

the balmain
association
incorporated
news sheet

The Peninsula OBSERVER

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Shop Fronts

The burgeoning of coffee shops is not only reducing the diversity of shopping in Balmain but it is also affecting the heritage of the traditional shop fronts. The trend is to replace the entrances with folding doors. While this has the benefit of allowing activity within to be more readily perceived from outside it has not always been achieved in a sympathetic manner.

The Leichhardt Council Draft Town Plan states that shop fronts should respect streetscape, elevational proportions of the building and heritage/conservation value and should contribute to the vitality of the area. The business centres of Leichhardt contain a wide variety of shops with individual character and traditional styles. A large number of original shop fronts exist in Leichhardt. There

are many significant examples dating from the 1850s. These are of timber construction, often incorporating splayed recessed entrances. From 1910 to 1940 metal-framed shop windows were used with tiling.

With the preservation or reconstruction of a traditional shop front it is important that the frame remains intact. The retention or replacement of traditional fascia lines can make a significant contribution to the appearance of a row of shops. The use of natural materials is preferred. The replacement offers the opportunity to provide entrances that allow access to all. "Council will not allow the loss of a traditional shop front on Heritage items."

Unfortunately Council planning officers appear to be ignoring the town plan when approving non-conforming designs.

Callan Park Masterplan

Although Acting Mayor, Arthur Drew, and the planning staff had recommended the adoption of the Masterplan for Callan Park prepared by the Dept of Health it was rejected when Councillor Marie Sheehan moved that council would not endorse any brief that contradicted stated policy. She said that the council is the consent authority.

Resident, Hall Greenland, stated that there was no guarantee that the hospital will continue to run and protection of heritage items had not been nailed down.

Heritage Week Report

The weather smiled on both weekends of Heritage Week 1999. There were so many varied events during the week of 17 to 25 April that we were pleased with the number of visitors 30, to the Old Balmain Walk. The afternoon tea was held in the grounds of Clontarf Cottage, Wallace Street. Thank You Committee. The visitors enjoyed themselves so much that they were escorted on an extra tour of Cameron Cove.

Cameron Cove

The Water Police have submitted a revised plan for their proposed depot on a disused site at Cameron Cove. The industrial contingent has been removed and all major repairs would be outsourced.

Although the new plan provides for public open space on two thirds of the site local residents have resolved to fight the development. They say that 70% of the open space is too steep. The Camerons Cove Committee will hold a public meeting at 7pm on 10 June in the Balmain Town Hall Meeting Room.

The Heritage Pub Crawl attracted 41 visitors who all agreed to return and maybe have a drink at one or two pubs.

So what for next year? Bigger than the 2000 Olympics - yes the Balmain Bicentenary. On the 26 April, 1800, Governor John Hunter granted 550 acres (227ha) of land to Dr William Balmain. The area today encompasses Balmain and Rozelle to Foucart Street.



Dreamy Daniel's confectionary shop at
360 Darling Street in 1892.

Fenwick Site

Residents and the Council are disappointed by the Land and Environment Court decision to uphold the appeal by Rosecorp Pty Ltd for their redevelopment of the old Fenwick's tug depot at East Balmain. Justice Talbot and Senior Commissioner Jensen granted a deferred commencement of five new two-storey dwellings.

The judgement required the developer to obtain approval from the State Transit Authority for the use of the bus turning area for access to the complex as well as approval from the Heritage Council of NSW for the alterations to the old Bell's Store that should be separated from the proposed new buildings.

It defies credibility that an 1840s sandstone building can be converted into a modern townhouse without compromising its heritage values.

The court stipulated that three units fronting Weston Street were to have flat roofs with a ridge line not exceeding 15.475m to conserve neighbour's views. A pathway 6m wide is required to provide a link between the proposed Darling Street Civic Square and Illoura Reserve. The sea wall is to be repaired and maintained for a period of twenty years.

H McKenzie Timber Merchant

Hepburn McKenzie (1864-1925) grew up in the coal mining village of Dalkeith, Scotland. He worked as a clerk and bookkeeper before migrating to Australia, aged 21. His diary of that trip to Sydney in the *Liguria* in 1886 gives a vivid description of the 50 days steerage passage from Gravesend at a cost of £16/16/-.



Hepburn McKenzie

His first job was in a timber yard and he learnt enough about the business that by early 1890s he had established his own business in Leichhardt from where he sold cedar direct to Chinese furniture makers at Alexander. In 1893, he moved to 50 Pymont Street, Pymont.

In October 1892, he married Helen Mary Walker and they lived at *Faversham*, Catherine Street, Leichhardt

for 11 years, before moving to Burwood.

In 1899, the Sands Directory lists "branch yards and wharf, Blackwattle Bay" in addition to the Pymont Street address. A year later a progression from pit sawing to the vertical frame saw continued with the erection of one of the first log bandsaws seen in Australia. It increased production six-fold, being part of the machinery in a new and larger five-acre site in Abattoir Road, Glebe Island. The waterfront site opposite Pymont was acquired on a 21 year lease from the New South Wales Government in 1902 and a full-page advertisement in the Sands Directory with illustrations of the mill and wharves and text: H. McKenzie, General Timber Merchant, Australian Steam Saw and Moulding Mills & Wharves, Abattoir Road & Miller Street, Pymont. Cedar, Rosewood, Silky Oak and Colonial Pine, Beech etc. In logs, Flitches or Boards for Export. Quotations given for all classes of timber, mouldings etc. Customers own Timber or Logs cut to order by his New Log Band mill.

McKenzie imported timber from Kaipara, Wairoa River, North Island, New Zealand.

In February 1906, a disastrous fire destroyed the timber mill at Pymont but the fire gave McKenzie the opportunity to reorganise the business and update the machinery.

Towards the end of 1909 McKenzie purchased 890ha. of forest at Kioloa, Central South Coast, NSW. It included a beach frontage of 1.6km. Timber cutters and haulers were employed and about 17 bullock teams were engaged to haul the logs to the beach for stacking. Coastal vessels would manipulate the logs into the ships hold and on the deck, then taken to the Glebe Island mill. In

1912 the company built a sawmill to treat the logs on the spot. Cottages were built for the workers and their families as well as a Public School.

In April 1918, H McKenzie Ltd bought the timber rights to 10,000 acres (4545ha) on Fraser Island for ten years and immediately began to construct a timber mill at the old quarantine station. To link the stands of timber with the mill and jetty, a tramline for eight miles (13km) was laid across the sand. A small village of some 30 houses and a school catered for the employees. During 1923 the McKenzie locomotives were blamed for starting fires on Fraser Island and at the same time, industrial problems added to growing costs. By 1926 the mill was no longer viable and McKenzie sold out.

Today on Fraser Island there is a Lake McKenzie and part of the old jetty remains since it was built with Turpentine piles and the tramline can be traced by its careful grading.

When the 21-year lease of the Glebe Island site was concluded in 1923 the company purchased the former NSW State Sawmills on the Parramatta River, Rhodes.

During the years McKenzie travelled to America, Europe and England on business trips and his letters and diaries were used by family historian Kathleen E Sharpe for the excellent publication, *McKenzie from Dalkeith, Timber merchant*.

Mrs Sharpe has donated to the Balmain Association a commemorative Dinner Menu printed by John Sands, Sydney, presented to H McKenzie on 3 September, 1906, by The Sydney & Suburbs Timber Merchants Association on his return from a trip to Europe. The menu is written in French. The testimonial will be on display at the Watch House.

Port Jackson Catchment Management Committee

This is a community-based committee of about 26 members and made up of landholders, council, Government agency, conservation and Aboriginal representatives. The PJCMC is one of four new CMCs launched earlier this year, although meetings of committee began in October 1998.

Local resident Nancy Campisi was accepted on the committee as a landholder. Nancy applied to be on the committee because she was concerned about the state of the harbour around Balmain and wanted to do something about improving it. Nancy

has previously been on the Murray-Darling Basin Nutrient Management Strategy committee.

The committee was set up to create a strategy and integrated approach to environmental and resource management of Sydney Harbour. The main aim of the catchment management committees is to co-ordinate, influence and integrate community and government efforts within the catchment, to ensure we have productive land, clean water and a diversity of wildlife and vegetation.

There are several subcommittees also set up to gather information

about environmental issues affecting the harbour such as land/water interaction and commercial/recreational interests. The committee is allocated \$30,000 each year to distribute in grants of up to \$5,000 for community based projects. The committee will be pleased to receive applications from people in the Balmain Peninsula area. Application dates are advertised in the local press late in the year for distribution in the following year.

If you have any questions or would like any issues raised at the PJCMC meetings, please contact Nancy Campisi on 9810 7084.

Swept Over, A factory story

An article by Jennie Gehue in Locality no 10 vol 1, published by the School of History, NSW University, alerted the History Committee to make further enquiries on another facet of the peninsula's industrial heritage.

A corrugated iron building was built in 1881 to be used as a foundry, at 84 Foucart Street, Rozelle by R O'Connor and the 1885 cottage, still located on the site.

Also in 1881, around the corner at 10 Fred Street, Rozelle, a German immigrant Heinz Grubmeier was converting another corrugated iron foundry building to millet broom making. He called the factory "Federal Brooms".

Grubmerier devised a new method of tying millet to the broom handle which he also made longer, which was easier to use as it no longer required the user to stoop to sweep. These design changes entitled Grubmerier to a fourteen-year design patent.

Through the 1890s depression, O'Connor's foundry business declined and by 1900 he was bankrupt.

In 1913 the building at 84 Foucart Street was bought by Henry's widow Rebecca and converted to another millet broom factory called "Commonwealth Brooms". There were now two broom factories in the area and by 1932 there would be six such factories in the area, creating an industry and a community that would survive two world wars, a depression and automation.

Rebecca Grubmerier ran the Commonwealth factory with her two daughters, one Dora married the foreman Jim Ferrier. The business was family run, employing about 12 locals. One young man Norman Mar-

tin was employed as a runner, who remained all his working life with the business.

By 1956, Dora Ferrier, was the only surviving member of her family and sold the Commonwealth Business and the Foucart Street site to Norman Martin who had secured a contract to supply the Navy with their brushes and mops. The Commonwealth equipment and employees shifted to Federal. When Martin secured a large military contract, he sub-contracted to the Federal factory and so kept everyone in work. His neighbours around Fourcart Street enjoyed a free supply of brooms, brushes and mops. He also gave freely to local charities and supported both public and Catholic schools in the area.

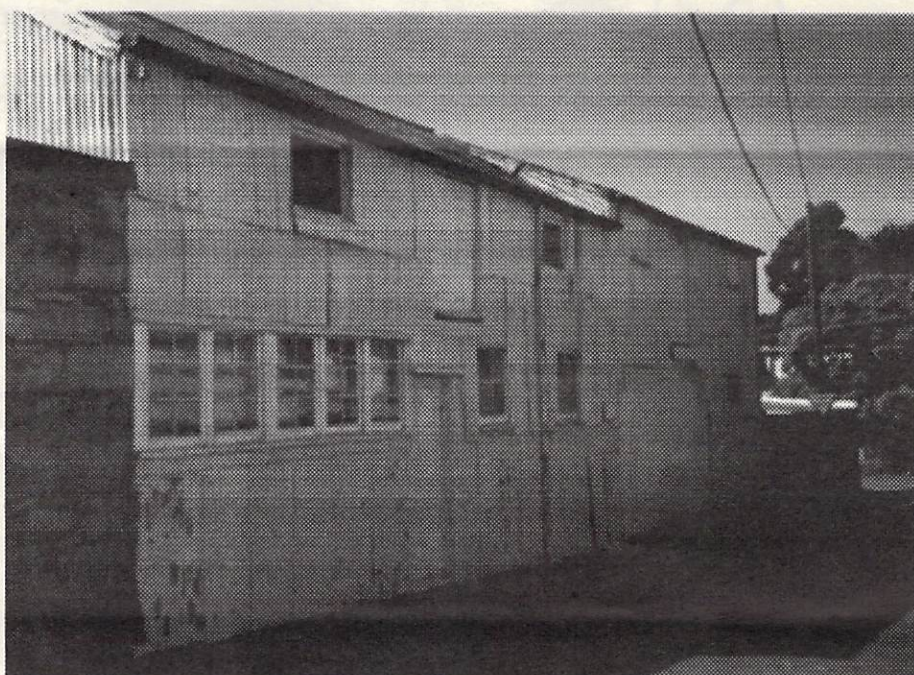
The 1980s signalled the end of an era for the broom manufacturers. The first to be sold to a large American company was Federal Brooms and the Fred Street site was closed and

the old corrugated iron building was demolished for a housing development.

Although Norman Martin sold the Commonwealth business, the buildings were not sold until 1992 to Hudson, timber merchant, who used the old factory as a timber store and rented the cottage on the site. The fate of 84 Foucart Street is uncertain at this time.

Another corrugated iron building at 15 Cheltham Street, Rozelle opposite 84 Foucart Street is to be demolished for housing. The building has a long association with the Angelini Family. In the 1940s, Zearo Art Cement Pots were made there, then a carrying business conducted from the site. Herman Vincent Angelini of 12 Alfred Street, Rozelle, was Alderman 1934-1941 and Mayor 1939 of Balmain Council. The street was named in his honour in 1968.

Below - 84 Foucart Street.



Thank You

From time to time the Association is offered memorabilia but because of our limited storage it is with regret that we have to suggest other suitable homes but we are very happy to receive photographs.

Stan Dearnley and his sister Betty Lawler donated a photo of their father A H Dearnley, confectionary shop, c1930, at 386 Darling Street. Standing outside the shop are some unemployed youths, who were allowed to

play cards in the shop. Stan also supplied some of his own photographs of the coal mine.

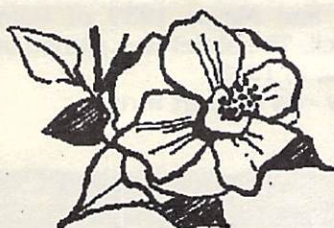
John Nelson of Broomhead, 201 Darling Street, Balmain, donated three albums of c1897 papers from George Clubb, real estate agent, 583 Darling Street. The letterheads from other businesses are most interesting. George Clubb was an Alderman 1881-1913, Mayor 1912-1913, of the Balmain Council. Clubb Street, Rozelle is named in his honour.

Bruce Smith of Carina, Queensland for postcard size line drawings of the Pubs of Balmain and Rozelle. Bruce has a few more drawings to finish to complete the series.

During the recent Council cleanup, a member was alerted to a throw out of a map of Balmain. The rescued 1897 map has business advertisements around the boarder. The 90cm by 60cm map has been glued to a piece of masonite which makes it difficult to copy. Any help please?

In Your Garden

Sassy Beauties. Each season has its stars, but now around Australian gardens sasanqua camellias are stealing the limelight. The sasanquas are the first of the camellia tribe to make even an average garden full of flowers from now until early spring. As well as being the first to flower, they are also the most easy going camellias. They are easy to grow and very hardy. They can be grown as small shrubs or as small trees (5 - 7 m). Most have a long lasting show of flowers giving at least six to eight weeks of colour. With a few delightful varieties the show will last through autumn.



CAMELLIA SASANQUAS

Although not native to Australia (they actually originated in Japan) the nectar filled flowers draw all sorts of native birds. The main bonus is they rarely suffer any pest or disease problems and consequently they certainly don't require any regular spray program.

Sasanqua camellias are at there best in an open sunny spot with sun for about half the day. They will not do well in deep shade. If you are planting now dig in lots of peat moss or rotted manure or compost before planting. Camellias flower best with ample water during summer.

Elizabeth Farm at Parramatta will have their usual yearly show of camellias that came to Australia originally with the MacArthurs in July. I try to attend every year.

In July remember to prune your roses. Remove all the dead wood completely then shorten healthy branches to promote growth. Do not prune weeping roses now. They are best pruned after their spring flush of flowers.

Bonnie Davidson

What's On

Watch House Exhibitions

- Photo-relief on Watercolour Joseph Loewy 5-13 June
- Twenty six years Claire Elsworth 17-20 June
- Landscapes & Photographs Alice Sweeney 26-27 June
- Expressionism & colourist Anthea Slade & Franca Della-Vedova 10-11 July
- Mother & Daughter Patricia Quinn 21-22 August
- Open Bite Printmakers Original prints 28 Aug 11 Sept
- The Burlong Group Women artists 18-26 Sept
- Photographic Workshop Anne Garbutt 2-10 October
- Kings Cross 1949-1999 Nado Milat 6-7 November

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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 of the area and keep a permanent collection of historical interest; seek the cooperation of everyone concerned in the realisation of the above.

The Balmain Association meets on the first Wednesday of each month at 7.30pm in the Watch House 179 Darling Street Balmain. The Watch House is open every Saturday from 12 to 3pm. Our editorial phone/fax is 02 98184954. Email: valham@value.com.au. Our Web site: <http://member.rivernet.com.au/swsouth/watchhouse.html>

Interested artists, potters, sculptors, etc who would like to organise an exhibition in the Watch House are urged to contact Steve South on 02 9810 1411 or on email swsouth@rivernet.com.au.

Annual subscriptions:
Household \$16, Concession \$7,
Organisations \$21.