

WAVERLEY COUNCIL

# BEN BUCKLER



Sydney Pleasure Resorts Series 57.  
Kerry (Copyright) Sydney

**4 · RICHARD HURD, 30, Thirty Acres, bounded on the South by part of Bondi Bay, and on a Line West 30 Degrees North 10 Chains, commencing at Roberts' North East Corner ; on the West by a Line North 30 Degrees East 13 Chains ; on the North by a Line East 30 Degrees, South 30 Chains to the Sea Coast ; and on the East by the Sea Coast to a Point called Ben Buckler.**

**Promised by Governor MACQUARIE ; Quit-rent 1s. Sterling per Annum, commencing 1st January, 1827.**

Images from top:

Bondi Beach, looking north to Ben Buckler, 1890s. Kerry & Co; Sydney Pleasure Resorts Series 57.

Land grant notice to Richard Hurd using the descriptor Ben Buckler, Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser, 14 September 1830.

## A Waverley Library Local History Fact Sheet

The first recorded instance of Ben Buckler being used to refer to the northern headland of Bondi Bay was in 1830, when a land grant to Richard Hurd at North Bondi was described as being '...to a point called Ben Buckler'.

There are conflicting stories about how the headland came to be named, with the three most common theories including being named after a convict, a bushranger, or a corruption of an Indigenous word.

### THE CONVICT

The story goes that the headland was named for a convict Benjamin Buckler or Ben Buckley, who lived locally with the Aboriginal people from 1810. His friend and fellow convict James Ives claimed he was killed near the point now

bearing his name when the rock shelf on which he was standing collapsed. He also claims that the headland was formerly known as 'Ben Buckler's leap'.

### THE BUSHRANGER

A variation on the story has a bushranger called Ben Buckley who, after taking part in many adventures and after obtaining his liberty, lived in a cave in the rocks at the northern end of Bondi Beach and was a known local character.

### THE DHARAWAL OR DHARUG WORD

Obed West (1807-1891) claimed that it was a corruption of an Indigenous word 'benbuckalong'. Others have claimed that the Indigenous word was originally 'baal-buckalea'.



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Images from top:

Portrait of Lachlan Macquarie, Governor of New South Wales, c. 1815. Image courtesy of the NLA.

Benbecula, in the Outer Hebrides. Photo by Paul Tomkins. Image courtesy of Visit Scotland.

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Another theory involves a connection to Governor Lachlan Macquarie. First raised in an anonymous letter to the Sydney magazine the *Australian Town and Country Journal* on 25 May 1878, the writer, using the nom de plume 'Old Colonist', claimed that the name Ben Buckler was a corruption of a name bestowed upon the headland by Macquarie.

The writer went on to argue that Macquarie named it 'Benbecula' in honour of the island of the same name located in the remote Outer Hebrides off the west coast of Scotland. Macquarie was born on Ulva, one of the Inner Hebridian Islands in 1762 and would have been familiar with other islands in this group although there is no way to confirm if he ever visited Benbecula.

The west coast of Benbecula has golden sand beaches, including one long sweep of beach Poll na Crann, with sand dunes behind them, the same

coastal environment as Bondi Beach had before its development. During Macquarie's travel along the South Head Road (now Old South Head Road), which was constructed in 1811, parts of Bondi Beach and its northern headland would have been visible from the road, potentially reminding Macquarie of the Hebrides of his youth.

In 1906 the discussion began again in a local paper *The Bondi Weekly* when a land subdivision on the headland, known as the Queenscliffe Estate, began rumours that Ben Buckler's name was to be changed to Queenscliffe. On 29 June 1915 Captain J. W. Watson of the Australian Historical Society decreed that 'the name of Ben Buckler is a corruption of Ben-becula, the name given by Macquarie.'

There is no primary evidence for any of the theories around the naming of the headland, but Ben Buckler remains an iconic landmark in the area despite the mystery of its name.