

the balmain
association
incorporated
news sheet

The Peninsula OBSERVER

Vol 29 No 4 Issue 230

Founded 1965

August/September 1994

Mainstreet Study

In 1989 the NSW Department of Planning introduced a Main Street Program modelled on a successful North American prototype consisting of five primary elements: organisation, design, heritage conservation, business development and promotion. Leichhardt Council received a grant for a main street study for Balmain and Rozelle and formed a steering committee to implement the program.

On the recommendation of the Committee, the Council appointed a group of consultants led by architect, Tim Shellshear, and including Greg Vicars and Peter Reynolds. A draft assessment of the significance has been submitted in which existing buildings are classified either as essential, contributory, neutral or non-contributory. These categories can be defined as follows:

Essential. Buildings which should not be demolished under any circumstances as they are landmark buildings and are most representative of the development of the area in architectural and social items. The Workingmen's Institute, Bray's Bookshop and the Cat and Fiddle Hotel are examples apart from the obvious heritage buildings such as the Balmain Fire Station, Post Office and the Westpac Bank.

Contributory. These support the essential buildings in the streetscape and are themselves generally competent examples of their style and architecture. Their demolition should be strongly discouraged and then only after suitable controls ensure that replacement will reinstate streetscape qualities and support of adjacent buildings. A number of these buildings are in poor condition and are included because of their potential to be upgraded to make a more positive



Darling Street Procession 1914

contribution. Some difficulty was experienced with a number of buildings as to whether they should be essential or contributory. Darling Street News, the Balmain Fruit Market, Michael's Place and Potsa Plenty in Rozelle are some buildings classified as contributory.

Neutral. These do not add to the character of the street nor do they detract from it. Some are competently designed buildings in their own right, but have ignored contextural streetscape issues and do not add to the street character. These sites are generally suitable for redevelopment subject to appropriate controls. Examples are Raler Business Publications, Top Video and the Rozelle Australia Post.

Non-contributory. These do not contribute to the character of the street and generally detract from it. They are all sites suitable for redevelopment subject to suitable controls. Obvious examples are Woolworths, Telecom, Rozelle TAB and the ANZ Bank.

The Committee favours the inclusion of the Barcham scheme for environmental improvements for the Balmain Centre with particular focus between Montague Street and Loyalty Square. It sought to improve public amenity by kerb extensions and tree planting, redesign Loyalty Square with traffic calming measures whilst minimising loss of kerbside parking. The scheme yields considerable scope for additional pedestrian space. It could be funded from the income from annual licensing of the seating provided by pavement cafes, estimated to yield \$100,000 per annum. Initial capitalisation costs need to be overcome, requiring a form of staged development. RTA funds could be sought for the redesign of Loyalty Square. Council has made an application for dollar-for-dollar assistance up to \$100,000 for the 1995-6 program.

A Public Meeting is to be held at 7.30pm on Monday 8 August in the Meeting Room of the Balmain Town Hall.

It's Official: Yurulbin

"The wooden boy who told lies grew a long nose! So did Long Nose Point when it concealed the rightful name of *Yurulbin*." Singer, Jimmy Little, used the words in a speech when he unveiled the plaque to reveal the Aboriginal name of the park on the Point. He said that his people had lived in the area long before the European invasion (the word was deliberately chosen by other speakers). He said not all Aboriginals moved away when the Europeans arrived as he lived some years in Louisa Road.

At least 200 people assembled in the park on the beautiful sunny Friday, July 8 and there many other well-wishers who did not manage to arrive in time as I discovered as I walked back along Louisa Road after the ceremony.

The Local Government Association initiated the drive for recognition of Aboriginal place names to further the reconciliation of Australia's indigenous and European cultures. Leichhardt Council shows that it is in the forefront of this movement with the successful celebration of *Yurulbin*'s official naming.

Leichhardt Town Plan

At a recent meeting of the Town Plan Committee the Mayor, Cllr Larry Hand, expressed dissatisfaction with the progress of the Draft Town Plan and presented a "new way forward" to prepare a paper for public discussion before the end of the year. He called for the draft instrument to be prepared by Council Planners by 30 September with regular reports to the Committee and Council. Public meetings would then be called to debate the draft and referred back to Committee for recommendation to Council leading to formal exhibition and then finally to Council for decision.

A number of issue papers had been presented to the Committee which was incapable of reaching consensus on some. These will not be discarded but will be included in the Planners' instrument.

The Committee resolved by amendments to hold public meetings in each of the old wards. Due to the amount of work in presenting new Local Environmental and Development Control Plans the meetings will not take place until October. The results of the exhibition would be referred to a municipal wide public forum, then to the Town Plan Committee and finally to Council.

The Mayor, Larry Hand, introduced the speakers, led by the Hon Robert Tichner, Minister for Aboriginal & Torres Straight Islanders, and followed by Peter Woods, President of the Local Government Association, Michael Stewart, Director of the Office of Aboriginal Affairs of NSW, Colin Markam, Opposition spokesman, and Pat Morris, Australian Local Government Association executive who flew from West Australia to attend. All speakers expressed delight that such positive reconciliation is gathering momentum and congratulated Leichhardt's commitment. Jimmy Little's daughter, Frances Peters, spoke of her strengthened sense of belonging, not only to Louisa Road, where she spent most of her life, but also the recognition of her peoples lives which go back for more than 40,000 years at *Yurulbin*.

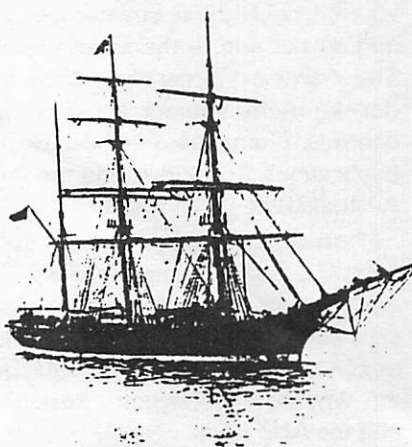
Afterwards, the Forest Lodge & Glebe Aboriginal Dance Troupe and Toni Janke, guitarist, provided entertainment before refreshments were served. In every respect a happy occasion

Frances Heathfield

Maritime Museum Proposed

Acting on the proposal of Ian Scandrett, President of Barcham, the Ballast Point National Park Committee agreed to campaign with the Sydney Maritime Museum for the relocation of the Museum to the controversial Caltex site on Ballast Point. Leichhardt Council is supporting the strategy.

Recently labelled an eyesore by the Darling Harbour Authority, the sailing ship *James Craig*, under the proposal, would be returned to the wharf at the entrance of Mort Bay. The museum would occupy existing buildings of the



Heliport Threat

The Environment Protection Authority granted approval on 11 July for the Pyrmont Heliport, subject to a maximum of 48 movements per day 7am-7pm Monday to Saturday and 24 on Sunday 10am-4pm. Other safety conditions restrict the amount of aviation fuel on the site and control waste, sediments and working hours during construction.

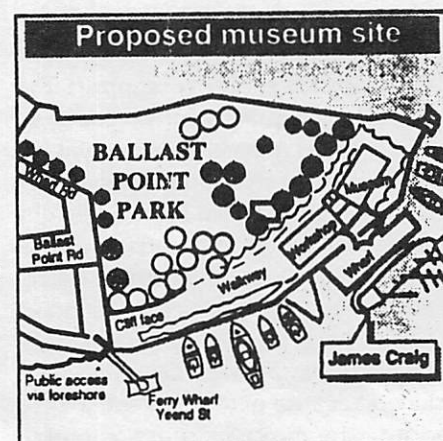
The Inner City & Foreshores Community Action Group has joined with Northside Residents Against Helicopter Noise, Galston Residents Association and Glebe residents to fight the project. Their committees will plan protests, explore legal challenges, assess safety and raise campaign funds.

Their protest was boosted by the revelation that Sydney casino partner, Leighton Properties was opposed to the heliport. Leighton's state manager, Mark Gray, told a Balmain meeting on 18 July that they would prefer it to be as far away as it could be. He offered the assistance of their acoustic engineer to monitor helicopter noise.

Caltex oil plant with the rest of the site becoming a much sought after nature reserve.

On Sunday 25 June, the Mayor and Museum chief, John Smith, were aboard the Museum's steamship, *Waratah*, to launch the campaign.

The architects' plans were commissioned by the Ballast Point National Park Committee and would provide the Museum with its first real home in 30 years. The Committee was set up by local residents with Council support to raise funds to purchase the \$20 million site but it would ultimately be funded by the State and Federal Governments.



Balmain Fire Station Centenary

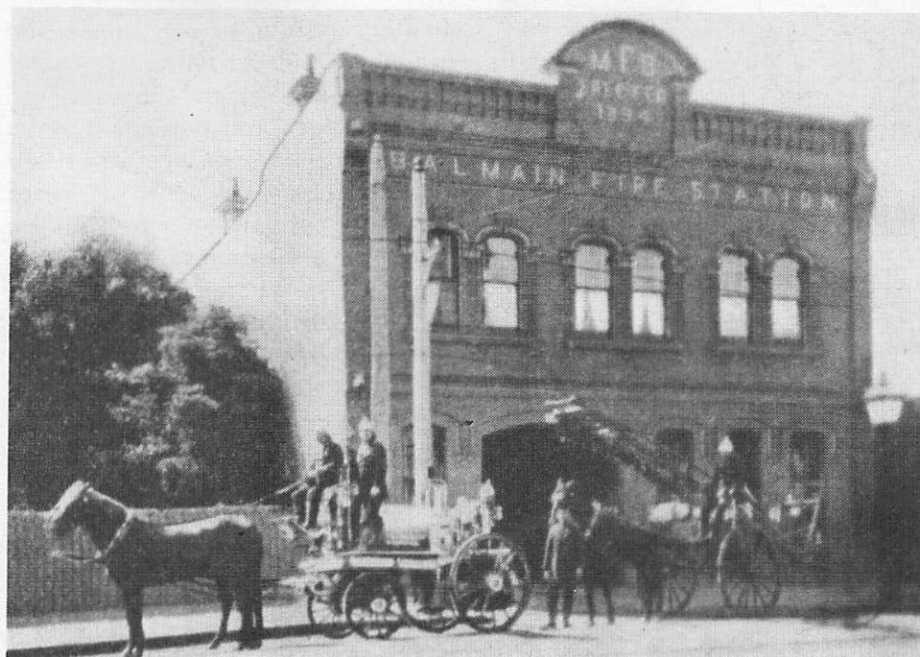
Balmain will be in celebratory mode when the Fire Station turns 100 on the weekend of 13-14 August. The station will be open to the general public and children's activities will be provided from 10am until 3.30pm on Saturday. There will be a Fire Brigade band concert from 10 to 11, a parade from 11.30, a sausage sizzle from 12 to 2pm, a Police Band concert from 1.30pm and a simulated emergency by the NSW Fire Brigades Rescue Section at 2.30pm. On Sunday the station will again be open to the general public and there will be a sausage sizzle from 12 to 2pm and a band concert from 12.30 pm.

Balmain was originally protected by volunteer firefighters, the first Volunteer Company being formed in Booth Street in 1875. It moved to Montague Street with a branch station in Darling Street between 1884 and 1888. The fire bell was located near the Watch House. When it rang, the volunteers, who might have been at work when the bell sounded, would gather and proceed to fight the fire. They frequently adjourned afterwards to the Volunteer Hotel on the other side of Darling Street.

A new station was built for the Volunteers in 1894. The site chosen "was at about the highest elevation in Balmain, having the great advantage of down-hill runs for the [horse-drawn] fire appliances when called into service, and of commanding a distant view." The Volunteers were disbanded in 1901 when a permanent staff was appointed.

A steam fire engine had been provided that same year with a capacity of 250 gallons per minute together with an escape ladder capable of extension to 60 feet. The station was also equipped with a smoke helmet for use when searching for fires in a ship's load which was unique at the time.

Correspondence from Fire Department Archives indicates that water pressure was one of the major problems encountered by the firemen in fighting the numerous fires which occurred. Letters of January and February 1909 report one case in which this led to acrimonious dispute. J Scard, Turncock, reported on January 30, "In order to get to the fire [at St Thomas' Schoolroom, Rozelle], the Brigade had to pass one S.D. hydrant on the 15" main,



Fire Brigade Station 1905

and one S.V. hydrant on the 9". The attention of the Brigade was directed to these hydrants by several of the spectators, and particularly by Mr. Burns, an ex-member of the Brigade, but no notice was taken of this information."

W. J. Corkill, the Station Officer, was given an opportunity to reply: "In the turncock's report he states when he arrived at the scene we were working from the 4 inch but does not mention that we were also working from the 9 inch main, and had the steamer at work some time before he arrived. He also says that a deal of comment was made by the onlookers, but I think the person who made the most was his friend Ex-fireman B. who was a member of the Balmain Volunteer Fire Brigade. Whom I have met on several occasions at fires in Balmain, and always seems to know more than any one else and has shown a desire to be a little officious if allowed."

The professionalisation of the service had obviously not been universally welcomed. The Superintendent of the Mid Western District Offices summarised the matter: "I would state that there is no question about the water supply being very bad in the vicinity of this fire when the Brigade arrived and I therefore refute any Statement that Turncock Scard has made in its entirety. This matter appeals to me as District Officer as the Brigade in my opinion has been held up to ridicule through the malicious and false reports which have been circulated in the Public Press by Turncock Scard."

Despite being of weather board construction with iron roof wood-lined, St

Thomas' Schoolroom suffered loss of the roof only and the Engineer-in-Chief noted "I question very much if damage could have been prevented as the fire had a hold before the Brigade appeared on the spot."

Occasionally accidents occurred en route to a fire. On 19 August 1905 G.H. Dadd reported, "I do myself the honor to report that Captain E.G. of Balmain called on me this morning Saturday 19th and stated that he was knocked down by our Engine and Sustained Severe Shock to the System. He admitted that the Engine did not touch him, but hearing the horses and bell he looked up and saw the Engine and went to step back and fell. Arthurson told me on Thursday night that a man fell down and he and Mulligan picked him up and asked if he was hurt. G. replied he did not know. I will let you know in the morning and walked on down the Street. I took no further notice of the matter after making enquiries and was satisfied that the Engine did not touch him until (G.) called on me this morning and told me he had got Medical advice and was going to put the matter in the hands of his Legal Adviser as he is of the opinion that he should get compensation for getting frightened with a Fire Engine."

"I may state that Captain G. is 72 years of age very tottery and excitable nature....G's Medical Adviser is an old retired Doctor. Older than G. himself..."

In these early days of the station there could also be problems with the horses. (more on back page).

In Your Garden

In the Shade

Most gardens have areas that are shaded or semi-shaded most of the time. That doesn't mean that you cannot grow plants there. Be aware whether the place is moist for long periods or quite dry.

Don't expect flowering plants to bloom well in shady conditions, instead look for plants with attractive foliage. The two tree begonias, *metallica* and *haageana*, bloom quite well under tall trees. Any soil can be improved by adding plenty of compost or other rotted organic material. Plants



growing under trees will compete for moisture and nutrients, so water regularly and feed them with a balanced fertiliser. Clived lilies not only thrive in shady areas, but also flower quite well. A shady, moist area is ideal for tree ferns and a selection of smaller ferns. *Helleborus orientalis* likes the same conditions and will flower throughout the winter and early spring.

For ground cover, any of these should do well: *tolmiea menziesii*, *viola hederacea*, *asparagus sprengeri* *ajuga*. For shady spots that seem to dry out easily try *bargeria cordifolia*, *nandina domestica*, *correas* (most varieties) or *westringia fruticosa*. The delightful long flowering *correas* will encourage nectar eating birds into the garden. *Dianella tasmanica* develops into a broad leafy clump. In spring and summer it produces deep blue flowers followed by purple berries. For areas that get morning sun only, consider *hydrangeas*, *rehmannia*, *fuchsias*, *impatiens*, *corylopsis spicata*. The last is deciduous and is pretty in early spring with lovely yellow flowers.

Bonnie Davidson

Fire Station Centenary continued. On 3 May 1906. Station Officer W.J. Corkill reported that when having harness drill on the 2nd May, "Horse Doncaster rushed the stable doors very suddenly before the bell rang or the lever on the door released. Which caused the horse to break both stiles on the door." He noted further, however, "I may state that the horses turned out several times previous to the accident and everything worked very satisfactorily."

False alarms also occurred in those days, just as they do now. On 22 Dec 1910 the Station officer reported receiving a call of fire aboard the S.S. Gabo lying at White Bay. When No 29 Steamer arrived, however, having proceeded "with all possible haste" they found no fire on board. Enquiries at the Balmain telephone exchange elicited the information that telephone number 173 (the Co-operative Wholesale Society Ltd of Glebe Island) had made the call but when the Station officer rang the same number that sent the call and made enquiries he was assured no such report of a fire had been made. The fireman who was on station duty when the call was received however, "positively identifies the voice who gave the call and the voice that answered my ring on the telephone."

Unfortunately, the Chief Officer, New South Wales Fire Brigades noted the letter with "I do not think that we can proceed any further with this matter. We could not obtain a conviction for giving a false alarm."

Debby Nicholls

A Showcase of Young Talent

David Nemeth and Jude Hungerford, violin, Zoe Hungerford, cello, Sarah McLain, clarinet, and the Amazing Joel, comedy magic, will be presented by Michael Oxenburgh at Clontarf Cottage, 4 Wallace Street on Sat 6 August at 8pm and Sun 7 August at 3pm.

Tickets \$10, concessions \$8. Bookings at Michael's Place 405 Darling Street. Ph 810 4896

The Village Players

present at Clontarf Cottage "Splinters", a comedy by Bill Condon. A love story about a man and a Norfolk Pine. Champagne Opening at 8pm on Sat 13 August. Tickets \$15. Preview 11 & 12 August \$5. Playing Thursday, Friday & Saturday at 8pm and Sunday at 3pm until 3 September. \$10 conc \$8. Bookings at Michael's Place 405 Darling Street. Ph 810 4896

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.

The Annual General Meeting of the Balmain Association Inc will be held on Wednesday 3 August 1994 at 7.30pm in the Watch House.

What's On

Exhibitions at the Watch House

- Julie Chamberlin - July 30 to Aug 7
- Susan Kerville - Historic Papers Sep 3-11
- Anita Johnston - Sep 17-25 Paper Makers of NSW
- Sue Cowden - Oct 1-2
- Anne Graham & Jacqueline Clayton - Oct 8-16
- Nado Milat - Nov 5-6 Ink on paper

Printed on recycled paper by Snap Print, Balmain

© Not to be reproduced without authorisation