



# The Peninsula OBSERVER

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## The Dunny Book Launch

On Saturday the 8th of December 2012 well over a hundred people attended a special function at the Watch House. Kathleen Hamey, the local historian extraordinaire, said “We are now flushed with excitement with an excellently presented dunny book that has a cartoon cover by Bruce Petty. Thank you, Bruce”. She then outlined the background to the writing of the Balmain Association’s latest publication, *Getting to the Bottom of Balmain’s Dunnies*, commonly known as “the dunny book” (thoughtfully she did not to mention that Fergus Fricke, the author of the book, was now commonly referred to as the “dunnyman”) and invited Tanya Plibersek, the Federal Minister for Health and Member for Sydney, to launch the book.

In her address Tanya gave an Acknowledgement of Country citing the Gadigal people of the Eora nation as the traditional custodians of the land. She also acknowledged the attendance of a good sprinkling of Balmain’s “newer elders”, Tom Uren in particular, and commented on the unusually rich history of the suburb and the, perhaps associated, rich recording of that history of which the dunny book is the latest example.

Tanya pointed out that while it was particularly appropriate that she launched the book for a number of reasons; her father had been a plumber, she had done a special project in year 9 at school on flushing toilets and she had visited the Palace of Knossos in Minoan Crete where a highly sophisticated water supply, flushing toilets and sewerage system

existed thousands of years ago. She also added that she felt a little uncomfortable, as Health Minister, publicly quoting a relevant old saying that plumbers had saved more lives than doctors. While not all the extraordinary increase in life expectancy and decrease in infant mortality in the 20th century could be attributed to improved sanitation there was ample evidence that these improvements would not have been achieved if Sydney’s sewage had continued to be dumped into the harbour. Tanya commented about how good the photos in the book are and that it would make an ideal coffee table book ..... though the subject might be a little off-putting!

Fergus responded, thanking Tanya for adding yet another professional act to her extraordinarily busy and successful life as a mother, MP, Minister and TV personality. He also thanked Kathleen for her persistent encouragement without which the



*Fergus Fricke talking about the book: photo courtesy Lee Gemmell*

book would not have been written. Fergus gave some insight into his interest in dunnies and advised readers not to use the book for dunny paper, whatever their thoughts were about its value. He ended by inviting those attending the launch to talk about their dunny experiences and stories while partaking of a sumptuous afternoon tea, which everyone seemed to take up with gusto.

Contact Fergus [fergus.fricke@gmail.com](mailto:fergus.fricke@gmail.com) with your dunny experience ... another book maybe?



*Tanya Plibersek with Tom Uren: photo courtesy Lee Gemmell*

NB Fergus is to give two presentations about the “dunny book”, the first at Balmain Library on Wednesday 13 March RSVP 9367 9211 the second at Leichhardt Library on Wednesday 20 March RSVP 9367 9266. Both talks are scheduled for 6:00 pm to start at 6:30pm.

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# Join us in these upcoming events . . . . .

## ENJOY BALMAIN'S COLONIAL ARCHITECTURE with these 2 events

### • Launch of the Balmain Walks website

The Balmain Association and Red Ant Media are proud to present a Balmain Walks website. This website will stand alone but be linked to and accessible through our existing site.

Long-term Balmain resident John Morris, formerly of the National Trust with a distinguished record in relation to historic buildings, will launch the walk. Red Ant will demonstrate this first walk, which features Balmain buildings from 1840-1860.

The new website provides a free, printable walking guide, with maps, illustrations and information about twenty-one of Balmain's colonial buildings. Initially designed for computers and tablets, a smartphone version is also in production. Light refreshments will be available.

Time: 6pm

Date: Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2013

Place: Balmain Library

Bookings essential- email [localhistory@lmc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:localhistory@lmc.nsw.gov.au) or phone Amie Zar 93679211.

### • Guided tour of first walk

To celebrate the launch of the Balmain Association's new Balmain Walks website, we are offering a guided walking tour following route of the first walk, Humble to Handsome, Balmain Buildings 1840-1860.

The route is hilly and covers approximately 3km.

Please book early as numbers are limited.

DATE: Saturday 4 May 2013

MEET: Balmain East Wharf: ferry departs Circular Quay at 10.20am and 442 bus from Queen Victoria Building Stand B at 10.10am.

TIME: 10.45am for approximately one and a half hours.

COST: \$10 to be paid when booking, details will be given.

Bookings essential and further information, contact: Meg Wallace 0414 695 623, Kathleen Hamey 9818 4954,

June Lunsman [bookings@balmainassociation.org.au](mailto:bookings@balmainassociation.org.au).

## What we've been doing . . . . .

### Submissionss and involvement:

**Heliport:** The Association wrote to State ministers and Government authorities to express its opposition to the installation of a Heliport in the inner harbour. There are safety and noise concerns due to the proximity to a high-density residential environment and a busy waterway. Although the proposal is on hold to address a lack of proper process, concerns remain as the RMS is keen to progress this proposal. The proposed Casino for Barangaroo is a likely proponent for a heliport facility for clients. Frequent joy-flights up to 8 per hour are part of the recent proposal. Councils around the harbour have raised objections.

The Glebe Island Expo development will increase traffic congestion and create parking issues in the adjacent residential area. The Association has expressed its support for the upgrade and use of the Glebe Island Bridge for pedestrian and cycle access, with a link to the Balmain peninsula. Given the continuing population increase in our area and other parts of the inner-west, the Association believes this would be an attractive and practical addition to access routes to and from the CBD and help ease congestion on buses and arterial and local roads. Traffic management plans for the Expo need to be improved.

**Tigers Development:** The Association has made a submission opposing the Rozelle Village Pty Ltd development for the former Tigers Club site. The proposed development is far too large for the area and it has been shown that it would create major overshadowing and traffic gridlock. It would destroy the 'village' nature of our historical area. It is believed the RMS has traffic flow concerns with the proposal. Connections that this proposal appears to have with persons under investigation by ICAC warrant further investigation. Any development of the site should be returned to Council for assessment and determination. A decision is expected later this year.

Callan Park new sporting field: Members recently expressed their opposition to the installation of large permanent 18m lighting towers on a proposed new sporting field on a Balmain Rd site in Callan Park. The lights were requested for soccer training purposes on some evenings. This proposal was not part of the Masterplan deliberations and was approved with some haste despite strong opposition from Friends of Callan Park and other residents.

**The Post Office Clock:** Member Ross McKenzie has contacted Australia Post expressing concern about the non-repair of clock. AP has contacted the owner of the building with no response to date. On behalf of the committee a letter has been sent to Senator Conroy, Minister for Communications, expressing concern for residents' inconvenience and in particular the impact on heritage significance of not having a working clock. News Update:

**Illoura Reserve, East Balmain Plan of Management:** Council has resolved to proceed with the plan to upgrade Illoura reserve, as per the new plan by Bruce McKenzie. It will progressively plant 54 extra trees, move the basketball court and replace it with a garden, and upgrade paths and seating. It is important that Council improves maintenance and management of the park going forward. Roche – the proposed development plan for the Nutraceuticals site has been rejected and the appeal by the proponent to the Land and Environment court has been refused on the grounds of the potential destruction of viewlines, LEP limits being exceeded, and potential impact on adjacent residences. Bell's Store: Public submissions on the use of the building and its curtilage have now closed and Council is assessing the comments and suggestions. The site is already being used for Council-organised meetings, an art display and commercial use for a real estate auction.

Post Office Park, the Telstra exchange: Leichhardt Council has submitted a Memorandum of Understanding to Telstra and is still awaiting a response from Telstra. Council is hopeful that an agreement will be forthcoming within a few weeks.

**White Bay Cruise Ship terminal:** the terminal is expected to be ready for first use in April. Given the proximity to our high-density residential peninsula there is widespread concern over the potential noise and pollution impacts from generators and loud-speaker systems, supply trucks, passenger and staff traffic, and gridlock on local roads.

**Barangaroo:** The headland park is proceeding. Some fill now has to be sourced from outside the Barangaroo site because much of the soil intended for construction of the park from Barangaroo south is contaminated.

**Council LEP:** The new LEP has been on exhibition with a closing date of 28 Feb. The new NSW planning laws White Paper is expected to be released shortly. Concerns remain over the weakening of the local DCPs, and later the LEPs, in proposed planning legislation. Meanwhile it is important to include in the new LEP the controls that will more likely retain the historical 'village' character and liveability of our area.

**Thirty-minute free parking:** There has been support shown for the permanent introduction of 30min free parking in Darling St. More parking improvement measures and street maintenance may be needed to assist business in the longer term.

**Heritage-listed White Bay Power station:** The Urban Taskforce developer organisation is pushing for development of the power station site for private residential apartments. Some contamination still exists within the buildings and the site. The impressive turbine hall would appear to lend itself well to adaptive reuse as a museum or other public space.

Christina Ritchie

# Memories of a Harbourside Childhood: a ferry story

Betty Daniel, the ferryman's daughter gives a glimpse of 20th century Sydney life

## ON THE WATERFRONT

My story begins during the War years when I was born to Dorothy and Eric Nicholson, the middle of 3 girls. We lived on the shores of Sydney Harbour in the suburb of Birchgrove on Snail's Bay. I never did determine how it got its name; I never noticed any more snails in our garden than anywhere else! So it was that our backyard gave way to water and a bustling, thriving hub of ferries, launches, lighters and tugs. In the 1920's my father Eric and his brother Stan had founded what became the largest privately owned Harbour Transport business in Sydney. Their company had the contracts for both the Royal Australian Navy and US Navy so every type of craft was utilised in the war effort. The wharfage was extended well into the Bay to accommodate the extra naval boats that were moored at our premises. I do not remember much of these days - however the one thing I do recall is taking American chewing gum (we had cartons upon cartons) to school after the war ended - and being very popular! My mother was given enough silk stockings to last her 10 years!

Very early in our young years we children learned the many nations' flags on ships coming from the timber-growing countries - the US, Canada, Norway, Sweden and Denmark, and we would play a game as to who spotted the ship's flag first as it sailed up the harbour before mooring. The timber (already planked) was winched and offloaded onto Dad's punts, and then towed by the launches to the shoreline timber mills. From time to time logs would be unloaded - a tricky business. The logs would be dropped overboard from the ship and deckhands then dexterously straddled the floating logs and fastened them together. The ferries had to be diverted round this quarter mile of logs being towed slowly to the mills.

Interesting Story - a tortoiseshell cat jumped ship from a Canadian ship moored out front of us. He'd been cruelly treated and I guess decided to take his chances. He swam to shore and one of Dad's employees fished him out of the harbour. We had Canada for 12 years until he died of old age. Lucky for him; this would never have been allowed with the strict quarantine rules of today.

I have memories of fishing at the bottom of our garden, catching bream, and I also became a deft hand at stubbing the spike and skinning the Leatherjackets - lots of fish dinners! We girls were also given our own oyster shucking knives, and on a Saturday morning we would sit cross legged on the floor, shucking and enjoying a delicious oyster lunch. We went to school on the Balmain - City Ferry operated by Dad's company and to commemorate the company's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary all patrons were given free travel for the day. Because I was born on my uncle Stan's birthday, I felt very smug - always believing it was because it was for *my* birthday.

Years later a Passenger Terminal was built at Mort's Bay. This was where the vehicular ferry "Empress of Australia" departed for Tasmania. It left every Saturday night, so for something to do my boyfriend (who later became my husband) and I would walk across to the next street, go on board and often had a meal before it sailed.

Footnote - The Publication "The History of Nicholson Bros Harbour Transport Pty Ltd" is in the Mitchell Library NSW under the category: Pioneers of New South Wales.

Two of the 42 Ferries in the Fleet are exhibited in the Heritage Section at the Maritime Museum, Sydney.



One of the Nicholson Bros' "fleet", the MV "Promise" 1929 (note the Harbour bridge under construction)  
All 42 ferryboats had names beginning with "Pro-"; Betty's dad felt the names should be "forward-looking". (ed)



# What's on at the Watch House

[www.balmainassociation.org.au](http://www.balmainassociation.org.au)

## MARCH

**Saturday 9 and Sunday 10, 10 am to 4pm**  
*"Visual Feasts"*

The Balmain Peninsula Park Painters are holding their 9th annual exhibition. This year's theme will feature many of the local community's favourite scenes and subjects. This group of artists paints regularly outdoors in the Balmain area.

Opening Friday 8, 5:30 to 8pm. Please come and join the artists for nibbles and drinks or anytime over the weekend.

**Saturday 16 and Sunday 17, 10 am to 4pm**  
*The Super Show*

Paintings and photographs by Thomas Brown. The exhibition represents eighteen years of painting and photographing the Australian and New Zealand landscapes. Short for The Superannuation Show, the exhibition will mark my sixtieth birthday. Opening Friday 6-8.30pm. All welcome.

**Saturday 23, 9am to 6pm and Sunday 24, 10 am to 5pm**

*IT'S OVER TO YOU 2013*

This is Richard Sercombe's second solo exhibition at the Watch House.

Richard returns in 2013 with the same variety of subject and medium and size of work; with the addition of some semi abstract and abstract work. Over 50 works so come any time over the weekend and enjoy a glass of wine (or two!) and something to nibble.

Opening 6 pm Friday 22.

**Saturday 30 EASTER**

No exhibition - **The History Room will be open 11.30 to 3pm.**

## APRIL

**Saturdays 6, 13, 20 April 11.30 to 4pm**  
Heritage Festival Exhibition - *Community Milestones of Balmain Peninsula*

**Saturday 27 and Sunday 28**

**BRIDGE FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS FOUNDATION (BASF) Auction**

View from 6.00 pm Friday 26 and Saturday 27 from 10am, auction on Saturday.

Final details of auction and time will be available on BASF website see below and the Balmain Association's.

Among the items included at the auction will be works by Pixie O'Harris, Judy Cassab, Pro Hart, and Aboriginal artists from Yuendumu as well as asylum seekers.

BASF is the sister organisation of Balmain for Refugees providing support for asylum seekers in the community on Bridging Visas who receive no government benefits.

Further information on:

[asylumseekersfoundation.com](http://asylumseekersfoundation.com)

## MAY

**Saturday 4 and Sunday 5, 10 am to 4pm**  
*Floriage*

Brian Doyle - *Floriage* is a collection of botanical three dimensional artworks made from printed and hand painted papers.

Entirely cut and assembled by hand these artworks are influenced by the Japonism style and yet are also unique to the artist. Love Mr B !! ( Who doesn't ! )

**Saturday 11, 10 - 5 and Sunday 12, 10 am to 4pm**  
*Reflections*

In these recent works Norma Dunstan has used a variety of fabrics, hand dyed with natural vegetation then stitched together with silk threads, like footprints, to form soft sculpture etching the unfolding rhythms of nature. During this process she became aware that artworks were a 'landscapes of memories'.

**Saturday 18 and Sunday 19, 10 am to 4pm**  
*PerCeption*

Misim Song, Jinyoung Lee & Soyoun Kim  
An exhibition of painting, ceramics and photography by three female Korean artists

based in Sydney. The title signifies the vast sense of arts, not limited by specific mediums, ideas, cultures or genders. Opening Friday 17 6-8pm. All welcome <http://www.soyounfotoarts.com/perception.html>.

**Saturday 25 and Sunday 26, 10 am to 5pm**  
*A visual feast*

An exhibition from two Birchgrove artists, Rod Smith and Jane Johansson. Rod's collection of photography, installations and artworks entitled *Sea Dreams And This Mortal Coil* features surreal and emotional imagery based on Sydney's beautiful Pittwater region. Jane's photographic exhibition *I Heart* depicting the historical and modern beauty of the Balmain peninsula.

Opening Friday 24, 6-8.30pm. All welcome [www.janejohanssphotography.com](http://www.janejohanssphotography.com) <http://be.net/rodsmith>

**Saturday 1 and Sunday 2**  
Sophie Clague.

**Calling all members, in particular those founding members, we need your memories.**

**What was important to you then?**

**Why did you form such an association?**

**What were the early great achievements?**

**Be part of National Trust Heritage Festival:**

**Community Milestones**

**18 April - 31 May 2013**

The Balmain Association's exhibition *Community Milestones of Balmain Peninsula* will showcase the achievements of the Balmain community, in particular the Balmain Association, from April, 1800, when the 550 acres were granted to Dr William Balmain to April 2013, when the first e-Walk guide for the Balmain Peninsula will be launched on 30 April, see page 2.

**The exhibition at the Watch House**

**will be open Saturdays 6, 13, 20 April 11.30am to 4 pm.**

Your assistance and ideas will be greatly appreciated contact

Kathleen 9818 4954, [khomey@tpg.com.au](mailto:khomey@tpg.com.au)

or June 9810 6885, [speal@zip.com.au](mailto:speal@zip.com.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

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