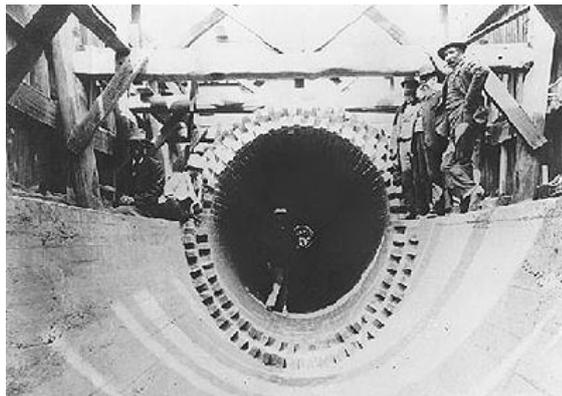


Bondi Sewer



A section of the oviform (egg shaped) brick-lined Bondi Sewer under construction - 1880's

Why sweat and strain while jogging in the City to Surf Race? You could reach Bondi quicker by drifting in a canoe through the main Bondi sewer. Staff of the Metropolitan Water Sewerage and Drainage Board found this out one year when their annual maintenance inspection coincided with the famous race.

The Bondi System is Sydney's oldest ocean outfall system, built to serve the inner city area and nearby suburbs and to intercept the original sewers then draining to the harbour. The system now drains an area of some 3560 hectares immediately south of Port Jackson and extending from the coast to Balmain, including the city commercial centre. What is sewage? 99.9 per cent is water, the remainder being solids, including human waste, grease, food scraps, soap and detergents and all the miscellany which goes down the plughole from kitchen, laundry and bathroom.

It didn't take long for the first settlers at Sydney Cove to pollute the fresh water streams and transform them into open sewers. Industries and houses caused so much pollution that eventually their dry weather flow consisted largely of fouled or slop water and because of the spread of pestilence and disease, it soon became necessary to build underground sewers.

The original Northern Bondi Sewer Outfall is one hundred years old in 1989. Begun in 1880, it was built by the Government and transferred to the Board of Water Supply and Sewerage by proclamation dated December 18, 1889. At that time, sewage treatment was virtually unknown, surf bathing was against the law between 8.00 a.m. and 8.00 p.m., and Bondi was a wasteland of scrub, sand hills and lagoons. A far cry from today's busy activities.

The sewer at the Bondi outfall chamber measures 8 feet 6 inches by 7 feet 6 inches. The brick lined oviform (eggshaped) sewer runs from the outfall, near the Bondi Golf Links, directly under Blair Street. It continues in a straight line through Bellevue Hill, crossing beneath Blaxland, Bellevue and Manning Roads to the corner of Ocean and Trelawney Streets where it curves gently to run beneath Liverpool Street into the City.

Until 1916, according to Waverley Council Minutes of July 10, "Blair Street is Commonwealth property and is not a public road". Later that year it was transferred to the State Government together with Military Road.

Blair Street originally had the unsavoury, but practical, name of "Sewer Road". In March 1914, two residents living in nearby Old South Head Road wrote to Waverley Council "suggesting that a new name be given to Sewer Road". The letter was signed by Joseph Blair and John E. Spedding and Council recommended the road be renamed "Blair Street". Perhaps if Mr Spedding's name had been first on that letter, it would today be known as "Spedding Street".