



the balmain
association
incorporated
news sheet

The Peninsula OBSERVER

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Loyalty Square

Leichhardt Council moved to accommodate communal input for the completion of Loyalty Square when it called a public meeting on Monday 27 April to discuss the project. The move followed a campaign by Tony Gilding, who claimed that he had 1000 objectors. The asphalt, heat and the bareness of the area were their main concerns.

Initially there were some strident critics. One woman was surprised by the cost of \$250 000 but was obviously unaware that most of the work was underground and that the RTA had contributed \$50 000. Some speakers believed that the traffic was a nightmare and was dangerous to pedestrians. Only one person advocated a return to the old square.

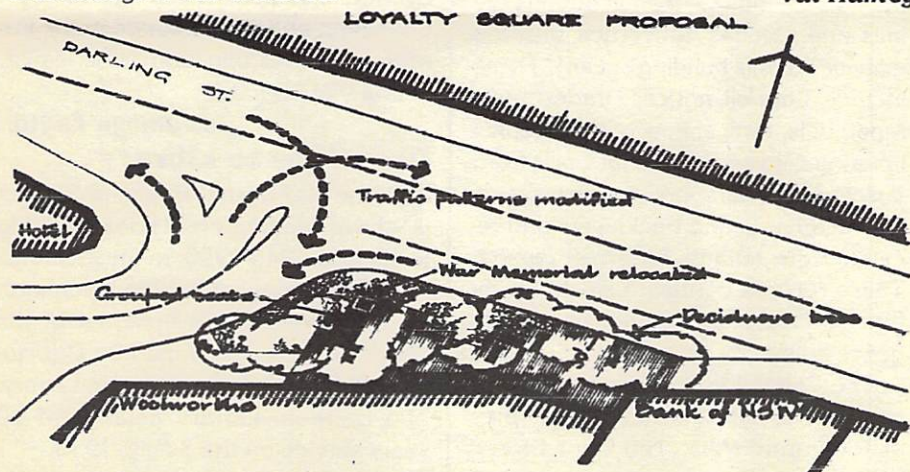
The mood softened later when there was support for the design from a number of speakers. They pointed to the improvement to pedestrian safety and accessibility of the Soldiers Memorial now that it has been rescued from the traffic. Architect Robert Irving said that the criticism was premature as the project was incomplete. The area isn't a square but a pedestrian refuge. When the wisteria vines cover the trellis it would be more attractive. He called the opposition a lopsided campaign. Jim Conway spoke of the need for a non-slip surface for impaired people and asphalt was a recommended material even though it was criticised.

Despite the criticism of the traffic management it should be recognised that the primary object was to slow traffic to reduce the danger. People have short memories. There were often traffic queues at the old roundabout arrangement and vehicles sped dangerously past Woolworths into Beattie Street. Pedestrians do tend to dominate now but this could be overcome by signs requesting group crossing when vehicles queue. The narrowness of the gap is another criticism but the dimensions are determined by RTA standards. There are minor problems at peak periods with vehicles making a right turn from Beattie Street but right turns are always difficult at intersections. There has been much uninformed criticisms but very few viable solutions. Council is undertaking a traffic survey.

There is a need to address the problems in a cooperative atmosphere. The campaign says quite a little about community attitudes. Unfortunately residents sometimes ignore the proposals until they are implemented and then they cry "Why weren't we told".

The meeting agreed to a committee to advise council of additions and changes to the project. There are representatives from business, residents and council. Woolworths were invited to have a delegate. I will represent the Balmain Association. The sketch shows that a similar proposal was promoted by the Association in August 1973.

Val Hamey



Cockatoo Island

Recent events promise a change in policy on the future use of Cockatoo Island. NSW Government has moved to take over planning control of Sydney Harbour foreshore land and Premier Bob Carr is committed to blocking the Federal Government's push to sell former defense sites to private interests by refusing unacceptable development.

The Cockatoo Island Rehabilitation Consortium has made a study of the island with reference to soil and groundwater contamination, hazardous materials, structures, sea walls, etc. Five of the wharves will be demolished because of their hazardous condition. The Destroyer Wharf removal will reveal the remains of a much earlier stone wharf. The Plate and Parramatta Wharves will be retained for access to the island. Several buildings on the south-eastern point will be demolished. Underground tanks used for storage of diesel, cyanide, etc, have deteriorated and must be removed. The Power House, the most impressive building, is contaminated with pools of mercury that have to be removed. These works with repairs to sea walls are estimated to cost \$5mill. The Heritage Commission has made it clear that approval for further demolition will be given only when the urgency demands. The dock caissons and machinery have deteriorated to such an extent that they cannot be revived but the docks are structurally sound.

The Commonwealth is to create a special trust to administer the harbour sites but is proposing to compensate the Defense Dept from the Federation Trust. This has been ridiculed by the Premier. The island will not be sold to private interests and will remain in Commonwealth hands.

The Friends of Cockatoo Island became founding members of the Defenders of Sydney Harbour Foreshores. They can be contacted through the Secretary, Jeanette Sims, 9498 1457, Fax 9418 2123.

Balmain Mine Memorial

In the Old Anglican Ground at Rookwood a large and impressive monument marks the graves of five workmates, buried there side by side. A marble carving of the headworks of a mine tells us that they were miners and their inscription records their death in the shaft of the Sydney Harbour Collieries Ltd. mine at Balmain in March, 1900. In New South Wales in that year, 11,333 men were employed in coal mining and 24 men were killed in mining accidents including the five from the Balmain accident. Even today with vastly improved equipment and safety measures, fatal accidents occur.

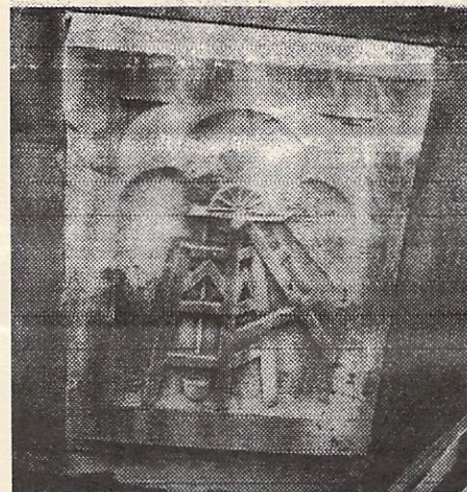
Below Sydney Harbour, the Bulli coal seam swept along the coast between Newcastle and Wollongong at 3000ft (915m) below sea level. Many waterfront activities, for example Mort's Dock at Mort Bay, repaired and built ships which relied on coal as a source of power. To tap this seam within Sydney Harbour would eliminate transport costs, provide a local supply of coal and allow ships to be loaded for export. The ships could also be bunkered direct from the mine.

A site was selected at the corner of Birchgrove Road and Water Street, Balmain and work began in 1897 on the sinking of two shafts. The shafts were named Birthday and Jubilee as 1897 was Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee year. Steam cranes were erected over the shafts and sinking began in the Birthday shaft on 9 June, 1897 and the Jubilee shaft on 5 August, 1897.

Work in the shafts had been in progress for almost three years with no

coal yet raised, when the accident took place on 17 March, 1900. The shift was being changed at 3pm on Saturday afternoon and six men were being lowered 1770ft (540m) down Birthday shaft. As usual the men stood with one leg in the bucket and one leg dangling outside as six was a full load. One man carried the kerosine flare which provided light for the descent. The flare was blown out only a few yards down, leaving the men in darkness, unable to see the walls and fend the bucket off as necessary. About 1200ft (366m) down, the bucket struck a projection from the wall which tipped it over from the base, emptying five of the six men into the shaft to fall 500ft. One man was left clinging to the handle with his feet dangling in space but was able to regain his place as the bucket righted itself and although badly battered by its swinging, he lowered safely. His name was William Watkins of Reuss Street. All the men were from nearby homes. One of the single men was the principal support of his mother and stepfather, who had lost an arm and his sight in a blasting accident in the same mine. Another of the dead, Alexander Robertson of Jaques Street, had given notice and had planned to take his family to New Zealand.

The funeral was held on 19 March, following immediately after the inquest held the same day. The funeral service was held at St John's Church, Balmain. The procession through the crowded streets to the Mortuary Station, Central Railway, was led by 150 colliery employees followed by 5 horse drawn hearses, 11 closed mourning coaches for close family and 5 open carriages of mine officials. Behind these came a very large number of vehicles carrying friends and



Detail of Memorial at Rookwood

relatives. Across the old Glebe Island Bridge and up Harris Street they went, while all other traffic stopped and thousands of people lined the streets. A special train, provided by the company took mourners to Rookwood and a service at the graveside.

At this time welfare payments were uncertain and it is good to know that at least the men were insured with the Ocean Accident Insurance Company which paid £50 to the heirs of each man to cover funeral expenses.

The mine was finally closed in 1930 and the owners decided to seal Birthday at the top and Jubilee at 40ft below. An explosion on 20 April, 1945 claimed three lives when Birthday was being sealed. The Coal mine disaster monument will be shown on "Sydney Last Century" Tour, 1 November, 1998. Contact 9499 2415.

Source: December, Newsletter of Friends of Rookwood, Leaflet, The Coal Mine, Peter Reynolds. On sale at the Watch House, \$2.

The St Joseph's Collection

The Society of Australian Genealogists has recently made available for research their records of the St Joseph's Investment and Building Society. St Joseph's maintained many houses within Balmain, Rozelle, Glebe, Annandale and Leichhardt areas and the bills and receipts for repairs to these houses, some covering a 70 year period, have been indexed to allow researchers to find out who originally owned the houses, the tenants who lived in them, what repairs were done and which local tradesmen carried them out.

The St Joseph's Collection dates

from 1880 until 1974 and contains the bills and receipts concerned with the activities of this building society. These include Council notices, tradesmen's repair bills, time sheets of St Joseph's labourers, investors' receipts, bills from building material suppliers, such as timber merchants and bricklayers and receipts from tenants for small repairs. These records contain a wealth of information for local historians as well as genealogists.

The Collection is housed in the Society of Australian Genealogists office at Richmond Villa, 120 Kent Street,

Sydney. It is part of the Australasian Collection and can be found in the Primary Records Collection as Series 22. Phone 9247 3953.

Bronwyn Layton

Donations to Library

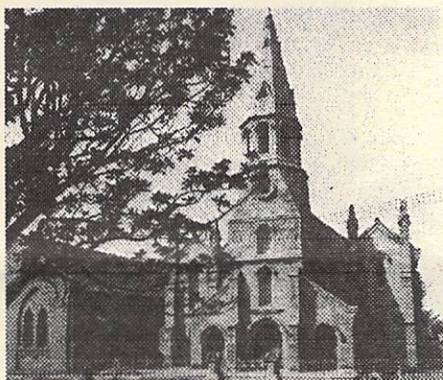
Raine and Horne House of Sydney have donated a rent book covering the period 1940-1950, to the local History Collection, held at the Leichhardt Library and a micro fiche set of the Sands Sydney and Suburban Directories 1858-1933, to the Balmain Library. The Balmain Library celebrated 20 years service on the 3 May, 1998.

Centenary or more

There are some buildings in the area that were built in 1898 and others that are a little older.

The Campbell Street Presbyterian Church. On 12 May, 1841, Dr John Dunmore Lang purchased land at the corner of Cooper Street and Darling Street. A weatherboard church was built at a cost of £254/17/- and was completed in 1842. In 1853, the Congregational and Presbyterian Churches of Balmain united and built the Congregational Church now St Andrew's at Darling Street corner Curtis Road. Following differences of opinion in 1857 the two bodies separated.

A second Presbyterian church of weatherboard was erected next to the Balmain Watch House. Within ten years of the first service on the 21 September, 1857, the congregation had outgrown the small building and the need for a larger one became apparent. A site was found in Campbell Street and the foundation stone of the present church was laid on 18 June, 1867. The first service in the new church was held on 19 April, 1868. The architect was James McDonald, Mayor of Balmain and a resident of Thames Street. The builders were James and William Burt of Jane and Ann Streets, who were responsible for the stone-work. James Schultz of Clayton Street executed the carpentry work. All in all, the design and construction of the Presbyterian church was a Balmain affair. The fine stone spire and nave and aisle roofs are a part of Balmain's silhouette.



Other buildings over a century old are: **1848** The former *Unity Hall Hotel*, Darling cnr Nicholson Streets. *Shannon Grove*, 10 Ewinton Street. **1858** The former *Forth & Clyde Hotel*, Mort cnr Trouton Streets. **1868** Campbell Street Presbyterian Church. **1878** The former *Waterview Hotel*, 131-135 Rowntree Street. *Tilba Tilba*, 18 White Street. *Callan Park Hotel* now Darling

Vale David Ramsay

Long time member and advocate for the Balmain Association, David Ramsay died on 16 April, 1998, from emphysema. Even before David was retrenched by the closure of Colgate Palmolive, he was prominent in many local campaigns, particularly in the redevelopment of the five major industrial sites in the early 1990s

David's weapon was the pen. He wrote many letters 'to the editor' of the various local newspapers, where he would focus on the many current issues. These included open space, over development, harbour pollution, public transport, Balmain heritage conservation and he attended Leichhardt Council Traffic Committee meetings as a representative for the Association.

David was great on recycling and would bring garage sale treasures to the Watch House to find a home but not all were received with the enthusiasm given, so some gifts had to be moved on!

David would drop in to the Watch House on Saturdays for a chat to the visitors and was the first to offer assistance on social occasions. He enjoyed to dress the part by wearing his sailor costume to such as the Birchgrove Bicentenary Dance and to the celebrations held at Birchgrove Park in September, 1996. He loved to surf so his swim flippers and favourite t-shirt were placed in his casket.

A month before his death, he wrote urging members of the Association to keep ever vigilant on community concerns. David, we miss you.

Sincere condolences to Ann and their sons, Paul and Jarrod.

Street Hotel, 726 Darling Street. *Merton Estate Hotel*, 38 Victoria Road. *Tattersalls Hotel* 68 Victoria Road. The former *Easton Park Hotel*, Gordon Street. *Royal Oak Hotel*, Curtis Road. *Keba*, 23 Louisa Road. 1, 11, 13 Bridge Street. **1888** *Glentworth*, 86 Darling Street, c1842, enlarged 1888. *Holyhead Terrace*, 113-121 Darling Street. Balmain Town Hall, 370 Darling Street. Smith Street School. 2-8 Rose Street: *Arcadia*, 2; *Oliveto*, 4; *Valetta*, 6; *Eversley*, 8. *Young Australia Terrace*, 55-69 Grove Street. **1898** *Concertina Terrace*, 5-13 Colgate Avenue. Gladstone Park Bowling Club. *Elmo*, 505 Darling Street. Waratah Masonic Lodge, 558 Darling Street.

Eat Street



Tourism New South Wales are to hold a Wine and Food Festival at Darling Harbour in June 20-27. A feature of the week long Festival will be Eat Street - Balmain and Rozelle, showcasing the culinary expertise of the many restaurants on the peninsula. A local committee was formed and the Balmain Association was invited to join.

There are over thirty participants in the Festival. The official opening will be held at 11am on Saturday, 20 June, at Loyalty Square. The Association will hold two guided walks and to be in the mood of the Festival are called a Heritage Wine Crawl, where we will be wine tasting at two venues.

Saturday, 20, depart Watch House, 1.30pm. Saturday, 27, depart Darling Street cnr Victoria Road, Rozelle., 1.30pm. Cost Adults \$12. Cons \$10. Bookings: 9818 4954.

Storage Tunnel

A tunnel to capture major wet weather overflows on Sydney's northside is to be constructed from Lane Cove to North Head. Over the next 2 years about one million cubic metres of excavated crushed sandstone will be transported by barge to White Bay Terminals 1 & 2 where there will be temporary stockpiling in bunds to enclose the materials. The product will be dewatered and stabilised if necessary before being trucked out in sealed trucks via James Craig Road into the City West Link.

A plant will be established this month to treat dredged sediment from Long Bay, Cammeray. Initial testing of the material indicates that it has low levels of heavy metals and organic compounds and low levels of odour. The Northside Storage Tunnel Alliance has strategies to control dust and odours. Some measures to reduce noise are the upgrading of mufflers on diesel powered machines, acoustic treatment of machinery, extension of the acoustic fence around the site and strict adherence to approved working hours. For further information or registration of complaints contact NST Community Affairs on its 24 hour hotline 9434 7443.

In Your Garden

May Gardening

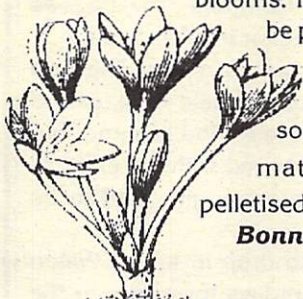
There is no mistaking autumn. Every time you go outdoors there will be another heap of leaves to rake up. Put all of these into the compost bin or in a heap in layers with garden refuse or other organic material. It will be valuable compost for spring.

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 out now. Rosa banksiae "lutea" 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 establish seedlings.

May seems to be clean-up month but as it is much cooler it is easier to work in the garden. You should have planted the spring flowering bulbs by early May. Other bulbous type plants 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 pelletised manure.

Bonnie Davidson

It's in the Mail

The Balmain Peninsula Observer is sent far and wide to members of the Association. Most issues of course are for Balmain and Rozelle but they are also sent to 33 Sydney Suburbs, 14 country areas, 2 each to Queensland, West Australia, Northern Territories and one each to New Zealand and London.



Watch House Exhibitions

- Balmain Captured 11-21 June Jan Jorgensen
- Balmain Photographs 28 June to 15 August
- Mix Pix - Nth Suburbs Camera Club Annual Exhibit 22-30 Aug
- The Burlong Group 12-20 Sep 10 Innovative Painters

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Dr Peter Reynolds
9 The Avenue
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1998/12

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.