

the balmain
association
incorporated
news sheet

The Peninsula OBSERVER

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Christmas in Durham House

[With Christmas coming, we bring you our final excerpt from Barbara Whitley's reminiscences with Seasons Greetings to all.]

This reminds me of Christmas time, and the making of puddings (though they'd be made weeks and weeks before.) Another all-in to the kitchen, but Mother at the center this time. What a huge pudding basin it was! In would go the brown sugar and dripping, pounds I'm sure, and there'd be more than one of us taking turns at the creaming of them - we didn't have any electric gadgets, hands were the thing. But we liked this better than the long business of picking the stalks and bits out of the dried fruit, far far more than I used to

with silver polish, washed in warm soapy water and dried, ready - Oh! - ready for the climax! Every person in the house, even studying sisters out of the eyries, had to come down to the kitchen, throw in a coin, have a stir with the big wooden spoon, and make a wish. Even Dad. (There used to be little magic tokens too. If you got the ring in

for Christmas Day, one for New Year's, one to keep for Easter, and one/two/three to give away.

I mind me, too, of Christmas cakes - not nearly as exciting as the puddings. I mostly remember having the carry them round to the baker's in Darling Street, mixed and in tines, to be put in the "dying oven" after the days' bread had been taken out. I used to wish I wouldn't be seen by anyone I knew on the way. I didn't mind so much the collecting of them after they were cooked - the smell was absolutely scrumptious!

Christmas itself - how did our mother do it! We hung a sock (boy's, long, woollen and stretchy) by a piece of string to the bottom of our beds, each child, one sock (a pillow case? unheard of!) In the morning, mysterious bulges, which would turn into - an orange in the toe, peanuts in the foot, presents and lollies in the leg, and always, somehow, she managed heart's desire poking out the top; for me, a book, perhaps even two. I wonder how many socks she filled? In my memory time, the number must surely have been well on the decrease. She used to go Christmas shopping in Anthony Hordern's, her best-loved shop; and it's beyond me to imagine what her shopping list must have been like.

[As indicated in our last issue, Barbara has recently published her memories in "Kid Sister" which is now available from Bray's Books and at the Watch House. If you wish to order it direct from Barbara, you can write to 47 Farnsworth Street, Castlemaine 3450 but please add \$2 to the price of \$17.95 to cover postage.]

Edited by Debby Nicholls



your pudding on Christmas Day - anyone can imagine what that meant. The button - you'd be a bachelor. The thimble - an old maid.)

Mother did the final part, portioning the mixture into pudding cloths, tying them up, and popping them into the great pot of boiling water at the back of the stove, where they'd cook for hours. (And what about scraping the basin, what about that! I can see it now, brownish-yellow on the outside, white inside, with the remnants of the luscious-smelling mixture sticking to it; Mum would mark three equal divisions, and away we'd go at it. I can't remember how many puddings were hung, afterwards, on hooks in the pantry - one



deal with on Saturday mornings. A lovely job was cutting up the candied peel. This came out of the grocer's bag in halves of oranges with the most unbelievably delicious lumps of crystallised sugar in them - and - and - and - they were for the eating! But he or she doing the cutting up, of course would go fair shares. There was nutmeg, not powder in a bottle but round nuts that had to be grated, and watch out for your fingers. A small heap of thrippeny and sixpenny pieces had to be cleaned and shined



The Old Balmain Cemetery

This year the History Sub-Committee of the Balmain made the Old Balmain Cemetery its focus of attention, with the aim of tracking down all the headstones which had been moved from the Old Balmain Cemetery before it became Pioneer Memorial Park in Leichhardt.

The first burial took place at that cemetery on 26 January 1868 with a further 10,608 interments before the cemetery closed. The last person to be buried was George Holley, aged 79 years, on 7 May 1912. A Balmain resident, he had married Agnes Howard, the daughter of William Howard, who was Balmain's first boat builder.



John Leys headstone at Camperdown

The records of the cemetery, which show place of residence, indicate that many of those interred were not from Balmain, some living as far afield as Rose Bay, Lynden, Muswellbrook and even one from Melbourne.

When the cemetery was demolished in the early 1940's a few family headstones were saved by Percy W. Gledhill who for many years was

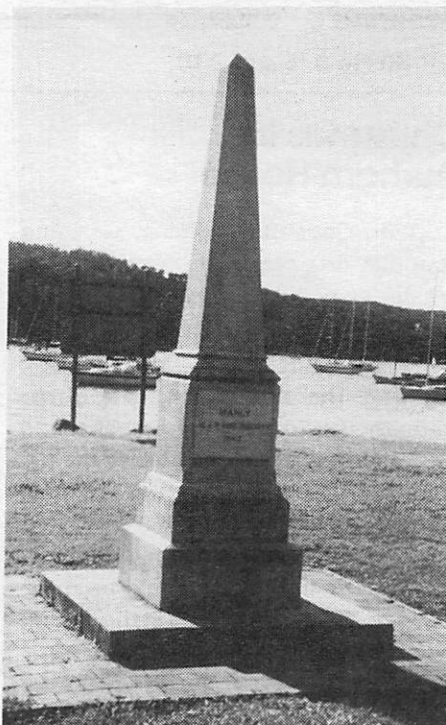
President of the Manly- Warringah and Pittwater Historical Society. Fourteen of the headstones - those belonging to Charles Davis, William Graham, Henry Morgan, Henry Palgrove, Bridget Sloan, Richard Fowler, Jane Thompson, Edward Martin, David Hall, John Leys, Bessie Brelliat, Samuel Turton, the Shoobert family and Edmund Blacket and his wife Sarah - were removed to Camperdown Cemetery. The remains of Edmund Blacket and his wife were removed and cremated and the ashes placed at St Andrews Cathedral, Sydney. The Shoobert obelisk was re-erected at Camperdown Cemetery on 22 October 1943 in memory of the Aborigines buried there.

Other headstones became historical markers. Thomas Rowntree's was placed in Macquarie Terrace, Balmain. Robert Towns' memorial was removed to Townsville which is named after him. Mr Gledhill gained the permission of the Leichhardt Municipal Council to erect the Harwood family monument at the Spit, Middle Harbour, on 19 May 1942, to commemorate Peter Ellery's hand punt which started there in 1850. An obelisk belonging to the Shaw family was officially unveiled by Mr Gledhill on 22 May 1943 at McCarrs Creek, Pittwater to commemorate the first survey of the creek by Captain John Hunter in 1789. It is now situated in Church Point.

Two obelisks were sent to the Ebenezer Presbyterian Churchyard: those of Rev Robert Blain and of Rev George Macfie, who for many years was a minister there. The obelisks were re-dedicated at the 140th Anniversary Celebrations of Ebenezer Church on 26 January 1942.

St Barnabas Church Ground, Broadway, also has monuments to two former rectors - Rev Joseph Bainer and Rev Canon Thomas Smith. Another clergyman's obelisk is now at St

Stephen's Church, Penrith. The Rev Elijah Smith was rector of that parish from 1853-1868. Mr Gledhill again participated in the unveiling when the rector's monument was re-erected on 14 December 1941.



Obelisk at Church Point

The History Sub-Committee has photographed all except three of the headstones, the existence of some of which was previously not generally known. The Brelliat, Davis and Martin monuments were, sadly, lost to vandals at Camperdown Cemetery. Further details will appear in a subsequent article, but in the meantime the Sub-Committee wishes to share a piece of information with you. Undertaking was one of the professions which occasionally passed to women on the death of their spouses. In the 1860s a Mrs Jane Thomas and a Mrs Kirby each took over the business on the demise of her husband.

Bonnie Davidson

Anniversary Party

The Watch House needed rubber walls to accommodate all who attended the 30th Anniversary Cocktail Party on 28 October because a downpour prevented the use of the garden. Many old friendships were rekindled. Eight past presidents as well as other officials made impromptu speeches. There were cheers and delightful anecdotes and reminisces of

previous campaigns and good wishes from absent friends. Thank you Debby Nicholls and Diana Garder for organising such a successful evening.

To commemorate the occasion two wines with 30th Anniversary labels are available. These are blends from McWilliams Riverina and Hunter vineyards - a Semillon Chardonnay and a Shiraz Cabernet Sauvignon and can be purchased for \$12 per bottle from Jeremy Arnott, Tel 818 1902.

the balmain association



30th
ANNIVERSARY

SEMILLON CHARDONNAY

Balmain Association Inc. 179 Darling Street, Balmain NSW
750ml Product of Australia 12.0% Alc/Vol Preservative (220) added

Sizar Elliott of the Balmain Stores.

In March, 1843, Sizar Elliott bought a stone cottage (11 Johnston Street, Balmain East) where he began a ships' grocery and chandlery. The cottage became the Balmain Stores, and when he found himself in financial difficulties in 1848, he was still able to settle the Balmain Stores on his wife, Sarah.

The Sydney Morning Herald, 20th June, 1848 carried his advertisement: "Office to Let" - A superior office to let in the house at present occupied by the subscriber. Rent, moderate. S Elliott, Charlotte Place.

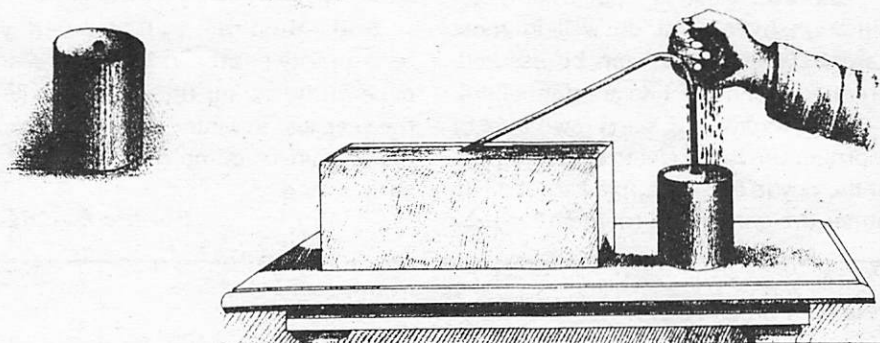
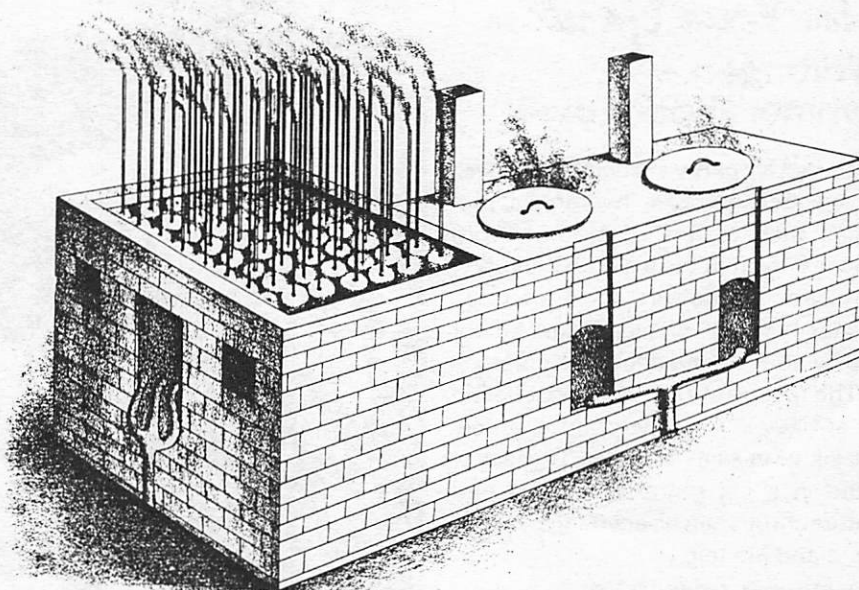
He survived his financial problems, pursued his career in Melbourne, and became the "oldest J P in Victoria" (aged 83 years in 1897). (From the Leichhardt Historical Journal No 14, page 26 by Peter Reynolds).

Sizar Elliott came to Sydney in 1837, aged twenty three and newly married. He set up a business supplying ships' stores, mainly groceries and wine, and he created the Balmain Stores in Johnston Street in 1843.

By the late 1830s, Australia's exports depended on the sheep farmers who suffered severe losses from drought from 1838 to 1840. Then followed the financial depression of the early 1840s. Farmers were ruined, the price of sheep, counted in the millions, dropped so low that sheep were slaughtered for the "boiling down" works, their fat being used for tallow. This invention raised the price of sheep from one to five shillings.

Sizarr (he was named after his grandmother) was concerned about the waste of lean meat in the boiling down process. He knew that meat had been preserved in tins in Britain, but did not understand the process. Undaunted, he set to work: "A few tins of meat were first cooked by the kitchen fire, but without success. A further quantity were then boiled in strong brine, and these gave some indication of keeping but they decayed in time...an old copy of Ure's Chemical Dictionary convinced me that a greater degree of heat was wanted. Chloride of Calcium was then unknown, at least to me, and while looking for some liquid with which to get an increase of temperature, I thought of oil" (This was whale oil).

On one occasion after sealing his tins and cooking them, he failed to



notice the temperature of the oil and the tins exploded causing considerable damage.

The diagram shows straw-shaped quills and escaping steam. After heating, the tins were topped up with gravy and the tins were sealed by soldering.

Sizar resorted to charcoal firing and set the temperature at what he thought would be average heat of a ship's hold at the equator. He discarded any tins that failed his tests, and by 1847 he received a first-class medal in the annual show for his sample of preserved meat. "The article was good but would have borne a taste more seasoning" (Sydney Morning Herald, 24th February, 1847). He opened his last tin twenty years later and it remained in excellent condition and retained its full weight. Thomas Mort wrote him in 1873; "I can testify to your great energy in pushing new industries along, more particularly those connected with the preservation of food".

Sizar Elliott left Sydney in 1851 and spent the next fifty years in Melbourne

where he became well-known. In Sydney he promoted colonial wine, exported lamb skins to China and canned meat for ships. He imported Kauri gum from New Zealand.

Sizar was at his most creative while living in Balmain. He was a survivor of family disaster as his father died when he was four. His mother took her three children from England to Ireland, but the ship was wrecked and his baby sister drowned. The family then travelled to Canada where his brother and uncle were also drowned in shipwrecks. He himself survived a shipping disaster on his return from Canada to England.

However, from the time he arrived in Hobart, aged 21, married, aged 23, and migrated to Sydney he was an asset to the colonies of New South Wales and Victoria.

His published pamphlets and some letters kept by his uncle's wife give an insight into the character of an energetic and optimistic "Colonial".

Frances Heathfield

In Your Garden

Hydrangea — Summer Shade Lover

Perfect for partly shaded parts of well watered gardens, hydrangea produces their posies of blooms from around November to well into February. You can cut flowers for Christmas arrangements or for even longer indoor display you can grow them in pots.

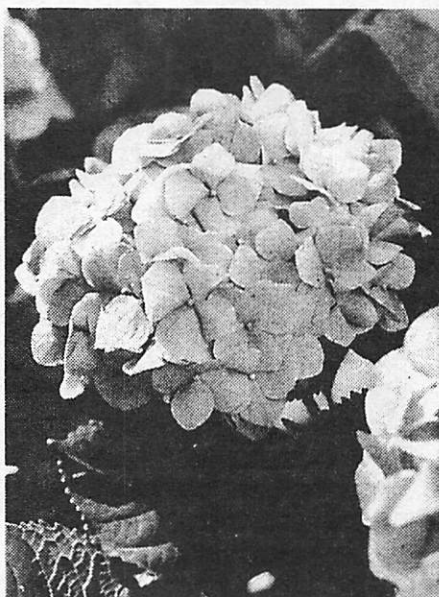
The most common and most beautiful species is the macrophylla, sometimes known as a hortensia. These now come in a big range of colours and mature shrubs can be anything between 50cm and 2m tall.

Greenthumb groundrules.

Climate. Best is cool and moist although hydrangea do well in most gardens where water can be assured. Frequent hot dry winds are not helpful.

Site. Hydrangea like a few hours of morning sun but prefer to spend the rest of the day in bright dappled shade. The hotter the garden the more shade they

will accept. The eastern or southern aspect is good.



Soil. Must be well drained yet reasonably water retentive. Water generously during the warmer half of the year, less in winter. Feed with annual application of complete plant food in early spring.

Bonnie Davidson

New Verandah

The latest project at the Watch House has been the replacement of the verandah floor. The floor, as it stood, was a patch job, probably done in the 1960s. The narrow tongue and groove deck, though of jarra, was not original.

We were hoping to reuse some of the bearers and joists but these were a mix of old and not so old timber that could not be satisfactorily reworked with any degree of integrity for the new floor boards. An interesting find was a joist cut from an original verandah post. Some existing posts, made of oregon and installed in the 1960s, required removal to the workshop and new bottoms scarfed in. A hinge that had failed causing the gate to carve an arc in the old floor was repaired by a Rozelle blacksmith.

The new floor timbers are of tallow and the bearers and joists are treated with copper naphthalate to deter whiteants. The floor boards are butt jointed as was the custom and certain boards are lightly nailed and stamped lift to access the sub-floor for inspection purposes.

The new verandah should last at least fifty years.

Jeremy Arnott

We wish you a
Merry Christmas
and a Happy New
Year



What's On

Watch House Exhibitions

- Printmakers Nov 25 - Dec 3
- Chris McLean Dec 9-17
Photos, drawings & acrylics
- Elaine Norling Feb 3-18
- Womens Collective Mar 15-16
- Susan Kerville Mar 22-31
Autographed documents
- Judy Brownlie May 18-19
Toneal impressionism

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Back to Balmain

Sunday 29 October was warm and sunny for the 7th Back to Balmain Day. Many former students visited Balmain and Birchgrove Schools, and for the first time Nicholson Street, Balmain High, Rozelle and Father Terry (St Augustines) Schools. The St Andrews service was well attended and ended with singing of *Brown Slouch Hat* and *Pack Up Your Troubles*. Then to the families picnic at Elkington Park for reunions with old friends.

The Association did brisk selling of books and had many family history enquiries as well as promises of photographs. The Leichhardt Municipal Band played from the bandstand and it was a very happy day. Congratulations to the committee. See you all next year.

Kath Hamer

Peter Reynolds has published *On the Pigeon Ground - Balmain Public School 1860-1965*. 56 pages and 29 photographs. \$12 plus postage available at the Watch House or Tel 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.