



the balmain
association
incorporated
news sheet

The Peninsula OBSERVER

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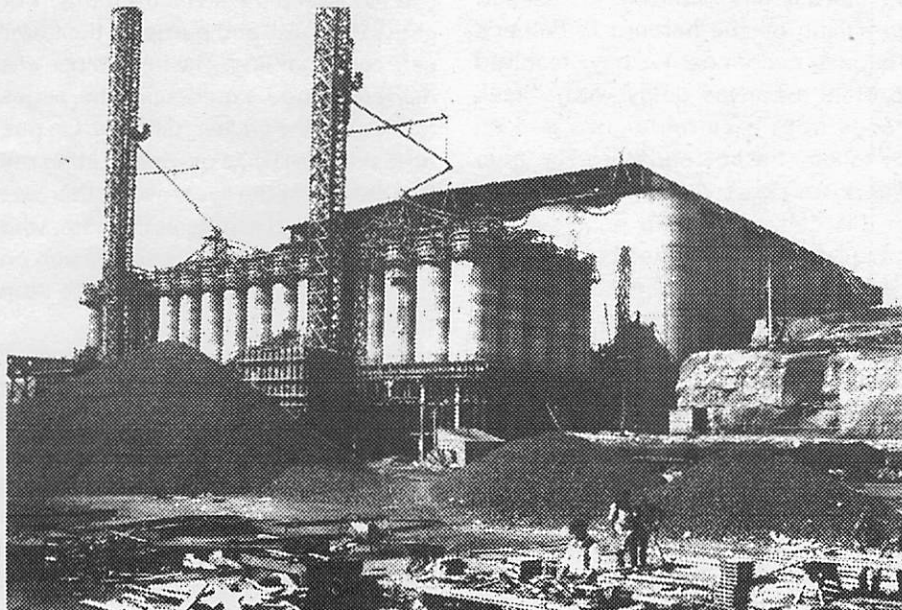
The Bays Precinct REP

The NSW Government has amended the City West Regional Environmental Plan to oversee development of land around White, Rozelle and Blackwattle Bays. The Minister for Urban Affairs & Planning is the consent authority. There is no indication of the proposed development, if any. Considering that the Port Authority estimates that there will be increased shipping activity for thirty years previous plans for residential development have obviously been shelved.

In 1996, Sydney Port Authority allocated \$6.3 million to buy the White Bay

Power Station in order to build a road transport route from the White Bay Terminal. The access road would parallel the railway under Victoria Road to exit on the West Link at The Crescent. Peninsula residents would welcome the removal of semi-trailers from Robert Street.

City West has received a DA to demolish some of the Glebe Island Grain Silos D and E, and ancillary structures. The silos suffer from concrete cancer. Those with Olympic motives will remain. The application does not state what development is to follow.



Glebe Island Silos under construction 1920

Cameron Cove

The Water Police propose to move their facility from Pyrmont to Cameron Cove and have submitted a DA to Leichhardt Council. It includes an two storey administration block, a large boat maintenance shed and a eight-berth floating marina.

A public meeting was held at the Town Hall on 19 March when residents expressed concerns about noise, contamination and foreshore access. They believe that the beach should be retained for public use.

Balmain Power Station

Demolition of the Power Station is expected to begin in April. There are 4 main buildings; Boiler and Generator A & B, Pump House and Administration. Australand, a division of Hooker, has paid \$35 million for the 5.5ha site and propose to construct nearly 400 dwellings. The row of apartments along Victoria Road will be 4 stories above the road level with a further 4 levels below near Iron Cove Bridge. There will be 160 three bedroom units, 130 two bedroom units and up to 80

Heritage Week 1998

Saturday 25 April and 2 May

Photographic Exhibition of the historic Balmain peninsula, featuring Pubs and Trams at the Watch House. 11am to 4pm. Entry Free.

Sunday 26 April

Balmain/Birchgrove Foreshore Walk of Parramatta River, Snails Bay and Mort Bay, includes former industrial sites. Meet 2pm, Rotunda, Elkington Park, Glassop Street. Cost: \$10 Adults. \$8 Cons.

Wednesday 29 April

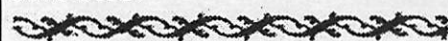
Rozelle/Callan Park Walk includes the grounds and buildings of the former Hospital now the Sydney College of the Arts, rock carvings and Iron Cove foreshore. Meet 2pm, Main Gate, Balmain Road opposite Cecily Street.

Cost: \$10 Adult \$8 Cons. Proceeds to the William Balmain Memorial Tablet at St Giles-in-the-Field, London.

Contact: 9818 4954.

Sunday 3rd May

Ballast Point/Snails Bay Heritage Walk followed by lunch at Dawn Fraser Pool. Stroll down historic Wharf Road, on the Interim list of the Register of the National Estate. Here visit the Archives Room containing a comprehensive photographic exhibition of swimming and water-polo in Australia, dating back to 1883. Cost: \$25 Adult \$15 Cons Walk only \$5. Contact: 9810 6885 or 9810 3639.



serviced apartments. No commercial facilities will be included to avoid competition with the nearby Walker site which has 290 apartments. There will be a 20m wide open space on the waterfront.

Most of the asbestos has been removed and low levels of coal ash are all that remain. The complex is expected to take 3 years to complete. Terry Street will be converted to two way traffic for access to Victoria Road. Other details may be obtained from David Whitting, Australand, ph 9395 5938.

Memories of Dr Ernest Northcroft Merrington

James Mayfield Merrington arrived in Sydney from London in 1845, aged 18 years. The first reference to him was in a list of the officers of the Drapery Assistants' Association in the Sydney Morning Herald 4th May, 1849. The Sands Directory had various references to my father from 1855 at 128 Pitt Street, Sydney, Linen Draper to Mercantile Broker & Commission Agent, at 448 George Street, Sydney, in 1873. Between these dates he spent time in Nelson, New Zealand.

There were no children from his first marriage to Elizabeth Waltham Rush, who died in 1868. My father was 47 years old when he married my mother, Frances Maria Jenkins, aged 26 years, on 1st January, 1874 at Redfern, Sydney. My parents moved to Newcastle in 1875 after my brother Alfred was born and where I was born on 27th August, 1876, however the family soon returned to rented premises at Paddington. My father possessed a fine baritone voice and he was a favourite singer at the drawing-room evenings. The family visited the Sydney Exhibition on 25th April, 1877 and in May, father was taken ill. However, he was well enough to see the Champion Boat Race between Trickett and Rush on 30th June, which was won by Trickett. Father died on 5th September, 1877.

Mother was now a widow with two small children and four months pregnant with my brother Arthur. She opened a large boarding house at corner Cleveland and Elizabeth Streets, Sydney. Mother also accepted pupils for general elementary French, History, English and conducted music lessons. Among the boarders was Mr Joseph Ada who became my step-father and in 1880 we moved to *Oneida*, 35 Wharf Road, Birchgrove and so by the water of the harbour our boyhood was spent.

My brother Alf took me to the Infants School, so called Pigeon Ground Public School when I was not six years old. I informed the teacher early in the afternoon that I wanted to go home! The headmaster of the school was Mr Robert Beavis, who was a real leader and inspirer of thought to the pupils in the main school to which I duly passed. One of the assistants was a Mr Crimmings who was kind to me. In one of his lessons, based on the reading book, the question was asked of the

class, "What is a membrane?" I lifted my hand high and stood up, catching the teacher's eye. "Well Merrington?" I confidently said, "A brain that leads to the member!" Another time Mr Crimmings asked, "What are you going to be when you grow up?" To which I replied, "Oh, just an ordinary sort of man about the house."

Although I reached the fifth class before I was eleven, I was never good at arithmetic and I used to count on my fingers behind my back. We were taught the elements of Latin in primary schools in those days. Father (Joseph Ada) handed out two golden sovereigns and two shillings each term for my fees.

Our house was on the shore of Snails Bay and in addition to a boathouse and davits on our stone wharf, there was a bathing-house where we learnt to swim. Father was keen on boating and always busy about the garden or wharf when home from Farmer & Co. He worked long hours in those days, 8am to 6pm, but early and late Father worked about the place. Every Saturday, we used to go sailing on the harbour in Father's 16-footer cedar boat. We boys resolved to build a canvas dingy with a keel, hoops from a barrel for ribs and an upright for the bow and stern. The latter was not as perpendicular as the former. In this cockle-shell we traversed the harbour and westward up to the Parramatta and Lane Cove Rivers. On one occasion, we crossed the Heads to Middle Harbour. Our neighbour, William Deloitte, warned our parents about the great risks we were running but fortunately we were given a pretty free hand in our 8-foot dinghy. Later we built a 12-footer along similar lines.

Our two gentlemen boarders, Mr Fred Attwood and Mr Lackersteen had a 24-footer sailing boat and we sometimes went out in her for a holiday picnic. In those days the North Shore was mostly bush and there were plenty of good places for a picnic near at hand.

In those days, before the cinema came into being, happy evenings were spent in the drawing-room, with Mother at the piano. Both Mother and Father were Congregationalists, with Father a deacon of the Balmain Church (St Andrew's). We went to Sunday School and the Band of Hope. At the latter, I made my first appearance on the platform. I recited Tennyson's 'Revenge' with a throbbing in my head all the time, due to nervousness. I occasionally sang

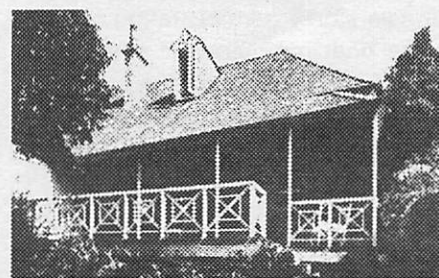
a solo and also gave humorous recitations.

Two sons were born to bear our step-father's name, John and William. So there were five boys. I must confess that the imp of mischief hovered round us boys at times. I have to plead guilty to firing off Mr Attwood's sporting rifle from the attic window at the bunya tree which stood on the edge of the lawn. A shout from Mr Deloitte who, as usual, was seated on his verandah just below— "Now then Ernest, don't you go firing off Mr Attwood's gun". Arthur and I used to watch Mr Attwood firing at the flying-foxes which infested two huge old Moreton Bay fig trees near-by. The rifle was an object of interest to us and I knew where it stood in the bedroom, also where the small cartridges were kept. I developed a love for cricket and we used to take our stumps to play at Birchgrove Reserve (pretty rough in those days, before the end of the bay was reclaimed from the mud).

There were home duties for us all. I used to sweep the steps from the front gate to the well and pump, at the lower gate each morning. The newspaper was delivered and I would scan the pages for news of the cricket matches. On one occasion I fell while playing, cutting my forehead near the eyebrow. Mother was talking to Mrs Deloitte at the gate, who ran her finger through a spider web on the wall and spread the web to stop the bleeding.

Life at Snails Bay had many aspects. On one occasion the body of a drowned sailor from one of the ships floated in front of our stone wharf. The sight haunted us for many days and so with school, church and societies, boating, swimming, cricket and other interests, the years passed at Snails Bay in 'the cottage by the sea'.

Extracts by Gaila Merrington. Joseph Ada moved to Glebe and the family continued to lease both *Oneida* and the joint property *Simla*, until both properties were sold in 1946 to Lavinia Deloitte Vernon, the Comtesse de Vilme-Hautemont.



Out and About In Sydney

Where can you go for Sunday entertainment? Surprisingly enough, on the first Sunday of every month, you could go as far as the Rookwood Necropolis for a fascinating three hours or so.

Every month, the Friends of Rookwood run Heritage Tours of this unique Sydney landmark which is not only one of the largest burial grounds in the world, but is also the world's largest surviving example of a Victorian public cemetery. It was originally designed as a garden cemetery including a Serpentine Canal with a series of ponds, bridges and statues, along with formal gardens, gazebos and rest houses. Money raised by the tours helps the Friends continue their invaluable restoration and research work.

In addition to the regular tours - full or half day - there are special tours each month. The March tour was called In Sickness and In Health, and was based on the terrible epidemics and diseases which killed the population of 19th Century Sydney.

There was, for example, the grave of Lucy, daughter of Jane and Cornelius Maloney, who died at the tender age of 7 in the diphtheria epidemic of 1877. A horrifying 46% of children in colonial Australia died before they reached the age of 18, many of them of this dreaded disease of the throat in which a mem-

brane formed which prevented breathing. In the early days they treated it with sulphuric acid diluted with a bit of water. Later kerosene was found to be as effective - and with less chance of the patient dying of the treatment rather than the disease! As late as 1926 the Presbyterian Women's Association Cookbook had a recipe which involved dipping a small bit of calico in the kerosene and wrapping it around a pen holder to use as a swab. The instructions stated, "Deal kindly with the child - use a spoon to open the throat before you try to insert the pen holder."

The grave of George Vidal who died in 1878 at the age of 62 was an example of the dangers of typhoid, another widespread cause of death in the days before the disease was connected to water or milk infected by contaminated faeces. Balmain cemetery was apparently the source of one outbreak: bodies buried insufficiently deep and too close to the water supply of a nearby dairy. Hospitals also contributed to - as well as trying to heal - the disease. Many of them sold their human waste to be used as fertiliser by vegetable growers.

The Butler family grave contains the bodies of three children who died within 13 days of each other in the measles epidemic of 1867, which caused 740 deaths (equivalent to 15,000 if an outbreak of similar proportions occurred today), 70% of them children under 5. Two more Butler children died in the

next two years; a sixth died in 1876 during the scarlet fever epidemic.

This epidemic also claimed the lives of four children who lie in the Solomon family grave. The recommended treatment in those days included rubbing the patients with lard or olive oil (to prevent flaking of the skin which was thought to cause the spread of the disease), as well as dosing them with Epsom salts, quinine, iron, sulphuric acid, belladonna, potash and hydrochloric acid. It would seem only the strong could survive the treatment let alone the disease.

In addition to dealing with other causes of death, including plague, influenza, childbirth consumption and the privations of the sea voyage to Australia, the tour also encompasses the graves of the physicians, surgeons and administrators. These men made invaluable contribution to the cause of public health, founding hospitals and benevolent societies, providing treatment for the deaf and blind and eliminating through improvement in sanitation, housing and vaccination the causes of the diseases.

Forthcoming tours encompass the railways, the Old Jewish burial ground, ships and shipwrecks, the Irish in Australia, and Sydney last century. They begin at 10 a.m. or 1.30 p.m. at Necropolis Circuit at a cost of \$8. Refreshments are on sale.

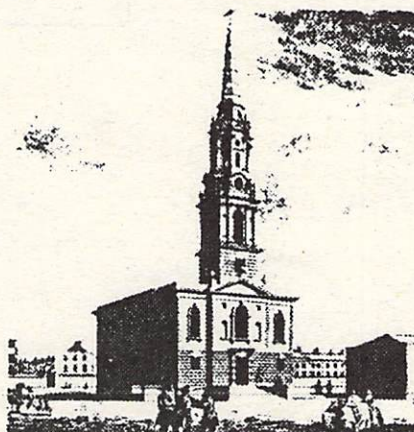
Debby Nicholls

William Balmain Memorial Tablet

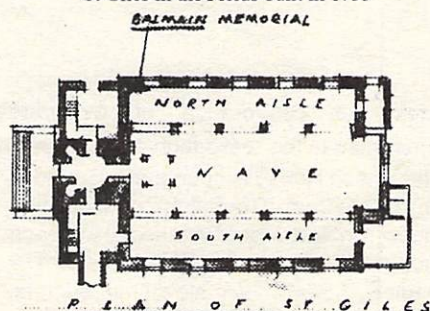
Rev Gordon Taylor has been requested to continue with the project for the Memorial Tablet to Dr William Balmain. The black slate tablet 92cm x 36cm (3' x 1'2") with gilded incised lettering, is to be installed in the North Aisle wall at St Giles-in-the-Fields, St Giles High Street, WC2, London. The church architect is Mr Peter Foster, who was until recently Surveyor to Westminster Abbey.

"Dr William Balmain Assistant Surgeon with First Fleet to New South Wales 1788. Principal Surgeon to Colony of New South Wales 1796. Returned to England 1802. Died 17 November 1803. Erected by the Balmain Association of Balmain Sydney Australia."

Donations are most welcome. Send to the Balmain Association.
Cost approx. UK £2000.



St Giles in the Fields built in 1753



Can Anyone Help?

Tim and Elle Underwood were recently visiting Australia trying to locate information about Tim's father, Edgar Dearing. Edgar had been wounded in WW1 and rehabilitated in England before returning to Australia. Tim was adopted and it was on his adopting mother's deathbed that she told him of his true parents.

Tim's father Edgar (Walter) was born at Goodsir Street in 1898. Edgar's father, Walter Lutteral Dearing and Mother, Isabella Elliott. Other siblings, Hopetoun R, born 1901, Balmain. Larry A, born 1904, Ryde. Norman S, born 1905, Leichhardt. Doris, born 1907, Petersham.

Tim would love to contact anyone who has information or photographs. He must have several cousins somewhere.

Contact: Joan Ransom, Presbyterian Manse. 9818 1170.

In Your Garden

Perennial Favourites

Flowers for little effort once planted, perennials are soft-wooded plants usually forming expanding clumps. Unlike annuals that die after blooming, they flower year after year without being replaced. Some are herbaceous, dying back to ground level over winter, then reshooting from their rested roots in spring. Others are evergreen, always remaining at least a leafy clump. They do better in colder areas. In milder districts they don't die back completely and exhaust themselves with continuous growth.

Perennials reduce garden maintenance for in a suitable climate, clumps can be left for three to five years, sometimes longer before they need to be lifted, divided and replanted. Popular types include the many varieties of Aster (Michalmas or Easter daisies for example). These tall growers can be planted at the back of the garden along with blue Salvia, Foxgloves, Perennial



Phlox and Penstemon.

Ajuga reptans or blue bugle is a great groundcover for shady spots with spikes of intense blue flowers in summer. Bergeria cordifolia has glossy round leaves and heads of fragrant pink heads on tall stems in winter.

Over time virtually all perennials will need to be divided. This is because the centre of the clump has died out. Lift the plants with a fork in autumn or winter, shake off soil from the roots and separate the outside growths for your needs and replant into new enriched soil, water in, keep lightly moist over winter and the new plants will get away to a good start in spring.

Bonnie Davidson

Wanted

Photographs of memorials from the old Balmain Cemetery formerly located in what is now Pioneer Park, Leichhardt. The History Committee is archiving the burials and has had numerous inquiries recently from people tracing their families. 9818 4954.

Peninsula Walks

The Association has booklets describing walks in Balmain, Walks I and II. Two for book of stamps \$4.50. New: Three Rozelle Walks \$4 + \$1 post.

Watch House Exhibitions

- Photographs of Historic Balmain 4 Apr-2 May
- Gary Notalley-Smith 11-19 Apr with Rowena Gibbs.
- Balmain Captured 23-31 May Jan Jorgensen

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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. 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.