



WILLIAM “BILL” BEACH

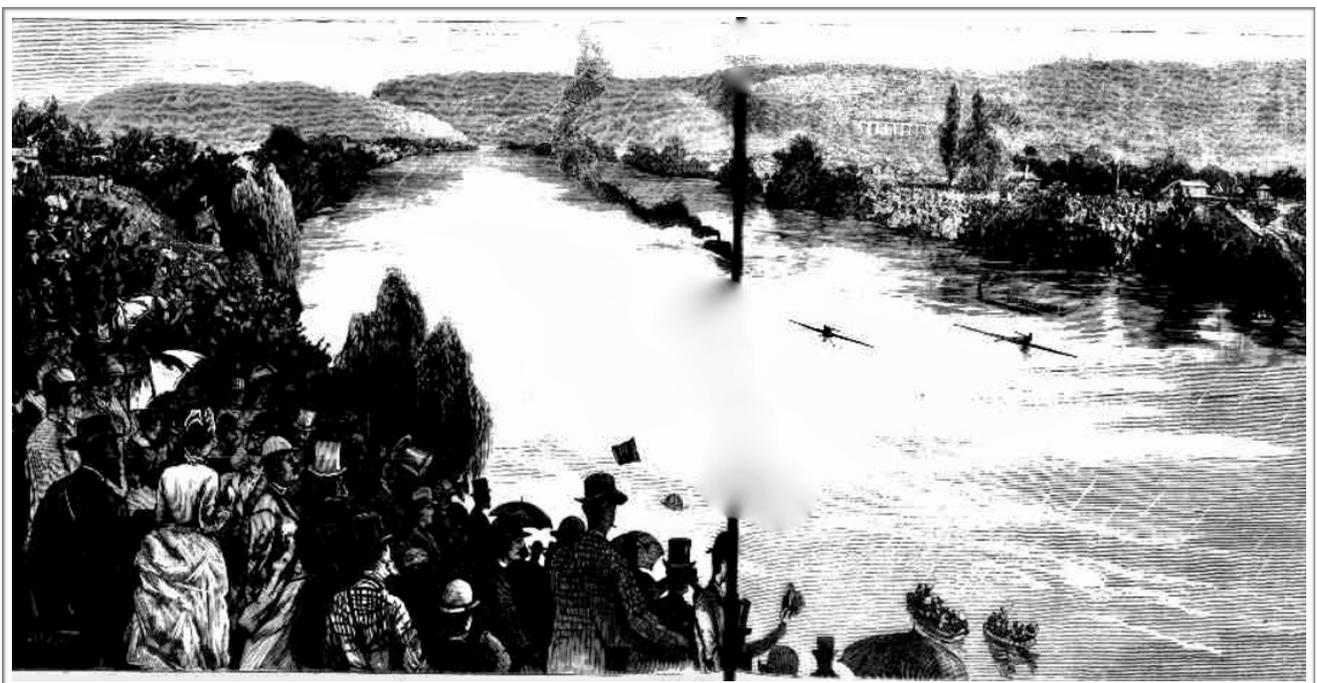
Australia's Undefeated Champion Sculler of the World

1850 - 1935

Restoration of the historical resting place of William Beach

William Beach's final resting place is with his wife Sarah in the Church yard of St Luke's Brownsville, near Dapto. Sadly the grave had fallen victim to the elements and time and had been in need of restoration for many years. A dedicated team consisting of Beach family descendants, Rotarians, Dapto Anglican Church and Dapto leagues Club worked together with the delicate preservation of the historical monument. Work was carried out by a professional restoration team from the Rookwood General Cemeteries Reserve Trust to ensure the heritage design was not compromised. Dapto Leagues Club not only funded the restoration work but were awarded ongoing guardianship of the William & Sarah Beach memorial ensuring it's upkeep for generations to come. On the 13 September 2017, the official unveiling ceremony of the restored grave was performed at the historical St Luke's Church, Brownsville. Many descendants of William and Sarah Beach attended the service and unveiling along with representatives from local businesses. Rowing was represented by NSW Rowing president Stephen Donnelly and Balmain Rowing Club president Joe Grech and Mark Campbell from Mosman Rowing Club.

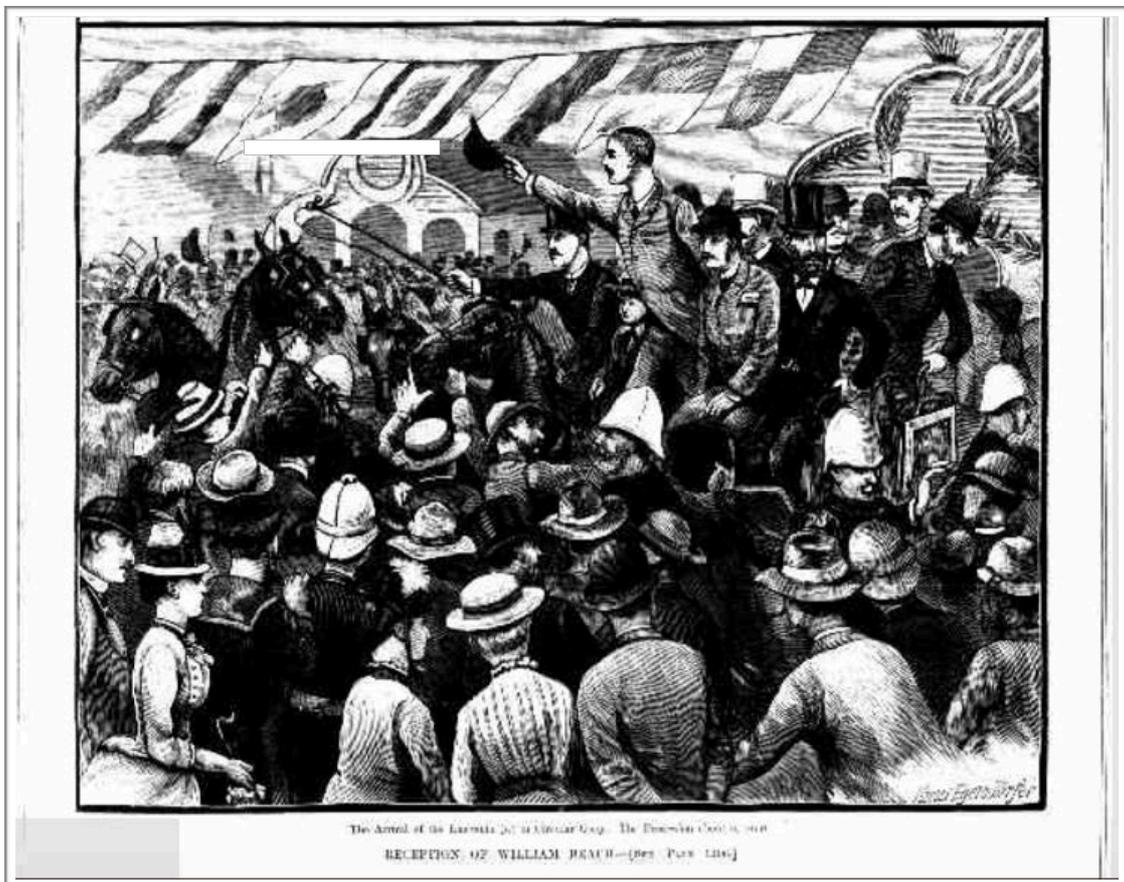
William Beach was known as the blacksmith from Brownsville, near Dapto, where he settled with his wife and brought up his twelve children. He first got into a heavy, fixed-seat rowing boat on Lake Illawarra, it wasn't until he was in his early thirties that he began rowing seriously eventually winning £25 for a race at Woolloomooloo Bay in 1881. The course was from Woolloomooloo Bay round Fort Denison and back. Sponsored by a publican, John Deeble, he upgraded his boat, won the Australian championship in 1884 and secured the world championship by beating Australian-based Canadian Ned Hanlan ('wizard of the sliding seat') a few months later. He accumulated victories and prize winnings until March 1886, when he and Deeble went to London. In August that year Beach won the International Sweepstakes on the Thames for a prize of £1,200. He defended his Thames title in September and won the world championship and £1,000 in November. He returned to a hero's welcome in Sydney. In November 1887 thousands of spectators saw him beat Hanlan again, on the Nepean. A year later, again in front a vast crowd on the Parramatta River, he beat Hanlan once and for all, for £500.



1887 Beach and Hanlon on the Nepean River

- 1884 W Beach Beat E Hanlan, on Paramatta River NSW (Aug 16) Time 20.28
- 1885 W Beach Bt. T Clifford, on Paramatta River NSW (Feb 28) Time 26.00
- 1885 W Beach Bt. E Hanlan on Paramatta River NSW (Mar 28) Time 22.51
- 1885 W Beach Bt. N Matterson, on Paramatta River NSW (Dec 18) Time 24.11
- 1886 W Beach Bt J Gaudaur, Putney to Mortlake (Sep 18) Time 22.28
- 1886 W Beach Bt. Wallace Ross, Putney to Mortlake (Sep 25) Time 23.5
- 1887 W Beach Bt E Hanlon on the Nepean (Nov 26) Time 19.55

Balmain Rowing Club were the first to show cordiality to William Beach on his arrival in Sydney in the early 1880's. When many were inclined to look down on the unknown blacksmith from the little town of Dapto, they extended the right hand of fellowship and membership. This recognition Beach reciprocated by wearing the club's colours as his own and through all his successes the Champion of the World carried the well known black and yellow of Balmain in all his hard fought victories on the Parramatta and the Thames. There is even a special design of black and yellow tiles on his grave, although the yellow has discoloured over the years.



William Beach is welcomed home from England in 1886

“William Beach had rowed a straight course - not only on the river, but also in life.”

William Beach died at his home “Champion Cottage” in Brownsville on 28 January 1935. His health had been failing for some time. It was a sad coincidence that he should die on Anniversary Day, as he was always a familiar figure at the Anniversary Rowing Regatta. His funeral took place at St Luke’s Cemetery, Brownsville and was one of the largest witnessed in the district. The chief mourners were Mr Beaches’ five sons and four daughters. Rowing was strongly represented, pall-bearers from the church to the graveside were ex-champion oarsmen - *Jim Stanbury, George Towns, Chris Neilson, Joe Andreoli, John Bennet Sharp (representing Balmain Rowing Club) and J Clifford.*

Rev R S Chapel conducted the service, he said that William Beach, throughout his life, showed two great characteristics - the spirit of determination and honesty. His grit was an example to the world and more especially to Australia. He had left a heritage to Australians - a heritage of which every Australian should be proud. William Beach had rowed a straight course - not only on the river, but also in life. William Beach leaves a name honoured not only by Australia but throughout the world.

Beverley Malone
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Grave before restoration

Ray Pearson, Joe Grech BRC, Beverley Malone BRC, Yvonne Downes & Steven Donnelly RNSW at newly restored grave



Family descendants with portrait of William Beach



Laying of floral tribute from Balmain Rowing Club



Descendants of William & Sarah Beach



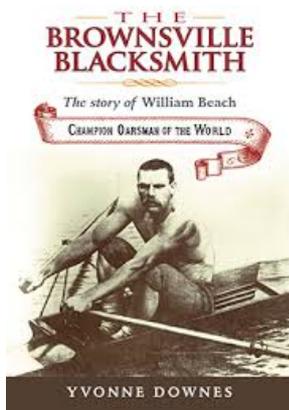
Dedication service at St Luke's Church Brownsville

Illuminated Address presented to William Beach in December 1886
 Upon his return to Australia from England as undefeated World Sculling Champion





William Beach memorial unveiled at Cabarita Park in 1938



The '**Brownsville Blacksmith**' is a book written by Yvonne Downes great granddaughter, of William Beach commemorating the life of the Dapto sculling champion of the world.

Acknowledgements Balmain Observer - 1/10/1887, Sydney Mail 3/12/1887, 11/12/1886, Balmain Rowing Club Archives - NLA Trove - National Portrait Gallery, Beach family descendants