



the peninsula Observer

newsletter of Balmain Association

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FROM the ARCHIVES

BY HELEN CARTER

After 10 years, sorting, culling, archiving and cataloguing material at the Watch House it is now time to share some of the secrets housed in the two upstairs bedrooms!

Last year, the Balmain Association received a small album with 21 black and white photographs from Mrs Raymer Wild, granddaughter of Reginald Thornton, Mayor of Balmain from 1920 to 1921, 1926 to 1928 and 1932 and Alderman from 1911 1941.

The images from 1921 to 1924 are not the usual portraits or family groups but instead houses in Broadstairs Street, Balmain. The name of this street changed to Colgate Avenue in 1951 even though the Colgate Palmolive

factory was founded circa 1924 at the bottom of the street.

What makes these images (10 x 15 centimetres) interesting is that they give us a snapshot into the subdivision and development of that street 100 years ago. More importantly, three of the images are probably the last ones taken of one of Balmain's oldest houses Waterview House also known as 'Bryn-y-more', built circa 1835, before it was demolished by Alfred Henry Bogle, house and land agent soon after he purchased it in September 1921 to make way for a planned subdivision. Waterview House was then on a block of land bounded by Duncan, Caroline, Broadstairs and Jagger Lane. Bogle's subdivision resulted in eight lots (see Z/SP/B2/162 State Library of NSW).

Alderman Bogle's residential development went ahead as his brother Andrew described in an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* that 'up-to-date cottage houses are now being erected on the historic spot'. Examples of the cottages built by Bogle are found in the album, however, it is the following words on the back of one of the photographs: 'New brick cottage



**Above and below:
Bryn-y-more (Waterview
House) photographed in 1921**



on Corner of Broadstairs Street and Caroline Street, Balmain 6/4/1923 for sale by Alfred Bogle' that confirms the commencement of his commercial activities.

While most of the other photographs have some handwritten house names and dates I was mystified as to why there are so many views of so few houses over such a short period.

These include such properties as Roslyn, photographed in 1921 and

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Built Environment Awards

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Marrickville Medal for Conservation

Submissions now open!



INNER WEST

Entries close Sunday 7 March 2021
innerwest.nsw.gov.au/Built

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1922; Ashgrove 1921 and 1922; Ashgrove Tennis Courts 1922 and 1924; Avondale, showing entrance to the Ashgrove Tennis Courts 1924 and Balmain 1924 – premises opposite Adolphus Street – shop demolished by Bogle on the corner of Broadstairs and Darling Streets.

A search of the National Library's digitised newspaper source Trove came up with an article entitled 'The Civic Example' in the Construction and Local Government Journal and it had used most of these images to illustrate how remodelling of these houses in Balmain that had been allowed to fall into disrepair could avoid 'a state approaching slumdom'. The initiative of Mr Bogle to build the tennis courts on the site of three demolished cottages were seen as important 'to provide exercise'.

Today, all the cottages erected

by Bogle in Colgate Avenue on the Waterview House block have still survived, however, Ashgrove circa 1840 on the corner of Colgate and Darling Streets has been demolished and the Ashgrove Courts have also gone to development. Let us all be vigilant to ensure that present day renewal initiatives do not destroy any more of our early constructed houses and buildings.

Both Mr Thornton and Mr Bogle were Aldermen when Waterview House was demolished and eight updated cottages were built on its site. Strong opposition is always exhibited by the Balmain Association and members of the community if our built heritage is threatened and this album is a reminder that it is so important that those seeking a return on their investment by overdevelopment.



Ashgrove Tennis Courts 1924

Australian Heritage Festival – Our Heritage for the Future April 18 to May 19, 2021

words by Helen Carter

The Balmain Association has registered for this year's Australian Heritage Festival and members of the Archive Committee are putting together an amazing exhibition.

Our focus for Balmain's history for the future is digitising our collection making it easily accessible to all.

Starting with our cassette tapes we have selected four Balmain personalities who were recorded as part of our oral history project in the early 1990s. Their voices and memories were transferred to a different format and with projected images they now talk to you from the charge room and the cells of the Watch House.

Come and listen to our podcasts. Those selected are:

Joan Parsons and Lorna May Faulkner who were born and lived at 26 Grove Street, Birchgrove (great granddaughters of John Degotardi, printer and photographer).

Laurie Short, AO, OBE, Secretary of the Federated Ironworkers, and a leading figure in the Australian Labor Party (originally from Rockhampton Queensland but active in the Labor Party during the 1940s in Balmain).

Basil Catterns MC, born 1917 in Balmain, from a maritime family, soldier, amateur yachtsman and member of the Sydney Maritime Museum.

Mary (Molly) Sussmilch (nee Wilton), born in College Street, Balmain in 1910. Mary's father was a painter and docker at Morts Dock and she worked at Stevens Knitting Mills in Darling Street (opposite College Street).

These oral histories tell us a lot about their daily lives and the character of Balmain during a time of depression, the war and trade unionism. Importantly, it is these people who were eyewitnesses to great historical events and whose stories can reveal a completely different perspective from those in histories of published by academics.

by Beverley Malone

Balmain Rowing Club

The Balmain Rowing Club has operated continuously since 1882 from its original timber shed. The shed, which is perched over the waters of Iron Cove, has defied all odds having survived for nearly 140 years. Generations of devoted members and supporters have worked to preserve this now historical Australian structure in the heart of Balmain.

The Balmain Rowing Club was established on 7 June 1882 at a meeting held at Dicks Hotel in Balmain.

The chairman of that meeting, Mr S.H. Hyam, declared that he had long been of the opinion that it was absolutely necessary that the suburb of Balmain should have its own rowing club.

Things moved quickly after that. A site at White Horse Point was deemed 'an exceedingly pretty one and very suitable for the purpose'. An existing boat builder's shed on the site was duly purchased and presented to the fledgling club by Mr John Booth.

Architect, Harold Brees designed a new building, which was then built by a Mr Pritchard. The new building measured about 23 metres by 9 metres and was built of wood, with a corrugated iron roof, dressing rooms, bathrooms and a large club room.

The official opening on the 25 November 1882 was, by all accounts, quite a grand affair.

The new clubhouse was festooned with flags of all colours and designs, the Albion and Coldstream bands provided music, the steamer Quandong turned up from Sydney, packed with visitors. Representatives from sister clubs arrived by water in skiffs and gigs. A

flotilla of white-sailed boats passed slowly round White Horse Point, which was packed with spectators.

A bottle of champagne was broken to christen the establishment. The club colours of yellow and black were hoisted over the clubhouse to applause and cheers and Balmain Rowing Club was officially opened. The mayor of Balmain, Mr W.A. Hutchinson, in his speech wished every success to the club.

The club very quickly thrived and began to produce many champion oarsmen and crews, successfully competing at state and interstate level by the 1890s. It was with great pride that in 1912, three Balmain Rowing Club members – Stuart Amess, Harry Hauenstein and Thomas Parker - were chosen to represent Australia in the Stockholm Olympic Games. It was the first time Australia had entered a rowing VIII in the Games.

During World War I (1914-1918), numbers were depleted as 70 per cent of the club's members joined the forces. An Honour Board in the clubhouse commemorates our oarsmen who served and remembers our 11 who made the supreme sacrifice. For a short time during World War II, rowing was restricted in the club while the boatshed was commandeered by the Army. The club membership took a while to rebuild after WWII but it did and continues to thrive to this day.

The Balmain Women's Rowing Club occupied a site at Elliott Street which was destroyed by fire. The women were then allocated a small section of the boatshed. By 1980 the two



**Winners from Balmain of a maiden fours race.
Poet, Banjo Paterson in the middle.**

clubs
had

merged and since then Balmain Rowing Club's female members have had an active role in the club and contribute strongly to its success, both on and off the water.

In 2019 Balmain Rowing Club undertook major building works and renovations urgently needed to save Balmain's heritage boatshed. The work was funded by generous donations,

bequests, fundraising and grants.

Balmain Rowing Club is proud of its history and place in the Balmain community. Visit our history and archives section on our website, www.balmainrowingclub.com/archives to learn more about our pioneers and rich history.

Beverley Malone is a member of the Balmain Rowing Club and is the club archivist.

Built Environment Awards

Submissions are now open for the 2021 Inner West Built Environment Awards (Marrickville Medal).

The conservation award, which has been awarded annually since 1995, is open to all building works within the Inner West local government area, large or small, public or private, completed in the past three years and having positive conservation outcomes and includes any of the following approaches - preservation, restoration, reconstruction, adaptation and interpretation. Works can be large or small, private or public and the judges are looking for thoughtful and innovative outcomes.

The Marrickville Medal of Conservation celebrates built conservation works that contribute to the understanding and preservation of the inner west's rich cultural and architectural heritage.

For further information and to submit, please go to the Built Environment Awards webpage. Submissions close on Sunday, March 7.

Quiz answers

(from page 7)

1. 1886
2. Curtis Road & College Street
3. Grayndler
4. Admiralty House
5. Oliver
6. Cat & Fiddle Hotel (1930)
7. Lion, kangaroo and sheep
8. Snails Bay
9. Mandarin
10. Verity Firth (2007 to 2011) and Sandra Nori (1991 to 2007)
11. Bradfield
12. Dr Herb Evatt
13. South
14. John Whitton
15. D. Warwick Castle Hotel
16. Illoura Reserve
17. R. M. Brownlee Reserve
18. St Andrews Congregational Church
19. Ashfield, Leichhardt and Marrickville
20. True

A Brief History of Balmain Hospital

From the earliest days of English Colonial settlement Balmain has been the home to a formidable chain of political activists lobbying through the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries to make Balmain a desirable place to live. A strong sense of Community spirit has fuelled the story.

The aim of the book, *A Brief History of Balmain Hospital*, with the support of the Balmain Association, is to consolidate the story and bring it up to date so that in another 35 years the baton of this special history can be taken up by future chroniclers.

The story of Balmain “Cottage” Hospital began in 1883 when the idea of a “cottage” hospital was floated at a meeting held in the Warwick Castle Hotel.

The Industrial Revolution had spread to Australia, particularly to Balmain because the scope for waterfront industrial activity was facilitated by the Balmain peninsula having three waterfrontages.

Our early civic fathers were highly entrepreneurial in their undertakings beginning with Thomas Sutcliff Mort and Captain Rown-tree establishing Morts Dock. The later years of the 19th century saw a dramatic increase in Balmain’s population because of employment opportunities in the waterfront industries.

The lack of respect for health and safety meant industrial deaths and injuries were high. The community worked together to establish the first “cottage” hospital in 1885.

The community raised funds to provide a four-roomed cottage near where the Balmain Courthouse stands today. A Miss Gisbourne became the first matron and the first trainee nurse was one Miss Lloyd.

For the update of the history to take us into the 21st century, Jan Wood is inviting the community to

Maybe you
have stories
of training
there as a
nurse?
Attending
casualty?
Working in
the office?
Working
with the
Hospital
Auxiliary?

add their stories. The last 35 years have been an extraordinary, unprecedented time of social, technological and medical advances. (Volume two of the history could conceivably be written focussing on this time!)

Maybe you have stories of training there as a nurse? Attending casualty? Working in the office? Working with the Hospital Auxiliary?

If you would care to record your story, contact Jan Wood on 9810 7016.

The book will be launched in conjunction with the 2021 Balmain Association Christmas party.

Thank you for your support in this project.

Words by Jan Wood

QUIZ

Questions compiled by Larry Hand, former Mayor of Leichhardt and quizmaster at the Unity Hall Hotel (Wednesdays 7.30pm)

1. In what year did the Balmain Post Office open?
2. There are three main streets boundaries between Balmain and Birchgrove? One is Macquarie Terrace. Name the other two.
3. Name the Federal Electorate the Balmain peninsula is located in.
4. What is the name of the Governor-General's official Sydney residence?
5. Last year, what was the most popular boys name registered in NSW?
6. Of the hotels still operating on the Balmain peninsula, which one was the last to be established?
7. What are the three animals on the NSW Coat of Arms?
8. What is the name of the body of water adjoining Birchgrove Oval?
9. In Australia, after English, what is the most common language spoken at home?
10. Prior to Jamie Parker, who were the previous two NSW Members of Parliament for the area covered by the Balmain Peninsula?
11. What is the name of the highway across the Sydney Harbour Bridge?
12. Which former resident of the Balmain Peninsular was elected Leader of the Federal Labor Party in 1951?
13. The name 'Australia' is derived from the Latin word *australis*, meaning what?
14. Who is considered the 'father' of the NSW Railways?
15. The corner of Darling and Mort Streets (now Chemist Warehouse), Balmain, was at one time a hotel. What was its name?
16. Facing the harbour, at the end of Darling Street, Balmain East, what is the name of the park on the right?
17. What is the name of the small park about 70 metres down Wharf Road from Ballast Point Park?
18. What is the name of the church on the corner of Darling Street and Curtis Road, Balmain?
19. The Inner West Council was formed from the merger of which former councils?
20. True, or false, the Sydney Opera House is classified by UNESCO as a World Heritage site?



See question 16

What's on at the Watch House

Over To You - 2021 Artworks by Richard Secombe

Open: Friday, April 9 at 7:30pm.

Saturday, April 10 and Sunday, April 11 from 10am to 6pm.

Richard explores landscape with an emphasis on the Australian bush, largely in mixed media and watercolour, in a wide variety of differently sized works.

What Richard refers to as 'florally inspired works' continue to feature as well, including some new alcohol ink works.

See Scapes Artworks by Martin Watson

Open: Friday, May 28 from 5pm to 8pm.

Saturday, May 29 and Sunday, May 30 from 10am to 4pm.

Martin Watson was born in 1972 Sydney. One of seven

children, he was encouraged to draw and embrace art from an early age.

In his own words: 'See Scapes is an exhibition that brings together a diverse mix of my latest artwork created over a 10 year period. Still life, portraits, landscapes, figures and abstractions of these are realised through drawing, painting and collage.

'I create layered works that explore themes that are both personal and universal. My studio is a portal to worlds real and imagined.

'I like to incorporate a diverse range of media in my art practice. Discarded images and objects are collected and recycled, combined with traditional materials to create works that transcend our throwaway culture.

'Through observation and memory I document everyday experiences and objects in an attempt to reveal their poetry and life force.'

martinwatson.com.au

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Martin Watson

The Balmain Association Inc. representing Balmain, Birchgrove and Rozelle

Since 1965 we aimed 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 realisation of the above.

Members are welcome to attend the Balmain Association meetings at 6pm on the first Wednesday of each month at the Watch House, 179 Darling Street Balmain.

The History Room at the Watch House is open every Saturday from 11:30am to 3pm and every Tuesday from 11am to 1pm.

Website: www.balmainassociation.org.au

Postal: PO Box 57 Balmain 2041

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