

## Paipo - Belly boarding in Australia

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New South Wales # 2

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John Dunn 1964. Skimmer. Photo Dennis Markson.



Leigh Tingle at Boomer.

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### Maroubra to Bronte

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Bill Wallace (2009) recalled a couple of wooden boards from the late 1940s-early 1950s. These were described as being modelled on "something surfers at Bondi were using". They were said to be a flat piece of 1/2" ply, with two metal handles on top and a fibreglass fin. It was unclear where the design originated but they were reported to have

been ridden around Bronte. A 1960s Bronte beach scene in *Vesper* (2007, pages 128-129) contains several short boards, including one board that is clearly a bellyboard. Seddon (2008) has reported that Clyde 'Trux' Park rode bellyboards around Coogee around the 1950s and had formed some form of bellyboard club. Weepy Sims surfed with Park. Walding's *Surf-O-Rama* (Walding 2008) includes a picture of a 4'6 Wallace balsa board. Dated 1959, this board appears similar to the paipo of Wally Froiseth of Hawaii ([Footnote 1](#)).



Bill Wallace balsa bellyboard  
Mike Brown collection.



Bill Wallace balsa bellyboard  
Mike Brown collection.



Bill Wallace logo  
Mike Brown collection.

In 1958 Gordon Woods built a wooden bellyboard for Leigh Tingle, after Tingle and friends watched a 1957 Bud Browne surf movie at the Coogee Surf Lifesaving Club. Tingle's board was 4' long x 20" wide, with a handgrip on the deck and two fins. This board is of especial interest because Tingle has ridden this board continuously to the present day, including Hawaii in 1964 (Tingle 2009).



Bluey Mayes with two paipo boards, late 1950s. One of these boards is believed to belong to Leigh Tingle.

Photo courtesy John Sullivan and Dan Webber [Bondi Stories](#)

Leigh Tingle who had travelled to Hawaii in 1964, gave up work in 1967 to make bellyboards. With the assistance of the Opera House seat manufacturer who used a microwave press, he produced 30 plywood 'Barracuda' bellyboards. These boards were based on the board Gordon Woods had made for Tingle. Advertisements were placed in surfing magazines (Tingle 1967a, Tingle 1967b) and the boards sold but there were construction difficulties and there wasn't a second run (Tingle 2009). Tingle's surfing has been featured in two articles, which included a photo at Boomer Beach (Waldeck 1963) and another at Haleiwa (Unknown 1962). He also featured in Nat Young's "Let's Go Surfing" in 1967, a 13 part instructional television series that is no longer available.



Leigh Tingle with boards. Photo Leigh Tingle.



Leigh Tingle board specifications. Courtesy Leigh Tingle



Barracuda bellyboard ad. Photo courtesy John Witzig. Surf international, Vol.1(7) 1968



Leigh Tingle at Haleiwa. Spotlight on Hawaii, Surfabout 2(6), 13-19.



Bennett bellyboard  
Everbodys magazine 1964  
Courtesy Gary Crockett.



1960s Bondi bellyboard  
Photo Charles Moseley  
Courtesy Marilyn Moseley.

Robert McDermott who introduced ply bellyboards to the Gold Coast around 1965 came from nearby Maroubra, where both finned bellyboards and paipo style boards were being ridden (Peden 2010). Peden described experimenting with different designs. Three ply was preferred over 5 ply. Five ply "didn't have the flex, couldn't get flex in the turn". Peden also described lifesavers riding 12-18" handplanes which they could get their chest onto.

Alternatively, these handboards were ridden with two hands held out in front. These Maroubra surfers also travelled to Avalon with Dick Evans, a bodysurfer who was brother of Bob Evans, the editor of Surfing World.



Robert McDermott.  
Photo courtesy JXX



John Holden -1965. Skimmer.  
Photo courtesy Dennis Markson.



Dennis Markson. 1969 with skimmer. Photo courtesy Dennis Markson.  
Photo courtesy Dennis Markson.



John Holden -1965. Skimmer.

Pennings (1965) described a surf trip to a south of Sydney spot Willinga Reef. This area was popular with bellyboarder riders then and since. Rick Howell, Paul Koller and Ian Peden were identified as bellyboarders on this trip, as were John Williams, Ian Barrett and Bob Commys. Many of these Maroubra surfers also surfed Little Avalon. Dennis Markson and John Holden were other Maroubra surfers who rode plywood 'skimmers'. (Markson 2010).



Ian Peden

'New south coast discovery: Willinga Reef'.  
Surfing World, 6 (2), page 13-16



Ian Peden

'New south coast discovery: Willinga Reef'.  
Surfing World, 6 (2), page 13-16

Around the corner from Maroubra, Regan (2010) recalled Russell Hogg of Bondi as a bellyboarder. Charles 'Bill' Moseley shot footage of a bellyboarder in the shallows at Bondi (Crockett 2010) while George Quigley a local lifeguard rode a variety of surfcraft, including prone on half a surfboard which was transformed into a bellyboard. Another Bondi bellyboard connection concerns Kevin Brennan. The photograph below features, 'Wheels' Williams, Brennan and John Knobel. The board Brennan is holding belonged to Gary Johnson of Bondi. Gary loaned Brennan the board at times for assisting him with a paper run. Brennan was recalled riding this board prone and standing up (Johnson 2011, Conneely 2011) Gary rode the board for 4-5 years around 1965 at places like Harbord. He

called it 'pregnant' as it was fat underneath (Johnson 2011).



John Knobel, Kevin Brennan and Wheels Williams.  
Photo courtesy John Knobel.



1960s Bronte bellyboard.  
Photo Seddon (2008).

Bill Wallace (Wallace 2009) recalled that he made a small number of foam bellyboards boards, in the 1960's. In the mid 1960s, he stated that Peter Crawford was a "wizard" at riding them.



Ron bellyboard.



Ron bellyboard.



"The surf-riders were pausing gregariously between rollers on one of the last summer's long Sundays at Coogee, N.S.W."

Barlow, Keith. [Photographer]. (1962, October 3). A Dream of Summer. The Australian Women's Weekly, 30(18), 23.

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## Extras

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