



the balmain
association
incorporated
news sheet

The Peninsula OBSERVER

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For Love of Life.

Centenary of the NSW Ambulance

The formation of an ambulance service in New South Wales was hardly auspicious. When the Civil Ambulance and Transport Brigade commenced operations on 1st April 1895 the officers occupied part of a former Sydney Police Station and their equipment consisted of one hand litter. Contact with the outside world was through a single telephone.

The bubonic plague outbreak in the 1900s increased the demand for assistance to transport the afflicted to an infirmary for care. The Ambulance Committee carried a motion in March 1909, "That the offer of the Balmain Horse Ambulance Committee to present the Civil Ambulance and Transport Corps with an Ambulance, Horse and Harness" be accepted.

Suitable premises at 4 Montague Street, Balmain were secured on a ten year lease at 57 pounds per annum and the official opening ceremony took place on 11th September, 1909. Public subscription towards the Ambulance cost was supported by the Ladies Committee, holding Concerts and Bazaars. (Photo of the Ambulance Station is published in *Gourlie's Corner*). During World War 1, operations were maintained by the provision of special Government grants.

The influenza epidemic struck Sydney in 1919. The service handled the crisis well but the proliferation of the

Brigade and groups offering ambulance services needed to be coordinated in some way, by legislation if necessary. In November 1919, the NSW Government implemented the Ambulance Transport Service Act which formed the first New South Wales Ambulance Transport Service Board. The resultant growth was dramatic as local populations formed fundraising committees and auxiliaries to bring to their community the benefits of the ambulance. Extracts from Service Call of veteran ambulance officer, Charles Holland. When Mr Holland joined the service in 1915 his equipment consisted of a first aid kit and a pair of scissors. His pay 35 shillings a week, working 70 hours a week with one full day off a fortnight and two nights off from 6-12pm.

Before the NSW Ambulance Transport Service Board was established, it was by no means uncommon for an ambulance-man to be attending a patient and to have the patient snatched away from him by a man from a rival service who felt that his territory had been invaded.

By 1930 the demand for the service had outstripped the capacity of the Montague Street building and the staff and equipment was moved to a new Station at 53 Victoria Rd, Drummoyne, opening on 13 December. The cost of building was £1894. Representations were made by the Balmain Council in May 1943 for "the re-establishment of a permanent ambulance and station

within the Municipality. The reason being the increased activity within the Municipality". The request was refused stating that manpower and vehicle shortage due to war conditions. Continued request for the re-establishment of an ambulance service was made on the 22nd November 1944 by Mrs Mary Quirk, MLA and representatives of various unions. The report stated that industrial employees employed in factories or working in the industrial area of Balmain would contribute a penny per week, and the employers would subsidise the weekly contributions of their employees by an amount at least equal to that paid by the employees, that the Balmain Council would pay £250 as an annual subsidy to support the new service in Balmain. Nothing came of the requests.

As a community service, the Balmain Rotary Club conducted an Art Union to raise monies for the purchase of medical equipment needed by hospitals in the district. Balmain Hospital was hoping to acquire their own ambulance so that quick and comfortable transport could be provided for patients referred to major hospitals for specialised treatment. This was realised when in 1974, \$7598 was given as part cost. The ambulance service still functions, funded by the Hospital.

We have progressed from hand litters to horse drawn vehicles, to 1920s motor vehicles, 1937 radio controlled vehicles, 1941 cliff rescue, 1961 training school, 1967 air ambulance, 1977 Paramedic Officers, 1979 Female Officers, (although during the second world war many local districts employed female officers), 1983 Helicopters, 1991 each vehicle is equipped with a defibrillator, 1993, paramedic motorcycles in the CBD. In October 1988, the State Headquarters transferred from the City to former Rozelle Hospital buildings, Balmain Road. Centenary Open Day, Drummoyne Ambulance Station, Sunday, 23rd April, 1995. **Gary Clark.** Ambulance Service and **Kath Hamey.**



Balmain Trams

Recent visitors to the Sydney Tramways Museum discovered David Keenan's recent publication "The Western Lines of the Sydney Tramway System" which includes comprehensive details of the growth of the Balmain line. A short article has already appeared condensing some of the information in the February "Village Voice" but the editor felt that readers of "The Observer" would enjoy following the history after 1902 when the lines were electrified. By that date the trams were running every 12 minutes at peak hours and every 20 minutes at other times on a journey which took 43 minutes from Circular Quay to Gladstone Park terminus via Railway Gates, Newtown Road Junction, Johnston Street and Weston Road (now Victoria Road). Surprisingly the time of the journey increased by 3 minutes after electrification, although only one extra stop, at Maude Street, was included. Electrification did mean that the additional services were no longer needed for major fixtures at the racecourses but the service continued to attract heavy loadings. In 1903 a supplementary steam service was reintroduced from Railway Gates to Balmain during the PM peak hour until the F class cars came into operation, and relief steam services were also used between 1904 and 1906.

An extension of the line from Darling Street, Rozelle, to Drummoyne was opened at the end of 1902. Following the opening of the Glebe Island Bridge on July 1, 1903 there was agitation for construction of a tramway connection

from Weston Road, Rozelle, via the new bridge and then across Pyrmont Bridge to the City. Statistics collected at the time of the discussion revealed that 123 trams carried 8210 passengers to Balmain each weekday while 102 trams carried 7140 passengers to Drummoyne. Another 5000 passengers travelled by ferry, so commuting was obviously flourishing almost a century ago. The direct service from Market Street to Balmain did not eventuate, but in 1911 a peak hour service was opened between Gladstone Park and Ultimo Depot.

Construction of the Birchgrove extension began in June 1916 and was completed in August the next year. The official opening date was 8 August of that year but the strike of 1917 meant that only restricted services were being provided by "loyal" and volunteer staff so regular services were not actually begun until November. The official running time from Fort Macquarie was 49 minutes via the Rowntree Street Junction, Cameron Street, Grove Street, Bay Street and the Snails Bay terminus.

In the meantime the cross-suburban route between Darling Street and Canterbury Railway Station had been expanding. The first of several extensions of the Balmain line was opened in November 1902 along Darling Street from Gladstone Park to Nicholson Street. The steepness of the grade to Darling Street Wharf made operation of a tram to the wharf itself extremely difficult, but it was also accepted that large numbers of people would not use the tram if they had to walk 200 yards

down - or more particularly up - that selfsame grade. Alternatives were considered. One was a proposal that the down line continue from Nicholson Street to the wharf while the up line would return along Weston Street through private property across Paul and Pearson Streets and then via Pearson and Johnston Street back to Darling Street. Just as work was commencing, property resumptions taking place and people were already vacating their homes, Mr Francis Edward Stowe wrote to the Secretary of Public Works stating that he had the solution: a scheme whereby electric trams could run both up and down the hill in complete safety. The solution was, of course, the counterweight which has been described and pictured in previous newsletters as well as in "Around Balmain" and "Called to the Bar."

Readers interested in knowing exactly how the counterweight system works are recommended further reading in Mr Keenan's book. He summarises the operation by including instructions to drivers to

1. Descend steadily
2. Start from the terminus very gently
3. Stop exactly at the white mark

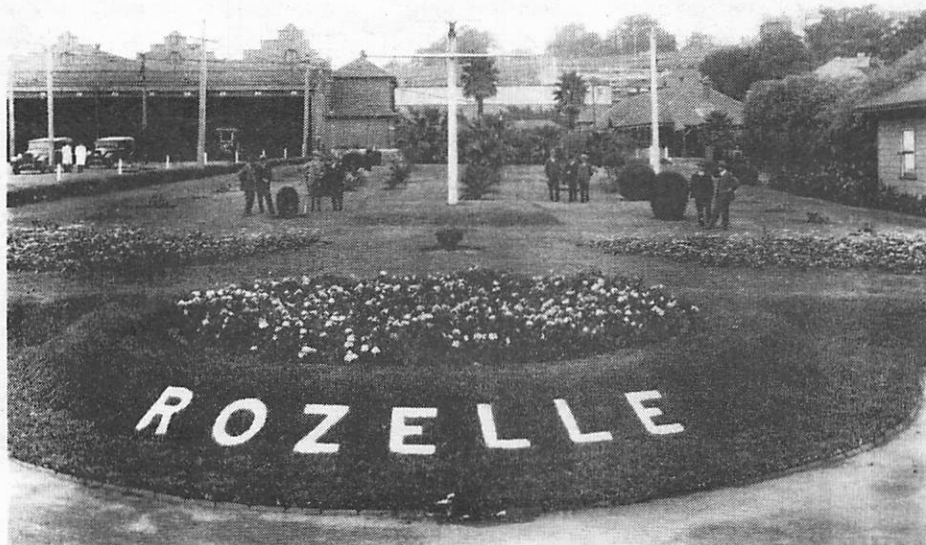
and adds that no driver was allowed to operate to Darling Street Wharf until he had made three round trips under the supervision of an experienced driver and had been passed as competent.

A service from Darling Street Wharf to Leichhardt opened in 1912 and the

Canterbury cross-suburban service was completed in the form which served the suburb until trams ceased to operate in the 1950's. The Birchgrove service was converted to bus operation in 1954 on the same day that the cross-suburban line from Darling Street was replaced by bus route 445. On 6 November 1955 the Breakdown Car from Rozelle Depot took the counterweight back to the depot. Workmen began removing the underground equipment and restoring the road surface the next day. Although the remaining services continued to show an overall profit, weekend services were running at a loss and they were all converted to bus operation from 23 November 1958. The era of trams in Balmain which had been inaugurated with such fanfare in May 1892 had come to an end.

Pictured is the Rozelle Tram Depot at Harold Park, Glebe.

Debby Nicholls



Planning Decision Anger

Five days before the State election the Planning Minister, Robert Webster, agreed to disputed developments on Caltex and Ampol sites and the demolition of the Balmain Power Station. Cr Helen Styles said it was incredible that such an important decision be made just before a poll. "He jumped the gun ... and made sure no-one knew until after the election".

Leichhardt Council and local residents have fought for six years against over-development and for greater public open space. Mr Webster's action was despite the pending decision on Council's appeal expected in June. The Council argues that the plan is invalid because it does not include height controls.

Cr Styles anticipates an approach by the Council to the new government

requesting that the order be revoked." Mr Carr said that he was going to review all State environmental plans and look at giving control to local authorities".

Australia Remembers

The 50th anniversary of the cessation of World War II will be commemorated by services at the three major War Memorials in the Leichhardt Council area. These are Pioneer Park, Leichhardt, Dr Foley Rest Park, Glebe and Loyalty Square, Balmain. At 10am on Sunday May 7 a service in St Andrews Congregational Church will have Tom Uren as speaker before a march to Loyalty Square for the official commemoration. Afterwards the Leichhardt Municipal Band will give a recital in Gladstone Park.

Other details from Cr Evan Jones, 569 8936.

Island in Distress

The prospect of Cockatoo Island to be auctioned should alarm Balmain residents. It would then be the first harbour island in private hands. Cockatoo Island is very significant island in heritage terms and its loss would be a national tragedy. It has two of the oldest convict built buildings in Australia as well as grain silos cut out of the solid rock. Other priceless features are early examples of ship building and repair facilities in the Fitzroy and Sutherland dry docks and an early 20th century power house.

Several people are working towards the formation of a "Friends of Cockatoo Island" lobby group. Anyone who can help this important cause is urged to contact Jack Clark on (02) 416 1495.

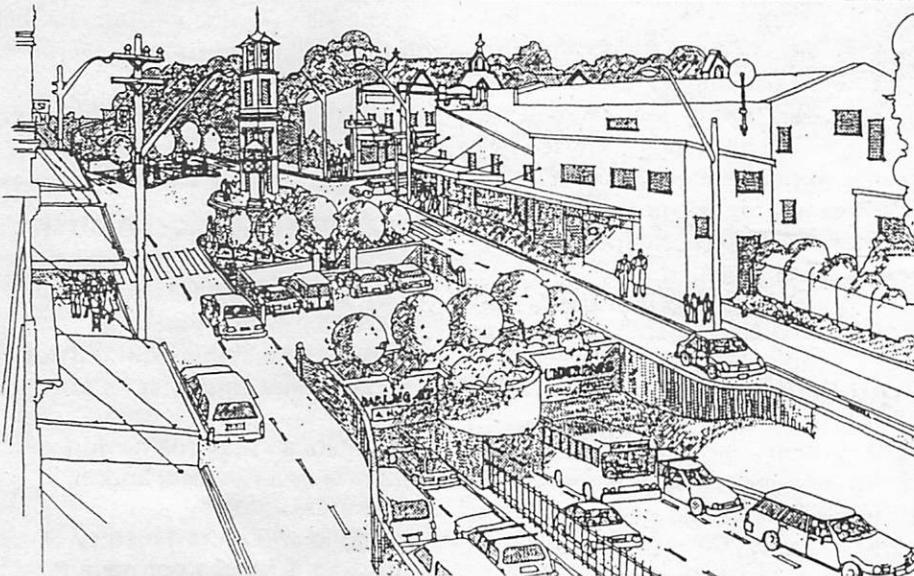
The Association is calling for a volunteer to assist identify and photograph the many War Memorial Honour Boards in churches, schools, halls etc in our area. Contact 818 4954.

New Sailing Club

Balmain is to get a new Sailing Club after Leichhardt Council voted to grant the lease of the old 12 Footers site in Water Street to the Balmain Sailing Club. The old club decided not to reapply for the lease when it expired. The new club is actively seeking members to help revitalise sailing in Balmain. The aim is to bring the club back to the community, open to both young and old. It's a chance to get in on the ground floor and help determine the directions the club will take. It is planned to involve local schools to provide sailing facilities for children, introduce new dinghy classes and run a Friday evening twilight race for keel yachts.

The Balmain Sailing Club will hold an open afternoon for all prospective members at the clubhouse at the foot of Water Street on Saturday May 6 between 2 and 5pm. Bring your own food and drink. The first General Meeting is set down for Saturday May 27 at 2pm. A committee of 15 will be elected to run the club for the coming sailing season.

Please ring James Cook, 810 5665, Margot Cross 810 8220 or Phillip Johnstone 810 8317, or write to The Secretary, Balmain Sailing Club, PO Box 653, Rozelle 2039.



The proposed Darling St underpass has been endorsed by Leichhardt Council.

Sydney's Airport Debacle

On 28 February 1995 a new airport was opened in Denver, Colorado. The first to be built in the USA for 20 years, it has high-tech facilities and is situated on the prairie outside the city limits. It cost US\$4.7 billion, \$3 billion over budget. The old Stapleton Airport will be sold for residential development. The population of Colorado is 4.5 million, a little more than Sydney, yet the airport was built by the city of Denver.

A new airport out of Sydney should have been built in the 1960s instead of extending the north-south runway into Botany Bay. After development Kingsford Smith Airport is the smallest capital city airport in Australia and only

one third the size of any comparable airport. The area surrounding it will be a waste land.

Reopening the east-west runway will only expose more residents to noise. Even with the third runway it is inefficient and will be an embarrassment for the 2000 Olympics. KSA will inevitably be phased out unless it is privatised which has to be resisted.

The new control tower at Mascot will enable a 50% increase in aircraft movements with more noise for residents of Sydney. The proposed runway at Badgery's Creek will only be 2,900 metres long, not long enough for international aircraft. Unless it replaces KSA it will make little difference as the major airlines will try to boycott it.

In Your Garden

Plant For Peace. A lovely way to gain benefit from your garden is to design a small intimate area, perhaps a special spot within a larger garden, where you can relax among plants selected for their perfume and colour. You could call it a Peace Garden. Plant with mainly white flowers because the symbolism of peace and purity gives tranquility to the contrast between green textured leaves and white blooms.

It is interesting to note that some of the best perfumed plants have white blooms, notably gardenia, mock orange and stephanotis murraya.

Dappled sunlight seems to be essential for a peace garden. An overhead canopy is best provided by a deciduous tree. The Chinese yulan magnolia, *m. denudata*; one of the new wisteria trees, *Robina pseudocacia unifolia*; white crepe myrtle

and white orchid tree all provide ideal filtered shade.

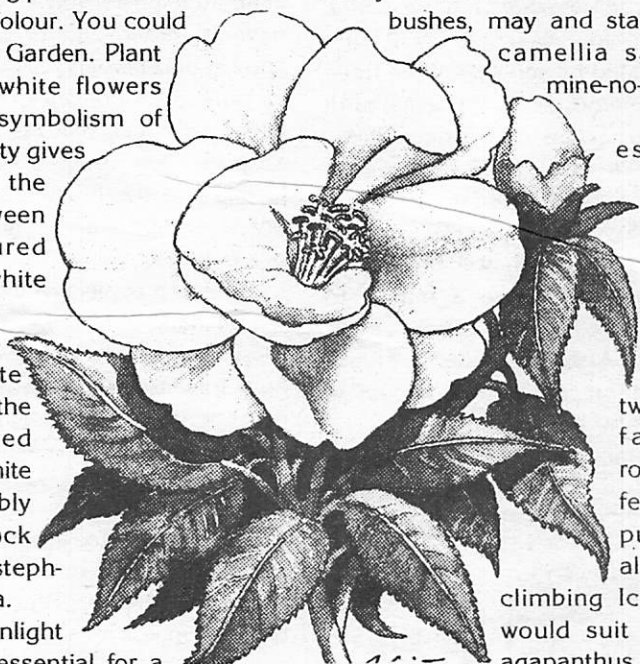
Privacy is essential in a peace garden and hedging may be needed to enclose the area. Plant tall, flowering shrubs around the perimeter but don't prune them into formal shapes. Any of the hardy white viburnums or snowball bushes, may and startling white camellia sasanquas, mine-no-yuki.

To get an established look plant climbers that grow quickly and flower within a season or two. Many old fashioned roses are perfect for this purpose but also the new

climbing Iceberg rose would suit as well as agapanthus whose evergreen leaves make a good border.

White gardens have had an importance for many centuries so do try for your own peaceful spot.

Bonnie Davidson



Senior of the Year

Congratulations to Frank Marjarson for the Courier Senior of the Year Award for service to the community. Frank is an Association member and exhibitor in the Watch House. After war service and a career in banking, Frank, in his retirement, has 10 years of welfare work for the Smith Family and helped to establish Senior Australians for Growth and Exploration. Frank as a diligent printmaker has displayed his work in various galleries in Balmain and has donated some prints to the Association.

Obituary

We regret to note the deaths of Patricia Anne Irving and Dorothy Harding. Both were dedicated parishioners of St Marys Anglican Church, East Balmain. Sincere condolences to Bob Irving and Alan Harding and their families. Bob (President) and Alan (Vice President) were active in the Balmain Association during the founding years and helped to secure the Watch House as our headquarters.

New Edition

The Leichhardt Historical Journal No 19 is now on sale. Contents include articles on the Balmain Association - 30 years On; the 1929 Timber Strike; From Adolphus St to Gladstone Park- 3; The Excelsior Estate; Book Reviews. Price \$15 plus postage \$2. Contact 818 4954.

What's On

Watch House Exhibitions

- **Heritage Week - Apr 2-9**
"Heritage in your hands"
Streets, Lanes & Places
- **Four Ways - May 6-14**
Four women artists
- **Ink on Paper - June 3-4**
Nado Milat
- **Kate Finnerty - Sep 9-17**

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Four Ways

A group of innovative women artists, under the name of Four Ways, will exhibit their images on paper and canvas, in oils, acrylics, collage and mixed media at the Watch House 6-14 May from 10am-3pm weekdays and 10am-5pm on weekends.

Geraldine Crumpton looks through the landscape, exploring the forms and spaces, expressing her feelings as she weaves her way through the wonderful tapestry of shapes, textures and colours.

Deborah Kiva's work is predominantly characterised by flow and movement, expressive and dramatic, representing a variety of subjects.

Billie Ross enjoys the challenge of diversity using acrylics and mixed media, from traditional to abstract, allowing her painting to dictate the final result.

The immediacy of pastel and charcoal allows Catherine Titmarsh the spontaneity to capture movement, mood and mark.

The official opening will be at 3pm Saturday 6 May.

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.