

the balmain
association

NEWS SHEET

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Free Gift of Land to the Balmain Council

The following letter was printed in the "Independent" newspaper in December, 1880.

The Worshipful the Mayor and Aldermen of the borough of Balmain.

Gentlemen,- It is with sincere pleasure that I find myself in a position to ask your acceptance, as the guardians and trustees of the property and interests of the inhabitants of this borough, of a piece of land adjoining the public reserve at White Horse Point.

This land, part of lot 6, I purchased some twenty years ago, but, owing to error in survey, I did not take possession until lately, and my intention was to make a private road of it to the water, but the liberal forethought which characterised your Council's purchase of White Horse Point as a reserve for public recreation, determined me to help the good cause by adding this said piece of land to it.

This land, which in size is about 553 links in length, and 40 links to water frontage, with a somewhat greater frontage to the street, will increase the extent and beauty of the public reserve, it gives access to the waters of the bay at a point of great convenience to the public, and will continue to grow in usefulness and value.

I have prepared a conveyance which I shall be happy to hand to you at such time as you may appoint, that gives you entire possession of this land, reserving to myself free access to my own property over it.

Permit me, gentlemen, while thus before you to draw attention to the importance of securing and adding to the White Horse Point reserve that other most desirable piece of the Cameron estate, including that secluded little bay, that sanitary spot, so admirably located for a bathing place, without which the reserve is deprived of one of its most sanitary and advantageous features, recalling at the

same time to your memory that the green spots of Balmain now used by the inhabitants are fast passing away for ever.

And now, gentlemen, let me assure you, that in presenting this land to you in trust for the inhabitants of Balmain, I do it with a most sincere and earnest desire to advance the comfort, happiness and privileges of my fellow citizens.

I have the honor to be,
Gentlemen,

With great sincerity,
yours faithfully,
F R Robinson

White Horse Point,
December 16th, 1880.

Editor's note: It seems that nothing has changed in the last 100 years. We are still preoccupied with the same issue of open green space. Our forefathers were concerned about the problem even though the pressure for land was not as great as today.

Have a Drink On Us

The Balmain Association needs recollections from the 40's to the 70's, - or earlier - of people and events connected with the pubs where you have your daily/ weekly/ yearly drink.

If you can provide us with something to use in the History of Pubs in the Balmain/Rozelle Peninsula, we will shout you a drink.

We know you are probably not old enough yourself to have these early recollections, but maybe you have a father, grandfather or an uncle - or a grandmother, mother or an aunt - who has a story to tell. We will shout them a drink too.

Send us the story together with your name, address and telephone number as well as the name and address of the person who supplied you with the information. If we can use the story, we'll let you know by May 15 and the drink(s) will be shouted at a time of your choosing.

Do let us hear from you. the address is Pubs Competition, Balmain Association. PO Box 57, Balmain 2041.

Prizewinners

The Raffle was drawn at the Christmas Drinks on Saturday 16th December by Mrs Marina Stanley, a visitor from the Ryde Historical Society. First prize of a 36 piece Nikko dinner set went to the Nicholls family, 2nd prize of 6 cut-glass wine glasses to Wally Jones and 3rd prize of a box of chocolates was won by Maureen Fry Tours.

All proceeds went towards the History Division Photographic Collection. Recent acquisitions have been photos of Elkington Park 1888; Gladstone Park 1890; Darling Street from Booth Street before and after the demolition of the Deal Box buildings 1891; Darling Street from Booth Street 1902; the Strand buildings, Booth to Palmer Streets; the Balmain Regatta 1888, taken from Elkington Park; three shops in Darling Street next to St Andrews, 1888. These photographs are on display in the Charge Room of the Watch House.

We would appreciate a donation of a suitable prize for a raffle to be drawn at the Pub Exhibition in April.

For those members who have yet to send their 1990 subscription your payment will be greatly appreciated.

The member who sent a bank cheque from Parramatta please send a name and address.

Special General Meeting

The Balmain Association announces a Special General Meeting on Wednesday 7th March at 7.30pm at the Watch House. The meeting has been called to ratify a new constitution which will allow for incorporation of the Association.

Incorporation is the creation of a legal entity separate from the individual members. The main benefit is that it protects members from being sued as individuals.

Other benefits are that the incorporated association can sue as well as be sued; it can accept gifts and bequests; it has the power to hold, acquire and deal with property; and can enter into and enforce contracts.

Balmain Personalities

As the cricket Test matches are commanding attention once again we are using a couple of cricket legends to commence a series on famous Balmain identities.

Frederick Robert Spofforth - known as "the demon bowler", was born 9th September 1853 at Broadstairs Street (now Colgate Avenue), Balmain. He was baptised at St Marys Church on 28th December 1853 and attended the Pigeon Ground School. He worked at the Bank of NSW, but left for England as a professional cricketer and was chosen to represent Australia in the first team to visit England in 1878 as well as subsequent tours in 1880, 1882, 1884 and 1886. In the 1882 Test match (still called the greatest of all test matches) he took 7 wickets for 46 and 7 for 42 and Australia won by 7 runs. England needed just 85 in their 2nd innings to win. The last 4 wickets fell for 7 runs. The Ashes were derived from this defeat of England. Spofforth settled in the UK after the 1886 tour and visited Australia in 1928.

William Lloyd Murdoch - regarded as the W G Grace of Australian cricket - a solicitor from Balmain, where a street perpetuates his name. He attended the Pigeon Ground School. Four times he captained Australian cricket teams against England; 1880 victory for Australia with Murdoch topping Grace's score of 152 by one run; 1882 victory by 7 runs and a spectator dropped dead with excitement. William died in 1911 in Melbourne.

His brother, Gilbert G Murdoch, also a solicitor and cricketer lived at the corner of King and Turner Street and became mayor. The house was demolished in 1969.

Sources: "Balmain, the Man & Suburb" - Napier; "Balmain, Past & Present" - Hogg. Right - Spofforth. Below the Australian 1878 team. Spofforth is

Clontarf Restoration

The Clontarf Restoration Community Committee of residents, under the chairmanship of the Mayor, Ald. Issy Wyner, are working, with great enthusiasm and expert help, on the restoration of the 1844 stone cottage at 4 Wallace Street.

The debris, accumulated over a long period of neglect, has been removed by volunteer labour with the aid of a Council truck. Architects, Don Harrington and John Doyle, are working in cooperation with Jocelyn Jackson of Howard Tanner & Associates in supervising the faithful restoration.

The burnt-out timbers in the roof have been replaced and new shingles installed with labour donated by Pat Williams of Period Roofing. Ald. D. Spedding donated and installed the chimney trays in preparation for John Ayers, well known for his stone restoration skill, to reinstate the two chimneys at a much reduced cost. The Urban Transit Authority provided the



scaffolding which was installed by two Painter & Docker Union riggers.

Clontarf is included in the Balmain History Trail of Commemorative Plaques and the Committee has suggested a Roll of Honour be installed for the recognition of donors to the restoration. Much has yet to be done and donations of time, money and materials are most welcome. Could you assist the Community Committee in the restoration of Clontarf Cottage? Please contact the Mayor, Ald. Issy Wyner or write to the Committee for further information.

Their address is Balmain Town Hall, 370 Darling Street. Phone 560 4100.

Australia Day 202

A happy band of walkers arrived at Peacock Point at 4.30pm for drinks and nibbles after a guided tour of the Commemorative Plaques installed during the Bicentennial Year.

At this scenic position, Bob and Debby Nicholls with Bonny Davidson were ready to serve the refreshments to their thirsty guests. The harbour traffic was particularly interesting due to the sail-past scheduled later that evening. A barge, bearing a huge Ozzie flag, floated past in amongst the many pleasure craft.



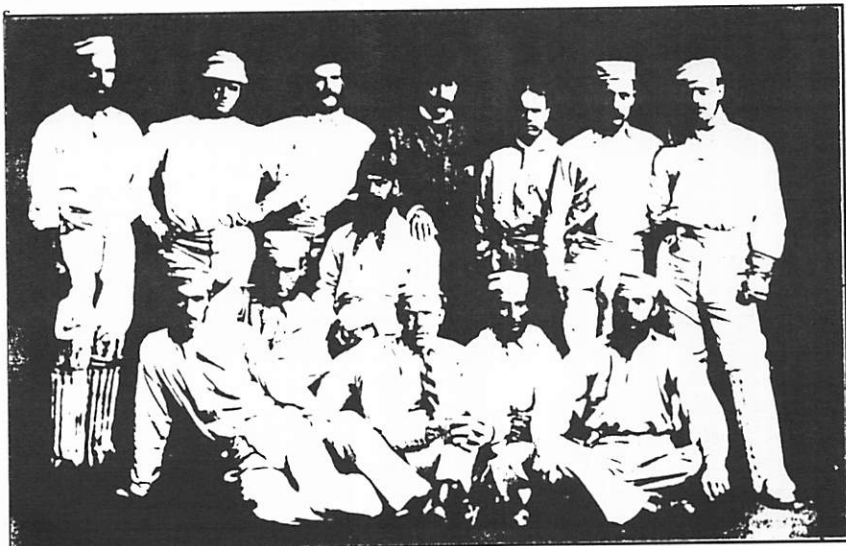
seated on left and Murdoch stands at extreme right. From Pictorial Celebration of Cricket.

Medium-density Exemption

Leichhardt was one of the seven councils exempted from the State Government's controversial policy to allow medium-density housing. The Mayor, Ald. Issy Wyner, is pleased with the recognition given to the problems experienced over the years.

"We seem to have been one of the few councils that has adopted urban consolidation easily and have suffered many problems - like all the pressures, including traffic, in Balmain."

He warned the exemption did not mean Leichhardt would be free of development pressures but did not have added pressures of the Government's policy, which effectively overrides existing laws prohibiting the rezoning of all residential land to permit townhouses.



GOURLIE'S CORNER

Jewellers & Watchmakers

There were two of these shops in Balmain, Blackwells in Darling Street (opposite Birchgrove Road) and Blands in 17 Rowntree Street. Blands celebrated their 100 years of business in 1988.

Thomas Bland started the business in Llewellyn Street and moved to a shop he had built in Rowntree Street. To mark the opening he hung a beautiful wall clock, a Viennese Regulator on the wall. He also built three other adjacent houses. Many of the Bland family were born at the shop residence and the building is in almost the original condition. The sign over the shop read W and J Bland, the initials were for Thomas Bland's sons, William and James.

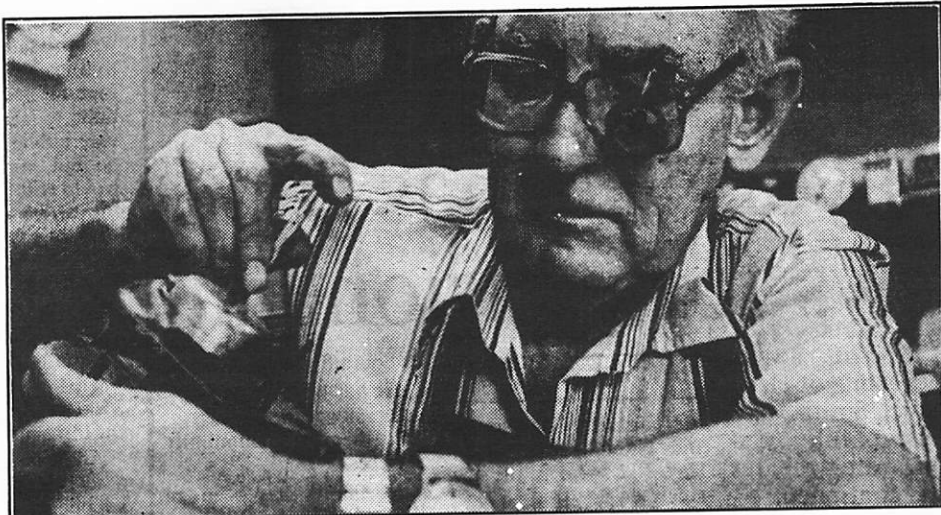
When James Bland retired in 1972, Mr Doug Noon, who began working for them in 1955, took over the business. He retired in December 1988, so ending a centenary of watchmaking.

Anyone who had covetous glances at the Viennese Regulator would have been disappointed as it had been inherited by Thomas Bland's granddaughter, Kay Sherman.

The Balmain Historical Plaques Trail booklet is available for \$2 at the Watch House



Shortly after his 101st birthday Mr. William Hill has donated this photograph to the Association which is on display at the Watch House. It shows Mr Hill proudly clutching his free travel pass as MP Dawn Fraser helps him on the bus.



Mr Doug Noon working in the Bland's shop before his retirement in 1988

Reprieve for Verandas

Old buildings with external verandas and balconies over footpaths in the Leichhardt Municipality will be permitted to retain their authentic touch following Council's suspension of regulations which impeded their renovation or reinstatement.

The prohibition of street verandas was introduced in the 1920s because of fears that balconies overhanging footpaths could provide a hazard in the motor age.

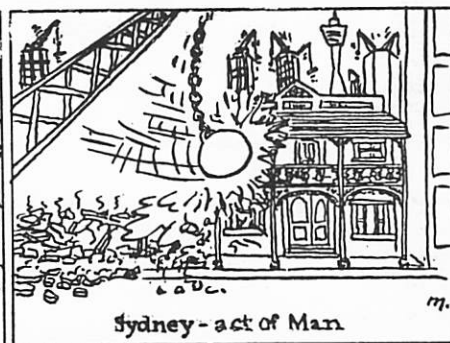
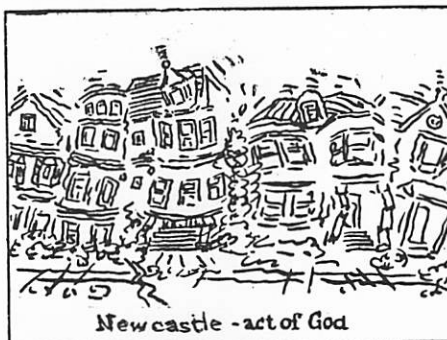
The external veranda, with thin posts, is a prominent characteristic of Australian building. In *"The Walls Around Us"*, the architect Robin Boyd wrote: *"the thin wooden posts of the hotels and poorer houses might look charming today, but most of their owners would have been glad to exchange them for thick, classically-proportioned masonry columns as used on rich mansions like Camden Park at Camden or Newington at Parramatta."*

It is now believed that the danger of overhanging balconies have been overstated and present less of a hazard than power poles, signs and trees.

Condensed from an article by Jonathan Chancellor, Property Editor, SMH.



HOUSE IN BIRCHGROVE ROAD with a room extended over the pavement. A great many Balmain shops and houses have verandahs extended in this way, making them distinctly different from any to be seen in Paddington's terrace territory.



The Balmain Association regrets the passing of Miss Madeline Allt, a long time member of the Association who visited the Watch House many times. Shortly before her death last year, Miss Allt donated 2 framed photographs of her ancestors which are on display in the glass case, upstairs in the Watch House.

Accompanying the photos are the following notes about her grandparents.

Mr Thomas Robert Allt, who resided in Balmain for many years and set up a business as a Wine & Spirit Merchant and later formed the North Coast Steam Navigation Company. Mr Allt was a prominent citizen in Balmain and it was at his home "Moorfield", 6 Charles Street, a meeting of associates formed the Balmain Bowling Club, making Mr Allt the first president of the club. The Balmain Bowling Club now stands on part of the Allt garden.

Mrs Jane Allt, wife of Thomas, and daughter of Thomas McArthur, the engineer who founded Mort's Dock, which was originally known as Thomas McArthur & Co. Later Mr Thomas Sutcliffe Mort invested a large sum of money in the dock and Mr McArthur took Mr Mort in as partner and the dock was renamed McArthur & Mort. Tragedy befell Mr McArthur when he drank water from the roof of the dock which contained lead-oxide, killing him at the age of 49 years. Afterwards the dock was renamed Mort's Dock.



IN YOUR GARDEN

Plants for Small Gardens

Clivia or Kaffir Lily as it is sometimes called, is a rhizomatous rooted plant with long evergreen strap-like leaves producing heads of large orange-red lily-like flowers on good strong stems of about 45cm high. Spring flowering, they will grow in almost any soil under the hardest conditions, provided they have shade.



They are excellent for growing under trees. Once established, clivias are best left alone, but a yearly application of a small amount of blood and bone is beneficial. They will stand fairly dry conditions and are reasonably free of diseases. The flower heads should be cut off after the blooms have faded as seeds take almost 12 months to mature, thus

weakening the plants for the next year's flowering. The roots can be divided in late spring or early summer after the plants have finished flowering. Clivias can be grown in tubs and moved as needed and make a splendid showpiece.

Bonny Davidson

Tour organisers and school groups take note. Walking tours of Balmain including a visit to the Watch House are available. Morning or afternoon tea can be included. Contact the Balmain Association on 818 4954.

WHAT'S ON

Balmain Association
Special General Meeting
7.30pm Wednesday March 7th
Watch House
to discuss new constitution

Pubs of Balmain & Rozelle Exhibition
April 21, 22, 25, 28 & 29
Early photographs & history

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:

ADDRESS:

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