

the balmain
association
incorporated
news sheet

The Peninsula OBSERVER

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Leichhardt Town Plan

The State Government through the Department of Urban Affairs & Planning has established a new approach to urban consolidation. This gives councils the opportunity to respond and take responsibility for implementing planning policies which contribute to metropolitan objectives. Leichhardt's comprehensive draft Town Plan should provide the major elements of the required residential strategy. However, the Plan needs some modifications to reflect more closely the objects of the strategy of maximising

local residential opportunities, and improving residential development controls and local approval processes.

The urban consolidation policies of the previous government focussed on residential land and increases in density. The new approach requires a more integrated land use to achieve the aims of ecologically sustainable development. It proposes to address other land uses such as local employment and recreational space not just housing. There should be attention to integrating transport and urban form as well as

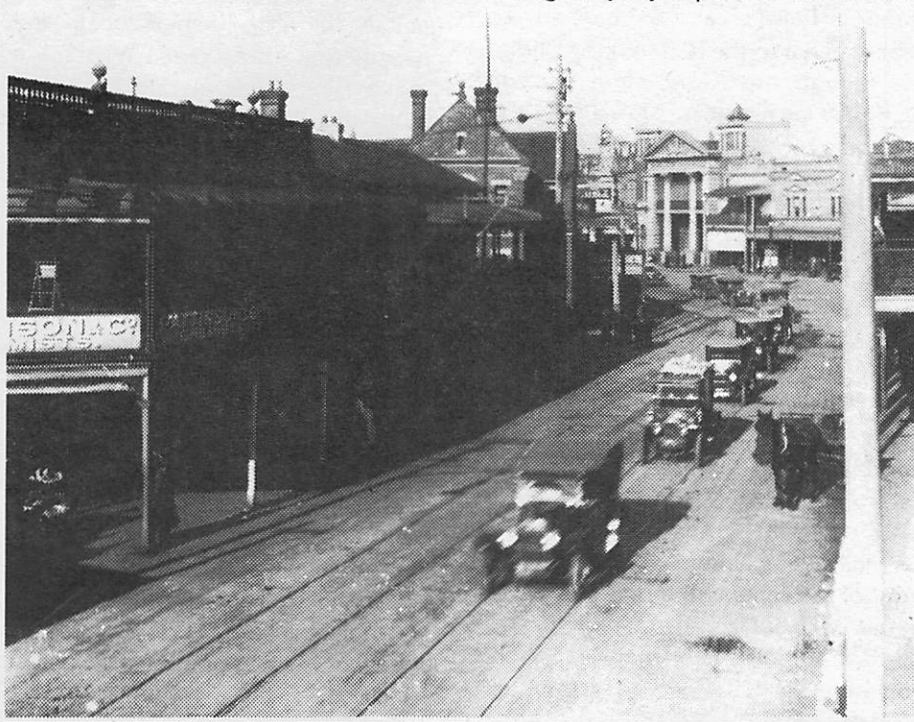
heritage issues that are important to Leichhardt with over 60% of the area with conservation status. There is a need to ensure the existing broad range of housing is retained with a mix of dwelling types, including affordable housing and small dwelling houses.

The DUAP proposes to exhibit SEPP 25 in June. Council planners advise that exemption will probably be granted to Leichhardt if the Town Plan is consistent with metropolitan planning objectives. We have reservations of the ability in the bureaucracy to promote the strategy.

Loyalty Square Project

A Steering Committee to oversee the enhancement of Loyalty Square is meeting regularly with architect, Bob Earl. The Balmain Association has supplied old photographs to help Mr Earl return the historic aspects of the area. The design will increase pedestrian amenity and improve safety. Mr Earl has proposed the mounting of the

monument on a more substantial plinth in the centre of a pavement extension fronting Woolworths and a covered walkway with columns echoing the Westpac Bank. The roadway is expected to be narrowed by a small kerb extension in front of the ANZ Bank. The pedestrian crossing will be moved to achieve greater safety. The photograph shows a funeral proceeding through Loyalty Square in the 1930s.



Heritage Week 27 April - 5 May

Visit the Photographic Exhibition featuring the Old Balmain Cemetery in the only remaining Watch House in Sydney. Inspect the interior and the cells. Open 11 - 4 Sat 27 & Sun 28 April. Free.

Coach Tours

Guided coach tours of the Peninsula will replace walks during Heritage Week. More ground will be covered in 1 1/2 hrs especially for children and the elderly. We hope to show people our unique area that deserves to be preserved. Overdevelopment and cars are the great threat.

Depart Watch House 1pm and 2.30pm Sat 27 April and Sat 4 May. Cost \$5 adult \$2 child. Bookings 818 4954.

Heritage Morning Coffee Cruise

On Sun 5 May, Friends of Cockatoo Island have arranged a cruise to Cockatoo Island on the *Solway Lass*. There will be a commentary on the history of the island and a description of the heritage items that can be seen from the water as well as a talk on the current situation of the island. Tickets \$20 adults \$10 children.

Contact Jeanette Sims 498 1457.

Thirty Years On A Personal View

The thunderstorms of October 28 1995 did not in any way dampen the spirits of the members of the Balmain Association, old and new, who gathered to celebrate 30 years. I was prompted to look back over those years thinking, from my own point of view, how Balmain had changed and how I had changed with it.

I was young, newly married and had only recently discovered Birchgrove where we had purchased a tiny stone terrace in Grove Street - now known as Fertility Row! I had started teaching at Birchgrove School, so meeting some of the local children and parents and was full of enthusiasm to get involved in the local community.

In the early days of 1966 I remember going to meetings to plan fund-raising activities - eg a memorable "Night on the Tiles" at the Bishops House in White Street where I think we paid \$2 each for entrance, food and wine! As our husbands were involved in the Architecture Sub-Committee, Narelle Hooper and I declared ourselves as the Balmain Association Architecture Sub-Committee Ladies Auxiliary as we prepared the suppers for the meetings. I remember cooking a chocolate cake one night and one of our two cats (Gilbert & Sullivan) ate a chunk out of the side so we cut that piece out.

We had meetings in the Balmain Town Hall prior to any election - Meet the Candidates, and called public meetings over issues we felt strongly about. The most notable was our fight against containerisation at White Bay and Mort Bay. One night a hurried call went out and we assembled at the Town Hall where we were addressed by Nick Origlas and Izzy Wyner among others and decided to march on Parliament House. With posters still dripping with paint we headed off - HANDS OFF BALMAIN! NO TRUCKS!

We had many successful ideas and activities to raise money towards the restoration of the Watch House which had been saved from "demolition by neglect" and given to the Association as their headquarters on the understanding that the building would be restored.

The Sale of Work was one such success. The first of these was held in Sybil Masterman's garage where

tie-dyed dresses, silk screened clothes, art, pottery and more were available. I bought a wonderful purple silk pants suit and a long orange and green tie-dyed dress which I wore for years. This Sale developed into an annual event at the Watch House where local artists could display and sell their crafts and a percentage went to the Association. Remember Jenny Porters childrens lampshades, Jeanette Stevenson's felt toys, Grannie Walmsley's jams and pickles and Lindsay's spicy meatballs.

Other annual events were the cricket match against the Paddington Society on Birchgrove Oval in the manner of 19th century English cricket on the green with the ladies in long dresses with parasols. Also the Christmas barbecue on the waterfront at Long Nose Point (Yurulbin) which was BYO everything for members and families.

I was elected to the Management of the Association in 1972 when David Porter was President and was particularly involved in fund-raising. We held a great jazz picnic in Eve Kendall's garden at Waterview Street with Bill Haesler and his Washboard Band playing - not to be forgotten because the raffle takings disappeared! The 10th Anniversary in 1975 was celebrated by a "Jailhouse Rock" at the Watch House. Another great night!

During those first years many hours were spent on the restoration of the Watch House. A popular Children's Library had been established in the back cells. This was dismantled when the Leichhardt Council finally set up a library in Balmain and the books were sold or given to the Balmain Hospital.

Through the Association I made many life-long friends. We set up the early playgroups, our children have grown up together and identify very strongly with the area. We have seen many changes. We learned that you can change things if you are determined and feel that you are right. We lost many battles in the early days. Birchgrove House, container wharves, no street trees, but we fought on - against local government, which seemed unaware of the changes in the area and more recently against the State Government with regard to the five sites. The Balmain Association is still in the forefront of residents in the redevelopment of this peninsula.

Now 30 years later many of us are still here, still fighting to retain the

essential character of Balmain that attracted us - the mix of people, industry and commercial, the proximity to the city, ferry travel to work, the comfortable feeling of meeting someone you know in Darling Street. Today you can have coffee with them in any one of a dozen coffee shops. Balmain is still a place for people on foot, to meet and greet and worth keeping that way.

Diana Garder

RTA Lacks Vision

The RTA has found that the new Glebe Island Bridge has had an unexpected beneficial affect on Victoria Road traffic. Their spokesman, Mr Mal Cross, would not commit them to supporting the proposed tunnel under Darling Street until the completion of the City West Link and the opening of the M2 Motorway next year.

This project would restore a sense of community to Rozelle and give a boost to shopkeepers. The RTA has created the division of the town for the benefit of through traffic and it is time that they showed more vision.

The author of the tunnel project, Mr Greg Vicas, said, "This project was never conceived as a way of dealing with Victoria Road traffic. It's objectives were to calm local traffic and rebuild the Rozelle town centre."

Sydney Maritime Museum.

In December 1995, the Sydney Maritime Museum celebrated 30 years of volunteer effort to restore and maintain the historic ships, boats and many marine artefacts. At Wharf 8 in Rozelle Bay, work is continuing to restore the *James Craig*, Australia's oldest surviving 19th century iron square rigger. The Museum maintains a number of other vessels at Wharf 5, including *Boomerang*, a classic gentleman's schooner, *John Oxley*, the last of Australia's pilot steamers, the *Lady Hopetoun*, 1902 VIP steam launch and the *Waratah*, Australia's oldest coal-burning tug.

The Museum's heritage boat collection is housed at 6 Mansfield Street, Rozelle and an extensive library of heritage documents and photographs available for public access and research. Visitors are most welcome during normal business hours week days, groups by appointment. Contact 810 2299.

Our Sydney Sandstone Cultural Heritage.

Sydney has the good fortune to be founded on a great bed of honey-coloured sandstone. The city that rose above this rock foundation took on the same golden colour as the stone from its quarries. The sandstone character of Sydney lasted through to the early Twentieth Century. The stone was used for housing, public buildings, warehouses and even street curbing and guttering.

Sand grains are created by the disintegration of older rocks such as granites. The various processes of weathering, change and break down the rock outcrop into smaller particles of rock and crystal. These are then eroded by running water and wind and transported from the regions of erosion, usually uplands, to regions of deposition, i.e., sedimentary basins. The quartzose sediments which make up the Hawkesbury Sandstone were deposited in a sedimentary basin during a non-marine phase of it's history, over an interval of about 2 million years between 238 and 236 million years ago, i.e., in the middle part of the Triassic Period. During long-term subsidence of the basin and burial of its deposits, the sand was eventually cemented together to form rock.

The cementing material in the Hawkesbury Sandstone is clay and silica. Clay particles were deposited among the more abundant quartz grains, especially during mega-floods, and this is seen in the great clay content of *massive* sandstone. In *sheet* sandstone, there is less clay and the gaps between the quartz particles have been more fully taken up by silica cement, in the form of quartz itself, which binds the particles more tightly than does clay. This affects the hardness and weathering characteristics of the rock types.

Massive sandstone typically lacks well-defined bedding planes and is uniform in texture and structure. It is commonly moderately fine-grained and incorporates a greater proportion of clay. This make-up renders it softer and easier to cut to regular blocks most sought after for building work. Massive sandstone was, and still is, selectively quarried for this reason. The best of the Sydney sandstone for building purposes was supplied from Saunders Quarry at Pyrmont; this rock has a

honey-colour hue and is commonly known as "yellowblock". Yellowblock is usually grey when first cut, but gradually takes on a yellowish tinge when exposed to the weather. Some fine examples of Pyrmont sandstone are; the Lands Department, Bridge Street, the Sydney General Post Office, Martin Place, the Central Railway Buildings, and in Balmain, the 1870s addition to *Ewenton*, 1 Blake Street, and the 1880 addition to the Watch House.

However, massive sandstone wears away more readily in response to wetting and drying and to changes in humidity. This is due to alternate expansion and contraction of the intergranular clay as it absorbs and releases water. When salt is present in the air or water, especially along the coastline, it develops "honeycomb weathering".

Sheet sandstone is typically coarser-grained and harder than massive sandstone. Well-defined cross-bedding planes enable it to be readily broken into irregular flagstone slabs, such as are used for paving and edging in gardens etc. The coarser grain-size and higher silica-cement content make it more resistant to weathering and it typically develops a darker weathering colour.

The contours of the streets in the earliest settlement at The Rocks had been hewn out by quarriers to give a

Mint Building, Macquarie Street. Also dating from this time is a stone wall that was built along the then northern boundary of the Gardens. In 1818 a stone obelisk was erected in Macquarie Place to mark the starting place for all roads in the colony. An earlier use of sandstone can be found on Observatory Hill in the wall surrounding the Observatory. After the Battle of Vinegar Hill in 1804, Governor Philip Gidley King had Fort Phillip and wall built on what is now called Observatory Hill. The Fort was demolished in 1858 to make way for the Observatory.

By the 1850s stone was quarried at the government quarries at Pennant Hills, Brighton and Ashfield, but also close by at places in Kent and Bourke Streets. Commercial quarries were opened at Willoughby, Belmore, Waverley, Marrickville and Arncliffe. Later, quarries were begun at Maroubra, Bondi and Canterbury as well as at Bundanoon and Gosford outside Sydney. Many of Sydney's most important public buildings are constructed of sandstone. Included amongst these are the Sydney Town Hall, Saint Andrew's Cathedral, Saint Mary's Cathedral, Queen Victoria Building, the Mitchell Library, the New South Wales Art Gallery, and several of the buildings at Sydney University.



Stonemasons preparing foundations

level surface and to provide sandstone for building material. A view from Atherton Street to Cumberland Street above, shows the extent of the early quarrying.

In Lower George Street, The Rocks, is the two-storey stone Cadman's Cottage (1816), Sydney's oldest extant building, built in the time of Governor Lachlan Macquarie (1810-1821). Additionally, 1816 also saw commencement of Macquarie's stone Rum Hospital, now Parliament House and the

References: The Story of Stone in The Wolli Creek Valley. Wolli Creek Preservation Society Inc., Morgan, G. (1994). School of Earth Sciences, Macquarie University. Geological content, Conaghan, P.G. The Australian Terrace House, Turner, B. (1995), Angus & Robertson, Sydney.

Thanks, Pat Conaghan for your editorial assistance.

To be continued in the next issue.

Kath Hamey

In Your Garden

April Gardening

There is no mistaking autumn. Every time you go outdoors there will be another heap of leaves to rake up. Put all of these into the compost bin or in a heap, in layers with garden refuse or other organic material. It will be valuable compost in spring.

The now bare area under deciduous trees can be prettied up by planting a few bulbs of scilla, tritelia or grape hyacinth or a sprinkling with some seed or alyssum.

Evergreen climbing plants can be planted now. Rose banksiae "luted" is a fast-growing climber that produces masses of pretty yellow flowers in spring. Roses, fuchsias, dahlias, sasanqua camellias, chrysanthemums, canna and nerines will also be flowering well so you will enjoy working in the garden. Any of the bulbs listed for March can be planted as well as hyacinths.

Using an all-purpose fertiliser, give fortnightly feedings to established seedlings.

As we come to May this seems to be clean-up month as it is much cooler it is easier to work in the garden. Don't leave it any later than early May to plant spring flowering bulbs. Other bulbous type plants to plant or repot this month are sprekelia, cyrtanthus, brodiaea, clivia (one of my favourites), astilbe, lillium, belladonna, convallaria and eucomis.

The early japonica camellias will be blooming. If weather conditions are not providing adequate moisture, give plants a deep watering adding some liquid seaweed. Watch that the azaleas and rhododendrons do not become dry or their flowering could be affected. Thick clumps of buds on camellias could be thinned if you want bigger blooms. If roses are to be planted during the winter, prepare the soil with organic material and pelleted manure.

Bonnie Davidson



New Edition

Leichhardt Historical Journal No 20 by Peter Reynolds is now available from the Watch House. The areas covered include White Bay, Stephen, Donnelly and Booth Streets, Balmain - John Booths Sawmill. Marion, Elswick, Renwick and Cary Streets, Leichhardt. Introductory cost \$15 plus postage.

Vale Margaret Dobson

Our dear friend Margaret Dobson died on 27 January this year the way she lived. Anonymously, quietly and with no fuss.

Margaret was secretary of the Balmain Association from November 1969 to 1971, when I was president. David Porter became president in 1973 and when he stepped down in 1976, Margaret took over for a year then helped the next president, Philip Bray, before retiring from the executive.

A long time resident of Louisa Road, Margaret Dobson was a very private person, often bemused by the antics of her mid-30 year old pre-yuppie committee friends. Her father was a sea captain and she was married to a man called Bill for a few months. She was senior secretary to an OTC bigwig. Who better to have as Association secretary? She had a gentle demeanour, a sharp mind, was independent and unflappable.

I do not know how old Margaret was when she died, but she must have been in her early 80s. We lost contact with her in later years, apart from the occasional meeting in Darling Street. When she became too tired to keep up the home in Louisa Road she moved to the Salvation Army retirement village in

Warringah. Nobody was notified. Too few really knew this remarkable lady. Perhaps no one did.

Bill Haesler

New

Streets Lanes and Places 2nd edition now available. \$10 plus postage from the Watch House.

A History of Teacher Education at Balmain and Kuringai College 1946 - 1991. Published on the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the Teachers College in Smith Street, Balmain. Cost \$29 plus \$4 postage. Contact 44 7537.

What's On

Watch House Exhibitions

- **Judy Brownlie May 4-12**
Toneal impressionism
- **Aqua Media May 18-19**
Eight watercolourists
- **Paul Connor Aug 17-25**
Architectural photos
- **Laura Stark Oct 12-20**
The Print Circle

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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.