



the balmain
association
incorporated
news sheet

The Peninsula OBSERVER

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March 2011

President's Report 2010

THE Balmain Association has completed another very busy year of wide-ranging activities, beginning with the annual, and always enjoyable, Back To Balmain Festival in Elkginton Park. A highlight was the musical performance in the Rotunda by the Birchgrove School Band, valiantly coping with a torrential rain storm, along with their enthusiastic audience who clapped vigorously out in the downpour. June and I were drenched and thought the event was a cheerful washout, but the stalwarts moved up into the Balmain Town Hall and continued with the rest of the highly successful program.

This year at the Watch House, two outstanding photography exhibitions featured the diversity of local residents, workers and artists, past and present. John Doyle delighted everyone with his richly detailed and fascinating observations of life and people in Balmain since he arrived here in 1982 (see March 2010 Observer). Many thanks to Fergus, David and Roger for their hard work in setting up these exhibitions. On Sunday 8th April our cruise of industrial sites in Balmain was also a great success. The route was carefully planned, the commentaries excellent and the lunch delicious. Compliments were flowing. Particular thanks go to June, Kathleen, Diana and Julie.

The maintenance of the Watch House itself is an on-going and time-consuming responsibility of the committee, whose efforts are constantly rewarded by praise from visitors and members. June does an excellent job of hiring out the premises for exhibitions.

Coach tour visitors greatly appreciate being shown around by Kathleen who tries to retire from guiding but is so knowledgeable and helpful that she is in high demand. June and others are gradually becoming apprentices.

On Saturdays, a hard core of members is rostered to open up the History room and provide information for visitors, many of whom become members of the Association. As President, I encourage people to join the Association and am pleased by the high level of membership renewal. Diana, June and I participated at Gladstone Park in the Chamber of Commerce's first Christmas in July. Our stall drew a lot of interest, and the whole event

was very popular, assisted greatly it must be said by the glorious, fine weather!

Jane with Local Member Verity Firth and Planning Minister, Tony Kelly at the announcement of the listing of Mart Bay Park on the State Heritage Register (more about this in the June Observer)

The UTS students re-designing our website are finalizing their work. Our new treasurer, John, has set up an online



Bulletin to be accessible between issues of the Observer. John, assisted by Val and Tim, is doing a great job and has brought welcome new ideas and energy.

After concerns were raised at a committee meeting about possible financial vulnerability of the Association, we are reviewing our constitution.

Heritage and planning issues continue to be high priorities for the Balmain Association. A surprise but welcome victory and precedent is the saving of Newtown's Leamington Street, but Heritage still lacks adequate statutory protection. On planning matters, we are disappointed that little good has come out of the recent spate of task forces, committees, enquiries and consultations. Instead there are political re-shuffles, costly back flips and ad hoc decisions. The Part 3A powers of the Minister of Planning are still entrenched and now the Premier is talking about taking direct control of Barangaroo.

We note the overwhelming support from the Bays Precinct Community Reference Group for a headland park at Wharf 6 White Bay. The Balmain Association has donated \$500 to the Barangaroo Action Group campaign. We also totally oppose the re-classification of Weston Street East Balmain from Community Land to Operational whereby it can be excessively commercialized or sold, also setting a dangerous precedent for other community land in Leichhardt Municipality.

The Balmain Association has a valuable role as an umbrella organization that can bring other groups together and speak on broader issues consistent with our stated aims. In line with that, I attend precinct meetings and speak publicly when appropriate. I was proud to draw "thunderous applause" for the Balmain Association at the JRPP hearing on the Tigers site. Speakers at that hearing spoke superbly. They were wonderful. The decision of the panel was unanimous - to reject the current DA application by the developers. The hall erupted with unprecedented joy. Disbelief. Hugging. Tears. Sheer amazement to win any victory, but awareness of being part of an excellent and compelling presentation. I thank again all the office bearers and committee members for their support and hard work. The Balmain Association is an organisation of great value to the community and one that also enables people to enjoy the company of others while being constructive and creative. Jane Ward, President.

Management Committee 2010 - 2011

President: Jane Ward

Vice President: Diana Garder

Secretary: position vacant

Treasurer: John Symonds

Committee Members:

Kathleen Hamey, Carolyn Allen, Penny Alexander, Christina Ritchie, June Lunsman, Ann Bastock, Leo White, Ross MacKenzie

We welcome new committee members Leo White and Ross McKenzie.

Our thanks to Roger Parkes and Fergus Fricke for their time on the committee and a very very big thank you to Val Hamey who for heaven only knows how many years was treasurer as well as, with help of Kathleen, produced the Observer.

Auditor: Tim Potter has again offered to be auditor. Our thanks to Tim for all he has done for the association.

Public Officer: Bob Ellis.

IN THIS ISSUE

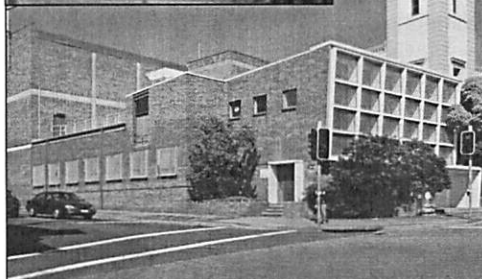
1. President's Report/new committee
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Enclosure Sydney Harbour National Park
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Balmain Telephone Exchange

In any survey of which is the ugliest building in Balmain or the most inappropriate juxtaposition of two buildings or the most prominent site in Balmain, the Telephone Exchange would have to get top rating and be the subject of the most vitriolic ranting as well. It seems that architectural merit is not a consideration in the design of Telstra exchanges but heavy metal-shuttered windows and brutal functionality are. The following is a brief history of the Balmain exchange and an account of the most recent discussions with Telstra about reducing its visual impact and to give a



better view of the side of the iconic 1886 James Barnett Post Office tower.



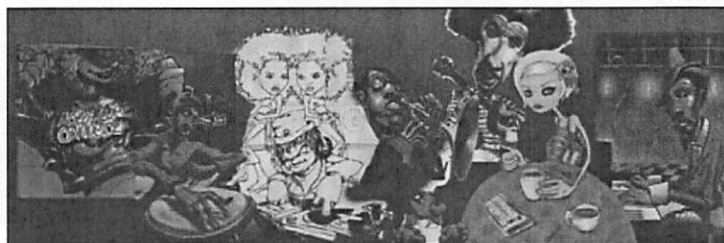
Before 1914 the site on which the telephone exchange is located was open space. In July 1914 the first automatic telephone exchange in NSW was opened on the site. Prior to the present building a smaller exchange was set back from Darling Street. The lower part of the existing exchange (the Darling Street end) was opened in 1957 and the taller rear extension was added in 1971. Telstra (or the Postmaster-General's Department, PMG, as it then was before becoming Telecom Australia and then Telstra) struck a deal with Leichhardt Council to build the 1971 extension of the exchange. In exchange for permission to extend the exchange the PMG agreed to replace the spire on the Post Office tower which had been removed for safety reasons. So while the Post Office was improved the telephone exchange was made more ugly. The best one can say about the exchange

is that it might make some people more aware of the beauty and grandeur of the Post Office and Court House.

There have been a number of attempts, over many years, to encourage Telstra to "modify" the exchange. The most promising of these was in 1999 as part of Leichhardt Council's plan to improve Darling Street. After initial interest Telstra backed away from a planned demolition of the Darling Street front of the building that contained an entrance, stairway, office, recreation room and toilets but no telecommunications equipment above ground level.

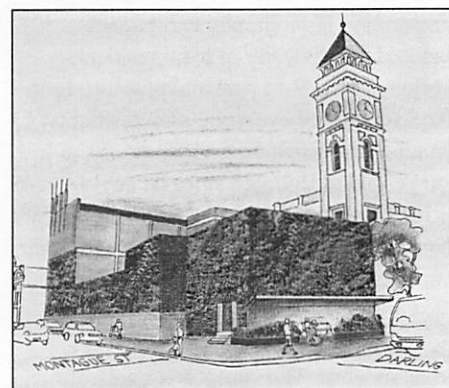
Last year, having received no response from two Telstra divisions, David Thodey, CEO of Telstra, was approached directly. Despite a less than enthusiastic response a number of subsequent phone calls, email exchanges and a meeting in Melbourne with Telstra staff established that something might be done to the exchange but that it was definitely staying where it was, cum hell or high water or the National Broadband Network. The interpretation of these contacts and discussions was that Telstra was open to suggestions and prepared to negotiate something even though the official line was that no demolition could be considered because of the effect of dust on telecommunications equipment in the basement of the exchange and that the "community" would have to pay for any such modification, which might cost a million dollars. Nothing however would be ruled out until a proposal was put forward.

So far the only proposal has come from Telstra. At the Melbourne meeting in November 2010 Telstra made an offer to paint a mural on the Montague Street side of the building at their expense. The proposed mural however (see below) was considered inappropriate, for what are fairly obvious reasons. It is thought however that a vertical



garden on that wall would be appropriate, together with, not instead of, the demolition of the front of the exchange. So currently support for action from the Federal, State and Local Governments and the community is being sought to encourage Telstra to do the right thing with or without help.

Fergus Fricke



A suggestion for a vertical garden at the Telephone Exchange - sketch by Ruth Downes. A local example of a vertical garden can be seen in the housing development at the old Camperdown Children's Hospital site.

Changes to membership subscription

To simplify the accounting and to comply with our revised constitution the following has been decided that:

- the membership year will run (for one or two years) from 1st July to 30th June rather than current practice of due date being the date that membership application was made;
- current members whose renewal falls due between 1 July and 30 December 2010 will now renew on 1 July 2011, this is the majority of members;
- current members whose renewal falls due between 1 Jan and 30 June 2011 will be taken as renewing on 1 July 2011;

- the same applies to 2 year subscriptions ie those between 1 July and 30 December 2010 will renew on 1 July 2012.

Future members: it was decided that a 6 month rate would apply to new members joining between 1 Jan and 30 June of any year. Those joining between 1 July and 31 December would pay full membership rate.

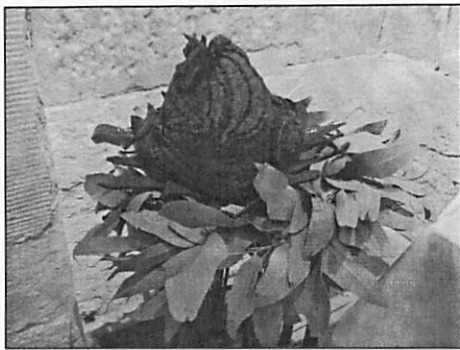
Annual subscription be increased by \$5: \$25/year; concession/student \$15. This is to cover increased costs of postage and printing. For more information or any enquiries contact Ross MacKenzie, Membership officer email rossmack@gmail.com or phone 9810 8592.

A Tea Exposition

Our December exhibition was not only a display of tea cosies and tea paraphernalia but a celebration of friendship with our community and for those seeking refuge here.

The call to creative instincts produced crocheted, felted, knitted, painted, potted & stitched items from the modest to wildly extravagant and from vintage to contemporary.

The exhibition was opened on Friday evening by Liz Gemmel, a wonderfully talented local fabric artist, who not only made the contemporary tea cosy *Cosy cocoon on a Bush Fire* (pictured below) but gave a very poignant speech as she reflected on her own family's arrival on the first migrant ship to berth in Newcastle with refugees from war in Europe. Liz talked of the welcoming generosity and friendship of Australians towards her young parents and how



today we too can show the compassion for those seeking asylum.

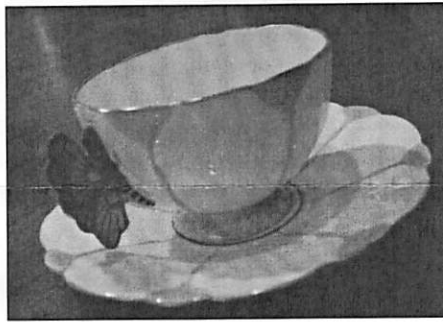
The display of tea items was very diverse – Blinky Bills, numerous Dolly Vardens, chickens, flower and vegie gardens, sea scapes and the just colourful and zany – and sales were brisk. Lynden White's *Tea Garden* was simply gorgeous as was Virginia



Walkers vintage cosy *I'm a little older* (pictured above) and Hilary Seymour

exhibited several felted beauties, including *Di's Garden*. Jenny's Burge's *Anenome* and a painting of tea in the garden by Barbara Hamilton were our raffle prizes. We also had a variety of tea inspired paintings & photographs and aprons.

Upstairs in the parlour was a display of some precious



tea items - family heirlooms and collector's tea pots for all tastes. Patricia and Gerry O'Brien displayed a most exquisite *Butterfly* cup and saucer, 1914 Ansley, England (see above).

A selection of photographs from the *Freedom From Fear* Exhibition* celebrating refugees who have found a sense of belonging in NSW and who are helping to shape their communities here was also shown.

On Saturday and Sunday we offered visitors tea tastings in the delightful garden setting. Elmstock Tea in Darling St kindly donated a range of delicious teas for tasting which we offered with cold tea punch and mini cupcakes purchased at cost from the cupcake factory. Tali, Rozelle's contemporary indigenous art gallery also joined in the event.



The event was both successful and fun thanks to all who made items and joined in over the weekend, but especially to Di and Robert Osmond and June Lunsmann who made sure it happened.

We are very pleased that the funds raised, just over \$3000, from sales, the raffle and donations will assist The Bridge for Asylum Seekers in their support and advocacy for those seeking asylum today.

Carolyn Allen.

*NSW Dept Education & TAFE, AMES, The Smith Family, Lady Gowrie, SGSCC UNSW

5th January 2011

Balmain Association

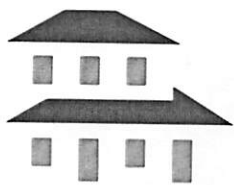
Dear Members,

I am writing on behalf of the Management Committee of Bridge for Asylum Seekers Foundation (BASF) to thank you, your committee and all those who helped to raise funds for BASF through the teapot and tea cosy display and sales at the Watch House on the weekend of 10th to 12th December. Not only was it a very happy weekend for Debby Nicholls and me it was also a very profitable one for BASF. We were both filled with admiration at the imagination and expertise which had gone into the making of the tea cosies, as well as for the work put into mounting it by members of the Balmain Association, including, of course, Di Osmond. And what a serendipitous speaker you chose to open the exposition: Liz Gemmel's personal experience as a refugee not only increased our compassion for the problems faced by all who have followed – and are still following – in the footsteps of her family to seek asylum in a place of safety; we feel sure it also contributed to the number of tea cosies and tea pots which were bought as well as the sizeable donations to BASF. The Committee was overwhelmed when I forwarded to them the information that almost \$3,000 had been raised through sales and donations. We currently give individual asylum seekers on Bridging Visa Es which do not allow them to work, obtain Centrelink or Medicare benefits or any government allowances the sum of \$110 per week. So this will mean that one of our recipients can be provided with money for approximately 6 months while he/she awaits finalisation of his/her claim for asylum. Again, I would like to thank you for your generosity and the inspiration for the event.

Sincerely

Virginia Walker, Honorary Chairperson

BRIDGE FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS FOUNDATION



What's on at the Watch House

www.balmainassociation.org.au

MARCH

Sat 5, 9am – 5pm and Sun 6, 9 to 4
'In our view'

Judy Karikios and Robyn Hammond
Figurative and abstract landscapes in
acrylics and mixed media

Saturday 12

The History Room open 11.30 to 3pm

Saturday 19 and Sunday 20, 10am-5pm

"Paintings and Prints of the Pilbara"

After a visit to the Pilbara in 2008 Janet
Carter has been painting and etching the
inspiring and colourful landscape.

Opening Friday 18, 6pm to 8pm

As well as the art, come enjoy music by a
string quartet, Norman Carter.

All welcome.

Saturday 26 and Sunday 27, 10am – 4pm

BRANDLING PAINTERS

A vibrant exhibition of fine art by our
members...figure studies in exciting
colours ...includes nudes.....in both oil
paintings and drawing in various media..

Opening Friday 25, 6-9pm All welcome

MAY

Sat 30 April and Sun 1 May, 10am- 4pm

Sydney Art School - Exhibition of
Emerging Artists

Opening Friday 6 May 6pm to 9pm

Saturday 7 and Sunday 8, 10am to 4pm

Ross Manwaring, watercolour artist.

The latest of his many exhibitions
at galleries around capital cities, the
paintings are watercolour in his wet-on-
wet and sgraffito style, deserts, seascapes
and bushland, some small contemporary
drawings all gleaned from wide-ranging
travel all over Australia.

Opening Friday 6, 6 to 9 pm, all welcome

Sat 14, 10 am – 5pm and Sun 15, 10 - 4

"Photo World"

Photographer Stephen Curran exhibits
four photographic themes from around the
world. "Canvassing the World": photos on
canvas with a painting-like quality. "This
was the Modern World": the colorful decay
of "modern" industrial buildings, motels,
and neon signs, including Las Vegas and

Cockatoo Island. "Formerly of this World":
black & white photos from cemeteries in North
America and Australia. "Our Natural World":
landscapes and a planned African safari exhibit
from local photographer Cait Dugan.

Opening Friday 6 to 8 pm. All welcome.

Thurs 26, Fri 27, Sat 28 10.30 – 5 and Sunday 29 10.30 – 4.30

*"breathing the rhythms and patterns of the
land and sea"*

Denise Barry and Deanna Doyle join
together again with their new work
– gifts from the sea and tracks through
the landscape – a series of mixed media
paintings, drawings, art furniture and
sculptural surprises.

Opening Friday 20 6 - 9, all welcome

JUNE

Sat 4 and Sun 5 June, 10am to 4.30pm

"Untitled"

An exhibition of prints by Graduating and
Third Year Printmaking students from
Sydney Gallery School.

Opening Friday 3, 6 - 8pm. All welcome.

APRIL - National Trust Heritage Festival 2011

The theme this year is *Amazing Stories*
with a water-based theme.

The Trust is working to preserve the
stories and places, collections and sites
where they are told in order to tell our
nation's history.

A River of Stories, Trusts across Australia will
focus on the use and conservation of water
and Australia's relationship to this amazing
resource and plans a national conference in
Melbourne on this theme.

The festival will be celebrated with events
across metropolitan and regional NSW
from Saturday 2 April to Saturday 23
April with National Trust Day falling on
Sunday 17 April.

The Balmain Association has participated
in each festival, now in its 31st year and
will present its

Amazing Photographic Exhibition.

Water, water, surrounds Balmain but

not a drop to drink. The Amazing story
of the Balmain Water Reservoir and the
introduction of reticulated drinking water on
the peninsula. Other amazing stories include
the search for refrigeration by Thomas Mort
of Mort's dock and the Balmain Coal mine
under the Sydney Harbour.

Contact: 9818 4954, 9810 6885.

Newsletter help needed!

We need articles for our newsletter – maybe
you have an interesting neighbour you could
interview or have researched your house or
street.

Volunteers are also needed to help compile
and/or layout the newssheet. It is presented
to the printer in pdf format so there are a
number of applications that could be used.
If you can help contact June 98106885
speal@zip.com.au, Carolyn 9810 3185
callen@anmm.gov.au

Sydney Harbour National Park Draft Plan of Management

Included is a card announcing the
exhibition of the draft POM. Of particular
interest to our community is the proposal
for Goat Island. The Association submitted
to the draft Conservation Management Plan
for Goat Island last year. Our major concern
is the preservation of the layers of history
on the island as maritime sites around
the harbour are rapidly disappearing. We
consider that the preservation of Goat Island
as a working site, as well as recreational, is
necessary and could offer the opportunity
for wider community use. These concerns
have been totally ignored in this draft POM
and it is recommended that a large number
of post 1914 structures and buildings be
removed. Go to the website on the card to
download the POM, Goat Island is Precinct
11. If you would like further information
or are unable to download the document
contact June Lunsman 9810 6885 email
speal@zip.com.au or Carolyn Allen
callen@anmm.gov.au

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 6:00pm in the
Watch House, 179 Darling Street Balmain.
MEMBERS ARE INVITED TO ATTEND.
The History Room at the Watch House is
open every Saturday from 11:30-3
Postal: PO Box 57 Balmain 2041
**Material from this newsletter is not to be
reproduced without acknowledgement**

STOP PRESS

Rowntree Family Reunion

Sunday 3rd April

11.30am to 4pm

Balmain Town Hall.

Contact Bill Rowntree 0407 893 373