



the balmain
association
incorporated
news sheet

The Peninsula OBSERVER

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Narrow Streets

The automobile presents problems of access in the narrow streets of Balmain. Cars are illegally parked straddling footpaths otherwise the carriageway would be restricted especially for fire engines and ambulances. The RTA threatens to enforce the law but doesn't offer any solutions.

Many towns and cities in Europe have the same difficulties but authorities have found ways of alleviating them. Holland has established woonerfs in their tiny streets. Lower levels of car ownership help as well as the excellent public transport, not to mention the use of bicycles. In Sydney these are known as shared traffic zones in which pedestrians and vehicles have equal rights. There are no footpaths and the speed limit is 10kph..

The implementation of shared traffic zones is expensive as the streets have to be resurfaced, sidewalks eliminated and drainage installed. However there is no other practical solution and we should be planning for its introduction. As an interim measure the existing gutter on the lower side of the street could be retained to carry off rainwater. Remedial measures are long overdue.

Val Hamey

Naming the Park

On Tuesday 19 February the Premier announced that the Caltex site at Ballast Point was to be acquired by the State Government for a harbour-side park and refueling facility. This was a wonderful announcement but, of necessity, it left a lot of details to be worked out in the next year or two before the park becomes a reality.

What will the negotiated sale price of the site for instance? What community consultation will take place on the type of park and what will it be called?

The naming of the park is likely to be a most strongly argued issue and so we should get suggestions rolling in. Let us not be restricted to "Ballast Point Park" when we can have so many discussions and arguments over other names and still call Ballast Point, Ballast Point. In fact let us not be restricted to just one name as there are many people to be remembered at a local, state and national level. We should have naming rights on any facilities, chairs, playgrounds, BBQs, etc. but in the end it should be looking at state figures of significance to commemorate.

As you drive down Ballast Point Road towards the point you will want to park

your car in the newly created "Carr Park". Then you take your children to the playground where they could play in the "Sandra Pit" or it would be nifty to go on the "Wran Slide". See-saws would be better named "Lib-Labs" as both parties have their ups and downs though perhaps it would be better to reserve those names for the swings and roundabouts.

I am having a little trouble with a suitable facility to name after Andrew Refshaugy, Michael Egan and other ministers but if the buses run to Ballast Point they will surely terminate at "Debus Stop".

The acquisition of the site and the creation of the park will be expensive and so in order to recoup some of the money the naming rights will not come cheaply and there will also need to be a donations box called "Costa Packet". Will there be toilets? If so the men's toilet should be the "Urenal" and the toilet for small women would be the "Lo Po".

Seriously though, the naming is important and I would like to see the park named the "Tom Uren Park" in recognition of Tom's efforts in preserving harbour lands for the public.

Fergus Fricke

Heritage Festival

The National Trust established in 1945, celebrates its work in conserving and protecting Australia's heritage with an annual festival. The 22nd festival will be held from Saturday 20th to Sunday 28th April, with over 300 events organized by government, business, tourism and community groups. The Balmain Association is proud of the continuing restoration of the Balmain Watch House and has participated in the Heritage/Festival Week for many years.

Local community program

The Grand Victorian Civic Buildings of Balmain. A guided tour of Balmain Post Office, Court House, Town Hall and Fire Station. Saturday 20th April 2pm. Meet at Post Office. \$10 Adults. \$5 Conc. Bookings Essential. 9818 4954.

The Balmain Watch House, 179 Darling Street. Photographs of former in-

dustrial sites that are now housing estates also the Balmain Federation Quilt will be on display. Saturday 20th and 27th April. 11am to 4pm. Free Admission. Enquiries 9810 5185.

Clontarf Cottage Open Day, 4 Wallace Street. Photographic Exhibition relating to the restoration and management of the 1844 cottage by the local community. Afternoon tea will be available. Saturday 27th April. 12noon to 4pm. Free Admission. Enquiries 9810 2775.

Callan Park Heritage Tours. Entrance opposite Cecily Street Lilyfield.

Tours of the Kirkbride Complex, now the Sydney College of the Arts, on the hour from 11am to 3pm. Tour of the entire site including Broughton Hall Gardens, at 11am, 1pm, 3pm. Saturday 27th April. Admission Free. jlenane@sydney.net

Victory Dinner Cruise

The Ballast Point Victory Dinner Cruise on the Lady Wakehurst departs Thames Street Wharf at 6.30pm Thursday 11 April. Returns at 10.30pm. Cost \$40 per head. Complimentary drink, entrée and main. Bar service. Dress casual. Bookings essential. RSVP 5 April. Kathleen Hamey 9818 4954, Roger Parkes 9810 8978.

Congratulations from the Balmain Association!

Leichhardt Library 64 Renwick Street.

Launch of photographic collection on the internet. Wednesday 24th April 6pm for 6.30pm Free Admission. Bookings Essential 9367 9266.

Balmain's Grand Victorian Public Buildings

The Post Office and Courthouse buildings and the Town Hall, with the Fire Station opposite, form an imposing civic group.

Post Office and Court House

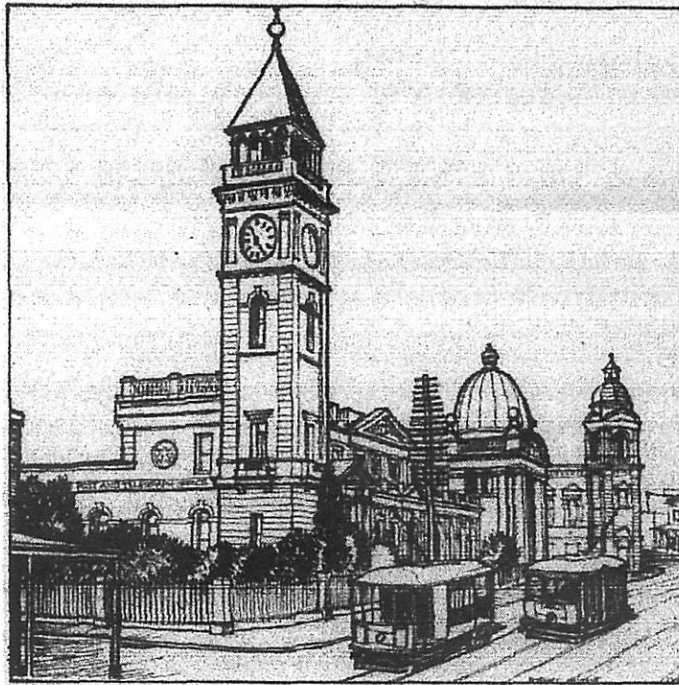
A Post Office was one of the first public services in Balmain, a two-penny post being established in 1843. In 1853 Augustus Hollebone was in charge in premises in Darling Street. In the following year George Chidgey's grocery stores, at the corner of Nicholson and Darling Streets, now demolished, became the Post Office. In the early days the mail was taken by rowboat to and from Sydney.

In June 1857 a more permanent move was made to Alexander Chape's grocery shop on the corner of Queen's Place and Waterview Street. It became the Post and Electric Telegraph Office and Government Savings Bank. This small sandstone building still survives.

The present Post Office and Police Court was formally opened, with much excitement, on 20th August 1887, by His Excellency the Governor of NSW, Lord Carrington accompanied by his wife Lady Cecelia Carrington. The cost of the complex was £15000. James Barnet, the Colonial Architect, was responsible for the design and the builder was G Langley. The building's dual functions are expressed by the clock tower and dome which seem '...to suggest a touch on India in Antipodean Sydney...'. The tower clock, supplied by Mr a Tornaghi was set in motion on 21st June 1887.

The peaked roof of the tower was removed in 1957 as a safety precaution. Unfortunately, the authorities did not see any need to save the parts for later reconstruction. Instead, the finely wrought timbers and slate roofing were sold to the highest bidder. In the early 1970s, Elwyn Leighton Black a Historic Buildings Liaison Officer, made a search for the missing parts for a grand idea of incorporating them in a scheme to re-erect the tower roof. Black was contacted by a Hunter's Hill resident who had the tower roof reconstructed as a gazebo in her garden.

By consulting the original Post Office tower drawings, Black was able to detail all the structural members, cladding and ornamental features to design a new roof. In July 1978, \$90,000 were allocated to paint and repair both the Post Office and Court house. \$12,000 of this sum had been set aside for the restoration of the tower roof. Black did not see



his vision become reality as he died suddenly in November 1977.

The firm of McKenzie building company hoisted the new tower roof into position on 15th October, 1978 with the copper ball and finial added by the end of that year.

The Balmain Post Office building was sold for \$970,000 in 1991.

Balmain Town Hall and Meeting Room

Balmain was incorporated as a Municipality on 21st February 1860. The first Council meeting took place on 5th April 1860 in Captain Rowntree's warehouse loft, approximately today end of Gilchrist Place. Temporary offices and Council Chamber were established in rooms rented from schoolmaster, Mr Heber G Loten in Adolphus Street and later in St Mary's schoolroom, rear of 7 Adolphus Street. Meetings were also held in the School of Arts building, site 142 Darling Street. The present Town Hall site was purchased in 1876 and the existing stone cottage became the council chambers. Alderman Charles Mossman commented 'it is painful to sit there, especially when the heat is oppressive'. To provide more comfortable conditions, council approved the building of new chambers in 1880. The mayor, James McDonald, architect and resident of Balmain, donated his services for the new building, opened in 1881, now called the Meeting Room.

History repeated itself when the architect for the Town Hall was another mayor of Balmain, Edward Harman Buchanan. In 1887, Buchanan, then a council alderman, was commissioned to design a Town Hall. This was built at a

cost of £6,000 and was completed in 1888, the centenary year of New South Wales. His design for the Victorian Free Classical style Town Hall included the centenary hall to seat 1,000, a library, a lodge room, mayor's room, 5 rooms for council officers, and 'a commodious council clerk's residence'. Council found that the design for the hall was too small and voted to enlarge the building by some ten feet to the east. This additional width was to

prove very important in terms of urban design because it placed the stair-tower right on the Darling Street frontage. The Town Hall building once displayed a fine dome but this was taken down during World War 11 and there was community interest to restore a dome for a bi-centenary project, but proved too expensive.

Balmain Council was absorbed by Leichhardt Council in 1947 and the building was used for social functions until the late 1970s when the major part of the ground floor of the town hall became a municipal library.

Fire Station

The Balmain Fire Station is located at 391 Darling Street, opposite the Balmain Town Hall. It was designed by Charles Hellmrich and constructed in 1894.

The Balmain Volunteer Fire Brigade was started in 1875 and located in modest quarters in Booth Street with another branch in Rozelle. In 1894, the present building was erected, complete with billiard room and billiard table. The plant at that time consisted of two manual engines, one hose reel, a couple of horses and about 1500 feet of hose and scaling ladders. It is believed the site was chosen at the top of the hill, so the horses could always be going down hill to attend the fire call. The two level building still retains the decorative feature of firemen's helmets on the facade.

Source: Balmain in Time. Peter Reynolds and Robert Irving. LHJ no 15. Newssheet no 91. Heritage Report, Balmain Fire Station. 1993.

Suburbia

A report of the National Trust of Australia Conference 25th February 2002.

What a wonderful informative day I had. The conference aimed to look at the diversity and grain which defines a cities suburb. The Hon. Andrew Refshauge, Minister for Planning, opened the conference, in his opening speech he stated how Ballast Point was given back to the people and that more would follow in the future. No, Callan Park was not mentioned but there was a pregnant pause before he proceeded.

Most of the talks dealt with Sydney, however papers were also presented which looked at issues from urban sprawl in regional NSW (Suburbia on Steroids-Mahalath Halperin), national and international trends in the do-it-yourself market (Home Improvement: Suburban works in progress-Joanna Besley), to examination of local authority tenants in England (On the Council-Sheila Owen).

Other issues discussed were the changing demographics in Canterbury (Streetscape in Suburbia-Ian Latham), the rich diversity of Fairfield (From Cobra Grubs to Dragons-Paul Graham), the legacy of the builder (Builders and barbecues-Meredith Walker), Model

suburbs (The Healthy Suburbs-Noni Boyd), the role of the Pacific Highway on a section of Sydney (Urban Space in Suburbs-Dr Nancy Cushing), a look at community gardening in three Pacific Rim cities)Plotting Eden-Richard Griffiths) and planning policies (Urban Consolidation: Sound Policy or Fad-Tony Recsei).

'If our population has to increase we have two options,' said Tony Recsei, reported in Domain, Sydney Morning Herald, 7th March. 'Either expand the city using proper planning for sustainability into carefully selected areas or preserve our open spaces, heritage and lifestyle. This expansion need only be very small. We could also repopulate selected depopulated rural areas or squash us in closer together and inevitably destroy heritage and conservation areas, gardens and remnant bushland. The Government has chosen the latter path of increasing population density'

The conference finally closed at 6.00pm with many tired speakers and attendees, quite a few of these hardy people carried on to a dinner on HMAV Bounty, which I am sure that they would have had a wonderful night.

Trish Mack.

Harbour Trust

The Sydney Harbour Federation Trust Act 2001 will prepare a plan for the future of lands around Sydney Harbour that have been vacated by the Commonwealth. The Trust has a life of ten years, during which time, the plan will be implemented and the lands transferred to suitable public management authorities.

The Harbour Trust lands are: North Head Artillery School, former Defense lands at Middle Head-Georges Heights, Macquarie Lighthouse on South Head, Woolwich Dock and adjoining parklands, Cockatoo Island, Snapper Island and the former Marine Biological Station at Watsons Bay.

The latter is a recent addition to these unique lands on Sydney Harbour and has a historical significance to Balmain. Nineteen century Russian biologist, anthropologist and explorer Nikolai Miklouho-Maclay, set up the southern hemisphere's first maritime biology station at Watsons Bay.

Maclay arrived in Australia in the 1860s, studying marine biology. He won the support of the then NSW Premier Sir John Robinson for his research station at Watsons Bay. The Premier's widowed daughter Margaret married Nikolai in

1884 when they settled at Wyoming, 25 Wharf Road, Birchgrove, where the first of their two sons was born. In 1888 the family moved to Russia where Miklouho-Maclay died of a tropical disease.

The Harbour Trust is keen to open the lands up to the general public so that people can become more familiar with them and their special qualities and so enable the community to be involved in the planning process.

Community advisory committees have been set up to cover all of the lands. Members of these have been drawn from a wide cross-section of people with relevant skills and expertise.

Open days have been held at Woolwich Dock, North Head, Cockatoo Island, Middle Head-Georges Heights. Macquarie Lighthouse open day will be held 21st April, 10am to 4pm. Old South Head Road, Vaucluse.

Cockatoo Island guided tours. Every Saturday, 10.30am & 1.30pm. Sunday 10am & 2pm. Bookings Essential. Contact only on Tuesday & Wednesday 9am to 5pm. 8969 2199. Cost: Adults \$12, Con. \$6.

The Sydney Harbour Federation Trust can be contacted on 02 8969 2100

Balmain War Memorial

There are 37 names recorded on the WW1 Memorial in Loyalty Square. Some interesting facts have been found about one of the names on the memorial, J A Fettes.

James Alexander Fettes lost his life while serving on one of the RAN submarines, AE1. AE1 was lost with all hands, off New Britain in 1914, when Australian forces occupied German New Guinea. The first two RAN submarines, AE1 and AE2, arrived in Australia in 1913 and were docked and refitted at Cockatoo Island. In fact, Cockatoo Dockyard from that time was to be the sole submarine refitting yard in Australia until the closure in 1992. AE2 was lost in 1915 in the sea of Marmora, after a passage of the Dardanelles during the Gallipoli campaign.

James A Fettes was born in 1884 in Sydney and one of six children, father William, mariner and mother Margaret nee McGinley. The Fettes family moved to 6 Stewart Street, Balmain in 1895, then 24 Pashkey Street, when in 1901 settled at 6 Wisbeach Street, Balmain. William died there in 1931 and Margaret in 1941. A headstone in the Old Catholic Mortuary, Rookwood Cemetery, reads James Alexander Fettes ERA who lost his life on HMA Submarine AE1 at sea 29 years 11 months 14/9/1914. William and Margaret were both buried in the grave.

Thanks to Peter Reynolds who gave the lead on an interesting research.

Council Update

The NSW Local Government Boundaries Commission confirmation of the transfer of Glebe to the City of Sydney leaves some anomalies that should have been addressed. Although the Bicentenary Park is important to Annandale residents it will be administered by Sydney Council. The Rozelle Community Garden should be retained in the Leichhardt Municipality. There will be no transfer of debt to the City of Sydney so it gets the assets without the penalties. Councilors estimate a \$5 million shortfall from the loss of Glebe revenue.

On the bright side Leichhardt Council is not using borrowings this year because of the income from parking meters. Despite objections from the Chamber of Commerce and the Village Voice the introduction of meters has made a large impact on the availability of parking places. Even on Fridays it is possible to find a spot.

In Your Garden

Planning for Perfume

Most gardeners could rely on a handful of white flowers to scent their garden year-round. Sniff around your neighbourhood. Gardenias, frangipani and the beautiful murrays particularly are loading the air with their fragrance.

Murrays, flowering now, are a good bet for scent in spring and late summer. Their perfume is like orange blossom and its common name is orange Jessamine. It is a plant for just about every temperate garden and has several benefits apart from flushes of perfumed flowers. It is ideal as a hedge or screen plant as it grows to around 3m and is evergreen, usually dense and leafy from tip to ground.

Autumn is here and paper white narcissus will start to appear. I believe viburnum looks fine when it is not in flower and it is evergreen. You could still plant some freesia bulbs

so that you can enjoy their fragrance later in the year.

There is really no end to perfumed white flowers in spring and summer. There are jasmines, frangipani, honeysuckle, mock orange, lily-of-the-valley (in cool climates) and the glorious gardenias.

Bonny Davidson



Fragrant flowers: gardenia, frangipani and murrays

What's On

Watch House Exhibitions

- Paintings 28 Mar-2 April
Rowan Fotheringham
- Paintings 6-14 April
Simon Meilak
- Heritage Week 20-27 April
- Ceramics 4-5 May
- Student Art Group 18-19 May
- HartStart Studio 25-26 May
- Water Colours & Silks 1-2 June

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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 John Sullivan on 9555 1026 or fax 9810 6774

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