

## DAY 3

### Huntleys Point Wharf to Balmain East Wharf

#### *Background and Historical Notes*

##### *Day 3:1 - Huntleys Point Wharf to Iron Cove Bridge*

(1) **Huntleys Point** was originally known as Tarban Point, but that changed when A. H. Huntley bought 8 hectares of it in 1841 and built his house (*Point House*) there. With one and a bit roads and 270 degrees of water views, it must be Sydney's smallest and most exclusive suburb.

(2) The first **Gladesville Bridge**, opened in 1884, a low level bridge with a swing span, joined the Gladesville side where the ferry wharf now is. It was replaced by the massive arched bridge which dominates the area - the largest single span concrete arch in the world when it opened in 1964. Crossing a distance of about 300m, it reaches 40m above the water at its crest and boats passing under can be comforted by the thought that about 75,000 tonnes of concrete are suspended above them.

(3) **William Wright**, a merchant and whaler, bought the northern end of the Drummoyne peninsula in 1853, building his house, *Drummoyne*, at the point. The name (Gaelic for 'flat topped ridge') was inspired by the family home at Drummoyne on the Clyde in Scotland. Mrs Wright lived on in the house almost to the end of the century and later, around the end of WWI, it was the home of Mrs Anthony Hordern of the famous retailing family. A small park retains steps and a landing place associated with Wright's now-demolished house remains down at Wrights Point.

In the first section of Wrights Rd almost uninterrupted units occupy the river side, where the oldest houses once were, but there are several very fine survivors on the Victoria Rd side, notably imposing No 45, *Omrah*, built just after the turn of the twentieth century. The Wrights Point end of the Drummoyne Peninsula, well away from the industry to the south, was obviously the choice of the well to do. Beyond Wolseley St many delightful Federation cottages survive, homes of the more modest middle class or trades people.

(4) In **Collingwood St**, with its rise and potential views, there is a fine run of Victoriana, beginning with the somewhat Gothic No 21, *Glendelough*, on the corner with Seymour St. It has some fine stained glass. No 17, *Candacraig*, has been spectacularly restored. Neighbouring No 15, originally *Taranganba*, was probably once almost identical, and was for a while in the 1920s a private school called Parks College, run by the Misses Moore. The next few, most built before 1891, are almost as impressive and the curved, barley-twist iron gatepost at No 7 is unusual (and possibly at times inconvenient).

(5) By **Renwick St**, the housing has become a rather charming mix of Victorian, Edwardian and later brick, timber and stone working class cottages. Their presence here is logical, closer to the shops and trams and to Cockatoo Island and other waterfront industries, including the Birkenhead rubber factory and, later, Balmain Power Station. By 1891 the householders included carpenters, boilermakers, plasterers, a van proprietor, an artist, a scalemaker and, close to Day St, dairykeepers. By the 1920s, the street was fully built up and surprisingly little has changed since. The survival of the houses in such intact condition possibly relates to the freeway reservation which may still lurk here. No 20, *Fernbank* (1885) seems to aspire to something a little grander. Towards Day St the occurrence of stone cottages increases and the mirror-image pair at No 8 (*Somerville*, 1889) and No 6 (*Keoghville*, 1890) certainly takes the eye.

At the bottom of Day Street the eyes are drawn to the spectacular views of Spectacle and Cockatoo Islands.

(6) **Spectacle Island**, the nearest, was named because of its original shape but it has been considerably enlarged since. Some powder magazines were established on it in 1863 and from then on it became a naval stores depot. Now a fascinating historical repository, the buildings packed into its tiny area contain tens of thousands of items from almost a century of Royal Australian Naval history, ranging from toothbrushes to torpedos. However, there is no longer public access to the base. Instead, highlights of RAN heritage can be seen by the public at the Naval Heritage Centre on Garden Island.

(7) **Cockatoo Island**, now operated by the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, also offers a range of tours and public programs, and campsites, which give an insight into its fascinating past. It is served by regular ferries on both the Parramatta River and Balmain-Woolwich services. Evidence of its days as a convict prison coexist with its remarkable shipbuilding history, including two dry docks (the one most easily seen

from here is the 1884 Sutherland Dock), huge engineering and machine shops, cranes, a powerhouse, houses, prison barracks, convict-built underground grain silos, tunnels and more. In use as a major facility for more than a century, the dockyard was closed and partly dismantled in 1992 while speculation raged over its future. With the founding of the Harbour Trust in 2000, public access and use was assured. (See Cockatoo Loop Walk C2 notes for further detail.)

**(8) Birkenhead Point** is now a mix of apartment development, shops and marina. The first industry on the point, a salting and boiling down works, was established by Charles Abercrombie in 1844 who, since he was from Liverpool in England, was probably the originator of the name 'Birkenhead'. In 1900 the Perdriau Brothers set up a rubber importing company here which, as the motor age dawned, began to manufacture rubber tires. In 1929 Dunlops took over and by the 1960s, 1,600 employees were engaged in tire manufacture here in a large plant. However, it had become outmoded and was closed down in 1977. This opened the way for an imaginative recycling of the factory buildings into a waterfront shopping centre in 1979 for DJs Properties through architect Peter Hickey. It was a groundbreaking development in many ways, out of the mould of most suburban mall-style developments. Subsequent redevelopment focussed on waterfront apartments but by 2009 the shopping areas had been modernised and upgraded.

**(9) The First Iron Cove Bridge**, part of the Five Bridges Route from Sydney to the North Shore, was a low level iron lattice bridge opened in 1882. It was replaced by a higher level bridge opened in 1955, the last steel truss bridge to be built in NSW. This bridge originally had a central tramway as well as traffic lanes. Product of a less wasteful era, iron lattice spans from the first bridge are still in use in three smaller bridges in the Forbes district. The concrete work of the 1955 bridge reflected the art deco style fashionable during its 1940s design period. In 2009, despite considerable opposition, construction began on a duplicate bridge as part of the Inner West Busway project, which was completed in 2011. The new bridge curves westwards with its abutments essentially on the site of those of the original 1882 bridge. It incorporates greatly improved pedestrian and cycle ways.

### *Day 3:2 - Iron Cove Bridge to Elkington Park, Balmain*

In fact this section begins in Rozelle, but quickly becomes Balmain and later, Birchgrove. The Rozelle-Balmain-Birchgrove waterfronts are a landscape of intense change. Hardly more a few metres have not been reclaimed, altered or built on, often several times. A few decades ago walking these shores would have been impossible because of the dozens of shipyards, slipways, wharves, oil stores, factories, and power plants sitting cheek-to-cheek along the waterfront. From the 1850s to the 1970s, this peninsula was one of the most industrialised areas in Australia.

Balmain is named after William Balmain (b1762 Scotland), one of the First Fleet assistant surgeons. In 1800 he was given a 550 acre (220 hectare) grant covering almost the entire peninsula of Balmain and Rozelle (thirty acres at Birchgrove had already been granted). On 7 July 1801 Balmain transferred the grant to John Gilchrist for 5 shillings, presumably to repay a debt, before sailing for London where he died in 1803. Gilchrist, also a Scottish naval surgeon, never visited Australia, but worked in India, becoming an authority on Indian language and culture. For a time he was in a syndicate with Balmain importing rum to NSW, which was probably what led to his receiving Balmain's land. Gilchrist returned to England in 1804 and began subdividing his Sydney land in 1836. Soon afterwards, litigation from some of William Balmain's heirs challenged the 1801 land transfer and prevented further sales for about 15 years. Gilchrist died in 1841 but the ownership issue was not resolved until 1852. At that time the Balmain area's population was about 1400. In the next thirty years it rose to 17,000.

Best reached by water, Balmain also offered prime sites for maritime activity. Many of its first residents were mariners who built docks, wharfs and small maritime industries. Bridges in the 1880s, then trams in the 1890s improved land access but ferries remained the favoured transport mode. Most Sydney ferry companies began or operated from the peninsula and most of Sydney's ferries were built or maintained there. What began as a maritime area, quickly became an industrial one, particularly after the 1850s development of Morts Dock.

Radical working class politics arose from these industries and several early unions began in Balmain, including the Iron Workers and Waterside Workers. The first Branch of the Labor Electoral League, which became the Australian Labor Party, was formed in Balmain in 1891. Three Labor premiers - W.A. Holman, John Storey and Neville Wran - called Balmain home, as did other famous political figures such as William Morris Hughes, Dr H.V. Evatt, Sir John Kerr and Tom Uren.

Working class Balmain gave rise to an unusually high number of pubs and important sporting associations. Not surprisingly, sailing was one of the first, with the Balmain Regattas famous from 1849 until WWI. In the 1890s Balmain developed the 18 footer sailing boats with their flat-bottoms and

massive sails which needed crews of up to 15 to keep them ballasted. Balmain has the oldest remaining rowing club (1882); the oldest swimming pool and swimming club (1883); the oldest district cricket club (1897); the oldest Bowling Club (1879); and was the co-birthplace of Rugby League Football in 1908.

However, in the 1950s change set in. Industrial plants began to close or consolidate and shift to outer suburbs. This accelerated and between 1971 and 1984 more than half of the peninsula's industries closed. At the same time, and partly as a result, inner city housing became more attractive and the area began to change into middle class dormitory suburbs with rising real estate values. The new issues now were redevelopment. There was pressure on historic buildings, the character of the area and the streets, and proposals for large-scale housing development of the former industrial sites. Radical industrial action was replaced by radical resident action and vociferous and highly effective resident action groups arose to oppose development on their waterfronts and promote lifestyle, property value and community issues.

(10) The walk beyond the Iron Cove Bridge passes the large *Balmain Shores* apartment complex on the site of the former **Balmain Power Station**, of which the 1934 Pump House on the waterfront is about all that remains. The power station was established by the private Electric Light and Power Supply Corporation in 1909 and burnt garbage as well as coal to generate electricity. Doubled in size in the 1940s it was taken over by Electricity Commission in 1957. New coal fields stations replaced it and it was decommissioned in 1976 and finally demolished in 1998 to make way for the apartment development.

Just past the pump house, the adjacent apartment complex (*Balmain Cove*) stands on the site of Balmain Chemical Works: The Elliott Brothers, Frederick and James, bought this 18 acre site to establish Australia's first chemical and later pharmaceutical plant in 1866. They produced such things as sulphuric, nitric and hydrochloric acid; sulphate of iron; superphosphate of lime; and soap. Its dozen or so smokestacks poured out a rich mixture of odours and pollution into the surrounding harbour and houses. The plant became part of Drug Houses of Australia in 1929 and then in 1959 Monsanto bought the works. Its closure in 1989 opened the way for the massive remediation and redevelopment of these sites.

(11) Steps lead up past Balmain Campus of Sydney Secondary College. The school was opened as **Balmain High** in September 1979, appropriately enough, by Balmain boy and Premier, Neville Wran. The site had been Bell and Frazer Ltd's timber yard from the 1920s.

Longview and Broderick Streets evoke the charm of the area with their eclectic mix of timber and stone cottages homes of all shapes and sizes. In Elliott Street, *Braeside* (No 96), built in 1887, is immediately uphill from the Broderick Street intersection, a Victorian iron lace house built for stationer, John Dunlop. There were other fine mid-nineteenth century houses across the road and down towards the water, including two family houses of Elliotts linked to the chemical works. These sites were included in the 1950-55 Elliott and Phoebe St Housing Commission apartments at a time when several groups of three to five storey public housing units were built in parts of Balmain to replace 'slum housing'. *Nutrimetics* occupies the site of former timber companies and box makers.

(12) **Sommerville Point** (formerly Fig Tree Point) offers good views back to along the waterfront and the Elliott St Sydney Ferries wharf.

The waterfront reserve was used by boatbuilders such as W.H. Golding in the 1880s and others. Up at Phoebe Street note the decorative wall on the flats at No 3. Almost at the end of Tilba St, look up to see the rear of No 18 White St, *Tilba Tilba*, a Gothic stone house originally built in 1878 for FR Robinson.

(13) Just offshore is the smallest of the nearby islands, **Snapper Island**, is more easily seen from the Salton Reserve end of Arcadia Av. It was built up as a sea cadet training depot and a naval museum in the 1930s. It is now, like Cockatoo Island, controlled by the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust, but currently (2011) closed to the public. Looking across the water here from Cockatoo to Birchgrove, it is worth recalling the one prisoner who did escape from the Cockatoo Island Prison. This was the bushranger 'Captain Thunderbolt', Frederick Ward, who swam to freedom in 1863, undeterred by the rumours and actuality of sharks. Thunderbolt resumed his bushranging in the New England district, finally dying in a shootout with police in 1870.

(14) **Balmain Rowing Club**, at the bottom of White Street, dates from 1882 and is next to **Elkington Park**, originally White Horse Point Reserve, a Victorian-style formal park completed c1910. The Point gives excellent views of the three islands, Snapper, Spectacle and Cockatoo. It was probably to here that bushranger, Captain Thunderbolt, swam in his epic escape from Cockatoo Prison in 1863.

(15) Another epic Balmain swimmer is commemorated by the **Dawn Fraser Pool**, formerly the Balmain Pool, established as a tidal pool in 1883. Balmain Swimming Club is now the oldest in Australia. The pool was renamed in 1964 after Olympian Dawn Fraser who had learned to swim here. Fraser set 40 world swimming records and represented Australia at the 1956, 1960 and 1964 Olympics, winning 4 Olympic Gold and 4 silver medals. She was banned from competition after souveniring a flag from the Royal Palace in Tokyo at the 1964 Olympics. Fraser was publican of the nearby *Riverview Hotel* in the 1970s

and early '80s, and was also elected an Independent Member of State Parliament for Balmain from 1988 to 1991.

### *Day 3:3 - Elkington Park, Balmain to Yurulbin Point, Birchgrove*

The renovated waterfront beyond the Dawn Fraser Pool is on a site used by National Box Company which operated here from post WWI until the 1970s. The quarried cliff face shows signs of once attached buildings.

(16) More stimulating to the imagination is the extraordinary **cliff carving of Neptune**, Roman god of water and the sea, just beyond the dock and next to the stairs. Carved, apparently as a bit of guerilla sculpture by local artist Michael Clifton in 1977, it allegedly brought a threat of prosecution from the Council for defacing the cliff. Over subsequent years, most of the carving disappeared behind foliage until it was resurrected and the steps completed in 2009. A smaller amount of foliage now seems to contribute to Neptune's beard. The steps offer a close-up of the work as well as fine harbour views.

Fitzroy Avenue has a range of mostly Victorian houses such as No 40 *Irene Villa* (1886), and No 28 *Herbertville* (1891), as well as a pleasant park environment with views. Gow Street brings up another pleasantly mixed street with some attractive nineteenth century terraces and houses as well as modern apartments. Birchgrove Public School, at the end, opened in 1885. It had more than 1100 students enrolled by 1900 but now has about a quarter of that.

(17) Immediately ahead, the housing development is on the site of the **Balmain Coal Mine**, once the deepest coal mine in Australia. Two shafts of over 2000 feet were sunk from 1897 onwards, and named *Birthday* and *Jubilee*, after Queen Victoria's Birthday and Diamond Jubilee. Sydney Harbour Collieries Ltd began mining under the Harbour from 1903, operating 1,000m below the Simmons Point-Goat Island-Balls Head-Ballast Point area, which was reached by long drives from here. Up to 300 miners worked the colliery but coal quality was poor and the mine was dangerous and foul with gas. Men were lowered in a bucket-like elevator. In 1900, during the sinking of Birthday Shaft, the bucket tipped on a descent, dropping 5 men to their deaths. By 1931, 850,000 tons of coal had been extracted, but it was always marginal and with the Depression the mine was closed. Methane gas was drawn from it 1932-37 and again during WWII but explosions cost several lives including three lost attempting to seal it in 1945. The buildings were demolished in the 1950s and the mine flooded and sealed. The site was purchased for townhouse redevelopment in 1987.

*Hopetoun Quays*, the upmarket waterfront and marina development, together with the townhouses, replace the coal mine, an old slipway and the 1970s-80s Howard Smith coal wharf.

(18) **Balmain Sailing Club** at the end, below Water Street, was established in 1885, sailing the small boats which developed into the famous 18 footers in the 1890s.

River Street is another charming mixture of cottages, many set at interesting angles to the street (or below it at water level), the first, at No 2, being an 1880s stone house. Cove Street (called Iron Cove Road until 1880) also had a ferry wharf operating well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A cutting and steps still lead to a wharf.

The suburban boundary of Birchgrove began back at the Primary School, but the Birchgrove Estate, which is the core of the suburb, and which was the only part of the peninsula *not* included in Dr Balmain's 1800 grant, begins at Cove Street. Private George Whitfield (NSW Corps) had been given a 30 acre grant here at Snails Bay in 1796 which was acquired by Lt John Birch, paymaster of Macquarie's 73<sup>rd</sup> Regt in 1810. Birch built a two-storey shingle roofed sandstone house, *Birch Grove House*, which became the first residence on the Balmain peninsula. It sat quietly with its estate of orchards and vegetable gardens, cattle and old convict huts, barely disturbed until 1860 when its then owner, Didier Numa Joubert, from Hunters Hill, began its subdivision, naming streets after members of his family.

In the subdivided area a mixture of houses, many of quality, appeared over the years, and *Birch Grove House* itself survived on its shrinking block until 1967. In the twentieth century a significant scattering of maritime industry developed along the shoreline, all of it gone by century's end as real estate values escalated.

(19) Louisa Road is the premier road of Birchgrove. Always a mixture and, until recently, containing a significant amount of industry, it has become the (multi-) millionaires' row of the Balmain area. **Nos 12 and 14 Louisa Rd** were amongst the first lots sold in 1860 by Joubert. No 12 *Keba*, was built in 1878 by solicitor Maurice Fitzhardinge and No 14 *Lenardville*, in 1876. Originally *Vidette*, it was the home of another solicitor, William Abbott, 1876-1903. There is a stone well near the front fence. At No 24, *Logan Brae* (c1917), is an elaborate Federation / Queen Ann style house originally called *Newlands*. Built by timber merchant Harold Driscoll, this was from 1923 to 1927 the family home of coal merchant and

shipowner, Robert William Miller (1879-1958). In 1908, this Scots-born seaman bought a punt and a second-hand tug, and won the contract to remove spoil from the Balmain Colliery. Instead of dumping the spoil at sea, Miller sold it to councils and contractors as road base. Thus began developing the RW Miller Company with its empire of tugs and lighters, sixty miler coal ships (which carried coal from Newcastle, unloading at Birchgrove and Blackwattle Bay), coal mines, brewing and hotels. Although Miller himself moved to Vacluse, company associations with Birchgrove continued until the 1980s. One of his sixty miler ships was *Birchgrove Park*, a 640 tonner which sank off Barrenjoey in August 1951 with the loss of 10 of its crew of 14 seamen.

No 38 was the site of the tramway and wharf of a coal yard which became J Gibson Engineering Works 1908, a concrete brick factory and finally a furniture store demolished in the 1950s for units. The latest apartment incarnation for the site epitomises the exceptional range of architectural styles to be found in Louisa Rd. No 44, also on part of the coal yard site, was built in the 1890s as *Fitzroy House*, a large 1890s Victorian terrace with a widows walk, and five stories high at the back. It was the home of John Gibson who had his engineering business on the waterfront behind the house. A later owner, a timber merchant called Driscoll, renamed it *The Anchorage* in the 1920s. A plaque on the wall giving details was donated by a more recent musician owner.

(20) Another plaque, at No 67, indicates the site of *Birch Grove House*. Lt Birch left NSW in 1814 with his regiment, and the house went through a series of owners until Didier Numa Joubert acquired it in 1854, beginning its subdivision in 1860. It took several subdivisions before all the land was sold by 1911, part of it going to Birchgrove Park. The house changed owners several more times but survived until its demolition in 1967 at which time it was the third oldest house left in Australia. A few years later, changing attitudes about heritage would almost certainly have ensured its survival.

Pairs of houses seem to dominate the next part of the street, ranging in age and style from mid-1880s Victorian to early twentieth century Federation. No 76, *Douglas*, is a stone Victorian rustic Gothic house with a 'Juliette balcony' built in 1881 by orchardist and sawmillier, John Lord. From 1883 to 1887 it was the home of cartoonist, engraver and lithographer, Eugene Montague (Monty) Scott, cartoonist for magazines and papers such as the Sydney Punch and Illustrated Sydney News. No 85 *Geierstein*, was built by Alexander W Cormack (b1837), a cooper, in the mid-1880s in the Victorian Italianate style. Cormack had a galvanising workshop for his cooperage on Long Nose Point.

Mid 1980s townhouses at Nos 88-98a replaced the Storey and Keers boatbuilding firm which operated there until early in the 1980s. The site had been owned by George Hudson, timber merchant, from 1923, before Gilbert and Norman Storey bought it, opening their shipwright and engineering works there in 1941. Nos 91-97 were the site of George Hancock and Sons boatbuilders from 1917 to the 1930s and, finally Banks Marine, one of the last of the Birchgrove shipyards to go.

No 109, built in 1899, was the home H.D. Stevens and proprietor of Campbell Lighterage, a tug company which operated out of Louisa Road, 1927-62. Both it and No 111 are multiple buildings on large former industrial sites. No 111 was the location of the Cobalt Ore Refining Company from 1885 to 1887. The site was subsequently used by at least five different paint works including Dampney's Paint Works (1902-12) and Major Brothers and Company (1920-28), as well as Campbell Lighterage's tugs in the 1930s.

(21) **Yeroulbin Street**, originally Wharf Road and later Ferry Lane, leads to a small waterfront reserve. Next to it, **No 113**, is an interesting glass-dome topped modern art deco style house. In 1861 a house called *Fairlea* was built here, its name changed to *Abbeville* in 1903. *Abbeville* was bought in 1923 by RW Miller (see No 24 Louisa Rd), coal and shipping merchants, who established a depot there for their sixty miler coal ships from Newcastle. In the 1930s Millers apparently acquired Jubilee Engineering Co and moved it here from Camerons Cove. Jubilee Engineering serviced the Miller fleet which, from 1970s, included oil tankers, as well as ships of other companies, as it was by then the largest privately owned ship repair facility in Australia. *Abbeville* had been demolished in the 1950s because of Jubilee's expansion. By 1987 Howard Smith Ltd had acquired 100% of shares in RW Miller and in turn both companies were absorbed into Coal and Allied Ltd. The Jubilee site was shut down, opening it for the present housing development.

The grandly-set No 144 was built in 1883 by Duncan Smith. Georgian in style with additions, it was later owned by a Miss Rachel Wells, from whence the name *Raywell* derives.

(22) **No 146** had been the site of a house, *Tabak* (1861) demolished in 1913. From 1904 the railways department ran submarine power cables across the Harbour floor to provide power for north shore trams. With the opening of its White Bay power station in 1913, the department started to build an under-**Harbour tunnel between Long Nose and Manns Point** – a distance of only 300 metres - to provide a more reliable power connection. The entrance was at Numa Street. Leaks and other problems complicated work and the intended two-year project took 12 years and cost 16 times the original cost estimate, finally opening in 1926. Later it was allowed to flood although it stayed in use until 1969. Until recent years a

corrugated iron shed stood above its entrance at 146 Louisa Road but it now has a contemporary house constructed over it. Behind No 146 Louisa Road, at No 2 Numa Street, is the expanded 1885 house originally called *Longsight*, then later *Seaview*, and later still *Esperance*. The houses' occupant from 1909 to 1919 was Reverend Albert Rivett, a Congregational Minister and well-known peace activist. A look down to the water at the end of Numa Street shows the extent of quarrying that occurred on the point from the 1860s onwards.

No 150, the last house in Louisa Road, is a fine Federation / Queen Anne style home built in 1897 for Charles Niccol. The house was restored in the mid 1980s after a stint as the headquarters of the Bandido Bikie Gang. The bikies were evicted after being involved in the infamous 1984 Milperra Massacre - a gun battle with the rival Comancheros Gang on Fathers Day at the Viking Tavern in Milperra which left 7 dead.

**(23) Yurulbin Point** (formerly Long Nose Point) is the tip of this narrow spit of land. It marks the start of the Parramatta River and its Wharf has regular services to Circular Quay and Woolwich. The first industry to be established at the Point after its original Wangal Aboriginal occupants faded away was a galvanised iron works built by cooper, Alexander Cormack. The site was further developed by Wallace Powerboat Building Co in 1917-20 and then Morrison and Sinclairs moved their shipbuilding yard here from Johnstons Bay in 1923. The firm built wooden hulled Sydney ferries, yachts and naval vessels, gaining a high reputation for their work. One of the yachts built about 1945 is one of Sydney's most famous - *Morna*, later *Kurrewa IV*, which won line honours 7 times from 10 starts in Sydney-Hobart races. After the shipyard closed, the site was purchased by the State Planning Authority in 1971 and turned into a park by 1979 through an award-winning landscape treatment by Bruce McKenzie (see Illoura Reserve also). The Morrison and Sinclair stone slipway and dock remain at the point.

### *Day 3:4 - Yurulbin Point, Birchgrove to Balmain (Thames St) Wharf*

The bay in front of Birchgrove Park is named Snails Bay, possibly after molluscs found there. Its deep water makes it a suitable mooring site and the many concrete dolphins in the bay were built as lay-off berths for timber carriers to unload logs onto lighters or into the water for towing to harbourside timberyards.

**(24) Atmospheric Birchgrove Park** was created by a trust set up in 1882 which filled in the Snails Bay mudflats. Funding was limited and progress was slow, but the park was completed with its tennis pavilion and cricket and football grandstand by 1904. Deloitte Avenue (the waterfront walkway) commemorates QL Deloitte, a park trustee 1884-1929, and a rowing and cricket patron. In 1907 a Rugby League was formed in Sydney because the existing Rugby Union would only accept amateur players and would not cover players' expenses or injuries. On 20 April 1908 the new League's first four games were played between its eight new teams. Two of the matches were at Birchgrove Oval (Balmain defeated Western Suburbs 24-0) and the others at Wentworth Park. The oval became the early home of the Balmain Tigers. A couple of decades later, an attendance record for a suburban oval was set when Donald Bradman batted here for St George against Balmain.

**(25) Grove Street** (originally Birch Grove Road) is also the southeastern boundary of the original Birchgrove Estate, although the modern suburb continues to the southern boundary of Mort Bay Park. At the water end of Grove Street is a park named for eminent Russian scientist, Nicholas de Mikluoho-Maclay (1846-88), who lived for a time in *Wyoming* (No 25 Wharf Road) in 1884. The first European to explore the north coast of New Guinea, Mikluoho-Maclay established a marine biology station at Watsons Bay. His wide-ranging scientific pursuits included botany, linguistics, anthropology and the Victorian 'science' of phrenology – the study of head shapes and bumps to determine mental capacity and personality.

Edging along the Snails Bay waterfront, Wharf Road rather naturally also attracted its share of waterfront industry until the end of the twentieth century. No 43 is *Clovernook*, 1873 home of A. Elkington, Mayor of Balmain 1875-99. Across the road, Nos 34-36 are c1870s *Exeter Villas - Lynworth* and *Glendon*. However the eye is naturally drawn to the impressive gothic house behind and above at 73 Ballast Point Road, the 1870s *Clifton Villa*.

Back on the water side, No 39 is *Ravenscourt*, built in 1875 as home for barrister L. O'Brien and altered to a Victorian Italianate style after his departure, in 1888. Standing imposingly on the opposite side again is No 22, *Yarildun*, with its impressive Victorian Italianate iron lace and small widows walk. It was built by architect E.H. Buchanan as his own home in 1885. No 25a is *Wyoming*, c1880, home of QL Deloitte, a founder of Birchgrove Park, but also for part of 1884, the residence of the scientist, Mikluoho-Maclay.

(26) No 19 was the last marine site left in the road but has now been redeveloped. However, the **Stannards Wharf** viewing platform incorporated in the development under the framework of the old lifting gear, offers an interesting glimpse of Snails Bay as well as of the site. From 1909 this was the site of Nicholson Harbour Transport, boatbuilders who eventually became the largest private ferry service in the Harbour and built, maintained and operated a fleet of tugs, lighters and other watercraft. The first successful ferry built by John Nicholson in 1911 was called 'Promise' and thereafter all Nicholson boats had names starting with 'Pro' (eg. Probe, Process, Proclaim, Prospect, Provide, etc). Nicholson also manufactured equipment such as anchors, and fitted out smaller ships. Nicholson moved to the site and acquired the still extant house at No 19 in 1913. In 1967 the company was taken over by Stannard Brothers, so that they had at that stage more than 45 tugs, ferries and workboats in service. Stannards were later taken over by Waratah tugs which had become part of Adsteam (formerly Adelaide Steamships).

The roads meet at Ballast Point. No 1 Ballast Point Road *Lerna*, 1881, was originally the home of bank manager, John Waugh, but was also lived in by the Cameron Family from *Ewenton* (featured in Day 4, Section 4:2 of the Harbour Circle notes).

(27) **Ballast Point** was opened as Ballast Point Harbour Park (*Walama*) in 2009 by Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority (SHFA) and designed by McGregor + Coxall Landscape Architects. The imaginative displays of this 2.6ha, \$11million, landmark park tell the story and illustrate its archaeology. Wind turbines create energy on site. The land was bought from John Gilchrist in 1840 by George Cooper (soon to reappear in the Balmain story) but he soon lost it because of mortgage payment shortages. Part of the Point was quarried for sailing ships' ballast, giving it its name. Clothing merchant Thomas Perkins acquired the site in 1852 and built a large house, *Menevia*, on the site but by 1893 *Menevia* was being leased as a boarding house and steadily fell into disrepair. In 1928, Texaco Oil bought the site, demolished *Menevia*, and established an oil terminal and grease plant with many storage tanks from 1929. This operated continuously, eventually under Caltex ownership, until closed in 1999.

Walker Corporation proposed to develop apartments on the site but met local opposition. In 2002 the State Government compulsorily acquired the site. An ongoing legal challenge ensued, regarding compensation for the proposed developers. Demolition of buildings and site remediation began in 2005.

Yeend Street Wharf offers an excellent viewpoint of the whole of Morts Bay, formerly Waterview Bay. At different times the wharf has been a ferry wharf and depot, and steamers' coal wharf.

(28) Morts Bay (formerly Waterview Bay) was the site of **Morts Dry Dock**. It was renamed after the death of Thomas Sutcliffe Mort in 1878, a fitting tribute to a man and enterprise that had more impact on Balmain than any other. Born in Lancashire in 1816, Mort came to NSW in 1838. Wool merchant, pastoralist and shipping shareholder, in 1854 he and Captain TS Rowntree formed a partnership to develop a dry dock in Waterview Bay. The 122m by 15.5m dock was excavated mostly by pick and shovel and was operational by 1861. Eventually three slipways were also developed. In 1872 the firm was formally incorporated as Mort's Dock and Engineering Company and had expanded into building steam locomotives, bridge works, mining machines, pipes and other engineering equipment. Mort also supported the development of refrigerated shipping and developed a 15,000 hectare dairying estate at Bodalla, where he died in 1878. By 1900 the 7 hectare works was the largest privately owned employer in NSW with over 1300 workers. Two years earlier it had also taken over the Woolwich shipyard and floating dock of Atlas Engineering and had begun building the largest dry dock in Australia at Woolwich (See Day 2, Section 2:5).

Morts Dock not only covered the area of the present park but all the public housing on its northwestern and southeastern edges as well. In addition, Mort had bought up land around the dockyard, selling it off as he needed additional capital for expansion or, originally, giving freehold blocks to entice workers to the site. A workers town of 700 lots developed as *Mort's Town of Waterview* in the 1870s to the dock's northwest. The scale of the enterprise and the size of the workforce had a major social and economic influence on Balmain, transforming Balmain from a small maritime village to one of the most important industrial suburbs in Australia. It also transformed urban unionism, and its industrial impact was a major reason why unions such as the Amalgamated Society of Engineers and Balmain Labourers Union and eventually the ALP itself were formed in Balmain.

During WWII the yard manufactured naval vessels including 4 frigates, 14 corvettes and several other ships but the end of the war also saw a decline in engineering demand from which the company never recovered. Operations were closed down in November 1958, signaling the beginning of the end for industrial Balmain.

By the late 1960s, the shift to containerization began which would change ports – and the size of ships – radically. Container handling required access by the much larger ships to large flat hard wharf space. To meet the new need, the Australian National Line (ANL), then still owned by the Federal Government, took over Morts Dock. They filled in the dock and cleared the buildings, opening their container facility there

in 1968. The first container ships arrived in Sydney Harbour in 1969. ANL also operated its Tasmanian Car Ferry from the Yeend Street end. However, the site had problems with water depth for the larger ships while road access through Balmain's narrow streets was difficult and caused great reaction from residents. In 1979 the facility was closed and ANL containers moved to Botany Bay.

The site was now available again. A proposal for public housing led to another local fight resulting in a compromise in 1986 of part public housing and part park. The new 1980s-90s developments in McKell Street and in College and Trouton Streets are a contrast in style with the public housing of the 1950s seen at Elliott Street or Nicholson Street.

Within the park, the outline of the dry dock can clearly be seen, and the steel and concrete caisson which opened or shut the dock for flooding and ship access is locked in at the dock's head. The newer concrete flat wharf and piers date from the later ANL container and car ferry era. There is no sign of the long slipways which once ran from just below the junction of Ballast Point Road and Short Street, through the now public housing area and out into the bay.

(29) Beyond the park, the suburb of Balmain is re-entered. **Thames Street Wharf** dates from the 1860s. Public baths were also located here in the 1880s and 90s. From Thames Street around to Ewenton Park on Camerons Cove was the area sold in the late 1830s from John Gilchrist's Balmain land. Most of the land was sold to speculators who generally either quickly resold or who overextended themselves and went down with the economic crash of the 1840s. The largest early holding was accumulated by George Cooper, Comptroller of Customs - a total of 20 hectares, including the tip of Ballast Point. This included *Waterview House*, the only house in the area, apparently built by Gilchrist's agent, Frederick Parbury, about 1835. However, the 1840s depression cost Cooper his holdings and his mortgagees successfully subdivided the estate over the next few years.

### *Day 3:5 - Balmain (Thames St) Wharf to Balmain East Wharf*

(30) The **junction of Trouton, Campbell and Wells Streets** is a streetscape very characteristic of old Balmain. Nos 1-7 Trouton Street are a former corner shop and dockworkers terrace from around 1875. Wells Street gets its name from a well owned by the Yeend Family whose 1880s former shop and terrace start the street. Further along, opposite the end of Wells Street, No 49 Waterview Street is an attractive house built about 1855 by Captain William Henry Sawyer whose wharves stretched along the bay. Indeed until recent years almost this whole waterfront was a series of shipyards.

(31) Waterview Street still leads down to **Sydney Ferries Balmain Shipyard** which includes Balmain's last dry dock. The site was established about 1890 by Balmain Ferry Company as a depot, ferry wharf and ferry coaling wharf but through amalgamations and government takeovers, has become the present Ferries Corporation maintenance and training base.

(32) Caroline Lane runs alongside the Sydney Ferries Depot to the waterfront of the former **Colgate Palmolive** plant. The American Palmolive Company opened its Balmain soap factory in 1923. The site was enlarged over time, the workforce reaching 144 by 1925. The company bought and demolished some surrounding houses, especially in the early 1950s, to further expand, producing soap, toothpaste, shaving cream and brilliantine and other products at "the Olive", as it was known locally. The corporate name changed to Colgate-Palmolive in 1953. In 1993-94 the Balmain site was closed and manufacture taken up by more modern and better located plants, and the main buildings were converted into apartments.

(32) No 7 Cooper Street is the tug base of Waratah / **Adsteam Harbour Sydney**, now after many amalgamations, part of one of the biggest private tug operators in the world, and the last of the many tug operators once based in Balmain when Sydney was a great working harbour. In the nineteenth century the Balmain Council Pier was here and, during WWI, it was the work site of a shipbuilder called George Washington. In the 1840s the Hunter River Inn was on the western side of the street but it and most of the workers cottages were demolished early in the twentieth century for industrial developments. These included Buzacott & Co, Machinery Merchants and Manufacturers and Ships Chandlers, who also established Hercules Oil Engine Works in 1906 and the Cyclone Gate factory in 1910. In the 1960s and 70s Cavanaghs Saw Mill and Sydney Slipway & Engineering Company operated in the vicinity. Nearer to Darling Street an atmospheric group of stone buildings remains, including a house from the 1850s and tin sheds, which strongly evoke the former atmosphere of the street.

(33) The western corner with **Darling Street**, No 145, was the site of a wooden Presbyterian Church built by Reverend Dunmore Lang in 1842. One of its early ministers was a Lutheran, Johann Handt, who had reputedly introduced pineapples into Queensland. In 1857 its Minister, Reverend Gordon, criticised some

of the congregation for attending the opera, causing half the congregation to depart to set up a second Presbyterian church. Across Darling Street, the Balmain Bowling Club is Australia's oldest bowling club (1879) still on its original site. The eastern Cooper Street corner of Darling Street begins a short run of interesting houses, Nos 143-141 being original 1840s stone cottages, while No 139 is a meticulously hewn building under apparently perpetual construction. No 137 had its origins as a one-storey weatherboard cottage in the early 1850s and was a shop for a time in the 1870s to 1880s.

**(34) Hart St and its waterfront** were the location of various boat building works including Chapmans Slipway and Engineering in the 1920s. Captain Rowntree's warehouse, wharf and floating dock were here from the 1870s onwards. Balmain Council first met in Rowntree's buildings, but they were in ruins by 1969 and were demolished. Little remains to recall its industry other than the ships' propellers in the park and a couple of older cottages in Gilchrist Place, itself a new development.

Street naming hereabouts often recalls early landowners, many of them sea captains, like Cooper. Several had their fingers burned in the 1840s depression after overambitious borrowing to purchase these prime areas of waterfront. Part of Cooper's land was bought by Captain Robert Duke who built a stone cottage here, 1837-41. Duke's financial collapse was spectacular, bringing dozens of creditors into ruin as well as himself. The *Sydney Morning Herald* of 14 May 1842 announced his insolvent debts at 175,239 pounds, nine shillings and ninepence – the equivalent of at least \$25 million today.

Duke Street starts as steeply as Captain Duke's debt. **No 33, Clarenook**, at the Duke Place corner, is an early survivor, started about 1844 by William John Row, Government Printer, and completed in 1857 by Scottish builder Peter McBeath. Most of the other earlier houses have been demolished and there is no sign now of early enterprises such as Andrew Reynolds's 1840s boatyard and wharf, Harry West's sailmaking loft, Waterview Slip and Power Boat Company, or Henry Roberts' Marine Renovating Company.

**(35) Origlass Park**, reached through the lane between Nos 31 and 27, was named 1995 after an uncompromising local ironworker, unionist and activist, Nick Origlass (1908-96). Origlass was expelled from several political parties and unions for the stands he took and was a Leichhardt Councillor for 35 years, about 6 of them as Mayor.

The public housing in Nicholson Street was built 1947-51. Building the flats at a time when most of the Balmain was considered a slum, meant little thought was given to the early homes that were demolished in the process. *Durham House*, built by Captain John Nicholson in 1840, stood on this site. Nicholson was Sydney's first Harbour Master, but he too was a victim of the 1840s depression.

**(36) Nicholson Street Public School** was established in 1883 under the 1880 Public Instruction Act. It was designed by government architect William Kemp in a free classical design thought to be more suited to secular public education. Always the smallest of the Balmain area's public schools, it now has about 130 students. A former student was Neville Wran, Premier of NSW in the 1970s and 80s.

**(37) The Zig Zag walkway** at the bottom of Nicholson Street was in existence before 1900 but during the Adelaide Steamship years (from 1900 onwards) casual workers would wait here of a morning (on zigs or zags according to their trade) hoping for daily employment in the works. The **Waterview Wharf Workshops** are the last remaining original maritime industrial buildings on Morts Bay. In the 1880s the Burns Timber Company built workshops, mills and a wharf on the waterfront site but the company collapsed in the 1890s depression. The Adelaide Steamship Company bought the site in 1900 and rebuilt the workshops as a ship maintenance and repair base for their fleet. Large-scale work could be done here even though there was no slipway or dry dock. In 1968 the company ceased operation here and eventually most of the wharf was demolished. The buildings remained as arts and craft studios and other small business activities. Preservation and restoration has retained the structural and industrial elements and allowed the continuation of small business use.

**(38) James Simmons** bought the **Simmons Point** area in the first sale of Gilchrist land in 1836, and his son-in-law Gustave Wangerheim eventually subdivided the land, Burns Timber Company buying the largest portion. The park at the point was established in 1977 on part of the site of the Adelaide Steamship Company wharves. Several of the houses in Simmons Street come from just after the 1880s subdivision. No 13, *Winnifredville*, was built by Herbalist, Dr Alexander Cole. It was bought by the ASC in 1903, renamed *Kenilworth*, and used as staff accommodation until privately purchased in 1973.

**(39) Ferries** or other small craft constantly slip through the narrow channel between Simmons Point and **Goat Island** (or Mel Mel, 'meaning 'the eye', as it was known to Sydney Aborigines). The island was worked as a convict quarry in the 1820s and 1830s when a number of sandstone military buildings – a magazine, guard house, officers' quarters and others – were built by convicts. Sydney's first Water Police station was also established on the island in 1838 but the prison was moved to nearby Cockatoo Island in 1838-39. It was then used as a military and civilian explosives store until these were moved to other sites

over the period 1884-1900. In 1900 the island was hastily converted into a bacteriological station during Sydney's bubonic plague outbreak. Transferred to the new Sydney Harbour Trust and with other buildings added, it became a major depot. From 1919 the Trust operated a shipyard with slipways and workshops which built and maintained harbour craft for the Trust and the Water Police. In 1936 the Trust was replaced by the Maritime Services Board. The MSB began to offer tours of the island in the 1980s but in 1990 sold Goat Island to the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and it has been part of Sydney Harbour National Park since 1995. In more recent years, the island has been used as a film and TV set and a rock concert venue. A conservation plan has recently been developed to guide future use and access.

Gallimore Avenue parallels the waterfront of some of Balmain's earliest and most intense maritime industry, although there is no evidence now of its string of shipwrights, wharves and sailmakers that were there from the 1840s onwards. Between School Street and Brett Avenue, Balmain's most famous sailmakers, E. H. Brett & Sons, operated from 1906, expanding, as sailing ships became rarer, into production of pleasure craft sails, flags, rigging and as a ships chandler. They moved to Darling Street in 1960 and the waterfront buildings were demolished for housing. The water end of **Lookes Avenue** was the site chosen by Joseph Looke to set up Balmain's first boatbuilding yard in 1838. Around the wharf and slipway, the Lookes created a small family community. Some of the houses remain, though difficult to identify amidst the mixture of flats and extensions and laneways. **No 15** was Joseph Lookes' house, originally built about 1844 and called *Radcliffe House*.

**Thornton Park** is a former tannery and distillery site and a park since 1921, named for Reginald Thornton, a former Balmain Mayor.

(40) The **Balmain East Wharf** has been the main Balmain wharf since the 1840s. It sits at the end of Darling Street, the spine of Balmain. Watermen offered the first services on demand in small rowing skiffs or sailing dinghies - effectively water taxis. The first regular public ferry services were established later by Henry Perdriau. The building closest to the wharf (No 10) was once the *Dolphin Hotel*, which opened in 1844, but became the *Shipwrights Arms* soon after when it was owned by Shipwright John Bell. It continued meeting the needs of thirsty travellers facing the steep incline ahead until losing its licence in 1966. Uphill on the opposite corner, No 12, is *Waterman's Cottage*, a stone cottage built in 1841 and later home to 'waterman' Henry McKenzie, who rowed passengers to Millers Point in the decades around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Electric trams were extended down to the Darling Street wharf early in the twentieth century, operating until 1954. For the steep incline from Nicholson Street to the wharf, a cable-operated under-road counterweight system was used to slow the trams on their descent and push them on the ascent.