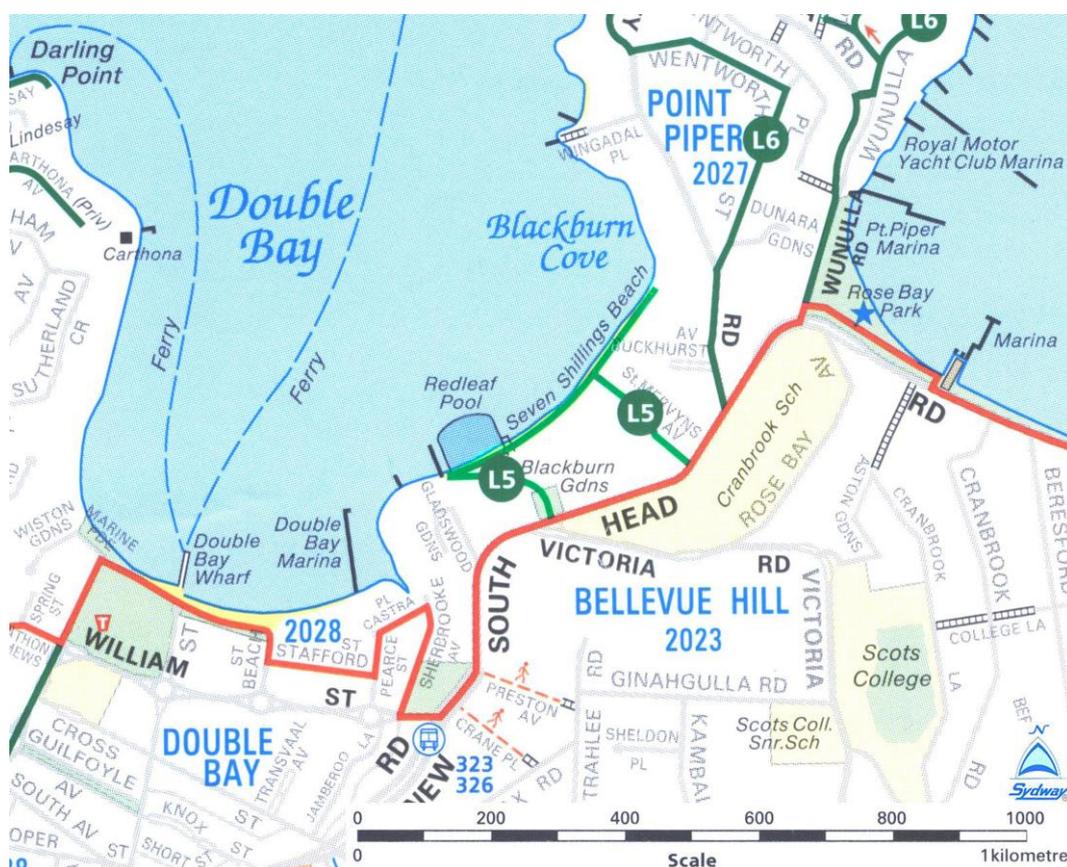


CIRCULAR QUAY TO SOUTH HEAD AND CLOVELLY

LOOP WALK L5: REDLEAF



Main Walk:	———	Loop and Connecting Walks:	———	Alternative Routes:	- - -
Distance:	0.7km South Head Rd to South Head Rd; 1km complete loop (return to Blackburn Gardens).				
Time:	20 mins green route only; 25 minutes complete loop.				
Level:	Easy, some steps.				
Transport:	New South Head Rd buses.				
Connects with:	Main Walk.				
Facilities:	Toilets: Blackburn Gardens, Redleaf Pool; Picnic spots: Blackburn Gardens, Redleaf Pool; Shops or hotels: Redleaf Pool.				

This short but very pleasant loop can only be undertaken in daylight - which hardly seems a problem - but could involve getting wet feet.

*Turn left off New South Head Road at Blackburn Gardens and head downhill to Redleaf Pool. At the north-eastern end of the pool, a gate opens onto Seven Shillings Beach. Follow this through (below the high tide mark) to the path and gates to St Meryovyns Avenue and follow that back up to the **Main Walk** at New South Head Road.*

Woollahra Council Chambers occupy one of the fine homes built on the slope above Blackburn Cove, **Redleaf**, which also gives its name to the pool below. Designed, possibly, by architect J. F. Hilly, in 1863, the house was owned by various merchants and others, and for two decades from 1888 by wealthy hardware merchant Frederic Lasseter (1828-31). Like many houses hereabout, it was taken over by the RAAF during WWII and until 1946, mainly as Womens Auxiliary Australian Air Force accommodation for WAAAFs based in Point Piper (see Loop L6). The house was purchased by Woollahra Council and became the Council Chambers in 1947. The house itself has been

impressively restored externally and additional office accommodation built underground above Blackburn Cove and the Blackburn Gardens.

Woollahra Council Offices and Library share the wonderful setting of Blackburn Gardens, which get their name from Blackburn Cove which gets its name from David Blackburn, who was the sailing master of HMS *Supply*, one of the two warships accompanying the First Fleet to Sydney in 1787-88. The gardens were originally those of *St Brigids* (now Woollahra Library). On the *Redleaf* side, some convenient toilets are annexed to *The Annex* which was originally the *Redleaf* stables, though, with the march of progress, it became the *St Brigids* garage. Later the Annex served as the Library before this moved across to *St Brigids* itself.

Blackburn Gardens were landscaped and opened as a public garden in 1955. This tranquil and prize-winning garden setting might be a good place to briefly recall the events which were investigated at St Brigids in 1954. Vladimir and Evdokia Petrov were espionage agents assigned to the Russian Embassy in Canberra in 1951. Vladimir was, in fact, not very successful in his assigned task of penetrating anti-Soviet groups in Australia and was feeling the heat. So on 3 April, 1954, after a series of contacts with agents from the Australian Security Intelligence Agency (ASIO), he decided to defect. Edvokia was unaware of this until the Russian Embassy learned of it and put her under house arrest. The timing was a gift to the Liberal Government. On April 13 – on the last Parliamentary sitting day before the next election – Prime Minister Robert Menzies announced Petrov's defection and the establishment of a Royal Commission into Soviet espionage in Australia. It was the just the Cold War sensation needed for the election campaign. The Russians added more fire to it by putting Edvokia onto a plane for Moscow at Sydney Airport on 19 April. A large crowd, incensed at her apparent abduction and deportation to punishment or death in Russia, surged around her grabbing at her clothes. She lost one shoe and, as newspaper photos showed, was clearly in great fear. She subsequently explained that it was the crowd she was afraid of, not the Russian 'couriers' who were trying to get her away from the crowd. However, appearances were what counted and in a mood of perfect pre-election hysteria, instructions were radioed ahead to Darwin and when the plane landed, Edvokia was separated from the couriers by ASIO and offered asylum. After some reflection, she decided to accept.

Menzies won the election – narrowly – and the Royal Commission produced little hard evidence of Soviet spy rings, but generated considerable hysteria, especially from Labor Leader, H. V. Evatt, who was convinced that the whole affair was purely an election-winning plot. Divisions within the Labor Party were inflamed to the point where the party split with the emergence of the right wing DLP. The following year, still riding on the induced Labor crisis, Menzies called an early election and won convincingly, setting himself up for the years of power which would make him Australia's longest serving Prime Minister. The Petrovs (renamed the Allysons), with government protection and assistance, lived out the rest of their lives quietly in suburban Melbourne, Vladimir dying in 1991 and Edvokia in 2002.

Now the gardens and waterfront lower a mantle of quiet calm back over life. There are several levels, including the 'rooftop' lawn behind the Council Chambers, and the displays of garden colour can be wonderful. Parts of the Gardens offer views over Redleaf Pool and Seven Shillings Beach and the lawns approaching it.

After exploring the gardens, Redleaf Pool is a perfect setting for a coffee or even a dip, before crossing to the gate on to Seven Shillings Beach – a private beach owned by the property owners who front it. As beaches go, this is not one of Sydney's finest but it has been one of the most disputed, the owners having been less than amenable to public access – hence the restrictions which limit that access to below the 'mean high water mark' during daylight hours – a classic piece of legal compromise. The higher ground belongs to the houses whose yards can readily be seen (see later in the walk for details). Once known as Busby's Beach, various stories are offered to account for the current name – the seven shillings being said to have been paid either for a catch of fish or native fishing rights or to have been in a purse lost by Captain Piper's (see Loop 6) nurse and recovered by fishermen. Whatever its price, the beach remains privately owned, although glances across into the private realms are permitted (or inevitable), some of the backyards having been long owned by the Fairfax family.

The beach exit is at the St Mervyn's Avenue gate, but it is worth wandering up the beach another 100m to the end of the publicly accessible part. There, sitting out above the water on its squat pier, is an unlikely turquoise 'Chinese' boathouse with white fence and dipping double roof, an all-too-rare rare eccentricity created entirely to provide pleasure.

Leave the beach at the St Mervyn's Avenue gate to rejoin the main walk at New South Head Road. The Avenue (and the similarly named block of units) was the site of a house, *St Mervyns*, designed by J. Horbury Hunt for solicitor Edward Simpson in 1887. Unfortunately, the warm brick gothic home made way for the home units in 1965, although

the brick 'Lodge' survives in the pleasant garden of *Fairwater* on the right hand side at New South Head Road - where the **Main Walk** continues.

Back at New South Head Rd, the Main Walk continues to the left. However to return to Blackburn Gardens and the start of Loop Walk L5, turn right.

Across New South Head Road, **Cranbrook School** looms. The name comes from the district in Kent, England, from which the Tooth family of brewers came (see Loop Walk L4). This estate was acquired in 1856 by Edwin Tooth, shortly before his death. His brother, Robert built the house of that name in the late 1850s which was enlarged and altered over time. During the early Federation period from 1900 to WWI, a succession of the new Governors-General of Australia occupied Government House in the Botanic Gardens (see Loop Walk L1) and the State Governors used *Cranbrook* instead. The State auctioned the property in 1917 and it was purchased by Samuel Horden for the consortium which set up Cranbrook School in 1918 as a Church of England School for Boys – which it remains, although a trifle enlarged.

Continuing on New South Head Road, fences, extensive gardens and superbly mature trees partly conceal the next two fine houses built on the former Cranbrook estate: *Fairwater* (1882) at Number 560, and *Elaine* (1863) at Number 550. *Fairwater* was originally designed by John Horbury Hunt for Francis Joseph, a stockbroker who, sometime after he sold *Fairwater* inherited the feudal barony of Lour in Angus, Scotland. Both houses were in the Fairfax family from around 1900. The house was altered around 1910 with some arts and crafts and classical elements while it was the home of Sir James Oswald Fairfax (see Loop Walk L10 and Connection Walk C3).

At the completion of the Loop Walk, look across the road to the island garden called **Horbury Hunt Place** and named in 1991 for architect John Horbury Hunt, whose work is clearly significant in the area (see Loop Walks L4, L7 and L10). Hunt lived nearby in now demolished Cranbrook Cottage from 1873 until poverty and illness forced him to sell it in 1902.