

WAVERLEY COUNCIL

BONDI SEWER



Images from top:

Old Tank Stream Sydney, 1852. Painting by John Black Henderson, image courtesy of the SLNSW.

Bondi sewer under construction nearing Ben Buckler and the end of Blair Street, ca. 1880.

A Waverley Library Local History Fact Sheet

It didn't take long for the first colonists at Sydney Cove to pollute the freshwater streams and transform them into open sewers. By the 1850s industry, farms, and houses had created so much pollution that eventually the dry weather flow consisted largely of fouled or slop water. The increase and spread of pestilence and disease made it necessary to build underground sewers to try and manage the problem. Five brick and stone sewers were built to alleviate the issue, but these proved to be inadequate and Sydney Harbour became so polluted that alternate methods for disposing of sewerage began to be investigated.

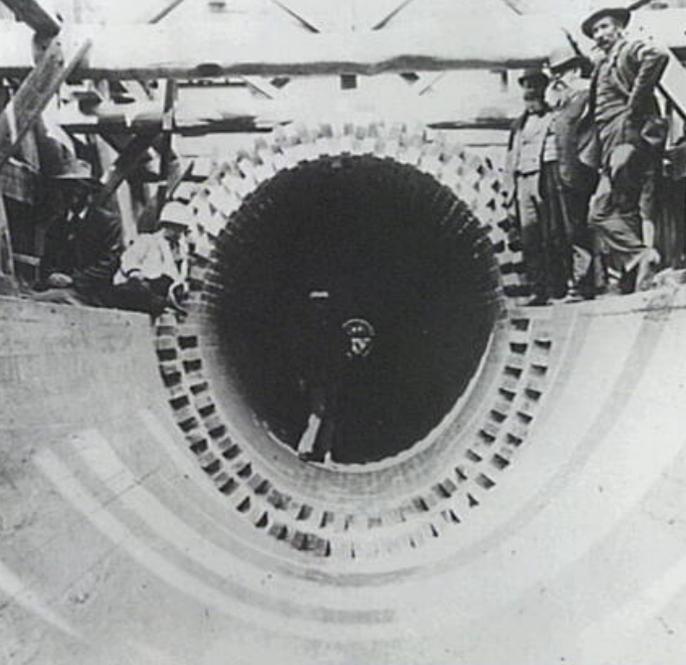
In 1877 the Bondi Ocean Outfall Sewer system was proposed, designed to serve the inner city and nearby

suburbs and to intercept and divert the sewers draining into Sydney Harbour. At that time, sewerage treatment was virtually unknown, surf bathing was against the law between 8.00 a.m. and 8.00 p.m., and Bondi was a wild place of coastal scrub, sand hills and lagoons- the perfect place to dispose of a city's worth of sewerage. 99% water, the remainder of sewerage consists of solids such as human waste, grease, food scraps, soap and detergents.

Sydney's oldest ocean outfall system, Bondi sewer system now drains an area of some 3560 hectares immediately south of Port Jackson and extending from the coast to Balmain, including the CBD. The original sewer system is more than 130 years old and was heritage listed in 2002.

WAVERLEY COUNCIL

BONDI SEWER



Images from top:

Section of the oviform brick-lined Bondi sewer under construction, with workmen on the left and right. Image ca. 1880.

Bondi Beach panorama section with the Bondi sewer vent stack in the background, 1960s.

Begun in 1880, it was built by the Government and transferred to the Board of Water Supply and Sewerage by proclamation dated December 18, 1889. One of the most significant engineering structures built by early colonists in Australia, the project was remarkable for its surveying accuracy allowing for the brick lining for the sewer to be laid before tunneling was completed.

Measuring 2.4m x 2.2m, the brick lined oviform (eggshaped) sewer runs from the outfall near the Bondi Golf Links, directly under Blair Street. It continues in a straight line through Bellevue Hill, crossing beneath Blaxland, Bellevue and Manning Roads to the corner of Ocean and Trelawney Streets where it curves gently to run beneath Liverpool Street into the City. The outfall is marked by the Bondi Sewer Vent, a heritage listed tower on Military Road, North Bondi.

Blair Street originally had the unsavoury but practical name of "Sewer Road". In March 1914, two residents living in nearby Old South Head Road wrote to Waverley Council "suggesting that a new name be given to Sewer Road". The letter was signed by Joseph Blair and John E. Spedding and Council recommended the road be renamed "Blair Street".

Until 1916, according to Waverley Council Minutes of July 10, "Blair Street is Commonwealth property and is not a public road". Later that year it was transferred to the State Government together with Military Road.