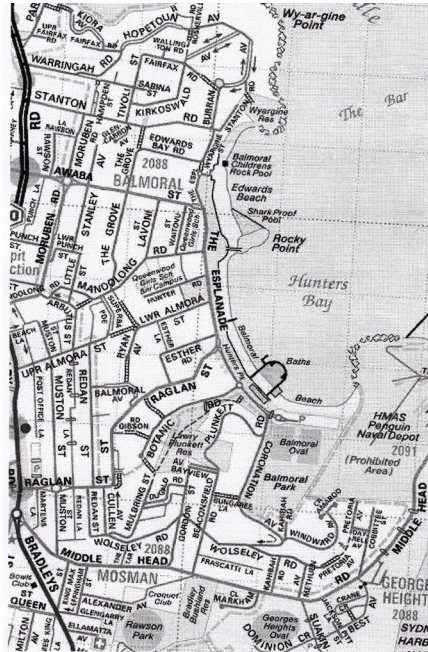




HISTORIC GUIDE TO BALMORAL



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Source - NSW Department of Lands SIX Viewer © six.nsw.gov.au

The brochure is designed for those who travel in either direction along Balmoral's Esplanade. Paid parking is available on the Esplanade and adjoining Balmoral Park. Buses connect Balmoral with various other locations.

Mosman Library's Local Studies Collection holds materials on the history of Balmoral.

Aborigines in the area were members of the Eora nation, belonging to either the Borogegal or Camaraygal clans (sources differ here). In 1992, an Australian Museum archaeological dig found points, stone flakes, animal and fish bones and charcoal at a rock shelter and midden near the beach. Radiocarbon dating indicated human occupation started there over 3000 years ago. In 1789, a smallpox epidemic killed many of the Aborigines living around Sydney Harbour. Bungaree, a well-known Aboriginal identity, was settled with his family on a farm at Georges Head near Balmoral in 1815 but the farm was abandoned three years later. Governor Sir Thomas Brisbane later gave them a fishing boat and net. By the middle of the nineteenth century there were few Aboriginal people left on Sydney's lower north shore.

Europeans arrived in Sydney Harbour on 26 January 1788, four days after the First Fleet's arrival at Botany Bay. On 28 January 1788, Captain John Hunter with Lieutenant William Bradley and two others in a longboat and a small rowing boat began a survey of the harbour. On the following day, Aboriginal people guided them to land at the southern part of what is now Balmoral Beach. Thomas (Tommy) O'Neil, a former Irish convict transported in 1800, was the area's first European resident. In 1811 or 1813 (there is uncertainty about the exact year), he established a farm in the vicinity of what is today Balmoral Oval, where he grew corn and wheat. Governor Lachlan Macquarie and his wife Elizabeth visited O'Neil's farm and also Bungaree in 1815. The land was not, however,

formally granted to O'Neil until 1832. He died aged 86 in 1840. By 1822, Barney Kearns, another former Irish convict, had a hut on O'Neil's land. A huge bushfire in 1826 destroyed both O'Neil's and Kearns's huts. John Edwards, a retired whaling captain, built the third permanent Balmoral house, a stone structure, in 1839 and lived there for 22 years. In 1860, his son John established the Balmoral Gardens pleasure grounds, named after Queen Victoria's Scottish castle. Balmoral Beach became a public reserve in 1878 and was proclaimed as Balmoral Park in 1886. Balmoral rapidly developed as a suburb from the late nineteenth century onwards. Between 1911 and 1936 the Balmoral Oval site was a rubbish dump.

The Artists' Camp was established by Livingston Hopkins, a cartoonist from New York who worked for *The Bulletin*, in the mid 1880s. It was at the bottom of what is now Awaba Street. He set up a rough hut and was joined by friends, such as the well-known artists Julian Ashton and Henry Fullwood, who lived in canvas tents. Some tents had wooden floors and carpets. At one stage there was a separate dining tent. Those at the camp, mainly men who worked in the city during the week, enjoyed pipe smoking, whisky drinking, yarn spinning and, of course, painting. In 1890, Hopkins bought a permanent home in Mosman and thereafter walked to the camp. Visitor access was by ferry to Mosman Bay then usually by foot. The famous author Robert Louis Stevenson visited in the 1890s and gave his book *Treasure Island* as a parting gift to the camp cook. Legislation passed in 1903 that allowed for daylight bathing brought

unwelcome crowds and the camp's demise. There were other camps elsewhere in Mosman.

Balmoral Baths were constructed in 1899. Leased to Robert Shearer, they became known as Shearer's Baths. He also lived in and managed the Bathers' Pavilion on its completion 1929. Men and women initially bathed separately in the baths.

Balmoral Beach Club, located near the Esplanade's northern end, was founded in 1914 by a group of seven Mosman men who called themselves 'The Smugglers'. They set up two old tram carriages for change rooms and purchased land to erect a timber fenced clubhouse. The club initially aimed to supervise Balmoral's more rowdy visitors, provide protection and first aid for beach users and purchase a patrol boat. Most of these aims were not achieved and it became a purely swimming and social organisation. Dave Smith, a boxer who fought Les Darcy, was a foundation member.

The Bathers' Pavilion was opened in 1929. Designed by Alfred H. Hale in a classical 'Mediterranean' style, it had 1506 clothing lockers and 239 cubicles where bathers disrobed in privacy. It remains largely intact and now houses one of Sydney's most highly regarded restaurants.

Joel's Boatshed was established by Jack Joel on the southern side of Balmoral Baths in 1923. His father Charles had moved to a house with a shipping cradle near the Baths in the

early twentieth century, building rowing boats and two schooners.

The Promenade along the Esplanade, which was completed in 1924, was a response to the influx of new visitors travelling by tram. As part of the Balmoral Beautification Scheme, the promenade's southern section was finished in 1927 and government employment projects during the Great Depression helped fund other sections, the bridge to Rocky Point, the Bathers' Pavilion and the Rotunda to be completed by 1930.

Public Transport began on a regular basis in 1905 with daily excursion steamers from Circular Quay to the Spit, stopping at Balmoral. The area's rugged terrain, however, meant that it was inaccessible to most Sydney residents until a tramline was established in 1922. The new service greatly increased the number of visitors to Balmoral and put an end to the excursion steamers. Buses replaced trams in 1958 and the former tram waiting shed opposite Hunter Park is one of the line's few remaining relics.

Queenwood School for girls, which occupies various sites adjacent to Balmoral Beach, was opened by Grace Lawrance in a two-storey house on Mandolong Road in 1925. It has grown from 45 pupils in its first full year to more than 700. It was named after a school in Brighton, England, operated by her mother. Beatrice Rennie, who assisted Lawrance, later succeeded her as the school's principal.

The Rotunda is a domed structure designed by Alfred H. Hale. It has Doric

columns standing on a dais. It was initially used for weekly Mosman Municipal Band concerts and is now frequently the location for weddings.

The Shark Net, controversially dismantled in 2008, was built in front of the Bathers' Pavilion in 1935 after much public debate. It provided a steel net enclosure hung between the end of Rocky Point and a high tripod opposite the Pavilion's northern end. In 1955, a shark killed a boy who was checking a lobster pot not far outside the net off Wy-argine Point

The Star in the East Amphitheatre, demolished in 1951, was on a site now occupied by a block of flats overlooking Edwards Beach. In the Grecian Doric style, it was built in 1923 and 1924 for the Order of the Star in the East, an offshoot of the Theosophical Society. Theosophists seek to find God and achieve universal goodwill by spiritual ecstasy, direct intuition or special individual relations. The white painted concrete structure seated 2000 and had room for an additional 1000 to stand. It included a stage, a chapel, a tearoom, a meeting hall and a library. The Order intended to use the Amphitheatre for a 'new world teacher', Jiddu Krishnamurti, to address his audience. He only, though, did so once and subsequently rejected his role. The Order was dissolved in 1929. The Amphitheatre was subsequently sold and used for concerts and plays.

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