the balmain association incorporated news sheet

The Peninsula OBSERVER

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President's AGM Report

The past year has been an extremely eventful and busy time for the Balmain Association. I warmly congratulate the office bearers and committee members for their efforts and achievements on behalf of the community.

Our regular calendar of meetings, exhibitions and activities included some major highlights - the restoration of the sandstone walls of the Watch House, the Balmain Spring Garden Walks, the Community Celebration dinner in honour of Kath Hamey, the History Week Water's Edge exhibition and walk, and the publication of Issy Wyner's book, "Open Council: a new era in local government."

Sad occasions were the funerals of three of Balmain's best - Ann Ramsay, Norman Macleod and Issy Wyner. Time to reflect on all our values and honour our memories of people who loved and epitomised Balmain.

The Association continues its involvement in enjoyable community activities such as Back To Balmain. We have also progressed with our goals to refresh our website, attract new members and further engage young people through our exhibitions and, this year, a Watch House tour and walk for 73 children from the Rozelle Vacation Care Centre. Thank you, Kath, Diana, June and Rita!

The History Committee routinely examines Leichhardt Council's DA list to monitor and respond to heritage issues, consistent with the Balmain Association's aims and efforts to preserve the character, heritage and improve the amenity of the area.

This year we have sustained an extremely time-consuming string of submissions and presentations to government entities, consultations and hearings. Matters include the Callan Park Land Use Plan, the Proposed Changes to the NSW Planning Procedures, the Tigers DA and the Baileys Marine Refuelling, Boat Maintenance and Major Supply Facility at Wharf 6 White Bay. I acknowledge the enormous amount of work involved and thank all those participating.

We will continue fighting against wrong land use, ad hoc planning, overdevelopment and arrogant government. My experience has long been that residents are the best planners**.**

Our longstanding Treasurer, Val Hamey, has retired after years of great service to the Association. We thank him warmly and wish him all the best.

Fergus Fricke is leaving the role of Editor. He is well-known and admired for his high quality journalism and unique humour. No one will ever forget The Dunnies!

I welcome our new Treasurer, John Symonds, and also our new Editor, Christina Ritchie.

I thank all members of the Committee, office bearers, and our Auditor, Tim Potter, for their continuing team work and look forward to another productive and harmonious year.

Jane Ward
President



The new management committee from the left: Jane Ward, Christina Ritchie, Carolyn Allen, Val Hamey, Rita Ellis, June Lunsmann, John Symonds, Kathleen Hamey and Roger Parkes.

Absentee members are George Cooper, Diana Garder, Bonnie Davidson and Ann Bastock.

Balmain Association End of Year Party and Opening of the *Balmain in Focus* Exhibition

Date: Wednesday 10th Dec. 08
Time: 6:30 pm
Place: The Watch House.
All members are welcome and are encouraged to attend.
RSVP June (9810 6885) or Kathleen (9818 4954) by Friday 5th December.

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OFF-STREET PARKING OR 'OFF' STREET-PARKING

There are many obvious issues like the saving of Callan Park, the future of White Bay, Tree Lopping and Poisoning, The Tigers Redevelopment, Iron Cove Bridge Widening, Multiplex, removing the awful Balmain Telephone Exchange (or at least some of it), and conserving the heritage streetscapes of Balmain; but it seems that Parking is still a dominant issue in Balmain and as the matter hasn't been covered in The Observer previously it is time is was given an airing. An idiosyncratic partial solution is offered below.

In case you hadn't noticed there is a scarcity of car parking spaces in Balmain and "garages", or "off-street parking" as they are known in the trade, don't do much for streetscapes or pedestrians. Why not help solve one problem by using another at no cost and possibly incurring other benefits as well?





At a rough guess about a third of the garages in Balmain are never used to garage cars; they are used for storage space, workshops, or an extra bedroom, rumpus room or whatever for the house. Another guess would be that a goodly number of these pseudo-garages would have "No Parking" written on the garage door. One can't really fault this sign in such circumstances as there is certainly no parking behind the door but the obvious implication is that one should not park outside the door, unless of course you are the owner/renter of the door, in which case you may park there with impunity and have a guaranteed parking spot on the footpath or road outside.

Given the lack of parking spaces in Balmain streets it does not seem unreasonable to ask the owners of these garages which aren't garages, these "pseudo garages", to put notices saying "parking" or even "please park here" or "please park here and we have some spare space to store some of your much loved but unused possessions in with ours so that you can go out and buy even more things to help the economy and China's growing trade surplus".

Instead of basing the parking on economic necessity one could even use it to make a political statement, "Labor Party voting parkers only", "Greens bicycles allowed" or "No 4WDs". A fashion or status statement might also be used; "BMWs only" or "Mercedes please". Colour schemes could be catered for by specifying the colour of cars to be, or not to be, parked out front.



To be consistent with council parking notices the times at which parking would be allowed in front of real garages could also be stated. Frankly if a garage owner uses his or her car to go to work and leaves at 8am and returns at 6pm parking times could be stated as "Weekday Parking 9am to 5pm" above the money box for donations.

At present garages in Balmain can result in less parking being available in streets rather than more or at best are "parking space neutral". Off-street parking is a bit off. With a bit of humour and goodwill this could be changed.

A New Editor for The Observer

In the last four years I have had the privilege of editing The Observer. It has been an enjoyable experience. Although I have not run out ideas for articles for future issues I realize that there is a sameness about recent issues and I don't have the ability to change that. Earlier this year I gave the Balmain Association notice that I wanted to quit in order to concentrate my limited abilities on other things such as other Balmain Association's publications and organizing exhibitions ……. and being more retiring!

While it is up to the next editor to decide on the direction the newsletter should take I would like to offer suggestions on what the newsletter should and shouldn't provide. It should record the activities of the Association as well as the history of Balmain. It should keep members informed and sometimes set agendas for the Association to address. There is a need to promote the Association to the wider community and there should be an element or two of entertainment. It should take on issues that are ongoing, such as what sort of community and built form we want in Balmain. The newsletter should not seek to compete with the local print media.

Christina Ritchie will take my place. You will no doubt be familiar with the poems and articles she has written in past issues and you will therefore realize that the Newsletter is in good hands. On behalf of Christina I would ask you to offer her ideas, letters, articles suggestions and feedback. It seems that members need to be approached personally before they are only too willing to contribute something. My fond hope is that, in future, members won't wait to be asked before offering something: shrinking violets are not an editor's favourite flower.

One of the most difficult things faced by an editor is the lack of comment on published articles. One assumes no comment means that readers are happy or are satisfied (no news is good news) but it is good to get the odd praiseworthy comment as well as corrections.

What needs comment, perhaps more than the newsletter, is the direction and activities of the Association. I have the strong feeling that the Balmain Association and the Watch House remain largely unknown to Balmain residents. Should we be doing more to encourage residents to join and if they do join what should the Association offer them other than more of the same?

I am sure Christina will have ideas on changes to The Observer. A President's column is one possibility. On your behalf I wish her a happy and interesting time as editor but if you wish to pass on your congratulations, ideas, suggestions and articles personally to Christina, her email address is chrisritchie01@yahoo.com.au and her phone numbers are 9818 4564 and 0409 204 229.

Thankyou all for your interest and support during my time as editor.

Fergus Fricke

WYOMING RESTORATION, 25 WHARF ROAD BALMAIN

Threatened with demolition in 1989, Wyoming was saved by the concerted action of Leichhardt Council, the Soviet Government, the NSW State Government and local residents from the Snails Bay Residents Group.

Wyoming was built in 1881, around an earlier stone house by Q. L. Deloitte, Secretary of C.S.R. for 50 years and the father of N.S.W. Rowing. The architect was the eminent Victorian firm Mansfield Bros. Wyoming is a rare example of their domestic work which also includes History House, 133 Macquarie Street, Sydney. They also designed many public buildings including hospitals, schools and banks including Balmain Primary School and the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.

In Deloitte's absence in 1884, Wyoming was tenanted by the renowned Russian scientist, explorer and humanist, Nicolai Miklouho Maclay with his wife Margaret, daughter of the five times Premier Sir John Robertson. Their first son was born there. Although little known in Australia, Miklouho Maclay is revered in Russian and Ukraine.

When Deloitte died childless in 1927, Wyoming was quickly absorbed by the adjacent maritime industry of Nicholson Bros &, later, Stannard Bros. Set below the street it was soon forgotten and neglected. Sixty years on, in 1989, it was threatened with demolition as part of the redundant Balmain maritime industry; its owners wanted to replace it with 10 townhouses built in its place and in front of Numbers 21 and 23 Wharf Road. The Leichhardt Council meeting which considered the development application to demolish was chaired by the Mayor, the late Issy Wyner, and addressed by the Soviet Consul General Mr. Igor Shtcherbakov. Being a Trotskyist, Issy was proud of the Soviet presence but the residents were even more proud of Issy's statesmanlike conduct of the meeting which was filmed and shown on Soviet television and reported by the Pravda newspaper. At that time the Council was deeply divided on almost every issue but the motion to reject the development application was unanimous. The State government agreed to Council's request for an order preventing demolition. This was followed by a State heritage listing. Wyoming's many attributes are that it is a rare Italianate marine villa; it retains its original curtilage on Sydney Harbour; it was lived in by the renowned Russian, Nicolai Miklouho Maclay, and prominent businessman, Q.L.Deloitte.

Restoration began in earnest in 1994. The Architects were Clive Lucas, Stapleton and Partners. The first step was to convert it back to a single residence by the removal of the flats' many kitchens and bathrooms which were located mainly on the closed-in verandahs. This had left the original fabric mostly intact. Evidence of this era of many flats as part of the maritime industry survives in the retention of the large power board (Sydney Electricity insisted on removing the 21 power boxes in 1994 but were persuaded to reinstate them in 2000 when they also appreciated how fast these items were disappearing). Conduit cabling, the letterbox on the front gates and the chain wire fence were also retained.

The architect Ian Stapleton has left his signature with the creation of the lovely conservatory-kitchen added to the original stone-flagged scullery. There was always a tension between adapting a 19th century house to the 21st century, with the need to retain original fabric and features and layout, and yet have modern conveniences such as the new garage and carport on the western side.

There were mishaps along the way: the new iron main verandah roof blew off in gale-force winds and landed on Wharf Road (its corrugations remain indented across the tar). Luckily no one was hurt. The hallway's first wallpaper fell off and the Orchid House proved too hot for other than tropical orchids.



Historic photos by Harold Caznaux in the 1929 Australian Home Beautiful magazine proved an invaluable guide to the multiple discoveries: the original iron lacework could be identified when fragments were found after a burn-off permitted by the EPA to recover the wilderness-like waterfront; the first floor verandah posts were not lying down, as was expected, but were standing up to make an arbor concealed under vine; the finials and ridge capping found lying around were able to be identified as belonging to the Orchid House. Other discoveries were a network of hexagonal drainage channels in the Orchid House floor; the original well described in an 1868 advertisement as "never failing spring well", was found under the verandah and the 1850s stone flagging survived under a flat's floor and in the scullery.

The colour scheme was determined by scrapings with the evidence preserved; and a pencilled inscription "1933 Cup Day, Hallmark won, Alex Burns" was also retained, both with great difficulty as the painters wanted to paint them out. A sample of the original dining room wallpaper was found under an architrave and copied by artisan Karmen Gretch.

The hallway's original finish was polished plaster which was too damaged to be retained but brilliantly captured by the adaptation of a contemporary wallpaper design by heritage consultant James Broadbent (This is the replacement wallpaper for the one that fell off.). James also assisted by finding pieces of furniture and, with Elizabeth Wright, designing and making the soft furnishings.

The roof was re-slated in 1996 and the Orchid house restored in 1997, narrowly missing the devastating 1997 Sydney hailstorm.

The original street fence was timber and had been replaced in its industrial phase by a chain wire fence. Covered in a beautiful 1940s wisteria, this was retained except for the section adjoining the original front gates which was replaced with a palisade fence. Rebuilding the original timber fence would also have meant that street glimpses of the garden and harbour would have been lost.

Heritage landscaper, Michael Lehany had the original layout, some beautiful old trees and shrubs with which to work. He created in front of the house an intricate Victorian garden, including a cactus garden, before they became a necessity due to water restrictions. A giant euphorbia cactus gifted by neighbours could not be moved by a team of 10 men but was successfully relocated by a small team of piano removalists.

The 1850s seawall was in a derelict state owing to neglect and a design fault, the top layer being formed by smaller stones in contrast to the massive blocks below. The early dock (possibly part of the original wharf of Wharf Road) had been closed in with Moruya granite which were off-cuts from the Sydney Harbour Bridge. This part was restored in granite while the rest was rebuilt with large sandstone blocks.

The waterfront Fernery is the last structure to be restored. Photographed by Caznaux, it was described as "the famous fernery" yet that history appears lost.

A riddle remains: why did Deloitte name the property Wyoming, changing it from the original name of The Hermitage? It seems an improbable choice for an 1880s Sydney home as it is an American Indian name meaning "big plains". The US named Wyoming was formed in 1888, some years after the naming of this Wyoming. We know Deloitte travelled widely: was Wyoming in the USA a special place of orchid interest or a CSR connection? Is it a coincidence that the very large listed tree on the east is an American Oak?

Janette Sullivan

THE NEW BOYS ON THE BLOCK

Christina Ritchie interviews the two new Balmain Ward Aldermen

1. John Stamolis (Independent)

CR: Tell me a little about yourself
JS: I am married and have a 21year old daughter Elizabeth. I live on the peninsula. I am a Statistician and work in the City. I moved to Balmain in 1986. I am originally from Adelaide.
CR: So what brought you to Balmain?
JS: Work brought me to Sydney from South Australia after I graduated from Adelaide University with a Maths/Stats degree. The job situation was much better here. I always thought it would be lovely to live in an historic area like Balmain. The thing that impressed me the most was its Heritage.
CR: So what is it that you like most about living in the area?
JS: It is close to the city and, for me, it is close to work, and, of course, I enjoy the historic character of the area.
CR: What don't you like about the area, what irks you?
JS: It is an inner-city area undergoing change and there are a number of needs that must be addressed. There is a lack of sporting facilities and there are public transport issues. We have seen development occur but not the other side to balance this – we have not seen increased amenity or improved services to keep up with the changes. My daughter experienced a lack of sporting facilities when she was growing up here. The same problem still exists today. Parts of White Bay could provide open space for passive and active recreation. Then there are the parking issues.
CR: What is your favourite local place or past-time?
JS: I like to sit and relax at Thornton Park and Illoura Reserve. Relaxing is also thinking time for me. Sometimes I like to spend time in Gladstone Park. It is our central greenspace and needs improvement now. It's time we saw the implementation of the park's masterplan that's sitting on the shelf at Council.
CR: Do you have any particular hobbies or interests?
JS: I used to play AFL and I still follow the game. I play guitar a little. I enjoy music and read poetry. I like to walk too, a great relaxer. I particularly enjoy walking around the harbour and the beaches.
CR: What involvement have you had in the local Community and why?
JS: I have been a member of the Balmain Precinct for 10 years and Chair since 2000. The Precinct has been quite active in the community and covered a lot of issues. It didn't start 10 years ago, more like 35 years ago. My grandmother, who mostly raised me, was involved in many community things and I went along with her. So when the opportunity to move back into community involvement arose, I saw the Precincts as an ideal way of achieving this. Contribution to your community is a very important thing.



CR: Have you ever considered joining a political party?
JS: No. I have always seen myself as an independent thinker. There are particular personalities that would not fit into a political party.
CR: Why did you decide to stand for election to Council?
JS: I stood last time and gained 12% of the vote. I felt I could do better this time. I saw it as an opportunity to flag some big issues, many driven by the Precincts. It was important that an independent with a good chance of being elected should stand. It is very important to have good representation on Council, good Party candidates and Independents.
CR: What are your priorities on Council?
JS: I will focus on Council itself – to ensure that it delivers amenity and services well and that it meets the needs of the current population. The responsiveness of Council can be improved. I want the Customer Charter to be a real document for staff. It is fundamental that local government services are carried out in an efficient way with good financial management. The 'Rates' campaign succeeded in tying rate increases to infrastructure improvements and I will make sure this continues and the details communicated to the public. Then there is the White Bay campaign. The nature of the area has changed and the docks are largely disused. Council must lobby the State Government on behalf of residents and be a voice for the Community on White Bay.
CR: One of the aims of the Balmain Association is the protection of our Heritage. How do you see your role in this regard?
JS: Lots of people visit the area because of its historical character and our streetscapes. It is a wonderful living example of our history that needs to be maintained. There are gaps at the individual level – the DAs have a lot of flexibility and are open to interpretation that can place Heritage at risk. We need to recognize the investment hundreds of residents have shown to keep the basic framework intact. There is also demolition by neglect that has to stop. I look forward to discussing Heritage issues with the Association. I would like to canvas a 'Statement of Heritage Values' with various groups to clarify heritage issues for residents, potential residents, Council staff and developers. It would be good to see this adopted by Council.
CR: Another aim of the Association is to improve the living/working/recreational amenity of the area. How will you help?
JS: We now have lots of young families – dogs too - and we are not blessed with big back yards so I see public open space as vital. I will strive for more active space for the community. Council must lobby the State Government to have a better approach to public transport. We need improvements to Transport interchange hubs. The ferry wharves need upgrading and we need reliable services with better access, seating, toilets etc. Balmain Hospital services must be retained. Our population is increasing. I will encourage Council to lobby strongly so that the scaling down of services is stopped.

Contact details for John Stamolis:
jstamolis@lmc.nsw.gov.au

New Mayor

Following the recent Council elections there was an election held for Mayor of Leichhardt Council for a term of one year to replace outgoing, retiring Mayor Caroline Allen.
Greens Councillor Jamie Parker of Balmain/Birrabirragal ward was duly elected, with Greens Councillor Michele McKenzie elected as deputy Mayor. There were big smiles from the Greens camp and Mayor Parker was heard to comment that it had been a long time coming.
Mayor Parker has vowed to improve transparency, service delivery, ecological sustainability and social justice. He has promised to work hard to ensure that by the end of the term of this Council the amenity and environment will have improved for all residents and businesses while maintaining the character and diversity of the municipality.

Contact details for Mayor Parker:
jparker@lmc.nsw.gov.au

2. Gordon Weiss (Liberal)

CR: Tell me a little about yourself.
GW: I am an Environmental Consultant. I live in Birchgrove with my family. I have a wife and 5 children – from 5 to 19 years. I lived in Forest Lodge, then Annandale before coming to Balmain in the late nineties. I built a house on a block of land I bought earlier.
CR: So why did you choose to live on the peninsula?
GW: It's such a pleasant area, so close to the city and with water on three sides, and it's fairly well served by public transport. I am lucky I live near Birchgrove Park where there's room for kids to play. Annandale had a shortage of open space. I can ride my bicycle to work in North Sydney.
CR: So what is it that you like most about living in the area?
GW: I like the village atmosphere and the convenience. I like to ride my bike around the area. It's a young family area too these days. You see lots of prams on Darling Street every day.
CR: What don't you like about the area, what irks you?
GW: The parking situation – it is severely stressed – everyone hates the parking meters. There are lots of things that need to be worked on. There is a limited amount of open space for people. There are a lot of young children here now and they need places to play and we need more child care.
CR: What is your favourite local place or past-time here?
GW: I like to cycle in the area. I ride through Callan Park and the Bay run.
CR: Other than riding your bike do you have any particular hobbies or interests?
GW: There's my family of course and all that's involved with that, and I'm interested in Politics.
CR: What involvement have you had in the local community and why?
GW: I became involved in the 'floodlights' issue at Birchgrove oval a few years ago that saw the council to review the configuration of the light towers to reduce their impact on the park. Then there was the campaign to fix the ferry wharf. It was very satisfying to achieve a better outcome for the area. I joined the Birchgrove Precinct committee about two and a half years ago and became Chair of the Precinct.
CR: What made you join the Liberal Party?
GW: I have been interested in Politics for a long time. I volunteered to do how-to-votes for the Fraser election in 1975, when the Whitlam government was defeated. Then I got more interested I suppose. I've been a member of the party for about 25 years now. I get involved with a number of organizations too through my work. The Liberal party is more aligned than others to my way of thinking. It's hard to have an effect unless you are involved in a party. I like to share views with others of similar thinking.
CR: Why did you decide to stand for election to Council?



GW: It was a decision that was within the context of the party. I enjoyed my time as Precinct Chair and I wanted to do more. I want to keep the same level of contact with the community. I can be involved in a much larger area now, not just Birchgrove. I am willing to listen to residents and other stakeholders – that's what makes it work. Being a member of a political party can be great too if it is aligned with what you want to achieve. I see it as a great opportunity to take local issues to a wider community.
CR: What are your priorities on Council?
GW: Fiscal responsibility is important. I want to keep the discipline and make sure we are financially sustainable. Parking has to be addressed – it's so important for local business and residents. A mix of local business gives the area its character. I will try to ensure Council keeps its own charges under control and is careful with its own revenue. I want to see more child care places too. The demand is high. I see Council working with other providers to help achieve this. I intend to talk to Council officers too on all issues. I want to see improvements to Ferry services and disabled access at the wharfs. I am against the duplication of the Iron Cove Bridge. I prefer the community's alternative idea of a pedestrian and cycle addition. Then there is the Tigers issue and Multiplex proposal to deal with. We need to tackle those questionable new planning laws.
CR: Regarding the Balmain Association's aim to protect Heritage how do you see your role?
GW: I will listen to the Balmain Association when they put arguments why a structure should be retained. I will support building controls that protect historical premises. We need to make it known that structures need to be protected. Plaques are helpful. Any changes or new structures must be sympathetic to the streetscape.
CR: Another aim of the Association is to improve the living/working/recreational amenity of the area. How do you see your role?
GW: I will encourage Council to lobby State government constantly to improve amenity. Council should consider buying property, within sensible financial constraints, to demolish and develop neighbourhood parks. We have limited open space. We must keep Callan Park for the Community. Council needs to present a unified front on White Bay – it's the last significant public open space. The whole of Sydney can benefit from White Bay. Consensus is important - there needs to be good interaction between Council, Council staff and the Community to achieve the best outcomes.
I have no ambition beyond local politics - I see Local Council as having the biggest impact on an individual.

Contact details for Gordon Weiss:
gweiss@lmc.nsw.gov.au

We wish our new Councillors and Mayor well in their important roles. We will no doubt catch up with them at meetings and events during their first term of office and look forward to discussions with them on issues of interest and concern to the Association. Ed

Marine Officer, Convict Wife: the Johnstons of Annandale

George Johnston played an important part in creating a viable colony out of pitiable beginnings. He gained enduring notoriety for deposing governor Bligh in 1808 but his wider role as a soldier and entrepreneur was no less important. In a new book written by Alan Roberts of the Annandale Urban Research Association Johnston's achievements, and their personal cost to him, provide for a fascinating read.

More striking is the depiction of Esther, a young milliner transported for stealing 21 yards of silk lace who rose to play a key role in managing Johnston's large pastoral properties. The name of Johnston will always be associated with Annandale, if only for Johnston Street. *Marine Officer, Convict Wife* is a study of place as well as personality, tracing the development of Annandale from 1793 when the family farm and mansion dominated the district just west of Sydney, to the 1870s when it began to take shape as a suburb.

Paintings, drawings and photographs illustrate a new world being created in an unfamiliar landscape. Funded through Leichhardt Council's Local History Grants Program, *Marine Officer, Convict Wife* will fascinate not just those who enjoy local history and architecture, but anyone with an interest in the early days of white settlement in Sydney. Available from all good bookstores, *Marine Officer, Convict Wife* retails at $29.95

http://localnotes.wordpress.com/

NOISE ANNOYANCE: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

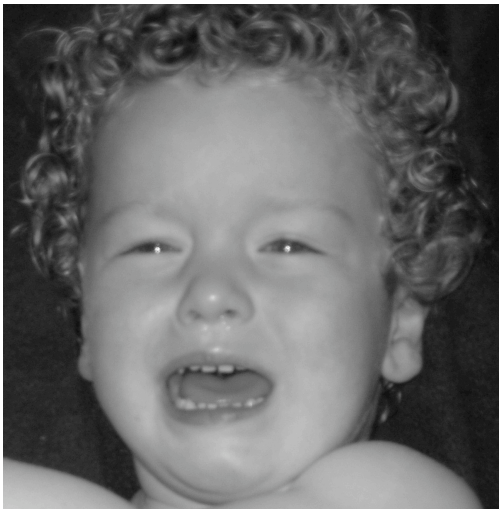
This is the first of what is hoped will be a two-part explanation of the vagaries of noise annoyance assessment. The second part on how noise annoyance is dealt with in NSW and the Leichhardt Municipality will be published in another issue when and if information becomes available. Ed.

There is an hypothesis which states that the amount of happiness in the universe is constant. This hypothesis has yet to be verified and transformed into the First Law of Happiness as there are a few difficulties in testing it. One difficulty is that there is no standard measure of happiness and another is that the universe is a very large place to investigate. Similarly one could hypothesize that annoyance in the universe is constant also. Both these hypotheses are worth contemplating when considering nuisance, where the nuisance does not cause permanent detrimental health and amenity effects such as might be caused by gas leaks, corrosive fumes, soil or water contamination and war.

In the blinding light of the happiness hypothesis, or even ignoring it, how should we go about treating issues such as complaints about noise from a party or a pub or a sporting venue or a helicopter, outdoor concert or café? Let's face it, the happiness of people going to a sporting event or any of these other activities is important and their unhappiness at being prevented from doing so because of a noise control order is also an issue, as is the comfort and amenity of neighbours. How can such a situation be resolved equitably?

At present the main approaches taken for minimising noise annoyance are controlling the noise level in the venue, improving the insulation of the venue, limiting the time and duration of the noise event and limiting the number of times a week, month or year such events can happen. There is another possibility that is occasionally used: insulate the residences of those affected or purchase those residences and rezone or demolish them, as was done to some extent when the third runway was constructed at Sydney Airport.

One of the biggest problems in assessing noise annoyance, as opposed to loudness, is that there are huge differences in the responses of individuals to a particular noise. The noise level ("the decibels") is a very poor indicator of annoyance. Any measure of noise, and there are many, cannot satisfactorily predict the reaction of an individual to a noise because of interference with speech or concentration, disturbance to sleep or dislike of a particular music genre. Someone who is studying for an exam is likely to be more sensitive than someone using a whipper-snipper or leaf-blower. Someone who has recently been in a car crash is likely to be more sensitive to crash noises. A person who is sleeping may be more sensitive than someone who is awake. One who perceives a source of noise to be controllable (eg a barking dog) will be more annoyed by it than a sound source that is perceived as uncontrollable (eg cicadas). The sounds that you make yourself or are under your control, rarely, if ever, annoy you. An unusual noise can often be more disturbing than a commonly occurring noise. One containing significant "information", such as speech or music, will be more bothersome than "white noise", such as the sound of wind in vegetation. Tonal and impulsive sounds are also more troubling than steady "broadband" sounds. Noise from a source which most people use, such as a car, is more easily tolerated than that from a source such as a helicopter which is used by very few people. A crying child is more upsetting than a laughing one. Tolerance to noise also depends on factors such as age, health, mobility, education, neighbourhood, time of day, public benefit, et cetera.



Should controls be put on children crying as well as air conditioning systems, lawn mowers and dogs barking and if so how?

There is a common belief, especially amongst noisemakers, that people adapt to noise. This is true to some extent. From the limited information available it seems that about 70% of the population do adapt to a noise they are subjected to while about 20% do not adapt and about 10% become sensitized to a noise and become more annoyed by it over time.

Currently the approach used in most environmental noise laws and regulations is to set a limit on the noise level produced by any activity, relative to the pre-existing (background) noise level, rather than to control annoyance. This measure is often stated as the noise level at the boundary of an adjoining residence that must not exceed the background noise level by more than 5 decibels. Because the background noise level is not constant there is then the issue of how, when, and for how long, the noise level and background noise level should be measured. There are many approaches to this. One of the more stringent and complex, though questionable, approaches is that applied to licensed premises. While ever more complex methods of assessment could be used to make slightly better predictions of annoyance for particular sounds, the more sophisticated the method the more difficult and expensive it becomes to assess compliance and the more legal loopholes are produced.

An alternative approach is to limit the noise level to one which only 10% of the population is seriously annoyed by. Both the OECD and the WHO suggest that this sound level is $L_{A,eq\ 24\ hour} = 55dB$. As this is not the place for a technical discussion it is perhaps enough to say that this "average" measure of sound ($L_{A,eq}$) is commonly used but, like any measure of sound, it has its limitations. The time at which the sound is measured and the time period over which the average is taken are very important, as is the character of the sound, for determining what value one obtains using this measure. And it is the peak noise level, rather than the average noise level, which disturbs sleep.

Whatever measure of sound is used there is no evidence that it results in greater happiness in the universe but what is known is that the more complex and legally-enforceable noise levels are the happier are acoustical consultants.

Existing legislation is effective for some noise sources but general noise from road traffic, aircraft, and trains is not covered (nor, for that matter, is the noise from Koels.) though in some cases, such as the nighttime curfew at Sydney airport and regulations on vehicles without mufflers or with "modified" mufflers, there is some control over these noise sources. The banning of noise sources such as aircraft, music or building activities at certain times is an effective and long established method of controlling noise nuisance. Elizabeth I, for instance, banned the beating of wives after 10 pm because of the disturbance that this caused (not the injuries).

Noise is like any other issue that governments want to control, such as alcohol consumption or drugs: it can be banned, limited or taxed. Limiting noise is commonly used for environmental issues, banning is used for occupational noise causing hearing damage but taxing is rarely used. Taxing was used at Sydney airport in order to pay for the insulation of buildings seriously affected by aircraft noise. Of course it is the passengers who pay the noise tax, not the airlines, airport operators or aircraft manufacturers. Until noise becomes easier to tax or there is more compelling evidence that environmental noise (as opposed to occupational noise) has serious long-term detrimental effects (such as changing governments!!) there are unlikely to be greater efforts to control it.

Vale Issy Wyner

Issy Wyner died in August. We were unable to print an obituary in the September issue of The Observer as it had already gone to the printer. Below is a copy of the obituary, published in the Sydney Morning Herald on 18 August 2008, that is reprinted with permission.

Also below is a transcription of a heartfelt address given at Issy's funeral by Philip Bray which sums up so well what so many felt about Issy's life and death.

Eighty years of defying authority
Issy Wyner 1916-2008

When a teacher at Fort Street High School recommended that students read the economist John Maynard Keynes, the schoolboy Isadore Wyner suggested Karl Marx. Young Issy was reprimanded. This did not stop him engaging with the world for another eight decades. While Marx lost most of his supporters many years ago and even Keynes has fallen from the fashionable, Wyner maintained his youthful curiosity, almost until his death at 92, in everything from the world's biggest geopolitical dramas to the future of a local park in inner Sydney.

Issy Wyner was born in Marrackville to Samuel, a Jewish cabinetmaker from Riga, Latvia, and his wife Rachel (Welling), from Estonia. The Wyners arrived in Sydney in 1914. Issy was the eldest of four boys and a girl. The family moved to Rozelle in 1920, then to Balmain. He attended Rozelle Public and Drummoyne and Fort Street high schools.

Samuel Wyner was a founder member of the Communist Party of Australia in 1921 and provided young Issy's first reading material, minutes of the first meeting of the Communist International. Aged 12 during the Depression, Issy joined others occupying houses to prevent the tenants from being evicted, a defiance that often ended in brawls with police. His father would take him to the "dole dump" in the Haymarket, where food was distributed to hungry families.

His father was expelled from the Communist Party in 1932, the year he left home. Issy left school at 16 to become the family breadwinner. After joiing the Young Communist League he was expelled in 1933, with Laurie Short, who was to overturn the communist control of the Federated Ironworkers Association. Wyner was also a member of the Unemployed Workers Movement and his first political victory was when he and Short had the swimming pool at Birchgrove, now the Dawn Fraser Pool, opened free to unemployed young people.

Wyner became a public servant, stamping dole books, and was transferred to Newcastle. He later went to sea on coastal steamers and became an ironworker at Mort's Dock during World War II. In 1940, Wyner met Ruby Bundy, a seamstress, at a party held by Nick Origlass, a left-wing political activist who was to become Issy's colleague. Ruby had led a strike by 40 laundry workers. They married in 1942.

After the war Wyner became a painter and docker at Cockatoo Island and joined the Painters and Dockers Union. He was a paid union official for 30 years, and its historian. The union held annual elections for officers, which Wyner won repeatedly. Together with many elections to Leichhardt Council, he was elected 44 times.

Hall Greenland, his political colleague, says he was the most elected man in Australia.

After the Hawk government disbanded the union, the unsentimental Wyner said: "I'm a life member of a dead union." In 1983, he published *With Banner Unfurled,* tracing the union's early history from the 19th century. A second volume, *The Union Right or Wrong*, published by the State Library in 2001, took the history to World War II.

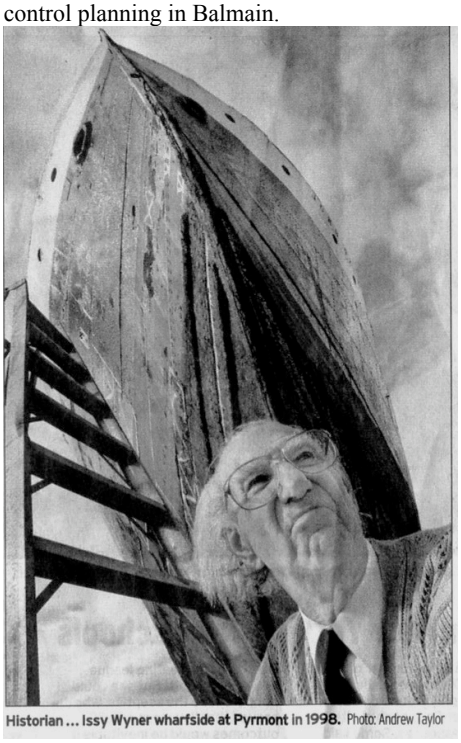
Wyner was elected as a member of the Labor Party to Leichhardt Council in 1959, joining Origlass. For years they defied authority in pursuing such unfashionable causes as preserving the environment, opposing developers, coal loaders and expressways and , and opening council meetings to the public. The ALP expelled them in 1968 for opposing a caucus decision to allow a chemical tank depot in the community, but they returned in 1969 as Independent Labor. They were ejected from meetings and ordered by the Supreme Court to comply with the mayor's rulings.



Out ... ejected in his chair at a 1969 council meeting. Photo: Fairfax Archives

The open council meetings from 1971 meant that all residents could have a say, although meetings sometimes lasted until 3am and development applications were delayed interminably. Critics accused them of stopping reasonable medium-density housing in the inner city and forcing the growing city further into its westward sprawl. Wyner's last book, Open Council: A New era in Local Government, was launched two weeks ago.

When Wyner opposed public housing in Mort Bay, he was accused of having moved rightwards across the political spectrum and joining the yuppies. He countered that he was not opposed to public housing but wanted open spaces. He saw the opening of Bicentennial Park, Rozelle Bay, stopped the building of a huge marina at Rozelle Bay, and led the struggle to save Callan Park, when he was mayor in 1990. His Community Independents lost power to Labor the same year, when the NSW government appointed an administrator to control planning in Balmain.



Historian ... Issy Wyner wharfside at Pyrmont in 1998. Photo: Andrew Taylor

Ruby died in 2000. Wyner is survived by their son, Larry, his wife, Patricia, grandchildren James and Melissa, great-grandchildren Nina and Astrid, and sister Marie.

His funeral service will be held at 11:15 this morning at Rookwood crematorium.

Tony Stephens

Goodbye Issy

In 1967 a young man moved to Balmain from the North Shore. His name was Philip Bray.

Not long after I first met Issy Wyner and Nick Origlass. That was in connection with the Chemical Tank Farm issue.

Over the next few years it became clear that we agreed on a lot of issues and in 1971 I found myself on Leichhardt Council as Deputy Mayor. With me on Council were Nick Origlass, Eric Sandblom, David Young, Bill Hume and a lion of a man, Issy Wyner. They were exciting times and we achieved a great deal. Issy roared like the lion he was. He roared for justice and he roared for a good society.

Now, no matter how hard I strain, I will not hear him roar again. Not with my ears. But in my heart, and I am sure that you in your hearts, we will hear him roar until the day we die.

Goodbye Issy.

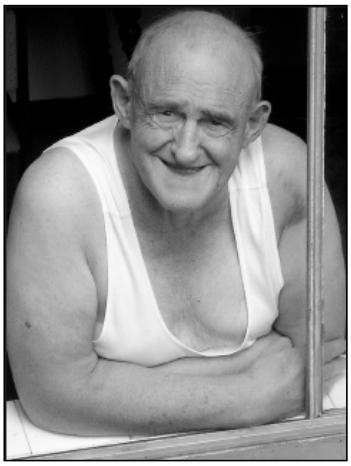
Philip Bray

What's on at the Watch House

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

DECEMBER/JANUARY

BALMAIN IN FOCUS



Saturdays from 13 Dec. to 31 Jan. 09, 11:30 am to 3:00 pm

A exhibition of photographs by local photographers David Liddle, Michel Brouet, Anthony Browell, Sue Callanan, Barbara Hamilton et al. The theme is Balmain with an emphasis on people rather than places.

Saturdays 11:30 am to 3 pm or by appointment (June 9810 6885 or Kathleen 9818 4954). **Opening on Wednesday 10 December at 6:30 pm. Refreshments provided. RSVP 5 December (June or Kathleen)**

FEBRUARY

Saturday 7, Sunday 8, 10am - 4pm

"Making Waves"

Helen Alker captures the moods and atmosphere of Sydney's people and places. Air and light surround her subjects as they emerge from unique depths of colour and spring to life with loose brush strokes. Come and share the loves of her life: Sydney Harbour, Musicians and Wild Animals. Enquiries 0400 940 036

Saturday 14, Sunday 15 (*Times to be advised)*

The road from Mandawa

Rowena Cubbs 4th solo exhibition, chronicles her travels in 2006 from Mandawa in Northern India across Europe to Morocco. Rowena, who has been painting fro 30 years, is also a tutor for hARTstART Studio who exhibit annually in the Balmain Watch House.

Saturday 21, Sunday 22, 10am - 4pm. Opening Friday 20, 6-8pm. All interested are welcome to join us.

The Balmain Peninsula Park Painters 5th Annual Exhibition with a focus on "Wharves of Balmain"

This is a popular showing by five artists with quite different styles, who paint together regularly in the parks of Balmain. Artists Susan Grant, Barbara Hamilton, Jenny Saunders Thompson, Pamela Neville and Mary Cullen will exhibit paintings in watercolour, acrylics, oils and mixed media as well as photography. Much of their work reflects on life in Balmain - particularly the ever-changing waterfront, boats, park scenes and streetscapes.

Saturday 28 Feb, Sunday 1 March, **10am–4pm.** Opening Friday 27, 6-8pm All welcome.

Tea

A selection of still life drawings and acrylic paintings by Vaughan Brennan exploring the social, contemplative, meditative and relaxing qualities in the daily ritual

Well Worth a Look

A website that is well worth visiting for anyone interested in the history of Balmain and Leichhardt is Bruce Carter's, *Local Notes,* at **http://localnotes.wordpress.com/**

Restoring Watch House Stonework

During July passers-by would have noticed the scaffolding surrounding the Watch House, seen the dust and heard the noise. All this was part of the restoration of the stonework on the wall facing Darling Street, replacing the badly weathered stone with a new "skin". They may have also noted that the stone on the ground floor (the original building) is different from that on the second storey and the additional cells at the back. The former was quarried in Balmain and was softer and weathered more quickly and the latter, which came from Pyrmont, was a lot harder and shows no obvious weathering.

The job took several weeks with the usual unexpected problems, a major one being the need to cut thicker blocks to install around the fireplace (not visible from the outside). You always imagine that the building is made out of solid blocks of stone but this is not so. The walls are "double-skin", that is there are two thinner blocks with a cavity between filled with rubble stones. In the case of the Watch House it had been constructed with poor materials and the rubble had subsided leaving a cavity and no support for the block above when replacing one below which made the job more difficult.



So much for the technicalities; overall the wall looks better and hopefully will not continue to flake away (although those blocks not replaced now look as though they should be!).

The stonework replacement was made possible by a grant of $25,000 from the NSW Department of Commerce, through its Centenary Stonework Program, and a $30,000 contribution from the Balmain Association.

The Centenary Stonework Program takes its name in recognition of the prediction by Walter Liberty Vernon, Government Architect in 1899, that sandstone used in the State's historic buildings would require maintenance "in about 100 years". Established in 1991, the Program has carried out maintenance on many of the State's historic sandstone landmarks, including Fort Denison, the Australian Museum, the Conservatorium of Music and the Sydney Observatory.

The Balmain Association has to give a big "thank you" to all the artists who have exhibited their work at the Watch House over the past 15 years for their financial contribution to funding this project.

June Lunsmann

Photo: Kathleen Hamey checking out complicated blocks of stone for installation on the corner of the building.

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:

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