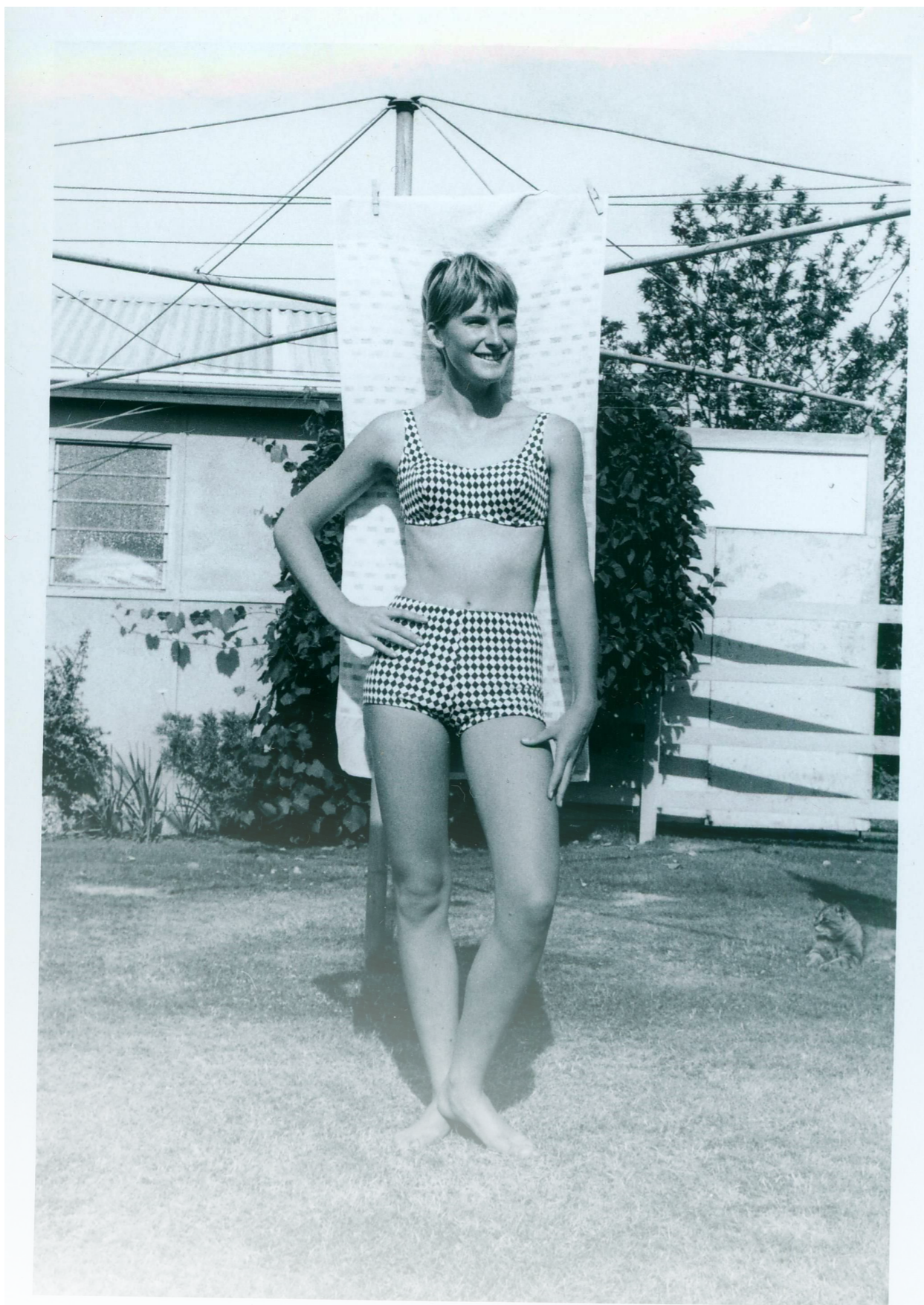


BATHING BELLE

*Favourites from the
Violet Rowe Swimwear Collection*





Strike a pose! Image Circa 1960. Holdfast Bay History Collection.

Take a step back in time and explore some of our favourite pieces from collector Violet Rowe's remarkable collection of unique swimwear.

Violet started curating her collection in 1957 at the age of 17 when she began work as a junior sales assistant in the fashion department at Myer Centre Adelaide.

The collection showcases the evolution of beach fashion and the iconic international and national fashion labels and designers who rose to fame during the 1930s to 1960s.

Though fashion fades, style is eternal.

You can see the Violet Rowe Swimwear Collection in person at the Bay Discovery Centre museum. Keep watching our social media channels to stay updated on opening times:

holdfast.sa.gov.au/BDC FB/Bay Discovery Centre

Browse the entire Violet Rowe History Collection:

www.holdfast.sa.gov.au/HistoryCentre

View beachgoers at Glenelg Beach in the 1930s:

<https://youtu.be/Lvxc3OmivE>



Matching Swimsuit, Bathing Cap and Bathing Shoes Circa 1930

Blue woollen one piece swimsuit, manufactured by "Botany Seagull". The piece has a high scoop neckline and a low cut back, a skirted front and back creating the illusion of a top and shorts.

Manufactured in Melbourne, the Botany Knitting Mills designed "Seagull" and "Black Lance" beach and swimwear.

The women's bathing slippers with flower fabric and blue rubber were manufactured by "Dunlop" in Australia. The pattern varies slightly between the shoes. The fabric edge is scalloped at the front of the shoe where it meets the blue rubber. There is a single blue and white bow at the centre on the top of the vamp.

The women's bathing cap is made of blue fabric with a rubber lining. The cap features an adjustable, yellow strap for under the chin.

OB-VR-0002a/b/c





Swimsuit Circa 1930s

Men's burgundy wool one piece swimsuit. Manufactured by "Exacto".

The top features tank style shoulder straps while the bottom has a skirted front and back for modesty.

OB-VR-0036



Swim Trunks Circa 1950

Men's light blue rayon high waisted swimming briefs with a modesty skirt front. Manufactured by "Ash".

OB-VR-0039

Swim Trunks Circa 1940

Men's black cotton high waisted swim trunks with modesty skirt front. Manufactured in Australia by Jantzen. Jantzen was a popular brand of swimwear established in 1916 in the United States of America. Its first Australian manufacturing factory was opened in 1928.

These swim trunks belonged to Violet Rowe's father, Edward Kershaw Annison.





Playsuit and Jacket Circa 1940s

Women's homemade blue and white polka dot cotton playsuit with matching crop jacket. The one piece playsuit has a high square neckline. The pattern features a blue background with white polka dots.

OB-VR-0006a/b



A group of friends picnicking on Brighton Beach. Kath Colley is picture in the center in white two piece bathers, Circa 1930s. Holdfast Bay History Collection.



Rita McPharlin and Zoe Gunner with Cherio Quizzy, the Australian Terrier and Gwyn Hopgood on the beach at Glenelg near Kent Street, 1943. PH-GL-1817.



Bathing Cap Circa 1930s

Women's white rubber swim cap with neck strap. The swim cap features a textured surface with flowers and leaves around the edges. The strap is adjustable and fastens with a press stud.

OB-VR-0052

Bathing Caps

In ancient times, people were known to have worn hair nets made from waxed taffeta, or synthetic silk, to keep their dos from getting damp. Rubber was introduced over a century ago and opened the door to many new inventions, including swim caps made from rubber-like fabric.

Early modern swim caps looked like aviator helmets; they had chin straps to hold them in place. By the roaring '20s, the invention of latex had led to the making of stretchier swim caps that fit right in with the styles of the day, considering head-hugging cloches were very popular.

During World War II, the availability of swim caps took a dive when rubber was widely used to make war materials and became sparse. Any woman who had one to protect her pricy salon 'do was considered a lucky gal!

Swim caps of the 1950s were colourful and textured, and still cherished by women who spent a lot of time setting and curling their hair. Elaborate, retro swim caps reached their apex.



Bathing Cap Circa 1950s

Women's pink rubber and tulle swim cap. Made in Great Britain with US rubber.

OB-VR-0058



Bathing Cap Circa 1960s

Women's white with yellow flower detail, rubber and cotton swim cap. Manufactured by Kleinert in Great Britain. Instructions to the wearer: "Be sure the rim is turned up above your ears not over them."

OB-SE-0046



Bathing Cap Circa 1950s

Women's orange rubber swim cap. The swim cap is textured with subtle 'Y' shaped pattern and a more prominent raised floral design.

OB-VR-0055



Adele Hustler nee Mazure, her mother Clarice and niece Sadie Murton on Seacliff beach Circa 1930.

PH-SE-0115

Swimsuit Circa 1950

Women's red and white stripe woollen one piece swimsuit. Manufactured by "Botany Seagull". The one piece has a v-shaped neckline with straps that cross over at the back and threaded through plastic circles to tie together. The front features a cut out midriff and modesty skirt.

Seagull swimwear was designed and manufactured by Botany Knitting Mills in Melbourne.

OB-VR-0007



Peter O'Sullivan

O'Sullivan became the first Australian swimwear designer to import to the United States.

From his Melbourne Botany Knitting Mill in Prahan, Peter incorporated imaginative design details such as buckles, decorative buttons, contrast trims and polka-dot patterns. He understood that the market was demanding an elegant and streamlined approach to swimwear and so he created a range of designs which were both practical and comfortable for swimming.

For the men, he designed the 'Bucaneer' style with a detachable top that could be easily be removed to become swimming trunks and then, re-attached for more coverage out of the water. For women, he designed the one-piece maillot with halter necks and V back cuts that were suitable for swimming while exposing more skin to the sun. His brands, Black Lance and Seagull Water Fashions, were part of the top Australian swimwear brands along with Kookaburra, Penguin and Speedo.



Seagull Botany design proof, 1937. ANMM ANMS0462[002].

Swimsuit Circa 1950

Women's white cotton and diamante one piece swimsuit. Manufactured by Rose Marie Reid and Tailored in Australia by Dowd Associates Pty Ltd.

Fabric is embroidered with diamantes, the front bodice is ruched and a decorative bow is attached to the top left bust area below the strap.

The shoulder straps are adjustable and the swimsuit has a structured inbuilt bra.

The top has a square neckline and the bodice features a modesty skirt at the front.

OB-VR-0018



Rose Marie Reid

From the mid-1930s to 1960s the name Rose Marie Reid was synonymous with beautiful, functional, and innovative women's swimwear.

Preferring to design on live models, Reid put an emphasis on an improved fit, a concept previously unknown in the swimwear field.

As she introduced tummytuck panels, stay-down legs, and inside brassieres, women's swimsuits became a hot fashion item for the first time.

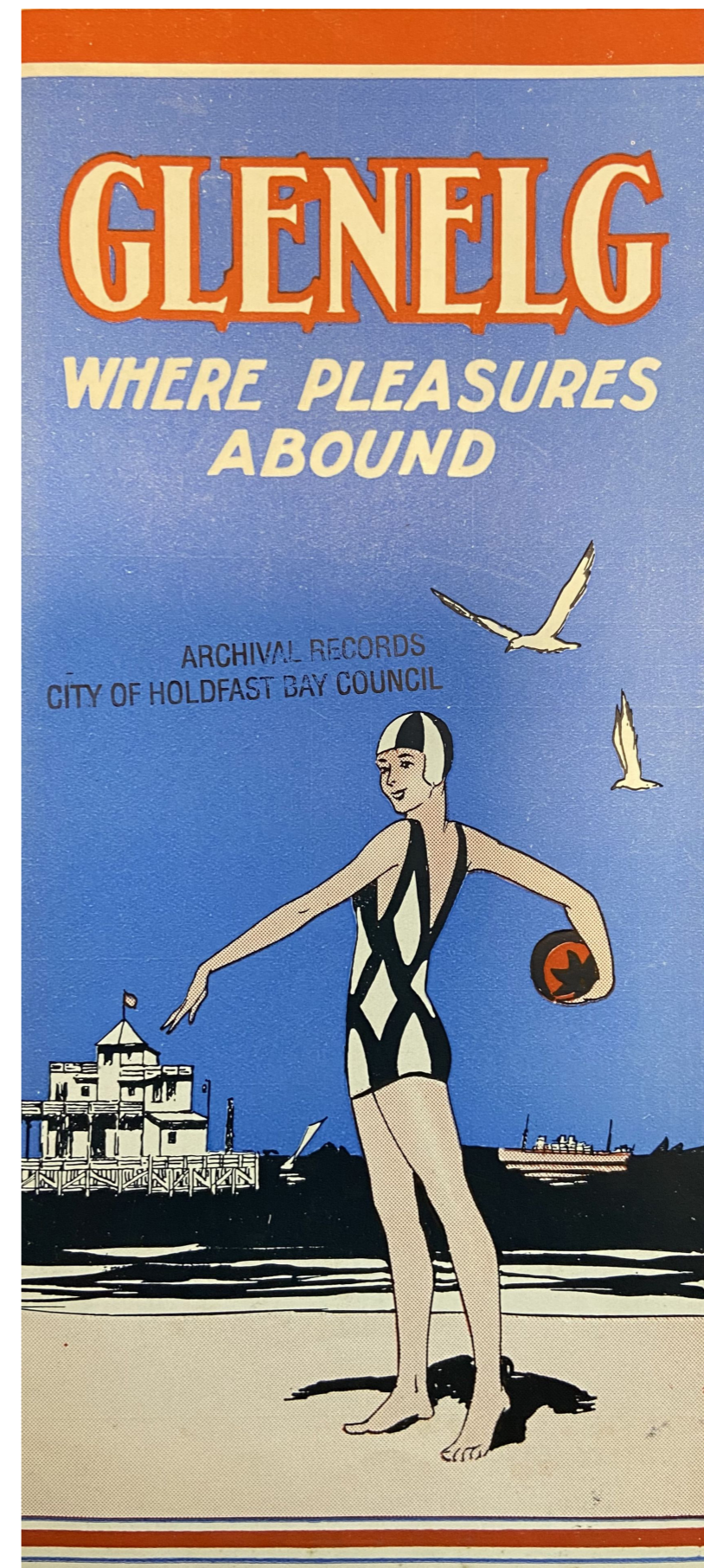
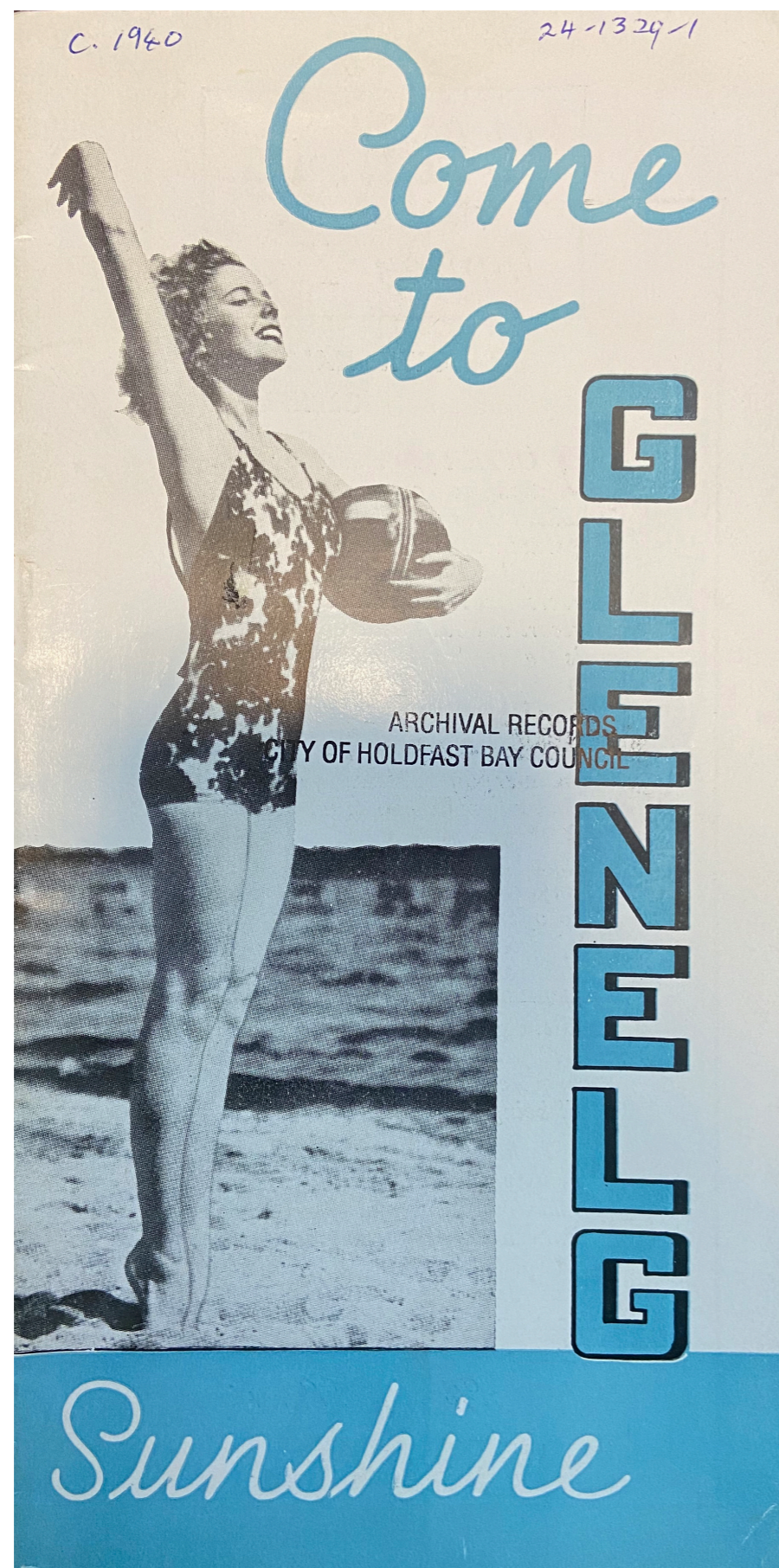
Operating on the assumption that "a woman should feel as lovely in a swimsuit as she does in an evening gown," Reid experimented with new fabrics and diversified the market

She designed for the bodies of all women, and was the first to provide suits according to women's dress sizes.

Rose Marie established a global, multi-million dollar fashion empire. Her swimsuits dominated the American market and were popular across Canada, Western Europe, South America, and Australia.

Rose Marie Reid working with a model on the design of the Sea Scallop swimsuit, Circa 1952. Courtesy Harold B. Lee Library.





Advertising brochures for Glenelg, Circa 1930 and 1940. Holdfast Bay History Collection.



Swimsuit Circa 1960s

Women's yellow, blue and green patterned bri-nylon one piece swimsuit. Manufactured by "Miss Jantzen" and in made in Australia. The top has a high square neckline with shoulder straps and an inbuilt, structured bra. The back is low-cut reaching down to the waistline. The swimsuit also features a modesty skirt front.

Jantzen was a popular brand of swimwear established in 1916 in the United States of America. Miss Jantzen swimwear was designed for the younger customer.

OB-VR-0026

Swimsuit Circa 1960s

Women's blue with white and yellow daisy flower patterned bri-nylon one piece swimsuit.

Manufactured by Jantzen for the 'Miss Jantzen' range in Australia.

The swimsuit features a sweetheart neckline and a low cut back.

The top has shoulder straps and an inbuilt bra.

The centre front features a silver metal zipper from the waist to the neckline with a circle hoop pull.

OB-VR-0023





Bathing Beauty Contest entrants, including entrants from Brighton, Glenelg, Semaphore, Henley, Grange and Broken Hill.

Second from left is Mary Redden nee Rennie, fifth from left is Cynthia Marshal and sixth from left is Isabella Norton nee Woolard.

The contest was held in aid of the RSL Building Fund in 1946.

PH-BR-0681



Women's Cat Eye Sunglasses Circa 1950s

Made in France

OB-VR-0060



Women's Sunglasses Circa 1960s

Made in Italy

OB-VR-0062

Did you know?

The earliest historical reference to sunglasses dates back to ancient China and Rome. The Roman emperor Nero watched gladiator fights through polished gems!



Madge McDonald holding Josephine Allen on Glenelg Beach in front of Dundrennan, Circa 1950. Holdfast Bay History Collection.



Swimsuit Circa 1950

Women's white, green and black patterned cotton bikini.

Manufactured by "Catalina by Sutex".

The top has a sweetheart neckline and the high waisted briefs have shirring at the sides and ruching at the back and front centre.

Catalina is one of the oldest clothing manufacturers in California.

They originally began as Bentz Knitting Mills, producing underwear and sweaters, in the 1920s.

In the 1950s, Catalina partnered with Australian manufacturer Sutex Industries, to create a line available to Australian customers.

The bikini was owned by Judith Maxwell who regularly frolicked along the Glenelg and Brighton beach while visiting her grandparents.

OB-VR-0070a/b



Swimsuit Circa 1960

Women's light blue bri-nylon bikini. The top has a scoop neckline and is bordered by a white stripe. It has an inbuilt bra lining. The briefs are high waisted and elastic with two bands of white bias binding on the waistband.

OB-VR-0028a/b



Swimsuit Circa 1970

Women's red and white floral and leaf pattern cotton string bikini. The straps tie at the back of the neck, forming a halter neck. The top is adjustable by moving the triangles along the strings. This also creates ruching at the base of the triangle.

OB-VR-0030a



Beach fashions on the Glenelg Jetty, Circa 1972.
Photo taken from the Jetty looking towards the Pier Hotel and Moseley Square.

PH-AL-0025

From Wool to Lycra

The first real bathing suits were made of wool and cotton making them heavy when wet. The colours available were basic: red, blue or black. The one-piece bathing suit originates from the end of the **19th century** and was a major stepping stone in the history of swimwear. The new bathing suit had a collar and pants reaching over the knees.

The first bathing suits that revealed the back was designed in the **1930s**. By now, all-concealing two-piece bathing suits for women were common and men were allowed to wear a two-piece bathing suit that allowed the top to be removed.

It wasn't until after **World War II** that the modern bikini, which shows the navel and was the next major stepping stone in the history of swimwear was invented by engineer Louis Réard. He called his new two-piece outfit the 'Bikini', after the Bikini Island where a nuclear test had taken place that year. Réard wanted the excitement about his swimwear to be just as 'explosive'...

In the **1950s** the female shape was celebrated with built-in bras and an accentuated waist. But bathing suit bottoms still reached above the navel and tops fully covered the bust. Men started to wear nylon bathing suits, mainly trunks.

In the late 1950s Lycra was invented, which made bathing suits much more durable, comfortable and easier to dry. By the **1960s** curved hips became more accentuated and the song "Itsy-Bitsy-TeenieWeenie-Yellow-Polka-Dot-Bikini", became a radio hit.

This shy attitude towards bathing suits changed during the sexual revolution in the **1970s** as the history of swimwear was changed forever. Bikini tops were not much more than bras by now.

In the late 1970s and early **1980s**, the one-piece bathing suits came back, but this time high-cut, showing the hips.



Swimsuit Circa 1908s

Women's 'body glove' style swimsuit made of lycra and with front zip.

OB-VR-0033

You can find out more about the History of Holdfast Bay by visiting our museum, the Bay Discovery Centre.

Keep watching our social media channels to stay updated on opening times:

www.holdfast.sa.gov.au/BDC

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