

Waverley Shops and Shopping



The milkman's horse and cart was a familiar sight making deliveries in Waverley well into the late 1940's. The brightly painted cart held bulk milk and from a tap on the back, the milkman drew the milk into his pint or gill measure and filled the householder's billycan which had been left out on the front step. The horse needed no guidance, it knew the route as well as the milkman. And let us not overlook the value of the horse's calling card - first neighbour out with a bucket and spade won the garden prize.

The days of horse drawn deliveries are long past and no longer does a packet of Persil cost sixpence, as it did in 1932, or a tin of soup only one shilling and four pence halfpenny, or a "prime roasting fowl" three shillings and sixpence.

Shops and shopping habits have also changed. A major shopping event meant a tram to the City dressed in one's best clothes, with hat and gloves. Today, it is a quick car trip to the local supermarket in jeans and T-shirt.

In the 1850's, the main township area of the Municipality of Waverley was Charing Cross, separate by scrub land from the village of Tea Gardens. By 1880, shopkeepers included Mrs Carroll's lolly shop and William Evans an ironmonger, both in Vickery Street (now Carrington Road); Miss Mary Coyle, a draper, and John Edwards, a confectioner, in Leichhardt Street (now Bronte Road); and the Misses Wright were dressmakers in Cowper Street (now Bronte Road).

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The new tramline to Bondi opened in 1884 and the junction between that and the line to Charing Cross was located at the Tea Gardens. For the purpose of the tramway it was named Bondi Junction, and Charing Cross was soon eclipsed as the major shopping centre of Waverley.

By the 1920's, shops included Frank Roper, "The Good Value Draper and Mercer"; Conn's Delicatessen, "All Goods are Keenly Priced"; Taylor's Shoe Store, "The Store for Value and Wear" ('Ladies Court Satin Shoes, fancy leather bow on vamp, round toes, high stilt heels, pump soles...27/6d'). Attwater's, "Value Draper and Mercers" (Gent's two-piece all-wool skirted bathing costumes from 9/11d) was another. And McIlrath's - their Christmas advertisement of 1929 reads, "Our Store is fairly bulging with seasonable goods" ('Bacon Hams from 1/9d lb, Arnott's Xmas Cakes, in tins, 4/3d ea, New Turkish Figs, just arrived 7d box, French Crystal Cherries 3/3d lb'). Who can remember the delicious aroma of this food and produce store?



Grace Bros., open in Bondi Junction in 1933, moving into the old Coronation hall which had been erected in 1911. The stage became the furniture department, hardware was in the front stalls, and mercery and ladies fashion in the back stalls. To find the offices, one climbed the stairs to the dress circle. The "new" Grace Bros. began building in 1957 and in the foundations of Coronation Hall, the builders found a "beautiful sandstone well".

With the opening of the Eastern Suburbs Railway in 1979, a new shopping boom arrived with the Bondi Junction Plaza and Eastgate Shopping Complexes and their variety of stores under one roof, changing our daily shopping habits. But whatever happened to brown paper bags and string shopping bags?

Source: Waverley Municipal Library's Local History Collection; Sands Sydney Directories; The Bondi Daily of 1928 and 1929; the Waverley Advertiser 1894.