



the balmain
association
incorporated
news sheet

The Peninsula OBSERVER

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Local Government Issues

Mr Craig Knowles, Minister for Planning, has introduced the Environmental Planning & Assessment Amendment Bill to Parliament, despite opposition from the Local Government Association, professional bodies, unions and the public. The bill persists with the odious provisions for private certifiers and development without consent. Similar measures have been legislated by the Kennet Government in Victoria and the private certifiers have invariably charged more than councils. But NSW does not propose to set up a data base similar to Victoria's PData on CDROM that allows interested parties to access maps and regulations. There is little confidence in the various Government departments cooperating in the implementation of the integrated strategy.

The amendments are designed to make it easier for developers at the expense of residents. The categories of exempt and complying development present the greatest threat to residents amenities. The Minister will determine the exempt development by regulation. Many councils already have Local Approval Policies. They are the most appropriate bodies to decide what needs approval.

It is incredible that a private certifier paid by a developer would be sympathetic to the interests of residents. Their decisions could conflict with local policies. We are all familiar with consultants preparing traffic reports that support the developers who commission them. The council will be forced to strengthen its development control plans which will limit the effectiveness of the integrated assessment strategy. Against this trend for efficiency it is prudent to recognise that sometimes it is better to delay decisions in order to get them right.

Balmain Power Station

The Balmain Power Station is to be auctioned by international tender although remediation of the site has been estimated at \$20 mill. It is reported to

have high levels of PCB contamination as well as asbestos. The development is expected to have up to 300 apartments. Provision has been made in Leichhardt Councils DCP for the widening of Victoria Road and Terry Street and the provision of a public elevator to give access to the waterfront park and ferry wharf. Some commercial establishments may front Victoria Road.

Ampol Site

Council has deferred rezoning of the Ampol site because of local resident requests for extra public consultation.

Ballast Point Site

The Ballast Point National Park Committee hosted a group from Sydney University School of Architecture on a ferry tour of the Caltex site on Friday 14 November. The event was part of a workshop of architect and planners seeking solutions to contentious conversions of old industrial sites to housing with the importance of identifying all stakeholders and the need for open space. Five groups designed outcomes for nominated clients. Distinguished French architect, Philippe Robert, was a session leader. About 50 residents accompanied the group on the ferry.

Former councillor, Helen Styles, said that the workshop investigated a compromise solution for the Caltex site involving the minimum viable amount of housing.

Leichhardt Town Plan

On Wednesday 26 November at the Dawn Fraser Pool, the Mayor, Cllr Chris Cruden, launched the Leichhardt Town Plan. After five years of community consultations the DUAP has allowed its public exhibition for three months. Local planning controls are in one user-friendly document. Development is limited to a floor space ratio of 0.5:1 but allows an increase to 0.7:1 if an affordable housing component is included. It also identifies heritage precincts with protective measures such as control over demolitions to retain the character of the area.

North Side Trip

The History Group, Kath Hamey and myself, visited Roseville in November to inspect *Clermiston*, the home of James Burt who had been well known in Balmain in the 1860s. He was an alderman in the first Balmain Council who, with his brother, William, (both stonemasons) built many stone houses in Ann and Jane Streets. William built St Andrews Church and with James constructed the Presbyterian Church in Campbell Street.

We arrived in plenty of time to view the house which is for sale. Imagine our indignation when we introduced ourselves as Balmain Association representatives and were shown the door. Only prospective buyers could enter we were told. We were amazed as we often make similar visits and most estate agents are pleased when we give them more information on the house and its owner. We thought maybe we should have worn our pearls or kept our noses stuck up, but we came back to friendly Balmain for a cup of tea.

On phoning the Lindfield real estate office to complain that we had never had such treatment from Balmain estate agents we were told that they do things differently on the North Shore and sticky beaks are not welcome.

Bonnie Davidson

We wish you all a
Merry Christmas
and a Happy New
Year



Paying Rent for over 100 Years

Whenever I walk down the slope that is Cambridge Street, Rozelle, I recall being told about Great Granny Ryan. Great Granny Ryan loved a beautiful tea-set which she had seen in a shop. She scrimped and saved until the day finally came, when she could buy that set. She carefully carried home her pride and joy but coming down the hill in Cambridge Street, she slipped and fell and her beautiful tea-set rolled down the hill, ending in a broken heap at the bottom. I always felt so close to Great Granny, when I looked down Cambridge Street.

Great Granny Ryan was born Mary O'Halloran. She had arrived in Brisbane in the early 1860s from Roscrea in Ireland. She had two sisters and a brother, John. Mary married John Charles Ryan in St Stephen's, Brisbane, on 1st June, 1864. Her husband was born in Portlaw, County Waterford, Ireland and he too arrived in Queensland in the 1860s.

Two sons, Michael and James and a daughter, Mary, were born and for sixteen years, the family lived on the Darling Downs where John Ryan was caretaker of a large property. Meanwhile John Ryan's brother in law, John O'Sullivan, the husband of Margaret O'Halloran, had been living at 23 Cambridge Street, since 1882.

John O'Sullivan was a merchant for W H Ariel & Co., General Merchants of 335 Kent Street, Sydney. The O'Sullivan's had two daughters but no sons. Knowing that the two Ryan boys were looking for work, O'Sullivan invited the family to Sydney and offered jobs in the grocery business.

In 1883 the Ryan family took up residence at 23 Cambridge Street, while the O'Sullivan's moved to 118 Terry Street. John Ryan continued to live there until his death on 15th November, 1910, Mary had died in 1895. The older son Michael Ryan married Sarah Ogden, of 21 Victoria Road, on 9th October, 1890. Michael and Sarah lived at 25 Cambridge Street, the other half of the semi-detached building.

John O'Sullivan continued to prosper. He owned a nice house in the 'country', at George Street (now Oxford Street), Smithfield. In 1906 this house was empty, so O'Sullivan invited Sarah and Michael with their growing family to live at Smithfield. Their youngest daughter Elsie, was born there.



Above: 21 Cambridge St, Rozelle
Right: Jim Acheson & Sister Claire Dawson
at 21 Cambridge St 1974

Next in line for 25 Cambridge Street, was James Ryan and wife Ellen, while his father and sister still lived at No 23. (Hope you are all keeping up).

In 1916 the street numbers changed in Balmain/Rozelle so the buildings became no. 19 and 21.

James and Ellen Ryan's daughter Mabel Ellen married William Acheson in 1914 and continued to live at 21 Cambridge Street, until her death in 1964. Sons James (Jim) and William (Bill) Acheson continued to live there.

The families of brothers, Michael and James Ryan, had no contact with my family since Michael's death in 1940. One day I, being Michael's granddaughter, went in search of 'cousins' in Cambridge Street. A neighbour told me that Acheson's lived in 'that' house, but no one was at home. I quickly drew a family tree and pushed it under the door.

Soon I received a lovely letter from James (Jim), so for the next few years I visited him often. We would sit and talk, remembering the old days and planning a tea-party when the time came to celebrate, one hundred years of paying rent. Sadly, Jim died in 1977, four years short of the planned centenary celebration, but his brother Bill continued to live there.

Soon afterwards I was transferred away from Sydney but on my return in 1997, I once again visited Cambridge Street. As I walked down the hill, I envisaged a short, plump Irish woman, her face beaming with delight, carrying carefully something in her arms. I had a vision of her tripping and falling heavily to the ground as her precious tea-set, lay smashed on Cambridge Street. Poor Great Granny Ryan.

Coming back to the present, I hurried to No 21. I knocked on the door. It was opened by old Bill who still lives there. Yes, the family is still in residence! John Ryan's family has been paying rent for 115 YEARS!

by Sister Claire Dawson



A Plaque for William Balmain

For some time I have been intrigued by a notation in Peter Reynolds and Paul Flottman's publication *Half a Thousand Acres*. The reference is to the death and burial of Dr William Balmain. The footnote states: Balmain was buried in the churchyard of St Giles-in-the-Fields, Middlesex, London and 'lies in an unmarked grave as no stone bears his name by omission or by the obliteration of time'. After a couple of false starts, contact has been made with Rector Gordon Taylor, now in his 49th year as Rector at St Giles.

An extract from Rector Taylor's letter: 'I discovered the Balmain entry in the Burial Register of St Giles, many years ago and I straightaway placed him on our ever growing list of 'worthies' who have been discovered in the 72 volumes of those Baptised, Married or Buried at the church. So I am delighted that at last, interest has been aroused concerning him. It would be good to put a small tablet to the good Dr. in the church, with the words as suggested. However, it would be an expensive thing. As the name in the Register is clearly **Balemain** I don't think it necessary to change the name of the suburb. A good story for the local paper! Spelling of the names depended on the hearing of the Parish clerk'.

The Association is awaiting a reply from Rector Taylor for details of costing for Dr Balmain's plaque but donations would be gratefully received for this 'expensive thing'.

Kath Hamey

A Self-drive Historic Tour The Oaks and Burrarorang.

The Oaks Historic District lies in the Burrarorang Valley an hour and a half drive west of Balmain. Originally the home of the Tharawal people, the area was settled by farmers in Governor Macquarie's time. The ensuing wars and diseases between the white settlers and the indigenous people led to the occupation of the Tharawal lands by Gundagorra people, as well as the European families. Today most of the Valley is covered by Lake Burrarorang flooded in the late 1950s prior to the opening of Warragamba Dam in 1960.

Your tour of the area should begin at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre, Edward Street, The Oaks which is open to the public every weekend and public holiday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. or on weekdays for groups by special arrangement. The Centre is entirely staffed by volunteers from the local historical society, who have over the years developed an admirable display of professionally-curated local history.

The Centre's Parallel Paths exhibition includes material about the local history of the indigenous people, stories of the European settlers, the lost world of the Burrarorang Valley and displays of the heritage of the working people. Behind the Centre is a fully-furnished pioneer slab cottage where you can re-

visit the life style of the early settlers, complete with washboard, soap making and apple-paring and coring.

There is a mock up of the interior of a coal mine, with sound effects helping you to visualise life underground while Werriberri Creek focusses on the study of the history of the local creek and the effects urbanisation on fresh water life.

Timbermen of the Wollondilly and Yerranderie exhibits show the changes which came to the country with the timber industry and silver mining.

In addition to a wide range of publications, including recipe books and pioneer recollections, you can buy a Tour Guide to the district, with directions to and information about The Oaks and the surrounding area of Okadale. It leads you to the Burrarorang Lookout where you will find one of the most beautiful views in New South Wales, overlooking what remains of the Valley and the waters of Lake Burrarorang.

There are barbeque facilities at the Wollondilly Centre or you can picnic at Burrarorang Lookout. En route to or from The Oaks you can also visit the historic towns of Camden and Picton, but you could easily spend the entire day at the Centre and the Lookout. Further information is available on (046) 571 796. **Debby Nicholls**

What does the Association Do!

A frequently asked question that can be answered as follows:

- * it is self funding in the restoration of the historic Balmain Watch House;
- * opens the Watch House to the public, free of charge, every Saturday, mid-day to 3pm and by appointment;
- * makes the Watch House available for meetings of some local community organisations;
- * provides guided tours of Balmain and Rozelle to school and other groups;
- * publishes books and leaflets of historic interest and bi-monthly Balmain Observer News sheets;
- * conducts historical research and assists with enquiries into family history and house history and student requests;
- * collects archival photographs of the peninsula;
- * attend Planning Committee meetings at Leichhardt Council;
- * meets on the first Wednesday night of each month at 7.30 pm.

National Trust Wine Tasting

The National Trust is to hold a wine tasting and dinner at the Watch House on Friday 19 December. Hosting wine makers will be offering samples in each cell. Dinner will be a buffet in the courtyard, fully catered by a professional spit roast specialist.

The number of guests will be limited to 100 so book early to join the fun Christmas event. Cost \$20 National Trust members, \$28 non-members. Contact 9363 2401 in morning only.

Auditor Required

After a number of years as Association auditor, John Sullivan regretfully has resigned. We thank him for his dedicated service.

If somebody wishes to volunteer or can recommend an auditor please contact the Treasurer on 9818 4954. The accounts are computerised and the work load is minimal.

Balmain Catholic Cemetery

In 1857, the pioneer Catholic priest Father John Joseph Therry, acquired four acres (1.6 ha) in a remote part of his parish to establish the Balmain Catholic Cemetery.

The cemetery was located in what is now North Leichhardt and was bounded by William, Allen and Elswick Streets. This land now forms the St Columba's parochial centre and all traces of the cemetery have disappeared.

About 2000 souls were buried in the cemetery, which closed about 1912 and regrettably the burial register has been lost.

A project is underway to gather information about the cemetery and to re-create the burial register.

If you have any information about Father Therry or the cemetery or believe you may have ancestors buried there, please contact Bonnie Davidson, 9810 5185.

New Publications

John Booth of Balmain by Peter Reynolds.

Here is the story of two branches of the Booth family. Cabin boy John Booth came to New South Wales in 1838 and made his fortune by becoming, in turn, a shipwright, timber merchant, steam sawmill, property developer, landlord and twice-elected member of Parliament. Booth Street, Balmain, is named in his honour.

John's half-brother, corn merchant Harry Booth, chose seclusion on Mitchell's Island at the mouth of the Manning River to give his wife the necessary seven years absence on which she could presume death and marry her lover.

Limited print. Cost \$17+ postage.

Rozelle Walks by Bonnie Davidson & Kath Hamey.

Three self guided walks around Rozelle. Walks 1, covers the area from the southern side of Victoria Road, the former Callan Park Hospital grounds to Iron Cove Bridge. Walks 2, Iron Cove Bridge to Elliott Street back to Victoria Road. Walks 3, Victoria Road, Mansfield Street, Smith Street, Goodsir Street.

The three walks offer much to delight the eye, with city and water views, pleasant parks and many interesting buildings.

Cost \$4 + postage.

In Your Garden

Magic Mulch

Mulch improves soil, saves water, suppresses weeds and looks good too. Apply mulch over all bare soil after first removing weeds. Don't build up around stems. Improving the fertility of your soil and then keeping it in good condition is the best, easiest and cheapest way to maintain a good healthy garden and it's not all hard work. Sure, you've first got to get rid of all the plants, especially the perennial types, but after that the worms will do most of the work for you. How? By breaking down and digging in the mulch you apply to the surface.

A mulch is a layer of preferably organic matter laid over the soil. It suppresses the germination of weed seeds by excluding light. It conserves soil moisture by reducing evaporation as long as it laid over already moist soil. Organic mulches are best. Suitable or-

ganic matter includes compost, fallen leaves, bark chips, peat, peanut shells, manure, straw, lawn clippings and mushroom compost. Do not use the latter around plants that demand an acid soil (such as azaleas, camellias and rhododendron). An organic mulch should not be fresh but rather old and rotten.



Lay mulch to a depth of 5 to 15 cm but do not pile it around the stems of plants.

Applying several thin layers over time is better than one heavy dose - and remember mulching is not a once only task, it should be applied every year in spring.

Bonnie Davidson

Balmain Toastmasters

The Balmain Toastmasters Club meets every second Wednesday at Clontarf Cottage, Wallace Street at 7 pm. It is dedicated to teaching the art of public speaking. Experienced speakers act as mentors for the less confident and show tricks and skills such as how to use gestures, body language and vocal variety to add character and charisma. Contact Sue Bullock on 9810 2078.

Watch House Exhibitions

- Collective Inovation Art Group Dec 6-7.
- Landscape, Modern & Still Life Dec 11-14. Paul Ardill & others.
- Balmain Heritage Photographs through January 1998
- Arty Ms 10th Annual Exhibition Feb 14-Mar 1 1998.

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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.

AnnualSubscriptions:

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