

the balmain
association
incorporated

NEWS SHEET

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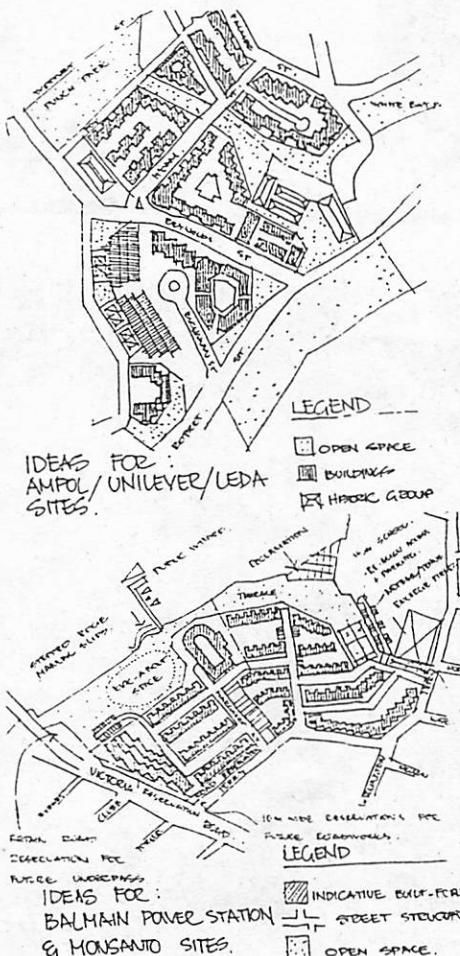
Extend Public Participation

The Rezoning Workshops conducted by Leichhardt Council have been concluded and there is agreement that they generally presented a consensus of residents' views and concerns. The Council is now expected to determine the Local Environment Plans before the end of the year.

As we forecast last month, the Department of Planning is still formulating their Regional Environmental Plan which they had proposed to exhibit on 18 November and is now due "before the end of the year". There is, however, a possibility of a legal challenge to this process from the Council and the Local Government Association.

Some of the developers have discussed the rezonings with the workshops and agreement had been achieved on general principles. The most developed concepts were from Leda on the White Bay site and the sketch illustrates some of the ideas promoted by members of the workshop committee. The main principle agreed to was the linkage of open space through the site from Punch Park to White Bay Park.

Variations to access roads and traffic arrangements are imperative and the recommendations include: (a) Improvements to access Victoria Road and keep heavy vehicles out of narrow suburban streets. (b) Extension of Booth Street to Roberts Street. (c) Extension of Reynolds Street to Roberts Street. (d) Closing off Buchanan Street to form a cul-de-sac serving only the commercial premises of the Ampol and Unilever sites.



No detailed concept has been revealed by Chemplex but general agreement was reached for waterfront open space with the possibility of enlarging the Balmain High School playing field. The widening of Terry Street between Victoria Road and Margaret

Street as well as a reservation for extra lanes on Victoria Rd from Iron Cove Bridge to Terry Street was well supported. The street network as portrayed on the sketch is not desirable and does not follow the site levels. Chemplex representative, Mr John Boyd, stated that they had not tendered for Cockatoo Island as it does not appear to be a viable development.

The Caltex workshop wants Council to request the State Government to purchase 4/5 of Ballast Point for a park and to allow development on the remainder. If this request was unsuccessful a minority report had two schemes which approximated the Commissioners' recommendations. Caltex advocated the adoption of the "umpire's" decision.

The next step in the public participation operation is to produce measures to control the effects of the development on these five sites and others such as the MSB buoy site and the White Bay Power Station which is about to be demolished. The Council is expected to form the precinct committees that we have been advocating. However, the traffic control measures and improvements to infrastructure and amenities need to be considered over the whole Peninsula and the precincts need to work in conjunction. A future resident committee should examine the traffic calming measures required especially for the Darling Street shopping area. Contributions should be obtained from the developers as well as the State Government to finance this work.



President Jane Ward for the
Management Committee wishes you all
the best for the Festive Season.

Please join us at 3-6pm on Saturday
December 21 at the Watch House for
Christmas drinks

Gourlies Corner

Picture Theatres

Picture shows operated in Balmain around the 1930s by the National Theatre (the "Old Nash") in Rowntree Street and Kings on the corner of Birchgrove Road and Darling Street. Screenings were on six nights a week with a children's matinee on Saturday afternoon. Two others were the Rozelle Hoyts at 730 Darling Street and the Amusu on the corner of Darling and Thornton Streets. The old Amusu was known to the children as the "Bug House". One of the buildings, Kings, has been demolished.

Emerging from its shroud now is the refurbished Bijou (Hoyts) Theatre in Rowntree Street adjacent to Darling St. This building has retained its 1930s remodelled Art Deco facade and will be recycled as office space and shops. Being in a prominent position its colour scheme compliments the 1887 Post Office opposite.

The National Picture Theatre was built in 1913. The entrance was in Darling St where the foyer held the ticket office and later the milk bar. It is now a gift store at 371A Darling Street and when the proprietor renovated the shop she discovered, under layers of lino, the foyer's original tiles which are now on view. Another entrance led to the National Billiards rooms above (the Loft) and there was also the Vaudeville Theatre entrance in Rowntree St which has been retained.

Wednesday evening was vaudeville night with entertainers such as Harry Clay's Revue Company, the Manchurians (Chinese jugglers), Slavin and Thompson (smart patterists), the Saldines (specialty act) and the comedian, Roy Rene. Silent movies shown on other nights starring



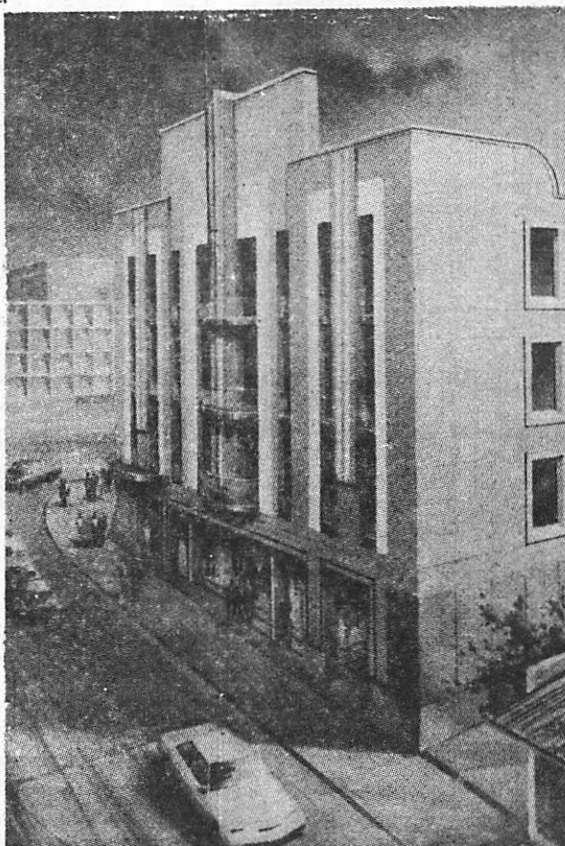
Snowy Baker, Olga Petrove, Ruby De Remer and Charlie Chaplin.

One of Australia's silent movie stars was Lottie Lyell who was born in Balmain in 1890 and grew up here with her two sisters. Her father, Joseph Cox, was a local real estate agent and her mother, Charlotte Louise Hancock. Beginning in 1907, Lottie's work as a film director and actor appears today as a significant departure from the accepted norm. The bohemian life of an actor, in those early years, still attached a considerable social stigma. Her association with Raymond Longford produced many well loved films including "The Mutiny of the Bounty", 1916, and those adapted from C J Dennis' popular poems "The Sentimental Bloke", 1919, and "Ginger Mick", 1920. Lottie Lyell died at the early age of 34 years.

Before the talkies arrived in the 1930s a pianist or a small group of musicians would synchronise sound to the mood required by the screen action. The Powerhouse Museum's Kings Theatre has a Photoplayer to accompany silent movies. It is a piano which has buttons to operate sound effects such as pistol shots, bells, whistles, etc.

From 1947 to 1964 the building was known as the Balmain Hoyts, after which it had a variety of uses. Live performances came again in the 1970s when Reg Livermore opened the re-named Bijou with Betty Blockbuster Revues. It was last used as a roller skating rink. Let us all wish the phantom of the theatre a renewed life in the Bijou complex. "Peanuts and lollies!" sez a boy upstairs.

Source: "Brilliant Careers" by Andrea Wright. The Association History Committee requests further information on the picture theatres of Balmain and Rozelle.



Cockatoo Island

For most of this year, the Australian Archives has been involved in a project aimed at the preservation of the records of Cockatoo Island Dockyard. Work on the dock began in 1851 and the Dockyard was used for shipbuilding and refitting until this year.

It was operated by the NSW Government until 1913, when it was transferred to the Commonwealth. From 1933 it was leased to the Cockatoo Docks & Engineering Co (now called Cockatoo Dockyard Pty Ltd). During its long history a wide variety of

naval and merchant vessels were built or refitted, including the Tribal class destroyers during World War II, the passenger ship *Empress of Australia* and the replenishment ship *HMAS Success*.

The project, undertaken with extensive assistance from the company and the Department of Defence, has resulted in the identification and transfer to the Archives' custody of some 580 series of records. These represent a most important resource for the study of maritime, industrial and social history.

The Australian Archives NSW Regional Office is located at 24 Market St Sydney.

**Annual Subscriptions
are now due.**

**Please send your
contributions as early as
possible.**

**Turn to back page for
important details.**

Wee Georgie Robinson

One of the outstanding displays at the Australian National Maritime Museum in Darling Harbour, is the *Britannia*, an 18 footer built in 1919 and sailed by noted Balmain shipwright, "Wee" Georgie Robinson. With a crew of 11 he raced *Britannia* on Sydney Harbour and interstate for 26 years. Cheered by ferry loads of spectators and punters, the crew of up to 16 sailed, bailed and brawled their timber boats around the harbour.

George's father started the Sydney Flying Squadron in 1890 and George sailed the 6 ft *Edna*, 8 footers, 10 footers, 12 footers, 16 footers and finally 18 footers, winning a race in every class. George took a year off from his work at Cockatoo Island to build his famous *Britannia*. In 1945 he took down the rig, installed an engine and added a cabin. *Britannia* became the Squadron's starter boat. Robinson cherished his famous boat all of his life.

The Museum acquired the *Britannia* in 1986 and reconstructed the vessel to its 1940s design. The late Arthur Griffiths of Birchgrove painstakingly removed the many layers of paint which masked the fine cedar hull beneath. The conservation was continued by Richard Wood and Nigel Shannon with sailmaker Dennis

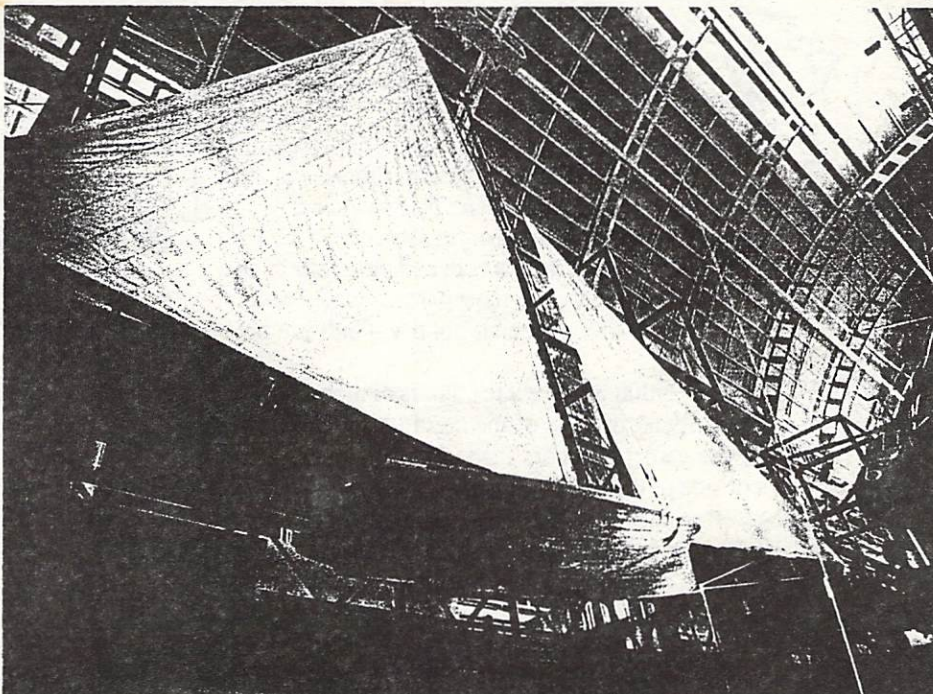
McGoogan. The lightweight hollow spars were fashioned from oregon pine by Michael Staples.

Britannia is now suspended majestically as a fully rigged sailing vessel from the centre of the Museum's main gallery (see picture below) alongside another favourite, *Australia II* with its revolutionary winged keel. A video made by the late George Robinson and a display cabinet of

memorabilia should be a mecca for anyone with a few drops of salt water in their veins.

The Maritime Museum opened to the public on 30 November 1991 and I was ticket holder No 1. Admission costs \$7 for adults, concession \$4.50, children \$3.50 and families \$17. Open 7 days 10am to 5pm. Congratulations to the Australian National Maritime Museum.

Kath Hamey



Frederick Vale

A prominent hotelier in the early years in Balmain was Frederick Vale. Frederick married Sarah Crane at St James Church, Sydney on 2 January 1855 when he was licensee of the Balmain Hotel in Darling Street (opposite the Watch House now demolished,).

Frederick and Sarah went on to have 12 children, all except one were baptised in St Marys Church, Balmain — Alice 1855, Frederick 1857, Ernest 1859, Thomas 1860, Charles 1862, Walter 1864, Florence 1866, Valetta 1870, Edith 1872, Emma 1874.

Fred Vale had built the Warwick Castle on the corner of Mort and Darling Streets, Balmain in 1860 to the design of the well known Balmain architect, James McDonald. When he sold it about 1867 he moved his family to The Australian Hotel and Cafe in George St, Sydney where Valetta was baptised. He returned to Balmain in 1870 when he bought Thomas Wakfer's Dock Inn on the corner of Cameron and College Streets.

At the time of the death of his daughter, Valetta, at the age of 13 months, he called the hotel The Clarendon, but next year he renamed it the Dry Dock Hotel as it is called

today. His daughter Emma died aged 10 months in 1875. In 1875 Vale sold the Dry Dock and Sarah died two years later of consumption aged 44 years and was buried in the Balmain Cemetery. He went to live at Boat Harbour on the Bellinger River in 1881 where he died aged 59 years and was buried there. In his early years in Balmain he was very politically minded as were many publicans in those days.

He owned land in Cove Street, Birchgrove, which he had purchased from

the Gilchrist Estate in 1866. His son Charles Vale was a very well known resident of Bellinger River and the Association was honoured to have had his grandson, Mr John Vale of Grafton with some of his family as guests at our launch of "Called to the Bar" at Clontarf. We hope to receive from him a photo of Frederick and Sarah Vale which shall be treasured. "Called to the Bar" is available for \$15 postage paid from the Balmain Association Inc PO Box 57 Balmain 2041.



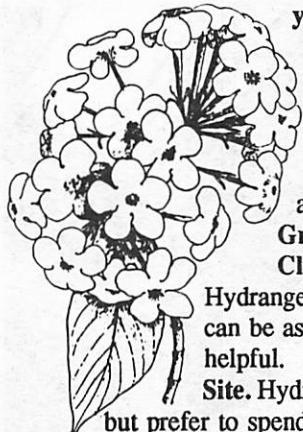
Warwick Castle Hotel 1930



In Your Garden

Hydrangea—Summer's super shade lover

Perfect for partly shaded parts of well watered gardens, Hydrangea produce their posies of bloom from around November to well into February. You can cut flowers for Christmas arrangements or for an even longer indoor display you can grow them in pots.



The most common and most beautiful species is macrophylla, sometimes known as a hortensia. These now come in a big range of colours and mature shrubs can be anything between 50cm to 2m tall.

Greenthumb groundrules.

Climate. Best is cool and moist although Hydrangea do well in most gardens where water can be assured. Frequent hot dry winds are not helpful.

Site. Hydrangea like a few hours of morning sun but prefer to spend the rest of the day in bright dappled shade. The hotter your garden the more shade they will accept. The eastern or southern side of the house is good.

Soil. Must be well drained yet reasonably water retentive. Water generously during the warmer half of the year, less in winter. Feed with annual application of complete plant food in early spring.

Bonnie Davidson

Subscription Renewal

Your 1992 Subscription is now due and your Committee welcomes your early contribution before the Christmas holidays. The rates are the same as the previous year as we have kept our printing costs under tight control. However, the subscriptions will now include postage.

Although our deliverers have been reliable and are willing to continue there are advantages in distributing the News Sheet entirely by post. Most importantly membership records would be more accurate because the News Sheet would be returned if a member had moved without notification. Distribution would be simplified to a bulk postage and you would receive your copy earlier and more safely as it would not be like junk mail. The bulk mail cost would be only a little more than that of the present third of copies posted in envelopes.

Please note that subscriptions are \$16.00 for Households and \$7.00 for Students/Pensioners. Both include postage. Those members who have paid in advance have received a Xmas bonus.

Season's Greetings from your Committee.

Books For Xmas Gifts

Half Thousand Acres	\$20
The Balmain Book	\$20
Christian Brothers & Balmain	\$25
Leichhardt Historical Journals	\$10, \$15
Around Balmain (special)	\$7
Called to the Bar	\$13
History Trail \$2	Leaflets \$1

Stop Press. Balmain Post Office to be auctioned.

Printed on recycled paper

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WHAT'S ON

- Christmas Drinks—3-6pm December 21 at the Watch House
- Carmen Hagen—Paintings. February 22 - March 1
- Ann Sheridan—March 6 - 15
- Margaret Margeson—March 21 - 22
- Renata Fisher—March 28 - April 5

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

the balmain association incorporated
MEMBERSHIP FORM

Return to Treasurer, PO Box 57, BALMAIN 2041

NAME:

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POST CODE HOME PHONE:

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

Please circle-...NEW MEMBER / RENEWAL

Single/Family/Household. \$16.00

Organisation \$21.00

Pensioner or Student \$7.00

Above rates include postage

Cheques should be made payable to The Balmain Association Inc