

## The history of South Maroubra Surf Club

### Beginnings, 1907-1908:

#### *Pioneering eminent doctors and sportsmen.*

- South Maroubra Surf Club has a proud history being one of the oldest surf lifesaving clubs in Australia. It was founded as 'South Maroubra Surf Club' at a beachside meeting on Sunday 1 December 1907. This is formally documented in minutes of the club in the E.S. Marks sporting archives in file Q82 held in the Mitchell Library, Sydney. The foundation came fifty two years before the establishment of the existing South Maroubra Surf Life Saving Club in 1959. South Maroubra was one of a number of the original surf clubs established in Sydney in 1907. Surf bathing, as it was then termed, had become increasingly popular and beach drownings in Sydney had increased dramatically from 1902 to 1907.
- The establishment of the surf club followed dangerous surf rescues in late October and early November 1907 when nine people were swept out at South Maroubra, including one group of four women. All were rescued by members of what was known as the Pioneer camp of surf bathers. The rescues precipitated the formation of an initial lifeline brigade which the following week was renamed a surf club. Prior to this the only hint of lifesaving devices at South Maroubra appeared to be a long length of rope tied around a tree, according to the memory of E.S. Marks, interviewed in 1930 about those earlier days.
- The initial and more informal lifeline brigade was formed to acquire rescue equipment, as the minutes reveal: *"On (Sunday) November 24, 1907 an impromptu meeting was held at the Pioneer surf swimmers camp with the object of raising funds to purchase a life line for the bathers at the southern end of Maroubra Beach. About 80 bathers mustered. Dr (Robert) Steere Bowker was elected chairman... the honour of Captain of the life line was appointed to Mr Norman Martin with E. Baker (Ernest) vice-captain.... Dr Cedric Bowker and Dr (Jack) Windeyer kindly volunteered to become honorary instructors in resuscitation and classes were to be formed immediately."* One of the members of the life line brigade was Fred Williams, a swimming champion who at the turn of the century had been called 'a pioneer of surf shooting'.
- The Pioneer bush camp, sometimes referred to as the 'doctors' camp', had been established at remote South Maroubra around 1905-06 at a time when Sydney newspapers began calling for something to be done about frequent drownings at Sydney beaches. The bush camp was one of many such camps at the southern end of Maroubra beach. Many in the Pioneer camp, including Ernest Marks, were also competitors and officials of the East Sydney Amateur Swimming Club which held races at the Domain Baths from its inception in 1894.
- Just one week after the lifeline brigade was formed at South Maroubra the name was changed to 'South Maroubra Surf Club', as the minutes reveal: *"On 1 December 1907 another meeting was called, Dr Cedric Bowker being elected chairman. The Hon. Treas. Messrs Bell, McGeachie and Schweicker had since last meeting visited Manly Surf Club's*

*buildings, and by the kind guidance of Mr Tong, (sic – W. Tonge, Manly's honorary secretary) had inspected the Manly Life Lines and Reels. It was agreed by the other Hon. Treas. that Mr Schweicker should give an order for the reel (for the South Maroubra club) to Mr Olding..."*  
(Sydney coachbuilder G.H. Olding.)

- E.S. Marks at the 1 December meeting said the title of a surf club was required 'in order to secure proper organisation', according to the minutes: *"Mr A. Schweicker proposed and Mr E. Brooke seconded that Mr William White be elected Hon. Sec. – Pro Tem – of the South Maroubra Surf Club. This was agreed to."*
- As the meeting concluded a demonstration was arranged by a duo who would become two most popular Sydney medicos: *"An address was given by Dr Cedric Bowker on the function of the lungs and the cause of symptoms of drowning. This was followed by a demonstration of resuscitation by the Dr Bowker and Dr Maitland kindly acted as the 'subject'. The proceedings then terminated by hearty acclamation for the Drs interesting instruction..."*
- Dr Cedric Bowker, keen swimmer and champion tennis player, was assistant NSW government medical officer and later a gynaecologist at Sydney Hospital. One of Bowker's many roles was to be present at city hangings. Dr Bert Maitland, later Sir Herbert, became famous for his head and neck surgery. At the beach 'handsome Bertie', an earthy and brawny sportsman and surfer, was good humoured and popular, especially when demonstrating the strength of his biceps, according to his biographer. The club instructor Dr Jack Windeyer was a surgeon at the women's hospital at Paddington and Sydney Hospital and later lectured in gynaecology at the University of Sydney. He was foundation professor of obstetrics from 1925. The Australian Dictionary of Biography called Professor Windeyer was 'a tall, impressive and likeable man.'
- Ernest Marks, woolbuyer and champion of amateur sport, much late Lord Mayor of Sydney, was a prime mover in establishing of the lifeline brigade and the surf club at South Maroubra. The lifeline's captain Norman Martin was a talented young professional Rugby referee. The lifeline's vice-captain was Ernest Baker, brother of young Pioneer camp member Harold Baker, also brothers to renowned sportsman and boxing entrepreneur 'Snowy' Baker. Also in the brigade was Courtenay Wiley, who became a doctor in 1909 and would go on to serve in the First World War as a colonel. He later became a Macquarie Street specialist.
- On Sunday 1 December 1907 Dr Cedric Bowker addressed a large foundation meeting of the newly named 'South Maroubra Surf Club' at the beach "on the functions of the lungs and the cause of symptoms of drowning", followed by a demonstration of resuscitation by Dr (Cedric) Bowker with Dr Herbert Maitland acting as his patient.
- South Maroubra Surf Club founders Dr Cedric Bowker, Dr Herbert Maitland, Fred Williams, Norman Martin and young Harold Baker in October 1907 had all taken leading public roles in opposition to draconian surf bathing regulations proposed by local councils. These five well-known figures helped to amend highly unpopular regulations, which included a form of 'skirt' covering men's swimming costumes. Proposed restrictions had included where, how,

when people could bath at beaches, including a half hour limit on surfing. Maitland was quoted as saying: "Since surf bathing is admitted by every doctor to be one of the best forms of exercise, every effort should be made to encourage the public to indulge in it." Maitland said no decent man or woman could object to the existing neck to knee costume for men as worn with a V-trunk. The new lifesavers had taken part in amusing protest rallies.

- The new South Maroubra Surf Club performed many rescues, as the Evening News indicated on 11 February 1908: "Joseph Wilding of Erskineville got into a beach current at Maroubra on Sunday and but for the plucky efforts of Dr Cedric Bowker would have, in all likelihood, lost his life."
- On 15 February, 1908, Dr Cedric Bowker presided over a large meeting of South Maroubra Surf Club members at the Pioneer camp, when he was re-elected president of the club with vice-presidents being his brother, Dr Robert Bowker, Dr Jack Windeyer, Dr Herbert Maitland and Mr S. McGeechie.
- Another club meeting was held at the NSW Sports Club on 24 February 1908. The meeting adopted a code of rules and South Maroubra Surf Club's first logo, a diamond shape featuring the letters S.M.S.C. Those present included Norman Martin, Fred Williams and active competitor Albert Tuck, a government printer.
- South Maroubra Surf Club's first annual report in mid-October 1908 showed many new members enrolled. The meeting elected Harold Baker, then twenty, a triple NSW swimming champion and who had played Rugby for Australia against New Zealand, as South Maroubra's club captain. Baker would go on to become a legendary surf lifesaver.
- In November 1908 South Maroubra Surf Club, while performing strongly, was obliged by the newly formed Surf Bathers' Association of NSW (forerunner of the SLSA) to amalgamate with Maroubra Surf Club, also formally established as a surf club in 1907, when it was decreed that there must be only one surf club at each beach and the northern half of Maroubra beach attracted larger crowds. Coogee, for instance, had five informal clubs at one stage.
- But bathers continued to get into difficulties at South Maroubra. On Sunday 13 December 1908 Harold Baker, without waiting for a lifeline, 'made a splendid rescue' of a man in difficulties at 'the south end near the most dangerous and treacherous part of the beach', according to the Evening News. Baker and friend Syd Brown took part in further rescues at the southern end that afternoon and were 'heartily cheered on their splendid save.'
- Harold Baker became the Maroubra Surf Club captain for the next two seasons after the two clubs amalgamated. By late 1910 thirteen of the founder members of the former South Maroubra Surf Club had become office bearers in the amalgamated Maroubra Surf Club, which had been formed as a surf club just months prior to the South Maroubra club.
- One of the founders of South Maroubra Surf Club in 1907 was Albert Tuck, a competitor and committeeman. Tuck, 32, enlisted in the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion AIF at Kensington in August 1914 after

Britain declared war on Germany and was quickly supported by Australia. Sergeant Bert Tuck was killed fighting at Gallipoli on 26 April 1915 and was mentioned in despatches.

- Several later attempts were made re-establish a South Maroubra Surf Club, including one in 1929. The backers, including Thomas Mutch, former NSW Education Minister, said Maroubra beach attracted 30,000 people on summer days and was too large for one club. However, the Maroubra club opposed the proposition and Randwick Council vetoed the idea.

#### South Maroubra SLSC from 1959:

##### *From a tent in the sand dunes.*

- On Sunday 31 May, 1959, fifty people attended a meeting at the Malabar Surf Club (now defunct) to establish a South Maroubra Surf Life Saving Club. It was convened by Rick McKeon and chaired by Alderman Bill Lucas with support from the Surf Life Saving Association, Maroubra Surf Club and Randwick Council. The formation committee comprised Alderman Bill Lucas, Alderman Bill Haigh, Richard Carruthers, Brian Chenhall, Percy McKeon, Fred McKeon, Rick McKeon, Jack Anderson, Les Samuelson and Dick Hall.
- Worsening sewage pollution at Malabar was an important motivation for the move to South Maroubra in 1959. Foundation member, John Ludlow, later noted that bather numbers had been decreasing at Malabar because of worsening sewage pollution. Members came mostly from the Malabar club and some from Maroubra.
- The first annual meeting of South Maroubra Surf Life Saving Club was held at the Malabar club on 6 September 1959. Club captain Rick McKeon 'outlined requirements for active membership and said *everyone* would be on patrol on the first weekend in October'. Bill Lucas said the club was in a good financial position. Alderman Charlie Molloy became first patron, Bill Lucas president, Brian Chenhall secretary and Kevin Quinn treasurer.
- A tent in the sand dunes was the first South Maroubra 'clubhouse' in that first weekend patrol in October 1959. The tent doubled both as a change room and somewhere for members to have a drink after patrol on Sunday afternoons. But strong winds often meant a glass in one hand while hanging on to the tent with the other. The club began with 17 active members and just about every one of them was an office bearer.
- A small fibro and timber clubhouse on the sand dunes at South Maroubra was built by members towards the end of the first season in 1959 and South Maroubra quickly became known as "The Fibro Club". A new surfboat was donated by real estate businessman L.J. Hooker. Ron McKeon became South Maroubra's first placegetter in a surf title, coming second in the Metropolitan junior surf championship.

#### The Sixties:

### *Mass rescues, Nippers, and a swank new clubhouse*

- On 27 March 1960 club members, having recently built their clubhouse, conducted their first restricted surf carnival between clubs of the Randwick municipality for the A.C. Molloy Shield. South Maroubra and Coogee dead heated for first place in the point score.
- Patrols, physical work, competition and fund-raising with a small membership seemed relentless. The 1960/61 season saw a good deal of membership 'burn-out'. Matters worsened when club captain Rick McKeon resigned from the club over what he saw as a lack of co-operation and debate from a section of the membership in regard to beach patrols. Rick later re-joined the club and in 1982 was made a life member. Rick McKeon died in 2014.
- South Maroubra's first annual surf carnival, as it was termed, was held on Saturday 14 January 1961. Eleven clubs attended. Maroubra Rotary Club donated the club's second surfboat, 'The Spirit of Rotary', in the second season. The club's junior boat crew was placed second in the Aussies in Tasmania during the 1961-62 season.
- South Maroubra members attended the Aussies at Moana in South Australia in March 1961. Afterwards John Ludlow and vice boat captain Ken Murphy drove home via Warrnambool, Victoria. Warrnambool Surf Club member, Ken Smith, twenty one, was attacked by a shark offshore. John and Ken were on the beach. "We carried him out of the water and up onto shore with our bare hands", John said, "Something I will never forget as I walked beside him was carrying his intestines in the palms of my hands." Ken Smith survived.
- The clubhouse was broken into repeatedly and equipment smashed during 1962. President Bill Lucas told the press vandals came 'like rats in the night'. But they didn't always get away with it. A crew returning from rowing at Yarra Bay one night found two young intruders sitting beside the club's only prized and beautifully painted surf reel used in march past competition, cutting line off the reel and had carved their initials into the glossy reel drum. The rowers acted with restraint, although the intruders were grateful when police arrived, according to member Ian Jordan. They youths were fined for malicious damage.
- In 1962 a boatshed was added, which became 'the lounge' after the regular Sunday morning surf race. A small public kiosk was opened. That year members sweated to build a sealed road from Fitzgerald Avenue to the clubhouse. As a minor luxury, hot showers were installed.
- On 30 December 1962, Frank Gidley, chief instructor, went to the rescue of a fellow swept out in the rip beside the rocks. The fellow shouted that he didn't want help. But he struggled and couldn't get back so Gidley took hold of him and received a punch in the face for his trouble. Within minutes the fellow called for help and Gidley brought him safely to the beach. Gidley, an accomplished amateur boxer, was commended for his restraint.
- The 1962/63 season saw a fenced enclosure with a concrete base, known as 'the stockade', added. It became useful for fund-raising socials including roast pig on the spit and other

rather primitive rituals. With slow recruitment and limited members, cadet and junior members, under supervision, began playing an important part in club patrols.

- Boxing Day 1963 was hot and humid with exceptional crowds at the beach. Treacherous surf conditions, resulting from a cyclone up north, quickly led to multiple rescues. Every available member went on duty. At one stage four beltmen at South Maroubra fought their way through heavy surf and seaweed to rescue a group of ten people swept some 200 metres offshore. Rescues continued so the beach was closed. A squad of juniors stood on patrol in waist deep water, holding back a mass of eager swimmers. Others ignored instructions and went in anyhow. Seventy rescues were performed at South Maroubra alone that day. The season was one of the busiest on record for South Maroubra with 158 recorded surf rescues.
- On a hot Sunday 3 March 1963 members Brian Chenhall and Frank Gidley were paddling a ski beyond the break when they decided to dive in to cool off. When a shark approached, Chenhall jumped back on the ski. Gidley tried but couldn't. The shark cruised straight past them and headed between the flags crowded with swimmers and causing general mayhem. With the shark alarm wailing, club captain Ross Milne grabbed the club's harpoon and ran into the surf joined by junior Peter Barron, clutching a lump of wood. As swimmers streamed from the surf, the two clobbered the two-and-a-half metre shark and dragged it ashore.
- Randwick Council erected public toilets and showers at South Maroubra in 1963. In the days before surfboard leg ropes, the number of injuries to surf swimmers increased markedly when surfboards came between the flags. Confrontations with patrols were frequent. Randwick Council proposed that all board riders at Maroubra to locate to the southern end. Hasty negotiations followed and the order was repealed, but boards had to be registered. The freshwater swamp behind the clubhouse was being filled in and the area eventually became the broad parkland called Byrne Reserve.
- The 1964/65 season saw John Dynan become club president. A new clubhouse was sorely needed and it became John Dynan's top priorities. Working behind the scenes 'Have a Chat' quietly enlisted Randwick Council and a host of others people to push the project forward.
- The club suffered from insufficient active members. Club captain Ron Firkin in the 1965-1966 annual report said he had only thirty experienced active members for patrol work and renewed public efforts at recruitment took place, including letters to local high schools. The season saw the start of an informal Nippers' Club with races held each Sunday. Bruce Rutherford was elected first president and Joyce Harris first honorary secretary.
- Surf ski champions and Olympic canoe medallists Dennis Green and Barry Stuart had joined South Maroubra with Dennis winning the Australian single ski title at the national championships at Perth in 1965. The Stuart and Green pair also won the national double ski title at the Aussies in South Australia in 1966. Dennis Green competed in five Olympic Games in canoeing, while Barry Stuart competed in four.

- The start of the 1966/67 season saw the formal establishment of the South Maroubra Juvenile SLSC, as the Nippers were then called. John Dynan became vice president of the foundation Sydney branch of the JSLSA. The Nippers' club 24 boys between eight and 13. Their march past team finished second that first season at the juvenile titles at Wanda.
- Sunday 18 December 1966 was hot with a big crowd at the beach and treacherous surf. After a hazardous morning South Maroubra beach was closed for the day. Patrols from Maroubra and South Maroubra then combined to patrol a central flagged area. The Maroubra patrol took the north side with our club on the south side. Hundreds of swimmers crowded the one wide flagged area. Rescues continued throughout the day as the broad sandbank gave way at the edges. Boards, skis and boats patrolled offshore picking up swimmers. Belt teams worked all day long. Sixty eight bathers were involved in nine mass rescues. South Maroubra's morning patrol worked throughout the day. First aid officer Ken Arthur rescued a girl aged thirteen by belt and revived her with mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Maroubra's patrol captain Barry Rogers told the press that without South Maroubra's assistance, he would never have had anywhere near enough patrolmen to cope.
- In February 1967 South Maroubra's Barry Stuart captained the NSW state team in the Aussies at North Cronulla. Stuart and Dennis Green won the double ski final. That year a new surfboat, 'Lest we Forget', was funded by Malabar, Maroubra and Matraville RSL clubs.
- On 9 August 1968 the club's first Ladies Auxiliary was formed. Maureen Murphy was president, Jan Milne honorary secretary and Rhonda Mason treasurer. For a time the women organised their own beach and water events during summer.
- The 1967-68 season saw the beginning of the first stage of the new clubhouse. The club started with a mere \$28,000 intended to cater for a club of an expected 150 active members. The first stage was planned as a lengthy single story. But by 1969 the modest building plans and budget blew out. Changes included an additional storey and separate facilities for women and Nippers at a total cost of \$54,000. The local building trade, the Maroubra Seals Club and Randwick Council were among generous donors.
- The planned new clubhouse became a concrete and brick two-storey structure topped by an observation deck. Costs were reduced significantly by the club acting as the builder. Paul Duffy and others on the building committee employed a foreman and tradesmen and did all the sub-contracting. Paul reported significant reductions in cost had been achieved because builders' profits and overheads were negligible.
- At South Maroubra an experiment was instigated so the sand dunes would be preserved with the clubhouse set unobtrusively in a recreated natural environment. Between 1968 and 1969, in a \$50,000 project, the club liaised with the University of NSW, the NSW Soil Conservation Service and Randwick Council. The sand dunes were rehabilitated with fenced walkways to the beach. The result is clear today with a 'natural look' at South Maroubra.

- South Maroubra's first open surf carnival was staged on 15 February 1969 in big seas and was a roaring success. The ASL company donated a new surfboat. In the ten years from 1959 the club recorded 1,009 surf rescues with no loss of life during patrols. A special annual report, distributed to guests at the clubhouse opening, documented the ten years from tent to modern clubhouse. Paul Duffy was house captain and later club president.
- In February 1969 South Maroubra Surf Club members, including president John Dynan, convened a lively public meeting in a campaign against pollution from the Malabar sewerage plant. Members formed the Anti-Beach Pollution Campaign Association and received support from the SLSA Sydney branch, Randwick Council and newspapers. Some 350 people and a senior representative of NSW Premier Bob Askin attended an angry protest meeting.

## The Seventies

### *Beach pollution, the 'Taj Mahal' and constant growth*

- As beach pollution from the Malabar plant and other treatment works worsened, the NSW Government announced in early 1970 that an initial \$17-million would be spent on treatment plants. As South Maroubra's 1969-70 annual report stated, funds were needed 'for the construction of two-mile long underway effluent outlets to take the filth away from our beaches to sea'. In 1970 the Sydney Water Board began studying a proposal to construct a deepwater undersea pipeline out from Malabar, which in time would come to fruition.
- 1970 saw the fit out of the new South Maroubra clubhouse. Then house captain Paul White called the building a 'Taj Mahal' and 'the best, most modern clubhouse in Australia'.
- All the hard work produced noticeable 'member burnout'. The 1969/70 annual report spoke of a lack of enthusiasm after several years of intense fund raising and physical work while maintaining patrols and competition. So the club put a temporary hold on members' fund-raising to concentrate on core duties. The season saw 21 members winning patrol pennants for 100 percent efficiency, a better than usual result. But there was still enough energy left for the club to stage the Metropolitan surf titles that season.
- The club for the first time experimented with a senior member as junior captain to increase concentration on the lifesavers of the future. Paul White took up the role and found it demanding but worthwhile. Three juniors won patrol efficiency pennants that season.
- By 1970 South Maroubra Nippers had a committee of ten chaired by Bruce Rutherford and 92 boys were registered, an increase of 25% on the previous season. Girls were not part of the Nipper movement then. The Nippers competed in numerous surf carnivals, including a 'mini' carnival at South Maroubra.



- On a hot Sunday, 29 November 1970, twenty people were washed out in a rip when a sandbank collapsed at South Maroubra. The club's power boat took sixteen of the surfers to shore while beltmen rescued the other four.
- During the 1971/72 season A.S.L. presented South Maroubra with a second surfboat. In addition the club had a good night at greyhound racing, being allocated a winning dog that provided the club with another new surfboat as first prize. The club's deputy chief instructor Spike Howden sadly died during a beach touch football game during the 1972/73 season.
- On Friday night 8 June 1973 club stalwart Paul White returned from work to his apartment in Coogee to find his wife of several years, Lynette, brutally murdered. Lyn was well known at the club having assisted with fund raising. Their boy of eleven weeks, Shane, who would become a club member, was uninjured in his room. Police think the killer murdered another young woman, Maria Smith, at Randwick the following year. He was not caught.
- South Maroubra staged the Sydney branch championships in 1973/74. The club received its third surfboat donation from ASL during the 1974/75 season. The Sydney branch titles were again held at South Maroubra in the 1975/76 season. Ron McKeon scored impressive surf wins in Aussies.
- South Maroubra held the televised 1978 Metropolitan titles in February attracting 36 surf clubs. There was resurgence in junior and cadet competition, led by Ron McKeon. Ron was placed first in both the Aussies junior belt and surf races and second in the open surf race.
- Throughout the seventies South Maroubra surf club continued to grow in every area which meant that the building which had been declared the 'Taj Mahal' had become inadequate and too small. The club had plans drawn up for the new clubhouse extensions and repairs and these were passed by Randwick Council during the 1977/78 season.

### The Eighties:

#### *Female lifesavers, patrol efficiency & state titles*

- In 1980 South Maroubra became one of the first clubs to have female lifesavers with girls and women patrolling the beach during the 1980/81 season. The first to receive qualifying certificates were Aileen Wilson, Bronwyn Roberts, Michelle Stuart and Renee Dever. The first to receive their bronze medallions were Aileen Wilson, Bronwyn Roberts and Helen Veale.
- Sewage pollution from the Malabar plant forced the club to cancel its 1981/82 open surf carnival. In that same season the club's foundation president in 1959, Bill Lucas, died.
- New clubhouse extensions were opened during the 1982/83 season. Botany Council added to Randwick Council's subsidy a \$7,000 donation. Patrol captain Bernie Kelly was selected to

the Australian instructional touring team to Sri Lanka. Rod McKeon, Rod McDonald and Mark Hastings represented South Maroubra at the World Lifesaving Championships in Hawaii. Ron McKeon won the State open belt race.

- In the 1983/84 season South Maroubra again hosted the Metropolitan Surf Championships. Ron McKeon won the Aussies open belt title. The Aussies junior boat title was won by the South Maroubra crew of Simon Butterfield, Karl Northall, Gordon Downey, Peter Economou and Barney Ferguson. Ron McKeon was placed first in the 1984 open belt title.
- A drilling rig appeared at sea off South Maroubra in 1984 signalling the start of a \$310-million project covering Sydney's ocean outfalls, including the huge plant around the point from our club at Malabar. The submarine outfall from Malabar would not become operational for another six years. In the interim beach pollution would continue.
- South Maroubra Surf Club staged the NSW titles in February 1985. Organisers must have done a good job because further state titles would be held at South Maroubra in 1996, 1999 and 2001. The 1985 titles ran over three days. Key organisers included Ron Firkin and John Marks. Kim Rutherford scored seconds in the women's state and Aussies surf titles.
- Life member Kevin Quinn, one of four foundation executive members from 1959, passed away during the 1986/87 season. The season was marked by good work on patrols with 52 members gaining 100% patrol efficiency. Phil Vanny became NSW team manager touring UK and the US. Juniors Samantha O'Brien and Jacqui Robinson had great competition success.
- The A boat crew won the Mayne Nickless surfboat title at Coogee during the 1987/88 season. Samantha O'Brien competed at the lifeguard titles in Hawaii while Jacqui Robinson won a world title in the 1988 World Nutri-Grain bicentennial championships. The club staged the metropolitan titles with four boat rowers were injured in dangerous surf.
- Under club captain Bernie Kelly beach patrols continued to improve markedly in the 1988/89 season. Sixty seven members gained 100% proficiency, a record unheard of in older days. Further, 47 candidates gained lifesaving awards. Bernie recorded that beach pollution seemed to be getting worse at South Maroubra. Samantha O'Brien had great successes in the NSW team in the Aussies. Jacqui Robinson won gold in the women's surf race.

#### The Nineties:

##### *Clean water, restructure & the death of a lifesaver.*

- In 1989/90 the A boat crew won bronze at the Aussies while Samantha O'Brien won gold and bronze. But the club was going through a difficult financial period with significant expenditure on the clubhouse extensions and 'concrete cancer' repairs.

- In September 1990 club captain and house captain Paul Duffy took an IRB more than two kilometres out to sea off South Maroubra. They wanted to see for themselves whether there was any visible sewage matter after the deepwater submarine pipeline from the Malabar plant had been completed and switched on. Treated sewage was now supposed to mix with seawater on the edge of the Continental Shelf at depths of 60 to 80 metres, leaving no pollution. The boys searched up and down and when they returned they reported that the sea was pristine. The pollution had gone after some 80 years of fouling the beach.
- But Paul Duffy could sniff money with the club struggling financially in 1990. He convinced Sydney Water, also backed by the chemical manufacture at Botany, ICI, that they should support a new marathon concept called the Clear Water Classic involving a swim of the beach, a five kilometre run and a sprint down the beach from north to south. The first event added \$30,000 to club coffers. The annual event continued for some five years.
- Linda Perrin was awarded the club's honour blazer with distinction in patrol work. She was captain of the first patrol to win the Sydney Branch patrol competition and had been honorary secretary for four years.
- Paul White took over as club captain from Bernie Kelly during the 1991/92 season when there was a welcomed influx of new members. But Paul and vice captain Yvette Roser expressed disappointment in the efficiency of some patrols. Drastic changes were made with active reserves called in. The club had a record nine boat crews, which worried Paul. Yvette noted that difficulties arose when 85% of patrolling members were also competitors.
- Bernie Kelly took over again as club captain during 1992/93 and was deliberately 'tough' about excellence in patrol work. It was a difficult season with 67 rescues and 249 preventative actions. Three swimmers rescued required hospitalisation. Bernie was forced to confront a minority of members who took part in competition without seeking patrol substitutes or were lax on patrol. The club had 396 members, 100 of them females.
- Patrols substantially improved in the 1993/94 season with 100% patrol efficiency scored by 87% of patrolling members. The club had 120 active and 30 active reserve patrolling members. William Rowley won the NSW title in the under 16 men's surf race and was runner up in the Aussies. Nipper membership grew enormously.
- William Rowley continued his success in the surf with a string of medals from State and Aussies titles, including first in the NSW under 18 surf and belt races and two seconds in the in the Aussies. Club president Jack Shaw noted 86 rescues, 54 first aid cases and 688 preventative actions with an impressive 102 surf lifesaving awards gained.
- During the 1995/96 season the club staged the NSW titles at South Maroubra and won gold in the 40-45 years boat race while William Rowley won both the NSW under 18 surf and belt races. Honorary secretary Yvette Rutherford reported that the club had made a conscious decision to develop cadets and the older nippers in looking to the club's future.

- The 1996-97 season saw the passing John Dynan, former president. Jovial boat sweep Pat Jollow also died. Friends contributed a new surfboat in Pat's name. Patrols vastly improved with 98 patrol members receiving 100% efficiency awards. Club captain Paul Fownes called them 'the real heroes of the club'. There were 74 rescues that season. The club won first place in NSW and Aussie masters surfboat events.
- Bernie Kelly was vice captain in 1997/98. On Sunday 18 January 1998 patrol members tried to relocate young footballers swimming outside the flags, but they were ignored. Soon up to a dozen of the swimmers got caught in a rip. Bernie Kelly was among those who took part in the mass rescue. But soon after Bernie collapsed outside the clubhouse from a heart attack. Members applied CPR but he didn't revive. The death of the dedicated and much-loved lifesaver so passionate about patrol excellence created national attention and sorrow. Tributes came from around Australia. A memorial fund collected \$45,000 for the club's work.
- The club's growth, new management structures, especially in lifesaving and youth development, plus expanded community activities were a highlight of the 1998/99 season. Newly titled directors and co-ordinators were assisted by specific committees. Patrol captains received training in leadership and met regularly with their lifesaving committee. Club facilities were improved. Enhancements also were made to Byrne Reserve and the clubhouse surrounds. The club now had 600 members with 200 doing active patrols. It hosted the NSW junior titles that season. Club masters did well in both State and the Aussies titles, co-ordinated by John Ludlow.

### The 21<sup>st</sup> century:

#### *State of the art clubhouse & exceptional rescues*

- Club membership reached 650 during the 1999-2000 season. A Rapid Response Unit was introduced, including an all-terrain vehicle and a jet ski to assist in rescues from Maroubra south to Botany Bay. Rescues were down to 79 that season owing to calmer conditions. Nine patrol captains attended training courses. A 'Bernie Kelly Memorial Patrol Competition', supported by the Westfield Foundation, provided new lifesaving equipment.
- South Maroubra experienced a remarkable season in 2000/01 with 142 patrol members receiving the 100% patrol efficiency awards, 92 SLSA lifesaving awards and a record 219 Nippers gaining surf education certificates, according to secretary Yvette Rutherford. The club signed up 72 new members bringing membership to 685, including 329 Nippers. Founder member Brian Chenhall and the old crooner Singing Dick Burgess died.
- By the 2001/02 season the club placed greater emphasis on becoming a strong participant in community affairs. Chairman Paul Fownes called the club 'a reservoir of young talent of sporting ability and leadership potential' - talent that would filter through many levels of society. He wrote of a moving experience witnessing children and parents developing lifesaving skills side by side at the beach. Tara Holt won three gold medals in NSW and

interstate titles. Jacqui Robinson won gold at the Aussie Masters and five first places in the World Championships in the USA, while Bob Goodsell won one first and four seconds.

- South Maroubra lifesavers carried out 520 hours of beach patrols in the 2002/03 season. No less than thirty club instructors helped the club gain 173 lifesaving awards. Mark Frost won the Sydney branch 'lifesaver of the year' award. Renovations were made to the club's top floor. A surfboard riding competition was introduced. Membership reached 886 including 358 Nippers. Junior Tara Holt again excelled in beach events. South Sydney Juniors, Randwick Council and Maroubra Seals Club were consistent big donors.
- The club celebrated its 45<sup>th</sup> year with an anniversary ball in the 2003/04 season. Patron Bob Carr and the CEO of Surf Life Saving NSW, Phil Vanny, former South Maroubra president, were present. Chairman Jack Shaw reported that membership had grown from 17 in 1959 to well over 800 members ranging in age from five to 70. The club was recognised as 'one of the top ten surf clubs in Australia in terms of membership, lifesaving awards gained and revenue generated'. Senior boat crews won 24 competition medals, including two golds. Kailah Koloamatangi-Elliott won an amazing array of under 12 medals.
- January 2005 saw beach patrols tested with cyclonic surf conditions pounding the NSW coastline. There were 816 rescues in NSW in the first week of January alone. South Maroubra patrols rescued 67 people in that January. One rescue included a helicopter evacuation and two patients needed ambulances, reported lifesaving director Chris Locke. Five people died along the NSW coast that January. During the 2004/05 season at South Maroubra there were 110 rescues and 1,707 preventative rescues with 373 first aid treatments. Yvette Rutherford completed a record twelve years as club secretary.
- The 2006/07 season again was marked by heavy seas. The beach at South Maroubra was closed on ten occasions. Secretary Murray Northey reported: "The surf season is becoming increasingly hectic with our lifesavers carrying out 155 rescues, treating 434 people with first aid and taking 3,310 preventative actions." Director Chris Locke reported that an elderly woman died after being caught in the rip at the southern rocks outside the patrol area. Nipper activities were seriously curtailed on some occasions. Kailah Koloamatangi-Elliott was named SLSS under 15 Female Athlete of the Year.
- Club membership reached the all-time high of 871 members including 204 available for patrols in 2007/08. It was another season of often dangerous surf conditions when the beach had to be closed. Surveillance patrols were common. There were 177 rescues that year. The club spent a considerable sum on fire compliance for the clubhouse, which in turn meant that the club could make revenue from function leasing.
- During the 2008/09 season South Maroubra celebrated fifty years since 1959 with an anniversary dinner at the Crowne Plaza, Coogee, on 5 September 2009. The night included a detailed audio-visual of the club's history from 1959. The event became a reunion for older members and resulted in the SMOFs group being formed. Of the original members from

1959, five were members fifty years later. They were Rick McKeon (Life Member), Richard Carruthers, John Ludlow (Life Member), Graham (Lou) Armstrong and Tony Brown.

- 2008-2009 was a difficult season financially but key donors like the South Sydney Juniors Club and the Maroubra Seals Club helped enormously. During the season 73 Nippers gained their SLSA resuscitation awards.
- Significant building repairs and expansions were drawn up for the South Maroubra clubhouse during the 2009/10 season. Building co-ordinator and Chairman Paul Fownes reported that by June 2011 the club would 'move into renovation mode where you will witness a transformation of the club...' and he didn't disappoint.
- The 2011/12 season saw extensive building work come together with a rebuild of much of the club, including the addition of an extra floor reached via elevator. The clubhouse had become one of the largest and best in Australia. The work enabled the creation of the sophisticated Horizons functions centre, which included a magnificent hall and a vast outside deck featuring Sydney's best close-up view of the surf and rugged coastline. The function centre, well suited for weddings, created an income stream for the club for many years into the future. South Maroubra beach attracted ever greater crowds and patrol work became harder than ever with an unprecedented 273 rescues that season.
- The club's core activity, surf lifesaving, was to the fore during the 2013-14 surfing season with 127 rescues and 2,468 preventative actions during the season. Director of lifesaving Damien Woods wrote: "The majority of rescues that were performed were relatively major and had the potential to turn a lot worse had it not been for the prompt response from our patrol teams." On Good Friday there was a mass rescue where everyone swimming between the flags was swept out in a matter of seconds. The IRB crew on duty performed twelve rescues while other patrol members used boards and tubes to bring in swimmers. Four patients needed oxygen. The beach subsequently was closed. South Maroubra had 637 Nipper members administered by some 40 officials.
- Father and son duo from South Maroubra, Graham and Lucas Toms, were awarded the national and state rescue of the month award for their efforts in August 2014, although tragically they were not able to save their patient. Seeing a rock fisherman in distress in Lurline Bay, they called 'triple zero' and made their way down to a rock shelf. Son Lucas entered the water with his board while Graham swam out with a rescue tube. The fisherman was face down, unconscious and unresponsive. Father and son supported the patient on the board giving resuscitation until he was winched up by helicopter. But when taken to waiting paramedics at Byrne Reserve, the fisherman could not be revived.
- List of South Maroubra's life members: Kevin Quinn 1975, John Dynan 1976, John Ludlow 1979, Ken Arthur 1980, Rick McKeon 1982, Robert Byrne 1984, Alan Morris 1985, Peter Steenson 1986, John King 1987, Brian Ferguson 1988, Paul Duffy 1989, Phillip Vanny 1990, Lionel Roser 1994, Johns Marks 1996, James Parker 1997, Bernard Kelly 1998, John Shaw

1999, John Park 2003, Alan Johnston 2005, Max Murphy 2006, Ray Robinson 2007, Yvette Rutherford 2008, Linda Perrin 2010, Horst Menzel 2011, Paul Fownes 2013.

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This potted history of South Maroubra Surf Club was compiled by Bob Wurth, current member and former club secretary. He is the author of five non-fiction books, mostly on military history, plus a 54-page book, *Origins of a Surf Club*, dealing with the South Maroubra Surf Club of 1907-1908. That book can be found in the Bowen Library, Maroubra, and other libraries of Randwick City Council and in the Mitchell Library, Sydney. For further information and contact, see [www.bobwurth.com](http://www.bobwurth.com)