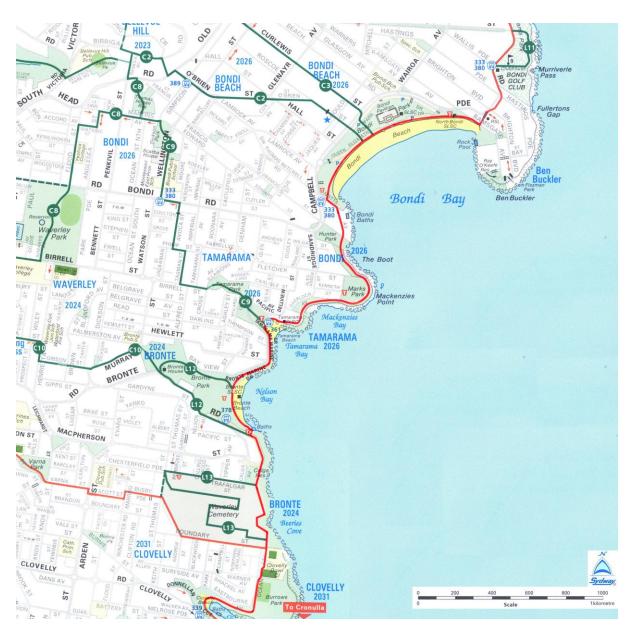# CIRCULAR QUAY TO SOUTH HEAD AND CLOVELLY
MAIN WALK SECTION 5:
NORTH BONDI TO CLOVELLY

Main Walk: ———   **Loop and Connecting Walks:** ———

Distance:	4.5km.
Time:	2 hours.
Level:	Easy-Moderate; some steps.
Transport:	Bondi, Tamarama, Bronte, Clovelly buses.
Connects with:	Federation Track; Loops L12 (Bronte) and L13 (Waverley Cemetery); Connection Walks C2 (Cooper), C3 (Bondi), C9 (Tamarama) and C10 (Bronte).
Facilities:	*Toilets:* Bondi Beach (north, central and south), Marks Park, Tamarama Beach, Bronte Beach (north and south), Waverley Cemetery (main gates), Burrows Park, Clovelly Beach;
	Picnic spots: Bondi Beach, Marks Park, Tamarama Beach, Bronte Park, Calga Reserve, Burrows Park, Clovelly Beach;
	Shops or hotels: Bondi, Tamarama Beach, Bronte, Clovelly.

Section 5 follows the marked Eastern Beaches Walk 4.5 km from northern Bondi Beach to Clovelly. Begun in the 1930s as a Depression relief program, this is now one of Sydney's most popular walks. On a fine weekend day this walk, with its succession of wonderful beaches, cliffs, bays and inlets, will be well populated by walkers and joggers. The walkway and adjacent parkland is also a setting for some very popular events such as the Festival of the Winds and Sculpture by the Sea, not to mention the inundation of sweaty bodies at the end of the City to Surf 'fun' run. The beaches attract at least some people most days and, again, on fine days can be pretty crowded, but on a hot day a dip in the surf might be an attractive break.

Bondi Beach has long been a famous icon of life in urban Australia and Sydney – home of surfing, birthplace of life-saving, Sydney's holiday at home. On most days – especially the sunny ones – the great kilometre long curve of sand and rolling breakers, and the cafes and restaurants along Campbell Parade, attract thousands of visitors.

From Ramsgate Avenue at the bottom of the steps from the end of Military Road, follow the footpaths from North Bondi Beach to the southern end of Bondi Beach.

At North Bondi Beach, the Coast Walk enters from a southerly direction (left) offering short, optional return walk to the Ray O'Keefe Reserve at Ben Buckler Headland. The origin of the name is uncertain, but it is a good spot for the view south and, on wilder days, gaining a sense of the power of the ocean. The huge boulder near the Point - supposedly weighing 235 tons - was actually washed up onto the rock platform during a storm in 1912. During the 1960s it was adorned with two sculptured mermaids, the work of artist Lyall Randolph, but the sea reclaimed one in 1974 and the other was removed for conservation and is now in Waverley Library.

Back at the northern end of the beach, Biddigal Park's name recognises the area's Aboriginal heritage. The Aboriginal name for the area, said to have meant 'noise of water' or 'water breaking over the rocks', was written by Europeans as 'Boondi', 'Bundy' or 'Bundi'. In 1900 storms exposed the area behind the beach, revealing a major archaeological site of Aboriginal artefacts – knives, scrapers, drills, axe heads. But, like the great stretches of sand dunes and the lagoons originally behind the beach, the site disappeared under suburban development. It is hard to imagine the beach as a lonely sweep of sand backed by a lagoon beyond which were scrub and gum tree-covered sand dunes between rocky outcrops from which streams dropped through gullies of ferns and palms. But it was like that, and for decades attempts to subdivide the area were met with little enthusiasm. Around the turn of the twentieth century that began to change.

The 200 acres which included the whole beach area was granted to William Roberts in 1809 but this was during the infamous Rum Rebellion period when the Governor, William Bligh, was dispossessed and the NSW Corps leaders gave freely of grants to their cronies. On his arrival in 1810, Governor Macquarie revoked all the grants but saw Roberts' as worthy enough to be re-granted.

Little else happened until after the land and its cottage *Bondi Lodge* were sold in 1851 to Edward Smith Hall, who had been proprietor of *The Monitor* newspaper. The land was intended for his daughter, Georgiana, and Hall, together with his son-in-law, Francis O'Brien, unsuccessfully attempted to subdivide in 1852. In 1855, they opened the beach to the public and it began gaining popularity as a picnic spot and amusement area. In 1882, after O'Brien sought assistance in controlling troublemakers, the government resumed the area around the beach as public land. The Bondi Baths were opened in 1887, though daylight beach bathing was banned until 1902. By then the Beach was well on its way to becoming Australia's most famous beach, a popular place to take in the sea air, especially after trams had reached the area in the 1890s.

In 1902 the daylight bathing ban was finally challenged and shattered at Manly Beach by a local newspaper editor and beach bathing took off. Conservative attitudes, however, clung on as long as possible. Waverley Council proscribed 'neck-to-knee' costumes for the beach in 1907 and prohibited sunbathing and 'mixing with the public' whilst in costumes – rules that were increasingly flouted. By the 1930s, crowds of up to 100,000 male and female bathers were mixing on the beach on sunny days, most wearing almost identical dark one-piece costumes, although some men – controversially – had even begun baring their upper torsos! Hollywood and WWII cracked the conservative fashion mould, and post-war bathers were increasingly more exposed to sun and public gaze. A well-publicised rear-guard action was fought by Aub Laidlaw, beach inspector at Bondi for 30 years. Armed with a tape measure and Council authority, he escorted offending bikini girls off the beach, often amidst a blaze of publicity, until the tide of taste and opinion swamped him. The arrival of topless sunbathing briefly revived the

debate, Bondi being Sydney's first public beach to allow it, although originally restricted to the southern end of the beach 'beyond the drain'. Today, a serious dress (or undress) controversy at Bondi seems barely possible.

With the growing crowds of bathers came the need for their protection from more than offences against their morality. Surf lifesaving and the life-saving reel were effectively invented at Bondi. Bondi Surf Bathers Lifesaving Club began in 1906, and their first rescues were of a nine-year-old boy, 'Charlie Smith' and his cousin. Twenty-one years later, and now better known as Charles Kingsford-Smith, Charlie piloted the first aircraft to fly the Pacific Ocean. The sea did finally claim his life, however, when he crashed into the Indian Ocean in 1935. There have been thousands of rescues since young Smithy's, the most spectacular being on 'Black Sunday', 6 February 1938, when freak waves swept 300 people out to sea. Luckily there were 70 life-savers on the beach that day and all but five surfers were saved. Sharks, the other popular surf danger, have proved less of a problem, especially since regular offshore netting began; the only two recorded deaths here occurred in 1929, a fortnight apart. The North Bondi Surf Lifesaving Club along the beachfront is one of two on the beach, the other (Bondi Surf Bathers) being next to the famous pavilion ahead.

Across the beach and park is Campbell Parade where the styles and colours, the mostly low-rise buildings, bars and cafes projecting into the streets, and to their sides the inter- and post-war flats climbing the hillsides help give this quintessentially Australian place a rather Mediterranean feel. The towered Hotel Bondi, at the northern end – individually the most interesting building along Campbell Parade – opened as a first-class hotel in 1920, when Bondi was still mostly sandhills.

The isolation of the area before 1900 was what attracted one of Bondi's most unlikely inhabitants in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Robert Howard had been a handsome hansom cab driver to the rich and famous – he even drove for the Duke of Edinburgh on his ill-fated visit to Sydney in 1868 (during which the Duke survived an assassination attempt). However, not long afterwards, one of Howard's horses kicked him in the face, caving in his nose, and disfiguring him so much that his days as a society driver were finished. Now nicknamed 'Nosey Bob', he retired to isolation and unemployment at Bondi Beach. His avoidance of company extended to sending his horse (probably not *the* horse) into a local pub with a bucket to collect his beer. In 1876 he took on the not-heavily-competed-for post of NSW hangman, eventually carrying out 66 executions with 'the utmost dispatch and decorum'. Strangely, he was well regarded for his generosity to former criminals and their families and became known as 'the Gentleman Hangman'. Howard died in 1906 at the age of 73 and is buried at Waverley Cemetery under a gravestone which suggests that his misfortunes were not limited to those above, showing as it appears to the deaths years before of his wife, daughter and possibly grand- or great-grand-daughter, all named 'Jane'.

Connection Walks C3 (Bondi) and *C2 (Cooper) join the Main Walk across Campbell Parade.*

By 1920 Bondi Beach had picnic areas, pine trees, a bandstand, a raised tram turning area called 'the loop', and a twin-towered wooden pavilion, but by 1928 these had been replaced by the great waterfront promenades and the present arched and colonnaded Surf Pavilion. Promenading had become the go by the 1930s and day or night dance bands performed at the pavilion. With its 121 metre (398 feet) beach frontage, Bondi's Pavilion was on a grand scale, housing a ballroom, restaurant, cafe, gymnasium, Turkish bath, bars, open-air theatre, dressing sheds for 12,000 people and the Surf Life Saving Club. Despite occasional threats of drastic redevelopment the Pavilion continues as a fascinatingly multi-purpose community building. Look inside the central section to see photographic murals of Bondi Beach over the years.

Above the southern end of the beach stands, amongst other more modern buildings, the *Astra*. Built as the fashionable *Grand Hotel International* in 1929 by Jack Shaw, a Jewish Russian emigre, the hotel had a palm court orchestra and roof garden. The Depression undermined it, though it struggled along with an increasingly seedy reputation before closing in 1983. Subsequently *Astra* became retirement units.

At the southern end of the Beach climb the steps to Notts Avenue at the seaward end of which steps lead on to the Coast Walk which follows a concrete path and steps around past Marks Park and Mackenzies Bay to Tamarama Beach.

The view back from the southern end is classic Bondi, a scene that has appeared a million times in photographs and films throughout the world. Bondi's 1880s tidal public baths became home to the Bondi Icebergs Club in 1929 - Australia's first winter swimming club, now with its large rebuilt clubhouse. The club swimming season begins in early winter when large quantities of ice are added to the pool in case its temperature is still a bit mild.

From Notts Avenue the path drops to a concrete waterfront walk between rock overhangs and waves and crossing a gully called 'The Bight' and a small stream called 'The Boot'. It was probably here in 1809 that surveyor James Meehan bestowed the name 'Bundi Bay' on the area. The headland at Mackenzie's Point offers sweeping views north and south – the south showing the way ahead to Bronte and the downward stretch of Waverley Cemetery.

Marks Park sits above the walkway as it turns into and above rocky Mackenzie's Bay - look for another surviving Aboriginal rock engraving of a shark or whale adjacent to the walkway. The rocky platforms below by Mackenzies Bay offer attractive scrambling but are also part of an intertidal protected area. Line fishing is permissible but collection of invertebrates such as crabs or cockles is not. The path sweeps around to climb around the next headland to emerge near Tamarama surf clubhouse, below which is the semi-circular span of the beach enclosed by cliffs, and backed by a neat park which continues across the road into steep-sided Tamarama Park.

Connection Walk C9 (Tamarama) joins the Main Walk at Tamarama Beach.

Tamarama Beach is small but perfectly formed and just as subject to occasional wild surf as any of the others along the coast. Behind it an understandably popular park is wedged in between the tight crescent of the Marine Drive. Across Marine Drive at its western end, Tamarama Gulley continues in a much larger and barer space between a circle of hillside totally dominated by one of the lesser architectural triumphs of 1960s planning and development.

Until the 1880s, the whole gulley was a delight of glens, ferns and waterfalls, known as Fletchers Glen, and considered the most beautiful spot on the coast. Naturally that made it ripe to be ruined for redevelopment and in 1887, when the tramway reached here, the Bondi Aquarium was born in the park immediately behind the beach. As well as fish (and a penguin), it featured swings, merry-go-rounds, razzle-dazzles, shooting galleries, tightrope walkers, Punch and Judy shows, a roller-coaster railway and a roller-skating rink, all illuminated by electric light. The Aquarium burnt down in 1891, but its remnants struggled on until 1906 when it was replaced on an even greater scale by Wonderland City. This predecessor to Luna Park had sideshows and stalls, underground rivers and cave rides, a large amusement building (*Katzenjammer Castle*), an undulating roller coaster snaking between the cliffs, a 3 kilometre miniature steam railway circling the entire park area, an elephant named Alice and even a mini-airship on a cable carrying passengers from clifftop to clifftop. It didn't survive too long. After a series of difficulties, Wonderland City closed in 1911. By then the beach was being called Tamarama, and gaining its own appeal. The Surf Club was established in 1906-07 following a drowning, and the public park opened in 1920.

Cross Tamarama Park, climb the steps to the footpath on Tamarama Marine Drive, which soon becomes Bronte Marine Drive. A short way around the Tamarama beach headland, a footpath drops towards Bronte Beach and down steps in front of the Surf Club. Cross the beach and at its southern end, climb up to the parking area roadway on the beach side of Bronte Road.

From the Tamarama Beach headland, Bronte Beach and Park spread out ahead. The local government area here is Waverley, which gets its name from Barnett Levey's 1824 *Waverley House*, named in honour of Sir Walter Scott's Waverley Novels. The naming of Bronte also derives from a house, but without literary connections. *Bronte House* (see Loop Walk L12) was named by its second owner – not after the literary sisters – but after Lord Nelson who was created Duke of Bronte by the King of Sicily in 1798. The new Duke also gained a small Duchy on the slopes of volcanic Mt Etna, no doubt accounting for the meaning of the name 'Bronte' which actually means 'Cyclops' or 'Thunder'. This whole area was originally named Nelson Bay for the same reason, but that name is now restricted to the Bay itself.

Steps lead down past the Surf Club and onto the concrete beach promenade. Bronte's beach is much smaller than Bondi's and the buildings less grand, but Bronte was also a pioneering site for surf-lifesaving, with the first surfboat and first use of the 'torpedo' flotation device. Across in Bronte Road café society is growing, although it is physically unable to match Bondi here, either, but there is no contest about the parkland - Bronte Park is superb and well worth exploring (see Loop Walk L12).

Loop Walk L12 begins in the park, focusing on Bronte House, and reconnecting across at the southern end of the beach, having also picked up Connection Walk C10 along the way.

At the southern end of the beach are Bronte Baths, built in 1887, the same year as the baths at Bondi. The small promenade beyond them does not link up with the Coast Walk and an Aquatic Reserve covers the coastline south from here to Coogee.

Climb the steps and footpath to the parking area above the southern side of the beach and turn left, following the road up through the cutting until Calga Reserve is met. Near Waverley Cemetery a series of steps and boardwalks traverse in front of the cemetery near the cliffs through to Boundary Street.

From just above Bronte Beach, the one-way road coming off Bronte Road is used as a car park, but it was built from the 1890s to 1911 for the Bronte Beach tramline. Further uphill, this becomes a significant cutting completed in 1911 through the back of the 50 metre cliffs fronting the ocean. Trams rattled through here until the end of the 1950s when all of Sydney's extensive tram services were closed.

At the point where the former tramway swings right towards Macpherson Street, a paved path leads across Calga Reserve and along the cliffs towards Waverley Cemetery. This dramatically located cemetery is one of Australia's finest and contains the remains of many well-known people amongst its 80,000 or so interments from 1877 onwards (see Loop Walk L13).

Loop Walk L13 turns slightly right but ahead from the Main Walk just before the steps down to the boardwalk in front of the Cemetery.

The superb steps and boardwalk cross the cliff faces and hanging swamps ensuring the integrity of the area and providing a safe passage as well as some excellent viewpoints and resting places.

*At Boundary Street, **the Federation Track and Loop Walk L13** reconnect with the Main Walk. From this point south, the Main Route and the Federation Track follow the same route.*

Follow the Eastern Beaches Coastal Walk south past Clovelly Bowling Club and Burrows Park and down into Clovelly Beach.

Burrows Park's headland is called Shark Point and while there is little to see of it, was the site of the third of the 1890s 'pop-up' coast guns, the other two having been positioned back at Signal Hill and at Hugh Bamford Reserve at North Bondi. The walkway leads around to the remarkable little inlet of Clovelly Bay. Originally called 'Little Coogee', it was renamed after a picturesque Devon fishing village and does have something of a picture postcard fishing harbour look. A breakwater tames the waves at the narrow entrance and beyond is a calm, narrow 350 metre long concrete-banked cove leading to a calm little beach. Recent concreting has swamped more of the rocks on the northern side but there is a small enclosed pool as well as a couple of small natural rock pools for calm days. Really, the whole cove is a swimming pool, and one very popular for snorkelling. On the near horizon sits the imposing rear end of the *Clovelly Hotel* built in 1923 after the demolition of an 1859 castellated and towered mansion called *Mundarrah Towers* built by nineteenth century newspaper owner Samuel Bennett (see Connecting Walk L6).

This is the limit of the Harbour Bridge – South Head – Clovelly map. The walk continues on the next map in the series.