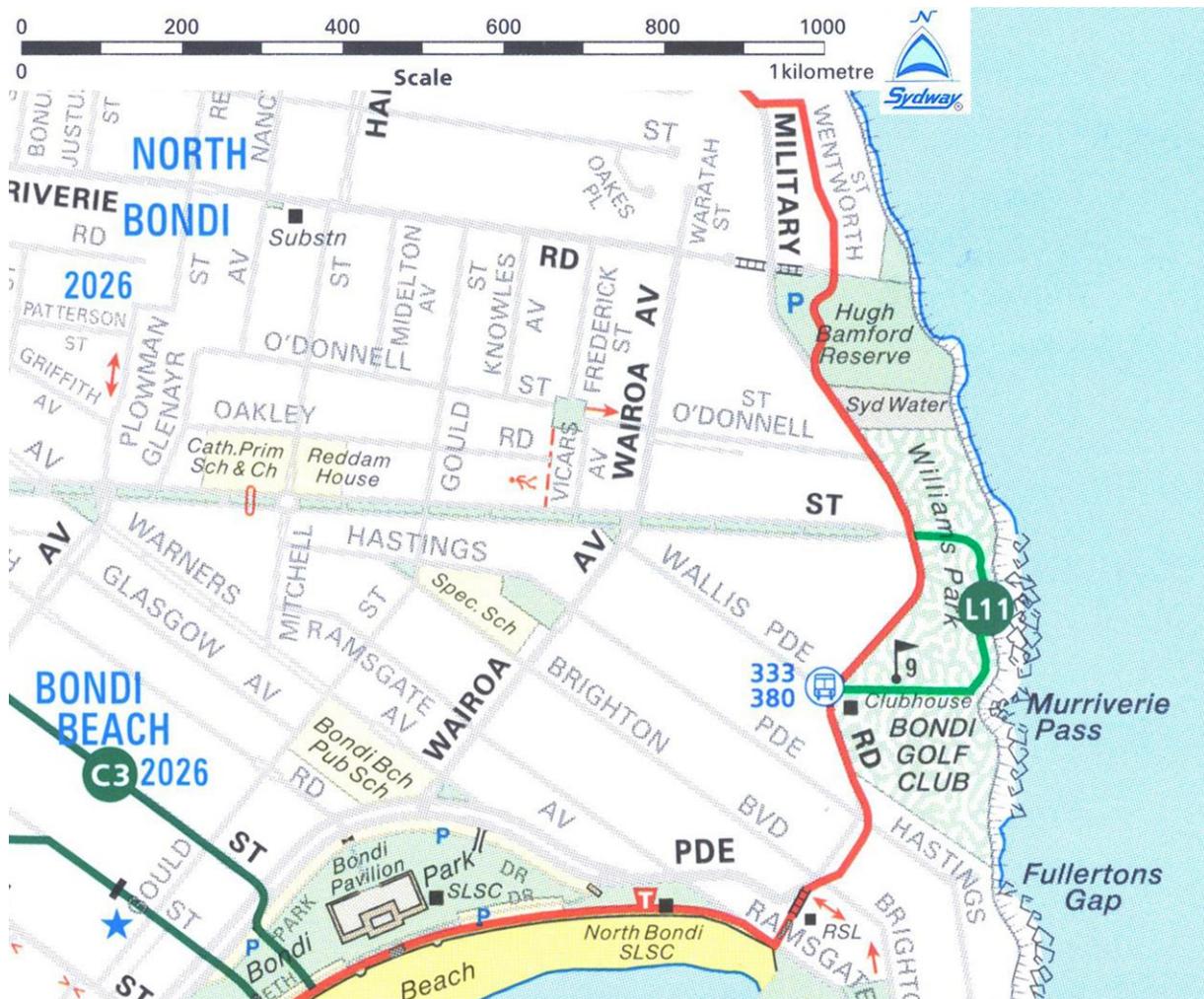


CIRCULAR QUAY TO SOUTH HEAD AND CLOVELLY

LOOP WALK L11: MURRIVERIE



- Main Walk:** ——— **Loop and Connecting Walks:** ———
- Distance:** 0.5km Blair St to Military Rd near Clubhouse; 0.7km complete loop (return to Blair St)
- Time:** 20 mins green route only; 25 mins complete loop.
- Level:** Easy, a few steps.
- Transport:** Military Rd buses.
- Connects with:** Main Walk.
- Facilities:** Golf Club House.

This is a short but interest-packed walk featuring sewers, rock engravings and remarkable geological features, but it may not be something everyone wants to do. It is across a public golf course so an eye must be kept out for errant golf balls at all times, and much of the walk is in close proximity to very dangerous 80 metre cliffs, so a safe distance should always be kept from these, especially in windy periods.

From the Main Walk on Military Road opposite Blair Street follow the roadway across Williams Park (Bondi Golf Course) towards the chimney of the sewer vent and beyond to the carvings and cliff.

The tall, landmark steel-banded sewer vent was built in 1910, to replace an earlier one. It services the Bondi Ocean Outfall Sewer (BOOS), the sewerage plant of which was in an 800 cubic metre chamber 45m below. Blair Street, behind, is actually on top of the line of the 7km sewer, completed from the city in 1889 – a marvel of surveying and engineering,

and Australia's first ocean outfall system of this kind. The system was designed to reduce harbour pollution. Until the 1990s minimally treated sewerage poured out here into the ocean, creating a rich fishing spot but also fouling Bondi Beach when weather and tides were uncooperative. After decades in denial, the Water Board spent millions creating deep ocean outfalls which opened in 1991, shifting the sewerage two or three kilometers further out into the Tasman. Whatever else this did to the environment, it did make Bondi Beach a healthier place to bathe.

A far larger and more sophisticated treatment plant now occupies the high ground to the north above the fenced area. On the cliff-front of Hugh Bamford Reserve, further above, is the buried Ben Buckler gun (see Main Walk, Section 4). From beyond the vent the views are wonderful – a sublime sweep of heavily populated headlands and beach easing into the ocean southwards with an even more dramatic series of cliffs marching north. On the cliff side of the big vent but southwards is a chained-in area of spectacular Aboriginal engravings. The engravings have been regrooved a couple of times, probably somewhat imaginatively and their location on a golf course has both positives and negatives for their continued survival. Nonetheless they offer an insight into thousands of years of indigenous occupation, their meaning necessarily speculative, but the importance of the ocean in sustaining the life of the Cadigal people goes without saying.

There are other engravings nearby, of a possibly even more mysterious sort. Back about 20m towards the vent but out on the cliffs projecting into the ocean – a place to approach with care – is a smaller chained-in area. Here, amidst the graffiti of more recent rock artists, are the remnants of engravings of what appear to be galleon-type sailing ships together with some curious lettering. One ship seems to have entirely disappeared and the other is faint but the lettering is clear enough. The turn-of-the twentieth century pioneer aviator, Lawrence Hargrave (see Loop Walks L6 and L13) came to the conclusion that these (together with others at Point Piper) were evidence of a visit to Sydney by two Spanish ships. The *Santa Yzabel* and the *Santa Barbara* disappeared from a small fleet of ships which sailed from Spain in 1595 to establish a colony in the Solomon Islands, and Hargrave convinced himself that they wound up here, staying for some years before sailing in 1600 to be wrecked on their voyage home. The engravings certainly seem European in origin, but not too many historians have warmed to the idea of a Spanish visit to Sydney Harbour almost two centuries before Cook or the First Fleet, and there are other ways and times at which the carvings could have got there – quarrymen working nearby being one likely source.

The sandstone cliffs here are a spectacular example of the often dramatic and abrupt Sydney coastline. They were laid down some 150 million years ago (in the Triassic Period), sand washed down from inland NSW. Perhaps a mere 20 million or so years later (in the Jurassic) there was a massive upflow of molten lava and steam which cracked through the landscape and forced the cliffs upward. Erosion did the rest, creating the dramatic cliffline. The fault (dyke) through which the lava vented has mostly disappeared, but here it can be seen as a fissure in the cliffs projecting out to the south. Once again, avoid getting close to the cliff edge, but down at the ocean level is a brown, flat rock shelf and some rocky islets, usually with waves crashing over them, which are the remnants of the basalt originating from the lava flow.

From the carvings area, follow the cliffline south to the old quarry before crossing the course as cautiously as possible towards Military Road or the Club House, and the Main Walk.

With continuing wariness of the dual dangers of golfers and cliffs, return to the Aboriginal carvings and walk due south. To the left is a gully area called Murriverie Pass, which for many decades rock fisherfolk descended, partly on ropes and ladders, to the water level to fish. Flying foxes were set up to reach the rocky islets and caves were enclosed to store fishing gear. It doesn't take much more than a glance down to understand why rock fishing is the deadliest pastime in Australia.

Just south of Murriverie Pass, the cliffs rise again and there is a quarried area around which golfers now tee off. The sandstone here looks unusually light coloured, tessellated and columnar. This was caused by the steam venting upwards which actually cooked the sandstone, making it unusually hard and resistant. There was possibly basalt here as well, although it may have been quarried out. Francis O'Brien (see Connection Walk C2) began quarrying here in the mid-nineteenth century. This is now a protected geological site but steps (and a steel ladder) lead up to the tee area and also to the rock platform where a white survey obelisk stands. Next to it, the fissure makes a sheer cut through the headland and can also be seen to continue on the next rocky outcrop south.

From this area, the golf paths can be followed to the Club House and Military Road to rejoin the Main Walk.

To return to the starting point of Loop Walk L11, turn right (uphill) on Military Rd, and walk back to Blair Street.