

## Stories from across the Divide: Waverley's Migration Heritage

### A talk given during the 2002 Heritage Festival at Waverley Library Elida Meadows 2002

Good afternoon everyone and welcome to our Heritage Week talk. Today, my colleague - Xanthi Pythagoras - and I will try to begin to address the huge topic of Waverley's migration heritage. I'm going to begin with a quote that might seem a bit highbrow but I think it makes a valid starting point. Believe me, we don't intend to stay on the academic plane for the whole of the talk - it's not our intention to put you to sleep.

Here goes:

*Much of what marginalised groups thought, felt and did – expressed from their particular viewpoints – went unrecorded in the past. It naturally follows that much of recorded history is biased. Analysis focusing on perspectives, then, requires us to integrate current knowledge and awareness of situations involving marginalised groups – the voices generally unrepresented in the media and public life – in contemporary society.*

This quote comes from the web page description of a heritage course at the University of NSW which incorporates a section entitled "Integrating multicultural perspectives" addressing the need to attain the most encompassing version of a topic or event by integrating a range of perspectives.

If we look at the local area we see that with all good intentions, we have built up an historical collection that presents something far less than the full picture. Other perspectives of events have at best been given a cursory nod and this is because history was written, by and large, by mainstream groups. It is also true that up until recently, most migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds did not have the knowledge or were not in a position to consider contributing to our local history archives. Just because we have not received contributions from these people, however, it is ridiculous to assume that events and places in the local area do not have significance and meaning for them as well. Kate Rea of the NSW Heritage Office maintains that meanings for heritage sites are as diverse as the community itself and that readings of existing heritage sites are given greater depth and more comprehensive meaning through consultation with ethnic communities.

Some places and buildings, which are already recognised by heritage authorities as being of significant heritage and historical value to the community also, have great meaning for people from different backgrounds. Bondi Pavilion is one such site. It is heritage listed by Waverley Council and protected by the National Trust. Its official history, numerous archival photographs and other material reinforcing its significance to our local area is housed in the Local Studies collection at Waverley Library. However, for the people of various ethnic backgrounds that have settled in the area, the Pavilion has additional meanings and significance.

Records show that from the outset Bondi Pavilion was a great asset to the local community. John Kingsmill, who grew up at Bondi, has written:

*When the new Bondi Beach pavilion and promenade were opened in 1929, Bondi people glowed with pride and became devotees of the art of promenading, day and night. It became the custom, the evening stroll, an hour or so at the beach to take the sea breeze before bed. The Depression made it all the more precious - for some it was their only entertainment.*

Nowadays, "promenading" is often considered a pastime introduced by continental Europeans, and it has become commonplace on the streets, parks and esplanades of Sydney. It is interesting to find evidence that people were indulging in this kind of diversion back in the 1920s. It is John Kingsmill, too, who describes the ethnic mix of Bondi in the 1920s and 30s:

*We knew very well who the other two per cent were. They were few enough, and different enough, to make them noticeable. Cheeky boys would thump each other for luck whenever they saw a Chinaman on the street. You saw Chinese working in market gardens and on vegetable runs in the suburbs, one-man horse-and-cart businesses whose daily round you could set your clock to. Our local greengrocer was a Chinese lady with a broad Australian accent and an un-Chinese name, Elsie. Going through school, any Italian or Greek name stuck out a mile. The Italian boy who moved through the Bondi Public School grades with me was Joe Tesoriero. I don't know what Joe's family did, but you expected to find Italians in every fruit shop in Bondi, Elsie notwithstanding. And Greeks in every fish shop, every milk-bar and in almost every steak-and-eggs café. 'Going to the Greeks', men would say, and you didn't even notice that they always put a 'the' in before 'Greeks'. There might have been, must have been, some French, Germans, Poles living in Sydney in the 1920s but we never knew of them. And would never have met them, since they were unlikely to run milk bars, fruit shops and cafes.*

A recent publication on the history of Oxford Street refers to the 'non-Anglo' presence and the cultural pluralism that it brought to street life and the communities that lived in the surrounding neighbourhoods. For the person walking the street or riding past in a tram many of the businesses were clearly identifiable as Greek, Italian, Chinese or Jewish. And, indeed, a cursory glance at the Sands Directory from 1890 shows a steady increase along Waverley's stretch of Oxford Street and Bondi Road of Italian fruiterers and Greek fishmongers with names like Loschiavo, Saradopolous, Russo and Karipas. This is not to mention the many Jewish businesses. The same author asserts that, during the 1930s and 40s, up the hill, in Paddington and even further afield in Waverley, the influx of Greeks, Maltese, Italian, Spanish and Central-European Jewish immigrants was making an even more dramatic impact on those neighbourhoods.

In more recent times the ethnic mix in the Waverley area is somewhat more notable – as is the case with the rest of Sydney. The 1996 census showed that 24% of Waverley's population was born in a non-English speaking country, a slighter higher figure than for Sydney overall. One journalist writing about Bondi back in 1981 quoted a local shop keeper who said, "It's like New York here – Spanish, Italian, Lebanese, Jewish, Greek."

However, nothing remains static, least of all in Waverley, and some of these populations are shrinking while others increase. Growing communities include the Russian speaking community, Koreans, South Africans and Indonesians whilst the more established European communities are decreasing. Nonetheless, it is true to say that people from all communities, past and present, leave their mark on the local area.

Again regarding Bondi Pavilion - this particular building has always been a vital part of the local picture. Today it is the site of a busy and well-subscribed community centre. Under and around its famous arches, people from all backgrounds play chess, take coffee, practice drums. In 1998, the authors of a book entitled *Cosmopolitan Sydney* noted that:

*Bondi is also the "natural" home of a small but noisy Brazilian colony that makes itself visible every Sunday around the Bondi Pavilion showing off with soccer balls glued to their feet and with the contagious rhythms of their drums.*

But Bondi is not the only place in the Waverley Local Government Area with a strong migrant presence. Today we are talking about Waverley's migration heritage as part of an effort to bring into Local History the stories of those people who have been marginalised in the official version. This is not by any means an exhaustive account, nor does it include stories from all the cultural groups who have settled in the area. That would be impossible in one brief talk, even if we had the information. Today, we will be focussing on the following communities: Jewish, New Zealanders, Chinese, Italians and Greeks. This is only a beginning. The rest is up to all of us.

The theme of the National Trust Heritage Festival this year is Bridging the Divide. Let's cross the divide together. As from today the Local Studies section of Waverley Library is officially "open for business" with regards to local ethnic communities. We are letting you know that we are interested in you and that one of our main aims from here on is to expand our knowledge of migrant heritage in the Waverley area.

Waverley was once Aboriginal country but Aborigines too were migrants; it is almost certain that they were the "first migrants" to this land. It has been firmly established that Aboriginal people have lived on this continent for over 40,000 years, and almost certainly 50,000 years - dates older than this are still unproven. The most likely source of this settlement was the islands of southeast Asia.

Moving forward a little, what do we know about the Aboriginal people who lived in the area that is now known as Waverley? To begin with, there is evidence of a significant pre-settlement indigenous presence. Apart from the rock carvings at the Bondi Golf Course, Ben Buckler Reserve and the coastal walk at Mackenzie's Point, which are protected by State legislation, there are traces of indigenous history that are not officially "sanctioned". One of these is the Aboriginal path from Port Jackson to Bondi Bay. This path is mapped in the book *A Difficult Infant* edited by Graeme Alpin and described as a major Aboriginal path in the Sydney region as deduced from the available ethnohistorical evidence. Alpin examines this evidence and concludes that there is strong support for the position of the path.

Findings also suggest that a considerable Aboriginal heritage has been built over by private and public development. In a Sydney Morning Herald article of March 9, 1996 - "Hands across history" - journalist Debra Jopson reported that Sydney sits astride a gigantic Aboriginal art gallery. This article included a photograph of an Aboriginal engraving found under a garage floor in the Eastern Suburbs.

New forms of stone tools certainly began to be made about 4,000 - 5,000 years ago. Among these were Bondi Points, named after Bondi Beach because the Australian Museum first collected them from a large site at the northern end of the beach in 1899. First called 'chipped-back surgical knives' because they are shaped like a scalpel or penknife blade, the name 'Bondi' was given to them in 1943. Nowadays these kinds of tools, along with the remnants of an Aboriginal midden containing shellfish debris, and other stone implements and artefacts (grindstone, nose ornaments, scrapers, spear points, etc.) are buried under Queen Elizabeth Drive. Items which were saved from this particular site are on display at the Australian Museum, Sydney. It is widely believed that the south side of Port Jackson from South Head to Long Cove was the territory of the Cadigal.

Today, the Aboriginal people of Waverley may not be Cadigal – most of those people were dispersed and/or perished from introduced European diseases during the early years of the colony. The Aboriginal population of Waverley of the present is not a large one but it is growing from census to census and it is made up of people from all over the country. One such resident is from the Dunghutti tribe of the east coast of NSW. Her name is Darlene Johnson and she is one of Australia's most promising and talented emerging filmmakers. Her work includes the short film *Two Bob Mermaid*, the documentary *Stolen Generations* and a documentary on the making of *Rabbit Proof Fence*. Darlene is currently editing a documentary which she wrote and directed on the life of Aboriginal actor David Gulpilil. She will be presenting a talk about her filmmaking at Waverley Library this year during NAIDOC Week.

Here I'd like to make a brief detour to look at the issue of Citizenship.

Although by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century most Australians would have regarded and referred to themselves as 'Australians', their nationality was solely that of British subject until 25 January 1949. The Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948 created a new status of Australian citizenship, in addition to that of British subject. This change had not been

brought about by any particular nationalistic pressure to create a new and different national status. It was imposed on an almost entirely indifferent Australian population from above, as a consequence of Canada's moves to create a separate Canadian citizenship.

In the post-war period, the Department of Immigration began actively promoting Australian citizenship. As far as migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds were concerned, the simplification of application procedures in 1955 and the abolishment of the naturalisation fee in 1959 was not enough incentive. Application forms remained too difficult for them and many could not obtain the required character references from Australians whom they had known for twelve months. And so it was that when the first Naturalisation Ceremony of its kind was held at Council Chambers (sometime during the period that Carl Jeppeson was Mayor of Waverley - 1954-56), there were only twelve applicants.

Previously all naturalisation ceremonies were held in Police Courts before a magistrate. This first Waverley ceremony was well attended by community organisations and many private residents of the area, greatly outnumbering the twelve applicants. The gathering was addressed by the Mayor and the Hon. Abe Landa MLA, Minister for Labour and Industry and Member for Bondi who said:

*Good Australians are not unmindful of the talents of New Australians. We appreciate your good taste in many things, your love of things cultural and your scientific and technical skills. To all present I would say, let's be tolerant. New Australians have proved themselves capable of great friendship. That must continue. We must learn to understand each other. I believe that Australian life will be enriched by our new citizens.*

The Hon. Abe Landa was right, Australian life has undoubtedly been enriched by its cultural diversity. And there is a richness of stories of people from a large variety of backgrounds who have settled in our local area. Mr Landa himself was from a Jewish background. He was born in 1902, the oldest child of Russian Jews who had fled to England and then to Ireland to escape the Russian pogroms of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In his early youth he came to Australia with his mother and siblings. Educated at Waverley College and at Sydney University, he became Member for Bondi in the Legislative Assembly in 1930, serving 25 years in this position.

But Abe Landa was only one of the Jewish people of many nationalities who have a long association with the history of Waverley.

Jewish people have settled in the Waverley area from the beginning. Indeed, Waverley itself is named after the house built by Australia's first free Jewish settler, Barnett Levey, who is also considered the father of theatre in Sydney. Generally, Jewish people came to escape persecution from the late eighteenth century to the end of World War Two. Waves of Jewish immigration at the end of the 1950s, 1970s and 1980s has seen the expansion of the existing Jewish community in Bondi with people from Hungary, South Africa, Russia and Israel. In 1939 Alfred Harris, a leader of the Sydney Jewish community, criticised Jewish migrants for 'congregating in or about King's Cross and Bondi, perhaps not realising that in so doing they are looked on as forming colonies which is positively undesirable'. This is obviously a criticism that has been made of many different ethnic groups. Today we are grateful for Bondi's Jewish flavour just as we are for Leichhardt's Italian flavour. Perhaps we should all remember that when we ourselves are driven to accuse newer settlers of 'forming ghettos'.

Of the period back in the 1920s and 1930s, Bondi identity John Kingsmill notes: I began to notice the Saturday Jews in the streets when I was very young...So what was this to me? The existence of difference. A variation on the Bondi theme big enough to be important.

In Bondi the Pavilion is one of the sites where these people all meet - to stroll, to play cards or chess, to take coffee. In front of the Pavilion, the steps leading down to the sand have long been known as the "Jerusalem Steps". Bondi is also home to the Gelato Bar on Campbell Parade, a Hungarian landmark and the Hakoah Club in Hall Street which began in Bondi in 1938 long before any club building was erected there. It was started informally by German and Austrian Jews who had escaped to Australia from Hitler's Third Reich.

Betty Bloch was born in Russia but had moved to Germany where she married a German architect. They escaped from Germany before World War II arriving in Australia in 1939. Had she remained, Betty would have almost certainly been murdered as much for her socialism as for the fact that she was Jewish. For almost 60 years Betty lived in the eastern suburbs, many of them in Bronte where she was involved in the campaign for child care centres and a member of the community group that set up Waverley's first preschool. She was also a tireless campaigner for nuclear disarmament. On the occasion of her ninetieth birthday in 1996, Betty told a local paper, "I am for peace and friendship and understanding".

There is a significant Russian Jewish community in Bondi and this was celebrated recently by the film *Russian Doll*. The film's screenwriter, Allannah Zitserman was three when she arrived in Bondi in 1980. In a recent interview she states: My mother wanted to get as far away from Russia as possible. Most of the community here originates from a port city called Odessa, so in Bondi we felt at ease being so close to the water. You have to remember that at that time Bondi was quite a violent place – run-down and, most of all, cheap.

Another prominent local Jewish person is Cesha Glazer who came to Australia from Poland in 1958 with her husband and two daughters. This amazing woman and her incredible story of bravery and survival is featured in a German documentary which has been shown on SBS and which we will show today after this talk for those of you who wish to stay and watch it. Cesha's story is one which features the big themes of the twentieth century – war, courage, persecution, the Holocaust, ordinary people caught within extraordinary circumstances. Here in Waverley Cesha made a new life with her husband, not a passive life at all but one of commitment to her local community. She has been a volunteer for Meals on Wheels, she ran her local branch of Neighbourhood Watch for many years, she is an active Friend of Waverley Library. Cesha is also a volunteer guide at the Jewish Museum and participates in the Courage to Care programme, giving schoolchildren from all over the state the inspiration to stand up against bullies and to reach out to those who are victimised by them. Last year she was invited to sit on the Multicultural Committee of Waverley Council. Cesha's motto is "Think globally, act locally", and she does. More than half a century ago she offered bread and protection to Jewish victims of the Holocaust in Warsaw. Here in Waverley, she and her husband convinced local bakers to give them the bread they were going to throw away for charity and for WAYS – the local youth centre for which, incidentally, Cesha also worked as a volunteer.

It has by now commonly acknowledged that commercial vegetable growing was established in the 1850s-60s by the Chinese and they had a virtual monopoly for the next 50 years. and the reason most often given for this phenomenon is that, as Karl Zhao, Chinese Heritage Officer at the NSW Heritage Office explains, Chinese immigrants came to prospect for gold but soon realised not everyone could get rich from the gold fields and so started growing vegetables. At the end of the 1850s gold rushes, many Chinese came to the Sydney metropolitan area and became involved in market gardening."

This explanation for the move from gold-digging to market gardening is interesting not because it is incorrect but because it leaves out an important factor in the process. Because of union attitudes, Chinese and other non-Europeans had little chance of obtaining work in a number of fields of employment. They were forced to concentrate in

areas like market gardening where they could operate independently, or to find work as private servants and in industries such as furniture-making where there were Chinese employers. In the meantime the increasingly powerful labour movement added its strength to the call for Australian federation to proceed on a whites only basis.

In Sydney the main gardens were established [in the 1800s] in the sandy soils of the coastal suburbs, from Rose Bay to Randwick and through Botany to La Perouse. By the turn of the century Chinese market gardens had proliferated in Sydney and could be found in a greater number of suburbs including the west, south-west and north west districts. Most of these gardens were leased by groups of 5 to 10.

Several Chinese market gardens flourished in the Waverley Municipality before and after the turn of the century. The most well-known "cabbage patch" was located at Flagstaff Farm, the area which became Waverley Park. The farm was hilly and rough, but the hillsides made good grazing ground for dairy cattle. The soil was poor and sandy, except for the flats, in the north corner and opposite Henrietta Street, which were worked by Chinese gardeners. Irrigation water was obtained from a pond situated near the present grandstand enclosure. The Council Rate Books and Sands Sydney Directories reveal some of the names of these market gardeners as: On Lee, Ah Yam, and Ah Foo.

Another market garden is believed to have been located in Tamarama Street (the later site of William Rose's stables) in the early 1900's. Some present Waverley residents recall other market gardens in those early days:

*Mr. Eric Shakes: I remember a Chinaman's Gardens over in Queens Park. There was a creek used to run down there. Mrs Eunice Tucker recalls: There used to be a Chinaman's Garden in O'Brien's Bush (Bondi). As children we used to go down and throw stones on the poor Chinaman's shed. He'd come out and pelt us with tomatoes. According to Edna Archer: There were a lot of Chinese market gardens where Military Road is now. It was only a bush trail then, pretty rough in patches for the horse and buggy.*

Mrs Barbara Podmore has interesting memories: We used to have a Chinaman come down the back lane and he had his two baskets across his shoulder. And what he had in those baskets you wouldn't believe. Mother could get anything she wanted, any kind of fruit of any description. He knew if you owed him a penny, or if you didn't. At Christmas he'd always give each customer a tin of ginger, and you never knew where in these baskets he could carry that. My father bought little bells from the Chinaman for Christmas decorations.

Amongst the Chinese who settled in Waverley was Sydney merchant and philanthropist Mei Quong Tart who built a house called Huntingtower in Evans Street. Quong Tart was an ardent cricketer. There is another more recent Chinese cricket connection in Waverley. Norman and Alison Chee Quee and their sons Andrew, David and Geoffrey ran the fish and chip shop at Bronte Road Charing Cross for many years. Norman, who has since retired to Darwin, is the uncle of cricketer Richard Chee Quee whose family was also in the fish shop business.

Another more recent Chinese-Australian Waverley resident is William Yang, renowned photographer who was born in North Queensland in 1943. His grandparents migrated from China to northern Australia in the 1880s. In the mid-eighties William Yang began to explore his Chinese heritage, resulting in his monologues Sadness and The North. In a photographer's statement he wrote:

*I lived at South Bondi in a block of flats from about 1983 till 1987. It was the first time that I had a place to myself and I really loved the experience of living alone. The flat was quite big and I had enough space to have a studio in the front room. I loved Bondi and Tamarama and would spend a lot of time at the beach or at the headland between the two beaches. I had a medium format camera which I used to take the series of beach shots which appeared in the book Starting Again. The title refers to starting a*

*new life. To some extent I'd given up working as a social photographer and I was beginning to take my own photographs. I was very happy at Bondi. Unfortunately there was a fire in the building where I lived and I had to move.*

*I came back to Bondi in 1992, this time to North Bondi. I felt happy coming back to the area. I haven't taken as many photos of the environs as I did in the eighties, as my work changed from taking photos to doing performance pieces in the theatre, and I have spent a lot of time touring my performances. For about a year I used a Nikonos underwater camera which I would take with me swimming, but I'm afraid lately I haven't taken many photos at all.*

*I've just pulled out some of my Bondi photos to put into this time capsule [for the new library building] and I love them. They confirm what beautiful exuberant place Bondi is. I want to take more pictures and I will. I resolve to photograph more this summer. There I've got it in writing!*

Maori and other New Zealanders have had a long association with Bondi. Journalist Anna Maria Dell'Oso noted in 1981 that the new incarnation of the Astra – staid and genteel - was once the territory of Bondi's Kiwis. It was a hotel in those days and it attracted a large Maori clientele. But Maori people were not only interested in places to "hang out"; they also needed places to live. In 1984 Jim George and a group of local Maori formed the Bondi Maori Self Help Housing Group and moved into a council owned property at 140 Curlewis Street. Because these people were squatters they were not welcome tenants even though the building had remained empty for some time. Eventually Council prevailed and the Maori squatters were evicted, the building demolished.

Back in 1986, Bondi Beach Public School in Campbell Parade, appointed its first Maori teacher, 31-year old Russell Mohri. At that time, 20% of the school's students were from New Zealand. There was also a Maori teacher's aide back then – his name was Paul Terangi – and he conducted Maori-language classes. I don't know where these two men are today but they have certainly gone down in (Waverley's) history.

Stan McDonald was the first beach inspector at Bondi, appointed in 1913 to look after the swimmers at the beach. He was born in Dunedin, New Zealand and came to Australia as a young man. After a brief stint in Adelaide, he settled in Bondi where he spent the rest of his life. Here he built up an outstanding record as a boxer and athlete and was very proud of the fact that he was never knocked off his feet. Stan retired as Beach Inspector in 1933 and set up the family business, Mac's Beach Hire – deckchairs, umbrellas, surfplanes, surf boards and also an oilspraying service for swimmers and sunbathers. Locally he was known as "Mac" – the king of Bondi.

Early Italian migrants to Australia lacked high levels of formal education and language skills and had little chance of entering training schemes to redress this situation. This, combined with experiences of poverty, ensured that Italian immigrants were keen to take advantage of any opportunities to work and save. So it was that:

*Italians have contributed their labour to the building of infrastructure crucial for the expansion of settlement in rural and urban areas of New South Wales. Such projects as the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Scheme and the Hydro-Electric Scheme in the Snowy Mountains region have all relied heavily on immigrant labour. In addition, the operation of factories and industrial plants in the city, have been dependent on Italian migrant labour. The field where Italians have perhaps contributed their labour most is that of civil engineering. They have helped to build railways, roads, buildings and bridges.*

It was mainly Italians, according to Major Johnston, who contributed their labour to the building of the Bondi sewer. Writing as "Plugshell" in the Eastern Suburbs Daily of 2 October, 1924, he noted that:

*A unique sight, when the sewer was being constructed was the navvies' camp on the flat, now the corner of Curlewis Street and Old South Head Road. There congregated men of all nationalities, employed in the works, under Jerusalem Smith, the contractor.*

*The camp was like a mining camp - canvas huts, tucker shops, boarding houses and salons (not pubs), all built of canvas, occupied and frequented by the workmen and their families; a real cosmopolitan crowd. On pay days they would foregather at the Tea Gardens, make merry in the 'Simon Pure' (now the Tea Gardens Hotel) and settle their differences...on the open space now occupied with the present buildings at Patterson's corner. They were mostly Italians.*

One of these Italians, one young man named Arcangelo Passeri was killed while he and an Italian co-worker were tamping a charge for blasting. Another Italian worker found the two men. Passeri was 28 at the time and left behind a young wife and a baby boy.

Many Italians worked as labourers and skilled artisans, tradespeople and were involved in the construction of the large villas and public buildings in Waverley from the Victorian period onward. This is not reflected in the descriptions of these buildings found in the heritage literature. Writing about ethnic building traditions in Australia, Miles Lewis concludes that building is as complex as any other culture in Australia. This culture has been simplified by the heritage literature to such a degree that the information provided serves to promote a monocultural perspective of our built landscape. Words like "Victorian Italianate" cannot substitute for the knowledge that at times the only people sufficiently skilled in the plasterwork, for example, required by an architect were migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds. Mary Immaculate Church at Charing Cross had significant input in its construction from many Italian artists and tradesmen including the frescoes painted by the Italian artist, Cesare Vagarini, Laureate of Florence Academy of Art and for some years Professor of Fresco Painting at the Brera Academy of Milan. In the late 1930s Signor Vagarini was commissioned to fresco the walls of the new Church of the Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth at Ein-Karem. But after Italy's entry into World War 2 he was interned by the Allies and sent with Signora Vagarini to Australia to the internment camp at Tatura in Victoria. At the intervention of the Australia Franciscans they were released from internment and came to Waverley early in 1945 to begin Vagarini's monumental work in the church.

However, generally as time went on, the main occupations of the Italian migrants changed. As was the case in other parts of Sydney - mainly Leichhardt - in Waverley Italian business changed from being dominated by specialist trades such as mosaic layers and stonemasons in the late nineteenth century, to predominantly food-related retail, especially fish shops and green grocers in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Of course Italians in Australia are known for their fruitshops. The 1947 census shows nearly 25 per cent of Italian born men were self employed in the retail of fruit and vegetables or fish or as proprietors of cafes and saloons. Currently the Australian Centre for Public History, UTS together with CoAsIt is working on Sydney's Italian Fruit Shop History Project, which includes an oral history component. Waverley, like the rest of Sydney, has had its share of Italian fruit shops, including the one when I was growing up at Charing Cross. It was owned by the Carrano family and was in what looks to be the oldest shop on that stretch of Bronte Road. An old sandstone building, it is now a drycleaners.

*There are a number of reasons why so many Italians in Australia chose to become independent business proprietors. Small business, in particular food outlets, required reasonably low initial outlay and could be made more economically feasible with the adaption of the peasant tradition of family labour. In addition, people could live on the premises and little English was required except by the person in charge. The reality of relations between Italian workers and Australians often meant that owning and running one's own business could be a refuge from hostilities meted out by bosses or those feeling threatened by the presence of immigrant workers in the job market. In a country where one was often limited to labouring jobs or jobs involving dirty and often dangerous work, regard-less of skills or qualifications, the prospect of creating one's own work environment through self employment was an attractive one.*

An interesting entrepreneurial family of Waverley was the Pugliese family which established Star Pictures at Bondi Junction around 1910. Antonio Pugliese arrived in New South Wales from Viggiano in Potenza, Italy in 1881 at the age of twenty-eight. He was listed as a watchmaker at 601 George Street until 1896. In 1883 he married Caroline Frances Donaldson and they had seven children, claimed to have been unbelievably good-looking, any member could have been a film star according to Jack Atkins' account of 1983. He adds that twice weekly all members of the Pugliese family from Mama to grandchildren attended the movies occupying a reserved section. Antonio's father, Antonio Pugliese senior was a successful racehorse owner and trainer and with his expert advice a small donkey and cart appeared around Bondi Junction, carrying a large sandwich board advertising coming attractions at Star Pictures.

A highly regarded Italo-Australian Bronte personality was Peter Bagnato. Born and bred into a Woolloomooloo Italian fishing family, Peter devoted many years of unstinting labour to the Bronte Surf Club. Interestingly, "bagnato" means "wet" in Italian, so it seems that Peter was always destined for the water! During World War II he served for Australia in the Middle East and New Guinea. He was a well-known character around the traps of the Bronte and Waverley areas where he went by the nicknames of "Bags" and "Bag of Potatoes". An obituary in a local newspaper of 1992 describes him as a unique character with a refreshing wit and an enormous generosity and claims that:

*You had to watch the crafty old buzzard sometimes though at the barbecues when he liked to season everything with lashings of onion and huge globules of garlic. He even used to put it in the Bonox and Rum concoction the Splashers had to drink on the cold winter Sunday mornings.*

The interesting thing about this photograph is that the young woman sitting on Peter's lap is the daughter of another well-known local Italo-Australian, Vittorio Magistrale and that the two - Peter and the young Angela - are at the wedding of yet another local Italo-Australian - me! I grew up in Waverley, went to school at St Charles and St Clares, attended mass at Mary Immaculate Church, borrowed books from Waverley Library, learnt to swim at Bondi Baths, went to my dad's work picnics at Bronte Beach where my favourite thing was the little train. My father, Raffaele - known as "Ralph" to his mates - considered Peter a good friend.

Greek migration to Australia dates back to 1829 but the vast majority of Greeks came after World War II between 1945 and 1982. The first significant stream of Greek migration began in the 1850s, attracted to the discovery of gold in New South Wales and Victoria. From the 1870s onwards, the establishment of chain-migration patterns resulted in the settlement of relatively large groups from the islands of Kythera, Ithaca and Kastellorizo. Most immigrants from Kythera went to New South Wales, settling in Sydney and some of the smaller towns. In 1940 there were more than 200 Kytherans in New South Wales, which, at the time, represented a quarter of all Greeks in Australia.

As early as the late 1910s there was a slight Greek presence in Waverley. B. T. Dowd, the author of Waverley's Centenary History in 1959, claims that Greek gypsies were camped at Bondi around 1901. However, most Greeks arrived during the post-war migration period. Of these, a significant proportion went into the food business. The catering trades were attractive because of a 'traditional peasant desire' for independence and security, though of equal importance was the possibility of employing kinsmen and compatriots. Such trades were also relatively free from government regulation and trade union interference, an important feature for Greek-Australians who were systematically excluded from unionised labour.

It was the 30-year old Greek cook of the Astra Hotel - Jimmy Koussis - who rescued a woman and her daughter from drowning in 1948.

*Coffee-houses were established in the early years of Greek-Australian settlement to provide a social setting where people gathered to discuss political, religious, community, and sporting issues, to promote ethnic ties, and sometimes to gamble. Many coffee-houses provided services such as the sale of Greek newspapers and magazines, advertising community events, and they also functioned as labour exchanges.*

Over time, there have been many Greek-owned milk bars and cafes in the Waverley area, some of them quite famous such as Bates at Bondi, but there was also Theo's at Charing Cross, Paul's at Bondi Junction and many more. Bates' Milkbar closed last year after 50 years of operation on the corner of Curlewis Street and Campbell Parade. The owners, Nick and George left their Greek homeland in 1948 as 18 and 16 year olds. They became the proud owners of what was to become arguably Bondi's most famous milkbar in 1951. George told a local paper that people had come from near and far to say goodbye. They've come from Narooma on the far south coast, Wollongong and even Broadbeach he said.

Just as fruit shops are associated with Italians, fish shops are associated with Greeks. The 'pioneer' of the Greek fish shop in Australia was Athanaios Kominos, who began trading in rented premises at 36 Oxford Street with his friend Theodore some time in 1878 (not long after his arrival in 1873).

*In the early years of the twentieth century Greek fish shops were located in downtown Sydney along George, King and Pitt Streets, and also to the east and south-east of Hyde Park down William and Oxford Streets. Fish shops and other catering concerns were typically staffed by Greek cooks, kitchen hands, waiters, oyster openers and general assistants who lived close to their employment.*

As previously mentioned, Greek fish-shops – owned by people with names like Saradopolous and Karipas - began to appear along Oxford Street and Bondi Road in the Waverley area from the early decades of the twentieth century. Since then, as with all ethnic groups, Greeks have moved on and into all walks of life.

In the words of one well-known Greek journalist who once lived at Bondi - George Donikian – talking about our local area, there is a multicultural mix that is not only working, but is succeeding. Multiculturalism is not just a word here. It is a way of life. And of course there are countless stories and many more cultures than we have been able to represent today who have made an impact on the history of Waverley. Each successive wave of migrants has contributed to how we work, how we play, what we eat, and ultimately the look and feel of our area. For those of you who are interested, after a short break we will be showing Cesha Glazer's documentary. Cesha is here with us today and she will be glad to answer any of your questions after the film.