

the balmain
association
incorporated
news sheet

The Peninsula OBSERVER

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Birchgrove Bicentenary 1796-1996.

The Balmain Association and Precinct 1, Birchgrove, have combined to celebrate the early history of the Peninsula and the first land grant with the Birchgrove Bicentenary Committee being formed. On the 15th September, 1796, a 30 acre grant at Snails Bay, running out of Cockle Bay (now Darling Harbour), was allotted to George Whitfield, a Private in the New South Wales Corps. This area today is Birchgrove. The boundary of the actual grant is Cove and Grove Streets. The grant is entered in the number 2 register of grants and leases by Governor Hunter and the terms were that after 5 years, Whitfield was obliged to pay one shilling quit rent and the Navy had permission to the use of any timbers. The Corps was first raised in 1789 in England by Major Francis Grose, especially for service in New South Wales. Recruitments were carried out at London and Chatham and recruits were often serving soldiers who were in trouble with the authorities. Whitfield enlisted on 17th November, 1789, receiving a levy of £3/13/6, but

the money would soon disappear as the recruits had to part pay for their uniform. In 1797 Privates received two payments a year amounting to £18. More of Private George Whitfield and family next issue.

The twin goals of the Bicentenary Committee are to; collect music of Balmain and Birchgrove onto one recording, together with oral history to be available for purchase as a Bicentenary memento; establish the Birchgrove Bicentenary Trust which will be a grant awarded annually, in perpetuity, for the enrichment of the community or community member. To achieve these splendid goals WE NEED YOUR ASSISTANCE, as this is essentially a celebration for you, your home, your street and your suburb.

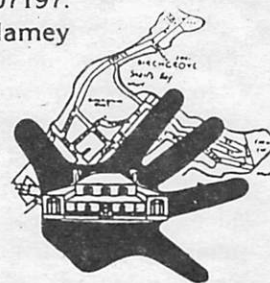
Proposed events are: Saturday 21st September, Birchgrove Colonial Dance at the Balmain Town Hall. A Birchgrove historical and garden walk. Sunday 22nd September, Picnic Day at the Oval. Folk Bands, Theatre, Aboriginal Dancing. Food-tasting from local restaurants. Tug of war teams representing local businesses, streets, precincts. Display of memorabilia. Kite Flying Competition. Sailing Race. A

Special Service at St John's Church to be announced.

The first event, **Port by the Harbour to celebrate the Winter Solstice**, will be held on Sunday 23rd June at noon.. This Port bottling picnic will be held on the beautiful foreshore area of the home of the late Nick Masterman, Numa Street. Cost \$17 per person or \$15 earlybird special. Ticket price includes 1 bottle of port, fruit punch, bread and salads. Bring your own food for the BBQ and a picnic rug.

Expressions of interest are sought in the form of donations of art and crafts for auction and raffles, loan of historical items, sponsorship, but most of all, a little of your time. Street stall Saturday, 22nd, June, Darling Street corner Mort Street.

Contact Chairperson: Damian Copley-Finch 8108208. Elissa Buttsworth 8107197. Kath & Val Hamey 8184954.



Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay 1846-1888

A reception will be held in honour of Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay at the Maclay Museum, Sydney University, on 17th July, the 150th anniversary of his birth. Other events over the next six weeks include an exhibition at the State Library and a talk by manuscripts curator Paul Brunton, a piano recital by Mark Isaac, a lecture at the Australian Museum, seminars at NSW and Macquarie Universities, a book launch of a new translation of Miklouho-Maclay's diaries at the Writers Centre in Rozelle, a special meeting of the Royal Historical Society and a commemorative address by Admiral David Leach.

This remarkable Russian scientist conducted anthropological studies in New Guinea, Indonesia and Melanesia during the 1860s and 1870s. Why is he being feted so royally? On his arrival in Sydney in 1878, he became involved in the colony's intellectual life and advocated protection of Aborigines. He campaigned for land and funding for Australia's first Marine Biological research station. The building remains today at Laings Point, Watsons Bay. Sir John Robertson, NSW parliamentarian, William Macleay and the Linnean Society supported Miklouho-Maclay. He met Sir John Robertson's daughter Margaret and they were married with the Czar's consent. In 1884 the couple were invited by

Quarton Deloitte to live at Wyoming, 25 Wharf Road, Birchgrove, where their first son Alexander Nils was born in November of the same year. Miklouho-Maclay wrote to his brother in Russia: Address your letters: Wyoming, Snails Bay, Sydney, Australia.

In 1886 he returned to Russia to organise the publication of his extensive scientific diaries. Miklouho-Maclay died at a young age of 41 in St Petersburg. His name is honored by the Institutes of Ethnography in Moscow and St Petersburg and streets are named after him.

Details: W Paton, 23 Pymble Avenue, Pymble 2073. Tel/Fax: 4492741.

Our Sydney Sandstone Cultural Heritage.

An early meaning of the word quarry is "squared stone", hence quarrying originally referred to the production of dimension-cut-stone rather than simply the extraction of rock. When useable rock is found the weathered rock is stripped away, then large blocks are separated from the parent mass with low-powered explosives. A floor is established and quarries are usually developed by stepping downwards from this floor. The rock is further broken down or fractured in a controlled way through the drilling of a line of small holes into which wedges are placed. They are driven with light blows of a hammer creating a line of tensile stress between the holes which causes the rock to split. Evidence of this former use of this technique can still be seen in St Mary's Street, Balmain East. A passage from Pearson Street, to connect through to William Street, was cut in the 1860s through a sandstone ridge. The extant shoulders of this passage are locally known as "the Balmain Heads". The use of diamond-tipped saws in more recent times has speeded up the cutting of stone considerably.

Attention by the stonemason had to be paid to the qualities of the stone when considering its use in building. A sandstone block with a seam of mica in it, might result in a structural failure if placed in an unsupported position. Much of the stone used for kerbing and guttering, particularly the deeply-laid corner-stones, required skill in cutting and laying. The durability of these structures is a tribute to the early workmen. A good example of guttering in Balmain is in the lower end of Spring Street, although some cement rendering has been added.

When a stone is selected for a particular use it is fashioned to the required shape, then with heavy-duty chisels and punches the surface is rendered and finally, after the mason refines the work done by the previous stages, stone and water are used to make a smooth finish by grinding or else the rock is given a 'sparrow picked' finish. In more recent times advances in techniques for working sandstone include ultra-violet retardants to protect the life of the stone and the use of epoxy rather than traditional clay mouldings.

Such epoxy restoration can be easily detected on the exterior decorations on the Queen Victoria Building in Sydney.

Stonemasons have a tradition of leaving their individual mark on the building they work on. It is said that their own likeness was included in the decoration, and it is worthwhile studying the ornate figures on sandstone facades to pick out the quirky aspects. A winking gargoyle or a small flower which appears to be slightly out of place may be the signature of the stonemason. Have you noticed the winking lion's head on a corner of the Sydney Town Hall and the head-shaped bosses on the old Saint Augustine's Catholic Church, Eaton Street, Balmain?

The only walling material available to the early builders in Balmain was sandstone. It was hewn from each rocky house site and the thick blocks were cemented together with mortar made from burnt oyster shells. Some local quarry sites were located in Palmer and in Donnelly Streets and where Short Street meets Bay Street today. As stone became harder to get and the availability of bricks easier and cheaper, brickwork became the favourite material for houses. It was liberally covered with stucco, which permitted lavish decoration that often imitated the stonemasons' work it superseded.

Nothing remains of the house, demolished in 1967, although the extant southern, stone boundary-wall contains shell-bearing mortar, giving it an early date. Another house, at 1 Bridge Street, also has the shell-bearing mortar. Local history, not as yet proven, is that the building was used to house convicts before removal to the Cockatoo Island Gaol.

Many of the sandstone cottages dotted throughout the peninsula can be attributed to certain stonemasons and are in excellent condition today. John Cavill, a Cornish stonemason, made his first purchase of Balmain land in September 1840, which began a 50 year career of land development and speculative building in Balmain. On this land, now 12 Darling Street, is where in 1841 he built a sandstone dwelling later known as the *Waterman's Cottage*. The cottage has recently been restored and with the former *Shipwright's Arms Hotel*, 1844, at 10 Darling Street, provide a welcome introduction to Balmain's sandstone cultural history to visitors arriving by ferry at the Darling Street Wharf. Cavill built his family-home at 17 Union Street in c1853. The c1860 corner shop at Datchett and Darling Streets has some fine quoin work to the first floor. The second floor is a later addition. The adjoining two single-story terraces were also built by Cavill.



Shipwright Arms & Waterman's Cottage

The first house built on the Balmain peninsula was Birch Grove House, constructed in 1810 and extended in 1827. The Georgian Simplified Classical Style house had 18-inch-thick stone exterior walls with dressed quoins and a timber shingled roof. The stone was probably quarried on the estate by convicts.

Solomon Wakfer constructed the walls and the hexagonal structure for the Saint Mary's Schoolhouse, 7 Adolphus Street, to an Edmund Blacket design.

William Burt was the stonemason of the Congregational Church, built in 1855, now called St Andrew's, as well

as his own home *Benarty*, at 9 Jane Street, in 1870 and he died there in 1907. He and his brother James were the stonemasons for the Campbell Street Presbyterian Church, built in 1868. In 1881 the Burt brothers built *Rosebank*, 11 Jane Street; and *Cairngorm*, 13 Jane Street. James Burt was elected Councillor on the first Balmain Council in 1860, the same year that he built his family-home at 36 Ann Street. An attached house, *Montague Villa* at 33 Stephen Street, was constructed in 1872.

Timothy Fawcett built three stone attached-houses, 1-5 Fawcett Street, c1856, and lived in number 1. He was quarrying on site for the construction of *Ada Terrace*, 8-12 Jane Street, when he died in 1862.

Peter McBeath was a builder, not a stonemason, but he undertook a building program from the 1850s, of sand-

stone cottages on land he purchased in Adolphus Street. Numbers 17, 19, 21, 23, 25 Adolphus Street, 5 Vincent Street and 4, 6 and 8 Waite Street.

John Fay built the houses at 34 Ann Street, in 1855, and 31 Stephen Street, in 1872. The latter being the adjoining terrace to James Burt's at number 33.

A sandstone terrace is being erected at 139 Darling Street, Balmain. The building will require approximately 500 blocks being 80 cm in length. Blocks have been recycled from the former building on the site and some believed to be from the restoration of the Corn Exchange Building, Sussex Street corner Market Street, Sydney. The additional new blocks are obtained from the Glenorie Quarry, near Hornsby, N S W.

The Balmain peninsula has a significant history of sandstone usage. We can see it all around us, from the kerb-

ing, to the chimney, from the workmen's cottages to the grand Victorian Government buildings. It is up to us to encourage the restoration of our rich built history.

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Reynolds, P. (1978) : *Leichhardt Historical Journal*. No 7, (1993) : *Ibid*, No 17, (1994) : *Ibid*, No18, (1995) : *Ibid*, No19, (1995). Turner, B. (1995) : *The Australian Terrace House*. Angus & Robertson, Sydney.

Thanks to Pat Conaghan for his editorial assistance.

Kath Hamey

To Enlighten Them Their Task - by Judy Taylor & Cliff Turney

"Let us seek the goal eternal,
As our lives we dedicate;
Guide our zeal from realms supernal,
Our example thus be great.
Final knowledge still is hidden,
But enough is all we ask;
Children 'neath our sway are bidden
To enlighten them our task."
(Balmain Teachers' College Anthem)

The authors of this comprehensive - and eminently readable history of the Balmain Teachers College explain their choice of title as follows:

"Over many years at the weekly assembly of Balmain Teachers' College, both staff and students joined in singing the College Anthem. Among other things the Anthem reminded everyone that the single most important prospective task of the students was the enlightenment of the children in their care - the enthusiastic promotion of child learning and development. The authors chose to name this book with those few words from the College Anthem which expressed such compelling sentences."

Apparently George Cantello, the first Principal of the College, often quoted the maxim "If you cannot realise the ideal, you must idealise the real." According to Judy Taylor and Cliff Turney, he meant it. The program notes at the opening of the Balmain

Teachers' College, probably written by George Cantello himself, stated that "there was in the air something beyond the shape, the observance of form. Visitors remarked on its presence...in a place so young. There was among the students an attention not born of compulsion, a zestful singing of songs that had to do with more than words and music...It came from the spirit of an idealism of every day, practical and meaningful". The authors conclude their opening chapter by saying, "Despite the dismal contextual realities surrounding the College, Cantello and his staff stuck to their ideals and determined that Balmain Teachers' College, founded in a context of post-war restrictions in an old school building in a down-at-heel suburb, would triumph over the shortcomings of its site and equipment, to provide the best possible practical training for those who would have the immensely important task of teaching NSW school children."

The first two chapters of the book expand on the "contextual realities" in some detail, including details of the shortcomings of the former Smith Street School building itself, student reactions to the culture shock of arriving in immediate-post-War Balmain to the inadequacies of supplies: when it opened the College library contained only one book on mathematics, despite the fact that this was a compulsory subject for all

students. The College also had to battle with frequent incidents of trespassing and vandalism over the years.

The book continues to stress, however, that whatever the shortcomings of the physical environment and bureaucratic support - or perhaps because of the desire to surmount them - the enthusiasm of staff and students in those early years didn't falter. In addition to giving a picture of Balmain in a period which has not been widely covered in printed material, the volume also provides a valuable description of philosophies and practice in teacher education at a time of social change. George Cantello was a leader in the demonstration school movement in New South Wales and also introduced the Project Method of instruction.

Cantello was also an enthusiastic believer in the importance of "College Activities" such as the Sports Union, Intercollegiate Visits, Intra-Mural Competition, Camps and Excursions, Social Activities, the Choral Society and Annual Choral Concert, the Dramatic Society, Gilbert and Sullivan Opera, ExStudents' Reunion, Literary Entertainments Group and Writers' Group. The impact on Balmain from these activities was considerable, particularly dramatic and musical performances and sporting events in Birchgrove Oval and at Drummoyne Tennis Courts. (Students were less enthusiastic about the Balmain Baths in early years; [next page please]

In Your Garden

Choosing and Planting Roses

Roses are suitable for a range of garden situations. The most popular are the hybrid tea roses with perfectly shaped flowers ideal for picking and which may be grown in



beds or borders. However, for a good supply colourful long-lasting blooms you should select floribunda roses. Although individual flowers are smaller than the hybrid teas they give massed colour effects.

For brightening up a dull wall or fence use can be made of the climbing roses. They are not self-supporting and therefore must be attached in some way. Trained on wires, climbers can be useful for screening. Miniature roses are fast increasing in popularity and are ideal for pots, baskets or low edgings along paths.

Roses love sunny and open positions and five to six hours each day are required for them to flower well. Soils should have good drainage with organic matter worked in before planting. Keep soils moist over dry months. Never plant roses where other roses have been grown as they are such heavy feeders that they thoroughly exhaust the soil and this can lead to a condition called "rose sick". Newly planted roses don't like strong fertilisers around their roots. The best time to feed roses is August and February.

Bonnie Davidson

[Continued from previous page]

one reported that they would go into the water one colour and come out another due to the high level of oil and sawdust it contained.)

The authors note the four major reasons for the initial success of the College were the fact that the enrolments of around 400 made for close personal relationships between staff and students; the quality of the leadership; the team spirit; and the quality of the staff.

Subsequent chapters of the book deal with the expansion of the College under George Cantello's successors, including the incorporation of Orange Grove Public School into the college, its move first to Lindfield where it was known as William Balmain Teachers' College, and then to Kuring-gai where it was ultimately amalgamated with UTS. Your reviewer recommends it highly. Balmain residents will find it adds to their knowledge of the past history of the suburb, including information about Smith Street School; anyone interested in education will find it an admirable discussion of the post-war changes which have brought

us to the system we find today.

The Association would welcome memories that this article might revive. The Archivist at UTS, Sigrid McCausland, PO Box 123 Braodway 2007 would welcome any documents you might have in your possession relevant to the Balmain Teachers' College or its successors.

Debby Nicholls

Vale Family Reunion

The descendants of Frederick and Sarah (nee Crane) Vale, publicans in Balmain 1855-1877 and their sons Ernest Henry, Thomas Alfred, Charles Edward and brother-in-law Frederick Thomas and Florence Jane (nee Vale) Matthews, are invited to attend the Vale Family Gathering at the Bellinger River Historical Society Museum on Sat 28th and Sun 29th September, 1996. Contact John Vale, 281 Oliver Street, Grafton, 2460. Phone (066) 422701.

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150th Centenary of St Mary's Anglican Church, Balmain.

Program of Events and Services

June 16th, Sunday, 9.30am. Special Commemorative Service. Especially for those Baptised or Married at St Mary's.

August 18th, Sunday, 3.00pm. St Mary's 150th Anniversary Service.

August 25th, Sunday, 9.30am. Civic Thanksgiving Service.

August 30th or 31st, Friday or Saturday, 7.30pm. 150th Community Party.

September 8th, Sunday, 9.30am.

Education Week Service.

October 24th, Friday, 7.00pm. Parish Dinner.

November 22nd-24th, Friday 7.30pm to Sunday 4.00pm. A Celebration of Creativity.

All events and Services will be held in St Mary's Church. 85 Darling Street, Balmain, 2041.

Enquiries: John and Robyn Cashman 810 2794. Robert Irving 810 4717.

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.