

Bondi Beach Research Guide

Waverley

Council



AUSTRALIA

The

Playground of the Pacific

Bondi Beach Research Guide

There are many resources available to research the history of Bondi Beach. This guide is a starting point.

Waverley Council website

The Waverley Council homepage has a great deal of information about Bondi Beach, including contemporary beach projects, programs and events. At the Council homepage, www.waverley.nsw.gov.au, choose 'Recreation', 'Beaches and the Coast'.

Local Studies website

On the Waverley Library website, <http://www.waverley.nsw.gov.au/services/library/home>, choose 'Local Studies', here you will find extensive information about the history of Bondi. Under the Local Studies drop down menu choose 'Local History Fact Sheets' and then choose fact sheets on Bondi. Not all Bondi fact sheets start with 'B', e.g. 'O'Brien's Estate Bondi Beach' is under 'O', so go through all the fact sheets.

Books

If you are a member of Waverley Library the following books are recommended and available from Adult Lending. If you are not a member of our Library, you can order these publications from your local library through inter-library loan.

1. *The Bondi Lifesaver* by Sean Brawley, ABC Books, 2007.
2. *History of the Municipality of Waverley 1859-1959* by B. T. Dowd, 1959.
3. *Bondi*, Robert Drewe et. al, James Fraser Publishing Ltd, 1984.
4. *Discovering Bondi* by Lee and Caroline Cass, Boondye Books, 2000.
5. *Bondi: the sound of tumbling water* by Robert Billington, Sparklehorse Publishing, 2006.
6. *Ready Aye Ready* by Bruce Elder, North Bondi Surf Lifesaving Club, 2006.
7. *The Colour of Bondi* by Rex Dupain (photographs), New Holland, 2006.
8. *Bondi to Broken Hill* by Rex Dupain, Harper Collins, 1998. This is mainly a photography book, but it does have an introductory essay by John MacDonald.

Indigenous history

See the Waverley Council website, the Local Studies website, particularly 'Local History Fact Sheets' and the Waverley Library catalogue, which is available online.

Photos

The Local Studies Fact Sheet entitled 'Images of Waverley' on the Local Studies website explains where photos of Bondi can be found, the easiest and quickest way to find Bondi photos is from the excellent photo portal Trove at the National Library of Australia, www.trove.nla.gov.au.

Bondi Beach: the earliest photographs

The earliest known photographs of Bondi Beach held in a public collection were taken in c. 1875 by an unknown photographer and are part of a large photograph archive known as the Holtermann Collection. This collection is owned by the Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW. You can see these pictures and order copies of them directly from Trove, www.trove.nla.gov.au.

This collection is named for Bernard Otto Holtermann, whose meeting with photographer Beaufoy Merlin in Hill End in 1872 resulted in one of the most astonishing photographic documentations ever undertaken. The Holtermann Collection is an internationally significant collection of prints, albums and glass plate negatives, including the largest hand coated wet plate negatives ever made. The Holtermann collection depicts New South Wales and Victorian gold towns from 1872 to 1875, and the streets and buildings of Sydney and Melbourne between 1871 and 1876.

The original photographs are on glass negatives and the photographers whose work appears in the Holtermann collection include: Henry Beaufoy Merlin, Charles Bayliss and Augustus Clinton of the American and Australasian Photographic Company and possibly Bernhard Otto Holtermann himself.

It is not known which of these photographers took the two Bondi Beach photographs which are part of the collection. The creator of the photos is listed as the American & Australasian Photographic Company. The call nos. of the photographs are: Home and Away nos. 40190 and 40133.

Photograph 'Home and Away – 40190' shows Bondi Beach, c. 1875, from the southern headland, about where Marks Park is now, facing north. It shows a lagoon, west of the centre of the beach, behind the primary sand dune, and another inlet further south, within about 100 metres of the water. North of the lagoons, the short, flat beach is sparsely vegetated.

Photograph 'Home and Away – 40133' shows Bondi Beach, c. 1875, from the southern end of the beach, looking north. Windswept ti-trees are in the foreground.

Online

As so many people have written about Bondi and various aspects of its history a simple internet search, 'Bondi history', will give you lots of articles you can download.

National Heritage List

In 2008 Bondi Beach was put on the National Heritage List. Details of its listing, including an extensive history of the beach and surrounding areas, appears on the website of the Department of the Environment. This government department develops and implements national policy, programs and legislation to protect and conserve Australia's environment. Website: www.environment.gov.au

At the home page choose 'Topics', 'Heritage', 'Heritage Places', 'National Heritage List' and from the list of places 'Bondi Beach'.

Subdivision plans

The Bondi area was extensively subdivided from the 1870s-1920s, original copies of these Bondi subdivision plans are held in the State Library of NSW (SLNSW) and copies of these originals are held in the Local Studies collection, Waverley Library. The SLNSW collection has an online catalogue to search the subdivision plans, the Local Studies collection does not and requires an appointment with the Local Studies Librarian to access the collection.

Bondi Beach: the earliest description

English brothers James and Samuel Tegg arrived in Sydney in 1834, shortly afterward they opened a wholesale and retail bookshop in George Street, where they announced that 'all orders entrusted to them will be executed with promptitude and correctness, and at London prices'. James also went into publishing, producing *Tegg's Monthly Magazine* and *Tegg's New South Wales Pocket Almanac and Remembrancer*.

The earliest known written description of Bondi Beach is from the 1842 edition of the *Almanac*, p. 284-285. Copies of the *Almanac* are held in the Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW and National Library of Australia collections.

'On the right, Waverley house, built by the late Mr. Barnet Levey. Adjoining is Waverley Crescent, a range of cottages projected by Mr. Levey, but of which only two or three are completed. On the left, gate leading to Bellevue, a high hill, from which there is an extensive prospect; and a large extent of the Pacific, close under the spectator is suddenly brought into view, with the Light-house, &c., on the left.

'From this gate the road descends the range, which is visible from Sydney. On the right, the first track to Bondi Bay. Half a mile further on is a bridge across a small stream. Some good specimens of weeping birch are seen here, which, when in bloom, are singularly beautiful. There are also some fine specimens of the Zamia palm, called the 'burwan,' also the fern tree; and further on the right, in the bush, the fan palm, commonly called the cabbage tree, may be found: a little further on is a grassy spot, where the only trace of the European is indicated by the solitary ruins of a house.

'The bays on this part of the coast, closed in by rocky headlands, and backed by barren rising ground, have something of peculiar loneliness about them. The solemn roar of the breakers – the confined view of the ocean – the shining sandy beach, unmarked by human foot, teach us to feel some of the finest sentiments of the poet –

"There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,

There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep sea, and music in its roar.”

‘The botanical productions found round these bays are scarce, and botanists resort hither to view, in flower, many shrubs rarely to be met with elsewhere.’

Bondi Beach continues to draw new visitors and has grown to be an important icon of Australia. If you have any further questions regarding Bondi Beach please contact the Local Studies Librarian, Sophia Smiley, Sophia.Smiley@waverley.nsw.gov.au or 9386 7744.