



the balmain
association
incorporated
news sheet

The Peninsula OBSERVER

Vol 40 No 1 Issue 287

Founded November 1965

February 2004

It started with a humble hop

A small hop for man and a giant step for mankind. On the 17th December, 2003, the centenary of the history of powered flight began when the American brothers, Orville and William Wright's Flyer flew 260 meters in 59 seconds at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. Conventional engines at the time were too heavy, so the brothers had a lightweight aluminium petrol engine built for the Flyer.

Their success was the culmination of the work of many pioneers who researched and experimented with the mechanics of aviation. One of those was inventor Lawrence Hargrave, who lived most of his life on Bald Hill near Stanwell Park south of Sydney. Hargrave's surviving aeronautical models, drawings, photographs and notes form the basis of an exhibition to celebrate the centenary of aviation at the Powerhouse Museum at Pyrmont.

The following is a selection from the Australian Aviation History listing of events: In 1858 on 1st February, Englishman William Dean made the first Australian hot air balloon ascent in Melbourne, Victoria. 1879 On 14th April, Henri L'Estrange used an emergency parachute after his balloon burst in flight over Melbourne, to slow its descent – the first use of a parachute on Australia. 1885 Lawrence Hargrave, after seven years research into the essentials of flight, on 2nd December flew a model plane propelled by rubber bands which undulated the wings. J T Williams, on 8th December 1888, made a parachute jump from a balloon over Sydney. 1894 Lawrence Hargrave ascends almost 5m at Stanwell Park, NSW, using four box kites.

The Australian government was moved by all the excitement to offer in 1909, a prize of £5000 to the inventor of a flying machine suitable

for use in war. The prize went begging when all 40 entries were deemed unsuitable.

1909 George A Taylor makes the first heavier-than-air flight in Australia, at Narrabeen, on 5th December, in a glider he designed and built. His wife, Florence, also flew the glider, the first women to fly in Australia. On 9th December, Colin Defries attempted the first powered flight in Australia, a short hop, at Victoria Park race course, Sydney in a Wright biplane. The race course area today is Alexandria.

fitted to an aeroplane of new design within the next few weeks, so that it is expected that the first stage in Australian aerial conquest shall be successfully overcome'.

John Gibson, timber merchant, built *Fitzroy Villa* at 44 Louisa Road, Birchgrove, (now *The Anchorage*), in 1896. Gibson founded J Gibson Engineering Works on the adjoining land in 1908 and the firm became J Gibson and Son, operating at 38 Louisa Road until 1923. John Gibson died at *Fitzroy Villa* in 1920 but the family remained for many years with



Lawrence Hargrave demonstrating his kite-lift in 1894. Photo by Charles Bayliss

On 18th March, 1910 American magician Harry Houdini made the first powered, controlled heavier-than-air flight in Australia after completing three flights in a Voisin biplane at Digger's Rest, Victoria, and finally on 16th July, 1910, John R Duigan made the first flight in an Australian-built, powered aircraft at Spring Plains, Victoria.

One of the 40 entries for the Government's prize may have had a Balmain input. In the January, 1910 publication *The Australasian Marine Engineer* mentions 'a 30 horse-power engine is now being completed at Gibson & Sons' engineering works, Balmain and will be

a change of business of the Concrete Block Co there in 1924 to 1926, then Ronnie Symonds second-hand furniture store until the demolition of the brick factories in the 1950s for a block of 31 unit building which in turn is being considered for demolition to be replaced with 12 luxury apartments.

The photo by Charles Bayliss is from the Powerhouse Museum Collection.

Kathleen Hamey

insensitive to the neighbourhood. Any changes must fit in the existing fabric.

With development pending at numbers 16, 36a, 104 and 126, the remaining heritage quality of Louisa Road, Birchgrove, is threatened. The Godden Mackay Logan study advocates the retention of "all residential or commercial industrial structures developed up to 1941 belonging to the period of the growth of the Birchgrove and Ballast Point area."

The significant historical house *Joylen*, built in 1882, contributes charm to the streetscape and as the home from 1884 to 1916 of John Lamb Lyon, stained-glass designer, is protected by Leichhardt Council's planning controls and should not be demolished. The proposed replacement dwelling would be inappropriate to the streetscape and the impact would be adverse with excessive bulk and unsympathetic materials.

Heritage journalist for the Sydney Morning Herald Geraldine O'Brien, reported on 14th January, 2004: Balmain has become a 'fashion victim' as moneyed classes move in and destroy the very qualities that made the place unique. Louisa Road once had a series of fascinating glimpses between houses, through trees and across old shipyards. Now a series of huge garages screen those views from the street and the street looks much like any other high priced Sydney suburb. 'There is no concept of views being shared,' says Meredith Walker, a heritage consultant, in the same article.

The Conservation Study will be discussed at the Planning Committee February Meeting.

Val Hamey

bathing in Long Cove in view of Louisa Road and fined 1s, was again up for the same offence and sent to goal for 10 hours on bread and water. Lionel Creasy was summoned for disobeying an order of the Court for the maintenance of his wife and being in arrears £3 5s 4d. Sent to goal till amount is paid.

Accommodation: To Let - 31 Smith Street, Balmain, close to Baldrock Ferry, good, high position. HOUSE, six lofty rooms, every convenience, connected to sewer. Rent 15s. To Let - Nice cottage, 4 rooms, kitchen, copper, tubs, bath nr ferry. 10s; also large Butcher's Shop, with superior residence, all fittings including Scales, 20s; also well-furnished part house, 10s. Apply, Chas Mossman, opposite Court House, Darling Street, Balmain. Vacancies at Mrs Allen's, 26 Gipps Street, Balmain. Terms 18s. Comfortable home. Convenient to tram and ferry.

Documentary

Some Association photographs have been included in a documentary by Julie Nebauer about the Balmain paper seller Beatrice Bush, *Urban Goddess: a salute to the apron strings*. The ABC Arts program will screen it on Sunday 29th February.

William Foy

William Foy born in London, came to Australia from England in the 1840s to make his fortune on the goldfields but, like many others, was disappointed. He spent a year in Victoria then several years in Tasmania, where he married his first wife Matilda Briscoe.

The couple eventually settled in Sydney where Foy put his skills as a tinsmith to make mining equipment and his fortune. The business was in Hunter Street, Sydney where they lived from 1858 to 1867. Tragically, Matilda died aged only 32 years old when her clothes caught alight during a fire on the premises.

Section 4 of the Gilchrist Estate held 7 lots within the boundary of Palmer, Wortley, Reynolds and White Bay. Sale of the first lot in section 4 was in 1853 and lot 7 was purchased in 1861 by William Foy. A fresh water creek from the upper valley ran through Foy's allotment into the Bay.



William Foy (top) and Alice Foy

Subdivision was by C Wilson and the street named by 1866. The boundary of Foy's land was Wortley, Reynolds, Foy and Dick Streets.

Foy married a second time on 28th January 1867 to Harriet Davis, at St Peter's Church, Tempe. Foy was 45 years old and his wife 23 years. Harriet Davis had come to Australia as a child, aged four, with the 'lace makers of Calais'. These were English workers, mostly from Nottingham, who had gone to Calais to work in the French lace factories. Harriet was born in Calais in 1844, but when the French revolution of 1848 threatened, the English lace makers petitioned their government to help them to immigrate to the colonies.

Conservation Stand

The Leichhardt Conservation Area Study presented by Godden Mackay Logan has proposed changes to the Residential DCP to make it more compatible with heritage considerations. "By being general in nature, the design element guide lines in the RDCP are not necessarily applicable to contributory buildings in conservation areas. . . This can cause considerable destruction to the fabric of a conservation area where the vast majority of the buildings are contributory items. These need to be treated differently to non-contributory buildings and protected by the conservation area provisions. . . The approach of the RDCP is strongly slanted towards providing advice about new development, whereas throughout the whole of the Leichhardt conservation area or outside the conservation areas, the main effort should be towards dealing with what is already there — the identity of Leichhardt what attracts residents and visitors alike, is the existing fabric. Any change which is proposed will therefore mostly be dealing with existing fabric, or fitting in between existing fabric. This needs to be upfront throughout the RDCP (Guidelines)."

"The local government area of Leichhardt today is of heritage significance because it collectively demonstrates that first great surge of suburban growth on the edge of the city which sprang from the consolidation of wealth brought by the gold rush. That surge filled the

years 1870s – early 1880s and was centred around the boom decade of the 1880s. . . The history of suburban growth, beginning tentatively in East Balmain in the 1840s and continuing through to about 1939 is best illustrated in the seventeen conservation areas where most of that original suburban development remains. Through their intactness these remarkable collections of buildings provide the 'diary' of the area's development. From them, the growth of Leichhardt over this 100 year period from 1840 – 1939 can be read. Changes have occurred in the way that land has been used, particularly since the 1970s when industry began to move out to larger sites : many former industrial sites can now be identified by modern multi unit residential development. In some areas this has been carefully designed and sited to respect the scale of original suburban buildings nearby." Unfortunately, many sites, both multi and single, have suffered by unsympathetic redevelopment.

The Balmain Association for many years has objected to the continual disregard of Conservation Controls. It has observed the piecemeal destruction of the Louisa Road streetscape with alarm. Birchgrove and Ballast Point is "complex area demonstrating many layers of residential and industrial development from the 1870s to 1940. It also shows a mixture of social layers in the scale and quality of the houses and the consequence of the closing down of earlier waterfront industries in recent years and the redevelopment of their sites." Planning staff have used the diversity of historical buildings and streetscapes to justify the erection of modern residences that are

The Balmain Observer and Western Suburbs Advertiser

A Rozelle resident recently had one of the History Committee scurrying to the Harris Street address. On removing the carpet he had found a Hoyt Rozelle Theatre hand bill advertising two movies, 'You're A Sweetheart' with Alice Faye and George Murphy and 'Roberta' with Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire. There were many layers of newspapers, mainly the Sydney Morning Herald dated 1938 but and part of a 14th July 1916 Balmain Observer. The weekly paper cost 1d. and their office at that time was at corner Darling and Merton Street. Although the State Library has a complete microfilm record of the SMH since 1831 it only has limited copies of the Balmain Observer: August 1884 to December 1889, January 1899 to 21 December 1907 and some single copies from 1916 to 1928.

Of particular interest was an incomplete list of the Observer's Honour Roll for the fallen Anzacs from Balmain and Annandale and among the illustrated advertisements one for

Burrill's Coach and Motor Works, see August 2003 Peninsula Observer for Balmain Personalities.

The following is from the Balmain Observer 13th February, 1904.

Balmain Court House: William Burns, 29, fireman, was fined 10s or 48 hours, for behaving in a riotous manner in Darling Street. Charles Christian was fined £2 and 4s 10s costs or one month, for using indecent language in White Street. Thomas Mather, 20, labourer, was charged with stealing a blue serge coat, a white soft shirt and pair of gold sleeve links, value £3, the property of Bernard A Ryan, at Balmain on or about the 5th January. From the evidence given it appears that both accused and Ryan were employed at the Unity Hall hotel. Accused left the Hotel on the 4th January, the next morning Ryan missed the clothes from his bedroom and informed the Police, who, after making inquiries, subsequently found the coat and shirt in accused possession. Accused admitted taking the coat and shirt but said he did not take the sleeve links. Fined P5 or 2 months, time allowed to pay on finding security. Arthur Simonette, a boy about 13 years of age, who was before the Court last week for

More than 600 of them arrived together in a mass emigration in 1848 – but a condition of their arrival was that they should not use their lace-making skills but instead be employed as farm labourers and domestics.

Harriet Davis family was included in a group of 126 workers who ended up at Morpeth, Maitland. When Harriet married William Foy, she took on his first family of four children, two of the six children had died in infancy as well as having eleven of her own. Three were born while resident in Balmain..

The couple moved to Balmain in 1868 and Foy was an Alderman of the Balmain Council from 1870 to 1873. Foy had purchased other blocks of land near his allotments where he had built six houses, one his own residence. In 1887 he auctioned 37 allotments and the houses. The Balmain Council purchased 33 blocks of the subdivision that was to become Punch Park. The remaining 4 blocks and the houses were on the White Bay side of Foy Street and the houses were later demolished to make way for Lever & Kitchen. In the 1880s the family moved to *Foyville* in Enfield and later *Montreal*, George's River Road, Enfield, where Foy now blind, died in 1908. Harriet died two years later and was buried beside her husband, later joined by some of their children in the family plot at St Thomas Church Cemetery, Enfield..

William Foy left £300 to his wife but on Harriet's death only two years later, the legacy was considerably more, including a house for each of the children. Perhaps even in those days businessmen put their assets in their wife's name!

A daughter from his first marriage, Matilda Elizabeth married in 1883 and lived in Gotenburg, Sweden. Daughter Alice from the second marriage was a painter and poetess and had a studio in Phillip Street, Sydney. A son also from the second marriage Leslie became a doctor and a son Frank William died in Perth, WA, in 1896 from typhoid.

Source: Streets, Lanes & Places and St Thomas Church Cemetery, Enfield, Publication. Research: Bonnie Davidson.

Patterson Family

Denise Barry nee Patterson, whose art exhibition at the Watch House is outstanding, was here again on October 4, this time with five gifted relatives showing their mixed media work. A relative began to do the Patterson family history some years ago and finally a huge group of them met up in 2002. They discovered that there were a considerable number of the descendants of Mr David Patterson of Belfast who were gifted artists and photographers. The result was the wonderful exhibition by Denise, Stuart, Tony, Steven (Paddo), Justine and Madeleine Patterson. The atmosphere in the Watch House was very warm and I enjoyed meeting Denise and her friendly relatives.

Ann Bastok



Spirit of Tasmania

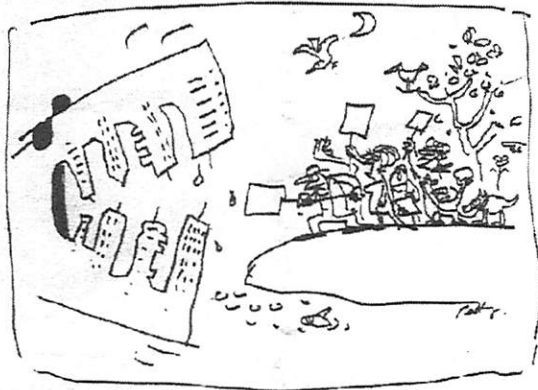
Balmain Library Project

Concept plans for the solution of the library's lack of space have been on exhibition and some submissions have been made. The plans have been prepared with reference to the Town Hall Conservation Management Plan because of its heritage listing and its integration with other civic buildings such as the Courthouse. Residents were consulted including the Friends of the Library, the Town Hall Committee and Precinct Committees

Several approaches were presented. One used the meeting room for library space. Another expensive scheme redeveloped the downstairs flat and western courtyard. A third envisaged an angled extension on the eastern wall (possibly conflicting with heritage consideration). Various situations for toilets were discussed.

Our representative has suggested sympathetic extensions in the western courtyard between the Town Hall and the Police Youth building and toilets behind the glasshouse. If the Pre-school Centre at rear moves to Mort Bay as planned this building could be utilised.

There is another building that could be used by the Library. The Telstra Telephone exchange is mostly empty because of modern technology. The front section could be rented by the Library. A more sympathetic entrance would be an asset to Balmain.



A plaque was recently unveiled at the Caltex gates at Ballast Point. It commemorates the efforts of people in returning the site to open space. Local cartoonist, Bruce Petty, produced this illustration for the plaque.

Then and Now

73 & 75 Evans Street, Rozelle.

These photographs, taken in 1896, were presented to the Balmain Association by Mrs Margaret Healy, Great Granddaughter of Thomas and Maria Drew.

Thomas Drew was born in 1845 at Tiverton, Devon, England and married Maria Axhorn in 1865. He was a Boatswain in the Royal Navy and spent seven years in the Pacific Ocean. He left his ship *HMS Cambridge* and the navy in Wellington, New Zealand and then came to Australia.

Daughter Bessy born in 1867 in Tiverton and wife Maria arrived in Sydney on 12th July 1873 on board *La Hogue* and joined Thomas. Maria had worked in the lace factory making the famous Devon Lace. The factory employed up to 7,000 people at one stage.

The family travelled around NSW looking for a place to settle. My grandmother Annie was born in Kiama in 1874. Soon after Annie's birth they came back to Sydney and settled in Balmain. Thomas was also a carpenter and built his shops on both corners of Evans and Bruce Streets and became a successful businessman. The shop at 75 Evans 'Balmain Supply Store' - 'T. Drew Family Grocer', 'T D 1896' was cut into the stone wall. Other children all born in Balmain. Emily b1875, Charles b1878. Thomas b1880. William b1884. Thomas and Maria have five generations on Australians as of 2003. Thomas died in 1897 and Maria died in 1900, both were buried at the old Balmain Cemetery. In the 1990s women's apparel and repair business was conducted from the building.



Narrow Street Parking

We have campaigned during the last year for Leichhardt Council to introduce shared traffic zones in Balmain's narrow streets. Many residents have been booked for parking on the footpath. The Council has heeded ours and other pleas and in meetings with RTA representatives has succeeded in getting agreement for a series of trials.

Starting with Foucart Street, Lilyfield and Stuart, Short and Philip Streets, Balmain shared pedestrian and vehicle zones will be constructed with traffic calming measures to

In Your Garden

February Gardening

For people living in units and townhouses, making green oases from little spaces may mean that a courtyard or balcony is the only private outdoor area available. Courtyards can be transformed into green extensions of the living space - an outdoor room. These spaces can be intimate with lattice smothered with perfumed vines.

One difficulty facing balcony gardeners is exposure to prevailing



winds. Even in shaded spots wind will quickly dry out pots and baskets. Some form of protection is necessary. For balconies this could be a reinforced glass screen giving protection without obscuring views. For courtyards panels of lattice supporting a hardy climber will stop draughts.

The choice of plants will be determined by the amount of sunlight available. The ideal aspect is an easterly one that receives gentle morning sun and is protected from the fierce afternoon heat.

Climbers for courtyards and balconies: The orange trumpet vine has lovely coral flowers throughout the winter. Chinese star jasmine produces white starry blooms in spring. Good for shaded areas. Potato creeper flowers nearly year round. Happy wanderer handegergia has deep violet blooms in winter.

For pots you can choose a wide range such as camellia, hydrangea, azalea, daphne, gardenia and fuschia.

Bonnie Davidson

What's On

Watch House Exhibitions

- **Steve Jennar Artworks 21-22 Feb**
- **Jan Henderson Artworks 28-29 Feb**
- **Joy Bye & Clarissa Regan 6-7 March**
- **Bing Wu Artworks 13-14 & 20-21 Mar**
- **Peter Mottershead 27-28 Mar**
- **24 April-2 May. This year's National Trust Heritage Festival theme is Foundations of Tomorrow in the Year of the Built Environment. We will celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the Watch House with photogtaphs of the restoration. Members' photos are requested.**

Printed by Snap Print, Balmain. © Not to be reproduced without permission.



the balmain
association
incorporated
news sheet

The Peninsula
OBSERVER

SURFACE
MAIL

POSTAGE
PAID
AUSTRALIA

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

Miss Theresa L Hayward
61 Louisa Road
Birchgrove NSW 2041
2005/12

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 5.00pm 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

Annual subscriptions:

Household \$20, Concession \$10

Organisations \$30.