



the balmain
association
incorporated
news sheet

The Peninsula OBSERVER

Vol 45 No 2 Issue 315

Founded November 1965

June 2010

NATIONAL TRUST HERITAGE FESTIVAL

The Balmain Association has participated in the National Trust Festival for over 20 years and was pleased to have the opportunity to showcase Balmain history again.

This year three events on the 2010 theme, "The Making of Our Nation" were held:

- A photographic exhibition at the Watch House titled, "Balmain Workers Help Make Our Nation" (This was extremely well attended.).
- A coach tour to the former industrial sites (The tour was booked out well in advance of the day and will again be on the events list for the September History festival.).
- A ferry cruise around the harbour to view the former Balmain industrial sites.

After the very positive feedback from those attending the 2007 cruise, including phone calls, notes of thanks and queries about "When are you going to do it again?", we decided that the time had come.

The theme for this year's Heritage Festival was appropriate for us to tour the Balmain foreshores and see the sites where, "Balmain workers helped make our nation".

So on Sunday 11th April, a perfect day, 82 people boarded the ferry *Radar* to enjoy the tour. One family had travelled up from Wollongong bringing their mother, an ex-Balmainite, on a surprise trip. She was absolutely delighted with the day. Guests spoke about their experiences and once again Diana Garder and Kathleen Hamey kept the commentary flowing. Leaving Mort Bay Diana spoke about the many ventures that Thomas Mort had initiated. Cruising past the East Balmain foreshore and into White Bay, Kathleen pointed out

the sites of the past boat builders and timber yards. Judy Newton and Al Garrick related stories from the time they worked at Unilever. Of particular interest was the community within the company, with the workers and families enjoying the annual balls, picnics and musical events.

Sailing into Rozelle Bay, David Lawrence spoke about the battles won and lost in the redevelopment of the Rozelle/Wattle Bay precinct and the current situation.

Other highlights were sailing past the *Adelaide*, prepared for its now postponed scuttling, and an unexpected contribution from Fay Briggs, a volunteer with Sydney Heritage Fleet, who gave us a rundown on the vessels moored there.

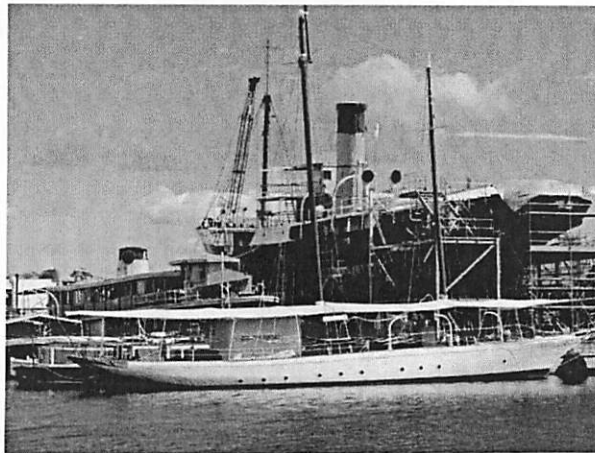


Photo by Jens Lichtenberger

Returning past East Balmain, noting Illoura Reserve and the recently acquired Bells foreshore, we cruised around Goat Island with John Morris speaking about its significant buildings representing the layers of history. John expressed his concern that National Parks were considering the removal of most of the buildings.

We were disappointed that due to the prevailing winds the ferry was unable to tie up at Fitzroy Park, the site of the former National Box Factory. Instead we lunched while

moored at the Elliott St wharf where people were able to disembark to walk around.



On the return trip we circled Rodd Island and the outer side Cockatoo Island with Diana and Kathleen pointing out various sites.

John Garrett gave us an impromptu talk about "the first Sydney Harbour Tunnel" built between Long Nose Point and Greenwich in the early 1920s. It was used to carry electricity cables for the trams on the north shore. The tunnel was flooded about 1930 but the cables remained in use until 1969.

Once again, our thanks to Rosman Ferries and the very amenable captain who slowed down and turned around on request. Thanks also to our speakers, the bar tenders and the three helpers who arrived at 8am to prepare the lunch. We actually covered costs and made a small profit which was unexpected due to the increased hire cost of the ferry and our keeping the tickets at the 2007 price. All these events take a great amount of organizing to be a success and there are many others to thank for their contribution. See you in September.

June Lunsmann
Kathleen Hamey

IN THIS ISSUE

Page	
1	Heritage Festival
2	Balmain's Sanitation
3	Sydney's Mt Rushmore potential
4	What's on at the Watch House

The Sanitation of Balmain

In 1888 Balmain Town Hall, a very grand building designed to hold 1000 people, was opened. There were no toilets in the building. No, the architect, Edward Buchanan, did not forget to include toilets and yes, even in those days people did need to relieve themselves. The full story behind why toilets were not included would require more than one short article but briefly, in order to have toilets a sewer was required and in order to have a sewer a reliable water supply was needed and Balmain in 1888 had neither.

Until 1880 Balmain's 16,000 residents relied on wells, springs and water carters for their water. Families spent up to a third of their income on water. In 1880 Balmain received its first reticulated water from the Botany Swamps but the supply was intermittent and often contaminated until the Upper Nepean water supply scheme was completed in 1891.

Before 1860 Balmain's sewerage was disposed of in cesspools (cesspits), in the streets or creeks, in the harbour or used on gardens or consumed by pigs, ducks and rats. The description in the 6 March 1851 Sydney Morning Herald is of Glebe but probably also applied to parts of Balmain, "ducks, fowls or pigs are diving into the depths of dung heaps, fetid gutters, etc, and the place is altogether stinking: the smells are overpowering - the people cook in dirt and they sleep in it."

Parts of Sydney were marginally better off. In 1859 there were six sewers that discharged into the harbour. One of these was the Tank Stream (discharging into Sydney Cove), which had been transformed from the sole source of potable water in 1788 to a brick lined sewer. The other sewers serving Sydney were the Woolloomaloo Sewer discharging into Woolloomaloo Bay, the Fort Macquarie Sewer discharging at Bennelong Point, the Hay Street Sewer discharging into Darling Harbour, the Darling Harbour Railway Sewer discharging into Darling Harbour and the Wattle Street Sewer discharging into Blackwattle Bay.

At this time much of Balmain's sewage also found its way into the harbour down streets and waterways.

Beattie Creek became an open sewer which discharged into White Bay at the power station. Other creeks such as White's Creek and Johnston's Creek suffered similar fates. The concreting containment of these creeks was the first attempt to reduce morbidity and mortality rates (The childhood mortality rates had at times reached 50%.) by constructing lined channels so the waste no longer stagnated in pools. Instead it moved the pollution problem to the harbour.

When Balmain Council was formed in 1861 it took responsibility for sanitation. By that time there were serious risks of typhoid, cholera and other diseases spreading because of unsanitary conditions and Balmain Council voted to leave waste disposal in the hands of the mayor! By 1889 there were estimated to be up to 4300 dunny cans and 500 cesspits in Balmain (Mayor James Buchanan in evidence to a Parliamentary committee) and Council was paying £1 per year per pan to contracted dunnymen. Full pans were replaced with empty ones once or twice a week from the dunnies at the rear boundaries of the properties (as far from the dwelling as possible to minimize odour problems). The full dunny-pans were, at various times, emptied into pits located at Callan Park, Moore Park, Homebush, or the harbour. Later sewage was loaded into barges at White Bay for disposal "at sea" and later still emptied into the Bondi Ocean Outfall Sewer (BOOS) at the corner of Catherine Street and Lilyfield Road (previously Abattoir Road) where the large vent is now located.

Because of the high levels of mortality and morbidity and because the harbour became so polluted the BOOS was constructed. The BOOS, which was the first ocean outfall sewer in Australia, was commissioned in 1889 but there was no connection to Balmain until 1896 and even then properties less than 40 feet above sea level could not be connected until the low level pumping stations, such as those at Birchgrove Park, Callan Park, White Bay and Mort Bay, were installed. This in turn was only possible when a suitable source of power, electricity, was available to operate the pumps. The first pumping

stations were commissioned in 1904. The last of the "Balmain" pumping stations to be commissioned was at Callan Park (King George's Park) West Balmain (Rozelle) in 1912.

This however was not the end of the dunny out the back. The dunnies were converted from pans and cesspits to flushing toilets and it was only in the 1960s that indoor toilets were commonly incorporated into new houses in Balmain (I once asked an acquaintance why he had bought the house he lived in. He said it was the only house for sale in Balmain in 1968 that he had seen with an indoor toilet.). The dunnies that remain are becoming rare, as are memories of them and their importance to the health and wellbeing of Balmain residents.

The story of the sanitation of Balmain is the story of the salvation of the suburb as well as of Sydney Harbour. Nowadays sewerage systems are taken for granted and few Balmain residents under the age of 40 have experienced outdoor non-flushing toilets ("dunnies") or even pit toilets, septic tanks or dry composting, except perhaps in rural areas or more remote camping and rest areas. Probably no one has experienced the "nuisance" (the stench and disease) that residents experienced in 19th Century Balmain and very few rely on an outdoor flushing toilet.

Given that it is now a century since Balmain was directly connected to Bondi it would seem appropriate to mark the occasion by producing a public sculpture (or convenience), based on some unused and unwanted dunnies, located in a park near you. Is there a willing public, sculptor and council to support this or is there some other way of recognising how lucky we are?

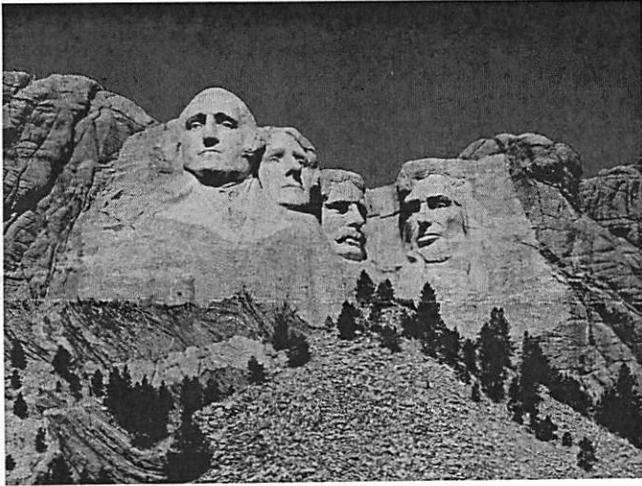
Fergus Fricke

PS Balmain Town Hall now has toilets inside and outside.



Sydney's answer to Mount Rushmore

I know that I am not going to be killed in the rush to take up my idea that we should honour our NSW Premiers, especially so as there have recently been so many of them, but please hear me out. Perhaps I can make the idea sound more palatable by saying that I would like to mount their heads rather than carve them out of stone and that I do not envisage these visages desecrating a national park, as at Mt Rushmore.

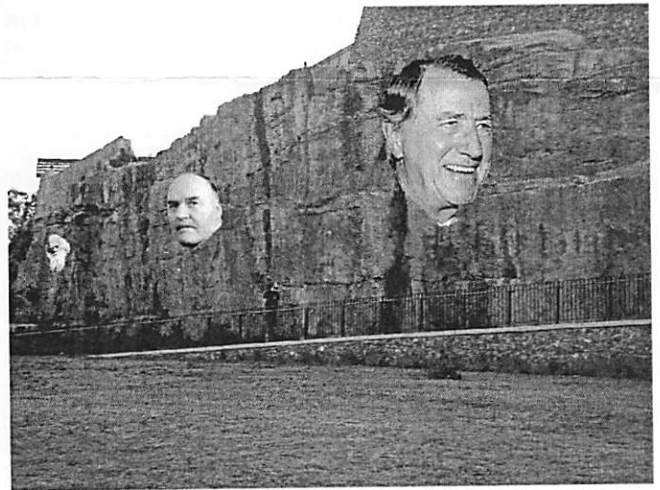
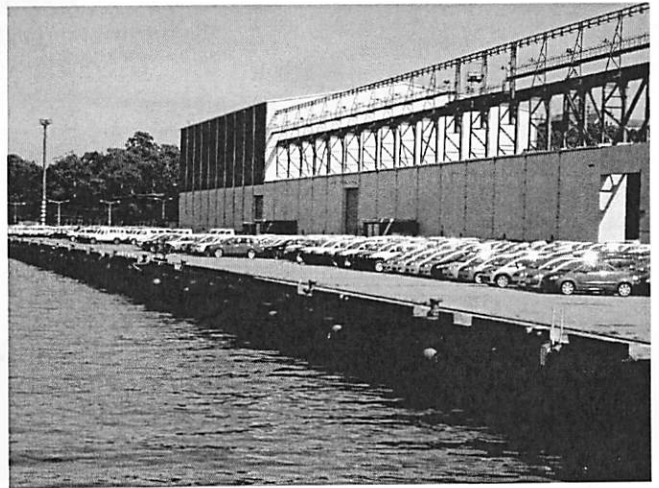


There are several prominent unnatural cliffs in inner Sydney such as the one towards the northern end of Barangaroo, opposite Balmain East. Another unnatural cliff is the largely hidden one, behind the monster shed at White Bay, where the Bailey Marine depot may, or may not, go. Then of course there is the southern side of Ballast Point. All of these are headlands that are crying out for heads. What better way would there be to ensure that any government ensures that these places are left as open empty spaces, than have the current Premier waiting to have his or her head drawn, sculpted and hung for eternity, or at least until there is a sea level rise of several meters.

And this leads to another possible benefit of this idea should it be taken seriously: premiers might wish to take the global warming issue more seriously unless they wanted to be visited, admired and remembered by sharks, fish prawns and scuba divers.

Photographs

Clockwise from below: the cliff at Barangaroo; Mount Rushmore, USA; the White Bay shed and Ballast Point, Sydney Harbour's Premier Headland (minus a few heads).

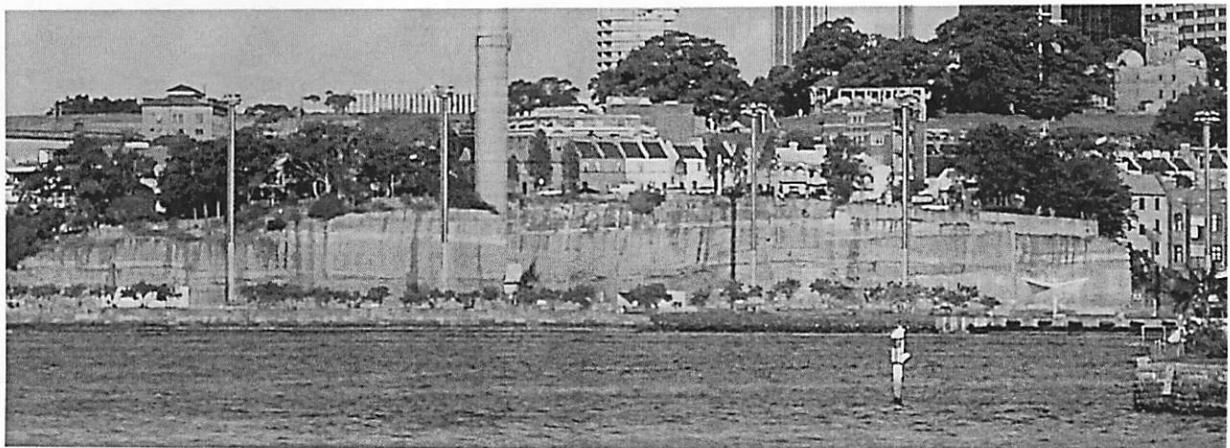


Every brilliant idea has to have a downside and I agree that this one does too. If the heads were at Barangaroo or Ballast Point many residents of Balmain would be confronted by images of dead and ceased Premiers. For East Balmain Muslims this could be the source of some concern as there may be confusion about what or who was the object of their prayers.

On the other hand if the Premiers were mounted at White Bay, Balmain residents would not have to gaze upon them and any adoration could be left to Pyrmontians and passengers and crew of passing boats travelling to or from the fish market.

I rest my case.

Fergus Fricke



What's on at the Watch House

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

JUNE

Saturday 5 and Sunday 6, 11am – 4.00pm

"Wide and Wild" – Photographs from Cameron Gray. A mixture of panoramic landscapes and seascapes and also a mixture of waterfront images including a few from around Balmain. Lots of colour and some different perspectives!

Saturday 12 (long weekend)

The History Room will be open 11.30am to 3pm.

No exhibition

Saturday 19 and Sunday 20, 10am-4pm

An exhibition by Mo Godbeer, Dee McMillan and Judith Wilson

An eclectic and exciting mix of contemporary works, including art, photography, encaustic, paintings, fibre and textiles.

Opening: Friday 18 June 2010, 6pm-9pm with refreshments
Everyone is welcome.

Saturday 26, 10am - 5pm and Sunday 27, 10am - 4 pm

"take it to heart" The exhibition showcases the work from all our members at **hARTstART** over the last 12 months. We are a small artgroup who meet in Rozelle every Tuesday night. We explore expressive and modernist painting methods.

Opening: Sat 26 1 - 3pm - drinks & refreshments.

JULY

Saturday 3 July to Sunday 11 July

Saturday 3 July 10am to 5pm; Sunday 4, Monday 5, 10am to 4pm; Friday 9, 10am to 7pm; Saturday 10, 10am to 5pm; Sunday 11, 10am to 4pm

Elke Klein, Marena Von Behr, Aurah Wood, Pepa Martin
A diverse exhibition of original hand-crafted textiles by four artists exploring the theme 'Nature, Harmony & Memory'. Drawing on their individual backgrounds in interior design, costume design, textile design and illustration they use fabric as a common medium and are working together for the first time. The exhibition includes silk screen printing, shibori technique, textile design, digital prints, fabric collage and mixed media.

Opening Friday 2 July 6 to 9 ALL WELCOME

Saturday 17 July and Sunday 18 July

Available for hire

History Room open Saturday 11.30am to 3pm

Saturday 31 July and Sunday 1 August, 9am to 5pm

"Fresh" This is a collection of new paintings by Shirley Peters, Kerry Lonsdale, Jennifer Park, Maggie Ho, Lillian Wong and Judith Strachan.

Opening night Friday 22 July 6 to 8pm – All comers welcome

AUGUST

Saturday 7 to Sunday 8

Available for hire

History Room open Saturday 11.30am to 3pm

Saturday 14 to Sunday 15, 10am to 6pm

The Autumn Set A group of artists will put together a collection of approximately seventy of their current works in oils, pastels, acrylics, watercolour and drawings. Years of painting together, between them they offer an extensive variety of different styles from landscapes, seascapes, portraits and many more.

Opening Friday 13 August from 6pm to 9pm Wine, cheese and nibbles. All welcome

Saturday 21 to Sunday 22, 10am to 4pm

OUT OF HOURS, 2010

An art exhibition from the people who know the tools and materials of fine art the best – after all, it's their job to sell it. The staff of Eckersley's stores around Sydney and beyond have collaborated to showcase their diverse skills, natural talent and technical knowledge.

Opening night: Friday 20 August 2010, 6pm – 9pm.

For enquires, contact Nicole Pendle on 0402059454, or Helen Alker, on 0400940036.

Saturday 28 to Sunday 29

Students from Meadowbank TAFE

Details to be announced

History Week September 2010: *Faces in the Street*

Join us in History Week 2010 for a walk down the streets of the past and into the lives of those after whom these streets were named. Compare the streets of 1909 to those of 2010.

The Balmain Association will be presenting an exhibition titled, *"The face of your street – the person behind the name"*

As well, the panoramas taken from the Post Office tower by Kerry in 1909 and by David Liddle in 2009 will be on display. Saturdays 4, 11, 18, 25 September.

Saturday 11th September: there will be a coach tour on to explore these streets. Leaving the Watch House at 1.30 returning 3.30. Cost \$10PP places limited so bookings essential Kathleen 9818 4954.

Biennial Spring Garden Tours

Saturday 18 September

Self guided tours of varied gardens throughout Balmain and Birchgrove – maps and information about the gardens and interesting streetscapes will be provided.

Gardens will be staffed by Balmain Association members, owners would not be required to do anything. If you would like to show off your garden contact Diana 0402 220 993 digarder@bigpond.net.au, June 9810 6885 speal@zip.com.au.

Balmain Publications

Three more publications have been added to the list on Balmain History that can be purchased from the Watch House on Saturdays from 11.30am to 3pm or contact 9818 4954. All publications can be viewed on www.balmainassociation.org.au

Exploring Leichhardt Heritage. Selected Walks in the Municipality. Compiled by Jeanette Knox. Published by HGOLD, Heritage Group of Leichhardt District with the support of a grant from the Leichhardt Council. 2010.

Cost: \$20 PLUS \$2.50 postage.

Down the 'Olive'. A memory of Colgate-Palmolive in Balmain. Edited by Else Lackey and Monica Vardabasso. 1994. Photos, advertisements and memories.

Cost: \$20 including postage.

Balmain to Glebe. A Pictorial History.

Joan Lawrence and Catherine Warne. Third edition 2009. 130 pages with 90 photographs and history, includes section on Annandale and Leichhardt.

Cost: \$25 PLUS \$7.50 postage.

Balmain Association, PO Box 57, Balmain 2041.

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 11:30am – 3:00pm.

Our editorial contacts:

phone/fax is 02 9810 8978

Email anneliese@ozemail.com.au

Postal: PO Box 57 Balmain 2041

Material from this newsletter is not to be reproduced without acknowledgement