



the balmain
association
incorporated
news sheet

The Peninsula OBSERVER

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Eternity

Last October an item appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald advertising the opening of a new film in the city called Eternity. The story was about Arthur Stace, who for the most part of 40 years, wrote this singular message on city and suburban pavements. I remembered seeing the chalk copperplate signatures during my city working days in the 1950s. The film and newspaper reported, that Stace was born in Balmain. The newspaper item was displayed at the Watch House requesting visitors if they knew of the Stace Family. No one could help.

Arthur Malcom Stace, was born on 9th February, 1885 at 16 Morehead Street, Redfern, fifth child of William Wood Stace, a labourer from Mauritius, and Laura nee Lewis, born in Richmond, NSW. "I mostly lived under the house rather than in one, sleeping in bags and for breakfast my brothers and sisters collected the bread and milk from some-body else's door". Stace learned to live by his wits, stealing cakes and lollies from shop counters and bread from baker's carts.

His parents were drinkers of methylated spirits and died at an early age. His two sisters, who were prostitutes and his two brothers all died derelict drunkards.

Stace was hardly schooled at all by 12 years and was made a State ward. His parents now living at 5 Moore Lane, Rozelle. By 14 years he started work in a south coast coal mine and drank his first pay. Stace moved to Surry Hills in his twenties, where he had various jobs. One as a tout for a local pub, carrying drink from the pub to houses of ill-fame, one of which was run by his sister.

A little man, just clearing five feet three inches, and probably that was the reason why he served as a stretcher bearer when he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force in 1916, serving with the 19th Battalion in France and at the AIF headquarters in

England. On his discharge he soon fell into old ways, drunk, broke, and out of work.

So it was that by 1930, Stace was a broken down derelict, drinking metho, methylated spirits, plonk, bad wine with metho, to plink which was bad plonk with the addition of "Nugget" boot polish. In August of that year he attended a service at St Barnabas' Anglican Church, Broadway, as he had heard that a cup of tea and a rock cake was served at the conclusion of the



Arthur Stace at work

meeting. Stace was inspired by the speaker, Archdeacon R B S Hammond, to give up the grog.

A few months later he attended a fire and brimstone address by the Rev John Ridley at the Burton Street Baptist Church in Darlinghurst. "I wish I could shout the word eternity through the streets of Sydney. Eternity! Where will you spend eternity?" Stace came out of the meeting, and finding a piece of chalk in his pocket, he bent down and wrote Eternity. In his own words, "The funny thing is that before I wrote it (Eternity), I could hardly write my own name. I couldn't have spelt the word for a hundred quid but it came out smoothly and in a beautiful copperplate script. I couldn't understand it and I still can't".

Stace received an appointment to the R B S Hammond, Buckland Street Hostel, now demolished, where he issued canteen supplies daily to 300 down-and-out men. He led open-air meetings on the corner of George and Bathurst Streets for 24 years and paid regular visits to inmates of Callan Park.

In January 1942 he married Ellen Ester (Pearl) Dawson, at St Barnabas' Anglican Church, Broadway, and described himself as a 'missioner'. His cryptic precept in yellow, waterproof chalk, was inscribed on pavements from Martin Place to Parramatta. It could cost him "six bob a day in chalk" when he was "running hot". Pearl died in 1961 and Stace moved from Pyrmont into the Hammondville homes. By the time of his death on 30th July, 1967, he had written his one word sermon 500,000 times. Stace's graffiti has long been washed away, apart from one surviving example. His body was bequeathed to Sydney University medical school. A stainless steel signature can be found in the pebble paving near the waterfall in Sydney Square.

In July 1995, the Eternity symbol has been used as a poster by 250 churches, of all denominations, around New South Wales.

Ref: The Crooked Made Straight, St Barnabas' Church. SMH 26/10/94. Aust Dictionary of Biographers.

Kath Hamey

Back To Balmain Day

The annual Back to Balmain Day
this year is on Sunday 29 October.

Association Anniversary

The same weekend we shall be
celebrating the Association's 30th
Anniversary with a Cocktail Party
at the Watch House from 6 - 8pm
on Saturday 28 October. All of our
members and supporters are
invited.

Balmain During the War

With the 50 years celebration of the end to the World War II in the Pacific, Balmain can proudly recall how important the ship building industry was to the war effort, as many corvettes were built by Poole & Steel, Mort's Dock and Cockatoo Island dockyards.

One of the corvettes built at Poole & Steel, Stephen Street, *Kapunda*, was launched on 23 June 1942 by Mrs Mary Quirk. The South Australian town that gave its name to the ship, was settled by pastoralists, Bogot and Dutton, in 1839 but really owes its development to the discovery of copper in 1842 and is said to be Australia's oldest mining town. HMAS *Kapunda* took the Japanese surrender at Kuching, Borneo on 11 September 1945. There were fifteen surrenders in all, ranging from the deck of USS *Missouri*, on 2 September to Ambon, on 22 September and including Government House, Hong Kong. *Kapunda* assisted in the evacuation of Allied POW's from Kuching. The ship returned to Sydney 17 November 1945, was paid off into Reserve 14 January 1946, listed for disposal fourteen years later and finally left Port Jackson 21 May, 1962 for breaking up.

A battalion was formed for the second AIF, mainly of 18 year old boys from the Balmain area. The colour patch of the 5th division of this battalion was deep purple and gold and a rectangle shape in its side. This unit was the first Australian troops to meet up with the American Forces in New Guinea and served with distinction in that campaign. The 30th battalion which fought in Papua, New Guinea and the Pacific, was largely made up of recruits from Balmain and Rozelle. Somerville Road, Glebe Island has a memorial, it reads, "Commemorating the First Landing of the US Armed Forces at the Port of Sydney on 28 March, 1942". The troops embarked from this area also for their war duties. During the war, the only place on the peninsula to have a Sunday liquor licence was the 12ft Sailing Club, River Street, and was a popular haunt for the US sailors as was the "College Hall", 13 Evans Street, where some lively dances were held. Another busy place was 17 Jane Street, where Mrs Muriel Taylor, was the registrar of Birth, Death and Marriage. From 1941 Mrs Taylor conducted many



marriages in her front room office to servicemen before embarkation. The small room was filled with bowls of flowers, framed family photographs, mementoes, a piano, and a modern stereogram on which she played her recording of the "Wedding March". Local housewives would earn a welcome 2s6d as witness to the wedding.

31 May, 1942.

Bonnie Davidson remembers: The night WWII really hit Sydney was very scary. All my family were in bed and suddenly all the noise woke us up, air raid sirens going off and searchlights all over the sky. Dad and Mum said we should all get under the beds. I was 10 years old and we were living at 99 Mort Street and Dad said the air raid shelter near Thames Street Wharf would be full. Other shelters were behind a brick fence on the corner of Cameron and Mort Streets on Mort's Dock land, Loyalty Square and the Balmain Police Station. There were other shelters throughout the peninsula. We later found out that it was not an air raid but a midget Japanese submarines had followed a Manly ferry through the boom net placed across the harbour. The submarines were trying to sink American ships in Sydney Harbour but instead hit the HMAS *Kuttabul* killing 19 men. My Uncle Fred was assigned to the *Kuttabul* and as he lived in Sydney, had been given shore leave that night. Soon after my Nana Berdg came to visit us from her home at Hillview near Liverpool. She wanted to persuade my parents to allow me to leave Sydney and live with her because of possible future air raids. My parents could not leave their work. So for 10 long months I cried and complained every week-end when my mother came to visit, until eventually Mum relented and I returned from the country (to me) back to Balmain. I have never liked the country

areas since and 54 years on I'm still in Balmain. Soon after we moved to 91 Mort Street, the old former Star Hotel, where there was an air raid siren on the roof. This was tested every Wednesday and Saturday at lunch time. One night a Japanese reconnaissance plane flew over Sydney and Mum was attending a city theatre, but hurried home to find me fast asleep although the siren had been blasting away. "Boy! How I wish I could sleep like that now".

Corvettes that were built in Balmain dockyards: **Pool & Steel.** *Katoomba* launched 16/4/41 by Mrs H Lloyd; *Geraldton*, 16/6/41 by Mrs W McKell; *Kapunda*, 23/6/42 by Mrs M Quirk; *Wallaroo*, 18/2/42 by Mrs A Pool; *Cootamundra*, 3/12/42 by Lady Davidson; *Cowra*, 27/5/43 by Mrs P Spender; *June*, 16/11/43 by Mrs J Rosevear. **Mort's Dock.** *Lismore*, 10/8/40 by Mrs G Mourhead-Gould; *Burnie*, 25/10/40 by Lady King; *Lithgow*, 21/12/40 by Mrs W Bennett; *Mildura*, 15/3/41 by Mrs J Durnford; *Deloraine*, 26/7/41 by Dame Mary Hughes; *Warnambool*, 8/5/41 by Mrs E Simpson; *Colac*, 30/8/41 by Miss M Heady; *Dubbo*, 7/3/42 by Mrs E Serisier; *Armidale*, 23/1/42 by Rev A Rix; *Inverell*, 2/5/42 by Mrs T Punch; *Latrobe*, 19/6/42 by Rev A Rix; *Wagga*, 25/7/42 n/a. **Cockatoo Island.** *Bathurst*, 1/8/40 by Mrs A Doyle; *Goulburn*, 16/11/40 by Mrs J Grace; *Bendigo*, 1/3/41 by Dame Mary Hughes; *Wollongong*, 5/7/41 by Mrs J Beasley; *Cessnock*, 17/10/41 by Lady Gorgon; *Glenelg*, 25/9/42 by Mrs H Evatt.

A plaque at Mort Bay Park, commemorates the Corvettes built at Mort's Dock.

The Rev Arthur George Rix was the only man to launch ships at the dock yards. Rev Rix was Parish Priest of St John's Church, Balmain from 1928-1953 and as honorary naval chaplain, he was present for the launching of 61 ships at the Cockatoo Island Dock Yards.

The Leichhardt Council has commemorated the cessation of hostilities, 1945, with church services and wreath laying ceremonies on 7 May at St Andrew's Church, and Loyalty Square, Balmain. 23 July at All Souls Church and Pioneer park, Leichhardt. 6th August, St John's Church and War Memorial, Glebe.

Kath Hamey

Working at Mort's Dock

Clem Kirkby, of Normanhurst, visited the Watch House for some research on wharves on the peninsula and has kindly given us an account of his memories of his apprenticeship days at Mort's Dock.

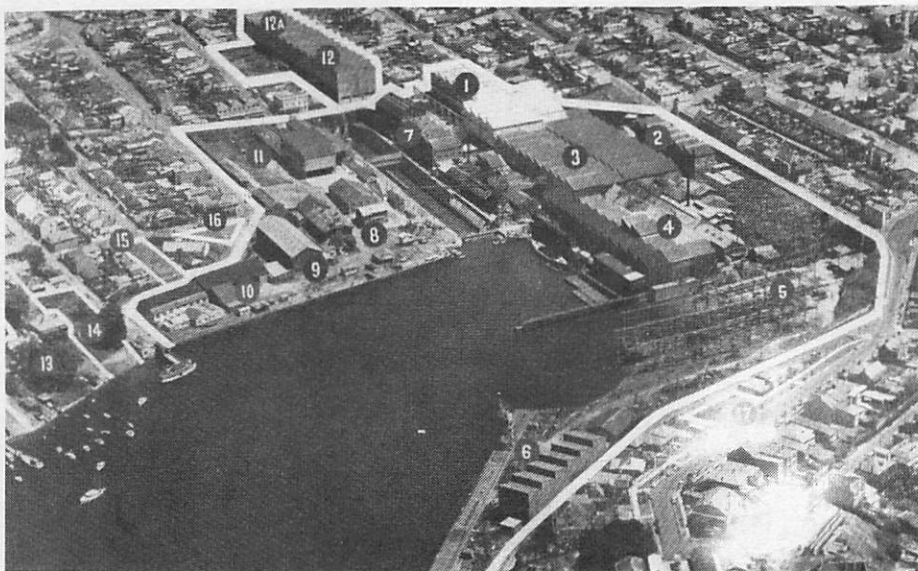
I was an Indentured Apprentice in Fitting and Turning to Mort's Dock and Eng Co Ltd of Balmain. Interviewed by Manager Mr Crawford, I commenced work on 4 February, 1937 in the Machine Shop under Foreman Tom Middleton, with his brother Bill, Assistant Foreman. Each day, the first job for a new apprentice was to paste into a book, copies of the work orders to be carried out in the Machine Shop. Then it was down to the screwing machine putting screw threads on bolts or round bar, a pretty simple job. Tradesmen and apprentices had to supply and make their own hand tools. I recall making a $\frac{3}{4}$ inch x $\frac{5}{8}$ inch double ended spanner. In winter time each man or sometimes a group of men had a brazier made from a drum in which coke was burned to give warmth. It was very cold at times and tools often had to be warmed up before use to overcome brittleness and breakage.

In the Machine Shop, there were no washing facilities other than one cold

greasy overalls each week for a reasonable fee.

The Machine Shop building was of old timber and corrugated iron, constructed in the latter half of the last century. Practically all machines except large drilling and boring machines were driven by flat belts from overhead shafts. Crude maintenance platforms were above and from one over the screwing machine it was the regular habit of older apprentices to throw down dirty wash water and drench the new apprentices. One couldn't be watching all of the time whilst working and would get a good soaking. Other "helpful" apprentices would then take the soaked one around to the back of a boiler in the Blacksmith's Shop to dry out, when another lurker would throw another bucketful of dirty water.

Another trick for new apprentices, which I endured, was to be given a Works Order to take to the store. It was folded to hide the order for a "Long Weight and Square Post Holes"! I took the order to the Store, where I was directed to the Boiler Shop, from there to the Joiner's Shop where a kind-hearted foreman showed me the wording and I realised I had been on a wild goose chase. I remember the sly grins of the older apprentices when I returned to the Machine Shop.



1 & 2 Foundries 3 Machine/Fitting Shop 4 Boiler Shop

water tap over a barrel. It was the duty of apprentices each afternoon to obtain a wash dish of warm water for the tradesman with whom he was working. Toilet facilities were minimal and were located between the Boiler and Blacksmith shops. One crude wooden locker was provided for each tradesman and apprentice. A laundry washed our

The rates of pay were 15 shillings per week for the first year and I believe, 21/-, 35/-, 60/- and 80/- for the ensuing years (\$1.50, \$2.10, \$3.50, \$6, \$8).

There was no special training arrangements for apprentices, we just picked up what information we could or whatever helpful tradesmen passed on. Each day the time worked on each job

was recorded on a block of wood about 6" x 4" x $\frac{3}{4}$ " thick with a whitewashed face. Job number was noted with time spent on it totalling $8\frac{3}{4}$ hours each day except Wednesday, 9 hours, making a 44 hour week. Lunch was noon to 12.45pm except Wednesday which was noon to 12.30pm. When living at Cremorne, I travelled to the Dock on the 6.35am ferry to Circular Quay, walked to Erskine Street, City, then by ferry to Thames Street near the Dock for a 7.45am start. Finish time was 5.15 pm and when attending Sydney Technical College for the Mechanical Diploma, I'd hurry to Gladstone Park, Darling Street, to catch the 5.20 pm tram to College and have a hurried tea at the canteen before lectures at 6pm to 9pm. A tram to Circular Quay and the 9.20 ferry got me home at 9.45pm. My family moved to Drummoyne in 1940 and I bought a pushbike to ride to and from work and to the Technical College.

The award did not allow holidays for tradesman or apprentices. In my ignorance, I applied for my annual holiday in 1938. The Industrial Officer, Mr Cox, came over to me spluttering, "What's this about holidays. You don't get holidays. Any time you take off you make up before you end your apprenticeship". As a result, I didn't complete my 5 year apprenticeship until 13th March, 1942, five weeks late.

During World War II, quite a number of Corvettes, Local Defence Vessels/ Minesweepers were built at the Dock for the Australian and Indian Navies. Armed Merchant Cruisers *Arawa* and *Westralia* were converted by the Dock. From 12/2/1937 to 11/5/1943, I kept a pretty close record of ship movements to and from the Dock and neighbouring docks in Mort Bay. It was an innocent and personal interest document, which of course could have raised suspicions during the war as it also noted damage to vessels in dock.

I joined the AIF in May 1943 and after Army Service I was welcomed back to the Dock in November 1946 and worked in the Drawing Office. In May, 1948 I took a position in the Design Office at the Maritime Services Board, Circular Quay.

On 13 September 1958 Mort's Dock closed down after more than 100 years of operation. This was a shock to many but was no doubt due in some measure to the firm not moving with the times.

Kath Hamey

In Your Garden

Growing Roses

The modern rose is a plant as much at home among abelias and grevilleas in full sun as it is in the huge old rosebeds of yesteryear. Few gardeners have space today to devote to large traditional rose plantings so the landscape use of the rosebush is changing.

A few tips for planting roses: (1) Select the sunniest position in your garden as at least five hours of sunlight each day is needed. (2) Avoid root competition with adjacent trees and shrubs. (3) Consider planting standard roses in a central position surrounded by bush and dwarf roses. (4) Prune damaged roots before planting. (5)



Don't fertilise newly planted roses. (6) Plant roses with the graft union just above ground level.

Each plant requires roughly a square metre. The roots are not adventurous but they are heavy feeders. Avoid shade which leads to diseases such as black spot, powdery mildew and grey mould on the petals and leaves. Treat powdery mildew with Banlate and black spot with Triforine. Established roses need a matchbox full of a complete rose food every six weeks from November until March.

Here are a few fungal disease-resistant roses. Bella Rosa, Champagner, Fiesta, Goldmarie, Iceberg, Limelight, Mister Lincoln, Patricia, Red Cedar, Sunburnt Country, Tony Jacklin and Traumerei. My favourite is a lovely fragrant yellow rose called Diamond Jubilee.

Bonnie Davidson



Australia's Oldest Church

I recently visited Ebenezer for my research for headstones saved from the old Balmain Cemetery (now Pioneer Park, Leichhardt). This is a project of the History Committee in conjunction with our 30th Anniversary. It was well worth the trip. The church (1809) and school-house (1817) have been fully restored and are the oldest in Australia.

Ebenezer is just outside Windsor off the Sackville Road and only takes an hour by car from Sydney. The buildings are open from 10am to 3.30pm every day. Home made jams, Devonshire tea and pioneer books are on sale. The Church Cemetery is also fascinating with the names of early pioneer families.

I can recommend the excursion.

Bonnie Davidson

What's On

Watch House Exhibitions

- Jan Marsh - Aug 5-6
- Kate Finnerty - Sep 9-17
Abstract acrylics
- Samantha Collyer, Sep 23-Oct 2
Painting, drawing & sculpture
- Julie Chamberlin, Oct 21-22
Photos & mixed media

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Balmain Sailing Club

The first two races were a great success. A 35 knot wind tested 13 boats and crew for the first event and 18 boats contested the second. Many more members were in the club house attending to the barbecue and the fridge. There will be racing every second week until summer. A modest fee of \$10 makes the competition self-funding enabling the financing of the tender service.

Lasers, Sabots, Mirrors and Tasars will be the preferred dinghie classes to be raced. Other boats will form an open class. Contact 810 2086.

Australia Remembers 1939-1945

To celebrate the cessation of World War II an Australian Remembers Evening will be held at 7.30pm on Tuesday 15 August 1995 in the function hall of St Andrews Church.

Come along and reminisce with music of the 1940s. Please bring a food plate. Soft drinks, tea and coffee provided. If transport is required contact 818 4954.

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.