the balmain association incorporated news sheet

The Peninsula OBSERVER

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OPEN COUNCIL
A New Era in Local Government

Issy Wyner's latest book, Open Council, (His previous one was "With Banner Unfurled") was launched in Leichhardt Council Chamber on August 1, 2008 by Hall Greenland. This was the culmination of nine month's work by the Association to publish the manuscript.

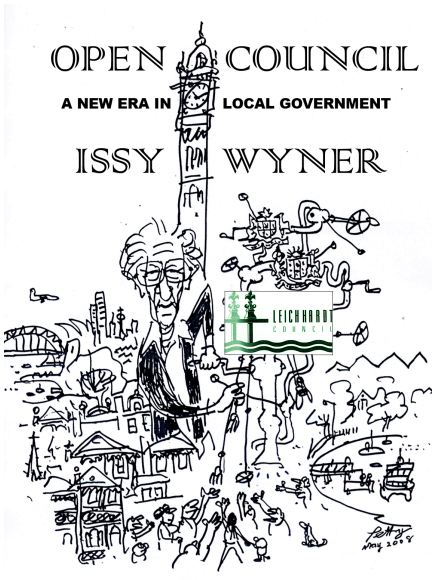
That this important historical work was written at all speaks volumes for Issy's conviction that openness was not only desirable but was necessary if governments were to represent the electorate rather than vested interests. That the work was published is thanks to the Balmain Association, to Hall Greenland for his editing of the manuscript to a reasonable size, to Gillian Delbridge for proof reading, to Gay Kalnins for doing the layout and organizing the printing, to Bruce Petty for the cover design, to Tony Harris and Philip Bray for helpful comments and to Mayor Carolyn Allen and Leichhardt Council for making the Council Chamber available, providing supper and organizing the launch.

The importance and relevance of this book is clearly enunciated in Hall Greenland's Foreword to Open Council, a copy of which is reprinted below. Further information is on page 8. Ed.

Issy Wyner is probably the best placed person to write an account of Leichhardt Municipality's experience with Open Council, the pioneering experiment in public participation and open government that was initiated 37 years ago. Issy was one of the architects of this new system of local government and was an Alderman and Councillor from Balmain on Leichhardt Council for 25 years from 1959 through to 1991. He is also an historian who kept meticulous files on Council's activities during those years.

This history could not come at a more crucial time as the NSW government attempts to roll back the rights of citizens in environmental and town planning matters. Its account of the ebbs and flows of public participation in local affairs – particularly environmental issues, both small and large – is a reminder of how much we have gained in rights as residents over the past three decades and what we now stand to lose if proposals to change our planning laws, which are currently before the NSW parliament, are successful.

Issy Wyner wrote this history well before the latest attempts to abridge the rights of citizens and Councils in environmental planning and it is interesting to read his optimistic proposals for furthering what he calls 'participatory democracy'. It certainly indicates an alternative to current developments in local



government and town planning.

But Issy's account of open government in Leichhardt has wider relevance too. At both state and federal levels of government, the provisions of the Freedom of Information laws make a mockery of the supposed intentions of those laws; they would be more accurately titled Freedom from Information, as they are encumbered with provisions exempting governments from releasing any but the most trivial information. By contrast, Leichhardt Council at its best, as Issy's account makes clear, releases all files, save those dealing with private staff matters and current legal actions. Certainly this rule of openness requires constant vigilance and its operation is often the result of political efforts by the champions of openness on Council as the tendency towards secrecy and cover-up is not absent from Leichhardt either.

The new Rudd Labor government in Canberra has promised to reform the FOI laws and could do worse than examine the Leichhardt experience with real freedom of information.

Perhaps more challenging for that government, but equally relevant for the renewal and safeguarding of democracy, are Issy's proposals for citizen-initiated referendums, the recall of Members of Parliament and the abolition of the redundant state governments. As he makes clear, these are ideas that were enshrined in the platform of the Australian Labor Party for most of its existence. Some of these reforms already operate in some American states, in Switzerland and in Venezuela.

A New Era in Local Government presents a very personal view of our local history. Issy certainly doesn't hold back in his criticism of some Councillors he shared the Council table with, or of state governments of both sides of politics. But Issy is always careful to source his judgments in the Council minutes and other documents of the time.

A New Era in Local Government will prove both a pertinent read for all citizens concerned with the fate of our democracy and an invaluable source for future historians.

This is an edited version of Issy Wyner's original draft which has been placed in the local history section of Leichhardt Library, along with Issy's Council papers. Those papers are sorted into subject files covering the major issues of his three decades of involvement in local politics. His papers detailing his involvement in the union movement, the Fourth International and the Labor Party can be found in the State Library of NSW.

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NEW FACES

Christina Ritchie talks with new arrivals on the Peninsula

Avril Henry: New Friendships and Community

Avril arrives at the Darling Street café in Balmain on a sunny, cool Saturday afternoon with her little Silkie/Jack Russell, Missy. Over coffee, tea and Anzac biscuits we chat:

CR: Tell me about yourself.
AH: I was born in South Africa and left for political reasons. I arrived in Australia with 3 suitcases and $500 in my pocket. I have lived in Australia for more than 25 years. I have 4 children, 2 are adopted twins. I also have 3 dogs. I am a professional woman who writes books and speaks on Human Resources issues. I have my own business. I work from home and from an office in Pyrmont. Home is an apartment in Balmain Shores with a beautiful water view from the balcony. I lived for a few years in London in the 90s, and worked intermittently in New York. I was never homesick for South Africa but I did get homesick for Sydney when I lived overseas. I was divorced 15 years ago. Before moving to Balmain I was living with my children in the Hills district. They still live in my house there. I live alone in my 'haven' on the Balmain peninsula.

CR: So what brought you to Balmain?
AH: It was time to live my life the way I now need. I no longer liked living in the Northern suburbs. I found it difficult to make friends there. There was no sense of community and none of the 'village' atmosphere you find in places like Paddington and Balmain. I did consider living in Paddington. But it still didn't feel that friendly. I had already heard about the community fight for Callan Park. I had also heard about the 'hippies' of Balmain. I wanted to see what it was like to live here. It's also close to the city.

CR: So you chose Balmain! How did you go about moving here?
AH: I first set up an office here, about 18 months ago with a six month lease. But after a few short weeks I decided it was where I really wanted to live. I was lucky enough that the right apartment came up for sale. I knew this was for me. So I signed up for a big mortgage and moved in.

CR: So what did you expect life to be like for you here? Has it lived up to your expectations?
AH: Oh, it's great. It has been everything I expected, or even more. Balmain is the coolest, friendliest place. I am a single woman now, with grown-up children and I wanted to be somewhere that accepted me and had a real sense of community. In Balmain you see people from all walks of life. It's ok here to be divorced or from another country or have a different culture, to be eccentric, to be a hippie, to be poor or to have lots of money, to be well educated or not. This is a place where people care. I'm very busy with my work and I also am on the Board of a charity that has set up an orphanage in Thailand to help children who were left without homes and families after the tsunami. My work also involves writing about people management and leadership. When the State government decided to close the mental health facility at Callan Park I was amazed to hear local people saying 'No'. Everywhere else would have said 'Good, we don't want a mental hospital in our area'. It was so refreshing. This is a place where when people don't want something to happen they agitate against it and do what they can to change the situation.



Avril with her girls

CR: Do you have a favourite past-time or place you like to go in Balmain?
AH: I like to run but not just the Bay Run but in the streets of Balmain and down to the wharf in East Balmain. It's like one long village from Victoria road to the East Balmain wharf. But it takes me a long time because people say hello and stop to chat. I like to go for a coffee or breakfast on a Sunday morning in Rozelle and pick up some flowers in the market. It takes hours because people actually talk to me. People are so friendly here. I even go to pubs here. I never did that before.

CR: But there must be something that 'irks' you about the area
AH: um..m.. Oh, the PARKING! There should be some arrangement for locals to park more easily. It cost me $12 to park in the area the other day. I don't use public transport much because it's not good enough. You can't get on the buses along Victoria Road, they're full when they get here.

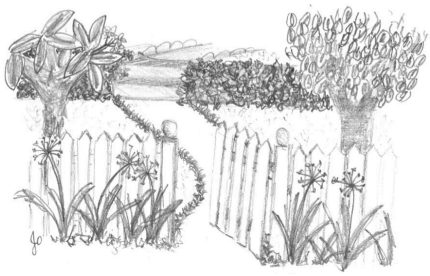
CR: What do you think about the proposed developments or changes that might occur in the area? Are you concerned about the future?
AH: I don't like that bridge idea. They did something like that where I lived once before, saying it would improve the traffic flow. It made it worse. I like the character of the area too. You wouldn't want to lose that, and the village atmosphere.

CR: So what do your children think about your living and loving being in Balmain?
AH: They say it's me. I can even bring Missy to cafés and places, like today. The children are beginning to understand that I really don't want to go out of the area at all. Why would you?

CR: So you think you're here to stay?
AH: 'Til they take me out in a box. I had heard that people never want to leave Balmain once they live here. Now I know why.

BALMAIN ASSOCIATION

SPRING GARDEN WALKS
CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS
SATURDAY 20 SEPTEMBER
10:00AM – 4:00PM



There will be one self-guided walk around Balmain this year which includes eight gardens. We need volunteers at each of the open gardens to ensure security. The walk will take approximately 1.5 to 2 hours. The gardens are open from 10.00am until 4.00pm. Tickets are $15 for the walk and a map.

If you volunteer in a garden for half a day then you get free access to the other gardens for the other half-day.

Please contact:

Diana 0402 220 993,
digarder@bigpond.net.au

June 9810 6885
speal@zipworld.com.au

Kathleen 9818 4954

Development Mania To Hit Balmain and Rozelle

When you pick up your copy of the local newspaper, be it The Glebe, Inner West Courier or Village Voice, the chances are there will be an article alerting you to another proposed major development or the continued push by developers to considerably increase the built environment in Balmain or Rozelle. They also appear as friendly advertisements that induce us to support their grand plans for a bigger, brighter future – but for whom? There are also the 'misguided' State Government proposals that will increase traffic in our area and, sooner rather than later, cause gridlock. The new planning reforms recently passed in the early hours of a cold winter's morning, with the support of two Shooters' members and Fred Nile, do not bode well for preserving or improving our local environment. The developer is king. What kind of government is it that spurns the voice of the people, the needs of families, the environment and the liveability of our city to lend its ear and stretch out its hand to the big D? Are thoughtful planners being gazumped by a Developer's 'better offer'?

What plans are there to provide community amenity in our growing residential area, recreation facilities for our young, facilities for our elderly and those mentally or physically in need of care? What about improving public transport services to help decrease traffic and reduce emissions, providing safe footpaths, foreshore walkways, and much-needed open space?

If you take a stroll or jog along the Glebe foreshore of Blackwattle Bay you will appreciate the greening, the calming influence of the accessible waterway, the public pathways with attractive views and interesting landscape, all providing considerable benefit to health and well-being. Meanwhile our village atmosphere that is the hallmark of our suburbs is in danger of being swamped by a concrete jungle.

Turnover of businesses in Darling Street is already high. Increasing rent charges are blamed for this. But there may well be other factors at play. The management of parking and traffic conditions can certainly be better. How often have you seen a favourite shop or service close in recent times? Pictorial reminders of Bill's Garage have disappeared while black and red graffiti cut ugly swathes through our cluttered streetscape. Local businesses need the assistance of good planning to help them thrive. Council has floor space ratio controls in place to help maintain the character and liveability of our area. So why are they being ignored when a developer wishes to impose on our community tall, dense, commercial and residential developments the scale of which we have never seen before in our area? Is this the type of progress we need? Our retail strips will be further threatened by these characterless commercial developments. When did a football club turn into a developer and claim the right to change our landscape for ever? The year of the rat may see the eye of the tiger scare off a multiplicity of local businesses.

Have you been caught in a pram-jam lately? Yes, we have lots of lovely new babies cooing along our main streets. Will the childcare facilities cope? Where are the recreation facilities for them when they find



their feet in a year or two? Our treasured elderly are founts of knowledge on local history and life experience. We need reliable community services for our older family members and a plan to provide more in the years to 2020.

Our parkland is under threat. Callan Park is destined to become Campus Callan of Sydney University. Will our Councillors stand firm and reject outright the State Government's unhealthy Land Use Management Plan for Callan Park? In recent weeks we have seen the last of our vital mental health services removed. How do we expect our fellow citizens in need of permanent mental health care, and their immediate families, to be properly cared for when their much–needed and most suitable tranquil site is handed over to create a densely populated campus which would be better incorporated into a site such as the ex-CUB site in Broadway? A university is not a public guardian and its aims are not those of a public representative body.

So many fought so hard to keep Balmain Hospital operating, our only 24 hr health facility in the area. Now it's going to lose its 10pm to 8am casualty service. The government takes away and fails to provide.

Then there is White Bay. The cars will soon be gone – what then? What a wonderful opportunity to provide facilities for the community, public access to the harbour, open space and public transport amenity for our growing population. Instead we have continuing ad hoc industrial maritime development proposals that will degrade our harbour-front and continue to build high metal fencing to keep the public away from the foreshores.

The White Bay Power Station site and Heritage buildings stand idle, decaying and forgotten. What opportunities lie within its boundaries for us to enjoy and appreciate – an attractive historical tourist venue, film studios, theatre, restaurants, a centre of excellence for environmental sustainability, maritime museum and/or historical park area? Whatever is eventually planned for this site, as for all other development sites, we will need to be vigilant to ensure the decision makers take note of its location, its impact on the local area and the need for improved traffic management and public transport access.

For each built environment development proposal we need to ask the question, Is this really needed here and does it enhance the liveability and amenity of the area? Our guardians are our elected representatives. They are elected to serve community interests first, not those of property developers or parliamentary ministers.

It's election time for Council and a good time to voice your opinion on these and other matters that threaten to destroy our revered community lifestyle, our heritage village streets and our breathing space. **Christina Ritchie**

PS Since Christina wrote the above article, the Bailey's proposal for an industrial refuelling facility at Wharf 6 White Bay, has been deferred by the State Government. The reason given was that the assessment of the proposal should not continue while the Bays Precinct Taskforce is considering options for the future of White Bay with input from stakeholders and the community. The Balmain Association and the Balmain/White Bay Precinct Committees have been calling for such a moratorium on all proposals for White Bay for many months. It is important now that the voice of the community is heard in the determination of outcomes for White Bay. Ed.

Subregion Strategy

The NSW Government is placing the draft Inner West Subregional Strategy on exhibition for public comment. When finalised it will guide land-use planning until 2031 in the Ashfield, Burwood, Canada Bay, Leichhardt and Strathfield local government areas.

Key directions include:

- Support and differentiate the role of strategic centres
- Protect employment lands
- Promote Parramatta Road as an enterprise corridor
- Improve housing choice and create liveable and sustainable communities
- Manage traffic growth and local travel demand
- Protect and promote recreational pursuits and environmental assets

Further information:

www.metrostrategy.nsw.gov.au/dev/ViewPage.action?siteNodeId=81&languageId=1&contentId=557

Submissions by email to:

innerwestsubregion@planning.nsw.gov.au

CELEBRATION OF COMMUNITY DINNER
With Special Guest Kathleen Hamey

Address by Carolyn Allen, Mayor of Leichhardt.

It is my honour to make a presentation to our special guest at tonight's Celebration of Community, Kathleen Hamey – also to be here with so many who work to make our community such a great place to live.

Kathleen has a great love and knowledge of our history which she gives enthusiastically as a gift to this community. Through her work she has made a link between knowledge and research of our history and we, the people.

This has strengthened our appreciation of our history and has played a significant part in our ability to work towards retaining much of the built character of the peninsula – this is very much why many of us love to live here – but something that we must be continually vigilant about – more so right now with proposed new planning regulations and the loss of the Heritage Council.

Kathleen has had many co-volunteers in what she has done – not least of all Val – however it is her knowledge & love of our history and her mission to share this that has given us all inspiration and why she is honoured tonight.

I did not know Kathleen until the 90s when she came along to the Birchgrove Precinct, but I now know that she and Val retired to Balmain in 1985 – surely the beginning of the 'empty nesters' invasion?

She and Val became part of the Balmain Association Committee at a time when it seems to have been not particularly active and I believe they have been the backbone of the Association since.

Kathleen became History convenor from 1990 & she has worked on almost all the Association initiatives since that time.

The publications drew on the significant research of Peter Reynolds – but it was primarily Kathleen, with the assistance of Bonnie Davidson and Deborah Nichols in the early days of the past decade or so, who promoted this work and brought it to many of us here tonight.

'*The Peninsula Observer*' came for many years from the Hamey's desk. I received the latest today - Following Peter Reynolds' Balmain brochures, Kathleen has worked on Rozelle Walks as well as many other publications – *Gourlie's Corner*; *Called to the Bar*; *Streets, Lanes & Places* and brochures on the *Balmain Cemetery* and the *Balmain History Trail.* Kathleen has led many, many locals and visitors on walks around the peninsula – sharing her love of this place with its distinct links to our past.



Photograph by David Liddle

Kathleen's contribution has also been extremely practical – she has been critical to the running of the Balmain Watch House – the management of the archive and pictures collection, exhibitions during heritage & history weeks, weekend opening and general maintenance. I know Kathleen has been assisted by a small band of people equally committed, and I thank them also.

Kathleen, with Bonnie Davidson, is also responsible for the Garden Club and from this Kathleen has become involved in the Rozelle Bay Community Nursery. I suspect this paved the way for a project of Kathleen's which I was very much aware of.

As I mentioned, I first met Kathleen through the Birchgrove Precinct Committee. For about 12 months leading up to the Bi-centenary of Birchgrove in 1996 a group of us worked on holding the Birchgrove celebratory 'games'. A small amount of money was raised and Kathleen was the keeper. Around this time also was talk of the Balmain depot moving and re-vitalisation of the Town Hall precinct. The glasshouse had fairly recently been abandoned for its original purposes & was falling into disrepair. Proposals from various sources for the precinct generally deleted the greenhouse.

So started a campaign by Kathleen - I think by then she was becoming involved with the Native Nursery. This is when I realised what a determined & dedicated person lay behind the polite exterior. Over a little time, we not only agreed the proceeds from the bi-centenary would go to the glass house, but we were all buying panels for the roof!!! I am pleased to say that Council, seeing the view held by the community, came to the party and the glasshouse was re-built and is now used by the community to raise seedlings, with Kathleen a significant contributor.

More recently I have seen Kathleen in action at the Balmain Town Hall Committee – I know she is on the Heritage Group of Leichhardt District, & the Clontarf Cottage Committee as well. I have also been witness to her being abused by a would-be developer who wished to demolish a single story weatherboard cottage – her eyes rounded to saucers and she kept her poker face – I love this about Kathleen – she is always ostensibly so polite – she thinks before she speaks, but can be devilishly cutting, pertinent or funny in her remarks.

Let me say, in this case I plunged in to defend the rights of the Balmain Association – and we kept the cottage in question - we won through pre-court negotiations.

This illustrates to me just how important Kathleen's work has been – and what a legacy she has given us – a vibrant Balmain Association with members who can keep vigil on our precious heritage. I will do what I can to ensure Council will continue to work with people like Kathleen to document our remaining heritage so we CAN protect it. I know I also speak for my fellow councillors on this.

Kathleen, thank you so much for all you have given our community.

…. and Kathleen's Reply

Mayor Carolyn Allen, Deputy Mayor Damien Cobley-Finch, Councillors, friends.

Thank you Carolyn for the flattery. It would appear I'm a compulsive committee member.

Several weeks ago I received a visit from some members of the Association, they had decided that it was time we held an event, a get-together, so a dinner was to be arranged on the theme, Celebrating Community and they wished to comment on my involvement with local groups. I was surprised but it looked like fun to meet friends from the various community groups that I attend, especially the native plant nursery people who have achieved so much to bring the bush back to the Municipality.

In my former life B.B. – as I say, Before Balmain – when we lived in Blakehurst, I was active in the St George Historical Society. When Val was to retire we became 'empty nesters' and relocated to Balmain, to relax, or so I thought, but I found heritage heaven here. We joined the Balmain Association and I was welcomed by Debby Nicholls who instantly had me on a Watch House Saturday roster. 'I do not know anything', I said. "You can learn on the job", Debby replied. I started to study the history of the area.



We were soon involved in residents' action groups: one was to save Clontarf Cottage and another the challenge in the law courts on the development of the former five industrial sites. Fortunately Val had just organised the incorporation of the Association that allowed it to safely take on the NSW Government.

I was introduced to Councillors Nick and Issy by attending Leichhardt Council meetings, where the best entertainment of the week was acted. It demonstrated to me though how community action can contribute. Margaret Mead had said "Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world."

Over the years I have accumulated a great deal of the history of Balmain, a good collection of old photos and documents. So many, in fact, that storage had to be found … under the bed, our bed is getting higher and higher off the floor. This information is a great help as the Association receives many enquiries on Balmain history mainly by email these days, also requests from the Balmain Library of people tracing their family history. Leichhardt Council officers give us as a contact to assist with enquiries on the former Balmain Cemetery. I'm still learning on the job.

I enjoy my participation in the many strands of the community blanket.

I'll finish with another quote: If you don't know what came before you cannot appreciate the present.

Thank you all.

Photograph by David Liddle

NURSERY PLAQUE

On Friday 27th June, Carolyn Allen, Mayor, Leichhardt unveiled a plaque recognising the work done by the volunteers of the Rozelle Native Nursery in *"Bringing the bush back to the City"*.

The plaque was the idea of David Lawrence, long time local activist. David was one of the driving forces in the campaign to turn the Rozelle Bay foreshore into the much-needed open space in the early 1990s.

After years of lobbying the state government and working with Leichhardt Council, this was achieved. When Leichhardt Council commissioned a Masterplan for the site, Beth Buchanan, the driver of the nursery, David and others requested space for a native nursery. The industrialisation of the inner city had led to a total loss of original species of plants and this was an opportunity to return some. The aim was to return the bush to the municipality by collecting appropriate indigenous seeds, propagating these in the nursery and then planting them in the parks and verges and any other vacant areas of land.

The Council fenced the site, provided irrigation and a work area; the community donated the shed, filing cabinets and found lots of other material such as cupboards, tables etc in the streets of the municipality. Things haven't looked back since.

With the boundary change in 2003, the nursery site became part of the City of Sydney, and a happily shared operation between the two Councils evolved, the volunteers working on Wednesdays on the City sites and Fridays the Leichhardt ones.



Nursery volunteers have been involved in many plantings around the district and the nursery has acted as a catalyst for other land care groups such as Callan Park Bush Care and Pyrmont Bush Care. Nursery volunteers have worked with the schools in the area and Planet Ark and its environment programs.

A new more modern and environmentally sound nursery is planned for Wisdom St, Annandale, with all relevant planning completed – all that needs to be done is for the site to be cleared by the Department of Planning.

Balmain contributes to the nursery through the glasshouse at the Balmain Town Hall which was saved by the campaign waged by Kathleen Hamey several years ago. This is now used for propagation of native plants. Again Leichhardt Council must be recognised for its major financial input into the glasshouse restoration and fitout.



The plaque recognises 13 years of the nursery volunteers' work and has been placed on the wall, above the bench seat, between Kentville Ave & Gosford Quarries in Johnston St.

June Lunsmann

Photo of Carolyn Allen, Mayor, and volunteers Beth Buchanan, Kathleen Hamey and Josie Clements courtesy of David Lawrence.

Balmain Association's Vacation Care Service

On Wednesday 9th July, Kathleen Hamey committed herself and three other brave members of the Association, June Lunsmann, Rita Ellis and Diana Garder, to conduct a tour of the Watch House and a short walk for up to 80 children from the Rozelle Vacation Care Centre. The children were due to arrive in two groups – one at 10.30 am and the other 20 minutes later, but as it happened, all 73 of them turned up together. Chaos reigned for a very short time but the extremely competent carers from the centre, particularly Matt with the loud voice, soon had everything under control. The children's ages ranged from 4 to 12 years and they were divided accordingly.

The first group, 17 pre-schoolers with three carers attached, explored the Watch House with the highlight being locked in a cell. They actually pointed out a few things that June had never noticed such as what seems to have been some under floor ventilation from the back yard. The children said it must have been where you put in the hose to wash out the cells. They were an enthusiastic group and the delegated young leaders already knew all that you could ever possibly learn in a lifetime. They also set a brisk pace. We went down Darling Street looking at the old stone houses, across to Jubilee Place and into Cameron's Cove to stop and do some drawing. They enjoyed seeing the Water Police and how close we are to the city. We then literally skipped, ie the leaders did, around to White Bay and into Birrung Park, another stopping point to look at the ships and discuss the fact that they would not be there in future. When asked what they would like to see replace the wharves the first answer was sharks. We went down to graffiti wall but they were more interested in having a space where they could run around. Then up to the Gladstone Park Bowling Club where they were to have lunch. We sat them within walls of the old Bandstand and once again it became obvious that having a confined space was the best place to play – there were instant games of handstands and aeroplanes.

The second older group had a longer walk. Most of the children were from the local area and were very knowledgeable about Balmain. They enjoyed the Watch House, listening carefully to the history of the building and the occupants – they were very impressed with the fact that Sergeant Gray had brought up 14 children there!! They also enjoyed the experience of being locked up in the cell – but not the prospect of dry bread and water!! Diana then led the group down to Colgate Palmolive and discussed the many factories that were in Balmain and what they produced. The children were interested in the tugboats, the ferry workshops, Ballast Point and what ballast was. It was then up Cooper Street to marvel at the tiny stone cottage, near the old water line, and the ongoing stone building behind. It was then on to Cameron's Cove, where the latest $11 million Water Police boat was berthed. There was much discussion about the White Bay container wharves and the Glebe Island wharf where a car transporter was berthed and there were a large number of cars and trucks lined up on the dock ready to be transported and sold. The story of the tank farm on Donnelly Street was interesting, particularly the graffiti wall and the children were impressed by how the native plants had grown in that area since the tanks had been removed. Unilever and the old coal loader were discussed and the story of black suds on your washing hanging on the line caused much amusement. Balmain Hospital was our last stop before we went into Gladstone Park for a much-deserved lunch at the Bowling Club.

The guides enjoyed the day almost as much as the children did!

Diana Garder
June Lunsmann

What's happening at Callan Park

On 1 May 2008, Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority took on responsibility for the care, control and management of a substantial part of Callan Park, and now provides 24 hour security, ground maintenance, facilities management, cleaning and administration for most of the site.

Since May, the Foreshore Authority has undertaken a number of works at Callan Park which include:

- maintaining the Waterfront Drive Oval on a weekly basis
- minor works in the sports pavilion including painting, upgrading the lighting and electrical, and improving the change rooms and toilets
- upgrading lighting at the Cecily Street entrance to the Kirkbride buildings
- mowing, edging and brush cutting across the entire site
- maintaining the garden beds to expose the features in the Stone Circle, located near Kirkbride, Military Drive and Central Avenue
- establishing a compost area to reuse leaves and clippings from the grounds
- providing meeting rooms for existing site users.

As part of its role, the Foreshore Authority has been developing partnerships with site users and other stakeholders, including organising an inspection of the major buildings and garden areas with the Friends of Callan Park in July.

The Foreshore Authority has also established a small site office at Ambrosia Cottage on the corner of Church Street and Wharf Road. For enquiries about building access, holding an event or general maintenance please call 1300 225 526.

Health services on site

A dedicated non-government organisation (NGO) precinct has been established at Callan Park in the area previously occupied by the hospital. NSW Department of Health is managing this precinct and has appointed a manager for the site.

We Help Ourselves moved to the NGO precinct in May, with other NGOs expected to relocate in the coming months. These include:

- Construction Industry Drug and Alcohol Foundation
- Just Enough Faith
- Mental Health Coordinating Council
- Aftercare
- SIDS and Kids
- Ranfurly Library Service.

The NSW Ambulance Service, Sydney Writers Centre and Rozelle Child Care will remain in their current locations.

Sydney South West Area Health Service (SSWAHS) will manage low cost accommodation for nurses and other key health workers in the buildings located at the eastern boundary of Callan Park. SSWAHS will also manage education facilities along Church Street and Glover Street for the next five years.

Films at Callan Park

Callan Park is continuing to be popular with film-makers and advertisers and since May has hosted two film shoots and one advertisement. Another film shoot is scheduled for November and the site will continue to be used for community exhibitions.

Tom Kennedy

Guided Walk

The next Balmain Association guided walk will be held in October. For information on the walk, the date, the cost, the meeting place and other information please contact George on 9810 2239.
Bookings are essential.

Balmain Association's Vacation Care Service

On Wednesday 9th July, Kathleen Hamey committed herself and three other brave members of the Association, June Lunsmann, Rita Ellis and Diana Garder, to conduct a tour of the Watch House and a short walk for up to 80 children from the Rozelle Vacation Care Centre. The children were due to arrive in two groups – one at 10.30 am and the other 20 minutes later, but as it happened, all 73 of them turned up together. Chaos reigned for a very short time but the extremely competent carers from the centre, particularly Matt with the loud voice, soon had everything under control. The children's ages ranged from 4 to 12 years and they were divided accordingly.

The first group, 17 pre-schoolers with three carers attached, explored the Watch House with the highlight being locked in a cell. They actually pointed out a few things that June had never noticed such as what seems to have been some under floor ventilation from the back yard. The children said it must have been where you put in the hose to wash out the cells. They were an enthusiastic group and the delegated young leaders already knew all that you could ever possibly learn in a lifetime. They also set a brisk pace. We went down Darling Street looking at the old stone houses, across to Jubilee Place and into Cameron's Cove to stop and do some drawing. They enjoyed seeing the Water Police and how close we are to the city. We then literally skipped, ie the leaders did, around to White Bay and into Birrung Park, another stopping point to look at the ships and discuss the fact that they would not be there in future. When asked what they would like to see replace the wharves the first answer was sharks. We went down to graffiti wall but they were more interested in having a space where they could run around. Then up to the Gladstone Park Bowling Club where they were to have lunch. We sat them within walls of the old Bandstand and once again it became obvious that having a confined space was the best place to play – there were instant games of handstands and aeroplanes.

The second older group had a longer walk. Most of the children were from the local area and were very knowledgeable about Balmain. They enjoyed the Watch House, listening carefully to the history of the building and the occupants – they were very impressed with the fact that Sergeant Gray had brought up 14 children there!! They also enjoyed the experience of being locked up in the cell – but not the prospect of dry bread and water!! Diana then led the group down to Colgate Palmolive and discussed the many factories that were in Balmain and what they produced. The children were interested in the tugboats, the ferry workshops, Ballast Point and what ballast was. It was then up Cooper Street to marvel at the tiny stone cottage, near the old water line, and the ongoing stone building behind. It was then on to Cameron's Cove, where the latest $11 million Water Police boat was berthed. There was much discussion about the White Bay container wharves and the Glebe Island wharf where a car transporter was berthed and there were a large number of cars and trucks lined up on the dock ready to be transported and sold. The story of the tank farm on Donnelly Street was interesting, particularly the graffiti wall and the children were impressed by how the native plants had grown in that area since the tanks had been removed. Unilever and the old coal loader were discussed and the story of black suds on your washing hanging on the line caused much amusement. Balmain Hospital was our last stop before we went into Gladstone Park for a much-deserved lunch at the Bowling Club.

The guides enjoyed the day almost as much as the children did!

Diana Garder
June Lunsmann

What's happening at Callan Park

On 1 May 2008, Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority took on responsibility for the care, control and management of a substantial part of Callan Park, and now provides 24 hour security, ground maintenance, facilities management, cleaning and administration for most of the site.

Since May, the Foreshore Authority has undertaken a number of works at Callan Park which include:

- maintaining the Waterfront Drive Oval on a weekly basis
- minor works in the sports pavilion including painting, upgrading the lighting and electrical, and improving the change rooms and toilets
- upgrading lighting at the Cecily Street entrance to the Kirkbride buildings
- mowing, edging and brush cutting across the entire site
- maintaining the garden beds to expose the features in the Stone Circle, located near Kirkbride, Military Drive and Central Avenue
- establishing a compost area to reuse leaves and clippings from the grounds
- providing meeting rooms for existing site users.

As part of its role, the Foreshore Authority has been developing partnerships with site users and other stakeholders, including organising an inspection of the major buildings and garden areas with the Friends of Callan Park in July.

The Foreshore Authority has also established a small site office at Ambrosia Cottage on the corner of Church Street and Wharf Road. For enquiries about building access, holding an event or general maintenance please call 1300 225 526.

Health services on site

A dedicated non-government organisation (NGO) precinct has been established at Callan Park in the area previously occupied by the hospital. NSW Department of Health is managing this precinct and has appointed a manager for the site.

We Help Ourselves moved to the NGO precinct in May, with other NGOs expected to relocate in the coming months. These include:

- Construction Industry Drug and Alcohol Foundation
- Just Enough Faith
- Mental Health Coordinating Council
- Aftercare
- SIDS and Kids
- Ranfurly Library Service.

The NSW Ambulance Service, Sydney Writers Centre and Rozelle Child Care will remain in their current locations.

Sydney South West Area Health Service (SSWAHS) will manage low cost accommodation for nurses and other key health workers in the buildings located at the eastern boundary of Callan Park. SSWAHS will also manage education facilities along Church Street and Glover Street for the next five years.

Films at Callan Park

Callan Park is continuing to be popular with film-makers and advertisers and since May has hosted two film shoots and one advertisement. Another film shoot is scheduled for November and the site will continue to be used for community exhibitions.

Tom Kennedy

Guided Walk

The next Balmain Association guided walk will be held in October. For information on the walk, the date, the cost, the meeting place and other information please contact George on 9810 2239.
Bookings are essential.

So You Want To Join a Book Club!

It's not uncommon to hear people wistfully say they would love to belong to a book club. It's also not uncommon to hear people say they have belonged to a book club but left because they felt uncomfortable. My suggestion to these people is to start one yourself. Not that I have done so, but a close friend of mine did about 7 years ago. She asked a couple of friends if they were interested and a couple of those have introduced new members. We have lost 2 members since inception. Membership has stabilised at 9 and has remained at this size for about 3 years. We are all women and meet monthly with a special dinner to see in the beginning of each new reading year. Because of the method of recruitment everyone initially has a close relationship with at least one other person, some met at school or in a music society, others in a women's discussion group or at work. We are women "of a certain age" (or at least we were when we started!) and are from disparate areas of work and life experiences. Some work areas represented are hospitality, visual arts, health professions, language teaching; and interests include local activism (eg Catherine Hill Bay, just in case you are thinking Balmain), social justice, music-making and of course families, travel and current affairs. We choose our books for discussion now from past prize lists such as the Mann Booker Prize (buying too many new hard-backs gets expensive and we want to use libraries, if possible) or from current reading and book lists put out by, for example, the Herald or Dymocks. We did try the WEA book boxes for a while but found the books outdated and the notes system unhelpful. We have no trouble getting people to contribute to discussions. In fact, the problem is rather how to have only one person speaking at a time. We resist regimentation for fear of sacrificing spontaneity. We have tried "going round the room", two minutes each without interruption to kick off but exuberance generally puts paid to that! Still, we are persevering. Yes, we DO discuss the book in hand. A sample from our repertoire is: The Sea by John Banville, The Memory Room by Christopher Koch, True History of the Kelly Gang by Peter Carey, The Secret River and The Idea of Perfection by Kate Grenville, Elizabeth Costello by J. M. Coetzee, Homecoming by Bernhard Schlink, Immortality by Milan Kundera, The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy, Benang by Kim Scott, The Blind Assassin by Margaret Atwood, Buddenbrooks by Thomas Mann, The Insatiable Desire of Injured Love by Sally Morrison, The Road by Cormac McCarthy. Two years ago we had our first book club weekend away. This was a time of listening, talking, laughing, sometimes crying, walking, cooking, eating. We are looking forward to our third such weekend in August. If this weekend is missed there is a pretty good reason. The words of one of our members in a recipe-sharing and Christmas-greeting email sums up the spirit of our club: Just want to say "*Thanks to you all for another great year of friendship, stimulation, laughter, sharing and always enlightenment! I feel very lucky to be able to participate in such a unique and dynamic group of women. Each time we meet, whether there are few or many, thankyou for the contribution you each bring, it is always fascinating, and never boring!"*

So go for it! **Bookclub member**

Bookclubs are fun and the enjoyment attained depends on setting parameters by means of which the Club is run. Don't be afraid of diversity. Get some blokes involved. Establish rules for the meetings. For example, determine the day the meeting is to take place and don't alter it. Establish the rule that all participants have a turn to speak and that turn takes place without interruption. Once everyone has had a chance to talk, then, and only then, is the meeting thrown open to general discussion. One member of the group should be nominated as the moderator. One book should be nominated for discussion which all should read. Determine at the outset that the book is readily available, is not too long, not too expensive, and where possible, establishes new areas of reading interest.

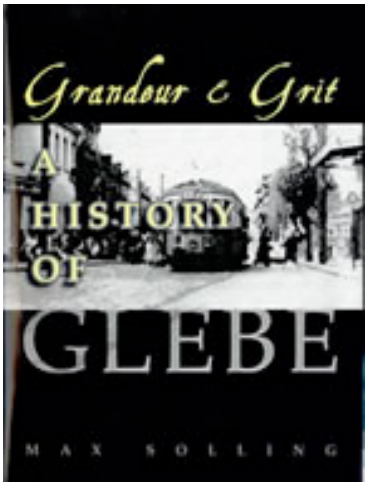
Another member, another bookclub

GRANDEUR & GRIT
A HISTORY OF GLEBE
by
Max Solling

You should buy this book; it is a good read. The person who wrote it is a passionate Glebe-(and inner-west) living devotee. The research that has gone into the book is wide and deep and thorough and it is not one of those turgid pieces of writing that has evolved out of some university thesis. The reader can quickly ascertain that Max Solling is a dedicated historian/sociologist/story-teller, who lives in Glebe and who has participated in the society to the full.

Much of the book is developed around the personalities of the chief players. Edith "Ettie" Flitcroft was the wife of the publican of Burton's Hotel. Solling uses her role in the hotel to show the important place in the society played by "the local". The impact of the temperance movement and the battle of "six o'clock closing" on pubs and the development of "the ladies lounge", are all covered. The author has an eye for the quirky personality.

The book looks at the early development of education. Even in the 1860s, it was seen as necessary for all children to attend school. Vagrant children were catered for with "ragged schools", similar to those in England. Kids were given a hot meal and basic care. The Glebe Ragged School was opened in 1894 and closed in 1927. The position and attitude to teachers in the society; the emergence of sectarian schooling; the introduction of compulsory school attendance, are all discussed.



Tied to the development of schools is the role of the churches. The attitude of each Christian denomination to attracting followers and the degree of authoritarian leaning is examined with interesting outcomes. Glebe was predominantly protestant, with 25% of the people being Catholic. Solling gives a fascinating (and sometimes amusing) outline of each Church's attitude to the observance of the Sabbath.

Health service provision makes interesting reading and makes one thankful for our situation today, even with the taxed hospital system. A quick review is done from the early state hospitals " which were used by the poor and avoided by those who could afford … private medical care." The role of religious groups and the development of early health insurance is looked at. The lack of proper procedures for recognizing medical qualifications created "a paradise for quacks" and it was not until 1898 that laws were introduced to regulate medical practitioners.

Developments that have taken place since the end of WWll include the growth of the Women's Liberation Movement and the role played by such notables as Anne Summers and Bessie Guthrie. The early establishment of refuges for women and children took place then. The "gentrification", the emergent middle class, the changes that have been made to local government and policies associated with the control of the environment are discussed and give the book a good balance.

Solling has produced the sort of book that pulls together all the issues associated with people living in an inner city environment since the beginning of European settlement in Australia. He does it well.

The 293 page book is a bargain of a buy at $49.95. The photos alone are worth all of that. Bray's Books in Balmain has copies readily available. It makes a great present.

Roger Parkes

What's on at the Watch House

For further information see http://balmainassociation.org.au

SEPTEMBER

HISTORY WEEK: 6-13 September

The Water's Edge

The History Council of New South Wales has invited groups to contribute to History Week 2008. *The Water's Edge,* has had many uses for work and play from time immemorial. The Balmain Peninsula, being surrounded on three sides by water, provides a wealth of history. From "tribal lands" to "gentlemen's residences" to "working man's suburb" surrounded by "the working harbour" and now "returning the foreshores to the people". We acknowledge the owners of this land, the people of the Eora nation and their communities within but are unable to tell their stories.

• Saturdays 6, 13, 20 and 27, 11.30 to 3pm at the Watch House

The Balmain Association is presenting an exhibition of photographs submitted by residents and from its archives.

• Saturday 13th, 2 – 4 pm

Walk our Water's Edge

A two-hour stroll around our water's edge. Meet at the corner of Grove Street and Wharf Road at 2pm. There will be a special presentation about Ballast Point, its history from "gentleman's residence" to "industrialisation" and "return of foreshores to the people". Also the plans of the new park and some artefacts found during the excavation for remediation will be displayed. Then walk via Mort's Dock, to the Watch House in Darling Street for light refreshments and to view the photographic exhibition.

Cost $15pp. Bookings essential: Kathleen 9818 4954, vhamey@tpg.com.au or June 9810 6885 speal@zip.com.au

OCTOBER

The Balmain Association Annual General Meeting, 6pm Wednesday 1 October.

The AGM will be held at the Watch House on Wednesday 1 October at 6pm. Members are encouraged to attend. Refreshments will be provided.

Any member of the Association wishing to nominate for the Committee, give their apologies, or appoint a proxy should contact June (9810 6885) or Kathleen (9818 4954).

• Friday 3, Saturday 4, 10am–4 pm, Sunday 5, 10am–3pm

Colour and Light

Official opening: Friday 6pm - 9pm

Paintings by Helen Brigid Alker, inspired by the music and the unique Sydney Harbour. Helen draws and paints with a sense of colour, depth and mood where air and light are prominent in every loose stroke.

• Saturday 12 and Sunday 13, 10am to 4pm

'Attaining Mecca'

Opening Friday 11, 6-8pm All welcome

This exhibition by Malama Arapoglou is about achieving the various destinations, visited by many, that are desirable to travel to. The paintings are an expression of the journey and reaching the objective. They articulate the long-term impression and feeling of place. There will be various subject matters from personal excursions to Africa, New Zealand and a recent trip to Europe - landscapes, portraits and animal portraits.

• Saturday 18, Sunday 19

Jennifer Thornhill

• Saturday 25 and Sunday 26, 10am – 5pm

'PUMPKINS AND OTHER CREATURES'

Opening Friday 24 6-8pm

Local inner-west artists Caron Pearce (Tempe) and Suzanne Voysey (Marrickville) have been practising artists since graduating from Art School. Caron works in a variety of media but most recently has been concentrating on photography. Suzanne has been concentrating on collage and drawing over the past few years but this exhibition will feature drawings and paintings of one of her favourite subjects - pumpkins.

NOVEMBER

• Saturday 1 and Sunday 10am – 5pm

Sculpted Alchemy

Opening Friday 31 October 5.30pm to 8.30pm

Six Sydney artists have formed the group "Sculpted Alchemy" - Linda Galbraith, Philippa Graham, Paul Hattaway, Philip Moore, Keith Neighbour and Brian Young. Each has worked in a range of media and they now come together with their diverse sculptural and print works including cast bronze figures, stainless steel abstract constructions and filamentous organic forms. The exhibition will be a combination of sculpture and works on paper including abstract and figurative art.

• Saturday 8 and Sunday 9, 10am – 6pm

"Celebrate 20 years Printmaking"

Opening Friday the 7th November, 5-8pm

Jan Melville will show selected works from the De Peinture studio, Balmain Flying Cow Studio, Kangaroo Valley and Scotland Island and works from international residencies Umbria, Italy and Cork, Ireland. *"This exhibition is part of having lived and worked in Balmain in Johnston Street and exhibiting at the Watchouse in 1988, 1989, 2003, 2006."*

• Saturday 15 and Sunday 16, 10am – 5pm

"6+"

Opening Friday 14, 6pm

Once again 6+ will be exhibiting at the Watch House and will feature new works by this dynamic group of artists - Roma Devjak, Harriet Loneragan, Dianne O'Dwyer, Lynne Sung, Wendy Lowe, Carlie Lopez and Heather Kepski.

• Saturday 22, 9am – 5pm, and Sunday 23, 9am – 4pm

"Cats and Dogs"

Opening Friday 21, 6-8pm

The OFAG group of 9 met at art school at Meadowbank TAFE. The exhibition "Cats and Dogs" presents everyone's interpretation of this title reflecting their predilection for their favourite moggie.

• Saturday 29, 9am – 6pm and Sunday 30, 10am – 4pm

Club Le Pot - 10 Artist Potters

Opening Friday 28, 6pm - 8pm

Open Council: A New Era In Local Government

Author: Issy Wyner
Editor: Hall Greenland
Publisher: The Balmain Association
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Available at Bray's Books, Leichhardt & Balmain Libraries and The Balmain Association.

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.

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Our Web site:
http://balmainassociation.org.au
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