

Bondi Aquarium



The Royal Aquarium and Pleasure Grounds was an amusement park located in the lovely valley of Fletcher's Glen at Tamarama Beach. Popularly known as the BONDY AQUARIUM, it opened on October 1, 1887, with a Grand Military Band, Merry-go-rounds, swings, shooting gallery, water boats, Camera Obscura, Punch and Judy, and Dancing in the Grand Hall.

Marine life swimming in the aquarium tanks included catfish, bream, whiting, mullet, lobsters, stingrays, porcupine-fish, turtles, a wobbegong shark and a tiger shark. Perhaps the most interesting and amusing of the inhabitants were the seals, who shared the pond with a solitary penguin. The most popular attraction was the Switchback Railway, an exciting, diving, plunging roller coaster ride above the sands of Tamarama Beach. Two roller skating rinks were "illuminated by the electric light"; Pain's Grand Fireworks exploded every Wednesday; Sacred and Classical Concerts each Sunday.

Feats of skill and daring were a special feature and included dangerous mounted sword contests; Alexander, the Australian Blondin, walking a wire from cliff to cliff; Captain George Drevar floating on a 'cask raft' through the pounding surf; and a Grand Balloon Ascent and Parachute Descent. As well, an enjoyable part of the entertainment were headliners from the Tivoli Theatre who performed on the Aquarium Circuit.

On the evening of July 11, 1891, fire destroyed the aquarium and pavilion, but it rose from the ashes in September the same year, and continued to entertain Sydney's populace. The last identified concert at the Aquarium was a fund raiser for the Waverley Benevolent Society in July 1906.

Ownership and management changed several times throughout its existence, until the site was finally sold by Mrs Margaret J. Lachaume in 1906 to William Anderson who transformed the amusement park, re-naming it Wonderland City.

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