

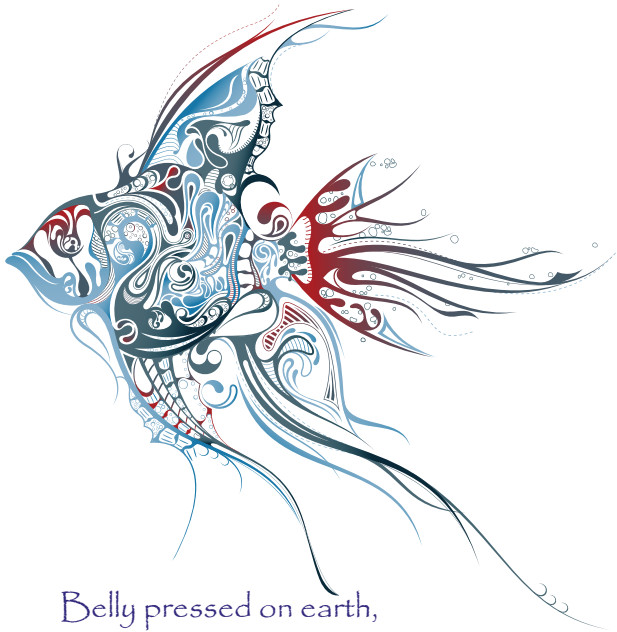
BRONTE



2. Bronte

Address: Bronte Rd, Bronte
Public transport: Buses 360, 361, 378
Local Council: Waverley
Traditional Owners: the Cadigal People

In the nineteenth century natural ‘bogey’ holes - in the southern end of Bronte were used by men and women at separate times of the day. One remains there still. Bronte Park reserve was created in 1887 and leased to Waverley Council. A new large pool (approximately 150 feet long) was designed by NSW Public Works civil engineer A. Williams. Constructed from wetland rocks, the pool was and is shaped rather like a whale, or a musical instrument - with the training lanes as strings - or less poetically, like a large hot water bottle. It nestles into the southern cliff, using the cliff as an enclosing wall. It has lovely curves. First leased to FW Lloyd in 1888, then Harry Wylie in 1895, the pool hosted very popular swimming tournaments run by the Waverley Swimming Club for many years. The Bronte Splashers Club was formed in 1921, with winter swimming as one of its main features. The pool was leased to the Bond family for almost 50 years, with John Bond introducing the ‘daring practice of mixed sex bathing on Sundays, holiday afternoons and evenings’ in 1923. The pool reverted to Council control in the 1960s, and back to free entry. Waverley Council refurbished the pool in the 1990s and another major upgrade was carried out in 2006. The pool hosts and sustains a vibrant local community, fiercely loyal to ‘their’ pool but welcoming to the stranger – so go swim! Then have that rare ocean treat – a hot shower!



Belly pressed on earth,
ocean breaks below.
Blues and greens infinite
in hue, waves of perfect
happiness.

Mary Seaborne

DATE	DAY	FEBRUARY 2016
1	MON	
2	TUE	
3	WED	
4	THUR	
5	FRI	
6	SAT	
7	SUN	
8	MON	
9	TUE	
10	WED	
11	THUR	
12	FRI	
13	SAT	
14	SUN	
15	MON	
16	TUE	
17	WED	
18	THUR	
19	FRI	
20	SAT	
21	SUN	
22	MON	
23	TUE	
24	WED	
25	THUR	
26	FRI	
27	SAT	
28	SUN	
29	MON	



4. Coogee - Surf Club pool

Address: end of Carr St, Coogee
Public transport: Buses 313/4 352, 370, 372, 373, 374, M50
Local Council Randwick
Traditional Owners: the Cadigal People

Coogee is blessed with four rock pools. The one pictured above is the most recent. The Ross Jones Memorial Pool - named after a Randwick Alderman and member of the Coogee Surf Life Saving Club, was built in 1947 underneath the iconic Club rooms (first established in 1910) at the southern end of Coogee Beach. The pool also has a long association with local swimming clubs. It has a natural rock base with three tapered concrete walls, with the fourth side being the natural rock formation. This beautiful little pool, one of the safest of Sydney's rock pools due to its sheltering cliff, and high sandy bottom, was the site of official vandalism in 2003. A contractor working for Randwick Council replaced the much photographed creamy coloured concrete piers which, extending beyond the top of the walls, resembled crenellations on a sandcastle. Stalinist grey blocs appeared instead on the repaired pool - provoking a wounded outcry from the pool community, and irate letters to the local newspaper at this assault on beauty. The small toddlers' wading pool beside the Ross Jones erratically fills and empties with tides - but parents still bring down their hopeful little nippers. Tidal conditions being optimal or not, there is always some delicious squealing pleasures to be had. Our photo though reveals the more inward pleasures of a rock pool.



Here in this vessel of warmed
brine, to bathe

And float myself into serenity.

Diane Fahey: 'Sea Pool' from *Sea wall and river light*. (Five Islands Press)

DATE	DAY	APRIL 2016
1	FRI	☾
2	SAT	
3	SUN	
4	MON	
5	TUE	
6	WED	
7	THUR	●
8	FRI	
9	SAT	
10	SUN	
11	MON	
12	TUE	
13	WED	
14	THUR	☾
15	FRI	
16	SAT	
17	SUN	
18	MON	
19	TUE	
20	WED	
21	THUR	
22	FRI	☾
23	SAT	
24	SUN	
25	MON	Anzac Day
26	TUE	
27	WED	
28	THUR	
29	FRI	
30	SAT	☾



9. Mona Vale Rock Pool

Address: Surfview Rd, Mona Vale – the pool
Public transport: E84 to Surfview Rd, or L90 to Palm Beach - get off on Barrenjoey Rd, at Darley St intersection. 10 min walk.
Local Council: Pittwater
Traditional Owners: Guringai People

This lovely pool, which is at the north end of Mona Vale Beach, started as a natural rock pool on the rock platform which separates Basin and Mona Vale beaches. Lying on an exposed rock shelf without the protection of headlands or other rock formations, the pool can be a thrilling place to swim. It was enlarged and deepened during the Depression by ‘relief’ labour gangs in the 1930s, with supporting infrastructure, (better access to beach, safety fences, handrails) added and maintained over time. The main pool is approx 31 m x 18m, with a depth of between 1.2 and 1.5 m. It has a children’s wading pool (15 x 10m) on its western side. Wave action fills and cleans both pools. Lighting is provided for night time swimming.
Like all the pools, Mona Vale rock pool is cherished and guarded by a vital and vibrant community – ‘The Mona Vale pool has SUCH a bond of love and camaraderie down there,’ says photographer Bruce Jackson who took this photo. Our swimmer is part of a group of regulars - ‘the sisterhood’ who greet the morning and each other down at the pool.



All creatures desire reunion
With the first pool of their advance

Shé Hawke, *Aquamorphia*

DATE	DAY	SEPTEMBER 2016
1	THUR	●
2	FRI	
3	SAT	
4	SUN	
5	MON	
6	TUE	
7	WED	
8	THUR	
9	FRI	○
10	SAT	
11	SUN	
12	MON	
13	TUE	
14	WED	
15	THUR	
16	FRI	
17	SAT	○
18	SUN	
19	MON	
20	TUE	
21	WED	
22	THUR	
23	FRI	●
24	SAT	
25	SUN	
26	MON	
27	TUE	
28	WED	
29	THUR	
30	FRI	

NEWPORT BEACH



10. Newport Beach

Access from Newport beach or walkway at cnr of Calvert Parade and the Boulevard, Newport
Public transport: 187, L87, E87, 188
Local Council: Pittwater
Traditional Owners: Guringai People

Although naturally occurring rock pools, enhanced by Pittwater Council, were already in use at Newport at the turn of the 20th century, these deteriorated in the following decades. Eventually, after locals had vigorously petitioned Council, one large new pool was built in 1925 at the southern end of the beach. (Contractor - T Birmingham). With a long rectangular shape (53 x 16m) the pool has a natural rock bottom with concrete walls.

Max Dupain took one of his most iconic beach pics here in the early 1950s – *At Newport Baths* - featured bronzed men in amazing trunks - and two women in bathing caps. Despite harbouring such sartorial and pectoral splendour, the pool has also suffered periods of neglect – sometimes rock slides even blocked access. Eventually toilets and a changing shed were built in 1966, and reconstruction of the western wall took place in 1984. The pool is now back in action – very much part of things again.

Being in a very exposed location, the pool is naturally filled and refreshed by tidal action.



‘notably joyous, egalitarian and environmentally friendly’

Marie-Louise McDermott

DATE	DAY	OCTOBER 2016
1	SAT	●
2	SUN	
3	MON	Labour Day
4	TUE	Feast Day of St Francis, Patron Saint of the Environment.
5	WED	
6	THUR	
7	FRI	
8	SAT	
9	SUN	○
10	MON	
11	TUE	
12	WED	
13	THUR	
14	FRI	
15	SAT	
16	SUN	○
17	MON	
18	TUE	
19	WED	
20	THUR	
21	FRI	
22	SAT	
23	SUN	●
24	MON	
25	TUE	
26	WED	
27	THUR	
28	FRI	
29	SAT	
30	SUN	
31	MON	●

NORTH NARRABEEN



11. North Narrabeen

Address: Narrabeen Head Aquatic Reserve,
Ocean St, Narrabeen
Public transport: buses 155, L85
Local council: Pittwater Council
Traditional Owners: the Guringai People

Narrabeen Beach on Sydney's Northern Beaches is so lusciously long – over two kilometres - that it is culturally divided into three sections, each with their own surf club. The rock pool is up the Northern end, and in keeping with the scale of things, is one of the largest rock pools in the Sydney region (apx 70 x 30m). A Depression-era pool, built by unemployed labour gangs, North Narrabeen Rock Pool was constructed on a flattened rock shelf with concrete edging used to provide access and to increase the depth of the pool. It is also more water engineered than most pools - with both release valves and pumps in use. A 50m – 8 lane competition swimming area within the large pool was created in the pool's south-western corner by the provision of a timber walkway – requiring frequent replacement over the years, but currently clearly in superb condition. The pool is home to three local swimming clubs, offering free learn-to-swim lessons in summer, and a smaller children's wading pool adjoins. Change rooms, showers and toilets are all available. Picnic and BBQ facilities nearby as is entrance to Naraabeen Lakes. Wheel chair access.



Listen to water
narrate
the world

murmur to itself
an un-predictive
text...

Shé Hawke, *Aquamorphia*

DATE	DAY	NOVEMBER 2016
1	TUE	
2	WED	
3	THUR	
4	FRI	
5	SAT	
6	SUN	
7	MON	
8	TUE	●
9	WED	
10	THUR	
11	FRI	
12	SAT	
13	SUN	
14	MON	
15	TUE	○
16	WED	
17	THUR	
18	FRI	
19	SAT	
20	SUN	
21	MON	○
22	TUE	
23	WED	
24	THUR	
25	FRI	
26	SAT	
27	SUN	
28	MON	
29	TUE	●
30	WED	

History of the ocean pool

Are the ocean rock pools of Sydney unique? As uniquely, as specifically Sydney as those other icons, the Bridge and the House? Perhaps in their sheer quantity – 30 at the last counting, (1994, by the National Trust of Australia -NSW) and in their having been socially as well as physically engineered. The pools represent significant, if often threatened, Australian values: they provide a public communal space where physical health, social justice and a sublime beauty meet.

The pools are the reasons for the superlative Australian skills in water. Long before the rise of the post war municipal swimming pools, and for some years afterwards, Australia's Olympians, hopeful or actual, swam their laps under the blue or grey skies. Mina Wylie and Fanny Durack, the golden (and silver) girls of the 1912 Olympics swam to greatness after practising in Mina's father's rock baths at Coogee.

Many of the pools were created on sites where natural rock formations had already created some form of swimming hole - in at least two Coogee pools there is oral memory of Indigenous use. These pools were then used by the white invaders, but slowly at first. The Australian love affair/ cultural identification with the beach was not an immediate one. Apart from the distinct lack of leisure for the working and convict classes, European cultural beliefs prevented an immediate embrace. Fear – mainly of sharks - was a constant early inhibiting factor. Gender another. Not knowing how to swim a further, widespread complication.

From the 1830s NSW authorities attempted to regulate public bathing, even to the extent of banning daylight ocean swimming 'in public view'. Public morality in the ever-disciplinary colony was threatened not just by the mixing and mingling of genders, races and classes - that always dreaded 'larrikin' element - in the unmediated public space of the beach, but by the then usual practice of swimming in the nude.

By the later nineteenth century physical fitness and being outdoors had begun to be seen as a public and personal good, and instructions 'in the noble art' of swimming increased in popularity, for women and girls as much as for men. Sydney's famous self-styled 'professor of swimming' Fred Cavill argued in the Sydney Morning Herald of 1881, that if more girls learned, 'we would not see so many sickly and delicate ones as we do now.'

Eventually Sydney's eastern councils responded to the tensions between health and morality by creating either gender specific pools - as at Coogee – or - in the case of Bondi and Bronte - ocean pools which were available to men and women at different times, with everyone instructed to wear appropriate bathing costumes. As almost all clothing was made at home in those days, a great variety and experimentation ensued.

Not till 1903 was daytime swimming permitted at Sydney beaches – with beach raids by Council inspectors aimed at curbing any overt male displays of genitalia. Randwick had a special Inspector of Nuisances for this task. While this can be seen as an inherently amusing or prurient activity of an overly controlling state, it was also an attempt to protect women's rights to access to the ocean.

The ocean pools themselves had rapidly become the homes of the seminal Australian swimming clubs – usually divided on gender lines as that other great Australian battle raged. The Randwick and Coogee Swimming Club, formed in 1886, would not allow women in until 1964. Bondi Icebergs (founded 1929) held off till 1994. There had been women swimmers, surfers and surf life savers before WW1 but after the war they were marginalised, even banned from beach cultural institutions – in particular surf lifesaving which took on a paramilitary character, 'one of the many complex ramifications on society of injured and disturbed men returning from the Great War' (Curby, p214).

The women, however, organised themselves in various tenacious Clubs – and held on at least to the territory of the pools; among them Bondi Ladies Amateur Swimming Club (founded 1907), Bronte Amateur Ladies, Dee Why Ladies (1922) while Randwick Coogee Ladies Amateur Swimming Club (1922) has guarded and cherished the last women only pool in Australia. The Ladies Clubs have all produced women swimming champions, as well as teaching generations of young Sydneysiders how to swim.

There were two distinct periods of construction or expansion of Sydney's ocean rock pools. The later nineteenth century saw early forms of public private alliances as local authorities built pools and leased them to private entrepreneurs or swimming clubs. Both Bronte and Bondi ocean pools were designed by a public works civil engineer, working for the NSW Water Board. These were opened to the public in the early 1890s while Randwick Council had excavated their Coogee pools as early as 1874.

The second period of creation, particularly on the Northern Beaches, was in the 1930s - the Depression era - when councils built pools with unemployed labour gangs. Les Murray's poem, *The Ocean Baths*, honours them – *'I'm thinking of/workers/who made pool-cementing last, neap tide by neap,/ right through the Depression/ then went to the war.'* (Dog fox field, 1990) Throughout the Depression the beaches and ocean pools of Sydney were refuges for the poor and unemployed. Large groups of unemployed people (mainly men but some women) regularly walked from the inner city to the beaches. During the worst period of the depression, newspapers reported crowds of up to 100,000 on Bondi Beach. They swam, they walked, they smoked, they moved amongst circus type performers, gymnasts, jujitsu tournaments, and they formed the Bondi Icebergs club.

The pools have suffered periods of neglect – when post-war (WW2) virtues of 'clean' chlorine combined with renewed fears of the dirt and danger of wild nature. In later decades, fear of Sydney's uncivil ways with sewage systems, which continued up until the 1990s, kept many people away. Rising prosperity and at-home entertainments have also threatened the pools' popularity. In most recent years, preoccupations with safety have grown – and in particular as children's playspaces have been 'purged of dangerous and challenging elements.' Chain surfing, however, a thrilling if also dangerous practice, is undertaken at almost all the pools – usually by youngsters, most often boys – part of modern day masculinity initiation rituals.



Social changes are evident too in the way in which some of the first pools were created by locals who hacked or blew away bits of ancient and sacred rock, to today's more eco-anxious mores where Maroubra Seals winter swimming club had to have permission in 2004 from the Dept of Fisheries to extract sea urchins from its pool.

The pools have always had their guardians – their communities, their defenders of the realm. Guarded and supported by local organizations in relationship with their councils, they are also evidence of another great Australian public good – local government. Blessings on all the Councils which have served these pools.

With less emphasis nowadays on the pools as training places for competitive swimmers, there is more room in the water and out of it for play, for bralking (breaststroking and talking .. a wonderful new word coined by swimming bloggers the MrsGs), for reflection and simply admiring the sublime view of sky and rock and water. As down on the beach the strutting and fretting of perfect bodies continues, the ocean rock pools have always provided a gentler place of acceptance for the unfashionable body – including the aging body, the wounded body, the shy body.

Our intention here with the production of this calendar has been to celebrate these wonderful pools, as places of sublime beauty, spiritual and physical revivification, social community, creative inspiration, and the provision of personal retreat and solace in the midst of the hubbub of the beach. We hope you get inspired to escape the iWorld and come down to the pools yourselves. You'll be very welcome.

Mary O'Connell – writer and researcher
Mike Gal – photographer
Bruce Jackson – photographer
Mona Vale
Helena Brusic – designer

Main References:

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Procter & Swaffer, *Sydney's Best Beaches & Rock Baths*, Woodslane Press, Sydney, 2009.

Slarke, Eileen, (2001) *A Century of Wylie's Baths, Coogee – a cultural history*, Wylies Baths Trust inc, Coogee.

There are also increasingly many wonderful blogs on the pools The MrsGs are fun at <http://swimmingsydneythemrsgspot.wordpress.com> and

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