



Our Committee for the Coming Year

It is a great pleasure to step into the role of President of the Balmain Association this year and I look forward to working with the Management Committee and members to maintain and improving amenity on the Peninsula and promote our heritage. We have a very committed group of people who give their time and skills to all aspects of running the Association and the Watch House. In receiving The Peninsula Observer members will be aware of the work in presenting exhibitions and responding to local development issues but there are many other people 'beaver' away in less visible jobs. Managing the exhibitors who bring in funds for restoration is a big job, as is that of treasurer and that of researching history enquiries. The Maintenance group have worked very hard generally and apart from the on-going jobs are currently doing a major restoration of the upper floor of the Watch House

so a very big contribution is being made. Resulting from this we have a group of dedicated members who have been reorganising the archives. We are fortunate that 2 of them are professional archivists. We also have members who put the garbage out each week and some that do gardening. It is a diverse group who come together to keep the association going and the Watch House in excellent condition. Thank you all. I look forward to working with this great team over the next year and to meeting members at events or at our meetings. Carolyn Allen,



Front: Jane Ward, Vice President; Carolyn Allen, President; Leo White, Ann Bastock; Diana Garder, Secretary.

Back: June Lunsmann; Ross Mackenzie; Kathleen Hamey; John Symonds, Treasurer; Penny Alexander.

Absent: Christina Ritchie, Helen Carter.

A special thanks to Rita Ellis who has been on the committee for many years and still attends meetings. We welcome new member Andrew West who has taken to archiving and history research with great enthusiasm.

Back to Balmain Day

The Back to Balmain day at Elkington Park on 27 October was a success for the Balmain Association and the event organisers. The weather was perfect for the Honeybrook Dancers to perform their dance routines, students from the Birchgrove Public School band entertained us with their music and the Leichhardt Celebrity Brass Band

delighted us with their medley of popular tunes. The Jazz Ensemble ended the event with laid back jazz for a summer's day. A large table with Tiger's Memorabilia was available for people to view and another table with photos presented by the local schools drew a large crowd. A sausage sizzle organised by the Congregational Church was also on the go for those who felt a bit peckish.

The Balmain Association had a stall with their selection of books and pamphlets on local historical issues which attracted a large number of people with sales of over \$400 for the day. A big vote of thanks to the Back to Balmain organising committee for a very successful 20 year anniversary of this celebration of Balmain.

Ross Mackenzie.



Ross Mackenzie and Kathleen Hamey chat to a visitor at the BA stall. Photo courtesy Michelle Hacking.

STOP PRESS

Illoura Reserve

On 2 October, 2013, the NSW Heritage Council resolved to recommend listing Illoura Reserve on the State Heritage Register (SHR). The recommendation was made after consideration of a report prepared by the Heritage Division which included submissions received from affected parties and members of the public including the Balmain Association. Once the Minister has considered the Heritage Council's recommendation and made a decision whether or not to list the item on the SHR, further notification will be provided. See more on p. 2. Information on the SHR is available on the Heritage Division website www.heritage.nsw.gov.au

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Planning Matters – Christina Ritchie

Illoura Reserve Heritage listing – the Bruce McKenzie-designed historic space at East Balmain has been recommended by the Heritage council for Heritage listing on the State Heritage Register. The Balmain Association made a submission in support of the listing. Submissions mentioned the very high esteem in which the community holds Illoura Reserve, and the fact it is the earliest Sydney Bush School foreshore park on Sydney Harbour. Illoura Reserve is located in a unique position facing the Sydney harbour bridge and across the water from the CBD and Barangaroo. The newly refurbished Bell's/Fenwick's store adjacent to the Northern end of the reserve is a public Heritage listed property. The Heritage listing of Illoura Reserve would appropriately complement this.

New NSW planning laws - On 30 October 2013, the NSW Government used its majority numbers to push its Planning Bills through the Lower House of Parliament. There have been some important changes made in the revised Bills but some major issues are still unresolved. Designated growth zones will allow fast-tracking of development without consultation. The Labor Party, Greens NSW and Independent MP Alex Greenwich voted against the Bills in the Lower House. To become law, the Bills must now go through the Upper House, where they are expected to be introduced and debated any time from mid-November. The Better Planning Network, (BPN), the large group of community organisations supported by the Association, believes there is a good chance that the Bills will not go through the Upper House because unlike the Lower House, the Government does not have a majority. BPN believes these bills would take away residents' rights to comment on proposed development in their neighbourhood, including new apartment blocks and commercial buildings.

Glebe Island Bridge – The cost-benefit analysis report organised by Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) has been presented to the NSW Government for consideration of the future of the Glebe Island Bridge. RMS had previously expressed its preference for demolition of the bridge to allow easier access for the larger boats moored in Rozelle Bay. Members of the Balmain Association Committee, among other community organisations, city of Sydney

Council and Leichhardt Council made submissions in support of the retention of the bridge for pedestrian and cycle access and as a Heritage item. This support was evident during the Bays Precinct consultation deliberations. Supporters of retention believe the report to the NSW Government fails to acknowledge the long-term benefit of adaptable re-use of the bridge for commuters, tourists and others by connecting the CBD with Glebe Island, White Bay and the inner-west and ignores its value as an historical item of Heritage significance.

Telstra Exchange, Post Office Park – The Balmain Association continues to support the push to demolish the front of the Telstra Balmain Telephone Exchange to establish a public open space with viewlines to the historic Post Office building. Fergus Fricke has informed the Association that Lyn Gerathy, LMC's Property Manager, has had talks with Telstra's Property Manager to settle purchase issues such as Council allowing Telstra's underground cables to remain and Council not being permitted to build any structures on the site should the purchase go ahead. These issues significantly affect the valuation of the site. Lyn Gerathy has undertaken to present the valuation to the next LMC "Council as a Whole" meeting in December.

Public Access to the White Bay foreshore – Agreement has been reached between the CEO of Sydney Ports and the Mayor of Leichhardt Council to pursue the much-called-for establishment of a pedestrian/cycle access point to the White Bay foreshore. The likely location is at Booth St, Balmain. The Association has expressed support for public access to the foreshore. This access would add to other cycle and pedestrian access routes, including an adapted re-opened historic Glebe Island Bridge, for residents and visitors to our historic conservation area. Sydney Ports has decided to change pedestrian access routes around the Cruise Ship Terminal, available on non-ship days. The changes are scheduled to take place at the end of the year. Residents are hopeful the changes will improve access to the foreshore. It is hoped that the open area at the back of the foreshore adjacent to Booth St and Birrung Park will be made available in the near future for public recreation.

Maybanke, Wharf Road DA approval – Members of The Association continue

to discuss the implications of the approval of the redevelopment of the Heritage 'Maybanke' property in Wharf Road, Birchgrove.

Barangaroo – It is disappointing, though not surprising, that the large James Packer Casino development for the public space area on the Barangaroo foreshore has been given the go-ahead by the Premier. The Association supported the case for less built development and provision of more public open space at Barangaroo. The Casino development proposal has been widely criticised.

Rozelle Village development – The RMS report on the latest Rozelle Village P/L development proposal for the former Tigers Club site has still not been released. The Association committee opposes the oversized, inappropriate development that is still being assessed under the infamous Part 3A provisions.

Thank you Betty Daniel

We know that Norman Self built No 21 Wharf Rd for his mother and himself and No 23 for Maybanke Anderson before 1875 as seen in historical photos. Now the mystery of its transformation that we see today has been solved.

Betty Daniel in response to the mention of 23 Wharf Rd in last issue sent the following

You may like to know that Historical Building Maybank was built by my father Eric Nicholson.

It was completed in 1938. He had it built so that it was ready for him and his bride (my mother) to move into on return from their honeymoon on 2 July. The original building on the site was called Maybank and dad retained its original Name.

We grew up and lived in the top flat at 23 Wharf Road. My father needed to oversee and have an uninterrupted view of his Harbour Transport Business Nicholson Bros, with extended water frontage to No 23 and beyond (later purchasing Wyoming (No.25). The other 3 flats at No 23 were rented to the Drivers and Deckhands who worked for Nicholson Bros.

We 3 girls were raised at No. 23. In 1948 our family moved into 19 Wharf Road (the family home since 1920) where my grandmother Sarah Nicholson and daughter Ellen lived until her death and my grandmother was admitted to a Nursing Home.

Snails Bay Sabot Sailing Club in the 1960s - Asa Wahlquist

On Sunday morning, February 4, 1962, eight small sailing boats gathered for the first race of Snails Bay Sabot Sailing Club. In the 1960s Snails Bay was lined with boat-related industries, from the Caltex terminal on Ballast Point, the southern arm of the Bay, to Morrison and Sinclair on the tip of Long Nose Point on the northern side.

In between were several lighterages with their barges, a number of small boatsheds where craftsmen boat builders worked and Nicholson Brothers Ferries where the big old ferry, the Sydney Queen, was moored.

The Club was the initiative of one of the Brothers, Stan Nicholson. He not only donated five sabots so the underprivileged children of Balmain could enjoy their birthright to learn to sail, but he also very generously allowed the club to use the boatshed behind his house at 103 Louisa Road.



Rigging the boats at 103 Louisa Rd

The Club that day was very much a local and a family affair. The Club hero and vice Commodore was “wee” Georgie Robinson. He built at least three of the sabots that started in that first race: his son, Ron, was the starter; and his grandson, Alan Robinson, and granddaughter, Rhonda Magner, sailed that first race.

The Sabot is a small boat, just 2.4 metres long and 1.14 metres wide. Back then they were simply constructed out of plywood, and most were made by the families who

sailed them. They had one sail and two crew, a skipper and a sheethand. In later years children aged over 12 years could sail one up. They were open boats with no buoyancy: once they capsized they could only be righted with external help. They were a very good preparation for the 12, 16 and 18 foot boats many boys would go on to sail. They were also reminiscent of the wide-bellied six footers that Wee Georgie and Balmain identities like Charles “Chook” Fraser sailed in Snails Bay at the beginning of last century.

Word spread quickly, and when the second season opened there were 25 boats and 150 members. One



Brit with Wee Georgie Robinson second from right, standing.

terms, “in fact the rough and ready Sydney Harbour sailors did embody many of the characteristics which were so readily ascribed to their country cousins”.

He listed their courage and daring, “their reckless have-a-go spirit, their rough language, their intense personal loyalty and mateship” and their working class origins, and pointed out many crews came from the same families.

By the 1870s the open boat races were at least as popular as horse racing in Sydney, and perhaps the most popular regatta of all was Balmain Regatta, held every year until the outbreak of World War 1 in 1914.

Wee Georgie’s Britannia was one of the most famous 18 footers on Sydney Harbour in the period between the wars. Stannard reports Britannia carried 2,800 square feet of sail, carrying a “mainsail, balloon jib, spinnaker, watersail, ringtail, topsail and God alone knows what else.” The young Sabot sailors were in awe of the photographs of Britannia in full sail, and of the stories he told us about the six footers.

When Britannia’s racing days were over, wee Georgie fitted her with a half cabin and inboard motor. We knew her as Brit our starting boat. Britannia was purchased by the National Maritime Museum in 1986, and restored by Arthur Griffith, whose son Alan was a club champion in his Sabot Viking.

of them, Atom, had been built by 13-year-old Nick Masterman, who went on to become an Australian representative sailor and renowned builder of wooden boats. Another new member was Rob Brown, who would crew Australia II when it won the America’s Cup in 1983.

Bruce Stannard argues the men who sailed the old open boats, the 18 footers like Wee Georgie’s Britannia, could be described as bluewater bushmen. He wrote that, while it might sound like a contradiction in

Stan Nicholson, who was also the Commodore, named all his donated boats after wild flowers: Waratah, Wattle, Rock Lily, Boronia and Native Rose. His brother, Eric, a vice commodore, together with G. Carlson also donated a boat. It was given a name, Propellor, in keeping with the Nicholson Brothers' habit of giving all their boats names with the prefix 'Pro'. Propellor has been restored and is now on display at the Wharf 7 Maritime Heritage Centre at Darling Harbour.

In the early days the Club operated in the shadow of the 18 footers. Races started at 9.30 on a Sunday morning, so they would finish in time for everyone to board the ferries and go and watch, or participate in, the Sunday afternoon 18s race. This had its advantages.

Every Sunday morning the bookies for the 18s would gather at the Snails Bay wharf, waiting for the ferry to take them to the afternoon race. They took an interest in the young sailors.

A report in The Link, dated March 14, 1962 stated: *"The Club would like to express its appreciation for the very fine gesture made by the Birchgrove Sea Wall supporters last Sunday by donating to the Club the sum of 10 guineas. Thanks Boys."*

A guinea was one pound one shilling, and 10 guineas was a handsome sum to donate in 1962.

That report in the Link also reported another notable event: *"To the two girls, Misses J. Gillings and K. Middleton, congratulations on your first effort in the Native Rose. It won't be long before you are winning races."*

Sailing in 12s, 16s and 18s was in those days, before equal rights, a male-only affair. But Sabots enabled girls who could previously only come on board for ladies day races, to get their hands on the tillers. There was no shortage of girls keen to sail, and many did so with distinction.

Ardyn, known as Poss, Masterman went on to become Club Champion in 1966/67. The following year Vicki Gilling was Club Champion in Surprise.

Shipbuilding and the engineering trades were, for more than one hundred years, "the mainstay and mainspring of Balmain's industrial life," according to P.R. Stephensen. In 1965 he wrote:

"The people of Balmain have a strong feeling of local pride, with traditions of toughness, cheerfulness, sportsmanship, and self-dependence, due to their peninsularity, which sets them a little apart from Sydney City; but their feeling of local pride is enhanced by the fact that Balmain has among its residents a larger proportion of workmen skilled in shipbuilding, engineering, stevedoring, and waterfront trades generally, than could be found in any other suburb of the Harbour frontages."

But within a decade, the lifetime of the Club, Balmain changed. The waterfront industry that was the lifeblood of the suburb would shut down; the families that had lived for generations in the same streets would begin to move out and go in different directions, under the pressure of gentrification.

Max Solling and Peter Reynolds, in *"Leichhardt, on the Margins of the City"* wrote that between 1966 and 1971: *"The proportion of blue-collar workers in the labour forces in Sydney's inner suburbs fell by up to 15 per cent, compared with 5 per cent across the whole metropolis. At the same time the percentage of professional and upper white collar workers in the Sydney population rose 0.5%."*

In Balmain it increased 6 per cent.

Stan Nicholson died in 1969 and the Club was evicted from his boatshed.



Janet and Asa Wahlquist in Cygnet, in Snails Bay

Morrison and Sinclair ceased work in 1970, and their site is now a park. By then Tay Lighterage and Clyde Lighterage had gone. Stannard Bros had taken over Nicholson Bros in January 1968.

The old boatsheds, industrial sites, the vacant lots and houses of Louisa Road, no matter how shabby, were skyrocketing in value and the fabric of the old suburb had changed.

After several years of temporary use of Dodds' boatshed on Louisa Road, the Snails Bay Sabot Sailing Club was welcomed on the other side of Iron Cove to become Drummoyne Junior Sailing Club in 1973.

Hundreds of children sailed at Snails Bay Sabot Sailing Club in the decade of its existence. Some went on to greater sailing glory, others never put a foot in a boat again after their sixteenth birthday. All were privileged to share in the great sailing tradition of Balmain.

References:

- Bruce Stannard, *Bluewater Bushmen*, The Heritage Press, 1981
- P.R. Stephensen, *The history and description of Sydney Harbour*, Rigby Limited, 1966
- Max Solling and Peter Reynolds, *Leichhardt, on the Margins of the City*, Allen & Unwin, 1997.

Celebrating the Bicentenary of the Birth of Ludwig Leichhardt

The Leichhardt Town Hall played host to a series of events:

• **Looking for Leichhardt Exhibition**

In 2012-13 artist Bill Gannon followed Ludwig Leichhardt's 1844-45 trail from South East Queensland, north to the Mitchell River at the base of Cape York, and then across to the Northern Territory to the top of the Top End at the Coburg Peninsula. His accounts of his journey were displayed in the Leichhardt Town Hall in October together with works by artists Jason Benjamin, Sarah Larsen and Maljah Cathy Snow. The Sydney based artist and Archibald finalist Jason Benjamin accompanied Bill on the Kakadu to Coburg Peninsula leg of the journey, while Sarah Larsen is a Central Queensland artist who joined him on two sections of the trail, and Maljah Cathy Snow is a Gkuthaan woman from the Gulf of Carpentaria.



BA members June Lunsman and Carolyn Allen painting by Sarah Larsen in the background.

There was also an exhibition of works by local school students.

The exhibition was opened by Hans-Dieter Steinbach, German Consul General who recalled having read *Voss*, a fictionalised account of the life Ludwig Leichhardt and his 1848 trek by Patrick White, but not having been taught about him at school. Ludwig was born into a farming family at Trebatsch, Germany (formerly Prussia) on 23rd October, 1813, the sixth of eight children. His history is taught Trebatsch which is 50km east of Berlin and has a museum dedicated to Leichhardt. In October 2001, Leichhardt Council held a reception for the visit of the great-grandnephew of Ludwig Leichhardt also named Ludwig who showed photographs of the museum.

• **Meet The Artists** - an artist led tour of the *Looking For Leichhardt* art exhibition.

• **In the Steps of Leichhardt** - a talk by enthusiast, Jenny Pattison, on Ludwig Leichhardt's extensive botanic



Mayor Darcy Byrne, artist Bill Gannon and author Dr Darrell Lewis at the birthday party. Photo courtesy Leichhardt Council.

knowledge, his plant collecting in Sydney and NSW, and his connections to the Royal Botanic Gardens.

• **Leichhardt's Birthday** - a celebration of his 200th Birthday, with a talk by Dr Darrell Lewis, and some classical German music by the Cacilien Choir. Dr Darrell Lewis' book, *Where is Dr Leichhardt?* was released earlier this year and posits all the various theories about the disappearance of Leichhardt in 1848, "the greatest mystery in Australian history - the disappearance of the Leichhardt expedition somewhere in the vastness of the inland".

• **Artist Talk by Bill Gannon** - Who spoke about his inspiration and insights on the Leichhardt expedition, and about the interesting mix of characters that travelled together on the 1844-45 expedition.

There were many other celebrations including:

• **Queensland Essay and Drawing Competitions**

Schools in Queensland along the track that Leichhardt travelled held an essay and drawing competition for students in the current electorates of Groom, Flynn, Dawson, Kennedy, Maranoa, Capricornia and Leichhardt. The competitions were judged by Senator Sue Boyce, Bill Gannon and Rod Schlenker, a surveyor from Rockhampton, who also has a deep fascination with all things Leichhardt.

• **Australia and Germany released joint stamp issue**

Australia and Germany commemorated the 200th birth anniversary of German explorer and naturalist Ludwig Leichhardt (1813-c1848) with the release of a joint stamp issue.

Australia Post Philatelic Manager Michael Zsolt said, "*Leichhardt's legacy includes his contribution to the natural sciences in Australia. His mysterious disappearance in the Australian outback during one of his expeditions ensures he lives on in our nation's mythology.*"

"We worked closely with Deutsche Post on this joint stamp issue which highlights the important work and legacy of explorer Ludwig Leichhardt."



The stamp features a portrait of Ludwig Leichhardt from around 1846, which is held by the National Library of Australia and was designed by Melbourne-based designer Gary Domoney.

It is available at participating Australia Post retail outlets, via mail order on 1800 331 794 and online at auspost.com.au/stamps while stocks last.

June Lunsman

Sources:

From Jimba to Dried Beef Creek. Editor Judith Bell;

The Peninsula Observer; December 2001 and August 2004;

Leichhardt Council;

Bronwyn Touhy, Leichhardt Council;

Senator Sue Boyce;

Australia Post.



What's on at the Watch House

www.balmainassociation.org.au

FEBRUARY

Saturday 1, Sunday 2 and Saturday 8,
Sunday 9, 10am to 5pm

Emergence

Claudia Greathead's inspiration for her paintings and drawings evolves from the psychology of "ideal self" as portrayed via social media. She aims to elevate the less attractive, the outcast, the loser through her paintings and drawings. Lee-Anne Plasto's vibrant, large abstract canvases evoke energy and movement. The fluidity of the medium enhances the ethereal qualities of the works and the resin finish seduces the viewer ever closer to engage with the work in a tactile manner. www.leeanneplastoart.wordpress.com.

Opening Friday 31 January 6-8 all welcome.

Saturday 15, Sunday 16, 11am to 5pm
Inter-medium

A group exhibition of Local and International artists exploring sculpture, painting and photography.

Opening Friday 14, 6-9pm All welcome
Saturday 22, Sunday 23, 11am to 4pm
Clark's Legacy.

Legacy is an exhibition of paintings by the late Clark Walton (1949-2011) Clark was a well known Sydney architect whose passion for painting began when he was at school and continued throughout his life. His large colourful oil on canvas works were a demonstration of his passion for painting. A scholarship in Clark's name has been established and proceeds from the sale of paintings will go to support the work of the Pinnacle Foundation.

Opening Friday, 21, 6.00pm to 8.00pm. All welcome but an RSVP by Friday 14 would assist with catering Anne Grover <anne.grover@hotmail.com>

MARCH

Saturday 1, Sunday 2, 10am to 4.30pm
3+1ART

Exhibiting over 50 artworks, suitable for your home or office.

Garry McDougall's modern and creative work both contrasts and compliments the works of Helen Ross, Christine de Stoop and Mollie Pegler.

Ross's love of bright colours and loose brushwork, de Stoop's traditional fine art and Pegler's beautiful mosaic compositions for framed art and designs on pedestal and treasure box collectables will also provide much to see and enjoy.

Opening Friday 28 February 6-8.30pm
We would be delighted if you would join us on opening night.

Saturday 8, Sunday 9, 10am to 4pm
Postcards from Balmain

The 10th Annual exhibition of the Balmain Peninsula Park Painters. This features many of the local community's favourite scenes and subjects, as well as a variety of other works, including overseas, still life and animals. As this celebrates a decade of exhibitions, a very special opening night is being planned.

This group of artists continues to paint regularly outdoors in the Balmain area. They have been very successful in their long history of annual public exhibitions at the Watch House and have regularly exhibited and sold their works at local community art shows in Sydney. **Opening** Friday 7, 5.30 to 8pm. Please come and join us for nibbles and drinks on the opening night or anytime over the weekend.

Join us for some Christmas cheer 2pm Saturday, 14 December

Peruse our publications for Christmas gifts, more than 15 on local history to choose from.

Enquire about local house history research.

There will photos of the Snail's Bay Sabot Sailing Club, 1960s, Asa Wahlquist by public demand, the photos by Sam Hood and photos from our archives. If there is something that you would particularly like to see please contact Kathleen, 9818 4954 or June 9810 6885 as soon as possible.

The Watch House will be open 11.30pm to 3 pm on Saturdays 7, 14, 21, 28 December and 4, 11, 18, 25 January, 2014



The National Trust Heritage Festival 12 April – 26 May 2014 -Journeys

Australians love to travel and this year our theme 'Journeys', is a celebration of our passage, both physical and cultural from our various points of origin to the Australia of today

Travel and Journeys through time, countries, vehicles, Walk About, migration and immigration, cultural studies.

Journeys can be interpreted in all different ways.

We will have an exhibition from 19 April to 3, 4 May and NEED your participation - your best travel stories and photos, your arrival in Balmain

AND suggestions for a special cruise event!!! Please.

<http://www.nationaltrust.org.au/nsw/Heritage-Festival>

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**