

the balmain
association
incorporated
news sheet

The Peninsula OBSERVER

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Council Challenges Govt Planning Grab

Leachardt Council has mounted a legal challenge to the Government's Regional Environment Plan (REP) which grabs the rezoning and development powers on the five Peninsula sites. It is ironic that the Minister for Planning, Mr Robert Webster, chose to make his appropriation pronouncement from his country house in Goulburn.

His well-worn cry of "urban consolidation" accompanied his support for "affordable housing" but there was no indication of how these objectives were to be achieved. These catchcries are meaningless in the context of his government's support for developers interested in big profits from luxury waterside development.

His department formulated the Urban Consolidation Policy over a decade ago but has ignored it in supporting the burgeoning

of urban sprawl. Urban consolidation in the inner suburbs only will not solve the problem. The department's plans for South Creek and Rouse Hill are classic examples of bad planning. They have ignored the achievements of Toronto where medium density housing is clustered around the rail network.

The Minister's only concession towards affordable housing is to reduce standards and quality. The only success with affordable housing has been achieved by co-operative housing schemes with community title otherwise the homes can be resold for a profit negating the objective. Once again Canada has shown the way as have Waverley and Woollahra Councils.

Missing from the Minister's statement were real measures to counter the traffic generation and general infrastructure

replacement. The RTA and the MSB have abrogated their responsibility to help local remedial plans. The MSB recently refused the residents' proposal to extend Booth and Reynolds Streets into Robert Street because "the MSB does not consider it desirable to mix port and residential traffic on port land". It would rather they mix on local roads that are unable to accommodate the traffic volume.

The real driving force behind the Government's assumption of the planning powers is its determination to solve its debt problem by selling the people's assets. Government departments "own" a number of sites on the Peninsula.

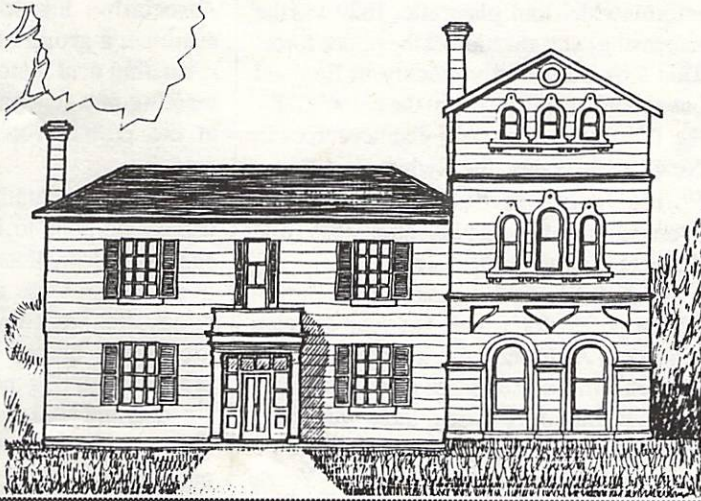
The latest rezoning application has come from the MSB for its Jubilee site where it proposes 96 dwellings. Will the White Bay Power Station be next?

Ewenton Revival

For some years the old mansion Ewenton in Cameron Cove has stood an empty shell awaiting an occupier. We are happy to report that there are plans to restore it to its former glory as a private residence for a family now living in Birchgrove.

Originally known as *Blake Vale*, the building was purchased in 1856 by Major Ewen Wallace Cameron, a partner of T S Mort. He commissioned James McDonald to transform Blake's Georgian house by adding an entrance portico, an upper storey, and a handsome bay window commanding a fine view towards the city. In 1872 he added a new wing and the house became known as "the Cathedral" because each internal door carried a Bible quotation.

After his death in 1876 the house was sold and it had various owners until 1951 when it was purchased by Dickson Primer & Co and was zoned industrial. The once grand mansion was faced with extinction and became derelict, condemned by Leichhardt Council. A fire on 17 May 1980 gutted the 1850s section. Lend Lease Corp restored the exterior as part of the Cameron Cove development. They sold it to a Language School for overseas students which did not materialise. The illustration shows the Ewenton Street elevation.



Birchgrove Oval

Unfortunately the public meeting in the Birchgrove Oval on Friday 7 February degenerated into individual arguments which were not very edifying and it was impossible to achieve a consensus. Many residents were disturbed by the invective used against neighbours. The chairman, Ald Nick Masterman, performed a difficult task and the meeting eventually decided to request the circulation of a questionnaire in the area north of Victoria Road.

The Association suggests that the questionnaire will be inconclusive and expensive and difficult to collate. The parking issue should be considered on an area basis as it is unfair to concentrate parking in Rose and Ferdinand Streets. When angle parking in Grove Street was promoted it drew a negative response with some residents of that street. The maintenance of the park requires replacement tree planting. It appears that some residents are against trees because it reduces their property value while others actively promote planting to improve the value. What chance has the Council of reconciling these attitudes?

The Police In NSW

Thanks to a dollar for dollar grant from the Royal Australian Historical Association, we have at long last been able to undertake research into NSW police records to unearth information about Crime in Balmain. Debby Cramer, who carried out the research for us, made an examination of all the extant New South Wales Reports of Crime for the period 1855-1861, and selected years and months from its successor, the New South Wales Police Gazette, covering the years 1863-1907.

The first Police Blotter reporting extracts from these sources regarding crimes perpetrated in Balmain appears on this page.

By coincidence, the most recent Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society was devoted to material on the police, the magistracy and imprisonment in New South Wales. We will bring you, in this and subsequent Observers, extracts of the papers written for that Journal, augmented by information provided by Debby Cramer.

The Early Years of the Colony

(Based on material in "New Police, New Country" by Michael Sturma, "Pursuing Incurable Rogues: Patterns of Policing in NSW 1870-1930 and "A Tour of the Rogues Gallery: Interpreting the Relics of Crime and Policing in New South Wales" by Christa Ludlow)

As most of you will be aware, before the 19th century there were no professional police forces. Policing was the responsibility of private citizens and the little organisation which existed was on an ad hoc basis. The starting point for professional police was, of course, the formation of the London Metropolitan Constabulary in 1829 - a police force often thereafter referred to as Peelers because of the part played by Sir Robert Peel in initiating the reform. One major purpose of the reform was to prevent crime by being seen in uniform and patrolling regular beats. The new police were also placed under more centralised control.

In Sydney, the first constables appointed were a Night Watch of convicts — without uniform — especially established by Governor Phillip. Gradually, constables were issued with insignia to identify them. The NSW Police was formed in 1810. In 1825 the Superintendent proposed that instead of the existing clothing allowance, they should be issued with regulation clothing, which he described as "One Coatee, one Waistcoat, one pair of Pantaloon, one round Hat, and one Grey Great Coat. He suggested that as a "Distinguishing Dress" the coat and pantaloons should be blue and

the waistcoat red. The benefits of this kind of dress were evident: *many Rogues and Vagabonds would by these means be deterred by the casual distant sight of a Constable, from the commission of an Offence and I consider the principal Duty of the Police is to be that of prevention of Crimes; whilst their detections is only of a secondary importance.*

In their haste to conform with the changes to the London Constabulary in 1829, the Sydney police adopted London's prescribed heavy woollen uniforms. Apparently it was believed by some that the unsuitability of this apparel discouraged potential recruits!

In addition to being seen in uniform, patrolling regular beats was supposed to play a large part in the aim of crime prevention which lay behind the reforms. In 1835, constables in Sydney were mustered early in the morning, checked by their supervisor for sobriety and neatness, and then sent out singly to patrol the street for two hours at a pace of two and a half miles per hour. Their time was not their own but the government's. In 1849 the constables at watch houses in Sydney worked alternate shifts every 12 hours.

Part of the reason for this strict control was the fact that so many of the police were ex-convicts. Many other men who joined the police — and then remained — were those whose age, health or skills meant they were unlikely to find other employment. Drunkenness was common among them. In 1841 the "Sydney Gazette" described the Sydney police as "as great a set of ruffians as the colony can boast of" and in one single year, 1854, over one-quarter of Sydney's police were dismissed for drunkenness.

Their leaders did nothing to help the police image. One of Sydney's longest serving police superintendents was rumoured to be a royal bastard and was dismissed in 1848 after being found drunk on duty. His next two successors were each dismissed a year after their appointments.

As noted earlier, a further aspect of the reforms which took place after 1829 was the increasing centralisation of the police force. This took place fairly quickly in England but was a longer process in the colonies. By the 1840's there were six distinct forces in New South Wales: the Sydney and Water Police forces in Sydney; the Rural, Mounted, Border and Native forces in rural districts and the frontier areas.

One of the major reasons for the reform of the police force was the fear of mass disorder. Although the composition of Australian citizens was more homogeneous than in America, there was still a fear of mass violence in Australia, partly a hangover of penal origins. A New Year's

Day riot took place in Sydney in 1850. Although the riot itself mainly involved teenagers breaking windows and tearing down some fence palings in the city centre, the disturbance resulted in immediate steps toward centralisation of the police and an increase in their numbers. The next major reform came in 1862 after the anti-Chinese riots at Lambing Flat gold fields and resulted in the Police Act of 1862 which will be the subject of a later article.

Debby Nicholls

Police Gazette

Police Blotter - March

Monday 28 March 1859

Stolen from John Thompson, foreman at the dry dock, Balmain, between 11 o'clock p.m. of the 23rd and 6 a.m. of the 24th instant, one paper box, about 6 inches square, containing a man's gold ring, large, with a brown stone set in it; one woman's gold ring with a small stone in it; one silver breast pin made in the shape of a spear; one silver watch guard, and one pair of jet brace lets.

Monday 19 March 1860

Missing from his home, Balmain, since the 14th instant a boy named Edward Glover, about 12 years old, fair sallow complexion, light brown hair, grey eyes, slim make; had on a brown alpaca coat, blue cloth trousers and cap. He is supposed to have accompanied some bullock team to the interior. L2 reward on his being returned to his home, Darling Street, Balmain.

Oral History Group Formed

Out there in Balmain and Rozelle — and other parts of Sydney — are a number of people who have a treasure trove of memories of the Peninsula as it was half a century or more ago. Unless these memories are recorded, they will disappear and an invaluable historical source will disappear with them. The Association has long been anxious to establish a group of people interested in recording oral history, and an inaugural meeting of a few participants took place at the Watch House at the end of last month.

We are gradually preparing a list of people we hope to interview and Yvonne and Peter Kendall have taken the first steps in setting up these interviews, but we are discovering what many oral historians have discovered before us: that it is a slow process requiring not only time to make contacts and hold conversations but also — and essentially — a number of interested participants.

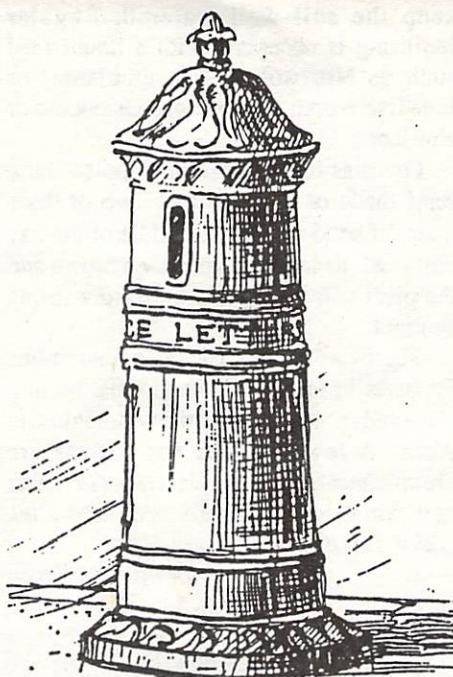
Letter Boxes & Postmen

Receipt boxes were introduced in 1831 in NSW and placed with shopkeepers for the public use. The fee for each letter left in the box was paid to the shopkeeper and collected twice daily by a postal official.

In 1856 iron letter boxes (pictured) replaced the Receipt boxes when the Post Office ordered twelve new bell-type letter boxes to be placed around the city. The first was at Circular Quay near the Customs House. Designed by T W Levinge of the Sydney Post Office from a type then in use in France the boxes were manufactured by Robert Bubb's Victoria Foundry, Sydney, in cast iron for a cost of £14,000. The vertical aperture was first used to make posting from horseback. Newspaper posting boxes with a horizontal aperture appeared in 1860.

Balmain's first letter box was placed at the corner of Darling and Nicholson Streets as well as at Mort and Trouton Streets in 1861. These were the only boxes until eleven years later when one was installed at Mullens and Reynolds Streets. These were followed by a box at Cameron and College Streets (now removed) in 1875 and a year later near the corner of Weston Street and Abattoir Road (Victoria and Lilyfield Roads). Next year a box appeared in Ballast Point Road near Lemm Street.

In the 1880s boxes were installed opposite the Town Hall in Darling Street (removed), Victoria Road/Withecombe



Street (removed), Birchgrove Road/Cove Street, Wortley St/Palmer St (removed), Mullens St/Reynolds St, Beattie St/Evans St (moved to Goodsir/Evans), Darling St/Beattie St (moved along Darling St), Mullens St/Mansfield St and Darling St/Merton St.

The only early type pillar box still standing is near the Darling Street pedestrian crossing in Loyalty Square. The aperture is sealed as there is a modern box alongside. There are now 23 post boxes in the Peninsula.

There Was Once No Postle

Letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* 26 March 1856.

What have we, the residents of Balmain, done that we should not have our letters delivered at least once a day at our houses? Surely we all contribute our quota to the general revenue. We have the honour of paying the most extortionate rates, our ferry charges are at least double what they ought to be and we have a miserable supply of three police. With all these blessings why cannot we have a letter carrier? Perhaps the PMG will put one on at once.

An old subscriber

10 January 1883

Between the hours of 4.30pm on the 5th and 6.15am on the 6th instant, two letter receivers at Balmain — one situated in Darling Street, the other in Evans Street — were forcibly opened and the contents stolen.

Our thanks to those members who have responded with their annual subscriptions.

If you haven't yet sent your cheque we would be pleased to accept it now.

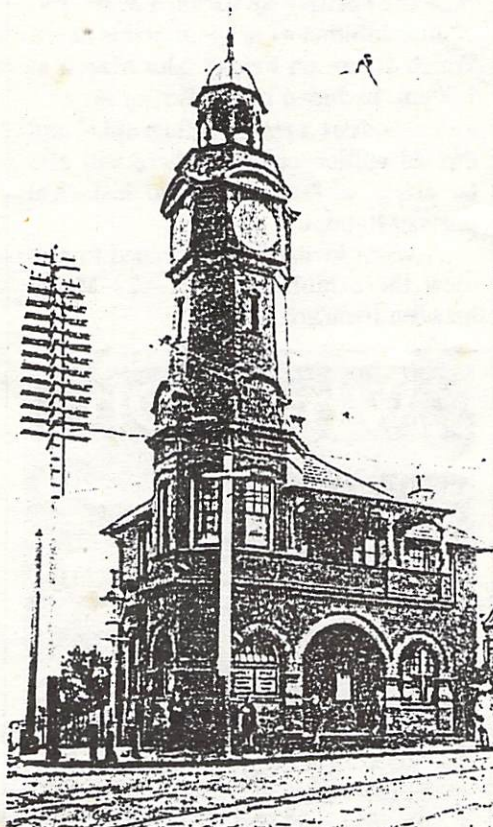
Early Telephones

Only four years after Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone in 1876, a telephone line was installed between Mort's Dock and its City office.

1888 saw the opening of the Balmain Exchange and a year later there were six subscribers; Mort's Dock, 1. Chidgey Fay & Berry (timber merchants), 2. Callan Park Hospital, 3. Dr Carruthers - Montague St, 4. Wood & Co - undertakers, Darling St, 5. Balmain Ferry Co - Waterview Bay 6.

In 1892 the list was extended by Town Hall, 7. Garrard & Hamilton - property auctioneers, 8. Rowntree Floating Dock, 10. Federal Timber Merchants, 13. Hutchison Wharf, 14. Exchange Hotel, 15. The following year a telephone was installed at the Balmain Post Office "for the use of the public on payment of a small fee". Three years later a public telephone at the Rozelle Post Office was one of only fifteen in the Metropolitan area.

The telephone line was extended to East Balmain Post Office in 1899 and one year later a public telephone was included.



ROZELLE POST OFFICE: c1910

Rozelle Post Office

Balmain West residents petitioned for their own post office in 1877 because the Queen's Place Office could no longer provide an efficient service. Three years later, Joseph Gosling, grocer, became the Balmain West postmaster for £10 per year. His shop was at the corner of Victoria Road and Withecombe Street. In 1889 J M McNeely became the postmaster in Darling Street near Victoria Road.

A new urgently needed post office was approved by the Government in 1892 but there was fierce argument over the names Balmain West, Garry Owen or Rozelle. The Balmain Council voted for Balmain West but the Postmaster General had the final authority and chose Rozelle. Opinions vary on the name derivation and range from the rosella parrot to rosella hibiscus but the bay had been called Rozella Bay and it seems likely that this was the source.

The 1895 building had living quarters for the postmaster. It was demolished when Victoria Road was widened in 1959 and Rozelle lost a significant landmark.

In Your Garden

Fuchsias

Fuchsias can be difficult plants to grow. It is best to have your local nurseryman recommend a good, hardy variety for your area. A red and white could be *Cascade*, a variety suitable for a hanging basket. *Dainty Lady* is a very hardy variety.

Fuchsias require specific good treatment. They grow well in pots with a good quality potting mix and also perform well in the ground. However, if the soil is average and not improved the fuchsia may well not thrive. It is important to dig in plenty of compost, organic matter, to get strong growth and



keep the soil well watered. Regular fertilising is necessary with a liquid feed such as Nitrosol or fish emulsion, or four-five month slow release Osmocote or Nutricote.

Fuchsias like to grow in dappled light, semi-shade or under a tree. Two or three hours of solid sun in the middle of the day will send the leaves purple, then brown and the plant will die, so protect it from strong sunlight.

There are a few tricks to remember. Fuchsias in hanging baskets must be in a sheltered spot away from the wind. Prune in April. A few varieties for baskets are *Troubadour*, red and purple; *Hula Girl*, pink and white; *Marinka*, all red; and *Pink Galore*, all pink.

Bonnie Davidson

Civil Service

The Mayor, Ald Larry Hand, will be the speaker at a special Civil Service at St Andrews Congregational Church on Sunday 8 March at 7.00pm. The Leichhardt Municipal Band will perform with the Samoan Choir.

Photo Competition

Michael's Place has increased the prizes for the photo competition on the theme "Looking at the Future as the Past".

Prizes are Michael's Place Gift Vouchers

High School	Primary School
1st \$150	1st \$75
2nd \$75	2nd \$50
3rd \$50	3rd \$25

In addition a Book from the Balmain Association or an enlarged print of the entry from Photel.

There will also be a Competition for a Poster for the Balmain Association with similar prizes. Details at Michael's Place.

"Approaches"

Three women artists, Ann Carney, Beverly Clark and Renate Fischer, all graduates of the City Art Institute are exhibiting their work of paintings and sculptures in "Approaches" at the Watch House opening on Friday 27 March at 6.30pm and thereafter can be viewed weekdays (closed Monday) between 11am and 6pm and weekends 12 to 7pm until 5 April.

The artists' last exhibition "Three Ways" received rave reviews. Although having studied at the same college they have different approaches and influences while incorporating a collective concern with every day lives.



Open Bite Printmakers invite you to the opening by Richard Morecroft of an exhibition of original prints at the Watch House on Friday 20th March at 7.30pm. Included in the display are lino and woodcut prints, collographs and limited edition etchings. There will also be prints of fascinating and historical parts of Balmain.

A warm invitation is extended to also view the exhibition on 21-22 March between 10am and 5pm.

What's On

Exhibitions at the Watch House

- March 20-22 Open Bite Printmakers
- March 27-Apr 5 "Approaches" Renate Fischer, Ann Carney, Beverly Clark
- April 11-12 Photo Competition "Looking at the Future as the Past"
- April 17-26 Ross Farrell

Vale Sagity Hill

William "Sagity" Hill, aged 103 years, died at Balmain Hospital on 8 February 1992 after a short illness.

Bill was born at Reuss St Birchgrove on 23 November 1888. His parents moved to 1 Bay St when he was a year old and he lived at that address for the rest of his life. His nickname "Sagity" came from his schooldays when he mispronounced sagacity before his school class.

Bill worked at Cockatoo Dock and in 1908 joined the Ironworkers Union which accepted him later as an honorary member. To "earn a few bob" he ran the horse racing SP book on Cockatoo Island as well as taking bets on the sailing races, then 10, 12 and 18 footers.

On the occasion of his 100th birthday the Association held afternoon tea in his honour where he entertained with his medley of songs especially his rendition of "Mr Booze". Committee members had kept a watchful eye on Bill including visiting him in hospital. Our sincere condolences to his family and many friends.

The Balmain Association Inc representing Balmain, Birchgrove, Rozelle.

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. Mail c/o PO Box 57, BALMAIN. 2041.

Our editorial phone is 818 4954
Annual Subscriptions:

Household \$16.00, Pensioners & Students \$7.00, Organisations \$21.00.

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.

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

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