



the balmain
association
incorporated
news sheet

The Peninsula OBSERVER

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Glebe's Council Change

Prof Sproat has rejected Local Government Minister Harry Woods' claim in activating some of the recommendations from the Boundaries Inquiry that proposed eight inner-city councils be reduced to four. The changes are really not for economic reasons but appear to have been designed to shore up Labor's base for the next Sydney council election.

Lord Mayor, Frank Sartor, claims efficiencies of scale but that argument doesn't apply as Leichhardt Council with the loss of Glebe has its municipality reduced by one third. The boundaries will be determined by the Local Government Boundaries Commission.

General Manager, Graham Foster, claims that the change may benefit Balmain services from greater concentration of resources. However this may be short lived as Leichhardt could be weakened, no longer viable and under threat to be merged with Marrickville. The Council will lose \$20 million in assets in Glebe and Forest Lodge and also be reduced to nine councillors.

Glasshouse

Five years ago, Annandale resident Beth Buchanan, with assistance from Leichhardt Council, formed the Rozelle Bay Community Native garden. The volunteer group collects and propagates local seeds for replanting in the municipality parks. Seed has been collected from trees and plants in Callan Park and are used in the regeneration of the foreshore and other areas.

The unused glasshouse next to the Balmain Town Hall would be an excellent plant nursery and education centre. The structure was built in the 1920s and was used up until the 1980s as a holding centre for park planting. In recent years it has been neglected.

An assessment of the cost to restore the glasshouse should be completed this month. The area around the Town Hall and the depot behind is being studied for development. Offers of assistance are very welcome. Contact 9660 1304.

Ballast Point Plan

McRoss Developments, a Lang Walker company, has submitted a proposal to build 83 "low density residential buildings" on Ballast Point. They have an option to buy the site from Caltex. In a coloured brochure delivered to 3000 residents their plan claims to provide a Point Park of 53% of the site, some SEPP5 Aged Care accommodation, two-storey unit floor space ratio of 0.5:1 and a Community Centre. The brochure is an obvious attempt to seduce residents by emphasising the environment.

The Minister for Planning, Andrew Refshauge, is reputedly not in favour of residential development and Leichhardt Council has a current resolution to acquire the site for public open space. Government financial assistance is necessary for the purchase. Cr Jamie Parker advocates the establishment of parkland on the point. Fergus Fricke, Ballast Point Campaign Committee, estimates that if only 30% of the site were developed for housing a developer could reap a profit of \$30 million. The Committee is galvanising its members for a struggle.



Point Park proposed by McRoss Developments

Christmas Gifts

We have a special price of \$5 for each of *On the Pigeon Ground- Balmain Public School* by Peter Reynolds and *Gourlies Corner*. Both publications

make interesting gifts. May we also suggest *Streets, Lanes and Places* an index of the origins of street names of Balmain, Birchgrove and Rozelle at \$10.

Available at the Watch House.



Take A Pew

Concerning the congregational seating and pews in St John's Church, Balmain.

From time to time, the delicate matter of the weekly offering is raised, either from the pulpit or in the weekly bulletin. The money so received forms part of the total church income and goes towards paying the bills, maintaining the premises and supporting the clergy. The money put into the offertory plate is a sum freely given and an unreserved seat for that particular service can usually be provided. This replaces an earlier arrangement whereby an individual or family paid rent for the sole use of a particular pew.



In the early church the provision of seats for the people was not even contemplated. When not kneeling, the congregation would stand, though in some churches there were stone benches round the walls and pillars for the benefit

of the infirm. Some authorities on the subject are of the opinion that the custom of a verger leading a procession with a stave arose from the difficulty of clearing a way through the standing or kneeling congregation.

Another feature of the early church was the practice of separating the sexes in worship. St Augustine maintained that each sex had its distinct place assigned to it. St Ambrose said much the same thing as did the sixteenth century St Charles in his instructions but he did allow 'predille' or kneeling pads for women, adding 'There should be no benches for men to kneel upon'. It was the practice for women to sit on the north side and men on the south.

Some seating was provided for the bishops, clergy and choir monks who were in church for long periods each day. There is some doubt as to when pews became into general use in the nave but some seating for the congregation was in use before the Reformation, after which such provision was accepted and the separating of the sexes was abandoned.

A natural progression in the design of pews was to raise the backs and to put doors on the ends, when they became known as box pews or dozing pews. This design served the purpose of helping to keep out the draughts as no church had

a heating system until the 19th century when 'tortoise' stoves were introduced.

These pews could be bought and sold and in 1457 in Somerset, a sale of a seat near the pulpit fetched sixteen pence whereas one near the front realised only eight pence. At the back of the church, forms were provided for the residents of the local Almshouse and were usually marked 'For the Poore'. Pew doors could be locked and many were stamped with the owner's initials. In his diary on 1661 Samuel Pepys complained he could not enter his pew because the Sexton had not unlocked it.

With regard to the pews in St John's, in March 1882 whilst the church was being built tenders went out for seats, glass, a bell, lectern and table. From the outset pews in St John's could be rented and the for the first four months of 1884, the account show an income of £182 and £237 from the free seats in the front of the church. The verger received five per cent of all pew rents, in addition to his emolument of thirty pounds a year.

In the early years of the twentieth century the present seat layout was installed and over time, as the need arose, minor adjustments were made but as late as 1924 pew rents were still being collected. In 1928 a decision was made that the rental system be discontinued when tenure of existing holders expired. Each rented pew had a plaque with the tenant's name on it and the places where these were screwed to the pews can still be traced.

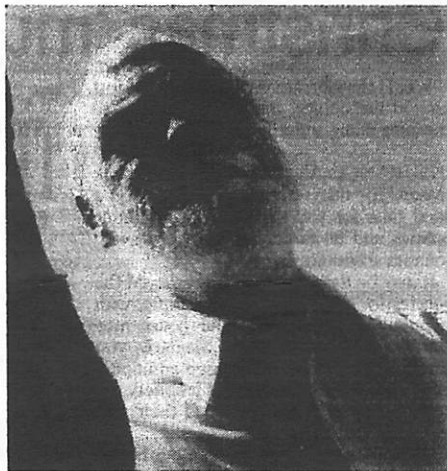
Vernon Kemp

Ludwig Leichhardt look-a-like

The Leichhardt Council held a small reception on Monday 29th October for the great-grandnephew of Ludwig Leichhardt, also named Ludwig. His resemblance to a copy of a painting of Leichhardt the explorer is uncanny.

There have been numerous documentaries made of the explorers epic 1844 journey from Queensland to the Northern Territory and return in 1845 and the 1848 expedition, to cross central Australia to the west coast, only to vanish with seven men, eight horses, 50 bullocks and 20 mules. Over the years there have been a number of attempts to discover the fate of the famous explorer and companions. Last November some other descendants from Kentucky, USA, travelled by four-wheel-drive over much of the route taken by their ancestor.

Photographs of a museum, dedicated to Leichhardt the explorer, were



Ludwig Leichhardt visitor

shown at the reception. The museum is 50k east of Berlin, in the village of Trebacsh, Leichhardt's birthplace. His namesake, who was accompanied by his wife, presented a plaster likeness of Leichhardt to Cr Kate Butler

While visiting the Top End last year, we noted the name Leichhardt can be

frequently seen, given to a 500k long river that flows north through Queensland to the Gulf of Carpentaria, a plaque to the explorer in Darwin and the Leichhardt Tree, *Nauclea Orientalis* was in bloom. The tree can grow to 20m high with shiny green leaves and is partly deciduous. The aromatic yellow flower is about 3cm long and produces strong-smelling fleshy fruits. Aborigines used the edible bitter tasting fruit pulped, to drink for coughs, stomach pain and diarrhea. Infusion from the bark was used to stun the fish and the trunk used to make canoes and paddles. The bitterness of the bark suggested quinine to the early colonists and for many years it was used as a domestic treatment for malaria and other fevers in the north. But you need not travel so far to see the tree, as there are several plants of the Leichhardt Tree growing in the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney including the Pyramid Glasshouse.

Kathleen Hamey

Photo from The Courier

Kings Theatre, Balmain.

The chain of Kings Theatres in Sydney was a phenomenon of the 1930s in the brief period between the depression and World War II. It was the period immediately following the acceptance by the film industry of the first major change since the initial public showing of motion pictures some thirty-five years previous, that is, of lip-synchronised sound. It was also the period when architects were generally accepting new concepts and styles in architecture and building technology. Priorities for development, immediately post WW11, would not be commercial in the normal sense: they would be domestic and industrial until the 1950s when general commercial building for offices and recreation again began to appear.

Technology had developed further during the 1940s and the next ten years would see a new architectural style emerge and the film industry would be shaken into a revisionary process with the advent of television in Australia in 1956. The introduction of wide screen, stereophonic sound and an almost universal use of colour film stemmed the outgoing tide of the public from the picture theatres until the acceptance of colour television in 1976, changed the cinema-going habits of the public. The picture theatres would nearly all be closed, reused for other purposes or more frequently, demolished.

The phenomenon of the thirteen Kings Theatres in Sydney took place in the decade of the 1930s but by 1983 it had all but disappeared. Balmain Kings Theatre was situated on the corner of Darling Street and Birchgrove Road, 1936-1959. A petrol service station preceded the accommodation apartments that now occupy the site that had passed through a number of uses before Kings Theatre.

On the corner at 413 Darling Street, from 1910-1915 was a dentist Thomas Donovan then 1917-1927 Thomas A

Petersen also a dentist. On the adjoining block 1910-1913 Central Mission Hall, 1912 & 1915 Acheson's Western Pictures, 1913-1914 Sewell's Picture Palace, 1916-1917 Skating Rink, 1922-1923 Balmain & Rozelle General Markets, 1924-1930 McNiven Bros. confectionary manufactures, 1931-1933 Astra Palais dance hall, 1934 The Roxy Whirl vaudeville and dancing, 1935-1936 Roxy Garden Theatre films and vaudeville. McNiven's were originally at 145 Beattie Street where they made chocolates and ice cream wafers. The cone to hold the scoop of ice cream was added to their products when they moved to Darling Street.

The old building was gutted and with the corner block, rebuilt and opened in early 1936 as the Roxy Kings with seating of 775 in the stalls and 223 upstairs, although in the sketches published at the time, the theatre was named Civic. The auditorium measured 60 feet wide by 120 feet and the stalls were flat-floored. The latest style in wall bracket lamps of flashed opal glass and metal were included in the decorations. A gold-sprayed wrought iron balustrade flanked a carpeted stairway, leading to the dress circle. For additional comfort, heating and mechanical ventilation systems were installed in the theatre.

The Roxy Kings was an early casualty in the war with television and closed on 25th April 1959. The final program was 'Battle of the VI' and 'Gypsy and the Gentleman'.

Mr Tom McGuire of Scarborough, WA, writes that the old Kings on the corner of Birchgrove Road was called the Roxy and Saturday night was Vaudeville night. "I was about 17 years old at the time and my mate and I had a permanent booking in the prime seats in second front row cost was 1shilling and 2 pence, so we could try and give the chorus girls the glad eye, not very successful I might add. Les Shippis ran the Vaudeville, one week the show would be managed by Ike Delevale, who had a similar appearance to Mo. Joe Laurn-

mouth would lead the other week and his main singer was Stella Raymond".

Source: For All the Kings Men by Ross Thorne & Kevin Cork. Sands Directories.

Morrison & Sinclair

Mr Vic Grant of Abbotsford was interested in the article on Morrison & Sinclair in our last issue. His letter states: I worked as a Town Planner at the City of Sydney Council (1955-1959) and one of the Planning Committees I was involved with sought recommendations for a submission to the County of Cumberland Council to nominate waterfront sites as County Parks.

I was very familiar with the M & S site and its potential, so I submitted a recommendation accordingly. The CCC planning legislation 'existing uses' zoned 'County Park' could continue, but, if that use ceased in future the CCC was required to purchase the site for a park, at the market value at that time. Hence the cost of \$185,000 for the site. The park now called Yurulbin is a great asset for Sydney Harbour and for the use of all citizens.

My Memories by R Keith Beattie. My father was a shipwright and boat builder who conducted his business at 103 Louisa Road, Long Nose Point. I have a photo of my dad with my eldest brother Victor, sitting on the front steps of our home at 21 Louisa Road. Vic was 12 years at the time, so this must have been about 1912. Pop had a bowler hat which he wore when he went out and about in his horse and sulky, which he kept next to us in a spare block at no. 23. Pop remained at 21 Louisa Road until his death in 1969.

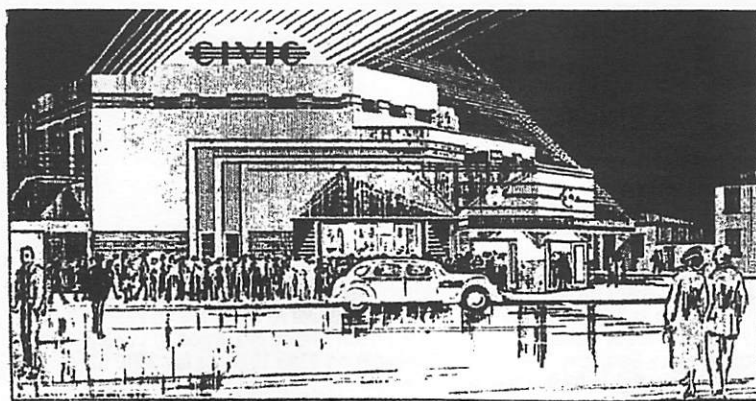
Unfortunately his partner, Bert Smith considered himself an expert on race-horses and being the 'silent partner' in charge of the book keeping side of the business, he gambled all income! So, eventually sent the business broke.

Now to me. In 1933 and being 17 years old in the depression years, I was desperately looking to get a job. Lo and behold, at Long Nose Point at Louisa Road end of the Morrison & Sinclair buildings, a small paint manufacturer, Viking Paint Co. with a staff of four had leased this portion of M & S.

I was readily employed and being a licensed driver was to use this to the company's advantage. As well as doing all aspects of paint manufacturing including varnish making and all types of paint making, I also did the marketing. I eventually became their commercial traveller and found that having the manufacturing side was to my advantage.

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In Your Garden

December Gardening

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 survive the the hot dry weeks ahead, make sure you use the sprinkler once a week on all areas and everything is well muched. If you are going away for a few weeks, move your pots into a shady spot away from the burning midday sun.

Potted plants are also a lovely Christmas present, small or large for the person who is difficult to find a gift and if they don't have green thumbs the plants will last at least for a few months, longer than a bunch of flowers. You can even put them in a lovely container as special treat. All of 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 impressiv indoor plant for 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 November to well into February. You can cut the flowers for Christmas arrangements.

Bonnie Davidson

What's On

Watch HouseExhibitions

- Focal Point 1-9 Dec
Rozelle Photo Workshop
- Each Saturday in January 12-3pm
The Balmain Federation Quilt
Balmain Photos from Archives
- Annette Dorahy 2-3 Feb
- Arty Ms Annual Exhibition
16-24 Feb
- Paintings of the Kimberleys
Janet Carter 9-10 March
- Paintings, Jewellery & soft
furnishings 16-24 March
Sandra Berzins
- Paintings 28 Mar-2April
Rowan Fotheringham
- Paintings 6-14 April
Simon Meilak
- Heritage Week 20-27 April

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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 collec-
tion 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 John
Sullivan on 9555 1026 or fax 9810 6774

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