

the balmain
association
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news sheet

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A Tale of Two Propellers

A question has arisen on the origin of two propellers on the Mort Bay foreshore at East Balmain. The Peninsula Observer, February 1998, requested information about the propellers and a member took up the challenge for the Association. They are a pair and are marked 'Shaw Savill' with the name *Cedric*. Both are mounted on concrete bases and are situated on a small reserve next to the tug wharf, the area being variously known as Gilchrist Place or Chapman's Slipway, though Leichhardt Council refers to it as Mort Bay Foreshore.

idly and maintained their direct service between England and New Zealand carrying not only passengers but particularly a refrigerated cargo trade of meat, butter and cheese.

The end of WW11 saw a further expansion in the number of ships in the fleet and in 1952, the first of a series of five sister ships, known as the 'C' class, was delivered. The fortunes of the company did not, however continue in the same way. In due course it became part of the Furness Withy Group which itself was eventually acquired by other interests and by 1987 only one ship, the

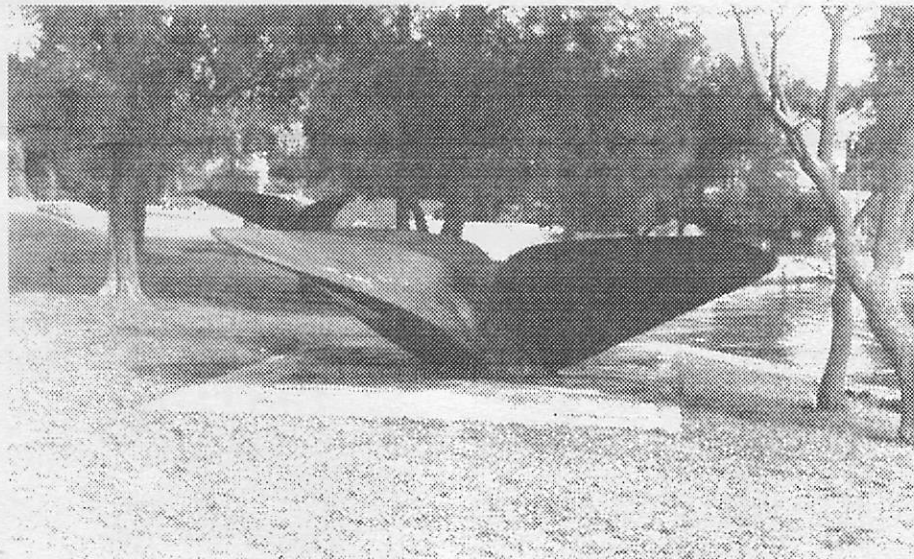
lers, tail shafts, anchors and anchor cables were stored at various places at Sydney docks, Chapman's Slipway being one such holding area.

In November 1976 the 24 year old ship was sold to Fife Shipping Ltd of Panama and renamed *Sea Condor*, however she sailed for Kaohsiung in Taiwan and was scrapped.

On looking more closely at the two propellers, it is clear that they had been spares for the *Cedric* or other 'C' class ships. The point is confirmed on noticing that they are made of cast iron and it is also clear that they have been used since the blade tips are chipped and probably were fitted in an emergency.

With the advent of containerisation the whole Mort Bay maritime scene changed. *Cedric's* propellers, condemned, worth nothing as scrap and their owners no longer in business, became relics and were abandoned on site. As happens to harbourside land, developers acquired the site and were keen to cover the whole area with private housing but in due course a reasonable compromise was reached. The result is that pleasant harbourside houses look down on a small waterfront reserve containing appropriate reminders of Balmain's historic past. A large gear wheel and another small propeller are also in the reserve.

This is an abridged article from A Tale of Two Propellers, the whole research is on view at the Watch House.



Shaw Savill was the name of a shipping company whose activities date back to 1858 when two young men, Robert Ewart Shaw and Walter Savill set up business on their own account in London as Shaw Savill & Co, and right from the beginning, had close links with the early development of New Zealand. This included the establishment of the first regular mail service to that country from England and in their early days, they adopted for a time as their house flag, the original national flag of New Zealand.

In 1882 the company amalgamated with the Albion Line to form Shaw Savill & Albion Co Ltd. The line expanded rap-

Dunedin, was wearing the SSA funnel. The five ships in the 'C' Class were, *Cedric*, *Cymric*, *Canapia*, *Cretic*, and *Carnatic*. The *Cedric* was built in 1952 by Harland & Wolff in Belfast and was a 11,232 ton steel hull ship. She had a well-raked stern, cruiser stern, two masts and an oval funnel.

After twenty years of hard work of two round trips a year of some 26,546 miles, she began to show her age and with the advent of containerisation was becoming less suited to the needs of the day. The ports of call included Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane and as usual with ships of this kind, spares were kept in bond in case of need. Propel-

**Annual General Meeting
Members are requested to
attend the 32nd Annual
General Meeting
of the
Balmain Association
at 7.30pm on Wednesday
2 September 1998
in the Watch House**

Balmain Personalities on the History Trail

Among the varied activities of the Balmain Association in its 33 years of existence, has been the installation of the Balmain History Trail. The project, the Commemorative Plaques were installed as a Bicentennial Project by members of the Balmain Association and the Rotary Club of Balmain, involved installing 63 plaques commemorating notable people, places and events connected with the Peninsula. Some of the personalities, especially, come as a surprise to people who are following the History Trail. Thanks to the phrase "Balmain boys don't cry" most of them are aware of a connection between Neville Wran and Balmain. Dawn Fraser's name has long been associated with the Peninsula. Tom Uren is a familiar - and welcome - sight in the streets of Balmain, and at public meetings. And quite a few will remind themselves "That's right, it WAS Balmain where Sir Henry Parkes lived for awhile." But Billy Hughes? For most people the response is "Oh, I didn't know he lived HERE."

with pride about his improvisations. One day, for example, he claimed to notice some loose tiles on a building, knocked on the door and told the owner he was an expert tiler from "Home". Another day he passed himself off as a locksmith and pretended to make a new key for a safe to replace one which had been lost, when in fact he had found the old key himself.

Hughes' shop was also the centre of political discussions, especially centering around a single tax. He was deeply involved in the Balmain Single Tax League and, later, the Balmain Socialist League. On Saturday nights he would mount a soap box and speak to the big open air meetings which took place at Loyalty Square. It was while living in Balmain that he became a Labor Party organiser for the Labor Electoral League, organising labour in three country electorates and enrolling members at the rate of four shillings a head. In 1894 Hughes was elected to the NSW Parliament seat of Lang, which lay between George Street and Darling Harbour and consisted of 2115 voters, who gave him the solid waterfront con-

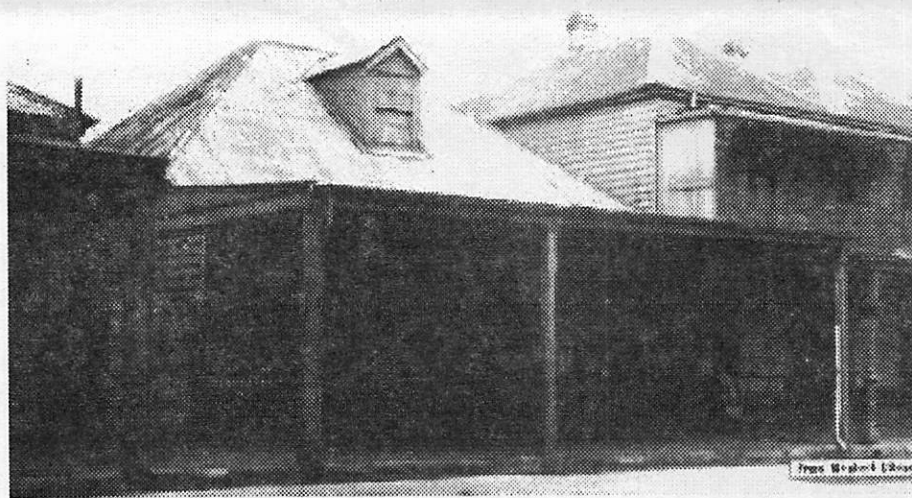
his connections with Balmain are often forgotten. The plaque at 83 Grove Street commemorates the fact that he was MLA for Balmain from 1925-1930 and the only Australian to be President of the UN, a post he held from 1948-49.

Another notable Labor resident was "Honest John" Storey who went to school in Adolphus Street, worked as a boilermaker at Morts Dock, served as Balmain's MLA and was premier of NSW from 1920-21. A plaque at 5 Macquarie Terrace commemorates his Balmain allegiance.

Ten years on 5 plaques have been removed during redevelopment, such as the no 6, E H Brett & Sons Pty Ltd, no 22, former Bank of NSW in Darling Street, no 26, Balmain Hospital, no 41, the former Amusu Movie Theatre, Darling Street and no 31, the Billy Hughes plaque has been temporarily removed due to rebuilding works. Contact was made with the above for the replacement plaques but to no avail.

Information about other commemorative plaques, together with a map of the trail, is contained in the Balmain Association's leaflet "Balmain History Trail", price \$2.

Debby Nicholls



Billy Hughes shop at 16 Beattie Street

In fact, Billy Hughes moved to Balmain in 1891, to a small shop at 16 Beattie Street which no longer exists. Donald Horne in his biography "The Little Digger" suggests that possibly Will Hughes used money of his wife's to set up the shop, a small mixed business so small that they both had to do other work. His wife, who had given birth to a son in 1887 and a daughter in 1888, took in washing. Billy took up odd jobs, amongst them selling umbrellas from door to door. Donald Horne says that Hughes himself reminisced

stipendiary which took him to the first Australian parliament after Federation. He and his wife and growing family left Balmain, but his presence here is recorded in the plaque at what was 16 Beattie Street.

Not long after that 54 Terry Street became the home of a little boy named John Kerr, whose early Labor Party allegiance has not, for the past 23 years, been the first thing to be remembered about him.

There is not that problem with Dr Herbert Vere Evatt, however, although

BALMAIN HISTORY TRAIL

COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUES



Area covered: Balmain, Birchgrove, Rozelle.

Implementing these changes has not involved any consultation outside the library staff, a number of whom are deeply concerned about the proposal. The proposed changes may breach the terms of the David Scott Mitchell bequest and should be vigorously opposed. Letters to the Premier and to the press are necessary to prevent this bureaucratic madness. From the newsletter of the Horbury Hunt Club Inc.

In Your Garden

Wattle Day

Wattles, or acacias, are among the most cheerful winter flowering native plants because their yellow blossoms stand out so vividly on cold, grey days. The following varieties provide winter colour in coastal or inland areas.

Queensland's silver wattle, *acacia podalyriifolia*, is fast growing and thrives in Sydney or anywhere the temperature falls no lower than -3 deg C. With silvery, round leaves it lights up with the brightest yellow blooms from mid-May until at least August. It will live longer if the branches are pruned by a third immediately flowering has finished.

In early August the green or black wattle, *ac. decurrens*, is at its best. This is one of the fastest growing wattles around Sydney, reaching 6 m in a couple of years. The Wallangarra wattle, *ac. adanica*, is one of the showiest, with masses of fluffy, perfumed flowers. Hardy and unfussy about soil, it grows to about 6 m. A prostrate form *ac. amblygona* called "Austraflora winter

gold" is recommended as a groundcover or for trailing over walls. The flowers are golden with deep green, triangular, prickly leaves. The stunning blue-leafed Cootamundra wattle, *ac. baileyana*, is a reliable favourite in gardens and street planting. Always shapely, it is smothered in July with brilliant yellow flowers.

The name wattle is derived from an old way of building used in parts of England called *wattle and daub*. The walls were a thick mat of twigs that were *wattled* (woven) between the posts and rails of the hut's frame. The slim branches of the acacias were easily bent for wattling and quickly earned its nickname. The mat of twigs was then *daubed* (plastered) solidly with thick mud or clay. In 1844 there were, in Balmain, eight *wattle and daub* huts together with five bark, thirteen slab and numerous stone buildings.

Wattle Day is celebrated in NSW on 1 August.



Swedish Printmakers

The works of an acclaimed group of artists from Akersberga, Sweden, will exhibit with Warringah Printmakers in a cultural exchange between Sydney and Stockholm. They open in the Watch House on 1 August for the following three weekends.

This year, Stockholm has been selected as the Cultural Exchange for Europe and Warringah Printmakers will in return exhibit in Stockholm.

Watch House Exhibitions

- Ends of the Earth - 1-16 August Warringah Printmakers Studio with Swedish Artists.
- Mix Pix - Nth Suburbs Camera Club Annual Exhibit 22-30 Aug
- The Burlong Group 12-20 Sep 10 Innovative Painters
- Assemblage & Collage 3-10 Oct Betsy-Jane Green

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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.