



the balmain
association
incorporated
news sheet

The Peninsula OBSERVER

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UPDATE ON THE VISION FOR WHITE BAY

The Community Survey on a "Vision for White Bay" conducted in July and August this year had over 500 participants. The results strongly indicate a preference for a mix of parkland, recreational facilities and community amenities including public transport options such as a ferry terminal and light rail connection. Industrial activity is not wanted, particularly any activity 24hrs a day 7days a week. Residential development is also not a preferred option. Public foreshore access is regarded as essential.

The weekend workshop conducted in August at the Balmain Town Hall brought together representatives from the local community, stakeholders, residents and experts in harbour management, transport and employment aspects. Outcomes included a list of common principles for the future direction and use of White Bay. It was agreed that any development should:

- Involve the full participation of the community and stakeholders
- Be part of an integrated plan for the whole area
- Perform well against ESD/sustainability principles
- Feature environmental best practice
- Provide public access to the waterfront
- Incorporate on-going community involvement and oversight
- Acknowledge the residential nature of the district and its growing needs.
- Include a catalyst development based around the Power Station.

Preferred options for the Balmain waterfront included public access, a transport hub (ferry/light rail/bus), a showcase of maritime heritage, provision of passive recreation facilities, a pedestrian/cycle zone, a mixed use area incorporating low impact

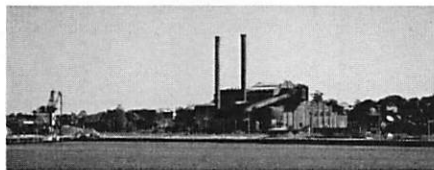
commercial, education, retail, marine use, sporting and community facilities. A review of the out-dated Masterplan for White Bay/Glebe Island is essential before any development proposal is approved for this area.

The EAP for the Baileys Marine proposal for a 24 hr, 7 days a week, multi-purpose refuelling and other services facility at White Bay Wharf 6 (next to Cameron's Cove) is now on exhibition at SHFA, Leichhardt Council and on the SHFA website. All concerned residents are urged to write or email their submission to SHFA during the exhibition period up to Dec 6th. The SHFA website address is: www.shfa.nsw.gov.au

Enquiries to:

cameron.sargent@shfa.nsw.gov.au

For more information please contact Christina Ritchie, Sec White Bay Precinct Committee, email: chrisritchie01@yahoo.com.au



White Bay, an ideal spot for what?

PRINT SIZE SURVEY

There has been a suggestion that the print size in The Observer is too small. In preparing an issue of the newsletter there is always a juggling act. It involves what material to put in, how much of a contribution to edit out, what print size to use, how many photos and illustrations to use, the amount of blank space and how many pages the Association can afford.

Comments on whether; 9 pt print is too small or whether 10 pt is more appropriate, or perhaps 11 pt is needed for some readers, would be appreciated, but please remember larger type means less of other things that one's eyes should be checked every few years and that a brighter light can often help the partially sighted!!

IN THIS ISSUE

The answer to the question posed in the 300th edition of the Observer is "Yes". The question was, "Do we have any artists interested in contributing to future newsletters, or have these skills been lost?"

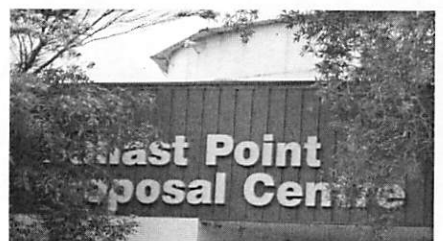
Not only did Bruce Smith respond with a sketch of The Beach hotel, he provided photographs and prose and poetry to go with them (p4).

Very gratifyingly there have also been other unsolicited contributions from Duncan MacAuslan on the origin of "Rozelle" (p4) and Christina Ritchie's, "The Balmain Guardian" (p5) and offers of help from artists Jenny Porter and Barbara Hamilton. Other contributions will be included in future editions.

In this edition there is a mystery story, "Bonnington Connections" on page 6 involving the Nicholson Street School. Also included is information on Bruce Petty's latest film (p4) and an account of the recent Garden Walks (p5).

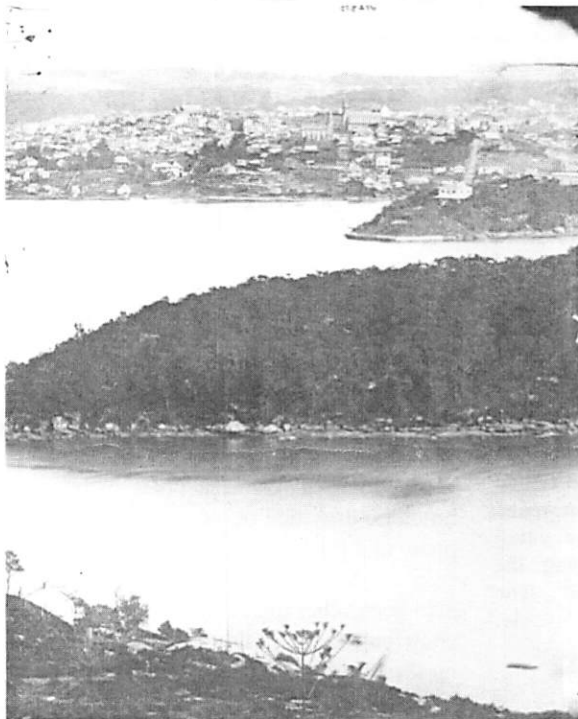
The Association's AGM was held in October. Jane Ward was elected President, Diana Garder Vice President, June Lunsman Secretary and Val Hamey Treasurer. Ann Bastock's outgoing President's report is on page 3. The Treasurer's report is included on page 5.

Our Nature writer, Clive Abbott, will be reporting on the Ballast Point Park project in the next issue. He is gathering information from SHFA for the Observer about the proposed landscaping from the point of view of fauna and flora.

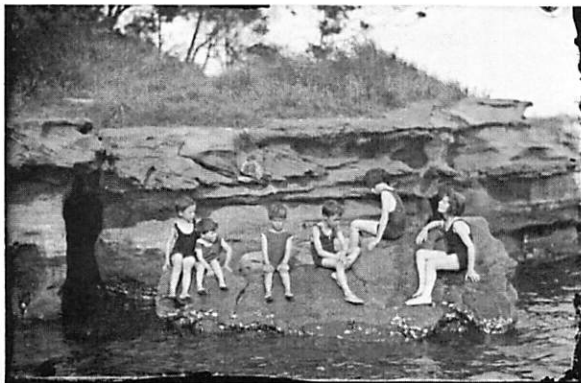


BALLAST POINT

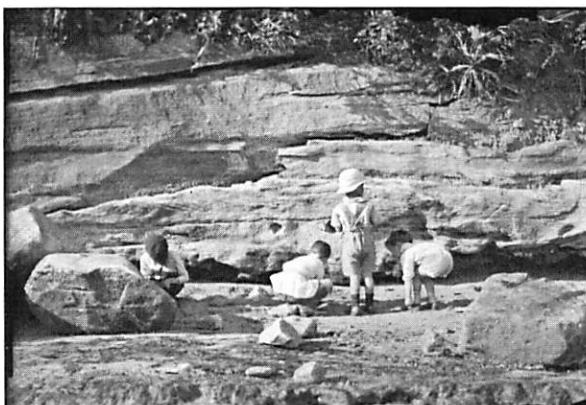
On this page some historic photos and information on Ballast Point are reprinted. The photos on the left were supplied by the Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW, and are reproduced with permission.



Balls Point (centre), Ballast Point (and Menevia) behind and Balmain in the background (from the Holtermann collection, circa 1870).



Above and below: photos taken at Ballast Point in 1921 (from the Mort family collection).



The entry below is from the popular D.I.Y. on-line encyclopedia, "Wikipedia" at www.wikipedia.org/ The Wikipedia entry on Ballast Point was written by Andy Mitchell, a new member of the Balmain Association.

Ballast Point, New South Wales

Coordinates: 33°52′204″S 151°18′331″E﻿ / ﻿33.872204°S 151.309194°E﻿ / -33.872204; 151.309194

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Ballast Point is a 2.6 hectare area located in Birchgrove at the tip of the Balmain Peninsula in the Municipality of Leichhardt in Sydney, New South Wales, Australia. It is located between Snails Bay and Mort Bay in Port Jackson.

Contents

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History

Between 1788 and 1800, the point was used as a fishing and hunting ground for European settlers and as a source of ballast for ships returning unladen to Europe, hence the name Ballast Point.

In 1800 the point was part of a 550 acre (2.2 km²) grant to colonial surgeon Dr William Balmain (1762-1803) made by Governor John Hunter. A year later, Balmain sold his entire holding to John Gilchrist for 5 shillings and the area then became known as Gilchrist's place.

In 1833, Gilchrist transferred power of attorney to Frederick Parbury who 3 years later commissioned surveyor John Armstrong to lay out sub divisions. This survey formed the basis of sales between 1836 and 1841.

Ballast Point was sold by Parbury to Cooper (NSW Controller of Customs and later Superintendent of Distilleries) and McLean in 1840 but a default in the mortgage saw the land transfer to James Tod Goodsir in February 1841 for 700 pounds. Only 7 months later, Ballast Point was sold to Andrew Blowers Smith and Henry Smith for 500 pounds. The land was advertised for sale in 1842 but severe colonial depression forced withdrawal of the sale.

Merchant and draper Thomas Perkins, purchased the 5 acre site for 300 pounds in 1852 and in 1864 built the only house thought to have existed on the site, Menevia. From this point until 1875 the site was known as Menevia Point after the residence and from 1884 to 1928 was known as Perkins Point after Mrs Perkins who lived in the house.



In 1905 the land passed to Henry Thomas Perkins, a barrister living in Surrey, England, who never took up residence at the site.

From 1893 to at least 1915 Menevia was used as a boarding house and possibly still operated as such in the early 1920s.

By 1928, Menevia had fallen into disrepair and the site was purchased by Texaco (later Caltex) who demolished the house to make way for a fuel depot, manufacturing and packaging facility. Ballast Point formed Texaco's major distribution point in Sydney and continued until the 1990s.

NSW Court of Appeal.

Significant community support for public ownership had occurred with the activist group *Save Ballast Point*, which was formed in 1984, claiming to have in excess of 500 members.

Current Use

The point is now owned by the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority and plans are underway to transform the site into a spectacular public space for the enjoyment of future generations.

The A\$16m plan includes demolition and decontamination of the existing derelict industrial site and construction of a children's playground, new wharves, pergola and gardens. Work is expected to be complete by 2007.

See Also

- The nearby suburbs Balmain and Rozelle both located on the Balmain Peninsula.
- Thomas Sutcliffe Mort, co-founder of the Dry Dock and Engineering Works at nearby Mort Bay.

References

- Solling, M; Reynolds, P; *Leichhardt: On the margins of the city*, Allen & Unwin, 1997, ISBN 186448408.
- Lawrence, J; Warne, C; *A Pictorial History of Balmain to Glebe*, Kingsclear Books, 1995, ISBN 0908272405.
- Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority: *Ballast Point*, [1] (<http://www.shfa.nsw.gov.au/ballastpoint/about.cfm>) . Accessed June 2006.
- Leichhardt Municipal Council: *Leichhardt Development Control Plan Part-A*, [2] (<http://www.lmc.nsw.gov.au/planning/files/A10.6%20Balmain%20all.pdf>) , 2000.
- Malkin, B; *Ballast Point: from oil terminal to public park*, Sydney Morning Herald, October 6, 2005. [3] (<http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/ballast-point-from-oil-terminal-to-public-park/2005/10/06/1128562928363.html>)
- Gee, P; *Ballast Point Victory*, Village Voice Balmain, March 2002. [4] (<http://www.villagevoice.com.au/news/NewsArchive/March2002/BalRozEd/BallastPVictoryBalRozMar2002.htm>)

External links

- Maps and aerial photos**
 - Street map from Street Directory (http://www.street-directory.com.au/sd_new/genmap.cgi?x=151.189331&y=-33.852204&size=800&sizey=800&level=5&enlarge=1&star=6) , MSN Maps (<http://maps.msn.com/map.aspx?&lat=151.189331&lon=-33.852204&zoom=15>) and Multimap (<http://www.multimap.com/map/browse.cgi?client=public&lat=-33.852204&lon=151.189331&scale=10000>) .
 - Satellite image from Google Maps (<http://maps.google.com/maps?ll=-33.852204,151.189331&spn=0.015,0.025&t=k>) , WikiMapia (<http://www.wikimapia.org/maps?ll=-33.852204,151.189331&spn=0.11,0.18&t=h>) and TerraServer (http://terraserver.com/imagery/image_gx.asp?cpx=151.189331&cpy=-33.852204&res=8&provider_id=350) .
 - Local Images at InnerWest ImageBank (<http://photosau.com/Leichhardt/scripts/home.asp>)
 - Local History Collection, Leichhardt Council (<http://www.lmc.nsw.gov.au/libraries/07>)
 - The Walker Corporation (<http://www.walkercorp.com.au>)

Retrieved from "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ballast_Point%2C_New_South_Wales"

Category: Parks in Sydney

PRESIDENT'S REPORT – 2006

Another year has flown by and it is time to write my 10th report as president of the Balmain Association.

In December last a wonderful event took place. It was an art show by asylum seekers and refugees organized by a group who work hard for these people. The art was all for sale and the proceeds went to the "Balmain for Refugees" group.

Early in 2005 I co-operated with a group called "Nexus" who are part of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. They prepare education programs for Asia/Pacific and hail from ABC Adelaide. They took some great photos of Balmain, including copies of some of those we hold in the Balmain Watch House that go back many years. They also interviewed Peter Reynolds re the early history of Balmain. This year they sent Peter and me a copy of the video just after it was released overseas and thanked us for our assistance in organizing it.

Also early this year Lucy Burke-Smith, a heritage design specialist from the Government Architect's Office, attended a committee meeting and gave us very helpful advice regarding restoration work in the Watch House.

Once again we have had a year of wonderful art exhibitions. "Form in Landscape" by Janet Carter & Jan Moore was wonderful as was the annual exhibition of the "Balmain Peninsula Park Painters". I was very impressed with the an exhibition in April of the artwork of twelve artists

who belong to the Lupus Association as I was too with the 7th show at the Watch House by the "Intertwining" group. They do bring the crowds in! The "Circle of Clay Artists" also returned with another lovely presentation of their work. And just before I began to write this report I once again saw yet another amazing exhibition by Denise Barry and friends called "Moving On". These exhibitions not only provide money for maintenance and restoration of the Watch House – they keep the building warm and lively!

For History Week in September our own exhibition was "Balmain Provides for the Nation" and what a top display was put up through the entire Watch House, including samples of the products manufactured here in Balmain so long ago, when Balmain really did manufacture provisions for the whole nation! Our dedicated member, June Lunsmann, deserves much thanks for the effort she put into organizing this display and the wonderful opening by Issy Wyner. Thanks too to Diana Garder who was MC and Vic Grant for his amazing speech about Thomas Sutcliffe Mort and Judy Newton who spoke about the history of Unilever. Brett's granddaughter, Barbara, also gave a speech that was appreciated and David Porter & David Liddle kept us all interested – making it an exceptional event.

We are grateful too, to all the people who responded to the rsvp in the Sydney Morning Herald, many of whom were unable to visit the exhibition. In particular, we thank Georgina & Barbara Brett for their contribution of photos and stories of

the Brett family, Pauline Insley for her aunt's letter which she received from Unilever on purchasing a new washing machine, Dot Tydeman for photographs and story about the Tancred family, Joan Otter for copies of her father's employment history at Morts Dock, Betty Grant for her donation of a tool kit for cleaning horses hooves which was used by a family member who drove wagons for Elliott's chemical company in the late 1800's and Bob McSeveny for his copies of photos and history sheet about Unilever.

The next morning all hands on deck for the Balmain garden tour – many people came along to enjoy what was a wonderful experience – the gardens were beautiful and so was the day. We were lucky it wasn't planned for the week before when flood and gale kept everybody home!

I must say that as president of the Balmain Association and resident for 21 years, I have been very involved in the battle locals are fighting against the horrific cement terminal proposal at White Bay.

So, the 41st year of the restoration and care of the Watch House was highly successful and a special thanks to everyone who has worked to make it so. And thanks also to Fergus Fricke and Ruth Macleod for the interesting "Observer" newsletters they produce every quarter to be sent out to our members. Let's hope that the 42nd year, 2007, will be another great one for our Balmain Association.

Ann Bastock



Some of the "new" committee, charged with running the Balmain Association in 2007, in the Watch House Charge Room. From left to right: Kathleen Hamey, Val Hamey (Treasurer), Jane Ward (President), Diana Garder (Vice President), June Lunsmann (Secretary), George Cooper and Ann Bastock (Past President). Other committee members not in the photo include Roger Parkes, Bob Ellis, Rita Ellis, Christina Ritchie, Bonnie Davidson, Jeremy Arnott and Fergus Fricke.

CORRESPONDENCE

From Bruce Smith in Queensland

I read with some surprise in the September issue of the Observer, the contribution 'Three Hundred', discussing a concern that the skills of sketches were being lost. Therefore I thought a response was necessary.

I joined an amateur writers group so that I could add some short stories to my Balmain pub drawings. I have enclosed one of my favourites, written before the restoration, for consideration for publication.

On a visit to Balmain in July 2005, both the pub and I were overjoyed to see that a restoration had occurred and 'The Beach' can once again take some pride in its appearance. I hope that the backpackers that find their way there will rekindle some of the pleasures that this pub once enjoyed.



THE BEACH HOTEL

Oh, woe is me woe is me.
Though even built right on the sea.
I now look so old and ug ... erly
Oh golly gosh - poor me.

"I feel so neglected drab and lonely, as I struggle to maintain a decent stance here on the corner of Mansfield and Smith Street, Balmain. Since 1881 I was a very proud and respected pub. Located close to the harbour beach, the Bald Rock ferry passengers would call in on their way home; local sportsmen also merchants and the Balmain Gas Company employees came and spent many happy hours inside my welcoming walls.

It was when the Great Depression started to creep upon the people of Balmain that my fate was sealed. Closure occurred in 1928. My present dilapidated state shows the damages of time, but you can see from the drawing why I feel as I do. What is my future to be?"



"The Beach" after restoration.

From Duncan MacAuslan

In a recent Peninsula Observer there was an article Balmain and the British Raj by John Williams hinting at an Indian derivation of the name Rozelle.

Well I think he is on the right track with the red sorrel but perhaps not quite with where the name came from.

When I was on one of my regular trips to Scotland I remember passing an estate entrance with the name Rozelle prominently displayed. At the time I thought the name was a coincidence but after reading John's article I wasn't so sure.

Rozelle House was built in 1760 by the Hamilton family and named after one of their three sugar and tobacco plantations in the West Indies. This in turn was named after the Roselle or Rozelle which was the red sorrel which was abundant in Jamaica at the time.

There seems to be some dispute as to whether the red sorrel was a native of the west African tropics which was transported to India, or Indian and transported to west Africa. The former seems more probable as the slave trade would have assisted in getting the plant to the West Indies and India. Sadly the Hamilton family's wealth was drawn from the slave trading as well as plantations.

Rozelle House is just south of Ayr, and just up the road from Alloway and the cottage belonging to Scotland's most famous poet Robert Burns. Appropriately, Rozelle House is now an art gallery displaying an exhibition based on Tam O'Shanter, one of Burns' most famous poems. Whether Major George Johnson from Annandale, some fifty kilometres east of Ayr, knew the Hamiltons and Rozelle may never be known.



Rozelle House, Scotland

Having found places in Jamaica, Scotland and India named after red sorrel it seems much more likely that the same derivation was found for Rozelle here. It does seem ironic that the last Rozelle named is the one which doesn't seem to be documented!

The photo comes from the website <http://www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/galleries/rozellehouse.htm>

In the hardcopy of Duncan's message the photograph above was, appropriately, in shades of red (presumably the printer was out of cyan ink!). Unfortunately The Observer is still in the black and white age and so it could not be reproduced. Ed

Global Haywire, a New Film by Bruce Petty

By the end of this year Balmain cartoonist, Bruce Petty, hopes to have his latest project finished. It is a film that explores the question of why the West is facing a terrorist insurrection from the East. It has been made on an incredibly low budget. Getting funding has been hard, because, as Bruce says, "It's not like anything". He has got it up with the help and goodwill of some mates.



The film is about a little man who builds a flying machine, and how his project gets hijacked. Bruce weaves together a combination of genres and techniques, including: cartoon animation; archival film; interviews with students around the world from London to Cairo; interviews with internationally renowned intellectuals such as Noam Chomsky, Gore Vidal, Tariq Ali (to name but a few); and a narrator with a "mock-authoritative" voice.

The scope of the content is ambitious to say the least. *Global Haywire* covers world history since the Enlightenment, the workings of international economics, and East-West conflict. Says Bruce: "Cartoonists don't worry about the size or sweep of the issues"! Of course, the whole tone is satirical. Like any political cartoon, it has several levels. Bruce explains: "It's hard to respond to issues that are complex. Cartoons do it an entertainment level, but mixed in with the heavy stuff. People think 'this is funny but wait a minute, maybe it's serious'. It's nonsense, but there's something in it".

Bruce's modest assessment is, "it's been a good experiment". His fear is that the film is so hard to categorise, it won't get picked up by TV channels or cinemas. But it sounds as if such a clever and innovative work has the potential to become a cult classic.

The distributor, Hopscotch, will put *Global Haywire* out next year in small cinemas in Australia.

The Balmain Guardian

Below is a poem by Christina Ritchie titled, *The Balmain Guardian*. Christina writes about the poem:

"After a morning walk next to the harbour at Balmain recently the beauty of the area inspired me. It helped me realise how important it is to preserve and improve the valuable harbour foreshore we have in Balmain/Rozelle. I am encouraged too by the residents who have worked hard for our community over many years. They still listen to our concerns, speak for us and inspire us. I hope the following words, encapsulating these women and men in a single persona, help to paint the picture."

The sun rises to the east over the city
A haze in silver, pink and gold across the bay
Ferries gather pace then ease back swiftly, sidling
Up to softly groaning wharves beside the walkway.
Cars glisten in their modern livery at port
A treasured gift, a new expense, pick-up today!

Rough pathways click and patter under heels and soles
Roads rumble, flashing red and green above the fray
At cornerstones. The café culture raises eyebrows
To the passing throng, a yawn, a sigh, a child at play.
Cats scurry home for breakfast by the dutiful
Dogs pant and nod at lines of joggers by the way.

Day opens up a little more, the harbour noise
Drowned now by skyward jets of fuel and fantasy
Strong cabled arms support a bridge of thundering,
Each vital link its own responsibility.
More ferries chum and cross, on course and service bound,
A working harbour as far as the eye can see.

The guardian wakens to a dawn he's known for years
His steely gaze a little bleary but open
To urgent messages that float in on the tide
A plea for help, a fault, a neighbour in distress
He knows that city living has its gains and falls
The needy and the politics, the fear and greed

He works it well, he'll lose a few, then win some more
From rats in ranks to Greens and urban rights, our needs
He knows. Late dawn sees him waiting at harbour's side
Water whispering laps at the stony shoreline,
The sun's rays wrap around him from the starboard side.

He nods, his broad smile capturing a knowing glance
As we greet him, a loyal guardian for us all.

Christina Ritchie

Balmain Association Spring Garden Walks

Following the very successful 40th Anniversary Garden Walks held in 2005, it was decided that this should become an annual event in the Balmain Association's calendar.

Two walks were held this year on the 16th September – one in the Birchgrove area and one in the old Mort estate. The Mort estate walk began at the Balmain Watch House and went up the hill to Campbell Street where two neighbours' gardens were open for inspection. One was a wide rear yard with a pretty cottage garden in front of a colourful studio (guest accommodation) and an inviting, exotic Moroccan style outdoor eating area. Next door there was a single fronted semi with a cool fernery as its entrance and an exquisite courtyard garden as an extension of the house. Brightly coloured pansies surrounded a large pot also full of colour; wisteria covered a pergola over the outdoor dining table and there was a touch of the country in the back corner. The third open garden on this walk had a large fish pond (originally a small swimming pool) which is home to some very impressive koi and a lone brown trout. The pond was surrounded by palms, ferns and native plants.

Keen walkers continued across Mort Bay to the Birchgrove walk, admiring the extensive landscaping and planting

being undertaken by the Council. A large waterfront property in Wharf Road was open, which has been magnificently restored to its former grandeur with the assistance of a heritage garden expert. The restored orchid house was an absolute treat, full of many varieties of orchids in flower. Further along the road a stone house with a large front garden was a picture with numerous azaleas in full flower and a wisteria-covered summer-house. The 80-90 years old Raphis Palm clump was impressive. This walk then took you to a Dock Road garden where the front had been transformed recently into a cool haven, with ferns, cliveas, rock orchids and a pool with fountain. At the back there were more varieties of orchids and an attractive outdoor eating area. The most interesting aspect here, however, is the enormous amount of work the owner has done on the back lane down below the rear yard. An amazing variety of plants – vegetables, fruit trees (lemons, pawpaws), herbs, flowers, native plants has enlivened what was once a weed-covered wasteland.

We will be planning the walks for next year and are keen to hear from anyone who has a garden and would be interested in participating. It's an opportunity to showcase the wonderful variety in Balmain. Contact can be made to June on 9810 6885 or Diana 9810 3639.

Diana Garder

Treasurer's Report — 2006

Another pleasing year financially with a surplus again. Our assets keep accumulating because we are still negotiating with the Public Works on restoring the sandstone. Some essential plumbing and roofing work was achieved.

The auditor has recommended several changes of procedure. You will notice that he has calculated the accrual interest on the term account that is not due until next year. As well we have been able to determine those members who have generously paid in advance and this is shown as a debit. Next year we will not be separating GST and it will ease the burden on record keeping.

Below is a short version of the audited Operating Statement for the year ended 30 June 2006. The full statement is available on request.

	2005	2006
Total Income	<u>\$22490.88</u>	<u>\$38201.69</u>
Total Expenditure	<u>\$17414.14</u>	<u>\$12819.12</u>
Operating Surplus	<u>\$59579.99</u>	<u>\$84962.56</u>

Val Hamey

WATCH HOUSE EXHIBITIONS

FEBRUARY 2007

Saturday 3 and Sunday 4, 10am to 4pm

Balmain for Refugees and Bridge for Asylum Seekers
Opening Friday 2nd, 6 – 9pm. Admission free but donations welcomed.

An exhibition of works by detainees at Villawood Immigration Detention Centre. Works include those by a talented young Tanzanian detainee, the Russian whose work was not for sale last year but will be this time and the Croatian who exhibited last year has more paintings. As well there will be works donated by other artists. Proceeds from sales will go to the artists and Balmain for Refugees (recipients of 2006 Law and Justice Foundation Volunteer Award). Proceeds from the Bridge for Asylum Seeker raffle will be used to provide assistance to asylum seekers who live in the community on Bridging Visas which do not allow them to work.

Saturday 10 and Sunday 11 – available

Saturday 17 and Sunday 18

Balmain Peninsula Park Painters. Opening Friday 16, 6-8pm.
Annual exhibition of works from around the area – oils, watercolours and photographs.

Saturday 24, 10am-6pm, Sunday 25, 10am-4pm

6 + 1 Art Group. Opening Friday 23 at 6pm
First exhibition of this group that paints together each week. A variety of subjects in pastels and acrylic.

BONNINGTON CONNECTION

History may never repeat itself but it sometimes comes awfully close. A contact made between Bonnington Primary School Leith and Nicholson Street Primary School, Balmain almost 100 years ago, was recently renewed.

Bonnington School head teacher, Andrew Hunter, received an Australian flag and an Aboriginal flag from staff and students of Nicholson Street School at a ceremony on July 27, 2006.

The scene replicated one that took place in Leith in 1911 when a John Weir presented to Bonnington Primary School a union flag with the words: 'From Nicholson Street Public School Balmain, Sydney, to our cousins in Scotland, 1911.'

The gift resulted in Bonnington School presenting a small, hand-painted wooden box, which is believed to have contained a flag, the following year. Engraved on a silver plaque were the words: 'To Nicholson Street Public School, Balmain, Sydney, from Bonnington Primary School, Leith, Scotland, 1912.'

The box then disappeared until two years ago when an elderly woman, Mrs Louella Herman, returned the box to Nicholson Street School, saying, it had been given to her by a friend, but she knew nothing of its origins.

The event became known as the Bonnington box mystery at Nicholson Street School. Things might have remained that way except that Nicholson Street administrator, Theresa Mortimer, and I, contacted Bonnington School and discovered through her Scottish counterpart at the school, Evelyn Luscombe, of the flag's existence.

Intrigued, we visited Bonnington School in May of this year while on holiday, thus retracing the historical path of 1911 and prompting Mr Hunter's visit to Balmain. Leith, like Balmain, was once a port and shipbuilding and ship repair centre. It too has been gentrified.



Theresa and Derek Mortimer at Bonnington Primary School, Leith, Edinburgh, with Andrew Hunter, head teacher, and pupils. The union flag was sent to the school by Nicholson Street School in 1911.

Mr Hunter spent three days with staff and pupils at Nicholson Street. He said that re-discovery of the flag during a clean out two years ago, then revelation about the existence of the Bonnington box, and the visit by Mrs Mortimer, regenerated interest from Scottish children. "They wanted to know about Australia and were very keen to keep the connection going. They have discussed sending a new box to Australia with contemporary objects in it," he said.



Bonnington Primary School captains, Paisley Williams, Maxi Harris, and vice captains, Lucy Heath and Max Rawlinson. The flags were donated to Leith School by 'Nico' teachers and students, re-establishing a contact that goes back almost 100 years. The 'Bonnington box' held by Lucy, was sent to Nicholson Street school in 1912.

Mr Hunter said it had been of great value to him to talk to both pupils and teachers in Australia. He must have done a great job in describing life at Bonnington

Primary. More than one teacher had asked him how they could get a transfer there, he joked.

The schools and the pupils were marked more by their similarities than their differences, Mr Hunter said, despite being asked by one of the younger pupils, "How do you spell Scotland in Scotland."

Nicholson Street principal, Robbie Fotheringham, said that when the box was returned to the school she had no idea the train of events it would set in course. "But I am very happy it has happened. It has created a focus for an historical connection for the children and a world aspect to their learning."

Mrs Fotheringham said she would like to find out more of the history of the box through local historical societies. "It is a good starting point for the kids, to experience the coming together of someone from another country and to feel that they are part of an occasion. The older children especially have been doing research about Scotland using the internet and finding out about the culture, the climate, the emblems, the geography." Ms Fotheringham said the visit has created the opportunity to establish email or letter communication between pupils of both schools and maintain the new connection.

Regrettably contact has been lost with Mrs Herman. She would have been delighted to know about the repercussion following her return of the box. If anyone knows of her whereabouts they could contact me. Similarly if there are any living ancestors of John Weir, further information would fill in more of the gaps because nothing is known about him other than he presented the flag in Leith. It is presumed he came from Sydney.

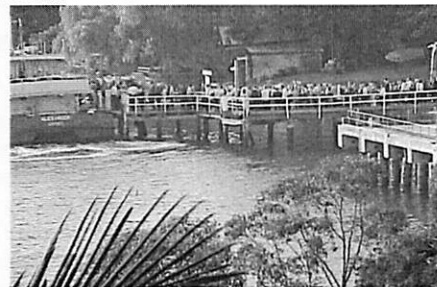
Derek Mortimer 60 Short Street, Balmain, NSW, 2041, phone: 9810 3496, Fax: 9810 0016.

BALMAIN THROUGH YOUNGER EYES



Thames St. wharf: dark and deserted

An exhibition of children's photographs of Balmain emphasizing contrasts and differences will be held in the Watch House over December and January. The schools participating are Balmain and Nicholson Street Public Schools. The photographs will be on display on Saturdays from 11:00am to 4:00pm from 9 December 2006 to 27 January 2007. The exhibition will be opened on Wednesday 6 December at 6pm.



Thames St. wharf: bright and busy

The Balmain Association Inc Representing Balmain, Birchgrove and 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 realization 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 12:00 - 3:00pm.

Our editorial contacts:
phone/fax is 02 9810 1179
Email ferg@arch.usyd.edu.au

Postal: PO Box 57 Balmain 2041

Our Web site:
<http://balmainassociation.org>

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