



On Easter Saturday in 1908, advertisements in that morning's *Sydney Morning Herald* urged people to take 'Easter Holiday Excursions' to Manly Beach, 'Australia's Pride of Seaside Resorts', aboard the 'fine fleet of promenade-decked saloon steamers'. That Saturday, the steamers left Circular Quay for Manly every 15 minutes (adults fourpence, children tuppence), and the ones that arrived at Manly between 1.30 pm and 3 pm were met by free buses provided by the real estate agent Richardson & Wrench.

They provided the service because that afternoon they were holding an auction of a 'Magnificent Villa, Ocean View and Camp Sites' at the 'Freshwater Beach Estate, Manly', now 'Sub-Divided at Last'.

Lots of those lured to Manly for the auction were surely enticed by Richardson & Wrench's eye-arresting poster displayed around Sydney. Today that poster is one of 10 000 real estate posters in the National Library of Australia's Ferguson Collection.

More than 100 years after the poster was first displayed, it's still a rivetting artefact. The eye goes straight to a gorgeous, buxom but wasp-waisted young woman dressed in a revealing (by 1908 standards) and luridly red swimsuit. Then the eye follows this belle's bare and shapely arm gesturing towards the poster's vital information. Behind her, there's a pair of legs of someone who's just plunged into this paradise's irresistible surf. The poster makes the beach

and sea the vital selling point—the estate is 'Close to the BEAUTIFUL SANDY BEACH, (So Attractive to the Surfer)'—only five years after local authorities had, grudgingly, ceased to forbid by law the wickedness of sea bathing in daylight.

The collecting of these ephemeral posters was a piece of wonderful foresight. At the time, most of them must have been thrown away or used to line cockatoos' cages but now we see the surviving ones as important documents about who we were, where we wanted to live and what we could afford (the Freshwater Beach sites were offered at a deposit of £1 pound and payments of 10 shillings a month). Today we see them, too, as masterpieces of early twentieth-century commercial art.

There's a great deal going on in this poster, with not only an abundance of explicit promises ('Wide Streets ... First Class Garden Soil') but also implied promises of a sweet seaside lifestyle. And the sprig of tea tree at the foot of the poster is perhaps a hint of an attractively semi-rural ambience in a place where, in 1908, there was still lots of bushland.

By 1908, the once remote Manly, though seven miles from Sydney ('and a thousand miles from care', a steamship company was to famously add), was connected to the city by regular steamer and roads, and so commuting from and then back home to one's 'Magnificent Villa' at Freshwater Beach was a possible dream. ●

