

## Surf Lifesaving in Waverley



*1948 Metropolitan Surf Carnival Championships - North Bondi*

Once the practice of surf bathing became popular for Sydneysiders in the late 19th century, the need for formal rescue operations arose. Waverley, being a seaside municipality with Bondi, Tamarama and Bronte popular resorts for surf bathing, was fortunate to have concerned residents gather together to form clubs to aid those in need while swimming.

The question always arises as to which club formed first. Bronte, according to its annual reports, claims as early as 1903. However, according to Council records it was officially, the Bondi Surf Bathers' Life Saving Club which formed in 1906 by application to Waverley Council. The other clubs in the municipality which formed around this time were the North Bondi Surf Life Saving Club, 1907, and also in that year, the Tamarama Surf Life Saving Club.

The aim and objectives of these clubs were to train members by course of instruction in how to rescue a drowning person, proper use of resuscitation and to provide efficient lifesaving apparatus for rescue. The overall aim was to ensure the public who attended the beach, were made aware of swimming hazards; and to promote the spirit of swimming as a healthy and safe one. It is certainly true to this day and there is ample proof that all surf life saving clubs have contributed a great deal to beach safety over the last 80 years.

Many famous incidents have been attached to Waverley's surf lifesaving clubs:

Black Sunday, perhaps the most famous rescue operation, took place on 6th February, 1938, at Bondi where lifesavers rescued more than 300 people.

Royal Command Surf Carnival took place on 6th February, 1954 when the local clubs demonstrated their expertise to the Queen, with a crowd of some 12,000 people in attendance.

The Reel, used in many rescues, was thought to have been built by Lyster Ormsby and John Bond, from the local clubs, and was demonstrated for the first time at Bondi in 1906.

North Bondi Surf Lifesaving Club launched a revolutionary surf boat, "Referee", patented by Earl Hammer in 1906.

Walter Biddell invented a "torpedo cork" to be towed behind the beltman as part of the line to support several beltmen, during rescue operations, for the Bronte Club.

These are just a few of the many incidents in the history of surf lifesaving in Waverley.

The Clubs continue today with their aim of beach safety and all actively participate in rescue operations, surf patrols and carnivals each year.