

2017 Ron Rathbone Local History Prize

The History of Lady Robinsons Beach By Victor Yan



~ Sydney Technical High School ~

Year 7

Prelude

Lady Robinsons Beach, originally known as Seven Mile Beach is arguably one of Rockdale City's finest beaches. It is Sydney's longest beach, spanning over 5km long.

This popular, promenade beach is perfect for a swim as with calm conditions year round you can enjoy yourself in the water. Parks nearby contain picnic and barbecue areas, outdoor gyms and fun shady playgrounds for the kids. Walking tracks along the beach are surrounded with cafes, restaurants and stores, great for people watching or soaking up the sun.

Although this beach might not be as iconic as Bondi, it without doubt attracts thousands from joggers and strollers to anglers, swimmers and those just looking for a cup of coffee and croissant by the water.

Lady Robinsons Beach's history is very fascinating and will be further delved into, in this piece of writing. We will discuss the past and history of the beach, the biophysical environment, conservation of the beach and the future of the beach.

Location

Lady Robinsons Beach is located in Sans Souci along the eastern boundary of the Municipality of Rockdale. It lies between the mouth of Cooks River and Georges River. It takes up a long stretch of the Western Foreshore of Botany Bay and can be easily accessed from many points along the Grand Parade.

Past

Lady Robinson Beach was formed by the erosion of the Hawkesbury Sandstone which can be seen today as there are rocky outcrops and cliffs located 1-3km west of the beach.

The First Eighty Years

The Western shore of Botany Bay, remained in its pristine state for about the first fifty years after the settlement of Sydney Town. Back then, the beach was very hard to access by land before a route from the west via Canterbury was established. As this route developed, it became known as Illawarra Road now known as the suburb of Marrickville. This is still one of the main access routes to the south-eastern suburbs today.

In 1839, a dam was constructed along Cooks River from what we know today as Tempe to Arncliffe with a purpose of accessing the district south of the river. It remained one of the most used routes to the south for about the next fifty years. About five years later, Rocky Point Road was built. It stretched from a tiny settlement, south of the dam to Rocky Point Road along Georges River. This made it much easier to access the beach.

Pioneers still struggled to find their way east to the coast of Seven Mile Beach. Timber harvesting helped in pushing tracks through to the coasts. It was found out when land grants were issued out that the deep sandy soil there, was unsuitable for agriculture or grazing. In contrast to the northern end of the area, Muddy Creek overflowed more often providing richer soil which was more suitable to growing crops.

The Next Twenty Years

Later in 1885, a new tramway was built by Thomas Saywell that ran from Rockdale Station to Lady Robinsons Beach along Bay Street, Brighton-Le Sands. In 1885, the beach was renamed from Seven Mile Beach to Lady Robinsons Beach in honour of the wife of the then Governor, Sir Hercules Robinson.

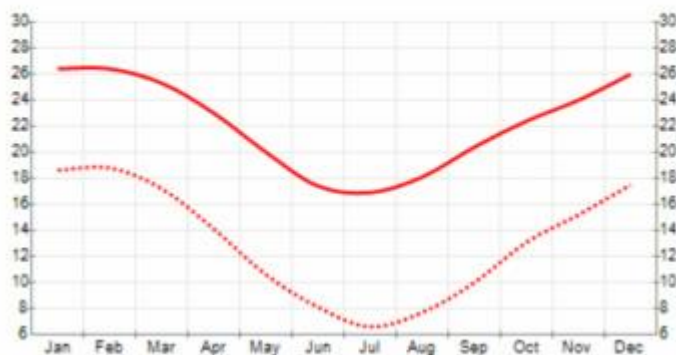
Biophysical Environment

The area near the surface of Earth can be divided into four inter-connected "geo spheres:" the atmosphere, hydrosphere, biosphere, and lithosphere.

The Atmosphere

The atmosphere is the body of air which surrounds Earth. The gravitational attraction is what keeps the air near the surface of the planet. Lady Robinsons Beach is best known for its calm conditions year-round. Statistics show that the average temperature in Summer is 26°C, Autumn is 23°C, Winter is 17°C and Spring is 22°C.

Average temperature per month



Graph showing the average temperatures at Lady Robinsons Beach.



The Biosphere

The biosphere refers to an environment in which living organisms exist. Lady Robinsons Beach provides a habitat that supports many different types of living organisms, mostly fish and sea grass. The fish at the beach attract many fishermen. The seagrass plays one of the most important roles in this ecosystem as it provides food and shelter for a wide range of organisms. The groynes are a popular place for people to fish.



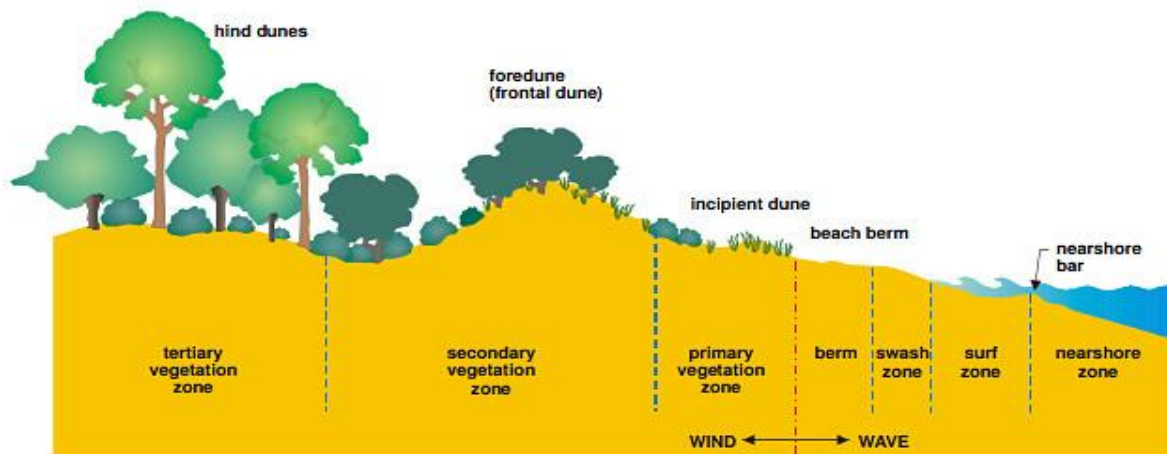
An example of common sea grass.



Local fishermen enjoying the fishing scene along the groyne at Lady Robinsons Beach.

The Lithosphere

The lithosphere is the outer part of Earth consisting of the crust and the upper mantle. An example of lithosphere includes land formations. Lady Robinsons Beach originally was backed by a series of sand dunes, all with a distinctive distinguishable structure. The dunes had a special dune vegetation which consisted of three zones extending inland from the back of the beach. The formation of the beach has altered due to the waves coming in and out. These waves are what shape the beach. We can see this in the diagram below.



This is a diagram showing the land formations of Lady Robinsons Beach.

The Hydrosphere

The hydrosphere consists of all of the water on or near Earth. Lady Robinsons Beach lies on the western shore of Botany Bay. Since the bay has a narrow opening, approximately 1.1km, it's a relatively sheltered body of water.

This means that Lady Robinsons Beach is very tranquil resulting in the beach receiving very low swell waves and wind waves. Only during very high outside swell do waves up to 1m high plunge off the beach. These waves are responsible for the transportation of sediments along Lady Robinsons Beach. The shape of the beach causes refraction, the change in direction of waves due to a beach's shape. The waves at the beach move sideways due to the beach's shape and this is causing the sand to

wash away. As a result, groynes have been placed along the beach to prevent the sideways movement of the waves.



This image is an example of wave refraction at Lady Robinsons Beach. The arrows indicate the sideways movement of the waves.

Conservation of the Beach

The future of Lady Robinsons Beach is unstable due to severe erosion, wearing away the sand. In 1997, eight groynes were placed to prevent the beach from further erosion. However, 41 000 cubic meters of sand was still lost in various parts of the beach and thus the state government has given \$15 000 to the council to further improve and repair the groynes. Martin Chessell, a natural resource manager from Arncliffe, used Lady Robinsons Beach as a case study for his environment science degree.

Chessell said that the cause for less sand entering the bay is because the Georges and Cooks River were flowing in too quickly carrying less sediment due to the urbanisation near the river banks. He also said that the already existing groynes were doing a good job but more groynes needed to be placed in order to protect the other vulnerable areas. These groynes had to be built to weaken the force of the waves thus, dropping the sand carried close to the shore, slowly rebuilding up the beach.

Future of the Beach

Lady Robinsons Beach has a huge potential in the future as it will become a wonderful beach. Every New Year's Eve there are fireworks which attract huge amount of people all gathering around to see the amazing display of fireworks.

It is also home to many joggers, swimmers and strollers who like just a light exercise in the morning sunshine. It provides a beautiful view of the blue sea and gold sand while providing an excellent place to socialise and play.

It has a history which is unique and important part of Bayside area, and while it is under some threat, are outlined above, we are well aware of what needs to be done to ensure its future and allow the community to continue its enjoyment of this wonderful site.



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