

the balmain
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news sheet

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Christmas Cards

Each year, hundreds of thousands of people all over the world send and receive Christmas cards. Have you ever wondered when and where the first card was produced? You may think that exchanging cards at Christmas is a very ancient custom, in fact it was firmly established in the late 1880s.

The idea of exchanging illustrated greetings and presents is however, ancient. The Egyptians gave each other symbolic gifts such as inscribed scarabs to celebrate the New Year, while the Romans exchanged golden laurels or sometimes made of olive branches. In Europe in the 15th century prints were produced by wood engravers that were in effect the prototype of the modern Christmas card. These were inscribed with various legends generally wishing a Happy New Year. Printed greetings especially from merchants were commonplace in the 18th and 19th century.

The first commercial Christmas card was produced in Britain in 1843 by Henry Cole, founder of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (below). The hand-coloured print designed by J C Horsley, was inscribed with the words "A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to You". The experiment was a failure and Cole did not repeat his ven-

ture. A similar experiment was published in the United States by R H Pease of New York.

The advent of the penny post in 1840 made possible the sending of cards but it was not until the 1860s that the Christmas card as we know it came into being. These were simple cards with an embossed border with "A Merry Christmas" selling for one penny each. But those with puritanical traditions of the Victorian period, found it hard to associate any kind of merriment with Christmas, so most of the cards tended to be New Year card than Christmas cards.

Perhaps the real founder of the American Christmas card can be said to be Louis Prang of Boston. He printed a wide range of album and visiting cards and in 1875 issued seasonal greeting cards which were an immediate success. By 1880 the popularity of Christmas cards was such that manufacturers were able to attract prominent artists to design original works. The enterprising John Sands of Sydney led the way offering prizes of 50 pounds for a competition for Australian design cards. 700 entries were received and the judging was undertaken by the Art Gallery of New South Wales. The subjects depicted the aboriginal, kangaroo,

black swans, colonial scenery, flowers and foliage. At the turn of the century photographic techniques and the onset of Federation saw an increase in interest the wildflowers and native fauna. A plea we are familiar with today to "Post early for Christmas" began in the 1880s.

The Australian Christmas card is once more popular, adapted to suit the summer climate but the English customs have not been discarded and to this day, snow clad scenes and holly are associated with the festive season. Today, we see the Christmas card not only being produced for profit but by charities while the Post Offices of many countries of the world issue special stamps. The first Christmas postal seal was in Denmark in 1904. Source: Christmas in the Colonies. Maisy Stapleton.

Kath Hamey



**Season Greetings
from the
Balmain Association
Management
Committee
All the best for
1999**



Memories

My name is Norma Beattie nee Stevens. I lived at 97 Beattie Street, three doors from Dick's Hotel. I married Donald Beattie at Campbell Street Presbyterian Church and later both our daughters were christened there. My husband is the great grandson of Henry Henderson Beattie who owned Balmoral House, 46 Waterview Street. Beattie was a shipbuilder at Peacock Point.

Directly behind Dick's Hotel there was a block of flats and tennis court on the corner of the lane. I remember the bottle and cloths prop man coming up the lane, his house down the end. Also there was a Rabbito man, who sold a pair of rabbits for two shillings and six pence (25cents). There was the ice-man who delivered blocks of ice, as not many people had refrigerators, only ice-chests. We had a milkman who only sold bulk milk by the pint or quart so we had to have a billy-can or jug.

If you needed material or cotton, you could get what was needed at Goldsmiths, which was at 285 Darling Street. There was another shop which sold everything you needed opposite Dreamy Daniels. I often went to Dreamy Daniels, 360 Darling Street,

after school and if you had three pence (3 cents), you could get a big bag of sweets.

My mother would send me to the corner store for the groceries on a Friday and a large bag of sweets was given for nothing. We could also buy a big bag of broken biscuits for one penny (1 cent).

I went to Pigeon Ground School then finished my schooling at Riverside Girls High School. My father was a bread carter and drove a horse and cart and would take me with him while he delivered bread in Darling Street. My father worked for Hunter & Sons Bakery, 213 Darling Street, for many years, then Dando's Bakery, 597 Darling Street, Rozelle. My grandfather worked in a Drapery Store in Rodger's Archade, 265 Darling Street. My mother worked as a machinist for quite some time at Brett & Sons, Brett Avenue, Balmain East.

When I left school I went to work at Colgate Palmolive for a short time, then in Derrin Bros, grocers, at 271 Darling Street.

Attending the Back to Balmain Day this year I remembered the good old days.

Norma Beattie, Elanora Heights.

Back to Balmain

On Sunday 25 October, the sun shone, the Leichhardt Municipal Band played Walzing Matilda, the children of the Honeybrook Dancers entertained the crowd and a good breeze sprang up in the afternoon for the one hundred and twenty four boats in the Balmain Regatta. The day began with a well attended service at St Andrew's Church as well as the local schools, opened for former pupils to revisit and to bring along photographs.

Elkington Park was filled with old Balmainites and families greeting them. Surnames were written on banners to attract old friends and the family historian researching their roots. The Association's book stall was kept busy with sales and history enquiries and jotting down little snippets of memories such as, did you know that during WW11 an air-raid shelter was in Elkington Park along the Glassop Street section?

With any function the committee work hard to make the day a success, so Congratulations on a great day for the 10th Annual Back to Balmain Day. See you on Sunday 31 October, 1999.

Regatta Matters

The one hundred and twenty four boats of great variety contested the twelve races; putt-putts including a steam launch, rowing, vintage skiffs, wooden boats, a Bluebird contingent, and some magnificent men in their flying machines, Flying Dutchman.

Only the first winner is listed following: Putt-Putt-Cooee Too, Waterman-Black Dog, Vintage Skiff - Astor, OK Dinghy - Soliloquy, Sports Dinghy - Extension, Open Dinghy-Boris 11, WB pre 62 - Etenne, WB post 62 - Reverte, Yacht - Grizzly, Bluebird - Quito, Flying Dutchman - Jellyfish, Regatta Trophy - SL Kelly Jean.

Last year the revamped Balmain Sailing Club, Water Street, re-established the Balmain Regatta after many years lapse. Planning has begun for the sesquicentenary in 1999, the 150th Balmain Regatta. Contact 9810 2086.

Callan Park would be alienated.

The STA land in Leichhardt was suggested as a possibility. There are plans to give Leichhardt High School a portion of this site and the Council is proposing to build a new Town Hall there as well.

Hospital Land Grab

Well over one hundred people packed the Orange Grove School Hall on Wednesday 25 November to learn about secret negotiations between the Dept of Health and Scalabrini Fathers to buy part of Callan Park land for a proposed retirement village. The news broke only when the Fathers issued invitations to the Mayor, Cr Kris Cruden, and others for a sod-turning ceremony to be performed by the Premier, Mr Carr, on Sunday 29 November. The residents were told that the site is included in the Sydney Harbour SEPP 56 that requires a master plan before any development application.

The meeting unanimously called for a master plan to retain public open space, retain mental health facilities and forbid any new building excepting the recycling of existing buildings. Many residents were outraged by the lack of consultation and agreed to reform the Save Callan Park Committee comprising residents and Council.

A larger crowd attending the ceremony on Sunday were told that it had been cancelled and the Govt had

agreed to the preparation of the master plan. There was anger at the proposed act of environmental vandalism on the beautiful sunken garden area of Callan Park and the crowd refused to accept the claim of local member, Sandra Nori, that she did not know of the negotiations. She said that she had rejected a suggested development eighteen months ago which was probably the reason for her exclusion from negotiations. The Mayor had admitted to a similar experience at the same time but hadn't accepted it as a serious proposal. A resolution was passed demanding that no part of Callan Park be sold to any special interest group and the existing buildings to be retained for their present purpose. There should be no alienation of public land.

The Committee met the Minister for Planning on Tuesday 1 December and were assured that no contract had been signed and a master plan for Callan Park would be prepared. The Scalabrini Fathers had jumped the gun. An alternate site for the retirement village would be investigated. No part of

St John's Church

The retirement of the Rev Tony Humphries as rector of St John's Anglican Church in September, after 26 years of faithful ministry is perhaps an appropriate time to look briefly at one or two of the events, providing church and community, since the church was formed 116 years ago.

This interesting church originally intended as a school-church, was completed in 1882 and was the last of the so called Barker churches. It was built over an old stone quarry and when completed was described as being almost square in shape, commodious and lofty but of no architectural pretensions. Mort's Dock Engineering Co. provided the stone and the brickwork was seen as being of a particularly attractive warm red tone.

Perhaps surprisingly the first gathering to be held in the church was not for worship but for a tea meeting. At a later event of this kind, held this time in the schoolroom, the choir sang glees, speeches were made and the organist, the rector and his wife, entertained the company with verse and song. The rector was presented with a beautiful 16 foot cedar boat and Mrs Charlton was handed a purse of sovereigns for the purchase of plate to commemorate their tenth wedding anniversary.

During the 19th century, drunkenness was seen as a major social problem. A number of temperance Socie-

ties were active in trying to combat it and as may be expected, the Parish News from time to time had something to say about it. Even as late as 1955, the News quoted from the Sydney Temperance Alliance's quarterly list of convictions for drunkenness in the various suburbs to show how Balmain compared with other parts of Sydney. Burwood showed an increase over the same quarter of the previous year of 20%, Balmain 32%, Glebe 70%, — to the largest of Redfern 142%.

The annual church fete continues to be a valuable fund-raiser but today, it can not compete with that held in July, 1887, not as now held in the church hall but at Birchgrove House and spread over two days. Attractions included a shooting gallery, Tableaux, flowers, fortune-telling, fish pond, sleight of hand entertainment, Maypole, glee club and Aunt Sally with music by a quartet and Newtown amateur orchestra.

In September, 1924, the church council sent a letter to Balmain Council complaining of coal dust nuisance from the nearby mine. This was a continuing problem particularly as the inside of the church were just rough bricks painted over. Such a surface was very difficult to clean, because stained with dirt and was 'in a dreadful state'. An appeal was also made for the sum of 60 pounds, enabling the inside walls to be plastered, to give them 'a smooth

and clean surface to which dust will not cling and that they may easily be swept down and washed each week'.

In March 1930 the Parish News reported that many people were viewing with grave concern the gradual Americanisation of Australia in standards and modes of speech through the medium of the moving pictures, particularly the talkies. "They mark" it said, 'a distinct retrogression in the art of the cinema; they stand for incorrect English, poor picturisation and low standards in their themes. Many scenarios are written for vaudeville artists who wail, talk, sob or monotone their songs ad nauseum. The sobbing, sighing, music, called canned music can only be likened to wind through a keyhole'.

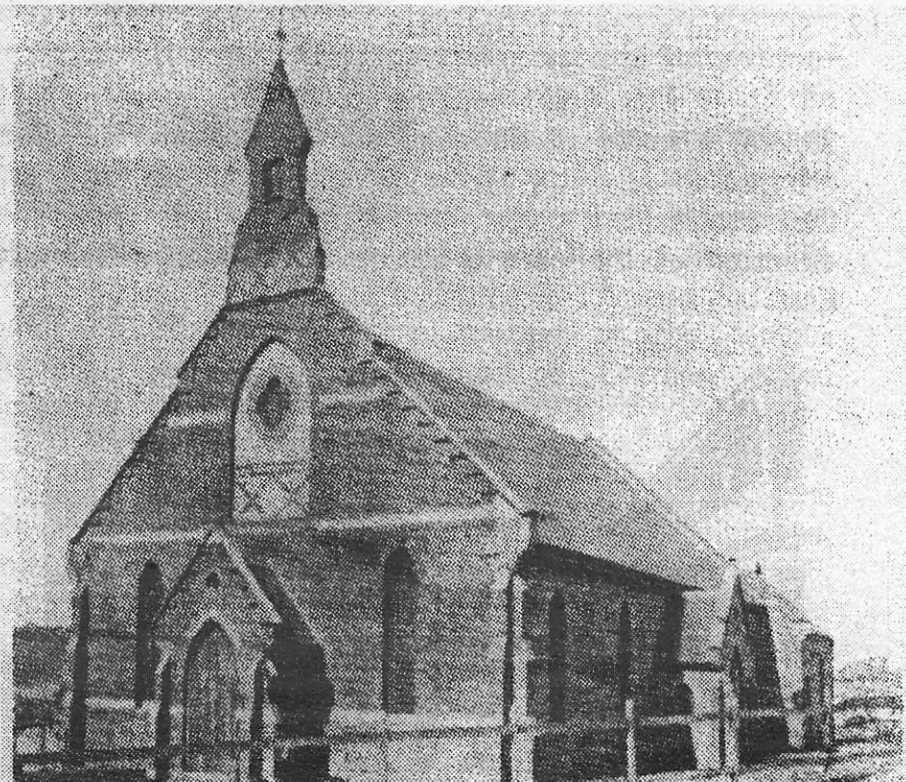
To-day the church looks forward to the appointment of a new rector and to continue to serve the community according to the needs of the day.

Town Plan Adopted

Leichhardt Council adopted the new Town Plan on 5 November and it now requires consent by the Dept of Planning. It establishes reduced densities for all dwellings, not merely development sites. As almost all the major sites on the peninsula have been approved the pressure comes from infills and additions. Floor space ratios of 0.5:1 for Leichhardt/Lilyfield; 0.6:1 for Annandale; 0.7:1 for Glebe and Balmain are said to reflect existing densities. The heritage conservation areas have been retained.

A Development Control Plan to complement the document will be presented next year. The Association will be pressing for a clause requiring all sites that have the land should be compelled to provide public open space instead of a Sect 94 financial contribution. It is the responsibility of the developer to provide open space for the new residents.

A particularly brazen instance was the Colgat-Palmolive building redevelopment. The Land & Environment Court allowed the construction of 10 townhouses as well as refurbishment of the main structures and a Sect 94 contribution in lieu of public open space. There is no land available locally. Even if there were the contribution would not have been adequate. Not content with that decision the developer returned to the Court to get permission for a further floor on the factory for penthouses.



St John's Church, 1880s

In Your Garden

December Gardening

Blooming Beautiful

The next few weeks may be a great feature time for you, but it's a potentially grim time for the garden. The art of Christmas holidays is to enjoy yourself and to keep the garden looking good without too much effort. To help your garden to survive the hot dry weeks ahead, make sure you use a sprinkler once a week on all areas and everything is well mulched. If you are going away for a few weeks move your pots into a more shaded spot away from the burning midday sun.

Potted plants are also a lovely Christmas present, small or large for the person you just don't know what to give and if they don't have green thumbs the plants will last for months, longer than a bunch of flowers. You can even put them in a lovely container as a special treat. All the nurseries will have a large selection of flowering plants for Christmas.

Hydrangeas can be grown in a pot for a long time and when flowering they make an impressive indoor plant for a few weeks. Remember that they need lots of water that is best applied outdoors. They are perfect for partly shaded and well watered gardens. Hydrangea produce their blooms from around November to well into February. You can cut the flowers for Christmas arrangements.

Bonnie Davidson



Watch House Exhibitions

- Warringah Printmakers 5-6 Dec Christmas Show of limited prints
- Immer Theil 12-13 Dec Paintings, Prints & Etchings Eclectic works on canvas & paper
- Photo Exhibition 19 Dec-23 Jan Old Balmain & Rozelle
- Rachael Armstrong 30-31 Jan Paintings, Photos & Sculpture
- Arty Ms 11th Annual Exhibition of Womens Art 12-28 Feb Anne Sheridan
- Gary Notaley-Smith 13-14 Mar Hartstart Studio
- Patricia Quinn 21-22 Mar Watercolours in a combination of Eastern & Western style.

From 1 January 1999 the Editor may be contacted on Email:

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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.