



## WAVERLEY COUNCIL

# WATER SELDOM STILL: WAVERLEY IN 1860

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### A Waverley Library Local History Fact Sheet

The Municipality of Waverley was proclaimed by the Governor of NSW on 13 June 1859. It's hard to imagine what Waverley looked and felt like as an early colonial settlement, especially compared to the urban and densely populated environment of today. The following year, on 20 October and 3 November 1860, The *Sydney Mail* ran two articles called 'Rambles in Waverley' which described the area in classic Victorian purple prose. Some notable extracts from the articles include:

*"Whoever the grant of Crown land came from, whoever first intended the gift --- alike displayed good taste in their nomenclature --- Waverley! How rich in all the wealth of young and affectionate romance. Out comes before us that old but somewhat and sterile estate (Waverley Honor)*

*where the Edward whose career we longed to trace, grew to manhood; in heart and honour high, in determination somewhat fickle and irresolute... But we may approach nearer to our Australian Waverley --- very rich as it is in beauty and scenery, which tempts us to reverie, and commemorate upon its namesake."*

*"In this beautiful suburb we have softness of subduing loveliness, mingled with scenes, ... in grandeur as any of those depicted by the master hand in the land of 'Brown Health'; ... The aggregate population is about 1,2000 and it has increased much of late, owing probably to the increased facilities of conveyance to and from... "*

*"One portion of Waverley has been made commemorative of*

Images from top:

Barnett Levey's Waverley House, the namesake of Waverley Council, image undated.

The Oak Walk, O'Brien's Estate, Bondi Beach c. 1900s.

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Images from top:

Bronte Beach and Baths, 1889.

The rivulet in the garden at Palmerston House, 1875.  
Photograph by J. Bischoff,  
image courtesy of the Historic Houses Trust.

*the great naval hero of Britannia ... there is Nelson bay, Nelson road, Trafalgar Road and others to remind us of the one-armed warrior of the waves. The Englishmen of Waverley have felt the call of the old sailor in the duty they have performed in commemorating his name."*

*"Waverley, however, has higher views and aspirations than those of a merely municipal character. It has a School of Arts with 80 members in which instructive lectures are frequently delivered and which has a growing library. There are too, Anglican, Catholic and Wesleyan Churches, numerous and constantly attended. Also a Catholic Young Men's Association for meeting and instruction."*

*"The scenery is very beautiful..."*

*"Waverley though possessing some handsome mansions is not pretentious in its private dwellings, but many are delightfully situated and plentiful in gardens. I dare not trace it now to the grand old*

*gateway to Pacific civilisation which opened thousands of years ago when the washing tide of ocean preceding the power of man, cleared the path between those majestic rocks."*

*"And I dare not now go down from the summit of the cliffs to the chorus ... which is whispered to me amongst the wild flowers, wild birds which make the heights of Bondi beautiful and musical very fair the scenes of the early traveller gazes upon as he explores the cliffs ... gaily and cheerily is Waverley interspersed with its gay little borders in front verandahs and looking verdant in green lettuces and cabbages behind..."*

*"I do not deny that there are many fine and picturesque mansions and many pretty dwellings. There are the picked spots and the scattered and irregular way on which there buildings have been erected tends to show that there is little prospect at the present time of being consolidated into a regular and compact town. But still Waverley is a go-ahead place and so much has been*

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Images from top:

Watson's Bay, drawn by F. C. Terry, 1826-1869. Image courtesy of the Mitchell Library, SLNSW.

Bondi Bay, near Sydney [a view], 1853-1865. Artwork by Samuel Thomas Gill, engraved by W.G. Mason. Image courtesy of the Dixson Library, SLNSW.

*done that seemed impossible that any prediction is not safe."*

*"Beyond the main street the country is covered with short tea-tree scrub. The street, however, which runs through it is level and well formed and the mass of wild flowers on either side, which load the air with perfume make it a pleasant walk. The roads are so well laid and formed as to do credit to the Municipality."*

*"To the multitude, interest is confined to Sunday drives to the Heads and holiday excursion to Manly and Watson's Bay. But the latter two in variety and sublimity of scenery sink into lame insignificance before Bondi ... There is silence around Bondi ... which the Heads do not possess ... and Bondi where the waters are seldom still, wash the shifting sands mostly with dimpling waves ... Oft times they come forward with mountain fierceness."*