

the balmain
association
incorporated
news sheet

The Peninsula OBSERVER

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Webster Rebuffed Again

The Supreme Court on 17 May again rebuffed the then Planning Minister Robert Webster and the bureaucrats of the Department of Planning. The Greater Metropolitan Regional Environmental Plan (GMREP) which gave development consent for four industrial sites to Mr Webster was ruled invalid because the Leichhardt Council had not been properly consulted. In 1990 the Balmain Association and the Balmain Development Trust first successfully challenged the Government on the removal of the planning powers from Council.

The Court decided that: "The REP made by the Minister on 21 December 1993, was significantly different from the draft REP publicly exhibited. There is a considerable difference between a plan containing a prima facie height limit that may be varied and one involving no such height limit. While both

the Director (under s.49) and the Minister (under s.51) may alter the draft REP, the power of alteration cannot be used to bring about making by the Minister, a plan so different from the publicly exhibited plan and that in some important respects it is quite a different plan. On this test, the Minister did not have the power to make the plan of 21 December, 1993."

On 15 March 1995 notices of the

"This action was carried out by the Department with a view to save the consents regardless of the determination of the Court of Appeal proceedings."

consents were published in *The Glebe*. A notice of a consent so published shall not be challenged after 3 months from the date of the notice. This explains the

Mr Webster's approvals of the development consents for three sites - Caltex, Ampol and Balmain Power Station - only days before the State election.

This action was carried out by the Department with a view to save the consents regardless of the determination of the Court of Appeal proceedings. Council has commenced injunction proceedings in the Land & Environment Court seeking an Order declaring void the consents issued by the Minister prior to the change of government.

It is believed that the new minister, Mr Craig Knowles, is concerned that the local community should have a strong say in the future of the sites and will meet shortly to discuss the future of the sites. Mr Knowles was earlier an employee of the Department of Planning. His former boss, M/s Gabriel Kibble, will now report to him.

No Answer to Noise

Sydney's aircraft noise problem will not be solved by the opening of Badgerys Creek airport because airlines do not want to move from Sydney Airport. Any measures to reduce aircraft noise in Sydney can only be palliatives as long as operations continue at the present airport. The insulation of houses under the flight path can only bring minimum benefit for the residents. The purchase of badly affected premises will create a wasteland. This is counter to urban consolidation programs to reduce the transport problems.

A totally unregulated Sydney airport will mean more than 50% increase in the number of planes using the airport over the next 20 years. The projected increase in flight movements is from 240,000 to 353,000 annually. The shortsightedness of using airport sales to reduce the federal deficit is against

the overall planning process and will lock the community into poor previous decisions. The Coalition of Councils against aircraft noise is expected to mount a campaign against airport privatisation. This could take the form of consumer boycotts of products and services offered by potential investors. There were many protesters at the recent privatisation conference held at the Sydney Hilton.

The proposed runway at Badgerys Creek will only be 2,900 metres long, not long enough for international aircraft. Nor will it solve the aircraft noise problem in Sydney. Unless it replaces KSA it will make little difference as the major airlines will try to boycott it. The government has not devised any regulations which would require airlines to use the new airport. They will not leave KSA until it becomes absolutely necessary when congestion and delays become intolerable.

**The 30th Annual
General Meeting of
the Balmain
Association Inc will
be held at 7.30pm
on Wednesday,
August 2, 1995 at
the Watch House
179 Darling Street**

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Kid Sister - Tennis Parties

More from Barbara Whitley about growing up in Durham House, Edited by Debby Nicholls

The tennis court became a very important factor in the family life. I feel sure it was this in particular which inveigled our mother into buying the house. She must have envisaged something akin to the gracious and leisured days of her own young womanhood, with men and maidens in white, sporting [sic] on gleaming lawns. Also, with four nubile daughters, she felt it part of her duty to provide opportunities for gentlemen to come to the house and, in course of time, marry them. The poor lady was clinging to a creed that was wearing out very fast. But she did, for a time, see her dream realised though it meant a tremendous effort on her part, and for us all.

On Saturday mornings the whole place was in a ferment of work. It had to be cleaned, dusted and polished, and three girls had this job, with hard broom, soft broom, dustpan and brush, tins of floor and furniture polish, and rags for dusters. There were five rooms upstairs and six below, along with a bathroom and washroom - I think we didn't bother with the laundry on Saturdays - and as for the kitchen, that was totally taken over by Nan, with me as helper.

Food had to be cooked, heaps and piles and tinsful. Fruit cakes, big and little, sponges, tarts and biscuits, puddings and pies. Hours I seemed to spend cleaning the currants and sultanas, picking out the tops and bits of stalk. My little paws kept going, creaming sugar and dripping (never butter - much too dear), peeling apples, rolling out pastry and cutting it into dozens of little rounds which had to be folded over, with jam inside. Pounds of Osborne biscuits had to be iced. Sometimes, just only sometimes, there would be a bit of icing left over, very pink and luscious, my one precious perk.

The boys had the tennis court to put in order, and out they would go, first with rakes, then mower and roller, and finally with the marker, a temperamental contraption with a rubber belt that held whitewash and marked erratic lines on the shining grass.

Bobaneenie had the job of sweeping the wide asphalt paths that stretched from the front gate, one in a curve up to the front steps and one straight through to the old stables at the back of the

house. They were only little boys and there was a lot of path and a lot of leaves from the camphor laurels, the oaks and especially the great old Moreton Bay fig trees, which shed squashy little figs as well. Sometimes there were fights between the two boys. Or there might be silence, which was worse, as it could mean dereliction from duty and just going over to Jackie West's place for a minute.

Then, after lunch, Mother had to be dressed, relaxed and ready to be hostess. People would arrive in bunches, according to when the ferry nudged in to the wharf at the bottom of the hill. Brother Pev kept up a fine supply of Law students, young men in long cream flannels with well-sleeked hair. Sisters and girl friends were in long white skirts with high tight belts and tucked blouses, their hair, if they were still at school, looped and tied at the back with a wide bow. (If they had "come out" it would be in a bristling bun stuffed with hairpins: in those days a boy was a child no longer when he "went into long-uns"; a girl when she "put her hair up".) When they weren't on the court they sat on the wide stone-flagged verandah, talking politely to Mother and Father for awhile,



then gaily to one another; watched the game; laughed; flirted; drank home-made lemonade and ate cakes.

Bobaneenie and I hung around and had our energy used up chasing balls, into the long grass among the trees around the court, or the thicket bamboos at one end, or sometimes right over into enemy territory. There was a row of back yards butting onto our side fence where, it was clear, a slice had once been taken off the old property and cut up into strips for shop residences facing 82 Darling Street. The greengrocer had chooks, and chasing a ball swiped into his yard was no mean hazard, as we had to get over our high fence and then through his chook wire

without being spotted by old Angelo who was entirely averse to us, our tennis parties, and kids mucking round his yard upsetting his chooks.

When the tennis party was over we'd know who were the favoured fellows - they'd be invited to stay to tea while the others went off to catch the 6 o'clock ferry.

Those teas! There was cold meat in the thinnest possible slices, arranged delicately in the serving dishes. I wrapped up lettuce leaves into tight little parcels and shred them as fine as could be, then put them in glass bowls with slices of tomato and cucumber tastefully sitting on top. The fruit bowls would be prettied up as well, with decorative leaves chosen from the garden. The table would also be laden with scones, tarts and cakes with the big fruit cake in pride of place in the centre.

After tea the fellow's time came, if he was cunning enough to grab his girl and get, without being snaffled by Father and kept talking politics for hours. We children stalked them for fun, but with Father it was a different matter. When he stalked the garden looking for his dallying daughters the fun was over. It was their turn, with the fellows, to tip-toe from shade to shadow, dodging and doubling from tree to bush, to get back to the house and be all together in innocent parley with Mother in the kitchen, drinking lemonade and eating the last of the cakes, when Father finally found them.

Then it was scatter and rush, Goodbye, Goodnight, thank you for the boscar time. At twenty-five past eleven the last ferry left the wharf, a good minute's run downhill from our place. At twenty past the girls would be permitted, actually allowed, to take their swains to the gate and say goodbye. I suppose Father thought no real sin could take place in those few minutes, and if they missed that ferry it was a case of wait for the dreary all-night tram that went inland and took for ever to get anyone anywhere. Perhaps the swains took it in turn to leave first, belt down the hill and get foot on the gangplank and so hold it for the rest of the runners.

I hope these tennis parties were worth all the effort for Mother's sake at any rate. I'd like to think it was one afternoon in the week when she and Dad could sit together, not working at anything, and both of them relax and have some enjoyment.

Glebe Island

The Rev Richard Johnson, Sydney's first chaplain, set out from England with the First Fleet with courage and optimism of a man embarking on a mission. Eighteen months passed before he was granted 160 hectares west of Sydney Cove. Such a grant to a church was known as a "glebe" and this name was given to the surrounding district. Johnson subsequently swapped this grant for a smaller site in an area which was named "Canterbury". For several years he was obliged to conduct his service under a large tree. Eventually, he paid £67 from his own savings to erect a thatched church of posts, wattle and plaster. An obelisk in Johnson Place, Sydney, marks the site.

A short distance from the north western shore of the Glebe lay a 13 hectare island covered in thick tea tree scrub. It was appropriately named Glebe Island.

About this time the government was pressured to establish an abattoir in the city area. Many of the early slaughterhouses of Sydney occupied the last valley before what is now Railway Square. In those days, animals had to be killed as close to the customers' homes as possible and this dip in the road was where the beasts, driven down from the grazing lands, reached the edge of town. There was also a short stream that ran down this gully into Blackwattle Swamp, now Wentworth Park. The slaughterhouses and tanneries clustered along the Creek, so that the offal and blood could run away into the water to be carried off by the current and the tide. However, it did not always work, as a distillery and a brewery dammed the stream further up. Often, there would be no water in the dry summer months to flush out the slaughterhouses and tanneries, yet

twice each day the tide came in to wash the effluent back up the Swamp.

In 1852 Glebe Island was chosen as the site, and colonial architect, Edmund Blacket, was instructed to draw up plans. The final design included slaughtering houses, stock yards, stables, residences and a jetty. The original intention was to transport stock to the island by punt but this proved impractical and so the island was connected to the mainland at Balmain and linked to Parramatta Road by the newly constructed Abattoir Road, now Lilyfield Road. Work commenced on the construction in 1853 but because of shortage of workers still flocking to the gold fields, it was some time before the works were fully operational. Access across Rozelle Bay by bridge was made in 1856 when the Blackbutts Bridge, made of Tasmanian Blackbutt timber, was opened. It was a fixed bridge.

In 1878, the Sydney Morning Herald published an article entitled "Butchers and Butchers' Meat" which criticised the running of the abattoirs. Conditions at the abattoir were clearly inadequate as the report revealed that the meat inspection system failed resulting, on occasion, in diseased meat reaching the market place. A major problem was the stock transport. Stock were often driven for such long distances that as much as 65 kg per head were lost in the process. Following the release of the report, improvements were made to the abattoir, but the hearing of cattle through city streets continued to cause serious problems.

In 1895, Drummoyne Council decided with Five Dock to "ask the co-operation of the various Councils interested in an endeavour to urge the Government to either abolish the Abattoirs at Glebe Island or provide carriage of Stock to the Abattoirs by rail

or water and thus relieve thousands of the public of a very just grievance". Of course not everyone objected to the stampeding stock. The school children looked forward to the twice weekly Sheep Day, when the noise of the sheep, dogs and horses and the shouts of the drovers providing free entertainment. There was employment at the many meat canning works on Abattoir Road as well as the Alston Soap and Candle Works. The soap manufacture Lever and Kitchens in White Bay began in 1895 and the old pub, then known as Flood's Hotel, on the corner of Abattoir Road and Gordon Street would have thrived.

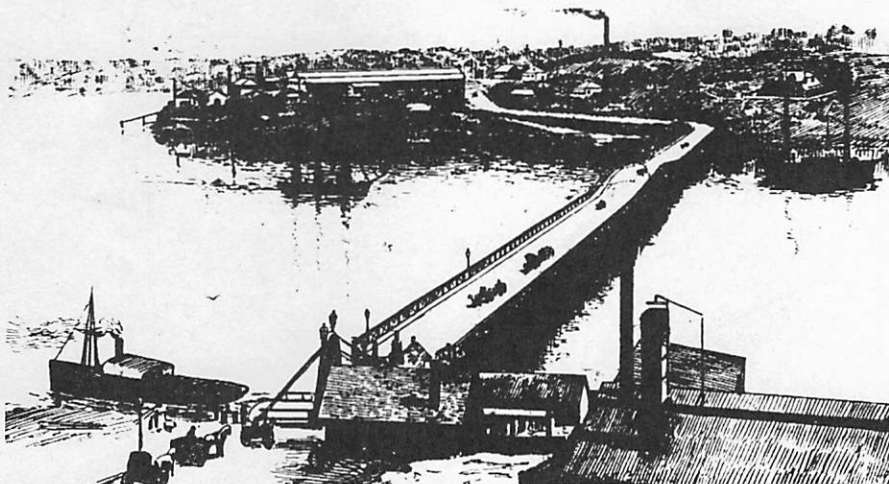
In 1900 the government yielded to public pressure and the Minister of Public Works referred the matter to the Standing Committee on Public Works. In its report presented on 16th June, 1902 the committee recommended that a new abattoir be constructed at Homebush at a cost of £160,000. The complex eventually began in 1910 but it was not until 1918 that the Homebush Abattoir became fully functional, and in the mean time the second Glebe Island Bridge, with an opening section, was opened on the 8th June, 1903. Nothing remains of the original Abattoir buildings.

From 1906 the Rozelle Railway Goods Yards and the first section of White Bay Power Station was built on the perimeter of Glebe Island. During the 1920s Glebe Island was extensively developed as a grain handling terminal with the erection with the holding silos for the bulk grain ships for export sales. During WW11, Glebe Island became the main American base in Sydney for the embarking of troops. On Sommerville Road is a plaque affixed to a block of granite, commemorating the arrival on 28th March, 1942. In the 1960s the Maritime Service Board constructed the Coal Loader on the Island and a container terminal in White Bay.

The new Glebe Island Bridge will be a high level crossing carrying six lanes of traffic and a combined pedestrian/cycle way. The 805 metre long concrete structure has a main span of 345 metres. The bridge will be the longest span cable-stayed bridge in Australia. It is hoped to retain the present bridge for additional access to Balmain.

Source The Islands of Sydney Harbour. Simon Davies.

Kath Hamey



Jessie Street National Women's Library

Some of our readers may have noticed articles in the Sydney press in the past months about the sale of the old Marrickville Town Hall to the Jessie Street National Women's Library for the sum of \$10. This amount might seem as much of a bargain as the sale of the Balmain Estate to John Gilchrist for 5 shillings, until one reads the fine print: the Jessie Street Women's Library has the task of restoring the building according to the conservation plan - at an estimated cost of \$500,000 - within five years!

The old Town Hall in Illawarra Road was built in 1879 and is the oldest civic building standing in the Marrickville local government area. It is also one of

the oldest remaining town hall buildings in New South Wales and represents the development of local government in the Inner West district. When the National Women's Library occupies the building, it will again be a focal point in the area, containing not only a unique collection of Australian women's writing and archival and reference materials about women and their interests, but also research facilities and an area which can be used for exhibitions, displays and seminars.

The Balmain Peninsula has a special connection with the Jessie Street Library as it is now temporarily situated at the Writers' Centre in the former Rozelle Hospital. A team of volunteers is already at work accessioning and cataloguing material which has been donated and arrangements can be

made to use the library for research purposes. Readers interested in knowing more about the library, donating books-or money!-or research can telephone/fax 555 9376 or write PO Box 1149. Volunteers for cataloguing or shelving can ring Verna Morgan on 718-4236.

If you would like to track down the old Marrickville Town Hall, by the way, do NOT ask directions in Marrickville Road. A local resident pointed to the present town hall, saying "Well of course that's the old Town Hall - it says 'Town Hall' over the door doesn't it. Open your street guide and find the corner of Illawarra Road and Council Street if you want to have a look at the exterior of this interesting building - and get an idea of the need for conservation funds!

Debby Nicholls

Dawn Fraser Pool

A successful "Sneak Preview" of the Dawn Fraser Pool took place on Sunday May 7. Friends of the Baths were very pleased with the attendance, interest and support on the day. It was gratifying to see the Baths come alive again. The weather stayed fine and the afternoon provided an opportunity to "re-open" the pool after its recent closure, which had been necessary to allow the enormous engineering task of demolition and replacing of the aging pylons and decking.

Those attending were able to enjoy a sausage sizzle and picnic and a chance to inspect the works underway, including the new piles, the excellent rebuilt deck, and the restored fence and seating on the western and eastern sides. The major installation of the new scumboards lined with backing timber also created a lot of interest.

Peter Simms was on hand with helpful information about the details of work undertaken in the rebuilding process as well as the plans which were on display for the reconstruction of the Northern Heritage Pavilion. Architect Peter Hickey has prepared the contract and costing for this significant structure for which tenders close on 6 June. The cost is in excess of \$200,000 and work could begin as early as July if finance were available.

In December 1994 the Australian Heritage Commission placed the Dawn Fraser Pool on the Interim List of the

Register of the National Estate as one of 132 places on the register in Australia. In keeping with this, the Dawn Fraser Working Party of Leichhardt Council is currently assessing expressions of interest for a commercial venture at the Pool.

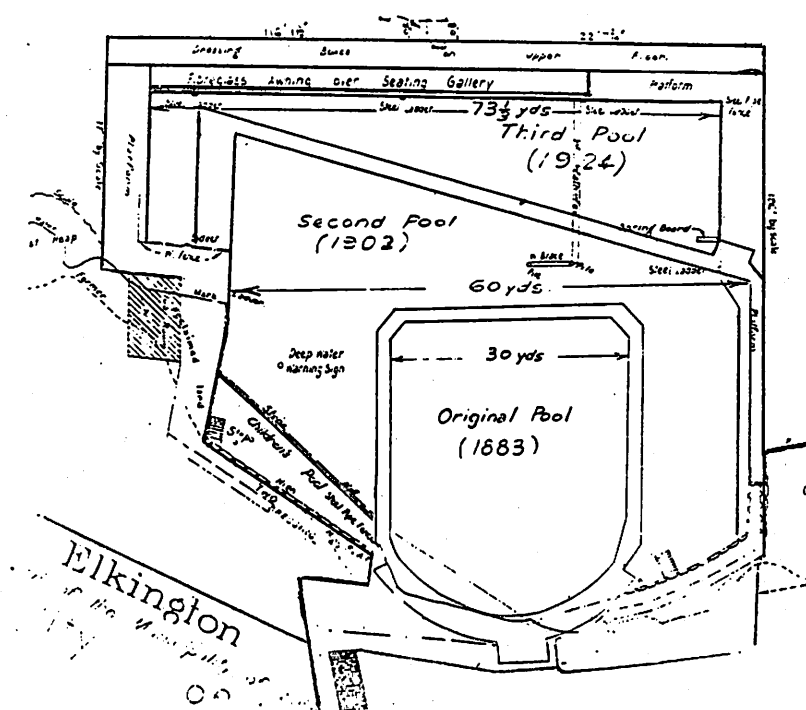
The extensive task of completing the major reconstruction works on the pool is well underway, but the Friends of the Baths need all the support possible to assist Council to complete this valuable sporting and recreational site. It is planned to open the Pool for the 1996 swimming season, but the greater task is to rebuild and restore the important

Heritage Pavilion. With the Olympics coming up, the Dawn Fraser Pool will provide a major attraction.

You can become a Friend of the Baths by subscribing \$20 for membership or by sponsoring a scumboard for \$100. The address is PO Box 81, Balmain 2041. Major sponsors are also welcome! All contributions are tax deductible.

The Friends of the Baths are grateful for the interest and support already expressed by visitors to and residents of the Balmain Community and to the Balmain Association.

Anne McLeod



Leichhardt Historical Journal

The LHJ 1-19 are now available at the Watch House. Cost 1-12 \$10. 13-19 \$15. Full set \$190. Each journal includes Book Reviews, but space here precludes their inclusion in this list.

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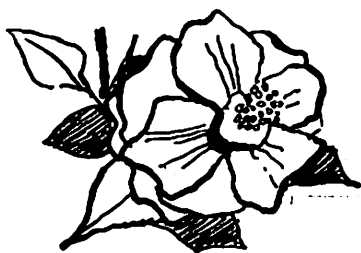
The Excelsior Estate. P Reynolds

The 30th birthday of the Balmain Association Inc will be celebrated on 28 October 1995 at the Watch House. Back to Balmain also falls on that weekend.

In Your Garden

Sassy Beauties. Each season has its stars, but now around Australian gardens sasanqua camellias are stealing the limelight. The sasanquas are the first of the camellias tribe to make even an average garden full of flowers from now until early spring. As well as being the first to flower, they are also the most easy going camellias. They are easy to grow and very hardy. They can be grown as small shrubs or as small trees (5 - 7 m). Most have a long lasting show of flowers giving at least six to eight weeks of colour. With a few delightful varieties the show will last right through autumn.

Although not native to Australia (they actually originated in Japan) the nectar filled flowers draw all sorts of native birds. The main bonus is they rarely suffer any pest or disease



CAMELLIA SASANQUAS

problems and consequently they certainly don't require any regular spray program.

Sasanqua camellias are at their best in an open sunny spot with sun for about half the day. They will not do well in deep shade. If you are planting now dig in lots of peat moss or rotted manure or compost before planting. Camellias flower best with ample water through the summer.

Elizabeth Farm at Parramatta will have their usual yearly show for camellias which came to Australia originally with the MacArthurs, on 29 & 30 July 10am - 4.30pm. I try to attend every year.

In July remember you should prune roses. Remove all the dead and diseased wood completely then shorten healthy branches to promote growth. Do not prune weeping roses now. They are best pruned after their spring flush of flowers.

Bonnie Davidson

Heritage Week Success

Heritage Week 1995 was a great success considering the competition from other attractions. Guided walks of Balmain and Rozelle on both weekends attracted a total of 125 persons and there were many visitors to the Watch House Exhibition. Thanks to all who assisted, especially John Williams who researched and guided the Rozelle walk. A leaflet describing this walk should be published later in the year.

Next year will be the two hundredth anniversary of the thirty acre grant which came to be called Birchgrove and should prompt a memorial pictorial booklet.

Three members of the History Committee were invited to the headquarters of the Blue Mountains Historical Society on Easter Monday at historic Tarella, 99 Blaxland Road, Wentworth Falls. History Archivist, Alan Robinson, had found a scrap book containing clippings of events in Balmain in the 1860s such as the Balmain Regatta, Balmain Musical Union, Balmain Amateur Dramatic Association and the Balmain Volunteer Rifles. The book was in excellent condition but had no nameplate. However, Francis Spence

was a recurring name. He worked as an accountant at the Treasury, was a Colour Sergeant in the Volunteer Rifles, secretary Balmain Lodge, Amateur Dramatic Association and Musical Union and lived in Booth Street where the hospital car park is today.

Another prominent name was that of John James Slade (Slade Street) who was a crack shot in the Volunteers and travelled with Spence to Melbourne for an Intercolonial Rifle Match.

Kath Hamey

What's On

Watch House Exhibitions

- **Ink on Paper - Jun 3-4**
Nado Milat
- **Aqua Media - Jun 17-18**
Eight Watercolourists
- **Barbara Halnan - Jun 24-Jul 2**
Painting & sculpture
- **Jan Marsh - Aug 5-6**
- **Kate Finnerty - Sep 9-17**
- **Kate Finnerty - Sep 9-17**

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Post Office Centenary

The Rozelle Post Office will celebrate 100 years of postal deliveries with a photographic exhibition June 1 - 14. The present building was opened in August 1958.

Balmain West in 1877 petitioned for their own post office because the Queen's Place office could no longer provide an efficient service. Three years later Joseph Gosling, grocer at the corner of Victoria Road and Withecombe Street, became Balmain West postmaster for £10 annually. He was followed in 1889 by J M McNeely at Darling Street.

A new post office was built in 1895 and had living quarters for the postmaster. It was demolished when Victoria Road was widened in 1959 and Rozelle lost its landmark. Opinions vary on the derivation of the name, Rozelle but the bay had been called Rozella Bay and it seems likely that this was the source.

Greg Vicas hopes that a replica of the tower will be a feature of the Victoria Road overpass he is promoting.

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.