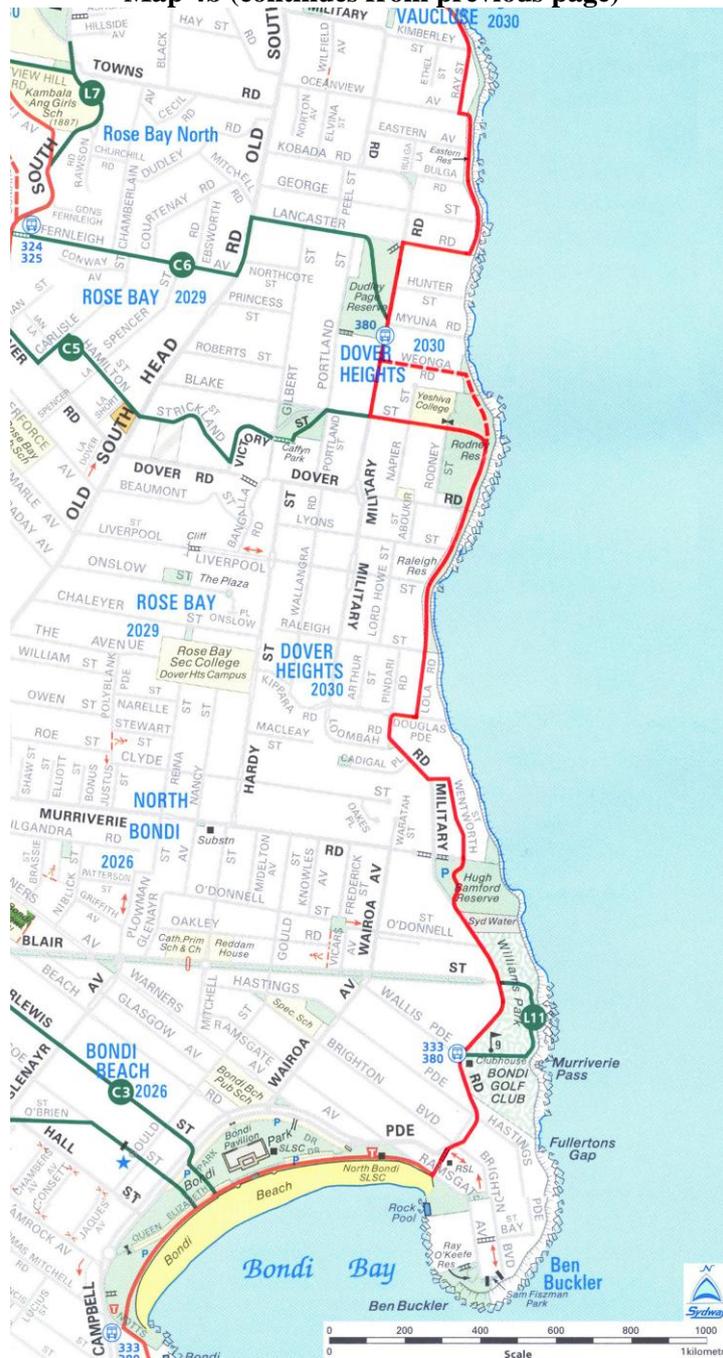


CIRCULAR QUAY TO SOUTH HEAD AND CLOVELLY  
MAIN WALK SECTION 4:  
SOUTH HEAD TO NORTH BONDI



Map 4a (continues next page)

Map 4b (continues from previous page)



- Main Walk:** — **Loop and Connecting Walks:** — **Alternative Routes:** - - -
- Distance:** 8km.
- Time:** 3 hours 15 minutes.
- Level:** Moderate; some steps.
- Transport:** Watsons Bay Ferry; Watsons Bay, Military Rd and Bondi buses.
- Connects with:** Loops L9 (St Peters), L10 (South Head Cemetery), L11 (Murriverie); Connection Walks C5 (Dover), C6 (Fernleigh) and C7 (Vaucluse).
- Facilities:** *Toilets:* South Head, Camp Cove, Robertson Park, Gap Bluff Reserve, Christison Park, South Head Cemetery, North Bondi Beach;  
*Picnic spots:* South Head, Camp Cove, Robertson Park, Gap Park, Signal Hill Reserve, Lighthouse Reserve, Christison Park, Diamond Bay Reserve, Dudley Page Reserve, Rodney Reserve, Hugh Bamford Reserve, Bondi Beach;  
*Shops or hotels:* Watsons Bay; Junction of Old and New South Head Roads; Cnr Military Rd and Blake Street; North Bondi.

## Section 4: South Head to North Bondi

*From South Head, follow the path south towards HMAS Watson before the track turns to the right and drops back towards the Harbour to rejoining the incoming route and begin Part 4 of the Main Walk.*

*At Camp Cove, follow Cliff Street to the turn into HMAS Watson. Follow the Watson road almost to the guard house but turn into the road to the right (signed for 'Gap Bluff Centre'), re-entering Sydney Harbour National Park.*

One side of Cliff Street becomes a profusion of coral trees, the other has another range of characteristic cottages and houses which relate closely in style and history to the Cove Street houses. Despite obvious later additions and modifications, these former fishermen's, signalmen's and pilots' cottages - many dating from about the 1850s - maintain some sense of the modest working class maritime village that this area was. Number 14, though much modified was the only stone house amidst this weatherboard group.

The turn up to HMAS Watson's main entrance soon reveals the guardhouse with some interesting pieces of hardware nearby. A naval radar station was established here during WWII and the base commissioned in 1945 as a radar training school on the former artillery school site. It is now an advanced anti-submarine, navigation and warfare training centre. Its clifftop Chapel, dedicated in 1962 can sometimes be visited. Check at the gate, if interested.

Since 1982, the Gap Bluff area has been part of Sydney Harbour National Park, opened to the public in 1990 and offering access to spectacular cliff views and pleasant walks amidst a few surviving buildings of the former army School of Artillery. Military fortification of the headland began in 1871 and a school of gunnery was established here in 1895 by the NSW military which by the 1930s had become the Australian Army's School of Gunnery. Considerable building of barracks and other facilities took place between then and the early post-war period. The Navy occupied part of the area for a radar station during WWII. The artillery school transferred to North Head in 1945, the Navy set up HMAS Watson and the army retained the rest of the area for various purposes. During the 1950s the barracks were used by National Service intakes, and during the Vietnam War as a transit camp for officers heading overseas. In the 1970s, the army presence had ended and the non-HMAS Watson land eventually became part of the National Park. Many of the mostly wooden army buildings were demolished by National Parks Service but a few remain.

The branch road from the Watson gates into the park emerges from the bush into a large open space fringed with some interesting buildings and a fine down-harbour view. The isolated toilet block once stood amidst wooden barracks blocks which lined this former parade ground. Ahead the few other remaining buildings from the original 30 or so include the 1930s building called *The Armoury*, formerly used as a store and now as a function centre with new verandah, and further on an 1890s weatherboard cottage, once used as a workshop and now a residence. The most interesting building, ahead through the trees, is the large 1935 former Officers' Mess, with an unusual look in military architecture. Unfortunately it was built on, destroying in the process, most of the Aboriginal rock engravings in the area. The building was modified in the 1950s from its original international P&O style. This area is entirely accessible to the public, but the buildings are frequently used for conference and commercial activities.

*Take the steps to the left of The Armoury building, which lead up through the bush on concrete steps and path before joining a wide bitumen path heading to the right. When a more open, partly bitumined, area is reached, walk left to the fenceline along the cliff and follow this or nearby paths southwards to the lookout and steps leading down to The Gap.*

The steps and path immediately north-west (left) of *The Armoury* climb through bushland before meeting the bitumen path leading to the right through more bushland to a clearing with remnants of landscaping. This was possibly carried out after WWII by displaced persons temporarily housed in the military buildings. Nearby, to the left, are the short concrete walls of the 1894 'Practice Battery' where gunners trained firing out to sea using obsolete cannon. At the cliffs spectacular views open up, particularly across the entrance to the Harbour - a reminder of why so much gunnery focused on defending this area. This part of the headland is known as the 'Gap Bluff' and the views continue to the south as The Gap itself begins to open up spectacularly below.

Seen from the Bluff, The Gap, with a crush of fallen rock at its base, appears as a crumbling weak spot in the defensive wall of cliffs protecting the city and harbour. There are sea caves under the cliff and erosion will eventually bring the sea through into the Harbour - though that might be some time away yet. The sandstone in these cliffs was laid as sediment more than 200 million years ago in the Triassic period. In the Jurassic era, 40 million years later, some cataclysmic event resulted in an enormous crack forming, which erosion and time have turned into Sydney's cliff line. At the water level, tessellated basalt rock platforms constantly duel with the waves.

From these heights, for several days following August 20, 1857, helpless spectators watched as the waves threw bodies and wreckage from the *Dunbar* onto the rock platforms. On that storm-wracked August night, the master (see Loop Walk L10) of the 1,321 ton three-masted frigate *Dunbar* mistook The Gap for the Harbour Entrance and ran aground about 500m south of The Gap. The spot was so isolated that Sydney was unaware of the disaster until well into next day. One crewman, from the 122 passengers and crew - James Johnston - survived, brought up the cliff face to safety 36 hours later. There seemed a great logic in Johnston's brother later being made Keeper of the new Hornby Light established as a direct result of the disaster (see Main Walk Section 3).

The Gap's association with death and despair, unfortunately, continues with regular suicide attempts (both successful and not), accidents, fishermen in trouble, and the occasional murder. It was The Gap's notorious record that led to the formation in the 1930s of the first Police Cliff Rescue unit, later to become NSW Police Rescue.

*From The Gap follow the cliffside path southwards and up to Old South Head Road. After a short stint on the road's footpath, turn into the Coastal Cliff Path which runs in the reserve roughly parallel to Old South Head Road. Follow it past the Signal Station and Macquarie Light to Christison Park and Clarke Reserve.*

At The Gap steps drop back towards Watsons Bay at the point where the old tram stop was. Parallel to but a little below the cliff path is the old tramway cutting which offers a secluded alternative or possibly a return walk at some point. This is part of the slightly dangerous 1909-60 Watson's Bay tramline, which emerges near Old South Head Road. However, the main cliffside footpath is certainly the more scenic.

As the path climbs through Gap Park, an anchor from the *Dunbar* can be seen on the platform at the southern end of The Gap. Anchors were retrieved from the wreck about 1910, another being on the grave site at St Stephens Cemetery in Newtown where most of the victims are buried. As the path continues upward the Harbour and seaward views are stunning but note the warm human-hewn stonework and wooden shingles of little St Peters Church perched inland above the low coastal vegetation. This can be seen more closely in Loop Walk L9.

Beyond a couple more former gun sites and just before climbing to South Head Road, there is another biblical connection in the naming of the two clefts in the rock dropping seaward. Known as *Jacob's Ladder*, because fishermen used rope ladders in them to reach the sea below, these are actually chines, or eroded volcanic dykes.

*At Old South Head Road, Loop Walk L9 turns downhill towards St Peters Church, looping back to eventually rejoin the Main Walk at this same point.*

*For the Main Walk continue south (and uphill) along South Head Road as it follows the coastline.*

At Old South Head Road, stands a 1900 memorial to Lieutenant C. J. Grieve, killed in the Boer War in South Africa. Further uphill, alongside the Old South Head Road footpath, is another small memorial to the ill-fated *Dunbar*, this time marking the approximate spot where she struck the cliffs below.

The path leaves the road at the signposted Coastal Cliff Path near the old South Head Signal Station. First met are the remnants of Signal Hill Fort, established in 1893. The original main gun placed here was a hydro pneumatic 9.2 inch breechloader which popped up above its emplacement to fire, then recoiled downwards, back out of sight. There were similar guns further south (see Main Walk at North Bondi and Clovelly). Last fired in 1933, it was removed in 1937 and its 22 ton barrel taken to Victoria Barracks and later to the artillery museum at North Head. Two 6" Mk II coastal defence guns replaced it as part of Sydney's WWII anti-ship defences. They were located in the two existing gun pits but they, too, became obsolete in the face of modern weaponry and were removed in the 1960s. The underground fort and its maze of tunnels is now locked up.

The Signal Station itself, with its octagonal tower and watchman's quarters, was built about 1842 and designed by Colonial Architect, Mortimer Lewis. The coastal views here continue to be spectacular but it is the expansive view down harbour which reveals the reason for the Station's location – it has a direct line of sight back to Sydney Cove. In maritime Sydney, the station had enormous importance. Governor Phillip had a flagpole erected here in January, 1790, to signal when approaching ships were sighted – the first navigational structure in Australia. Two years into the new Sydney settlement, with the colonists near starvation, their hopes rested on the arrival of supplies from England. On June 3 a signal was raised from the station but the excitement collapsed when the ship proved to be the *Lady Juliana*, carrying starving women convicts and bringing the news that the accompanying supply ship, *Guardian*, had been wrecked. Three more convict ships arrived the same month – more than a quarter of the 1,000 convicts

aboard having died en route while the ships' masters hoarded food to sell at inflated prices in Sydney. Economic rationalism had made its entrance into Australia. The continued importance of the station was indicated by the establishment in the 1820s of a line of semaphore signalling stations which stretched from here to Parramatta. The permanent building came in the 1840s, and in 1858, NSW's first electric telegraph line was installed to link the station with central Sydney. The station is now used by the volunteer Coast Guard.

The views south open up as the path runs toward the fence of the remarkable Macquarie Light, the first lighthouse site in Australia and still operating. Governor Macquarie had a lighthouse built here in 1816-18, and was so pleased with convict architect Francis Greenway's elegant design, that he gave Greenway a pardon. Greenway had been an architect in Bristol until declared bankrupt. Convicted and sentenced to death in 1812 for forgery of a contract, his sentence was commuted to 14 years transportation to Australia. While Greenway was still a convict, Governor Macquarie appointed him Civil Architect in 1816, a post which came with an attractive stipend of 21 shillings per week, plus a horse and a house. By the 1880s the Macquarie Light's sandstone was crumbling and being held together by iron bands. Its now ancient lantern was also due to be replaced by a new gas-generated electrical light (the first in an Australian lighthouse). A new and taller lighthouse, similar in design to Greenway's, was built behind the first, after which the old one was demolished. The new one came into service in 1883 and could be seen 40km out to sea. The Macquarie Light has been automated since 1976, as now are all Australian lighthouses, and the 1880s keepers' cottages have been privately leased since the 1990s. However, the lightstation itself is now managed by the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust and its grounds are open to the public, with the tower often open to guided tours.

Beyond the lighthouse, the path south past the sports fields of Christison Park reveals cliffs dipping towards Diamond Bay with the old sewer vent for the Bondi Outfall Sewer gracing a distant headland. A sewer outfall is under foot, as well, with the Vacluse sewer outfall at the bottom of the cliffs near the southern end of the park which from 1916 onwards pumped untreated sewage into the ocean.

*At Clarke Street the Main Walk continues down Jensen Avenue, while Loop Walk L10 turns right along Clarke Street for South Head Cemetery as well as the start of Connection Walk C7.*

*For the Main Walk, follow Jensen Avenue and Marine Crescent to Chris Bang Avenue and steps down into Diamond Bay Reserve.*

Along this route, for the next three kilometers, houses occasionally block cliff access, although in Jensen Avenue a couple of house-block Reserves (Jensen and Tower) do provide quiet little viewing spots early on. Above Diamond Bay the fenced open expanse again displays the impressive quality of this cliff frontage. Not as evident or as impressive, being below the waterline, are two small but untreated sewerage outlets constructed in the 1930s.

*Loop Walk L10 rejoins the Main Walk at the corner of Yong Street and Chris Bang Avenue.*

*Take the steps down from Chris Bang Avenue into Diamond Bay Reserve and pick up the wooden walkway heading towards the cliffs and around and up into Ray Street. At Oceanview Street turn left and pick up the Federation Cliff Walk, climbing steps and following it south to Lancaster Road.*

Diamond Bay Reserve, despite the extraordinary example of overdevelopment on its southern flank, is a wonderful spot, a hanging swamp dropping to Rosa Gulley, an inlet between the cliffs. Surviving native vegetation is extremely rare along these eastern cliffs but here (partly re-introduced) some flora does survive along with some occasional sleeping or scuttling fauna such as skinks and eastern water dragons. An excellent timber walkway with viewing platforms, funded by various special programs, has been built by Waverley Council to provide a safe and scenic circuit past the cliffs and surging waves of the inlet to Ray Street. Obviously, adventurous types do not limit themselves to the walkway and there are signs of rock climbing, fishing and so forth.

Beyond the apartments and houses, another 500m or so of cliff walk begins at the bottom of Oceanview Avenue. There is a dip here, but southwards the cliffs increase in height, rising to 80m above the ocean, the result of a dramatic uplift caused by volcanic activity that occurred perhaps 130 million years ago. The grassy area leads to excellent but plentiful wooden steps which steadily climb rocky outcrops between cliffs and backyards almost to Lancaster Road. The area's domestic architecture is very much on display, the contemporary updates of the sites nearest the cliffs often contrasting with the older styles inland.

*Walk up Lancaster Road to Military Road and Dudley Page Reserve. Turn south (left) on Military Road and left again at Weonga Road or Blake Street. At the end of either, the cliff walk recommences in Rodney Reserve, continuing through Raleigh Reserve to Raleigh Street.*

Dudley Page Reserve, a flat playing field and park atop a reservoir, is understandably a popular tourist coach stop. The harbour and city views, especially from the southern end and at sunset, are hard to beat.

*Connection Walk C6 commences at the Reserve, heading down Lancaster Road towards the harbour.*

Military Road was named because it provided access to the gun emplacements at Signal Hill and North Bondi. Architecture in this part of Dover Heights ranges from art deco to contemporary but the tendency is certainly upmarket and average house prices nudge \$3 million.

Number 197, on the corner with Myuna Road, is a stand-out, however. Completed in 2005 by architect Ed Lippmann, its sweeping silver metallic and glass curves somehow feel like something that should move – a ship or a space ship, or perhaps a butterfly. It is known as 'The Butterfly House'. Designed according to Feng Shui principles, cornerless with its figure-8 design offering spectacular views from every room, observation, both inside and out, seems to be the keynote. There is even a little top-deck pilot's cabin in case it does take off. While it's on the ground, though, it has its own large home theatre, and there is no need to worry about parking – it has a cavernous 10 car garage.

*At Blake Street, Connection Walk C5 from Rose Bay joins the Main Walk.*

Raleigh Reserve is reached by either Weonga Road or Blake Street and is a substantial cliffside open space leading to a narrow linear continuation southwards. Adjacent to it is Yeshiva College, a Jewish School (or more correctly *several* Jewish schools) and synagogue on a site full of interest and controversy. Previously the site had been a TAFE College and former public school. The college's closure and subsequent sale to a private school around 2001 caused considerable protest to begin with. Then the site was caught up in the dramatic foreclosure in 2003 of Yeshiva College in Flood Street, Bondi Junction (see Connection Walk C8), after which the Flood Street college also transferred here under a complex web of legal titles which appear to have prevented these assets also being seized. This part of the eastern suburbs is well-served by synagogues and schools and not surprisingly, because as of 2007, the Federal electorate of Wentworth to which the area belongs, became the most Jewish part of Australia, grabbing the crown from Melbourne Ports by 186 people. Officially, 14.1% of the people here are Jewish, but the real figure is more like 17% - one in every six people.

Historical interest in the site goes back further. During WWII, this area including the reserve and the college site, were a key part of Sydney's defence system. A three storey concrete building, clad in red brick to look like just another block of flats, housed a fire command post and observation post which controlled Fortress Sydney's coastal artillery. Inside it service personnel, mainly women, operated telescopes, stereoscopes, range finders, plotters, position finders and a telephone system linking the dozens of anti-ship and anti-aircraft gun emplacements, observation posts, plotting rooms, searchlights and military establishments along the coastline and down Sydney Harbour. Later, as radar stations were established, these were also linked into this defence chain. In fact, the first experimental Australian coastal radar station - No 1, Mark 2 (Aust) was developed here in 1941, its conspicuously large square antenna array facing out to sea and popularly known to the troops as a 'bat catcher'. Treated with great secrecy, this revolutionary development (it was initially known as RDF - 'Radio Direction Finding') was at first fairly crude but by 1942 new versions were showing the benefits of improved technology and expertise. Dover was the first of a chain of at least six radar stations along Sydney's coast and soon smaller, more portable sets had become a standard part of artillery, ship and aircraft operation.

With the end of the war, the expertise and equipment developed at Dover Heights was put to peacetime use. The CSIRO took over the site, and it became the Dover Heights Field Station, operating Australia's first radio telescope. In 1949 the first identification of a radio galaxy occurred here and in many ways the science of radio astronomy was born here. In 1951, the area which is now playing fields was dug out into a shallow dish, eventually 25m across, to become Australia's first radio telescope. The site operated until 1954, achieving many important astronomical discoveries and laying the foundation for one of the sciences Australia has a particularly high reputation in. After 1954, when the CSIRO moved out, the site morphed into the technical college which was closed in the 1990s.

Down at an indentation in the cliff-side fence, a plaque was unveiled in 2003 which provides a history of the site. Immediately ahead, on the cliff below, a full-size replica of a 1951 eight-element radio antenna has also been

recreated on the old instrument base, with the rusting original stand alongside. To the left, along the cliff, seems to be at least one more concrete footing.

There are supposedly no other traces of either the WWII Dover command post and radar station, or the CSIRO site, but in fact there may be one quite big one. The two-storey part of the house at the south-west tip of the reserve, facing Rodney Street – although it could easily be in the modern P&O style of the 1940s - is exactly the size, shape and style of a concrete fire control and observation post. It also looks remarkably similar to the 'WWII blockhouse' with yagi antenna shown on the final panel on the plaque down at the fence, the sandy landscape being typical of the area before it was subdivided into the present street pattern. Taking imagination a step further, it's not too hard to imagine that the sandy mound on which the house stands conceals underground bunkers and there is a little evidence to support this near the northern side of the house.

The fence continues to provide separation for walkers from the 80 metre Hawkesbury sandstone cliffs and very terminal drop into the ocean below, while the walk south also offers some few glimpses into the well-located houses backing onto the reserve. The walkway ends at Raleigh Street.

*From Raleigh Reserve, follow Lola Road and turn right at Douglas Parade, then left at the intersection with Military Road, following it down to Wentworth Street. Take Wentworth to Hugh Bamford Reserve.*

In the short section of Military Road between Douglas Parade and Wentworth Street, some great Bondi and southward views open up. At the end of Wentworth Street is the entrance to Hugh Bamford Reserve. To the left, though, is another isolated piece of fenced-off clifftop reserve with a patch of the now rare native coastal banksia and teetree scrub which once characterized the area walked through south from Watsons Bay.

The drop down to Military Road at the end of Wentworth Street is a reminder of the extensive quarrying that once took place in this area. One of the reasons for Military Road's existence and name lies within (under) the Hugh Bamford Reserve.

The Reserve offers wonderful views south along the coast and inland into the lowlands traversed by Connecting Walk C3. It sits interestingly above the Treatment Plant for the Bondi Ocean Sewer Outfall adding to the interest of the views. One of the reserve's most interesting features can't be seen but is located under the sports field in the corner near the cliff fence just above the Treatment Plant. This is the site of the Ben Buckler gun and it is still there, a metre or two below the surface. In 1893 a team of 35 horses, carts, men and cranes spent three weeks dragging a 22 ton breech-loading gun here from Victoria Barracks (see Loop L3), necessitating construction of Military Road in the process. It was one of three 9.2 inch (234mm) 'disappearing' guns placed along the Sydney coastline as shore batteries (the others were at the Watsons Bay Signal Station and at Clovelly). These were concealed guns inside thick concrete casemates whose hydro-pneumatic mounts allowed them to pop up to fire at enemy ships, before the guns' recoil dropped them down out of sight again. They fired a 172 kg shell designed to pierce the defences of the new heavily armoured warships of the time from up to eight kilometers away. The other two guns were removed long ago and one barrel survives at the Artillery Museum at North Head, but the geographically challenged 'Ben Buckler' gun (Ben Bucker Headland is actually about 1 km south) was held in place as a reserve until after WWII. Apparently, unlike virtually all other coastal guns, the barrel and fittings were not sold for scrap, and in the 1950s the complex was simply buried as part of building Hugh Bamford Oval. Partly uncovered briefly by the Water Board in 1984, it remains an archaeological treasure waiting to be explored.

*From the Hugh Bamford Reserve take the access road within the reserve down to Military Road and continue downhill to the intersection with Blair Street.*

From the Reserve's car park, a roadway cuts down through the rocks to Military Road and the entrance to the Treatment Plant to Williams Park and the Bondi Golf Club. Downhill another couple of hundred metres, wide and straight Blair Street meets Military Road from the right. Its attractiveness should in no way be detracted from by the fact that its elegant median strip exists because it sits above the main sewer line constructed from Sydney to Bondi in the 1880s.

*Loop Walk L11 enters and re-emerges from Williams Park opposite Blair Street.*

*The Main Walk continues downhill on Military Road past the Golf Club and shops to Brighton Boulevard. Take the steps down to Ramsgate Avenue and the northern end of Bondi Beach.*