

Decision Time This Month

There were no surprises at the Public Hearing into the rezoning of the five sites before Commissioners Simpson and Carleton when it commenced on 13 May with the submission of the Leichhardt Council Town Planners supporting their December 1990 report and LEPS.

They were followed by all of the developers with the final period in the first week held by the Balmain Development Trust. Sonja Lynham for Planning Workshop was abrasive in her defence of their proposals for the Chemplex site and Caltex maintained their stand for approval to build 163 dwellings on Ballast Point.

Mr Coulston, Traffic Consultant for Caltex, attempted to discredit the figures for traffic generation from Ballast Point contained in the Traffic Study Stage I. He contended that a reduction of develop-

ment proposed by the Town Planners would only achieve a 2% drop in traffic unaware that the number of units proposed by the LEP would be 104 not his figure of 137.

Leda Holdings advised of a new scheme for the development of the Unilever site in which greater emphasis was placed on the residential component. This has been influenced by the change in the market brought on by the recession.

The Balmain Development Trust presented the winning entries to their Design Competition and argued that an Environmental Study should have been done before the rezoning. They called for the acquisition of Ballast Point as a park from funds raised by the sale of the Balmain Power Station site.

In June following a two week recess, it was the residents' time to be heard and the Balmain Association was represented

by President Jane Ward, Val Hamey and Ofra Shabtay. We called for measures such as better public transport and traffic calming to reduce the dominance of the motor car on the Peninsula. A net floor space ratio in the range 0.7:1—0.8:1 was supported as well as 20 m² per person open space allowance. The development should be sympathetic to the character of the Balmain streetscape but with modern street design employing shared traffic zones. We requested a recommendation to the Leichhardt Council for the formation of Precinct Committees to allow public participation and aid open government. Without consultation there will be resident action.

The Commissioners have invited input from the Roads & Traffic Authority, State Transit Authority and the Maritime Services Board. Their recommendations will then be made to Leichhardt Council who in turn are required to decide on the rezonings by 28 June by instruction from the former Minister for Planning, Mr Hay.

Action On Public Transport

Don't wait for the Government, start working now for a light rail system by setting up local committees. This is the advice Professor Peter Newman gave a meeting in the Balmain Town Hall on 29 May.

The Professor in Environmental Science at Murdoch University WA was presenting a summary of a ten year study of 32 world cities and their petrol and car dependence. He advocated a strategy involving the use of light rail with urban villages around the stations and traffic calming measures to reduce the dependence on the private vehicle. An advanced tramway with modern electric vehicles providing easy entry is more acceptable to passengers and much cheaper than Sydney's railway.

Professor Newman is consulting with business and environment groups in Canberra to introduce a light rail link to the satellite centre of Gungahlin. A joint Federal-ACT parliamentary committee recently scrapped two freeways and recommended the rail link. There will soon be a law allowing federal funds allocated to a freeway to be diverted to rail development. A similar law in USA enabled a freeway in Portland to be aban-

doned and more environmentally sympathetic light rail to be constructed which has transformed that city. He was visiting Sydney as a member of the Prime Minister's Ecologically Sustainable Development Transport Group and kindly agreed to speak Balmain residents.

The following day he blasted the State Government's plans to build the Castlereagh Freeway to service a series of low density suburbs in Sydney's north-west. "It's the most car-based planning that Sydney has done," Prof Newman said. "It's a big leap into the 1950s."



Professor Newman "It's a big leap into the 1950s." Picture by Ben Rushton, SMHerald

GOURLIE'S CORNER

Rat Catcher

Mr Peter Dunn, who lived in Stewart Street, was the recognised local rat catcher and he was paid a bounty from the Balmain Council for each rat caught. He had only to produce the tail as this was sufficient proof. The bounty was a penny a tail.

When the bubonic plague befell Sydney in the summer of 1900, it was serious. Between 19 January and 19 August 303 people contracted the disease and of these 103 died.

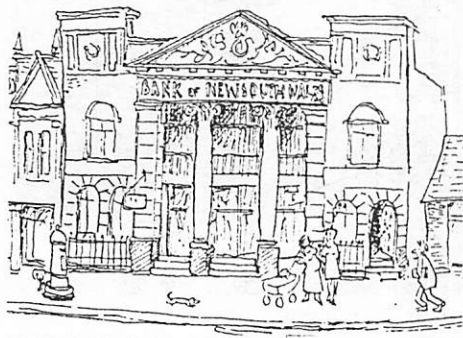
The Sydney Morning Herald, 26 March, 1900, reported two cases of the plague around Easton Park, Balmain. The patients were named Fleming and Hall. Soon after the Mayor (Alderman Mills) took action to remove rubbish and disinfect the nearby rubbish tip. Six extra inspectors were employed on a complete house to house inspection.

A young woman, Florence Gibbs, was a victim in 1902 in Davidson Street, Happy Valley, Balmain. *The Observer*, 10 May, reported that it was difficult to say where she had contracted the disease as her living premises were said to be scrupulously clean but it is believed she got it in some infested area of the city.

That Portico!

Towards the end of 1902 there was considerable argument over the new Bank of NSW building in Darling Street. There was a very awkward angle in the building line of the Bank's land and they had been approached by council to forego a small angular piece of land to enable the street to be kept at its then present width.

In September 1902 a plan was submitted. *The Observer* 22 November, commented "A pretty picture that seems to have dulled the perceptive ideas of the aldermen". The Bank offered the council the small piece of land for the sum of 10s and 70s transfer costs, provided the council would grant the bank the privilege of erecting a "portico" across the footpath. The aldermen were pleased with its appearance, characterised the offer as a generous one and granted the application. The portico was to be supported by



On the outbreak of World War I a meat works, National Meat Preserving Co Ltd, was built at the foot of Broadstairs Street, now Colgate Avenue. The works produced bully beef for the troops and it was not unusual to see horse drawn drays

lining up 24 hours each day to take the product to the wharves and railheads. When the building was demolished in 1920 the surrounding streets were plagued with rats. One wonders what was in the bully beef.



A group of professional rat catchers

four Corinthian columns each three feet in diameter with bases four feet square placed on the footpath thus reducing the space for pedestrians from 12 to 8 feet in one of the busiest parts of Darling Street.

"Let our readers imagine the four pillars that adorn the entrance to the Balmain Police Court placed upon the footpath at intervals of eight feet... when they thus picture the gift given under the nose of our Mayor their summing up of his act will be more emphatic than ours. How the bank officials must crow over the deal!"

At a meeting of Balmain Council on Tuesday 9 December 1902 matters took a new phase. A letter was read from Messrs Allen, Allen & Hemsley, for the Bank, stating that the portico was considered to be a great advantage but as a section of the public seemed to hold a different view, it was thought best to rescind the arrangements. Mayor Cox saw no harm and, like the other aldermen, would grant the same concession to any ratepayer. It was strange how anything out of the old groove was put down. None of the aldermen realised the size of the pillars from the drawings. After much argument, Ald Laws moved an amendment "That this council has no objection to the portico provided smaller pillars be used." Eventually the amendment was passed.

In the 3 January 1903, *The Observer* reported "The public have, we are pleased to announce, scored against the

carelessness of the aldermen, in the matter of the four feet square pillars. After receiving a petition from 60 businessmen and ratepayers pointing out the illegality of the action of the aldermen, the bank officials decided that they would not incur the risk of legal proceedings, and called upon the council to re-convey to them the small piece of land". A resolution proposed by the Mayor was carried in silence—"That in consequence of the opposition by certain ratepayers to the Bank of NSW building proposed portico, and this being the condition upon which the transfer of land in Darling Street was made to this council, the Mayor be empowered to transfer the said land back to the Bank of NSW."

But Will It Help Us?

The defeat of Mr Hay in the State Elections may bring a more reasonable offer from the Government for the court costs recently awarded by the successful challenge by the Association.

We are advised that the Director of the Department of Planning, Ms Gabriel Kibble, at first offered \$44,000 against actual costs of \$72,000 but this was withdrawn and replaced by an amount of \$38,000. The Balmain Development Trust is consulting with their legal representatives to determine measures of obtaining an equitable settlement.

Balmain Personality

A Balmain Hero

Mrs Dingwall of Kings Langley has been researching her family history and has uncovered as an ancestor, a Balmain hero, Patrick Connolly.

Patrick Connolly married Frances Pont on 25 September 1860. Her father Phillip Pont was of the well known Pont Bros, fuel merchants of Balmain 1869-1947. Patrick was at first a waterman, then boatman and finally a mariner. He lived in Elliott Street from 1871-1880. His nickname was Paddy (Man Overboard) Connolly. He was a rower at the Balmain Rowing Club and won many prizes. A painting of him by a Mr Cressy was found in the Mitchell Library.



Patrick Connolly was engaged on the steamer *Gem* of the Balmain Ferry boats which plied between Balmain and Sydney. During over 28 years service he rescued no fewer than thirty eight individuals from a watery grave.

In August 1879 the Committee of the National Shipwreck Relief Society of NSW had forwarded him a silver medal. On 16 February 1882 he was presented with a bronze medal by the Royal Humane Society of England. Some local people also gave him a silver watch and gold albert together with an illuminated address. (An albert was a watch chain named after Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's Consort).

The following is a list of the persons whom Mr Connolly has rescued, —

1854—A young lady off Ebsworth's Wharf. 1858—A man and woman off Garden Island. 1859—A man from the Parramatta steamer, *Miss Johnson*, who fell down a well in Weston Street. 1860—A man and two women, from the capsizing of a boat between Goat Island and Billy Blue's Point. 1861—Three men and three women, through the boat being

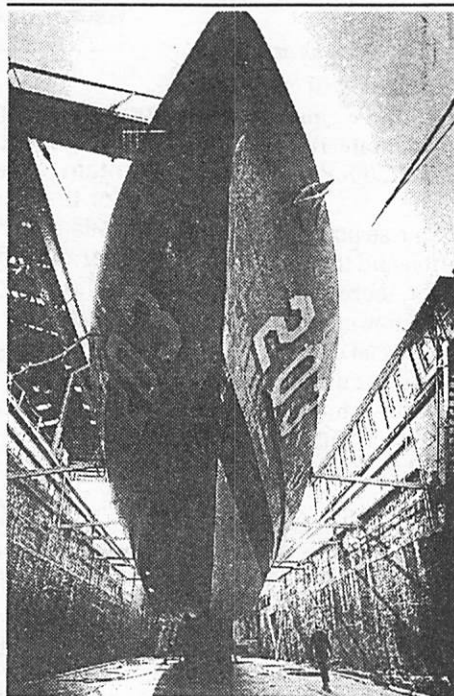
caught in a south-west burster and upset off Cockatoo. Five of the six were saved alongside the boat, and in diving for the sixth, Mr Connolly nearly lost his own life. 1861—Nicholas Stenhouse, JP off Crook Wharf. 1864—Two men and one woman off Cremorne. 1865—Two youths, through upsetting of a boat off the Gas Wharf—both unable to swim. 1866—Two men off Erskine Street. 1867—Mr Thiering, Balmain, and two sons. 1874—Mr Coleman and son, Balmain, at the Adolphus Street Wharf. Mr Armstrong, Wharf Street, Sydney, fell out of a boat off Adolphus Street Wharf. 1875—Mr Allway, late of Balmain, off the Bald Rock Wharf. 1877—Mr Stuart, off the Stephen Street Wharf. 1878—Mr J Harper, Balmain, off the Stephen Street Wharf. Mr Bolan, of the *Samuel Plimsoll*, off the Stephen Street Wharf. Mr G Jackson, Kent Street, Sydney, off the Erskine Street Wharf. 1879—A man off the Stephen Street Wharf. Mr Moore, Balmain, off the Erskine Street Wharf. 1880—Mr Peter Grant, off the Erskine Street Wharf. Mr Daniel Curran and child, off the Reynolds Street Wharf. Mr Christopher Tully, off the Bald Rock Ferry.

The 1861 rescue is interesting as Nicholas Stenhouse lived in Waterview House, Caroline Street (first house in Balmain), and on his death his many books formed the nucleus of the Sydney University Library.

Patrick Connolly died on 13 May 1912 near where Birkenhead Point is today.

A Family Reunion of the Pont, Milham and Ford families is being organised for next year in Balmain by Mrs Paula Huine. Please contact 949 4454. Phillip Pont and Frances Ford had 11 children so there are many descendants.

Ref: *Balmain Independent* April 1882



A fish eye view of the HMAS Fremantle at Balmain shipyard
Photo: Paul Melville

Protest on Buses

On Monday 20 May a meeting of residents was held in the Watch House to discuss the deterioration of the bus service to Balmain. The initiative of one of our members, Mrs Kath Epple, with help from friends, resulted in more than 800 signatures on a petition and requested Sandra Nori MP to convene the meeting.

The meeting room upstairs was crowded with nearly 50 residents who voiced their complaints to Ms Nori and Shadow Minister for Transport, Mr Brian Langton. Most of their concerns were with the changes to Route 445 which now terminates at Gladstone Park but there were complaints about Route 441 as well. Among other issues there was dissatisfaction with the necessity for East Balmain residents to change from a 442 bus to a 445 bus at Gladstone Park. They found that the 445 did not wait for the connection and this required a wait of at least 20 minutes with only a shelter on the Gladstone Park side.

Mr Langton told the meeting that although there was a large highly paid managerial staff the economies were obtained by cutting services throughout the bus network. The meeting resolved to send letters to the Minister for Transport and to form a committee to continue the campaign.

Balmain Success Story

The navy patrol boat *HMAS Fremantle* has joined the ferries in Balmain. The ship is at present in dry dock at the NSW State Transit Authority's shipyard in Balmain.

The contract for the three week intermediate docking was awarded to the STA as part of a long standing policy of contracting work to local private shipyards wherever possible.

This is the second naval contract awarded in as many weeks. *HMAS Brunei* was at the shipyard recently undergoing urgent repairs.

State Transit Chief Executive, John Brew, said that the effort by the shipyard management and staff to complete the repairs to a very tight schedule has already borne fruit with the award of the second contract. Mr Brew described the Navy contracts as important milestones in the development of the Balmain shipyard as a competitive and commercially viable facility capable of carrying out repairs and maintenance of commercial, naval and private recreational vessels, in addition to State Transit's ferry fleet.

According to STA in 1987-88 its ferry maintenance terminal in Balmain was poorly run and cost inefficient, adding to the financial problems facing the Authority. (more on back page)



In Your Garden

The Rewards Of Recycling

Organic gardening is very popular with people who now realise the importance of recycling fallen leaves, lawn clippings, spent plants and weeds to enrich the soil and produce healthier plants.

Plants draw up the nutrients and minerals from the soil to help them grow and much of this stays in the leaves and stems. So returning these to the soil in the form of mulch or compost helps to maintain the natural fertility.

Well-mulched soil with plenty of compost added retains moisture and cuts down on watering. Plants grown in organically rich soil will be healthier and less vulnerable to attack by pests and diseases, will need less spraying and produce more flowers or fruit.

A quick and easy way to compost leaves is to drive four stakes into the ground to form a square and wrap with chicken wire or plastic mesh. Fill with leaves, sprinkling each addition with sulphate of ammonia or manure and a spadeful of soil. Put a layer of soil on top, then damp down and cover with plastic or newspaper to keep the rain from leaching out the nutrients. You can use any vegetable and fruit peelings, peanut shells, sea-weed and tea leaves on the compost heap and you will have a rich mulch ready for use in spring.

Bonnie Davidson

This month is the 175th anniversary of the Royal Botanic Gardens. They were originally established by Governor Lachlan Macquarie in the Governor's Domain at Farm Cove in June 1816 on what was the site of Australia's first farm. Farming had proved unsuccessful because of relatively infertile soils.

The long history of collection, study and acclimatisation began in 1817 with the appointment of the first Colonial Botanist, Charles Fraser. Other notable botanists associated with the gardens include the early explorer brothers, Richard and Allan Cunningham, Charles Moore and J H Maiden. The current director is Professor Carrick Chambers.

An estimated three million people visit the Gardens each year. A vital breathing space for the city.

Balmain Success Story continued from page 2

In that year the shipyard accounted for more than 31% of ferry service expenditure. 23.6% of working days lost were through absenteeism leading to a blow out in overtime equalling 37% of the total wages bill. Although only 2% of State Transit's workforce was employed at Balmain they accounted for 48% of days lost through industrial disputes.

Union domination over a poor management structure had largely contributed to the unacceptable situation and the operation was faced with closure. Now, 2 1/2 years later, there has been a complete reversal and the Balmain shipyard is showing signs of profitability and has already secured four commercial contracts. This success has its foundations in cooperation between management and unions and determination by State Transit to make it work. An emphasis on training and a new Balmain enterprise award which involves multi-skilling has led to the revival of the fortunes of the yard.

As far as the rest of the suburb is concerned, it has meant continued work for some of its inhabitants and the continued use of an important industrial site.

Bob Nicholls, "Navy News".

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WHAT'S ON

- **Paintings of Paul Connor**
June 21 – July 1
- **Paintings – Ann Sheridan & Ly Ashburn**
July 7 – July 14
- **Ceramics & Paintings – Melinie Scarcella**
July 17 – 21
- **History Trail Notice Board Unveiling**
The Governor Rear Admiral Peter Sinclair will unveil the notice board at Thornton Park on Sunday July 21 at 9.30am.

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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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
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