



the balmain
association
incorporated
news sheet

The Peninsula OBSERVER

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SCHOOL VISIT TO WATCH HOUSE

On Tuesday 5 April two groups of children from Father John Therry School visited the Balmain Watch House. The children had been studying the history of their local area and the Watch House and its story fitted well into their studies.

Each group of Year 3 children arrived with their teacher and a parent and were excited to go inside the building. The first stop was the Charge Room where they learnt about the history of the building and the surrounding area as well as the use of this room. There was much discussion about the different sorts of crimes people would have been charged with in those times.

Upstairs the children were fascinated to learn that the last Police Sergeant, Gray, lived there with his 12 children – The school children were left wondering where the family would have all slept!!

They also talked about dinner time for such a large family and the washing up – no dishwashers then!!

The highlight of the tour was the experience, like any common felon, of being locked into the

back cell with no light other than the small amount of daylight through the grill. The clang of the heavy iron door brought squeals of excitement from most, perhaps apprehension from some.



Children in Exercise Yard with Diana Garder, Kathleen Hamey and Louise McCarthy, teacher.

The photographic exhibition for Heritage Week was hanging and the children were interested to find their street on the maps and find out how it had been named.

It was an enjoyable morning and I'm sure that some of our young local schoolchildren learnt a little more about their suburb.

The tours were taken by Kathleen Hamey and Diana Garder.

By Di Garder

Planning Matters

Anka Site, Terry St Rozelle

The Balmain Association responded to Leichhardt Council's community consultations on this site by expressing concern that overdevelopment would lead to unacceptable levels of traffic in Terry St and Victoria Rd. The Association argued that the density of the proposed development should be reduced, and street frontages kept to a maximum height of three storeys.

Former Balmain Leagues Club (Tigers) site, Victoria Rd Rozelle

Before the elections, the Association wrote to State candidates deploring the use of Part 3 A of the Planning Act to facilitate excessive development on this site, in contravention of the Joint Regional Planning Panel's (JRPP) earlier decision. We sought candidates' views on the use of Part 3A. Liberal candidate James Falk responded that an O'Farrell government would scrap Part 3A and refer incomplete Part 3A determinations to a panel of independent experts. Supportive responses were also received from Independent candidates Jane Ward and Maire Sheehan

By Meg Wallace

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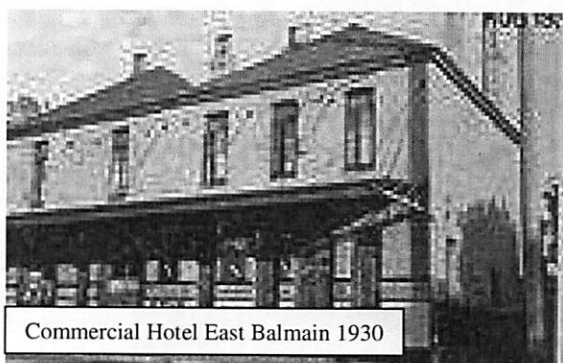
In the 1920's and 30's

Some things change, some things stay the same.

Unlike today, in the 1920's and 30's fruit grew in abundance in people's yards, including stone fruit such as peaches, nectarines, apricots and plums. Christmas apples, quinces, passionfruit vines, china pears and pomegranates formed a rich harvest not only for families but also school children who made a habit of pinching what they could by climbing over the back fence and leaving with shirts full of 'loot'.

Talking of animals, horses with carts roamed the streets of Balmain and made stops at horse troughs along the way in places such as the corner of Beattie and Palmer Sts. and the Rowntree St end of Macquarie Tce. The trough water flowed with the aid of a cistern. It was kept under a steel cover and rose and sank to maintain the water level. Hotel patrons nearby wouldn't be keen to drink from these troughs!

Goats were also a feature. Most houses had a pet goat. They wandered the streets feeding on grass verges. Once the trams arrived the goats left.



Commercial Hotel East Balmain 1930

Meat eaters could frequent Windred's butcher shop in Loyalty Square. Meat would hang outside adorned with ferns. Refrigeration was not available. There were lots more butcher shops in the backstreets – they are few and far between today.

Smoked fish was also on the menu. Artie Beaumont's Valley St home was the setting for smoking fish using slow-burning sawdust. Taylor was the favoured fish and the process took 2 to 3 days. Carrying a basket, Artie was to be seen hawking his wares to households and hotels. When Artie passed away his special smoking method died with him.

At the foot of Llewellyn St were the Balmain Ice works run by the Lucy family for some 40 years. Ice in blocks was available daily. Ice cream too was available in 2 or 3 gallon cans and kept in an ice chest with crushed ice and saltpeter to aid freezing. There were deliveries every 4 days from manufacturers such as Peters. Large numbers of children would gather round the delivery truck – an attraction that continues to this day. Milkshakes called soda drinks, made with ice-cream, became available in the area in 1936. No. 272 Darling St (now National Bank) and No. 297 (next to what is now the Commonwealth bank) were the two main 'Milkshake' shops. A favourite ice-cream was the choc-coated vanilla 'Eskimo pie' - quite expensive at three

pence. Fruit ice-creams with pure frozen fruit were a healthier popular alternative at one penny each

Recycling took place back then, and is still very much in fashion today. Scrap iron and bottles were collected by 'Bottlos'. Discarded fuel stoves and iron baths ended up as 'Bottlo's' booty. An empty beer bottle fetched a halfpenny. Back street shops traded a halfpenny worth of lollies for a bottle – it was illegal to pay by cash. Nicklo was a well-known and highly respected Bottlo who did his run on a weekday and on weekends sold ice-cream from a cart. A beer bottle would buy a halfpenny ice-cream. Though not an accomplished musician, his bugle call was well-recognised.

Who can resist toffee? In the 1930's a husband and wife team operated a mini showcase outside Balmain Demonstration School and sold toffee to the children before and after school. Dental hygiene must not have been an issue back then! The showcase was a converted old pram shaped into a barrow - necessity was the mother of invention then, and probably always will be.

Healthier pursuits included blackberry picking - a popular activity during the school holidays. Blackberries in season

were seen in a number of parks around Balmain. The favourite was in Palmer St, opposite Wortley St. Blackberry pies were popular. The blackberry bush exists to this day in the area – a weed or desired fruit?

Fishing from a borrowed boat or from a wharf, such as Thames St wharf, was also a past-time of this period. Squid was used for bait – though a popular identity 'Felix' insisted the bait was better for eating than any fish one might catch. That might well be true today in our polluted waterways. Blue swimmer crabs were caught using snares made from horses' tails and wire. A fairly expensive delicacy today, it is to be 'caught' mostly in fish shops or restaurants.

Ducks and chickens were commonplace in the backyards of Balmain. The poultry were fed scraps such as pollard mixed with bran.

A circus used to come to Balmain once a year and set up at a paddock between Darling and Montague Sts. The star attraction was a tight-rope walker, Blondie.

During the Great Depression the Sydney City Mission in Beattie St was the largest local soup kitchen. The Sydney City Mission still continues its community welfare services in the city.

By Penny Alexander and Christina Ritchie
Source: Wal Gourlie's 'Reminiscences'.

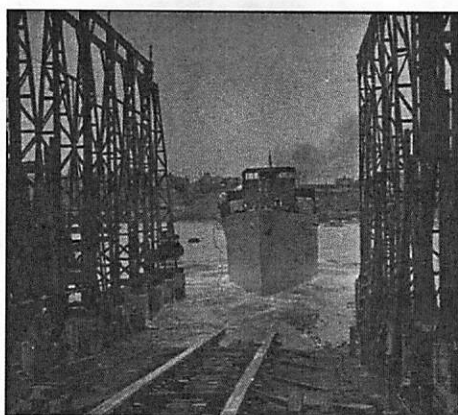
Mort's Dock listed on the NSW State Heritage Register



Thomas Mort, businessman, and one of the greatest contributors to Australia's industries

Balmain's Mort's Dock (now Mort Bay Park) is listed on the State Heritage Register – the highest form of heritage recognition and protection in NSW. Former Member for Balmain, Verity Firth joined former Planning Minister Tony Kelly and members of the Balmain Association for a special event at Mort Bay Park to officially declare Mort's Dock a State Heritage Site on 17 January 2011.

Opening in 1855, one year before Cockatoo Island, Mort's was the first dry dock of its size in Australia, the largest shipyard and engineering workshop, and the Colony's largest private enterprise. Mort's Dock is also the birthplace of modern industry in Australia, home to the trade union movement - the Ship Painters & Dockers union was established on site in 1872 - and instrumental in the creation of what was to become the Australian Labor Party in 1891. Interestingly, NSW Premier William McKell and former NSW Minister for Justice John Storey both completed apprenticeships on site.



Mort's Dock 1942

For all these reasons Balmain resident, and State Maritime Archaeologist, Sarah Ward, nominated the site for the State Heritage Register.

The listing is fantastic for the people of Balmain, and would make Nick Origlass

and Issy Wyner proud. It celebrates the social and cultural significance of the site, and will help to protect not only Mort Bay Park – because the Heritage Council of NSW will need to give approval for any works to be undertaken – but the vitality of Balmain's working harbour which continues to be active to this day.

The listed area is located within Mort Bay Park, but does not include the western section of the Park that Leichhardt Council calls "Site C" – i.e. the land between McKell, Bay and Short Streets, in Birchgrove.

Sarah Ward, Maritime Archaeologist Office of Environment & Heritage NSW Dept of Premier & Cabinet To view full listing go to: http://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au/07_subnav_04_2.cfm?itemid=5061224



Association members enjoying the sunshine at the official declaration

National Trust Heritage Festival - Amazing Stories

The Amazing Stories Exhibition was held during April as part of the National Trust Heritage Festival.

One of the water-based themes the Balmain Association presented was the Balmain Water Reservoir and the introduction of reticulated drinking water on the peninsula. A letter from Balmain, to the Editor of the Sydney Morning Herald 16th December 1884 stated "Counting from the 10th ultimo, 33 days, we have been entirely without water from Monday to Saturday two weeks, and from Sunday to Saturday one week, 13 days in all; during 17 days we have had it from 2 or 3 to 6 o'clock in the morning only, and only on three occasions has it been on during the day." Clearly something had to be done but the residents of Balmain had uncertain water supply until 1917 when the Reservoir was ready for use.

Another story with a water base, but this story was about what was under the water, and that was the Balmain Coal Mine that mined for the coal under the Sydney Harbour. The area is between Ball's Head, Ballast Point to Simmons Point.

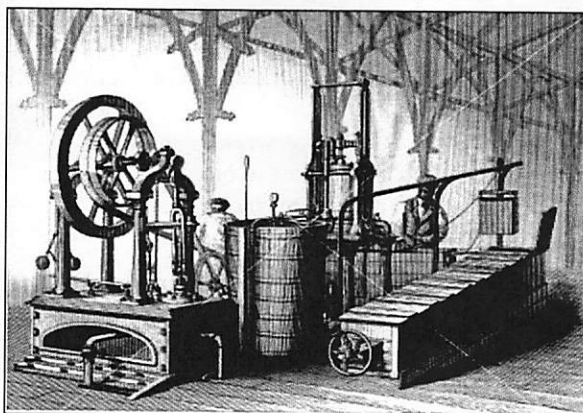
Amazing Story No 3. Thomas Mort was concerned about the large amount of wasted food in the Colony in the 1870s

and the large number of children who were dying from drinking sour milk. Mort acquired the services of Eugene Nicolle, a French engineer and in 1875 established the first freezing works in the Southern Hemisphere at Darling Harbour. The first successful shipment of frozen meat to England was in 1880 but Mort didn't live to see his vision of frozen exports as he had died in 1878.

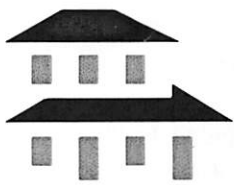
Other stories were, Fred Ward's escape from Cockatoo Island, Dawn Fraser and that stolen flag, the shoot-out at Mort's Dock, Mr Big Lennie McPherson and William Balmain's land grant of 550 acres sold for 5/- and a shipment of goods.

During the exhibition time, 53 year 3 students from Father John Terry Catholic School visited the Watch House, guided through the building by Diana Garder.

Kathleen Hamey.



Siebe and Harrison's ice-making machine 1862



What's on at the Watch House

www.balmainassociation.org.au

JUNE

**Saturday 11, 10am to 1pm and
Sunday 12 10am to 4.30**

"A Journey Together"

Louise Cole and Paul Hassey travelled around the world together almost 20 years ago. They recorded images of their journey together and have had their images from 35 mm slide restored and printed. Photographs are for sale.

Saturday 18 and Sunday 19, 10am to 3pm
"Birds"

A selection of colourful acrylic paintings by Vaughan Brennan depicting some of the birds found in the Sydney, Central Coast, Blue Mountains and Wollongong regions. Opening Friday 17th June opening night 6pm - 8pm. All Welcome.

**Saturday 25, 10am - 5pm and
Sunday 26 10am - 4 pm**

TO THE HART'S CONTENT

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

Drinks with the artists Sat 26, 1 - 3pm
JULY

Saturday 2 and Sunday 3, 10am to 5pm

The Wednesday Drawing & Painting Group

This group has been making art outdoors around Sydney for over 10 years. We are all keen amateur artists working 'en plein air' from 10am until about 12.30 at scenic venues around Sydney. We encourage you to join us.

Len Rieser 9810 5759 or

email: len_rieser@bigpond.com

Opening 6pm Friday 1 July All Welcome

Saturday 9 and Sunday 10 10am to 5pm

120 years of labor history and mementos.

The Labor Electoral Leagues were the birth of the Labor party. Balmain created the first in 1891. The Labor party is the oldest labour based party in the world. In Balmain radical thinkers and activists joined together to give Labourites a voice in parliament they could rely on. Over the years many well known activists were resident in Balmain. Long John Storey, Jack Lang, Billy Hughes, Bert Evatt, Tom Uren and Neville Wran were amongst them. The exhibition celebrates Balmain activism with images and material, some of which would not



have been publicly displayed up to now.

Opening Friday 8 July at 6.30pm

**Friday 15, Saturday 16 and Sunday 17
10am to 5pm and Thursday 21, Friday 22,
Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 10am to 5pm**
"Oil and Water"

An exhibition by Julie Simmons and Gloria Galvin, two award winning artists who paint in all media with works held in many private and council collections. Many of the works are the results of week long plein air painting trips they take to various parts of the country.

**Opening: Friday 15 6 - 8.30pm All welcome
Saturday 30 and Sunday 31, 10 to 3.30pm**
Fusion

ExtraTexture, a group of seven textile artists, all working in slightly different ways will display a broad cross section of contemporary textile art techniques. A feature of the exhibition will be two displays of 12 inch square works, the first challenge we set ourselves when we came together as a group. It typifies the diversity & yet uniformity of the work we are doing.

AUGUST

**Saturday 6, 9am to 6pm and Sunday 7
10am to 5pm**

'It's over to you'

Richard Sercombe is predominately a landscape/urbanscape/still life artist who works in a variety of mediums. This is his first solo exhibition, 50 pieces, with a large variety in both size and technique. He hopes you will go away feeling that it was time

well spent...and so it's over to you!

Opening Friday 5 from 6pm. All welcome.

Saturday 13 and Sunday 14, 10am - 4pm
"Engaging With Nature"

Three artists in one family present their recent works - drawing inspiration from the variability and constants of nature, Pat Crawford, Justin Crawford, Charlotte Crawford. Their paintings exhibit a sensitivity and perception of the natural world, utilising painted and drawn images of great trees, robust abstracts of the Australian landscape and that give a compositional importance to nature's patterns.

Opening Friday 12 6-8pm. All welcome.

Saturday 20 and Sunday 21, 10am to 5pm
Enigma Variations

An eclectic showing of recent paintings by Ryde artist Alan Holroyd will reflect the journey, travelling from realism to semi-abstract paintings that all have a story to tell. Holroyd has works in the permanent collection of the NSW Department of Education and Training has shown in numerous exhibitions including at Willandra Ryde, Brush Farm House Gallery Eastwood and the Charlotte Café in Birchgrove.

Opening Fri 19 July 6-9pm All welcome.

Saturday 27 and Sunday 28, 10am - 4pm
Floriage

An exhibition and sale of botanical paper collage artworks by Mr B (Brian Doyle) Featuring over fifty exhibits showcasing the versatility of paper and the beauty of flowers Love Mr B !! (Who doesn't !)

EAT HISTORY

Search your cupboards, attics, garages - find old pots and pans, other utensils, old recipes, cook books perhaps an apron and join us in History Week 3-24 September, 2011.

This year's theme is "EAT History" and hopefully will bring to the table the edible, appetising and tasty history of food. Who ate what and where in the past? How did we cook and where did our food come from?

The Balmain Association will present an exhibition of cooking and eating memorabilia and will be having a themed dinner in the Watch House (maybe only bread and water!) at a date to be confirmed. If you have any suggestions for these events and would like to be involved contact Kathleen 9818 4954, khamey@tpg.com.au or June 9810 6886, speal@zip.com.au (after 8th June)

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**