THE NATATORIAL ART

A SOCIAL HISTORY OF SWIMMING IN SYDNEY TO THE OUTBREAK OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

BY

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THE NATATORIAL ART

A Social History of Swimming in Sydney Harbour and on Sydney's Beaches to the Outbreak of the Second World War.

In acquiring this art – and it is not difficult of attainment – the disciple must learn to look upon his body as a boat, for the propulsion of which nature has given him a double pair of sculls, viz, his arms and legs, on the proper use of which his progress through the water depends.\(^1\)

![Illustration of two people swimming](image)

The Macquarie Dictionary describes natatorial as pertaining to, adapted for, or characterised by swimming.\(^2\)

\(^1\) Swimming, by Martin Cobbett. (E.S. Marks Collection, Mitchell Library) p.2.
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ABSTRACT

From settlement, Sydney's inhabitants bathed in the open waters of the harbour and its surrounds. An uninhibited camaraderie existed amongst the swimmers and nudity was generally the order of the day. As sharks and pollution claimed harbour waters, baths gained popularity and swimming clubs were formed producing many champions and Olympians, including two women champions who paved the way for women in future Olympic competition. At the advent of daylight bathing, people flocked to the beaches. However, numerous drownings occurred as people, unused to the rips and conditions of the surf entered the water. This, in turn, brought about formation of surf lifesaving clubs. In October 1907 the Surf Bathing Association of New South Wales (SBANSW) was formed becoming the genesis of the Surf Lifesaving Movement. The popularity of surf bathing saw a government instigated Surf Bathing Committee established in 1911-12 to examine the new phenomenon. Seaside councils too, were involved in the rush to the beaches as they struggled to find finance for bathing sheds and other beach infrastructure. Property values in seaside suburbs rose and the commercial sector enjoyed financial gain as the demand for beachwear and accessories accelerated. Technology too, was upgraded and extended as tram and ferry services were increased to cope with the beach going public.

Sydney's citizens, who twice voted 'no' to conscription during the 1914-18 war developed a hedonistic beach culture in the 1920s and 1930s which embraced both the cult of the beach girl as a beauty contestant and the surf lifesavers as icons of masculinity. Their physical attributes did much to uphold beliefs of the eugenics movement which gained a foothold during this period. The hard times of the Great Depression followed, but the beaches and surf were free to be enjoyed by everyone. And so they did, until the world once more erupted into global conflict.
DECLARATION

This thesis is my own work, except where quotations and direct acknowledgements appear in the text. It has not been submitted for a degree elsewhere.

Signed

Jean Allan
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I wish to express my thanks to the people who have provided assistance, information and encouragement. I particularly wish to thank my supervisor, Professor Richard Waterhouse who has guided, suggested and painstakingly read drafts of thesis chapters. His prompt and comprehensive feedback has been invaluable.

I thank the librarians at the Mitchell and State Reference Library for their knowledge and professionalism. To the Local Studies Librarians at Municipal Council Libraries for such willing help, access to the collections, print-outs, loans and posted and emailed information – grateful thanks. I would like to name them –

Manly: Maureen Smith (retired) and John MacRitchie
Randwick: Victoria Scarf
Ryde: Glenys Murray
Warringah: Tina Graham and Judy Childs
Waverley: Elida Meadows

To my husband Arthur Allan and indeed, all my family, thank you for stoic and unflagging support.


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ABBREVIATIONS

AGM     Annual General Meeting
AIF     Australian Infantry Forces
ALP     Australian Labor Party
ARJC    Australian Racing and Jockey Club
ASA     Amateur Swimming Association
AWAAU   Australian Womens Amateur Athletic Union
BALM    British-Australian Lead Manufacturers Pty. Ltd.
F.R.Z.S Fellow of Royal Zoological Society
I.W.W   Industrial Workers of the World (an anti conscription movement)
LASA    Ladies Amateur Swimming Association
MSC     Manly Surf Club
MLSC    Manly Life Saving Club
MCC     Melbourne Cricket Club
mss.    Manuscript
n.d.    Undated
n.p.    No pagination
NSWAAA  New South Wales Amateur Athletic Association
NSWASA  New South Wales Amateur Swimming Association
NSWLASA New South Wales Ladies Amateur Swimming Association
R.&.R.   Rescue and Resuscitation
RSL     Returned Servicemens League
SBANSW  Surf Bathing Association of New South Wales
SLSAA  Surf Life Saving Association of Australia
SLSA   Surf Life Saving Australia
SLSC   Sydney Ladies Swimming Club
WCTU   Women's Christian Temperance Union (1874)
INTRODUCTION

Anyone who decides to write a thesis requires both motivation and a masochistic streak. The first drives the author on; the second conditions her to the domination and demands of a project undertaken with the conviction that the subject is worthy of investigation. The goal of this thesis is to document the social history of swimming in Sydney Harbour and on Sydney’s surf beaches and its pools in the period up to the outbreak of the Second World War. The thesis, because of the immensity of the subject I have undertaken, will concentrate on the beaches and surf life saving clubs of the three councils most involved with surf bathing in those early hedonistic days - Manly, Randwick and Waverley.¹

From the early days of establishment of the colony the inhabitants bathed in the open waters of the harbour and its surrounds. By its very nature, swimming in Sydney Harbour also acted as a social leveller. Anyone could swim in the harbour waters and nakedness was the order of the day. There appeared to be an uninhibited socialisation and camaraderie amongst the swimmers some of whom gained status amongst the fraternity with their swimming prowess through the distances they covered on their daily swims. Those who preferred privacy were able to bathe in privately owned baths and pools from the 1830s. The Municipalities Acts of 1858 and 1867 empowered local

¹ As an example – There are 21 Surf Life Saving Clubs between Manly and Palm Beach on Sydney’s northern beaches and countless swimming clubs, both social and competitive. This thesis does not concern itself with surfing, that is board riding, although there is an abundance of literature on the subject.
councils to build baths and pools, which in turn led to a boom in swimming in the 1880s.

The formation of swimming clubs soon followed, and, as well as conducting races, diving exhibitions and novelty events officials and entrepreneurs staged carnivals with the attributes of a circus. These events attracted large crowds and a high standard was expected of those taking part in races, exhibition swims and even comedy acts. Failure to achieve the required standard usually resulted in critical coverage by the press.

While bathing in the harbour and later the ocean were part and parcel of early Australian life some considered it wrong for people to parade their nude or partly clothed bodies in public. This prudish attitude caused the prohibition of bathing in public during daylight hours. From the 1830s daylight bathing was progressively proscribed as conservative Evangelical values towards public bathing took hold and it was not until the end of the 19th century that bathers began to reclaim their rights.

Legislation of daylight bathing in the early 20th century marked a shift in attitude to the display of the body from moral doctrine to medical science and common law. The law’s repeal also represented a major social change in the colony and marked a step in the liberalisation of relationships between men and women and eventually a new era in the beach culture of Sydney.
The reclamation of the public’s right to bathe in the sea at any time of day, and the growth of sea-bathing in general, was also encouraged by business owners who could see economic benefits flowing their way. This, in turn, led to formation of surf life saving clubs to combat the drownings, which were inevitable when inexperienced swimmers (or indeed, non-swimmers) entered the surf.

Some councils, although realising that surf clubs absolved them of the moral and financial obligations to make beaches safer were reluctant to hand over complete control of the beaches and equipment to the surf clubs which, in turn, in some cases, led to ill feelings between the two. This was particularly apparent at Manly between the Municipal Council and the original Surf Club. A second club, Manly Life Saving Club, formed in 1911 had a happier relationship with Council. Conversely, at Bondi, relations between the Surf Bathers Club and the Council were very cordial with the Council handing over control of the kiosk and supervision of the bathing sheds to the surf club and deferring to that club when the Bondi Surf and Social Club (North Bondi) approached Council for equipment.

A NEGLECTED FIELD OF INQUIRY:
Although some swimming and surf clubs produced early club histories, historical material in the field of recreational swimming is somewhat limited. Some of the story has been told - in newspapers, magazine articles, forming part of a chapter in Council Histories, in Council Minutes and in various small historical publications.
Competitive swimming, specifically the Olympic Games has fared somewhat better. Material on body surfing appears to have been relegated to the newspapers, while focus on surf life saving usually forms part of surf club histories. In fact, apart from a 1984 publication, *Gladiators of the Surf* by Barry Galton dealing with who won titles at Australian Surf Life Saving Championships, two recently published surf club histories, *Vigilant and Victorious: The History of Collaroy Surf Life Saving Club, 1911-1995* and *Beach Beyond: A History of the Palm Beach Surf Club 1921-1996*, both by Sean Brawley\(^2\) and a 2001 publication titled *Australian Beach Cultures: The History of Sun, Sand and Surf* by Douglas Booth, swimming and surf life saving have been dealt with in an ad hoc fashion. However, a comprehensive study of the social history of swimming and surf bathing in Sydney to the period prior to the outbreak of the Second World War has not emerged. Nobody, has interwoven all aspects, including both recreational and competitive still water swimming as well as surf swimming, surf life saving and beach culture into a social history. Booth’s book is ‘an investigation into the specific cultural practices of three groups, surfbathers, lifesavers and surfers (board riders) with a particular emphasis on the ways they produce and reproduce specific types of body’.\(^3\) However, he touches only briefly on recreational and competitive still water swimming.\(^4\)

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2 Brawley apparently is near completion of a history of Bondi Surf Life Saving Club – yet to be published: personal communication with local studies historian at Waverley Municipal Council, January 2004.


Mindful of this situation, where possible, the material in this work is drawn from primary and contemporary sources to obtain a chronological picture of swimming from the early days in the colony to 1939. In charting the unmapped waters of the social history of swimming and surf bathing I have pieced together information from widely scattered sources, which have ranged from archival to oral. In the search for information many libraries, government departments and Councils were visited. The Mitchell Library, as always, was a great source of information for both background and primary material, in particular, the E.S. Marks Sporting Collection, the Davis Sporting Collection, the Mina Wiley papers and the Rose Scott Family Papers all of which contained personal correspondence, souvenir programs, minute books, handbooks, annual reports, newspaper clippings and personal memorabilia. A great deal of the primary and contemporary information was gleaned from various newspapers held in both the Mitchell and the State Reference Library. The newspapers of the day such as the Sydney Sportsman, the Sydney Morning Herald and the Referee were generally supportive and played their part in the promotion of swimming and surf bathing by publishing club results and involving themselves in all aspects of surf bathing from articles on body shooting to reporting the horrors of the shark menace, the numerous drownings which occurred and the type of swimming costumes acceptable to the councils and the public. The Sydney Sportsman was particularly supportive of women's competitive swimming. Manuscripts of George Aurousseau, Arthur Lowe and A. Vialoux's on Manly, Jim McRorie's brief handwritten history on Coogee Surf Life Saving Club and R. Roberts on the Old Fig Tree Baths were
helpful. Oral histories, particularly the recollections of former Manly beach inspector and lifesaver, Bert Owen, provided first hand local knowledge. Parliamentary Papers, Government Gazettes, and Ordinances as well as local council minute books were also an important source of information as were local history collections in which were held original letters and reports, such as The Swan Family Papers at Ryde Library which opened up a vista of the way people enjoyed the early resorts in Sydney, particularly 'Fairyland' at Lane Cove. An archival box at Manly Library was found to contain all the original correspondence between the Minister for Local Government at the time (Mr. Eric Spooner) and Council regarding the building of the South Steyne Surf Club in the 1930s. Reports by Government Committees, for example, the Report of the Committee appointed by the Sydney City and Suburban Sewage and Health Board (1875). Reports of the Surf Bathing Committees (1911-12) and that of the Shark Menace Committee (1935), which provided statistics of shark, attacks were particularly useful. Suburban newspapers held in council libraries also provided valuable information. Even advertisements for cosmetics, soap and clothing played a part in providing an insight into life of those times.

The Early history of swimming was gleaned from numerous works, in particular, that of Nicholas Orme, an academic, who, after learning to swim in adult life wrote *Early

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6 Box 900, Manly Library. The design (by competition), site selection, financing and building of this building became a major, long running saga over a period of five years.

Primary sources, often written in memoir or letter form, such as John Askew’s *A Voyage to Australia and New Zealand by a Steerage Passenger*, (1857) and John Hood’s *Australia and The East: being A Journal Narrative of a Voyage to New South Wales in an emigrant ship with a Residence of some months in Sydney and the bush 1841-1842*, both give a good description of the old Fig Tree baths and a glimpse of the social life of early Sydney; as does Royal Naval Surgeon, P. Cunningham’s *Two Years in New South Wales* (1827) (A series of letters comprising sketches of the actual state of Society in that colony of its peculiar advantages to emigrants, of its topography, natural history etc.). Surveyor, W.R. Govett’s *Saturday Magazine* (1837) provided a background of happenings in the colony. Govett considered bathing to be a ‘healthy recreation’ and gave a good account of swimming in the Domain and the early harbour baths. J.A. Barry’s *The City of Sydney* (1902) covered early swimming in the harbour, the shark menace and harbour pollution. Shirley Fitzgerald and H. Golder also deal with harbour pollution in *Pyrmont & Ultimo Under Siege*. Printed in *The Labor Advocate*, Sixty Years’ Reminiscences (Historical, Truthful, Interesting, Amusing, Entertaining, Humorous [sic] and Original) by Rex proved to be all he claimed. He too, wrote of the old Domain baths and filled his column with stories of the characters
who inhabited the Old Fig Tree baths at Woolloomooloo where ‘a friend was needed to mind your clothes...there were no aristocratic covies then, they were all on the same level’. Rex claimed ‘there is no country in the world more beautifully formed by Nature and so naturally laid out for bathing as Sydney’  

And in 1912, Gordon Inglis in Sport and Pastime in Australia wrote of early baths, bathers and ‘the turbulence of the tremendous breakers which roll up from South America and New Zealand until they trip on the ocean beaches at Sydney’. George Blackmore Philip’s Sixty years Recollections of Swimming and Surfing in the Eastern Suburbs provided much useful information on Bronte Beach and the years before the formation of surf and life saving clubs in that area.

Secondary sources included Council histories, the recently written Seven Miles from Sydney: A History of Manly by Pauline Curby, Dowd and Foster’s History of Waverley Municipal District, Lynch and Larcombe’s Randwick 1859-1959: Randwick Municipal Council, although the latter gave little consideration to swimming or surfing nor indeed to the swimming baths in the area. The National Trust of Australia (NSW) survey of Harbourside and Ocean pools of the Sydney Metropolitan Region identified pools, locations, construction dates and historical status where applicable. Swimming club histories, some, unfortunately undated, are thin on the ground and reflect a lack of interest by historians, but provide a broad area for much needed

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B.T. Dowd & W. Foster, The History of the Waverley Municipal District, published by the Council of the Municipality of Waverley (NSW) to commemorate its centenary of municipal government 1859-
research. Two exceptions, the well researched, undated, *Through the Last 100 Years, Balmain Swimming Club 1884-1984* by Alex Hamill and *North Sydney Amateur Swimming Club from its Inception to 1952* by Brian Bailey and Frank Reddan (1953) provided background information on swimmers, carnivals and club events, gleaned, according to Hamill from ‘Club Annual Reports, Reports from the Minutes and Annual Reports of the NSWASA, newspaper files and the keen memories of those long associated with the Balmain Amateur Swimming and Life Saving Club’. Bailey and Reddan also relied on ‘the memory of some of the foundation members in setting down the details’, which, they say ‘explains the apparent “sketchiness” of the report prior to 1902’.

With the exception of Brawley’s two published histories, Surf Life Saving Club histories have suffered a similar fate, although this situation is being addressed by some clubs. Undated histories written years ago, for example *The History of Bondi Surf Bathers Life Saving Club 1906-1956* and Reg. S. Harris’s *Heroes of the Surf: Fifty Years’ History of Manly Life Saving Club* provided early but limited information on the two clubs. Tom Symond’s *Maroubra Surf Club – the First 75 Years* written in 1982 gives an account of the Club in the Depression years and writes of many Club personalities including those who have been inducted into the N.S.W. Hall of

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Champions. Apart from McRorie's brief account, historians, it appears, have forgotten Coogee Surf Life Saving Club altogether.

Excluding the professional historians already mentioned there appears (until very recently) to be a dearth of professional interest in the subject. It is perhaps a little unfair to be critical of people whose enthusiasms have rarely been matched by any great regard for historical perspective, who embark on local or specialised histories with the best of intentions, but much early history has been produced in this way and has left a legacy of mixed information, some correct, some incorrect – a kind of historic roulette. Quite often these sources are based on partial memory or are passed from previous generations by word of mouth and whilst they can be useful, must be used carefully. A good example of this is Charles Swancott's Manly 1788-1968. Written in 1968 this history was written from notes, books and reminiscences of Manly by the eighty year old author, and until recently was one of the chief sources of historical information on Manly. It contains much useful information but unfortunately, some mis-information as well, such as the suggestion that ‘English type bathing boxes on wheels made their appearance on Manly’s Ocean Beach in the 1860s’. A case in point is Douglas Booth’s claim in Australian Beach Cultures, that

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9 For example, Olympian, R.L. ‘Snowy’ Baker, Dennis Green, B. Rogers and marathon swimmer Des Renford.
bathing machines appeared on Manly beach when, in fact, bathing machines never appeared on Manly’s ocean or harbour beaches.\textsuperscript{12}

Richard Cashman’s \textit{Paradise of Sport}, (1995) The Rise of Organised Sport in Australia follows all forms of sport from convict days to ‘the death of amateurism by the 1970s and 1980s’ outlining Aboriginal and ethnic participation, commercialisation and the roles of business and the media. \textit{Private Pleasures, Public Leisure} by Richard Waterhouse traces Australian popular culture since 1788 and covers the various sports in which the early colonists indulged – such as cock fighting, prize fighting, bare-knuckle fighting, horse-racing, cricket, football and water sports as well as cultural pursuits – for example, the theatre. In \textit{Their Chastity was not too Rigid}, J.W.C. Cumes, gives a good overview of early sports as well as a useful insight into the recreations of colonial women, which, according to Cumes did not amount to very much at all.\textsuperscript{13} However, swimming rates only a brief few lines in a chapter entitled \textit{The Surging Devotion to Sport 1820-1840}.

There is a considerable body of literature on men’s sport to the end of the 1930s covering cricket, boxing, tennis and athletics, and to a much lesser extent swimming and surfing. However, as women’s place was considered to be in the home, literature

\textsuperscript{12} Booth op.cit. p.25: See Manly Municipal Council Minutes 3 December 1885: 24 February 1887: Shelagh and George Champion, \textit{Bathing, Drowning and Life Saving in Manly, Warringah and Pittwater} to 1915. p.9. Booth refers to ‘bathing machines [as] changing rooms on wheels drawn into the water by a horse – (which) allowed bathers to descend into the sea unseen from the beach’. (p.25): A distinction should be drawn between bathing machines which were an apparatus on wheels, drawn into the sea by a horse for bathing purposes and a bathing box which was a fixed structure without wheels on the beach used as a changing room.
on women in sport during the same period is sparse, although there exists some academic work covering women’s sport in the United Kingdom. Most works such as Kathleen McCrone’s and other contributors to *From Fair Sex to Feminism: Sport and the Socialisation of Women in the Industrial and post-Industrial eras*, deal with school girl sport and sport participation by women which was hedged in by compromises with the social system. Sports such as cycling, tennis, croquet and hockey were played, albeit in restrictive clothing and encumbered by codes of behaviour and constraints, which made a mockery of leisure’s supposed freedom - but swimming doesn’t rate a mention.

On the Australian academic scene there is also a dearth of literature. Helen King’s chapter, The Sexual Politics of Sport: an Australian Perspective in *Sport in History: The Making of Modern Sporting History* (1979) edited by Richard Cashman and Michael McKernan discusses the emergence of sporting women against a background of the prevailing images of women as wife, mother and homemaker - the accepted role of women in society.

The sexual politics of sport are defined in Australia by the accepted role of women in society, which is based on a masculine prejudice concerning the ‘feminine nature’ of women, which is to produce and rear children...consequently, sportswomen and their commentators dwell on femininity rather than ability.14

Anne Summer’s *Damn Whores and God’s Police* argues that ‘this stereotype of the feminine nature has meant that women have been excluded at every level and in every

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recreational activity seen as important in Australian life, by rules, conventions, and attitudes which ensure that those activities remain the domain of men'.

A similar theme emerges from Women's Sports and Embodiment in Australia and New Zealand by Angela Burroughs and John Nauright in Sport in Australasian Society, Past and Present (2000).

For over a century male (and some female) critics have argued that vigorous physical activity was not appropriate for women. Concerns about female physical activity were centred squarely on the preservation of the female body for its 'natural' function - the reproduction of the race.

Dealing entirely with women's still water swimming, Veronica Raszeja's thesis, A Decent and Proper Exertion: The Rise of Women's Competitive Swimming in Sydney to 1912, echoes the sentiments expressed above and charts the rise of women's competitive swimming in Sydney, their quest for recognition and final achievement of gold and silver medals at the Stockholm Olympics in 1912.

Books covering women's sport in general include Half the Race, A History of Australian Women in Sport (1991) written by former Australian Women's Cricket Captain, Marion K. Stell. Stell gives a good account of Australian women in sport from early colonial days to 1990 but fails to back-up some statements with empirical evidence. She does, however, make the following observation on women in sport.

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15 Anne Summers, Damned Whores and God's Police, Ringwood, Vic, (Penguin), 1975, p.82.
16 Chapter titled Women's Sports and Embodiment in Australia and New Zealand, p.9.
Over the years 940 women have represented their country at all the Games, winning an incredible 425 medals – 163 of them gold medals. But after the golden girl hype has died down and the gold dust has settled, women’s sport is ultimately awarded a bronze medal in our national identity, a cultural third place behind sportsmen and racehorses.

Much of the literature in the field of swimming and, indeed, sport generally, has been produced by dual or multiple authorship - for example, *Aussie Gold: The Story of Australia at the Olympics* by Reet and Max Howell (1988) which traces the history of some of Australia’s Olympic Gold Medal winners. *A Pictorial History of Surfing* by Margan and Finney (1970) emphasised the classless society of the beach – ‘the sun and surf were great social levellers’

all the ingredients were there that fitted the developing Australian character, the natural follow on to the convict start to the colony...the classless society.\(^\text{18}\)

Although their focus was on board riding, they failed to relate the beach ‘way of life’ to its social context.

Wilkie and Juba’s *The Handbook of Swimming* (1986) traces the history of the beginnings of early swimming and its development in England\(^\text{19}\) and the multi-authored *Oxford Companion to Australian Sport* (1994)\(^\text{20}\) provides a reference to sports and sports people with useful technical background reference, but lacks any social reference. The few books devoted to swimming, and surf bathing, for example, *Forbes Carlile on Swimming*,\(^\text{21}\) whilst giving a brief overview on early swimming techniques, concentrates chiefly on training methods and record times achieved by

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\(^{19}\) See also - Nicholas Orme, *Early British Swimming S5BC - AD 1719*, University of Exeter, 1983.

\(^{20}\) Wray Vamplew, Katharine Moore, John O’Hara, Richard Cashman and Ian Jobling (eds.) 2nd ed.

various athletes using those (or similar) training methods. Carlile states in the introduction to his book, ‘above all, this book is written to serve as an up-to-date, practical guide for competitive swimmers and their coaches’. Similarly with Barry Galton’s *Gladiators of the Surf: The Australian Surf Life Saving Championships - A History*, (1984), Galton notes ‘my story is about the Australian Champions and Australian titles carnivals...it is about who won those events and who filled the placings.’22 And C Bede Maxwell’s *Surf: Australians Against the Sea* written in 1949.23 Maxwell wrote of the lifesavers as having ‘a spirit of selflessness, of chivalry such as is found in no other sporting movement in all the world today, not counting the cost when a life is for saving.’24 This well researched work is first, and foremost, a tribute to life saving, not a social history.

In *Australian Surfing and Surf Life Saving*, 1979, Jack Wilson writes of early equipment used by surf life saving clubs, particularly the various types of belts used over time by the rescue and resuscitation teams (as does Galton) but concentrates his narrative on the period from 1930 onwards, particularly following the Second World War. Also in 1979, Pearson’s academic account, *Surfing Sub-cultures of Australia and New Zealand*, whilst giving an early background to surf bathing is essentially about surfing, that is, board riding. A great part of the book is devoted to an analysis of a questionnaire in which lifesavers and board-riders took part in the 1970s. This

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24 ibid. p.302.
particular questionnaire totally polarised the two camps with the emerging ‘explanation’ of the conflict between the two parties.

The 1980s saw publication of two books relating to beach culture. Both viewed beach culture as developing through a particular format. Through numerous photographs, unreferenced Sunny Memories: Australians at the Seaside (1982) by newspaper and magazine journalist Lana Wells suggests a classless society – ‘each (man) is as good as the next man or woman baking on the sand’.25 Wells evokes beach scenes as well as entertainment, bathing costumes and resort wear in all Australian capitals, royal visits to surf carnivals, and topless sun bathing. Similarly, and also unreferenced in Sun, Sea, Surf and Sand - The Myth of the Beach published in 1985 Geoffrey Dutton looks at the relationship Australians have with the beach through poems, extracts from novels, paintings and photographs, mainly by well known artists, such as Dobell, Stretton, Roberts, Boyd, Lambert and Nolan; photographers Dupain and Cazneaux and poets Slessor and Stead.26 However, it fails to make any explicit assessment of their literary significance and is in no way a systematic history.

Australian Beach Cultures by Douglas Booth examines the aforementioned three groups, ‘surf bathers, lifesavers and surfers’. The book appears to have grown out of previous articles by that author - ‘War off Water: The Australian Surf Life Saving Association and the Beach’, (1991), ‘Swimming, Surfing and Surf-Lifesaving’,

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(1994), Surfing 60s: A Case Study in the History of Pleasure and Discipline, (1997).27

Booth's dislike of the Australian Surf Life Saving Movement is made clear from the beginning. In his Preface he writes of the 'domination of the foreshore by lifesaving clubs'.28

At least once a summer the lifesaving fraternity 'appropriated' the main surf beach for their carnivals. The local club literally sealed the beach behind a wall of hessian. Before entering this inner sanctum one had to pay an entrance fee to watch what was billed as a sporting spectacular but which struck me as nothing more than regimented drill interspersed with a few less than exciting beach sports. As far as I was concerned, lifesavers had seized public space for private benefit.29

Devoting an entire chapter to an analysis of the 'supposed virtues' of the surf lifesaving movement Booth concludes that discipline, military-style attitudes and single-sex club houses in lifesaving's early years nurtured a particularly raw form of masculinity - that few people joined surf clubs for humanitarian reasons - most joined to take advantage of residential facilities and recreational and social activities. Further, he asserts that 'once the highest authorities on the beach, lifesavers were icons of masculinity. Today they are a parody of their former glory, their corporeal capital increasingly challenged and their prestige greatly diminished'.30 He also questions the worth of competitions, which form part of Life Saving Club participation, and

30 ibid. p.184.
contends that in Australia antipathy existed towards the Royal Life Saving Society, which had set the stage of the surf lifesaving movement. By contrast, he claims in New Zealand, surf clubs developed in close association with the Royal Life Saving Society. I question the bias in Booth’s book and whether it is a fair account of beach culture as the Surf Life Saving Movement accounted for, and formed a large part of, the original concept of ‘beach culture’. Certainly, some surf club members exhibited a larrikin streak, but is this a fair account of all members? Writing of the life saving movement in the 1950s Worthington points out ‘the glamour attached to club membership attracted a number of applicants who would have had considerable difficulty in saving their own lives, let alone those of others, but generally speaking the standard of efficiency was high and there can be no question of the fine ideals which motivated the organisation of the clubs’. Jaggard contends that some took their duties seriously; others used the club as a convenience. And Carter has remarked ‘in those early days, surfing meant body surfing. Anyone who was good at it joined a club. The only clubs were the surf life saving clubs. Surfing was almost

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31 ibid. pp. 66-74 (Chapter 4): Competitions were introduced into surf club participation soon after clubs were formed. (see Surf Bathing Ordinances (published in Government Gazette No. 40, 27 March 1912). Local Government Act, 1906 and Acts Amending the Same. Ordinance No. 52, Public Baths and Bathing (sub-headings – Surf and Reel Drill, Schafer Method of Resuscitation and Conditions for inter-club Rescue and Resuscitation Competitions. Galton states that ‘competition sharpens the life saver’s skills so that he is ready to act in any emergency. It helps the club movement grow so that as many beaches as possible are patrolled by highly skilled men (and women)’. Galton op.cit. p. 11.


synonymous with surf life saving'.\textsuperscript{34} ‘In the world of the beach... it seems...pleasure and duty were subtly juxtaposed’.\textsuperscript{35}

The present study seeks to present a positive and detailed analysis of the chosen subject using a wide variety of evidence. One motive of the thesis is to correct inadequacies of previous texts and ‘put to rest’ some myths which have grown out of past reporting. Another is to show that even in a predominately middle class society, swimming and surf bathing acted as a social leveller. The thesis is based on the belief that swimming, surf bathing and beach going had become an essential part of Sydney life and therefore the subject deserves a careful, unemotional, unbiased and objective study.

**ARRANGEMENT OF THE CHAPTERS:**

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 considers the historical background of the Natatorial Art, the swimming feats of the Greeks, Romans and Anglo-Saxons, the attitudes of the educationalists and the early literature on the subject. The development of swimming techniques can be traced from writings dating to the sixteenth century. Prior to that time, accounts by the Greek, Roman, Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian classics dealt only with great feats of swimming prowess of the heroes of their day and left the type of swimming stroke used by these heroes to the reader’s imagination. The chapter also provides a background to early sport and leisure pursuits in the colony of Sydney, and to recreational swimming, which was

enjoyed with total abandon by the colonists until a Government order curtailed it. Swimming, both recreational and competitive was then enjoyed in the various baths such as the Natatorium in Pitt Street, Sydney and the many floating and fixed baths available in and around the harbour. I have not drawn a dichotomy between recreational and competitive swimming because the latter was considered a form of recreation and each found much favour with Sydney’s swimmers.

Chapter 2 begins with a discussion of early spas in Britain. As this period unfolded, the pursuit of leisure won an increasing number of devotees. The rise of the railways, and later cheap excursion fares which made the seaside more accessible to the working class and thus the emergence of seaside resorts such as Brighton and Blackpool to which people flocked to ‘sniff the briny’ or enjoy an immersion in the sea via a bathing machine is outlined.

Ties to the United Kingdom were still strong and this was reflected in the pleasure grounds, which popularised Sydney Harbour. Established along the lines of British resorts, their heyday was short-lived, although many remain today as popular picnic and swimming spots. The pleasure gardens, along with the ferries played a role in creating a leisure world for Sydney’s citizens in the second half the nineteenth century and reflected changing perceptions to recreation. Also reflecting the influence of British values, piers were planned for Manly, Balmoral and Coogee. However, Coogee was the only pier to be built. It proved to be unsuccessful and was eventually

demolished. The role of the ferries is discussed as they played an important part in the success or otherwise of the pleasure gardens, often being the only mode of transport to many of the ‘resorts’. The Manly ferries in particular, have always held a ‘special place’ in Sydney’s history.

The focus of the study in Chapter 3 is the emergence of competitive swimming for both men and women, the various swimming strokes used and the emergence of the Australian crawl. The exploits of the famous Cavill swimming family are discussed as well as those of other champions including C.V. (Freddie) Lane, Bernard Bede (Barney) Kieran, Cecil Healy, Andrew ‘Boy’ Charlton, Annette Kellermann, Sarah (Fanny) Durack and Wilhemina (Mina) Wiley to name a few. Also examined is the struggle of sports-women including swimmers who dared to rail against their assigned female role, to overcome not only Victorian morality and both male and female prejudices but medical scientific theory of the day which used the ‘conservation of energy’ theory to prevent women from indulging in any sport which might hinder or harm their reproductive role. Triumph eventuated with the inclusion of two champion women swimmers (Durack and Wiley) in the Olympic team, to compete (and win gold and silver) at the Stockholm Games in 1912.

Surf bathing and the Surf Life Saving Movement are discussed in chapter 4 in which inconsistencies and myths in local histories are addressed.\textsuperscript{36} The struggle for daylight

\textsuperscript{36} For example, the myth that William Gocher won the battle for daylight bathing on Manly beach in 1902 when, in fact, it was seven years after his ‘exploit’ that a writer at the \textit{Daily Telegraph} promoted him to hero status.
bathing, the formation of surf life saving clubs, the question of power and control of the beaches; as well as inter-club conflict as to the designated areas to be patrolled is examined against a background of increasing commercialisation in which the commercial sector sought economic gains from the promotion of surf bathing. This chapter also outlines the art of body shooting and those who pioneered and popularised it. As well, sun bathing gained great popularity at this time and councils set aside special ‘sun-basking’ enclosures for the purpose. However, many people were offended particularly when male sun bathers removed the top half of their costumes to gain more exposure and thus more tanned skin, which was considered to be very healthy and masculine. Bathing costumes too, came in for a share of publicity, particularly a ‘tunic’ type that was interpreted as a skirt and caused much hilarity and mockery amongst bathers who donned women’s skirts and formed a large protest group at Bondi beach in October 1907. Another bone of contention was mixed bathing. Some saw it as sensible and modern with an element of safety, particularly for women swimmers; others such as Archbishop Kelly of Sydney viewed it as a ‘deterioration of our standard of morality’.

The formation of surf life saving clubs and the Surf Bathers Association of New South Wales (SBANSW) in October 1907 forms part of this chapter. The Surf Bathers Association was the precursor of the Surf Life Saving Association of Australia (SLSAA) now Surf Life Saving Australia (SLSA).
Chapter 5 deals firstly with an explanation of the pioneers from whom the legends of the bush and ANZAC were formed – a national type – of which the lifesaver became the modern embodiment. The bush gained significance early in our history. Writers were of crucial importance in constructing the bush and rural life as the quintessence of Australian identity – our earliest and most influential myth of place. The beach became part of Australian life in the early part of the 20th century – a much more recent contributor to the people’s image of themselves. The outbreak of the First World War saw enlistments from both surf and swimming clubs. With depleted membership in surf life saving clubs, those who did not enlist or were medically unfit for service were assisted in mounting beach patrols by schoolboys and senior members. Upon rejoining their clubs on return from the war ex-servicemen felt resentment against those who did not enlist. This caused much tension within the surf clubs and endured for some time. Most swimming and surf clubs erected honour rolls bearing the names of those who did not return. This chapter also discusses the conscription issue of 1915-1917, the ensuing two referendums, the tensions, which divided the nation and the principal figures in the debate, Prime Minister Hughes and Archbishop Mannix. Had conscription been accepted at the referendums, surf clubs, whose numbers were already depleted by enlistments would have experienced difficulty mounting beach patrols to ensure beach safety.

The penultimate chapter is appropriately titled ‘Bodies on the Beach’. After the war the population enjoyed an unprecedented culture of pleasure and consumerism. The beach was the place to be and be seen, and the people of Sydney embraced the lifestyle
with unabashed hedonistic fervour. Eugenic ideals, which were upheld by such icons as the *Australian Women's Weekly*, are discussed along with beach girl competitions, which in turn, brought about a resurgence of physical culture and beauty regimes to help keep the beauty queens in trim. But women were also involved in surfing and surf life saving and despite being adept at much of the necessary aspects of surf life saving such as the Rescue and Resuscitation events, were not admitted to membership of surf clubs although they did play a role in fund raising for the clubs. Swimming costumes still made news headlines especially when they defied the regulations and more so when worn while walking in the street and on shopping excursions, much to the chagrin of some seaside councils. In competitive swimming, Australia sent swimming teams to the Antwerp Olympics in 1920, the Paris Olympics in 1924, Amsterdam in 1928 and Los Angeles in 1932 at which the teams acquitted themselves admirably, the returning heroes receiving huge welcome home parades.

The final chapter opens with the gloom of the World Depression and traces the period from 1929 to the outbreak of the Second World War. It discusses the survival of surf clubs during this depressing period; as well as the political upheaval of the time which saw the formation of the secret (and not so secret) armies such as the Old Guard and later the New Guard which were established to man strategic points if necessary should the government of the day falter. The period also saw people living in ‘camps’, which had developed to accommodate those who had lost their homes or were unable to pay rent through loss of employment. Councils also struggled to stretch their financial resources to upkeep of beach infrastructure and associated amenities.
However, the most pressing issue was shark attacks and how to make the beaches safer for surf bathing. Two shark Menace Committees were set up, one in 1929 which made some sensible recommendations which were ignored by the government of the day and another in 1934 which made similar recommendations to those of the 1929 committee and which were acted upon. Sydney beaches were to be meshed for sharks.

The history halts with the world once again poised for global conflict as the allied powers prepared to halt the German invasion of Europe.
CHAPTER 1:

THE NOBLE ART OF SWIMMING

I saw him beat the surges under him,  
And ride upon their backs; he trod the water... his bold head  
‘Bove the contentious waves he kept, and oar'd  
Himself with his good arms in lusty stroke. ¹

EARLY SWIMMING IN BRITAIN:

Vague records of early swimming indicate that it grew up with people from the early stages of their appearance on earth. When early people needed to move on land they either walked or ran, when early people needed to move across water they probably waded, and then eventually swam by watching the example set by other primarily land-based animals. The ability to swim, however poorly, would probably have been part of the dexterity of early hunters and the need to hunt would certainly have been a reason to swim.²

There is evidence that an over-arm stroke was used in antiquity by the Assyrians and Greeks, at least 800 years before the birth of Christ, and that a variety of the crawl stroke was the natural style of South Sea Island natives, North American Indians and the Kaffirs of South Africa. The over-arm stroke was lost in Europe during the Dark Ages when swimming was not popular because epidemics were a constant dread, and perhaps with some justification, swimming was believed to help the spread of plagues via the water.³

The Greeks and Romans first indulged in the sport as a form of exercise and recreation. And it was from the Greeks that the Romans inherited their passion for water. Utilitarian purpose had not vanished entirely however, as shown by the coin of Abydos (A.D. 193) which depicts Leander swimming the Hellespont to meet his beloved, and Scandinavian epics contain boasting reference to feats of endurance in the icy waters of Norway. The art was also kept alive for military purposes.

There have probably been swimmers in Britain ever since there have been people. The expeditions of Julius Caesar, himself a noted swimmer and his legions to Britain in 55 and 54 BC brought to the island its first attested swimmers.

The Romans enjoyed the use of water for health and pleasure. Baths, both public and private were established in the towns, the military barracks and the great houses of Roman Britain. The spa towns of Bath and Buxton both had swimming pools. Although swimming was widely in vogue among males in Roman society, women, in contrast, did not swim, at least not those of elevated rank.

Swimming was both practised and given a status of honour by the Anglo Saxons who occupied most of the Roman Province after Roman control ended in the early fifth century. The principle Anglo-Saxon reference to swimming appears in the epic poem

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6 ibid.
8 ibid. p.4.
Beowulf, although the swimming in Beowulf is not presented realistically. The swimmer is a superman capable of super human feats.  

The Norse involvement with Britain began in 793 and reached its height with the Viking attacks on Britain in the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries. The ability to swim is attributed to men in Norse literature. These are sometimes fantastic with saga-heroes, which parallel the superhuman achievements in Beowulf.  

The Norman Conquest of 1066 brought a new ruling aristocracy to Britain. The Normans were the first conquerors of the island in historic times to whom the skill of swimming was not very important. In the narrative literature the heroes were rarely or never shown swimming as the heroes of earlier literature had been.  

Evidence shows that swimming was known and practised in England and Scotland during the middle ages. There was no simple medieval view of swimming, some thinking it dangerous or foolish, and others believing it useful and praiseworthy. It survived at any rate and that was important for the future.  

The Renaissance of the sixteenth century stimulated the writing of the first treatises on swimming. Whilst still regarded by writers in the medieval tradition as a skill of war, it was also coming to be viewed as an accomplishment for health and even recreation. Two writers in particular wrote at length on the subject. Elyot, for the first 

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9 ibid. p.11.  
11 ibid. p.33  
12 ibid. p.40.
time linked swimming to health and Mulcaster discussed the advantages of swimming to the body and also its dangers

in hot water it warms and makes nimble the joints...in cold water it strengthens the natural heat and improves the digestion but harms the sinews and the hearing if the swimmer stays in too long.\textsuperscript{13}

Thus the attitudes of people towards swimming varied from the utilitarian approval of the educationists through the erotic portrayal by Marlowe to the pessimism of Shakespeare \textsuperscript{14} and the downright hostility of Whitgift who was vice-chancellor at Cambridge in 1571.\textsuperscript{15}

In 1562 Dr. William Turner published \textit{A Booke of the nature and properties of the bathes in England...Germany and Italy} in which he dealt for the first time in English with the subject of bathing. Turner's influence is difficult to access as the major expansion of spa towns did not occur until the seventeenth century and then largely as a result of royal patronage. However, some evidence suggests that the sick were visiting Bath and Buxton in the late sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{16} Both towns were mentioned in the Poor Law Act of 1572 as places of great resort by poor and diseased people.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{13} ibid. pp.53-54.
\textsuperscript{14} Marlowe portrays Leander's body erotically. He evokes Leander undressing on the shore and leaping into the water in the cause of love. Orme op.cit.p.58: Shakespeare's portrayal of swimming is not in terms of strength or beauty but of frustration, fatigue and the ever-present likelihood of drowning, ibid. i e. 3 \textit{Henry VI}. Act v, Scene 4, \textit{Shakespeare, Complete Works} pp.696-7: \textit{The Rape of Lucrece}; ibid p.1297: \textit{Macbeth}, Act i. scene 2; ibid p.999.
\textsuperscript{15} Orme op.cit. p.65. Bishop John Whitgift forbade any scholar of the university to enter any river, pond or water within the county of Cambridge by day or night for the purpose of swimming or bathing upon pain of the most severe penalties: Shakespeare's references to swimming were for the most part cynical and on occasions pessimistic. The one major exception is that of \textit{The Tempest} in which the author's swimmers surmount the water in triumph and unscathed. ibid p.9.
In 1586 Everard Digby wrote his *De Arte Natandi*. This was followed by *A Short Introduction for to Learne to Swim* (E. Digby, translated by Christopher Middleton in 1595). James Clelland’s *Hero-Paideia or the Institution of Young Nobleman* (1607) and *The Compleat Gentleman* written by Henry Peacham in 1622 both devote a chapter to swimming. Peacham, recommends it to those inclined to follow a military profession. ‘The art of swimming ought to be learned by every class of persons belonging to an army and perhaps it may not be improper to add, by every other person also’.\(^{18}\) A work titled *Itinerary*, written by Fynes Moryson in 1617 brought a change of direction. He recognised the usefulness of swimming to travellers, particularly those who travelled on or near water.

The second half of the seventeenth century saw the publication in English of William Percey’s *The Compleat Swimmer* (1658), which was largely a translation of Digby’s *De Arte Natandi*. Percey wrote ‘I could very well wish every man and woman were perfect in swimming likewise, which with a little practice they easily may attain unto’. Percey extols the virtue of swimming for pleasure, exercise, health and the preservation of life and recommends the skill not only to males, but significantly, females.\(^{19}\)

By 1693 John Locke’s *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* entrenched the link of swimming to health. Locke placed a high value on boys being made hardy by exercise

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\(^{18}\) Cited in Joseph Strutt, *The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England from the earliest period to the present time*, 1801, Printed for Thomas Tegg and Son, 73 Cheapside, 1834, p.85.
and exposure to the open air, and accordingly thought well of swimming in cold water during the summer as leading to this end.

I shall not need here to mention swimming when he is of an age able to learn and has any one to teach him. It is that saves many a man's life: and the Romans thought it so necessary, that they ranked it with letters; and it was the common phrase to mark one ill-educated, and good for nothing, that he had neither learned to read nor to swim. "nee literas didicit nee naturae". But besides the gaining a skill, which may serve him at need; the advantages to health, by after bathing in cold water, during the heat of summer, are so many that I think nothing need to be said to encourage it provided that one caution be used, that he never go into the water when exercise has at all warmed him, or left any emotion in his blood or pulse.20

Another translation of Digby's treatise into French by Melchisedech Thavenot L'Art de Nager was published in Paris in 1696. This was later translated into English as The Art of Swimming in 1699.21

LEISURE AND SPORT IN EARLY SYDNEY:

As colonial society developed in Australia, the infant society of Sydney aspired to British social orthodoxy. The settlers from the most hardened wretches to the reasonably genteel identified themselves with recreations transported with them from Britain. Early forms of leisure and recreation in Sydney ranged from the simple to the brutal. In a settlement that offered few other ways in which people might divert themselves, drinking and gambling became regular leisure time activities. Other less refined activities included cockfighting, dog fighting and baiting of animals. Pigeon shooting also enjoyed popularity, the brightly coloured parrots of the colony being substituted for the pigeon. Kangaroo hunting also found popularity during the first

20 Orme, op.cit. According to Orme "the form and content of Percey's treatise is entirely based upon Digby, of which like Middleton's work is an abridged translation. Percey, however, made absolutely no mention of Digby or any acknowledgement of his debt, thus branding himself a plagiarist". p.104.
21 Orme, op.cit. p.105.
twenty years of settlement. Fishing was also popular, both as a sport and a source of food.\textsuperscript{22}

Some did enjoy a more genteel form of leisure. Mrs. Elizabeth Macarthur wrote of her pleasure at the widening of ‘our little circle’ with the arrival of Mary Parker the wife of the commander of the Gorgeon. ‘We are constantly making little parties in boats up and down the various inlets of the harbour, taking refreshments with us and dining out under an awning upon some pleasant point of land’.\textsuperscript{23} Mary Parker’s journal describes the scenery and environment of the excursions ‘up the cove’.\textsuperscript{24}

Our parties generally consisted of Mrs. King, Mr. Johnson and the ladies who resided at the colony. We made several pleasant excursions up the Cove to the settlement of Parramatta. The numerous branches, creeks and inlets that are formed in the harbour of Port Jackson and the wood that covers all their shores down to the very edge of the water, make the scenery beautiful...The north branch is particularly so from the sloping of its shores, the interspersion of tufted woods, verdant lawns and the small islands which are covered with trees scattered up and down. (sic)

Such were the leisure pursuits of the genteel ladies of the colony. However, it appears that the majority of women had little time to participate in any type of leisure in the colony’s early days. This could be linked to ‘sport’ being male orientated and women being linked to their domestic and reproductive roles. Blainey concludes his paper on The History of Leisure in Australia with the comment ‘I have...touched little on women’s leisure, partly because the adult women did not have much leisure’.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{24} Mary Parker, (wife of Captain John Parker), A Voyage Round the World in the Gorgon Man of War: Performed for the advantage of a numerous family. Dedicated by permission to H.R.H. The Princess of Wales, London. Printed by John Nichols, Red-Lion-Passage, Fleet Street, 1795.
Other forms of leisure and entertainment were also enjoyed. On 16 January 1796, a pardoned convict, Robert Sidaway opened a playhouse in Bligh Street, Sydney which was patronised by people from all walks of life. It held 120 people. Governor Hunter closed the theatre two years later claiming it was a 'corrupting influence'. However, Vice-regal displeasure did not endure, and on 8 March 1800, by permission of His Excellency at the Theatre Sydney the comedy of The Recruiting Officer was performed together with a musical entertainment called The Virgin Unmasked.\(^{26}\) However, theatre did not become a continuous tradition until 1833 when Barnett Levey opened his Theatre Royal in George Street.\(^{27}\)

Official entertainment appeared to centre on Government House. Balls became part of official entertainment from 1800, when Governor King brought his wife to the colony. Although well established as a form of recreation and enjoyment by about 1810, the balls were not held frequently and then were only attended by the gentry.

Lady Forbes in her Reminiscences states.

Society in Sydney at this time was composed almost entirely of the families of the Government officials, the Military and Naval Officers and their wives, and some few of the leading Colonists. The prejudice against trade, from a social standpoint, was very pronounced, and none engaged in any kind of trade or business were admitted with the circle of the exclusive set.\(^{28}\)

A classification of the society of Sydney by Alexander Riley, a merchant of New South Wales placed the officers, civil and military, and gentlemen in his first class.


His next, division consisted of the traders and settlers who had come to the colony as free men. Traders and settlers who had been convicts formed Riley’s third class. The lowest rung of the social ladder was made up of convicts still under sentence and ‘free labourers’.  

Surgeon Cunningham RN. throws another light on the subject suggesting bickering between the classes.

The grand division...of the free classes here, without reference to colonial technicalities, is into that of emigrants, who have come out free from England, and emancipists, who have arrived here as convicts, and have either been pardoned or completed their term of servitude...it is between these two classes, that there has been so much bickering.  

John Hood and Roger Therry were more blunt. Hood asserted that ‘caste in Hindustan is not more rigidly regarded than it is in Australia: the bond and the free, emancipist and exclusionist, seldom associate together familiarly; indeed, the mode of life of the generality, even of the more wealthy of the emancipists, was such, in certain instances as to exclude them from female society, and from family intercourse with the other class’. And Therry wrote that

not only were persons who have been transported excluded from the upper circle of the plan, ...but the exclusion extended, at least partially, to their connections...the term pure merino, a designation given to sheep where there is no cross-blood in flocks, was applied to mark a class who were not only free and unconvicted, but who could boast of having no collateral relationship of distant affinity with those in whose escutcheon there was a blot. The pure merinos formed the topmost round in the social ladder.

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Finally, McQueen posits that 'for its first fifty years at least, Australia did not have a class structure, but only a deformed stratification which had been vomited up by the maelstrom which was redefining class in England'.

It should be noted that few of the free settlers in the First Fleet were of the social elite. Certainly, the early settlers did not number any nobility within their ranks. The majority were from the lower ranks of society. Even the military and official class did not belong to the wealthy or powerful ranks of English society.

This then was the social potpourri, which comprised the colony in the early years of settlement. A mixture of free settlers, officials and explorers and those who qualified for transportation, the patriots, martyrs, murderers, thieves, pickpockets, forgers and builders.

Despite the class differences, slowly and gradually sport began to emerge in the colony. Most sporting activities reflected those enjoyed in the British Isles whilst the climate of Sydney provided an ideal environment. As spectator sports grew in popularity, it can be assumed that the venues were open to, and patronised by, most classes of colonial society. However, it appears to be more wishful thinking than reality to suggest that all classes enjoyed these and other sports together in a classless society. Leisure and recreation in the early nineteenth century was divided between the traditional popular pastimes of the working class and the organised sports and recreational pursuits enjoyed by the middle class and the gentry.

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33 H. McQueen in R.W. Connell, Ruling Class, Ruling Culture: Studies of conflict, power and
The picnic was one popular leisure activity that transplanted perfectly from ‘the mother country’ becoming one of the most important leisure time activities from settlement until well into the twentieth century. Taking no account of the Australian climate, fashions were at first rigidly copied from British designs of the day. Picnic dress was quite extraordinary.

The trips were made in full dress costume of the day, the ladies in crinolines with parasols and wide-brimmed hats, the gentlemen in tight-fitting trousers, tall hats and frock coats. The occasional concession of wrapping a silken pugaree round the hat was permissible in less formal circles. 34

However, climate was eventually taken into consideration and by 1896 Nat Gould noted the dress of picnickers. ...white flannels and broad-brimmed hats, gauzy looking white and coloured dresses that seem as though a puff of wind would float them away. 35

The picnic too, had social distinctions, ‘such outings...were more of an upper-class diversion, and, as so often happens, the common folk favoured the drives to Parramatta or South Head that the previous generation of their ‘betters’ had enjoyed. 36 Harbour picnics in Sydney declined in importance as ocean bathing gained popularity.

Dancing seemed to be enjoyed on two levels. At the lowest level there were the hornpipes, the jigs and simple folk dances, none of which enjoyed much favour with

the upper classes. The dances tripped by the latter were the court and ballroom dances of Europe.37

Regattas have been a popular sport on Sydney Harbour since the early days of colonisation. The first recorded Australian Regatta was held on Sydney Harbour on 28 April 1827 at the end of a week of sports, and was arranged by the officers of two ships of the Royal Navy HMS Success and HMS Rainbow when visiting Sydney. 'The boat-crews...competed in a sailing race, on a course starting from Sydney Cove, round the 'Sow and Pigs' and return for a purse of Spanish dollars'.38

The Sydney Gazette reported that '...the harbour was filled with ships, yachts and boats of all descriptions, such as had not been seen simultaneously since the day of Governor Macquarie's departure five years earlier'.39 The popularity of yacht and boat racing led to annual Anniversary Day Regattas, the first of which was held on 26th January 1828, the fortieth anniversary of the foundation of the settlement. The Sydney Morning Herald carried an advertisement for the 1857 regatta in commemoration of the 69th Anniversary of the foundation of the colony

all yachts and sailing boats may carry any and what sail they please but will not be allowed to use oars or threw (sic) ballast overboard after starting.40

Macquarie's arrival in the colony as Governor in 1810 brought many changes. It also marked what could be called the beginning of organised sport in the colony. He

37 Brian McKinlay, Sweet and Simple Pleasures, Collins Dane, Melbourne, 1988, p.12.
39 Sydney Gazette 30 April 1827.
40 Sydney Morning Herald 29 January 1857.
discouraged many of the old forms of leisure pursuits and encouraged new, less cruel and brutal pursuits.

Prize-fighting almost certainly took place but because it was effectively illegal it became a covert activity. As Cumes notes, ‘the crude bare-knuckle form which came to Australia was a manifestation of those blood sports and that love of violence, cruelty and brutality which so disgraced Georgian England’.41

According to Corris the first recorded prize-fight in Australia took place on 8 January 1814 between John Parton (also known as Bellinger) and Charles Sefton, both transported for life. The bout was fought over more than fifty rounds for something over two hours, with the approved time of half-a-minute allowed between rounds.42

The fight was arranged at least one day before it took place giving people time to place their bets. Corris states that ‘although no purses or side-bets are mentioned in the scanty report on the fight, we can be confident that money was involved and that this qualifies as a prize-fight’.43

The Sydney press were disdainful of this type of fighting. The Sydney Gazette of 3 November 1832 carried a lengthy article from a reader addressed to the Editor

where is humanity more outraged than in witnessing the professed pugilist, for sordid motives - from a mistaken notion of bravery of spirit, and manly intrepidity, enter a ring with gladiatorial purpose to sustain a combat where the laurel of victory may exalt the possessor in the minds of low-bred rabble.

41 Cumes op.cit. p. 61.
A bout which took place at Duck River Bridge (Silverwater NSW area) was described in the Sydney Gazette publication of 13 February 1834 as 'downright massacre - the blows fell upon each other's faces as the blows of a hammer, wielded by a powerful blacksmith, would fall upon the anvil...such murderous exhibitions'.

Although Governor Macquarie is credited with encouraging and popularising the sport, allowing the first meeting at Hyde Park in October 1810, horse-racing began before his time. Races were held usually between just two horses on the Parramatta and Windsor Roads.\textsuperscript{44}

The military were the main importers of horses. The officers of the Seventy Third Regiment organised and promoted the first official race meeting, inviting Macquarie to act as patron.\textsuperscript{45}

Horse racing was a popular amusement with colonial upper-class women and grandstands were built on the early courses for their benefit, to ensure they didn't have to rub shoulders with plebeian spectators.\textsuperscript{46} Probably an understandable course of action when one reads the Public Notice issued from Government House Sydney, on Saturday 6 October 1810.

\begin{quote}
It being highly necessary that Peace and good Order should be preserved at the ensuing Races...His Excellency therefore strictly forbids and prohibits all species of Gaming, Drunkenness, Swearing, Quarrelling, Fighting or Boxing taking place on or near the Race Ground - Any Person transgressing these Orders, or who is detected creating any Noise or Disturbance, will be immediately apprehended and confined in Gaol and the Constables will have strict Orders to this Effect.
\end{quote}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{43} ibid.
\textsuperscript{46} Waterhouse, \textit{Private Pleasures}, op.cit. p.19.
\end{flushleft}
Or the comments in the *Sydney Gazette* following a sporting day at the Village of Parramatta where horse racing was a leading feature of the day and on the outcome of races ‘bets to a considerable amount were depending’

when those animals had retired from the field that old (but not very humane or merciful) custom of cock-fighting was introduced, and a Main of Cocks was fought...death deciding the victor. 47

The Colony’s first racing club was the Sydney Turf Club (also called the Australian Turf Club) formed due to the efforts of Sir John Jamieson, one of the largest land holders in New South Wales and Captain John Piper, the Colony’s naval officer on 18 March 1825. A political difference between one of its members, W. C. Wentworth and Governor Darling led to a second club, the Australian Racing and Jockey Club (ARJC) being formed in opposition. However, it became defunct. The Sydney Turf Club, also in trouble, held its last meeting in 1832. 48

Cricket was played in early Sydney in a desultory way as early as 1803. The infant *Sydney Gazette* gave no scores for the colony’s first match played between civilians and officers from the *Calcutta* on the ‘rough, uneven slopes of Sydney at Hyde Park’. 49 The players’ equipment was primitive, balls and bats being costly to import and colonial substitutes deficient in craftsmanship. The game was generally played barefoot and seems to have justified a retrospective judgement that prior to the first

47 *Sydney Gazette* Saturday 5 May 1810.
48 Painter and Waterhouse op.cit. pp. 5-10.
English visit Australian cricket was decidedly colonial, agricultural and uncouth.\textsuperscript{50}

However, by 1857 regular inter-colonial cricket matches had begun and by 1870 two English touring sides had visited Australia. In 1868, before an official Australian cricket team toured England, a team of 13 Aborigines ‘played a successful series of matches against the finest professional and amateur players in the world’. The team led by Charles Lawrence was originally contracted to play only a handful of matches. However, their popularity with English crowds was such that they were held over to play 47 matches between 25 May and 17 October.\textsuperscript{51} By 1878 the first white side had gone to England and Australia had won the first test match.\textsuperscript{52}

Football, which according to Curnes was a ‘natural’ for Australia as it needed little equipment but a lot of land and preferably good weather, had a late start in Australia, despite the fact that it had been played in England as far back as the fourteenth century. The first record of a football match between army privates was reported in the \textit{Monitor} on 25 July 1829. The \textit{Sydney Gazette} also reported that ‘some of the military have been amusing themselves for several days past in the barrack-square at the game of bootball’.\textsuperscript{53}

While the 1820s and 1830s constituted a period of vigorous development of sports on shore, it was also a period in which aquatic sports were organised and became a significant part of the recreation and public entertainment of a large part of the


\textsuperscript{52} W. F. Mandle, \textit{Historical Studies}, Vol. 15, No. 60, April 1975, p.511: Mandle also notes the visit of an Aboriginal cricket team to England in 1868. (footnotes to above, p.511.)

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Sydney Gazette} 25 July 1829.
community. No doubt as a direct response to the climate, by February 1834 bathing was reported to be ‘now the favourite recreation in Sydney’.  

SWIMMING IN SYDNEY:

The natatorial art was practised on this continent long before Europeans arrived. The swimming skills of the Aborigines were admired by W.R. Govett who wrote in 1836 ‘the natives are not cowards of the deep: on the contrary - they are bold and surprisingly expert both in swimming and diving’.  

Cashman suggests that Aboriginal sport did not exist as a separate compartment of life inseparable from daily life and nature. The sports imported from Britain were based on notions of a division between work and leisure - something quite alien to Aboriginal culture. Imported sport was in the process of establishing itself as separate with its own rules, times, venues and culture. British sport also differed as a sport in that it was becoming more organised, commercialised and professional.  

Swimming in the Harbour appears to have begun with the first arrivals. G.B. Philip recalled ‘again we had those cool baths at Dawes Point, probably founded by members of the Battery built in 1788 for the benefit of the marines in residence at Dawes Point Battery’ and Stephensen records that ‘a track led down the hill from the barracks (near the site of the present-day Wynyard Square) in the vicinity of

54 ibid. 18 February 1834, p.2.
present-day Erskine Street, to Soldiers’ Point, where the troops enjoyed sea-bathing in
the military bath house - the first bathing enclosure erected on the foreshores of
Sydney Harbour.\textsuperscript{58} However, bathing in the open waters of the harbour gained such
popularity that in 1810: A Government edit declared.

A very indecent and improper Custom having lately prevailed of Soldiers, Sailors and
Inhabitants of the Town bathing themselves at all Hours of the Day at the Government Wharf,
and also in the Dockyard. His Excellency the Governor directs and commands, that no Person
shall Bathe at either of those Places, in future, at any Hour of the Day, and the Sentinels
posted at the Government Wharf and in the Dockyard are to receive strict Orders to apprehend
and confine any Person transgressing this Order.\textsuperscript{59}

This does not necessarily reflect Macquarie’s dislike of swimming, rather it suggests
that naked male bathing in public places was frowned upon and needed to be
curtailed. Although there is no record of Macquarie having a private bathing-house
built, two of Sydney’s governors did have private bathing facilities. In 1823 a small
round structure was built by Governor Brisbane in the grounds of Government House
at Parramatta as a bath house\textsuperscript{60} and in 1826 on Woolloomooloo Bay a ‘Gothic House
with castellated walls and octagonal towers of stone was built for Governor
Darling’.\textsuperscript{61} From c1850 private bath houses and sea baths appeared on waterfront
estates in Sydney Harbour. One example is Admiralty House at Kirribilli which has a
sandstone pool dating from the 1850s. Most of the harbourside pools ‘are built from
ashlar stone and rectangular in shape. Some have remnants of iron gates, which
allowed water in and kept sharks and debris out. Others simply have a gap where the
gate was’.\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{58} Stephensen op cit. p.206.
\textsuperscript{59} Sydney Gazette 6 October 1810. (J.T. Campbell, Secretary).
\textsuperscript{60} Brian and Barbara Kennedy, Sydney and Suburbs, A History and Description, A.H. & A.W. Reed
Pty. Ltd. Frenchs Forest, NSW, 1982, p. 103. (the bath-house was converted into a pavilion in 1886).
\textsuperscript{61} Edwin Wilson, The Wishing Tree, Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney, 1992, p. 28 (the bath-house was
demolished in June 1924).
\textsuperscript{62} Grace Karskens, ‘Kirribilli House Bathing Pool and Early Harbourside Pools in Sydney’: A Brief
2-4.
Unclad swimming continued until the mid 1820s when a government subsidy was
given to develop a swimming enclosure next to the Domain in Woolloomooloo Bay. 63
This popular bathing spot named the ‘Fig Tree Baths’ was constructed from the hulk
of the Ben Bolt, a disused trading vessel anchored out from the shoreline and then
joined from both bow and stern to the shore by wooden picket fences. It was a
primitive structure that afforded little protection to bathers against ‘the wiley shark’.
Despite this, it was a common practice amongst youthful bathers to dive underneath
the hulk and swim out into the open waters of the bay. The baths were later enlarged
by having a larger ship the London Trader, Cornwallis, placed at the front end and
piles at the other. Dressing boxes were fitted up on the old hulk, 64 and, ‘a friend was
needed to mind your clothes while you bathed’. 65 Males mostly inhabited this
enclosure, and there was no admission charge. It was a meeting place for all sorts of
characters. ‘There were not tights in those days and had any one came there with a
costume on he’d have had a lively time of it. There were no aristocratic covies then,
they were all on the same level’. 66 This structure was also known as Centipede
Rock. 67 The name ‘Fig-Tree’ bathing place most likely got its name ‘from the fine
native tree of that description which overhangs the rock’. 68

64 W. E. Smith, Souvenir program in connection with the opening of the Sydney Municipal Baths,
Outer Domain, on Saturday, 17 October, 1908. n.d. E.S. Marks Sporting Collection, Mitchell Library.
65 Sixty Years Reminiscences by ‘Rex’, The Old Fig Tree Baths, Woolloomooloo, The Labor
Advocate, A Monthly Journal devoted to the interests of the people, No. 2, July 15, 1919, p.6: No. 7,
December 22, 1919, p.6. (Rex bathed at Fig Tree for 58 years).
66 ibid.
67 Smith op.cit.
68 John Askew, A Voyage to Australia and New Zealand by a steerage passenger, Simpkin, Marshall
A sight that upset the Director of the Botanic Gardens – naked boys at the ‘free’ or Figtree Baths in the domain.

Source: The National Trust of Australia (NSW) Survey of Harbourside and Ocean Pools of the Sydney Metropolitan Region, 1994
Recreational swimming also seemed to be a favourite pastime with women. As early as 1828 Cunningham wrote that the currency lasses 'are all fond of frolicking in the water, and those living near the sea can usually swim and dive like water-hens.' In his paper titled *Origin of Names in Port Jackson* read to the Royal Australian Historical Society in 1945 the late B. Millin noted with reference to Lady Bay.

I am informed that in the earlier days when swimming was prohibited between sunrise and sunset, certain ladies then resident at Macquarie Lighthouse used to swim there. It is also referred to as Ladies' Haul, fishermen regarding it as a good hauling ground.\(^{49}\)

However, naked bathing continued and the *Sydney Gazette* of 11 April 1829 reported.

We have again to call the attention of the Police, to the shameful practice of persons bathing contiguous to the public walk leading from Macquarie Place to the Domain by the water side. It was needless, we should think, to expiate on the impropriety of such conduct and the necessity for putting a stop to it in future. Not only children but also adults are constantly in the habit of bathing in the place to which we allude and that in the open day, and in the presence of respectable females who use the adjacent bank as a promenade.

Bathing in the Domain and Darling Harbour areas, especially popular on Sundays was considered a gross violation of decency and a hindrance to the public. Thus, in 1833 an Act (4 William IV No. 7) was passed by the NSW government prohibiting bathing in Sydney Cove or Darling Harbour.

The military men, however, flaunted the Act. The *Gazette* of Saturday February 1834 carried an article stating

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\(^{49}\) P. Cunningham op.cit. p.53. The term 'currency' was given in contradistinction to Sterling or those born in the mother country. The name was originally given by a facetious paymaster of the 73rd regiment quartered in Sydney, the pound currency being at that time inferior to the pound sterling. (p.52).

the inhabitants of that part of Darling Harbour, in the rear of the Military Barracks, complain loudly of the soldiers bathing all along the shore in that direction, at all hours of the day; in consequence of which violation of common decency their wives and daughters are reduced to the alternative of remaining constant prisoners in their own houses or having their feelings outraged. The officers have a bathing-house for their own accommodation at the end of Erskine Street, to which they resort, uniformly conducting themselves as real gentlemen always will do. But we are sorry to hear that their men have not the same sense of decorum, and only insult those who remonstrate with them when they are trespassing at noon-day on their premises. An Act of Council renders it punishable to bathe in Darling Harbour after six o’clock in the morning; and we are aware of no clause to privilege the soldiers either in violating this injunction or in trespassing on private property.

And Govett wrote in the *Saturday Magazine* in 1837, ‘men and women, boys and girls, all...indulge in this healthy enjoyment, and so much indeed, was bathing in fashion at one time, that it was impossible to walk out any time of the day, by the water-side in Sydney without being annoyed by bathers in all directions.’71 A glowing account titled *Sketches of New South Wales* stated that

Darling Harbour and the Domain both afford most convenient spots for the healthy recreation of bathing. The angular corners formed by the rocks are generally filled with beds of fine white sand, which gradually shelves off into deep water. It is generally in such spots that bathing-places are selected; for it must be remarked that in the neighbourhood of Sydney there are no beaches fit for bathing.72

The Act of 1833 was followed by another Act in 1838 (2 Victoria No. 2) providing ‘that it shall not be lawful for any person to bathe near or within view of any public wharf, quay, bridge, road or other place of public resort within the limits of any of the towns between 6 am and 8 pm’. The infringement penalty of this Act was £1.73

The Act continued to be ignored, and further, this was not a ‘boys only club’, women too indulged in naked bathing. The *Sydney Gazette* in 1841 reported under a heading of ‘Hint to the Police’ that ‘boys and girls (the latter big enough to wear laced stays) were bathing publicly together at the end of the street leading to the Commercial

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71 Govett. op.cit.,No. XVI, p. 123.
72 Ibid.

Wharf where people assemble for the steamers... one of the naked girls deliberately came out and put on her shift, stays and frock etc. in the presence of the boys, who were all looking on’.

It should be noted, however, that Mrs. Bigges’ baths (for both men and women) established in the early 1830s catered to ‘respectable Sydney ladies’ who could enjoy ‘the greatest possible luxury in this climate’ where the ‘ladies are safely secured from all intrusion, and they can duck and gambol unseen and unmolested’. These baths later became Robinson’s Baths. The Colonial Post of January 1863 carried an advertisement on its front page.

Robinson’s Ladies Baths - The Proprietor, in returning thanks for past favours, and respectfully soliciting continuance of the same, begs to inform his patrons and the public generally, that the Ladies’ Baths are now open. Besides numerous other improvements since last season, the baths have been greatly extended into deep water, so as to secure a sufficient depth for bathing in any state of the tide... by a new arrangement in the scale of charges, families and others may enjoy the advantages of the baths at a considerably reduced price.

Known as ‘Robinson’s at the Dom’, ladies entered this establishment through a private entrance into a pavilion of twenty private cubicles, and a café that served coffee and Abernethy biscuits. These facilities were not public in the sense that anyone used them. Only those with money to pay for the privilege entered their portals.

A preference for unclad mixed bathing may have been a motive for harbour bathing rather than bathe with their ‘betters’ in sexually allocated and privately owned baths.

74 Sydney Gazette 28 January 1841.
75 Hood op.cit. p.315.
It may also have been the payment of entry fees, which served to discriminate in general against the poorer sections of the community, both men and women. The Domestic Intelligence section of the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported in 1831 that ‘it is a matter of regret, that we have no bathing places for the fair sex of Sydney. At present females are debarred from this enjoyment, which in many cases is necessary to restore health, and by all would be considered as an addition to their comforts and we think it therefore deserves the attention of Government’. 78

Despite the pleas, no free baths were forthcoming for women but harbour swimming remained popular. The ‘*Herald*’ of 23 March 1847 reported a ‘Grand Swimming Match’, which had taken place the previous day at Woolloomooloo Bay.

The contestants numbered seven, including a “dark hero” (who managed to come in fourth) and, starting at “Robinson’s Baths” they swam the whole width of the bay and back again. There were many spectators “on the rocks and in the Domain”, and as the report states that Mr. J Redman, who won the event, had proved equally successfully on a previous occasion; it is clear there was no lack of interest in the sport among a certain section of the community. 79

**BATHING – STILL THE ‘FAVOURITE RECREATION’:**

The popularity of bathing was such that there was a need to provide additional accommodation for both bathers and spectators and in 1858 the Sydney Municipal Council replaced the old baths at Woolloomooloo Bay. The new baths were described at the time as

150 feet long with 47 recesses for the accommodation of bathers...there is a central pier 4 ft in width, running a length of 41 ft. into deep water. At a distance of 27 ft. a ladder is provided on either side for deep-water approaches...the baths occupy the well known site of the ‘Fig Tree’ - almost a venerable site, considering that the southern division which is intended to be free of access to the public, had its approaches made 20 years ago at the subscription cost of youths who are now numbered among our most active citizens. 80

80 Souvenir Program in connection with the opening of the Sydney Municipal Baths, Outer Domain on Saturday, 17 October, 1908, n.p.
These new baths had two divisions, and thus served two purposes. Whilst providing free public bathing it also produced revenue for Council.

The southern division has excellent approaches by shelving projections of rock near the water’s edge. The partition between the two baths and the whole water enclosure, are effected by stout piles, upon which a paling fence is placed. The northern division is approached by a gateway at its south-west corner, and a 6ft platform is entered upon at the waterside. It was intended that the southern division be free to the public; ‘but it is the recommendation of the by-laws committee that no more than 3d shall be charged for admission to the shelter accommodation’. 81

Also in use in the 1880s were the dry docks when not used for ship repairs. These included Cockatoo Island shipyard, Morts Dock, Balmain and the Sutherland Dock, also at Cockatoo Island.

The Nautical School Ship **Sobraon** for neglected children, and those without parents on Cockatoo Island had recreation facilities, which included a swimming pool. However, it is unclear whether this referred to the dry dock. 82

Baths were also established at Manly in 1859, Pyrmont in 1875 ‘replacing unsuitable and inadequate baths’, 83 and also at Dawes Point. ‘Professor’ Frederick Cavill took possession of the Lavender Bay baths in 1881, clearing and cleaning what was generally in a neglected condition 84 and at Elkington Park Balmain - the White Horse Baths were commenced in 1881 with use from 1882. In 1883 the baths were re-named Elkington Park Baths after a former Mayor of Balmain who had instigated the

81 ibid.
83 Municipal Council of Sydney, ‘**Vade Macum**’, 16th year of issue, Bloxam and Chambers, Printers, Wentworth Place, Sydney, 1915.
84 Official Souvenir Program, North Sydney District Swimming Club, Tuesday 28 November 1905, Grand ‘Welcome Home’ to the Club Captain B.B. Kieran.
purchase of the park from the estate of Ewenton Cameron.\textsuperscript{85} The pool is now classified by the National Trust. In the eastern suburbs, baths were established at Watsons Bay in 1888.

In the south, Thomas Saywell constructed an hotel and baths at Lady Robinson’s Beach in 1885, which was reached by Saywells’ tramway. Saywell held the franchise to operate the Rockdale-Brighton-le-Sands tram for thirty years. The franchise expired in 1914 and the government took over operations. Advertisements in the newspapers of the day were aimed at families, encouraging ‘young men - to bring your sweetheart and husbands bring your wives and families’.\textsuperscript{86}

Ashton’s baths established in Mortlake in 1886 were a showpiece of the municipality. Excavated from solid rock without the benefits of modern earthmoving equipment, the baths measured thirty metres by twelve metres. Although partly tidal, the water levels were maintained by electric pumps. The baths were popular with both local school children and the more serious members of swimming clubs. In the early years of the pool’s history, male and female swimmers had different times during which they were permitted to bathe.\textsuperscript{87}

Apart from Ashtons baths, most early baths were one complete structure either erected on piles or floating. They included an entrance at the shore end and dressing cubicles, lockers, showers, sanitary accommodation, wind breaks and privacy walls.

\textsuperscript{86} Sydney Morning Herald 9 November 1885.
surrounded the pool. Timber paling fences were the earliest method of enclosing baths. The closer the palings were placed the less flotsam and jetsam entered the pool and the longer the water could be retained when the tide fell.

It was in the eighteenth century that timber floating baths were first established in Paris along the Siene. By 1820 they existed on the River Thames in London and were later established along other European rivers and also in New York and Boston. Pollution of the rivers caused their decline in the early 1900s.\textsuperscript{88}

Floating baths were not without their problems. During a carnival (date unknown but possibly early to mid 1800s) at Billy Warbrick’s floating baths at Lavender Bay, a ferry moored to the side listed dangerously when the spectators crowded to one side. Club members had to bail out the buoyancy tanks to right the baths again. ‘There was the possibility of many people being drowned if the baths had sunk and a searching inquiry into the matter was held’. When Mr. Warbrick (a famous Maori Rugby Union footballer) fell ill the baths became neglected and a ‘southerly buster’ blew one end of the baths in and they sank.\textsuperscript{89}

And in 1900 floating baths were moved from Farm Cove to the eastern side of Mrs. Macquaries Point, opposite Garden Island. Unfortunately, in 1909 the baths were swept away in a gale and deposited on a beach across the harbour, some considerable distance away.\textsuperscript{90} The fact that floating baths could be sold and moved to another

\textsuperscript{89} Bailey and Reddan op.cit.p. 16.
\textsuperscript{90} Australia’s Yesterday: A Look at our Recent Past, Readers Digest, Sydney, 1974, p.192.
location stood in their favour; however, their movability was off-set by their considerable hazards. In 1899 the Swimming Association presented evidence to the Metropolitan Land Board (F.H. Wilson presiding) with reference to bathing facilities in Sydney. In its view ‘floating baths should only be erected as a last resource, particularly on account of the liability of such baths breaking away from their moorings in heavy storms - pile baths are preferable where possible’.91

Yet Harbour bathing remained popular. Askew, writing in 1857, notes

the public and private bathing places are beautifully situated on Woolloomooloo Bay. The water is clear as crystal in every part of the harbour. This Bay is the only place near the city where public bathing is allowed, and here on account of its secluded situation. There are several bathing houses with shark-proof netting or wooden grating round them, which rests upon the bottom to prevent any accident occurring for many sharks frequent the harbour.92

It is interesting that pollution is not mentioned in Askew’s article for it surely must have been present. The whaling industry was established early after settlement and moved from Sydney Cove to Mosman Bay by order of Governor Darling in 1831 because of its ‘noise and smells of boiling down the blubber and coopering’.93 Also, Askew’s claim that ‘the water is clear as crystal in every part of the harbour’ could be challenged because by 1875 there were sewage outlets at five different points in the harbour. A committee appointed to examine the outlets found that at Rushcutters Bay an extensive and stinking mud flat had formed which was exposed at low tide. At Woolloomooloo Bay a large bank had formed and sewage floated on the surface of

91 Report to the Metropolitan Land Board with reference to floating baths in Sydney. Unnamed newspaper cutting in E.S. Marks Sporting Collection, volume of bound newspaper cuttings 20 September 1899, p.1, Mitchell Library.
92 Askew op.cit. p.145: MacDennell also makes mention of the crystal clear waters of Woolloomooloo Bay, Before Kings Cross. 1967, p.7. The natural sand bar entrance of Woolloomooloo Bay possibly acted as some type of barrier against the tide of excrementitious matter.
the salt water, oscillating back and forth with the movement of the tides. At Fort Macquarie a ‘considerable bank had formed and certain winds blew effluvia over a considerable area of the northern part of the city’. The water flowing from the Tank Stream into Sydney Cove was inky in colour, ‘apparently putrescent, and floated on the surface of the Bay’ for some distance. Finally, at Darling Harbour the committee described accumulating banks of ‘filthy and putrid mud’. 94

Throughout the 1870s, the government was lobbied to clean up the mess. Petitions were signed and claims were made that the state of the harbour was well known overseas thus ‘discouraging immigration and hindering trade’. Owners of waterside properties also suffered ‘excreta and offscouring’.95 And the Imperial Naval authorities complained about the unhealthiness of the anchorage-grounds. Typhoid fever had broken out on board a moored ‘man-of-war’ in early 1875, its cause attributed to noxious gases coming from the sewer outlet at Fort Macquarie.96 Finally, in 1889, the Bondi Outfall was commissioned. There were, however, objections to the outfall. Waverley Council Minutes of 6 April 1880 note that correspondence was received from the Hon. Secretary of the Suburban Sewerage Vigilance regarding the matter and it was moved that Council ‘do most earnestly protest against the proposed, or any scheme of sewerage which will empty itself at Bondi – it will naturally affect the best interests of the municipality’. The underground pipes extended from Hyde

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94 Report by the No. 7 Committee appointed by the Sydney City and Suburban Sewage and Health Board, 1875.

95 New South Wales Legislative Assembly Votes and Proceedings, 1876-7, p.685.

96 Sydney City and Suburban Sewerage and Health Board, Sixth Progress Report, 1875, p.8.
Park to Ben Buckler at Bondi, leaving drains officially storm water channels, and still a major source of pollution in the Harbour.97

Fear of pollution of the town’s water supply was a major concern and long before Governor Darling’s order the Sydney Gazette carried a notice by command of His Excellency that no slaughter houses, tanneries, Dying-houses, Breweries or Distilleries shall be in future erected on or near to the stream of water which flows through the town of Sydney and the tanks which have been constructed thereon for the purpose of procuring a good and adequate supply of pure and good water.98

There were several slaughter houses at various places in and near Sydney ‘including one at the head of Rozelle Bay, from which blood and offal or scraps drained into the Harbour, creating hazards to public health and attracting swarms of sharks’99 According to Barry, sharks haunt this part of the harbour in search of offal and act as an efficient cordon.100

Most of the smaller abattoirs were closed when the largest of the slaughterhouses was built on Glebe Island. An Act of Parliament in 1850 established the abattoirs. Building began in 1853 on a 2-ha site on the Rozelle Bay shoreline of Glebe Island to a design by Edmund Blacket, incorporating both the latest technical ideas from America and some first-class masonry work (detail) that seems out of keeping with

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97 Public Works Department, Coast & Rivers Branch. Seawall/Promenade Stability Report No. 88034, May 1988; The suburb of Waverley was connected to the same sewer in 1892: John Breen, Archivist with Sydney Water asserts that water would have been pumped from the Domain. Personal Communication, 23 February, 2001.
94 Sydney Gazette Saturday 13 April 1811.
99 Stephenson op.cit. p 287.
the function of the building. This was a substantial building of stone and costing nearly £70,000. The abattoirs were connected with Pyrmont by a long wooden bridge. Opened in 1860, the complex generated constant complaints about the stench and possible disease emanating from effluent entering the harbour and from dung piles. A Commission of Inquiry was established in 1879 and a petition for removal of the abattoirs to Homebush was presented in 1887. Attempts to modernise the establishment were made in the following year, but closure and removal to Homebush eventually took place in the 1920s. However, pollution continued with increasing concentrations of waste from the factories of Chippendale and Redfern as well as human effluent as cheap housing was crammed in on both sides of Parramatta Street (sic).

Until the abattoirs were moved to Homebush the harbour was polluted by animal waste drifting its length from Blackwattle Bay to Manly. In a deputation of members of Annandale Municipal Council and local residents to the Premier, it was reported that frequently large masses of decomposed refuse, weighing from a few pounds to about a quarter of a hundredweight from which offensive smells arose, could be seen floating about the Bay.

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101 J.A. Barry, *The City of Sydney: The Story of its growth from its foundation to the present day*, The NSW Bookstall Co, Sydney, 1902, p. 61.
104 Aplin & Storey op.cit. p.95.
106 The NSW Government acquired land (comprising 830 acres) at Homebush Bay in 1906 for establishment of the State Abattoirs. Stephenson op.cit. p.287.
The ocean beaches, Bondi, Bronte, Coogee, Manly and as far south as Cronulla unfortunately were polluted with refuse which was washed up after being dumped at sea. Under a newspaper heading 'Filthy Beaches: Councils take action. Carcases and Refuse', it was reported that 'lumps of lung, liver, animals legs and bones as well as the carcases of dogs cats and hens' were to be found on Bondi Beach. Coogee was 'thick with a mixed collection of vegetable waste, rotten fruit and household kitchen refuse...which would make it appear that one of the city garbage punts had discharged its cargo close inshore'.\(^{107}\) The bathing inspector at Manly reported to Council that he had buried nearly a ton of animal offal in the sands on the beach. Alderman Heaton stated 'I saw Reynolds burying this awful stuff, livers and entrails, dead calves, rotten pumpkins and every horrible kind of decayed fruit and vegetables. It was floating about amongst the bathers'.\(^{108}\) A statement from the Abattoirs Board denied blame for the dead animals but acknowledged that the offal came from the abattoirs and offered to pay the expense of its disposal. Alderman Quirk from Manly stated 'it is a damnable state of Affairs, it's the same from Barrenjoey to Cronulla'.\(^{109}\) The Mayor, Alderman A.T. Keirle stated that an officer from the Navigation Board said he failed to see how the board could prevent the trouble as the signal-man said the punts went out three miles. Outside the three miles the board had no jurisdiction.\(^{109}\) However, at a Waverley Council meeting to discuss the matter it was reported that the signal-master at Watsons Bay had frequently reported 'that punts discharged loads of garbage inside the limit they were supposed to go'. Alderman Walker's comment 'what are the sharks doing? brought much laughter'.\(^{110}\)

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\(^{107}\) *The Sun* 8 May 1914.
\(^{108}\) ibid.
\(^{109}\) ibid.
\(^{110}\) ibid.
Ratepayers, too, had their say ‘Nuff Said’ wrote ‘in a land that is reputed to be flowing with milk and honey there is a spot on earth called Manly which is not flowing with milk and honey at present, there is meat, fruit, fish and vegetables; yes, enough even to fill 100 baskets’. Mr. Robert H. Lalor worried ‘that the obnoxious staff would endanger health in seaside resorts and particularly surf bathers’, while ‘Manly Surfer’ complained ‘that dumping meat off Sydney Heads is bringing all the sharks from Tweed Heads to Gabo Island around our front door. I am afraid that one of these days some of the “sardines” may show a preference to white flesh and I am white as a lily’.111

The combined hazards of pollution and sharks then, were no doubt of concern to the Harbour swimmers. Barry writes that the old Fig-tree was a favourite resort of swimmers who used to go out in parties and race from one point to the other, often paying for their temerity with their lives by reason of either cramp or sharks. He also recounts that in December 1849 ‘a man swimming near the Fig-tree was seized by a very large shark so close in shore was this, that some of the bathers present beat off the brute with their boat-hooks. But the poor fellow died from loss of blood in a few minutes.’112 Roberts also recounts the story of a Mr. George Lee, a wood turner who was present one morning when a shark bit off a Soldiers leg in Port Jackson. He and a

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111 The Sun 9 May 1914: Apparently dumping of garbage at sea continued for some time - Randwick Council Minutes of 22 August 1933 state that Alderman Moverly referred to advertisements in the Sydney Morning Herald and proposed ‘that a letter be sent to the Minster for Local Government asking him to take the necessary steps to amend the Sydney Corporation Act to prevent the City Council having its garbage dumped at sea and also to amend the Local Government Act in the same way and that other seaside Councils be asked to take similar action’.

112 Barry op.cit. p. 58.
man named Biggs went to his assistance and brought him in, but he bled to death.\footnote{113} It
is interesting to note the contrary view of Inglis writing in 1912 who states

originally in Sydney it was possible to bathe in open harbour water without danger from
sharks; at least, if the danger existed it was not generally realized.\footnote{114}

Sharks were not the only thing to look out for however. The *Sydney Gazette* of
Saturday 2 November, 1811 reported the ‘body of Jane Arding which had been
accidentally found under water in Cockle Bay close to the market wharf by a boy who
in bathing tred (sic) upon it’.

Askew notes that ‘they (the swimmers) have a great dread of sharks and none of them
would venture thirty yards beyond the point of a stone jetty which ran out a short
distance from the shore’.\footnote{115} On the other hand, in the *Saturday Magazine* account it
was asserted that ‘there are many young men who think no more of swimming out a
mile or more and back than a stranger would think of walking that distance. From
habit, the exertion is not fatigue to them’\footnote{116} Arthur Lowe, writing of his childhood
remembers Sir Edmund Barton who became Australia’s first Prime Minister, telling
him ‘your father was a strong and fast swimmer when he used to lead us on our early
morning swim from Dawes Point to Milsons Point or McMahons Point and return.’\footnote{117}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[114] Askew op.cit. chapter 4, p. 206.
\item[115] The *Saturday Magazine*, 1837 p.123.
\item[116] Sir Edmund Barton, *Surf, Surf-Shooting and Surf Lifesaving Pioneering*, Published privately by the
was the first Prime Minister of Australia, 1901-1903. In 1891 he succeeded Sir Henry Parkes as Leader
of the Federation Movement in New South Wales. To support this cause he coined the phrase ‘There
will be a nation for a continent and a continent for a nation’.
\end{footnotes}
Unfortunately, Barry does not mention the distance raced from one point to the other by swimmers, but he does state that because of pollution, 'the harbour was no longer attractive to swimmers and that people would not swim in it even if paid to do so'.

It is perhaps timely to state some facts and figures with reference to shark attacks in Sydney harbour. According to research by G. P. Whitely, F.R.Z.S. Curator of Fishes at the Australian Museum Sydney (published in an article in the Australian Encyclopaedia 1956) there are records of only fifteen persons killed by shark attacks inside Sydney Harbour in 165 years (from 1791 to 1956). Of these, eleven were in the main harbour including two in the Parramatta River, one in the Lane Cove River and four in Middle Harbour. There have been no fatal attacks by sharks inside the main harbour since 1929. Of the five deaths from shark attacks in the much quieter waters of Middle Harbour, two were in 1942, two in 1955 and another in 1962. The deaths that occurred in Middle Harbour were all of persons swimming in open waters.

These hazards, combined with Sydney’s boom in population, urban development and trade expansion provided impetus for safer and cleaner swimming facilities. L.F. Mann found things a lot better at Neutral Bay where a clean beach and a dam constructed by Benjamin Boyd provided bathing facilities.

A pretty sandy beach, edged by nature’s jagged rocks formed the water frontage. This beach of clean sand, extending to the fringe of wood at low water induced daily swimming and supplied quantities of whiting and other fish for a change of diet for all provisions had to be obtained from the city.

the clear waters that rushed over a large undulating area from about where the public school stands down through a pretty ravine, fed this dam used for storing water for Boyd’s woolshed facing the Harbour near to the foot of Ben Boyd Road. The dam was large and swimming and rowing flat-bottomed punts was the delight of the youngsters.

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118 Barry op.cit. p. 408.
119 Quoted in Stephensen op.cit. pp. 60-61.
120 Ibid. p.193.
In an attempt to address the need for safer and cleaner facilities the Municipalities Acts of 1858 and 1867 empowered councils to provide such facilities as baths, wharves and parks. As it was much easier to wall in water than to excavate a basin, seaside municipalities soon became popular resorts for city dwellers. As early as 1862 Charles Moore of Randwick Council emphasised the suitability of Coogee for baths and although subscriptions were collected it would be forty-five years before baths were constructed.\(^{121}\)

The popularity of swimming in Sydney was such that the existing baths had trouble coping with the crowds. Swimming legend Annette Kellermann wrote in her book *How to Swim* ‘In Australia swimming is so much a sport for everyone and amateur swimming contests and exhibitions so plentiful that the very abundance of the sport makes it common-place.’\(^{122}\) There was also the on-going question of lack of free public bathing facilities. The *Mirror* of August 1888 carried an attack on the City Municipal Council.

There is a terrible dearth of public bathing accommodation at prices within the reach of every class. While the city Corporation has persistently neglected what is recognised in most civilised countries as one of the essential duties of a Municipal Council - that of providing cheap bathing facilities for the public - the Sydney Bathing Company has taken the bull by the horns and done for Sydney through private enterprise what should long ago have been done as a public right.\(^{123}\)

The reference was to the Natatorium. These grand baths were built in 1888 in the heart of the city near the corner of Pitt and Goulburn Streets. Opened by the Mayor of


\(^{122}\) Annette Kellermann, *How to Swim*, George H. Doran Co. 1918, p.19.

\(^{123}\) *Daily Mirror* 1 August 1888, sighted in E.S. Marks Sporting Collection, No. 73: Bound volume of newspaper cuttings. (Mitchell Library).
Sydney, Alderman John Harris on 6 July 1888Footnote 124 and featuring an exhibition of fancy swimming by the Cavill family the baths were 100' x 40' and had a depth of 3ft.6in. to 9ft. The baths were constructed from cement and asphalt. The water was heated to 70°F. There were 3 springboards a 'shoot' course, 65 dressing rooms and four shower baths. Footnote 125 They were recommended to

the many thousands of busy bees from the warehouses, manufactories and stores...who...may take advantage of a dip after their hard day's toil. Hot sea water plunge 1d. Hot fresh water plunge 9d. Swim 6d and 4d. Footnote 126

Referred to as Sydney's first tepid sea water baths, Footnote 127 water was pumped up from the harbour, Footnote 128 although there is no indication as to how often this was done. Apart from general public swimming sessions, the Natatorium became popular for swimming and diving exhibitions and club and inter-club races and carnivals. A regular columnist in the Referee, who used the pseudonym 'Natator' announced that the opening meeting of the Port Jackson Swimming Club was fixed for Wednesday 16 January when there would also be an exhibition of life saving and diving. Footnote 129 By 1889 the Enterprise Swimming Club was also conducting mens and ladies races at the baths, Footnote 130 as were retailer, Anthony Horderns Swimming Club, The Warehouseman's Club and the Roma Swimming Club. Footnote 131 By 1890 the Natatorium had become the scene of club events and professional challenges involving such swimmers as W.J.'Paddy' Gormly and George Meadham. Footnote 132 Both champions in their day, Gormly came close to world record times in New South Wales Championships between 1890 and 1895. His leg

Footnotes:
124 Echo 6 July 1888.
125 Evening News 5 July 1888, sighted in E.S. Marks Sporting Collection No. 73: The Cavill family were famous swimmers and baths proprietors who made a major contribution to swimming.
126 G. Robertson & Co. (publishers) Beautiful Sydney, 1895-96.
127 Sydney Morning Herald, 6 July 1888.
129 The Referee 19 December 1888: W.F. Corbett Sen. a writer for the Sydney Referee wrote under the by-line of Natator.
130 Daily Telegraph 30 April 1889.
action was unusual; he accompanied his single-arm-over-side-stroke with a scissor kick in which he lifted his upper leg (his left) clean out of the water from knee to foot before thrashing it down. Meadham was one of the first Australian swimmers to use the double over-arm stroke. He won the first 100 yards Australasian Championship in 1894.

Ladies not wishing to participate in races but wishing to take swimming lessons were not forgotten according to the Referee - two mornings a week were set aside for them from 9am until 12 noon.

In 1890, an 85 bed hotel was erected next door to the Natatorium. Some 80,000 people were said to have visited the baths in the first summer. Not all were enamoured by the enclosed baths. Annette Kellermann stated that ‘Swimming under a roof to me is like big game hunting in a zoo’. Unfortunately, success was short lived and the Natatorium was closed sometime in the 1900s.

It should be noted here, that, although not strictly bathing, (that is swimming) baths, there did exist in Sydney a Turkish Bath in Bligh Street. The bath was introduced into Australia in 1859 by Dr. Le Gay Brereton. Its popularity was such that a separate building was built to accommodate ‘female bathers’ when previously they had ‘two

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133 Carlile op.cit. p. 129.  
134 Bailey and Reddan op.cit. p.11.  
135 The Referee October 1889.  
136 Kellermann op.cit. p.177.  
137 E.S. Marks Sporting Collection No. 73, Bound Volume of newspaper cuttings, (Mitchell Library): Evening News 5 July 1888, December 1889.
days in the week appropriated to them' in the male baths. Both buildings contained all the appliances of an Oriental Bath.  

The 'harbour bathing question' though was still a popular topic. The Sunday Times in March 1889 carried the following article.

There are dozens of little Bays quite secluded from the outside public where swimmers who live too far away from public baths or do not care to have their skins in water which has been polluted by the week's collection of hundreds of previous bathers ought to have the unquestioned right to bathe.

By 1900, although there were quite a few baths in existence there was still a shortage of public baths and existing structures were deteriorating through faulty construction and neglect in maintenance. Baths existing at this time (c1900) included - Cavills, Farmers, Hellings, the New Ladies Baths, and Dawes Point baths, Point Street baths at Pyrmont, Nicholson Street baths, Elliott Street baths and White Horse Pt. baths (Elkington Park) at Balmain. Also Lavender Bay baths, The Spit baths and Manly mens and Manly ladies baths, and coastal baths at Watsons Bay (enlarged in 1895), Bondi, Bronte, Coogee (1907) (mens and womens) proposed baths at Rose Bay and Rushcutters Bay.

About this time a pro-bathing movement began a push for more free bathing facilities. Unfortunately, not a great deal of hope was held for any immediate action. The Sydney Sportsman noted on the 9 October 1901.

The Swimming Association have time after time waited on the Sydney Municipal Council and the Government by deputation, calling attention to the paucity of bathing accommodation throughout the city and suburbs, only to be met by promises...clearly...there is very little hope of the bathing facilities becoming more numerous unless private enterprise is to do it instead

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139 Sunday Times 3 March 1889, 'Harbour Bathing Question'.
140 E.S. Marks Sporting Collection No. 74. (Mitchell Library).
of the Government... when the opportune time arrives, this column will support the movement, but at present it is useless to discuss the matter.\textsuperscript{141}

In a letter to the City Council the New South Wales Amateur Swimming Association suggested an alleviation of the problem.

Dear Sir, The Council of this Association have considered it advisable to revive the agitation for the conversion of the generally unoccupied Exhibition Building in Prince Alfred Park into municipal swimming baths for the benefit of the citizens of Sydney. A meeting of representatives of Sydney clubs and others interested in the movement will be held in the Sports Club on Monday evening at 8 o'clock. (signed A.T. Hendrig and E.S. Marks Joint Hon. Secs. Baths Extension sub-committee.)\textsuperscript{142}

Not only were bathing facilities needed but room for spectators was also a high priority requirement. 'Natator', writing the swimming column in \textit{The Referee} reported on The Otter's inaugural carnival at Hellings' Domain Baths.

The attendance, all things considered, was very good indeed, a large percentage being ladies, and this reminds me that they were extremely badly treated. The reserved space was fixed where the rays of the sun beat down unchecked by shelter of any kind throughout the whole afternoon, while the officials and competitors, as well as many of those who paid a modest 'bob', monopolised the shaded portion of the enclosure. Another grievance the ladies have against the committee is the meagre costume worn by some of the contestants - a couple of them were almost naked...nothing will do swimming more harm than the toleration of this sort of thing...a repetition of what occurred last Saturday afternoon will see them (the ladies) conspicuous by their absence.\textsuperscript{143}

Another sporting newspaper report noted that 'close on a thousand people packed themselves into Farmer's Domain Baths last Saturday to witness East Sydney's seventh annual carnival. Every corner was occupied, standing room even being at a premium.'\textsuperscript{144} The same newspaper reported a month later that 'the most important and most successful swimming carnival ever held in Sydney was that held last

\textsuperscript{141} \textit{Sydney Sportsman} Wednesday 9 October 1901. The pro-bathing movement's push for increased bathing facilities is mentioned in various issues of the \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} throughout 1900.

\textsuperscript{142} Letter dated 19 February 1901, addressed to the City Council, E.S. Marks Sporting Collection, Bound Volume of Newspaper cuttings, No. 73. (Mitchell Library).

\textsuperscript{143} \textit{The Referee} 14 December 1898.

\textsuperscript{144} \textit{Sydney Sportsman} Wednesday 19 December 1900.
Saturday in the Fitzroy Dock...there was a good crowd there all day - never less than 3000 and the show was kept going from 11.30 am to 5.00 pm.\textsuperscript{145}

By 1899 extensions to Woolloomooloo wharf for shipping traffic threatened the existing baths. A report was compiled on possible sites for new baths. These included the northern end of Mrs. Macquarie's Chair, rock baths on the western side of Mrs. Macquarie's Chair, two sites at Rushcutters Bay for floating baths, a floating bath site in Double Bay and the southern end of Rose Bay, the eastern side of Mosman Bay for fixed floating baths, several sites in Neutral Bay and a floating bath site in Rozelle Bay and Middle Harbour.\textsuperscript{146} Floating baths were used where the Bay was well protected; otherwise permanent pile structures were used.

The City of Sydney Council was slow to respond to the plight of the baths at Woolloomooloo. The Reports and Proceedings during the year 1902 stated with reference to Woolloomooloo Baths.

Whilst it is a matter of great regret that the provision of public baths is not more generously recognised as a purely municipal function, which a representative municipal authority ought to undertake as a public duty, it is to be hoped that should the projected establishment of new baths attain fruition the municipal authorities will be entrusted with their administration and control.\textsuperscript{147}

Unfortunately, no immediate action was taken because of lack of funds despite the need to lessen the drownings and risk of shark attacks in the harbour.

Councils in seaside suburbs also recognised the need for ocean pools, but their construction was not without red tape and difficulty. The control of the harbour

\textsuperscript{145} ibid. Wednesday 9 January 1901.
\textsuperscript{146} E.S. Marks Collection, No. 73: \textit{Evening News} 30 December 1899.
foreshores had been a contentious issue between State and local government since the first pools were built. Initially, the foreshore land belonged to the State Government, which could create Crown Reserves or lease the land so that Councils could construct pools. Councils were eager to build pools where they thought it could attract tourists or residents, but the red tape created by the State often created obstacles. In 1901 control of the foreshore passed to the Sydney Harbour Trust, which was formed in the same year. The Trust encouraged the construction of local public baths, thus many new small baths appeared in the period up to 1920. The foreshore of the harbour became the domain of the Maritime Services Board in 1936. On 1st September 2004 it became the New South Wales Maritime Authority.148

The question of the erection of public baths at Bondi originated in the 1800s when a report requested by the Council of the Municipality of Waverley was received from the Under Secretary of the Department of Public Works dated 17 February 1880 advising Council that the Engineer-in-Chief of that Department did not recommend the making of public baths at Bondi. Council asked for reconsideration and stated it was prepared to keep the baths in repair when constructed.149 The problem in this case was that Mr. Francis O'Brien of the Bondi Estate, at that time, owned legal right to prevent access to the beach. O'Brien was willing to allow access (in fact, he allowed the land to be used as a picnic ground and pleasure resort) if proper control was maintained at the beach. Council, however, had no power to control in any way, private land. After larrikinism developed the owners threatened to close the area to

147 Reports and Proceedings of the Municipal Council of the City of Sydney during the year 1902. Sydney, Turner and Henderson, Printers to the Corporation.
149 Waverley Council Minutes 17 February 1880.
the public unless Council approached the Government to make available land for public use.\textsuperscript{150} This difficulty was overcome in 1881 when the government acquired an area of about 25 acres fronting the beach for public recreation, thereby giving free public access.\textsuperscript{151} However, it was not until 1885 that Council was appointed Trustee of Bondi Beach Reserve.\textsuperscript{152}

The baths issue dragged on until a petition from ratepayers in December 1883 stirred Council into action, although the Council Minutes of 7 March 1882 note that Council was to ‘obtain services of a competent engineer to report and prepare designs for the making of public baths at Bondi and Bronte’. Amounts for the erection of baths at both Bronte and Bondi were passed by Council, but the permission of the Department of Lands for Council to occupy the sites on lease was still awaited. This was granted in January 1885 at £25 a year at Bondi and £20 at Bronte.\textsuperscript{153} At the request of Council, the Government, in August 1886 gave permission to Mr. A. Williams of the Harbours and Rivers Branch of the Department of Public Works, to design and supervise the construction of the public baths at Bondi and Bronte. A sub-Committee had already been appointed in 1884 to draft regulations for the conduct of the baths\textsuperscript{154}, which were adopted by Council on 4 October 1887.\textsuperscript{155}

\textsuperscript{150} ibid. 6 April 1880.
\textsuperscript{151} D.T. Dowd and W. Foster (eds.) The History of the Waverley Municipal District, published by the Council of the Municipality of Waverley (NSW) to commemorate its centenary of Municipal Government, 1859-1959, p.129. By 1851 O'Brien's name became linked with Bondi when 200 acres were purchased for him by Edward Smith Hall his father in law. The land, part of the Bondi Estate was purchased for £1 per acre, The Entwining Branches, A History of the O'Brien, Hall and Curlew's Families, Jenny Priestley, Star Printery Pty.Ltd. 1993.
\textsuperscript{152} Waverly Council Minutes 1 September 1885. Letter from the Under Secretary with a copy of the gazette of 14 August wherein Council was appointed Trustee.
\textsuperscript{153} Waverly Council Minutes 3 May 1887 – Leasing of foreshores for public bathing at Bronte and Bondi.
\textsuperscript{154} ibid. 20 September 1884.
It is unclear just when Bondi baths were opened to bathers, but in January 1888 the Council placed on record its appreciation to the Government for making available the services of Mr. Williams and thanked Mr. Williams for the very satisfactory manner in which he supervised the work.\(^{156}\) It seems likely that the building of both Bronte and Bondi baths in 1887 may have been severely affected by floods that occurred in Sydney in April of that year, and particularly at Waverley.\(^{157}\) In 1888 Council expended further money in order that the baths be completed for the ensuing season. And again in September 1889 for dressing rooms, fencing and completion of baths, but there is no indication that the baths were in public use.\(^{158}\) Finally, in November 1889 tenders were called for the leasing of the baths for 12 months.\(^{159}\) Perhaps natural disaster aided government bureaucracy and red tape.

It appears that Bronte baths were completed in the middle of 1887. A complaint to Council in August of that year stated that persons were bathing in Bronte Baths during prohibited hours.\(^{160}\) The baths were to be opened for gentlemen from daylight to 10 am and 4 pm till dark each day. For ladies, from 10 am to 4 pm each day except Sundays and public holidays. On Sundays and Public holidays the baths shall be open for gentlemen from daylight to dark. Every person using the baths was required to wear appropriate bathing dress.\(^{161}\)

\(^{155}\) Ibid. 4 October 1887.
\(^{156}\) Ibid. 14 January 1888.
\(^{157}\) Public Works Department Report, May 1889. ‘Hugh seas and gale force winds reported along coast’.
\(^{158}\) Waverly Council Minutes 31 August 1889. – ‘A sum not exceeding one hundred and fifty eight pounds voted for extension of dressing rooms, fencing etc.’
\(^{159}\) Ibid. 28 September 1889
\(^{160}\) Ibid. 2 August 1887. The Council Clerk was to direct attention of the local police to the matter.
\(^{161}\) Ibid. 1 October 1884.
A point of discrimination should be noted here. Although the ladies have not been excluded, the hours of bathing allotted to them, at Bronte, at the Natatorium, and at Wylie's Coogee baths, (and no doubt other bathing establishments), although limited, served to discriminate against working women. Thus, male and middle class non-working women enjoyed more benefits from the allotted bathing hours. And the entrepreneurs whose leases ran at £100 to £150 per year were obviously making the most of their investments by keeping the baths constantly in use. Bronte baths gained great popularity and The Sydney Mail wrote a glowing report.

Bronte baths are situated on the southern shore of... Nelson's Bay... the baths are the property of the Waverley Municipal Council and Mr. Harry A Wylie, the champion distance diver of Australia is the popular lessee... The baths are in length about 150 feet... in width the widest part is 72 feet... The basin has concrete walls on the sea side, and outside of this large boulders are thrown up to break the force of the waves when... very high seas are running, but there is no fear of danger even at that time, while at low tide the smoothness of the water is agreeable to nearly all bathers... There is one particular feature in favour of these baths, the crystal waters of the Pacific flow into these baths through a shoot which is made for the purpose of catching all tides, and the overflow goes over the sea wall at the opposite end of the baths. This goes to prove that dirty water at Bronte is an unknown quantity... This class of bath is being largely popularised by the medical profession for certain ailments, such as sciatica, rheumatism etc... Adjoining the baths and beach are the picnic grounds...

The beachside suburb of Coogee was well served with swimming facilities. When they were finally built in 1907 at the southern end of Coogee beach, Wylie's baths became, and still is, a popular bathing pool. The baths were formed by the construction of a concrete wall almost at high water level around the existing rock shelf, sea water refilling and flushing the baths at high tide. The first licence to operate the baths was let to Henry Alexander Wylie, in 1907. Earlier in the 1900s Wylie had obtained a special lease for the area below high watermark, with the area

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162 H.A. Wylie secured a five year lease from 1 November 1895 for £100 per year for Bronte baths and Phillip Farmer secured Bondi Baths for a similar period from 1 January 1896 at £150 per annum. Dowd & Foster op.cit. p.150.
163 Sydney Mail 12 April 1898.
above high water mark being under Crown Reserve.¹⁶⁵ The baths were opened on 12 December 1907.¹⁶⁶ Wiley again tendered and won the lease in 1911 for 3 years at £150.¹⁶⁷ At that time Council also received a letter from Wiley claiming certain buildings erected by him as his property. Wiley’s tender (the highest) was accepted subject to the government granting Council an extension of its lease and that the lessee enter into an agreement with the Council for the purchase by Council of the improvements erected by Wiley at the termination of the lease at a valuation to be arrived at by arbitration. Wiley to be asked to state a price at which he would sell to Council. Council Minutes of 12 January 1912 state that £250 be voted for purchase from Wiley of 100 dressing boxes; 2 W.Cs with all fittings, refreshment room, bath, office and all gas fittings to various buildings. During his tenure, Wiley continued to construct improvements to the baths, boardwalk, fencing and general areas including a court near the north western corner which was used for a game similar to volley ball with four players using a rubber quoit (deck quoits).¹⁶⁸ The lease was transferred in 1959 to Mr. Desmond Selby who paid an annual rent of $500. Selby renamed the baths Sunset Pool and upgraded facilities.¹⁶⁹ The buildings and pool suffered badly from the impact of storms in the 1970s and were closed for a time until they came under the control of Randwick City

¹⁶⁵ ibid.
¹⁶⁷ Randwick Council Minutes 26 September 1911.
¹⁶⁹ ibid. There is no mention in Randwick City Council Minutes of any leasing transactions between Wylie and Council for either Wylies Baths or the Ladies baths in 1907. Further, no mention can be found of a transaction between Council and Desmond Selby. However, Council Minutes of 3 November 1959 state that Wylie had again successfully applied for the lease. It could be assumed that Wylie may have sub-leased the baths to Selby.
Wylies Baths, Coogee.


Originally, the baths had a 6 ft. concrete diving tower on the back wall and a springboard on the left wall. (author’s memories).
Council in 1978 with the original name restored.\textsuperscript{170} Wylie’s Baths, McIvor’s women’s baths, Giles baths, (both at Coogee), Coogee rock pool and Clovelly Bay enclosure have been classified by the National Trust.\textsuperscript{171}

In 1876 the Colonial Secretary informed Randwick Council that the Ladies Baths at Coogee had been gazetted.\textsuperscript{172} Situated on the south Coogee headland, a little to the north of Wyliies baths these baths cater to women and children. The baths are 1.3 metres higher than the Wyliies baths due to the rock formation giving them many advantages when tides are high. Established by H.A. Wylie in 1907 under lease from Randwick Council, ownership was transferred to Mr. R. J. McIvor after World War I. Commonly known as McIvor’s baths the pool is home to the Randwick-Coogee Ladies Swimming Club established there in 1921 by Rose McIvor and Wilhelmina (Mina) Wylie.\textsuperscript{173} In its resolve to call tenders for a three year lease of the baths in 1911, Randwick Council specified that a clause be inserted in the specification granting school children the right of admission to the baths one day per week.\textsuperscript{174}


\textsuperscript{172} Randwick City Council Minutes 14 March 1876.

\textsuperscript{173} National Trust of Australia (NSW) Swimming Pools and Public Baths, 24 January, 1995, p.1: Wiley apparently also looked to making a profit from selling refreshments. Randwick Council Minutes of 26 November 1907 stated ‘Has the Lessee of the Ladies baths power to sell refreshments on the reserve adjoining the baths? The short answer was ‘no’. Wylie, and to a lesser extent McIvor held numerous interests in the baths and dressing sheds. Council Minutes of 25 June 1907 note that Wylie was seeking ‘a 2 year extension of his lease of the Ladies baths in view of the great improvements carried out by him’. The extension was granted. The Minutes of Council meeting of 11 February 1908 note the ‘caretaker of the gent’s baths, H.A. Wylie offering £15 for 3 months tenure of the gent’s baths’. Offer accepted. Minutes of 24 December 1907 record that tenders for the lease of the dressing sheds on Coogee Beach were received, the highest tender from McIvor £100 for 3 years and £117 for 5 years.

\textsuperscript{174} Randwick Council Minutes, 23 August 1911.
The ‘Bogey Hole’ at the foot of the cliffs at the northern point of Coogee Bay served male bathers in the nineteenth century. The exact date of construction of the pool is not known although it would seem it pre-dates any buildings associated with it. A rope from the cliff may have been used to descend to the water. In 1902 a Crown Reserve was established on the present site. A timber building was erected on the site and used for dressing rooms. F. W. Lloyd was the first proprietor of the baths, which were known as Lloyd’s Baths. The baths are listed in Sands Directory of 1909 as ‘Randwick Municipal Baths’. The present building was erected in 1928 and opened in November 1929 initially for men only. They were known as Giles Hot Sea Baths and Swimming Pool ‘for the man who wants to keep fit’. The proprietor was Mr. Oscar Giles, a masseur. Jockeys, footballers and fighters extensively used the baths.\textsuperscript{175} In 1956 the land, known as Dunningham Reserve was vested in Randwick Municipal Council as trustee for the purpose of public baths and access. Unfortunately in 1974-75 the building was condemned following damage suffered during violent storms.\textsuperscript{176}

Shearer’s baths at Balmoral Beach also opened in (February) 1907. They did not cater for mixed bathing. However, bathing regulations prohibiting bathing in public were enforced as is evidenced by a newspaper report of 1907.

\begin{quote}
At a south coast town the other day two men were fined (under an old Act) for bathing in a place exposed to public view. They had bathing costumes on, and committed no offence against decency; and under the same Act anyone is liable to be fined for bathing on the ocean beach at Balmoral or at Manly.\textsuperscript{177}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{175} A Randwick Ramble, Part I, 5\textsuperscript{th} ed. Coogee & Clovelly. Randwick & District Historical Society, 1998, p.50.

\textsuperscript{176} National Trust of Australia (NSW) Survey of Harbourside and Ocean Pools, op.cit.

\textsuperscript{177} Marion McFarlane, Mosman Edwardian Years, 1901-1911, M.A. thesis, Sydney University, 1984. p. 10.
The North Sydney Swimming Club welcomed the new Municipal Baths at Lavender Bay in April 1905. These replaced the old floating baths, which were deemed unsafe, and the club prohibited from holding their third annual carnival in 1905. The carnival was held at Rose Bay at Pike’s Crystal baths on 11 February 1905. The new baths remained the headquarters of that club until April 1936 when the North Sydney Olympic Swimming Pool was opened. In its first five years of operation five million people passed through the turnstiles of the Olympic Pool. The North Sydney Olympic Pool remained a venue for important championships and meets.

In 1931, the Port Jackson and Manly Steamship Company built the Manly swimming enclosure on the West Esplanade for the tourist and day-tripper trade. Covering more than nine acres, it was 300 yards long, with an average width of 75 yards and its deepest parts varied between 14 and 20 feet. It also had shallow parts with a clean sandy bottom making it ideal for children thus making the ferry trip and dip in the pool a family outing. The pool contained quite a few novelties, which provided entertainment for the more daring of swimmers.

Floating logs, anchored at the end, rolled and bucked at the slightest touch. The climb onto them required a great deal of skill and practice. A circular platform on metal floats tilted from side to side...another floating platform had two steep slippery dips. There were nine water wheels as well as an Olympic standard springboard...a great thrill for watches as well as riders was the 50ft high slippery dip built on to the walkway across the pool. At night the pool was floodlit. At the western end were dressing sheds, a kiosk and tea rooms.178

The most important thing about the pool was that it was shark-proof so that it was a playground for children...at the far end, and alongside the wharf, the pool was deeper and boys would dive for silver coins. The public would throw coins into the pool...the boys would dive down to retrieve them179.

On the eastern shore of the harbour as well as Pike's Crystal Baths at Rose Bay there were also numerous municipally owned netted swimming enclosures. Probably the best-known netted enclosure is at Neilson Park named in honour of N.R.W. Neilson who was Minister for Lands (1908-1911). Neilson Park was formally part of the Vaucluse Estate of W. C. Wentworth, explorer and Statesman. The Vaucluse Estate was reclaimed in 1908 and in 1911 the New South Wales Government resumed the remaining Wentworth Estate. The land was proclaimed for public recreation and the National Park Trust was set up to administer it. It is now part of the Sydney Harbour Trust. When additional dressing rooms were needed the Government Architect design shows a change in moral attitudes to bathing as both mens and ladies dressing rooms were located in the one structure, rather than at opposite ends of the beach.\textsuperscript{180} The original enclosure constructed of timber piles and cable, which supported a tarred cotton net, was built in 1930. It also incorporated a timber diving tower, pontoons, a float and rolling logs, which do not exist any more. A jetty and sandstone sheds were demolished in 1975.\textsuperscript{181}

There are also enclosures at Parsley Bay erected in 1930 from steel net and timber supports, Rushcutters Bay and Double Bay (Redleaf pool), which opened on 29 November 1941, and Watsons Bay. The original Watsons Bay baths were constructed in 1888, and enlarged by Council in 1895 with a dressing room built in 1898. The Sydney Harbour Trust granted the Council a lease of land 'near the goods wharf' in November 1904 for a public baths. The baths fell into disrepair in 1922 and were

\textsuperscript{179} Memories of Manly between 1903 and the Second World War. Oral History, compiled by residents of Lister Nursing Home, Manly, NSW, n.d. p. 39. The pool was badly damaged by storms in 1947 and eventually condemned and dismantled.

\textsuperscript{180} Sydney Morning Herald 28 February 1930.

\textsuperscript{181} A. Scott op.cit. p.32.
partly demolished in 1923 leaving only the shark proof enclosure. Long associated with the baths Alf Vockler, a veteran of the 1938 ‘Black Sunday’ surf rescue at Bondi held the licence and taught swimming for 28 years at Watsons Bay baths. He conducted life saving classes for mothers and classes and carnivals for deaf children from the New South Wales institute for Deaf and Blind Children at Darlington. He also held the youngest ever swimming championships in Australia - the 14 yards for 3 year olds.

Eventually, bowing to public and media pressure the City Council constructed new baths on the western side of Woolloomooloo Bay, on the foreshores of the Outer Domain. The baths, which took in, the space occupied by what had been known as Farmer’s Baths, a portion of the Fig Tree Baths and part of the water on the northern side of Farmer’s Baths were officially opened by the Lord Mayor, the Hon. Thomas Hughes M.L.C. on 17 October 1908. The total cost of the baths under contracts was approximately £10,000. The elaborate structure is worthy of note.

The main basin is 330 feet long thus giving a course of 110 yards which is most convenient for long distance contests, and for shorter events floating booms are provided. On the eastern platform two large gates, together with fender piles, are provided to allow ferry steamers to berth and discharge visitors during carnivals. Four springboards are provided, together with ample ladders and steps. A large diving tower is provided, consisting of six tiers the topmost being no less than fifty-four feet above the mean sea level. Above the main platforms and for the full length of the baths is a commodious grandstand, capable of accommodating 1,500 to 1,700 spectators. The grandstand is in five tiers with a promenade at the rear.

One of the features of the new baths is the splendid sanitary accommodation, which is of the most modern type. The baths are fitted up for a most elaborate system of electric lighting, for swimming by night and also for night carnivals. Council has been assured by competent judges that the baths are the largest and finest of their kind in Australia and a tribute to the Council’s municipal enterprise.

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182 At 3pm on 6 February 1938, 300 surfers were caught in the receding swirl of three huge waves and swept out. About 80 members of the Bondi Surf Bathers Club were about to commence a race and went to their rescue. Five lives were lost. The Bondi Surf Bathers Club and the lifesaving movement won international renown for the mass rescue. History of Bondi Surf Bathers Life Saving Club 1906-1956. n.d. p. 31: The National Trust of Australia (NSW) Survey of Harbourside & Ocean Pools, op.cit.
183 ibid: A.Scott op.cit. p.32
The baths attracted further glory in January 1924 when it hosted a race between Andrew 'Boy' Charlton and the European swimming champion, Arne Borg from Sweden in front of 10,000 supporters. Charlton beat Borg twice and went on to win a gold medal at the Paris Olympics later than year.

POSTSCRIPT:

Unfortunately, thirty years on, the pool was attracting less acclaim. A 1950 report commissioned by the council described the water in the baths as 'dilute sewage' with levels of effluent 1000 times above the acceptable health standards of the time. In the same year a city council alderman requested the Maritime Services Board to 'clean out the rats at the baths'.

In a Sydney Morning Herald report from 1963 the baths were referred to as 'the most unhygienic swimming hole in the world' thanks largely to the pollution that drifted across to the open sea-water pool from the naval docks in Woolloomooloo Bay. Time had come for an upgrade. An estimated 200 diehards swam their final laps in the Domain baths on New Year's Day 1967 under the banner 'Vale the Old Dom, 1908-1966 - hail the new, 1967. Demolition work began the following day to replace the baths, which had become synonymous with oil slicks and rotting wood - with an enclosed tiled saltwater pool. The pool was re-opened in 1968 as the Andrew 'Boy' Charlton Pool.\(^{185}\)

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CONCLUSION:
This chapter has attempted to give an insight into the type of leisure and recreation enjoyed by earlier generations. The attitudes and conventions, which prevailed in those early days, reflected the British heritage of the settlers. However, the social structure, which emerged in post penal times, has tempered many prejudices and class differences borne of an imported culture and a social system nurtured in a unique background.

Early swimming was enjoyed in the harbour and retained its popularity despite Government Acts to curtail it. Pollution and the shark menace eventually forced the swimmers to use baths but this brought another problem – a shortage of public bathing facilities. A pro-bathing movement was formed which had the support of the newspapers of the day, but little was achieved.

Eventually the Municipalities Acts of 1858 and 1867 empowered Councils to build baths. A great deal of red tape, government bureaucracy and considerable time lapses ensued in some cases, but Sydney got more pools. Seaside municipalities became popular resorts.

From the time of settlement, swimming has formed very much a part of everyday life in Sydney. Indeed, it may have been a ‘leveller’ in a society made up of several levels of ‘class’, as a future Prime Minister enjoyed harbour swimming along with ‘Rex’ and his ‘cokies’. It may also have provided one of the few forms of free leisure in

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186 Baths with paid entrance fees were available, but few could afford the luxury.
those early days before other forms of sporting and recreational events were available
to the general public.

\[\text{187 Some were netted, some timber encased or a combination of timber and net and some excavated from rock.}\]
CHAPTER 2:

SPAS AND SEASIDE RESORTS

‘If one could but go to Brighton!’ observed Mrs. Bennet... ‘A little sea-bathing would set me up for ever’. *Pride and Prejudice*

A BRIEF PRE-HISTORY:

There was much travel within the Greek world before the conquests of Alexander in the fourth century. People travelled from distant cities to take part in games and competitions at centres such as Epidaurus, which could be said to foreshadow the health resort since it centred on Asclepeion (a shrine for the worship of Asclepeios, the god of Medicine) and was thus a place to ‘take a cure’. ¹

In the last two centuries BC, some of the prerequisites for the development of tourism existed in the eastern Mediterranean. Merchants, mercenaries, philosophers, athletes, poets, actors, dancers and musicians moved fairly freely between Pergamum, Antioch, Alexandria, Rhodes and Seleucia. However, the hardship of travel together with continual internal warfare prevented lengthy pleasure trips from becoming an accepted mode of leisure and, in consequence, the great cities developed pleasure resorts on their immediate peripheries. Antioch had Daphne, famous for its springs and its oracle of Apollo, and Alexandria had Canopus on a branch of the Nile. Daphne’s oracle lent it some trace of ‘high moral tone’ but the only *raison d’etre* of Canopus was pleasure... and the pleasure resort became highly developed in a decadent situation. ²

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² ibid.
The Romans also developed a full-scale resort complex on the Campanian littoral on the northern shore of the Bay of Naples, which it is maintained foreshadowed modern Riviera development. However it is necessary to go as far back as the Roman Empire to find a precedent to tourism, properly so called, as it began to develop in the middle of the nineteenth century.

During the greatest period in Roman history travelling was more extensive than it was in Europe up to the nineteenth century...Prosperity, leisure and the quests for pleasure and recreation...gave rise to annual movements of large numbers of people from Rome to the country or to the seaside during the summer. Romans visited temples, shrines, festivals and baths for health or for amusement. The European centres of pilgrimage of the Middle Ages were the forerunners of resort towns, and when the traffic in pilgrims declined, spas and health resorts gradually spread, first through Europe and later to Britain.

THE SPAS OF BRITAIN:

The vogue of taking the water spread in the 17th century in England with spas specifically designed for medical and social needs. The sites of natural springs often developed into centres of social and religious activity and gradually it became accepted that such waters possessed medicinal benefits. However, it was the entrenchment of Roman culture across Europe, which helped to confirm the

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3 ibid.
importance and to spread the custom of bathing in, and drinking spring water. In England, the springs of Buxton and Bath are living reminders of Roman habits.5

In the years following the Restoration, spas were numerous enough for the English well to do to spend the entire summer season sampling their delights. Dominant spas were at Buxton, Harrogate and Scarborough in the north and Bath, Tunbridge and Epsom in the south. Scarborough was the only one situated on the coast but it was to be a full century before changing medical opinion came to find in seawater the medicinal properties, which were previously reserved for spa waters.6

By the turn of the Seventeenth century the ‘spaw’ habit had caught on among all classes. The patronage of the Stuarts and their Queens encouraged the discovery or re-discovery of healing springs up and down the country. Bath, the queen of spas boasted four open-air baths, the hottest at 103°F, as well as chalybeate water to drink.7 Medical confidence in the efficacy of such bathing dates from late in the seventeenth century. Dr. Richard Russell, who published his Dissertation concerning the Use of Sea Water in Diseases of the Glands in 1750 and in so doing turned the attention of the sick from the inland spas to the seaside, began a vogue, which was to create the pattern of the English seaside holiday up to our own time.8

As with Tunbridge Wells, the visits of the Stuart Royalty from Queen Anne of Denmark to Queen Anne of England to Bath had established the city in fashion ‘at the

6 ibid, p.15.
7 Alan Savidge, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Midas Books, 1975, p.41.
8 Lickorish and Kershaw op.cit. p.6: Walvern op.cit. p.16.
head of English Watering Places...without a rival'. But, although a city of some 250 houses, it was no better prepared for the invasion that followed than the wells near Tunbridge had been. At the end of the seventeenth century the lodgings were mean and dirty, the charges outrageous, the sedan chairmen rapacious, the streets unlit and unpaved, infested with beggars and the high roads beset with highwaymen. The baths, said John Wood, the Elder were ‘like so many bear-gardens and modesty entirely shut out of them’.

The English, Harold Walpole remarked ‘were waddling like ducks to the water’.

SEASIDE RESORTS OF BRITAIN:

Seaside resorts replaced the spa town as the fashionable place of recreation in England in the early nineteenth century, adopting the spa town’s regime and fashionable promenade in the process. Medical men were extolling the virtues of seawater. The upper classes wished to escape the middle class invasion of the spa towns and followed royalty to the seaside, beginning with the Prince Regent at Brighton. Thus, a leisured class of aristocrats, gentry and merchants their ranks swelled by lawyers and half-pay officers, supported the nascent holiday industry. They alone could afford the high cost of travel, accommodation and time away from work. The season in most resorts ran from May to October, with a few favoured places attaining the prestige of a winter season. The emphasis lay, ostensibly at least, on cure rather than amusement and pastimes were generally decorous and sedate: bathing in the morning, promenading at lunchtime and in the evening, cards, subscription concerts, novels, botany and geology. Brighton retained some of its raffish reputation almost throughout.

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9 Savidge op.cit. p.59.  
10 ibid. p.88.
the nineteenth century, but most resorts aimed at the patronage of respectable families, and paid the resulting penalty of dullness.¹¹

The reformation of manners in the higher strata of society, with its impact in emulation and social controls on those lower down the scale, confirmed this tendency. The extension of the moral values of the puritanical, dissenting section of the middle classes to achieve great influence on the aristocracy and within the Church of England had far reaching effects on the nation’s social life. Traditional customs and amusements deemed cruel, indecent, immoral or potentially disorderly under the new orthodoxy were suppressed or fell under heavy weight of disapproval. A pall of gloom descended on the English Sunday. The seaside resorts conformed to the new morality, in general; by the 1830s; not only did landowners and tradesmen themselves share the evangelical orthodoxy, but they were also obliged to look to the tastes of their visitors. Even Brighton succumbed, at least on the surface. In many resorts the dominance of health over pleasure, and the preoccupation with morality and ‘rationality’ in entertainment, survived until the 1900s.¹²

However, the hegemony of these middle-class values in the resorts was threatened on two fronts. First, by working-class excursionists, and second, later in the century, by the spread of an increasingly open, secular attitude to leisure activities, which provided a welcome release from the strict controls on behaviour, imposed by ‘respectable’ society at the mid-century. ¹³ Also, the rise of railway travel made the

¹² ibid. p.134.
¹³ ibid.
seaside more widely accessible to a growing middle class. Class differentiated resorts came into existence and the extension of cheap excursion rail travel and holidays with pay eventually opened the resorts to a wide section of the working class.\textsuperscript{14} Being beside the sea, was, until after 1920 the direct aim in recreation, although a survey showed that only one-quarter of visitors to one resort actually entered the water.\textsuperscript{15} Sea bathing as an aid to health was important, so also was the social life in the resorts.

Like the pump-room at the spa, the beach was the focus of the activities of the visitors, and bathing was the activity in which all were interested even if all did not take part.\textsuperscript{16}

Steamboat pleasure excursions also became popular and were introduced in 1815 to the Thames...to carry passengers to London’s nearest watering places, Gravesend and...Margate.\textsuperscript{17} The move to paid leave from work also opened up opportunities for inexpensive holidays such as those organised by Thomas Cook. When Cook began organising excursions to British seaside resorts, he inadvertently paved the way for mass invasions of exclusive resorts by economising holidays for middle-class families and impetuous day-trippers.\textsuperscript{18} Later, camps such as those run by the pioneer of inexpensive holiday camps, W. E. ‘Billy’ Butlin were also effectual in catering for holidays for working class families.

In Blackpool, the sheer pressure of crowd numbers began to reshape its social character and large hotels and associated infrastructure changed the physical focus of

\textsuperscript{14} In Britain legislation enabling paid holidays was passed in 1937. (1936 in France): \textit{Problems in Modern Geography}, Patrick Lavery (ed.) Resorts and Recreation, Chapter 8, p. 171, David and Charles, Vancouver/London, 1971.


\textsuperscript{17} ibid. p.54.

the town. The *Preston Pilot* stated in 1851 'unless the cheap trains are discontinued
Blackpool as a resort for respectable visitors will be ruined'.
And in Brighton -
taking on a plebeian tone, a popular ditty:

> I took the train to Brighton
> I walked beside the sea and 30 thousand Londoners were there along with me.
> We crowded every lodging and we crowded each hotel
> Sniffed the briny for an appetite and dined extremely well.20

Excursionists were frowned upon in most resorts as they sought to enjoy their limited
leisure to the full, arriving early and departing late. They were 'offensive to the resorts
established customers as they cleaved to the holiday traditions of their home towns
being uninhibited in shouting, singing, drinking and dancing and bringing with them
all the trappings of a fair at home, street vendors, showmen and quacks to block the
streets - and they usually came on Sundays'.21 However, their numbers increased as
the century wore on, especially during the great price fall after 1873 and resorts within
easy day-trip travel of a populous industrial area were obliged to find ways of coming
to terms with the excursionists.22

In 1851 the census noted 'seaside resorts have expanded more rapidly than any other
group of English towns and in doing so have overtaken inland spas'.23 Pimlott asserts
'the popularity and eventual decline of the spas in favour of the seaside resort ... was
thus a natural consequence of that of the spas'.24 Seaside resorts

...satisfied not only the craving for remedies for the ills, often imaginary, chronic in any
leisured class and aggravated by the reaction from Puritan austerity, but also the desire for
novelty and change, for new ways of expending wealth and obtaining excitement, characteristic
of an idle society bent chiefly on pleasure in an age of economic expansion. They offered a

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19 Walvin op.cit. p. 38.
22 ibid.
23 ibid. p.43.
24 Pimlott op.cit. p.54.
cure-all for the ills, and a pleasant alternative to the life of the city when the palate for urban life was jaded.\textsuperscript{25}

The popularity of sea resorts remained and to facilitate immersion in the sea, bathing machines were devised,\textsuperscript{26} the first in Scarborough in the 1730s.\textsuperscript{27} It appears that bathing machines were predominately used by ladies. \textit{Splash} magazine points out that while men's bathing could be unfettered and often quite unclothed, women's bathing was attached...to the bathing machine, the shelter that allowed private bathing immune from sunlight (perhaps pernicious) and the surely pernicious impropriety of the body visible.'\textsuperscript{28} However, it has been pointed out that bathing machines were much to blame for ladies' lack of proficiency in swimming. 'Bathing machines where they are used, generally stand in such shallow water that to dive from them (let alone swim) is impossible, as the head would strike against the bottom.'\textsuperscript{29} But the disadvantages of the machines did not outweigh their popularity. Scarborough beach boasted 'twenty six bathing machines from which two women attend each lady who bathes, as guides; and one man every gentleman who requires it.'\textsuperscript{30} It was asserted by a local historian that the beach and sea as much as the spa increasingly became the focus of daily routines...that Scarborough perfectly fitted the rules for bathing established by Dr. Russell.\textsuperscript{31} Encouraged by medical and published advice, this pattern of sea bathing became commonplace. Mornings were reserved for bathing and

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid. p.29.
\textsuperscript{26} Bathing machines were basically a wooden box on wheels, which allowed bathing in privacy on a crowded beach. These 'machines' were drawn by a horse into the sea, where its occupants would change into bathing attire and take the plunge.
\textsuperscript{27} Walvin op cit. p.23. 'The interiors of these machines were often quite lushly and elaborately decorated with carpet, wallpaper and curtains as well as a mirror, dressing table set and folding chair'. Historical Houses Trust of NSW, December 1981, p.4.
\textsuperscript{29} Illustrated Sydney News 1876.
\textsuperscript{30} Walvern op cit. p.18.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
in the process the focus of activity switched to life on the beach.\textsuperscript{32} By mid century so popular had bathing become, The Times of August 1860 commented: ‘Down comes the Excursion Train, with its thousands…all rushing with one impulse to the water’s edge’. Such popularity was not universally approved, and touched a number of Victorian sensitivities. Victorian society emphasised the work ethic, with leisure in a subordinate, and often morally inferior role.\textsuperscript{33} Worse even than the desecration of the Lord’s Day, in the eyes of many Victorians was the state of abandoned nudity so commonplace at English resorts. What French resorts boldly proclaimed in the 1970s, a century before had been a common sight on English beaches.\textsuperscript{34}

The reasons for nude bathing were simple. Until the emergence of mass-produced bathing costumes later in the century, swimming garments were either unheard-of or too expensive, and much too cumbersome.\textsuperscript{35} Swimmers thus took the plunge in the nude.

RESORTS IN SYDNEY:

In the late 1850s the relationship between work and leisure altered markedly with each area becoming more sharply defined, more clearly distinguished from the other. Changes in mental attitude towards pleasure seeking were also evident, as was an increasing need to find relief from workaday routine. These factors and the availability of transport interacted and produced fertile ground for the development of pleasure

\textsuperscript{32} ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} Walvin op.cit. p.69.
\textsuperscript{35} ibid.
resorts - a commercialisation of leisure. The resorts, modelled on English style pleasure gardens offered a wide variety of entertainment and amusement.\(^{36}\)

Unlike England, resorts in Australia have, until the 1960s been virtual suburbs of the large capital cities in which sixty per cent of the population has lived\(^{37}\).

...well-dressed crowds wend their way to parks and gardens...to steamers, trains, trams etc. to convey them to a favourite resort of which is a legion, where the day is spent in enjoyment to the full, and a return home made at dusk.\(^{38}\)

The Cabarita Gardens on the Parramatta River were probably the first commercial attempt to gild the harbour's lily in the early 1800s. The idea of improving a beautiful area, adding certain amenities and then running a ferry to the scene soon caught on. Joubert's Picnic Grounds at Fig Tree was another successful gathering place.\(^{39}\) One of the most popular was Correy's Gardens at Cabarita Point. The *Sydney Morning Herald* carried an advertisement for celebrations of the Prince of Wales's Birthday at Correy's Gardens.

...Visitors will find the above gardens the favourite resort of all pleasure-seekers, and no exertion has been spared to render the establishment one of the very best in the Australian colonies. All who have visited the Pavilion have expressed wonder and surprise at its magnitude and handsome proportions and in the Cuisine Department the world-wide representation is still maintained...the comfort of the Ladies and Little Folks made a speciality, for whom Summer Houses have recently been erected.\(^{40}\)

From the 1800s until the First World War, Correys Pleasure Gardens and Dance Pavilion catered for all the family. For children there were swings, merry-go-rounds and other attractions, while a cricket field and running track provided entertainment for their parents and for members of the many social and sporting clubs which held

\(^{36}\) Although these resorts offered swimming opportunities (albeit in a modest form in the early resorts) other forms of leisure were available, thus other recreational pursuits are briefly included in this chapter.

\(^{37}\) Jeans op.cit. p.2.


\(^{40}\) *Sydney Morning Herald* 31 October 1885: 3, 9 November 1885.
annual picnics at the Gardens which were established on 2.8 hectares of land adjacent to Cabarita Park fronting onto both Hen and Chicken Bay and Kendall Bay. Thomas Obed Correy, the founder of the resort had previously established similar gardens at Botany in about 1874, but after a rent increase moved shrubs and plants to Cabarita where he set up a new complex. After an elaborate dance pavilion was erected in 1887 the popularity of Correys Gardens boomed. Its tallow wood floor was a feature of special pride to the family as was the fernery underneath the raised bandstand. The pavilion was lit, first by kerosene lamps, and later by gas lighting. Families and social groups made the boat trip along the river from the city or Parramatta to Correys where they either relaxed in the gardens with an open-air picnic or danced to a seven-piece string band in the pavilion. Later, when gas had replaced the kerosene lamps, evening dinners and dancing became increasingly popular and many of Sydney's clubs and organisations booked a year in advance to ensure their society's night out at Correys.41

On public holidays and gala occasions special ferries were arranged to bring visitors to Correys Gardens. It was used for weddings and private functions, many of which were held in the family's dining room, enlarged by double doors, which opened into the next room.42

Sunday excursions gained popularity and were commenced as early as 1831 with the ferry steamer Surprise plying to Cabarita and Correys, however, in some quarters it was considered 'a sinful desecration of the Sabbath'. Horne quotes the correspondent

41 Lois Michel, Concord Heritage Society, p.1. (prepared for the 1995 Westfield Display). Correy's son, also named Thomas Obed Correy took over his father's business in 1890, ibid. My thanks to Lois and the Concord Heritage Society for providing this information.
42 ibid. p.2.
in the *Colonist*. ‘These Sunday trips are run by a company of ungodly men who are willing to fill their pockets with the fruit of their own profaneness’. 43

Moral attitudes aside, to further attest to the popularity of these Gardens, two Parramatta River steamships *Pheasant* and *Bronzewing* carried 3,000 excursionists one eight-hour day in the early 1900s. 44 Locomotives also carried excursionists to the picnic grounds.

It was common to see a steam locomotive pulling three car loads crowded, to picnic at that delightfully wooded point at Cabarita or to dance at the famous Correy’s Garden Pavilion where the music was dispensed by Boxall’s String Band. 45

By 1918 leisure patterns had changed from pre-war days, people preferring to venture further afield for their entertainment. In 1918 Correys Gardens was sold up. The property was purchased by British-Australian Lead Manufacturers Pty. Ltd. (BALM) who established a white lead factory on the site, which began production in 1921. BALM was later incorporated into the Dulux group. The Correy home still stands in the grounds. 46

On the other side of the harbour, Manly’s founding father, Henry Gilbert Smith recognised Manly’s potential as a resort or watering place. With his brother, he launched the *Surprise*, the first steamboat to be built in Australia on 31 March 1831.

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46 Michel and Concord Heritage Society op. cit. British-Australian Lead Manufacturers Pty. Ltd (BALM) was incorporated in 1918 and began operations in Concord in 1921. The same year they purchased nearby Strathroy estate and the following year the land between the two blocks was acquired. This was the Homesdale estate that, since 1913 had been occupied by members of the Israelite House of David, a religious sect founded in the United States in 1903 by the owner of the Homesdale land, Benjamin Purnell. At the time of incorporation, they acquired Australasian United Paint Co. Ltd., Port Adelaide, which was probably the oldest paint factory in the Commonwealth, its origin able to be traced back to 1849. At Cabarita, they had the largest and most modern plant of its kind in the Southern
This picture gives some idea of the size of just one single group. It was a picnic given by the Metropolitan Brick Company Ltd. to the Architects, Contractors and Builders of Sydney and Suburbs at Correy's Gardens on 28 April 1883.

Courtesy: Concord Heritage Society.
This group are photographed in front of the main building at Correys Gardens which shows the design on the front of the building.

Courtesy: Concord Heritage Society.
The *Surprise* was advertised as sailing on an excursion to Manly Beach and North Harbour on Sunday 10 July 1831 where passengers would have the opportunity of landing at Manly and remaining for two hours. The fare was five shillings. The idea of enticing picnickers and day visitors was clear.

The opening of Cremorne Gardens resort, named after the famous gardens in London on Easter Monday 24 March 1856 was an indication of how far the colony had developed from its early days when leisure was a luxury even for the elite. It was the forerunner of even more elaborate resorts, which followed. Cremorne Gardens boasted amongst other delights a rifle gallery where gentlemen ‘desirous of indulging in this truly English sport are recommended to bring their own favourite pieces...as the supply in hand may not equal the demand’.

The gardens and their delights were relatively short-lived. After a masked ball in December 1856 proved to be a flop, the gardens deteriorated and patronage of less reputable visitors known as ‘the push’ kept people away. An attempt to redeem the gardens as ‘Cremorne Pic-Nic Gardens’ also failed and in 1891 the owners offered to sell land with water frontages for home sites. The Crown intervened, contesting their right to do so and held ‘that the grant of James Robertson’s 100 feet above high water

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Hemisphere, with facilities and skilled technicians capable of providing a product for any painting purpose. ibid.

47 *Sydney Gazette* 9 July 1831. The profit Smith hoped to make from this venture never eventuated and he ended up suffering a loss. The *Surprise* passed through a succession of owners operating a service across the Derwent between Hobart and Kangaroo Point and later as *Anna Jane*, converted to a schooner trading out of Hobart. She ended her days as a lighter in Melbourne – ‘an ignominious end for Australia’s first steam boat’, John Morcom, *Manly Daily* 10 July 2004.

mark was reserved for the Crown'. The case, (*The Attorney General v Milson and others*) was heard in the Supreme Court of New South Wales and duly reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on the 9th, 11th and 12 June. Sir Julian Solomons, in opening the case for the plaintiff said that ‘the action is one of ejectment and trespass, or what was technically called a writ of intrusion. It was instituted by the Attorney General on behalf of the Crown, or, rather the public, to oust the defendants from possession of a very valuable reserve at Cremorne’. The verdict of the jury, which found for the plaintiff, with damages of forty shillings was delivered on 12 June 1891.

Following the initial success of Cremorne Gardens, Mosman Bay experienced a ‘rediscovery’ in 1860 according to Ancher when a couple of enterprising steamboat proprietors started a service from Circular Quay. Mosman boasted beautiful waterfalls. There was also a pavilion in which band recitals were held. However, the interest of coal mining companies in Cremorne and Mosman drew further attention to the area and eventually the involvement of Parliament, Ministers and their departments, Council and the media. Resident protest and public opinion saved the area from that fate.

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*Sydney Morning Herald* 21-24 March 1856.

50 Ibid. 9,10,11 June 1891: The land was originally a grant to James Robertson in 1833 by Governor Sir Thomas Brisbane in appreciation of his services. Robertson was a watchmaker who looked after the scientific instruments in the Governor’s observatory at Parramatta.

51 The *Sydney Mail* also published the outcome of the case on 20th June 1891 referring to it as an ‘important land case’. When the matter was discussed in the House of Parliament it was stated that one of the members of the ‘syndicate’ was an alderman on St. Leonard’s Council and ‘we should hear nothing of this tomorrow in the *Daily Telegraph* for the chairman of the board of directors of that newspaper was one of the land-grabbers concerned in the matter – Mr. Carey; therefore, it was not likely to be exposed in the *Daily Telegraph*’.

The Clontarf resort which the Balmain New Ferry Company brochure states was opened as far back as 1840 made two claims of note. First, its association with the shooting of the Duke of Edinburgh there on March 12, 1868 and second, the size of its pavilion, which could ‘accommodate 800 visitors at luncheon’. The Balmain New Ferry Company had a vested interest in both the steamer and resort trade having purchased the Clontarf grounds from the Moore Brothers in circa 1906.54

Another favourite picnic resort and pleasure ground was Pearl Bay in Middle Harbour. Named after HMS Pearl, it also boasted a dancing pavilion and numerous other forms of entertainment. It was popular with large picnic parties such as Sunday school outings. During the depression years Pearl Bay was the location of a large camp for the unemployed and their families.

By far the most celebrated of the north shore resorts was Clifton Gardens (Chowder Bay). The Town and Country Journal of 15th January 1876 stated that the name of Chowder Bay came from the picnics given by whaling skippers at which the American dish of chowder was a feature. In The Companion Guide to Sydney, Ruth Park writes that Clifton Gardens was a kind of colonial Blackpool where one went to have fun at the seaside but never entered the water. She suggests the whole area was ‘amusingly like a Victorian watering place’.

Its ghosts are all long-skirted with veils and mushroom hats; moustached papas with rolled up trousers paddling along the little beach; children in sailor suits with buckets and spades, hokey pokey men; German bands and Italian organ grinders.55

This resort boasted an hotel, the ‘Clifton Arms’ reached by a tramway from the wharf, a dancing pavilion and elaborate picnic facilities. It also boasted a bathing machine imported from England in which ‘bathers may enjoy a bath in the sea with perfect security and without fear of sharks’. This particular machine appears to have been specially adapted for the Australian climate. It had an ingenious attachment, a protective, shark-proof frame which was lowered into the water with the swimmer allowing him or her to feel ‘as safe as a plunge bath in his own home’. Such events as the annual Butchers’ Picnic would see ferry loads of holiday makers arrive. Foot racing, dancing, swimming or just drinking beer were indulged in according to taste. Sydney Ferries Limited purchased the hotel, pavilion and pleasure grounds around 1906, changing the name of the dance hall to Dixieland. Amongst other added facilities, they built an elaborate circular swimming pool, which the Daily Telegraph reported.

The baths now being erected for the Sydney Ferries Limited are quite different from those hitherto built in the metropolis. One of the principal improvements to be noted is the marine promenade, which encircles the enclosure. This enclosure is of oval shape and will give a swimming area of about 275 feet by 224 feet. The piles forming the baths are spaced 10 feet apart and the distance between will be protected with 8 gauge specially made wire netting of 2in and 3in mesh. Racing platforms, marble chutes and a diving tower 50 feet high are among the accessories of the enclosure...platforms for bathers will be on a lower level, while the dressing rooms will be situated in the pavilion at the back of the oval, and above them will be an extensive refreshment gallery and grandstand.

An early advertisement by Sydney Ferries stated ‘The huge amphitheatre baths which circle out into Chowder Bay are the largest and most unique swimming baths in the

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57 McLaren op. cit. p.50: Picnics were extremely popular and large organised affairs such as company or union organised picnics attracted large crowds.
58 Daily Telegraph 1 November 1906.
Southern Hemisphere with space to accommodate over 3,000 spectators’. 59 Jack Allport, a well-known diver whose skills were seen in the circular pool at Clifton Gardens, wrote.

Before the First World War the largest ferries, crammed with picnickers, came at weekends. The best swimming baths in Sydney featured ‘mixed bathing, night time bathing, a large dance hall, band recitals by famous visiting bands, balloon ascents, sporting events. etc. 60

Although not a resort, it should be noted that Taronga Park Zoological Gardens became a well-known tourist attraction in the early 1900s. Originally established at Billygoat Swamp in Moore Park now the site of the Sydney Girls’ and Sydney Boys’ High Schools, the Zoo was moved to Ashton Park, Mosman and opened on 7 December, 1916. Despite the fact that Australia was involved in the conflict of the First World War, Sydney-siders thronged to the new zoo, and in its first year of operation 420,000 people - 66% of Sydney’s population visited the zoo. 61

Until 1900 there was little development of the Balmoral area. However, all this changed with the development of the ‘camps’. Some of these ‘camps’ such as the ‘artists’ camp and the ‘gypsy’ camp became quite famous in their time. The artists’ camp numbered among its occupants such well-known artists as Julian Ashton, Arthur Streeton, Tom Roberts and Phil May. Arthur Streeton painted ‘Musgrave Street Wharf’ in 1893 and ‘Sirius Cove’ from Curlew camp, another of the artists’ camps in 1894. 62 Tom Roberts ‘Mosman Bay’ is equally famous.

60 ibid.
Circular Swimming Pool, Picnic Grounds and Pavilion at Clifton Gardens (circa 1906).

Source: Mitchell Library.
Around 1910 a larrikin element made up of the notorious ‘push’ gangs from Woolloomooloo and The Rocks area introduced a period of violence which shattered the serenity of the area. Persistence of their unwelcome behaviour caused the members of the Smugglers camp to offer their services to Mosman Council. The Balmoral Beach Club was formed holding its first meeting on 12 February 1914. The club eventually became the Balmoral Life Saving Club.

In Manly, Henry Gilbert Smith who earlier recognised the value of resort trade set about developing his ‘spec’, purchased in 1853 in the best of British traditions. In a letter to his brother dated 18th May 1856 he wrote ‘the place I like as much as ever and there is no spot to equal it in beauty. It is truly delightful, there is nothing like it that I have seen in the wide, wide world’.

Smith built a pier which was completed and in use by October 1855 and the Pier Hotel completed in December of the same year. Next, Smith set about building baths. He chose the north-west corner of Manly Cove where a stream of fresh water ran into the harbour, so that the baths were supplied with both fresh and seawater. Engineers were invited to contract ‘for the erection of a small steam-engine and to lay down the requisite pipes for supplying the baths now in course of erection at Manly’. The following year an advertisement in the *Sydney Morning Herald* stated that ‘no expense has been spared on the buildings, furnishing of the 12 bath-rooms, fitting of steam engine and boilers, to place these baths on a par with those at the English watering places.’

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63 The correspondence of H. G. Smith, Mitchell Library, Sydney.
64 *Sydney Morning Herald* 17 January, 1857.
Brighton, Manly Beach - Warm and Cold Sea Bathing Establishment
Warm bath 2s. Cold shower 1s.
Vapour or douche 2s. Cold jet de rose 1s.
Hot sheets and towels. 65

These 'perfectly safe, secret and commodious baths' were advertised in the Empire as
'fitted up with every requisite, and in a style of extraordinary luxury...with a view to
their use by invalids'. 66 An advertisement for the Pier Hotel in September 1859
mentioned that the Brighton Baths were 'now fitted up with patent hip, slipper, foot,
vapour and douche baths, admitted to be equal in character to any in England'. 67

The baths had a somewhat chequered existence. In May 1859 these 'very excellent
baths' were operated by a Mr. Guest. Mrs. Elizabeth Cadman kept the baths in 1860-
61 until her death. The Bathing House was advertised 'to let' in October 1862 and re-
opened under the supervision of Mr. and Mrs. James Melville. 68 By 1864 Manly
school teacher, Henry B. Lee and his wife were conducting the baths 69 and by the end
of 1866 Mrs. Ellen Harrison was the supervisor of the (now ladies) baths and
adjoining boarding facilities offering 'all the comforts of home at two guineas per
week'. 70 Sands directories show that Mrs. Harrison was still there in 1873. In his
Reminiscences of Manly, George Aurousseau wrote

there were no swimming baths for several years except a rough one for ladies at the western
end of the Esplanade where a Mrs. Harrison lived in a long stone house, which she kept as an
accommodation house and looked after the ladies baths. The Manly Art Gallery is built on that
site...there was a small place partly enclosed with stone blocks where we boys used to
swim...boys and girls would get together in the afternoons, form sides and play games...or go
fishing or swimming either in the lagoon or harbour beach...surfing and sun baking were not
then in vogue...there were no bowling or surfing clubs...but cricket was popular. 71

65 ibid. 8 November 1858.
66 Empire 25 May 1859.
67 Sydney Morning Herald 10 September 1859.
68 ibid. 14 November 1862.
69 ibid. 3 December 1864.
70 ibid. 8 December 1866.
Smith also set about building a ‘pleasure garden’ in the style of the Vauxhall Gardens in London. Writing again to his brother he stated ‘the hotel is really a grand affair. Adjoining it we have quite a Vauxhall garden. The tower and camera (obscura) are all but finished … a building for warm baths is now in progress’.

Henry Gilbert Smith returned to England with his three small children upon the death of his wife Anne, at Fairlight on 7 April 1866, leaving his attorney to attend to his New South Wales estates. His Manly properties were offered for sale, the baths being advertised in February 1871. No buyer was found for the baths, which were situated on a public reserve. This came to light upon Council’s application to the Minister for Lands, Mr. Farnell, to solicit Government aid to construct two baths at Manly, one for ladies and the other for gentlemen. The Council deemed the baths a necessity as Alderman Austin pointed out ‘baths were essential for public safety in consequence of the attractions about the place for bathing, many persons had gone into the water, and several, in fact about two a season, so far, had unfortunately been drowned’. Mr. Farnell replied that ‘there would be no objection to dedicating a portion of the reserve for making public bathing places. As to the building already on the reserve, inquiries should be made as to whether the person erecting it had acquired any rights in regard to it’. It transpired that Henry Gilbert Smith owned and leased out the baths, which he had erected on a public reserve without consulting the authorities.

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72 The correspondence of H.G. Smith, Mitchell Library, Sydney. Letter dated 14th October, 1856. Smith’s model for development was probably based on the fashionable English watering place Brighton. (which was his intended name for Manly). The Vauxhall Gardens and the Ranelagh Gardens in London were known as ‘those two wonders of London’ ‘where one could dine, listen to music…dance, sometimes masked, sometimes not and above all partake of that favourite eighteenth century sport of sauntering to ogle the girls’. J.H. Plumb in The Emergence of Leisure, M.R. Marrus (ed.) Harper and Row, New York, 1974, p. 33.
Manly was also touted as a health resort. *The New South Wales Medical Gazette* of May 1873 recommended the 'locality's sanitary importance and advantages as a convalescent station'; *The Illustrated Guide to Sydney* in 1882 stated 'to Manly, the invalid comes to recover the strength which inland heat has lessened' and country newspapers between March and May 1918 carried an article by Manly Councillor, Dr. Richard Arthur M.L.A. extolling the virtues of Manly, - 'A pearl amongst pearls, as a winter and health resort'.

The perceived need to emulate the English resort of Brighton persisted and in 1910 there was a move to erect a huge pier on the ocean front at Manly similar to the Brighton Pier in England. The prospectus of the Manly Palace Pier Coy. Limited was issued (capital £100,000) and the subscription list was opened on Monday 29 August, 1910, and was advertised to close 14 days from that date. It was an adventurous scheme. The length of the structure, was to be 900ft by 36ft. wide and at the seaward end the area of the pier head, about 300ft long by 126ft wide. On the ocean frontage of the pier head an area of 126ft by 80ft was to be set apart for a grand bandstand, surrounded with seating accommodation. The promoter of the scheme was a Mr. A. J. Metcalfe of 76 Pitt Street, Sydney (who held the concession) Mr. S. V. Rowe was the appointed architect, while construction was to be in the hands of Messrs. J. and A. Mayo whose Company had built 15 similar piers in England. The pier and pavilion

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73 *Sydney Morning Herald* 12 January 1878.
were thus designed on the lines of promenade piers erected by them at various seaside resorts in England.\textsuperscript{75}

The pier designed for Manly will resist the most severe gale that is ever likely to visit the Australian coast...if it is found advisable a landing stage at the pier head will be constructed to enable pleasure steamers to call in fine weather, while another idea which is to be carried into effect is the addition of a sloping launching place from the pier from which a lifeboat will be able to be sent off at a moment's notice. This will probably take away a lot of work from the life-saving brigade of the Surf Club, but all will agree such a provision is a splendid one. \textsuperscript{76}

The scheme did not eventuate, although the promoters pressed their suit before several Councils.\textsuperscript{77} At a referendum on the subject in 1922, a majority of 300 declared themselves not in favour of the scheme. The plan was finally abandoned after suggestions that it might neither be a paying proposition nor survive storm conditions.

\textit{It is a bold project, with many pros and cons, but our Civic Fathers will be guided by the will of the people, and the 'hasten slowly' policy may not have been amiss}. \textsuperscript{78}

Pleasure resorts were also to be found in the eastern and southern suburbs. A \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} in 1880 carried various advertisements for New Year's Day celebrations. Steamers \textit{Swansea}, \textit{Phantom} and \textit{Golden Rose} carried patrons to Watson's Bay for dancing and other sports. The \textit{Fairlight}, \textit{Emu} and \textit{Mystery} sailed to other pleasure venues. Dancing was to be enjoyed at Manly, and Botany Tea Gardens whilst the Royal Sydney Swimming Club advertised 'Bathing, Swimming, Swimming, Swimming at Robinson's Baths, Domain where a match for Captaincy and Vice-Captaincy' would be held. 'High Tide at 12\textsuperscript{79}.

\textsuperscript{75} Official Jubilee Souvenir of Manly to Commemorate the 50\textsuperscript{th} Anniversary of Manly Council 1877-1927, published by authority of the Council of the Municipality of Manly by the \textit{Manly Daily}, Manly, p.39.
\textsuperscript{76} ibid.
\textsuperscript{77} Letters to Council re lease of the site to erect a pier, Manly Council Minute Books 15 March 1910; 26 July 1910; Council had cautiously stated that it 'would welcome a pier similar to those skirting the beaches of the continent and Europe...providing plans for such pier and buildings and the character of the entertainment to be furnished met with it's approval'. ibid.
\textsuperscript{78} Official Jubilee Souvenir of Manly to commemorate Council's 50\textsuperscript{th} Anniversary, p.39.
At Botany there was a zoological garden and the Sir Joseph Banks Hotel and pleasure gardens where strict rules were to be obeyed when dancing.

No two gentlemen will be allowed to dance together.
No two ladies will be allowed to dance together.
Any person creating a disturbance of any kind will immediately be expelled, and handed over to the police. 80

Despite such restrictions, dancing was very popular and classes were held in Sydney where ‘women especially could learn the finer arts of dancing’. The Dancing Academy, Nithsdale that taught all the latest in dances advertised one called ‘La National’ as ‘the elegant and graceful dance, being a combination of the Minuet and Valse, now the rage in aristocratic circles of England’. 81

Further south, Gunnamatta Bay and Audley National Park were favourite picnic grounds. Noelene Elder recalls taking the train from Central Railway Station to both these venues for well-organised picnics with bay or river swimming replacing the Harbour enclosures. 82 And ‘an early promise of development of Yowie Bay into a busy watering place was nipped in the bud by the sudden appearance of the sirens of the surf on our beaches’. 83

At Tamarama, formerly known as Dixon Bay was Wonderland City, the brainchild of entrepreneur William Anderson. A reporter for The Theatre magazine called it the Coney Island of Australia.

Wonderland City has five miles of pathways and at every turn are lakes and fountains. In all there are no less than fifty entertainments including The King’s Theatre, capable of seating...
800...at this theatre, a ladies’ orchestra - the only one in Australia - plays under the baton of George Gardiner. Under the theatre is the aquarium and waxworks. In one corner of the ground is a large switchback railway and an American shooting gallery with moving figures. A special feature is an open-air roller skating rink...then there is a maze and an up to date double decker riding gallery where young and old may ride the fiery untamed wooden steeds. For the little ones there is the Palace of Illusions, the electric fish pond, the fun factory, dogs and monkeys, the haunted swing and rides on 'Alice' the elephant. In the engine room there are two huge boilers, 60 and 80 hp and the engines 160 hp. There is sufficient power to light up the whole of Bondi.86

The Evening News also listed its main attractions stating that ‘on Saturday night the skating rink was patronised by thousands of the lovers of rollers and these devotees were given several exhibitions of fancy skating by experts’.85

Wonderland may have been a casualty of the relaxation of daylight bathing restrictions. It closed down in 1905 after pressure from local surf bathers who periodically removed sections of fencing which prevented unpaid access.86

Beachside aquariums became popular in the 1880s and 1890s. Like Coogee, Bondi and Tamarama in the eastern suburbs, Manly also had public aquaria. Manly Aquarium opened in December 1885 and contained as well as the usual display of a seal cavern and fish tanks, a roller coaster and water slides.87 However, competition forced the proprietors to close the aquarium part of the operation and turn the large tanks into salt-water baths. Pumping machinery was installed in July 1889.88 In January 1890 the privately owned baths were opened with a display by ‘the charming and graceful Miss Nina Beckford who would dive through space 45 feet into the water. Ladies and gentlemen’s swimming races would also be held’.89

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84 The Theatre 1 December 1904 p.10: George Blackmore Philip, Sixty Years Recollections of Swimming in the Eastern Suburbs, George B. Philip & Son, Pitt St. Sydney, 1940, mentions Anderson who ‘gave us a matinee at the Criterion Theatre from which we raised considerably over a hundred pounds’, p.46: Dowd and Foster, op.cit. p.162.
85 Evening News 14 October 1907.
86 G.B. Philip op.cit. p.10.
88 Daily Telegraph 22 July 1889.
89 Sydney Morning Herald 26 April 1890: A Herald advertisement for entertainment at the Natatorium in Pitt Street carried an article on Nina Beckford (now aged 18) who at age 15 dived from the
Coogee Palace Aquarium, which opened on 23 December 1887, was an example of the splendour and extravagance of some aquaria. 'The magnificent dome, which is no less than 55 feet in diameter and 55 feet high is of octagon shape, decorated with radiating blue, enriched with gold and silver stars with the rising sun and moon'. Advertised as the leading pleasure resort of Sydney, at the aquarium as well, were swimming baths 'with saltwater from the deep continually flowing through', performing seals and a gigantic string band.90

The Coogee Bay Hotel (now heritage listed) was another popular pleasure spot advertising a promenade band for the pleasure of its patrons.91 And the Bondi aquarium provided a novelty amusement for Boxing Day 1889 - a 'Balloon ascent and parachute jump - Should the Aeronaut go to sea a handsome reward will be given to the boat's crew that picks up the Aeronaut and Balloon'.92

Coogee was also earmarked for a pier proposed as early as 1887. This was to be a grand structure extending 900 feet from the sea wall with shops, a theatre seating 1400, a restaurant seating 400 a band rotunda and a 'ball-room where 300 couples can dance and 200 can look on from a balcony, and which can also be used as a concert hall seating 1000 people'.93

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90 Hammersmith Bridge into the Thames a distance of 60-70 feet. She was also known for her life-saving activities, Sydney Morning Herald 1 March 1890.

91 Ibid. 24 November 1888, p. 2.

92 Ibid. 1 January 1889, p.2.

93 Ibid. 25 December 1889. p.2.

94 Prospectus No. 5 issued by Coogee Ocean Pier Company Limited, Sydney, August 1924.
The prospectus stated there were no engineering difficulties with the erection of such a structure and it 'could be guaranteed to weather successfully all storms to which it is likely to be exposed'.\textsuperscript{94} The Coogee Ocean Pier Company started work on the project in 1924; large crowds gathering to watch the first pile being driven on 24 July that year. The proceedings were broadcast by Sydney radio stations 2KY and 2BL. Station 2BL at that time was located at Coogee. The gala opening of the pier, which cost £70,000 took place on 24 July 1928. This was followed by an even grander ceremony on 16 November 1929 for the opening of the shark proof net.\textsuperscript{95} The plan for the net chosen from 300 schemes was the work of the manager of Coogee surf sheds, Mr. Frank O'Grady. The enclosed area was approximately 600 feet by 470 feet, and was completed at a capital cost of £6,750. Cables for the net were especially made to order in England of rust resisting steel.\textsuperscript{96} Admission to the enclosure, which was located on the south side of the pier to be 1d.\textsuperscript{97} The official opening by Mayor Alderman J.T. Jennings, coincided with a 'Come-to-Coogee' Week inaugurated by the Coogee Advancement League. A procession exceeding a mile in length, paraded before a crowd of 135,000 spectators. The enclosure was declared open in dramatic fashion with the exploding of a bomb, which was the signal for the dropping of a starting rope, and some 10,000 surfers charged into the water 'and flung defiance at the tiger of the

\textsuperscript{94} Prospectus No. 1 issued by Coogee Ocean Pier Company Limited. Sydney, August 1924.
\textsuperscript{96} Picturesque Coogee, 'The Steel Safety Net', Prepared and distributed by the Coogee Randwick Advancement League, 1936, p.1. 'The net is placed in position on 1st October each year. During winter months it is taken up, carefully overhauled and repaired or renewed as required'. The net was usually replaced every 2-3 years.
\textsuperscript{97} Unnamed newspaper in newspaper cutting book, Randwick Council Library, n.d: As early as 1922 an entry fee to the enclosure drew criticism. In a leader headed 'Randwick Rules the Waves'. The Sun newspaper somewhat facetiously stated that Randwick Council was apparently considering annexing the Pacific Ocean or that part of the Pacific adjoining Coogee. The editor commended the Council on its foresight but condemned it for considering an entry fee – 'The proposal to erect a toll bar upon a national playground is so preposterous as to excite wonder at the fact that the Council gave it serious consideration' The Sun 7 September 1922.
sea’. At night the enclosure was bathed in light and night surfing, ‘a joy hitherto only
dreamt of, was inaugurated for the first time in any part of the world’. The
inauguration attracted another huge crowd estimated at 100,000 which was entertained
by an orchestral concern and a parade of bathing beauties, clad in most elaborate
costumes. 98

But the pier’s days were numbered. After the initial burst of enthusiasm, crowds
dwindled and the claim that ‘no storms will affect it’ proved untrue. The pier fell into
a state of disrepair and Council was forced to act. The Randwick Council Finance
Committee at their meeting on 16 January 1931 suggested in items 2-6

- That a demand for the rent due be made on the Coogee Ocean Pier Company Limited in
  accordance with the terms of the Lease.
- That legal notice be served upon the Coogee Ocean Pier Company Ltd in accordance with the non-
  fulfilment of the conditions laid down concerning the expenditure of £15,000 upon the extension of
  the Pier.
- That legal notice be served upon the Coogee Ocean Pier Company Ltd to fully complete the
  construction of the Pier in accordance with the terms of the Lease.
- That the Lands Department be advised of the action taken by the Council re the Coogee Ocean Pier
- That the Coogee Ocean Pier Company Ltd be informed that the Council cannot see its way clear to
  accede to its request for a reduction in the Annual rental.

This was followed by the Surf Shed Manager’s Report of 12 May 1932 stating -
‘Acting on your instructions at 10.30 a.m. on Tuesday the 10th instant, I took
possession of the Coogee Ocean Pier for the Randwick Council. 99

A Special Committee was then appointed to confer with the Liquidator of The Coogee
Ocean Pier Company. At a meeting on 24 May 1932 terms and conditions were
discussed and agreed upon. These included ‘that the Council agree to the cancellation

98 The Sun 3 April 1934 reporting on a Committee finding into beach safety and noting that the net at
Coogee had cost Randwick Council £6,750 and an annual upkeep of £450. W.B. Lynch and F.A.
Larcombe, Randwick 1859-1959: Randwick Municipal Council, Oswald Ziegler Publications, Sydney
1959.
of the existing Leases, that is, the Lease from the Crown to the Council and from the Council to *The Coogee Ocean Pier Company Ltd* with the view of obtaining fresh Leases in each case. The Lease from the Council to the Pier Company to provide inter alia –

- That no more building is to be required to be erected;
- The rental of £100 per annum to stand;
- The Lease to be for the unexpired portion of the present Lease;
- The Liquidator and Company to be released from all claims from rent to date, the amount owing to be taken from the deposit of £600 held by the Council and the balance to be retained by the Council;
- The Liquidator to be allowed to endeavour to sell the new Lease, the time granted to be six (6) months from the date of the tentative consent of the Minister.
- The new Lease to provide that the Pier is to be put in order in accordance within the requirements of the Public Works Department’s Engineer'.

Council now had Permissive Occupancy of the Pier and invited offers for leasing from 19 December 1932 to 30 April, 1933 – rental to be paid in advance and entrance to the pier to be free.100 Apparently these arrangements were not extendable for a further period. The Minutes of the Council meeting of 22 August 1933 were blunt

> that the Council reject the offer made by the Lands Department to lease the Pier for a period of twenty eight years at approximately £120 per annum and that Council take action to have the Pier demolished as soon as convenient in view of the liability which may be incurred together with the fact that it is an eye-sore and undesirable so far as the residents of Coogee are concerned and does not help in any way to progress this particular part. 101

It was then moved that the matter be placed before the Minister giving the reasons why the pier should be demolished and removed.102 Tenders were then called for its demolition and removal.103 Eight were received ranging from £68.10.0 to £1,450.00.

It was resolved by Council to accept the offer of E.A. Marr at £905.0.0.104

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100 Randwick City Council Minutes 14 November 1932.
101 ibid. 22 August 1933.
102 ibid.
103 *Sydney Morning Herald* 23 September 1933 ‘Coogee Ocean Pier – tenders are invited 3rd October 1933 for the purchase, demolition and removal of the Coogee Ocean pier’. The same advertisement appeared again in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Sun* on 4 November 1933.
Coogee Beach looking north-east – shows Coogee pier as well as Giles Baths and Gordon Bay (also known as Thompson’s Bay)

Source: Beautiful Coogee, Coogee Advancement League, Coogee, September 1929.
Demolition of the pier superstructure commenced in 1933. In 1934 the *Sydney Harbour Trust Officers’ Journal* carried a lengthy article on the demolition of Coogee Pier and the extraction of the iron piles, stating that the operation attracted large crowds of onlookers.105 Removal of the pier affected the shark net, which was soon put back in service. The net, which required regular inspections and repairs to damage caused by action of the sea required expenditure of £16,395 from 1929 to 1945, whilst it produced a revenue from admission charges amounting to £21,733. It was taken down during the Second World War.106 and never re-erected or replaced. However, the reasons behind its history and eventual removal are worth noting. The Council Parks Committee Report of 26 August 1942 stated that the dressing sheds at Coogee Beach ‘will have limited opening days – weekends and public holidays during months of March, October and November and all days during the months of December to February’, which, in turn, would have had an effect on numbers using the netted beach.

It is further recommended thereafter that the Sheds be closed for the winter as soon as the necessary maintenance has been carried out and that the Public be notified that this is due to War conditions and labour shortage. Consideration was given to the advisability of acquiring a Net for the current season and it is recommended that in view of certain work carried out by then Military authorities that no action be taken to acquire a Net for this season.107

The operation of both the pier and the shark net had been far from plain sailing for the Council. *The World* newspaper noted on 10 February 1932 under the heading ‘Government asks Randwick for ‘shore rent’- adding that ‘Council has refused to pay £100.00 a year foreshore rental demanded by the Minister for Lands (Mr. Tully) for the use of the area occupied by the shark net. The Minister has instructed the Crown

101 Randwick City Council Minutes 14 November 1933.
Solicitor to take necessary steps to compel payment. It was further stated that 'if the Government wins in the Courts a continued refusal of payment will mean the installation of a receiver to take charge of the Council's receipts for bathing'.

Randwick Council Minutes from 1931 to 1943 contain numerous references to the shark net. The Report of the Finance Committee of 7 April 1931 recommended 'that the Council accept the permissive occupancy of the land enclosed by the Shark Proof Net at Coogee at a rental of £100 per annum'. However, the Council Minutes of the same date resolved 'that Alderman Dunningham interview the Minister for Lands regarding the matter'. The May 19th 1931 Minutes note that correspondence was sent to the Minister for Lands re rate of rental to be paid and the Minutes of 11 August 1931 state that this Council declines to pay a fine of £100 per annum to the Minister for Lands, Mr. Tully, for providing protection for the Public against Sharks at Coogee Beach, considering such demand for payment an unjust imposition on the Council and the general Public and considers that instead, the Council should receive a subsidy of £100 per annum from the Government.

At the same meeting it was 'carried' 'that the Mayor proceed immediately with the work of erecting the Net (for the coming swimming season) at Coogee and the Tender of Messrs. Clarke & Sons be accepted...that as the Council is responsible for the cost of erection, maintenance and working expenses of the Net a strong protest be made against the requisition of the Lands Department, that approval of the Minister be obtained regarding the charges made for admission'. Further correspondence

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107 Randwick City Council Minutes 1 September 1942.
108 The World 10 February 1932. (cited in newspaper cutting book, Randwick City Council Library)
109 Report of the Finance committee, Randwick City Council, 7 April 1931, item 5: As no reference to a permissive occupancy fee appears in the Minutes prior to this entry, it can only be assumed that the Lands Department be latently decided that some additional revenue might flow into the State coffers courtesy of Randwick Council.
110 Minutes of Regular Meeting, Randwick City Council, 11 August 1931.
111 ibid.
suggests that the matter was not settled in August 1931 as correspondence was again sent to the Minister for Lands 're rental for a Permissive Occupancy for Shark-proof enclosure at Coogee'. However, Minutes of 27 January 1932 note receipt of 'a letter from the Department of Lands intimating that the Council’s permissive occupancy of the Enclosure of the Coogee Shark Proof Fence was cancelled'. Although the Minutes do not note an agreement, one must have occurred and Council succumbed to the rental, as the Minutes of 23 August 1932 state 'that the Mayor be authorised to accept under Seal the permissive occupancy of the Shark Proof Enclosure on Coogee Bay'. However, the net's days were coming to a close. On 6 January 1942 the Finance Committee recommended 'that the Council make representations to the Lands Department for a reduction of rentals on Coogee Tennis Courts, Shark-proof Enclosure and other areas affected by reason of curtailment of rights and losses due to war conditions'. This was accepted at the General Meeting of the same date and at the Meeting of 5 January 1943 'it was resolved that the tender submitted by Ku-ring-gai Chase Trust (to remove the netting) be accepted, conditional upon them taking the whole of the net from the Beach'. Mosman Council had submitted a tender 1d per foot for 1,000 feet. Ku-ring-gai £5.0.0 for the whole.

The net's fate was finally sealed at the Council meeting of 15 September 1942. A report to Council from Mr. T. Coughlan, the Surf Sheds' Overseer stated

since the Defence Department no longer considers the Coogee Shark Net part of the defence scheme for Coogee, I would strongly advise that the old net still on the wires be removed. My reason is, the suspension stays between the main cables and the net carrying cable are beginning to break. They are rusted where they are clove hitched to the net carrier. A moderate sea broke some of them last week. If the net cannot be removed the Defence Department will have to supply sufficient 1” or 1 1/8” flexible wire rope to renew the strands, otherwise the net and cable will be at the bottom of the bay after the first few good seas, and the cost of getting it out again would not be small. I would also suggest that the northern pile set be briddled on to the anchor cables. Without a net there is no weight on these cables and they can be made to

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112 Randwick City Council Minutes 25 August 1931.
serve a useful purpose holding the head of the pile set and thus prevent it coming shorewards any more.113

Interestingly, the *Daily Telegraph* of 24 November 1942 carried an article stating that 'the first Sunday Coogee surfers are without the protection of a shark net, a shark chased 200 bathers out of the surf. Coogee has had a shark net for nearly 10 years but last Monday workmen began removing the net due to lack of metal to repair or replace -- probably due to the war'.

The pier might have gone but Coogee didn't lack entertainment. *The Evening News* of October 1907 advised visitors to Coogee of a new attraction in the 'Figure Eight', a variation on the switchback railway with one or two thrills peculiarly its own.

It is a railway line built in four stories in the 'form of a figure eight'. The passenger gets into the car and is pulled up an incline by an endless chain. At the summit the car starts on its own initiative, running along the railway and twisting round corners until it reaches ground level again...it is well lighted by electricity and at night should prove particularly attractive.114

Plans were also afoot for a pier at Balmoral. On 16 August 1926 *The Daily* (Mosman) published the Town Clerk's report on a proposed pier for Balmoral Beach.

The plan indicates that the pier will be built from Rocky Point, the projecting feature dividing Edwards and Balmoral beaches and running north-easterly to the northern point of Edwards beach. The intervening way between the pier head and northern point of Edwards beach is shown to be enclosed. This will have the effect of rendering the whole of the waterway between the pier from both points to the beach, shark proof.

Not planned to be as elaborate as the Coogee Pier, Balmoral pier was to have a dance hall, restaurant, four shops, bandstand, baths, wharfs for ferries and small craft, protection against wind and weather and lavatory accommodation.115 Public opinion however, was not in favour of the proposal and *The Daily* (Mosman) called upon the

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111 ibid.15 September 1942.
114 *Evening News* 14 October 1907.
115 *The Daily* (Mosman) 27 August, 1926.
public to express their opinions ‘in no uncertain way’ and produced one of its rare editorials in which it stated.

Mosman Council is considering a proposal to convert one of our most beautiful spots into an eyesore. The charming little headland with its silver sand on either side it is proposed to blast and desecrate and erect a pier with shops and other abominations...Hands off Balmoral...Petitions are available at The Daily office for those who wish to register their disapproval of what would be one of the greatest acts of vandalism ever perpetrated on the foreshores of the harbour.¹¹⁶

Public opinion won the day and The Daily (Mosman) of 16 September, 1926 reported

‘At the last meeting of Mosman Council, after a long report by a special committee it was decided not to entertain the proposals to erect a pier at Edwards beach as submitted by the syndicate’.

Finally, Fairyland Gardens between Chatswood and Ryde on the banks of the Lane Cove River was once part of the field of Mars common which was partially sold off by the government to finance the Iron Cove and Gladesville bridges. The Swan family purchased 17 acres for £141.00 in 1896 and, using Chinese labour, developed a market garden growing strawberries and water melons, which they sold to passing picnickers.¹¹⁷ This soon developed to afternoon teas of strawberries and cream being offered. A jetty was built in 1900 and by 1905 the area had acquired a name ‘The Rest’. Between 1905 and 1910 the market gardens were phased out and ‘The Rest’ became Swan’s Picnic Grounds with the more imaginative name of Fairyland Tea Gardens evolving about 1914. Later it became Fairyland Pleasure Gardens but was generally known as just ‘Fairyland’ The Swans developed the area as a picnic ground equipping it with a razzle-dazzle, flying fox and other forms of entertainment. A dance

¹¹⁶ ibid. 8 September 1926.
¹¹⁷ The land was officially known as portions. Portions 385 and 386 became Fairyland Pleasure Grounds, the adjoining portions 384 and 387 were also purchased by members of the Swan family. Portions 384 and 387 were never considered part of Fairyland even though entry to the access road from Delhi Road was on Portion 387. George Redding, A History of North Ryde 1850-1950, North Ryde
hall was built about 1930. As noted earlier, in the 1930s the community in general

disapproved of dancing on Sundays but at Fairyland, isolated from the public gaze,
dancing on Sunday afternoons became the craze. Also, about this time, a netted area
was built for swimming on the river where there was a small sandy beach.\footnote{Sharks were known to be in the river. Redding op. cit. p.14: David B. Hunter 'The Lane Cove River', Mid-Pacific Magazine, Vol. X111, No. 5, May 1917 states 'It is a sad truth that all these beautiful
coves, that look so calm and peaceful, are death traps. Sharks abound in this river, and although as a boy
I have swum there often and come out whole, it is one of the most 'sharky' places the harbour
possesses': Northern District Times, 11 July 1990.}
The grounds were used by Sunday School groups, Clubs, Lodges and Companies for their
annual ‘get together’. Firms like Gartrell White brought many hundreds of employees
over the years, reserving the entire grounds for the day.\footnote{Public School Ex-Pupils History Group, p.14, in Swan Family Papers: Supplement to the New South
Wales Government Gazette No. 107, Saturday 15 February, 1896, No. 578, Saturday 25 July, 1896.}
The area was served by several small ferries of the Upper Lane Cove Ferry Company which connected at Fig
Tree with the bigger ‘Lady’ class boats. These small craft then worked their way up the
shallow and winding Lane Cove River often grounding on mud along the way. Silting
of the river was a constant problem and in 1913 the Company complained that ‘it is
only at high tide that the launches can get above Swan’s picnic grounds’. The ferries
plied to Fairyland between 1908 and 1918. Launches were still running from Fig Tree
to all wharves as far as Killara in 1923 but Fairyland had begun using its own boats
and could run regular services when others were discontinued due to silting.
Fairyland’s boats were the \textit{Escort} and the \textit{Twilight}, both shallow draft single-deckers.

Parties also came to Fairyland by car; however, parking was limited to 120 cars when
the ground was dry. (the grounds were prone to flooding). The reliance on the river
became significant after 1938 when the Lane Cove National Park was formed and
incorporated much of the orchard area above Fuller’s Bridge. A weir completed in that year blocked access to the upper river by boat and in 1939 the Epping Road Bridge prevented larger boats from approaching Fairyland.\footnote{ibid. Lane Cove Council had requested the Government to construct the weir as early as 9 July, 1900, plan of the proposed weir - Swan Family Papers. n.d.}

**THE ROLE OF THE FERRIES:**

In the era preceding the use of the motor car, excursions by ferry to popular picnic and entertainment resorts were a familiar part of life to Sydney-siders. The development of urban estates and entertainment resorts and the provision of a ferry service to them were interdependent. Thus water transport played a vital and significant role in the social as well as the economic development of a large part of the Sydney area.

By the turn of the century, when the tramways (and to a lesser extent, the railways) had started to show their effect on the shape of Sydney, the ferry services had already made possible suburban settlement in areas such as North Sydney, Mosman, Manly, Watson’s Bay, Balmain and Hunter’s Hill. The water link to Parramatta established in the early days of settlement remained until 1928 for passengers and until 1941 for cargo in spite of being rivalled by the railway since 1855.\footnote{ibid. Gartrell White was a large bread supply company. Swan Family Papers – Fairyland, City of Ryde Council Library, Local Studies Collection.} North shore areas from Lane Cove to Mosman remained totally dependent on the ferries and punts for communication with Sydney until the Harbour Bridge opened in 1932.\footnote{Rivercats provide the water-link today.} A statement in the 32nd Report of The Sydney Harbour Trust Commissioners for the year ending 30 June 1932 summed up the fate of one ferry service.

\footnote{ibid p.17.}
For many years upwards of 40,000,000 people have annually crossed the harbour by ferry, the majority being residents of the suburbs on the northern side who used the Milson's Point Service. With the construction of the bridge and the diversion of the railway service from Milson's Point across the bridge to Wynyard station that ferry service was no longer required and it officially ceased at midnight on 19 March 1932.\textsuperscript{124}

Early steamers were used as tenders, tugs, workboats and cargo lighters when not pressed into use as excursion ferries. Many were only part time ferries. They were essentially tugs, used to tow sailing ships in and out of the port through the week and cutting in on the growing Manly tourist trade at weekends and on public holidays. Frequently, if a sailing ship was sighted through the Heads, the Manly 'ferry' would divert from its route taking the load of passengers with it to race out to sea and get the tow into port before a rival tug arrived.\textsuperscript{125}

Ferries could also be hired to follow yacht or rowing races or for the moonlight concerts on the harbour, popular around the turn of the century. Excursion ferries however, were often overcrowded and thus dangerous and usually endeavoured to land their passengers at Circular Quay before 7 pm.

Accommodation on early vessels consisted of wooden seats on the poop deck with a removable awning for protection from the weather, and perhaps one cramped cabin below decks. Later vessels were handsomely fitted out. Both Brighton and Fairlight carried a bar, and Brighton's saloons were panelled and carpeted with velvet-covered lounges, gilt-framed mirrors, stained glass panels, silk curtains and moulded ceilings.

\textsuperscript{124} The Sydney Harbour Trust Commissioners, 32\textsuperscript{nd} Report for year ending 30 June 1932. The Sydney Harbour Trust Commissioners compiled the Reports until 1935 after which the Maritime Services Board provided the Reports.
and cornices. Musicians, usually a pianist and a violinist and sometimes adding a banjo and a saxophonist, provided entertainment on the ferries and a piano accordionist who ‘traversed the length of the deck even penetrating the sacred portals of the ladies’ cabin at one end of the ferry’. A colleague shaking a collection box as he walked around the decks provided percussion.

Sydney’s ferries reached their peak patronage, 47 million in 1927. However, patronage was subject to constraints such as the size and speed of the ferries and the population of the areas they could serve, which was limited to harbourside localities and their immediate hinterland. Although the ferries endured on the harbour in both an excursionists and commuter capacity their decline was sealed with the opening of the Spit Bridge in 1924 and the Harbour bridge in 1932, the public quickly asserting a preference for the motor car, tram or bus. The bridge certainly helped to reduce harbour congestion as ferry passenger figures for the years 1927 to 1939 show.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1927</th>
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<th>1931</th>
<th>1933</th>
<th>1935</th>
<th>1937</th>
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<td>47,046,300</td>
<td>45,977,000</td>
<td>42,885,000</td>
<td>19,915,000</td>
<td>20,545,000</td>
<td>21,521,000</td>
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<td>46,444,000</td>
<td>45,757,000</td>
<td>41,627,000</td>
<td>19,021,000</td>
<td>20,882,000</td>
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<td></td>
<td>22,794,000</td>
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The increase of 2,000 in 1938 was due to the increased number of passengers carried during the period of Australia’s 150th Anniversary celebrations held at Sydney.

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126 Prescott op.cit. p.71.
127 Dorothy Collins Not a Peony Bush. Extracts from an unpublished autobiographical manuscript. n.d. (Manly Municipal Library).
128 Mead op.cit. p.13.
129 Official Year Book of New South Wales, 1928.
between January and April 1938. Some of the decrease may have been caused by the depression.\textsuperscript{130}

Ferries have plied the harbour for many years and in many roles and have become ‘a distinctive institution’ in their own right. In summer this experience is sublime, in a winter storm it is, for the stout-hearted.\textsuperscript{131} Perhaps Kenneth Slessor summed up the ferries and their long association with the Harbour.

The ferry-boat, built by practical men to pay practical dividends, is not meant to be a fairy-boat. But at sunset, when the Harbour is glazed with pebbles of gold and white, and the sun is burning out like a bushfire behind Balmain, the ferry-boats put on their lights. They turn into luminous water-beetles, filled with a gliding sliding reflected glitter that bubbles on the water like phosphorus.\textsuperscript{132}

The decline and eventual demise of the resorts and pleasure grounds can be attributed to a number of factors. The changing whim of the patronage, the increasing popularity of surfing beaches, an expanding public transport system, increased car ownership and the Harbour Bridge which caused a reduction in ferry patronage, especially to the harbour resorts. This is reflected in the change of advertisement in the mid thirties for the hotel at Clifton Gardens; ‘its special features were extended to include ample garage accommodation...only twelve minutes by car from the city via the Harbour Bridge’. As Correll notes ‘almost every family aspired, sooner or later, to have a motor car, which then became the centre for their whole social activity and especially their destinations for holidays’.\textsuperscript{133}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{131} Prescott op.cit. p.63: The fate of, and the last journeys of the various ferries is well documented by Mead.
\bibitem{132} Kenneth Slessor, A Poet’s Sydney in Portrait of Sydney: a Photographic Impression, Gwen Morton Spencer (ed.) Ure Smith, 1950.
\bibitem{133} Ted Correll, Beach Holidays, ABC Television, George Negus Tonight, 16 February 2004, (Transcript p.2).
\end{thebibliography}
Unfortunately, the areas suffered decline until Councils had the funding to acquire or develop the areas as passive recreational parklands. This sometimes took years. An example is the case of Clifton Gardens. Negotiations for the purchase from Sydney Ferries Limited took until 1953 to complete. The Mayoral Minutes stated

opportunities for the purchase by the Cumberland County Council and the Mosman Council of the Clifton Gardens Park area having now been completed, it will be possible to consider plans for the future development of this very valuable recreation space which under private ownership was in danger of passing out of public use. In view however, of the large capital outlay involved in the purchase it may be some time before additional funds can be allotted for the effective development of the property.\textsuperscript{134}

CONCLUSION:

It can be seen from this short history of resorts that there are numerous parallels to be drawn between the early British and Sydney resorts. The need in Sydney to emulate British resorts is evident, particularly in the perceived need to construct piers with all their attendant entertainment. In Sydney, resorts became a feature of leisure life. The majority were opened in the mid 1800s to the early 1900s. Ferries provided the transport to the harbour resorts but in the 1880s with the establishment of a tramway system the pattern of urban transport changed, opening up public transport to the seaside beaches and pleasure resorts. The Sydney Harbour Bridge, opened in 1932 offered even greater opportunities for travel between Sydney and the north shore by car or public transport, further reducing the ferries’ popularity.

The promotion of Manly as a health resort by the medical profession in Sydney can also be associated with the earlier promotion of sea bathing as a health cure in resorts established in England towards the end of the eighteenth century.

\textsuperscript{134} Mayoral Minutes, Mosman Municipal Council, 1953.
Further, as well as social changes brought about by increased leisure activities, over time leisure became commercialised as attitudes, conventions and also the built environment changed. This is particularly reflected in the resorts with specialised transport such as steamers plying to places of entertainment. The steamship enjoyed an aesthetic as well as a technological advantage, and for this reason the harbour ferries in particular, have retained their importance well into the present century. The fact that ferries rather than railways initiated these processes in Sydney was a matter of geography and economics.\textsuperscript{135} Social change can also be seen in the forms of entertainment, which entrepreneurs provided, and the way in which people interacted and enjoyed their leisure time.

\textsuperscript{135} Prescott op. cit. p. 7.
CHAPTER 3:

THE SWIMMERS

"I believe swimming to be the best sport in the world for women...I am not trying to shut men out of swimming. There is enough water in the world for all of us".

Annette Kellermann (1918)^{1}

THE FLYERS:^{2}

Men's swimming competitions were originally conducted in a casual, informal manner. When numerous new baths were constructed in the 1880s clubs were formed and competition took on a more formal tone. By the turn of the century most swimming baths had their own swimming club with organised races and carnivals, which attracted large crowds and were to become a popular feature of Sydney life. Men's swimming did not become properly organised until the formation in 1892 of the New South Wales Amateur Swimming Association (NSWASA). This assured clubs of formally organised competitions and carnivals. From just six clubs in 1892 membership grew to twenty-nine clubs by 1901, and when school clubs began to affiliate in 1904-5 memberships reached 12,000.^{3} As membership grew so also did the number of events. Crowd spectator numbers also increased dramatically with newspaper articles proclaiming 'standing room only' at carnivals.^{4}

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^{1} Annette Kellermann, Physical Beauty and How to Keep it, William Heinemann, London, 1918. The Kellermann name is sometimes spelt Kellermman. To avoid inconsistency, throughout this thesis it will be spelt Kellermann. The Kellermann papers which were held at the Performing Arts Library at the Sydney Opera House are now at the Mitchell Library. Unfortunately, the Trustee, Mrs. Barbara Firth has placed a 10 year restriction on the papers, therefore, apart from the Kellermann books, secondary sources will be used.

^{2} The men swimming champions were referred to as 'flyers'.

^{3} NSWASA annual reports and minutes 1892-1905: E.S. Marks Sporting Collection, Mitchell Library.

^{4} Sydney Sportsman 19 December 1900; 23 November 1901 and the Sydney Morning Herald, 17 February 1900 calling for increased bathing accommodation for school children.
As well as competitive swimming races, the carnivals also included many novelty events such as the Egg and Spoon Races, Apple-Snapping contests and diving and trick swimming. The spectators and sporting columnists expected a high standard from these displays. The *Sydney Sportsman* columnist was cutting in his remarks with reference to some fancy diving at the East Sydney Club’s Carnival at Farmers Baths.

An exhibition of fancy (so called) diving was given by two swimmers who were arrant novices at the game. A bag of spuds, thrown from a height would have entered the water as neatly as they did. It was really an exhibition of how to drench the spectators sitting around the edge of the basin.5

Some of the trick and display swimming was performed by children, usually the sons and daughters of bath’s proprietors. Mina Wylie, whose father was a bath’s proprietor and distance diver, was performing when she was five years of age6. In an oral interview in 1975 she recalled ‘we used to go to a lot of the men’s carnivals as children and give exhibitions of fancy swimming which we called rolling logs, submarine, underwater swimming and streamers, stars – we formed a star and we did streamers. I used to swim at five years of age with my hands and feet tied, 25 yards...this started synchronized swimming as it is called today which my father called fancy swimming’.7 She was later to win a silver medal at the Stockholm Games in 1912. The daughters of another bath’s proprietor, Mr. Sid Davis gave an exhibition at a Mort’s Dock Carnival in October 1900, displaying such skills that ‘their performance might well arouse envy in many a full grown man’.8

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5 *Sydney Sportsman* Wednesday 4 December 1901.
6 Newspaper cutting from the *Sunday Times*, 22 January 1905, p.8 in the Mina Wylie papers. Mitchell Library. Harry Wiley was the champion underwater swimmer of Australasia and also the champion plunger of Australasia. ‘Plunging is when you take a dive and you won’t swim downwards like that, you don’t lift your head, you’ve got to hold your breath’. Oral transcript, Mina Wiley and Neil Bennetts. 19 October 1975, Neil Bennetts Collection, Oral History Collection, National Library of Australia. p.5
7 ibid. p.3.
8 *Sydney Sportsman*, Wednesday 21 October, 1900. The same newspaper carried an article on Harry Wylie and his children giving a display of fancy swimming and Wylie himself giving a diving exhibition with a dive of 73 yards under water ‘re-appearing quite fresh’ on 23 January 1901.

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The proprietors of the various baths in the harbour and surrounding suburbs appeared to be keen and competitive swimmers. The Cavill family were particularly well known and it was Percy Cavill who set the benchmark for training. After completing numerous laps in the baths at Farm Cove, Percy would then walk and run to the Bondi sandhills, and return to the baths to swim more laps. Called a ‘fool’ at the time, Percy’s training would eventually pay off.\(^9\)

Percy was one of six sons and three daughters of ‘Professor’ Frederick Cavill, who taught swimming at the Lavender Bay Baths. He promised to teach anyone to swim for one guinea.\(^10\) A prominent endurance swimmer in his native England, the ‘professor’ had made two attempts on the English Channel, being defeated when almost reaching his goal.\(^11\) All his sons became swimming champions.

The Cavills are well known for their contribution to development of the swimming stroke called the crawl, more popularly known as the Australian crawl and the double arm breast-stroke (now known as the butterfly stroke). The origin of the ‘crawl’ stroke has been the subject of considerable discussion. It is, however, popularly agreed that Australians can claim the honour of being the first to employ the stroke in championship events. The stroke was first introduced into Australia by Alick Wickham, a Rubiana Islander who came to Australia on his father’s trading schooner

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\(^10\) Geo. Farmer also charged one guinea for ‘swimming thoroughly taught at Farmer’s Domain Baths, Woolloomooloo’. Advertisement in programme of East Sydney Swimming Club’s 4th annual carnival on Saturday 15 January 1898.
\(^11\) For an account of ‘Professor’ Cavill’s endurance swims see press reports in *How to Learn to Swim* by Professor Cavill, H. Solomon, Caxton Printing Office, Sydney, n.d.
when he was seven years old, and stayed in Sydney for his schooling. Alick was a keen swimmer and in 1898 entered in a 66 yards under 10 years handicap race in the rock pool at Bronte astonishing on-lookers with his speed and unusual stroke. Alick raced against Charlie Bell, who told Forbes Carlile that Wickham swam with his head held fairly high, turning it quickly from side to side breathing with each complete stroke. The entry of his arms was short and towards the centre line of the body with the elbows well bent. His arm action was very fast and short. Each arm performed a symmetrical action with the head turning from side to side as if breathing on each side, but only breathing on one side to each stroke.\(^{12}\)

This caused a prominent swimming coach of the day, George Farmer to exclaim - 'look at that kid crawling'. The name of the 'crawl-stroke' is said to have come from his comment. There is another version of the origin of the name 'crawl'. Dick Cavill, of the well-known Cavill family, during a race persistently swam into a rival who complained that Cavill was 'crawling all over me'.\(^{13}\)

The stroke was not Wickham's own invention. The 'crawl' as it was afterwards named, was used by all Rubiana natives whose name for it was the 'Tuppa Ta Pala', no doubt suggested by the sound made by the leg thrash.\(^{14}\)

Syd. Cavill claimed a third version of the origin of the crawl-stroke and stated in The Referee in July 1914 his version of the birth of the stroke

\[\text{I claim that I am the man who discovered the crawl and that my brother Arthur ('Tums') who died the other day inSeattle when he froze trying to swim the harbour there, was the first man to swim the stroke in Australia, and that my brother Dick was the man who perfected it. I introduced it into the United States. In 1898 I made up my mind to leave Sydney and try my luck in America. On the way, in Apia (Samoa) I swam against a woman and she gave me the hardest race of my life.}\]

\(^{12}\) Forbes Carlile, Forbes Carlile on Swimming, Pelham Books, 1963, p.134. Carlile received several letters in 1950 from Alick Wickham's brother Harry when he was investigating the beginnings of the crawl stroke. See also Dudley Hellmrich, How to Swim Correctly. Caxton Printing Works, Sydney, 1924, p.11.

\(^{13}\) Carlile ibid; Hellmrich ibid.

\(^{14}\) Carlile ibid; Hellmrich ibid.
Later I watched her intently. She swam a natural crawl stroke, not kicking her legs at all. I wrote home from Apia telling Tums all about it, how I could swim with my legs tied, using the crawl-stroke, as fast as with my legs free using any other stroke. Tums set to work and found he could do the same.\textsuperscript{15}

'Tums' Cavill, who could sprint faster over 33 yards, using arms only, than when employing both arms and legs challenged Sid. Davis, proprietor of the floating baths at Elliott Street, Balmain (and matched himself for five pounds on the side) over 33 yards, Cavill to swim with his legs tied together at the ankles. 'Natator' in \textit{The Referee} described the race

there was a very large crowd at Davis' floating baths at Balmain on Thursday evening, attracted by the fact that a novel contest had been arranged to take place between Sid. Davis and Tums Cavill, the latter undertaking to swim with his legs tied while Davis had all his limbs free. A bet of 5 pounds hinged on the race. The course was one lap of the basin, 33 and one-third yards. Cavill led throughout and eventually won by one yard, amid a great deal of excitement. The time was 20 seconds.\textsuperscript{16}

The Cavills were all notable swimmers. Ernest, Charles, Percy, Arthur ('Tums') and Syd. had all won championships by the time 15 year old Dick who was to be the greatest swimmer of them all, won his first New South Wales championship on 31 December 1899. Dick Cavill introduced the crawl-stroke to England in the summer of 1902 but was defeated by fellow Australian Fred Lane who swam the double over arm with a narrow leg action and straight knee.\textsuperscript{17} Cavill's crawl-stroke however, impressed the English swimmers. An English newspaper report quoted in \textit{The Sydney Referee} stated.

Many remarkable performances of late have been reported in the swimming world, but none so remarkable as this brilliant swim of Richard Cavill of Australia in the half-mile championship on Saturday.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{The Referee} July 1914.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{The Referee} 7 December 1898.
\textsuperscript{17} Carlile op.cit. p.140.
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{The Referee} reporting on commentary by 'Marcian' of the \textit{London Sportsman}, 17 September 1902.
Cavill's marvellous crawl-stroke called forth the admiration of everybody present. His head is low in the water and he breathes by snatches, every five breaths or so. His arms are extended wide and swept up under the chest, while one leg keeps swirling with great rapidity, the other works in the ordinary manner. Several of our younger swimmers have since this swim been hard at work practising the stroke.  

The Amateur Swimming Association in the United Kingdom thought enough of the stroke to include a chapter on it in their publication on *Swimming - by Champions of the World*. Geo. R. Hodgson wrote.

The crawl, by some considered the greatest of all strokes was first used, I believe, by the Australians from whom it derived the name the 'Australian Crawl'. The stroke was first used for short distances only, but during latter years it has been in use up to distances of several miles. My own personal experience is that - 100 yards is the longest distance for which the stroke can be used with advantage.  

It is agreed by all observers of the time that the leg actions of Wickham and Cavill were vigorous vertical thrashers. There is no general agreement as to whether these two pioneers used two, four or more leg-beats to one revolution of the arms. Cecil Healy of Australia was the disciple of the heavy 2-beat leg-kick, which became known as the Australian Crawl and was used by Healy himself and such champions as Fanny Durack and Bill Longworth.  

Before the Australian crawl stroke gained popularity several other strokes were practised. Modern competitive swimming had its origins in England and from 1837 breaststroke was the racing style. By the 1840s this gave way to the sidestroke, with

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19 The Referee reporting on commentary in the *London Sportsman*, in E.S.Marks bound volume of newspaper cuttings No. 74, 27 October 1902, p.295.
21 Carlile op.cit. p.140.
the knees drawn up in the scissors leg kick. The arms were pulled back alternately so that the dead point of propulsion in the breaststroke was to some extent overcome. Both arms were brought forward again *under* the water. This English sidestroke became the most popular racing style of its time.\(^{22}\)

In 1855 in London a new stroke was demonstrated by C. W. Wallis who came from Australia. He had seen the Aborigines gliding through the water in the Lane Cove River at Fig Tree near Sydney. The natives brought one arm forward *over* the water. Using this new single-arm-over sidestroke ‘Professor’ Fred Beckwith became champion of England in 1859. For the next 46 years the long-distance championship of England was won by side-strokers using the single-arm-over recovery.\(^{23}\)

In 1875 John Trudgen introduced a style new to English racing in which *both* arms were recovered over the water. The body remained flat on the chest and the legs made an orthodox breaststroke kick. Trudgen claimed that he learned his stroke from the South African Kaffirs. He had lived abroad with his father who was an engineer. Trudgen’s stroke was successful for short races, but distance swimmers like the English amateur champions Tyers and Jarvis and the professional champion Nuttall, all wonders of the swimming world in the 1890s remained single-arm-over side-strokers.\(^{24}\)

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\(^{22}\) ibid. p.127.  
\(^{23}\) ibid.  
\(^{24}\) ibid.
By the 1890s the *double-over-arm* had evolved. As with Trudgen's stroke, both arms recovered over the water, but in the double-over-arm the swimmer was mainly on his side and the legs made a sidestroke scissor kick.\(^{25}\)

There has always been controversy as to who was the first in Australia to adopt the double-over-arm or Trudgen stroke. Records show that Mr. Peter Murphy of Balmain Club was really the first to wholly employ the stroke in a race. On 19 January 1896 the Club promoted an Inter-Australasian meeting at Sutherland Dock, Cockatoo Island and P Murphy, D. Boyd and A. Holmes, all Balmain Club members represented the Colony of New South Wales in the 880 yards Championship of Australasia. Although Murphy was beaten by Percy Cavill and, in fact, came only third, his swim was at the time remarkable because he used the double-over-arm technique with both arms recovering out of the water for the whole distance.\(^{26}\) It was, according to the press.

A fact perhaps without parallel in any Championship contested in the world. This particular mode of progression is so severe an attack on endurance that swimmers rarely use it over a distance exceeding 200 yards. There is no record of any other swimmer having done what Murphy did in the half-mile\(^{27}\).

In January 1899 an 18 year-old named C. V. (Freddie) Lane performed the unprecedented feat of swimming with two arms over the water for the complete distance and winning the New South Wales Mile Championship. It was at Wagga Wagga on the Murrumbidgee River in New South Wales. At the Paris Olympic Games

\(^{25}\) ibid. p.131.

\(^{26}\) Alex Hamill, *Balmain Swimming Club, 1884-1984, Through the Last 100 Years*, n.d. p.10: Carlile op. cit. p.130.

\(^{27}\) *The Referee* 8 April 1914.
in 1900 Lane won the 200 metres freestyle event for Australia proving his mastery of the double-over-arm stroke. 28

FORMATION OF SWIMMING CLUBS:
Controversy also abounded about which was the first swimming club to be formed. At a public meeting held at the Warwick Castle Hotel in Balmain on 18 March 1883 ‘it was resolved that a number of swimming matches should be held at the Baths, White Horse Point, Balmain on April 5th. A programme of the different events, and a considerable sum of money has already been subscribed for prizes’. 29

Although a floating pool existed off the end of Johnson Street, East Balmain, at the end of the 19th Century, Balmain Council constructed a 30-yard baths at White Horse Point in 1883. These baths were situated within the boundaries of the existing Dawn Fraser Baths. The opening of this new shark-proof tidal baths (renamed Elkington Park Baths) was no doubt the reason why the public meeting was called to form the Balmain Swimming Club. 30 Thus the distinction of being the first club to be formed is held by the Balmain Swimming Club, which was founded in March 1884. 31

From the 1880s a number of swimming clubs existed in Balmain, some of which ultimately amalgamated into the Balmain Swimming Club. Three other known social clubs were also operating in Balmain in the 1880s. It is unclear where the Balmain

28 Carlile op.cit. p.130; Reet and Max Howell, Aussie Gold, The Story of Australia at the Olympics, Brooks Waterloo. 1988, p.19. Lane also won a gold medal in the now defunct 200 metre obstacle race at the same Olympics.
29 Sydney Morning Herald 18 March 1883.
31 ibid: Daily Telegraph 24 September 1897.
East Club and the Gladstone Club held their events. The third social club known as the Morts Dock Club probably held their races in the actual dock when it was not used for ship repairs. The Sydney Mail reported the first organised competition.

The first of what are intended to be the Annual swimming sports of Balmain took place at the Corporation Baths White Horse Point on Saturday last and although the rain had been pouring in torrents all day every inch of standing room being occupied, a goodly number of ladies being present. The management was very creditable and great praise is due to the Secretary and Committee for the pains they took and endeavouring to make things run smoothly.

Balmain Club members were very prominent in forming the New South Wales Amateur Swimming Association. Mr. J. Sims, the Balmain Club Captain at a special meeting moved ‘that in the opinion of this meeting it is desirable for the better conducting and managing of swimming tournaments, and for the regulation of amateurs and professions, to form a Swimming Association of New South Wales’. However, the Association was not arranged on a working basis until 1892 and in that year Balmain Club affiliated.

Swimming clubs existed in Manly in 1893-95 and 1899-1900. On 25 August 1905 a meeting was held at the Steyne Hotel, Manly as ‘a preliminary to forming a swimming club in Manly’ and stating that ‘the Annual Meeting of the Club will be held in the Victoria Hall, Corso, Manly on Thursday 27 September 1905 at 8pm’. The club was named the Manly District Amateur Swimming Club and it was intended to affiliate with the NSW Swimming Association. The 1921-22 season saw Manly become the premier club - included in its members were Andrew ‘Boy’ Charlton, Richard Eve, Harry Hay and Ernest Henry - all champions.

32 Hamill ibid. p.6.
33 Sydney Mail 12 April 1884.
34 Hamill op.cit. p.8.
35 A reproduction of the original minutes of the meeting of inception of the club held on 25th August, 1905 at the Steyne Hotel, The Corso. (held in Manly Municipal Library).
36 Sydney Morning Herald 25 September 1905.
The North Sydney Amateur Swimming Club also featured prominently in Sydney’s early days of club swimming holding its first annual carnival at the then new Spit Baths on 2 March 1901. The press reported that the ‘attendance was large and the arrangements complete and thorough’. The club produced several champions including Bernard Bede (Barney) Kieran who was hailed as the greatest swimmer the world had known. Kieran was a ‘Sobraon’ boy whose Australian records for 300, 500, 1000 and 1760 yards stood for 25 years. In the 1904-5 season he held all Australian and worlds records from 200 yards to the mile and equalled F.C.V. Lane’s figures over the furlong.

Kieran swam some remarkable races during his short career, perhaps the greatest when he defeated Dick Cavill in the Australian half mile Championship at Rushcutters Bay Baths on 12 March 1904. The carnival attracted around 2000 people, the largest number of spectators to attend a swimming carnival to that date. Swimming the trudgen style Kieran defeated the reigning champion recording 11 mins. 29.8 sec., which broke the world’s record by 20.6 secs. established by Cavill in England in 1902. Cavill also broke his own record during the race. Such was the esteem in which Kieran was held that on his return from overseas where he competed successfully,

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37 Bailey and Reddan op.cit. p.11.
38 The Sobraon was a fully rigged clipper launched in 1866 as the largest composite timber and wrought-iron vessel yet built. Designed specifically for the England-Australia run she provided fast and, for some, luxurious service for 25 years. G. Aplin & J. Storey, Waterfront Sydney 1860-1920, Allen & Unwin, Sydney 1984. p.24. The Sobraon was acquired by the NSW Government for £12,500. She was moored off Cockatoo Island serving, in the then official nomenclature as the ‘Nautical School Ship Sobraon’, as part of the Public Instruction Department, under the Minister of Public Instruction, and was in no way connected with the Prison Department. The boys who were sent on to her were those, who by the loss of their parents, or had been neglected by them, became a charge on the state’. Bailey & Reddan op.cit. p.20.
39 ibid. p.18.
winning many medals and cups, the North Sydney District Swimming Club held a
carnival as a ‘Grand Welcome Home to the Club Captain B.B. Kieran’ on Tuesday
evening 28 November 1905.\textsuperscript{41} Unfortunately, the following month, after competing in
the championships in Brisbane where he won the 220 yards, equalling Lane’s record,
Kieran fell ill with appendicitis and died on 23 December, 1905 at St. Clare’s Private
hospital in Brisbane aged just 19.\textsuperscript{42} The \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} published a lengthy
column outlining Kieran’s swimming achievements and reported that ‘Kieran’s body
will be embalmed and sent to Sydney on Sunday morning by mail train, the funeral
taking place in Sydney on Christmas afternoon’.\textsuperscript{43} On 27 December the same
newspaper reported

the remains of the late Bernard Bede Kieran, the Australian champion swimmer were laid to
rest yesterday in the presence of one of the largest attendances ever gathered at the Gore Hill
Cemetery...the widespread esteem in which the deceased swimmer was held was also shown
by the great number of wreaths \textsuperscript{44}

LIONIZING THE ATHLETES:

The \textit{Sydney Mail} described Kieran’s funeral, attended by an estimated 30,000 people
as one of the greatest displays of mass mourning Australia has seen’.\textsuperscript{45} Kieran’s grave
is inscribed ‘Erected by the Public as a tribute to the late Champion Swimmer of the
World. He won his laurels by courage, self-denial and patient effort. His achievements

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Official Souvenir Programme, North Sydney District Swimming Club ‘Grand Welcome Home
Carnival to the Club Captain B.B. Kieran,’} 28 November 1905.

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} 23 December 1905.

\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Sydney Mail} 27 December 1905: Bethel in Bailey and Reddan op cit. p.18.
and many qualities will long be remembered in this and other countries in which his victories were gained'.

Public reaction was not really unusual, especially when one notes the way in which Australians lionize their athletic idols. Sixteen years earlier there was large-scale mourning for world champion sculler Henry Searle who died aged 23 years from peritonitis brought on by typhoid fever, which he contracted when competing in Europe and the U.K. Searle who was known as the *Clarence Comet* became ill on the voyage back to Australia and hospitalised in Melbourne where he died. Half-mast flags were observed in all the capitals, as well as centres as widespread as Ballarat, Newcastle and Townsville. His body was taken by train from Melbourne to Sydney but not before a huge demonstration of grief in Melbourne.

As the procession moved four abreast along Collins Street it was watched, not by a few sportsmen, but an ‘immense concourse’ which ‘thickly lined’ both sides of the thoroughfare for the entire distance. So large was the crowd that traffic had to be suspended, and great difficulty was experienced at the station in forming a passage to the platform.

In Sydney much planning went into the funeral and the *Sydney Morning Herald* ventured the opinion that the next day’s funeral would eclipse all similar events yet witnessed in Australia. The funeral arrangements included a short service at St. Andrew’s Cathedral for which 1,500 reserved tickets had been printed and issued on a restricted basis, then a procession through the streets to the Maritime Wharf at Circular Quay where another ceremony took place on the black draped ship, *Australian* which was to take Searle north to his final resting place.

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46 Bailey and Reddan op.cit.p.18. Kieran was also honoured in verse and by the ‘Kieran Memorial’ Premiership Shield inaugurated by public subscription in the 1906-7 season.
48 ibid pp 82-83.
Some newspapers expressed concern over Australians' worship and glorification of its athletes. One editorial referred to the 'cultus of Athleticism', which distorted minds and made it difficult to explain to the young how this young man who was lucky enough to possess skill with an oar should receive a higher public tribute than that given a Dalley or a Kendall. *The Bulletin* 's editorial of 14 February 1890 noted that 'it must come to the sorrowing conclusion that this was merely another example of Australian juvenility. The young country still had a lot to learn'.

But it had not learnt by the time boxer Les Darcy's body was brought back from the United States for burial in his home town of Maitland, New South Wales. *The Sunday Times* of Sunday 8 July 1917, in an article headed 'Canonising Les Darcy' declared that the panegyrics delivered at Darcy's funeral services by 'priests of Christ' were filled with 'morbidity and false ideals'. Aged just 22, Darcy too, was given a hero's funeral. An estimated quarter of a million people lined the route of the funeral procession; one hundred thousand filed past the coffin at St. Joseph's Church, Woollahra and a further six thousand people filed past the catafalque in the East Maitland church of St. Joseph. Darcy's story was an unhappy one. As Australia's most prominent boxer, Darcy was under considerable pressure to enlist by the Rev. Professor Macintrye, president of the State Recruiting Committee, the Council for Civic and Moral Advancement and his patriotic manager R.L. 'Snowy' Baker who announced that Darcy had signed up for three more fights after which he would be

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49 *Sydney Morning Herald* 13 December 1889.
50 Raymond Swanwick, *Le Darcy: Australia's Golden Boy of Boxing*, Ure Smith, Sydney, 1965, p.233. Although over 50 years separated the deaths of Searle and Darcy an interesting parallel is the rumours which persisted after each death that poison had been involved.
barred from the Stadium until he had presented himself at the recruiting depot. On his twenty-first birthday (and also the eve of the first conscription referendum) he absconded to America illegally, without a passport.\textsuperscript{51} He wrote to Baker apologising for the way in which he left, explaining that he ‘had a chance to put his family on their feet for life...as soon as I have had three or four fights here I will go to the nearest place where I can enlist – to Canada...and offer my services...I must leave my family beyond want. I have five brothers and four sisters. One brother is crippled, the next boy is 17. He is working day and night as a baker. The others are little fellows. I never got much for fighting in Australia. I intend to get it now, in America, and then I’ll give it to my family and go to war’.\textsuperscript{52} Vilified as a traitor and unable to secure fights in America, Darcy died of pneumonia.

The history of the NSW Amateur Swimming Association embraces many champions, world and Olympic record holders. The Cavills, Barney Kieran, Freddie Lane who, as well as winning Olympic gold, also held numerous Australasian, and English championships and world records, and the many club champions who paved the way for a new clutch of champions and Olympians - Cecil Healy, Frank Beaurepaire, Harold Hardwick, Harry Hay and numerous others to follow to the present time. One of the greatest champions was Andrew (‘Boy’) Charlton for whom the swimming pools at the Sydney Domain and Manly are named. In three Olympic Games for Australia he won five medals - one gold, three silver and one bronze. He also broke

\textsuperscript{51} Michael McKernan, \textit{The Australian People and the Great War}, Collins, Sydney, 1984. Darcy’s manager R.L. ‘Snowy’ Baker was a great all-round sportsman who became a successful entrepreneur. Baker represented Australia in the 1908 London Olympics, winning a silver medal in the middleweight boxing division. At the same Games, Baker competed in the fancy springboard diving and in the 4 x 200 metres freestyle swimming event.

\textsuperscript{52} Swanwick op.cit p. 203.
eight Australian records and five world records. Charlton captured the affection of the public and media by his modesty and his great races against the Swedish champion Arne Borg. Takaishi of Japan and Weissmuller of the United States. The thirty third Annual Report of the NSWASA held on 13 October 1924 carries a photo of Charlton with the caption - 'The World’s Greatest Distance Swimmer - Andrew “Boy” Charlton'. These pioneer superstars built the framework for the beginning of Australia’s swimming history. Many champions both male and female have followed, some creating their own legends by their swimming feats.

WOMEN SWIMMERS:
Thus far, with the exception of those who chose to swim in the harbour or at Mrs. Bigges establishment in the Domain or partake of ‘ladies day’ or ‘ladies hours’ at some swimming establishments women participated as spectators rather than swimmers. Women’s participation in swimming as an exercise and a sport and eventually on a competitive level developed in an entirely different way to men’s swimming.

In 1850 Harriet Martineau, the distinguished political economist asserted that girls should be allowed to do unladylike things such as climb trees, walk briskly, run, leap, row and swim. This is in sharp contrast to the cultural indoctrination that strenuous exercise was ‘inappropriate’ for women because of their physical frailty and the

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53 Attendance estimates vary from 5000 to 8000 for the Charlton/Borg clash at the Domain baths in the 1923/24 season. Borg held four world records and was Europe’s star swimmer. R. &. M. Howell suggest that ‘the public’s enthusiasm for a swimming match was unprecedented. Charlton seemed to inspire deep emotions and empathy in the crowd as if his deeds were reflecting underlying social needs’. R. &. M. Howell op.cit. p.75.

generally accepted notion that women were linked to domestic labour, their reproductive role, marriage and waged work. ‘The cultural image of women in Australia and the western world in general has been one of dependence and passivity, with emphasis on their supportive functions’. As a result of this notion, certain sports were socially acceptable for women – sports which usually included activities emphasising flexibility and co-ordination with an aesthetic appeal which did not require much strength, endurance and bodily contact. Sports, which fit this pattern, include diving, figure skating, tennis, gymnastics and equestrian events. Although the last two mentioned required some degree of strength, it was offset by grace, rhythm and balance. Not only men perceived women in this role. The Woman’s Voice magazine declared ‘women’s sphere of duty is said to be the home’ and ‘tenderness and innate motherliness should be the characteristic of every true woman’. Influent women too, demanded that certain physical activities be denied women. In 1928 Mrs. Herbert Hoover, wife of the 31st President of the United States denounced the use of weight lifting devices by girls in high school as ‘immoral’ and led a campaign to outlaw such ‘unholy’ and ‘unladylike’ contraptions. It is perhaps no accident then, that in the French, Russian, Polish, Hebrew, Spanish, German and perhaps other languages, in which gender is assigned to nouns, sport is always masculine.

56 ibid.
57 The Woman’s Voice 1 August 1916, Vol.1, No. 8, p.3; 1 June, 1917, Vol.11, No. 6, p. 3.
58 Barbara Drinkwater, Myths and Realities of Women’s Performance in Sport, Institute of Environmental Stress, University of California, n.d. p.6.
Since the time of Hippocrates and Aristotle, the roles assigned to women have attracted an elaborate body of medical and biological justification. This was especially true in the nineteenth century as the intellectual and emotional centrality of science increased steadily. Would-be scientific arguments were used in the rationalisation and legitimisation of almost every aspect of Victorian life, and in particular in those areas in which social change implied stress in existing social arrangements.⁵⁹ Women occupied the private sphere, the home, whilst men occupied the public (or economic) sphere. The taken-for-granted assumption that this was the ‘natural order of things’ was underpinned by the implicit belief that the differences between men and women were biologically determined and hence immutable. This was an integral element of the rhetoric of Social Darwinism incorporating the medical case for women’s physical inferiority, which was employed to justify ‘maternity as the highest function of womanhood - essential to the healthy progress of the nation’.⁶⁰ Manliness and womanliness remained very different concepts. Also the arguments put forward in the 1870s by two eminent physicians, Dr. Edward Clarke of Harvard University and Dr. Henry Maudsley of University College London, did nothing to help the ambitions of women in all directions except the domestic scene. Both physicians insisted that the sexes’ biological variations dictated significant differences in behaviour and roles. Females, they said, had only a limited amount of energy, the bulk of which during puberty was required for the development of the organs of reproduction. Normal puberty was equated with normal behaviour, and if women and girls behaved abnormally by acquiring a masculine type of education, their vital energy would be

sapped and their health ruined. More specifically, the doctors predicted they would lose their natural grace and gentility and be turned into coarse, imperfectly developed creatures who would produce degenerate offspring or none at all.\textsuperscript{61} Unfortunately, for any women's movement of the time the Clarke-Maudsley thesis was widely held for years. It could not help but influence educators who generally agreed with the doctors on the close connection between physical and mental development and on the need to protect students from overstrain.\textsuperscript{62}

These notions were unwittingly reinforced by the fashions of the day, particularly those worn by the middle and upper class ladies - tightly laced corsets, long skirts and narrow high-heeled boots also contributed to their inability to partake of any exercise other than a leisurely stroll. It was perhaps the tight lacing which induced the swooning and fainting fits so common with women of that period. Thought to be biological, these fainting fits helped highlight feminine characteristics of weakness and frailty and thus women's unsuitability for physically demanding exercise. Another myth, that strenuous exercise was not 'appropriate' for women, was the assumption that the performance of sedentary women represented the potential of all women - that women had a characteristic cardiac inefficiency during exercise. Inefficiency was supposedly characterised by a high resting heart rate, a slow recovery after activity and a higher heart rate than men during exercise. Actually, according to Drinkwater, all three factors are related more to one's activity habits than to one's sex.\textsuperscript{63}

\textsuperscript{61} Kathleen E. McCrone, Play up! Play Up! And Play the Game! Sport in the Late Victorian Girls' Public Schools, in Mangan and Park (eds.) \textit{From Fair Sex to Feminism}, 1987, p. 104.
\textsuperscript{62} ibid p.104.
\textsuperscript{63} Drinkwater, op.cit. p.4. Resting heart rate decreases with training and in proportion to the intensity of the training.
Paradoxically, those restrictive fashions were to be partly instrumental in releasing women from the culturally imposed strictures. By the second decade of the 19th century the dire effects of the prevailing fashions and thus women’s lack of physical activity were noticed and it was contended that women were becoming unhealthy through lack of exercise, which would imperil the future race. This observation produced numerous books and articles on exercise and deportment for women. The primary aim however, left no doubt that the exercises were aimed at preparing women for motherhood.\(^6^4\)

As the century progressed opportunities for women’s participation in sport increased but it was still ‘a man’s world’ particularly for the middle and lower classes. Women’s sport which had previously consisted of the afore mentioned leisurely ‘stroll’ began emerging with participation in gymnastics followed by croquet in the 1850s. Croquet quickly became the rage in fashionable society and signalled the entrance of women into organised competitive sport.\(^6^5\) Croquet had also been called the greatest outdoor game for women yet invented. It required skill but not necessarily scientific technique and not too much strength or activity for a lady.\(^6^6\) Moreover, it seems its courting and matchmaking qualities were unprecedented. The first recorded croquet club in Australia was formed at Kyneton, Victoria in 1866 and then Kapunda in South

\(^{6^4}\) McCrone op.cit. in *Play up! Play up! And Play the Game!* pp 100 and 123.

\(^{6^5}\) McCrone op.cit. in *Playing the Game* pp. 155-6. A croquet club was given ground at Manly, NSW in the 1890s, a club eventually being formed in 1913.

\(^{6^6}\) Report on the Conference on Women in Sport and Recreation, Women’s Advisory Unit, Premier’s Department, Adelaide, South Australia, 4 February 1980, p.7.
Australia in 1868. The first Association was founded in Tasmania in 1908 and in New South Wales in 1918.  

Women of the upper class rode to the hunt and participated in archery but all other sports were considered ‘manly’ and thus ‘unbecoming’ for colonial women. This attitude was reflected in South Australia in 1859. In an attempt to create interest in an annual race meeting the Gawler Racing Committee advertised a ‘Ladies Race’. This caused outrage, and the South Australian Register weighed in with a lengthy editorial on feminine amusements hoping that

...for the credit of South Australian womanhood, the novel feature (would) utterly fail. Unquestionably the spectacle (would) be capital sport for the gaping crowd...especially the ‘oi polloi’ who would wish nothing better than to witness the unhorsing of some of these unblushing damsels...but we entertain a strong confidence that no girl of proper feeling, having the slightest degree of self respect, or cherishing the smallest regard for the approbation of the virtuous and wise will condescend to exhibit herself for the vulgar delectation...most earnestly do we entreat our spirited young country ladies - splendid horsewomen as many of them are - to reflect before they give their sanction to this indelicate proposal...if they take time to consider, their feminine sense of propriety will infallibly dictate their proper course.  

The ancient game of golf, a game whose history can be traced back to 1457 when King James II of Scotland declared it illegal because it was interfering with the archery practices of the citizen army, was enjoyed initially by men only, golf clubs having no female members. However, around 1860 a few Scottish women decided they wanted to be more than spectators, and the first women’s club, the Westward Ho and North Devon Ladies Golf Club was formed in 1868. It took a little longer in Australia with the first ladies national golf championships being held at Geelong in Victoria in 1894.

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68 John A. Daly, Elysian Fields, Sport, Class and Community in Colonial South Australia 1836-1890, published by the author, Adelaide, 1982, p.82.
69 McCrone op.cit. in Playing the Game, p.166-7.
Female golf was non-threatening to male players. Initially limited to putting contests, they played over 9 holes on restricted days and in clothes that inhibited rather than enhanced performance – hats, stiff collars and ties, long sleeved jackets, blouses and skirts to the ankle – women could not challenge their male counterparts.\textsuperscript{70}

Lawn tennis achieved popularity in the 1870s in the United Kingdom, partly as a desire among youthful croquet enthusiasts for more active exercise. However, had ladies aspired to perform energetically they would have found it impossible. Until shops began selling special tennis costumes in the 1880s they played in the same long dresses they wore for garden parties and although the special tennis costumes were an improvement they were hardly conducive to vigorous movement, in fact, quite unsuited to any degree of muscular exertion. They were thus no threat to the male ego and viewed tennis as a social asset and never expected to actually run for a ball, rather to reach for it and pat it gently across the net.\textsuperscript{71} In 1878 the Melbourne Cricket Club (MCC) put down the first asphalt court in the colonies. In 1880 the MCC Lawn Tennis Club laid a grass court and held the first tournament in the colonies, the precursor to the Victorian Tennis Championships. Sydney Lawn Tennis Club was founded in the same year. The first inter-colonial championships were held between Victoria and NSW at the Sydney Cricket Ground in 1885.\textsuperscript{72} Male tennis attire among club players in the 1870s and 1880s consisted of long trousers or knickerbockers with flamboyantly striped wide elastic belts or cummerbunds, stiff collared white shirts with ties, black stockings, skullcaps and flannel blazers. The ladies wore their hair upswept and

\textsuperscript{70} The Oxford Companion to Australian Sport, p. 186.

\textsuperscript{71} McCrone op.cit. in Playing the Game, pp.135-7. A lawn tennis club was formed in Manly, NSW in 1885.

\textsuperscript{72} The Oxford Companion to Australian Sport, p. 248.
gathered in a bunch with a straw ‘gem’ hat pinned to its top. White blouses and long skirts, reaching some three inches short of the ground completed the outfit.  

Cycling became fashionable during the 1890s. It became acceptable because it was popularised by the wealthy and was less expensive than other sports such as horse riding. Along with tennis and golf, cycling was widely practised by the ‘new’ woman. Kingston posits that the bicycle had a liberating influence in giving freedom and mobility in the form of exercise ‘the equivalent for the not so well off of horse riding for wealthy women’. Cycling could also been seen as an impetus for the rationalisation of women’s sporting clothing. Cricket, hockey, swimming and, eventually, athletics, were ‘permitted’ sports. Because they were more demanding and more closely approached the male emphasis on physical exertion, they were, however, tolerated. Unlike the sports which were shared with the opposite sex (tennis, golf, croquet) ‘permitted’ sports were segregated by sex so that women could not compete with or threaten the popularity of the men’s game. This resulted in men’s team sports thriving and attracting large audiences while women’s team sports were kept ‘in their place’. Women who achieved and gained recognition for their sporting prowess did so as individuals rather than as members of a team. Thus, from the 1830s, it was the wealthy upper and middle class women who had the time and could afford the ‘women only’ accommodation of Mrs. Bigges baths where the natatorial art for ladies

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73 ibid.
74 King op. cit. p.74.
77 ibid.
was allowed to develop in secluded surroundings. Urging ladies to take swimming
lessons the noted swimming teacher, ‘Prof’. Cavill asserted.

Nothing I could say would sufficiently urge the necessity of their learning the art. Their mode
of dressing and sedentary habits, with the very few exercises of a strengthening nature they can
indulge in, makes this art of the greatest importance to them. Not only does it expand the chest,
and so strengthen the lungs and heart by giving them room to act, but the exercise gives all the
muscles and amount of exercise which keeps the frame in a healthy condition,
preventing headache and languor, which many ladies, owing to the want of such exercise, frequently suffer from.78

And Louisa Lawson, the feminist proprietor of The Dawn, a paper devoted to the
household asserted that ‘every boy, and girl also should acquire the art of swimming.
It was meant by the Creator that all human beings should be able to swim...women
learn to swim quicker than men and float with more ease, the bones of the body being
smaller than in a man’.79 Years later however, old, entrenched medical ideas still held
sway. The Sydney Mail in 1904 carried photographs of two lady champion swimmers,
the article generally extolling the virtues of swimming, drawing comparison between
the swimmers with their ‘fine figures and graceful walk to their non-swimming ‘chalk-
white sisters who get their beauty in city shops’, but, warning, ‘the medical men assert
- as long as it (swimming) is not carried to the point of exhaustion’.80

Women’s ‘learn-to-swim’ lessons proved popular and successful and swimming
competitions slowly began to become part of women’s approved recreation. Unlike
the more fashionable sports such as tennis and croquet women’s swimming by virtue
of its secluded beginning and lack of social interaction with the opposite sex,
developed unhampered by behavioural strictures of mixed society.

78 ‘Professor’ Fred Cavill, How to Learn to Swim, H. Solomon, Caxton Printing Office, Sydney, n.d.
80 The Sydney Mail 30 March 1904.
Women’s swimming also, and because of, its segregated beginning was able to avoid the constraints of dress which was problematic for women tennis and hockey players and especially women cyclists, often lampooned in the press in their bloomers and knickerbockers. Because their sport was ‘public’, they had difficulty in finding dress suitable to the physicality of their sport, yet not offending Victorian sensibilities. Because women’s swimming was never a ‘public’ sport and because of its aquatic nature the costumes worn by the women swimmers were accepted. The aquatic medium also removed an ‘ideological impediment’ to women’s swimming - effort: ‘no matter how hard the competitors pushed themselves, the watery medium minimised the outward appearance of effort and exertion’. In women’s competitive swimming, the speed, power and endurance required were hidden, thus ensuring that the Victorian image of ideal womanhood remained; segregation, enclosure and the medium of participation creating the impression of a non threatening sport. The ‘watery medium’ held true. Reporting on a swimming carnival at the Domain baths ‘which flashed with the bronze skins of Australia’s daughters of Neptune’ The Bulletin noted that -

Mina Wylie, in a weather beaten grey bathing suit was easily queen of the pageant. In the water she became a slim length of pale bronze that kicked a silver tral of foam buoyantly in her wake.

The champion was no doubt powering along to win a race; the energy expended being offset by the aquatic medium and her grace in the water.

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81 Australian hurling and javelin champion Clarice Kennedy started her career in the late 1920s in pleated bloomers that blew out like balloons when she ran. Marion K. Stell, Half the Race: A History of Australian Women in Sport, Angus and Robertson, 1991, p.161.
83 Ibid.
Throughout the early 1900s the so-called ‘modern’ woman, no longer bound by Victorian ideas and voluminous skirts but still hesitant to show her ankles, ventured into various forms of physical activity. Some entered into competitive events, others preferring to enjoy sport for the pleasure and physical exercise. The only sports, which remained strictly out of bounds, were those where body contact was possible, and if an invasion of male space or a strictly male sport was eminent, the men made rules to prevent it. Women, it seems could compete so long as they did so with their own kind. Clearly, changes in women’s sport were not sudden or dramatic but rather a process of adjustment to new forms of activity in keeping with the new attitude towards healthy sport for women, but also being mindful of the need to consider the prevailing conservative attitudes of the day.

As the number of women spectators at swimming meets increased, so also did the numbers competing in races, a fact not lost on the proprietors of the swimming venues. ‘Ladies’ races would no doubt attract a wide patronage of family and friends and young men to cheer them on. An important factor in the rise of women’s competitive swimming, and in fact, in competitive swimming generally, was the addition of swimming into the sports curriculum of NSW State schools in the latter years of the 19th century. Both girls and boys grew up with the notion that swimming, be it competitive or recreational was an accepted part of life.

The first competitive women’s swimming carnival was held in March 1902. The meet was held at St. George Baths in Redfern, and reported in the Sydney Sportsman on 2 April 1902. ‘Trudge’ commented on the mixed crowd.

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84 The Bulletin 17 February 1921.
That venerable dame, Mrs. Grundy, has got a dead set on affairs of this character, and holds up her hands in holy horror at the mere mention of ladies swimming in the presence of the trousered sex...the day is not far distant when ladies will have as little objection to doing a mermaid act as they have to attending a ball or the theatre in a low-necked dress...some of the ladies proved themselves real water nymphs and appeared as much at home in the water as on the land...Miss Annetta Kellerman (sic) as expected secured both the championship events.  

As little was reported on women’s swimming there was also a paucity of information on the types of strokes the women swimmers used. The *Sydney Sportsman* did show an interest though and in the same article reported that ‘the two contestants in the quarter mile race Miss Annette Kellermann and a Miss F. Riley, both ladies used the trudgeon (sic) stroke through the whole distance’.  

Annette Kellermann was to stamp her name on women’s swimming in Australia (and later in the United States). Taking up swimming as a child to correct a crippling condition in her legs, and encouraged by Olympic swimmers C.V. (Freddie) Lane and ‘Snowy’ Baker, Kellermann eventually turned professional, swimming and diving in displays in most Australian capital cities. In 1905, with her father she went to England and made three unsuccessful attempts on the English Channel. On her first attempt she was in the water for almost seven hours before seasickness and fatigue forced her to abandon the swim. On a second attempt on 7 August 1906 she again failed to complete the crossing, however the ten and a half hours she spent in the water on her failed third and final attempt stood as a women’s record for many years. ‘I had the endurance’ she said ‘but not the brute strength’.  

Undertaking an extensive European tour with well-publicised swims in the Seine and the Danube and displays in glass

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85 *Sydney Sportsman* 2 April 1902. ‘Trudge’ was the pseudonym used by the *Sydney Sportsman’s* swimming reporter.
86 ibid.
tanks Kellermann eventually went to the United States where she became a film star. In 1914 she starred in *Neptune’s Daughter* a film made on location in Bermuda. The public adored her and she became known as a ‘pin-up girl’ long before the term became popular during the Second World War.\(^{88}\) Annette Kellermann did much to make women’s swimming popular and socially acceptable.\(^{89}\)

Following the success of the women’s swimming championships, the Sydney Ladies Swimming Club (SLSC) made application to the NSWASA for affiliation, which was duly granted. However, the affiliation was ‘conditional’ and the ladies were not to have a delegate on the decision-making committee. All policy decisions remained in masculine hands - the old social divisions remained - the public/private spheres were still firmly in place. ‘The men controlled the whole thing’ commented up and coming champion Mina Wiley.\(^{90}\) Along with the press of the day which saw increased sales figures by recording and reporting swimming events, the NSWASA was to figure largely in the control of women’s competitive swimming.

After several more ladies clubs were formed and had applied for affiliation, it was suggested, because of the volume of administration, that a separate ladies association be initiated. This was, of course, a subordinate women’s controlling body designed to relieve the men’s association of any administrative burden. After due consideration and over numerous meetings, on 8 February 1906 the New South Wales Ladies Amateur Swimming Association (NSWLASA) was formed. Following some adverse press regarding the ladies’ racing costumes, one of the first acts of the new association

\(^{89}\) Walsh ibid.  
\(^{90}\) Walsh ibid.
was to standardise the dress regulations. One new regulation stated ladies must go 'cloaked to the starting post and to resume their cloaks on the conclusion of their heat.'\textsuperscript{91} Interestingly, as late 1923 the ladies were still cloaked before, and on completion of their races. Furthermore, there was also the addition of a Costume Steward

who shall have power to prevent any person from starting in any competition or event, if, in his opinion, such person's costume be not in accordance with Rule No. 147 and shall have general supervision over all costumes at any meeting.\textsuperscript{92}

Meanwhile, Victorian morality was also to win the day. The furore over the women's swimming costumes fuelled the debate on whether women should once more return to segregated swimming. Miss Rose Scott the president of the Ladies Amateur Swimming Association (LASA) and also the chairwoman of the Sydney Ladies Swimming Club believed in the separation of the sexes and successfully called for a return to segregated swimming. A prominent feminist, Rose Scott was a major figure in the history of women's rights in Australia and a tireless worker for the rights of women and children. But unfortunately, for all her political and social awareness, she knew very little about competitive swimming. And, by her own admission, Scott herself could not 'swim any swifter than a stone'.\textsuperscript{93} It would seem that organised sport in Australia was restricted by otherwise well-meaning people who occupied positions of considerable authority but knew little about the sport over which they presided. Like most women of her time, Scott had strong convictions on what constituted 'proper behaviour' for women. She believed that the public competition in which

\textsuperscript{90} Oral transcript – Mina Wiley and Neil Bennetts, op.cit. p.1.

\textsuperscript{91} Constitutional Rules and By Laws and Regulations of the NSWLASA, 1908-9 in Mina Wiley papers, Mitchell Library. Many photographs of swimmers Fanny Durack and Mina Wylie show them in floor length cloaks.

\textsuperscript{92} NSWLASA handbook, 1923, p. 27.

\textsuperscript{93} The Bulletin 29 February 1912.
women were competing posed a threat to women’s image and femininity. These convictions were to prove more important to her than the prospect of sending Australian women to the Olympics.

The ‘no men’ rule received a fair share of press media coverage. The Referee noted that ‘the doors at the swimming galas were shut closer than an oyster against man… members may not compete at shows where men are of the onlookers, and whenever carnivals are held by affiliations of the NSWLASA it is writ large over the gates and clinched by the strong rivets of unwavering firmness - no man shall enter here’. 94

Although seemingly a regressive step the decision to exclude men from women’s race meetings did have some redeeming points. First, had women continued to race in front of a mixed public in the skimpy costumes they were wearing at the time, it is more than likely the powers to be in the NSWASA would have enforced rules to modify the costumes and the women could have ended up in neck to knee outfits or some cumbersome skirted model. As the only body with authority to ratify swimming records the NSWASA held the upper hand. By resorting to segregation, the women were able to retain their aquatic freedom and their streamlined costumes whilst honing their competitive edge. It was also a chance for women who wished to participate in competitive swimming, but preferred not to do so in mixed public meets, to join and enjoy membership of a swimming club as these clubs provided a social venue and a chance to meet other women. However, whilst a ‘women only’ atmosphere prevailed at the ladies races in the baths, the media of the day pointed out that the NSWLASA could not control its members on the beaches.
(though) swimmers may not race and otherwise disport themselves before the opposite sex at carnivals, there is nothing to prevent them surfing on our several beaches among men, and in full view of male spectators.\(^5\)

The women’s swimming clubs practised life saving methods in still water. However, some of the women, as well as enjoying surf bathing, wished to participate in surf life saving. In a lengthy article titled \textit{the Troubled Surf: More about the costumes: Should lady swimmers shoot the breakers: Miss Rose Scott down on surfing and other things}, the \textit{Sun} reported ‘a little while ago Miss Fanny Durack, one of the most prominent members of the LASA committed the heinous offence of going out on the life-line at one of the beaches with the men’. When questioned at the LASA meeting the outspoken Durack replied ‘I did go out with the lifeline and I see no harm in it and I’ll do it again if I want to’. The reporter added Miss Durack didn’t say ‘so there’ but she meant it all the same. The writer also suggested to Miss Scott

\begin{quote}
that the practice of teaching girls life-saving in closed baths was hardly likely to prove such valuable training as if the lessons were given in the open sea under conditions approximating as nearly as possible to reality.\(^6\)
\end{quote}

The problem arose when some of the club members wore the association’s regulation costume with the badge prominently displayed whilst on the beach. The \textit{Sun} reporter speculated that ‘if she covered the badge over with a piece of cloth there would be no objection to her wearing the dress...but some...are guilty of the gross indecency of exposing the badge in public.’\(^7\)

\footnotesize
\(^5\) \textit{The Referee} 13 March 1912.  
\(^6\) \textit{The Sun} 1 November 1910.  
\(^7\) \textit{The Sun} 1 November 1910. Even Rose Scott saw the sense in this suggestion and promised to ‘look into it’. However, in the 1940s women were still practising life saving methods and undergoing examinations in still water. Mina Wylie held a life-long interest in still water life saving and remained its examiner well into the late 1940s.  
\(^7\) \textit{The Sun} 1 November 1910.
Despite the furore over wearing the club costume 'out of bounds', women's competitions flourished and small inroads were gained. Although the NSWASA still retained final authority, the NSWLASA now conducted their own handicapping and time keeping which led Fanny Durack to remark:

since the ladies have had charge of the handicapping and time-keeping they do it better than the men...I think the men used to favour some of the girls, but you won't catch a girl favouring another girl.\textsuperscript{98}

\textbf{OUT OF THE CLOSET AND A TILT AT THE OLYMPICS:}

It took four years before a breakaway group took women's swimming 'out of the closet'. The NSW League of Swimmers held mixed carnivals and also offered the lure of cash prizes, an exciting change from the ubiquitous pin-tray. But the 1912 Olympics were looming and for the first time in the history of Olympic swimming, events for women were to be included. The fact that Fanny Durack looked likely to be included in the Australian team brought the absurd 'no men' rule to a head. The newspapers had a field day with the issue. In a letter to \textit{The Sun} from a 'Patriotic Swimmer' Fanny was described

as a young lady, by her recent performances, shows herself, judging by all the data at our command in the van of the lady swimmers in the world. And what is the obstacle in the way of her representing her country at this great sports gathering? Expenses? Not for a moment. In competing in races in which she stands every chance of gaining world's championship honours for herself and honour for her country, Miss Durack would be under the gaze of a large gathering of men. How dreadful!\textsuperscript{99}

And this, from the \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} - 'there seems little doubt that she {Fanny} would easily account for any competition in the world today.'\textsuperscript{100} Natator of the \textit{Referee} expressed some doubt and sat on the fence between the pool and the beach.

\textsuperscript{98} \textit{The Sun} 1 November 1910.
\textsuperscript{99} \textit{The Sun} 14 March 1912: Rose Scott Family papers 1885-1912. Roll No. Cy 2944, Mitchell Library, Mss. 38/57.
\textsuperscript{100} \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} 6 March 1912.
The well-shaped girl might easily get over her qualms, no matter how modest she may be, but her less-favoured sister is altogether differently placed. Men who have attended swimming shows where the other sex took part, could not help but notice the quizzing and guying girl contestants were frequently subjected to...I believe in the mingling of the sexes on our beaches and under proper supervision; but the cad is much more in evidence at a swimming meeting where women figures than he is in the surf.\textsuperscript{101}

Fanny's record was impressive, and she warranted inclusion in the Australian team. At the 1912 Australian Ladies' Championship she won the 100 yd freestyle in 1 min.09 secs. unofficially breaking the world record of 1 min 12.06 sec held by Daisy Curwen of England. She lowered her time to 1 min. 06 secs. on 16 March 1912 and this was officially recognised as a world record. She had previously set two other (unofficial) world records, the 440 yd. in 6 min. 42 sec. and the 50 yd. in 31 sec. - both set in early 1912 during a visit to New Zealand. In these races she used the trudgen stroke, but switched successfully, but against advice, to the crawl, then used by some male and female swimmers for subsequent competitions.\textsuperscript{102} The sports reporter at the \textit{Herald} noted that 'Fanny has mastered a fine crawl - the change from trudgen to crawl has resulted in an extraordinary difference in pace.'\textsuperscript{103}

The Sydney newspapers gave considerable coverage to the claims that Fanny Durack should go to the Games and to the meeting convened to discuss the 'no men rule'. The \textit{Evening News} weighed in with a lengthy article headlined - \textit{Lady Swimmers. Should men look on? Sydney Club's Decision!}

discontent has reigned among members of the New South Wales Ladies Swimming Association for a long time, and now some of the fair exponents of the natatorial art intend “kicking over the traces” if the Sydney Club's special general meeting at the ABC Rooms, Pitt Street Sydney on Wednesday evening can be taken as a criterion.\textsuperscript{104}

\textsuperscript{101} \textit{The Referee} 13 March 1912.
\textsuperscript{102} R. and M. Howell op.cit. p. 53.
\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} 20 March 1912.
And the *Sydney Morning Herald* swimming reporter printed an opinion from a reader

"-Sir, - Would you kindly permit me a small space in your column to voice my opinion on the question of gentlemen spectators at a ladies’ swimming carnival or not...in my opinion gentlemen have just as much right to see our ladies swim as ladies have to see gentlemen swim...ever since the association has been formed, there has not been a yard of progress made. Agitation has long been smouldering to cut out the rule which excludes gentlemen, but having no strong leader, things have been at a standstill with struggling unfinancial honorary secretaries to try and run a club. It is a pity that we have not a few more strong broad-minded women on our committee as the Sydney Ladies Swimming Club have in a certain vice-president. -Signed common sense."\(^{105}\)

Further responses to Scott’s stance on the ‘no men’ rule show that she could no longer assume that it was intelligible to others. Scott was also taken to task for asserting that it was a poor mother who would like her daughters to swim in the presence of men.

Why the daughters of the leading people at Manly, Bondi and Coogee engage in Continental bathing daily and without the presence of their mothers, and of the young ladies taking part in your carnivals, Misses Durack, Tate, Meades and others are in the constant habit of indulging in mixed bathing, so this clearly shows that your best swimmers do not object to swimming in the presence of men - the carnivals will never be a success until gentlemen are permitted to witness the swimming by the girls and manage the carnivals.\(^{106}\)

A special meeting of the NSWLASA was called at which three separate but interrelated items were to be discussed. (1). Miss Durack be nominated for the Australasian Olympic team; (2) admittance of men to women’s swim carnivals and (3) participation in a charity swimming carnival at Rose Bay. Rose Scott strongly opposed the proposal to send a woman to the Olympic Games. She was supported by Mr. A.C.W. Hill, Secretary of the Amateur (Men’s) Swimming Association, and the only male present at the meeting, who claimed that the Amateur Swimming Association would not approve or recommend women swimmers for selection. Hill also claimed that there were insufficient funds to send all the nominated male swimmers.\(^{107}\)

\(^{104}\) *The Evening News* Thursday 7 March 1912.

\(^{105}\) *Sydney Morning Herald* 9 March 1912.

\(^{106}\) E.R.N. Hill to Rose Scott, Rose Scott Correspondence, (Mitchell Library), A2276, n.d. p. 179.

\(^{107}\) *The Referee* 13 March 1912.
first item, the majority voted against ‘...this wowseristic view’.\textsuperscript{108} It was unanimously decided that Sarah (Fanny) Durack should go to the Olympic Games. It was also decided that another champion swimmer from Sydney Wilhelmina (Mina) Wylie should also be included in the team. On the second motion Miss Scott firmly opposed a change in the rules and there were claims of controversial voting which defeated the motion.\textsuperscript{109} Mina Wylie, who was present at the meeting stated ‘my father or brothers have never seen me compete, and I would like them to see me. I think the male public should be allowed in’.\textsuperscript{110} The third motion dealt with Fanny Durack’s request to compete at a carnival in aid of the Wyalong disaster fund. Two previous requests by the organiser of the carnival had been ignored by the NSWLASA. Mr. Hill, who along with Miss Scott, opposed the motion, declared that ‘if Miss Durack competed at the carnival in question she would be associated with coloured boxers and such like persons’\textsuperscript{111} The vote was 10 to 10. Miss Scott cast her deciding vote and the motion was defeated again.

Another meeting of the NSWLASA was called by Miss Durack, at which it was voted to rescind ‘the rule of the association in forbidding the presence of men at swimming contests conducted by the association’,\textsuperscript{112} thus paving the way for the women

\textsuperscript{108} Daily Telegraph 9 March 1912.
\textsuperscript{109} Rose Scott voted first as President and then as Chairwoman. The legality of the ‘double vote’ was later questioned.
\textsuperscript{110} The Evening News Thursday 7 March, 1912.
\textsuperscript{111} Daily Telegraph 9 March 1912. The Wyalong disaster was the collapse of the Barrier mine on 13 January 1912 in which six miners lost their lives.
\textsuperscript{112} Scott papers, Mitchell Library, March 1912.
swimmers to go to Stockholm. Rose Scott was not present, nor was she notified of the meeting.\[113\]

The conflict had been bitter, and, as the decision was totally against Rose Scott’s principles, she had no choice but to resign from the presidency of the LASA and also that of chairwoman of the SLSC. Although urged not to resign ‘as the public would think you were beaten’ by some women colleagues, such as Alice Bentley who supported her notions, the unequivocal verdict of most commentators was that Scott was ‘old fashioned’ or ‘behind the times’, on this matter since among women swimmers polled, ‘more than half were in favour of the men’. Scott resigned, but stuck to her principles to the last stating in a newspaper interview.

We cannot have too much modesty, refinement and delicacy in relations between men and women. There is too much boldness and rudeness now and I am afraid that this new decision will have a very vulgar effect on girls...I also object to mixed bathing on the beaches. I was brought up in a school that considered it an insult on the part of a man to stare at a girl...it is not a compliment to be stared at by a man. Familiarity breeds contempt and I am afraid that the rescission of the rule will lead to a loss of respect for the girls and the increasing boldness of the men. It would be alright perhaps if the men would behave themselves properly, but a lot of bad men would be attracted who would make all sorts of nasty remarks and would go rather for the spectacle than for the skill.\[114\]

It is difficult to locate Rose Scott’s feminism. Why did Scott who was a firm believer in, and fighter for, the rights of women, and known as ‘the mother of suffrage’ in New South Wales have such an abhorrence of women swimming in front of mixed public? Unfortunately, researching Scott’s papers did not reveal why a woman who had such a record of service to women should take such a stance.\[115\] It can only be assumed that

\[113\] Scott’s biographer, Judith A. Allen does not elaborate on this period of Rose Scott’s life. The meetings and their outcome which received much publicity in Sydney’s newspapers are not mentioned. She writes barely a page and a half on the entire issue. (Chapter 6. Against the Brotherhood 1911-19).
\[114\] Unreferenced newspaper cutting in Scott Family Papers, Records of various organisations 1895-1912, Roll No. Cy2944, Mitchell Library, Mss.38057.
\[115\] Scott was a founder and associate of many feminist causes, including women’s suffrage and citizen’s rights, raising the age of consent, women prisoners, prostitution politics, working women’s wages and
the unmarried Scott had such high moral beliefs that she could not condone women swimming in front of the opposite sex in what might be considered revealing swimwear. Scott also wrote to *The Sun* with reference to it’s reporting of the meeting and the question of ‘double’ voting

your account implies that I, as chairwoman had only one vote. Rule 41, which reads the same in the Men’s Association, is as follows: ‘The chairman shall have a deliberative as well as a casting vote’ Then again, you imply that the vote to rescind the rule was lost by two votes. This is a mistake, as no rule can be altered or rescinded unless three-fourths of the delegates and officers present sanction such an alteration, so you see the motion was lost by an absolute majority.\(^{116}\)

This had been a collision between, on the one hand, an older women’s’ movement bent on protecting women and enabling them by asserting their sex differences and specificity; and on the other, the new feminism, preoccupied with the assertion of women’s equality, sameness and common humanity with men.\(^{117}\) Or was it much more! It has also been depicted as a contest of women versus men, of liberals versus conservatives and progressives verses wowsers. The concerns and motivations on both sides of the debate were in fact, much more complex and interesting than any of these simple adversarial descriptions allow. Certainly Durack and Wiley felt they had as much right as any man to go to the Olympics; however, many of those who supported them did not really care about women’s rights. Their main desire was that Australia does whatever possible to foster its reputation as a sporting nation and they saw the two women as distinct medal possibilities. These people wanted Australia on centre stage - how it was achieved was of secondary importance. They wanted Australia to

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\(^{116}\) Scott Family Papers op.cit. Cy2944.

\(^{117}\) Judith Allen op. cit. p.212. Allen suggests that the last years Scott devoted to public life might be represented as her struggle to come to terms with the increasing irrelevance of her own position in a new feminist context. ‘Scott had become a relic from a dim past, a prophet of doom attempting to obstruct the initiatives of progressive enlightenment and above all feminist younger women’. (p.212):

Sydney’s Archbishop Kelly stated his dislike of mixed bathing from the pulpit during a Sunday sermon.
win and win well. The Referee summed it up rather neatly after the two women had won.

Had it not been for Miss Durack and Miss Wylie...there would have been little (at the 1912 Olympics) for Australia to hold her head up and stick her chest out over.

As the 'no men' rule also applied to newspaper reporters the media lost no time in having their male reporters present at the State Championship carnival of the NSWLASA at the Domain baths on Saturday 29 March, 1912. The Daily Telegraph reporter waxed lyrical

...here were health and physique and the unhampered freedom of the human figure, here, too, was keen and friendly sport for sport's sake. Brown many of the girls were and finely developed most of them and it was this healthy sport of swimming that had made many of them the beautiful, and graceful figures they were

One more obstacle, financial support was yet to be overcome by the women in their bid to compete at Stockholm. Prime Minister Fisher rejected the sports governing bodies' request for a pound for pound subsidy and the Australasian Olympic Council lacked the funds to send all the nominated athletes to Stockholm. And, as the all-male Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) were not keen on sending female representatives, financial help from them was not forthcoming. The women were thus given the lowest priority - the leading lights of the men's Association had agreed that Durack and Wiley could represent Australia only on the conditions that (a) a sum of £150 was raised for each to cover expenses, and (b) arrangements were made for an appropriate 'chaperone'. The necessity of a travelling companion doubled the cost

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119 Daily Telegraph 31 March 1912.
120 The Referee 27 March 1912. Cashman notes that 'Requests for government assistance were turned down in 1908 and 1912, the responsibility for raising funds was left to individuals, their clubs and State Associations. One of the reasons for the emergence of what is now the Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) in 1914 — known until 1990 as the Australian Olympic Federation was to raise funds for future Olympics from the public and from business'. Paradise of Sport, The Rise of Organised Sport in Australia, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1995, p.118
of the trip for the women. The necessary funds were raised through a fund initiated by Mrs. Hugh McIntosh, Vice President of the NSWLASA who publicly supported their nomination at a carnival organised by her husband who was the proprietor of the Rushcutters Bay Stadium. Unfortunately, the money was not received in time for the women to sail with the rest of the team on the RMS Osterley enabling them to take advantage of the concessional fares on offer. Fanny, with her sister Mary as chaperone sailed on the French steamer Armand Behie and Mina with her father who had made up the difference necessary in her funds on the RMS Malwa on 4 May 1912. Both were to compete successfully in events organised for them along the way. At the Kings Cup competitions in England, Fanny won the 75 yd. freestyle ladies’ race with Mina a close second. Both women used the new two-beat Australian crawl - the first females to use it. However, it was their performance in Stockholm which brought them international fame and recognition.

Quite a stir went through the crowded audience as the ladies appeared on the starting platform for the final of the 100 metre freestyle event...the green caps and green cloaks of the Australasians made them conspicuous (sic) as they stood side by side on the extreme left side of the board. 122

On 9 July 1912 Durack took Gold and Wylie Silver in the 100 yards women’s final. They were now hailed as Australia’s Olympic sporting heroines. Not only did they swell nationalistic pride, but also they legitimised the public presentation of the athletic female. However, many years later, Wiley, recalling their efforts and ‘long fight’ to get to Stockholm remarked ‘both Fanny and myself went to Stockholm at our own expense, and when the Australian flag went up for 1 and 2 in Stockholm of

121 The Referee 24 April 1912.
course Australia sort of took the credit, for which they really weren’t due’.\textsuperscript{123} There was one other race for women at Stockholm – the women’s 4 x 100 metres relay. Unfortunately, with only two competitors from Australia, the women were unable to compete although each offered to swim twice. The women’s team from Great Britain won the race. Interestingly, Fanny was not entered in the women’s high diving event although she held the Australian women’s high diving championship.

Competing in races and exhibition swims in England and Germany on the return journey; Fanny Durack added more honours and world records to her tally. Upon receiving a champion’s welcome on her return to Sydney the \textit{Referee} reported Durack’s feelings on segregated swimming

\begin{quote}
our world’s woman champion comes back more than ever satisfied that the objection to members of both sexes swimming together exists only in this section of the earth, and is strained prudery…nowhere else is it taken exception to.\textsuperscript{124}
\end{quote}

‘Natator’ replied in the form of a ‘slap on the wrist’ to Durack, contending that

\begin{quote}
… it is not that there is anything wrong in the sexes mingling in swimming contests, or in men being allowed to look on while their or the other fellows’ sisters or cousins or aunts swim; but simply that this part of the world has not been educated anything like as far in the direction under notice as the older centres of the universe…and until it is, many of our women swimmers who race now among women, only, would drop out of the game altogether should conditions be altered so that we might fall in line with France, Germany etc.
\end{quote}

and, further resorting to a defensive and somewhat resentful tone

\begin{quote}
it was one thing for a young woman to win medals and world-wide attention for Australia but quite another for her to return home and presume to lecture anyone on social mores! Young Miss Durack must not allow her head to swell merely because she had gone overseas and done well at the Olympics.\textsuperscript{125}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{123} Oral transcript, Mina Wiley and Neil Bennett, op.cit.p. 2.
\textsuperscript{124} \textit{The Referee} 2 October 1912. This was not quite correct. Women’s competitive swimming in the United States was still a controversial issue. The extensive world-wide coverage Durack and Wylie received in Stockholm however, may have helped their cause.

158
Sarah (Fanny) Durack  
1889-1956

Wilhelmina (Mina) Wylie  
1891-1984

Source: E.S. Marks Collection  
Mitchell Library

Plate 7
BOSSING THE LADIES:

After gaining rights, which looked like taking women's swimming to total autonomy, unbelievably, they were still dominated by the NSWASA. In 1919 W.F. Corbett writing in the Referee, reported 'at the council meeting of the NSW Amateur Swimming Association on Thursday night, (Mr. E.S. Marks, chairman, presiding), Mr. A.C.W. Hill submitted the following report which was adopted as the result of a conference with the council of the Ladies Amateur Swimming Association' -

(1) That the general control by the NSWASA of all swimming, both male and female, in NSW is recognised by the NSW Ladies' ASA. (2) That the NSWASA shall control ladies' swimming in NSW with the right to conduct interstate ladies' championships (3) That it is not necessary that the rules of the NSWASA be amended to allow the NSW Ladies ASA representative on the council of the NSWASA (4) That the NSWASA be recognised as the proper channel through which to conduct all negotiations with the Australian Amateur Swimming Union in connection with international swimming.\[126\]

Although surprised at the outcome of the meeting - 'just how our mermaids were cajoled into this position I am unaware...at last the New South Wales A.S.A. has achieved what one or two of its prominent workers have been aiming at securing for a long time past'. Corbett quickly took a condescending stance

the lady swimmers will now be bossed by their brothers...it will perhaps prove all the better for the ladies that they have been taken into the arms of the masculine section of our water athletes, to be closely hugged henceforth and for evermore.\[127\]

Corbett was no doubt referring to A.C.W. Hill who had sided with and totally supported Rose Scott in her beliefs. It is possible that the powerful and influential E.S. Marks was the second 'prominent worker' who believed the NSWASA should hold sway over the NSWLASA.

\[125\] ibid.
\[126\] The Referee 17 September 1919.
\[127\] ibid.
It was Corbett’s belief that the outcome of the meeting concerned the opposition of the NSWASA to the position taken by the NSWLASA regarding a trip to the United States undertaken by Durack and Wylie, which he referred to as a ‘wild goose chase’. In 1918 the two swimmers went on a disastrous tour of the United States, which had not been sanctioned by the Australia Swimming Union. Durack and Wiley were informed that if they swam in the United States their amateur status would be jeopardized. The apparent reason for this stance was the fact that Durack had insisted that her sister Mary join the tour as chaperone and not Mrs. Chambers the preferred choice of the Ladies’ Swimming Association. The Referee’s sports writer W. F. Corbett gave considerable coverage to the 1918 venture and a second trip to the United States made by the two women the following year. The 1918 tour, eventually abandoned, was plagued by miss-information such as newspaper articles claiming that the tour had been approved and the women carried credentials. There were also objections to the entrepreneurial tactics employed by an American swimming philanthropist, William Unmack who arranged the tour. 128 With regard to the 1918 tour Corbett wrote -

Misses Mina Wiley and Fanny Durack and the latter’s sister Miss Mary Durack found America freezingly cold toward them when they arrived in San Francisco. Their attitude with regard to the New South Wales Ladies’ Amateur Swimming Association was responsible for the Amateur Athletic Union of America taking up an antagonistic attitude with regard to the tour and their attitude toward the man Mr. Unmack who suggested the venture.

In 1919 they were again in the United States and once more dogged by controversy and misunderstanding. Although sanctioned by the swimming union this tour proved as disastrous as the first. Amateurism again figured in debate and further trouble centered around their manager a Mr. W.H. (George) Dowsing. The women claimed that although they were amateurs, Dowsing should be paid expenses. However, neither

128 The Referee 24 July 1918: 22 October 1919.
the American nor the Canadian swimming bodies would agree to this stating that Dowsing could join the women as a friend only. Dowsing returned to Australia. Once more, inaccurate reporting appeared in the press. The *San Francisco Examiner* of 3 July 1919 stated that the women would stand by their Australian Sportsman manager. Dowsing, in fact was an American commercial traveller who visited Australia periodically. *The Referee*’s W.F. Corbett, however, had little time for Dowsing and stated that he (Dowsing) said he had spent a ‘whole lot of money’ in his efforts to become the ‘guardian’ of the two swimmers. After complaining to Corbett that he was ‘considerably out of pocket over the matter’ Corbett stated that ‘the American responsible for the previous visit of Misses Durack and Wiley to the United States professed himself to be a swimming philanthropist prepared to spend his money in the hope that the presence of the Australian women in Yankeedom would make for the improvement of that country’s female swimmers. What his philanthropy amounted to we now know…the swimmers went to America to turn on their heels and come home again’.

As their second tour progressed the two swimmers were shunted from one city to another with barely time to recover after swimming appearances. Angered and frustrated at arrangements – Fanny thought she had agreed to non-competitive and exhibition swims only, however, she was entered into handicap races with greatly improved American swimmers. Eventually beaten by the young Americans and after much controversy surrounding the handicapping, Fanny refused to swim stating she

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129 ibid.
130 ibid. 20 August 1919.
131 ibid. 30 July 1919.
was through with competition in the United States. They returned to Australia extremely disillusioned.

That these two splendid swimmers gained for Australian sports women a recognition previously denied is undoubted. Their feats must surely have swollen the ranks of members, not only in swimming clubs, but also those of other sports. However, Marion Stell points out that 'many commentators have under-represented the numbers of colonial women participating in sport, recreation and leisure...that all classes and all ages of women played a variety of sports in significant numbers throughout the nineteenth century'.

Certainly girls had more opportunities to become involved in sport with the promotion of physical culture in schools. While sport had been an extracurricular activity in the 1890s, subsequent generations of girls were obliged to take part in physical exercise and games during school time. Further, Stell states that 'by 1939 there were well over one million amateur sportswomen, together with a sprinkling of professional sportswomen, who belonged to sports associations across Australia...these included team-based as well as individual sports...and...although impossible to count the numbers...women had learnt to swim, dive, row, fish, cycle, swing clubs, exercise, lift weights, march, walk, run, skip, hike, roller skate, ski toboggan, shoot, box and kick-box. They played tennis, cricket, golf, archery, croquet, billiards, cards and football as well as several variations of these games. They hunted, owned, raced, rode, jumped and bet on horses, they went mountain climbing, they parachuted and they ascended in balloons'. Stell notes her source as the *Australian Women's Weekly*, February and April 1934 but unfortunately does not offer any

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132 Stell op.cit. pp.24-5.
133 ibid. p.32.
empirical evidence such as membership statistics of various sporting associations to substantiate her claims.

Women may well have participated in all the above mentioned sports but longstanding problems of sex discrimination and female subordination in Australian sporting culture was always in the background, and some women resented the male presumption that they were not the equals of men. Although swimming was a more ‘acceptable’ sport than athletics for women in the 1930s that sport had formed its own union, the Australian Women’s Amateur Athletic Union (AWAAU) in 1932. One of its founding members Mrs. Doris Magee (who was to devote a lifetime of service to Australian athletics) took the men to task. She complained to some of the leading male officials about the treatment of women athletes. In an interview with Dennis H. Phillips she stated

In 1931 Bob Heathwood, Secretary of the men’s association (NSWAAA) reacted to my complaints by saying that if I didn’t like it why didn’t I nominate for the executive committee of the men’s organisation. So I did. I won the ballot and became Assistant Secretary of the NSWAAA, the first woman to serve in that position…they (the men) definitely thought there was no place at all in a ‘man’s’ organisation for a woman. They thought it was disgusting…the standard of the meetings…and the language certainly improved. They said that they now had to write out their dirty jokes and pass them around, but it all usually ended up in my hands anyway.133

It was pretty tough for women in those days, we were always considered secondary. Many of the men acted as if women should feel grateful that they were allowed to compete at the ‘men’s meet’, and the petty slights were too numerous to mention. It was ‘only natural’ that the men controlled the meet as judges and officials, while the women served the tea and biscuits. To ‘save time’ on the track, women were for many years allowed only two attempts, rather than three at the high jump or long jump. The women’s relay was usually the last event of the day, by which time many of the male officials had gone home and women were left to come up with their own starter, times and judges. Women athletes who won at state championships were not awarded medals like the men. Instead, they were given an ‘open order’ to take to a jewellery store to purchase their own medal or trophy.136

\[134\] ibid. p.48, p 25.
\[135\] Phillips op.cit. p.41.
\[136\] ibid. Open orders were given in lieu of trophies by many swimming clubs in Sydney in the 1940s and early 1950s. The Randwick-Coogee Ladies Swimming Club gave ‘orders’ on Saunders jewellery store at Railway Square.
Despite the constraints of the Depression Australia managed to send a small team to the 1932 Olympic Games in Los Angeles. Although none of the Australian women at the 1928 Amsterdam Olympics had gained a medal, three female swimmers were selected for the Los Angeles Games along with one woman athlete.\textsuperscript{137} The four women composed one-third of the 1932 team. However, when the team was first announced on 8 February 1932, no female runner was included. An uproar ensured, selection procedures were severely criticised and a month later Eileen Wearne from New South Wales was included in the team.\textsuperscript{138}

Sydney swimmer, Clare Dennis won gold for Australia in the 200 metre breaststroke in a record time of 3 min. 06.3 secs. At age 16 Dennis became the youngest gold medallist at the Los Angeles Games and the only competitor to break the American monopoly on the gold medals in women's swimming. Fellow Sydney swimmer, Philomena (Bonnie) Mealing won the silver medal in the 100 metre backstroke. The third woman swimmer Francis Bult acquitted herself well. She took more than a second off the Olympic record and still finished fifth.\textsuperscript{139}

Berlin was selected to host the 1936 Olympic Games and once again furore broke out over the selection of the team to represent Australia. The male contingent more than tripled from 8 to 29. Initially, only one woman, backstroke swimmer Pat Norton was

\textsuperscript{137} Andrew Charlton won Australia's only medals at the 1928 Amsterdam Games. He gained two silver medals – the 400 m and 1500 m freestyle.

\textsuperscript{138} Eileen Wearne came fourth in her heat of the 100m and was eliminated. \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} 3, 6 August 1932. See also David Wallechinsky \textit{The Complete Book of the Olympics}, New York, Penguin, 1984.

\textsuperscript{139} Phillips op.cit. p.43. The race was won by Helene Madison of the United States who in 1930-31 set world records in all of the recognised distances from 100 yards to one mile.
selected. When the team was first announced in March 1935 many prominent names were missing, including athlete Doris Carter, swimmers Clare Dennis, Kitty Mackay and Evelyn de Lacy (who had held the 200, 400 and 800 metres freestyle titles for two successive years) as well as Clarice Kennedy who was javelin and hurdles champion of Australia. The media became involved in the selection controversy as did Doris Magee who forcefully protested the omission of Clarice Kennedy. In response, the men’s athletic union informed her that ‘her letter of protest was viewed as impertinent’. ¹⁴⁰ The Australian Women’s Weekly joined the fray leaving no doubt about its views on the selection committee

while the Olympic Federation and the Athletic Union officials are wrangling, and blaming each other for want of foresight in the selection of the team to take part in the Olympic Games at Berlin, the average Australian realises that the omission of certain athletes and swimmers has left the Australian team hopelessly weak, unless, at the eleventh hour, more names are added to the list. ¹⁴¹

The matter eventually reached Parliament. The then leader of the Opposition, John Curtin complained that the sporting associations charged with the selection of Australia’s Olympic athletes were guided more by ‘internal jealousies and personal prejudices’ than any concern for Australia’s prospects at the Olympic Games. Following the resignations of several of the original selectors The Australian Olympic Federation decided on late admissions to the team. Swimmers, Mackay and de Lacy were both added as was high jumper Doris Carter, but the men’s athletic union stood firm on Clarice Kennedy and she was not included. Claire Dennis, preferring not to be embroiled in the controversy announced her retirement.¹⁴² No Australian swimming medals were gained at the Berlin Olympics.

¹⁴⁰ ibid. p.49; Stell op.cit. p. 107.
A further factor, which fuelled the debate, was the declaration by the Olympic Federation that nominations would be called for the position of chaperone for the women’s team. However, selection would be conditional on the chaperone being able to pay her own expenses. The chaperone of the 1932 team, Mrs. Chambers, pointed out that the position was not one calling for a ‘chaperone’ but one, which required the skills of a ‘manageress’.

She has numerous duties to perform. She sees that the girls are properly looked after, that they keep to their training, that their meals are properly cooked, and that they are well catered for. She must also arrange for proper sleeping apartments and that they get the necessary amount of rest, yet the Olympic Federation considers that this service should be given gratis.¹⁴³

*The Sydney Morning Herald* observed that ‘should the delegates decide that no women swimmers are to be sent, the cost of a chaperone will be saved and this will permit the inclusion of two extra men’.¹⁴⁴ ‘It would take decades of lobbying before Australian women were finally successful in having the term ‘chaperone’ dropped in favour of a more accurate and less condescending job description’.¹⁴⁵

**CONCLUSION:**

Throughout history men have been swimmers. From the time of colonisation men’s swimming enjoyed the luxury of being an accepted form of recreation. There was also a straightforward transition from recreational to competitive swimming. There were no barriers to be broken down, no sensibilities to be appeased. Their competitions progressed from an ad hoc informality to serious racing as clubs and associations were formed. Men became the champions, they swam in competitions at home and abroad;

¹⁴² Phillips op.cit. p.49; Stell op.cit. p.107.
¹⁴³ Phillips ibid. p.49.
¹⁴⁴ *Sydney Morning Herald* 13 March 1936.
¹⁴⁵ Phillips op.cit. p.49.
men became predominately the teachers and initially, it was the men 'flyers'\textsuperscript{146} who attracted the crowds to the swimming carnivals and competitions and thus popularised the sport.

The women swimmers of Sydney followed a different road. From splendid isolation - to conditional acceptance - to self imposed purdah and finally to Olympic glory women's swimming, both recreational and competitive evolved in a very different way to that of men's swimming. No matter what their chosen sport, women had to challenge and overcome the social mores of the day, which were deeply rooted in western cultural traditions, and the tensions surrounding the definition of sex and gender roles. They also had to overcome the tyranny of medical ignorance, and challenge the establishment which firmly believed in the superiority of men with all the attendant privileges - the public/private sphere - with women occupying the private sphere.

While the physical figures of sportswomen were largely hidden from public display, the bodies of sportsmen were exposed and coveted; the athletic torso and muscles of leading male swimmers and scullers, were eulogised by the print media and commercial advertisers. Men continued to hold centre stage as achievers in sport.\textsuperscript{147} Conduct for sportswomen was circumscribed in other ways. The rise of competitive women's sport trespassed on what had been broadly considered male cultural territory, so men, who felt aggrieved or threatened by this change, reacted with hostility,

\textsuperscript{146} On 12 March 1902 the Sydney Sportsman reported postponement of a carnival 'owing to the absence of "flyers" in New Zealand for a 100 yards championship - without Lane and Cavill amongst the competitors it would fail to attract any interest'.

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ridiculing female athletes as ‘unladylike’ and trivialising their sporting abilities. The print media led this tirade, lampooning sportswomen as straying mothers and wives, reminding them that their place was in the home, not on the playing field or in the swimming pool.\textsuperscript{148}

The women swimmers of Sydney entered recreational, and for that matter, early competitive swimming in a very understated way. Recreational swimming was conducted in a secluded atmosphere away from the ‘public’ sphere emerging quietly into ‘ladies hours’ in mixed bathing establishments and later in unheralded competitions such as ‘ladies races’ held at men’s swimming carnivals - a type of novelty race without names being shown on the program. When competitive swimming became serious, barriers became large hurdles. Along the way they had to challenge the NSWASA, which numbered amongst its members some very influential Sydney business and sportsmen. This Association patronised women swimmers and practised blatant discrimination. It offered affiliation but rejected any move to allow equality by electing a women delegate on to the executive committee - ‘ladies will not sit in the parliament of swimmers’.\textsuperscript{149} It thus held the upper hand in decision making for women’s swimming clubs. It decided when and where women could conduct carnivals and competitions; as well, it initially controlled the handicapping, the time keeping and other aspects of racing procedure. Finally, they had to challenge some of their own gender who remained committed to the preservation of many conventional

\begin{footnotes}
\item[148] ibid.
\item[149] Sydney Sportsman 12 November 1902.
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values relating to family life and womanliness. It made the medals won at Stockholm all the sweeter.

However, the blurring of the public and private process has not necessarily undermined male domination, but may have merely served to shift the locus of its power.
CHAPTER 4:

LAWS MADE AND LAWS CHANGED

O Mr. Gocher, you really shouldn't oughta
Put on your togs in daylight hours
And swim in Council water! ¹

SURF BATHING AND THE LAW:

It will be recalled that the Surveyor, W.R. Govett, writing for the *Saturday Magazine* in 1837 remarked that 'in the neighbourhood of Sydney there are no beaches fit for bathing'.² But as the colony grew and expanded, the ocean beaches of Sydney became available to those who would venture from the safety of the baths to the surf.

In the 1880s and 1890s people were beginning to realize that the sea had uses other than for fishing and boating and they turned to the ocean for its health giving properties. Swim they could not, nor even be seen attempting to do so in broad daylight as the law was still in force, which forbade bathing between the hours of 6 am and 7 pm.

In 1902 a quest began to extend public bathing to daylight hours in New South Wales. A conflict then began between those who wished to legitimise surf bathing and the moralists who argued that daylight bathing was a threat to public decency. Those in favour of daylight bathing argued

we are an open air people in these days when the 'return-to-nature' theory is looked upon with increasing fervor, the getting of as much sunshine and fresh air as possible is coming to be looked upon as a moral duty...sand, surf, sunshine...if not the elixir of life, must surely be part of it, and is certain to tone up the system and lengthen the life...so the sun-worshipper looks with pity upon his pallid brother as one who stupidly neglects a most evident good, and in fact one who falls short somehow in the standard of true manliness.³

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² Govett was probably referring to the harbour beaches, which suffered the combined hazards of pollution and sharks.
³ *Evening News* 12 October 1907.
All day bathing had been enjoyed for some time at Little Coogee (Clovelly) and according to the *Sydney Morning Herald* ‘throughout the greater part of the year hundreds of people bathe there almost daily, and the local council has given encouragement to this healthy exercise by the erection of bathing sheds for males and females. The council, according to a notice board, permits bathing at all hours providing bathers are properly attired’.\(^4\) However, it reported on both 2 and 9 June 1902 that during the last week or two, when the bay was well patronized the police came down and took the names of a number of swimmers, although properly clothed. These people have been fined, and naturally there is a good deal of indignation amongst the regular bathers. According to the clauses in the Police Offences Act under which they were fined, bathers are equally liable at Coogee, Bondi and other places. It is hinted that the prosecutions have been instituted with a view to having the Act, which is considered obsolete, amended.

On 7 October 1902 Randwick Borough Council passed a by-law allowing all-day bathing.

It shall be lawful for all persons, whether male or female, to bathe in the sea at all times and at all hours of the day at those portions of the sea beach within the Municipality of Randwick duly set apart for such bathing, provided such persons desirous of bathing being male or female, shall be clothed or covered from the neck and shoulders to the knees with a suitable dress or costume; and all children above the age of 8 years, male or female, shall be so clothed to prevent exposure or indecency, such clothing or covering shall be approved of by the Council, or other persons appointed as caretaker or caretakers. Any person infringing the provisions of the by-law shall be liable on conviction to the penalty not exceeding £1 and not less than 5 shillings. This by-law covers bathing on the beach at Coogee.\(^5\)

Manly Council took a different line. During the previous summer numerous complaints were received concerning bathing on the Ocean Beach without proper bathing costumes. The then current by-law, while strong on decency, did not mention any time as being prohibited and Council had to rely on the Police Offences Act which stipulated no bathing after 6 am. This was clearly unenforceable, so, on 20 October 1902 the Manly aldermen passed a by-law, which they intended to rigidly enforce.

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\(^4\) *Sydney Morning Herald* 2 June 1902.
\(^5\) NSW Government Gazette, 2 December 1902, Vol. 6, p.8690. ‘Passed at the regular meeting of the Randwick Borough Council held on 7th October 1902’.
body from the neck to the knee. Any person committing a breach of this by-law shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding £1.6

Daylight bathing was first proscribed in an Act in 1833, which banned it in and around Sydney Cove. The ban spread to other parts of the state incorporated into municipalities in 1880 but by then Manly Council had already acted, having introduced a by-law in 1878 forbidding bathing in the surf between 7 am and 8 pm. However, the bathing laws only applied to those parts of the state incorporated into municipalities such as Manly, and not to all the beaches north of Manly lagoon, which were only incorporated when Warringah Council was formed in 1906. Anyone wanting to enjoy the surf and sun had only to go over the hill to Freshwater to escape the quaintly named Inspector of Nuisances.

Waverley Council also took action to regulate bathers at Bondi Beach. A complaint was received that a number of men bathed every morning between the hours of 6 and 8 am within view of people frequenting the beach, and many of the bathers were not properly dressed. Council requested Police Inspector General Fosbery to instruct local police to take action under sections 77 and 78 of the Police Offenses Act. Several names were taken but after police looked into the situation which was that bathing was taking place at Bondi, as it had at Manly for the previous twenty years, common sense prevailed and the Inspector replied to the Council.

So long as bathers wear suitable costumes, and public decency is not outraged, I am unable to see that a practice permitted for so many years should be stopped. Indeed, I do not suppose that the magistrates would inflict penalties for any breach of the Act under the circumstances. Unless, therefore, I receive instructions from the Government to the contrary, I do not see my way to take action beyond instructing the police that decency is to be observed.7

6 ibid. ‘Made and passed by the Council of the Municipal District of Manly, this 20th day of October, one thousand nine hundred and two’. Manly’s By-Laws were again altered on 7th December 1903 to permit persons to bathe in the sea at all times and at all hours of the day in the appropriately permitted swimming attire. New South Wales Government Gazette 11 December 1903, p.9118, (appendix No. 3) (made and passed by the Council of the Municipal District of Manly this 2nd day of November, one thousand nine hundred and three).
7 Sydney Morning Herald 15 November 1902.
Further investigation of this matter revealed that the complaints emanated from Mr. Farmer the lessee of Bondi Baths. Farmer paid the council £150 per year and according to the police was ‘annoyed at seeing so many people enjoying a free bath’. This was also a problem in Manly. Council was hampered with the lease of its harbour baths. Thomas Skinner had leased the men’s baths for £375 for three years and Leon Ferrett the women’s baths for £185 for the same period. As both men no doubt took the leases on the assumption that the baths were the only places where ‘legal’ swimming was permitted after 7am the aldermen no doubt felt an obligation to them until the leases expired in 1903.\(^8\)

In late 1902 a local newspaper proprietor and editor of a single sheet newspaper called the *Manly and North Sydney News*, William Gocher, who had a talent for self promotion, decided to test Manly Council’s by-laws on restricted bathing hours. Gocher announced to his readers that he would defy the daylight bathing laws and challenge the police to arrest him. On two occasions he entered the water reputedly wearing a mackintosh over a costume with wide blue and white stripes (although there is disagreement about this outfit) and each time was ignored with no sign of the police showing up to arrest him. Even when he went to the police station he was met with disinterest. He then met Inspector General Fosbery who told him that ‘it was unlikely that any magistrate would prosecute daylight bathers as long as they were decently attired’. The law had been flouted for some time and most councils had already altered their by-laws to allow daylight bathing by the time Gocher performed his stunt – Manly was just a little behind the rest. It wasn’t until 1907 that a *Daily Telegraph* journalist wrote Gocher up as a hero. In a story entitled *All Day Bathing – How it was Won* for
Manly, the author castigated the people of Manly for failing to recognise Gocher, the hero, who had done so much to make surf bathing the popular sport it had become – and linked Gocher’s efforts to Manly’s growing commercial success which was becoming increasingly centred on surf bathing. Shortly after the Daily Telegraph article appeared, an appeal was launched by Manly Surf Club’s co-founder Frank Donovan which resulted in a presentation of 50 sovereigns and an inscribed watch to Gocher. In 1952 a block of Housing Commission flats in Manly was named after Gocher and in 1980 Manly Council eventually placed a plaque on the beachfront at South Steyne commemorating his effort. There were no heroes behind the advent of daylight bathing – just ordinary people who wished to enjoy the sea and the beach and who were not overly concerned about the niceties of the law.

And, enjoy the beach they did. The Red Funnel of August 1907 ran an article on its front page praising the sport of surf bathing and its health giving attributes.

It is a welcome sign that the youth of New South Wales are becoming so universally addicted to surf-bathing – for there is no finer, no cleaner, no more invigorating, health-giving and health-retaining pastime known to mankind, nor one freer from debasing influences and fuller of that which elevates and pleases. To the healthy active young who has once tasted of its delights, there is an occult, irresistible allurement and entrancing beauty in the ceaseless swish and roar of the breakers that draw him to them on every possible occasion.⁹

DANGERS OF THE DEEP – DROWNINGS:

The problems associated with nudity, swimming costumes and offended sensibilities palled in the face of the biggest problem councils had to contend with – drownings.

Drownings had occurred at various times in the harbour and surrounding waterways but once discovered, the surf became a major claimant of lives. People who could not swim, let alone handle or ‘read’ the surf ventured into the waves and with no knowledge of

⁸ ibid 3 October 1900.
rips, undertows, wave zones and channels which were the bete noire of the surfer, were often carried out past the line of breakers. Unfortunately the majority of by-standers were non-swimmers and incapable of rendering assistance.

After several drownings Manly council made a half-hearted attempt to deter surfers from using certain parts of the beach known to have rips and undertows and installed signs to that effect. But it could no longer ignore the need for some type of life saving equipment on the beaches and in 1886 lines and life-buoys were put in place. These proved inadequate and after another drowning, the lines were lengthened, but still to no avail in rescue attempts. Council, however, was still reluctant to spend money on what the majority of councillors and residents thought to be a dangerous activity pursued by a small minority. Eventually, pressure forced the council to apply to the Life Saving Society, the National Shipwreck Relief Society and the Humane Society for equipment, which was again put in place along with warning signs. A Manly Council minute of 23 March 1903 notes that a letter from the secretary of Manly Life Saving Society suggests in lieu of flags denoting dangerous spots on Ocean Beach that finger posts be erected. This suggestion was accepted. Unfortunately, sea air and lack of continued maintenance on the lines and upgrading of the signs took its toll, rendering them useless. After a double drowning at Manly on 17 January 1902, which received much publicity, council was urged to install bathing machines. Council had been approached previously with regard to placing bathing machines on the beach. A letter was received by council on 22 November 1883 from a Captain Wagstaff requesting council’s permission to place

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There was also a need for public education on the importance of this equipment. On one occasion a group of picnickers at Manly made swings from the lines, which had to be replaced. Sydney Morning Herald 4 February 1896. This situation did not improve. Some years later complaints were made to Waverley Council that steps should be taken to prevent improper use of the lines at Bronte. Waverley Council Minutes 12 February 1907. The Hon. Secretary of Bondi Surf Bathers Life Saving Club was more vocal drawing attention to the fact that ‘some evil disposed person or persons had removed a number of large corks from the life belt attached to life and portable reel’. Waverley Council Minutes 18 May 1907.
bathing machines on the harbour beach.\textsuperscript{11} After discussion, it was resolved on the motion of Alderman Barker, seconded Alderman Small, 'that owing to the contracted and limited area of the harbour beach, and soft nature of the sand, it is unsuitable for bathing machines and council therefore cannot assent to Captain Wagstaff's proposal'.\textsuperscript{12} On 26 March 1885 council considered a letter from Mr. H. Greenfield with regard to bathing machines. The aldermen considered it not only unsuitable for Manly but an injustice to the lessee of the baths. Mr. Greenfield wrote again in December 1885 seeking permission to place a patent bathing machine on the Ocean Beach but council ruled that the outer beach was too dangerous. His persistence resulted in a third try in February 1887 to place bathing machines on the Ocean Beach, and again permission was refused.\textsuperscript{13} At no time in the history of Manly have bathing machines appeared on the harbour or ocean beaches. At any rate, had the proposal been acceptable to council, bathing machines were likely to have satisfied the bathing needs of only a few people and certainly not those who wished to enjoy the freedom of swimming in the surf or open water.

The double drowning in January 1902 had a significant impact at Manly. It involved a young woman named Mabel Thorp who worked in a boarding house in Manly and a visitor to Manly from Broken Hill, Frederick Smalpage. When Mabel got into difficulties, Smalpage who was swimming nearby with his family went to her rescue but drowned trying to save her.\textsuperscript{14} Manly blacksmith, Phillip Daley managed to recover Smalpage's body. Mabel Thorp's body was not recovered; only a woman's straw hat

\textsuperscript{11} Manly Municipal Council Minutes, 22 November 1883.
\textsuperscript{12} ibid.
\textsuperscript{13}ibid, 3 December 1885: 24 February 1887.
\textsuperscript{14} Sydney Morning Herald 18 January 1902.
Mobile bathing machines at Coogee in the 1880s.

Source: Randwick City Council Library
was found floating nearby.\(^\text{15}\) The drownings brought a flood of letters to the newspapers from concerned citizens, all of whom had suggestions for safety and rescue operations. One suggestion along the lines used in English and continental watering places was to have two boats cruising constantly on duty to go to an immediate rescue. Another was to have one boat cruising just beyond the line of breakers and strict regulation of bathers as to the safest area in which to swim ‘and an experienced man on the beach engaged to watch the safety of those who entered the water’.\(^\text{16}\) Another suggested ‘piles be driven in the sea in a line deemed by depth of water to be dangerous to the inexperienced. The piles may be 40 to 50 feet apart, double hopped at the top with a hole inserted between the hoops of a size to take a disused tram cable with a similar hole in the central depth of water and one near the ground level. To those ropes a wire netting some 7 to 8 feet high could be secured’.\(^\text{17}\) Moored buoys were another suggestion. These had been tried at Manly but proved unworkable in rough seas. In fact, the only beach at which this method proved to be of any use was at Little Coogee (Clovelly), which has little surf. There was, in fact, some rescue apparatus on the beach when the drownings of the 17 January occurred but unfortunately ropes broke when a rescue attempt was made not once but twice which says little for experience in choice, upkeep or quality of such equipment. A letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* from a Will A. Dixon lamenting the drownings suggested that as the life-line parted several times

this line was probably of Manila hemp, as this is the rope that is used for almost all purposes in Australia, but it has the unfortunate property that once it has been wetted with salt water it soon

\(^{15}\) ibid.

\(^{16}\) *Sydney Morning Herald* 22 November 1902. A monument was later erected to the memory of Federick Snalpage and Boer War volunteers. In October 1902 the editor of the *Sunday Times* wrote to Council asking that it take over £111.19.0 that he had for a Snalpage memorial. Council decided the money should be put towards the erection of a marble drinking fountain which was unveiled on 18 January 1908: Manly Municipal Council Minutes 7 October 1902, p.176. The fountain was also in memory of Manly residents, Troupers Budd and Lipscomb who volunteered for the South African war but died of enteric fever on reaching the war zone: *Sydney Morning Herald* 20 January 1908. A complaint by an alderman of ‘the fine real appearance of the drinking fountain facing the Harbour beach’ brought about its removal to its present location on East Esplanade: Manly Municipal Council Minutes, 1 September 1908, p.44.

\(^{17}\) ibid 21 January 1902.
perishes and is quite unreliable. For a life-line coir should be used, as it does not rot with salt water. It floats well, and is rough, so that it affords a good grip to a person in the water.\[18\]

Waverley Council too had to contend with unfortunate drownings. In the Council Minutes of 11 June 1907 the Mayor referred to a lamentable drowning affair at Tamarama Beach on the 9th instant, but went on to defend the council’s actions.

It was thought outside Council that the Council was to blame for the non proviso of life saving apparatus at this beach – and desires it to be known Council is not to blame – Council had assisted Bondi and Bronte and discouraged surf bathing at Tamarama knowing the dangerous nature of the surf and beach – instructions had been given for notices to be placed on the beach to this effect.

**SHOOTING THE BILLOW:**

Despite the drownings more people were becoming proficient swimmers and enjoying ‘shooting the breakers’. Annette Kellermann stated ‘the man who has never given himself completely to the sun and the cold sting of the waves will never know the meaning of life...there is nothing more liberating than swimming – swimming out beyond the surf line is freedom itself...all life’s shackles are washed away with the waves’.\[19\] The Sydney press provided plenty of advice on the subject, and named some prominent ‘shooters’. It is generally agreed that one of the first white Australians ‘to shoot the breakers’ was Mr. F.C. Williams of Manly who was introduced to the art in 1890 by Tommy Tanna, an Island native who was employed as a gardener by the Moore family who lived at ‘Tramore’ on the corner of Darley and Addison Roads, Manly. However, it is maintained that it is wrong to suggest Williams was *the* first white Australian as Tanna had been in Manly long before the Williams family moved there ‘and other local lads would have picked it up before young Fred arrived on the scene’\[20\]

\[18\] ibid 21 January 1902.
In his autobiography, written in the late 1950's Arthur Lowe takes the opportunity to refute the stories that abounded about William's role as the first surf-shooting pioneer.

I must refute a lately broadcasted statement from the A.B.C. It stated that Fred Williams interviewed Tommy Tanna and said to him 'I'll learn this surf shooting too, and get it going'. The real facts as shown in this book distinctly state my mates and I were shooting with Tommy Tanna four years before Fred came to Manly.  

Apparently, Eric Moore who was a classmate of Lowe at Manly school invited Lowe home for a game of tennis. Lowe admired the court - 'it's dead-even lawn' and was told that 'credit for it belonged to our Islander Boy, Tommy Tanna from the Island of Tanna'. It was Tanna's custom to go to the beach each morning to empty the fish traps he set off the rocks at South Steyne, and, leaving his catch in a nearby rock pool, then dive into the surf and swim off Rocks Point. Lowe and Moore accompanied him but went into the surf from the beach, until encouraged by Tanna's confidence in deep water, joining him there found that as they trod water

...all got lifted up from the base of a wave to its crest, he (Tanna) gave several quick overarm strokes and kicks and then travelled onto the beach with it. ...Eric and I, during those pioneering days with Tommy Tanna learned a lot about the waves that under ordinary circumstances, i.e. as a non-surf shooter, we would never have found out, nor bothered about. At the time we started with Tommy, I had turned ten...Eric was a little younger than I.  

This was in 1889 when Lowe, with his four friends Eric Moore, Norman Rowe, John Bedwell and Sydney Stevens, called themselves the 'Junior Pioneer Gang' and met

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22 Ibid. p.26: (For historical reasons the quintessential Australian beach is defined as a surfing beach - that is - one which faces the open ocean where waves build in height before crashing as breakers on to the sand. Because most of Australia's continental shelf is steep and narrow by world standards its ocean beaches (where unprotected by reefs) are typically pounded by waves more active and vigorous than those found on other coast lines - particularly those of Britain and Europe. Sandy beaches without surf are located in sheltered bays and inlets such as Sydney Harbour. New South Wales Department of Land and Water Conservation, May 1997.)
23 Ibid. p.30.
regularly in the early morning for surf-shooting.\textsuperscript{24} Brothers, Fred and Sid Williams with their parents moved to Manly from South Australia in about 1893 and joined surf shooters at South Steyne. Fred was seventeen years old when he began surf shooting.\textsuperscript{25}

But it was 'Williams who popularised the art - or sport - by taking bodysurfing on the road, so to speak, travelling as far as Newcastle to teach the art and by writing newspaper articles on the subject'.\textsuperscript{26} The Sydney Mail published an eight-picture detail of 'shooting' (with references to the coastal shark) by Williams.\textsuperscript{27}

Samuel A. Mills also wrote a good description for The Sydney Mail 'It consists in utilising an incoming wave as a force of propulsion for the body. It is done by either springing or swimming into a billow just before the crest begins to curl over.'\textsuperscript{28} And, from another 'shooter'.

The best wave is the one that is thick at the base; the complete wave, the solid blue unbroken wave, and the top of it must not break before the swimmer gets it. When the wave is coming the swimmer has to face it, then allow the body to rise with it. As he nears the crest he turns his body horizontal, balances on the wave's top, gives the kick and the hand stroke, then stiffens the body, hollowing his back, pressing his hands against his front thigh, keeping his head down, and forcing his feet straight out behind him. Balanced thus, with the impetus given to his body by the kick and stroke, he finds himself poised for a second on the wave's peak and carried forward several yards by it. The same instant he begins dropping over, sliding head first down the face of the breaking wave, slipping porpoise-like down the terraces of foam, tobogganing the breaker from crest to base.\textsuperscript{29}

'The best beach for breaker-shooting is one that shelves gradually, and has neither holes nor adjacent rocks to create cross currents. The further the bather is able to wade before he reaches the point where the waves break, the longer will be his shoot and the safer.

\textsuperscript{24} ibid.p.35.
\textsuperscript{25} Oral history interview between Maggie Sirks and Joan Cooke (past Mayor of Manly), Maggie Sirks was Fred William's daughter.
\textsuperscript{26} Morcombe op.cit. p.22.
\textsuperscript{27} Sydney Mail 16 January 1907. Williams was also known as 'the man with the megaphone'. Before the introduction of public address systems Williams was a well-known personality mustering competitors and announcing race results at swimming and surf carnivals. He was always impeccably dressed in white. (photo and caption held at Manly Life Saving Club).
\textsuperscript{28} Samuel Mills, 'Shooting the Breakers', The Sydney Mail, 16 January 1907.
Where the beach dips suddenly, and a bather is out of his depth at a few yards from the water’s edge, shooting is neither good nor safe. Under such conditions, waves have a way of dumping a bather vertically instead of horizontally. The result is that the inexperienced or foolhardy bather who tries to take such waves is lifted high, and then suddenly cast head foremost into water perhaps only six inches deep. Fractured and dislocated shoulders from this cause are comparatively common.\(^\text{30}\)

The growing popularity of beach-going presented beachside councils with another problem - dressing room accommodation. When the mayor of Waverley moved a motion to make funds available for dressing room accommodation to be built for surf bathers there were objections mainly because council ‘did not derive any revenue from the bathers’ and ‘increasing the attractiveness of surf bathing would depreciate the value of the municipal baths’.\(^\text{31}\) However, it was obvious that councils would need to address the accommodation problem as more people flocked to the beaches. In an article titled ‘Surf Bathing at Manly’ one newspaper observed

> on Saturday and Sunday last there were some thousands of bathers (at Manly)...the accommodation for them was altogether inadequate and the enclosures - they can’t be called sheds - were in a dirty and unkempt condition.\(^\text{32}\)

Aware of the situation, the Manly Mayor’s report for 1906-1907 stated

> as surf bathing is now one of the principal features of the municipality it behoves the Council to go a step further and cater for the requirement of a modern people. To my mind it is absolutely necessary to erect up-to-date dressing sheds with all conveniences. This will probably entail an expenditure of a £1000 but the Council could reimburse itself by making a charge for admission.\(^\text{33}\)

Councils, however, did not have full control of the beaches and were subject to the supervisory control of the Department of Lands. The divided nature of the control was

\(^{29}\) ibid.


\(^{31}\) *Sydney Morning Herald* 25 October 1905.

\(^{32}\) *Daily Telegraph* 26 September 1907.
considered difficult and endeavours were made to gain full jurisdiction. The Mayor of Randwick demanded that councils be given full rights to their beaches. However, the provision of adequate beach amenities was costly and thought to be beyond municipal councils' financial resources. Some government aid was necessary and consideration was being given for advances to councils to contract dressing accommodation under a repayment scheme similar to that used for water supplies. Total support for the scheme from the aldermen was not forth-coming - some were opposed to the councils having full control. Alderman Baker of Randwick thought that some government control was necessary to safeguard the public and prevent any 'funny business'. 'It was hardly consistent' he argued 'to ask for public money to improve the beaches and expect to have full control'.

Many local rate payers also opposed erection of accommodation for 'the benefit of 50 or 60 bathers'. A different view was held by 'Merman' a regular contributor of letters to the editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*. He contended -

Sir - some 30 years ago I advocated mixed bathing on the beach at Manly. Ever since then the waves have been beating on the sands, and all that time they might have been rolling sovereigns into the pockets of the Manly people but for prudishness and false modesty.

Strong support for erection of bathing facilities came from another direction - the commercial sector that welcomed the business and commercial opportunities to be derived from the promotion of surf bathing. These included land speculators, property owners and developers, food outlet proprietors, costume hire operators, manufacturers of costumes and beach wear and the retailers who stocked this merchandise. Randwick Council Minutes record that a Mr. Hobb's tender of £12.12 shillings (12 guineas) for the

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34 *The Sun* 9 August 1911.
35 ibid 10 January 1907.
36 ibid 24 January 1907.
right of leasing chairs on Coogee beach was refused. But by 1908 a Mr. C. Griffiths gained permission from council to use the northern end of Coogee Beach for hiring out of costumes. Just three years later a Mrs. Carson was granted the chair hiring rights at £45 per annum. Even soap manufacturers jumped onto the bandwagon with ads for medicated soap to take the sting out of sunburn. These groups contended that surf bathing made the beach areas popular and that accommodation facilities would be money ‘well spent’. Councils obviously saw the need for dressing accommodation. In March, 1908 Manly Council wrote to Randwick Council suggesting a joint delegation to the Minister for Lands to request assistance in providing more accommodation at beaches. Randwick Council not only agreed, but also resolved that the Coogee Surf Life Saving Brigade also be invited to send 2 delegates.

Other economic benefits were apparent. Frank Donovan, the founding president of the Manly Surf Club attributed population growth and increases in property values in the Manly area to surf bathing. Moreover, the expansion of sport, in this case surf bathing, produced an increased desire and need for more information on the sport, the result being increased local press coverage, a market for sporting literature and sports journals, the creation of guidebooks and other sports manuals and the development and importance of statistics. And, as the Parliamentary Standing Committee’s Report Relating to the Proposed Electric Tramway - The Spit to Manly (1908) was quick to

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37 Randwick City Council Minutes, 26 November 1907.
38 ibid. 10 March 1908.
39 ibid. 23 August 1911.
40 The Surf, 5 January 1918 carried an advertisement for Rexona — The Surfer’s Friend guaranteeing relief from sunburn: the same publication dated 19 January 1918 carried an advertisement for swimming costumes at Lowe’s clothing store. Men’s two-piece all-wool costumes 10/6. Ladies two-piece costumes 8/6. to 11/6. and women’s oil-silk surf caps with earflaps, all sizes 3/6. Another advertisement suggested ‘surfers’ foot’ could be prevented with iodex, p 4
41 Sydney Morning Herald 25 October 1905.
42 Randwick City Council Minutes, 24 March 1908.
43 Daily Telegraph 29 October 1907.
point out, one component in particular spelt economic viability for the tramway and thus ensured its construction - the advent of surfing.\textsuperscript{45} Commercialisation then, acted like a catalyst for the rationalisation of business practice and maximisation of profits.\textsuperscript{46}

By 1905 male sun baking had become very popular, giving councils yet another problem with which to deal.\textsuperscript{47} A healthy looking tan was seen as very masculine and male bathers set about acquiring summer tans, some even flaunting the law and tanning themselves on the beach in view of women and children and other swimmers, instead of using the designated enclosures.

The newspapers encouraged the idea of masculinity and healthy tans. The \textit{Sydney Mail} suggesting 'a sun-browned body always wins respect. After a dip it is quite common to see youths oiling each other's back preparatory to lying on the sand, so that the sun may give them a healthy tan'.\textsuperscript{48} The problem apparently persisted for some time. The \textit{Daily Telegraph} of 20 January 1917 carried, under the heading \textit{Dangers and Decencies}: an article which reported the meeting of 'a deputation to the Minister for Local Government (Mr. J.D. Fitzgerald) representing several seaside municipalities to seek assistance in safeguarding the public against surf-bathing dangers and also to obtain the assistance of the Minister in any action taken against offenders of public decency'. The Mayor of Manly spoke of 'the action of people walking down from their homes in an outer garment and disrobing on the beach'\textsuperscript{49} to which the Minister replied that 'police were already clothed with sufficient power if people offended the canons of decency'.

\textsuperscript{45} Parliamentary Standing Committee Report Relating to the Proposed Electric Tramway - The Spit to Manly, (1908).
\textsuperscript{46} Adelman op.cit. p.10.
\textsuperscript{47} This continued to be a controversial issue up until the 1920s.
\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Sydney Mail} 22 February 1905.
But it was the sun basking on the beach outside the enclosures, which brought prudery to the fore. Alderman Quirk (Manly) asked that an ordinance be enacted to enable the council to prosecute sun-bathers who ‘lolled in the midst of women and children clad only in neck-to-knee costumes’.\(^5\) The Minister then read the ordinance ‘which stated that sun-basking on the beaches was prohibited where sun-basking enclosures were provided’. The Minister went further – with two suggestions. First, ‘councils should bar surf shooting. A man or a group of men would start right out on a breaker, and, coming in at a fast bat, would dash against people and injure them’...second, ‘on European beaches patrol boats were provided to patrol outside the surf-line. Some surfers, through flashiness or recklessness, went in for what they termed ‘shark bait’. Lifesavers accompanied the boats and when a surfer ventured too far a trumpet was blown. If the surfer disregarded the warning, the boats went after him and he was arrested’ ...in the Minister’s opinion ‘the surfboat would be an improvement on the surf-line’. The *Manly Daily* reported a communication to the Manly Town Clerk with regard to sunbathing from the Honourable Minister dated 12 December 1917.

\(^1\) I, John Daniel Fitzgerald, the Minister administering the Local Government Acts, in pursuance of the power and authority vested in me by the said Local Government Acts and the ordinances thereunder, do hereby approve of the sun-basking enclosures provided by the Council of the Municipality of Manly on the South Steyne beach, within the municipality, such enclosures having dimensions as follow:- for men 66 feet x 50 feet, for women, 50 feet by 35 feet. And I do hereby authorize the Council ... to erect on the said South Steyne beach notices prohibiting sunbasking on such beach except within the above-mentioned enclosures. (Signed) John D. Fitzgerald, Minister.\(^3\)

THE AUSSIE COZZIE:

Meanwhile, the compulsory bathing attire still provoked debate for many male sunbathers were removing the top half of their costumes to expose more skin to the sun and acquire the sought after tan which had become de rigueur. Social reformers now joined

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\(^4\) This refers to a type of glorified pyjamas suit and a kimono, which was popular attire.

\(^5\) *Manly Daily* 14 December 1917.

\(^3\) ibid.
the debate arguing that if surf bathing was to have a ‘salutary affect on skin, nerves and tissue, then salt water and sunlight must be in contact with the body’. R.D. Meagher, a member of the Legislative Council argued

where is Mrs. Grundy going to stop? Our Australian girls no longer consider it good to wear pale and uninteresting complexions...but are devotees to Old Sol and Neptune...and vitality in their constitutions.53

However, some were very unhappy about the situation and the newspapers were inundated with letters from offended citizens who directed their attention to sunbathing, mixed bathing and swimming costumes (or lack of them). A letter from ‘A mother of girls’ who frequented Balmoral beach declared ‘a good flogging might be in order for indecent exposure’.

I am the mother of some girls, whom I frequently take to the farthest and what used to be the quiet end of the beach...The same we must leave not to bathers but to heaps of sprawling men and lads, naked but for the nondescript rag around their middle, whose language and conduct ensure to them a wide berth for themselves.53

And to the same newspaper from ‘Daily Dipper’

we women as a general rule are not strong enough to swim in the breakers, only going there for the pleasure of having the sweet, clean surf break over us, so our skirts are no great hindrance...a girl with a neat serge costume looks ten times more becoming than one in stockingette tights - girls, hang on to your skirts...to the men taking sun-baths (as some do...in the public view)...if there are men who like to put themselves on the same level as dogs - well, blood will out.54

In October 1907 the three councils mostly involved with surf bathing, Randwick, Waverley and Manly held a joint meeting with the Local Government Branch of the Public Works Department and drafted a new set of beach ordinances. The Evening News published the proposed new regulations, which included prohibitions of males and females mixing on the beaches, undressing and dressing in public view, loitering on the beach clad only in bathing costume and sunbathing (except in special enclosures).

53 Evening News 14 October 1907: Grundyism is described as excessive attachment to conventional behaviour (after Mrs. Grundy, a person mentioned in Thomas Morton’s plan “Speed the Plough” (1798)) Macquarie Dictionary 2nd revised ed. 1987, p.777.
54 Sydney Morning Herald 12 February 1907.
Bathers in costume were required to take the most direct route between the dressing pavilions and the water. The costume itself was to ‘cover the body from neck to the bend of the knee and be of such material as not to disclose the colour of the skin...and shall consist of complete combinations, together with a tunic worn over the combinations, both covering the body from neck to the knee, and the tunic shall have sleeves reaching to at least half way from the shoulder to the elbow’.\textsuperscript{55}

Unfortunately, the ‘tunic’ was interpreted as a ‘skirt’, which provoked protests, by large numbers of people at Manly, Coogee and Bondi. The newspaper cartoonists and photographers had a field day. The \textit{Evening News} followed the protests with gusto printing a photograph of the champion swimmer Cecil Healy in the ‘bathing dress used at carnivals attended by both sexes and which has not hitherto been objected to’.\textsuperscript{56} The following day the paper printed a statement by the champion who asserted ‘the idea of skirts I consider perfectly ridiculous’.\textsuperscript{57}

And on 21 October the same publication covered an anti-skirt demonstration at Bondi which attracted several thousands of spectators and ‘judging by the heartiness of the laughter heard on all sides, the occasion was perhaps one of the most humorous in their respective lives’...

\textsuperscript{55} ibid 1 February 1907.
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Evening News} 14 October 1907.
\textsuperscript{57} ibid. 15 October 1907.
\textsuperscript{58} ibid.
\textsuperscript{58} ibid 21 October 1907: Some of the skirts were decidedly novel and a few bore evidence of having been carefully designed for the occasion. As all the daily newspaper carried articles with reference to the ‘skirt’ it no doubt was a newspaper beat-up.

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The *Sydney Morning Herald* referred to the skirt as ‘the salt-water kilt’\(^5^9\) and writing to the same newspaper, a ‘Maroubra Marauder’ claimed it would be the ‘death of surf bathing’. The *Daily Telegraph* devoted a full page of its publication to pictures of men in the skirt, the v-shaped trunk and the guernsey (sic) or sweater and knickers and printed an indignant quote from a prominent Manly resident and surfer

> to force the male portion of enthusiasts to wear a skirt would be simply a farce...to enjoy a surf swim and ‘shoo’ the legs must be free and how could that be possible with a skirt flapping around one...the whole thing is ridiculous and followers of the sport simply won’t stand it.\(^6^0\)

Another letter to the *Daily Telegraph* stated that ‘the skirt would not only be grotesque...it would certainly lessen the chances of a swimmer caught in the swirl of the drawback...the mind that conceived this kind of swimming attire was also clearly out of place in having to do with such a matter’.\(^6^1\) And, at the annual meeting of the New South Wales Amateur Swimming Association on 23 October 1907 members added their quota of disproval to the outcry against the proposal ‘to force swimmers to wear skirts and sleeved tunics’.\(^6^2\)

The strategies, however hilarious, paid off and the government retreated. When the new Beach Ordinances were promulgated seven months later they contained no reference to tunics. The restrictions on mixed bathing and sunbathing though still applied, the former having a mixed reaction. Whilst agreeing that surf bathing is ‘an invigorating and healthy pastime,’ Archbishop Kelly of Sydney strongly objected to ‘the promiscuous commingling of the sexes which is the chief feature of surf bathing as at present

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\(^5^9\) *Sydney Morning Herald* 15 October 1902.
\(^6^0\) *Daily Telegraph* 15 October 1907.
\(^6^1\) ibid. 16 October 1907.
\(^6^2\) *Daily Telegraph* 23 October 1907.

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The skirted swimsuit for men.

Source: Daily Telegraph 15 October 1907.

Manly surf bathers try out their skirts for the proposed new Ordinance.

Plate 9
indulged in...it makes for the deterioration of our standard of morality'.  

Cecil Healy held a more practical view

regarding the proposed separation of the sexes, do the municipalities propose to organize a body of women lifesavers? Otherwise what is to become of women who get into difficulties in the water? Are they to be left to their fate and the men to be prevented from going to their assistance because the ordinance says they must confine themselves to a certain part of the beach?  

Manly Council followed the Ordinance to the letter of the Law and roped off the ocean and fenced the beaches. Signs were erected directing men to the north and women to the south. Randwick Council followed a more common sense approach. The Mayor of Randwick, Alderman D. Maxwell Cooper who urged full local control of the beaches stated, ‘It is my belief that women who surf, mix with the men more from a sense of safety than a desire to besport their figures in full view of admirers’.  

However, when Archbishop Kelly severely criticised mixed bathing from the pulpit during a Sunday sermon -

I think promiscuous surf-bathing is offensive in general to propriety and a particular feature of that offensiveness is the attraction it has for idle onlookers...I think the municipal authorities should take steps in the regulation of surf-bathing as would eliminate its present objectionable features...there is no border-line between vice and virtue...Our worst passions are but the abuse of our good ones.  

Alderman Cooper joined issue. He emphasised that Randwick separated the sexes on the beach and in the dressing sheds but in the water it was another matter.

It is just as well for a high ecclesiastical dignitary to sound a note of warning in the interests of womanly modesty, but the prevention of the 'deterioration of our standard of morality' must at all times rest with the individuals themselves as against any set of rules, by-laws or regulations...The beauty of the human form has at all times appealed to the world's greatest painters and sculptors, and surely we, living in an enlightened age, can be permitted to add our quota of admiration without shocking our modesty. It is quite evident from the popularity of the sport that in 10 years' time no more notice will be taken of the ornate Canadian costume on the beach than the flimsy, transparent summer costumes in the Strand. It appears to me that those who raise protests against the women in the surf are guided by what has been done in the past. I also believe that the crowds who collect at the water's edge watching the parties diving under or riding on the crest of the breakers are animated by motives quite wholesome.

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63 The Sun 14 August 1911.
64 Daily Telegraph 16 October 1907.
65 The Sun 15 August 1911
66 ibid. 14 August 1911.
67 ibid. 15 August 1911.
THE RISE AND RISE OF SURF LIFE SAVING CLUBS:

A more serious matter than segregation of the sexes and swimwear was the continued lack of facilities; not only dressing rooms and showers etc. but most importantly safety and rescue equipment caused community concern and forced surf-bathers to begin forming their own clubs, which were financed by member’s subscriptions. The clubs having been given permission to erect or lease club rooms on the beaches, and having, in almost all cases, had to pay the cost of these buildings themselves, were forced to look around for a method of raising money. To strengthen their finances the clubs adopted rules for the admission of ‘honorary or associate members’. Bathers were thus attracted to membership, not out of a humanitarian desire to offer some community service, but to gain use of the facilities. This unfortunately led to the clubs being labeled ‘dressing shed syndicates’. Ted Reeve, a member of the original Surf Life Saving Association Rules Committee writes

the club...formed in Manly was run by what seemed to me - in those days - old men, who were primarily concerned with having a decent dressing place and showers. The younger members must have been rather a nuisance to their peaceful enjoyment. Friction grew between the old and young members, and finally the older members passed a rule that no one under 21 years of age should have any say in the management

Manly Surf Club (MSC) was formed at a meeting in the Steyne Hotel on 16 July 1907.

Its objects were -

(i) To obtain improved facilities for Surf-bathing, and otherwise promote the sport.
(ii) To ensure the most effective methods of rescuing persons in distress, and the resuscitation of the apparently drowned.
(iii) To provide for a Regulation Costume for Members and to assist in enforcing the laws governing the conduct of surf-bathers.
(iv) To effect such other purposes as may hereafter be considered necessary in the interests of the sport.

68 The Australian Star 14 October 1907.
69 NSW Commissioner’s Report of the Surf Bathing Committee 1911-1912, Division II - Life Saving para. 22.
70 ibid.
Manly solicitor, Frank Donovan was elected president. Inaugural secretaries were W. Tonge and A.W. Relph. The Honorary Treasurer was C. J. Burchmore, the assistant treasurer, J.J.K. Taylor. The State Governor His Excellency Admiral Sir Harry Rawson, G.C.B. agreed to be the club patron. It was agreed that the club’s costume should be royal blue with red trimmings and a white badge bearing the initials of the club on a red shield, to be worn on the breast. A new pattern of costume, to be worn by officers of the club, was also approved.\textsuperscript{73} Shortly after formation of the MSC, and after newspaper criticism of Manly’s ramshackle...tuppenny-ha’penny shanties called bathing structures\textsuperscript{74} council adopted plans to build a bathing house to include dressing rooms, showers, toilets and sunbathing and refreshment facilities. However, when council announced plans to charge for use of the facilities the MSC and local ratepayers protested, arguing it was council’s responsibility to ensure public decency and therefore to provide free dressing rooms. The Department of Lands was approached and the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported on 14 October 1907 that ‘the department will contribute pound for pound on the amount provided by the local council up to £200 towards providing necessary immediate accommodation for surf bathers subject to the proposed scheme meeting with the department’s approval.’ The planned building, reflecting the award winning design of Messrs Kent and Budden of Sydney was to be a model bathing house costing around £1,200. However, because of opposition to a small charge, plans were put on hold. The Minister for Lands, James Ashton stepped in and refused to give council permission to make a charge.\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{73} *Daily Telegraph* 17 September 1907.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid. 31 October 1906.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid. 26 September 1907. It was pointed out that no charge was made at Bondi and Coogee.
Manly council resented the ‘conditions’ imposed that ‘no other seaside municipality had to put up with. Coogee could obtain money with no conditions and had to submit no plans. Was it fair that Bondi also could obtain an unconditional grant? It was common property in Manly that the Port Jackson Company were willing to grant £150.’

In December 1907 another club was formed at Manly. The North Steyne Surf Bathers and Life Saving Club was committed to taking charge of a section of the beach that had seen numerous drownings over the years. Previously almost deserted this section of the beach and indeed, the built environment itself had suddenly become popular. The council promised to place lifelines there and appoint an attendant.

The lack of life saving equipment on the beaches was of an ongoing concern. As surf clubs were constituted it was evident that councils had to be involved in providing rescue apparatus. In Manly, two local fishermen, Eddie and Joe Sly had performed numerous rescues in their fishing boat, which they kept at Fairy Bower. A demonstration of surf life saving between the Slys and the best swimmers of the day on Boxing Day in 1903 earned a glowing newspaper report

> all who witnessed the feats of the Sly brothers on this afternoon as they gave exciting demonstrations of picking up supposedly-drowned patients and coming to shore with them, will for ever retain vivid recollections of their skilful exhibitions of shooting the breakers in their surf-boat.

Pleased with the brother’s service, Manly Council sought a State Government subsidy to provide a weekend and public holiday patrol of the beach by the Slys but the Government refused the request and collections on the beach and the ferries helped

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76 *Evening News* 16 October 1907.
77 *Daily Telegraph* 16 December 1907.
78 The boat was an old double-end whaler, which the Slys converted to a tuck-stern for laying nets. Harris op.cit. p.7. Fairy Bower is situated in the bay of the next headland to that occupied by the surf club - a good distance to cover in an emergency.
retain their services. The following season this service had to be discontinued because of
the expense involved.\textsuperscript{80} Instead, the Manly Life Saving Society,\textsuperscript{81} supported by
voluntary contributions engaged Edward ‘Happy’ Eyre as a professional lifesaver. Eyre
was later employed by the council in the same capacity.\textsuperscript{82} ‘Appy’ Eyre as he was to
become known performed numerous rescues – sometimes several in a day during his
employ as a professional lifesaver on Manly beach from 1904 to 1907.\textsuperscript{83} His advice to
surfers was to avoid panic, go with the current, float when tired and most important
swim between the flags.

As membership of the Manly surf club increased - by the end of 1908 membership had
reached 600 (but only 100 members were lifesavers, the others enjoyed the club’s social
amenities and facilities) and had grown to more than 1,000 by 1911, the club wanted
due and official recognition and rightly or wrongly thought it should have control of the
life saving apparatus on the beach, and the new surf boat which had been built by public
subscription and kept at Fairy Bower in what the surf club considered an inconvenient
and inaccessible position. The club also sought the right to appoint the beach attendant.
A letter written to the council was read at the council meeting on Tuesday 16 October
1907 to that effect.\textsuperscript{84} Alderman Quirk objected strongly to the surfboat going out of the
control of the council.\textsuperscript{85}

\textsuperscript{79} R.S. Harris op. cit. p.6.
\textsuperscript{80} This apparently caused alarm at the Port Jackson and Manly Steamship Company - their concern was
that an absence of lifesavers would affect their lucrative day-tripper trade. The company contributed to the
purchase of a new boat.
\textsuperscript{81} This was the Manly branch of the Life Saving Society, otherwise known as the Manly Life Saving
Society.
\textsuperscript{82} \textit{Evening New} 16 October 1907.
\textsuperscript{83} After an unexpected plunge in the surf to rescue a drowning surfer ‘Appy’ recovered with a whisky and
soda in the bathing enclosure; \textit{Sydney Mail} 16 January 1907.
\textsuperscript{84} \textit{Evening News}, 16 October 1907. (Council minutes unavailable 1904-1908)
\textsuperscript{85} This was a new purpose built boat, which was designed by Charles Sly and built by a firm of boat-
builders in Leichhardt, Sydney. It was launched at the first annual carnival held at Manly beach on 23
March 1907. The carnival was a community event organised with council approval and support.
An amateur crew would never answer. The craft should be left where it was, and the Brothers Sly would successfully manage it, as they did last year. In rough weather they would also be on hand.

Alderman Walker agreed saying ‘the manning of the surfboat should not be done by an amateur crew. The Slys were always on the spot when wanted and had always done good work’. 87 Alderman Quirk was also opposed to the surf club appointing the beach attendant, but Alderman King disagreed on both counts stating that ‘the idea of an amateur crew is an excellent one...the council should respect every recommendation from the surf club especially one regarding the appointment of the beach attendant. The club was only anxious to do the right thing in trying to govern surf bathers’. 88

However, the final word appears to have been that of Mayor Learmonth who stated that ‘the surfboat was not a plaything and required skillful management. If amateurs had charge and an accident occurred, who would be to blame? why, the council, not the surf club’. 89 When a second letter from the surf club was read regarding control of the beach and it was suggested that council should meet with the surf club, the mayor ‘warmly refused’ saying ‘he was of the opinion that the council should control everything pertaining to the management of surf bathing on the beach’. 90 This apparently meant bathing costumes also. Unfortunately, Mayor Learmonth was still smarting from suggestions that he was responsible for the inclusion of ‘the impossible bathing suit’ in

86 Evening News 16 October 1907.
87 ibid: Nobody appears to have consulted the Slys on this matter. Their good efforts appear to have been taken for granted.
88 Evening News 16 October 1907.
89 ibid.
90 ibid.
the Ordinances. Alderman Learmonth stated that 'he would hold no further communications with the surf club'.

The situation in Manly was in sharp contrast with that at Bondi where Waverley Council had erected a kiosk and drill shed on the beach and spent nearly £400 in providing accommodation assisted by a Government grant of £75. Waverley Council granted lease of the kiosk and supervision of the bathing sheds to Bondi Surf Bathers' Life Saving Club.

The question as to which of the surf clubs in the eastern suburbs was first to be formed has led to controversy. Most of the clubs appear to have come about from the meeting of friends who enjoyed the sport some years before the clubs were officially formed and recognised by the Municipal Councils. The official recognition of the clubs by council was one thing, but their unofficial forming was another. Finally, however, claims of Bondi and Bronte to be the first club have been settled. Professor Ed. Jaggard, National Historian, Surf Lifesaving Australia, after receiving evidence from both clubs states that 'the primary sources...inform us that the Bronte Volunteer Lifesaving Brigade was formed some time in April-May 1907' which puts their formation after that of Bondi.

Jaggard states in his report 'unfortunately, those who make the claim for Bronte's appearance in 1903 have not produced any primary sources backing this

91 In a letter to the editor of the Manly Daily Mayor Learmonth stated 'I never suggested or advocated skirts being worn by male bathers. An article which appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald of 15 inst. reported an interview with the Mayor of Randwick wherein that gentleman is credited with saying that the Mayor of Manly did propose it (the skirt)', Manly Daily 17 October 1907.
92 ibid: The quarrel between Manly Council and Manly Surf Club received voluminous coverage in the newspapers of the day, particularly the Daily Telegraph.
argument...[and] Waverley Council Minutes contain no reference to a club between 1903 and 1907, nor do they include reference to correspondence from such a body. 95

The various claims for Bronte such as that by George Blackmore Philip crediting Walter Biddell for formation of a Life Saving Brigade in 1905; club official Bob Foster again crediting Biddell but in 1903 and E. Reeve in an article in Surf in Australia written in 1936 claiming 1903 for formation by (probably) Warrant Officer (later Major) John Bond are thus all without primary source foundation. 96

Life saving and surfing enthusiast Walter Biddell however, warrants mention for his involvement at Bronte. Biddell formed three separate brigades to patrol the beach under the direction of the parent organisation, later known as the Surf Swimming and Open Sea Life Saving Association of New South Wales. He also developed a new form of rescue belt for line and reel rescues, dispensing with the standard buoyancy packs. 97

And, Galton notes that in 1906 Biddell launched at Bronte the first craft designed solely for the Australian surf, but this (and other models) was not successful. 98

The first surf belt was a form of heavy ship's life jacket with cork and linked to a heavy tape. The belt and accompanying apparatus was a hindrance to early beltmen who had to summon all their strength to struggle to sea. Although claiming his design was superior

94 Ed Jaggard, National Historian, Surf Lifesaving Australia, Report on the Claims of Bondi and Bronte to be Australia's First Lifesaving Club, 2003, p.3. (This debate was aired on A.B.C. National Television 'Re-Wind' on Sunday 5th September 2000).
95 ibid. p.2
97 Kent Pearson, Surfing Subcultures of Australia and New Zealand, University of Queensland Press, 1979, p.40. Biddell was President and Life Governor of the Association and acting President of the Surf Saving & Open Sea Lifesaving Association of NSW. Catalogue of Manuscripts, Series A, 1967, p. 8-18A. Mitchell Library. (Waverley Council Minutes are peppered with correspondence received from Biddell, particularly 1907-8, mostly with regard to life saving equipment and dressing sheds).
to the equipment in use, the officials of the day thought otherwise and Biddell’s brigades were barred from interclub competition. This eventually led to their demise.\textsuperscript{99}

Interestingly, in his insistence that buoyancy was a hindrance rather than a help to the beltman, Biddell was anticipating the development of belt design by forty years. From this time onwards belts were progressively reduced in size until they consisted simply of a canvas belt and rings fitting around the waist to which the tie was attached and a neck strap to keep it in place.\textsuperscript{100} Over time, belts have undergone further changes and improvements. In 1924 Steve Dowling and Manly club mate Claude West designed a safety belt, which allowed the beltman to withdraw a slip pin and make the belt fall apart. This followed the drowning of a Corrimal lifesaver, James King, who was caught up in the belt and could not break loose. Surprisingly, the Dowling belt was not accepted and the use of the old style continued. It was not until another beltman, Mervyn Fletcher, drowned in 1950 at Dee Why that the Ross Safety belt was introduced. It was almost identical to the Dowling Belt.\textsuperscript{101} However, one first Bronte Club can claim is the introduction by its Captain, Ted Morrison of the alarm bell to warn bathers of sharks.\textsuperscript{102}

Whichever Club had the honor of being ‘first’, the dedication and value of surf life saving clubs has been widely acknowledged. The Duke of Edinburgh, Chief Patron of the Australian Surf Life Saving Association, once commented -

\begin{quote}
 I suspect that most people get the greatest satisfaction in their leisure time activities if one of them is either directly or indirectly a service of some sort to other people. Look at the surf life savers of Australia - they pay a subscription to their clubs for the privilege of risking their necks to save others.\textsuperscript{103}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{98} Galton op.cit. p.27.  
\textsuperscript{99} ibid: Dowd and Foster op.cit. p.152.  
\textsuperscript{100} Pearson op.cit. p.40.  
\textsuperscript{101} Galton op.cit. p.19. ‘Today the surf life saving movement has many more aids and needs every one of them - because there are far more people using the beaches’. p.19.  
\textsuperscript{102} ibid. p.12.  
\textsuperscript{103} ibid. p.11.
The origin of the Bondi Surf Bathers’ Life Saving Club dates back to 1907, not 1906 as has been generally believed. Jaggard states ‘there is a lack of credible evidence for 1906 but a conclusive case for 1907...Bondi has accepted that its history should be corrected.’ Waverly Council Minutes record a letter from the Bondi Surf Bathers Lifesaving Club notifying formation of the club ‘to encourage the use of life saving methods, arrange for classes to be held [and] asking the council for permission for the free use of the life lines for practice purposes.’ The club began with a rather humble ‘club house’ in the form of a tent on the beach provided by member E.R. Abigail. The aims and objectives of the club were

(a) the study and practice of the methods of life saving as taught by the Royal Life Saving Society
(b) to minimize the loss of life from drowning by providing efficient life-saving apparatus
(c) to promote demonstrations, and to arrange classes of instruction so as to bring about a widespread and thorough knowledge of the principles which underlie the art of natation
(d) to obtain improved facilities for Surf Bathing and otherwise promote and encourage the sport
(e) to assist in regulating surf bathing.

The Bondi club made rapid progress. The close of the first season saw a membership total of 81. However, there is conflicting evidence with regard to the first reel to be made. According to a history of the Bondi Surf Bathers Club, ‘the first reel made was a model – from hair pins and a cotton reel-made at the home of Lyster Ormsby’, the Club Captain, the prototype being made by the coach-building firm of Olding and Parker and first used at Bondi in a display on 24 December 1906. The reel supports were made of hickory and selected wood. However, according to Reeve in Surf in Australia ‘The first reel was designed by John Bond, a Staff Sergeant of the Medical Staff Corps,

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105 Waverly Council Minutes 12 March 1907.
106 Official souvenir program of a gymkhana held at Wonderland City for the Bondi Surf Bathers Life Saving Club on 29 February 1908: Dowd and Foster, op.cit. p.139.
107 History of Bondi Surf Bathers Life Saving club, p.9.
Victoria Barracks but a much improved model was later made by a Paddington coach-builder.\textsuperscript{110}

Discipline was placed in order early in Bondi club’s activities. Its articles stated that members must be on the beach at least twice in each month unless a notice was lodged with the captain or secretary of their inability ‘so to do’; and early morning bathers prior to entering the water were to place the line and reel down on the beach ready for any emergency and that bathers late in the afternoon were to see that the line and reel and other property of the club properly housed before leaving the club room. Further, a rule was made to the effect that qualification for new members was to include an ability to swim 100 yards breaststroke and 50 yards on the back with arms folded. This sounds almost quaint today but at that time under the conditions of the Royal Lifesaving Society, all the swimming in connection with the examinations was breast and back stroke,\textsuperscript{111} and it should be noted that the person performing the rescue did have to swim on his back while supporting the person he was rescuing. The first recorded rescue by a lifesaver at Bondi was that of Charlie Smith (aged 10 years) who, later as Sir Charles Kingsford Smith became a famous aviator. He was eventually claimed by the sea in the Indian Ocean.\textsuperscript{112}

Bondi club members also enjoyed social activities such as an annual ball, an annual picnic to Lane Cove River and inter-club hospitality and visits as part of their membership. Once known as The Silvertail Club ‘members chose to accept this

\textsuperscript{110} Galton op.cit. p.13.
\textsuperscript{111} ibid: Reeve op.cit. 1 September 1936, p.29: C Bede Maxwell, \textit{Surf: Australians Against the Sea}, Angus and Robertson, Sydney 1949, pp.22-28 Maxwell also recounted the history of the Bondi Surf Bathers Life Saving Club and notes the conflicting evidence with regard to crediting them with the development of the surf reel: \textit{The Sun - Daily Magazine Section: Stories of Australia’s History}, 1 December 1976. This was obviously the John Bond of Bronte Beach.
\textsuperscript{112} \textit{History of Bondi Surf Bathers Life Saving Club}, p. 8.
reference not as a slur but more in the nature of a tribute to the gentlemanly conduct of members at social functions. 113

At the end of 1908 the club was approached by some of the local ladies who wanted to form a ladies’ surf club. The committee assisted to the extent of introducing them to the Council and also advocated the granting of the necessary approval. The Bondi Ladies Surf Club came into being in 1909. Although many of the women were strong swimmers the club functioned mainly as a social club. They occupied a weatherboard club house, which was erected at the foot of the steps leading to the beach from the tram terminus loop. 114 Following a demonstration of line and reel method of surf rescue by a Newcastle women’s team at a Bondi carnival, membership of the Bondi women’s club quickly expanded to 620 women. 115

A ladies life saving class was conducted by the Manly Surf Club and a number of the women were examined for the proficiency certificate and bronze medallion (still water). The Manly Women’s Surf Life Saving team competed at the 1912 surf carnival before a crowd of 20,000, having already been immortalised in Percy Spence’s 1910 painting ‘Women Lifesavers, Manly Beach’. 116 Although the Surf Life Saving Association of Australia allowed ‘surfer girl contests’ in the late 1920s it subsequently banned women from gaining the bronze medallion, which was a necessity to qualify them as lifesavers, asserting women were too physically frail for rescue work. Women were also restricted

112 Daily Telegraph 3 January 1907.
113 History of Bondi Surf Bathers Life Saving Club, p.20.
114 ibid. pp.9-10.
The call of the surf at Manly, December 1910.

Source: Manly Municipal Council Library.
"Manly Beach with lady life savers, 1910"
Watercolour by Percy Spence.

Source: Manly Art Gallery.
in competition to march pasts, drill, surf races, beach relays and novelty events. An article in *The Lone Hand* described the ladies' costumes as being 'sportswomanlike...simple, tight and yet impenetrable...made from scratchy wool the costume defies the X-ray glance of the wowser'.

The North Bondi Surf Life Saving Club claim that the first move towards the formation of this club was made by a group of swimmers who regularly attended Bondi baths and, with the Paddington Punters Sports and Social Club (formed at Wally Weekes' barber shop on Glemore Road, Paddington) formed the Bondi Surf and Social Club. The inaugural meeting was held at the *Light Brigade* Hotel in Oxford Street, Paddington.

This club too, initially used a tent as a club house. Friction developed between the two clubs when the Surf and Social Club made application to council for a reel and line for rescue work at the north end of the beach. The council agreed to the request subject to agreement of the parent body, the Bondi Surf Bathers' Life Saving Club. The parent club 'could not see its way clear to share control of the beach' with its neighbour club. The Surf Bathers' club believed that the lease of the kiosk from Waverley Council gave it full trading rights of the beach. The dispute was eventually settled.

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117 ibid. This discriminatory statute was not lifted until the early 1980s - a time lag which symbolised the resilience of male discrimination against women in Australian sport. Daryl Adair and Wray Vamplew, *Sport in Australian History*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1997, p. 53; Douglas Booth, Swimming, Surfing and Life-saving in *Sport in Australia*, Wray Vamplew and Brian Stodart (eds.) Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 244. (this discussion is elaborated in Chapter 6.)


120 Waverley Council Minutes 26 November 1907. The application was made in the name of Bondi Surf and Social Club. This appears to be the first mention of the Bondi Surf and Social Club in the Waverley Council Minutes. They did affiliate and have 6 representatives at the first meeting of the Surf Bathing Association of NSW held on 18th October 1907, Minutes of the First Meeting and First Annual Report.1909. The Fourth Annual Report and Balance Sheet for the season ending 30 September 1912 lists North Bondi Life Saving Club as affiliating. (no mention appears hereafter of Bondi Surf and Social Club).

121 Aussie Bronze op.cit. p.9.

122 Waverley Council Minutes 13 August 1907. The cost of the lease was £10.
after ‘talks’ between the two clubs and Bondi Surf and Social Club got its rescue apparatus.\textsuperscript{123} The Surf Bathers Club announced.

Today we share with pride the honor of looking after what we and our North Bondi friends regard as the finest beach in the world...we are happy and privileged to attend functions of our North Bondi comrades and we know they feel the same way about our club. When, as for instance on Black Sunday - we require their assistance, the North Bondi boys are ready to get in and help us. We promise them the same co-operation.\textsuperscript{124}

‘Coogee Surf Life Saving Brigade was formed in 1907 by a group of young men who were regular patrons of Coogee Beach and principally residents of the Borough’.\textsuperscript{125} The club’s first meeting was held (in the absence of accommodation) ‘under the last light at the southern end of the promenade adjacent to the present clubhouse’.\textsuperscript{126} In July 1907 the club wrote to Randwick Council asking for use of a room for instruction and storage of life saving apparatus.\textsuperscript{127} This resulted in the club’s first premises, which consisted of a small room, 8 feet by 10 feet tucked away under the seawall. Harry Wylie was elected the club’s first president and Teddy Hooper it’s first captain.\textsuperscript{128} In 1910 the club was transferred to a new building, which cost £450 ‘but the strength and importance of the club grew to such an extent that this building was demolished and a new structure costing £4,000 was built’.\textsuperscript{129} A souvenir program of the 77\textsuperscript{th} annual dinner yielded some interesting early fund-raising tactics used by the club.

\begin{itemize}
  \item the surf boat crew would wait out at the mesh nets for the shark meshing contractors to pull out large sharks from their nets, then persuade the mesh boat men to surrender their catch. The shark would then be transferred to the surfboat, rowed ashore and taken to the surfboat shed and the public charged 1d admittance to see it. Many practical jokes were apparently played regarding its
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{123} Aussie Bronze op.cit p.9.
\textsuperscript{124} ibid.
\textsuperscript{126} McRorie op.cit. p.8.
\textsuperscript{127} Randwick City Council Minutes 23 July 1907: A further request for supply of life saving gear was made in November, Council Minutes 12 November 1907.
\textsuperscript{128} McRorie op.cit. pp.7-8.
\textsuperscript{129} \textit{Beautiful Coogee}, published under the auspices of the Coogee Advancement League, Belmore Road, Coogee, September 1929, p.8.
disposure (sic) the following day. Another fund-raiser was a ride in the surfboat out to Wedding Cake Island and back for 6d on 'flat days'.

Band music provided another fund raising method. On 1 October 1908 the club wrote to Randwick Ccouncil asking permission for a band to play on Sunday - the collection to aid the Life Saving Society. Permission was granted on condition the music be classical or sacred.

Meanwhile, in 1906 Waverley Municipal Council having a request 'to light up Bondi Park and baths with electric light' rejected by the Railway Commissioners who 'could not entertain the proposal' was making plans for dressing room accommodation and invited competitive plans for a building to accommodate 750 men and 250 women with 'all accessories of a modern surf bathing resort'. Complete designs were not to exceed in cost £2,000 and the winning design would be awarded £20. The proposal however, was deferred on account of the cost. In 1911 the Department of Lands advised council that the government was prepared to grant £1,250 towards surf bathing accommodation and the building of a sea wall. The tender of Taylor and Bills of £3,000 for the bathing sheds was accepted and the work completed and opened for public use on 3 October 1911. The estimated revenue from the bathing sheds for a year was £900 and expenditure £458. The first charges were: Adults 2d and children 1d; Costumes (Canadian only) 2d with deposit; Hats and 'V'trunks 1d each. But council also had a 'win' in another direction. A Mayoral Minute received great applause when it was

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130 Souvenir program of 77th annual dinner of the Coogee Surf Life Saving Club. Also reported in the Randwick Rag August 1983, p.4. (Wedding Cake Island was so named because of its appearance when awash with foam).
131 Randwick City Council Minutes 1 October 1908.
132 Waverley Council Minutes 14 August 1906.
133 ibid. 14 December 1909.
134 ibid.10 January 1911. (Three tenders were received, Taylor and Bills, Taylor and Robertson £3,394.00 and James J. Rosenbotham £3,945.00)
135 ibid.
announced that as a result of the 'mayor's meeting with Mr. Ashton, Minister for Lands in connection with conveniences for general public at Bondi beach the Minister had preserved the sum of £250 for the project' 136.

Influenced, and no doubt also goaded by the description of neighbouring Waverley Council's accommodation at Bondi beach, Randwick Council decided to construct up-to-date accommodation at its beaches. With Ministerial approval of the expenditure of £7,800 of which £5,000 was to be spent at Coogee on surf dressing shed accommodation a design competition for a prize of £50 was held. From 13 entries the design submitted by Buchanan, McKay and Kemp was selected on the condition the building did not cost more than £5,000. When tenders were called the lowest was £5,654 and as the architect had not provided for sufficiently strong foundations a further £849 was added, bringing the total to £6,503. Later developments revealed that even this amount was inadequate. Apparently there was little co-ordination among the architect, contractor, government and the council and considerable bickering occasioned numerous delays. 137

During the construction of the surf sheds a rumour became current that the council intended to lease not only the accommodation but also the beach to a syndicate for a period of fifty years. It was stated that the Council's Parks Committee made the recommendation on condition that £20,000 was spent upon improvements within three years. The rumour and subsequent press reports, which suggested a 'monopoly in the surf', led to heated discussions and demands for the resignation of the aldermen. The

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136 ibid. 12 February 1907.
137 Randwick City Council Minutes 25 June 1912, 9 July 1912, 23, 27 August 1912, 28 January 1913: Lynch and Larcombe op.cit. p. 234. The considerable difference in the planned expenditure by the two
Town Clerk, W. K. Percival stated that, 'originally, the council did intend to lease the area upon which the new accommodation was to be erected, upon the condition that improvement designs were acceptable and the council empowered to take over the control whenever it was considered desirable'. Subsequently, a second scheme was submitted involving not only accommodation but also a pier and shark-proof netting. At this stage the Minister imposed certain conditions, the eventual outcome of which was a council resolution to consider a municipal scheme. In neither of the two schemes was there to be any restriction of access by the public to Coogee Beach.\(^\text{138}\)

A meeting of the executives of numerous surf clubs in the Sydney metropolitan area was held on Friday 18 October 1907 at the Sydney Sports Club to form an association of surf clubs ‘with the object of advancing the sport and pastime of surf-bathing’\(^\text{139}\) The Surf Bathing Association of New South Wales (SBANSW) was formed with Mr. F.W.J. Donovan, president of the Manly Surf Club voted to the chair and Mr. I.C. Ormsby (Bondi Surf Bathers’ Life Saving Club) elected honorary secretary.\(^\text{140}\) The Surf Bathing Association was the genesis of the Surf Life Saving Association. In 1920 it was decided to change the name to the Surf Life Saving Association of New South Wales. In 1922 it changed once more - to Surf Life Saving Association of Australia with the introduction of clubs from Western Australia (1925) Queensland (1930-31), Victoria (1946) Tasmania (1948) and South Australia (1952).\(^\text{141}\) Headquarters remained in Sydney.

councils suggests that Randwick had access to generous government funding and a great desire to outdo Waverley.

\(^\text{138}\) The Truth 16 June 1912. ‘Shindicates and shicers – still grafting – hands off our beaches’

\(^\text{139}\) Surf Bathing Committee 1911-1912, para. 54, p.1: Sydney Morning Herald 19 October 1907.

\(^\text{140}\) Executive officers of the following clubs and Associations attended the meeting: Manly Surf Club, Bondi Surf Bathers’ Life Saving Club, Coogee Life Saving Brigade, Bronte Surf Brigade, Bondi Surf and Social Club, Maroubra Surf Club, Tamarama Surf Club, United Wanderers’ Surf Club, Woollahra Surf Club, New South Wales Amateur Swimming Association, Paddington Old Boys and the Royal Life Saving Society. Minutes, Surf Bathing Association of NSW signed by the Chairman, F. Donovan, 21.2.08.

'Most of these clubs had had surf lifesaving clubs on their beaches for some time prior to their affiliation with SLSAA, but most of these clubs had been affiliated with the Royal Life Saving Society instead'. \textsuperscript{142} In 1991 the Association became Surf Life Saving Australia.

The Association began modestly, the First Annual Report (1909) noting a credit balance of £7.3.0. The Third Annual Report noted 17 clubs had affiliated during the season – an increase of three over the previous year. Finances also increased to £18.17.8 an increase of £7.18.9 on the previous season. By 1912 ‘the total number of clubs and kindred associations affiliated amounted to 22 an increase of five on the previous season’ and finances showed a healthy £27.10.0 for that year. \textsuperscript{143}

During the proceedings of the first meeting of the Association Mr. Donovan stated that the surf bathers, rather than the mayors of Manly, Randwick and Waverley were the people to legislate for the good conduct of surf bathing. He maintained that municipal councils should spend on the beaches some of the increased revenue they received as a result of the growth of the popularity of surf bathing. Quoting figures in Manly he declared that ‘property during the past five years had gone up in value from about 50 to 200 per cent; house rent had been doubled; rates increased by nearly 100 per cent and the population increased by 50 per cent – from the date that all-day surf bathing was made possible’. These figures were disputed by Alderman Quirk of Manly Council in the \textit{Daily Telegraph}. He quoted the total increase for general rates over a three year period was £758 which was nowhere near the amount Donovan was claiming. Alderman Quirk stated, ‘I quite admit to property value having increased but Mr. Donovan’s wild

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{143}
flight of imagination is astonishing...the next statement that house rent has doubled on
the authority of our leading house agents is just as inaccurate." However, Donovan’s
claims were backed up by numerous ‘letters to the editor’ of the Daily Telegraph.
Donovan also recommended that the ‘officers and committee (of the SBANSW) should
be men of some standing’. Of the initial six hundred members, half were leading
citizens and the remainder young men trained as lifesavers. Official sanction came in the
form of a New South Wales government appointed Surf Bathing Committee in 1911 to
examine the sport.

That committee declared surf bathing to be a ‘clean and healthful pastime’, which
should bring considerable commercial benefits. However, it warned that a lack of good
dressing accommodation would hinder ‘commercial prosperity and the increase in land
and rental values which surfing brings in its train’. The committee recommended the
provision of good dressing accommodation, the initial cost of which would be provided
by either private enterprise or government loans to councils, and repaid by charges
levied on bathers. Free accommodation, it said, should be kept to a minimum. It also
recommended that surf bathers (club members) should pay for the accommodation and
equipment used by the surf bathing clubs and recommended strict controls on club
members to eliminate the dressing shed syndicate mentality. Further recommendations
suggested that only men holding the surf medallion of SBANSW or a proficiency award
of the Royal Life Saving Society should be admitted to the clubs. Without these
qualifications prospective members should be classified as ‘probationers’ and denied

143 Annual Reports, Surf Bathing Association of New South Wales, 1909-1912-13. My thanks to Caroline
Ford (SLSA) for copies of reports and other material relating to surf bathing.
144 Daily Telegraph 23 October 1907.
145 ibid. p.29.
'club privileges...until they earn full membership and with it full privileges of the...
clubrooms'.

In the section headed Controlling the Public the committee recommended that councils
appoint members of surf bathing clubs as beach inspectors. Ordinance No. 52 under the
Local Government Act, empowered councils to appoint Inspectors to maintain order on
the beach by warning offenders, and, if necessary, to take their names and addresses for
the purpose of prosecution. The committee strongly recommend that those councils
which have not done so to appoint Inspectors under this Ordinance. ‘By choosing the
older and more responsible members of the life saving clubs they will secure the aid of
men who will use their authority with moderation and discretion for the good of the
public, and for the advancement of surf bathing’.

The committee supported the existing by-laws against sun bathing, which it described as
‘loitering on the beach clad only in a bathing costume’. It defined as ‘objectionable’
persons in bathing costumes mixing with the general public and said that it was
‘desirable’ for bathers to walk from the dressing pavilions to the water by the most
direct route and when leaving the water should do so at the place nearest to the dressing-
shed or enclosures and proceed direct thereto.

Clearly, despite the rules and regulations surf bathing was here to stay. The Sydney Mail
in a very favourable article on Manly wrote that 'the immense popularity which surf
bathing has assumed at Sydney’s chief watering place has caused during the past two

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146 Surf Bathing Committee, paras. 25, 27.
147 ibid. paras. 149, 152.
148 ibid paras. 154, 155.
years, a 'Manly boom'. The *Sydney Morning Herald* declared that 'Manly has produced a characteristic life of its own that is novel, audacious and delightful'...Sydney was 'witnessing the birth of a new spirit of living'.

This 'boom' was also evident in the eastern suburbs. The *New South Wales Surf Bathers Guide* announced that at Bondi 'property in the district has advanced tenfold in value, and fine houses have been erected around the beach'...while at Coogee 'land values have increased twofold and some very fine residences are now to be seen facing the Esplanade'. Going to the beach was becoming a 'way of life' – Sydney's beach culture was firmly established.

Unfortunately, at Manly, at this time, cordiality between the surf club and the Council was not the order of the day and tensions were once more running high between the two. The surf club chose to ignore the Council's offer of a shed on the beach claiming it was unsuitable as a club-house. Instead, they rented premises, which afforded them considerable comfort nearby at an annual rent of £85. The 'little comforts of the club house' included 'its fine lounge room, hot and cold showers, its warming stoves and sun baking patch, which rendered membership popular both with the Manly people and visitors from Sydney and the Country'. This offended the council. However, in November 1910 council voted to allow the club to build a "suitable" club-house on the beach, which the club could have on a 10-year lease and at a nominal rent.

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149 *Sydney Mail* 22 February 1905.
150 *Sydney Morning Herald* 1 May 1909.
152 *Official Jubilee Souvenir to Commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Incorporation of the Municipality of Manly 1877-1927*. Published by Authority of the Council of the Municipality of Manly by the *Manly Daily*, Sydney Road, Manly.
The matter dragged on and letters from the club to the council were noted at council meetings but the season ended without any firm decision on location or construction.\textsuperscript{153} Relations between the council and the club deteriorated further after Donovan, himself a Manly councillor, gave evidence at the NSW Government's enquiry into surf bathing. Donovan denigrated Manly Council claiming it was negligent, stating that the beach facilities were an absolute disgrace 'Manly is the most neglected beach of all...Manly Council, of which I am a member, is neglecting its duties in regard to the beach - the present accommodation is...the worst on the coast'.\textsuperscript{154} On 28 August 1911, the council retaliated by rescinding the resolution to allow the club to build on the beach.\textsuperscript{155}

Another councillor, Alderman Charles Paterson who was both a member of the Government's Surf Bathing Committee and the North Steyne Surf Bathers and Life Saving Club was 'against surf clubs exploiting the beaches' and publicly stated that 'if clubs wanted to provide social accommodation for their members they would have to do so off the beaches, which should be free to the people'.\textsuperscript{156} This view was shared by other Aldermen including Alderman Heaton who also pointed out that if the recision motion was passed it would mean putting the surf club off the beach.\textsuperscript{157} This unfortunately was the outcome and Manly's first surf club became a social club. Further bitterness developed, the club resenting its members being referred to as 'trippers' as membership comprised both residents and non-residents of Manly. Donovan, however, was insistent that 'it would be a very improper thing to confine life saving clubs to local members'. The club took exception to the council rescinding its earlier motion and the bitterness

\textsuperscript{151} Manly Municipal Council Minutes 14, 28 February 1911, pp. 321, 327.  
\textsuperscript{154} Evidence volume, Report of Surf Bathing Commission 1911-1912, pp.11-12. The outspoken Donovan had numerous run-ins with the council over the years, previously accusing it of being 'behind the age' and 'opposed to the advancement of a health-giving recreation'. 
\textsuperscript{152} Manly Municipal Council Minutes, 28 August 1911, p.14. 
\textsuperscript{153} ibid: Evening News 29 August 1911 
\textsuperscript{157} Manly Municipal Council Minutes 28 August 1911, p.14.
eventuated in the club going on strike and requesting the council ‘to take the surf-boat off it hands as it will not now be of any further use to us.’\textsuperscript{158} Formally writing to the council the club stated

that in consequence of the action of the Council in rescinding the permission given to the club to erect a clubhouse on the beach it was not intended in future to take any responsibility for the safe-guarding of life such as performing patrols and formally ask Council to take over the surf-boat.\textsuperscript{159}

On motion of Aldermen Quirk and Ogilvy it was decided to receive the letter and note the action taken and that a letter of thanks be sent for the work carried out by the club in the past. It was also decided to take over the lifeboat.\textsuperscript{160}

The situation of having an un-patrolled beach was relieved when council received notification of two new clubs being formed; one, a breakaway group from the Manly Surf Club, which called itself the Manly Life Saving Club (MLSC). This group comprised those members ‘with no other object than that of life saving...every member of the club to be a certificated lifesaver’.\textsuperscript{161} Council welcomed the new club with a letter to its founder W.A. Kellam who had been a foundation member of the Manly Surf Club and its vice-captain and instructor stating that ‘the Council willingly gives its support to the formation of a Life Saving Club in the South Steyne’.\textsuperscript{162} Another prominent member of the new club was Tom Gunning. Also a foundation member of the Manly Surf Club Gunning was responsible for the design of a movable wooden telescopic tower, which was used on Manly beach. This was designed as a possible means of overcoming the danger represented by the tendency of over-enthusiastic on-

\textsuperscript{158} Sydney Morning Herald 22 September 1911.
\textsuperscript{159} Manly Municipal Council Minutes, 6 September 1911, p.427.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., p.427.
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., 19 September 1911, p.426. The Constitution and By-Laws of this club are held in the Local History Section, Manly Municipal Library, along with the first annual report dated Thursday 19 September 1912.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid.

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lookers to rush the lifelines and haul back some luckless belterman, either with or away from his patient, and to drag him under and through the surf at the risk of his life. Gunning who had suffered this experience, designed the movable tower in such a fashion that the reel could be set on a platform, adjustable to any height and the line run out by the patrol clear over the heads of curious crowds and beyond the reach of clutching hands. Set on wide-tyred wheels the tower could be trundled to any part of the beach. The original cost of the tower's construction was apparently met by a grateful surfer whom Gunning had once rescued.

A bitter opponent of the formation of the Manly Life Saving Club was Cecil Healy the Captain (and a foundation member) of Manly Surf Club. He accused members of the new club of looking for 'blatant notoriety' and acting as 'beach scavengers to Manly Council'. Manly Surf Club's founding President, F.J. Donovan told the annual meeting that the club 'wanted no traitors in the camp; it required the loyal support of every member' He agreed that Mr. Kellam's services to the club had been outstanding, 'but he was a deserter from the Surf Club...this club has had troubles enough without smoodging to anyone'.

Manly Life Saving Club quickly established itself. The first carnival, held in its foundation season on Saturday 6 January 1912 attracted more than 20,000 people – an extraordinary number when the only way to reach The Village was by paddle-wheel

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163 Manly Souvenir, Manly and District, 1924, p.31: Maxwell op.cit.p.58: S.& G. Champion, Bathing, Drowning and Life Saving in Manly, Warringah and Pittwater to 1915, Book House, Glebe, 2000, pp.195-6. The tower eventually fell to pieces in the Manly Council yard to which it was relegated in need of repairs.
164 Maxwell op.cit. p.59.
165 Harris op.cit p.7.
166 Sunday Sun 18 October 1911.
ferry. The second carnival held in January 1913 was watched by an estimated 30,000 spectators.\textsuperscript{167}

The other newly formed club was the Manly Seagull Surf and Life Saving Club made up entirely of local residents. It was this club’s ‘desire to assist the council in carrying out the ordinances of the council and...they are prepared to provide senior members as inspectors under appointment by the council.’\textsuperscript{168} This club later changed its name to South Steyne Life Saving Club. Manly Life Saving Club objected to this change claiming that it might lead to confusion, as there was already a North Steyne Club. Further conflict developed between the two clubs when in May 1913 a violent storm that lashed the New South Wales coast swept away the shed provided by council for the Manly Life Saving Club. Manly Council was prepared to erect another shed and South Steyne (Seagulls), as local residents, put in a claim to use the shed. However, Manly Life Saving Club as former occupiers of the shed wished to be the sole users. The matter was directed to the Surf Bathing Association, which suggested an amalgamation between the two clubs. Manly club was willing but South Steyne desisted, claiming that there was plenty of room on the beach for both clubs; also, that all their members were local residents whereas Manly club’s members were not all locals, some members being drawn from outside the area. At a special meeting of Manly Council it was decided that the clubs should amalgamate.\textsuperscript{169} This apparently occurred, as the South Steyne Club did not affiliate with the Surf Bathing Association for the 1915-16 season.\textsuperscript{170}

\textsuperscript{167} Harris op. cit. p.9.
\textsuperscript{168} Manly Municipal Council Minutes 26 September 1911, p.428; \textit{Evening News} 29 September 1911.
\textsuperscript{169} \textit{Daily Telegraph} 12 December 1913.
\textsuperscript{170} ibid.
The lifesaving movement developed in a mood of moral disapproval and government reticence. Although it stressed the ethics of ‘vigilance and service’ (surf lifesaving’s motto), it should be acknowledged that not all members were drawn to the movement by altruistic motives and belief in an esprit de corps. The *National Times* wrote ‘the surf lifesaver has always represented a certain Australian ideal, physical sun-burnished, heroic, yet hedonistic’.\(^{171}\) Hedonism was alive and well and was no doubt a major part of the appeal of the beaches for many members. There were other benefits too. The blokiness, mateship element of the clubs as well as public status and participation in competition and carnivals would have appealed to many, as would perhaps hero worship from the opposite sex.\(^{172}\) No doubt keg parties and grog-ups were indulged in as well as cavalier behaviour, particularly by boat crews as Maxwell observed.

> The championship crew from North Steyne took the club surf boat out to the bombora, more than a mile off shore for no other reason than to see if they could ride the huge waves. An onlooker noted as it was picked up by a frightening wave ‘the twenty foot boat with its cargo of beefy blokes looked like a solitary skier on the snowy slopes of Mount Kosciusko’\(^{173}\)

Undoubtedly, there were also elements of authoritarianism, indeed, puritan regulations and rigorous discipline ruled the surf clubs, but flamboyant radical individualism could also be found in most clubs.\(^{174}\) But can this label be attached to all members? Jaggard suggests while discipline and larrkinism were, and still are, opposite sides of the same surf lifesaving coin, there exists three overlapping categories of club members. First, those who took their ‘guardian of the beaches’ patrol duties very seriously, second, the competitors who joined because of the sport and for fitness and those who were

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\(^{172}\) Understandable when the press of the day referred to lifesavers as ‘physical perfection in all its glory! Herculean conquerors of the surf - Australia’s guardians of the undertow’. *Sunday Times* 16 March 1935.

\(^{173}\) Maxwell op.cit. p.113. See also E. Jaggard *The Australian Lifesaver as a National Symbol 1920-1960*, paper presented at the Australian Identities Conference, History, Culture and the Environment held at University College, Dublin, 3 July 1996 wherein Jaggard states ‘the law enforcer of the beaches frequently used his unique community status and very visible public presence, with all the connotations of virile masculinity, to protect himself when he ignored generally accepted standards of public behaviour. Public tolerance - “they do a good job and they’re volunteers” - was his shield’. (my thanks to Professor Jaggard for a copy of his paper).
motivated by little more than the realisation that the clubhouse was a place to shower, hang their towels and perhaps store their surf boards. On the other hand, Phillip and Correll saw an egalitarian side to the movement. Both asserted that ‘the surf club was a great leveller as members are drawn from all grades of society’.  

The image of discipline manifested in displays of rescue and resuscitation and the military style drill of the march past was (and still is) important to the clubs’ social, public and traditional image. But it should also be remembered that as surf clubs had not been established elsewhere in the world, the methods, drill, gear and organisation had to be developed by Australian lifesavers - they studied, they experimented, they practised, they subscribed for equipment, they got doctors to teach them the art of resuscitation.

Carter sums it up

in those early days, surfing meant body surfing. Anyone who was good at it joined a club. The only clubs were the surf life saving clubs. Surfing was almost synonymous with surf life saving.

The lifesaving movement still flourishes but its glory days are past, rescues are now performed using the latest in modern equipment, or by board riders who spurn club discipline. In its ‘heyday’ it was for many, ‘a labour of love’. However, it was, and still is, public service on an honorary basis.

175 G.B. Phillip, *Sixty Years Recollections of Swimming and Surfing in the Eastern Suburbs*, p.61: Correll stated “the beach was a place to go to meet one’s friends and swim on even terms. The beach tended to be a leveller. We met there and swam and played games”. Beach Holidays, ABC Television George Negus Tonight, 16 February 2004 (transcript p.2).
176 *Beside the Sea, Sydney Beaches and Resorts*, published by the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales in conjunction with the exhibition *Beside the Sea* at Elizabeth Bay House, December 1981, p.4. In an article titled ‘Surf Bathing and Surf Life Saving in Australia, ‘Bank Notes’ published by the Commonwealth Bank of Australia in February 1926 has very explanatory photographs (and text) on various components, which comprise a surf carnival.
CONCLUSION:

The emergence of surf bathing as a popular sport heralded many changes. Beachside councils, although in some cases, reluctant, were eventually forced to alter their by-laws and ordinances to accommodate daylight bathing and provide dressing room accommodation for the public and club sheds for the newly formed surf life saving clubs. New regulations were also enacted to regulate swimming and beach attire, mixed bathing and sunbathing. Councils also had to address the need for life saving apparatus on the beaches. This need - particularly at Manly, led to conflicts about power and control of the beaches between the Councils and the Surf Life Saving Clubs as well as inter-club conflict with regard to the use of surf boats, life saving equipment and designated areas to be patrolled.

The increasing popularity of surf bathing and beach going\textsuperscript{178} also brought about increased use of public transport. One journalist wrote of ‘the boon’ of Sunday morning trams and trains enabling father, mother and the children to ‘come down from one of the outer suburbs to surf and go home thoroughly refreshed’.\textsuperscript{179}

Old entrenched attitudes and conventions were pushed aside as the rush to the beaches and the surf brought about rapid social change. Clearly, surf bathing with all its attendant commercialisation was here to stay. People embraced a new lifestyle - a new freedom of enjoying the beaches and the sunshine. Sydney was indeed ‘witnessing the birth of a new spirit of living’ - a hedonistic culture in which nobody seemed to take themselves too seriously, and, as with those swimmers at the ‘Figtree’ in the early days

\textsuperscript{177}Carter op.cit. p. 20.

\textsuperscript{178}The Surf Bathing Committee found for example, that at Coogee the average daily attendance exceeded 15,000: Little Coogee had a daily attendance of 1,000: Lynch and Larcombe op.cit. p.232.

\textsuperscript{179}NSW Bookstall: Guide to Sydney and Pleasure Resorts of NSW. 1938.
of settlement, the watery medium acted as a 'leveller'. As Pringle noted 'you cannot tell a man's income in a pair of swimming trunks, and the Pacific surf is a mighty leveller'.

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CHAPTER 5:

NATIONAL ICONS

Coming towards us, along the edge of the water, a tall young man - is now in focus. His performance is astounding. A Beautiful Person. He runs lightly, easily, knees high, arms swinging. Along the length of the beach he draws eyes after him. The crash of the surf is the necessary accompaniment. There are youths on boards. Most of the swimmers are body-surfers, wave catchers in the best Aus. style.¹

SPLENDID TYPES OF AUSTRALIAN MANHOOD:

The history and mythology of Australia’s surf lifesaving movement portrays the surf lifesaver as a national symbol, an image of manhood often regarded as reflecting the legendary ethos of the early settlers – the bushmen, itinerant workers, gold diggers, squatters, selectors, explorers who blazed the trail over the Blue Mountains and of course, the Anzacs, all of whom forged a creed of mateship.

Romantic images of the bush were well recorded by writers and painters such as A.B. ‘Banjo’ Paterson, Henry Lawson, Hans Heysen, Tom Roberts, Frederick McCubbin et al.² The Bulletin newspaper with its ‘boisterously assertive nationalism’ became ‘the standard bearer for the literary discovery of Australia, ’encouraging and publishing works of ‘bush’ writers.³ Thus the folk figures emerged from ballad, song and history to contribute to the making of a national self-image. Russell Ward asserts that ‘if we seek the source of the national self-image we must look, almost exclusively to the bush’.⁴ For Ward, self-image comprises a whole range of attitudes, assumptions and beliefs about life in general and Australian life in particular. ‘Some of these, like the

heavy emphasis on equality, 'mateship' and practical improvising skills and on local, as opposed to British imperial, patriotism may be considered admirable traits and some, like contempt for intellectual and spiritual pursuits and a virulent racism may be thought vile, but all formed part of the image. However, the debate on self-image (or national identity) is ceaseless. Whilst the romantic image of a pure, uncontaminated bush has long dominated much of Australian thinking Donald Horne claims that many symbols are 'too far fetched for Australian taste'...He sees as the image of Australia, 'a man in an open-necked shirt solemnly enjoying an ice-cream. His kiddy is beside him'.

There are several schools of thought on whom the 'national type' image was founded. Russel Ward explored a model through the tradition of ballad and yarn, which developed first among the convict settlers, and itinerant workers of the pastoral frontier creating a tradition of collectivism, egalitarianism and 'mateship'. He thus argued that the Australian bush legend culminated in the 1890s after native-born white Australians had become the majority of the population and literacy had brought the city and country closer together with writers like Lawson, Paterson and Furphy romanticising the bush ethos. The ethos was propagated by the strengthening labour movement. Ward's "typical Australian" was 'a practical man, rough and ready in his manners and quick to decry any appearance of affectation in others. He is a great

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7 Donald Horne, The Lucky Country, Australia in the Sixties, Penguin Books Pty. Ltd. 1964, p.16. Horne rejects as too far fetched, the image of 'an Australian beach on a hot summer day people doze in the sun or shoot the breakers like Hawaiian princes on pre-missionary Waikiki', p.16.
improviser, willing to "have a go" at anything...he swears hard, gambles heavily and drinks deeply on occasion...he is a "hard case" sceptical about the value of religion and of intellectual and cultural pursuits...he is fiercely independent, hates officiousness and authority...yet hospitable and will stick to his mates through thick and thin, even if he thinks they may be in the wrong." Ward contended that the loneliness and hardships of outback life taught the value of co-operation and brought a more communitarian or collectivist outlook. This is probably borne out in the fact that the bushman and farmer contributed much to the Australian soldier's image. Barrett points out that 'the first image of the Australian soldier was largely stamped by real Australian bushmen...the Queensland contingents to the Boer War were mounted infantry organized around bushmen and farmers {while}...the third contingent overwhelmingly and deliberately composed of bushmen...Australian infantry contingents were often mounted in South Africa, and, after a contingent of bushmen proper had been sent by New South Wales, Britain quickly asked for more...the whole emphasis in the Australian commitment came to be placed on bushmen.' Manning Clark contends that 'the bush was the cradle of the bush culture, and the virtues of courage, resource, initiative and compassion...conferred a mantle of glory on the Digger'.

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11 ibid. In 'Melbourne and the Bush: Russel Ward's Thesis and a La Trobe Survey', Meanjin Quarterly, Vol. 31, No. 4, December 1972, p.465, Barrett states that the Boer War drew heavily on bushmen and their skills, contributing significantly to the Australian image...that the two world wars intermingled masses of urban and rural men, often under conditions reminiscent of outback camps, and potently reinforced the legend'.
Graeme Davison believes the collective ideas of the poets and story-writers as an emerging urban intelligentsia had a dominating influence. He points out ‘all but a few of the Bulletin’s staple contributors and most of its occasional “correspondents” lived in the coastal cities, especially Sydney and Melbourne… that the most outstanding group – Henry Lawson, Bernard O’Dowd, Edward Dyson, A.G. Stephens, the Lindsays – came as fortune-seekers from the declining goldfields, their intellectual interests already often kindled by small-town self-improvement societies’. Certainly, most of Lawson’s work was written in the city. For J.B. Hirst the early pioneers assumed the mantle of legend. He relates the ‘image’ to the ‘courage, enterprise, hard work and perseverance’ of the pioneers who became pastoralists and farmers, rather than their employees. He too, draws on the work of the artists, poets and story-tellers, and uses for example, the 1904 Frederick McCubbin painting The Pioneers as the ‘embodiment in art of the pioneer legend’. Hirst points out that Ward saw the work of both A.B. ‘Banjo’ Paterson and Henry Lawson as the chief vehicle for spreading a democratic, collectivist, national mystique. However, he further asserts that both writers also celebrated the pioneers, the most powerful being Lawson’s The Drover’s Wife which relates the story of the stoic bushwoman, alone in her bush home with her children and her faithful dog. She reminisces on her struggles with flood, pleuro-pneumonia, crows and a ‘gallows-faced swagman’ whilst waiting for a black snake to appear from under the house.

Hirst's legend is very different to the one discussed by Ward. Hirst's is a nationalist legend, which deals in a heroic way with the central experience of European settlement in Australia—the taming of the new environment for man's use. As Hirst points out in *Intruders in the Bush* 'pioneers originally means immigrants who had come to the colonies in their early years, but by the 1890s it had come to mean those who first settled and worked the land'. Hirst's pioneers are politically conservative who celebrate individual rather than collective or state enterprise. To Hirst, the pioneer epitomised courage, enterprise, hard work and perseverance and usually applied to the people who first settled the land, whether as pastoralists or farmers and not to those they employed. 'The pioneers are depicted in a world limited by the boundaries of their properties, subduing the land and battling the elements. Their enemies are drought, flood, fire, sometimes Aborigines; never low prices, middle-men, lack of capital, or other pioneers'.

Allan Ashbolt contends that pioneer-consciousness is not peculiarly Australian, that the pioneer is an archetype, almost a stereotype, in all those colonies of the New World, which have been culturally dominated by European settlers.

In North America, it was the Pioneer, buttressed by the Protestant ethic, who became the symbol of acquisitive expansionism as he rolled back the forests, harnessed the rivers, destroyed the Indians, pushed forward the frontier. In South Africa the Pioneer took his gun in one hand, his Bible in the other, and trekked towards the Transvaal, drawing out of this experience a devious doctrine of racial supremacy.

Acquisitiveness and racialism Ashbolt further suggests are characteristic of pioneering societies—Australia being no exception—that we too went through periods of

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16 Hirst op.cit. p.316.
18 Ibid.
audacious land-grabs and caused decimation of a native people, ‘including one act of genocide, the extermination of the Tasmanian Aborigines’.\textsuperscript{20}

Twenty two years after the aforementioned papers of Ward, Davison and Hirst were published Richard Waterhouse argued that ‘metamorphosing images of the bush and its peoples’ were promoted by a ‘cultural and intellectual response to a series of dramatic social, economic and technological changes that transformed the face of rural Australia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries\textsuperscript{21} First, changes in communication resulted in closer links between the cities and rural communities thus exposing country people to city culture; second, railways extending into distant areas of the hinterlands brought about changes in transportation and finally, industrialisation and mechanization which extended to rural areas in the form of ‘dairy factories, boiling down and wool scouring works, flour and sugar mills, breweries and iron foundries’.\textsuperscript{22} The gold diggers of the 1850s ‘became employees rather than entrepreneurs’ as gold diggings were operated by large companies using modern equipment, and the use of technology in agricultural production ‘acted to create a widespread perception that the traditional bush and its inhabitants now belonged to a fondly remembered history’.\textsuperscript{23}

The shaping of Australia’s national identity cannot be pigeon holed into a legend or pioneer category. It is much larger than either Ward’s or Hirst’s thesis. It involved a

\textsuperscript{20} ibid.
\textsuperscript{22} ibid. p.213.
\textsuperscript{23} ibid. p.214.
whole range of people, ideas and places and both the bush and urban environments.
Along with the bushmen and the pioneers it involved explorers, bushrangers, artists,
writers, composers, actors, politicians, soldiers and frontier women who were all
heroes in their own right. And, as Waterhouse has pointed out, modern technology
closed the gap between the bush and the city.\(^{24}\) Furthermore, national identity is
something both attained and constantly renegotiated, something derived from the past
yet still to be discovered.\(^{25}\)

Whichever ‘type’ promoted the bush legend, after the landing at Gallipoli Australia
acquired a legend more powerful and enduring then any previously suggested – the
Anzacs - who became known as ‘diggers’. The term ‘digger’ appears to have been
derived from several sources. Ward contends that ‘the term was a nickname the
Australians bestowed upon themselves which was to remain with them and their sons’
sons in other places and other wars. They called each other ‘diggers’, partly in all
probability, from memories of the goldfields and Eureka Stockade, and partly from the
prodigious amount of digging done by the men in all the armies engaged in the Great
War’.\(^{26}\) Laffin agrees with Ward on the trench-digging activities but offers some other
suggestions. He quotes C.E.W. Bean, the Australian official historian of World War I
as saying that the word was evolved from the professional gum-diggers of New
Zealand. And, at one time it was a slang expression for a plodder, which could make it
an apt term for an infantryman. The Poet Laureate at the time, John Masefield
probably had the final word in Gallipoli.

\(^{24}\) ibid, p.201.
\(^{26}\) Russel Ward, A Nation for a Continent: The History of Australia, 1901-1975 (revised ed.) Heineman,
In this war of digging, the daily life in the trenches gives digging enough to every soldier. Men dig daily even if they do not fight. At Anzac in July the Australians had a double share of digging – their daily share in the front lines, and when that was finished their nightly share preparing cover for the new troops...all this work was done in their sleep time after the normal day's work of fighting, digging and carrying up stores. Besides digging those hiding places they carried up, fixed, hid and filled the water tanks, which were to supply the newcomer. They took personal pride and pleasure in playing the game of cache-cache to the end...those smiling and glorious giants thought little of it.

Whatever its origin, the word apparently had a much stronger connection with Australian soldiers than with New Zealanders who were more commonly known to allies and even to enemies as 'Kiwis'.

The baton of the 'legend' was handed to the lifesavers who encapsulated the importance of strong masculinity, able-bodied, healthy men who worked well in teams and risked the elements to safeguard the community. Not only did this new icon exemplify the ideals of masculine perfection in portraying development of a 'national type', he also epitomised the long-standing code of civic duty - it was officially stated that 'their work can be definitely classified as the most humanitarian movement of modern times'. For the Australian Sesquicentenary of 1938, the artist Charles Meere designed a poster to promote the Empire Games held in Sydney as part of the celebrations of 150 years of British settlement. The poster featured an heroic hurdler leaping over the Harbour Bridge and this square jawed figure typified the imagery used to represent the Australian male in the 1930s. The warrior aspect of the lifesaver hero is implicitly acknowledged in the titles of books produced on the

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27 John Masefield, Gallipoli, W. Heineman, July, 1918, pp.110-112.
subject; for example, *Gladiators of the Sea, Australians Against the Sea, A Challenge Answered, Saviours and Sportsmen, The Guardians of our Beaches, The Upraised Arm, Vigilant and Victorious*.

Newspapers too, used stirring headlines and photo captions depicting the lifesaver as hero. Captions such as *Leaders of the Surfing Armies, Bringing in Their Man, Kings of the Surf, Youth and Strength Under Australian Skies, Bold Men of the Surf, Vikings from Twenty-Nine Clubs crushed the sand at Bondi Beach and Types of Lifesavers from Sydney Beaches.*

Tanned by the sun and hardened by the sea surfers of the Sydney beaches seem to develop into a race of supermen, splendid in physique and carriage, like the athletic gods modeled by the sculptors of old Greece.

The Lifesaver was thus added to the litany of Australian icons, the gold digger, the rugged bushman, the warrior at Gallipoli. He exemplified a central continuing image of Australian masculinity...able-bodiedness, heroic sacrifice and racial purity.

Saunders suggests that this icon developed almost concurrently with attempts to reincorporate returned servicemen back into the fabric of Australian society after World War I points to a cultural need to preserve the image of manly strength and virility at the expense of the reality of shell-shocked and physically maimed men destroyed by war. Sacrifice had rendered the Anzac flawed in mind and body; a new unblemished and intact hero needed to be constructed.

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34 ibid.
A founding member of the Manly Surf Club, A. W. Relph in a newspaper article compared the surf life-savers with this accepted symbol of Australian manhood - the pioneers of the outback, shearers, stockmen and drovers who worked hard and endured hardship and isolation with stoic resolve - men who provided the qualities relevant to a country dependent upon the ‘sheep’s back’ for its wealth. He proclaimed that surf bathing had produced a ‘fine healthy race of men, quite equal to their brothers who live in the outback, in the bush and open air of the country’ and

when Australia needs them, as some day no doubt she will, these men, trained athletes, tanned with the sun on the beaches, strong and brawny with the buffeting in the surf, will be well fitted to take up their trust and do duty for their country.  

It could be suggested that the image of the lifesaver as hero was already cast. the heroine of Ethel Turner’s novel Flower o’the Pine, set in Manly of 1911 stated that ‘lifesavers were the splendidlest men in the world’. However, the ANZACS as national icons reinforced and upheld that image. As ‘Banjo’ Paterson wrote ‘even the English at home insisted on seeing them as noble, if regrettably undisciplined, bushmen, every one slouching six feet or more tall in his socks’. Writing in The Australian, George Johnston described them thus.

They were men of big physique, brown and carefree. They romped naked and bathed naked under shellfire along the beach; often they fought naked in their clifftop trenches. They were sardonic about patriotism, aggressively masculine; they respected the enemy more than they did their own leaders; they were ingenious and adventurous; they lived by simple codes of loyalty and comradeship; and they had a mordant, self-denigrating often macabre humor which took the place of both heroics and histrionics.

The physical appearance and nakedness of the men at Anzac Cove was noted in a similar manner by Compton Mackenzie who visited the war zone and wrote: ‘there

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35 Sydney Morning Herald, 26 September 1908.
was not one of those glorious young men I saw that day who might not himself have been Ajax or Diomed, Hector or Achilles. Their almost complete nudity, their tallness and majestic simplicity of line, their rose-brown flesh burnt by the sun and purged of all grossness by the ordeal through which they were passing, all these united to create something as near to absolute beauty as I shall hope ever to see in this world'.

Masefield drew an idealised picture of the Anzacs

...the finest body of young men ever brought together in modern times. For physical beauty and nobility of bearing they surpassed any men I have ever seen; they walked and looked like kings in old poems, and reminded me of a line is Shakespeare:

‘baited like eagles having lately bathed’

...there was no thought of surrender in these marvelous young men: they were the flower of the world’s manhood, and died as they had lived, owning no master on this earth.

The digger, then, held a special place in the national identity because he could be seen as the ideal expression of the Australian ‘type’.

It was with a mixture of relief and pride that patriotic Australians could regard the national type as tested and not found wanting. With those credentials, the digger soon came to stand for all that was decent, wholesome and Australian. Not only did he embody Australianness, but he was its greatest protector.

The lifesaver was also seen as a ‘type’ The Sydney Mail under the heading ‘Splendid Types of Australian Manhood’ proclaimed ‘Most of the members of the surf clubs are particularly well built men whose self imposed task of lifesaving not only makes surfing for the multitudes comparatively safe but helps to develop them into splendid types’. The ‘protector’ image was also related to the lifesaver as he patrolled the beaches and ‘protected’ the community, carrying out rescues with courage and efficiency. One particular event – ‘Black Sunday’ at Bondi on 6 February 1938 is an example, when 300 surfers were caught and swept out in the receding swirl of three

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39 Laffin op.cit. p.44.
40 Masefield op.cit. pp.19,49.
41 White op.cit. p.123.
42 Sydney Mail 15 February 1928, p.13.
huge waves. Providence had 80 surf club members on the beach waiting to commence a race. Courageous rescues were made -

Bondi Beach resembled a battlefield as lifesavers, doctors and first aid men fought to revive the unconscious. There were heart-rending scenes amongst relatives and friends who milled about the area where the desperate battle for life was being waged. The Bondi Surf Club and the lifesaving movement won international renown for the mass rescue. 43

A visiting American doctor, Dr. Marshall W. Dyer who was taking pictures on the beach when the tragedy and rescue occurred commented 'there are no men in the world like your lifesavers...this is the greatest labor of love in the world...I have never seen anything like it'.44 The lifesaver thus achieved almost legendary status becoming a paragon of national manhood – sun-bronzed, iron-muscled, surf gods. Comparison with the military (and thus the digger) followed.

Not only is he metonymic of the city - particularly Sydney- and thus culture, but the practices that develop around the lifesaving clubs are those of the most disciplined of institutional structures - the military. Lifesavers have drills, march-pasts, and patrol squads, while exercising a conservative pastoral interest in their members' moral health. They are agents of social control. Further they see themselves as servants of the community, sacrificing their weekends for others – a tradition of sacrifice dear to a nation, which twice voted no to conscription in the Great War...Australia, responded by according the lifesaver the kind of heroic status accorded the digger."

ANSWERING THE CALL:

Unfortunately, A.W. Relph's prediction came all too soon when Australia was plunged into the Great War in 1914. Enlistments from swimming clubs and surf life saving clubs soon followed. Bondi Surf Bathers Life Saving Club had just won the first championship rescue and resuscitation competition held by the Surf Life Saving Association and the club was bounding from success to success when the war began to drain its ranks. The first application for leave of absence while on active service was made by H.A.D. Wainwright on 3 September, 1914 one month after the declaration of

44 ibid.
war and from then on there were regular enlistments, 110 active members serving overseas. In September 1916 Dr. Keith Grieve was awarded the Military Cross for conspicuous bravery in attending the wounded in the open. Captain Robert Crowe was the first club member to fall on active service and a number of members died in the war. The depletion of members meant that the committee had to call on able-bodied associates to assist with beach duty. The committee approached the nearest schools, Sydney Grammar, Waverley Christian Brothers and Scots College, many boys coming forward to assist with patrols.

In Manly, after much ill feeling, the amalgamation of Manly and South Steyne clubs had just been completed when war began. Voluntary enlistment for overseas service was almost 100% and almost immediate. At North Steyne club 53 of 71 members enlisted. Unfortunately, like Bondi, those who remained were insufficient in numbers to mount patrols and the committee sought the help of the headmaster of Manly public school, in enlisting the best swimmers to become probationary members of the club. Other boys were recruited from Manly Amateur Swimming Club at the beginning of the 1915-16 season. The probationary members paid no fee. The volunteers numbered 184 and when the war ended the club made provision to admit junior members, for many of the juniors (aged 16-18) had been the 14 year-olds who had patrolled the beach between 1914 and 1918.

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48 R. S. Harris, Heroes of the Surf: Fifty Years History of Manly Life Saving Club, p.11.
49 Ibid. Jaggard (writing about Cottesloe Club in Western Australia) points out in A Challenge Answered: A History of Surf Lifesaving in Western Australia, Surf Life Saving Association of Australia, W.A. Centre, 1979, p. 10. that ‘through the years from 1914 to 1918 surf lifesaving struggled to survive, principally because most club members enlisted’.
50 Harris op.cit.p.12.
was club captain Fritz Schwarz who upon return from the war changed his name by deed-poll to Fred Campbell. Further research has not thrown any light on his reasons; however, an interview with Mrs. Joan Kearney (nee Lear) who was the adopted daughter of a German family living in Harbord NSW during World War I suggests the anti-German feeling in the community.

In WWI and the years following, the Pföeffers and other local German families suffered some discrimination and social isolation: ‘stones were thrown’. Joan remembers a happy, but solitary childhood, with few friends, no children or local families invited home or extending hospitality to Mrs. Pföeffler. She sensed that being in a ‘German’ household marked her out in some ways. She also recalls her embarrassment at having to go home for a hot meal at lunchtime each school day while other children took sandwiches to school.51

This was not a localized event. German residents of Australia whether born in Australia or not were subject to abuse and suspicion. The defeat of the first conscription referendum in 1916 brought about a search for scapegoats, one of which was the ‘German vote’. The Hughes nationalist government as a consequence, invoked the War Precautions Act of 29 October 1914 (and as amended on 30 April 1915) preventing ‘Germans’ from voting in the 1917 general election and subsequently extended their definition of ‘German’ to include a naturalized subject born in an enemy country.52 Hughes estimated that striking the German vote off the electoral

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51 Notes from a telephone interview with Mrs. Joan Kearney by Terry Metherell, Manly Warringah and Pittwater Historical Society, 13 April 2003: Harbord is the ‘next-door’ suburb to Manly: Another example of anti-German feelings in the community was the renaming of Shultz Avenue in the northern beaches (NSW) suburb of Cromer to Kyrie Avenue after Collaroy Surf Life Saving Club patron Granville Ryrie, Brawley op.cit. Vigilant and Victorious, p.30.

52 Michael McKernan, The Australian People and The Great War, Collins, Sydney, 1984. p. 167: The Chief Returning Officer for the Commonwealth announced that under the regulations for the Military Service Referendum every naturalized British subject who was born in an ‘enemy’ country and every person whose father was born in an ‘enemy’ country suffered disqualification in the referendum. Under the regulations an ‘enemy’ country was one which formed part of the territory of any country with which the British Empire was then at war. L.C. Jauncey, The Story of Conscription in Australia, Allen & Unwin, London, 1935. p.271: ‘For its part, the High Court co-operated in the national cause by liberally construing the commonwealth’s defence power to permit near-dictatorial federal action in executing the war effort. The constitutionality of the War Precautions Act 1914-16 which allowed the executive government to make virtually any regulations it thought desirable ‘for the more effectual prosecution of the war” including regulation of “the disposal or use of any property, goods, articles or things of any kind’ was upheld by the Court. The leading case, Farey v Burvett (1916), that upheld the validity of commonwealth laws that authorized the fixing of bread prices in Victoria, provided the judges with a
rolls would reduce the 'No' vote in the second referendum on conscription by 114,000. This action denied the German-Australians the fundamental rights of citizenship and gave official sanction to the question of their loyalty. In some cases the sons of these German-Australians were fighting with the AIF in Europe. Under the War Precautions Act German schools were closed, licenses to publish newspapers in German language revoked and the use of German language in churches prohibited. The South Australian Parliament introduced legislation to change German place names to patriotic English ones, and under the Nomenclature Act of 1917, 69 German place names were changed to English or Aboriginal names. In the Barossa Valley, Klemzig became Gaza, after an Australian victory in Palestine; Handorf became Yantaringa. The township of Hamburg was called Haig, after general Haig. Further, it became an offence for an individual to anglicise his name, which had become common practice. Other actions included the refusal of their workmates to continue working with them and dismissal by employers, which meant they had little chance of finding other employment. This antagonism may also have been a desire to secure jobs for Australians in a time of high unemployment. Some German-Australians,
feeling like aliens in the land of their birth or adoption were interned at their own request.

Many Manly swimmers also gave their lives. Two in particular were prominent figures in both still water and surf swimming. Arthur Rosenthal joined the Light Horse Field Ambulance, a section of the forces for which his knowledge of first aid, acquired during a long connection with the Royal Life Saving Society particularly fitted him. He served at Gallipoli and died in Egypt on 29 May 1915, aged 33.58 The second was Cecil Healy who joined the Australian Imperial Force on 15 September 1915. Healy saw action in France as a 2nd Lieutenant in the 19th Battalion Australian Infantry (sometimes known as the Sportsmen’s Battalion)59 and was killed in the Battle of the Somme in France on 29 August 1918, aged 35.60 Holder of many Australian and Australasian titles Healy also took part in the Interim Olympic Games in Athens in 1906 and the Olympic Games in Stockholm in 1912, where he won silver in the 100m freestyle, and, with Leslie Boardman, Malcolm Champion (NZ) and Harold Hardwick won gold in the 4 x 200m freestyle relay team.61 He was also a regular contributor to the press on swimming and surf bathing. One of his articles on the ‘crawl stroke’ which appeared in the Sydney press was thought so highly of by the Amateur Swimming Association of England that they reprinted it and issued 20,000 copies for free distribution under its scheme for the encouragement of swimming in Great

58 The Sun, 22 September 1914.
59 In its recruitment efforts the government began to target sportsmen such as lifesavers. In 1916 a call went out for formation of the ‘sportsman’s 1000’ a unit representing the height of Australian manhood. S.L.S.A. of NSW: New South Wales Surf Life Saving Handbook, Sydney, 1921: ‘By the end of 1914 the expectation had emerged that the sporting community had a particular role in relation to the war; if eligible, sportsmen should enlist; otherwise they might continue to play their games only to the extent that they did not interfere with the empire’s higher business’. Michael McKernan, Sport, War and Society in Australia 1914-18 in Sport in History, R. Cashman & M McKernan (eds.), University of Queensland Press, 1979, p.3.
World's Team Champions, Olympic Games, Stockholm, July 1912
(M. Champion, H. Hardwick, C. Healy and L. Boardman)

Source: E.S. Marks Collection, Mitchell Library

Plate 12
Britain. First published in the *Referee* in Sydney, on 12 March 1913, it was subsequently republished with a postscript by the author in ‘The Blunderbuss’ of April 1918, a paper issued by the 5th Officers’ Cadet Training Battalion at Trinity College, Cambridge. Healy was a founding member and Captain of the Manly Surf Club to which he remained loyal. One of the most popular early surf club competitions was the Cecil Healy Memorial Shield given by the members of the Manly Surf Club (not connected with the Life Saving Club) in his memory. The sought-after trophy comprised beach and water events. Manly Lifesavers became the absolute winners having won the Shield in all the six years of the competition.

At Coogee, 84 members of the Surf Life Saving Brigade enlisted, fifteen of whom did not return. Swimming club numbers were also depleted due to enlistments in the services. At Balmain Swimming Club ‘war took its toll and the next two seasons (after the 1914/15 season) only 18 members were active’. And at North Sydney the effect of the 1914-1918 World War was not made apparent in the Club’s affairs until the annual meeting in September, 1915 when the chairman, Mr. W. E. Bethel announced that policy for the duration of the war would be in the direction of junior swimming events rather than races for seniors. Subscriptions were reduced and efforts made to canvas all public schools in the district for junior members. The only district championships conducted during the season were the 50 yards junior and 250 yards

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62 ibid.
63 ibid.
66 Alex Hamill, *Balmain Swimming Club 1884-1984 Through the last 100 Years*, p.15.
teams (5 men) race. By the end of 1915 voluntary enlistment had caused the
cancellation of much of Australia's spectator and participant sport. Such actions were
interpreted as a sign of patriotism, and sports such as Rugby League, which continued
to be played, drew criticism. Although surf life saving could justify its continuance
because of its community service, the first Association Championships in 1915 were
the last until 1920. In December 1915, the Sydney Swimming Club announced that
in future, competition would be restricted to the under-21 and over-40 age groups.

Upon their return from active service feelings ran high in some surf life saving clubs
against those members who had not gone overseas. At Bondi, the returned men
expressed opinions about those who had not enlisted and stated that 'the committee no
longer had their confidence'. The committee resigned in a body and an election was
held but this did not remove all the hostility. Ultimately, a motion was carried by a
general meeting - which remained in force for some years - that only men who had
enlisted for service overseas and those who had been rejected on medical grounds
could be elected active members. Collaroy Surf Life Saving Club made life members
of all club members who served in the Great War. Something of a similar situation
occurred at Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club. The club celebrated the return of soldiers

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67 Brian Bailey and Frank Reddan, North Sydney Amateur Swimming Club, From its inception to 1952, p.24. (Enlisted numbers may vary as many of those who enlisted were members of both swimming and surf clubs.)
68 Sean Brawley, Beach Beyond, A History of the Palm Beach Surf Club 1921-1996, University of New South Wales Press, 1996, pp.77-78
69 ibid.
70 McKerman, The Australian People and the Great War, p. 105.
71 History of Bondi Surf Bathers Life Saving Club, p. 11.
72 ibid.
73 Brawley op.cit. Vigilant and Victorious, p. 36.
from the war with a carnival restricted to returned soldiers and competitors under 21 years of age.  

THE CONSCRIPTION ISSUE:

The feelings of the returned men can be related to numerous tensions, both political and within the community. As White observes, 'the Australia to which the diggers returned in 1919 was not the one they had left'.  

Most of the returning troops returned to their pre-war lives, some 40,000 accepting government aid in establishing themselves as soldier settlers in rural areas. However, many had difficulty finding jobs and readjusting to civilian life; and some, unfortunately, were shabbily treated by their pre-war employers. Given these tensions, the feelings of hostility by the returned men against those who did not enlist, is, perhaps understandable. They also returned to a country, which had been split by the conscription issue. The horrors of war were ignored by Labor Prime Minister, Andrew Fisher who 'urged all Australians to entertain the kindest feelings towards the mother country'. 'Should the worst happen'...after everything had been done that honour would permit... Australians would 'stand beside our own to help and defend her to our last man and our last shilling'. Fisher's successor, William Morris Hughes, the 'Little Digger', also a king and empire man, went further, calling for the conscription of the nation's youth. Australians divided along class, party and sectarian lines on whether conscription

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74 Lana Wells, Sunny Memories; Australians at the Seaside, Greenhouse Publications 1982. p. 122.
75 White op.cit. p.130.
76 ibid. p.135.
77 ibid. p.139.
78 Manning Clark, op.cit. Vol. 5, p. 374: Constitutionally, Australia had no decision to make about entering the war; membership of the British Empire ensured that Australia was automatically involved the moment Britain entered hostilities. Bicentennial Diary op.cit. p.92.
should be introduced. The measure was rejected by the slender margin of 72,476 in a poll of 2,500,000 voters on 28 October 1916. Three states, New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia voted ‘No’ with the majority in New South Wales (117,739) determining the outcome. This view was reaffirmed at a second referendum on 20 December 1917.\footnote{Michael McKerman, *The Australian People and The Great War*, p. 38.}

Generally, the newspapers, the Protestants and the wealthy saw conscription as morally necessary. Catholic leaders did not reject the idea and initially the Catholic newspapers supported the call for conscription in 1915, basing their arguments on the need for efficiency and economy and the best use of available manpower.\footnote{Ibid. p. 35.} However, Catholic newspapers had a change of opinion following working-class opposition and mobilization of the labour movement against any form of compulsory service overseas. The Catholic Assistant Archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix, recently arrived in Australia from Ireland, became Hughes’s most prominent critic when he championed Catholic labour supporters who felt betrayed by their religious leaders, who had supported the conscriptionists.\footnote{The ranks of ‘yes’ supporters included Archbishop Kelly of Sydney.}

Monsignor Mannix claimed that his intervention in the conscription debate was brought about by ‘certain authorities of the Anglican Church who have given their public support for conscription’.\footnote{Michael McKerman, ‘Catholics, Conscription and Archbishop Mannix, Australian Historical Studies, Vol. 17, April 1977, No. 68, pp. 299-314} Protestant leaders contended that ‘the issue is a moral one and therefore comes within the sphere of Church action’ - they saw the war as a God-sent opportunity by which the Australian people would learn that only through sacrifice and suffering did nations
achieve greatness. However, at this time, few Catholic bishops followed Mannix, arguing that for practical reasons not moral ones Catholics should vote ‘yes’.

The final manifesto issued on behalf of the leaders of the conscription campaign stated that ‘the advocates of the ‘No’ vote included every enemy of Britain open and secret in our midst. They include the violent and the lawless, the criminals who would wreck society and ruin prosperity.’ Even Henry Lawson believed conscription would

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\begin{align*}
&\text{make men of weeds! Give muscle thought and feeling!} \\
&\text{Reduce the Fat that goes in making men} \\
&\text{Give brains to brawn!... and you’ll get used to discipline and like it.}
\end{align*}
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Mannix’s encouraged the ‘no’ side to believe in their own patriotism, their loyalty and their respectability. He grounded his opposition to conscription upon the fact that conscription would destroy Australia’s economy, weaken or wreck the union movement and possibly lead to the immigration of diverse racial groups. He accused Hughes of wanting to put the people of Australia under the heel of military domination. His popularity and influence caused the Prime Minister, Mr. Hughes on two occasions to appeal to the Vatican to restrain Mannix. This was extremely serious. The first attempt was made in July 1917. As Australia had no diplomatic links with the Vatican, the Governor-General Ronald Munro-Ferguson requested the Foreign Office in London to handle the matter. He cabled, ‘at the request of Mr. Hughes suggesting Rome be asked to restrain Mannix’. The Foreign Office instructed its representative at the Vatican, Count de Salis, on 20 September 1917 to explain that the Commonwealth Government strongly suspected Mannix of disloyalty and believed

\[^{63}\text{ibid.}, \quad ^{64}\text{Jouney op.cit. p.211.}, \quad ^{65}\text{Henry Lawson op.cit. ‘Conscription’, A Fantasy of Man, Vol. 2, 1984, p.696.}, \quad ^{66}\text{ibid. p. 308.}\]
that he was highly unpopular with Australian Catholics. De Salis should request the Vatican to urge Mannix to ‘moderate his utterances’ lest the Commonwealth be forced to act against Mannix under the Defence of the Realm Regulations.\textsuperscript{88} The outcome of these representations is unknown.\textsuperscript{89} However, it can be fairly assumed that had there been any initiative from the Vatican, it both failed to sanction Mannix or satisfy Hughes. The second attempt was made following the second conscription referendum, which complained that Mannix had again ignored advice to refrain from public discussion of conscription. When this became known in Rome the Congregation of Propaganda reminded Mannix in a letter dated 3 April 1918 that ‘the office of a Pastor is to pacify souls, to allay discords and prevent their arising or becoming embittered’.\textsuperscript{90}

Although Mannix believed he would probably be sanctioned at his ad limina visit to Rome which he could no longer delay, he defiantly stated ‘if the Holy Father has any fault to find with my career or administration, my first reply to him will be that I did not seek the position I hold...[and] that I am prepared to stand or fall by the judgement of the Bishops and clergy and people of Australia’.\textsuperscript{91} Furthermore, as Mannix himself believed that his local popularity was the best guarantee against Roman censure, he concluded on a note of bravado: ‘I look forward with great pleasure to the time when I shall come back as I went – the Archbishop of Melbourne – unchanged and unchanagable’.\textsuperscript{92}

\textsuperscript{87} Manning Clark op.cit. Vol. 6, p.74.
\textsuperscript{88} McKernan op.cit. Catholics, Conscription and Archbishop Mannix, p. 310.
\textsuperscript{89} ibid.
\textsuperscript{90} ibid.,
\textsuperscript{91} ibid. p.312. Canon Law prescribed that every Catholic bishop must perform the Visitatio ad Limina Apostolorum every five years for those with European Dioceses and every 10 years for the remainder.
\textsuperscript{92} ibid.
The second referendum held at the end of 1917 after huge losses of Australian troops on the Western Front was this time, defeated by an increased proportion of votes. Despite attempts to make voting difficult in rural areas the country votes played a prominent part in the defeat of the referendum, as people on the land feared the loss of farm labour. Conscription would have had disastrous consequences for rural life.\(^93\) The choice of Thursday, December 20\(^{th}\) for polling day was an effort to place anti-conscriptionists at a disadvantage.\(^94\) It also adversely affected the industrial and working classes who did not have a mid week day free for voting. For farmers it meant an extra trip to town as they usually went to town on Saturdays. Another important fact in connection with the second poll was that rolls closed on November 10\(^{th}\), two days after the announcement of the referendum. In many rural districts news of the impending vote became known after the rolls had closed.\(^95\) Henry E. Boote, editor of the *Australian Worker* claimed that the conscriptionists had purposely provoked the railway strike in Sydney with the idea of breaking the Trade Unions who were the ‘backbone of anti-conscription’.\(^96\)

Most of the Catholic bishops had now changed sides and supported Mannix because they feared offending their people who wholeheartedly supported Mannix.\(^97\) Indeed, so powerful had Mannix become, the *Advocate*’s ‘special correspondent’ in Rome

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94 Jauncey op.cit. p.272. Never before or since has the Federal Government held an election or referendum on any other day than a Saturday.
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
97 Ibid. p.38: Hughes made wide use of the power of the War Precautions Act. One speaker in Adelaide was fined for using words calculated to cause disaffection amongst the civilian population. In Sydney and Melbourne charges were laid against men making speeches calculated to prejudice recruiting. Manning Clark op.cit. Vol. 6, p.53
reported on his audience with Benedict the Fifteenth on 30 March 1921 - "it would seem that Mannix's position in Melbourne was too strong to allow for Roman interference, because [he] enjoys great influence on the working classes." Such a powerful alliance between bishop and people prevented either the Vatican or the local authorities from taking action.  

Censure of Mannix by the Vatican, his own church was obviously what Hughes preferred, but McKernan makes the point that 'had Hughes decided to act, he would have been happier to invoke the Australian War Precautions Act' rather than act against Mannix under the Defence of the Realm Regulations. But it did not stop the newspapers from printing opinions of the Archbishop's involvement in the debate. The Sydney Morning Herald ran several comments on the matter. The Anglican Bishop of Kalgoorlie, Dr. C. H. Golding Bird stated that 'Dr. Mannix represented Dr. Mannix only and the disloyalists dubbed by the name of I.W.W. and Sinn Fein...and a small number of men whose proper home was the heart of Berlin'. The Minister for the Navy, Mr. Joseph Cook stated.

You are advised by a certain prelate to put Australia first and the Empire second. This advice is evil and mischievous. There is no question of first and second in it; we stand with the Empire, our breasts, hearts, and wills on a level with her's. If she goes down we go down with her. We could not stand without her' it is utterly impossible that we could stand alone with all the menace of the world around us, and we do not wish to do so.

One belief was shared by both sides - the women's vote was seen as crucial, the Prime Minister appealing to the patriotism of women, whilst the opponents of conscription

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98 McKernan, Catholics, Conscription and Archbishop Mannix, p.314.
99 ibid. The Defence Preparations Act and Regulations were laws connected to defence of the Commonwealth and valid under the Defence Power. P.H. Lane, A Digest of Australian Constitutional Cases, (4th ed.). The Law Book Co. Ltd. 1992, p.72. Hughes apparently enjoyed considerable power in use of the War Precautions Act backed by the co-operation of the High Court.
100 ibid. footnote No. 61, p.310.
101 Sydney Morning Herald 21 November 1917.
not only appealed to the pacifist sentiments of women, they also related their general economic arguments to the lives of women. They argued that the introduction of conscription would allow the ruling class to destroy unionism by importing cheap, coloured labour; they also argued that conscripted men’s jobs would be filled by women and thus overturn the supposed natural roles of the sexes.\textsuperscript{103}

Before the vote was taken on the second referendum Hughes pledged himself publicly to resign from office if the conscription proposal were rejected by the people. This was seen by many as a challenge to the electorate to vote ‘yes’ or find another Prime Minister. In the event, though Hughes went through the motions of submitting his resignation to the Governor-General, the latter was not prepared to hold him to his pledge. Hughes read a Memorandum to Members on 10 January 1918 announcing his re-commissioning...The Governor General considered that it was his paramount duty (a) to make provision for carrying on the business of the country in accordance with the principles of parliamentary government and (b) to avoid a situation arising which must lead to a further appeal to the country within twelve months of an election resulting in the return of two Houses of similar political complexion, which were still working in unison. The Governor-General was also of the opinion that in granting a commission for the formation of a new administration his choice must be determined solely by the parliamentary situation. Any other course would be a departure from constitutional practice and an infringement of the rights of Parliament.\textsuperscript{104}

\textsuperscript{102} ibid.

\textsuperscript{103} McKernan op.cit. p. 89. \textit{The Australian People and the Great War.}

\textsuperscript{104} L.F. Crisp, \textit{Australian National Government}, Longman Cheshire, 5\textsuperscript{th} ed. 1983, p.407.
The tensions and rifts caused by the conscription issue were immense. Historian Manning Clark observed ‘Families were divided, churches were divided, parties were divided; friends of a lifetime found they were on opposite sides’. Numerous reasons have been put forward for the defeat of Hughes’s impassioned pleas for conscription. These include, the sheer magnitude of Australian casualties, the reluctance of women voters to send men to war against their will and the fact that many Australians believed in the principle of voluntary service.

Whatever the reasons for the defeat of Hughes referendums, the legend itself lived on and gained impetus. In 1921 the word ‘Anzac’ was protected by an act of parliament, which forbade its use as a title or for commercial purposes. And, between 1921 and 1927 all states declared Anzac Day a public holiday. Johnston called the Gallipoli campaign ‘a disastrous bungle’, thus a ‘bungle’ and a battle against impossible odds was idealised into an epic saga of pride and honour.

Furthermore, the Anzacs represented all that was noble and heroic, including the old obsession with masculinity. A public outcry ensued when it was suggested that the focal point of the Sydney War Memorial should be a female figure representing Australia. A replacement in the form of a naked male warrior quickly followed. The Anzac became the reincarnation of the classical Greek warrior.

106 White op.cit. p.136.
107 Johnston op.cit. The Australian
CONCLUSION:

This chapter has examined the various notions of the making of the national self-image handed down to us through drovers, stockmen, boundary-riders, shearers and station-hands, miners, and swagmen ‘and to some extent even bushrangers’. The national image, centered on masculinity, mateship, and physical prowess exemplified by the early pioneers and the ANZACS, and, later, through his humanitarianism, military discipline and guardianship of the beaches elevated the lifesaver to the same plane; which Ashbolt typifies as the ‘Pioneer-Common Man-Warrior’ view of the Australian national character. However, rather than depiction in the printed word and painting as previously occurred in the initial construction of the (male) Australian national type, changes in technology and the emergence of a consumer culture in the 1920s witnessed new methods of representation. The lifesaver represented modern Australia with its emphasis upon technology and urban location – ‘moreover, an urban hero, appropriate for a nation whose population increasingly lived in the suburbs of the cities’ – the ethos of the individual bushman and his loyalty to his mates broadened into an ideal of community service.

The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 saw many surf and swimming club members join the armed forces. It was the first major war in which Australia had participated (although there had been contingents in action in the Sudanese campaign and the Boer War). Australia followed Britain into the war, immediately upon the

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109 Ashbolt op.cit. p.376.
110 ibid.
latter's declaration of war on Germany on 4 August 1914. Australia's Prime Minister (ALP) pledged that Australia would support the Motherland 'to the last man and the last shilling'. Large numbers of men volunteered for the (First) Australian Imperial Force, serving in France, Belgium and the Middle East. A total of 340,000 men were sent overseas, suffering casualties of 60,000 dead and 230,000 wounded and injured. The heavy losses suffered led to a falling off in enlistments, and two attempts to introduce conscription for overseas service were made by the government in 1916 and 1917. Both referendums were defeated. The conscription issue introduced divisions into Australian society between Irish Catholics and pro-Empire Protestants. It also gave birth to an ultra-conservative, politically active ex-servicemen's organization, the Returned Service League (RSL). The conscription debate was dominated by personalities. For the 'yes' vote Prime Minister William Morris Hughes (who succeeded Andrew Fisher) was supported by the Anglican Church, wealthy pastoralists and industrialists, the newspapers and for a time by the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. For the 'no' vote the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, Dr. Mannix had the support of the working class and because so many Catholics belonged to the working class he also achieved a position of dominance in the Catholic Church. An eventual change of heart, by the Catholic newspapers and Clergy saw them support Mannix and the 'no' vote. Not only did the conscription debate polarize Australian society generally, it also led to fears of schism within the Australian Catholic Church provoked mainly by Mannix's policy of confrontation and alienation.

The legend of the 'Digger' and the 'ANZAC' suggested that Australia had come of age in the years 1914-1918 – that it had been toughened and purified by the fires of war. This mantle was handed to the lifesaver who exemplified a continuing image of Australian masculinity and mateship, the regulator and preserver of innocent pleasure. Whilst others enjoyed their leisure often by literally doing nothing but laze upon the sand or test the surf, the lifesaver was the guardian of this naive hedonism by his own military discipline, self-denial and sacrifice. 114

114 Sanders op. cit. p. 98.
CHAPTER 6:

BODIES ON THE BEACH

...the actual surfing is only half of it. One does not go for just a dip. One goes for 'a dip and a bake'...the rest of the world seems to feel it as a personal injury that Australians do not spend less time on their beaches and more in their offices and factories getting rich.¹

BEACH PARADE:

As the war faded into history Australians entered the 1920s with an optimistic feeling that things could only improve. ‘It was as though people had been curbed by the war from all sorts of freedoms and now they were liberated’.² People returning from the war expected new opportunities and better living and educational standards. Ahead lay the age of radio communications, and air travel that promised to link Australians closer to the modern world.³

With most of the population hugging the coastline, beach going, surf bathing and swimming in general became a national recreation and part of a new culture of pleasure and consumerism 'which required a lifestyle embodied in the ethic of a calculating hedonism - the narcissistic person'.⁴ The enthusiasm for the surf seemed unstoppable and the beach became the symbol of Australia at leisure and pleasure.

'Here you see the national cult of sunshine...a soft breeze, salted by the ocean, murmurs through the pines, the sun's blissful warmth destroys all sense of time'.⁵ In the Lucky Country, Donald Horne wrote 'when the waves are running right and the weather is fine the crowds at the beaches are doing more than enjoying themselves: they are worshipping the body and feeling identity with sand and sea and sky...people

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amuse themselves as they wish in outdoor games or relaxations that express a belief in the goodness of activity and nature.  

The hedonism which was latent in the colonial temperament now had its most dramatic flowering, for while the sun was embraced with a passionate passivity, the beach also created a sociability of a new, sensually self-conscious kind...the beach was the new frontier of urban Australia, and the uniformed lifesavers who (literally) patrolled it were promoted in an Anzac tradition. The male swagger of the lifesaver was matched by the cult of the beach girl...in the world of the beach pleasure and duty were subtly juxtaposed. The hedonism of sun and surf was moderated by the discipline of the frontier: the common ground lay, perhaps, in the elevation of extrovert health and fitness. The beach suited the Australian temperament; it was a place for physical expression not emotional intimacy.

So popular was beach going that Jean Curlewis wrote in 1929 'on Sundays three surfs are considered reasonable – the first lasts from waking until breakfast, the second from breakfast until lunch, the third from lunch until dinner...At Bondi, girls in bathing suits and full evening dresses walked together along the lighted promenade. People came from the theatres at half time and finished the evening in the water...entire families camped out all night.

For the surf is a sculptor. Those tons of breakers fall like mallet blows and swimmers are chiseled slim and straight. The foam, fizzing and stinging like iced champagne, restores to slack fibres the priceless quality that doctors call 'tone'. The sun polishes the skin to an incredible smoothness. Until the Australian surfer looks like – I cannot help it – a young Greek God.

Hemmer saw the surfers as 'Australian amazons, dipping, jumping, swimming the spume-capped rollers with the enthusiasm and natural movement of sea-born Nereids'. Of the women he wrote 'like valkyries they rush forth to disport themselves and battle with the elements, or they resemble Greek goddesses as seen by the early sculptures...they enjoy the most natural and healthy sport of man'.

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9 ibid. p.27.
Frank Fox saw surf-bathing as 'an amusement...which promises much to improve the physique of the race...since it is largely favoured by the feminine half of the community...{it}...is not a matter of tip-toeing over wet sands and through shallow pools. It is standing up to great breakers of ocean water, champagned to foam as they break their crests'. Fox's text is accompanied by the watercolour paintings of Percy F.S. Spence, which show women surfing and performing life saving drill at Manly. Fox's comment appeared to carry a eugenic and racial meaning, that athletic Australian women would lead the way in producing the next generation of racially superior beings. Fox was expressing a popular belief of the developing Australian racial 'type' as evidenced among the healthy, virile masses at Sydney's beaches. 'This was a eugenic aspect of the Australian popular surf-culture that would develop and have added significance during the inter-war years'. A similar sentiment was expressed in the Sydney Mail - 'nowhere in the world can finer physical types be seen than on the beaches that fringe our coast. Surfing has become a national pastime and many of those who indulge in it, both men and women are beautifully proportioned specimens of the race'. And the same newspaper's editorials upheld the eugenic benefits that surfing held for women. - indeed, eugenic discourse had a special place for women.

The sinewy muscular forms of strong swimmers fighting the breakers in the flashing sea and sunlight gives always a picture of force and health and energy gratifying to the artistic eye. The extent to which surf-bathing has attracted Australian girls and women, as well as men, is not surprising once the step has been taken and the recreation surrounded by proper safeguards. But this is a new departure, which is full of the promise of health, of the renewal of

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12 John Ramsland, 'They Ride the Surf like Gods': Sydney-side Beach Culture, Life-Saving and Eugenics, 1902-1940. Unpublished paper, The University of Newcastle, Australia: The aims of the Eugenic Society are - to study the influences that may modify inborn human qualities; to formulate and support policies for developing these qualities to the utmost advantage; to promote research on eugenic problems and to foster a responsible attitude to parenthood. Eugenics Review, Vol.60, March 1968. (introduction).
strength, of improved physique, and general well being for the Australian women of the future.

There was also a parallel growth in nudist colonies during the late 1930s. *Smith's Weekly* printed an article on a proposed nudist colony in Queensland that seemed to be more than an extreme version of sun worship and more like a pure form of eugenics with connotations to Nazi ideals of building a master race.

On a tropical island a few miles from Mackay North Queensland, Australia is to have a nudist colony. In Brisbane, J. Lorraine-Osborne and his wife are planning details. He has a lease of five square miles, and has already advertised it as a sun bathers' paradise. It is South Percy Island, and there the Lorraine-Osbornes hope to take ten men and ten women, as they say, 'perfect physical specimens' from whom they hope to build the new race of Australians - the foundation stock of a new race.

Mr. Lorraine-Osborne is quoted as saying 'for years I have dreamed of a new race of Australians, straight-backed, strong limbed, fearless and magnetic personalities, brought up in an atmosphere of clean spiritual thought and training...so it is that I have decided to form a health and physical culture colony selecting ten perfectly healthy young men and ten perfectly healthy young women for the purpose'.

During the inter-war period sun worship became a national pastime. Eugenicists actively encouraged Sydney's beach lovers to pursue the beach culture not only for its contribution to the physical side of Australian racial development, but also because of its unique contribution to mental hygiene. The mental hygiene movement sought to promote mental and physical health, and ultimately human social adaptation, through efforts to strengthen mental vigor, and had wide support among an elite of Australian academics, doctors, lawyers, educationists and feminists concerned with social

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15 *Sydney Mail* editorials, 'The Summer Seaside Carnival', March 1906; 'Summer at the Seaside', 16 January 1907.

16 *Smith's Weekly* 15 January 1938.

The ‘mainline’ eugenicist project was probably the form in which most Australians initially identified themselves as eugenicists in the period before the Great War of 1914-1918. Any Social Darwinist optimism about an historical telos of natural progress was by then crumbling in the face of a discourse about high crime rates, falling population, national defence capacities, unemployment, economic depression, and the role of Australia as a white enclave in Asia and labour-capital conflict. Garton asserts

In the early 1900s the supposed decline in the birthrate, high levels of infant mortality and the rise of Asian powers fanned middle-class anxieties and propelled reform movements advocating increased state intervention. In this context concepts of evolution, race and heredity became significant elements in social debate. Population became a central issue...it was essential to breed a more resilient population to counteract the problem of racial decay. The central problem became national efficiency. A healthy population free of physical and mental defect was necessary for continued national progress.

However, by the 1930s eugenicists were divided about things like compulsory sterilisation of the feebleminded, a position promoted by mainline eugenicists. Reform eugenicists argued for social interventions which could improve the ‘quality of the race’ stressing their linkages with feminists, anti-war and socially progressive movements and practices. In 1930, the Minister for Health in New South Wales, Dr. Richard Arthur who founded the Eugenics Society of New South Wales in 1912 introduced a Bill calling for sterilisation of defectives, which he stated ‘is a Bill which I feel sure will be entirely non-controversial and will have the hearty support of all sides of the house’. Despite observing at close hand the fate of Dr. Arthur’s Mental Defective Bill in the New South Wales Parliament, prominent eugenicist, Harvey

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21 Ibid. p.332.
22 Hansard, NSW Parliamentary Debates Session 1927-30; 11 December 1929, 27 February 1930, 19 George V, Second Series, 28th Parliament 4 Session; Mental Defectives Bill, Assembly – first reading 2874, second reading 3753, 4137, 4174. Com: 4834, 5409, 578. The Bill was rejected: Mary Cawte,
Sutton, Professor of Preventive Medicine and Director of the School of Tropical Health and Preventive Medicine at the University of Sydney continued to advocate the sterilisation of mental defectives. His theory was based on the eugenic belief that ‘mentally defective parents may have normal children, but normal children should not have mentally defective parents. It is not fair for any child to have incompetent guardians’. He conceded, however, that the legal position of eugenic sterilisation was uncertain and preached the virtues of preventive eugenics — segregation — as the only solution to ‘these social misfits’ from whose ‘ranks chiefly are recruited the unemployables, destitutes and prostitutes of low-grade…they tend to be prolific, to hand on their taint, and their numbers appear to be increasing’. Thus, despite the legal position of eugenic sterilisation he argued for the compulsory sterilisation of the ‘unfit’ in order to improve progressively the ‘inherited worth’ of human beings and guard ‘against degeneration of the race by great numbers and proportions of ‘dud’, thus encouraging the breeding of a superior ‘national type’.

Professor Sutton co-founded Health Week in 1921. He was also an athlete. While working at a London hospital, he represented Australia as an 800 metres runner in the 1908 Olympics.

The eugenics movement was initiated by Sir Francis Galton in 1883 and developed by disciples like the English biometrician Karl Pearson and Americans Charles Davenport and G. Stanley Hall, and occupied an important position in Western societies up to the 1930s. As well as its ‘believers’, it also had detractors.

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25 Watts op.cit p. 318.
Eugenics has become a word of ugly connotations – and deservedly… eugenic aims merged with misinterpretations of the new science of genetics to help produce cruelly oppressive, and in the era of the Nazis, barbarous social results. 26

The *Australian Women’s Weekly* upheld eugenic ideals when it printed a photograph of young people playing sport on the beach with the following caption ‘on any beach you’ll find the real spirit of Australian sport - men and women running, jumping, diving, swimming, playing in friendly vigorous style all the games that world champions do under intense strain’. 27 And, ‘our team of nearly seven millions would dazzle the world in a big parade’

what a novel touch would be given to future Olympic Games if a new section could be introduced in which nations would make a mass entry, to be judged on all round sporting ability and physical and mental development. 28

Looking at the other side of this mating to produce a super race it could be suggested that women were only ciphers – their role was to breed the national character, defined in the masculine qualities of mateship, and military style discipline.

The perceived democratic qualities of surf and beach culture were also trumpeted

The surf is a glorious democracy - or, rather, it presents a readjustment of all the classifications that history and politics and social conditions ever brought about. Wealth has no place here; nor rank, nor Norman blood, nor scholarship. Plain primitive manhood and womanhood are the only tests the surf-bather applies to distinguish one from another. 29

Commercialisation followed in the wake of glorious beach days. Going to the beach not only required wearing the latest in swimwear, it also demanded a range of accessories from umbrellas, screens and sleeping mats to beach bags, thus promoting a burgeoning fashion industry in beachwear. Interestingly, not many sun hats feature in advertisements, beach pictures and paintings. Indeed, the Charles Meere oil *Australian*
Beach Pattern which features 31 figures, shows only one woman wearing a hat and one man wearing an eye shade in the main picture with one hatted man in the background. The perils of skin cancer were unknown. Advertisements for beachwear portrayed the beach and pool as places where the attractive young displayed their bodies with cheerful eroticism.\textsuperscript{30} Journalist, John Hallows wrote

one of the most attractive things about Australian life, to both Australians and foreigners, is its leisure potential. The image of eternal sun, sand, surf and space figures largely not only in the motivation of immigrants from northern Europe, but in the conceptual bases in which Australians themselves organize their attitudes.\textsuperscript{31}

Although the majority appeared to prefer the beach and surf bathing, serious swimming competition returned to pre-war popularity and Australia sent a team of swimmers to the Antwerp Olympics in 1920. The team of Frank Beaurepaire, Harry Hay, W.S. Herald and Ivan Stedman won the silver medal in the 4 x 200 relay. Frank Beaurepaire also took the bronze medal in the 1500 freestyle. The Paris Olympics in 1924 were the platform for Australia winning 2 gold, 1 silver and 2 bronze medals. Andrew (Boy) Charlton won gold in the 1500 freestyle and bronze in the 400 metres freestyle. Richmond (Dick) Eve won gold in the high diving. Frank Beaurepaire again headed the 4 x 200 relay and with Andrew Charlton, Moss Christie and Ernest Henry won the silver medal. Beaurepaire also took a bronze in the 1500 metres.\textsuperscript{32}

As noted in chapter 3 Australians tend to lionize their athletic heroes. The Paris Olympic team was no exception. They received a tumultuous home coming. Charlton’s welcome at Manly, his home town, was described in the Evening News

\textsuperscript{31} John Rickard, Australians 1938, ‘For God’s Sake Keep Us Entertained’, (ch. 23) p.348.
\textsuperscript{32} John Hallows, The Dreamtime Society, Collins, Sydney, 1970, p.82.
\textsuperscript{33} Reet & Max Howell, Aussie Gold: The Story of Australia at the Olympics, Brooks Waterloo NSW, 1988. (section titled Olympic Medals - 1896 Athens - 1936 Berlin, n.p.): Frank Beaurepaire, later Sir Frank and Lord Mayor of Melbourne had the distinction of being placed in Olympic finals from 1908 to 1924. At various times he held 14 world records. Forbes Carlile on Swimming, Pelham Books 1963,
Manly goes delirious at the 'Boy's win - scenes at Manly were reminiscent of Armistice Day. 'Boy' Charlton's wonderful win from Arne Borg in the 1500 metres at the Olympic Games in 20 minutes 6.6 secs. Smashing the world record by 1 min. 4.4-5 secs. was the sensation of the Games.33

The _Manly Souvenir_ of 1924 described the welcome home to the team both in the city and in Manly the home town of Charlton, Eve and Nick Winter who won gold in Athletics in the Hop, Step and Jump.

There was a wonderful awakening on the harbour as the 'Tahiti' entered the heads...there were blasts on all sides, and cheers of welcome from crowds on hundreds of launches. Whistles, hooters, sirens, horns poured forth in a thousand keys their gladness at the return of the conquering heroes. Said the Lord May (Alderman Gilpin) 'Not only have they brought back championships, but they have set a standard of manliness and athletic prowess that have made a name for Australia throughout the world'.

The mid-day boat from Sydney was packed and came back to the old home town with wonderful blasts. The combined Manly Military and Fire Brigade Bands enlivened proceedings during the trip. There was no doubt about Manly's sincerity, for whatever glory had been brought to Australia had come from three victors who had gone forth from our own Manly. It was a marvellous (sic) achievement and Manly understood. It was just a big family gathering on the Corso. There was nothing spectacular but just that deep-rooted and genuine feeling of pride as in members of a family.

Of the prowess of the 'Boy' in his record-breaking swims against world champions of the grace and beauty of Eve's faultless diving and of 'Nick' Winter's masterly achievement in breaking the world's record in the hop, step and jump, much has already been written. It was a great feat for Australia to see the flag raised three times in token of our champions success but when the three triumphs came from Manly's three athletes then, 'all the world wondered'.34

BEAUTY AND THE BEACH:

Most of Australia's Olympic swimming team and, in fact, most members of swimming clubs were also members of surf life saving clubs and mixed beach duties with enjoyment of the beach culture and all it offered. One popular post-war beach innovation was beauty contests. Entrepreneurs saw the parading of these 'beach beauties' as an ideal platform to advertise goods and services. The _Sunday Times_, a promoter of the contests, described an early contest winner, Miss Edith Pickup of

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p.145: At the Paris Games for the first time in Olympic competition lanes were marked in the swimming pool. R. & M. Howell, op., cit. p.77.

32 _Evening News_ 16 July 1924.

Right: 'Bondi', Australian R. & R. champions 1932, at the Freshwater Beach carnival; Allan Rennix (left), Bruce Wilson and Reg Stevens (rear), Dudley Wilson (patient), and Arthur Besomo (battman)

Below: Andrew 'Boy' Charlton makes an impressive battman for the Manly march past team in 1932

Manly, as 'a tanned, young slender beauty, she carries herself with perfect girlish grace...naturally, daintily, winsomely, modestly'...she has personality and undoubted feminine distinction. She is just under 15 years of age. The same newspaper also cautioned would-be beach beauties

the girl who wants to look charming in a surfing costume must be fastidious in all her habits and wise in all her exercises. She must dance and walk well. She must eat sensibly. She must avoid all excess. Otherwise, sooner or later, come all the enemies of beauty.

It has been borne in on us that many surfing girls in Sydney do not realise the need of general physical culture and care of the body as an aid to deportment and good carriage. The girlish beauty that has charm is an effect of a wise discretion in all ways of life.

The clothing, cosmetic and advertising industries were essential to this self-discipline. Briefer clothes, whilst promising new freedoms, enticed women to reveal more of their bodies. Exercise and dieting combined with the use of a range of advertised creams and toiletries ensured women conformed to the 'correct' shape. The Surf Life Saving Association of Australia approved and encouraged beach beauty contests. The sole criterion - 'modest charm' - was consistent with the Association's notion of femininity. Physical culture became de rigueur.

The physical culture movement was not new; in fact, the feminine tradition of physical culture can be traced to the work of Per Henrik Ling in Sweden at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Swimmer Annette Kellermann, also a leading physical culturalist stressed its importance in her *Physical Beauty and How to Keep It* manual - 'Bodily form, or the perfect figure is to be won by proper muscular

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35 *Sunday Times*, 22 February 1920.
36 ibid.
37 ibid.
development and proper control of weight by rational diet. There is no other way'.

And, beautician Helena Rubinstein maintained

Before any woman can attain outstanding beauty she must first have this conviction, this determination, this positive will to be beautiful. And this is the crucial point at which most of us fail. Women do not want to be beautiful enough. Despite these assertions, women’s beauty culture experienced difficulty in achieving legitimacy. ‘Cultivated physical beauty meant seductiveness, which connoted the unfair temptation of men, competition among women, and the immoral exploitation of difference between the sexes. In an attempt to break the associations between beauty and narcissistic vanity, and between physical pleasure and sexual abandon, physical culturalists sought legitimacy in promoting inner forms of beauty

The beautiful woman should...have a pretty face, but the perfect figure is even more essential...a woman must be beautiful of body to the very core of her being. She must have health-beauty, vital, radiant health that keeps the bloom upon her cheek, the flash and sparkle in her eye, the snap and vigor in her carriage, grace in her every movement, and last but by no means least, the vivacity of mind that can no more flower in a sick and weakly body than roses can thrive on barren impoverished soil.

Kellermann also advocated swimming for both health and beauty — ‘I insist that swimming is not only a splendid sport for women but that it is the sport for women...swimming is a great beautifier. It combines in the one sport the benefits of splendid exercise, the invigorating tonic of a plunge bath, and, if it be outdoors and especially if on the beach, the health building powers of air and sunshine’. By the mid-1930s pursuit of the body beautiful was the aim of most women and ‘physical culture became part of the desire for popular modernity’. The Women’s League of Health and Beauty, the most successful of the inter-war mass health movements advocated the modern, respectable women should

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42 Cited in Matthews p.27.
44 ibid.
45 Kellermann op.cit. p.17.
46 ibid. p.85.
exercise for the sake of attractiveness, fun and pleasure - good clean fun and innocent pleasure...a new power in herself which she will feel.\textsuperscript{46}

The popularity of beauty contests continued, particularly those offering big prize money - one example being ‘The ‘Guardian 1,000 Pound Competition’. The Manly and District Souvenir 1924 recalled that ‘on Wednesday 25 June 1924 the quest for the most beautiful surf or swimming girl in the State under the auspices of the ‘Guardian’s Surf Girls’1,000’ was decided by a committee consisting of Miss Florence Rodway, Mr. Norman Lindsay, Miss Thea Proctor, Mr. R.E. Minns, Mr. D.H. Souter and Mr. Percy Bennison. Over 1,000 nominations were received. The possible prize winners were reduced to 36, and ‘after much consultation the choice of ‘Paris’ fell upon Miss Lilian Owen of Manly - she became our Aphrodite - Goddess of Foam’.\textsuperscript{49} In an Oral History conducted in September 2000 Mr. Albert (Bert) Owen recalled

It was 1924 when Smith’s Newspapers decided to offer £1000 for the most beautiful surf or swimming girls in NSW. Photographs poured in from every surfing beach and from every town with a swimming pool in the State. The ultimate winner was my 18 year old sister Lilian Owen who had won the Venetian Carnival Miss Manly competition. She was unaware her boyfriend had forwarded her photograph. Lilian was the unanimous choice of the judges and received first prize of £300. A committee member said of Lilian: ‘Miss Owen from Manly...is proof of the beneficial effect surf bathing is having on the young womanhood of Australia’. The success of this competition became the inspiration for the Miss Australia contests.\textsuperscript{50}

The beach beauty competitions were connected in ideals to the eugenic family competitions organised at many local agricultural shows in the United States.\textsuperscript{51} At a beauty contest and parade held at the St. James Theatre in Sydney, the Mayor of Manly, Arthur Harcourt proclaimed ‘I sincerely hope residents of every Sydney beach

\textsuperscript{47} Matthews op. cit. p 29.
\textsuperscript{48} ibid.
\textsuperscript{49} Manly & District Souvenir, 1924.
\textsuperscript{50} Albert (Bert) Owen, Recollections of the 20s and 30s - Beach Frolics, Shoroc Oral History Project conducted for the Australian Centre for Public History at the University of Technology, 13 September, 2000: How much has changed? The Manly Daily of Friday 7 March 2003 featured a picture of entrants in the 2003 East Coast Beach Girl Model Contest in which 50 of Sydney’s top swimsuit models compete for $40,000 in cash and prizes. The Contest in it’s 12 year.
will thrill to this physical, mental and spiritual appeal of these clean-hearted Manly girls at the Sydney St. James’. This particular competition was part of the fiercely contested Silver Reel contest between Manly and Bondi, which culminated, with a ‘glorious pageant of beach youth and grace’ at one of the beaches. The 1931 pageant was held at Manly and one of the five judges that year was Harvey Sutton.

With the disappearance of the fashions of previous eras and the promotion of beauty contests, the female body was now on show to a much greater extent. In sharp contrast to the belief that population meant power and thus women’s role was chiefly defined as maternal, women were now seen outside their domestic role of dutiful wife and mother. Modernity began to be invoked in the definition of a new femininity in which sexual attractiveness rather than maternity was the focus. As Matthews observed

> Chemical and electrical technologies were adapted by a scientific beauty culture to foster the potentialities of the modern woman. The most crucial element of the commercialisation of beauty, invoking a ‘cult of smartness’ was the slender figure.

Along with the slender figure, the rise of the flapper with bobbed hair, rouged cheeks, lipstick and heavy perfume, personified by Clara Bow, Hollywood’s ‘It’ girl, showcased a new, nubile female body. In previous eras such blatant sexuality would have been a signifier of a wanton and narcissistic woman, by the mid 1930s this kind of appearance was deemed a non-negotiable feature of modern femininity.

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51 Rodwell op.cit. p.61.
52 The Sun 15 October 1931
53 As a national hygienist, Professor Harvey Sutton was in a position to influence government policy and public opinion, particularly in regard to state schooling and preventive medicine, and influence students in a variety of disciplines including medicine, education, architecture and social studies towards eugenic ideals and approaches. A spectrum of eugenic approaches was at the core of his ideals and practices. Grant Rodwell, Professor Harvey Sutton: National hygienist as eugenicist and educator, Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, Vol. 84, Part 2, December 1998.
54 Matthews op.cit. p 19.
WOMEN SURFERS AND LIFE SAVERS:

However, not all the girls were about beauty and large prize winnings. The Manly Souvenir of 1924 ran an article titled Lady Champions of the Surf Life Saving.

Australia has had many first-class swimmers, and is still producing its quota, but despite the numbers of girls who indulge in Surf Shooting, few, indeed, reach a high standard. Two notable exceptions are the Misses Agnes and Jessie Sly, of Manly, who have thrilled big surf carnival crowds by their intrepid surf swimming. Each of the girls possesses a useful trudgen crawl stroke, which is particularly suited for the surf, and they are also graceful exponents in the art of breaker shooting. In the ladies’ events it used to be difficult to get any opponents to face the Misses Sly, and the event had to be dropped right out of surf carnival programmes.57

The fate of the event at which the Misses Sly excelled seemed to echo much of women’s attempt at becoming members of surf life-saving clubs. Indeed, not until 1980 were women a real life saving presence on surf beaches when they were able to qualify for the bronze medallion and thus full membership of surf life saving clubs. However, their participation was not altogether ‘domestic and decorative labour’ as Booth claims 58. Although banned from life-saving and patrolling per se, there were no rules preventing women from participating in other aspects of beach competition, such participation depending on the willingness of the men to agree to the women either competing with the men in beach competition or conducting their own events.

However, not all clubs were happy to admit women at all. At Palm Beach in Sydney the men considered their clubhouse to be ‘sacred male space’. Clause 38 of the club’s rules decreed that ‘no female shall be permitted to enter the clubhouse or the precincts thereof except by invitation of the Committee’.59 One evening in 1937 a female supporter in the company of a former Secretary of the club, George Wray decided to challenge clause 38 and used a toilet in the clubhouse in contravention of that clause. The offence was ‘very seriously aggravated’ because it ‘took place at night’ and

58 ibid.
57 Manly and District Souvenir, 1924,
58 Douglas Booth, Swimming, Surfing and Surf-Life Saving, p. 244,
Aggie and Jessie Sly with Olympian Frank Beaurepaire (c.1920)

Source: Manly Municipal Council Library.
officials summoned Wray to appear before a disciplinary committee to ‘show cause why he should not be asked to resign from the club’. Wray was suspended for one month for his failure to prevent his companion from contravening clause 38.

Although some women did participate in various events such as beach sprints, surf races and Rescue and Resuscitation, a major contribution to clubs came from women’s fundraising, the income generated providing necessary equipment and financing club participation in surf carnivals. Without their initiative and energy many small clubs would have struggled to remain in existence. However, Jaggard asserts that over the years these volunteer workers who posed no threat to male hegemony and ‘rarely received any rewards for their efforts have become sanctified as the only women in surf life-saving, thus disguising the reality of female competitors. Furthermore, ‘the historical obscurity of these competitors is partly due to the comparatively greater prominence of members’ wives, relatives and friends who formed themselves into ladies’ associations, auxiliaries or committees...[thus]...any discussion of women in surf life saving invariably mentions these fundraising cake-makers...who were little different from women who supported cricket, football and other men’s sporting clubs. At the end of each year, their accumulated profits were passed on to the men’.

Clubs outside the metropolitan area were more accommodating towards the women’s involvement. Three women belonging to the ladies adjunct of the Newcastle Surf Club were successful in gaining the Proficiency Award, and formed the nucleus of a women’s lifesaving team that provided a display of Rescue and Resuscitation at the

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60 ibid.
first Newcastle Club Carnival on 28 March 1908. The performance was repeated at a
carnival at Bondi the following month at which they were given a long and
wholehearted ovation after performing a rescue.63 However, full membership was
denied them - 'their active role did not suit the Surf Life Saving Club's sense of
propriety: Women were supposed to be saved, not saviours'.64 Such discriminatory
treatment highlighted the differentiation between Surf and Royal Life Saving because
the latter sensibly drew no distinctions between men and women's abilities to qualify
for awards. Moreover, the Surf Bathers Association of New South Wales had no rules,
which restricted women from becoming club members or qualifying for awards. As
noted in Chapter 4, a women's club was formed at Bondi in 1909 but functioned
mostly as a social club. Women were active members of Narrabeen (NSW) and Manly
(NSW) Surf Clubs, while the Wollongong (NSW) Surf Bathing and Life Saving Club
had more than twenty-five women members, three of whom had gained the Surf
Bronze medallion and one her Instructor's Certificate.65 During World War I, a ladies'
club was formed at Collaroy (NSW) but after 1918 the ban on taking awards limited
the ladies' club activities to swimming, running and/or fundraising during their
intermittent existence in the 1920s and 1930s.66 In country New South Wales, at
Evans Head Surf Life Saving Club eight women formed an R.&R. team and were
trained by a male club member who was also the local beach inspector. This team
entered carnivals in the late 1920s and early 1930s. 'For practice the women
frequently entered the men's surf races, and on a number of occasions were successful
in gaining either first, second or third places'. At one carnival the women's team beat

62 ibid.
160. (The Women's R.&R. Team consisted of Ladies Club Captain, Miss Elizabeth Williams
(beltwoman), Miss Myra Halbert, patient and Miss Emily Graham in charge of the reel). (The Bondi
demonstration is briefly mentioned in chapter 4, p.33.)
64Jaggard op.cit. Forgotten Members, p 27.
65 Brawley op.cit. p.74.
the Evans Head men. In late 1930 the team disbanded when four members moved out of the area.

A similar situation existed in Coffs Harbour, N.S.W. ‘where a women’s club was formed in 1921, the women being adept at the R.&R. event, the march past and the alarm reel race (today’s belt race)’. And in Swansea, New South Wales the Belmont Club formed a female boat crew which consisted of five local women (Misses, D. Hughes, E. Hall, A. Chapman, T. Partridge and E. Watkins). The crew were trained and swept by Harry Mitchell, Swansea’s boat captain. Mrs. E. Bruce (formally Hall) recalled how they came to row.

We were never off the beach in these days...I remember we talked the boys into letting us try rowing the boat...we harped and harped until they gave in...(at Stockton) the surf was flat and we had no trouble...but when we appeared at Newcastle the seas were rough and they would not let us on the beach.

After attending a Stockton carnival in November 1932 a newspaper report claimed that ‘these girls take the boat out daily across the Swansea bar and handle it better than some of the men. They have issued a challenge to row any women’s crew in the State, but so far the challenge has been unanswered’. Women appeared to be less prominent towards the end of the 1930s before briefly returning to the forefront in the post war years as march past teams providing sex-appeal and glamour at carnivals.

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66 ibid.
67 Hedley T. Davey, The Iron Gates Have Opened. n.d. p.34.
68 ibid.
70 Conrick op.cit. p.160.
71 ibid. (The Swansea women’s boat crew only lasted the one season). Writing in 1989 Conrick notes ‘even today as female members are fully accepted into surf clubs very few have found their way into boat crews’, p.160.
72 Jaggard op.cit. ‘Chameleons’. p.188. Jaggard correctly rejects the widely held view that ‘surf lifesaving became a women’s movement during the Second World War’ – (‘Forgotten Members’, p.39) Women had some involvement but most patrols were mounted by senior male members, members who were medically unfit to enlist and schoolboys: Photographs of women’s march past teams and R. & R. teams appear in Manly, South Pacific Playground, Douglas Thompson Pty. Ltd, Sydney (eds. and publishers). n.d. pp.18-19

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Jaggard points out that the running, swimming and various drills challenged the masculinity of the movement, the frequent friction between the two groups often discouraging women from continuing to be involved, whereas the fund-raisers accepted their subservient role in contributing to the clubs’ well-being. In *Gladiators of the Surf*, Barry Galton (in 289 pages) only once mentions a women surfer with a caption under a photograph of Isabel Letham stating that she ‘was probably Australia’s first board rider when she joined Hawaiian Duke Kahanamoku at Freshwater in 1915 for his first Australian demonstration here’.

However, women’s involvement up to 1980 has considerable gaps. Jaggard points out some reasons – for instance, ‘written club histories often ignore female involvement in competition or indeed in club membership. The Cottesloe club in Western Australia instructed its author to write only about men’s activities before 1980, while the Leighton (Western Australia) historian suggests former women members rectify their omission by producing their own history. However, not all clubs were so narrow minded and macho. Ken Spillman, the author of *Custodians and Champions*, the history of the City of Perth Surf Life Saving Club ‘discusses women as an integral part of the club’.

Women’s exclusion and discriminatory treatment can be attributed to several factors. First, the Surf Bathers Association with historic links to the Royal Life Saving Society placed emphasis on improving life-saving methods and gaining improved facilities for swimmers. The Surf Life Saving Association of New South Wales, unencumbered by

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73 Jaggard ‘Forgotten Members’, p.43.
74 Galton op.cit. p.25.
75 Jaggard op.cit. ‘Chameleons’, p.187. Jaggard’s footnotes state ‘the present author was requested to “leave the women out” in Cottesloe’s history’, p.191.
76 ibid.
such tradition was concerned with life saving in the surf. It thus reflected the masculine culture of the clubs and the value placed on mateship, a ‘concept synonymous with masculinity’. Second, it contended that women were considered to be weaker and slower swimmers and thus ‘lacking the strength and stamina’ required for rescues, ‘particularly in a pounding surf’. Thirdly, the fact that most club houses were constructed for men-only membership offered another pretext for exclusion, as the admission of women meant additional expenditure on change-rooms and toilet facilities. Finally, a gender imbalance – a disproportionate number of men in the Australian population which lasted almost half the nation’s history no doubt accentuated values of mateship and masculinity.

As men returned to civilian life at the end of the First World War the surf life-saving movement expanded. However, Jaggar points out that ‘there is little evidence to suggest that women’s clubs were established on Sydney beaches in the 1920s, although in 1925-26 the Collaroy Ladies’ Surf and Swimming Club was re-formed with the twin goals of enjoying ‘surf sports’ and ‘assisting the men in life-saving’. An attempt at forming a surf club was also made by the Randwick and Coogee Swimming Ladies Swimming Club. A newspaper noted that ‘the ladies are keen on forming a surf club at Coogee’

The Surf Life Saving Association looks askance at the opposite sex showing signs of taking part in beach work, but has no objection to certain instruction in the methods being given to the girls. Mrs. R. McIver has been communicated with to this effect, also the Coogee Life Saving Club, which the ladies have asked for instruction.

77 Jaggard op.cit. ‘Forgotten Members’, p.27.
78 ibid. p.28.
79 ibid.
82 Chequer Scrapbook (unnamed and undated – believed to be mid 1920s). (As further information is unavailable on the Randwick/Coogee Ladies’ efforts it can be assumed that their surf club did not eventuate). Rose McIver was founder and President of the Randwick/Coogee Ladies Swimming Club.
Collaroy Surf Life Saving Club Secretary, Bert Chequer instructed the Collaroy Ladies and it appears both the men's and women's clubs enjoyed an amicable arrangement. The women's clubhouse was relocated to the south of the Surf Life Saving Club, but was washed away sometime between 1926 and 1927.\(^3\) Although realising the women were not physically strong enough to tow a life line through heavy surf, Chequer reasoned that if they gained their Proficiency Certificate they could play a part in other aspects of surf life saving especially in assisting the weekday duty lifesaver by manning the reel, and most importantly, in the casualty room.\(^4\) Support for his initiative came from the men's club and the media, *The Sun* newspaper offering to champion the issue. However, the Surf Life Saving Association was not prepared to provide an examiner and refused to allow the women to qualify for the award. The squad was disbanded to the disappointment of all concerned.\(^5\)

Some women though, were prepared to assert their rights, albeit for use of accommodation rather than involvement in beach and physical surf club activities. Apart from a few, such as Alcrema Samuels who enjoyed surf-board riding, decorating the beach and fund raising, it seemed, suited the women supporters at Palm Beach. However, after many years of supporting and fund raising for the Surf Club the women were not prepared to accept male hegemony any longer. Forced to use public accommodation or a small private dressing box provided by the Surf Club as a compromise, while the men enjoyed the comfort of the 'men only' clubhouse, the women decided to form a new beach club which would cater to women's needs.


\(^4\) Chequer was of the opinion that male lifesavers should play as small role as possible in reviving female swimmers, especially when standard practice called for removing their costumes to get them warm. Brawley pp77-78.

\(^5\) ibid.
Deciding to call the club the ‘Florida Beach Club’, rules were drafted most of which related to providing members and their friends with a clubhouse and other conveniences through the acquisition by purchase, lease or otherwise of land and building of any tenure or description. Only when these objectives were met would the new club seek to co-operate with and assist the Palm Beach Surf Life Saving Club in raising funds for the advancement of the work of that Club and in particular the maintenance of proper patrols and life saving equipment at Palm Beach.  

Fearful that the Surf Club would not only lose its fund raising committee but that funds might be diverted away from the club and, the further horror, that new male members might be attracted to join or the established club’s members might switch to the new club, required prompt action. The Surf Club’s answer was to announce it was the Club’s intention to provide a clubhouse for female supporters. However, the name was changed to the Pacific Club, the five original objectives were reduced to two – both relating to fundraising for the Surf Club and a statement inserted that ‘no gentlemen shall be admitted to membership of this Club without the consent of the Committee of the Palm Beach Surf Life Saving Club.’ It was also decided that the Chairman of the Pacific Club and two ordinary members of the Committee would be ‘gentlemen’ of the Surf Club. The justification for this rule being that the Surf Club was assuming a financial burden to accommodate the new Club and that the Pacific Club would simply be lessees of Surf Club property. The foundation meeting of the Pacific Club was held at the Forum Club in Sydney on 24 May 1937, construction was commenced in September of that year and the Club officially opened on 28 November 1937. The club appointed a caretaker and a buffet lunch could be purchased for 2s3d while afternoon tea cost 1s. Membership by the time of the first AGM was 115 and £165 had been raised for the Surf Club. The women had acquired the much

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86 Brawley, Beach Beyond, p.47.
87 ibid. p. 48.
88 ibid.pp.48-49.
89 ibid.
desired dressing accommodation and a place to meet. The men had retained their fund-raising committee. Both, it appeared had scored a victory, albeit a little hollow for the women and expensive for the men!

The ladies at Dee Why Swimming Club had a victory of a different kind and a unique and effective way of discriminating against the opposite sex. If a gentleman wished to attend a Ladies Club function he was charged approximately fifty per cent more to enter. However, they did have to deal with ‘take over’ tactics.  

Members became alarmed in 1928 when it appeared their clubhouse was under threat from male domination. The local lads were proposing that the clubhouse be taken over and in its place a surfboat shed was to be constructed. Under no circumstances were the women going to take such a proposal lying down. A resolution was immediately passed that ‘under no conditions shall a boat shed be erected’. A letter of dissent was forwarded to Warringah Shire Council and a petition was co-ordinated to ‘proclaim against building a boys’ boatshed. At a meeting on October 7 1928 a Vigilance Committee to guard the clubhouse was also established. The men obviously did not envisage the fight they encountered. The women were prepared to fight to protect the clubhouse that they had put so much time and effort into. The efforts paid off and the proposal for a boys’ boatshed subsided

FLOUTING THE LAW – DARING YOUNG MEN AND BRAZEN WOMEN:

Swimming costumes still provoked argument and controversy. The Australian distance swimmer Annette Kellermann had pioneered the one piece bathing costume in the United States to replace the ‘Canadian’ costume of tunic top over knee-length knickers; not the ideal dress for the boisterous surf as women were embarrassed by ‘having their tops drawn up by the breakers’. Known as the Australian Mermaid, Kellermann entered the water at Boston, U.S.A. in 1907 for a long-distance swim, wearing only a flimsy, legless, armless, skintight swimsuit. She was promptly arrested. Kellermann argued that ‘the bathing suits of the day were as dangerous as having lead weights tied to you while swimming’. She further contended ‘not only in

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90 Isa Wye, 80 Years On, Dee Why Ladies' Amateur Swimming and Life Saving Club 1922-2002, p.5. The Club added the title life saving club when it affiliated with the Royal Life Saving Society.
92 Ibid.
matters of swimming but in all forms of activity woman's natural development is seriously impaired by social customs and costumes and all sorts of prudish and puritanical ideas.\textsuperscript{93} Even so, the Kellermann costume was considered too daring in Sydney. Connie Miller described her bathing costume

My first suit was a navy cotton stockinette two-piece, its shapeless pants finished two inches above my knees and its sack-like, short-sleeved top ended about ten inches below my hips. The suit's natty white-tape trimming did nothing to counteract the monstrous effect cotton stockinette can achieve, when wet, on the human shape. And the mob cap of yellow oiled silk into which I pushed my long thick hair looked like an over-ripe pumpkin.\textsuperscript{94}

But by the end of the 1920s women's costumes evolved into a sleeveless, one-piece costume of wool or cotton. Men's and women's costumes were very similar. Many men still retained the cotton Vs worn over stockinged one-piece costumes for decency - 'a curious conceit about as discreet as a mediaeval cod-piece'.\textsuperscript{95} Children's costumes reflected adult styles. In 1903, all children over the age of eight had to wear neck-to-knee costumes and up until the 1930s these 'regulation' speedos of light wool and cotton knit were common.\textsuperscript{96} Speedo, a brand name, was the official regulation racing costume. Ladies costumes were produced under the same name -

Tailored from tightly-knitted fabrics of caressing softness, and designed with a first-hand knowledge of surfers' requirements, Speedo meets everybody's preferences in style, freedom and long wear.\textsuperscript{97}

Swimming Clubs designed their own costumes. Dee Why Ladies Club costume was the essence of fashion. 'The costume was designed to be black woollen with white stripes on the legs, neck and arms. As there were no rubber swimming caps in the

\textsuperscript{94} Connie Miller, \textit{After Summer Merrily}, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1980, p.141.
\textsuperscript{95} Flower op.cit. p.156.
\textsuperscript{96} Speedo Swim-suit Exhibition, Manly Art Gallery & Museum, January 2002.
\textsuperscript{97} \textit{Surf in Australia}, (official Organ of the Surf Life Saving Association of Australia) 1 September 1930, p.27.
Dee Why Ladies Amateur Swimming Club Members
(c. 1922).

1920s Mrs. Bailey volunteered to make black handkerchiefs from Italian cloth edged with white tape. This heavy material was somewhat cumbersome.98

Costumes of wool were a mixed blessing. They fitted better even if the material had a tendency to shrink or bag in contact with water. Salty wool also gave off a funny smell and remained uncomfortably damp for long periods.99 But it was the decency aspect which worried the keepers of public morals. The Rev. A.R. Ebbs was quoted in the Daily Guardian

Manufacturers, in order to make more money out of the public without any regard to the moral aspects are making many of the bathing suits more scanty than ever - some of the costumes worn in Manly are positively indecent.100

The practice of wearing bathing costumes on the streets and ‘even shopping in them’ also brought considerable comment. Manly Alderman Fawkner launched an attack on the practice stating ‘It is disgraceful how they knock around the Corso in their short costumes’. The Town Clerk, Mr. Wellings wrote a strong report on the subject stating that ‘unless appropriate action was taken Manly’s renown as a fashionable and dignified residential suburb would suffer - the police should be brought in to assist’.101

The Commissioner of Police was rather guarded when asked his opinion stating the practice was ‘not in the best interests of the growing youth of both sexes’. However, Mr. Wellings further warmed to the subject stating that ‘as far as he could see, the only thing to do was to make women wear neck-to-knee costumes’ He was howled down. ‘Well might he be’ trumpeted the Daily Telegraph

Womankind has raised her banner. Who dare to tear it up - up to the neck! Who dare to drag it down - down to the knee? Up to the Police.102

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98 Wye op.cit. p.2.
99 Ibid.
100 Daily Guardian 6 November 1929.
101 Daily Telegraph 1 November 1933; The Sun 1 November 1933; Sydney Morning Herald 4 November 1933.
102 Daily Telegraph 6 March 1929.
Manly Council discussed the issue but ‘as a direct outcome of this, the costumes are not going to grow any longer’ reported The Sun.\textsuperscript{103} However, four years later the editorial of that paper stated ‘it is correct procedure to wear a wrap over the costume - good manners should prevail - good manners are the unfailing sign of good parental guidance and the school of conduct at home’.\textsuperscript{104}

Suggestions that the police could use the Vagrancy Act to combat the practice of wearing swim-wear on the streets were met with ridicule. Section 8a of the Act states ‘any person who in or near any public street, thoroughfare or place or within the view of any person passing therein who behaves in a riotous, indecent, offensive, threatening or insulting manner will be liable to a penalty not exceeding £5.’\textsuperscript{105} The Daily Telegraph posed a scenario - ‘Say Miss Manly were haled to court for going along the Corso in a bathing costume. It would have to be proved to the magistrate’s satisfaction that she had behaved in a riotous, offensive, threatening or insulting manner. Who’s going to take the job on?’\textsuperscript{106}

One Manly resident had her say on the matter. The Sun reported that ‘Mrs. Jamieson Williams, president of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (W.C.T.U) who has lived in Manly for years and seen many men, women and children...in the streets in bathing suits is surprised at the council’s attitude...She is quite accustomed to it and wonders that any councillors are not...crowds of people clad in bathing suits, pass her house every day on their way to the surf...it doesn’t worry me a bit’ she claimed.\textsuperscript{107} The Council’s power extended to the beaches and reserves and the police on being approached replied that they would be prepared to render any assistance desired by the

\textsuperscript{103} The Sun 29 February 1929.
\textsuperscript{104} The Sun editorial 4 November 1933.
\textsuperscript{105} Daily Telegraph 6 March 1929.
Council's officers in enforcing the local government Ordinance. The Ordinance had no power in the streets, but it required bathers to wear neck-to-knee costumes on the beaches and reserves—a rule mostly ignored. Council compromised by deciding to ask all women bathers to wear bathing gowns over their costumes. The wrap or 'bathing gowns' however, did little to hide the body in the swimsuit. Spartacus Smith writing for the *Sydney Mail* gave some 'impressions' of Manly

So this is Manly! Serene in Her Healthy Gaiety, Sydney's Carnival Suburb Tosses a Jest at the Customs and Conventionalities of the Cities - A girl comes around the corner and crosses the street. She is in a bathing suit with a cloak on her shoulders blown out by the breeze from the sea. She might be promenading down George Street in full silken outfit for all the concern she shows about her slim, shapely legs being on exhibition. But, of course! This is Manly. Who dresses for anything but bathing and amusing oneself in Manly! 'Dress! Poo! What better dress can there be than a bathing suit?...Around the same corner come two more - three others on their heels...laughing, chatting...as though everyone else had on nothing but bathing suits...so confident, serene...the healthy smiles without an atom of suggestiveness of aught but the glory of life in natural delightful surroundings.

Women's costumes had come a long way by the 1930s. Although government regulations stipulated neck-to-knee costumes be worn these had long disappeared from Sydney's beaches. The sleeveless fullpiece costumes, although heavy, dark and clingy when wet, were attractive and daring after the neck-to-knee styles. Narrow adjustable straps as well as cutaway back and side panels started a trend towards maximum skin exposure. The skirt front was retained for modesty. Practical rubber bathing caps and beach shoes protected the bather. In 1935 the Minister for Local Government, Eric Spooner introduced costume regulations, which he hoped, would be in line with current fashion. However, there was a ban placed on trunks for men and brassiere type costumes for women. The Minister told a deputation from Randwick Council that he did not intend to amend the Ordinance prescribing the type of costumes to be worn by bathers. He said that 'if the Ordinance was altered it might

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106 Ibid.
107 *The Sun* 29 February 1929.
108 Ibid.
only be a month or two before there was agitation for another change...the Councils had ample power to deal with indecency and alteration of the Ordinance would not necessarily have any bearing on that aspect.\textsuperscript{111} The Minister further stated

that the only costume prescribed before 1935 was the neck-to-knee style dating back to 1912. The old Ordinance was brought up to date at the request of councils and nobody criticised it. It was tabled in Parliament and there was no objection in either house...further... advertisements for women’s costumes had appeared during the past fortnight that indicated an effort to put on the market the costumes to which strong exception was taken 2 years ago.\textsuperscript{112}

The debate on swimming costumes for both women and men raged on for a number of years. In 1931 the Mayor of Manly, Alderman Harcourt stated that ‘the girls were going too far and are breaking the bounds of decency on the beaches’.\textsuperscript{113} However temptation in the form of fashion parades and newspaper pictures proved hard to resist. The Sun reported that ‘the new models of “Skimpies” (swimsuits) were being modelled in the latest fashion parades’ but took the precaution to remind readers that the Ordinance with regard to neck to knee swim suits still stood.\textsuperscript{114} But with a further taunt to seaside councils

Advance displays of very revealing surf costumes for the coming season have not yet shocked suburban councils into restrictive action but this may be due to the fact that the costumes have not yet been worn - except in mannequin parades. England, France, Germany and of course Melbourne have already reacted against near nudity on the beaches.\textsuperscript{115}

After an announcement that the Ordinance would be policed and swimsuits must fit the necessary requirements women on the beaches kept on their kimonos and did not enter the water for fear of prosecution.\textsuperscript{116} Miss Heather Hood, a young Sydney woman in charge of the beauty parlour on the Aorangi which was in dock in Sydney stated in The Sun that ‘in America, girls almost without exception wear the brassiere type of swim suit. Men everywhere wear trunks. I doubt if you could buy a full-length man’s costume anywhere’.\textsuperscript{117} However, Sydney’s beach-goers were required to ‘toe

\textsuperscript{111} Sydney Morning Herald 16 October 1937

\textsuperscript{112} ibid.

\textsuperscript{113} The Sun 13 October 1931.

\textsuperscript{114} The Sun 15 August 1932.

\textsuperscript{115} ibid.

\textsuperscript{116} The Sun 1 October 1935.

\textsuperscript{117} ibid.
the line’. The Sun printed a warning that the Mayors of Sydney’s seaside municipalities have stated that the Spooner (so named after the Minister for Local Government) bathing costume regulation will be strictly enforced again this season\(^\text{118}\) and the Daily Telegraph announced ‘this season’s Spooner bathing costume will be less revealing according to an executive of one of the big stores. It will fit more in the way of a corset - backs will be displayed as amply as before. Blacks and dull reds would be the most popular colours’.\(^\text{119}\) Officially, the Surf Association agreed to abide by the Government’s ruling but did not rule out any future opposition to the current law or that a new sub-committee would make a further appeal to the Minister for Local Government.\(^\text{120}\)

A reminiscence from former Manly beach inspector Albert (Bert) Owen sums up the general feeling on the matter

> During the 30s we beach inspectors had the unpleasant task of enforcing the Spooner regulations which stated that everyone had to wear neck-to-knee costumes...girls were the first to rebel and started making their own costumes, a bra and trunks. These homemade swimsuits were made of all sorts of material and the beaches were a mass of colour. Some girls had a one-piece rubber costume which fitted into their handbags and they poured themselves into it. They were very revealing and did not last, for after a few swims they would split down the centre and we had the pleasant task of repairing them with plaster tape...One day at South Steyne a blonde German girl emerged from the dressing sheds topless and I had the job of enforcing the regulations. Bystanders insisted that it took me a couple of hours to convince her to leave but all I did was to concentrate on my job.\(^\text{121}\)

Men’s costumes too came in for debate on whether men should be permitted to roll down the top of their costumes to the waist. Manly Council considered police action against members of the South Steyne Surf Life Saving Club who allegedly played football on the beach with their costumes pulled down to their waists. And, Alec Parkins a member of Manly Club was escorted from the beach wearing shorts, sox and

\(^\text{118}\) The Sun 24 October 1936. There is ample coverage of the Spooner costume and the related Ordinance and the surfer’s revolt against the cover-up costume - particularly in The Sun in 1936-37 and that newspaper’s editorials of 14 November 1936 and 9 February 1937. Men’s trunks were referred to as ‘Spooners’.

\(^\text{119}\) Daily Telegraph 2 September 1936.

\(^\text{120}\) Surf in Australia, 1 January 1937, Vol.1, No. 5, p.1.
boots. The Parkins incident however, was a planned affair as Albert (Bert) Owen recalls:

Males became our problem and we spent our time making men who had rolled down their costumes to sun-bake pull up the top or leave the beach. One day a reporter friend of mine said he had an idea. 'Bert', he said, 'we have to bring this costume business to a head' and suggested that the next day another colleague would appear on the beach in football shorts and I would pull him off the beach while the photographer took snaps and then the reporter would write his story. And so it came to pass. The next day after they left I rang the unsuspecting town clerk, the late Les Wellings and told him that we had had a trouble on Manly Beach. The newspapers made much of the incident and Manly Council had a meeting to discuss the matter and the following edict came out: 'No action to be taken with people in shorts but rolled down costumes to be banned'. All councils promptly followed Manly’s lead and shorts were in.\textsuperscript{122}

Despite the Ordinance that required bathers to cover the upper part of their bodies on the beach, Manly Council stated this was ‘ordinary dress’ and Parkins probably would not be prosecuted.\textsuperscript{123} Had a magistrate convicted Mr. Parkins, public sympathy and amusement would surely have been on his side.\textsuperscript{124}

Following the publicity the Parkins revolt received the newspapers were swamped with letters for and against the practice. The \textit{Daily Telegraph} printed two photos of golfer, Jim Ferrier, who had just returned from abroad - one with full costume and one wearing trunks. ‘Here’, said Mr. Ferrier, ‘is a picture of myself sunbathing in Europe and here’s a picture of me sunbathing in Sydney...the difference, as you can see, is that where there was hardly any sun I was allowed to uncover my chest...and where there is plenty of sun I am forced to cover myself up’. The Rev. George Cowie of Fullarton Memorial Church stated ‘when I was in England, we always used to bathe in trunks, and I don’t think the morals here are any better than they are in the Old Country...I think this ‘Scooperism’ is all astray. I cannot understand its stupidity...we are getting like Germany, where they are told what they may and may not do.

\textsuperscript{121} Albert (Bert) Owen, Oral History Project, 13 September 2000. The \textit{Manly Daily} recalled Owen’s ‘stunt that led to the liberalisation of men’s bathing attire’ in his obituary, 25 February 2004.

\textsuperscript{122} ibid.

\textsuperscript{123} \textit{Daily Telegraph} 12 November 1936.

\textsuperscript{124} ibid.\textit{13 November 1936.}
Presently, we won't be able to eat without Mr. Spooner's permission. Lady Walder, president of the New South Wales Women's Amateur Sports Council said her personal view was 'that shorts were the most logical dress for the full enjoyment of the beaches and the Australian sunshine'. Miss Clare Dennis, Olympic and Empire Games breaststroke champion said she thought 'that most of the harm in the wearing of shorts existed in the minds of their critics...shorts for men are the vogue in practically every other part of the world including London, America and the Continent and it is impossible to assail them on the grounds of indecency unless the male chest is abhorrent to Australians'. The president of the Feminist Club, Mrs. Cameron, however, took the opposite view. 'I think they are horrible...the only place I saw them worn abroad was on the Rhine and I can't say they improved the general picture of the Rhine'. In a spirited editorial The Sun on the 14 November 1936 wrote

'It is when we come to man, proud man, dressed in a little brief authority, like Mr. Spooner, or dressed in a costume which hides his manly torso, that the struggle for freedom begins...there are still, it seems, many persons in Australia, though they are dying out fast, who object to seeing too much bronze on the bronzed Apollos of the surf. Bronze backs, yes, and bronze shoulders, arms, legs and necks, but not bronze chests or abdomens, Modesty forbids...In other countries it is sufficient to wear trunks. Even in the heart of London, bathers in the Serpentine show their chests to the passers-by. On the Lido, at Coney Island, at Margate, Ostend - everywhere that humanity bathes in the sea, except in the South Sea Islands or the Congo where no costume at all is necessary - trunks or shorts are the sole clothing of the male bather...we have seen pictures of a Royal Duke bathing in costumes which Mr. Spooner's ordinance declares indecent...Some day...we may be able to wear what we like, read what we like and see what we like - and drink what we like when we like. The freedom for which our fathers bled has been slightly bent. It is for us, too, to bleed if we want it straightened again.

The Surf Association probably had the last word on both men's and women's swimming costumes. Women were dismissed quickly, 'the introduction of the brassiere costume for females was never mentioned by the Association, and is of little interest to its members'. However, indignation surfaced for the men

123 ibid.
124 Sydney Morning Herald 13 November 1936.
125 ibid.
126 ibid.

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By 1938, men were permitted to swim in tight-fitting, topless, woollen or cotton trunks. These more colourful costumes were often designed with smart webbed belts, braiding and a front skirt.\(^{130}\)

**BEACH POPULARITY – COUNCIL PROBLEMS:**

Despite the controversy over swimwear people were flocking to Sydney’s beaches in such numbers that they were neglecting their church-going duties. Such religious neglect caused the Anglican Archbishop of Sydney, Dr. Mowll to remark ‘if the people on the beaches will not go to church - then the church will go to the people on the beaches’. The Clergy announced that services would be held at Manly, Cronulla and either Bondi or Coogee. Manly was the first Council to give permission for a service to be conducted on the ocean and harbour beaches. Waverley Council, which had previously opposed applications for beach services, consented to re-consider the matter.\(^{131}\) If beach going did replace religion as the choice of the masses, it can claim the distinction of giving unbridled pleasure to so many.

Councils also had to contend with complaints from surfers. One reported incident stated that ‘regular surfers were filled with indignation at the action of some of the South Steyne life-savers in bringing their surf boat and surf boards right in amongst the bathers. One elderly woman surfer stated ‘I am afraid to go in the surf at the weekend now for fear of being seriously injured by a surf board or killed outright by the surf boat’.\(^{132}\)

\(^{130}\) Speedo Exhibition, January 2002.
\(^{131}\) Daily Telegraph 26 July 1934.
\(^{132}\) The Sun 1 February 1928.
Either there were more unreported incidents of surfers tangling with boats and boards or Manly Council were slow to act but it took Council until 1933 to instigate action in the matter. The *Daily Telegraph* reported that ‘It is expected that the motion recently carried by Council in trusting beach inspectors to divide the surfing area into sections for surf-boats and boards, surf shooting and a general safety zone for women, children and non surf-shooters should ensure the safety of all’.\(^{133}\)

Apart from safety problems, upkeep of existing facilities and provision of new infrastructure, Councils endeavoured to attract tourists and visitors to their beaches. Randwick Council advertised Coogee as ‘the seaside holiday resort of New South Wales whilst Little Coogee (Clovelly) with its surrounding reef and small surf was described as ‘the kiddies’ paradise’. Maroubra was touted as ‘the biggest surf-bathing beach in Australia’.'\(^{134}\)

Unfortunately, undermining such advertising, Council learned that the life-saving equipment on Coogee Beach had been misused and carelessly handled. A report on the beaches in the Municipality by the Parks Committee found at Coogee, three reels were unsatisfactory and the equipment quite inadequate to cope with the crowds. The equipment at Maroubra - reels, buoys and boat, was unfit for use and at Clovelly little gear was available, just one reel was serviceable. With shades of the differences experienced between the Manly Surf Club and Manly Council, disparaging remarks were made about the Coogee Life Saving Club. Statements condemning the indolence of the members, attributed to Alderman Dunningham appeared in the newspapers under the caption ‘Surfers’ Toilet Club’...Coogee harbours Mack Sennett surfers

\(^{133}\) *Daily Telegraph* 18 January 1933.

\(^{134}\) This is, of course, inaccurate. However, Maroubra Beach does have a ‘heavy’ surf particularly when compared to the surf at Coogee and Clovelly beaches. Sections are often closed at Maroubra when a
whose only virtue is they are decorative'. Needless to say, such remarks and the charge of careless use of gear were resented by the Club, which blamed the Council for the state of the equipment. While the Town Clerk Mr. W. K. Percival claimed that Council had been very generous in the way of equipment to the clubs, the Secretary of Coogee Club Mr. S. J. Winton declared that the club’s policy was to be self-supporting and the Council had supplied only one reel in the last ten years. The matter eventually came before the central body, the Surf Life Saving Association. The Coogee delegate declared that the Council had not only removed all equipment but had withdrawn from the beaches the services of employees who acted as lifesavers during the surfing season. The President of the Association Mr. C. D. Paterson considered the situation ‘a positive disgrace’ for which both the Randwick Council and the Coogee Surf Life Saving Club were culpable. As criticism of the Surf Club soon abated it can be assumed that the unsatisfactory state of the life-saving gear was rectified.\(^\text{135}\)

Membership in swimming clubs continued to expand and a winter swimming club was formed at Bondi in 1929, which has endured to the present time. It was the Bondi Icebergs. This club prided itself on its egalitarian ethos ‘where competition was important but where a fair-go, generosity and mateship are even more so...there was no pretension, no class system and no cocktails with little umbrellas in them’.\(^\text{136}\) ‘To become a full member of the Bondi Icebergs you have to endure 75 winter swims in a five-year period. If you miss more than one swim per month, you are officially reminded of your obligations and required to explain’.\(^\text{137}\)

*big* surf is running, *The Referee* on 10 February 1915 declared that ‘Maroubra is classed as one of the finest surfing beaches that faces the blue Pacific Ocean’.

\(^{135}\) Randwick City Council Minutes (Item 9) 5 August 1924: *Evening News* 4 July 1924.
CONCLUSION:

With the conclusion of hostilities of the 1914-18 war, the decade of the 1920s brought about a new era of promise, which Australians embraced with enthusiasm. Sydney swimmers enjoyed a period of freedom of surf shooting and a new beach culture was born. The lifesaver became the new symbol for Australian nationalism, the heir to the ANZAC legend. One young lifesaver upon gaining his Bronze Medallion stated it was his ‘initiation into Australian manhood’.\(^{138}\)

This period saw the beginning of the beach girl beauty contest, which, by its new place in the pattern of life, in turn, led to a resurgence of physical culture and a culture of the ‘body beautiful’. The rise of a eugenic movement coincided with the display of body, health and exercise. The *New Nation Magazine* which described lifesavers as ‘...bronzed sons of Australia’ suggested that ‘such men mated to the magnificent brown girls of today will, surely, evolve a future race of even superior mould’\(^{139}\).

These factors all combined to bring about an increasingly powerful leisure industry, which fanned a growing predilection for all the trappings of beach fashion as well as increased leisure publications. The population plunged headlong into a hedonistic period with what might be described as ‘gay abandon’. This was the period of the brazen missy and the brown men - a lifestyle embracing a ‘cult of sunshine’ - a period of challenging the laws dictating bathing costumes and in many cases turning their backs on religious duties to the extend that some clergy held services on suburban beaches. As well, competitive swimming had a resurgence, the Australian Olympic teams acquitted themselves well in competition in 1920 and 1924 with

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137 ibid.
widely acclaimed triumphs from Andrew ‘Boy’ Charlton and other members of the 1924 Australian team.

This period also saw the ‘rise and fall’ of women’s participation in surf life saving. Despite spirited attempts, women failed to gain full membership of Surf Life Saving Clubs – with some exceptions, particularly in country areas, their role generally being designated to fund-raising, competing in beach running and R.&R. events, or adding glamour to the march past. The male bastion stood firmly. Women, though, had their day and caused more than a stir on many occasions by appearing on the streets in brief swimsuits much to the chagrin of the aldermen of seaside councils.

But seaside councils had more than brief swimsuits to contend with. Government grants to upgrade or build new infrastructure and purchase necessary equipment for surf clubs were eagerly sought by seaside municipal councils. This request for funds was also an on-going concern for these councils during the following decade. However, people still flocked to the beaches - swimming and surfing continued to gain popularity. Beach going and surf shooting became a free leisure pursuit for the enjoyment of all and the volunteer lifesaver the definitive national icon.
CHAPTER 7:

THE WORLD DEPRESSION AND ITS EFFECTS

‘even though there might not have been much money about there was a lot of fun...the Club helped to keep up the spirits of those who couldn’t get jobs and whenever a member could put some work in the way of a fellow Bondi man there was no hesitation’.¹

HARD TIMES:

The twenties were fabulous years but when that decade ended a new and unwelcome era arrived. The World Depression, which began in 1929 with the New York stock market collapse and lasted with varying intensity for seven years, was a cataclysmic experience for many Australians.² Unemployment was the most crushing and soul-destroying aspect of the Depression. The earliest and most marked indication was the rapid shutdown in the most visible and vulnerable of all urban activities - building construction.³

As people found themselves with unwelcome time on their hands, the beaches, ‘natures most potent antidepressant’⁴ became a draw card providing free recreation in the warmer months. ‘Surfers could spend their enforced leisure time together in the sun and surf which afforded them momentary relief from the troubles of the day, even if it did produce a great thirst for a beer which could not be bought’.⁵ ‘The sun was the brightest thing about the Depression and the most relentless production, it seemed, was that of the waves, so beach life and surf life saving activities reached an enforced

² Australia during the years 1932-1934 experienced a rate of registered unemployment of 23.4 per cent. Dean Jaensch & Max Teichmann, The Macmillan Dictionary of Australian Politics. (2nd ed.) The Macmillan Company of Australia Pty. Ltd. 1979, p.67.
new high. Ted Correll remarked on ABC Television ‘from about 1929 right through
till ’39, most families, except perhaps the top 10% or 20%, didn’t have the
wherewithal to do other than go down to the beach’.

The Depression affected surf clubs and their members in differing ways. The Bondi
Surf Club formed the ‘Sunshine Club’ in which those more fortunate were able to help
those who were not so well off. Owen recalls that at Manly more than half the
members were unemployed and, although they had no work they had the beach to fall
back on. ‘Us surfers get in any time - if the surf was no good, then there was always
another beach, another surf club. We pooled money and would cash in a trophy won at
a surf carnival with the storekeeper. There was always money for parties, dances and
the local hotel’. To keep the members together they formed the Manly Life Saving
Club Rugby Union Football Club. The club-house also had a recreation room and
billiard table, which provided another means of competition. It was important to keep
members together because the depression years saw increasing numbers of people
spending time on the beach and in the surf, which, in turn, brought the need for
increased beach patrols. In 1931-32, Manly club had 191 active members and 21
patrols contested the ‘Skipper Cup’ Rescue and Resuscitation competition. It was the
largest life-saving event held on Australian beaches.

Inter-club competition continued although shortage of funds forced club members to
travel to carnivals on the lorry, which transported the surfboat. This apparently had its
share of danger as one of Australia’s great beltmen, Wally Proudfoot from North
Narrabeen was killed when returning from a carnival in this manner.

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6 ibid.
8 History of Bondi Surf Bathers Life Saving Club, p.12
The thrill - or the danger - of travelling to surf carnivals... in the depression years, when few could afford the money to travel to carnivals saw the boat lorry jammed on both sides of the boat with costume-clad youths, shouting joyfully - and sometimes rudely - as they passed through suburbs and rival beach areas.\textsuperscript{11}

At Maroubra Surf Life Saving Club those out of work were exempted from payment of fees and they were made eligible for special trophies in the handicap races. In 1931 the annual report noted that over twenty-five percent of members were out of regular employment. Another report states that Maroubra members walked to a Newcastle carnival.\textsuperscript{12}

However, the Depression did have an overall detrimental impact on the Surf Life Saving movement. Membership plummeted along with club finances as many lifesavers could no longer meet the associated financial costs of membership because of unemployment or greatly reduced discretionary spending. In response, the Surf Life Saving Association instigated a number of schemes to help find work for lifesavers. These included special approaches to the New South Wales police, fire and tramway departments and country employment schemes - which saw unemployed city lifesavers bolster developing country clubs in return for work.\textsuperscript{13} In the 1920s the Surf Life Saving Association had made concerted efforts to develop surf life saving clubs on the New South Wales North and South Coasts. To aid in such development it had introduced the Big Brother/Little Brother scheme in 1930 whereby the large and well-established metropolitan clubs adopted a ‘country’ club and provided training assistance and other related initiatives. Unfortunately, the Depression greatly curtailed the Big Brother scheme and as considerable distances were involved in travel (and

\textsuperscript{9} Albert (Bert) Owen, \textit{Recollections of the 20s and 30s - Beach Frolics}, 13 September 2000, n.p.
\textsuperscript{10} ibid.
\textsuperscript{13} Sean Brawley, \textit{Beach Beyond: A History of the Palm Beach Surf Club 1921-1996}, p. 31.
thus expense) to compete in carnivals, fears were expressed that some country surf life
saving clubs might fold.14 With this dilemma and the unemployment issue
confronting it, the Association struck upon another scheme. If the country clubs would
accept the responsibility of providing employment the Association would organise for
unemployed members of metropolitan clubs to join them. The country clubs would
receive experienced lifesavers who could help with the club’s development and the
metropolitan club member would gain a job. Once the scheme was seen to work the
regional clubs became more selective. Rather than just wanting another lifesaver, they
would request a belt swimmer or a sweep or a sprinter as they built the competitive
side of their clubs.15

The Great Depression not only impovished the nation but it also created tensions
which divided it. The Labor Government, elected in October 1930 brought about some
of these tensions. The period saw the growth of ‘anti-political thought’ – that the
democratic process had been subverted by ‘sectionalism’ and ‘machine politics’ -
backroom deals conducted by ALP politicians such as Jack Lang who took their
orders from the ALP ‘machine’ and trade union bosses.16 Both Communism and
Fascism attracted new adherents during this period and many turned to political
extremes for solutions to the predicament.

Believing that a communist insurrection was imminent and that the unemployed might
revolt, and governments collapse, secret armies were organised in the 1920s and
1930s to defend the nation against subversion. These armies, headed by society’s elite,
were known in Victoria as the League of National Security; in Western Australia it

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14 Sean Brawley, Vigilant and Victorious: History of Collaroy Surf Life Saving Club, p.103.
15 ibid.

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was the Khaki Legion. In New South Wales it became the Old Guard or ‘X’ force. Melbourne was the Australian headquarters of this ‘White Army’. In New South Wales this secret ‘committee of vigilance’ included amongst its members Philip Goldfinch, the General Manager of Colonial Sugar Refining Company, a descendant of Governor King, linked by marriage to the Macarthurs and the Cowpers and the old Sydney money, George Macarthur Onslow of Camden Park, descendant of John Macarthur, and Jack Scott, a member of the prominent Street legal family. Many leaders were ex-military men who felt that parliamentary problems could be solved with methods that had worked on the fields of Flanders. The Old Guard held in tension two different conceptions of events, which would trigger its mobilization. First, that the Lang government, unable to meet its commitments such as State government benefits and salaries would collapse producing a situation where a force would be needed to subdue those affected and secondly, the likelihood of an antipodean Bolshevik revolution. Efficiently and silently the Old Guard set about developing the capacity to protect vital and strategic points, power stations, transport centres, munitions dumps, oil plants, banks, post offices, telephone exchanges, roads and bridges and prepared to launch a solid counteroffensive against the enemies of capitalism. All believed in the need to uphold the Digger legend. Indeed, the Right set about idealising the Diggers. Not only had they shown Homeric courage in the face of adversity - they had placed national and imperial interests above sectional and class interests. Another Right initiative was the conservative alliance, which created

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17 ibid. p.40.
20 ibid.
22 ibid. p. 25.
and controlled the Returned Soldiers’ and Sailors Imperial League of Australia (the forerunner of the RSL) which was granted government recognition as the official representative of returned servicemen ‘in return for defending the powers that be’.\textsuperscript{23} This further ‘facilitated the propagation of the Right’s Digger legend’.\textsuperscript{24} Memorial celebrations were organised along with Anzac Day parades all of which offered ex-servicemen the status of national heroes.

Another, much less secretive group, which emerged during this period, was the conservative paramilitary organisation, the New Guard formed by Eric Campbell in Sydney in 1931.\textsuperscript{25} This was a breakaway movement from the Old Guard. It’s members included insurance clerks, motor garage proprietors and small businessmen who were the ‘meat in the sandwich’ between big business and organised labour.\textsuperscript{26} The movement’s aims included total loyalty to the monarchy and the British Empire, the exposure and removal of all ‘disloyal’ elements in the industrial, societal or governmental fabric of the Australian nation and the destruction of communism. One of the specific aims was to oppose and defeat the Labour Government of New South Wales led by demagogic Premier J.T. (Jack) Lang, whose unorthodox methods did much to polarise the community.\textsuperscript{27} The New Guard feared that under mounting left-wing pressure, the Lang government might attempt to use it’s constitutional power to ‘foist’ socialism onto the people.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{23} Alistair Thomson, ‘Passing Shots at the Anzac Legend’, \textit{A Most Valuable Acquisition: A People’s History of Australia since 1788}, Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee (eds.) 1988, p. 203.
\textsuperscript{24} Moore op.cit. \textit{The Right Road}, p.25.
\textsuperscript{25} Eric Campbell was born at Young NSW in 1893. Like his father, he was a solicitor. His mother was a Russell and descendant of Dr. Thomas Jamison who was a surgeon with the First Fleet. Jamison Street in Sydney and the Jamison Valley are named in his honor. Eric Campbell commanded the 27\textsuperscript{th} and 46\textsuperscript{st} Batteries in the Australian Field Artillery and was awarded the D.S.O in 1919. He held the rank of Colonel. H. Barry, \textit{Elanora: History of the Elanora Country Club}, 1977. p. 51.
\textsuperscript{26} Moore op.cit. \textit{The Right Road}, p.46.
\textsuperscript{27} Jansisch and Teichmann, op.cit. p. 139.
The New Guard was based on a para-military organisation and was inspired by fascist ideology. At its peak in 1932 it claimed over 50,000 members mostly ex-servicemen. Unlike the secretive Old Guard the New Guard made public shows of strength at drill parades, regularly broke up communist meetings and at their own meetings, proclaimed their readiness for any eventuality ‘should there be an upheaval in the State’. The most famous exploit associated with the movement occurred at the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge on 19 March 1932 when Captain Francis De Groot, a New Guard member, rode up and cut the ribbon with his sword denying the Premier the honour. De Groot was fined £5 for ‘offensive behaviour’.

The political significance of the New Guard was strong – it’s membership as a proportion of the New South Wales population exceeded that of the Italian Party just before the Fascist take over, and it was backed by some of the most important members of the New South Wales community, including most senior serving military officers. Amos points out that some joined the service to avoid unemployment, some thought they were ‘doing the right thing’ but many had been moved by a deeper and broader sense of patriotism and shared a firm conviction that God, King and Country and Empire had to be defended at any cost. It was this latter group that provided the ex-military element of the New Guard. It was, according to Brawley, unquestionable that many members of the Surf Clubs were members of the New Guard. The Guard had appealed to those men, many ex-servicemen, who had become

29 Freudenberg op.cit. p.172.
30 ibid.
31 Jaensch and Teichmann, op.cit. p.139.
32 Amos,op.cit. p. 9
33 ibid. There was a parallel organisation of comparable size and elite support in Victoria at the same time apparently headed by leading military figures.
convinced that communism posed a direct threat to Australia and that Lang was the embodiment of this evil.\textsuperscript{34}

The Old Guard went into recess after Lang’s electoral defeat on 11 June 1932. Many New Guardsmen, appalled that Campbell had linked his call for fascism too closely with Adolf Hitler and a range of images that were unrelated to Anglo-Australian imperial patriotism left the movement. By 1935 the New Guard and its parliamentary arm, the Centre Party were moribund.\textsuperscript{35}

An attempt at establishing another movement similar to the Hitler Youth Movement was aimed more directly at the lifesavers. This did not meet with much success, the idea appealing to only a minority. The Olympic swimmer and coach, Harry Hay, was a nazi sympathiser who attended the Olympic Games in Berlin and became impressed with fascist ideology and the Hitler Youth Movement. In a speech delivered at the Queenscliff Surf Lifesaving Club on 9 December 1936 he declared.

\begin{quote}
Too much youth is being wasted in Australia. Our youth is smouldering away. Germany’s action will hit the world most forcibly in the years to come...in Australia there are too many loafers living on the government...There are no unemployed in Germany to-day, every lad being drafted into the Youth Camps for 12 months’ training. Without a certificate from the Camp no lad could find work in Germany. Any boys who would not find work were taken into the military.\textsuperscript{36}
\end{quote}

In that same year it was announced that a team of 24 lifesavers would leave in 1937 on a goodwill tour of Britain, the Continent and the United States. The Surf Life Saving Association set up a company for the purpose of financing the tour, with all earned revenue from the trip paid to the company. At the conclusion of the tour the company was to go into voluntary liquidation after providing for a dividend of not more than 5 per cent to the shareholders, with the balance of the profits paid to the

\textsuperscript{34} Brawley, \textit{Vigilant and Victorious}, p. 86.
\textsuperscript{35} Moore op. cit. \textit{The Right Road}, pp. 42, 45.
\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Surf in Australia}, January, 1937, p.31; April 1937, p.24.
Association. The attendant publicity stated that ‘no body of Australians abroad since our immortal AIF has been given the advertising and publicity that will surround this tour of suntanned southern Vikings’.

Very few, if any, Australians were untouched by the Depression. Many, who were evicted from rental accommodation, found their way to one of the numerous ‘camps’ established by the homeless. The camp at Clontarf was established on a three-acre section of the once extensive pleasure grounds, which had been gazetted as a public park under Manly Council control as trustees. It featured in the newspapers of the day as ‘being clean and well kept’ although local residents urged Council to close the establishment, as they feared the camp could become permanent thus lowering their property values. However, council made it clear that it was not council’s intention to cause hardship and suggested that the government take some steps to provide homes in other places for these people. Frenchs Forest on Sydney’s northern peninsular was one suburb suggested. The government, on the other hand insisted that ‘the question is far more involved than the general public realises. ‘It is our biggest question and government is doing everything possible to grapple with it’ stated the Assistant Chief Secretary, the Hon. Minister, Mr. Hawkins. The government’s problem was resettling shack dwellers from other camps in the metropolitan area, some of which had been set up on property owned by municipal councils. The Sun of 6 February 1934

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37 *Surf in Australia*, 1 September 1936, p. 30. The description of the lifesavers as southern Vikings is interesting and probably refers to an attempt to give Australia credibility as a nation through the possession of a mythological tradition – a bronzed southern version of tough Nordic masculinity. In 1916 the Manly lifesavers dressed up as Vikings for a carnival complete with blonde wigs, breast-plates and horns, but it is doubtful that the reference refers to that.

38 The Department of Lands informed Manly Council that more than 3 acres had been made available for public recreation but it was ‘at present occupied by campers’. Council had previously controlled the 100 ft. reservation and this area was now added to it. *The Sun* 21 February 1934; *Sydney Morning Herald* 15 May 1934. As early as 1840 ‘Lane’s Gardens’ are recorded as being established at Clontarf, Rob. Sturrock, *A Pictorial History of Mosman*, Griffin Press, South Australia, Vol.1, n.d. p.60: The grounds were later purchased by the Balmain New Ferry Co. Ltd. which claimed in their booklet *Pleasant Places in and Around Sydney: How and Where to spend a Holiday for Sixpence* (1906) ‘that the grounds have an area of not less than 70 acres’, p.38.
noted 'Happy Valley settlers at the moment can continue living in contentment but at Clontarf and Brighton-le-Sands the heavy hand of the Council is raised against the new communities in these areas. Cook Park at Brighton-le-Sands has over 300 people settled in rough but tidy shacks'. During the time the 'campers' inhabited the Clontarf camp, local newspapers featured photographs of camp residents who enjoyed swimming at Manly.\textsuperscript{40} No doubt the Brighton-le-Sands campers enjoyed Botany Bay. But, the 'heavy hand' did strike at Clontarf. The \textit{Daily Telegraph} issue of 21 December 1933 stated that 100 unemployed people have been given notice to leave their camp at Clontarf by 31 December. There is a paucity of information on just where these 100 people re-settled, if indeed, they did. However, in February of the following year the Premier of New South Wales, Mr. Stevens, stated that shelter would be provided for persons who were ordered to quit unemployment camps.\textsuperscript{41}

**CASH STRAPPED COUNCILS:**

Seaside municipalities may have enjoyed the economic advantages of the newfound and seemingly booming tourism trade, however, their cash-strapped councils were hard put to provide all the necessary infrastructure such as sea walls, dressing sheds, pavilions and swimming baths and their associated up-keep as well as support for the Surf Life Saving Clubs and payment of professional lifeguards. An example of the burden was published in \textit{The Truth} newspaper.

The 4000 people who packed the baths at Manly a week ago to see Charlton and Takaishi swim might easily have had a swim themselves - 18 piles, which carry the decking, were rotten. Some of the piles have rotted through and are suspended by the structure they are supposed to support.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{The Sun} 9 March 1934; \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} 10 March 1934.
\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Daily Telegraph} 22 December 1933. This edition featured a photograph of three girls from the camping area returning from their daily swim at Manly.
\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} 7 February 1934.
\textsuperscript{42} \textit{The Truth} 23 January 1927.
Aware of these and other problems of much needed swimming and surfing infrastructure, Manly Council proposed to replace the old South Steyne pavilion which, in its time, was said to 'surpass anything yet attempted on the beaches' when it was opened in 1913,\(^{43}\) with new Surf Sheds and Surf Life Saving accommodation

The Minister for Local Government (Mr. Spooner) notified council in December 1933 that he could not sanction a loan of $19,000.00 for the erection of surf sheds at South Steyne unless a referendum of ratepayers was taken before the following March. Should the outcome of the referendum be favourable, the loan would be made at the original terms. In the event of an adverse vote the Minister was prepared to provide about $3,000 for the work of repairing the existing building.\(^{44}\) Most of the newspapers of the day gave a great deal of coverage to the matter, the *Daily Telegraph* noting that the deputation from Manly Council has asked the Minister to make the money available from the *Unemployed Relief Fund*, and printed a statement from Manly Alderman Fawkner stating the Minister 'has adopted a Mussolini attitude and has kicked us in the neck every time'. This was accompanied by a cartoon depicting the Minister as II Duce.\(^{45}\)

Council's luck changed somewhat when *The Port Jackson and Manly Steamship Co. Ltd.* made an offer to lease for 20 years at a yearly rental of $1,500.00 the proposed new dressing pavilion at South Steyne. The Deputy Mayor stated that the annual payments on the $19,000.00 loan would amount to $1,300.00 and, if the offer was accepted, there would be no fear of council being unable to meet its obligations

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\(^{43}\) *Sydney Morning Herald* 22 December 1913.

\(^{44}\) Letter dated 22 November, 1933 from the Minister for Local Government, Mr. Eric Spooner to L.C. Wellings, Town Clerk Manly Council (File No. 990) on South Steyne Surf Club 1932-1954, Manly Municipal Library, Local Studies Collection: *Sydney Morning Herald* 19 December 1933.

\(^{45}\) *Daily Telegraph* 19 December 1933.
regarding the loan. However, the Steamship Company made quite clear in a letter to Council, signed by its General Manager, W.H. Dendy

it has been mooted, that if the Referendum is not carried ... that the Company will build the Surf Pavilion at its own expense, and I wish it to be distinctly understood, that my Directors will not under any circumstances, entertain any such proposal. 47

The referendum was set for 24 February, 1934. The question asked ‘Do you approve of the Council accepting an advance of £19,000.00 from the State Government Unemployment Relief Council repayable by equated payments over a period of 20 years at 3% per annum for the purpose of erecting a Surf Pavilion, Surf Life Saving club rooms and public conveniences at South Steyne’. 49 The short answer was ‘no’ the majority voting against the scheme. The poll was not large - only 38 per cent of ratepayers and about 19 per cent of electors voted. 50

Following the referendum result, Council received a letter from the Minister stating that ‘under the circumstances the advance of £19,000.00 will not be made by the Unemployment Relief Council for the purpose of building a new Surf Pavilion at South Steyne. He further added that -

I am prepared to consider any new proposal for the erection of a Surf Shed that the Council may submit provided that such proposal is, in my opinion, financially sound and unlikely to place the General Fund at a disadvantage so far as the net profit at present derived from beach bathing at South Steyne is concerned. I am also prepared to consider any proposal that the Council may submit for renovation of the present Sheds if the Council is of opinion that such is desirable. 51

48 Manly Council Minutes 13 January, 1934.
49 ibid. A further question was proposed, but lapsed for want of a seconder. ‘Do you approve of Council leasing the Pavilion, if approved, to The Port Jackson & Manly Steam Ship Co. Ltd. or some other competent body’. ibid.
50 Sydney Morning Herald 5 March 1934.
51 Letter to Council received from the Minister for Local Government (Mr. Spooner), 14 March 1934, File 990, Manly Library.
As the Minister was unbending in the matter, council decided to look to the private sector for finance and put forward suggestions for a competition for the design of a new Surf Pavilion. An invitation to competitors was issued on 26 March, 1936. Proposed sites were considered, a precis of competition codes obtained from *The Royal Australian Institute of Architects* and an undertaking given to the Manly Branch of *The Australian Labour Party* that ‘if permission is given for surf sheds, conditions will stipulate employment of local unemployed tradesmen at award rates and conditions.’\(^{52}\) Letters were sent from Council on 12 November, 1935 to several financial institutions enquiring about loans for the purpose.\(^{53}\) *The Australian Temperance & General Mutual Life Assurance Society Ltd.* offered £25,000.00 – £30,000.00 for a term of 20 years repayable by equal half-yearly installments at the rate of £4:2:6% (sic) on 21 November 1935. On 20 February 1936 they again offered finance on the same terms at £4:5:0% (sic) With similar terms, *The State Superannuation Board* offered 4% over 20 years, and indicated in a letter dated 30 October 1936 that they were prepared to entertain the proposal.\(^{54}\) *The Commonwealth Savings Bank* offered 4% over 15 years, *Manchester Unity Oddfellows* 4½% over 20 years as did *Australian Mutual Provident Society* and the *City Mutual Life Assurance Society*.\(^{55}\)

Council also applied to *The Port Jackson and Manly Steam Ship Company* in a letter dated 15 January, 1936. That Company replied that ‘owing to the large sum of money

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\(^{52}\) Manly Municipal Council Minutes 7 April 1934, 27 June 1934; Letter and competition forms from the Royal Institute of Architects, 30 August, 1935, File 990, Manly Library; Letter from Town Clerk to Manly Branch, Australian Labour Party, 7 March, 1934, File 990, Manly Library.  
\(^{53}\) Copies of all letters sent – file 990, Manly Library.  
\(^{54}\) File 990, 1932-1954.  
\(^{55}\) Letters, all dated November 1935, file 990, Manly Library.
being expended to maintain efficient steamer service they were unable to entertain Council’s application for a loan for the new Surf Sheds and Surf Club’.  

There were objections to the proposal which probably reflect the result of the referendum. One objection came from the Town Planning Association of New South Wales stating that the popularity of Manly will suffer if surf buildings are erected opposite the end of the Corso – it will destroy one of the greatest attractions of this part of Manly by blotting out the view of the ocean and this part of the beach. Another came from the Manly Women’s Branch of the United Australia Party stating ‘the harmful effect already produced at North Steyne by the erection of surf buildings at the end of Pine Street will be intensified in the case of the Corso if a building is erected’. However, it appears that Council had come to a site situation. At a special meeting, it was decided ‘that club house accommodation shall be situated at the North Eastern end of the main surf pavilion building either as an annex to the main structure or as a separate building and the Life Saving Club accommodation shall comprise the minimum provision outlined’. The motion was carried. And, at a Council meeting a year later the decision was made to present the application for a proposed special loan of £41,000.00 for the South Steyne Surf Pavilion and Municipal Administrative building to the Minister ‘and that the seal of the Council be affixed thereto’.

The matter had dragged on for several years. It had, in fact, become a well publicised and long-running saga, a Mayoral Minute of 20 July, 1937 noting ‘the matter was first

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56 Letter dated 24 January, 1936 from The Port Jackson & Manly Steam Ship Co. Ltd, File 990, Manly Library:
60 ibid. 2 February 1937.
proposed in August 1932, followed by a long history of proposition and counter
proposition, public meetings, interviews and referendum clearly shows the disability
of public bodies when attempting to carry out a business enterprise’.

However, the time lapse had taken its toll and tender prices ranged from £38,797.00 to
£41,305.00 - much higher than expected and it was obvious that Council would be
unable to build the pavilion for the amount of £25,000.00.61 (and, a far cry from the
originally envisaged amount of £19,000.00). A great deal of media coverage followed
the revised and amended plans to reduce costs, the Sydney Morning Herald printing a
statement on 8 October 1937 attributed to the Minister.

Mr. Spooner, the Minister for Works and Local Government said yesterday ‘that some months
ago Council was granted permission to borrow £41,000.00 of which £25,000.00 was for
construction of surf sheds - after consideration - approval of an additional loan is granted’.

It was indeed a saga, but finally, the building, described as ‘the last word in
modernity’, and eventually costing £34,000.00 was completed and opened by the
Minister for Local Government, Eric Spooner on 17 December 1938. The Minister
remarked that ‘although the Government had made no contribution to the cost of the
pavilion, sympathetic consideration would be given to a request in regard to the cost
of improving the surroundings’.62 Eric Andrew in association with Winsome Andrew
won the Sir John Sulman Award for 1939, awarded by the Royal Australian Institute
of Architects for the design of the Manly Surf Pavilion.63

61 The Sun 19 May 1937.
62 Sydney Morning Herald 19 December 1938. The loan was secured with the State Superannuation
Board. Council applied to the Superannuation Board for a further £5,000.00 to be added to the loan on
23 July 1937. This was agreed to. Original letters between the Council and the Superannuation Board
63 ibid. 14 December 1938. Runners-up were 2nd, Henry T. Hodges, 3rd, Walter R. Bunning, 4th
Seabrook & Fildes.

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In 1933 representatives from the combined seaside councils from Cronulla to Palm Beach announced they were sending a deputation to wait on the Minister for Local Government, Mr. Spooner, to urge a plan of ‘nationalisation of all surfing beaches’.  

It was pointed out to the Minister that at present councils provide money for beach improvements from their own funds. Their ratepayers however, form only a small proportion of the people who benefit - thousands attend but pay nothing or very little for the privileges they enjoy on the beaches. At most they pay admission to dressing sheds and shark-proof areas which are generally erected on the council’s responsibility and necessitates a big initial outlay. It was instanced that Waverley Council recently spent £200 on improvements at Bondi payment for which must come from its revenue and rates levied for such schemes. Randwick and Rockdale Councils have built shark-proof areas to safeguard bathers while every beach has its clubhouse for lifesavers.

The deputation urged that money be made available to councils, which controlled beaches for general improvement and the provision of life-saving gear and additional accommodation for the public. The deputation had the support of the Surf Life Saving Association. The Sun reported the Minister’s reply that ‘this is an unfortunate time to make a request of this description’.

Seaside councils also had to deal with damage caused by storms. One example was the cyclonic disturbances, which caused coastal damage in June 1935. Sections of protecting seawalls were damaged at Bronte, Balmoral baths were demolished, a bandstand was washed away at Bondi and damage was caused to Coogee Surf Life Saving Club.

The finance problem did not go away and the following year a deputation of Mayors and representatives of local authorities waited once again upon Mr. Spooner. The Mayor of Manly, Alderman Seller spoke of ‘the difficulties of finance during the past

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64 The Sun 2 March 1933.
65 ibid.
66 ibid.
67 ibid. 4 March 1933.
few years prove beyond doubt to councils no less than the government the necessity for adopting a uniform policy in floating loans and re-adjustment obligations'.

It was asserted by the delegation that 'the Interest Reduction Act had failed to achieve satisfactory reductions in interest on local government loans and it was urged that a board should be constituted with statutory powers to control future loans and the consolidation or conversion of existing loans'. It was further pointed out that 'even with the Interest Reduction Act the councils are still paying up to 6½% on borrowed money. Stating that Local Government loan indebtedness totals £8,000,00 Alderman Sellars, Mayor of Manly, who occupied the chair, declared 'that the Government's expressed policy indicated a tendency to preserve the contractual rights of the creditors, while councils, struggling to satisfy heavy commitments were forced dangerously to minimise the maintenance of their assets'. Country and inner city mayors shared the same sentiments. The Mayor of Petersham, Alderman Raith stating 'I say definitely that the day for monetary reform is on top of us, for we cannot go on any longer under this crushing burden of interest...in the face of this we have a Government telling us that we must not interfere with the sanctity of a contract'. The Mayor of Bathurst adding 'that there was no interference with the sanctity of contract when it was a case of relieving the suffering of the people...his council could pay back the balance of its electricity loan, but the Government will not allow it to do so'. The Secretary of the Local Government Association, Mr. A. R. Bluett declared 'that the conference was up against a brick wall, the Minister for Local Government (Mr. Spooner) and the Premier both having refused to take any action to intervene'. The Labour Daily gave widespread coverage of the matter declaring that 'the day is

70 Sydney Morning Herald 26 May 1934.
71 Labour Daily 26, 29 May 1934.
72 Ibid.
not far distant when Mr. Spooner will seek to set up his standard at his own little Nottingham and defy the forces of public resentment to rout him from his splendid self-conceit', finally reporting that the delegation had waited upon an ‘unsympathetic Minister’.73

The Minister, is seems, had numerous portfolios and his ‘other onerous duties precluded his giving the time needed to Councils’ affairs’.74 The executive of the Local Government Association strongly criticised the Government for its neglect of the needs of local bodies on the ground that the Assistant Treasurer and Minister for Local Government (Mr. Spooner) had too many other duties to attend to. It was decided to ask the Premier to appoint a full-time Minister to handle the Local Government portfolio.75 A deputation to the Premier was suggested but no record appears of it being received by the Premier and it is assumed that Mr. Spooner retained his numerous portfolios.

The final years of the twenties also witnessed the ‘battle of the beaches’. This involved the rivalry between Bondi and Manly, each claiming to be the premier beach. The Sun newspaper, quick to see a profit, entered into the ‘battle’ with gusto reporting

\[\text{last night Manly fired its first broadside at Bondi in the struggle for beach supremacy by announcing at a special meeting of Council it was unanimously decided to borrow £200,000 for the purpose of putting Manly in the position of premier watering place’.76}\]

The Sun’s editorial on 25 February 1933 referred to this spending as ‘aldermanic zeal’ and reported that ‘the ratepayers of Waverley were concerned over expenditure of £160,000.00 on a sea wall, esplanade and surf sheds (which are carefully avoided by most of the bathers)’.

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73 ibid 29 May 1934.
74 The Sun 22 June 1933.
75 ibid.
76 ibid 21 January 1929.
Bondi, however, gained the upper hand by winning permission to hold a gala surf carnival to celebrate the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge.\textsuperscript{77} The rivalry even extended to beach girl competitions with Manly declaring in answer to a ‘petticoat taunt’, ‘we will meet any challenge Bondi likes to make concerning our beach, the beauty of our girls and the physique of our men! We have no desire to shelter behind petticoats as Bondi accuses us of doing’.\textsuperscript{78} The beauty of Manly’s beach girls apparently held up as the \textit{Sunday Sun} headed an article ‘Beach War Beauty: Manly’s broadside for Bondi’ as Manly’s ‘Miss Leah Midgley took the plaudits from 5000 beach patriots, as winner of the first stage of the £125 Manly Surf Girl competition in conjunction with the “Sun’s” Silver Reel competition’.\textsuperscript{79}

\textit{The Sun} newspaper obviously saw a continuing profit from involvement in the ‘battle’ as it announced it would offer a solid silver reel by way of a trophy to the winners of a carnival between the two clubs. Manly eventually gained ownership of the silver reel with Bondi taking both the junior prizes. ‘The beach war which had waged for months on two beachfronts finally ended in an ‘armistice’ and a parade and dazzling carnival at Manly’.\textsuperscript{80} Despite the declared ‘armistice’ the rivalry was not ‘put to rest’ \textit{The Sun} was happy to announce

\begin{quote}

it’s started again and this time Bondi has carried the war into the enemy’s camp. A striking poster urges Manly tram travellers to spend their holidays at Bondi, Australia’s best beach - everybody will be pleased to know that the battle of the beaches has started again
\end{quote}

In 1933 the tide of magazine and newspaper closures was reversed with the production of the first issue of \textit{The Australian Women’s Weekly}, which sold 120,000

\textsuperscript{77} \textit{The Sun} 7, 10 October 1931.
\textsuperscript{78} ibid. 13 October 1931.
\textsuperscript{79} \textit{The Sunday Sun} 1 November 1931.
\textsuperscript{80} ibid. 20 December, 1931. The rivalry flared up again in 1934 when Manly secured the right to hold the Royal Beach Gala during Prince Henry’s visit. (\textit{The Sun} 8 June 1934).
copies. The ‘Weekly’ featured photos and articles of Sydney socialites and reported on ‘what smart women were wearing’ but did not mention the unemployed or those who still slept on park benches. Its publication on 30 December reminded readers that ‘we can all look forward to 1934 as the best year we have had for a long time’ and reported that the hotels and boarding houses at the surfing beaches were full to capacity. And Bank Notes of March 1934, the official magazine of the Commonwealth Bank in an article on Manly conservatively noted a ‘remarkable increase in branch business in recent years has been a barometer by which the prosperity of the district may be measured.’

BEACH SAFETY AND THE SHARK MENACE:

Beach safety became an important issue when several beaches reported shark sightings and three attacks occurred on the northern beaches resulting in two fatalities. Frank Riley was fatally attacked at Dee Why beach in March 1934 and sixteen year old Leon Hermes was taken at North Steyne the following month. Colin Grant who was attacked at Queenscliff recovered.

Representatives from seaside councils from Newcastle to Cronulla decided to ask the state and federal governments for aid in making beaches safe from shark attacks. They contended that surf bathing was a national pastime and the improvised councils could no longer be expected to undertake the protection of bathers.

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81 Spearritt op.cit. p. 65.
83 Bank Notes March 1934, p.21.
Despite the sightings and attacks, the *Sydney Morning Herald* carried an article that a Mr. E. Williams 'would, next Sunday, attempt to swim from Sydney to Manly and back but without a net'. Elaborate plans were made for his safety. Two boats would accompany him, manned by friends armed with harpoons. Without actually printing doubts of William's ability to swim the distance, the *Herald* noted that 'Williams, who is a member of the B.S.A. Motor Cycle Club is not known as a racing swimmer - he claims to possess exceptional stamina and says he has swum long distances'.

However, concern and probable doubts may have been felt in other quarters as that newspaper carried an article stating 'in deference to the wishes of the police who pointed out the danger of attempting to swim to Manly without the protection of a net, Mr. E. Williams cancelled his proposed swim from Fort Macquarie which was to have taken place yesterday morning'.

It appears the shark problem had a history of previous investigations into shark attacks. The Government appointed 1934 Shark Menace Advisory Committee provided in it's report a 'History of Previous Investigations' which included the first official reference to the shark 'menace' contained in the report of the Surf Bathing Committee which was set up in the year 1912. This committee reported on procedures at Durban in South Africa where there was a great prevalence of sharks and where a large semi-circle safety bathing enclosure was erected. This was not recommended for Australian waters for several reasons. First, the surf bathing beaches were so numerous that the cost of erecting such enclosures was prohibitive. Second, it was thought that the great number of bathers would not swim in the enclosures, preferring the open sea where the breakers came in without check, rather than have their force

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84 *Sydney Morning Herald* 1 April 1934. Another fatal attack occurred at Manly when David Paton aged 14 of Bower Street, Manly was seized by a shark and disappeared. A 'plane and surf boat search failed to find his body. *Daily Telegraph* 5 February 1936.
diminished by hitting an enclosure. Finally, it was considered that as the seas on the
Australian coast were so heavy, enclosures would suffer damage and the on-going
costs of repair would be enormous. The report concluded.

We recognise that more protection against sharks, and permanent safe-guards against bathers
being carried out to sea, would be good things, but regret that at the present time we are unable
to suggest anything practicable. Nevertheless, we think that no obstacle should be put in the
way of a council making any experiment or adopting any suggestion which it thinks will be of
benefit to the bathing public.\textsuperscript{87}

It seems clear, that, at that time, despite awareness of the presence of sharks it was not
regarded as a serious menace. However, after accidents at Newcastle in 1918 and
1920 and in 1922 at Coogee doubts were raised as to the safety of surf bathers from
shark attack. Surf Life Saving Clubs took precautions such as look-out towers, alarms
and shark spears in surf lifesaving boats but more surfers became shark victims and
Governments, Councils, Surf Clubs and the general public saw the necessity for action
in combating the ‘menace’. The table, set out below, gives an indication of the
reported attacks. Pro rata of population nine fatalities in twelve years may not seem a
great number, however, such violent deaths attracted a great deal of press coverage as
did the non-fatal attacks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victim</th>
<th>Beach</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cook, Andrew</td>
<td>Newcastle NSW</td>
<td>March 1918</td>
<td>Late afternoon - alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkell, Douglas</td>
<td>Newcastle NSW</td>
<td>January 1920</td>
<td>Late afternoon - alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coughlan, Milton (died)</td>
<td>Coogee</td>
<td>February 1922</td>
<td>Afternoon - isolated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gannon, Mervyn (died)</td>
<td>Coogee</td>
<td>March, 1922</td>
<td>Morning - others near</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derrett, Miss Nita</td>
<td>Bronte</td>
<td>February 1924</td>
<td>Late afternoon - alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canning, James (died)</td>
<td>Newcastle</td>
<td>March 1925</td>
<td>Afternoon - isolated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dagworthy, Jack</td>
<td>Coogee</td>
<td>March 1925</td>
<td>Late afternoon - alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pritchard, Edward</td>
<td>Merewether NSW</td>
<td>March 1927</td>
<td>Late afternoon - isolated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lane, A.E. (died)</td>
<td>Merewether NSW</td>
<td>April 1928</td>
<td>Late afternoon - alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steei, Max</td>
<td>Bondi North</td>
<td>April 1928</td>
<td>Dull afternoon - isolated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butcher, Allan (died)</td>
<td>Maroubra</td>
<td>February 1929</td>
<td>Late afternoon - isolated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stewart, Colin (died)</td>
<td>Bondi</td>
<td>January 1928</td>
<td>Late afternoon - isolated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gibson, James (died)</td>
<td>Bondi</td>
<td>February 1929</td>
<td>Late afternoon - isolated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ogilvie, Rex</td>
<td>Redhead NSW</td>
<td>October 1932</td>
<td>10 am - alone, dull</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant, Colin</td>
<td>Queenscliff</td>
<td>January 1934</td>
<td>3 pm - dull - isolated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riley, Frank  (died)</td>
<td>Dee Why</td>
<td>March 1934</td>
<td>3 pm - isolated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hermes, Leon  (died)</td>
<td>North Steyne</td>
<td>April 1934</td>
<td>noon - bright - isolated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{85} Sydney Morning Herald 31 January 1934.
\textsuperscript{86} ibid. 5 February 1934.
\textsuperscript{87} Reported in the Report of the Shark Menace Advisory Committee, 1935, to the Honourable E.S.
Spooner, M.L.A. Minister for Local Government and Assistant Colonial Treasurer. (Suggested methods of
protecting bathers from shark attacks ordered by the Legislative Assembly): Alfred James Kent,
Government Printer, January 1935.
A ‘Shark Menace Committee’ was appointed in 1929 ‘to investigate ways and means of dealing with the problem’. That Committee carried out an extensive investigation and presented a comprehensive report. It rejected the more outlandish and absurd suggestions and agreed that netting (meshing) was probably and best and most economical procedure.

Some of the more bizarre suggestions put forth to remedy the shark problem included concrete walls (fashioned with grilles to allow the waves to pass through); patrols by motor boats with machine guns; submerged electric lights; wires charged with electricity; pipes charged with air from which bubbles would be blown to the surface; bombing, meshing and trawling.

It was further suggested that whichever method was chosen it should be backed-up with surf patrol planes equipped with radio. This back-up was not favoured by Manly’s Mayor Alderman Cross who said it would only be ten per cent efficient and give surfers a false sense of security. However, an aerial surf patrol report printed in the September 1936 edition of the Surf in Australia magazine indicated the effectiveness of the aerial patrols. It stated that ‘great assistance was given the patrol by the installation of radio receivers on many of the surfing beaches, the ‘planes being able to give first-hand information at all times...there have been no shark fatalities during the period when the Surf Patrols were in the air’.

The most important fact that has emerged from the aeroplane logs is the entire absence of sharks during winds from southerly directions – meaning that a wind from the south anywhere between the points east and west – sharks have not been sighted at any time. It is apparent that

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88 ibid.
87 The Sun 19 July 1934.
90 Daily Telegraph 3 September 1935.
they go out into much deeper water. With winds anywhere from the north round to east, sharks are most prevalent in proximity to the shores; also coming to the surface in deeper water. Sharks were most prevalent on the beaches between the middle of January and the middle of March, this being observed over two seasons. 91

The report of the 1929 Committee made the following principal recommendations:

(1) Shark risks would be greatly reduced if bathers avoided bathing at dangerous hours, in isolated places and going too far out.
(2) The Bathing Ordinance made under the Local Government Act needs amending to enable the enforcement of precautions.
(3) The Local Government Act requires amendment to give Councils greater power in the expenditure of their funds to protect bathers from sharks.
(4) Attempts at destruction of sharks by bombing or bait fishing are likely to do more harm than good, and are only a temporary expedient at best.
(5) Sharks will not be frightened away by noises or air bubbles.
(6) Out of the great number of schemes submitted for shark-proof fences or nets attached to piers or floats and anchors, expert engineering advice convinced the Committee of the tremendous handicaps in regard to their satisfactory construction and also raised doubts as to whether they would continue to withstand the waves on exposed beaches in all weathers and the difficulties of tides, changing sand, marine growth etc.
(7) It does appear to the Committee that regular and systematic netting affords a cheap and effective way of greatly minimising the shark peril.
(8) On most beaches towers for the purpose of keeping a look-out for the presence of sharks would be found effective.
(9) The electrical device for the stunning of sharks might be satisfactory in still water, but there are many drawbacks to its use on the beaches, with no guarantee of effectiveness.

Despite what seemed like a report warranting action, it appears little or nothing was done. However, more shark attacks brought pressure for action from Councils, Surf Clubs and the public. The President of the Surf Life Saving Association, Adrian Curlewis addressed Manly Councilors at a meeting on 11 April 1934 reading summaries of the findings of the 1929 Shark Menace Committee and suggesting that both Federal and State governments should be approached with a view to having a committee of experts appointed to go thoroughly into the matter. 92 Furthermore, as surfing on Sydney's beaches was beginning to attract overseas visitors it was feared that any adverse publicity with reference to shark attacks might ruin a budding tourism industry. The government moved to avoid this by appointing a second Shark Menace Advisory Committee in 1934. This Committee noted that public confidence

91 Aerial Surf Patrol Report, 'Surprising Revelations', by E. V. Collibee, Pilot of McWilliam's 2UW aerial Surf Patrol, Surf in Australia, 1 September 1936, p.16.
was ‘somewhat shaken’ by the number of shark attacks since 1918. The Committee commented that ‘sensational headlines and searching details of even the most inconspicuous incidents… did more harm than good’.

The people of other countries are being educated to believe that the waters adjacent to our beaches are literally alive with ferocious monsters seeking a human meal…our beaches, instead of being the wonderful advertisement which they should be, are being given a most undesirable kind of publicity…this sort of thing must undoubtedly, have a harmful effect on our tourist trade.93

The government had a second reason for appointing the Committee. The beach, provided free recreation when work was unavailable during the Depression. The government was concerned that participation in ‘one of the most health-giving and exhilarating public relaxations from the turmoil of modern life’ was not hampered.94

The Terms of Reference of the Committee of 1934 appeared to be similar to the instructions given to the 1929 Committee.

1. Investigate suggested methods of securing the protection of bathers from shark attack.
2. Report to the Minister generally or in respect of any particular beach - (a) which of such methods, in the Committee’s opinion, would be the most practicable to adopt; and (b) what, in the Committee’s opinion, would be the most appropriate means of securing adoption of and of financing the implementing of such methods as may be recommended.

The Committee, which commenced its deliberations on 22 August, 1934 obviously held the previous (1929) Committee’s recommendations in some regard. It issued the following statement regarding that Committee’s report.

It has to be placed on record, however, that the only recommendations of the Committee to which substantial effect has been given is that for the improvement of the provisions of the Local Government Ordinances relating to beach and bathing control. Had the Committee’s other recommendations been reasonably tried out and the results noted during the period of five years, which has since elapsed, the task of the present Committee would have been very much simplified.

This (1934) Committee held forty-four meetings and inspected numerous models of enclosures and devices. In all, one hundred and thirty-six proposed methods of protection from shark attack were examined, some of which had been investigated by

92 Manly Council Minutes 11 April, 1934.
94 ibid.
the 1929 Committee. Evidence was heard from sponsors of twenty of the schemes as well as from thirty-six expert witnesses on various aspects from whom valuable information was obtained.  

The Committee issued a Summary of Recommendations –

- Shark-fishing from beaches – prohibition
- Set lines – prohibition within one mile of foreshores
- Sewage – construction of further ocean outfall sewers undesirable
- Garbage – continuance of supervision of present methods of disposal
- Look-out towers – desirable to reduce degree of risk
- Hints to bathers – to reduce degree of risk
- Treatment of victims of shark attack – provision of first-aid kits to Surf Life Saving Clubs.
- Subsidisation by the Government of systematic and continuous meshing along the Metropolitan coastline from Broken Bay to Port Hacking, for a period of not less than two years.

The erection of a series of shark-roof enclosures is not recommended for the reason that the degree of risk of shark attack is not considered sufficient to justify the expenditure which would be involved.


The meshing system was the favoured procedure. This was also the preferred system of Adrian Curlewis, President of the Surf Life Saving Association who stated ‘I have no hesitation in saying that enclosures with pylons would be smashed to bits in heavy seas - meshing is the way to go’. The Minister for Local Government, Mr. Spooner announced that he had decided to call for tenders at an early date for the shark meshing scheme recommended by the Committee. Meshing consisted of a twine or rope net 1000 feet in length, which was lowered overnight and removed by trawler in the morning. Sharks, which have very poor vision, become enmeshed in the net and are easily destroyed. The Government accepted the only tender, that of Australasian Fisheries Ltd. on a two-year contract and meshing for sharks off Sydney beaches began in January 1936. It was further announced that ‘sharks will be

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95 ibid.
96 ibid.
97 Daily Telegraph 20 June 1935.
98 Sydney Morning Herald 16 June 1935.
99 The Sun 19 July 1934.
commercially treated and a big trade in by-products such as fertiliser and leather is expected'. The project provided employment for 150 men. Meshing also had it's problems. The following year, The Sydney Morning Herald noted that 'meshing of Sydney beaches began again yesterday. Nets were laid off Manly and Bondi. However, bad weather prevented the nets being laid the following day.'

Times moved on but the old debate on swimwear still drew headlines and sold newspapers. The Sun of 10 January 1938 headlined - 'Mayor jolted by street paraders in bathers'. 'The Mayor of Randwick, Alderman Bourke told of seeing two women walking the street in costumes that were as near to nature as could be...it is carrying the demand for freedom too far'. The culture that had developed around the activities of surf bathing meant that over time there were significant numbers of people who were fairly comfortable about being in close proximity with the semi-clad bodies of the opposite sex. Was Grundyism revisiting seaside municipalities? Or, had the demand for freedom in beachwear, in fact, gone too far? The newfound freedom perhaps required a new kind of social discipline. The growth and practice of leisure had become more assured, while the apparatus of leisure was more extensive, visible and sophisticated. Evidence of all this was the quickening pulse of commercial enterprise which did much to enlarge and glamorise leisure. While devising a new rationale for leisure and all its trappings in this period, beach-goers were also endowing it's practice with an appropriate form and substance. However, in these same years, this growing satisfaction from leisure was running in counterpoint to anxiety and unease at the developing world situation and the very real prospect of another world war.

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101 Sydney Morning Herald 30 October 1937.
CONCLUSION:

For the most part, the 1930s were dominated by news of the great Depression, which began in 1929, and, in some way or other touched the lives of most Australians - many living in ‘camps’ as the only type of accommodation available to them. During the 1930s the beach was used to justify notions of egalitarianism.

This national game is not only invigorating but... it is democratic in the extreme. In the surf we find Duke’s son and newsboy, Colonel’s lady and Judy O’Grady participating with equal pleasure and the whole thing is free Wealth gives no monopoly over this health-giving charm and position makes not the slightest difference to our enjoyment of it\(^\text{102}\).

The highs and lows of that decade - at times an awakening of the great potential of the beach and all it offered - at times a dismal tale of seaside Councils going ‘cap in hand’ to an unbending Government Minister seeking financial help in maintaining beach and seaside infrastructure. This decade saw the introduction of shark meshing on Sydney beaches as a means of combating the shark menace on the recommendation of a second Shark Menace Advisory Committee appointed in 1934; the government having virtually ignored a similar recommendation after thorough research and a comprehensive report by a Shark Menace Committee appointed in 1929. But it also saw Australian Olympic teams compete at Los Angeles in 1932 and Berlin and 1936. In 1934 Clare Dennis once again demonstrated her superiority in the pool by winning gold in the 200 yds. breaststroke event at the Empire Games in London that year, while Lesley Thompson won silver medals in both the springboard and highboard diving.\(^\text{103}\)

Women, were again triumphant at the Empire Games (later the Commonwealth Games) held for the first time in Australia in 1938. Overall, Australia topped the medal tally, winning 24 gold medals. Although women were restricted to competition

\(^{102}\) ibid. p.40.
in athletics, swimming and diving, Australia’s team of 30 women gained 15 gold, eight silver and six bronze medals. In swimming events Evelyn de Lacy won the 110 yds. freestyle, Dorothy Green the 440 yds. freestyle and Patricia Norton the 110yds. backstroke. For the men’s team Percy Oliver won the 110 yds. backstroke. Irene Donnett and Lurline Hook took gold in the springboard and high tower diving respectively. Ron Masters for the men’s team won gold in the Springboard dive. However, the outstanding athletic was track star Decima Norman who won five gold medals - three individual gold and two relay gold medals. The Sydney Morning Herald sports writer noted ‘The Games have made all realise the efficiency of the sports organisation of the women’s swimming and athletic associations, which have done so much to encourage the girls’. The old rivalry between Bondi and Manly as to which was the leading seaside resort continued via the Sun newspaper’s lucrative ‘Silver Reel competition’, and a new method of crowd control was established on the beaches. The Sydney Morning Herald reported

control of large crowds of surfers at Manly yesterday was simplified by the installation of a series of loud speakers along the foreshore. Surf club officials have had difficulty in keeping surfers within the safe limits of the flags and now they can send a warning to the most distant and daring surfer... Adrian Curlewis, President of the Surf Life Saving Association said these are a good innovation as whistles previously used were unable to attract attention.

105 Sydney Morning Herald 15 February 1938.
And, that same year, Inspector J.S. Jones retired as head of No. 12 Police Division after 37 years service. He recalled doing beach duty at Manly in 1902 and calling ‘times up’ to bathers who were in the water after 6 am.\textsuperscript{107}

The chapter closes with the world once again poised for global conflict.

\textsuperscript{107} The Sun 13 January 1938: Sydney Morning Herald 13 January 1938.
CONCLUSION

Australians have one love in common – the seaside. It’s there, with socio-economic skins peeled away... the beach is the headquarters of the country’s egalitarianism and a barometer of its social thinking.

This study set out to examine the social history of swimming in Sydney Harbour and on Sydney’s beaches in the period up to the outbreak of the Second World War. Analysis of a variety of data collected through primary, contemporary and secondary sources has shown that from the early days of settlement, Sydney-siders embraced swimming and later surf bathing with fervour.

The transition of European bathers into Australian swimmers began at the very beginning of white settlement on the shores of Port Jackson progressing to baths and bathing enclosures, eventually embracing the surf, and, in time, a distinctive Australian beach culture developed. A number of characteristics were important in shaping this beach culture, two in particular, the rise of the life saving movement which nurtured a national image of masculinity and mate-ship – the guardian of the beach who upheld the code of civic duty (and thus the ANZAC image) and the cult of the beach girl.

A theme running through the thesis is the suggestion that swimming, particularly in the early days of the colony was a great leveller. People swam naked in the harbour and later, on the beaches during restricted hours as swim wear had not yet become popular (or compulsory) attire. When the wearing of swim suits was eventually enforced, there was a conformity in both style and material for both sexes as well as children. Not until the relaxation of regulations governing swim wear and the advent
of fashion magazines and fashion parades, did individuality enter the market. Even then, as Pringle has noted ‘you cannot tell a man’s income in a pair of swimming trunks and the Pacific is a mighty leveller’.¹

As well as swimming, the early colonists enjoyed other forms of leisure and recreation. These included drinking and gambling which were associated with blood sports such as cockfighting, and dog fighting. These activities eventually gave way to theatre going, boat trips, sailing regattas, prize fighting, horse racing, cricket and football. As well, Sydney-siders in the 1800s enjoyed numerous pleasure resorts on the Harbour and the Parramatta and Lane Cove Rivers. These resorts which attracted large picnic crowds emulated similar British establishments and were reached mainly by ferry. Another attempt at maintaining Britishness was the desire to build piers such as those at British seaside resorts Brighton and Blackpool. Piers were planned for Manly, Balmoral and Coogee but only Coogee got a pier, albeit short-lived; opened in 1928 and demolished in 1933. Another attempt at Britishness was Manly’s founding father, Henry Gilbert Smith’s original intention to call his ‘spec’ Brighton in keeping with the English resort of the same name.

As competitive swimming became popular various swimming strokes were changed or improved upon, culminating in the Australian Crawl. Swimming clubs were formed and new swimming baths were opened – some floating, some fixed structures, rock pools, even docks when not in use, but there remained a shortage of baths and the

government was pressed to provide free baths with adequate swimming and dressing accommodation. A pro-bathing movement began a push for more free bathing facilities holding up the privately built Natatorium in the heart of Sydney as an example, but government reaction was slow. Eventually, public and media pressure saw the opening of new baths on the western side of Woolloomooloo Bay in 1908.

Conflict between those for and those against the quest to extend daylight bathing hours finally resulted in relaxed rules and the people took to the beaches. The popularity of surf bathing resulted in numerous drownings, which, in turn, saw the establishment of Surf Lifesaving Clubs. The Lifesaving Movement stressed the ethics of vigilance and service, denying elements of pleasure as a motivation to become members. However, hedonism did play a role, and, moreover, members of lifesaving clubs enjoyed privileges not available to the general public. One example was contained in the Report of the Surf-Bathing Committee.

No person shall while in bathing costume, mix with the general public on the beach, beach reserves...who are not bathing, unless such person wears over the bathing costume an overcoat, mackintosh or other sufficient wrapper...provided that this shall not apply to bathers actually engaged in the procuring or using of lifesaving appliances for purposes of practice or for the saving of life.

As the number of lifesaving clubs being formed increased it became necessary to have a governing body. At a meeting in Sydney on 18 October 1907, The Surf Bathing Association of New South Wales (SBANSW) came into being. In 1920 the name was changed to the Surf Life Saving Association of New South Wales and once more in 1923 to become the Surf Life Saving Association of Australia. It is now Surf Life

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2 The Natatorium was built by the Sydney Bathing Company in 1888.
3 These baths were eventually demolished in 1966-67 and the pool re-opened in 1968 as the Andrew 'Boy' Charlton Pool.

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Saving Australia. An independent examination of the sport of surf bathing also seemed necessary and in 1911 the New South Wales government appointed a Surf Bathing Committee to undertake such an examination. Surf bathing had taken off.

Myth too, had its place in beach history, and myths unfortunately, have an insidious habit of taking over from actual fact. It was claimed for many years that Manly newspaper proprietor, William Gocher was instrumental in gaining daylight bathing for the people of Manly. I have deconstructed the Gocher myth. The swimmer in the blue and white striped costume at Manly was not a hero and law defying citizen fighting for the bathing rights of Manly surfers. In fact, daylight bathing was already a reality, even if not yet in the eyes of the law – everyone had been flaunting the law for some time and most coastal councils had already changed their by-laws to allow for daylight bathing by the time Gocher staged a series of self promoting stunts.\(^4\) His role in legitimising daylight bathing was little more than a media beat-up by a *Daily Telegraph* reporter wishing to resurrect and sensationalise an act which had occurred years before, which, in its time, was of no consequence in the repeal of the law.

Reflecting changes in society, women's competitive swimming, for so long a 'hidden' sport came 'out of the closet' when two women champions, Fanny Durack and Mina Wiley were nominated to swim for Australia in the 1912 Olympic Games at


\(^5\) Manly council was a little slower in addressing the law than other coastal councils. However, as long as bathers were appropriately dressed, the police turned a blind eye. Gocher actually went to the police station where he was met with disinterest and later met with the Inspector General of police who informed him that as long as bathers were decently attired he doubted a magistrate would convict daylight bathers.
Stockholm. Their inclusion in the team was not without difficulties and frustrations. The men’s Association was against their inclusion, as was the President of their own Association, Rose Scott. They also had to fight and overturn a rule which forbade them from swimming in front of men. As well, lack of finance meant that money had to be raised to cover their fares and expenses (and that of their chaperone – the chaperone a condition of their inclusion in the team). Their eventual triumph at the Games vindicated all their efforts to be members of the team for Stockholm. Interestingly, many of those who supported the women who were distinct medal possibilities, did so, not so much in the interests of women’s rights but to foster Australia’s growing reputation as a sporting nation.

At the outbreak of the First World War enlistments thinned the ranks of swimming and life saving clubs and school boys, senior members and those unfit for military duty patrolled the beaches. But the social unity which the war initially brought soon fractured as the rigours of war deepened class antagonism and a social upheaval split the community. The issue was conscription – the single most important factor which focused the social discontent of the time regarding politics and religion. Two referendums defeated the government’s call for a ‘yes’ vote.6 The two chief protagonists were the Prime Minster Mr. W. H. Hughes for the ‘yes’ vote and the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, Dr. Mannix who led the predominantly Irish Catholic working class in a call for the ‘no’ vote.

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6 Also at this time German residents of Australia whether born in Australia or not were subject to abuse and suspicion. By invoking the War Precautions Act of 29 October 1914 Prime Minister Hughes
Another social tension at this time was the anti-German feeling in the community. German residents of Australia, whether born in Australia or not were subject to abuse and suspicion. They were made the scapegoats for the failure of the 1916 conscription referendum and Prime Minister Hughes invoked the War Precautions Act (1914) to prevent Germans voting in the 1917 referendum. This effectively denied German-Australians the fundamental rights of citizenship. In some cases the sons of these people were fighting with the AIF in Europe. It also became an offence for an individual to anglicize his name which had become common practice and German street and place names were changed to English or Aboriginal ones.

With the war consigned to history and society settling into peacetime activities, going to the beach became part of everyday life, and beauty contests became part of a culture of hedonism which dominated the 1920s and 1930s. A study of the tears, tiaras and (no doubt) tantrums appears to be one which is fertile for further investigation. Beauty culture also made its debut during this period. Women not only embraced newly marketed beauty products but were instrumental in a revival of the physical culture movement. A major baton change took place in which a new femininity was born – the beach was linked to other aspects of Australian life – women were no longer ‘swimming against the current’. Sexual attractiveness replaced the maternal, home orientated, domestic woman. The experience of the beach thus resonates with other patterns in our culture – attitudes to the body, to fashion, enjoyment of leisure time, indeed to our history itself.

prevented 'Germans' from voting in the 1917 election, thus reducing the 'no' vote in the second
Commercialisation was also a major contributing factor in a growing beach culture. The fashion and cosmetic industries flourished as did newspapers, magazines and the property market, both commercial and residential. Leisure – going to the beach with all the nascent trappings became de-rigueur and the press made much of the ongoing debate about the brevity of swim-wear be it on the beach or in the streets. Technology too was boosted, as tram and ferry services were increased and extended to cope with the beach going public.

The physical attributes of the lifesaver and the beach girl did much to uphold ideals of the eugenics movement which brought its own brand of tensions to the community. It’s two pronged objective to produce a super race and sterilise the feebleminded found favour with social reformers, but also had its detractors who saw Nazi beliefs inherent in its ideals. Even that national icon, *The Australian Women’s Weekly* upheld these ideals when it printed photographs of young people at play on the beach with captions suggesting their mating would bring about ‘the real spirit of Australian sport’. This period also witnessed a resurgence in competitive swimming following the success of the Olympic teams at the 1920 and 1924 Games. The 1924 Paris Games were the venue of the triumph of Andrew ‘Boy’ Charlton winning gold, (1500 m freestyle) silver and bronze. Richmond Eve also won gold in the high diving and Frank Beaurepaire a bronze in the 1500 m freestyle. Australia also triumphed in the 4 x 200 freestyle relay. Charlton was again successful at the 1928 Amsterdam Games winning two silver medals whilst the 1932 Los Angeles Games saw Australian women attain gold and silver. No Australian medals were won at the 1936 Berlin Games.

*referendum on conscription by 114,000.*
Women were again successful at the Empire Games in London in 1934 and once more in 1938 at the Empire Games held for the first time in Australia.

That era - the hedonism of beach life and the hero worship of Charlton gave way in 1929 to one which can only be described as 'hard times'. Important among historical factors were political and social issues all of which have stamped a firm imprint on Australian values. The World Depression began and touched the lives of most people in one way or another. The established political parties within and without the parliaments were challenged by neo-populist and nascent fascist organisations. The shadowy 'Old' guard feared the failure of the Lang government and the likelihood of a Bolshevik type revolution in Australia, and thus a necessity for its involvement to protect strategic points if necessary. Other rumblings of fascism came from the New Guard who used bully-boy tactics to carry out physical assaults on unionists, 'left' activists and sympathisers. In the wake of heightened class tensions wrought by the economic collapse the Depression years saw many experiencing a lower standard of living through wage-cuts or total unemployment. Thus, numbers at the beaches were boosted because the beaches and surf were free. The Depression also affected the life saving movement, depleting numbers in some clubs or losing members to the country in search of work but more importantly, it brought about the 'camp dwellers' of Sydney who lost homes and possessions for want of money and employment.

[7 The Old Guard included among its members some of society's top echelon connected to 'old' Sydney money (Philip Goldfinch, a descendant of Governor King, George Macarthur Onslow, Jack Scott a member of the Street legal family. The New Guard included amongst its members insurance clerks, motor garage proprietors and small businessmen who were the meat in the sandwich between big business and organised labour.)]
One social issue which did find favour within the community was the introduction of shark meshing off Sydney’s beaches recommended by the Shark Menace Committee (1935) to reduce the number of shark attacks. However, this also had economic overtones as the adverse publicity with regard to shark attacks was thought to have a detrimental effect on a budding tourist industry. Although tourism (as we know it today) was no doubt in its infancy its capacity for job creation and economic contribution was obviously recognised.

An on-going issue which was shared by beachside councils was a shortage of government funding. These Councils bore the brunt of financial strain as they endeavoured to provide necessary infrastructure for the surfing public, a shortage of dressing sheds being one bone of contention that appeared to be on-going as more and more people spent their leisure time on the beaches. The Councils also had to deal with damage caused by storms – particularly to structures on or close to the beach such as sea walls, surf club buildings etc. The Councils seemed to be locked in a permanent battle with the Minister for Local Government over funding.

The study has shown that there is a distinctive history of swimming and surf bathing in Sydney which began with early settlement and intensified when restrictions on surf bathing were lifted, in fact, a hedonistic attitude emerged and is apparent in what is regarded as typically Australian. A feature of most statements of typically Australian characteristics is the frequency of references to the leisure-pleasure aspects of life, which embrace the significance of swimming, and the beach in the lives of Sydney people. This was particularly so in the 1920s and 1930s when beach goers proved
themselves to be materialistic, pleasure-loving extroverts. The study has also related the evolution of this specific swimming and beach culture against a background of social, political, commercial and economic events of the time.

The experience of bush life and the bushman legend has for years been seen as defining the typical Australian. However, it could be argued that the beach culture which developed in the 1920s and 1930s has also shaped Australian life and could serve to define a distinctive Australian culture. The natatorial art, whether enjoyed in the surf or in a pool served to link human experience with a culture which Australians turned into an art form.
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