

WAVERLEY COUNCIL

BEACH COURT

Sleaze and sly grog at The Lido

A Waverley Library Local History Fact Sheet



Images from top:

Beach Court building North Bondi, 1959. Image courtesy of the SLNSW.

Alexander Ernest Anderson, owner of Beach Court. Photo provided by Stuart Hibberd.

In 1920 a new complex of flats, refreshment rooms and dance hall was built on the north end of Bondi Beach, replacing the dressing sheds which had formerly stood on the site. Named Beach Court, it was located on the corner of Ramsgate Avenue and the Bondi Beach promenade at North Bondi, its official address being 65a Ramsgate Avenue, Bondi Beach. With its beautiful location right on the beach, Beach Court soon became a popular local venue.

THE OWNER

The land Beach Court stood on was purchased in 1912 by Alexander Ernest Anderson from Robert Ernest Courtney for £2000. A wealthy grazier and horse breeder, Anderson had formerly owned Murrumbong Station in the Wellington district of the Central

West slopes. Anderson moved to Bondi after selling the station property and newspaper reports say that he was soon "conducting building operations on the beach front". Alexander established himself as a land owner and developer in Bondi, purchasing land lots on the headland at North Bondi, Hall Street, and Scarborough House. Shortly after the Beach Court site purchase, a massive storm swept the east coast and the dressing sheds on the site were destroyed.

By December 1912, Anderson was seeking designs for a large kiosk at the south end of Ben Buckler, with a prize of 25 guineas. Between 1917-1919 Alexander was in money raising mode, selling furniture and paintings at auction and subdividing the Beach Court site. The eastern section was



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Images from top:

The recovery of Dr Stuart-Jones, as he appeared on January 10, 1945 before giving evidence at Central Court. Photo by Leonard, image courtesy of the Sydney Morning Herald.

Dr Reginald Stuart-Jones. Photographed at his house, September 18, 1952. Image courtesy of the Sydney Morning Herald.

sold, and the part adjacent to the promenade was retained for the Beach Court construction.

By 1921, Alexander was calling for plasterers, tilers, glaziers and electricians and Beach Court was open for business. Tiny's Dance Hall opened in Beach Court soon after the building was completed and proved very popular, with people queueing outside on weekends to get in. In August 1930 there was a partial resumption of the block by Waverley Council and the promenade was continued adjacent to Beach Court for pedestrians.

In February 1931, Beach Court was granted a license under the Theatres and Public Halls Act of 1908. The building was now legally allowed to operate public functions and dances, and dance competitions started.

Beach Court's reputation started to slide into infamy after the property changed hands in 1932. In October 1932 Alexander leased the property

to Frederick Goldsmith, a dentist based in Darlinghurst. A business the "Lido Cabaret Limited" was registered with Goldsmith and Dr Reginald Stuart-Jones as directors. The two men had proven links with organised crime, and trouble started at the Beach Court soon after.

THE PLAYERS

There is little information about Frederick Thomas Goldsmith, other than that his registered place of business as a dentist in 1934 was The Lido. Newspaper reports also describe his attendance with his wife and business partners at events at the Lido.

Born in London, Stuart-Jones emigrated with his parents to Australia as a child. On graduating from Sydney University, he moved back to England and married the heiress to a chain of cinemas. Returning to Sydney, he set up practice as a gynaecologist on Macquarie Street in the city. Stuart-Jones was an inveterate gambling man with a string of greyhounds and racehorses,

BONDI'S new club, Lido, opened with a bright dance last night. Plans of the most energetic of the dancers included an early breakfast of bacon and eggs and a morning with the daybreak surfers. Among the dancers were Mrs. Stuart Jones, who wore a Loudon frock of gold angel's skin lace with fur edging to her tiny cape; Mrs. Fred Goldsmith, who chose a fuchsia satin and a matching cape with an upstanding collar. Dr. and Mrs. Caleb Goode, of Vacluse entertained a large party, and Dr. Jones, Mr. and Mrs. McNiven, the Swiss Consul-General and Mrs. Bloch, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Morgan, Miss E. Davis, Mr. and Mrs. R. D. Massey, Rex Dyden, Mr. Charles Norman, Mr. Watts, and Mr. Bert Luscombe were also present.

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BONDI LIDO RAIDED IN EARLY MORN

37 Charged With Drinking On Unlicensed Premises

CAVIARE, WINE AND SONG

VISIONS of Bondi Beach, Sydney, becoming a second Riviera abruptly vanished in the early hours of Tuesday morning when a posse of police raided the Lido, a fashionable club which, since Cup night, has entertained and thrilled the young bloods and smart lasses of Sydney's social set.

"The Arrow" does not for one moment deny the right of the police to carry out the letter of the law and prosecute persons for city grip-selling, but it does deplore the fact that when an imaginative Australian sets out to brighten our lives, his efforts are frustrated almost at birth.

Images from top:

Description of The Lido's opening night. Daily Telegraph 2 Nov 1932, page 5. Image courtesy of SLNSW.

Report of the police raid on The Lido, 23 December 1932. The Arrow, image courtesy SLNSW.

Council to build dressing cubicles on the property.

The former dance hall was then transformed into a nightclub, and reports of its opening on Melbourne Cup night on 1 November, 1932 were glowing. Dresses of fuchsia satin and gold angel's skin lace were described and the "plans of the most energetic of dancers included an early breakfast of bacon and eggs and a morning with the daybreak surfers". The entertainment included a "twice nightly snappy ballet of five in scanty costume" that danced and sang to the patrons while an orchestra played nothing but the "latest and swaggiest of tunes". The most novel feature was the telephones on every table to enable patrons to phone "that pretty little thing across the way".

It was only a matter of months before the newly coined Lido was raided by police. One night in December 1932 The Lido was raided in the early hours of the morning and 37 people were arrested including the manager, Leo Mandrell, who

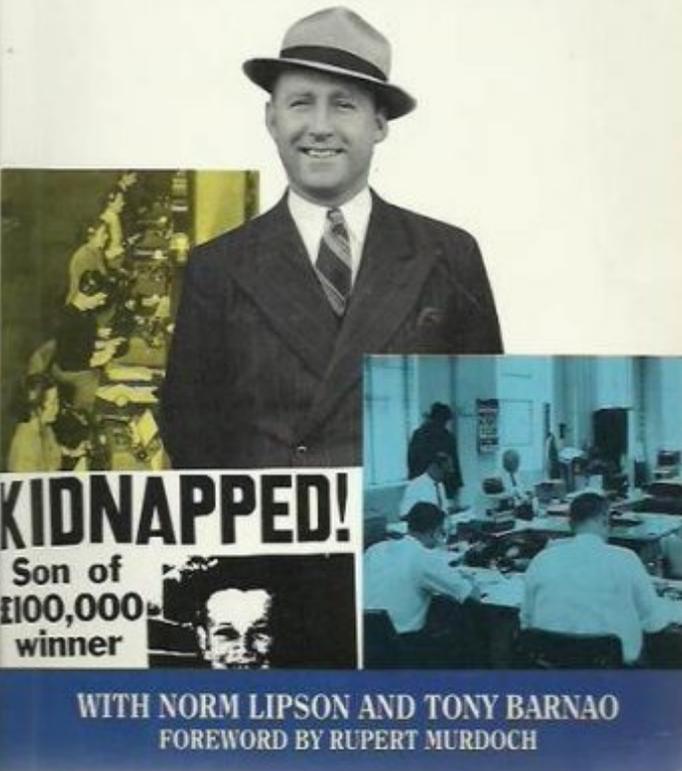
was charged with selling alcohol without a license. Despite pleading guilty Mandrell wasn't dissuaded from his activities and when he was raided again two months later he was charged with the same offences. In August 1933, the lease to Frederick Goldsmith was surrendered. By this time, The Lido had three cases filed against it in the Chief Industrial Magistrates Court. By September 1933, the lease was now in the name of Reginald Stuart-Jones and the revelling swung merrily on.

The raids continued, but so did the late-night partying with the club advertising 'special decorations, cabaret and an a-la-carte menu' at its all-night New Year's Eve party to welcome in 1934.

The property as a whole was often referred to as 'The Lido'; however, this was the name of the nightclub within the Beach Court premises which still housed flats and a kiosk. At The Lido patrons could expect after-hours alcohol, drugs and access to prostitutes. Later,

As Crime Goes By..

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF
"BONDI" BILL JENKINGS



Images from top:

Cover of Bill Jenkins book *As Crime Goes By.*



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during World War II, it became a popular place for visiting American servicemen to let their hair down.

The premises became so notorious that surf lifesaving clubs banned their members from going to The Lido in their club blazers, believing it brought the surf clubs into disrepute. One Bondi surf life saver, Bill Jenkins, who worked as a crime reporter recounted a memorable night there in the 1930s in his memoir, *As Crime Goes By*:

'On this particular night, a dozen or so surf club members, making sure we weren't wearing our club blazers so we wouldn't lower the name of the surf club, went to [the nightclub].

'My first alarming experience that night came when I went to the toilet. A fellow came at me with a knife, and I flattened him with a right-hand punch, before returning to the main hall to rejoin my mates.

'This place had come under the

notice of the police following complaints from locals. While we were enjoying ourselves and playing up, the cops raided the place, arriving in two large paddy wagons.

'It was about 3.00am and the band had gone. The only patrons left were drinking sly grog – the club did not have a liquor licence.

'A couple of smarties slipped out the back door and let some of the police wagons' tyres down. This made the constabulary extremely hostile. They pumped up the tyres and began to herd the patrons into the vans.

'I had an inspiration. I jumped up onto the stage and sat at the piano. One of my mates grabbed the saxophone. When the sergeant told us to get outside and into the van with the rest, I said to him: "Crikey, give us a break, we're only the band. Do you have to pinch us as well?"'

Jenkins was saved from arrest, with the police officer



Images from top:

Horsing around outside Tiny's Cafe, North Bondi, 2 October 1939. Photograph by George Caddy. Image courtesy of the SLNSW and Paul Caddy.

Group in overcoats outside Lido Club, 16 July 1939. Photograph by George Caddy. Image courtesy of the SLNSW and Paul Caddy.

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telling him that he was "closing this joint down".

The Lido Cabaret Ltd went into liquidation with Stuart-Jones fined for assaulting Katie Lillian Moorhouse, and his lease was cancelled by Anderson due to defaulting on the rent payment.

Henrietta Owens, a Bondi Dance Promoter became the next tenant in October 1934. The next major activity was in 1936 when the Lido Club (now also called Beach Court Cabaret) was subject to a police raid that saw 42 people charged.

By the late 1930s Beach Court was coming to the attention of Waverley Council who began agitating for the owner and tenants of the property to exercise more control over their customers. If they didn't do this the Council warned that they would close The Lido.

Anderson passed away on 1937, and Beach Court was inherited by Kate Mare Earngey who became registered proprietor by February 1938.

An offer on behalf of Anderson's estate to sell the property to Waverley Council for £6,000 was declined.

The Lido nightclub continued until the mid-1940s, briefly known by other names such as The Mirrors and The Palms. On 6 January 1940, Beach Court was listed for sale:

"BEACH COURT" (THE LIDO) RAMSGATE AVE
A SUBSTANTIAL BUILDING, with promenade roof, comprising Refreshment Shop, Dance Hall with Catering Accommodation and Dwelling of 3 rooms and kitchen
Detached at rear are TWO Weatherboard Cottages iron roofs, each having verandah at front and containing each 3 rooms, bathroom (heater) washhouse.

Beach Court appears in the background of a series of photos taken in 1939 by George Caddy, which are owned by the State Library of NSW. The 'Bondi Jitterbug' exhibition in 2008 showcased these photos, including couples

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Images from top:

Bathers on the beach at North Bondi. Raffles Hotel and Beach Court in the background, 1960.

The former site of Beach Court, now Biddigal Reserve. Image courtesy of Waverley Council.

jitterbugging on the Beach Court veranda and women dressed up in fur coats and waiting to get into The Lido.

THE COMMUNITY CENTRE

Beach Court survived its racy period, and its nightclub infamy. In later years it was better known for its community meeting rooms and its beachside kiosk, Tiny's Café, which provided classic beachside food to hungry beach goers at the northern end of Bondi Beach.

The club was formed and the Eastern Suburbs Rugby League Club began operating from Thursday to Sunday at Beach Court, moving to the first floor of the Bondi Pavilion the following year. It was also the first home of the Bondi Boys' Club which itself also later moved to the Bondi Pavilion.

The building was demolished in 1966, and on 30 March 1981 became Crown Land. The site is now occupied by the North Bondi park Biddigal Reserve.

In 1957 Waverley Council bought Beach Court, and in February 1958 the community meeting rooms were hired by a group who discussed the formation of a rugby leagues club for the Eastern Suburbs.

Original research kindly provided by Stuart Hibberd

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