

the balmain
association

NEWS SHEET

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Exhibition Attracts Crowds

On the week-ends of Heritage Week and especially on Anzac Day the Pubs of Balmain & Rozelle Exhibition drew throngs of visitors to the Watch House from all over Sydney and even from the country. One of the first was the Mayor, Ald Issy Wyner and Mrs Wyner.

The display documented the era which saw so many pubs established first around the waterfront and then later in the developing town. Keen interest was shown in the many old photographs and records dating back to 1860. Many descendants of publicans searched the lists and were excited to see their grandparents' or parents' names. Some interesting stories were related and hopefully they will be included in a proposed book.

Association researchers, Kath Hamey and Bonnie Davidson, are elated with the response to their extended effort particularly as many new members were enrolled.

"It is not commonly appreciated," Kath said, "that in the early days the hotels were more than drinking places. They were centres for meeting people, either informally or at union and society meetings."

The early pubs attracted mainly the workers from the waterfront. The oldest existing building in which liquor was sold is the Shipwrights' Arms at the Darling Street Wharf. The Pacific and the Bald Rock Hotels were situated close to ferries. The Pacific dates from

1865 when John Dick established it as Dick's Hotel near the Stephen Street Wharf.

The Bald Rock Hotel in Mansfield Street was closer to the water than today because the White Bay Terminal reclaimed part of the bay. One of its publicans was George Peters who, after years of travelling around the country in various pursuits such as mining, acquired the "cosmopolitan character which helped to increase his popularity." In 1909 he was elected alderman of

and open-air meetings were conducted from their balconies. Luckily Balmain hotels have generally maintained their 18th Century look, only a few have lost their balconies or have been modernised externally.

On Anzac Day people of all ages joined the Pub 'Crawl'. Four groups headed off from the Watch House to visit the pubs and learn some of their history. Visitors joined the locals in a couple of pubs to have a drink and watch the two-up games. Some stayed for dinner and the Association was urged to make the walk an annual event.

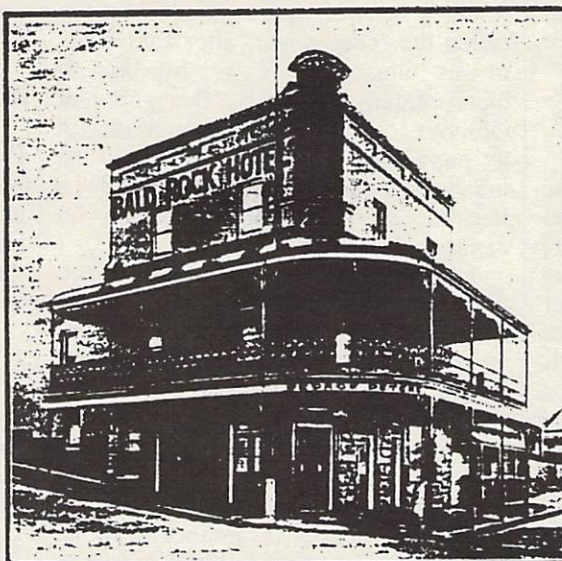
Klin Sullivan had a number of her Pub paintings on display and they were popular with the visitors. Three were sold in the first few minutes of the exhibition.

Donations of photographs were received from Jim Kiloh (Dry Dock Hotel in 1907), Norm Buckley (Exchange Hotel 1925 showing the demolished veranda of Dick's Hotel) and Nick Keene (Garry Owen Hotel 1876, 1930, 1949). Mr Yandell of Ancestry Antiques, Rozelle kindly loaned an illuminated Farewell to Daniel Claughessy, publican of the Riverview Hotel in the 1930s, signed by his friends and patrons.

On Saturday, 28th April visitors were entertained by members of Music 2041 with selections played on their recorders.

Thanks to those who assisted in the Exhibition especially Debby Nicholls and Dave Ramsay.

It is proposed to remount the exhibition later in the year.



the South-west Ward of the municipality of Balmain. He worked with Signor Simonetti on the group sculpture now standing in the Sydney Botanical Gardens.

As the town moved west in the 1880s, Dick's Hotel and the Exchange became centres for local society meetings

Update

In response to public outrage, the Leichhardt Council has agreed to preserve the stump of the illegally felled Moreton Bay fig tree on the Unilever site and to plant a replacement.

The Balmain Association has suggested that a vegetation map of the peninsula be compiled so that the Council has a better knowledge of what is here and the ways to protect and improve our wild life habitat. If the

Council hasn't the staff perhaps interested organisations such as the Nature Conservation Council and Friends of the Bats can help as well as local residents.

The Leichhardt Council has imposed strict safety and heritage controls on future demolition on the Unilever site until the rezoning issue is determined. The Balmain Association is supporting the local action groups who are coming together to work with Council to secure a co-ordinated, workable plan for the peninsula which takes into account our

"village" atmosphere, low scale development, and inadequate open space. There will be a public meeting in the Balmain Town Hall at 4pm on Sunday 20th May and all interested residents are encouraged to attend.

Be ready....

Wyoming is currently protected from demolition by an order which expires in October 1990.

The word is that the Premiers Department is spearheading a re-newed push to have a heliport installed on wharves 22 and 23 at Pyrmont.

GOURLIE'S CORNER

Community Questionnaire

Q1. The Balmain Police Citizens Youth Club is situated in Darling Street at the Jacques Street corner and was opened in 1938. Can you remember what this building was used for prior to the Club?

Q2. Can you name some of the lollies (chocolate, wrapped or unwrapped) that could be bought during the 1930s?

Q3. During the 1930s most grocers gave a bag of lollies free to customers with weekly purchases. What kind were they?

Q4. Prior to World War II and for some time after, many grocery items carried a coupon on the packet which could be accumulated to be redeemed for kitchen ware, linen, etc. What were some of the items that carried these coupons?

Q5. Situated in Balmain was a company who packed bird seed. Can you name the company and where it was situated?

Answers on back page.

The Friends of Birchgrove Oval are continuing the efforts to have improvements made to the park and will explore the possibility of turning the area zoned parkland at the corner of Ferdinand Street and the Terrace into a pleasant area of plant growth. The Leichhardt Council has been approached to supply logs to surround the area to keep out cars and bulldozers.

Indications from Council are that the Caretaker's cottage is to be rented for more than a greenkeeper or grounds person will be able to afford. The Friends are asking that the rent be subsidised in return for a permanent "on-call" situation.

A "Dog Update" was issued to local dog owners as they did not want to appear to be unjust to responsible dog owners because of a minority not controlling or cleaning up after their dogs.

The Friends of Birchgrove Park need your support and you may join by contacting them on 818 1160.

The Sydney Quarantine Station Inspection is on 20th May. Meet at the Hospital Bus stop, Manly Wharf (on right of exit) before 2pm. Cost includes bus (there is no parking at the Station). Adults \$10. Concession \$5. Approximate time of tour is 2 hrs. Bookings the close on 12th May. Contact 818 4954.

The Balmain Observer

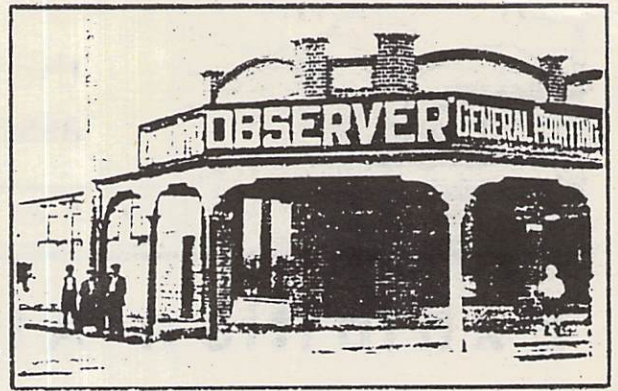
Balmain has possessed a newspaper since 1880, but previous to that time attempts had been made to supply residents of the suburb with news.

Those acquainted with the early history of Balmain tell that the first distribution of the *Sydney Morning Herald* amounted to twelve copies, and these were handed to subscribers as they passed onto the ferry. Then came the time when Balmain was thought to be worthy of a paper of its own, and coincident with the incorporation of the borough, there came into existence the *Balmain Reporter*. This paper, destined to have a short career, was started on February 2, 1867. The first to show signs of vigorous existence was called the *Independent*, after four years of its life, Mr W C Macdougall incorporated it with the *Balmain Observer* to supply the news wants of a population of then some 20,000 inhabitants, and it was published by him for 32 years until his death on January 25, 1917.

In premises at 275 Darling Street, Mr Macdougall laid down the plant for the first issue. In those days the production of the paper entailed a deal of worrying and strenuous work. The mechanical type-setters were an unknown invention and all of the work had necessarily to be set by hand. The public facilities for travelling from one part of the district to another were not in vogue as to-day, and the reporting staff, in common with their chief and editor (Mr Macdougall), worked early and late to gain the success which the paper achieved.

His eldest daughter, Miss E Macdougall, carried on the publishing until health reasons forced her to sell the business to the Pouter Bros in April 1918.

At the time of the first issue in 1884, Balmain presented a very different appearance to that of today. The Post Office was situated in Waterview Street, and the police station in Darling Street East (the Watch House). The values of the foreshores of Balmain were not regarded seriously at that time, as on Johnstone's Bay side there was little else than swamps, except Messrs Booth's timber yard at Bald Rock and a slip near where Lever Bros' works were built. No buildings were erected on the land between Hyam Street and the



water. On the Iron Cove side of the municipality, near Weston Road (Victoria Road), was the timber yard of Messrs Chidgey, Fay & Berry, which continued its activities well into the nineties. While Elliott Bros' chemical works were established, the factory was very small in comparison to its present proportions (Chemplex). There was no public conveyance running from Balmain to Sydney, and residents depended entirely on the ferry service. Watson's Ferry, which plied between Bald Rock and Sydney, called at Reynolds Street wharf at that time.

From early files of the publication the following are of interest:-

September 30, 1884.—Balmain Half-Holiday Association met in Hunt's bootshop in the Strand, decided to report all shopkeepers to the Association who kept their establishments open on the afternoon of the 1st of October, the first early-closing day in the district.

December 13, 1884.—Residents notified that, owing to the water shortage, water will only be obtainable from the mains on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays. Household in East End of Balmain complained of having had no water supply for over a week.

February 27, 1886.—Lord Carrington, Governor of NSW, visited the municipality for the purpose of officially opening the sheds of the Balmain Workingmen's Rowing Club (now demolished) at White Horse Point.

In 1910 the *Balmain Observer* moved to 643 Darling Street, at the Merton Street corner and remained there until 1931. In 1932 S D Smith published the paper at 603 Darling Street now the site of the bottle shop of the Sackville Hotel.

Other newspapers were the *Link* 1930s to 1960s and the *Glebe*, now in its 20th year.

For research purposes the Mitchell Library has complete issues of the *Observer* from 1884-89, some to 1907 and scattered to 1928.

Source: 50th Anniversary Souvenir of the Municipality of Balmain 1910. The *Balmain Observer*, May 3, 1918.

Barbara Thomson's Ordeal

On the morning of October 16, 1849, a landing party from HMS *Rattlesnake*, which was engaged on coastal survey, went ashore near the tip of Cape York to get fresh water.

Groups of aborigines stood watching them warily from the scrub fringing the beach when, suddenly, a woman broke away from them and ran towards the sailors. With her arms outstretched, she cried out, "I am a white woman. Don't leave me here."

As she came closer, the landing party saw that she was naked, except for a skimpy grass skirt. Clearly, she was white, although her skin was deeply tanned and scarred from burns through sleeping too close to a fire on cold nights.

The woman halted in front of the sailors. Pointing to her body, she spoke in halting English, mixed with several native words. "I am ashamed," she said. "Give me some clothes to cover myself."

Two of the men stripped off their shirts, and the woman donned one to cover her upper body, before tying the other around her waist as a skirt.

Taken on board the warship, where she bathed and was clothed and fed, the women told an incredible story of living with natives of a nearby Torres Strait island for five years.

Her name was Barbara Thomson and the sole survivor of a shipwreck. She had been claimed for a wife by the island's tribal chief, who treated her well enough, but she had roused the jealous hatred of other women of the tribe who forced her to do the most degrading work and also beat and abused her.

She was in her early 20s when rescued from the aborigines. The later famous scientist, Thomas Henry Huxley, who was aboard MHS *Rattlesnake* as assistant surgeon, said of her: "She spoke with an air of the most perfect truth and sincerity, and with no little intelligence."

The woman had been born Barbara Crawford in Aberdeen, Scotland, in 1828. She was eight years old when her parents migrated to New South Wales and her father set up in business as a plumber in Sydney. He could have done well had he not taken to drink.

Her home life was such that, at 16, she eloped with a sailor named Thomson and fled with him to Moreton Bay where they were married.

Also a skilled carpenter, Thomson worked hard as a boat-builder at the growing settlement. He built his own cutter, which he called *America*, and was doing well until a big whaler went aground on Bampton Shoal in Torres Strait. A friend proposed that they sail his cutter to the wreck, salvage the oil

and sell it at the settlement at Port Essington in Arnhem Land.

So in 1844, the cutter *America* left Moreton Bay and sailed north. It carried Thomson, his girl-wife Barbara, the sailor friend as pilot and a crew of three.

The voyage was doomed almost from the start. After the pilot had nearly wrecked them on the Barrier Reef, a fight followed between Thomson and his supposed friend, ending with the pilot being callously marooned on a small island (to be never heard of again) and Thomson taking over the navigating.

Shortly afterwards, two of the crew were swept overboard in a hurricane. Thomson and the remaining seaman kept going, believing it was safer to attempt to reach Port Essington than to turn back.

Rounding Cape York, a sudden squall wrecked them on a reef in the vicinity of Prince of Wales Island. During the storm, they had seen two native canoes also in danger. Convinced that a native settlement must be nearby, Thomson



A portrait in later life of scientist Thomas Huxley who gave Barbara Thomson medical treatment after her rescue.

the native foods and gradually shedding her clothes, manners and speech. For the first year or so, she managed to keep track of time. Soon, though, the weeks and months merged into each other and, when rescued, she had no idea how long she had been on the island.

On the morning of October 16, the ships dropped anchor in Evans Bay and the news soon reached Muralug. Boroto was ill and unable to paddle across to the mainland to investigate but Barbara pleaded with him to be allowed to go over with other natives.

Despite her decision to return in the *Rattlesnake*, she remained friendly with most of the natives while waiting for the ship to sail.

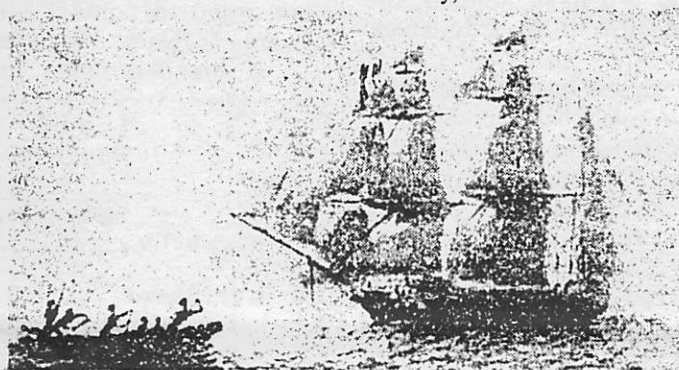
Only Boroto seemed upset at her departure and sent word that if she left the ship he would cut off her head with his own hands and hang it in his hut.

From the date of her return to Sydney on February 6, 1850, Barbara's remarkable adventures were ignored by newspapers and were only recorded in published accounts of the voyage of the *Rattlesnake*.

Her subsequent history remained unknown until 1977 when a Sydney newspaper discovered two of her descendants living in Balmain. They revealed she had remarried twice, first to a James Adams in 1851 and later, when he died, to a Henry Simpson. To one of her husbands she bore a daughter, Susan.

Mrs Florence Molyreau, a great grand-daughter, said, "Granny Barbara, as she was known to the family, had badly scarred legs all her life from a burn and one crippled foot from a scorpion bite. Granny died at Short Street, Balmain about 1920 in her 90s."

Source: Article by C J McKenzie in Daily Mirror, December 29, 1988.



The Royal Navy survey ship, *Rattlesnake*, which found Barbara living among Aborigines on Cape York in 1849.

and the seaman attempted to swim ashore from the reef to get help.

Barbara watched as both were drowned and she remained alone on the reef until the storm abated and was rescued by a giant aborigine who swam out and carried her ashore. He belonged to the tribe of Kowrarega, which occupied Muralug (Prince of Wales Island). She was promptly snapped up by the tribal chief, Boroto, as his lawful prize. After her rescue, she was reluctant to talk about their relationship, but he undoubtedly regarded as his "wife" although she bore him no children.

For five years the white woman lived with her adopted tribe, eating



IN YOUR GARDEN

Hibiscus

One of the best summer flowering shrubs for warm and tropical climates. There are many species (mostly evergreen) and hundreds of named varieties, including the Hawaiian strains.

The magnificent large flowers (some to 20cm across) are single or double and range in colour from white through lemon, gold, yellow, orange, pink and red. All hibiscus are frost susceptible so in cooler climates choose a sunny sheltered position. Pruning is necessary in winter and about one third of last season's growth should be removed.



Few diseases affect hibiscus but the following *Hibiscus* pests may attack in summer months; aphids and thrip on buds and flowers, and black beetle which may eat the leaves. Malathion will control all of these.

There are a large number of varieties - too many to list here - so it is a matter of individual choice, but they do add to the colour in your garden.

Bonnie Davidson

Watch House Renovations

As any observant passer by will have noticed, the Watch House exterior has now been extensively repainted.

We obtained the advice of Ian Sansom of the Department of Public Works who gave us detailed instructions about the colour schemes which were in use for watch houses in the 1880's. Members and passers by who come into the Watch House will find that similar changes have occurred with the interior paintwork with, we think, huge success.

Our opinion was seconded by Chris Levins, the curator of properties for the National Trust - yes, Virginia, there is still a National Trust - who paid us a visit in November in connection with an inspection to determine, amongst other things, the renewal of the Watch House lease. We are pleased to report that he found the Watch House in admirable condition and that he and the inspector who accompanied him approved all of the renovations which had been carried out.

Last issue was printed on recycled paper and the results were pleasing. Future issues will use the same paper if available at the printer at publication time.

Answers

- A1. Technical College for Apprentices.
- A2. Bulls Eyes, Conversations, Chocolate Toffs, Milkos, Nifters, Kurls, Nulla Nullas, Red Rays, Meteors, Sunbuds, Rum Toffees, Sherbert Bag with licorice straw.
- A3. Boiled lollies.
- A4. Sydney Flour, White Wings Flour, Mothers Choice Flour, Kinkara Tea, Bushells Tea, Lan Choo Tea.
- A5. Golden Cob, 213 Darling Street, Balmain bounded by Curtis Road, Campbell Street and Queens Place.

WHAT'S ON

- Quarantine Station Inspection
2pm Sun May 20 Adult \$10 Conc. \$5
Includes return bus from Manly Wharf

ART EXHIBITIONS

- May 4-11 Anna Stacey & Jennifer Craig
Prints, Paintings & Drawings.
- May 19-20 Peter Handran-Smith
30 Paintings.
- May 25-27 Brett Smout
4th year Graduation Pottery.

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:

..... POST CODE

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