

Historical Notes and Background

Day 1:1 - Circular Quay to Milsons Point Station

(1) **Circular Quay**, in Sydney Cove, was the site of the first European settlement in Australia. Sydney Cove originally extended several streets further inland but the mudflats were reclaimed and from 1844 to 1855, a semi-circular stone wharf was built (the first part by convicts), around the head of Sydney Cove, providing an effective system of quays for the warehouses that once lined its western and eastern edges. Over time, 'semi' was dropped from the name 'Semi-Circular Quay'. Several generations of ferry wharves here have served the city since the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The eastern end of the Quay was, into the 20th century, used by ocean-going ships – passenger liners and wool ships. Stone wool stores survived there until the 1960s and the undistinguished contemporary buildings which replaced them were in turn replaced in the 1990s by the present complex derogatively known for a time as 'The Toaster'.

(2) The eastern wharves led to **Bennelong Point and Sydney Opera House**, once a tidal island named for the famous Aboriginal who had a cottage there for a time in the days of the first settlement. Bennelong, captured and eventually celebrated friend of the first Governor, Arthur Philip (Governor 1788-1792), visited England and was presented to King George III, but ended his days far more sadly at Kissing Point on the Parramatta River. By 1821 the island had been linked to the headland and a stone fort (Fort Macquarie) built. In 1901 this was replaced by a large castellated tramshed and terminus. After the closure of the Sydney tramway system at the end of the 1950s, the shed was demolished and an international architectural contest mounted for a new Opera House on the site. The design selected was that of Danish architect, Jorn Utzon (1918-2008), and work commenced in 1959. Difficulties in working with government ministers led to Utzon's departure from the project and when the iconic Sydney Opera House eventually did open – after huge blowouts in construction time and cost – in 1973 – its external appearance reflected the Utzon vision, while the interior was pure Public Works Department. Recent work has regained some aspects of Utzon's vision.

(3) A lift rises to the **Cahill Walkway** near the eastern end of the Cahill Expressway viaduct. Following the walkway right and up towards the Harbour Bridge offers excellent views of Sydney Cove and soon illustrates how the Expressway became the dividing line between city and Rocks development after the Green Bans of the 1970s. George Street looks particularly noble and late Victorian from the walkway, while further uphill, Gloucester St is a window into the old Rocks. The walkway turns north near the tollgates, where ...

(4) a large modern building houses a Youth Hostel built over and preserving an area of 1990s **archaeological excavation** off Cumberland St involving the narrow lanes and modest stone foundations of dozens of houses, shops and the odd pub, torn down in the post-Plague demolitions from 1902 to about 1915. Another modern building is the City Council Recreation Centre, beyond which are the Bridge Stairs.

(5) These stairways are the point from which the **Sydney Harbour Bridge** opened on 19 March, 1932, it was the fulfilment of more than a century of dreams and plans. In 1915 the NSW Government approved the scheme of the Chief Engineer of the Public Works Department, J.J.C. Bradfield, for an underground city railway and Harbour crossing. Work began in 1923, after the English firm Dorman, Long and Co won the tender and the arch design had been adopted. Credit for the design became a controversial subject but, in effect, is shared between Bradfield, and Dorman and Long's consulting design engineer, Ralph Freeman. Dorman and Long built the 39,000 tonne, 503m span steel arch and the granite-faced concrete pylons, while the 3km of approaches were built by the Department of Main Roads. The arches - held in place by banks of cables anchored into the ground behind the rising pylons - were built simultaneously from both shores with giant 600 ton cranes creeping out along them and hauling the steelwork into position beneath. The two ends met in August 1930. By then, Australia was in the grip of the Great Depression and the 1,600 workers engaged on the project were doubtless glad of the work, despite hard and dangerous working conditions. Sixteen workers were killed and many injured on the project.

The opening contributed to the romance of the Bridge when former military officer, Francis de Groot, attached himself to the Governor's mounted escort and then rode out and slashed the official opening ribbon moments before Premier Jack Lang was to officially cut it. De Groot was arrested and fined, but his action underscored serious political tensions in NSW at the peak of the Depression. A member of the New Guard, a militant right-wing organisation, de Groot's action was intended as a protest against the radical

Labor Premier. On the day, however, the incident was a small blip in the celebrations which featured a 2km long parade, fly- and sail-pasts and the opportunity for more than a million people to walk across.

The Bridge Stairs offer further fine views of the Rocks, the Opera House and Harbour, before dropping down to the Bridge Walkway, which is also linked by a tunnel under the Bridge roadway to Observatory Hill.

Originally, the Bridge had two rail and two tram lines, as well as the equivalent of six road lanes, the tramlines being where the two Cahill Expressway road lanes now run next to the bridge walkway. The trams were withdrawn in 1959. Immediately after the start of the walkway from the stairway, the closed off entrances to former tramway tunnels can be seen under the road deck.

(6) The **Pylon lookout (entrance fee)** in the southern Pylon is accessible from the Bridge walkway, and offers extensive displays and views from its 87m high parapet. In 1932, this was by far the highest viewing point in Sydney. This Pylon's use is a little different to that of one of its opposite numbers on the north side which is used as an exhaust stack for the Harbour Tunnel which crosses under the Harbour east of the Bridge.

Immediately beyond the Pylon, grey clad Bridgewalkers are usually encountered clambering up through the roadway to climb the arch itself to its summit about 134m above water level. At least these climbers will come down slowly. On average, every three or four days for the seven months after its opening in 1932, someone suicided from the bridge, an extraordinary figure that must have been fuelled partly by the economic depression. These days, traffic accidents average about one a day, but there were many more in the first year as well, even though there was only a fraction of the number of motor vehicles. This was partly because there were no lane markings and cars wandered about to take in the view. After September 1932, when two policemen were killed by a wandering car, the first centre line in NSW was painted (in white) on the bridge roadway.

Beyond the North Pylon, steps lead down to Broughton Street at Kirribilli near the entrance to Milsons Point Station.

Day 1:2 - Milsons Point Station to Quiberon Park, Lavender Bay

(7) **Milson Point** is named after James Milson, a Napoleonic Wars veteran who arrived in Sydney in 1804, and was given a land grant for this part of the north shore, building what was probably the first house in the area. He prospered until a bushfire destroyed almost everything in 1826 including his title deeds. Unfortunately, a later Governor had granted the same land to others and the protracted argument resulted in Milson retaining only a small part of the land. Nevertheless, his family (whose descendants remain here) dominated the early development of the area. Milsons Point was not much more than a maritime village until late in the nineteenth century when ferries, trams and the railway made it a commuting centre. The construction of the Harbour Bridge cut a swathe through the commercial centre, with over 500 properties and whole streets disappearing and it was not until the 1970s and '80s that massive commercial development and the Warringah Expressway construction began changing its appearance again.

(7) Both **North Sydney Pool** (opened 1936) and **Luna Park** (opened 1935) stand on the site carved out of the cliffs and reclaimed from the bay for the former Dorman, Long and Co Harbour Bridge construction workshops. Before that, this had been the site of the first Milsons Point Railway Station from 1893 until the bridge opened in 1932, which linked to ferry wharves located where the Bridge Pylons now are. The pool was the aquatic centre of the 1938 British Empire Games and between 1936 and 1976, 86 world records were set here – a world record in itself. Many of Luna Park's original rides came from Adelaide's recently closed Luna Park. Immensely popular until the 1960s, the Park suffered closures and uncertainty from 1979, after a Ghost Train fire in which 7 died. After upgrading and reopening in 1995, it was suspended again through resident protest at noise. Re-opened in 2004, controversy continues in the face of associated redevelopment proposals. The boardwalk leads past it and the once extensive railway yard. After the new line to the Bridge was opened, the old line and yard have been used for off-peak train storage. Near the end of the Lavender Bay boardwalk, look for artist Peter Kingston's small iconic objects and literary characters peeping from the bushes.

(8) **Lavender Bay** is named after George Lavender, boatswain of the convict hulk *Phoenix*, which was moored in the bay in the 1830s and who lived here after he married Susannah Blue, a daughter of Billy Blue, the West Indian former convict who left his name and mark on the peninsula Blues Point. Here, too, were the 1881 baths of the large Cavill Family who between them invented or introduced the Australian Crawl and Butterfly strokes, and held many swimming records. Men's and women's baths remained here well into the 20th century.

The railway viaduct arrived in 1893 cutting off the houses and gardens which became Watt Park. The **steps** through the viaduct arches lead to Walker Street with its luxuriant central growth. The first house, *Berowra*, was once the Station Master's house.

(9) Artist Brett Whiteley (dates) had his home and studio in the towered house on the eastern side of the Walker Street steps. His wife, Wendy Whiteley, has created a delightful '**secret garden**' in the gully between the house and railway line.

(10) **Quiberon Park**, at the bay's western end, retains some evidence remains in the form of a slipway and winding gear of another 19th century industry, boatbuilding, which continued here until 1987. **Watt Park**, with its lovely trees, is through the arch, was once the site of several substantial houses, of which there is also some evidence.

Day 1:3 - Quiberon Park, Lavender Bay to Waverton Park, Berrys Bay

Blues and McMahons Points share the same peninsula between Lavender and Berrys Bays.

Bayview Street, from the mid-nineteenth century, with its natural beauty and convenience, was part of a working class area that became home or a centre of activity for many artists and writers. Occupants included Conrad Martens; Henry Kendall; Arthur Streeton; Norman, Lionel, Rose, Percy and Jack Lindsay; Will Dyson; Henry Lawson; Hugh McCrae; Lloyd Rees; Roland Wakelin; Joshua Smith; Geoffrey Lehmann; Fred Cress; Brett Whiteley; Peter Kingston; and John Firth-Smith, amongst others.

(11) **McMahons Point** is named for Michael McMahon, an Irish-born brush and comb manufacturer and a prominent local from 1864, and later its Mayor. The reserve at the southern end of East Crescent St offers fine bridge and harbour views. Nearby steps on the Lavender Bay side lead down to McMahons Point wharf. Before the Harbour Bridge opened, this area was a hive of maritime industry and ranks of ferries waited here for the peak hours. The wharf was served by trams via Blues Pt Rd and Henry Lawson Av, the old tram turning circle obvious in the road outside the wharf. Until his death in 1922, Henry Lawson, the writer, frequently trudged from the ferry wharf home to North Sydney via the hotels of Blues Point Road.

(12) **Blues Point** was named after Billy Blue, an ancient West-Indian convict granted most of the Point in 1817 after establishing a rowboat ferry service (for which he was dubbed 'The Old Commodore' by Governor Macquarie). Several buildings and area names remain with associations to the extensive Blue family. At the start of Blues Point Reserve note the ramp into the water at the end of Blues Point Rd. Until the Harbour Bridge opened, this was a major landing point for vehicular ferries crossing to Dawes Point. The Reserve has some interesting areas to explore – its upper and lower levels, old steps, a WWII observation post, and evidence of quarrying and of earlier buildings. These buildings included Billy Blue's farm cottage, a later house on the Point called Gibraltar and the Edmund Blackett-designed house, Bellvue (c1872), purchased in 1873 by Moses Bell, who, in 1872, shared with B. O. Holtermann the discovery of a 286kg mass of gold and quartz at Hill End. The gold made their fortune and bought them both to the area as householders. Holtermann's house, occupying the crest where Shore School now is, had a tower (still there in modified form) from which superb panoramic photographs of the area were taken. Bellvue was demolished to make way for Architect Harry Seidler's prominent 25 storey Blues Point Tower (1961). The not always affectionately regarded 85m tall Tower was also a landmark in urban organisation as well as design, signalling the beginning of high rise living in Sydney. The average price of the 144 apartments in 1961 was \$7,000. The Tower concept originated in a 1958 Seidler design to demolish most of Blues-McMahons Points in order to build similar tower blocks throughout. Despite this, convict-built Blues Point Rd, together with West Crescent St, retains many modest nineteenth century cottages and terraces, some of them once the homes of the marine and timber workers from the waterfront industries which once ringed the peninsula.

(13) **Sawmillers Reserve** is an attractive waterfront park on Berrys Bay which was, from 1880 to 1982, the site of the large Eaton's sawmill and timber yard. A few relics remain here to be explored, though generally, little is now left of the waterfront industry (wharves, sawmills, boatyards, gasworks, oil and coal stores, etc) which once dominated the waterfront west of the Bridge. The rail tunnel first met at Lavender Bay emerges from the hillside behind the Park. Though not on the direct walk route, there is an interesting waterfront link across apartments north of the park which leads to the remaining marina and a steep climb back up Munro St to rejoin the main route.

After climbing the zigzag to Munro Street and crossing the rail bridge to Dumbarton, follow it and the rail line downhill and turn left into John St. This leads into the lower level of Waverton Park.

(14) **Waverton Park** was reclaimed during dredging to improve water access to the BP Berrys Bay Oil Terminal. The terminal, now removed, has been replaced by an imaginative park on the rocky western shoreline. On the ridge above the eastern end of the park sits a stone house in Commodore Crescent, its oldest portion built in the 1830s for a son of Billy Blue. On the level lower, and closer to Woolcott St, is a decaying old two storey cottage, possibly once the house of a caretaker on the Wollstonecraft estate which

occupied much of the area. The upper section of the Park was built up with coal waste from the former Oyster Bay Gas Works. The Waverton Park area was popular with artists of the post-WWII Northwood Group who included Lloyd Rees and Roland Wakelin.

Day 1:4 - Waverton Park, Berrys Bay, to Horace Street, Waverton

(15) The former **BP site park** opened in 2005 after state government intervention to save it and other waterfront sites from development. It provides a dramatic public area which imaginatively reflects the significant industrial heritage of the site. The rocky isthmus always had an element of drama about it, even before the sheer, semicircular cliffs were cut to accommodate oil storage tanks, its heights were known as 'Gibraltar'. Balls Head Rd was built by **Alexander Berry** (1781-1873) and **Edward Wollstonecraft** (1783-1832) to access the wharf and warehouse they constructed here in the early 1800s.

The Waverton and Wollstonecraft areas were once part of the 524 acre *Crows Nest Estate* granted to Wollstonecraft in 1825, and later inherited by his partner and brother-in-law, Berry. The pair operated a huge and productive property near the mouth of the Shoalhaven River – the town of Berry being named after Alexander's family. The Estate was progressively subdivided in the last parts of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth, with Balls Head and Berry Island being kept as public reserves.

Wollstonecraft and Berry's buildings were later used as a coaling depot, boatyards, a distillery and a military depot for the NSW Torpedo Corps into the 1880s. Early in the twentieth century the Anglo-Persian Oil Company established itself on the site and by 1923 large oil storage tanks began to be constructed on the site – there were 31 by the 1960s. Commonwealth Oil Refineries (COR) replaced Anglo-Persian, and finally became BP (British Petroleum). The tanks were dismantled in the 1990s. Beyond the site, the marina and slipway, and the miscellany of watercraft moored in the Bay reflect more the area's long marine heritage. Redevelopment of the Marina is proposed (2011). Cross Balls Head Rd and climb to Balls Head Drive.

(16) The former **Coal Loader** on Balls Head Drive is an industrial site and large wharf established by the Sydney Bunkering Company during WWI to fuel electricity supply. The coal, mostly brought from Newcastle on the 'sixty miler' colliers, was hauled up on a cable railway until this system was replaced by conveyor belts in 1976. The loader shut down in 1995 and the site has been redeveloped as public space. ? Poem complaining about development.

(17) The former **Quarantine Depot** is soon met once within Balls Head Reserve, the path passing behind its almost colonial Federation charm and old wooden wharf. Established in 1912, its launches were used to inspect – and often fumigate – vessels entering Sydney Harbour. The site is now used by the Maritime Museum to store and repair some of its fleet.

(18) **Balls Head** was named after Lieutenant Henry Lidgbird Ball, commander of HMS *Supply* in the First Fleet. It retains a bushland character despite being extensively landscaped in the 1930s depression years. Concrete was used to create artificial rock shelters, sheds and rustic railings – much of this now crumbling. These and exotic plant species still mingle with renewed native landscapes and modern walking paths and facilities. Together with Berry Island, the headland came into government hands from the Berry estate and was declared a reserve in 1926. The extensive track system allows exploration of the headland at several levels. At the lookout near the carpark, with its views of Goat Island and the Harbour, there is a little rock pool on an overhang with Aboriginal axe grinding grooves cut into the rock surface next to it. Balls Head has important cultural sites left by the indigenous Cammeraygal occupants, with rock shelters, art and engravings, middens and work sites.

At the headland's highest point (90 metres) stood until recently an old flagpole in the style of a semaphore signalling mast. In the early 1800s, a chain of such masts sent messages down river to Parramatta. Beyond the flagpole, the track turns down steps towards the Harbour, then follows around past overhangs once developed for picnic shelters, turning inland again following the line of the point before steps lead down to the track and boardwalks towards the lower level of the Coal Loader.

(17) The path now enters one of the four tunnels under the great platform of the **Coal Loader**. Restrained lighting adds to its atmosphere. The coal was originally landed on the platform above and then funnelled down into vehicles in these tunnels via chutes. Once the site is fully developed, interpretative material will explain how the site worked. Beyond the tunnel, there are many options to explore but the main route leads out below the main buildings, past greens, lookouts and a wetland pond up steps on the right.

(18) Naval base **HMAS Waterhen** has its entrance at the end of the Coal Loader site. The base, which houses Sydney's minehunters and diving units, was named after a destroyer of the RAN's WWII 'scrap-iron flotilla' lost at Tobruk in 1941, the first RAN ship sunk by enemy action in WWII. The site's naval use originated in WWII after sandstone quarried from the site was used in the construction of the Captain

Cook Graving Dock at Garden Island. A WWII barrack blocks built by the US Navy stood in the enclosed parking area from Horace St back along Balls Head Road until the early 1990s. The current base was commissioned in 1962 and completely rebuilt in the mid-1990s.

(19) Turning right, uphill, this is an opportunity to explore the upper part of the Coal Loader site, with its buildings and important **Cammeraygal engraving site** showing a whale and other figures. Development nearing completion in 2011 will include interpretation and exposure of the full engraving site along with various uses of buildings and the Loader platform which are set to make this a very popular area. The Coal Loader, along with the former BP site, are particularly exciting examples of adaptive public use of former industrial sites, many of which are to be met on the Harbour Circle Walk.

Balls Head Drive leads uphill to Horace Street with its expansive Harbour view towards Iron Cove above HMAS *Waterhen*.

Day 1:5 - Horace Street, Waverton to Gore Cove

The Waverton and Wollstonecraft areas were once part of the 524 acre *Crows Nest Estate* granted to **Edward Wollstonecraft** in 1825, and later inherited by his partner and brother-in-law, Alexander Berry (see Section 1:4).

(18) The Horace Street steps give another view of the navy base, **HMAS *Waterhen***. About half-way down, take the path to the right which leads below other apartments to a huge apartment development.

(20) The ***Wandakiah*** development replaced the Oyster Bay Gas Works on an industrial site with a long history – sugar works from 1857, gunpowder works, then kerosene works. Through most of the twentieth century gas was produced here from coal, and an immense stone coal bunker, several storeys high, dominated the waterfront along with two large gas-holder tanks sited up towards the railway. Gas production ceased in 1976, replaced by natural gas which was initially distributed through here. The works finally closed in 1983. Artist Brett Whiteley used part of the closed down factory buildings for a studio for a time. In the 1980s and 90's, most of the structures were demolished, the site was remediated and the ***Wandakiah*** complex completed.

Across the footbridge, steps and a climb lead into Badangi Reserve, an area of varied and interesting woodland with a central north-south track linking the headland back up to Bridge End above ***Wandakiah***. The Harbour Circle route crosses this westwards, picking up an old roadway running parallel to but below Tryon Av and evidence of earlier industrial use of the reserve area.

Wollstonecraft was the last subdivision of the Wollstonecraft-Berry (and their heirs, the Hays) estate, completed around 1910. The earliest houses were substantial, often in the English arts and crafts style. One of the first families on the estate were the Shirley family (relatives of the Hays), hence the street name. *Te Waari* (No 8 Shirley Rd), the large house near the Reserve, was built in 1898, and is now the oldest house on this street.

(21) Tear-shaped **Berry Island** is an isthmus rather than an island, although the present grassy parkland linking it to Shirley Rd only dates from the 1960s, having been built up from a sandspit and mudflats. It was dedicated as a public park in 1926. The 'island' itself is well-endowed with native trees and wildflowers with an interesting central area of exposed sandstone surrounded by Port Jackson mallee. The 800 metre Gadyan Track circles the island, offering water access and views of any tanker unloading at the Shell Oil Terminal across Gore Cove and HMAS *Waterhen* on the eastern side. Signs provide an interpretive tour of the area's significance to and evidence of the original owners of the land, the Cammeraygal people. Plaques provide information on native flora; the people and their activities and culture. There is an excellent lookout at the south east corner.

A major **rock engraving site** has a ten metre long creature – a spirit figure or perhaps a whale – and near it a small waterhole with adjacent axe-grinding grooves. There are large exposed middens, evidence of thousands of years of shell gathering near the waterfront, notably where the track begins, and near the Harbour viewing platform on the island's eastern tip.

(22) Back on Shirley Rd, the **District Fisheries Office** provides fisheries research and inspection services for the Sydney area. Immediately uphill from it the Gore Cove Track leads down towards the Cove with views of the Shell Oil Terminal across in Greenwich. Passing through quality bushland behind the backyards of Milray Avenue, the track drops to the head of Berry Creek and Gore Cove. This reclaimed flat was the base of a small mine and now has a rather mysterious feel to it. The northerly track leads away from the Cove, climbing and following the creek up through rainforest to Smoothey Park near Wollstonecraft Station. The Harbour Circle route crosses the footbridge at the head of the Cove to climb to Greenwich.

Day 1:6 - Gore Cove to Greenwich Wharf

(23) After the steep **Holloway Reserve** steps, a pause for the vista at the end of Vista Street is essential. The view of Berry Island, Gore Cove and the Oil Terminal and the Harbour and city beyond makes the climb worthwhile.

'Greenwich' is one of several Harbour and Parramatta River names which recall the early settlers' attachment to London and the River Thames – Woolwich and Henley being other examples. The direct source of the name is *Greenwich House* (see Section 2:1) built by George Green around 1837-41, although he actually named the house *Willoughby* and the present name was not used until about 1871.

In Chisholm St a few older cottages survive. Surrounded by later development, but able to be seen from the street, is a Victorian villa, *Rothsay* (officially 100 Greenwich Rd), built in 1893 by land developer, William Clark.

(24) **Shell Gore Bay Terminal** dominates the Gore Cove side of Greenwich. It was already an industrial site when Shell Trading and Transport Co of Australia opened a facility here in 1901, enabling them to store bulk oil rather than having to rely on imports of drums of petroleum products in drums. Over time the site expanded taking over adjacent land formerly used for bitumen refining and asphalt products, a timber mill and a shale oil depot. Shell unloaded crude oil here which was then shipped down Parramatta River by barge from 1927 to the Clyde Refinery near Silverwater. In 1962, the barges were replaced by an underground pipeline which is still in use.

(25) **Shell Park** is on land transferred to Council from the Shell Company in exchange for land on the opposite side of Greenwich Rd. The Waterfront walk is part of Greenwich Park, which was dedicated August 1911, and offers views down the Lane Cove River to Woolwich and to Cockatoo Island. The Valentia St Wharf at Woolwich, which is a day and 13km away on foot, can be seen less than 500m away across the water. This gap is also the beginning of the Lane Cove River which turns westward at Onions Point to pass suburbs such as Longueville and Hunters Hill.

Above the waterfront walk, cling houses with wonderful views one of which was the home of Paul Brickhill (1916-1991), WWII fighter pilot, Stalag escaper and writer of such wartime classics as *Reach for the Sky*, *The Dam Busters* and *The Great Escape*.

At Lower Serpentine St there are some fine houses, particularly the two-storey Federation *Toora* (1906), opposite the wharf.

(26) **Greenwich Wharf** was in use at this site from the later part of the nineteenth century, but was rebuilt in 1981. A number of other wharves in this area no longer exist but another substantial wharf remains beyond Shell Park at Bay Street. Greenwich Wharf has regular services back to Circular Quay.