



the balmain
association
incorporated
news sheet

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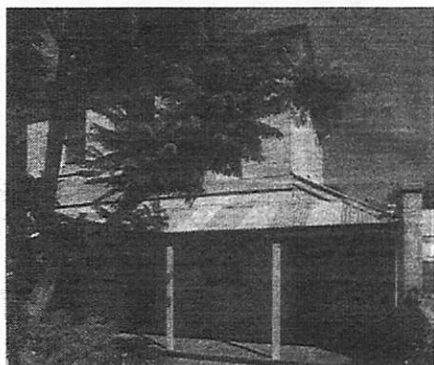
April 2004

Balmain Watch House 1854 - 2004

The Watch House is in many ways a symbol of Balmain for its beginnings, heyday, decline and regeneration closely echoing the progress of the district of which it was once the hub. Now in the final stages of its restoration by the Balmain Association, the building is thought to be the only surviving example in Sydney of an early police station and lock-up.

The first land sales in Balmain were in 1836 and by the 1850s the residents numbered 1500, when the settlers asked the Government to provide a police force and a gaol. Edmund Blacket, the Colonial Architect was instructed to find a suitable site and the present site was bought from Edward Hunt of Hampton Villa, Grafton Street, for £240.

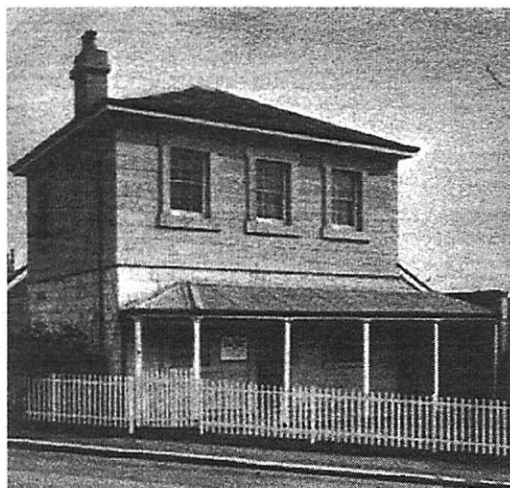
The original Watch House included a Charge Room, Constables' Bed room and two cells. Messrs Holmes and Coney started work on 9th May 1854 after submitting a tender of £950 which later increased to £1058. The building opened in early



Watch House 2004

1855 without the privy and urinal that was completed later in the year!

It is a little difficult nowadays to picture the Watch House as part of a busy little commercial centre, surrounded by shops, houses, post office, hotels and a church. For a while



Watch House 1971

the police station rubbed shoulders with a wooden Presbyterian church occupying the small triangular plot of land next door until 1868 when a sandstone church was built in Campbell Street. The church/shop remained until 1920s.

In 1878 the Balmain police force comprised six men 'amongst the most exemplary that New South Wales can produce, more parental than otherwise and protective not detective' and 'larrikinism has to a great extent subsided'.

By 1880s the population was over 15,000 and the Watch House was enlarged adding another storey for the Sergeant's residence, a kitchen to the side and a verandah to the front and two larger cells at the back.

The Watch House continued to be used as a local lock-up until 1925 even though in 1887 the expansion of the suburb had caused its centre to move further up Darling Street when the grand new post office and court house and police station was built.

The Watch House remained in control of the Police Department and the whole building, downstairs as well as up, became a home. The charge room became a living room, the cells bedrooms as necessary. From 1930 to 1947, Sergeant

Ira Gray and wife Eliza and twelve children, called the lock-up their home.

About 1960 the police ceased to occupy the Watch House and with minimal maintenance the deterioration became more rapid and became a target for vandals and a home for vagrants.

The newly formed Balmain Association asked the National Trust of Australia to support an appeal to the Minister of Lands for the preservation of the Watch House. The request met with sympathetic response and the State Government vested the building to the National Trust and a lease was drawn up that the Balmain Association would undertake the repairs and restoration.

The early members had taken on a huge task but the renovations had advanced sufficiently for the official opening performed by the Minister of Lands, The Hon. Tom L Lewis, MLA, on 12th April, 1970.

In 1971 the land adjoining the Watch House was vested to the National Trust and added to the lease for communal use. The small park contains foundations of the old Presbyterian Church.

To celebrate the 150 years of the building the National Trust had offered the deeds of the Watch House to the Balmain Association. The Committee are delighted to be recognised in this way, for the restoration and repair has always been the Association's most important single project. Investigation is in progress as to the cost of insuring the building by the Association and if we can afford to do so.

During April please visit the Watch House on Saturday 11.30am to 4pm, for a photographic display and receive a commemorative pen.

Source: Balmain Watch House leaflet, Peter Reynolds.



Spirit of Tasmania

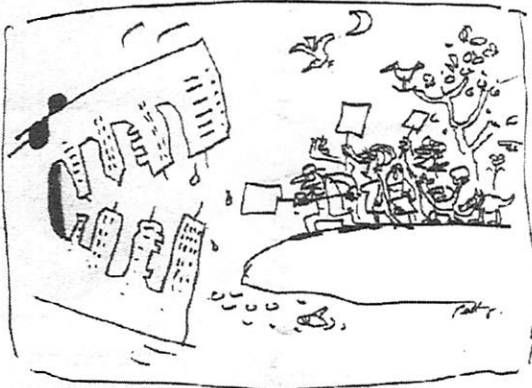
Balmain Library Project

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

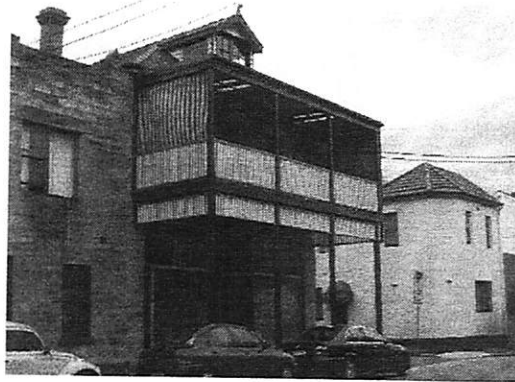
73 & 75 Evans Street, Rozelle.

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

Passenger Car Ferries

In February 2004 a new service was introduced by an almost-new passenger car ferry *Spirit of Tasmania 111* from Sydney to Devonport, Tasmania. *SOT !!!* built in Finland in 1995 for service across the Adriatic Sea as the *Superfast 11*. She is of 23,663 tons gross and 173m can carry up to 700 passengers on her new route at speeds of 27 knots.

Ferries that carried vehicles and passengers have been with us since soon after the invention of steam engine. In Sydney large vehicular 'punts' worked from 1870s until 1932 when the Harbour Bridge was opened and continued to work in many other places much longer.

Carrying vehicles to sea was always somewhat difficult. Until 1959 anyone being so desperate as to wish to take their car to Tasmania was required to present the car at

a wharf in Melbourne. There the car would be hoisted by sling and plonked in the hold of a passenger steamer. The last such passenger steamer was *Taroona*. She was replaced in 1959 by a new style of sea-going passenger ferry in which the traveller could park the car on a big flat deck.

The first roll on/roll off ferry was *Princess of Tasmania* known to all as the POT. This ferry was built in Newcastle and could carry 330 passengers across Bass Strait along with a sizeable group of cars and trucks.

POT was such a success that the idea of carrying on a similar trade from Sydney to Tasmania was investigated with the result that the Australian National Lines built the *Empress of Australia* at Cockatoo Island, launched on 18th January 1964. When commissioned, EOA was the largest roll on/roll off ferry in the world and working the longest route, carrying 250 passengers on a gross tonnage of more than 12,000.

Many passengers can remember driving their car to Yeend Street, Birchgrove, to be loaded from a berth over the remains of the old Mort's Dock for the two nights, one day trip. The EOA provided three round trips in two weeks, calling at Hobart, Bell Bay and Burnie, in rotation.

The EOA ran down the coast from 1965 until 1972 with many Australians paying to find out the same truths concerning the NSW South Coast and Bass Strait that just as many other Australians have learned under sail from Boxing Day each year that the area can be b...rough!

Source: Taking your car to Tassie. Graeme Andrews. Afloat Magazine February 2004.



Empress of Australia 1971

The National Trust Heritage Festival 2004

The Foundations of Tomorrow in the Year of the Built Environment. The Balmain Association and other local organisations are to hold a variety of events from 24th April to 2nd May 2004 and we invite you to participate in these events.

The Balmain Association Inc. *Then and Now-A Photographic Exhibition* celebrating the 150th Birthday of the Watch House 1854-2004 and other photographs from our archives. Saturdays 3rd April to 1st May. Open-11.30am to 4pm. Entry Free. 179 Darling Street, Balmain.

Heritage Pub Tour. The 2 hour tour will guide you to former pub buildings and eight functioning hotels. Refreshment at two hotels at own expense. Saturday, 24th April. Depart Watch House at 2pm. Cost \$10.

Coach Tour of Balmain. 1 hour tour of Balmain including visit to 1844 Clontarf Cottage and commentary by local guides. Saturday, 1st May. Two tours at 12.30pm and 2pm. Cost \$5. Depart Watch House.



Clontarf Cottage Committee invites you to Open House at Clontarf Cottage. Saturday, 1st May. Visit the 1844 sandstone cottage at 4 Wallace Street, saved by resident action, now a Community Centre. Open 12pm to 4pm. Free. Booking for tours Essential. 9818 4954.

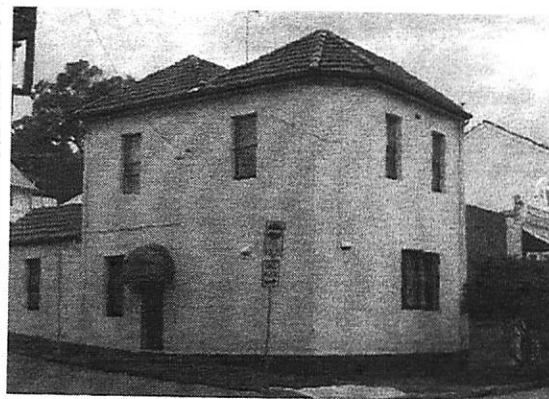
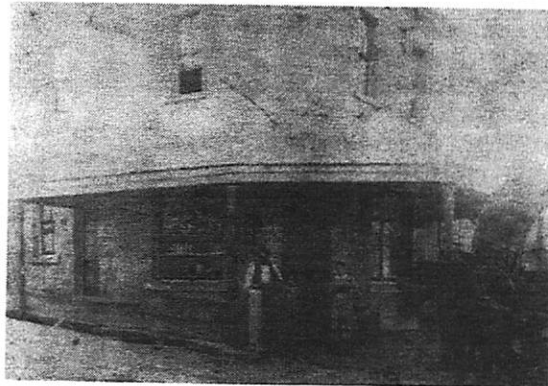
Leichhardt Local History Group. The History of Annandale Talk by David Springett, Chartered Architect, BSc(Arch), B(Arch). Monday, 26th April, 6.30pm at Leichhardt Library, Italian Forum, Norton Street, Leichhardt. Cost \$10.members. \$12 non-members. Enquiries. 9519 3268.

Leichhardt Library. Built Locally: A Photographic Exhibition presents a snapshot of the varied residential, industrial and institutional heritage to be found in Annandale, Balmain, Leichhardt and Rozle. 19th April to 23rd May. Library hours.

Royal Australian Historical Society. Foundations: The Ups and Downs of Balmain Walk. Wednesday 28th April. This walk led by local historian, Dr Peter Reynolds, will focus on Balmain's waterfront, sandstone outcrops, maritime links, waterfront parks, 1840s sandstone cottages. Bookings, cost and place to meet. Contact 9247 8001



75 Evans St, above and 73 Evans St, below in 1896



73 Evans St, above and 75 Evans St, left today

ensure pedestrian safety. Gipps Street and parts of Louisa Road are being considered. These measures are being introduced because of parking laws that made parking on footpaths illegal. This could block emergency vehicles in narrow streets.

Shared traffic zones can be expensive to construct if RTA design guidelines are slavishly followed. They require expensive paving, all kerbs to be removed and underground drainage installed. We have suggested that only the kerb on the high side be removed and the lower side used for surface drainage.

In Your Garden

Gardening With Bulbs

Once autumn arrives the thoughts of the flower gardener turn inevitably to the spring bulbs display. Most of us have plans for a few new bulb varieties that we would like to grow and now is the time to put them into effect.

If you're a novice take heart - anyone can grow bulbs. With a couple of exceptions (notably tulips and hyacinths) they will grow and flower with ease in a wide range of soils and locations. Even those places less than ideal but never in heavy wet clay as this spells trouble because the constantly damp situation could rot the bulbs..



Bulbs mix well with other plants and so are ideal for spots here and there in the garden. Plant them between shrubs, under trees or in pockets of a rockery. They are also suitable for pots, tubs, hanging baskets and window boxes to bring colour to balconies and other paved areas.

Bulbs can be planted at anytime over the autumn months. Before planting it is worthwhile to add some plant food in the soil to provide future nourishment and have better flowering. Use about two handfuls of any plant food per square metre. Mark the spot to ensure you don't disturb them accidentally.

The first shoots are tempting for slugs and snails so keep an eye out and scatter some bait around. When flower buds appear in spring apply some liquid fertiliser to give the display a boost..

Bonnie Davidson

What's On

Watch House Exhibitions

- **April Heritage Festival Photographic display**
- **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 photographs of the restoration. Members' photos are requested.**
- **Intertwing Weaving, Canework, etc 8-9 & 15-16 May**
- **Juliet Cohen 22-23 May**
- **Kim Savage 29-30 May**
- **Carolyn Lapiss 5-6 June**

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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 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.