

The Cars That Ate Balmain

The gentrification of Balmain has followed a similar trend to that in most industrialised cities of the world. There was a period of decline in population due to the growing affluence generating a demand for more private space. Household sizes declined while cheap housing for young families was available on the city fringe. There was a rapid increase in car ownership and a decline in public transport. At the same time there was an exodus of workplaces.

However, some people learn in hard practice that living near nature means mowing the lawn every week, driving downtown in long queues every morning and driving back in the evening to a suburban home that requires a second car for the wife. So the reurbanisation begins. Those that return to the inner city force out those who cannot afford the burgeoning property values introducing an equity issue. Unfortunately the transport systems have either remained static or have been run down and car population continues to grow.

density to gasoline usage is an exponential one with gasoline usage falling dramatically as density rises. Similar studies of five sections of the San Francisco Bay area confirmed these results and the key findings were (1) Doubling residential density reduces annual per capita auto mileage by 25 to 30 percent and annual per household auto mileage by 30 percent. They depend on appropriate expansion of neighbourhood businesses and transit as residential density increases. (2) Higher residential and commercial densities and better transit service shorten trip lengths sufficiently to allow one passenger-mile on transit to replace ten miles of driving. This 10 to 1 "leverage" results from the increased convenience of higher density, mixed-use areas.

However, it should be added that these factors can be abused by bad planning that pushes transport patterns more towards cars. Some examples are:

(i) placing high density housing a long way from all other urban activity i.e. transport terminal or urban employment;

Growth in Car Ownership in Balmain

Year	1971	1976	1981	1986	1991	1997
Population	18573	15859	14721	14671	15400	19507
Persons/ha	56.6	47.9	44.5	44.3	46.5	58.8
Persons/dwelling	2.75	2.37	2.24	2.20	2.30	2.30
No. cars	4500	5486	6176	6937	7632	10940
Cars/dwelling	0.66	0.82	0.94	1.04	1.14	1.29

The accompanying table shows the growth in car ownership in Balmain since 1971. The Peninsula has an area of 331ha.

The number of cars per household is growing by 2% annually and the 1991 and 1997 figures had to be extrapolated from the potential residential increase from all of the expected developments. It is obvious that this trend cannot be supported and a strategy must be instituted to reduce the dependency on motor vehicles.

How can this tendency be contained?

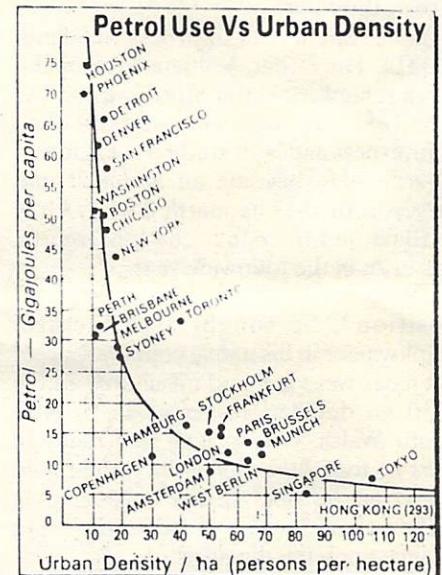
The key is greater reliance on efficient public transport preferably rail and mixed land use. Peter Newman with Jeff Kenworthy in 1989 established the density—transport link. A global cities study compares city average density with gasoline usage and the data is shown in the graph. The shape of the curve relating

(ii) housing only high income earners—a social mix is better for a balanced transport system as well as for equity reasons; and

(iii) forcing development into more of an auto-mode by large adjacent roads and by excessive parking that makes the development less human in scale and orientation.

The graph shows that Australian cities are midway between US and European cities in petrol use. Note that Balmain has a similar urban density as European cities.

With the general pattern of increasing levels of motorisation and accelerated urban sprawl there are some notable exceptions. San Francisco is akin to Sydney in its urban structure and transportation patterns. It has a dense inner city with mixed land use, comprehensive public



transport based on light rail and buses and a heavy rail transit system (BART). Unlike Sydney's CBD population which has declined by 41% between 1960-1980, San Francisco's has declined by only 6%. Part of its success in creating a vital CBD has been its strong pro-residential policies in the central area.

The Mission Bay, a waterfront area of 121 ha adjacent to the CBD, is being redeveloped over the next 20 years into a new urban neighbourhood with an integrated living and working environment. Developers are required to provide a certain amount of new residential floorspace in every new office development.

Over the past 20 years the urban consolidation policy has failed. It has not halted the urban sprawl because it continues to subsidise city fringe development. If centres of high density had been built around the rail stations the expenditure could have been transferred from road building towards improving the range and quality of public transport.

The development threatening Balmain needs Government attention and financial contributions to the transport network. It requires a change in local government strategy on land use and in the short term needs action on traffic calming. This means more than just speed humps. More on this next issue.

Ref. Transport Energy Conservation Policies for Australian Cities by P Newman, J Kenworthy & T Lyons-Murdoch University WA.

Balmain Personality

James McDonald Architect of Balmain

James McDonald certainly earned the title "Architect of Balmain". Of the fifty one years of his life here, forty five can be documented as being spent as an architect. All but one of his known works were executed within walking distance of his residence at 10 Thames Street, Balmain.

James was born at Inverness, Scotland, in 1814. His father, William McDonald, was a schoolteacher at Stornoway on the Island of Lewis. James finished schooling at Inverness and later studied at Elgin and Aberdeen to become an architect and surveyor. In 1849 he married Mary Gray at Elgin and their first child, Margaret, was born in the following year.

Being "of an active and pushing disposition", he sought architectural employment in his native country. Career openings were few and unsuitable and in 1850 he decided to emigrate to New South Wales. On arriving in Sydney in 1851 he found the city in the grip of gold fever but he held to his original plan rather than "a life of adventure and chance upon the diggings".

At the time Balmain was a bushy headland bustling with building activity and containing 1400 residents, a number that was to double within McDonald's first ten years there. It was there that McDonald's two other children were born – William in 1853 and Mary in 1859. During this period of population increase, Balmain's industrial expansion was under way and he became the architect of the Mort's Dock complex as well as many ecclesiastical, domestic and official buildings.

A tender notice in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 20 March 1857 was the recorded beginning of his career. It called for prices for "Mason work to a residence in Balmain" but the location of the residence is not stated. McDonald's own address is simply referred to as "Rose Cottage near the Dry Dock". The exact location of *Rose Cottage* cannot be determined even if it still exists.

McDonald's first commission of note was to design the second Presbyterian Church in Darling Street next to the Watch House. The foundations can be seen on the triangular park at the Colgate Avenue corner. The need for this small but elegant timber church arose from a split in the united Presbyterian and Congregational denominations. Seating 270 worshippers the building combined "utility, taste and economy" and was seen as a credit to the architect on its completion in 1858. McDonald had given his service free and the quality undoubtedly attracted more substantial commissions.

Two years later he was appointed Clerk to the new Balmain Council which was proclaimed on 12 February 1860. His duties were mainly concerned with road survey and construction for which he received £250 per annum and a rent free dwelling. During eight years of office, McDonald constructed Darling Street, Curtis Road, Rowntree, Mullens, Palmer, Donnelly and Vincent Streets. The Darling Street construction brought his professional expertise into question. Residents complained bitterly of property damage caused by his drainage installations and difficulty of access resulting from the construction levels. McDonald's lax supervision also brought criticism. After this unpromising beginning McDonald carried out his duties efficiently enough to warrant the Council renaming the top part of Thames Street in his name.



James McDonald 1814-1902

Throughout his Council employment he retained the right to practise privately. The School of Arts was completed to his design in 1862 on the site in Darling Street next to Ewenton Street. The building was destroyed by fire in the early 1920s and the stonework was used in the Bowling Club's wall. He built his residence at 10 Thames Street in 1863.

In 1866 McDonald received his largest and most important commission, the design of a new stone church in Campbell Street to replace the overcrowded Presbyterian Church in Darling Street. The double aisled church with its impressive central tower was completed in a little over a year on 19 April 1868. Four years later the gallery was added with access via a stair within the tower.

McDonald designed the schoolroom at St Andrew's Congregational Church in 1871. His only known work outside of Balmain was the Bathurst Congregational Church in 1874. Then came the Balmain West Presbyterian School at the

corner of Darling Street and Weston Road (now Victoria Road) in 1875.

In 1872 McDonald executed his most unusual commission when Ewen Wallace Cameron engaged him to build an upper storey on *Blake Vale* which he had purchased from Robert Blake in 1856 and renamed *Ewenton*. McDonald departed from the standard Colonial Georgian style with a markedly different mid-Victorian extension.

During this busy period McDonald found time to become involved in community affairs. In 1872 he embarked upon a 23 year term as an alderman which reached its peak early in 1878 when he became Mayor. During his second term in 1879, he prepared plans for new Council Chambers. The building was completed in 1881 and is now the meeting room at the rear of the Town Hall.

In 1880 he enlarged Blacket's 1876 Jane Street Convent and further added to this building in 1885. McDonald also built the St Joseph's School in 1876 at the corner of Weston Road and Gordon Street and followed with a church and convent in 1880-1881.

He built 6 houses in Smith Street (Nos 31–41) in 1880 and 5 Darling Street houses (Nos 113–121) in 1881 as speculative investments. In 1883 McDonald designed St Augustine's school then located in Thames Street. This is almost unrecognisable under Christian Brothers Primary. The house at 42 Darling Street was built for William Miller in 1884 for £735.15.0. McDonald designed 3 houses in Paul Street (Nos 15–19) for Miller in 1885.

During the late 1880s and throughout the 1890s, McDonald received many commissions but information about them is sketchy. One project that occupied his last years was the design of the Presbyterian Manse in Campbell Street. After he rejected earlier tenders for this building a third was called in 1901 in the joint names of McDonald and the Sydney architectural firm of Slatyer & Cosh. It seems that McDonald's advancing years forced him to share this important commission. The Manse was completed in 1906 after his death and the architecture is not his. It is the work of younger men designing in the Edwardian style.

James McDonald died at his home on 25 November 1902 at the age of 89. His wife Mary had died in 1897 and since then had rented a room from his son-in-law, James Shirra, to whom he had sold the property in 1895. There is a History Walks Plaque on his home and a memorial plaque in the Campbell Street Church.

Although McDonald's practice was behind the architectural front line of his day, it was remarkable in that it began, grew and ended in Balmain.

Condensed from John Fowler's article in *Leichhardt Historical Journal* No8.

GOURLIE'S CORNER

Coupons

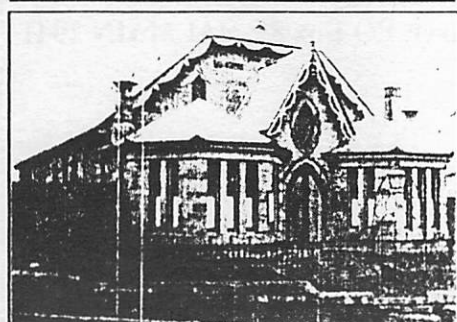
Many of the drapery and grocery stores gave coupons for every sixpence spent. The two types available were Green Coupons and Gold Star Coupons.

Green coupons were distributed by the Co-operative Coupon Co. and were the most popular. These could be redeemed for a wide range of goods such as kitchen utensils and linen to the value of 2s 6d for every 100 coupons presented.

Until recently a Gold Star Coupon sign could be seen at the rear of Blakeley's old shop in Watson's Lane. Prior to World War II, and some time after, the following groceries were some of those included in the coupon gift system. Sydney, Mother's Choice and White Wings Flours, Kinkara, Lan Choo and Bushells Teas.



Shop on corner Booth & Darling Streets



McDonald's School of Arts, Darling St. destroyed by fire in the 1920s.

Grandpa's Going Back Day

On a recent holiday in Sydney, my elderly grandfather said he wanted to revisit the inner-city suburb of Balmain where, as a youth, he was employed by a timber merchant, and drove a horse and dray. So I took him on a nostalgia tour. He particularly wished to see if one narrow laneway was still there. It was, still lined with side-by-side toilets which still served the terrace houses built before the turn of the century. Pointing to one of these utilities, he told me how he had knocked the original down in 1917.

It was his last day with the firm before going off to fight in World War I and he was anxious to finish early, as his mates were planning his send-off. With one more delivery to make he took the lane at a fast clip and swinging around the bend a protruding timber caught the toilet amidships and the structure began to disintegrate. Hearing a squeal from inside, he thought it wise to keep on going.

We called at the house to see if anyone there had heard of the incident. A pleasant woman said she remembered the occasion well. She asked us in for a cup of tea and then explained with a roguish grin that had my grandfather waited to see the results of his handiwork he might have glimpsed her scooting up the backyard path with her drawers down. Grandpa's 'going back day' was made.

C A Lambert, Doubleview, WA.

The American Connection

On Sunday 7 April a reception was held at the Watch House to welcome Dr Laura Balmain, Mrs Sue Balmain-Griffin and Valene Balmain. While researching her family tree, Mrs Griffin discovered her relationship with William Balmain and was amazed to find a suburb named after him in Australia.

For many years there has been correspondence between Dr Peter Reynolds, other Association members and Mrs Griffin. The result can be seen at the Watch House in the elaborate family tree chart presented by Mrs Griffin.

When her niece Laura decided to attend a course at the Prince of Wales Hospital, Mrs Griffin and her sister-in-law Valene accompanied her to visit their namesake suburb.

Recovering Awarded Costs

Negotiations to recover court costs are proceeding with the Government around common fees which are approximately 2/3 of the actual cost. Responding to a \$72,000 account we were finally offered \$44,000 but this offer has since been withdrawn. We could be in for some messy and delaying negotiations requiring public action.

Former Watch House Tenants

To our great surprise, we were visited on 20 April by a family who had lived in the Watch House from 1952-63. Surprise, because as far as we knew the Watch House had fallen vacant and started to become derelict before 1962.

The story of the tenancy is no less intriguing. Apparently the Zanella brothers, having arrived in the area from Italy, were looking for a place to bring Mrs Zanella when she joined her husband. To their delight, a man, whose name is lost in the mists of time and memory, told them he had just the place. He was going overseas, he said, and for £500 they could have the key to his house for as long as they wanted.

The money changed hands, the man departed and the Zanellas moved in.

You can imagine their consternation, therefore, when shortly thereafter the police came knocking at the door. "What are you doing here?" they were asked. "This house belongs to the police".

Fortunately, the Balmain police were as humane as they are now. No charges were laid. Instead the Zanellas were allowed to retain occupancy for 15 shillings a fortnight. Of course they never saw their £500 again but they were very happy tenants of the Watch House for the next ten years. Mrs Zanella painted the walls and made the place cheery; Mr Zanella says that he enjoyed stopping off after work at the Pacific Hotel with "one for the road" at the London before he came home. We hope to see them again and learn more of these formerly lost years.

Stonework Provides Additional Interest

A fortuitous addition to Heritage Week was the stonework carried out by Kel Munyard of Hart Street. Thanks to a \$2500 dollar-for-dollar grant from the Dept of Planning's National Estate Grants Program, we have been able to proceed with essential repairs to the stone doorways.

As some of you may have noticed, these doorways had been steadily eroding around the cell door hinges and the exercise yard door. By the time we applied for the grant we felt the situation was reaching emergency proportions and were very pleased to find the Heritage Branch apparently agreed. Please come and inspect the completed work.

Balmain's New Street

A new street has appeared in Balmain-McKell Street. Named after Sir William McKell, who as Labor Premier set up the NSW Housing Commission. Entry is off Yeend Street into the new housing estate at Mort Bay.



Hardy Hellebores

Easy to grow, these winter flowering perennials are super reliable. Given cool, protective shade during scorching summer, the shy, enchanting, pale-green flowers of the winter rose creep open in the middle of winter. The large, saucer shaped blooms may be pale-green, white or a squashed mulberry and cream colour. The strong golden stamens are a feature of another member of the family, the buttercup.



Helleborus niger, *H. orientalis* and *H. corsicus* are well suited to any shady corner of the garden. Well drained soil with a topdressing of compost or rotted manure in August – September will ensure healthy plants with a profusion of flowers. Disturb as little as possible, but clumps can be divided in spring after flowering.

The hellebores combine beautifully with camellia and japonica in winter flower arrangements. They have a tendency to drop, but this can be avoided by putting the stems in boiling water and leaving for hours or even overnight.

Bonnie Davidson

Competition Prizewinners

The Children's Colouring Competition held in conjunction with Michael's Place was judged by Klin Sullivan and the winner of the Under 7 group was Jessica Ball, runner-up Megan Donnelly; 7–12 Years - 1st Amanda Casey, 2nd Alice Ansara. Our thanks to Rozelle Primary School for the childrens' response.

Phillip Bray of Bray's Books judged the Limerick Competition and the Senior winner Limerick was Judith Eban and the Junior prizewinners were 1st Heather Cave - 2nd Emma Clifford.

And the winners are:

Senior Limerick

It's time to break out the champagne
The battlers have triumphed again
They stood fast and fought
The Libs through the court
Another great win for Balmain!
Judith Eban

Junior Limerick

There was a girl from Balmain
Who met a prince in a lane
She gave him a kiss
And said what is this?
And never went there again.
Heather Cave

Apologies to Bill Marshall for failing to credit him last issue for the history details of his great-grandfather, Capt Marshall.

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WHAT'S ON

- The Beginning and End of Lever & Kitchen Photographs and Memorabilia
- Paintings of Paul Connor
June 21 – July 1
- Paintings – Ann Sheridan & Ly Ashburn
July 7 – July 14
- Share My Phantasy – Writers Aloft
1st Sunday of each month. Readings, critique
Supper served.

OUR HOUSE WATCH

The Watch House is open every
Saturday from

12 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 inc
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

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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

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Add \$6.00 to above rates to have News Sheet posted
Cheques should be made payable to The Balmain Association Inc