

Waverley Flower Fair: 13 - 15 October 1886



The Waverley Flower Fair was opened on 13 October 1886 by His Excellency, the NSW Governor, Right Hon. Baron Carrington who was accompanied by the Hon. Lady Carrington, the Patroness of the event. The Fair was to raise money for the improvement of Waverley Park.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* 14 October, 1886 reported:

"The amount of patronage accorded both in the afternoon and evening was very liberal and it is hoped that the sale of flowers will materially swell the fund for the improvement of Waverley Park. At night time the fair was illuminated with electric light which invested the decorations and flowers with a peculiar charm."

Alfred Allen had composed an ode, 'On the occasion of the opening of the first flower fair in Waverley, October 13th, 1886' which ran to seven verses and included such gems as:

*"Bondi is calm - as if in sleep;
The coast-girt village rings with glee,
While high Ben Buckler, bold and steep,
Is resting by the restless sea,
In waiting for the songs that rise,
From distant voices to the skies."*

The General Committee organising the Flower Fair had 42 members and in addition to this there was a nine-member Executive Committee, a Treasurer, two Honorary Secretaries and two judges for the exhibits.

There were 13 stall holders and each stall had a name, some of these, such as 'Waratah', 'Acacia' and 'The Native Rose' seem to indicate they were showing Australian wild flowers. The Flower Fair ran for two days.

B.T. Dowd in *The Centenary of the Municipality of Waverley*, published in 1959, says of the Flower Fair:

"It was in the year 1886 that the question of the improvements to Waverley Park was very much in the minds of the people, and a most unique way was adopted in raising funds for its improvement. About 2.5 acres of the park were enclosed by a committee for the holding of a Flower Show. It was opened on October 13 1886 by His Excellency, Lord Carrington, accompanied by Lady Carrington.... Two bands provided lively music for the two days. The Flower Show closed on the Monday night following with a fine concert in a marquee on the grounds. The outcome of the whole Show resulted in 300 pounds being presented to the trustees - Waverley Council - for improvement to the Park. The Council extended its grateful thanks to the organisers of the Flower Show."

