

the balmain
association
incorporated
news sheet

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Worker's Cottages

One of the most common types of house in the Leichhardt Council area is the worker's cottage that occurs through all periods of development. It usually copied the architectural styles of their time in simplified form but often with great invention in ornamentation. The small residences are generally less than 100 m², with 4 rooms under the main roof with front verandah and ancillary rooms under a rear skillion. The most enduring form is the double-fronted cottage with a pair of windows and a central door. The origins are in the simple slab wattle and daub of Sydney reflecting in turn English 18th century rural cottages. Later at the turn of the century, single fronted timber cottages became common as a cheaper option to brick as pressure on land increased.

As the cottages were often built on larger lots they have been prone to re-development from the late 19th century. Many on the slopes to Mort Bay were replaced by terraces. Timber structures are easy to change and relatively fragile. Often their individuality and details of ornaments, including picket fences, have been lost. Many of these houses are being demolished and replaced by modern two storey dwellings. This tends

to reduce the stock of affordable housing and increases land values.

Leichhardt Council is considering a policy to protect small residential buildings from demolition or substantial alteration. Factors to be appraised are the suitability of these modest structures for contemporary purposes; the loss of significance and context if simple structures are extended; the quantification of work required for renovation; off-street parking can compromise existing dwellings and streetscapes. Small residential buildings should not be demolished unless it can be demonstrated that retention of the building is not possible. As the new Town Plan is

some months away it is imperative that the policy be implemented now.

Additions and alterations should retain major form, scale, materials and roof form of the existing structure. Additions should generally be to the rear to avoid changing the relationship of the building to the street when viewed from the street. Extensions should not be greater in size than the existing building. They do not have to imitate the building but should be complimentary to existing detailing and form.

Very few such buildings (actually eight) are included in the register of heritage items so there is little statutory protection available.



Worker's cottage 4 Clayton St, Balmain. No2 was identical

Heritage Week 1995

This year the National Trust of Australia (NSW) will celebrate 50 years of conserving Australia's heritage and the Balmain Association achieves its 30 years of preservation of Balmain's unique history. The Trust, as part of a year long celebration will award a "green ribbon" to every building the trust helped "save" over the 50 years. Some Balmain buildings will be proud to wear a "ribbon".

Heritage Week is an annual event aimed at drawing attention to Australia's natural, built and cultural heritage. The theme for 2-9 April 1995 is "Heritage in your hands". On Saturday, 1st & 8th, Sunday 2nd & 9th, 11am to 3pm an

Exhibition at the Watch House will feature early maps, etc in association with the publication Streets, Lanes and Places, free entry. A guided Heritage Walk of Balmain, Saturday, 1st & 8th, departs 2pm from the Watch House. A guided Heritage Walk of Rozelle, Sunday, 2nd & 9th, departs 2pm from the main gates of former Rozelle Hospital, Balmain Road. Cost \$5 pp, to Watch House restoration. Bookings 8184954.

There has been some good news, would you believe, from the Tax Office. No, not an oxymoron — not for heritage owners anyway! This year the Federal Government has introduced a new tax incentive to encourage owners of listed heritage items to carry out approved

conservation work. A rebate of 20 cents in the dollar is available. In order to qualify for assistance owners must apply to the Federal Minister for Communications and Arts for a provisional certificate before work commences; prove that the item is listed on either the Register of the National Trust, the Heritage Council Register or in a heritage schedule to a regional or local environmental plan; undertake work that will cost at least \$5,000; and complete the work within two years. The incentive is capped to achieve a total of \$9.5mill worth of conservation work each year. Contact Victoria Throp or Dennis McManus at the Heritage Branch, Department of Planning on 391 2045 or 391 2061.

Kid Sister Part 2

School, Church and Sunday Dinner

The Primary School was in Nicholson Street, only a hundred yards or so away from our front gate, which was something else to be pleased about in our new abode. For me, going to school was just something we had to do. I didn't love it, I didn't hate it. One grievous trouble was, there was never enough to read. We'd get our School Magazine once a month, and that was good, but I'd read it through in one afternoon. There was a class set of books for our Reading Lesson, in fourth class, and we read bits aloud - but the one book lasted us a whole year. The name of it was "The Hare in the Moon".

Fourth and fifth classes were taken both together, by Mr Jory. (It wasn't a very big school.) The top half of his classrooms was made of glass, so you could see a bit of what was going on in the next room, if there was any excitement, like some luckless boy getting the cane, which happened pretty often. (Only boys copped it. I can't remember it happening to a girl ever - or I would have, by the time I was in sixth class with a horrible teacher. We were a mutual hate society, he and I.) I'm sure Mr Jory prided himself on being a virtuoso. He made a full-scale, first-class performance out of giving the cuts. I can see him now, clear as day. He'd stand there puffed up with menace, pull himself up to his full height, stretch the arm that was holding the cane slowly, slowly back as far as possible, bending backwards and sticking out his round tummy, and when he'd got to full stretch he'd give the cane a little shake and it would quiver dreadfully, and then he'd swipe it down on to the poor little trembling hand.

Because not all the family were at one school at once, we might drib and drab off on week days to different schools or to work, but on Sundays we all went off together, excepting for the big girl whose turn it was to stay home and get the dinner. Our parents went to the Christian Science Church in Riley Street, in the city, and Sunday School was next door. Children went there till they were twenty - it was presumed it took a young person a long time to learn and apply the precepts of this faith.

Whichever sister's turn it was to stay home, it would have taken her the whole morning to prepare the dinner for eleven of us and one or two more in case our

parents invited friends home. Put the roast in the oven with plenty of dripping and settle down to do the vegies - half an hour most like just to peel the potatoes and pumpkin, and another for doing the beans, which had to be strung and sliced very finely. Then the pudding - half an hour again for peeling and slicing apples, and rubbing of fat into flour, if we were having my favourite, which was fruit steamed in a suet crust. Of course there'd always be a potful of custard to go with whatever we had.

Our family dinner was no mean undertaking. First the bell would be rung, summoning us from the corners of house or garden. Hands (and boys' faces) had to be washed. We'd stand behind our chairs, and when Father was satisfied we were all there, quiet, clean and in goodly frame of mind, he would solemnly say Grace, and we could sit, except for the two runners (food bearers). How hungry we used to be! What a marvellous moment when the roast leg of mutton, or sirloin of beef, was brought in and put in front of father - and good, good, good it smelt. And smell had to keep us going for what seemed like eternity before we got fork into food and

Father's serving. Then, in order of seniority, we'd put the plates in front of each person. By this time the smell was excruciating, as the rule was implacable - nobody started till all were served, and the plates retrieved from the kitchen. At last Father would say, "You may begin," and up would go elbows and down hands, and food at long length into aching stomachs.

Then came the washing up, done by turns, same as the cooking, except that the young ones were included in the roster - no one was ever too young to wipe up. But she who cooked was out of it. The dining room went off the hall, at the back of the house. To get to the kitchen we went down two steps, through what was known as the Children's Room, and along a passage, past the pantry. Bringing in the meal was quite a performance - clearing the table was another.

Next came the packing up. We'd scrape the plates, putting the scraps into a saucepan to be boiled up with pollard for the chooks. Washing was done in the scullery, a gloomy little cave with a wide stone sink. There'd be one child to wash, one to wipe, and one to put away. The



Nicholson Street Public School

food in between jaws.

Father was head of the family and head of the table, deliberate and pompous about carving the joint. First he would flash the carving knife and steel, a maestro showing his skill. He would select the choicest cut, put it on a plate and hand it to the runner saying "That's for your mother". The runner would run down to the vegetable end, where there'd be at least three covered dishes and a big jug of gravy, and then take the plate out to the kitchen to be kept hot in the oven. The other runner would do the same with

sink had a wooden rack above it for plates, which were done first. Then came the knives, forks and spoons, all laden onto a big oval tin tray, which we carried into the kitchen where the wiping went on, meanwhile the washer filling another tray. So it went on. And Oh! the pots! We had nothing more for their cleaning than sand soap and monkey soap. The whole job seemed to take most of the afternoon, and be just finished in time to get afternoon tea for our parents and their friends.

Barbara Whitley (ed D Nicholls)

Memories

As the granddaughter of Thomas Stevenson Rowntree I feel close ties with Balmain – more so as my own mother, Emelia Sommer, lived next door to T S Rowntree Jnr in *Northumberland House* and married the son, Norman Randle Rowntree. My mother's parents later lived in the home *Cliffdale House* at 8 Lookes Avenue. It was a great disappointment and a wrench when flats were built where a gracious home, the *Anchorage* (as my grandparents named it), existed with, for us, wonderful memories.

This home played a big part in our family's life where it was a treat to visit and explore the many rooms and roam the shore line to watch the Blue Funnel Line ships manoeuvring to their berths. The building of the Sydney Harbour Bridge was another awe inspiring sight for us from the top floor of the house.

Grandfather (Papa Sommer) grew bananas and vegetables in his quite sizeable garden at the side of the house. It was a gracious living area with tall palms in well kept lawns. Under the taps were huge white clam shells, where I, as a very small child, tried to bath the cat.

There was a mangle for pressing clothes in the huge laundry which was separate from the main house. It backed against a stone wall which must have been cut originally and was always moist with ferns growing down the sides. The paths were huge flat black pieces of rock.

On the ground floor at the back of the house and opposite the bath-room, half the width of the house, was a store room and this was only unlocked by request if you had been good. Such a treat; there were huge baskets where you could hide and full of fancy dresses for on ship-board parties. One I always wanted to see was the Peters Icecream dress with icecream buckets and wooden spoons attached all over it. Treasure chests could not have been more interesting. Model sailing boats leant against the walls and there was a ship in a glass case. Ah, such memories.

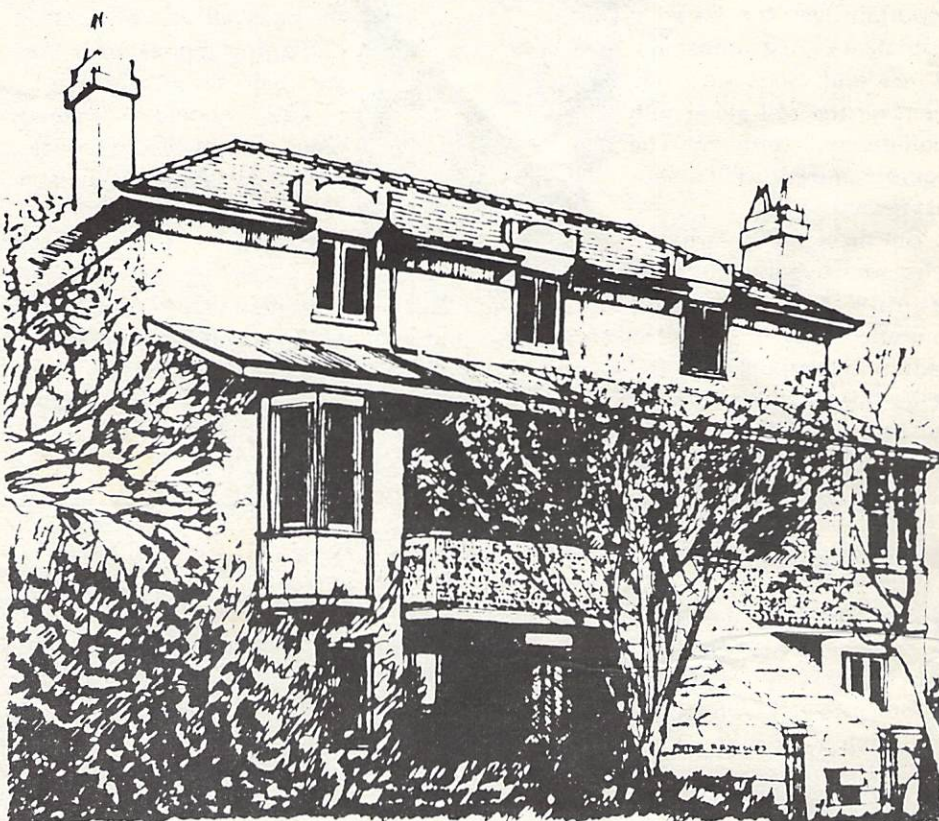
Father built a canoe for my cousin and it was a great day when it was launched down White's slipway into the harbour. I was rowed to Rowntree's floating dock by my father and let inside – so small I thought. It seemed a long way to row back to Lookes Avenue and I worried that my father would be tired.

Mother went to Balmain on Mondays and Fridays and I was taken with her until I started school at the age of seven. Grandfather T S Rowntree Jnr was permanently on the third floor by this time and it was my task to take his morning tea up to him. He used to tell me of his youth and how he carved toys and pointed out the different ships sailing by. I wish now that I had taken more notice of all the wonderful tales.

On the weekend visits our car used to go down Lookes Avenue, entering, in those days, off Nicholson Street (where

searched for my relatives amongst the names. My grandparents lived right behind the church and only last year (or maybe it was two or even three years ago) my husband and I drove down beside the church on to a block full of weeds to see the now inaccessible home Blacket built for the Rowntrees. It had been restored and looked wonderful.

On subsequent visits we found that the block was filling up with the most attractive homes "blending into the atmosphere". Time does not stand still. Balmain is still the fascinating place it is



Cliffdale House

my father as a youth attended school). It was frighteningly steep to a child and I always feared going straight into the harbour. The climb out was as bad. We could slide backwards into the water. Of course none of these dreaded outcomes ever happened any more than the "dummy" on the front of the tram was going to run over me going down to the Darling Street wharf. West's white house at the bottom of Lookes Avenue had access to Thornton Park where there was a cannon on which I was allowed to climb. The cannon has gone and the park looks smaller.

About five years ago I visited St Mary's Church where I was christened. The lady cleaning the porch let me in and showed me the book with all the signatures. After signing it myself I

in my memory. I would wish the Erskine Street wharf back in service as it was with the ferries with their green well-oiled engines pulsing in a mesmeric hum; and the tiny corner shop at Darling Street wharf where mother used to buy peppermint buttons. The smell of the sea is the most poignant memory; it brings all the other memories flooding back. The Lookes Avenue neighbours, the family, the ferrymen; wonderful people all. Of course these recollections are repeated in all of the many families of Balmain. They too have heart-warming memories.

(A project selected to celebrate 30 years of the Association is the restoration of the Rowntree Memorial which stands at the corner of Rowntree Street and Macquarie Terrace. Ed.)

Vilma Burrows (nee Rowntree)

In Your Garden Time To Cool It

During the long hot days of summer, garden jobs are best done in the early morning or late evening. Watering is most effective in the early hours and vigorous garden projects are best put off until the mellow days of autumn.

Mulching is the answer to summer survival for your garden and is especially important with the watering restrictions. Just gather the leaves and twigs and pile them on the soil along with manure and compost. The vigorous growth will be your just reward.

But there are a few minor jobs to be done such as pruning. Cut off larger "summer burst" of azaleas to keep them neat and shapely and to encourage better flowering. Watch for the tiny lace bug on the reverse of azalea leaves. The best control is by spraying with Folimat,



making sure you spray the under surfaces.

Cutting the rose blooms with long stems encourages growth and more flowers. Give them a light sprinkle of rose food — a heaped tablespoon is enough and should be applied to moist soil and then watered in. Watch for black spot on rose leaves. Treat with a spray containing Triforine fungus in the early evening after bee activity has ceased.

Hibiscus look lovely in full flower, but watch out for tiny black beetles that damage the buds before they open. If damage is significant spray your hibiscus with Carbaryl.

Lawns should be watered only once or twice a week, but thoroughly, which is a problem with the current restrictions. Watering of lawns, gardens, and plants is permitted only between 7am and 9am and 7pm and 9pm. Hosing of paths and patios is prohibited.

Bonnie Davidson

Demolished

Despite last minute action by residents and Leichhardt Council, a 19th century home *Llanabar* at 17 Wharf Road, Birchgrove has been demolished. Early on January 20 workers began tearing off the roof but residents called council officers and the police. It was claimed that the owners had not sought council permission and had not adhered to a court order to record, with drawings and photographs, the buildings and gardens. Justice Bignold granted a temporary injunction but the next day he approved the demolition.

Janette Sullivan of the Snails Bay Residents' Group said the destruction of the home would ruin the historically significant charm of Wharf Road as one of just five Sydney streets with the last remaining 19th century streetscape on the harbour foreshore. The group sent a letter to the Heritage Council calling for an interim conservation order on Wharf Road properties to allow time for a development control plan.

Residents and Council planners are very concerned by the threatened intrusion of multiple apartments in this conservation area.

Rare Book

Ten copies of "Balmain in Time" (P Reynolds & R Irving, 1970), mint condition, signed by authors. \$25.00 each. Ring Peter Reynolds 810 8560 (daytime).

Leichhardt Historical Journal No 1-18. Contents cover Leichhardt, Annandale, Lilyfield, Glebe, Balmain, Birchgrove and Rozelle. Cost from \$10 to \$15 plus postage. Contents list on application. No 19 due in March.

What's On

Watch House Exhibitions

- Elaine Norling - Feb 3-19
- Ann Sheridan - Feb 25-Mar 12
- Women's Art Collective
- Samantha Collier - Mar 18-26
- Painting, drawing & sculpture
- Heritage Week - Apr 2-9
- "Heritage in your hands"
- Streets, Lanes & Places

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New Book Well Received

Our latest publication *Streets, Lanes and Places* is eagerly sought from the Association, Balmain Library and Bray's Books. The book describes the origins of the street names of Balmain, Birchgrove and Rozelle and costs \$10 plus \$2 postage. It has 39 illustrations and old maps.

Other publications available are:-

Around Balmain \$7
Called to the Bar \$13
Gourlie's Corner \$10
Half a Thousand Acres \$20
Balmain Walks 1 & 2 \$2 each

Please add \$2 postage for the books and \$0.45 for the walks' leaflets.

Know Your Cricket Terms



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.