

WAVERLEY COUNCIL

BATES' MILK BAR, BONDI

Malted milkshakes and mixed grills

A Waverley Library
Local History Fact Sheet



Images from top:

Bates' Milk Bar exterior. Image courtesy MAAS.

George Bates serves a surfer at Bates' Milk Bar, Bondi Beach, 2001. Photo by Stephen Cooper, image courtesy of the Daily Telegraph.

Waverley has had its share of great Sydney milk bars, many run by local Greek families who were part of the great post-WWII European migration to Australia.

Theo's at Charing Cross, Paul's at Bondi Junction and Vallis' underneath the Kings Cinema opposite Bondi Beach remember a time when a Chiko roll, a chocolate milkshake and a game on the 'pinnies' (pinball machines) capped off a perfect day at the beach.

For 50 years there was no more famous milk bar in Bondi than Bates' Milk Bar. Fronting Campbell Parade and wrapping around the corner into Hall Street, it mirrored Ravisis' which still stands opposite.

The owners, Nickolas and George Bagiatzis left their Greek

homeland in 1948 as 18- and 16-year olds. They became the proud owners of what was to become Bondi's most famous milkbar in 1951. Operated by Nick, George, and their wives Mary and Chryssanthe (Chris), Bates' Milk Bar (Bates is the Anglicised version of their name) was open seven days a week, often until late at night.

Reflecting a time when a full-fat diet wasn't considered a health risk, George and Nickolas remember a steady stream of people from the beach ordering their famous choc-malt milkshakes and patrons ordering mixed grills from breakfast through to dinner.

The milk bar was an existing business when the Bates brothers bought it shortly after arriving in Australia. They extended it in the early 1960s,

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Images from top:

Bates' Milk Bar interior, with laminex tables and timber booths. Image courtesy MAAS.

Etched glass detail from Bates' Milk Bar. Image courtesy MAAS.

installing wooden booths with pink laminex-topped tables and distinctive mirrors with etched scenes of bathers and the beach cut into the glass.

Except for minor alterations in 1969 the early shop décor remained in place until the end of the business. The original slushy machines, traditional milk fridge with stainless steel scoops and metal milkshake containers, glass shelves stocked with confectionary and a checked linoleum floor completed the picture of retro chic.

When Bates' closed its doors in 2001 a manual cash register was still ringing up sales on the milk bar's yellow laminate counter. On its final day of trading it had the distinction of being the longest-existing shop at Bondi Beach.

Its closure was widely mourned and described frequently as 'the end of an era' or 'the end of old Bondi'. The Bates family reported that when news got out that the doors were closing former customers travelled from all over NSW to say goodbye, many bringing their children to show them their favourite teenage stomping ground. Spelling the end of an era, George Bates' passed away in July, 2011.

Recognised as one of Sydney's last remaining old style beach milk bars, some of Bates' Milk Bar distinctive interior has been preserved and is now held in the Powerhouse Museum collection.