

INNER WEST

This enquiry based site study and accompanying historical resources were designed to fulfil the requirement for a mandated site study in the NSW Years 7 --10 History Syllabus. It provides all you require for a virtual site study although a site visit is highly recommended. The later can be undertaken as a class or in the student's own time. The primary objective is to enable your students to develop skills to analyse and use historical sources in order to undertake an historical inquiry and communicate their results with a focus on change over time. This aspect is applicable for both Stage 4 and Stage 5 NSW History students. Many of the historical sources align with the Stage 5 History syllabus theme of the modern world and Australia, especially the depth study areas of making a nation and popular culture.

Aspects of this site study are also pertinent to NSW Years 7 – 10 Physical Activity and Sport Studies Syllabus. Here the focus is on the historical participation of women in swimming as competitive and recreational pursuits. Sources on the segregation of men and women both physically or through timed access are included along with changes in swimming costumes for women over time. Three Australian female swimming legends who give their name to Inner West Council aquatic centres are also considered:

- Fanny Durack (<https://www.innerwest.nsw.gov.au/explore/aquatic-centres/fanny-durack-aquatic-centre>),
- Annette Kellerman (<https://www.innerwest.nsw.gov.au/explore/aquatic-centres/annette-kellerman-aquatic-centre>)
- Dawn Fraser (<https://www.innerwest.nsw.gov.au/explore/aquatic-centres/dawn-fraser-baths>)

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The study consists of:

- Teachers notes and resources
- Syllabus links – objectives and outcomes
- Historical sources for the site study (online, pdf and xlsx)
- Powerpoint of maps, photographs and images of the site
- Student worksheets

A wide and diverse range of primary and secondary, visual and written sources are used in this site study that span from pre-European occupation of Australia to the Elkington Park, Fitzroy Avenue Reserve and Dawn Fraser Baths encountered in the Sydney suburb of Balmain today. All sources are referenced.

Please be aware the language in some sources regarding both Aboriginal people and women is often inappropriate and not acceptable today. These may have [sic] inserted into the source text as may spelling which differs from that used today. Sources have been edited but not altered and provide an opportunity to explore further with your class changing attitudes to Aboriginal people and women over time.

Historical overview

The suburb of Balmain is around five kilometres west of the Sydney CBD and on land of the Wangal people of the Eora Nation. Surrounded and shaped by water on three sides the peninsular was and still is a significant place for Aboriginal people today (1, 4, 7). Middens thought to be 4,500 years old have been found (1) and fish and shellfish were abundant (1, 2, 4, 7).

The Assistant Surgeon on the First Fleet, William Balmain, was granted 550 acres (c. 222 hectares) in what are now the suburbs of Balmain and Rozelle.

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He returned to the UK in 1801 (5).

In the first decades after Europeans occupied Australia Balmain was largely a place where Aboriginal people gathered, fished and hunted and Europeans picnicked (7). Images and descriptions provide evidence of the plants, animals and marine resources encountered at Balmain before European occupation of the area (6, 7). An elderly resident recalled in 1906 the bush had abundant wildflowers, tea tree and generally low scrubby trees in the early 1840s, (6). This is also seen in contemporary paintings and images (8, 9). He remembered plenty of birds, snakes, wallabies, bandicoots and native cats (6).

A 1914 newspaper states the first European settlement at Balmain was in the 1830s (7). After the 1830s the population of Balmain increased. Photographs and descriptions provide insights into how Elkington Park and its immediate surrounds have changed since the description of early settlers (6, 7). 20th century photographs (9, 13, 18, 25, 28, 33) show quite sparse vegetation around the Elkington Park Baths. Today the vegetation and trees around the Dawn Fraser Baths are dense (36).

Recreational swimming was popular in first decades of European occupation (10, 11, 12) and grew in popularity in the late 19th century with competitions held (14, 15, 16, 18). Fanny Durack was Australia's first female Olympic medallist when she won a gold medal at the Stockholm Olympics in 1912 for the 100 metre event (42), another Australian Mina Wylie won the silver medal.

The Council considered erecting swimming baths at Elkington Park in Balmain in 1877 and these opened in 1882 (13). They were enclosed and initially roofed (13). Originally called the White Horse Baths this was changed

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to Elkington Park Baths in 1883 (13, 22).

When the Baths opened women were segregated from men either because of physical barriers or restricted access times (13, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21). Men couldn't even attend women's swimming carnivals (16, 20). In the late 19th century neck to knee bathing costumes for both men and women hampered swimming (19, 21, 42). Often made of wool they became extremely heavy when wet (42). Annette Kellerman championed the fitted one piece bathing costume and was even arrested in 1907 for wearing one that reached to just above her knees (43, 44). Kellerman went on to star in movies and launched a range of one piece swimsuits (43, 44).

Dawn Fraser, after who the Elkington Baths were renamed in the 1960s, grew up in Balmain and initially trained at these Baths. She is one of Australia's most decorated athletes winning Olympic and Commonwealth Games medals and was the first woman to break the minute for the 100 metre freestyle, a record she held for 16 years (45, 46).

Water polo and rowing were both also popular leisure activities. Two rowing clubs were established on White Horse Point, (28), the Balmain Rowing Club in 1882 and the Balmain Working Men's Rowing Club in 1886 (also known as the Enterprise Rowing Club). The later was destroyed in a storm in 1917 (30) with only footings and steps visible today (29).

Balmain was an important industrial and maritime suburb in the second half of 19th and for most of the 20th century. The many jetties found on maps and in photographs transported raw and manufactured goods, and people (23, 24, 31, 32). The 1897 and 1906 maps, and a 1951 aerial photo (31) highlight the proximity of Elkington Park and White Horse Point to industries such as Mort's Dry Dock, the Balmain Colliery, Soap Works,

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Australian Gas Light Company and the White Bay Power Station (23, 24, 31). The Balmain Colliery was just a kilometre or so from Elkington Park, right next to Birchgrove Public School (26, 27). It operated from 1897 – 1931 and after coal mining of stopped methane gas was extracted until 1950. The coal mine shafts were only sealed in 1957 (27).

In 1925 the National Box Company established a business to the immediate east of the Elkington Park Baths on what is now called Fitzroy Avenue Reserve (32, 34, 35). It doesn't take long if you visit the Reserve to see the remains of buildings near the waterfront, cuts into the rock face and where the earlier jetty once was (36). The company made boxes and pallets for the transportation of goods that involved the milling of timber on the premises (32, 33, 34, 35). Industrial pollution (37) and the poor state of the Baths lead to complaints from the community to the Council in 1950 (38).

The Council undertook extensive renovations to the Dawn Fraser Baths to mitigate for rising sea levels winning the National Trust Heritage President's Prize for this work in 2022 (41). They had been modified many times and their size increased since opening in 1882, most notably in 1888, 1900, 1910, 1926, c.1984, 1993--95 and 2015 (13, 18, 39). The Baths are highly significant as the only surviving example of a fully enclosed, public tidal baths from the late--19th and early--20th centuries in Australia (12, 39).

Online resources

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/>

<https://dictionaryofsydney.org/place/balmain> with links to images

Online calculator to convert pre decimal currency to today's currency value

<https://www.rba.gov.au/calculator/annualPreDecimal.html>

Online calculator to convert area and length to current metric area and

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length

<https://www.industry.gov.au/data-and-publications/metric-conversion-tool>

Sydney's Aboriginal history

<https://www.sydneybarani.com.au/sites/aboriginal-people-and-place/>

An overview of Aboriginal people of coastal Sydney

<https://australian.museum/learn/cultures/atsi-collection/sydney/>

History of Aboriginal Sydney

<https://www.historyofaboriginalsydney.edu.au/about>

Significance of waterways to the Wangal people: This Place, Uncle Jimmy Smith (2009) 2.34 minutes

<https://www.indigenous.gov.au/news-and-media/stories/significance-waterways-wangal-people-place>

NITV, "Diving into defining moments of Australian Indigenous civil rights with the Freedom Rides"

<https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/diving-into-defining-moments-of-australian-indigenous-civil-rights-with-the-freedom-rides/6qxj5zu1r>

Published 20 February 2017

Our Dawn ABC documentary about Dawn Fraser's life and swimming career (2021) 29 minutes

<https://iview.abc.net.au/video/NS2144H001S00>

A history of women's swimwear

<https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/a-history-of-womens-swimwear/>

Lorinda Cramer, "Wool swimsuits used to be standard beachware – is it time to bring them back?"

The Conversation, December 19, 2022

<https://theconversation.com/wool-swimsuits-used-to-be-standard-beachwear-is-it-time-to-bring-them-back-195103>

The film official trailer YouTube clip Million Dollar Mermaid, 1.12 minutes

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Un0w7WyRgsc>

Million Dollar Mermaid YouTube clip 4.31 minutes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t5HufDgwD4w>

A NFSA collection of articles about Annette Kellerman including a timeline of her life

<https://www.nfsa.gov.au/collection/curated/annette-kellerman>

<https://www.nfsa.gov.au/collection/curated/who-annette-kellerman>

Fanny Durack at NLA

<https://www.nla.gov.au/digital-classroom/year-6/documenting-federation/themes/fanny-durack>

<https://olympics.com/en/news/12-july-1912-fanny-durack-becomes-the-first-female-olympic-swimming-champion>

NLA Women's sport

<https://www.nla.gov.au/digital-classroom/year-7/sport-and-australian-culture/women-sport>

Hannah Lewi, "From segregation to celebration: the public pool in Australian culture" The Conversation, September 5, 2017

<https://theconversation.com/from-segregation-to-celebration-the-public-pool-in-australian-culture-82916>

McIver's Ladies Baths at Coogee

<https://www.mciversladiesbaths.com/history>

Earliest book on swimming in English (translated from French) published in 1764

https://www.google.com.au/books/edition/The_Art_of_Swimming_Illustrated_by_Forty/ESH3reVKzj0C?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=google+art+of+swimming+thevenot+1764&pg=PP7&printsec=frontcover

NLA blog post on their first edition copy

<https://www.nla.gov.au/stories/blog/rare-book-highlights-swimming-1764>



NSW Years 7 – 10 History Syllabus links: Stage 4

This site study supports the Stage 4 key inquiry question: How do we know about the past? It also provides a complete site study as mandated in the NSW History Syllabus.

Student objectives

- Develop knowledge and understanding of the nature of history and significant changes and developments from the past, the modern world and Australia
- Develop knowledge and understanding of ideas, movements, people and events that shaped past civilisations, the modern world and Australia
- Develop skills to undertake the process of historical inquiry
- Develop skills to communicate their understanding of history

Historical concepts and skills

- Analysis and use of sources: students use a range of primary and secondary historical sources to understand the history of the site, and investigate source reliability and purpose
- Continuity and change: understanding changes in the area from pre European occupation to the modern pool and parks there today
- Comprehension: read historical texts and study photographs to sequence historical events
- Perspectives: interrogate later memories and recollections of an elderly resident
- Significance: appreciate the significance of the Dawn Fraser Baths along with recreational aquatic activities and the industrial heritage in the area
- Explanation and communication: students develop a narrative of the site using historical sources



Student outcomes

- Describes the nature of history and archaeology and explains their contribution to an understanding of the past HT4--1
- Sequences events, people and societies from the past HT4--2
- Identifies the meaning, purpose and context of historical sources HT4--5
- Uses evidence from sources to support historical narratives and explanations HT4--6
- Identifies and describes different contexts, perspectives and interpretations of the past HT4--7
- Locates, selects and organises information from sources to develop an historical inquiry HT4--8
- Uses a range of historical terms and concepts when communicating an understanding of the past HT4--9
- Selects and uses appropriate oral, written, visual and digital forms to communicate about the past HT4--10

Related Life Skills outcomes: HTLS--1, HTLS--2, HTLS--3, HTLS--5, HTLS--6, HTLS--7, HTLS--8, HTLS--9, HTLS--10, HTLS--11, HTLS--12, HTLS--13

NSW Years 7 – 10 History Syllabus links: Stage 5

The Dawn Fraser Baths site study provides a complete site study as mandated in the NSW History Syllabus and supports the Stage 5 key inquiry questions:

- What were the changing features of the movement of people from 1750 to 1918?

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- How did new ideas and technological developments contribute to change in this period?
- How was Australian society affected by other significant global events and changes in this period?

Student objectives

- Develop knowledge and understanding of the nature of history and significant changes and developments from the past, the modern world and Australia
- Develop knowledge and understanding of ideas, movements, people and events that shaped past society, the modern world and Australia
- Develop skills to undertake the process of historical inquiry
- Develop skills to communicate their understanding of history
- Develop a lifelong interest in History

The following historical skills and concepts are incorporated into the site study Continuity & change: investigate the use and occupants of the site from pre 1788 to the aquatic centre and surrounding parks encountered today

Cause & effect: increase in female participation in swimming and lifting of restrictions for swimming costumes and access to the Baths

Significance: understand the importance of swimming and its impact on shaping modern Australia

Comprehension: chronology, terms and concepts: sequence historical events using a wide range of sources

Analysis & use of sources: interrogate a wide range of primary and secondary sources to assess their reliability and usefulness to communicate aspects of the site's history

Explanation & communication: select and use evidence to communicate



about the past

Student outcomes

- Explains and assesses the historical forces and factors that shaped the modern world and Australia HT5---1
- Sequences and explains the significant patterns of continuity and change in the development of the modern world and Australia HT5---2
- Explains and analyses the causes and effects of events and developments in the modern world and Australia HT5---4
- Identifies and evaluates the usefulness of sources in the historical inquiry process HT5---5
- Uses relevant evidence to support historical narratives, explanations and analyses of the modern world and Australia HT5---6
- Selects and analyses a range of historical sources to locate information relevant to an historical inquiry HT5---8
- Selects and uses appropriate oral, written, visual and digital forms to communicate effectively about the past to different audiences HT5---9
- Selects and uses appropriate oral, written, visual and digital forms to communicate effectively about the past for different audiences HT5---10

Related Life Skills outcomes: HTLS---1, HTLS---2, HTLS---4, HTS---5, HTLS---6, HTLS---7, HTLS---8, HTLS---9, HTLS---10, HTLS---11, HTLS---12, HTLS---13

Depth topic 2a: Making a nation

- Living and working conditions around the turn of the 20th century, especially with regard to women’s participation in swimming



Topic 5a Popular culture (1945 – present)

- Contribution of Australian women to international sport

Years 7 – 10 Physical Activity and Sport in Society Syllabus

Students explore physical activity and sport from national, community and individual perspectives. They identify factors, and reflect on significant changes, events and new directions that have shaped identity and increased rates of participation for groups within society.

Stage 5 Physical Activity and Sports Studies Content Endorsed Course

Students demonstrate a broad understanding of the historical, social and cultural factors that have shaped contemporary views of physical activity and sport in Australia.

The historical sources on swimming, especially the sources about women and swimming, could be incorporated into the module, Australia's sporting identity. They are also pertinent to the Lifestyle, leisure and recreation module for the following Stage 5 student outcomes:

- discusses the nature and impact of historical and contemporary issues in physical activity and sport PASS5---3
- analyses physical activity and sport from personal, social and cultural perspectives PASS5---4