THE ORCHID HOUSE

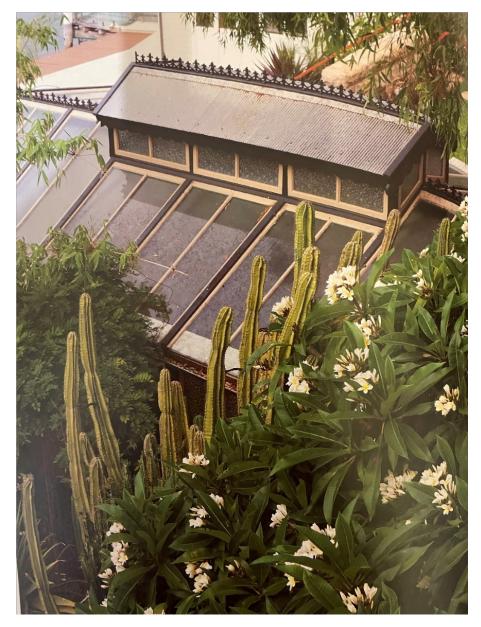


Photo: Courtesy Simon Griffiths, in Gardens on the Edge by Christine Reid, 2018

WYOMING, 25 WHARF ROAD, BIRCHGROVE (SNAILS BAY)

By Helen Carter

Wyoming is a two storey Italianate Marine Villa designed by the architects, Mansfield Brothers, for Quarton Levitt Deloitte. Built over an earlier cottage, *The Hermitage* that had belonged to James John Yeend, from 28 November 1867 until 23 August 1877 on Lots 4 and 5 of the John Symons subdivision of part of Section 31 of the Balmain Estate. Lot 3 was added to Deloitte's holding on 13 January 1881. Situated on the waterfront on Wharf Road at Birchgrove (Snails Bay) it is its Orchid House that is the subject of this paper which is being considered by a committee assessing removable heritage iron structures in Australia under the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) charter principles. Whilst my heritage research over the past ten years has been mainly as a member the Balmain Association, a non-profit community organisation in New South Wales with one of its aims: *to preserve the best of the suburbs' history, architecture and or historical value of the area and keep a permanent collection of historical interest*.... my terms of reference here was *to date the Orchid House prior to 1900*.

Today, as illustrated on the front cover, the Orchid House is a separate garden structure below the house that was restored c 1990s by the present owners. Subsequently, *Wyoming* was added to the New South Wales State Heritage Register on 2 April 1999.

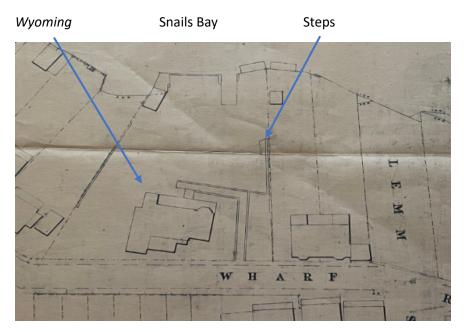
Background

Italianate Marine Villas such as *Wyoming* were typical of many similar waterfront homes that existed in the 19th century and were designed to be viewed from the water. Their early owners had access to garden catalogues from England from which they could order horticultural manufactures. However by the late 19th century Sydney had its own nurserymen, architects and ironmongers who offered various examples of garden furniture such as chairs, ferneries and glasshouses.

Description of Orchid House

Wyoming's glass house appears to be based on the English model, with a low tuckpointed brick wall as its base, a gabled/pitched glass roof with airvent and finials, operated by trusses, with support from cast iron brackets and walls of timber framed windows of glass.

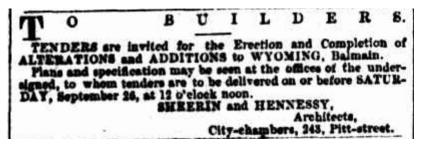
Research to date this garden structure has proved difficult. Access to – *Balmain* – *Sheet No 5* of the Public Works Map, traced on 14 June 1889, does not show a structure where the present orchid house exists. The small drawing along the boundary on the right of *Maybanke* indicates steps.



An early catalogue at the Caroline Simpson Library & Research Collection by Messrs Charles D Young and Company (c1854) does mention the importation of *Horticultural and Miscellaneous Manufacturers* and there are various instances of flat pack conservatories advertised in the early newspapers being imported but as mentioned above small structures c1890s could be supplied by local firms or designed by an architect. I believe that this would have been the case for this structure.

The construction of an Orchid House at the Botanic Gardens, Sydney in 1898 no doubt would have prompted many gardeners to visit and perhaps encouraged them to build a special structure for their own collection of plants. The reference to the Botanic Gardens construction is an indicator of just how popular orchid collecting had become. However, as Dr Toby Musgrave, an English horticulturist and garden historian stated in his book *The Head Gardeners*, 2007 p 196 *collecting orchids was not only a highly addictive, but also a highly expensive pastime'*.

Whilst the focus of this paper begins with Quarton Levitt Deloitte who named and owned *Wyoming* at 25 Wharf Road (first numbered in *Sands Directory*, 1889) from 1877 and there are later references in the early decades of the 1900s that he was a keen orchid collector. My brief is to create an argument that Deloitte's *Orchid House* was built pre 1900 if a classification is to be successful. On 23 August 1873 when Deloitte bought lots 4 and 5 on Wharf Road with 'houses and buildings', a condition of his mortgage, was that it had to be re-paid within 7 years and that he erect a 'dwelling house and offices' which had to be approved by the Mansfield Brothers (who held the plans in their office). On 13 January 1881 Deloitte added Lot 3, and by 2 August 1881 had redeemed his mortgages and renegotiated another mortgage with the mortgagors - Henry Bradley, William Fowler, Joseph and George Williams. A tender notice in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, dated 12 September 1885, by the architects Sheerin and Hennessy revealed that they had been given the project of erecting *Wyoming*. Details were as follows:



Sheerin had worked for Mansfield Brothers until 1884 before he went out on his own and partnered with Hennessy.

Research information on George Allen Mansfield received from the Australian Institute of Architects (NSW Chapter) does not attribute a residential house/villa named *Wyoming, Snails Bay* as a Mansfield Brothers construction. In fact, Mansfield's prolific portfolio listed mainly warehouses, government school contracts and banks. The only Balmain building listed in the inventory, attributed to Mansfield Brothers and/or Mansfield and Son, for the period from 1880-1900, was the Sunlight Oil Mills [Lever Bros] in 1897.

After the Committee's site inspection of the Orchid House on 3 September, 2023 I have no doubt that the Orchid House would have been Deloitte's pride and joy when it was built to house his rare and exotic orchids.

Birchgrove/Snails Bay

Prior to 1900 there are numerous real estate advertisements that refer to Marine Villas in Snails Bay (National Library of Australia's database *Trove*) however I found only a couple of those advertisements mentioned, a glasshouse, fernery, a rockery, or a good well of water in their advertising spiel and there was no mention of a house name to connect those details to *Wyoming*.

SMH 9 Nov 1889 p6 [pretty fernery and rockeries]

T SNAILS BAY, Halmain. allractive little 872 OTTAGE for SALE, suitab. for newly-instried couple, convenient to ferry, containing 5 good rooms, kitchen, and laundry, pretty fernery and reckeries, cannot be built in, bathroom, water laid on, and drainage perfect. The rooms are lofty, and external appearance charming ; plastered and papered throughout; has just been done up; price. £575, £200 cash will secure it A real gift. PIERCY ETHELL and CO., (613) 114A, Pitt-street.

SMH 1 Feb 1899 p5 [ferneries]



And in another part of Balmain -



Balmain Peninsula and Observer, 14 June 1902 p6

Information that was sourced that identified owners as having ferneries/ glasshouses and who collected ferns and/or orchids prior to 1900 were as follows:

Nearby, at 9-9a Wharf Road, Leopold Jung Senior (1817-1892) lived at 9-9A Wharf Road, Snails Bay from 1864 and he is pictured below in his fernery (*Leichhardt Historical Journal* [LHJ] 21) and from the Jung family history the glass imported for Jung's greenhouse cost £8,000 (*The Peninsula Observer*, News Sheet 130, May 1983).



9-9A Wharf Road, Snails Bay (Photo: Courtesy of Barry Jung)

At East Balmain, Captain Broomfield, who was a member of the Horticultural Society of Sydney and whose estate *Glentworth*, was situated on Darling Street and ran down to the waterfront, had hot houses and he grew orchids. His success at horticultural shows is well documented. Quarton Levitt Deloitte, who also liked collecting and growing orchids and being the first Captain of the Sydney Rowing Club would have crossed paths with Captain Broomfield. In fact, as early as 1868, Deloitte and Broomfield are listed on the program for the day as vice-presidents of the Balmain Regatta for the Prince of Wales Birthday race (*SMH* 9 November 1868 p8).

Of course, much earlier, there was the surveyor and botanist, Robert David Fitzgerald II (1830-1892) who lived at *Adraville, c1860,* 7 Fawcett Street, Balmain from 1870 who was also a member of the Horticultural Society. Fitzgerald collected ferns and orchids and was praised for his cut flowers of home-raised seedlings in his greenhouse, which was at the side of his home, and situated parallel to Jane Street (*Death by Demolition, by Helen Carter 2022 p84*). Sadly, his house and greenhouse were demolished but his legacy, still in print today, is his 1875 published work entitled *Australian Orchids*.

Surprisingly, a search on *Trove*, using the specific words *Orchid House* for the relevant period, from 1890 to 1910, revealed only two instances, from the Sydney suburbs of Woollahra and Burwood, where real estate advertisements included as one of the Villas attributes an orchid house, whereas nothing came up for Snails Bay or Balmain.

Balmain was a close-knit community and networking by gentlemen occurred when residents met at their church or were a member of the Balmain branch of the Freemasons. Captain Bloomfield, Robert Fitzgerald and Mr Deloitte were all members of St Mary's Anglican Church, at 85A Darling Street, East Balmain. A search of the church's early account book from the 1870s lists income entries for these gentlemen as having paid a yearly or quarterly pew rent and coincidentally on 7 July 1870 there was an outgoing entry for £7 18s paid to Goodlet & Smith for leadlight. Pages from that firm's 1890 catalogue are featured below because its samples of conservatories for sale, are almost identical to the Orchid House.



Initially, I was rather excited when I found this article below, but alas, only Captain Broomfield's residence in Balmain is featured.

Suburban Gardens.

Captain John Broomfield's, Balmain.

In descriptions given in the columns of the daily press the public are often informed that the decorative plants at national assemblages and balls given in aid of char-table institutions are kindly furnished by Captain Broomfield. Again, in the horticultural section of the once prosperous Agricultural Society the display of plants was nearly entirely supplied by the gentleman in question. So at least at the present time, when our growers of plants keep all to themselves, the colony has at least one patriotic enough to either lend his valuable plants for charitable purposes, or is not afraid to exhibit them for the general benefit of the public. Naturally enough it may be thought that to produce such fine large specimens the grounds must be very extensive. buch, however, is far from the fact, as the whole of the grounds, which contain flower gardens, greenhouses, and bushhouses, is an area about a chain in width by about four and a-half chains in length. Immediately on the spex of the steep slope leading from the wharf at Darling-street, Balmain, a goodly pile of building, with ornamental front, of no particular size, attracts the attention, and is well known as the residence of Captain Broomfield. Judging from appearances, the passer-by would

In the *Sydney Mail* 22 February 1890 p407 – Horticultural Society of New South Wales – fruit and flower show at the Exhibition Building. Captain Broomfield's orchids received praise.

plants and flowers were 112; in fruit only 65, and of these 15 were by Mr. Voelckers, 11 each by Mr. F. S. Barker and Mr. Nicholls; 37 exhibits by three growers, and 28 between all the rest. At this time of the year there should be a far greater number. Captain Broomfield's orchids are still unrivalled, and carried off the first prize. The collection of plants from the Botanic Gardens included some very fine specimens artistically arranged, but the gem of the whole was the collection shown by Messra. Shepherd and Co. There were about 40 plants, no two alike, all fine

On his death, Captain John Broomfield's estate was advertised as *Glentworth House & Grounds*, for sale by auction, on 16 September 1908 and the grounds included a gardener's cottage, stables outhouses and orchard. In October 1881, his original house had another storey added and the well known architect Edward Harman Buchanan had tendered for its fence and billiard room. *Glentworth House* was nearby, almost opposite to St Marys.

EH Buchanan, was on St Mary's Parish Council in 1867 and remained a member of St Mary's Anglican Church while he lived at 22 Wharf Road, in his Italianate villa *Yarildun* which he had built in 1887. I had hoped that Buchanan would have provided the link to dating the Orchid House. David Logan, a Sydney architect, completed his undergraduate thesis *The Life and Work of EH Buchanan* and listed in chronological order from 1880-1913 public tender notices from the *Sydney Morning Herald* at the end of his work. These notices were not only for Buchanan's commissions for villas or houses but smaller jobs such as plastering, foundations and alterations. Unfortunately, there were no entries that referred to the building of an orchid house/greenhouse/plant house or glass house on Wharf Road, Snails Bay. Buchanan is recorded as doing work at nearby *Ravenscourt* at 39 Wharf Road and around the corner in Dock Road. Buchanan had felt the effect of the 1890s Depression and received very few architectural commissions and had to rely on income from building and construction work. By 1893 Buchanan had sold his Italianate marine villa, *Yarildun* and relocated to a small iron house, above *Yarildun*, on Ballast Point Road, at No 57 still part of his lot.

Captain Broomfield's success at Horticultural Shows and Mr Fitzgerald's knowledge of orchids would have been factors that persuaded Deloitte about the benefits of having a specific structure for his orchids. Articles about plants houses and greenhouses were now common features in the Horticultural Section of the current newspapers. For instance, in the *SMH*, 4 June 1892 p5

experience and nis special anowledge. Line information he has a mod at presenting in simple language, and as an exposition of details rather than of principles. "The writer," we read in the preface, "is familiar with the troubles of these who seek to make sardens, to study plant and to construct bush and glass houses, and has endeavoured to help them with practical advice." Further, he offers the book as containing information suited to the Australian climate, for the want of which he himself suffered in his carlier experiences. Careful perusal of his work will satisfy the reader that these promises have been fulfilled, and that this modestly-named handbook in its complete form is a book that should be in the hands of every amateur horticulturist. There is little information here that the flower cultivator could dispense with, so well is the space filled with apparently everything that he could wish to know. From the calendar of operations for each month to the instructions as to how to construct a bushhouse every item seems, to have been selected for its practical utility. Its descriptions are exact, and yet given in an easy and agreeable manner, and the practical requirements of the reader are everywhere kept prominently in view. The author acknowledges his obligations to Mr. H. H. B. Brailey for his hints as to the culture of the dahlma; to Mr. C. B. Pitt for his advice on pelargoniums ; and to Mr. E. Williams, of Camden Park, for his assistance with the matter relating to orchids. To Mr. Msiden's book on

And in the Sydney Mail, 31 August 1895 p425

oronare men los our mus

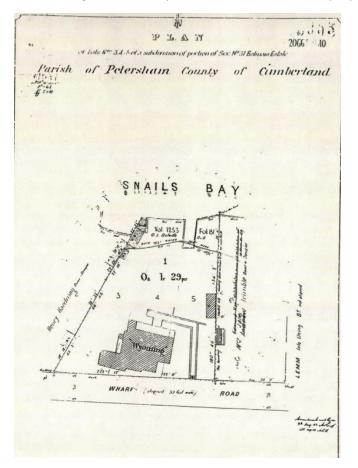
Plants of all kinds are making rapid growth under glass. They need abundance of water and pure air. Wood lice and snails are abundant, notwithstanding dry weather; indeed the dry weather seems to drive them into the moist houses. They will do no

Houses and Frames.

Amateurs who haveglass houses are recommended to try a few of the most easily cultivated orchids. They are gradually becoming more and more popular in the colony, but very few persons as yet attempt their culture. Some of our native orchids are very pretty, and easily managed. For instance, the splendid Dendrobium speciosum will manage itself, and blossom yearly with little or no care; and yet it is doubtful whether any of the most skilled cultivators of orchids in England can yet manage Some of the to grow and flower it successfully. Queensland dendrobiums are very pretty, and can be flowered without use. Our prettiest orchid is Sarcochius ai, and it is well worth growing in any collection. very -----

Note: the species of orchid is named after Mr Fitzgerald

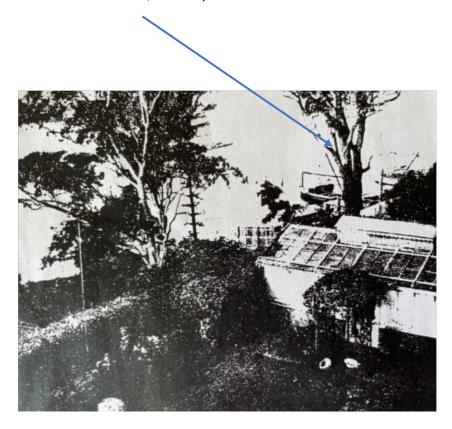
By 1909, the Deposited Plan 65983 showed *Wyoming* clearly labelled and the existence of the Orchid House along the boundary line to Mrs Jane Trimble's property *Maybanke*.



Deposited Plan – Parish of Petersham, County of Cumberland, May, 1909

Returning to the Deloitte family, Quarton's wife Emily died in 1896, and there were no children from their marriage. His brother Marmaduke and his wife Emma and their five children lived next door at *Devonville*, 27 Wharf Road. Later, an article in *The Australian Home Beautiful*, on 2 September 1929, pp25-28 entitled *The Passing of an Old Sydney Home* gave an insight into the history of *Wyoming* and its owners which also included a photograph of the orchid house taken by Harold Cazneaux.

Orchid House, Photo by Harold Cazneaux c1929



Whilst the article makes no mention of when the orchid house was built it is worth noting that prior to 1908 Council approval was not required for building work on one's property and the only way to find alterations or details about its construction was by searching *Trove*. If lucky, perhaps a tender for its construction or building materials may reveal evidence. After 1908, The Construction and Local Government Journal often captured Council approvals. Two items relating to Wharf Road from the late 1920s/early 1930s that were found -

22 May 1929 p18 - Real Estate - Coming Sales

Balmain-Snails Bay-25 Wharf Road, frontage brick residence. May 31.-Richardson and Wrench Ltd. n ditt 12.

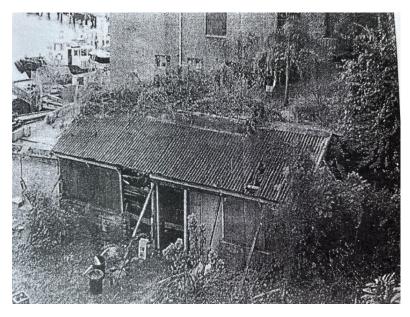
Interestingly, note the construction of a Glass House in the following advertisement!

20 December 1933 p2 – Building and Works Approved – p2

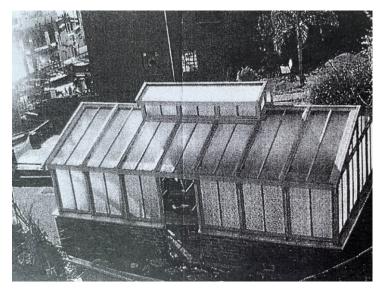
 Snails Bay, Balmain.—Conversion of residence to flats, 25 Wharf Road.—A. E. and W. A. McDonald, 41 Ballast Point Road, Balmain.
South Kensington.—Glass House, 25 Marville Avenue.—W. B. Parry, 3 David Street, Mar-cialuille rickville. Vaucluse.—Front Stone Wall, Dalley Avenue. -C. Reynolds Winter, 23 Macquarie Place, Syd<u>ney</u>. Waverley.-

averley.—Three W.B. Sheds, Oxford Street —J. Shaw, Waverley Crescent, Waverley.

After the owners restored their Orchid House an invitation was issued which showed *before* and *after* photographs. Below, can be seen the state of the Orchid House when the owners purchased *Wyoming*.



Before



After, c1996 progress of restoration

The restored structure shows a brick base (tuckpointed) with glass panels which I associated with a period later than 1900 however there is evidence that Buchanan called for tenders on 26 November 1895 for a villa in Waverley Street, Waverley and again on 1 October 1902, in Dock Road, Snails Bay, Balmain to do tuckpointing. Whilst there is no evidence that he called for the tuckpointing on the orchid house it does establish that tuckpointing was used earlier than 1900.

Findings prior to site visit: I was unable to establish a pre-1900 date for the Orchid House because:

• Sheet 5 of the Water Board Plan 1889 showed no garden structure

- the references to ferneries and rockeries on Wharf Road, Snails Bay found from 1890-1900 could not be linked to *Wyoming*
- the search terms Orchid House/Green House/Glass House/Plant House did not refer to a structure at *Wyoming* and,
- the non-existence of a Council requirement for building construction approval prior to 1908 was an impediment.

ICOMOS Committee site meeting 3 September 2023

My invitation to attend the site meeting at *Wyoming* enabled me to view the internal structure and the workings of the Orchid House. For completion, I have included images from that site visit and additional research found post 3 September.





Cantilever roof opening

Cast iron bracket

And below, note the unusual drainage pattern (circular terracotta mats added later by the owners)



Photos: Helen Carter, 3 September, 2023

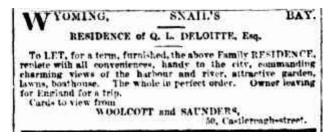
Internal access to the restored Orchid House revealed its structure, materials, drainage and its operation. Visible relics, such as the original rim lock, with its patent mark (c1890s) still in operation, pieces of ribbed glass and samples of it of iron lace frieze/finial were important in my attempt to place a date on the structure.



Plate reads: No 60 Jas Carpenter, Patentee

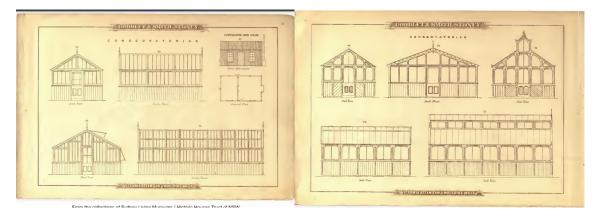
Post ICOMOS committee site meeting – further research

An advertisement in the SMH 10 July 1888 p10, mentions his attractive garden, lawns and boathouse



Perhaps, this gentleman's English trip was to view and/or collect orchids.

At the Carolyn Simpson Library, Museums of History, NSW a trade catalogue, by Goodlet & Smith Ltd, Sydney (est 1855) published 1890 was sourced. They were timber and galvanised iron merchants, who operated the extensive Victoria Saw and Joinery Mills site at Murray Street, Pyrmont (with a company wharf) perfect for Mr Deloitte to arrange pick up and/or delivery to his wharf. Snails Bay was a short distance from Pyrmont. Two of the catalogue pages (p13 and 14), entitled *Conservatories* showed detailed drawings, one of which had a marked resemblance to the Orchid House at *Wyoming* (although the foundation in the catalogue does not feature the use of bricks).

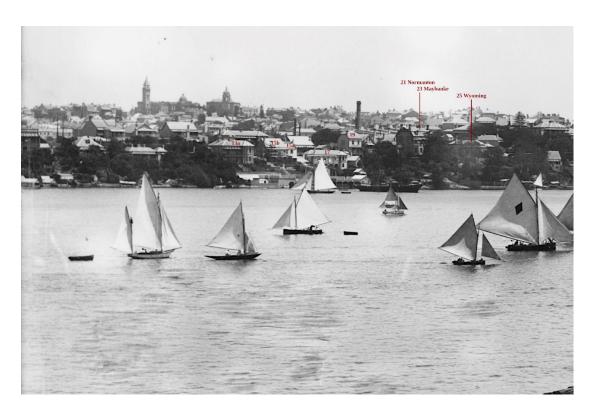


The State Library of NSW, only held architectural plans for one of Mansfield's commercial buildings, the Australian Mutual Provident Society building, 1903, but no plans for residential buildings.

However, a paper by Ailsa McPherson, BA(Hons), MA, entitled *The History of Wyoming* dated November, 1992 [Q994.4006/23] provided useful information about QL Deloitte, the property transactions in relation to QL Deloitte's mortgages and that he employed *'two* uniformed maids and gardener'.

Photographic evidence

Around the period in question, the photographers Henry King and Charles Kerry took a number of images of Snails Bay, which are now part of the Tyrell Collection, at the Powerhouse Museum. Surprisingly many of those images did not include that part of Wharf Road where *Wyoming* was located. However, closer scrutiny of the collection did yield an image which provided an expansive view of Wharf Road taken c1890s. Perhaps the sailing boats in the foreground are a fortuitous inclusion here as Deloitte, the Father of Rowing, was also an entrant in a number of Balmain Regattas.



944. Balls Head and Snails Bay, Kerry Photo, Sydney, glass negative (c1890s) (MA.AS29584)



Extract from 944. Snails Bay and Balmain, Kerry Photo

The photo by Henry King, probably from 24 Wharf Road over Wyoming and showing Maybanke



706. Sydney Harbour from Balmain, H. King, Photo (MA.AS 31313)(1880-1890)

This extract from the Henry King photograph above shows the Orchid House



Conclusion: I believe that now with the benefit of the site inspection and further research the Orchid House can be dated pre 1900 and locally manufactured. This finding is supported by the weight of the circumstantial evidence, the Goodlet and Smith Ltd catalogue c 1890 (timber and iron merchants – who would manufacture iron brackets), the tender notice by Sheerin and Hennessy (dated 12 Sept 1885), the relationships that Deloitte had established within the church, competing in sailing regattas and sharing information with his fellow orchid growers together with the tangible evidence from the rim lock dated c 1890s, the Kerry c1890 and King photographs c1880-1890 showing the orchid house supports a finding that the [conservatory]/Orchid House was constructed on Deloitte's property at *Wyoming* prior to 1900, probably delivered to his wharf or picked up from the Pyrmont wharf of Goodlet and Smith.

Helen Carter, carterhelenj@gmail.com (Balmain Association)

19 September 2023

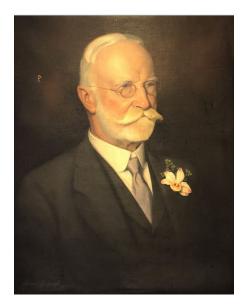


Naterfront view of The Orchid House (Photo: Helen Carter, 2003)

(Two other draft notes were also presented to the ICOMOS Committee for Vernacular Architecture – one by Professor Miles Lewis AM, (University of Melbourne) whose focus was on the technology of the structure (University of Melbourne) and one by Historian, Meg Quinlisk (M.ICOMOS).

Postscript: Additional information has been provided for publication on the Balmain Association website

Biographical Details - Quarton Levitt Deloitte (1843-1929) (QL) one of 12 children, was aged 7, when he moved to Balmain with his parents Captain William Salmon Deloitte and Elizabeth Marlay and his other siblings. Deloitte's father, born in Hull in the United Kingdom was a trading merchant and established his home in Sydney when he purchased Bettington's wharf at Darling Harbour in 1841. The Deloitte family went on to have a strong connection to Birchgrove. Initially, the family resided at *Birchgrove House* (1850-1856) before they moved to *Janthenia House*, at the corner of Wharf Road and Grove Street (west side) later demolished. QL is credited with having the Orchid House constructed at *Wyoming*, and his love of orchids is on display in his lapel in his portrait by Herbert Beecroft, entered for the 1922 Archibald Prize and a number references were found on Trove from 1919-1929 which also referred to his attendance at Horticultural Society shows. When QL died the funeral took place at Waverley Cemetery after a service was held at his residence in Wharf Road prior to the cortege arriving. His Estate at Probate was valued at £13,389 and he made bequeaths to nieces, cousins and friends and a number of charities (*The Labor Daily*, 12 June 1929 p4).



Portrait of QL Deloitte - Courtesy of the Sydney Rowing Club

QL Deloitte was also a pioneer of Australian rowing, and became the first captain of Balmain Rowing Club. Deloitte jointed the Colonial Sugar Refinery in 1858 aged 15 years and held the position of Secretary from 1877-1911. QL was also involved with the creation of Birchgrove Park, (Chairman of the Trust – EH Buchanan), and acknowledged by the naming of Deloitte Avenue, along the edge of the park in 1904. QL also bequeathed money for improvements to the park and the Trustees, as a permanent tribute to his memory, erected a Memorial Gate which was unveiled on 13 November, 1930. QL was also a member of the Freemasons Lodge and the Sydney Philharmonic Society. The Deloitte family had strong associations with Wharf Road, Snails Bay/Birchgrove. QL's Deloitte's younger brother, Marmaduke Levitt Deloitte lived next door at *Devon Villa*, 27 Wharf Road from 1882 until 1903 when they moved to 17 Wharf Road. Deloitte's older brother William Henry Deloitte (d1905) and his wife lived at *Oneida*, 35 Wharf Road (1889-1893) and *Simla*, 33 Wharf Road (1894-1905) and later Lavinia, his daughter purchased *Simla* c1946.



Mr. R. Mills, Mr. F. W. Hann, and Mr. D. D. Barranti, characteristic difference of the transfer of the structure of the struc

Unveiling of the Memorial Gate, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 November 1930 p12 The gate was dismantled in the 1960s, its whereabouts unknown.