

the balmain
association
incorporated
news sheet

The Peninsula OBSERVER

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Balmain Tramway Counterweight Centenary.

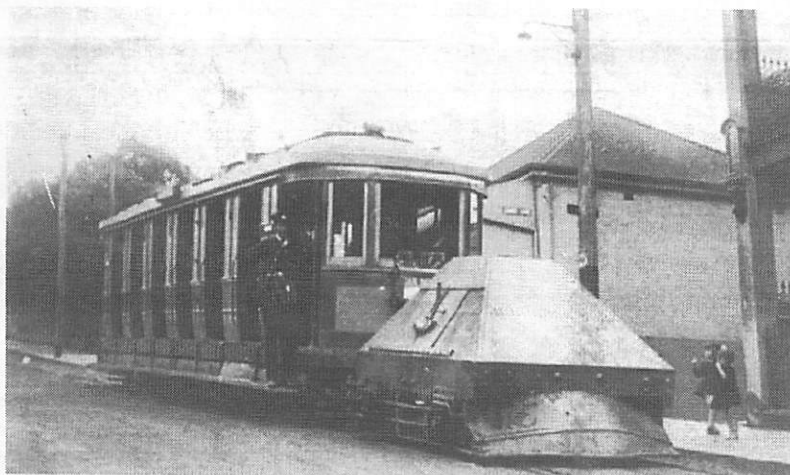
Two members of the Association attended a special feature of the Sydney Tramway Museum on 14th September, 2003. The Balmain Counterweight or 'Dummy' was unique not only in Sydney but Australia wide.

In September 1903, a tramline was opened along the steep section of Darling Street, Balmain between Nicholson Street and the Ferry Wharf. Finally, the people of Balmain and the inner western suburbs of Rozelle, Leichhardt, Dulwich Hill and Petersham had a convenient connection between their homes and city-bound Ferries without the need to walk down the severe grade from Nicholson Street.

To safely negotiate the steep 1-in-2 grade the Tramways installed a counterweight system that not only kept the descending trams at a safe speed but also assisted the heavily laden trams as they ascended the hill packed with shoppers and workers returning from the city.

The system was at that time a technological innovation that enabled electric trams to traverse a grade that was otherwise too steep for everyday operations. A 'counterweight' trolley running on rails in an underground shaft was connected by a series of cables and pulleys to an aboveground 'dummy'.

A tram descending the grade from Nicholson Street would run up to the dummy, not attached in any way, and push it down the hill. In doing so, the underground counterweight was propelled up the hill, keeping the tram at a safe speed.



Darling St Tram with counterweight

The pyramid shaped 'dummy' became a local landmark. When not in use it sat at the top of the grade, in the middle of Darling Street at

Nicholson Street where it became a local meeting point and a magnet for young boys. When the tram descended many a boy, it has been told, would hold on with one hand while riding a scooter or push-bike.

When the line closed in 1955, the 'dummy' was hauled to Rozelle Depot for disposal. Fortunately, the Sydney Tramway Museum stepped in and this important artefact was saved for preservation at Loftus, in southern Sydney.

The veteran 'dummy' was removed from the Museum's Main Hall for the outdoor display along with one

'toast-rack' tram that once used the Darling Street Wharf line. Two 'R' type corridor cars, so very familiar to Balmain tram travellers in the 1940s and 1950s operated with passengers to Loftus and Waterfall.

A fun time was had by all who attended the Counterweight Centenary.

The Museum is located at the Loftus train station on the

corner Pitt Street and Rawson Ave. Loftus and is open each week-end and school holidays 9542 3646.

Book Launch

Dr William Balmain arrived with the First Fleet as an assistant surgeon, on the ship *Alexander*. He was 26 years old. In 1796 Balmain was the Principal Surgeon of the Colony of NSW and in 1800 he received a land grant of 550 acres in the Petersham Hills, the area today Balmain and Rozelle. In July 1801 Balmain rescinded ownership and all rights to the 550 acres when he drew up a document which stated for 'a

consideration of the sum of five shillings of lawful money of Great Britain', the land was sold to Dr John Gilchrist of Calcutta. Balmain and family boarded the whaler *Albion* for England where Balmain died on 17th November, 1803 of a 'disease of the liver'. Balmain's will contained no mention of the sale of the land grant to Dr John Gilchrist.

To commemorate the bicentenary of the death of Dr William Balmain on 17th November, 1803, you are cordially invited to a book launch at

Clontarf Cottage, Wallace Street, Balmain, at 2pm on Saturday, 6th December, 2003.

The intriguing story Balmain's family and of the many challenges to the sale of 'Balmain's land' has been researched by author Peter Reynolds. Balmain Historical Monograph No 5. William Balmain 1762-1803 and John Gilchrist 1759-1841, Family and Property.

Phone 9818 4854

Balmain Personalities

John & Mary Lily May Quirk

John Quirk, MLA, had represented the Labor Party for Balmain in the Legislative Assembly since 1917 when he died at his home at 28 McKenzie Street, Rozelle, on 13th December 1938 age 68 years. At the time of his death he was treasurer of the State Parliamentary Labor Party. His funeral service was held at St Joseph's Catholic Church before his burial at the Field of Mars.

John Quirk's father John was a Balmain dairyman and mother Mary nee McClapperty and was born in Balmain 18th May 1870 and attended St Joseph's School, Rozelle.

Before he became a Member of Parliament, John Quirk had joined the PMG Dept in 1886 and was an officer for 32 years mainly at the Balmain Post Office. He founded the Letter Carriers' Union later Postal Workers' Union and was an active member of the Balmain / Rozelle Friendly Society and a JP from 1911 as well as a foundation member of the Rozelle Labor League 1893. Labor meetings were held at the Unity Hall Hotel, Balmain.

The Premier at that time Mr Stevens Stated: 'In his 31 years of Parliamentary life he endeared himself not only to his fellow members, but to hundreds of his constituents on whose behalf he was a tireless worker'.

The Opposition Leader, Mr Lang, said 'he had lost a personal friend. Mr Quirk was envied by Labor and Parliamentary leaders for his forthright honesty, his aggressive sincerity and his truly Christian understanding of what it meant to be a representative of the people'.

John Quirk's married his second wife Mary May Lilly Kelly nee Deal at St Patrick's Church Sydney on 9th February 1927. Quirk was 56 years and Mary 47 years. Mary was born at Coonamble but by 10 years her mother Emma nee White and father Julius Deal had moved to Balmain where Deal was a butcher. Mary Quirk worked as a shop-assistant for Grace Bros. and joined the Shop Assistants' Union of New South Wales.



John Quirk MLA

Following John Quirk's death, Mary won the by-election for his Balmain seat on 14 January 1939. On Mrs Quirk's first day in the Legislative Assembly in February 1939, the 'galleries were crowded with women who had come to see her sworn in. The first Labor women-and only the second women-to be elected to NSW parliament, she later remarked that a 'lot of people told me that I only got in on a sympathy vote, ..but at the next election they stood by me'.

When feelings in the Legislative Assembly ran high, her presence tended to 'moderation and forbearance'. Mrs Quirk lost pre-selection in May 1950 and died on 4 March 1952 and was buried with John Quirk at the Field of Mars with a request that Mary Quirk (Ex. MLA) be inscribed on the tombstone. Mrs M L M Quirk, MLA, Balmain is inscribed on a the foundation stone for the Housing Commission Apartments in Curtis Road, Balmain that was attended by The Hon Clive R Evatt KC. MLA on 21 February 1948.



Mary Quirk

Victoria Street, Rozelle was renamed Quirk Street in 1944. John and Mary Quirk moved from the long standing family home at 9 Gorgon Street, Rozelle to 28 McKenzie Street, Rozelle in 1929. Both buildings remain in good condition today.

Source: ADB. Parliamentary Library Listing. Anthony Dickson.

Balmain Glasshouse Saved Again.

A report in the local newspaper The Guardian 20th October 1977 stated, 'Leichhardt Council last night considered a petition signed by more than 600 angry Balmain residents. The petitioners were protesting against a council plan to remove the glasshouse and greenery next to the Balmain Town Hall and replace them with a car parking space'. The Council instead decided to beautify the area with a facelift of the glasshouse .

Some 26 years later the Balmain Glasshouse is to receive complete renovation. At the Leichhardt Council monthly meeting on 23rd September, the Property Services acting on a previous direction in November 2002, to obtain quotations for the work to be carried out on the building, presented a report recommending that Council proceed with the renovation of the glasshouse. There was one dissenting vote against the motion. Thank you Councillors.

Due to the need for safety glass and the extent of the work, a partial restoration was unacceptable. The Council will fund the works while the Rozelle Bay Community Native Nursery will fund the set up to propagate native plants by volunteers.

Supporters who pledged \$15 for a replacement glass panel should send their cheque to Rozelle Bay Community Native Nursery, C/- PO Box 57, Balmain. 2041. Please supply name and address for receipt.

Special Thanks to Myles Stewart, local builder and Paul Davies, Heritage Consultant.

Kathleen Hamey

City Planning

The Federal Environment Minister, David Kemp, has had a change of heart with his announcement that an inquiry into the sustainability of Australian cities will be conducted by the House of Representatives Committee on Environment and Heritage. Not quite the Better Cities proposed by Tom Uren when he was the Minister. Submissions on city planning and environmental issues close on October 31.

Gladstone Park

As the tempo of development quickened in Balmain in the 1870s some forty years after the first land sale in Balmain at Balmain East and the area now Mort Bay, no provision was made for parks and recreation grounds. However, the *Lands for Public Purposes Acquisition Act, 1880*, recognised the need for open space.

The a'Beckett family had purchased the area Section 1 lots 1 to 8 in 1853, and where 'the principal pigeon matches were 'shot off' on the land known as the Pigeon Ground.' Emma Louisa a'Beckett, had her Ladies School nearby, brought about change in 1872 when she subdivided the land into 83 small allotments. The subdivision was bounded by Darling, Booth and Darvall Streets but there was no road on the eastern side of the land.

The citizens of Balmain had become attached to the Pigeon Ground and did not want to see it cut up for building. As early as 1879, the Balmain Council had offered to buy the area as a site in the middle of Balmain was needed.

Balmain's first Member of Parliament, Jacob Garrard, called a meeting for 28th February 1881 to be held in the Oddfellows Hall, corner Darling and Jane Streets, the largest public gathering to that time in Balmain.. It was unanimously resolved that 'for the preservation of health and the proper enjoyment of life', the land should be set apart for recreation for the population in 1880 of 15,000 people.

Garrard led a deputation to the Colonial Secretary Sir Henry Parkes for the Government to purchase the area for the cost of \$12,000, a price that was high but the money would be well spent as Balmain was 'a place which all the more wanted breathing room because...it had been laid out in lanes 9 to 10 feet wide.' Parkes replied that the Government was usually

'treated as a milch cow' in such matters but promised a quick decision.

As a result of the exertions of the deputation and the influence of Parkes, the Government bought the land in September 1882, all except the school site sold in 1875. Trustees were appointed to turn the Pigeon Ground into a park but there was very little money available so work proceeded slowly. The Balmain Observer said in late 1889 that more money should be spent to throw open the park for public use because 'the local cricketers are pinning for a game.' Though proclaimed on 25th July 1885, the Park was not finished for official opening until 5th April 1890 when it was named Gladstone Park. The name was derived from the British Prime Minister, William Ewart Gladstone.

Sir Henry Parkes and his family of eventually 17 children moved to *Hampton Villa*, Grafton Street, 1888-1892 and no doubt walked through Gladstone Park to the shopping area.

Improvements were slow that in 1905 Gladstone Park was called 'a dusty heap of stones' and 'as an offensive tip'. In 1908 it was proposed to locate a new convenience underground but this was rejected because it was considered a 'menace to common decency.' At the end of

for a further 21 years expiring in 2017.

In 1912 the government announced plans to construct a water service reservoir under Gladstone Park. Up until this time water supply to Balmain had been a major issue. As of 1880 town water was connected to Balmain, however only to a few streets. Water supply was not consistent and residents relied on backyard wells and water trucks. During dry spells a system of water rationing needed to be introduced.

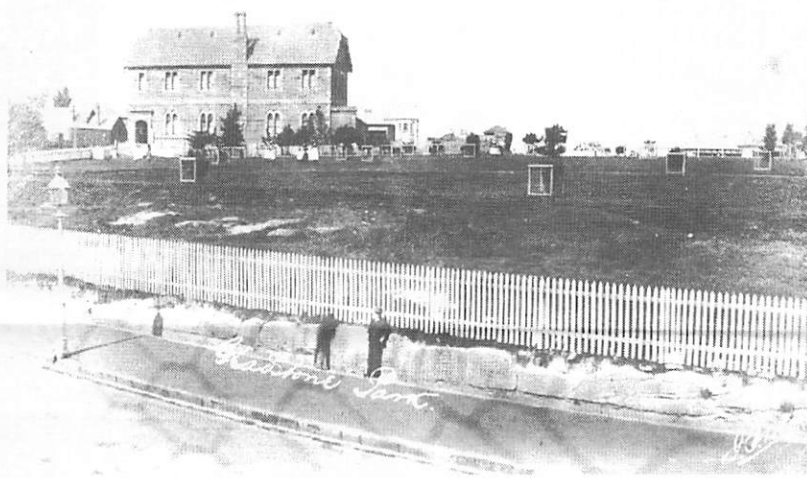
The Water Board guaranteed to restore the Park and promised to provide the Park with a bandstand when the reservoir capable of holding 2.4 million gallons of water, was completed. The structure was officially opened on 7th April 1918 by the Mayor of Balmain, D H McKenzie. The low brick wall that can be seen today is the base of the ornamental fence which once enclosed the bandstand. The reservoir and pumping station were made redundant by the commissioning of Petersham Pumping Station and Petersham Elevated Reservoir in 1965 and is empty today. The Park provides a rare area of public open space within a densely settled residential and commercial area.

The park's proximity to the commercial centre of Balmain and its frontage to Darling Street as the spine of the village centre precinct establish the park as an important open space asset to the centre. The park's relationship to adjoining school, hospital and church grounds also provide a regular source of passive usage.

Gladstone Park is classified by the National Trust of Australia NSW and included in the National Trust register. The Leichhardt Council Gladstone Park Plan of Management 2000 will begin to im-

plement improvements shortly as soon as funds are available.

Source: Draft Plan of Management. Leaflet Gladstone Park. Peter Reynolds.



Gladstone Park 1890

the year also the Gas Company offered to erect two gas lamps in the Park if the Council agreed to keep them alight for five years.

The Gladstone Park Bowling Club was founded in May 1898 and the club's lease was recently renewed

In Your Garden

Australian Shrubs

Add life and colour to the garden. In an average sized garden you can enjoy quite a collection of small to medium native plants.

Natives are generally regarded as low maintenance plants and although many can survive long dry periods this doesn't mean that you can plant and forget them. Good drainage is essential for natives such as grevillea banksia.

At this time of the year the bottlebrush is out in all its glory. They are among the hardiest of plants because they can tolerate such a wide range of climate and soil types. Sometimes confused with banksias, melaleucas and



calothamnus because of similar staminate flowers, the flowers of the bottlebrush genus callistemon are, however, so called because of the resemblance to the well known kitchen bottle washer. The bottle brush will survive most types of soil. The only thing they need is sunshine. They just will not grow in shade.

The birds love them. The flowers vary in colour from reds and pinks to mauve and cream with variations in the length of the flower spikes.

Some shrubs are tall and upright in their growth habits. Others are soft and weeping. Hannah Ray will grow to 4m with a pretty weeping growth and crimson brushes Harkness has masses of large bright red spikes on a rounded bush that grows to 5m.

All bottlebrush should be lightly trimmed after flowering.

Bonnie Davidson

What's On

Watch House Exhibitions

- **Denise Barry Artworks 4-5 Oct**
- **Sokquon 11-12 Oct Charcoal drawings watercolours**
- **Sandra Elliot 18-19 Oct Impressionist mixed media**
- **Heather Kepski Artworks 25-26 Oct**
- **Nado Milat Artworks 1-2 Nov**
- **Shirley Church 8-9 Nov Artworks**
- **Watercolour Group 29-30 Nov Gail Hewson**

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**The Peninsula
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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 7.00pm 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 :vhamey@tpg.com.au. Our Web site:: www.balmainassociation.homestead.com

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