

the balmain
association
incorporated
news sheet

The Peninsula OBSERVER

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Onithological Association

Builder, John Lowe & Son lived at Perritt Terrace, 13 Perritt Street, Balmain from 1884 to 1909.

John Lowe was a bird fancier and Mrs J Ramsay of Chatswood, (his descendant), kindly sent some 'treasures' kept for many years in an envelope in that bottom draw. The 'treasures' were some business invoices dated 1881 and the brochure of the Balmain Canary and Caged Bird Show, in the Balmain Town Hall in June, 1901. There were 31 prizes of trophies, gold medal, cash prizes for the different categories, 1st of 10 shillings, 2nd 5 shillings and 3rd 2 shillings and 6 pence. Entry for the competitors was 1 shilling and 6 pence.

The present Secretary of the NSW Ornithological Association, Mr N Richardson has supplied the following information on the Association.

The Association was founded in 1894 and has carried on continuously from that time, conducting bird shows every year. It is the oldest bird club in NSW and there is some conjecture as to whether it is the oldest club in Australia. In 1991 the Association combined with the Parramatta Canary & Cage Bird Society, in conducting a combined bird show in May each year.

In 1994, the 100th annual show was held and each exhibitor was presented with a Centenary Club Badge, featuring a king parrot inscribed on the face and 1894-1994.

The Canary & Cage Bird Improvement Society was formed a few years after the Association. Sir Edward Hallstrom was a member of the Association, as well as many other prominent Australian's.

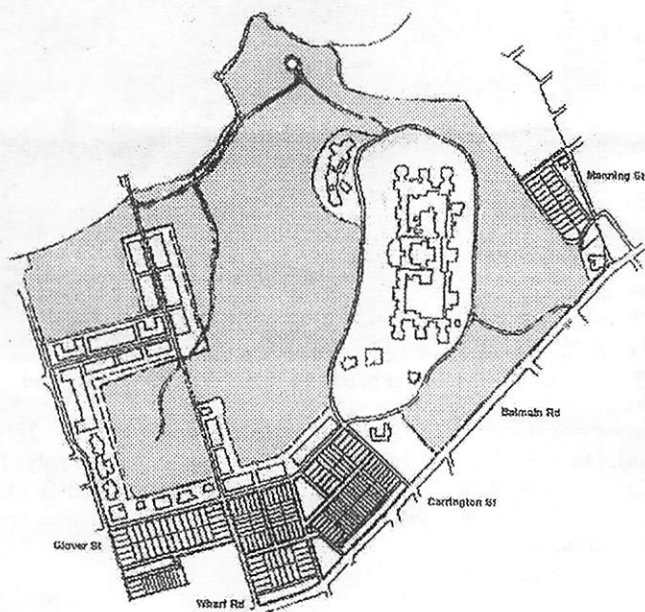
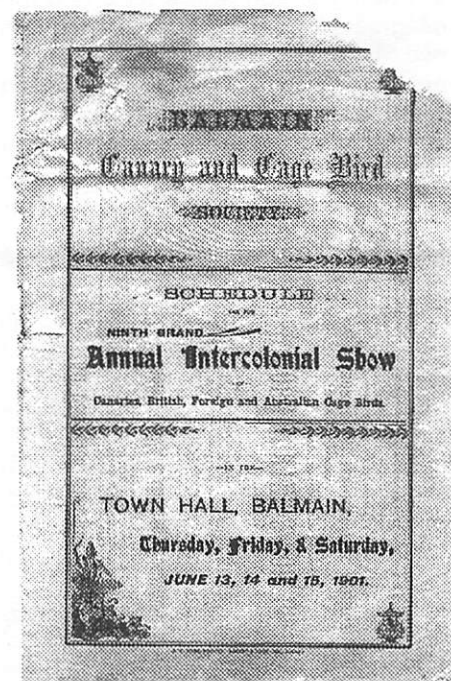
Other clubs have been formed over the years, one being a Sydney Federation formed in 1935. The meetings were held in Sydney and some members from the Newcastle and Hunter areas, would travel by train and would return home on the early Paper train to Newcastle.

The Federation has 106 affiliated clubs in every state in Australia. A magazine Feathered World is published eleven times a year. Contact: 11 President St. Croydon Park. 2133.

P.S. A story is told in my family about my younger brother's fascination with a birdcage! My parents were bird lovers and kept many finches in a large aviary. My job before school each morning was to clean out the cage, feed and water the birds. One day my two-year-old brother, opened the cage door and crawled in, leaving the door ajar and so the birds escaped. From then on, each day for

some time, brother would crawl into the cage and happily play for hours. Mother was delighted and would creep up and secure the latch, then finish the household chores. We also kept a beautiful singing canary in a cage, kept high up out of brother's reach.

Kathleen Hamey



Callan Park Plan

The gray areas on the accompanying map shows the proposed dedication of public accessible open space claimed by the Health Dept as 80% of the Callan Park site. Notice the Kirkbride heritage buildings surrounded by the road. Some of this has been accessible by the public for some time.

Although no details have as yet been published by Twyford Consulting, the firm engaged to do the public consultation, it is believed that the Health Dept plans to concentrate development between Glover Street, Wharf Road and Carrington Street. However 1.5 ha along Manning Street is also marked for sale.

The area for medium density housing claimed to be 12.5 ha would enable a developer to construct 625 dwellings under Leichhardt Council Town Plan 2000 that imposes a floor space ratio (FSR) of 0.5:1.

Leichhardt Council has set up a planning forum to produce an alternative vision for the future of Callan Park. Friends of Callan Park meet on the first Monday of the month in Lilyfield Neighbourhood Centre, cnr Cecily and O'Neill Streets, Leichhardt.

Royal Australian Historical Society Centenary

Two men who influenced the founding of the Australian Historical Society: Andrew Houison, 'founding father' and David Scott Mitchell, patron.

In 1888 community sentiment was riding high on the tide of nationalism following the Centenary and the debate on Federation.

What motivated Andrew Houison, a successful medical practitioner, to develop a passion for Australian history, then only of 100 years of European settlement, to become the foundation president of the RAHS?

Andrew Houison was born at Parramatta on the first day of January 1850, the youngest son of five sons and five daughters of James and mother Ann nee Stark. James had trained as a carpenter and joiner with experience in Georgian London as a clerk-of-works and in Parramatta became a builder and architect.

Andrew Houison attended The King's School Parramatta and later the newly opened Newington School at Silverwater.

In February 1866, aged 16 years, he enrolled at the University of Sydney and gained his BA degree in 1869, then to Edinburgh where he graduated in medicine. After some post graduate research in the medical field of antiseptics with Professor Joseph Lister at the University of Edinburgh, Andrew returned to Sydney to a private practice in Macquarie Street, Sydney.

In 1890 Andrew's hobby was philately and held the position as president of both the NSW and Australian Philatelic Associations. He planned an exhibition to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the introduction of postage stamps in Great Britain.

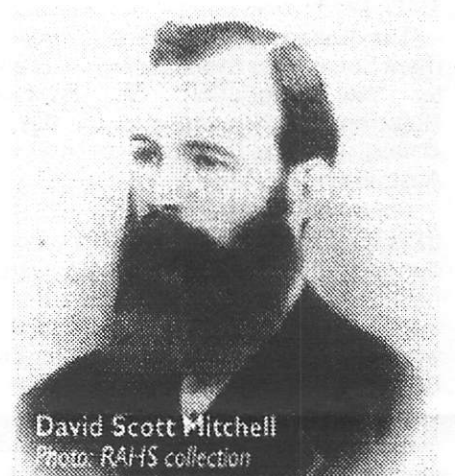
The Premier, Sir Henry Parkes, a former philatelist himself, approved the scheme as an official government project. An illustrated book *The History of the Post Office of New South Wales* with Houison credited as author, was prepared for the display.

A meeting was held in the Sydney Town Hall on 30 October 1900, for 'gentlemen interested in Australian history' with Dr Houison in the chair. Further planning meetings were held until the inaugural meeting of the Australian Historical Society was held in the Queen's Hall, Pitt Street Sydney on 15 March 1901. The meeting elected him as President also accepting the nomination of David Scott Mitchell as the Society's patron. Andrew maintained his

interest in the Society until his death in 1912.

'The Mitchell' is a term understood by all who research family and Australian history. David Scott Mitchell's obsession for book collecting was the basis of the Mitchell Library in Macquarie Street, Sydney.

Mitchell was born at the Military Hospital in Macquarie Street, Sydney on 19 March 1836, into a military medical family. His father Dr James Mitchell was the principal surgeon and mother Augusta Maria Scott, a doctor's daughter.



Mitchell became one of the first graduates of the University of Sydney with a BA in 1852 and his Master of Arts in 1859. He was admitted to the Bar but never practised although his legal training was put to good use when on the death of his father in 1869, it was revealed that the considerable estate had been given to his father's medical partner. After a protracted legal case, the jury awarded the verdict in Mitchell's favour.

With enough money to pursue any lifestyle, Mitchell devoted almost every waking moment of his life to the collecting and study of Australian history, photographs, maps, letters and paintings and various other publications. So avid was Mitchell's collecting that his treasures eventually began to intrude on the limited space available in his seven-room two-story terrace house at 17 Darling Road, Darlinghurst. This area now called Kings Cross. The tide of books overflowed from the library, up and down the stairs, into the bathroom and even into a corner of the housekeeper's attic.

As he grew older he was faced with the problem of what to do with his collection. In October 1898, with his health failing and with the support of The State Library's principal librarian, Henry Anderson, Mitchell decided to bequeath his precious library to the Trustees. Mitchell had a condition on his bequest - that the government should provide a suitable building.

The years dragged on with no sign of the new building even though Mitchell had added an increased endowment. Finally, the NSW Premier Sir Joseph Carruthers laid the foundation stone on the Macquarie Street site on 11 September 1906, eight years after Mitchell's original offer. Mitchell died on 24 July 1907, before the building was completed.

The Mitchell Library has reopened, after being closed for the last seven months for a \$2.5 million refurbishment, including a new glass roof and original features, such as 1.6 km of shelves. I am sure David Scott Mitchell would approve!

In this year of Centenary Celebration, the Society has many events planned. A luncheon for members and guests will be held on Friday, 29 June 2001, at The Strangers' Dining Room at Parliament House, Macquarie Street.

The RAHS has an excellent Library open for research Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm. History House, 133 Macquarie Street, Sydney. 02 9247 8001.

The Balmain Association has been an affiliated member for 35 years. There are 314 affiliated Societies.



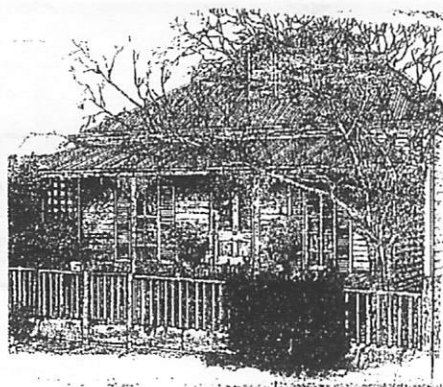
The dining room at Mitchell's home in Darlinghurst Road

Source: Magazine of RAHS, John McClymont. The Daily Telegraph 19 July 1997, Walter Sullivan and 3 May 2001, Monica Heary.

Henry Edmond Fisk Boatbuilder

Henry was born in Hobart on 1 June 1814, the son of Captain Arnold Fisk and his wife Mary Ann Campbell Bunker. Henry was their second child in a family of eleven children. His father was an American of Quaker stock, who sailed to New South Wales from England in 1802 in the *Surprise*. His mother was the daughter of Captain Eber Bunker, called 'the father of Australian whaling' and a descendant of the *Mayflower* pilgrim John Howland. Captain Bunker was in command of the Third Fleet transport *William and Ann*, which arrived at Sydney in 1791.

Henry Fisk married Mary Beattie at St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Sydney on 21 November 1846. Mary was the daughter of John and Dulcibella Beattie of Erskine Street, Sydney. John Beattie had purchased land in the now Cameron Cove area in the first Balmain land sale in 1836. John Beattie also was publisher of the *Masonic Arms* 1843-45, the former *Waterview House*, the first dwelling in Balmain, now demolished.



Oatland Cottage

Henry and Mary children were: Arnold J b1847, Henry W b1849, Edward G b1851, Edgar H b1853 William J b1857, were all baptised at St Philips Church, Sydney and their only daughter Elizabeth (Bessie), was born at Balmain on 28 April 1853 and baptised at St Mary's Church, Balmain. Elizabeth died in 1854 and her brother William in 1858,

both buried at the Old Devonshire Street Cemetery, Sydney.

Henry and family moved to Brisbane Waters where he became a boatbuilder. He built the ketches *Sylph*, *Midshipman* and the *Phoenixion*. He later built the schooner *Countess of Belmore* at Lake Macquarie.

In 1860 Henry returned to Balmain where he built his residence, *Oatland Cottage* in Mort Street where he remained until 1873, continuing with boatbuilding. The cottage remains today at 83 Mort Street.

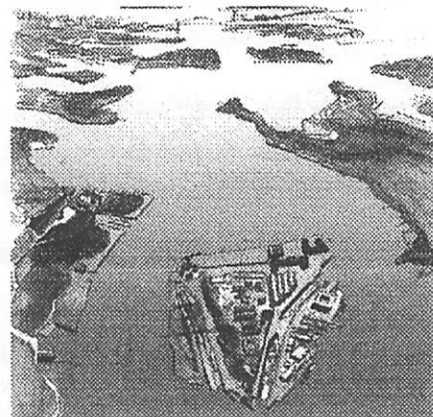
At age 60 years, Henry tried his hand at a new trade, when he became licensee at the Albion Hotel on corner Nicholson and Darling Streets, Balmain, then moved to the Mariner's Hotel in George Street, Sydney in 1877, Princess of Wales Hotel 1878-1879, also in Sydney. During these years, Henry's son Edward was a boatbuilder in Duke Street, Balmain.

Henry died at Petersham on 5 February 1887 possibly at his son Edgar's residence. His burial was the last interment in the Church of England section of the Old Devonshire Street Cemetery, permitted because of the Fisk/Bunker vault. The cemetery had been closed from 1849 onwards. In 1901 to make way for the new Central Railway Station, the vault and remains of Elizabeth, William and Henry were removed to La Perouse site adjoining the existing Botany Cemetery, Church of England section, at the request of Mrs E Cartwright of Kogarah.

The Department of Public Works administered the transfer of some 20,000 remains and about 2800 monuments to the cemetery. Other cemeteries to have remains and monuments were Rookwood, South Head, Gore Hill, Waverley while others where transferred to country cemeteries. Balmain Cemetery received at least 6 reinternments.

Source: Leichhardt Historical Journal No 14, Peter Reynolds. Sydney Burial Ground 1819-1901. K Johnson and M Sainty. The Shipbuilders of Brisbane Water, NSW. Gwen Dundon.

Bonnie Davidson.



Sydney Harbour Trust

The exhibition Sites Unseen: exploring the future of Trust lands on Sydney Harbour opened in the Custom House on 26 May. It is intended to generate interest in the future of six former defence and maritime lands on the Harbour.

Of special concern to Balmain residents are Cockatoo and Snapper Islands and also Woolwich Dock. The Navy is not relinquishing Spectacle Island. Cockatoo is the largest island in Sydney Harbour and a visual landmark with a rich historical interest.

A courtyard cluster of prison barracks, water towers, workshops and houses sit atop the hill and there are a number of convict excavated grain silos. Later uses involved shipbuilding and repair and this activity is suggested for renewal to revitalise the heritage nature of the island as a centre of the maritime industrial precinct.

The potential of the island as a special place to visit will be explored. An island walk could be created that retraces the pattern of occupation from convict gaol to maritime industry.

Exhibition visitors are invited to submit ideas on a questionnaire.

Stop Press

Heritage photographs were seen being removed from the Watch House two weeks ago. They were loaded into a red sedan that was driven away fully loaded.

There's no need for concern, however. Fifty six framed photographs from the Balmain Association archives were carefully transported to the State Library where Mr Scott Wajon, Photographic Coordinator of the Image Library, received them. He will copy and scan them to produce a CDROM.

We shall receive negatives on proof-sheets as well as the CD. The scanning will produce high quality TIFF (tag image file format) images for our archives allowing the production of copies in other formats.

Volunteer Locally

Enjoy volunteering in the International Year of the Volunteer. There are lots of ways people can give free time, skills and resources to the community.

One great way is to get involved with a community service group operating in your local area, such as Rotary.

Local members have a pamphlet on Balmain Rotary, which explains its aims

and activities, global and local. Have a read and consider finding out more, or hand the brochure on to a family member, friend or neighbour. If you would like other ideas on volunteering, phone Volunteering NSW on 9261 3600.

Jane Ward.

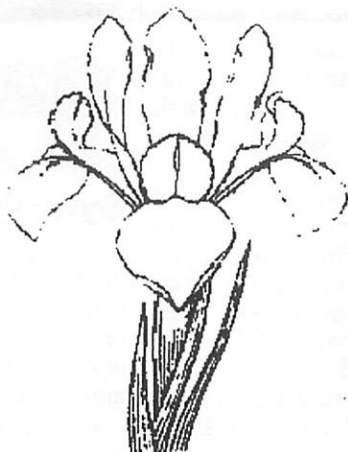
Welcome back to the Association. Jane held the President position for many dynamic years.

In Your Garden

Colours of Cannas

Add a glow to that sunny spot in your garden with colour during the hottest time of the year by including cannas in your planting. Cannas come in all tints of red, pink, orange and yellow as well as spotted and multi-coloured. Seldom attacked by pests and diseases and requiring little attention, cannas will brighten a sunny corner.

Cannas are most effective when grown as a complete bed, but they are also pretty and adaptable for spots or narrow areas. They also can be grown in large containers. As they like the sun, they can be kept on the north or north-west of the house. There



are dwarf, medium and tall growing varieties, so plant accordingly. They can also be propagated from seed that can be sown in autumn or spring.

Cannas like plenty of moisture but not bog conditions. Being quick-growing they can absorb extra plant food. Plant in soil enriched with plenty of organic material, some animal manure and slow-release fertiliser.

The best time to divide cannas is winter. Plants that won't be lifted can be topped with organic material from mid-summer until late autumn if grown in a full sunny position. When cannas have finished flowering, the tall and untidy stems can be cut down to near the ground.

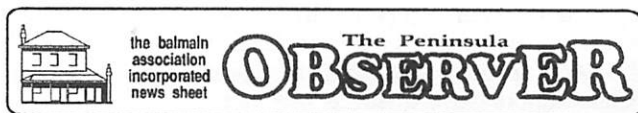
Bonnie Davidson

What's On

Watch House Exhibitions

- Denise Barry 1-10 June
- Jean MacManus 16-17 June
- Nicholas Beckett 23-24 June
- Paintings 23-24 June
Nicholas Beckett
- 7 Artists - oils 30 June-1 July
Elsie McEwen
- Photographs - Sydney & Port Arthur. Bridget Marning 7-29 July
- Photos & Drawings 4-19 Aug
Marilyn Walters & Son
- Ross Mainwaring 25-26 Aug
Paintings
- Jan Henderson & others 1-2 Sep
Sculpture & paintings
- Chis Vella, Roger Janes & Ann Garbutt 8-9 Sep

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If undelivered return to:
The Balmain Association Inc
PO Box 57
Balmain 2041

Miss Theresa L Hayward
61 Louisa Road
Birchgrove NSW 2041
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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: hamey@netpro.net.au.
Our Web site:
www.balmainassociation.homestead.com

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@riversnet.com.au.

Annual subscriptions:
Household \$20, Concession \$10,
Organisations \$30.