

the balmain
association
incorporated
news sheet

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New Australia: Utopia Revisited

The anniversary of the New Australia venture was commemorated on Friday 16 July at the Australian National Maritime Museum. Gavin Souter, author of "The Peculiar People", a book about the adventure, gave the historical background while Anne Whitehead presented taped interviews of the descendants of the settlers. Peter Wood spoke of his grandfather and uncles who stayed on after the colony collapsed.

During the great depression of the 1890s, faith in the ability of the labour movement to resist rapacious employers had been dashed in the maritime and shearers' strikes. Henry Lawson, caught the mood in the line, "hope of something better than the present or the past". William Lane had established a following, especially in the bush, with his stirring articles in the *Brisbane Worker*. He conceived a society in which labour would be idealised; want, greed and vice conquered and peace on earth established. Fearing that the ideal society would be impossible to attain in Australia, he proposed the promised land on a free grant of 45,000 acres of agricultural and grazing land in Paraguay.

The 13 years old barque of 600 tons, the *Royal Tar*, was purchased from John Booth of Balmain for £1620. She was

immediately taken to Mort's Dock to be fitted out for the voyage. As it had been used in the South American timber trade, new 'tween decks had to be added and cabins, together with berthing accommodation for her passengers. To save expense, thirty members of the New Australia Cooperative Settlement Association were put to work constructing the modifications while others scraped the hull. Other work was done by day labour at Mort's Dock and the men were paid 12/- a day while the Association was charged 14/-.

Many members of the expedition, had thrown up their jobs, sold their homes, paid all they had to the Association and moved into camp at Nicholson Street, Balmain until the ship was ready to sail. Every man had to make a minimum cash contribution of £50. If a member possessed more he was expected to donate more. William Lane contributed £1000. The *Bulletin* reported that 200 people were crowded into ten houses.

On 16 July 1893, the *Royal Tar* sailed from Sydney with 220 men, women and children. It was a joyous event. Any tinge of sadness was with the members of the second contingent waiting for the return of the vessel. Mary Cameron, whose marriage to William Gilmore in 1897 was

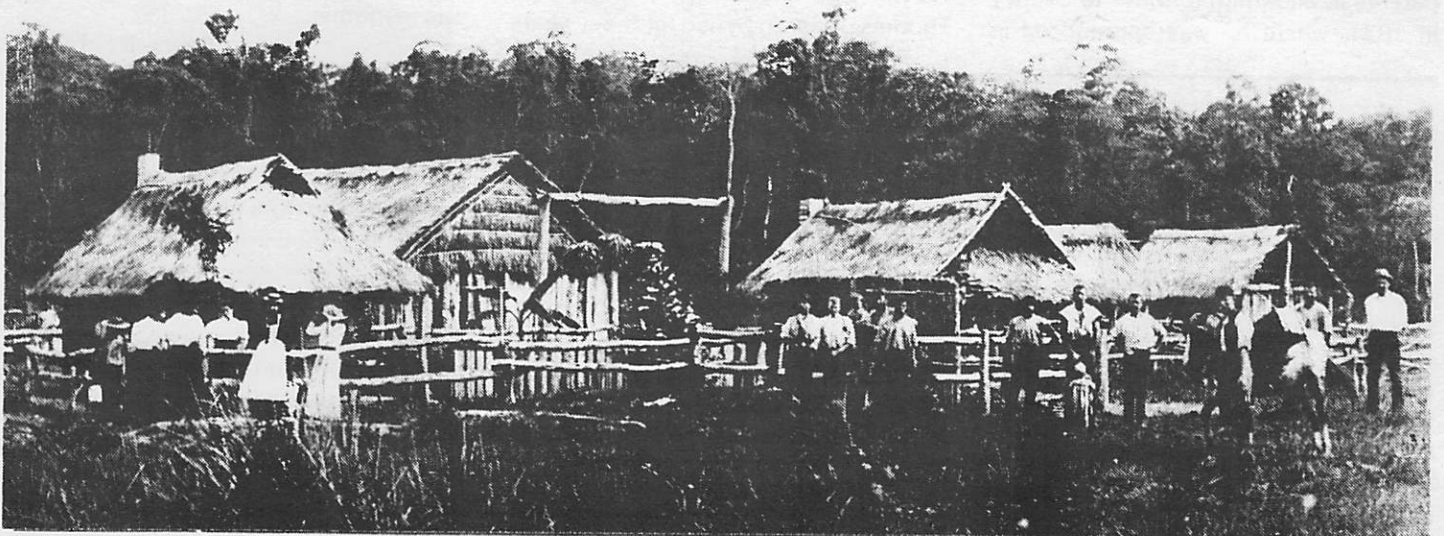
the second in the new colony of Cosme in Paraguay, did not sail on the first trip. At the time she was writing for *The Worker*. She reported the first voyage: "The deck was crowded. Ringing cheers sounded all along the waterfront. In the crowd were union pioneers like Spence, Sleath and Head. The banner carried the motto, *Each for all and all for each*. Aloft in one of the lifeboats stood William Lane, his face worn with work and worry, aglow with a sweet unselfish joy. The dream of four years was fulfilling itself. The crowd was eager to believe that the new voyage of discovery would bring gladness and a renewed hope in mankind's future. Three cheers were given for Freedom, Lane and Paraguay."

Even before the *Royal Tar* had reached South America, friction emerged. Lane's fanatical commitment to New Australia made him intolerant and tactless. The land grant proved to be a harsh environment far from markets. In 1894 Lane led a breakaway group of 63 to form Cosme, 72 kilometres south.

Disillusioned, Lane quit the scheme in 1899 and the venture ended when 16 colonists left to participate in the Great War. The survivors were given the choice of repatriation to Paraguay or Australia.

Cosme, the second settlement in Paraguay.

Photo: National Library of Australia



Frederick Robinson 1812-1899

Frederick Ropier Robinson and his family were early residents of Balmain who took an active part in the civic and social life of the district from the early 1860s until 1900. When the family moved to Balmain, Frederick had already established for himself a respected place in the business and community life of Sydney.



Frederick's father Thomas came to Australia as a convict in 1823, leaving his wife and five children behind in England. He had been sentenced to 14 years for "making and selling four silver bottle labels with hallmarks counterfeited". In July 1824, Thomas was assigned as a Schoolmaster to the Anglican school at Campbelltown. He then petitioned the Governor for free passage for his family, who arrived in 1828.

Frederick was aged 16 at the time of his arrival in Australia. After working for two years on a dairy farm near Campbelltown, Frederick persuaded his parents to allow him to move to Sydney in 1831, where he was apprenticed in

metalwork to Mr Nock. In 1838 he established himself in business at 307 George St, later moving to premises at 366 George St in 1851.

On 16th April 1838 Frederick married Caroline Phillips in St James Church, Sydney. Interestingly, his sister Susannah had married Caroline's brother John Phillips in St Peter's Church, Campbelltown six months earlier, on 28th October 1837. Frederick and Caroline lived in George Street, where most of their nine children were born.

The business flourished, the work at the factory being considered of highest quality. All the gas standards and fittings in St Andrew's Cathedral were credited to him as well as the design and erection of the two metal domes of the Sydney Observatory for H C Russell. Contracts for the Colonial Architect Thos Dawson included the oversight and inspection of all Lighthouses along the NSW coast. For Colonial Architect James Barnett, he erected lighthouses at Twofold Bay and Nelson Bay. He was also the largest importer of English and American heating and cooking hardware in the colonies.

In 1862, Frederick purchased land from the Gilchrist Estate on White Horse Point, Balmain, where he built the houses known as *Carieville* and later *Tilba Tilba*. Both stand today in White Street, adjoining Elkington Park. Frederick became an Alderman on the Balmain Council and was Mayor for several terms. He was an enthusiastic worker for the establishment of Public Schools in Balmain and was a member of various school boards. Throughout his life he was a devoted supporter of his Church and played a leading part in building and establishing St Thomas and St John Episcopalian Churches, became a Trustee for each and represented St Thomas parish in Synod for many years.

In 1880 Frederick led a deputation to the Mayor of Balmain that presented a petition of 80 ratepayers to buy land on White Horse Point for a park, which is known as Elkington Park, named for the Mayor. He wrote to Council in December 1880, offering to donate a piece of land from his Carieville Estate, as an addition to the Park. In this letter he reminded Council "that the green spots of Balmain now used by the inhabitants are fast passing away forever".

Frederick was a founder of the Deaf, Dumb and Blind Institute in Sydney, occupying the position of Vice President from its inception until his death. His eldest son Ellis was secretary of the Institution for many years. Frederick was Justice of the Peace and often sat on the bench of the Water Police Court in the days before the appointment of stipendiary magistrates. In 1885, he took his three sons, Ellis, Francis and Charles into partnership in what then became F R Robinson & Sons and moved to large and imposing premises at 225 Castlereagh Street, Sydney. The very severe depression of the 1890s, when land values collapsed and many banks failed, resulted in financial difficulties that led to the forced sale of the business after his death on 4th November 1899.

Both Caroline and Frederick lived at *Tilba Tilba* until their deaths, Caroline dying on 26th September 1891. Of the nine children, the youngest Ida died in 1865 aged four years. Those surviving were Ellis, Francis, Caroline (m F S Wilson), Clara (m John Cornwell), Agnes (m Alfred Hunt), Emily (m James Cornwell), Phoebe and Charles. Charles Robinson married Caroline Grimm in Balmain on 21st June 1887. Caroline was the eldest daughter of Rev George Grimm, pioneer Presbyterian Minister at Rozelle and Drummoyne. Their son Roy was my father.

Bruce Robinson

Leichhardt Council Notes

Sewerage and Stormwater

All the sewerage from Balmain passes through the aquaduct near Piper St in Annandale on its way to Bondi. The Water Board now admits this pipe overflows in times of heavy rains, ie approximately every 6 months. Whites Creek also floods the neighbouring houses in heavy rains. The flooding is due to the land being gradually covered by paving and thereby increasing the

run-off. Council resolved on Tuesday night, that it does not support the amplification of the ocean outfall system but instead, wishes to explore with the Water Board ways by which sewerage and run-off can be reduced and re-used in the municipality.

Jobs in Balmain

Council has a jobs survey form available from the libraries. It is keen to find out what is the community attitude to permitting and expanding the home and local business provisions in the

planning regulations. Promoting the traditional diversity of Balmain and giving people, once again, the opportunity to work at or near their home is seen as a good way to reduce the need for cars. It also enriches our sense of community and makes our houses more secure if there are people about during day. Please try to take the time to get a copy of the questionnaire and let us know your thoughts for the future of Balmain.

Councillor Nick Masterman

Alfred Hancock 1835-1919

Alfred Hancock was well known as the "Father of Rozelle", which was originally Balmain West. A real estate agent, he can justifiably be given the description "caring" for his policy of selling land to the working class man on low deposit and repayment of 10 shillings a week to help them build and own their homes. He was an alderman on the Balmain Council from 1873-82 and

(b&d1862), Elizabeth (b1864), Arthur (b1866), Catherine (b1869), Walter (b1872), Percival (b1874) and Augustine (b&d1875). His wife, Elizabeth, died shortly afterwards. On 20 December 1886 Alfred married the widow of Capt G E Edwards, Mary Ann Charlotte, in Williamstown, Victoria. Four more children were born Henry (b1887), Reginal (b1889), Russell (b1894) and Alice (b1900). Mary Ann became a tireless worker for St John's Church where most of the children were baptised and



Alfred's family with Mary Ann nursing her first son

1884-6. Many streets were named for the members of the Hancock family, including Charlotte, Elizabeth, Catherine and Alfred Hancock himself.

Alfred was born in London in 1835 to Henry and Charlotte Hancock. At the age of 20 he married Elizabeth Brady and they came to Australia soon after. Their children were Charlotte (b1859), Henry

Alice's wedding was celebrated in 1923. The Association has a photo of the latter event.

For many years the Hancock family lived in *Mertonville* on land that is now the Cashman Reserve at the junction of Beattie, Elliott and Lawson Streets. He conducted his business from this address for many years. By 1913 they

had moved to Thompson Street, Drummoyne, where Alfred died in 1919, aged 84 years. He is buried in the Church of England section of Waverley Cemetery.

The Association has recently been given Alfred's journal entitled "Trifles", composed during a voyage to Sydney in 1871 aboard the ship *Warwick*. They were composed, he stated at the conclusion, with the view of "giving occupation to the many dreary, monotonous hours with which the life of a passenger on shipboard is beset". Among the verses were the following Acrostics dedicated to William Loughlin:

When I left fair Sydney' shore
Ill at ease in mind and heart,
Land of birth: for thee I tore
Loving friendships rude apart,
In my mind conflicting rose
Anxious fears, and sanguine hopes
Mingled in contending throe's
Like as foe with foeman copes.
Oft dear Will I've told they worth
Under various trials proved
Gems like which, when met on Earth
Have charms, beyond the world removed
Long may we live
In affections pure joy
Nor may aught in this life our friendship
destroy.

and W M Paling (piano importer):

When true worth like that I praise
Hardly met with twice in life
Presents itself like sunshine's rays
And cheers us in this world of strife.
Let us treasure up secure
In our hearts the flow'ret rare,
Nature's choice Exotic pure,
Growing in this world of care.
Research by **Bonnie Davidson**.
Edited by **Debby Nicholls**.

Watch House Restoration

Last year, the Watch House restoration works were described in the Observer. Twelve months on and the works are complete. We were greatly assisted by a grant of \$3,000 from the Heritage Branch of the Dept of Planning with funds made available through the Heritage Assistance Program. A new exciting phase is beginning.

The rear left hand side cell is being refurbished to provide a permanent historical exhibition. The History Committee has engaged the professional services of Montague Design Pty

Ltd of Balmain to provide an adaptive mural display on three walls of this cell. The charge desk and stool as well as some of our historical photographs will be displayed on the remaining wall.

A brief history of the Watch House in a simple, uncluttered form will be a feature of the entrance foyer wall.

Upstairs, it is planned to restore the mahogany dining table and furnish a matching set of reproduction colonial style chairs to give the meeting room a simple elegance combined with robust practicability.

A landscaping plan is being formulated to address paths, paving, garden

furniture, lawns, edging, potted plants, shrubs and watering systems. It is hoped to commence this work in early September.

It should be emphasised that the end is still not in sight. Damp courses are to be installed in the Charge Room walls when the sacrificial plaster has completed its task of removing salt. Spalling stone elsewhere requires treatment.

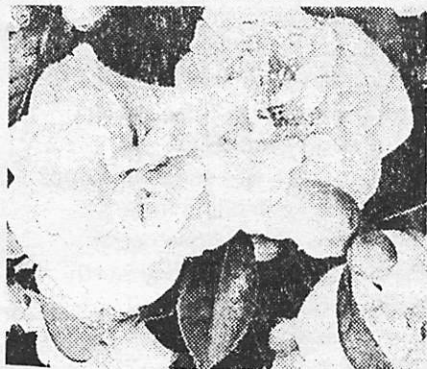
Visitors, particularly those attending opening nights of exhibitions, comment on the building exuding a warm and friendly ambience — one, we guess, not intended by its original builders!

Jeremy Arnott

In Your Garden

August Gardening

Get set for spring. Take advantage of clear sunny days to prepare your garden for a feast of colour for spring and summer. While soils are still cold you can divide and replant perennials into renovated soils. Though plants such as roses, maples and hydrangeas are dormant you can move them if necessary. Sometimes you may have a plant in a wrong position which gets too little or too much sun. There is still time



Southern Cross Time

It is possible to tell the time by observing the position of the Southern Cross. The long arm of the Cross always points to South Celestial Pole approximately four and a half times the length of the Cross from the star at its foot. It shows the right time on 28 March when it is upright at midnight. As it rotates around the pole due to the earth's rotation it is necessary to add two hours for every month. The Cross is easily seen from Sydney's latitude in the evening from January to September.

One way to determine the time is the 'Add Six Method'. Consider the rotation around the pole as a 24 hour clock. Firstly, judge the 'star time' by the position of the Cross, remembering that the head always points outwards. Secondly, add six; and thirdly (remembering that the star clock gains 4 minutes a day) subtract 2 hours for each completed month since the start of the year.

Notice to Members
The 28th Annual General Meeting will be held at 7.30pm on Wednesday 4 August 1993 at the Watch House.

to plant new roses so give them plenty of sunshine and good rich soil.

Camellias are coming to the end of their flowering and will benefit from a thick mulch of leaf mould. September is time to plant window boxes and baskets with as much boisterous colour as you can manage to brighten dull verandahs, patios and courtyards. I have planted a lovely mixture of orange and deep magenta impatiens in a large basket. The new dwarf impatiens prefer filtered rather than full sun. Yellow and purple pansies look most attractive together.

Azaleas can now be selected for almost any position in your garden from full sun to near full shade. Most azaleas grow well in tubs. The secret is to plant them in a good azalea/camellia potting mix and never let them dry out. They will need to be moist at all times but not wet and soggy. Overwatering will kill azaleas. Fertilise them after flowering has just finished and repeat in January unless an eight-to-nine month slow release fertiliser has been used.

Bonnie Davidson

Charity Auction

On Sunday 19 September between 2pm and 5pm a charity auction of clothing, bric-a-brac and antiques will take place at Clontarf Cottage, Wallace St, Balmain. All proceeds are to help 3rd World children and sustainable development projects. Donations for auction are welcome. You may find that out of this world bargain. Ph 555 1161.

Sydney Planners, 26a Glebe Pt Rd, Glebe 2037. (A support group for Foster Parents Plan of Australia).

What's On

- Exhibitions at the Watch House**
- Julie Chamberlain - Jul 31- Aug 1
 - Nadia Milat - Aug 7-8
 - Bonnie Tossell - Aug 21-29
 - Balmain Art Show
 - Leonard Markevitch - Sep 4-12
 - History Room - Sep 18-19
 - Ross Farrell - Sep 25-26
 - Hilary Cassidy - Oct 2-4
 - Robin Elphick - Oct 8-9
 - Anne Carney - Oct 16-24

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For your diary
Back to Balmain Day
31 October 1993

Village Plan

Barcham have released proposals to improve Balmain and particularly Darling St and Loyalty Square. Their initiatives would increase the potential of the village centre, encourage walking by making it safer and create a civic square next to the Town Hall. The plans are on display at many stores including Darling News, Photel and Bray's Books.

Getting to a Hospital

Due to restricted services at Balmain Hospital you may need to travel to Prince Alfred Hospital at Camperdown. By public transport this requires a bus (442 or 441) to York St and then a 412 bus to the hospital. There is a 30 min service at 25 and 55 min past the hour on weekdays and 17 and 47 min past on Saturday. Sundays has a limited service starting at 9am then at 55 min past the hour. Rozelle residents, take the 440 to Missenden Rd and walk from there.

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.