



the peninsula Observer

newsletter of the Balmain Association

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President's Report and Christmas Message

2024 has been another busy and outstanding year for the Balmain Association. The first major event on our calendar was the National Trust Heritage Festival. Our exhibition at the Watch House was curated by Wayne Longbottom and Helen Carter. We presented a pictorial account of the Post Office and Court House with an additional section by Mark Calabretta explaining how the Town Hall lost its cupola.

We continued with our small booklet issues with Duncan McAuslan contributing a new edition on the Watch House with more planned for 2025.

Kate Calabretta and Sue Hilton have taken over the bookings from June Lunsmann. They have revamped the bookings system and I'm glad to say that we have had full bookings until our break in December. Bookings have also filled up for 2025.

Mark Calabretta has been doing

detailed house history enquiries which have produced a steady stream of revenue throughout the year.

Submissions to Placemaking NSW on Ballast Point Park by Wayne Neich, David Somerfield, Di Garder and Malcolm Garder have been invaluable in keeping the State Government abreast of issues on the peninsula.

Our History Week event this year included June Lunsmann receiving life membership of the Association. June has been the secretary of the Association, editor of our newsletter, the exhibition booking person and many other tasks that help to keep the Association running. A well deserved award.

The newly renovated Balmain Town Hall was opened in September 2024 with fanfare and a large number of local residents in attendance. Helen Carter conducted a walking tour of the building pointing out a number of important historical features to a large number of locals.

The Town Hall was opened just in time for the regular 'Meet the Candidates' forum for the council elections. A big thank you to Ray Stevens for organising a very successful event under difficult circumstances. In part of the Precinct area stands the Glasshouse, renamed The Kath Hamey Glasshouse. It was looking lost and forlorn until Lisa Tatman and Ilona Tar negotiated with the Council to give it some loving care. The painting has just finished and it looks ready for a new life.

In late September the NSW Govt launched the Power Up Festival at the White Bay Power Station. The Balmain

Association was involved with an event, 'Human Library'. Members past and present were 'on stage' to relate memories and stories from the past. It was a tremendous success, thanks to Lisa Tatman who organised the event.

Thanks also to Wayne Longbottom for editing the Newsletter; Carolyn Allen for looking after our finances; John Symonds and Michael Bounds for looking after the maintenance of the Watch House; and lastly Robyn Longhurst who is stepping down from the Committee but a thank you for her support for the Balmain Association's endorsement of the 'Voice to Parliament' last year.

On behalf of the Balmain Association I wish you all a happy and safe festive season.

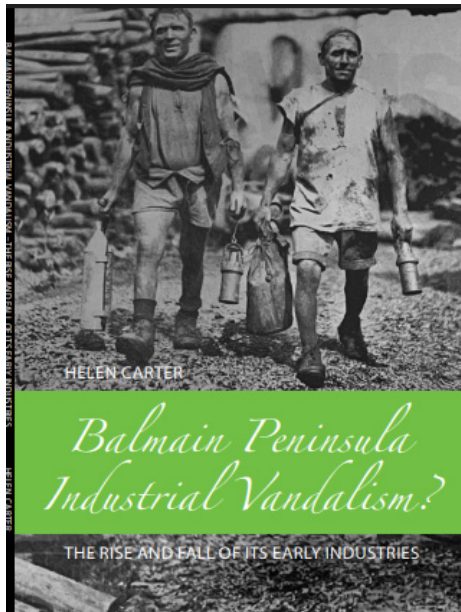
Ross Mackenzie

President The Balmain Association Inc.



Industrial Vandalism Powers Up!

Cathy Bray



Balmain Peninsula Industrial Vandalism? The Rise and Fall of Its Early Industries and Helen's equally celebrated earlier work, **Death by Demolition**, the lost houses of Balmain, can be purchased for \$55 and \$49.95 respectively from the Balmain Association website or from Balmain bookshops Hill of Content and Roaring Stories.

If you or a relative, neighbour or friend have a story related to Balmain's past please let us know.

Send your story to:

publisher@balmainassociation.org.au

or

The Publisher,
The Balmain Association
PO Box 57,
Balmain 2041

UNEARTHED 2025

As part of the National Trust's 2025 Heritage Festival "Unearthed" at the Watch House the Balmain Association is asking members, to dig deep and 'unearth' a Balmain treasure they or their friends or family has in their homes or places of work. The objects could be sports trophies, paintings, mementos or anything 'revealing Balmain's past, bringing to light lesser-known stories and unearthing knowledge to empower younger generations as custodians of culture and tradition'.

email: info@balmainassociation.org.au

Helen Carter's celebrated book **'Balmain Peninsula Industrial Vandalism? The Rise and Fall of Its Early Industries'** recently came alive at the **Power-UP Festival** held at White Bay during interviews between local children and older residents for the Balmain Association's inter-generational project **Human Library** organised thanks to Lisa Tatman, Chair of the Balmain Association's Arts & Culture committee.

A story* from Page 71 The National Box Co Pty Ltd as told to Cathy Bray

The photograph opposite appears at the top left of page 71 and shows the National Box Co Pty Ltd, towering over the neighbouring baths (later renamed Dawn Fraser Pool in honour of the Australian Olympic swimmer who grew up in Fitzroy Avenue above the baths).

If you look carefully, at the bottom of this photo you can see adults and children sitting on the boardwalk of the pool. When Jack Holcombe from Birchgrove (a 3rd generation resident and plumber who is very familiar with a number of the sites included in the book) saw this photo he told me "Yes, well see that crane next to the pool? Well Dawn Fraser's brother Alec was a very good diver. And he used to climb to the top of that crane and dive into the pool!"

Obviously children were far less supervised back then than they are now and also a lot less attention to OH&S - but you can imagine he was quite a hero with the children of Balmain for some time after that!



My Balmain Story

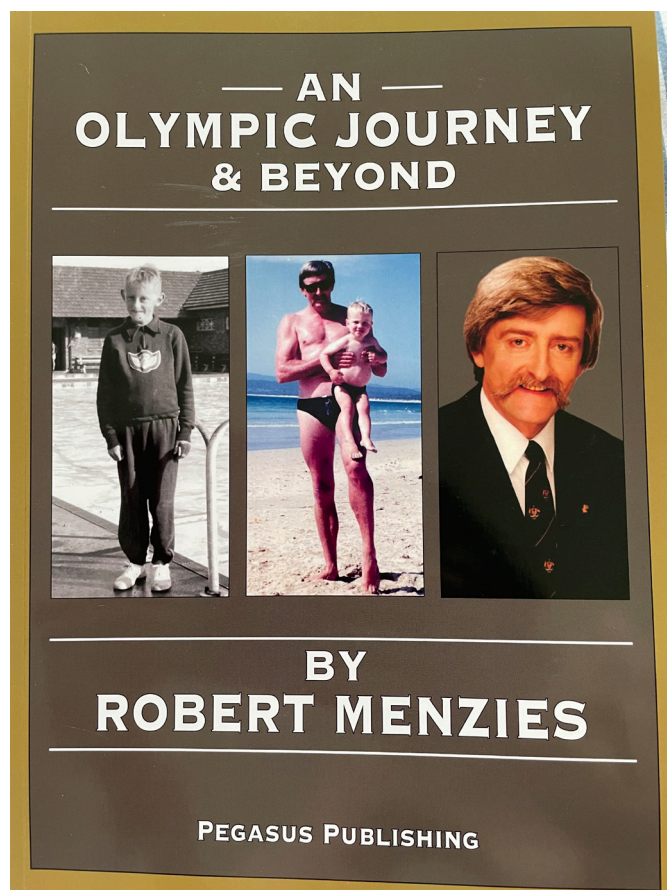
Helen Carter

Some time ago former Australian Olympian Bob Menzies (no not that one) came to the Watch House while researching his forthcoming memoir. Bob represented Australia in Water Polo in what he describes as 3 and a half Olympic games, one of which being the infamous 1972 Munich Olympics. While on that occasion the team wasn't so successful (achieving 2 drawn matches in the Group stages), more recently on 21 November Bob had individual success with the launch of his book, *An Olympic Journey & Beyond*, at Manly Library.

Bob's mother's parents, the Graftons lived their entire lives in Balmain and his wife's father, Ron McJannet was born and raised in Fitzroy Avenue above Dawn Fraser pool where he played water polo and where Bob would also later play for the University team in the 1970s. Bob has in the past generously loaned the Association the miners lamps featured on the cover of my book *Industrial Vandalism* for display at the Watch House.

In his book's introduction Bob acknowledges the assistance he received from the BA during his research and recounts an extraordinary coincidence that occurred on the occasion of his first visit to the Watch House, when one of our volunteers, Wayne Longbottom, overheard Bob's arrival and the mention of the name Grafton. Wayne having recently completed the digitisation of the story of Jack Grafton enquired of Bob if his relative's first name might have been Jack? It turned out that Bob's uncle Jack and Wayne's Jack were in fact one and the same! We sent Bob off as a happy man with a copy of his uncle's story.

At Bob's book launch the venue was packed with his former Olympic and other friends and family and it was just so moving when Bob mentioned that "he was able to hear his



uncle's voice for the first time in probably 50 years".

Thank you Wayne for bringing to life such a magical moment for Bob and his family.

Hey members Bob Menzies book is fascinating.

By the Way: He Stole the Show!

Duncan MacAuslan

On 1 August 1939 the Government announced that a bus service would operate from the Queen Victoria Building to Balmain by Pyrmont and Anzac Bridges. The private service on this route had ceased in 1931 deemed competitive with the trams despite the fact that trams all ran a long detour round Railway Square.

To celebrate the culmination of Balmain Council's agitation for better and more modern transport facilities to Balmain a reception was announced at the Balmain Town Hall on Sunday 20 August at 2.30pm. the Mayor, Alderman Herman Angelini was to preside, several local politicians and prominent

business were to attend, and the Ryde District Band was to perform.

Despite this assembly the public's interest was drawn to a short figure in a blue uniform on the bus. He was Jimmy Quealey, Balmain Rugby League's star five-eighth who had played in the previous day's first semi-final win over Canterbury-Bankstown.

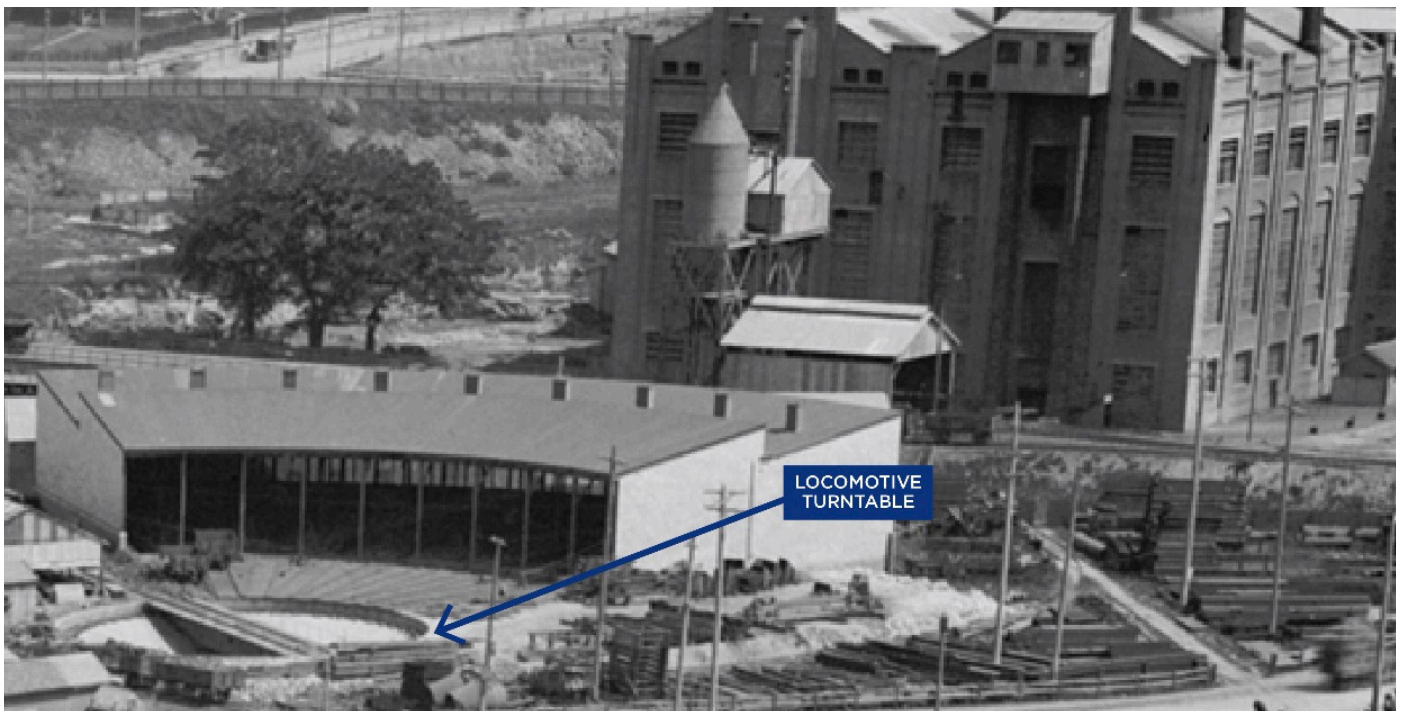
Quealey, was a bus conductor with the Department of Road Transport and Tramways, and worked on the new run all day. The service then known as the 401 terminated at Loyalty Square. It was a sign that the Government's previous devotion to trams was waning and that they saw buses as the future.

The service proved successful and is now the 442 extending to Balmain East Wharf.

Jimmy lived in Rowntree Street with four sisters and six brothers. He had debuted with Balmain in 1938 and scored a try in the 1939 premiership defeating South Sydney 33-4. He retired in 1945. In an interview with the Daily News Quealey thought "You've got to be terribly unlucky to get hurt playing football" then listed his injuries: torn shoulder muscle, plenty of cuts, a few kicks in the shins and two broken bones in his right hand. "But I've never been hurt!"

History unearthed and recreated at The Bays Station site

Courtesy Acciona Ferrovia Joint Venture



The Bays Station site for the Sydney Metro West project is close to both the former White Bay Power Station and the ports at Glebe Island and White Bay on Sydney Harbour. With an extensive maritime and industrial history in this area, careful consideration and planning for potential heritage discoveries was required.

As part of the Conditions of Approval for the project, Sydney Metro prepared an Archaeological Research Design and Excavation Methodology (ARDEM) to manage archaeological remains. The ARDEM identified archaeological remains of a locomotive turntable from preceding decades.

Prior to European settlement, the areas of White Bay and Glebe Island were inhabited by the Gadigal and Wangal people. The White Bay area would have been a suitable location for Aboriginal occupation given its abundance of marine and plant resources, reliable water sources, proximity to ridges and cliffs, and availability of raw materials suitable for stone tool construction. Despite these favorable environmental factors, the preservation of in situ artefactual deposits associated with Aboriginal occupation is low due to the significant ground disturbance that has occurred in the area since European colonisation.

Construction for the White Bay Power Station commenced in 1912 to provide electricity to support the ever-expanding tram network and the growth of the suburban railway system. The area between the White Bay Power Station and the port at White Bay became a railway yard once the Wardell Road to Darling Island Railway, part of the Metropolitan Goods Line, was built in 1916.

To support the Metropolitan Goods Line a locomotive roundhouse and turntable were built. The turntable was 75 feet wide and its function was to turn the locomotive en-



Locomotive Roundhouse and Turntable

N1



gines around to change their direction. These structures remained in operation until 1933 when the roundhouse was demolished, and the turntable was fixed “in situ” and could only be moved in emergencies.

At the outbreak of World War II, the port facilities became a major armaments and engineering supply depot for the US forces in Australia. The US Navy was the principal tenant at White Bay and large storage sheds were built for them on the site. At the end of the war the large sheds were purchased by the Maritime Services Board and converted for port purposes.

Post war activity on the site includ-

ed the 1951 construction of a new coal-loading facility. This involved the demolition of the storage buildings on the site, the building of new railway embankments and construction of two 20-tonne capacity electric jib cranes for the loading of coal onto ships at the port.

Once approval was granted to start works for Stage 1 of Sydney Metro West, site excavation work began, and the remains of the former locomotive turntable were uncovered in March 2022. Using non-destructive digging (NDD), these remains were painstakingly exposed and cleaned by a specialist team. The entire site was then cap-

tured through extensive photography.

The picture below shows the newly exposed locomotive turntable (photo by Artefact)

Using those photographs and a virtual recreation of the remains, the heritage surveyors produced a 3D model that allows exploration of the historic locomotive turntable in three dimensions.

The remains of the former locomotive turntable were incomplete and although it couldn't be salvaged, the 3D model gives an opportunity for current and future generations to visualise this historic find.

Ballast Point Park: Proposed State Heritage Listing

Malcolm and Di Garder



Ballast Point Birchgrove and Balmain were part of the area inhabited by the Wangal tribe of the Eora language group.

After settlement Ballast Point was part of the land granted to William Balmain in 1800. Ballast Point was later subdivided in the 1850's; it gets its name from the deep water which allowed ships to moor close to and cut ballast from the sandstone cliffcccccfs. The ballast was required to stabilise the sailing ships on their long return journey to Britain.

The first house built on the site in 1864 was Minevia for the merchant and draper Thomas Perkins. The point was then known as Minevia Point or Perkins Point until the 1920's when the site was sold to Texaco (later Caltex) in 1928.

The house was demolished to make way for a fuel depot to service the larger oil burning ships. During World War II the use was intensified and covered much of the site. By the 1960's much of the shipping had been transferred to Botany Bay and the terminal became a lubricant plant serviced by road tankers through the narrow streets of Balmain.

The first attempt to acquire Ballast Point for a park was in 1972. A submission was prepared by the Balmain Association's Town Planning Committee, to the Whitlam Government's Enquiry into the National Estate. The site was identified as one of a number of industrial waterfront sites suitable for Open Space. The outcome was that four sites were chosen for immediate acquisition and the Caltex site was listed for future

acquisition.

In 1990's there were 5 waterfront industrial sites (Ampol, Unilever, Balmain Power Station, Monsanto and Caltex) which were to be rezoned to Residential with Waterfront Reserve. The Caltex site was shown to be the least suitable for redevelopment because of its location, being furthest from main roads and because of its prominence in the harbour. A developer took a 'put option' to purchase the site on the provision it would be rezoned from Waterfront Industrial to Residential. The proposal was to develop the site for 160 units.

In the 1990's Wharf Road residents formed the Snails Bay Residents Action Group to save Wyoming, the grand waterfront marine villa that was to be demolished by its owners, Standards. In the fight to save Wyoming the group became aware that there could be many other development threats on Wharf Road. Heritage specialist, Ian Stapelton of Lucas Stapelton & Partners was commissioned by the residents to help prepare a Development Control Plan (DCP) for our street. The DCP was then produced for Council by Paul Davies Heritage Architect in July 1994.

The report describes Wharf Road as one of the most, if not the most, significant Victorian 19th century waterfront on Sydney Harbour.

So when the Caltex development was proposed the group was well prepared for action and the Ballast Point Park Campaign was formed with local residents from all Balmain, local councillors

and high profile locals as well. Mayor Larry Hand with support from Tom Uren, Paul Keating and others ensured the site was compulsory acquired by the Bob Carr Government for Open Space in 2002.

Remediation of the site was necessary and the residents were asked to participate in the design of the new park. Residents generally wanted to retain the industrial heritage and Macgregor Coxall, landscape architects, were appointed. The resulting design recognised the heritage significance, retaining the industrial character of the park.

Opened in 2009, Ballast Point Park has won international acclaim and is well used by locals and tourists.

Ballast Point Park is now under consideration for State Heritage Listing. Balmain Association is supportive of the listing, however some concerns are about how the listing will affect future minor improvements, such as: increased seating, additional BBQ's, shade areas etc. Also how to manage the minor design flaws such as the wind turbines, some incorrect signage and the dirt walkway over the grass to the BBQ's.

We would like to see more interpretation of the park – the story of the park, why and how it was acquired without a list of names of the participants in the fight. The Minevia display should be reinstated with the story.

Vale Ian Findlay: “God’s” electrician

John Symonds and Burford Sampson

We said a sad fairwell recently to one of the peninsula’s favourite sons and a five star human being, Ian Findlay. A couple of our members who knew Ian well recount their memories of him:

John Symonds:

Ian was well known on the Balmain peninsula as the ‘go to’ electrician. When Ian came to do electrical work at your home it was like a mate turning up to help you get a job done. Nothing was too hard. Every job ended with a chat. In my own home he replaced the switchboard, organised the solar panels, the hot water system, and the installation of the induction stove – tricky jobs to do neatly in a 19th century house, and all done without fuss.

The baffling wiring at the Balmain Watch House was no mystery to Ian. New power points, lights and switchboard repairs in a heritage-listed building, all done expertly, without fanfare and at mate’s rates.

Burford Sampson:

I first met Ian whilst quenching my thirst at the Unity Hall Hotel in the mid-1980s. Ian was qualified in certain aspects of electrification well beyond my powers as a self-regulator. He was a trouble-shooter for Sydney County Council and could alter the nature of the electrical connection to my property. In the 1980s the price of electricity rose the more of it was used per meter – no buy-in-bulk to save money, instead good customers, using more kWhs had

to pay a higher rate! A change in tack for the cost of meter reading meant that a hefty service fee was charged for each meter read. Not a problem for most people, but prior to my occupation, my residence had been a boarding house and had 5 separate electricity meters. Consequently, I faced an exorbitant meter reading charge. Ian



Ian and Leo

for a very modest outlay, reduced my 5 meters to the much more desirable 1. Fantastic!

From then on, I was a beneficiary of Ian’s wisdom and resourcefulness. He had an uncanny ability to perform miracles, not just with his main occupation, the poles and wires, but also in another derelict building that I owned, replete with electrical problems. I don’t

know when he became an independent contractor but I understand Ian could still be called out for emergency work after leaving the SCC. And of course, at any time privately. Over 30+ years I recommended him as the only solution to fellow citizens in desperate need of his services, many of whom resurfaced at his funeral and wake.

Sometime during the 2000s I became aware that Ian was engaged in the re-wiring of another derelict building – St. Andrew’s Cathedral. Wow! I was very impressed, how the hell could you do that without demolishing the building? He invited me inside to explain the intricacies of the project. The tricks involved in getting the lighting and power distribution to be subtle and mostly invisible to the congregation were described exuberantly by his customer, the Anglican Church, as ‘a miracle’. Ian’s contribution will live on and is a monument to his achievements, all the more impressive as he did all this work as a sole practitioner. A charming, witty individual his partner Lindi recalls he promoted his services to her as being “God’s electrician”.

Ian Findlay died unexpectedly on the 4th September 2024. He was 62.

He leaves behind his partner Lindi, parents and his beloved ginger cat, Leo. He is sadly missed.

Vale Ian.

Melbourne Cup Tradition

Di Garder



Many years ago, when our adult children where young children, a group of Balmain mothers decided to celebrate Melbourne Cup with a lunch at one

mother’s house. We all brought a plate and had a some of sweeps - \$1, \$2 and \$5! Very daring!

Each year we would take it in turns to host the Melbourne Cup and so it went for very many years until... Some husbands were retired and wished to join the fun! This was fine while the numbers were not too large but by the time we were up to 40+ it was decided that we needed a neutral venue! So we approached the Balmain Association to use the Watch House and as more than half the participants were members it was agreed.

This event has taken place at the Watch House now for quite a few years and the same rules apply – bring a plate and have cash for sweeps! As there is an entry fee to cover drinks, at the end of the afternoon the balance is a donation to the Balmain Association! A win win!!

What's on at the Watch House



Travels with Clarice

27 February - 9 March 2025

Julie Simmons and Melissa Read-Devine

Julie travels in her campervan named Clarice, to many places of natural beauty to sketch and paint.

Often on these trips, Mellissa joins Julie, and together they endeavour to capture the emotion and a sense of the places they see.

The sketchbooks, drawings and paintings produced are used to inform their studio work.

Julie Simmons' more interpretive pieces will be in the exhibition as well as a series of linocut prints by Mellissa Read-Devine.'

Hours:

Opening Friday 28th February 6pm to 9pm: All Welcome.

Thursday - Sunday 11am-5pm



Drawn to Nature

15-23 March 2025

Trish Yates

Drawn to Nature — a solo exhibition by Trish Yates of original prints, drawings and artist's books. Themes from the natural environment have long been part of her art practice where, rather than replicate nature, she captures its essence. Her local Sydney bushland setting provides an ongoing resource for much of her imagery. She always interprets the textures, forms, and shapes in a personal and intuitive way, often abstracting nature as her memories, environmental values, feelings and imagination merge to create her images. Trish uses several relief, intaglio and monotype techniques, which she sometimes combines in her artwork. Multi plate monotypes enable her to create more painterly and spontaneous works. All these techniques allow her to reveal what draws her to nature

Hours:

2025 March 15-16 (Saturday and Sunday), 10am to 5pm, and

2025 March 22-23 (Saturday and Sunday), 10am to 5pm.

Drinks with the artist: Saturday March 15th, 2-4pm. All welcome.

The Balmain Association Inc. representing Balmain, Birchgrove and Rozelle

Since 1965 we have 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, and
- 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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