

the balmain
association
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news sheet

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Balmain Pioneers and the Macdonald Valley

Within three hours motoring of Sydney is a wild and lovely valley, where pioneer settlers sleep in forlornly neglected small cemeteries, or whose headstones mark their resting place on the original land grant. The Macdonald River meanders shallowly through farmlands and past a few scattered cottages; above tower the enclosing mountains bushclad and rock-strewn; over all there seems to emanate a strangely disturbing restlessness, as if the disembodied spirits of the first pioneers still exert an unseen influence in the once life-pulsating valley. On the mountain ridges of its eastern boundary is the Great North Road to Laguna and Wollombi, a miracle of outstanding engineering by the brilliant Sir Thomas Mitchell, Surveyor General of the Colony from 1828 to 1855.

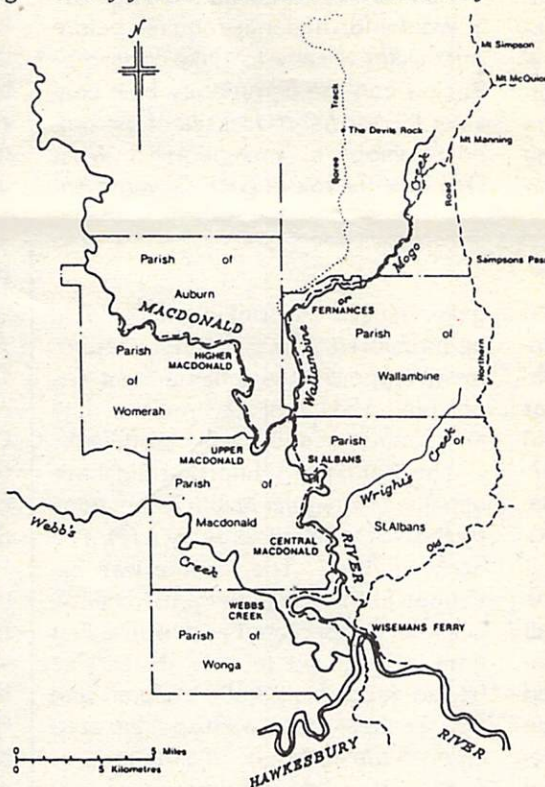
The extract above is from *The Forgotten Valley. History of the Macdonald Valley and St Albans. NSW* by M Hutton Neve. Many familiar Balmain pioneer names are mentioned.

Thomas Rose, farmer, and his wife and four children left their home in Dorset, England, in August, 1792 as the result of repeated requests by Governor Phillip for the dispatch of intelligent and experienced farmers to Sydney. Rose and family together with four other free settlers sailed in the *Bellona* for New South Wales. They were the first free and independent settlers to reach Australia. Thomas Rose eventually moved to the fertile lands near the later named Wilberforce, where the first Methodist service in that area was held in his home.

Joshua Rose, the second son of Thomas, also an established farmer, bought lots 20 and 21 at the corner of Johnston and William Streets, Balmain in 1841 from Captain John Peacock for 360 pounds.

Another native of Dorset, Edward Gardner, arrived in the Colony in 1815,

but unlike Thomas Rose, Gardner was a convicted felon. His son Henry Gardner mastered the boatbuilding trade and married Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of Joshua and Ann (nee Hecket) Rose, on 20 March, 1839. They set up house in Henry's hut, near 20 William Street, where he built his long boatshed and wharf. By 1847, Henry had built the stone cottage, 18 William Street, that became their home for many years. The house remains today.



Macdonald Valley

Joshua Rose second son, William Henry also was a shipwright and built a timber cottage at 18 Johnston Street. Like his brother Henry, Edward Gardner married a Rose girl. Louisa the youngest daughter of Joshua and Ann. Eventually, Joshua and Ann settled on his William Street land, at number 22. Joshua died there in 1862 and his widow lived on to 1868. This waterfront land remained in the Rose/Gardner hands until 1911.

Another association with the Macdonald Valley is the Griffin and Bates. Thomas Bates was born in

Chatham, Kent, England in 1772. He enlisted with the 102nd Regiment and arrived in Sydney in 1790 with the 2nd Fleet. Thomas married Ann Griffin on 12 May, 1800 in Sydney. Thomas elected to stay in the Colony following his discharge from the army and in 1809 set himself up on the shores of Cockle Bay now Darling Harbour, as a boat builder. Bates died in 1836 and Ann carried on the business with the help of her sons. William Bates was the

older brother, born in 2/9/1812. By 1840 William had set up his own boat building yard near Thames Street, Balmain and his mother moved there. Ann Bates was one of the first residents of the area then known as Strathean, now the Mort Bay area. Two stone attached houses at 25 & 27 Trouton Street were built in the 1850s by William Bates, and remain today. In 1851 William opened a Ladies' and Gentlemen's Baths on the shore near where the Thames Street Wharf is today. Bates Street, Balmain is named after William.

Ann Bates sister Lydia Griffin was a 'Currency Lass', which was a name given to the first crop of Australian born children, to differentiate them from those borne in England. Lydia married John Benn in 1814 at Windsor. One of the witnesses was Thomas Rose. Benn was killed when thrown from his horse. Lydia then married John MacDonald in 1817.

Once again Thomas Rose was the witness. MacDonald explored north from Pitt Town via the river and valley which now bears his name.

Ann Bates and Lydia MacDonald's father, Michael Griffin, had spent his last years with the army in the Veteran's Corps, at Sydney, Parramatta and finally, in 1809 at Windsor. When he left the army in 1823 to live with the MacDonald's, he had served a record term of 61 years.

Source: *The Forgotten Valley*, by M Hutton Neve. *Leichhardt Historical Journal* No 12. Peter Reynolds.

History Group

Australia Consults

As part of its Australia Day program of activities as part of Australia Consults 1997, Leichhardt Council held a public forum on 29 January to allow local citizens to express their views on national identity. The forums were trialed last year with about 90 councils taking part. The three key issues discussed were reconciliation between indigenous and other Australians; the celebration of federation centenary in 2001; and possible changes to the Head of State in 2001. Unfortunately, the attendance was poor because of the inclement weather and the holiday period.

Linda Burnie and Anthony Albanese led the discussion on reconciliation, Sandra Nori spoke on the achievements of the last centenary and the celebration of 100 years of federation, while Tom Uren gave his views on constitutional questions in regard to the republic.

Mr Albanese contrasted the acceptance of compensation for gun owners for the loss of their weapons with the reluctance to consider compensation

for appropriation of aboriginal land. Tom Uren advocated the election of the president by a combined vote of both houses of the Federal Parliament to avoid the prospect of USA type presidential campaign. To maintain the Senate as a house of review no senator should be a government minister. He made a strong argument for the role of local government as the most democratic of all the levels of government.

The assembly then divided into three groups to consider the issues:-

Centenary of Federation celebrations-
1. What have been the most interesting or proudest achievements in the community in the last 100 years and how can they be used in the centenary celebrations? 2. What should the celebrations focus on and what needs to be done at the local level?

Head of State & Constitution Reform-
1. What information is required before Australians are able to make decisions? 2. How can the community best consider the formal processes of the proposed People's Convention? 3. What should be the role of Local Government

in the lead up to 2001?

Reconciliation between Indigenous People and other Australians- 1. What social, political or economic issues should be resolved first at the national level? 2. Australia Day, as the commemorative day of European settlement, is not a day of celebration for many indigenous Australians. Should another celebration day be chosen? 3. What community project could assist in the process of reconciliation between indigenous and other Australians?

One problem was whether the president should have merely a ceremonial role. There was agreement on the necessity to determine the president's powers. In any case the president should not be able to dismiss a government that had a working majority. There was agreement on recognising local government in the constitution. Due to the low attendance it was agreed that the questions should be discussed by precinct committees and other citizen meetings. The meeting accepted the lack of awareness of the constitutional issues needed to be addressed.

School Milk and Health

In the early 1900s, undernourished and malnourished children were common in Balmain. In 1911 the population on the peninsula, peaked at 32,000, declined to 27,000 in 1933 and then remained fairly constant to 1947.

Balmain had become heavily industrialised and the great bulk of the people were working class. Employment for the unskilled was a problem in the 1920s but more than one-quarter of all Balmain breadwinners were unemployed in the early 1930s. Translated to State-wide figures the percentage was nearly one-fifth. Even after the revival of water front industry in the mid 1930s, unemployment was still high among the unskilled. In 1931 it was estimated that 2,000 children in Balmain were 'so seriously undernourished as to be in a state of semi starvation'.

Schools in the area attempted to increase the standard of nourishment by encouraging children to drink milk. In 1922 a few enlightened companies began distributing free milk to infants schools in 'the poorer parts of Sydney'. By the end of 1923, 5,000 pupils were paying a nominal one penny a day for a half-pint. To check the value of the scheme, P & Cs in some schools provided weighing machines so that weight

gains caused by drinking milk could be monitored. The Education Department supported the scheme but it was not until 1941 that free milk for city and country schools was introduced.

The Balmain Schools would have benefited by regular health inspections by the School Medical Service from as early as 1907. The service was expanded in 1912 with extra medical offices being appointed and for the first time, nurses also. In 1913 the service had to vaccinate 23,000 children and 800 teachers in the metropolitan area against an outbreak of smallpox in Sydney. Medical staff were scarce during WWI and though numbers increased in the 1920s, the depression severely curtailed activities. The service was transferred to the Health Commission in 1946.

An extract from Gourlie's Corner relates 'Each year, the health Department sent a doctor and a dentist to examine the nose, throat, ears and teeth of the pupils and issue a report for their parents. Mostly, the parents did nothing about the report as it took them all their time and money to feed their families'.

Source: On The Pigeon Ground. Balmain Public School 1860-1965. Peter Reynolds. On sale at the Watch House \$12 + postage..

Farewell

A farwell service will be held at the St Andrews Congregational Church, Balmain, on Wednesday, February 12, at 7pm. The Reverend Peter Carter, has announced his retirement after many years service to the Balmain community. Rev Carter and his wife Sheila will be sorely missed.

Their involvement included the Saturday Markets, Carols by Candlelight, Back to Balmain Picnic Day and work with the disadvantaged. The Carter's have been long time members of the Balmain Association and we wish them both good health and happiness at their new residence at Leura.

Tom Roberts, Artist

In reference to our last issue, additional information has been supplied. It would appear that the artist, Tom Roberts while in residence in Balmain, played bowls at the Balmain Bowling Club, Darling Street, and swam at the Nicholson Street Swimming Baths. The Nicholson Street Swimming Baths functioned 1887-1909. John Byrnes, lessee 1888-1900.

The newly formed Balmain East Club held its first handicap in the Nicholson St baths last Saturday, the distance being 88 yards.

Balmain Observer 1/11/1902

Milk Companies and Vendors

Until the 1950s, two milk companies supplied milk to the Balmain and Rozelle areas, the New South Wales Fresh Food & Ice Co Pty Ltd, 13 Ellen Street and Dairy Farmers' Milk Co Ltd, 600 Darling Street. The latter building remains to-day.

These two companies supplied all the vendors and some shops although in later years, the shops were supplied by the vendors or milkmen as they were commonly called. The vendors delivered the milk twice a day in the 1930s but with the commencement of World War II, only the shops received both deliveries each day. At this time there was no choice of vendor as the milk runs were zoned. Some of the vendors names were: Hardy, Clarke & Son, Norm Goranson and Mitchell & Daly. Most of the deliveries was by horse and cart but Mr Hardy had a T model Ford, cut back to fit the milk box on the back. The vehicle was highly painted in dark and light sienna colour, with beautifully decorated signwriting.

Most milkos had a 'billy boy', who had just left school at the age of 14 years. His job was to carry two cans containing two gallons of milk each and two measures of half and one pint, then deliver to the side streets and when empty, return to the cart and refill. Heavy work for a young boy.

The price of milk in the 1930s was 3 1/2d a pint. (1 pint = 568ml. 600ml to-day costs 75 cents). Customers had tin

billy cans or jugs, covered with a fancy worked cloth with bead edging, to keep the flies out. At the same time, there were two dairy's in the area. Kinkade's was in Crescent Street, near the White Bay Power Station and Conaghan's at Crystal Street.

Hugh and Nora Conaghan came to Rozelle from Donegal in Ireland with a son and eventually had a large family of twelve children. There were plenty of hands to help with the dairy!

One son Jim lived at 52 Callan Street. The cow yard was opposite at the area of Callan, Manning and Tolley Streets. The herd was directed up Tolley Street at 11.30 pm, when the trams had ceased for the night along Victoria Road making a crossing possible to the dairy in Crystal Street. After the milking was completed, the route was reversed about 2 am, with the herd arriving back at the ungrassed cow yard where they were hand fed and remained all day.

In 1980, houses were erected on the former cow yard by the Department of Housing. A sandstone trough (below) was relocated opposite in King George Park. The plaque was stolen but a copy of the wording has been found and a replacement plaque will be installed by the effort by the Balmain Association about this interesting history of the Conaghan's dairy.

Source: Gourlie's Corner. On sale at the Watch House. \$10 + postage.

Sister M Dominica. (Marie Conaghan)

Kath Hamey

Heritage Week April 20-27

Heritage Week has been presented by the National Trust since 1981. It is an annual event which draws attention to Australia's natural, built and cultural heritage.

In 1997 Heritage Week takes an exciting new direction as Heritage Week in NSW becomes part of the National Trust Festival to be held throughout Australia in the month of April. In creating a National Heritage Festival, we are aiming to broaden the appeal of our heritage celebrations and encourage greater media and public interest in heritage and conservation issues.

To make Heritage Week a success we need community involvement, and encourage everybody to take part. The National Trust's role is to coordinate and promote these activities around the state in our Heritage Week Calendar.

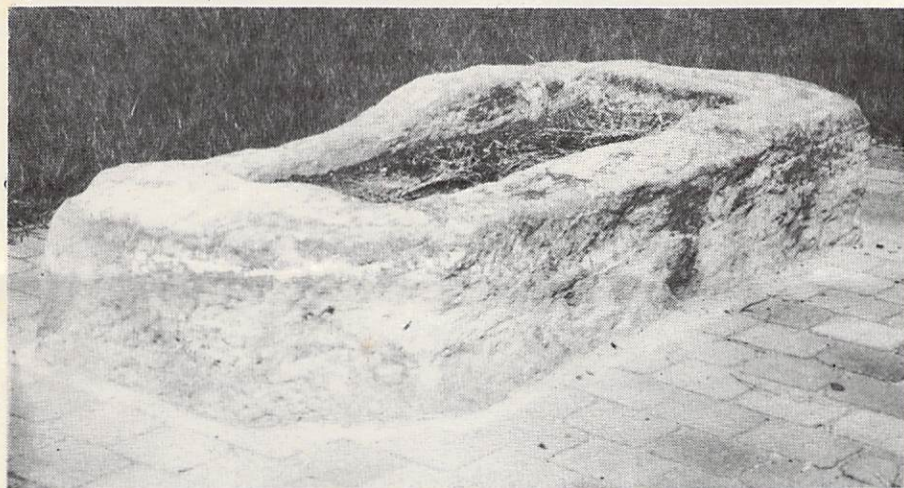
The theme for the 1997 Heritage Festival and Heritage Week is Culture Down Under, a celebration of all aspects of our cultural heritage.

The National Trust Heritage Awards are to celebrate Australian initiative, creativity and commitment to heritage projects. Anyone can enter and there are eight categories. Individuals, community groups, all levels of government, educational bodies, tourism operators, publishers, writers, electronic media and interior designers can enter the Heritage Awards. The Awards give you the opportunity to receive recognition for your commitment to heritage.

Contact the National Trust Centre on 9258 0123 to request your Heritage Award entry kit. Registration Activity Form for inclusion in the Heritage Week Calendar 9258 0134 by February 21, 1997.

The National Trust Women's Committee Tuesday House Inspections will come to Balmain on April 15, 1997 to visit *Wyoming*, *Clifton Villa* and *Ewenton* and will include the Watch House.

The Watch House and Balmain Heritage, will feature in a segment on Channel 10 children's program, *Totally Wild* to be shown in March, 1997.



Vale

Father Terence McDonald was born in Rozelle on 27 June 1945 and was educated at the Christian Brothers, Rozelle. He trained as a sheetmetal worker with Qantas and was named apprentice of the year. In 1967, he was involved in a serious road accident and

was in intensive care for five weeks. Unable to work at his trade, he became a tour guide with the airline for nine years. His decision to become a priest was inspired by volunteer work for the Rozelle parish where he conducted a choir and led a youth group. After he was ordained in 1981 he worked for

several years as a parish priest in Sydney until being appointed as chaplain to Long Bay and Mulawa prisons. Father McDonald was chaplain for the Balmain Rugby League Club and was well known in the Balmain-Rozelle area, helping locals in need. He died suddenly on 6 January, 1997.

In Your Garden

February Gardening

For people living in units and townhouses, making green oases from little spaces may mean that a courtyard or balcony is the only private outdoor area available. Courtyards can be transformed into pretty green extensions of the living space - an outdoor room. These spaces can be intimate with lattice smothered with perfumed vines. One difficulty facing balcony gardeners is exposure to prevailing winds. Even in shaded areas, wind will quickly dry out pots and baskets. Some form of protection will be necessary. For balconies, this could be a reinforced glass screen that allowed in the sunlight giving protection without obscuring views. For courtyards, a panel or two of lattice sup-



porting a hardy climber will stop draughts.

The choice of plants will be determined by the amount of sunlight available. This may vary with aspect or the direction the balcony faces and may also be affected by neighbouring buildings. The ideal aspect is an easterly one that receives gentle morning sun and is protected from the fierce afternoon heat.

Climbers for courtyard and balconies. Orange Trumpet vine has lovely coral flowers through the winter months. Chinese Star Jasmine produces its sweetly scented white starry flowers in spring, a good one for shaded balconies. Potato Creeper (Solarium Jasminoides) flowers nearly all the year with lovely white lacey blossoms. Happy Wanderer Hederbergia has deep violet flowers in winter.

Perfect plants for pots. You can choose from a wide range of plants such as camellia, hydrangea, azalea, daphne, gardenia and fuschia. Perfumed plants should be included where possible. Balconies provide the ideal place for troughs and window boxes overflowing with colourful annuals such as petunias, pansies, lobelia, dwarf sweet peas, marigolds, primulas and ivy geraniums that cascade brightly over the railings.

Bonnie Davidson

Watch House Exhibitions

- Elaine Norling Photographs Feb 8-16
- Arty Ms 9th Annual Exhibition Feb 22-March 3
- Heritage Week April 20-27
- Denise Rothwell May 3-25
In conjunction with Quebec Art Gallery

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97/12

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. Our editorial phone/fax is 9818 4954.

Interested artists, potters, sculptors, etc. who would like to organise an exhibition in the Watch House are urged to contact Steve South on 9810 1411.

Annual Subscriptions:

Household \$16, Pensioners & Students \$7, Organisation \$21.