

BALMORAL MEMORIES

POSTED BY: **Les 'Tummy' Kewin**
STREETS: **The Esplanade, Esther Road**
TIME: **1920s – 1930s**

For my name and memory, I leave it to men's charitable speeches and to foreign nations, and the next ages.

Frances Bacon 1561 – 1626.

My memories of Balmoral, Mosman

I was born in a little country town called Pericoe near the Victorian border. The Kewin Family moved to Balmoral in Mosman when I was six months of age in 1921 in the early Depression years, my memories from 4 years of age will never fade nor be forgotten. I was number three in a family of five brothers and sisters, Bertha, Gwen, Ken, myself Les (Tummy) and Jack. My father passed away when I was just 3 years old and only 6 weeks before my youngest brother Jack was born, so I grew up knowing the tough times as well as the good times during my early years at Balmoral Beach. With the most wonderful Mother and family I had bestowed upon me and with all my very good friends my very early years were truly spent in paradise.

Early recollections at the time were of *Braemar House* on the corner Lawry Parade (The Esplanade). *Braemar House* was a restaurant and dance hall. Next door was the amusement park with swings, slippery dip, hoop-la and many more show time games.

There was a merry-go-round, (with no engine in those days) it was pulled around by a little black horse that we kids and everybody loved. In later years the amusement park was made into tennis courts, a popular sport of the day, but now is developed into homes that exist along the Balmoral waterfront.

I clearly remember Dermot Graves riding to school just above the top of Esther Road. We used to swim the horses along past Joels Boatshed.

The 1920s and '30s of the Music Hall Charleston era, the Dance Halls along The Esplanade four in all were *Braemar*, *The Astor*, *Lavos* and *Featherstone* behind the fish and chip shop and also the butcher shop. As kids we would climb on the vacant block of land next door and watch the adults dancing and being entertained with music of the times.

During this period in time the Mini-Golf craze courses were the rage, actually there were four mini-golf courses at Balmoral at the time in the middle of the Great Depression. There

were many empty houses and flats in the area at this particular time. I met my childhood sweetheart Joan during early boyhood days, we grew up together and have been married now for 67 years. We have four daughters, nine grandchildren and 9 great grandchildren. We have lived in 15 different homes in this area but many do not exist to day.

There were quite a few quaint and different characters who lived at Balmoral then, one I remember clearly. He was "Dublin Tom", well known he was and is mentioned in Mosman Library photos. He lived in a cave just past where the Sea Scouts Building now stands.

Before the trams started to run to Balmoral, the area was served by white buses run by the White Transit Bus Company their depot was on the corner of Military and Cowles Road at Spit Junction. Many the times when there were too many passengers the men would have to get out and walk up Raglan Street to Military Road from Cullen's Corner. Ladies remained on board. As kids we would hang onto the spare wheel at the back of the bus and scale a ride up Raglan Street, on our way to school.

There were some friends my age during the 1920s and '30s. There were the Wylie boys Ronnie and Lennie plus Billy James all from Almore Street. We had common back fences and large backyards that went through to Esther Road. Our neighbours were the three Ford brothers, the Pethebridges, Frank and Ted (Bubba), plus my two brothers Ken and Jack and we all played together. There are not many of my old friends now left in Mosman.

As a young boy I had an 8 foot canvas canoe. I would paddle over to Grotto Point lighthouse wharf, dive from the wharf that existed. I would look back at the expanse of the whole escarpment "Balmoral Slopes," impressions never to be forgotten. We young fellows growing up in Mosman were surely rich with natural gems.

With my mates we would sneak around the rocks at the southern end to swim in Cavill's Baths, which were the old converted septic tanks. These came from the house up on the hill that had sewerage connected, where as we, living on the flat area at Balmoral we still had an out back dunny, removed once a week by the "Dunny-Man".

Mosman had a nine hole golf course at the time on Middle Head commandeered by the Navy during WW2 and it still exists, it is HMAS Penguin. The old clubhouse still remains. With my friends we would wait in the bush and fox for golf balls rolling off the fairways show the golfers where they were, even sell them ones we found, this was one of the ways we could earn enough to go to the "Fliks on Saterdee Arvo." Money was scarce but we survived.

One particular time I remember the finding of an Aboriginal skeleton during the building of the promenade.

Shearers Baths at the ferry wharf and Joel's boatshed I remember well. **Large notices were displayed at the time - Ladies and Gents Mixed bathing Prohibited before 12 o'clock, the**

order of the day. James's Dressing Sheds also existed at that end next to the Balmoral Beach Club.

Another of the buildings creating much interest at the time was the Amphitheatre built by the religious sect "Star of the East." It ended up in controversy, built with money contributed by selling seats to view the second coming of Christ through Sydney Heads and was also used for musical and vaudeville shows at weekends during depression years. It was demolished and a large block of flats erected at the far end of Edward's Beach.

Both my wife and I served in the Australian Army during the war years myself 4 years and Joan for three years.

I was a Butcher by trade having served my time at the well known shop of Pistola's situated Military Road at the junction of Middle Head, Bradley's Head and Prince Albert Streets towards the Beuna Vista Hotel and opposite Jewke's Chemist Shop. Joan and I have been married now for 67 years with the Kewin Clan spread around still holding the values born while growing up in Mosman during the Depression Years. Being Mosmanian and in conclusion...

'A Mother's Hope'

*Youth fades; Love droops;
The leaves of friendship fall;
A mother's secret hope outlives them all.*

O.W. Holmes

— posted by Les 'Tummy' Kewin, Thursday January 29, 2009

COMMENTS

I think this is a wonderful letter posted by my Father re his Mosman Memories

— posted by Jacqui Parsons, Tuesday February 10, 2009, 3:09:50 PM #

Wonderful memories from a wonderful man & an even better Dad.

— posted by Karen McCann, Friday February 13, 2009, 4:43:32 PM #

Hi, My parent managed Joels Boatshed around 1942-1946. He looked after the boats and mum operated the kiosk at the entrance. I used to play or have lunch with anybody that turned up on the beach. A wonderful place, and sorry to see the boatshed gone. I remember I was not allowed to go up to the top workshop overlooking the baths at certain times as I believe a little nude bathing used to go on. Many fond memories of Balmoral and Raglan Street Mosman.

– posted by Kay Francis, Sunday March 22, 2009, 4:07:51 PM #

Billy James was or is my uncle. My mom was Betty. Other siblings were Foncie, Josie, Jack, Molly and Peggy. From what I recall no one used their real names. I know Billy was “Reg”. Betty was “Claire”. You might be able to help with the others.

– posted by Peter O'Donnell, Friday April 24, 2009, 3:25:30 AM #

Les thank you for your wonderful memories of Balmoral. Mine were of a later date mainly the late 50s. My sister and I almost lived at the beach in Summer. Getting up early and running down the hill past Queenwood Girls school, thongs slapping the pavement, hair blowing in the breeze with the lure of the Summer King tide spurring us onward. We didn't stop 'till we dove into the crystal clear water. Mostly we had the whole beach to ourselves.

– posted by Rhonda Blunt nee Higgerson, Saturday September 5, 2009, 3:14:33 PM #