

**LEICHHARDT:
On The Margins of the City**
**A social history of Leichhardt and the former municipalities of
Annandale, Balmain and Glebe**

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Industry and commerce (pp121-129)

To the west of the city, Balmain's deep and sheltered waterfront suited boatbuilders and repairers who moved there in the early 1840s, and an associated enterprise, timber milling, came in the wake of the boatbuilders.' The number of industries operating in the Balmain and Glebe districts in the 30 years after 1840 was relatively small – boatbuilders and repairers, an abattoir, tannery and other animal-based concerns, a chemical works, boot-making factory and small brick kilns on the periphery of these emerging villages. The government resumed land for a public abattoir at Glebe Island in 1850, and within a decade tanners, tripe-makers and soap and candle manufacturers were operating in close proximity to the abattoir. Glebe Island abattoirs, two long sandstone buildings, one to slaughter sheep, and the other for cattle, stood out on the landscape. Agitation for removal of the abattoir became more strident with residential expansion, culminating in lengthy parliamentary inquiries in 1878 and 1903. Construction of a new abattoir at Homebush Bay was authorised in 1906 to replace Glebe Island: 'a noxious nuisance ... a source of serious loss to the government ... and hopelessly out of repair!' It had gone by 1916.

The office and sawmill at Mort's Dock, Balmain, c. 1905. The dock was the largest single private employer in nineteenth century Sydney, with about 1,350 workers. (*Mort's Dock 50 Years Ago and Today, 1905*)

Captain T.S. Rowntree came ashore in 1853 and acquired land at Waterview Bay for a slipway. Rowntree had transacted business with T.S. Mort, who, impressed with the sheltered bay, joined the captain in a new venture. They initiated construction of a dry dock at Waterview Bay in 1854 and this was hailed as an 'example of individual enterprise conducted with unflinching vigour!' By 1861 the dock was being leased to various shipping companies, ship repairers and engineers. Mort became directly involved in the dock's operation from 1866 and poured in new capital to build iron and brass foundries, a patent slip and new facilities for boilermaking, blacksmithing and engineering. J.P. Franki became dock manager in 1867, and his experience in railway and mining engineering drew orders for the manufacture of equipment for sugar crushing and refining, and retorts for mining and refrigeration. A feature of the dock throughout the 1870s was the more general nature of engineering work it undertook.



Mort saw piece-work as a means of increasing profit and 'breaking down' wages, though in 1870 he did offer foremen and leading hands a half-share in the dock to improve labour relations. Some agreed to buy shares, and for two years the dock was managed by a committee of Mort, Franki, Benjamin Buchanan and foremen and leading hands. These men were shareholders in 1872 when Mort's Dock & Engineering Co. was created, and three years later the company was incorporated with limited liability.

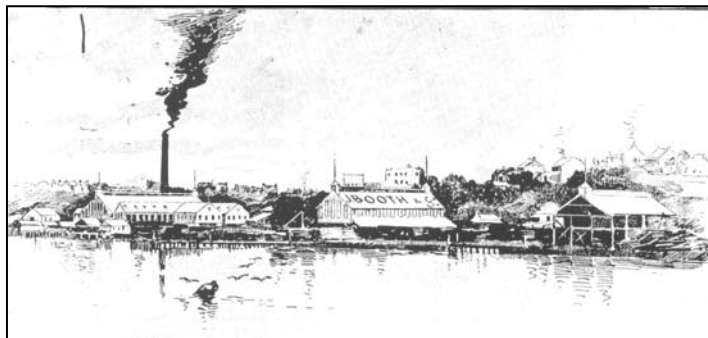
Plutocrat Mort withdrew from active participation in dock affairs in 1873 and died five years later. The dock undertook much more marine work in the buoyant conditions of the 1880s but an economic downturn meant its workforce fluctuated from 1,100 in 1885 to 450 in 1887. The sheer size of Mort's Dock, and its workforce, had a pervasive influence on Balmain, a place where generations of local families earned their living. The average number of hands at Balmain factories in 1889 was 26, while the dock employed 1,350.

Maritime unions, the largest in Sydney, played an important role in the urban labour movement. Mort's Dock was the largest private employer in the colony. Casual and unskilled workers from the dock formed the backbone of the Balmain Labourers Union and its first representatives took the initiative in forming the first Labour Electoral League. The Balmain Labourers met at the Working Men's Institute in 1900 when the union changed its name to the Ship Painters and Dockers. The workforce embraced

John Booth began operating a sawmill at Balmain in 1854. The business flourished and, by 1889 when this illustration was made, Booth's sawmill, joinery works and timber yard dominated White Bay and employed 300 men on the company's eight-acre site. (ISN, 11 July 1889)

by this union now met regularly Dick's Hotel in Beattie Street, Balmain. Ship painters and dockers were employed on a casual basis, generally performing 'one-off' tasks and then returning to the pool of unemployed labour. Their principal pick-up place was a paddock adjacent to Mort's Dock. The dock, which covered some eighteen acres, had by 1923 provided 1,300 men with apprenticeships. Under the

management of the extraordinary J.P. Franki, the dock engaged in diverse activities, its marine and engineering section making locomotives, ships and machinery, ironwork for bridges and buildings and components for mining and resource development. Welded steel pipe for the Water Board was also made there. During the 1939-45 war the dock manufactured fourteen corvettes, four frigates, tugboats and a 1,000-ton



capacity floating dock. On 12 November 1958 the dock closed its operations and the following year it went into liquidation. In 1968 the area was levelled, the dry dock filled in and the site became a shipping container facility. Most wooden-hulled ships were built by specialist yards, and there was often a close tie between shipbuilders and timber mills. John Booth, who established his Balmain works in 1854, operated steam-powered sawmills and built ships. Booth temporarily retired in 1870 but his sawmills, joinery and timber works continued to flourish, employing 60 people at the company's eight-acre site at White Bay. The main driving wheel of the 500 hp engine at Booth's mill was cast at Mort's Dock; it drove the sawing, planing and moulding machines which produced up to 200,000 feet of timber each week. After Booth's death in 1898 the company leased parts of the site to various enterprises and the mill was sold to the Sydney Harbour Trust in 1912.

The London-born Elliott brothers, George, Frederick and James, unable to import adequate supplies of sulphuric acid for their wholesale druggist business, decided to purchase an isolated eighteen-acre site at Iron Cove and manufacture their own acid. In 1866 their factory commenced operation and by 1872 the Balmain Chemical Works was producing sulphuric, nitric and hydrochloric acid, powdered sulphate of iron, super phosphate of lime and soft soap. Registered as a public company in 1883, its capital had increased to £700,000 by 1911 and Elliott Brothers became a part of Drug Houses of Australia in 1929.

Sydney's factories were concentrated in and to the south and west of the city proper. On the harbour the dockyards, stretching from Circular Quay to Balmain, maintained vessels moored in Port Jackson Close by were the shunting and repair yards that made and serviced the trains that carried goods to and from the port of Sydney. Steam power revolutionised land and sea transport as well as manufacturing, and in the period between 1881 and 1901 the industrial structure of Sydney experienced rapid but uneven growth. Population growth and increasing urbanisation stimulated industrialisation. Small-scale craft-based industry remained important but a growing number of large-scale industries

brought larger numbers of workers together under one roof. Four factories employed more than 500—the Eveleigh railway workshops, Mort's Dock, the Colonial Sugar Refinery at Pyrmont, and Hudson Brothers at Clyde.

In 1889 some 15,425 of the 25,000 metropolitan factory jobs were concentrated within the city limits. Redfern provided 2,822 jobs for factory workers, followed by Balmain (1,537), Newtown (1,458), Paddington (698) and Glebe (351).

Comparatively cheap land and low suburban rents for industrial premises were powerful reasons for small workshops to move beyond the city limits. A growing market led to an expanding demand for local labour in local factories, workshops and mills and also to a rising employment in the local retail trades. Dispersal of industry to the suburbs had begun in the 1880s. The number of factories in the Balmain electorate (which embraced Leichhardt) fluctuated: 61 in 1881, 45 in 1883, 93 in 1887 and 73 in 1888, which employed 1,619 workers." Mort's Dock was synonymous with shipbuilding and repair, but there were eleven other concerns engaged in this industry including Rowntree's Floating Dock and the Balmain Ferry Co.'s works at Waterview Bay and Foster & Minty and Gardiner Brothers at Peacock Point. Other significant employers of local labour were eight foundries and seven engineering workshops in Balmain in 1888 as well as six sawmills, five steam joineries, five dry docks and four soap and candle works.

Booths' steam sawmill and Joinery was an impressive building, dominating White Bay. Freezing, desiccating and meat-preserving firms clustered around the abattoir. Box and glass companies faced Rozelle Bay. On either side of Weston Street was a collection of iron foundries, soap manufacturers and beverage firms, and on Balmain's north-western boundary, along Iron Cove, were industrial sites occupied by Elliott Brothers, the boot-making works of J.H. Mills and Chidgey Brothers' timber company.

Langdon, Hopkins & Langdon's timber and joinery works at Rozelle Bay, Annandale expanded rapidly to employ 120 men, and from 1891 the Kauri Timber Co.'s Blackwattle Bay mill was flourishing. A parliamentary committee recommended the Darling Harbour goods line be linked by a railway goods line to the head of Rozelle Bay in a scheme to redevelop the port functions of Blackwattle and Rozelle bays which, by 1914, had become a centre for the coal and timber coastal trade. The new sawmills received consignments of sawn timber, logs, piles and girders from coastal ports as well as increasing quantities of imported softwoods.

The Sydney Harbour Trust commissioners in 1914 noted the 'pressing needs of increasing trade and the larger modern vessels', and proposed building extensive broadside wharfage in Johnston's, Rozelle and Blackwattle bays, but lack of capital and manpower meant that this work did not take place until 1926. During World War 1 a railway line proceeded by viaduct across Wentworth Park and by tunnel under Glebe Point to Rozelle Bay. Rozelle railway yards became a feeder for the Darling Harbour line and by 1916 a railway line, along the western boundary of Leichhardt: to Wardell Road, Dulwich Hill, was completed. Construction of wharfage around Glebe Island began in 1912, and six years later foundations for grain elevators were laid there. Large grain silos together with wharves to handle bagged wheat dominated Glebe Island by 1922.

Industrial penetration in Glebe was less marked than in Balmain and was strikingly heterogeneous, with the number of factories rising from 30 in 1880 to 41 in 1888.¹⁰ The four-storey factory of the Sydney Tramway & Omnibus Co. in Francis Street drew other coach and wagon builders to the suburb and it remained an important local industry throughout the 1890s. 21 Sawmills, iron and brass foundries and joineries also provided employment for local labour. Industry in Glebe tended to be located on the perimeter of the suburb. There were Hackshall's Centennial Steam Biscuit factory, Lackersteen's jam and the Upton Soap Works in Parramatta Road near Ross Street; the NSW Magic Soap Works, Sydney Lead Co., and Abrams broom factory in Wentworth Park Road; and, just around the corner in Bridge Road, Brady's revolving shutter factory and Kauri timber mills and coachbuilders. Not far from Franklyn Place were Dunn's tannery and Conlon's Broughton Street pottery, and Thomas Wearne's Cowper Street foundry, which employed about 130 workers in 1889, producing railway carriages, safes, ovens and bridge components.

Brickmaking was a major industry in Leichhardt throughout the 1870s, reaching its peak in 1882 with fourteen brickyards. But new technology in the form of the Hoffman steam kiln revolutionised the industry. By 1891 the Leichhardt brick pits had closed but William Carter's Catherine Street pottery remained. Samuel Harper & Co.'s Marion Street boot factory was listed as one of Leichhardt's main industries in 1890, along with the Queen soap works and Lock Brothers soap factory .24 Local people also found employment in the suburb's meat-Preserving companies and furniture factories, and there were, as well, chair-makers and wood-turners, confectioners, timber and broom factories, iron and brass foundries and three breweries.

Annandale remained largely untouched by industry in 1890 though timber merchants, wharves and a box company were visible around Rozelle Bay, and the smell of fermenting hops pervaded Collins Street where a small brewery was operating.

A report in 1876 on factory conditions noted that while overcrowding and poor working conditions existed in clothing, boot and tobacco factories, conditions were gradually improving because of the practice of 'giving out work' .26 The system of sub-contracting was open to abuses." The clothing industry used many workers employed on piece-work; dressmakers worked alone or employed one or two assistants in small rooms, often in small terraces or cottages where the light and ventilation were bad.

Child labour was a feature of the factory system, especially in woollen mills, boot factories and on Sydney's brickfields. Children laboured long hours carrying clay in suburban brickyards for ten to fourteen shillings a week. Dr Arthur Renwick believed the employment of boys and girls close together for long hours made them 'sharp and precocious in things of which they should be ignorant, and physically deteriorates them in many ways ... the boys become men too soon and the girls women too soon'.

Industries which contributed directly to the building of the city and suburbs-sawmills, steam joineries and iron and brass foundries - all experienced rapid growth. Shipbuilding and repair had a significant impact on metal-working industries. The size of overseas vessels entering the port stimulated new technical innovations by local foundries because of the complexity of maintenance work. The need to service the increased tonnage of shipping was not the only factor that encouraged growth in engineering and associated trades; these trades also found work providing machinery for the rural sector.

Foundry proprietors worked to their capacity seeking to meet the demand for ship boilers, engines, shafts and other fittings.

In 1900, 67 per cent of the 2,047 factories in the Sydney metropolitan area employed between four and 30 persons, and only 61 factories had more than 100 workers?' Between 1899 and 1912 the numbers employed in manufacturing in New South Wales grew from 68,000 to 120,000 and much of this expansion took place in Sydney; after 1904 there was an increasing concentration to the south and west of the city proper, though the nature of the manufacturing industry changed little.³²

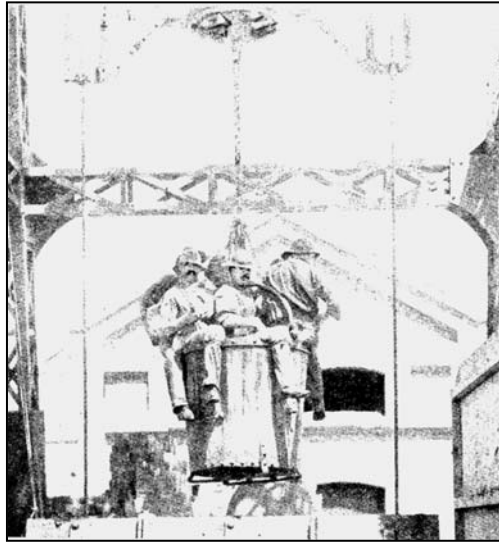
Some of this growth involved making mining and agricultural machinery for primary industries, but many metal-working and engineering plants were really in the repair business. The remainder of manufacturing was largely concerned with making construction materials or non-durable products such as foodstuffs, clothing and drinks.

Established at White Bay in 1897, Lever Brothers became a vast factory complex covering about 25 acres and employing up to 1100 workers in the 1960s. The success of this British-owned company, shown here in 1955, was built on the manufacture of Sunlight Soap. (By courtesy of LeverRexona Division of Unilever Australia).



Overseas supplies of many manufactures were cut off during the 1914-18 war, stimulating expansion of local industry and the rise of new industries-motor cars, electrical appliances and rubber goods-which were supported by protective tariffs.

Balmain, c. 1900. As many as 309 coalminers worked on shifts at Balmain, but the coal was of a poor quality and expensive to extract. The mine closed in 1931. (NSW LA 1901, Annual Report Dept of Mines NSW, 1900)



Factory employment statistics in Sydney were not published between 1890 and 1944, but entries in *Sands's Sydney and Suburban Directory* and other sources reflect increasing industrialisation in the inter-war years, when manufacturing took every opportunity to diversify operations but not their locations. The harbour remained a barrier to factory development on the north shore. In the period of rapid expansion after 1904 an array of commercial and industrial users invaded parts of the residential areas of Annandale, Balmain, Glebe and Leichhardt municipalities, when there were increasing demands on power generation and the railway system.

In the 1890s new industrial activities were attracted to Balmain. Lever Brothers, established at White Bay in 1897, became a vast factory complex covering 25 acres. It was the municipality's largest industrial site, employing up to 1,100 workers in the 1960s. The company began crushing copra at the Balmain plant, shipping the coconut oil back to its base in England, but soon was manufacturing Sunlight Soap, the foundation of the Lever empire. There were early problems in soap manufacture as oil exuded from the soap, damaging its packaging and making it unattractive for sale. Once this problem was overcome, the company made a fortune. Balmain master soap maker, William Wainwright, was Mayor of Balmain in 1922, and one of a coterie of Freemasons at Lever

Brothers. At the Balmain complex there was also a glycerine refinery, toilet soap plant, and an oil refining and hardening works. The search for coal in Balmain began in 1897 when the first shafts were sunk at Birchgrove. After the first coal was won five years later, the Sydney Harbour Collieries Ltd obtained a lease to mine under the harbour. As many as 309 men worked on shifts at the mine but the coal was of a poor quality and expensive to mine. About 850,000 tons of coal were extracted from the mine before it closed in 1931.

The new coal-fired power stations contributed a disproportionately high degree of industrial pollution to the area.

Electricity for street lighting and household consumption in Balmain and adjoining municipalities was supplied by a private company, the Electric Light & Power Supply Corporation, which began operating in 1909. The Balmain Power Station at Iron Cove, the largest privately owned power station in Sydney, was taken over by the Electricity Commission in 1957. An expanding railway and tramway network required more power generation and the Department of Railways began the first phase of White Bay Powerstation in 1912; it became fully operational in 1917. The longest serving power station in New South Wales, White Bay was transferred to the Electricity Commission in 1953.



Bird & Lucas Iron Foundry, Phillip Street, Glebe, photographed in 1904. Shipbuilding and repairs provided much work for the metal-working industries. This foundry made a wide range of castings for baker's oven doors, truck and barrow wheels, fireplace surrounds, stoves and iron desk stands for public schools. A. Roberts *Social History of Glebe and Annandale No 2, Men's Work*, Glebe Public School (1982).

The number of Balmain factory entries in *Sands's Sydney and Suburban Directory* increased from 44 in 1918 to 111 in 1932, with growing concentrations around White Bay, Rozelle, Iron Cove, Mort Bay and Johnston's Bay. The Colgate-Palmolive factory (1922), Glebe Island Grain Silos (1922), Commonwealth Oxygen, Adelaide Steamship Co, the Hume Pipe Co., and J.B. Sharp's furniture factory were important parts of this expansion.

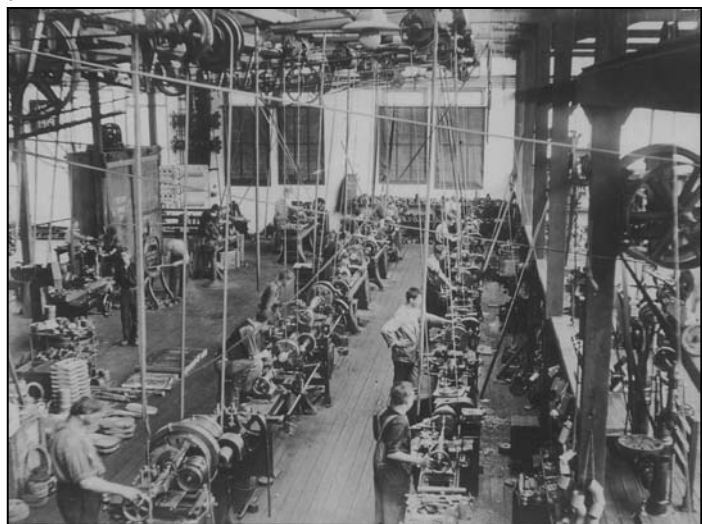
The timber industry (George Hudson, Vanderfield & Reid, Hardy Bros and others) emerged as a large employer of local labour in Glebe, and in the early years of Federation, with the expansion of the wool industry, some of Glebe's working-class housing was demolished to make way for multi-storey wool stores and warehouses, hide and skin merchants, flour millers and coal merchants. In the inter-war years a growing number of small mechanical and general engineering workshops-some fourteen in 1936 - and printing firms were operating in Glebe. There were also Bird & Lucas's iron foundry, Stone's Waratah stove works, jam and cigar factories, a straw hat workshop and an ostrich-feather works.

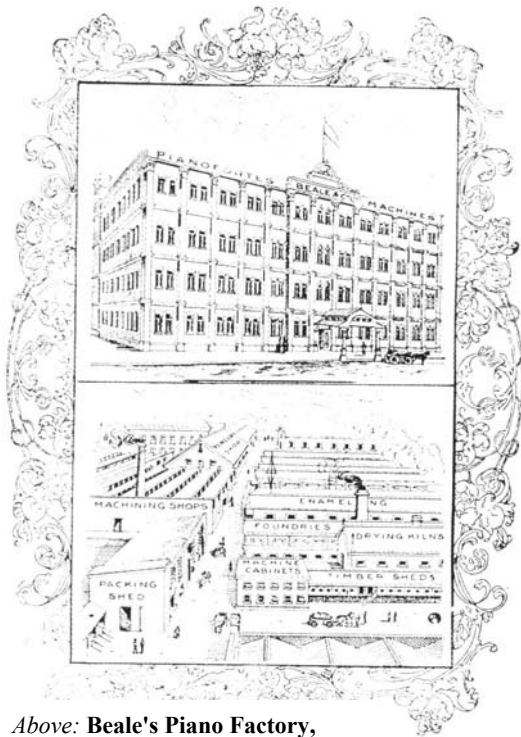
Meat packing, preserving and exporting, so prominent in Leichhardt in 1918, had been replaced by jam and fruit preservers like Cottees in 1947 and sauce-maker Lea & Perrins. Among Leichhardt's prominent employers in 1918 were the City Furniture Manufacturing Co., Pilcher's Balmain Road Baking Co., machine-tool maker John Heine & Son and toymakers Cyclops. Carbolite and sand soap makers, Pearson Brothers, began operating a factory in Henry Street from 1896. Their sandsoap, especially used by domestics for scrubbing table tops and floors, was advertised in the Worker, the official organ of the trade union and labour organisations, and their Solvol soap was famous throughout the country, being widely used by tradesmen and factory workers for removing the grime from their hands. Industry was increasingly attracted by Leichhardt's locational advantages between 1918 and 1932 and the number of trade entries more than doubled from 41 to 90 in this period. Furniture making, wood and ivory turning, chair-making and coopers remained prominent, together with hat-maker John Bardsley, box-and case-makers, brush and broom manufacturers, small engineering workshops and foundries, macaroni-maker Italia Australian Delicacies and stove manufacturer Ernest Presdee.

Some 40 factories could be identified in Annandale in 1918. They included T.H. Chapman, saw manufacturer, James Robertson, tinsmith, Marvel Toy Works, a yeast-maker and a marble manufacturer.

Octavius Beale began the manufacture of sewing machines and pianos at Trafalgar Street, Annandale, in 1893. His sewing machines bore the motto 'Advance Australia', but high duty on machine parts forced Beale to abandon their production in favour of pianos. The suburb's largest industry, by the 1920s Beale & Co.'s piano factory employed 560 people, many of whom were superb craftsmen. Octavius Beale and his son, Harold, pioneered the use of Australian timbers and the pianos, furniture and panelling made at Annandale were of the highest standard.

In 1917, John Heine & Son Pty Ltd established a sheetmetal-working and machine-tool manufacturing firm on the corner of Allen and Francis streets, Leichhardt. Many boys served apprenticeships here, acquiring skills in machine- tool technology. It was the pre-eminent machine-tool manufacturer in the southern hemisphere. (By courtesy of John Heine & Son Pty Ltd,





Above: Beale's Piano Factory, Trafalgar Street, Annandale, in 1902. Octavius Beale began operating from the Annandale complex in 1893. (SM, 18 January 1902) Below: Craftsmen assembling pianos at the factory in 1911. Annandale's largest industry employed 560 people in 1920. (ATCJ, 24 May 1911)



By 1932 Annandale had 69 industrial entities and industry was beginning to encroach upon the suburb's residential precincts. The most numerous firms were furniture-makers, joinery, box and packing-case workshops, piano tuners, small engineering works and dye works. There were also a patent medicine importer and manufacturer; a china, glass and earthenware importer; a grinder; a furrier; a blind-maker; and the Imperial Billiard Table Co.

The process of the industrialisation of the inner suburbs intensified between 1932 and 1944 with a significant growth in the number of factories. This process was supported by the existing system of rail or water-borne transport and other locational advantages. Within the present Municipality of Leichhardt, Balmain had by far the most factory jobs, with some 179 factories employing 10,238 people. In 1944-45 there were 175 factories in Annandale and 4,235 workers, 158 industrial establishments in Leichhardt and 4,121 workers, and 156 factories in Glebe with 4,496 workers. The City of Sydney remained the hub of industry and commerce in 1945, with one-third of all factory jobs and about one-half of all

manufacturing workforce non-factory jobs in the state and in the period between 1945 and 1953 Sydney retained its man. The composition of the metropolitan workforce underwent fundamental change between 1921 and 1971. From the 1960s there was a massive decline in the number of manufacturing jobs in both the City of Sydney and in the Leichhardt Municipality. These jobs were shifting westwards where land and buildings more suited to manufacturing's

technical requirements were available and where the most rapid population expansion was occurring. By 1971 commerce (including wholesale and retail trading, finance and real estate) had overtaken manufacturing as the most important industry in Sydney. The number of blue-collar jobs was declining though the proportion of the workforce employed in building and construction altered little.

Women, comprising one-quarter of Sydney's paid workforce in 1921, had increased to over one-third in 1971. Between 1971 and 1984 manufacturing employment in some inner-city local government areas declined by more than 50 per cent. Table 14 reveals a dramatic decline in the number of factories and manufacturing employment between 1971 and 1984 in Leichhardt Municipality.

The growth of trucking and containerisation for freight transport promoted this dispersal. Warehouse jobs, too, left the inner city for sites more appropriate for new goods-handling techniques. The closure of Mort's Dock in 1958, the municipality's largest single employer of labour, epitomised the beginning of the decline in the industrial structure of the inner city. In the early 1960s, Beale's factory eventually closed and Balmain and White Bay power stations were being decommissioned. In the 1970s, the timber companies were being expelled from Rozelle and Blackwattle bays; the huge Glebe Island silos were no longer being filled with wheat; and between 1971 and 1990 the Sunlight Soap (Unilever) complex in Balmain was closed down.

Table 14 Leichhardt municipality manufacturing industries (excluding 108 small single establishment enterprises, i.e. those with fewer than 4 persons employed)

Year	Number of establishments	Male employees	Female employees	Total employees
1971-72	462	10,662	4,570	15,232
1982-83	222	6,642	2,085	8,727
1983-84	210	6,578	1,913	8,491
Loss 1 Year, 1983-84	12	64	172	236
	5.4%	1.0%	8.3%	2.7%
Loss 13 Years, 1971-84	252	4,084	2,657	6,741
	54.6%	38.3%	58.1%	44.3%

Retail shops

The earliest suburban retailers, listed in Sydney directories published by Low, Ford, Waugh & Cox, and John Sands between 1844 and the 1870s, probably operated from the front rooms of houses, selling basic necessities. The fancy bazaars and the market-stall holders were disappearing from the directories, replaced, it seems, by shops occupied by small-scale traders who catered only to the needs of surrounding householders." The rise of a new generation of shopkeepers in the municipality can be traced through *Sands's Sydney and Suburban Directory* from about 1880. Businesses concerned with the sale of food were most numerous-grocers, butchers, bakers and fruiterers. There were also those selling clothing and household goods, tailors, dressmakers, milliners and bootmakers - and there was a miscellaneous group that included hairdressers, chemists, tobacconists, mercers, newsagents and fuel and produce merchants." Many small-scale retailers did not survive the depression after 1893 but the number of suburban retailers had recovered by 1904.

Most shops were located in groups on the main roads or on interconnecting side streets and others were in new residential subdivisions away from the main routes. The local grocer, boot and shoemaker, butcher, baker and greengrocer could count on the continuous patronage of a relatively small but fairly concentrated clientele. Others, such as the musical instrument repairer, costumier and photographer, depended on the occasional custom of a large number of people and were found only along the main thoroughfares-Darling Street, Glebe Road, Parramatta Road, Norton Street and Booth Street.

The appearance of new public buildings - courthouse, police station and post office often fashioned in the Classical idiom, was a sure sign of a more general sophistication in the ...