



Ada Callachor (née Egan)
(c. 1929)

WAVERLEY COUNCIL

TALES TOLD BY ADA

By Maureen Brian

Waverley Council held a Seniors' Storytelling Workshop at Waverley Library in 2009 to collect and celebrate the memories of Waverley's seniors.

My Dear Grandchildren,

What a friendly, safe yet colourful and exciting place Waverley must have been for your great-grandmother and my mother, Ada Callachor (née Egan) who, as the youngest of six children in a fairly comfortable middle-class family, grew up in the area around Waverley Park/Bondi Junction. Here are just a few of her early memories of the years 1915-1932.

By the time she was a young girl, the electrification of the trams and the extension of the line to Bondi Beach had helped to break down the earlier separation between those who lived at "Tea Gardens", and those who belonged to "The Cross" (Charing Cross). Ada would ride on the tram or else walk to her father's work at

Macdonald and Co. – House Agents at 106 Cowper Street (Bronte Road), a small couple of rooms wedged between the Tea Gardens Hotel and Richard Hughes' Plumbing business. She remembers walking hand in hand with her father Edward James Egan (Jim) and the cheery word he had for everyone as he collected rents through Waverley, Randwick and Surry Hills for the widow Mrs Macdonald. Ada remembers, a few years earlier, seeing her father using the horse and sulky loaned by the proprietor of Tea Gardens, Paddy Murray, with his scary grey beard and strong Irish accent. Jim preferred to walk, however, and meet people as they were – the egalitarian way or the 'Waverley' way he used to say. Ada later recalled her father purchasing the estate agency business; Mrs

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Images from top:

O class electric tram, Oxford St, Bondi Junction, 1917-1918.

Coronet Theatre, Bondi Junction. Built and operated by Olympic in 1921, the theatre was purchased by Hoyts in 1930. The Coronet closed in 1968.

Macdonald selling part of the land to Mrs Grace (haberdashery proprietor); and years later Grace Bros., Bondi Junction, being built close to the site.

Bondi Junction was growing and buzzing with life as 1920 approached. Ada loved to look in the windows of the Wright sisters' dressmaking shop; she relished the colours and aroma of the McIlrath's produce store and occasionally would treat herself to six pence of broken biscuits. The new all-wool, one-piece Canadian costume had come into vogue in the early 1920's and Ada was certainly daring enough to appear on Bondi Beach in one – saving the seven shillings and sixpence purchase price proved a little more difficult! She loved the pictures, particularly the 'talkies' (after about 1929), and the theatre that later became the Coronet (cnr Oxford and Waverley Streets) was her favourite.

Waverley Park featured strongly in the lives of the six Egan children. From their first home at 167 Birrell Street, and

and after 1921, their subsequent home at 27 Paul Street, they shared a park view with the students and Sisters of the Church who conducted St. Gabriel's school with its beautiful Italian style (Preston College) and its Romanesque Chapel (current site of Waverley Bowling Club). Ada has spoken of many locals who lived close to the Park: the shoe manufacturers the Minahans at 25 Paul Street; the friendship with Tom Magney and his family; the 'Edina' property with its bamboo forest at one end, and its owner Mrs Vickery who after the death of her husband Ebenezer, and despite the advent of the motor car, continued to travel along Birrell Street in her hansom cab or in her open carriage. With enormous generosity she donated her Edina property to the "War Women" as the *War Memorial Hospital*.

Waverley Park is closely associated with Treat, an injured race horse owned by a Mr Trautum, a Randwick racing personality who entrusted Treat to the Egan family for a whole year. Ada rode Treat through



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Images from top:

Waverley College, Carrington
Rd, Charing Cross, 1918.

[1] "Waverley Park, except for the oval, was then a waste land (1904). Later it was covered by the coarse grass where the youngsters played football and where, so the story goes, "Nutty" [Frank, Ada's brother] Egan ... took cover under the long grass before he finally emerged with the ball before the goal mouth." Brother P. A. Brennan in the school magazine *Waverley*, quoted in Justin Fleming, *The Crest of the Wave – Waverley College, 1903-2000*, Sydney, 2003, p 8.

[2] James Hugh Donohoe, *Treat*, Sydney 1999, ch. 1.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] Bede Kenny VC, Arthur Hill, Bernard McTeague, and others.

[5] "With the help of Mr Egan [Ada's father], we gained the right of way to Birrell Street. It was an important asset as it gave easy access to Waverley Park, where a concrete wicket was laid down; now as many as six teams could enjoy in games at once in the spacious park". 'College Chronicle, Chapter 3, 1910-1915', in *Waverley 1903-1953*, p 29.

[6] 'C.B.C. Annual Record 1916', *College Annual 1929*. "The Late Mrs M. E. Egan".

the sandy patches and tufts of quite high grass that covered the Park;[1] she watered Treat at the horse trough in Paul Street, but she looked on rather enviously as "Cyril Egan (her eldest brother and Captain of Waverley College 1913, 1914) and Billy O'Brien, astride their ponies, rode like the men from Snowy River down from Henrietta Street, across Waverley Park, on towards Bondi Beach".[2] The real story of Treat in Waverley folklore has been embellished by Treat accompanying Cyril Egan to the Middle East in 1917 when Cyril joined the 24th Reinforcement Squadron of the Australian Lighthorse.[3] The account, however, re-enforces the stories Ada told of the wartime sacrifices of so many young Waverley men, many of whom were friends of the family.[4]

Waverley College evoked strong memories for Ada. An entry in the "College Chronicle, Chapter 3, 1910-1915", shows the significance of Waverley Park in the life of the College. [5] The May Procession at the College was the key event of the year for a young girl. Ladies

dressed in hats and gloves; men in suits and ties. She was proud to accompany her mother Mary Emily ("Pet") Egan who, together with a group of hard-working women, was credited with furnishing the Physics room, organising the College Ball, and instigating the erection of the Conlon Gates (present main gates in Carrington Road).[6]

Ada remembers the contagious influenza that followed the return of the soldiers after World War I. She recalls the closure of Churches, schools, theatres, etc. She added her own little bit of colour to this piece of Waverley history. Her family, fearing the worst after discovering Ada with a raging temperature, put her in isolation, prayed more fervently than usual, and endured a number of sleepless nights. In due course, no miracle cure was deemed necessary, for Ada's mysterious ailment had been the result of her experimenting with a cigar of her father's and smoking it in the fowl shed in the yard of their Birrell Street home!

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Images from top:

Water reservoir at Waverley Park, 1919. Image courtesy of City of Sydney.

Bondi Beach, 1925. Image courtesy of the NLA.

[7] Millie Hart, Joyce Moller, Kath Hidden, Genevieve Robinson.

[8] including Sister de Chantal, Mother Thecla and others.

Many post-War Waverley women relished the greater freedom in fashions and hair styles that the war experience had opened up for them. Ada's pleas to her mother to let her replace her long "sausage curls" with the short style of the "bob" proved ineffectual. Waverley Park, with its old fig tree, came to the rescue. After rubbing her hair in the resin, and equipped with the one shilling piece she had received for her 11th birthday, Ada walked into the barber shop (men only) at Bondi Junction and demanded that her head be shaved. To the dismay and consternation of the barber and waiting customers, Ada insisted on shaving and not just cutting! Her mother, on her first glimpse of the blue-veined pate, fainted in the hall of the Paul Street home! Next day, sitting in the back of the class at Holy Cross College, the popular beret-headed Ada had to accept the many hair-pins and ribbons which were passed to her row by row by her many and faithful school friends[7].

Ada, with her sisters Alma, Olive and Clare, was enrolled in

Holy Cross in 1917. She remembered clearly the day the large statue of Mary was raised by ropes and pulleys into place above the front entrance, accompanied by the rattle of rosary beads and sound of heartfelt prayers from those assembled below. Ada always had wonderful admiration for the Sisters of Mercy[8], but Ada did not like going to school. Waverley roads with their storm-water drains came to her aid. The beautiful and gentle Ethel Cashman of Birrell Street (later Sister Mary St Jude rsm), and whose father was a local tram-driver, had the unenviable task of taking the younger Ada to school. Ethel's morning pleas and entreaties were clearly audible, but Ada frequently would not move from the drains in which she was hiding.

When Ada met the handsome Waverley College ex-student Emil (Bill) Callachor in the late 1920's, Waverley was a wonderful place for a courtship. In the cool Sunday evening air they strolled, together with so many other people of all ages and backgrounds, along the crowded Bondi Promenade

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Images from top:

Promenading at Bondi Beach, photo by Hall & Co., ca. 1923-1930. Image courtesy of the SLNSW.

Holy Cross Hall, 15 Adelaide St, Woollahra. Field Survey 1982. Image courtesy of Woollahra Library.

shaded by the newly erected Bondi Pavilion with its state-of-the-art swimming pool, dressing rooms, ballroom and exotic Turkish baths.

Ada and Emil were married in the 'old' Holy Cross Church (now the Hall) in Adelaide Street in August 1932. They are both buried in Waverley Cemetery, together with four earlier generations of Ada's family – the first being a convict great-grandmother of Ada's. Waverley still continues to enrich the lives and stories of their many descendants, as well as the lives of so many who are privileged to live or work here.