

VANTAGE POINT

HISTORY IS THE VANTAGE POINT FROM WHENCE TO UNDERSTAND THE FUTURE



The Wading Pool

Not to be confused with The Saltwater Baths located on the beach front between 4th and 5th Avenues. The Baths opened in 1927 and closed in 1971, during which time several generations of kids learned to swim and later became champions, without the help of the Mud Welks.

The wading pool was a public facility, situated between 8th and 9th Avenue. It was developed as part of the construction of the current stone seawall during The Great Depression from 1929 to the late-1930s.

The construction of the seawall provided work in return for relief payment

(sustenance or 'susso'), to many of the unemployed, and often itinerant families who were part of the 30% of the workforce unemployed at that time. The wading pool, located where the Aquatic Centre and gym now is, was completed in 1938.

It was filled and flushed by the tides and provided a safe, shallow swimming place for the kids, and, no doubt, many adults.

In 1966, responding to public concern expressed about a storm water drainage outlet's proximity to the pool's tidal inlet, there were discussions about the wading pool's fitness for use.

The pollution problem may have been exacerbated by the rapidly increasing population resulting in occasional flood runoff from the proliferation of grease-traps, back yard wastewater sumps and septic tanks, and who knows what else, channelled into the storm-water gutters and ultimately into the bay. The pollution problem, while not completely eliminated, was substantially reduced by the construction of the city-wide sewage system under the stewardship of Clem Jones in the late 60's, however the Wading Pool did not survive the changes taking place.

What happened to the pool's stone retaining wall? Was it dug out? Bulldozed in or built over? Call the Sandgate Museum if you can fill in the details of the pool's demise.



On a lighter note, the Pool provided excellent, permanent, untroubled water for the many model boat sailors in the district.

It was also home to an astounding number of Hercules Club Mud Welks taking advantage of the protected environment of the pool.

While about a meter deep at high tide, the wading pool was not much more than ankle deep at low tide. Except around areas of water turbulence at the slippery slide and the tidal inlets where it was a little deeper because the bottom was sand. Unlike the Heritage-listed Wynnum Wading Pool, also a 30's relief construction, which has a concrete bottom and is still in use.

The Olympic swimming pool, opened in 1973, has expanded to become the Sandgate Council Aquatic Centre and Gym, occupying some seven acres where families were free to enjoy the Bay's glorious sea front.