

Bondi Junction - Heritage on the Move



Bondi Junction has traditionally been a dominant retail centre in the Eastern Suburbs and this role was reinforced with the advent of the Eastern Suburbs Railway in 1979, and Bondi Junction Plaza and Eastgate shopping centres. Despite some modernisation, traces of the suburb's commercial heritage remain visible in the late 19th and early 20th century retail buildings along Oxford Street and Bronte Road.

Bondi Junction is not only a commercial centre. It has been a popular residential suburb from the beginnings of its development in the nineteenth century and has a wide variety of architectural styles from Victorian terraces, Federation homes and modern high-rise apartments.

Development of Bondi Junction has largely been controlled by transport routes. The South Head Road (now Oxford Street) was the first, being constructed in 1811 by soldiers of the 73rd Regiment. By 1856 a tollgate had been erected at the corner of Bronte Road and Ebley Street. "Waverley was all scrub in those days and (Bronte Road) was a little better than a bush track." The tollgate was moved in 1869 to a site opposite Hough's windmill to catch residents who were managing to evade paying the toll.

When Barnett Levey built "Waverley House" in 1827 it was the first of many fine mansions to grace the area which then became known as Waverley. In 1854 the "Waverley Tea Gardens", at the corner of Oxford Street and Bronte Road, were laid out with gardens, summer houses, quilt pitches and other games and was a favourite resort for afternoon teas and fun. The area took on the local name of Tea Gardens until the Bondi steam trams junctioned there with the trams to Charing Cross. Hence, Bondi Junction came into usage.

Early industries included Henry Hough's windmill in Mill Hill Road which ground corn and other cereal products; William Allen's soap candle works off Cowper Street (now Bronte Road); the Waverley Brewery in Adelaide Street; John Farrelly's dairy in Cowper Street; the Boot Factory of William Sidaway and Thomas Bardon, in Spring Street.

Trades and professions were well represented around Bond Junction: blacksmith, farrier, carter, dray proprietor, coach-painter, bootmaker, basketmaker, produce and fuel merchant, timber merchant, stonemason, drysalter, grocer, greengrocer, baker, confectioner, hotelier, builder, architect, accoucheuse, doctor, surgeon, tailor, fireman, draper, dressmaker, tailor, school teacher and professor of music .

Some well-known names, past and present, have played their part in Bondi Junction's history: Grace Bros, David Jones, Coles, Woolworths, Attwaters, Sargents Pies, McIlraths, Corkhill Bakery, Kublers Bakery, Lopes Fruiterer, Bell's Pharmacy, Washington H. Soul Pattinson, Taylors Shoes, Faulkinghams Shoe Repairs, Singer Sewing Machines, Alldis & Cox, Dunrich Bros, Day's Newsagency, Mick Simmons, Dairy Farmers, Fresh Food & Ice Company.

Entertainment was provided at Coronation Hall (now the Grace Bros site), Harris Hall above Harris Bros Shoe Store (cnr Oxford and Newland Streets), and Stratton Hall (now the Cock n Bull restaurant of the Grand Hotel). "The new Bondi Junction Palais de Danse" opened in 1923, offering "select dancing every Thursday 811". Silent films were screened at the Olympic Picture Theatres which were taken over by Hoyts when "talkies" arrived. The Hoyts Star and Hoyts Coronet, together with the Regal (later the Metro) have all disappeared and, today, the Bondi Junction Plaza Cinema provides this entertainment.

The Centennial Roller Skating Rink opened at 65 Ebley Street in 1912, the year after the Bondi rink was gutted by fire. This address was also the film production studios of Australasian Films, Cinesound, Australian Television Enterprises, Visatone Television and Ajax Films, until its use as the retail premises of Norman Ross Discounts and Keith Lord. Some fine Australian films were made there, including "40,000 Horsemen", "Smithy and "On Our Selection"

On the Spring Street site of the present Eastern Suburbs Leagues Club stood the Bondi Junction Ice Skating Rink, proving that local residents enjoyed this form of entertainment long before Torvill and Dean.

Bondi Junction has had its fair share of prominent residents, amongst whom were: Paul Scully-Power, Australian-born astronaut of the 1984 Space Shuttle "Challenger" mission. Harry Rickards, actor, singer, and Tivoli Theatre owner. Roderic Quinn, one of Australia's leading poets. Watkin Wynne, Manager of the Daily Telegraph. Jack Fingleton, international cricketer. Lady de Miklouho Maclay, daughter of NSW Premier Sir John Robertson, and wife of Russian scientist and explorer Nicholaievich Mikluho- Maklai. Alexina Wildman, journalist and satirist, who wrote for the Bulletin as "Sappho Smith".

Today, Bondi Junction continues to be "on the move", offering a wide range of community and recreational activities which complement its retail and commercial roles.

Compiled from resources in Waverley Library's Local History Collection for Heritage Week 1994.