

WAVERLEY COUNCIL

# WAVERLEY FLOWER FAIR

A Waverley Library  
Local History Fact Sheet



## WAVERLEY FLOWER FAIR.

Waverley was *en fête* yesterday, the occasion of the opening of the Flower Fair, the proceeds of which are to be devoted to the improvement of Waverley Park. The fair is being held on the park, and in connection with it some four large marquees have been erected. The vicinity of the park has been made gay with an abundance of bunting, and the entrance to the enclosure has been adorned by a well-built triumphal arch. The principal marquee, which is 100 feet in length by 36 feet in width, is devoted to the fair proper, and has been converted into a place of exceeding beauty. Another marquee has been fitted up as a conservatory. The third has been set apart for the display of competitive flowers, and the fourth has been attractively furnished as a refreshment room, Chinese lanterns and parachutes being freely used for decorative purposes. A considerable portion of the space in the principal marquee has been subdivided into some thirteen bowers, which have been most artistically constructed. Festooning, cultivated as well as wild flowers, mirrors, and rustic ornamentation have been skilfully employed, the result being that all the bowers present a charming appearance. In each of the stalls there is a profusion of bouquets, floral designs, & c., and in some cases the effect is heightened by the introduction of singing birds, miniature gardens, miniature pools, diving girls, and other statuettes. Each of the 13 bowers is distinguished by a name exhibited in a conspicuous place, and in most instances these names are composed of flowers exquisitely arranged. Especially was this the case in regard to the names "The Native Rose," "Waratah," and "Gloire de Dijon," which were respectively composed of the flowers represented. The bowers were named and presided over as follows:—

The Waverley Flower Fair was organised as a fundraiser for the improvement of Waverley Park. The Hon. Lady Carrington was the Patroness of the event, which was opened on 13 October 1886 by her husband His Excellency, the NSW Governor, Right Hon. Baron Carrington.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* 14 October, 1886 reported:

*"The amount of patronage accorded both in the afternoon and evening was very liberal and it is hoped that the sale of flowers will materially swell the fund for the improvement of Waverley Park. At night time the fair was illuminated with electric light which invested the decorations and flowers with a peculiar charm."*

Alfred Allen had composed an ode, 'On the occasion of the opening of the first flower fair in Waverley, October 13th, 1886' which ran to seven verses and included such gems as:

*"Bondi is calm - as if in sleep;  
The coast-girt village rings with glee,  
While high Ben Buckler, bold and steep,  
Is resting by the restless sea,  
In waiting for the songs that rise,  
From distant voices to the skies."*

The General Committee organising the Flower Fair had 42 members and in addition to this there was a nine-member Executive Committee, a Treasurer, two Honorary Secretaries and two judges for the exhibits.

WAVERLEY COUNCIL

# WAVERLEY FLOWER FAIR

---



Images from top:

His Excellency, Right Hon.  
Baron Carrington, Governor of  
NSW. Image courtesy of the  
Mitchell Library, SLNSW.

Sydney Morning Herald, 14  
October 1886, page 7.

Wa-ra-ta by George Raper,  
1788. National Library of  
Australia.

There were 13 stall holders and each stall had a name, some of these, such as 'Waratah', 'Acacia' and 'The Native Rose' seem to indicate they were showing Australian wild flowers. The Flower Fair ran for two days. The fair was well received by the public, despite inclement weather destroying several flower displays. The organisers managed to repair the damage and the fair continued undiminished.

B.T. Dowd in *The Centenary of the Municipality of Waverley* (1959), says of the Flower Fair:

*"It was in the year 1886 that the question of the improvements to Waverley Park was very much in the minds of the people, and a most unique way was adopted in raising funds for its improvement.*

*About 2.5 acres of the park were enclosed by a committee for the holding of a Flower Show. It was opened on October 13 1886 by His Excellency, Lord Carrington,*

*accompanied by Lady Carrington.... Two bands provided lively music for the two days. The Flower Show closed on the Monday night following with a fine concert in a marquee on the grounds. The outcome of the whole Show resulted in 300 pounds being presented to the trustees - Waverley Council - for improvement to the Park. The Council extended its grateful thanks to the organisers of the Flower Show."*