



the balmain
association
incorporated
news sheet

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History Week – Tales of Scandal and Corruption

There is a saying “crime doesn’t pay” but the many varied stories presented in the exhibition of *Scandals, Crime and Corruption* would beg to differ.

This was the theme for History Week, 5 – 13 September 2009, an initiative of the History Council of NSW. It caught the attention of the public at large with attendance at the 140 scheduled events of walks, exhibitions, talks and documentaries throughout the state.

The Balmain Association’s exhibition, *Balmain Boys do Cri...me and Other Misdemeanours* featured Sgt Ira Gray the last police officer and family to live at the Balmain Watch House; Police uniforms with thanks to Ian Horncastle; the Pubs of Balmain and Rozelle where crimes from murders to selling of stolen goods occurred; Wanted Posters; crimes relating to convict escape from Cockatoo Island, an attempted payroll robbery at Mort’s Dock, counterfeit money, drug bust, murder and corruption by well known criminals. Shrieks were heard from visitors when looking into one of the small cells as an inmate could be seen sleeping on a straw pallet.



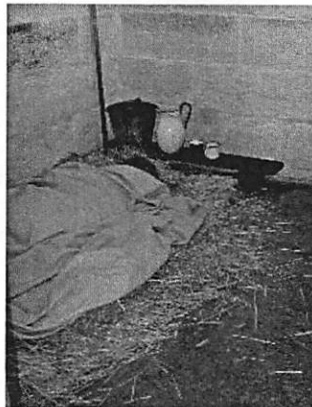
The Charge Room

Many visitors had stories of their own but as discovered when researching information for the exhibition most were disinclined to put them to paper. Maybe another time.....

To quote Terri McCormack (forget that a name has been mentioned)

The difference is that, while we might not have condoned their crimes, these were all our criminals and we felt safe enough as long as they kept their activities to themselves. And you — always knew there were ways to get in touch with a hitman if you really needed one. Now the offences are being committed by outsiders and it’s just not the same.

From her article *Balmain – a Den of Iniquity* in *Phanfare*, (The Newsletter of the Professional Historians Association) No. 238: Sept-Oct 2009



In the Cell

Crime and Punishment

The Crime and Punishment tour of the Grand Victorian Balmain Court House built by Colonial Architect James Barnet included a talk in Court 1 with Kathleen Hamey reading out past and present charges. This court is in session each Wednesday. The smaller upstairs Court 2 which is no longer in use due to lack of disabled access, was also opened for our inspection. Thanks to staff at the Court House.

Before departing, participants visited Balmain Library’s exhibition of images revealing the ‘smokey, dirty and crime-ridden’ Balmain that once was. The previous weekend the Library had conducted “Busted”, a walking tour pointing out the old “dens of iniquity”

which included a visit to the Watch House.

Our tour then strolled down Darling St to finish their visit viewing the Watch House exhibition and enjoying afternoon tea.



Reading the Charges

The exhibitions of *Scandals, Crime and Corruption* were the most successful with large attendances and the “best ever” comment an echo of the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

Next year’s theme is *Faces in the Street* 4 - 12 September 2010.

**Kathleen Hamey
June Lunsman**

In 1909 - 100 years ago

First electric lighting introduced in streets, parks, pool and public buildings. Nine miles of deepwater frontage, 246 streets and popn approx 32000.

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President's Report Balmain Association AGM

7th October 2009



I thank and congratulate the hardworking Management Committee team for their efforts and achievements throughout the past year in conducting the Association's regular calendar of business and activities whilst responding to changing and new challenges in local issues, particularly heritage protection and planning.

The Planning Minister's recently increased power to override heritage classifications is a great concern, whilst the Gordian knot of ad hoc, unfunded Government proposals for traffic and local land use cries out for a Bruce Petty cartoon. As the saying goes, 'It would be funny, if it weren't so serious'.

As its current main contribution to planning, the Balmain Association is participating in the Bays Precinct Community Reference Group, from which two already positive outcomes

are the agreement on the wide area to be considered and the bringing together of a large group of people with disparate ideas and interests – an opportunity for some validations of my longstanding experience that residents are the best planners.

In our region, three significant heritage matters this year were the sudden and sad destruction of the iconic White Bay Hotel, the beautiful and practical refurbishment of the heritage-listed Balmain Town Hall, and the preservation vulnerability of the Abbey in Johnson St, Annandale. Members of the Association were recently privileged to a guided tour of this extraordinary and beguiling structure.

The Abbey is now having to be sold by its family owners. Sadly there seems to be no way to fund restoration of the Abbey. Fortunately, the White Bay Power Station is heritage-listed, and must stay so, with community vigilance and insistence on appropriate use.

On a truly joyful note, the most outstanding planning matter this year was the completion of the Ballast Point Park, a stellar achievement by the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority,

and the result of years of campaigning by adjacent residents, the Balmain Association and the wider community. Congratulations all round.

At the Watch House, the most visited exhibition was the Association's History Week display on the theme of 'Crime, Corruption and Scandals'. Much discussion was generated about current relevance! The 'body' in the cell was the star of the exhibits, especially with children.

Looking towards future ways to involve more members without their needing to attend solely-business meetings, the Management Committee has decided to pioneer quarterly meetings with an allocated time for visitors and general socialising – to be announced in the preceding Newsletter.

We encourage feedback on ways we can enhance our activities, and welcome, as always, participation from the community.

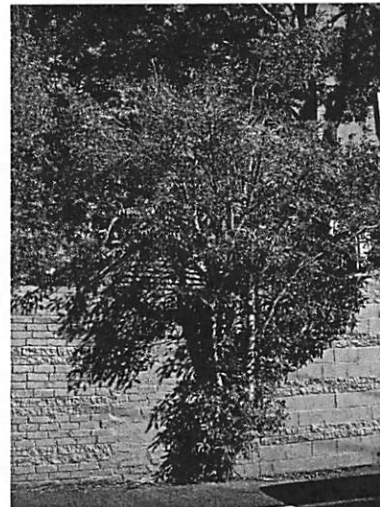
I wish everyone a safe, enjoyable and productive year ahead.

Jane Ward

Statement of Financial Position at June 30 2009

	2008	2009
Current Assets		
Business Online Saver	27,008.69	20,068.84
Bank Balance	5,829.99	14,142.89
Term Deposits	87,000.00	77,000.00
Cash in hand	6.65	65.35
Total Cash & Bank	\$119,845.33	\$111,277.08
Interest Accrual	1,551.16	1,256.07
Sundry Debtors	84.00	.00
Total Assets	\$121,480.49	\$112,533.15
Current Liabilities		
Subscriptions in advance	980.00	910.00
Members Funds	\$120,500.49	\$111,623.15

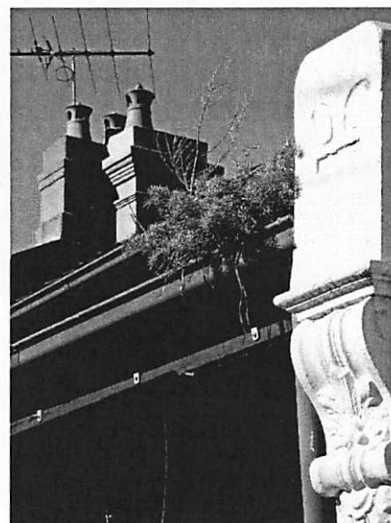
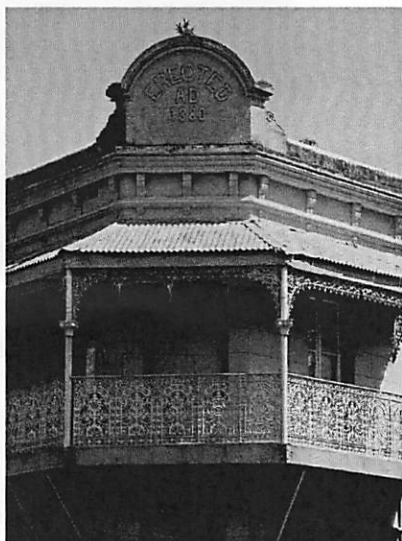
Art Nouveau Balmain Style



The "Art Nouveau" movement started in about 1890 and lasted for about 20 years. It was characterized by the decorative motifs of vegetation (leaves and flowers) and highly-stylized flowing curvilinear forms in art and architecture. It was a fashion whose followers were usually the rich and powerful, both of which Balmain had very few of in the 1890s.

more correctly, "cheap maximum floor-space glass boxiness")

Neo Art Nouveaux involves real living decorative additions to buildings.



"Environmental Art Nouveaux" or "Neo Art Nouveaux" is taking hold as well.



Although Balmain buildings appear to have been largely uninfluenced by the Art Nouveaux movement (and the "Art Deco" movement which followed it) an Balmain has now embraced the "Modernism" (or perhaps

Fergus Fricke

Steps to the Foreshore

Part 2: Balmain and Balmain East

Ballast Point Park is now open and there will soon be a new pontoon wharf constructed off the end of Yeend Street, next to the lower entrance to the Park. From the steps at the end of Yeend St there is an excellent view of Morts Bay, formerly Waterview Bay. At different times the old Yeend St wharf was a ferry wharf and depot, and steamers' coal wharf. Mort came to NSW from Lancashire in 1838. Wool merchant, pastoralist and shipping shareholder, in 1854 he and Captain TS Rowntree formed a partnership to develop a dry dock in Waterview Bay.



On the other side of Mort Bay Park, right at the end, is the Thames St Wharf – a steep hill down from Darling St. At the end of Caroline Lane, off Caroline Street, on the same side of Darling St in Balmain, there are steps that lead to the foreshore next to the expensive harbourfront Colgate Palmolive apartments (converted from the old Colgate Palmolive factory). Ferries can be seen moored in this small bay for maintenance.



Further east, the old Zigzag foreshore steps can be found at

the bottom of Nicholson St in East Balmain

These steps were in existence before 1900 but during the Adelaide Steamship years (from 1900 onwards) casual workers would wait here hoping for daily employment in the works. In the 1880s the Burns Timber Company built workshops, mills and a wharf on the waterfront site but the company closed in the 1890s depression. The Adelaide Steamship Company bought the site in 1900 and rebuilt the workshops as a ship maintenance and repair base for their fleet. In 1968 the company ceased operation and eventually most of the wharf was demolished. The structural and industrial elements have been retained in the restoration of the buildings and small business use, including some arts and crafts work has continued there.

The few metres of land between the end of the Waterview wharves and Simmons Point Reserve is private property, so it's necessary to return up the Zig Zag steps and Nicholson Street before turning left into Simmons Street to reach the set of steps leading to the reserve at Simmons Point.



Simmons Pt steps

James Simmons bought the Simmons Point area in the first sale of Gilchrist land in 1836, and his son-in-law eventually subdivided the land. The Burns Timber Company bought the largest section. The park at the point was established in 1977 on part of the site of the Adelaide Steamship Company wharves.



Thornton Park steps

Thornton Park is a former tannery and distillery site and a park since 1921, named for Reginald Thornton, a former Balmain Mayor. The park runs along the waterfront between Lookes Avenue and the Balmain East Wharf at the end of Darling St. East Balmain is the main Balmain wharf since the 1840s. Watermen provided the first services on demand in small rowing skiffs or sailing dinghies - water taxis. The first regular public ferry services were established later by Henry Perdriau.



Illoura reserve steps

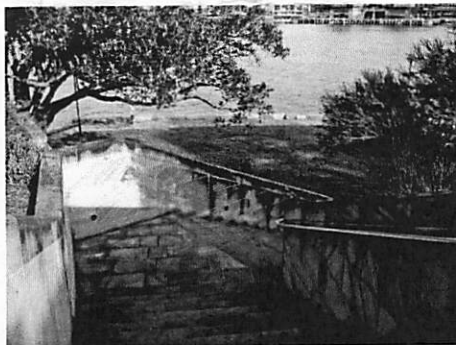
Illoura Reserve covers a large part of the eastern waterfront land, from Balmain East wharf to Peacock Point. It was created in 1970 to commemorate the Cook Bicentenary. An Aboriginal name was chosen (meaning 'pleasant place') and the landscape design was by Bruce McKenzie. The land had seen many waterfront industries come and go including Perdriau's Ferry depot c1875; Iron foundries; soap and candle manufacturers; beverage firms; Fenwick's tug berths; and a Maritime Services Board timber store. Contd.

Balmain and Balmain East - Foreshore Steps, contd.

The headland point at the end of Illoura Reserve is Peacock point. New sandstone steps have been constructed to the waterfront reserve.



Peacock Pt steps, construction



Peacock Pt Steps

Johnston's Bay Sailing Club sailed off Peacock Point around the turn of the century. The steps at the end of Datchett Street were constructed after the Water Police station and moorings on the eastern side of Cameron's cove were completed. The Water Police Command facility was relocated here from Pyrmont in 2004 despite local objections. There are great views from here to the city, particularly lovely at sunset.



Datchett St steps

The parkland at Cameron's cove is called Ewenton Park. Both the cove and park were named after Ewen Cameron of Ewenton. Much of its foreshore is reclamation undertaken from the early 1900s onwards.



Steps leading from Darling St to Jubilee Place and the foreshore

Jubilee Engineering, operated a major ship servicing facility for years in Cameron's Cove. Jubilee Engineering relocated to Louisa Road from the 1930s, and in 1952 the Maritime Services Board (MSB) expanded across the site. The MSB Depot (No 2) was used for buoy and beacon maintenance and boat repair. It was closed down in 1990s when the MSB was broken up.



Steps from modern townhouses and view to Wharf 6.

Ewenton Park is a pleasant amphitheatre-like space created in the late 1980s from a former industrial site. It gets its name from the grand house near its SW corner. The park area once had small cottages, wharves and a slipway here in the late nineteenth century. Its shoreline was changed by the container wharf development. In Jubilee Place, a plaque on a townhouse gatepost commemorates the site

of the workshop where the winged keel for Australia II, winner of the America's Cup in 1983 was constructed. The house, Ewenton, was begun about 1854 by Robert Blake, a Sheriff of NSW, who subdivided and built houses in the area. It was bought by Ewen Wallace Cameron, a partner of TS Mort, in 1856, and the name changed from Blake Vale to Ewenton. The Cameron family lived here until 1891 after which the building became variously a house, boarding house and part of an industrial site. Fire damaged in 1980, it was restored as part of the townhouse development.



Stephen St – a step to nowhere

Changes in international trade forced containerisation on Sydney. The MSB began creating container wharves in Johnstons and White Bay, the first section opening in 1969. This process continued and plans were announced in 1999 to increase harbour activity by 350% by 2020. Residents were upset, living with an average of 900 clattering cargo movements each night. In 2003, the State government announced that all container, and later, car carriers would operate away from Sydney Harbour. The container terminals closed in 2004. White Bay's future is in question as the community has been promised a say in its future while the Govt continues to approve developments there.

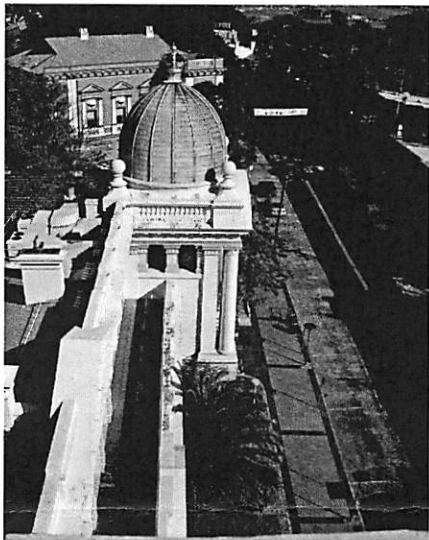
Christina Ritchie

Ref: *Walking Coastal Sydney* website

Enjoying the high life in Balmain



Wednesday the 9th of September was supposed to be an auspicious day because of the alignment of 9s (9/9/09) but Thursday the 10th of September was far more important for the recording of a piece of Balmain history. In February 1909 Charles Kerry, a famous Sydney photographer, took panorama shots from the top of the Balmain Post Office tower. These are iconic photographs showing a suburb from the tallest building on the highest point on the peninsula. The photographs show very few people and trees and no vehicles, a city skyline devoid of buildings, no harbour bridge but many ships' masts. The only tall structures were the church spires and the Balmain coal-mine chimney. The scenes are instantly recognizable as Balmain as many of the shops and houses still stand, and even though Morts Dock and other major industries have disappeared.



In late February this year I first tried to obtain permission to take photos from the PO tower so that the Association's History Week exhibition could include the Kerry panoramas together with contemporary ones taken by David Liddle. It is not unreasonable to describe this first attempt as a dismal failure and Australia Post's attitude to it as less than helpful. However persistence was finally rewarded when, numerous letters, email messages, post office visits and phone calls later, Australia Post appeared to run out of objections. The last two of these were that I had to get a letter from the Hong Kong owner of the post office building giving permission for us to have access to the tower and absolving Australia Post of any responsibility, and secondly that I supply a copy of an insurance policy which covered David and me for any injury we may sustain while we were in the building.



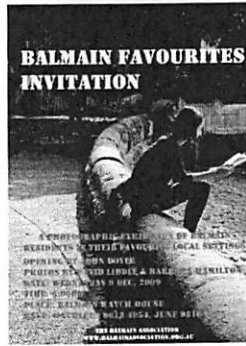
At 8:30am on Thursday 10/9/09 we knocked on the back door of the post office as arranged and after a delay of about 15 minutes due to last minute hitches we were allowed in and climbed the tower. It is a wonderful view despite the ugly large telephone exchange building next door. Fortunately the clock chimed 9am before David was delicately balanced on the parapet in order to take photos unimpeded by the columns supporting the roof. With our ears still ringing after the bell had stopped, David nonchalantly defying death on the parapet and me trying to appear calm by holding my breath while also holding the tripod, the photos were taken (with some delay due to passing clouds).



David returned from the edge of the abyss, my heart started beating again, as did the clock bell (it was 10am). We descended the tower and David returned to his studio computer to form the photos into several panoramas, one of which is included here. I am sure the panoramas will be a feature of next year's history week exhibition and that it won't matter David's photos are half a year late.

Fergus Fricke

BALMAIN FAVOURITES



This Balmain Association's photographic exhibition this year is titled *Balmain Favourites*. The photos are of Balmain residents photographed with their favourite place, park, pet, person, plant, building, street, scene, café, club, group or organization, or combination of these.

A short biography of each subject and the reason for their choice of favourite will also be displayed. The photographers are David Liddle and Barbara Hamilton.

The exhibition will be opened on Wednesday 9 December at 6pm.

This will also be the Balmain Association's end of year party. Please notify Kathleen (9818 4954) or June (9810 6885) if you intend to attend.

The exhibition will be open each Saturday between 11:30am and 3:30pm during the rest of December and in January

Special Interest Quarterly Meetings

The management committee is planning to hold quarterly meetings with a special interest such as an important issue that needs wider airing or a guest speaker or a video presentation. We now have a number of interesting interviews old and new on DVD. The first such quarterly meeting will be the first Wednesday in March at 6pm following the usual management committee meeting. At present it will be a video by Jan Woods of her interview with Phillip Coxall, the designer of Ballast Point Park. The confirmed presentation will be advertised in the March issue of the association's newsletter, the Peninsula Observer. Please put this date on your calendar now.

We do remind you that members are always welcome to the management committee meeting on the first Wednesday of the month, 5pm at the Watch House. Hope to see you then.

Developments - Update

- **Bays Precinct** – meetings of the Bays Precinct Community Reference Group are continuing, but progress to decide on Planning Principles and aspirations for the future is slow. The process has been hampered by the inclusion in the group of persons with Private interests and industry representatives who have a different focus, as one would expect, from that of community representatives. Another impediment is the State Government's failure to provide updates from the Taskforce and Cruise Passenger Terminal Steering committee. Information requested by the group and direct communication with these Government committees has also been refused.
- **CBD Metro to Rozelle** – opposition to this major development is mounting, with the State Opposition saying they would not proceed with it. Even within the ranks of the State Labor Party many are opposed to it and feel the \$6Bn could be far better spent. LGA's across the metropolitan area are strongly opposed to this expensive, and badly conceived, proposal.
- **Callan Park** – 12 months down the track, the resolution of the handover of the care, control and management of Callan Park At the Council meeting on 20 October 2009, Leichhardt Council resolved to hold a public meeting on **Thursday, 26 November 2009** to update the community on the transfer of Callan Park to Council and the development of a masterplan to govern the site. The State Government has failed to offer adequate funding for the transfer. Leichhardt Council welcomed the receipt of a draft Heads of Agreement from the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority (SHFA) for the Callan Park site granted to Council in 2008 but said the offer of \$1.8 Million to maintain the site is grossly inadequate to cover the true costs of proper ongoing maintenance. At the meeting, Council also resolved to continue negotiations with the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority (SHFA) to facilitate the transfer of care, control and management of Callan Park but only with adequate funding to cover maintenance and upgrades to the site.
Ed. Christina Ritchie

What's on at the Watch House

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

DECEMBER

Saturdays 13, 20, 11.30 – 3.00 pm

Balmain Favourites

An exhibition of photos of Balmain people and the things they like most about Balmain, a place, a person, building, street or community group and their reasons for such.

Photographers David Liddle and Barbara Hamilton.

Opening by John Doyle 6pm Wednesday 9th December (see enclosed invitation)

JANUARY

Saturdays 9, 16, 23, 11.30am – 3pm

Balmain Favourites continues.

Saturday 30 Jan 10am-6pm

Sunday 31 Jan 10am-4pm

Desire Lines

Paintings and prints by Sally Merrett, Janet Reinhardt and Bronwyn Rodden

Opening 6pm-9pm Friday 29 January

With live jazz, music by AR Duo, drinks and nibbles.

All invited to attend.

FEBRUARY

6, 7 and 13, 14 available for hire

The History Room will open 11.30 to 3pm

Saturday 20 and Sunday 21, 10 am to 4 pm

"Laneways of Balmain"

The five artists of the Balmain Peninsula Park Painters are exhibiting a selection of artworks in their diverse styles in their popular annual exhibition. Artists Mary Cullen, Jenny Saunders Thompson, Barbara Hamilton, Susan Grant and Pamela Neville exhibit a mix of watercolours, mixed media, acrylic and oil paintings, as well as photography. These reflect our appreciation, inspiration and interpretation of Balmain locations, with lanes and streetscapes of the community, as well as water scenes of the surrounding harbour.

Opening Friday 19 February 6 - 8 pm: All interested are invited to attend.

Saturday 27 and Sunday 28, 11am 5pm

"THE WORKS"

Pictures created by Neil Duncan during a 40-year career as a professional photographer.

The show will include:

- celebrity portraits such as Jack Nicholson, Betty Davis, Robert Helpmann & Rudolph Nureyev, taken when Neil worked as press photographer.

- a photographic record of the last working days of the Colgate Palmolive Factory will remind some of our area's history.

- a few examples from Neil's previous exhibition, "Ships In The Night", at Paddington's "Blender Gallery" which was well-received.

Also included will be a selection of pictures created of the New Year Fireworks, [shot from Balmain], Dust Storm Over Mort Bay, Balmain Aerials.

All pictures are printed on highest quality archival art paper and are available in various sizes.

The show will open on Friday, February 26 at 6pm

MARCH

Thursday 4 and Friday 5, 4pm – 7.30pm

Saturday 6 and Sunday 7, 11am to 5pm

"THE WORKS" will continue.

Please note copies of the now rare history of Colgate Palmolive *Down the Olive* will be available for purchase funds going to the Watch House.

Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 10am-4 pm.

Colour Indulgence

Grazyna Wollman's passion is colour and design and this art exhibition combines both passions.

All works are in Gouache, her preferred medium, or Gouache mixed with delicate fabrics. The depth, purity and the unlimited number of colours achievable with Gouache are what she loves.

So please come along and enjoy a feast of vibrant colour and intricate design.

All works are for sale

Opening night - Friday 12 6-9 pm

Hope to see you there.

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>

Annual subscriptions: Household \$20, Concession \$10,

Organizations \$30

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The Balmain Association Committee wishes you all an enjoyable and safe festive season