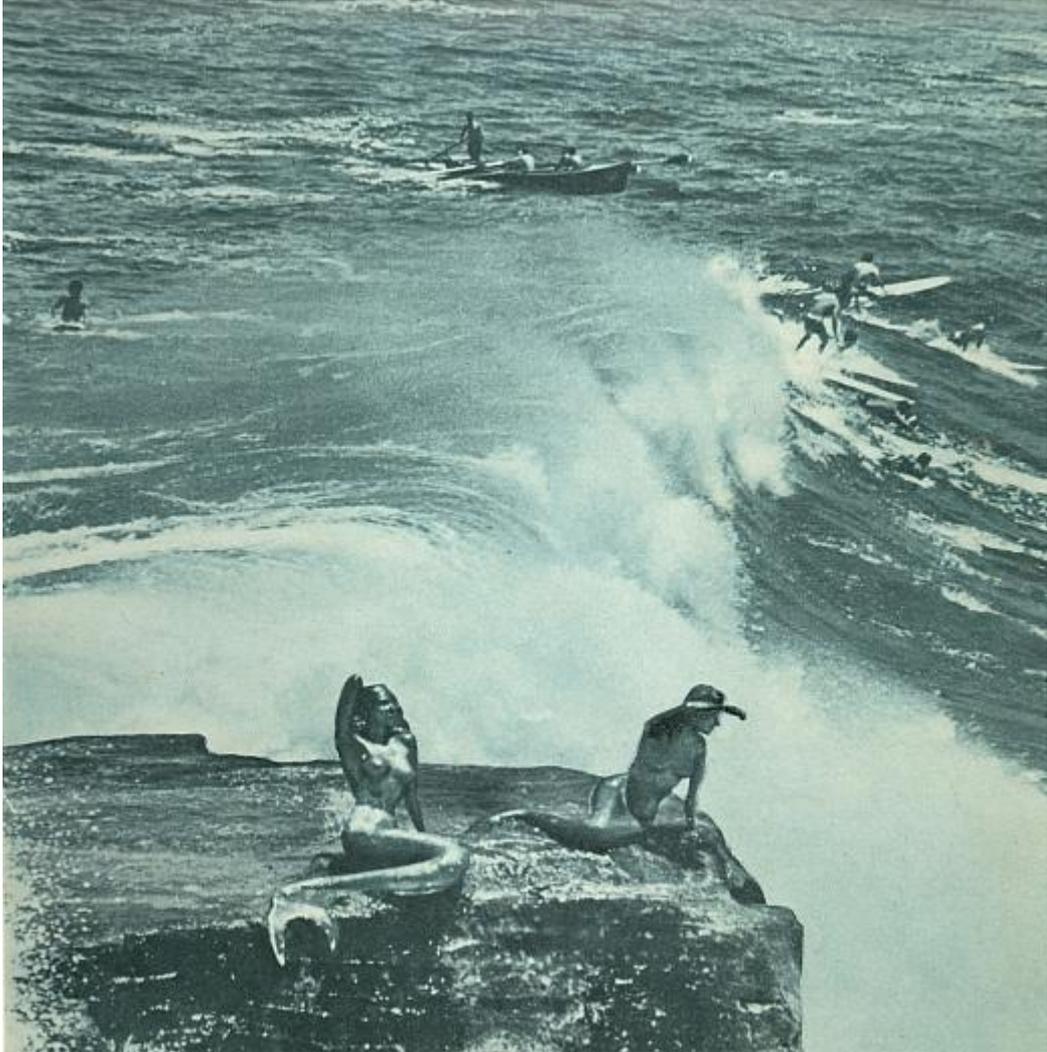


The Bondi Mermaids



Bondi Mermaids and local surfers, North Bondi, 1970.

There were originally two Bondi mermaids who sat on the Big Rock at Ben Buckler. The Big Rock is a 235-tonne boulder at Ben Buckler, on the northern headland of Bondi Beach, which was believed to have been thrown up by heavy seas on 15 July 1912. Because the mermaids used to sit there this rock is also often referred to as Mermaid Rock.

Only the remains of one of the mermaids is still in existence. She is on permanent display in a special perspex case on the 1st floor, Waverley Library, 32-48 Denison Street, Bondi Junction.

The mermaid statues were modelled on two local women:

- Jan Carmody, who was Miss Australia Surf, 1959
- Lynette Whillier, champion swimmer and runner-up in the Miss Australia Surf, 1959

Sculptor Lyall Randolph created the mermaids from bronze-coloured fibreglass that he filled with cement. He first tried to sell the idea of the mermaids to Waverley Council, but the Council refused to pay for them.

So Lyall erected them on the Big Rock at his own expense. He claimed that because they were placed a certain distance offshore the space they occupied was not under the jurisdiction of Waverley Council, but the Department of Lands. He claimed that the Department had approved his statues. The mermaids were installed on 3 April 1960.

One month after they appeared university students chiselled mermaid Jan from the Big Rock and removed her as part of a Commemoration Day prank! She was later recovered under mysterious circumstances at the Engineering School, Sydney University. Repaired, she was restored to the Big Rock to rejoin her fellow mermaid Lynette. The cost of repair met by public subscription – the public loved the mermaids so much that they paid for Jan to be put back together again.

Heavy seas claimed Lynette in 1974; swept off the Big Rock in a storm she disappeared forever. Jan lost an arm and her tail in the same storm. For two years Jan sat alone on her rocky throne until Waverley Council removed what was left of her in 1976, storing her in a Council Depot where she was forgotten for many years.

Re-found in the late 1980s she was moved to Waverley Library, where, in 1999, the Friends of Waverley Library paid for her remains to be preserved by Sydney Artefacts Conservation.



Jan the mermaid at Waverley Library where she remains today, 1999.

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