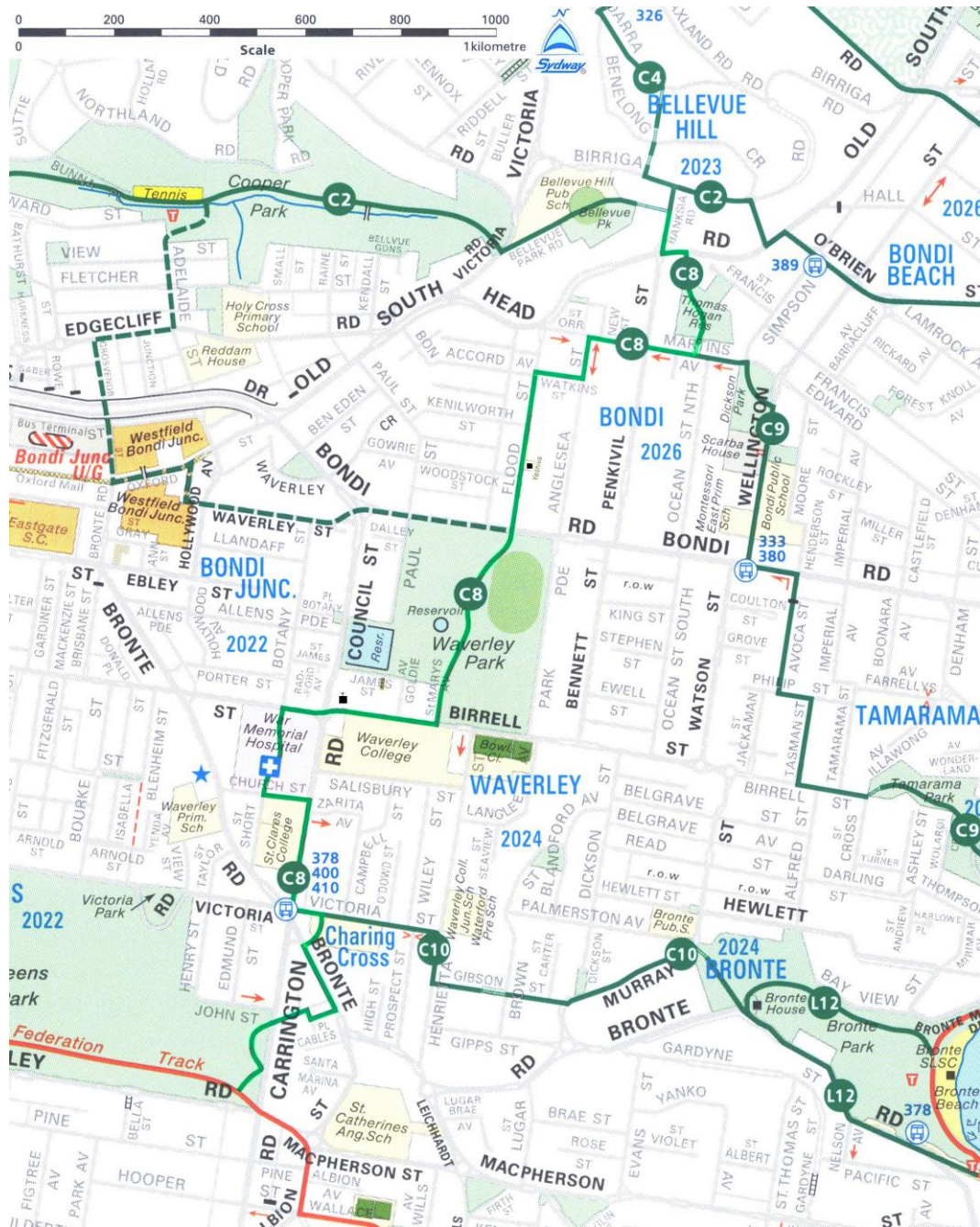


CIRCULAR QUAY TO SOUTH HEAD AND CLOVELLY

CONNECTING WALK C8: CHARING CROSS

BELLEVUE HILL TO QUEENS PARK



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| Main Walk: | ——— | Loop and Connecting Walks: | ——— | Alternative Routes: | - - - |
| Distance: | 2.6km. | | | | |
| Time: | 1 hour 15 mins. | | | | |
| Level: | Easy-moderate, some steps. | | | | |
| Transport: | Bondi Junction Station; New South Head, Bondi and Bronte Rd buses. | | | | |
| Connects with: | Federation Track; Connection Walks C2 (Cooper), C9 (Tamarama) and C10 (Bronte). | | | | |
| Facilities: | <i>Toilets:</i> Waverley and Queens Parks.
<i>Picnic spots:</i> Thomas Hogan Reserve, Waverley and Queens Parks;
<i>Shops or hotels:</i> Bondi Road, Charing Cross. | | | | |

The place names of London frequently re-emerge in Sydney but that is usually where the similarity ends. There is certainly little about Sydney's Charing Cross that would remind anyone of that noble London intersection where The Strand, the Mall, Whitehall and other streets meet Nelsons Column and the National Gallery. In fact very few Sydneysiders would even know where it was. But despite all that, there is no denying that Sydney's Charing Cross has charms of its own, or that this is a walk packed with unexpected interest.

This Connection Walk links connection routes C2 (Cooper) and C9 (Tamarama) with Connection C10 (Bronte) or the Federation Track. It therefore opens up many permutations which could form part of several great circular walks involving Centennial Park or the coast between Coogee and Bondi.

Leave Connection Walk C2 (Cooper) at Banksia Road, Bellevue Hill, at the bottom of the steps down from Bellevue Park.

Turn right in Banksia Road and cross the lights at Old South Head Road and then immediately left across Penkeville Street to follow OSH Rd downhill a short way Turn right into the cut-off Francis Street and then immediately right again down into Thomas Hogan Reserve. Climb the steps at the back of the reserve to Martins Avenue.

Thomas Hogan Reserve is a delightful discovery, a lawn in an almost hidden little steep-edged bowl of trees – near rainforest in its density and complete contrast with the area around it. Originally a bird sanctuary called Glen-Roona Reserve and before the twentieth century known as 'Bondi Glen', it seems to have been developed as part of a garden during the first half of the twentieth century by a local landscape gardener, Adolf Schneider, before it became a public reserve. Its small space contains a rich variety of mature trees – Port Jackson fig, palms, brush box, camphor laurel and more. There is a Guide Hall to one side and in the centre of the reserve at the back, a set of timber steps and platforms leading up to Martins Avenue.

At Martins Avenue, Connection Walk C9 begins, leading left to Tamarama, while this route, C8, turns right.

Turn right at Martins Avenue and cross Penkevil Street to a lane leading to Anglesea Street. Turn left and then right into Watkins Street and then left up Flood Street to Bondi Road.

At the top of the substantial steps to Martin Street, take a few steps to the left to see the house, *Mandalay*, up on the Ocean Street corner. A two storey c1890 Italianate Victorian villa with more than the usual amount of its original setting and fence, its earliest name appears to have been *Barrona*.

Further along, past Penkevil and Anglesea Streets, Watkins Street seems to have managed to keep a lot of its original feel, with its late Victorian brick terraces on one side and Federation semi-detached houses on the other, all amidst trees. Despite the differences in styles, they were probably all built around the turn of the century or just after with Victorian styles merging into Edwardian.

Around the corner, in Flood Street, there is a fine c1880 Gothic villa behind a vine-covered fence at Number 20 (*White Gables*), with a Juliet balcony. Across the road at Number 15, a later two-storey Federation house with arched verandah openings is also impressive. A couple of doors past *White Gables* a spanking new apartment development has emerged. Until August 2003, the apartment site was, and had been for 40 years, the Yeshiva Rabbinical College and High School. However, in 2003 the college abruptly closed in extraordinary circumstances described at the time as a 'family feud'. In 1993 a Melbourne mining entrepreneur donated five million dollars to the college - the entrepreneur's sister being both married to the Rabbi who was the College's spiritual head and on the College Board of Deputies. Over the next few years, however, there was a significant family falling out leading to the Melbourne brother successfully applying through the Supreme Court to get his money back, plus ten million more in interest and expenses. The money was not paid, and the bailiffs were sent in, closing the school and repossessing its contents. Some of the dispossessed rabbinical students left the country but others and the high school students were relocated to the Yeshiva campus opened a few years before at Dover Heights (see Main Walk, Section 4), itself a centre of some controversy. The school site was sold for development, although the saga continued with the Taxation Department investigating unpaid tax and the complex ownership arrangements.

Beyond the apartments, at Number 36, the Yeshiva Synagogue and community centre continues on the site, one of quite a number of synagogues in the eastern suburbs. 'Yeshiva' literally means 'sitting' and came to refer to classroom

teaching, or more broadly usually Orthodox Jewish institutions for teaching the Torah, Mishnah and Talmud to students of all ages.

Towards Bondi Road, the surviving older buildings are mostly Edwardian (or Federation) two-storey villas, some in varying states of departure from their origins. Cross at the lights to Waverley Park.

Cross Bondi Road to Waverley Park and pass through it to Birrell Street. Turn right, past St Marys Church, and cross at the Carrington Road lights to the south west corner. A few paces down Birrell Street again, enter the War Memorial Hospital grounds.

Waverley Park is a large and diverse area well worth exploring. Much of its lovely quality can once again be attributed to Adolph Schneider, who landscaped it as he did the Thomas Hogan Reserve. Once a farm area (*Flagstaff Farm*) and Chinese Market Gardens (the rate books show the names On Lee, Ah Foo and Ah Yam) with a hill known as Quinns Hill, it was purchased by the government for a park and reservoir site in 1879 and dedicated as a park the following year. The cricket oval dates from 1891, but the 1930s (remodelled c1951) pavilion disappeared to be replaced by a far larger and more modern one with greatly enlarged facilities in 2011. At the lower levels of the Park are Waverley Council Chambers, a council nursery, formal and native gardens, hedges and arbours, as well as war memorials and fine groups of trees including Norfolk and other pines, figs, Canary Island palms and native Banksia scrub. It is worth climbing the hill (possibly via the grand staircase) to the water reservoirs from where it is impossible to resent the interruption of the views to the ocean by such wonderful trees. The reservoirs here supply much of the eastern suburbs by gravity feed and include Reservoirs No. 1 (1887), No. 2 (1917) and No. 3 (1938). The first one was built as part of the Lachlan Swamps (in Centennial Park – see Federation Track notes) Scheme to supply water to Sydney. However, it came into use about the same time a new supply from the Nepean replaced the Lachlan Swamps scheme. The upper works of No 1 are very noble, a statement of the importance of these public works. Notice the use of the ancient Egyptian key-like symbol, the ankh. The ankh symbolised the key to life, a concept which included life-sustaining waters as well as air, food and life forces. The Egyptians often used the symbol to bless the water within a vessel to make it more powerful. There is a recurring reference to Egyptian monumentalism in NSW public works before WWII.

Climb down behind the hill, possibly past the bocce and netball courts, to either St Mary's or Goldie Avenues and through to Birrell Street. Across the street is the expanse of Waverley College, a Christian Brothers school, with its contemporary Performing Arts Centre down the hill and larger street front buildings uphill. The site was bought by the Franciscans in 1902 from the Barlow family and when opened the following year, the school was known as "Our Lady Mount". The Barlow House *Airmount* (originally built by John Birrell with two storeys and half-metre thick walls and once called *Ellerslie*) was used for the first classes although other buildings were soon added. *Airmount* was subsequently demolished, although a couple of heritage buildings do survive amongst the functional architecture. The school has its fair share of well-known 'old boys' – early rocker, Johnny O'Keefe, was a student here; as was General Peter Cosgrove, the best known military leader of recent times; and Peter Collins, NSW Opposition Leader in the 1990s. Tragedy has struck the school community as well. In 1979, four Year 8 students from the College died in the Luna Park Ghost Train fire. Three of them buried together at South Head Cemetery (see Loop 10).

Atop the main building fronting Birrell Street, a large white statue of Mary looks benevolently down across the street at namesake St Mary's Church - even if it is Anglican. St Mary's full name is St Mary the Virgin and this church - the work of the usual suspect when it comes to NSW nineteenth century Anglican churches, architect Edmund Blackett - was dedicated in 1864, replacing a nearby 1850s St Marys. The porch and organ chamber were added in 1872 and the heritage-listed organ itself in 1889. Its proposed tower and spire were never completed.

Up at the Carrington Road-Council Street crossing, the 82 metre high landmark Telstra communications tower is hard to miss - a constant point of reference for walking in the entire area. The tower carries traffic of all sorts of communication systems, most of which did not exist when it was constructed at the end of WWII.

Across the road and down the street from the entrance to War Memorial Hospital, Birrell Street has a number of interesting terraces and cottages. Nestling under the tower, is a turn of the twentieth century terrace (Numbers 208-236) which is one of the best surviving in the area.

Pass through the hospital grounds and exit to Church Street, turning left and then right into Carrington Road. Follow this down to the Charing Cross intersection with Bronte Road.

War Memorial Hospital is a potpourri of architectural pleasures and comes complete with a small café to enjoy the grounds from, grounds which constitute about three quarters of a property formerly owned by the Vickery family and whose houses and garden are important features of the hospital. Ebenezer Vickery (1827-1906) was born in London and

came to Sydney 1833 where his father opened a boot and leather business, laying the foundation for the family fortune. Ebenzer became a merchant, director of many companies, manufacturer (primarily of leather), a politician and a philanthropist, particularly in relation to the Methodist church. He gave the Lyceum Theatre to the Church, and was particularly associated with the Central Methodist Mission, and the YWCA & YMCA. Vickery built his first residence, *Edina*, on the property in the mid 1860s, naming it after the Scottish birthplace of his mother. Subsequently, the grounds were developed and other houses built for family members, including a new *Edina* in 1884. Ebenzer Vickery died in the UK in 1906 and at the end of WWI, on Anzac Day 1919, the family donated the whole property to the Methodist Church as a war memorial general hospital. In the 1980s it was converted into a geriatric hospital and remains now an aged care and rehabilitation centre affiliated with the Uniting Church.

On the right hand side of the Birrell Street entrance is *Ellerslie* (1880s), a two-storey villa with Italianate and Gothic features, apparently greatly expanded from an earlier building on the site. Vickery built it for his sons but the family lived here while the new *Edina* was being built. *Ellerslie* later became the first section of the new hospital to be opened.

On the left are two substantial semi-detached houses with fine iron balconies, *Banksia* and *Wytchazel*, also built in the 1880s for Vickery sons. Subsequently, both became nurses' quarters in the new hospital.

Further down the walkway, the 1932 Nellie Vickery Memorial Chapel is on the left. This brick chapel with stone porch and excellent stained glass has an extremely unusual octagonal cone-like roof with terracotta shingles and is a charming little corner of the hospital, close to the pavilion-like kiosk.

Beyond is the magnificent *Edina*, a white, square-towered Victorian Italianate mansion. The interior of this fine 1884 house is used by the hospital but the arched colonnaded verandah shows some of the tiles brought from Pompeii by the Vickerys. In front of it, the house's setting and the wonderful quality of the old estate has been preserved, with white classical and romantic statues circling the entrance approaches, pleasant lawn and majestic old trees (figs, Norfolk Island pines, Canary Island palms and more) and what was once a circular pond.

To the south of *Edina* is the pleasing three plus storey, terracotta tiled, more or less Mediterranean styled 1935 wing originally built as the Jeanie Morgan maternity wing. It has been altered somewhat over time. To the right of the former maternity wing, the attractive grounds lead through to Church Street, where the final group of interesting buildings stand on the footpath to the left (eastward). This is the stable block, dating from *Edina's* time and probably housing staff as well as horses and carriages. There have been changes over time, but with its loft still opening out onto Church Street, this group completes the country estate feel of the *Edina* estate which, within the hospital, remains a place where the elegance of wealthy late-Victorian lifestyle can be glimpsed.

Church Street was the original location of St Marys Church, now in Birrell Street, but the area from the corner down Carrington Road is the site of a different church. A group of Irish Poor Clares sisters arrived in Sydney in 1883 and were given charge of a school which moved here as a convent and St Clares College for Girls, after the site was purchased in 1885. Originally a terrace of three houses, a boys school was added in 1902 and a chapel in 1917. In time, the boys school became the co-educational St Charles Primary School.

Across the road, Number 36 is a very grand pre-WWI Federation mansion with a symmetrical design, still with something of its original setting and fence, another reminder that this was once an area of fine houses. The intersection with Bronte Road and Victoria Street is Charing Cross, originally intended to be the centre of the Waverley municipality, hence the location of the pleasing classical revival former Post Office (now golf shop). It was originally called Charing Cross Post Office when it opened in 1923 but the name was changed in 1940. Steam Trams began running to here in 1881, and later electric trams continued onward to Bronte.

Cross Bronte Road and Victoria Street past the hotels and then Bronte Road again and into Victoria Street heading east.

The 1935 **Charing Cross Hotel** is little changed since the art Deco building replaced an inn built on the site by William Newland in 1857. Originally *Newlands Inn*, its name was changed to the *Charing Cross Hotel* in 1859. Opposite it is the rather swish 1940s International and Art Deco style **Robin Hood Hotel**, so streamlined and moderne it could be a very large express steam train racing for Bondi Junction. Like its neighbour, it remains in excellent condition inside and out. It is the third *Robin Hood*, the first being an 1850s inn on a nearby site. Its licensee was a Patrick Walsh who was distinguished not by his skills as an archer (or possibly in robbing rich patrons to help poor ones) but by being struck by lightning whilst standing in the bar. His trousers and one of his boots were torn off and his leg badly burnt but he survived for several more years. In the 1880s the *Robin Hood* was relocated to the present site, though this building was replaced by the present one in the 1950s.

Some interesting stone shops survive from the earlier era of Charing Cross in Bronte Road but for the moment continue east a short way down Victoria Street. On the northern side of the street is the not entirely beautiful **Grahame Memorial Presbyterian Church**, built in 1897, next to its 1885 Church Hall. Like a number of Presbyterian Churches in Sydney, the name reflects not a Saint but a benefactor, whose name is recorded on its foundation stone. The church has another memorial, this one to Peter Dodds McCormick (1834-1916), a church elder who was also the composer of *Advance Australia Fair*. A missionary worker and preceptor of the Choir of the Presbyterian Church in NSW, and neighbour of the Methodist Vickers, Dodds used music as a means of engaging young people in the church.

However, the church prize for this area goes to the one immediately along on the southern side, the imposing white **Mary Immaculate Church**, dedicated to St Charles Borromeo. It is the fourth in a succession of Catholic Churches hereabouts, the last two having been on the St Charles School site in Carrington Road. In 1879 the Franciscan Order took over the parish and in 1891 they built a Friary next to this site. The original Friary was damaged by fire in the 1980s and demolished, although there is substantial more recent Friary accommodation still next to the church. In 1913 this church was built next to the Friary in a Romanesque style but in 1929-30 the façade was completely remodeled to its present classical style with its Cathedral-size flanking bell towers. The church is usually open. Entering in under the organ loft, the classical theme continues at the altar and, particularly, with the paintings of the Seven Joys of Mary in side bays and on the sanctuary wall. These were the work of Italian artist Cesare Vagarini, formerly a professor of fresco painting in Milan. How he came to produce these works is a remarkable story. In the 1930s, the church hierarchy had a number of unacted-upon plans to add paintings to the new interior. Meantime, Professore Vagarini was commissioned to fresco a new Franciscan church in the Holy Land. He was working there when Italy entered the war in 1941, at which point he was interned by the allies and eventually sent to Tatura POW Camp in Victoria. Seizing this heaven-sent opportunity, the Waverley Friars were able to arrange his release early in 1945 and he came to Charing Cross to begin work. International convention, however, required that he be repatriated to Italy, which he was in 1948 with three of the panels completed. The remainder were done in his San Gimignano studio in the 1950s, the final painting – the *Adoration of the Magi* – being put into place in 1959.

Connection Walk C10 to Bronte continues eastwards along Victoria Street from the church. The Charing Cross Connection (C8) however, turns back (westwards) to eventually link with the Federation Track at Queens Park.

Either walk back to the Bronte Road intersection or take a short cut through the car park next to the church to Bronte Road. Turn left and cross Bronte Road, and shortly before reaching the road junction at Albion Street, take the signposted Judges Lane to the right. Turn right, again, behind the shops, and follow the lane around, left, to Carrington Road. Cross over to Queens Park.

Near the Bronte Road intersection some older commercial buildings, including Number 254 which seems the oldest, are mixed in with the mostly late nineteenth century shops. Near where the lane from the car park emerges is a remnant of an 1890s house, *Minnamurra*, now a cafe. The largely Victorian or Federation era ribbon of shoptops has some atmosphere, and although there are obvious exceptions, some of the modern additions have been designed to complement its character. There are more fine examples of Victorian shops just beyond Judges Lane at the start of Albion Street.

Signposted Judges Lane is almost opposite where Bronte Road turns away left from the shops. Ducking down the lane reveals a bit of old Bronte with several weatherboard workmen's cottages surviving happily behind the shops. Continue to the right and then left down the now very concrete channel of laneway out to busy Carrington Road, across which are the upper reaches of Queens Park with its westward vistas. The park was created along with Centennial Park in 1887 and, like it, had been part of the water supply reserve for the Botany (or Lachlan) Swamps scheme.

Immediately opposite Judges Lane a path leads left, downhill to join the route of the Federation Track in Queens Park.