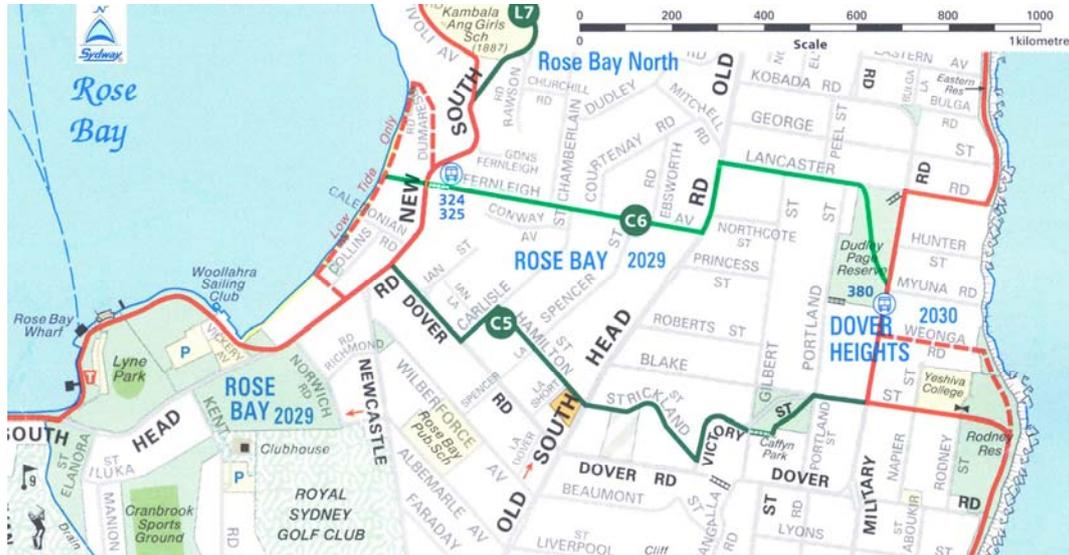


CIRCULAR QUAY TO SOUTH HEAD AND CLOVELLY CONNECTING WALK C6: FERNLEIGH DUDLEY PAGE RESERVE TO ROSE BAY



- Main Walk:** — **Loop and Connecting Walks:** — **Alternative Routes:** - - -
- Distance:** 1.4km.
- Time:** 30 mins.
- Level:** Moderate (downhill); some steps.
- Transport:** New South Head, Old South Head and Military Rd buses.
- Connects with:** Main Walk (at Rose Bay and Dover Heights).
- Facilities:**
Toilets: Rose Bay.
Picnic spots: Rose Bay Beach, Dudley Page Reserve.
Shops or hotels: Rose Bay, Old South Head Rd.

Unlike most of the connections which lead generally eastward, the recommended way to walk C6 is westwards. It is a far easier walk this way, the views are better, and is a good link between the Main Walk from coast to Harbour, allowing for a circle walk involving the Main Walk and other connection walks such as C5, C7 or C3. The main features of the Connection route are the views and a rare and rarely seen castle.

*From the northern side of Dudley Page Reserve walk down Lancaster Road to Old South Head Road. Turn left (downhill) and then cross to the western side, before continuing south 100 metres to Fernleigh Avenue. Follow Fernleigh Avenue down to its end where steps drop to New South Head Road and, on the opposite side of the road, the **Main Walk**. The lane and steps continue down to the beach at Rose Bay where they meet the alternative Main Walk.*

The best view from the much visited platform of Dudley Page Reserve is from its southern side. From there, head north towards Lancaster Road and the end of the park which slopes or steps down to Lancaster Road. The views drop away with the walk down Lancaster Road. On the western side of Old South Head Road the contemporary-looking Orthodox **South Head Synagogue** at Numbers 662-666 has the fortified character most Jewish institutions have been forced to adopt in the last decade.

Fernleigh Avenue is well named in part only – at first it looks more like a straight and narrow, treeless lane of garages dipping towards the unseen harbour. It is mostly one-way but the footpaths are narrow with several wider streets feeding off it. After Chamberlain Avenue, look to the right for the back yards and then side entrance into *Fernleigh*

Castle. The gates offer a reasonable side view of its facade, but if desired, a far better look can be obtained by a little uphill walking once down the steps to New South Head Road.

The Breakwell Grant (see Loop 7), made to Irishman Samuel Breakwell in 1812, was sold up in 1831 in five large blocks, one of them being *Fernleigh*. In 1874 a Mr C. W. Roberts built a stone cottage on the land, which was eventually bought by Frank Bennett. It was Bennett, a lesser newspaper baron, who built his Victorian castle, with its towers and battlements, here in 1892. Bennett was the son of Samuel Bennett, a printer who left *The Sydney Morning Herald* in 1859 to buy out and operate Sir Henry Parkes' newspaper, *The Empire*. Samuel Bennett started Sydney's first evening paper, the *Evening News*, in 1867 and the paper lasted until 1931, when it became a victim of the Depression but also of the early jostling for control and media empires by the first generation of the Packer and Murdoch dynasties. The year before its demise, Sydney – with a fraction of its population today - had at least 5 daily newspapers and 8 weeklies. Another of Bennett's papers was the famous illustrated *Town and Country Journal*. When he died in 1878 the papers were taken over by his sons, Christopher and Frank, and it was the latter, by then the highly respected owner of the *Evening News*, who built the 30 room *Fernleigh Castle* – perhaps inspired by his father's monumental castle *Mundarrah Towers* (demolished in 1923) at Clovelly, with its castellated rooflines and ornate towers. After the Bennett era, *Fernleigh Castle* was leased for a time during WWI by prima donna Dame Nellie Melba (1861-1931), the first and still perhaps the most famous of Australia's sopranos (unless Dame Joan is within hearing). At this time the immensely wealthy operatic superstar had returned to Australia to undertake singing tours to raise money for war charities, and it was this undertaking that led to her being created Dame of the British Empire in 1918. The Castle carried on after its brush with superstardom to become a hotel into the 1960s and a bank training centre in the 1970s.

Steps lead down past a couple of interesting flats to New South Head Road. Directly across the road (but there is no crossing here), the **Main Walk** is rejoined. At that point, more steps lead down past tennis courts and units directly onto the beach at Rose Bay to rejoin the beach-walk alternative **Main Walk**.

However, to see *Fernleigh Castle* properly, walk 200m uphill from the bottom of the steps on New South Head Road to the next turning to the right, which is the short cul de sac of Fernleigh Gardens. There are other rather more contemporary large buildings to gaze at as well, but the golden sandstone of the castle, with its not contrasting white cast iron balustrades, dominates the top of the street. The way back down the cul de sac is rewarded with impressive harbour views, and it is hard to miss *St Donats* and, next door, *San Romolo*, the classic Spanish mission flats across the street.