



the balmain
association
incorporated
news sheet

The Peninsula OBSERVER

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The Year of the Indigenous People

The Balmain Peninsula was well populated with Aborigines when the First Fleet arrived. Among the first recorded sightings of Aborigines were at Yerroulbin (Long Nose Point — the name by which it was known for most of this century) where the rock ledge provided shelter and the narrow point became an enclosure for animals, such as kangaroos, which could be cornered and kept as a supply of fresh food.

Evidence exists in middens on private properties in Birchgrove. These are sheltered areas close to the water's edge where a group camped or stopped for a meal. The remains have been built up by repeated use over generations.

Four aboriginal sites also exist at Callen Point in the Rozelle Hospital grounds. At one site there are traces of handprints and a charcoal drawing of a shark. Sadly, two other aboriginal sites have been destroyed. These were at Whitehorse Point (Elkington Park) and Balmain Sailing Club. Recently a cave was destroyed by excavation for the River Street development.

The Eora tribe covered much of the Sydney Basin, with the Cadigal clan south of the harbour to about Leichhardt and the Wangal clan to the west. Bennelong lived on Goat Island and was a member of the Wangal clan, so the Balmain Peninsula was probably part of the Wangal area.

In 1789, smallpox was passed by the First Fleet to the Eora — with such dev-

astating effect that bodies were found all around Port Jackson and from then on the population was greatly reduced — probably to little more than 1500 in the Port Jackson area. Today the aboriginal population in our municipality possibly exceeds that number.

As the records of the First Fleet are of sightings from the harbour we are told that the Aborigines lived mostly on fish and shell fish. Those that were driven away from this food source were found to be in poor condition.

The middens have shells of rock oysters, whelks, mussels, etc. Aborigines made canoes out of bark stripped from trees and bound at bow and stern. They often carried fire with them in the boats and had fishing hooks and lines, hoop nets to catch crayfish and lobster, as well as digging sticks and spears.

Leichhardt Council has an Aboriginal Community Consultative Committee of Aboriginal residents, representatives of their organisations in the municipality, aldermen and other interested residents. This committee is concerned that any Heritage Development Control Plan should fully cover the Aboriginal heritage of the Municipality. Council has agreed to the preparation of a detailed Aboriginal history of the Municipality to stand with the detailed 'European history'.

Council is looking at options for preserving the Aboriginal sites on publicly

owned land and opening them to the public. This will be done in consultation with the Aboriginal Metropolitan Land Council and the management of Rozelle Hospital.

The options for sites on public land are: 1. Educational and interpretive facilities at the sites. 2. Full excavation of the best preserved sites. 3. Management of other sites to prevent damage by casual use (fences, rerouting of paths, vegetation screens, etc).

The options for sites on privately owned land are: 1. Instruction to owners not to disturb the surface of a known Aboriginal site. 2. Instruction to owners not to carry out any activities that might damage the site (such as lighting fires). 3. Encourage owners on land close to public open space to allow interpretive and educational material to be displayed about the site on their land.

The Heritage Development Control Plan will recommend that development consent will have to be received from Council for any work which may disturb, remove or alter the site in question. This is a small part of the large agenda planned for this year.

Frances Heathfield

With the help of the Aboriginal Community Worker of Leichhardt Council.

Editor's note: Long Nose Point has reverted to its original name of Yerroulbin which has been registered by the Geographic Names Board in 1992.

The Balmain Five Sites Court Case

Late last year, in the Court of Appeal, the Minister and the Department of Planning were again shown to be incompetent in properly consulting with Council under the terms of the Act. Mr Webster after 8 January could no longer appeal to the High Court. In any case it was unlikely that he would have been granted leave because the decision of the three Supreme Court Justices was unanimous. He finally agreed to meet the Mayor, Ald Larry Hand, and consultant, Richard Smythe, on 20 January.

Fortunately, Ms Gabriel Kibble, Director of Planning, was overseas on leave.

After the meeting, Mr Webster said that he would continue with the Regional Environmental Plan, but he and the Mayor had agreed that further discussions would be held on the vital questions of density, open space and traffic management.

The REP leant heavily on the premise that there is surplus infrastructure in the inner city. There is no surplus infrastructure in Balmain, the sewerage overflows every time it rains and we consume more than 10 times the amount of water, gas and electricity as our grand parents did when the services were installed.

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Use the renewal form on the wrapper.

The Titan Sunk

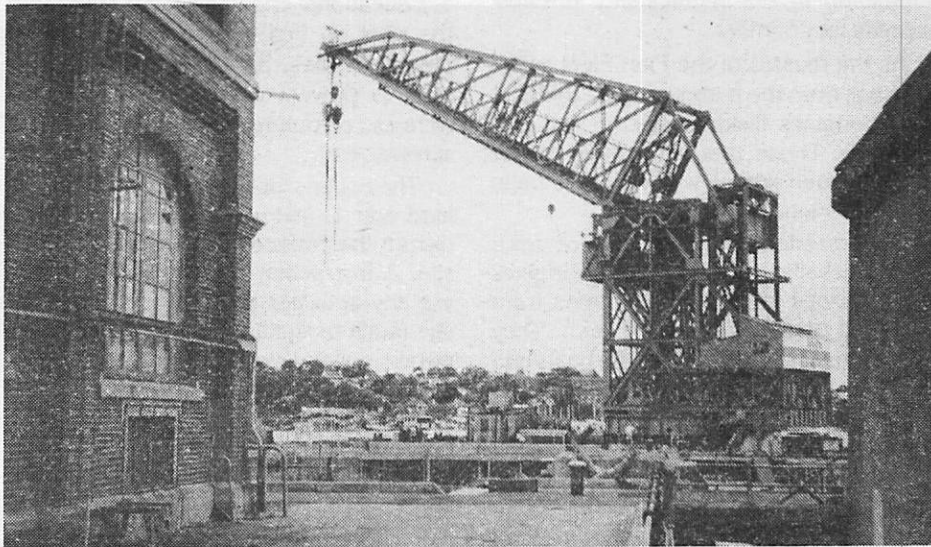
Cockatoo Island's famous floating crane, *Titan*, has joined *Poseidon* after its battle with the Olympian (Singapore) gods. Not a seagoing vessel, it capsized and sank off Smokey Cape near Kempsey on 25 December while being towed to Singapore. It is said to have been stripped of all worthwhile fittings before leaving. It was supposed to be returned to Sydney by 1994.

During World War I, the *Titan* was shipped in parts to Australia from England. A pontoon was built and the crane assembled at Cockatoo Island and commissioned in 1919. Its 150 ton lifting capacity made it the largest floating crane in Australia. During its lifetime the lifting work included the placement of the mast

In 1970 the boiler gave up and a survey certificate could not be obtained so a diesel generator was added with rectifier to convert DC current to AC. There were three hoists, two of 75 tons and a third of 30 tons, as well as 10 ton jigger hoists.

The *Titan* was withheld from sale during the auction of Cockatoo Island equipment in October, 1990, but the Department of Defence sold it late 1992 despite advice from the Australian Heritage Commission. The historic crane was classified by the National Trust as a prime example of early 20th century technology.

Bert Phegan, well known in Balmain, was, for many years, the crane driver of the mighty *Titan*. Bert and his wife, Maude, lived in Manning Street, Rozelle. A testimonial fountain to their son, who



of HMAS *Sydney* on to Bradley's Head; carried guns and turrets for harbour fortification during World War II; it was involved in the construction of the Gladesville and Spit Bridges; and helped in most large harbour salvage including two trams which had overshot the Athol Wharf, Mosman.

played in the Cockatoo Dock Football team, is at the entrance to the Balmain Hospital. The plaque reads: *In memory of Kevin (Dick) Phegan, injured on 20th June, 1948 at Jubilee Oval. Died 4th November 1948 in Balmain District Hospital. Unveiled 23rd July, 1950 by Ald E. C. Erwin, Mayor of Leichhardt.*

Traffic Calming

The Balmain Association is concerned about the lack of progress of traffic calming in the municipality. Other councils appear to be doing much better. Last year it was announced that a number of paved speed controls would be placed in Darling Street east — a well known speedway — and a threshold to prevent parking at the entrance of Duke Street to improve visibility. As yet nothing has been done. The Loyalty Square proposal of the Balmain/Rozelle Chamber of Commerce also seems to have been pigeon-holed. This scheme would improve pedestrian safety and strengthen the village character.

The chief device to be employed so far has been the redoubtable speed hump — a cheap solution.

Bays Precinct Study

Brian Elton Associates have been commissioned to prepare a Social Impact Study of the area around Rozelle and White Bays. They have met with Val Hamey of the Balmain Association and Peter Strickland of the Glebe Society to establish means of promoting community input. It was agreed to hold a meeting of representatives of local organisations early in March to initiate the process. Broader resident meetings will be held when firm proposals are determined.

The MSB is conducting workshops on port usage on 9-12 February so that the Department of Planning should be able to have preliminary proposals for the development of the Bays for the March meeting.

Leichhardt Council Notes

Howard Smith Site

Recently in the Land and Environment court Council was unable to prevent approval for McMahon Holdings' plan to build dwellings along Birchgrove Road on the Howard Smith site. As a result only glimpses will be seen of the magnificent panoramic sunset views with the harbour and islands in the foreground. The issue also caused a major dispute between Aldermen and the Council's town planning staff who claimed it more important, in town planning terms, to have houses along the street.

Unilever/Vanadi Site

Council plans to proceed with approval of the application for the clean-up and remediation of this site at its next meeting on the 9th February. Vanadi's chairman, Mr Bob Ell, has written to the aldermen complaining that their actions and those of local resident groups have resulted in redundancies in his firm.

Traffic and Transport

The Traffic & Transport Policy Committee has recommended to Council a policy to promote the friendly low energy consuming village atmosphere of the municipality's shopping centres by increasing the number of shoppers but reducing the number of cars. In future all funds levied to businesses, in lieu of them providing ample off-street parking, should be used to provide better public access to the shops.

A proposed shopping centre study would look at schemes such as Dial-a-bus, a local precinct multiple hire taxi-bus, ways to improve the existing bus services, the light-rail alternative and improving the walking and cyclist access to the shops. No extra parking for cars is envisaged.

Ald Nick Masterman

Dawn Fraser Pool

A National Estate grant of \$25,000 will enable a National Trust survey to be made of all the harbourside pools with a view to their inclusion on the Register of the National Estate. The Dawn Fraser Pool, together with other harbour and ocean pools such as Huntley's Point and Wylie's Baths at Coogee, will be surveyed, photographed and recorded. The Balmain Council constructed a 30 yards long baths at White Horse Point in 1883 and the Balmain Swimming Club was formed soon after.

Leichhardt Council has committed \$750,000 for the restoration of the Dawn Fraser Pool. Because of a pollution scare some years ago attendances have dropped from 60,000 to 35,000 a year.

Balmain Personality

John Lamb Lyon

John Lamb Lyon was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1835. On leaving school, he was apprenticed to the glass-painting firm of Kearney & Co of Glasgow who, as well as being decorators and stained-glass workers, were chemists who mixed and ground their own colours. It was during his apprenticeship that he met Daniel Cottier later well known as an artist and decorator. Lyon was next employed for six years with the firm of Ward & Hughes, glass painters to Queen Victoria.

On 3 December 1860, Lyon married Elizabeth Gillespie Pearson in Glasgow and on the same day they set out on their journey to Australia. They sailed from Liverpool on the *Donald Mackay* on 7 December and disembarking in Melbourne in April 1861. He joined Ferguson & Urie, glass painters, who also made their own colours and acid and fired the glass in a colonial camp oven.

About 1869 the Lyon family journeyed to Europe but by 1875 they were living in William Street, Paddington, NSW and Lyon was in partnership with Daniel Cottier under the name of Lyon, Cottier & Co with an office at 8 Langham Place, London, and premises at 333 Pitt Street, Sydney. They decorated two of the rooms at Pitt Street in the latest London style and invited leading Sydney architects to inspect their work. Many of the principal architects of Sydney were their early patrons and they decorated and installed stained-glass windows in many private residences, churches and public buildings in NSW. An example of their stained-glass windows may be seen in the old Vickery home which is now the War Memorial Hospital, Waverley. The firm also decorated the "new General Post Office, Sydney - Postmaster-General's and Secretary's rooms and principal staircase and landings". Examples of their windows can be seen in St Mary's Church, Waverley; All Saints Cathedral, Bathurst; Armidale Cathedral; Goulburn RC Cathedral, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Camperdown and King's School, Parramatta. A window was installed in the Bank of NSW building on the corner of King and George Streets which was demolished in 1972. This window was purchased by W H Kater of Swatchfield, Oberon, NSW, before the demolition. John Lyon presented a window to St Stephen's Presbyterian Church, Macquarie Street, Sydney, in memory of his daughter, Mary, who died in infancy. The Weingarten Restaurant, 86 Walker Street, North Sydney, has included a Lyon & Cottier window in its decor.

Of Cottier's work, one writer says: "To contrast an average modern window with an average Cottier is to contrast pallor with bloom, a noon of March with a September

afterglow". Cottier was an art critic and a collector of pictures of the modern French school, including Corot, Millet and Monticella. It is said that, after inspecting the pictures in the National Art Gallery while visiting Sydney, he called them "a pawnbroker's collection".

John Lamb Lyon was awarded an honourable mention for a drawing of a stained-glass window at the Melbourne Exhibition in 1861. He received medals for stained-glass windows exhibited in Melbourne and Sydney and a gold medal award at the International Exhibition held in Christchurch, New Zealand, as well as a gold medal at the Franco-British Exhibition held in London in 1908.



John Lamb Lyon

The window shown at the Melbourne Exhibition was a near life-size painting on glass of Captain Cook seated by a table on which were his sextant, a glob and rolled maps. The borders of the window depicted Australian native flora and fauna. This glowing picture of richly coloured glass was installed on the Balcony of Lyon's residence at 104 Louisa Road, Birchgrove, and for 60 years it was exposed to the westerly sun and storms. In the 1950s a fierce westerly gale finally weakened its frame and it crashed to the ground and was destroyed.

Apart from his talent at glass-painting, John Lyon was a portrait painter in oils and was a member of the Art Society of NSW. He frequently used his family as models and in August and September 1882 he worked on a painting of his three sons, two playing chess and the third looking on. He entered it in the Art Society Exhibition in the Garden Palace in the Sydney Domain. At 5am on Friday 22 September 1882 the Garden Palace caught fire and was totally destroyed together with all the pictures in

the exhibition. John Lyon lost two paintings — a portrait of Mr Hugh McMaster and "The Three Boys".

In 1882 he decorated the Pitt Street Congregational Church. The following year he installed the window in Goulburn Cathedral, decorated a bank in Adelaide and exhibited a portrait of his wife in the Art Society Exhibition.

Lyon bought a fine 2-storey house in Louisa Road from Robert Bulk Edwards in February 1884. His daughter described it; "It has a water frontage and a bathing house and we could have a boat; it is terraced down to the water and there is a lovely view. The house is on Long Nose Point, rather a funny name, but we need not use it, Birch Grove, Balmain, would sound much better". Although gas was laid on the residents had to rely on rain water for their domestic supply.

John Lyon decorated his new house with paint and "the very best of wall-papers" and on Monday, 24 March 1884 the family moved into 84 Louisa Road. He combined his initial "J" with that of his wife "E" and the name "Lyon" and christened his new house *Joylen*. By 1885 city water had been laid on to Long Nose Point, but because of the drought that year the water was turned off for half the days of the week.

In August 1884, he built a weatherboard studio on one of the lower terraces of the land overlooking the water. It had a flat roof which was railed to make it safe to walk on and get an extended view along the Parramatta River. In those days the Balmain Regatta was held off Greenwich. He was disturbed by the cost of the structure—£80 in fact—much more than he expected. The family bought a boat and spent many hours sailing and rowing around the Harbour.

In 1890 the houses in Louisa Road were renumbered and *Joylen* was given its present number - 104. Up until 1891 the road was called Louisa Street.

At midnight on 12 June 1916, John Lamb Lyon died at *Joylen*, a much loved, kind and generous man.

Margaret Dobson

Abridged from *Leichhardt Historical Journal* No 3. Note: The demand for out of print issues of LHM has prompted the reprinting of No 3, Dec 1972 and No 4, Jul 1973. The covers have been redesigned and the page format enlarged to match later issues. Now on sale at the Watch House. Peter Reynolds, December 1992.

Subscriptions

Our subscription notice in the last issue confused some members. We appreciate the early response but a few sent only \$10. Please note that annual subscriptions are \$16 for household and \$7 for pensioners and students. It includes postage of your Observer.

In Your Garden

February Humidity

As this is a very humid month, make sure to watch out for fungus diseases. In warm areas some tender plants, especially those newly planted, may need extra protection from the strong sun.

Avoid major plantings (trees and shrubs) until the weather cools. Prolong flowers on annuals with light trimming and feeding with a soluble fertiliser. Roses need a light feed of Rose Food to encourage new growth. Water well before and after feeding.

Organise your bulbs during February or buy them now but do not plant in Sydney areas until March, when



Tazetta Narcissus

the weather is a little cooler. Prepare your soil with a good dig over and some fertiliser. Plants in pots should be given controlled release fertiliser granules. Mulch the surface with compost or peat moss. Plants in large tubs need to be repotted every five years while those in smaller pots up to 30cm in diameter require repotting every two years.

Baskets dry out readily and need constant monitoring for moisture content as they dry out so quickly. For permanent baskets you will not lose as many plants in the summer heat if you set up a drip irrigation system and you will save time and money.

Insects breed prolifically this month. Keep a watch for caterpillars, citreous bugs, aphids and lawn grubs.

Bonnie Davidson

POLICE GAZETTE

Police Blotter

10 October 1883

Balmain. — On the morning of the 7th instant, the body of a newly-born female infant was found on a vacant plot of land at the corner of Clayton and Trouton Streets, Balmain, by Henry Williams of Mort Street; and at an inquest held on the 8th instant, before the City Coroner, the following verdict was returned:— "We find that the said new born female infant at Balmain, in the District of Sydney, on the 7th day of October, 1883, was found dead with certain marks of violence appearing on its body; and we further find that the said infant was born alive and the cause of its death was asphyxia produced by strangulation; and we further find that some person or persons to us unknown, at Balmain, in the Colony aforesaid, on or about the 5th day of October instant, her, the said new-born female infant of his or her or their malice aforethought, wilfully and feloniously did kill and murder."

17 January 1900

Missing from her home, No 29 Rowntree Street, Balmain, since the 2th instant, - Maude Tarlington, 15 years old, tall for her age, medium build, fair complexion, dark short hair, mole on upper lip, dressed in navy-blue print dress, white spots and black velvet hat trimmed with tartan ribbons like a fan.

17 January 1900

Reported stolen, Gold ring, 18 carat set with five sapphires. 8 January. George McFarlane, 107 Mansfield Street, Balmain

Heritage Week

28 March to 4 April 1993.

Heritage Pub Stroll. Departs from Watch House, Saturday 3 April, 2.30pm. Cost \$10. Concession \$6. Tel 818 4954.

Pub Photographs on Exhibition at Balmain Library. 29 March to 3 April. Library hours.

"Called to the Bar - Pubs of Balmain & Rozelle" on sale. \$13 + \$2 postage.

Balmain Library

Great Book Sale
Saturday 20 February.

What's On

Exhibitions at the Watch House

- Belinda Swan - Feb 20-28
- Anne Sheridan - Mar 6-15 - "Artemis"
- Kim Spooner - Mar 20-28
- Open Bite Printmakers Apr 3-4
- Carmen Hague - Apr 17-26

- Balmain Swimming Club Twilight BBQ - Feb 20
- Bail at the Baths - 27 March Launch of the Restoration Appeal.

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Vale Judy Coxon (Wilson)

Miss Dorothy McKay has informed us of the death on 27 August 1992, of a former member of the Association, Judy Coxon. Judy was active in Balmain until 1981 when she moved to Richmond and later to Kurrajong to give her family the country life she loved. She was an occupational therapist who worked at Callan Park and Broughton Hall and who supported the drive of her profession towards more socially relevant activities.

She was interested in amateur theatre and helped to start the Balmain Theatre Group with Richard Norman.

Balmain Sailing Club Revival

More than 60 people turned up to meetings in December and January to formulate plans to revive the club. A number of old members have also emerged and expressed their interest in the club being used for junior and general sailing and learning to sail rather than simply sailing the specialist 12ft skiff class of boats. Anyone interested in joining can obtain a membership form from George McGoogan at 12 Reuss St and send it with \$20 to PO Box 88 Balmain.

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 Watch House is open every
Saturday from 12 to 3pm

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/fax 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.

Annual Subscriptions:

Household \$16, Pensioners & Students \$7, Organisation \$21.