

WAVERLEY COUNCIL

WAVERLEY'S TRAMWAYS



151 ELIZABETH ST. HYDE PARK SYDNEY. (H.KING PHOTO SYD)



Images from top:

Steam Tram 93, near Hyde Park on Elizabeth Street. 1880-1890. Photographer Henry King, image courtesy of the Powerhouse Museum.

View towards the ocean near Waverley, ca. 1875. B.O. Holtermann archive of Merlin and Bayliss photographic prints of New South Wales and Victoria, image courtesy of the NLA.

A Waverley Library Local History Fact Sheet

Trams were a ubiquitous sight in early Sydney, and at its height was the largest tram system in the southern hemisphere. Sydney's very first tramline was installed in 1861, linking Circular Quay with the main train station in Redfern. A simple horse-drawn carriage, this tram line was short lived but paved the way for steam trams. In 1879 the steam train was introduced, with the first line built along Elizabeth Street to Central Station.

In the 1880s Waverley was still a relatively young municipality, remote and sparsely developed. Early settlers used private vehicles or one of the few horse buses plying between Sydney and the Tea Gardens (now Bondi Junction). Tram access was one of the key reasons for Waverley's development into a highly

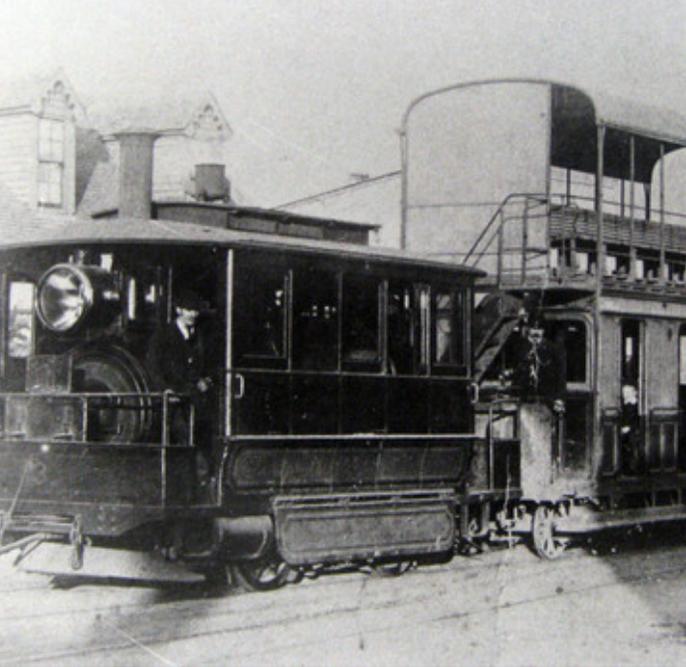
desirable residential, commercial, and leisure area. The first sign of trams being introduced into Waverley was in 1880 when the government of the day passed an Extension Bill:

"to authorise the construction and maintenance of Tramways along certain streets and highways in the city of Sydney and elsewhere..."

One of the Tramway extensions authorised by this bill ran from Darlinghurst to Charing Cross, Waverley. The first steam tram arrived in Charing Cross on April 13, 1881, only 17 months after the first city steam tram puffed its way up Elizabeth Street in the city. The first suburban village to be directly linked to the city via this new form of public transport, the trams travelled down Bronte

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Tram terminus at Charing Cross, Waverley. Steam tram with coupled double-decker passenger cars, ca. 1880s.

Bondi Junction, Oxford Street. Intersection of Bronte Road and Grosvenor Street, 1884.

Road, turned at Macpherson Street and headed down the hill. The tram stopped at Bronte Shops, which was also the stop for Waverley Cemetery, and later to Bronte Beach. In 1886 the Waverley-Randwick extension line was completed linking Charing Cross with Randwick. Sydney was experiencing an economic downturn at the time, and a number of unemployed people were used at "task work" on the new tram line. Over the next 30-40 years there was a rapid growth of tramways and, by 1917 Sydney boasted 473km of tram tracks.

Waverley Council originally planned for Charing Cross to be the commercial and retail centre of Waverley, but the creation of a tram junction at Tea Gardens generated a new hub in what is now known as Bondi Junction. Sydney's tram system grew rapidly, with new routes being added as the public's appetite for fast and convenient public transport increased. Figures from January and February 1882 show that the trams on the Waverley line carried

approximately 4,700 passengers per day. Travellers on the Bondi line first caught a glimpse of the ocean with the extension of the tramline to the Fletcher Street corner on May 24, 1884. A further extension on 29 August, 1887 took the line down to the Tamarama headland to service the new Bondi Aquarium. This tram stop would be where the eventual balloon loop to Bondi Beach would be built. By 1885 a trip from Bridge St to Bondi Junction would cost you 4d., with the trip to the Fletcher Street terminus setting you back another penny. On October 1, 1887 a first class car was introduced as an experiment on the Woollahra line. Trips were made from Woollahra 3 times a day, and from Bridge St twice daily. The fare for the whole or any part of this journey was sixpence (6d.), but due to lack of support the experiment was discontinued on December 1, 1887.

In the 1890s a meeting was held in Stratten's Hall, Bondi Junction to agitate the government for an extension of the tramway to Bondi Beach.

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A crowd at Bondi Beach, 1890s. Photographer Harry King. Image courtesy of the National Archives.

P Class Tram, Campbell Parade Bondi Beach. Decorated for the procession for the official opening of the Bondi Improvement Scheme, 21 December 1929.

Eventually a line to the beach was installed including the famous loop at Bondi Beach which gave rise to the expression "shoot through like a Bondi Tram".

The first tram to Bondi Beach arrived on February 19, 1894, running two trams per day from Circular Quay. The new Bondi tram delivered thousands of people to the beach, prompting Council to provide facilities for them. At this time it was still illegal to swim during daylight hours, a law that wasn't repealed until 1905, but was consistently flouted at the local beaches. Bathers swimming at Bondi had historically changed in the open air, but the huge influx of visitors brought by the trams also increased the number of complaints about 'public decency' at the beach. The first simple dressing sheds were built at Bondi around 1903, part of the burst of development and commerce that Bondi Beach weathered with the advent of trams and easy access to the coast.

Electrification of the tram system began in 1898, and

most of the network was converted by 1910. The first electric tram in the area began with the section between Waverley and Randwick using the new technique of overhead wires. The new electric tram services to Bondi Beach began on October 19, 1902, even though there was only a three-inch clearance beneath the Bondi Road overbridge. This situation was eased the following year when the track was lowered under the bridge. 1905 saw the Bondi line chosen as a destination for the new tourist tram service and the first of a number of moonlight excursions. The Bondi tram loop was demolished as part of Waverley Council's Bondi Improvement Scheme in the 1920s and the trams rerouted along Campbell Parade to a new terminus at North Bondi, the site still used today by the buses. In 1914 a second route to Bondi Beach was opened via Curlewis Street, an extension of the Bellevue Hill line which relieved congestion along Oxford Street.

Bronte Beach took longer to connect to the tram network. A

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Images from top:

Tram in Bronte Cutting,
c. 1950s.

The last Bondi Beach tram,
February 18, 1960.

hard-fought public battle finally saw the extension from the terminus at Bronte Shops down to the beach in 1911. . The extension opened on May 20, 1911 and involved a tram route cutting into the sandstone rock above Bronte Baths which allowed the tram to come down to the coast on an easier gradient. After rattling along Macpherson Street and stopping at the corner of St Thomas Street, the trams entered the cutting and emerged on the cliff top above the beach. The trams then descended to Bronte Park, arriving opposite the newly built shops. This route provided travellers with magnificent views as the tram emerged from the cutting on its way to the beach. This part of the tram route became known as the 'Bronte Cutting'.

For decades the trams delivered swimmers, surfers and picnickers to Waverley's

beaches, parks, and retail centres. By the 1950s, however, trams were considered antiquated and there was a push for motorways, cars, and buses. Bondi's last tram to shoot through was during the early hours of Sunday, February 18, 1960. The R class corridor tram was crammed with last-tram riders and had a boisterous journey. It left Bondi at 3.30 a.m. and arrived at the Dowling Street depot minus most light globes, some handrails, all upholstered seat cushions, the lifting jack, a headlight glass and all destination rolls. The last tram to Bronte ran on February 28, 1960.

Sydney's final tram trip ran from Hunter Street to La Perouse on February 25, 1961.