

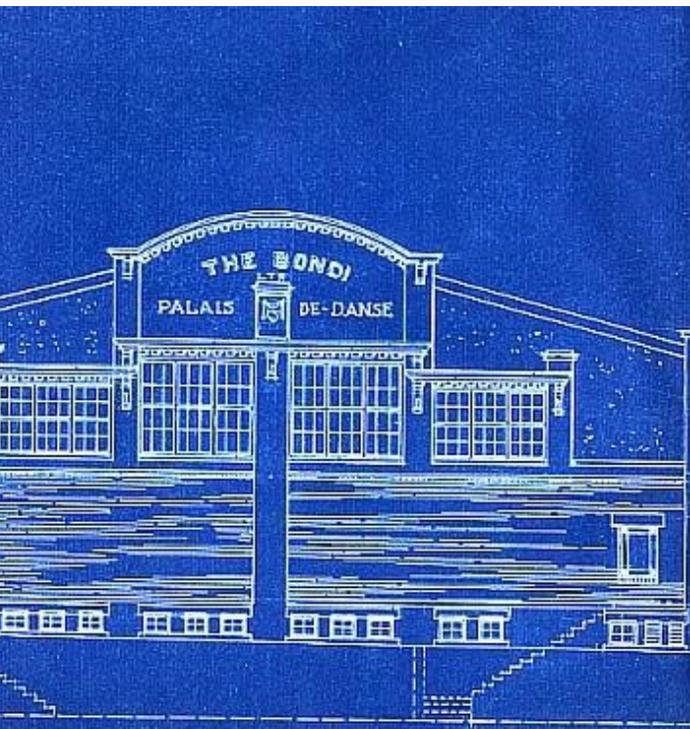


WAVERLEY COUNCIL

BONDI CASINO

Bondi's first nightclub and the
Palaise de Danse

A Waverley Library
Local History Fact Sheet



Images from top:

Bondi Casino & Hotel Bondi c.
mid-1920s. Photo by Samuel
Wood.

The Bondi Palais de Danse
blueprints, submitted to
Waverley Council, 1923.

By the 1920s Bondi was rapidly developing a bohemian and hedonistic reputation, with artists, writers and creatives flocking to the area. Bondi had usurped Manly as Sydney's premier surfing beach, and Sydneysiders came in their thousands to surf and promenade along the beachfront. Campbell Parade was being transformed to reflect Bondi's new status, the Hotel Astra and Hotel Bondi had been built and it was in this environment that the Casino opened.

The Casino at Bondi Beach claimed to be Sydney's very first nightclub. While this is unconfirmed, it is certainly one of the earliest of Sydney's entertainment venues. Once used to describe buildings or venues that were used for entertainment or dancing,

casinos had no relation to the gambling institutions of today.

Confusingly, the venue at Bondi Beach was known under a variety of names including the Casino at Bondi Beach, Bondi Casino, the Palaise de Danse, and the Bondi Palais de Danse. The building itself was owned by Palaise de Danse Limited, and blueprints submitted to Waverley Council in 1923 are for a 'Proposed Casino' for the Palais de Danse Limited. The external awning had 'CASINO' in large lettering, but a proposed sign at the top of the building read 'Bondi Palais de Danse.' Despite this confusion over its name, the venue refers to itself in its advertisements as The Casino, Bondi Beach.

The Casino itself was on an enormous site. Located on the corner of Roscoe Street and

ELEVATION TO ROSCOE STREET



ELEVATION TO CAMPBELL PARADE



WAVERLEY COUNCIL

BONDI CASINO



Images from top:

The Bondi Palais de Danse blueprints, submitted to Waverley Council, 1923. Elevation to Roscoe Street.

David McFarlane 'Andy Kerr', also known as the Coogee Bunyip. Bookmaker and owner of Bondi Casino. Photo 1890, image courtesy of Randwick Library.

Campbell Parade directly opposite Bondi Beach, it took up half the block between Roscoe Street and Curlewis Street and stretched back up Roscoe Street as far as the laneway which ran behind the Hotel Bondi.

The owner of the Casino was David McFarlane McLachlan Kerr, nicknamed 'Andy', who was one of Sydney's early 'colourful racing identities'. In the 1910s and 1920s he was a high profile bookie at Sydney racecourses, known as the 'Coogee Bunyip' because of his love of swimming at Coogee Beach. Andy Kerr was very wealthy, very flashy, and owned diverse businesses including the Gaiety Theatre, Variety Magazine, and a city jewellery shop as well as the Casino.

The Casino opened in 1923 with Will James' Band in residence, including famed jazz musician Frank Coughlan who went on to lead the jazz orchestra at The Trocadero in both Sydney and Melbourne from 1936-1970.

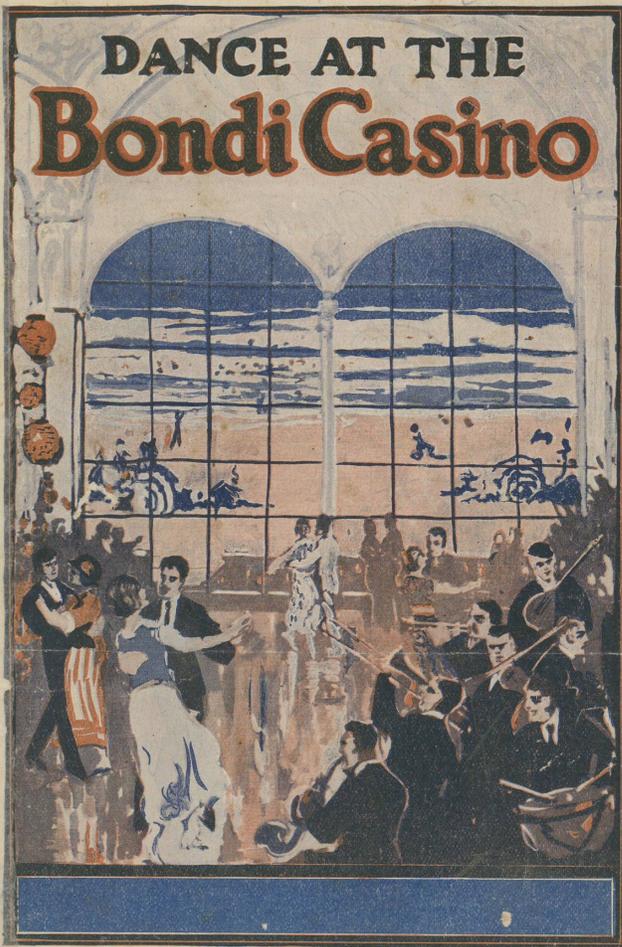
Inside the Casino a huge lavishly furnished central dance area was complemented by semi-private sitting compartments, called 'logues', to either side of the public entertainment area. A very high ceiling added to the sense of the large scale and size of the building.

The Casino, Bondi Beach advertised itself as:

'Sydney's most popular dancing rendezvous. Specially designed for dancing this palatial building quickly established itself in public favour. Its situation overlooking the Ocean is, of course, unique. Its luxurious furnishings, elegant appointments and exquisite Palm Court are all in keeping with the refined atmosphere that is the keynote to the Casino's success. The floor of Tasmanian blackwood is perfect; the full strength All-Australian band a revelation in the possibilities of syncopated melody. Nowhere would you find a pleasanter place in which to enjoy the modern dance or listen to good music played

WAVERLEY COUNCIL

BONDI CASINO



amid congenial surroundings. A visit to The Casino should form part of every Sydney visitor's program.'

THE CASINO'S WEEKLY PROGRAM

An advertisement for the Casino in the 1920s lists the weekly program as follows:

Monday-Wednesday: Popular nights. Admission 2/2 (including tax). Dances, 3d. per couple. Private Loges 2/2 each person (plus admission fee). No charge for Dancing.

Thursday: Popular Supper Nights. Prices as above. Dress optional. Supper is served as required.

Friday: Supper Night. Admission 4/4 (including tax). No charge for Dancing.

Saturday: Matinee: 3pm to 5pm. Admission 2/2 to all parts. No charge for Dancing. Evening: 8pm to 11.15pm. Prices same as Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday.

Programs for the Casino were

printed in newspapers and magazines, listing which band would be playing and even a set list of the music. In 1928, taking advantage of Leap Year where traditionally women can ask men to marry them, a Leap Year Bride's Ball was held at the Casino.

In 1923 there was also another dance venue called the Palaise de Danse operating at Bondi Junction, it is unknown if this venue was connected to the one at Bondi Beach.

THE END OF THE CASINO

Andy Kerr lost all his money during the Great Depression and the Casino felt the brunt of this, closing in 1931. For the next six years the cavernous dance venue became the Rialto Skating Rink. In 1937 it briefly became a dance venue again, the Rex Palais, which opened and closed the same year.

The site was redeveloped as the Kings Theatre/Cinema, on two levels, opening in 1937. On the street frontage facing Campbell Parade Vallis's Milkbar became a local



Images from top:

Ad for the Bondi Casino.

King's Theatre, Bondi Beach, 1937. Photo by Samuel Hood, image courtesy of the SLNSW.

WAVERLEY COUNCIL

BONDI CASINO

landmark, as popular with the late night cinema crowd as those leaving the beach after a long day in the sun. The cinema closed in 1969 and in later years the Hakoah Club occupied the site. In the 1980s the building was demolished and today the Breakers building occupies the site.

Images from top:

Architectural rendering of the Hakoah Club, Bondi.