, herbs and vegetables all together in the one bed because they rightly observed that everything thrived that way. The plants helped each other in many ways. Thus nature was well balanced.

Apple trees like chives, nasturtiums and wallflowers growing under them. Citrus trees like guava trees nearby. Grapevines like to be near elms, or mulberries or hyssop. Plant an elm tree near a grapevine and let the vine climb up it. This will ensure good quality grapes. Foxgloves are beneficial to all other nearby plants and trees. Garlic planted under rose bushes is beneficial for them. Spinach improves soils.

All herbs, except fennel, planted as a border around vegetable plots benefit the vegetables. Parsley aids roses and tomatoes. Primroses and violets enrich the soil for other plants. Mix the herbs for best results. Lavender is happy alongside peas and beans. In fact, the whole garden thrives if there are lots of leguminous plants around. Most bear pods. Lupins enrich soils for other crops.

Shred old branches of tree ferns and add to the potting mix for all tree cuttings or seedlings.

Margaret Ford

The Balmain Garden Club in future will meet in St Marys hall on the third Saturday of each month.

Just to remind....

Membership renewals are due now

For a truly modest sum you get

- membership of the prestigious Balmain Association
- regular delivery of the News Sheet
- the warm inner glow that comes from knowing that your subscription contributes to the well-being of the community through the Association's activities.

WHAT'S ON



Saturday 16th December - Christmas Drinks
4pm until exhausted. All welcome

Historical Trail Walk • Australia Day

Friday 26th January 1990

Departing the Watch House at 2.30pm

Concluding at Peacock Point for refreshments

Cost \$7.00 incl Booklet & drinks

Celebrate our 25th Anniversary

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

OurAimsAreTo:

- 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:

ADDRESS:

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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